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Title: A Sister's Love: A Novel

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Translator: Margaret Payson Waterman

Release Date: September 30, 2010 [EBook #33958]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Peter Vachuska, Mary Meehan and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

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A SISTER'S LOVE

A NOVEL

BY W. HEIMBURG

**TRANSLATED BY
MARGARET P. WATERMAN**

**CHICAGO:
M. A. DONOHUE & CO.
407-429 DEARBORN ST.**

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A SISTER'S LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

A severe storm had been raging all day, and now, in the approaching twilight, seemed as if it would overleap all bounds in its wild confusion. Straight from the North Sea, over the broad Lüneburg heath, it came rushing along, and beat against the gray walls of the manor-house, shook the great elms in the garden, tossed about the bushes, and blew from the bare branches the last yellow leaf yet spared them by the November frost.

The great castle-like building, inhabited for centuries by the Von Hegewitz family, looked dismal and gloomy under the cloud-laden sky; in almost spectral gloom it lay there, with its sharply pointed gables, its round tower, and heavy buttresses supporting the walls.

If did not always look thus, this old manor-house; in summer it was very picturesque behind its green trees, the golden sunshine lying on its slate roof, the pointed gables sharply outlined against the blue sky, and the gray walls, framed by huge, old oaks, reflected in the brown water of the pond. Beside it lay the farm-buildings and the houses of the village, whose shingled roofs emerged in their turn from the foliage of the fruit-trees. Far out into the Mark country extended the view, over fields of waving corn, over green meadows and purple heath, bounded on the horizon by the dark line of a pine forest. A narrow strip of pine woods, besides, lay to the north, extending nearly to the garden, and on hot summer afternoons an almost intoxicating fragrance was wafted from it toward the quiet house.

Within it was still a real, old-fashioned German house; for there were dim corridors and deep niches, great vaulted rooms and large alcoves, little staircases with steep steps worn by many feet, and curious low vaulted doors. A flight of steps would lead quite unexpectedly from one room into the next, and here and there a door, instead of leading out of a room, opened, to one's surprise, into a huge closet. Then there were cemented floors, and great beams dividing the ceilings, and the smallest of window-panes. And yet where could more real comfort be found than in such an old house, especially when a November storm is howling without, and here indoors great fir logs are crackling in the gay-tiled stove?

And just now, down the stairs from the upper story, came an old lady, looking as if comfort itself came with the green silk knitting-bag on her arm, her large lace cap, and the brown silk shawl over her shoulders. She might have been in the fifties, this small, spare figure, and she limped. Fräulein Rosamond von Hegewitz had limped all her life, and yet a more contented nature than hers did not exist. She now turned to the left and walked along the narrow corridor. This was her regular evening walk, as she went to her nephew and niece in the sitting-room—a dear old walk, which she had taken for years, since the time when the children were little, and her brother and sister-in-law were still alive; when twilight came she could no longer endure the solitude of her spinster's room.

Just as she was about to lay her hand on the bright brass door-handle, she perceived by the dim light of the hall-lamp a girl who was sobbing gently, her coarse linen apron thrown over her face.

"What are you crying about, Marieken?" asked the old lady kindly, coming back a step or two. The curly brown head was raised, and a young face, bathed in tears and now red from embarrassment, looked up at Fräulein Rosamond.

"Ah, gracious Fräulein, I am to leave," she stammered, "and I——"

"Why, what have you—?" The old lady got no further, for just then the door was opened a little way and the clear, full tones of a youthful feminine voice came out into the corridor.

"That is my last word, Märtensen; I will not suffer such things in my house. She may thank God that I have noticed her folly in good season. Only think of Louisa Keller!"

"God in heaven, Fräulein!" the person accosted replied in defence, almost weeping. "The lass has done nothing bad, and he is certainly a respectable man. O Fräulein, when one is young one knows too——"

"For shame, Märtensen!" This came vehemently. "You know what I have said. Take your Marieken and go. I will have no frivolous maids in my house!"

The door was now opened wide, and an old woman came out, her wrinkled face red with excitement.

"Come, lass," she called to the girl, who had just put her apron over her eyes again; "troubles don't last forever! She'll feel it herself some day yet! Driving away my girl as if she had been stealing!" And without greeting the old lady, she seized her daughter by the arm and drew her away with her.

Rosamond von Hegewitz turned slowly to the door. A half-mocking, half-earnest expression lay on the wise old face. "*Bon soir*, Anna Maria!" said she, as she entered the brightly lighted sitting-room.

A girl rose from the chair before the massive secretary, went toward the new-comer, and received her with that formality which at the beginning of our century had not yet disappeared from the circle of gentle families, pressing to her lips the outstretched hand with an expression of deepest respect.

"Good evening, aunt; how are you feeling?"

It was the same rich voice that had spoken before, and, like it, could belong only to such a fresh young creature. Anna Maria von Hegewitz was just turned eighteen, and the whole charm of these eighteen years was woven about her slender figure and the rosy face under her braids of fair hair. In contradiction to this girlishness, a pair of deep gray eyes looked out from beneath the white forehead, seriously, and with almost a look of experience, which, with a peculiar self-conscious expression about the mouth, lent a certain austerity to the face.

"Thank you, my dear, I am well," replied the old lady, seating herself at the round table before the sofa, upon which were burning four candles in shining brass candlesticks. "Don't let me interrupt you, *ma mignonne*. I see I have broken in upon your writing; are you writing to Klaus?"

"I have only been looking over the grain accounts, aunt; I shall be done in a moment. I shall not write again to Klaus, for he must return day after to-morrow at the latest. If you will excuse me a moment——"

"Oh, certainly, child. I will occupy myself alone meanwhile." The old lady drew her knitting-work from the silk bag and began to work, at the same time glancing dreamily about the large, warm, comfortable room.

She had known it thus long since; nothing in it had been altered since her youth—the same deep arm-chairs around the table, the artistic inlaid cupboards, even the dark, stamped leather wall-paper was still the same, and the old rococo clock still ticked its low, swift to-and-fro, as if it could not make the time pass quickly enough. And there at the desk, where the young niece was sitting, her only brother had worked and calculated, and at that sewing-table on the estrade at the window had been the favorite seat of the sister-in-law who died so young. But how little resemblance there was between mother and daughter!

The old lady looked over toward her again. The girl's lips moved, and the slender hand passed slowly with the pencil down the row of figures on the paper. "Makes five hundred and seventy-five thaler, twenty-three groschen," she said, half-aloud. "Correct!"

"Now, then, Aunt Rosamond, I am at your service." She extinguished the candle, locked the writing-desk, and bringing a pretty spinning-wheel from the corner, sat down near her aunt, and soon the little wheel was gently humming, and the slender fingers drawing the finest of thread from the shining flax. For a while the room was quiet, the silence broken only by the howling of the storm and the crackling of the burning log in the stove.

"Anna Maria," began the old lady at last, "you know I never interfere with your arrangements, so pardon me if I ask why you send Marieken away."

"She has a love affair with Gottlieb," replied the niece, shortly.

"I am sorry for that, Anna Maria; she was always a girl who respected herself; ought you to act so severely?"

"She gives him her supper secretly, and runs about the garden with him on pitch-dark nights. I will not have such actions in my house, and know that Klaus would not approve of it either." The words sounded strangely from the young lips.

"Yes, Anna Maria"—Rosamond von Hegewitz smiled "if you will judge thus! These people have quite different sentiments from us, and—and you cannot know, I suppose, if their views are honest?"

"That is nothing to me!" replied Anna Maria. "They *cannot* marry, because they are both as poor as church mice. What is to come of it? The girl must leave; you surely see that, dear aunt?"

The old lady now laughed aloud. "One can see, Anna Maria, that you know nothing yet of a real attachment, or you would not proceed in so dictatorial a manner."

The slightest change came over the young face. "I *will* not know it, either!" she declared firmly, almost turning away.

"But, sweetheart," came from the old voice almost anxiously, "do you think that it will always be so with you? You are eighteen years old—do you think your heart will live on thus without ever feeling a passion? And do you expect the same of your brother, Anna Maria? Klaus is still so young——"

The little foot stopped on the treadle of the wheel, and the gray eyes looked in amazement at the speaker.

"Don't you know then, aunt, that it is a long-established matter that Klaus and I should always stay together? Klaus promised our mother on her death-bed that he would never leave me. And I go away from Klaus? Oh, sooner—sooner may the sky fall! Don't speak of such possibilities, Aunt Rosamond. It is absurd even to think of."

"Pardon me, Anna Maria"—the words sounded almost solemn—"I was present when your dying mother took from Klaus his promise never to leave you, always to protect you. But at the same time to forbid him to love another woman, a woman whom his heart might choose, she surely did not intend!"

"Aunt Rosamond!" cried the girl, almost threateningly.

"No, my child, I repeat it, your mother was much too wise, much too just, to wish such a thing; she was too happy in her own marriage to wish her children—But, *mon Dieu*, I am exciting myself quite uselessly; you have such a totally false conception of this promise."

"Klaus told me so himself, Aunt Rosamond," declared the girl, in a tone which made contradiction impossible.

Aunt Rosamond was silent; she knew well that all talking would be vain, and that nothing in the world could convince Anna Maria that any object worthy of love beside her beloved brother could exist. "*Nous verrons, ma petite*," thought she, "you will not be spared the experience either!"

And now her thoughts wandered far back into the past, to the night when Anna Maria was born. A terrible night! And as they passed on, there came a day still more terrible; in the heavy wooden cradle, adorned with crests, lay, indeed, the sweetly sleeping child, but the mother's eyes had closed forever, not, however, without first looking, with a fervid, anguished expression, at the little creature that must go through life without a mother's love! And beside her bed had knelt a boy of fifteen, who had to promise over and over again to love the little sister, and protect and shield her.

How often had Aunt Rosamond told this to the child as she grew up; how often described to her how she had been baptized by her mother's coffin, how her brother had held her in his arms and pressed her so closely to him, and wept so bitterly. Indeed, indeed, there was not another brother like Klaus von Hegewitz, that Aunt Rosamond knew best of all.

