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# L'ARRABIATA

AND

OTHER TALES

BY

PAUL HEYSE.

FROM THE GERMAN

BY

MARY WILSON.

*Authorized Edition.*

LEIPZIG 1867

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## L'ARRABIATA.

### L'ARRABIATA.

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The day had scarcely dawned.--Over Vesuvius hung one broad grey stripe of mist; stretching across as far as Naples, and darkening all the small towns along the coast. The sea lay calm. But about the marina of the narrow creek, that lies beneath the Sorrento cliffs, fishermen and their wives were at work already, with giant cables drawing their boats to land, and the nets that had been cast the night before. Others were rigging their craft; trimming the sails, and fetching out oars and masts from the great grated vaults that have been built deep into the rocks for shelter to the tackle over night. Nowhere an idle hand; even the very aged, who had long given up going to sea, fell into the long chain of those who were hauling in the nets. Here and there, on some flat housetop, an old woman stood and span; or busied herself about her grandchildren, whom their mother had left to help her husband.

"Do you see, Rachela? yonder is our Padre Curato;" said one, to a little thing of ten, who brandished a small spindle by her side; "Antonio is to row him over to Capri. Madre Santissima! but the reverend signor's eyes are dull with sleep!" and she waved her hand to a benevolent looking little priest, who was settling himself in the boat, and spreading out upon the bench his carefully tucked-up skirts.

The men upon the quay had dropped their work, to see their pastor off, who bowed and nodded kindly, right and left.

"What for must he go to Capri, granny?" asked the child. "Have the people there no priest of their own, that they must borrow ours?"

"Silly thing!" returned the granny. "Priests they have, in plenty--and the most beautiful of churches, and a hermit too, which is more than we have. But there lives a great Signora, who once lived here; she was so very ill!--Many's the time our Padre had to go and take the Most Holy to her, when they thought she could not live the night. But with the Blessed Virgin's help, she did get strong and well--and was able to bathe every day in the sea. When she went away, she left a fine heap of ducats behind her, for our church, and for the poor; and she would not go, they say, until our Padre promised to go and see her over there, that she might confess to him as before. It is quite wonderful, the store she lays by him!--Indeed, and we have cause to bless ourselves for having a curato who has gifts enough for an archbishop; and is in such request with all the great folks. The Madonna be with him!" she cried, and waved her hand again, as the boat was about to put from shore.

"Are we to have fair weather, my son?" enquired the little priest, with an anxious look towards Naples.

"The sun is not yet up;" the young man answered: "When he comes, he will easily do for that small trifle of mist."

"Off with you, then! that we may arrive before the heat."

Antonio was just reaching for his long oar to shove away the boat, when suddenly he paused, and fixed his eyes upon the summit of the steep path that leads down from Sorrento to the water.

A tall and slender girlish figure had become visible upon the heights, and was now hastily stepping down the stones, waving her pocket handkerchief.

She had a small bundle under her arm, and her dress was mean and poor. Yet she had a distinguished, if somewhat savage way of throwing back her head; and the dark tress that wreathed it, on her, was like a diadem.

"What have we to wait for?" enquired the curato. "There is some one coming, who wants to go to Capri. With your permission. Padre. We shall not go a whit the slower. It is a slight young thing, but just eighteen."

At that moment the young girl appeared from behind the wall that bounds the winding path.

"Laurella!" cried the priest, "and what has she to do in Capri?"

Antonio shrugged his shoulders. She came up with hasty steps, her eyes fixed straight before her.

"Ha! l'Arrabiata! good morning!" shouted one or two of the young boatmen. But for the curato's presence, they might have added more; the look of mute defiance with which the young girl received their welcome, appeared to tempt the more mischievous among them.

"Good day, Laurella!" now said the priest; "how are you? Are you coming with us to Capri?"

"If I may. Padre."

"Ask Antonio there, the boat is his. Every man is master of his own, I say; as God is master of us all."

"There is half a carlin, if I may go for that?" said Laurella, without looking at the young boatman.

"You need it more than I," he muttered, and pushed aside some orange-baskets to make room: he was to sell the oranges in Capri, which little isle of rocks, has never been able to grow enough for all its visitors.

"I do not choose to go for nothing;" said the young girl, with a slight frown of her dark eyebrows.

"Come, child," said the priest; "he is a good lad, and had rather not enrich himself with that little morsel of your poverty. Come now, and step in;" and he stretched out his hand to help her; "and sit you down by me. See now, he has spread his jacket for you, that you may sit the softer; young folks are all alike; for one little maiden of eighteen, they will do more than for ten of us reverend fathers. Nay, no excuse, Tonino. It is the Lord's own doing, that like and like should hold together."

Meantime Laurella had stepped in, and seated herself beside the Padre, first putting away Antonio's jacket, without a word. The young fellow let it lie, and muttering between his teeth, he gave one vigorous push against the pier, and the little boat flew out into the open bay.

"What are you carrying there in that little bundle?" enquired the Padre, as they were floating on over a calm sea, now just beginning to be lighted up with the earliest rays of the rising sun.

"Silk, thread, and a loaf, Padre. The silk is to be sold at Anacapri, to a woman who makes ribbons, and the thread to another."

"Self spun?"

"Yes, sir."

"You once learned to weave ribbons yourself, if I remember right?"

"I did, sir, only mother has been much worse, and I cannot stay so long from home; and a loom to ourselves, we are not rich enough to buy."

"Worse, is she? Ah! dear, dear! when I was with you last, at Easter, she was up."

"The spring is always her worst time, ever since those last great storms, and the earthquakes, she has been forced to keep her bed from pain."

"Pray, my child. Never grow slack of prayers and petitions, that the blessed Virgin may intercede for you; and be industrious and good, that your prayers may find a hearing."

After a pause; "When you were coming toward the shore, I heard them calling after you: 'Good morning, l'Arrabiata!' they said, what made them call you so? it is not a nice name for a young Christian maiden, who should be meek and mild."

The young girl's brown face glowed all over, while her eyes flashed fire.

"They always mock me so, because I do not dance and sing, and stand about to chatter, as other girls do. I might be left in peace, I think; I do *them* no harm."

"Nay, but you might be civil. Let others dance and sing, on whom this life sits lighter, but a kind word now and then, is seemly even from the most afflicted."

Her dark eyes fell, and she drew her eyebrows closer over them, as if she would have hidden them.

They went on a while in silence. The sun now stood resplendent above the mountain chain; only the tip of mount Vesuvius towered beyond the group of clouds that had gathered about its base. And on the Sorrento plains, the houses were gleaming white from the dark green of their orange-gardens.

"Have you heard no more of that painter, Laurella?" asked the curato; "that Neapolitan, who wished so much to marry you?" She shook her head. "He came to make a picture of you. Why would you not let him?"

"What did he want it for? there are handsomer girls than I;--who knows what he would have done with it?--he might have bewitched me with it, or hurt my soul, or even killed me, mother says."

"Never believe such sinful things!" said the little curato very earnestly; "Are not you ever in God's keeping, without Whose will not one hair of your head can fall; and is one poor mortal with an image in his hand, to prevail against the Lord? Besides, you might have seen that he was fond of you; else why should he want to marry you?"

She said nothing.

"And wherefore did you refuse him? he was an honest man they say; and a comely; and he would have kept you and your mother far better than you ever can yourself, for all your spinning and silk winding."

"We are so poor!" she said passionately; "and mother has been ill so long, we should have become a burthen to him;--and then I never should have done for a Signora. When his friends came to see him, he would only have been ashamed of me."

"How can you say so? I tell you the man was good and kind;--he would even have been willing to settle in Sorrento. It will not be so easy to find another, sent straight from Heaven to be the saving of you, as this man, indeed, appeared to be."

"I want no husband;--I never shall;" she said, very stubbornly, half to herself.

"Is this a vow? or do you mean to be a nun?"

She shook her head.

"The people are not so wrong, who call you wilful, although the name they give you is not kind. Have you ever considered that you stand alone in the world, and that your perverseness must make your sick mother's illness worse to bear, her life more bitter? And what sound reason can

you have to give, for rejecting an honest hand, stretched out to help you and your mother? Answer me, Laurella."

"I have a reason;" she said, reluctantly, and speaking low; "but it is one I cannot give."

"Not give! not give to me? not to your confessor, whom you surely know to be your friend,--or is he not?"

Laurella nodded.

"Then, child, unburthen your heart. If your reason be a good one, I shall be the very first to uphold you in it. Only you are young, and know so little of the world. A time may come, when you may find cause to regret a chance of happiness, thrown away for some foolish fancy now."

Shyly she threw a furtive glance over to the other end of the boat, where the young boatman sat, rowing fast. His woollen cap was pulled deep down over his eyes; he was gazing far across the water, with averted head, sunk, as it appeared, in his own meditations.

The priest observed her look, and bent his ear down closer.

"You did not know my father?"--she whispered, while a dark look gathered in her eyes.

"Your father, child!--why, your father died when you were ten years old--what can your father, (Heaven rest his soul in Paradise!) have to do with this present perversity of yours?"

"You did not know him, Padre; you did not know that mother's illness was caused by him alone."

"And how?"

"By his ill treatment of her; he beat her, and trampled upon her. I well remember the nights when he came home in his fits of frenzy--she never said a word, and did everything he bid her. Yet he would beat her so, my heart felt like to break. I used to cover up my head, and pretend to be asleep, but I cried all night. And then when he saw her lying on the floor, quite suddenly he would change, and lift her up and kiss her, till she screamed, and said he smothered her. Mother forbade me ever to say a word of this; but it wore her out. And in all these long years since father died, she has never been able to get well again. And if she should soon die, which God forbid! I know who it was that killed her."

The little curate's head wagged slowly to and fro; he seemed uncertain how far to acquiesce in the young girl's reasons. At length he said: "Forgive him, as your mother has forgiven!--And turn your thoughts from such distressing pictures, Laurella; there may be better days in store for you, which will make you forget the past."

"Never shall I forget that!"--she said, and shuddered;--"and you must know, Padre, it is the reason why I have resolved to remain unmarried. I never will be subject to a man, who may beat and then caress me. Were a man now to want to beat or kiss me, I could defend myself; but mother could not:--neither from his blows or kisses, because she loved him. Now I will never so love a man as to be made ill and wretched by him."

"You are but a child; and you talk like one who knows nothing at all of life. Are all men like that poor father of yours? do all illtreat their wives, and give vent to every whim, and gust of passion? Have you never seen a good man yet? or known good wives, who live in peace and harmony with their husbands?"

"But nobody ever knew how father was to mother;--she would have died sooner than complained, or told of him--and all because she loved him. If this be love;--if love can close our lips when they should cry out for help; if it is to make us suffer without resistance, worse than even our worst enemy could make us suffer, then I say, I never will be fond of mortal man."

"I tell you you are childish; you know not what you are saying. When your time comes, you are not likely to be consulted whether you choose to fall in love or not." After a pause; "And that painter: did you think he could have been cruel?"

"He made those eyes I have seen my father make, when he begged my mother's pardon, and took her in his arms to make it up--I know those eyes. A man may make such eyes, and yet find it in his heart to beat a wife who never did a thing to vex him! It made my flesh creep to see those eyes again."

After this, she would not say another word.--Also the curate remained silent. He bethought himself of more than one wise saying, wherewith the maiden might have been admonished; but he refrained, in consideration of the young boatman, who had been growing rather restless towards the close of this confession.--

When, after two hours' rowing, they reached the little bay of Capri, Antonio took the padre in his arms, and carried him through the last few ripples of shallow water, to set him reverently down upon his legs on dry land. But Laurella did not wait for him to wade back and fetch her. Gathering up her little petticoat, holding in one hand her wooden shoes, and in the other her

little bundle, with one splashing step or two, she had reached the shore. "I have some time to stay at Capri," said the priest. "You need not wait--I may not perhaps return before to-morrow. When you get home, Laurella, remember me to your mother;--I will come and see her within the week.--You mean to go back before it gets dark?"--

"If I find an opportunity," answered the young girl, turning all her attention to her skirts.

"I must return, you know;" said Antonio, in a tone which he believed to be of great indifference--"I shall wait here till the Ave Maria--if you should not come, it is the same to me."

"You must come;" interposed the little priest:--"you never can leave your mother all alone at night--Is it far you have to go?"

"To a vineyard by Anacapri."

"And I to Capri, so now God bless you, child--and you, my son."

Laurella kissed his hand, and let one farewell drop, for the Padre and Antonio to divide between them. Antonio, however, appropriated no part of it to himself, he pulled off his cap exclusively to the padre, without even looking at Laurella. But after they had turned their backs, he let his eyes travel but a short way with the padre, as he went toiling over the deep bed of small loose stones; he soon sent them after the maiden, who, turning to the right, had begun to climb the heights, holding one hand above her eyes to protect them from the scorching sun. Just before the path disappeared behind high walls, she stopped, as if to gather breath, and looked behind her. At her feet lay the marina; the rugged rocks rose high around her; the sea was shining in the rarest of its deep blue splendour. The scene was surely worth a moment's pause. But as chance would have it, her eye, in glancing past Antonio's boat, met with Antonio's own, which had been following her as she climbed.

Each made a slight movement, as persons do who would excuse themselves for some mistake; and then, with her darkest look, the maiden went her way.

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Hardly one hour had passed since noon, and yet for the last two, Antonio had been sitting waiting on the bench before the fisher's tavern. He must have been very much preoccupied with something, for he jumped up every moment to step out into the sunshine, and look carefully up and down the roads, which, parting right and left, lead to the only two little towns upon the island. He did not altogether trust the weather, he then said to the hostess of the Osteria; to be sure, it was clear enough, but he did not quite like that tint of sea and sky. Just so it had looked, he said, before that last awful storm, when the English family had been so nearly lost; surely she must remember it?

No, indeed, she said, she didn't.

Well, if the weather should happen to change before the night, she was to think of him, he said.

"Have you many fine folk over there?" she asked him, after a while.

"They are only just beginning; as yet, the season has been bad enough; those who came to bathe, came late.

"The spring came late. Have you not been earning more than we at Capri?"

"Not enough to give me macaroni twice a week, if I had had nothing but the boat;--only a letter now and then to take to Naples;--or a gentleman to row out into the open sea, that he might fish. But you know I have an uncle who is rich:--he owns more than one fine orange garden,--and; 'Tonino,' says he to me; 'while I live you shall not suffer want, and when I am gone you will find that I have taken care of you;' and so, with God's help, I got through the winter."

"Has he children, this uncle who is so rich?"

"No, he never married; he was long in foreign parts, and many a good piastre he has laid together. He is going to set up a great fishing business, and set me over it, to see the rights of it."

"Why, then you are a made man, Tonino!"

The young boatman shrugged his shoulders. "Every man has his own burthen;" he said, starting up again to have another look at the weather, turning his eyes right and left, although he must have known that there can be no weather side but one.

"Let me fetch you another bottle;" said the Hostess; "your uncle can well afford to pay for it."

"Not more than one glass, it is a fiery wine you have in Capri, and my head is hot already."

"It does not heat the blood; you may drink as much of it as you like. And here is my husband coming, so you must sit awhile, and talk to him."

And in fact, with his nets over his shoulder, and his red cap upon his curly head, down came the comely padrone of the Osteria. He had been taking a dish of fish to that great lady, to set before the little curato. As soon as he caught sight of the young boatman, he began waving him a most cordial welcome; and came to sit beside him on the bench, chattering and asking questions. Just as his wife was bringing her second bottle of pure unadulterated Capri, they heard the crisp sand crunch, and Laurella was seen approaching from the left hand road to Anacapri. She nodded slightly in salutation; then stopped, and hesitated.

Antonio sprang from his seat;--"I must go," he said; "It is a young Sorrento girl, who came over with the Signer curato in the morning. She has to get back to her sick mother before night."

"Well, well, time enough yet before night;" observed the fisherman; "time enough to take a glass of wine. Wife, I say, another glass!"

"I thank you; I had rather not;"--and Laurella kept her distance.

"Fill the glasses, wife; fill them both, I say; she only wants a little pressing."

"Don't," interposed the lad. "It is a wilful head of her own she has; a saint could not persuade her to what she does not choose." And taking a hasty leave, he ran down to the boat, loosened the rope and stood waiting for Laurella.--Again she bent her head to the hostess, and slowly approached the water, with lingering steps--she looked around on every side, as if in hopes of seeing some other passenger. But the marina was deserted. The fishermen were asleep, or rowing about the coast with rods or nets; a few women and children sat before their doors, spinning or sleeping--such strangers as had come over in the morning, were waiting for the cool of the evening to return. She had not time to look about her long; before she could prevent him, Antonio had seized her in his arms, and carried her to the boat, as if she had been an infant. He leapt in after her, and with a stroke or two of his oar, they were in deep water.

She had seated herself at the end of the boat, half turning her back to him, so that he could only see her profile. She wore a sterner look than ever, the low straight brow was shaded by her hair; the rounded lips were firmly closed; only the delicate nostril occasionally gave a wilful quiver. After they had gone on a while in silence, she began to feel the scorching of the sun; and unloosening her bundle, she threw the handkerchief over her head, and began to make her dinner of the bread; for in Capri she had eaten nothing.

Antonio did not stand this long; he fetched out a couple of the oranges, with which the baskets had been filled in the morning: "Here is something to eat to your bread, Laurella;" he said: "don't think I kept them for you; they had rolled out of the basket, and I only found them when I brought the baskets back to the boat."

"Eat them yourself; bread is enough for me."

"They are refreshing in this heat, and you have had to walk so far."

"They gave me a drink of water, and that refreshed me."

"As you please;" he said,--and let them drop into the basket

Silence again; the sea was smooth as glass. Not a ripple was heard against the prow. Even the white seabirds that roost among those caves, pursued their prey with soundless flight.

"You might take the oranges to your mother;" again commenced Tonino.

"We have oranges at home, and when they are done, I can go and buy some more."

"Nay, take these to her, and give them to her with my compliments."

"She does not know you."

"You could tell her who I am."

"I do not know you either."

It was not for the first time that she denied him thus. One Sunday of last year, when that painter had first come to Sorrento, Antonio had chanced to be playing Boccia with some other young fellows, in the little piazza by the chief street.

There, for the first time, had the painter caught sight of Laurella, who, with her pitcher on her head, had passed by without taking any notice of him. The Neapolitan, struck by her appearance, stood still and gazed after her, not heeding that he was standing in the very midst of the game, which, with two steps, he might have cleared. A very ungentle ball came knocking against his shins, as a reminder that this was not the spot to choose for meditation. He looked round, as if in expectation of some excuse. But the young boatman who had thrown the ball, stood silent among his friends, in an attitude of so much defiance, that the stranger had found it more advisable to go his ways, and avoid discussion. Still, this little encounter had been spoken of; particularly at the time when the painter had been pressing his suit to Laurella. "I do not even know him;" she had said, indignantly, when the painter asked her whether it was for the sake of that uncourteous

lad, she now refused him? But she had heard that piece of gossip, and known Antonio well enough, when she had met him since.

And now they sat together in this boat, like two most deadly enemies, while their hearts were beating fit to kill them. Antonio's usually so good humoured face was heated scarlet; he struck the oars so sharply that the foam flew over to where Laurella sat; while his lips moved, as if muttering angry words. She pretended not to notice; wearing her most unconscious look, bending over the edge of the boat, and letting the cool water pass between her fingers. Then she threw off her handkerchief again, and began to smooth her hair, as though she had been alone. Only her eyebrows twitched, and she held up her wet hands in vain attempts to cool her burning cheeks.

Now they were well out into the open sea. The island was far behind, and the coast before them lay yet distant in the hot haze. Not a sail was within sight, far or near; not even a passing gull to break the stillness. Antonio looked all round; evidently ripening some hasty resolution. The colour faded suddenly from his cheek, and he dropped his oars. Laurella looked round involuntarily;--fearless,--but yet attentive.

"I must make an end of this;" the young fellow burst forth. "It has lasted too long already. I only wonder that it has not killed me!--you say you do not know me? And all this time, you must have seen me pass you like a madman, my whole heart full of what I had to tell you, and then you only made your crosser mouth, and turned your back upon me."

"What had I to say to you?" she curtly said. "I may have seen that you were inclined to meddle with me, but I do not choose to be on people's wicked tongues for nothing. I do not mean to have you for a husband. Neither you, nor any other."

"Nor any other? so will you not always say!--You say so now, because you would not have that painter. Bah! you were but a child! You will feel lonely enough yet, some day; and then, wild as you are, you will take the next best who comes to hand."

"Who knows? which of us can see the future? It may be that I change my mind. What is that to you?"

"What it is to me?" he flew out, starting to his feet, while the small boat leapt and danced; "what it is to me, you say? You know well enough! I tell you, that man shall perish miserably, to whom you shall prove kinder than you have been to me!"

"And to you, what did I ever promise?--Am I to blame, if you be mad?--What right have you to me?"

"Ah! I know," he cried, "my right is written nowhere. It has not been put in Latin by any lawyer, nor stamped with any seal. But this I feel; I have just the right to you, I have to Heaven, if I die an honest Christian. Do you think I could look on, and see you go to church with another man, and see the girls go by, and shrug their shoulders at me?"

"You can do as you please. I am not going to let myself be frightened by all those threats. I also mean to do as I please."

"You shall not say so long!" and his whole frame shook with passion. "I am not the man to let my whole life be spoiled by a stubborn wench like you! You are in my power here, remember, and may be made to do my bidding."

She could not repress a start, but her eyes flashed bravely on him.

"You may kill me, if you dare," she said slowly.

"I do nothing by halves," he said, and his voice sounded choked and hoarse. "There is room for us both in the sea; I cannot help thee, child,"--he spoke the last words dreamily, almost pitifully;--"but we must both go down together--both at once--and now!" he shouted, and snatched her in his arms. But at the same moment, he drew back his right hand; the blood gushed out;--she had bitten him fiercely.

"Ha! can I be made to do your bidding?" she cried, and thrust him from her, with one sudden movement; "am I here in your power?" and she leapt into the sea, and sank.

She rose again directly; her scanty skirts, clung close; her long hair, loosened by the waves, hung heavy about her neck, she struck out valiantly, and, without uttering a sound, she began to swim steadily from the boat towards the shore.

With senses maimed by sudden terror, he stood, with outstretched neck, looking after her; his eyes fixed, as though they had just been witness to a miracle. Then, giving himself a shake, he pounced upon his oars, and began rowing after her with all the strength he had, while all the time, the bottom of the boat was reddening fast, with the blood that kept streaming from his hand.

Rapidly as she swam, he was at her side in a moment. "For the love of our most Holy Virgin,"



he cried; "get into the boat!--I have been a madman! God alone can tell what so suddenly darkened my brain. It came upon me like a flash of lightning, and set me all on fire.--I knew not what I did or said. I do not even ask you to forgive me, Laurella, only to come into the boat again, and not to risk your life!"

She swam on, as though she had not heard him.

"You can never swim to land.--I tell you, it is two miles off.--Think upon your mother! If you should come to grief, I should die of horror."

She measured the distance with her eye, and then, without answering him one word, she swam up to the boat, and laid her hands upon the edge; he rose to help her in. As the boat tilted over to one side, with the young girl's weight, his jacket that was lying on the bench, slipped into the water. Agile as she was, she swung herself on board without assistance, and gained her former seat; as soon as he saw that she was safe, he took to his oars again, while she began quietly wringing out her dripping clothes, and shaking the water from her hair. As her eyes fell upon the bottom of the boat, and saw the blood, she gave a quick look at the hand, which held the oar as if it had been unhurt.

"Take this," she said; and held out her pocket-handkerchief. He shook his head, and went on rowing. After a time, she rose, and stepping up to him, she bound the handkerchief firmly round the wound, which was very deep. Then, heedless of his endeavours to prevent her, she took an oar, and seating herself opposite him, she began to row with steady strokes, keeping her eyes from looking towards him;--fixed upon the oar that was scarlet with his blood. Both were pale and silent; as they drew near land, such fishermen as they met began shouting after Antonio, and jibing at Laurella, but neither of them moved an eyelid, or spoke one word.

The sun stood yet high over Procida, when they, landed at the Marina. Laurella shook out her petticoat, now nearly dry, and jumped on shore. The old spinning woman, who, in the morning, had seen them start, was still upon her terrace. She called down: "what is that upon your hand, Tonino?--Jesus Christ!--the boat is full of blood!"

"It is nothing, Commare;" the young fellow replied. "I tore my hand against a nail that was sticking out too far, it will be well to-morrow. It is only this confounded ready blood of mine, that always makes a thing look worse than needful."

"Let me come and bind it up, Comparello; stop one moment, I will go and fetch the herbs, and come to you directly."

"Never trouble yourself, Commare. It has been dressed already, to-morrow morning it will be all over and forgotten. I have a healthy skin, that heals directly."

"Addio!" said Laurella, turning to the path that goes winding up the cliffs. "Good night!" he answered, without looking at her; and then taking his oars and baskets from the boat, and climbing up the small stone stairs, he went into his own hut.

He was alone in his two little rooms, and began to pace them up and down. Cooler than upon the dead calm sea, the breeze blew fresh through the small unglazed windows, which were only to be closed with wooden shutters. The solitude was soothing to him. He stopped before the little image of the Virgin, devoutly gazing upon the glory round the head (made of stars cut out in silver paper). But he did not want to pray. What reason had he to pray, now that he had lost all he had ever hoped for?

And this day appeared to last for ever. He did so long for night! for he was weary, and more exhausted by the loss of blood, than he would have cared to own. His hand was very sore: seating himself upon a little stool, he untied the handkerchief that bound it, the blood, so long repressed, gushed out again; all round the wound the hand was swollen high.

He washed it carefully; cooling it in the water; then he clearly saw the marks of Laurella's teeth.

"She was right," he said--"I was a brute and deserved no better. I will send her back the handkerchief by Giuseppe, to-morrow. Never shall she set eyes on me again."--And he washed the handkerchief with greatest care, and spread it out in the sun to dry.

And having bound up his hand again, as well as he could manage with his teeth and his left hand, he threw himself upon his bed, and closed his eyes.

He was soon waked up from a sort of slumber, by the rays of the bright moonlight, and also by the pain of his hand; he had just risen for more cold water to soothe its throbbings, when he heard the sound of some one at his door; "Who is there?" he cried, and went to open it: Laurella stood before him.

She came in without a question, took off the handkerchief she had tied over her head, and placed her little basket upon the table;--then she drew a deep breath.

"You are come to fetch your handkerchief," he said: "you need not have taken that trouble. In the morning, I would have asked Giuseppe to take it to you."

"It is not the handkerchief;" she said, quickly; "I have been up among the hills to gather herbs to stop the blood; see here." And she lifted the lid of her little basket.

"Too much trouble," he said not in bitterness;--"far too much trouble; I am better, much better; but if I were worse, it would be no more than I deserve. Why did you come at such a time? If anyone should see you?--You know how they talk! Even when they don't know what they are saying."

"I care for no one's talk;" she said, passionately: "I came to see your hand, and put the herbs upon it; you cannot do it with your left."

"It is not worth while, I tell you."

"Let me see it then, if I am to believe you."

She took his hand, that was not able to prevent her, and unbound the linen. When she saw the swelling, she shuddered, and gave a cry:--"Jesus Maria!"

"It is a little swollen," he said; "it will be over in four and twenty hours."

She shook her head. "It will certainly be a week, before you can go to sea."

"More likely a day or two, and if not, what matters?"

She had fetched a bason, and began carefully washing out the wound, which he suffered passively, like a child. She then laid on the healing leaves, which at once relieved the burning pain, and finally bound it up with the linen she had brought with her.

When it was done; "I thank you," he said; "and now, if you would do me one more kindness, forgive the madness that came over me; forget all I said, and did. I cannot tell how it came to pass, certainly it was not your fault; not yours. And never shall you hear from me again one word to vex you."

She interrupted him: "It is I who have to beg your pardon. I should have spoken differently. I might have explained it better, and not enraged you with my sullen ways. And now that bite!--"

"It was in self-defence--it was high time to bring me to my senses. As I said before, it is nothing at all to signify. Do not talk of being forgiven, you only did me good, and I thank you for it; and now,--here is your handkerchief; take it with you."

He held it to her, but yet she lingered; hesitated, and appeared to have some inward struggle--at length she said; "You have lost your jacket, and by my fault; and I know that all the money for the oranges was in it. I did not think of this till afterwards. I cannot replace it now, we have not so much at home;--or if we had, it would be mother's;--but this I have; this silver cross. That painter left it on the table, the day he came for the last time--I have never looked at it all this while, and do not care to keep it in my box; if you were to sell it? It must be worth a few piastres, mother says. It might make up the money you have lost; and if not quite, I could earn the rest by spinning at night, when mother is asleep."

"Nothing will make me take it;" he said shortly; pushing away the bright new cross, which she had taken from her pocket.

"You must," she said; "how can you tell how long your hand may keep you from your work? There it lies; and nothing can make me so much as look at it again."

"Drop it in the sea, then."

"It is no present I want to make you, it is no more than is your due, it is only fair."

"Nothing from you can be due to me, and hereafter when we chance to meet, if you would do me a kindness, I beg you not to look my way. It would make me feel you were thinking of what I have done. And now good night, and let this be the last word said."

She laid the handkerchief in the basket, and also the cross, and closed the lid. But when he looked into her face, he started;--great heavy drops were rolling down her cheeks; she let them flow unheeded.

"Maria Santissima!" he cried. "Are you ill?--You are trembling from head to foot!"

"It is nothing," she said; "I must go home;" and with unsteady steps she was moving to the door, when suddenly a passion of weeping overcame her, and leaning her brow against the wall, she fell into a fit of bitter sobbing. Before he could go to her, she turned upon him suddenly, and fell upon his neck.

"I cannot bear it," she cried, clinging to him as a dying thing to life--"I cannot bear it, I cannot

let you speak so kindly, and bid me go, with all this on my conscience. Beat me! trample on me, curse me! Or if it can be that you love me still, after all I have done to you, take me and keep me, and do with me as you please; only do not send me so away!"--She could say no more for sobbing.

Speechless, he held her a while in his arms. "If I can love you still!" he cried at last. "Holy mother of God! Do you think that all my best heart's blood has gone from me, through that little wound? Don't you hear it hammering now, as though it would burst my breast, and go to you? But if you say this to try me, or because you pity me, I can forget it--you are not to think you owe me this, because you know what I have suffered for you."

"No!" she said very resolutely, looking up from his shoulder, into his face, with her tearful eyes; "it is because I love you;--and let me tell you, it was because I always feared to love you, that I was so cross. I will be so different now--I never could bear again to pass you in the street, without one look! And lest you should ever feel a doubt, I will kiss you, that you may say, 'she kissed me;' and Laurella kisses no man but her husband."

She kissed him thrice, and escaping from his arms: "And now good night, amor mio, cara vita mia!" she said. "Lie down to sleep, and let your hand get well. Do not come with me; I am afraid of no man, save of you alone."

And so she slipped out, and soon disappeared in the shadow of the wall.

He remained standing by the window; gazing far out over the calm sea, while all the stars in Heaven appeared to flit before his eyes.

The next time the little curato sat in his confessional, he sat smiling to himself: Laurella had just risen from her knees after a very long confession.

"Who would have thought it?" he said musingly; "that the Lord would so soon have taken pity upon that wayward little heart? And I had been reproaching myself, for not having adjured more sternly that ill demon of perversity. Our eyes are but shortsighted to see the ways of Heaven!"

"Well, may God bless her I say! and let me live to go to sea with Laurella's eldest born, rowing me in his father's place! Ah! well, indeed! L'Arrabiata!"

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## **COUNT ERNEST'S HOME.**

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While I was at College, I chanced, one summer, to fall into habits of frequent and intimate intercourse with a young man, whose intellectual countenance and refinement of character never failed to exercise a winning influence, even upon the most cursory of his acquaintance.

I may call our connection intimate; for I was the only one of our student set, whom he ever asked to go and see him, or himself occasionally visited. But in our relations, there was nothing of that wild, exuberant, often obtrusive kind of fraternizing, affected by our studious youth. From that, we were as far, when we parted in the autumn, as we had been on our first walk by the Rhine; when the same road, and the same delight in the marvellous beauty of the spring scenery before us had first introduced us to each other's notice.

Even of his worldly circumstances, I had learned but little. I had heard that he came of an ancient and noble house;--that his boyhood had been passed at his father. Count ----'s castle, under the direction of a French tutor, with whom he had then been sent to travel; and finally, at his own express desire, to college. There, he had ascertained, what he had long suspected; viz.: that in each and every branch of regular instruction he was totally deficient--Upon which, straightway he shut himself up with books and private tutors;--suffered the tumult of loose Burschen-life to sweep by him, without once lifting his eyes from his task;--and by the time I knew

him, he had got so far as to rise every morning with the Ethica of Aristotle, and to lie down, at night, with a chorus of Euripides.

Not a shade of pedantry;--not a taint of scholastic rust,--was left to clog the free play of his mind, at the close of all those years of sharp-set study.--Numbers of industrious people work, because they do not know how to live. But his life was in his work;--he took science in its plenitude, with all his faculties at once. He acknowledged no intellectual gain, that did not tend to elevate his character, or stood at variance with his mental instincts.

In this sense, his was, perhaps, the most ideal nature I ever knew; if the term be not abused, as it too often is, to mean a vapid kind of beauty worship, and a sentimental distaste for rough realities; but used in its loftier, and certainly far rarer sense: an ideal standard of human character, resolutely upheld, and steadily pursued; with undaunted spirit, if with moderate expectations; and at whatever sacrifice of present brilliance and success, a thorough contempt of cram, as well as of every other form of professional narrow mindedness.

It is quite conceivable therefore, that the coarser kind of student pleasures could not prove ensnaring to this young hermit, whose seclusion came to be interpreted as aristocratic prejudice, from which no man could be more free. Education may have done something to confirm his natural aversion to all that was coarse, excessive, or impure. But as his scrupulous personal cleanliness was innate, so also was his almost maidenly delicacy in matters of morality. Never have I met such firmness of resolve, never so much masculine energy of intellect, united to so girlish a reluctance to talk of love and love affairs. Consequently, he kept aloof from all those clamorous carouses, where, amidst the fumes of liquor and tobacco, liberty and patriotism, love and friendship, God and immortality, are in their turns, discussed on the same broad basis of easy joviality as the last ball, or the newest cut of College cap. Even in a tête à tête, where he could so eloquently hold forth on any scientific problem, he very rarely touched on questions dealing with the most private and personal interests of man. History, diplomacy, politics, or the classics, were subjects he would discuss with passionate eagerness. Then he could wax as warm and fluent in debate, as though he were addressing a listening nation he would have won to some great purpose. To things of common life, he rarely referred. Of his own family, I never heard him speak. His father, he mentioned only once.

One evening, when I went to ask him whether he would join me in a row upon the river;--in one of those excursions of which he was so fond, when we used to take a little boat to a tavern a mile or two below the town, and, after a frugal meal, to walk home by starlight;--I found him just as he had thrown aside his pen, and was struggling with the resolution necessary to dress for an evening party.

"Pity me!" he cried, as I came in; "only look at that magnificent sunset, and imagine that I am doomed to turn my back upon it, and to go where I shall see no other midnight splendour but that of the stars on dress-coats!"

And he mentioned one of the most distinguished houses in the town, where a party was to be given in honor of some passing diplomate.

"And must you?"--I asked, with sincerest sympathy. For all our intimacy, we had never come to saying thou.--

"I must," he sighed; "my father, who has set his heart on making a diplomate of me, whether I will or no, would be indignant if I were to go home without being able to inform him, whether the suppers at Baron N.'s are still such as to justify their European reputation. Hitherto, I have been so culpable as to ignore them, and now, at the last, I have to fill up these blanks in my course of study."

He saw me smile, and hastily added: "My father, you must know, has, if possible, a still more uncivil opinion than I have of the liveried nonentities that stop the way in that kind of society; only what he finds wanting in them, is not what I do.--He is of the old school; a diplomate of the Empire. He has seen the world in flames, and cannot forget the demoniac light by which he then saw all things, good and bad; fair and foul; high and low. Now the world is quiet, and regular enough; but sleepy, tame, and colorless. At least he thinks so. Still it is the world, and he who would rule in his generation, must make himself acquainted with his subjects. He gave me very few maxims to take away with me, when I came here; but this one, certainly with fifty variations, 'Read men more than books.'--'When I was at your age,' he used to say, 'books played a very subordinate part in the world. I have known many a clever man, who from the time he entered into society never read a line save the newest novel, or the latest war-bulletin, and never wrote a syllable, except in love-letters or dispatches. He had all the more time to act, or, if necessary, to think;--and when is it *not* necessary to think? But learning, book-learning! *we* never thought of such a thing, and yet, we knew everything, of course.--It was in the air; and where, now-a-days, you very soon get to the end of your Latin, our French took us a good way farther.'

"So I considered that as settled, and more than once I have girded up my loins, to go and read these men, and study them. But after the first few pages, I generally found out that their titles were the most important part about them. Either I am a stupid reader; (a 'kind reader', I know I am *not!*), or else the great world of the present day really is a most insipid study."

His carriage came to the door, and I went away, for I had often noticed that it embarrassed him, when any one was present while he was dressing.

At a later hour, as I chanced to pass the house where the aristocracy of ---- was to be assembled, I saw him getting out of the carriage; we exchanged a short look with a shade of irony; and then he went slowly up the carpetted steps, and I looked after him, while I felt proud of his knightly bearing, and of the grace of his stalwart figure.

He could be dangerous to womankind, as I had heard from several sources. They even told a story of a distinguished Englishwoman, who, after divers attempts to win him, attempts as fruitless as unequivocal, had at last gone off in rage and undisguised despair, after having wrung her parrot's neck, for screaming from the window, day and night, the name of the coy young count.

I was not able to learn more of this, nor of any other of his adventures; he carefully avoided any conversation about women; still, nothing he ever said could have led me to assume that he thought meanly of them, or that he was suffering from any hidden wound, of which he could not bear the probing.

Judging by the whole tenor of his conduct, I decided, that, striving as he did, at aims so serious, he found no time for trifling flirtations, and never had been touched by a deeper feeling. His mother had died very soon after the birth of her first-born son, but he would occasionally receive letters, addressed in a feminine hand, and he told me they came from an old nurse of his, who had been as a second mother to him. She was evidently very dear to him; but even of her he spoke but little; eager discussions upon his own studies, or on mine, were ever burning on his lips.

He was several years in advance of me, and when we parted in the autumn, he went to pass his diplomatic examination at Berlin. We bid each other a very affectionate farewell, without much hope of continuous intercourse;--we knew that what we had hitherto exchanged, no correspondence could have replaced. But we were young, and we parted in the confident hope that life and its chances must, in some way or other, bring us together again.

For many a long year, I heard nothing of him but his name; the last I learned was from a newspaper, which stated that Count Ernest ---- had been appointed secretary of Legation at Stockholm. Again a long time elapsed, without the smallest tidings of him, and I confess that his image had considerably faded in my memory, when it chanced, that, on a pedestrian tour, I suddenly lit upon his name, printed upon a road-post that pointed to a deep lane, all overgrown with brushwood, cutting at right angles the road which I had taken. I stopped, and, as if by a magician's wand, the country round me seemed metamorphosed.

Again the Rhine was rolling at my feet, and again I saw his straight lithe figure, as he walked along, holding his hat in his hand, and letting the fresh breeze from the current play among his luxuriant hair of reddish gold; and those fine eyes of his, so full of thought, gazing over the river towards the mountains, until my voice would rouse him from his musings. This visionary play of memory lasted but a moment, and then an incontrollable desire came over me to look upon that face once more, and abundantly to make up for what I had lost so long.

It was early in the afternoon; I hoped that I should not mistake the road, and never doubted but that at this autumn season, I should find my friend at home; he was an eager sportsman, and had spoken far oftener of the trees, than of the persons he had known from childhood.

I may have followed this ravine for about an hour, when it suddenly occurred to me as strange, that the road should be so neglected and overgrown; it was evident that no sort of carriage could possibly have passed this way for years. The foliage of past autumns lay mouldering in deep crevices;--here and there, a fragment of rock, or rotten branch, had been hurled from the edge by the winter storms; only in the firmest parts of the ground, were occasional tracks of human passage. I sent my doubts to sleep, with the supposition, that long before this, some other and more level road, must have been made between the castle and the plain. And yet, on entering the ravine, I had certainly ascertained that no nearer way was possible, from the little manufacturing town I had left behind. At the summit of the pass, where half a dozen neglected paths diverged, I stopped, in real perplexity. I climbed up a wide armed beech-tree, and looked all round me.

A deep circular hollow lay before me, almost like a lake, filled with lovely bright green waves of densest foliage. It was a vast forest of old beech-trees. Just in the centre rose the turrets of the castle, over which the wilderness seemed to close.

It was like a fairy tale, to see the spires and weather-cocks glittering in the bright autumn sun; as in those stories of sunken castles, which shew their pinnacles on some clear day, peeping from the hidden depths of water. There was not a sound of human life; the woodpecker tapped monotonously against the trees;--a careless deer ran past me, with more surprise than terror;--while swarms of audacious squirrels, among the branches, were aiming at the intruder, with the empty husks of beechnuts.

I was on the point of giving it up, when, with a sharper look at the enchanted castle, I saw a thin thread of smoke, to inform me that it could not exclusively be harbouring hobgoblins.

That the owner had not been here for ages, might, with some degree of certainty, be surmised; but some sort of castellan or game-keeper might be there, and from him, I hoped to hear some tidings of my friend and his welfare, and at least to spend a night in a home which he had loved with all his heart.

I took one of these downward paths at a venture, and soon plunged into the strangest, darkest night of wood that ever stirred above a wanderer's head.

And in the night come dreams;--and these soon wove a spell about me, and I quite forgot whence I had come, and whither I was going, and blindly left my legs to guide me, as they stepped uniformly on, until they came to an involuntary halt, at a broad stream, where not a trace of path could be discerned; the trees stood thick, interlacing their branches with the brushwood, and forming an impenetrable barrier. I immediately turned back, and walked steadily upwards, until a path to the right again seduced me; then I tried another downwards, went astray again, and so went wandering on for hours, making the whole round of the valley, without catching a single glimpse of the castle peeping through the thickets. The moon was already shining upon the tree tops, and I made up my mind to pass the night in the airiest of lodgings.

Suddenly, when I least expected it, the brushwood opened, and there, like an island in the midst of a lake of verdure, the old grey building stood square before me, with countless glassless windows, but without one trace of human habitation. A broad stone-bridge across the dried-up moat, reached right into the dark court, from which the three square wings of the building rose ponderous and unadorned. Not a balcony, nor jutting window, was there to relieve the stern monotony of the walls; nothing but a gigantic coat of arms hewn in stone above the gateway, in which I recognised the bearings of a well-remembered signet ring.

Nearer to the roof, the castle wore a gayer aspect the copper-plates about the gables shone mildly in the moonbeams, and the numerous chimney tops with weathercocks and flagstuffs, seemed all spangled over with silver. Nowhere a light; nor a window opened to the evening air; even the smoke I had seen upon the roof was gone.

As I stood upon the bridge, and looked upon the rank vegetation, which, struggling upwards, was choking up the moat; and then at the forest pressing onwards to the very threshold of the castle, the thought would force itself upon me, that in fifty years or so, all this vast work of human hands would be destroyed and overcome by the exuberance of nature; that these tall beeches would thrust their branches into the deserted halls; would take possession of the court, and sink their roots deep into the vaulted cellars; till, stone by stone, the whole fabric would give way, and again the forest reign alone.

I entered the court-yard; and where the long grass that grew in the chinks between the paving stones, muffled the echo of my steps, I began to be sensible of a strange sound, proceeding from a small building that had been patched on beside the bridge; at first, I took it for the jarring of a shutter shaken by the wind; and then I thought, that noise could only be produced by some vigorous deep-bass snoring. I saw a light at one small window, and stole up to it to peep in. In a low room, two men were seated at a table, with bottles and half emptied glasses before them, and a pack of cards. One of them, huddled into a corner, had fallen asleep. The other sat leaning on his elbows, staring into the light with sleepy swimming eyes, a short pipe between his teeth. Now and then, he caught a fly, and burned it at the candle, and hardly turned his head when he heard me at the window-pane.

"What's the matter now?"--he called, in a voice worn and hollowed out by drunkenness,--"bid the Mamsell<sup>[1]</sup> send our supper, the devil take her!"

Before I could speak, I heard another and a more gentle voice, calling to me across the court: "Who is there?--is a stranger there?" I turned, and at the chief entrance I saw a female figure standing, whom, by the huge bunch of keys she carried at her girdle, I could not err in taking for the housekeeper. She was dressed all in black; all but a tremendous cap, of which the broad bright ribbons fluttered oddly about her delicate faded face.

Taking off my hat to her, I enquired, as politely as I could, while I drew near, whether this really was the castle of Count Ernest ----, and despite the deserted look, whether he might not chance to be at home? I wished to be announced to him as an old friend, although, to be sure, we had not met for years.

The old lady stood looking at me for awhile, with a melancholy searching gaze, and then she said: "This certainly is the castle of the Counts of ----; but my master, whom you seek, you will not find. It is two years since Count Ernest took leave of this place for ever. Perhaps you are not aware that he is settled in Sweden? It is true," she added, after a pause, "the world is very different to these woods; things that will keep sounding in my ears all my lifetime, may be scarcely heard out there. But will you not come in? You cannot leave this place to-night, and you must be so kind as to put up with the little we have to offer. It used to be very different; in our hospitable days, guests used to be glad to stay a week. Since the castle has been kept in trust for the two little counts, all has gone to ruin. You have seen, yourself, Sir, the sinful way in which the Forester and Monsieur Pierre kill the time. They clean out nothing but the cellars; and when I say a word of what is needful to be done, the villains turn upon their heels, and I might as well have spoken to the walls. I myself am old, and my eyes get worse and worse, so that I can hardly see to

cleanliness and order as I should do. But pray, come in, Sir, and take a bite of something, and talk to me of my dear Count Ernest, of whom now I can only talk to empty rooms and pictures. Your visit will be the greatest favor you can do me."

I still stood on the steps before the great arched door, and felt strangely moved. This old woman's thin quavering voice, and the weary blue eyes with which she looked so sadly on me, increased the dreariness of the place and sharpened the recollections that came crowding over me.

"You are Mamsell Flor," I said, at last; "from whom my friend used to get letters when he was at college; he appeared to be very much attached to you."

At these words her eyes overflowed at once. "Come," she said, and stretched out a slim withered hand; "I see you know me--we are old friends. I have been sadly wanting to see some kind and sympathizing face, once more before I die. It is a long while to have lived only among servants, for indeed I have been used to better company."

She led me across the dark entrance-hall, and through a vaulted passage to a great hall, dimly lighted by a few candles. Two farm-servants and a maid were seated at a heavy stone table, supping, who stared astonished, when they heard a strange voice wishing them good evening. My companion gave a few whispered orders to the maid, and turned to me again.

"The provisions we have in the house are but poor," she said; "everything we want has to be carried for miles through the woods; and I myself require so little. But for one night, Sir, you will not mind bad cookery. This hall, you see, was once a chapel, in old times, when the counts were Catholic; it was then left some time to dust and ruin, until at last Count Henry, our Count Ernest's father, had the altar, the benches, and the pictures taken away, and an eating room arranged. You can still see the niche for the choristers over there, where the floor is raised and boarded. That is the master's table, at which Count Henry used to sup all his life, with the officials about the place--the steward, the forester, and the castellan, (not Monsieur Pierre then), and the bailiff; and at this stone table I supped with the servants; we had crowds of them then. We never spoke a word, and the count seldom asked a question. When he had company staying with him, the table was laid upstairs in the great saloon, as it always was at dinner, when he dined with the countess. I will just light this candelabrum on the master's table; who knows whether I shall live to see it lighted again?"

She placed a heavy five-branched candelabrum of massive silver on the table, which she had laid with a snow-white damask cloth, and shortly after, a supper was served up, that might have been far more frugal still, to appear excellent after my long wanderings. Whilst I ate and drank, the old lady disappeared, and left me to my meditations. The men were already gone. I looked up into a twilight depth of desert space, broken by a few tall pointed windows, through which the moonbeams fell. The cross-vaults of the ceiling were supported by square pillars, fretted all over with antlers; and the same ornament was placed at regular intervals along the walls, with a small tablet under each, recording the date of the shot, and the name of the shooter. What changes had the world not seen, from the days when the first high mass was celebrated here, to the present evening, when a stranger sits alone at a deserted table, counting these dust-worn trophies! I took the candelabrum to light myself along while I went reading the names on the little tablets, reaching about two centuries back.

Counts, and princes, and princely prelates; even a few highborn dames had been pleased to immortalize their luck. Presently I came to a well-known name, beneath a stately antler of fourteen:

"On the 20th of September, Count Ernest shot this mighty stag, (who numbers as many antlers as the young count years,) in the glade by the deer's drought; Anno Domini 183--."

Heavy steps now came sounding along the passages, and two men made their boisterous entrance.

I immediately recognised the respectable pair of the watch-tower by the bridge. The farm-servants may have told them that there was a stranger in the house, and they had shaken themselves out of their drunken sleep, and come to assert their rights as guardians and watchmen. The castellan, Monsieur Pierre, blinking on me with his small yellow much inflamed eyes, measured me from head to foot, with a very comical combination of sleepiness and impudence. He stammered out a few words in a hoarse coarse voice, in very indifferent French, but he was soon talked down by his companion, who walked straight up to me, and in the most brutal tone of official zeal, enquired who I was, and what I wanted?

I drily answered, that I was a friend of Count Ernest's, and had come to see the castle. Upon which straightway a change came over the spirit of the pair. The castellan commenced a series of crouching cat-like obeisances, while the forester contrived to hit on the happiest transition from the most insolent aggressiveness to the respectful bluntness of the honest woodman. I perceived that I was taken for a far more important personage than I was--for an emissary--(no less!)--from the family, come to hold an impromptu inspection of the castle and its condition. The forester, officiously relieving me from the candlestick, forced me into a seat again, and sent a man to the cellar, for a bottle of the best and oldest; while, with a sly kick, or a smothered imprecation, he

made an occasional attempt to awaken his drowsy colleague to the full gravity of the situation. However I did not care to be initiated into the details of the administration of woods and buildings, and I felt so much disgusted with the voluble servility of this precious pair of rogues, that I broke off suddenly, as soon as the old lady returned to the hall, and excusing myself with the natural fatigue of a pedestrian, I begged her to light me to my room.

She cast a look of meaning on the two, who were hardly to be prevented from following us upstairs.

"Did you see the face Monsieur Pierre made at me, sir? and how the forester took up his knife? Of course they are afraid that I should tell of them. Good Lord! as if one could not see with half an eye the state the place is in! I did once write about it to Sweden; but Sweden is a long way off; too long, it would appear, for things to be remedied in this castle. When one has seen it in better days, one feels the worm that eats through wood and silk, gnawing at one's very heart, Sir!"

"It is high to climb;" she apologised, as we came to the third steep flight of stairs, "but I thought I would put you here, as you might like to sleep in the rooms in which Count Ernest grew up to be the man he is, and which he always preferred to any others. And they are more comfortable too, for I look after them myself, and carefully dust out every corner. And to-morrow morning, when you awake, you can see his favorite tree by the window; it has grown up so high meanwhile, that by reaching out your hand you can lay hold of it. Ah, and well a day! when we live to be so old, we live to see many a young child, and many a young tree, grow up and reach to Heaven, and leave us wearily to climb after them!"

With these words, we came to the top, where a long low corridor ran past a range of garret rooms, hardly above man's height. A covey of newly fledged bats, scared by the light, were flapping about against the ceiling. "There must be a hole somewhere in the roof;" said the old lady looking up, with a shake of her head; "I have told the man to mend it ten times and more. But he always pretends he can find no hole, and thus it is with every thing."

She opened a door, and shewed me into a large low room, where a light was burning on a chiffonier, and where the atmosphere was purer and more lifelike than without.

"Here we are;" she said. "Here he lived until he went on his travels with Monsieur Leclerc, and then again before he went to college; and also the last time he was here. Everything is just as it used to be. That faded tapestry with the great hunting pieces may have faded a trifle more; and the writing-table there, with the brass mountings, by the window--the wood-worm is making sad havoc of it. Every time I come, I find above an inch of yellow dust to sweep away. That is his own pretty blue water-bottle; and the gilded glass was a present from his tutor. I worked that little rug before the bed, to give him when he was confirmed, and he never would allow it to be removed, long after the work was quite worn away. The bed is not his; I took his down stairs;" and, with a faint flush, that brought back a touching tint of youth to her refined old face, she added: "in that I sleep myself."

"Indeed, my dear Mamsell Flor," I said; "and he was worthy of being loved by a heart so faithful. He bore the stamp of his most ingenuous soul so clearly upon his noble brow, that even those who merely saw him pass, could not choose but believe all good of him. By the time I knew him he had become reserved; but what must he have been to you, who reared him from his birth, and were to him as a mother! What happened to make him give up this place, and leave a home for ever, that used to be so dear to him?"

She shook her head sadly, and sat down upon the sofa, as if the weight of all these rushing memories at once, were too heavy to be borne standing. She remained a while absorbed in thought; and then at last, taking an agate snuffbox from her pocket, she strengthened herself with a pinch, before she answered.

"It is a strange story, Sir, which nobody can tell so well as I can; and I may tell it now, that the grass is growing over many a younger head than this old foolish one of mine. It will be nine-and-forty years at Christmas, since I went up these stairs for the first time. I was the schoolmaster's daughter, a silly green young thing, and I thought I was being taken straight to Heaven, when our gracious Countess first took me into her service as a waiting maid. The young Count was not born then, nor ever likely to be: there was little love between my master and my mistress. To be sure my lady would always have been willing to worship him, for all he did to vex her. But they were an illmatched pair; and when Count Henry, who was almost always travelling about, came home in Autumn for the shooting-season, he managed to make his pretty patient wife still more unhappy than when he was away.

"I had not been two days in the castle, before I knew that my lady was suffering from some sore trouble; I used to find her pillow wet of mornings, and her eyes all swollen with crying.

"For you see, Sir, the count was a gentleman who had a quick temper and a wild way of his own, and the countess was meekness itself; she was too quiet for him, and he soon wearied of her.--I suppose he had only married her to please his father; some wilful, imperious, dark-eyed lady would have done better for him; some Frenchwoman, or Spaniard, such as often came to visit at the castle; who would have kept him at his wits' end, and made him hate her mortally to-day, and love her desperately to-morrow. He only loved what gave him trouble; he rode the



wildest horses, and shot the biggest stags.

"Our countess loved him far too well, and that was her misfortune--and our young count was exactly like her, and that was his. Only she was small-made and delicate, and had a voice like the clearest bell. When at last, after many long years of waiting, she had hopes of being a mother, she looked like some fair angel; her joy was shining so peacefully in her eyes! And the count seemed kinder, and even stayed here all the summer, to be present at the baby's birth. When the nurse brought it to him, so small and weakly looking, with its little yellow down upon its head, he said nothing, but put it back into its cradle, and left the room without a word.

"I saw that my lady was deeply hurt, and I felt so angry, that I could not keep from saying, half to myself; 'Boys don't come into the world on horseback!' But I repented directly, for my lady heard me, and sent me out of the room. A week after this, she died.

"It was I who had to go and tell my master. He was sitting at the piano, which he played, oh, so beautifully! I could have listened to him for ever. It was early in the morning: he had watched through the night in my lady's ante-chamber, and as she seemed to be rather better, he had just gone upstairs; only instead of going to bed, he sat down to play, and, while he was playing, she died. He shut down the piano, without changing one feature of his face, and went down stairs to look at his dead wife with the same proud step he always had; and in the outer room, where our little master lay asleep in his cradle, he passed the poor babe as though it were only a dead image, as its poor mother was. When he came out again, he said to me:

"'A wet-nurse must be found,' he said; 'meantime, Flor, I give the child in charge to you. I hold you responsible for every proper care.--'

"And then he ordered his favorite horse, and rode away, and did not come home till evening.

"Three days after this, they buried our countess in the cemetery of the town. The count went with the funeral on horseback. And I could not help thinking--God forgive me!--there he goes, prancing away like any conqueror, with his poor victim carried after him for his triumph.

"When the ceremony was over, and all the servants were assembled, eating their funeral feast in silence, and I was alone upstairs, sitting by the little one's cradle, and crying while I was singing him to sleep, in comes my master, stares at the babe a while, and says:

"'They had to send the nurse away, I hear;--the child would not take to her at all?--' 'No, Sir, he wouldn't.'

"'It will be hard to find another one to suit, in that little hole of a place. Do you think you could undertake to bring up the child yourself by hand, with milk and water, as they do in France? You are a person I can depend upon--I had rather leave the child to you, than to twenty wet-nurses.'

"I burst out crying, and took my master's hand and kissed it; for when he pleased, he had a way with him, and a voice, that could turn the heart of his bitterest enemies. 'It is well,' he said, and drew away his hand: 'I shall be some time away; you will write to me twice a year about the boy, and I shall give orders that no one shall interfere with you.' That same day he left the castle, and for many a long year we saw no more of him.

"I will not weary you, Sir, by telling everything--how my little master grew up to be a great boy;--although I remember it all as if it were only yesterday;--and many's the lonesome hour I spend thinking over the past, from the first tooth he cut, to the first bird he shot with his little gun. And when I watched him playing in the court with the dogs, or looked after him when he rode out on the bailiff's horse, every muscle as firm and supple as a steel spring, and then that sweet face of his, and that dear little voice--I used to wonder at his father, who could go wandering about in foreign parts, rather than see his child grow up. To be sure, the boy did not take after him at all, except in his love for horses, and field sports.--For the rest, he was just his mother over again, both in face and temper. And so, when his father came and saw him at ten years old, he frowned, and looked as coldly on him as on a stranger. At night my darling asked me: 'Is Papa always so grave-looking, Flor?' And of course, I could not tell him how it was.

"However, by-and-by, things began to mend. The Count came every autumn for the shooting season, and grew quite paternal with our boy;--kind or affectionate he never was. I cannot call to mind that he ever kissed him, or even so much as stroked his cheek.

"But he gave him, on his thirteenth birthday, a small dun pony, with a bushy mane like a thick clothes-brush, and a pretty saddle; and then Count Ernest was taken to ride out with his papa, away through the forests, for whole days, and often to pay visits in the neighbourhood, where the great folks were always pleased to see the boy. Nobody ever dared to say how like his mother he was, for that always vexed the count; in general the countess was never spoken of, and the full length picture of her was hung in a room that was never used. Only her son would go into it now and then; and loved it well!--He often made me talk about his mother. But do you know, Sir, even then he had the sense to see that it was wisest not to mention her to his father. He had found out that even Death had failed to make her dearer to him. And then, he may have seen that it was just the proudest and wildest among the beauties of the neighbourhood, (and there were several then) who attracted his father most. The count amused himself with them all, and was a very different man to what he was at home. And the boy could not make these doings suit with what

he had heard of his mother.

"'Poor child!' I thought; 'Pray Heaven you may not get a stepmother who may suit your father better!'

"However, that did not seem to be so likely, and by-and-by, it came to be rumoured, that the count never intended to marry again at all. He had his loves in Paris, where he always spent the winter, and would not give them up. Of course, Count Ernest never heard a word of this; he was as innocent as any girl could be; and not even that horrid creature, Monsieur Pierre,--who was then the count's own man, and used to think it a good joke to make an honest woman blush by his loose talk,--even he would affect propriety before the boy.

"A sly fox he was, and knew how to accommodate himself to every one. For the rest, he was a country lad from these parts, and his name was Peter; but after he had been to Paris we never ventured to hint at that. He went every where with the count, and was indispensable to him--He was terribly afraid of him, and worshipped him as a god;--but he robbed him always.

"And now just fancy, Sir!--when our young master was about twelve years old, the count had almost determined on giving him this wretch as a sort of tutor, and asked me what I thought of it? The boy must first learn French, he said, before he began his other studies. I felt as shocked as though he had thought of poisoning the child; and so I took heart and spoke up, and told my master plainly what I thought of Monsieur Pierre, and I said I had rather lose my place than stay to see such disgraceful doings.

"The count let me have my say, and was not a bit angry. He only motioned me to go, and never said another word about the matter. But when he came home in the following September, he brought a stranger with him, whom he presented to us as our young master's tutor. We called him Mr. Leclerc, though that was not his real name; he was a nobleman in needy circumstances, who had been glad to find a decent living--otherwise a harmless gentleman enough, who, to the very last day of his life, never could learn one word of German, so that we, all of us, soon picked up enough French to speak it fairly.--

"He had some little talents, which he used to teach the young count; such as, dancing, fencing, and playing the flute; and then they read some books together; but Master Ernest once told me with a laugh, that before they had read three pages, Monsieur Leclerc would fall asleep, and leave him to read, on to himself till the great clock struck, when he would wake up with a start, and shake the powder from his sleeve, which he had sprinkled over with it while he was nodding, and say; 'Eh! bien, c'est ça!' and then he would fall asleep again. One thing he used to be very busy with; and that was a knack he had, of modelling little figures in pink wax; and he would paint them and varnish them so prettily that they really looked like life--little marquises and viscounts. He had a whole court of them, and would make them dance menuets, while a sweet little queen was sitting on a throne, looking on. Afterwards I heard from Count Ernest that he had taken into his head that Marie Antoinette had been in love with him; he was as old as that, although he used to go tripping about like any dancing master.

"But here I am, running on, sir, telling you all this nonsense, and you wanting to go to sleep!--Yes, when once I begin, I can find no end; and indeed there is not a chair in the castle but could tell ever so long a story of its own.

"Just there, where you are sitting now, sir, I stood one morning, and Master Ernest was sitting here on this very sofa; he had been at a ball for the first time. It had been given at X by the small officials and chief burghers. He was just sixteen--and quite grown up, although he was slighter than when you knew him. 'Well Count Ernest,' I said; 'and how did you like it? Were there any pretty girls? And whom did you dance with? And who got your posy at the cotillion?'

"'Flor;' he said; he always called me Flor, and I was also the only person, until he married, to whom he ever used the 'thou'--'Flor, it was all very pleasant; and one there was most pleasant--'

"His eyes were sparkling, and he looked at me in a kind of shy pretty way I had never seen in him before--he even blushed a little.

"'Come come;' I said, 'Master Ernest, you make me curious--was it one of the young ladies who had been invited, or one of the townspeople's daughters?'

"'I am not going to betray myself any farther, Flor;' he said; 'but she was very pretty and very wise, and talked so pleasantly, I only wish we were going to have another ball to-night!'

"'Why, that sounds quite alarming, Master Ernest,' I said, and laughed--'to stay up all night dancing and go riding all the morning, and then to want more dancing! Our gracious count will be quite pleased! And is this really to be your last word, and all your faithful Flor is to be allowed to hear?'

"'My very last word, Flor; it is my own secret, and I mean to keep it.'

"'I must get hold of Mr. Leclerc, then;' I said, he will be able to tell me who you danced with oftenest.'

"Try him, Flor," cried the naughty boy; and laughed; 'all my partners were the same to him; only--"jeunes Allemandes, jolies bourgeoises!"--he looked after my pas, and never minded where my eyes went; besides, he played écarté all the evening with the director of the saltworks. Ah! Flor, I never thought there could be such sweet eyes in the world; I used to think that your two were the sweetest!"

"You see, sir, this was what I got for all my pains and my anxiety!"

"But this merry mood of his did not last. Next day he grew quiet and thoughtful, avoided all my questions, and shut himself up in his room at an unusually early hour; and then I heard him playing the flute for ever so long after. He could not get this girl out of his head--I saw that. At first he had felt no more than a pleasant smart, as it were, and could joke about it; but the fever followed. He could not hold out four-and-twenty hours, but he ordered his horse and rode out alone, returning at night quite cast down. It was plain that he had not seen his flame, and had been too shy to find her out and pay her a visit. And so he rode to X several times over, with more or less good luck. One night, when his heart was full, he could not refrain from telling me his adventure, as I was lighting him upstairs to bed. His face was radiant; but Good Lord! to any other man, it would not have been worth the telling; Count Henry would only have said, 'Pshaw!'--but to him it was a rare delight. Just at the gates he had met her, out walking with two of her young companions, and all three of them had roses in their hands. Just as he rode by, and bowed, his horse had given a jump, and the young lady had been so startled that she dropped a rose: 'I saw it,' said Master Ernest, 'and in a moment I was out of my saddle, and had picked it up and given it her; and she thanked me very kindly, and walked away towards the woods.'"

"And you rode on, and the lady did not even give you a rose for your reward? Any other man would have picked up the flower, and stuck it in his buttonhole, and galloped off in triumph."

"He looked at me, and seemed quite struck; 'Flor,' says he; 'I do believe you know more of these things than I, although you are a woman.'

"More likely, *because* I am a woman. Master Ernest,' I said. 'Well, well, I see, the young lady is badly off for mother-wit, or else she can't abide you.'

"Of course I was only joking; for how could I think the girl existed who would not like him? But for all that, it made him silent, and I saw that he really thought she did dislike him.

"Only once again did he ride over to X, and after that he stayed at home, and was quite downhearted; he spoke to nobody, but sat in his room writing--verses, as I believe,--and played the flute, and pined away so, that when Count Henry came back, he was quite angry about his looks, and scolded him, and told him he did not take exercise enough, and he asked me if Count Ernest had been ailing? That he had a heartache I did not like to say--he never would have forgiven me, and Count Henry would have laughed. At last it was decided that our young count was to travel for a time with Mr. Leclerc, and both of them seemed to like the plan. 'Flor,' said my boy, 'it is well that I leave this place. Life is become wearisome to me.'

"God bless you, my dearest boy,' I said; 'the world is so beautiful, they say, that I suppose one can't long be sad in travelling.'

"He looked at me with an unbelieving smile; but afterwards he wrote to me from Vienna, that he was well, and often thought of me. God knows! I thought of him, day and night.

"I did not get a sight of him again for three long years, and when he wrote to me from the great cities where he went to court, among all the fine folks--he will get properly spoiled, I thought, as befits his rank. I shall not know him again. But just the contrary; when he came back at last in his twentieth year, without Mr. Leclerc, who had died in Russia of the climate, the very first word he spoke: 'Flor,' says he, 'and how is Miss Mimi?'--That was a cat I had, Sir, of whom he used to be almost jealous, as a child.

"Returns thanks for kind enquiries. Master Ernest,' I said; 'she has just kittened, and will be delighted, as we all are, to see your honour back again.'

"I am afraid it is a delight that won't last long, Flor,' he said; and at night, when I was lighting him to bed, as I always did, he told me all about it; how he had done his father's bidding, and been to see the great world, and he had seen enough of it to find it terribly tedious; and now he had had some trouble in carrying his point, which was to go and study alone for a year or two. 'It was a shame,' he said, 'the confusion that was in his brain.' I could only stare at this, for to me he seemed a man in all things, and cleverer, I thought, it was not possible to be, when I heard him talk with others. But he knew best, of course, and I did not contradict him then; for there were other things I was more curious to know. I asked him about the life he had been leading, and whether the fine ladies he had been dancing with, were handsomer than the daughters of our townspeople? And look you, Sir, at this, he turned as red as a boy;--he, the accomplished fine-grown gentleman, who had just come from living among the fine folks;--and he only said: 'Some perhaps, not many;' and so I saw that old love does not always rust. The very next day he rode over to the town; I suppose to make enquiries, and find out whether she were still unmarried. Of course, I did not know, for I had never heard who she was. When he came back, in the evening, he looked very grave. 'It is all over,' I said to myself, 'and all the better that it is so; what could

have ever come of it?'

"Between him and his father things were no better than they used to be. When I helped to wait at table, I saw that the count was always ready for a quarrel with his son, who could never say or do a single thing to please him. He seemed provoked to be, in a manner, forced to respect the lad, who never by any chance forgot himself, but only quietly defended his own opinion, or held his tongue. Just as the blessed countess had always done, and the count was not fond of being reminded of her. Nothing would have pleased him better than to see his son just such another bold bird of prey as he himself still was, for all his half century. Never had he found a horse too wild, a woman too witty, or a sword too sharp for him. He could not forgive the boy for being so modest. Indeed I often thought--God forgive me!--that he had rather have seen Count Ernest forget his duty to him as his father, if he only would have forgotten that the countess was his mother. Therefore the count always went back to talk of the good old times, when the world was merrier and less particular. Now it was only a world for sneaks and lubbers. And when he had drunk a glass beyond the common, he would tell us all sorts of love-adventures he had had when he was young; while the young count would look straight before him, and hold his peace. I was horrified to hear him, and said to myself: 'Can a father really find it in his heart to be the tempter of his son, when he finds his innocence a reproach to him?'"

"To be sure, I knew that was not the way to tempt my boy at all; he did not even lose the respect he owed him as a father. Only it grieved him sadly, never to see the slightest sign that his father loved him; that I saw by his eyes; but he never spoke about it, not even to me, to whom he generally told everything. And so I was almost glad when he left us in a week to go to College, and never once came home for the next five years; much as he loved his home, and his woods, and everything about the place, and often as he used to enquire after them in his letters.

"I say, I was almost glad, and was more glad presently.

"The young count may have been away for about three years, when I fell into a bad illness; and that left me a weakness in my limbs, so that I could hardly drag myself up and down the stairs. For I kept all the keys, and nobody but Mamsell Flor ever touched a thing in the cellars, store-rooms, or plate-chests. When the count came home in the autumn, and saw me crawling about the house with a stick; 'Flor,' he said, 'you have been doing too much for your strength; you must have some assistance; a sort of housekeeper under you, to save you going up and down the stairs.' So kind he was, you see, sir, in some things; and for all I could say against it, next day, it appeared in the daily papers, that a housekeeper was wanted at the castle.

"All sorts of women came, but none to please me. One or two among them I even suspected of coveting a higher place, (or a lower, as one takes it) than that of housekeeper; for the count was known to be a gallant gentleman. I was rather pleased that none of them could be found to suit; I was always too particular, and none of them did things as I liked to have them done. And so we had nearly forgotten that we had wanted one, when one afternoon, in comes a tall slight young woman, in deep mourning, with very weary eyes. She had come two days' journey from a town where her father and mother, one after the other, had lately died, and left her entirely unprovided for. Her father had been a functionary of some importance, and had lived upon his pay. Her only brother was an engineer, and was now employed in England on a railway, which he could not leave without the sacrifice of all his prospects. She had therefore written to him not to mind her; she had found a situation in a noble family, and was well provided for; meaning if she were not accepted here, to take even a lower place.

"Although everything I could learn about the poor child was entirely satisfactory, and though she passed the severest examination I could think of in household matters, I felt a something in my heart, that warned me not to take her. I told her plainly I thought it might not be for her good. I said she was too young, and what more I could think of. And just as she was going, quite submissively, without any prayers or tears, I called her back, and kept her after all. In fact I was only afraid she might please the count too well, for she was as fine a girl as you could see, with a splendid figure, and a high-bred face like nobody else's; and then such a weight of long brown hair, that could reach three times round her head. But I found that she had a grave decided way with her, and that she was not easily to be put upon. And besides, Count Henry was just then over head and ears in love, as Mr. Pierre had whispered, with a singer he had met in London, and had only broken from her chains for a short time, to hasten back to them as fast as ever he could. So he did not take much notice of the stranger, when she took her place at the servants' table for the first time; he just glanced at her from head to foot, gave an approving nod, and sat all the evening alone, at the master's table, playing with his ring, and letting the beautiful green stone glitter at the light, and Mr. Pierre told us it was a present from his London friend. And I suppose it was true, for when he came back next year, the ring was gone, and Mr. Pierre told us strange stories about it, which you will not care to hear, sir.

"When the count first saw the girl again, Mamsell Gabrielle, as she was called, I watched his face attentively as she walked across the hall. He looked much as he used to do, when the dealers brought him horses, and he had them trotted out into the yard. But he treated her just as he did the rest of us, only that he spoke to her less often. She had begun to bloom again, in the quiet life here among the woods, and with the exercise she took when she was busy about the house. She had left off mourning, and sometimes I even heard her singing in the little garden she had laid out with her own hands in the moat, that we might have our vegetables more handy.

"In this, as in everything else, she was clever, quiet, and independent; I may say I got to love her dearly, and thought we never should be able to do without her; and yet we had done so long!-We used to sit together for many a pleasant hour, spinning and chatting. I used to talk to her of my dear Count Ernest, and read his letters to her, and when Count Henry was at home, we would stand at the window till late at night, listening to his beautiful playing, and to the nightingales singing. Then she would tell me how her childhood had been passed, and of the happy life she had led when her parents were alive, and how well off they had been; and also about her brother; and she spoke of all this without any bitterness, and so I saw that she was quite contented; and that the longer she lived among us, the more she liked us.

"And now, for the first time, I was glad when the winter came, and we were snowed up again by ourselves. When the count was here, we had no peace; though he only received gentlemen, and was particular about these. To be safe from the ladies of the neighbourhood, he had left all the roads without repair, save only a few bridle paths. But it did not come at all as I expected. The count did not leave the castle, and Mr. Pierre insinuated that it was because he had never been able to forget that faithless love of his, and therefore preferred to live in solitude. I could not get this idea into my stupid old head, for I knew my master too well to believe that he could be so long cast down, for such an amour as that. However, stay he did, and the winter came, and snowed us up; and with us, the count and Mr. Pierre.

"How he managed to get through those long winter-days, is more than I can tell; for he never had been fond of his book. We could hear him playing on the piano out of his own head for hours together, and then he used to take long rides into the woods, and it was fine to see him come home, riding in a cloud of smoke from the nostrils of his snorting horse, his beard all tinkling with icicles, and his grand proud face colored by the frosty air. He had always been a handsome man, and if his hair was getting a trifle thinner and more grey, his eyes looked all the darker and more fiery. He must have found a sweetheart in this neighbourhood, I thought, but we heard nothing; not even in this dull place, where we could hear the leaf fall; market-women and butter-women took care of that. Visits or invitations there were none. I used to shake my head, and Mr. Pierre, who had been used to a gayer life, shook his. He had never dreamed that the count would hold out so long as Christmas.

"'Mamsell Flor,' he said; 'il y a du mystère, as sure as my name is Pierre!' and he would whistle the Marseillaise and wink; but in fact, the rogue knew nothing. To pass the time, he took it into his head to make love to Mamsell Gabrielle, but he soon let that alone. For modest as she was, yet she had a way of throwing back her head at times, you would have thought she was a duchess, and he found out that it was none of his Paris sewing women he had to deal with. Something French he must have, and so he took to the Bordeaux wine in our cellars, and often he was so drunk that he could not wait at table. But his master never said a word to him. The count was more gentle than he used to be; he never said an angry word, and at Christmas he made each of us a present. With the new year he took to dining downstairs in the hall, and of an evening he came early, and sat reading the newspapers all alone, at the master's table. But he did not like us to be silent; on the contrary, after supper, he made us stay and sing. The second forester had a fine bass voice, and Mamselle Gabrielle could sing like the very wood witch herself. We often sat up till past eleven, and it sounded, beautifully in the echo of the great hall. Many a time I saw the count drop the paper, and listen pensively, with his head leaning on his hand. But I always kept thinking of my own dear young count, and what a weary time he had been away; and I used to talk of him to Mamselle Gabrielle, till she sometimes fell asleep;--which made me cross with her.

"For the rest, we were always the best of friends, and it was no small shock to me, when one morning she came to tell me, that she was obliged to give up her place. She did not think the air was good for her; she meant to try another. Well, she had slept very badly, I knew, the night before. She still looked feverish, and her eyes were red; and as often as I called to her, she would begin trembling all over. She might have caught cold, for she had come home late from a walk in the woods the day before, and had gone straight to bed, without coming down to supper. 'Child,' I said;--'it will pass off. The air of this place is healthy; and where will you find so easy a situation, and so kind a master?--not to speak of my own humble self.' But the more I talked, the more positive she grew, and I thought I should only make her worse; so I went upstairs to my master, to tell him that Mamselle Gabrielle had just given warning.

"The count heard me out, and then he said: 'Do you know any reason for her going, Flor?--when I began about her health;--'What room have you given her?' 'I took her into mine. Sir,' I said; 'Your honor knows the rooms on the first story, just opposite my lady's bedroom; I have slept in them for twenty years and more, and I never found anything unwholesome for one moment.'"

"He considered a while, and said: 'If Mamselle Gabrielle chooses to go, of course we can't prevent her, Flor; she is her own mistress. But at least, she shall not say that she lost her health in my service. Your rooms look to the forest, and the west winds come blowing against the windows. It must be damp; and in winter there is not a finger's breadth of sunshine. While Mamselle Gabrielle remains, you will have to give her another room. Put her in those opposite, that look into the court; they have the morning-sun full upon them; and then you may advertise for another situation for her.'

"I stared at him. 'I am to put Mamselle Gabrielle in the apartments where our gracious

countess slept?"

"He nodded. 'I will have it so:' he said shortly."

"'But all the furniture is just as it was then;' I went on, without minding his frown. 'How can I give my blessed mistress's things,--her bed and table, and her toilette service--to a stranger?'"

"'You can do as I bid you;' he said, very quietly. 'Leave every thing as it stands.'"

"'And if the poor thing gets worse;'--and I spoke more eagerly;--'whom has she at hand to look after her?'"

"'There is only the passage between you;' he answered. 'If Mamselle Gabrielle should be unwell, it will be very easy for you to nurse her.'"

"He sat down to the piano, and began to play, and so I was obliged to go. And I must say, fond as I was of Mamselle Gabrielle, it cut me to the heart to have to go down-stairs, and air those beautiful appartments, to put a servant in them. For that she was, the same as I was. And moreover, I did not like her face, when I told her what the count had been pleased to order. She first turned white, as if she had been frightened, and then she grew scarlet; she curled her lip half scornfully, and said: 'Very well; God will not forget me, wherever you may please to put me!' She took over her little bed with her, and would not put her bits of clothes in those beautiful inlaid drawers, but left them packed in her little trunk, all ready to go. And I liked that of her; and I kissed her, and begged her pardon in my heart, for having so grudged her my lady's rooms. She sobbed a while on my shoulder, and I had some little trouble in soothing her, but I laid it all upon the fever. That night, I left my door ajar, to hear if she went quietly to sleep; and all was quiet till about twelve o'clock. Then, all of a sudden, I thought I heard her talking loud and angrily. I jumped out of bed, and all the time I was feeling for my slippers, I heard her talking on. I could not catch the words till I got into the passage, and then I distinctly heard her say: 'I am only a poor servant-girl; but may the walls of this castle fall upon me, and crush me, rather than ...'

"I knocked at the door,--(which she had bolted by my advice),--and screamed out: 'Gabrielle, child! What is the matter? Answer me, for the love of God! Whom are you talking to?--Is the room haunted?'--No answer. I looked through the keyhole--nothing to be seen--I went on knocking and calling, but it was a long time before I could get a wiselike answer. 'Mamsell Flor? is that you? what makes you come so late?'--and presently I heard her unbolting the door.

"She stood before me in the darkness; only the snow gave a faint light from the windows. I took her hand, and felt it trembling and ice-cold. 'What makes you come to me so late, Mamsell Flor?' she said--'Have I been talking in my sleep? Oh! yes, I am ill; I think I am in a fever; just feel how my limbs are shaking!' And with that, she burst out crying. I got her to bed again as fast as ever I could, and sat up all night with her.

"In the morning she was too ill to rise, and did not get well again for more than a week. The count did not seem much concerned about it, though he sent Mr. Pierre to enquire after her.

"The first time she came downstairs to supper, my master went up to her, and said a few words in a low voice, and then she walked silently and thoughtfully to her seat. And silent and thoughtful she remained, for the matter of that. But she slept quietly of nights, and did her work, as usual, like a pattern. She asked me now and then, whether any answer had been made to our advertisement. Our letters all went through Mr. Pierre's hands, and he had heard of none. But she seemed in no hurry to go, and I was only too glad to have her stay.

"Spring came, and we were still without my dear young count. Instead of him, there arrived one day a very disagreeable stranger, a gentleman from London--and indeed I don't think that even my master was quite glad to see him. But he did his best to receive him civilly, as was due to an old acquaintance; he rode with him all over the country, and he invited people to play cards with him. They would sit up gambling till daybreak; trying all the wines in the cellar, and never once coming down to the hall.

"This went on for about a fortnight, and glad enough I was when I heard that the English Lord was going away next morning. The last day, they had been to dine at the Baron's, eight miles off; it might be about nine o'clock, when we heard their horses come pattering over the bridge. We were just at supper, and I was getting up to take a candle, and light the gentleman upstairs, but before we could leave the table, they came in. The English gentleman foremost, with that look he had in his eyes when he had just dined. And the count came after him, with his riding-whip under his arm, and his spurs jingling with that heavy tread by which I knew that his spirit was up.

"We all rise, and make our bows and curtsies; the English Lord, keeping his hat upon his head, gives us a sort of condescending nod, and says: 'Devil take long rides, Harry! I feel as stiff as a poker! don't let us go upstairs to-night; let us have our grog down here by the chimney corner--I incline to affability towards these your trusty vassals!'--and he stared from one of us to the other, and never listened to what the count was saying to him in French, in a low voice. All at once he catches sight of Mamsell Gabrielle, and chuckles quite out loud. 'Ha! Harry, old boy!' he cries; 'what an old fox you are! do you keep such doves as these in your hen-house? Foi de gentilhomme!'--and he laughed so insolently that I felt the blood rush into my face. 'Let us have this dove at supper, I say, with a good glass of Burgundy: you have plucked it long ago, of course-

' and then another great roar of laughter. My very heart stood still--I looked at the poor girl--she was as white as the wall--and my master looked--Sir, I cannot tell you how he looked. He went close up to the Englishman, where he stood laughing, and said out loud: 'You will ask the young lady's pardon, sir, this moment--and then you will leave the room. I can protect my people from the insolence of any man, be he who he may!'"

"The Lord did not seem to hear him, and kept staring at the girl. 'By Jove!' he said, speaking thick with drink; 'deuced neat built she is! and I have been in the house a week and more, and never yet--Ah! Harry--I say--d--d sly old fox is Harry. Come, dear, don't let me frighten you.' And he stretched out his arm to take her round the waist, while the poor thing stood motionless against the wall, as if she had been struck by lightning--when we heard a sharp sound whistling through the air, and with a great oath the Lord drew back his hand. The count had drawn a broad red stripe across it with his riding-whip.

"Sir, I need not tell you all that passed that night; only, that by seven o'clock next morning my master had fought the stranger, without seconds, at a place they call the wolfs gap. We heard the crack of the four shots in the still February morning, and half an hour afterwards, the count came home bleeding from his left hand. He did not send for a surgeon, but had it bound up by his valet, Mr. Pierre, who had been with him on the ground, and told us that the Lord had not come off so easily; but he had been able to get on horseback and ride on to the next town.

"What that poor thing,--Gabrielle,--said to it all? Good Lord! She held her peace, as if she had really been turned to stone that evening--and what surprised me rather--she never thought of going to thank her master for what he had done; but she never talked of leaving now.

"From that morning when we heard the shots, she was so changed, I should scarcely have known her. She went through her work as usual, and was neither glad nor sad, only absent; so absent, that of an evening she would sit for hours, staring into the light, as if she were in a trance--and I must say these strange ways became her; she grew handsomer from day to day. We every one of us noticed it. As to the younger functionaries about the place, there was not a single man of them, who was not over head and ears in love with her. But she never seemed to see it--and not one of them had a kinder word to boast of than the others.

"Summer came, and brought no change. The count was still at the castle; Mr. Pierre sitting with his bottle before him half the day; and every body wondering and conjecturing what was likely to come of this new style of living. The busy tongues had a fresh match ready every week for my Master. For he had got to be far gayer; he willingly accepted invitations in the neighbourhood, and even gave little fêtes in return, where he was all politeness. I had never known him to be in such a humour before, and I thanked God for it; the more, as we expected our young count to come home in the Autumn, and it would have broken my heart if they had not met in peace and kindness.

"And oh! Sir, that night, when my Count Ernest came, and his father rode out to meet him--(he came from Berlin, after having passed his examination most brilliantly)--I felt--his own mother could not have felt more. And when I saw him, so tall and handsome, riding beside his father through the triumphal arch of fir-trees the men had put up for him across the bridge--and the lovely transparency over the gate, with the word: 'Welcome!' and Mr. Pierre's rockets whizzing right up into the sky, I burst into tears, and could not speak a word--I only took his hand, and kept kissing it again and again.--

"And he was just the same as ever; and he stroked my face, and had his old jokes with me, that were only between us two. Ah! Sir, that was a pleasant meeting! The count--I mean the father--walked upstairs with his son, looking quite pleased and proud; and indeed it was a son to be proud of. I felt so cross with Mamsell Gabrielle, when I asked her what she thought of our young count, and found she could not tell me whether he were dark or fair. But when I came to consider of it, I said to myself that, after all, this was better than falling in love with him--for that was what I had always been afraid of.--Poor shortsighted creatures that we are!

"In the evening I was called upstairs, to help to wait upon the gentlemen, who had their supper in Count Henry's room. Monsieur Pierre's fireworks had so heated him, that he was not to be got out of the cool cellars that night at all; and I was only too happy to take his place, and have a good look at my young count. But my pleasure was soon spoiled, for the count his father soon began to talk again, as he used to do, of the good old times. 'The young folks of the present day,' he said, 'are fit for nothing but to sit by the chimney-corner, with their noses on their books--worse still, to write themselves--even for the daily papers.' I don't remember all he said--only some things that appeared to me the worst--some things I shall not forget to my dying-day.

"You must know. Sir, that when Count Henry had been a half-grown lad, he had, been taken to Paris by his father, just when the Empire was at its height; and as the old count (grand-father to our Count Ernest) had always been of those to whom Napoleon was as a god, of course they met with the best reception. The old count had been at Paris before, for some years during the revolution; and most of those bad bloody men had been his friends; and Count Henry began to talk of these. 'Do you suppose,' he said, 'that the Emperor could have fought these battles with our good bourgeois of the present day? Wild beasts those were he had to tame, and to let loose upon his enemies. There was a scent of blood in the very air of Paris then, that was withering to the sicklier plants; and turned the weaker spirits faint. But to a resolute man, the sulphureous

atmosphere proved intoxicating. He would have dared a thousand devils. And as the men, so the women; all had tasted blood--and blood makes brighter eyes than household dust. Just look at our present world,'--he said--'our German world at least--compared to that! all so prim, precise, and regular, like the straight lines of a Dutch garden. Fathers, schoolmasters, and wise professors are there to trim it, and if anything escapes them, there is the police. If ever the brute begins to shew itself in man,--in civilized man--quick comes the police with a summons to expel it; but the beast is not to be expelled--it must have blood--if not in pailfuls, at least in drops--it will turn sneakingly domestic, and suck it from the veins of its nearest neighbour. Out upon the small sly social vices of the day! they are so shabby!--worse--they are so stupid!--see what they will do for this puny generation when a time for action comes--for great deeds to be done by thorough men, and genuine mettle. When a man says he shrinks from shedding blood, and would not crush a worm, I say it is his own blood he is so chary of, and shrinks from shedding. At that time Death was the Parisian's familiar,--his bosom friend; together they fought and won the Emperor's great victories.' And then my master went on to talk of a ball where his father had been; they called it 'le bal des Zéphirs,' because it was given on a spot which had been a churchyard--I forget the name of the church. And just above the skull and cross-bones upon the gateway, they had put up a transparency with the inscription: 'Le bal des Zéphirs;' and they had danced like mad upon the graves and tombstones, till morning.

