

The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Romance of the Canoness: A Life-History, by Paul Heyse

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: The Romance of the Canoness: A Life-History

Author: Paul Heyse

Translator: Mary J. Safford

Release Date: October 22, 2010 [EBook #33879]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Charles Bowen, from page images provided by Google Books

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ROMANCE OF THE CANONESS: A
LIFE-HISTORY ***

Transcriber's Notes:

1. Page scan source: <http://books.google.com/books?id=E1ETAAAYAAJ&dq>

THE ROMANCE OF THE CANONESS.

A LIFE-HISTORY

BY

PAUL HEYSE

AUTHOR OF "IN PARADISE," ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY

J. M. PERCIVAL

**NEW YORK
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
1887**

Copyright, 1887,

By D. APPLETON AND COMPANY.

NOTE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

The title of this book, in the German, is "Der Roman der Stiftsdame," *stiftsdame* being rendered in this version *canoness*. It is desirable to explain that *stiftsdame* is the name given to a female member of certain religious communities or orders, originally Roman Catholic, the members of which lived in common but without taking monastic vows. After the Reformation, Protestant houses of a similar kind were organized. The privileges of these communities are often secured by noblemen for their daughters, who may at any subsequent period enter the stift or chapter of the order, but who forfeit this right in case of marriage.

THE ROMANCE OF THE CANONESS.

In June, 1864, a visit I had promised to pay one of the friends of my youth led me into the heart of the province of Brandenburg. I could travel by the railway as far as the little city of St. ---, but from this place was compelled to hire a carriage for two or three miles, as the estate, which my friend had owned several years, did not even possess the advantage of a daily stage. So, on reaching St. ---, I applied to the landlord of the "Crown-Prince"--who was also postmaster--for a carriage, and, as it was past three o'clock in the afternoon, and the drive over shadeless roads in

the early heat of summer would not be particularly agreeable, I begged him not to hurry, but give me time to have a glimpse of the little city and its environs.

The landlord replied that the poor little place had no sights worth looking at. As a native of a great capital who had removed to the province, he displayed a compassionate contempt for his present residence. The situation was not bad, and the "lake" the most abundantly stocked with fish in the whole Mark. If I kept straight on in that direction--he pointed across the square marketplace on which his hostelry stood--I should get a view of the water just beyond the city-wall.

To a traveler who is less thoroughly familiar with the local history of the Mart than my friend, Theodor Fontane, and who suddenly finds himself transferred from the capital to the province, one of these little cities looks very much like another. The first feeling amid the neat little houses--most of them only a story high, while walking over the rough pavement kept as clean as the floor of an old maid's room, or passing through the quiet squares planted with acacias or ancient lindens, where nothing is stirring save flocks of noisy sparrows--is a secret doubt whether real people actually dwell here, people who take an active interest in the life of the present day, or whether we have not strayed into a pretty, gigantic toy village, which has merely been set up here for a time and will soon be taken down and packed into boxes like Nuremberg carvings.

This impression of fairy illusion and enchantment, which would speedily vanish, was enhanced by the sultry calm, portending an approaching thunder-storm, that brooded over the streets and squares and kept the inhabitants indoors. Here and there I saw behind the glittering window-panes the face of an old woman or a fair-haired young girl, not peering out between the pots of geranium and cactus to look after the stranger with provincial curiosity, but gazing into vacancy with a strange expression of gentle melancholy. The few persons I met in the street also wore this pensive look, as if some great universal calamity had happened, which quenched the cheerfulness of even the most indifferent.

I therefore pursued my walk somewhat cheerlessly, and not until I had reached the wall, which rose to a moderate height on both sides of the ancient city-gate, did the oppression of this sultry afternoon calm abandon me. Not less than four rows of the most magnificent old trees, among which several huge maples and chestnuts stretched their gigantic branches skyward, cast a broad belt of shade over the dreary little place, and were not only animated by the notes of birds, but by the shouts and laughter of countless children, who had seen the light of the world in the silent houses. Their nurses sat knitting and gossiping on the numerous benches; yet even on their faces I fancied I perceived the sorrowful expression I had noticed in the other inhabitants of the city.

It would have been pleasant to linger here in the shade among the little ones. But I remembered that I must do my duty as a tourist and see the lake, which even the postmaster had mentioned approvingly. At the end of a long avenue of poplars, leading from the gate over the level plain, I saw the white-capped waves sparkling in the sunlight, and quickened my pace in order to return the sooner to the cool shade of the dense foliage.

Yet the scene that opened below, before my gaze, was indeed wonderfully charming. A bright, semicircular basin, as clear as a mirror, whose circuit it would probably have required a full hour to make, lay amid the most luxuriant green meadows and a few tilled fields, in which the lighter hue of the young grain stood forth in strong relief. The shore was encircled by a dense border of sedges, whose brown tops, whenever a faint breeze blew, waved gently to and fro as though stirred by their own weight. The opposite bank, which rose in a gradual ascent, was clothed with a dark grove of firs, whose reddish trunks were reflected in the water, and around whose tops hovered flocks of crows and jays, whose harsh screams ever and anon interrupted the oppressive silence.

The avenue of poplars led directly to the harbor, which was marked by half a dozen gayly painted boats. These had been drawn up on the sand, but their owners had not thought it worth while to fasten them to a stake, as if it would be quite impossible for them to voluntarily drift away from the shore. Near these skiffs I was surprised by the sight of a steamer, similar in size and form to the coasters so much used in the German Ocean. The light green garlands of fir, with which it was profusely adorned, formed a strange contrast to its slanting smokestack and the damaged condition of the deck-rail. But I looked about me in vain for some person who might have told me how this craft, which must have once seen better days, had reached the quiet inland lake and been decked in its gay festal array, like a shame-faced old man holding a jubilee.

Still keeping my eyes fixed on the opposite grove, I strolled slowly along the broad path by the shore of the lake, unheeding the sun, as a refreshing coolness rose from the water. But ere I had advanced a hundred paces I discovered, half hidden behind some tall lindens, several lonely buildings, a long, narrow, gable-roofed house, without any architectural ornamentation, which looked more like a store-house than a dwelling, yet showed by the little white curtains at the window-frames, and the flowering plants inclosed by trellis-work fences, that human beings lived there. A few low huts or sheds adjoined it in the rear, the long front faced the lake; but the view was here partly cut off by a little church or chapel, also of the plainest structure, and so low that a man on horseback might have easily glanced into the swallows' nests under its weather-beaten roof. Yet the poor little church, with its four blind arched windows and tiny steeple, looked cheerful and picturesque, for an ancient ivy had climbed the narrow rear wall, and, while the

trunk clung naked and bare to the masonry, the luxuriant branches, twining over cornice and roof, had flung a thick mantle over the shoulders of the shabby building.

Here, too, all was desolate and silent. But a peasant lad, who had been fishing in the lake and was now running home, answered my queries so far as to enable me to learn that the long building was the almshouse, and the chapel belonged to it, but there were no religious services held there now; and no one, except the paupers, were buried in the little grave-yard, whose sunken, slanting black crosses gleamed from under the shadow of the lindens. When I asked if I could go into the chapel, the child stared at me in astonishment, shook his flaxen head, and sped away on his little bare feet as swiftly as though the earth was beginning to scorch them.

I now walked slowly around the chapel, and approached the house. Standing on a little bench in the flower-garden, before an open window, was a tall figure clad in black, gazing motionless into the dwelling. He was apparently a man of middle age, with smooth, brown hair, which fell slightly over a high forehead. The profile, whose noble lines denoted marked character, was strongly relieved against the whitewashed wall; the sun shone fiercely on his head and back, but, without heeding it, he held his hat before him in both hands, and did not even turn when I passed. The sound of my steps apparently did not reach his ear. His coat was old-fashioned in cut, but his appearance was by no means provincial. I would gladly have accosted him, had it not seemed as if he were listening to something, inaudible to me, that was being said inside the room.

So I quietly passed him and went to the gable side of the house. On the steps in front of the open door sat an aged dame, stooping so far forward that her big black crêpe cap shaded the tiny old book she held in her lap. A pair of large horn spectacles rested on the open pages, and her sharp red nose nodded strangely like the beak of a bird that is trying to peck at something. She was not asleep, for she sometimes sighed so heavily that the capstrings under her withered chin trembled. Then her yellow shriveled hand grasped a small lead box lying on the stone step beside her, and she took a pinch of snuff.

"Can you still read, mother?" I asked, stopping before her.

She looked up at me without the slightest sign of surprise. The stern, withered old face wore the anxious expression of a deaf person.

I repeated my question.

"Not so very well, sir," she replied in her Mark dialect. "When one has seventy-seven years on one's back the old eyes are of little use. But I can still manage tolerably with the hymn-book. I need only see the numbers and the big letters at the beginning to remember the whole at once; and if I can't get one verse exactly right, I think of the next one. Whoever has had experiences, and fears and loves the Lord, can make a verse for many a hymn in the book."

"You have a beautiful spot for your old age, mother, and are well taken care of, it seems to me."

The aged dame wore a new dark calico dress, and over her thin shoulders lay a black shawl, which, spite of the heat, she had pinned close.

"It's very comfortable, my dear sir, it's very comfortable," she replied, taking a pinch of snuff with her trembling hand. "The Canoness said so, too; that's why she didn't wish to go away again, not even when they wanted to take her to the castle. But she planted the flowers, and we have only kept our gardens so neat since she has been here. Well, everything will soon be at sixes and sevens again. You see, when I first came, thirteen years ago, just after my husband and my eldest daughter died, and there wasn't a soul to care for Mother Schulzen, I thought I should lead a wretched life in the almshouse. A silver groschen every day, free lodging, peat, and light, six groschen every quarter for beer money, and a bit of land where everybody can plant potatoes--that was hardly enough for a living. Dear me! A person who hasn't much is soon satisfied, and there is apt to be something put by for a rainy day. When the Canoness first came, though she had nothing herself, yet she always found something to give away. See, she gave me this woolen petticoat"--she pulled her dress up to her knees to show it--"on her last birthday, and the shawl at Christmas. That's why I wear it in her honor to-day, though it's certainly warm; but I want to look respectable when I follow the body, for a woman like her won't come again, and, as the hymn says:

'Alas, my Saviour, must Thou die,
That we the heirs of life may be?
Let not Thy woes, grief, agony,
On us be lost, but win to Thee.'

She muttered to herself for a while, with her chin buried in her shawl, and seemed to have entirely forgotten my presence.

"Mother," I began after a time, "you are always talking about a Canoness. Is there a chapter-house in this neighborhood?"

The old dame slowly raised her head and scanned me with a half-suspicious, half-pitying look.

"Why, what a question!" she said at last. "I suppose you don't belong here, my dear sir; but you must live very far away, for everybody in the neighborhood knows who the Canoness was, and that she died three days ago and will be buried to-day. Have you never heard of Spiegelberg, her husband, who is now standing before the throne of God? She belonged to a noble family, and her cousin, the baron, when he visited her, took me aside and said: 'I hope, Mother Schulzen, that you don't let my cousin want for anything here.' Good Heavens! What we poor old women could do to make her life easy--especially I! For she always showed me the greatest kindness, and the teacher and I were with her in her last hour. Yes! yes! If anybody had told me that such a poor, useless body would close her eyes, and yet must creep about here on earth a while longer, while she, who was still in her prime--But perhaps you would like to see her? There is time enough. She is to be buried at four, and the whole town will be present, and not a dry eye in the throng, for nobody else in the whole place had gifts like hers; and now they will see what we had in her, we old creatures especially, for no one like her will come again--never again--never again--"

She shook her head mournfully as she spoke, but her weary, reddened eyes were tearless, and, rising with some difficulty, she took up her hymn-book, spectacles, and snuff-box, and, beckoning to me to follow, hobbled through the entrance--the door stood ajar--into the long corridor which divided the interior of the dwelling into two equal parts.

It was pleasantly cool inside, only a strong smell of vinegar tainted the air and enhanced the feeling of uneasiness with which I had entered. It was uncanny to be conducted to the abode of death by this old crone, incessantly mumbling her song of Destiny, while out-of-doors the bright young summer was wandering over the fields. The bare hall, too, from which opened more than a dozen whitewashed doors, had no inviting aspect, especially as several dark figures, all dressed very much like my guide, were crouching on little benches along the walls, whispering together and casting distrustful glances at me. I afterward learned that the almshouse had been erected for a pest-house centuries before, when the Black Death was devastating the land, and afterward remained a long time vacant and shunned, until it was at last converted into a poor-house, and the chapel was rebuilt. But how had the Canoness come under this humble roof?

Mother Schulzen had already opened the first door on the left, and I entered a large room with two windows. In the center stood a piano, a number of plain, rush-bottomed chairs were ranged along the walls, a rack containing music-books stood on the table between the clean white curtains. "She gave her singing-lessons here," the old dame said; "the next room was her sleeping-chamber, where she died."

She opened the door of the adjoining room as gently as if she feared to wake some sleeper, and let me stand on the threshold.

I saw a light, square chamber, through whose one window the sun was shining. These walls, too, were merely whitewashed, but they were adorned with a few engravings in dark wooden frames, and the simple but tasteful furniture, a sofa with a bright calico cover, a book-case, a chest of drawers, a bed with white curtains, the flowers on the window-sill, would have made a cheerful impression, had not a coffin stood on a low trestle in the middle of the room. Over the shining boards was flung a large, gayly embroidered rug, whose artistically wrought flowers and vines were almost entirely concealed by garlands of natural blossoms. The dead woman was attired in a plain white shroud; the head was toward the window; at the feet lay a large laurel wreath tied with a broad white satin bow; the hands, which were large, but very beautiful in shape, rested on the bosom, but were not clasped; the head inclined a little to the right, so that I could see it perfectly from the threshold.

There was nothing to inspire horror; a quiet, mysterious charm pervaded the features, which, spite of the silvery hue of the smoothly brushed hair, still wore a look of youth: it was the face of a beautiful woman in her prime, who had lain down on her last couch in the full vigor of life. I said to myself that to have known this sleeper, while living, must have been no ordinary happiness, and those whom she had chosen for her friends had been most fortunate. A feeling of regret stole over me that I had never pressed that firm hand, nor heard a word from those calmly closed lips, never seen the face brightened by a smile.

Who was she? How had this noble woman condescended to make one of the number of the inmates of the almshouse, and who had laid the laurel wreath at her feet?

My eyes quitted the pallid face a moment and wandered to the sunny window. There I saw the mute figure, clad in black, still gazing fixedly in. He did not even seem to see me, but stood motionless, watching the lifeless form, of which only the head and the tips of the feet were visible to him. I now distinctly saw large tears gush from his dilated, motionless eyes, and course down his pale cheeks.

"Mother," I asked softly, "who is the man outside of the window?"

I had forgotten that her deafness would prevent her understanding me. Just at that moment a clear little bell began to ring from the steeple of the chapel. The old dame looked up.

"It is four o'clock," she said; "the services will begin. You can't stay here any longer, sir; the

pastor and the others will come directly. But if you stand by the trellis outside you can see everything. Oh, dear! Now the sad end is coming! But God's will be done! Only, may it be my turn soon. Come, sir, there are the bearers."

Six men in long black coats entered, and I was obliged to leave the room. In the corridor I met the pastor in his robes, and a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a sorrowful face--the burgomaster, the old dame whispered. Outside the house a large crowd of people had assembled, who eyed me with surprise and curiosity. Most of them were women in mourning-garments, but in their midst was a group of young girls dressed in white, with large black bows, and black veils on their heads. Each carried a garland of flowers on her arm, and the eyes of all were full of tears. I perceived that, as a total stranger, I ought to keep myself as much out of sight as possible, and hurried around the house to a post by the garden-fence, whence I could overlook the chapel and the cemetery.

The solitary man in the black coat had disappeared.

The bell continued to toll, the birds twittered in the linden boughs, but spite of the surging throng the spot was otherwise so still that we could distinctly hear the coffin-lid screwed on. A few minutes after, the funeral procession began to move, headed by the pastor; then came the bearers with the coffin, over which hung the gay rug covered with garlands, close behind it the aged paupers, six in number, then the young girls, two by two, carrying their wreaths, and behind them the burgomaster and many stately men, evidently the dignitaries of the little place. Last of all came the women and less important citizens, in such a throng that the open space between the house and the chapel was filled with the crowd. But scarcely had the pastor entered the consecrated ground, when, from behind a dense clump of elderberry-bushes on the edge of the cemetery, floated the notes of a chant, a beautiful, simple melody, wholly unfamiliar to me, which did not sound as if it came from a hymn-book. Clear, boyish voices, well-trained, fresh, and pure, as children alone sing ere they have learned to understand the solemnity of death and can not belie their joyousness even in a dirge.

There were only three verses, then the clergyman began his address, of which I could distinguish but a few words in my distant corner. But it must have been very touching, for all present showed the deepest emotion, and the suppressed sobbing was communicated to the farthest ranks. I regretted that I had not ventured nearer, I so much desired to know who this noble woman was, and why she had enjoyed such universal reverence and love.

But I could only indistinctly see the pastor raise his hand to bless first the open grave and then the mourning parish, the young girls approach and throw their wreaths upon the coffin, and the whole assembly press forward to scatter a handful of earth upon the flowers. During this ceremony, which occupied some time, the boys' voices were again raised, and this time I plainly heard the words:

"Like her in sweet repose,
All the sainted--"

and, as a sunbeam now pierced the elder-bushes, I saw the bared head of the man at the window, who was standing among the young singers, slowly and solemnly beating time with his hand.

The little bell had stopped ringing, the throng noiselessly dispersed without the unfeeling buzz and murmur which usually rise at once when people have merely dutifully paid the last honors to one who has departed from their midst. I remained quietly in my place watching the throng move off in the direction of the town, while the old dames, coughing and panting, returned home. My intention was to approach the lonely man, who I thought would be the last to quit the grave, and modestly express my desire to learn some particulars of the dead woman. But when I entered the cemetery and glanced toward the elder-bushes, there was no trace of him.

It was now quite time for me to return to the hotel, where my carriage must already be waiting. I consoled myself by the belief that the postmaster would undoubtedly be fully informed about the Canoness. The pale, still face, with the silvery halo around the head, in the mysterious twilight, still hovered before me, and I quickened my pace to obtain a solution of the mystery.

The path I took through the grain-fields, along whose edges grew small cherry-trees, did not lead me back to the city-gate, but to a different part of the wall, which I found entirely deserted. There was not a single baby-carriage, nor a pedestrian resting on any of the benches. Yet it was pleasant to saunter along in the shade, and I lapsed into a comfortable, dreamy state, which is really the greatest advantage of travel, because we shake off our daily dull routine of occupation, and, in some strange manner, feel as if we had just dropped from the moon and were strangers in this world, to whom the most trivial thing appears new and wonderful.

Suddenly I stopped. Sitting on the next bench, in front of me, I saw the man in the black coat whom I had just vainly sought. He was evidently so much absorbed in his own thoughts that he did not hear me, but sat gazing out over the open country and the waters of the lake, or rather at the little chapel and the small portion of the almshouse cemetery visible from this point. I could now obtain a near view of his delicate, regular features, and was particularly struck by the beautiful arch of the brow, and the character expressed in the nose, which was by no means

small. His hat lay on the bench at his side, and his clasped hands rested on his knee.

He now perceived me, but remained perfectly motionless, as if he could thereby render himself invisible and induce me to pass on.

But I was not disposed to let the favorable chance slip.

"Allow me to sit with you a moment, sir," I said. "I am passing through here on a journey, and am somewhat fatigued by rambling about. I must set out again in fifteen minutes, much as I regret not becoming more familiar with the pretty town. A walk on the walls like this can not be easily found, far or near."

He made no reply, merely bent his head slightly and took up his hat to give me the other half of the bench. I sat down, and we remained silent for a time.

"Pardon me," I said at last, "if I seem intrusive, and perhaps disturb you in a mood in which one prefers to be entirely alone. But I was a witness of the funeral that has just taken place, and, as the image of the lifeless form I saw just before in the coffin has haunted me ever since, and I fancied I read a remarkable destiny on the noble brow, you can probably understand that I am reluctant to leave here without learning some particulars of her fate. One of the old women in the almshouse below gave me some information which, though very vague and insufficient, only increased my interest. You seem to have been on more intimate terms with this universally respected woman. If you would see a better motive in my question than idle curiosity, I should be very grateful to you for any details of her life you might be willing to give."

I saw a faint flush mount into his face. He gazed steadily into vacancy for a while, as if irresolute what to answer. Suddenly he seized his hat, rose, and, bowing to me, said:

"Pardon me, sir--I have--my time will not permit--I wish you a pleasant journey."

Then he turned and walked away with long, but not hurried steps, while I remained on the bench in a mood of painful discomfiture.

At first I was uncertain whether I had done wrong, or merely applied to the wrong person. But I soon distinctly perceived that the fault was mine. This resident of the provinces, on whose deep grief I had intruded with a bold question, as if he must consider it an honor to afford a traveler information about anything worthy of note, even if it concerned his most sacred private feelings, had given me a well-merited lesson. How indelicate to put the question point-blank, without any introduction, like a police-officer inspecting a passport, and, ere the tears were fairly dry on his lashes, request from him an obituary of the dead woman, such as a newspaper reporter would unfeelingly insert in a daily journal. Perhaps, had I been more considerate of his feelings, cautiously gained his confidence without revealing my object--! But, as it was, I ought not to complain of having received a refusal, whose manner showed that I had addressed a cultivated man.

At last, very much displeased with myself, I rose and tried to reach my hotel by the shortest cut. Even the desire to question the postmaster had deserted me. I would gladly have driven the Canoness--who was now associated with a humiliating remembrance--entirely out of my mind, and, in fact, at that time I was to learn nothing more about her. My light carriage stood waiting in front of the house, but the landlord had been suddenly called away on some business; so I remained no longer than to drink a little wine and seltzer-water, for my tongue was parched, and then urged the driver to hurry that I might reach my destination before night.

Even at my friend's house I did not mention my experiences in St. ----. As he had only lived in the neighborhood a short time, and was completely engrossed by his immediate duties and occupations, he had scarcely had an opportunity to become familiar with the local history of the place. Only it chanced to be mentioned that the dismantled coasting-steamer had belonged to a bankrupt firm and been taken by one of the creditors, who had hoped to sell it again for the value of the material. As it did not immediately find a purchaser, he had had the worn-out invalid brought to the inland lake, where it was now enjoying rest from its labors.

I spent a few refreshing days in my friend's pretty house, which unfortunately was situated in a most prosaic neighborhood, and when I returned to Berlin the memory of the hour in the cemetery had already become considerably fainter.

But, like every reminder of our weaknesses and follies, it never wholly vanished. So no one will marvel that I was most agreeably surprised when, a year afterward, I received by mail a heavy parcel, accompanied by the following lines:

MOST HONORED SIR: Unfortunately, I am not so happy as to be able to present myself as a total stranger. For I must commence my letter by apologizing for an offense committed more than a year ago, when I had the honor of making your acquaintance, if this word can be applied to a meeting in which both persons remained wholly unknown to each other.

True, I am ignorant whether you have retained any recollection of the uncourteous person

who had no other reply to a friendly question than to quit you so abruptly. You are living in the current of the world, which washes away so many trivial things, and effaces old impressions with a thousand new ones. An inhabitant of the provinces, of my temperament, has nothing to interrupt him in the unpleasant task of thrusting still deeper into his flesh, in the endeavor to withdraw them, the thorns implanted by a fleeting moment.

Directly after leaving you I had, it is true, no other unpleasant feeling than that a total stranger had disturbed me amid the indulgence of a fresh sorrow. But at the end of an hour, when I recalled your words and tones, and the gestures accompanying them, I was seized with shame for my boorish conduct. You had been present at the funeral, had even gazed with deep interest at the face of the dead: what was more natural than that you should marvel how that queenly head could rest on the hard pillow of an almshouse coffin, though the mourning of a whole city followed it? And how could you suspect that the man to whom you applied for information suffered most keenly from the universal loss, and at that hour had so bitter a taste of the earth-mold on his tongue that he could not have uttered a word, had his own brother accosted him?

When I clearly perceived this, and had partly regained my calmness, I hurried to the hotel, firmly intending to apologize for my incivility and tell you at least enough to have enabled you to understand my sorrowful obduracy. You had already continued your journey. I only found your name in the landlord's book, and doubly regretted my unseemly conduct. I was familiar with some of your books, and said to myself that you, of all men, could not have spoken from mere empty curiosity, but from genuine interest in everything relating to human nature, and you, if any one, would have been capable of feeling with me that the death of such a woman is a loss to the whole world.

What had happened could not be altered, but, to somewhat alleviate the discomfort of my regrets, I began the very next day to write down, for my justification and penance, everything I had left unsaid, intending to lay it before you and thereby obtain absolution for the sin of silence I had formerly committed.

I meant to be very brief. But my heart took possession of my pen, and the short narrative of this remarkable life has become a shapeless "history in detail," whose swelling daily alarmed me, though I was unable to confine the overflowing torrent of memories into a narrower channel.

I have spent a whole year in writing, as I only found leisure for it during a few evening hours, and often for weeks together could not find courage to summon up the spirits of the departed. Will you have patience to read to the end? Far more important persons and destinies have passed before your notice, and you will more than once have occasion to smile at the value attached to apparently trivial incidents by a person whose horizon is so limited as that of my insignificant self. Besides, I am a clumsy writer, and do not understand the literary art of polishing even a pebble till in the sunlight it looks like a costly gem.

Yet, even if you merely cast a pitying glance at these memoranda, I think I can venture to promise that the principal character in this true story will fix your interest and win from you the acknowledgment that it was worth while to follow her unusual life-path with the care of a truth-loving chronicler.

So I trustfully commit to you the clumsy manuscript, which I entreat you to burn after you have read it. It owes its existence solely to my purpose of paying my debt to you, and with sincere respect, I am

Your devoted

JOHANNES THEODOR WEISSBROD,

ex-Cand. Theol.

I confess that, in spite of this letter, whose simple, amiable style recalled to me every feature of the writer's face, so full of feeling, I took up the bulky manuscript with a certain dread. More than three hundred closely written pages--who could tell with how much theological speculation the simple life-history had been garnished. But the very first pages dispelled the doubt, and the farther I read the more eager was my interest in both contents and narrative. When I laid the last sheets down, I said to myself aloud: Yes, it was indeed worth while.

With this opinion I instantly wrote to the author, begging him not to confine this confession to ourselves, but by its publication edify all who, in our hurried and corrupt age, had preserved minds capable of appreciating simple grandeur of soul and the natural nobility of humanity.

He did not keep me waiting long for his answer.

"Dearest sir and friend," he wrote--"for the friends of our friends are ours, and the warmth with which you speak of my departed friend justifies me in believing that you cherish a kindly feeling toward me also--no, I can not bring myself to regard this account of my most private experiences as a literary production, and appear in it before the cold eyes of the public. Apart

from all other considerations, however, the careless, thoroughly untrained literary style appears to me an unconquerable obstacle. Yet, if you would undertake to subject these pages to a thorough revision, provide the splendid kernel which is no merit of mine, with a new and more fitting husk! But, even then, I could not wholly conquer my secret reluctance. I live in complete seclusion; those who know me best, with the exception of one friend of my youth, regard me as a mere commonplace day-laborer in the shape of a pedagogue. The publication of such a work would suddenly render me an 'object of notice,' and nothing is less readily forgiven in a provincial sphere than any departure from the every-day routine of existence.

"But I will say this, my honored friend: If my unpretending story really seems to you so valuable that you desire to save it from a fiery death, keep the volume till I am no more. You will then be at liberty to publish it--of course, with the abridgment necessary where my personal interest has made me unwarrantably garrulous, and the omission of the guide-posts that would point out persons still living, or the descendants of certain families. The names of cities and communities ought also in justice to be suppressed. Nothing appears to me more contemptible than the modern effort to attain, by the disclosure of actual events, a success which mere skillful literary invention could not have hoped to secure.

"For the rest, I am entirely of your opinion that a life like the one described here is well fitted to set an example, and that it seems almost a duty to transmit the memory of so rare and lofty a human character to future generations."

This was the last direct communication I had from the admirable man. I did not venture to make any further effort to shake his resolution, and for two decades his manuscript was carefully treasured in my desk.

Early this year I received a letter, written by an unknown hand, and bearing the postmark of the city in the Mark. The principal of the grammar-school there informed me that his friend, after having enjoyed the best possible health to the last, had been found one morning dead in his bed! He had been buried, according to the directions of his will, in the almshouse church-yard, by the side of the Canoness, amid the sincere grief of the whole community. Among his papers had been found the request that I should be informed of his demise.

So I may doubtless consider myself as his executor in at least bringing the following pages from their concealment. While re-reading them I have made only the most modest use of the authority to erase and alter at pleasure--only here and there a certain inequality of style will show that another hand has interposed to make some obscure passage clearer, or correct some awkward expression. In the main, I have left everything as I found it; for it seems to me that the unassuming series of pictures in this biographical romance, as it may be called, would scarcely have gained greater vivacity and charm by a more careful grouping or more artistic execution, while the impression of simple truthfulness might have been impaired. With little art, clear wit and sense suggest their own delivery; and, I may add, that as the love of a warm and noble heart transfigures even the most insignificant countenance from whose eyes it shines, much more does it illuminate features as expressive and beautiful as those that look forth at us from between the lines of this narrative.

HERR WEISSBROD'S STORY.

I.

I must preface the following record with the entreaty that it may not be regarded as puerile vanity if I begin with my insignificant self and allow my own personality to appear in the course of my story more frequently than it may deserve. The nature of the case requires it. My own valueless destiny is as inseparably connected with the life of the principal personage as the

insignificant thread is a part of the pearl necklace whose costly gems are strung upon it. Unfortunately, there are some parts where the jewels are missing, and then only the gray thread appears. But I will try to make these spaces as short as possible; for I am only too well aware that my own existence has merely gained what little worth it possesses because Providence brought me into the vicinity of so rare a creature, and permitted me to move around her and receive light and warmth, as a planet from the sun.

True, I certainly did not begin life with so modest an estimate of myself. Nay, I imagined that I was well fitted to let my light shine as the center of a little planetary system of my own. At a very early age I was praised in my family and notorious among my school-fellows as a pattern boy, and the blows I received from the latter--and had richly deserved by my ridiculous boasting--only helped to increase my arrogance. All exalted minds, I said to myself, have been obliged to atone for their superiority by calamity and persecution. Nay, I even went so far as to compare myself with the Son of man, and should not have been surprised had some Herod yearned for the life of the child who felt himself destined to redeem the poor, sinful world, and meanwhile showed his teachers in the town-school contemptible cajolery and faultlessly written exercises.

When I was fourteen my father, who was a true Christian and a faithful servant of the Word, was transferred from the town parish to be superintendent in Berlin. My mother had died young, and my father, who was completely absorbed in his official duties, left me--with too much confidence--to myself. An elderly, somewhat weak-minded aunt, who even in the great city kept house for us, regarded me as a small miracle, and, therefore, had neither judgment nor power to uproot the weeds of spiritual arrogance from my heart. The latter had already flourished so rankly that they continued to grow luxuriantly even in the freer air of the capital. When, at eighteen, I entered the university, I instantly formed a pietistical society, which behaved almost like a students' consistory. We preached to each other to our hearts' content, debated the most difficult theological points of controversy, wrote hymns, which I set to music and accompanied on our harmonium; in short, we were a set of insufferable young saints, not a single one of whom, had he knocked at the door of heaven with his long locks and meekly turned-down collar, would Saint Peter have admitted.

I need scarcely state that I held aloof from all worldly amusements, considered the theatre a vestibule of hell, and the other beautiful arts as mere pagan jugglery. But the thing that now seems to me the drollest of all is the relation I then occupied toward the female sex. With the best intentions, I could imagine pure maids and matrons in no other guise than as a devout congregation in Sunday attire, gazing upward in gentle ecstasy at their pastor, and drinking in with fervent gratitude the heavenly dew that fell from his lips. In some far remote background of time I beheld one of these humble creatures nestling in my embrace, trembling in the ecstasy of her bliss, and overwhelmed with gratitude at the knowledge of being chosen before all her sisters to stand by the side of the man of God--whom she had long secretly worshiped--as his unworthy wife, iron his snow-white bands, embroider his slippers, and write down his sermon every Sunday.

In this state of supernal self-glorification, I considered it only natural that, as soon as I had passed my examination with special brilliancy, and crossed the threshold of the position of candidate, the most advantageous projects should open to me from more than one direction. My dear father's heart was far too kind, and he practiced the injunction of Christian charity of his own impulse in too wide a sense, to permit him to find his salary sufficient either in the little town or the great capital, and when suddenly summoned from this life he left me nothing but his blessing and a choice theological library, the only luxury he had ever allowed himself.

I was now forced to rely, with God's assistance, upon myself, and as, with all the innocence of the dove, I possessed a sufficient measure of the wisdom of the serpent, I did not merely examine superficially the three places offered to me, but made careful inquiries to discover in which one I should have the softest bed. All three were tutor's situations in the country, with a prospect of the pastorate, which would fall vacant in a longer or shorter time. I decided in favor of the estate of the most aristocratic of the three employers, who also owned two villages located in a region described to me as being very fertile and not lacking in rural beauty. The pastor there was almost eighty; the baron's children, whom I was to teach, were but two in number, a boy, and a girl twelve or fourteen years old; my patron was reported to be particularly strict in his religious views, and--a fact by no means least influential--his letter, which my dear father received with tears of joy on his death-bed and read aloud to me in a trembling voice, expressed emphatic praise of my admirable self, a pleasant report of my gifts and virtues having spread through the country.

So in my heart I praised God, who so paternally provided a fitting career for his favorites here below, embraced my poor old aunt, who was left behind in a wretched attic, and set forth on the journey to my paradise with proud hopes and a joyousness but slightly subdued by my recent grief.

This exalted mood was somewhat depressed when, on reaching the last railway-station, I vainly looked for the coach in which I was to make my entry into the place of my destination. The baron had written that he would send for me. I expected nothing less than a splendid carriage, not drawn by four horses, it is true, but perhaps hung with garlands as befits a young ecclesiastical conqueror. Instead, there was nothing stopping at the station but an insignificant

cart, which I suspected was generally used for the transportation of calves or sheep, drawn by two plow-horses, dejectedly switching their long tails to and fro. An old man-servant, who did not even take the stump of a pipe from his mouth when he came up to me, asked in his surly Low German dialect if I was the tutor whom he was to take to the estate, then, with many a muttered oath, lifted my trunk and three heavy boxes of books into the cart, and pointed with his whip to the seat, where the sole provision made for my comfort was a thin leather cushion.

He himself--after relighting his pipe and starting his horses by a drawling Hi-i!--trudged beside the cart as it creaked slowly along.

I tried to bear my disappointment with Christian resignation, and, after we had gone a few hundred paces, asked in my gentlest voice how far the castle was, and whether we were to go the whole distance at a walk.

The horses were plowing all day yesterday, growled the old man, and the road was too bad for them to trot. We should be two hours at least, "p'raps a bit more"; the sand began just beyond the next village, and then, with the big boxes, we should move still more slowly.

Rustic ways! I thought, to console myself, jolted about on my hard seat for a while longer, and, at the beginning of the sandy road, which ran sometimes between fields and meadows, sometimes between low fir-woods, sprang nimbly from the cart to relieve the panting animals. It was toward the end of April, a warm spring wind blew over the wide, quiet country, the crows were perched in dense flocks on the freshly turned furrows, and the low twittering of birds was heard from the bare tops of the birches. At three and twenty the theological bark around my heart was not yet hard enough to prevent all this stir and movement of Nature from penetrating it. In a very short time, while striding a few horse-lengths ahead of my vehicle, I was so happy in the thought of my God that I seemed to myself like King David, and my great wooden trunk the ark of the covenant, and could scarcely refrain from falling into a dancing step and letting the hymns I was singing in my heart escape my lips.

Yet I was glad when the two hours and "p'raps a bit more" were over, and old Krischan, pointing with his whip to the roof of a tower, visible between the lofty elms in the avenue, muttered between his teeth: "Here we are!"

I had made several vain efforts on the way to question him about the lord of the castle and his family. I had learned nothing except that the baron was "a bit strict," and the old baroness "always very kind and gracious." Of the heir he only uttered a significant hum! and of the pastor merely said, "He's poorly just now." So my curiosity and impatience increased with every step the horses took in the grinding sand; and, as the rural charms of which I had dreamed were nowhere visible, the village through which I passed differed in no respect from an utterly unattractive Mark hamlet, and the few women and children who stared at me from the doors of the houses appeared extremely indifferent to the great event of my arrival, I climbed back with a sigh into the cart as we turned into the avenue and traversed the rest of the way at a trot.

We drove directly up to the castle, which looked very stately through the bare branches, and, as the road at last passed over a slight ascent, the horses relapsed into their former comfortable walk. Yet we overtook a queer little cart, to which the--according to the Mark ideas--considerable hill gave more trouble than to us.

A very old woman had harnessed herself and a spotted dog to a small hand-cart, heavily laden with a large, well-filled sack, several bundles of fagots, and various utensils and tools, the whole, tied together with old ropes, towering so high aloft that the swaying structure could scarcely keep its balance. The little dog's red tongue was hanging out of its mouth, and the old dame panted and coughed as she bent under the drawing-rope, which cut deep into her shoulder. Spite of her four-footed assistant, she could scarcely have pulled the load up-hill, had not a vigorous push from behind aided her. This was given by a tall, slender figure, a young lady dressed in city style, who, with both hands braced against the back, walked firmly on, relieving the toiling pair of half the weight.

As we passed she merely turned her face toward us for a moment without the slightest change of expression. I could not see her features distinctly, owing to the shifting play of the shadows cast by the bare branches above, but I perceived that the face was young and grave. It made a singular impression on me, though she flashed but a single glance at me and then instantly lowered her eyes. I noticed too that her smoothly brushed hair, over which she had knotted a black kerchief, was of a remarkable dark golden hue, somewhat similar to amber. I perceived also that she wore a blue polonaise of rather old-fashioned cut, trimmed with a narrow border of gray fur. Then the old vehicle was left behind, and I did not venture to look back.

"That's the Canoness!" said Krischan, who had taken his pipe out of his mouth and lifted his cap respectfully; "and the old one is Mother Lieschen."

"The Canoness!" I repeated in surprise. "Has the baron so old a daughter?"

"No, sir. The baron's daughter is only fourteen. She's Fräulein Leopoldine. But the Canoness--hi!"

He urged on his bays with a loud crack of the whip, for we were just turning out of the avenue

into the castle court-yard. I was obliged to repress my curiosity for the present.

The castle really did honor to its name. It was a very large building, dating back from the commencement of the previous century, with a lofty lower story, to which led a double flight of broad steps, above which was a second story richly decorated with stucco ornaments--a style, however, that did not exactly harmonize with the peaked roof and irregular attic windows. From this central building a wing extended at right angles on the left almost to the avenue of elms, while the right wing, which, as I afterward learned, had been destroyed by a great fire, was replaced by a clumsy square tower three stories high. Yet this tower bore above its four gables a gigantic cupola, garnished with pinnacles and battlements of all sorts, which gave it an air of chivalrous boldness.

A servant in a light-green livery received me at the top of the steps, said that his master was expecting me, and ushered me into the house with condescending familiarity, as if he considered me a sort of colleague. The cool, dim hall paved with tiles, the broad stone staircase, the antlers that adorned the walls, the numerous servants of both sexes, who were peeping curiously from different doors, produced a strong impression upon me, though I secretly regretted the absence of a more formal reception by my future patron's assembled family. But I consoled myself with the thought that this was the genuine aristocratic demeanor, and resolved to maintain my own dignity and command the respect due my ecclesiastical character even from high-born laymen.

Meantime I had climbed the steep stairs to the highest story in the tower till I was fairly out of breath. But when I entered the apartment the footman showed me as mine, I was instantly reconciled to the quarters gained by the toilsome ascent. It was a corner room with four wide, almost square windows, which afforded a most superb view, over the tops of the trees in the avenue, of fields and moorland, forest and farms, and the village houses gathered about the handsome village church like a flock of chickens around the clucking hen. The whole scene was steeped in the brightest noonday sunlight, and filmy bluish clouds floated from the chimneys of the low straw-thatched roofs, pierced by single sunbeams, and swayed to and fro by a fresh April breeze.

Dinner would be served in fifteen minutes, the servant said. Did the Herr Candidate want anything? I asked for my trunks, and had just time to brush the dust of my journey from my clothing, when a big, hollow-sounding bell, which roused a welcome echo in my empty stomach, began to ring in the hall below.

I cast one more glance into the tiny mirror, which, like the rest of the furniture, did not produce a very magnificent impression, and, after having combed my hair smoothly, and pushed my long locks neatly behind my ears, descended the steep tower-stairs, spite of the consciousness of my ecclesiastical dignity, with a somewhat quickened pulsation of the heart.

The dining-room was on the lower floor, directly behind the entrance-hall, a vaulted apartment, whose four high windows looked out upon the garden. The wide glass door in the center opened on a small terrace, from which a few steps led to the flower-beds. But I did not notice all this at my first entrance, as my whole interest was engrossed by the various persons who were assembled.

A tall, extremely dignified gentleman, with very handsome, regular features, and mustache and whiskers cut in military fashion, came up to me, held out his well-kept hand, and said, in a voice whose musical tones he himself seemed to enjoy: "May the Lord bless your coming and going, Herr Candidate!"

I bowed silently, and was led to a little lady attired in a black silk dress and a large white lace cap, who sat in the depths of a tall arm-chair.

"Here, my dear Elizabeth," said the baron, "I present to you Candidate Johannes Weissbrod, who, with God's blessing, will aid us in the education of our Achatz! Achatz!" he called, turning to a pale-faced boy, evidently backward in mental development, who stood giggling with a tall young girl at the other end of the hall. The lad came slowly forward, eying me askance with mingled shyness and defiance, and only at his father's repeated desire gave me a thin yellow hand. I noticed at the first glance the striking resemblance between him and his mother. The latter was remarkably plain; she had a shrunken, withered face, which strongly reminded me of old General Zieten, to whom, I afterward learned, the baroness was distantly related. Even a little Hussar mustache was not lacking, and the sight of the tiny witch-like scarecrow was so melancholy, especially by the side of her husband's stately figure, that in my first confusion I actually forgot the fine speech with which I had intended to present myself, and could only bow silently and kiss the diminutive hand the little specter extended to me.

But, as I straightened myself again, a warm, irresistibly kind glance fell upon me from the small gray eyes, and such a touching, child-like voice came from the little withered mouth, saying, "I shall be deeply grateful to you, Herr Candidate, for everything you do in behalf of my dear son," that I lowered my eyes in actual confusion, and felt a sincere reverence for the little lady, whom I had just held in such light esteem. I would make every possible effort, I stammered, laying my hand on the boy's rough fair locks. But he shook off the friendly touch so rudely that I instantly saw that the effort would certainly be no easy one.

Meantime his sister had also approached me. She bore as strong a resemblance to her handsome father as the boy to his mother. I addressed a pleasant remark to her, which she answered by a haughty curl of her full red lips. But there was still another feminine member of the company, a lady, whom I supposed to be about thirty, not so tall as the young baroness, but of a more elegant figure and with serpent-like swiftness of motion. "This is a beloved member of our household, Mademoiselle Suzon Duchanel," said the baron, as he led me to her. "She is a true blessing from the Lord to us all, shortening the long hours to my suffering wife, helping my daughter in her French lessons, and sometimes chatting my own anxieties away." As he spoke he bent over the young lady's hand, and, with chivalrous gallantry, pressed it to his lips.

I know not why the act displeased me. My knowledge of the world and society was still slight, and nothing could be more natural than an act of courtesy by which the master of the house endeavored to lighten the discomfort of a subordinate position to a lady. Nor was there anything worthy of censure in the Frenchwoman's conduct. She was studiously polite to every one, not excepting her insignificant fellow-slave, myself, and, after becoming accustomed to a certain piercing light in her dark eyes, no one could help thinking her attractive. So I could only explain my strange aversion by the belief that, in her society, I was almost always conscious of my defective French, and therefore, though she spoke to me only in German, I felt her presence as an embarrassment.

We were about to take our places at the table, which, set for eight persons, stood in the middle of the room. The baron had already escorted his little wife to her seat opposite to the glass door, and the young heir had seized his sister's braids to drive her to the table like a horse, when the door into the hall opened and another person appeared, a tall, thin man in a plain gray hunting-coat, with horn buttons, high boots, and a shabby gray felt hat on his head. It was evident at the first glance that he must be a brother of the master of the house, only he lacked the elegance that pervaded the latter's whole appearance.

He entered noiselessly with a slight smile, half sad, half humorous, that lent his beautiful beardless lips a very pleasant expression, went slowly up to the mistress of the house, whose hand he silently kissed, and nodded to his niece, but without vouchsafing me anything more than an indifferent glance.

"Where is Luise?" asked the baron.

The little old lady gazed at him with a look of timid entreaty. I noticed that he had some angry remark on his tongue, but his son interposed.

"She harnessed herself to Mother Lieschen's dogcart," he said loudly, with a jeering laugh, which displeased me extremely; and then whispered into his sister's ear so that all could hear, "I laughed at her well, and she tried to hit me, but I was spryer."

And the little toad giggled spitefully.

The baron uttered a few words in French, which I did not understand. Then he clasped his hands on the back of the chair, and said: "Let us thank the Lord."

He asked a blessing, which did not seem to me amiss, only it appeared somewhat lengthy, especially as Achatz was constantly nudging his sister in the side with his elbow. Mademoiselle Suzon Duchanel made the sign of the cross at its beginning and end, which led me to secretly wonder how a Catholic could have been received into this rigidly Protestant family. Yet none of the others seemed to find it objectionable.