She remembered how he had watched for nights at the child's bed when she lay ill with measles; with what unwearied patience he had borne with her whims, now even as then; how carefully he had marked out a course of instruction and selected teachers for her, looked up lectures for her, read and rode with her, and did everything that the most careful parental love alone can do, and even more—much more! Indeed, Anna Maria knew nothing of a parent's love; the father had always been a peculiar person, especially so after the death of his wife: it almost seemed as if he could not love the child whose life had cost a life. He was rarely at home; half the year he lived in Berlin, coming back to the old manor-house only at the hunting season. But never alone; he was always accompanied by a young man, a Baron Stürmer, owner of the neighboring estate of Dambitz, and two years older than Klaus.

It was a singular friendship which had existed between these two men. Hegewitz, well on in the sixties, gloomy and unsociable, and from his youth distrustful of every one, and not even amiable toward his own children, was affable only to his friend, so much younger. To this moment Aunt Rosamond distinctly remembered the pale, nobly-formed face with the fiery brown eyes and the dark hair. How gratefully she remembered him! He had been the only one who understood how to mediate between father and son, the only one who, with admirable firmness, had again and again led the struggling little girl to her father; and he did all this out of that incomprehensible friendship. The two used to play chess together late into the night; they rode and hunted

together; and still one other passion united them—they collected antiquities.

They searched the towns and villages for miles about for old carved chests, clocks, porcelain, and pictures, and would dispute all night as to whether a certain picture, bought at an auction, was by this or that master, whether it was an original or a copy. They often remained away for days on their excursions, and the treasures they won were then artistically arranged in a tower-room—"a regular rag-shop," Aunt Rosamond had once said in banter. "I only wonder they don't get me too for this '*Collection Antique*.'" After the death of Hegewitz this really valuable collection was found to be made over, by will, to Baron Stürmer, "because Klaus did not understand such things." Stürmer accepted the bequest, but he had it appraised by a person intelligent in such matters, and paid the value to the heirs. Klaus von Hegewitz refused to accept the sum, and so the two men agreed to found an almshouse for the two villages of Bütze and Dambitz.

That had happened ten years ago, and the collecting furor of the old gentleman had borne good results.

Soon after his death, Baron Stürmer went away on a journey; he had long wished to travel, and had deferred his cherished plan only on his old friend's account. His first goals had been Italy, Constantinople, and Greece; he went to Egypt, he visited South America, Norway and Sweden, and had travelled through Russia and the Caucasus. No one knew where he was staying at present. He had written seldom of late years, at last not at all; but his memory still lived in Bütze. Only Anna Maria no longer spoke of him; indeed, she scarcely remembered him now: she was just eight years old when he went away. Only this she still knew: that Uncle Stürmer had often taken her by the hand and led her to her father, and that at such times her heart had always beaten more quickly from fear. Anna Maria had stood in real awe of her father, and when he died and was buried, not a tear flowed from the child's eyes. Her entire affection belonged to her brother, as she used to say, full of pride and love for him.

Aunt Rosamond had never been able to exert the slightest influence over the girl's independent character.

As soon as Anna Maria was confirmed, she hung the bunch of keys at her belt, and took up the reins of housekeeping with an energy and circumspection that aroused the admiration of all, and especially of the old aunt, who was particularly struck by it, since she herself was a tender, weak type of woman, to whom such energy in one of her own sex could but seem incomprehensible.

Anna Maria spun on quietly as all these thoughts succeeded each other behind the wrinkled brow of her companion. She could sit and spin thus whole evenings, without saying a word; she was quite different from other girls! She did not allow a bird or a flower in her room, nor did she ever wear a flower or a ribbon as an ornament. And yet one could scarcely imagine a more high-bred appearance than hers. Whether she were walking, in her house dress, through kitchen and cellar, or receiving guests in the drawing-room, as happened two or three times a year, she lost nothing in comparison with other ladies and girls; on the contrary, she had a certain superiority to them, and Aunt Rosamond would sometimes say to herself: "The others are like geese beside *her!*"—"Yes, what may happen here yet?" she asked herself with a sigh.

"A letter for the Fräulein!" A youth of perhaps twenty-five years, dressed in simple dark livery, handed Anna Maria a letter.

"From Klaus!" she cried joyfully, but held the letter in her hand without opening it, and fixed her eyes upon the firm, resolute face of the servant.

"Well, Gottlieb, what is the matter with you?" she asked. "You look as if your wheat had been utterly ruined."

"Gracious Fräulein," the youth replied, with hesitation yet firmly, "the master will have to look about for some one else—I am going away at New Year."

"Have you gone mad?" cried Anna Maria, frowning. "What is it here that you object to?" She had risen and stepped up to the youth. "As for the rest," she continued, "I can imagine why you have such folly in your head. Because I have sent away Marieken Märten, do you wish to go too? Very well, I will not keep you; you may go; there are plenty of people who would take your place. But if your father knew it he would turn in his grave. Do you know how long your father served at Bütze?"

"Fifty-eight years, Fräulein," replied the young fellow at once.

"Fifty-eight years! And his son runs away from the service in which his father grew old and gray, after a frivolous girl! Very well, you shall have your way; but mind, any one who once goes away from here—never returns. You may go."

The servant's face grew deep red at the reproachful words of his young mistress; he turned slowly to the door and left the room.

Anna Maria had meanwhile broken the great crested seal, and was reading. "Klaus is coming day after to-morrow!" After reading awhile, now as happy as a child, she cried to the old lady: "Just hear, Aunt Rosamond, what else he writes. I will read it aloud.

"I found my old Mattoni over his books as usual, but it seemed to me he looked ill. I asked him about it, but he declared he was well. A proposal to come and recuperate next summer in our

beautiful country air he dismissed with a shake of the head, "he had no time!" He is an incorrigible bookworm.

"But now here is something particularly interesting! Do you know whom I met yesterday "Unter den Linden," sunburned and scarcely recognizable? Edwin Stürmer! He was standing by a picture-store, and I beside him for some time, without a suspicion of each other; we were looking at some pretty water-colors by Heuselt. All at once a hand was laid on my arm, and a familiar voice cried: "Upon my word, Klaus, if you had not developed that fine beard, I should have recognized you sooner!"

"I was exceedingly glad to see Edwin again, and rejoice still more at the future prospect. The old vagabond is going to fold his wings at last, and take care of his estate. He is coming shortly to Dambitz; consequently we shall have a good friend again near us. As for the rest, he wouldn't believe that you have become a young lady and no longer wear long braids and short dresses."

Anna Maria stopped, and looked into the distance, as if recalling something. "I don't know exactly now how he looked," she said. "He wore a full black beard, didn't he, aunt, and must be very old now?"

"No indeed, *mon cœur*; he may be thirty-five at the most."

"That is certainly old, Aunt Rosamond!"

"That is the way young people judge," said the old lady, smiling.

"It may be, aunt," said Anna Maria, and put the letter in her pocket. She had begun to spin again, when an old woman in a dazzlingly white apron entered the room.

"Gracious Fräulein," she began respectfully, yet familiarly, "Marieken is off, and has made a great commotion in the house, and the eldest of the Weber girls has just applied for the place, but she asks for twelve thaler for wages and a jacket at Christmas!"

"Ten thaler, and Christmas according to the way she conducts herself," Anna Maria replied, without looking up.

The housekeeper disappeared, but returned after awhile.

"Eleven thaler and a jacket, Fräulein; she will not come otherwise," she reported. "You can surely give her that; she has no lover, and will hardly get one, for she is already well on in years, and ___"

Anna Maria drew a purse from her pocket, and laid an eight-groschen piece on the table. "The advance-money, Brockelmann; do you know that Gottlieb wishes to leave?"

"Oh, dear, yes, Fräulein." The old woman was quite embarrassed. "I am sorry; he doted upon the lass at one time, and at last—oh, heavens, fräulein, one has been young too, and if two people love each other—see, Fräulein, it is just as if one had drunk deadly hemlock. I mean no offence, but you will know it yet some day, and, if God will, may the handsomest and best man in the world come to Bütze and take you home!"

The old woman had spoken affectingly, and looked at her young mistress with brightening eyes. Only she would have dared to touch on this point. She had been Anna Maria's nurse, and a remnant of tenderness toward her was still hidden somewhere in the girl's heart.

"Brockelmann, you cannot keep from talking," she cried, serenely. "You know I shall *never* marry. What would the master do without me? Is supper ready?"

"The master!" said the good woman, without regarding the last question. "He ought to marry too! As if it were not high time for him; he will be thirty-three years old at Martinmas!"

CHAPTER II.

A few days afterward Edwin Stürmer came to Bütze. Anna Maria was standing just on the lower staircase landing, in the great stone-paved entrance-hall, a basket of red-cheeked apples on her arm, and Brockelmann stood near her with a candle in her hand. The unsteady light of the flickering candle fell on the immediate surroundings, and, like an old picture of Rembrandt's, the fair head of the girl stood out from the darkness of the wide hall. Round about her there was a great hue and cry; all the children of the village seemed to be collected there, and sang with a sort of scream, to a monotonous air, the old Martinmas ditty:

"Martins, martins, pretty things,
With your little golden wings,
To the Rhine now fly away,
To-morrow is St. Martin's Day.
Marieken, Marieken, open the door,
Two poor rogues are standing before!
Little summer, little summer, rose's leaf,
City fair,

Give us something, O maiden fair!"

They were just beginning a new song when the heavy entrance-door opened, and Baron Stürmer came in. Anna Maria did not see him at once, for, according to an old custom of St. Martin's Eve, she was throwing a handful of apples right among the little band, who pounced upon them with cries and shouts. Only when a man's head rose up straight before her, by the heavily carved banister, she glanced up, and looked into a pale face framed by dark hair and beard, and into a pair of shining brown eyes.

For an instant Anna Maria was startled, and a blush of embarrassment spread over her face; then she held out her hand to him and bade him welcome. Far from youthful was her manner of speaking and acting.

"Be still!" she called, in her ringing voice, to the noisy children; and as silence immediately ensued, she added, turning to Stürmer: "They are meeting me on important business, Herr von Stürmer, but I shall be ready to leave at once; will you go up to Klaus for awhile?"

He kept on looking at her, still holding her right hand; he had not heard what she said at all. With quick impatience, at length she withdrew her hand.