"All this time, my dear young count sat grave and silent, opposite his father, whose discourse, I could plainly see, appeared as blasphemous to him, as it did to me; but he spoke very calmly, and beautiful were the things he said:--'Man has progressed since then,' he said; 'it requires more energy to build up than to destroy.' In his opinion: 'a world without a sense of veneration must necessarily decay and fall in pieces, like a building without cement;' and more of the like which I have forgotten, more's the pity; but when he spoke, I used rather to watch his eyes, than mind his lips! His eyes would grow so clear, you could look right through them. Only one thing more I recollect; he said: 'A generation that can dance on the graves of its fathers, will assuredly care little for its children; a man who tramples upon the past, is unworthy of a future--'

"As these words escaped him, he turned red and stopped short,--fearful lest his father should be offended by them. But, bless you, he was not used to mind such trifles!

"'Bah!' says he: 'we are all the same--only we are quieter; we do the same things, only not to the sound of fifes and trumpets--we have no piping to our dancing. In every generation man is selfish, and has a right to be. There was another kind of ball in those days, they called it le bal des victimes. When the Convention had confiscated the property of the guillotined, it was returned to their heirs, after the 9th Thermidor. Thus many of them held their lands, par la grace de Robespierre. Young men began to live fast again, and to enjoy themselves. They gave balls where only those were admitted who could prove that some very near relation had been beheaded; it was a sort of herald's office to the scaffold; and to shew their gratitude for their inheritance, they invented a peculiar mode of salutation. A gentleman would go up to a lady, and jerk his head forwards, as if he dropped it, and the lady would do the same. They called it Salut à la victime; and all this with fiddling and dancing, and wax-lights and champagne. I do not admire that style of thing myself; it was a fashion like any other, and not a pretty one, I think; but I really do see no improvement in young people's babbling of the sanctity of family ties, and of their duty to their fathers, and forefathers, and sighing in secret for their turn to come, even if without the connivance of a Robespierre.'"

"I left the room, for I could not hear him speak in such a way, to such a son. I waited in the antechamber till Count Ernest came out to go to bed. He was sad and silent, and would have passed without noticing me, but I took up my light, and followed him. In the passage he suddenly stopped and looked eagerly up the staircase, that was well lighted with a two-branched lamp. 'What now?' thinks I--and then I saw Mamsell Gabrielle coming down from the loft with some plate she had been to fetch, and pass us on her way downstairs. When she had quite disappeared; 'Who is that, Flor?' says he, quickly turning to me--'Who is that lady?'

"When I told him, he shook his head. 'Can it be the same?' he murmured, 'or can I be so far mistaken?' And then after a while, when I had come into his room with him: 'Flor,' he said, 'I am right; she was only on a visit to X, when she was at that ball, and she left it again soon after. *Both* parents did you say?--and so poor,--so friendless--that she was forced to go to service?--'

"'She wants for nothing here;' I said, to pacify him; for then I saw at once that she was that old flame of his, for whom he had pined so long. 'My dear young master,' I said, 'she could never be better off than she is here. His honor is very kind to her, and will have her treated with the greatest consideration and respect.'

"But he did not seem to hear me; he was sitting there in that great arm-chair by the open window--thinking, and thinking, till he made me feel quite nervous. He appeared to be so troubled in his mind, as all the past came over him, and all that he thought he had forgotten.

"The old rooms again; the tapestry with the hunting scenes; the furniture he had seen from his childhood; the dark woods before the windows, and then his father's horrid talk--if he forgot his poor old Flor a while, I am sure I could not wonder. I was about to steal quietly away and leave the room, when he saw me, and rising, he came and laid his two hands upon my shoulders:

"'Flor,' he said: 'if it should really come to pass--which is more than I dare to hope--what a



wonderful,--delightful dispensation it would be!

"If *what* should come to pass?' says I; for fond as I was of the girl, the idea that she could ever become our gracious countess was a thing I never could have dreamed of. 'Let us leave it all to Providence, Flor,' he said, very seriously. 'Good night, Flor--'

"And with that, he went to the window again, and I to my lonely room, where, for all it was so quiet, I could not fall asleep for hours.

"And so, next morning I overslept myself, and was quite ashamed when I saw the bright sun shining in at my window. My room just looked over the vegetable beds that Mamsell Gabrielle had laid out; and I saw her busy among them, cutting what was needed for the table. I was just going to call to her, and tell her how long I had been sleeping, when I saw Count Ernest coming out of the wood, and going towards the little garden. He bowed to her, and I saw how she stood up, and returned his bow with due respect, but quite naturally--not an idea of recognition--not even when he spoke to her;--nothing of the awkwardness of recollecting that her former partner now stood before her as her master. He appeared more embarrassed than she was. And as they crossed the garden, side by side, I could not help thinking to myself, if God should so appoint it, a handsomer pair could not be found in all the world. I was quite willing that the poor child should have all that happiness and honor, if she only made my boy as happy as he deserved to be.

"But you know, sir, 'man proposes, and God disposes,' as the proverb says, and I soon found out.

"I had not looked after them long, when Mr. Pierre came running to tell Count Ernest that his father was wanting him immediately--and soon after they rode away together; and indeed, sir, it was quite a sight to see that handsome father on his wild black horse, and the slender son riding a light brown Arab mare, as they galloped over the bridge into the wood. Mr. Pierre said they had been invited to the Baron's: there they had cast their hooks in haste for the son, when they found the father could not be made to bite; and indeed the three baronesses had not much time to lose; but 'they reckon without the host,' thinks I.

"As for Mamsell Gabrielle, I could not get much out of her. Many years ago she had been in X, on a visit to a friend, and there she had danced with our young master. It was plain that he had been so bashful, that she had no idea of the impression she had made; she talked of him as of any other young man. This made me cross, I must confess; but to be sure, it was all quite right, and far better so; and I resolved to have no hand whatever in the business, and neither by word or hint, to meddle with it, but to leave it entirely to Providence.

"When the gentlemen came back that night, I had a good long talk with my young count at last. He was very merry. He described the foolish dressed-up ways of these three lemon-colored baronesses, who in those last five years had grown so young and bashful, so girlish and so giggling; and had pouted so prettily at his father for being so bad a neighbour, hinting at their hopes that the son might make amends; and so, with one eye upon the father, and the other upon the son, altogether the attraction had been rather 'louche.'

"Ah! Flor,' he said, 'it was just the thing to make me sick of the so-called proper matches. I half suspect my father to have taken me there on purpose to warn me from the daughters of the country, and make me feel the value of my liberty; he knows how I hate the thoughts of going to Stockholm, where they want to send me with the Legation. I had so far rather stay at home among my woods, and only be a sportsman, or a farmer. And you, Flor, you faithful soul, you would never bid me go. But when I just hinted at my wishes, treating them as a sort of romantic whim, I saw at once that by staying I should lose the last remnant of my father's good opinion; and indeed I have no occasion'--he said, with a faltering in his voice, that made my heart ache terribly--'I have no occasion to put his affection to too hard a test. After all, Flor, one has but one father, in this world.'"

"Poor boy, it was the first time he ever shewed how much it grieved him to be so little loved.

"My darling Count Ernest,' I said; 'you know how I wish you all your heart desires; but to live here in this solitude, at your age, one had needs be wonderfully happy, or desperately wretched.'

"And which was your case, Flor?' he asked.

"I was happy,' I said; 'for I had a dear little master to bring up, who never for a moment let me feel that I was not his own mother, but only a penniless servant-girl.'

"He took my hand, and said; 'Right, you dear old woman! but if to live here, one must needs have everything one wishes, or nothing, why should I despair of having everything?'"

"I held my tongue, for I did not dare to begin first to speak of what he might be thinking needful to his happiness. He guessed what I was thinking of, for he said:

"To be sure, even if the greatest of all gifts were within my reach, who knows whether I should be allowed to take it? Curious, how men contradict themselves! There is my father now, who never goes to court, because, he says, the nobility of to-day has nothing thorough-bred about it, if it be not in the stables. Yet how would he look, if I were to go and propose giving him a

daughter who was only a blameless girl, who had been his servant? But I am talking nonsense. It is not likely that I shall be tempted to make such a proposal."

"The safest way not to be tempted, is to go abroad;' I said, at last, as he sat silent and discouraged. 'For, my dear Count Ernest, if Mamsell Gabrielle appears to have no eyes for her young master, I am certain it is only because she is a servant girl, and knows what she is about. It would be a thousand pities for the poor child, if she were to suffer her heart to escape her through her eyes, for there would be no recalling it. I know her well: she has a brave spirit of her own; if she were to say:--"I will do this, if I were to die for it,"--she *would* do it and die, without a word.'

"God knows, I found it hard to say all this to my darling boy, and moreover, presently I found that I had only been making matters worse.

"He had never hoped that the girl could love him, but now he interpreted her reserve more favorably; he thought it might be forced--in self-defence--to enable her to stand more firm; and that perhaps she suffered from it no less than he did. And indeed I thought the same. I, too, thought her changed since Count Ernest had been at home; she had grown graver and more absent. I often saw her sweet face change from white to red, without any sufficient cause. I meant to speak to my young count at the very first opportunity, and entreat him to come to some decision; to settle it one way or the other. But the opportunity did not come of itself, and I wanted heart to seek one. I loved him dearly, and it was hard for me to part with him so soon.

"And so a week passed, and then a fortnight, and three whole weeks, and the evil was growing daily before my eyes; and other eyes saw it too. At least I heard from Mr. Pierre, that the two counts had been talking of Stockholm again. Count Henry had insisted on Count Ernest's going at once, and Count Ernest had begged for time to think about it. After that the father had taken care that they should be out all day, so that his son should find no time for the handsome Mamsell Gabrielle. 'C'est drôle,' says Mr. Pierre, the cunning creature; 'if my master were in love with the girl himself, he could not be more careful of her; but I would lay my life, that he has not the shadow of a liaison with her. It would be the first time he ever undertook such a thing, without my help; and how could he?--in this castle all over ears and eyes! No, I rather think there must be something deeper in it. The girl's mother, perhaps, you understand me. But this is strictly between us two, Mamsell Flor.' All this was puzzling, but the end was very different to anything my stupid head had thought of.

"One evening in October--by some chance or other there had been no riding out that day--Count Henry was busy with the steward's accounts, and Count Ernest had gone out with his gun and his melancholy to the woods. I heard a strange voice in the court, speaking to one of the men, and enquiring for Mamsell Gabrielle. She had just gone to the garden, to cut some dahlias and china-asters for the supper-table. So down I go, to ask the stranger what he wants with her, and feel quite pleased to hear it is her brother come from England all the way to see her. He had a serious, steady, manly way with him, that I rather liked, though his dress and manner were far below his sister's; indeed his dress was almost shabby. I gave him a hearty welcome, and told him how glad the dear girl would be to see him, and led him through the little postern-gate that opens to the moat and to the garden; and there, standing among the tall flowers, we saw our Gabrielle. She knew him in an instant, but, I thought, for a brother and sister who had not met for years, they were not so very eager about it.

"She turned pale, as though she were going to faint, and he held out his hand, saying a few words in a tone as if he pitied her. 'It is the first time they are together since they have been orphans,' thinks I; 'I must go and leave them by themselves;' and so I went back to my own room, and when I looked out of the window, I still saw them standing as I had left them. He was saying something, but nothing pleasant, it appeared, earnestly, in a low voice, while she only hung her head and listened.

"In about ten minutes' time, Count Ernest came out of the wood, and saw the two as they stood together. He went straight up to the stranger, and bowed to him politely, and I saw that he joined in their conversation. I could not hear what they said, they spoke so quietly. But at last the young count raised his voice: 'You will think better of it perhaps. How is it possible to decide so hastily? What does your sister say? what do you think of it, yourself, Gabrielle? Your sister is quite startled, you see, by this sudden break in the tenour of her life. Not even your brotherly affection for her should induce you to adopt any violent measures. Your sister is so highly valued by us;--she is so necessary to us all! I am sure she has no reason to wish for any change. If you will remain with us a few days as our guest, you will convince yourself, I hope, that life may be very tolerable in this wilderness of ours.'

"He held out his hand to the stranger, who was, I thought, rather slow to take it, and turned away, and after saying a word or two I could not catch, walked towards the castle.

"Count Ernest remained standing beside Gabrielle, saying nothing at first, but only looking earnestly in her face, while she looked down. Then he began to speak fast and low, and in my heart I felt every word he said, though I heard nothing; upon which she suddenly dropped her flowers, and covering her face with her two hands, she ran away and left him, and I could see that she was crying bitterly.

"He stood looking after her till she disappeared among the woods; he did not venture to follow her, but I saw that his face had that happy thoughtful look he used to have long ago, when, after the long winter, he would stand watching the sun rise above the woods for the first time, and feel that the sweet spring season was at hand.

"My heart melted, and I folded my hands, and prayed; I hardly know what I was praying for, till I heard the stranger's voice in the passage, asking Mr. Pierre if he could be admitted to speak to Count Henry, and there he stayed a long time. I heard them walking up and down in the room above me, talking loud and angrily. When the stranger was gone, and Count Henry had gone out, Mr. Pierre came and told me what he had heard in the ante-chamber.

"And then, Sir, I heard that the stranger had come all this way from England only to take his sister from us. And do you know what made him come? That duel with the English Lord was at the bottom of it all. It had appeared in the papers, and had been the talk in London for a day or two, and many of my master's old adventures and love affairs had been raked up again; so this brother had had no peace for thinking of it, and at last he had started off, travelling day and night, meaning to fetch his sister away at once, and take her with him just as she stood, without stopping one moment longer.

"'Mon cher,' had my master said; 'let me tell you that you are acting like a fool, to your own damage. I need not trouble myself to discuss with you what is likely to prove more injurious to your sister, my chastising a man who had insulted her, or your coming here to fetch her away, at a moment's notice, from a home where she is perfectly secure in the respect of all who know her, to take her to a strange place where there are numbers of such lords, who are not often likely to be so kind as to let you shoot them; but, as I said before, that is your own affair. Mine is, to see that your sister's liberty be respected, for she is of age; further, that the legal term of warning be observed. I am not prepared to dismiss my servants at a day's notice, just as they may think fit.'

"The young man had found a thousand reasons to oppose to this, speaking in an abrupt business-like way, and suffering himself to be so far carried away as at last to offer a sum of money for the rupture of the contract. And then my master had turned his back upon him, and gone out, leaving the bold man standing, who, after some consideration, had hurried away, and left the castle for the next town; probably to consult the burgher-master as to the lengths the law would let him go in his attempts to force the count to give up his sister.

"With all these things buzzing in my head, I felt crosser than ever with Mr. Pierre, and had no ears for his stale jokes. I wanted to ask Gabrielle herself what she wished to do; for, after all, that was the chief thing to be considered. So I went over to her room, to wait till she came back. It was all just as it used to be--the gilding on the mirrors and picture-frames, and on the furniture; and the beautiful hangings of green damask with a large raised pattern on it. And there was her plain servant's-bed under the silk curtains, and her trunk with her bits of clothes. I began to think how it would be if we had a young mistress living there; and while I was pondering, and looking at the picture of Count Henry over the sofa, painted when he was going to be married, (I will shew it you to-morrow, Sir), and seeing some dust upon the consoles, I took the corner of my apron and was going to wipe them, when I heard a noise like mice behind the hangings, and stood still to hear where it was coming from. Well, there is a great mirror in a broad old-fashioned frame, reaching down to the ground, (the fellow of it is up-stairs in Count Henry's room); behind this I heard a rustling and a creaking, and I was looking about to find the hole, when all of a sudden the floor begins to slide, as it were; I see my face in the glass going round, as if I were giddy, the wall opens in the gaping frame, and who should step out of it but my own Count Ernest!

"If I was dreadfully startled, he was no less astonished. 'Why Flor!' he cried, 'Good evening to you! Are you surprised? Here I come upon you like a thief in the night, in an odd way enough. I had no conception of such a thing--I wanted to speak to my father, and not finding him in his room, I waited for him. I was determined to tell him all, and not to pass another night in a state of such uncertainty. To her I had spoken--her brother wants to take her away, and I asked her whether she would find it so easy to go away and leave us, and if she thought she could be induced to stay for my sake? Upon which she burst into tears and ran away. But I rather hope you were right, Flor, and that there really may be nothing to part us but the coat-of-arms above the gateway. As for that, we might do without it, and quietly settle in a happier home. Just as I was thinking over what I would say to my father, my eye fell by chance on a part of the mirror where the frame appeared to have been damaged. I put my finger upon it mechanically, and was poking at it, when all at once the glass gave way, and then I saw a great gap staring me in the face. I had scarcely stepped through to see what was beyond it, when it closed upon me again and left me in the dark; and finding neither spring nor handle to open it again, there was nothing for it but to grope my way straight on, along a small passage, and then down a small winding staircase all pitch dark, and then I came to a dead halt against a wall. I must own that I had some slight shudderings and misgivings while I was feeling about for the spring, till I got hold of it. Deuce take these dungeons, Flor!' he cried, quite amused: 'Are there many of these moleworks in this place?--whither have they led me? Where am I now, Flor? Surely ... this is not your room, Flor? is it--was it not--my mother's? and now, now--does not--yes--does not Gabrielle--sleep--'

"He broke off short, and looked at me--and, oh! such a look of horror flared up in his frightened eyes. And then he closed them, as though he could not bear to look again on any human being. I myself felt more dead than alive, but I made an effort to speak--to say something.

"It was for her health,' I said; 'only because the sun is on this room, that my master desired me to give it to Gabrielle. My dear boy,--my darling--what is it you are thinking of? What is there in this to trouble you so terribly? That passage,--you see, nobody ever knew of it--not even your father, probably. It is true the mechanism has not rusted--the springs slip smoothly into their grooves, but that is no reason--my dear Count Ernest--you cannot think--how should damp or dust get at it, where we take such care? It is a curious coincidence--a chance;' I said, and tried to feel convinced; 'how could it be anything else? and she such a modest girl, and so particular about her honor; and but a few months ago, my master'--And then I was fool enough--only think of the stupidity, Sir--to go and rake up that story of the duel, and in my fright I thought I was doing wonders to make him easy, and myself. But even whilst I was talking, the scales were dropping from my eyes; I saw how it was--who ever *does* fight a duel for a servant after all? When I thought of this, I came to stammering, and could find nothing wiser to go on with than: 'It would be beyond belief--it must be a mistake,--or else I could never trust one human creature on earth again--scarcely the Lord in heaven.'

"He looked up at his father's picture on the wall, and then at her little trunk, and I saw that he did not believe in a mistake. I had taken hold of his hand in my agitation, and I felt that it was quite numb and cold; I don't believe there was a pulse in it. 'Flor,' he said, in a low voice; 'You will never tell how it chanced--you will tell no living soul--promise me, Flor.'

"I pressed his hand between both mine. I could not speak, for I felt as if ten millstones had fallen on my heart. He gently drew away his hand and left the room. Where he went, I never could find out. Nobody knew where the others were that evening. Count Henry did not come down to supper, Mamsell Gabrielle's brother did not return, and she herself was walking in the woods long after dark.

"As soon as my trembling legs would carry me, I went over to my own room; I wanted to hear or to see nothing of nobody--least of all, of Mamsell Gabrielle. That evening I hated her with all my heart and soul.

"If the earth would only open and swallow her up!' I thought to myself a hundred times. 'If the woods would only fall upon her and crush her, before she should come between father and son, to estrange them still more than they already are!' I upbraided myself bitterly for having been melted by her pale face and her mourning, and taken her into the house, although I had felt a secret warning at the time; and then I thought of my own Count Ernest, how he was wandering all night about the woods half mad with grief--looking on his boyhood's brightest dream--on the only thing he had ever set his heart on--as some unnatural sin--perhaps--who knows?--as an offence to all he held most sacred. 'What will be the end of it all?' I lamented to myself, as I wrung my hands, and I felt as if the coming morning were to dawn on the day of judgment!

"When I heard the girl go past my door at bedtime, I shook all over with my hate and horror of her. If she had happened to come in, I really do not know what I should have done to her. If my boy had been poisoned by her, I don't think I could have hated her more. I could not conceive how I had been so blind.

"Not to call myself a fool, I called her all the names I knew. I abused her for the most horrid hypocrite, the sliest creature that ever ensnared a man or deceived a woman. I tied a great silk handkerchief over my head, that I might not hear her in her room, or be an unwilling witness if anybody came to her in the night.

"If anybody *did*, I did not know it. I had lighted my lamp and taken out my hymn-book; but, God forgive me, I did not know what I was reading. And I was hungry too, for I had not gone down to supper, and that made me feel still crosser with the girl.

"As for my master, I never thought of blaming anything he did. I had broken myself of *that*, years ago. At last I fell asleep with grief and hunger--at least, I suppose I did, for I was waked up suddenly by feeling a hand laid upon my shoulder. I could not hear, because I had my head tied up.

"The lamp had quite burned down, and the first grey of the morning light might be seen from the window. And beside my chair I saw Mamsell Gabrielle standing. I stared at her, for she had her little straw-bonnet on, and her brown shawl pinned across her chest, and her parasol in her hand. I really had some trouble to collect my thoughts and remember what had happened. Meanwhile that sad gentle face of hers had had time to melt the cruel crust of hate that had gathered about my heart. I untied my handkerchief and got up. 'Good heavens! what have you come here for? is it so late? have I been asleep?'

"My dear Mamsell Flor,' she said, 'it is hardly four o'clock; I am very sorry to disturb you, but I have something to say to you, and I must say it. You were always so kind to me, it would hurt me to have you think ill of me when I am gone, if you did not know my reasons for the step I am about to take.'

"What step?' I cried; 'What are you going to do? You are ready dressed for a journey; you don't mean to go and leave the house in this way, in the dark and cold? Your brother has not come back to fetch you.'"

"I am going to him,' she said; 'I am going to beg him to take me away with him--to the very end of the world, rather than leave me here. Oh! that I had only had the courage to do so sooner! Miserable I might have been, for I should have left my heart behind me, but I should not have been sinful; and I could have looked you bravely in the face and said good-bye to you, my dear kind friend, who have been a mother to me. I know you will forgive me for all I have done, you are so good and pitiful. But now you will shiver when you hear my name, and when you think of one who has been the cause of all this misery, and made your darling feel the greatest pain a man can feel. Dear Mamsell Flor, only yesterday he told me that he loved me,--and I ... for many months I have been his father's--'

"She stopped, as if in horror at the sound of her own words; and I who but yesterday had been so full of rage and hate, Sir, a daughter of my own could hardly have melted me so soon. She stood before me the very picture of wretchedness, her bosom heaving, her eyes drooping, as though she could not bear one ray of light to fall upon her and her miserable lost life. I sat like one struck dumb, and at last, only to say something:

"'Won't you take a seat?' I said, 'You have a long way to go;' and then immediately I blushed at my own silliness--such foolish words, you know. Sir,--so out of place. But she did not seem to hear me. After a pause, she said:

"'I did what I could to save myself in time; you know that. I plainly saw my danger--plainly--I am not naturally careless. I am not a giddy girl, dear Flor. I walked into this with open eyes--that is, I thought I knew the path I had chosen; I little dreamed that it could lead to this. Did I say with open eyes? Yet I think they might be blinded by my tears. I cried so terribly when I saw his wound, and knew it was for me. He had often tried to make me love him, and I had told him more than once that I never would be his, except as his wedded wife--*that* I could never be, he told me; he had a son who was not to be defrauded of his inheritance, and who would be shocked if he gave him a young stepmother. 'As it is, we never can agree,' he said; 'and this would bring us to an open rupture.' He took some trouble to make this very plain to me, but he never succeeded in altering my resolution. I had never heard of what he called a conscience-marriage, and all my principles rose up against it--not to speak of my pride, that revolted at the secrecy. If two persons are worthy of each other, I thought, and their consciences worthy of being called to witness what they do, why should there be secret?

"'I was in sore trouble day and night, and God knows how I struggled, Flor! To hear that proud man--naturally so violent and so imperious--to hear him beg and beseech, and to see him suffer, and to go on living here in this solitary wilderness beside him, without a soul to help me, or any counsel, save my own weak heart--it was hard to bear, it was terrible! and it was worse when he never spoke to me at all for months, nor even looked at me; and all the while I could see how his dumb passion was wearing him out; and then at last the blood from that wound!--then I did feel my courage spent, and I gave myself up. Dear Flor, if there really be a woman's pride, that could have taken her through all this unmoved--ordeals, I may say, by fire and water--if there be such courage, I hardly think I could covet it!

"'We took an oath,' she went on; 'we pledged ourselves to eternal constancy and to secrecy. My mind was at peace--happy I was not. Not that I ever doubted him, whatever he may have done--and indeed he never tried to make me think better of him than others. This I know--never will he love another woman now, nor I another man. But there was always a heavy presentiment of evil that was to come--and now it has come, and my life is at an end.

"'It is not possible for me to remain where I am,' she continued; 'between father and son. If Count Ernest had come back, and found me as his father's lawful wife, he would have smothered his boyish flame at once, and all would have been plain and open. But now this wretched secrecy has borne its bitter fruits! I have prayed to God to guide me, and I am resolved to take it all upon myself, and by leaving the house at once, to save what there is yet to save. If I were to die, it would be the best thing I could do for all of us, and so I must anticipate death, and take myself away, never to be heard of more. I will tell my brother all, and that shall be my penance. I do not mean to spare myself, for henceforth I shall have to live all my days alone. But it will be a comfort to me, dear Flor, to think that you remember me and have a kindly feeling for me!'

"I held her hand and stroked her cheek; 'I will never forget you, dear,' I said: 'Wherever you go, my heart will follow you;' and it quite moved me to see a faint rose return to her pale cheeks, with pleasure at hearing me speak so. She drew a deep breath, as if a load had been taken off her mind; and then she begged me to keep her flight a secret. Afterwards, when it was no longer to be concealed, I was to say that she had gone to her brother to persuade him to go back to England quietly, and that perhaps she would not come back that night.

"'When I am safe across the channel, I will write to the count; she said; 'and as for you, my best and dearest friend, I shall always think of your love and goodness for me to my dying day.'

"And she fell upon my neck, and cried so bitterly that I cried myself while I was trying to comfort her--saying the most stupid things--for my poor old head was all astray. I could hardly get out the words for sobbing, and only kept repeating: 'God bless you, poor dear!--bless you I--don't forget your own old Flor, who wronged you so!--you are far too good to be so wretched!'

"As if, in this world, the good people were the best off! As if my blessed mistress had not been

an angel even before she died!

"As soon as we heard the first birds singing in the woods, the pretty creature rose and dried her eyes, and gave me her hand to say good-bye; and when at the door she turned round to nod to me again, she looked so lovely that I looked after her, as if I had been her lover myself, and ran to the window to see her pass through the little gate, and walk towards the wood to wave my hand to her again. The day was dawning gradually over the trees, that all stood still, as if asleep, till the dew fell, and then they began to stir in the morning air. To this moment I can remember how I felt, as I put out my hot head to cool the fever in it, and let the fresh breeze blow over my hair. 'God be praised! who gave that poor girl the sense and courage to go at once, and make an end of it!' I thought one moment, and the next--'But has she a right to go? If that be true about the oath she took, and the conscience-marriage, can she--can any woman--go and leave her husband as though her life were still her own to dispose of?' Yet at every step she was taking farther out into the wide world and farther from the castle, I felt the weight on my heart loosening, and I imagined that if only my poor dear boy were safe never to set eyes on her again, all might yet be well, and we might leave the rest to Providence.

"She must have got a good start by the time our people began to be stirring about the stables and the farm-buildings, and my master never got up till several hours later. I always was the earliest in the house, and had more than enough to do and to look after, but that morning I could think of nothing at all; my head was dazed, everything seemed running in it at once--I took a whole hour to plait up my poor wisps of hair before I could make up my mind to leave the room. For I thought I should meet the count, and if he were to ask for Mamsell Gabrielle, I was sure to stammer and hesitate, and very likely to confess the whole. However, I could not hold out any longer, I wanted so much to go and see what my poor Count Ernest was about. I went along on tiptoe, and slowly up the stairs. My legs shook as though I had grown to eighty in a single night.

"I listened at the door of his room, and hearing nothing, I softly opened it and went in. The room was empty, and the bed untouched; but he must have spent the night here, for the candles were burned down to their sockets. It all looked so sad, it made me begin to cry again, as I went about setting things to rights, and opening the windows. I looked out far over the tree-tops, and fell a-thinking. I can remember that I almost went into a passion with that faded dog-boy there on the tapestry, who grins and looks so happy, shewing all his teeth. 'Whatever happens, that fool must grin,' I said; sorrow had made me that distracted, that even a picture on the wall could provoke me, Sir."

"All at once I heard the piano in the room below me, long before the time when my master was used to rise. 'The whole world is topsy-turvy;' I thought, as I went downstairs. Now that I was sure not to meet the count, I wanted to go and look for my dear boy all over the castle and about the grounds."

"When I came to the door of my lady's room, where we had put Mamsell Gabrielle, I could not pass it. I felt drawn in against my will, as it were--it was like those places where dreadful murders have been committed. I stood staring at the glass, and talking to myself like a mad woman. We women are a weak and a curious race, you know. Sir, and have a right to be, as our mother Eve was before us; and I could not help fumbling about till I had found the mechanism; and then, I thought, I would take one peep at the hidden passage--just one peep, I thought--but when the mirror turned upon its hinges, I had one foot over without intending it, and then the other--and I found myself walking on, hardly venturing to breathe, and the door had closed behind me of itself. I was not frightened. If I really never did get out, or saw the light of day again, what would it matter? What is there in the world to please me, where all is temptation and disappointment, and where one man plays the part of Lucifer to the other?

"I saw a faint streak of light falling through a crack, and so I went on till I came to the steps; I went up cautiously; I heard the piano getting louder and louder as I went up. While I live, I shall not forget that strange feeling; the dark dank air, like a prison, and the beautiful music pealing above my head.

"I felt as if I were in my grave, and thousands of birds were singing over the sod, and I could hear them and understand them all. At the last step I stood still--'Where does this lead to?' I thought, 'and shall I be able to get out?' and I turned cold all over, when I saw that this passage could only lead into Count Henry's morning-room, just where the piano stood. If I were to walk in suddenly, what would he think of me?"

"Then I saw the light shining through a hole in the wall, and that made me go on again. The mirror had been injured at one place, which looked like a spot or blemish, and it had often vexed me while I was cleaning it; and now I saw that it had been done on purpose, to enable one to look into the room and see that all was safe, before putting the springs in motion and opening the door.

"I crept close up and peeped in. Count Henry was sitting at the piano, in his short velvet morning-dress, with his back turned to the mirror, and all the windows were standing wide open. I was going to steal away again, but the music bewitched me, as it were; I never could get enough of it. It was easy enough for it to steal away the heart of a poor young lonely creature like Gabrielle, when it could so bewilder an old thing like me! It all came of itself while he was playing, out of his own head. It was as if he were talking with the spirits within him, and soothing

them when he felt his fits of passion coming on; and at those times the music sounded like two distinct and separate voices discoursing--angry first, and quarrelling, and then at peace.

"What storm was raging in him that morning I do not know. He could not be thinking of Gabrielle's brother,--he was not uneasy about that,--for he was fully persuaded that she herself would never leave him--neither of Count Ernest; for what did he know of what he was feeling? But he must have a kind of presentiment that some great event was impending, for the music was like the sound of a coming storm, and one could hear the first roll of the distant thunder. It made me feel so frightened and uncomfortable--partly because of the confined air in that little passage--that I stood up, and was just going away, when the door of the ante-chamber opened, and my dear Count Ernest came in.

"His father looked round, but he made a sign to beg him not to let himself be disturbed, but to go on playing, and he sat down in an arm-chair to wait; he sat so that I could see his face straight before me. There was something so grave and grand about it, and yet so subdued and peaceful,--he looked handsomer than I ever saw him. He did not raise his eyes to the secret door; it was pain and grief to him to know that it was there. He was very pale, and he looked down as if he were studying the pattern of the inlaid floor, with a look of forced cheerfulness that made my heart ache. And though he never moved an eyelid, I saw his eyes getting wet, and then two large tears glittering beneath his eyelashes, while his mouth remained as quiet and sweet as ever. I saw that the music was too much for him, and almost overcame him. His father did not seem to notice it; he went on playing for some time longer, until at last, closing with a magnificent unison of all the voices, he shut down the piano, got up, and took a few hasty turns about the room. He never looked at his son, (in general he seldom did); but still he appeared to be in a good humour, and took up a new fowling-piece that was lying on the table to shew it him."

"'You are just come when I wanted you,' he said. 'I was going to send over Pierre to ask whether you would like to take a ride with me through the forest. Pierre tried this gun yesterday, and says he thinks it is even better than my English one; did he speak to you about it?'"

"'No, he did not;' and the young count rose also; 'and I rather fear I shall not be able to accompany you, my dear father. I have come to a sudden decision about Stockholm, and I mean to go at once. You say very justly, that it would be far too soon for me to stay here and bury myself among these woods, without at least one trial of what I may be fit for in this world. And I am come to say good-bye--that is, if you still approve of my decision as much as I hoped you would, concluding from the wishes you have so frequently expressed.'

"He spoke calmly and cheerfully; but oh! it was woe to me to hear him! I could hear every word through the slight partition, and I held my breath, for I even fancied they must hear how my heart was beating. I did not dare to move, and so I stayed, and heard all they said. I found I was to lose him again; and when to see him, who could tell?--never perhaps. I knew what made him go. He was resolved never to see the girl again. But she was gone, and what would they do when they found *that* out? When I tried to think of this, my five senses failed me, and so I rather listened to what they were saying. I cannot repeat every word, but it was beautiful to hear my young count explaining to his father how the post at Stockholm had just then acquired a great importance, in consequence of our commercial relations, and what not; and how clearly he saw it all, and knew what he had to do.

"Meanwhile the elder count was walking up and down, and never spoke a word till he had done. Then he stopped short before his son, and held out his hand to him; 'You are perfectly right in all you say, and I entirely approve of the step you are about to take,' he said. 'I know it is a sacrifice to my wishes on your part, for in fact, you are not a man of action, you have far more of the German scholar in you, but in your new position you will soon have shaken off the last vestige of school-dust; and by-and-by you will agree with me, that my wishes were entirely for your own good. When do you start?'

"'This very day, if you approve, Sir; I would take Fatme as far as the station, and Pierre could take the horses back in the evening. My things can be sent after me.'"

"His father nodded, and again they remained silent for a time. My Ernest had still something weighing heavy on his mind--that I saw by his face."

"At last he said: 'And you, my dear father, what have you decided upon doing? What are your plans for the present? Do you mean to spend the winter here?'"

"'I rather think so. I fancy I have had enough of being tossed about. A quiet time in port to rest, would do no harm for a change.'

"'This is a solitary place,' returned his son, 'and our neighbours are not much resource. Will you laugh at me if I ask you a strange question? Did it never occur to you to think of marrying again?'

"The count gave a loud laugh. 'Well, I must say, you do ask searching questions,' he said. 'You would like to do a good action before you go, and see that your father is well provided for. Give it up, my son, give it up! A second marriage is but a second folly; and if age cannot save us from folly, youth at least, should not tempt us to it.'

"You are not speaking seriously, Sir;" returned Count Ernest; 'I have found you younger this time than when I left you five years ago. If you really should decide on settling here, only consider how a young mistress would improve the place--one who would prevent your growing old before your time; and when that time does come in good earnest, would make those quiet years pleasant to you. I know that I leave you in the best of hands,' he went on; 'our Flor is fidelity itself, but you require more than she can do for you, and as I cannot tell when I may come back, I--'

"He stopped short, and I saw that he had some trouble to hide his emotion. His father turned a searching look on him, and after a pause he drily answered: 'Enough of this; I am very well as I am; and though I may find other ways than you would, of combating dullness, I shall not run to seed as you suppose. There are foxes enough to be shot, while my hand can hold a gun; and when the end of all ends comes, I shall sit down and write my memoirs, as a pattern to this generation of propriety--that is, a pattern to be avoided.'

"He now evidently expected his son to take his leave, but Count Ernest stood still, with his eyes fixed on his father's face. Count Henry did not seem to feel quite easy under them; he looked annoyed, and added, as if in jest: 'Well, and don't these prospects please you? I do believe you have a match all ready made for me, and intend to show me that your talents in the diplomatic line are greater than I should have supposed. May I ask who the lady is? I confess I am getting curious. Is it young F., with her Madonna eyes, and her liberal portion of freckles? or Comtesse C., with her shortened leg, and her never-ending giggle, who would persuade herself and the world, (though the world knows better), that she has not seen sixteen summers?' And so he went on, through the list of all the young ladies in the neighbourhood, caricaturing them with a few sharp strokes, but without succeeding in moving a muscle of his son's countenance."

"When he came to the end: 'You are on the wrong track, dear father,' he said; 'It is no fine lady I am thinking of, nor should I like to see any of these in this house, as its mistress. But there is a prize much nearer home, that I should be glad to see you win. Have you really never noticed the young lady who helps our Flor to rule the house? She is fond of you, I know. Her passionate attachment to you has grown too strong for her to conceal it even from herself.'

"The count stood rooted to the ground, and I saw a dark frown gather on his brow. But he always knew how to command himself. With a laugh that did not come from his heart: 'Mort de ma vie!' he cried--'Mamsell Gabrielle? Why, that would indeed be a triumph of the new school over the old, if you have managed to discover more in these three weeks, than I in the last two years!'

"To be candid with you. Sir,' said Count Ernest, 'I must honestly confess that I did not discover this until last night--not, at least, with any certainty. I was witness to the poor girl's struggle when her brother wanted her to go with him, and I saw that it would be the death of her to part from you.'

"Part from me!--stuff and nonsense!' cried his father. 'That brother of hers startled her--he is a hard-headed fool. It was his coming here so fast and furious, as if it were a matter of life and death, that frightened the girl out of her senses. I tell you, you are mistaken. And besides, who says she is to go? She is of age, and can do as she likes; I mean to take care that she does--her free will shall be protected.'

"Another pause, and then the son: 'Are you sure she may not have to suffer for being so protected? Let me own to you that I went over to X. last night, to speak to this brother of hers. He told me how chivalrous you had been, in defending his sister on one occasion, and also what had been said about it at the time. If you do not intend to sacrifice your protégé's good name for ever, it is indeed high time to dismiss her, or to give her a name that will effectually protect her. Dearest father,' he continued while my master sat silent, angrily gnawing his lip; 'Do not be angry with me for venturing to interfere with any of your decisions. I have set my heart on seeing you in possession of this good fortune, which has been so long within your reach, though you would not see it. Of course, I do not know how you may feel towards this young lady; whether you would care to see her go out alone into an uncertain world--alone with her secret, her grief, and her love for you. But if you really have one spark of feeling for her, why not take a creature so fair and good, and make her your own for ever? If you do decide in haste, I am certain that you will not repent at leisure.'"

"All this time I had never taken my eyes off my darling's face, and I saw it glowing and reddening, till his eyes were all glittering with tears.

"He was standing before his father, and had taken one of his hands in his. 'Strange boy!' his father said; 'I do believe you mean it--you would like to make me leap into this adventure blindfold, as my own folly has often made me do in others. What is there about this girl to make you plead her cause so passionately? And, when I come to think of it, your proposal is not so utterly to be despised. I have only to think of our highborn neighbours, and of their indignation when they hear that Count --- has married his housekeeper, to feel ready for the wedding at once. It would be a satisfaction, but I am afraid it is a satisfaction of which I must deprive myself. Not that there is anything in your taste to be objected to--she comes of a respectable family, and has manners that many a countess might envy her. Yet, it won't do, Ernest, give it up--yes, I will talk to her brother; we will do all that is right to be done, only do you go away now, and leave me



to myself for half an hour. Why,' he went on, as his son still kept hold of his hand; 'are you not satisfied that I should have done this proposal of yours the honor of thinking it worth a moment's consideration? Enough of this! I say again. I acknowledge the kindness of your heart, that would be glad to see me happy; but hearts are giddy things, and are apt to come to their senses after it is too late.'

"And he talked on in this style, without ever once looking at his son. Then he got up, went to the piano, struck a chord or two, went to the window, and shut it hastily.

"'There is something in this you will not tell me,' said his son. 'You are disturbed. You have a reason you will not give me for not doing as I request. I know your way of looking on these disparities of position; therefore it is not that--and what else can it be? For I see by your agitation that the young lady is not indifferent to you.'

"He waited for an answer, in vain. 'I know,' at length he said, very sadly, in a tone of deep dejection; 'I have never been so fortunate as to find my way to your confidence, though, God knows, I have sought it with all my heart; and I never regretted this so much as I do now, but I have been forgetting myself--this conversation has lasted too long already. You think it absurd that a son should take his father's happiness to heart. I have only now to beg your pardon, and to say good-bye.'

"The count turned from the window to look at his son from head to foot, as if he would read through him.

"'Go out into the world, my son, and let the bitter blasts from the so-called summits of society blow over your brains a while, and cool down the effervescence of that strange fanciful heart of yours, and blow away the last of your romantic prejudices. You will soon come and thank me for not having consented to give you a young stepmother, and perhaps a batch of younger brothers. Your fortune would never be sufficient to enable you to move with ease in the society to which you belong, if you had to divide it with a young stepmother, and possibly with other children, far less if you gave it up to them, and had to live on your mother's portion only. On the other hand, a woman I had made a countess of, I should not choose to leave a beggar. Now, have I spoken plainly? and do we understand each other?'

"'We do;' slowly repeated Count Ernest, with a faltering voice; and after a moment of meditation, he went up to the table, where among other things there was an inkstand, and taking out a sheet of paper from his father's portfolio, he wrote a line or two, standing where he was. He had hardly finished, when the elder count came up. 'What on earth are you about? what is this new fancy of yours?' he cried; 'I do believe you are getting up a comedy. I hope you do not mean--'

"'My dear father,' said Count Ernest, placing the written paper before him: 'let me entreat you to do nothing hasty; see here, what I have written; and if you really would make me happy before I go, and do me the greatest favor, please put your seal and signature here, as a ratification of mine. I have sometimes thought I must seem stranger to you than any stranger; our ways of thinking are so different. At the age when sons grow up to be their father's friends, I have been pained to find how little I have been yours. You have given me this moment a strong proof of your affection. But if you repent of it, if you would annul it, and prove to me that I am still as far from understanding you, or doing anything to make you happy, as my poor mother always was,--then, I say,--destroy that paper.'

"Count Henry took it, and I saw his hand tremble, as he held it up to read it. 'Ernest,' he said; 'this is simply impossible; there never can be any question of your giving up this property, to have it settled on a stepmother and her heirs; it can't be done.'"

"The paper fell upon the table, and the two stood side by side for a minute without speaking, and that sunny room was still as death."

"All at once we heard a quick step coming through the ante-chamber, and Pierre came, out of breath, to say:"

"'Monsieur le Comte! Is M. le Comte aware that Mamsell Gabrielle is missing, and that the ranger's assistant met her before day-break, walking on the road to X, and that Mamsell Flor Las been missed as well, and looked for all over the house without being found?'

"'The calèche to the door, this instant!' cried my master, snatching at his hat, that lay on a chair. 'Stay,' he called after the man who was already on the threshold; 'my horse--have it saddled and brought round--allons!'

"'I will accompany you, Sir, if I may,' said Count Ernest; 'as it is, I am all ready for the road.' And he would have hurried away after the servant, but his father held him back, looked in his face without saying a word, and then suddenly folding him in his arms, they stood for a moment heart to heart. After that I saw no more; my eyes were running over, and everything was swimming before me. By the time I had got them dry again--and that was not easy--the room was empty, and only the paper on the table was there to tell me that it had not been all a dream."

"How I felt as I got down the winding staircase, you may fancy, Sir;--when I had found the

door again, groping about with my trembling hands, and stepped out of the dark into the broad daylight again, I felt as if it were a quite new world I was coming to. I heard the horses' hoofs on the pavement of the court, and I saw from the window father and son galloping over the bridge together, while the light carriage that was going to fetch our Gabrielle, was driving gaily after them in the morning sunshine."

"Yes, Sir, and it was a pretty sight to see: that poor thing that had stolen out of the house by the back-gate, before daybreak, and all alone, coming back joyfully by the light of noonday, driving over the great drawbridge, and her master on his grand horse, riding proudly by her side, and him leaping from his saddle, to open the carriage-door, and give her his arm to lead her up the steps!

"And there was a still finer sight to be seen eight days after, when there was a fine wedding at the castle. They were married in the great saloon, and the dinner was downstairs in the hall; and there sat Count Henry at the master's table, with his beautiful young wife, and her brother; and all of us dined at the other table, with flowers and wreaths all over, and the band from X. playing in the gallery. They danced till long past twelve o'clock, and the young countess danced with every one, from the steward to the assistant ranger, and it was talked of all over the country, ever so long after. But to me, sir, the best of all was wanting, and I cannot say that I felt really happy for a single moment. For my dear Count Ernest had not returned with them that morning, and I had not even been able to take leave of him!--And all the time the band was playing, I could not keep from thinking of him, at sea, on his way to Sweden, in that cold night, hearing nothing but the salt waves beating against the ship, and the rough winds blowing.

"When the wedding gaieties were over, everything in the castle went on as it had done before, only that we spoke of our gracious countess, instead of Mamsell Gabrielle, and that the new-married pair rode out every day, and that often when my master played, his young wife sang.

"We had no visits, for those my master and mistress paid among the families of the neighbourhood, were not returned; at which our master only laughed, and indeed, it seemed as if nothing ever could succeed in spoiling his temper again. If anything occurred among the servants, or in the stables, which we would have been afraid to tell him formerly, we had only to speak to the countess, who always knew how to make things smooth, and to charm away his angry mood.

"Only once, I heard her beg and beseech in vain. It was soon after New Year's Day, the snow was very deep, and we lay buried among the woods, as if we had been walled up. An invitation came from the grand duke to a ball at court. It was a ball where all the grand folks of the whole country came together. Last winter our master had gone there too, though he was not in very high favor in that quarter. A court-lackey on horseback had brought the invitation, my master and mistress were at table, and I still see the count, as he pushed away his plate and rose, and walked about the room.

"'What an insult,'--he cried,--while his wife seemed anxious to quiet him. 'They have not included my wife in this invitation;--and yet we shall both do them the honor of going.' And in spite of all that the countess could say or pray, he made the man come in, and ordered him to take back his answer, that the count had accepted the invitation, both for himself and his countess.

"After that he seemed in particularly good spirits, and never minded the countess's petitions, but kissed her forehead, and said: 'Don't you be frightened, child. It is the first time, I ever returned an insult with a favor; I choose to show them that you are their superior, and you must not spoil my sport.'

"And so it really came to my dressing my Gabrielle,--I mean my gracious mistress,--for a ball. She wore a beautiful white satin dress, with a wreath of scarlet and gold in her hair, and she looked like a queen."

"'Comme une reine;' said Monsieur Pierre, who rode before the sledge with a lantern; and sweet she did look, as she nodded to me out of her veils and furs, to say good-bye, and my master, who drove himself, was just cracking his whip to start."

"I was quite in love with her myself, and sat up all that long night awake by the fire, ready to receive her when she came home. I will not weary you, sir, by repeating all I was thinking of the while. It made me go to sleep myself, and I only waked towards morning at the noise of the sledge bells. When I came running down, the count was already leading his countess up to her room. Neither of them seemed tired at all; they looked as bright and happy as if something particular had occurred to please them. When he said good night, he took her tenderly in his arms,--before me, sir, and all the servants,--held her there for a minute, as if he had forgotten the whole world besides. I saw how much moved she was, and I followed her into her room to help her to undress. As soon as we were alone, she fell upon my neck in tears, and as she always had treated me as a mother, she told me all that had taken place. They had created a great sensation, when they came in, later than the rest. The duchess, who was a very haughty woman, had not said a word, when the count led her up and presented her as his wife. But the young duke had been excessively courteous, and had opened the ball with her, and had distinguished her more than all the other ladies. She had felt completely at her ease, and I could easily see that she had

been the reigning beauty."

"But to her great alarm, she had come upon that rude English lord, standing at one of the card-tables, and only on seeing her husband so indifferent and calm, had she been able to recover her self-possession. After one of the dances, the count had led her into another room to take some refreshment; and there he had introduced some gentlemen to her. Meanwhile the Englishman had come in with some ladies, unobserved; and he had raised his eye-glass with a fixed stare at her, and had said quite out loud: 'For a chamber-maid, she is not without tournure.' There had been a dead silence; the count had changed color, and soon after he had said, in a tone of the greatest indifference: 'Look there, Gabrielle, don't you see a striking likeness between that gentleman who has just come in, and that illbred person who was once so rude to you, and was served with a taste of my horsewhip and my pistols as the consequence? I rather think the horsewhip would have been enough; people who know him are apt to think him hardly worth the powder and shot.'"

"You can fancy, sir, how my poor countess felt when he said this. However, she heard no more just then, for the duke came in to the refreshment-room after his partner, and was politeness itself, and all attention. I fancy more than one of these highborn ladies, must have gone green and yellow with envy and jealousy. When the fête was over, and my master and mistress took their leave, the English lord had followed them in a very insulting manner, and when they came to the staircase had whispered a word or two in the count's ear; who had then stood still, and had answered quite loud enough to be heard by all the footmen, and some of the court-gentlemen who were standing about:

"This time you will have to look for another player at that game, my lord--I have found a prize since then, which I have no intention of staking on one card: even if I were certain that the cards were not false, as, they did say in the London clubs, some people are in the habit of using. In case you should require any further satisfaction, my horsewhip is still, as it was then, very much at your service."

"And with that he had gone, and left the fellow standing. On their way home, he had said to Gabrielle: 'I trust this is the last remnant of my past life that will ever rise up to throw a shadow on my present happiness. You alone are all my present and all my future, in this world.' And he had said more of the like loving, heart-felt things that kept her warmer in the cold and snow of that winter night than all her furs."

"From that time they lived alone, and were all and all to each other, refusing every invitation that came from court--only now and then, they took little journeys; though it was easy to see that they were always happiest at home, among our solitary woods. The countess never changed to me, and used always to tell me everything. The only thing we never spoke of, was what had passed between us on that awful morning, when she had wanted to go away--I never heard whether she confessed the real reason to her husband. I rather think it likely that she did, for now the count had a peculiar look of tenderness, whenever he mentioned his absent son; even when he got a letter from Stockholm. When that happened he would send for me upstairs, and talk to me of my darling, and give me the love he never forgot to send me. Once or twice a year he wrote to me himself; familiarly and kindly, as ever, but never a word of what was most important to me--not a word of what he felt or thought."

"When he had been about two years away, he wrote to announce his intended marriage with a highborn young lady in Sweden, and to ask for his father's consent. To me he wrote, that he hoped I should not withhold my blessing, as his bride was exactly such as I would have chosen for him myself. And afterwards he sent me her picture;--an angel's face; all gentleness and goodness. Before I had seen it, I used sometimes to torment myself with thinking that he had only made up his mind to marry, in order to set his father's mind at rest. But I knew, those great clear, innocent eyes of hers, must have found their way to his heart."

"Then came accounts of the wedding, and of their beautiful wedding-tour among the mountains. You will hardly believe it, sir, but even then the young countess found time and thoughts to spare for poor old Flor. She wrote to thank me, for having taken such care of her Ernest all his life, she said. But there was no word of their coming back to Germany, especially after the pair of twins was born--which event was an occasion of great rejoicing here in this castle. The count used to talk of going to Sweden, and taking me along with them; and you will believe that my head was turned by the thoughts of such a journey, and such a meeting."

"But it is not for us to number our days--many an old cripple, or useless pensioner, has to stand sentinel a weary while, watching for the call, and waiting to be relieved. And other lives, on which a whole world of happiness hangs, are taken--we do not know how or why."

"One day Count Henry was carried home for dead. He had been thrown from his horse, and had received some internal injury, which no doctor was able to discover. He came to himself again, but only with a faint light of consciousness or memory. He knew the countess and me, but no one else--Pierre he would not suffer in the room at all. He took him for a rat, and cried incessantly; 'Take it away!--catch it!--set a trap for it!--it has gnawed away my wedding-garment. See what a hole it has bitten in it!'"

"And then he would call upon his son so movingly, it was impossible to hear him without tears.

The countess had written immediately to Count Ernest, to tell him the state in which his father was; I only feared he might come too late."

"Do not ask me, Sir, to describe those days, and the nights we had to live through, nor the heart-rending sight it was to see that young wife, who never uttered one word of complaint, but rather was a support to us all. On the twelfth day, the young count came. We had hardly expected him so soon, and we were almost startled when he entered the sick room."

"As soon as he heard the door open, my master waked up from the lethargy in which he had been lying, and sat up, and in a voice which I shall hear all my life, he cried: 'Ernest, my son!' and burst into a passion of tears, and wept as though his spirit were passing away through his eyes. After that he became surprisingly cheerful and sensible, and lay quietly, holding his son's hand in his. He talked again without rambling; so for one moment we hoped the worst was over, and the turn taken towards getting better. But ten minutes after, his eyes grew dim again; he gave one look at his countess, and said: 'Ernest will take care of you.' He was going to say something to his son as well, when he fell back and was gone."

"You must excuse me, Sir, for telling you all this so particularly, but you must let me say a few words more, to tell you how it ended. Alas! the end came soon enough! The very day after the funeral Count Ernest went away again, after having done all that could be done, by seals and documents, to make the countess complete mistress of the whole. For they had found no will. Count Henry knew well enough that he had only to say; 'Ernest will provide for you,' to close his eyes in peace."

"If there is anything I can do for you, I beg you to command me in every way;' my dear Count Ernest had said to his stepmother before he went. 'If you should ever find this solitude too much for you, I hope you will remember that my wife is waiting to receive you with open arms.'"

"She looked at him affectionately, and held out her hand, which he respectfully took and kissed."

"You are well cared for;' he said in a low voice; 'I leave you with my own faithful Flor--I only beg you will bring her with you, when you come to Sweden.'"

"Of course this was more than I could hear with dry eyes. So I threw my apron over my face, and ran away--but in the passage he held me fast, and kissed me quite vehemently, and I felt how his heart was beating, and the hot tears from his eyes came dripping on my grey hairs."

"My boy, my Ernest, my dearest master!' I said;--'God bless you for having come! as He has already blessed you for your truth and tenderness. He did not take your father until you had heard from his dying lips, that he well knew what a son he was leaving. Go, and God be with you! Give old Flor's love to your countess, and to the darling children; tell them that Flor has no other wish on earth, but that the whole world might know Count Ernest's heart as she knows it, and then the whole world would be ready to lay their hands beneath your feet, as she is.'"

"He broke away from me, and ordered his horses to meet him at the top of the walk that leads up the forest--He walked on before, and I heard people say that he had wandered about the forest, taking leave of the spots he loved, and now looked upon for the last time. So even at that time he must have resolved never to return. He could not be happy again in his old home."

"And so I knew that I had taken leave of him for ever. I would have fretted still more about it, only I was so taken up with my mistress. She pined away; white and quiet, and without a murmur. It was just as if strong hands were dragging her down into her husband's grave. Even dead, that proud man ruled her. When I wrote the sad tidings to Count Ernest--it is hardly a year ago--he answered me immediately; he said I was to go to them, at all events; and the young countess wrote and begged me, as hard as one can beg. My Ernest had given up his post, and settled where they are living still, on a very fine estate among the hills, close by the sea, where I suppose it must be beautiful."

"I would come myself to fetch you,' he wrote; 'only I am too conscientious in my duties as a husband and a husbandman, to go from home in harvest-time.'"

"He did not like to give his real reason. But all this melted me, and I got my bits of things together, and gave over my keys to the new steward. The countess's brother had a pride of his own, and never would have anything to do with her inheritance; and so, one fine morning, I really was quite ready to go, and drove away. But when I got to that road in the hollow, to the place where one can see these chimney tops just peeping above the woods, my heart failed me all at once, and I jumped out of the carriage, and ran home as if the fiends had hunted me. And when I got back into our court, I felt as if I had been a hundred years away."

"Ah! Sir, it is no good transplanting a rotten tree!--it should be left standing where it grew, waiting for the axe. Heaven knows, I would gladly give the few years I have to live to see my Ernest's children only once; to take them in my arms, and hug those darling babes; but I know I could never be dragged so far. They would have to bury me in the sea, and my ghost would walk the wild salt waves, and never rest in peace."

"How different here, where our own pleasant woods are shading the graves where my master

and mistress are lying side by side. The birds singing among the branches, and the deer grazing peacefully round the two grave-stones that bear their names."

"When old Flor's weary eyes are closed, and there is no one alive to tend them, they will soon be overgrown with moss and brushwood; and in the woods where these two hid their happiness from the world, their rest is hidden--and there, please God, shall mine be."

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## **BLIND.**

### **BLIND.**

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#### **CHAPTER I.**

At a window which opened over a little flower-garden, stood the blind daughter of the village sexton, and sought revival from the wind as it blew over her hot face. The delicate half-grown figure shook, and the small cold hands lay clasped upon the windowsill.

Farther back in the room, sat a blind boy, on a stool before the old spinet, playing restless melodies. He might be about fifteen; scarcely a year older than the girl. No one who saw and heard him, as he lifted up his large open eyes, or bent his head towards the window, could have guessed him to be so afflicted--there was so much security, nay, vehemence, in his movements.

He broke off suddenly, in the midst of a sacred song that had been running wild beneath his fingers.

"Did you sigh, Marlene?" he asked, without turning his head.

"Not I, Clement; what should I sigh for? I only started when the wind burst in so suddenly."

"But sigh you did! Do you think I do not hear you when I play? When you shiver, I feel it even here."

"Yes, it is cold now."

"You don't deceive me! If you were only cold, you would not be standing there at the window. And I know what makes you sigh and tremble; you are afraid because the doctor is to come tomorrow and pierce our eyes with needles. Yet he told us how quickly it is done, and that it is only like the sting of a gnat. You used to be so brave and patient. When I was little, and used to cry when I was hurt, were not you always held up as a pattern to me by my mother, though you are only a girl. And now you cannot find your courage, and do not in the least think of all the joy that is to come after."

She shook her head. "Can you believe me to be afraid of so short a pain? And yet I am oppressed by foolish childish fancies, from which I cannot see my way. From that day when the strange doctor for whom the baron sent, came down from the great house to see your father, and your mother called us in to him from the garden--from that hour there has been a weight upon me which will not go. You were so glad, you took no notice; but when your father knelt down, and began to return thanks to God for this great mercy, my heart was dumb within me, and I could not join. I tried to find a reason for being thankful, but I could feel none."

She said this very quietly, and her voice was steady. He struck a few gentle chords. Between the hoarse jarring tones peculiar to such old instruments, sounded the distant song of returning labourers--contrasting, as did that life, in its plenitude of light and power, with the dream-life of these two blind children.

The boy appeared to feel it; he rose hastily, and went to the window with unerring step--for he knew that room and everything it contained--and, tossing back his fine fair curls, he said:

"You are fanciful, Marlene; our fathers and mothers and all the village wish us joy, and should it not be joy?--before they promised this, I did not mind. We are blind, they say; I never knew what it was we wanted. When visitors used to come and see my mother, and we heard them pity us, and say; 'Ah, those poor children!' I used to get so angry. What right have they to pity us? I thought. Still, I always knew that we are not like other people. They often spoke of things I did not understand, but yet which must be lovely; now that we are to know these too, curiosity has taken hold of me, and will not let me rest night or day."

"I was quite content before;" said Marlene, sadly. "I was happy, and could have been happy all my life--now it will be different. Do you never hear people complain of care and trouble? and what did we know of care?"

"That was because we did not know the world; and I want to know it, at whatever risk. I too have been contented to grope about with you, and to be left in idleness--but not for ever. I will have no advantage over those who have to work. Sometimes, when my father used to teach us history, and tell us of all the heroes and their doings, I would ask him if any of these were blind? But every man who had done anything to speak of, could see. The like thoughts would keep tormenting me for days. Then, when I was at my music, or was allowed to play the organ in your father's place, I would forget my grievances. Again, I often thought; 'Am I eternally to play this organ, and walk these few hundred steps about this village here for ever? and beyond this village, never to be heard of by one living soul, or spoken of when I am dead?' You see, since that doctor has been up there at the castle, I have had a hope of growing up to be a man like other men--and to be able to go out into the wide world, and go where I please, and have nobody to mind."

"Not even me, Clement?" She spoke without complaint or reproach, but the boy broke out passionately:

"How can you talk such stuff, which you know I can't abide? Do you think I would go away and leave you all alone? or steal from home in secret? Do you think I could do that?"

"I know how it is. When the village-lads begin their wanderings, or go away to town, nobody ever may go with them, not even their own sisters; and here, while they are children still, the boys run away from the girls whenever they come near them. Till now they let you stay with me, and we learned and played together; you were blind, as I was--what should you have done with other boys? But when you see, and wish to stay with me, they will mock you, and hoot after you, as they do to all who do not hold to them; and then you will go away, for ever so long a time, perhaps--and I--how shall I ever learn to do without you?"

The last words were spoken with an effort, and then her terrors overcame her, and she sobbed aloud.

Clement drew her towards him, and stroked her cheeks, and said with earnest tenderness: "Yon must not cry; I am not going to leave you--never--rather remain blind and forget the rest. I will not leave you if it makes you cry so. Come now, be calm; do be glad!--you must not heat yourself, the doctor said; it is not good for the eyes, dear darling Marlene!"

He took her in his arms, and clasped her close, and kissed her cheek--a thing he had never done before. Just then he heard his mother calling to him from the vicarage close by; and leading the still weeping girl to a chair by the wall, and seating her upon it, he hurried out.

Shortly after, a venerable pair might be seen walking down the hill, from the great house towards the village. The vicar, a tall and stately form, with all the power and majesty of an apostle; and the sexton, a simple slight-built man, with humble gait and hair already white. Both had been invited to pass the afternoon with the lord of the manor and the doctor, whom he had sent for from the adjacent town, for the purpose of examining the children's eyes and attempting an operation. The doctor had repeatedly assured the two delighted fathers, that he had every reasonable hope of a perfect cure; and he had requested them to hold themselves in readiness for the morrow.

It was the mother's business to prepare what was needful in the vicarage. The children were not to be parted on the day appointed to restore to both the light, of which, together, they had been so long deprived.

When the two fathers reached their homes (they were opposite neighbours), the vicar gave his old friend's hand a squeeze, and said, with glistening eyes: "God be with them and us!"--and then they parted. The sexton went into his house, where all was quiet, for the servant-girl was in the garden. He went into his room, rejoicing in the stillness that made him feel alone with his God. But when he crossed the threshold he was startled by his child. She had risen from her chair, holding her handkerchief to her eyes, her bosom heaving, as if in spasms, her cheeks and lips dead white. He sought to comfort her; begging her to be composed, and anxiously enquiring what had happened? Tears were her only answer--tears which, even to herself, she could not have explained.

## CHAPTER II.

The children had been laid in two small rooms with a northern aspect, in the upper story of the vicarage. In default of shutters, the windows had been carefully hung with shawls, making soft twilight of the brightest noonday. The vicar's quiet extensive orchard, while it gave the walls abundant shade, kept off the din of village life beyond.

The doctor had enjoined extreme precaution, for the girl especially. As far as depended upon himself, the operation had proved successful. In solitude and silence. Nature must be left to do the rest. The young girl's temperament was so excitable as to require the utmost care, and most attentive watching.

At the decisive hour Marlene had not flinched; and when her mother had burst into tears on first hearing the doctor's step on the threshold, she had gone up to her to comfort her.

The doctor began the operation with the boy. Though somewhat agitated, he had seated himself bravely, and borne it well. At first he would not suffer himself to be held, and only yielded to Marlene's entreaties. When, for a second, the doctor removed his hand from his unveiled eyes, he had raised a cry of surprise and delight.

Marlene started; then she too proceeded to undergo the ordeal without a murmur. Tears gushed from her eyes, and she shook from head to foot, hastily tying on the bandage. The doctor helped them to carry her into the adjoining room, for her knees knocked together, and she could hardly stand. There, stretched on her little conch, she had a long alternation of sleep and faintness; while the boy declared himself to be quite well, and only his father's serious orders induced him to go to bed. To go to sleep was not so easy. Confused visions of forms and colors,-- colors for the first time,--flitted across his brain; mysterious forms that had as yet been nothing to him, and were now to be so much, if those were right who wished him joy. He asked a thousand questions while his father and mother sat by his bedside--riddles not yet expounded by the deepest science. For what can science tell us, after all, of the hidden springs of life? His father entreated him to be patient; with God's help, ere long, he would be able to resolve these doubts himself; at present, quiet was the one thing needful--especially to Marlene, whom he must not wake by talking. This silenced him, and listening at the wall, he whispered a petition that the door between them might be left ajar, in order that he might hear whether she slept or if she was in pain. When his mother had done his bidding, he lay quite still, and listened to the breathing of his little sleeping friend; and the quiet rhythm as it rose and fell, sang him like a lullaby to sleep.

Thus they lay for hours. The village was much more still than usual. Those who had to pass the vicarage with carts, took every possible precaution against noise. Even the village-children, warned, most likely, by their master, in place of running riot on coming out of school as usual, went quietly by in couples to their remotest playgrounds, whispering as they passed, and looking up at the house with wistful eyes. The birds alone among the branches did not hush their song. But when did a bird's voice ever vex or weary child of man, be he ever so sorely in need of rest?

Only by the bells of the homebound flocks, were the children at last awakened. The boy's first question was for Marlene, and whether she had been asking for him? He called to her in a suppressed tone, and asked her how she felt? That heavy sleep has not restored her, and her eyes are burning under the slight handkerchief that binds them. But she does violence to her sensations, and forces herself to answer that she feels much better, and to talk cheerfully to Clement, who now gives utterance to all the wildest speculations of his fancy.

Late, when the moon stands high above the woods, a shy small childish hand is heard to knock at the vicarage door. The little village-girls have brought a garland for Marlene; woven from their choicest garden-flowers, and a bunch of them for Clement. When they are brought, the boy's whole countenance lightens up. "Give them my kindest thanks," he begs; "they are such kind good girls! I am not well yet, but when I have my sight, I shall always be on their side, and help them against the boys." When the wreath was brought to Marlene, she pushed it gently from her with her small pale hands. "I cannot have it here," she said; "it makes me faint, dear mother, to have these flowers so near--give these to Clement too."

Again she sank into a sort of feverish slumber; only the healing approach of day brought something like repose. And the doctor, who came in the morning very early, was able to pronounce her out of danger, which indeed was more than he had hoped for. He sat long by the boy's bedside, listening to his strange questions with a smile, benevolently admonishing him to patience; and, filled with the most sanguine hopes, he left them.

But to be admonished to quiet and patience after one has had a glimpse of the promised land! In each interval of his duties, his father had to go upstairs to that little room and talk. And the door was left ajar, that Marlene too might hear these charming stories. Legends of godly men and women, to whom the Lord had sent most heavy trials, and then withdrawn them. The story of

poor Henry, and of that pious little maiden who would have sacrificed herself in her humility; and how God had guided all to the most blissful consummation; and as many of such edifying histories as the worthy pastor could find to unfold.

And when on the good man's lips, story would unconsciously turn to prayer; or his wife would raise her clear voice in a hymn of thanksgiving, Clement would fold his hands and join--but he would so soon break in with fresh enquiries, as to prove his mind to have been far more present with the story than with the song.

Marlene asked no questions; she was kind and cheerful to every one, and no one guessed the thoughts and questions that were working in her mind.

They recovered visibly from day to day; and on the fourth, the doctor allowed them to get up. He himself supported the young girl, as, all weak and trembling, she crept towards the door, where the boy stood joyously holding out a searching hand for hers, and then holding hers fast, he bid her lean on him, which she did in her usual confiding way.

They paced up and down--he with the perceptions of locality peculiar to the blind, guiding her carefully past the chairs and cupboards that stood against the walls. "How do you feel now?" he asked her. "Well;" she answered again--and always.

"Come," he said; "lean heavier on me; you are so weak. It would do you good to breathe the air, and the scent of the flowery meadows; it is so close and heavy here. Only the doctor says it might be dangerous; our eyes might get sore again, and even blind, if we were to see the light too soon. Ah! now I know the difference between light and darkness! No sound in music is so sweet as that feeling of space about the eyes. It did hurt me rather, I must confess; yet I could have gazed for ever at those bright colors--the pain was so beautiful (you will soon feel it also). But it will be many a long day before we are allowed to enjoy that pleasure. At first, I know I shall do nothing but look all day long. One thing I should like to know, Marlene; they tell us each thing has its color--now what is the color of your face and mine? I should so like to know--bright or dark? Would not it be disagreeable if they should not be bright and fair? I wonder whether I shall know you with my eyes? Now when I only feel with the tip of this little finger, I could distinguish you from every other human being in the world.

"But then!--ah! then we shall have to begin again. We must learn to know each other by sight. Now, I know that your cheeks and hair are soft to touch--will they be soft to look at? I do so long to know, and have so long to wait!" In this way he would run on, talking unceasingly. How silently she walked by his side, he never noticed. Many of his words sank deep into her heart. It had never yet occurred to her that she should see herself as others saw her--she could hardly fancy that could be. She had heard of mirrors, but she never had been able to understand them. She now imagined that when a seeing person's eyes are opened, his own image must stand before him.

Now as she lay in bed, her mother believing her to be asleep, the words recurred to her again: "It would be disagreeable if we should find our faces dark!" She had heard of ugliness and beauty; she knew that ugly people were generally much pitied, and often less loved. "If I should be ugly," she said to herself, "and he were to care less for me! He used to play with my hair and call it silk--he will never do that now, if he finds me ugly. And he?--if *he* should happen to be ugly, I never would let him feel it--never! I should love him just the same. Yet, no; *he* cannot be ugly--not he. I know he is not." Thus she brooded long, lost in care and curiosity. The weather was hot and close. From the garden the nightingale was heard complaining, while fitful gusts of west wind came rattling at the windowpanes. She was all alone in her room. Her mother, who till now had slept beside her, had had her bed removed, to lessen the heat within that narrow space. It was unnecessary to watch her now, they thought, as all feverish symptoms were supposed to have disappeared. This night, however, they did return again, and kept her tossing restlessly until long after midnight. Then sleep, though steep dull and broken, had taken pity on her, and come to close her weary eyelids.

Meanwhile the storm that had been encircling the horizon half the day, threatening and growling, had arisen with might, gathered itself just above the wood, and paused--even the wind had ceased. Now a heavy crash of thunder breaks over the young girl's slumbers. She starts up, half dreaming still--what it is she feels or wants, she hardly knows; impelled by some vague terror, she rises to her feet. Her pillows seem to burn her. Standing by her bed, she listens to the pattering rain without; but it does not cool her fevered brow. She tries to collect her thoughts--to remember what had passed. She can recall nothing but those melancholy fancies with which she had fallen asleep. A hasty resolution forms and ripens in her mind. She will go to Clement; he too is alone--what is to prevent her resolving all her doubts at once, by one look at him and at herself? Possessed by this idea, the doctor's injunctions are all forgotten. Just as she had left her couch, with groping trembling hands, she finds the door which stands half open; feeling for the bed, she steals on tiptoe to the sleeper's side; holding her breath, bending forward where he lies, she tears the bandage from her eyes.

But how is she terrified to find that all is as dark as ever. She had forgotten that it was night, and that she had been told night makes all men blind. She had believed it was the light streaming from a seeing eye that lighted up itself and other objects round it. She can distinguish nothing, although she feels the boy's soft breath upon her eyelids. In distress, almost in despair, she is



about to leave the room, when a sudden flash of lightning flames through the now less carefully darkened panes; a second, and then a third--the whole atmosphere seems to surge with lurid light. Thunder and rain increase their roar. But she stands motionless, her rapt gaze fastened on the curly head before her, resting so peacefully upon its pillows. Then the picture begins to fade--the water gushes from her eyes; seized with unutterable terror, she takes refuge in her room, and hastily replacing the bandage, she throws herself upon her bed. She knows--she feels irrevocably--her eyes have looked and seen for the first time--and for the last!

### CHAPTER III.

Weeks have passed--the young powers of these eyes are to be tried by the light of day. The doctor, who, from the adjacent town where he lived, had hitherto directed the children's simple treatment, had come over on a bright unclouded day, to be present, and with his patients to enjoy, the first fruits of his skill.

Green wreaths in lieu of curtains had been hung about the windows, and both rooms festively adorned with flowers and foliage. The baron himself, and from the village the nearer friends of both the families, had assembled to wish parents and children joy, and to rejoice in the happy wonder of the cure.

When Clement, scarlet with delight, was placed before Marlene, and took her hand, in shy terror she had half hidden herself in a corner behind some foliage. He had begged to be allowed to see her first--both bandages had been loosened at the same moment. A cry of speechless rapture had sounded from the boy's lips; he remained rigid on the same spot, a beatified smile upon his lips, turning his flashing eyes on every side. He has forgotten that Marlene was to be placed before him; (he had yet to learn what the human form is like,) and she did nothing to recall it to him. She stood motionless. Only her long lashes quivered over her large clear brown passive eyes. No suspicions were awakened yet. "Those unknown wonders of sight are strange to her," they said. But when the boy broke out into this sudden rapture, and they said to him, "This is Marlene," and in his old way he had felt for her cheek with his hand, and stroked it, saying, "Your face is bright;" then her tears gushed out. She hastily shook her head, and said, almost inaudibly--"It is all dark; it is just as it always was!"

The horror of that first moment who shall describe? The agitated doctor drew her towards the window, and proceeded to examine her eyes; the pupils were not to be distinguished from seeing ones, save by their lifeless melancholy fixedness. "The nerve is dead!" he said; "some sudden shock, or vivid light must have destroyed it." The sexton's wife tamed white, and fell fainting in her husband's arms. Clement could hardly gather what was passing--his mind was filled with the new life given him. But Marlene lay bathed in tears, and returned no answer to the doctor's questions. Nothing was ever learned from her; she could not tell how it had happened, she said; she begged to be forgiven for her childish weeping. She could bear all that was appointed for her--she had never known a happier lot.

Clement was beside himself when the extent of her misfortune was made known to him. "You shall see too!" he cried, running to her; "I do not care to see if you do not! It cannot be so hopeless yet. Ah, now I know what it is you lose! Seeing would be nothing; it is that everybody else has eyes, that look so kindly on us--and so shall you see them look on you! Only have patience, and do not cry!" And then he turned to the doctor, and with tears, implored him to cure Marlene. Large tears stood in the good doctor's eyes; he could scarcely so far compose himself as to bid the boy first be careful of himself; meanwhile he would see what could be done; he was forced to leave him a ray of hope to spare him dangerous agitation.

From the disconsolate parents, however, he did not withhold the truth.

The boy's grief had been some comfort to Marlene. As she was sitting by the window she called him to her: "You must not be so grieved," she said; "it is the will of God. Rejoice, as I rejoice, that you are cured. You know I never cared so much; I could have been contented as it was. If only father and mother would not mind!--but they will get used to it again, and so will you. If you will only love me just as well now that I am to remain as I was, we may still be very happy."

But he was not so easily to be comforted, and the doctor had to insist on their being parted. Clement was taken into the larger room, where the villagers came pressing round him, shaking hands with him by turns, with cordial words and wishes. The crowd half stunned him, and he only kept repeating: "Marlene is still blind; she will never see! have you heard?" he would say, and burst into tears afresh.

It was high time to tie the bandage on again, and lead him to his own cool quiet room--there he lay exhausted with joy and grief and weeping. His father came to him, and spoke tenderly and

piously; which did not much avail him. He cried even in his sleep, and appeared to be disturbed by distressing dreams.

On the following day, however, wonder, joy, and curiosity asserted their rights again; sorrow for Marlene only appeared to touch him nearly when he had her before his eyes. The first thing in the morning he had been to see her, and with affectionate anxiety to enquire whether she felt no change--no more hopeful symptom? Then he became absorbed in the variegated world that was expanding before his eyes. When he returned to Marlene, it was only to describe some new wonder to her, although sometimes, in his fullest flow of narrative, he would stop suddenly, reminded by a look at the poor little friend beside him, how painful to her his joy must be. But in reality, she did not find it painful. For herself she wanted nothing--listening to the enthusiasm of his delight was joy enough for her. Only when by-and-by he came more rarely, or remained silent, for the reason that all he could have said, appeared as nothing to what he did not dare to say--only then she began to feel uneasy. Hitherto, by day, she had hardly ever been without him, but now she often sat alone. Her mother would come to keep her company; but her mother, once so lively, in losing her dearest hope, had also lost her cheerfulness.

She could find nothing to say to her child save words of comfort, which her own sighs belied, and which therefore could not reach her heart. How much of what the young girl now was suffering had she not foreseen with terror! And yet the feeling of what she had lost, came upon her with pangs of unknown bitterness.

She would still sit spinning in her father's garden, and when Clement came, these poor blind eyes of hers would light up strangely. He was always kind, and would sit beside her, stroking her hair and cheek as he had done of old. Once she entreated him not to be so silent--she felt no touch of envy when he told her what the world was like, and what it daily taught him; but when he left her to herself, she felt so lonely! Never, by word or look, did she remind him of that evening when he had promised he would never leave her--such hopes as these she had long resigned. And since he had nothing to conceal from her, he appeared to love her twice as well.

In the fullness of his heart, he would sit for hours telling her of the sun and moon and stars; of all the trees and flowers; and especially how their parents looked, and they themselves. To her very heart's core, she felt a thrill of joy, when he innocently told her that she was fairer far than all the village maidens; he described her as tall and slender; with delicately-chiselled features, and dark eyebrows. He had also seen himself, he said, in the glass; but he was not nearly so good-looking--men in general were not, by a great deal, so handsome as women. All this was more than she could quite comprehend; only so much she did: her own looks pleased him, and more than this her heart did not desire.

They did not again return to this topic; but on the beauties of nature he was perfectly inexhaustible. When he was gone, she would recall his words, and feel a kind of jealousy of a world that robbed her of him. In secret this childish feeling grew and strengthened--growing stronger even than the pleasure she had felt in his delight. Above all, she began to hate the sun; for the sun, he told her, was brighter than all created things besides. In her dim conceptions, brightness and beauty were the same; and never did she feel so disheartened as when, towards evening, he sat beside her, intoxicated with delight, watching the sun go down. Of herself he had never spoken in such words--and did this sight so cause him to forget her that he did not even see the tears that started to her eyes--tears of vexation, and of a curious kind of jealous grievance?

Her heart grew heavier still, when, with the doctor's sanction, the vicar began the education of his son. Before his eyes had been couched, the greater part of his day had been spent in practising his music. Bible teaching, something of history and mathematics, and a trifle of Latin, was all that formerly had been considered needful. In all those lessons, not extending beyond the most conventional acquirements, Marlene had taken a part.

Now that the boy manifested a very decided taste for natural history, his time was filled up in earnest; preparing him for one of the higher classes of a school in the neighbouring town. With a firm unwearying will, and his natural dispositions aiding, he laboured through all that had been omitted in his education, and soon attained the level of his years. For many an hour together, he would sit in the sexton's garden with his book; but there was now no question of their former chat. Marlene felt her twofold loss--her lessons and her friend.

## CHAPTER IV.

The autumn came, and with it a few days' pause in the lad's studies. The vicar had resolved to take his son, before the winter, on an excursion among the mountains; to shew him the hills and dales, and give him a deeper insight into a world that already had seemed so fair, even upon the meagre plains around their village.

When the boy first heard of it; "Marlene must go with us," he said. They attempted to dissuade him, but he refused to go without her. "What if she cannot see?" he said; "The mountain-air is strengthening, and she has been so pale and weak, and she falls into anxious fancies when I am away."

They did his bidding therefore; the young girl was lifted into the carriage beside Clement and his parents, and one short day's journey brought them to the foot of the mountain-chain. Here commenced their wanderings on foot. Patiently the boy conducted his little friend, now more reserved than ever. He often felt a wish to climb some solitary peak that promised a fresh expanse of view, but he led her wherever she wished to go, and would not give up the charge, often as his parents would have relieved him of it.

Only when they had reached a height, or were resting in some shady spot, would he leave the young girl's side; seeking his own path among the most perilous rocks, he would go collecting stones or plants not to be found below. Then when he returned to the resting party, he had always something to bring Marlene--some berries, a sweet-scented flower, or some soft bird's-nest blown from the trees by the wind.

She would accept them with gentle thanks; she appeared to be more contented than at home, and she really was so, for all day long she breathed the same air with him. But, her foolish jealousies went with her. She felt angry at the mountains, whose autumn glory, as she believed, endeared the world still more to him, and estranged him more from her.

At last the vicar's wife was struck by her strange ways. She would occasionally consult her husband about the child, who was as dear to both as if she had been their own. Her obstinate dejection was attributed by both to the disappointment of her hopes of sight; and yet the young girl felt no pain in losing that which had only been promised to her, or depicted to her fancy--it was all in the loss of what she had already known; of what had been her own.

On the second evening of their journey they halted at a solitary inn, celebrated from its situation close to a waterfall. Their wanderings had been long, and the women were very weary. As soon as they reached the house, the vicar took in his wife before going on farther to the cleft, from whence they already heard the roaring of the water. Marlene was quite exhausted, yet she would persist in following Clement, who felt no want of rest. They climbed the remaining steps, and louder and nearer sounded the tumult of the waters. Midway up the narrow path Marlene's remaining strength gave way. "Let me sit down here," she said, "while you go on, and fetch me when you have looked long enough." He offered to lead her home before going farther, but she was already seated, so he left her and went on, following the sound; touched at once, and charmed with the solitude and majesty of the spot.

Seated upon a stone, the young girl began to long for his return. "He will never come!" she thought. A chill crept over her, and the dull distant thunder of the falls gave her a shudder.

"Why does he not come?" she said; "he will have forgotten me in his delight, as he always does. If I could only find the way back to the house that I might get warm again!" And so she sat and listened to every distant sound. Now she thought she heard him calling to her; trembling, she rose--what was she to do? Involuntarily she tried a step, but her foot slipped, and she staggered and fell. Fortunately the stones on the path were all overgrown with moss. Still the fall terrified her, and losing all self-command, she screamed for help; but her voice was unable to reach across the chasm to Clement, who was standing on the edge, in the very midst of the uproar, and the house was too far off. A sharp pain cut to her heart, as she lay among the stones, helpless and deserted. Tears of desperation started to her eyes, as she rose with difficulty. What she most dearly loved seemed hateful to her now--her heart was too full of bitterness even to feel that an all-seeing God was nigh. Thus Clement found her; when for her sake he had torn himself with an effort from the spell of so magnificent a scene.

"I am coming!" he called to her from a distance. "It is lucky that you did not come with us--the place was so narrow, one false step would have been enough to kill you. The water falls so far, deep down, and roars and rushes, and rises again in clouds of spray, it makes one giddy. Only feel how it has powdered me. But how is this? You are cold as ice, and your lips are trembling. Come, it was very wrong of me to leave you sitting out so late in the cold! God forbid that it should make you ill!"

She suffered herself to be led back in perverse silence. The vicar's wife was much alarmed at seeing the child's sweet countenance so distorted and disturbed. They prepared some warm drink for her in haste, and made her go to bed without being able to learn more than that she felt unwell.

And in truth she did feel ill--so ill that she wished to die. Life that had already proved itself so adverse, had also become odious to her. She lay there, giving full vent to her impious rancorous thoughts, wilfully destroying the last links that bound her to her fellow-creatures. "I will go up there to-morrow;" she said to herself, in her dark brooding. "He himself shall take me to the spot where one false step may kill me. My death will not kill him. Why should he have to bear my burden longer?--he has only borne it out of pity."

This guilty thought wound close and closer round her heart. What had become of her natural

disposition, so tender and transparent, during those last few months of inward struggle? She even dwelt without remorse on the consequences of her crime. "They will get used to it, as they have got used to my being blind; he will not always have the picture of my misery before his eyes, to spoil his pleasure in this beautiful world of his!" This last reflexion invariably came to strengthen her resolves, when a doubt would arise to combat them.

The vicar and his wife were in the adjoining room, separated from hers by a thin partition. Clement still lingered out of doors, under the trees; he could not part from the stars and mountains, or shut out the distant music of the waters.

"It distresses me to see how Marlene pines and falls away," said his mother. "If the slightest causes agitate her so, she will be soon worn out. If you would only talk to her, and tell her not to make herself so miserable about a misfortune that cannot be repaired."

"I am afraid it would be useless;" returned the vicar. "If her education, her father's and mother's tenderness, and her daily intercourse with ourselves, have not spoken to her heart, no human words can do so. If she had learned to submit herself to the will of God, she would bear a dispensation that has left her so much to be thankful for, with gratitude, and not with murmurings."

"He has taken much away from her!"

"He has, but not all--not for ever, at least. Now she seems to have lost the faculty of loving; of holding all things as nothing, compared to the love of God and of His creatures. And this faculty only returns to us when we return to God. As she now is, she does not wish to return to Him--her grievances and her discontent are still too dear to her; but the tone of her mind is too healthy to harbour these sad companions long. Sometime, when her heart is feeling most forlorn, God will take possession of it again, and love and charity will resume their former places, and then there will be light within her, even though it be dark before her eyes."

"God grant it! yet the thought of her future life distresses me."

"She is safe if she does nothing to lose herself. And even if all those who now love and cherish her should be taken from her, charity never dies. And if she take heed to the guiding of the Lord, and the ways it pleaseth Him to lead her, she may yet learn to bless the blindness, that from her infancy has separated her from the shadow, and given her the reality and truth."

Clement interrupted their discourse. "You cannot think how lovely it is to-night!" he cried from the threshold where he stood. "I would gladly give one eye if I could give it to Marlene, that she might see the splendour of the stars. I hope the noise of the waterfall may not prevent her sleeping. I can never forgive myself for having left her to sit out there in the cold."

"Dear boy, speak lower," said his mother; "she is asleep close by. The best thing you can do, I think, would be to go to sleep yourself." And the boy whispered his good-night.