The company then took their places at the table, the baroness at the head between her two children, the master of the house next to Achatz, then the French governess, by whose side my seat was assigned. There was a vacant chair opposite, next Fräulein Leopoldine, then came the baron's brother, to whom he presented me as we were taking our seats: "Herr Candidate Johannes Weissbrod--my brother Joachim."

Just as the soup was being served, the folding-door again opened and the missing Luise entered, who of course proved to be the Canoness whom I had passed in the elm avenue outside. She had taken off her blue polonaise and little black kerchief, and in a plain gray dress, with snow-white frill, looked even more slender than before, somewhat as ancient statues represent the goddess of the chase. Her face was slightly flushed, whether from embarrassment or her hurried walk I could not determine. Yet she did not hang her head like a penitent, but went straight up to the old lady, bent down and kissed her cheek, then bore the baron's reproving glance without lowering her lashes, and silently took the vacant chair between the daughter of the house and "brother Joachim."

Achatz stared and giggled, but grew as still as a mouse when she cast a sharp, quiet look at him across the table. I now saw that she had sparkling dark-brown eyes, against which the golden lashes stood forth in strong relief. Yet, on the whole, she did not seem to me so beautiful as when out-of-doors under the shadow of the elm-trees.

There was a stern, defiant expression in her face, very unlike my ideal of feminine charm and lamb-like meekness. Moreover, she seemed to entirely overlook my precious self, which gave me no favorable impression of her character. Without uttering a word, she exchanged a hurried clasp

of the hand with her next neighbor at table and then began to eat as indifferently as though she had been entirely alone.

I was somewhat annoyed because I had received no special introduction to her; but my thoughts were soon directed from this perplexing young creature by the baron, who commenced a theological conversation with me, in which he showed himself a zealous Lutheran of the most rigid type. I was extremely cautious at first, having heard that he was a remarkably learned man. But I soon perceived that his knowledge was utterly unsubstantial; he merely scattered broadcast certain names and titles of books, which had been new years before, and persistently repeated a few established formulas, on which he set far too much value. He seemed especially to have received the stamp of the Schleiermacher school, repeated a pun on the name of its founder two or three times, but did not appear to have read even a page of his "Dogmatik" or of the "Discourses on Religion."

The whole conversation was evidently solely intended to inspire me with a high opinion of his knowledge and spiritual enlightenment, though he himself did not really feel the slightest interest in the matter, for he turned a deaf ear to my modest objections, and as--though I regarded myself a valiant champion of the true faith--I knew how to keep my polished sword in its sheath on occasion, this first theological tourney passed off with mutual satisfaction. I only regretted that my position in the house forbade me to stretch my opponent on the sand and receive from fair hands the prize of victory.

During the whole dinner no one except the baron and myself had spoken. The mistress of the house gazed into vacancy with a look of quiet suffering, ate very little, and only showed herself eager to fill her husband's glass as soon as he had emptied it, which in the zeal of his debate occurred every moment. The others drank nothing but water, except Mademoiselle Suzon, whose glass, spite of her coquettish reluctance, the baron filled twice with Bordeaux. Two liveried servants moved to and fro as if shod with felt; but for so aristocratic a household the meal seemed to me rather meager and niggardly.

After dinner the baron, lighting a short hunting-pipe, took me into his study and discussed the plan of instruction I was to pursue with the heir. Biblical history, the catechism, the history of his native country, a little geography--the lessons in the two latter branches were to be shared with Leopoldine. She was far more talented than her brother, my patron remarked; but the lad possessed the germ of a genuine old-school Mark nobleman and an orthodox Christian, though it was overgrown by all manner of boyish naughtinesses. His affectionate papa hoped, from my experience in teaching and theological training, that my pupil would soon visibly grow in favor with God and man.

At the same time the baron allowed me to see that upon my success would depend my future position and promotion to the living. The present pastor, with increasing age, would become less and less capable of maintaining the strict discipline that was desirable, already displayed a lamentable tolerance in matters of faith, and, if he did not shortly apply for a discharge from his office, it would be necessary to obtain his removal.

When I left my patron's study, I should have liked to give my pupil a short examination at once and commence the training of the young plant intrusted to my charge. Achatz, however, was neither within sight nor hearing, but had disappeared, like the other members of the Round Table. So I went up to my tower-room, and set about unpacking my books. An old servant, who appeared to be the factotum of everybody in the castle who wanted help, made me--as there was no book-case--two rude sets of shelves out of boards, which, however, after they were filled with my ecclesiastical works, looked very respectable. My pupil's room adjoined mine. "Who occupies the second story under us?" I asked. "The young baroness and Fräulein Luise," was the reply. I don't know why this annoyed me, but I should have preferred to avoid the vicinity of the Canoness.

While thus occupied, twilight had closed in, and I resolved to walk down to the village and call on the old pastor.

As I entered the long village street, I prepared to assume the most gracious manner. The worthy folk should have an idea of what they might expect from their future pastor. But my nods and smiles, greetings and questions, did not produce the slightest impression. The children ran shyly away, and the grown people only gave me curt, suspicious answers, though they knew very well that I was the expected candidate, and enjoyed the favor of their noble church-patron. So I was not in the best humor when I reached the little old parsonage, whose dilapidated condition was revealed, at this early season of the year, by the bare vine-trellises and empty garden. Even the church, beside which it stood, only separated by the graveyard, urgently needed repairs, and I secretly wondered that so pious a man as the baron did not set more value on the proper preservation of the house of God.

But the interior of the parsonage looked all the brighter and more home-like. True, the walls of the rooms were only whitewashed, but there was not even a fly-speck on them; the thin white curtains seemed to have been freshly ironed only the day before, the floors were strewn with sand, and the household utensils were dazzlingly clean. A brisk, plump old lady, the pastor's wife, greeted me with so cordial a pressure of the hand, that I felt almost ashamed of having crossed

her threshold with the selfish thoughts of a smiling heir.

She led me into a small back room, that was just illumined by the setting sun. Here, in an atmosphere so oppressive from the heat of the stove that I could scarcely breathe, an old gentleman was sitting by the window in a large arm-chair covered with calico. A small black cloth cap rested on his venerable head, and his gouty, swollen knee was wrapped in a woolen blanket. His kind, blue eyes gazed so affectionately at me that I involuntarily bent over his outstretched hand and would have kissed it, had he not withdrawn it, silently shaking his head. I was requested to sit beside him, and, while we were exchanging the first common-place remarks, I had time to again reflect what a brilliant young light of the church I was compared to this feebly flickering, almost burned-out tallow stump. For on the little book-shelf beside the desk stood a scanty group of theological works, so that, recalling my own abundant store, I seemed to myself, in the presence of this aged champion of God, like a hero armed to the teeth and clad in a steel corslet, opposed to an old warrior, who could only swing a rude iron-spiked club.

But I was not allowed to display my admirable armor, for the old gentleman subjected me to no theological examination, but merely inquired about my former life, parents, and relatives. When he heard that I had lost my mother when a child, he passed his withered hand over my arm with a gesture of timid kindness, and his old wife, who had often mingled in our conversation with some little jest, gazed at me with such maternal compassion that a very strange feeling came over me. Until then I had never realized my orphaned condition, but felt perfectly secure in my kinship to God.

To reach a fresher theme, I began to talk of the baron and his family, praising especially the spirit of genuine piety that pervaded this aristocratic household. I perceived with surprise that neither the old pastor nor his more loquacious wife assented to my fervent eulogy. Only when I paused, the old man nodded gravely, and with his eyes fixed on vacancy, said: "Yes, yes, the baroness--she is a woman after God's own heart." "And don't forget Fräulein Luise!" added the old lady eagerly, then hastily quitted the room, as if summoned by some urgent necessity, and did not appear again even when I took my leave.

I explained this strange silence to myself by the supposition that there were dogmatic differences between the pastor and his patron. The baron had shaken his head over the old gentleman's toleration. Desiring to avoid any dispute on this first visit, I soon rose to take leave.

The old clergyman apologized for being compelled to remain seated. He was confined to the chair by a violent attack of his complaint, and would have been obliged to leave the pulpit vacant on the following Sunday had not God sent him so able a representative in my person. He begged me to preach in his stead, and only regretted that he could not be among my devout listeners.

I was grateful in my heart to his gout for affording me an immediate opportunity to display my lauded oratorical talent, wished him a speedy convalescence, and took my leave with a much calmer heart than I had entered.

When I returned to the castle, a servant received me in the hall and informed me that tea was ready.

I found the whole family, except brother Joachim, assembled in the dining-room around the tea-table, on which two large old-fashioned lamps diffused a somewhat dim light. As at dinner, there was no lack of silver tableware, so that everything looked very stately and splendid, though the fare was scarcely superior to that of a respectable farm-house.

The Canoness was making tea, and poured it from a heavy silver pot into the cups handed around by a servant. Again she did not vouchsafe me a glance. The others, too, merely bowed silently, as the master of the house, seated close beside one of the lamps, was absorbed in the newspapers, which were brought every evening by an errand-woman. The regular mail came but twice a week.

I, too, now ate, without speaking, a due amount of bread and butter, my sense of decorum and theological wisdom having prevented my fully satisfying my appetite at dinner. Achatz giggled and whispered with his sister, who now sat beside him; Mademoiselle Suzon had the headache and looked very much bored, but from time to time gave me a glance and murmured a question, her cold eyes meanwhile wandering to and fro with a strangely uneasy expression.

When the baron threw aside the papers, the whole party rose from the table; Fräulein Luise led the baroness to an arm-chair beside the huge chimney-piece, which, however, spite of the chill evening air, served merely for ornament; and, after a little table had been pushed before her seat, and the children had said good-night, the Canoness brought out a pack of French cards and sat down opposite to play with her.

The baron had taken his place at a small chess-table with the French governess, who had suddenly recovered her animation, and, turning to me while arranging the ivory men, he said, "You can choose, Herr Weissbrod, which game you will overlook. It is really against my principles to allow card-playing in my house, but my wife's game is by no means an invention of Satan, unless tediousness is considered one of the torments of hell. I never touch a card myself, and suppose you have the same ideas. So, if you have no interest in chess, do not feel under any

restraint, but go to your room, if you prefer. You have had a fatiguing journey to-day."

I thought this implied that my presence was no longer desired, and, after having watched both games for awhile--for civility's sake--without understanding anything about either, I bid the party good-night and climbed up to my tower-room.

The footman who lighted me seemed strongly inclined to have a little chat, and I was very anxious to put certain queries about the relations existing between the different members of the household. But I thought it was indecorous to question servants about their employers, cut short the tall rascal's opening remark, which tended in that direction, and remained alone with my wandering thoughts.

My pupil was already sound asleep. As I looked at him and noted the resemblance to his mother, which seemed even stronger than when he was awake, I resolved to struggle against my aversion to the saucy young lad and honestly strive to develop the half-stifled germ of which his father had spoken. It seemed as though the impulse was felt through the little dreaming brain, for the boy opened his eyes, stared at me, blushed, and then said in an entirely different voice, "Good-night, Herr Johannes."

I returned this good-night, passed my hand over his eyes, and went softly back to my room.

But I could not yet go to sleep. All the new experiences the day had brought were surging and seething in my head as if it were a witch's caldron. Opening the window, I gazed out into the calm, cool night, where the moon was shining so beautifully over the tree-tops, and gauzy veils of mist were hovering in the distance above the hills and meadows.

Conspicuous among all the figures which glided past me, as if in a spectral chase, staring at me with questioning eyes, was one which at last, when the other ghosts had vanished, remained standing before me--a slender girl with tawny hair and brown eyes, whose gaze rested on me so indifferently that my vain soul grew more and more insulted and angry, yet without being able to turn my thoughts from her. I said to myself that if this one woman did not dwell under the same roof I should be as contented here as though I were in Abraham's bosom. Then I wondered whether she had gone to rest, and imagined that she was even now thinking of me with a scornful curl of her lips, which idea strengthened my hostility still more. To calm myself, I lighted a long pipe and paced up and down the carpetless floor of my room, thinking of the sermon I was to preach on the following Sunday, and in which I meant to say all sorts of offensive things to the arrogant creature's face. Yet I possessed sufficient good-breeding to remove my squeaking boots and put on the soft slippers my good aunt had given me as a parting present.

I was just going to shut the window, for I was beginning to shiver, when a low melody rose below me, to which I listened intently. My little talent for music, as I first learned long after, was at that time the best and most genuine quality I possessed. So, at the first notes, I knew that the pure alto voice beneath me was no ordinary one, but issued from a thoroughly musical nature. But the piano on which the singer accompanied herself appeared to be a worn-out, tuneless old box, and she made the least possible use of it. I did not know what she was singing, but it seemed to me a magnificent piece by some great master, and I went close to the window that I might not lose a note. I afterward discovered that it was an aria from Gluck's "Orpheus."

This solitary nocturnal singing, which could proceed from no other lips than those of the Canoness, instantly disarmed me. It sounded very subdued; Fräulein Leopoldine slept in the next room, and must not be disturbed. But this *mezza voce*, in its melancholy gentleness, contradicted everything I had imagined of the singer's nature. It was like the lament of a proud, free soul, that disdains to impart its grief to any one, and only in a secret soliloquy makes the moon and the night its confidants.

When the singing ceased, it was long ere I could resolve to seek my bed. I still waited to learn whether it would begin again. Midnight had passed when I at last shut my window, and, absorbed in thought, prepared to seek repose.

Yet I was up very early, and had much difficulty in persuading my pupil, who had hitherto slept below next his mamma's room, to leave his bed, as among other bad habits he had been accustomed to stretching and turning lazily on his couch in the morning.

I found it difficult to keep the resolution I had made the night before over the sleeper, now that he sat wide awake before me with his impudent little face, especially as I soon perceived with horror that the young nobleman was deficient in nearly all the rudiments of knowledge, and, moreover, did not appear to feel at all ashamed of his ignorance. I found myself obliged to begin from the very commencement in all the branches except writing, for which he was indebted to the village school-master, and the catechism, which he could repeat faultlessly with the volubility of a starling.

Yet, even in the first hour, I succeeded in uprooting some weeds of error in his head and heart, and at least in conquering his absent-mindedness, so that we were tolerably well-satisfied with each other when, toward ten o'clock, the baron entered in his own sublime person. He merely asked carelessly what I thought of my pupil then, with an exclamation of surprise, went up to my books and glanced over their titles. "Ah, Neander! Marheineke!" he said, as if greeting

old acquaintances. "You are certainly a thorough scholar, Herr Weissbrod. Only don't soar too high! Let us have no unfruitful knowledge. 'Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.' There is this Neander, for instance--h'm! Yet he's not one of the worst." (Good Heavens! Candid Neander! That soul of child-like purity!) "And yet--h'm! Well, with God's assistance and favor, his day of Damascus will come."

He talked a great deal more of such conceited, equivocal trash; and though even then some irreverent doubts arose in my mind as to whether his own theological wisdom was correct, I was impressed by his oracular speeches, and endeavored to make one answer and another which should lead to a more professional conversation. But he cut me short by remarking that there would be time enough for us to come to a clearer understanding. I might now accompany him down-stairs to his daughter, and then give the two children their first lesson in history.

We found the young lady's room already in order, and she herself, in a by no means studious mood, sitting at a table which stood in the middle of the apartment. The Canoness sat by the window with some sewing in her hand. At our entrance she rose hastily and returned her uncle's cold good-morning with a slight bend of the head. I did not appear to have any existence for her.

Again I felt my blood boil with indignation. But I only strove the more to do my work well, in order to show her what a remarkable fellow I was; nor did I succeed badly, in my own estimation. I began to relate the history of the Mark from its earliest origin, and as I was myself a native of the country, and, moreover, very familiar with this subject, I had the satisfaction of interesting not only my two pupils, but their papa, to such a degree, that the baron remained a full half-hour, and was first reminded that he had long since outgrown his school-days by the announcement that the steward was awaiting his orders.

I was especially pleased to see how Achatz fairly hung on my lips during the narrative of the battles and victories of his ancestors in this once pagan land. The ice was broken, at any rate, and even Fräulein Leopoldine, who at first had sat with an insufferably condescending expression, was evidently excited. Only the grave face at the window bent like a stone image over the industrious hands, without any token of interest. I began to doubt whether the beautiful nocturnal melody could have issued from those obstinately compressed lips.

At dinner, when I again saw the mistress of the house, I could plainly perceive that my first appearance as a pedagogue had produced a favorable impression. The little lady, with a kindly glance from her timid blue eyes, held out her hand to me, and asked whether I had slept well and if I needed anything for my comfort. Achatz displayed in motley confusion all sorts of crumbs of his new knowledge, and Mademoiselle Suzon granted me more than one long look from her Catholic eyes. When I said that the old pastor had requested me to take his place the following Sunday--which was the next day--the baron said he was very curious about the conception held by the young school of the preacher's office, but warned me not to drag my Neander and Marheineke into the pulpit with me, which of course I smilingly promised.

Uncle Joachim, according to his custom, did not utter a word. The Canoness looked at her plate, and I noticed that she sometimes made a low remark to her neighbor, who always responded by a quiet smile or a twinkle in his honest gray eyes.

When, that afternoon, I was again alone in my tower, I prepared to study my sermon with great composure of mind, for I felt perfectly sure of myself. I had brought from the university and our religious society a bundle of outline sermons, one of which I took out and read over again with constant reference to my new hearers. Of course this masterpiece seemed a thousand times too good for the rural congregation, but I had intended it principally for my patron and his family, not least for the obstinate face that, willing or not, must listen to me for a full half hour. I changed a few details, repeated the whole in a low tone, while veiling myself in clouds of tobacco-smoke, and, when I had finished, patted my stomach caressingly, as though I had just swallowed a dainty morsel, and resolved to take a short stroll in the park as an aid to digestion.

Hitherto I had only seen the grounds through the glass door of the dining-room, and I now marveled at their extent and beauty.

Low farm-buildings, stables, and barns extended on both sides in the rear of the castle, and were separated from the flower-garden in the center of the park by dense rows of splendid fir-trees. The dry basin of a fountain, ornamented by a crumbling sandstone statue, served as an abode for an aged peacock, which could now spread only a very ragged and shabby tail, as he constantly circled around it, keeping a distrustful watch. No one except the Canoness, as I afterward noticed, was permitted to approach without his uttering a shrill, spiteful scream.

The beds, at this early season of the year, were still empty except for a narrow border of crocuses and snowdrops, but they were neatly raked and carefully marked out; even the paths between were free from dead leaves. From this place ran a broad walk fenced on both sides by tall, closely clipped hedges in the French style. But the tops of the ancient elms and oaks soared above them into the air, and the solemn splendor of a German forest far surpassed the Italian prettiness. Never in my life had I seen anything so beautiful, for the Berlin Thiergarten, so far as the size of the trees was concerned, could not bear the least comparison to it.

When, studying my sermon, I had strolled some distance under the lofty crowns of foliage, a strange figure came toward me, whom I at once supposed to be the gardener--a short, gray-haired man in a peasant's jerkin, over which a green apron was tied, a green cap, horn spectacles on his sharp, hawk's nose, an axe in his bony hand, and with one foot slightly dragging. I went up to him, greeted him in my affable manner, and asked if it was due to his care that the beautiful park was in such admirable order.

At first he nodded silently, scanning me from head to foot with the air of an expert examining some new plant to see whether it would be likely to thrive in this soil. Then he said, by no means sullenly, that he was the gardener Liborius and I was probably the new tutor. As this was a leisure evening, he would do me the honor to show me the park.

While walking by his side, I had a strange conversation. In the first place, he modestly refused my praise of his skill in gardening. He would not be able to accomplish half without Uncle Joachim, who planned everything that was to be done. True, he himself knew more about cultivating flowers, because he had been educated for an apothecary, and, had he not been compelled to enter the army, would probably be one now. But while serving as the baron's orderly--the elder brother--he had been shot in the foot; so, after he had obtained his discharge, his master had made him gardener on the estate. At that time the park was a perfect wilderness, everything higgledy-piggledy, and at first he had only bungled, until at last the younger baron came. "Yes," he added, glancing at me as if somewhat doubtful whether he might venture to speak openly, "many things would go wrong if it were not for Uncle Joachim. There's no telling all he has on his shoulders--half the management of the estate, the garden and stables, and the few cattle, for the larger portion of the land is leased. And yet he gets small thanks for it. They say that as a young officer he was what people call a sly chap, ran in debt, gambled, had love affairs; we know how things are with young noblemen who serve as officers. Then his brother once helped him out of a scrape and made him take an oath to lead a regular life, and he has done so too. But they always treat him like the prodigal son in the gospel, only there is no fatted calf killed for him. And why? Because he doesn't go to church. You pull a long face over it, Herr Candidate, but you can believe this: he's more religious at heart than many a man who can repeat the whole hymn-book; if he were not, there's much that would look very different here. For our master, he's not exactly a bad one, but very strict, like our Lord in the Old Testament, and looks after the pennies and wages, so, though the heavens should fall, he never abates any of the work the peasants are obliged to do for him. Unfortunately, he is obliged to look after his due, for the estate was heavily laden with debt when he took possession of it, and had he not made the wealthy marriage he did--for the money comes from *her*--he could not have lived here, especially as he, too, in by-gone days, led a jolly life and spent a great deal. Well, he's tolerably well over that now, but he nips and saves at all the ends and corners, always saying it is for his children. Would you believe it, he wanted to send me off six years ago, after the grounds here were at last in proper order and the park could be seen again. His brother could attend to it with one of the servants. Then I said: 'Don't send me away, Herr Baron; I'm no longer a young man, and have forgotten my training as an apothecary, and my heart clings to the old trees as we cleave to an old love. If it's only the wages, I'll gladly give them up, if I can keep my room and have the little food I eat.' So he let me stay, and I drudge away in Heaven's name and for the sake of Uncle Joachim, who could not manage it all alone. And now Fräulein Luise helps us, too."

"The Canoness?" I interrupted.

"Yes, indeed. She has charge of the vegetable-garden, because she knows best what is wanted in the kitchen. Ah, yes, she is for a woman what Uncle Joachim is for a man, and gets just as few thanks for it. You know, of course, Herr Candidate, that she is an orphan, the daughter of a third brother of our baron, who also squandered his property and died young. She has lived here at her uncle's since her eighteenth year--she will be twenty-four next Whitsuntide--and as her aunt has been an invalid so long, and her uncle is often absent for months, because he finds the castle tiresome, Fräulein Luise is obliged to stand in the breach everywhere. Well, she can do it, for she has the brains, and her heart is in the right place; our Lord will reward her some day for what she does for her old aunt."

The old man stopped, pushed aside with his hatchet a few dry branches that lay at our feet, and then drew from under his green apron a small bone snuff-box, from which he offered me a pinch. I took a few grains for the sake of courtesy, and then, with the most perfect innocence, for I had not yet penetrated into the real state of affairs, asked:

"Is it possible, Herr Liborius? I thought the French lady took charge of the housekeeping."

The old man shrugged his shoulders, slowly stuffed the pinch of snuff into his little hooked nose, sneezed several times, and after a long delay replied: "All that glitters is not gold, Herr Candidate. But let every man sweep before his own door. See, here we are at Uncle Joachim's rooms. Will you pay him a call? He'll surely be glad to see you. Not a human creature ever crosses his threshold except myself, his dog Diana, and Fräulein Luise."

We had walked the whole length of the park, to where a tall fence divided it from the open fields, and were again approaching the castle, when we reached a small summerhouse connected with the outbuildings by a long hothouse. As I nodded assent, Liborius knocked, and then, without waiting for the "Come in!" raised the latch of the crumbling old door. No one was within. But at first I could not believe that this utterly cheerless room was occupied by a member of the

baron's family. Against one wall stood a more than plain bed, covered with an old horse-blanket; a huge arm-chair, from whose worn leather covering the horsehair stuffing here and there protruded, was at one of the windows, and at the other a large pine table, without a cloth, on which lay in excellent order numerous thick account-books, writing-materials, boxes of seeds, and a leaden tobacco-box; in the corner stood a narrow wardrobe, and on pegs along the wall hung a few guns and fishing-rods. This constituted the entire furniture of the yellow-washed room. But above the bed hung the portrait of a beautiful woman, and a couple of old copper engravings, representing Napoleon at Fontainebleau, and on his death-bed, in worm-eaten brown frames.

"It is not exactly a princely lodging!" said the gardener, "but he chose it himself. Well, it makes little difference where we stretch our limbs if we haven't spared them from early till late. At night all cats are gray, and any four walls do well enough for a sleeping-room."

Then he let me out again, and I went back to the castle, often shaking my head over the many things I had learned, which had considerably lowered my high opinion of the people and things around me.

When the church-bells rang the next morning, I went to the window and looked down into the courtyard. A large old-fashioned coach, to which two fine horses were harnessed, was standing before the steps. Almost immediately the baron came out of the doorway, carefully leading his wife.

Mademoiselle Suzon and the two children followed. They took their seats in the carriage--Achatz mounting the box, so that if those within moved a little nearer together there would be room for a slender person. I waited to see the Canoness, who was always late, come out of the castle. But the coach-door was closed by the footman, who sprang up behind, and the vehicle lumbered slowly away.

Is she, too, like Uncle Joachim, no church-goer? I thought, and felt that this would have chagrined me greatly, for I hoped to impress her especially by my sermon.

But I had fretted in vain.

I set out at a rapid pace, and, having discovered a meadow-path, which, intersecting the avenue, led straight to the village and church, I arrived even before the party from the castle.

The sexton received me, ushered me into the vestry, and helped me don the black robe in which I always seemed to myself especially trim and ecclesiastical. While the last verse of the hymn was being sung, I saw by my pocket-mirror that my locks were parted down the middle of my head in perfect order, and my hands faultlessly clean, and then entered the crowded church.

I had carefully examined and tried my voice in it the day before. It was as plain and bare as most of our village churches in the Mark, having been hastily rebuilt with scanty means after a conflagration, and even robbed of the monuments which, as the sexton said, had come down from Catholic times. On the whitewashed pillars hung nothing but dusty and faded bridal and funeral wreaths, with long black or white streamers and tarnished silver spangles. There was also a black tablet with a few hooks, from which were suspended the war medals of anno '13, '14, and '15, with the names of their wearers in clumsy white letters beneath. The organ alone was handsome, its pipes brightly polished, and its notes--for the schoolmaster understood his business--greeted me with a harmonious melody as I climbed the steep stairs to the pulpit.

While the last verse died away I had just time to scan my devout congregation. Opposite to me, in the baronial pew lined with red cloth, sat the party that had come in the carriage. In the front seat, at its left, was the pastor's plump old wife; the lines on her cheerful face were to-day drawn into a peculiarly intent expression. I told myself that I should have in her a particularly critical auditor. Behind these pews, in a dense throng, were the peasants and cottagers of the village, with their wives and children, whose singing, thanks to the musical teacher, was far more endurable to hear than is usually the case in our unmelodious region. Spite of my self-confidence, I was forced to subdue the quickened throbbing of my heart as I saw the eyes of all these strangers fixed steadily and not exactly benevolently upon me. I was really glad not to discover among them one pair that, within the last few days, had already more than once disturbed my peace of mind.

But just as I was opening the Bible on the pulpit desk to read the text, the door at the end of the narrow aisle, between the rows of pews, noiselessly opened, and, amid a stream of sunlight and spring air, that was instantly shut out again, the Canoness entered. Instead of passing through the rows to take her seat in the baron's pew, she unceremoniously sat down on the farthest bench, where an old woman, in whom I now recognized Mother Lieschen, made room for her with a friendly nod. No one else in the church noticed her; this late arrival appeared to be considered perfectly proper.

So I began my sermon in a somewhat unsteady voice, but it soon grew firmer. The text was: "Many are called, but few are chosen."

The doctrine of predestination had frequently been the theme of our debates at the university,

and the sermon as I had brought it in my trunk bore evident traces of the learned apparatus with which I was accustomed to defend my views. For my present congregation, however, I had wisely omitted this, and restricted myself to bringing the kingdom of God as I had dreamed of it, in vast outlines, but colored with brilliant hues, before the imagination of my listeners. It resembled, as it were, a beautiful fairy palace, to which led an immense, broad staircase. This symbolized the temporal world in which, separated by steps, the many called and the few chosen hurried on together. For, I said, as all nature shows a gradual development from a lower to a higher stage, in which no creature has reason to complain, since thus alone can the omnipotence of God, which renders everything that might be possible actual, reveal itself; so it is compatible with the Creator's infinite righteousness that he does not endow all his creatures equally, but makes distinctions, and, with apparent severity, favors one and neglects another. Thus only could he have completed the wondrous picture of the world, without leaving any step vacant or overleaping transitions. If dissatisfaction should thereby arise, the peace that is not of this world will at some future time silence all complaints and reconcile all contradictions. On the day the portals of that palace would open at the sound of the last trump, all who were waiting on the stairs would be invited to celebrate the entrance into the heavenly mansions. Ay, even those on the lowest step. For it is explicitly written: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

I now adorned this idea of a staircase, which, as the final tableau of a fairy opera, would have done credit to a scene-painter, with the necessary lay figures and heroic characters, which I will briefly pass over here. It is only necessary to say that in the elect on the upper step I described with tolerable clearness people of the stamp of my employer and his family--high-born, wealthy mortals, endowed with every advantage of nature and education, and also with the grace of true religion; while on the lowest step crawled poverty-stricken creatures, bereft of happiness, like Mother Lieschen, who, however, would also be saved if they gathered the treasures which moth and rust do not destroy.

After I had pronounced the benediction over the congregation and descended the steep stairs of the pulpit, I felt fairly intoxicated by my own fiery eloquence, and considered it only natural that the baron should signify his most gracious approval by a nod of his handsome head. The pastor's wife, on the contrary, had not changed her expression in the least, and did not stir even when I passed close by her. I forgave her from my heart for being unable to feel friendly to the new star that outshone her husband.

The sexton, however, praised me lavishly. Only I had made my sermon a little too aristocratic.

I could scarcely wait for the dinner-bell to ring, as I fully expected that the whole conversation over the Sunday roast would turn upon my sermon. But in this I was bitterly disappointed.

A guest had arrived who had not witnessed my oratorical triumph, a thorough man of the world, as I perceived at the first glance. He was called Cousin Kasimir; I do not know whether the relationship was through the baron or his wife, for he was so disagreeable to me that I vouchsafed him no special notice. The young gentleman had ridden over from a neighboring estate, where he was living as a student of agriculture, lured less by the aroma of the baronial table, which even on Sunday promised no choice dishes, than, as everybody knew, by designs on his cousin, the Canoness, in which he had long obstinately persisted, though without any form of encouragement. He seemed to have resolved not to attempt to take the coy fortress by storm, but induce it to surrender by tenacious persistence. So he sat between Fräulein Luise and the young girl Leopoldine, without addressing a word to either, but zealously striving to entertain the whole company by amusing anecdotes, bits of gossip, and jests with Uncle Joachim. The latter always gave him sharp, curt replies, whose quiet scorn the young man did not appear to feel. In the intervals he discussed politics with his host, of course from the standpoint of the nobility; and Mademoiselle Suzon was the only lady at table who could boast of a slight show of gallantry from him.

On the other hand, he did not seem to be aware of the existence of the mistress of the house, nor of my important self, though the baron had presented me to him with some flattering words about my intellectual gifts.

Nothing was said of my sermon.

Wounded vanity naturally led me to cherish a secret, but all the more bitter, hatred of the new guest. Even now, though I have long since learned to smile at this pitiable youthful weakness, I must, for truth's sake, admit that Cousin Kasimir, fine gentleman though he might be, was an insufferable fellow, and had a face that might aptly be styled a hang-dog countenance.

Very much annoyed, I went out into the garden as soon as we rose from the table. I should have been glad to meet my honest friend Liborius, not to hear him praise my pulpit eloquence, but to question him about the object of my hate. He was, however, nowhere to be seen. He spent his Sunday afternoons, as I learned later, in a neighboring village, where he had placed a daughter, the child of an unlawful youthful love, in the charge of worthy people. The baron inexorably banished everything bordering upon unchaste relations from his pure neighborhood.

I sat for a while under the budding trees on one of the most remote benches in the park, and

the worm of unsatisfied vanity gnawed my heart. At last I consoled myself with the thought that the fitting opportunity to speak of such exalted subjects had not yet come, and when the conceited nobleman had taken leave the neglect would be more than made up.

So I at last rose and resolved to have the church opened again and improvise a short time on the organ, for I was accustomed to be my own Orpheus, and quell, by the power of music, the wild beasts which, spite of my religion, ever and anon stirred in my heart.

But as I approached the little summer-house where Uncle Joachim lodged, I saw the door open and Fräulein Luise come out, taking leave of her friend with a cordial clasp of the hand.

I confess that this meeting was not exactly welcome. Her icy manner--even colder than usual--at dinner had told me plainly enough that I had by no means advanced in her esteem. But in certain moods a vain man longs to hear himself talked about at any cost, and would rather endure the most pitiless verdict than the offense of silence.

Therefore, instead of turning into a side-path, I quickened my steps toward my foe, who, without taking the slightest notice of me, friendly or otherwise, quietly pursued her way to the kitchen-garden.

I soon came up with her, bowed politely, and asked whether she objected to my bearing her company a few moments.

"Not in the least," she calmly replied. She merely desired to look at the young plants, which was not an occupation in which one could not be disturbed.

We walked for some distance side by side in silence. She did not wear the gray dress to-day, but a black one, whose contrast made her fair face look still whiter. A thin gold chain, from which hung an old-fashioned locket, was twisted around her neck. I afterward learned that it contained her mother's miniature. I do not remember ever having seen her wear any other ornament.

Her expression was even colder and more repellent than usual, yet she seemed to me more beautiful than on the first day I saw her. She again wore over her golden hair the little black kerchief I thought her most becoming head-gear.

"You were at church to-day, Fräulein," I began at last, for I felt that I must hear something about my sermon.

"Yes," she answered, gazing calmly at the freshly dug beds by the path. "But I shall not go again when you preach."

"Why?"

"Because I will not have the God I love marred by you."

This was too much. I stopped as though a loaded pistol had been fired under my nose.

"Permit me to ask," I said, essaying a superior smile, "in what respect the God you love differs from him whom we all, including myself, have worshiped in our Sunday service to-day."

"Oh, if you wish to know," she replied with a slight curl of the lip, which, spite of my wrath at her depreciation, I thought bewitching. "You have made a God who reigns in heaven very much as an aristocratic patron of the church rules his estate. When there is a harvest festival here, and the peasants come into the court-yard of the castle to cheer the noble family, they arrange themselves on the steps very much as, in your imagination, humanity stands on your staircase: the magistrates at the top, then the villagers, graded according to the amount of their property and cattle, and at the very bottom Mother Lieschen, who owns nothing but a wretched hut, a dog, and a goat, yet nevertheless receives a gracious glance because, as you think, she is poor in spirit. To certain ears this may have been an admirable prophecy of the Day of Judgment. In the ears of God it must have sounded somewhat differently."

"Then you do not admit the gradual development of all mortal creatures?"

"Certainly. Who would deny it? Only the image of poor humanity probably looks somewhat different to the omniscient eyes of God than when seen through the spectacles of our arrogant prejudices. If there were such a staircase, reaching to the portals of heaven, Mother Lieschen might perhaps stand on the topmost step, and certain others, to whom you have borne such flattering testimony, at the very bottom."

I wished to give the conversation, which was becoming more and more embarrassing to me, a different turn, and said in the gayest tone I could assume:

"You seem to be a special patroness of this old dame, who doubtless possesses a multitude of secret virtues. You preferred the seat by her side to one in the baron's pew."

She now stopped in her turn, flashing so strange a glance at me from her brown eyes, that all inclination to jest vanished.

"Yes," she said, "I like to sit where my heart attracts me. I think there would be neither patrons' pews in the church, nor hereditary tombs in the grave-yard, if people did not merely bear God's words on their lips, but were aware that we are all sinners and lack the grace we ought to have before God. Their forgetfulness of it is the fault of the false expounders of the gospel, who value worldly profit more than the kingdom of heaven. Ay, look at me, Herr Weissbrod. You, too, are among them, spite of your excellent theological testimonials and St. John's head. Otherwise you would not speak of the old dame with pitying contempt, merely because she is the poorest person in the parish. First learn to know her as I do. Then I hope your derision of her secret virtues will cease. That she *does* conceal them is possibly her greatest merit, and God, who seeth in secret, will perhaps reward her openly."

She turned away with a hasty gesture of indignation, and seemed about to leave me. But I was not so easily shaken off.

"I have irritated you, Fräulein," I said somewhat dejectedly. "We will discuss my theology no further. But I should be very grateful if you would give me some other particulars of your protégée. I really did not intend to despise the old dame on account of her poverty."

"Really?" she retorted. "Did you not? Well, I will believe you, though you don't seem to possess much knowledge of character. But you would be greatly mistaken if you supposed that Mother Lieschen is one of the poor in spirit. Let me tell you that I owe all, or at any rate a large share, of my love and reverence for God, and the small amount of Christian patience I have acquired, solely to my intercourse with this sorely tried soul. When I made her acquaintance, six years ago, I had a defiant, despairing heart. Now I believe, in all humility and cheerfulness, that my Creator will impose upon me no heavier burden than I can bear, and know that a human being who possesses genuine nobility can never lose it, no matter into what society he may be thrown. Only he must fear God more than men, even those who, in your opinion, stand on the highest step, next the angels and archangels, as at court the second rank of nobility is close beside the royal personage. You wonder to hear a Canoness speak so irreverently of noble birth. But I have seen too many base and contemptible acts perpetrated by people with the longest pedigrees, to feel very proud of my ancestors. There will be quite a different Almanach de Gotha in heaven from the one here below, I think, and perhaps there Mother Lieschen will have a nine-pointed coronet over her name."

Wondering more and more, I made no reply. She had hurled these remarks at me with sharp abruptness, while her fair face flushed, and the little locks on her temples trembled with repressed excitement. I had had no idea that an aristocratic young lady could cherish such democratic ideas and express them as a matter of course.

"Tell me more about this rare Christian," I asked at last.

"Oh, that is soon done. She lost three fine sons in the war of liberation; her only daughter was led astray by a dissolute fellow--also one of those on the highest step; her husband, who until then had been thoroughly steady, was driven by sorrow to the demon of drink, and died a wretched death. She herself was at first utterly crushed by all these troubles, especially as the little property she possessed was lost through faithless people. But she remembered the promise, 'All things work together for good, to them that love God,' and resolved that she would not suffer herself to be overwhelmed, but in her great desolation constantly sought those who were as sorely tried, nursed the sick, and shared her last mouthful with a poor outcast till the girl could maintain herself. While thus employed, her old heart became at last so cheerful that whenever I am with her all my own somber thoughts leave me, and I would rather cross her threshold than stand on the topmost step of your staircase and be invited to enter by an aristocratic archangel, as the reception of the few elect was just being held. Now I will bid you good-evening, Herr Weissbrod. I have something to tell Uncle Joachim."

After passing through the kitchen-garden, we had again reached the little summer-house. The Canoness nodded haughtily, raised the latch, and left me standing outside, disturbed and bewildered.

But, strange to say, roughly as the shower-bath had dashed over me, I did not feel in the least chilled, but revived and strengthened, as we do after a rain which, though drenching us to the skin, has at the same time washed all the dust and feverish heat from our limbs, so that, even while shaking and shivering, we can not help laughing at the baptism.

Even had her words been more severe and stinging they would have inflicted no sharp wounds, for the voice which uttered them soothed me like balm, though the tones were by no means gentle, but often harsh with indignation. Yet, when she spoke of the persons and things that were dear to her, one could imagine no richer melody. I felt in that hour a strange ambition to have her voice some day pronounce my name also in that sweet, thrilling tone.

And how her whole appearance had bewitched me, while she lectured me so pitilessly!

I was lost in reverie as I returned to the castle. Cousin Kasimir met me, and asked if I knew where Fräulein Luise was. I shook my head. Even his hang-dog face did not seem quite so disagreeable when the pinched lips uttered that name.

And how I felt an hour later when, unable to fix my thoughts upon any occupation, I sat at my tower-window and suddenly heard beneath me the piano and then the voice for which I had so passionately longed. To-day, since the time for sleep had not yet come, there was no repression, but a power and fullness of melody which, when a note seemed to soar triumphantly upward, or to sink into the very depths of the soul, sometimes brought my heart into my throat. It was another aria by the same composer, who was her special favorite. For nearly an hour this pure flood of harmony flowed through my penitent soul. I may truly say that whatever transformation of my nature her words had failed to accomplish was completed by her singing.

When the supper hour arrived, I sent word by the servant that I begged to be excused, I was not well.

With this fib my first Sunday ended. I was, on the contrary, so rapturously well that I could not bear to be confined within four walls, but slipped out into the open air and sauntered for several hours, with an overflowing heart, under the waving branches of the trees, and over the young grain sprouting in the dark fields, until all the lights in the castle were extinguished.

If, from the foregoing confession of faith, you have drawn the inference that Herr Johannes Weissbrod had regularly fallen in love with Fräulein Luise von X., the conjecture might be termed premature.

True, I had had as yet no personal experience in this department, but I knew from the stories of others, and my own few observations, that love includes the tender desire to take possession of the beloved object. Even in its boldest dreams my agitated soul had not felt a trace of such a yearning. If ever so-called Platonic affection existed, it was in my case, though some eccentricities would have given a third person cause to smile.

For, albeit I could not help thinking constantly of her, I did not feel this constraint, after the manner of lovers, as a sweet bond imposed upon me, but struggled against my chains, and had moments when I almost hated them, though even then she seemed to me one of the most remarkable human beings I had ever met. At such times I would gladly have practiced some little act of retaliation upon her--of course merely to shame her, and show that I really was no such contemptible fellow, but with my intellect and learning could have held my own beside any arrogant young lady.

I also detected in myself a secret envy, which will show you how far I was from the usual condition of being in love. I would gladly have been in Uncle Joachim's place, even for a few hours, to feel how it seemed to be liked and honored by this girl. And, if this could not be, I would have even consented to be transformed by some magic spell into Mother Lieschen.

At night I dreamed that the beautiful staircase to the portal of heaven was before me perfectly empty; but when I tried to mount it I constantly slipped back, till at last I remained with bruised knees on the lowest step. Just at that moment the door opened and St. Peter came out--who, however, bore a striking likeness to Uncle Joachim--leading with his right hand the Canoness and with his left Mother Lieschen. All three looked down at me and suddenly began to laugh. I started up angrily, and gave them a sharp lecture on the wickedness of malice. While I was in the midst of it, the little old baroness came up, looked compassionately at me, and said, "Give me your hand, my son." Then she led me up the stairs with as light a step as if she were no longer an invalid, saying, "You see, Johannes, it is perfectly easy, only we must leave behind the learned luggage you have dragged with you in your trunk." And, indeed, it seemed as if I had received winged shoes, like the messenger of the Greek gods, yet the stairs appeared endless. Higher and higher I floated, but still saw the three at the same distance above me, only they were no longer laughing, and the vision constantly grew paler, till at last I beheld nothing but the horn buttons on St. Peter's gray coat, glittering like stars, and the Canoness's golden hair shone like the sun on a winter day, while Mother Lieschen's gray locks fluttered around her little pale face like the autumn clouds about the moon. When at last the dread that I should never get up found utterance in a shrill cry, I woke and felt ashamed that the sun was shining on my bed.

My first business that morning was to send for the barber who shaved the baron every day, and have him cut my hair. True, what remained was still brushed behind my ears, the parting, however, was no longer exactly in the middle, but a little on the left side. When I went down with my pupil to the history lesson I was vexed that this important change in my outer man, symbolical of a transformation of my views, did not receive a glance from her on whom I hoped it would produce an impression. Achatz alone made some foolish remark about it, which I sternly reprov'd. Fräulein Luise again sat at the window, sewing on a child's jacket, as completely unmoved as if nothing had passed between us the day before.

So she remained during the whole week. I did not understand how I could have fancied, even in a dream, that I heard her laugh, for she never laughed.

I should have been delighted to meet her again alone, but she never permitted it. So I had no resource except to continue in my next sermon our conversation in the kitchen-garden, an expedient which gave me one advantage--she would be unable to interrupt me.

But, while in the act of connecting my sermon with my cleverly chosen text, the old pastor sent me word by one of the school-children that, as his foot was now tolerably well, he intended to occupy the pulpit himself on the following Sunday.

This greatly annoyed me. When the Sunday came I should have preferred to stay away from church, especially as I did not know which would be the most suitable seat for me. I could not take my place in the baron's pew without a special invitation, which was not given, and I did not consider it exactly proper to sit among the congregation. So I chose an excellent expedient by joining the schoolmaster in the organ-loft, where a dozen towheaded children stared at me. Requesting the worthy man, by a condescending gesture, not to trouble himself about me, I sat down on a stool behind the low wooden railing.

From here I could overlook the whole church except the last bench under the organ-loft, which was the very one that most interested me, because I supposed Mother Lieschen and some one else to be there. But I had not much time for such thoughts.

While the hymn was being sung, the door of the vestry opened and the old pastor appeared, accompanied by the sexton, who carried the Bible, while his wife walked by his side, supporting his feeble steps with her strong hand. With trembling knees the old clergyman slowly ascended the pulpit stairs, and was obliged to rest for a time--which he passed in silent prayer--in a chair that had been placed for him. Then he rose as if refreshed, and, when he had opened the Bible and cast a long, gentle glance over the congregation, he seemed ten years younger, and his wrinkled but kindly apostolic face glowed as though illumined by the fire of youth.

He had chosen for his text the words of the seventh psalm: "My defense is of God, which saveth the upright in heart."

I had intended to watch sharply, to endeavor to detect some reference to my own sermon, as I could well imagine that the pastor's wife had told her husband about it, and not in the most favorable way. But after the first few sentences all my vain self-consciousness vanished, and even my renowned powers of theological criticism, which I had so often valiantly tested at the university. True, there was no trace of any controversial disposition in the low words from those withered lips, which, however, were so distinct that not one remained unheard. The old man opened his reverent heart to all who had ears to listen, as a father speaks to the children who cluster around his knees. I have forgotten what he said. It was anything but what is termed an intellectual discourse. But the tone of his voice has rung in my ears all my life, as though I had heard it only yesterday.