"Brockelmann, bring the candle here, and take the gentleman to my brother," she ordered; but then, as if changing her mind, she threw the whole basketful of apples at once among the children, who scrambled for them, screaming wildly. The baron made his way with difficulty through the groping throng to the stairs, where Anna Maria was now standing motionless, and with earnest gaze regarding the man who in her childhood had so often held her in his arms, and had so many a kind word for her.

Yes, it was he again; the slender figure of medium height, the dark face with the flashing eyes—and yet how different!

Anna Maria had to admit to herself that it was a handsome man who was coming up the steps just then; and old? She had to smile. "One sees quite differently with a child's eyes!" she said to herself. Was it not as if years were blotted out, and he was coming up as in the old times, to hold her fast by her braids and say, "Don't run so, Anna Maria"?

Silently up the stairs they went together, to the top, their steps reëchoing from the walls.

It really seemed now to Anna Maria as if her childhood had returned, the sweet, remote childhood, with a thousand bright, innocent hours. Involuntarily she held out to him her slender hand, and he seized it quickly and forced the maiden to stand still. The sound of the children's shouting came indistinctly to them up here; there was no one beside them in the dim corridor.

Words of pleasure at seeing the friend of her childhood again trembled on Anna Maria's lips, but when she tried to speak the man's eyes met hers, and her mouth remained closed. Slowly, and still looking at her, he drew the slender hand to his lips; she allowed it as if in a dream, then hastily caught her hand away.

"What is that?" she asked, half in jest, half in anger; "I gave you my hand because I was glad to greet the uncle of my childhood, and an uncle——"

"May not kiss one's hand," he supplied, a smile flitting over his face. Anna Maria did not see it, having stepped forward into the sitting-room. "A visitor, Klaus!" she called into the room, which was still dark.

"Ah!" at once replied a man's voice. "Stürmer, is it you? Welcome, welcome! You find us quite in the dark. We were just talking of you, and of old times; were we not, Aunt Rosamond?"

A merry greeting followed, an invitation to supper was given and accepted, and Klaus von Hegewitz called for lights.

"Oh, let us chat a little longer in the dark," said Aunt Rosamond. "Who knows but we should seem stranger to each other if a candle were lighted? Does it not seem, *cher baron*, as if it were yesterday that you were sitting here with us, and yet——"

"It is ten years ago, Stürmer," finished Klaus.

"Truly!" assented Stürmer, "ten years!"

"Oh, but how happy we have been here," the old lady ran on. "Do you remember, Stürmer, how you carried me off once in the most festive manner, in a sleigh, and on the way the mad idea came to you to drive on past our godfather's, and then you landed us both so softly in the deepest snow-drift—me in my best dress, the green brocade, you know, that you always called my parrot's costume?"

Klaus laughed heartily. "*À propos*, Stürmer," he asked, "have you seen Anna Maria yet?"

"Yes, indeed, I have already had the honor, on the landing down-stairs," replied the baron.

"The honor? Heavens, how ceremonious! Did you hear, dear?" asked the brother. But no answer came. "Anna Maria!" he then called.

"She is not here," said Aunt Rosamond, groping about to find the way out of the room. "But it is

really too dark here," she added.

"Why haven't you married, Hegewitz?" Stürmer asked abruptly.

"I might pass the question back to you," replied Klaus. "But let us leave that alone, Stürmer, I will tell you something about it another time." Klaus von Hegewitz had risen and stepped to the nearest window; for a while silence reigned in the quiet room. Stürmer regretted having touched upon a topic that evidently aroused painful emotions.

"Every one has his experiences, Stürmer, so why should we be spared?" Klaus turned around, beginning to speak again. "But it is overcome now. I do not think about it any more," he added. "Will you have another cigar?"

"Not think about it any more?" cried the baron, not hearing the last question. He laughed aloud. "At thirty-four? My dear Klaus, what will become of you, then, when Aunt Rosamond dies and Anna Maria marries?"

"Anna Maria? I haven't thought about that yet, Stürmer; she is still so young, and—although—But one can see that it is possible to live so: you give the best example!" Klaus was out of humor.

The baron did not reply. He soon turned the conversation to agricultural matters, and a discussion over esparcet and fodder was first interrupted by the announcement that supper was served.

Aunt Rosamond had, meanwhile, gone through the main hall and knocked at a door at the end of the passage. Anna Maria's voice called, "Come in!" She, too, was sitting in the dark, but she rose and lit a candle. The light illuminated her whole face. "Anna Maria, are you ill?" her aunt asked anxiously, and stepped nearer.

"Not exactly ill, aunt, but I have a headache."

"You have taken cold; why do you ride out in this sharp wind? You are both inconsiderate, you and Klaus! Show me your pulse—of course, on the gallop; go to bed, Anna Maria."

"After supper, aunt; what would Klaus say if I were not there?"

"But you are really looking badly, Anna Maria."

The young girl laughed, took her bunch of keys in her hand and thus compelled Aunt Rosamond to go with her. "Don't worry," she bade her, "and above all, don't say anything to Klaus. He might think it worse than it is."

"Klaus, and always, only Klaus—*incroyable!*" murmured the old lady.

"If that wasn't a remarkable company at table this evening," said Klaus von Hegewitz, as he reëntered the sitting-room, after escorting Baron Stürmer down-stairs. "You, Anna Maria, did not say a word, and the conversation dragged along till it nearly died out; if Aunt Rosamond had not kept the thing up, why—really, it was peculiar. But how nice it is when we are by ourselves, isn't it, little sister?"

He had put his arm around Anna Maria, who stood at the table, looking toward the window as if listening for something, and looked lovingly in her face.

The brother and sister resembled each other unmistakably in their features, except that beside his earnestness a winning kindness spoke from the brother's eyes, and the harsh lines about his mouth were hidden by a handsome beard.

"Yes," she replied quietly.

"Now tell me, little sister, why you were so—so, what shall I call it—icy toward Stürmer?"

Anna Maria looked over at her brother and was silent.

"Now out with it!" he said jokingly. "Didn't Stürmer treat you with sufficient deference, or——"

"Klaus!" She grew very red. "I will tell you," she then said; "the recollections of old times came between us and spoke louder than words; my childhood passed before my eyes, and—" She broke off, and looked up at him; it was a sad look, yet full of unspeakable gratitude. Klaus drew her to him, and pressed the fair head to his breast with his large white hand.

"My old lass, you're not going to cry?" he asked tenderly; but he, too, was moved.

She took his hand and pressed a kiss upon it. "Dear, dear Klaus," she said softly, "I was only thinking how it would have been if you had not loved me so very, very much?"

Klaus von Hegewitz was silent, and looked thoughtfully down at her. "Quite different, my little Anna Maria," said he at last; "it would have been quite different—whether better? Who can fathom that; it must have been so——"

She looked up at him in astonishment, he had spoken so slowly and earnestly. Then he stroked her forehead, pressed his sister to him again, and then turned quietly to the corner-shelf and took

down his favorite pipe.

"There, now we will make ourselves comfortable," said he. "Come, Anna Maria, 'Tante Voss' is very interesting to-day."

Anna Maria stood long at her bedroom window and looked at the drifting clouds of the night-sky. Now and then the moon peeped out, and tinged the edges of the clouds with silver light; as they sped in strange forms over her golden disk, there was a continual change in the fantastic shapes, but Anna Maria saw it not. Confused thoughts chased each other about in her brain, like the clouds above, and now and then, like the brilliant constellation, a bright look from the long-known dark eyes came before her mind. "It is the memory of childhood," she said to herself, "yes, the memory!"

Twelve o'clock struck from the church-tower near by, as, shivering with cold, she stepped back from the window. She heard hasty steps coming along the corridor; she knew it was Brockelmann going to bed. The next moment she had opened the door; she hardly knew herself first what she wanted, when the old woman was already crossing the threshold.

"You are not sleeping yet, Fräulein? Ah, it is well that you are still awake. I had a fine fright a little while ago. What do you think, Marieken Märtens, the crazy thing, tried to drown herself; a man from the village pulled her out of the pond."

Anna Maria had grown white as a corpse; she had to sit down on the edge of her bed, and her great eyes looked in sheer amazement at the old woman. "What for?" she asked hastily, and almost sharply.

"Indeed, Fräulein, for what else but because of the stupid affair with Gottlieb? You know what his mother is. Marieken did not dare go home all at once—there are mouths enough to feed: so her sweetheart took her home to his mother, and she told him he should not come to her with a girl whom the gracious Fräulein had dismissed, that he must not think of marrying the girl as long as she lived; you know, Fräulein, the old woman swears by the family here. And so the stupid thing took it into her head to go into the water."

Anna Maria looked silently before her, and her whole body shook as if she had a chill.

"Heavens, you are ill!" cried the old woman.

"No, no," the girl denied, "I am not ill; go, only go; I am tired and want to sleep."

Brockelmann went to her room, shaking her head. "Well, well," she murmured, "I did think she would be sorry for the poor girl, but no!" She sighed, and closed the door behind her. But toward morning she was suddenly startled from her slumber by the violent ringing of a bell in her room.

"Good heavens, Anna Maria!" she cried. "She is ill!" In her heart the old woman still called her young mistress by her child's name. Hastily throwing on one or two garments she hurried through the cold passage, just lighted by the gray dawn. Anna Maria was sitting upright in her bed, a candle was burning on the table by her side, and lit up a face worn with weeping. The old woman saw plainly that the girl had been weeping, though she extinguished the candle at once.

"Brockelmann!" she called to her, but not as usual in the old imperious manner, and she now hesitated; "as soon as it is light, send for Gottlieb's mother; I want to talk with her about the girl. And now go," she added, as the old woman was about to say something, "I am so tired to-day!"

CHAPTER III.

"The time passes away, one scarcely knows what has become of it; even in my solitude, it does not seem long to me. Really, the starlings are here already. Where has the winter gone? Strange!"

Aunt Rosamond held this soliloquy at her chamber-window, as her gaze followed the little messengers of spring, who vanished so briskly into the wooden boxes, a large number of which had been placed for them on the trees and buildings. It was no sunny spring day there without; the clouds hung low and gray over the earth, and a warm, sultry wind tossed about the budding branches unmercifully, as if to shake them into complete awakening.