When his mother went to Marlene's room, she found her quiet and apparently asleep--that troubled look had given place to an expression of peace and gentleness.

The tempest was overpast, and had destroyed no vital part. Even remorse and shame were slightly felt. So absolute was the victory of that joyful peace that had been preached in the room beside her. Slowly, and by side-paths, does the principle of evil steal over us, and assume its sway--good asserts its victory at once.

## CHAPTER V.

Next morning her friends noticed with astonishment the change that had come over her. The vicar's wife could only explain it by supposing Marlene to have overheard their conversation of the night before. "So much the better," said the vicar. "If she has heard it, I have nothing more to say."

After this, the young girl's gentle tenderness towards Clement and his parents, was touching to behold. She only wished to be considered as belonging to them. Any proof of their affection she received with glad surprise; as more than she expected or deserved. She did not talk much, but what she said was gay and animated. In her whole manner there was a softness, an abnegation of herself, that seemed meant for a mute apology. In their wanderings she again took Clement's arm, but she often begged to be allowed to sit down and rest. Not that she was tired; she only wished to give the boy his freedom to climb about whenever he saw anything to tempt him. And when he came back to tell her what he had seen, she would welcome him with a smile.

Her jealousy was gone, now that she desired nothing for herself but the pleasure of seeing him pleased.

Thus strengthened and raised to better feelings, she came to the end of her excursion--and the strengthening had come when it was needed. She found her mother laid low by a dangerous disease, which carried off the delicate woman in a day or two. And after the first few weeks of mourning, she found that her sadly altered life exacted duties of her, for which before she hardly would have been fitted. She busied herself about the household, late and early. She found her way, in spite of her infirmity, into every nook and corner of their small home; and though there were many things she was unable to do herself, she shewed both cleverness and foresight in her arrangements, and in her watchful care that her afflicted father should want for nothing.

She soon acquired a remarkable degree of firmness and quiet dignity. Where formerly repeated admonitions had been necessary, she ruled the men and maids with a gentle word. And if ever any serious instance did occur, of neglect or real ill-will, one earnest look of those large blind eyes would melt the coarsest nature.

Since she had understood that there was work for her to do--that the moulding of their daily life was entirely in her hands, and that it was her duty to be cheerful for her father's sake, she had much less time to feel the pain of Clement's absence; and when he was sent to school in town, she was able to bid him a more composed farewell than any of the others. For some weeks, it is true, she went about the house as though she were in a dream--as though she had been severed from her happier self. But she soon grew gay again, jesting with her father to win him to a laugh, and singing to herself her favourite songs. When the vicar's wife would come with letters, and read the news and messages from Clement, her heart would beat quick in secret; and that night perhaps, she lay awake for a longer time than usual; but in the morning she would rise serene as ever.

When Clement came home for the holidays, his first steps were to the sexton's house--and his step Marlene knew,--ever so far off. She stood still, and listened whether it was for her he asked; then with her slim hands, she hastily smoothed back her hair, that still hung in its heavy plaits upon her slender neck; then rose and left her work; and by the time he had crossed the threshold, there was not a trace of agitation on her features. Gaily she offered him her hand, and begged him to come in and sit down beside her, and tell her what he had been doing. There he would often forget the hours, and his mother would come after him, for she began to grudge any of his time she lost. He very rarely stayed all his holidays in the village; he would go rambling about the mountains, absorbed by his growing love of nature and of its history.

And so the years rolled on, in monotonous rotation. The old were fading gradually, and the young growing fast in bloom and strength.

Once when Clement came home at Easter, and saw Marlene, as, rising from her spinning-wheel she came to meet him, he was struck with the progress of her loveliness since autumn. "You are quite a grown-up young lady now," he said; "and I too have done with boyhood--only feel my beard, how it has grown over my winter studies." She blushed a little as he took her hand, and passed it across his chin to make her feel the down upon it. And he had more to talk of than he used to have. The master with whom he boarded had daughters, and these daughters had young companions. She made him describe them to her. "I don't care for girls," he said; "they are so silly, and talk such nonsense. There is only one, Cecilia, whom I don't dislike, because she does not chatter and make those faces the others do to beautify themselves--and what are they all to me? The other evening when I came home, and went into my room, I found a bunch of flowers on the table; I let it lie, and did not even put it in water, though I was sorry for the flowers--but it provoked me, and next day there was such a whispering and tittering amongst the girls!--I felt so cross, I would not speak a word to them. Why can't they let me alone?--I have no time for their nonsense."

When he talked so, Marlene would hang upon his lips, and treasuring up his words, would interweave them with an endless web of her own strange fancies. She might perhaps have been in danger of wasting her youth in fruitless reveries, but she was saved from this by serious sorrows, and cares that were very real. Her father, who had long fulfilled with difficulty the duties of his place, was now struck with paralysis, and lay entirely helpless for one whole year, when his sufferings were put an end to by a second stroke. She never left him for an hour. Even in the holidays which brought Clement, she would not spare the time to talk to him, save when he would come to spend ten minutes in the sick-room.

Thus concentrating her life, she grew more self-denying. She complained to no one, and would have needed no one, had not her blindness prevented her doing everything herself. Her misfortune had been a secret discipline to her, and had taught many a humble household virtue, that those who see neglect. She kept everything committed to her care in the most scrupulous order. Her neatness was exaggerated, for she had no eyes to see when she had done enough.

Clement was deeply moved when he first saw her trying to wash and dress her helpless father, and carefully combing his thin grey hair. If in that sick-room, her cheek grew somewhat paler, there was a deeper radiance in her large dark eyes, and to her natural distinction, those lowly labours were, in fact, a foil.

The old man died. His successor came to take possession of the house, and at the Vicarage Marlene found a kind and hospitable home.

Clement only heard this by letters rarely written, and still more rarely answered. He had gone to a more distant university, and was no longer able to spend all his holidays at home. Now and then he would enclose a few lines to Marlene, in which, contrary to his former custom, he would address her as a child, in a joking tone, that made his father serious and silent, and his mother shake her head. Marlene would have these notes read aloud to her, and listening to them gravely, would carefully keep them. When her father died, he wrote to her a short agitated letter, neither attempting to console her, nor expressing any sorrow; containing only a few earnest entreaties to be careful of her health, to be calm, and to let him know exactly how she was, and what she felt.

At Easter he had, been expected, but he did not come; he only wrote that he had found an opportunity, too good to be lost, of accompanying one of the professors on a botanical tour. His father had been satisfied, and Marlene at last successful in pacifying his mother.

He came unannounced at Whitsuntide, on foot, with glowing cheeks, unwearied by a long march before break of day--a fine-grown young man. He stepped into the silent house, where his mother was alone and busy, for it was the eve of a great holiday. Surprised, with a cry of joy, she threw herself upon his neck. "You!" she exclaimed, as soon as she had recovered herself, drawing back to gaze upon him, the long absent one, with all her love for him in her eyes. "You forgetful boy, are you come at last? You can find the way back, I see, to your old father and mother! I began to think you only meant to return to us as a full-fledged professor, and who knows whether my poor eyes would have been left open long enough to behold that pleasant sight on earth? But I must not scold you now that you are my own good boy, and are come to bring us a pleasanter Whitsuntide than I have known for years--me, your father, and all of us!" "Mother," he said, "I cannot tell you how glad I am to be at home again. I could not hold out any longer. I don't know how it happened. I had not resolved to come--I only felt I must. One fine morning, instead of going up to college, I found myself without the gates, walking for very life--such journeys in a day as I never took before, though I was always a good pedestrian. Where is my father, and Marlene?"

"Don't you hear him?" said his mother; "he is upstairs in his study." And in fact they heard the old man's heavy tread walking up and down. "It is just as it used to be--that has been his Saturday's walk all these twenty years I have known him. Marlene is with the labourers in the hayfield--I sent her away that I might be left to do my work in peace. When she is in the house, she would always have me sitting idle in the corner with my hands before me. She must needs do everything herself. We have new men just now, and I am glad that she should look after them a little, until they get accustomed to their work. Won't she be surprised to find you here? Now come, we must go upstairs to father, and let him have a look at you. It will be midday directly. Come along--he won't be angry at your disturbing him."

She led her son after her, still keeping hold of his hand while she slipped up the narrow staircase before him; then softly opening the door, with a sign to Clement, she pushed him forwards while she stepped back. "Here he is at last!" she said; "there you have him!" "Whom?" cried the old man angrily, and started from his meditations; and then he saw his son's bright face beside him radiant in the morning sunshine. He held out his hand: "Clement!" he cried, between surprise and joy, "You here!" "I was homesick, father," said his son, with a warm grasp of the proffered hand. "I am come to stay over the holidays, if there be room for me now that you have Marlene here." "How you talk!" eagerly broke in his mother; "If I had seven sons, I know I should find room for them. But I will leave you to your father now; I have to go about the kitchen, and I must rifle our vegetable-beds, for in town, I doubt they have been spoiling you."

And with that she went, leaving father and son still standing silently face to face. "I have disturbed you," at length said Clement; "you are in the middle of your sermon." "You can't disturb a man who has already disturbed himself. I have been going about all the morning, turning over my text in my mind, but the seed would not spring up. I have had strange ideas; misgivings I could not master."

He went to the little window that looked upon the church. The way thither was through the churchyard. It lay peacefully before them, with its flowers and its many crosses glittering in the noonday sun. "Come hither, Clement," said the old vicar gently; "come and stand here beside me. Do you see that grave to the left, with the primroses and monthly roses? It is one you never saw before. Do you know who it is sleeps there? It is my dear old friend; our Marlene's father."

He left his son standing at the window, and began pacing up and down the room again; in their silence they only heard his even tread crunching the sand upon the wooden floor; "No one ever knew him as I did;" he said, drawing a deep breath--"Nobody lost so much, in losing him; for he was to no one else what he was to me. What did he know of the world and the wisdom of this world, which is foolishness in the sight of God! What science he possessed was revealed to him--by scripture or by suffering. I know he is blessed now, for he was already blessed on Earth."

After a pause he went on; "Whom have I now to put me to shame, when I have been puffed up? --to save me, when my faith is wavering--to unravel the vexed thoughts that by turns accuse and excuse each other! This world is growing so terribly wise! What I hear is more than I can understand--what I read my soul rejects, lest it should lead it to perdition. Many there be who lift

up their voices, and dream they have the gift of tongues; and behold, it is nought but idle lip-work, and the scorners listen, and rejoice. Ah! my dear old friend, would I were safe, where you are now!"

Clement turned to look at him. He had never so heard his father speak, in the anguish of his soul. He went up to him, trying to find the right words to say. "Don't, my son;" said his father, deprecatingly, "there is nothing you can say to me, that saints have not said better. Do you know, one day, just after his death, I had fallen asleep, here in this very room; night had come with a tempest that awoke me; my heart was heavy, even unto death, when suddenly I saw him--a great light was shining round him, but he appeared in the clothes he usually wore, just as if he were alive. He did not speak, but remained standing at the foot of my bed, calmly looking down upon me. At first it agitated me terribly, I was not worthy of the grace vouchsafed me; of beholding a sainted face.--Only the day after, I felt the peace it had left behind. He did not come again until last night--I had been reading one of those books, written to seduce Man from God, and from the word of God, and had gone to bed in grief and anger, when soon after twelve o'clock, I woke up again, and saw him standing as before, holding an open bible in his hand, printed in golden letters. He pointed to them with his finger; but so great a radiance was streaming from the pages, that I strained my dazzled eyes in vain; I could not read a line.--I sat up, and bent nearer to him. He stood still, with a look of love and pity in his face; which presently changed to anxiety when he saw that I was trying to read, and could not. Then, blinded by the brightness, my eyes ran over, and he vanished slowly, leaving me in tears."--

He went to the window again, and Clement saw him shudder. "Father!" he said, and took his hand as it hung down limply by his side--he found it cold and damp--"dear Father, you distress me! You are ill--you should send for a doctor."

"A Doctor?" cried his father, almost violently, drawing himself up to his full height--"I am well, and that is the worst of it. My soul feels, longs for, approaching death, while my body is still obstinately rebellious."

"These dreams are destroying you, father."

"Dreams! I tell you, I was as wide awake as I am now."

"I do not doubt it, father; you were awake, and that is just what makes me so uneasy. It is fever that given you those waking dreams, the very memory of which distresses you enough to quicken your pulse and make you ill. I need not be a doctor to know that last night you were in a fever, as you are now."

"To know! and what do you think you know, poor mortal that you are! Oh admirable wisdom!--Grace-giving science!--but after all, whom do I accuse? What do I deserve?--for babbling of God's most precious mysteries, and baring my aching heart as a mark for scorners. Are these the fruits of all your studies? What grapes do you hope to gather from thorns like these? I know you well, poor vain creatures that you are, who would set up new Gods for others, while in your hearts you worship no gods but yourselves; I tell you, your days are numbered."--His bald brow was flushed crimson as he turned to go, without one look at Clement, who stood shocked and silent, his eyes fixed on the floor. Suddenly he felt his father's hand upon his shoulder:

"Speak truth, my son; do you really hold to those of whose opinions I have read with horror? Are you among those bright votaries of matter, who jest at miracles; to whom the Spirit is as a fable which nature tells, and man listens to with scorn. If your youth could not choke these weeds, was the seed of gratitude sown by the Lord in your heart in vain?"

"Father," said the young man after some consideration, "how shall I answer you? I am ready to stake my life on the solution of these questions--I have heard them answered in so many different ways by men I love and honor. Some of my dearest friends profess the opinions you condemn: I listen and learn, and have not yet ventured to decide."

"He who is not with me, is against me, saith the Lord--"

"No, I could not be against Him--I could not strive against the Spirit. Who does deny the Spirit? even among those who would bind it to the laws of matter?--Are not its miracles the same, even if they be no more than nature's fairest blossoms? Is a noble image to be scorned, for only being of stone?"

"You talk as they all do; your heads are darkened by your own dim metaphors--you are so deafened with the sound of your empty words, that the small voice within you speaks unheard--and is it thus you come to celebrate our Whitsuntide?"

"I came because I loved you--"

There was silence again between them. The old vicar's lips parted more than once, as if to speak, and firmly closed again. They heard Marlene's voice below, and Clement left the window at which he had been sorrowfully standing. "It is Marlene," his father said: "Have you forgotten her? Among your profane associates who vie with each other in their reckless folly and deny the Spirit and the liberty of the Spirit--the freedom of God's adoption--did the memory of your young playfellow never come to remind you of the wonders the Spirit can work, when severed from

outward sense; and of the strength God's grace can give to a humble heart that is firm in Faith?"

Clement kept back the answer that was on his lips, for he heard the blind girl's light step upon the stairs.--The door opened, and she stood on the threshold with blushing cheeks. "Clement!" she cried, turning her gentle eyes to the spot where he actually stood. He went up to her, and took the hand she held out waiting for him. "How glad you have made your parents! Welcome, welcome! a thousand welcomes! but why are you so silent?" she added.

"Yes, dear child," he said, "I am here--I wanted so much to see you all again; and how well you look! You have grown taller."

"The spring has set me up again--this winter was very hard to bear--but your parents are so good to me, Clement.--Good morning, father dear;" she said, turning to him--"It was so early when we went out to the field, that I could not come up to shake hands then"--and she held out hers to him.

"Go downstairs now, dear child, and take Clement with you. You can shew him your garden--you have a little while to yourselves yet before dinner; and you, Clement, think over what I have been saying to you."--And then the young people went away.

"What is the matter with your father?" said the young girl, when they had got downstairs--"his tone sounded rather strange, and so does yours. Have you had any angry words together?"

"I found him very much excited; his blood appears to be in a disordered state. Has he been complaining again of late?"

"Not to me. He sometimes appeared to be ill at ease, and would not speak for hours together, so as often to surprise our mother. Was he severe on you just now?"

"We had a discussion upon very serious subjects. He questioned me, and I could not conceal my convictions."

Marlene grew pensive, and her countenance only brightened when they got into the fresh air.

"Is it not pleasant here?" She asked, stretching out both hands.

"Indeed I hardly know the place again," he said; "what have you done to this neglected little spot? As far back as I can remember, there never was anything here but a few fruit-trees, and the hollyhocks and asters, and now it is all over roses."

"Yes," she said; "your mother never used to care much about the garden, and now she likes it too. The bailiffs son learned gardening in the town, and he made me a present of some rose-trees, and planted them for me--by degrees I got the others, and now I am quite rich. The finest are not in flower yet."

"And can you take care of them all yourself?"

"Do you wonder at that, because I cannot see?" she said, merrily; "but all the same, I understand them very well, and I know what is good for them--I can tell by the scent, which of them are fading, and which are opening, and whether they are in want of water--they seem to speak to me. Only I cannot gather one for you; I tear my hands so with the thorns."

"Let me gather one for you;" he said, and broke off a monthly rose--she took it--but--"You have broken off too many buds," she said--"I will keep this one to put in water, and there is the full blown rose for you."

They walked up and down the neatly kept path, until they were called to dinner--Clement felt embarrassed with his father--but Marlene, generally so modest in the part she took in conversation, now found a thousand things to ask and say. And thus the vicar forgot the painful feeling left by that first meeting with his son, and the old footing of cordiality was soon resumed.

In the course of the next few days, however, they could not fail to find occasion to revive their quarrel. When his father enquired about the present state of theology at that University, Clement endeavoured to turn the conversation to general subjects; but the farther he retreated, the hotter grew his father in pursuit. Often an anxious, and sometimes an indignant look from his mother, would come to support him in his resolution to avoid all plain speaking on this subject; but whenever he broke off, or was forced to say a thing that to him meant nothing, the awkward silence fell upon his spirits, and chilled him to the heart Marlene only was always able to recover the proper tone. But he saw that she too was grieved, and therefore he avoided her when she was alone. He knew that she would question him, and from her he could have concealed nothing. A shade came over him now whenever he saw her. Was it the memory of that childish promise he had long since broken? Was it the feeling that in the schism of opinion that threatened to estrange him from his parents she remained standing on their side?

And yet he felt his tenderness for her more irresistibly than ever; it was a thing he found impossible to deny, but which he did strive most resolutely to conquer. He was too much absorbed in study and in his visions of the future, not to struggle with the energy of an aspiring



nature against everything that might cling to his steps, or eventually chance to clog them.

"I have to be a traveller," he said: "a traveller on foot--my bundle must be light." He felt strangely burthened when he thought of binding himself to a wife who would have a claim to a large share of his life; and a blind one too, whom he would feel it wrong to leave. Here in her native village, where everything wore the simple aspect she had known from childhood, she was secure from the embarrassments which a residence in a town must inevitably have produced; and so he persuaded himself that he should do her a wrong by drawing closer to her. That he could be causing pain by this self-denial of his, was more than he could trust himself to believe.

His measures became more decisive. On the last day of his stay, after he had embraced his parents, and heard that Marlene was in the garden, he only left a farewell message for her, and with a beating heart he took the road to the village, and then turned down a path across the fields, to reach the woods. But the vicarage garden also opened to these fields, and the nearest way to them would have been through its small wicket gate. It was a long way round he had preferred, but at the last, he could not make up his mind to go farther on his narrow way through the young corn, without at least, one pause of retrospection.

He stood still in the serene sunshine, looking towards the hamlet with its cottages and houses--behind the hedge that bounded his father's garden, he caught sight of the young girl's slender figure. Her face was turned his way, but she had no perception of his presence.

His tears sprang quick and hot, but he struggled and overcame them; then, leaping wildly over banks and ditches, he reached the hedge; she started: "Farewell, Marlene! I am going. I may be away for a year;" and he passed his hand over her hair and forehead. "Good-bye!"--"You are going?" she said; "one thing I should like to ask of you--write oftener;--do!--your mother needs it, and sometimes send me a little message."

"I will;" he said in an absent way--and again he went. "Clement!"--she called after him--he heard, but he did not look back. "It is well that he did not hear me," she murmured; "what could I have found to say to him?"

## CHAPTER VI.

After this Clement never made a stay of any length in his father's house. Each time he came, he found him harsher and more intolerant. His mother was tender and loving as before, but more reserved: Marlene was calm, but mute whenever they became earnest in discussion. At such times she would rather avoid being present.

On a bright day towards the end of autumn, we find Clement again in the small room where, as a boy, he had spent those weeks of convalescence. One of his friends and fellow-students, had accompanied him home. They had gone through their course at the University, and had just returned from a longer tour than usual, during which Wolf had fallen ill, and had desired to come hither to recover in the quiet of village life. Clement could not but acquiesce, though of all the young men he knew, Wolf was the one, he thought, least likely to please his father. But, contrary to his expectations, the stranger prudently and cleverly contrived to adapt himself perfectly to the opinions of the old couple; especially winning the mother's good will, by the merry interest he manifested in household matters. He gave her good advice, and even succeeded in curing her of some little ailment with a very simple remedy. He had been preparing himself to follow his uncle in his business as apothecary: an avocation far beneath that for which his natural talents and acquirements would have fitted him; but he was by nature indolent, and was quite contented to settle down, and eat his cake betimes.

Mentally, he never had had anything in common with Clement; and on first coming to the vicarage, he had felt himself in an atmosphere so oppressive and uncongenial, that he would have left it, after the most superficial recovery, had not the blind girl, from the first moment he saw her, appeared to him as a riddle worth his reading.

She had avoided him as much as possible; the first time he had taken her hand she had withdrawn it, with unaccountable uneasiness, and had entirely lost the usual composure of her manner. Yet he would remain in her society for hours, studying her method of apprehending things, and with a playful kind of importunity which it was not easy to take amiss, taking note of her ways and means of communication with the outer world.

He could not understand why Clement appeared to care for her so little--and Clement would avoid her more than ever when he saw her in company with Wolf. He would turn pale then, and escape to the distant forest, where the villagers would often meet him, plunged in most disconsolate meditations.

One evening, when he was returning from a long discontented walk, where he had gone too far and lost himself, he met Wolf in a state of more than natural excitement. He had been paying a long visit to Marlene, who had fascinated him more than usual; he had then found his way to the village tavern, where he had drunk enough of the light wine of the country to make him glad of a cool walk among the fields in the fresh evening air.

"I say!" he called to Clement. "It may be a good while yet, before you are so fortunate as to get rid of me; that little blind witch of yours is a pretty puzzle to me. She is cleverer than a dozen of our town ladies, who only use their eyes to ogle God and man--and then that delicious way she has of snubbing me, is a master-piece in itself."

"You may be glad if she ends by making you a little tamer;" said Clement shortly.

"Tamer! that I shall never be--and that magnificent figure and lovely face of hers are not calculated to make a fellow tame. Don't believe I mean to harm her. Only you know, sometimes, I think if she were to be fond of one, there would be something peculiar in it. A woman who can't see--who can only feel, and feel as no other creature can--I say if such a woman were to fall upon a fellow's neck, I say, the feeling might prove especially pleasant to them both."

"And I say, you had better keep your sayings to yourself."

"Why? Where's the harm? what harm would there be in making her fall just a very little bit in love with me, to see how her nerves would carry her through the scrape? In general so much fire finds its safety valve in the eyes, but here----"

"I must beg you to refrain from making any such experiments," flared up Clement. "I tell you very seriously, that I do not choose to see or hear anything of the kind, and so you may act accordingly."

Wolf gave a sidelong look at him, and, taking hold of his arm, said with a laugh: "I do believe you really are in love with the girl, and want to try a few experiments yourself. How long have you been so scrupulous? You have often heard me out, before now, when I have told you what I thought of women."

"Your education is no concern of mine. What have I to do with your unclean ideas? But when I find them soiling one so near and dear to me, one who is twenty times too good for you to breathe the same air, that is what I can and will prevent."

"Oho!" said Wolf tranquilly--"too good you say? too good? It is you who are too good a fellow Clement, far too good! so take yourself away, out of my air, good lad."

He clapped him on the back, and would have moved on--Clement stood still, and turned white; "You will be so good as to explain the meaning of those words;" he said resolutely.

"No such fool; ask others if you wish to know--others may be fond of preaching to deaf ears; I am not."

"What others? What do you mean? Who is it dares to speak slightly of her? I say who dares?" He held Wolf with an iron grasp.

"Foolish fellow, you are spoiling my walk," he growled, "with your stupid questions; let me go, will you?"

"You do not stir a step until you have given me satisfaction," cried Clement, getting furious.

"Don't I? Go to the bailiff's son if you are jealous! Poor devil! to coax him so, till he was ready to jump out of his skin for her, and then to throw him over! Fie! was it honest? He came to pour out his grievances to me, and I comforted him. She is just what all women are, says I, a coquette. It is my turn now, but we are up to a thing or two, you know, and may not be inclined to let our mouths be stopped, when we would warn other fellows from falling into the same snare."

"Retract those words!" shouted Clement, shaking Wolf's arm in a paroxysm of rage.

"Why retract? if they are true, and I can prove them? Go to! you are but a simpleton!"

"And you a devil."

"Oho! I say, it may be your turn to retract now."

"I won't retract."

"Then I suppose you know the consequences. You shall hear from me as soon as I get to town."

And having thus spoken in cold blood, he turned back to the village. Clement remained standing where he was.

"Villain!--miserable scoundrel!--fell from his lips; his bosom heaved, a cruel pain had coiled itself about his heart, he flung himself flat upon the ground among the corn, and lay there long,

recalling a thousand times each one of those words that had made him feel so furious.

When he came home at a very late hour, he was surprised to find the family still assembled. Wolf was missing. The vicar was pacing violently up and down the room. His wife and Marlene were seated with their work in their laps, much against their custom at so late an hour. On Clement's entrance the vicar stopped, and gravely turned to look at him.

"What have you been doing to your friend?--Here he has packed up and gone, while we were all out walking, leaving a hasty message. When we came home, we only found the man who had come to fetch his things. Have you been quarrelling? else why should he be in such a hurry?"

"We had high words together. I am glad to find that he is gone, and that I shall not have to sleep another night under the same roof with him."

"And what were your angry words about?"

"I cannot tell you, father. I should have been glad to avoid a quarrel, but there are things to which no honest man can listen. I have long known him to be coarse, and careless in feeling, both with regard to himself, and others, but I never saw him as he was to-day."

The vicar looked steadily at his son, and then in a low tone: "How do you mean to settle this quarrel between you?" he asked.

"As young men do;" said Clement gravely.

"And do you know what Christians do, when they have been offended?"

"I know, but I cannot do the same; if he had only offended me, I might easily have forgiven him, but he has insulted one who is very dear to me."

"A woman, Clement?"

"A woman. Yes."

"And you love this woman?"

"I love her;" murmured the young man.

"I thought so," burst out his father. "Yes! you have been corrupted in the town. You are become as the children of this world, who follow wanton wenches, fight for them, and make idols of them; but I tell you, while I live, I shall labour to win you back to God. I will smash your idols. Did the Lord vouchsafe to work a miracle for you, for you to deny him now? Far better have remained in darkness, with those gates closed for ever, through which the devil and all his snares have entered in, and taken possession of your heart!"

The young man had some struggle to suppress his rising passion. "Who gave you the right, father, to suppose my inclinations to be so base?" he said. "Am I degraded, because I am forced to do what is needful in the world we live in, to crush the insolence of the base? There are divers ways of wrestling with the evil one; yours is the peaceful way, for you have the multitude to deal with. I have the individual, and I know that way."

"It is a way you shall not go," hotly returned the father; "I say you shall not trample on God's commandments. He is no son of mine, who would do violence to his brother. I prohibit it with the authority of a parent and a priest. Beware of setting that authority at nought!"

"And so you spurn me from your home;" said Clement gloomily. A pause ensued. His mother, who had burst into tears, now rose, and rushed up to her son. "Mother," he said earnestly, "I must be a man. I cannot be a traitor." He went towards the door, with one look at Marlene, whose poor blind eyes were searching painfully; his mother followed him--she could not speak for sobbing. "Do not detain him, wife," said the vicar, "he is no child of ours, since he refuses to be God's; let him go whither he pleases, to us, he is as dead."

Marlene heard the door close and the vicar's wife fall heavily to the ground, with a cry that came from the depths of her mother's heart. She woke from the trance in which she had been sitting, went to the door, and with an immense exertion, she carried the insensible woman to her bed. The vicar stood at the window and never uttered a word; but his folded hands were trembling violently.

About a quarter of an hour later, a knock came to Clement's door. He opened it and saw Marlene.--She entered quietly. The room was in disorder--she struck her foot against the trunk. "What are you going to do, Clement?"

The stubbornness of his grief softened at once, and he took her hands and pressed them to his eyes which were wet with tears. "I must do it;" he cried, "I have long felt that I have lost his love. Perhaps when I am gone, he may feel that I have never ceased to be his son."

She raised him up, and said; "Do not weep, or I shall never have strength to tell you what I have to say. Your mother would say the same if your father did not prevent her. And even he,--I

heard by his voice how difficult he found it to be so hard; yet hard he will remain--for I know him well--he believes that he is serving the Lord by being severe, and serving him best, in sacrificing his own heart."

"And you think the same?"

"No, I don't, Clement.--I don't know much about the world, nor the laws of that opinion that forces a man to fight a duel; but I do know you enough to know that every one of your thoughts and actions--and therefore this duel also--is submitted to the severest test of self-examination. You may owe it to the world, and to her you love; only I think you owe your parents more than either. I do not know the person who has been insulted, and do not quite feel why it should make you so indignant, to be prevented doing this for her. Do not interrupt me. Do not suppose me to be influenced by the fear of losing any remnant of our friendship which you may have retained during the years that have parted us. I would be willing to let her have you all to herself, if she be able to make you happy, but not even for her sake should you do what you are about to do, were she dearer to you than either father or mother. From their house you must not go in anger, at the risk of its being closed to you for ever. Your father is old, and will carry his opinions with him to the grave. If he were to give way to you, it would be at the sacrifice of principles which are the very pith and marrow of his life; and the sacrifice on your side, would be merely, the evanescent estimation in which you believe yourself to be held by strangers. If a woman whom you love, could break with you because you are unwilling to embitter the last years of your father's life, that woman, I say, was never worthy of you."

Her voice failed her; he threw himself on a chair and groaned.

She was still standing by the door, waiting to hear what he would say; and there was a strange look of tension about her brow--she seemed to be listening with her eyes. Suddenly he sprang to his feet, laid his two hands on her shoulders, and cried: "It was for you I would have done this, and now for your sake I will not do it;" and rushing past her, he ran downstairs.

She remained where she was. His last words had thrilled to her very marrow, and a sudden tide of gladness broke over that timid doubting heart of hers. She sat down on the portmanteau trembling all over. "It was for you! for you!"--the words echoed in her ear. She half dreaded his return; if he should not mean what she thought! and how could he mean it?--What was she to him?

She heard him coming upstairs again; in her agitation she rose, and would have left the room, but he met her at the door, and taking her in his arms, he told her all.

"It was I who was blind," he cried, "and you who saw--who saw prophetically. Without you, where should I have been now?--An orphan without a future, without a home; banished from the only hearts I love, and by my own miserable delusions. And now--now they are all my own again; mine and more than I ever believed to be mine--more than I could have trusted myself to possess."

She hung upon his neck in mute devotion; mute for very scorn of the poverty of language. The long repressed fervour of her affection had broken loose, and burned in her silent kiss.

Day dawned upon their happiness. Now he knew what she had so obstinately concealed, and what this very room had witnessed; where now, pledged to each other for life, with a grasp of each other's hands, they parted in the early morning.

In the course of the day a letter came from Wolf, written the night before, from the nearest village. Clement might be at rest, he wrote; he retracted everything; he knew best that what he had said was nonsense. He had spoken in anger and in wine.

It had provoked him to see Clement going about so indifferent and cool, when, with a word, he might have taken possession of such a treasure--and when he saw that Clement really did mean to do so, he had reviled what had been denied to him.

He begged Clement not to think worse of him than he deserved, and to make his excuses to the young girl and to his parents; and not to break with him entirely, and for ever.

When Clement read this to Marlene, she was rather touched: "I can be sorry for him now," she said; "though I always felt uneasy when he was here--and how much he might have spared us both, and spared himself! But I can think of him with charity now--we have so much to thank him for!"--

# WALTER'S LITTLE MOTHER.

## WALTER'S LITTLE MOTHER.

On a still spring night, that had followed on a stormy day, a young woman sat alone by her little lamp, watching and wakeful, although in every other room of that old house, the lights had been put out above an hour before.

It was in a narrow street of a little northern town, and not a footstep was to be heard, save the watchman's, who stopped from time to time, under the one lighted window, to sing out with especial emphasis, his warning to be careful of fire and light. The casement was not closed, and the lamp flickered in the night wind, that blew chill into the room, stealing as it passed, the fragrance of the hyacinths that were blooming in the window. But the girl did not close the casement; she only drew her large brown shawl still closer about her shoulders, and remained pensively looking over the book on her lap, towards the sleeping town beyond; listening to the clock upon the tower as it struck the successive quarters.

Opposite the deep old arm-chair in which she was reclining, a table had been laid with a clean white cloth, and a little tea-kettle was singing merrily beside a simple supper of cold meats, set out with a dainty neatness that almost amounted to elegance. An arm-chair had been drawn close to the single cover.

There was no other symptom of petticoat government in that large low room. Discolored copper-plates, sketches in oils, fragments of antique marbles, covered the walls, and lay about encumbering the furniture, in artistical confusion. An old stove of green potter; had been crowned by a Corinthian capital, blackened by the smoke and dust of years. Now, at this quiet hour of the night, when the lamp in the centre left the comers of the room in darkness, this motley assemblage almost haunted one. The most incongruous things had been placed so close together, as to make them all look strange.

The clock struck eleven. With a movement of impatience, the young woman rose, and throwing down the little blue volume of which she had been absently turning over the leaves, she went to the window and looked out. Her earliest youth was past, and her countenance bore the stamp of a resolute soul, that has suffered, and struggled, and ended by becoming indifferent to evanescent charms. Yet if you looked longer at that serious face, you could see that such charms had been intended for it when Nature cast those features; but that life and fate had been too hard for her, and blighted their original promise. Eyes and brow were of the purest cut; the contour of cheek and throat was broad and sweeping. Even a slight trace of the small-pox here and there, had not deteriorated from the delicacy of her profile. One breath of youthfulness, of gladness, of carelessness, and that severe mouth would have softened into loveliness.

Even now, her countenance completely changed, as her watchful ear at last discerned the echo of a footstep on the pavement, coming up to the door, and a suppressed voice, humming a valse tune, as the key was being turned in the lock.

"At last!" she murmured, as she drew back from the window; "and late enough;--and what can make him sing? A glass too much, perhaps, and for all my pains and patience, I shall only have to preach him sober."

She listened to the step upon the stairs, it was steady, elastic, noiseless. "Not so bad after all," she said, with a sigh of relief, "but that he should have taken to singing--?"

The door opened, and a fine-grown young fellow of about nineteen came in, with a kindly salutation.

"How are you, little mother?" he said, taking off his cap, and smoothing back the tangles of his thick flaxen hair. "Why did you sit up for me? I told you I should be late. It was our last dancing lesson for the winter, and they made a sort of ball of it. If some of our young ladies and gentlemen had not been of such very tender years, we should have been at it still. But not a few of our partners were prematurely carried off, by their respective nursery maids;--a fact they would not have owned for worlds--and so we had to break up without dancing in the morning. You have been nodding a bit, I hope?"

"Not I, my son," she said, in a quiet tone. "Care keeps mothers awake at home, when grown-up sons and daughters go racketing to balls and parties. However I believe I should have done wiser in going to bed, than in sitting up here with my teapot, waiting for light-footed young gentlemen who, I perceive, have already quenched their thirst at a less insipid tap than my domestic teapot."

"You perceive, do you little mother?" he answered gaily, disposing of his long limbs under the little table as well as their length admitted of; "and how do you perceive that?"

"This how: you never walked home singing in your life before; and we cannot attribute any ordinary cause, to an effort of nature so extraordinary as to produce what it never had. To be sure, the production was accordingly."

He laughed. "What a wonderfully sagacious little mother! your perceptions are correct as far as you see, but you don't see far enough. I confess to some disturbance somewhere, but not in the upper works, as you suppose. His worship the burgermeister's mild punch is brewed with far too careful a consideration of the tender years of upper tertia, to do much mischief among us other fellows. Altogether, the refreshments affect the sober system, and I am afraid your provender here will have to suffer for it I abominate the trash and sweet-stuff they feed a fellow with at parties. Come, little mother, just give us a spoonful more rum in this tea, and cure one giddiness with another. For, as I said before, there is something wrong about me. I *am* hard hit."

He looked at her in mock distress, with a saucy sparkle in his deep blue eyes. "Walter," she began, in some dismay, "what have you been about? I trust you have not----?"

The young fellow helped himself to a slice of bread and meat, and fell to his supper with a ponderous gravity, that was meant to cover a shade of embarrassment.

"I suppose no man can escape his fate," he said, chewing away with prosaic complacency, "sooner or later, there always must be a first time; and when a fellow comes to be nineteen, it becomes an affair of *amour propre* to do as others do, and fall in--" he hesitated and she laughed.

"In love?--I do believe this foolish fellow is trying to persuade himself and me, that he has fallen in love!"

"No less;" returned the lad, swallowing the tea she had poured out for him at a gulp; "I am afraid there is every symptom of that fatal malady."

"Most prominent symptoms: a very unusual appetite; and twelve bars of a valse, sung so false, as to make the very muscle model in the corner stop his ears, if he could move his hands. May I enquire to whom these miracles are to be attributed?"

A sly look of mystery came over his bright face; of which indeed the chief charm was this first freshness and frankness of early youth.

"Guess," he said; "you see at present I am too intent on filling my mouth, for any very coherent confession to come out of it."

And he fell to work again, and filled his plate, and cut large pieces off a bright pink ham. She had drawn her arm-chair close to the table, and looked quietly into his eyes.

"As if there were much to guess!--when one has the honor of knowing every one of the young ladies, and more of their giddy partner and his strong points (and his weak ones)--than he himself!--and we know him to be an aspiring young man, for whom the best of all things is but just good enough--and in every thing that beguiles young fools to folly, who is there among our maidens that can vie with the daughter of our most worshipful and puissant Burgermeister?--Did I not lay hands on a certain drawing board a few days ago, that was ornamented with the name of Flora in choicest arabesques?"

"Your tea is strong, little mother, but your prophetic sense is weak;" said the young man with an affectation of pomposity; "of course I do not attempt to deny"--he proceeded with a passing blush--"that I really did at one time admire that smooth-faced little viper, who can slip so cleverly through a thousand things that would pose a man--and besides I may as well confess that I felt less provoked at my own mistakes, because it amused me to persuade myself that it was love that made me stupid, as it has made many a cleverer man before me. But to-night my eyes were opened, and I saw that between us two there never could be any question of love. If a certain muslin dress were but transparent enough for us to look into her left side, we should discover nothing, I lay my life, but a pair of ball-tablets and the last No. of the 'Modes'."

"And may I enquire what there is to justify a young gentleman in harbouring such dire suspicions? Is a helpless young woman to be argued out of her heart, simply because she may not hold it ready when certain persons ask her."

"Proofs--we have proofs of what we advance;" returned the lad very seriously; "I do not profess to be any very extraordinary judge of character--in fact I suffered myself to be made a fool of for a time. All this winter, you should have seen how this little Dalilah walked round my beard,--to use a figure of speech, for this trifle of yellow down is barely enough to swear by yet."

"Though I do dance deplorably, and never know whether it is a valse or schottisch, or whether I am to begin with the right foot or the left, still I was the acknowledged favorite. I was the eldest and biggest of the company, and might be looked upon as a full-grown man and champion." "A pike among the small fry;" observed his listener.

"As you please; she took me as full measure, and I let her--There *are* feminine perceptions," and he smiled good-humouredly, "which would fail to discern my manhood, even if I were to grow right through the ceiling, and look down upon them from the mazes of a bristling beard."

"Certainly," she retorted; "you are my own little Walter, and will be, if you live to be a grandfather. I shall always feel maternally responsible for your faults and follies--and there is every prospect of your keeping these maternal feelings in practice to the last day of your life."

"Very possibly;" and he laughed again. "But to-day I really did do you credit, I assure you, and was an honor to my education. Our ball queen, you must know, proud minx! found me all at once too mean for even the meanest services of her slaves. There was a young gentleman from the bar, who had been so condescending as to join us. When I came in, with my plain frock-coat and cotton gloves, he was pleased to take his eye-glass, and to stare at me from head to foot. He was in tails, and light-coloured kids, and naturally took the shine out of me, and would you have believed it?--she would hardly vouchsafe to let me take the tips of her fingers!--Oh! woman! woman, false and fair----"

"No sweeping condemnations, I beg."

"Oh! no. Heaven forbid! Of course there are angels among Eve's daughters. Some--angels with flaming swords. Others--simply angels, wearing their little wings neatly folded under innocent muslin dresses--"

"As--for instance--?"

"While I was still standing, turning to stone at the assertion that Fräulein Flora had already disposed of all her dances, my indignant eye chanced to light upon a face I had overlooked before--perhaps because it could not ogle and grin as some can--and now I saw a pair of large soft eyes pitifully fixed on mine, which seemed to say: 'Why did you never look our way before?--we could have warned you long ago, to beware of icebergs,' &c. &c.--all that eyes can say. So I resolved to be a fool no longer, and I walked across the room, look you, with a dignity--"

"I see!"--she interrupted drily; "I see him, as he walks over half a dozen dresses, turning over as many chairs as he could find in his way."

"Not this time, you unnatural mother, who are always ready to believe the worst of your own son! I tell you, I walked up to Lottchen Klas with the dignity of a prince--"

"Lottchen Klas, is it? A mother's blessing on your choice, my son!" she said with great solemnity. "If this be your first love, it is not of a disquieting nature. This is not likely to prove too absorbing--this will scarcely keep you from better things. I only beg you will put no nonsense into that poor child's head, do you hear?"

"I don't know what you take me for," he said with honest naiveté. "I did not say a word to her that I might not as well have said to a woman of seventy."

"She will have been much edified by your conversation."

"Hm;--" he said; "*she* began--she seemed to see that I could not be contented to go on poking here, and never be more than a very middling house-painter or decorator--that I had rather do anything, or go anywhere, to get to a proper school, and have an architect's education. How she knew, I can't say, but she began--"

"And you could not leave off, as I know you."

"Of course not, and she didn't want to; *she* did not find it tiresome; and then, between whiles, we danced; and I never thought I had been so clever at it. You can't think how well she managed to keep me in order; so that we hardly ever got out of time, and got through the quadrille part of the business with only one very small confusion. Ah! she is a sweet creature! and divinely good!--and I really don't believe I ever could find a more suitable opportunity to fall in love. Look here,"--and he pulled out a handful of bows and cotillion badges from his waistcoat: "All these are to be put in the fire. Only this one crimson bow was hers: and this is to be carefully kept, and laid under my pillow to-night, and I am much mistaken if I do not find myself over head and ears in love when I awake in the morning!"

"So that is still to come?" she said, passing her hand playfully over his hair, "Alas! poor youth, I fear you may have long to wait! To-morrow is Sunday, and when you get to your drawingboard, you are most likely to find a slender shaft, or a well-proportioned capital, more attractive than all the Lottchens ever born; and indeed my son, it is not a pity! You have plenty of time before you yet."

She sat silent for a while, and thoughtfully staring at the little blue flame of the tea-kettle, that had been singing a merry treble to her voice. He too was silent, sighed, and shoved away his empty plate.

"Little mother," he said at last; "I daresay you are right. At least, I suppose you should know more about these things than I do. Tell me honestly now, in strictest confidence, as a mother

should speak to a grown-up son: how long is it since you loved your first love?--And why did nothing come of it, as in general, they say, nothing ever did, does, or can come of anybody's first love?"

A shade passed over her face. "Good boys don't ask questions;" she said, shortly. "You be one; and fetch down our history from the bookshelf, and let us read a chapter of it before we go to bed."

"Not to-night, little mother, please not!" he implored. "Indeed it would be no use; it would be more waste time than ever, to drum any more of those weary old stories into my hard head to-night. Tell me one rather, as you used to do when I was a boy. I used to sit there, on that very footstool at your feet. You could tell beautiful stories. About the emperor Octavian, and the sons of Haymon, come now;" and before she could prevent him, he had crouched down at her feet "Here I am, and so now begin, little mother; I am sure a true love-story would do me far more good than all those bloody battles, and cruel murders you seem to think so necessary to my education."

He threw back his head with its shock of curls, and looked up with a face it was not so easy to resist.

"You are a naughty curious boy," she said; and you turn upon me now, to punish me for having spoiled you. You think I can deny you nothing; but that is your mistake. Get up, sir, will you?--and go to bed, and sleep away the presumptuous thought, that your little mother, who after God, should be your first authority on earth, ever was, or ever could have been, any such green gosling as you may have seen to-night. Well, do you mean to go?"--He did not stir.

"What's the use of making a fuss?" he said playfully. "You know you always end by doing what I want, naturally; because I never want anything but what is reasonable. And now I want to hear this love-story of yours--and I *ought* to hear it, that I may not look like a fool when other people talk of it, and wonder why you never married--though--"

"Though?"

"Well, though you were so handsome,--they say."

"*Who* says--?"

"Peter Lars for one; besides, I have only to open my eyes and see."

"You don't say so?"

"That is, to be candid, I never opened them till yesterday, when Peter Lars was talking of it, and said he would give a great deal to have seen you as you were when you first came, ten years ago. And then it only just occurred to me that I had been struck with you at the time. Since then, I never thought about it. I hardly knew whether you were plain or pretty. You were my own little mother, and that was all I cared for. But I see that Peter Lars, though I can't abide him, spoke truth when he said--"

"When he said, I had once been handsome?--thank you!"

Walter reddened. "Nay, you must not take it that way; for I think, on the contrary, yours is a face that could not alter much in half a lifetime."

"Possibly," she answered quietly: "By rights, a face that has never been young, should never grow old, unless the hair turns grey." A silence followed, while the little flame under the tea-kettle suddenly went out, and hushed that too. At last the girl resumed. "Yet I wrong myself; I was as young once as the youngest--happiest--most careless. If I changed so soon it was not my fault."

"Whose then?" he said, very softly, holding his breath to listen; and as his head rested on her knee, he felt how she shivered through all her limbs at the recollection.

"Whose fault was it?" he whispered, with his eyes fixed on the ceiling--on a spot where a tiny ring of light was flickering above the cylinder of the little lamp.

"It is not a long story," she said reluctantly; "but a story that is neither new nor pretty: and so why should I tell it you? If you had been a daughter, instead of being a son, I should not have let you grow up to be nineteen, without having told it. It might not have done much good, what stories ever did? But at least, I should have done my duty by her, as a mother. But you that are a man, what good could I have done, by telling you that man is a rapacious and a selfish animal. If your own conscience has not taught you that, sooner or later it will."

"Rapacious? You know me better, little mother!"

"Right dear boy;" she said, much moved. "And if I had not expected you to be different from other men, should I have taken the trouble, all these eleven years to help you out of your childhood? No, dear, in that sense you will never be a man: could you have even believed it possible that a man could break his plighted troth to a helpless maiden, simply because she told



him that she had nothing to bring him, but her face and her fair fame, and her sweet seventeen?"

Walter started from his seat, and took a few hasty turns about the room; then dropping down again on the stool at her feet. "Tell me all," he said.

"What is there to tell?" she answered sadly. "What signifies name and date and place? I have taught myself to forget it, but it has made me old before my time--I could not forget that if I would, for my glass tells me that every morning."

"Your glass tells fibs then," said Walter, interrupting her. "I have watched you narrowly; when you are by yourself, or with a person you dislike, you can look so grave and stem as to frighten people. But with me, when you are cheerful, and especially when you laugh, I often think there is not a girl I know, so young or so handsome as my own mamma."

She tapped him lightly on the mouth. "This is not the dancing-lesson, where compliments are practised with the steps. But I know you mean it kindly, dear; you want to comfort me for the mortifications of the past. But you need not, my son; I have comforted myself for this lost luck, and can even thank God that I did lose it. And was it not strange? A month or two after the thing had been broken off, and he had turned to a richer woman, Fortune was so mischievous as to send us a legacy which nobody had ever thought of; my elder sister and myself were now good matches, and my poor Rose who always had been plain, and long given up all hopes of a husband, was found to be a very charming creature, seen by the glitter of this unexpected gilding. Even an artist was among her suitors, and he considered himself a very fortunate man when she gave him the preference. I too did not want for choice, but it gave me no trouble, either of head or heart. Only when that man I had really loved came back to me, and had the impudence to talk of an error of the heart, then, indeed, the bitterness rose to my lips, and the disgust has remained. Especially when I hear people talking of man's virtues. They have taken good care, since then, to prevent my opinion changing; my poor sister--"

She stopped, and her eyebrows met with a sinister expression.

"Had she so hard a life of it?" asked Walter, timidly: "after I saw her she never left her bed, and then our Meister seemed kind enough; she always looked so sad, I used to pity her, though she never gave me a good word. After you came, you know, I was even forbidden to go near her: I often tried to think what made her so unkind. Of course I must have been a burthen to her at first, when the Meister brought me home, as a poor orphan boy, and she may have found it hard to have to appear fond of me, because she had no children of her own. But I did all I could to make myself of use, and certainly I did the work of any two of our usual apprentices. Why did she always turn away her head when she saw me, as nervous people do, when they see a poor blind worm, or a mouse?--do you know why, little mother?"

"Forget it, dear," she said. "Poor Rose was an unhappy woman; she took no pleasure in anything. *She* really never was young at any time; not even as a little girl--I never saw her really merry, while I used to be full of mirth and mischief. In our own home, where we lived before our dear mother died, it was quite different to this ridiculous little puffed-up place, which is neither town nor country, and where people are always standing upon their dignity, even though they were to perish with it in their own dullness. When I hear of your stupid dancing-lessons, and of the amusements you have here, that can as little enliven the dreary winter, as the couple of wretched little oil-lamps can the dull streets--then I really do feel as if I were--not nine-and-twenty--but nine-and-ninety; and as if I had lived so long--so long as to remember the days, when the children of men were innocent and dwelt in Paradise."

"Did you ever care for dancing?"

"I danced all day, like the mermaids. Wherever I went and stood, I had the three-quarter time in my toes, and the prettiest of the quadrille tunes; and so I danced at my spinning-wheel, and while I was watching the kitchen-fire, or plaiting up my poor mother's hair, who could not easily lift her arms. Nay, even in church, I have caught myself singing the Psalms, and beating valse time with my foot--and terribly ashamed I was, afterwards, when I thought what a sin it was. It was a disease I had; but I was soon cured. Ever after I found out that I had given away my heart to a heartless man, my feet seemed shod with lead. I never entered a ballroom again; and though in church my thoughts were often far away, they were not in a merrier place, but in a quieter--darker--farther above, or below the earth."

A silence followed, and they heard the watchman pass again, and the clock strike twelve.

"This is the hour for the ghosts to dance," said Walter with a laugh, and a sort of superstitions shudder. "What do you say to taking a turn, little mother? I don't know why, but I do feel a most inordinate desire to see you dance. The Meister is still at the Star. On a Saturday, you know, he never comes home till one o'clock. We have the house to ourselves, and may do what we please, without anybody's being the wiser--unless indeed, that rickety old cupboard should chance to fall upon us, and crush us, and send us dancing into all eternity. Hey! mamma, what do you say?"

He had jumped up, stroked back his hair, and stood before her, with a make-believe of buttoning his gloves, and settling his necktie.

"Foolish fellow!" she said. "What has come to him to-night? He sings, he falls in love, and now

in the dead of night, he comes and calls upon his own old mother to stand up and dance with him! Is this what comes of spoiling sons, and letting them grow over their mother's heads?"

"Suffer me to say you are mistaken, honoured madam," he began, with mock devotion. "It is, on the contrary, your duty, as guardian of my unguarded youth--your serious duty--to convince yourself that I really do grow in grace, and make progress in those ornamental branches of education, which are indeed most foreign to my nature. At the close of my course of dancing-lessons, it might be considered proper to hold some species of examination."

She raised her eyes to his, with a look so grave, as to tone down his mischievous mood at once.

"It is time to have done with nonsense," she said; and her voice sounded almost sharp. "I would say goodnight, and leave you to yourself this moment, only I see that you are not nearly ready for sleep, nor will be, for ever so long--go, fetch the book. Even if you should not learn much to-night--which indeed does not seem likely--it may help us to get this nonsense out of your head, and that is always something gained."

He sighed as he walked towards the narrow bookshelf upon the cupboard. "Well, I suppose I must obey--for a change," he said, with a shake of his head. "Only if I should never know anything more of Barbarossa, than that his beard was red, it will be nobody's fault but yours."

"Well, and I suppose--for a change--I must temper my justice with mercy," she said, returning to a jesting tone. "Leave that history, and come and sit down here at my feet, and let me talk to you of gods and heroes; and if you are a good boy, and pay attention, I will shew you the pictures afterwards, as a reward."

She took up the little blue volume she had been looking through before. "I only found this yesterday," she said, "in the lumber-room upstairs; the title is 'Götterlehre,' and it was edited in the last century by a man called Moritz. There are some good verses of Goethe's in it; I know you will like them."

He resumed his place at her feet, and she began. She had a clear voice, and used it simply; only when her feelings became excited it would sink to a moving melodious contralto. After she had read the first few pages, and waxing warmer, began to recite the passage: "To which of these immortals, the highest prize?" &c., &c.--the words almost turned to song. She read the poem slowly to the end, and gently closing the book--"How do you like it?" she whispered.

He did not answer. The eyes that had been dreamily fixed on the blue ring of flickering light upon the ceiling, had been dropping gradually, till at last they closed. His head was resting on her knee; he breathed softly, and smiled in his sleep. "Is he thinking of his last valse?" she said to herself, looking thoughtfully down on his cloudless brow, and at the full red lips, above which a line of soft yellow down had begun to shew itself. The lines of that blooming face were certainly far from regular; but even in sleep, there was an intellectual charm about it--a spiritualized sense of humour--that ennobled its expression. Those lips had certainly never parted to laugh at or to utter a scurrile jest.

Thus she sat gazing on the placid face of the sleeper; till wearied by the thoughts that came sweeping through her brain in the stillness of the night, she leaned back in her chair, her eyelids drooped, and she too, fell into a slight dreamy kind of sleep.

An hour elapsed. The wind blew the casement open, with a gust of damp night-air that extinguished the little lamp that had almost consumed its oil.

A heavy dragging step was heard upon the stairs. She heard it even through her dream, though the darkness prevented her waking quite. The door opened, and a lantern threw its full ray of vivid light full upon her face. She started up in alarm: "Is that you, Meister?" she said, hastily passing her hand across her eyes.

A strange figure was standing on the threshold--a tall man between fifty and sixty, in a long loose coat trimmed with fur, buttoned over a faded red velvet waistcoat. He wore a cap or barret, placed so far forward upon his grizzling curls, as also to cover the half of his flushed forehead. One foot was shod with a coarse stout boot, and the other, wrapt out of all shape, with a large felt slipper.

For all his uneven gait, and his uncouth appearance, there was that about him which was well calculated to quell any inclination to laugh; and the look from those sinister dark eyes, directed towards the group formed by the two young people, was enough to make even this fearless girl quail.

"What does all this mean?" he said, as he came forward and placed his lantern upon the table. "What are you two doing here at this hour? Is the boy asleep, or have you been acting a play?"

"I do not profess to understand you;" she answered, flushing up with pride and scorn. "He is asleep, as you see. We were reading, and he fell asleep; and then I did too."

"And the lamp? Why was the window suddenly darkened when I came up to the house-door?"

Did you mean to make me believe that you were in bed, and had been asleep for hours?"

She bent over the lad, and took him by the shoulder: "Get up, Walter," she said; "the Meister is here, and I wish to go to my own room, and not to hear any more of what he may please to say in his drunken--"

"Who dares to say it is the wine I have drunk that makes me speak?" he broke out in a tone so fierce, that the sleeper started, and springing to his feet, stood upright before him with a penitent mien.

"Go to bed, Walter," he continued, with more moderation. "It is nearly two o'clock. This is not to be borne! At this hour of the night--" His eye caught the girl's, who had now recovered her usual self-possession. "Ah, well!" he growled, "it will be put a stop to soon, in one way or another." Then--"I have somewhat to say to you, sister-in-law. I shall not be able to get up tomorrow morning; I feel my pains in all my joints, and my leg as heavy as a stone. So I shall expect to see you in my room, Helen; Good-night." He lighted a candle, took up his lantern, and limped downstairs again to his own room.

The two he left behind him did not speak another word. The lad gave Helen's hand a squeeze, and nodding to her with a look half penitent, half drowsy, he went up to the garret-room he shared with the first apprentice, Peter Lars, who had been asleep for hours. He threw off his clothes, listening to the cats that were running riot upon the roof; and only then remembered that he had left Lottchen's crimson bow to perish with the others, instead of taking it up with him to sleep upon. He laughed to himself before he fell asleep. "She is right," he thought; "I don't suppose it *is* the real thing."

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Next day was Sunday, and Helen went downstairs betimes, to knock at the Meister's door. He was lying upon the bed half dressed, in a faded green dressing-gown, with a blanket thrown over his ailing leg; while on the knee of the sound one, rested a heavy old book of plates, with views of churches and Roman ruins. The room was on the ground-floor, at the back of the house, and was filled with a greater disorder of artistical fancy than even the parlour upstairs.

When Helen came in, he rested his head of weird grizzling locks upon his fist, and partially raised himself. He only gave a slight nod by way of salutation; he seemed to be bent on letting her speak first.

In the middle of the room she stopped. "You wanted to speak to me, brother-in-law?" she said very composedly.

"Take a seat, will you, Helen;" and he pointed to a carved tripod stool that was covered with drawings and rolls of paper.

"Thank you, no. I hope you will not want me long; I am busy, for Christel is at church, and there is no one in the kitchen. What was it you wished to say to me?"

He hesitated a moment, and threw a hasty glance to try and find out the mood she might be in. Her serious face remained impassive.

"Doctor Hansen, the notary, was at the 'Star' last night," began the Meister, while he turned over the leaves of his book with a show of indifference. "He has never been seen in a wine-house, you know, since that sick sister of his died. And this time he had a particular reason for coming; and while he was walking home with me, he told me that reason. In short, he wants to marry you, Helen!"

She did not move a muscle.

"What made him speak to you about it?" she said, very coldly.

"He wanted to know if I thought you hated him."

"What could he have done to make me hate him?"

"What indeed? He is an honorable man--there is not a contrary opinion in the town; only he believes himself to be the object of your particular aversion. Every time he tried to speak to you, he says, you frowned and turned away."

"If I did, it was because I soon saw what he wanted of me. Where's the use of being civil to a man, if he has to be rejected in the end?"

"And why rejected?"

She paused before she spoke: "Be candid, brother; did he not ask you what my fortune was?"

"He asked me nothing of the kind."

"He had heard then, without asking, as much as was necessary for him to know. He is considered a clever man of business, I believe?"

"What of that? can't a man of business have human feelings as well as another? At all events he is in love now, Helen."

"In love, is he? you don't say so," and her lips quivered strangely as she spoke; "how can he find time for that piece of folly, with all his business? However, I suppose I should feel grateful to him, so you had better save him farther trouble, and tell him that I cannot have the honor--that I regret,--and so forth; and to comfort him, you can tell him what a cross-grained treacherous race I come of, and what a miserable mistake you made in marrying my sister. Only think how that poor man would be to be pitied, if I were to play him such a terrible trick, as poor Rose played you, and light the stove with all I am worth, and only leave enough to bury me! Tell him that story, brother, and I dare say he will be completely comforted."

She had turned white as she was speaking, and kept her eyes fixed upon him, with a look of cool defiance he was not able to withstand; only when she was about to leave the room, and put an end to farther discussion, he recovered himself again. "I have not done yet;" he said gloomily.

"Not yet?--but my patience will not last much longer."

"*Nor* mine. I tell you plainly, I will not stand this nonsense with the boy. In putting a stop to it I am only doing my duty by him."

"How long have you been so conscious of your duty to him?"

"Let by-gones be by-gones!" he said violently; "you will not stop my mouth with them, as you suppose. I tell you I can't bear to see your goings on with him; petting and patting that great grown fellow! I say, it is bad for him, do you hear me?--and if you don't give over, I shall find means to make you; you may take my word for it."

She opened her great grave eyes, and held her peace. Her self-possession appeared to embarrass him, and he went on in a quieter tone.

"I know what he owes you well enough; and what I have to thank you for; there can be no question of that. If things had gone on as they did when the boy first came, it would have been the ruin of him, body and soul. It is bad for children to feel themselves hated, and I was not in a position to save him from the feeling. You were a mother to him then, and his affection for you is no more than natural--within proper bounds. Wherever these are not, the devil steps in, and sows his tares. I need not explain my meaning; enough--he is now nineteen, and you are no more than nine-and-twenty. Don't let me see this sort of thing again. He is *not* to fall asleep over his reading as he did yesterday, and the lamp *need* not go out."

He averted his face, let his head fall back upon his pillow, and drew up his suffering leg. Whether he really was in pain, or only wished to break off the conversation, was not quite evident.

After a moment of breathless silence on both sides: "It is well," she said, with smothered utterance; "there are not many things in the world that could surprise me now; from *you*, nothing!--but that your way of thinking could be so base as this, even I could scarce be prepared for."

"Oho!" he said, very coolly. "Be so good as to spare these grand expressions for an occasion where they may seem more fitting. What I now say, and what I intend to do, I am ready to account for before any jurisdiction whatever, and call on my own seeing eyes to witness. Lovers are blind, we all know that; only they need not suppose other people to be blind as well."

"Lovers!" she echoed, with an irrepressible gust of passion.

"Lovers; I say, lovers;" he repeated, with emphasis: "He, at least, is on the high-road to that condition, whether he be aware of it or not; and you must have lived these nine-and-twenty years in a maze, if you really do not see that you are over head and ears in love with the boy. You don't mean to come to me, I hope, with that trash and nonsense about adoption and maternal feelings. The thing is as I state it, whatever you may please to say. But if you do search your heart, and ask yourself what is to be the end of it--whether you mean to go on rejecting respectable men who would make good husbands, for the sake of your nonsensical love-scenes with a half grown hobbledehoy----"

"Enough," she interrupted him, with glowing cheeks: "Now I assuredly do know enough of yourself and your opinions. They cannot affect me much, for I never had any ambition with regard to them. There are many things in which we differ, only before I turn my back upon you, I should be glad to hear what you have resolved upon in this matter."

"As I have repeatedly told you; I am resolved to make an end of this, and part you two, the sooner, the better."

"And how?"

"As it turns out. If you take the wisest course, and marry Dr. Hansen, it would be the best plan for all of us, and a better proof of your sincerity with your motherhood, than all this ranting, and

shrugging of shoulders. If you cannot make up your mind to this, the boy will have to go."

"As a Wanderbursch? As a common house-painter?"

"As a house-painter, of course; what else can he be? you know I am not in a position to send him to an architectural school, or to afford his keep for six or seven years, instead of having him here, to help me to an honest livelihood, now that I am half a cripple."

"Well, you have spoken frankly to me," she answered after a pause; "and I suppose for that much, I ought to thank you. What must be, will be, one way or the other; meantime you are at liberty to think what you please--and I know what I have to think."

She turned to the door, but as she laid her hand on the lock, he called after her: "I asked Hansen to dine with us to-day. I don't intend to say a word more upon the subject. You must give him your answer yourself."

She said nothing, she only gave an absent nod, and went--but not into the kitchen. Her heart beat violently as she flew upstairs, to take refuge in her own room. It was off the sitting-room, with two narrow windows, that looked out on the sunny street. As soon as she felt herself alone, she sat down upon her bed, for her knees were knocking under her, and she could scarcely stand. She sat staring at the motes dancing in the sunbeam, that fell aslant upon the floor. As rapid and impalpable as those whirling atoms, was the vortex in her brain. At last, her eyes ran over; and, in a gush of passionate tears, she poured forth the pain and grief she had repressed so sternly and so scornfully, through all that hostile conference below.

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About this time, Walter came in from a French lesson which, on Helen's advice, he was in the habit of taking after early church. He went straight to a large low room upon the ground-floor. The dining-table stood in the centre of it, and a few old presses and cupboards, ranged round the walls, contained the Meister's whole stock of decorative designs, and all his plans and patterns.--Here, it was evident, a feminine hand kept order. The boards of the dinner-table were polished white with scrubbing. The sand lay still immaculate upon the floor, and the large pots of ivy by the windows, shaded the purest, brightest panes.

The room looked to the court and garden, and was entirely sunless; so that Walter, who had taken out his drawing-board, and seated himself in the best light, undisturbed by a single ray, very soon became absorbed in his work.

There was an old villa outside the town, that had formerly belonged to a family of rank, and had now been purchased by the rich Burgermeister. There, among other rooms that wanted painting, was a large saloon in the Rococo style, that had to be restored from the very foundation. And for many weeks past, the Meister had refused all other orders, that he might finish this master-piece within the appointed time.--Here, as every where, Walter had to help him vigorously. But while with bold pencil, he was grouping arabesques and wreaths of fruit and flowers, adapted from old engravings, to renovate the obliterated ceiling in its original style, he found it far more interesting to study the whole plan of the building, and then, taking note of its measures and proportions, to work it out at leisure, after his own head, with its sections, height and basements. He had only a sweet stolen hour or two, on holidays, to spend on these. The Meister snarled and scolded him, when he came in and caught him at such allotria--"Where's the good of them?" he growled. "There are many things more needful to our business--"

To-day, however, the old man was safe in his own room, tied by the leg, and could not possibly disturb him; so he worked on quietly and quickly, and hoped to have done by dinner-time.

All at once the door opened, and in slipped a small dark figure, with his hands in his trowser's pockets, and his close shorn raven head slightly inclined towards his left shoulder, which was visibly some inches higher than his right one. He kept the lower part of his face on the stretch of an everlasting grin--and while the thin lips always seemed prepared for a whistle or a jovial smack, the restless grey eyes had wicked gleams of malice, and cunning, and consuming desire.

"Good morning, young genius;" he said, coming round the table with noiseless step; "busy as a bee?--When you come to my time of life," (he was barely five-and-twenty), "you will have spent a good part of that speed, and will be glad enough to take your Sundays easily as I do, in having a good long sleep, and then in pleasantly getting rid of your wretched wages, that are certainly not worth the keeping. Even now, if you were not such a stiffnecked sort of virtue, I should say to you: 'Put that scrawl in the fire, and come with me. I could show you where you may taste a sound French wine, that is well worth its price.'"

"Much obliged to you," said Walter coldly, "your taste is not mine, Peter Lars; and I can't stand wine in the morning--"

"I know you can't," sneered Peter. "You are such a pattern of propriety!--And for as tall and as broad as you are, you let yourself be led about by a piece of womankind, like a cockchafer tied to a thread. What we men think of that, you never care to know."

"Men!" echoed Walter, and with all the young fellow's kindheartedness, he could not repress the look of irony that stole over his features.

"I say, men;" repeated the little dark one, and stretched himself in all his limbs. "One need not be six foot high, to feel oneself a man by the side of women's darlings, and giant babies in swaddling clothes."

"Thank Heaven, then, Peter Lars, for having made a man of thee, and go thy ways rejoicing--What's the use of coming here to worry me? can't you leave me to myself in peace? Do I look after you?" Peter came close up to him, and peered in his face with a wicked smile.

"I do not mean to disturb you long," he said; "but I could not deny myself the pleasure of congratulating so dutiful a son, on the acquisition of a bran new step-papa. Ha! now I see our bright young genius can vouchsafe to look at me;" and, in fact, Walter was staring at him in speechless surprise.

"What are you talking of?"--he said impatiently.

"Of nothing, and of nobody less, than Mamsell Helene! who does not mean to content herself, with petting her great big boy for ever; and begins to feel a hankering after real legitimate babies of her own, and of more natural dimensions."

"Don't be stupid!"--and Walter laughed, half in anger, and half amused at the idea. It had never occurred to him before. "*She* never means to marry! That is a fact I happen to know."

"None of your arrogant contradictions, I beg," retorted Peter; "one may be a very bright young genius, and yet see nothing of what is passing in broad daylight--I have it upon the best authority. I know she is going to be married, and moreover I can tell you, to whom."

"Tell me then."

"What can that signify to you?--To you, one step-father must be just as inconvenient as another. Those happy days are over, when you made rain and sunshine, and used to be her darling, and the core of her heart, and the apple of her eye. At least the new Papa would be a terrible ninny, if he were not prepared to decline with thanks a wedding present as large as life--of such a stepson. And, indeed, it should be all one to me, as well. Having always had the honor of enjoying the haughty damsel's undivided aversion, it can make no difference to me, whether her choice be M. or N.; it does not in any way alter my position, as a vermin--toad, bug, spider, worm--what you please--to be trodden upon and crushed, were it not for the risk of soiling a dainty shoe----"

"Nonsense--you exaggerate, as you always do--but tell me--"

"Whether I exaggerate or not, nobody can tell except myself;" and he distorted his ignoble mouth to a grimace of atrocious spite. "Why should I make any secret of it?--On this very spot, not ten days ago, I came and made her a formal offer of my hand and heart. Upon which she just walked out and left me standing, as if I had been an idiot, not worth answering!--Bah!--I can laugh at it now!--I can't think what possessed me! I am not such a beggar as to care for her thalers. If it were not for my own amusement, I could throw over the whole concern--give up this daubing and scrawling business, and go home to my own place, where my father and mother are well to do, living comfortably on their own broad acres.--Only I was such an ass as to be smitten with this scornful damsel, and I would have been willing to forget that she is no chicken; (several years older than myself in fact.) And she--I tell you she looked at me as if a toad had spit its venom on her. Death and damnation! wouldn't I have given her a piece of my mind! Only I thought: '*She* will never marry--she will have nobody--she must have found a thing or two in her past life, to disgust her with man and marriage;' and so I choked upon my wrath. But this is quite another affair. If she hangs out other colors, and capitulates to another suitor, I see she did not think me good enough--"

He swallowed down the rest of his abuse, and only waved about his hands, in confused convulsive gesticulation.

"Are you sure of what you are saying?" asked Walter in a low voice, that was trembling with some strong suppressed emotion. "Who is the man?--is it a settled thing?--And yet no--it is impossible--only last night--"

"What do you venture to call impossible, when you are speaking of a woman?? Bah! teach *me* their tricks and dodges!--I saw how late it was last night, when you left her!--I dare say she would not let you go, but coddled you to her heart's content, it being the last time. But I tell you it is as true--as true as that the sun is shining.--She is going to be married--and her choice is no other than that wretched quilldriver of a lawyer--"

"Hansen?--the Doctor?"--

"If he be not the man, and my story be not true, I give you leave to call me rogue. Just now I was in the little lumber room off the Meister's, where he keeps his samples of colors, and I was looking out some that we shall want to-morrow--for he blew me up about them yesterday--when I heard Mamsell Helene come into his room, and they had a long confabulation. I could not hear it all, but the upshot of it was, that she means to take him. Of course she made a fuss about it--but when he said: 'He is to dine with us to-day, and you can give him your answer,' she was mum as a

mouse. If she did not mean it to be favorable, I much mistake her if she would not have declined the pleasure of eating her dinner with him first. She is not so fond of speaking up, and saying no to a fellow, as I know by my own experience."

"Surely you must have heard wrong, Peter;" and the young fellow fell into a fit of musing; "it can't be possible."

"Can't be possible!--but what's the use of talking of men's business to a baby. I only repeated the thing that I might not choke upon it. For a girl like that, to go and marry a rusty fusty lawyer--a scribbler of deeds and parchments! He has not a conception of what she is worth, except in thalers! Ha!--would not she be a delicate morsel for an artist, who looks farther than a trifle of white and red and those mincing ways that attract the crowd. What does a lawyer know about the lines of her face?--and that she has a figure fit to drive a fellow crazy? She does not show it off, to be sure--she wraps to the chin, as if she were a mummy,--more's the pity!--a stone might weep to see her! But for a man who has eyes in his head, one little finger is enough to construe the whole figure by, and you might search the world over, before you could find--"

"Silence!" interrupted Walter passionately--"I will not hear another word." He had sprung to his feet, with a flaming face. "Get out! I say, and never let me hear that you have spoken your foul thoughts to any other living soul--or else--"

And he struck his clenched fist upon the table, with a violence that made the very walls shake.

"Milksop! baby face!" and Peter gnashed his teeth, while he retreated from his immediate neighbourhood; "It shall go to its mother--it shall--and have its pap--and sit on its own mammy's lap, and have a smart new dress for her wedding-day. Ha! such a fellow as that is not worthy of a man's confidence. I did feel sorry to see you in a cunning woman's leading strings; and I pitied you--but now go to!--I despise you as much as I pitied you before. We two have had our last words together."

And with his most vicious look, Peter sauntered away, whistling.

Walter remained standing on the selfsame spot for half an hour, at least, without moving. His brain was reeling--he fetched his breath heavily, and shut his eyes, as though he felt ashamed to see himself by the light of day, while such thoughts were seething in his imagination. At last he heard Helen's step upon the stairs; he felt as if he had been scalded, and impelled by some inexplicable instinct, he seized his cap, and fled; through the garden, out into the open country.

She heard him go, but she had no suspicion that it was from her he fled; she went to the window and looked after him as long as she could catch a glimpse of his long light hair among the leafless shrubberies.

She thought she had wept away all that had been so heavy on her heart. People who are sparing of their tears expect wonders from them, and the good they are supposed to do, when they do flow. But she found they had done very little to solace her.

What made her weep so bitterly? She had long schooled herself to meet aggression with the tranquil energy of a mind, that no contradiction of fate can disappoint or surprise, for the reason that it is entirely without hopes or wishes.

She believed that she had nothing to expect from life--nothing to gain. Now, she had been suddenly reminded how much she had to lose.

First of all:--to a proud spirit the bitterest loss--confidence in her own heart. Those unsparing words, concerning her relations with a child, whom she had seen grow up to manhood, had sounded strange and incomprehensible when she had first heard them--she believed that she could shake them from her, as an insult. Other cares that had arisen during that interview with her brother-in-law, had then appeared more urgent. But as soon as she had found herself alone in her silent room, all other cares had dissolved like shadows, and the words she had so scornfully disowned--these words alone remained.

She thought over the ten years that had passed, since she had first entered that dreary house; when the intimidated boy, dumb between his adopted parents, who quarrelled over him daily, with ever-increasing discord, had come to her at once, and poured forth all the sorrows of his little heart to her, and had clung to her with overflowing love and confidence. Without many words, he had understood that she was to be his protectress.

It was a task she did not find easy always, especially as opposed to her own sister. But the compensation was a thousandfold, in her tenderness for the child, in whom his early hardships appeared to have blighted all the gaiety and elasticity of his age; and now under her genial influence, she saw these expand, brighter and more spontaneous, from year to year.

And she knew that he owed her more than this mere deliverance from bodily durance. She had been as indefatigable in the tending of his mind; in helping him to complete in private, the defective education of the common school which he attended daily. In this, she had no small opposition to suffer from her pupil and his artistic tastes; not to speak of her own inclination to do his bidding, instead of enforcing hers. Far pleasanter she would have found it, to sit working

by his side, listening to his good-humoured rattle, while he was busy over some architectural drawing; than to tie him down to the thread of a weary lesson-book, that was to drag him through some dry essentials of education. But in all things she had taught herself to consider, first of all, his real wants and future welfare. She had never trifled with her maternal duties, nor been childish with her child.

Was it strange that, in time, the course of all her plans and wishes fell into this single channel? that, waking or sleeping, he was ever before her eyes? that these followed him, unconsciously, in all his movements when he was present; and, when absent, that she looked as constantly towards the door, and listened to nothing so interesting as his returning step?

And now when she mentally compared him with, all the other men she had known in all these years, was she not justified in believing that she could do without any and all of these, if only he remained to her? And there was no weak idolatry in this; she had never deceived herself. She saw that he was neither handsome, nor graceful, not even of very engaging manners; she often teased him about his awkward ways and helpless movements, and his duncolored shock of hair; she acknowledged that his features were commonplace; that his figure was a clothes-stick, for all the tailor's pains to make a man of him. Yet there was a charm about him, that even strangers and coarser natures, she observed, seldom could resist; a breath of freshest, purest youthfulness;--an innate tact of the heart; a dash of that genuine genial humour, that lends wings to the soul, and raises it high above the vulgar worship of any of the golden calves and idols of the day. It was strange;--but with this young pupil of hers, in worldly matters a child, she could discourse of the last aim and end of all mortal life, as though they had been centenarians in experience, and in years.

Thus it had been, and this had been their happiness; and was it to be no more? had it suddenly become so dangerous? Was it now to be avoided as a snare? She had been told to her face, that it was for the sake of this lad, that she rejected all her suitors. Well, she would not attempt to deny it. She would have deceived any man to whom she would have sworn to be only his. This feeling had grown to be a passion; but a passion that was hallowed by years of purest tenderness, of most unselfish sacrifice. She looked upon him as her own; and had she not a right to him?--what would he have been, without her?

And was she really to give him up?--The thought was more than she could bear. *He* did not wish to leave her--*he* knew how necessary she was to him. Could there really be danger in remaining as they were?--To him, certainly none; his whole life lay before him yet, wide and distant. *He* could not lose by perfecting his growth in shade and solitude. To suppose that her own presence could prove dangerous to him, seemed nothing less than madness. She felt herself older by ten additional years to those she already was.

Could he ever possess her heart more entirely than he already did? was that possible?--And if it were, what harm could it do her?--She had nothing else in life to make it valuable to her, but this one feeling.

And yet she had been weeping,--long and bitterly. She felt as if some mute veiled fate were ever by her side. With all her self-command, and bracing resolutions, wherewith to strengthen herself in her own rights, and in the consciousness that others could have no legitimate power over her--except she gave it them--she could not overcome a feeling of anxiety, and an instinct that their happiest days were over, and trials and difficulties impending.

The Meister's threat of sending the lad away on his Wanderschaft, had not seriously alarmed her. She knew that he would scarcely make up his mind to part with him. Certainly not to drive him to a course so contrary to his inclinations. To dispose of him in any other way, in the Meister's position, would have been simply impossible. Yes, there had been hard times of want, when Helen had gladly come to his assistance; and thus he had become dependent on her, in a manner that, though she never took advantage of it, made him feel a sort of tacit obligation to desist from any very violent opposition to her wishes.

In fact no woman had less reason to fear the despotic interference of any man in her fate. Yet words had been spoken, that never could be made unspoken; and they had brushed the bloom off what had been dearest to her on earth.

She only became clearly aware of this, as she looked after his retreating figure in the garden, and felt almost glad that she had not met him; for the first time she might not have been able to look straight into his eyes. She had no idea that, within the last hour, he too had been startled out of the peace of his unsuspecting mind. She believed that the suffering was hers alone; and in the midst of her anxieties, she found no small comfort in the belief, that like a true mother, she had contrived to conjure over her own devoted head, the hostile elements that were threatening his. This helped her to recover her composure, for in the more absorbing troubles, she had almost forgotten the disagreeable task before her, of having definitively to reject and mortify a man, for whom she had never felt anything worse than indifference.

When the clock struck the dinner-hour, she entered the large dining-room with perfect self-possession; and received the notary, who bowed low before her, as she would have received any other guest of her brother-in-law. The Meister had left his bed, and joined them in his dressing-gown, in anything but a holiday trim, or holiday humour. He now lay stretched on a sofa, at a



little distance from the table. An old neighbour, a standing guest on Sundays, stood modestly waiting with the two apprentice boys at the windows.

Walter came in such visible perturbation that he could scarcely stammer out the commonest forms of salutation. Nobody however seemed to notice this, except his little mother; who, perplexed by the sudden change in his demeanour, threw him a look of dismay, which he felt too conscious-stricken to receive with calmness.

The Meister enquired for Peter Lars, and scolded at his delay, until they all sat down to table without waiting for him.

It was some time before any kind of general conversation could be established. Walter kept his eyes upon his plate, and held his tongue, without attending to anything that was passing round him. The old neighbour, who, in general, was rather fond of playing the connoisseur, and holding forth in rambling dissertations on drawing and effects of color, was silent this time, as he saw the Meister neither spoke nor ate, but ground his teeth for self-command in bodily torture. The boys were tongue-tied, naturally, in their master's presence; and thus on Helen, and on the Notary, who sat opposite, the whole cost of the conversation fell.

There was nothing remarkable about his outward man. Only a fine forehead, and a pair of clear calm eyes, were the attractions of his face. And there was an expression of animated benevolence in his countenance when he spoke, that, together with the masculine cast of his features, was especially captivating to the confidence of his hearers.

After the first awkwardness of his meeting with Helen, he became gayer and more conversible than he was ever known to be. He spoke of his travels in Sweden and Norway; of the Scandinavian races; of their customs and holidays; of their national songs. He talked pleasantly, for he never generalized, either in praise or blame--each thing was distinctly drawn, given in its own peculiar coloring, with its distinctive touches. Even old Christel, who waited at table, left the door ajar to listen to him longer; and the Sunday guest applauded with approving nods, shoving in here and there a choice remark or two upon Scandinavian Art, which the traveller was so kind as to leave undisputed.

And yet his pains were wasted. Helen's attention was an effort. Her mind was engaged in speculations upon the possible cause of the cloud that had come over her darling's spirits.

She hazarded a jest or two, to win him over to the general conversation. But a beseeching, almost frightened look, from the young dreamer, had each time induced her to desist.

The bottle of wine produced by Christel, had been emptied to the better health of their host; it had been the lawyer's toast--who had returned thanks silently by a slight nod. He had not drunk a drop, and hardly waited for dinner to be over, to drag himself back to his own room, in order to groan without restraint, and, unheard, curse his sufferings.

While the table was being cleared away, the others had gone upstairs to take their coffee in the sitting-room. There, between the pictures and plaster-casts with which the walls were covered, stood an old pianoforte. It had not been opened for years; but now at Helen's request, Dr. Hansen had seated himself before it, and played a few national melodies from the North.

He then sang some of the songs, with a voice that, if somewhat uncultivated, was very musical.

Helen had taken her work to the window, where Walter stood gazing out into the street, without taking any notice of what was passing.

Under cover of the music she whispered a few questions. What ailed him?--Had the Meister been scolding him? had he been quarrelling with Peter Lars?--Peter's absence she thought suspicious.

Walter only shook his head; and at last, seized with an unaccountable fit of restlessness, he jumped up, and was about to escape for a solitary walk, when just then the door opened, and visitors entered. They were relations of the Meister's, Lottchen Klas and her mother--Lottchen Ellas, who, but yesterday, had stood so high in her partner's estimation. To-day he only felt annoyed, when the little maid came smiling in under her mother's wing, with a shy look of satisfaction, that made him conscious that his defection would be a great offence to her especially. However he hardly spoke a civil word, to either mother or daughter; and when Helen began some playful remark about their party of the night before, he fetched a book from the cupboard, and in the face of all good breeding, he settled himself to read, as though he had been in the remotest solitude.

Not long after, somebody proposed a walk, and, with the exception of the old neighbour, who took his leave, the whole company was set in motion. The mother walking in front, with Helen and Dr. Hansen; Walter following with his pretty little partner. But he was as taciturn as before--all along the peopled streets, and out by the town-gate to a garden where the higher among the burghers were wont to enjoy their Sunday afternoons,--he never spoke one word; he even neglected to bow to passing acquaintances;--he had no eye for the dismayed little face by his side, that grew cloudier and cloudier, until a shower of tears appeared most imminently

impending. Fortunately, before this crisis, one of her yesterday's partners came up to the rescue, and did duty both for himself and Walter.

Now, if he had been so minded, he might have stolen away and relieved his oppressed soul from the shackles of society. But in the morning he had had occasion to find out, that the tangle of his ideas grew worse in solitude. And besides, he felt irresistibly rivetted to Helen's presence, with chains he could not break. He kept an anxious watch over every gesture, every look, every word, that might possibly throw some light on his chances of really losing her.

He too had lived on heedlessly by her side, without ever asking himself, how long this state of things was to last--What they called the feeling that united them--so long as they *had* it, what cared he? From the time he could remember anything, or anybody, after the mother that bore him, Helen had been the person most essential to his existence.

And the last few years, that had brought him to the age of manhood and independence, had only served to strengthen the closeness and confidence of their relations. In the same proportion as he had grown beyond her guidance in commoner things, he came more eagerly to seek it in every thing that perplexed his head or heart. What she had been to him;--sister, mother, friend, play-fellow--grave or gay, the companion of every hour--he had no name for it. Indeed, he had never thought of naming it: with regard to her, the terms handsome--charming--least of all dangerous--had no sense for him; she was herself, and that was all he cared for.

And now he was suddenly to reconcile himself to the perception, that she was a woman like other women, creating passions;--attracting men, awakening jealous rivalry. The idea seemed so preposterous, that he felt as if his own life had become strange to him. Only last night, when she had told him of her first love, he had listened, as he had done when they used to tell each other fairy tales, and expound each other's dreams--and now these most inconceivable realities had to be accepted as facts--one man had been a suitor for her hand; another had been silently rejected by her.--Would these last pretensions find no favor in her eyes?--and if they did?--How insupportable he found the torture, when he tried to think of her as the wife of any man living. In his unsullied soul, there arose an indefinable sensation of wrong and shame, that ran through his veins like liquid fire. He would have given his life to shield her from a look; and when he recalled the coarseness of his comrade's words, he involuntarily clenched his fist. And yet, while he was walking behind her now, he could not take his eyes from her. For the first time, he observed the grace of every movement; he silently compared the classical lines of her neck and shoulders, to the massive shapelessness of the elder lady, and the insignificant prettiness of her little daughter. His eyes were opened, and they saw her graceful walk, and the way she placed her slender feet; and--when she turned to speak to her companion--the regularity of her clearly cut profile, seen in the relief of her dark bonnet; and then the glitter of her white teeth, when her lips parted, as they often did, without a smile, but with a pensive and rather lofty look, that was in keeping with the deep low tones of her voice.

Indeed she never smiled, unless when she was talking to him; this discovery rewarded him for his eager watchfulness, when she was talking to other men. She *did* love him best; there could be no doubt of that. Why then tolerate the attentions of a stranger, if he was to be nothing more?

Thus he questioned himself, in his perplexity; when the perception suddenly flashed upon him, that after all, if she *did* feel youthfully enough to begin life afresh, he certainly had no business to prevent her--What compensation had he to offer her? Was it not the idea of a maniac, to suppose that she was to go on for ever, sacrificing her life to his; waiting upon him so long as he should think fit to go on calling her his little mother, and keep dangling by her apron-string?

When they came to the coffee-garden, they found there was a band in the saloon of the house, playing valse, and summoning the younger among the loungers to go in and dance them; an impromptu ball was soon arranged. The elders sat in the sunshine before the windows, occasionally turning their heads from their coffee-cups, to look round at the dancing vortex within, and see how their young people were amusing themselves.