I can remember but one thing: that he referred to the calamity of the preceding year, when floods and stunted harvests had affected the village; but all this trouble had not been able to depress pious hearts, only those who did not have God for their shield, and what a precious thing this shield was, and many more simple, earnest words of this sort, all appealing with gentle power to every heart, because they did not merely spring from the lips, but were felt in the depths of the soul.

The dull peasants listened so breathlessly that the fall of a leaf might have been heard in the church. I glanced once at the occupants of the red pew. The baron had closed his eyes and bowed his handsome head on his breast--in contrition, as I first thought. Then I perceived, by the strange nodding, as it drooped lower, that he was indulging in a little nap. His wife's face, on the contrary, was raised, and she did not avert her eyes from the venerable bald head and silver locks of the speaker. As Mademoiselle Suzon was of a different faith, it could hardly be considered a crime that she was constantly glancing here and there over the congregation.

When the sermon was over, and the people were just preparing to sing the last two verses of that day's hymn, I hastily signed to the schoolmaster to let me take his seat at the organ, and at first modestly played the accompaniment; afterward, however, I put forth all my skill, not from the vain desire to make myself talked about, but an earnest longing to pour forth in music all the emotions of my overflowing heart.

A magnificent motet by Graun had been constantly echoing in my ears during the sermon, a harmony as full of the faith of childhood and the gentleness of age as the nature of the old clergyman in the pulpit. I now began to play it with a quiet fervor and triumphant devotion which finally made the tears gush from my own eyes. At the same time the image of the maiden whom I revered rose before my mind, and, as I had so long been unable to communicate with her in words, it was a pleasure to think: She is hearing you play, and, as her own being is instinct with music, you will approach her across all the gulfs that yawn between you, and she must begin to think better of you!

When I at last closed with a bit of improvisation, and rose, glowing with excitement, I saw close behind me the whole flock of children from both villages, who had stolen softly up from below and gathered around with shy reverence, as if I were a magician. But I sought only one pair of eyes, and enjoyed the first happy moment for several days. The Canoness was standing beside the old peasant woman, gazing rapturously into vacancy, as though still under the thrall of the notes she had just heard. As I passed with a slight bow, she only moved her blonde lashes a little, while her lips parted in a serene smile. No enthusiastic eulogy could have rewarded me more highly.

I could scarcely wait to meet her again at dinner. I fully expected that she would at last break her cold silence, and question me about what I had played, my musical studies and tastes. But nothing of the sort occurred. Nay, while all the others were praising and admiring me, and the Frenchwoman, with studied graciousness, kept her black eyes on my face, and laid a large piece of roast goose on my plate with her own hands, Fräulein Luise looked at me so absently and indifferently that I could not help secretly brooding over this mystery.

I was also annoyed because the baron, who had made no allusion to my sermon, delivered a long speech about my organ-music, from which I perceived that he had not taken the slightest interest in it, and was merely patching together, with a defective memory, certain phrases about the value of music to religious consciousness and the sin of considering the old church-hymns antiquated.

But Uncle Joachim vouchsafed me for the first time a brief conversation in a low tone, which, however, I scarcely regarded as an honor. I thought him an insignificant, frivolous old nobleman; besides, he had not been to church at all.

I longed to learn whether I owed the happy moment after my playing to self-delusion, or what was the reason I had again fallen into disfavor with the Canoness. So, soon after dinner, I went into the park and sauntered about within a short distance of the summer-house, holding in my hand a book, at which I gazed intently without reading a line.

My friend Liborius had told me that Fräulein Luise drank coffee every Sunday afternoon with her Uncle Joachim, who made it himself in his little pot, and ordered the cakes from the town at the next station. They always enjoyed it very much, and could often be heard talking and laughing loudly together.

I had seen her go there that day, after giving a Sunday morsel to the sick peacock and stroking its back as it came up to her, screaming and fluttering. I did not understand how she could love the spiteful, disagreeable bird, any more than I could comprehend what attracted her to her godless uncle, with his sarcastic smile, whom I so greatly envied on account of her preference. I waited at my post an hour and a half in a very irritated mood, and was just in the act of turning away, and driving the arrogant enchantress out of my thoughts, when the door of the summer-house opened and she herself appeared, evidently in the gayest humor.

But, as she caught sight of me, a shadow instantly flitted over her face, and only a faint smile of superiority lingered on her lips.

"You are waiting for me, Herr Weissbrod," she said, carelessly, advancing directly to me. "You want a compliment for your church concert, do you not? Well, you played very finely."

I was so bewildered by this address, and still more by the glance with which she seemed to illumine my inmost heart, and read my most secret thoughts, that at first I could only stammer a few unmeaning words. She seemed to pity my awkwardness.

"Yes," she repeated, "you really played very finely. Where did you learn? Our organ sounds well, doesn't it? Do you play on the piano too?"

I answered that I had taken lessons at college, but had never made much progress on the piano, which required greater dexterity. Besides, there were no such beautiful, solemn melodies for the piano as for the organ.

She again looked at me with so strange an expression that I lowered my eyes.

"Do you love music only when it is solemn?" she asked, and turned away as if to leave me. But I was determined to speak freely and compel her to confess her grudge against me.

"I thought you would be of the same opinion on this point," I answered, hastily. "At least I have only heard you sing slow, solemn melodies."

"Me? Oh, yes! You are my neighbor in the tower." She smiled faintly, but instantly grew grave again. "Well, would you like to know why I sing nothing else? Because I have a heavy voice that does not suit gay airs. Yet 'Bloom, dear Violet,' and 'When I on my Faded Cheek,' or anything still more light and cheerful, can touch the feelings as much as the most devout choral, if it only comes from a merry heart and a pure voice. True, we can not win artistic renown or be considered specially pious by singing such things; though I think God has the same pleasure in the chirp of the cricket as in the trills of the nightingale."

"You wound me, Fräulein," I answered, crimson with emotion. "You do me great injustice if you believe that what I do or leave undone is for the sake of external effect. Who gave you so bad an opinion of me?"

She stopped and looked at me again, not into my eyes, but at my hair, whose parting had meanwhile daily moved farther to the left.

"Do you really care to know what I think of you? Well, I believe you vain and weak, a man who

no longer reflects upon anything because he imagines he has made himself familiar, once for all, with all the enigmas of life, though he does not yet know even the first word of them. I don't blame you, for I know that this is the case with most of those who have pursued your path. But, as I have different ideas of the one thing needful, we certainly have nothing to share with each other."

I felt a keen pang at these words, but was resolved at any cost to know more, to know everything.

"And what is your idea of the one thing needful?" I asked, trembling with emotion. "You say such hard things to me. Are you perfectly sure that you have a right to do so? Are you certain that you are yourself in possession of the right knowledge?"

"Oh, no," she replied, and her voice suddenly sounded strangely low and earnest, as if she were speaking only to herself; "but I know that I seek truth and allow myself to be led astray by no external delusion, peril, or reward. No more can be required of any one, but no human being should demand less from himself. I don't know why I am saying this to you; I see by your puzzled face that it is a language wholly unfamiliar. Well, I have neither taste nor talent for converting any one. I shall thank God if I can conquer myself."

She bent over a bed to straighten a young cabbage-plant that had just been set out and was half trodden down.

"Fräulein," I said, once more fully conscious of my ecclesiastical dignity, "has not God himself pointed out to us the way in which we must seek him? And is it not boastful to disdain this allotted way and seek a side-path, merely in order to be able to say to ourselves that we do not follow the high-road?"

She straightened herself, and flashed a glance at me from her dark eyes, which she always closed a little when angry.

"Boastful!" she answered. "If food that neither satisfies nor nourishes is offered, and I can break from some bough fruit that suits me better! Boastful, because I do not wish to starve! That is only another of those speeches learned by rote. You do not even suspect how much you yourself suffer from arrogance." Then, after a pause, during which I persistently asked myself, "Good Heavens! what am I to do? how shall I say anything that does not displease her?" she added:

"I will tell you why the high-road is so detestable to me: because I can not bear to hear strangers chatter thoughtlessly about things I love. If I revere any human being, it always seems to me like a desecration to hear him approved and praised by others who do not know him so well; how much more when I hear all sorts of things said about my Creator, things which distort the image of him I cherish in my heart! I suddenly turn as cold as ice, and feel as much oppressed as if he were taken from me, and strangers were pressing between us. Whoever really loves God keeps that love secretly, does not repeat others' protestations of affection, nor use worn-out forms of speech already employed a thousand times. It seems to me like having a love-letter copied from a letter-writer. You know the passage in the Bible that says we must go to our closets and shut the door. Yet you come forward publicly and preach your petty human wisdom, as if you were thereby doing God a special favor. If you had a wife, would you not be ashamed to plant yourself in the village street and protest that she was a paragon of her sex?"

"Oh," I said, "how can you make such a comparison! God belongs to no one person alone."

"Do you really believe so? I think, on the contrary, that God belongs to every human being alone. He dwells in a special way in each human soul, and whoever does not feel this has not received him into his heart at all."

"Then you object to all public worship, Fräulein?"

"No, only that which prevents our coming to ourselves and God within us. Did you not hear how our old pastor preached to-day? How completely he forgot that he was in a crowded church, and poured out his heart as if he were alone with his Creator! So every one had time to do the same, and also approach God in his own soul. The rest of the old man's discourse was like a father talking to his children. Even if they did not all agree with him, they heard him speak from his inmost heart, and were glad to have him still among them and see his venerable white hair and his gentle eyes."

"Then it surely is not my fault if I can not assume the right paternal tone, since my hair is not yet white," I answered, trying to jest.

"Not your fault," she replied, "but the fault of those who believe young people capable of taking charge of a parish. Well, it is all the same to me."

"Because you will not go to church again when I preach? Oh, Fräulein, try once more! Don't give me up too quickly! What you have said has made a deeper impression upon me than you suppose. Perhaps we may yet understand each other better than you now believe."

She reflected an instant, and then said: "Very well, if you lay stress upon it, I will try once more. At the worst, I can think of something else. Farewell!"

She left me, and walked with her swift, even steps to the castle.

I can not describe the state of mind in which I spent the days until the following Sunday.

When a house, in which a man has lived safely and happily for years, suddenly falls under the shock of an earthquake, and he escapes, at great peril, with bruised head and half-broken limbs into the open air, his feelings may be somewhat akin to mine.

At first, it is true, the old Adam stirred and tried to reconstruct the ruined edifice and persuade me that it might be made habitable again. But I soon felt that the dust floating around it oppressed my breathing more and more, and the old walls shook at the slightest motion. Only one little room had escaped the universal destruction--the one I was to enter and shut the door behind me to be alone with my Creator and my love for him.

But I am not writing the confessions of my own soul and my incarnation, but the account of a far better and more interesting human being. So I will be brief.

My anxiety lest the old pastor should be able to fill his pulpit again the following Sunday, for which I did not reproach myself at all, though it showed little love for my neighbor, had been superfluous. His disease again confined him to the arm-chair by the window. But he talked long and cordially with me, and, when on my departure he embraced me, I thought I perceived that he was better satisfied with my conversation this time than during our first interview. With his wife, however, I had found no special favor as yet.

When the Sunday had come and I heard the bells ring and the hymn was sung, I was obliged to drink a glass of the wine kept in the vestry for the communion service, in order to control the wholly unprecedented weakness that assailed me. My knees trembled as if I were about to plead my own cause before a jury, in a case where my life was at stake. Yet there were only two judges in the church whose verdict I valued--my own consciousness, and the grave face beside Mother Lieschen in the last pew.

To be brief, the culprit was absolved.

I had chosen the text, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me!"

And when I began to speak it was not long ere I forgot everything around and was entirely alone in the church with one whom hitherto I had only known afar off, but who now for the first time drew near me, clasped my cold, damp hand, and gazed into my eyes with indescribable goodness, gentleness, and majesty, so that I clung fervently to him and poured forth all the trouble of my bewildered soul till he raised and blessed me.

My heart was so melted by the feeling of having at last beheld my God that I did not even glance at the pew under the organ-loft. But, in a pause which I was compelled to make to control my emotion, I perceived two things that satisfied me that I had found the right words: the pastor's wife was gazing affectionately at me with motherly love, as if she were listening to her own son, and the baron had again let his chin sink on his breast and was sleeping the sleep of the just, as soundly and sweetly as I had seen him on the previous Sunday during the old pastor's sermon.

I could scarcely wait for dinner. I did not expect a kind word from any of the others, but I firmly believed that she would grant me a friendly look.

But, as I entered the dining-room, my first glance fell on the cold, arrogant face of Cousin Kasimir, and all my pleasure was spoiled.

True, my heart grew warm again. For the first time Uncle Joachim was not the only one who pressed my hand. Fräulein Luise also extended hers, which was neither small nor especially white, but, when I cordially clasped and pressed it, I felt a joy akin to that of the first man when the Creator stretched out his hand and bade him rise and look heavenward.

It was but a brief happiness; I perceived, by the Canoness's stern eyes and compressed lips, that she was no longer thinking of me and my sermon, but of something repulsive and hopeless. Besides, she did not whisper some confidential remark to her neighbor now and then, as usual, and a leaden cloud of discomfort rested upon the whole company at table.

Cousin Kasimir alone seemed to be in an unusually cheerful mood, which, however, did not appear quite natural, and chattered continually, telling hunting stories, news from Berlin, and occasionally commencing bits of gossip, which the baron hastened to interrupt on the children's account.

He was very handsomely dressed, wore a small bouquet of violets in his new dark-blue coat, and had carefully trimmed his somewhat thin fair hair and small mustache.

As soon as we rose from the table, the Canoness was retiring as usual, but her uncle said: "Come to my room, Luise." She looked at him with a steady, almost defiant glance, then stooped to kiss her aunt's cheek and followed him.

Cousin Kasimir had approached Mademoiselle Suzon, to whom he constantly paid compliments in French, without receiving any special encouragement. My pupil had seized his sister's hand and hurried off to show her a new gun Cousin Kasimir had brought him. The old baroness sat in her high-backed chair, gazing at the beautiful blue sky as if her thoughts were far away. I took my leave of her, which roused her from her abstraction, and she gave me her little wrinkled hand, looked at me with her sad, gentle eyes, and said: "You edified me greatly to-day, Herr Candidate. God bless you for it."

At any other time this praise would have greatly delighted me, but to-day all my thoughts were fixed on the person to whom my heart clung, and I could not shake off the idea that she was now enduring an unpleasant scene. I went up to my chamber in the tower and paced restlessly to and fro within its four walls, like a wild beast in a cage. Sometimes I went to the window and looked down into the court-yard without knowing what I expected to see there. An hour probably passed in this way, then a groom led Cousin Kasimir's horse to the foot of the steps and, directly after, he himself appeared, accompanied by the master of the house. He was very much excited, he had cocked his hat defiantly over his left eye, and was lashing his high boots violently with his riding-whip. I heard his disagreeable laugh, which now sounded angry and malignant. He shook the baron's hand and, with a wrathful smile, said a few words I did not understand, which brought a sullen look to his companion's face. Then he swung himself into the saddle, driving his spurs into the flanks of his noble horse so cruelly that it reared high in the air, and then darted like an arrow down the elm avenue with its savage rider.

I remained standing at the window a little longer; I did not know myself why I felt so strangely relieved by this speedy departure. Something decisive, something that had made the hated cousin's blood boil, had evidently occurred. And I grudged him no vexation.

The air was now pure again, and I determined to go down to the kitchen-garden in quest of information. But, while passing Uncle Joachim's open windows, I did not hear the Canoness's voice, and could nowhere find any trace of her. The peacock screamed so discontentedly as I passed him that I knew he had not received his usual Sunday dainty. But in other respects the garden was very pleasant, the beds were full of spring flowers, and the first light-green foliage was waving on all the branches in the delightful May air. At last I met my old friend Liborius.

He was sitting in his clean white sleeves on one of the farthest benches, with a tattered book in his hand, and a cigar, a luxury he allowed himself only on Sunday, between his teeth.

I sat down beside him, took the volume, which was nothing worse than a novel by Van der Velde, now forgotten, and ere ten minutes had passed I knew everything I desired to learn. For, as the castle afforded no other entertainment, so thorough a system of watching and listening had been established that the family might as well have discussed their most private affairs before the assembled servants as behind closed doors.

The long and short of the matter was that Cousin Kasimir had sued for the hand of the Canoness; but the latter, on being informed by her uncle of the flattering and advantageous offer, had curtly replied that she felt neither love nor esteem for the suitor, and begged once for all that she might hear no more about him.

A terrible scene had followed, the baron had flown into an inconceivable fury, upbraided her for her poverty, her impiety, her defiance of his kindness and wisdom as her guardian, and who could tell where it might have ended had not the young lady turned away with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders and left the room.

Now even her pleasant coffee-drinking with Uncle Joachim was spoiled. She had locked herself up in her chamber, and would not see any human being.

I heard all this--part of which I had already conjectured--with secret triumph, bade my informant good-evening, and strolled through the park into the open country.

Never had I been so happy on any day I had spent in the castle. A small quiet flame was burning in my breast, as if it were some pure hearthstone, and must have shone from my eyes. At least all who met me looked at me as if they saw me for the first time, or, rather, were wondering what change had taken place in me. The peasants in that neighborhood are not loquacious, but more than one stopped of his own accord and said something about the crops, the weather, and the need of a good harvest, in which I thought I heard the assurance that they no longer considered me a stranger, but would confidently confess their spiritual wants as well as their external ones.

And the young grain was so beautifully green, the little fleecy clouds in the bright sky drifted along so gayly, the countless nightingales were already beginning their evening songs, scarcely a patch of green was visible in the meadows among the spring flowers, the dogs lay yawning and stretching in front of the little houses, which extended from the village to the fir-wood, and the only person who had been like the Satan of this beautiful spot of earth, Cousin Kasimir, had

departed, gnashing his teeth, leaving the good people to enjoy the bright Sunday repose.

When I at last approached the little wood, whose narrow border of young birch-trees bounded the last inhabited tract, I saw a low hut whose straw roof looked as awry and dilapidated as a moth-eaten fur cap that has fallen over one of its wearer's ears. I knew that Mother Lieschen lived here, but had always passed by it on my strolls. To-day some impulse prompted me to go there.

It was a miserable shelter for a human being, having but one window by the side of the low door, and only a single room, which had not been whitewashed for many years. A patch of ground behind it, inclosed by a low, ruinous fence, contained a few potato-plants and two tiny flower-beds, both still empty. A lean goat, tethered to the fence, was grazing on a bit of turf; two pairs of stockings and a much-darned shirt were hanging on the old palings to dry. Yet this scene of the deepest poverty seemed to me more beautiful than Gessner's trimmest idyl, for, on the bench before the house, by the side of the old woman, whose thin gray hair fluttered unconfined, sat the object of my secret worship.

The Canoness held on her lap a woman's old blue waist, which she was so busily engaged in darning that she did not notice my approach until I stood close before her. Mother Lieschen was half blind, and could not see anything at a distance of more than two paces.

I was greatly astonished, when Fräulein Luise looked up at me, to see in her beautiful, calm face no trace of the emotions which had embittered the afternoon.

She greeted me in her usual simple way, but I felt that I was no longer a disagreeable object. With a slight blush, she told me that she was helping the old woman--whose stiff fingers could scarcely hold the needle--with her sewing. I asked if I might join them, and took my seat on the bottom of a wash-tub turned upside down. The kitten came out of the hut, rubbed purring against me, and at last jumped confidently into my lap. Then a short conversation began, which seemed to me far more interesting than the most profound debates at our college.

I do not know what we talked about, but I can still remember that the old dame, who spoke the purest Low German, sometimes made brief, droll remarks, which greatly amused all three of us. She had asked Fräulein Luise to tell her about Berlin, where, though nearly seventy, she had never been. But the Canoness did not relate all the marvels as if she were talking to a child, but as though she expected from Mother Lieschen's wisdom a decisive verdict upon people and things. I rarely mingled in the conversation between the two friends, but gazed intently at the Canoness's beautiful bowed face and amber hair, and then at the slender fingers that used the needle and thread so nimbly. Sometimes the goat bleated, and the kitten arched her soft back to rub it against my hand.

At last the difficult task was finished, and Fräulein Luise rose, pressed the old dame's shriveled fingers, pushed back from her face a few gray hairs that had fallen over her eyes, and prepared to return home.

I asked if I might accompany her, and she silently nodded assent. Yet at first we said nothing. I cast stolen side-glances at her. She wore a dark summer dress, very simple in style, which, like all her clothes--as I knew through friend Liborius--she had made herself. But it fitted her so well. Her figure, which afterward became somewhat too stout, was then in its most perfect symmetry.

At last I said, "You are becoming a deaconess, Fräulein, after all. At least, I am constantly meeting you engaged in some work of charity."

She looked calmly at me. "I hope you don't say that in mockery, because you do not believe in works, and think salvation is gained only by faith. But I have never understood that. Whoever regards neighborly love as not merely a command, but a necessity of the heart, can be happy on earth only when he helps his fellow-man wherever he can. And do you really believe any one can be happy in heaven who was not so on earth?"

I now launched into a long discourse upon salvation by faith, till I perceived that she was listening absently.

Suddenly she interrupted me.

"No, I would not do for a deaconess. If I were to wear a special uniform of Christian charity, I should begin to be ashamed of what is best and dearest within me. A thing that is a matter of course ought not to be made a profession whose sign we wear. Others, I know, think differently. But neither could I put on the pastor's robe, if I were a man. Yet perhaps it is necessary; people cling to appearances, and clothes make people."

She said all this interruptedly, stooping frequently to gather flowers--which she arranged in a bouquet--from the meadows through which we were walking.

Somewhat embarrassed to defend my position, I tried to help myself with a jest.

"I would give much if I could see you stand in the pulpit in a black robe and bands, and hear

you preach. But tell me, if you had been a man, what profession would you have chosen?"

The Canoness stood still a moment, apparently gazing at a wide, radiant prospect with a rapt expression I had never seen on her face before.

"I would have been an artist, an actor, or a singer," she said, softly.

"An actor?" I replied, scarcely concealing my horror.

"What do you discover so terrible in that?" she asked, with a slight, sarcastic smile. "Is it not a magnificent thing to embody the characters of a great author, to cast noble, beautiful thoughts among the throng of breathless listeners? But perhaps you know nothing about it. You believe the theatre to be a sink of iniquity, like so many of your class. I can only pity you. I have neither the desire nor the power to convert you to a better view."

"And where were you yourself converted?"

"Oh, I--I, like you, was reared to loathe this so-called jugglery. But, three years ago, I spent several months in Berlin. An old aunt, who was very fond of me, sent for me because she was entirely alone. Uncle Joachim took me to her. There I spent the happiest period of my life, and there the scales fell from my eyes."

"If those are your views, have you never felt tempted to become a singer?" I inquired. "With your beautiful voice and love for music--"

"No," she answered, firmly, "as a girl I should never have ventured into that career. For the very reason that music lies so near my heart, I should feel it a desecration to be compelled to come forward and reveal my inmost soul to strangers, who had paid for tickets. Perhaps, if I had true genius, it would bear me above all such scruples. And yet the greatest singer I ever heard, Milder--have you heard Milder?"

I was forced to confess I had never entered an opera-house.

"Well, then, we will say no more about the matter," she replied. "You could not understand me. But I pity you."

Yet she did tell me more of her experiences in Berlin. She had heard Milder in some of Gluck's operas and in "The Vestal," and described her appearance, her figure, her execution; then, assuming a majestic attitude, she herself sang several passages which had specially touched her. Her fair face flushed crimson, and her eyes sparkled.

I believe it was on that evening that she enthralled my heart forever. Not a word was exchanged between us concerning the events of the afternoon or of my sermon. But I was too happy to find that she gave me her confidence so far, not to forget myself and my petty vanity.

We rambled over the fields for an hour, until it grew perfectly dark, and returned to the castle just at tea-time. The Canoness had arranged her bouquet very gracefully and laid it beside her aunt's cup, who patted her arm with a grateful glance. She looked past her uncle into vacancy, without moving a muscle. The latter was in the worst possible humor, which he even vented on Mademoiselle Suzon during the game of chess.

Soon after I went to my tower-room, Fräulein Luise began to sing below. I listened at my open window in a perfect rapture of every sense. Outside, the nightingales were trilling, beneath me this magnificent voice, in which so strong, so pure, so noble a woman's soul appealed to me--I felt as if my whole being had been encompassed with iron bands, and in this "moonlit, magic night" one after another burst asunder, and I could breathe freely for the first time.

Much might be said of the days that followed. They were the happiest of my young life. But memorable as they are still, distinctly as I can recall all the trivial events and rapturous joys of many, I shall avoid relating them in detail.

Though a man should speak of his first and only love with the tongue of an angel, he would find no patient listeners.

Yet, for truth's sake, I must here remark that I did not deceive myself for an instant in regard to the hopelessness of my passion. But, strangely enough, this clear perception of the heights and depths which separated me from the woman I worshiped did not make me unhappy. Nay, it would only have crippled the lofty flight of my feelings had I flattered myself that this peerless, unattainable being might some day prosaically descend from her height and become the wife of a commonplace village pastor. True, I can not assert that this state of mere spiritual aspiration would always have continued. If she gave me her hand, if her dress brushed me, or my foot even touched the shoes she had put outside her chamber-door in the evening to be cleaned, an electric shock thrilled me, which doubtless had some other origin than mere devotion and the worship we pay to saints.

Still, it never entered my mind to imagine that I could put my arm around her and press her

lips. I believe I should have actually fallen lifeless from ecstasy if such a thing had occurred.

Externally everything remained precisely as before--our lesson-hours, which she always attended as a duenna, our Sunday conversations in the kitchen-garden, now and then a meeting at Mother Lieschen's. Yet I felt more and more plainly that she trusted me and had forgiven my former follies. My hair was now parted wholly on the left side, and no longer combed behind my ears.

Whitsuntide came in the middle of June, and Whitsuntide Tuesday was her birthday, on which she attained her majority. The evening before, I had composed a long poem addressed to her, no declaration of love, merely a simple expression of gratitude for all she had done to aid my secret regeneration. I had carefully erased every exaggerated word that had flowed from my pen in the first fervor of writing, and substituted a simpler and more genuine one. I was no great poet, though I had been considered one at the college. While following the style in which church hymns are composed, I had been able to deceive myself on this point. Now that I desired to express my deepest personal feelings, I perceived that God had not granted me the power "to tell what I suffered." Yet on the whole I did not succeed badly, and it afforded me special pleasure to accost her in my lyric flight with the "Du" (thou).

Then I made a fair copy of my poem, and at midnight stole softly down-stairs and pushed it under her door, that she might find it the next morning.

I waited with many an inward tremor and quickened throbbing of the heart to learn how she would receive it, and was much relieved when, at dinner, she showed me by an unusually cordial pressure of the hand that she had not been displeased. No notice was taken in the household, save surreptitiously, of the high holiday, for which no celebration, either of music, illuminations, or fireworks, would have seemed to me brilliant enough. The old baroness had crocheted a large silver-gray shawl, which, spite of the heat, the Canoness did not lay aside all day; Uncle Joachim wore a little bouquet in the button-hole of his gray coat; my pupil Achatz, who had grown very well behaved, gave her a horse which he had sketched very carefully from nature; and Fräulein Leopoldine had placed in her room a rose-bush in full bloom. The master of the house appeared to see no reason for making any special ado over the day, though it must have been a marked one to him, since it relieved him from the duties of his guardianship.

"Come and drink coffee with me this afternoon," Uncle Joachim had whispered to me as he rose from the table. I bowed silently, feeling as if I had received a patent of nobility.

When, an hour later, I went to the little summerhouse, I found the Canoness already there. Diana, Uncle Joachim's pointer, sprang toward me growling, as soon as I crossed the threshold of the sanctuary; but, seeing that her master welcomed me kindly, lay down again, whining and wagging her tail, at the feet of the young lady who, from time to time, rubbed her smooth back with the tip of her foot.

Uncle Joachim wore a short summer coat made of unbleached linen, with yellow bone buttons, and a white cravat, and had brushed the hair over his high forehead in a curve that gave him a holiday air. On the neatly covered table, which had been cleared and pushed into the middle of the room, stood a large pound-cake adorned with a wreath of roses.

"You ought to brighten up Herr Weissbrod's black coat a little, Luise," he said, with his dry, good-natured smile. "A poet likes flowers."

I blushed at finding the secret of my rhymed congratulations betrayed, and the flush grew deeper when the young lady took several beautiful buds from the garland and fastened them in my button-hole with her own hands. Then we three sat in the most delightful friendliness around the table; Fräulein Luise poured the coffee from the big Bunzlau^[1] pot, and cut the cake. I was amazed to see with what persistent dexterity Uncle Joachim made the largest pieces vanish behind his sound teeth, while I myself had lost all appetite in the delight of being near her. Meantime a merry little conversation went on, spiced by my host's droll remarks and Luise's musical laughter. I myself served as a target for the old gentleman, who indulged in jests about my inward and outward transformation, but so kindly that I could not help joining in the laugh, without the least feeling of offense.

I was ashamed of having at first set so low a value upon this man. No one could desire a more genial companion; without the least effort he gave an interesting turn to everything he said.

When only a small portion of the cake was left, our host filled a short, smoke-blackened pipe with French tobacco, stretched his long limbs comfortably under the table, and began for the first time to really thaw out. He amused himself by recalling how and where, during the past years, he had spent his niece's birthdays. The year she was born, he had been in France, and related all sorts of adventures he had had there, often breaking off, however, as he approached the point, because they were not exactly fit for a woman's ears. Then he spoke of his other journeys, his travels in Spain, often with a heavy sigh, because such delightful days were over. He also questioned me about my so-called past, and, shaking his head, said, "You have missed a great deal, Herr Weissbrod. Whoever doesn't sow his wild oats in youth, must commit his follies later, when they are less easily forgiven. Nature will not be mocked."

Luise rose, saying that she was going to take a walk. Then she asked for a piece of paper, in which she carefully wrapped the remains of the cake, pressed Uncle Joachim's hand, and nodded pleasantly to me. "Wait a bit," cried the old gentleman, in Platt Deutsch--he was very fond of speaking it when in a good humor--"the old witch shall have a birthday present from me too." While speaking, he took from the chest of drawers a small snuffbox, which he had made himself out of birch-bark, and filled it with tobacco. "Here's something for her eyes. She need only try it. When she has used it all up, I'll give her more."

I understood that these holiday presents were intended for Mother Lieschen, and would have been only too glad to accompany the young lady. But I did not venture to make the offer, and, after she had gone, remained a few minutes with the old gentleman.

I call him so because, at that time, when I was only twenty-three, he really seemed to me very elderly and venerable, but he would have been not a little offended, or else laughed heartily, had he suspected that, while only forty-eight, I had already placed him on the catalogue of ancients.

When we were alone, he laid his large hairy hand on my shoulder.

"You are still a young man, Herr Weissbrod," he said. "But when you have half a century more on your back, even though you have used your eyes industriously meanwhile, I doubt whether you will have met any human being more pleasing to God than the girl whose birth we celebrate to-day. I am glad that, judging from your poem, some idea of this is beginning to dawn upon you. Only heed this well-meant advice--don't scorch your wings. That's nonsense."

I stammered something that sounded like an assurance that I was far from intending such presumption.

"That's right, my son," he said, kindly. "Follies, as I declared, are good things in their way. But we mustn't lose hide and hair in committing them, like the bear who put his head into the honey-tree and couldn't pull it out again. Good-evening, Herr Weissbrod. Don't take offense because I don't go to hear your sermons. My old heathen, the rheumatism, can't bear the air of the church."

How often I afterward recalled the worthy man's words, and could not help sighing mournfully and saying, with a shake of the head, "Good advice is cheap. You were her uncle, dear friend, and, besides, had had your due share of 'follies' in the past, while I, poor student of theology, had yet to learn the first rudiments of passion.

"Then you did not consider the unreasonable number of nightingales in the park, which were fairly in league against me; and, what was still more, the voice below, Gluck's 'Armida,' Spontini's 'Vestal,' and all the divine spells of golden hair and brown eyes."

But I am lapsing into Wertherism again. At least, I will commit no more follies now, but continue my narrative like an honest chronicler.

We are writing of August 26th. It was a fruitful year, and the harvest had almost all been garnered. But the heat daily increased, and we obtained no relief until after sunset. I had gone in the sweat of my brow to the next village, which belonged to our parish, on an errand of duty: to aid a sick tailor who desired spiritual consolation--no easy task. The old sinner, in his terror and despair, had been reading certain tracts and taken specially to heart the doctrine of the endless punishments of hell, probably because he was aware that he had made a sinful use of his tailor's hell^[2] here below.

I did my best to calm him, and, as I had the reputation among my parishioners of being an enlightened and not fanatical preacher, succeeded in partially soothing him and inspiring his soul with some degree of trust in God's mercy.

As I returned through our own village in the gathering dusk of twilight, I saw a little group of children standing in front of the tavern, staring at two dusty, shabby carriages. The first was an ordinary, four-seated calash, with a torn leather covering, and a broken spring under the box, temporarily mended with ropes. The second vehicle was a large, windowless box on a rough platform, such as is commonly used for a furniture-van. Of the people traveling in this extraordinary equipage I saw only two persons, who were sitting on the little bench beside the tavern-door, a bold-eyed, pale-faced young fellow, not more than twenty, who, with his straw hat trimmed with a dirty blue ribbon, pushed far back on his head, and his hands thrust into his pockets, was saying to his companion, amid frequent yawns, all sorts of things I could not understand. He had a bottle of beer beside him, from which he occasionally filled a glass, held it up to the light, and then emptied it at one draught.

The girl by his side was probably sixteen or eighteen years old. Her appearance was disagreeable to me at the first glance, though no one could have helped owning that her prettiness was more than the mere beauty of youth. But the bold way in which she turned up her little nose, the scornful looks she cast at the villagers, and especially the soulless laugh with which she greeted her companion's jests, were thoroughly repulsive to me.

Her dress was as shabby as the vehicle in which she had arrived. But she had fastened a huge

red bow into her black hair, and fancied herself sufficiently adorned in comparison to the barefooted children. Her little dirty hand held a few flowers, which she continually bit with her sharp white teeth, and then spat the leaves out of her mouth again.

The landlady, who came forward when she saw me stop before the house, told me that they were actors. There was a married couple, too, but they were in their room. The manager had gone up to the castle to speak to the baron.

I don't know why the sight of the poor traveling players was so repulsive to me. One might almost believe in some prophetic gift of the soul, for I had long been cured of my aversion to actors by Fräulein Luise's opinion of them.

So I did not linger long, but briefly reported to my old pastor how I had found his parishioner in the village--we were now one in heart and soul, including the pastor's wife--and then walked rapidly to the castle. As I turned from the elm avenue into the court-yard, I instantly perceived that something unusual was occurring. A groom was leading up and down a saddled horse, which I recognized from the silver-mounted bridle as Cousin Kasimir's. During the months that had passed since the latter's rejection, he had only come to the castle when he had some business matter to settle with the baron, and never remained to dine or to spend the evening. Yet this surely could not be the cause of the general excitement. Almost all the servants were standing, whispering together, near the staircase, on whose upper step the baron's valet and the cook--the two most zealous gatherers and diffusers of everything that happened in the household--had stationed themselves like two sentinels. They were so thoroughly absorbed in their office of listening, that they did not even move as I passed. True, this task was certainly made very easy for them.

Voices were ringing through the spacious entrance-hall in tones so loud and excited that every word could be distinctly heard outside of the lofty doors. Within I saw the master of the house, his face deeply flushed, and beside him Cousin Kasimir, with his hat on one side of his head and in his hand a riding-whip with which he beat time to his uncle's words; behind the glass door appeared the faces of the two children and Mademoiselle Suzon, pressed closely against one another, while opposite to the baron stood a handsome, finely formed man, the cause and center of the whole scene, whom I had no difficulty in recognizing as the manager of the company of actors.

He was showily dressed in a blue coat with gilt buttons, black trousers, red velvet vest, and light cravat. Yet, this somewhat variegated attire was by no means unbecoming to him, since it made his symmetrical and not over-corpulent figure more conspicuous. His head was gracefully poised on his broad shoulders; but at first I only saw the lustrous black locks that fell rather low on his neck, then, as he turned his face, the finely cut profile and light-gray eyes, whose expression was both honest and self-conscious. He held in his left hand a pair of yellow gloves and a black hat, while he gesticulated eagerly with his right, making a red stone in his large seal ring glitter.

"Only one night, only this one night, Herr Baron," I heard him say in a resonant, somewhat theatrical voice, which, however, had a certain cadence that touched the heart. "If I must give up proving to you and your honored family, by a recitation, that you are not dealing with an ordinary strolling company, but with an artist by the grace of God--"

"I forbid you to utter the name of God uselessly," the baron vehemently interrupted. "The calling you pursue has nothing in common with God or divine things. We know what spirit rules those who devote themselves to your profession. And, in short, I shall not change what I have said."

"I will not discuss the matter further, Herr Baron," replied the actor with quiet dignity. "But consider, there is a sick woman in my company, who has been made much worse by the journey here over the rough roads. If she is permitted to rest this one night, we shall continue our way to-morrow with lighter hearts. Therefore I most earnestly beseech--"

"You have nothing to beseech; I have expressed my will," cried the baron furiously, passing his hand through his beard, which with him was always a sign of extreme anger. "I have told you that the control of the police regulations in the district intrusted to my care is in my hands, and that I could not reconcile it to my conscience if to-morrow, on the Lord's day, a few paces from the house in which his word is preached, one might meet a company of strolling players, whose depravity is stamped upon their brows. You will therefore return to your people at once, and see that they are ordered outside the limits of the village within an hour."

These words were accompanied with such an unequivocal gesture toward the door that I believed the final decision had been uttered. But the actor stood motionless, save that he turned his head toward the side where the stairs led to the upper story, and, as my glance followed his, I saw what had silenced him, though I did not instantly perceive the true cause. In the dusk above us, on the central landing, stood the tall, slender figure of the Canoness.

All eyes were involuntarily fixed upon her where she leaned, as though turned to stone, against the railing. She had grown deadly pale; life seemed to linger only in her eyes.

"Fräulein," I heard the stranger exclaim in a tone of the most joyful surprise, "you appear before me like an angel of deliverance. Can you refuse to say a word in my behalf? Consider that the point in question is not so much my sorely insulted dignity as an artist, as a simple duty of benevolence. Through a mistake, in taking what I supposed to be a short cut, I came here. For two years I have had the privilege of giving performances in the cities of Pomerania and the Mark, and, after spending several weeks in L---, I intended to go to R---, where I meant to practice my art during the last months of summer. I should probably have reached the railway-station to-day, had not the lady who plays the old woman's parts in my company been taken violently ill. And now the Herr Baron, as you have heard, wants to turn us out of his territory as though we were a band of gypsies. You, who know me, Fräulein, will not hesitate to be my security; you will explain to the baron--"

The nobleman did not let him finish.

"Do you dare, sir!" he shrieked (his voice sounded like the creaking of a weathercock in a storm), "do you presume to appeal to my own niece for support? Do you wish to shake the foundations of the authority on which the life of every Christian family is founded? Such unprecedented insolence--"

His voice suddenly failed, he tore open his coat to get more air, and his hand groped around as though seeking some weapon to expel the intruder by force.

Just at that instant we heard from the staircase the firm voice of the Canoness, only it sounded somewhat deeper than usual.

"Consider what you are doing, uncle. It would ill beseem the honor of this house to turn from its threshold a suppliant who asks of you nothing save what Christian love and God's command alike enjoin upon you as a duty. I know this gentleman. I know him to be an admirable artist, and a man of unsullied honor. To refuse him admittance to your house is your own affair, but to deny him permission to rest for a night in the village below, especially when a human life is perhaps at stake, is an act you can not justify before God or man."

A deathlike silence followed these words. No sound was heard in the spacious hall save the gasping breath of the baron, who was vainly striving to speak. Then the actor's fine baritone, in which there now seemed to me a slight tone of affectation, echoed on the stillness.

"I thank you, most honored lady, thank you from my heart, for bestowing your sympathy upon a misunderstood disciple of Thalia. True, I expected nothing else from your noble soul. Will you now fill up the measure of your goodness by explaining to your uncle--"

A sharp cracking sound interrupted him. Cousin Kasimir, who during the whole scene had been casting furious glances around him and only waiting for a moment when he might interfere, struck his riding-whip violently against the top of his high boot and advanced a step.

"Silence!" he shouted, his mustache quivering with excitement. "You have heard that you have nothing more to ask or expect here, and if you carry your insolence so far as to throw upon a member of this family the suspicion of standing in any relation whatever to the head of a band of jugglers, the baron, whose patience amazes me, will have you driven out of his grounds by the field-guard. Do you understand, sir? And, now, without further ceremony--"

He advanced another step toward him and, with a threatening gesture, raised the hand that held the whip. But the actor did not cease playing his *rôle* of hero for an instant.

"Who are you, sir?" he exclaimed, without yielding an inch, "that you dare to assume a tone whose ill-breeding befits no cultured man. You seem to be abandoned by all the Muses and Graces, and I pity you. It can hardly surprise me that a country nobleman has never heard the name of Konstantin Spielberg. But in any other place I would call you to account for speaking of my company of artists, which has been honored by the concession of a distinguished government, as a band of jugglers. In this house, and out of respect for the ladies present, I can only say that I include you among the profane *vulgus* whose opinion I despise."

He raised his right arm with an impressive gesture, as though hurling an anathema against some worthless heretic or insulter of majesty, and at the same time, with expanded chest and locks tossed back, fearlessly confronted his foe. Then something happened which drew from me a low exclamation of terror. The riding-whip whizzed through the air and struck the uplifted hand of the artist, who staggered back, speechless with pain and rage.

"Scoundrel!" cried the nobleman's sharp voice, "dare--dare you tell me to my face--"

But he could say no more. The Canoness, whose approach had been unnoticed, suddenly stood between the furious men with her tall figure drawn up to its full height.

"Back!" she said imperiously to the young nobleman. It was only one word, but uttered in a tone that must have pierced to the very marrow of his bones, for I saw him turn as white as chalk, stammer a few unmeaning words, and draw his head between his shoulders. But, without vouchsafing him even a glance, she went up to the ill-treated stranger, seized the hand hanging loosely down, on which a deep-red mark was visible, and stooping, pressed a hasty kiss upon it.

Then in a loud voice, trembling with secret emotion, she said: "Forgive this poor creature, he does not know what he is doing. And now shake off the dust of this house from your shoes. You will hear from me again."

Once more a deathlike stillness pervaded the hall. But it lasted only a few minutes. Then we heard the actor say: "I shall be your debtor to my dying day, most gracious lady."

The next instant he turned toward the door, passed me with haughty, echoing strides, and went out upon the steps.

Spite of my terrible excitement, I retained sufficient deliberation to look keenly at him. For the first time I saw his full face, whose remarkable regularity of feature and a certain dreamy luster in the eye aroused my astonishment. Nevertheless, he did not attract me. I thought I detected in his expression, instead of manly indignation, a trace of satisfied vanity, such as may be seen in an actor who has just made an effective exit and, while the curtain is falling, tells himself that he is an admirable fellow. I could not help thinking involuntarily how different would be my feelings if such a girl had done *that* for me, how humbly, enraptured by such divine favor, my heart would shine from my eyes. And he seemed to be merely reflecting how brilliantly he had retired from the stage, not at all how he had left his fellow actor upon it.

I gazed anxiously at the heroine of this improvised drama. She was standing motionless, her eyes fixed with a look full of earnestness and dignity upon the door through which the man whom she had protected had disappeared. Her face looked as though chiseled from marble, her hands hung by her side, and ever and anon a slight tremor ran through her frame.

The master of the house also stood as if he were turned to stone. Not until Cousin Kasimir went up and whispered something to him did any semblance of life return. He drew a long breath, then, without moving from the spot, said: "Go to your room, Luise, and wait there for what more I have to say. Until then I leave you to your own conscience."

He turned quickly away and walked, followed by Cousin Kasimir, through the glass door, which he banged noisily behind him, into the dining-room, whither the three watching faces had shrunk, startled, from the panes.

Luise still stood lost in thought, showing no sign that she had heard the imperious words. But, just as I was about to approach her and assert my modest claim of friendship, she seemed to suddenly awake, but without taking any notice of me. I heard her say to herself: "It is well! Now it is decided!" Then she quietly pressed her hand on her heart as if she felt a pang there, nodded thoughtfully twice, and walked slowly up the steps of the great staircase, while I looked after her in gloomy helplessness.

As soon as I found myself again alone and recalled all the events I had just witnessed, I felt, with a certain sense of shame for the pettiness of my nature, that fierce jealousy was consuming every other emotion. So she had known and honored this man in former days. She had even placed him on so high a pedestal in her thoughts that the proud woman--before whom, in my opinion, the best and noblest must bow and hold themselves richly compensated by one kind look for every annoyance they encountered--did not for an instant consider herself too good to kiss his hand.

And he had received this homage as if it were his due, and thanked her with a cold, high-sounding speech.

What was he that she should consider him so far above her. For, after all, the insult offered him here was not so atrocious that it could only be atoned by the humiliation of such an angel in woman's garb. Had he not been already dear to her, she would probably have left him to obtain satisfaction for himself.

She had made his acquaintance during her visit to Berlin, that was evident, on the stage, of course, and probably elsewhere also; or how could he have greeted her as an acquaintance? Yet she had never mentioned his name to me, as she had spoken of the worshiped songstress Milder. What had passed between them? And what kind of afterpiece might yet follow the scene of today?