The old lady did not like the overcast sky at all, it put her out of humor. She could not wander about far out of doors, to be sure, but she would fain have seen the little spot of earth that lay stretched out before her window looking cheerful, and blue sky and sunshine lighting up the fresh green of the meadows, and the oaks in foliage.

"It ought to be always May or September here in the Mark," she used to say; "then it would be the loveliest country in the world. In winter one does best to draw the curtains, so as not to cast a single look out of doors, it looks so melancholy outside, brown upon brown, with a shade of dirty gray."

And so she turned from the window and its dull outlook, and limped quickly through the room, here and there arranging or straightening something. That was such a habit of hers. Now the candelabra on the spinet were moved a little, and now the delicate, withered hands picked a yellow leaf from a plant on the flower-stand, or gave an improving touch to the canopied bed which so pretentiously occupied an entire side of the room. Aunt Rosamond called that her throne; one had to climb up a pair of carpeted steps to reach it, and with its crimson silk hangings, somewhat faded indeed, and gilded knobs, it really gave you the impression of one. Then here and there she pushed back a coverlet or straightened a picture which tipped a little to one side. The latter she did most frequently, for the high walls were almost covered with pictures, a collection of portraits, mostly in oil or pastel. Aunt Rosamond knew a history about each one of the faces that looked so quietly from the frames in her room; she had known them all, these men and women there above, and strangely enough it sounded to hear her, as she stood before some picture, tell its story in a few words.

She had just limped to a card-table, over which was hung an oval pastel portrait of a man with curled and powdered hair and a blue silk coat. She gave the portrait a gentle push toward the right, but whether it was the cord or the nail that had become loose, matters not, down fell the picture, and lay face downward before Aunt Rosamond.

"Let it lie, aunt, I beg you!" called Anna Maria's voice at this moment; and before the old lady could collect herself, the girl had bent her slender form, and handed her the picture.

"*Merci, ma petite!*" she cried kindly, and looked into her niece's face; and, indeed, if Aunt Rosamond missed the spring without, now it had come, bodily, into her room.

Anna Maria still had on a dark-blue riding-habit which closely fitted her fine, strong figure, and the young face looked out from behind the blue veil with such a spring-like freshness, that it quite warmed Aunt Rosamond's heart.

"Have you been riding, Anna Maria?" asked the old lady, as the girl endeavored to find the fallen nail.

"Yes, aunt, I rode with Klaus for an hour on the Dambitz cross-road; afterward we met Stürmer by chance, and took a cup of coffee at Dambitz Manor."

"Indeed!" Aunt Rosamond seemed quite indifferent to this, although she looked searchingly at the reddening face of her niece, who, apparently, was very attentively regarding the rescued nail in her hand.

"Are the snow-drops in bloom already at Dambitz?" inquired the old lady. "Well, the garden lies well protected. But what do you say, Anna Maria, will you stay and rest with me? I think we will sit down a little while—*n'est-ce pas, mon cœur?*"

Anna Maria stood irresolute; she looked over at her aunt, who had already seated herself on the straight-backed, gayly flowered sofa, and pointed invitingly to an easy-chair. It was so comfortable in this cosy old room; the rococo clock with the Cupid bending his bow told its low tick-tack, and a sudden shower beat against the window panes; it was a little hour just made for chatting of all sorts of possible things, of the past and of the future.

Anna Maria slowly seated herself in the chair; she neither leaned back gracefully and comfortably nor rested her fair head on the cushions. Always straight as a candle, she carried herself perfectly, and so she remained now. But sudden blushes and deep pallor interchanged on her face, which turned with an expression of perfect, modest maidenliness toward the old lady's face. One could see that she wished to say something, and that her severe, unsympathetic nature was struggling with an overflowing heart.

Her aunt did not seem to notice it at all; she had taken up a book whose once green velvet binding was worn and faded with age. The delicate fingers turned leaf after leaf; then she glanced over a page, and after a pause said:

"Actually, Anna Maria, Felix Leonhard has fallen from the wall on his birthday; how singular! Now people call that chance, but how strange it is! I have always remembered the day hitherto, until to-day, and have been going about all the time with a feeling as if I had forgotten something, I could not exactly think what. And then he announced himself. *Mon pauvre* Felix! You shall have your flowers to-day, as every year." And she caressingly touched the picture before her on the table. Then she looked over to Anna Maria almost shyly, for she knew that her niece sometimes smiled scornfully at signs and forebodings.

But to-day the deep line about Anna Maria's mouth was not to be seen; she looked thoughtfully at the picture, and asked: "Who was Felix Leonhard, aunt?"

"An early friend of my brother's," replied the old lady.

"Is he the one, aunt—I think you told me a strange story once about some one shooting himself for the sake of a girl?"

"Yes, yes, quite right, my child. This gay, handsome man once took a pistol and shot himself for the sake of a girl; quite right, Anna Maria. And he was no youth then, he was well on in the thirties, and yet did this horrible deed, unworthy of a peaceable man. Oh, it was a misery not to be described, Anna Maria!" She shook her head and passed her hands over her eyes, as if to

frighten away a horrible picture.

"Why did he do it, aunt?" asked Anna Maria, in an unusually warm tone; "was she faithless to him, or——"

"She did not love him, *ma petite*; she had been persuaded by her parents and brothers and sisters to become engaged to him. He was in most excellent circumstances, and one of the best men I ever knew. He became acquainted with her at a ball in Berlin, and fell violently in love with her, although before that no one had ever considered his a passionate nature. She was not young at the time, not even particularly pretty, and with the exception of a pair of melancholy great eyes did not possess a charm. *Eh bien*, after endless doubts and struggles, she accepted his suit. The engagement lasted a whole year, and she was as shy and discreet a *fiancée* as could be found; he, on the other hand, was full of touching attentions to her; indeed, to use a worn-out figure, he carried her about in his hands. The nearer the wedding-day approached, the more dreadful grew the poor girl's state of mind. She had repeatedly asked various people if they believed she could make her lover happy, and she was always turned off with a jest, yet quite seriously as well, on the part of her brothers and sisters. Then on the wedding-day, half an hour before the ceremony was to take place, pale and trembling, she announced that she must take back her word, she could not speak perjury—she did not love him, and she did not wish his unhappiness! Ah, I shall never forget that day—the anxious faces of the guests as the report of this refusal began to spread, and the terrible anger of her brother. What followed in her room was never made public; I only know that she persisted in her refusal, and that same evening he shot himself in the garden. *Voilà tout!*"

Anna Maria was silent; she had turned pale. "And *she*, aunt?" asked the girl after a pause.

"She! Well, she lived on, and even married not very long afterward; she did not love him at all, Anna Maria. Who knows his own heart?"

For an instant it seemed as if Anna Maria was about to answer, but she closed her lips again. The room was still. She was leaning back now; she was almost trembling, and her eyes turned thoughtfully to the picture before her. Without, the rain was beating with increased force against the windows, and the wind drove great snowflakes about in a whirling dance, between whiles; April weather, fighting and struggling, storming and raging, so spring will come.

The old lady on the sofa looked out on this raging of the elements, and thought how such a powerful spring storm rages in every human heart, and how scarcely a person in the world is spared such a fight and struggle; she knew it from her own experience, though she was only a poor cripple, and a hundred times had she seen the storm rage in the breast of another. To many, indeed, out of the struggle and longing, out of snow and sunshine, had arisen a spring as beautiful as a dream; but for many was the stormy April weather followed by a frosty May, killing all blossoms; as for herself, as for Kla—She left the thought unfinished, and quickly turned her head toward her niece, as if fearing she might have guessed her thoughts. And then—she was almost confounded—then the young girl's rosy face bent down to her, and Aunt Rosamond saw a shining drop in the eyes always so cold and clear. Anna Maria sat down beside her on the figured sofa, and threw her soft arms about her neck.

The heart of the old lady beat faster; it was the first time in her life that Anna Maria had showed any tenderness toward her. She sat quite still, as in a dream, as if the slightest movement might frighten the girl away, like a timid bird. And "Aunt Rosamond!" came the half-sobbing sound in her ear. "Oh, aunt, help me—advise me—for Klaus——"

Just then the door was quickly thrown open. "The master sends word for the Fräulein to come down-stairs at once," called Brockelmann, quite out of breath. "He can't find Isaac Aron's receipts for the last delivery of grain, and——"

"I am coming! I am coming!" called the girl. She had sprung up, and quickly thrown the skirt of her riding-habit over her arm. The spell was broken; there stood Anna Maria von Hegewitz again, the mistress of Bütze, as firm, as full of business as ever.

She crossed the room with quick steps, but turning again at the door, she said softly, and embarrassed, "I will come up again this evening, aunt." Then she closed the door behind her.

Aunt Rosamond remained as still as a mouse in her sofa-corner; she had to reflect whether this blushing, caressing girl who had just been sitting beside her were really Anna Maria von Hegewitz, her niece. She passed her hand over her forehead, and confused thoughts passed through her mind. "*Quelle métamorphose!*" she whispered to herself, and at length said aloud, "Anna Maria is certainly in love; love only makes one so gentle, so—*je ne sais quoi!* Anna Maria loves Stürmer! How disagreeable that Brockelmann happened to come in with her grain bills! *Mon Dieu!* the child, the child! I wonder if Klaus suspects it? What is to become of you, my splendid old boy, if Anna Maria goes away? But what if he should marry, too?"

She rose from the sofa and stepped to the window again. It had stopped raining, and a last lingering ray of sunshine broke from the clouds and was spread, like a golden veil, over the wet, budding trees and shrubs. "Spring is coming," she said half aloud. And now she began to walk up and down the room, but this time the pictures were undisturbed. Her hands were clasped, and now and then she shook her gray head gently, as if incredulously.

CHAPTER IV.

Meanwhile Anna Maria had gone quickly down-stairs and entered her brother's room. He was sitting at his desk, rummaging about in the drawers for the missing papers. Klaus von Hegewitz was exactly like other men in this respect, that he never could find anything, and grew so vexed in hunting, that from very irritation he found nothing. At the door stood the farm inspector and a little old man who was well known at Bütze, Isaac Aron the Jew. He made a deep reverence to Anna Maria, and said contentedly: "Now matters will be brought into good shape; the gracious Fräulein knows the place of everything in the whole house."