Lottchen had asked and obtained her mother's permission to join the dancers, and now stood evidently waiting for Walter's assistance, to take advantage of it. But he rose, and pleading a bad headache, he walked away to escape from the noise and crowd; so with a sigh of undisguised regret, she saw herself forced to accept the offered arm of his more willing substitute.--

Helen saw what was going on but too plainly, and she had begun to divine that she herself might be the cause of Walter's change of spirits. How could he have heard of his adopted father's intentions? and if he *had* heard of them, why should they so affect him?--The notion that jealousy could have any share in his vexation, never suggested itself to her mind for a moment. She wanted to talk it over frankly with him; only he had taken himself and his gloom for a solitary saunter, along the highroad, past the last detached houses, towards the open country, perfectly insensible to the charms of a lovely afternoon in early spring. He came to a halt before an ancient country-house long since deserted, and stood looking through the railings at the neglected garden--The dried-up basin of the fountain, that had long ceased to flow, was now filled up with decaying leaves and exuberant nettles.

A kneeling nymph in the scanty drapery of the French school, with her urn gently inclined, seemed bending over it, in melancholy contemplation of the weeds. It was a pretty little figure,

and would have deserved a better fate. Now the sparrows made a perch of her polished shoulders, and the wreath upon her head was crumbling into dust. What kept Walter standing there so long, on the spot from which he could best see the contours of that figure as they stood out against the darkness of the grotto?

A measure or two of the merry music swept past him, borne on the evening wind; he looked as if he were waiting for the lonely beauty to rise to her feet, and come towards him. He could not tire of gazing on those slender lines of beauty, which many a time before, he had passed without even seeing, for all his artist eye--and now they seemed to haunt him; he began to feel uneasy; he tore himself away, and heaving a deep sigh, he thoughtfully retraced his steps.

He arrived just in time to see his party break up, but he did not join it. He followed at a distance, keeping his eye upon it.

This time, mother and daughter walked in front, with Lottchen's partner; while Helen and Dr. Hansen followed. He saw that she spoke kindly to him, and fancied he could see that the lawyer no longer doubted the fulfilment of his wishes. Now he even saw her laugh, at something her suitor said.

Their way home took them past the house where Dr. Hansen lived; they stopped before it, and he pointed upwards, and said something, to which she returned no answer; but her eyes followed the direction of his hand, and then they both walked on, as it appeared, in a graver mood.

Their distant watcher concluded that all was settled, and a feeling of unutterable wretchedness overcame him. He stopped, and tried to think where he was, and whither he was going?--He did not know, and he did not care--Anywhere!--Only not to that home where he should inevitably have to face her.

One of his former play-fellows came past, and found him standing; they exchanged a few words, which ended in Walter's accepting an invitation to take a glass of wine with him, and, arm in arm, the two young men walked away, and turned down another street.

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Meanwhile, conversing on indifferent subjects, the others had reached the Meister's door; and here the women separated; but the lawyer remained standing upon the threshold, as if he found it quite impossible to part from Helen in this uncertainty.

She had looked round, more than once, for Walter, whose absence disquieted her; she was not so entirely absorbed, however, in this anxiety, as to forget the feelings of her present companion. She, too, desired that they might come to an explication.

"This morning, my brother-in-law told me what you had confided to him." she began, in a calm tone, but not with any coldness; "I have to thank you for all the kindness and regard, which I acknowledge to be the motives of the wishes you expressed to him. I have always entertained a high consideration for you, and taken pleasure in your society. But my life does not admit of any farther change. I do not wish to form any other ties. I shall be quite contented if I may continue the old ones; and have none of them prematurely broken. I owe you this frank explanation, and I hope it will not lower me in your esteem."

He turned white, and some time passed before he spoke; "You will not send me away without one ray of hope; may I never be any more to you?--Ah! do not say that this is your only answer!"

"Indeed it must be. I should be very sorry to deceive myself, or you."

"And is there nothing else to part us, save your own disinclination to change your present life?"

"My present life is enough for me;--and she reddened slightly. "And I find its duties sufficiently absorbing. Besides--but let us say no more; my reasons are my own, and you may be convinced that I should oppose no trifling ones. Give up this idea, I beg--indeed, it would not be for your happiness."

She did not finish, for she saw that he did not listen; he bowed low, and turned away, and left her without another look.

His whole manner had surprised and touched her; for worlds she would not have given this earnest man the reasons that she had used against her brother-in-law. She stood at the door awhile, and looked down the street, to see if Walter was not coming home.

The night had quite closed in; a mild warm night like midsummer. She could scarcely say why she felt so strangely loath to go into the house.

At last she went upstairs, without first going into the Meister's room to bid him good night, though she heard him hobbling about, in evident expectation of her coming in to give him an account of what had passed. But she longed to be alone; and the moment she reached her room, she drew the bolt after her, and lightened her bosom with a few deep drawn sighs. It was so dark, that she groped about some time before she could find her matchbox, which was not in its

proper place. Altogether, she thought, some one must have been there, and disturbed the method of her usual arrangements. At last she found her lamp; but before she had lighted it, a musing mood came over her, to which she found the darkness most congenial.

She went to the window, and leaning her brow against the cool glass, she tried to live over the last few hours.

Here, on this very spot, she had poured forth her whole heart in a torrent of tears. Now she felt it aching still, but there was a sweetness in the pain.

She now foresaw that from year to year she would become lonelier and more alone, and that at last she *would* have to give up the only being she loved. But her affection for him--*that* she felt, nothing ever could oblige her to give up. Even if he could be happy without her, she, at least, never could care for any happiness that severed them.

On reflection, she became more composed; nay, cheerful. She began to long for his return, that they might have a quiet evening together like the last.

All at once, she heard a sound quite close to her, she thought it might be he, and that she had overheard his step in the next room.

"Is it you, night-rover that you are, Sir?"

No answer--yet she felt certain that she had not mistaken. She listened with sharpened attention; again that suppressed sound. "Who is there?" she called out, with a leaping heart. Still no answer!--She went to the table to light her lamp; suddenly a dark shadow was at her side, and a nimble hand stopped hers, as she was about to strike a light. She was not much startled:

"What are you doing here, Walter?" she said, drawing back; "how did you get in? I thought I had bolted the door.--God in Heaven!" she shrieked. "Peter Lars!--how is this!--What brings you here?"

It was so dark that she could not have recognised him; except for a peculiar trick which he had, and she hated; a hoarse way of breathing audibly.

And now she could distinguish the outline of his figure, and involuntarily retreated towards the door; but with one bound, he had intercepted it--

"Don't be frightened, Mamsell Helene," he said, with an ugly nervous laugh; "I mean no harm. It is not, to be sure, that darling poppet, our young man, who rules the house. It is only the vermin, Peter Lars, that creeping, crawling worm. But a worm won't hurt you, if you don't crush it, and unless you really mean to set that pretty foot of yours upon my ugly head, and--"

"What do you mean by taking such a liberty?" she interrupted him, with a show of self-possession: "Who ever gave you leave to come here, into my room to make a scene? I should have imagined you to be sufficiently aware of my opinion of you."

"Exactly so," he sneered. "It is precisely because I *am* aware of it, my very dear Mamsell, that I desire to know the reason of it, and what I ever did to vex you. And as you never yet have done me so much honor as to speak to me when we meet elsewhere, I took the liberty of waiting for an interview here. If you should vouchsafe to tell me that I am drunk, allow me to tell *you* that you are wrong. I give you my word I have not drunk a drop more than I found necessary to untie my tongue. Pluck, you know, my dear young lady, is a thing a man never can have too much of; and now I have enough to ask you what you are pleased to object to in my humble person. Eh! we are so cosy here, quite by ourselves--couldn't you be a trifle kinder? Or have you really no kindness left for Peter Lars? Have you been so lavish to your own sweet poppet, and to that precious quilldriver, your new betrothed? Have you nothing to say to a fine young fellow like myself, an aspiring artist, who is, without bravado, worth ten of such?"

"Be silent, sir, and leave the room this instant!" commanded Helen. "Not another word! and you may thank the wine you have drunk, if this insolence--"

"Oho! fair lady, softly! you will be ready to come down a peg or two in a moment; after all, we are two to one, myself and my wine; and when my pluck is up--not to speak of my love, and I adore you--Nay," he added in a lower voice, "I would not harm you for the world. I really had no bad intentions. If you had not been so stupid as to spoil my sport, and find me out before it was time, I should have let you go to bed in peace. I meant to have crept out after I had made sure that you could not possibly escape me, nor shirk the answers to a question or two I have to ask. I do assure you, proud Mamsell, I have the greatest regard for you--quite a respect--and for all my pluck, if I do stand here to keep you from the door, it is only because--"

He did not see the dangerous light in her eyes; her silence and apparent impassiveness misled him.

"It would almost appear that I really have been so fortunate, as to hit upon a humaner mood. If you would but listen to reason, adored Mamsell, you would find that the varmint, Peter Lars--"

At the same moment he found himself firmly seized by the collar, and thrust aside with a sudden jerk of a resolute woman's hand.

In the darkness, he fell over a chair, and got his feet entangled among the bed-curtains; foaming at the mouth with rage and hate, he freed himself, and rose; but the bolt had been withdrawn, and the girl had flown.

She flew downstairs, and went straight into her brother-in-law's room, waked him;--for as he lay on the sofa he seemed to have had the relief of a short nap;--and told him what had happened. He rose in agitated anger, took his burning candle, and went upstairs to her room with her. But the room was empty. The little miscreant had escaped; In the whole house there was not a trace of him to be found. The Meister called up old Christel, bid her search carefully in every nook and corner, and on no account whatever to open the door, if he should come back at a later hour. Next morning he should be dismissed in form. Then he asked after Walter, and growled when he heard that he had not yet come home; paced up and down with angry gesticulation, heavily dragging his lame leg after him, till at last he limped downstairs again, leaving his light behind him, without saying one word to Helen, who had been standing silent in the middle of the room.

As soon as ever she found herself alone again, she bolted herself in, with trembling hands, and sank upon a chair by her bedside, pressing her face into her pillows, that she might neither hear nor see a single object that reminded her of the disgraceful scene she had just gone through. After a time the dead stillness of the house brought more calm to her agitated spirit, and quieted the blood that coursed so wildly through her veins.

She rose and looked all through the room again, to convince herself that she really was by herself. There was a recess where she kept her dresses, closed by a curtain, and there he must have stood; she shivered again as she saw the crumpled folds. To rid herself of the odious recollection, she took down a book from her bookshelves, and settled herself with it in a corner of the sofa. But to read it was not so easy, she could not fix her scared ideas to the black letters before her.

She found it insufferably hot and close in that small room, but she feared to stir out of it in case of another ambush. She put down her book, took off the dress that confined her movements, and felt relieved as she walked up and down, with uncovered neck and arms, plaiting up her long dark hair for the night.

Her candle was placed so near the glass, that she might have seen herself quite easily; only her eyes were fixed upon the floor, and her thoughts were far away.

In this manner more than an hour elapsed, and her weariness began to warn her, that it was time to seek some rest, when the door of the adjoining room was cautiously opened, and she heard a light step cross it, and a knock at her bolted door. After the first thrill of momentary terror, the recollection came, that the house had been shut up, the miscreant flown, and Walter not come home.

"Is that you Christel?" she called through the door. A very subdued "yes" came back to her. The old servant often used to come to her before going to bed, to consult her in some kitchen dilemma. Without farther demur, Helen unbolted the door--It was Walter who stood before her in the darkness of the doorway.

"It is I;" he stammered, with a beseeching, almost frightened glance; both faces turned crimson in a moment.

"Helen!" he began again, and she started when she heard him call her by her Christian name. She felt his moody eager eyes upon her. In the dress in which she now stood before him, she might have appeared in any ballroom; only it had never so happened that he had occasion to see her in any other than in her dark high morning-dresses of almost conventual cut.

"What brings you here?" she asked in a tone of cool severity, that was to serve as a mask to the emotion within. "How could you so mislead me? Could not you have told me it was you? Go now, at once. This is no hour for conversation."

He did not move, but stood gazing at her white shoulders, as if they had been a vision. With ready tact, she felt that it was now too late to cover them with a shawl, while a retreat towards the darker part of the room, would have been an insult to herself.

"Do you hear me?" she repeated, in a tone he could not but obey; "I choose to be alone just now. Any thing you can have to say to me, must keep. I am more vexed than you seem to be aware of. To think that *you* could deceive me! If it should happen again, we two are parted."

His eyes fell before her angry looks, and then she turned away abruptly, and went back to the table, as though he had been already gone, and he did go. She heard him gently shut the door, and slowly walk across the adjoining room.

Before the last lingering step had died away, she was already steeped in the bitterness of remorse and self-rebuke. She had condemned him without a hearing. She called up the mute reproach of those mournful eyes that had been gazing on her, and pictured to herself what he

had felt, when she had dismissed him thus. That day had separated them more than they had ever been before. He had not been able to go to sleep without talking it over, as they had always done. Now he had come innocently to her door, and had answered her enquiry without thinking--certainly without meaning mischief, and he had been sent away like a detected culprit; expiating, unawares, the outrage of another man, an hour before.

She found it so intolerable to be alone with this remorse, that she fastened on her dress again, took up her light, and went into the sitting-room.

She would have liked best to go straight up to his garret-room, to excuse the flightiness of her temper, and to beg him to forget it and forgive her, but from this, on reflection, she desisted. She would rather go downstairs to old Christel, she thought, and speak to her about some household matters; for which, to be sure, there was no hurry, but she was yearning for the sound of some familiar human voice.

When she came to the landing place, she was not a little startled at seeing Walter sitting in the dark, on the upper steps, leaning his head upon both his hands. She could not be certain whether he was awake, or had fallen asleep; for he did not move when the door opened behind him. She set down her candlestick upon the top of the banisters, and in a moment she was seated by his side on the steps; he lifted up his head, and made a movement, as if he would have risen and taken flight.

"I beg your pardon," he said; "I hardly know myself, how I came to be sitting here; but I will go upstairs directly--"

"Stop one moment; pray do!" she whispered softly; "I am so glad to find you here; I had no peace after I had been so cross to you. Forgive me;--this has been an agitating day to me in many ways; there have been many things to pain me, and I made you suffer, poor dear, for what you could not help."

He did not answer, but looked straight before him over the dark staircase.

"Are you really angry with me?" she asked; he shook his head. "Angry with you, I never *could* be, he said mournfully.

"What was it that made you come to me so late?" she began again, after a short silence. "You wanted something, that I saw by your face, only just then, I was in such perplexity about my own affairs, as to seem cross and indifferent to those of others. Would you like to talk to me now?"

"What good would that do? I shall hear it quite soon enough?"

"Hear what?"

Still no answer; only when she said: "I do believe you are seriously vexed with me," it came out at last. "Is it true," he murmured, with averted face; "is it true that you are going to be married to that man?"

She started; a new sensation, strangely sweet, thrilled to her heart. She laughed, as we do laugh, to ourselves, when we are quite alone, at the memory of some delicious moment in the past; of happy love--of brilliant triumph--of success in some feat of our boyish days. What it was that delighted her so much, she could scarcely have defined.

"What makes you think such silly things?" she asked, completely returning to their old footing; "don't you know I shall never be going to be married to any man? When one has had a great big boy to educate, and just got him out of the roughest rudiments, one really has no time for other people; and who would thank me for bringing them such an unruly step-son? Who put these fancies into your head?"

He told her; and they sate there side by side, for some minutes, without saying anything.

"No, indeed, my dear boy," she began at last, in a tone of singular solemnity; "I never mean to go and leave you, for the sake of any human creature living. It is no sacrifice on my part; and you owe me nothing for it. I should have to chain up my own heart first of all, were I ever to settle down to any other mode of life, *any* life in which you were not the first and foremost. I have felt this for years, and shall never feel otherwise probably as long as I live. But for you, there must, of necessity, come a time, when the claims of your little mother will have to be reduced by half; when she will have to content herself with only a duty share in your thoughts and feelings; lucky if she does not fare worse, and be stowed away in the lumber-room of memory, like an antiquated piece of furniture. Don't you contradict me; I know well enough what I have to expect, and a true mother never thinks of herself. All mothers have to bear the same, and the best way to bear it, is with a brave face; and now, away with care! For the present, I am yours, and you are mine; and as far as I am concerned, nothing shall ever part us. I give you my word, and here is my hand upon it, and now--let us go to bed, and sleep upon it."

She rose, and he mechanically did the same. When she stood at the top of the staircase, and he a few steps lower, she just reached to the tall stripling's forehead; she threw her arms tenderly about his neck.

"You are not to get into the habit of that ugly frown, mind that!" she said caressingly; "frowns don't become you, and you have no reason to frown on life like any old grumpy misanthrope--such a spoiled creature as you may well afford to laugh.--smooth away, I pray, all these precocious wrinkles; and now, my son, good night!" She kissed him softly on the forehead, and passed her hand lightly over his tangling curls. Then, taking up her candle, she glided back into her own room.

The night that followed on such an eventful day, brought Helen both repose and sleep. She believed her difficulties to be overcome, and her troubles postponed for years at least. But she would hardly have looked so cheerfully after Walter, as he walked away to his day's work at the Burgermeister's Villa, had she known that he had not been able to close his eyes till morning.

In painting that saloon, he was destined to have no assistance but that of the two boys: the Meister being confined to his room, and Peter Lars nowhere to be found. It was rumoured that he had been seen at the "Star." It appeared to be his plan to stay away, and let himself be missed so long as to be received with thanks, and not with abuse, when he did come back at last. However the Meister seemed quite disposed to do without him, gave Walter his instructions, wrote to the capital for more assistance, and sent the truant's things after him to the Star, without wasting any words upon the subject.

Thus a few days elapsed. The atmosphere of the house was lowering; never a laugh now, nor a gay word. These three inmates--for Helen too, had begun to wear a graver face--lived on together, without exchanging more than a necessary word. When Walter came home in the evening--for he did not even leave his work for dinner--he would swallow down the food that had been kept for him, and then go straight to his room, on plea of fatigue, regardless of the questions asked by poor Helen's melancholy eyes. She well knew that if he left her, it was not to go to bed; for in the morning she always found his light burned down.

And if he left home weary, it was not from over-eagerness to get to his work. The villa was situated at about two miles' distance from the town, just where the forest began and the country became more undulated. It had originally been built as a ducal shooting-box. It had passed through the hands of numerous owners--through some very careless ones; and at last, in a farmer's, had been turned to more profitable purposes. When the Burgermeister bought it, he found it dignified to boast that he had a mere country-seat--a villa that cost so much and rented nothing; and so he decided on having it entirely renovated in the original style, and on opening the gardens to the admiration of the public in the summer season. The distance was no more than a pleasant walk for the townspeople. Yet Walter had been known to take two hours to it and more. The boy apprentices enjoyed a game of ball in the shell-gallery, or a little mischief in the gardens; while their young taskmaster, in his meditations, loitered about among the leafless glades, until the sun, darting into every nook and thicket, would rise so high, as to remind him that he had been sent there in some other capacity than that of overseer to the building of the birds'-nests.

Then he would hurry back to the house, scare the lads with a harshness they had never seen in him before, and fall as violently to work as though he meant to do in a day, or in half a day, what would be the work of weeks. But he would soon let his brush drop, and sit motionless upon the scaffolding, staring at some vacant spot on the opposite wall, where his fancy had conjured up a charming vision--a pensive face, and the turn of a graceful head resting on snowy shoulders, a pair of admirably moulded arms, of that smooth pearly white, which art so rarely renders, and is but too apt to turn the head of the artist who attempts it.

Almost half the week had been spent in this desultory way, when one morning the Meister called up Walter, and believing the ceiling of the shell-gallery to be finished, all except the centre-piece, he gave him an old engraving to sketch in with charcoal in the necessarily increased proportions. The Meister proposed to be there before twelve o'clock, to see if the sketch would do. It was an engraving after Claude Lorraine, with some architecture in the foreground, set off by a group of lofty trees. As for the sunrise in the background, that, the Meister thought, he should like to do himself.

Walter set off with far more alacrity than usual. His task allured him; frequent practice had made him quick at landscape-drawing, whereas he always preferred to leave the figures to his comrades.

The ceiling had been originally planned with a centre-piece of allegorical figures; but, of course, since Peter Lars' defection, that was not to be thought of now.

Walter was just thinking of this disagreeable personage, and rejoicing in his absence, when he heard a voice behind him, and looking round, he saw the very man coming after him at a brisk pace. He stopped, and waited for him with an instinct of vague curiosity. He wanted to discover why he had been so suddenly turned off--he had heard no particulars.

The black-faced little fellow, who was walking along in full travelling trim, with staff and knapsack, appeared to be in his happiest mood; his pursed-up lips wore their sliest sneer, with even more decided mischief in it than usual. His eyebrows were drawn up to his cap, and as he called after Walter, his voice sounded like the treble tones of a chaffing boy.

"You are the very man I wanted to see," he began, even before he had come up with him. "Scheiden und meiden thut weh!--partings are grievous, you know; and though I could have done all my partings with my principal in writing, well enough, I wished to take leave of you, for I had a thing or two to tell you, that would not have done quite so well in a letter. So if your people did not forbid you to contaminate yourself with an outlawed miscreant like myself, I will walk your way with you a bit."

"As you please; but tell me what you did, Peter, to bring things to such a sudden crisis?"

"Did? pshaw! a piece of nonsense! I was a donkey, my very dear and very proper young friend, as, of course, you have heard--unless perhaps they did not tell you, lest evil communications should corrupt good manners."

"The chief thing, I suppose, I do know," said Walter reddening. He only knew what old Christel had told him; viz., that Peter had come home drunk, and been disrespectful to Helen.

"The chief thing!" sneered Peter; "a pretty chief thing to make a row about! I have done many such chief things, and more to the purpose, in my life, and not a cock crowed after me. If I had not been such a confounded ass as to let myself be found out too soon, and get kicked out like a mangy hound *before* I had got what I came for, I could have laughed in my sleeve, even if they did kick me out *after*. As it is, I have made a fool of myself for nothing--got blown up and turned off, while others remain behind to laugh at me as I deserve. Eh! why don't you laugh. Propriety? You see *I* laugh at my own clumsiness!"

"I don't see what there is to laugh at," said Walter coldly; for he bitterly repented of having suffered this little villain to walk by his side.

"Don't, then," he said jeeringly; "Milksop that you are!--You have a spirit that is as blond as your head, and as your mother's was, when she suffered herself to be so taken in--"

"Fellow!" cried Walter, flaring up with sudden passion; "if ever I hear my mother's name on your lips,--" and he held his strong fist in the wizened face of his tormentor, who stood still with a look of defiance.

"Softly, old boy, take it coolly," he said. "There are moments, I am aware, when even the sweetest milk is apt to turn sour; but never mind; I don't see what I should gain by quarrelling with you before I go. You always treated me fairly--like a gentleman, I may say; for our principal I was a mere machine; for our adorable Mamsell a toad; you were the only person in the house who treated me as a fellow-creature; and so, old fellow, I mean to do you a good turn before I go. When all the rest are abusing me, you can say: 'Well, poor devil, he was not so bad a fellow after all!'"

"Come to the point;" said Walter, losing patience; "I have work to do."

"Work, have you? Ah! poor dear, I dare say. Now you have to be first and last; man-of-all-work, and Jack-of-all-trades, until the Meister finds another Peter Lars--if he ever does--or ever looks for one. When the old screw took you in, out of Christian charity, of course he had no idea that you could ever grow up to be a man, and do the work of two, and earn him a mint of money. Oh, no!--not he! he never dreamed of such a thing! I say, has he ever increased your wages? or is my young gentleman too high for such low ideas?"

"What are you driving at? what do you mean by all this nonsense?" cried Walter, out of patience. "What can it signify to you, if my foster-father--"

"Foster-father!" echoed the other, while his eyes were dancing with malicious mirth. "Well, for a foster-father, perhaps, it might be fair enough; but when we come to think of what a real father will do for a son, we can't say much for what he has done for you--especially when we consider what he ought to have done for your mother, that he left undone."

Here he looked Walter full in the face. The young fellow stood before him with heaving chest and quivering nostril, in fearful agitation. He staggered back, and leaned against one of the trees that formed the avenue. With a shriek of sardonic laughter: "Ha! is it possible?" he cried, "just look at him! he really has no suspicion how things stand! Ha! sancta simplicitas!--well, it was your luck that made me stop a day or two at the 'Star', and lay hold of that old fellow of a porter, who used to be in the Meister's service. I made him tell me the whole story; and, but for me, this pretty pattern of a helpless orphan might have lived to threescore-and-ten, without being so wise as to know its own father!"

Walter still stood thunderstruck--his lips moved, but his voice failed him.

"What makes the boy stand there, turning to stone, as though he had just heard the trumpet sound for the judgment day? I say, don't you go on being the soft chap you are, that anybody can take and twist to their own purposes. You open your eyes, and look sharp, and take what rightfully belongs to you. Take my advice--maintain your place in the world in a proper manner, even if you did come into it in a manner that may be called less proper.

"Come, let us be walking. I have a long way to go, and feel a most desperate desire to get out



of sight of that den of Philistines behind us."

"Peter!" said Walter, struggling painfully to recover his composure; "Is there more in what you have just been telling me, than mere talk and gossiping nonsense?"

"Ask the old one, if you don't believe me. Ha! shouldn't I like to see his face, when you come upon him unawares, and call him 'Dad!' And I tell you it is all as true, and as well proved as twice two. And if you had not been really as great a baby as they took such pains to make you, you would have put this and that together, and worked out your little reckoning years ago. I did, for one, as soon as ever I put my nose into the house. I sometimes tried to give you a hint; and just because you took no notice, 'Aha!' thinks I, 'he knows all about it, and makes believe not to; and of course he has his reasons.'

"Besides, one has only to look at you two together to say--that is the block, and this the chip. The same long limbs, the same build--put you in the same clothes, and look at you from behind, and not one man in ten could say which was which. Of course, what is grown dark and grey and grizzled in him, is carried out in pink and white and yellow with you--the colouring must have been your mother's; and a deuced pretty woman she was, the old porter says. He saw her once, not long before she died; he had to take some money to her--on the sly, of course; since then he has never been able to forget her, he says, and that his master felt so spooney about her, he can't wonder at; far rather, that he could give her up, and marry the wife he did--our charming Mamsell's sister, you know; the two sisters were totally different in everything--except the tin, which was the same. I rather think the Meister must have had a try at the younger sister first, and been rejected; she was a haughty 'Frölen' even then, you see; and so he turned to the other sister, who was neither haughty nor handsome, and so she took him. However, I suppose she wouldn't, if she had but known of your own sweet self--you were just beginning to run about in your first little boots--and had known that her precious husband used, as often as he could get away, to go and have a peep at his former family about three or four times a year, on his business journeys. It was all kept so cosy, that not a soul ever heard of it. A sly fox your governor was--excuse the candour of the remark. But sly he must have been in this business, if you really did live so long without ever having smelt a rat; and in other respects you are as quick a lad as may be. His wife, however, somehow or other, in time did smell it, and hunted it down, and there was the devil to pay and all, as you may fancy. She kept the keys of the strong box, so of course it lay in her power to stop his business-travelling, and she did. More fool she! for it could not tend to improve his temper, you know; and at last, when a letter came--was it a letter, or the porter?--to say that your mother was ill and dying, and past recovery, you can imagine that the governor was not disposed to stand on ceremony. He started off alone, and did not come back for three weeks and more; he had not written either--what could he have written about her illness to his wife? Of course, the worst news of the one, were the best to the other. However, he did come back at last; and she might have lived in peace now that the other woman was dead and buried; only she couldn't. And there was the greatest row of all when one day he came home and surprised her with a little present--orphan or foundling, or whatever he was pleased to call you,--she might be as fractious as she would, the child was there, and there was nothing to be done but to be cruel to it.

"And this she honestly did, to her heart's content, as you know best yourself. The governor was forced to let two and two make five; he was seldom at home, and you were a soft chap then, it seems, as you are now, and you made no resistance, nor ever even complained of her. At last the old porter could stand the thing no longer; and so he spoke up, and told her it was a shame, and not the poor brat's fault if his mother had pleased his father better than such a vixen could. Of course she made the house too hot to hold him, and he said he felt glad to go, for he could not bear to see a child so knocked about.

"It appears the Meister felt the same, and so he wrote to his sister-in-law to come and stay with them. His wife was ill with spite and rage, and things in the house went topsy-turvy. Well, and so our adorable Helen came, and what she did, I need not tell you. So there it is; and it is a special satisfaction to me"--and he gave a sneering laugh--"that I got hold of Johann, and warmed him with a bottle of Bordeaux, till he let the cat out of the bag. It was a fair trick to play to that old screw.

"You can act upon it as you please; but I know, if I stood in your shoes, I should not let myself be treated like a fatherless beggar, and fed on charity. I would speak up and take another tone. He should send me to travel, I know; with something in my pockets to chink as I went along, to do or to leave undone, what I pleased. What business had he to go and sell your mother for any amount of money-bags whatever? If he did, I should expect the money bags to pay me for it."

With this they had reached the forest Walter never spoke a word; breathing hard, he strode away as if Lucifer were at his heels. The dwarf kept up with him, waving about his stick, and gesticulating with grimaces so grotesque, as would have made any other companion laugh. Now he stood still at a spot where the roads diverged, lifted his cap, and turned round, for a last look at the little town he was leaving.

"I am truly thankful, that we definitively quarrelled, the Meister and I, and did not make it up. Do you know, I actually did demean myself so far as to write him a note this morning, with the conditions on which I would have consented to return to him. For that he must miss me sorely, no one can deny. So without ceremony, I wrote. I *may* have been too free and easy, and thawed too

fast. But he certainly gave me back as good as he got; for you know, when he is in the vein, he can write and talk like Buonaparte; let him!--If I did knock under, it was for the miserable reason that I could not find it in my heart to part from our charming Mamsell, for all her abuse and scorn.

"Bah! when once I am away from her; I shall come to my senses soon enough. But what I wanted to say to you, my boy, was this: follow my example, do as I do, and cut your chinks. You have no reason to fear that she will treat you ill; far more reason to fear the contrary.

"Do you know that she has given warning to her dangling lawyer?--and do you know why? I will tell you; simply because she is smitten by those two forget-me-nots of yours; and as you happen to be a spoon, you may take your oath that some fine day you will inevitably be sold--that is, married. You may stare if you like, and write me down an ass, if it be not as I tell you. It would be a pity; for, after all, she is your aunt; if not exactly, still she is old enough to be; and by the time you are a man in your prime, like me, she will be a withered old thing, and the very devil for jealousy, and you will have to sit by the chimney-corner all your life, instead of seeing the world and enjoying life while you are young, as every man ought to do.

"If I had been able to get her, I suppose I should have repented; but then I was madly in love with her, which you are not. With you it would have become a habit, if you go on as you are doing now.

"Well, well, no doubt you will cut your wisdom-teeth, at last. Think on my words, my boy, for I wish you well. Heavens and earth! what a face!--Have I upset you so by helping you to find a father?--and by no means, let me tell you, the worst father you could have;--not by a great deal, though I certainly have no reason to speak well of him. And now fare thee well! old boy, and carry back my compliments to those Philistines in their den. If we should chance to meet again somewhere or other, knocking about the world, I hope I shall find you a trump: give us a parting fist."

He held out his hand, but Walter did not take it; he continued staring vacantly before him and did not move a finger. With a volley of parting imprecations, half vicious and half facetious, Peter Lars twirled his stick, and went sauntering on his way, whistling.

The state in which this dark spirit left the blond, is not to be described. But the tumult of Walter's mind arose from such conflicting sources, that the one appeared to balance the other, and to produce a sort of silent stupefaction; only here and there, a word or two stood out from the chaos, and sounded after all, more strange than ominous.

He sometimes thought his comrade had amused himself by stringing together his own fanciful speculations, which in no way concerned him, and that the best thing he could do would be to laugh at and forget them.

He walked on, therefore, through the forest very cheerfully till he reached the villa; he entered the sunny gallery of which the great glass doors stood open to admit the mild spring-air, and having appointed the two boys their tasks, he climbed up to the scaffolding. He fastened the engraving before him, and proceeded without delay to sketch in the landscape on the white grounding. As before said, he was quick at architectural drawing, and very soon the temple stood out in correct proportions from the high elms and plane-trees that surrounded it.

Meanwhile, Peter Lars's disclosures had lain dormant in his mind, in a sort of unconscious twilight. But when he had finished his temple, and began to wonder whether the Meister would be pleased with it, he suddenly recollected that the Meister had promised to come out himself, and see what he had been doing. Yes, he would come--presently he would walk in by that door---how should he address him?--how call him?--Meister, as before?

The blood rushed to his forehead, and danced before his eyes. He sat down upon the ladder, and covered his face with his hands. He recalled his past life, and wondered what it would turn to now. Every one of those words of Peter Lars recurred to him--he could have put down every syllable in writing--in characters cut deep into his heart. He read them over again from beginning to end--and the end made him hesitate. What he had said of Helen appeared improbable--inconceivable--impossible! Yet what could he remember to oppose to it?--how much rather in corroboration of these conclusions?--

His blood was hammering violently at his temples, he dropped the charcoal, for he could not hold it. The deep depression of the first few moments began rapidly to give way to a feeling of rapture, to which he had almost given voice in a shout of ecstasy.

He looked down from his scaffolding, away over the sunny gardens, where the discolored turf was rapidly changing to green velvet, and the young leaves, still folded in their opening buds, were only waiting for one drop of rain to burst forth full length. He heard the singing-birds warbling in the transparent air, and under the roof of the semicircle that formed the gallery, he saw the swallows busy about their nests.

His mood was glad and tender; he no longer thought how he should meet his father; or how he should act in furtherance of his darling wish to turn his back on paintpot and plaster.

He saw nothing but her earnest face, now with an unwonted look of tenderness; and those ivory arms and shoulders; and heard her voice with that accent in which she had said, as she had kissed him on the forehead; "so spoiled a creature can afford to laugh."

He could not tell how long he had been dreaming, until the two boys reminded him that it was time to eat his dinner. And he let them eat it, and remained where he was. He wanted neither meat nor drink.

Presently he started violently, on hearing the old pensioner who kept the gardens, say in answer to somebody's question: "You will find Mr. Walter in the shell-gallery. I scarcely think he means to leave his work to-day, so long as the light lasts."

His knees shook as he got up; and all his self-possession left him at the thought that he was about to see his father for the first time, consciously.

Only it was not the heavy uneven gait he expected that he heard coming up the steps, though the eyes that looked up through the tall windows in search of him upon his scaffolding were not less familiar to him.

"Helen!" he cried. "What brings you here?" and running down the steps, he was by her side in a moment.

Never had he seen her look so charming. A rose on her cheek with the air and exercise--her dark hair blown back in slight disorder under her little hat; her eyes radiant with gaiety, a crimson handkerchief loosely tied about her throat, and on her arm, a basket carefully closed.

"No, no;" she said, as Walter attempted to take it from her; "that is to come afterwards, and is only to be considered as an appendix to my real mission. So first of all I must deliver myself of that: know therefore, Claude Lorraine and his temple and his sunrise are all to be thrown over, and your laudable labours of the morning wasted. It will all have to be rubbed out and done over again. The Burgermeister has just sent to say that he has other projects wherewith to astonish the weak minds of his admiring friends. They are to have Naples and the Mediterranean above their heads, and Vesuvius spouting lava over them. Of course the Meister was indignant at any man's presuming to meddle with his business; but you know his worship has his peculiar ideas about the fine arts, and a not so peculiar intolerance of contradiction. And then a most impudent letter from Peter Lars came to make the measure full; and this shock seems to have fallen on the Meister's limbs, so that he is quite unable to walk, or to come himself to look after you, as he proposed; so I said I would come instead, and tell you what I could--and, to-night, he will tell you the rest.

"So there is a truce for you, meanwhile; that is, as far as regards the ceiling. But I don't see, young sir, that you have been so very busy all this time--one or two of those Cupids I see over there have scarcely a leg to stand on, and there are many gaps among the shells and wreaths."

While her bright eyes were roving over the walls, he stood mute before her, lost in contemplation.

"You are not communicative this morning; I rather think curiosity concerning the contents of my little basket must have struck you dumb. Know then, that my sense of my maternal duties was too strong to let me set out on my diplomatic mission without having made a previous raid into the store-room; for though art may profess to live on bread and water, I never saw that it had any particular objection to meat and wine. And as I don't deny that my walk has made me hungry, we will proceed to explore our basket without farther ado. Only you must find a breakfast-table for us--where it does not smell of plaster and fresh paint, but rather, more seasonably, of spring violets. Let us walk through the gardens till we find a shady spot and a bench. Every other essential of an idyll is here already."

He laughed, though he did not seem to have heard; he answered half shyly, half absently, in monosyllables.

As they walked down the steps of the gallery together, the greybearded pensioner doffed his cap and nodded, with a sort of complacency and paternal admiration of the handsome young couple, that made the young man flush to his temples, as though he had heard the most hidden secrets of his heart proclaimed from all the tree-tops.

He walked beside his companion without offering her his arm. He had silently possessed himself of the basket, in spite of her resistance; and she had slung her hat upon her arm in its place.

"It is not yet time for the sun to be dangerous," she said, and looked steadily upwards at it; her face was radiant with unwonted gaiety.

"Don't we feel as if we had broken loose from prison," she said, "when once we fairly escape from the town? A person who has always lived in such a place as this need never grow old, I fancy--or at least, never feel old, which would be the same thing. In fact, if I were not ashamed of

myself in the face of that venerable warrior, I feel as if I could begin to dance, even at, my advanced age; the birds would make a charming band."

"Come then and try," he said; "what would be the harm of it?--The avenue is smooth enough."

She shook her head. "Breakfast first, and then, not play, but work; I have so much to do at home, and have done nothing; the house is an abomination to look at"--He did not press her farther, and hardly ventured to look at her as they walked along together under the high trees.

They did not meet a soul, the grounds were running wild; the Burgermeister had quarrelled with the gardener over the projected improvements, and dismissed him; so there had been a sudden stoppage, and there were traces of this stoppage everywhere. But this unbroken solitude made the place all the more enjoyable.

They came to a halt before a running stream that had been expanded to an artificial lake. A wooden bridge had led across it to a little island, where swans were kept, and a hermitage had been built beneath a group of tall ash-trees. This bridge was to have been carried away and replaced by a new one, but by the time the first half of his intentions had been carried out, his worship dispatched a counter-order; and at present there was no way of getting to the island but by a single plank loosely thrown across the bridge posts. Helen was perplexed.

"I don't trust myself to cross," she said; "though I think that plank would carry me; but I am afraid it would make me giddy."

"The swan is sitting;" he said, half to himself; "it is pretty to see her; and then her mate, how he flaps his wings, and flies at any body who comes too near."

"Have you been over?"

"Often; it is quite safe; come, let me carry you."

"We shall both fall in," and she laughed; "let us rather give it up."

"Don't; I want to shew you the hut; and there is a table in it, where we might have our breakfast. You take hold of the basket, and leave the rest to me."

He had her already in his arms--he hardly felt her weight; but the loose plank swung and shook under his feet, and she clung to him with both her arms round his neck. He stopped in the middle of the rushing waters. "Suppose,"--he said, and his tone was strange;--"one, two, three, eyes shut, and a jump, and it would be over."

"Don't talk so wickedly," she whispered; and he felt how her heart was beating.--

When he had carried her over, he still held her high above the ground. "I should like to try how long I could carry you without being tired," said he. And she: "I can't say I should like to try anything of the kind. I have had seats that were more comfortable, and I only wish I were safe over on the other side again;--but here we are at the Hermitage. Suppose all the people who ever walked about under these trees, were all to appear at once, what a curious masquerade it would be!"

"I had rather do without them;" he said between his teeth.

"Still, those must have been strange times," she continued, in a contemplative mood; "Pigtails and powder, and trumpery dress swords; and with these they played at being hermits and Arcadian shepherds: Nature is sure to avenge herself; turn her out as often as you please, and she always slips in again, in some disguise or other."

"There are the swans;" and he pointed them out at some distance. She thought it a pretty sight to see the brooding mother placidly sitting upon her eggs, while her mate, in jealous haste, was vigilantly swimming his patrol all round the nest.

"Do you hear him? how he hisses and threatens?" asked Walter.

"Yes, and it makes me feel disquieted; almost as if he were agitated by human passion; and the contrast with the soft snow of his plumage makes it still more curious.--I could stand here and watch these creatures for hours together. Now let us go and sit in the hut, there is rain coming in those clouds."

And in fact the first large drops were falling; pattering upon the bark roof of the hut; they heard the sweet spring rain, and smelt it, with the scent of a thousand blossoms wafted to them through the little cobweb-curtained window; and as they sat on the only bench, eating their breakfast off the roughhewn table, they looked through the open door over the surface of the water all fretted and rippled by the rain. The birds had ceased their song; and the two sat silent, listening to the splashing and streaming above their heads.

"We can't even see to the other side," she said; "the rain is falling like a thick veil; shutting us out from the rest of the world--which would not be so great a loss after all."

"It looks as if we really were upon some desert island in the deep sea;" he said, gazing on the water; "I only wish that shore were really farther off; and that we were floating far away out of sight."

"A pretty Robinson you would make, to be sure, spoiled boy that you are!"

"Why?--have I not all I want here with me?"

"Yes, till we come to the bottom of the basket, and have emptied our one bottle; after that perhaps we might do battle to the poor swans, and prey upon their eggs; and then the comedy would be over, and the tragedy would begin. I read one, once, about a Count Ugolino, whom they threw into a deep dungeon, with his children, to be starved to death. But I don't think I should like to see it acted; still less, to take a part in it."

He kept his eyes fixed on the little glass she had brought with her, and had now filled for him.

"What man cares to sate his body," he murmured, "if his soul be famished? I should prefer the reverse; should not you?"

"I don't think I always understand you now--you sometimes say odd things."

"Drink out of this same glass then; and then, you know, you will be able to guess my thoughts." He held it towards her; his whole face was glowing, his eyes avoided hers, as they looked at him with surprised enquiry. She took the glass, but held it in her hand, without drinking.

"I wish it could really help one to guess them. There is a certain young man of my acquaintance, who used to have no secrets from me, and of late he has been a mystery with seven seals; but I doubt if the truth be really in this wine. I rather think----"

She stopped short, for a sudden perception began to dawn on her mind, though she could hardly trust herself to admit it. He had raised his eyes now, and was looking at her with wrapt gaze.

"Helen," he said, "when a man feels choking it is too late to ask him what strangles him? All I know is, that I shall have to go away, and leave you--"

"Go away! why, what are you thinking of?"

"You may well ask," he said, in a tone of desperation, without venturing to look up. "I only know too well, I cannot live without you."

His words thrilled to her very marrow, she held the wineglass unconsciously, without seeing how she was spilling the wine.

"That is not what I meant," she said. "What makes you talk so strangely?"

She would have risen, but he seized her hand so eagerly, that she dropped the glass.

"Do not go," he cried. "Oh! stay and listen to me! You must. I must talk so, because it is what I feel, and you must hear it, or it will kill me. All this time I have felt as if my heart were dead within me. To me there is nothing in the whole wide world but you. If this island were to float away, and carry us away where nobody could reach us, you know you would be mine and I yours to all eternity--you cannot deny that; and therefore what difference should the world make to us? Can all the talking and the gossiping in the world, make us one jot more happy or one jot more wretched? You have nobody to consider; I am what I always was--a penniless, homeless orphan; for if I have a father living, I have no desire to see him. Why should we go back to those people? We might cross the seas together; to any wilderness, where there is nobody to ask for baptismal certificates, or parish registers; and there we might be all in all to each other and be happy, and then we might afford to laugh at a world that would have grudged us our happiness."

He held her hand tight between both his own, while the words fell from his lips in burning haste, and his devouring eyes were fastened on her downcast lashes, or watching the quivering of her parted lips.

She could not speak; her brain was reeling, and her ears ringing. She could not distinguish every word, but his meaning went straight to her heart.

"Helen!" he cried, and dropping her hand, he caught her all trembling to his heart; lifting her from the ground, and covering her face with passionate kisses.

The intoxication that had so carried him away lasted but a second. With a violent effort, she tore herself from his arms, and stood breathless, facing him with flaming eyes. "No more!" she said. "Not another word! thank God rather, that I have sense enough left for both, to take your words for what they are, for the vagaries of an idle brain. Were I so foolish as to take this nonsense for downright earnest, you should never look upon my face again. But even a mother's indulgence has its bounds, and if ever you are seized with such another fit of madness in my presence, the last word will have been spoken between us two. I shall take good care, however,

that you do not so easily forget yourself again. Hitherto I have forgiven many things; I trusted to the natural candour of your disposition. But I am afraid you are not much better than most young men of your age. I am sorry to believe it of you, both for yourself and me. But it serves me right, for supposing that ten years could be enough to know a man; even when one has brought him up oneself!"

He stood before her without being able to utter a single word. If the earth had opened and swallowed him up, it would have been a relief to him. In the tumult of his ideas, he tried in vain to make her words agree with all that he had seen and heard within the last few days; had he ventured to look at her, he might have had some suspicion of the struggle in her soul, while she was uttering those annihilating words.

"The rain is over;" she said after a pause, in a tone of complete indifference, "I must go."

He prepared to follow her.

"I can find my way without you;" she said; "now that I know that the plank is safe. Good-bye, Walter, you can send the basket by one of the boys."

She stopped on the threshold of the hut. "See how suddenly all the leaves have burst their buds," she said, and her voice had completely recovered its tranquil tone. "Everything in nature has its season; we can change nothing, and prevent nothing. Give me your hand, dear boy. I am not going to leave you to mope by yourself, because you have just given me another proof that you are but a child, and a dreamer of childish dreams. I am not a bit angry with you now; so let us make haste and forget all those ugly passionate words we said. By-and-by you will laugh at them as I do now. And when you come home this evening, I hope you will bring us your own bright face again, and the best resolutions henceforth, to honour and obey your own little mother, that your days may be--as the fourth commandment says. Bless you, my son."

She looked back affectionately at him, and waved her hand to say good-bye, and then she walked steadily over the plank, with her light elastic step, and turned into one of the paths that led through the wood on the other side.

As long as she was to be seen, Walter looked after her; then he flung himself on the grass, with his face to the ground, in an agony of shame and grief, and self-reproach. He did not know that as soon as she was out of sight, her brave heart failed her; she stopped, and leaning her head against the stem of a young tree, she too relieved herself by a flood of tears.

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The day was fading into twilight; in the Meister's room it had grown too dark for him to do anything until the lamp was brought. Putting by the watercolor sketch of Naples and Mount Vesuvius, in which he had been making some alterations in the foreground with a piece of chalk, he was just about to exchange his favorite old dressing gown with the sheepskin, for a more appropriate garment for an evening walk, when the door was opened noiselessly, and Helen came in, with a serene countenance, and an unfaltering voice that belied all her agitations of the morning.

"Good evening, brother. I have been longer away than I expected. I had a little piece of business to do on my way home, that should have been settled long ago--Christel has been taking good care of you, I hope? How have you been? better?"

The unusual friendliness of her manner took him by surprise, and stopped the reproaches that had been ready on his lips. "How does the gallery get on?" he asked, instead of answering. "You will have been standing chattering there so long, that there will not have been much work done."

"I left the gallery about twelve o'clock;" she said with a faint blush. "If I had not gone astray among the woods, and done that business on my way back, I should have been here ever so long ago. After all, it would not so much signify, if the work were to last a few days longer. The grounds are hardly planned, and the gallery will certainly be finished in a week. Have you heard whether that assistant is to be counted on?"

"Not yet, why do you ask?"

She took a chair and seated herself with her back to the light. "I will tell you why," she said. "I have been thinking over what you said the other day, and I begin to see that you were right, when you said it was time for Walter to be sent from home; I know him too well, not to see that for him, it would be waste of time and talents, to go on plodding as he is doing now, in this narrow sphere of action. If he is ever to attain the full development of which he is capable, we must transplant him to a more congenial soil. However, I am aware that you would find it hard to keep him in a strange place, unless he were to earn his own livelihood by his present trade; and that would be hard on him, for he takes no pleasure in it, and will take still less, if you send him among strangers."

She paused, for her voice was failing her; he stood at the other window, looking away from her, and drawing upon the vapoury panes with his finger.

"Brother-in-law," she began again: "I have just done a thing without your knowledge, that I

hope you will approve of, as it is for Walter's good. As I was walking home just now, I thought over all those long years we have lived together, and I confess I have not been so friendly with you as I should have been, to make our lives pleasanter to both. I am sorry for it now. There were some things I never could forget, although they were past and over, and we know that no one human being has any right to judge another.

"With regard to Walter, I have not so much to reproach myself. I did my duty by him, as far as I saw it; and I see that I would not be doing it now, if I were to keep him at home, merely because I find it hard to part from him. So it occurred to me, as the best plan for us all, that I could give him an independence, by making him my heir, as a mother should her only son. Don't mistake me, I am not thinking of dying--only of making my will; and as women are ignorant in such matters, as soon as I had made up my mind, I went straight to the proper authority, Dr. Hansen, and asked him what would be the surest way of making a will--not only with a sound mind, but a sound body--and of laying down the burthen of one's thalers in the most legal form."

"You spoke to Hansen about this?"

"I did; and found him quite willing to assist me. I had a deed of gift drawn up, which he will bring this evening, written out in proper form. I also begged him to join you, as trustee for the management of the property, and to provide for Walter's wants until he becomes of age. I hope you will not object to this."

"Helen!"--cried the Meister--"and you yourself?"

"Don't imagine I could forget myself," she said merrily. "I took good care to keep enough for my own livelihood; especially as I mean to look out for a situation in some respectable family where there is an orphan to bring up. I have been in a good school for that you know."

"And when you are old, and feel loath to be dependent upon strangers, though you may think it so easy now?"

"I should not be forlorn or forsaken even then," she said very earnestly. "I shall find a home for my old age in my dear Walter's house, and I hope his young wife will never turn me from the door." A long silence ensued.

"You don't seem to be entirely satisfied with my plan, brother," she began again. "But it really is the best plan for all of us. When your son is taken off your hands, you will be able to do what you have wished for all your life. You can sell this house and garden, give up the business, and go to Italy for a year or two. In that lovely Italy you rave about, you would soon shake off your horrid rheumatisms, that torment you so. And one fine day, Walter would cross the Alps and join you, when he finished his studies; and then you could shew him all those marvels of Art and Nature you are always yearning after, and you would be happy both together--and I--"

Her voice faltered, she could not continue. The Meister turned from the window,--and, in an instant,--for she was too unsuspecting to prevent him, he had flung himself upon his knees before her, as though he had lost his senses. He hid his rough grey head upon her lap, smothering the strange sounds that fell from his lips; stammering and sobbing in wordless protestation.

"Don't, brother;" she whispered, in a trembling voice, bending over him; "come to your senses, and hear me out. I have a favor to ask of you in return, that you may not feel inclined to grant me, and in case you should refuse it, the whole plan falls to the ground."

He looked up in her face, without rising from his knees. The great strong man lay helpless and crushed by the tempest of feeling that had swept over him. He had taken one of her hands, and pressed it to his lips. She went on.

"This thing I am going to do would be of no use whatever, if Walter ever came to know I did it. He is not a child now; he has the pride and the sensitiveness of a man. Were he to know that he owed this inheritance to me, he never would accept it: my most solemn protestations would be in vain. I might swear to him that all my happiness is placed in his; that the only interest I have on earth, is to provide for his future welfare; it would be no use, he would reject it all. Therefore it behoves us to take the proper measures to deceive him; and the safest way to deceive him in this, would be to undeceive him in another matter: he must know his father, and his father must be thanked for the change in his fortunes."

The Meister sprang to his feet, and paced to and fro in violent agitation.

"Never!" he cried at last; "It is impossible, Helen, I can't do it."

"What can't you do?" and she looked very grave. He stood still before her with an imploring look.

"Don't ask me to do that," he said; "It costs me nothing to take that dear boy to my heart, and call him son, if you think it is in your power to absolve me from the promise I made your sister. But that I should appear as his benefactor, I who have done him and his poor mother such grievous wrong--" She interrupted him--

"That wrong has been expiated, brother; and what there may remain, will be expiated now by the penance I prescribe. I too have some wrong to expiate, though not of my own doing. Had my poor sister, in the delirium of her revenge, not destroyed the inheritance you had a right to expect, things would have happened differently. Promise me, therefore, to do as I ask you, and give me your hand upon it. Believe me, it will be the saving of us all." She rose; "I hear steps in the passage," she said; "if it be Walter, I hope you will not let this night pass, without having spoken to him. Only do not tell him that it was I who proposed his going; he has a real father now. I abdicate my authority, and lay down my duties in your hands. I know he will not have to suffer for the change." So saying, she left the room, without waiting for his answer.

In the passage she met, not Walter, but the lawyer; who had brought the deed of gift.

"I have already talked it over with my brother-in-law," she said in a kindly tone, to the silent man before her. "He has consented to do as I wish, and now I leave the rest to you and him, with entire confidence in you both; would you be so kind as to go in and tell him what you think about it?"

And bowing slightly to him, she passed on, to go into the garden. There, in the morning, she had left the bushes and the fruit-trees with their buds all shut, and now they were clothed in tenderest green.

She looked at them with tranquil pleasure; and while she walked down the narrow gravel path, she thought to herself how soon she would have to leave them, never to see them more. But there was not a shade of regret in her meditations, and her heart, that had passed through so many storms, had come to a sudden calm.

Half an hour later, she heard Dr. Hansen's step on the pavement of the little court, which he crossed, and she saw that he was coming through the garden gate. She made an effort to conceal a gust of emotion that suddenly came over her, and she looked searchingly in his serious face.

"What news do you bring me? I hope we have not forgotten anything that may prove a hindrance to so simple a desire as mine is?--"

"Nothing," he answered gravely. "It is settled in the most formal manner, and all I have to do in this house in the capacity of lawyer, may be considered as definitively concluded. Will you forgive me, if I say that the lawyer has not succeeded in silencing the man?--who *will* speak, even though he has so much reason to fear that he will not find a hearing."

He paused, as if in expectation of some sign to interpret in his favor, or against him.

She said nothing, and his courage rose.

"You know how I feel;" he continued, "and after our recent conversation on Sunday evening, I certainly should not have presumed to molest you with another word that sounded hopeful. Only the day after, I ascertained from your brother-in-law, what I had already surmised with pain, that your reason for rejecting every suitor who presented himself, was because you felt no security that he sought you, not for your fortune, but for yourself.

"It was small consolation for me to know that it was not, in the first instance, any special aversion to myself, that had cut me off from all my hopes of happiness. What could I ever do to convince you of the bitter injustice of your distrust?--If my undeclared devotion has not proved it to you in all those years, what farther assurance of mine could ever convince you of it? But to-day you were so good as to take me into your confidence, and to allow me to look deeper into your heart, than would have been necessary for a simple affair of business. In my office I could not thank you; and here--will you take me for a madman, if I have not given up all hope, and venture to ask whether circumstances may not have arisen to induce you to change your mind? In me, you will never find a change."

She kept her eyes cast down. "Do not ask me now," she said, with quivering lips. "I have need of all my resolution to do what has to be done, and it has been sorely tried."

"Not now?" he whispered, "another time then?"

"My dear kind friend," she said, now looking him full in the face; "if you really be a friend to me, wait until that young moon that is just rising, has run its course, before you come here again. There is a strange chaos in my mind. You would hardly understand it, if I were to try to explain, and unravel all its mysteries. They will unravel themselves in time, and then you may come for an answer to your question. A clear straight-forward answer. This is all I can give you for to-day."

"It is more than I dared to hope; more than I deserve," he said, with deep emotion, and bent low to kiss the hand she had offered him as farewell, and so they parted.

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Four weeks later, the same pale crescent that had lighted our yellow-haired young friend through the woods that evening, was shining in full refulgence upon a street of a great city, in the quarter chiefly inhabited by students and artists. Close to the open window of a small lodging on the third story, catching the last glimpse of fading light, a young man was seated before a great



drawing board; with bold pencil drawing great broad sepia lines, to relieve with light and shade a correct and tasteful architectural ornament.

His landlady came in with a letter in her hand. "From home;" she said, laid it down upon the table, and left the room again. The colour-box and drawing board were thrown aside, and in an instant, with trembling haste, he had broken the seal.

The young artist seated himself upon the windowsill, and read as follows:

"My dear spoiled boy! That we have been almost three weeks parted, is a fact I should find incredible, did I not know my almanack too well for reasonable disbelief.

"There, the day of your departure has been branded with a thick black stroke, and the days on which your letters came, distinguished with bright red ones. It is a fact, for nineteen long days we have been deprived of our six-foot son, and for how much longer, is past all present reckoning.

"I began several letters which I never finished. I knew that your father wrote, so that as for news, you were not starved. Anything more your little mother might have wished to say, though she certainly is no sentimental writer, would only have tended to make you homesick; and home is a thing with which, at present, you are to have nothing more to do.

"I had the satisfaction of hearing by your last letter, that you find your new mode of life already becoming congenial to you; that your work absorbs you, and your comrades suit you. Here steps in maternal jealousy at once, and in terror of losing you altogether, I write this letter as reminder; also because I have a thing or two to tell you which may not be indifferent to you.

"In the first place, you must know, that yesterday was the day appointed for the magic ceremonies with which the Burgermeister thought fit to inaugurate his villa. The Heavens were pleased to smile on his designs, and favored him with the loveliest day this year has brought. In the grounds and garden, every flower that grows and blows, was in full bloom and fragrance. Our worthy host--you know him in his gala mood--was courtesy itself. Wife and daughter attired from head to foot, in correctest taste and newest fashion; and we poor provincials rigged out in our best, each one according to his abilities.

"What will you say to your little mother, when you hear that she turned out in fall ball dress!--worse--what will you say when you hear that she actually danced?--Not merely a sober polonaise with our host, who led us by torchlight all over the house, down to the lowest cellar, and into the park and grounds--but actually waltzes and écossaises; even a heel-splitting mazurka, which your rival of old, the young referendarius, led off with the daughter of the house.

"Alas! poor boy, it is not to be concealed from you, that the venerable guardian of your youth took strange advantage of your absence, to wax wild and wanton in her old age.

"Not only did I join the giddy throng myself; whirling round our well-known gallery of shells, perfectly undaunted by any flaming volcano whatsoever, but I succeeded in turning a far stronger and more respectable head to my own mischievous purposes, and I fear we are a superannuated couple who have fed the gossips with our follies, for some time.

"My dear child, it is my own confession, or you might refuse to believe the papers when you read it in them. Your mamma has finally made up her mind to give you a stepfather, and her decision was solemnly celebrated last night in a select circle of authorities and townspeople. Your mother's health and her bridegroom's, was drunk with all the honors, as the clock struck twelve.

"At first I thought that all the world must be astonished, and would regard it as no less improbable than improper, that a mother should think of weddings, when she has a great grown-up son so far away. But, judging by their words at least, it did not astonish them at all, and they seemed to think it quite correct; and so after all, I daresay, there is no one to find fault with us, save precisely this grown-up son. Here I would make the appropriate observation that a dutiful child never presumes to judge its parents, but rather looks respectfully on all their actions, as emanations of a maturer judgment.

"In the fond hope that my dear Walter is just such a dutiful child, I send him his stepfather's love meanwhile, and I trust that he will not fail to bring us his in return, when some fine day he comes back to us as a distinguished architect; when, instead of the poky old house we are to take possession of in autumn, he will have to build us a sunny airy villa outside the gates; though I should not care for volcanoes or shell-galleries.

"And now I must say good-bye to you for to-day. He (major) is just come to fetch me for a walk; and as he is to be my master, of course I must obey. Only about your father; he has grown quite young again, and his leg is quite alert--to be sure the days are warm, and I don't really think, that without that trip to Italy--It is no use trying. My master will not leave me time to finish--I begin to fear that I have sold myself to cruel bondage. Thank Heaven! I have a great strong son to threaten with, who, I trust, will never forget, or cease to care for his

"little mother."

"P. S. It would be dishonesty in me to suppress poor Lottchen's love: she asked after you the very first thing, with a charming little air of melancholy; which, however, did not prevent her dancing every dance, and eating a vielliebchen at supper with the Burgermeister's son. Alas! they are all alike!--Youth is given to folly; and even age----!"

Here came a long dash of the pen, which Walter sat looking at, without moving for half an hour. Only when his landlady came in to ask him whether he would have his lamp, he stared at her, shook his head, and carefully putting away the letter in his pocket, he went downstairs, and away towards a distant quarter of the town, to a modest little wine-house, where he was wont to meet his comrades once a week, to enjoy a sociable evening.

When he came home about twelve o'clock, his landlady heard him singing a snatch of a student song as he walked up stairs--a very unusual circumstance.

"What can have made him so jolly to-night, I wonder?" she said to herself as she pulled the bed clothes over her ears; "he must have had very good news from home.--This is the first letter he ever got, that made him go to bed singing!"

**THE END.**

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## **THE DEAD LAKE**

**AND**

**OTHER TALES**

**BY**

**PAUL HEYSE.**

**FROM THE GERMAN BY**

**BY**

**MARY WILSON.**

*Authorized Edition.*

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Summer was at its height, yet in one corner of the Alps an icy cold wind revolted against its dominion, and threatened to change the pouring rain into snow flakes. The air was so gloomy that even a house which stood about a hundred paces from the shore of the lake, could not be distinguished, although it was whitewashed and twilight had hardly set in.

A fire had been lighted in the kitchen. The landlady was standing by it frying a dish of fish, while with one foot she rocked a cradle which stood beside the hearth. In the tap room, the landlord was lying on a bench by the stove, cursing the flies which would not let him sleep. A barefooted maid of all work sat spinning in a corner, and now and then glanced with a sigh, through the dingy panes at the wild storm which was raging without. A tall strong fellow, the farm servant of the inn, came grumbling into the room: he shook the rain-drops from his clothes, like a dog coming out of the water, and threw a heap of wet fishing nets into a corner. It seemed as if the cloud of discontent and ill-humour which hung over the house, was only kept by this moody silence from bursting into a storm of discord and quarreling.

Suddenly the outer door opened, and a stranger's step was heard groping through the dark passage; the landlord did not move, only the maid rose, and opened the door of the room.

A man in a travelling suit stood at the entrance, and asked if this was the inn of the dead lake. As the girl answered shortly in the affirmative, he walked in, threw his dripping plaid and travelling pouch on the table, and sat down on the bench apparently exhausted; but he neither removed his hat heavy with rain nor laid down his walking stick, as if intending to start again after a short rest.

The maid still stood before him, waiting for his orders, but he seemed to have forgotten the presence of any one in the room but himself, leant his head against the wall, and closed his eyes; so deep silence once more reigned in the hot dark room, only interrupted by the buzzing of the flies, and the listless sighs of the maid.

At last the landlady brought in the supper; a little lad who stared at the stranger carried the candle before her. The landlord rose lazily from his bench, yawned and approached the table leaving to his wife the charge of inviting the stranger to partake of their meal. The traveller refused with a silent shake of the head, and the landlady apologized for the meagreness of their fare. Meat, they had none, except a few live ducks and chickens. They could not afford to buy it, for their own use, and now travellers never came that way, for two years ago, a new road had been made on the other side of the mountain, and the post which had formerly passed their inn now drove the other way. If the weather was fine, a tourist, or a painter who wished to sketch the environs of the lake now and then lodged with them; but they did not spend or expect much, neither was the selling of a few fish very profitable.

If however the gentleman wished to remain over night, he would not fare badly. The bedrooms were just adjoining, and the beds well aired. They had also a barrel of beer in the cellar, good Tyrolese wine, and their spirits of gentian was celebrated. But all these offers did not tempt the guest; he replied that he would stay for the night, and only wished a jug of fresh water. Then he arose and without casting a single look at the people seated round the table, and silently eating their supper, or taking any notice of the little boy of ten, although the child made the most friendly advances, and gazed admiringly at his gold watch guard, which sparkled faintly in the dim light. The maid servant took another candle from the cornice of the stove, and showed him the way to the next room, where she filled his jug with fresh water, and then left him to his own thoughts.

The landlord sent an oath after him. "Just their usual luck," he grumbled, if any guest ever came to them, it was always some idle vagrant who ordered nothing, and finally took his leave without paying for his bed, often disappearing in company with the bedclothes. His wife replied that it was just those folks, who regaled themselves on all that larder and cellar could supply, and tried to ingratiate themselves with the landlord. This gentleman was ill in mind or body, as he neither ate nor drank. At this moment the stranger again entered the room, and asked if he could have a boat, as he wished to fish on the lake by torchlight, as soon as the rain had ceased.--The landlady secretly poked her husband in the side, as if to say; "Now, you see! he is not right in the head; don't contradict him for heaven's sake."

The landlord who was fully aware of the advantage to be gained by this singular demand, answered in his surly manner, that the gentleman could have both his boats, though it was not the fashion in these parts to fish at night, but if it amused him he was welcome to do so. The farm servant would prepare the torch immediately--so saying, he made a sign to the tall fellow who was still occupied in picking his fish bones, and opened the door for his guest.

The rain had not ceased and the water was dashing and gushing from the gutters. The stranger seemed insensible to any outward discomfort; he hastily walked towards the shore, and by the light of the lantern which the farm servant had brought with him, he examined the two boats, as if he wished to make sure which of them was the safest. They were both fastened under a shed, where different fishing implements were lying under some benches. Then sending back the farm servant under some pretext or other, he sought on the shore of the lake for a couple of heavy stones, which he placed in the largest of the two boats.--He drew a deep breath, and stood for a moment with his eyes fixed on the dark water, which as far as one could see by the light of

the lantern was furrowed by the drizzling rain. The wind had ceased for a moment, the surf foamed, and dashed round the keel of the small boats; from the house, one could hear the monotonous sing song of the landlady who was lulling her baby to sleep. Even this sounded melancholy, reminding more of the cares of motherhood than of its joys, and heightened the dismal impression made by the forsaken aspect of this corner of the world.

The stranger was just returning to the house, when he heard on the road coming from the south, along which he had also travelled that morning, the cracking of a whip and the crashing and creaking of wheels which were drawn heavily up the hill through the deep and sloughy ruts. Shortly afterwards a lightly covered carriage stopped before the inn. Lights were brought to the door, a female voice asked questions which the landlady answered in her most amiable tones; then two women got out of the carriage and carefully carried something wrapped up in cloaks into the house. The farm servant helped the coachman to bring his horses under shelter. A few minutes later every thing had relapsed into the former silence.

It had all passed like a vision before the stranger, neither awakening his curiosity, nor, still less, his interest. He once more looked up at the dense clouds to see if there was any chance of their dispersing, and then entered the house where lights were now shining in the room opposite the tap room, and shadows were flitting to-and-fro behind the curtains. He gave back the lantern to the man, and some orders about baits and fishing hooks which he would require in the morning, and retired to his room.

There he lighted the candle, and placed it in a bent candlestick, which stood on the rickety table.--Then he threw open a casement to let out the stuffy and damp air, and for a while looked out on the splashing and spirting gutter in which a cork was restlessly dancing. Further off no object could be discerned; the inky darkness of the cloudy sky hid everything from view. The wind howled in a ravine near the lake, like some caged beast of prey, and the trees near the house groaned under the weight of the gushing rain. It was an unfavourable moment for standing near an open window but the stranger seemed to be listening intently to the dismal sound of the storm which raged without. Only when the wind drove the rain straight into his face, he moved away, and paced up and down between the bare walls of the little room, with his hands crossed behind his back. His face was quite calm, and his eyes appeared to be looking beyond what surrounded him, into some distant world.

At last he took writing materials, and a small portfolio from his travelling pouch, sat down beside the dim candle, and wrote as follows:

"I cannot go to rest, Charles, without bidding you good night. How weary I am, you must have perceived when we met, unfortunately for so short a time, six weeks ago. *Then* I ought to have spoken to you, and we might have come to an agreement on this chapter on pathology, as we have done on so many others: Had I done so, I could now have quietly smoked my last cigar, instead of tiring us both, with this dull writing, but the words seemed to cleave to my lips. We should have probably disputed about the matter--Each of us would have maintained his own opinion, so I thought it useless to spoil the few hours we had to spend in each other's society. I am well acquainted with your principles, and know that if you were here, you would endeavour to reconcile me to existence. But you would wrong me, if you thought that I had caused this dissension between life and myself which nothing but a divorce can appease. I would willingly live if I *could*. I am not such a coward, or so fastidious that a few 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' should drive me distracted and make me take the resolution to leap out of my skin in the full sense of the word. Who would throw over the whole concern, and fume against the inscrutable powers because many things are disagreeable to bear? Are not the decrees of the eternal powers equally unfathomable and indisputable? But here lies the fault--I can play the part of a wise man no longer. The desperate attempt to save reason at least from the general wreck of soul and mind has failed. Just now when I watched an old cork which had fallen into the gutter, and which lashed by the rain was helplessly whirling about in the dirty puddle, the thought struck me that this cork was my own brain which had stolen from out my heated skull, and was now taking a shower bath. If such an absurd fancy could take possession of my mind for a whole quarter of an hour, then must the last prop of my reason be fast giving way.

"I have the highest idea of the self-sacrificing duties of a man towards his fellow-creatures, yet I cannot calmly see the moment approach when the asphyxiated soul is to be buried alive, watch the loss of self-consciousness, and finally sink lower than the most miserable brute. This, my dear Charles, would require the dullness of a sheep patiently awaiting the butcher's knife, though it feels a worm gnawing at its brain.

"But I quite forget that this will seem but a confused outpouring of words to you, who are only aware of a portion of my calamities. You only know what the rest of the world is acquainted with--that my adopted sister died, this day year, that her father followed her a few days later, and her mother in the spring of this year.--You also know that my family consisted of only these three--that I loved them dearly--that, in fact, except yourself, they were the only beings to whom I was much attached.

"Under any circumstance their loss would have wounded me deeply, but I should have ended by overcoming this grief. Even had they been severed from me at a single stroke, I could have bravely outlived it. Truly the death of one man is always irreparable but his life is never indispensable. Science, my profession, my youth, would have healed the wound.--Now, it is still

open, and the blood which flows from it cannot be stanchd, for these three precious lives would have been spared, but for me!...

"I must begin from the beginning, Charles, if I wish to make these sad words clear to you.--You know, I believe, that I hardly ever saw my own parents, that after the death of my father, I should have been brought up at the orphan asylum, if those generous people had not taken pity on the son of the poor surgeon, and adopted me. My foster-father was one of the most opulent merchants of the town.--When he gave me a home, he was still childless after eight years of marriage. He hoped that my presence would cheer him, and his wife, and enliven the quiet dull house. Unfortunately, at first, I but ill rewarded the kindness of the worthy couple, though I was greatly attached to them. I was a reserved, irritable, and unamiable lad, with a great tendency to ponder over everything. My behaviour vacillated between a moody silence which lasted for days, and sudden and passionate outbreaks of temper. Even now I feel deeply ashamed when I think of the truly angelic patience with which my foster-parents bore my perverseness, and tried to moderate my violent temper without ever showing how sorely I disappointed their hopes.

"Suddenly all was changed. When I had lived about two years in their house, my adoptive parents saw their heart's desire fulfilled. A child was born to them, the most beautiful and gifted creature I have ever seen. As if by magic, everything grew bright--even I, was changed, and became a good-humoured and sensible lad. I was quite infatuated about the little girl, and watched her like a nurse. For hours together I played with her. I taught her to speak, to run, forgot my dearest occupations, and all my schoolfellows when with her.

"My behaviour towards her parents also completely altered. These excellent people, instead of no longer caring for my society, now redoubled their kindness towards me, and seemed to regard both of us as their children and as having an equal right to their affection.

"As time went on, my fraternal love for the little Ellen only increased with my years; the more so, that a curious similarity in our characters became more perceptible every day. She was not one of those soft, pliable and easily managed girls who give no more trouble to their mothers, than to their future husbands. She would suddenly change from the most extravagant gaiety, to the deepest melancholy--if one can use the term, melancholy, in speaking of a child. In those moments, she would steal out of the garden where she had been romping, and laughing with her little companions, and, come to my little room, sit down with grave face, opposite to me, at my writing-table, and read the first book she could get hold of.

"From my school-days upwards, I had always been heart and mind, a naturalist, and had no other thought, but that I would study medicine as my father had done. I used to show her all my collections, even the skeleton of a large monkey which stood in a corner behind my bed, and to hold most unchildlike conversations with the little girl; at other times she would communicate her childishness to me; I cooked for her dolls and physicked them after having first carefully bedaubed their faces with the tokens of the measles and I filled her little garden with all sorts of medical herbs from my herborium. We never shewed much tenderness towards each other. Only once I kissed her lips; it was when I left for the University at nineteen years of age.

"Though I deeply felt the pain of leaving my adoptive home, yet I fancied it would not become me as a man to show any emotion, still my voice failed me when my dear mother embraced me with tears in her eyes. Little Ellen stood pale, and silent by her side. I turned to her with some joke and jestingly gave her different directions about the care of my zoological collection, (preserved in camphor and spirits of wine) which I had entrusted to her charge. Then I drew this child of eight into my arms to bid her farewell. As I kissed her, I was startled by a sudden shudder which ran through her frame, as if an asp had bitten her. She staggered back with closed eyes and nearly fainted away. She quickly recovered however, and next day wrote me a childishly merry letter.

"Since that day I only once touched her lips again, and then they were cold and closed for ever.

"How the six years of my University career passed, how I found life at home when I returned for the holidays would be useless to relate. It would be a long, and monotonous narrative. Some estrangement arose between me and my foster-sister, partly through my fault, for science and study monopolized my attention more and more. From year to year this strange girl grew more reserved in my presence. Only in her charming letters could I discover a trace of the old intimacy of our childhood.

"Her outward development did not fall short of its early promise.

"She was fullgrown at the age of fourteen; somewhat slender, but quite formed. The small portrait of her which I once showed you has but little resemblance. Her character, if I may so express my self, was even more mature than her person, and only betrayed itself in her movements. A stately calm, an indifference, scarcely concealed for many things which generally appear alluring at her age, isolated her a good deal. Then again, when she wished to please, her smile, the gentle and timid yielding up of herself had a charm not to be described. Few knew her real value, her genuine upright soul; and among those few, her brother was not. I was then too much engrossed by my studies, too eager to solve the mysteries of physical science, to care about the secrets of that young heart. Strange to say although I was always of a sensual disposition,

and certainly no paragon of virtue, and having eyes to see could easily perceive, that all my conquests, compared with that remarkable girl, appeared like housemaids beside a young princess, yet it never entered my head to fall in love with her. When I wrote home, it was always to my foster-mother, and she had to remind me sometimes, of what was due to my little sister.

"She once wrote that the child who was as reserved as ever, did not show what she felt, although my neglect seemed to hurt her, and one day when I had forgotten even to mention her in my letter, she had cried the whole night.

"I hastened to repair my negligence, and wrote her a most penitent letter half in earnest, half in jest, accusing myself of the darkest crimes towards my faithful little sister, protesting that she was a thousand times too kind to me a petrified egotist whose very heart had been turned to stone, among skeletons and anatomical preparations. Her answer was full of loving kindness, and after that our fraternal intercourse seemed re-established on the old footing.

"Then she was fourteen years of age. On her fifteenth birthday, I passed my examination for a doctor's degree and we exchanged merry congratulations by telegraph.

"Then I travelled during a year with you for a companion, and you will remember that the letters I received from home often made me slightly uneasy.

"My mother wrote that Ellen was not well; she did not complain, but her altered looks only too visibly testified to her sufferings. The old family physician looked rather grave about it. Now I was well acquainted with this good old gentleman. He was a strict adherent of the old school, and greatly prejudiced against the stethoscope, otherwise he had the reputation of much experience in diagnostics, and of great caution, and attention.

"Still this could not tranquillize me, and my parents who believed me to be the greatest medical genius in the world, expressed a strong desire, that if I could possibly get away, I should hasten home and have a consultation with the old doctor. So I determined, as you know to quit my studies in Paris--to hurry home, and decide for myself if all was as it should be.

"When I arrived, Ellen advanced to greet me, looking so well, and lively, that at the first moment, I asked with playful indignation, if this was the august patient to attend to whose delicate health, a celebrated young physician had been summoned from a great distance. Poor child! the pleasure caused by my having set aside every other consideration for her sake, gave that delusive air of blooming health. I soon perceived that the old doctor had not looked grave without cause. I was decidedly however opposed to his opinion that she was threatened with pulmonary disease. After a most careful auscultation, I had found her lungs to be perfectly sound, whereas the palpitations of her heart seemed to be somewhat irregular; this symptom proceeded from a morbid state of the nervous, and blood system. Accordingly the first treatment which was principally directed against everything stimulating and enjoined great quiet, seemed to me the reverse of salutary. I prescribed steel, wine, and strengthening food, to rectify the poverty of blood, and declared that the remedies by which the old doctor hoped to ward off the disease were as bad as poison in her case. Her parents, of course, sided with me, particularly as the apparent success of my treatment during the first weeks of my stay with them corroborated my statement. Ellen felt more lively, and stronger, her sleep and appetite returned, and while the old practitioner withdrew deeply hurt, and mortified, I enjoyed the first pleasures of fame though it still stood on a very precarious footing, and I felt the happiness of having delivered those dear to me, from a heavy care.

"I never intended to establish myself in that town. I knew that I could only reside in a large capital where I could find better assistance in my studies. I, therefore, carefully entrusted Ellen's treatment to the second doctor of the place, a very humble man, rather irresolute, and dependent on others, who in presence of so young, and far travelled a colleague, meekly resigned any opinion of his own, and promised to keep strictly to the enjoined course of treatment; and now and then to write and inform me of the progress of the cure. The parents saw me depart with heavy hearts, but my welfare, and their duty with regard to my success in life, outweighed any wishes of their own, and Ellen eagerly seconded my desire. I had already lost too much of my precious time on her account, she said; she felt much better, and now that she knew my orders, no one should induce her to do anything I had not sanctioned. I still see the smile with which she bade me good-bye, while the repressed tears choked her voice. Alas! Charles, it was the last time that I saw a smile light up that dear face!

"So I departed entirely blinded, and at the commencement of my stay at M---- I was so completely taken up with the exercise of my profession, that in the letters from home I only noticed the favourable particulars; especially as Ellen's frequent accounts of herself, which almost formed a sort of diary, lulled me into so perfect a security, that I fancied, the care and anxiety which now and then appeared in her mother's letters to be only caused by the exaggerated fondness of a mother's heart.

"My colleague full of respect for my green wisdom, did his best to interpret every graver symptom in favour of my diagnostics, and so I lived on, a rose coloured mist blinding my eyes, till the darkest night suddenly closed around me.

"Ellen's letters which in the later weeks had become rather dispirited suddenly stopped. In

their stead I received a letter from the doctor, about six months after my departure saying that another consultation with me seemed to him most desirable. In the last few weeks several symptoms had suddenly changed, so that he dared not proceed in the former manner without further orders. My adoptive parents also eagerly intreated me to come to them.

"But even in spite of all this, I still lingered, certainly not for any frivolous reason; the life or death of some of my patients, just then, depending on my stay. At last a telegraphic despatch startled me into activity. A vomiting of blood had taken place: If you do not come instantly, wrote her mother, you will not find her alive.

"Late at night I arrived at their house feeling as if I myself were dying. On that dreadful journey the scales had suddenly fallen from my eyes, and with the same ingenuity which I had formerly exercised to confirm my own errors, I now sought out every argument expressly to torment myself with the conviction that I alone was responsible for the loss of this much cherished being. I tottered up the well-known stairs. Her mother met me on the landing, tearless, but with a disturbed look in her eyes. It seemed almost like a relief to me, when she exclaimed: 'you are too late!'--I had dreaded to meet the eyes of my poor sister, as a murderer dreads the dying look of his victim. And yet it was more painful to see the calm face, which reclined on her pillows, smiling, and free from reproach.

"No one accused me; they still believed in me, and laid the blame on different incidents, but I felt crushed under the weight of my despair, and the wildest self-reproaches.

"On entering the chamber of death, her father looking like a corpse, staggered heavily into my arms, and losing all self-command, burst into such convulsive sobs, that the people passing in the streets stopped to listen. Then the sight of all the old servants who had adored her; of her mother so completely *changed*--even to this day my hair stands on end when I think of that dreadful scene. The mother beside herself with grief called for wine, for I was to drink Ellen's health--she supposed the 'so called good God' would not object to that. But when the servant brought it, the father taking the glass from the plate dashed it against the wall, crying out: 'broken! dead!' A hundred times, till his voice was choked by tears.--At last his wife led him away and I was left alone with the dead.

"Enough of this dreadful night. I need only add that by dissection, I obtained a full confirmation, of that, of which the quick penetration of the old physician had foreseen the danger.--Could it have been averted? Who can say with certainty whether a conflagration can be stayed or not, if he does not know what feeds it, or from whence the wind blows. I had poured fuel on the fire which had snatched away this innocent life.

"You may imagine that I did not close my eyes that night. The morning found me still sitting, racked with pain and fever, by the bed-side of my sister, when the door opened, and her mother entered the room. She had recovered the noble and gentle serenity of her features, now that the first delirium of despair had passed. She kissed me, with overflowing tears, and even in *my* burning eyes the tears welled up, 'My dear son,' she said 'I here surrender to you a small packet which I found in her writing-table: Your name is on it.'

"It was her diary, beginning with her twelfth year, up to a few days before her death--On every page I found my name; on the last were these words, 'I am dying, darling--I have known you and been permitted to love you. What more can life bring me? I now have no other wish but that you should know that I only lived for you, and through you!'--And this to her murderer!!

"All the events that succeeded; the death of her father, the short widowhood of her mother, who pined away till she was at last re-united to her darling ones, all this, sad as it was, could no longer move me, the darkness within me was so great--What mattered it if one spark more died out or not? *That* I never could forget or overcome--That all hopes of ever being happy again were at end, was a conviction deeply impressed on my heart.

"I repeated to myself a hundred times, that I had acted for the best according to my belief, that every one of my colleagues had experienced a like misfortune, that we were only responsible for our intentions--But in spite of all this, did these three lives weigh the less on my soul? Could I absolve myself, were all the judges in Heaven and earth to proclaim me free from guilt? I had destroyed the only joy of my benefactors, and had miserably deceived them.--I had neglected this precious life, and how could I henceforth expect any man to entrust his life to me?

"I know what you would oppose to this Charles--You have often told me that I was too sensitive for a doctor's profession--That every one who consults us knows beforehand that we are only human,--not omnipotent, and omniscient Gods, and takes his chance.

"The best doctors are those who never let their feelings interfere, and never paralyse their energies for the future, by useless regrets for the unalterable past. I quite agree with you that these are most sound maxims. But I know enough of disease to foresee that mine is incurable.

"When the first stunning pain had somewhat subsided, I said to myself, that I *must* bear it as well as I could, and at least try to be of some use as a subordinate, having forfeited my rights as a master.--I threw my whole energy into theoretical studies--I collected, dissected, and observed--I might, perhaps, have reconciled myself to this new existence, if the past had not thrown a



shadow over every thing. Now I loathed and revolted inwardly against all this groping on the boundaries of human knowledge. A general, after losing a battle upon which depended the destiny of a whole nation, will hardly like, as long as the war lasts, to sit in a corner of some quiet library, and study tactics and strategy. Then I believed that time would cure my wounds and make life, at least, supportable to me, even if it should be for ever sunless and gloomy.

"I had tried aimless wandering and had only experienced the truth of that hacknied saying that shifting of scenes can never change Tragedy into Comedy.

"Only once it seemed as if I might be allured back to that part of my life alone worth living for--my profession!

"It was on a steamer between Marseilles and Genoa--We had left the coast far behind us--suddenly the Captain came up in great consternation, and asked if there was any doctor among the passengers. A lady had been taken ill, and was lying in the cabin writhing with pain--I was just lying down to sleep, determined not to meddle in this matter, when I heard moans and exclamations from the cabin which would not let me rest. I asked the Captain to take me down, and after searching the ship's medicine chest; found some remedies which soothed the pain. The lady would not let me go, but insisted in a strange medly of Spanish, and French on my passing the night on a sofa in the adjoining cabin. At last she went to sleep, and my eyes also closed, weary with gazing through the open hatchway at the moon-lit sea.

"All at once, I felt something like an icy cold hand drawn across my face. I started up, believing it to be the spray which was dashing off the wheels into the cabin--but to my intense horror, I saw the figure of Ellen standing beside me, just as she had looked when lying in her coffin, only her dim widely opened eyes were fixed on me, and her white finger was laid to her lips, as if to say: 'Do not betray me.' Then she approached the couch of the stranger, lifted one of the green silk curtains and after gazing for several minutes on the sleeping woman she sadly shook her head, and looked gravely at me as if to reproach me for caring for another when I had left *her* to die. For one moment she sunk down at the foot of the bed as if greatly exhausted: then beckoning three times to me she glided through the hatchway like a streak of mist. Since that night I have never again approached a sick-bed. You know, Charles, that I was never of a visionary nature, that I do not believe in spirits. Of course I know as well as you do that this was only a delusion of the senses. An apparition caused by the over excited state of my nerves. But does this alter the main point? Did I suffer the less because I knew it to be owing to the power of my nerves over my reason? How can one, whose senses are at variance with him, hope to gain peace? and how is *he* to live, who hopes no longer?

"I have become a superfluous guest at the banquet of life, and so I prefer taking leave of it, and only press your hand once more before disappearing. My existence is now no longer necessary to any one--not even to a dog.

"None but a healthy and cheerful egotist could tolerate a life which subsists only for itself. Pardon me, my dear friend, I know that you will now and then miss me, but you would surely prefer; never to meet me again, than to recognize me some day in a mad-house; clothed in a straight waistcoat, and muttering soliloquies.

"This letter has nearly attained the dimensions of a volume, but as it is the last I shall ever write, its length may be pardoned. I shall seal this enclosure with a steady hand, for I am only about to do that which I must, that which I believe to be for the best.

"Here in this solitary inn, they will only suppose me to be some crazed Englishman who insists on fishing by torch-light, in the middle of the night. Tomorrow when they see the boat driven on the lake without me, they will say, I have only suffered for my folly, by falling asleep, and tumbling overboard. Let all my acquaintances suppose the same. And now good night. I own that on the point of going to sleep, I feel some curiosity, and hope to have many things--made clear to me.--It is a pity that I shall not be able to impart my observations to you, as we have always done when studying together on terrestrial subjects.

"I am also desirous to witness what dreams may haunt us in eternal sleep, if a dead man can witness anything.