I could not help thinking constantly of his handsome yet unpleasant face, and asking myself what attraction she could find in it. I felt a most unchristian hatred rising in my heart toward this man, who had certainly not done me the slightest harm--nay, with whose whole deportment I could find no fault save the somewhat theatrical air inseparable from his profession. Yet, had I possessed the power to make the earth by some magic spell suddenly swallow up the whole innocent "band of jugglers," like Korah and his company, I believe I should not have hesitated a moment.

Since this was impossible, I resolved to try to obtain some explanation of this disaster which, as the principal person shut herself up from me, I could only hope to do through Uncle Joachim. Unhappily I found his cell closed--he had ridden across the country on some business connected with the sale of a peat-digging. I wandered in the deepest ill-humor through the park. At last it occurred to me that Mother Lieschen, with whom the Canoness was in the habit of talking about

so many things, might be familiar with this accursed Berlin story, and I turned into the path leading to her lonely hut.

But just as I caught a glimpse of the straw roof I perceived that I was too late. The old dame was just coming out of the door, and by her side walked Fräulein Luise herself, whom I had supposed imprisoned in her tower-room. They were talking eagerly together, Mother Lieschen had tied her kerchief over her head and seemed about to set out for a walk, for she took from the bench the staff with which she supported her steps, and held out her hand to the young lady. Then they parted, and, while the old dame hobbled along the edge of the wood, which was the shortest way to the village, Fräulein Luise came directly toward me to return to the castle.

She did not see me until within the distance of twenty paces, then she stopped a moment, but without the slightest change of expression. No one, who did not know what had happened an hour before, could have suspected it from her face.

"Good-evening, Herr Johannes," she said in her calmest voice (she had called me so for some time because the "Candidate" seemed too formal, and she thought the name of Weissbrod ugly), "I am glad to see you. I have a favor to ask."

I bowed silently. My heart was too full not to pour forth all its feelings if a single word overflowed, which I did not think seemly.

"Our old pastor will preach again to-morrow," she continued, walking quietly on by my side. "You might do me a real favor if, after the close of the service, you would give a beautiful long organ concert in your very best style, like the first one we heard from you. I have a reason for making the request, which I can not tell you to-day. Will you do me this service, dear Herr Johannes?"

Dear Herr Johannes! It was the first time she ever gave me that title. No matter how many unutterable things I had cherished in my heart against her, such an address would have won me to render the hardest service.

"How can you doubt it!" I answered quickly. "I understand only too well that you need the consoling power of music. Oh, Fräulein Luise, when I think how it affected me, a mere silent spectator, and how you must feel--"

"No," she interrupted, "it is not as you suppose, but no matter; it is important to me for you to play both very well and very long. I will thank you for it in advance--" she gave me her hand, but without pausing in her walk--"and also for every other kindness you have showed me in your earnest, faithful way. Promise that you will always remain the same, and never, even in thought, agree with other people's silly gossip about me."

I silently pressed her hand. A hundred questions were on my tongue, but I could not summon courage to ask even one. She, too, sank into a silence as unbroken as though she had forgotten that she had a companion.

So, when we reached the elm avenue, we parted with a brief good-evening. The Canoness turned toward the farm-buildings, and I went to my room.

Fräulein Luise did not appear in the dining-room at tea-time. Cousin Kasimir had ridden off long before, and a strange, oppressive atmosphere of irritation brooded over the rest of the party. I had already heard that the baron had had a long, violent conversation with the Canoness in her own room, but, contrary to the custom of the house, whose walls had a thousand ears, nothing was known of its purport. The baron's eyes were blood-shot and the lid of the left one twitched nervously. He had invited the steward to tea and talked to him with forced gayety about agricultural affairs. The old baroness gazed into her plate with an even more sorrowful and timid expression than usual, the children frolicked with each other, Fräulein Leopoldine endeavored to put on an arrogant air, while Achatz chattered to her with boyish impetuosity. Mademoiselle Suzon alone seemed to be in good humor, and ate a large quantity of bread and butter, while making tireless efforts to maintain a conversation with me, which I with equal persistency continually dropped.

When I at last went up to my tower-chamber and saw Fräulein Luise's well-shaped, though not unusually small, shoes standing outside of her room, I was obliged to put the strongest constraint upon myself to avoid knocking at the door and begging the alms of a few soothing words. It would have been very indecorous and worse--utterly useless. So, with a sigh, I renounced the wish, and resolved to speak to her so touchingly through my church-music on the morrow that the closed door must at last open of its own accord.

I had never passed so sleepless a night, and on the next morning felt so wearied that I feared the keys of the organ would refuse to obey me. But the old pastor's sermon strengthened me wonderfully, and his words fell like, soothing oil upon the burning wounds in my heart. Now, I thought, she is sitting beneath you with her old friend, the comfort of God's word is coming to her also, and the balm of music must do what more is needed to make her soul bright and joyous again.

I began to play the best melodies I knew, and I believe that never in my life have I had a higher and more sacred musical inspiration. So completely did I forget myself in it, that I started in alarm when the schoolmaster at last touched me lightly on the shoulder, and whispered that I had been playing a full hour, and, exquisite as was the performance, the dignitaries below were showing signs of impatience, and the congregation wanted to go home.

As if roused from some dream of Paradise, I broke off with a brief passage and hurried down the stairs. My eyes searched the ranks of church-goers thronging out of the edifice. I saw Mother Lieschen, but she was standing quite alone in her dark corner, and I could nowhere find the face I sought.

Perhaps she had shunned the gloomy church and preferred to remain outside in the graveyard, now fragrant with monthly roses and mignonette, hearing my music through the half-open door. At any rate I should see her at dinner.

When we assembled in the dining-room and she was even later than usual, I heard the baron say, turning to his wife: "She grows worse and worse every day; this irregularity must be stopped--" and my heart beat so violently that it seemed as though it would leap into my mouth. I asked Uncle Joachim, under my breath, how the young lady was, and whether she would not come to dinner. He shrugged his shoulders without moving a muscle, yet I saw that even his appetite had deserted him.

Just as the roast was served, and the baron was preparing to carve it, one of the footmen handed him a note on a silver salver. It had just been left by old Mother Lieschen.

The knife and fork dropped from his hands, he hastily seized the missive, glanced rapidly over it, and I saw him turn pale as he read. Then with an effort he controlled himself and rose.

"Harness the horses into the hunting-carriage," he shouted, "and saddle the chestnut instantly! Ha! This was all that was lacking! This caps the climax. But the lunatic shall learn with whom she has to deal! Dead or alive--even if Satan himself, to whom she has sold her soul, tried to protect her from me--she shall not drag the name she bears through the mire; she shall--"

He could say no more--it seemed as if some convulsion in the chest choked his utterance, and, with a terrible groan, he sank back into his chair.

The children started up; Mademoiselle Suzon hastily dipped her handkerchief into a glass of water to sprinkle the nobleman's brow; the old baroness rose as fast as her feeble limbs would permit, and in mortal terror approached her husband to feel his hands and head. The servants hurried out to execute his orders.

Just at this moment a voice was heard which never before had spoken in loud tones in that hall.

Uncle Joachim had risen, but remained standing at his place. His face wore a sorrowful, yet bold and threatening expression.

"Brother Achatz," he said, "I must beg you to moderate your words and undertake nothing that will make the matter worse, and which you would perhaps afterward repent. Do not forget that Luise is of age and mistress of her own actions. I regret what she has done as much as you do. But what has happened can not be altered."

The baron started up as if he had been stung by a serpent, angrily shaking off all the hands outstretched to help him. Wrath at the interference of his brother, who had hitherto had only a seat and no voice at this table, seemed to have suddenly restored all his haughty strength.

"You have the effrontery to still plead for her?" he shouted with flashing eyes. "You even knew her intention, and not only concealed it but helped her forget all modesty and honor and go out into the wide world like a wanton?"

"I forbid any imputations upon my honor, Achatz!" replied the other, meeting his brother's wrathful glance with cold contempt. "I have not seen Luise since yesterday noon. Just before dinner to-day I received a farewell letter from her, in which she informs me that she can no longer endure to live in this house, and will seek her happiness at her own peril. The other reasons she adds in justification of her step concern no one save myself."

"Then she did not tell you that she has determined to follow a certain Herr Spielberg, a strolling actor, and, if he will graciously consent, to become his wife? The wife of an adventurer who pursues a godless calling, and whom I ought to have had hunted out of the court-yard by the dogs, instead of giving him any hearing at all!"

"She told me that also, Brother Achatz, and it sincerely grieves me; for, though I believe this gentleman to be a reputable artist, I doubt whether she will ever become at home and happy in this sphere. But from what we know of her she will carry out her purpose, and if you should now institute a pursuit it will only cause a tremendous scandal and gain nothing; the family honor will be far more sullied than if we keep quiet and let the grass grow over the affair. That matters have gone so far, Brother Achatz, some one else will have to answer for at the Day of Judgment."

The two men measured each other with a look of most unfraternal hatred. The old baroness gazed up at her husband with a pleading quiver of her withered lips, whose words were not audible to me. But he hastily shook himself free, as she laid a hand on his arm, and advanced a step toward his brother.

"Do you mean to say," he asked, grinding his teeth, "that I am to blame because this mangy sheep has strayed from our fold and is devoured by the wolf? True, she has always rebelled against the strict rule of obedience, against both human and divine law. But, if any one in this house has helped to strengthen her in her obstinacy and arrogance, it is you, you, and no one else. Can you deny it?"

"I am not disposed to allow myself to be examined like a criminal," replied Joachim with sarcastic coolness. "If I were malicious, I would let you say the most senseless things in your helpless rage. But, as we bear the same name and I pity your blindness, Brother Achatz, and moreover we are not alone, so that I might tell you my whole opinion to your face, I will simply warn you. If you use violence and drag the matter before the courts, you may hear things far more damaging to the honor of our family than the news that the Canoness Luise has followed a strolling actor and made an unequal marriage by wedding him. I have nothing more to say. May the meal do you all good!"

He bowed to his sister-in-law, walked quietly to the antlers on which he had hung his hat, and left the room.

His last words had a magical effect upon the baron, who bowed his head on his breast and stood for a time as if lost in thought. Not until the servant entered and announced that the carriage was ready and the horse saddled did he rouse himself, and, with an imperious gesture that indicated they were no longer wanted, he walked without a glance at any one, with slow, heavy steps, to his room.

The roast meat, which meantime had grown cold, was left untouched on the table. The mistress of the house, after remaining for a time lost in sorrowful thought, followed her husband; the children, completely puzzled, had withdrawn into a window-niche. When the Frenchwoman, with a disagreeable smile intended to be amiable, addressed a remark to me containing the words *horreur* and *déplorable*, I made a very uncourteous gesture, as though brushing off a buzzing hornet, and hurried into the park after Uncle Joachim.

I found him where I sought him, but his surroundings looked very different from usual on the cozy Sunday afternoons.

Nothing was in order in the room, which had never seemed to me so shabby and unhomelike; the fly-specks had not been washed from the glass over the engravings, and the coffee-service was not on the table. Diana was lying in the middle of the unmade bed, and only lifted her head from her fore-paws to yawn at me. Her master, who usually dressed himself very carefully for this coffee-hour, was pacing up and down with folded arms, in his shirtsleeves, and slippers down at the heel, smoking his short pipe as fiercely as if he meant, in defiance of the sunshine streaming through the little window, to intrench himself behind an impenetrable cloud.

"Pardon me if I disturb you," I said, as he stopped and glared angrily at me as though I were a total stranger; "but I can not bear to stay alone with my own thoughts among people who either make scornful comments on the misfortune in private or openly exult over it. And altogether--I can't yet believe it. Tell me honestly, Herr Baron; do *you* believe it? Do *you* understand it?"

"Nonsense!" he growled. "Believe what? 'Long hair and short wits'--that's all we need know to marvel at nothing one of *that* sex does, even if she were the best of them all. Have you come, too, to fill my ears with lamentations? I have enough to do to swallow my own bile."

He began to puff out the smoke again, and resumed his walk as if he had said enough to induce me to beat a discreet retreat.

But I did not stir.

"Oh, Herr Baron, don't send me away without any comfort, any explanation. You know more about the matter than any other person; you said you had known this--this Herr Spielberg. Do you really believe that she has followed him, that--that she has not merely suggested the horrible idea of becoming his wife as a threat, an alarm-shot, but will seriously persist in it?"

Again he stopped, then with grim earnestness said: "Do you not yet know her well enough to be aware that she never jests about serious matters, and that, when she has once made up her mind, a legion of angels or fiends could not divert her from her purpose. I've seen it coming a long time, not exactly this, for no sensible person could imagine such a folly, but some dangerous escapade, merely to escape from this oppressive, poisonous atmosphere into the free air, and, had it not been for her aunt, the martyr, who must now endure to the end, she would have gone away as soon as she became of age, at least to her chapter, where, it is true, she would have found all sorts of hypocrisy that did not suit her, but at any rate she could have planned her life according to her own inclination. She only remained for the sake of her aunt, and to be able to occasionally lay a bunch of flowers beside the old baroness's plate. Now that scoundrel Kasimir

has severed with his riding-whip the tie that bound her here, as if it were a cobweb, she has dropped everything as if she were called upon to answer for the honor of the whole family, and questioned only the bewildered heart and obstinate conscience which persuaded her that this folly was a noble sacrifice. I could tear my hair out by the roots because I was not present, and heard nothing about the matter until early this morning, when Liborius told me that so and so had occurred yesterday, and that he saw the young lady set off gayly on her walk at dawn this morning but thought nothing of it. She appeared just the same as she usually did when walking, and he would never have dreamed of her committing so extraordinary an act. But *I* should have noticed something and opposed it with might and main. *Nom d'un nom!*"--this was the French oath he used when excessively angry--"I believe, if I could not have conquered her obstinacy, I would have gone with her and twisted the neck of the man into whose arms she wanted to throw herself, ere I would have allowed him to rob me of my darling and drag her into misery."

He again smoked furiously. Diana sprang howling from the bed and ran up to him, but was banished into a corner by a kick.

"But how can you explain her taking refuge with this stranger, confiding to him her person, her honor, her whole life, merely because he was treated here in her presence as a vagabond? So proud as she always was, so pure, and so well aware of what she ought and must do in order not to blush for herself?"

Uncle Joachim gave me a side-glance from his half-shut eyes. "Herr Weissbrod," he said, "you are an honest fellow, and you revered my niece as if she were a saint. I can tell you how all this agrees. As a future pastor, you must know what is to be expected of women, the best of whom are often the most perplexing. You see, three years ago, this Spiegelberg, or Spielberg, as he now calls himself, had the insolence to write her a letter, which she did not answer. But a girl like her does not willingly remain in debt for anything. What she has done now is the reply to that old letter."

I stared at him with dilated eyes.

"Yes," he continued, "what *is* to be, *will* be. I thought then the matter was ended once for all, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating! That devil of a fellow, with his dove-like eyes, was more cunning than I. At that time he was living in Berlin, at the same hotel where I had gone with Luise, a respectable second-rate house in Mohrenstrasse, for our means did not allow us to go to the Hôtel du Nord or Meinhardt's. She noticed the black-haired gentleman who sat opposite to us at the table, and talked so well, and he did not seem a bad fellow to me either. I inquired who he was. An actor, I was told, who played at the Royal Theatre. 'We must go there once, uncle,' she said, 'as a matter of courtesy,' and I was weak enough not to say no. What could I ever refuse her? Especially with her love for the stage. So we saw him act, and he did not play his part badly; and, as the women were crazy over him, he had a great success. I have forgotten the play, I never had much fancy for the theatre; everything always seemed to me bombastic and exaggerated, and the most touching passages moved me less than when my Diana gets a thorn into her paw and whines. But he seemed to please Luise greatly. So I was obliged to go with her three or four times, when Herr Constantin Spielberg's name was on the bills. Well, no great misfortune could have come from that. The worst of it was that Luise caught fire from the flashing sparks he scattered around him when he stood on the stage in his romantic costumes and assumed the most melting tones of love. 'Luise,' I said, jestingly, 'you must not forget that Herr Spielberg did not compose the works of Schiller or Goethe, but simply acts them. Still, he did not need to declaim; when he was merely sitting at the hotel table, talking about the weather, she listened as though he was expounding the gospel. And there was something in his voice that might well turn a young girl's head--she was twenty-one, but she had never been in love--and even when he was not behind the footlights he could look as honest and innocent as a pastor's son or you yourself, Sir Tutor.

"Besides, everybody in the hotel liked him, and no one had anything to say against him. It was reported that he supported an old blind mother, etc. But, knowing Luise as I did, the longer this state of things lasted the less I was pleased, and I gently began to speak of departure, of course without making any allusion to my own private reason. Well, to cut the story short, one morning my niece came to me with a letter in her hand: 'Just think, uncle, what I have received'--and gave it to me to read. We had no secrets from each other. It was a declaration of love from our opposite neighbor in due form--that is, in the Schiller and Goethe style, only not in verse, closing with a simple honorable offer of marriage. *Nom d'un nom!* This was too much for me. I allowed her the choice whether I should give the bold fellow a verbal answer, such as his insolence deserved, or we should set off *stante pede*, without bidding him farewell.

"After some consideration she decided in favor of the latter. But when we were on our way she said, 'Uncle, I was too hasty. He will always think me an arrogant fool. I ought to have answered him myself.' 'And what would you have said?' 'That I felt honored by his proposal, but was under the guardianship of my uncle, who would never consent to this alliance.' 'The deuce!' I cried; 'that would have been almost the same thing as a declaration of love.' 'What then?' she asked, quietly. 'Is there anything degrading in loving a noble man, merely because he belongs to a class against which people in our circle are unjustly prejudiced?' 'Well, this beats the Old Nick!' I thought, but did not say one word, for I knew that fire is only fanned by blowing upon it, and thought, 'It will die away into ashes when it has no food.' Now you see what a confoundedly clever prophet I was."

During Uncle Joachim's story, I had sat in the chair Fräulein Luise usually occupied, and patiently endured everything like a person who is crossing the fields in a pouring rain without an umbrella, and feels that he is drenched to the skin and can be no worse off. Every spark of hope had vanished; I knew that she would never turn back from the path she had entered; and, even if it were possible, she would be too proud to desire to do so. But man is so constituted that, though I foresaw all the misery of the future, for I did not trust the handsome face of the man to whom she had fled, and I knew by this step she had forfeited her right to be received into her chapter in case of need, in short, though I saw nothing in prospect for her save trouble and grief--the bitterest thing of all to me was to find my own dreams and wishes, which hitherto I had never acknowledged to myself, shattered at one blow. The most frantic jealousy of the happy man, who had won the bride forever unattainable to me, burned in my miserable soul, now suddenly bankrupt; and, when it flashed upon my mind that I had even been her accomplice by deferring the discovery of her flight as long as possible through my organ-music, I felt so utterly wretched that I suddenly burst into Boyish sobbing, in which offended vanity, wounded love, and grief for the uncertain fate of the woman so dear to me, bore an equal share.

Just at that moment I felt Uncle Joachim's hand press heavily on my shoulder.

"Hold up your head and don't flinch, my friend," he said, in a voice that was by no means firm. "We can't change the matter now, so we must let it go. But we must always repeat to ourselves one thing: whatever folly a woman like her may commit, she will not allow herself to succumb to it. She may lose the right scent once, like Diana, but she'll find it again--I feel no anxiety on that score. The only people who will suffer and can get no amends are ourselves--or rather, I mean, my own insignificant self. You are a young man, still have life before you, and--which I can't say of myself--are a devout Christian. But an old fellow like me, who is robbed of his only plaything--deuce take it! It will be a dog's life!"

He had put on his coat and now whistled to Diana. "Excuse me, Herr Candidate, I have some business to attend to. Stay quietly here till your eyes are dry. I'm disgusted with the old barrack, since we can expect no more pound-cake here."

He went out, carrying his gun upside down and followed by Diana, whose ears drooped mournfully, as if she shared her master's mood.

II.

There is not much to be said of the period which now ensued. Outwardly everything went on as usual. The void made by the flight of the insubordinate member of the family seemed to be felt by no one except myself and the silent Uncle Joachim; at least, her name was never mentioned. True, pauses in the conversation at table were more frequent, and were usually broken--not always with much taste--by a remark from my little pupil. There had been no gayety before in this strangely constituted circle, and I don't remember ever having heard a really hearty laugh. But, since the event, the master of the house seemed to desire to keep his family under still more rigid spiritual control. The blessing invoked upon the food often extended into a short homily, and on Sunday afternoons he held services of his own, by the aid of some Lutheran tracts, from which he extracted so confused a theology that I was often compelled to exercise great self-control in order not to give the rein to my old love for debate. On such occasions he indulged in rancorous allusions to stray sheep and lost souls, spite of the presence of the servants, who nudged one another, and afterward let their tongues wag freely in the servants' hall.

I wished myself a hundred miles away, for it seemed to me as if the veil, which hitherto had only allowed me to see the vague outlines of persons and things in the household, was suddenly torn away, and I experienced a sense of almost physical discomfort, which increased with every passing week.

The most puzzling thing was that, spite of the promise I had given my worshiped idol at our last meeting, I had become suspicious even of her. When I imagined her in the society of the strange actor, my hand involuntarily clinched, and I was strongly inclined to pronounce the whole female sex, which had seemed to me so supernatural and adorable in this individual, nothing better than the body-guard of the enemy of mankind.

I was by no means reconciled to her, but on the contrary still more deeply wounded, when, a fortnight after her disappearance, I received the printed announcement of her marriage to Herr Konstantin Spielberg, theatrical manager. I had still cherished a secret hope that she would repent the false step into which her exaggerated sense of justice had led her, and withdraw from the turbid, bottomless swamp she had entered, pure as a swan that needs only to shake its wings

to cast off everything that could besmirch it.

True, with my knowledge of her, I ought not to have been surprised that she should take upon herself all the consequences of her hasty step, yet it roused a feeling of such intense bitterness that it made me fairly ill, and for twenty-four hours I would see no one, as if the sight of any human face must awaken a sense of shame.

I knew that she had written long letters to her aunt and Uncle Joachim, letters in which she had probably attempted to justify her conduct. But I did not venture to make any inquiries about them. More than once, when I met her beloved uncle, my tongue was on the point of asking the question what threat he had used to deter his brother from pursuing the fugitive. I vaguely suspected that I should learn things in her favor. But, as the old gentleman did not commence the subject, I was forced to say to myself that, little friendship as he felt for his brother, he probably considered it unseemly to afford a stranger a glimpse of the circumstances that did no honor to the name they both bore.

Not until long after did I obtain a clear understanding of the matter.

Even from the poor, timid baroness, I could obtain no information, though, since the loss of her affectionate young confidante, she had shown me even greater kindness than before. Nay, since I had offered to supply Fräulein Luise's place at the evening games of cards, I was regularly assured of her friendly feeling by a warm clasp from her little wrinkled hand on my arrival and departure. Very soon she bestowed upon me another office which her niece had formerly filled--that of her High Almoner. I now perceived, with reverent emotion, how from her invalid chair she was the guardian angel of all the poor and wretched in the village; and the wan little face, with its bony nose and low forehead, really gained a gleam of youthful grace when I informed her of the recovery of some sick person, or the gratitude of a poor woman to whom her help in some desperate strait had restored the courage to live.

Besides the quiet satisfaction I felt in my own modest share in these deeds of charity, I had one great pleasure--my little pupil was becoming more and more fond of me. Through all his ungovernableness he had retained a dim consciousness of right and wrong, and when he perceived the patient love I gave him he felt the obligation not to be indebted to me, and therefore vented his instinctive rudenesses on others. His progress in study continued to be extremely slow. But he disarmed my displeasure by a frank confession of his faults and laziness, and the entreaty that I would not attribute to ill-will what was a part of his nature.

I hoped to gradually obtain an influence over this perverse disposition, but I was not allowed time to do so. With this fact there was a strange story connected.

The day after the flight of the Canoness, as Fräulein Leopoldine needed a companion, Mademoiselle Suzon had moved into the vacant tower-room below me. From this time, also, the Frenchwoman was present at the history lessons, during which she made herself very troublesome by asking foolish questions and coquettishly endeavoring to turn the tiresome teaching into empty conversation. But I said nothing about it, knowing that a complaint to the baron would have been futile.

Neither did I trouble myself about the extraordinary marks of favor with which the cunning creature began to annoy me.

One of the least of these was, that I rarely returned home from a walk without finding in my room a bouquet of flowers or a few choice fruits, filched from the garden or the green-house. Even at table she did not restrain herself in the least from making all sorts of advances to me, praising my lessons, repeating admirable remarks of which I had no recollection, and keeping up a fusillade of glances, which greatly incensed me, because it seemed to show distinctly that we were on the best possible terms with each other. In my innocence, I was mainly disturbed lest it should place me in a false light before the eyes of my employer and his wife. To Uncle Joachim I had made no secret of my dislike. The baroness's confidence in my honor and virtue, however, seemed immovable, and the baron appeared to be merely amused by this shadow of flirtation between his awkward tutor and the family friend, without seeing any cause for suspicion in it.

The affair pursued its course in this way for several weeks. Sometimes, from the open window beneath mine, I heard, instead of the dear "Orpheus" melody, most unmusical sighs and incoherent French verses, declaimed to moon and stars, but whose real object I knew only too well. Then I shut my own casement with an intentionally loud slam, and preferred to dispense with the delicious coolness of the autumn night rather than seem to listen to the tender soliloquies of this detestable hypocrite.

She perceived that she made no progress in this way, and resolved to risk a bold stroke.

It had already happened several times--accidentally, as I, unsuspecting novice, supposed--that, when going up to my room, I passed the Fräulein's door just at the moment she was putting her shoes outside. I had then forced myself to exchange a few courteous words with her, but escaped her efforts to carry on a more familiar conversation in the dimly-lighted corridor as quickly as possible by a hasty "*Bonne nuit, mademoiselle!*"

How different would have been my demeanor if my former neighbor in the tower, whose shoes and speech were both less ornate, had met me here even once to say good-night!

One evening my game with the old lady had been unusually prolonged. Mademoiselle Suzon, after her victory at chess over the baron, and obligatory courtesies to the baroness, had glided out of the room; the master of the house, making no concealment of his impatience, paced up and down the spacious apartment, frowning angrily; the servants occasionally glanced sleepily through the glass doors, to see if it were not bed-time. At last we finished, and I could take leave of my employers. My old patroness pressed my hand with a friendly glance, the baron nodded silently, but, as it seemed to me, with a sarcastic smile. I took the candle from the servant who was waiting outside, and, in a mood of dull ill-temper which was now almost always dominant, mounted the stairs to my lofty lodging.

I thought the delay would at least insure safety from my tormentor. But as, walking on tip-toe, I reached the story where her room was situated, the door gently opened, and an arm in a white night-dress noiselessly placed the well-known pair of dainty shoes on the floor.

I stopped, holding my breath and shading the candle with my hand. But, as the door showed no sign of closing, I resolved to rush straight on and pretend to be deaf and blind.

But I had reckoned without my host. The door was suddenly thrown wide open, and the French spook, in a most bewitching *négligée* costume, stood directly before me.

"*Bonsoir, Monsieur le Candidat!*" I heard her whisper, and then followed a long, half tender, half reproachful speech in her Franco-German jargon, of which I only understood that she was angry with me--yes, seriously offended, because I so openly shunned her. She could bear it no longer, and desired at last to know what grudge I had against her, why I treated her like an enemy. She knew, of course, that she could bear no comparison with Fräulein Luise, to whom I had been so completely devoted. She was only a simple French girl, and had no other *qualités* than her good heart and her virtue. But, since I was such a chivalrous young man, and treated everybody else so kindly and politely, she must suppose that she had given me some special offense; and, if this were the case, she would gladly apologize for her fault if she could thereby put an end to the icy coldness with which I treated her.

As she spoke, the wretch gazed at me with such an humble, childlike expression in her crafty black eyes, that I, poor simpleton, completely lost countenance.

I stammered a few French phrases--I should have found it more difficult to lie in German--assured her of my profound *estime*, and that she had made a deplorable *erreur*, and, with a low bow, was hurrying away, when I felt the arm that carried the candle seized in a firm clasp.

"I thank you for those noble words," said the smooth serpent, fixing her glittering eyes so intently on my face that I could not help lowering my own like a detected criminal.

"If you knew, *Monsieur Jean*, how happy your *sympathie*, your cordial warmth makes me! Ah, *mon ami*, I am not what I perhaps seem to you, a superficial, selfish creature, who avails herself of her position in this house to gain some advantage. If you knew how this dependence, this forbearance humiliates me! My youth was so brilliant, so happy! If any one had told me then that I should ever enter a foreign German household--"

And she now began to relate to me in French, with incredible fluency, the romance of her life, not more than half of which could I understand. But as, spite of my inexperience, I retained a sufficient degree of calmness to believe that even this half contained far more fiction than fact, I at last, relapsing into my former incivility, showed evident signs of impatience, and was just in the act of gently shaking off the hand that still held my arm, when her eyes filled with tears as she talked of her worshiped mother, and that honorable man, her father.

"You are exciting yourself too much, mademoiselle," I said. "It is late--you must go to rest--tomorrow, if you wish--"

Meantime I glanced into her room, which looked very untidy. The bed was already opened, and on the little night-table stood a candle which illumined the picture of the Madonna on the wall and a small black crucifix beneath it.

"Oh, *mon ami!*" she sobbed, pressing my arm as if she needed some support in her grief, "*si vous saviez! Mon cœur est si sensible--tous les malheurs de ma vie--*" and then came a fresh torrent of revelations of her most private affairs, till terror brought cold drops of perspiration to my forehead and, in my helplessness, I could finally think of no other expedient than to whisper: "Calm yourself, Mademoiselle Suzon! Somebody is coming--if we should be found here--!"

Her features suddenly changed their expression, she half closed her eyes, as if fainting, and murmuring with a gesture of horror: "Mon Dieu--je suis perdue!" tottered backward and would have fallen, had I not sprung forward and caught her with my free arm.

Instantly I felt her throw her arm over my shoulder, clinging to me as if unconscious, and while we stood in this attitude and undoubtedly formed a very striking group, which I myself lighted effectively with the candle I held aloft, hasty footsteps, which I had only pretended to

hear, actually did come up the staircase, and at the end of the corridor appeared the tall figure of one of the footmen, who served as the baron's valet.

I was wild with rage and shame at having allowed myself to be caught in this suspicious position, and the thought darted like lightning through my brain that the whole scene had been merely a prearranged farce, to which in my good-natured simplicity I had fallen a victim! The fellow's manner strengthened this belief, as he grinned at me with insolent cunning. Besides, he had no reason to come here at this hour.

Yet I retained sufficient composure to say quietly: "Mademoiselle has been taken ill. Wake the housekeeper, Christoph, and see that she is put to bed. I wish her a speedy recovery."

With these words I unceremoniously laid her on the floor, and walked off as calmly as if entirely indifferent to what was happening behind my back.

Yet every one will understand that I could not fall asleep very quickly that night. Again and again I called myself an ass for having entered this clumsy trap, and for the first time in my life learned that a good conscience is not always a soft pillow. True, when I asked myself how a trained man of the world would have acted in this situation, I could find no reply. But my contempt for the female sex increased that night to such a degree, and gained so large an access of dread and horror, that for the first time I envied the anchorites who, to escape from the sight of these fiends, retreated to some wilderness, where if any appeared to them and might perchance lure to sin, though they did not come straight from Hades, at least the hermits could not be surprised by inquisitive lackeys.

The next morning, just after I had risen with so disagreeable a tang on my tongue from the scene of the previous night that I could not make up my mind to touch any breakfast, I suddenly heard a heavy step in the corridor outside, which I recognized with terror as the baron's.

I did not doubt for an instant that the hour of judgment had struck, and the whole affair had been planned to obtain a sufficient excuse for my dismissal--I was perfectly aware how little I had concealed my feelings toward the outlawed member of the family, the lost soul of this household. After the first shock of surprise, I really felt glad that the climax had been reached without any volition of mine, and armed myself with all the pride and defiance of a pure conscience.

What was my amazement when my employer, after knocking courteously, entered my room with his most cordial smile, which I had not seen for a long time, and sat down on my hard sofa with the utmost affability.

He began by requesting me to give my pupil a holiday, as the family intended to drive to a neighboring estate. Then he launched into praises of the good influences I had exerted over Achatz, and expressed the hope that I might still long devote myself to his education, even if the other duties of my office claimed my attention--for the old pastor could not remain longer; his sermons showed that he was falling more and more into the childishness of old age. He had determined to pension him very shortly, even if it were against his wish, and give the office to me, though I could not move into the parsonage till after Christmas, as a suitable residence must first be found for the old couple.

I was so surprised by this offer--after having prepared myself for the most furious rage--that I could only thank my kind patron with a few clumsy words.

"Oh, my dear Weissbrod," he replied, gazing out of the window with his handsome bright eyes, like an aristocrat who is accustomed to dispense favors, "you need not give me any special thanks. I know what I possess in you, and hope that we shall understand each other better in future. Of course, I should have wished you to treat me with more frankness, but I understand and pardon your reticence. You thought me a rigid judge of the conscience, from whom it would be best to conceal all human weaknesses. You ought to have believed me a better Christian, one who is mindful of the words relating to the forgiveness of his erring brother: 'I say not unto thee, until seven times; but until seventy times seven.' Besides, youth has no virtue, and a future pastor is not to blame if he remembers the proverb: 'The pastor when settling for life wants a wife.'"

He smiled with patronizing significance, rose, went to my bookcase, and, while gazing thoughtfully for the tenth time at the names of Neander and Marheineke on the backs of the volumes, remarked with apparent calmness:

"When do you expect to be married?"

I felt as if I had dropped from the clouds.

"Herr Baron," I replied, "I am very grateful for your kindness, but I have never had any idea of entering the estate of matrimony."

The baron took out a book, turned the leaves, and then said, still in the same tone of gracious familiarity:

"That I can easily believe, my dear Weissbrod. Young people do not always think of the

consequences of their acts. But an honest man, and especially a servant of the gospel, will not hesitate to recognize the obligations he has undertaken. As I said, I do not reproach you for having permitted the matter to go so far. But, after the scene of yesterday evening, which could not remain secret, you will perceive that it is your duty to protect the honor of the lady you have compromised, and this can only be done by a speedy marriage."

He shut the volume and restored it to its place. Then, turning quickly and gazing at me with an inquisitorial expression, as if I were a convicted criminal, he smoothed his beard with his white hands.

But, thanks to the indignation which took possession of me at the perception of this base farce, I maintained sufficient composure to look him squarely in the face and answer coldly:

"I do not know what has been told you, Herr Baron. But, for the sake of truth, I must declare that it never entered my mind to carry on any love affair beneath your roof, and that my conscience absolves me from any obligation."

I saw that he turned pale, and with difficulty repressed a violent outburst of rage. At last he said:

"How you are to justify yourself to your conscience is your own affair. Mademoiselle has told me, with tears, that yesterday evening you took advantage of a moment's physical weakness, by which she was attacked, to embrace her, an act that did not occur without witnesses. I am disposed to judge such an impulse of gallantry leniently, on account of your youth and the attractiveness of the lady. But, as she is alone and defenseless in the world, it is my duty to protect her reputation, and I therefore give you the choice between proposing for her hand within twenty-four hours or resigning your position in my house, and with it all your prospects for the future. You must not make your decision in your first embarrassment. When we return this evening from our drive, there must either be a note from you in the young lady's room containing your proposal, or in mine your request for a vacation, as family affairs summon you as quickly as possible to Berlin. This request--unless you should change your mind while away--you must follow after a time with a petition for your final dismissal. You see that, even though you have forfeited my esteem, I treat you with Christian forbearance, but at the same time, as I am a foe to scandal and have confidence in you, I trust you will avoid any cause of vexation. I will now leave you to consider your own future, and wish you good-morning."

He nodded with affable condescension and, without waiting for an answer, left the room.

I was scarcely alone ere the repressed indignation that had been seething within me found vent in a convulsive laugh, and I felt tempted to rush after my noble patron and loudly inform him, outside the door of his clever accomplice, that I was not the dull simpleton they believed me, but saw through their preconcerted manœuvre, and was not at all disposed to let a bridle be thrown over my head. Fortunately I remembered that I did not possess a particle of proof, and should only make my cause worse by uncorroborated assertions. So I strove to calm myself, showed my pupil, who came bounding joyously in to bid me good-by, a cheerful face, and embraced him, a caress he received with innocent surprise, not suspecting that I was taking leave of him forever, and then watched from my window the departure of the family, which took place with the usual ceremony. In the servants' presence the baron always treated his wife with chivalrous courtesy, lifted her into the carriage himself, saw that she had the pillows for her back and the rug for her feeble knees, and always asked if she was comfortable, and whether she would not prefer to have the carriage open.

Mademoiselle Suzon helped him with kittenish suppleness. Spite of the nocturnal attack of faintness, her usual smile rested on her lips, and not a single upward glance at me intimated that above her lodged the robber of her honor, the man on whom depended the weal or woe of her future life.

As soon as the carriage had disappeared in the elm-avenue, I prepared to pack my effects, except my books, which I could not take with me without revealing my determination never to return. I do not know what impulse of prudence induced me to enter into the cunning farce my shrewd employer had marked out for me. Perhaps it was consideration for the kind mistress of the house or for my little pupil. The others certainly had not deserved to have me conceal the truth. After locking my trunk, I sat down and wrote the note to the baron, which was disagreeable enough for me. With great difficulty I resisted the temptation to inform him, on another sheet, that his hypocritical words had not blinded me in the least to the real motive of his conduct. But I deemed it more dignified to leave him to his own conscience, and, if the matter was as I firmly believed, he would be sufficiently punished.

Several other farewells were before me--my worthy pastor, old Mother Lieschen, with whom since the Canoness's departure I had chatted a short time on many evenings, and finally my honored patron, Uncle Joachim. I made the leave-taking with the first two as brief as possible. I felt reluctant to use deception toward the good old pastor, and yet I could not tell him the whole truth. But, spite of his eighty years, his eyes were still keen enough to perceive the real state of affairs, so that a shake of the hand was sufficient to make us understand each other.

Mother Lieschen was not in her hut. I could only leave a farewell message, in which I wrapped a small gift of money. Uncle Joachim I found in the fields, where he was overlooking the laborers in place of the steward, who was ill.

I thought it needless to maintain any secrecy toward him. He listened quietly, and his sharp, expressive features showed no signs of surprise.

"I have seen it coming," he said at last, sending forth vehement puffs of smoke from his short pipe. "The farce is excellent, though no longer perfectly new; such things have frequently occurred before, though the exit is usually different. Well, I'm not anxious about you, Sir Tutor, and I shall at least have the advantage of no longer seeing that intriguing woman's face opposite. Believe me, my dear friend, I, too, would gladly take to my heels and try to earn my bit of daily bread elsewhere, even if it should be as head-groom or steward on the estate of one of my former equals and boon companions. But there is my sister-in-law, poor thing. Who knows what her pious husband might do, if the last person in whose presence he is obliged to control himself should go away? You know the proverb about us natives of the Mark--that, though we never burned a heretic, we never produced a saint. Well, if there were a Protestant Pope, he should canonize that poor martyr for me on the spot."

Then, after we had shaken hands, he called me back again.

"You must do me the favor to keep this whole abominable story a secret, Sir Tutor," he said. "I could not blame you if you blazoned it abroad, for, after all, you are the one who is injured, and, if we can get no other satisfaction, to rage and call things by their right names relieves the bile. Still, remember that the honorable man who has thus injured you bears the same name as our Luise, to say nothing of myself. True, the girl has made haste to lay it aside. If you should ever meet her in the outside world, give her a tender greeting from Uncle Joachim, and tell her to bestow a sheet of letter-paper on him. Well, may God be with you, my dear friend! Heads up always, then we see the sun, moon, and stars, and not the wretched worms that crawl on this foul earth."

As he uttered these words, he clasped me affectionately in his arms, and kissed me on both cheeks. Then, turning abruptly away, he went back to his work.

In the afternoon I sat in the self-same butcher's cart in which I had made the journey to the castle. Krischan maintained a diplomatic silence, though I could not doubt that, like the other servants, he was perfectly aware of the nocturnal incident and its unpleasant consequences. Yet I perceived that the popular voice was not against me, for several times on the way I was obliged to refuse a drink from the worthy fellow's bottle. In the village, too, many tokens of a friendly and respectful disposition fell to my lot.

Yet, though this time the bays did not have the heavy box of books to drag through the sand, and my conscience was no weightier burden than it had been six months before, the drive, spite of the bright October weather, was a dismal one, and my heart was far from singing hymns as it had longed to do on the former occasion.

I could not help constantly reflecting that a few weeks before the one woman who attracted all my thoughts had passed over this very road to a future which I could paint only in the blackest hues.

I can not shake off the fear that in the preceding pages, which concerned my insignificant self, I may have been too verbose. Should this really be the case, I may confidently assert that the error is not due to the garrulity, or even the self-love, of a lonely man, but the desire of a conscientious biographer to omit nothing that could throw more light upon the acts of his heroine.

During the time immediately following her marriage, she disappeared entirely from the horizon of my own pitiful existence. I will therefore make my account of the succeeding years until she reappears as brief as possible.

My good old aunt in Berlin received me with her former love and kindness, though somewhat surprised that she must once more shelter in her little back-room the clerical nephew whom she had expected to speedily see shining as a brilliant light of the church in the glittering candlestick of a parish, while he now again seemed to be a dim little flame with a big "thief" in it.

True, she did not suspect the real state of the case concerning this "thief"--the hapless love for a woman who had utterly vanished that was secretly consuming me. I did not deny it to myself for a moment. I knew too well that all the joyousness of youth was irretrievably lost to me; and, as I perceived that the consolations of religion were powerless in my condition, I fell away more and more from my theological vocation, and during the first months gave myself up to a very God-forsaken, brooding idleness.

I carefully remained aloof from the circle of my former companions. I felt that the experiences of the past six months had separated me from them forever. Even in my outward man I had changed so much that two of my former most intimate friends passed close by me in the street without recognizing in the tall fellow with closely cropped hair, clad in a light summer suit and a

straw hat, the apostle of yore, with his long locks parted in the middle, and clerical black coat.

On receiving my definite request for a dismissal, the baron, closely as he usually calculated, had sent me six months' extra pay as tutor, which I did not return, though I could not help regarding the modest sum as a sort of hush-money. Having been turned out of the house without any fault of my own, I thought myself entitled to some compensation.

This money, which I was not compelled to use for my own support, since my kind aunt feasted me as though I were the prodigal son, I devoted to one exclusive purpose, for which probably no theological candidate waiting for his parish ever used his savings--I went to the theater every evening.

True, my longing to hear the great Milder was not fulfilled. I do not know whether she was dead or had merely retired from the stage. But I heard other admirable singers, among whom Sophie Löwe and the fair-haired Fassmann made the deepest impression upon me, and in the drama I was just in time to admire the famous Seydelmann, and afterward, perhaps wrongly, rave over Hendrichs, though I never saw the latter enter without a feeling of aversion, which did not vanish until he had acted for some time. He reminded me, both in personal appearance and in many gestures, of another actor, whom I hated from my inmost soul because I believed that he was to blame for the darkening of the star of my life.

But the world represented on the stage, the creations of the authors themselves, captivated me far more than any individual artist--so bewitched me, indeed, that I do not remember having opened a theological work or even visited a church during the year and a half I spent in the capital. The hypocrisy whose bitter fruits I had tasted had disgusted me with the delicious wine pressed in the Lord's vineyard, till, with a sort of defiant rebellion, I fled to the world of illusion irradiated by the foot-lights.

No one will marvel that, in this mood, I even essayed my own powers as a dramatic author. Of course, it was no less a personage than Julian the Apostate whom, during five acts, I made atone in iambs for having desired to restore to honor the ancient Pagan gods. I still retained enough of the theologian to place Venus lower than the mother of the Saviour. Yet between the lines glimmered so skeptical a view of the world that this *exercitium* in ecclesiastical history certainly would not have been reviewed *cum laude* at my old college.

I had just finished the shapeless *opus*, and was considering whether I should offer it to a "rational artist," like Eduard Devrient, for his opinion, when a sorrowful event suddenly stopped my dramatic career.

My loving nurse and supporter fell ill, and at the end of a few days I was obliged to accompany her to her last resting-place. As she had lived upon a small annuity, her whole property consisted of old furniture and a modest wardrobe. I myself had spent all my money except a few thalers. Therefore, it was necessary to again obtain a firmer foothold than the boards of the theatre, which could not be my world.

A few private pupils whom I secured helped me out of my most pressing need. Meanwhile, I industriously watched the papers for advertisements for tutors, and almost every week sent to the addresses mentioned a letter containing copies of my testimonials and references, including the name of my first employer, but to my grief and anger I invariably received a refusal. Knowing myself to be so well recommended, it was a long time ere I could understand these persistent failures, till at last, one sleepless night, when anxiety about my immediate future sharpened my wits, I hit upon the most natural solution of the enigma--my former employer, in reply to inquiries about me, of course gave the most unfavorable information, thereby refuting his written testimony, partly to prevent my relating in a new position the true cause of my dismissal.

Therefore, when a tutor--who must also be musical--was wanted for two boys seven and eight years old on a country estate near the frontier of Pomerania, I quickly formed my resolution, borrowed from an actor, whose acquaintance I had made, the money to pay my traveling expenses, and hastened to wait upon my future employer in person.

I found the position to be everything I could desire. The owner of the estate was a vigorous, thoroughly aristocratic, that is, noble-minded, man of middle age, who was deeply interested in agriculture, and had therefore left the education of his two sons exclusively to his admirable wife, until they had outgrown her feminine care and teaching. When I had explained my situation, and told him enough of the cause of my short stay with the baron to enable the shrewd man to perceive my innocence, without suspecting the whole truth, we soon agreed that I should come on trial for a quarter. These three months became three years, and, as neither found any reason to complain of the other, I should probably have grown old and gray in this beautiful part of my native land, had not the strange wandering star of my life suddenly appeared again in the firmament and lured me into new paths.