Anna Maria paid no attention to this, but, going to the desk, confidently put her hand into a drawer, and gave a little packet of papers to her brother. "There, Klaus," said she, looking with a smile in his flushed face, "why did you not call me at once?"

The troubled face grew bright. "Upon my word, Anna Maria," he cried gayly, "these are stupid things; I have had that package in my hands twenty times at least. A thousand thanks! I say again and again, Anna Maria, what would become of me without you?"

The smile suddenly disappeared from her face, and she looked thoughtfully at the stately figure of her brother, who had stepped up to the men and was negotiating with them. The words fell on her ears as in a dream, and quite mechanically she took up her train and walked out of the room. As she was about to close the door, her brother called after her: "Anna Maria, shall I meet you by and by in the sitting-room? The gardener wants to talk with us about the new work in the wood."

She had no idea, as she stood outside, whether or not she had answered him; then she sat down in her room, and her eyes wandered about the familiar spot and rested at length on her brother's portrait. But she saw it not; in her mind was another picture, another man's head. The red-tiled roof of Dambitz Manor rose before her eyes, and over him and her the brown, budding branches of the linden-walk in the Dambitz garden fluttered and beat in the damp spring air, and at their feet long rows of snow-drops bloomed and shook their little white heads.

"Anna Maria," he had called her, "Anna Maria," as in her childhood. She started up, as if awakening from a long, deep dream. Ah, no! it was true; scarcely an hour ago he had spoken thus to her, and Anna Maria von Hegewitz had stood before him as if under a spell.

What else had he said? She knew no longer, only the words "Anna Maria" sounded to her very soul; and as on that St. Martin's Eve she had put her hands in his, and he had drawn her close to him—only one short moment, she scarcely knew whether it were dream or reality. Then Klaus had come down the steps—"Klaus! ah, Heaven, Klaus!"

She leaned her head against the back of the sofa and closed her eyes. She saw herself going away from the old house here. Could her foot cross the threshold? And she saw Klaus looking in the door-way, looking after her with his kind, true eyes, perhaps with tears in them. And there came to her all the words which she had so often spoken to him, caressingly: "*I will stay with you, Klaus, always, always!*" And now the strong girl began to weep; she scarcely knew what tears were, but now they gushed from her eyes with all the force of a shaken soul.

And yet above all this pain there hovered a feeling of infinite happiness, through the dark veil of sadness gleamed bright rays—the premonitions of a wonderful future, the suspicion that the life which she had led hitherto was hardly to be called living, because that one thing had been wanting which first consecrates and gives value to a happy life.

She rose and went up to her brother's portrait. "Klaus, dear Klaus, I cannot help it, indeed!" she whispered; and then she wandered about the room, a tender smile on her lips, and a laugh in her eyes.

The sound of the servants' supper-bell roused her from her dreams; she changed her riding-habit for a house-dress, but laid the snow-drops in the Bible on her writing-desk, and gave the little white blossoms a caressing touch before she took up her basket of keys to leave the room. She was met on the way to the sitting-room by a fresh, curly-haired girl, carrying an armful of flashing brass candlesticks, her black eyes almost as bright as the shining metal.

"Well, Marieken," asked Anna Maria, "is the outfit ready?"

The brisk girl laughed all over her face. "Oh, not quite, Fräulein; but it is three weeks to Easter, and Gottlieb is painting the rooms now in our house, and the cabinet-maker is going to bring our things next week."

Anna Maria nodded kindly, but did not reply. Her thoughts were already again in Dambitz, wandering through the rooms of the castle. Most of them were still empty, but a time was doubtless coming for her too when the cabinet-maker would bring her things. And Anna Maria looked at the girl and smiled; she knew not why herself; it was from overflowing happiness. And Marieken laughed too—a perfect harmony of youth, hope, and happiness. Then the girl ran on with her candlesticks, and Anna Maria walked down the corridor, and in both hearts was the same sunshine. She must hurry, for Klaus would surely be waiting for her, he wanted to speak with her about the work in the garden.

Next to Klaus's room was a small room, where Anna Maria remembered to have put away in her portfolio of drawings the roughly sketched plan of the alterations, and as Klaus was not yet in the

sitting-room she hurried back to get it.

It was almost dark, and she could but indistinctly discern the objects in the little room, which Klaus jokingly called his library because of a bookcase which found its place there. So the more distinctly came to her ears a hearty laugh from her brother, and, with the laugh, the sound of her own name.

"Anna Maria, do you say? My own aunt, it is perfectly ridiculous!"

"Laugh then, you unbeliever, you will soon be convinced of the truth of my conjecture. We women, especially we old maids, Klauschen, look at such things more sharply. Soon some one will come and carry away your darling, and then we too may sit here and have the dumps, my beloved boy! What will become of us?"

"*Some one*, aunt? You speak in riddles."

"Well, since you are so dreadfully smitten with blindness, *mon cher*, it is a Christian duty on my part to open your eyes. Do you not see the girl's entirely altered manner? Have you never—But to what purpose is all this? In short, Anna Maria loves Stürmer!"

Another hearty laugh interrupted the old lady. But Anna Maria, with closed eyes, leaned against the door-post; the ground seemed to give way beneath her feet.

"Kurt Stürmer? Uncle Stürmer? But, my dear aunt," cried the young man, "he might almost be her father!"

"Is that a hindrance, Klaus?"

"No! I don't believe it, however. Shall we bet?"

Anna Maria straightened up. She was on the point of going in and saying, "Why do you argue? I do love him—yes! a thousand times, yes!" But she stood still; her brother's voice sounded so strangely altered.

"Aunt Rosamond, I *cannot* believe it!"

"Klaus! Have you not thought for a long time that it must happen some day?"

"Yes, yes! But—Ah! I have stood in fear of this hour, since the child is the only one to whom my heart clings; you do not know how much, perhaps, aunt!"

"Klaus,"—the old lady's voice was melting with tenderness—"my dear old lad, you are still young: why should there not be a happiness yet in store for you? I have often told you you ought to marry."

"Marry? You say that to me, aunt? and you know that I have been a wretched being for years, because——"

"But, Klaus, do you still think of that?" sounded the anxious voice of the aunt.

"Still?" he repeated ironically. "Am I not daily reminded of it? Do you think, because I live so peacefully now and can join in a laugh, because food and wine taste good to me—I see the tower of her family home whenever I go to the window, I see Anna Maria, I cannot pass that fatal spot in the garden without the words she then spoke reëchoing in my soul. I know them by heart, aunt, I have called and whispered them for weeks in fever; and ever again her enchanting figure stands before my eyes, and that sweet, beseeching tone rings in my ears, as seductive as Satan himself: '*Put that obstinate, disagreeable child out of your house; she interferes with our happiness!*'"

He laughed scornfully. "And because I would not consent to that, and did not break a promise given to my dying mother, then—she cast me off like a garment that does not fit comfortably enough—then—then——"

"Klaus! Klaus! for God's sake!" The anxious voice of the old lady interrupted his speaking, which had risen to vehemence.

But in the little room lay Anna Maria on her knees, her head almost touching the floor. It had become still in the next room, except for the sound of rapid steps as the young man paced the floor.

"And now—yes, yes, it had to happen!" said he softly. "I am no egoist, certainly not, but it will be unspeakably hard for me to give her up. Oh, yes, I shall see her often. I can ride over any minute; she will come to us too—certainly. But see, aunt—but I am a fool, really, a fool! It is the way of the world, and I do not understand why I did not see long ago that Stürmer is fond of Anna Maria; it is, indeed, so natural. How good it is that I am prepared; not the slightest shadow shall fall on Anna Maria's happiness. Your eyes ask that, Aunt Rose? No, be quiet, be quiet!"

Anna Maria remained motionless on the cold floor, leaning her head against the door-post. She no longer understood what they were saying in the next room; she kept hearing only that one dreadful speech: "Put the child out of the house; she interferes with our happiness!" His happiness! Klaus's happiness! She passed her cold hand over her forehead, as if she must convince herself whether or not it was a dream. No, no; she was awake, she could move her feet as well, she could walk out of the little room, along the corridor, to her own room.

Marieken was just coming along the passage. Anna Maria stopped, and bade her say to Fräulein Rosamond that she was not coming to the table; she had a headache, and wanted to be alone that evening.

The girl looked in alarm at the pale face of her mistress. "Shall I call Brockelmann?" she asked anxiously.

Anna Maria made a negative gesture, and laid her hand on the door-knob, and then turned her head. "Marieken!"

The girl came back.

"It is nothing—only go!" She then hastily turned away, and shut and bolted her door at once.

"She wishes to be alone with her thoughts," remarked Aunt Rosamond at the supper table, where she and Klaus sat, right and left of the absent one's place. Klaus did not reply at once, but looked at that place and said at length: "So it will always be, soon!" And the old lady nodded sadly; she knew not what to reply, and a secret anxiety about the future stole over her, since she had seen that Klaus still bore the old wound which he had received many years ago. She had supposed it healed long since.

The next morning Anna Maria went as usual, with her bunch of keys, through kitchen and cellar. She was pale, and her orders sounded shorter and less friendly than they had of late. Only to Klaus she gave a friendly smile, but it was forced, and her eyes had no share in it. She looked over accounts with him for two hours, and, though he was distracted and restless, the results were perfectly correct. Aunt Rosamond alone was alarmed at the girl's appearance, but she did not venture to ask any questions. Anna Maria was as icily cold as often heretofore.

The next day, toward evening, Klaus came into Aunt Rosamond's room. The old lady had just hung up Felix Leonhard's portrait again, after carefully making fast the broken cord.

"Well, who was right, Aunt Rose?" he asked. He was standing beside her, and she saw that his face had grown very red, and that his whole being was stirred.

"Right? In what, Klaus?"

"In your assertion about Anna Maria. She does not love him!"

"Did she say so? Oh, well, it doesn't follow at all that a girl has spoken the truth, if she says she does *not* love a certain person, does not even like him. I have experienced the contrary a hundred times; those who talk so hide a warm affection under cold words."

"Not this time, Aunt Rose. Anna Maria has definitely refused him!"

The old lady sank, quite overcome, into the nearest chair. "Klaus! *Est-il possible?* Has he spoken already, then?"