"Nothing further has any interest for me--My will was deposed six months ago in the court of justice--You are my executor--I thank you once more for your faithful and firm friendship--Let this be my last word.

"EBERHARD."

He did not read over what he had written but immediately folded it, put it in an envelope, sealed it, and wrote the address--Then he again looked out of the window--The storm had gradually subsided. He lighted a cigar and pacing his room, he watched the long-legged spiders crawling about the low ceiling, and observed the effects of tobacco on them, by blowing a thick cloud of smoke over their backs. But he soon grew tired of this interesting occupation, and stared vacantly at the white washed walls that surrounded him. Suddenly a clamour arose in the adjoining tap-room. He heard through the door a gruff voice which belonged neither to the

landlord, nor to the farm servant, complaining of some unreasonable demand. "Yes it was always so, just those women who cried and lamented if a baby had a cold, did not feel the least compassion for two poor horses, but would drag them from the manger, and after a journey of fifteen miles, in this cursed weather; mostly uphill, and over those dreadful roads, would force them to trot for ten miles further, and the whole night through, regardless as to whether they could move a limb on the morrow or not. But he would not stir; no, not if they were to lay down a hundred kronenthalers on the very spot. He was not in the service of a knacker, but had to deliver up his roadsters in the same condition in which he got them; and besides to say the truth he wished for some rest for himself, and did not care to break his limbs on the way or get drowned in a puddle."

A timid female voice which had now and then interrupted this speech with beseeching words was silenced by this conclusion, which was accompanied by a fierce oath, and a heavy thump of the fist on the table. The landlord intervened in his abrupt way by seconding the coachman, and ordering some beer from the cellar. Then the two men began to converse on other subjects, the coachman chiefly abusing the bad roads which ruined horses and carriage. The landlord fully agreed with him, and asked him how it was that the ladies had preferred coming by this side of the dead lake. The coachman informed him that a landslip had made the other road quite impassable, at least for twenty-four hours. The rest of the passengers had been contented to wait at the station, but these ladies had insisted on continuing their journey on this dangerous road; perhaps because of the child, which never ceased to wail and moan. At this moment the door opened, and the men's rough tones were suddenly hushed. A melodious woman's voice was heard whose touching accents seemed to quiet even these coarse fellows. At least the coachman, who on her renewing her prayer to him to prepare for their departure, answered quite civilly, and without any superfluous oaths, that it was almost impossible to gratify her wishes, and gave his reasons. She appeared to acquiesce in their importance, and after a moment's silent reflection, asked if any messenger could be found who for a considerable gratification would undertake to summon the nearest doctor, otherwise the child would probably not live through the night. In saying this her voice trembled so much that the involuntary listener was touched to the heart. He walked to the casement, hoping to drown those soft tones in the rushing sound of the rain. At this moment however the clouds above the lake dispersed showing the moon's clear and silvery crescent and the sudden stillness forced him to hear the rest of the parley.

The landlord called his servant, and asked him if he would take a message to the doctor who lived six miles distant, in the small market-town which was situated in a neighbouring valley. The man replied that he had no objection to the long walk, or the bad road, if the lady gave him a liberal fee; but he knew that it would be useless for Hansel the forester's assistant had told him that very day, that his friend Sepp had to wait another week to have the ball extracted from his thigh, for the doctor himself was ill, from a fall from his horse, and his apprentice had an unsafe hand, as he was renowned for drinking too much brandy. Then the sad and gentle voice of the lady asked, after a silence of several minutes, if it would not be possible to procure a litter, and carry the child to the nearest place where a doctor resided, she herself would help to carry it; she only required a couple of trustworthy men, and a guide with a lighted torch.

That could not be done either, the landlord answered;--they had no litter on which the child could be carried comfortably, and then they could not all leave the house; however he would speak to his wife about it.

He was just reluctantly leaving his bench by the stove, when the landlady herself rushed into the room, and cried out that the nurse begged her mistress to come to the child--that departure was now not to be thought of, for the child was dying.

The listener in the adjacent room turned from the window as if drawn by some magic power; he took a few steps towards the door, then stopped and shook his head with a sigh. He tried to recommence his walk up and down the small room; but at every second step, he stood still to listen for some further sound. His cigar had gone out. Mechanically he approached it to the candle to light it, but before he was aware of what he was doing, his breath had extinguished the feeble flame. He remained staring at the dying sparks in the wick--one moment more and the last would disappear. Possibly in the next room a little flame far more valuable than the miserable light of this penny candle was on the point of relapsing into the darkness of night.

Well let it die out; what right had any one to meddle in the matter. Perhaps by trying to kindle it again, it would only the more surely be extinguished by his clumsy hands. What can it signify? Why try to save a human being's life, who may, some day or other, wish that he had never been born, and who may perhaps also see the hour, when he shall have to bid good night to his dearest friend---

Again he listened, and held his breath not to lose a sound of what was passing in the next room. He fancied he heard a child's plaintive moaning, then the lady's gentle voice trying to soothe it, passionate weeping, and then silence. He could stand it no longer in the solitude of his room. He only wished to hear how the child was going on. He began to think himself a barbarian, to be quietly hiding in a corner, when even these rough peasants showed some sympathy. Hastily opening the door, he groped his way through the dark empty tap-room, and across the passage. The door was ajar, and a ray of light streamed through the chink. He now distinctly heard the child moan and the mother quieting it. "We ought to prepare some tea for the poor child in order to bring on a perspiration," said the hostess, "We must try and find some."--"The elder berries, in

the drawer up-stairs, would not do badly in case of need," answered her husband; then silence reigned again, only interrupted by the sighs of the house-maid, who knelt in a corner, repeating one pater-noster after another.

"Put another feather-bed on the child," advised the coachman; "it has caught cold; see how its little hands twitch convulsively--it is freezing."

The farm-servant, who stood near the stove, was just going to lay another log on the still glowing embers, when he was arrested by a firm hand which was laid on his shoulders. He turned round and perceived the stranger standing before him. "I forbid you to put on another chip of wood;" he said, in a voice which denoted that he was accustomed to be strictly obeyed; "and you all," he continued, turning to the rest of the idle spectators, "get out of the room; do you hear? the air here is bad enough to stifle even a healthy man." They all looked at each other--only the mother and nurse of the child had not perceived the entrance of the stranger. The mother knelt beside the bed with one arm clasped round the moaning child as if to defend it from assassins. The nurse stood by her, and stared in helpless despair on her little charge--on its wandering eyes, and fever parched lips, from which now and then a low wail escaped. She started back, as if death in person was approaching her, when the stranger stepped up to the bed, laid his hand on the burning brow, and took up one of the little thin arms to feel the pulse.

The shriek of horror which the nurse involuntarily uttered, awakened the mother from the lethargy of despair. She looked wonderingly at the stranger, and a sudden ray of hope brightened her face.

"Madam," he said, "will you entrust your child to one entirely unknown to you, who though he has not the presumption to promise to save its life, yet knows what in these cases, is prescribed by our feeble science."

She could not answer him; this unlooked for aid in her direst distress overpowered her. "Take this," he said, drawing a card from his pocket-book, "my name may not be known to you, but the title which stands before it will show you, that others too have trusted to my skill; with what result, has nothing to do with the present case."

The young woman remained in her former position, but she stretched towards him the arm not engaged in supporting her child's head, and said: "The Almighty seems to have sent you, He has had compassion on me. I fully confide in you!"

"Then order a pitcher of fresh spring water from the well, and a tub to be brought. The rest I will manage myself."

He hastily opened both windows, and took the feather-bed from off the child, only covering it lightly with a large plaid. Then he called in the farm-servant who was standing in the passage, with the rest of the people, grumbling, and waiting for the result of the stranger's despotic interference. He asked if no snow or ice could be procured in the neighbourhood. "Yes," growled out the man, "there was some to be had; but one must climb for about an hour through the woods, to get to the crevice in a rock, where the snow never melted summer or winter, as the sun could not reach the spot. To-morrow morning he would go and fetch some!"

"You don't seem to understand me," resumed the doctor; "here I lay down this kronenthaler; it is now half past nine o'clock; the moon is up, the storm has ceased--whoever brings me in the course of an hour, a load of snow or ice has gained this reward. Tomorrow you may bring down a whole glacier, and will not get a penny for it." "All right," said the farm-servant with a short laugh, and walked away. The nurse had in the meantime brought in the cold water and an empty tub. Without another word, the stranger lifted the child from the bed, stripped off its clothes, and telling the mother to hold it, he poured the icy cold water over it. He then dried it quickly, laid it again in its bed, and wrapped a wet towel round its head. The child which a moment ago had struggled and screamed in his arms, now seemed relieved. The eyes ceased to wander, and turned towards the mother with a wondering, but calm look--then she closed them with a deep sigh.

"The child is dying!" the nurse screamed out, and burst into a fit of crying. "I thought that would be the consequence of the cold water, and the open windows. Ah, Madam, how could you suffer this?"

"Silence," said the stranger imperiously, "or you will have to leave the room. I hope, Madam," he continued, in a gentler tone, "that you do not expect a miracle from me. The illness we have to combat, cannot be vanquished in one night. The child has a virulent typhus fever, and our chief care must be to prevent the brain from being affected. But do not let every new symptom alarm you. As far as I can judge, no aggravating circumstances exist. You see the child has again opened its eyes. Nature already feels that we are assisting it. How old is the child?" "Seven years and a few weeks." "A fine child, so well developed; what anguish you must now suffer."

Tears streamed from the poor mother's eyes; she pressed her face against the little white hand which lay on the dark plaid. All the agitation of the last weary hours, dissolved in these refreshing tears.

At last she arose, and with a grateful look at the doctor, she sank into a chair which he had

placed for her beside the bed. He too took a seat at the foot of it, and gravely but calmly observed the little girl. They were both silent. The nurse, ashamed of her thoughtless outbreak, went to and fro to renew the cold compresses. Without, all was still; the last clouds had disappeared and a ray of moonlight stole in, and shone slanting through, the narrow casement, lighting up the small white hand of the young mother who was softly stroking the little hand of her child. The only sound which broke the silence proceeded from the streamlets formed by the rain, which were now rushing past the house, the regular dripping of the gutter, and the whistling of the coachman who was bedding his horses.

Suddenly the child raised herself on the pillows, looked at the stranger with widely opened eyes, and said: "Is this Papa? is he not dead? I want to give him a kiss, Mamma; has he not brought something for his little daughter? I want to sit on his knee. Where is Sophy? Oh! my poor head! Papa please hold my head. I am thirsty." Then the small fair head sank back on the pillow, and the eyes closed as if in pain. Eberhard rose and held a glass of fresh water to her burning lips. "Thank you, Papa," said the child. Then she became very quiet, only the twitchings of the feverish half opened mouth betrayed her sufferings.

"I must explain to you," the lady began, turning to the silent doctor, who had now resumed his seat, "how it comes that my poor darling has those strange fancies. Unfortunately I must reproach myself with having caused this violent shock: The father of my poor little girl was an Austrian officer. A few months after our marriage, I had to part with him; his regiment was ordered to Italy, where the war was commencing. Shortly afterwards news reached me that he had been amongst the first victims of the bloody battle of Solferino. Since that time I have always felt the greatest longing to visit the spot where my dear husband found repose after his short career, and though no cross marks his grave, at least to inhale the air in which his brave heart breathed its last. Even my little girl expressed the same wish as she grew older, and understood me when I told her of her father's death. Many things deterred me from realizing this plan, particularly the fear that the long journey might overfatigue, and agitate the child, who always had a very excitable imagination, and a tender heart: and now I have to suffer severely for having indulged my desire. If you had seen how eagerly she listened to the words which I translated to her from the account of the old serjeant, whom I found watching the monument on the field of battle. Her cheeks burned, and her eyes glistened; her emotion was far beyond her years. When we turned back she shivered, and in the following night, complained of headache, and did not sleep for an instant. She did not mention her father again till this moment, when she mistook you for him, and fancied he was sitting at her bedside. Perhaps it would have been better, had I remained where I was, but I dreaded the Italian doctors, and did not believe the danger to be so imminent. In my own carriage, for I had taken post-horses on leaving the railway, I thought we could easily arrange a comfortable bed for the child. The weather too was warm, and she herself eagerly desired to be taken home. The storm reached us just at the worst part of the road; and we were most thankful when we reached this inn. But what would have become of us without your help?"

She turned from the gloomy and taciturn man to dry her tears. Then they again sat silently opposite each other. He felt tempted to entreat her to go on speaking. Here was something in her voice which soothed him, and was as cooling balm to his feverish soul, but he saw that her thoughts were again occupied with the child, and he had nothing to tell her. He only gazed more earnestly at the young woman by the dim light of the candle and of the moon. He remarked that her brow, and the shape of her eyes which had a distinguished melancholy and gentle expression in them, resembled those of his adoptive mother, who had so often looked at him with thoughtful affection. Her figure was round and supple, and every turn of her head and of her slender throat was full of grace.

The abundant auburn hair hung negligently over her shoulders. All about her showed the habits of one accustomed to wealth. Wealth ennobled by a cultivated mind, and refined taste, but which had lost all charms for her, in the danger which threatened her most precious treasure.

The door was now cautiously opened, and the farm-servant dragged in a large tub filled with ice; then wiping the perspiration from his forehead, he triumphantly pointed to the clock which showed that ten minutes were still wanting to the stipulated hour, pocketed his well earned money, and officiously asked if anything else was wanted. "No, he could go to bed now," the doctor answered. He then tore a piece of oiled silk from the lining of his travelling pouch, made a bag of it to hold the ice, and showed the nurse how to lay it on the forehead of the child. Her mistress interfered--"No," she said, "you must now lie down, and rest, Josephine; you have not slept for thirty-six hours."--"Neither, Madam, have you," observed the maid, "and I do not need it so much as your honour, for at least I have swallowed a few morsels of food."

"Do as I tell you," resumed the mother; "I well know how useless it would be for me to attempt to sleep. Perhaps I may be able to take some rest in the morning, if the night passes well."

"Allow me to feel your pulse. Madam," said the doctor, and then without another word he suddenly left the room.

The two women looked after him in astonishment, and the maid, an elderly fat woman, with a round face, strongly marked by the smallpox, and good natured brown eyes, availed herself of his absence, to sing the praises of their unknown deliverer, quite as eagerly as she had previously abused him. "He had something so peculiar about him," she remarked; "he appeared to be ill and

yet kind heartedness was written on every feature--and how cleverly he managed everything; how well he supported our child's head, just as if he had been a nurse all the days of his life. And then he is so very handsome and quite young, only now and then when a stern expression comes over his face, he looks so grave and gloomy, as if he had never laughed; and at other times he shuts his eyes, as if he were in great pain, and wished to conceal it."

At this moment the subject of her remarks returned, carrying a large glass of milk in his hand. He gave it to the lady as one would offer some medicine to a child. "Drink this, Madam," he said; "it is new milk and will do you good." "You require strength to fulfill the task you have undertaken, and here nothing else is to be had. It would be very beneficial to the child, if she could be induced to swallow a few drops. Approach the glass to her lips, and persuade her to try it; you have succeeded. We must do all we can to keep up her strength, so that another attack may not overcome her. Now follow my advice, and lie down on that bed; I will watch the child, and the maid also can well spare a few hours more of sleep. When midnight has passed, I will awake you and then the maid can lie down." She still objected. "Do as I tell you," he said passionately, "or I will think that you never really felt the confidence you showed me."

She turned towards the bed where the child, relieved by the ice compresses, lay apparently asleep and stooping over its delicate little face kissed its closed eyes. "I will obey you," she said, with a faint smile, "if you promise to awake me, in case my child should grow worse."

He silently pressed her hand and took her seat by the bedside, while her maid helped her to lie down on the second bed, which stood in a corner, after having removed a load of coverings.

When a quarter of an hour had passed, the faithful creature, softly approaching the doctor, who sat absorbed in his own thoughts, stooped, seized one of his hands, and before he could prevent it had pressed it to her lips, whispering: "God be praised, she sleeps! Oh sir, you can work marvels! For four nights, my mistress had not closed her eyes. First the grief, and agitation before we reached that unfortunate battle-field; and then, anxiety about her child. If you but knew what an angel my mistress is. If I were to tell you all...."

"Leave that for another time," he interrupted; "you have nothing else to do now, but to lie down, and not to stir till I call you. To-night you are useless, and to-morrow you must be up early. Here are pillows, and coverlets enough. Arrange a bed for yourself beside the stove; and now good night. Don't contradict me. Do you wish to awake your mistress by uselessly arguing the matter?"

The good woman obeyed with a timid humble look, pulled a feather-bed into a corner of the room, and in a few minutes her regular breathing, proved that she too had needed rest after the hardships of the last few days.

A short while afterwards, the moon disappeared behind a cloud, and only the faint reflex of the starry sky was to be seen, on that part of the lake which could be overlooked from the room in which the lonely watcher sat by the sick-bed. He now for the first time felt a desire to take some food, and to quench his thirst. He drank the remainder of the milk which still stood on the table. As he put down the glass he fancied he saw the lady on the bed make a convulsive movement. He approached her softly. In an uneasy dream, she had put both hands to her eyes as if to wipe away tears; now she slept quietly, and her hands slowly sank down again. Motionless he gazed on that fair face, on which every dream was reflected as the shadows of dissolving clouds on the calm surface of a lake; sorrow, anxiety, then hope! Now she smiled, and the delicately chiselled lips parted, disclosing two rows of pearly teeth. The next moment her brow darkened, an imploring look appeared on her face; she stretched out both her hands and clasped them together; he then remarked on one of her fingers, two wedding rings, and wondered whether the second one belonged to the father of her child, or if some other man were now in possession of that small hand. He was roused from these thoughts by a moan from the little girl. He only arranged the coverlet which had fallen on the ground and wrapped it round the small feet of the young woman who had not taken off her boots. Then he returned to his occupation of changing, every quarter of an hour, the ice that had melted and now and then refreshing the parched lips of the child with a few drops of water.

Towards midnight a violent wind arose on the lake, and the young man shivered as the window was still open. He seized the first wrap which he found among the luggage, and covered himself up with it. It was a long soft burnouss lined with silk which belonged to the young woman. He pulled the hood over his head; and a sweet scent was wafted from it; as the silk touched his face a peculiar feeling of languor came over him; he closed his eyes, but a confused maze of ideas passed through his mind, and he could not sleep.

Suddenly his eyes opened with an expression of terror in them. He started from his chair, and trembling violently, he stared at the lake. Conspicuous on the dark surface of the water, something white glided slowly; it had the shape of a veiled figure, and seemed to move towards the house. The moon had appeared again, and lit up a faint streak of mist which had strayed from the mountain tops, and was swept across the lake. When it reached the current of wind that blew from the ravine, it dissolved, and the surface of the water was as clear as before; but the only one who had seen this airy apparition still stood as if rooted to the ground and stared at the spot where it had disappeared. A cold perspiration bathed his brow, his breath came shortly and quickly, and his eyes, which started from their sockets, remained fixed on that spot, as if he

expected to see the vision appear again the next moment.

A hot little hand touched the clammy ones of the horror-stricken man, "Is it you, Papa?" asked the little girl; and sat up in her bed. Two small thin arms were stretched up to him and before he was aware of it, the child clung to his neck and hid its burning face on his breast. "Don't leave us again, Papa," she said, "or Mamma will cry again, and I must die."

In an instant the nightmare which oppressed him, vanished. He clasped the slender little figure in his arms, as if it were a protection against the malignant powers. He held her so for some time, and while the child caressed him, he felt the blood flow more calmly through his veins. He kissed her little face, stroking her damp curls, asked: "What is your name, my child." "Are you my Papa," she said, "and do not even know that I am your own little Fan? Ah, yes, I know that they have shot you, that is why you have forgotten me. Did it hurt you much?"

"To-morrow I will tell you all about it," he said, and gently laid her back on her bed; "now, you must keep quiet, and not awake your Mamma."

The child obediently lay down, and closed her eyes, but she held fast the hand of her faithful guardian, and now and then looked up at him with a wondering but wide awake expression. He too steadfastly gazed on the innocent face, as if fearing that were he to turn round, the terrifying vision would again appear.

So he watched by the sick-bed till day dawned. When the bare rocky peaks which rose above the lake, blushed in the first morning light, sounds of life, broke the stillness of the house.

The farm-servant crept shoeless along the passage, and cautiously peeping into the sick-room, pointed to the now empty wooden tub and asked if another supply of ice were wanted. The doctor nodded his head, and he disappeared. Then came the landlady and offered her ready services, but Everhard declined them. The generosity of the strange gentleman had worked wonders with the inmates of the house. Only the coachman, who had not got over his intoxication of the previous day, stumbled, cursing, and growling, with heavy boots, down the stairs, and through the passage; so that the lady asked still half asleep, if it were time to start. "Not yet," answered Everhard, "you can sleep on for another hour." Then he rose hastily, and went out to prevent the noisy fellow from again approaching the sick-room. When he returned after a few minutes, he found the young mother seated at the bedside of her child.

"Why are you up already?" he asked reproachfully. "Already?" she replied, "you wish to put me to confusion. Have you not succeeded in deceiving me, and taken my place through the whole of the night. Why did you not let me share the night-watch with you?"

"Because I could easily dispense with sleep, which was most needful for you. And then there was nothing to be done which required help. Be of good cheer; we have every reason to be satisfied with this night."

"Then the danger is over! thanks be to heaven!"

"I cannot give you that certainty," he answered; "you have promised to trust me, and can only do so, if I conceal nothing from you. But I can give you the assurance that all the symptoms are as favourable as can be expected in this illness. The inmates of the house are well disposed towards us, and will do their best to help us."

A ray of pleasure brightened her pale face. "Oh! my friend," she exclaimed, "if it were but possible!" She held out her hand to him, and tears stood in her eyes.

He stooped to kiss her hand, but in reality to hide his emotion. "Could you have believed me capable of forsaking you, before the child's life was saved?" he asked. "Do not thank me, not imagine that I am sacrificing anything by remaining here. I have already brought you the greatest sacrifice I could offer, all the rest is a relief to me."

She looked up inquiringly. "I am keeping you from other duties?" she asked.

"No," he answered gloomily; "ever since last year I have been an idle, and restless man. Led by motives, which cannot interest you, I once gave myself my word of honour, never to exercise my profession as a doctor again. Yesterday, I broke this word for your sake. If you will permit me to continue my attendance, you will free me from reproach, and so we shall be of mutual service to each other."

After a pause during which he had felt the pulse of the child, he resumed, "She now sleeps quietly; if you wish to apprise your friends of your present abode, you have time to do so. The coachman, who is meanwhile getting ready, will post your letter at the next station."

"I have no one, who would feel anxious at my non-appearance," said the lady, and blushed slightly; "I live so very retired!"

"No one?" he repeated, with surprise, and involuntarily his eyes fastened on the two rings.

She remarked his glance, and understood it instantly. "The second ring," she said

unconstrainedly, "is not the sign of a second marriage. It belonged to my husband, who feeling death approaching, drew it from his finger and begged a comrade of his to bring it to me. Since that day, I have refused all solicitations to change my condition, and have only withdrawn from my dear husband's family, because a near relation of his, imagines that he has some claim to my hand. I have vowed to live only for my child, and to the memory of the dead, and this vow is sacred to me."

The nurse now awoke, and reluctantly sat up on her couch, but she jumped up briskly, when she saw her mistress and the doctor already actively employed, and hastened with great zeal to relieve them; protesting that it was all the doctor's fault, as he had strictly forbidden her to watch.

"Bathe the child," said Everhard; "I will now leave you for half an hour; bathe the child as we did yesterday, and let it drink some milk which you can now get fresh from the cow. And here comes a fresh supply of ice. You see the attendance could nowhere be better than it is in this desolate nook of the world. Fortunately an apothecary's shop is not needed in this case. Good-bye; we shall soon meet again." He bowed slightly and left the room. Then he walked down to the shore, loosened one of the boats which were chained up in the shed, and with a few powerful strokes launched the light bark into the open lake. The sun had not yet risen above the surrounding heights, overgrown with dark pines, and the calm and sultry air lay heavily on the dark surface of the water, and oppressed the chest of the young man who was fatigued by the sleepless night. He looked down into the depths below him and noticed that close to the boat the water seemed transparent as crystal, and nearly white, while the lake beyond, though the sky was bright and clear, appeared like a black unfathomable chasm. He recollected what a woodcutter had once told him, that the lake was bottomless--that its waters sank deeper and deeper till at last they reached hell; and so when the evil spirits there found their abode too hot for them, they went to bathe in them.

He pulled in his oars and looked up at the nearly perpendicular shores which were covered with dark fir-woods up to their very peaks. These had exchanged the glow of early morning for a dull greyish tint. And now the sun had burst forth with great power, and tried to gild the ravine, which looked like a cauldron of dark iron. But only a dazzling white light was reflected on the smooth surface of the lake. The dense woods which surrounded it absorbed every ray of sunshine. No cheerful light coloured and enlivened the dreary landscape. A small patch of green grass, near the inn, on which a red-brown cow grazed, and the blue smoke which curled up from the chimney were the only objects that awakened the consoling thought, that even in this wilderness human beings had found a home. An islet, covered with birch-trees, lay near the opposite shore. Everhard rowed up to it, tied the bark to a post, and stripped off his clothes to enjoy an early bath.

Suddenly the thought struck him, with what intention he had arrived yesterday. He shuddered. It seemed to him as if his resolve would be fulfilled, even against his will; as if he had pledged himself to that perfidious depth, which would claim him for its own. One moment he felt tempted to put on his clothes again, and to row back as fast as he could, but ashamed of his weakness, he shook off these fancies and boldly jumped into the water.

The cold Alpine waves closed round him like ice just melted by the sun, and he had to exert all his knowledge of swimming, to keep his blood, by continual movement, from congealing. When he stepped out of the water, and leaning against the stem of a young birch, his feet buried in the soft moss, dried himself briskly, he felt happier than he had done for many a day. He looked towards the house. In the room, where the child lay he could see some one moving near the window. The distance was too great to distinguish the figure, still less the features, yet it pleased to him to think that among the inmates of that house, there were some who needed him, and had placed their hopes in him.

Meanwhile the child in the sick-room raised herself in her bed, looked searchingly round the room, and said: "Has Papa gone away? is he again dead? I want him to sit beside me." Her mother kissed the child's forehead and begged her to remain quiet. "That good gentleman is not your Papa," she said; "you must not call him so. He is the doctor, who will make you well again, if you are a good child, and do all he tells you." "Not my Papa," repeated the little girl meditatively. She seemed to relinquish her first idea with difficulty. "What is his name?" she resumed. "Will he leave me?"

"Here he comes," said the fat nurse, who had tears in her eyes, on hearing her darling speak calmly and sensibly, for the first time for several days. "Just look Ma'am, how fast he rows, as if he were impatient to get back to our child. Well, I call that a doctor! To-day he looks even handsomer, than he did yesterday, with his fine black beard and pale face. Only his eyes have a stern expression, that would frighten one if he were not so kind."

They now saw him leap from the boat but he did not speak to them, as he passed the door, and they heard him give some orders to the landlady. A few minutes later he entered the sick-room, at once approached the bed of the child, and talked kindly to it. This presence seemed to exercise a sort of charm on the little girl. She breathed with more ease, and closed her eyes at his persuasion.

The stillness in the sick-room was so great that they heard the splash of the fish leaping in the

water. After some time he rose, and whispered, "She sleeps; the fever has abated. I hope she may be able to rest for a few hours, and I will take care that no one disturbs her. I will now lie down for a short while, till the chicken broth I have ordered for our little patient, is ready.

"How can I ever express my thanks to you for all your kindness, and solicitude," observed the child's mother with much emotion.

By not thanking me at all he replied almost gruffly, and left them.

When he entered his room, he found the letter he had written the night before still lying on the table. The large red seal now, seemed offensive to his eyes, yet he could not make up his mind to destroy it, so he put it by, in his portfolio. He then threw himself on his bed, and tried to sleep, but the thick coming thoughts, beset him like buzzing flies. He fancied he heard the child's voice, and that of its lovely mother, and raised himself on his bed to listen. At length after much musing and reflection, he fell into an uneasy sleep disturbed by dreams.

At noon, the landlady entered his room, and seeing him asleep, tried to creep away noiselessly. But he was up in a moment, and inquiring if the soup were ready, followed her into the kitchen. "Where is the broth?" he asked, and approached the hearth whence a tempting odour arose from the different pots and pans. The stupid maid who was stirring something in one of them, let fall her wooden ladle in amazement, and stared open-mouthed at the stranger as he lifted the lid of one of the pots, and examined its contents with a critical eye. Then he asked for a plate poured some of the chicken broth into it, and carefully took out the herbs which floated on it.

When he turned to carry away the soup, he saw the young mother standing at the entrance. "Is this right?" she asked with a charming smile, "instead of sleeping I see you have turned cook."

"I only cook for my patients," he replied, "the care of preparing dinner for the healthy, I leave to our hostess, who will do honour to our confidence in her, and needs no help of mine. Is our patient still asleep?"

"She awoke a moment since, and has just asked for you."

When he entered the sick-room, the child sat upright in her bed, and greeted the doctor with a smile. Then she willingly swallowed a few spoonfuls of the soup which he offered her. She did not appear to be hungry however, but only to do it because he wished it. She listened eagerly to all the doctor said. He told her that in the morning he had watched the fish disport themselves in the lake, and promised her that they would go and catch some of them when she could leave her bed.

After a while she again seemed to lose consciousness. Her blue eyes partially closed, and the small head sank back on her pillows.

"Be of good cheer," said the doctor; "the progress is slow but sure. Your maid must continue to change the ice frequently. Meanwhile we will go and have dinner. It is ready."

"Leave me here with my child," she whispered. "No," he replied, curtly. "You must breathe the fresh air. We do not want another patient, and your pulse is much agitated. When we have dined, we will relieve the nurse."

He walked on without another word, and she dared not oppose him. In the shade before the house, close to the window of the sick-room, the cover had been laid for two. Just as they came out, the landlady brought a dish of fish, and placed them on the table, these were followed by a roasted fowl. During the repast they hardly spoke a word to each other. Both were lost in thought. Now and then, he would persuade her, not only to take a few mouthfuls on her plate, but to eat them. "I shall be offended," he said, gaily, "if you eat nothing. We doctors enjoy the reputation of being great gourmands. I hope I have not disgraced my profession in this instance?"

"Pardon me, if I cannot yet bear the brightness around me," she said. "My heart has been too deeply troubled. I have passed through such heavy storms, that the ground still trembles beneath me. To-morrow I will behave better." Then they both relapsed into silence, and gazed at the lake, over which the mid-day heat was brooding. A cricket chirped in the quiet little garden; and within the landlord snored on his bench by the stove. From the shed by the lake, the gurgle of the waves against the softly rocking boats was heard, and from the sick-room the nurse humming a nursery rhyme, the same with which years ago she had lulled the child in her cradle to sleep.

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The quiet day was followed by a restless night. The fever increased in violence; the child moaned continually, and could hardly be kept in her bed. At midnight she grew calmer.

The doctor hardly stirred from the house; only in the evening, he refreshed himself with a cigar out of doors. Then he took a turn round the house, and every time he passed the window of the sick-room, stopped for a moment, and spoke a few words of encouragement to the mother who would not quit the bed-side. In the night, while watching with her--the nurse had been sent to bed--he suddenly said: "How much your child resembles you. Just now, in this dim light, when you stooped over her and the little girl looked up to you with that peculiarly spiritual and precocious expression which illness gives, I could almost have fancied that you were sisters. Ten



years hence, she will be your very image." "Perhaps you are right," answered the young mother, "but the resemblance is only outward: all her mental qualities she inherits from her father. I often wonder at so great a likeness in such a young child, and *that* too a girl. Her truthfulness her self-denial, her courage often make me feel as if my lost husband had been given back to me in this child."

"You are mentioning qualities, which during our short acquaintance, I have remarked that you possess in a high degree."

She shook her head, "If I seem courageous, it is only owing to my natural cowardice. When you first saw me I was quite broken-hearted with misery, and anxiety, but I dared not give vent to my feelings, for I knew that I should break down utterly at the sound of my own voice. My husband could look the most fearful events calmly in the face; and so it is with the child. He could make any sacrifice without thinking of himself."

"And you; I should think, you did not spare yourself in the first days of this trial."

"A mother's heart feels no sacrifice," she answered, "but before my child was born I often had to strive with myself, and force myself to do what was distasteful to me for the sake of others. It is not so with the child, though youth generally is, and well may be, the season for egotism. I could tell you a hundred traits of her excellent disposition. I have often felt anxious about her, for so precocious a tenderness of feeling is said to be the presage of a short life. Who can tell whether it may not be realized."

Everhard looked out on the lake, and seemed not to have heard her last words. Suddenly he said; "you have probably a portrait of your husband: Will you show it to me?"

She took off a delicately worked Venetian chain, which she wore round her neck, opened the locket which was fastened to it, and handed it to him.

He gazed at it for several minutes, and then silently gave it back to her. After a long pause he said, "Was it a youthful attachment?"

"Not quite what is generally so called. I was, certainly very young when I made his acquaintance. Before I saw him no man had ever made any impression on me; but I hardly knew how dearly I loved him till a month after our marriage took place. I only learnt to appreciate him fully during the short period of our union, and my love grew into a passion when I had lost him for ever. Had you known him, you would have become friends; he never had an enemy."

Everhard had risen and was pacing the room with noiseless steps. He stopped before the table and took up a volume which projected from a travelling bag. They were Lenau's poems. On the fly leaf was inscribed the name of Lucille.

"Does this poet please you?" asked the doctor.--

"I hardly know whether he repels, or attracts me; and although I generally have a clear perception in such things, yet I cannot quite discover in his thoughts, what is genuine and what is artificial. He suffered much, yet it often appears to me, as if by continually irritating them, he purposely re-opened his wounds. I hardly know why I took this book on my journey; perhaps as a sort of consolation."

"You seek consolation with a poet so weary of life?"

"Why not? *He* died mad. When I think of that death, the grief for my husband's seems easier to bear, for what a glorious death was granted to *him*! Young, loved by all, he died heroically for his country! I carry his image undefaced in my heart, not distorted by illness, and the last agony, nor estranged from me by insanity. How dreadful must it not be to see one dear to us deprived of his senses. Do you not feel the same?"

He was silent for a moment, and then replied by another question: "So you would have thought the death of your husband desirable, if he had been doomed to life long insanity?"

"Spare me the answer. I cannot give you one truthfully, without pain."

"So much the better," he said. She did not understand him. A few minutes later he left the room.

He returned an hour after midnight, and insisted on relieving the mother from her watch by the sickbed. She could not resist his imperative manner, and only begged him to let her, and the nurse, relieve him alternately. He promised to do so; and this time kept his promise. In the morning when Lucille awoke, she found the nurse alone, and heard that the doctor lay on a straw mattress in the tap-room to be near at hand in case of need.

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A week had passed since these events, and Everhard again sat in his little room at the crazy table, and the candle cast the same dim flickering light, as on that first occasion, only the moon shone so brightly through the casement, that one could easily have dispensed with any other

light. Everhard had just perused the letter written on that dark and gloomy night, and was now adding a postscript on the blank page.

"A week older, Charles; and yet a week younger! When I look at my face, and compare it with the aged features which appear to me in these pages, then I find that I have made the most retrograde movement, and here again arrived at an age, at which even you did not know me; at a time when I never thought of death, though I touched it daily with my dissecting knife; *then* I had no more thought of it, than a child's doctor has of catching the measles. I have now studied the morbid symptoms in my letter, as coolly as I once did the strange countenance of number So and so in the hospital.

"You will be glad to hear that I have surmounted my last crisis, but I, when I search my thoughts, can only deplore this.

"Everything was ready for my departure, my trunks so nicely packed, the last leave takings exchanged; I heard the shrill whistle of the engine,--suddenly I am told that I have missed the train; and so I remain, not at home, nor abroad, but sitting at the railway station in a most provoking position. It seems ridiculous to have to stay and unpack, after all these preparations for departure. How it all happened I will tell you in a few words, lest you should think that cowardice overcame me at the last moment, that I regretted to leave this life, and persuaded myself that after all it was the best. No it was not that which played me this trick, it was my old passion, my profession! I found it of more importance to save a young life, than to despatch my own, so prematurely old. The child in question was well worth the trouble, that I can tell you. And as for the mother! don't fancy that I have fallen in love; you would be mistaken. Or do you call love, the feelings of a poor devil of a miner who after having been buried in a coal-pit, is brought to life again and rejoices in the first breath of fresh air. Do not be afraid that I shall give you a description of this young woman's charms. Whether she be handsome, amiable--what is usually so called; clever, or whether she possess all those qualities the description of which generally fills columns, I know not. All I know, is that in her presence, I forget my existence; the past, the future--all I feel is that she is there beside me and that I would desire nothing more to all eternity, than that she should remain so. Do you recollect how strange it once seemed to us, that the same passionate poet, from whose brain proceeded 'Werther' should have expressed such tame feelings as these--

"Gaze at the moon,  
Or think of thee,  
I fancy 'tis the same.  
All in a holy light, I see,  
And know not how it came.'

"And now to my shame be it spoken, I experience the same feelings in myself. This lunacy, as we jestingly called it, has taken such possession of me, that my only desire at present is, that through all the future years of my life, I might live as in one long night, surrounded by the pale veiled halo which now calms my soul.

"This is but a dream. Ere long I must insist on my little patient's departure to more civilised regions, where she will be better provided for during her convalescence, than she can be here, where chicken-broth is the landlady's sole culinary achievement. Then I shall become unnecessary, and can bid farewell to the Dead Lake, and once more try to live in a world which after these events will seem doubly desolate to me. Was I not right in deploring the departure of the train? By this time I should have reached my destination. But why should not the journey be only postponed for a fortnight; especially as the one I had intended to take does in no wise depend on the weather, or the company. I can tell you the reason, Charles; I know that you will not despise me for it. My courage is gone! Is it so very despicable that I now dread that gloomy depth, into which a week ago I was willing to plunge; now that I have found a place of rest up here in the daylight? And though in a few days I shall be again roaming about, like the wandering unsettled savage I was, up to this last week, yet nothing can ever efface from my heart the feeling that somewhere between heaven and earth there is a corner where I could live in repose; where, like that Matricide, in Sophocles, I had found a sanctuary from which, awed by the holiness of the refuge even the furies keep aloof, and dare not sully the threshold.

"Unfortunately, it is perfectly clear to me that from her, I also must keep aloof. This woman even if I ventured to offer her my unamiable society for the remainder of her life, could but politely decline. She has made a vow to remain faithful to the memory of her dead husband. What is a vow? Ought it to be a chain to bind and check our very existence, after we have outgrown our former selves. In the course of seven years the physical part of man is completely renewed, and is our spiritual part, surrounded by new flesh and blood to remain the same, because some misanthrope doubted his own power of revival. Have I not also broken my vow never again to approach a sick-bed. And I even deem this to be rather to my credit than my shame. But the vow of this woman is raised far above the fickleness of human wishes and resolves. She wishes me well; I could find no truer friend in need than she would prove. She would make any sacrifice but this for me, who have saved her child; but her whole existence, her heart, and soul are rivetted to the memory of her own passed happiness, and to the future happiness of her child--and for me, to whom the present alone is of importance.... I have carefully avoided the question as to where she

lives, in what town, under what circumstances in what neighbourhood. I will part from her without knowing anything of this, lest I should be tempted to seek her, and endeavour to make the impossible possible.

"A few days more of the happiness of this singular position--in this solitary wilderness among the mountains, far from all the littlenesses and miseries of the world, and as if we were in heaven, where there is neither giving in marriage, nor parting--then come what may; what must!

"In truth it is a strange and cruel remedy which fate has employed, making a deep incision in my heart, in order to convince me how little I was ripe for death; how much strength and feeling there was still in me, how much I could yet endure!

"Enough of this for to-day. We live here totally deprived of all postal communication. When, and where, I shall close this letter and forward it, the Gods only know, if indeed they concern themselves with our correspondence.

"Farewell!"

He laid down the pen and listened. From the sick room, the child's soft prattle was heard and though free from the restless and rambling tone of fever, yet it was an unusually late hour for the child to be awake. He also heard the soft voice of the mother calming it by a few soothing words. When Everhard entered the room the child was already fast asleep.

"She has just been dreaming of you;" turning towards him with one of her charming smiles; "she told me, she dreamt that you had given her a white lamb, with a red ribbon round its neck, which took food from her hand. She had possessed it for some time when it suddenly occurred to her that she had not thanked you for it; so she begged me to call you that she might repair this neglect."

"And why did you not call me?" asked the doctor.

"I told her that her uncle Everhard would never listen to any thanks. That Mamma too had received a gift from him for which she never, never could thank him sufficiently. The best way to thank him, was to be a good child and go to sleep again. You should have seen how earnestly the dear child tried, after this, to go to sleep. You see she is asleep already and her forehead is moist. You have more influence, over her than any other person has."

He thoughtfully contemplated the childish face.

"I regret that I am not a princess," Lucille continued with a slight blush; "for then I could offer you a place at my court, and beg you to accompany me on my travels in the capacity of Court Physician. I cannot imagine what we shall do without you--at every cold little Fanny catches, we shall miss you sadly. And yet I am content with my station in life. A princess would perhaps presume that she could repay you for your devotion to her child by offering you an establishment. I cannot regret the feeling that I can never repay you for all your generosity." She stretched out her hand to him, which he pressed, strangely moved, to his lips.

"Madame Lucille," he said, without continuing the subject, "it is now eleven o'clock; it is my turn to watch, and you are relieved."

"No," she answered gaily, "I am not quite so obedient as our little Fan, or rather, sleep does not so readily obey my call. You must allow me to remain awake for another hour, and if you are not tired, you shall read aloud to me. I have seen a volume of Goethe's works in your hands. I admire him above all other poets, and wish to get more fully acquainted with him, for I must confess to my shame, that on looking through your volume the other day, I remarked that most of its contents were unknown to me.

"As you please," he said, "but most of its contents will remain for ever new to you, were you to hear them ever so often. At least that is my experience of them."

He fetched the book, the first volume of the poems, and without selecting any particular poem began at the first page. He lowered his voice but read without any studied art of delivery. Never had he so keenly and clearly felt the charm of the everlasting spring which emanates from the blossoms of the poet's youthful ardour.

He dared not look at her whilst he read fearing to meet the mute enquiry in the eyes of the young woman; but when he came to "the hunter's evening song," he with difficulty faltered out the words,

'Gaze at the moon,  
Or think of thee,  
I fancy 'tis the same.  
All in a holy light, I see,  
And know not how it came!'

Suddenly he stopped, let the book glide on to the bed of the child, and rose hastily.

"What has happened?" she asked, startled. "Go and rest," he replied with averted face. "Wake the nurse; she can take my watch for this night. The atmosphere here oppresses me, I must breathe the fresh air, I already feel better, since I have risen. I will go and take a row on the lake."

So saying he disappeared, leaving her with all her feelings in a state of tumultuous disturbance at the enigma she dared not solve.

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The next day at their early meeting, they succeeded in assuming the gay and unconstrained tone which had hitherto existed between them. The child assisted them in their efforts. The night had been quiet and refreshing, and a bath which had been prepared for her, under Everhard's superintendence; in an old washing tub of the landlady's had greatly revived her, and had sent her off into another long sleep. Towards evening the doctor brought home from his walk different kinds of ferns, gentians, and also gaily coloured pebbles which he had found near the rocks. He sat down by Fanny's bed-side, and told her all about the birds, and other small animals which he had met in his wanderings over the heights. He was pleased at the intelligent questions the child put to him, as she sat up in bed and admired with wide opened eyes the treasures he had laid on her coverlet. The mother sat beside them working at a piece of embroidery. From the kitchen without was heard the crackling of the fire on the hearth, over which the child's soup was being prepared. Everhard did not relinquish his night watch this time, but no more was said of reading aloud. Neither was there any mention made of it during the following nights, and indeed no occasion for it presented itself. The night watching had now become almost unnecessary, so the doctor could, without further apprehension, remain a good deal in his room. Even in the day-time, now that the child was allowed to be up for several hours, he seldom appeared. But often under pretext of fishing he would row over to the islet from whence he did not return till late in the evening, or he would roam through the pine woods and the ravine, and climb up to the ice cavern.

The farm-servant who hearing that the lady wished for the last strawberries of the season had climbed up there, to look for some, reported on his return that he had met the doctor seated on a rock, and looking like a man in a dream. He had bidden him good day, and the doctor had started up, and with a silent nod of recognition, had disappeared in the wood. He was evidently touched in the head, the farm-servant continued; I always said so from the moment I saw him sitting quite crazed like in the tap-room, and refusing all refreshment.

This continued during several days. In proportion to the progress of the child's recovery did the doctor's melancholy, from which the sudden call of duty had roused him, appear to increase. Those days were full of gloom; he felt how necessary it was to abridge them. One forenoon he started without waiting for dinner, not caring to meet the sad inquiring look in Lucille's eyes. He climbed up the steep ravine with the firm resolve to arrive at a final decision. In spite of the fierce noon-day heat, he pursued a road which he had recently discovered, and which led towards the south across the rocky ridge of the mountains. He knew that if he continued his walk he would reach before night fall a Romanic<sup>[2]</sup> village which was separated from the dead lake by nearly impassable tracts of ice and snow. Once there, and he had achieved all that now seemed impossible to him, all leave taking was spared him and he was as one dead to those to whom he had now become useless.

This seemed to him the best plan, and he relied on his strength of will to carry it out. But when the last glimpse of the lake had disappeared and he found himself surrounded only by the sterile wilderness of rocks, he felt so wretched that he could not proceed, but flung himself on the ground, in the shade of a projecting rock, and buried his face amidst the moss and heather. He eagerly sought for all the reasons which should prevent his departure, and make his return necessary, his papers, his diary which he had left in his room; the anxiety his sudden disappearance would cause Lucille. Then he reflected that he was in duty bound to provide for their departure, and for their safe journey to the next town. He made a solemn vow that all should be done that very day. He would send down the farm-servant to order a carriage as soon as he had returned to the inn. In twenty-four hours everything would be accomplished, and the separation irrevocable. After that he did not care what happened. When he had firmly settled this in his mind, he felt relieved, and hastily arose to reach the inn without further delay. He resolved to be cheerful and to enjoy the few hours that remained to him of her society as if they were to last for ever. He regretted having embittered many a day by the thought of the approaching end. He plucked a bunch of scentless Alpine flowers and ferns--it should be his farewell token to little Fanny. So thinking he rapidly descended the steep mountain, and reached the last firs in the ravine when the greatest heat of the day was over. Below him lay the lake. Not the slightest breeze ruffled its calm surface which clearly reflected the small meadow on the opposite shore; the firs on the steep slope above it, and beyond these, the bare grey rocks and crags. Then he looked towards the fisherman's house. His quick eye discerned every shingle on its stone laden roof--in the yard, the old hen followed by her yellow brood, and the linen hung out on ropes to dry. Those who lived beneath that lowly roof were nowhere to be seen. Generally at this time of the day, everyone dozed over some slight work, so Everhard was much surprised when he saw the door of the house open, and a perfect stranger step out into the bright sunshine. He was a tall young man dressed in a light summer costume. His face was partly shaded by a broad brimmed

straw-hat, and only a fair moustache of a military cut was visible underneath it.

The newcomer stood still for a few minutes, looked around him as if to examine the weather, and then eagerly talked through the open door to some one who had not yet appeared. A few minutes later Lucille joined him, without a hat, only holding a large parasol to protect her delicate complexion from the sun. She accompanied the stranger to the shed on the lake, and a moment after Everhard saw them both issue from it, in one of the boats, and take the direction across the smooth lake towards the islet. The stranger wielded the oars so dextrously that they soon reached their destination. Then leaping on shore he assisted Lucille to get out. They walked along the shore wending their way between the birches and the high bulrushes, apparently with the intention of making the circuit of the small island. Everhard's heart throbbed so wildly that he had to lean against the stem of a fir-tree till the first giddiness had passed.

Who was the new comer who seemed so intimate with her, that she followed him on his boating excursions, and thus granted him what she had ever refused to Everhard her friend and helper? Who was this stranger that she leant on his arm, and while walking by his side, and gaily conversing with him seemed even to forget her child, and abandoned it to the care of the nurse? Well whoever it was, he had arrived just in time to wake them all out of the dream into which the solitary stillness of the place had lulled them.

Doubtless the sight of this old acquaintance brought back to Lucille's remembrance all that she had forgotten at the bed-side of her child; her intercourse with the outer world; her friends, and admirers, recollections to which Everhard would ever remain a stranger, and which summoned her back to a life in which he could have no share. So much the better! It could but facilitate the execution of his resolves, and confirm the urgency of a separation.

He felt it was impossible to share her presence with a third. He strode down the precipitous path, and reached the house greatly exhausted, and his knees knocking under him. He remarked a travelling carriage which stood beside the shed, and in the stables in which a cow was kept during the winter, two horses were tied to the manger. Without heeding the landlady who was dying to tell him the news, he walked straight into the room where the child sat at the table playing with a new doll.

"Uncle Max is here," she cried out to him, her face beaming with joy. "He has brought me a doll that can move its eyes; then he dined with Mamma, and now they are both on the island. They will soon return however, as Uncle Max means to take us away in his large travelling carriage, but Mamma said that she would not move a step without your special consent."

"Fanny," he said, and took the child's curly head between his hands, "you won't forget me, though I cannot offer you a beautiful doll, but only a simple bunch of flowers?"

The child looked up surprised; "Mamma said that after the good God, I should love you best, because you have saved my life. I love you better than all other people; but Mamma I love best of all."

He stooped over the fair face, and kissed the child's truthful loving eyes, and her pale lips.

"You are right, little Fan," said he, speaking with difficulty, "she deserves your love. Here is my bouquet, and give her my compliments." He turned towards the door.

"What are you going away! the child called after him; won't you come, and tell me some nice story."

"Another time," was all he could say. The nurse who just then came in, tried to detain him, and wondered at his disturbed appearance, but he passed her by, and hastening to his own room locked the door behind him.

Once more alone, he was so overcome by the agony of his feelings that he dropped into a chair and his strong frame shook with convulsive though tearless sobs. But he promptly recovered himself, pressed his hand to his heart as if to still its throbbings and proceeded to stuff his few possessions into his travelling bag. Only his portfolio he kept back; then he sat down at the table, and mechanically took out the letter to his friend as if to add another postscript, but he vainly sought for words and he finally laid it down, took up another sheet and began to write a short account of the child's illness, with the intention of leaving it to Lucille in case she should find another consultation necessary.

He found a certain satisfaction in clearly wording his statement, and in perceiving how steadily his hand wielded the pen. "At least I have not yet lost my senses," he said aloud.

He had just finished this writing when a man's quick step was heard approaching his room, and then came a knock at the door. He rose with an angry feeling. He could not deny his presence, and yet this meeting was intensely distasteful to him. He unlocked the door with a countenance which was anything but inviting. The moustachied stranger however entered with the most amiable air. Apparently he did not expect a very gracious reception, but seemed fully determined not to let himself be put out by anything.

"My dear doctor," he exclaimed in an engaging manner, and with a friendly shake of the hand.

"Pray excuse my intruding on you; Lucille has told me that you refuse to listen to any thanks, but I am not to be daunted; I am a soldier and would think it dishonourable to be afraid of anything; even of the glum face of a benefactor; and so I boldly express my thanks, at the risk of being challenged by you afterwards, and tell you that I shall always feel indebted to you, and that you can command my services at any time as you would those of your oldest friend.--You have worked wonders, you best of doctors! Not only with the little one, whose welfare I have at heart as though it were my own child, but above all with the mother--I can assure you that I hardly recognized her. From the time when her husband my dear brother was buried with his comrades in one common grave on the field of battle, her widowed grief, up to a few weeks ago, had always remained the same. All the efforts of her friends to restore her to her former cheerfulness were vain. Seven years! In truth, I should say that the most legitimate grief might be overcome in that time. Between ourselves, be it said, though I sincerely loved my brother, yet I have found these seven years unconscionably long. Lucille was my lady love as well as my brother's, but then I was only a good for nothing lieutenant, and so I had to yield the precedence to my brother Victor. Now it seems to me that I have every right to assert my claim considering that it is of such long standing. Don't you think so, doctor? But in spite of my perseverance through all these years, not the slightest ray of hope was ever granted to me. I wished to accompany her on this visit to the grave; but no, my request was mercilessly refused. Wait till she has returned, I said to myself; who knows but this visit may be the last stage of her conjugal grief. So I waited for her return, or at least for a letter, but when three weeks had passed without any tidings of her, fearing that some misfortune had happened, I took leave of absence from my regiment, and traced her steps till I found her here at the Dead Lake; not the cold and reserved Lucille of old, but a totally changed being. The gratitude she feels for the preservation of her child, seems to have reconciled her to life, and consequently it will be to you alone that I shall owe my thanks, should I one day be allowed to give her a far dearer name than that of sister. She owns that it is you who have broken the ice, and talks of you with so much enthusiasm that if I did not know that it overflowed from the abundant thankfulness of her maternal heart, I should feel jealous of you."

A short silence followed this artless avowal, during which the young officer paced the room; then walked to the casement, and rapped his fingers against the low ceiling.

"Well," he exclaimed, with his good-humoured laugh, "you doctors are certainly not more fastidious than we soldiers! How did you manage to hold out in this dismal hole? We will now try to make you as comfortable as possible, for of course you are coming with us. Lucille would never reconcile herself to the thought of losing her court physician."

"I much regret," answered Everhard in a calm voice, "that Madam Lucille is mistaken in this case. The child can travel without the least danger; it is even necessary that she should leave this place, where the food is not adapted to her delicate state of health. I had determined to order a travelling carriage for tomorrow, when I perceived your carriage. I could not place the ladies under better protection than yours, so you must pardon me if I leave you to-day."

"Impossible!" cried the young officer in a tone of the most sincere dismay. "What a desperate clamour the women would set up at your leaving us so suddenly. Lucille, little Fan, even the nurse would cling to your coat tails; I should have to arrest you by barring the way with my sword."

"Possibly they may augment the difficulties of this inevitable and necessary step," remarked the doctor with a grave face, "so the best plan will be, not to mention my resolve and at nightfall I can easily depart without any leave taking. Here is a report of the child's illness, take the paper with you, but I trust it will not be required. If you go only short day's journies, the drive at this season will probably be beneficial to the health of the little patient. And so permit me to bid you good-bye. I beg you to present my compliments to your sister-in-law."

"Doctor, this cannot be your final decision; I hope you will yet change your mind; meanwhile I will take this statement and leave you, for I fear I have disturbed you whilst writing. Au revoir."

"Do not betray me." Everhard called after him. The young officer put his finger to his lips, and hastened through the tap-room whistling a merry tune.

Everhard had hardly been alone for ten minutes pacing his room like a prisoner who is meditating how he can escape from his bare and narrow cell, when he suddenly heard the outer door again open, and a step, which sent the blood to his heart, approach his room.

"Is my cup of bitterness not yet full," he murmured to himself.

The door opened and Lucille stood before him with an expression in her eyes which utterly disconcerted him and forced him to cast his down.

"Pardon me my friend," she said in an agitated voice, "if once more I intrude on your solitude, though you so evidently avoid me. You even intend to leave us without a word of farewell. My brother-in-law did not admit this; but I was aware of it from his manner when he left your room, and as I have long suspected this to be your intention, I was not much astonished, though greatly grieved. I owe you so much that it would be useless again to repeat my thanks before we part; but it is not generous in you to deprive me of all opportunity of rendering you any service, or of showing you the deep interest I feel in you. I am persuaded that my friendship is not incapable of

giving you relief if you would but return the confidence with which I have always treated you from the first hour we met. A secret grief consumes you. What would I not give to be able to aid you in bearing the load which oppresses you! Now could I leave you, perhaps never to meet you again, and have to reproach myself with the thought, that although knowing, that you, dearest and most devoted of friends, were suffering deeply, I yet allowed a miserable fear of appearing curious and importunate to deter me from making any attempt to assuage those sufferings or to learn their cause!"

"No," she continued with heightened colour, "I know that you are not selfish enough to burden me with this unbearable grief and remorse, only because it humbles your pride to acknowledge your sufferings to a woman."

He did not once interrupt her, but stood with his eyes fixed on the ground. When she had ceased speaking, he made an effort to answer her but he did not look up. "Thank you," he said, "I know that your questions proceed from the kindness and benevolence of your heart; and be assured that if the weight which oppresses me could be lightened by human means, I would apply to you for help--I was enabled to come to your aid, why therefore should I not accept succour from you? But there are certain circumstances in life which cannot be altered, and in such cases, I think it is foolish weakness, and even culpable to give vent to useless complaints, and to importune one's friends with them. Let us part. When the health of your child is completely restored to its former bloom, the sad impressions connected with the remembrance of the Dead Lake will vanish from your mind, and with them the image of a man who"----

Feeling that emotion was overpowering him, he suddenly stopped, and walked to the window to regain his composure. When after a moment he again turned towards Lucille, he saw her leaning against the door post, pale as death and with the same pained expression on her countenance that he had noticed the first day of her arrival.

"Good heavens, what ails you?" exclaimed he; "Know then, if you cannot bear the feeling of being indebted to me, that we are quits. If I have succeeded in saving the life of your child, you have fully acquitted this debt by preserving my own life."

She looked up with surprise.

"Yes," he continued; "on that very table, on the night I first met you, I wrote a farewell letter to life. The letter still lies there, so you see that I have changed my resolution. I do not say that I feel grateful to you for it. Possibly non-existence has its dark side too, but it cannot be worse than remaining between life and death neither suited to the one, nor prepared for the other--enough of this! Is it your fault if the life which you saved was not worth the trouble? Do not let us prolong so painful a meeting. Our paths now diverge--You return to your home, I---go where fate leads me. I am driven on by my destiny like a stone which a boy rolls before him. I thank you for the happy days I have spent in this wilderness; they have been the first, for a long time, in which I felt that I lived. It is a pity that they must pass away like every thing else in this perishable world."

"And why must they pass, away?" she asked looking up with anxious and imploring eyes. "Why will you not accompany us?"

"Why? because"--he suddenly stopped. His eyes whilst wandering round the room had fastened on the letter to his friend which lay on the table, beside the travelling bag. A sudden thought flashed through his mind. "You wish to test the value I set on your friendship, and that it is not pride which prevents me from availing myself of your kindness; well then take this letter, but promise not to read it before to-morrow. Will you promise this?"

She only bowed without looking at him.

"This letter contains every explanation which I could not bring myself to utter. When you have read it, you will understand that I can no longer remain here, and that you ought not to detain me. And now give me your hand once more. Let me also thank you again for the happiness of knowing you! He pressed her hand to his lips with much emotion. Embrace your child to-morrow when you have read the letter, and then--but I need not ask you for this; then in spite of all, think kindly of me. I know that you will do so, have you not the heart and soul of an angel!"

He hastened from the room and passed through the empty passage. He heard Fanny's voice in the sitting-room. She talked with the nurse and mentioned his name. This accelerated his steps. He had just presence of mind enough left him to throw a handful of money to the landlady, and to bid her good-bye, then he followed the cart track which led into the valley, and hastily turned round the first corner without looking back. After he had walked for a quarter of an hour unconscious of all around him, only blindly driven on by the dim feeling that if he once looked back his strength would fail him; it suddenly occurred to him that he was walking northward in the direction of Germany, instead of turning towards the lakes of Lombardy as he had at first intended. "What does it matter," he said to himself; "what is home to me, am I not everywhere a stranger?" He descended to the bed of the mountain stream which flowed by the roadside. There he rested for a while, bathed his feverish brow with the cold water, and listened to its gurgle as it flowed over the pebbly bed. The sound reminded him of Fanny's clear voice when she laughed for the first time after her illness. This recollection so overpowered him that the tears streamed from his eyes, and he let his grief take its course without trying to check it.

A cart which passed him in its slow progress up the hill, roused him from his painful thoughts. It occurred to him, that the carter would stop at the inn and there probably see Lucille and her child. That happiness would never be his again! However he remained firm to his resolve, and wandered on till he felt, in his trembling knees and exhausted frame, how deeply the last few hours had affected him.

He had now reached a more expanded part of the valley; he sat down beside a small shed which had formerly served as shelter to the workmen of a quarry. His head sank on his chest, and he was soon absorbed in gloomy thoughts and reveries.

An hour passed and found him still sitting there half stupified; neither feeling pain nor wishing for any thing. He only heard the rushing of the water and stared vacantly at the stones and mosses at his feet. Suddenly he started up, the tread of horses was heard, and the grating sound of the heavy drag as a carriage proceeded slowly down the hill. A secret presentiment thrilled through him, he looked up with a feeling of terror, and to his dismay recognized the carriage of the young officer.

On the box beside the coachman was seated the nurse, her fat good-humoured face shaded by a large straw hat and a blue veil, though the sun had now sunk low, and only a few slanting rays reached the deep glen. His first thought was to spring up, and fly before them. But even if he could have got in advance of them here on this steep road, once in the plain they would speedily overtake him; so he had no chance of escaping. He stealthily rose and approached the door of the hut. "They have not yet seen me," he murmured; "they will drive past, and then this last pain will have been overcome; but why could they not have spared me this?"

He entered the shed half ashamed of slinking away, and hiding like an outlaw.

Through all those days of inward strife he had never felt so thoroughly wretched and unhappy as he did at that moment. Now when his last strength was exhausted, he had to witness the triumphant progress of one to whom he bitterly grudged the prize that was denied him.

Cautiously he pressed against the wooden partition of the hut he could not refrain from looking through the small aperture which stood in lieu of a window, and once more gaze on those dear faces.

They were now so close to him that he could examine the inside of the carriage. On the further side lay the child asleep, wrapped up in blankets, and cloaks. Lucille sat beside her, and held her hand, but her eyes searchingly scanned the road. Where was her young protector? "He will follow on foot," thought Everhard. "Thank heaven they have passed; now all is over!"

Suddenly the carriage stopped. The coachman jumped off his seat, and opened the door. Lucille hastily descended and walked towards the hut. A few moments later and she stood with a bright flush on her cheek before the bewildered young man.

"You see that all your resistance is vain my dear friend," she said in a trembling voice. "You wished to escape, but we follow you; we discover your hiding-place, and now hold you fast in spite of your resistance. We cannot do without you, you must...."

"For heaven's sake," he cried, greatly agitated, "what has happened. Has the child had another attack?"

"Our child sleeps," said the charming woman, and her voice sank low; "but still we want you my dear friend. This time ... this time, it is the mother who entrusts her life to you."

"Lucille!" he exclaimed, well-nigh distracted, and seizing the hand which she offered him, drew her into the hut. "Can I?--may I hope?--Will you indeed ..."

"I must ask you to pardon me," she replied blushing still more deeply: "I could not wait till tomorrow, but read your letter the moment you were gone. Then, I may as well confess all,--I had to sustain a severe conflict within me, but I soon felt that I never could again arrive at a clear understanding of my own heart, if I let you depart. You have broken your vow, and have resolved to bear life for my sake, I can only return this by surrendering myself to you. He to whom I pledged my faith, never had another wish during his life than to see me happy. I am convinced that if I could now explain to him how all this has happened, he would release me from my word. When I had clearly perceived this, I could find no rest. I have confided everything to my brother-in-law. He has remained behind with a heavy heart; but he told me to shake hands with you in his name. 'If he can make you happy Lucille,' these were his last words, 'I will try not to hate him.' Will you make the trial my dear friend?"

Unable to contain himself any longer he fell on his knees at her feet, clung to her hands, and buried his face in the folds of her dress. He could not utter a word except her name, which he stammered out repeatedly in faltering accents.

"How is this?" she whispered. "Overcome this emotion, and be a man. You ought to be my support; I must look up to you. Have I not done so, during all these days?"

He rose slowly. "Pardon me darling," he said, pressing her to his heart, and ratifying on her



lips a mute vow. "My knees could no longer support me. This day has brought me too much misery and bliss. Now I am strong again, now my heart can once more sustain hope and happiness. Let us walk to the carriage, I am impatient to embrace our child."

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## DOOMED.

### DOOMED.

Meran, 5th October 1860.

A week has passed since my arrival and I have not written a line! I was too much exhausted and agitated by the long journey. When I sat down to write, gazing on the white blank pages, it seemed to me as if I were looking into a camera obscura. All the scenes which had greeted me on my journey appeared so clearly and vividly before me and chased each other as in a feverish dream till my eyes filled with tears.

More than once during the journey I had felt the tears ready to start, but I was not alone, and I had no desire to be pitied, and questioned by the strangers who occupied the carriage with me.

Here it is different--I am alone and free. Already I have learnt by experience that solitude only can bring freedom. Why am I, even now, ashamed to weep? have I not a full right to do so? Is it not sad that my first glimpse of the beauties of this world should also be my last?

Truly it were better that I closed this book, and left the blank pages as they are. With what can I fill them but with useless complaints. I had imagined that it would be pleasant and consoling to write down every thought that crossed my mind, every event in this my last winter. I wished to bequeath this book to my dear brother, my little Ernest, who is as yet too young to understand life and death; but some day or other he would prize it, when, asking about his sister, he found no one to answer him. Now, however, I see it was a foolish thought. How could I wish to live in the memory of those dear to me, in the image of my last illness. Better that he should forget me, than have impressed on his mind these pale features which frighten even me when I look at them in the mirror.

Evening.--

--The atmosphere heavy and lowering.--

For several hours I have been sitting at the open casement. From thence one can overlook the beautiful country of the Adige. And far beyond the walls of the town and the wide-spreading<sup>[3]</sup> poplars which border the stone-dike beside the rushing Passer, the view extends over the lower pasture-lands, intersected with a hundred rivulets, where the cattle feed, to the distant chain of mountains which bounds the horizon. The air was so still that I could hear the voices of the promenaders on the *Wassermauer*<sup>[4]</sup>--or was it a fancy of mine?

The children of my landlord, a tailor, peeped in curiously through the door till I at last gave them the remainder of the chocolate in my travelling bag. How joyfully they ran down with it to their mother! Soon I became more calm and cheerful. I found that I had been wrong in dreading my own soliloquies. Why, even considering these leaves as a legacy, should they only contain sorrow? Did I not leave home, where I was tied down by a hundred fetters with the full determination for once, to enjoy life and liberty? And shall I now bear witness against myself that I am unworthy of that freedom?

Certainly it will be but a brief enjoyment, but all the more firmly will I grasp it and not embitter it by weakness and absorbing self-pity.

The landlady told me that this morning a burgher of Meran, who had never suffered from illness in his life, had died suddenly in his prime. They had all expected that he would attain to a good old age, and, probably, he had thought so himself. Comparing my fate with his, is not mine

preferable? Probably, like the generality of men, he had spent his days in toil and labour, looking forward to a time when having earned a sufficiency, he would be able to rest, and enjoy the remainder of his life. His end was unexpected, whilst I know mine. And is not this difference all in my favour? Is not spring yet distant, and should I so fully enjoy this reprieve, were its short duration concealed from me? Oh, truly it is a blessing not to be overtaken, and surprised by death; to watch his slow approach, and only then, face to face with him, learn to live. I can never sufficiently express my thanks to our doctor, my dear fatherly friend, for not keeping the truth from me--thus has he fully redeemed the promise he gave to my dying mother, always to stand by me as a friend.

The night has now set in. I can hardly see what I write. In my whole life, I have never felt so thoroughly at peace as here, in this beautiful forecourt to the grave.--Father! that I could but waft one breath of it to your depressed and sorrowful soul. Good night! Good night, my little Ernest. Who has put you to bed to-night? Who shall now tell you fairy tales to send you to sleep?

The 6th Afternoon.

To-day as Frau Meisterin brought up my dinner, she eagerly tried to persuade me to take a walk and not to sit so much at home. It was so fine on the Wassermauer. So many people were to be seen there; she was sure it would divert me. I could not make her understand that all I wished was to collect my thoughts, and not to divert them; and that I did not feel the slightest desire for the company of strangers. At last, I convinced her by declaring that I was still so weak and so tired with the journey that the two steep stairs were as yet too much for me. Then she left me, and I continued to write.

I have been obliged to put aside my embroidery; it now hurts my chest. I had even to send away my landlord's little girls to whom I had intended to give sewing-lessons.

To-day a doubt weighs on my mind. It seized me suddenly for the first time on waking this morning, and came upon me with great force and persistence. I want to solve it now. Strange, that it should not have struck me sooner. I was so fully convinced that I was doing right! I knew that no one would miss me at home, that my father felt pained at every unkind look my step-mother gave me, that I could no longer be of use even to Ernest, since my step-mother had insisted, in spite of his tender age, on sending him to school, only to avoid seeing him, and having to take care of him.

My father shed tears when he clasped me for the last time in his arms; still my departure relieved him. He wished what is best for me, but what can he do?

This morning, however, the question suddenly occurred to me, whether I had not left other duties; whether any human being, not utterly disabled, has a right to sit down idly or go holiday making for a whole winter. Only since I have felt happy; since the littlenesses of the empty commonplace provincial life have ceased to oppress me, have I begun to question myself as to what right I had to enjoyment, more than all those thousands to whom death is not more distant, than it is to me, and who are forced to strive and wrestle to their last breath, and here am I closing a truce with the enemy, and celebrating a festival as if I had been victorious.--

7th October.

That question for which my poor head could find no answer, I have solved to-day when I came home as shattered from my first walk as if I had laboured for a day in chains. No, I am fit for nothing but rest, and if it taste sweeter to me than to many, that cannot be a cause for self-reproach. Am I not more easily contented than others? If I am of no use, am I a burden to any one? Even if I did not avail myself of the small inheritance left me by my mother, but kept it intact for my brother Ernest, would it exempt him from the necessity of supporting himself by his own exertions? Part of it will probably remain for him, for as I experienced to-day, my strength is already scantier than I had imagined. Who can tell how short my winter in the South may be? I shall not frequent the walk under the poplars. To-day I felt uneasy among those poor, coughing, dressed up people, who tottered about with their baskets full of grapes, and seemed eagerly to imbibe new hope with each berry. By those whose faces expressed hopelessness, I felt still less attracted. It may sometimes be soothing to frequent the society of fellow-sufferers; but when the same fate creates totally different feelings, then that which could otherwise unite only separates, and one feels all the more forcibly the difference of character. Not to one of them, would I have ventured to speak of the peaceful and grateful mood I enjoyed. They would either have looked upon me as an eccentric enthusiast, or thought me a hypocrite.

Can they be blamed for it? Possibly I too might have feared death had I loved life more. And why was my life so little loveable?

Only a few can understand the deep feeling of immensity, and peace with which nature fills my soul. For two and twenty years I never set foot beyond the walls of a small uninteresting commonplace town. In these days people travel much. But for the long illness of my mother, and after her death, the care of my little brother, I too would probably have wandered forth from that

desolate little place. This beautiful valley already seems to me like the world to come, like a true Garden of God. The first time I inhaled this air, I felt as if I already glided over the earth, borne on the wings of my soul. It was certainly a pity that they did not support me better as I toiled up the steep narrow stairs, but what business had I to descend them, when every glance through my windows is an excursion into Paradise.

The people with whom I lodge are very poor. The man works till late at night, and his wife has enough to do, attending to the wants of her large family. The inside of the house looks dusky and gloomy. When the porter of the hotel who from the simplicity of my dress inferred great meagreness of purse, first took me through the long dark passages, and the gloomy courts, and we scrambled up the delapidated staircase, over the landing where dusty furniture, old spinning-wheels, beds, earthen ware and provisions of maize lay in confused heaps, and the spiders, undisturbed for many years, spun their webs, I felt oppressed and my heart beat so that I had to rest at every third step. But the first glance at my small low room reconciled me quickly to the thought that this was to be my last earthly habitation. That old fashioned writing-table with the brass mountings looks like the twin-brother of the one which stood in my dear mother's room. That arm-chair is just as high and heavy, and as brown with age, as the one she used. A few bad prints on the wall, which disturbed me, I immediately took down, and hung up the portraits of my parents instead. It now seems to me as if I had been at home here for years. In one of the comers on a black wooden console stands a crucifix which though I have not been brought up to it, causes me deep reflection. I have received all my books. My father sent them after me and now I want nothing more. At the same time he wrote me just such a letter as I expected from him. That trait of conforming oneself to what is unalterable without further struggle, I have inherited from him. Six lines from Ernest to tell me that he is very happy at school with his little comrades, and a greeting from my stepmother; at least, the letter contains one, but probably my father has added it without asking. Now I will write home. How much more freely could I do so, if I knew that my letters reached my father's hands only.

The 10th--Evening.

What strange people one meets with! An hour ago I was sitting, quite unsuspecting of any interruption, at my window reading, and enjoying the mild evening breeze--the sun now sets at five o'clock behind the Marlinger mountain, yet the air retains the mildness of a summer evening, and the tips of the high mountains to the East, a ruddy glow, for many hours longer--when there came a knock at the door, and a short stout lady, quite unknown to me, entered coolly, and introduced herself to me, expressing a most cordial desire to make my acquaintance. She had seen me on the Wassermauer the only time I had walked there, and had immediately taken a great interest in me, for I was evidently very ill and very lonely, and she had resolved to speak to me the next time we met, hoping to be of some use to me.

"For you must know, my dear child, that I, as I stand before you, am fifty-nine years old, and have not been ill for one day, except during my confinements. My two sons, and three daughters are also, thank heaven, perfectly healthy, and are all of them married and settled in life. But you see I have always had a passion from my earliest youth for helping those people who were not so well off as I am, for nursing the sick, and for rendering the last offices to the dying. My late husband used to call me the privileged life preserver; you cannot imagine a better nurse than I am, for you see I am of a generation when professional ones were as yet unknown. I can easily do without sleep, and can even assist at any operation without the least show of weakness. I have come here with a friend of mine who cannot last much longer. When the poor thing is released from her sufferings, I shall have more time at my disposal than now; she has always to entreat me to leave her and take some exercise--and so my dear child if you want support, advice, or help, apply to no one but me; you must solemnly promise me this. Of course I will no longer allow you to spend your days all alone. I will often come to see you. I never stand on ceremony with my friends, and so you must take it kindly if I tyrannize over you--it will be all for your good. I understand nervous complaints as well as the best of doctors--amusements, air, excitement, are the remedies I prescribe. *A propos*, which doctor have you consulted here?" I answered that I had not applied to any, neither intended to do so as I knew that my malady was incurable. She shook her head incredulously, so I took from my portfolio a sheet of paper on which our doctor had drawn a sort of representation, to shew how far the disease in my lungs had spread. She examined it with experienced eyes.

"My dear child," she at last said, "this is all nonsense, the doctors are all the same, the more they talk, the less they know. I could lay any wager that your interior has a totally different aspect from this." I told her that she had every prospect of being able to ascertain this, but that I declined the wager, as unfortunately I could not win it whilst alive. She only partly listened to what I said, and she continued in so loud a voice that it pierced to my very marrow, to give me an account of different illnesses which tended to shew how little doctors were to be relied on, accompanying it with so many details, that it would have made me sick, if I had not had courage and presence of mind enough to cry for mercy. At length she rose, and in taking leave she made a movement as if to embrace me, and was evidently surprised when I coldly and stiffly gave her my finger tips. She rustled out of the room in great haste, and with many promises to return soon. I had to sit for half an hour with closed eyes to calm my nerves. A sharp odour of acetic ether which surrounded her and which she strongly recommended to me as a powerful neurotic, is still prevalent in the room, and those sharp peering eyes, and the determined expression of

philanthropy in her broad face still haunt me. Only the thought, that for some days at least, I was safe from another invasion, gave me some consolation. But my former *tête-à-tête* with destiny; that which gave a peculiar charm to this place are now lost to me, unless I speak to her yet more intelligibly; and that, even in a case of self-defence, would be most painful to me.

And is this human sympathy! The few who love us pain us by it, because we see that they suffer with us--and those who do not love us--can they please us? "Only beggars know, what beggars feel" I once read in Lessing. But can beggars give alms?--

The next Morning.

I have had a restless night. I am so little in the habit of speaking, and being spoken to that the shrill voice of the charitable lady still resounds in my ears. In my dreams I had a fierce quarrel with her, till at last she took off her fair front and threw it in my face--I woke up with a shudder and bathed in perspiration. What rude things I had said to her, among others that I would bequeath to her my lungs, preserved in spirits of wine. How exceedingly impolite we are in our dreams!

I dressed myself hastily, but even now I am in terror of another invasion--my humble little corner, where I had hoped to die peacefully--this too has been disturbed. Even here I cannot find quiet! I really must go out and try to find some safer hiding-place.

In the Afternoon.

To-day I have met with great events and have boldly surmounted them--first a high mountain then an adventure with a savage--finally I have revelled in nature, and solitude to intoxication. And although I am so tired that I have to summon all my energy every time. I raise my hand to dip my pen in the ink, yet I have renewed my inward strength, and have got over the effect of last night's encounter. Now I could boldly confront a whole company of coffee drinking sisters with false fronts.

How beautiful is my burial place, how marvellous the light that streams on it. I fancied that I had already remarked the magical effects of this light, but find that only to-day the scales have really dropped from my eyes. Seriously I believe that what we in the north call *sunshine* is only an imitation of it, a cheap mixture of light and air, a sort of gilded bronze in comparison with the real solid priceless gold which is lavished here.

I moved slowly up the cool and gloomy Laubengasse<sup>[5]</sup> where a shiver always seizes me and a peculiar oppression stops my breath. Then I reached the small Platz with the fine old church. The Platz appeared all black and red with the costumes of the peasants of the neighbourhood, and of the valley of the Passer. Their trim holiday dress consists of a short dark jacket with red facings, red waistcoats, and broad brimmed hats. Most of the people are fine-looking and stately, the men however, much handsomer than the women. Of the latter, I have only remarked since I came, two pretty faces with regular features.

As it was a peasant's holiday, they stood about in dense groups and none of them took the least notice of the suffering stranger who glided past their clumsy elbows. Over the whole Platz hung a thick cloud of acrid tobacco smoke, which gave me a fit of coughing, so I preferred to go round the church rather than endeavour to push my way through the uncivil crowd.

In the buttresses of the church, old tomb stones were immured. On one of them I read an inscription so full of meek resignation that I was greatly touched by it. One, Ludovica, was buried underneath it in the year 1836. I will write down the inscription, I learnt it by heart:

"Separate they lived, and lonely,  
Father, mother, and only child  
Till death had them together bound.  
In blessedness themselves they found,  
For aye and ever now united.  
So the early fading of the rose,  
Is to be envied; it is repose."

The quiet and fervent tone of these verses accompanied me for many hours. I walked pensively along the narrow streets up to an old gateway which leads through a weather-beaten tower, scarred with French bullets, into the valley of the Passeier. The view which from thence suddenly opened before me filled me with awe, by its strangeness, beauty, and grandeur. I sat down for half an hour on a large stone beside the gateway, from whence a steep path leads to the Küchelberg, and up to an old tower, formerly a powder-magazine, which now peacefully keeps watch over the vineyards like a pensioned veteran.

Just before me on a rock which projects from the Küchelberg, I perceived the ruins of Zenoburg, and considered whether my strength would carry me thus far on the broad and

uncared for road, or if I should content myself with crossing the stone bridge from whence I could see the cheerful village of Obermais. A woman approached me with a basket of grapes and peaches on her head. I bought some fruit and after eating it felt invigorated. So I set off, pausing at every step to look down on the Passer whose water now dark blue, now flaked with white foam, flowed through the arch of the bridge. How boldly yet lightly the vines hang from the rugged rocks on the banks of the river; among them grows the wild fig-tree covered with purple fruit. Running water conducted in canals refreshes the leaves, and now and then turns a wheel. Large chesnut-trees rise from the depths. Everywhere luxuriant growth and rejoicing nature meets the eye. Mine rested with especial pleasure on the varied colouring of the rocks; here of a warm brownish tint, there of a silvery grey. How picturesque those peasants, in their bright costumes look, coming down from the Küchelberg, and that cart or rather two wheeled sledge, drawn by strong whitish grey oxen, and laden with vine-leaves, descending the Zenoburg. And above all a sky the colour of which, I had held till now, to be a fiction of poets, and painters. While I so walked on and wondered, I said to myself this is all mine this is my joy and no one can take it from me. Could it be more mine if instead of, for one moment, I had looked on it for centuries? Who can say if the best part of every pleasure does not consist in its transientness; how otherwise could the happy ever grow tired of their bliss....

I had probably walked on too fast while thinking of all this, so that when I reached the top of the hill, I had to rest on a bench which stood before a pretty house. My eyes closed in involuntary slumber. All was still around me, only the Meran church bells which deafened me below sounded softly up here and lulled me to sleep. How pleasantly we dream in the mid-day sunshine, when the light penetrates our closed eyelids, and blends in our fancy with the marvellous colours and rays which have nothing tangible or earthly in them. Sitting quite still for some time, I probably went to sleep, but suddenly I started up as I felt something cold and moist touch my hand; it was nothing worse than the nose of a large dog, who standing beside his master, watched me curiously. But the appearance of the latter was so horrible, that I would willingly have believed it to be a dream, to be got rid of by speaking and moving. It was a tall bearded man whose age I could not define. His hair hung over his forehead, he wore a heavy and enormous hat, covered by a wilderness of cock's feathers, fox tails, and strange furs, casting a fierce shade over his eyes, which however as I remarked afterwards, had a most innocent and harmless expression. Probably I plainly showed my terror, for the mysterious apparition, which seemed to have risen from one of the old tombs of the Zenoburg, laughed good-naturedly, holding a very small pipe between his even white teeth, he told me not to be frightened. He was only a Saltner, who watched the vineyards, and as I had entered his district he requested a penny for tobacco. In my consternation, I gave him half a florin in silver, and hastily turned away, as I did not feel quite secure in the close proximity of his bright spear. But the piece of silver which is scarce here, or perhaps a holiday humour made the giant quite tame and officious. He walked without ceremony by my side, and noticing that I climbed with difficulty, he energetically supported my arm with his great paw. I had to put a good face on the matter, and indeed; ended by being thankful for his help, as I could hardly have managed to ascend alone the last steep bit on which the ruins of the castle stand. It struck me how reserved he was in his questions, and how communicative about his own affairs. Comparing this charitable brother with the uncharitable sister, who had visited me yesterday, how much more elevated was the natural feeling of this peasant, than the obtrusive refinement of the so-called higher classes.--On the top of the hill it was indeed beautiful. With the exception of a small chapel and a solitary tower which remain intact, the castle is in ruins; only a few fragments of walls, thickly covered with ivy, are standing. Luxuriant grass grows beneath them, tribes of lizards rustle over the sunny stones. Tangled creepers of every description hang over the walls, and far below, so that a falling stone would dash perpendicularly into the water, the unruly Passer flows underneath the shelving rocks at the foot of the hill.

My armour bearer pointed out to me, on the opposite heights towards the south, many old castles and small villages, where the vine cultivators live, and told me the names of the different mountains, as I comfortably sat on the grass with his dog lying beside me.

At noon the church bells rang; he ceased talking took the three cornered hat off his head and the pipe from his mouth, and crossing himself devoutly, he prayed in silence. When the sounds had died away, he put his hat on again, puffed at his pipe, and asked me if I were hungry.

I answered in the affirmative, but said I was still too much exhausted to undertake my homeward journey. Without a word he descended the hill with stalwart strides, and disappeared.

Ten minutes later a little girl carrying a basin of milk, some bread and a piece of the fête-day roast, hurried up the hill and looked about for me, then silently and timidly placed the very welcome refreshment before me. After many vain attempts, I at last coaxed the child to speak to me. She told me that the Saltner had ordered it all for me in the house below; he himself was busy in the vineyards, and would not come again. The child then ran away and left me alone to feast in this delightful solitude. Never had I eaten a more delicious meal. I was quite ashamed of having consumed all, and having to carry back the empty dishes.

With difficulty I persuaded the good people to accept some money; probably the Saltner had forbidden them to take any. In vain I looked for him on my back. I do not even know his name.

Is this not quite an adventure? and have I not reason to note this day.

This morning on waking, I thought how strange it is, that each different class should envy the supposed freedom of the other, although no true freedom can be found where the sense of this difference of classes exists. Perhaps while I am casting a longing glance at the life of these poor peasants who pass their days among vines, fields of maize, and mulberry-trees, and who know as little of the hundred narrow conventional considerations of propriety which rule the so-called refined classes than the silk worm knows of the glittering misery which may one day be covered by his web; to them the life of a town lady who if she chose might spend her days in waltzing may seem a life of supreme happiness and freedom. They are tied to their labour hour after hour, and when they rest on Sundays they can as little free themselves from the tedious customs which confine their enjoyments, as they can in the heat of a summer-day, exchange the heavy woollen skirt with the hundreds of plaits, for a lighter dress.

The educated classes certainly have this advantage that they *can* emancipate themselves when they will, but still would such a one not be blamed by his equals, just as peasant is blamed when he goes out shooting in the harvest time? Altogether....

1 o'clock.

No I will not bear this any longer, if I had to challenge the whole world for it. The dying surely need not lie, need not submit to be tormented, and smile complacently all the while. I am so revolted and harassed--my nerves are so bruised, that I wish for a speaking trumpet to be able to declare through it at the open window, my most solemn renunciation of all society; unfortunately my tormentors are dining at this moment, but this must happen sooner or later.

I will have an iron bolt to my door of an hundred pounds weight, and an iron mask for my face when I take a step out of my room.

The landlady has just brought up my dinner; well it may get cold, I have no appetite for it. My heart is beating fast with anger and agitation.

I am sick to death of all the talking that has been buzzing in my ears, and could no more be stopped than the stream which turns that wheel beside the bridge. That at least legitimates its noise by its useful activity.

Among all the good things I had to say of yesterday, I forgot to mention the vain attempt of "the life-preserver" to see me. Now I thought she will have at all events remarked that I do not wait for her permission to breathe the fresh air and for the future will let the light of her charity shine on more grateful beings. I little knew her.

Whilst I was writing I heard her step coming up the stairs, and laying aside my diary, I quickly took a letter which I had begun from my portfolio, and intrenched myself behind it, determined to defend myself to the last drop of ink.

My poor forces were overthrown by her at the first assault. Letter writing! tired! what nonsense; it was for my health I was here, and my nerves required amusement and rest. No, as I had run up the Küchelberg yesterday like an unreasonable child, she had come to-day to prevent the repetition of such suicide and to show me what it was to take the air in a healthful way. Oh, yes she had found me out, I was not pleased to see her again so soon! but a young lady who lived by herself was on no account to be neglected. I was only to submit to her authority, and would certainly be grateful to her afterwards.

I put on my hat silently and resignedly. I could not even feel angry at her clumsy and good natured tone, though it made me suffer bodily pain.