I had entered upon my office of tutor without any thought of ever moving into the neighboring parsonage. This was partly because I had become doubtful of my vocation as a preacher, and partly because I did not grudge the excellent man who now filled the place the longest possible life, which indeed he needed in order to leave his six young daughters--who had early lost their mother--alone in this dreary world without anxiety.

The oldest, Marie, was just sixteen when I entered upon my duties in the family of Herr von N---. Never have I known a more exemplary girl than this pure and lovely young creature, who, spite of her extreme youth, took the whole burden of the housekeeping and the education of her younger sisters on her slender shoulders, without even seeming to feel its weight. Her violet eyes and waving light-brown locks gave her a claim to beauty, especially when she smiled and her teeth glittered bewitchingly between her pouting lips. Had I not been afflicted with so obstinate a heart, I should undoubtedly have lost it to this charming child of God, and now be settled as a worthy pastor and father of a family in some village in the Mark. But my thoughts, spite of my utter hopelessness, clung so steadfastly to one image that for a long time I went in and out of the worthy pastor's house, and ate many a piece of cake Marie had baked, without seeing the merry little housekeeper in any other light than as the well-educated daughter of a man to whom I became more and more indebted for my own development.

For, while a country pastor who enters his pulpit every Sunday for twenty years usually lets his spiritual armor grow tolerably rusty with the flight of time, this admirable man, in his quiet gable-room, had taken the most eager interest in all the struggles which in those days agitated the theological world, had entered deeply into the historical investigations of the Tübingen School, and instantly fanned to a bright blaze the scientific interest which, during my rage for the theater in Berlin, had become completely extinguished--a blaze, it is true, that consumed to a sorry little heap the last scraps of orthodoxy with which I had covered my nakedness.

This is not the place to enter more fully into this spiritual question now struggling in the pangs of its birth. Only I must say that I looked up with actual reverence to this man who, from the depths of his warm, thoroughly evangelical nature, drew the strength--spite of casting aside the dogmatic traditions, whose foundations had been shaken in his soul--to beneficently fulfill his duties as pastor and proclaim the Word, without being faithless to its spirit.

I was not granted this gift, rooted in the purest philanthropy, and therefore capable of helping each individual to salvation in his own way. I was exclusively occupied with my own redemption, and, as I had entirely relinquished the idea of a parish, and for the present gave myself no anxiety about any other profession, I spent these three years, so far as my secret yearnings for my lost love permitted, very happily, and daily passed several hours with my teacher and friend, who treated me like a younger brother, and let me share without reserve everything that occupied his mind.

It was inevitable that I should be on the most familiar terms with his children also. From the first I had placed myself on a footing of merry banter, and asked the little girls to call me Uncle Hans. Marie persisted in addressing me as Herr Johannes. Yet an innocent familiarity, like that of blood relations, existed between us, and seemed to continue undisturbed when the child had matured into a maiden, and the eyes of the girl of nineteen gazed into the world with a dreamy earnestness that would have given a person better versed than I in reading the human heart much food for thought.

I noticed that she had lost some of her former vivacity, but was so unsuspecting that I jested with her about it, and drew no inference from her silence and blushes. True, the idea occurred to me that the young bird was fledged and longed to quit the overcrowded nest. But, as I knew with whom she associated, and that none of my employer's guests, who sometimes visited her father, had made the slightest impression upon her, I ascribed her changed demeanor to some anxiety of conscience--she often rummaged among her father's books--rather than any affair of the heart.

That I myself might be the cause never entered my dreams. All vanity had been shorn away with my beautiful fair locks, for with cropped hair I seemed to myself anything but attractive, and, since I had been obliged to atone for the bold hope of making an impression on the heart of the sole object of my adoration, by the keen disappointment of her marriage, I did not consider myself created to be dangerous to any woman.

So, one morning, when I had vainly sought my pastor in his study to return him a volume by David Friedrich Strauss, and on entering the little garden saw Marie sitting on a bench, holding in her lap a dish of green beans which she was preparing for the kitchen, I greeted her with a jest, though I noticed her tearful eyes, and asked if I could sit beside her a moment.

She nodded silently, and moved to make room for me. I commenced an indifferent conversation, but secretly resolved to question her, like a true uncle, about the cause of her melancholy. Her only friend, the daughter of a neighboring pastor, had just become engaged to a young agriculturist. I began with that, and asked if there was genuine love on the part of the girl, to whom I also had become attached. Marie, without looking up from her work, replied that this was a matter of course. How could people stand before the altar, and form the sacred tie, if there was no real love? Why, I answered, many a girl hopes that love will come after marriage, and only weds for the sake of having a home of her own, a husband, and children. True, I did not believe Marie capable of such conduct. She would never put this little hand--and as I spoke I patted the delicate little fingers resting on the beans--into that of a man whom she did not love with her whole heart.

Again I felt a violent tremor run through her slender figure; she made a visible effort to calm herself, but suddenly let the dish fall from her lap, tears streamed from her eyes, and, stammering almost inaudibly, "Excuse me, I don't feel well!" she rushed into the house as if flying

from Satan himself.

I remained sitting on the bench as if a thunderbolt had struck me. It was long ere I could calm myself sufficiently to pick up the dish and carefully collect the scattered green pods.

What would I have given to be able, with a clear conscience, to follow the dear child, take her little cold hands in mine, and utter words which would have had the power to dry her tears.

But, deeply as my heart glowed with tender sympathy for this youthful sorrow, I did not doubt an instant that I should be doing her a far heavier wrong if I tried to console her without the "real love" than if I left her uncomforted.

At last, after vainly waiting in the hope that she would come back and turn the affair into a jest, I rose in great perplexity and went thoughtfully back to my employer's house, here also called the "castle," though it had no feudal aspect.

As soon as I was alone in my little room--my pupils were waiting for their lessons in the school-room--I went to the mirror and carefully scrutinized my face. Even now I could find in it nothing that seemed calculated to disturb the peace of a young girl's heart. The conversations with the dear child, which I could remember also contained nothing captivating, and, as I had again and again said that I should probably remain a bachelor all my life, I could not help acquitting myself of all blame in the sweet girl's unfortunate passion.

Yet the sudden discovery so agitated me that I felt unable to give my Latin lesson. I dictated a written exercise to the lads, and, while they were at work upon it, sat down by the window with the last newspaper, which had just been brought in, not to read, but to have some pretext for pursuing my idle and fruitless thoughts.

But, as my eyes wandered absently over the columns of the paper, they were abruptly arrested by a name which glared in large letters amid the small type of the advertisement.

Konstantin Spielberg.

How long a time had passed since I had either heard or read that name! In Berlin, where ever and anon--always blushing as if I were betraying my secret--I had inquired about this object of my silent hate, no one seemed to know whether he was alive or dead. He appeared to have won no special repute as an artist, and, since his withdrawal to the provinces, his former colleagues, several of whom I knew, had heard nothing about him. As such wandering stars only diffuse their light in their immediate vicinity, the small local sheets that came to us made as little mention of him as the large journals of the capital.

Now, in his erratic course, he had come so near us that I could not avoid suddenly discerning him with the naked eye.

There stood the notice. "Konstantin Spielberg, with his renowned dramatic company, has arrived in St. ----," the nearest Pomeranian capital to us, "and intends, during the next six weeks, to give performances to which respected citizens, the nobility, and the art-loving public are invited."

At any other time this intelligence would undoubtedly have agitated me, but without stimulating me to any decision. In the strange situation in which I found myself since my last interview with my friend's daughter, this shadow from former days seemed to me like a sign from Heaven. I instantly resolved to repress all the emotions contending in my soul and convince myself, with my own eyes, how this man's wife fared, and whether she needed any assistance from the friend whose confidence she had certainly sorely betrayed.

I went at once to my employer and requested him to give me a week's vacation. Both physically and mentally I was in a strangely upset condition, which perhaps was only due to stagnation of the blood, and would be relieved by a short pedestrian excursion.

My request was granted without hesitation, and that very afternoon I found myself, with a light knapsack on my back, but my heart doubly burdened by two hopeless love-affairs, on the sunny highway that led to the Pomeranian frontier.

I might have reached my destination that night. But, swiftly as I had commenced my walk, after the first hour it became difficult for me to put one foot before the other. I constantly repeated to myself: "How will you find her? And how will she look when you suddenly take her by surprise without having previously inquired whether your visit would be agreeable or not? Quite probably she will shrink from you, as if you were a ghost recalling a time she would prefer to have buried, and you can be off home again.

"What then? And what is to be done about the other, whom you really never ought to see again, if you desire to be an honest man."

Under the influence of such thoughts I stopped, at the end of a few hours, at a respectable village tavern, the last in the territory of the Mark, and spent the sultry night uncomfortably

enough in the thick feather-bed. The next morning I continued my snail's pace. Never in my life had I felt more plainly, and with deeper shame, how pitiful a thing is our much-lauded free-will. For in fact I was nothing more than a puppet which a child pulls by a string, and it made the matter none the better because the boy whose plaything I was had gay wings on his shoulders and wrote his name Cupid.

It was about ten o'clock when I reached the little city--a place as ugly, dreary, and lifeless as any other Pomeranian town on an August morning. But, as I walked over the rough pavement of the main street, my heart throbbed as if I were entering some enchanted city, where in a crystal castle I should find the princess in a giant's power, and, after perilous adventures, secure her release.

I first inquired at the hotel, fully expecting that I should find the "renowned" traveling company had lodgings there. But, when I had thrown my knapsack into one chair in the public-room of the "Black Eagle" and myself into another, and the waiter had brought me half a bottle of Moselle, I was better informed at once.

The actors had spent only one night with them, and the very next day hired the back of the commandant's house for a month. Until six years ago a regiment of infantry had been stationed here, and the colonel had occupied Count X----'s old house facing the Goose-Market. When the regiment was ordered to another garrison, the house was not rented again. Now the manager had hired the back building, formerly used for the offices and adjutant's residence, at a very low price. The performances were given at the Schützenhaus near the Stettin Gate. The actors were splendid and drew large crowds.

"Does the manager's wife play too?" I asked, and, as I spoke, my hand trembled so violently that part of the wine was spilled from my glass.

No. The manager's wife never appeared. It was said that she was a lady of noble birth, who had run away with her present husband. But she was a very beautiful lady, and nobody could tell any evil of her. Did not I want something to eat? The *table-d'hôte*, at which there was nobody now except one commercial traveler, would not be ready for two hours.

I rose after hastily swallowing a single glass, let the officious youth brush my hat and clothes, and then requested him to direct me to the actor's residence. Perceiving my interest in him, he brought me the bill for that night's performance. The "Ancestress," a tragedy by Grillparger, with spectral apparitions: first row, six good groschens[3]; second row, five silver ones; pit, two good ones; children, half price; commencement at six o'clock. I read the names, of which I knew only the manager's: Jaromir--Manager Konstantin Spielberg. An uncomfortable feeling of mingled cowardice and repugnance again overpowered me. For a moment I actually hesitated whether I should not strap on my knapsack again and walk straight out through the opposite gate. But the puppet was fastened to its platform, and the naughty boy pulled till his toy was obliged to roll where he wanted it to go.

The Goose-Market was a rectangular piece of ground, in which grew dusty acacia-trees. On one of the narrow sides stood the colonel's former residence, a by no means ugly two-story building, in the style of the reign of Old Fritz, with a flight of steps leading to the door, and a stone escutcheon on the cornice above. But all the windows were closed with shutters, and a cat lay asleep in the sentry-box beside the steps.

My waiter led me to the side entrance, whose door was unlocked, and through the wide gateway into the shady court-yard, in whose center a large chestnut-tree spread its boughs in front of the windows of the rear building. "Please go up the stairs at the back," he said. "Somebody is always at home; but, if you want the manager, you'll find him now at the rehearsal. A very diligent artist, as the president of the district court says, and the rest of the company do well, too. But our little city deserves it, for everybody here raves about art. Well, you will see for yourself."

He bowed affectedly and left me alone, which made me very happy. For the accursed throbbing of the heart grew madder than ever, and I was forced to lean against the trunk of the chestnut ere I was able to walk through the court-yard.

The lower story of the back building seemed to be wholly occupied by stables and coach-houses. In the upper one, all the windows stood open, and their freshly washed panes glittered all the more brightly from the contrast to the thick dust on the doors and sills. At last I plucked up courage and mounted the dark stairs.

I came to a long, tolerably wide corridor, and wandered helplessly past several closed doors. Behind one of them I heard the rattling of pans and dishes; that must be the kitchen. I did not wish to summon a servant, so I stole softly on. And now I paused before a door through which I heard the sound of a woman's well-known voice--only a few words, but I felt by the hot tide which coursed through my veins that it had not lost its power over me during the four or five years of separation. And now I summoned up my resolution like a hero and knocked. Some one called "Come in," and I suddenly stood inside the apartment, confronting my old, inevitable fate.

She was sitting at the open window, and the sunbeams, piercing the foliage of the chestnut,

flickered over her figure, leaving her head in shadow. At the first glance I saw that she had grown even more beautiful--a little stouter and more matronly, of course--but her face was still more instinct with intellect, and her nose had actually lengthened a trifle. She wore her hair in the same fashion as in her girlhood, only she had fastened over the coil behind a black-silk crocheted net, whose ends were knotted at her neck. No one would have perceived either her lineage or her present dignity as wife of the manager by her plain, dark-calico dress. But in her lap she held a red-velvet royal mantle--very threadbare, it is true--trimmed with gold-lace, in which she was mending a long rent, and a pile of knights' costumes, satin bodices, and plumed caps lay in a clothes basket beside her chair.

"Good Heavens, Johannes!" I heard her suddenly exclaim. The royal mantle slipped from her hand, and she rose to her full-height, fixing her large brown eyes on me exactly as I had feared--as if a ghost had rudely startled her from her quiet thoughts.

A little boy, about four years old, who had been playing with a Noah's ark on a piece of carpet at her feet, sprang up at the same time, seized her hand, and was now staring at me with mingled shyness and curiosity.

At first I could say nothing. I was gazing steadily at the little fair head--her child, and her very image.

She seemed to notice it, and, as if to disguise her first feeling of embarrassment, she bent over the little fellow, saying, "Go and shake hands prettily with the gentleman, Joachimchen. He is a dear uncle, and it is very kind in him to have sought out your mother again."

But the child clung timidly to her arm, and would not approach me.

"Yes, it is I, Frau Luise," I stammered at last, in some confusion. "I wanted, as my way brought me near you--. But you are looking so well, Frau Luise. How do you do? You are happy, I see--and the dear child--does Uncle Joachim know that he bears his name? He would surely be pleased."

"Won't you sit down, Herr Johannes?" she replied. "The sofa over yonder is very uncomfortable. Bring a chair, and let us sit near the window. And now tell me whence you have come and what has brought you to us."

I did as she requested, while she resumed her interrupted work and listened intently. The child had pushed his toys aside, and, when I held out my hand, shyly laid his soft little fingers in it. But I soon drew him close to my side, and, ere ten minutes had passed, he was sitting on my knee, patiently letting me stroke his hair while I described my life.

True, I dared not make even the most distant allusion, to the one thought around which everything else had turned in the course of the years, and which had now brought me here. But women are sensitive, and have the gift of reading in our eyes and catching from broken tones the very thing we are most anxious to conceal.

She, however, did not do this.

"I am heartily glad to see you again at last, dear Herr Johannes," she replied, when I had paused. "I have always valued your friendship, and was very sorry that you had perhaps formed a false opinion of me when I disappeared so suddenly. If you stay with us a few days, you will see that I could not have done otherwise. My husband, too, will be glad to make your acquaintance. I have told him about you. True, you will not be able to judge correctly of his talent as an artist. His surroundings are not worthy of him, and he can not appear in his best parts in these little towns. But you will learn to value him as a man."

I made no reply. I could not tell her that I greatly doubted the latter, and did not even desire it. My aversion to her husband was as much a part of my reverence for her as the thorn is a portion of the rose.

"Put the boy down again," she said. "You will tire the gentleman, Joachimchen."

The little fellow had begun to pull my whiskers with his slender fingers, which gave me great pleasure.

"Let him stay, Frau Luise," I said. "Shall I tell you a story, little Joachim? Or, shall we play together?"

"Play!" replied the dear child, and his earnest eyes sparkled. He slid quickly from my lap and again knelt on the carpet where the little menagerie lay, heaped in motley confusion. I sat down beside him and began to arrange the animals in pairs on the floor, asking my little playmate the name of each. He scarcely missed one.

"He is remarkably far advanced for his age," I said to his mother, who sat at her work, looking down at us with a quiet smile.

"He has associated entirely with grown persons," she replied. "I hope it will not always be so. I shall try to obtain some companions for him this winter. We shall then spend several months in

the same place."

Just at that moment the door opened and her husband entered. He paused as he saw the strange group at the window, but, when I rose, and his wife mentioned my name, came forward with outstretched hand, saying, in the beautiful baritone voice he used in personating his heroes:

"How do you do, Herr Candidate? We are old acquaintances, for you were among the spectators at my disastrous appearance at the castle. It certainly was not one of my brilliant parts, and the only hand that moved to clap, wounded me. But, for the sake of the happy afterpiece, I still remember the day with joy and gratitude. Do I not, dear wife?"

He had taken his wife's hand and raised it to his lips. I could not help owning that his chivalrous bearing suited him admirably. Though he had just passed his fortieth year, his appearance was still youthful and winning; there was not a gray hair in his locks *à la Hendricks*; the expression of the pale, finely-chiseled features was a trifle self-complacent and triumphant, but unmistakably kind. Even his conspicuous dress--a short, black-velvet coat trimmed with braid, yellow nankeen trousers, and a red-silk kerchief knotted loosely around his throat--was becoming. One thing, however, I did not like: he nodded to the child with sarcastic condescension, and, after a careless "How are you, lad?" took no further notice of him. The boy, too, quietly continued his play as if a total stranger had entered.

The great artist instantly asked me familiarly if I felt inclined to change the pulpit for the stage, since it was well known that an actor can teach a pastor. Luise had told him that I was musical; as he meant in time to add operettas to his list of attractions, he could make me a sort of conductor, unless I should prefer to fit myself to be an actor. I would find it pleasant with him; his wife could bear witness that he did not make amends for the petticoat government he was under at home by tyranny behind the scenes.

His jesting tone did not seem to be exactly agreeable to his wife. At least she did not enter into it, but gravely continued to mend the crimson robe. But he was evidently in the best possible humor. While pacing up and down the spacious room with the slow strides of a stage hero, he cast a proud, well-satisfied glance into the mirror that hung above the sofa every time he passed it, talked of the rehearsal from which he had just come, and trivial annoyances which he had smoothed according to his wishes.

"You will make the acquaintance of the members of our company immediately," he said, turning to me; "and I hope you will find them by no means the worst sort of people. We must live and let live. My wise wife, who in the shortest possible time has transformed herself into a perfect mother to the company, has made the arrangement that we are all to dine together at noon, not at the hotel where food is dear and bad, but here under her wing. At first it was inconvenient to many of them. But they soon perceived it to be an advantage in every way. They obtain for a very small sum, which is deducted from their salaries in advance, good and abundant food, support themselves honestly, and contract no debts at the hotel. Besides, we have an opportunity of discussing at table many points concerning the evening performance which did not occur to us at the rehearsal."

A square-built personage, with a white cap surrounding her flushed face, entered and announced that dinner was ready.

"Here, my honored friend, you see the artist who provides for our physical support--Fräulein Kunigunde--the mistress of the kitchen and larder, who in her leisure hours renders us priceless services as mistress of the wardrobe.--Fräulein Kunigunde, I have the honor to present to you Herr Dr. Johannes, a distant relative of my wife, who would fain convince himself whether our car of Thespis merits the renown it enjoys in all the region where Low German is spoken. I hope you have some nice dish for us."

The embarrassed creature courtesied silently and vanished, settling her cap. She evidently supposed me to be some distinguished stranger, before whom she would not willingly have appeared in her working-clothes. The artist, after a parting look in the mirror, passed his hand familiarly through my arm, saying: "You won't object to my suppressing your title of Candidate and promoting you to that of Doctor in presenting you to my colleagues. Among these frivolous folk, theology plays the part of Knecht Ruprecht,^[4] or must encounter disrespectful badinage. Your surname, too, would give cause for witticisms. So let us keep to the Christian one. Then it will be thought that you consider it a duty to your aristocratic relatives to be known on the stage only as Johannes."

I was about to protest against his taking possession of my person in this arbitrary fashion, but he had already opened the door of the adjoining room, and, as Frau Luise, who led the boy by the hand, cast a glance at me as she passed, which seemed to indicate that I need not be too rigorous, I entered without further scruple into the part thus forced upon me, and from which I fancied I could escape at any moment.

The dining-room was a long apartment with three windows. Its walls were perfectly bare, and the old white-lace curtains made them seem still more cold and unhomelike. A narrow table, whose uneven width betrayed that it had been formed of several sets of boards, occupied the

center; its cloth was not fine, but exquisitely clean. About fourteen rude wooden chairs were ranged around it, all as yet unoccupied, and the number of guests, who stood chatting together in the window-niches, seemed still incomplete.

I was presented, as an old friend of the family and embryo student of the dramatic art, first to a married couple, Herr and Frau Selmar, who eyed me in unfriendly silence. These two oldest members of the company, as I afterward learned, were in a chronic state of dissatisfaction with everything and everybody except themselves. Probably there is no class of persons among whom the type of character embodying careless, arrogant pride, may so frequently be found as amid the older dramatic artists, whose profession compels them to attach value to their personality, to long passionately for momentary triumphs, and to be on their guard against any rivalry. Herr Selmar, who took the parts of the stage fathers and blustering old men, considered himself still young enough for the lover's rôles in which the manager shone, and his faded wife, who years before had bewitched all hearts by her personal charms as much as by her acting, could not now feel satisfied to fill the characters of old women and mothers.

They had just been venting their irritation concerning some jealous grievance to each other, and I admired the good-natured cheerfulness with which the manager gradually soothed them. True, he was most ably assisted in doing so by the droll quips interposed by a tall, thin man of uncertain age, dressed in a greenish summer suit. The latter was presented to me as Herr Laban, comedian of the company, and as, spite of my uncomfortable mood, I could not help laughing heartily at his quaint jests, a sort of friendly familiarity instantly arose between us, and he took the seat next me at table.

Frau Luise sat at the head, and on a high cushion in the chair at her right was the little boy, who managed his knife and fork very prettily from his miniature throne. Her husband occupied the seat at her left, then came the Selmar couple, I sat next the child, and with tender delight rendered him all sorts of little services. A few of the lesser lights of the company joined us, and, just as the soup was served, a dilatory pair appeared, in whom I recognized the young man and his companion who had attracted my attention while sitting on the bench in front of the village tavern.

"Herr Daniel Kontzky--Fräulein Victorine."

With a silent bow to the manager's wife, they sat down opposite to me, and seemed to recognize my face. At least, they exchanged a few whispered words before beginning to eat, which they did with affected haste and indifference, entering into no conversation with any of their colleagues. They evidently desired to give the impression that they considered themselves far superior to their present associates, and had only strayed among them by chance.

While the simple but very excellent food was handed around--Fräulein Kunigunde brought in the dishes, placed them at the ends of the table, and left those who sat nearest to pass them farther--I had time enough to study the two youngest and most interesting members of the company. They had improved during the five years--at least, so far as their personal appearance was concerned. The young man, now probably about six and twenty, had a remarkably handsome face, whose swift play of expression instantly betrayed the actor. I afterward learned he was the child of a Hebrew father and a Polish mother. From the latter he inherited the passionate fire of his eyes and the feminine delicacy of his complexion, as well as his small hands and feet. He wore a light summer suit of the latest fashion, and had a ruby ring on his little finger. But, notwithstanding his soft tenor voice, his laugh was sneering and disagreeable, and I noticed with surprise that he sometimes cast a side glance at Frau Luise which expressed open dislike, while her lip curled whenever their eyes chanced to meet.

Fräulein Victorine's face puzzled me still more. It revealed a two-fold nature, at once aspiring and sordid. Nothing could be more charming than her large, mournful gray eyes, under delicate black brows, and her little nose seemed to have been stolen from some Greek statue. But the mouth belied this refinement of nature. Spite of her youth, it was flabby and prematurely withered, and, even when it remained firmly closed, one expected nothing to issue from it save commonplace and repulsive words. Her little figure was the daintiest, and at the same time the most perfectly rounded that could be imagined, and she understood how to set off its charms in the best light.

At first I was myself deluded as I watched her melting Madonna gaze wander so disconsolately over the company, and read in it a touching legend of lost youth and premature contempt for the world. But, as soon as she began to whisper with her neighbor, an expression of coldness and insolence rested on her face that was intensely repulsive to me.

I will mention here the other members of the Round Table: A graybeard of fifty, vigorous and stoutly built, in the dress of a workman, who was introduced to me as stage-manager, machinist, and Inspector Gottlieb Schönicke--a queer fellow, who told me the very next day that he was a misunderstood genius, and, if he were only allowed to play King Lear once, the world would perceive what serious injustice had been done him for years; and his neighbor, a stout, plain, middle-aged woman, who filled the office of a prompter, but was often pressed into the service as an actress to play women of the people, Hannah in "Mary Stuart," nay, if necessity required, even the mother of Emilia Galotti.

All these worthy actors and actresses behaved during the meal like mutes, and I thought I noticed that the presence of Frau Luise, whose kindness they regarded as condescension, embarrassed them. The only person whose manner displayed dignified ease was the manager himself, who did not let the conversation drop, first discussing all sorts of technical questions with the tall comedian, then turning to me and asking minute questions about the present condition of theatrical affairs in Berlin. I could not help secretly owning that he did not lack culture and sound judgment; and a certain enthusiasm for great models, whom he had studied on the stage, though it was expressed in a somewhat sentimental manner, and rather too abundantly garnished with classical quotations after the manner of actors, also did him honor. Besides, he ate very little and very gracefully, and always offered his wife the best pieces, which she declined with a blush.

Frau Luise said little, devoted herself to the child, and thanked me with a half smile for my services to him.

When the delicious plums and early pears, that formed the dessert, had been eaten, she rose from the table. A hasty "May the meal do you good!" was uttered on all sides without shaking hands, and in two minutes the whole company had dispersed. The manager, after again kissing his wife's hand, beckoned me to accompany him. "I must first of all take you into better company," he declaimed with his sonorous laugh. "I drink my coffee every day at the club-house, where all the rich dignitaries meet. You won't object to my taking your 'kinsman' away from you, Luise?"

She silently shook her head and dismissed me with an absent "Farewell."

I should have infinitely preferred to stay with her and the little boy, who had completely won my heart. But the actor had already passed his hand through my arm, and now led me out. Nothing was more painful to me than this familiar contact with a man whom I had cursed a thousand times in my heart, and who was now treating me so kindly and frankly that I could not even have stabbed him with Macbeth's imaginary dagger.

We had scarcely reached the street, when he suddenly stopped, took off his straw hat, and passed his large, well-shaped hand across his brow.

"I am extremely glad that you have come, Herr Doctor," he said in a subdued voice. "I don't grudge my wife a little agreeable refreshment, such as a visit from an old friend affords.

'She is a woman, take her all in all!
We ne'er shall look upon her like again.'

But we will not conceal it from each other, she is not exactly in her sphere among us. Her eloping with me was a piece of magnanimous folly, which she does not repent, it is true, she is too proud for that, and--" here he straightened his shoulders and replaced his hat on his flowing locks--"and too happy in her marriage with me. Nevertheless, she is an aristocrat, and the best among us have a drop of gypsy blood in our veins. If she could have resolved to act--with her appearance, her superb voice--I am sure that she would now be completely absorbed by her new profession, and it would have been a great gain to me. But nothing would induce her to do this. Now she sits alone during the many hours that I am occupied, for the boy is a little aristocrat, too, and so quiet--I would rather have had a girl, you know. Girls can be used in the business much younger, and there is no such need of educating them. Well, as I said, it is only for her sake--she is really a pearl of her sex, and never complains. But I should like to see her shining in a suitable setting. Posterity weaves no garlands for the actor, and his contemporaries only too often twine for him a crown of thorns. That they wound her forehead, too, is painful to me. I am really a kind-hearted fellow. It is not true that genius makes people wicked and selfish. You will yet be convinced of it."

I replied that I should not have much time to become acquainted with all his good qualities, as I intended to continue my journey the following day.

In fact, all these disclosures made my heart so sore that I wished myself a hundred miles away.

He instantly took my arm again and led me on. "We will discuss that subject further. I will not impose any restraint upon you, but, you know, temptation is really violence, and I think you will be able to endure our society for a few weeks at least. Come to the theatre tonight. It is not our worst performance. True, when I think of the difficulties with which a traveling company must contend, and how differently I might fill the office of a priest of art, had not envy and intrigues forced me away from the great theatres--"

Here he launched forth into descriptions of his former triumphs, to which I listened with only half an ear.

I remained only half an hour in the club-room, to which he conducted me mainly to show the distinction he enjoyed among these worthy citizens. His game of dominoes, at which I was merely a spectator, wearied me, and his drinking three small glasses of rum to one cup of coffee completely destroyed my dawning good opinion of him. I pleaded a headache, which would not

allow me to endure the smoke-laden atmosphere of the room, and, as he was entirely absorbed in a conversation with several enthusiastic admirers, he dismissed me without opposition by one of his royal gestures of the hand.

I sauntered in a very miserable mood through the little city and out of the gate.

The day was beautiful, the air had been cooled by a light shower while we were drinking our coffee, and the neighborhood of the little town, with its fields and meadows dotted with fruit-trees, was well worth seeing. But my mind was closed against the perception of anything pleasant.

I could not help constantly saying to myself: "So she lives here, with this man, among these people! And she has before her a long life, which can never again tend upward to the heights, but always downward, slowly paralyzing the mind and soul."

For the unruffled cheerfulness of her manner at the table had not deceived me an instant. True, the life she had led in her uncle's house was by no means what she deserved. Yet, in those days, amid all the oppression, all the repugnance to so much that was base, her eyes had sparkled with joyous pride, and her head was held proudly erect on her strong shoulders. Now it drooped slightly as though under an unseen burden, and her large eyes often wandered to the floor as though seeking something that was lost.

My grief for her was so intense that it even crowded the old passionate love into a corner of my heart, especially as I had taken a solemn vow to see in her only the wife of another. Nay, I believe, if I had found her perfectly happy, with head erect and laughing eyes, I would have uprooted the weeds of envy and jealousy from my poor soul forever.

True, Uncle Joachim had said: "Whatever folly a woman like her may commit, she will not allow herself to succumb to it." He knew her well. But how much secret misery a human being may have to endure, even though he or she "bears the inevitable with dignity."

Absorbed in these thoughts, I had walked a long distance, and was already considering whether I should not let the "Ancestress" go, and find some pretext for taking my departure that very evening, when I saw Frau Luise herself, with her little boy, approaching me by the shady path that led through a wood. The child was frisking merrily around his mother, but she walked slowly with bowed head, and seemed to answer his questions very absently. She had put on a small hat that had slipped back from her head, and a blue sunshade rested carelessly on her left shoulder. She came slowly forward without looking up, until the child noticed me, and with a sudden exclamation ran to her and seized her hand; then, with a friendly nod, she paused.

At first we talked of indifferent matters, the weather, the pretty location of the city, and the superior fertility of the soil to that of her native region. This brought us to the persons we had both known there, and about whom she had been kept informed by Uncle Joachim. I learned that my former pupil had been placed in the cadet barracks, and that his sister was betrothed to Cousin Kasimir. Mademoiselle Suzon had quitted the castle a few weeks after my departure, to return no more. She passed quickly over this point, but a contemptuous curl of her lower lip betrayed that she had been informed of the whole affair. A young English lady had now taken the Frenchwoman's place; she did not know whether she could play chess, but she seemed to fill her predecessor's position satisfactorily in every other respect. Sometimes the new pastor--the old one had gently fallen asleep in death--came to the castle in the evening and held devotional exercises for an hour. Everything else remained unchanged. The veteran peacock had spread his tail for the last time the previous winter, and she was keeping some of his feathers as a relic.

Then for a time we relapsed into silence. The dear child walked gravely along between us, holding a hand of each. When we came out of the wood, we saw a meadow thickly besprinkled with autumn flowers. "Run, Joachimchen, and pick a beautiful bouquet for Uncle Johannes," said the mother.

The child obeyed, climbing merrily over the little slope by the road.

"He is so bright," said Frau Luise, "he hears everything, and already understands more than is well, or at least has his little confused thoughts about all sorts of subjects. And I must tell you something that is to remain a secret between ourselves. I have never so thoroughly despised any one from the depths of my heart as Uncle Achatz, and it was a punishment to me even to breathe the same air. When I came to his house--only a few months after my mother's death--he had the effrontery to persecute me with offers of love. He wished to get a divorce and marry me. You can imagine that I longed to go out into the wide world then; but pity for my aunt, who is a saint-like sufferer, withheld me. During those sorrowful years I learned that man has no other source of strength and peace than his conscience, his love of truth, and the quiet communion with his God, who, it is true, answers us not when we chatter to him overmuch, but when we listen in the deepest silence. He commanded me to interfere when a good and innocent person was shamefully insulted in my presence. 'The measure is full!' cried a voice in my heart. 'You must no longer breathe the air of this house, where all human dignity is trampled under foot.' So I did what I could not help doing. I knew I was undertaking no easy task, and those who charged me with frivolity never knew me. Now, with God's assistance, I will perform it. And he has given me

something that has helped me through many a trying hour and will aid me year after year."

Her eyes wandered to the child, who had already gathered a handful of flowers, and with sparkling eyes was holding them up to show them to his mother.

"The dear little fellow!" I said.

"Yes, if I did not have him! He has never caused me a single sorrow. He constitutes my entire happiness."

"Your *entire* happiness, Frau Luise?"

The question had scarcely escaped my lips ere I regretted it. What right had I to tear the veil she had drawn over her fate?

But she raised it herself.

"No," she said, "you must not misunderstand me. The child is not the sole blessing I possess, but he is really my only *entire* happiness. You do not yet know my husband thoroughly. He is a noble-hearted man, and would do anything for my sake, so far as he could anticipate my wishes. But his profession makes him see the world in a different light, and think other objects desirable. That is usually the case between married people, and must be accepted. Have you ever or anywhere found entire happiness? We must strive to receive the patchwork with our whole souls, then the gaps will be filled, and, as the words run in Faust, 'the insufficient becomes an event.' Stay with us a few days. You will then judge many things differently."

I did not know what to answer, but a cry of terror from the boy relieved me from my dilemma. We saw him suddenly spring aside, stumble over a clod of earth, and fall, still holding the flowers tightly in his little hand. I was at his side in an instant, lifted him, and saw that an ugly fat toad, which had jumped clumsily into the ditch, had frightened him. He was still trembling in every limb, but already smiled again and held out the bouquet to me.

"His nerves are so sensitive," said his mother, as she smoothed the little bare head. "If he could only be more in the open air. But all my time is so occupied that I can scarcely manage to spend an hour out of doors with him every afternoon. And his father lives so entirely in his art that he does not see it."

She became absorbed in her thoughts, while I walked by her side, carrying the boy in my arms. He soon climbed on my shoulders and pretended I was his horse, till his shouts and laughter even called a smile to his mother's grave face.

Just before reaching the city, we again walked decorously side by side. I took my leave outside the house. Should I see her at the theatre? No, she always remained at home and her husband went with his colleagues to the club-room, so she could not receive me, but hoped to see me early in the morning, or at any rate at dinner.

I dared not at once bid her farewell forever; nay, I no longer believed I should have the courage to set out on my return the next morning. The child had won my heart.

Of course I spent the evening at the theatre. The hall of the Schützenhaus had been hastily fitted up, and for the first time I admired Gottlieb Schönicke's skill in placing shabby and faded scenery and properties in the best light. My free ticket admitted me to the most desirable place, which consisted of three rows of rush-bottomed chairs, but I purposely took my seat on one of the back benches where the humbler folk, the tradesmen, and resident farmers of the little town, gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the play. The house was packed; the large receipts would have warranted a better illumination. But it was the rule not to light more than eight lamps in the proscenium and one on every other pilaster, and I must confess that the illusion was more perfect than in the broad glare of the gas in the theatres of the capital.

I do not intend to deliver a discourse on the drama, and shall avoid adopting the style of the countless romances of theatrical life, especially as--apart from the external differences caused by the changed methods of travel--the lives of these strolling players have remained essentially the same since the days of Wilhelm Meister. Besides, they are perfectly familiar to the world in general and possess little interest. Only, for truth's sake, I must observe that the "renowned" Spielberg company did honor to their name. Spite of inadequate accessories and acting, the wonderful drama created by a classically poetic imagination, still under the influence of romance, exerted a fascination which even the lachrymose specter of Madame Selmar, and the hypochondriacal, sepulchral tones of her husband, who played Count Idenko von Borotin, could not destroy. Spielberg was a superb Jaromir, and I now understood that his fervent chest-voice might irresistibly charm the heart of a girl of twenty. In the scenes with Bertha particularly--whose character, as personated by Fräulein Victorine, had a touch of witchery--his tones possessed a pathos that brought storms of applause from the audience which, however, on appearing before the foot-lights, he acknowledged--as became so great an artist--with merely a quiet bend of the head.

During the performance his eye had discovered me in my dark corner, and ere he left the

stage he made a significant gesture as if to say, "I expect to meet you again." But this was by no means agreeable to me. I only hated him the more because he had extorted from me some degree of admiration; besides, I longed to be alone in order to determine whether to go or stay.

So I let the audience quit the hall, that I might not be accosted, with provincial courtesy, by any of the inhabitants who chanced to notice that I was a stranger, and was the last of all to emerge into the open air.

It was a beautiful star-lit summer night, warm and still; the only sound was the patter of the heavy dew trickling from the branches of the trees in the Schützen Park. I paused outside, enjoying the same sense of comfort we have while awake in bed between two dreams, in the consciousness that we are still enjoying our bodily existence. Only the day before yesterday I had been sitting on the bench in the parsonage garden, beside the dear sensitive girl from whom the sudden outburst of the flame of a hapless attachment had driven me, and to-day I was here amid these totally unfamiliar surroundings, with the old fire once more burning beneath the ashes, and must again save myself by flight if I were not to perish utterly.

I saw the actors, who meantime had changed their clothes and washed off their rouge, emerging from a little back door, heard their loud conversation, and once even the call for "Doctor Johannes." Then the little group dispersed under the trees toward the city, and, after a sufficiently long interval separated us, I too set out on my way home.

Suddenly I heard a light footstep behind me, and a low, musical voice said: "Are you in such a hurry, Herr Doctor, that you can't even look round at a defenseless lady, far less offer her your arm and your company?"

At the same moment a hand was slipped through my arm, and by the uncertain starlight I looked into Victorine's big, mournful eyes.

"I was belated," she said, "and now I am glad to still find a companion. Besides, I should like to become a little better acquainted with you, for at dinner, when the manager's wife is present, my mouth feels as though it were sewed up. Come, you needn't be afraid that anything will be thought of it, if we are seen taking this nocturnal promenade. We sha'n't meet even a cat, and you probably care no more what Mrs. Grundy thinks of you than I do."

Her light tone, so strangely belied by her melancholy eyes, was extremely repulsive to me: So I answered very coldly and a trifle maliciously:

"I only wonder that Herr Daniel leaves the knightly service to another."

"He!" she replied, with a short laugh, which, spite of her beautiful voice, sounded very unmusical. "In the first place, he did not play to-night, and was not even at the hall. And then, though he usually pays me some little attention, we have had a quarrel to-day. You are mistaken if you fancy he is in love with me. It's only old custom that makes us keep together. His heart, such as it is, belongs to a very different person."

"May I ask--?"

"Why not? It is an open secret. He's infatuated with Frau Spielberg, though she's such a cold fish that it always makes me shiver merely to look at her. She behaves, too, as if he were not in existence, and when he gets into a rage about it he pours out his whole heart to me, and it does him good to have me laugh at him. That is our whole relation. Perhaps I ought not to speak to you so frankly about it. You are her relative, and of course revere her as though she were a saint. But I can't help it; she is insufferable to me, with her Canoness airs and woful face the instant the company begins to be a little merry, and one or another goes a shade too far. She ought to have kept away from the stage. But she felt her human nature once when she threw herself into Spielberg's arms. Why does she put on her governess manner now?"

As I made no reply--feeling disgusted by these blasphemies--she chattered on, clinging still more closely to my arm.

"You see, even you yourself can not defend her. She is a positive injury to the manager. He used to be such a pleasant, courteous man, a genuine artist. Now he, too, poses as a Philistine and tutor, all by the orders of his aristocratic wife. She would prefer to have the whole company live in the same house, like a great cloister, to be able to continually watch over them. And most of them are cowardly or obliging enough to submit to it. But Herr Daniel, Herr Laban, and my insignificant self don't care for such an institution for small children. We always lodge at the hotel, and so you have the honor of being only three doors away from me; your room is No. 6, mine No. 2. I hope we shall be good neighbors."

I could not command my feelings sufficiently to enter into this light tone, so I began to speak of something entirely different, and praised--which I could do with a clear conscience--her acting that evening.

"Nonsense!" she interrupted, "you can't be in earnest; for, between ourselves, I played abominably to-night, I was so vexed by the scene with Daniel, whom I had been lecturing because he confessed his jealousy of you. Besides, I hate such sentimental parts, which unfortunately I

have to play most frequently. Before I joined Spielberg's company--I was still very young--I was very fond of acting the merry little coquettes, the gayer they were the better, and best of all were parts like those of Parisian grisettes. But the manager thought my face exactly suited the heroines of tragedy, so now I am continually obliged to moan and roll my beautiful eyes toward heaven, as, for instance, to-morrow in 'Cabal and Love.' I have finally become indifferent to it, and, after all, we learn to act best the characters most unlike our own."

I did not feel at all tempted to enter into a conversation upon the art of acting and its higher demands with this girl. Meantime we had reached our hotel, at whose open door the waiter received us with a meaning face. I had evidently risen in his esteem, since I had the honor of escorting the youthful leading lady home the very first evening.

On our way up-stairs she said: "I don't know whether I can venture to invite you to drink a cup of tea with me. I should be obliged to send you away in half an hour at any rate, for I must read over my part of Luise Miller once more before I sleep."

I excused myself, on the plea that I had a letter to write. She quietly shrugged her shoulders.

"As you please, Herr Doctor, or rather, as you must. I forgot that you are a kinsman of Frau Spielberg. So good-night, and no offense!

'Thou'rt ill, ah, return,
Return to thy room!'"

she declaimed from the rôle of Bertha, then dropped me a mocking courtesy and glided into the door of No. 2.

I ordered supper to be brought to No. 6, not because I was hungry, but to show the waiter that I had not availed myself of the favor of this envied neighbor. Then I stood a long while at the open window, gazing out into the narrow street and at the opposite houses, the homes of the worthy citizens who led their quiet lives so contentedly, without dreaming of tempests like those that raged in my heart and brain.

One light after another disappeared, the footsteps of some belated pedestrian echoed less and less frequently from the pavement below; at last no sound arose save the hoarse voice of the night-watchman calling the tenth hour. The house, too, which was so slightly built that its walls told every secret, had become perfectly still. I was just unpacking my knapsack to make my toilet for the night, when I heard in the corridor a stealthy step which stopped a few doors away from mine, then a low knock, and after a short time a suppressed voice said, "Victorine. Open the door! I have something to tell you!"

Of course, I could not hear the answer. The colloquy lasted some time, the request for admittance being several times repeated, sometimes in urgent, sometimes in coaxing tones, ere the closed door opened and was noiselessly shut again.

The study of the rôle of Luise Miller would scarcely be pursued in company.

This incident had the effect of sending me to bed, firmly determined to turn my back as speedily as possible upon a world to which I did not belong. I woke in the morning with the same resolution, and only hesitated whether I should be expected to take a verbal farewell or might depart with merely a written one.

But, while I was sitting at breakfast pondering over this weighty question, some one knocked at my door, and a personage of no less importance than Konstantin Spielberg himself entered.

Though he had sat up till late in the night with several of the town dignitaries and some of his colleagues, and had drunk a great deal of liquor, he looked so fresh, so full of strength and cheerfulness, that again I could not help admiring him. He first kindly reproached me for having so slyly deserted him the evening before. It had been my own loss; he would have made me acquainted with some very intelligent people; and his colleague Laban's witticisms had been like a perfect shower of fireworks. But I should be forgiven if I would do him a great favor.

"A favor?" I asked. "If only I have time to grant it. I shall leave in half an hour."

That would be impossible in any case, he answered, arranging his locks before the mirror. I must see him that night as the President; it was one of his best parts, though he had resigned Ferdinand to Herr Daniel. But, if I really had any friendly feeling for him, I must help him out of a great difficulty. The prompter was to play Luise Miller's mother. Gottlieb Schönicke usually filled her place on such occasions, but owing to his carouse the night before he had become so hoarse that he could scarcely utter an audible word. So, if the performance was to take place, I must consent to fill this part and accompany him to the rehearsal at once.

All reluctance and pleas of my unfitness for this responsible post were futile. And as, in the depths of my heart, I had sought some pretext for being *compelled* to stay, at least for one more

day--ere I took my leave, never to return--I finally allowed myself to be dragged away, and half an hour later was standing behind the scenes with the prompter's book in my hand.

Tall Herr Laban greeted me very cordially, and told me he yet hoped to see me appear in different parts. It was a pity to waste my gifts: figure, play of expression, voice, and taste for acting, all urged me toward the stage, and the company was in great need of new talent for the characters which he himself, now *invita Minerva*--he pronounced the words with a faultless accent--was compelled to fill, though Nature had originally intended him for a comedian.

Victorine gave me a careless nod, and studiously held aloof. Her friend treated me with marked hostility, and was the only person who constantly found fault with my prompting, for which the manager quietly reproved him. Most of the members of the company performed their parts at the rehearsal indifferently enough. Frau Selmar, however, personated her Milford with a clear voice and through every shade of meaning, and Laban gave an extremely clever performance of his Hofmarschall Kalb.