"Not to her, but to me, aunt. He came about five o'clock this afternoon; Anna Maria was sitting at the window as he rode into the court, and she got up at once and went to her room. Stürmer sent in word to me that he wanted to speak to me alone; and then—truly, Aunt Rose, you do know how to observe—then he said to me that he loved Anna Maria, that he thought his affection was reciprocated, and other things that people usually say on such occasions; he spoke of his age, and said that he would be not only a husband but a father as well to Anna Maria. I assured him that I had the deepest respect for him, which is quite true, and after about an hour went to Anna Maria to get her answer. Her door was open; she was sitting at her little sewing table by the window, looking out into the garden; she held her New Testament in her hand, but laid it down as I came near her. I thought she had been crying, and turned her face around to me; but her eyes were dry and burning, and her forehead feverishly hot. As I began to speak she turned her head to the window again and sat motionless as a statue. I must have asked her certainly three times: 'Anna Maria, what shall I answer him? Will you do it yourself? Shall I send him to you?' 'No, no!' she cried at length, 'don't send him! I cannot see him; tell him that I—he must not be angry with me—I do not love him! Klaus, I cannot go away from here! Let me stay with you!' And then she sprang up, threw her arms about my neck, and stuck to me like a bur; but her whole frame trembled, and I thought I could feel her hot hands through my coat. After much persuasion, and promising that I would never force her, I got her so far as to sit down quietly at last; but I had to give the poor fellow his answer—and that was no trifling matter!"

"For God's sake, Klaus, what did Stürmer say?"

"Not one word, aunt; I spared him all I could, but he grew as white as the plaster on the wall. At last he asked: 'Can I speak to Anna Maria?' I said, 'No,' in accordance with her wish; then he took up his hat and whip, and bade me good-by as heartily as usual, to be sure, but the hand he gave me trembled. Poor fellow! I do pity him!"

"And Anna Maria?"

"I cannot find her, aunt, either in the sitting-room or in her own room."

At the farther end of the Hegewitz garden stood an old, very old linden; the spot was somewhat

elevated, and a turfy slope stretched down to the budding privet-hedge which bounded the garden. Under the linden was a sandstone bench, also old and weather beaten, and from here one could look away out on the Mark country, far, far out over cornfields and green meadows, dark pine forests and sandy patches of heath.

There stood Anna Maria, looking toward the meadow on the other side of the road, with its countless fresh mole-hills, and the wet road which ran along beside the quiet little river, on whose banks the willows were already growing yellow. How often of late had she stood here, how often waited till a brown horse's head emerged from among the willows, and then turned quickly and hurried into the house, for he must not see that she was watching for him with all the longing of a warm, first love. And *to-day*? She did not know herself how she had come hither, and she looked blankly away into the mist of the spring evening as if she neither saw the golden rays of the setting sun nor heard the shouting of the village children in the distance. The air was intoxicatingly soft and played gently with the black lace veil which had fallen from Anna Maria's fair hair. She noticed it not. Then she quickly turned her head; the breathing and step of a horse sounded along by the hedge: "Kurt Stürmer!" she whispered, and started to go. But she stopped and saw him come near, saw him ride away in the rosy evening; his eyes were cast downward. How could he know who was looking after him with eyes almost transfixed with burning pain? She stood there motionless, and looked after him; the horse's tread sounded ominously in her ears as he stepped upon the little bridge which united the Dambitz and Hegewitz fields, and she still remained motionless after the willows had hidden the solitary horseman from sight.

Meanwhile the sunset glow had become deep crimson, and faded again; the wind blew harder, and rocked the budding linden-boughs, and bore along with it the sound of a maiden's voice; an old song floated past Anna Maria out into the country:

"I had better have died
Than have gained a love.
Ah, would I were not so sad!"

Then she turned and ran along the damp garden path as if pursued; she stood still by the fish-pond, so close to it that the water touched her foot, and looked into the dark mirror. In these Marieken had sought oblivion when she might not have her Gottlieb! Was it really such madness, if one—? And Anna Maria stretched out her arms and sprang into the little decaying boat by the bank.

"Anna Maria! Anna Maria!" called a man's voice just then, through the still garden.

"Klaus!" she murmured, as if awakening; she tried to answer, but no sound came from her lips. With a shudder, she climbed out of the floating boat and turned her steps toward the house.

CHAPTER V.

Spring had come again. Two years had passed since that evening. In Bütze Manor-house there was a vaulted, out-of-the-way room, which was entered by a low, small door at the end of a dark passage; the windows looked out upon the garden. Tall trees forbade entrance to the light, which had to seek admission through an artistic old lattice-work as well. This had been the lumber-room from time immemorial. All sorts of things lay, hung, and stood there, in perfect confusion. Old presses and chests, old spinning-wheels with yellowed ivory decorations, and dark oil portraits on which one could hardly detect the trace of a face; a huge bedstead with heavy gilt knobs—a French general had slept on it in the year nine, and the late Herr von Hegewitz had banished the bed to the lumber-room as a desecrated object after that, for it had originally been made to shelter a prince of the royal family for a night. The wings of the gilded eagle who sat so proudly at the top were broken off, and his beak held now only a shred of the crimson curtain, as the last remnant of former splendor. Fine cobwebs reached from one piece of furniture to another, and yellowish dust lay on the floor, a sign that the wood-worm was undisturbed here.

Here Anna Maria stood and looked about her, as if in search of something. She scarcely knew herself just why she had come in here; she had happened to go by, and then it had flashed across her mind that it might be well to give the old lumber-room a breath of fresh spring air, and she had taken the bunch of keys from her belt and come in. The young linden leaves outside let one or two inquisitive sunbeams through the window, and myriads of grains of dust floated up and down in them. It was so quiet in the room, among the antique furniture. Anna Maria was just in the mood for it; she sat down in an arm-chair and leaned her head against the moth-eaten cushion, her eyes half-closed, her hands folded in her lap.

She felt so peaceful; the old furniture seemed to preach to her of the perishable nature of man. Where were all the hands that had made it? the eyes that had delighted in it? She thought how some time her spinning-wheel, too, would stand here, and how many days and hours must pass before strange hands would bring it here, as superfluous rubbish. Strange hands! She felt a sudden fear. Strange hands! For centuries Bütze had descended in direct line from father to son—and now?

Anna Maria rose quickly and went to the window, as if to frighten away unpleasant thoughts; the

soft, mild spring air blew toward her and reminded her of the most unhappy hour of her life, and again she turned and walked quickly through the room. Then her foot struck against something, and she saw the cradle, lightly rocking in front of her—the heavy, gayly painted old cradle in which the Hegewitzes had had their first slumber for more than two hundred years—Klaus too, and she too. And Anna Maria knelt down and threw her arms about the little rocking cradle, and kissed the glaring painted roses and cherubs, and a few bitter tears flowed from under her lashes, the first that she had shed since that day.

"Why did I, too, have to lie there in the cradle? It might have been so different, so much better," she thought. "Poor thing, you must decay and fall to dust here, and at last irreverent hands will take you and throw you into the fire. Poor Klaus! For my sake!" And almost tenderly she wiped the dust from the arabesques on the back, and shook up the little yellow pillows.

Just then came the sound of a quick, manly step in the passage, and before Anna Maria had time to rise, Klaus stood in the open door.

"Do I find you here?" he asked in astonishment, and at first laughing, then more serious, he looked at Anna Maria, who rose and came toward him.

"I wanted to let some fresh air in here, and found our old cradle, Klaus," she said quietly.

"Yes, Anna Maria—but you have been crying," he rejoined.

"Oh, I was only thinking that it was quite unnecessary that the poor thing should have been hunted up again for me!" The bitterness of her heart pressed unconsciously to her lips to-day.

"Anna Maria! What puts such thoughts into your head?" asked Klaus von Hegewitz, in amazement. And drawing his sister to him, he stroked her hair lovingly. "What should I do without you?"

She made a slight convulsive movement, and freed herself from his arms.

"But, listen, sister," he continued, "I know whence such feelings come. You must become low-spirited in this old nest; you have no companions of your own age, you withdraw more and more from every youthful pleasure, and, although you think you can do without these things, you will have to pay for it some day."

Anna Maria shook her head.

"Yes, yes!" he continued, stepping in front of the window, and his tall figure obstructed the sunlight so that the room grew dark all at once. "I have seen more of life, I know it. What should you think, Anna Maria, if you—" He paused and drew a letter from his pocket. "I had better read the letter to you. I was just looking for you, to talk with you about it. Professor Mattoni is dead!"

Anna Maria looked over to him sympathetically. Klaus had turned around and was looking out of the window; the paper in his hand shook slightly. She knew how deeply the news of this death touched him. Professor Mattoni had been his tutor, had lived in Bütze for years, and the pleasantest memories of his boyhood were connected with this man. As a youth he had had in him a truly fatherly friend and adviser, and had since visited him every year, in Berlin, where he held a position as professor in the E—— Institute.

Anna Maria took her brother's hand and pressed it silently. "Yet one true friend less," she then said; "we shall soon be quite alone, Klaus!"

"He was more than a friend to me, Anna Maria," he replied gently, "he was a father to me."

She nodded; she knew it well. "And the letter?" she asked.

"A last request, almost illegible; he wishes that I should take charge of his little daughter, till she—so he writes—till she is independent enough to take up the battle of life."

"His little daughter?" asked Anna Maria. "Had he still so young a child?"

"I am sorry to say," said Klaus, "that I know nothing at all of his family affairs. He married late in life, and probably had every reason for not presenting his better half: some said he picked her up somewhere in Hungary; others, that she had been a chorus singer in one of the inferior theatres in Berlin. I never spoke to him about it, and when I went to his house I saw in his study no indications that any female being presided there. I have never noticed anything on my frequent visits to show that such a person lived with Mattoni, and remember just once that while we were having a pleasant hour's chat, a child's cry came from the next room, whereupon he got up and knocked emphatically on the door. The screaming child was probably carried to a back room, for it grew still next door, and we talked on. Then I once heard that his wife was dead; I have never seen any outward tokens of affliction on him, but the child seems to be alive."

"And now, Klaus?"

The tall man had turned, and was looking absently at the little wooden cradle.

"And now, Anna Maria? I owe him so much"—he spoke almost imploringly—"may I impose such a burden upon you?"

"Klaus, what a question! Of course! Please take the necessary steps at once, and have the child come."