Chattering incessantly she dragged me towards the winter grounds, as the most sheltered part of the Wassermauer is called, for there an old cloister and its high garden-wall keep off all cold winds, evergreen shrubs flourish and the rose-bushes are still covered with roses. This place is always crowded, the band plays and the whole society of strangers walk there or sit basking in the sunshine. My protectress seemed purposely to have brought me here with the intention of introducing me to this beau monde. I had to run the gauntlet of a curious, but to me quite indifferent crowd of ladies and gentlemen. I saw not one face that pleased me, heard not one word that reached my heart. Then the heat under those arbours, the noise of the importunate brass band, and the rebellion which was chafing within me against this soft tyranny, nearly drove me distracted.

Still more revolting to me than the dull unfeelingness of the healthy, was the behaviour of many of my fellow sufferers. There sat a young countess who as I heard had been parted from her husband, in order to avoid all excitement, but she was not too ill to notice my simple old-fashioned dress, which she scanned from head to foot, and then with a crushing look, she wrapped herself up in her cashemere burnouss, as I sat on the bench beside her.

And that young girl who treated me as an old acquaintance in the first five minutes, and told

me all the scandal of Meran, though death was written in her face, and her cough went to my heart. Are those figures of wax, dressed up automatons, who exhibit all their old minauderies, though when spring comes they will have to lie in their coffins.

It seemed to me quite a deliverance when the dinner-bell of the hôtel de la poste rang, and most of the company departed and my protectress had to go to her sick friend. I hardly bid her good-bye. I could no longer speak, or listen to a word, for I felt quite paralyzed; so she has at last obtained her object and tried her cure on me, and the result is, that both in mind and body I am more dead than alive. Certainly that is a sort of recovery.

The 13th--Evening.

I have at last succeeded, and cannot sufficiently express my joy at this achievement. I reflected that it was only just, that if I wished for freedom, I should purchase it by the exertion of some courage and determination. Armed with a book, I calmly walked through the winter grounds without recognizing any one, sat down in the midst of the whole society and read for several hours without once looking up.

Of course the life-preserver made her appearance and at once approached my bench, but I coolly told her that talking hurt me; she looked astonished, shrugged her shoulders, and left me to myself.

I saw very well that she was offended. So much the better! If I find no better occupation I will do this every day; I feel a certain satisfaction in it. Whilst I sat surrounded by all those tiresome people, I triumphed in my courage and the victory I had gained in not having allowed myself to be daunted. Certainly the conflict had made my heart beat faster, but even courage is not to be learnt in a day. And then is it not doubly refreshing to read the grave and beautiful words of our greatest poets, when from the different conversations around, one picks up words which show what inferior spiritual nourishment society puts up with.

Possibly this may be a proud and over vain thought. But some pride surely is pardonable in one so isolated. Is it not most presumptuous to retire within oneself, and be contented with one's own society? Surely he who prepares for death has a right to think of his soul above all things, and how is this possible, in the midst of the thoughtless, soulless noise, commonly called conversation?

Already they show me plainly that I am not to their taste. To-day when I appeared on the Wassermauer, with my book, all the benches were occupied except one, on which sat only a pale and melancholy looking young man, who is daily partly led, partly followed by a servant to a sunny corner of the wintergarden and there sits covered up with costly furs. Had the ladies, who were talking, and embroidering in the arbours deigned to move, they certainly could have made room for my slight person, whose crinoline never molested any one.

I saw however that they had resolved to cause me embarrassment. Oh, how sharp, unamiable, cold, and even inhuman our faces become, when we are determined to show our dislike to some one of our fellow creatures! I felt quite frightened at the stony features, dark looks, and drawn down lips of the company. But soon I was ashamed of my cowardice, and of having allowed it to be perceived. So I looked as if I saw no hostility in their countenances and quietly sat down beside the young man, leaving space enough between us, even for the wide robes of the countess. I was deeply absorbed in my book, but though I never looked up, I knew exactly what were the glances they cast at me, and could have written down the benevolent remarks that were whispered beneath those arbours. The sick young man hardly moved, only from time to time he sighed--I pitied him; he appears to be one of the most suffering of the invalids here, and to bear his illness with difficulty. He must be rich for I saw a costly ring glittering on his finger.

We sat side by side for several hours, and I was on the point of making some observation to him about the book I was reading merely for the sake of rousing him from the melancholy thoughts which seemed to oppress him. Where would have been the harm? But now a days, care is taken to make us feel ashamed of every natural impulse. So I remained silent and read on. Suddenly he let a silver pencil-case fall from his hands, as he was going to write down something in his pocketbook; he made an effort to stoop, breathing with difficulty and I, without much hesitation, anticipated him, and picked up the neat little pencil-case. He thanked me with rather a surprised look: I myself blushed deeply, and hearing a derisive titter from the ladies' bower, I lost my composure for a few minutes. I thought with most tormenting perspicacity of all that would be said of the crime committed by a young lady in being of use to a young man. What would he think of me? I had slightly glanced at him and remarked no smile on his melancholy face. If after this proof of how little worldly knowledge I possess, he thinks me very countrified, why should that annoy me? If I am contented to be so, why should I be angry with him for perceiving it? He bowed very politely, as half an hour later I rose to go. By this time I had come to an understanding with myself, and felt so composed, that I returned his salutation without the least embarrassment. Even the black looks of my protectress, who had been immediately taken possession of, by the other ladies, could not spoil my appetite for dinner.

Here comes the soup unfortunately, it is of a lighter colour even than the fair curls of the charitable lady. What a pity it is, that with the dying, taste is not the first thing to depart. How I

wish for one good home cooked dish.--

Evening. The first autumnal winds  
carrying with it some poplar leaves.

A letter from our dear old doctor, my best friend. He wants to hear how I am getting on, how I feel, and how the climate agrees with me. He reproaches himself for not having hidden the hopeless truth from me; at the same time he praises my courage and firmness; he does not try to change or put another construction on his former words; he knows it would be useless. "Remember, dear Mary," he adds, "that miracles still happen every day, and that all our science and knowledge only teach us to marvel at everything or nothing. He is aware that my best comfort is to know the truth, and to live in the truth as long as life is granted me."

Several days later. I have lost the date.  
Beautiful autumnal evening.

Here was so much wind in the forenoon that I had to remain in-doors. I was busy altering my dresses for my chest becomes more and more delicate and they oppress me. In the afternoon the wind subsided, and I walked out, down the broad street called Rennweg. Numbers of cows and goats were driven through it--not a pleasant circumstance attending the walks here. I tremble every time I see one of those clumsy horned heads approach me though I know that they are not so stupid as they appear, and have not such strong prejudices against a lonely female, as my wise fellow-creatures. It is my bodily weakness which in case of need could not find shelter behind a stout heart, which leaves me defenceless. So I kept close to the houses, and arrived safely at the Western gate of the town from whence the road leads on to the beautiful and sunny Vintschgau. A path which passes at the foot of the Küchelberg and then winds through the vineyards tempted me and I slowly walked in that direction. It pleased me to see the heavy bunches of purple grapes hanging from the trellis above me, the huge yellow pumpkins, the ripe maize in short all the riches of a southern autumn. Now and then I met peasants at work; tubs filled with grapes and carts laden with vine-leaves passed me. It seemed strange to me that the work was done so quietly, without music or singing, for I had always fancied the vintage to be one of the most noisy and brilliant of festivals. The people of the country are of a lazy pensive disposition and never sing at their work. If one now and then hears a song it is owing to there being many Italians here, who are easily recognized by their fiery and lively gestures.

A hundred paces distant from the gate, close under the mountain, lies a solitary farm. My landlady had told me that there one could get milk fresh from the cow. As I am not a good walker, I entered the little garden and ordered some milk and bread. Only a few strangers occupied the benches, but just beside the door underneath a large orange-tree, sat the pale young man, whilst his servant further, off, was refreshing himself with a glass of wine. He had not touched the glass of milk which stood before him, and as I was going to pass, he rose, bowed, and offered me a seat at his table, saying that it was the most sheltered spot. It was the first time I had heard him speak several sentences together without stopping. His deep sad voice was very pleasing. I gladly accepted his offer and when he begged me to take his untouched glass, as he was not thirsty, I could not refuse without giving offence. Finally we began a conversation, though much broken by pauses, during which he relapsed into his melancholy dreaming. Only once he smiled slightly, but it made him look still more sad when his pale lips parted over the bluish white teeth. We had been talking of the dull monotony in the life of the patients here; of the tiresome sitting about in the winter garden. I said it reminded me of the caterpillars and cocoons which my little brother keeps in glass boxes. These also crawled about indolent and depressed amongst their food, satisfying their gaoler by feeding greedily, and eyeing each other curiously when they accidentally met; then they proceeded to their winter sleep, if by chance they did not find the air too oppressive for them, and died. He laughed, and said: "your comparison is much too flattering; do you think that our fellow-worms ever feel as light and free as *they* become, unless in a purer atmosphere than this terrestrial one?" "That depends," replied I, "on whether, when they proceed safe and sound from their cocoons, they find their glass cage open. Otherwise they may be reserved for a still more cruel fate. Few enjoy the liberty of their wings; they are generally caught again, and struggle on a pin till their bright colours turn to dust."

He remained silent, and I was half sorry for having led the conversation to so strange a theme; to divert his thoughts, I spoke to him of the stiff, foolish narrow minded views of my native town, where in the style of the so-called good old times, every one embitters the life of his neighbour in the most amicable and ceremonious way. I then told him how free and released I felt since I knew I was doomed to die. My fetters had been loosened like the fetters of those who are sentenced to death. He listened with interest but looked incredulous. When I had done speaking....

The next day.

Yesterday I could not have been interrupted in a more unwelcome manner. My door suddenly opened and the life-preserver, the sister of charity, the lady without nerves, rushed into the room with a particularly stern and solemn countenance which boded no good. Without taking breath after running up the stairs, she sat down, spread her skirts over my sofa, and without any circumlocution began to lecture me. Possibly she may be of use where bodily nursing is required, but for spiritual care she certainly has no vocation. A more clumsy way of touching on delicate subjects I have not yet met with, and I have certainly not been spoiled in that respect. I was



informed that I had been guilty of great sins, and could only make atonement for them by deep contrition. The unaccountable whims of a sick person might, perhaps, excuse the highflown manner with which I had received the friendly advances of many estimable ladies, and the way in which I had withdrawn from their company. But I had dared too in the face of all society to make advances to a young man, and yesterday had gone so far as to accept his glass of milk, and his company on my way home. She had never heard of such a thing. A girl without the least education but with a sense of decency and a proper regard for her reputation would never have thought of doing so. After these occurrences she would certainly never have set foot over my threshold again, had not conscience, and her good nature bidden her warn me. I was alone here, and had no one to look after me if I went astray. That young man did not enjoy a good reputation; his illness was the consequence of a dissipated and reckless life which he had now to expiate by an early death. If so near to the grave, he was still so unscrupulous as to compromise a young creature like myself, then all persons who had any regard for morality must condemn his outrageous conduct, and endeavour to save his victim.

During this speech I remained petrified, and my heart beat so violently that I could not utter a word; but when she stopped and cast a severe look at me, the convicted sinner, I rallied all my remaining spirit and answered that I thanked her for her solicitude, and did not at all doubt her good intentions, but that I did not think I had committed any impropriety--still less had gone astray--that I did not believe my reputation to be in any danger. I knew what I could, or could not do, and would be responsible for it. I did not see why the fact of having one foot in the grave obliged one to give an account to the world of every free but innocent action, particularly as even that would not protect one against its malignant judgments. I had not come to Meran, I continued, in order to ingratiate myself with a society entirely strange to me, but to spend my last days in the manner most agreeable to me, and most in accordance with my nature. You must allow me, my dear Madam, I concluded, not to be led by considerations which, perhaps, may be useful to others. When I had delivered this speech I felt quite startled at my own boldness yet I was pleased with myself. This I thought will at all events make an end of it; and so it was; at least, I hope so, for my protectress rose with a dignified look which sat oddly on, her round face adorned with the little ringlets and said: "Good-bye, Mademoiselle, you are so independent that it would be indiscreet in me to prolong my visit," and with these words she sailed out of the room. So I had at last got rid of her, but not of her sayings, nor of my thoughts. Oh, the sad cold littleness of the world! Is there no spot on earth where a poor human being may be permitted to die after its own fashion? Is one to go tightly laced even to one's last breath? No, they shall not get the better of me; I do not love them, then why should I not despise them; or at least not notice them when they cross my path? Possibly I may have been thoughtless, but thoughtfulness requires time, and I have not much to spare. Certainly if I had to live with these people for an immeasurable time, it might be prudent not to exasperate them, and to bow before them--prudent, but annoying, and in my opinion, hardly worth the while. What harm could they do to me; at the worst they would leave me alone, and could they do me a greater favour? She said that he had caused his own sufferings. Is he for that less worthy of compassion? Perhaps, the remorse he feels is the cause of his melancholy, as the consciousness of my undeserved fate is the cause of my gaiety. Each of us has lived a different life, and has now to resign it. I have nothing to repent of, and nothing to regret; he does both, and so each of us dies a different death.

Why should it be a crime to exchange a few unconstrained words? Do not people who have set out together on a long journey fraternize, and become friends at the first station? Are they then to be blamed if they exchange a few words before starting.

Monday, the 21st October.

I spent my Sunday at home in writing, and reading the letters of Mendelssohn's youth, which in my opinion show his character to much greater advantage than his other writings. They convince me still more that even a complete and free man of genius can work earnestly at his own improvement. If I were a man, I should only care to be an artist. This seems an extravagant idea; for those not endowed with talents perceive only the outward freedom of the existence of a genius, and not the anxieties and labours of his vocation. But in some of the attributes of an artist's nature, in the power of desiring freedom, and of maintaining it, in enthusiasm for noble deeds, and in admiration for all that is beautiful, I should not be found wanting, and armed with these weapons could pass a lifetime in waging war against petty formalists and pedants.

But of what use are all these to me, a girl, with death before me. Well, at all events they will teach me to die calmly.

Mendelssohn's letters have awakened in me a longing for music. I hope I have not been extravagant in hiring a small piano. This morning it was brought to me, and now stands in my room. I have not played for a long time, and after reading Mendelssohn's letters felt quite ashamed of stumbling through his songs without words. I must purchase some sonatas and study them. I confess that at the first notes of music I burst into tears. The last conversation has left in me a wound which bled afresh, as the first sound of music reached my heart after so many weeks privation. I let my tears flow freely, and played on till I grew calm again.

I have seen him again. I had avoided him those last days. Though I am quite determined to go my own way; still they have succeeded in robbing me of my first unconstraint. But to-day I met him at the bookseller's shop, where I was looking out some music. He asked me if I had felt unwell, as I had not appeared on the Wassermauer. I blushed and replied, "no, but I had not felt inclined to walk there." Then we talked about music which he greatly likes. "Once I was in possession of a voice," he said, smiling; "but it has departed this life before me." As we came out of the shop I at first wished to bid him adieu, and walk home alone. Then I felt ashamed of my cowardice, and walked on with him to the gate which leads on to the Wassermauer. The day was lovely, and the promenaders walked about with their cloaks on their arms. Only a few yellow leaves reminded one of October. As we followed the course of the Passer and passed the benches occupied by the so-called good society, I was pleased, and happy to feel so much at ease. I tried to cheer him up and when I had succeeded in making him laugh I applauded my own spirit which was not to be daunted. I said to myself, "Does it please you my good people to put on disdainful looks, and to wrap yourselves up in your own virtue, as much as it does me to see this pale face, on which death has already cast its shadow, light up with the serenity of an evening sky." We walked up and down for a whole hour, and I did not feel in the least tired. This time I closely examined his countenance. Whatever lies behind him, it can be nothing base or mean. His features are neither regular nor can they be called expressive, but when he speaks there is something refined and thoughtful about his face which becomes him well. He cannot be more than twenty-six years old. His manners are easy, and natural, and plainly show that he has mixed in the best society. I, with my provincial style of dress, and little knowledge of the world, must contrast strangely with him.

I have looked over the book of strangers trying to find out his name; *before*, I only knew where he lived; I have now discovered that he can be none other than a Mr. Morrik *Particulier* from Vienna. What an odd position! probably it means independent. Then I am a *Particulière* with more right to be so than he has. He is dependent on many things; on his fortune, on his melancholy thoughts--on his servant, who carries his cloak and furs for him.

The 23rd.

Last night I dreamt much, and very reflective dreams. In one of them, I again met Halding, who for years has never troubled my thoughts. I spoke to him as indifferently as ever, and asked after his wife and children. I was glad to hear that they were very well. Then still in my dream, I considered what would have been my lot, had I accepted his hand. I should now be established in America, in a fine house, and have riches and health, for I should not have passed through the sufferings of the last years, in my father's house--I should not be thinking of dying. I thought over all this, as I saw the red cheeked wife, who had so soon consoled him after my refusal--I shuddered at the idea of such happiness. This may appear foolish, full of pretension, and ingratitude. What fault could I find in him except that I did not love him. Many people found him most amiable, and I thought him even too much so, for a man. As a woman he would have made the best, most docile, and virtuous of wives, but just for that reason would, as a husband have made me most wretched. More than once I have been given to understand that my character was too determined and energetic for a girl. Did not the long lecture of the life preserver tend to show me how deficient I was in feminine timidity and reserve. If this be true the fault lies with my destiny, which threw me early in life on my own resources, and made me independent. One to whom the world and life makes advances may well await its approach but one who must confront its struggles, cannot do without reliance on God, and on himself. If I required any proof that no unwomanly boldness, no desire of dominating lies in my character, I would find it in my dislike to womanish men, who must lean for support on a wife; and towards manly women who only find their happiness in ruling.

The 26th.

A few quiet and uniform days have passed. I felt very languid and disinclined to everything and I remained at home, as the change from the hot sunshine to the dark arcades always hurts me. I read, and played a few sonatas, and felt that even solitude brings many heavy hours with it.

To-day I walked out and the first person I met was Mr. Morrik, as he really is called--I heard an acquaintance address him by that name. We sat for a long time together on a bench amidst the evergreen shrubs in the winter garden for underneath the poplars the air is now getting too sharp. Society seems to have reconciled itself to the unpardonable and unheard of crime, committed by two candidates for death, in talking to each other, and no longer disturbs us. So to-day we had a remarkable conversation. It began, instead of ending, as such conversations when they are earnest and agitated are apt to do, by the utterance of the most hidden thoughts which are usually kept back, till, after having turned over different questions, they suddenly break forth in the ardour of the contest. It was not the first time that I experienced in myself a habit of thinking aloud. To my own great astonishment I, this time suddenly took heart, and poured forth my most hidden and unavowed thoughts and feelings; so that when the words, I was uttering struck my ear I felt quite frightened at my audacity in harbouring such strange ideas, and still more in delivering them to a stranger. It sometimes really appears to me as if I had two characters within me--the one spirited, out spoken, and clever, and this one seldom shews itself--

the other, silly and girlishly shy, which sits by in fear and trembling when the other speaks, and cannot muster courage to interrupt it. I forget what gave rise to this conversation. I only remember that before I knew what I was saying I found myself in the midst of an eager, and passionate sermon. The subject I treated was "the fear of death," which is so plainly written in many faces around us, and also in his pale quiet features. I have now forgotten the greatest part of my lecture, though as the words flowed from my tongue it pleased me much and seemed to me impossible to be refuted. I only remember that the text of my sermon were the words of Goethe: "For I was made man, and that means, that I have striven"--etc. "Why then if we are all combatants," I began, "Who sooner or later must perish beside their colours, why should it be a disgrace to those only who bear arms by profession to meet death with cowardice; why should it not also be considered repugnant to the esprit de corps, and the honour of humanity in general, to cling to life with groanings and lamentations when danger approaches. Soldiers who slink away on the eve of a battle are brought back dishonoured and disgraced, and are thought too despicable to be allowed to fight in the ranks of the brave. Why should a dying man who prays for a respite of days, and hours, and even minutes, not forfeit our sympathy and obtain only a little pity for his weakness?" So it was I spoke. I felt like an old trooper who exhorts his men before they commence the assault on an entrenchment. I believe that at that moment, if the whole of the society had gathered around me to listen, my ardour would only have increased. In the midst of my harangue, I cast a look over the beautiful landscape which lay bathed in sunshine and it seemed to inquire of me whether it were so very contemptible not to close ones' eyes readily on all we have learnt to love, when we do not know, when and how they will open again or whether they will like the change. But this mute interrogation did not disconcert me; I had an answer all ready; so I continued: "What you have once enjoyed is yours for ever. What has time to do with our immortal soul? and if the soul be immortal, will not the best part of our life, our love, all that we have striven, and yearned for be purified and increased, and remain ours for ever. And how few really happy sensations do we owe to that which we shall leave here below. How many delusions cling to our dearest friendships, must cling to them for in the midst of our enjoyment we feel restless, and dissatisfied! Then why not leave with a serene countenance this dreary world, where the brightest light throws the darkest shade?"--I could have talked on for ever, had not a vehement fit of coughing cut short my power of speech. Then only did I consider what effect all this might have on my silent and melancholy companion and whether it would not have been better to wait till our acquaintance had ripened somewhat, before I displayed my small knowledge of life and death. That which was a specific for me, his nature might not be strong enough to bear, and then what good would it do him? Should I not appear to him as hard and obtrusive as the lady without nerves had appeared to me. Had I the least right to force my aid and advice on him? However the words had been said and could not be recalled. He remained buried in thought for full ten minutes, and left me time to reproach myself bitterly. Then he began in a grave and affectionate tone to dispel my fears. He said that he agreed to every word I had spoken, and that as he took a great interest in me, it pleased him to see me meet my fate so well armed, and with so much fortitude; but that human destinies were different. "It is unjust," he continued, "to expect from the sick the same strength and courage, which we justly demand in a troop of active and healthy men. Do you not believe that in a soldier who camps in the snow and marches twelve hours a day, the body and blood which he stakes when he hazards his life, and limbs must be of a more vigorous nature than those of the poor wounded man who from the hospital hears the report of the cannon and shudders. And is he for that to be despised? But there is another difference which a girl cannot well understand. A man who has any knowledge of life must perceive that his destiny is not merely to enjoy himself, but that he has a task to perform, duties to fulfil. Do not you think that it must be painful to have to leave the world without having even begun this task? You must not forget this difference Mademoiselle: The soldier fulfils his duty in dying: every other man in living except his death be a sacrifice or an example to others. How can he who has hitherto only lived to neglect his duty die without feeling his death to be a new fault, a new faithlessness. We have exchanged so many confessions," he went on, "that it would be foolish to keep back, one, which to be sure is wholly personal and may not interest you. To judge from the opinions you have expressed you seem to think that my gloomy and unhappy humour is the consequence of an unmanly despair at the prospect of certain death. Perhaps you will be inclined to think more favourably of me when I tell you that my illness has taught me to look upon a life of vain amusements, caring and cared for by nobody, a life of pure selfishness as unworthy of the exercise of great medical skill, and of the benefit of this much lauded climate. The past would not hinder me from dying calmly--it was an empty life nothing worse. It is the future which I had hoped to conquer just when it was too late; wisdom came but strength left me. It is that gnaws at my heart and makes it impossible for me to leave life with the same cheerfulness that you do. Believe me I was not worse than the best of my equals. I spent my youth in idleness, gambling, travelling and such trifles and fancied as long as my father lived that it was a life suitable to my station, and this was also his opinion. I took great pleasure in the intellectual amusements as they are called. I was present at the début of every actor singer and musical composer. I collected fine pictures, cultivated music and took a part in any amateur quartett, and that not badly either. Suddenly my father died and his property, his fortune, his political obligations, and connections were left without a head. Nobody had dreamt of so sudden an end. Now it was my turn, now I had to advance to the front and to take an oar, and just at that time strength, and power to act were taken from me. How this happened and how much or how little the fault lies with me is not to the purpose. Let us suppose that this misfortune was not caused by any fault of mine, but that it came upon me as the stone falls from the roof. Do you not allow that my feelings on looking at the past may well be different from yours? and so are the feelings with which I view the future." I was on the point of answering, *what*, I hardly know, probably it was to ask his pardon for my hasty condemnation, when I was prevented by an old

woman who offered roses for sale. He took a bunch and gave her a florin in silver which she held in her hand, and looked at with astonishment, as here one only meets with dirty torn paper money. He made a sign to her, that it was all right and laid the bouquet on the bench between us. A gentleman then approached, and spoke to him. He rose without taking leave, but did not return to me. Soon after I walked away leaving the bouquet on the bench. Now I regret it. What crime have these poor roses committed that I should grudge them even a short reprieve in a glass of water.

Evening.

I went out again, and as I must confess, only to fetch the roses. It seemed to me like a wrong towards living beings, to leave them to wither on the bench. I found them untouched, and now they stand fresh and fragrant outside my window. I had to place them there, for the nights are now so cool, that I dare not leave the window open. I will now read to quiet my agitated thoughts. The roses have brought back to my mind the epitaph on the tombstone:

So the early fading of the rose  
Is to be envied: it is repose?

This sign of interrogation has slipped from my pen and I cannot make up my mind to strike it out. Truly, it is a question, whether a poor human creature has a right to envy his fellow men for anything, even for death.

The 29th

To-day is my birthday; I formerly never took any notice of it, and did not expect others to do so. This one however as it is my last one on earth, I resolved to honour and solemnize as much as I could. Quite early in the morning I summoned the little girls of my landlord and gave each of them a dress I had made for them, a cake and a kiss. Then I walked out though the day was chilly and without sunshine.

On the stairs I met Mr. Morrik's servant, who came to ask if I were unwell, as I had not appeared on the Wassermauer for several days. I felt pleased that some one inquired for me. After the recent conversation in the wintergarden I appeared to myself so unamiable, that I did not think it possible that any one should care whether I lived or died.

I walked up and down for some time underneath the arcades, for the rain swept through the narrow streets, and it was disagreeable to be out there, as a piercing wind which they call here the Jaufenwind had arisen, and though the Küchelberg kept it off in some degree still it now and then blew in gusts round the corner. I felt so dull and unemployed, so dreary, that by way of pastime, I bought some figs and peaches and ate them. I soon felt, that in this cold weather, I had not done wisely, but made bad worse by sitting down beside a woman who was roasting chesnuts, and eating some of these to warm me, and thereby only succeeded in nearly making myself ill.

So this is my holiday! It serves me quite right; How can an unemployed person think of holiday making. "Sour workdays, sweet holidays," that is a different thing. More and more clearly I see that he was right, and that I was not only wrong, but have wronged him. It is only the heartless and selfish who would not feel regret at being called away from this life without having done any good in it. He was very kind and forbearing in trying to find a difference between his position and mine. Have we not all of us duties? Did not my mother fulfil hers till her last breath? And here am I happy in my unprofitable solitude, and joyful as a child who has shirked school.

Here are letters from my father, and little Ernest. Birthday congratulations. I will read them out of doors. The Jaufenwind has cleared the sky, and the sun shines so warmly that I can no longer stand the heat of the stove, and have to open both windows.

In the Afternoon.

This day has after all been celebrated; by a reconciliation which consisted in a second dispute. As the unexpected sunshine brought every living creature out into the wintergrounds, I walked on from the Wassermauer towards the west, till I reached the spot where the Passer flows into the Adige. There I saw at a distance Mr. Morrik sitting on the trunk of a tree in the sunshine, with his servant at his side. He observed me also, and rose to meet me. I was much embarrassed, for it seemed as if I had come in search of him; however it was too late to turn back; and why should I have done so? Was it not true that I was pleased to see him, and wished to speak to him. I owed him the satisfaction of telling him that he had converted me, and that all my death defying wisdom appeared to me now like the delirium of fever. I could hardly wait till an opportunity presented itself of confessing this to him, and so I almost started when he anticipated me by calling out: "How happy I am to see you! You will wonder at the miracle you have performed on

me. During your heartfelt speech I felt what a deep impression it made on me; but like the rest of the world though I saw I was wrong I did not like to acknowledge it, and so I supported my cause as well as I could. We have not met since then, and in the meanwhile I had time to recall it to my thoughts, and after a few hours consideration, I felt I was completely changed and could have sworn never to desert the colours you carried so valiantly before me."

"What will you say," I replied despondingly, "when you hear that I myself have turned traitor?" "Impossible," he exclaimed, laughing--and it was the first time I had seen him, not only smile, but laugh heartily--"and so even you are affected by human weaknesses; but beware of me, for I will bring back the deserter, willing or unwilling; not to pass sentence on him, but to entrust to him again the standard under which I will conquer or die."

There now arose an absurd contest between us, each defending the very point he had vehemently disputed a few days ago, and trying to depreciate his former opinion as much as possible, "You must confess," he at last exclaimed, "that in whichever way the wisdom of a Daniel might theoretically settle our dispute, *my* opinion, I mean your former one, is by far the most advantageous. Since my conversion to it, I feel reconciled to Providence, to the world, and even to myself, as-- yes, as you were before you were led astray by me. Now, although my position, my sufferings and the few pleasures left to me are the same, they appear to me tinged with fresh and glowing hues, instead of the dull grey which shrouded them before. I look on the past as I did then; but can I win back what I have lost by losing also that which remains to me? You were so right in saying: in every minute, we can live a whole life. How many minutes, nay days, weeks, perhaps months still lie before me, and shall I not employ them? That which I had intended to do is not of such great importance after all. Humanity will not be much affected by its failure; but even had it been of the utmost importance, nothing can now be altered. I cannot go back. I can only advance and should there be some task for me to perform in the next world, I shall be better prepared for it by courage and confidence than by the useless despair of which I now feel heartily ashamed, before you, and should be still more so if you had not left your position, high above the rest of mankind, and had shown no human weakness."

I can only write down dryly all that I remember of what he said; but when he himself utters his thoughts there is so much cleverness, originality and wit in them that they refresh the mind, like the inhaling of vivifying salt, and never leave a bitter taste behind.

It was a delightful hour. Had we been two men, or two women, we would have shaken hands at parting and have fraternized on the spot. We have now agreed to meet daily on the Wassermauer; we still think differently on several points and have not much time to decide them.

The letters from home have also pleased me. Ernest is quite impatient at not seeing me for so long. The poor little fellow does not know how long it will be before we meet. Meanwhile it has grown dark. I will have some music and so close the day harmoniously.

The 3rd November.

Pleasant days are rare guests in this world. Since I last wrote we have only met twice. The day before yesterday the weather was damp and foggy. I walked in the wintergarden, but he was nowhere to be seen, I only perceived the malicious inquisitive face of the young lady who always takes a seat close to Mr. Morrik and me, hoping to hear some of our conversation. The life preserver also arrived, and looked at me severely from head to foot, as I passed before and I heard her say to a lady who sat beside her, intending it for me: "That poor young man; how he has to suffer for talking so much." I shuddered and was very nearly going up to the uncharitable sister, in spite of what had passed between us, to ask her for news of him. Fortunately he sent his servant in the afternoon, to tell me that he was confined to his room by the cold weather--it had snowed during the night--and that I ought to take great care of myself as the transition from autumn to winter was very dangerous. In spite of this I went out both yesterday and to-day with the hope of seeing him, but in vain. When two people are isolated among the rest, how soon they grow accustomed to each other's society! He has no acquaintances here except the doctor, whom he greatly likes. I sometimes feel inclined to consult this doctor--not to hear anything about myself, I know enough of that; but to hear if he really is doomed or only fancies himself so.

The 5th--Evening.

The wind has changed and now a scirocco is blowing. The whole country of the Adige is covered with fog, a warm soft rain drizzles against the window panes. The poplars have lost so much of their foliage that I can easily trace the outline of the beautiful peak of the Mendola. The vineyards are autumnally bare, the cattle are now sheltered in the stables, everything is prepared for winter, and I am heartily glad of a warm nook. My father writes of much snow and cold, whilst here the southern wind still brings an Italian warmth with it, and in the little garden below my windows, the roses bloom as gaily as if they were quite certain that the snow would never descend from the top of the Muth to the village of Tirol--still less reside on the Wassermauer.

The 6th--Morning.

The roses really seem to be right. The most beautiful sunshine awoke me; the stove shall enjoy a holiday. The green meadows in the lower part of the country are as bright as in May. Half an hour ago I received a note from Morrik saying that he wished to take advantage of the fine day, and enjoy a ride over the nearest hills as walking was forbidden him and he asked me if I would accept his company, and join him. In that case he would fetch me at ten o'clock with the mules. I wrote to him without much deliberation that I would be very happy to do so. Now when I think of it....

In the Evening.

Fortunately I had no time to think over it, or I should probably have thought many foolish and superfluous things. My landlady came to announce that the gentleman was waiting for me below, and at the same moment his servant entered to carry down my plaid and bag, so I had to hurry away. He had dismounted when I came down, and the pleasure of seeing him again, after so long a time, looking tolerably well and cheerful, the mild clear day, the view, and the prospect of a pleasant ride helped me to overcome my childish embarrassment. Society had at last got accustomed to see us talk together whilst walking, why should we not also do so on mules. So we rode gaily through the Laubengasse, and over the bridge, where to be sure the whole company of strangers rushed to the railings of the wintergarden, and followed us with their kind looks and remarks. On the other side of the bridge, the road turns to the left and ascends the hilly streets of the cheerful village of Obermais. We soon found ourselves among the leafless vineyards, and in trotting past the houses, saw the grapes pressed in large tubs, and barrels filled with their juice, and under the bare trellises, preparations for next year's harvest. One can hardly imagine anything more picturesque looking than one of those tall fine looking young peasants ploughing underneath these bowers with their strong grey oxen, or as in that beautiful picture of Robert's, resting his cattle while he leans on the pole between them. The whole surrounded by a frame of trellis work, which here supports the vine in the form of a vaulted arcade. They all left their work when we passed--I rode in front on a very quiet animal, led by the guide; Morrik just behind me, so that we could exchange the expressions of our delight at all these beauties of nature, and his servant brought up the rear.

When we had mounted somewhat higher, I involuntarily stopped; the view was so wonderfully beautiful. The entire valley of the Adige lay far beneath us, the river glittered between meadows and sands, and the more distant mountains encircled the whole with their clear and beautiful outline. But how can words describe a scene which the brush of the most able painter could not do justice to. Neither of us spoke, we remained in silent awe, and could only marvel. Had not the mules become impatient, who can say whether we should not be on the same spot still. My docile bay who was more sagacious than he looked, pondered, and shook his head with the conspicuous ears, over the folly of mankind in stopping where no fodder was to be seen: so he moved on slowly to supply our want of judgement, and the others followed. We left to our right a beautiful castle belonging to Count Trautmannsdorf, and the little church of St. Valentine, which stands quite isolated in a sheltered valley. Our way then again turned to the north over a hill which rises at the foot of the Ifinger, whose snowy summit towered in the clear autumnal sky. The whole ridge of the hill is covered with solitary farms, intermingled with old castles that are now chiefly inhabited by rich wine growing peasants who, during the summer months, lodge invalid strangers. I have forgotten the names of most of them, only one of them I remember, the castle of Rubein. There in front of the old battlements stand tall slender cypresses, like guardians round an old sarcophagus and contrast by their sombre hue with the green and yellow foliage of the vine. We took a hasty survey of the courtyard. The small open gallery supported by pillars, the steep stairs, which lead up to it, and in the corner the old, and now nearly bare walnut-tree round which myriads of birds were fluttering and singing, so that it seemed as if they had enjoyed too much of their grape harvest and were now intoxicated and overmerry. I could fill pages with a description of the beauties of these heights. Further on, towards the valley of Passeir, the road gently ascends underneath noble chesnut and walnut-trees, and the view opens out to the Küchelberg, and my dear old Zenoburg, till it rests on the high projecting village of Schönna with its old castle.

When we arrived it was just noon. We were both tired by our long ride, hungry and silent. The sights in which we had revelled still occupied our thoughts, and here again our eyes hardly sufficed to enjoy the view which extended far and near from every window. I entered the tap-room, whilst Morrik talked to the landlord outside, and sat quietly in the dusk for a while with closed eyes endeavouring to recover my calmness.

The room had a projecting bay window which formed a sort of recess, where sat, as a hasty glance when I entered had shown me, a young peasant, and a girl with their dinner and wine before them. They seemed to notice me as little as I did them. Morrik then came in, and sat down at a table beside me. He appeared more cheerful than usual, but also looked paler, as if the air had fatigued him. We talked about indifferent subjects. Suddenly the young peasant rose from his seat in the window, and with a full glass of wine in his hand, approached our table. "With your permission," he said, "the gentleman won't object to my drinking the health of this lady, as we are old acquaintances." Then he took a sip, looked at me over the edge of his glass, and gave it to me to drink from. I took the glass, but looked at him rather puzzled. He seemed quite unknown to me, and appeared to be flushed with wine, and in a waggish humour, so that I was really frightened.

"Well, well," he said, as I was silent, and Morrik gave him no encouragement; the hat of a Saltner, and a beard of three months' standing certainly give a fellow somewhat more of a diabolical look than his holiday clothes. But if I did not seem appalling to her then, there is still less danger of it now, particularly as her brother, or her sweetheart....

"Natz," the girl interrupted, "what nonsense you are talking. The young lady does not look as if she felt a great horror of you, but to drink wine is forbidden to those who are ill; is it not so your honour? Ignatzius has a notion that no one can live without wine. Oh what a wild-fellow he is! I have been begging and entreating him for a whole hour to come away. We are going down to Meran for our pledge, you understand, our betrothal; but there he will sit, sit till night comes on, and when the wine is well up, forsooth, a pretty figure we shall make before the deacon. Do persuade him to come away my lady----"

"Heigh-ho what's this!" exclaimed the young fellow, whom I at last recognized as my friend of the Zenoburg, "don't you see Liesi that this gentleman and lady are in no hurry either? What do you say to that, sir? she already takes the reins; the women are always in a hurry to get the men into their power. A smart fellow often pauses on this road and drinks his last bachelor's bottle with all the more relish. In other respects," he continued, casting a proud and merry glance at her, "I cannot complain; she is a tightly built lass, and has her senses about her; and certainly she has not been picked up on the highways--Only this setting down, and domineering, that is an affliction to be sure; but even the strongest and most determined fellow must submit to it--How have you fared?" turning to Morrik, the lady here is very nice, and I would not mind changing with you, but then there would be an end of playing the master of the house, "well every one has some burden to carry."

"Ignatz," I said, for Morrik still continued silent, and I feared he would set the young fellow down, whose tongue the wine had loosened, somewhat ungently, "this gentleman is neither my sweetheart nor my brother. We are both of us strangers here; who only had agreed to make this excursion together. You talk about commanding but that demands strength. A poor woman who will be buried before the spring arrives, neither has spirit nor inclination for it. And now go with your Liesi to Meran to the priest, and don't let it be said of you that you did not know what you were doing when you gave her your promise."

The girl who was fresh and blooming, and had a frank and intelligent countenance, now also rose and took the young man by the arm.

"Thank you, young lady," she said, "for helping me to get off with this fellow. Say God speed, to the gentleman and lady, Natzi, and then come along; and I hope ma'am that you will change your mind about dying. I was a servant girl in one of the lodging-houses down at Meran during two winters, and know many a one who quite recovered after having ordered his coffin, and many a one who thought he was breathing his last breath, afterwards climbed to the top of the Muth. The air of Meran is so fine that I should not wonder if it woke up the dead. But now goodbye your honours, or this one here, will go to sleep on the spot where he is standing."

There really seemed some danger of this for he stood leaning against the table, and vacantly stared at the floor. He nodded dreamily towards us, and willingly let himself be led out.

I cannot deny that the whole scene had made a painful impression on me. It did not exactly show the young fellow to disadvantage, but his talk of which I have given the main part without his strong expressions had vexed me. Morrik did not seem much edified either by this encounter. The landlady who brought in our dinner, also asked importunate questions, and so did not improve our humour. Moreover the air was heavy in the low room and the smoke from the kitchen penetrated into it. The cooking too was bad, so we were glad to have done with it and to breathe again the fresh air. We walked slowly along the narrow paths among the picturesque farms, talking little. My cheerfulness however soon returned. "Are you not well?" I asked, as he pensively walked beside me. "I cannot complain," he said, "I should feel neither care nor grief if thoughts did not oppress me."

"Perhaps it would relieve you, if you could express your thoughts."

"Perhaps it would make it worse. My thoughts would hardly please you."

"Your confidence at least would please me."

"Even if I should confide to you, that after all, I fear you have too much confidence in me?" I looked at him enquiringly.

"Look here," he continued, "the little you know of me, is perhaps the best part of me; thence I am persuaded that you think much too highly of me, and would be disappointed if you heard the judgement which other people, who to be sure know me still less than you do, have passed upon me."

"Is it not the same with every one of us," I replied, "either we are judged too highly or undervalued by our fellow creatures. Even our nearest friends do not always see us in our true light. But shall I for that lose my faith in the durability of our friendly intercourse, the term of which is so very short."

He smiled sadly. "I have a sure presentiment that you will outlive me; perhaps for many years. Since I have known you, your health has visibly improved, and who can tell whether the sentence pronounced on you by your doctor may not one day be laid aside with the rest of the sayings which false prophets have recklessly uttered. You shake your head. Well we will leave the future to decide this question, I carry the sure tokens of death too plainly within me to mistake them. So it causes me much deliberation whether I am not wronging you, in enjoying your society, your conversation, may I say your friendship? without heeding the injury your kindness may do you. You are so far above many things, which, in spite of their meanness, are all powerful in this world; how strong and cruel that power is, I myself have painfully experienced. Lest you should feel hurt at a man's reminding you of the prejudices and opinions which usually have more influence with women, and which hitherto, in our friendly intercourse, we have despised, you must know that I should not be here, not be ill, not be dying if I had been more careful of the judgement of others and of the light, or rather shade which I throw on all with whom I associate."

We had seated ourselves on a stone, close by the roadside, and covered with moss and ivy from whence we could see the beautiful mountain peaks and the sloping heights of the Passer through the branches of the chesnut-trees.

Children on their way to school surrounded us at some distance, peasants passed, and cows were led to the fountain. He did not heed them, but continued in a low voice: "Perhaps you do not know, dear Marie, how much an independent position influences our nature for good or for evil. It is now useless to moralize on the subject, but one thing to be observed, is, that a man who is not restrained by any tie is very apt to despise those who are bound by considerations, or prejudices. I have already told you that I was better than my reputation. As I could easily dispense with the assistance, protection, and good-will of my fellow-creatures, I thought I could also dispense with their good opinion, and only laughed when the *home-made* people, as I used to call them, painted my character in darker colours than it really deserved. They envy me my freedom, I often said. As I am not dependent on them for anything, they want me at least to bow down before their moral tribunal. What would freedom be worth if it did not teach us to depend on ourselves and the voice of our conscience alone? So I went my way, and let them talk. Every path in life leads past human habitations, and whoever seeks admission into these must steady his steps that he may not be suspected of being a vagabond or a drunkard, and no peaceful citizen will let such a one cross his threshold. I will not give you a long history--to be brief; I made the acquaintance of a most amiable girl--perhaps, it was for the first time, that I felt warm friendship, and inspired it. The young lady had been engaged for several months to an officer whom I had formerly met in rather light society. At that time he was absent on duty. I am convinced that I would never have entered the house again, had I felt anything like love for his betrothed. But as matters stood, I gave myself up to the charm of this harmless and cordial intercourse, the more so, that her brother saw no objection to it. The family was wealthy and much esteemed. Small parties were given in the house, where dancing, comedies and tableaux-vivants went on, so that many young men were always assembled there even during the absence of the betrothed, and his future bride gaily joined in every amusement. Suddenly I remarked that her brother treated me with coldness and reserve; I was on the point of asking him the reason of this, when he anticipated me by writing a polite letter in which he expressed his positive desire that I should never again enter his parents' house. Of course, we had an explanation in which I was informed that the officer to whom his sister was engaged had charged her to break off all intercourse with me, as I was a man of no principle. Several other circumstances added to the irritation caused by this unfortunate affair, and though I did my best to spare my fair friend every sorrow, yet the affair took a serious turn. The conversation ended in a duel. I shot into a tree, but the brother whose blood was hotter than mine, grazed my side with his bullet. It was not much to speak of, but the agitation which I with difficulty repressed, the cold of the winter morning in which I drove for several hours in my carriage back to town, and the pain and rage I felt at seeing this pure and charming tie so foolishly rent asunder, all this laid me prostrate. I only rose from an inflammatory fever to be sent here as incurable. And now, dear Marie, you will understand why I can no longer make light of your innocently walking by the side of a man supposed to be without principles. I who, at least, have always adhered firmly to one thing, and that is not to seek my own happiness at the cost of another's."

I had long made up my mind how I should answer him. "If you have confided all this to me, with the hope of changing my opinion," I said, "you little know me. It can only confirm me in the belief that I do well in availing myself of the right of speaking the truth to you. A right which, is only granted to the dying.

"All the good I have enjoyed in this life I have had to struggle for. I so truly prize our mutual friendship that I will not renounce it so easily. What would friendship be worth, if one had not the courage to acknowledge, and defend it when attacked. How mean and false, should I not appear in my own eyes, and in yours, if I changed in my conduct towards you because bad or silly people accuse you of things which I know to be untrue. I too depend on no one, in consideration of whom, I being a girl should subject my feelings, against my convictions.

"If my father should ever hear that in my last days I had formed a firm friendship with a stranger, he will only think highly of the stranger in whom his daughter confided.

"So no more of these reflections which ought never to have troubled you, and we will remain what we were before, good comrades. Is it not so, my friend?"



"Till death," he said, and pressed my hand, greatly agitated. I soon, succeeded in cheering him again, and this happy day would have closed harmoniously, but for an event which to be sure troubled only me. We rode home early, as the sun so soon sets behind the mountains. Morrik was very merry, and talked to his mule, jestingly giving it credit for a sense of the beautiful; he stopped at the farms, and spoke to the children and their mothers, and as we rode past a white bearded old man whom we met panting up the hill, he stuck a paper florin in the old peasant's hat, and was delighted with the thought of what he would say when a passing acquaintance told him of the strange ornament. So we reached the bridge by a shorter road, there I saw on a bench a young Pole whom I had several times noticed, and not in the favourable sense of the word. I had now and then met him alone, and then he had stared at me with such a fierce look in his dark eyes that I always hurried past him. He is evidently one of the most suffering of the strangers here, and his passionate temper seems constantly to be in revolt against his fate, and this inward conflict distorts his otherwise handsome and attractive features. His strange costume, all black, with high boots, and a fur-cap with white feathers in it, gives him a striking appearance, which sometimes has haunted me in troubled dreams, always menacing me with terrible looks. To-day he sat quite quietly, and did not appear to see me. Morrik was in front as the bridge is so narrow that two riders cannot cross it side by side, and I had to pass close to the bench on which he was reclining apparently asleep. Suddenly he jumped up seized the bridle of my mule, and looked at me fixedly with piercing eyes; he wanted to speak, but only burst out in a frantic laugh, so that my mule shied and gave such a start that it nearly sent me flying over the parapet of the bridge. Before I had recovered from my astonishment, he had disappeared round a turning of the road. The guide in a fury sent a curse after him, and I had hardly time to enforce silence on him, before we reached Morrik, to whom I would on no account mention this singular adventure until I ascertain whether there is any mystery concealed under it. I have written too much, and my pulse is beating feverishly. This night I shall have to pay for the pleasures of the day. Good night.

The 8th November--rain and sirocco.

This the second day we have had of this unwholesome air in which no patient dares to go out. It is a pity. I had anticipated the pleasure of discussing different subjects with my newly acquired friend, which I had refrained from doing before we had so cordially shaken hands as comrades. Now, I must wait patiently. Strange that the solitude which formerly seemed to me as life itself becomes only the resort of necessity now that I have associated with a genial and intellectual mind. I must content myself with my books and music. Every morning he sends his servant to enquire how I feel. The ride seems to have done him good, I still feel it in my limbs. I will write home and tell my father of my new friend; I know it will please him.

The 11th November.

Now, at last, the southern winter has commenced its mild reign, and people say that this will continue. Yesterday I again remained out of doors from two o'clock till sunset with Morrik on the Wassermauer, not always conversing, as he in compliance with my request brought a book with him. The poems of Edgar Allen Poe, he showed them to me with a smile, saying that these were the true expositors of his own feelings before his regeneration, as he called it. I have taken the book away with me and have lent him instead "The wisdom of the Brahmins" by my dear Rückert, of which, however, one can only take in finger-tips at a time, but every pinch of this snuff, to continue the clumsy simile, freshens the mind and dispels congestions.

"You really have given me a spiritual medicine," Morrik jestingly said, "I must beg of you to go on prescribing for me, for that desperate American had quite unsettled me."

He told me that people had talked a great deal about our excursion to Schönna, and looked at me to see if that annoyed me. "Do not let us please them by noticing it," I answered, "just as we enjoyed the sunshine without allowing the gnats and flies that buzzed about us, to spoil our pleasure." We have tacitly agreed never to talk about our illness, as most people here do, and either make themselves unhappy by it or find consolation in it, according to the warmth or coldness of their hearts. But I often perceive that he fancies erroneously that my health is improving, instead of which I distinctly feel the contrary. The momentary relief which I experience is just what characterises the approaching end in this disease. I fancy that I breathe more easily and move with less effort. I also eat more and sleep well, probably owing to exhaustion, which increases, though I have the illusive feeling of more vigour and ease. As I walked home to-day--I dine at three o'clock--I really felt hungry, but I know how it is with me.

To-day there is at Meran besides the usual market one of those large meat ones that take place in the autumn when the Lauben are transformed into long rows of butcher's stalls, and butchering goes on in all the court-yards. On every peg, there hangs the half of a pig or a calf which is sold to the peasants, who come in great multitudes from the Vintschgau, Passeier, and Ultner valleys, and from the different farms in the neighbourhood. Other booths are filled with various merchandize: iron-ware, clothes images of saints and numberless trifles. Between these booths the people push, press, and jostle, so that if one is not in danger of one's life, one is at all events nearly suffocated as the smell of the meat mingles with the fumes of bad tobacco. I have even seen boys of ten years old walk about with short pipes in their mouths, and the smoke hangs over the market-place like a heavy fog; the lungs that can stand it must really be strong as

healthy. I nearly fainted. Those great strong fellows would not stir a step out of my way. Fortunately my friend of the Küchelberg and his Liese came to my rescue, just when I most needed it. By plenty of vigorous elbowing he at last got me safely through those human walls. He was again somewhat flushed with wine, but he nevertheless appeared to me like a guardian angel and I easily forgave him the question he jokingly asked me about my brother or sweetheart. I could not make him understand that the gentleman was neither the one or the other, though very dear to me.

My landlady has just brought me in my afternoon meal. My hunger has grown so morbid that I cannot wait till supper time. Probably these are the last figs of this year. Thank heaven that ham and bread are not restricted to any particular season. What if I played our old doctor the trick of dying before the spring, and that of starvation!

The 19th November.

I can hardly hold my pen, I tremble so with the agitation of this last hour. How rashly I hoped that the weeks would glide on peaceful, and full of sunshine like the last one; one day resembling the other. In the forenoon, those happy hours on the Wassermauer with Morrik; the remainder of the day, my books, and letters, or my work and my piano, which I fancy sounds more and more melodious every time I play on it. And now this occurrence! Moreover I cannot speak of it to any one, and above all before my friend, before Morrik, I must appear as if nothing had happened. Is it not all some fearful dream! Has that poor man, I may say that madman, though he vehemently protested against the suspicion, really spoken words to me that I could not understand, accompanied by looks that I shudder to think of, for they seem to me to have been more expressive than his words. I ought to have listened to the secret misgivings which warned me against the solitary road on the Küchelberg, since that scene on the bridge. But I knew that Morrik was not on the Wassermauer, and did not like to be there without him, particularly as the band was to play on that day.

I had walked on so totally absorbed in my own thoughts that I had passed through the gate towards Vintschgau before I knew what I was doing: it is still as warm there as summer is at home, and one may saunter on through the leafless vineyards and find every now and then a bench inviting to rest. Where my thoughts were I know not, when suddenly he seemed to emerge from the ground, and stood by my side holding my hand. My fright was so great that I could not utter a sound but I fixed my eyes firmly on his face and saw that he opened his lips with an effort. He began first in broken German, and then fluently and vehemently in French, to excuse himself for the scene on the bridge. He had been blinded by pain and jealousy, and would willingly cut off the hand that had seized the bridle of my mule, if by so doing he could obtain my forgiveness. While he spoke I vainly tried to free my hand from his grasp. I looked around but no one was to be seen, the road was deserted. This roused my pride, and my courage; I drew back my hand, and could at last ask him what authorized him to speak in that way to a stranger. He was silent for some time, and a violent conflict seemed to rage within him. Every nerve of his face twitched convulsively. What he at last said I *will* forget, I listened to it as if it were not addressed to me. *Could* it be addressed to *me*, whom he did not know, with whom he had never exchanged a word? Is a passion that is roused by a figure gliding past like a shadow, by one who is inwardly dead, and only outwardly has a semblance of life; is not that passion but a freak of madness; and is a madman responsible for the words he utters? Only when he threatened Morrik, I began to think such an insanity dangerous, and not merely to be pitied. I do not know what I said to him, but I saw that it made a deep impression on him. Suddenly he took off his high black cap with the feathers in it, and stood humbly before me; "Vous avez raison, Madame," he said in a deep thrilling voice which before had had a harsh hoarse tone in it. "Pardonnez-moi, j'ai perdu la tête." Then he bowed and walked across the fields towards the level part of the country, where I could for some time distinguish his dark figure moving among the willows.

After having written all this, it seems to me that I look upon what has passed with more calmness; and compassion gets the better of my indignation. I looked at myself in the glass and could still less understand it. It will also always remain a mystery to me how such a scene could take place between two natures one of whom did not feel the slightest inclination for the other, who on his part made impetuous attempts to draw near. I know that not only affinities draw characters towards each other but also contraries; but can indifference also have that power? The longer I think of it the more clearly I perceive that his mind must be deranged. I will, after all, mention it to Morrik, for who can say to what I may not expose myself if I should a second time encounter this madman, defenceless, and fright should paralyze the self-possession which I need to subdue him.

Several days later.

The pain of mentioning this dreadful encounter to my friend has been spared me. It would certainly have agitated him, the more so, that he has been much less cheerful lately, and often walks quite absently beside me.

The poor young man whom I dreaded will never again cross my path. His clouded mind is now brightened by the light of heaven. This morning when my landlady came to me, she told me that a

young Pole had died in the night. The description she gave me of his person is exactly that of the poor madman. A hemorrhage had carried him off in the night and he was found dead in the morning. I now reproach myself with having spoken too harshly to him, but I had no other weapon than my words. If they were too sharp and wounded him more deeply than the offence demanded, the alarm of that moment may excuse me, and the fact that I did not immediately perceive the state of his mind.

Evening.

Tired, agitated, and in conflict with myself.

To-day when I met Morrik, I welcomed my dear friend with particular pleasure, after these last painful days. He told me without laying much stress on it--for here one is accustomed to the disappearance of some known face--of the sudden death, and asked me if I remembered the handsome young man. I said: no, and then felt heavy at heart as though I had committed some crime. In vain I tried to persuade myself that by this untruth, I had cut short any further conversation on the subject, and perhaps the necessity of telling other falsehoods, I cannot get rid of the painful feeling that I have wronged my friend who has so much right to hear the truth. I shall again have a bad night, and shall not be able to rest till I have confessed all to him, and begged his pardon.

The next day--I believe it to be the 23rd,  
cold and foggy.--

I am severely punished. The cold prevents his walking out. Now I must wait patiently till tomorrow comes, or perhaps till the day after. It has become quite a necessity with me, not to let the least breath of untruth, or misunderstanding come between us.

Edgar Allan Poe with his morbid discontents; his bitter and hopeless sarcasms, is now congenial to me. There is a frame of mind when wisdom is repugnant to us, as a bowl of sweet milk is to a man in a fever. Only that....

Two hours later.

Are calm and peace really only words void of meaning in this troubled world? Cannot even those retain them inwardly who had won them. I begin to think that I should not be secure from the events, and storms, which harass my last moments, even were I shut up in a walled in tower, where the ravens brought me my food through the barred windows. If no other catastrophe were possible, an earthquake would root up my place of concealment, and break through the walls, and I should be again cast out into the world among strangers, whose affection would distress me, when I had ceased to care for their aversion.

A visitor disturbed me this morning; the last person in Meran whom I should have expected to see in my room! No less a personage than the Burghermeister of the town. He came to spare me the disagreeable surprise of a solemn summons, and disclosed to me that he had been entrusted with a letter for me, and with the testament of the writer, who names me his sole heiress.

I looked helplessly at the Burghermeister. The thought of my father's death did not occur to me. If this dreadful event were to happen; if I should lose him before my hour had arrived, at least the pain of inheriting from him would be spared me. But who in the whole world--?

I glanced at the letter which the Burghermeister had with some hesitation laid on the table, and saw a handwriting that was quite unknown to me. "I don't know this handwriting," I said wonderingly, though a sudden misgiving seized me, as I remarked that the direction was in French. My evident astonishment seemed to relieve him. He probably had supposed that a more intimate acquaintance had existed between me, and the writer of the letter, and was prepared for a painful scene. "Do you wish to read the letter now or later?" he asked. I opened it at once, and read it with a beating heart but without any outward show of emotion, at least I believe so. The letter was filled with the rhapsodies which I had before spurned from me with horror. They were hardly subdued by the approach of death, though the unfortunate man must have felt it coming. I have not as yet deciphered much of it. The indistinct French hand seems to have trembled at every stroke with violent emotion.

But not a word of the legacy; only wretchedness and accusations against fate which had rent asunder the fetters of passion, instead of loosening them; confused tumultuous words, and ideas, written in order to lighten the burden of one heart, and to weigh down the other with it.

When I had laid down the letter, the kindly old gentleman turned to me, and seemed to ask for an explanation which I could not give. When I had told him that I was just as much astonished as he was, he departed, leaving me a copy of the will for further consideration, but he seriously advised me not to refuse so considerable a property in the first moment of excitement, though I was of age, and need not consult the wishes of my father. He would call again in a few days.

I will take a walk, I feel as if I could no longer remain in the room with those papers; as if they

impregnated the air with the fever heat from whence they proceeded. I did not even require to read them a second time to come to a decision; I--, or the poor of Meran--can there be a doubt which of us will outlive the other, and will need the fortune most.

In the Afternoon.

Truly this is a disastrous day. I wish it were past. Who can tell what the evening may bring!

I went out with the foolish hope of meeting Morrik, instead of whom, I encountered all the strange though well known faces in the winter garden. I can generally now pass them with indifference, but they were this day again to wound me deeply.

I perceived that they laid their heads together and whispered as I went by. On one of the benches sat the young *chronique scandaleuse* whom I have long ceased to bow to, as she tosses her head whenever I come near her. The place beside her was the only unoccupied one, but hardly had I sat down, when up she started and moved towards another bench, begging two ladies to make room for her. The blood rushed to my face but I was not conquered. At last the life preserver, who had not deigned to address a word to me for weeks past, rustled into the arbour. This time her heart was too full; she came up to me and said, so loudly that every one could hear her, "Well my dear, I suppose we are to congratulate you. The young Pole has bequeathed to you, his large fortune. Poor young man! To be sure you always kept *him* at a great distance. It is no wonder that he soon died. It is really quite touching that even after his death he offered his broken heart to you."

"You are mistaken," I said. "I have not accepted the legacy which was only left to me by the error of an unsound mind. But even if it had been clearly the intention of the deceased to appoint me his heiress, I would not have accepted it. I am not moved, either by the kindness, or the malevolence of strangers, but generally turn my back on both." Then I quietly read on. There was a great silence in the arbour, and I could hear the quicker breathing of the fat old lady without nerves, as well as that of the little lady who hates me. I did not take any further notice of what they whispered and tittered around me, only I several times distinguished the name of Morrik, purposely pronounced very distinctly. Even that cannot hurt me. But as I walked home, shivering in the damp foggy air, and feeling inwardly as sunless and gloomy as the sky was outwardly. I should have liked a good hearty cry. I feel so weary, that not even tears will flow. Life, happiness, sorrow, everything, seems stagnant within me.

The 25th November.

And now this! this verily is the last drop in the cup of bitterness. This blow strikes at the very roots, and no storm is needed to level to the ground the falling tree a child could overturn it. And that this blow should come from the hand, from which I least expected it. That just where I had hoped to ease my heart, I have brought it back more heavy still. To-day I at last found him on the Wassermauer. The sun shone brightly; I felt revived and hoped to gain peace and relief from the conversation I had so long wished for. I thought I could easily explain to him this last occurrence, and I was not disappointed; he smiled when I told him how sorry I was for my want of truth towards him. He took my hand and before releasing it he pressed it to his lips. I felt strangely moved. He had heard of the legacy of the young Pole but had never doubted that I would refuse it. Everything now I thought was smoothed and settled, and I cast a grateful look at the sun as if his kindly beams had cleared it all.

How came it that we again turned to that unlucky theme? Alas it was my fault. I wished to convince him more fully still that my feelings for the poor madman had always been cool, and indifferent; so I began again by saying, how the bare thought of that meeting filled me with horror; how inexcusable it was to let people who were so evidently deranged walk about unwatched. He looked straight before him, and said: "You are mistaken dear Marie, he was not more deranged than I am who sit beside you, and I hope I do not inspire you with fear. He even has the advantage over me, for he has eased his heart of the burden which still oppresses mine."

"I do not understand you," I replied, and I spoke the truth.

"Then I will continue silent;" what good could speaking do me?

After a pause: "But no, why should I remain silent you might then only fancy something worse. Is it so contemptible, if a few steps from the grave we once more look back on life, and there perceive a happiness which would render it loveable and worth having if only it were not too late, and if then one grows distracted with misery and longing, and with rage against fate? If though dying one longs to press to one's heart the dear one who is denied to us, and breathe our last breath on her lips? That is what happened to the poor lad who now sleeps a dreamless sleep--and so...." He paused and looked at me. There was not a soul to be seen underneath the poplars and he again took my hand. "You tremble! before me too," he said. "Forget my words."

I could not speak. I felt that my last and best happiness was destroyed; the harmless confidence, the warm cheerful intercourse to which my heart clung. Again I was alone, I felt it

must be so, if I would not add remorse to my other sufferings. "I will go home," I said, "I feel unwell; you must remain here, and enjoy the sunshine which makes my head ache to-day, I will write a few lines to you in the afternoon to tell you, if I feel better." Then I rose, gave him my hand for the last time; entreated him by a look to say no more, and left him.

I will see if I can collect my thoughts sufficiently to write to him.

In the Evening.

I lay the copy of my letter to him between these leaves, and feel relieved now that it is over; physically relieved, but the weight on my heart still oppresses me. This is the letter:

"Meran, the 25th November.

"MY DEAR FRIEND!

"Let me to-day, bid you farewell for the last time in this world, and express my hope of a happy meeting in the next, towards which we are tending. It will be easier for both of us to take leave of each other now, while we are still under the impression of a pure and friendly intercourse, than it would be later when we should have felt that we do not agree in higher matters, and this I fear would sooner, or later have been the case, for your last words still sadden and dishearten me, as I never thought words spoken by my dear friend could have done.

"How I wish we still lived in the past; then I was happy and hoped that you were so. Why did you speak, why could we not calmly have awaited our destiny, and stood firmly by each other as true comrades till the end came.

"I hope that this calm and premature farewell, though it may cause you a momentary pain, will in time soften your thoughts, and give you back the clear-sightedness with which we a short time ago looked on the past, and hoped for the future. We cannot avoid meeting now and then; let us pass one another with a silent bow, as if already we were shadows moving in a higher sphere.

"I need not tell you that I shall always retain the warmest friendship for you, and I beg you to keep yours for me, though at one time it seemed overshadowed by darker passions.

"Farewell my dear friend; show me that these words, which come from the heart, are understood, by not answering them."

"MARIE."

The last of November.

I long for snow and ice for the cold winter air of my home. This sun that shines day after day in the clear blue November sky makes my eyes and my heart ache. This morning I woke with a pleasant surprise; it had snowed in the night and the soft snow still lay unsullied, and pure on the roofs and on the road. Now it has melted away, and only a few traces of it are left. People again walk about in light cloaks, and with dry feet under the leafless poplars.

My father wrote yesterday that he fully approves of my decision regarding the legacy. I immediately informed the Burghermeister of this, and have already received a vote of thanks from the administration of the poorhouse funds, which I would willingly have dispensed with. I now write rarely in this journal. One day resembles the other; they are like the leaves of a tree in the late autumn; all of them are brown, only one falls to the earth sooner than another.

The 1st of December--at Night.

A shooting festival has taken place and enlivened the quiet town of Meran. Early in the morning I was awakened by the band of music which accompanied the shooters from the Sandplatz in front of the Post to the targets. Then the whole day long the report of the rifles was heard and made me feel quite nervous, and later the shouts and jodles of the peasants who arrived rather the worse for wine. In the evening fireworks were displayed on the left bank of the Passer, and it was very pretty to see the population of the town, and the strangers walking up and down, and enjoying the mild air by the light of torches which were placed along the Wassermauer. Then a strong sirocco arose, and wildly swept the rockets across the water, made the torches flicker, and drove the spectators into their houses by bringing on the rain. I saw the spectacle from my window, and remained there till the last spark had died out in the dark starless night.

How long it is now since I have spoken to any one except to the people of the house where I

lodge. The wish that my lips might be closed for ever grows stronger every day. Oh for an hour of the cheerful, confidential talk I once enjoyed with Morrik, and then to go to sleep and dream that same dream on to Eternity! But I must endure till my time comes.

The 4th December.

When my time has come, shall I find courage to resist my longing to see him once more, and in spite of my resolve, bid adieu to life with my eyes fixed on his. I think he too would wish it, whatever his present thoughts may be regarding my sudden rupture with him. Sometimes the idea torments me that he may have possibly misunderstood my letter and think that I drew back because I feared gossip. I should like to tell him once more that this is not the case; that I only did it for his sake, for his peace of mind, and indeed for mine also.

How is he now? Can he walk out? Who will help him to bear the long solitude of the day. I am truly grateful to him for having granted my wish in not having answered my letter. Still something seems missing in my life, now that I no longer see him, and cannot judge for myself whether he is cheerful or melancholy; how he bears his sufferings, what he reads, what he thinks--his thoughts even, I could once read in his face, his countenance is so clear and open.

Yesterday I met his servant. The faithful creature bowed to me; I should have liked to ask him how his master was; however it is better not.

The 11th.

Took a walk to the Zenoburg; that dear walk of former days, but not with my former spirits. As I passed by the house where he lodges, he was just coming out; he perceived me and stood still and motionless to let me pass. I dared not look at him, but the first glance told me that he had become pale and grave--nearly as much so as when I first saw him. He did not bow, but remained in the shade of the doorway as if fearing to frighten me; so I passed him with my eyes fixed on the pavement.

The hill seemed much steeper to me than when I walked up the first time--probably I have grown weaker--and *then* I was happy. What is it that hinders me from being so again, in spite of all my efforts and self-command. Is it merely compassion for him, and the want of that intercourse which had become a necessity to me. No, it is not that alone; it is as if I had been infringing on some duty. But how could I have acted differently? Can one trifle with the hopes and happiness of this life, when death is so near.

The 16th December--Evening.

A trying but pleasant day has passed. I have packed a small Christmasbox which I intend to send home. When all the trifles I had worked for my father, Ernest, and my step-mother were laid together; the pretty wood carvings, the picture of Meran, and the figure of a Saltner which I had dressed up for Ernest as like the real ones as possible, I was as happy as a child with its own Christmas presents. And then the packing of it all; as the box was not quite filled, I crammed in all I could get hold of; some pomegranates, a box filled with dried figs, another one with chesnuts, and one of those sweet Christmas-cakes made of honey and raisins. The box will tell its own tale of Meran.

My landlord's apprentice carried the box to the post. Then for the first time for several weeks, I walked on the Wassermauer. The strangers sat on the benches as they had always done, only foot-rugs had become more general. Morrik arrived soon after me. This time we silently exchanged salutations as had been agreed between us. He looked kindly and calmly at me probably to see whether I appeared well and cheerful. I was much heated by my Christmas packing. When I got home I looked at myself in the glass and perceived that it was only a transient flush of agitation, perhaps of pleasure. Now that we have again met so unconstrainedly I fancy that the future will seem easier to me. I need only imagine that I never exchanged a word with him but that I have simply read a story in which one of the characters had attracted me--that I now meet a stranger whose face recalls my idea of this character, and therefore that I take great interest in him. We did not sit down beside each other. I walked several times up and down the Wassermauer with a lady who was very kind to me, inquired why I had so persistently remained at home, and then told me all about herself and her children, from whom she had been separated for the sake of tranquillity. Tears started to her eyes as she said. "To be separated from those dear to us in order to enjoy quiet and peace of mind!" Oh you good doctors! what bad physicians for the soul you are.

Christmas Eve.

What am I to think of this! An hour ago a Christmas-tree beautifully decorated with oranges, pomegranites, and sweet meats, and covered with wax-lights was brought into the room by my

landlady. The tree is so high that I was obliged to place it on the floor and yet it nearly reaches the ceiling. A strange maidservant brought it, my landlady tells me, and would on no account say from whom it came. I have now lit all the tapers and am writing by their light, after having given my landlady's children some Christmas-presents, for the people here never have Christmas-trees.

Now that I am again alone, I ransack my brain to find out who could have sent the tree. The kind lady who may also feel the want of Christmas joys, and Christmas lights? But surely she would have written a letter to say so, and then our acquaintance is so short. Many other kind faces have passed by me in my daily walks, but to whom of these would it have occurred to brighten my Christmas eve. I must confess that in my first irritation, I wronged many of them, and might certainly have found some pleasing acquaintances among them, if my first longing for solitude had not expressed itself so repellantly. Now no one would willingly speak to me.

Can the tree have come from *him*? but that would be contrary to our agreement. One who must and will keep silence cannot offer presents. It is easier to give than to receive silently, and yet how is it possible to express one's thanks after having already bid farewell.

The more I think of it the more uneasy I become. It is not all as it should be; something unnatural and indefinable seems to have come between us; something pernicious that would revenge itself on us.

Here come letters from my dear ones, from home! But I must first put out the tapers and light my little lamp. Some of the twigs are already crackling and glimmering. The last spark has died out on my last Christmas-tree. The church bells are ringing while I am writing these lines by the light of the moon which is now keeping me company, my lamp having died out.

December the 28th.

We have met again, our hands have touched, and our eyes have encountered each other; but what a sorrowful meeting. The vengeance I expected has come.

The program of a concert was brought to my lodgings. A player on the cither was going to perform in the Assembly rooms at the Post. I am no longer displeased at being roused from my own thoughts; so I went, as I very much like the cither, and have always wished to hear a virtuoso perform on it. When I arrived the first piece had begun, and only three seats in the front row were unoccupied; they seemed to have been kept for some expected personage of distinction: I found myself compelled to take one of these seats of honour, and did not do so, unwillingly for the tone of the instrument was rather low, and there too, I could observe the movement of the performer's hands. The air soon became oppressive; the heat of the stove, the crowded room and its low ceiling all combined to make it so. I was much flurried at first, but I soon grew calm, and listened with delight to the charming and touching sounds. Suddenly the door was opened softly and quietly, and Morrik entered. He stopped when he saw the room filled, but did not like to turn back. Some gentlemen near the door pointed out to him the empty seat beside me. He slowly moved up the room, and arriving at my side, sat down with a slight inclination of the head. My breath stopped and I feared he would perceive the trembling which seized me, as the arm of his chair touched mine; however he appeared to be much calmer than I was, and to listen to the music with more attention; so after a time I mastered my agitation, and listened too, absorbed in an exquisite and sweet reverie. I felt as if the melody were a celestial atmosphere in which our mutual thoughts and feelings rose and intermingled; a harmonious communion of soul with soul banishing all that had hitherto divided estranged and tormented us. I cannot describe how this sort of visionary dream comforted me. I felt persuaded that the same thoughts touched him also. Our eyes were fixed on the cither, and yet it seemed as if they met in one long look.

Even the applause and shouts of bravo! hardly roused us from this ecstasy. The pauses between the pieces only lasted for a few minutes, and at the end of one of them the cither-player put by his cither, and brought out an enormous instrument which he called the divine Kikilira, explaining in a few words that it was an instrument peculiar to the Tyrol, and had been constructed by a simple peasant. It is a sort of wooden harmonium--the notes are formed of very hard wood, and the tones are produced from them, by the sharp and rapid blows of two small hammers. It has a harsh shrill sound, and one could hardly have found an instrument more opposite to the cither. It rudely put to flight all my exalted thoughts and feelings, and seemed to outrage my very soul. I would willingly have left the room, had I not been afraid of offending the performer. I feared for Morrik, for I knew how exceedingly sensitive he was with regard to every noise. I slightly glanced at him. He sat with closed eyes his head reclining on his right arm, as if trying to shield himself from this sudden attack.

All at once I perceived that his lips grew still paler, his eyes opened partially and lost all expression; then his head sank heavily against the back of his chair.

Several of the audience also observed this, yet no one moved to assist the fainting man. I fancied, judging by the scornful expression on their faces, that they with malicious pleasure, purposely left this benevolent charge to me. I got up and begged the performer to stop, as a gentleman was unwell. I sprinkled his forehead with eau de cologne which I always carry with me, and let him inhale the vivifying perfume. Part of the company had risen, but none of them left

their places: it was only to observe the spectacle more at their case. Only the cither-player came to me, and helped me to support Morrik, when his senses had returned; and to lead him the few steps to the door. Once out of the room, where the fresh December-wind blew across his face, he recovered completely. He looked inquiringly at me, then remembered what had occurred and leant slightly on my arm as I led him down stairs. "I thank you;" was all he said, and we walked on together as his servant was nowhere to be found. I accompanied him up the *kleine* Lauben, as the street leading past the Post is called, and as far as the church from whence we could see his lodgings. "Do you feel better?" I asked. He bowed his head and made a movement as though he now wished to walk alone. Ere we parted he pressed my hand endeavoured to repress a sigh, and silently turned towards the house. I watched him till he had reached the door; he walked with firm slow steps, and did not once look back. When he had disappeared, I too went home.

I feel so overcome by this event that I must lie down; my head is nearly bursting with pain, and when I close my eyes the harsh hammering sound of that wooden instrument, which surely has received the name of "divine" in derision, rushes wildly into my ears, and I feel feverish and exhausted from the heat and oppressive air of the room.

The 11th January.

A fortnight of sickness and suffering, during which I did not open a book or play a note on the piano--It was only a slight influenza, sleep and diet have pulled me through--though one night when the fever tormented me with horrible visions, I was on the point of calling in a doctor, as my landlady constantly urged me to do. The people here have great faith in medicines. I am glad that I can now again stand on my feet, and owe it to no one but myself. I will venture on my first walk to-day. The air is cold, but still, and the sun is so powerful that I can boldly open my casement. I long to hear something about Morrik; but whom can I ask.

The same day.

My presentiment was right; the visions in my feverish dreams spoke the truth. He is seriously ill with typhus fever. He has been laid up ever since that concert and sometimes the fever is so bad that he lies unconscious for hours. I met his doctor just at the gate of the town, and mustered courage to ask him for news of Morrik; and what good would restraint do me; it would only be ridiculous for does not everyone already know that I led him out of the concert-room, and across the streets and is not my show of interest very innocent, though unfortunately it may seem improper. The doctor looked very grave and I should have liked to detain him, and extract from him a decided answer to my question as to whether there was any immediate danger, but just then one of his patients accosted him, and our conversation was broken off. With what feelings I sat down on the sunny bench, and gazed at the water, watching the logs of wood floating down the stream, and swept away by the force of the current every time they tried to cling to a stone. And is it not so with us poor human creatures; do we not float down the stream of life! and are the happy moments we enjoy anything better than a short rest on a cliff from which we are severed by the first passing wave.--Oh, come peace, come! My heart will break with its stormy throbbing. How shall I be able every morning to endure the pain of imagining him dying, and of not being able to watch for his every breath! Oh heavens! and has it come to this, that I must see him leave this world before me; I who never dreamt of such a possibility.

January, the 12th--Evening.

At last I have gained my point; and the calm I now feel amply compensates me for the struggle I have had to endure. I have just come from his lodgings where I have passed the day with him, and shall do so again to-morrow, and all the days that are yet granted to him.

How I passed this night, God to whom I prayed in my calmer moments alone knows. In those dark hours, when sorrow and hopelessness took away all feeling of *His* presence, and of my own strength, life, time, eternity whirled about in my giddy brain just like the helpless logs of wood tossed by the waves.

In the morning I begged the landlady to go to his lodgings and enquire how he had passed the night. She told me that a stout elderly lady with fair ringlets had opened the door of Mr. Morrik's sitting-room--He lay in the adjoining room and talked so loud in his fever that one could hear him distinctly from the outside. The lady asked who had sent her, and on hearing who it was, had made a wry face, and sent her away with the information that there was no change.

This was a terrible blow to me. I knew what he thought of the professional philanthropy of the life preserver, and that he had always purposely avoided her. And now there was she listening to his feverish talk, and plaguing him with her officiousness in his lucid intervals. I could not bear the thought.

It was early in the morning when I ascended the stairs of his lodgings, fully determined not to let any consideration, except what was necessary for his welfare and tranquillity, prevail over me. My courage only deserted me for a moment when on knocking at the door a shrill hard voice



called out, "Come in." All my coolness and presence of mind returned however, when I felt the cold lustreless eyes resting on me, with a severe rebuking expression; and with a quiet voice I said that I had come myself to have news of him, as the information of my landlady did not suffice me. Before she had time to answer Morrik called out my name from the inner room. "I will go myself," I said, "and ask the sufferer how he feels. He seems to have recovered his senses."

"Mr. Morrik receives no one," she said, "and your visit would be against all propriety, a reason, to be sure, which is of little importance to you?" "At the death-bed of a friend, certainly not," I replied. He called a second time "Marie;" so opening the folding that led to his bedroom, I entered without a moment's hesitation.

The small room looked dark, as the only window opened on the narrow, gloomy street, and was partly covered by a curtain; still it was light enough for me to see that his pale face was brightened by a ray of pleasure when I entered. He stretched out his hot hand, and tried to lift his head. "You have come!" he whispered, "I cannot tell you how your presence relieves me. Do not go away again, Marie, I cannot spare you, my time is so short. The lady out there, you know whom I mean, her very voice pains me; her presence seems like a nightmare to me, but I cannot bring myself to tell her so. I tried to hint to her that I preferred remaining alone, but she answered that: patients were not allowed to have a will of their own. Please remain with me, when you are here I shall see and hear no one but you, and I promise never to annoy you again."

He talked on in this strain in so low and hurried a voice, that the tears sprang to my eyes. I pressed his hand warmly and promised to do all he wished. His face brightened in a moment. Then he lay quite still and closed his eyes, so that I believed him to be asleep but when I tried to draw away my hand, he glanced at me with a sad and pleading look. At the end of half an hour, he really slept. I returned again to the sitting-room where the lady sat on the sofa. She was knitting in great wrath, and the poor meshes had to suffer for my offence. I perceived that there was no time to be lost, so I told her with as much consideration for her feelings as I could, that the patient was very grateful to her for her kindness, but that he would not trouble her any longer as I was going to nurse him with the help of his servant and of the people who lodged him. "You, my dear?" she slowly asked, casting an annihilating look at me.

"Certainly," I replied quietly; "among all the visitors here I am the nearest acquaintance Mr. Morrik has, and so we should both think it strange if I left the duty of nursing him to an entire stranger, who moreover has so many other charitable duties to fulfil."

She stared at me as though my mind were wandering.

"Is it possible," she at last said, "that you do not feel, that by this step you will for ever ruin your already so much damaged reputation. Are you related to him? Are you an old woman, who is above suspicion; or are you in need of a nurse for yourself, my dear?"

"I am perfectly aware of what I can do, and what I can answer for," I said, "I regret that our opinions on the subject differ, but I cannot change mine. I shall remain here; and certainly I cannot hinder you from doing the same. Do not be uneasy about my reputation; I believe I told you once before that I have closed with this world, and submitting the case to a higher judge, I hope to be acquitted." She arose, took her bonnet and said: "You will not expect me to remain in the same room with a young lady whose moral principles so widely differ from mine, and to sanction by my presence an intimacy which in every respect I hold to be most reprehensible. Nothing remains for me but to hear from the patient's own lips whether he desires my departure. If the doctor should sanction this continual emotion for a patient suffering from typhus fever, it is no business of mine."

With these words, she moved towards the folding doors, but I quietly stopped her and said: "Mr. Morrik sleeps, so I beg of you not to disturb him; and from this sleep you may gain the tranquillizing assurance, that my presence is rather beneficial to him than otherwise."

After these words we only exchanged a silent and formal curtsy, the door closed on the deeply offended lady and a load fell from my heart. I opened the door of the balcony which also leads into the garden, to let out the odour of acetic ether which the lady without nerves had brought here too. Then I looked round my new domain, and it pleased me much. What a difference between this elegant, handsomely furnished, and lofty apartment, and my own small room with its scanty furniture. Here, his writing-table loaded with all the luxury of portfolios, inkstands, and different trinkets; there, the shelves with his finely bound books; the comfortable arm-chair, and above all the pleasure of breathing the fresh air merely by stepping out on the balcony shaded by awnings from whence a few steps lead into the garden. How sunny, sheltered, and secluded it looked down there; only the splash of the fountain was heard, and the lullaby song of a nurse who sat on a bench with a pretty baby in her arms.

I was so charmed with the peace of this abode that I actually forgot who was lying in the next room in a feverish slumber. I was shocked at having been led for a moment into this obliviousness. I stepped to the door and listened. He called "Marie" in a low voice. When I looked in, he said: "I heard all; you are my guardian angel; I owe you the first refreshing slumber I have had for a fortnight."--"Sleep on," I replied, "you are not to speak. Cheer up, and dream pleasantly." He nodded faintly, and again closed his eyes.

In the afternoon the doctor came. Him, at least, I must exempt from the accusation I recently brought against all doctors; that of being bad physicians for the soul. When I told him why I had remained, he smiled. Has Morrik spoken to him of me? I do not think so. But what pleased him more even than the departure of the life preserver, whose beneficial influence on the nerves, he evidently doubts, was the fact that Morrik had slept for three hours and that his pulse was calmer.

When I accompanied him to the door, and ventured to ask him what he thought would be the end of this illness, he shrugged his shoulders. "The danger has not yet passed," was all he said. I had thought so.

At seven o'clock I walked home; the servant watches by him during the night. He slept when I went away, and did not even feel my hand when I touched his before leaving. I will sleep now; I want to be at my post early in the morning. For a long time I have not felt so peaceful and calm as this evening. Now nothing can again estrange us.

The 13th.

He woke in the night, and immediately asked for me. The servant could hardly quiet him with the assurance that I would certainly return in the morning. I found him much agitated; only after a long explanation, in which he followed me with difficulty, did I succeed in convincing him, that it must be so, that it was necessary that the day and night watches should be relieved. "But if I should die in the night?" he asked. "Then you will send for me, and I will come to you instantly." When I had promised this, he went to sleep again. He does not eat a morsel and his hands are fearfully thin.

I am more convinced than ever that my presence tranquillizes him. The afternoon passed very quietly. We did not speak to each other, but the door between the two rooms was left open, so that he could see the light of my lamp, and watch my shadow on the wall; he had expressly desired this.

I read for a long time, and listened to his breathing. No other sound reached me. Only when I had to give him his medicines I went to him. Then he always had some gay and affectionate words to say to me, but without any tone of passion in them.

"She is a fairy," he said to the doctor, "she makes even death appear a festival to me. Formerly, doctor, I always felt inclined to say to you: 'That thou doest, do quickly.' But now it is of great moment to me that you should prolong my life for a few days. I can never have enough, even of your horrid potions, now that a good spirit gives them to me."

The 15th.

Yesterday I could not write. He was much worse. To-day he is, at least, not worse still; what a sad consolation! The hard frost continues. The fountain in the garden is covered with ice, and not a flake of snow to soften the piercing air, and to relieve the chest. I long for snow, for I am convinced that he will not be better till the air softens. To-day I stood for hours at his bedside, and he did not recognize me. In his delirium, he talked of people and countries unknown to me, and then I saw how little we really know of each other; and yet a moment later when he called me by name, I felt how near and dear I was to him, and that we do know of each other our best feelings and thoughts. All that is really worth knowing.

The 19th January, 5 o'clock in the morning.

I have just come home after four and twenty sleepless hours, and yet I feel that no sleep is possible for me till my feelings are more calm and collected, and I have expressed them in these leaves. I feel like one who has been blind, and who struck by the first ray of light, is made aware of his happiness by a dazzling pain. I will try to speak connectedly, though what is the meaning of beginning, middle, end--what is the significance of these words, when eternity has mingled with time; when dying, one awakens to a new life, which is subject to time, yet still bears the impress of eternity.

These are but weak and unconnected words, and I wished to speak clearly.

The days which have passed since I last wrote have been so sad that I could not speak of them. Yesterday evening when the doctor came quite late, I had sent for him as my anxiety increased every hour, he did not conceal his fears. "We must bring on a crisis," he said, "or he is lost." They put him in a tepid bath and dashed cold water over him. This excited him to such a degree that even through the closed doors, I heard his groans and his loud and unintelligible exclamations. When he had been again laid in his bed the doctor came to me. "I will remain with him during the night," said the excellent man; "any blunder about applications of ice might be of fatal consequence. You must go home and rest, the day has been too fatiguing for you," I told him that even at home I should find no rest, and would rather remain and watch with him. He did not

press me further as he saw that I was quite decided. Had I not given my promise to Morrik that I would not be absent when his end was approaching. So I sat down in an arm-chair at his writing-table and took up a book only for the sake of holding on to something--to read was impossible; for that a clear mind is required, and mine was clouded over with a dark shadow, and all my attention was riveted on the sick-room where the doctor sat by his bed changing the compresses himself, and only now and then giving the servant some order in a low voice. The moans and the rambling indistinct words which broke from those feverish lips cut me to the heart; this is still his voice I thought, and these are, perhaps, the last words that he will ever speak to me. I cannot understand their meaning, nor does he himself. Oh, what a leave taking!

I will not dwell on this scene; the remembrance, even, of that dreadful time makes me shudder. We heard the hours strike from the church-tower; ten, eleven o'clock, midnight.--In the next room stillness now prevailed. I kept in my breath and listened anxiously, questioning myself if this were a good or a bad sign. I tried to rise and creep to the door to hear if he yet breathed, but I found that the agony of the last hours had nearly paralyzed me, and I could not move. Or was it only that I could not muster courage and nerve myself sufficiently to face the dreadful certainty.

Strange! I had thought myself quite familiarized with death, even if it should approach the bedside of my dearest friend. And now, instead of calmly facing it, I shivered with fear like a child in the dark.