Gottlieb Schönicke remained invisible. Whether he was sleeping off his intoxication, or the story of his condition was merely a fiction to induce me to act with them, I have never been able to determine.

After the rehearsal the actors unceremoniously dispersed; the manager had some arrangements to make in the dressing-room, and I was no little surprised when allowed a glimpse of this holy of holies to find only a single, tolerably large room, divided by a few screens and a sheet hung over a rope, into two dressing-rooms, one for the men, the other for the women. In the broad light of day all this disorderly collection of mirrors, rouge-pots, and clothes-presses looked uncanny enough, and I hastily beat a retreat. But, as I was passing through the empty auditorium of the theatre, I saw with astonishment Frau Luise sitting on one of the rear benches.

"You here?" I exclaimed. "And absent yesterday evening? Do you attend such unattractive rehearsals?"

"I never go to the theatre during the evening performances," she answered, rising. "I will not allow the suspicion that I do not consider the acting of the company worth looking at, so I sometimes come to the rehearsals, which also serves the purpose of enabling me to call my husband's attention to many points when we are alone. True, it is of little use," she added, with a resigned smile; "these second-rate people, among whom we are placed, are the very ones that have an exalted opinion of their own talent and knowledge of art. But I feel in a certain sense responsible for the acting of my husband, who is a genuine artist, and I know that my opinion is not a matter of indifference to him.

"Besides, dear friend," she added, after a pause, "you can not imagine how lonely I am. So completely without society, except the company at the dinner-table, I sometimes feel the necessity of sharing some sphere of life, even though I might desire it to be a different one."

Then she thanked me for having granted her husband's request, and we left the theatre together. On our way, while she frequently glanced back to see if her husband were not at last following us, I told her that I had determined to continue my journey to-day, and now positively intended to take my departure on the morrow.

"You are right," she answered. "What should detain you here? You are not fitted for these surroundings."

Then, after a pause, she added: "Write to me if you change your residence. I should always like to know where you are to be found, for I have one earnest desire, which I have long secretly counted on you to fulfill. When you have a parish, or a good wife, such as I desire for you, I should be glad to put my son in your charge."

"Do you intend to part with the child?"

"Yes, dear friend," she replied, her brows contracting with an expression of pain. "How I am to bear it I do not know. But my resolution is fixed. He must grow up in a perfectly pure atmosphere. While he is a child, I guard him myself. But how long will that be? Even now it is almost impossible for me to reconcile all my duties. When I go to the rehearsals I am compelled to trust him to Kunigunde, who is an excellent person, but does not always take the right course with him, and he shall not accompany me to the theatre. It would be worse than if I were to give him brandy to drink, instead of milk."

Then we grew silent. "Poor woman!" a voice in my heart continually repeated; "you are indeed lonely."

Meantime we had returned to the town, and then something happened, whose memory even now makes my heart throb faster.

When we entered the courtyard of the commandant's residence, my companion's first glance sought the windows of her room. She suddenly grasped my arm as if to save herself from falling, and I asked in alarm if she were ill. But, as I looked up, a thrill of horror ran through my frame also. For at the open window I saw the child, who had climbed out on the sill, clinging with one

little arm to the sash and stretching out the other toward a drooping chestnut bough, whose ripening nuts had probably roused his longing. As in his eagerness he held one little foot suspended in the air, he seemed fairly hovering aloft with but the feeblest support, and an icy chill crept down my back.

Suddenly I heard the mother say in her gentlest voice: "Wouldn't it be better for me to get you the beautiful chestnuts, Joachimchen? You shall have a whole handful, if you are a good boy and climb down again at once. Do what your mother tells you, my darling. I am coming up directly. Then you shall show Uncle Johannes how to make a chain of chestnuts."

The smiling boy looked down at us, nodded to his mother, cautiously drew first his foot and then his arm back from the giddy height, and quickly disappeared inside the dark frame of the window.

My own heart had fairly stopped beating. When I could breathe again, I wanted to tell my companion how much I admired her for having had courage to repress any cry of terror that might have startled the little one and perhaps hurled him to destruction. But the words died on my lips, for the next instant she had thrown her arms around my neck, and, with her face hidden on my breast, burst into such convulsive sobs that I was forced to exert all my strength, to support the tall, noble figure in its helpless emotion.

She did not regain her self-control until we heard steps in the gateway, then, still clinging to my arm, she hurried into the rear building and up the stairs. "Not a word about it to anybody!" she whispered. At the top she stood still, panting for breath, and passed her hand over her eyes. At last she rushed to her room, on whose threshold the child met her, and clasped her sole happiness in her arms with a cry of rapture in which all the pent-up excitement of the mother's heart found utterance.

When, soon after, her husband entered, nothing but her unwonted pallor and a tremor, which still ever and anon ran through her limbs, could have betrayed to him that anything unusual had occurred. He, however, in his jovial self-satisfaction, was so exclusively absorbed in himself--having just purchased a new neck-tie which he meant to wear at dinner--that he noticed no change in her. And there was no one else at the table who took any special heed of her, except a young girl of fourteen--the daughter of the Selmar couple--who had been too ill to appear at dinner the day before. She went to Frau Luise, pressed her hand affectionately, and anxiously asked if she were well. "Oh! perfectly well," replied the happy mother, smiling, as she kissed the girl's cheek and inquired about her own doings. The dinner passed off very much like the one of the previous day, except that the manager regretted he could not drink my health in a glass of wine as a token of gratitude for my admirable prompting. But the rigid law of the household prohibited all spirituous drinks until the evening--and he cast a glance of comic terror at his wife.

I saw that she found it difficult to maintain her assumed cheerfulness, and when we rose her knees trembled. So I suggested in a low tone that she should lie down for a time and trust the boy to me for the afternoon. She assented with a grateful glance and pressure of the hand.

When, at the end of a few hours, I brought the child--with whom I had formed the closest friendship--back to his mother, I found her sitting by the very window at which she had gazed with so much horror. She was still quiet and pale, like a person just recovering from a dangerous illness, but I had never seen her look more beautiful and charming, and felt that the duty of self-defense required me to take leave of her now. I could not come to her room after the play, so we shook hands without uttering what was oppressing each heart; I kissed the child, for the last time as I supposed, and, in a mood well worthy of compassion, left these two beloved beings expecting never to see them again.

When the evening performances ended, amid great applause--which most of the company had honestly deserved, even Victorine, whose Madonna eyes were obliged to make up for the deficiencies in her soul, while Daniel's acting, in its fervent sensual vehemence, if it did not depict the "German stripling," presented a very attractive young hothead--I attempted to again slip out unnoticed, but was detected by the manager's watchful eye, and, as tall Laban joined him, was helplessly carried off between them and dragged to the club-room. Protest as I might, Spielberg insisted upon treating me, and while doing so presented me to his acquaintances in the little town with great ceremony as a young dramatic student, whom he hoped to secure for his own stage. Meantime, one bottle of doubtful red wine followed another, and while I took a very moderate share I marveled at the celerity with which the great actor emptied one glass after another at a single draught, without the slightest flush appearing on his face. During all this time his stories of various events in his theatrical career seemed inexhaustible, and his frank delight in his own genius sparkled so innocently in his eyes, that it was impossible to feel vexed with him or avoid listening with a certain interest to his marvelous anecdotes, as one would to the tales of the "Arabian Nights."

At last the regular guests had all dispersed, even Laban had departed, but the great actor still detained me and made a sign to the sleepy waiter, upon which he instantly set a bottle of champagne upon the table. "It's no-use, cousin," he said, in a sonorous bass voice, which, it is true, now sounded a little husky; "we have a solemn act to perform. I have vowed not to go to bed until I have drunk to a pledge of fraternity with you in foaming sack. Come and pledge me! You

are a fine fellow, only you haven't yet found it out yourself. When you have been in my company a few weeks, you will strip off the chrysalis and wonder at yourself as your wings bear you from flower to flower. Even if you often fly too near a light and scorch yourself a little, that is better than your pastoral tepidity. Your health, my heart's brother! Let us drink eternal friendship!"

Spite of my intense reluctance, I could not avoid his cordial embrace. Then he grew quieter, and, with apparent business-like gravity, began to discuss the capacity in which I was to enter his company. He spoke of new pieces its members were to study, the revision of older ones, for which he himself lacked time, and finally of his plan for including light operas in his repertory, for which he could not dispense with a conductor.

I listened without protesting, save by interjections and shrugs of the shoulders. Meantime, he emptied the bottle almost alone and called for a second, but I rose and resolutely declared I was going home.

"A plague on all cowardly poltroons!" he cried, staggering to his feet. "Virtue exists no more!" Then followed a torrent of classical quotations in a voice that made the windows rattle. Yet his gait was so unsteady that I hastily sprang forward to support him. When we were in the dark street, he passed his arm around my shoulders and tottered along the road like a blind man. "Say nothing to her about it, brother," he stammered, "nothing about the champagne. She hates champagne, though in other respects she's a good wife; it's pure jealousy, ha! ha! She thinks my heart belongs to the Widow Clicquot--a worthy dame, in truth, who never reads me a curtain-lecture, but her purse must be filled with gold if we want to win her favor, ha! ha!--and the father of a family, you know. Never get married, brother! 'Long hair, short wits,'" and he began to sing the champagne aria in the midst of the death-like silence of the Goose-Market.

When, with some difficulty, I at last succeeded in getting him up the stairs to his lodgings, he became as still as a mouse, and trembled from head to foot. "Don't tell her!" were the last words he whispered. Then, forcing himself to stand erect, he gently opened the door.

"Good-evening, my angel," he stammered, and was going up to her to embrace her. She silently rose and looked at him with a sorrowful gaze, which suddenly seemed to sober him. "Well, well," he said, "it's hardly one o'clock--we don't act to-morrow--I've done a good business, too, haven't I, cousin? He'll stay with us, sweetheart; I've engaged him as dramatist and conductor, at a monthly salary of twelve thalers for the present--that will please you, I think. But now good-night, cousin! I'm perfectly sober, only I couldn't tell the town how one becomes President. So I'm going to take a long sleep, for the torture of the day was great."

Amid all the confusion of his brain, he still retained sufficient chivalrous courtesy to take his wife's hand and kiss it. Then he staggered through the side door into the sleeping-room, and we could hear him fall on the bed without undressing.

I cast a hasty glance at his wife, who stood gazing into vacancy.

"Good-night, Frau Luise," I said. "You will see me again to-morrow."

"To-morrow?"

"Certainly. To-morrow, and every day until you yourself send me away. Perhaps I may yet make myself useful here--though not as conductor."

After that night I no longer led my own life.

My existence seemed only valuable when I made myself a slave, soul and body, in Frau Luise's service, coming to her aid wherever her own grand and lofty strength failed.

In reality I was making no sacrifice by this self-abnegation. For, as I have already confessed, my own aims and purposes had vanished, as a light on which a nocturnal traveler depends suddenly proves a will-o'-the-wisp, and flickers into a marsh mist. I felt averse rather than inclined to enter a pulpit, and I had not sufficient love or talent for any art or science to induce me to devote my life to it. Clearly, as though written on the wall by some spectral hand, the sentence stood before me: "You are a mediocre man from whom the world has nothing to hope in the way of happiness or enlightenment. Rejoice if some good human being can warm his hands by your little flame."

I also perceived the correctness of my opinion by the fact that this discovery, instead of wounding me, created a sense of peace I had hitherto lacked. Rarely have I awaked in a mood so joyous, feeling as it were new-born, as on the morning after I had placed myself at the service of this noble woman. And the difficulties in regard to my former occupation which still embarrassed me were to be dispelled in the simplest way.

With my breakfast a letter was brought in, which had been forwarded from the estate I had left, as I had said I should remain in this place for several days. A former fellow-student, a very admirable and intelligent man, wrote that some weakness of the throat compelled him to give up his profession as a preacher. Until he could determine how to shape his future life, he desired to seek a position as tutor in a family, and begged me to aid him as far as possible. I instantly wrote

to my employer, informing him that I could not return to his house for reasons which at present I could disclose to no one, but which he would certainly approve if I could ever confide the whole truth to him. At the same time I proposed in my place the college friend, for whose character and education I could amply vouch.

I took leave of him and his whole family, who had become so dear to me, and requested him to send my property to me except the books, which I would leave for the present in my successor's care. Then I wrote a few cordial lines to my friend the pastor. As I added the farewell message to his dear daughters, the sorrowful face of the eldest again appeared before me in the most vivid hues, and her earnest eyes seemed to say: "You do not know what happiness you are losing."

But I was proof against any temptation to return.

Early that very morning I hurried to Herr Spielberg's rooms. He received me in a Turkish dressing-gown, with his brightest face, and, when I inquired how he had slept, answered, laughing: "You probably expected to find me a quiet fellow, cousin. But you must know that champagne and I are on the best of terms. When we do fall out, however, champagne always gets the worst of it; or to quote Julius Cæsar:

'We were two lions litter'd in one day,
And I the elder and more terrible.'

"But, good-morning. I hope you haven't slept off overnight what we arranged yesterday. How much salary did I promise you? I don't remember. But I won't play the rogue to you at any rate."

I told him that I would remain only on two conditions: first, that I should have entire liberty to do nothing except what I felt competent to accomplish; and secondly, that there should never be any question of wages. I had saved enough, during my three years as a tutor, to live without earning anything for a time.

He made no reply, only shook his ambrosial locks thoughtfully and struck my shoulder with his hand, like a prince accepting the homage and service of a vassal. Then he called his wife, who was in the adjoining room, dressing the boy.

She entered with her usual calm expression and, avoiding my eyes, held out her hand. The boy ran to me and threw his arms around my neck. "What do you say, dear," cried the artist, "he has really determined to stay. Of course, it is solely on your account, for he would not throw up his profession for my sake. Well, I hope you will treat him kindly.

'This lad--no angel is from sin more free,
Craving thy favor, I commend to thee.'

With these words he rose, smiling, leaving me to decide whether the quotation referred to my character of Fridolin, or to Joachimchen, who expressed great delight on hearing that Uncle Johannes would take him to walk immediately.

After her husband had left the room, Luise came to me and said in a low tone: "I can not approve your decision, Johannes. But I am so weary that I have not the strength to combat it."

I shall avoid giving a minute description of the time that now followed. No one can feel disposed to pursue the destinies of such a strolling company, the alternations of good and evil fortune, or the coming and going of its members, in greater detail--nay, even for theatrical history the list of its plays would have no value, as it was not at all regulated by the spirit of the time, nor even by the fashion, but patched together from new stock and shabby rubbish, as chance and the difficulties of stage-setting permitted.

During the first few months the enterprise remained in about the same stage of prosperity as I had found it. Then, by the withdrawal of the Selmars and their charming daughter, it fell several degrees, soon rose again by advantageous engagements, and then declined in consequence of our worthy stage-manager's being made helpless for months by a fall from a high scaffold. These fluctuations corresponded with the ebb and flow in the cash-box, and, but for the wise economy of the manager's wife, there would often have been a failure in the payment of salaries. But the name of Spielberg always possessed sufficient attraction to fill the house tolerably well, and make amends for the recreant members. The most faithful were those from whom I should have least expected loyalty--Laban, who, with all his apparent frivolity and jesting, felt a sincere and warm reverence for Frau Luise, and the young couple, whose stay, it is true, was due to less honorable traits of character.

How they were to regard me, and in what manner my position as dramatic "maid of all-work" was to be interpreted, at first caused them much perplexity. They soon learned that I was not working for money. My sole pecuniary profit consisted in my paying no board, as Frau Luise would not permit any other arrangement, and occasionally, when lodgings for all could be hired, I

was not allowed to pay for my sleeping-room. In return, I made myself as useful as I could, coached green beginners in their parts, sometimes stood at the side-scenes or crouched in a subterranean box with the prompter's book in my hand, copied parts, arranged plays so that ten characters could be compressed into six, and only drew the line of my services at the one point of obstinately refusing to undertake to act any part, no matter how trivial.

At first they attributed this to arrogance, of which, spite of his unassuming helpfulness, they credited the "doctor" with a large share. But, after I had once told them that I cherished too lofty an idea of art to sin against it by bungling work, I rose no little in their esteem, and even Spielberg, who never ceased saying that I was a genius in disguise, let me alone.

The suspicion that I was following the company as a secretly favored admirer of the manager's unpopular wife had of course at first suggested itself, even to the better natures among them. But the calm irony with which the great artist crushed all allusions to such a relation did not fail to produce its effect, as well as the perfectly unembarrassed demeanor of the suspected woman herself, and my own Fridolin countenance, which expressed anything rather than the secret triumph of a favored lover.

And, indeed, I was not on a bed of roses.

Not to mention that I was forced to purchase the happiness of being daily in her society, and making myself indispensable to her by a hundred little services, at the cost of witnessing her suffering, which, it is true, she bore like a heroine, but which nevertheless constantly consumed her strength and youth--it was a most painful thing to be compelled to witness her husband's steady progress toward the ruin to which the unfortunate man opposed less and less resistance. At first I had endeavored not to lose sight of him after the play was over, striving--in the outset with mild, afterwards with the most earnest remonstrances--to recall him from his fatal passion. As he had a gentle, yielding nature, I succeeded several times in doing so. But Daniel, who with fiendish cold-bloodedness played the part of his evil genius, soon made him disloyal to his best resolves and vows, so, at the end of a few weeks, I was forced to let the evil pursue its course.

For a time the leonine constitution of which he boasted resisted the effects of his nocturnal debauches, at least so far that no traces of them were visible the following morning. Then, in the consciousness that he stood in need of forgiveness, he was courteous and affectionate throughout the day, like a little boy who fears punishment, and paid his wife all sorts of charming little attentions.

But as his weakness gained more and more control, and his nervous strength began to fail, he no longer took any trouble to deceive us about his condition, and instead of showing repentance and embarrassment, after spending half the day in bed suffering from the effects of his intoxication, he tried to conceal his evil conscience under an air of boastful defiance, and bluntly declared that genius required great stimulants, and need not be restrained by Philistine rules.

Of course, with such irregularities, which soon became the rule, no firm, careful management of the company was possible. By degrees all business cares and responsibilities were shifted to my insignificant self. It was enough if the sick lion crawled out of his den an hour before the performance, rolled his bloodshot eyes in front of the mirror, and then made his somewhat husky but all the more tragic voice resound through the theater till the puzzled spectators left the house with the acknowledgment that he had "roared well" again, and no one could easily outdo him in shaking his mane.

Nevertheless, in this disorder, the company lost its power of attraction more and more, and were obliged to change from place to place more frequently, and these numerous journeys increased the expenses and demoralized the members. I did what I could to stay the ruin, and, besides a silent clasp of the hand from the woman I loved, I was rewarded by the confidence and devotion of most of my colleagues. Only two, who watched the mischief with quiet malice, showed me their aversion more openly, the more honestly I tried to save the tottering car of Thespis from breaking down.

These two, of course, were Daniel and Victorine.

For a long time the cause of their evident dislike was a mystery to me. For the insolent young fiend could not long suppose that he had been supplanted in the favor of the object of his secret worship by the faithful squire, and his publicly-acknowledged sweetheart, disagreeable as she was to me, I treated with the utmost courtesy. The real purpose of both, and the reason I stood in their way, did not dawn on me until afterward.

Daniel's passion for the pure and proud woman was of the nature of those feelings with which fallen angels survey their former heavenly companions. He could not forgive her being so unapproachably far above him. To drag her down, gloat over her humiliation, take vengeance for the coldness with which she passed his hellish ardor by--this was the diabolical idea that haunted him day and night. He well knew it was madness to hope for its attainment so long as our wandering life pursued its usual course. But, if everything were thrown into confusion, the husband utterly ruined, the wife overwhelmed by poverty and despair, he relied on conquering the helpless woman, and, with Satanic energy, grasping her when mentally broken down as his sure prey. Whoever strove to check this development of the tragedy he could not fail to hate.

He had such power over Victorine that she shared this mood--though the infernal plot affected her too. Besides, I had made her forever my foe by remaining wholly indifferent to her charms. I will pass over the proofs I might bring forward, not because I am ashamed of my *rôle* of Joseph, but, even without this, I shall have occasion to speak of myself more than is agreeable to me.

I should have led no enviable existence, had not Heaven itself provided some consolation and strengthened my heart.

Whenever we settled for a few months in one of the larger cities, I always obtained a piano, which was placed in Frau Luise's room, or, if there was no space there, in the dining-room--she still maintained the rule of having the meals in common, though the Round Table constantly dwindled--and here we passed our only hours of pure, unshadowed happiness. For, when she sang and I accompanied her, the narrow walls seemed to expand, the earth, with everything base and unlovely it contained, to sink beneath us, while we ourselves floated in a sunny atmosphere where everything was harmony and peace, love and hope, and every wound that bled secretly healed at once as though touched by the hand of some enchanter.

We did not permit ourselves this delight daily, only on Sundays and when, for some reason, there was no acting. The boy, meantime, sat in a little chair and never turned his eyes from his mother while she sang; or I took him on my knee while I played the accompaniment, and he gazed wonderingly at the keys. At last I began to give him a few lessons on the piano, and was amazed to see how easily he understood everything. Oh, that child! He became more and more the one unalloyed delight of my life, for unmixed happiness in the society of his mother was impossible for me.

Afterward, during my long life as a teacher, I had an opportunity to observe many hundred boys, and to this companionship I owe a thousand pleasures. But neither before nor after did I ever meet a child like Joachimchen.

He was no prodigy in the usual acceptance of the word. No technical talent, no intellectual gift developed with extraordinary power or precocity, and, even in music--the only instruction I began in his sixth year to give him regularly--he made no remarkable progress. But the quality this young creature possessed to a far greater degree than other children of his age, was the subtlety and accuracy of his mental perceptions, by which he infallibly distinguished truth from semblance--a, if I may so express it, moral clairvoyance which enabled him to give the most striking opinions of persons and things without any precocious conceit. No trace of child-like vanity, no desire for praise, marred this innocent faculty of his soul. He was like a clear mirror, which reflected in their real outlines the images of everything that surrounded him. Any one whom he loved was sure to be pure and good; for everything base and sordid, though it approached him under the most flattering guise, instantly repelled him.

Yes; there was a well-spring of cheerfulness in this little human being which, in proportion to the delicacy of his physical condition, became the more refreshing to him and those who best loved him. His thoughtful views of the world, and the luster of the large eyes in the little palid face, would have roused our anxiety, had not shouts of mirth often issued from the narrow chest, while even in his quieter moments there was no trace of sickly peevishness or weariness. The little naughtinesses, almost invariably seen in an only child who is deeply loved and spoiled, were foreign to his nature. A sign, a word would guide him. It was only in the society of other children that I frequently perceived a shade of reserve and fretfulness in his manner, so I persuaded his mother not to force him into their companionship. On the other hand, he was all the more vivacious, even to the verge of ungovernable delight, when we took him out to walk. He chased all the butterflies, made friends with all the little dogs he met, and, mounted on a hobby-horse, galloped along, swinging his little riding-whip. Everybody loved him, though he was very chary of his caresses. He was shy only with his own father.

Often at dinner--the only time he spent a whole hour with him--I saw him fix a watchful gaze upon Spielberg, just when the latter in his most radiant mood was pouring forth high-sounding speeches about art and artists. The boy never uttered a word, though often, to the delight of the others, he made one of his quaint, penetrating remarks to some member of the company. Never, either to me or his mother, did he mention his father's name. But the latter, whose face always beamed with the consciousness that he was impressing every one, evidently avoided meeting the child's eyes, and, when he felt their gaze on him, became so confused that he often hesitated in the middle of a sentence and lapsed into silence. I do not remember, during all the time that we lived together, a single instance when he showed the boy any tenderness, or troubled himself in the least about him.

I had agreed with Frau Luise that, on account of the child's delicate constitution and sensitive nerves, he ought to be guarded from all mental excitement, though he was now six years old, an age when children usually begin to study the alphabet and primers. To train him in the use of his hands, I gave him easy lessons in drawing, which he greatly enjoyed, let him practice daily half an hour on the piano, and sing with his clear little voice intervals and simple songs. During our walks I told him Bible stories, which, whatever may be thought of their historical value, ought--as the most venerable traditions from the earliest days of the Christian world--to be given every child for his journey through life, as well as the fairy lore of our nation.

Yet I was obliged to limit even this elementary instruction, because the boy's unusually vivid imagination transformed everything which was intended merely to serve for amusement into solid food for his mind. For instance, he became as much excited over the history of Joseph and his brothers as a grown person would have been by a novel. I directed his thirst for knowledge exclusively to natural objects, so far as my defective education in this department permitted, and everything seemed to be going on admirably when a slight attack of fever roused our anxiety.

The company had settled in one of the larger cities on the shore of the Baltic, where they were doing an excellent business. So the plan of instantly departing, and perhaps breaking up the threatening disease by a change of climate, could not be entertained. Besides, the physician, whom the mother questioned, did not consider the case serious, attributed all the symptoms to the child's rapid growth, and prescribed a different diet and certain strengthening measures which seemed to have a good effect.

We had formerly divided the care and training of the boy in such a way that he was never left a moment without his mother or myself. Now she would not allow me to take her place except for an occasional half-hour, and even at dinner remained in her room, while we were served by Kunigunde. For a long time she had given up the sleeping-room to her husband's sole use, and contented herself with an uncomfortable couch made up every night on the sofa, while the child's little bed stood close by her side.

He could not be allowed to see the condition in which his father usually returned at midnight.

One morning she received me with an anxious face. Joachimchen was reluctant to leave his bed, complained of headache, and did not want his breakfast. The doctor, whom I instantly summoned, soothed her as much as he was able. The fever had not increased, perhaps some childish disease was coming on, which would produce a favorable change in his whole physical condition. He prescribed some simple remedy, and we felt a little relieved.

He became no worse in the evening. But I had told Spielberg that I could not perform my duties that night, and, as the play had been acted hundreds of times, I really was not needed behind the scenes.

When at ten o'clock I felt the pulse of the child, who was lying in an uneasy slumber, I thought there was no occasion to fear a bad night, and persuaded his mother to lie down in order to save her strength. I would sit up a few hours longer, as I had some alterations to make in a new play, which was then creating a sensation--I believe it was the "Son of the Wilderness"--in order to adapt it to the scanty strength of our company.

My room in the private house where we had taken lodgings was on the same floor as the manager's, and I could be summoned by the faintest call. But for several hours everything remained quiet, and I was just thinking that I might venture to go to bed when I heard the drunkard's heavy footstep on the stairs. He had wished the sick child a good night's rest, with evident sympathy, and even now seemed to remember that he must enter softly. Nor did it surprise me that he did not go directly to his own sleeping-room as usual, but gently raised the latch of his wife's door. He wants to inquire how the boy has rested, I thought.

I had just closed my book and was preparing to retire for the night when I heard the door of Frau Luise's room thrown open, Spielberg's voice faltering unintelligible words, and shrill moans and cries for help from the boy which sent a thrill of terror through every nerve. But I had no time to reach my door, for at the same instant it was flung wide open, and the unfortunate mother, clad only in the white dressing-gown in which she was in the habit of lying down when Joachimchen needed any special care, darted in, her face death-like in its pallor, holding the wailing child in her arms.

"Protect us! Save the child!" she cried, with a terrified gesture, and as she rushed to my bed, drew back the curtains and hastily laid the boy, whose slender frame was convulsed with sobs, on it, she whispered, with a glance of intense fear: "He will follow us! Bolt the door! O, God, this too!"

She had thrown herself on her knees beside the bed, clasping her darling's quivering form closely in her arms, pressing her lips to the little pale face, and murmuring in confused words that he must be quiet, nobody would hurt him or his mother, he had only been dreaming, now he must go to sleep again, and his mother and Uncle Johannes would stay with him all night.

The child did not cease moaning, struggled into a sitting posture in her arms, and cast an anxious glance around the room as if he feared a pursuer. And in fact some one knocked at the door, but very timidly, and, as none of us answered the request to open it, silence followed, and we heard the steps retire and the door of Spielberg's room open and close.

But there was no improvement in the child's condition. He tossed convulsively to and fro, his eyes rolled without any sign of intelligence, and his face burned with fever.

"I will get the doctor, Frau Luise," I said. "I hope it is only a crisis." She made no reply, but gazed fixedly at the little one's distorted features, and endeavored by her embrace to control the convulsions that shook the slight frame.

We found them still in the same state when I at last brought the physician.

The worthy man, who felt the most sincere reverence for the poor mother, made every effort to conceal his alarm. When, after a few hours, during which he had watched the very trivial success of his remedies, he took his leave, promising to return early in the morning, and I lighted him down the stairs, he pressed my hand with a heavy sigh. "Poor woman!" he said. "The child does not suffer at all; it is not conscious. But how the mother is to bear--"

"So you have no hope--"

"There is inflammation of the brain, more severe than I have often witnessed. But nature is incalculable. Do you know how it happened that his condition changed for the worse so suddenly?"

I answered in the negative. It was not until long afterward that I learned what had occurred in the brief interval between the father's entrance and the mother's flight.

Spielberg had returned home with a clearer head than usual. When he entered his wife's room, she half arose from the sofa and laid her finger on her lips. By the light of the dim night-lamp he approached the child's bed, softly touched the little sleeping face, gazed at it a short time, and then turned to his wife, whispering: "He is doing admirably." She merely nodded, and when, in an impulse of his old tenderness and sympathy with her anxiety, he held out his hand, she kindly returned the clasp. He sat down on the edge of the bed and told her in a low tone that the play had been much applauded and the receipts large. When she asked him to go to rest, as talking might disturb the child, he answered that he was not tired, but felt inclined to have a short chat with his beloved wife. When she shook her head, he moved nearer, and, putting his arm around her, begged her to go into the next room with him for a little while. It was so long since they had had a confidential talk, and there was rarely time for one during the day. The more he urged, the more firmly she declined, till he finally threw both arms around her and whispered: "If you don't come voluntarily, I will use force! You are my wife!"

Then, as she resisted with desperate strength, he fairly lifted her up and was carrying her away, when a shriek from the child's bed suddenly made him loose his hold. The boy was sitting up, staring with dilated eyes at the nocturnal scene, and stretching out his little arms as if to aid his defenseless mother. The next instant he had sprung from the bed, climbed on the sofa by his mother's side, and, thrusting his father away with his little clinched hands, screamed: "You sha'n't kill my mother! Go away! You sha'n't hurt her!--" till, exhausted by terror, the chivalrous child succumbed to a severe attack of fever.

The boy lay in the same condition all night, without a single interval of consciousness. We had not removed him to his own little bed; my room, situated at the end of the corridor, was quieter than his mother's. Neither of us left him. His father had come in early in the morning, but, as he found the child apparently calm and received only curt answers from his wife, who did not vouchsafe him a single glance, he soon went away again. For the first time his unshadowed self-complacency had deserted him. He hung his head like an unjustly accused criminal before the judge, whom he can not hope to convince of his innocence.

The physician had returned very early. He uttered no word of discouragement, but his troubled face, after he had examined the child, so oppressed my heart that I could not even venture to ask a question. But when I went out with him he pressed my hand, whispering: "If he survives the night--but we must be prepared for everything."

The actors, who were all very fond of the little fellow, stole to the door, tapped gently, and asked me for news of him. The only one who entered the room was Daniel. He bowed silently to Frau Luise, and then stood a long time at the foot of the bed; but, after a hasty glance at the little invalid, he fixed his glowing dark eyes on the mother, who, still robed just as she had fled to me yesterday, sat beside the child, now hovering between life and death. At first she took no more notice of the intruder than of anything else that was passing around her. Suddenly she seemed to feel his scorching gaze, and looked up; the blood crimsoned her pale cheeks, and she flashed a single glance at the man she so detested. His head sank, as if he had been struck by an arrow, and he glided on tiptoe out of the room.

Victorine alone did not appear. She had never showed any affection for the child, and, besides, was to have a benefit that night, for which she wished to freshen her costume by many little devices.

No one thought of dinner. Kunigunde brought Frau Luise some food, which she did not touch. I myself hastily swallowed a few mouthfuls in the kitchen. Spielberg, who after the rehearsal had again inquired for the child, went to the hotel with the others.

So the evening approached. The boy's condition remained unchanged, except that the fever increased, and every remedy used seemed powerless. After a bath, however, which the doctor himself helped to give, he seemed somewhat quieter, and lay still and pale in my large bed, the dear little face only occasionally distorted by a slight convulsive quiver.

The father entered in street dress. For the first time his wife looked at him, and her lips parted

in a question--her voice sounded hoarse and hollow after her long silence.

"Are you going to act to-night, Konstantin?"

He went up to the child and touched its pale forehead.

"He is better. His forehead is perfectly cool. I will come back as soon as the play is over."

"He is *not* better. If, meanwhile--"

She could not finish the sentence.

He looked at me. I shrugged my shoulders and turned away to hide the tears the unhappy mother's voice brought into my eyes.

"If I could be of any assistance here," he said, hesitatingly; "it costs me a hard struggle to leave you, but you will find that the night will pass quietly, and to-morrow we shall be relieved of all anxiety."

"To-morrow!" she repeated, dully. "You are right; to-morrow we shall be relieved of all anxiety."

Turning abruptly away, she bowed her face on the pillow of the little boy, whose chest was beginning to heave painfully.

The artist had already gone to the door, but stopped, saying: "Since you prefer it, I will give up the performance. I am so agitated that it would be a poor piece of acting; and then--if he is really--no, it is better so. They must do as well as they can. Farewell!"

I felt how deeply each one of these careless words wounded her. But no sound or look betrayed that she was conscious of anything save her maternal anxiety.

Yet--when, half an hour later, a boy brought a note in which was scrawled in pencil, "I had entirely forgotten that it is Victorine's benefit. Unfortunately, it has been impossible for me to induce her to give me up, and, besides, we have a very crowded house. Let us bear the inevitable with dignity. Konstantin"--I saw by the gesture of loathing with which she crushed the sheet and flung it into the corner, that the wife possessed a vulnerable spot as well as the mother.

Still she uttered no word of comment, and the next moment seemed to have entirely forgotten it.

For the brief armistice produced by the bath had expired. The last struggle began. It lasted only a few hours, then all was over. The brave little heart had ceased to beat.

The mother sat like a statue of despair beside the bed, holding the little white hand, which no current of blood would ever again warm, and gazing fixedly at the closed eyelids and livid mouth distorted by pain that would never more utter any merry words. It was as still around us as though the night was holding its breath, in order not to rouse the mother's agonized heart from its beneficent stupor. I had thrown myself into a chair in a dark corner, and felt as though I were sinking deeper and deeper into the bottomless abyss of the vast enigma of the world.

From time to time I was forced to struggle with the temptation to rise, go to the poor woman, fall on my knees before her, and plead: "Keep your heart firm that it may not break. If you follow him into the grave, I shall perish too."

But I conquered this selfish impulse. What mattered what happened to me! What mattered anything, since this child no longer breathed!

The window stood open, the still night air--it was early in June--stole into the room, but, as the house stood in a quiet side street, rarely bore with it the sound of a human voice or a passing footstep. The play must be over, and, with silent indignation, I expected to see the artist return home to-night in the same condition as yesterday. But I had done him injustice.

His footstep echoed from the street below as firm and full of stately majesty as when he trod the boards in his most exalted characters. Beside it was another, which I should instantly have recognized as Daniel's elastic tread, even had not his voice been audible also. The words were unintelligible. But he must have been telling some amusing story, for his companion's resonant laugh interrupted him several times. They did not cease talking till they reached the door of the house.

His wife started at the sound of the laugh, and rose. The little lifeless hand slipped from her clasp. She passed her other hand over her brow and her lips moved, but I did not understand what she was saying, and I only saw that her eyes were sullenly fixed on the floor.

Her husband entered softly. "O, God!" he exclaimed, as he glanced at the bed. "It is over!" He pondered a moment to find something to say to his wife, then with a deep groan went to the boy and was about to bend over him. But he started back as the mother suddenly stood before him, with her tall figure drawn up to its full height.

"You shall not touch him," she said, in a harsh, hollow tone. "Go, at once--we have nothing more in common with each other. May God forgive you for what you have done! Go, go!" she repeated, in a louder tone, as he made a gesture of entreaty--"I will not bear one word from you--here--by this bed--in this hour--"

"Luise!" he exclaimed wildly.

"Hush!" she replied sharply, "I pity us both, you as well as myself. I know you do what you cannot avoid. But go, go! Something is rising in my soul--something terrible. If I should see you before me longer, poor--comedian, I might utter words I should repent to-morrow."

Spielberg tottered out of the room. But, as soon as he had closed the door behind him, his wife sank down beside the couch of her dead child, and a convulsive sob burst from her sorrow-laden heart.

(Here in the manuscript follow several pages, in which a detailed account is given of everything that happened during the next few days. After so many years, every little circumstance was still present to the narrator, and his grief for the boy, his sympathetic insight into the soul of the hapless mother, burst forth with such renewed strength that he felt a sorrowful relief in again conjuring up, incident by incident, these melancholy recollections. But we will not take up the thread again until after the earth has closed over the little coffin, which was wholly concealed under the garlands bestowed by the actors and some kind people among the inhabitants of the little town. The mother, who could not be prevented from walking in the funeral procession, had watched with tearless eyes, as if they were "burned out," her "entire happiness" placed in the grave--the father had displayed a pathetic emotion, whose extravagance touched no one. The next evening a comedy was again played, and the great artist did not miss a word of his part.)

The fortunate star of the renowned company of artists seemed to have vanished when the child's eyes closed.

The audiences at the theater daily diminished, two of the most useful and indispensable members broke their contract and left the manager in great embarrassment, he himself, after having exerted some little self-control during the first period of mourning, plunged still more madly into his nocturnal carouses, and, when I earnestly remonstrated, asserted with tragic affectation that he had no other means of drowning his grief. Recently he had even smuggled a bottle of strong liquor into the dressing-room, contrary to his own rule, prohibiting the use of wine or spirituous drinks of any kind during the performances. So it happened that he sometimes declaimed his lines with a stammering tongue, and lost the last remnant of his authority over his company and effect upon the public.

I watched the increasing trouble with deep anxiety; but the mute abstraction in which the unhappy wife passed her days tortured me still more. At last I ventured to speak to her on the subject, and it seemed as though she had only been in an apparent death-trance, which was broken by the first tender word, the first touch of a friend's hand.

"I thank you, Johannes," she said, and for the first time her dull eyes grew wet with tears. "You are right, I must try to control my grief. It is not death which has clutched me in his bony arms and stifled every breath. Life, dear friend, is far more cruel; I cannot break the chains and bonds in which it has fettered me. But even a convict who drags an iron ball by a chain must perform his task. It was cowardly and childish to neglect my daily duties. Only have a little patience with me; I will hold up my head again."

From that moment she resumed all her duties to the company, managed the money matters, kept an eye, with Kunigunde's assistance, on the wardrobe, sent the members word that she would again provide the dinner, and only shrank from one thing--occasionally attending a rehearsal as usual.

She again treated every one pleasantly, but never spoke a word to her husband except when he addressed her. Her misfortune had drawn the members of the company nearer to her; the women, especially, showed her many little attentions, except Victorine, who held aloof as before, and no longer even appeared at the Round Table.

But, when darkness came, she always went to the graveyard and remained there an hour alone, declining even my companionship with a silent shake of the head. But we met each other several other times when she was returning home, and walked silently side by side, absorbed in the same thoughts, which needed no utterance. I only remember that I once asked her how she could reconcile this pitiless blow with God's fatherly kindness. She stopped and, raising her tearful eyes to heaven, answered:

"Never for one moment have I doubted him. Spite of all the burdens that weighed upon me, I was the most blessed among women, and God is wise and just. He lets the tree of no earthly happiness grow into heaven. But, for the very reason that he took the child from me, I know that he has not deserted me. If he had left him to me, and he had some day seen with his innocent eyes the ugly world around us as it really is, and been permitted only the choice between

scorning it or becoming akin to it, who knows what he would have decided, and either course would have made both him and me wretched. Now I have buried him here in my heart, in all his purity and loveliness, and may love him forever, far better and more fervently than when I still clasped him in my arms. And, though this love is full of sorrow, neither time nor fate has any power over it, and for this I thank God, whom I always know near to me when I go down into the depths of my own heart and feel the dear child living on there."

What answer could I have made? My whole philosophy became pitiful and humble before the pious trust of this strong soul. She received the news calmly, when one day at table her husband said that they would be obliged to change their residence. The receipts were miserably poor, and he had had an invitation from the magistrates of the next town on the coast to give a series of plays, lasting several weeks.

As he spoke, he cast a side-glance at his wife, as though fearing she would object to leave the place where her child lay buried. He had long since fallen into the habit of discussing no subjects, when alone with her, except those required by absolute necessity.

To his surprise she simply assented. Even, when, three days after, we departed and I drove through the gate in the same carriage with her and the worthy lady whose young daughter played the *ingénues*, while Spielberg, with Daniel and Victorine, formed the rear-guard, she had strength enough to give no sign of the emotions which must have assailed her in parting from the little grave.

But the hopes with which we had struck our tents were not to be realized. Just at that time a panic occurred in commercial circles that made itself felt in the seaport no less than in the large North German commercial towns. People kept their pockets buttoned, and even the renowned artist could not open them.

He became so irritated by this state of affairs that, to punish the ingratitude of the age, he intentionally hid the light of his art under a bushel, and played his parts with such haughty negligence that even the few patrons of the theater, who had known his reputation, shook their heads, and transferred their favor to the less famous members of the company. Victorine was the admiration of the young merchants; the *ingénue* previously mentioned turned the heads of the older school-boys; Daniel, whose acting, even when most negligent, always had its interesting moments, found favor with the critics in the two local papers--yet, nevertheless, the receipts were so small that the company would have been compelled to disband had not Frau Luise's wise economy provided a reserve fund for such contingencies. She paid the salaries as regularly as ever, and kept the wardrobes and other requisites in decent order, without receiving any special thanks from any one.

I myself was entirely out of funds. Two and a half years of this wandering life had devoured my savings, I could scarcely be seen in my shabby clothes, and, though protected from any anxiety about food, had not even the small amount of pocket money required for trifling wants, so that I was sometimes seized by a mood of despairing melancholy, and should undoubtedly have been up and away some day had I not known how indispensable I had become. If I left the company, everything must go to ruin. I could tell myself, without vanity, that the breach of my--unwritten--contract would be equivalent to fracturing an axle in the car of Thespis.

Moreover, was I not bound body and soul to this woman, considering myself transcendently rewarded if she held out her large, firm hand to me in the evening and said, "Good-night, dear friend!"

Still, these miserable circumstances oppressed me more and more, and one day, when I met in the street a college friend who meanwhile had had a prosperous career, and while on a business journey had come to our Pomeranian coast, I bore his look of compassionate surprise with a bitter laugh, and willingly accepted his invitation to share a bottle of wine with him that evening at his hotel and make a general confession.

I had made no confession for years, and it was months since a drop of wine had moistened my lips. So only a single glass was needed to lure from me an unreserved acknowledgment of my wretched plight.

There was but one thing I carefully concealed--the strongest chain that bound me to this miserable existence, my mad, hopeless love for this woman. Yet, had the hand of a god suddenly aided me to tear myself free, what could I have done with my liberty? To what occupation in civil life should I have found the door open, I, a runaway Candidate of theology, who had not disdained to play the part of factotum to a company of traveling actors for two years and a half.

So when, toward eleven o'clock, I took leave of my former comrade, we were no wiser concerning my future, and what I had to hope and fear from it, than in the beginning.

He had told me, with a shake of the head, that there must be some love affair in the matter, and correctly understood my shrug of the shoulders. But, as he had been to the theater the night before, he seemed undecided between Victorine and the young *ingénue*.

"Let me sleep over the affair," he said at last, as he went out into the hall with me--we had had

our wine in his chamber, as there was much noise and confusion in the public room below--"I sha'n't see you to-morrow, because I must leave very early, but I will write as soon as a good idea occurs to me."

I pressed his hand and thoughtfully descended the stairs. In going up, two hours before, I had seen in the public room below Luise's husband and several actors, among them Daniel, who was inseparable from the manager. Meantime, eleven o'clock had come, but they had not yet separated, and I wished at any cost to avoid meeting them. But, just as I was stealing softly past the door, it was thrown open, and my friend, tall Herr Laban, staggered out, supported by one of the younger actors. Both were in the gayest humor. "Look there, look there, Timotheus!" he shouted, laughing. "Where the deuce hast thou been hiding"--he always used 'thou' to me--"while we have been seeing the most capital farce played here? You have missed a great deal, I can tell you, Doctor; and, in not saying good-night to your traveling friend over our heads, you have stood very much in your own light. Isn't that so, Juvenil?"

The young man laughingly agreed that it had been a splendid joke--no comedy of errors had ever amused him so much.

I tried to pass on with some careless remark, but Laban seized my arm and, while we helped him down the last steps, began to tell me the story in his comical way.