"The child, Anna Maria? Why, I think she must have reached the limits of childhood now!"

"That doesn't matter, Klaus. Then I will instruct her in housekeeping, and all sorts of things which she may find useful in her life."

"I thank you sincerely, Anna Maria," he replied; "I hope you will take pleasure in the girl." He said this with a sigh of relief, which did not escape Anna Maria's ear.

"You act exactly as if you had been afraid of me, Klaus," she remarked, with a passing smile; "as if I should not always wish anything that seemed desirable to you."

"Just because I know that, Anna Maria," he said, grasping her hands affectionately, "I wish, too, that you might do it gladly, that it might be no sacrifice to you——"

"I am really and truly glad the child is coming," she said honestly. And so they stood opposite each other in the forsaken lumber-room; it was now flooded with sunshine, and the two strong figures stood out from a golden background. The shadows of the young leaves about the window played lightly over them, and the call of the thrush echoed from the woods far away without.

"A sacrifice!" he had said, and yet they had each already made the greatest sacrifice of which a human heart is capable, and each thought it unknown to the other. And at their feet rocked the heavy cradle, moved by Anna Maria's dress, and it rocked on, long after the two had left the room.

CHAPTER VI.

Thirty years had passed away, and on a stormy autumn evening a young couple sat before a crackling fire, in Bütze Manor-house—she, a slender, girlish figure, fair, with pleasant blue eyes; he, tall, or seeming so from a certain delicacy of form, and also fair; but a pair of bright brown eyes contrasted strangely with his light hair.

Without, the wind was raging about the old house, as it had done many years before, and sang of past times; now and then it set up a howl of furious rage, and then sounded again in low, long-drawn, plaintive tones, as if singing a long-forgotten love-song.

The young wife in the comfortable easy-chair had been listening to it a long time; now she said in a clear voice:

"Klaus, this would be just the evening to read aloud the journal."

He started up out of a deep reverie. "What journal, my child!"

"That little packet of papers that we found the other day, in rummaging about in Aunt Rosamond's writing-desk."

He nodded. "Yes, we will do it," he said, "it will be a bit of family history, perhaps about my parents. I was just thinking how little I know of them, and it makes me sad. Mother Anna Maria makes her account so short and scanty, as if she did not like to talk about it, and whenever she mentions her only brother her eyes grow moist. Come, sit down on the sofa with me; I will get the papers."

He rose, went to an old-fashioned desk, and took a little packet of papers from the middle drawer. The young wife had meanwhile taken up a bit of dainty needlework, and now they sat, side by side, on the sofa, before the lamp, and he unfolded the sheets.

"What a pretty old handwriting," he said. "See, Marie!"

She nodded. "One can make quite a picture of the writer from that—small, delicate, and good, as loving as the first words sound."

"Yes," he replied, "she was good and kind. I remember her so distinctly yet. She used to give me sugarplums and colored pictures, and at Christmas she used to come as Knecht Ruprecht, and I should certainly have been frightened if I had not recognized Aunt Rosamond by her voice and limp."

"Ah, but please read, Klaus," begged the young wife impatiently; and he began obediently:

"My dear Anna Maria has driven away again with little Klaus——"

"That is you!" interrupted the young wife, laughing.

He nodded; his fine eyes gleamed softly. "But now be still," he said; "for Aunt Rosamond surely never thought such a disturber of the peace would ever put her nose in here."

"You bad man! Give me a kiss for that!"

"That, too?" he sighed comically. "There, but be quiet now!" And he began again:

"My dear Anna Maria has driven away again with little Klaus. It has become very quiet at Bütze, not a sound in the great house; even Brockelmann is no longer heard, for since last winter she

has taken to wearing felt slippers. All the rooms down-stairs are shut up, and it is melancholy. Anna Maria consoles me, to be sure, by saying that there will be life enough here again when the child has grown large; but, dear me, by that time I shall have long been lying in the garden yonder! Oh, I wish I might live to hear merry voices ringing again through the house at Bütze, and see the rooms down-stairs occupied; but I do not believe it possible. Well, I must not allow myself to be overpowered by the loneliness and tediousness about me; I sit at my desk and will try to narrate the late events here, in regular order. So much has happened here; the stories rush to my mind all confused, but I should like to recall the past in proper order.

"If I only knew how to begin! I have already cut three goose-quills to pieces! I look out of the window, the trees are clad in the first green, the sky is blue, only a dark line of cloud rising over the barn yonder. It is warm and sultry, as before an approaching thunder-storm, and now another spring day rises before my eyes, and now I know.

"It was a ninth of May, just as damp and sultry as to-day. Anna Maria came in to me. My room was up-stairs here then, on the same story, the same big flowered furniture stood here, and I was the same infirm, limping old creature, only fresher and brighter; I laughed more than any one in the house in those days. I can see Anna Maria before me so distinctly, as she stood there by the spinet in her every-day gray dress, with a black taffeta apron over it, and the bunch of keys at her belt.

"'Aunt Rosamond, will you look at the room which I have been getting ready for the child?' she asked, and I rose, and limped along beside her down the hall as far as the large, dark room. I never could bear the room, and to-day, as I entered it, it oppressed me like a nightmare. To be sure, dazzling white pillows stood up beneath the green curtains of the canopy, and a spray of elder on the toilet-table sent its fragrance through the room; but neither this nor the sultry air which came in at the window could improve the damp, cold atmosphere, or convey any degree of comfort to the room.

"'You ought to have had it warmed, Anna Maria,' said I, with a little shiver, 'and had that unpleasant picture taken away.' And I pointed to the half-length portrait of a young woman looking boldly and saucily forth into the world, with a pair of sparkling black eyes, who was called in the family the 'Mischief-maker.' According to an old, half-forgotten story, she had come by her nickname from her black eyes having been the cause of a duel between two Hegewitz brothers, in which one was killed by his brother's hand. A Hegewitz herself, and lingering at Bütze on a visit, she had deliberately married another man. How, when, and where, it happened, the story did not tell; but her portrait had remained at Bütze, and hung from time immemorial in this room.

"'Ah! let the picture stay: the child does not know whom it represents,' replied Anna Maria. 'I think it is quite comfortable and pleasant here, Aunt Rosamond, with the view into the garden.'

"Anna Maria had, literally, no idea of comfort, so her remark did not surprise me. She lacked that charming feminine faculty of making all the surroundings pleasing with a few flowers or a bit of graceful drapery. 'The poor thing,' thought I, 'coming from Berlin—to this dreary solitude!'

"Anna Maria had suddenly turned around to me, and her face, usually so austere, was glowing with tenderness. 'Aunt Rosamond,' she said, 'do you know, I am really glad the little Susanna Mattoni is coming!'

"'And I am glad for you, Anna Maria,' I replied, 'for you need a friend.'

"'I need no friend,' she replied bluntly, 'and how could that young thing be a companion for me? She is a child, a poor orphaned child, in need of love, and I will—' She broke off, and a hot blush spread over her face.

"'You are still young yourself, Anna Maria,' I interposed, 'and I think she must be seventeen years old.'

"'Years do not make the age, Aunt Rosamond, but the soul, the nature, the experiences. If God will, she shall find in me rather a mother, for as a companion I am worth nothing. I should have to conform her to myself—oh, never!'

"I knew that Anna Maria's whole heart, usually so coldly closed, had opened to receive a fatherless and motherless creature, to love it, in her way, with all her might—in her way, indeed, and that was not understood by every one. How much time have I spent in trying to fathom that nature, which apparently lay open to every eye, against whose sharp corners and angles almost every one ran, who had anything to do with her.

"'Has Klaus gone to meet your guest?' I asked.

"'No, he rode out into the fields. Why should he?' she rejoined. 'Old Maier drove away to S— yesterday, and I think every second she must come. I only hope it will be before the approaching thunder-storm breaks!'

"The unpleasant stillness before the threatening storm pervaded the outside world. I went up to Anna Maria at the open window and looked at the black clouds looming up in the horizon. My eyes roved beyond the trees in the garden, out into the country; strangely near seemed the dark forests and Dambitz with its clumsy tower.

"How near Dambitz looks,' I remarked, 'and it is really so far away.'

"Anna Maria turned quickly. 'Very far,' she said listlessly.

"'Stürmer still stays away,' I began, designedly. I felt compassion for the man whom an incomprehensible whim of a girl had driven away into the world, just when he had hoped to find a home and heart; I had once, for the space of half an hour, imagined that she loved him.

"I received no answer, but about the girl's lips there lay such an expression of pride and defiant resolution that I resolved never to mention that name again. She gazed fixedly at the dark clouds, and at last said, in a wearily oppressed tone: 'Is not that the rumbling of a carriage?'

"'Perhaps the thunder,' I replied. But before we had closed the window and I had looked around the room again, Brockelmann stood, with flushed face, before Anna Maria. 'Gracious Fräulein, she is—they are here—God in Heaven!'

"'What is the matter?' asked Anna Maria.

"'There are two of them, Fräulein, and queer enough she looks—the old woman, I mean. And a thunder-storm like this is just the time for them to come to the house in!'

"The storm had indeed broken loose, with thunder and lightning, and torrents of rain. The old woman made haste to light the candles on the great mantel, for it was almost dark in the room.

"'They are coming up-stairs already!' she cried, and hurried out, leaving the door open.

"Anna Maria had not interrupted the old woman by a word; it was not her way to apprehend quickly a new turn of affairs. So she snuffed the candles quite composedly and remained standing by the mantel, so as to keep the door in sight. Her face was as cold and still again as usual, and did not show the slightest trace of expectation or curiosity, nor did it alter when in the door-way. But how shall I describe the young creature who, as suddenly as in a fairy-tale, stepped over the threshold?

"There never was but one Susanna Mattoni! I do not know whether she could be called a beauty; perhaps her sparkling brown eyes were too large for that, too widely opened for the narrow face, the nose too short, the lips too full, and the complexion too pale; but this I know, that only by an effort I suppressed an exclamation of surprise, as she stood there, so small and slight, in her closely-fitting black dress, as if she had been charmed thither. Her light mantle had slipped from her shoulders, and a pair of very slender hands had impetuously thrown back the crape veil from her hat. It was evident that the young girl was in a state of great excitement; her searching, anxious eyes rested on Anna Maria's imposing figure, and then dropped to the floor in embarrassment; she apparently did not know what to do now, and breathed timidly and faintly.