I know not if I could have endured these feelings much longer without fainting, especially as I had not swallowed a morsel the whole of that day. At last, just as my strength was giving way the bedroom door opened, and the doctor came out quietly. "He is saved."

The shock these words gave me was so great that I burst into a fit of hysterical tears. The doctor sat down opposite me and said: "You weep, Mademoiselle, and perhaps the word 'saved,' seems to you only as a bitter mockery, when coupled with the name of a patient whose life was despaired of before this last illness seized him. But it is just on this illness that I found my hope of saving him. Nature has risked a bold experiment and has succeeded. It is not the first time that I have observed her employ this admirable device by which she first kindles a conflict in the nervous and blood systems; and then summoning the last vital powers, she combines all her forces to drive away the enemy who had taken entire possession of the citadel. Now you will see that our friend, if his convalescence after this fever proceeds without any disturbance, will make rapid progress towards the full recovery of his former health, which was once with reason despaired of. Now I can safely send him to Venice in March, without any fear of his catching the typhus there, as this fever seldom seizes the same person twice. The soft sea air will be most beneficial to his lungs; and though I never meddle with prophecies, I can say, almost with certainty, that in this case--taking it for granted that no outward disturbance occurs--our patient will in less than a year be as strong and healthy as ever."

A slight noise in the inner room, called the doctor again to his post.

He stayed away only a few minutes, but at least I had time to become more collected before he returned. Can I acknowledge even to myself that this great revolution in all my ideas startled me more than it pleased me? So he was to live, and I firmly believing that he was to follow me into another world had as fully taken possession of his soul as if it were written that we should only be separated for a short time, and would part with the mutual wish of: A happy death to you! instead of a happy life to you!

Fortunately this selfish regret only lasted till the doctor returned, and I could say with a heart full of pure joy and gratitude, Thank God, he will live! He will once more enjoy his youth, his strength, his plans, and his hopes! When the doctor was again beside me he said, "They are both asleep: both master and servant. I settled the poor fellow, who certainly has been greatly fatigued, more comfortably in his armchair and he did not awake. It seems as if he knew that he is no longer wanted, now that the crisis has passed, and nature herself has taken charge of nursing the patient. I advise you to follow his example Mademoiselle and to lie down on the sofa and go to sleep. I have kept a cup of tea for myself and do not mind in the least remaining here till morning, and will feast meantime on our friend's looks. I cannot let you walk home in this cold winter night, you would by so doing risk all the benefit you have obtained by your stay here," "Benefit!" I exclaimed; "you must know that I have no illusions whatever with regard to the state of my health. I am perfectly aware how little I have to risk. If I have gained anything by my stay here it is only a reprieve of a few days or weeks."

"Pardon me," he said with a smile, "if I do not share your opinion. To be sure we professional men are often worse prophets than the uninitiated. At least we are less confident."

As during the last few days I had written some letters at Morrik's writing-table, I had brought with me the portfolio, in which I keep our old doctor's drawing, I drew it from the portfolio, and handed it to him. "Now you can convince yourself that I am only repeating the prediction of one of your colleagues," and I told him how I had come to Meran.

The drawing appeared to make some impression on him. He shook his head after looking at it, and then said, "I generally examine the patient by auscultation myself before I give any opinion. You say that you have spent the winter without any medical assistance or advice, and perhaps

you were right in doing so, for truly our power is very limited. Far be it from me to force my opinion on you, but it would interest me greatly to discover whether your looks, your movements, your voice, and your pulse are only deceiving, or whether this drawing is to be relied on. Would you let me ascertain this?"

"I have no objection to it," I replied, "but you must permit me, whatever the result may be, to have more faith in our old doctor than in you."

After auscultating me, he sat down for about ten minutes in front of me, and after taking a long draught of tea, he answered my question as to whether the drawing was not right after all. "I will not venture any opinion on that subject; all I can say is, that if your lungs really were in that state, then the Meran climate has worked wonders. We have had several cases here, in which the patients sent to us had been given up and were supposed to be in a hopeless state, yet those very patients are enjoying life to this day, to their own and their doctor's astonishment. The time you have staid here is however much too short to have operated such a marvellous recovery, and so I have my doubts about this drawing. I would even venture to say, if the assertion be not too bold, that you have never had any inclination to disease of the lungs, but that your illness is simply caused by great exhaustion of the nervous system. You say that your doctor is an old practitioner, but auscultation is a recent discovery and if Hippocrates and Galen, had to speak on the subject they would certainly commit themselves deeply. You look incredulous dear Mademoiselle. Next year we will again speak of this, for it will be most beneficial to your nervous system, which is in a very irritable state, if you spend another winter here and only visit your relations during the summer."

Could he have assured me positively of all this and proved it by a hundred scientific arguments it would have been in vain. I feel only too well that it is impossible. We had a long dispute about it, and his smilingly sarcastic tone, and confident manner made me at last lose all patience, and I uttered all the invectives I had ever heard against his profession, only exempting our dear old doctor from this sweeping condemnation. It was rather curious to hear a patient quarreling with his doctor for awarding life to him. But if life were again given back to me, could I receive it thankfully as a blessing, would it not appear only as a renewal of bondage after this short dream of freedom?

I could not rest till I had then and there in the presence of the doctor written to my old friend and besought him to come to my rescue; and save me from this return to life into which they wished to delude me. The day had not yet dawned, when the doctor and I left the house. Morrik's servant was now awake, and his master slept, to awaken to a renewed life. The doctor insisted on my ordering a sedan chair; but I refused decidedly, and went to post my letter myself. I then begged the doctor not to mention what had passed between us to any one, and above all not to Morrik till I had received an answer. He promised it, and smilingly took leave of me, after seeing me to the door of my lodgings. As I toiled up the steep stairs, I again felt convinced that ere long I should ascend them for the last time.

The mountain tops are not yet red with the rising sun, the air is foggy, and flakes of snow begin to fall. My room is comfortable and warm, as the small stove does its duty. If I could but find sleep. This mounting guard has been too heavy a service for the poor invalid. A great battle has been won without him, and he himself has been deluded with the hope of a victory the fruit of which he would not care to enjoy.

January 30th.

Yesterday, I remained at home, as I had rashly promised the doctor not to leave my room till he gave his consent. He said that the honour of science was at stake, if I brought to naught the opinion he had pronounced, by my reckless enterprizes. It is also necessary for our friend he added.

This morning he came to see me. God be praised Morrik it seems, improves rapidly. I dared not ask him if he had inquired for me, had missed me. It appears that he eats and sleeps a good deal.

Rain and snow help me to endure my imprisonment. I shall probably remain at home for the whole of this week. I do not wish to meet anyone. I feel a strange uncertainty and anxiety till the answer from my friend arrives.

I shall not know what face to put on when I meet my fellow creatures. Shall I appear to them as one who after a short rest among them will suddenly take up his staff again, or as one who has changed his mind and is determined to remain. I feel restless and unsettled since that conversation with Morrik's doctor. My home is neither in this world, nor in the next; my mind is uneasy. I fancy that every one looks at me suspiciously, as the police looks on a vagabond whose passport is not in proper order, and who cannot state from whence he comes nor whither he is going. And I shall have to pass another week in this disagreeable state of bewilderment before I can receive an answer, even if he wrote by return of post.

To-day I ought to write to my father but I cannot bring myself to touch a pen--my feelings are in such a sad state of confusion, often it appears to me that my body and soul cry out to me "you

*cannot* live;" then suddenly the blood flows again so warmly and vigorously through my veins, that it seems to mock my aching heart, and worn out nerves. In those moments I take out my drawing as if it were a sure bill of exchange for a better world, but the doctor treated it with so little respect, that even this paper has lost its tranquillizing power. Formerly I was so sure that Death like grim Shylck would insist on the acquittance of his bond, but now I begin to fear that favour, instead of justice, will be shown me, but is it a favour to be restored to captivity?

The 15th.

Still no decision! This cold foggy weather continues. The only ray of light in my gloomy existence are the daily tidings my landlady brings me that Morrik's nights are good, and that he is gaining strength rapidly.

I must here confess a foolish action I have been guilty of. I have bought a new dress, and a silk neckerchief, just as any other girl might do. To be sure they were brought up to my room by a grey haired, half blind pedlar; who came in with his packages dripping with the cold damp fog. I pitied him when he resignedly tied them up again, after I had told him that I should hardly wear out the dress I had on. But could I not have given him some money, as a compensation for his useless trouble. It is a very pretty summer dress. I wonder who will enjoy all the blessings and riches of summer in it?

The 1st February.

I have slept on it, and yet have not gained more composure. When the letter arrived yesterday, I trembled so with excitement that I could hardly open it, and then at first all the lines danced before my eyes. When I had perused it all my ideas were in such a state of tumultuous confusion that I thought I was going mad. Was it pleasure? was it dread? was it self pity? No it was the certainty that we poor mortals can have no firm and steadfast support in this unstable world. I believed that I had at least one faithful, honest, intrepid friend; and he too has deceived me. I fancied that at least my own unbiassed instincts, and presentiments could not mislead me, and I find that they too had conspired against me.

But the more I read this letter the less angry I feel with him. I will destroy the answer I had begun in the first impulse of my disappointment. He meant it well, and has done his duty as a doctor but I always come back to my old maxim, that all of them are bad physicians for the soul. Did he consider before trying this energetic cure whether, though it might succeed with the body, it might not do irreparable mischief to the soul; or had he kept some "heroic remedy" as he calls it, also for that case. He knows me well--could he not have known me somewhat better? He is right in saying that without this deception I never would have consented to leave my home, my family; and never would have freed myself from those depressing bonds which wore out my life, never have allowed myself the rest which was so necessary for my recovery.

Was it not principally to spare my dear father, who already has so many cares, the additional one of seeing me die without the possibility of saving me, that induced me to leave him.

I would certainly have forced myself to look happy, and to submit to my destiny till I had, made myself ill beyond human aid. He knew what suited my character when he deceived me in this cruel way. I have ever preferred the most dreadful certainty to a hopeful uncertainty. If peace and quiet were the only remedies which could strengthen my suffering nerves, and ward off the menacing disease from my oppressed chest, then I could only be saved by the firm belief that I was doomed. And the undecided wavering hope of life would only have aggravated my illness.

How artfully the crafty, malicious, cruel friend brought about what he thought good for me. This drawing, with what seeming reluctance he put it in my hands, in order that I might have impressed on my mind a fixed tangible vision of my danger, that I might be well armed against all rising hopes, all glimmering wishes. Then his exhortation not on any account to consult a doctor who would certainly only seek to delude me, to spare my feelings, in the way all medical men treated their patients. His emotion when I left, his praise of my firmness and self-command--Still I cannot bear him ill-will. He does not know what sort of life it was, he sought to give back to me, by this stratagem. After having resigned it, it appears so paltry and valueless; how painful it is to me to begin anew with all the trifles of this world to which I had already become dead, and to bear what now seems doubly odious to me after having lived in a higher and nobler sphere; to fall back into the dreary drudgery of a girl's life; to be once more tied down to the narrow, commonplace customs and prejudices of a small town; to be observed, judged and pitied by one's so-called friends, who know so little of the characters of their acquaintances, that they invariably mistake their good qualities for their bad ones.

I must cease! my thoughts are lost in the deep gloom of a sunless future, in which the dear faces of my father and Ernest are the only bright spots.

What radiance streamed from the open gate, the entrance of which was guarded by the angel of death.

February the 3rd.

The doctor has just left me. He has taken the letter with him, as he thinks it very remarkable, and says he has not yet met with such a thorough physiologist as my old friend. Perhaps he wishes to show the letter to Morrik. From him not a word; I did not like to question the doctor, as I had heard in the morning, that he was getting on well, and yesterday for the first time, enjoyed the warm sunshine on his balcony.

To-day I fancied the doctor was very absent hurried, and mysterious; I had to ask him if he permitted me to walk out. He nodded, and said; "Mind you do not agitate yourself by any exciting conversation." With whom should I speak?

So I must begin life again, where, and under what circumstances? I should like to keep a school; but here the people are all Roman Catholics.

Leave these dear mountains, and return to that dull town to look again on the monotonous faces of its inhabitants with their air of self importance, the obtrusiveness of which disturbs my very dreams. However I cannot leave my father. Fortunately he has not been duped as I have been. He agreed to the stratagem of our malicious friend.

It appears strange that Morrik should not have made the slightest inquiry, or sent any friendly greeting to me. He probably feels that there must be some change in our relations to each other, as it is decided that we are both to live. But some acknowledgement of our former friendship.... or does he not feel the pain and bitterness of having found each other, only to lose one another again for ever.

The doctor says that so severe a crisis often changes the whole nature, and so his soul which has risen renewed, and invigorated from the paroxysm of fever, has probably kept no remembrance of his companion on the road to death. Well I must submit to it.

Let him forget me; I will always remain to him what I have been.

The 5th--Morning.

Received a letter from my father congratulating me. I shed tears over it. Whilst every one was condoling with me I felt happy, and now that I am again given back to life, and ought to rejoice I feel wretched.

These desolate winter-days, the sun shining with the heat of spring, make me feel miserable in body and soul; it is but a sterile....

February the 6th.

Yesterday amidst all my hopelessness, a spark of courage kindled within me. I left my writing and walked to the window. I felt heartily ashamed of my cowardice, my grief, and my ingratitude towards God.

What had become of the sentence which I had once so valiantly used as the theme for a sermon? "For I was made man; and that means that I have striven."

The wings of angels which I had expected are not to be mine yet. I must still be up and doing, and if necessary, must work my way through the world with these mortal arms of mine, and be thankful if some day I should be able to twine them round a dear friend and there find rest.

The remembrance that I had once approached a higher sphere and had learnt to know it, or at least to anticipate it, will always remain with me for good and for evil. For good, as I carry away with me an everlasting treasure of golden thoughts; for evil, as many things which formerly I should have deemed riches, will now appear insufficient to me. Yet I would not spare the past.

I have written to my old friend this morning and have reconciled myself with him; and now I will try to be reconciled to myself, for I was justly angry with my own weakness. Must I not be at peace with myself, before I can once again engage in the battle of life.

The 8th February.

And where is the free and happy mortal who is permitted to glide through life as on wings, whose forehead reaches the clouds, who can say that the dust on the road of life has not touched his soul, no barrier hemmed in his steps, or obstructed his sight, that every hour he feels within him an eternal bliss and freedom. To few mortals has fate awarded such a lot as awaits Morrik after his heavy trials. My heart beats with joy when I think of the brilliant future that lies before him. How little I grudge him his happiness; I rejoice in it. It seems strange to me, that only a fortnight has passed since I stood beside his bed. How much has occurred since then! When he

hears my name, he will perhaps look up wonderingly, and try to recollect where he met me.

Here I sit thinking and planning for his future, like an old woman who after many long years is told that a friend of her youth has thriven and prospered in life, and who says: "He has well deserved it; his character was noble and generous; I knew him well when I was young!"

The 12th February.

The wisest thing I now can do is honestly to confess my folly and then have a good laugh at myself. How long is it since I again resolved to be a true combatant? And now? What a heroic achievement to lay down my arms and run away without having even the courage to desert, but to lose heart when half way, and turn back again. Well done brave warrior! If I did not look on the whole thing from a ludicrous point of view, I should feel deeply ashamed of myself.

Well this afternoon the air was so warm and springlike that the sun drove me from my customary lonely walk on the Küchelberg. Not a breeze stirred, little lizards whisked about as gaily as in summer, and there is no foliage to afford shade; the tendrils which were formerly trained into cooling bowers have probably a good reason of their own for not budding as yet.

I turned back, and for the first time for many days ventured on the Wassermauer, which was not much frequented.

My heart beat as though everyone already knew that I had slipped into the society of the doomed, under false colours, and had been sent back with a protest.

I tried to find a ready answer in case anybody should ask me; "and so you have changed your mind, and are not going to die?" All the small sins I had committed in the belief that it was pardonable to gratify every wish, as the wish of one dying, rose in array against me. How impolite, how regardless of giving offence I had been to every one for whose good opinion I did not care. There is that stout old gentleman with a small thermometer in his button-hole, who fastens or unfastens one of the buttons of his overcoat at every degree more or less of cold. At first he had lectured me about my health, and I had not only continued my imprudent courses but even, when I once met the fat philanthropist, unconsciously let down my veil, to his great astonishment. There is that young girl, with whom I never exchanged another word, because after the first quarter of an hour of our acquaintance she kissed me, and read aloud a poem which her brother had composed. There is that lady with her two big mustachioed sons, who with great foresight, had cautioned me against any flirtation with them, and after all was much offended when I followed her advice and turned my back on them; and above all the poor little chronicler of scandal, who can now only come out by means of an arm-chair, but still has strength enough left to rejoice over the weaknesses of her fellow creatures. What a character she will give me, when she arrives in the next world before me! Well I hope He who judges up yonder will be more lenient than the good people here below. I was thinking over all this, and feeling very much provoked at my own paltry cowardice which seemed to flourish again and prevented me from attaining the indifference and disdain with which I had formerly looked down on the life here, when I reached the Winter garden, and glancing along the benches and arbours, what I saw there put the finishing stroke on my remaining courage. There sat bolt upright, and expanding around her the skirts of a dazzling toilette, the lady without nerves, and beside her, silently looking on the ground, and perfectly restored--Morrik! She was eagerly talking to him, and he listened patiently, a kind smile even brightening his face. I grudged her that smile, as I would have done to no one else. I cannot express the misery I felt, the longing to be away, never to see, or be seen of them again; never to be forced to speak indifferently to those with whom, in the presence of death, I had exchanged words full of weal or woe.

I fled across the bridge, and along the highroad which leads through the beautiful valley of the Adige, and after passing several villages reaches Botzen sixteen miles off. I soon left the first village of Untermals behind me, and then sat down on a bench, and there collected my thoughts sufficiently to devise a plan, which though wiser than the rest was still exceedingly foolish. If I walk on for several hours, I thought, I shall reach Botzen to-day, and probably some carriage or omnibus may overtake me, and give me a lift. Once at Botzen, I can write to the people with whom I lodged, and apprise them that I was forced to leave suddenly, send them some money, and beg them to pack my things and forward them to me. By so doing, I should never again see them all, and should avoid the trials and pain of leave taking in case anyone should care about my departure--at least it will not trouble *my* rest. And who will care? Perhaps the doctor, and I can write to him. I need not be uneasy about *him* whom I once called my friend. He must have *quite* recovered, if he can sit beside the lady without nerves, and smile when she speaks to him in her shrill voice. When I had taken this resolution, I felt quite satisfied, at least I fancied that I was so; so I walked bravely on towards the south, and tried to enjoy the fine scenery around me; the green meadows, the bare rugged mountains with the snow glittering on their summits, the picturesque houses of the peasants, the vineyards, the rushing streams which I passed on my way, and above all, I tried to rejoice in the thought that I had now put an end to all my doubts and cares, and had depended on no one but myself. It seemed quite a relief to return home, and to hide my broken wings. They had been too weak to soar aloft, and had not borne the test of freedom. Is not that a common misfortune among caged birds?

The sun had now set. I had passed a village the name of which I did not know, and had there drunk a small glass of wine as, I was shivering in my light cloak. The air was sharper than was agreeable to a patient spoiled by the warm sun of Meran. I became more and more uneasy as I wandered alone, along the highroad, in the twilight. I often looked back to see if nothing was coming that might give me a lift. An omnibus passed me, but it was crowded with smoking peasants, and did not look inviting.

After having walked on for another hour, nearly famished, and with no shelter in view, the brave heroine who had formed such daring projects, sat down on a stone by the way-side, and had a good cry, like any other baby which had strayed from its home. Truly death is easy, and life is hard!

Heaven knows what would have become of me had not a lucky chance, no, it was kind Providence, taken compassion on me. Suddenly I heard the rolling of a light cart, and the crack of a whip, and looking up I recognized in the charioteer, my friend of the Kùchelberg, Ignatius.

After scanning the lonely figure, with sharp eyes he pulled up. A touching scene of recognition took place, which ended by Ignatius lifting me into his cart, and driving me homewards. He had concluded some wine business in Vilpian and was in high spirits. He was quite satisfied with my declaration, that lost in thought, I had walked on and so strayed far from Meran. There I sat wrapped up in coverings, and conveyed home as speedily as possible. Fortunately we did not approach Meran before dark, and did not meet anyone except the doctor, who came out of a house just as we were passing through Untermais, and who little suspected who was hiding from him in that cloak and veil. During the drive, kind Ignatius gave me a detailed description of his conjugal felicity, with a freedom of expression which I had to pardon on account of the wine of Vilpian which had loosened his tongue. "Certainly," he remarked, "Liesi still had her old propensity for setting down and knowing better; but he had at last come to the conclusion that she really *did* know better. A single person did so many foolish things, but when two kept house together all was quite different. Where one was at fault, the other succeeded, and two pair of eyes saw just twice as sharp as a single pair could do. Then his Liese was so handy and clever in every respect, just as he had always wished his wife to be. She always had a kind word for him, in short, life seemed a paradise to him since his marriage." Once he asked after the gentleman who had been with me at Schönna. When I told him that he had quite recovered his former health, he hummed a song, and nodded and winked at me so mischievously that I got quite angry.

The good people with whom I lodge, stared in astonishment when I told them how far I had wandered. I then informed them that I would leave after another week. I have been told that the passage over the Brenner is now free from snow and the cold is not very keen. I must take advantage of this early, and probably transient, spring for my passage over the Alps....

I now make a solemn vow that to-morrow I will do public penance for my childish flight of to-day. I will walk on the Wassermauer, speak to my few acquaintances, and tell them how marvellously I have recovered my health. I will confront even the lady without nerves, and see if I cannot be restored to her favour. It would have been really too disgraceful if I had reached Botzen. To run, away like a rogue who dares not look an honest man in the face. Then I quite forgot too that this diary would have remained here, and who knows into whose hands it might have fallen.

The next day--Spring has burst forth.

Can one write down what the heart can neither seize, nor comprehend? I will try.

When I rose in the morning I did not in the least fear all the trials which this day would bring me, all the tests of courage I would have to undergo in front of the enemy. Had I known what bliss was awaiting me, I should have perhaps run away overpowered by its greatness. Yesterday I wrote that life was hard to bear; but hardest of all for a poor weak heart to bear, is great happiness when it has never before tasted it from youth upwards, and is then suddenly crushed and overpowered by its weight. It cannot cease to ask itself, "Will it not be taken from me before my strength is equal to it?" There is one comfort however in this, that no true happiness has to be borne alone. This deep and heartfelt bliss can only be given us by a fellow creature, who in bestowing it on us, shares it with us. There lie the first violets they too bear witness to the spring which has this day come to me. I had a refreshing rest after my long wandering of yesterday; softly rocked to sleep by a conscience which had grown quite easy since I had firmly resolved not to be ashamed before the world of the crime I had committed in returning to life.

When I rose the day was far advanced. While dressing my hair before the glass I perceived that my colour was returning, and when I put on my dress, I remarked that I could no longer wear my funereal clothes; they have become much too tight for me and confine my chest. The old hoary headed pedlar came in good time! It is long since I have had a fit of vanity. But if one is to live, why not do like other women? When I had done plaiting my hair, I came to the conclusion that after all, I did not look so very old. I do not know how it happened, but my thoughts then suddenly turned to the young Pole, and I began to consider what charm was attached to me, that anyone could fall in love with, at ten paces distance. Probably it is all a matter of taste.

For the first time I was ashamed of my old-fashioned clothes, and when putting on my hat,



determined to have a new ribbon for it, before I ventured out on my thorny walk among the strangers. And so it came to pass that as I was going to leave my room, my head filled with finery like that of a silly Miss in her teens, the door opened and in walked Morrik. I verily believe that he had forgotten to knock. I was somewhat startled, but he did not seem to notice it. He was quite absent and shy.

He did not even sit down, but walked at once to the window, and admired the view; then examined the writing-table, and talked about rococo furniture with the air of a connoisseur. All at once he burst forth, and begged my pardon for the liberty he had taken in calling on me, but that he was starting for Venice tomorrow morning, and wished to take leave of me. He wanted also to excuse himself to me and to thank me.

I sat down on the little sofa, and could find no word in reply but: "Won't you sit down." I still had my hat on which did not appear very hospitable but he seemed to think of nothing but how to express in words, what weighed on his mind.

"What must you have thought of me," he at last said, "when you neither saw nor heard anything of me, after that night when you, and the doctor watched by my bedside. But I am not quite so bad, so heartless, so ungrateful, as you must have supposed me. The truth is that I can recollect no more of what happened during my illness than I can remember of an uneasy dream. I certainly fancied that I had seen you at my bedside, that I had received the medicines from your hands, and that it was you who had arranged my pillows. I had also a vague impression of some strange scene between you and my *bête noire*, the lady without nerves. But when I had considered it all, it appeared to me, so strange that I quickly banished it from my mind. Had I not received the letter from you, in which you so seriously and decidedly bade me farewell. To be sure your landlady came daily to inquire for me, but then many other persons did the same. Why should you not have been civil, though everything was at an end between us. So I feared to act against your stringent orders, by trying once more to approach you. I even doubted whether you would not consider it as an offence if I were to write a line to you before leaving, and send you a bouquet as is customary in this country. You will now understand my astonishment when having accidentally met the life preserver, I heard from her that all that had seemed to me a dream, had actually taken place; that you had really been my deliverer and faithful guardian, and with noble generosity, had taken pity on my sufferings and not resented all that had estranged us, and had so suddenly put an end to the bright and happy days of yore. Now I can hardly thank you sufficiently. I feel quite unhappy, and bewildered when I think of the past. I wished to tell you so yesterday, and to clear up all that must have seemed incomprehensible to you, but you were out when I called. Were you not told that I had been here twice? Perhaps you would rather leave everything unexplained, as it was before; quite without, my knowledge and will. Your interest was only for the dying man. Now that it is decided that I am to live, I am perhaps quite as much estranged from you as when I rashly uttered the words that pained you so much. Well, I am to leave Meran to-morrow, and you will be freed from the constraint which my presence has caused you."

What I answered; what he said, when he spoke again; how it came that his hand held mine, and that he again called me "Marie," as he formerly had done, how can I tell?

The air seemed suddenly filled with intoxicating music, my eyes were dazzled with the rays of heavenly light which appeared to stream through the room. How long this ecstasy lasted I know not; all I know is that Eternity opened before me. I had died happy and without agony, and now I was awakened to a new life, in heaven and yet in this world; dead to all the small cares and fainted-heartedness of human life, and arisen to the full glory of peace, everlasting trust, and the eternal knowledge of the truth.

"Come," he said at last, "you are ready for a walk; let us make our bridal visits."

I took his arm, and he first led me across the passage into the workshop of my landlord, where the good old Meister and his apprentices stared at us, and the Fran Meisterin hearing the news, rushed into the room, with a frying pan, which she was just going to put on the fire, still in her hand; she loudly sang my praises, and congratulated Morrik on having secured such a treasure as a wife, till I at last burst out laughing through my tears. Then we walked through the town, and he now and then entered a shop, and bought most useless things only for the pleasure of saying, "Send it to the lodgings of my betrothed, you know the house of the tailor, three stairs high, next door to heaven," and he said it all with perfect gravity.

When we arrived on the Wassermuer, all the strangers were assembled as if by appointment. The band was playing, and for the first time, it seemed to me, that the instruments were in tune, and the musicians keeping time.

At first I felt rather embarrassed, as all eyes were upon me, but that soon passed off, and I was infinitely amused to see how amiable and friendly every one had suddenly become, and how pleased I was with them. We first turned to the life preserver, and actually something like a tear glistened in her small unmeaning eyes when Morrik kissed her hand and told her she was as yet the only woman who had made me jealous. This speech procured me a gracious kiss on the forehead and the assurance that my behaviour was to be overlooked in consideration of my jealousy, and weak nerves. Then came the lady with her two smart sons, the sister with her brother the poet and even the fat gentleman with the thermometer at his button-hole. From them

all we received congratulations, and they all assured us that they had known it long ago; to which Morrik answered that in that case they had known more than we ourselves had done; he even joked with the little *chronique scandaleuse*, who alone persisted in treating me with icy coldness. To a child who offered me a bunch of violets he gave his whole purse. The sun shone, the trumpets seemed to call the spring from its winter sleep. And yonder in the churchyard where I had chosen a sunny little corner for my grave, the flowers were blooming, as if after having taught us to live, death had disappeared for ever.

After that, we sat together for a long time and only took leave of each other when the sun was setting.

"Darling," he said, "I have solemnly promised our tyrant the doctor, not to see you again before next spring. Nothing he says is so pernicious to the health of convalescents as a long betrothal between two solitary young people. That was the reason he would never speak out about your nursing me in my fever; although I several times very plainly alluded to it. But you have learned how to write as I know to my own cost, and so we shall still be united. How I shall rejoice at the first letter from you which does not speak of leave taking but of meeting, never to be parted again; not of death, but of a life full of happiness."

We were standing on the stairs in the twilight. We clasped each other's hands and promised to bear this last trial cheerfully. I pressed him once more to my heart before I had to surrender him again; but we both firmly trusted that He who had granted us this happiness would also grant us a future to enjoy it. We shall not in vain have passed from death to life....

I now close this journal: I will send it to you to-day, my dearest friend, perhaps it may amuse you to peruse it on your lonely journey when your thoughts are with me. Is not all I possess, are not all my thoughts yours for ever? The pages contain your name more than once. May it be a clear mirror in which our united images are reflected. I lay this poem between the leaves, I have copied it for you, and have placed beside it one of the violets you gave me to-day. When they bloom again, we shall be once more united, if God permits it--and He *will* permit it.--

Thou shall't not weep but gladdened be  
And bless thyself at noon, at night,  
When free thy soul with wond'ring glee  
Shall joyful taste love's deep delight.

Of life, the tumult all is o'er;  
No sounds to us from earth can soar,  
As heav'nward now our eyes we raise,  
And on the glorious stars we gaze.

Softly the waves of peace shall flow  
O'erwhelming every grief at last;  
And to our senses the bright glow  
Of endless love o'er all is cast.

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## BEATRICE.

## BEATRICE.

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Night was far advanced and yet we three sat together in the cool summer-house, conversing over some bottles of wine from Asti, which we had discovered by a lucky chance, and were now emptying to the health of our friend who had just returned from Italy. He was, by several years,

our senior, and had reached man's estate, when we first met him twelve years ago, on our southern journey. His manly, appearance, the nobility of his demeanour, and a certain pensive charm in his smile had attracted us from the first. His conversation, his universal knowledge, and the unassuming way in which he displayed it, confirmed us in our first impressions, and at the end of the three weeks, which we passed together in Rome, we were united in as firm a friendship as ever existed between men of such different ages. Then he suddenly left us; he was summoned back to Geneva, where he was at the head of a large commercial establishment.

During the succeeding years we never missed an opportunity of meeting again, so he had not hesitated this time to take the longer route through our town for the sake of spending twenty-four hours in our company.

We found him unchanged in his outward appearance; he was still a handsome man, his hair was hardly sprinkled with grey; his high forehead was white and smooth, but he was more silent than formerly. Sometimes he was so absent that he did not hear our questions, but apparently absorbed in his own thoughts gazed at the wine-bubbles in his glass, or holding a lump of ice to the candle watched it slowly melting. We hoped to render him more communicative by making some inquiries respecting his last journey, but finding that even this favourite theme could not arouse him we left him to himself, and kept up the conversation between us, happy to have him at least in the body with us, and patiently waiting for the time when his spirit also should return.

In the meantime I poured forth all the ideas which had lately occupied my mind. They were crude and superficial and would at any other time have provoked a contradiction from our friend who was a sharp and keen logician. The condition of the Italian theatre had given occasion to this discussion. I maintained that it was not in any way surprising if the Italians, in spite of all their pathos and passion, could not equal the dramatic literature of Greece, England, and Germany; nor does it stand higher in France and Spain, formerly so renowned for dramatic glory. The temperament of the Latin races, their nature and cultivation, are so restrained by conventionalities that the tragic element which consists in concentrating all our interest in one single individual is quite unintelligible to them. Nor do they venture to liberate themselves from the trammels of form and give free course to the spontaneous accents of nature which can alone awaken a tragic awe in our hearts.

Like every conversation on elevated subjects which does not blindly grope on the surface of a question, so the present one soon led us to the discussion of the most mysterious depths of human nature.

Whilst Amadeus drew figures with his silver pencil in the spilt wine, Otto warmly defended the conventionalism I had; condemned, and maintained that even fiction should be subjected to strict moral laws. My proposition that the drama should deal with individual, and exceptional cases, rather than with generalities, and exalt natural laws above social ones, seemed to him pernicious and full of danger, for, he said, the conception of a dramatic crime would then be like the harbouring of a demon in our bosom, instigating to the contempt and intolerance of every thing that clashed with our individual feelings and passions. You would thereby destroy the whole social system, which after all must have some reason for existing, in favour of the boundless liberty of the individual. The only merit you appear to recognize in poetry is that which is beyond the pale of every law. I tried to, make him understand that the point in question did not only apply to the collision of the drama with outward forms; in a word that heroic and noble souls were wont to solve the problems of duty, otherwise than those timorous and commonplace formalists who are always regained by petty customs and considerations. Highly gifted natures, who set an example proportionate to their inward strength and greatness, extend by their actions the limits of the moral sphere; and just so, the artist of genius breaks through, or at least extends the limits that confine his art.

If those noble souls are often actuated by pride and excessive self-reliance, do they not atone for it by their tragical end? at least in the eyes of those formalists who regard life as the most precious of gifts, and who for that reason will never engage in any action, or be led away by any opinion, which according to the laws of society must end in death. Such, however, as are capable of understanding the thoughts and feelings by which those noble natures are impelled, will never resign the right of exalting them, for they cannot be meted with the common measure of morality. They who condemn as immoral, what in our wretched and deficient social organisation ought only to be considered as the sacred self-defence of free and strong characters, will never be sensible of the beautiful, or sympathize with what is generous, they will only discern what is profitable.

Thus had I spoken when suddenly Amadeus looked up from his reverie and stretched out his hand to me across the table.

"Thank you," he said, "for these true and noble words you have spoken; they have pleased me much. Amongst us there can be no difference of opinion as to the fact that custom is not the true standard of morality, and that the mission which poetry fulfils lies beyond the pale of human ordinances. I only protest against your assertion that the deficiency of great tragical poets in Italy is to be accounted for by the conventional fetters which restrain the character of the nation. As if capacity of mind, fancy, morality, and the sense of the beautiful must necessarily be equally developed; as if the one did not often outstrip the other.

"If a great tragic genius, such as they once possessed in Alfieri were to be born again to the Italians, the spirit of the nation would not be slow to welcome him, and academic prejudices of style, could no more keep their ground, than enforced conformity to the law can oppose the rights and duties of a free born soul.

"No," he continued, visibly moved, and the tears glistening in his eyes, "the hollow pathos of their tragedies is not the touchstone by which we can judge the soul of that noble nation. I cannot hear you say this without protesting against it, for if ever there existed a self-dependent character, in feelings, and actions; that character was my wife's, and she was an Italian."

He paused, while we sat mute and breathless with surprise. Though we had always presumed ourselves to be well acquainted with him, and all related to him, we now heard for the first time that he had been married to a woman he so highly esteemed, and yet whose existence he had concealed as one conceals a wrong. He rose and paced the narrow and now dusky room, and we did not disturb him either by questions or inquiring looks.

At last he stood still, and began in his deep and mellow voice: "I never told you this because the remembrance of it has always overpowered me, and the mere recalling of these events caused me a fever which laid me prostrate for a week. Still it always seemed to me as if I were wronging you, when I used jestingly to evade your railleries on my bachelorhood. Believe me, it was principally to redress this wrong, that I sought your society when I this time returned from my yearly visit to her grave. Let me therefore simply tell you all that my heart dictates to me; but first I must open this casement; the air here is so oppressive that I breathe with difficulty. So, now, go on with your cigars and your wine, while I walk up and down.

"A quarter of a century has passed since those events, yet they are as present to my memory as if they had happened only yesterday; they will not let me rest."

What he confessed to us in that night, till the day dawned--and even then we could not part--I wrote down the following day, keeping as much as possible to his own words. Then I little thought that they were to be his last ones, his last bequest. He had rightly judged of the power these recollections still exercised over him; they brought on a fever, which clung to him during his homeward journey, and was aggravated by his exertions during a night conflagration, and a few weeks after our meeting the news reached us that we had then seen him for the last time.

The following record is now doubly precious to me, and I can with difficulty bring myself to allow indifferent eyes to peruse his secret. Then again I feel it a duty to bring to light the strange fate of those two hearts. Are not the expressions of noble and generous souls the rightful property of humanity?...

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I had reached my twenty-fifth year when my father died. Standing at his death-bed, after witnessing his painful agony, it seemed to me that ten years had passed over my head. My only sister who was very dear to me, had shortly before married a young agent of our establishment, a Frenchman, whose family had long ago settled at Geneva, and who now entered into partnership with our firm.

He was like a brother to me, and so when he and my sister urged me to travel for several months with the hope of rallying my depressed spirits, I took their advice in this, as in all things, and set out on my journey, the more readily that I felt how necessary to me was some outward diversion to my thoughts.

The change of scene soon realized the hopes of my relations. Youth and vitality were restored. I was again able to enjoy the beauties of nature, and my taste for the fine arts, which had been awakened by my former journeys through France and Germany and now found ample food in Venice and Milan, whither I at first directed my steps, intending to proceed southwards by slow journies.

Above all I was impatient to reach Florence. The marvels I expected to find there caused me to look with indifference on the many beauties of art which I met with on my way thither. Thus I reserved only one day for Bologna, where I took a hasty survey of the churches and galleries in the morning, and in the afternoon I drove out to the old convent of St. Michele at Bosco, in order to quiet my conscience by obtaining a complete view of the wonderful old town from the summit of the hill.

It was one of the hottest days in midsummer, and though I am generally little affected by any temperature, yet the suffocating air on that occasion completely overpowered and exhausted me. The road which leads from St. Michele back to the town was entirely deserted. Above the walls of the gardens the trees and bushes projected their dusty boughs. The wheels of the carriage sank deeply into the burning sand. The coachman drowsily nodded on his seat, and with difficulty kept his balance. The tired horse crawled with drooping head and ears along the edge of the road, in the hope of enjoying the scanty shade which now and then was cast across it by a villa, or a garden-wall. I had stretched out my weary limbs along the back seat of the carriage, and after forming a tent above my head by means of my umbrella I fell into a dose.

Suddenly I was roused from my repose by a rough blow on my face, as if some overhanging bough had grazed me as I passed. I started up, and looking around, discovered a blooming spray

of pomegranate lying beside me. Evidently it had been thrown at me over the neighbouring wall. The movement I had made seemed to be a signal to the horse to stop. The coachman quietly slept on, so I had ample leisure to examine the spot from whence the branch had been thrown at me. I did so all the more carefully that I had heard from behind the high garden wall a suppressed girlish titter at the success of the merry trick. I was not deceived; after waiting a few moments, standing upright in the carriage, and stedfastly gazing at the wall, I perceived a curly head shaded by a large florentine straw hat, arise from behind it. A pair of dark eyes, sparkling with fun underneath the solemn eyebrows, turned towards me, and seemed, to regard me as some strange animal. But when I raised the sprig of pomegranate, and pressing it to my lips, waved it towards the young waylayer, a deep blush suffused her face, and in the next moment the fair vision had disappeared, so that without the branch in my hand I should probably have believed it to be a dream. I left the carriage and pensively walked along the side of the wall, till I reached a high trellised gate which closed the entrance to the garden. Between the old iron bars of massive mediaeval workmanship, I could perceive a part of the grounds of the house which stood with closed Venetian blinds among groups of elm-trees and acacias. I shook the lock of the gate, but it would not open; my hand had already grasped the bell rope, when I was seized with sudden shyness at the thought of entering these strange premises. What a figure I should cut were I asked the reason of my intrusion. So I contented myself with patiently waiting for several minutes in the hope of once more seeing the youthful thrower of sprigs. In the meantime I scanned the house, which was in no way remarkable, as attentively as if I had intended to draw it from memory. At last the heat of the sun became unbearable, and I returned to my umbrella tent. This roused the coachman, he jerked the reins and away we crawled; I with my head still turned backwards, though no trace of the fair one was to be discovered.

When I reached the hotel of the three pilgrims, a heavy shower freshened the oppressive air, and during the night the streets were so deliciously cool and damp, that I never wearied of sauntering through the long arcades, now stopping to drink a glass of iced water at some coffee house; now admiring the portal of some church in the dim light of the lamps. But in spite of the fatigue caused by this continual walking and standing, I could find no rest till the morning dawned. I would not believe that it was the fair young face that kept me awake, though it continually rose before my eyes; I had always considered it a fable that the spark from a single glance could set fire to the heart, so I believed my restlessness to be caused by overstrained nerves.

The next morning however when my hotel bill which I had ordered the evening before was brought to me, I perceived, now that departure was at hand, how painful it was to tear myself away. I became pensive; then I suddenly recollected that a friend of our firm lived in Bologna whom I ought to visit. Generally my conscience was not over sensitive in these matters, but now it seemed to me that this civility was of great importance. I also reproached myself for the superficial way in which I had looked at Raphael's St. Cecilia, not to mention several other sins of omission. I discovered that Bologna was a most remarkable town, and that after all Florence would always remain within reach.

I finally succeeded in persuading myself that the pretty thrower of flowers had not the slightest share in this sudden change in my plans. Strange to say the outlines of her face, when I tried to recall them vanished more, and more from my mind, and at last I could only remember the expression of her eyes. During the day time while I fulfilled my duties as a tourist, I did not feel any particular agitation, but when the intense heat had subsided, and I directed my steps towards the villa, as though it were a matter of course, I felt a strange uneasiness, and I can even now recollect the songs which I sang to raise my spirits.

I soon reached the spot and found everything just as I had seen it yesterday. The house looked more cheerful, now that the Venetian blinds were drawn up, and on the balcony stood a little dog, who when he saw me stop at the gate, barked furiously. I could not muster courage to ring the bell. It seemed as if a secret presentiment warned me, and I almost wished never to see that fair face again, and to depart early next morning with an unscathed heart. Nevertheless I once more walked round the boundary wall which extended for some distance, and was bordered on the further side by some peasants' huts, and a few fields of maize, nowhere a living creature was to be seen. I had now reached a point where a low hedge touched the garden wall; I could easily climb upon it, and from thence overlook the garden. As nobody appeared. I boldly ventured. The bough's of a large evergreen oak-tree projected beyond the wall, and I hastily scrambled up and clung to the lowest branch for support. I could not have chosen a better place; at a distance of hardly fifty paces I saw on the parched up lawn which now lay in the shade, two young girls who were playing at battle door and shuttle cock quite unconscious of being watched. One of them wore a white dress and the broad brimmed straw hat which I had remarked the day before. She was of middle height with a figure as straight and slender as a young poplar tree. She moved like a bird with a graceful agility such as I fancied that I had never before seen. Her black hair loosened by her lively movements, flowed freely over her shoulders. The face was very pale, only lighted up by the eyes and teeth. Suddenly the shuttlecock was thrown awkwardly, and she burst into a merry laugh which made my heart throb violently, and the hedge appeared to tremble under my feet. Her play fellow was dressed like her; only with less elegance; she seemed to be of an inferior rank.

I hardly noticed her, I was wholly engrossed by her charming companion. The way in which she lifted her arm to throw the shuttlecock, the eager look in her eyes when she raised them to

await the coming one, her delight when the shuttlecock described a circuit in the air, the shake of her head at any failure, every gesture was in itself a picture of youthful charm and vigour.

I clearly felt that my fate was sealed, and for the first time in my life I surrendered myself to the sensations which overpowered and ensnared me. In the midst of this rapture, I considered how I could draw nearer to her without startling her, when chance--no auspicious fate--came to my aid. The shuttlecock, which had been sent up high into the air, flew over the top of the oak-tree under which I was concealed, and fell at some distance into the neighbouring fields. She looked anxiously after it. I do not know whether she then perceived me, but when I instantly sprang after it and re-appeared on the wall with it, I noticed that her dark eyes turned towards the place where I had stood with an astonished and displeased expression. The other girl shrieked, and ran up to her, whispering something which I did not understand, but I could see by her gestures that she urged her to immediate flight. The fair creature however did not listen to her, but waited quietly till it should please the stranger to restore her property. When I delayed, quite absorbed in my admiration, her face assumed a haughty and defiant look, and she turned coldly from me. I held up the shuttlecock and with a hasty gesture entreated her to remain. Then I took from my neck a velvet ribbon, to which was attached a gold locket in the shape of a heart containing my sister's hair, fastened them carefully to the feathered ball, and threw it towards her. Fortunately it fell just at her feet, and lay on the light gravel of the walk.

She took a few steps with a most stately air, and picked up the shuttlecock; and noticing the locket she darted a quick and flashing glance at me which pierced me to the very marrow.

Her companion approached her, and seemed to make some inquiry. She did not answer, but silently put the shuttlecock and the trinket into her pocket, and then with inimitable dignity, waved the shuttlecock which she held in her hand towards me thanking me, as a princess might, for an homage due to her.

Then she turned and walked slowly towards the house without once looking back.

I now had no further pretext for remaining perched on the wall, and I dared not make another attempt to see her again on that day; and then what would have been the use of it, had I not gained my point for the present. She had evidently recognized me. My reappearance sufficiently expressed my feelings. I had laid my heart at her feet; she had accepted it, and it was now in her possession. Ought I not to leave her time to think over all this. I was so agitated that had I met her then, I should only have been able to stammer out some confused words like a person in a fever.

That night I slept but little, but in the course of my life I never again lay awake and counted the hours with so much pleasure.

At day break I rose, entered the picture gallery as soon as it was open and remained sitting before the St. Cecilia for full two hours. There I searched my inmost soul as before a clear mirror. I felt that the spark which had reached my heart was of the true heavenly fire, and not a transitory illusion of the senses. Those two hours were wonderfully sweet. It was an anticipation of future bliss and at the same time an exceeding happiness as if she were sitting close to me, and I felt her heart beating against mine. The St. Cecilia before me, her eyes calmly turned heavenwards, could not have had a purer foretaste of the celestial joys than I had that morning. Again I waited till the time for the siesta had passed, before I turned my steps towards the villa. But this time I did not content myself with merely looking through the bars of the gate. I boldly pulled the bell and was not even startled by the endless jingle it produced. The little dog rushed, barking furiously, on the balcony, and out of a small side door, which was next a larger glass one, issued a little man with enormous grey moustachios which gave him a ridiculously martial appearance. He approached the gate with evident astonishment at the unexpected visit. I repeated the sentence without faltering which I had rehearsed previously; I was a stranger and intended to publish a book about Italy, and amongst the rest I wished to introduce a chapter on the country houses of Bologna. So it was of great importance to me to be allowed to examine this house. Particularly as it was built in the old style, and was in many respects remarkable.

The old man did not seem to understand this. "I am very sorry sir," he replied, "but I cannot admit you. The villa belongs to General Alessandro T.... under whose command I served. I know your country well, sir, I marched through Switzerland under Bonaparte. Afterwards when all was at an end and my wounds became troublesome, my general transferred me to this quiet post; and when he married for the second time, he entrusted his daughter to my care, for you well know sir, how it is when the daughter is handsomer than the young step-mother. So we live here in great retirement, but the Signorina wants for nothing, for her papa sends her some handsome present nearly every week; the best masters, come to teach her singing and languages, and my own daughter is an excellent companion for her. Only she never goes up to town, her step-mother does not care to have her there, but that does not distress her, so long as her father is allowed to come and see her, once a month. Every time he comes, he enjoins me over and over again to keep his child as the apple of my eye. And on the Sundays when she goes to hear mass, Nina and I accompany her and never lose sight of her. What do you expect to see in this old house? I assure you it does not differ in any respect from other villas, and nothing remarkable grows in the garden. There is no need to put us in some book; what would my master say to it. Possibly I might lose my situation notwithstanding my old age."

I tried to appease him, and succeeded if not with words, at least by pressing a gold piece into his hand.

"I see," he resumed, "you are an honest young man, and would not be the ruin of an old soldier. If you persist in your wish, I will lead you through the house, so that you may satisfy your curiosity. I can do so the more easily, that the Signorina is just now at her singing lesson, so she will not know that I have admitted a stranger."

He unlocked the gate with a heavy key and preceded me towards the house. The ground floor partly consisted of a large cool hall, from which the sun was shut out by closed Venetian blinds, and heavy curtains. True to my assumed character, I begged him to let in some light so that I might see the different paintings which hung on the walls. They were all family portraits of little value; only one of them which hung above the chimney piece engrossed my attention. "This is the mother of the Signorina," said the old man, "I mean the real mother, who has been dead these fifteen years. She was a handsome woman; the people here called her the beautiful saint. Her daughter is very like her, only she is more cheerful. She resembles a bird, who always merry, hops up and down in its cage."

"She seems to possess the voice of a bird, as well," I remarked, with all the indifference I could assume, "if that is hers which we now hear above us."

"You are right," said the old man. "The director of the Opera in town comes here twice a week. When her papa (*il babbo* he called him) pays her his monthly visit, he always stays many hours, and she sings all her new songs to him, and then the poor old gentleman feels as happy as if he were in Paradise. He has not many joys, and without that child he were better in another world."

"What is the matter with him," I asked, "is he ill?"

"As you take it;" replied the old man, with a shrug of his shoulders; "I for my part would prefer death to such a life. For those who knew him when he was still in the army--the giant of Giovanni de Bologna on the market-place, does not look more high spirited, and chivalrous, than did my general--And now! it breaks lay heart to think of it. The whole day long he sits in his arm-chair by the window, and cuts out pictures or plays at dominoes--It seems as if he neither heard nor saw, but when his wife speaks to him, he looks up timidly and nods acquiescence to everything she says. Only with regard to the Signorina he has remained the same, and is not easily to be deceived. Those who attempted it would soon perceive that the old lion's paws have still some strength left in them although his claws have been cut."

"But how came he to sink into that melancholy condition?"

"No one knows. Many things have occurred in this house but the outer world only whispers them. My belief is, that, that woman; I mean to say her Excellency, the young Signora struck his heart a deadly blow and he has never recovered from it. So he drags on the burden with which he has loaded himself, as a resolute old soldier bears hunger and thirst though he should dwindle to a shadow. Well, well, these are old stories now, and cannot be altered."

During this conversation we had ascended the stair, and were approaching the room from which the singing proceeded. The voice had a crude inflexible sound; it was a high youthful even boyish soprano. It seemed as if she sang only to give utterance to her thoughts perfectly careless of the sound.

"What is the Signorina's name?" I asked, when we had reached the top of the stairs.

"Beatrice. We call her 'Bicetta.' Oh what a priceless heart is hers! My Nina often says to me, 'Father,' she says, 'if the Signorina is to wait for a husband worthy of her she will remain unmarried.' See here, Sir; this is her sitting-room. There are her books. She often sits up half the night, Nina says, and reads them in many languages. Adjoining is the little bedroom where the two girls sleep. That picture there, above her bed, represents my poor master in his General's uniform as he used to lead us into action. That small figure in the background who brandishes his musket is me, says the Signorina, and she has lately added the grey moustachioes to give it more resemblance. But come away Sir, there is noting remarkable in here, the furniture is old. The General once wanted to furnish it anew, but the child would not hear of it because everything had been left just as it was when her deceased mother passed the first summer of her married life in this house. There on the balcony she used of an evening to sit rocking her child's cradle, and waiting for the return of her husband when he had gone to town on business."

I stepped out strangely moved and stooped to caress the little dog who wagged his tail and licked my hand. Every word which the faithful old man spoke added fuel to the fire which burnt in my breast, and the voice in the adjoining room fanned the flame with its breath.

Fearing to betray myself, I talked of the way in which the grounds were laid out, about the inlaid table of mosaic work, which stood in the middle of the room; of the faded fresco painting on the ceiling. I could not tear myself away though my guide grew impatient.

Suddenly the singing ceased; the door was thrown open, and she appeared on the threshold, holding a sheet of music in her hand. She had never been so near me, yet I did not discern her features more distinctly than I had done before.

Everything seemed to dance before my eyes I only remarked at the first glance that she wore my locket round her neck.

The old man started back at her appearance and stammered out some clumsy excuse, at the same time stealthily pulling at my coat.

"Never mind, Fabio," she said, "you can shew the gentleman all over the house, and through the grounds, if he cares to see them." Then turning to her companion, who sat on a low chair with some embroidery in her hand; "You can go with them, Nina. But stay I will first tell you something." She whispered some words to her, her eyes always fixed on me, and then bowed gracefully, to me, who could not utter a word. In so doing she pressed her right hand as if involuntarily on her locket, then returned to her singing-master, who had watched this interlude with curious eyes, and the lesson was quietly resumed whilst we three ascended the next flight of stairs. The old man's daughter walked before us and at every turn of the steps, she examined me with a pensive look but did not speak a word. Only when we had entered the garden, she said to her father: "Bicetta charged me to pluck two oranges for the gentleman. She thought he might be thirsty after his long walk. We will pass by the fountain where they are ripest." I followed them as if in a trance, and looked up at the house towards the window from whence we could still hear her voice. The blind was partially drawn up, so I could perceive her standing in the apartment. I fancied that she turned, and followed me with her eyes. Nina also looked up, and then at me. I did not care to hide my feelings from her, I even wished to make them known to her. But as her father was present I could only whisper to her, when we reached the gate and she gave me the oranges: "Express my thanks to the Signorina, and tell her that she will hear more of me. Give back one of these oranges to her, and tell her when she eats it...."

But before I could finish the sentence the old man came close to us. He took leave of me with much less amiability than he had admitted me.

I repeated my promise not to betray him, but another suspicion seemed to weigh on his mind, for his honest face remained gloomy.

I passed the night in writing a long letter in which I disclosed to her the state of my feelings and placed my future happiness in her hands. Even in those moments of absorbing passion the step which I was blindly taking appeared to me somewhat wild and romantic, but I took up the orange which lay beside me on the table, pressed it to my lips, and closing my eyes represented her to my imagination as she stood on the threshold, gave me that long and loving look, and bowed laying her hand on the locket.

After having written the letter I slept very quietly, and only awoke when it was broad daylight. I again waited for the approach of evening before I took the decisive walk as my own letter carrier.

Fortune smiled on me. I had composed a most impressive speech, with which I hoped to persuade the old man in case he refused to deliver the letter. But this time Nina came to open the gate. The intelligent girl did not seem the least astonished at my reappearance. She took the letter unhesitatingly, but when I asked her if she thought the Signorina would send an answer, she assumed a diplomatic tone, and said: "Who can tell?" I told her that I would return to-morrow at the same hour, and begged her to await me at the gate, so that I need not ring the bell and let her father into the secret.

"My father!" she exclaimed laughingly. "We are not afraid of him. Bicetta need only smile on him and then she can twist him round her little finger in spite of his savage air--Come somewhat later to-morrow; we have our drawing lesson just at this hour, and cannot send away the master for your sake. Will you do so?"

A carriage now rapidly approached the gate. I had just time to whisper "yes" to the girl before she silently vanished. Then I hastened away for I did not wish to be seen before that gate.

The carriage drew up before the house and my greybearded friend, the steward, jumped from his seat beside the coachman and assisted a tall white haired old gentleman to descend from the carriage. I recognized him at once to be Beatrice's father from the resemblance of their features. He walked with unsteady steps, stooping forward, and rubbing his hands, while a delighted smile overspread his countenance. A footman took a basket of flowers, and several parcels from the carriage, and carried them after him. I pressed close to the wall so that I escaped notice, and at the same time could watch the whole scene. Before the bell had been rung, the door flew open, and the slender white figure of Bicetta clung to her father, who threw his arms round her neck with a touching tenderness, and partly walking partly carried by him she disappeared into the house with the old gentleman. The others followed, and with a pang of envy I saw the gate close behind them. How the remaining hours of that day, and the following night passed I know not. It seemed to me that a constant twilight surrounded me, a sweet lethargy overpowered me, and a celestial harmony filled my soul. Strange to say though I generally felt little assurance in my intercourse with women notwithstanding my reputation as a good looking young fellow, this time I confidently awaited the decision of my fate, no more doubting that I possessed her heart than I doubted that the sun would rise on the morrow. Only the hours that must pass before I could hear it from her own lips, appeared endless to me. I must here mention an adventure which I had next day in one of the churches. As I roved about the streets hoping by continual movement to



restrain my impatience, almost unconsciously I entered a church. Neither paintings, nor pillars, nor the people who knelt before the altars could awaken any interest in me at that moment. My thoughts were far away, and I even forgot to tread softly though mass was going on, till the angry mutterings of an old woman made me aware of my unseemly behaviour. So I stood still behind a pillar, and listened to the music of the organ and the tinkling of the bells, and inhaled the smoke of the incense.

As I absently surveyed the kneeling multitude--I, the son of a rigid calvinist, of course abstained from that devout practice.--I remarked on one of the more retired chairs, just in front of me, a pair of dark blue eyes, underneath a white brow, surrounded by auburn curls. Those eyes were fastened on me, and never changed their direction during the whole service.

I confess that at any other time I would have replied to that mute appeal, but on that morning I was perfectly insensible to any allurements, and should probably have left the church, if I had not feared to cause a second disturbance. When mass was ended, the handsome woman hastily rose, drew her lace veil over her head, and walked straight up to me. Her figure was faultless, perhaps somewhat too plump, but the agile grace of her movements gave her a very youthful appearance. In the white ungloved hand which held her veil together, she carried a small fan with a mother of pearl handle. When she was close to me, she partly opened this fan, and moved it carelessly, whilst her eyes were fixed on mine with a quiet but significant gaze. When I appeared not to understand her, she tossed up her head, smiled haughtily, so that her white even teeth glittered, and rustled past me. A moment later I had forgotten this interlude; yet all my joy had suddenly vanished. As the evening approached, I felt more and more uneasy, and when the appointed hour struck I dragged myself towards the villa like a criminal who is to appear before his judge. I started back when instead of Nina, whom I had expected I found her father waiting for me at the gate. But the old man though he looked very morose, nodded when I appeared and beckoned to me to approach. "You have written to the Signorina," he said, with a shake of his head, "why have you done so? If I had thought you would do such a thing you should never with my consent have entered the house. Oh, my poor dear Master--after all my promises to him--and who knows what will be the end of it. I dare not think of it all."

"Dear old friend," I replied, "nothing shall be done behind your back. Had you been at home yesterday, I would certainly have given you the letter, and as for that, you could have read it and convinced yourself that my intentions are most honourable. But tell me, for heaven's sake?" ....

"Come now," he interrupted, "do not let us waste our time. You are an honourable young man, and besides, how can such a poor old fool as I am, prevent these things, even if I tried it. Believe me, sir, she is the mistress, in spite of her youth. When she says: 'I will!' no one can resist her. Now, she will see you; she wishes to speak to you herself."

All my senses reeled at these words; I had hardly dared to hope for a letter and now this!--

The old man himself seemed moved when I impetuously pressed his hand. He led me towards the house, and as on the previous occasion we entered by the side-door into the large hall on the groundfloor. This time all the curtains and jalousies were opened, to let in the red glow of the setting sun; two chairs stood opposite the chimney, and from one of them the figure of the girl, so dear to me, arose and took a few steps towards me. She held a book in her hand and between its leaves I saw my letter. Her abundant hair was tied up this time and a black ribbon was twined through it. On her neck I again noticed my locket.

"Fabio," she said, "open the door towards the garden, and wait on the terrace in case I should have some orders for you."

The old man bowed respectfully, and obeyed. In the meantime we stood motionless beside each other, and my heart beat so violently that I could not utter a word. Her eyes were fixed on mine with a grave expression partly of inquiry, and partly of wonder.

A last she regained her full composure, and appeared to understand what a moment before had been unintelligible to her. She stretched out her hand which I eagerly seized, but dared not press to my lips.

"Come and sit down beside me," she said, "I have much to tell you. Do you see this portrait before us? It is my mother's; she died long ago. When I got your letter I sat down before her and asked her what answer I ought to give you. It seemed to me that she assented to nothing but the truth. And the truth is, that from the moment I saw you in the carriage, all my thoughts went with you, and there they will remain till I die." I cannot express what I felt at these simple words. I fell on my knees before her, seized both her hands and covered them with kisses and tears.

"Why do you weep," she asked and tried to raise me, "Are you not happy? I am full of joyfulness. I have suffered much, but now all is blotted out. Now I only know that we are firmly united and I can never again be unhappy."

She rose, I sprang up. Intoxicated with joy, I tried to press her to my heart, but she gently stepped back.

"No, Amadeus," she said, "that must not be. You now know that I am yours, and will never be taken from you by any other man; but let us be calm. I have considered the matter during the

long night that has passed. You cannot come here any more. I have promised it to poor Fabio. This is the first, and the last time that we meet here. If you repeated your visit I should soon have no other will but yours, and I will never dishonour my father's name. Listen, you must go to him, you will find no difficulty in introducing yourself in his house, so many young men," she added with a sigh, "even perfect strangers are received there. When he knows you more intimately, and has given you his confidence, then demand my hand. You may also tell him that we know each other and that I will never marry any other than you. All the rest leave to me, and above all promise not to speak of this to my stepmother; she does not love me, does not wish me to be happy. Oh, Amadeus, is it possible that you can love me as much as I love you? Did you not feel the first time we met, as if a flash of lightning had fallen from heaven, as if the earth trembled and the trees and bushes were on fire! I do not know how it occurred to me to throw a branch of blossoms on the stranger who slept underneath his umbrella. I could not even see your face; it was a childish trick, and I repented if it a moment later; yet an irresistible impulse made me look once more over the wall, and then when I saw you standing in the carriage and waving the branch of pomegranate blossoms towards me, I was seized as with a fever and from that moment you have always been before me whatever I do."

I had led her back to her chair, and holding her hand in mine, I told her how I had passed the last few days. She did not look at me while I spoke so that I could only see her fair profile. Every part of her face, even the pure and spiritual palor of her complexion, and the violet shade under her eyes, were full of expression. Then I too became silent, and felt the warm blood, rush through the delicate veins of the small hand that lay clasped in mine.

Old Fabio discreetly looked in, and asked if we wished for some fruit.

"Later," she replied, "or are you now thirsty, Amadeus?"

"To drink from your lips," I whispered.

She shook her head, and looked grave, as she knit her finely pencilled eyebrows.

"You do not love me," I said.

"Far too well," she replied with a sigh.

Then she rose. "Let us walk round the garden," she said, "before the sun is quite set. I will pluck some oranges for you. This time I need not bid Nina do so."

So we walked on, and she holding fast by my hand, asked me about my country, my parents, and if the hair in the locket were my own. When I told her that my sister had given it to me, she enquired after her. "We will go and see her," she said, "she must love me, for I already love her. But we cannot stay there. My father cannot live without me, I am his only joy. You will come to Bologna with me, will you not?" I promised all she desired. Nothing seemed impossible to me now that one miracle had been performed, and she looked upon me with the eyes of love. After that she became exceedingly merry, and we laughed and chatted as happy as children, and ended by throwing oranges at each other. "Come," she said, "let us have a game at battledore and shuttlecock. Nina shall play with us, though she almost makes me jealous, by constantly speaking of you. See, how she slips away, as if she feared to disturb us. Might not heaven, and earth, and all mankind listen to what we say?"

She called her companion, and the good girl came up to us, gave me her hand and said: "I hope, you will deserve your happiness. I would have grudged her to any man but you. If you do not make her happy, Signor Amadeo, then beware!"

This menace was accompanied by so vehement and tragic a gesture that we both laughed, and she herself joined us.

On the lawn, where I had seen the girls at their play, we now all three threw the feathered balls, and were soon as much engrossed with our game, as if we had never had any more serious thought in our lives, and had not decided on all our future happiness an hour before.

Papa Fabio did not appear again. When the shade grew deeper the two girls accompanied me to the gate. I was dismissed without a kiss from those dear and lovely lips. I could only seize her hand through the bars and press a parting kiss on it.

What an evening! what a night! The people of the hotel probably thought I was somewhat crackbrained, or an Englishman, which in their eyes comes much to the same thing.

On my way back I bought a large basket full of flowers which was carried after me by the flower-girl. These I strewed about my room. I ordered several bottles of wine, and threw a five franc-piece to a violin-player in the street. Then I went to sleep in the refreshing night air which entered by the open windows. I still remember the sensations I had during my sleep, as if the vibration of the terrestrial globe as it proceeded on its aerial course were re-echoed by the pulsations of my heart.

Not till the following morning did I remember that some obstacles had to be surmounted before I could take possession of what was already mine. I must get introduced to her father; and

would he confide in me with the same readiness that his daughter had done? Whilst I sauntered through the arcades of Bologna considering these matters, propitious fortune again came to my aid. I met the correspondent of our firm whom I had visited the second day after my arrival; he was greatly surprised, as he did not expect to find me still in Bologna. I alleged some news I had received from my brother-in-law, as an excuse for my prolonged stay. I said that a plan had been formed to found a branch establishment of our business in Italy, with particular reference to Bologna. My departure was necessarily delayed for an indefinite period, and in the meantime it was my duty to form acquaintances in town. Amongst the names of other distinguished families, I mentioned the General's. Our friend did not know him personally, but a young cousin of his, a priest was a frequent visitor at his house, and would willingly introduce me. "But beware of the dangerous eyes of the lady of the house," he continued, "for though she has not the reputation of treating her admirers with much cruelty, yet your attentions would be wasted, for the young count her present adorer, does not seem at all inclined to relinquish his conquest."

I joined in this bantering as well as I could, and we then made arrangements for an introduction.

In the evening of the same day I met the young priest by appointment at one of the Cafés, and he then accompanied me to the general's house which was situated in a very quiet street. It was a Palazzo of very unpretending exterior, but furnished most luxuriously within. Thick carpets covered the corridors through which we passed to reach the apartment where every night a small circle of habitués assembled.

Prelates of every rank, military men, several patricians, but only men, formed the society. The young abbate never tired of expatiating on the happiness of the fortunate mortals who were admitted to the intimacy of that house. "What a woman," he sighed. He seemed to hope that his turn would also come some day.

When I entered I first perceived the old General. He sat in an arm-chair, and opposite to him an old canon; between them stood a small table on which they were playing at dominoes. On a low stool beside the general lay a pair of scissors and some sheets of paper, on which were depicted little soldiers; these he cut out, when he could not find a partner for his game. A lamp hung above him, and in the full light, I again remarked the astonishing likeness of his features to those of Beatrice. I had hardly spoken a few polite words to the old gentleman, who responded to them with a childish and good-natured smile, when my companion hurried me away. I followed him into a small boudoir, where the lady of the house was reclining on a couch, while a tall much adorned young coxcomb sat on a rocking chair by her side; they both of them seemed rather bored by this tête-à-tête. He was languidly turning over the leaves of an album, and the fair lady embroidering some many coloured cushion, and now and then she caressed with the point of her brocaded slipper a large Angora cat which lay at her feet.

By the subdued light of the sconces, reflected by numberless mirrors, I did not at first recognize in the lady before me the fair devotee of that morning in church, although the same mother of pearl fan lay on a table near her.

She was more quick sighted than I, and started up so vehemently at my approach, that she lost her comb and her abundant hair fell over her shoulders. The cat awoke and purred, the tall young man cast a piercing look at me, and I myself was so startled as I recognized her, that I was most thankful for my little companion's volubility. She remained silent for a while, and looked at me with that same steadfast gaze--which had made me feel uncomfortable in the church.

Only when she observed the rudeness of the count, who tried to ignore my presence, her face grew more animated. In a low caressing voice, which was the most youthful part of her, she invited me, after dislodging the cat, to sit down beside her. Then turning towards the young man; "You can look over the music which I received to-day from Florence, count, I will sing afterwards and you can accompany me."

The young exquisite seemed inclined to rebel, but a severe look from her blue eyes subdued him, and we soon heard him strike some accords on the piano in the outer saloon.

The young abbate was employed in cutting the leaves of some new French novel, so I alone was left to court our fair hostess. Heaven knows I envied them, and above all the old canon at his game of dominoes. From the first words I exchanged with this woman, I felt an invincible dislike to her, which increased in proportion to the efforts she made to attract me. I had to summon all my prudence to keep up an appearance of politeness, and to listen attentively to her remarks. My thoughts were far away in the saloon of the villa, and between those glib and clever words, I still heard the soft voice of my darling and saw her eyes fixed on mine with a sad expression.

In spite of this absence of mind and heart, the fair lady did not appear to be displeased with my first attempt. She probably imputed my embarrassment to a very different cause, and the fact that I had sought to be introduced in her house, she certainly construed in her favour.

She praised my fluency in the Italian language, but remarked that I had a Piemontese accent, that I could not find a better opportunity of correcting this, than by frequently joining her friendly circle. Then she begged me to consider her house as my own, provided my evenings were not otherwise engaged. She had melancholy duties to perform, she said with a sigh, and a glance

towards the adjoining room, from whence was heard the good natured laughter of the old gentleman as he had won his game. Her life, she continued, only began with the evening hours; I certainly was very young, and the society of a sad woman, grown grave before her time, would hardly attract me. But so sincere a friend as I should find in her was worth some sacrifice. I greatly resembled one of her brothers, who had been very dear to her, and whom she had early lost. She had noticed this likeness in the church, and for this reason, she warmly thanked me for my present visit. She cast down her eyes with well assumed embarrassment and then with a smile stretched out her hand to me which I slightly touched with my lips. "As a pledge of friendship," she said in an undertone.--Fortunately some new arrivals spared me an answer which could not have been sincere. The new comers were dignitaries of the church, men of the world, who treated me, as they would an old acquaintance. The count also returned and whispered a few words to her. She arose and we all followed her into the saloon where the piano stood. She sang the new airs and her Ciccio accompanied her.

Her fine voice poured forth trills and cadences and I could remark that between times she glanced towards the dark corner where I leaned against the wall, and mechanically joined in the general applause, at the end of every song.

My thoughts wandered to the villa where I had heard another voice so dear to me. Liveried servants entered noiselessly, and offered ices and sorbets on small silver trays; the music ceased and an animated conversation commenced. The old general now appeared leaning on his stick, and seemed delighted at having won six games consecutively. He asked me if I, ever played at dominoes, and on my replying in the affirmative, he invited me to return next evening, and try my luck with him. He then called his valet as it was his usual hour for retiring to rest. This was the signal for departure. I obtained a significant smile from the lady of the house, and I hastened to leave the rooms before the rest of the company. I longed for solitude to shake off the unpleasant impressions of the evening. Yet I could not get rid of these sensations till next day at dusk, when I again directed my steps towards the villa. I well knew that I should not be admitted, but I hoped, between the bars of the gate, to catch a glimpse of her dress or of the ribbon on her straw-hat.

I found her on the balcony alone, and her eyes were turned towards the road as if she expected me. For a short while we were contented to express our feelings by looks and gestures. Then she signalled to me that she would come down, and a moment later she issued from the lateral door, and approached me blushing with love and happiness. She gave me her hand between the bars, but when I asked her if she would not admit me, she shook her head gravely, and laying her hand on her heart, she said, "Are you not here, nevertheless?" We were soon engaged in exchanging sweet and childish words of love, till I told her of my yesterday's visit to her father. When I spoke affectionately of him, she suddenly seized my hand, and before I could prevent it had pressed it to her lips. I did not mention his wife, and her unseemly behaviour. She understood my silence. "Return to him," she said, "and do all you can to please him; he cannot fail to love you." Finally, when I begged her for a kiss, she approached her cheek to the bars, but hearing the trot of a horse coming down the road, she speedily fled. So I had to leave her with an unsatisfied longing in my heart. I confess that for the first time I doubted the strength of her love. I knew how strictly girls in Italy keep back their feelings, only to give them more free course when they are once married. But why grudge me a kiss from her lips even when separated by the bars of a gate. Then again I thought of all she had said to me, and of the looks which had accompanied her words and felt tranquilized.

Of course in the evening I punctually appeared in the General's rooms, and he ordered me at once to the dominoe table. The company was much less numerous than the day before. The old canon when I took his place retired to a niche near the window, and was soon snoring comfortably.

This time the lady of the house did not remain in the boudoir, but sat on a sofa not far from our table, greatly to the annoyance of her adorer who sat sulkily opposite to her. She had given him a novel, and she bade him read to her. He made many blunders, and at last threw down the book with an oath, common in this country but certainly not fit for drawing room society.

The lady then rose and beckoned to him to follow her into the next room, where a passionate but whispered dispute took place. We heard that she threatened never to receive him in her house again unless he altered his behaviour.

The old gentleman who had been very happy at his success in the game, listened for a moment. "What can be the matter?" he asked. I shrugged my shoulders. A strangely anxious look passed over his face. He sighed, and for a moment seemed irresolute as to whether or not he ought to interfere. Then he sank back in his chair, and appeared to be lost in dreams. The canon awoke, took a pinch of snuff and offered his snuff-box to the General; this restored his equilibrium, and we resumed our game. When I at last rose to depart, he begged me to return soon; he preferred me as a partner, to the old canon. These words were spoken in a most amiable tone and accompanied by a cordial pressure of the hand. Altogether in spite of his weaknesses, he still retained the manners of a gentleman of the old school. His wife dismissed me more coldly than the night before, but this seemed to me to be only for the count's sake with whom in the meantime a reconciliation had taken place.

I was right. The following evening, when the count was prevented by some excursion from appearing at his usual post, her efforts to lure me into her nets were redoubled. I assumed the

character of an unsuspecting young man who from sheer respect neither hears, nor sees, nor understands anything, but she was evidently not duped by it. Probably the unsuccessfulness of her efforts provoked her, and incited her to conquer at any price my real or feigned coldness. She was so carried away by her vexation that she lost all command of her feelings, and could not master them even when the count returned. Of course all the rest of the company noticed how matters stood. The correspondent of our house did not neglect to inform me of the rumours which were current in the town. He congratulated me on my good fortune, and little guessed how uncomfortable I felt at his words. I perceived that I must no longer delay in declaring my real intentions.

A conversation I had with the young count precipitated this decision.

One evening when I returned to my hotel I found him waiting for me. He saluted me with frigid politeness and requested me in a curt, and concise manner either to discontinue my visits at the General's house, or to expect an encounter of a different nature. Being a stranger I was probably unacquainted with the customs of the country, otherwise he would not have taken the trouble of giving me warning.

I begged him to wait twenty-four hours, and he would then perceive how absurd was any idea of rivalry between us. He looked surprised, but as I did not give any further explanation, he bowed and departed.

Early the next morning, for I knew the old gentleman was up betimes, I asked for an interview with him, and was ushered into his bed-room, where he sat smoking a long Turkish pipe. He was rummaging in several card boxes in which all his treasures consisting of cut out pictures lay around him. When he saw me he stretched out his hand with evident pleasure, thanked me for visiting him in the morning, and offered me a pipe. When I declined this he pressed me to accept as a token of remembrance several cut out soldiers on which he set particular store. I felt heavy at heart when I reflected that my future happiness depended on this poor old man. But to my astonishment the expression of his face completely changed when I mentioned his daughter. He became grave and silent, and only the intent look in his eyes betrayed, that even on this theme, he could with difficulty collect his thoughts. I concealed nothing from him. Beginning with our first meeting, I related every circumstance up to the last hours. He now and then nodded acquiescence, and when I told him of my love for her his eyes glistened and he raised them heavenward with a deep emotion which shed a sort of glory over his features.

Then I spoke to him of my circumstances and expressed the very natural wish to take my young wife--provided he should entrust his child to me--to my own home; assuring him however, that I was quite willing to remain in his neighbourhood for several years, as I could never tear her from him. He seized both my hands when I said this, and pressed them with more vigour than I could have believed possible in so weak and worn out an old man. Then he drew me into his arms, and without a word kissed me till his strength failed him, and he sank back into his chair. After remaining so for a few moments he made a sign to me to help him to rise, and when he had regained his feet, he said: "I entrust this treasure to you my son, and thank my God, that I have lived to see this day. Come we will go and tell it to my wife. From the first moment I saw you I felt sure that you had a kind heart. If I had ten daughters I could not see them better provided for. But did you ever see such a naughty child? Fie, fie, Bicetta! meeting a lover when your old babbo's back is turned, but they are all alike when love is in question, and where their heart is concerned they are not to be trusted, no, not one!"

He sighed and his face took an expression partly of anxiety, partly of sorrow. Perhaps some recollection troubled his mind. A moment after he again embraced me, pulled my hair, called me a traitor and a hypocrite, and finally seizing my hand, he drew me towards his wife's apartment, which was situated at the other side of the house.

In the ante-room a maid advanced to meet us; she looked at me with wondering eyes, and only admitted the General to her mistress' room, after having first announced him. She then begged me to wait as her mistress was not yet dressed for receiving. I heartily rejoiced at this, though the time I had to wait seemed interminable.

I could not distinguish what was said in the adjoining room, but the General spoke in a louder and more commanding tone than I had ever heard from him before. A long and hurried whispering followed, till at last the door opened, and the General issued forth erect, and triumphant as if he had won a battle.

"Beatrice is yours my son, the affair is decided. My wife sends her best wishes to you! At first she made some ridiculous objections. You see a cousin of ours, a young fop who is now in Rome, said to her before he left. 'Keep Bicetta for me, I will marry her on my return.' This was only in fun, but you and I, we are in earnest, so you shall have her Amadeo. It is true," he continued, with a sigh, "that I let many things take their course, I am an old man, and the reins often drop from my hands, but on some occasions Amadeo, I take up arms again and then I am not to be daunted. I now solemnly promise you that Beatrice shall be yours. Come back this evening; you will find her here. Embrace me my son, make her happy; she deserves to be rewarded a thousand fold for the love she bears her old father."

He only left me at the top of the stairs after folding me once more in his arms.

When I returned in the evening, I found the house brilliantly illuminated. In the ante-room many people were assembled who eyed me with curiosity. In the drawing-room the old General sat in his usual place, and the Canon opposite to him, but to-day the dominoes lay untouched on the marble table, for on her father's knees sat his daughter, simply dressed, without any ornaments, only pomegranate blossoms in her hair. Her arms were twined round the old man's neck as if she felt uneasy in this society, and took refuge with her only friend. When she saw me enter, she glided from her seat and stood motionless as a statue before me till I took her hand. She cast a rapid glance at the sofa where her step-mother sat, brilliantly attired, her hair flowing over her beautiful bare shoulders, her round white arm reclining on a crimson cushion. She evidently intended to outshine the slender maidenly beauty of the young girl. At her side sat the tall young count, who had now recovered the phlegmatic insolence of a supreme sovereign. He nodded to me with a gracious condescension.

When I turned towards them holding my betrothed by the hand, I noticed a sudden palor on the woman's face, but she greeted, and congratulated me with a most winning smile; offered me her hand to kiss, and then embraced Bicetta who submitted to it with an impassive face; only the trembling of her hand told me what she felt.

After this we had to receive the congratulations of the company, and I admired my darling who stood the flow of shallow words with which she was overwhelmed with perfect calmness. The General contemplated her with an expression of great delight. He bade us sit down in the embrasure of one of the windows, where two chairs had been placed near each other, and then he proceeded to his game with Don Vigilio.

Bicetta and I soon forgot all around us. The hum of conversation did not reach us. The dim light of a lamp which swung on a chain across the street was bright enough for me to drink the deep draught of love from the eyes of my beloved, and from her enchanting smile. On that evening the company dispersed later than usual. Champagne was drunk, and an old archbishop who was passing through the town on one of his pastoral tours proposed the health of the betrothed. The venerable old man was particularly affectionate to me. He made me take a seat in his carriage and insisted on driving me back to my hotel. But hardly had we been a moment alone together, when the reason for this remarkable condescension appeared. "You are a Lutheran?" he asked. I assented, and he continued with a benign smile; "You will not remain so. The great earthy happiness you have found here, will lead you to a higher bliss. Come to see me to-morrow, and we can talk more about this."

I did not fail to appear, but he could not force me one step from the path which I had traced for myself. I demanded the same liberty of faith which I conceded to my wife. With regard to the children, she might decide for them, till they had reached the age when they could judge for themselves what was necessary to the welfare of their souls. The artful old priest seemed well pleased with this beginning, and to rely on the future.--As he was forced to leave the town, he committed me to the care of a younger keeper of souls; a member of a religious order, who set about the affair much more vehemently and clumsily so that to prevent further unpleasantness, I broke off all intercourse with him. This, I could perceive in the faces of certain of the frequenters of my future parent's house, was greatly taken amiss, but as the General's cordial manner remained the same, and the mistress of the house continued to shew me a cool amiability, I bore it with great equanimity.

My betrothed, who was aware of my feelings, fully coincided in my desire to cut short any further attempt of this kind. "What can they mean by it?" she said. "There is only one heaven and one hell for us; is it not so Amadeo? If I entered Paradise and found you not there, my soul would turn back, and not rest till it had found yours." When she spoke thus it seemed to me that I saw heaven open before me, and I could not believe that any danger threatened our future happiness, or even that any delay was possible.

The wedding was fixed for October. I had made up my mind to bear this interval of two months with all the patience I could muster. Only one thing made me uneasy; I had announced my betrothal to my sister, and brother-in-law, and had not received one line in return.

I knew them too well to fear any objection on their part; only some illness or some sorrow which they wished to keep from me could account for this silence. So in spite of the happiness which smiled upon me, I grew more and more uneasy. At last after three weeks of feverish impatience, the longed for letter from my brother-in-law arrived. He wrote that my sister Blanche had been dangerously ill after her confinement, and that the state of her health was still so precarious that he had not ventured to agitate her by the news of my engagement. If it were possible, it would greatly relieve him if I could come home for a short while.

"You must go," said Bicetta when I had silently handed her the letter. "You must leave this to-morrow. I will try and bear your absence as well as I can. But you must write to me when you arrive, write to me as often as you are able. How I long to go with you. But of course that is impossible. Give my love to Blanche; tell her that she already lives in my heart, and give her this kiss from her sister."

She passionately threw her arms round my neck and pressed her lips to mine. It was the first kiss she had granted me. Even when I had met her alone, and entreated her both jestingly and earnestly not to be so cruel, she had always remained inexorable. How often had I not felt hurt at

this reserve, but then she had only to speak a word, or to stretch out her hand with that indescribable smile of hers, and my doubts and displeasure vanished.

I departed with the full persuasion that I should find nothing changed on my return. The old general took leave of me with evident distress; he could not cease to press me in his arms. His wife shewed great interest in the illness of my sister, and so completely deceived me that on my way home, I reproached myself for my former injustice towards her, and mentally begged her pardon.

Part of my luggage remained at the villa which had been my habitation during the last weeks of my betrothal; Old Fabio and my friend Nina faithfully ministering to my wants. I felt sure of returning in less than a month, and hoped to bring back with me my sister and her husband to the wedding. Nina in the meantime went up to town to keep Beatrice company.

Everything seemed to be arranged for the best, and this short separation to be a sacrifice to the jealous gods before I was allowed to enjoy complete happiness.

At home I found matters better than I had imagined during the anxious hours of my long journey. Blanche was out of danger, and it seemed as if the pleasure of seeing me again and the joyful news I brought her, hastened her recovery. Their accompanying me to Bologna however was out of the question. My sister could not leave her child, and my brother-in-law was detained by our business which had lately so much increased that we could not both be spared. Yet they hastened my departure, and indeed as matters stood my visit caused them more anxiety than pleasure, for in spite of our firm resolve to write to each other as often as we could, and though I faithfully adhered to my promise of never missing a single post, yet not a line had reached me from Bologna. During the first week of my stay I was inexhaustible in finding some natural cause for her silence. But when I had remained a fortnight at Geneva without a word either from my betrothed or any member of her family, I was tormented with anxiety. My only comfort was that no great misfortune could have happened to her without our correspondent in Bologna informing me of it, but then again, how could I know that he had not left Bologna, and should any letters have been lost or intercepted, might not his too have been among the number?

I felt that I must start for Bologna if I did not wish to go mad. The state of my feelings as I travelled day and night is not to be described. As I saw my face in the glass when I stopped to arrange my disordered toilet before entering Bologna, I started back. It was certainly not the face of a happy bridegroom, such as I had hoped to return.

It was early in the morning when my travelling carriage dashed along the well known road. I called to the postillion to pull up at the trellised gate, of the villa. I jumped out with tottering knees, and rang the bell violently. Some time elapsed before my dear old friend Fabio appeared at the door. When he recognised me he started and without taking time to button his old waistcoat across his naked chest, he rushed to meet me with so disturbed a face that I called out in an agony: "She is dead!"

He shook his head and hastily unlocked the gate, but the fright had completely taken away his breath, so that I could only draw out word by word, a scanty unconnected explanation from him. He observed my pale face and worn out looks, and wished to spare me, instead of which he only cruelly tormented me by his dilatoriness. With many things which had been schemed in the dark, he was unacquainted, for he had only learnt the main points from Nina, I who well knew the actors never for a moment doubted who had taken the principal parts in this fiendish intrigue. Hardly had I left Bologna when that cousin from Rome appeared, and brought forward his imaginary claim to the hand of my bride.

Had he come by order, or would he have arrived of his own accord even had I not been absent I never knew. He cut a sorry figure Fabio said. A life of gambling, revels, and adventures had considerably reduced his fortune, but being the nephew of a cardinal, and of the old nobility, he was still considered a good match. Bicetta had always disliked him. He (Fabio) remembered that she had once boxed his ears for having ventured to kiss his little cousin. Upon which he had laughingly vowed to make her pay for it once she was his wife. Now the time had arrived when he hoped to realize his threat. The step-mother and all those who had most authority were on his side. They had frightened the poor old general by predicting for him all the torments of hell, if he married his only child to a heretic, till they had subdued and silenced him. But whenever he looked at Bicetta his eyes filled with tears, and he would sit for hours in his arm-chair, and sob like a child. He never spoke to his wife for he knew that she was at the bottom of it all.

"And Beatrice?" I asked, half maddened with rage and pain.

"Ah Bicetta," replied the old man, "who can understand her! At first when they urged her to renounce her heretic lover, she had answered: 'I have pledged my faith to him in the sight of God, and I will keep it though I should die for it;' so they could not persuade her. Then when her cousin had come to pay his court to her, she had calmly told him: 'Don't trouble yourself Richino it is perfectly useless; even had I never seen Amadeo I should never have loved you.' Then when he attempted to take her hand and to play the gallant to her, she drew herself up and said in the hearing of Nina: 'Miserable coward to lay hands on another's property! Go I despise you.' She would not see him after that yet she never sheds a tear though the marriage is decided on, and she has quite left off begging and entreating her father, her step-mother, or any one, even God I

dare say. She no more received your letters, than you did hers which I posted myself. It seems that the officials at the post-office know what is expected of them when the nephew of a cardinal wishes to carry off the bride of a foreigner. Still it is surprising that she should have resigned herself so quickly for she cannot possibly doubt your fidelity. Nina told me that they threatened to shut her up in a convent if she did not marry her cousin, and certainly a convent is not the proper place for our Bicetta, yet I should have thought it preferable to a marriage with that man, when her whole heart belongs to you. I for my part cannot make her out, and my daughter too is in a perpetual state of amazement."