They had drunk several glasses when Daniel began to boast of his talent for imitating living persons, and instantly gave several proofs of this ability by copying the voice and gestures of the landlord and some of the regular guests, to the delight of the whole company. Spielberg alone had sat in his heroic grandeur, looking on with an air of contemptuous dignity, and finally remarked that such monkey tricks, which dazzled the public, were easy, and besides found their limits in certain figures whose majesty rendered them, as it were, unapproachable for mimicry. Did he include himself among them? the insolent fellow asked, and, when the great man nodded silently, he laid a wager that he would personate him so exactly that he would hardly know whether it was himself or his double. They ordered a bottle of champagne, and then Daniel led the manager into the next room. After a short time the door opened again, and Spielberg strode in. Everybody asked whether Daniel was not ready or had given up his wager. "That young man promises much, and does nothing save to make fools of honest Thebans," was the reply, after which he approached the table with his stately walk, shook the bottle in the ice and exclaimed: "A plague on all cowardly poltroons!" Then they first discovered that it was Daniel, and not the great actor himself, and even then it was only the little hand he owes to his Polish blood that betrayed him. But, just as there was a general burst of applause and laughter, the door again opened and a second Daniel appeared, in a gray summer suit and Polish cap, with his cat-like tread and feminine movement of the hips, so that the uproar and clapping of hands grew louder than ever--for nobody had ever imagined the manager possessed such a talent. This, however, was merely the beginning of the farce. Each continued to play the character of the other: Daniel in the belaced velvet coat, with straw hat pulled over his forehead, toasted his image, amid constant quotations uttered in his resonant voice, and Spielberg, with all the Harlequin tricks the other was in the habit of using on the stage, never let the laughers stop to take breath, so that each of the two had won and lost the wager. But, when they had broken the neck of the second bottle, Daniel suddenly became silent, went to Spielberg, and whispered something which made the manager look puzzled. But his double seized his arm and led him out. When after a long time they did not return, we asked for them, and the waiter said that after whispering together for some time the two gentlemen had left the hotel arm in arm.

I do not know why I could not laugh at this amusing trick. But I hastily took leave of the two actors, whose room was on the top floor of the hotel, and, in a most uncomfortable mood, passed out into the street just as the clock in the nearest church-steeple struck eleven. Though I felt no inclination to sleep, a strange anxiety urged me homeward, as if I were expected there.

My way led through the street in which the other hotel stood. Here Victorine and Daniel lodged. And just as I glanced at the door of the house I saw the fellow--whom I easily recognized by his dress--ring the bell and, directly after, with a greeting from the porter, cross the threshold. But what thought occurred to me? Was that really Daniel--or was it his double in his clothes? And, if it were the latter, what was he doing in that house, where Victorine was now probably waiting for the *other*?

However, I had no time to ponder over this idea, for the question suddenly darted through my brain: What has become of that other, the false Spielberg?

Suspecting some deviltry, some base trick, I rushed through the deserted streets to the house where Frau Luise lived, and I, too, had my modest room in the upper story. She was in the habit of sitting up late with some piece of sewing or a book, usually alone, for faithful Kunigunde closed her eyes at nine o'clock. As I hastily drew out my night-key I noticed that the door, contrary to custom, stood half open. I did not take time to shut it again, but, with trembling hands, lighted the little pocket-lantern, which must illumine my way up the dark stairs, and rushed on. But I had not yet reached the landing on the first story when I heard Frau Luise's deep tones, and then saw her facing her husband--no, his double, who, with his straw hat on his head and his coat flung open, slowly retreated before her, his ardent dark eyes fixed with an indescribable expression on her face.

Frau Luise was holding a little lamp in her left hand, and had raised her right threateningly against the scoundrel, her face, whose waxen pallor usually formed a striking contrast to her mourning dress, was flushed with the crimson hue of wrath, and her eyes shone with a strange, supernatural luster.

"You will leave this house at once and the city tomorrow," I heard her say. "You are the most contemptible of human beings, and what you have presumed to do merits a bloody chastisement. I am a woman, and must leave it to my husband to avenge this insult as he deems best. But, if you should ever have the effrontery to appear before my eyes again--"

"Pardon me, madame," he interrupted--and, though he endeavored to appear entirely nonchalant, I detected in his tremulous voice that he did not feel entirely at ease while confronting this haughty figure--"I beg a thousand pardons; I did not imagine you would take an innocent jest so tragically, especially as your husband saw no offense in it. We had laid a wager that I could personate him exactly. The final and hardest test, of course, was whether his own wife would recognize me. Well, at first you certainly believed me to be Herr Spielberg, and were not undeceived until I took the liberty of embracing you--doubtless a husband's kisses are less ardent than those of a lover, who for two years has yearned to even once press his lips upon a mouth which never had aught for him save contemptuous silence. Though I have lost my wager, the kiss that betrayed me is abundant compensation, and so, fairest of women, I have the honor--"

He was not to have breath to finish the sentence. For, in a fury I had never experienced before, I rushed upon the miscreant, seized him by the chest, and, tearing off his hat with the other hand, shook him by the hair till his sneering face wore an expression of mortal terror, as I dragged him to the stairs and would have flung him down heels over head, had he not by a sudden movement, lithe as a young panther, escaped from my grasp, and, thrusting me aside, glided down the dark stair-case, muttering an imprecation between his set teeth.

We heard him shut the door of the house and, in the fear of pursuit, hurriedly lock it. Then, in the death-like stillness that again prevailed, we looked into each other's eyes to see if it were possible that we had actually experienced this, or whether some dream had conjured up the same vision before both. I saw her tremble as if some unclean beast had clutched her in its claws. A quiver of wrath and loathing contracted her brow and lips. "I thank you, Johannes," she said. "But excuse me, I must go in now and wash myself. O, Heaven! all the perfumes of Arabia--but no, we can only be sullied by our own evil thoughts. Do not you think so, too?"

She turned away and carried the lamp back to her room again. I followed her to the threshold.

"Frau Luise," I asked, "will you let me shoot the rascal down like a mad dog? Or do you consider him worthy to receive his punishment in an honest duel?"

"You must do nothing to him," she answered in a hollow tone. "If, as I still hope, it is false that another person knew of this knavish trick, it is that other's business to avenge the insult that was offered to him even more than to me. To-morrow will decide this. It is late now--you must leave me--I must wash my face and the hands that touched the scoundrel, even to push him away."

I shut the door, and sadly mounted the stairs to my room.

It was useless to think of sleeping. Not only because the detestable scene I had just witnessed still hovered before my eyes, but because I expected every moment that the other would return home, and wished to be ready in case his wife should need my assistance.

True, she was strong and brave enough to defend herself against any insult or injury. But who could tell in what state of recklessness, stung by his evil conscience, that "other" would confront her.

At any rate he delayed long enough. The *rôle* of double, which he played so admirably, seemed to have found an appreciative audience in the depraved girl for whom he was enacting it, or perhaps she had entered into the deception with malicious satisfaction in order to wound the noble woman she hated.

I heard the clock strike the hours--midnight, one, two. Then, without undressing, I threw myself on the bed and shut my burning eyes, but my ears remained open and watchful. Scarcely half an hour had passed when I heard a lagging step approach along the pavement below, and in an instant again stood at my window. Yes, it was he. By the gray light of the summer sky, I could distinguish the Polish cap, the loose coat, and the white hands which hastily rummaged his pockets for the key of the house door. But it was in the other suit of clothes, now worn by the double. The criminal who had shut himself out of the peace of his own home stood for a time gazing up at the windows, behind which he doubtless saw the glimmer of the night-lamp. Ought you to go down, open the door for him, and pour forth to his face all you think of him, all the wrath you have so long pent up concerning his sins against this woman, the tip of whose little finger he is unworthy to kiss? No, I thought. Let him suffer for his sin. It is only a pity that this isn't a winter night, and he is not obliged to stand barefoot in the snow until broad daylight.

He? He would have been likely to undertake such a penance! After twice calling, in a tone of

assumed piteousness, "Luise!" he took off his cap, passed his hand over his waving locks, then pressed the little fur cap low over his forehead, and turned defiantly to seek the place from which some pitiful remnant of remorse had driven him.

I uttered a sigh of relief, opened the window, and cooled my heated face. At last I sought my couch, and toward morning really fell asleep.

My slumber was so sound that I was first roused by a very loud knocking at my door. When I opened it, Kunigunde was standing outside, and requested me to come down to Frau Luise. "Has your master returned?" I asked the faithful creature.

"Of course. But not until nearly nine o'clock, when my mistress had gone out to make some purchases. He seemed to know that she was not at home, for he did not even ask for her, but shut himself up in her room for a while, and then went away without leaving any message. But I saw a letter lying on the table, which the mistress read as soon as she came in, and then sent me up to you."

The good old woman was evidently troubled, and, in spite of having gone to rest so early, seemed to have heard enough of the nocturnal scene to pity her honored mistress.

When, following close at her heels, I entered Frau Luise's room, I found her sitting on the sofa beside a table, with the letter lying open before her.

She nodded to me with an absent look, and said in an expressionless tone: "Sit down and read this, Johannes; the end has come."

I took the sheet and hastily glanced over it. The letter was not short, and was written precisely in Spielberg's usual style, lofty, adorned with rhetorical ornaments, interspersed here and there with a quotation from Schiller. He saw that by yesterday's occurrence--of which, though without any evil intent, he had been the cause--he had forfeited even the last remnant of her love. So it would be better for him to go voluntarily into exile, and not return until he could meet her with new renown and in an assured position. True, what are the hopes, the wishes on which man relies? But he trusted to his star. She would lose all trace of him for a time, but he hoped he should afterward be able to repay her for what she had suffered through him. He closed by thanking her for her generous tolerance of his weaknesses. Genius was no easy companion for a life-pilgrimage--and similar high-sounding words.

In a postscript, he begged her to pardon him for having appropriated, in order to execute his plan, the reserve fund she had so carefully saved. He left in exchange, at her free disposal, the whole *fundus instructus*, scenes, costumes, requisites, and theatrical library; she might either sell them or continue the business. In the latter case, Cousin Johannes would assist her.

Then followed a pathetic farewell, another quotation, and the signature, with an elaborate flourish: "Ever your own Konstantin."

I probably looked like a person who, while eating raspberries, suddenly bites a wasp. For, as I silently laid down the letter, she said soothingly: "It has moved me very little. This must have happened sooner or later, and it is fortunate that it came now. Believe me, I feel perfectly calm, and am sincerely grateful to him for not having sought a personal interview. I am like a person recovering from a severe, insidious disease, a little weak, it is true, but I shall no longer be terrified by the hideous visions with which the fever tortured my brain."

"What do you intend to do?" I asked at last.

"My duty, so far as I can. True, I am as poor as a church-mouse. But the others must not suffer."

"Frau Luise," I said, "I know that you were formerly too proud to summon your guardian to give an account of his management of your property. But now, in such necessity--"

She smiled bitterly. "Too proud? My dear friend, I should not have been too proud even at that time to claim my rights. But, as you know, where there is nothing, even the Emperor cannot assert his rights, far less a poor Canoness who eloped with an actor. My uncle squandered the last shilling of my mother's property. Would you have me turn him out of house and home by appealing to the law? But let us say no more about these detestable things. Fortunately I paid the members of the company their monthly salary only a few days ago. As the business is now broken up, they are in a pitiable plight, for where can they obtain a new engagement in midsummer? So the *fundus instructus* must be sold as quickly and as profitably as possible, and meantime be pawned. You will do me this one last favor, dear Johannes. I have another little plan, too. Why do you look at me so wonderingly? Surely you did not suppose that all this would find me unprepared. I have long expected something of the sort. Weak as he is--but we will not speak of him."

She now explained her intention of obtaining, by means of a concert in the theater, a considerable sum for the benefit of the orphaned company, which, bereft of the manager and "the others," could give no more performances. By these "others" she meant Daniel and Victorine. While out of doors she had met an actor, who excitedly asked whether she knew that the couple

had just gone on board an English merchant vessel lying in the harbor. He did not say that the manager was with them, but the wife did not doubt it for an instant, and therefore knew what she should find when she returned to the house again.

She would herself appear and sing at the concert, she continued. She knew that there would be a full house, for her misfortune, of course, was now in everybody's mouth, and, as she had always kept out of sight, curiosity and perhaps a better feeling would urge many to see and hear the woman who had led so strange a life, and must now reap what she had sown. She did not fear the eyes of strangers. It was a misfortune that her heart had prompted her to entrust her life to the keeping of one who was unworthy, but neither a disgrace nor a crime. So she would appear, with head erect, before a cold, malicious world, and not a note would falter in her throat.

She had not expected too much of her own powers. When she appeared on the stage, in a plain black dress, with a little black veil wound around her golden braids, and every eye in the densely-crowded house was fixed upon her, I saw--I was sitting at the piano to play her accompaniments--her face flush for a moment. But its natural hue instantly returned, and she sang her aria from Orpheus, several melodies from Iphigenia in Tauris, and Mignon's song composed by Beethoven, with such power and simple beauty that it seemed as if the tempests of life which had stirred the inmost depths of her soul had only served to bring the flower of her art to still more superb development.

The effect was so profound and overwhelming that a storm of applause, such as had never greeted even the finest scenes of the great actor, shook the theater.

She bowed modestly, with a sad smile that won every heart. When, in the waiting-room, I congratulated her, her face clouded. "Hush," she whispered hurriedly. "Would you tell the victim, about to be offered as a sacrifice, that the garlands are becoming?"

The other parts of the programme, two comic soliloquies by Laban, and some of Schiller's ballads recited by our *ingénue*, were well received. When I accompanied Frau Luise home, I held in the box under my arm a very large sum received from the evening's entertainment.

When we reached her room, I wished to give her the money. "No," she replied, "henceforth you must be the treasurer. I shall make but one stipulation--that you do not entirely forget yourself, but share equally with the rest. With foolish generosity you have spent all your savings in order to retain a laborious situation here, for which you received neither thanks nor payment. What do you intend to do now?"

"That will depend upon you, Frau Luise."

Her eyes sought the floor, then, raising them to mine with an indescribably tender glance, she said:

"No, my friend, we part this very day, this very hour. You need have no anxiety about me. I shall not pine away and die. You know that I am very strong, or how could I have endured everything?--and, as I am no longer a Canoness, I must not shrink from a little labor. But you must try to return to the life from which your friendship for me has torn you. Promise me that, after you have attended to the last details of business here, you will go back to your old profession, if not as a clergyman, as a teacher, or in some scholarly occupation. I will watch your course from a distance. You will promise, will you not?"

"Frau Luise," I stammered, "do you wish to banish me? Do you not know--"

"I know all, my friend; you need not add another word. And I also know that I love you with all my heart, and therefore it is better for us to part. A woman whose husband has vanished is not free to choose--surely you understand that. And I will suffer no stain upon my name. You will remain my friend, as I am yours. And to seal this, I will now, in bidding you farewell, affectionately embrace you and give you a sister's kiss. Your lips, my faithful friend, shall restore the purity of mine, which yesterday were desecrated by a scoundrel."

With these words, she embraced me, and for one brief, blissful moment her warm lips pressed mine in a pure and tender caress. Then, with a low "Farewell, my friend," she gently pushed me out of the door.

The next morning, when I woke from sorrowful dreams, and was hurriedly dressing, some one knocked at my door. Kunigunde entered and, with many tears, told me that her mistress had driven away at dawn in a hired carriage, telling nobody her destination, and leaving for me a farewell and a little package.

It was a sealed paper. When I opened it, out fell the gold chain on which she used to wear around her neck the locket containing her mother's picture.

III.

Several weeks have passed since I wrote the last lines. When I laid the sheet in the portfolio--a music portfolio Frau Luise had left, and in which I usually kept some of the airs from Glück's operas arranged for the piano--I was startled by the bulk of the MS., and asked myself: "Will any one have patience to read all this? And why should you add to it?"

Ah, if you were a professional author, and, instead of a truthful narrative of the life of the woman so dear to you, could transform her fate into a genuine romance, skillfully blending fact and fiction, or if you at least possessed the gift of describing these experiences in hues so fresh and vivid that no one could help finding her as charming as she is to you! But you are only a clumsy, simple chronicler of events, and the man for whom you intend these records will smile at the *labor improbus* you have bestowed on so superfluous a work and at your innocent idea that you were thereby doing him a favor.

Well, I then thought, even if you are only pleasing yourself by again conjuring up your old joys and sorrows, what harm is there in that? He can let the avalanche of MS. you hurl into his house roll quietly aside with the others the mail brings to importune him. Who compels him to do more than cast a compassionate glance at it?

But, if he forgives the lonely man his volubility, and eats through this biographical mountain, as Klas Avenstak ate through the hill of pancakes, he must expect that I shall not defraud him of the end, especially as the early close the gods decreed to Luise's life was spiced with much that was sweet, to compensate for many bitter things in her previous destiny.

So I will summon courage to again take up my pen, endeavoring, however, to be as brief as possible, especially in the incidents which concern my insignificant self.

Therefore I will say nothing of the state of mind in which I spent the first few days after my friend's secret departure. Fortunately I had a number of disagreeable affairs on my hands, was forced to attend to the questions, complaints, business, and reproaches of the deserted company of actors, undertake the distribution of the money and provide for the sale of the *fundus*, which latter affair was settled more quickly and profitably than I had feared. Frau Luise's destination was as little known as the distant shore to which the great artist had shaped his course. So I took a sorrowful leave of my colleagues, who, with the exception of the three oldest members, Laban, Gottlieb Schönicke, and the good prompter, who grieved sincerely for the vanished woman, seemed to be tolerably consoled by the considerable sum that fell to the share of each, and, as I was far too sad at heart and dull of brain to form any sensible plan for the future, I sent my trunk to my native town, strapped my knapsack on my back, and wandered through Pomerania and the Mark to my old home. I believe that during those eight or ten days I did not have one sensible thought, for the Orpheus aria constantly rang in my ears:

"Alas, I have lost her,
All my happiness is o'er!"

It will be considered perfectly natural that the news of my return excited no special rejoicing in the small provincial town, and no one felt impelled to kill a fatted calf to do honor to the Prodigal Son. At first I kept out of the way as much as possible, since wherever I appeared I was stared at as though I were some wild animal just escaped from a menagerie, or, still worse, shunned with evident fear of contagion, being regarded as a dangerous sinner who, lured by the lust of the world and the flesh, had exchanged the preacher's calling for a dissipated vagabond life among jugglers and strollers.

One old friend, however, who meantime had become principal of the highest public school, treated me with his old cordiality, listened sympathizingly to the account of my fate, and, as I was absolutely penniless, offered me temporary shelter in an attic room in his little house. Ere long, spite of my antecedents, he succeeded in getting me the position of teacher of singing to the three lower classes, as the old chorister was daily growing deafer. When he became wholly incapable of further service, the three upper classes were also transferred to me, and, after having conscientiously done my duty for several years, and meanwhile showed by my irreproachable conduct that I was not the Don Juan and demon of darkness rumor had pronounced me, I was advanced--partly in consequence of the services of my dead father, whose memory was still honored--to the position of teacher of geography and history, in which I was often reminded of the time when I had related the same beautiful stories to my little pupil and his haughty sister.

My kind fellow-citizens had pardoned my past--nay, with the feminine portion of the population, it merely helped to surround the commonplace fellow I was and am with that halo of impiety which is usually more attractive to the weaker sex than the most beautiful aureola of unsullied virtue. Many very estimable mothers of marriageable daughters greeted me in the

street with an encouraging glance--nay, there was no lack of efforts to tempt me to their houses, especially after a small legacy, which I inherited very unexpectedly, enabled me, with my modest salary as a teacher, to establish a quiet home of my own. Even my friend and present colleague gave me numerous well-meant hints--Heaven would rather provide for two than for one, and so would the fathers of the city. But I answered all such admonitions with a smile and a shrug of the shoulders. How could I have been such a scoundrel as to deceive an innocent, unsuspecting girl by letting her suppose a heart free which had long been firmly bound?

The ten years I spent in this way were joyless and desolate enough. I had lost my taste even for the society of men; foolish political discussions and standing local jests had no interest for me, and I had never cared for any game of cards except the one with which such beloved memories were associated. So I spent the evenings in my lonely room, and used the money I saved from gambling and drinking for the purchase of books, though the volumes were wholly different in character from those I had inherited from my dear father. Besides the newest philosophical works, I ordered novels by English authors, among whom Thackeray was my special favorite, while Dickens seemed to me a sentimental mannerist, striving for effect, who had no correct ideas of women. But I will leave this part of my life and hasten on to the main subject.

One Wednesday afternoon in March--I had no school, but a furious snow-storm prevented my taking my usual walk into the country--some one knocked at my door, and an old woman, on whom I had never set eyes before, hobbled into the room. She was almost out of breath, for, as she said, she had come from the alms-house at the opposite end of the town, and the wind had almost blown her away. She drew from the folds of her thick shawl a crumpled note, in which was scribbled in pencil:

"If you have not yet forgotten your old friend, dear Johannes, give her the pleasure of a visit. She has been ill for a fortnight, and is permitted to sit up to-day for the first time. The messenger knows where she is to be found.

Luise."

I will not attempt to describe the tempest of feeling those few words awakened in my soul. For a moment the room and all it contained whirled around me, and I should not have been surprised had the old woman suddenly thrown off her patched clothing and stood before me in the guise of a beautiful fairy.

With trembling haste I hurried on my coat, seized my hat and cane, and went out into the street ere I asked if this were really true, and how she had happened to serve the lady as a messenger.

There was nothing strange in that, the old dame had answered. Madame Spielberg had arrived a fortnight ago, in her own carriage, very ill with measles, and had asked to be taken to the hospital. But as, on account of the rebuilding, no one could be received there, and the only patient, by the burgomaster's orders, had meantime been removed to the almshouse, the stranger had been transported there, to her entire satisfaction for, thank Heaven, she had lacked nothing. The doctor had been instantly summoned, and then the seven old dames who now lived there shared the nursing, which had prospered so well that to-day she had eaten her soup with an excellent appetite and been able to drink a tiny glass of wine. The doctor had told them to be very attentive to the sick lady, who was of noble birth and a Canoness. Well, that was no hard task for them. There was not such another lovely lady in the whole world, she was always apologizing for giving so much trouble, and that day, after she sat up, had sent for her trunk and given each one some article of clothing for a present. Then she asked about the schoolmaster, but, when she saw the storm, said the note could wait till to-morrow. But she, the old dame, would not hear of that, and now I would see for myself how well the lady was taken care of. She occupied No. 12, the best room in the whole house.

When I had entered the dusky corridor and shaken the snow from my clothing, and my guide, pointing to one of the little doors, had said, "That's number 12," I was obliged to pause a few moments to calm myself before I knocked. Is it really true? I thought. Ten years have passed like one day! In your heart at least! And she--how will you find her? But I had scarcely heard her "Come in!" when I knew she must be just the same as ever; time, grief, and even want had no power over her strong soul; and, whether I found her in this wretched almshouse or on a throne, she would ever be the mistress of my thoughts and feelings.

So I entered, and the first look in which our eyes met thrilled me with the warmth and happiness a patient, on whom an operation for a cataract has been performed, feels when the bandage is removed for the first time.

She was sitting in a large arm-chair by the window, past which the snow-flakes were whirling, and held on her knee an open book. The large room was bare and wholly unadorned, the walls were white-washed, the bed was covered with a brown shawl that I distinctly remembered, her trunk stood at the foot, there was a plain table and two chairs--the usual almshouse furniture. But

on the table beside the *carafe* stood a glass containing a bunch of snow-drops, in front of a daguerreotype of her child in a small easel-frame wreathed with the same white blossoms. Everything was just as usual, for she had always kept this picture near her, and she still wore, as at the time I last saw her, her mourning dress, with the little black silk kerchief wound in her fair hair, only its amber hue was not so deep, but seemed powdered with a gray dust. The beautiful oval face, however, was wholly unchanged, save for an expression of cheerfulness which had been alien to it during the last period of our companionship. How she smiled at me, how her voice sounded--was she really a sorely-afflicted woman, who had passed her fortieth year? And I, was I the dried up, provincial Philistine and pedagogue I had so long believed myself to be, or still a reckless young fellow, ready at any moment to commit the wildest folly for this woman's sake.

She did not rise to greet me, but held out both hands, and I could only clasp and hold them in the utmost embarrassment. I did not venture to kiss them. I had too often seen this knightly homage paid by the man who had inflicted the keenest suffering upon her heart, and would not remind her of any bitter experience.

"Frau Luise," I said, "it is really you--you have not changed in the least--I am so happy to see you again--and you were ill and I only learn your presence here to-day."

"Sit down by me, Johannes," she said. "I, too, am glad to see your face once more. You look very well; you have grown a little stouter, but it is becoming; teaching seems to suit you better than the dramatic business. Oh, my dear friend, this is like the day of judgment, when everything is to be brought together. True, only the shadow of the very best of all returns!" She glanced at the picture of Joachimchen on the table, and her eyes grew grave.

"I can not yet recover from my joyful surprise," I said, as I took my seat at the window opposite to her. "You here! And what tempted you to this out-of-the-way corner? And whence do you come?"

She smiled again.

"*You* tempted me, my friend--*you*, and no one else. I was very ill and thought I should not recover. So, before my death, I wanted to again clasp the hand of my last friend, and thank him for all the love and fidelity he has shown me. Believe me, I know everything that has happened to you during our separation--it is not much--Uncle Joachim constantly inquired about you and wrote me all he learned. He alone, of all my acquaintances, knew where I was to be found."

"And did not answer one single word, the envious man, though I wrote to him three times to obtain news of you."

"He could not. I had strictly forbidden it. I wanted to be dead to every one, and always hoped that God would be merciful and speedily summon me from the world. But He had different plans for me, and I will not murmur against His will. Where did I hide myself? Why, in a very remote corner of the Uckermark, on the estate of a nobleman who had advertised for a companion for his invalid wife and a governess for his little daughter. How I fared in that house, and learned to practice every deed of charity, I will tell you some other time or not at all. I can only repeat the old words: 'With the sick I became well, with the poor rich, with the dying I learned to live.' And all this exactly in my own way, with people whom I tenderly loved. You know the professional neighborly love a deaconess practices would be contrary to my nature, like a public display of piety and love for God. But when the gentle sufferer died, and a few weeks after her little daughter followed her, I could no longer remain in the house; for the sorrowing widower, otherwise a thoroughly admirable man, offered me his heart and hand, and, when I told him that I was not free, proposed to make every effort to have my missing husband declared dead and then marry me. Just at that time I received a letter from our Liborius, the gardener, informing me that Uncle Joachim was very ill and wished to see me. This instantly afforded me an escape from my painful position. For, though I could be nothing to the worthy man, I pitied his desolation and his hopeless love. Willing or not, he was now obliged to let me go at once."

"Poor woman!" I said. "How you must have suffered in returning to the old scenes which had so many hated associations."

"You are wrong," she answered. "Those few weeks on the estate are among the most consoling my life has known. I saw none of the faces that were repulsive to me--indeed many of those I held dear were also missing. Aunt Elizabeth had slept for six years in the family vault. Her 'inconsolable husband,' as he styles himself on the tombstone, coupled with a verse from the Bible expressing a hope of a reunion--perhaps you have seen it in the newspaper?--Uncle Achatz, went to France directly after the funeral, accompanied by the young Englishwoman, who, after the separation from Mademoiselle Suzon, had become indispensable to him as a reader and companion. In Paris, where to improve his finances he frequented gambling-houses, he met a doubtful character, who quarreled with him at faro and then shot him in a duel. As the traveling companion disappeared the same day, leaving nothing of any value, the unfortunate man was buried in a very simple manner at the expense of the Prussian embassy, and is still awaiting in French soil the day when he is to be interred by his wife's side. Hitherto my young cousin has lacked time and means to do this. Immediately after his father's death, he set to work zealously, under Uncle Joachim's supervision, to extricate his financial affairs from their utter disorder, and

in every possible way improve the estate, so that in time the former splendor of the family might be restored. I should have been very glad to see Achatz, who had not been your pupil one whole summer entirely in vain. But just before I arrived he had set out with his young wife on a wedding journey to Italy. Nor did I see my cousin Leopoldine, who as you know married Cousin Kasimir, and has had no light cross to bear. My best friend, Mother Lieschen, had long since gone to her last rest. So I found only the old servants, the gardener, the villagers, who were all fond of me because Aunt Elizabeth's kind deeds reached them by my hands--and my dear old uncle, the sight of whom fairly startled me. He was sitting, crippled with gout, our family disease, in an uncomfortable chair by the stove, his dog, a grand-daughter of our old Diana, lying beside him, and his pipe, which had gone out, between his teeth. He could not light it himself with his bandaged hands, and Liborius did not always have time to attend to him. But his mind was as clear and bright as in his best days, and his old heart still throbbed as warmly as ever. I can not tell you, dear Johannes, what joy and enlightenment, even amid the saddest feelings, I experienced during those last days spent with the dying man. There the last ring forged around me by my own hard fate was shattered into fragments, and I felt ashamed of my weak-hearted melancholy in the presence of the quiet, brave, cheerful sufferer, who never allowed a complaint to escape his lips. Only when the pain became too severe, a stifled *nom d'un nom!* sometimes slipped through his teeth with the smoke, and then he begged me to put my hand on his heart, that the raging thing might feel its mistress.

"So he at last died, with a chivalrous jest on his lips and a loving look at me. The gout, as people say, went to his heart. It was not until after his death that I fully realized what a noble man he had been. I sat for hours beside the open coffin, and resolved that I would fight as bravely through the span of life still left me, and again look forth upon the world with cheerful eyes.

"But I could not yet devote myself to my own affairs, an epidemic of measles had broken out in the village, and I was needed from early till late, in house after house, to help the doctor abolish the absurd torments still in use from the treatment of ancient times. Meanwhile, the small sum of money I had brought with me was consumed in the expenses of my uncle's funeral and the needs of the village hospital. When at last the disease attacked me also, I had just enough left to pay for the carriage which was to bring me here to my old friend.

"But when I had arrived it seemed kinder not to startle this faithful man, perhaps even expose him to the same calamity by summoning him to my sick bed. So I waited till I had had my first bath, which I took yesterday, and now I can give you my hand without peril, and tell you how glad I am that a respite on this chilly earth is still granted me, and that I hope to enjoy a few more beautiful springs in this lower world."

She had again given me her hand, which I now raised to my lips.

"Frau Luise," I replied, "you have bestowed upon me the greatest joy and honor I have ever experienced. I value your coming here as highly as though you had dubbed me a knight. And, in truth, during all these years, I have felt myself your knight and worn your colors."

A slight flush mounted into her face, which made her look still younger. "Do not overestimate me," she replied. "I had two objects in coming, only one of which was unselfish. I wanted to see you again to have you help me in my need, but also, it is true, to provide for your own future."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "What future can there be for a man like me, whose presence no one would miss. You see, my dear friend, men of my stamp are indispensable to the human race, but only like the stones the architect cements together in the earth, that they may form a solid foundation for his proud temple. We are invisibly bound together, and render service as a whole, but the individual is not much noticed; even if he is moldering, he does his duty while he fills his little space. Why do you talk to me of the future? So long as you stay with me, time will vanish."

Luise shook her head gravely.

"I am not in question," she replied, "and, if we are to remain good friends, you must not make any more of these extravagant speeches. You are no longer an enthusiastic youth, but still young enough to take a fresh start in life, have a beloved wife and a house full of children, without entirely forgetting your old friend. It is not necessary to have a proud ideal of the future for that. But you ought to be ashamed of so depreciating yourself, burying your talent, dreaming and grieving away your life in this secluded hamlet, instead of seeking a sphere of influence where all your gifts might develop. Or, if you have lost the courage and desire to live for mankind, why will you not at least make one individual happy, and diffuse warmth enough from your hearth-stone to benefit the immediate neighborhood?"

"Because I am no longer free, but have long languished in bonds and fetters," I replied, and, unbuttoning my vest at the neck, drew out her gold chain, which I never laid aside. She again flushed slightly, but forced herself to assume a stern expression, and said: "You are incorrigible; but I won't give you up yet. I know that you will do much to afford me pleasure. First, however, you must do me another service. I have told you that I spent my last thalers for the carriage which brought me here. I should like to look about me for another position, where I can make myself useful, and you shall help me by advancing a small sum. I don't need much, but I haven't paid a farthing in this house, and should not like to live on at the expense of a community upon

which I have not even the claim of being a native of the place. But I am not too proud to beg from you."

"You could have made me no more valuable gift," I exclaimed. "And now we won't say another word about this trifle. Tell me about yourself, and, above all, whether you are well cared for here, and what I can do for your comfort."

She smiled again.

"I am treated like a princess. You know that old women were always fond of me. Now I have no less than seven of them in one group, and they are so attentive and so jealous of my favor that I am obliged to act on the defensive. Whenever I rang, all seven of them would come hobbling in to ask my wishes. They felt honored by the presence of an ex-Canonesse in the almshouse; the coachman, who came from our estate, had told them who I was, or rather might be, if I had not destroyed my own prospects. My coming here ill with such a commonplace disease, and lying down contentedly in so plain a bed, as if I had never slept in a castle, won their hearts at a single stroke. But, to escape their officious zeal without wounding the jealous devotion of any one, I arranged to have each dame serve me one day in the week. In this way I learned to know them all, and am now aware of everything Mother Schulzen, Mother Jenicke, Mother Grabow and the others have suffered during their insignificant, sorrowful lives. But you will be little interested in this. Besides, I have already talked too much--the doctor would scold. Go now, dear friend, and if you have time come again to-morrow. While I am here, we will see a great deal of each other."

These were pleasant and prophetic words. I owe the happiest part of my life to the time Frau Luise spent beneath this humble roof.

Of course, I now visited her daily, and as she rapidly recovered our talks became longer, so, when the last snow had disappeared and the world grew warm and bright again, we did not stay within the four bare walls, but took the most delightful walks, at first near the house and church, but afterward we rambled for hours along the shore of the lake, and even entered the little grove beyond.

We were always compelled to do this when my princess desired to escape from the attendance of her court. So long as we remained near the house, the seven old dames persistently followed us, the one who was on duty that day in front, the six others, each holding her knitting in her old withered hands, behind, as if to do the honors of the neighborhood, but really because their hearts drew them to this new inmate of the household. They seemed to find comfort in merely looking at her or hearing the distant sound of her voice. But their feeble old limbs would not carry many of them farther than the shore of the lake, and the two youngest, who were only seventy and still very vigorous, dared not take any special liberties.

We never went into the city. Frau Luise did not wish to fan the public curiosity, already excited. True, the burgomaster had considered it his duty to wait upon the lady, and urge her to move into more elegant lodgings which he had secured for her.

He, too, was so charmed by her appearance and manner that his first embarrassment soon vanished, especially after she had requested him not to call her Baroness, but simply Frau Spielberg, and had thanked him for the hospitality extended to her here. So comfortable an abode for old women--to whose number she herself would soon belong--could scarcely be found in the whole Mark, and she begged to be allowed to stay until she had decided how to shape her future life.

But, as she could remain nowhere without bestowing on her environments the impress of her own nature, the burgomaster at his first visit marveled at the changed appearance of the almshouse and its inmates. The seven old dames, who had formerly crept about in forlorn tatters, with their thin hair hanging over their brows, and lines of discontent on their faces--nay, sometimes bearing tokens of very unchristian deeds, the result of their quarrels--suddenly appeared transformed into neat, civil matrons, for they had noticed that they did not please their mistress unless they appeared with clean faces and carefully mended dresses. Even the building itself had changed. The corridors and rooms were spick and span from scouring, and strewn with clean sand. The most beautiful of all was the garden, a narrow strip of ground beneath the low windows. Without saying much about it, Frau Luise one day dug with her own hands the patch below her own window, divided it into small beds, and planted some flowers she had asked me to get for her. Her old guard had scarcely seen this ere they became possessed with an ambition to imitate the noble lady, and, as the latter willingly helped them with seeds and young plants, the wilderness, in which formerly nothing but nettles and weeds of all kinds had flourished, was transformed into a gay garden, and under each window stood a small, rudely made bench, painted with cheap green paint, on which every leisure evening one of the old cronies sat in the sunset glow with the everlasting knitting in her lap.

I had ordered Frau Luise's bench to be made somewhat larger, so that there was room for a slender person by her side. There I sat many an hour, often with a book from which I read aloud to her, or talking cheerfully and earnestly about God and the world, not infrequently recalling memories of the beloved child, whose smallest trait of character had not been forgotten by either of us. His father's name was never mentioned. I only knew that he was still dragging out his

useless existence in some foreign land.

At that time I learned to know the deep wisdom of the words "All things work together for good to them that love God." For all the good and evil, strange and detestable things this woman had experienced, had worked together in her strong, clear soul, till after the dross had been separated pure gold remained. Now, as ever, she was reluctant to needlessly mention the name of God, and, had she been catechized about her faith, probably would not have passed the examination well. But she possessed the consciousness that, whenever she went down into the depths of her heart, she would find the spirit of peace, love, and truth, and this consciousness was so vivid that a divine calmness and confidence, visible to the dullest senses, illumined her brow. But a new trait in her was a peculiar sense of humor, a mirthfulness which had rarely flashed out in her youth, yet now appeared to be the predominant mood of her nature. When she was gay, she could make the most comical remarks about herself and her surroundings, mutual old acquaintances, and the seven dames knitting on their little benches, remarks whose drollery could not be surpassed by Dickens or Thackeray. Her merry satire did not even spare me. But, as I was utterly defenseless, she soon let the subject drop, though she could see by my hearty laughter that I was flattered rather than offended.

This uniformly charming idyl would have satisfied all my wishes, had I been able to shake off the fear that it would some day come to an end. For Frau Luise daily studied all the advertisements for governesses or nurses, and several times had applied for something, fortunately without success. I racked my brains to discover some plan that would keep her near me. But, though she unhesitatingly accepted my friendly assistance as a loan, she was inexorable whenever I spoke of having no question concerning "mine and thine" rise between us in the future.

"Whoever can work must gain a living!" she answered once, in a tone that deprived me of all courage to return to the subject.

Then a fortunate chance caused, in a very simple and easy way, the fulfillment of the sum total of my wishes.

One Sunday afternoon in May we had taken a delightful walk, and on our return the little almshouse chapel stood before us in its dense robe of ivy, illumined by the full radiance of the sun, looking so beautiful and venerable that, for the first time, we gazed at it attentively and remarked how strange it was that we had never desired to see the interior. Though we now heard from the seven matrons that it was perfectly bare and the walls had nothing but spiders' webs, Frau Luise asked for the key, which had not been used for years, and, attended by the whole train of knitting courtiers, we entered the deserted old chapel.

There was, in truth, nothing remarkable to be seen. A tolerably bright light fell through four long, narrow, arched windows, but illumined nothing save bare walls destitute of pillars, entablatures, or other architectural decorations. Within the choir there was only the square, brick foundation of the altar, raised one step above the floor. In a corner opposite stood a bier covered with a black pall, thickly coated with dust. The little almshouse chapel had doubtless served for a receiving tomb so long as the graveyard outside was used. This thought did not make the cellar-like place more agreeable, and we were about to go back to the warm spring sunshine when my eyes fell upon a high, narrow, wooden box, which stood on the other side just opposite to the altar. Great was my surprise when, after having vainly fumbled about the case for a time, a lid suddenly flew back, and an old harmonium appeared. How it came there I could never ascertain. These instruments are still very rare in our province, and it is hardly probable that years ago the almshouse had a pious and wealthy patron in the city, who desired to aid the religious service in the poor little church by such an endowment.

So we examined our treasure with astonished eyes. When I touched the keys, dull and somewhat rusty, yet not wholly discordant notes stole forth, as if the sleeping soul, so long confined there, were waking, and its first sound was a timid expression of thanks to its deliverers.

The case was instantly drawn forward, and I prepared to play. Frau Luise, with sparkling eyes, came to my side. I began "A mountain fastness is our Lord," and she joined in with her voice, at first timidly, it was so long since she had sung a note, but soon with all her former depth of feeling, till my heart thrilled with ecstasy. When it was over, I began the introduction to our beloved Orpheus aria, and how my friend's marvelous alto voice rang through the lofty, empty chapel! The seven old dames sat silently on the step of the altar, the click of the knitting-needles was no longer heard, nothing mingled with the melody except the low twittering of the birds. So in the utmost delight we practiced for some time, not stopping with this one aria, and many airs which we had sung to our little Joachim returned to his mother's mind.

At last emotion overpowered her, and I ceased playing, rose, and held out my hand, which she cordially pressed. We knew what remained unuttered.

"This must not be the last time we are happy here," I said; "later in the summer this concert-room will be a pleasant refuge, though now the damp, close atmosphere oppresses us. I wonder that you could control your voice so well, Frau Luise."

She made no reply, but passed out through the doorway. I walked by her side, and the seven maids-of-honor followed. But what was our amazement to see a crowd of people gathered outside the threshold, who respectfully formed into two lines to allow the singer and her train to pass. Not only some of the plain people from the few neighboring houses had flocked hither, attracted by the music, but several of the prominent families in the city, among them the burgomaster and his two daughters, who while returning from a Sunday walk had heard with astonishment the strong, beautiful tones issuing from the long silent chapel, and stopped to enjoy the free concert.

The burgomaster himself, a great lover of music, seemed so amazed by the discovery that so admirable an artist had been concealed in the humble almshouse that he did not utter a word to express his homage--only bowed low and silently lifted his hat as she passed. The audience of both high and low degree speedily dispersed; yet, as I walked home in the evening, I caught many a word from the worthy citizens, sitting before their doors or going to get their beer, which betrayed how our church-music still echoed in the ears of the listeners.

The Canoness at the almshouse formed the topic of every conversation during the evening, and no three women whispered together ten minutes over their coffee without saying something for or against their interesting new neighbor.

When, on the following afternoon, I went to my friend, she asked, smiling: "Guess what distinguished visitor I have had to-day, Johannes?" Then she told me that the burgomaster himself had called on her, and, amid many compliments on her singing, asked if she would give lessons to his daughters. The two girls, who had been waiting outside, entered, blushing, and, as she did not refuse the request, sang to her at their father's bidding in fresh, though untrained, young voices, after which she gladly consented to give them two lessons a week, and was to begin the next morning. The only point now was to procure a piano, the harmonium being far too powerful to be used to accompany singing.

It was difficult for me to repress my joy at these glad tidings. Now she is ours, I thought. Now she need no longer pore over the advertisements in the last pages of the Voss and Spener journals.

But I said quite calmly: "This happens capitally. I have a piano"--this one luxury had been procured for little money, as, though the old instrument was originally good, it had seen much service--"and I will send it early to-morrow to the almshouse, where there are plenty of vacant rooms which would be cheerfully given up to you for your lessons."

This plan was accomplished. Ere a month had passed, all the girls from fifteen to five-and-twenty were enrolled in my friend's volunteer corps of singers, and it was considered as fashionable to send a daughter to the Canoness as it is in the capitals to secure admission to the conservatory.

She had fixed a very moderate price for her lessons. Still, as she also superintended choir-singing, and soon had all her time occupied, her income was so large that I jestingly said she would soon be able to buy an estate.

She shrugged her shoulders, smiling, and I well knew what this meant. For her left hand was never aware of what her right hand was doing, and, though our town had an organized system of charity, there was ample opportunity for deeds of benevolence.

We never exchanged a word about her remaining in the almshouse. But she persistently resisted the entreaties of her young pupils and their parents to move into better lodgings in the city. "I could not do without my seven guardian angels," she said, smiling. She merely obtained somewhat better furniture for her room, sent for Uncle Joachim's old chest of drawers and the two pictures of Napoleon--he had left her everything he possessed--and added two beautiful engravings from my aunt's legacy. The large room with two windows, adjoining her own, was fitted up for her lessons, and my piano was moved into it. Many an afternoon, when I had arrived before the close of the lessons, I sat outside on the bench in her little garden, listening to the chirping within, the regular *solfeggios* and runs, and the magnificent bell-like tones of the teacher ringing out between them, or the sweet voices of the full choir, which practiced not only solemn *motettos* and *cantatas*, but sought recreation in Mendelssohn, Schubert, and Schumann.

The service she was rendering the young people could not fail to dispel their parents' prejudices against the wife of the strolling actor, and make them endeavor to draw her to their houses. But on this point she was inexorable. "I detest these provincial entertainments," she said to me. "I will cheerfully give the people among whom I live as much of my life as can be of service to them, but the rest I will keep for myself. To sit on the sofa a whole evening between the wives of the burgomaster and the councilor, and talk about servants and betrothals, would kill me. Besides, my opinions would rouse their displeasure before an hour was over. There is where Mother Schulzen, Mother Grabow, and the other five Fates deserve praise. They think me a saint, though I don't go to church."

But, while she retained this view and avoided the society of the mothers, she was all the more friendly in her intercourse with the daughters. Every other Sunday her pupils, about twenty in number, were allowed to spend the evening with her, and she gave them a little supper of tea, cake, and bread and butter. But these pleasant meetings were not intended merely for merry talk

with the children--they were expected to produce better results. She read to them from the works of our classic writers the most beautiful and ennobling selections adapted to their age and culture, a couple of acts from one of Schiller's tragedies, which they were afterward to finish at home, once the whole of Iphigenia, at another time ballads from Goethe and Uhland, and then let her youthful audience express their ideas of what they had heard, only adding a few wise remarks of her own.

I did not attend these readings, but took the liberty of lingering outside the open window and listening to her recitations. I will not speak of the indescribable enjoyment that fell to my lot. But, though my love for this woman may make me appear somewhat partial, the assertion can be believed that she would have surpassed many a famed tragic actress, had she given her readings on the stage.

How completely she captivated her young listeners!

Many of the older people were made somewhat anxious by finding that the actor's wife was on such intimate terms with her young pupils that she directed not only their singing but their thoughts and feelings. But the last ice melted, though it was the very middle of winter; when a nocturnal conflagration destroyed several houses and robbed some families of their whole property. Frau Luise instantly advertised a concert in the town-hall for the benefit of the sufferers. She herself sang, her pupils helped to the best of their ability in solos, choir-singing, and recitations. Every nook in the hall, spite of the high price of admission, was occupied, and the next day there was but *one* verdict in house and hovel, namely, that no such pleasure had ever been enjoyed by even the oldest inhabitants, and no more noble soul ever dwelt in woman's breast than in the tuneful one of this greatly misjudged lady.

So she had reached this point.

The swan, that had lost its way in the marsh, had plunged into the clear water of this quiet country lake, shaken its feathers, and lo! they were once more snow-white as in its early days.

Even the pastor, who had been unable to forgive her for not appearing at his church and having even chosen as her only intimate friend a renegade theologian, whom he could not help doubly condemning--even this zealous shepherd of souls could not permanently refuse her his esteem. After the concert he called on her, and had a conversation which lasted two hours. I met him just as he was leaving the almshouse. His face looked as I imagine Moses' might have done after he had seen the Lord in the naming bush. I did not even consider this strange. What victory over human hearts might I not have expected this woman to achieve!