So the good old man rambled on without venturing to look at me, whilst I lay completely stunned on one of the chairs opposite the chimney. It was the same in which we had sat our hands clasped in one another's the first evening of our betrothal. I was quite incapable of thought; every feeling even of love or of hate seemed paralyzed within me and all vitality to have ceased, as the movement of a watch stops when a blow has broken the spring. After a long pause I recovered my composure sufficiently to ask when the marriage was to take place. "This afternoon," replied the old man in a timid voice. Then I started up, brought to my senses by the nearness of this fearful and decisive event. Old Fabio seized my hands, and looked anxiously into my face.

"Merciful heavens!" he exclaimed, "what are you doing. You know not how powerful they are. If you were to appear openly in the streets, who knows whether you would outlive the night."

"I will go in disguise, I will stand face to face with this scoundrel, and tell him that one of us must die. You surely have a pair of trooper's pistols in good condition. They are all I shall want. Leave me now."

"First you must shoot me with them," he said, and clung so firmly to my arm, that I saw no possibility of freeing myself from his grasp without using force. "Think of Bicetta," he continued, "what would she say to it." "You are right," I replied, and felt as if I were again deprived of all energy. "I know not what she would say, but I *will* know, or I shall go mad. Let go my arm, and give me my hat. I will go to her; I will burst open the doors which keep her from me, and when once I have seen her then come what may."

But he would not let me go. He led me back to my chair and said, "you must surely be persuaded that no one so sincerely desires yours, and the Signorina's, and the old general's welfare as old Fabio, so you must listen to his advice, and not rush headlong to your own destruction. If you imagine that you can reach her apartment, you are greatly mistaken. The house is filled with servants on account of the wedding, and you would fare ill if you desired to see the bride with this face. Let me go to her; they cannot forbid me the entrance, although the Signora does not regard me with favourable eyes. If it should come to the worst, I can always send for my daughter; so if you will write a few lines I promise to deliver them, and they will certainly reach their destination with more safety than by the papal posts. Sit down here by this window and write a few lines and if I am not greatly mistaken in our Bicetta she will answer them. He ran to fetch me writing materials, but I was in such a wretched state that I could not even hold a pen, and the fury which raged within me drowned every thought.

"Never mind," said the old man, "there is no need to write. Is it not sufficient that she hears you have come? If she then still consents to this marriage, hundreds of letters would be of no avail."

With this he left me, but first I had to give him my word that I would not leave the house, which was now completely deserted, and that I would open the door to no one but him.

By this time day had dawned, and after bringing me some wine to strengthen me, the old man departed, and I remained alone in the death-like stillness of the house--I could not rest; I dragged myself into the garden, to the orange-tree of whose fruit she had given me, and to the pomegranate the blossoms of which had been her first love token to me. She was always before me, and the more clearly she appeared to me the less could I understand her apparent oblivion.

Though I was greatly exhausted by my night's journey, yet I could not swallow a morsel of bread nor drink the wine, but I sucked the juice of an orange, and felt so revived that I seemed to have imbibed hope and comfort with it. Then I returned to the house, ascended the stairs and slowly walked through all the apartments. In her little room all remained as she had left it; even the book which she had last read was still open on the table. I began to read from the same page where she had left off. It was an edition of the "Canzone di Petrarca" and I felt soothed and refreshed by their gentle harmony. I shoved a low chair into the balcony (it was the same on which she had sat as a child while playing with her dolls), and threw myself into it with the book in my hand. But after each verse my eyes wandered along the road in the hope of seeing a messenger appear. I had grown calmer however, and no longer dreaded the decision of my fate, yet I started wildly when the old man appeared.

"What news do you bring me," I called to him. But I knew all when I saw his sorrowful countenance, as he turned towards me, and I rushed down the stair case with trembling knees. "Read this," he said; "perhaps you will understand what it all means."

I tore the paper from his hand. On it were hastily scrawled these words: "My own dear love,



what I am going to do, had to be done; do not try to prevent it, only trust in me. I shall never be another's. You will understand all when we meet again, and perhaps that may be before long. Whatever happens I am yours only for ever and ever." On the edge of the paper was added, "Remain concealed. If you are found out, all is lost."

Whilst I continued to stare at these few lines, the old man told me that he had not seen her himself. Nina had been the messenger between them; but even from her, he could not find out what he wanted to hear. She only told him that the Signorina had not shown the least astonishment at the news of my return. "I have long expected him," was all she said; and while her maid was bringing in her bridal attire, she had written the note quickly, standing at the window. Then she had charged Nina to enjoin the greatest secrecy on her father, and to tell him to take care of me. After that she quietly proceeded to unfasten her hair which had to be dressed for the wedding. "She wrote these lines," Nina added, "with the calmness of a person who is unable to live any longer for the very agony of his pain, and writes down his dying wish." She had always thought she knew her as well as she knew herself, but in these last days she was a perfect mystery to her.

Was it not the same with me? I who had fancied that I understood her better than any one else, could I understand her now, though I read the lines she had addressed to me over and over again a hundred times. Why if she would not belong to any one but me, why did she not fly to me, or take refuge in a convent till I had found means to liberate her. Why did not the boldest and most adventurous scheme appear natural and easy to her, rather than resignation to the fate which was forced on her, and to the bearing quietly those hateful fetters which death alone could tear asunder.

Still there was something in those simple words which sustained me, when I was on the point of despairing, and which silenced me when I was on the point of giving vent to a burst of indignation or despondency. I even slept a few hours, and could swallow a few morsels which my faithful attendant had prepared for me. Not a word passed between us; only when the hour of the wedding approached we had a violent dispute. I insisted on attending it, and he opposed this to the utmost. At last when he saw that my resolution was not to be shaken, he brought some of his clothes and helped me to muffle myself up in them, and then pulled an old torn straw-hat, which he generally wore in the garden, over my eyes. I will accompany you Signor Amadeo, for I fear that you will lose all command over yourself, and that you will require some one to restrain you. He might have proved right had not the wedding guests, and the bridal couple entered the church before we reached it, and the crowd been so great that they stood pressed together, spreading over the Piazza far beyond the church portal.

I bitterly reproached the old man for having deceived me with regard to the hour, but he vehemently asserted his innocence, and his ignorance of the hour.

So we waited amongst the crowd, and the sound of the bells, which were ringing loudly, lulled me into my former state of dull torpor. Suddenly the cry arose: "Here they come!" I should have sunk down had not Fabio supported me. I kept myself up, so to speak, by fastening my eyes to the church door, whence she was to issue forth. When she at last appeared I was surprised that I could bear the sight, that it even calmed me, although her husband was walking beside her. He was just the man I had expected to see from Fabio's description. A creature I could have felled to the ground at one blow. A smile hovered on his worn features which made my blood boil. He nodded with a triumphant, and lofty air to the people around him, and stroked the fair moustache on his thin upper lip.

She passed through the crowd without looking up, the expression of her face was inscrutable, and her eyes were veiled by her long lashes. A child offered her a bunch of flowers; she took it into her arms, and kissed it, and I could even perceive a smile on her lips. Had not the distance been so great, and Fabio watching me I should have pushed my way through the crowd, and asked her how she dared to smile on such a day. But the smile had vanished while I was reflecting on it.

They got into their carriage, and drove off, followed by the parents of the bride. The old General bending under the weight of his grief, at the side of his proud young wife. Then came all the dignitaries of the church who frequented the house.

"The Archbishop performed the ceremony," said an old woman beside me. "She would not marry him at first, but they say that the holy father himself urged her to it. Nothing more has been heard about that other one, the Lutheran."--"Aye, aye," replied another woman; "it seems that his sister has died, that is the just penalty for refusing to abjure his heresy."--And so their foolish talk went on around me. Fabio dragged me away, and led me by a bye path back to the villa. I let him do as he pleased with me; all my strength had left me. I was as unconscious of my actions as a man in a fever, or a sleep walker.

Even now, when I reflect on the past, I cannot understand how I bore that day. My nature, generally so impetuous, appeared to be completely subdued by the great bodily exhaustion caused by that hurried and sleepless journey from Geneva, and I submitted unresistingly to these horrible events.

When I reached the villa, I staggered blindly. Fabio forced me to swallow several glasses of

strong wine in such rapid succession that I at last sank insensible to the ground.

When I recovered my senses, night had come on, and it was some time before I could recollect where I was, and what had occurred. The clear sky could be seen through the high panes of the glass door, and the faint light of the new moon fell on the portrait of Beatrice's mother, who I fancied looked sadly down at me from her place above the chimney. Then only everything came back to my memory; then I remembered how terrible was the significance of this night, and what future these hours foreboded. Then a fearful agony overwhelmed me, and I was brought to the verge of madness. I cried out aloud and the unearthly sound of my voice as it echoed through the desolate house terrified me. I threw myself down on the cold stone floor of the hall, and there I lay writhing, pressing my face against the ground, and tearing my hair as if bodily pain could stifle the despair which raged within me. Every thought which sprung up in me, I willfully thrust back into the general whirlpool which darkened and confused my mind. I would feel nothing, think of nothing, but the terrible certainty that my heart's treasure was now in another's possession; I could not cease from piercing my heart with this thought, as though it were a poisoned dagger that would make it bleed to death. At last worn out with this self destructive frenzy I lay motionless in the dust. The cold stones of the floor cooled my burning brow, and my tears ceased to flow. After some time, I roused myself sufficiently to regain my tottering feet, and to crawl into the garden. At the fountain underneath the evergreen oaks I washed the tears and the dust from my face, and took a deep draught of the tepid water, which nevertheless cooled my blood.

I now considered what remained for me to do, but could not come to any resolution. One thing, however, I determined on. I would write to her the next day, and implore her to end this dreadful uncertainty; to rend asunder the last tie which bound me to her. Then I remembered the words of her note, but of what avail were they now to me? Now that I had seen her come out of the church, and that day, and part of the night had passed without bringing me any comfort.

When I heard the clock strike midnight, and the moon disappeared I could no longer bear the awful stillness of the garden, and I returned to the hall. I lighted a candle and placed it on the mantelpiece; then I drew a chair near it, took a small volume of Dante from my pocket, and was soon deeply engaged in perusing the most gloomy and despairing canto of his "Inferno."

I had remained thus about an hour, when suddenly I thought I heard the key turned in the lock of the garden gate. My hair stood on end. I fancied in the first moment of terror that my poor darling had destroyed herself, and that her restless spirit now sought me to suck my heart's blood; but the next moment I had shaken off these senseless ideas, and regained my composure. I arose and listened attentively in the stillness of the night.

The garden gate was opened. I heard steps on the gravel walk--some one sought for the handle of the hall door; it opened and a youth in a black cloak and hat appeared on the threshold. Suddenly the hat fell back from the brow, and I recognized Beatrice. With a cry of joy we rushed into each other's arms, and clung to one another as though we could never be torn asunder nor our lips ever parted.

At last she disengaged herself from my embrace, and her tearful eyes turned on me with a sad mute gaze. "How pale thou art!" she said; "and this is all my doing. But now it is all at an end. I have kept my word. Here I am your own wife, and never another's, though I should suffer for it in this world, and in the next. Oh! Amadeo, why is this world so full of wicked people; why do they sully the purest, and revile the most sacred feelings! Why do they force us to lie, and to perjure ourselves in the very sight of God. We must say *yes*, with our lips, while our hearts say *no*. They have brought me to this, that I can only choose between two sins: either to deliver myself up to a man whom I despise, or to slink like a thief in the night to one who in the eyes of the world can never be mine. But God metes with another measure than these cruel and selfish people; is it not so, Amadeo? He cannot bid me break my faith to you. He never meant our destruction. I imprisoned in a convent, and you alone in the world, without love, or joy. He has destined you for me, and me for you, and now I am yours for ever. That other one dared not touch me. When we were left alone together, I said to him: 'If you ever try to approach me, to-day or at any other time, you will have been my murderer, for I have vowed before God not to survive the hour in which you dare to claim your right on me. I told you this before our marriage and you still insisted on its accomplishment. You then carried the point, now it is my turn.'

"So I left him, and shut myself up in my room till I knew that every one in the house was asleep. Nina then brought me this disguise, and now I am here, Amadeo! The happiness of being yours would be too great if I had not to strive and suffer for it."

She clung to my neck and hid her glowing face on my breast. All the ardour and passion which she had repressed with maidenly pride, and had not even betrayed by a look, now burst forth in a sudden flame, and threatened to set my whirling brain on fire.

When we had at last recovered our power of thought, and speech, she told me what had occurred after my departure; the intrigues of her step-mother, the helpless efforts of her father to defend himself, and his child, against the ascendancy of the clergy; her useless attempts to disarm and confound her enemy by the most unshaken sincerity. At last, when she perceived that they would mercilessly separate her from her father, and shut her up in a distant convent, from whence no letter from her could reach me, she suddenly determined on apparent submission to

every thing for the sake of saving herself and me. "And, in fact, they only desired an outward victory. What do they care whether my soul is lost or not," she continued. "Did they ever blame the woman who bears my poor father's name for indulging all her passions freely? They are all of them the slaves of appearances, and they cannot bear to look truth in the face, for it would put them to confusion. Oh! Amadeo, how often did I form the resolution to fly to you, and then declare openly that I am your wife, and shall be so to eternity. But you do not know how powerful they are. Even if we started this very moment, and travelled day and night they would overtake us, and that would be certain death to you. Then my poor dear father also, he would not survive the separation, and such a one, from me. But do not grieve my love, we are now united and those who know our secret are faithful. Pardon me, for not telling you of my coming in my note of this morning, but I knew not for certain whether I should be able to accomplish my plan, or whether that wretch might not strike me to the ground on my refusal to acknowledge him as my master. And if I then had staid away, should you not have suffered greater tortures than in this uncertainty? You knew that I had pledged myself to you, and that I would keep my word; that I would be faithful to you, and never belong to any man but you.--I will return to you every night. The porter who is an honest fellow, hates his present master, but would have died for you."

She noticed that in spite of my happiness; my wife sitting on my knee, that I was silent and thoughtful. "Why are you so sad?" she asked.

"That we must obtain by fraud what is ours by right," I replied. "That we must hide in darkness, and mystery as if we committed a crime in keeping our vows!"

"Do not think of that," she said, and passed her hand across my forehead. "The future is unknown to us; we are only certain of the present hour, and of our own hearts. Why should we not thank God for it. He surely knows that it is best so. Come now; I am not going to sit here as your lady love with my hands folded, and leave it to others to minister to you. You must be half famished, and I too am hungry. I have tasted nothing since last night. I remember perfectly where Fabio keeps his provisions. I will go and prepare a wedding feast which will be more joyful than the last one was, where I saw that every drop of wine was turned to gall for my poor father."

She rose, and hastened to the cellar, and larder. In the meantime I pushed a small table into the middle of the room, and lighted up all the bits of candle which remained in the dusty chandeliers. When she returned with the plates and glasses, she stopped on the threshold with a joyful exclamation. Then she laid the table and filled the glasses with her own hands from the heavy wicker bottle. "Come," she said, "let us drink to our future happiness, if your sister were but here I should desire no other wedding banquet." After drinking this toast, she waited on me, helping me to the cold meat and olives, persuading me to eat, and doing the honours like a good little housewife. To please her I swallowed some morsels though I felt no hunger. She too would hardly take anything till I began to feed her like a child holding the choicest morsels to her lips, then she laughingly opened them and complied with my request.

"Now I have had enough," she said, rising. "I must provide a better couch for you than these cushions on the floor. Fabio never thinks about such things. An old soldier like him hardly perceives whether he is lying on the bare ground or on a feather-bed. To be sure the wisest thing for you will be to take possession of my little room upstairs, instead of remaining here where any body can look in, and betray you." She took my arm and conducted me thither after we had put out all the lights. As we passed Fabio's closet, I stopped to listen if he moved. "Don't mind him," she whispered; "he knows that I am here. A short while ago, when I fetched the wine, I met him coming from the garden, where he had plucked the fruit for our wedding feast. He was nearly beside himself with joy on seeing me; he wept, and kissed my hands. Now he does not appear, for fear of disturbing us."

The day had not dawned when she reminded me that we must part. I insisted on accompanying her back to town, and when she saw the disguise in which I had ventured out the day before, she consented. She pulled her broad brimmed hat over her eyes and I wrapped her up in her large cloak. We then left the house, and proceeded in the direction of the town. We met not a soul--no lights burned either in the houses or in the streets--the morning star sparkled alone in the pale azure of the sky. A cool breeze came from the North. We hardly spoke a word during our walk. My heart was oppressed, and she too when the moment of separation approached, seemed to feel, for the first time, how unnatural was our position. When we reached the house, she clasped me in her arms with tears in her eyes and held me so for a while before giving the appointed signal to the porter. "Expect me to-morrow," she whispered, and disengaging herself from my neck she glided through the half open door, and I was once more alone in the darkness.

A bitter feeling came over me. So I had to resign her again, my own, my bride, who had vowed to belong to no one but me; to leave her at the threshold of a stranger's house, whose door was for ever closed to me. Here I had to stand at the entrance, and if the master of the house appeared, should have to hide in a corner, as a thief from the bailiff. What would be the end of it? Would a life of so full of bye ways and mysteries be endurable. Can that be called happiness which can only be obtained at the price of daily torment, and anxiety?

Before I reached the villa I had firmly resolved to put an end to this insufferable position. From that moment I felt easy at heart, and as I walked along the deserted road, could fully rejoice in the unalloyed happiness which had been granted me, and I considered in its minutest details how the plan which was to unite us for ever was to be accomplished.

In the garden of the villa I found the old man at work. I apprized him of my scheme, and though he thought the execution of it would be more difficult than I expected, he willingly agreed to do all I asked of him, and this was no slight sacrifice at his age, the more so that he would have to part with his daughter. But where Bicetta's happiness was concerned, he had no will of his own.

We both spent the day in preparations. More than once, while taking our measures, I had occasion to admire the circumspection, and the foresight of the old soldier. During the afternoon I slept, and at ten o'clock at night, I was stationed at the gate of the town through which she had to come. We had not settled that I was to meet her, so when I stepped out of my lurking place, she started back but instantly recognizing me as I pushed back my hat she gave me her still trembling hand, from underneath her cloak. So we walked along gazing at each other in silence, for we met several tardy wayfarers who were returning to the town, and feared to awaken their suspicion should they hear a soft woman's voice underneath that broad brimmed hat only when we had reached the villa, and its comfortable hall where lights were burning, and a rustic meal had been prepared for us by Fabio, she again talked freely. She told me how she had passed the day, how long and dreary it had appeared to her. Richino had treated her with a rigid coldness, hoping to mortify her by it, and to force her to make some advances, but before the world, her parents and their numberless visitors, he had assumed the manners of a happy young husband. In the evening however, he had bowed to her without a word, and had withdrawn to his apartment. "This cannot last," I suddenly said, after a long silence; "It is as unworthy of you, as it is of me. We must put an end to it. Your decision alone is wanting. Mine is already formed."

"Amadeo!" she exclaimed, and her eyes turned towards me with a wondering look. "What can you mean? Separation! Oh death rather than that!"

"No," I replied, "fear not; I do not demand what is impossible to me as well as to you. Leave thee my wife, my second self, truly that would be death! But our present existence, is it not worse than death? A life which must in time, kill the soul's freedom and dignity, and will sooner or later cause our ruin. But even if it did succeed, which is most improbable, if I could remain here concealed year after year, in what a wretched state should I not drag through the weary days; idle and solitary cut off from all society but yours; condemned to an aimless, useless life, consumed by the torture of an obscure, and worthless existence. But even if, in more favourable circumstances, I could openly come to your house as your declared lover I would not do it; I could not brook this state of ambiguity and falsehood. I must be able to acknowledge my feelings, and openly take possession of what is mine. Do you now understand me my darling?"

She nodded, and her eyes were pensively fixed on the ground.--"I know how painful it will be for you," I continued, and took her cold and lifeless hand in mine, "You feel that you must leave your father, perhaps for ever, if he cannot summon courage enough to follow us; You must leave your country, and all that is dear to you, and has taken root in your heart from childhood upwards. You can no longer kneel in the church on the same spot where your mother once prayed--You dread the strange country all the more, that you will have to enter it as a fugitive, and not with the rejoicings and honours due to a bride. You imagine that you would not dare to lift up your eyes to those who love you. Is it not so Beatrice?"

She again nodded; then she looked up to me and said, "I will bear all if it can make you happy."

"My own love," I resumed clasping her in my arms; "You have full confidence in me, have you not? You believe that I have carefully considered what I owe to you, and to myself, and that I would not shrink from any sacrifice so long as my honour is not concerned, and that it does not lower me in your eyes. There is but one way of escape possible from all the snares and fetters which our enemies have thrown around us. You said truly that flight with the swiftest horses would not save us: no, we must set about it with more caution, if we do not wish to be overtaken. I have spoken to Fabio, he knows all the ways to Ancona as thoroughly as he knows this garden. He will be our guide. We shall travel on foot, dressed as peasants and only at night, once there, we shall embark for Venice. Fabio too leaves all that is dear and valuable to him, only for our sakes, in order that he may assist us to recover our freedom and happiness. Are you courageous enough Beatrice? Do you feel strong enough to undertake this journey at your husband's side?"

"I will follow you all over the world," she said, and pressed my hand; "You shall have no cause to complain; I can do all you expect of me."

I embraced her with great emotion. "Come, then, I said; let us take some food to strengthen us for the journey."

"To-night Amadeo? I implore you with all my heart, ask anything of me, but that I should leave this without once more seeing my poor father, without the sacred memorials of my mother which I keep at home. I promise you that nothing shall alter my resolution, not a tear shall betray me, when I kiss my father for the last time. I feel that without that, without bidding him at least a mute farewell I should find no rest, and the longing for home would kill me. As yet, we risk nothing. No one knows that you are here, no one sees me coming, or going. I shall not even acquaint Nina with our plan. To-morrow evening when I leave my home, it shall be for ever; that I promise you. Grant me only these few hours, and then, I shall be as entirely yours, as if I had fallen from heaven into your arms, and had no other home than your heart." She looked at me

with an imploring expression which I could not resist, although I felt uneasy at the slightest delay. I gave way to her entreaties, and her gaiety then returned, and soon banished every care from my mind. We supped together; Fabio waited on us, and not a word more was said of our project. I then sent Fabio to his bed, and brought in the dessert myself, and a bottle of sweet wine which she liked to drink only a thimble full of, at a time, but even a few drops of it sufficed to give her pale cheeks a rosy tint. Who could have, seen us, joyous as we were together, and have believed that we had obtained these brief hours of happiness by stealth, and were enjoying them clandestinely.

She then drew me into the garden. "Let me bid farewell to all my friends, to the pomegranate, the orange trees, the fountain. To-morrow there will not be time for it." We walked arm in arm into the garden. She drank once more from the marble fountain, put a few oranges in her pocket, and plucked a spray from the pomegranate. "These must go with me," she observed, "in your home in the north, these things do not grow. I shall soon learn to do without them. And this shuttlecock,"--she picked it up as she saw it lying forgotten in the grass, "I will not leave behind. Our children," she whispered, and drew close to me, "shall play with it, and you will tell them how you exchanged your heart for one of these feathery balls."

We had now reached the place where I had once looked over the wall. There underneath the spreading branches of the trees, the sward had remained fresh, and soft, and the air was pure, and free from dust. "Let us pass the remainder of the night here," I said, "I will bring some cushions from the house." I returned and brought a few, and also a cloak for Beatrice. She wrapped herself up in it and soon slept calmly, but it was long before I could find repose. I listened to her gentle breathing, and gazed at her sweet face, with the closed eyes up-turned to the grey sky. She murmured some indistinct words in a dream. I could not understand them, but their soft tone still lingers in my ear.

At last I too slept; I know not for how many hours. When I awoke, the day had not yet dawned, but she was gone. A sudden fear seized me, why had she left me? I jumped up to ascertain whether Fabio, at least, had accompanied her. Hardly had I taken a few steps, when I heard the bell at the garden gate pulled violently. In that moment a fearful foreboding came over me, and forgetting all prudence, I dashed across the garden, and round the house towards the gate. Nevertheless old Fabio had reached it before me, and when I turned the corner, I saw him trying to lift up a dark figure which had sunk down at the entrance of the garden.

"Beatrice!" I cried and rushed to the spot. When I reached it, she just opened her eyes again, and supported by Fabio, she turned towards me with a look of intense anguish and despair, but directly she tried to smile again. "It is nothing Amadeo," she gasped out with a great effort, her hand pressed to her heart. "Do not be alarmed, I do not feel much pain. Are you vexed that I left, without awaking you? You slept so quietly, and I thought there was no danger. How could he have discovered that you were concealed here? Yes to be sure, I forgot to tell you what Richino said to me yesterday at table; he spoke in French to prevent the people from understanding him: 'Do you believe in ghosts, Madame? If such things exist, they are welcome to roam about, but if living creatures take it into their heads to play the *revenants*, upon my honour, I will take good care that they are soon turned into real phantoms.'

"I fancied that these were only idle words. Alas, Amadeo, now I cannot travel with you; you will have to go alone, and in this very hour. Those two who were on the watch outside the garden gate; certainly expected you to pass. They called to me when I was ten paces distant from the gate, and asked for my name. I gave no answer, so they did what had been ordered them. They did not succeed however; see I can still walk and even speak. Leave me here and do not be uneasy on my account. I shall not die. When I hear that you are in safety then I will follow you. Go my darling husband--before the break of day--Give me your hand--kiss me."

Her voice grew faint; her knees could no longer support her. We carried her, insensible, into the hall, and laid her on a low couch. When we pushed back her cloak, and opened her coat, the blood streamed over our hands. I bent over her; she heaved a deep sigh, looked at me once again, and sunk back to rise no more.

Let me pass over that morning in silence.

When the sun shone through the glass door, it found me still kneeling beside her couch, and gazing on her pale face. Old Fabio crouched in a corner, and sobbed.

Suddenly we heard her name called from without. Nina rushed in, and with a loud cry, threw herself on the corpse. By her demeanour it seemed as if she had been struck a deadly blow. Then in the midst of her convulsive sorrow, she roused herself, and turning me she said, "You must escape; I hastened hither to caution you and Beatrice. A short while ago Richino entered her bedroom and sought her. I know now for what reason; it was to tell her that the man she loved was dead. He hardly expected it to end as it has done. When he perceived that she was not in her room, he turned pale as death, and went away. But believe me, he will come to seek her here, and if he finds those dreadful marks on the path--listen! I hear footsteps approaching--they are his. Fly! they forebode death to you." I replied not, but rose and stood by the couch of my dead wife.

The door opened and he entered....

Whatever he had meant to say, the sight before him turned him to stone. He staggered back, and clung to the door post for support. His cadaverous face was distorted by helpless horror. I saw that he struggled in vain for breath.

"What do you seek here?" I said at last. "You hoped to find me lying covered with blood; your servants did your bidding promptly, but unfortunately they mistook the person. So you are disappointed of your malignant pleasure. You could not crown your deed by awakening this unhappy woman, of whose heart not a particle was yours, with the tidings that her lover was dead, and would never return. What hinders me," I continued, approaching him, and clenching my hands with rage, and maddening pain. "What hinders me from crushing you beneath my feet, and casting you out of the house, so that you should no longer pollute with your breath this sacred dwelling of the dead. If you had loved her, miserable scoundrel, if you could extenuate your deed by a human passion--but you would have taken possession of her, you would have abased this noble soul to your own level, only for the sake of gratifying your low desires, and because you were incited by others. Go, I say, hide your face in eternal darkness. Assassin! I swear that if you dare to stretch out your hand towards the dead, or cast your eyes on her once again, I will tear you to pieces with my own hands! Away with you!"--

In the midst of this outburst of my fury, I was silenced by the expression of his face, on which an expression of intense pain appeared. It seemed as if the ground reeled underneath him, as if it were going to burst asunder and devour him. He did not look at any one; he tried to raise his head, but sank down on the threshold completely overcome and remained so for several minutes. I had to avert a sort of pity, which I should have deemed a crime. When I had regained sufficient composure to say a few last words to him, I saw him totter like a drunken man towards the gate, and leave the garden.

I then allowed Nina to take off Beatrice's man's clothes, and to dress her in the same white gown in which I had first seen her. There she lay smiling peacefully amongst the flowers which her faithful attendant had brought from the garden and the conservatory, and so she remained during the day. Nina had just concluded this last act of friendship, when we heard a carriage approach the gate. Her father sat in it, pale, and with an insane smile hovering on his withered lips. Fabio, with scalding tears, assisted him to leave the carriage, and led him into the hall. When he saw his child surrounded by the apparel of death he dropped silently on his knees, and pressed his forehead on her folded hands. When at last we tried to raise him, we found that a paralysis of the heart had compassionately united him to his darling.

In the following night we buried them both. No one was present but Fabio, and Nina. Don Vigilio pronounced the benediction on the dead. He told me afterwards that Richino had appointed it so, and had given orders that all my requests were to be complied with as if I were master of the house. He had received no visitors, and after a violent scene with his mother-in-law, had on the same day left Bologna for Rome.

The widow of the General entered a convent for the time of her mourning. I for my part when the earth had closed over the two coffins, took horse, and before the day had dawned was on my way to Florence.

A year after, I read in the papers that the widow of the General had married the young count, her faithful admirer. But though I often returned to Bologna to visit the grave of my wife I never saw either of them again.

## **BEGINNING, AND END.**

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In the deep bay window of an otherwise brilliantly lighted saloon, a single candle, supported by the arms of a winged figure in chased silver, shed its faint lustre.

This soft shade was increased by broad-leaved plants, the last blossoms of the season, and by

a slender palm-tree whose delicate branches arched gracefully above the entrance of this dusky bower. Two chairs stood beside each other in the background, inviting to repose, but only one of them was occupied.

The slender figure of a young woman reclined in it, her head supported by her arm. Those who suspected her of retiring from the gay company to this verdant hiding-place in order to attract attention or cause a search to be made for her wronged her. She thought not of the effect produced by the delicate half shade of the palm-tree on her pure white brow, nor of the soft moonshine-like reflex of the candlelight on the shining waves of her dark hair. Neither did she take advantage of the solitude around her, whilst a girlish voice was heard singing to the piano at the further end of the room, to indulge in those reveries which in the summer time of life so often take their abode underneath the closed eyelids. In a word, she slumbered. The music to which she had at first dreamily listened, had at last lulled her to sleep like a tired child. She did not even awake when the song being ended, the old gentlemen around applauded encouragingly, the piano stool was pushed back, and the hum of the interrupted conversation again sounded through the saloon with renewed vivacity.

No one came to disturb her; she was a stranger in this society, and besides there was a certain expression of grave reserve in her countenance which did not encourage new acquaintances.

It was her fate to be considered proud. She knew it, but the little effort she made to dispel this error arose more from indifference than contempt. A familiar voice which addressed her by her name at last aroused her. She opened her eyes in some confusion and saw the master of the house standing before her, and by his side a stranger whose forehead reached up to the branches of the palm-tree.

"Allow me to interrupt your meditation, Madam," said the host with a smile. "I here present to you my friend, and cousin Valentine, who only returned to Germany a few weeks ago, and a few hours since became my guest. We must now try to retain him, and who could undertake this task with more success than our fair country women."

He had long left them and, still they remained opposite each other without a word of greeting. His eyes were fixed on the red rose which adorned her hair, and only a slight movement among the palm leaves betrayed that the blood rushed vehemently through his veins.

The lady's face was raised towards him with an earnest expression, as if she were trying to solve a problem. Was the veil which sleep had thrown over her eyes, not yet removed? Was this meeting only the vision of a dream. But no, could a dream have the power of changing, as time had done, the well known features before her; of thinning the curly hair, and of drawing those lines above the eye-brows which she had noticed at the first glance?

The longer he delayed in addressing her, the deeper grew the blush that suffused her cheek. Several times her lips parted as if to speak, but still she remained silent, and fixed her eyes on the ground. Her fan slid on the carpet. He did not pick it up.

At last he said, "Madam Eugénie, permit me to call you so, for I have just arrived here and have omitted to ask our host for your husband's name; how strangely we meet in this life. I am truly astonished at my want of presentiment which never foretold me by a sign from heaven or from earth that I should find you here."

"A special motive caused me to undertake this journey," she hastily said. "I intend to put my son to school and I am told that there is one here in which he will be well taken care of. I arrived to-day after having spent a sleepless night in the carriage, and I must confess to you that just as you came up, weak human nature, against all good breeding, was on the point of making up for lost time. I tell you this because the cool, and absent way in which I received you must have seemed strange to so old a friend."

She stretched out her hand to him. "I thank you," he replied, and his face brightened, "for having remembered my small claim on your friendship. Pray continue to treat me on the old footing, and resume your repose, which I unfortunately disturbed. I will take care that no one enters the bower: I can keep watch behind this palm-tree."

She laughed. "No, I did not mean that. I am only too tired to converse with perfect strangers. Come, sit down by me, if you will be satisfied with my good intentions, and tell me how the past, and the present have fared with you."

"You will best be able to judge for yourself how it has fared with me when I confide to you my situation at the present moment. My friend has only invited me here for the sake of marrying me. He regards it as a duty. What do you say to that? In what a sad state must not that man be whose friends consider it their duty to render him harmless?"

"You alarm me," she replied with a smile. "When I first knew you, you were, if not actually harmless, at least far from causing so much mischief that you had to be laid in chains for the sake of the public safety."

"You are deriding me, Madam. Ah that talent of yours, how well I know it. This time however your darts did not touch me. My charitable cousin fears not for others, but for my own safety. He

believes that if I continue to reside alone in the old castle which I have bought; abandoned to my own crotchets, only occupied in catching hares and helping the peasants in their agricultural affairs, which I do not myself understand, that I should sooner or later lose the little sense which he kindly presumes is left to me. You see he wishes to treat me homeopathically, dispersing one folly by another. Perhaps he is right. Those who have proved themselves incapable of regulating their lives properly, should be grateful, should they not, to their friends for taking the trouble off their hands, and quietly follow their advice; but I fancy sometimes that their kind intentions have come too late for me."

"Too late? I must combat that assertion. Fourteen years have passed since we last met, and if you did not then make yourself younger than you were, you can hardly now have reached the prime of life."

"Make myself younger! Good heavens! to do just the contrary would then have conduced more to my interests. But of what are you reminding me Eugénie?"

"Is your betrothed young, handsome amiable?" she quickly resumed; "I would not ask these questions which imply a doubt, if you had not told me that you had authorized your friend to dispose of your heart, and in these matters friends are not always to be relied on."

"You greatly wrong our most amiable host," he said laughingly; "Not only are these cardinal virtues not wanting, but all three of them are three times combined."

"Three times?"

"I mean in three different samples, as I have been told; so it will be difficult to choose."

"And each of the three young ladies is desperately in love with you? Then a twofold catastrophe is inevitable."

"Up to this hour none of my destined brides know of my existence. Their father----"

"So they are sisters?"

"Yes. A fair, an auburn, and a dark haired one. You see there is no possibility of escape; Every taste is provided for. Early to-morrow the merciless disposer of my heart, and hand takes me in his carriage, and delivers me over to my destiny. They live in L---- not quite four hours drive from this. Horse dealing is to be the pretext. The father who is the doctor of that small town, has a thorough-bred grey Arab in his stables."

"You go forth as Saul the son of Kish. I hope you may return like him with a kingdom."

"If you but knew," he said pensively, "how little I covet that dignity: is not a king fettered by his duties? To-day I am still free, so I take the liberty of sitting down beside you, and of talking with you of that happy time when I too was held captive, but by enchanting fetters."

She remained silent while he threw himself into the second arm-chair, and turned it so that he could see nothing of the company in the saloon; but only the plants before him, and the charming face of the young woman, lighted up by the solitary candle. Meanwhile the mistress of the house had sat down to the piano, and began to play a waltz; and soon the light branches of the palm-tree trembled in the whirlwind caused by the passing couples. Eugénie silently watched the gay scene before her. With her left hand she played with a gold chain, and in the right, held carelessly a large bouquet on her lap.

Valentine stedfastly gazed at her; when she observed it, she took up the nosegay and buried her face in it. "You think it somewhat indiscreet on my part," he said, "that I sit before you, as though I were admiring a fine painting; but is it not pardonable if I gaze with astonishment on that soft bloom which remains as fresh as though hardly a day had passed since our last meeting. If I banished from my mind the thought that fourteen years have gone over my head, and that I may be a married man to-morrow, I might easily delude myself into the belief that I am sitting in the conservatory of your parent's house, and have just laid aside the book in which I had been reading aloud to you, who were meanwhile watching the gnats dancing on the pond, or the falling of the leaves. In reality however, only youth can give us those hours of enraptured extasy, that entire blending of the soul with the soul of nature, when we are freed from the fetters of our own individuality only to be united, like a plant, all the more closely with the elements. When I walked home, still entranced, after one of those evenings, I felt as if I were carried along the poplar alley, as a feather is borne by the breeze. In later years we often call that feeling sentimentality, but even now I cannot laugh at it."

"If I smiled at it in those days, I now feel as if I ought to apologize for it. We girls are taught by our education to watch over our sentiments, and to be cautious in our enthusiasms. Now I may confess to you that I often only wished for Cora to disturb our reading hour by her barking, or for Frederick to summon us to tea, because I could no longer restrain my tears."

"You always had the firmer character of the two. The cement which has consolidated my nature has only grown hard in the bracing atmosphere of a stirring, and active life. But the names you have just uttered, what remembrances they bring back to me! My friend, and my



enemy, Frederick, and Cora. That dear old Frederick. I know that he heartily pitied me, a feeling which is said to be rare between rivals. You cannot be ignorant of the feelings with which you inspired him. He worshipped you as devotedly as a gardener, a servant, can worship his young mistress. He looked on his case as still more hopeless than mine, though with regard to our social position, his was by far the more settled of the two. The quiet sympathy of hopelessness united us. Often when he had come to fetch us from the conservatory and you were skipping before us after your dog, and overtaking it, would catch it up in your arms, and kiss it, he would turn to me with jealous wrath, and say: 'Now, can you understand, Master Valentine, what pleasure our young lady can find in hugging that stupid brute?' With an indignant shake of his head; the hair of which he always arranged carefully, since he served at table, and could offer you the dishes. If you confess the truth, you will own that you only fondled that ugly creature for the sake of driving us distracted."

"Do not speak ill of the dead," rejoined Eugénie. "Cora sleeps the sleep of death, not far from the pond where the bench stands underneath the elm-tree; do you remember it?"

"How could I have forgotten it? Was it not on that bench that I fastened your skates, when we started on that skating expedition with your cousin Lucy. How is your cousin getting on?"

"She is now a fine lady, with a large family. If she only knew that I have met you here! Not more than a month ago we were talking of you. She has a kind remembrance of you, and has not forgotten that bright winter's afternoon, when we first initiated you in the art of skating, and she maintains that you squeezed her hand on that occasion with more ardour than your later behaviour warranted. Since then a shade of fickleness darkens the otherwise favourable recollection she has of you."

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed laughing; "so the most harmless cannot escape suspicion. To be sure I was not wholly guiltless, but as it so often happens I must suffer for another sin than that which I really committed. When you both held my hands to guide my first steps on the slippery plain, I longed to express more to you by the firm pressure of my hand than the mere desire not to fall. But you were always inaccessible to any intelligence of that kind. You will now bear me witness that I need not reproach myself with regard to little Lucy. Ah! I still remember it all as if it had been yesterday! I still feel the glow which rushed through my veins, in spite of the cold December wind; the enrapturing touch of your hand, which seemed to linger with me for weeks after. Do not be displeased," he continued, "at my speaking so freely of all this. We are no longer the same and can now talk of these things as though they had occurred to some one else. Is it not an innocent pleasure if I now tell you what so often hung on my lips in those days, and was always repressed by that unlucky timidity of mine. We now meet as good comrades do after having settled a debt."

"And which of us is the creditor?" she asked. "Both of us," he replied. "Do you not think that I too have some right to that title? If you but knew what trouble you have caused me; how long your image stood between me, and every enjoyment of life. But you must have guessed it. When I used to watch for you on your way to your drawing lesson, when my heart beat at the sight of your checked cloak, and grey hat--and when I passed you with all the equanimity I could muster, happy in having been allowed to salute you, did the unfortunate fate of the poor lad who so humbly bowed to you never smite your conscience?"

"You are greatly mistaken my dear friend," she said, with a charming look of merriment. "I blushed whenever I met any one in that attire which I fancied gave me the appearance of a scarecrow. The cloak had long passed out of fashion, but my mother thought it good enough for the drawing lesson. How many tears of mortified vanity have I not dried with a corner of that detested garment."

He laughed. "You see how widely our natures differ. Fate did wisely in separating us. I for my part on my travels through the world vainly sought for a similar cloak which seemed to me to be the essence of all that is beautiful. In France I once remarked at some distance the same kind of checked stuff. I rushed after it, but found to my disappointment that the wearer in no way resembled the lady of my thoughts. Since that time I am inclined to believe that it was the wearer and not the garment which haunted the dreams of my youth."

During this conversation the music had continued and the air in the apartment became hot and oppressive. The young woman agitated her fan, and inhaled with parted lips the refreshing breeze from it. She reminded her friend of a remark he had once read in a French book on the affinity existing between certain blue eyes, and certain glittering teeth. He told her so. "You see," he continued, "how freely I take advantage of the privilege of friendship, telling you every thought which crosses my mind, I make up for my long silence, and you will not take it amiss. Truly it seems that Providence intends to make me a good husband and father as on the eve of the important step I am about to take it relieves my mind from all anxiety regarding it. If I had not met you, I should never, even in the midst of every domestic felicity, have been able to rid myself of the fear that some day or other you would appear, and turn my head as you did years ago. Now that you know my intentions and that we have placed our friendship on a warm, and steady footing, I can start on to-morrow's expedition in search of a wife, with an easy heart."

They had both risen, and now admired the flowers. "How beautiful this candelabra is," she remarked. "Fortuna subjected by man, and made to give him light."

"I believe it to represent the goddess of victory. The ball on which fortune glides from us, is wanting here, but Victory remains faithful to the daring."

"In that case Victory by serving you on the eve of your expedition, foretells you good luck."

"I see you doubt my courage Madam. Certainly you above all others have a right to do so. But this time I hope to manage my affairs better than I did fourteen years ago. I intend to challenge my fortune, be it good, or bad, and force an answer from it. If she smiles on me, I promise you that to you first, I shall be the herald of my heroic achievement. But enough of myself as a topic; as yet you have told me nothing of your own life, and how the years have passed with you. I could not muster courage to make enquiries about you. After I heard that you were married, I studiously avoided every place where tidings of you could reach me. I am even unacquainted with the name of your husband. Will you introduce me to him. He probably has accompanied you here?"

"I lost my husband seven years ago."

He started--"My son is all that is left to me," she resumed, "and I must now part with him. He has become quite unruly from staying with my mother in the country, and even if I could find a tutor who knew how to manage him, I should be sorry to see him pass the merry time of youth without any companions of his own age."

"I long to see him," he hastily said, without lifting his eyes from the flowers in her hand. "So he has lost his father; poor child! When he has grown up you must send him on a visit to me. I will take him out hunting, give him my horses to ride, and if he should fall in love with my daughter, why in that case the beginning and the end would once more be united, although in a different manner from what blind mortal, once dreamt. Would you consent to the match Eugénie?" and he stretched out his hand to her.

"With all due regard to the future father-in-law of my son," she replied gaily. "I should wish first to see the young lady herself, especially as you cannot even answer for her mother."

"Of course you must approve of the mother; I should never think of marrying her, if she had the misfortune to displease you! The wisest course would be!"--

The conversation was here interrupted by a young man, who hesitatingly approached the embrasure of the window, with the intention of inviting the lady to dance. She declined, alleging the fatigue of her night journey as an excuse, and then she left the bower, and mingled with the rest of the company. Valentine who had remained standing by the palm-tree, watched her figure amongst the others, and now and then he fancied he heard her voice. It appeared to him as if he had forgotten some question of importance, and he tried to recall it to his mind. At last he remembered that he ought to have enquired for her mother. He went in search of her to repair his neglect but he could not find her either in the saloon or in the adjoining rooms. She had disappeared.

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It was on the second day after this meeting; a dense morning fog still filled the street but the air above was clear, and promised a sunny day, that in one of the rooms of the hotel, Eugénie sat at a writing-table, an unfinished letter lying before her. Her folded hands rested on the paper, and her thoughts strayed far away from the contents of those lines.

Now and then when a step was heard in the passage, she started up, and listened, but they always passed the door, and she remained alone.

Why did all her thoughts revert to the past, to that particular walk in the garden where the sunflowers and china asters grew, and the small fruit-trees threw long shadows across the cabbage beds. The sun was shining through the high hedge but the air did not resound with the song of birds. To-morrow when the day waned, she would be far away from this homely spot, and when she returned, the fruit-trees would be bare, and snow would cover the ground. The young student who walked by her side and was digging holes in the gravel with the point of her parasol, was fully aware of this. He had seen the travelling carriage in the courtyard, and watched Frederick fastening the valise on the box. When people start on a journey, who can tell if they will return, or at least return the same as they went. Is it not expedient then to exchange one's last bequests, especially if each is disposed to bequeath body and soul to the other.

If he had but known how highly he ought to value her condescension in leading the way to this remote and solitary corner of the garden. As she walked along, she upbraided herself with having thus far made advances to him. But she would not take a step further, now it was his turn to forward matters, and if he did not, she would never forgive herself for having done so much to loosen his tongue. For it had a high opinion of the dignity of its sex, this young head of seventeen, and if the unfortunate youth by her side, had choked with mute respect, she would not have spoken a word to help him. Was not this walk sufficiently secluded, and the sun at their backs; was it not the only time she had ever walked with him in the kitchen garden, and above all, had he not seen the travelling carriage in the yard.

On no account, however, was he to perceive that she had contrived all this for his sake. She talked eagerly of the approaching journey, expressed her pleasure at seeing her cousins again,

and laughingly described every one of them.

They had reached the end of the walk, and had looked over the hedge, but he became more and more laconic. At last he quite ceased talking and she too became silent. Feelings of passion and mortification rose in her breast, and nearly choked her. Then she suddenly turned towards him, and colouring deeply said: "Let us now go back; and give me my parasol. I shall want it on my journey, and you will break it to pieces. I must hasten home, as I still have many things to pack. Do you know that I quite shudder when I think of how much my intellectual refinement will retrograde during my absence. I shall hardly remember the English kings in Shakespear's works, which you have taken so much trouble to impress on my mind. It is a pity, but what can I do? My cousins are not such pedants as you are. If I return--but who can tell whether my aunt will not keep me through the winter. Well, it may be a long time before we can resume our studies and if I pass my examination badly, this long absence must plead for me."

More than a year passed before they met again--When the morning arrived, the travelling carriage was ready to start and the ladies sitting in it, he approached the door of it and offered a bouquet. The mother accepted it with many thanks. Eugénie nodded gaily to him, and gave him her gloved hand. He did not see her pale face, and swollen eyes behind her thick veil. He closed the door and bowed. As the carriage drove away, Frederic turned once more towards Valentine, and across his honest face there passed an expression of pity for his less fortunate rival.

This had been in autumn. When they returned in the middle of winter, Valentine had left the town; he was occupied at a small court of justice in the country. Only in the following summer he once again rang the well known bell at the garden gate. On being told that the house was full of visitors, cousins, and others who were strangers to him, he charged the servant with a message that he would return another time; but a cold bow from her mother whom he met in the streets next day, showed him that he should not find all as he had hoped; so he never returned.

Was his absence regretted? Who could solve the enigma on Eugénie's pale face, when three years later, she married the man her mother had chosen for her. But now when her thoughts wandered back from the letter before her to those days of old, the words of a pensive song resounded in her heart: "There was a time when happiness was mine to give and take etc."----

The clattering of swift hoofs was now heard in the street, and she flew to the window. A horseman on a beautiful grey Arab galloped through the thick fog which closed behind him. Clouds of steam arose from the reeking nostrils of the horse.

With an agitated glow in her eyes, she watched the proud and manly bearing of the rider, and the ease with which he managed his restless horse. What a difference between this chivalrous firmness, and the soft pensive manner of his youth. Still she had recognized at their first meeting, that his heart had lost none of its fresh bloom; it was developed not changed. Had he this time divested himself of his former timidity, and spoken the binding words? She shuddered at the thought.

Rapid steps were now heard ascending the stairs. Her habitual self-command did not forsake her, and when Valentine entered the room, her face was calm in spite of the quick beating of her heart. She met him with a smile, and offered him her hand. "Good morning," she said: "so you have kindly kept your promise! The triumphant prancing of your horse has already apprised me that you return crowned with success."

"Eugénie," he replied, "you must highly value my visit of to-day, for I have made it in spite of my conviction that you will have a good laugh at my expense. My only acquisition by yesterday's expedition is this horse which I paid for in ready money, and this apple which I stole." And he laid a fine wax-like apple on the table. "I do not hold the booty obtained by your campaign so very despicable. I understand nothing about horses, but as you doubtless obtained the apple from the hands of your chosen one"----

"If I had but reached that point," he resumed despondingly; "the rest would be easy enough. You are greatly mistaken, however, if you are inwardly accusing me of having been again wanting in courage. It was the superfluity of it which in this case hindered my success. Upon my word, I would, without the slightest hesitation, have made a declaration to each of the three young ladies, one after the other."

"What a pretty disaster you would have caused." "I never expected anything of you but an ironical pity. Still--you may judge from this how thoroughly perplexed I am--I turn to you for help."

"You expect more of me than with the best intentions I can give you."

"Ah, but you can help me Eugénie. Now listen and I will give you an account of it all. My friend, and I spent a whole day in their company."

"That is either a very long, or a very short time as you take it."

"You are right. The time is long enough to fall in love with all three sisters, and much too short to decide which of them is to be preferred. The only way would be to take the whole batch from the nest."

"Are the nestlings so unfledged that they would submit to that?"

"To tell the truth I never thought of that. The chief thing for me is to get so enraptured with one of the sisters, that she should banish the other two from my mind. But at my age it is difficult to grow enthusiastic."

"Then all three are equally irresistible?"

"Quite so, all of them made to be kissed, and each of them a different style of beauty; so that when one sees them, together one feels that one could never be satisfied with only one of them."

"Your account is given in too vague and extravagant terms. I wish to have it in proper order, and with every detail. First then comes the fair, then the auburn, then the dark one; or how do they follow in age?"

"I don't know."

"Well, then we will arrange them according to size, and begin with the smallest. Is it the auburn haired young lady?"

"I really cannot tell."

"You seem to have employed your time badly, or was it the triple fascination which had such power over your feelings from the first, that your senses left you?"

"Certainly I cannot excuse myself on that score," he replied laughing. "I do not remember a more disagreeable sensation than I had yesterday on my way to L----. A visit to the dentist is a pleasure trip compared to it. Several times I was on the point of jumping out of the carriage, but then I reflected that my cousin's horses would soon have overtaken me, and then I should have been delivered over ignominiously into the hands of my evil destiny. For on this point, my friend, who is in every other respect so yielding, knows no mercy. So I plucked up courage, and thinking over all the evil that had ever befallen me in the course of my life I tried to find comfort by repeating that in fact it all amounted very much to the same thing. At last we arrived. I had stipulated from the beginning that my cousin should not say a word of my real purpose, either to the father, or to the young ladies. The doctor was not at home when we first arrived, so we only found the sisters of fate in the neatest of dresses, fresh and charming like three rose buds on one stalk. Yes in truth they equalled the three graces, and their manners too were far from being provincial. I could not tire of looking at them."

"The beginning seems promising."

"When they perceived us, they left their several domestic occupations, and ran to meet my cousin. Then arose a delightful trio of merry girlish voices around us. Of course my share of their words, and looks of greeting, was at first only what civility demanded, and I was quite contented with this, as it gave me a good opportunity of quietly observing them. When I first entered the room, and perceived the dark haired young lady, who looked up from her work with large and wondering eyes, I said to myself; This is the one, I always had a predilection for dark hair. The next moment however, I again wavered at the sight of the fair haired one, whose voice is as clear as a bird's, and her skin as white as the cherry blossom. Then the auburn haired one entered, grace and modesty personified. You will understand, that under these circumstances my countenance did not wear a very intelligent expression. However I was soon on very good terms with the three young ladies, and when they conducted me to the stables to show me the horse, I even took the liberty of lifting the fair one on its back, and led it about in the courtyard."

"Then it is the fair one."

"Not exactly; I only gave her a ride because she was the most courageous, and appeared to be very familiar with the grey Arab. She sat on his back with folded arms as calmly as if she had been on her sofa, whereas the auburn haired one clung to the mane with a charming timidity."

"So all three had to display their horsemanship; at least you can now judge of the weight of your future wife."

"No, the dark-haired one was not put to the test. Their father had now joined us. He turned them out of the stable-yard, and charged them to provide for our dinner. Then we soon settled the bargain, and ratified it by a bottle of good Heidelberg wine. The doctor pleased me. He is just the sort of man one would desire for a father-in-law. Besides he is a good sportsman, an excellent judge of horses, and the best chess player in the neighbourhood."

"In that case your young wife will pass very amusing evenings."

"If it ever comes to that. But as I said before I lost my time, and opportunities, in a most inexcusable manner. In the afternoon we walked through the town to see the old castle in which the former king gave great entertainments, but under the present government it is quite deserted. The place where the orange-trees stood is now turned into an orchard. It was a pretty sight to see the delicious looking apples, and pears lying carefully assorted in great heaps on the green grass; and I never inhaled a more refreshing odour than was diffused over the spot. So we

walked along; the three sisters in front with light straw hats and all dressed alike; then we three behind them. While I was examining them, the thought struck me that I was now in the same position as that prince who while keeping his father's flocks, was suddenly called on to award the prize of beauty to one of the three goddesses."

"So you appropriated to yourself this apple, hoping to extricate yourself from your embarrassment by a symbolical allusion."

"I certainly put it in my pocket with that intention; and as we rambled through the old park, and now one of the sisters, and now another walked beside me on the narrow path, I several times felt fully convinced that just this girl was the right one and I secretly grasped the apple. Then again when one of the others turned round towards me, or some word or sound of laughter reached me I hastily replaced it. So I did not dispose of it, and have brought it back with me.

"Is it not provoking Eugénie, that when love was at hand courage was wanting, and now that I have gained courage, love is not forthcoming."

"You must not despair at the outset," she said, encouragingly. "Your first attempt was not so very bad. Rome was not built in a day, neither can you expect to find your domestic felicity in so short a time. Are their names all equally pleasing to you? I lay much stress upon names, and can easily understand the feelings of that dauphin who would not wed a woman called Uracca."

"That cannot decide me either," he answered, despondingly. "Anna, Claire, and Mary, I know not which I prefer. No, my kind friend, I now look to you for assistance."

"To me, I cannot guess how I can be of use to you in this intricate affair."

"It is certainly a great favour which I require from your friendship," he replied with some hesitation. He had now risen, and had taken the apple in his hand. He threw it several times into the air, caught it again, and finally replaced it on the table. "You see," he resumed, "when after having passed a very restless night, I mounted my horse--my cousin had driven back the same evening--and as I rode through the fog in the frosty morning air, it occurred to me what a strange co-incidence, it was that just before deciding on the most important step of my life, I should meet you once more; you the only one who really knows me, and in whom I could freely confide, were anything wanting to your knowledge of my character. I recalled to mind all your kindness to me, and also all the harm you have done me, and I felt convinced that you really were my debtor, and owed me some reparation for all my misfortunes, and privations. What I further thought, Eugénie!---Well, that is not to the purpose now.--So I devised a plan which I hope you will not mar."

"What is it?" she asked absently.

"Would you consent to get into a carriage with me, and accompany me to L---? I would take you to the doctor's house, and then you could see the three girls side by side. The one to whom you gave this apple would become my wife. I solemnly promise you that I will not raise the slightest objection to your choice."

"You cannot give me full powers, and I could not accept them in such a case."

"And why so? I am quite convinced that I could be tolerably happy with any one of them; indeed, for that matter, if I did not think it presumptuous, I might simply write down their names, throw them into my hat, and draw my lot with closed eyes. It could not be a great prize, *that* has passed for ever; at least many things would have to be changed; but at all events I should not draw a blank. But why should it be hazarded, why should you think the responsibility so great, if I consult you as the friend of my youth, with the firm conviction that a clever woman can more easily fathom the depth of a girl's character, than a man ever can."

"But even if I consented to your adventurous scheme, under what pretence would you introduce me to the family?"

"I have also considered this point," he said, striking with his whip the many coloured pattern on the carpet. "I introduce you to the good people as my betrothed. In this way we are sure to obtain our end, for every girl, even the most undesigning, in the presence of a bachelor endeavours to shew herself in the best light. They are daughters of Eve. But if I return to them as one already disposed of we shall easily be able to find out which of the sisters has been acting a part and, perhaps, I may even discover that one of them has secretly monopolized my heart. Surprise often brings to light the true character."

He glanced at Eugénie who stood before him with an air of quiet deliberation. She had let him come to the end of his proposal, but now she shook her head.

"Think of some other plan, Valentine, I cannot consent to this one."

"There is no danger in it."

"Possibly, but I am neither skilled enough, nor do I feel inclined to act that part, and were I suddenly to drop the mask my embarrassment could hardly exceed yours."

"Consent at least to assume the character of a sister."

She considered for a while. "If I agree to this," she said at last, "I only do so for the sake of proving how little I can help you. The qualities in a girl, which please or displease an old woman, are totally different from those which seem important to a man. I confess that curiosity has a share in my decision, and above all the fear of your cousin, who would never forgive me if I did not further his philanthropic plans on your behalf."

"I thank you," he exclaimed joyously, taking her hand and kissing it. "Now I am free from all anxiety. A true friend is certainly one of the greatest blessings under heaven. I will go this moment to the landlord, and order a carriage."

"Your wooer's wings must submit however to some delay. Or do you expect me to perform the part you have forced upon me in my morning dress and cap?"

"In truth," he replied, "I never noticed that. In my opinion you might boldly drive to L---- in your present attire. The hair so pushed back under your cap, shows your fair temples to advantage, I am enabled again to admire those unruly meshes in your neck which in former days ensnared my poor heart, like a fish struggling in a net."

She held up her finger threateningly, and then said, while a sudden blush suffused her face: "Take care, else I will betray you to your future bride. Your triple courtship, however, excuses the disregard with which you treat the toilette of an old friend. Here are some books; amuse yourself in the meantime; I will be back presently."

She disappeared into the adjoining room and closed the door behind her.

He approached the table on which the apple lay, and after pensively gazing at it for a while, he suddenly gave it an angry push, which sent it flying over the edge of the table, and rolling across the carpet. He sighed, and as if to rouse himself struck his hand with his whip till it smarted. He then mechanically took up one of the books which lay in the corner of the sofa. It was a volume of Mörike's poems, and they exercised on him their powerful charm. He forgot all around him, and drawn on from page to page was soon completely absorbed in "The moonlit path of love once sacred."

Suddenly the door from the passage opened and a lad of about ten years rushed into the room.

"Mother," he cried, "will you allow me---- Why to be sure she is not here," he then said to himself, and turned his sharp clear eyes inquiringly on the stranger. "Come here, my boy," said Valentine stretching out his hand to him. "Your mother is dressing in the next room. What is your name?"

"Fred is my name."

"Won't you give me your hand, Fred?"

The lad hesitated. "Who are you?" he asked partly embarrassed, partly defiant.

"I am an old acquaintance of your mother's. She will not object to your giving me your hand. So, that is right. Will you come to see me some day? I have four handsome horses in my stables. I will give you a small gun, and will take you out shooting with me. The first hare you shoot, you shall bring to your mother."

The boy's eyes sparkled, but suddenly he became thoughtful, and said, "I should like it very much, but I must go to school. This is my last holiday, and the two sons of the head-master have just invited me to go into the fields with them to fly a kite."

"Well, then you will come to see me in the vacation time. Would you like that, Frederick?"

"Yes, if my mother permits it."

"Go, and ask her, my dear boy. We will become fast friends, won't we?"

The lad nodded. Valentine took him up and kissed him. Then his mother called him into her room; and Valentine heard him, as he eagerly repeated what the strange gentleman had said to him. "He gave me a kiss," continued the boy. "Why does he love from the first moment he sees me?"

They continued the conversation in an under tone, and then the boy left his mother's room by another door.

Valentine approached the window, and watched him as he left the house, and joined his two playfellows, who had been waiting below for him. His fair straight hair hung in masses about his shoulders; his round childish face beamed underneath the border of his cap. Yet the man at the window seemed to find no pleasure in the sight.

When Eugénie, dressed for the drive, entered the room, she found him still in the same position. She wore a dark green hat with a waving black feather, and a short grey cloak which

closely fitted her fine figure. "I am ready, my friend," she said; "let us get into the carriage?"

He looked up in confusion. "The carriage?" he asked.

"Yes, the carriage which I suppose you ordered long ago."

"I confess," he replied, "that I have not yet done so. I did not expect you to be dressed so soon."

"You are certainly the first man to complain of that. Well, so it seems that I must provide for our departure."

She rung the bell and ordered a carriage. Whilst her orders were being executed, Valentine remained standing near the window, and attentively examined the arabesques on the curtain. He perceived that she stooped to pick up the apple, but did not anticipate her.

"Well, I think you ought to treat this fine apple with more respect," she said jestingly. "You see it has been already injured by its heavy fall."

"Perhaps it were best Eugénie to leave it where it is. The reluctant shudder of yesterday is already coming over me. Why must I try my luck at L--- Why should it be one of the three sisters. Possibly I need not look so far to find what I desire."

"You ought to be ashamed of your vacillation," she answered with comical solemnity. "Is this the courage you boasted of? Come, rouse your spirits, and replace the stolen apple in your pocket. The sin you have committed by this theft, can only be expiated by the more difficult task of stealing the heart of one of the sisters. Come, I hear the carriage driving to the door. You have excited my curiosity, and I shall not rest till it is satisfied."

When the carriage had left the town, and was rolling smoothly along the even road, Valentine broke the silence. "I have become acquainted with your son, Eugénie," he said.

"You must praise him to me," she hastily returned; "I am a very proud mother, he is the very image of his father."

"I thought so," he resumed. "The face seemed strange to me. I only recognized the mouth. This mouth is strikingly like yours, Eugénie."

She turned away towards, the carriage window, and her eyes wandered over the landscape, which had now contracted, so as to form a narrow valley surrounded on both sides by steep vineyards. The mist had entirely cleared away, and the wet tendrils and leaves of the vines sparkled in the bright sunlight. The river bordered with willows, and alders flowed smoothly by the road side, and small barges glided rapidly along the current. Nothing is so refreshing and enlivening as a drive on a fine autumn day. Valentine experienced its charm and soon resumed the conversation. He enquired after the health of her mother, and after a while Eugénie began to speak of her husband. "You would have been his friend, Valentine," she gravely said. "He was an excellent man, and a brave officer and he had a profound and unaffected admiration for all that is good and beautiful. Those who did not know him intimately thought him cold and indifferent, but inwardly, he was full of generous warmth which he kept for his family, his friends and those who were in want. My mother still grieves for him, as she grieved for my father. I hope that Frederick will some day resemble him in every respect."

Valentine was silent for a long time. At last he asked, without looking at his companion, "Have you never thought of choosing a second husband among the many suitors who no doubt have surrounded you?"

"No, my dear friend," she answered quietly. "Passions have never troubled me, and a marriage founded on esteem--it always is a lucky chance if one does not repent of it afterwards."

They had now reached a turn in the valley, and the unexpected change of scene interrupted the conversation. On the left hand where the vine covered hills receded from the river, lay a small town, the industry of whose inhabitants was testified by the smoking chimnies of many factories, and the roaring and clashing of the water engines.

A broad stone bridge led across the river, and high above the old gable roofed houses, rose the graceful edifice of a gothic church, whose perforated spire of delicate fret-work with the ornamented cross at the top, projected boldly into the clear blue sky, and was surrounded by swarms of pigeons.

"This is C----" said the coachman, pulling up his horses for a moment, and pointing towards the town with the end of his whip.

"Drive over the bridge," cried Valentine; "we wish to visit that beautiful cathedral before we proceed on our journey."

Eugénie looked at him enquiringly. "Let me manage it all," continued Valentine, turning to her. "We are sure of reaching the doctor's house in good time, so I propose that we rest here awhile, climb up to that steeple, and dine at the inn of the place; by this plan we shall not arrive

just as my future father-in-law is sitting down to dinner. To-night there is full moon, so that our drive back, though somewhat late, will not be the less pleasant."

"Be it so," she replied, "I only stipulate that the rest of our plan remain as we had first agreed upon, and that the valiant knight does not seek a pretext to keep the apple again in his own pocket."

He laughingly promised it on his honour as a knight.

The carriage had now stopped before the cathedral. They got out and desired the old portal to be opened for them. The grey-haired door-keeper slowly led them through the lofty nave and aisles, coughing and gasping at every step.

"The dank air of the church is not good for you, old lady," remarked Valentine. "Have you not a grandchild, who could serve in your stead, as a guide to strangers? You ought to sit basking in the sun. Go, and leave us to find the way by ourselves."

"Showing the church is all well enough," replied the old woman, "but I can no longer drag myself up the steep stairs of the steeple; so if the lady and gentleman wish to climb up there, they will have to go by themselves. You cannot miss the way; one flight of steps follows the other, till you reach the upper gallery; once there, you will have had enough of it."

Valentine looked at Eugénie. "Shall we try?" he asked. She nodded, so they passed through the narrow portal, guarded by two dragons hewn in stone and they began their ascent; leaving their old conductress below. Up there the scanty warmth, and light of the autumnal sun could not penetrate, and the dim cool twilight which prevailed, inclined them to silence. As they ascended the winding stairs, Valentine watched the little feet, which so nimbly mounted the steps before him. He felt as if he could not but follow them, even if they chose to venture out on the steep roof, which now and then was to be seen through the apertures. He heaved an involuntary sigh. She stopped on one of the landing places, and turning looked smilingly at him. "You are out of breath it seems."

"On the contrary, I feel as if I had too much of it," he replied.

"Do not squander it, methinks you will yet want it. See how high above the world we are already, and still the gallery over the nave is much higher."

"I believe you are in fact leading me straight to heaven, Eugénie."

"Gently, gently, you must first deserve it," she replied laughingly.

"And if I carry it by storm?"

"It remains to be seen whether you are as exempt from giddiness, as such a titanic achievement would require. But I would rather you now walked before me; for the stairs grow narrower, and narrower, and I fear I shall lose courage if I see no one in front of me."

He complied with her wish, and pensively ascended the steps before her. Only the rustling of her dress against the wall told him that she was still behind him. So they reached the first gallery which ran round the base of the spire, and entered the interior part of it. "Don't let us stop here," she said, "I will not look around me, till we have reached to the very top. Meanwhile we can admire what is above us. Look how curiously, this pointed airy tent of stone closes around us; a cool bower. It is a pity that the wooden pillar which supports the small upper staircase, somewhat disfigures it, and mars the effect of this beautiful sculptured rosace. But to be sure without it, we could not reach the very point of the spire. Come now, let us proceed in our ascent."

They soon stood beside each other on the aerial summit, and gazed with exulting awe into the fathomless depth below them. The numberless denticulations and ornamented pinnacles of the cathedral, the hundreds of chimnies and roofs, the neat market-place with its quaint looking old town-hall, the swarms of people in the streets, every thing appeared small, strange, and silent as if it were a world of pigmies. At a little distance the river basked in the sun, resembling a silver snake, and its ripples glittered like scales in the light. Further down the valley in the grey distance, above the vineyards rose the clear and cloudless outlines of blue and purple hills. As they stood beside each other, and leant over the stone parapet, he gazed intently at her purely cut profile, which she had heedlessly exposed to the sun. Her eyes were still fixed on the world below her; the wind had dishevelled her long hair and the loosened tresses brushed Valentine's cheek. She did not notice it; her parted lips eagerly inhaled the freshening breeze, her delicate nostrils dilated, and the blood flowed more rapidly through her blue veins.

"Are we not amply repaid for the fatiguing ascent," she asked. "How beautiful it is here. The further we are separated from our fellow creatures the dearer to our hearts they become. I can easily imagine that if a fierce misanthrope filled with animosity and hate were to ascend to these heights, with the intention of precipitating himself over the parapet, he would be suddenly softened and converted, after looking on these humble roofs, underneath which thousands of people bear the sufferings and toils of this life, and are contented if they can only see the sun, and the sky, and the golden cross on their steeple."



"There certainly is a purifying virtue in the air of higher regions," he replied in a low voice. "We are freed from the oppression of daily petty considerations and customs, and are drawn nearer to the Creator. We feel as if we were called to rise above the world, part of which we survey at our feet. Even the most faint-hearted must feel the wings of his soul expand, and that which he dared not utter or even think in the midst of the din, and cares of every day life, here spontaneously flows from his heart to his lips."

Suddenly the sound of trumpets and flutes reached them from below, and they saw a band of music followed by a crowd, slowly advancing in solemn procession, as it issued out of one of the narrow streets, and marched across the market-place. The brass of the instruments sparkled in the sun and some of the people wore bouquets in their hats. "Apparently a wedding," remarked Valentine. "But where is the bride?" interposed Eugénie. "It rather seems to me to be one of those expeditions which now daily proceed to the vintage accompanied by singing and music. But you have just mentioned weddings; that reminds me of the great aim of our excursion. Come let us descend." He appeared not to have heard her. "Eugénie," he said, "if we had stood up here fourteen years ago, all would have been different."

"Who can say if it would have been better. I am inclined to think that all that happens to us is well, and for our good."

He had pulled out the apple, and held it before him on the stone parapet.

"Do you really believe that Eugénie?"

"Yes, I do."

"And if I had told you then, what escaped from my lips, the first evening we again met, what would have been your answer?"

"That question, is a matter of conscience, my dear friend," she replied, carelessly, "which even up here a hundred feet above the every day world you are not justified in asking. Before I could give you a clear and concise answer, I should have to read through some chapters in the book of my life, which I have not perused for many a year." "And that truly is a trouble which I cannot expect you to take," he replied in a pained, harsh tone. "Besides it would be useless labour as the writing must have long since faded. I forgot that though the chapters in my book, end in a blank, yours have a continuation." Saying these words he leant over the parapet, and the apple he held in his hand rolled as if by accident over the edge. In its fall it struck one of the many pinnacles which surrounded the spire, and broke into several pieces, which flew, describing wide curves, into the street.

"What have you done Valentine?" exclaimed Eugénie; "where shall we be able to steal another apple? Only fruits of stone can be plucked here. But now let us hasten down."

"You are right," he replied, indifferently, "here every thing is of stone; I did not think of that." Then he remained silent till they reached the streets. The gloom however, which had settled on his countenance, could not hold out against the unconstrained gaiety of his companion. His brow cleared before they had taken many steps on their way to the inn. She had taken his arm through the narrow tortuous streets, her cloak, which in the warm sunshine had become too heavy for her, hung loosely from her shoulders. As they walked along, they joked merrily at the smell of the new wine, which met them at the entrance of every cellar and courtyard and even pervaded the precincts of the old dilapidated church, and at the large vats which obstructed their way.

When they reached the inn, the hour of the table d'hôte had passed, so they sat down alone in the large room, at a small table, where they were amply provided with the best wine of the country; but Eugénie wished for a bottle of that year's vintage. She said she longed to taste that beverage the scent of which she had so abundantly enjoyed during her walk--

When she had tasted it, she praised the sweet and turbid drink.

"It resembles first love," remarked Valentine, "beware of its strength; it will turn your head."

"At my age there is no danger of that," she replied, smiling. "I am an old woman already, and take my daily nap after dinner. To-day this bad habit will be of great service to me."

She then retired to a room prepared for her, and Valentine remained alone in company of the wine and his thoughts. The uneasiness of the morning had passed, and he no longer pondered on what would be the end of all this. The voice of a good genius secretly whispered in his ear that fate now smiled on him. He looked around, as if to ascertain that no one was near, and then hastily took a sip from Eugénie's glass, with the devout superstition that it would help him to divine her thoughts. As however no enlightenment on this point was vouchsafed him, he consoled himself with the thought that without doubt, she was asleep at that moment, and so could think of nothing. He represented her to himself reclining on the sofa, her small feet crossed, and her head drooping on her shoulder. A sensation of happiness thrilled through him; he felt as if he must hasten upstairs, kneel before the fair sleeper, and press her hand to his lips. But he soon rejected this thought, lighted a cigar and patiently waited for Eugénie's appearance. It certainly seemed as if the new wine had confirmed its reputation, for more than an hour passed before the door was opened, and his fair companion re-appeared.

"Good morning," she exclaimed, "how long have I slept? truly this wine though it seems so harmless, is even in its cradle as powerful as an offspring of the gods. It will be late before we reach the home of your fair ones."

"We never can reach it late enough," he replied, laughing. "Think of what you promised me on your honour as a knight," she said, with a menacing gesture, "and hasten our departure. What a careless mother I am, instead of spending my poor boy's last holiday with him, I stroll about the country making the acquaintance of new wine, and old churches."

In spite of Valentine's efforts to hasten their departure the day had waned before they reached their destination. The fog had gathered again, when the carriage slowly ascended the hill on which the town was built, and rattled over the bad pavement. Valentine lifted Eugénie from the carriage when it stopped at the inn, and silently walked by her side through the streets to the doctor's house. She remarked that he was greatly agitated, and she almost felt pity for him, but they had already mounted the stone steps which led up to the neat little house, the knocker had sounded, and a moment afterwards the door was opened by a stout little man with large gold spectacles.

"Why, what's this!" cried the merry old gentleman, pushing back his spectacles. "What gives me the unexpected pleasure of seeing you so soon again? I hope there is nothing wrong about the horse---but I see you have brought company with you, and I have left you standing out there in this rude manner. You must excuse me, fair lady; you see we are still barbarians in this remote corner of the world. I beg you will honour my humble roof. But now tell me seriously my dear friend *is* there anything the matter with Almansor? Unfortunately you will find no one but myself at home, my dear Madam; my daughters will be inconsolable when they hear that during their absence---but I will send for them this very moment; but stop a bit! why confound me, I remember now, I have already sent for them, they will be here in a few minutes. To the left Madam if you please, will you kindly walk in here, most honoured guests?"

They entered the room, the door of which the lively little man had opened for them. In the centre stood a table laid for four, on which there were cold viands and a bottle of new wine. The whole was lighted up by the faint twilight which stole through the window. "Now you can judge for yourself, my most honoured friend, how we are treated by our children," resumed the doctor. "Those naughty girls of mine run away, and leave their papa to wait for his supper. We will play them a trick however, nothing but the empty dishes, shall they find on their return. But what a fool I am, inviting you to supper without considering that this scanty meal is in no way fit for such charming visitors. Unfortunately the cook is gone to summon them, so there is no one to---But please to be seated at least, take off your hat and cloak, and make yourself comfortable--Welcome to L--- most honoured lady. Now my friend *do* tell me has the horse?"---

"I can relieve your mind on that point my dear doctor," Valentine at last interposed. "I value Almansor's excellent qualities more than ever, since he has found favour in the eyes of my betrothed, to whom I have the pleasure of introducing you." Eugénie bowed to their amazed host. She checked the words which had risen to her lips, and only a severe look reproved Valentine for this arbitrary assertion, so contrary to their treaty.

Had the little doctor entertained other hopes since yesterday's visit? Had he attached greater importance to it than mere horse-dealing?--With a low bow he stammered forth his congratulations, and thanked Valentine for honouring him with this visit. However he soon, recovered his jovial equanimity and laughingly said: "Well, you are the most complete hypocrite and false hearted friend! Did you not on this very spot abuse matrimony so vehemently, that you even alarmed, and terrified such an old widower as I am? and then to come next day accompanied by your betrothed---Well, she certainly is bewitching enough to convert a heathen.-Pardon me, pardon me. Madam."

Valentine laughed. "I can assure you, doctor; that none but you are responsible, if after all my yesterday's heresy has been retracted."

"I? you are joking."

"No, I am speaking in good earnest. For you have, or rather your horse has been of great assistance to me in winning this fair lady's hand. This morning when mounted on Almansor, I rode up to the window behind which stood my beloved one, the sight melted the hardness of her heart, and she acknowledged herself conquered. Hardly had I recovered my senses, which were somewhat confused by this unexpected victory than I declared that you should be the first person to hear of our engagement, so we ordered a carriage and drove to L--- and now permit your grateful and overjoyed friend to embrace you."

"Ah!" exclaimed the delighted doctor, "my fancy for horses has caused me many vexations, but this master-stroke of Almansor's makes ample amends for it all. No my dear young lady, you need not take it amiss that your betrothed has divulged your secret. I esteem you all the more highly since I find that you acknowledge a man to be only complete on horseback. Now leave it all to me, my eye ranges all over the country, and if some day I should find a lady's horse worthy of cantering by the side of Almansor----"

"It shall be *mine*; let us shake hands over it, doctor, and the first time I ride with my wife, you

shall accompany us."

"Agreed," cried the little man, and energetically shook hands with his guest. "But where are those girls, confound them; just when all is ready to celebrate this happy event they are wanting."

"Are your daughters on a visit in the town?" asked Eugénie.

"Yes, my dear young lady, they have been invited to one of the autumnal grape gatherings, by a friend of mine, who has daughters of the same age. I have no doubt, that the affair will finish off with a dance; however I exercised my paternal authority, and strictly enjoined them to come home before evening. I will not again allow them to dance at this season of the year, for every time they have done so, they have brought home bad colds. Now they will miss you delightful visit, and it serves the disobedient hussies quite right--but they really must come I will have them fetched home instantly! halloo Henry!" he shouted to a farm-servant, whom he had seen passing, from the window; "just run over to the Kitzinger garden and tell Margaret to bring them home immediately. Now you see," he continued, turning to his guests, who sat side by side on the sofa without looking at each other, "how little respect a father enjoys. You must educate your children with more severity. Ah! if my wife still lived, it would all be different."

Eugénie blushed and remained silent, but Valentine exclaimed; "No, no Doctor, don't disturb your daughters in their merry making. It is true that I have praised them so much to my dear Eugénie that she will not leave L---- without having made their acquaintance, but there will be time for that to-morrow, for the moon does not make its appearance, and I hear that we shall be well provided for at the inn of the Crown."--"Are you not of my opinion darling," he said turning to Eugénie, and suddenly approaching his lips to hers.

"Valentine," said the young woman, and drew back quickly, "you seem to have forgotten what you promised me."--"Now what do you say to that Doctor? She reminds me of my promise, and does not keep hers. Eugénie have you not vowed to agree to all my wishes, and are you justified in refusing a kiss to your betrothed. Come now let us seal our engagement as students seal their fellowship. We have not yet done so."

"That is right!" exclaimed their host. "This is only new wine, but in the cellar...."

"Don't trouble yourself my dear friend; is not new wine sweet, turbid, and intoxicating like first love. And you must know, Doctor, that the fair charmer before you has been worshipped by me from the time I entered college and though fate parted us in later days. 'Old love fades not,' as the people say, and you know that 'the voice of the people, is the voice of the gods.' So We will perform the sacred act with none other but new wine. Fill your glass. Doctor!"

He had risen with these words and again turned towards Eugénie, with two full glasses in his hand. She sat on the sofa suffused with blushes, and her eyes fixed on the ground. Maidenly confusion sealed her lips, she tried to speak, but could not utter a word, so she took the glass mechanically. He then knelt before her, twined his arm within hers after the fashion of the students and emptied his glass at one draught. She took a sip from hers with half averted face. Valentine then threw away his glass and kissed her lips.<sup>[6]</sup>

"That's right," said the doctor. "You need not blush fair lady, if an old man like myself is present at so solemn an act. All I ask as a reward for my good offices, is that I should be permitted to assist at the wedding."

Valentine silently nodded, and remained standing for a while before her, pensively gazing on her calm brow.

"My dear Doctor," he then began, "you must make some allowance for two people who are nearly out of their senses with joy. It is no trifling matter, I assure my dear friend, when one's betrothal is only of a few hours standing; particularly as this cruel lady love of mine tormented me so relentlessly with her wicked tricks, and her apparent indifference struck me dumb, and made me feel as timorous as a bashful youth. It was so years ago, when she was still in her mother's house, and I used often to think that I should no longer be able to stand it, but must plunge into the water to cool my smarting wounds. Then when we again met after many years of separation she was just the same. How often, by some jesting word has she not checked the confession which hovered on my lips, that my feelings for her had remained unaltered; and who knows how all would have turned out, had it not been for you, my dear Doctor. Now, however, you see she has quite changed, and you would never believe how much of subtleness and womanly art lies hidden beneath those demure eyelids."

"Nay, you calumniate me, dear Valentine," she said, and raised her beautiful moist eyes to his. "It is only natural that I should not show my feelings so openly here, in a house which is yet strange to me, though it may not appear so to you."

"And whose is the fault, if not mine," cried the doctor, "or rather of those disobedient damsels who leave all the duties of a host to me." "Well, where are they? what are they about, why are they not with you Margaret?" he angrily asked the cook who had now entered the room.

"You see. Sir, the master and mistress of the house pressed the young ladies to stay for the evening," replied the old woman staring at the two visitors with wondering eyes. "They promised

that the young ladies should not dance too much, and Miss Clara thought that if I put it in that light to you Sir!..."

"Deuce take it," cried the doctor, in a passion, "but they *must* come home immediately!"

"Nay, my dear Doctor," Eugénie said, entreatingly, "Pray do not burthen our consciences with this cruelty."

"Heaven forbid," Valentine hastily added. "Tomorrow there will be time enough."

"Well, let us go after them," proposed the doctor, "what do you say to closing this eventful day with a dance?"

"Are we not better here," replied Valentine, "we do not know your friends, and would greatly prefer remaining another hour under your hospitable roof if you will permit us to do so. Is it not so Eugénie?"

She nodded. The old gentleman then rubbed his hands delightedly, and declared that he had not felt so pleased for many a year. He sent the maid into the cellar and the larder and made her bring all that was to be found in the house, in spite of the entreaties of his visitors not to make so much ado for them. When they were at last sitting gaily and comfortably together, the doctor exclaimed with a look of satisfaction: "Now if the girls but knew what they have missed by their disobedience!"

Valentine smilingly looked at Eugénie who had now completely recovered her usual calm demeanour and gave with composure her opinion on the subject of the future arrangement of their life, which Valentine had proposed, and played her part admirably.

When the clock struck ten, she arose. "I am afraid, we can await your daughters no longer;" she said, "to-morrow, when they have rested after their dancing we will return."

"I will not detain you," replied the doctor, "for I verily believe that they will not come home, till I go and fetch them myself. That is the way they treat their old father. I will forgive them, however, this time an account of the pleasure they have procured me of having your society all to myself. But I rely on your promise to return to-morrow, and perhaps, you will understand my paternal weakness when you see these naughty daughters of mine."

So they all set forth; the doctor had insisted on accompanying them to the door of the hotel; there he left them, and they silently followed the waiter who carried the light before them. He opened two adjoining rooms and after wishing them good night disappeared.

Valentine stretched out his hand to Eugénie. She pressed it, and said calmly, looking up at him,

"Good night to you, my dear friend, sleep well, and au revoir to-morrow."

Then she entered her room and closed the door behind her.

After remaining quiet for some time he knocked gently at the door which separated the two rooms.

"Eugénie," he whispered.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Your good night of before, was against our treaty."

"Against what treaty?"

"That which we solemnly ratified with the doctor's new wine."

"I think we have had enough of this acting I only agreed to the pledge because I thought it lay in my part."

"Can we not continue in earnest, what we began in jest. At all events it was a solemn vow made before witnesses."

"Well, then I will make up for it to-morrow morning, and now once more good night." But no movement showed that she had turned from the door. So after a pause Valentine began again,

"And all the rest may I not consider it as true?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, all that we acted this evening."

"That is a good deal."

"Eugénie."

"Well."

"Can that be too much which alone can give me back the life and happiness you have taken from me a thousand times?"

"When I consider...."

"Oh, Eugénie, say that I may throw myself at your feet, that I may kneel before you. Do open the door--!"

"Gently, gently, my dear friend. You certainly deserve some punishment. What! is this all your courage? You can only speak out what weighs on your mind behind the shelter of a closed door! I will bet anything that you have even put out the light hoping that the darkness may give you confidence. You dare not acknowledge your love for me in the face of day. You are a poor hero indeed. But I will now confess to you that I have owed you a grudge for many a year."

"You are jesting again, Eugénie."

"No, this time I am thoroughly in earnest. If in former years you had as little courage as now, why at all events could you not have been as cunning. Was there no door then behind which you could have owned to me what now comes too late!"

"Too late? No, Eugénie; where are the years that separate us from that time? Is it not the same timid lad of those days who now stands here, and implores you to lighten the darkness around him with a heavenly ray from your eyes. Can you leave me to despair?"

He waited some time for an answer. Suddenly the door was noiselessly opened, and she stood before him smiling, but with tears in her eyes.

"One kiss freely given you, as a token of forgiveness for all you have made me suffer," she said.

He folded her in his arms and she softly passed her hand across his brow, saying: "Here, there are many lines, but our hearts are still fresh and youthful, and to-morrow we will begin life anew where we left it off fourteen years ago."

She pressed her lips to his, and with his arm round her waist, he led her to the window. The moon had dispersed the fog, and a gentle autumnal breeze wafted the scent of the grapes through the open casement.

"Let us drive back to-night, my darling," she said. "I could not sleep now, and the air is quite mild. Go, while you order the carriage, I will write a few lines to the doctor, and tell him not to expect us to-morrow: Is it true, Valentine, can it be true, that we have at last told each other what we knew years ago?"--

## FOOTNOTES

[Footnote 1](#): The title given to all housekeepers in old-fashioned houses. *Die Hausmamsell* is so untranslatable a title in its exact meaning, that I have left it. *Translator's* note.

[Footnote 2](#): A part of Switzerland on the frontiers of Italy.--The Translator.

[Footnote 3](#): Not the Lombardy poplar, but the populus Alba, or Abele tree, which is wide spreading.--The Translator.

[Footnote 4](#): Name of a promenade at Meran.--The Translator.

[Footnote 5](#): Lauben. A provincial term for arcades.--The Translator.

[Footnote 6](#): This is an old custom at the German universities when a new comer enters the Fellowship--they call it "Brüderschaft trinken."--The Translator.

**THE END.**

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