The "overflowing treasure of grace" she so lavishly bestowed benefited me also. For the first time, my modest greeting to the secretly resentful man was returned with a friendly gesture, in which I fancied I noticed a shade of curious interest. We afterward became better acquainted, and learned to sincerely value each other.

My position as the Canoness's special friend was of course much envied by my colleagues and other acquaintances, and many questions were asked about her. But, as I had no intimacies, I was not obliged to put any unusual bolts on my heart, that it might keep its secrets. And I must add one thing more which, amid such narrow, provincial environments, does the highest honor to human nature: never, by even the most trivial jest, was the slightest shadow cast upon the purity of my intercourse with her.

Nay, a still more extraordinary thing: even the most arrogant among the wives of the dignitaries willingly yielded her the precedence she never claimed, and without envy or hatred beheld this stranger, who had been received into the almshouse from Christian charity, ruling the city as it were from her little room--at least, in all matters relating to the common welfare of the inhabitants and their intellectual life. Even the burgomaster's wife and her friends, who gathered at society meetings and coffee-parties, did not consider it beneath their dignity to seek the Canoness's advice on any charitable business, or any question concerning education or etiquette, with a faith as devout as if the almshouse were the oracle of Delphi, and Frau Luise sat on the tripod as priestess. She told me the drollest stories about these occasions, which I, as a faithful servant of the temple, vowed to silence, must not betray here.

Thus the renown of her talents and virtues could not fail to extend beyond the precincts of our little town, till at last even the newspapers mentioned her. She took no notice of it; indeed, she did not look at the papers, now that the advertisements no longer interested her. I think she secretly dreaded to accidentally read the name of the man whom she desired to forever forget.

But her concert for the sufferers by the conflagration had made such a sensation that all Preignitz and Uckermark rang with its fame. So one day, when I came to chat with her a little while after she had finished her lessons, I saw standing in front of the almshouse a dusty carriage, on whose door I recognized the coat of arms of her own family, though the faces of coachman and footman were unfamiliar to me.

Nevertheless, I did not hesitate to knock at her door, and, on entering, saw a pretty, stylish young lady sitting on the sofa by her side, while at the first glance I recognized in her companion my former pupil--Baron Achatz. He had not grown much taller, but a little blonde mustache had

ventured forth under his turned-up Zieten nose, and the light-blue eyes beneath his low brow had so frank an expression that I was instantly reminded of his excellent mother, now resting in the peace of God.

"Come nearer, my dear friend," cried Frau Luise. "You will find an old acquaintance, who has already been inquiring for you, and his young wife. This is our candidate, dear Luitgarde, of whom Achatz has often told you. What do you say, Herr Johannes? My cousins have come in person to invite me to spend the rest of my life with them. They have heard I was an inmate of an almshouse, which did not seem to them a proper place for a member of their family. Now they want to carry me off in triumph to their castle, like a precious jewel that has been taken from the family treasures and at last found again. Is it not kind in these young people, who could not be blamed if, for a time, they had thought only of themselves and their own happiness. But you are misinformed, my dear cousins. I live here just as I desire, and want for nothing, though my claims upon life are not the most modest. Tell Achatz, my dear Johannes, how I am spoiled here. Am I not pleasantly lodged? The adjoining room is my music-hall, and my reception-day is always crowded. The attendance leaves me nothing to desire, seven maids and waiting-women, whose united ages number more than five hundred years; where should I ever find the like again? If you could stay longer, you would be convinced that I am at least as well cared for here as though I were living in a chapter, while I need not even wear the veil and dress of the order, but can cut my garments according to my own taste. Nevertheless, I thank you from my heart for your kind intentions"--and as she spoke she kissed the young wife, whose blushes followed each other in swift succession--"but, if you really must go to-day, you must first see that your old cousin can offer her guests a very tolerable cup of tea. First, however, I will take you over my little kingdom, of whose orderly government I am so vain that the sarcastic candidate is fond of calling me 'the queen of the almshouse.'"

She rose, tied her little black kerchief over her hair, and then drew the young baroness' slender arm through hers. We men followed, and, while Frau Luise, with sportive self-ridicule, pointed out all the modest beauties of the building and its environs, and finally gathered a bouquet for the bride in her little garden, my pupil (pardon the slip) plucked up courage to beg me, in a whisper, to persuade his cousin to accept his well-meant offer. Even if she herself was satisfied with her humble position, it would place him and the whole family in a bad light if it should be rumored that he had allowed his nearest relative to live in an almshouse, and from considerations of kinship she owed it to him and to herself to return to--

"My dear baron," I replied, "you overestimate my influence with your cousin. She knows exactly what she owes to herself. But, if you speak of family considerations, allow me to say, with all the freedom warranted by my old acquaintance with you, that the occurrences during your father's life-time must absolve Frau Luise before God and man from any duty to her family. And now, pray, let us say no more about it. I congratulate you sincerely upon your marriage. Your wife seems endowed with every physical and mental gift that would have led your mother to greet her joyfully as her son's wife, and love her most tenderly."

The good fellow silently pressed my hand, and I saw his honest little eyes sparkle.

When we returned to the house--the lake and ivy-mantled chapel had fairly enraptured the somewhat romantic young wife--we found the tea-table set, a task for which Mother Schulzen, whose day it was, possessed especial skill, and supplied with fresh bread, golden butter, and a little cold meat. "The cups are not Sèvres," said Frau Luise in a jesting tone, "and, as I had more pressing wants than silver table-ware, you must be content with pewter spoons and bone-handled knives and forks. While I am making the tea, friend Johannes will give you a proof of his greatest talent, which consists in buttering bread."

She was so irresistibly charming in her quiet cheerfulness that the young wife at last lost her embarrassment, and we four sat together for an hour, talking in the gayest manner like old friends. When the time for departure had come, the ladies affectionately embraced each other, and promised to correspond regularly. The young baron kissed his cousin's hand, but she embraced him with maternal tenderness, saying: "I can not see the kind face you have inherited from your mother, Achate, without remembering how often I kissed that saintly woman's cheek. Now, farewell; remember me to old Liborius, and Krischan, too, though he has become a drunkard, and, when you meet Leopoldine, tell her that I should be very glad to see her again. But traveling is uncomfortable for an old woman like myself; she must come to me."

This visit, which of course was much discussed in the little city, greatly increased and strengthened the love and reverence my friend enjoyed. It was considered greatly to her credit that she had resisted the temptation to return to her aristocratic circle, and preferred the humble almshouse to the proud castle. Mother Schulzen, of course, under the pretext that she must be close at hand, had listened at the door, and, though she usually declared herself to be hard of hearing, had not lost a word of the conversation.

From that time Frau Luise was secretly regarded as a sort of honorary citizen of our town, and would have been cheerfully granted the most jealously guarded privilege of citizenship, that of fishing in the lake, had she displayed any love for angling.

Yet she continued to live on in the unassuming manner previously described, and, as she

enjoyed perfect health, she compared, in her droll way, her own condition with that of the little dismantled steamer that lay anchored in the calm inland lake, resting comfortably from every storm.

But one more tempest burst over her, which threatened to shake even her steadfast nature.

We had been permitted for three years to call her ours. Spring had come again, but no March snow-flakes were fluttering through the air as in the time when she arrived; the sun was shining brightly, and, as the song says, the weather tempted one to walk. Still, though it was Saturday afternoon and school had therefore been dismissed, I was obliged to leave her earlier than usual, as I had taken charge of the lessons in German for a sick colleague, and had a whole pile of exercise-books to correct by Monday.

I was sitting at my work again early Sunday morning, when a hurried message, brought by one of the seven almshouse dames, startled me. I must come at once to the Canoness--as her train preferred to call her.

I could not learn what had happened from the messenger. It was not *her day*, and she had not seen Frau Luise.

When I entered, I was no little surprised to find her in bed for the first time since I had known her. She tried to smile in order to soothe me, but it was only like a fleeting sunbeam which instantly vanished behind clouds of gloom.

"My life is not threatened, dear friend," said she; "nay, I am not even really ill--only so exhausted by mental emotion that, when I tried to rise, I fell back again. Sit down and listen."

She then related the horrible story. On the afternoon of the previous day, as, lured by the beautiful sunshine, she continued her walk alone as far as the lake, a wretched figure had suddenly confronted her, just at the spot where a group of willows cast a dense shade. It was a man with long, gray locks and a haggard, sunken face, holding his hat in his hand with the gesture of a mendicant. Lost in thought, she had not at first noticed him particularly, but felt in her pocket to throw alms into his hat. Suddenly the beggar seized her hand, and, covering it with passionate kisses, exclaimed: "Do you no longer know me, Luise?"

The sudden fright fairly made her heart stop beating. She could not move a limb, but, wrenching her hand from his grasp, stood staring at him, as though the specter must dissolve into mist before her eyes.

But unhappily it remained, tangible and audible, and the wife perceived with horror the ruin time had wrought in the proud and stately man. Absolutely unable to utter a word, she had been forced to listen to the long, carefully-studied speech, in which the hapless actor gave her a succinct account of his adventures and experiences in two hemispheres, protested his eternal love and longing for his worshiped wife, and in exaggerated theatrical phrases besought her forgiveness.

Not until he paused and, panting for breath, again tried to take her hand, did she recover sufficient self-control to retreat a step and say, "We have parted forever." With these words she turned to leave him. But he grasped her dress, and again began the litany of his complaints, entreaties, and self-reproaches. Fearing that some person might pass whom the desperate man would make a witness of this pathetic scene, she imperiously commanded him to leave her at once, but inquire for her in the evening at that house--she pointed to the almshouse.

"And you did not inform me at once?" I interposed.

"Why should I, dear friend? I knew what I had to do, and no one could represent me. True, the hours before night closed in--the bitter and anxious feelings seething in my soul, shame at the thought that I had once imagined I loved this man, horror of his presence, and grief for the downfall of a human being who had once been good and noble--you can easily understand how all these things agitated me. But when he entered, I had at least attained sufficient outward composure to tell him my decision in curt, resolute words."

"'You will swear,' I said, 'never to appear before my face again. Your sins against me have long since been forgiven. You were like one dead to me, and will be so once more as soon as the door has closed between us. But you must remain unknown to others, and therefore must agree never to mention your name here, and to leave this place early to-morrow morning, not to return. The little I have saved I will give you. But, if you rely on my weakness and ever again remind me of your existence, either verbally or in writing, I will appeal to the protection of the law, and use the right of self-defense. Here on the table is the money. It will be enough to pay your passage to America. What you do there is your own affair. I have made many sacrifices for your sake; I will not allow you to ruin the last remnant of life and peace I have won.'

"Spare me the description of the scene the unfortunate man now rehearsed," she continued. "Dragging himself to me on his knees, he poured forth flatteries, curses on his evil destiny, imprecations on the stupid world that leaves genius to languish--in short, he used the whole stock of his pitiful theatrical arts. When he saw that he made no impression upon me, he staggered to

his feet, straightened his shabby velvet coat, tossed back his thin locks, with a look into yonder little mirror, and then cast a quick glance toward the table on which the money lay. My loathing, especially as he diffused a horrible odor of bad liquor, had grown so strong that I was afraid every moment of fainting. Fortunately he speedily released me from his intolerable presence. With a flood of high-sounding words, he swore to respect my wish, until I myself changed, which he expected sooner or later from my generous heart. Meantime he found himself compelled to accept one last favor from me, of course only as a loan, which he would repay with interest, when I had become convinced of his complete regeneration, and recalled him to spend the evening of our lives in loving harmony, and look back with a pitying smile on the storm and stress of our wandering youth.

"With these words he went to the table, put the money in his breast-pocket, made a movement as if to take my hand, but, when I drew back, cast a sorrowful glance heavenward, and with a low bow tottered out of the room.

"I listened to discover whether he really went away. Then, with trembling hands, for I did not feel absolutely secure from a fresh surprise, I bolted the door, and threw myself, utterly exhausted, upon the bed.

"I told myself that I could have pursued no other course--that his life was not to be saved, even if I threw my own into the gulf of ruin after it. Yet, my friend--the man whom I was forced to drive from my threshold had once laid his hand in mine for an eternal union--and had been the father of my beloved child.

"I did not sleep quietly an hour. Every time the spring wind shook my window and rattled the blind, I started up and listened to hear if he was standing outside, rapping. And to-day I feel as though I were paralyzed, and moreover have constantly before my eyes the piteous figure of the poor, homeless man, and tremble at the thought of the woe that may still be in store for us both."

She then begged me to inquire whether he had been seen in the city, or where he had gone. I soon brought her news that he had spent the night at the "Crown Prince," did not enter the public-room, but ordered wine and rum to be brought to him. He had not mentioned his name, and early that morning--about eight o'clock--had departed as he came, on foot and without luggage, after paying his bill and buying a bottle of brandy to take with him. After giving the waiter a thaler for his fee, he turned his steps toward the north.

I succeeded in partially soothing her agitated mind. I spent nearly the whole day with her, played some of her favorite melodies, and shared the simple meal brought to her bed-side. When I at last went away, she pressed my hand with a touching look of gratitude. "Don't forsake me, dear friend," she said. "And do not think me an affected simpleton, because I am lying here so helpless. I shall be in my place again to-morrow. Only I will defer our spring concert"--she had been in the habit of giving a musical entertainment, aided by her pupils, every three months--"for a fortnight. I fear I should not be able to sing with them now."

These words proved true, but not in the way she had meant.

Her great strength of will soon roused her from the lethargy into which the sad meeting with her husband had plunged her, and even on Monday she gave her lessons as though nothing had occurred. But on Friday news came that tore the old wounds open afresh.

A few miles down the river, near a little village, a fisherman had found, drifting in the water among the reeds, the body of a man with long gray locks, dressed in a black-velvet coat. It must have been there several days, for it was swollen and livid, like the corpses of the drowned who do not instantly rise to the surface; besides, the pocket-book containing his papers was completely sodden, and the money in it spoiled by the water. In each of his two pockets he carried a half-empty bottle. There could be no doubt that he had met with his death while in a state of bewilderment, perhaps partial unconsciousness. With the exception of an American passport bearing a foreign name, nothing was found on him that could throw any light upon his personal relations.

Nevertheless the rumor spread with amazing celerity through the whole neighborhood that the Canoness's missing husband had returned to find his death in the waves of their native river. The burgomaster called on Frau Luise to impart the sad news considerably. But the old gossips who served her had anticipated him.

I was with her when she received the visit of the father of the city. "It is true," she said, "the man is my unfortunate husband. But do not expect me to feign a grief I do not feel. That he sought death I do not believe. He was supplied with money, and could indulge his sole passion, which had stifled all his nobler feelings. His death was an easy one, and now the poor restless wanderer has found repose. You can not desire me to see him again. Have him buried as quietly as possible; I will place a cross upon the grave at my own expense." Then, in a few brief words, she told the worthy magistrate about her last interview with the dead man.

This occasion clearly revealed the love and esteem in which she was held by the whole community, high and low. There was not a single malicious gossip who molested her with a visit of feigned condolence, while secretly gloating over the fact that the husband of this much-lauded

woman had met with a miserable end like any common vagabond. On the contrary, all who could boast of her acquaintance endeavored to show her by little attentions that the misfortune of her life, which had here reached so tragical an end, had only made them love and honor her the more. Not one of her pupils came to take a singing-lesson without bringing a bunch of violets or early lilies-of-the-valley, or a hyacinth raised at home, and no coffee-party was given from which the hostess did not send her a plate of cakes, which, it is true, only benefited the almshouse dames. Though Frau Luise gratefully appreciated these discreet tokens of affection, she was remarkably quiet and thoughtful. She wore no mourning robe, but her soul seemed muffled in a black veil.

This mood was deepened by the death of the oldest of the almshouse dames, a feeble crone of eighty-four, who had recently been unable to perform her duties as attendant. During the last three days she was unconscious, and her exhausted flame of life went out without a flicker: When I spoke to my friend, who had not left her side, of this easy death as something enviable, she shook her head gravely, and replied: "I would prefer a different one, like my dear Uncle Joachim's. I wish to be conscious when I am dying, to experience my own death, and not, so to speak, steal out of the world behind my own back."

She insisted that, at the burial in the almshouse church-yard--where only the inmates of the almshouse were interred--her pupils should sing a choral and Mendelssohn's "It is Appointed by God's Will," an honor which had never before fallen to a poor woman's lot, so that some wiseacres asserted she was overdoing the matter. But that did not trouble her in the least.

"When they bear me out some day," she said, as we returned from the funeral, "see, dear friend, that I, too, find my last resting-place yonder. I do not wish to be dragged through the whole city to the other cemetery, with its pompous marble monuments. And place no cross on my grave. I have borne it enough during my life; in death, let the earth rest lightly on me. What I possess will go to my old guard; you must attend to it, after first choosing some memento you value. Promise me that! I have written my last will and given it to the burgomaster."

These words could not specially disturb or sadden me. I saw her walking by my side in the full vigor of life, and though, since the day she had sustained such a fright, her hair had grown still more silvery, she seemed, in her gentle melancholy, younger and fairer than ever.

She was also even more affectionate and tender to all, including myself. And, though I had already passed my fortieth year and ought to have grown sensible, her mild words and the faint air of sadness that surrounded her fanned the old flames I had with so much difficulty subdued, and one evening they not only flashed from my eyes but darted from my tongue.

The heat for several days had been equal to that of summer, so we had been weeding and watering the young plants in her garden. Then we sat down side by side on the little bench, and I said: "Do you know, Frau Luise, that this is the anniversary of the day on which, twenty years ago, I first saw you?"

She reflected a short time and then answered: "I have no memory for dates. But I know one thing, Johannes: there has not been a single day since then when I could have doubted you."

While speaking, she gazed thoughtfully into vacancy, as if this great truth were dawning upon her to-day for the first time. This gave me some little encouragement.

"Frau Luise," I continued, "that day seems to me like yesterday. And not one has passed since then that I have not felt you are the dearest creature in the world to me. But must we live on thus to the end, only together a few hours, though we feel that we belong to each other? You have long known my feelings. Can you not resolve to make the bond that unites us still firmer, to grant me the right to lay my whole insignificant self at your feet before the eyes of the world?"

The words had leaped from my lips as if some one else had lured them from my inmost soul, and I was startled at my boldness as I heard the sound of my own voice. I dared not look at her. I felt, or thought I felt, that she was forcing herself to keep calm and not rebuke my presumption. After a long pause, she replied, in a voice whose tones were sorrowful rather than indignant:

"Why have you said this, Johannes? You ought to know me and be aware that I have done with life. Do not suppose that the opinion of the world would awe me, if I felt that I was still young enough to be happy and make others happy. But I was probably never created to devote myself with my whole heart to a single individual, as a true wife ought. Even my unfortunate first love was but a delusion of my imagination. I have every talent for friendship or for being a Sister of Charity, and my most passionate feeling has ever been a fervent sympathy with *pauvre humanité*, as Mademoiselle Suzon said. But you would not wish to be married from compassion.

"No," she continued, as I was about to protest, "it would be a cruel pity. In a few years I should easily pass for your mother, and you would cut a ridiculous figure in attending me through the streets. You are still a young man and a very foolish one, as you have just proved. Your heart must still possess a fountain of youth, though you are no mere lad. Why don't you do me the favor to marry my Agnes, who is nine and twenty, an epitome of every feminine virtue, and, moreover, in love with you?"

This Agnes was her favorite pupil, the daughter of the district physician, and, as I lived opposite to her house, our names had already been associated by the gossips. It was by no means humiliating to be suspected of cherishing a special liking for this exemplary and by no means ugly girl. But, Good Heavens, I!

I could only shake my head and answer: "Why do I not love your Agnes? Because I don't want to marry a bundle of virtues, but one human being, and in fact only that one who in my eyes will always be young, and whom I desire to call mine in order to please no mortal save myself. However, as you have so little love for me that you would willingly serve as a match-maker in my behalf, it was of course folly to ask if you would become Frau Johannes Weissbrod, and I therefore most humbly beg your pardon."

I rose with an uncontrollable sense of grief, and, scarcely bowing to her, stalked away like a thoroughly rude, defiant man.

The next day, it is true, I returned humbly, and remorsefully besought her to forgive my spiteful escapade. She was quite right; I was nothing but a crack-brained young man who grasped at the stars, and in doing so fell on the ground. Frau Luise gazed silently into vacancy, and then said: "The most difficult task and the one we learn latest is to cut our garments according to the cloth, though we feel it will grow with us. Let us say no more about it."

I did not exactly understand what she meant. It became clear to me afterward.

We again lived on as before, and, after she had survived the spring tempest, life seemed to become dear to her once more, though a slight shadow rested on her brow. At Easter she gave her concert for the benefit of the poor, which was a brilliant success. Her birthday came just after Whitsuntide, and, in token of the love and gratitude of the whole community, was to be celebrated with special pomp. I, of course, began the festival with a morning serenade executed under her windows by my pupils, after which she invited the whole choir in and treated them to coffee and cakes. At ten o'clock the burgomaster's wife and her most distinguished friends called, and attended her in a stately procession down to the shore of the lake. There the greatest surprise awaited her. The burgomaster had sent to Berlin several days before for a machinist and some assistants to inspect the little steamer and put her in safe condition to make an excursion over the mirror-like surface of the lake. The boiler and engine were found to be still in tolerable order, and a trial trip was taken at night whose result was perfectly satisfactory.

When we came down to the shore, the little vessel, gayly decked with flags, hung with garlands of fir, and sending upward a light column of smoke from its smokestack, looked extremely pretty and inviting; and Frau Luise's eyes dilated with astonishment when she understood that this smoke was floating from the stack, so long empty, in honor of her. The burgomaster's wife and I led her across the long, swaying plank that extended to the deck; but here she was so startled that she almost made a misstep, for an exultant pæan suddenly resounded with such vehement, youthful energy from invisible throats that it was almost too much for her composure. Her pupils had posted themselves behind a canvas awning, which was afterward drawn over the deck as a protection from the sun, and in the excitement of the moment were singing the festal melody I had composed and arranged with more regard to the feelings of their hearts than the rules of art, by which state of affairs neither words nor music were especially enhanced. However, in the open air and amid the general emotion, this modest overture performed its part acceptably. Then the deck suddenly became thronged with joyous, loving faces; and, when the anchor was weighed and the little vessel swept with majestic calmness through the glittering water, first along the shore and then across the lake to the little grove, while the chorus of fresh young voices, now mindful of every nicety of execution they owed to their mistress, began the superb air, "Who has Thee, Forest Fair--" I saw the sweet face of the woman I loved illumined with gentle, divine emotion, and was forced to turn away that my tears might fall into the water unobserved.

But all this was merely the prelude to the festival. The banquet was served in the wood, where, in an open space under tall fir-trees, stood a large table adorned with bouquets and covered with dishes, which had been brought there early in the morning, and received the last dressing over an improvised hearth by some experienced housekeepers. Under the seat that had been arranged for the heroine of the day lay the gift her young friends had prepared, a large rug for her room, the work of many industrious hands, and as gayly adorned with the most beautiful garlands of roses and arabesques of violets as provincial love could accomplish. Still, here amid the green foliage and before the festal board, the strange work of art with its glaring colors and grotesque flourishes looked very bright, and each of the fellow-workers won from the deeply agitated recipient a kiss and clasp of the hand. After this we took our places at the table, and began the feast with the best possible appetite.

Of course, there was no lack of admirable speeches, merry clinking of glasses, and frequent embraces between the feminine members of the party, during which I played the part of envious spectator. I also contributed my shred to the general eloquence by emptying my glass to the health of the six almshouse dames, who were seated in holiday garb at the table below, and imagined themselves in Paradise--never had they dreamed of such honors and delights on earth. Their patroness, the queen, had not even been obliged to stipulate that they were not to remain at home. The givers of the festival knew that without her faithful followers something would be

lacking from the pleasures of the day.

Of course, the meal did not pass without singing, and, when we had risen from the table and were enjoying a little rest on the moss-grown soil of the wood, the young ladies walked arm in arm in little groups along the dusky woodland-paths, raising their voices in an alternative melody very sweet to hear. All sorts of games followed, in which, however, the presence of young men was secretly missed. I was malicious enough to remain with the mothers or talk with the six or seven fathers who had joined the party, in order not to go near Agnes, whom my cruel friend, as a punishment for my sins, desired to force upon me as a wife.

I saw that the long-continued festivity was wearying her, though she exerted herself to acknowledge, with unvarying winsomeness, the efforts made by these worthy people. I heard her cough, so I drew the burgomaster's wife aside and persuaded her to give the signal for departure.

After some delay and discussion we all went on board the steamer again, and, making a wide sweep around the lake, returned to our harbor.

Frau Luise stood on deck in the bow of the vessel with several of her favorite pupils near her; no one uttered a word. We were allowing the memories of this delightful day to re-echo in our hearts. Her head was turned toward the west, where the sun was slowly sinking, and her dear face and tall figure were warmly illumined by the crimson glow. With what a youthful light her eyes sparkled! The silvery luster of her hair had vanished in the golden radiance. It seemed impossible to believe that this woman had just celebrated her forty-fourth birthday.

"Sing something!" said Agnes, who stood nearest. "Ah, yes, do sing!" entreated the others.

She did not seem to have heard them. Yet suddenly, as if in a dream, she sang, *mezza voce*, an Italian air, an aria from Paësiello, of which she was especially fond. And, as the steamer swept on into the crimson light, the song rose clearer and stronger till she poured forth the full power of her voice, whose every note must have been distinctly audible on the shore. The whole company had gradually glided closer to us, and I saw by their rapt faces how they were enjoying the foreign beauty of the melody, whose words no one understood. Even the people on the shore, peasants with their carts and solitary pedestrians, stopped as if enchanted, and gazed at the black ship slowly dividing the waves bearing a singing nixie on her deck.

Then the vessel turned, and the sun was behind us. The aria was finished, and the burgomaster had given the signal for applause, in which all joined with great fervor. When silence was restored, and the group waited for the singing to be resumed, she began, without waiting to be asked, Beethoven's "Knows't thou the Land!" which she had transposed to suit the deeper notes of her voice. "Mignon certainly had an alto voice," she once jestingly said to me. Never had I heard her sing it so superbly, never heard the "Thither! thither!" express such strong, sweet, uncontrollable yearning. We reached the landing-place just as the last notes died away. The burgomaster was so deeply moved that he forgot to applaud, went to her, and, with tears in his honest old eyes, bent, seized both hands, and faltered: "I thank you, I thank you a thousand times, madame! This is the fairest day of my life! You have made us all happy."

She smiled and looked at me. "It was my swan song," she said. "I fear I shall be obliged to give up singing. Just hear how hoarse this little exertion has suddenly made me."

I saw her shiver slightly, and hastened to wrap a shawl around her. "Good-night, my dear friends," she said. "I owe you all thanks for a pleasure never to be forgotten. Forgive me for taking my leave so abruptly. But this was a little too much joy for an old woman who has not deserved so much love and kindness. No, I am perfectly well; a little rest will make me quite myself again. My beautiful rug must be put in my room at once. I will feast my eyes on the lovely flowers and think of the dear givers till I fall asleep."

She then shook hands with every one. As I helped her across the plank to the shore, I felt the difficulty she experienced in holding herself erect. "It is nothing, dear friend," she whispered hoarsely. "My heart is as light as a bird's, only my limbs are heavy. My good mother Grabow shall put me to bed. Perhaps I took cold in the wood. But you know I am like a cork figure, my head is always uppermost. Good-night."

I had by no means a good night. When, before school the next morning, I inquired at the almshouse for Frau Luise, she was still asleep, that is, she was lying in a feverish dream, raving incoherently without recognizing any one. I spoke to the doctor, who had been already called in the night. The old man had the thoughtful wrinkle between his bushy eyebrows that always boded trouble.

"But she is so strong and full of vital energy," I said.

"The strongest constitutions fare the worst. But we can still hope, and she could not be more carefully nursed if she were a princess."

It was the same at noon. I spent the whole day with her, had a couch made up for me in the music-room at night, and the following morning sent a message to my friend the head teacher--who meantime had been made superintendent of the school--requesting him to do me the favor to

take charge of my classes. I was unable to do my duty while my friend's life was in danger.

This lasted four, five days. The doctor shook his head more and more despairingly. "I can give the disease no special name! It is a sort of nervous fever, but in a very unusual form, and the ordinary remedies do not avail. It is fortunate that she is unconscious. Only the expression of pain on her face shows that she has a dull sense of the life-and-death struggle raging in her frame."

During those days it seemed as though the little almshouse had been transferred to the heart of the city. Instead of being solitary and deserted as usual, it was now constantly surrounded by a crowd of persons of all ages and sexes, treading lightly with a sorrowful look on their faces. They did not venture to ring the bell, and indeed it was not necessary: one of the old dames was constantly cowering outside of the door, and gave to all questions the same sad answer. When prominent people came, I was obliged to go out and reply to the queries myself. Every one thought it was a matter of course that I now belonged to the household.

Scarcely any change occurred in her critical condition, nothing save a slight ebb and flow of the fever, a lower or louder intonation of the voice, as she raved of the visions of her bewildered brain. Sometimes, with wide-open eyes that rested on nothing, she repeated correctly and distinctly a few lines from one of her husband's parts. Sometimes she seemed to be talking with her son, and a happy smile that pierced me to the heart flitted over her colorless lips. Sometimes she sang, but only diatonic scales, and when her voice failed to reach the high notes she shook her head mournfully, whispering: "Too high, too high! Trees must not grow to the sky. Down! down! It is pleasant to dwell below."

At such times I could not restrain my tears.

But, on the fifth day, a crisis seemed imminent. The fever had lessened several degrees; the old doctor's face, for the first time, wore a hopeful look.

He gave several directions, and promised to come in the next morning earlier than usual. I could send home the young girls, who called at a late hour to inquire, with a little hope, which, however, I did not feel myself. Then I returned to my post. It was Mother Schulzen's turn to keep watch that night, but she was so deaf that I could not trust the invalid solely to her, though nothing would have induced her to go to bed. She was sitting in a low chair by the wall, and, after keeping herself awake for a while by knitting and taking snuff, at last fell peacefully asleep.

A lamp, protected by a green shade, was burning in the room; outside, the moon was sailing through a cloudless sky; deep silence surrounded us. Frau Luise had not uttered a word since noon, and for the first time seemed to be quietly asleep.

Suddenly--it was about ten o'clock--while I sat by the bed without turning my eyes from her face, her eyes slowly opened and wandered about the room with a strained gaze till they rested upon me. Then she said, in a perfectly clear voice: "I feel wonderfully well!"

After a pause, during which I scarcely ventured to breathe, as if the slightest sound might drive the approaching convalescence away, she murmured: "Are you here, dear friend? Have I slept long? How delightful that I can see you as soon as I wake!"

She moved her hand as if seeking something. I timidly clasped it, and stooped to press my burning brow upon it. Just at that moment I felt her other hand laid gently on my head, and, while stroking my hair, she continued in the same calm voice:

"My last hour is near, Johannes. But I am glad that I have waked once more before the long night begins. I have something to say to you, my friend. You know the tenor of my last will, and that I wish to be laid in the church-yard outside with my old almshouse friends. If there is a Day of Judgment, I would like to rise with my body-guard; they have spoiled me; I could no longer do without their service. And let my coffin be covered with the rug; afterward it shall belong to you. Do you hear me? Come a little nearer. What I now have to say is to be a secret between us two. I deceived you when I told you, a short time ago, that I was not created to see the universe in a single individual. It cost me no little effort, for my heart belied my lips. I should have been very happy if I could have become your wife. I knew that long, long ago--ever since the day you took our Joachimchen in your arms when he grew weary and carried him home, I said to myself: 'Could I possess this child and this man, no wish would remain ungratified.' But it might not be. I was obliged to bury the child and hide my love for the man in the inmost depths of my heart. But it always lived on there, and now I can thank you, Johannes, for all the love and faith you have lavished upon me. Lift my head a little--there--I want to see you clearly once more, and--it is strange--my eyes are so heavy, though my soul is awake."

I helped her rise higher on her pillows, bowed my face nearer hers, and saw her eyes fixed on me with strange brilliancy.

"I love you, my friend," she said. "There is not one false line in your face nor in your heart, but a great sorrow now fills both. Be happy, dear one, and remember your friend without tears. Shall I not remain with you, wherever I go? True, to see each other again--" She slowly shook her head. "Ah, if I might only see you and my boy--but the other masks--no, no! We have eaten at the table of life here below till we are satisfied--or rather, we are wise and stop just when the food tastes best; now others will sit in our chairs. But we will first cordially wish each other 'a good appetite!'"

Come! kiss me once, just as a loving husband kisses his beloved wife--then I will stretch myself out and take my afternoon rest."

My quivering lips touched her cool mouth. "Dear Johannes!" she murmured, clasping my hand tightly as she fell back on the pillows. Then she smiled once more, an unearthly smile, and closed her eyes. Her hand trembled a little.

An hour after it lay cold and still in mine.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 1](#): Bunzlau is famed for its pottery.--Tr.

[Footnote 2](#): A round hole in a tailor's table, through which he brushes useless bits of cloth, and--as is generally supposed--some that are valuable.--Tr.

[Footnote 3](#): An old coin, worth a little more than the groschen now in general use; for a time both circulated together.--Tr.

[Footnote 4](#): The bug-bear of German nurseries.--Tr.

THE END.

D. APPLETON & CO.'S PUBLICATIONS.

PAUL HEYSE'S NOVELS.

THE ROMANCE OF THE CANONESS. A LIFE-HISTORY. By PAUL HEYSE, author of "In Paradise," etc. Translated from the German by J. M. PERCIVAL. 12mo. Paper, 50 cents; half bound, 75 cents.

IN PARADISE. A NOVEL. From the German of PAUL HEYSE. A new edition. In two vols. 12mo, half bound (in boards, with red cloth backs and paper sides). Price, for the two vols., \$1.50.

"We may call 'In Paradise' a great novel with the utmost confidence in our judgment of it."--*N. Y. Evening Post.*

TALES OF PAUL HEYSE. 16mo. Paper, 25 cents; cloth, 60 cents.

ARIUS THE LIBYAN: AN IDYL OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH. A new edition in new style, at a reduced price. 12mo, cloth. \$1.25.

"Arius the Libyan" is a stirring and vivid picture of the Christian Church in the latter part of the third and beginning of the fourth century. It is an admirable companion volume to General Wallace's "Ben Hur."

"Portrays the life and character of the primitive Christians with great force and vividness of imagination."--*Harper's Magazine.*

S. BARING-GOULD'S NOVELS.

RED SPIDER. A NOVEL. 12mo, paper. 60 cents.

"A well-told and neatly-contrived story, with several excellent figures exhibiting broad traits of human character with vivacity and distinctness."--*London Athenæum*.

LITTLE TU'PENNY. A TALE. 12mo, paper. 25 cents.

This charming novelette is reprinted by arrangement from the *London Graphic*, appearing here in advance of its completion in London.

GABRIELLE ANDRE. 8vo, paper. 60 cents.

THE SILENCE OF DEAN MAITLAND. A NOVEL. By MAXWELL GREY. 12mo, paper. 50 cents.

"The Silence of Dean Maitland" is by a new English author who gives promise in this striking story of a brilliant future. It is a novel of a high intellectual order, strong in plot and character.

A GAME OF CHANCE. A NOVEL. By ANNE SHELDON COOMBS, author of "As Common Mortals." 12mo. Cloth, \$1.00.

"A Game of Chance," by Mrs. Coombs, will, in its fresh and vigorous character drawing, and its fidelity to American life, fully justify the expectations awakened by her first novel, "As Common Mortals."

IN THE GOLDEN DAYS. A NOVEL. By Edna Lyall, author of "Donovan," "We Two," "Won by Waiting," "Knight-Errant." A new edition, uniform with the author's other books. 12mo. Cloth, \$1.50.

"In the Golden Days' is an excellent novel of a kind we are always particularly glad to recommend. It has a good foundation of plot and incident, a thoroughly noble and wholesome motive, a hero who really acts and suffers heroically, and two very nice heroines. The historical background is very carefully indicated, but is never allowed to become more than background."--*Guardian*.

ARIUS THE LIBYAN; AN IDYL OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH. A new edition in new style, at a reduced price. 12mo. Cloth, \$1.25.

"Arius the Libyan" is a stirring and vivid picture of the Christian Church in the latter part of the third and beginning of the fourth century. It is an admirable companion volume to General Wallace's "Ben Hur."

A DATELESS BARGAIN. A NOVEL. By C. L. PIRKIS, author of "Judith Wynne," etc. 12mo. Paper cover, 30 cents.

"A clever and interesting novel."--*London Literary World*.

"Mrs. Pirkis has supplied fresh proof of her skill in turning out very good and workmanlike fiction."--*Academy*.

TEMPEST-DRIVEN. A ROMANCE. By RICHARD DOWLING. 12mo. Paper cover, 50 cents.

THE GREAT HESPER. A ROMANCE. By Frank Barrett. 12mo. Paper cover, 25 cents.

"Two of the scenes of this tale can lay claim to more power than anything of the kind that has yet been written."--*London Post*.

DICK'S WANDERING. A NOVEL. By JULIAN STURGIS, author of "John Maidment," "An Accomplished Gentleman," etc. A new edition. 12mo. Paper cover, 50 cents; half bound, 75 cents.

MISS CHURCHILL: A STUDY. By CHRISTIAN REID, author of "A Daughter of Bohemia," "Morton House," "Bonny Kate," etc., etc. 12mo. Cloth, \$1.00; paper, 50 cents.

The author calls "Miss Churchill" a *study*, for the reason that it consists so largely of a study of character; but there is no little variety of scene in the story, the action taking place partly in the South and partly in Europe, while the experiences and vicissitudes of the heroine are of great interest. The contrasts of place and character make it a very vivid picture.

THE MASTER OF THE CEREMONIES. A NOVEL. By GEORGE MANVILLE FENN, author of "Double Cunning," etc. 12mo. Paper, 50 cents; half bound, 75 cents.

"The interest in the plot is skillfully kept up to the end."--*Academy*.

"The story is very interesting."--*Athenæum*.

LIL LORIMER. A NOVEL. By THEO GIFT, author of "Pretty Miss Bellew," etc. 12mo. Paper, 50 cents; half bound, 15 cents.

Lil Lorimer, the heroine of this novel, is a character marked by many individual and fascinating qualities, and enlists the sympathies of the reader to an unusual degree. The action of the story takes place partly in South America, with an English family residing there, affording some fresh and striking pictures of life.

IN ONE TOWN. A NOVEL. By EDMUND DOWNEY. 12mo. Paper, 25 cents.

"A story of unusual merit; by turns romantic, pathetic, and humorous."--*Westminster Review*.

A ZEALOT IN TULLE. A NOVEL. By Mrs. WILDRICK. 12mo. Cloth, \$1.00; paper, 50 cents.

The scenes of "A Zealot in Tulle" are laid in Florida, the introductory part in Florida of seventy years ago; the main story in Florida of to-day. The plot turns mainly upon romantic incidents connected with a treasure buried in an old fort by the Spaniards at the time of their occupancy.

THE WITCHING TIME: TALES FOR THE YEAR'S END. By F. MARION CRAWFORD, W. E. NORRIS, LAURENCE ALMA TADEMA, VERNON LEE, EDMUND GOSSE, and others. Uniform with "The Broken Shaft." 12mo. Paper cover, 25 cents.

KATY OF CATOCTIN; or, The Chain-Breakers. A National Romance. By GEO. ALFRED TOWNSEND, "Gath." 12mo, cloth, \$1.50.

"Katy of Catoctin," now just published, is a stirring national romance, opening with the raid of John Brown at Harper's Ferry and closing with the death of Lincoln. It is a picturesque and romantic story, partly historical and partly domestic, full of dramatic incidents, and marked by vivid delineations of character.

THE SILENCE OF DEAN MAITLAND. A Novel. By MAXWELL GREY. 12mo, paper, 50 cents.

"The Silence of Dean Maitland" is by a new English author who gives promise in this striking story of a brilliant future. It is a novel of a high intellectual order, strong in plot and character.

"Distinctly the novel of the year."--*Academy*.

"The work of a literary artist of great promise. It is a brilliantly written novel, but it is more than a novel. It is a work of exceptional dramatic power, and is both rich in melodramatic incident and spectacle, and has in it the essence of the noblest kind of tragedy.... It is full of thrilling incident, powerful description, and scenes of most moving pathos."--*Scotsman*.

LITTLE TU'PENNY. A Tale. By S. BARING GOULD. 12mo, paper. New Twenty-five Cent Series.

This charming novelette is reprinted by arrangement from the *London Graphic*, appearing here in advance of its completion in London.

DR. HEIDENHOFF'S PROCESS. A Tale. By EDWARD BELLAMY. New edition, 12mo, paper, 25 cents.

"It might have been written by Edgar Poe."--*The London Spectator*.

"Unlike any story we have seen, perfectly original and new."--*London Daily News*.

DEAR LIFE, A Novel. By J. E. PANTON, author of "Jane Caldicott," "The Curate's Wife," etc. 12mo, paper cover, 25 cents.

"A good, strong story, well worked out, and told in straightforward fashion.... The fundamental idea of Mr. Panton's plot is novel."--*London Saturday Review*.

PEPITA XIMENEZ. A Novel. From the Spanish of JUAN VALERA. With an introduction by the author written specially for this edition. 12mo. Paper, 50 cents; half bound, 75 cents.

Señor Don Juan Valera, recently Spanish minister to our Government, is recognized as the most prominent literary man of the time in Spain. He is the author of some eight or ten novels, the most recent and successful of which is "Pepita Ximenez," which has appeared in eight editions in Spain, and been translated into German, French, Italian, and Bohemian. Nothing more charming has appeared in recent literature.

A POLITICIAN'S DAUGHTER. A Novel. By MYRA SAWYER HAMLIN. 12mo. Half bound, 75 cents.

"A Politician's Daughter" is a bright, vivacious novel, based on a more than usual knowledge of American social and political life.

ALIETTE (La Morte). By OCTAVE FEUILLET, author of "The Romance of a Poor Young Man," etc. 12mo. Paper, 50 cents; half bound, 75 cents.

"There is no sort of doubt that M. Octave Feuillet has produced a little book of immense

power, in which the sketches of character are as vivid as if he had had no moral after-thought in his work."--*London Spectator*.

"Nobody can deny that M. Feuillet has made a very strong hit in 'La Morte.' ... Altogether the machinery of the novel is excellent and the interest admirably sustained."--*London Saturday Review*.

"The development of the characters is most skillful, and while the journal form into which the beginning and end are thrown imposes special difficulties upon the author, there is no loss of power in these parts. Perhaps the most subtle thing in the book is the exposition, in the contrasted characters of Dr. Tallevaut and Sabine, of the two ways in which the modern scientific education may operate; and of the radical difference in the effect of such teaching upon one whose mind has been formed under religious influences and one whose growing intellect has been carefully guarded against all spiritual beliefs and doctrines. The figure of Aliette is the least strongly drawn, yet she is perfectly intelligible. Sabine is startling, and will no doubt be called unnatural, but it would be unreasonable to say that a girl with such a temperament, so educated, might not grow into such a woman."--*New York Tribune*.

"Merit of a most unusual kind."--*London Athenæum*.

THE DIARY OF A WOMAN. By OCTAVE FEUILLET. 16mo. Paper, 25 cents; cloth, 60 cents.

WON BY WAITING. A Novel. By EDNA LYALL. 12mo. Cloth, \$1.50.

"The Dean's daughters are perfectly real characters--the learned Cornelia especially; the little impulsive French heroine, who endures their cold hospitality and at last wins their affection, is thoroughly charming; while throughout the book there runs a golden thread of pure brotherly and sisterly love, which pleasantly reminds us that the making and marring of marriage is not, after all, the sum total of real life."--*London Academy*.

WE TWO. By EDNA LYALL. 12mo. Cloth, \$1.50.

"Well written and full of interest. The story abounds with a good many light touches, and is certainly far from lacking in incident."--*London Times*.

"'We Two' contains many very exciting passages and a great deal of information. Miss Lyall is a capable writer of fiction, and also a clear-headed thinker."--*From the Athenæum*.

"We recommend all novel-readers to read this novel with the care which such a strong, uncommon, and thoughtful book demands and deserves."--*From the Spectator*.

DONOVAN; A MODERN ENGLISHMAN. By EDNA LYALL. 12mo. Cloth, \$1.50.

"Distinctly a novel with a high aim successfully attained. The character-drawing is vigorous and truthful."--*Pall Mall Gazette*.

"This story is told with vigor and intelligence, and throughout the book is well imagined and well written. It is a novel of sterling merit, being fresh and original in conception, thoroughly healthy in tone, interesting in detail, and sincere and capable in execution."--*From the Academy*.

THE ALIENS. A Novel. By HENRY F. KEENAN, author of "Trajan," etc. 12mo. Cloth, \$1.25.

"The Aliens "is a stirring, picturesque romance, depicting life and character in strong contrasts, and marked by an affluent and vivid style. The scene of the story is laid in the western part of the State of New York, about fifty years ago--the events coming down to the time of the Mexican War.

"He colors richly, warmly, and with the dash of an artist; ... and his characters grow, and are not manufactured; ... the freshest and most readable American novel of the season."--*Philadelphia Bulletin*.

"The prevailing merit of the story is the vivid sense of reality which the writer gives to scenes and characters; ... above all things, interesting."--*Rochester Post-Express*.

"Not second to 'Trajan' in character-painting, felicity of diction, well-managed conversations, pathos, and humor."--*Journal of Commerce*.

"Thoroughly interesting in plot, and told with equal skill and animation."--*Boston Gazette*.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ROMANCE OF THE CANONESS: A LIFE-HISTORY ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation’s EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state’s laws.

The Foundation’s business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116,

(801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.