"'God bless your coming, Susanna Mattoni!' said Anna Maria, in her deep voice; and she put her arm for a moment around the slender figure. 'May Bütze please you as a temporary home!' There was an unwonted sympathy in these words, and as she bent down to the stranger I had to smile at my former opinion. Anna Maria needed no friend; young as she was, she stood by Susanna Mattoni with the maternal dignity of a woman of forty. It was remarkable how she utterly belied her youth in everything she did.

"But at this moment it first became clear what Brockelmann had meant when she spoke of two—of the old woman. At the threshold of the room appeared the figure of a small, elderly woman, in a worn black silk gown, a shawl embroidered in red and yellow over her shoulders, and an ill-shaped hood of black crape on her head, from which a yellowish, wrinkled face looked forth; a pair of small dark eyes darted like lightning about the room; then she ran to Anna Maria, who was regarding her in amazement, and with a theatrical gesture raised her clasped hands to her. 'Oh, Mademoiselle, pardon my intrusion, but the child—I could not part from Susanna!'

"'Stop that!' commanded Anna Maria, decidedly disturbed. 'Who are you?'

"The woman dropped her eyes and was silent.

"'Fräulein Mattoni, who is the woman?' said Anna Maria, turning to the young girl, who, it seemed to me, looked timidly at her companion. Susanna was silent too. There was no sound but that of the rain beating against the windows, and swaying the branches of the trees. Anna Maria waited quietly a few minutes.

"'I have been in Professor Mattoni's household since Susanna's birth,' the old woman now began, 'and—'

"'The child's nurse, then?' Anna Maria said, cutting off her speech. 'Very well, you may stay here twenty-four hours, and see how your demoiselle is provided for. Brockelmann,' she ordered the old woman, who, with a chambermaid, had just brought up a trunk that seemed as light as a feather, 'make up a bed in the gray room for the woman. And you, Susanna Mattoni, need to be alone after so long a journey. Make yourself comfortable till supper-time; punctually at seven, I shall expect you in the dining-room.' She took her basket of keys from the mantel, and noticing me, motioned to Susanna and introduced her to me as our future household companion. The little thing shyly kissed my hand, and as I raised her chin a little to look at her face again, I saw that tears were shining in the brown eyes. 'Heavens!' I thought as I went out, 'how will this little princess get on here in that gloomy room, in Anna Maria's chilling atmosphere?' I quietly patted the pale little cheek, and followed my niece. Outside in the corridor we met Klaus, dripping wet,

having just dismounted from his horse.

"And so she is really here, then, the new accession to the family?" he asked, giving himself a shake in his wet clothes. "Well, what does she look like, the little Berliner?"

"I opened the door of my room, and the brother and sister entered.

"You will see her, Klaus," replied Anna Maria.

"Right, little sister, that is true; I will change my clothes first of all."

"Yes, Klaus, but be quick: I would like to settle something with you before you see the young lady at table."

"Young lady? Whew!" rejoined the brother, and a disagreeable expression lay for a moment on his kind, handsome face. "Do you wish me to put on a dress-coat, Anna Maria?" He laughed.

"Well, you will open your eyes, too, Klauschen," thought I; and all at once a thought came to me that fell like the weight of a mountain on my soul, whether it would not be better if this Susanna Mattoni, together with her black-eyed witch of a nurse, were a thousand miles away?

"When Klaus and Anna Maria had gone, I stood still in the middle of the room and said aloud, with a fierce conviction: 'The two children have made an unpardonably stupid move; what will come of it?' And much came of it! If the succession of sorrow, tears, and bitter hours that followed Susanna Mattoni's little feet could have been foreseen on her arrival, Anna Maria would have given not only the old woman, but Susanna herself, no longer than twenty-four hours to stay in her house!

"I was still standing on the same spot when the door flew open, and Susanna's old companion entered. 'Gracious Fräulein,' she cried anxiously, 'do come; the child—she is weeping, she is ill, she will kill herself!'

"The excited creature wrung her hands, and her whole frame trembled. I limped across to the girl's room, again with the thought, 'What will come of it?' Susanna was sitting, half undressed, at the toilet-table, her dark hair falling loosely over a white dressing-sack; her face was buried in her hands, and she was crying. The old woman rushed up to her: 'Darling, the kind lady is here; she will be good to us, she will let me stay here, and will speak a good word to the Fräulein; please now, my lamb, she surely will.'

"Susanna Mattoni raised her head and dried the tears from her great eyes; when she saw me she sprang up, and again I felt the magical charm that surrounded the young creature. 'What is the matter, my child?' I asked tenderly.

"You are very kind, Mademoiselle," she answered; 'it is only the strangeness and the long journey.' And she shivered with cold.

"Dress yourself quickly," I advised her, 'there is a fire in the dining-room, and the warm supper will do you good.'

"The old woman seized a comb and drew it with evident pride through the beautiful hair, and waited on the Professor's young daughter as if she were really a princess. She talked meanwhile of her delicate constitution and her nerves. I quite forgot going, and at that stood still in amazement. Merciful Heaven! In old houses in the Mark 'nerves' were not yet the fashion. What would Anna Maria say, what would—?"

"Anna Maria had spoken of having Susanna acquire the art of housekeeping, so that in the future she might help herself through life with her own hands. And here! a maid, nerves, the beauty of a *grande dame* with the little hands and feet of a child.

"And now the old woman took from the trunk a little black dress, evidently quite new, and trimmed with bows, flounces, and the Lord knows what! Over the shining white neck she laid a black gauze fichu, which she gracefully arranged on the bodice, and beneath the short skirts peeped two shoes laced up with silk ribbons, such as scarcely ever before glided over the old floors of Bütze Manor-house. Certainly the old woman understood her business. Susanna Mattoni was, as she stood there, the most charming girl I have ever seen, before or since, in my long life.

"God help me, what will be the end of it?" I asked myself for the third time, as the old woman broke off a white spray of elder, and placed it, correctly and not without coquetry, in the fichu.

"But, my dear," I said aloud, 'there is no company here this evening. We eat to-day *en famille*, buckwheat groats with milk.'

"But I got no answer; the busy lady's maid bent quickly to pull one or two bows straight, and I glanced from Susanna—the color in whose cheeks had mounted to a bright red—to the trunk, which looked suspiciously empty after the taking out of the new dress. The old woman observed me, and quickly shut the cover. 'The clock is striking seven,' she said; and in fact, the weak, thin tone of the Bütze church-bell was heard just seven times, and at once began the noisy sound of the servants' supper-bell.

"Come," said I to her, 'the servants' room is down-stairs.'

"Thank you," she replied, with a look of refusal. 'I am not at all hungry; but I would like to ask for

some wood, for the child cannot sleep in this damp atmosphere.'

"I directed her to Brockelmann, and conducted Susanna Mattoni to the dining-room.

"Oh, I could paint the scene now! The four candles on the table vied with the rosy twilight, and in the vaulted window-niche stood Klaus and Anna Maria. He had put his arm around her, and had been saying some kind, serious word—they never stood so near each other again! I seem to see, at this moment, how they turned around toward me—how Klaus, full of surprise, looked past me at the slender, girlish figure; how Anna Maria was suddenly transfixed—and I could not blame either of them! I have scarcely ever seen Susanna Mattoni more charming, more maidenly, than at that moment, when she stood in embarrassment before the young friend of her father. I wondered if she had imagined he was different.

"A warm glow overspread her delicate face; Anna Maria blushed, too. I do not know whether it was fear or anger that caused her to touch Klaus's arm, as he stepped forward to say some words of welcome to Susanna.

"Please come to the table!' called Anna Maria. 'Here, Fräulein Mattoni, beside Aunt Rosamond.' As we stood at our places she said, in a strangely faltering voice, the old grace: 'The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord!' The 'Amen' almost stuck in her throat, and in the look which she gave the young girl's dainty dress, and which fell with especial sharpness on the white flowers, I saw what the clock had struck for Anna Maria. It was almost amusing to me to compare the two girls, so unlike, and to wonder whether the high-necked, gray woollen dress and the dainty little silk gown would ever live side by side, without having to make mutual concessions.

"Klaus talked to Susanna, who sat opposite him. He touched upon the subject of her deceased father, but gave it up at once when he saw the great eyes fill with tears, which she bravely tried to swallow with the strange buckwheat groats. A fresh egg, afterward, seemed to taste better to her, but with a timorous smile she refused a glass of foaming brown beer, and I am convinced that she rose unsatisfied from the table.

"The candles were lighted in the sitting-room, and at the master's place lay a plate of tobacco and a matchbox beside the newspaper. At Anna Maria's place lay her knitting-work, and at mine spectacles and Pompadour, just as Brockelmann arranged them every evening, except that in winter Anna Maria had her spinning-wheel instead of her knitting. To-night Klaus did not take his pipe from the shelf in the corner; Susanna Mattoni's delicate form sank into his comfortable easy-chair, and her small head nestled back in the cushions; but Klaus, like a true cavalier, with a chivalry that became him admirably, sat on a stool opposite her.

"The conversation, in which Anna Maria joined but little, turned upon Berlin. Susanna was well informed about her native city, and now chattered charmingly and without embarrassment; her eyes shone, her cheeks grew red, and a roguish dimple displayed itself every instant. Now she was in the opera-house or theatre, in the Thiergarten or in Charlottenburg; now she related anecdotes of the royal family. All this came out in a confused jumble, and Klaus did not grow tired of asking questions. The newspaper lay disregarded, and his pipe did not receive a glance.

"Anna Maria sat silent, and knit. At nine o'clock she broke into the conversation. 'I think you must be tired, Fräulein Mattoni,' she said; and one could perceive what an effort she made to speak kindly. 'We usually retire about ten, but you need an extra hour's sleep to-night.' And as Brockelmann appeared, in answer to the bell, the little thing, with a certain astonishment in her eyes, said 'Good-night,' like an obedient child. She turned around at the door, and asked, with a sweet, imploring expression on her little face: 'May Isa sleep in my room?'

"A bed has been made up in another room for your companion,' replied Anna Maria; 'you are surely not afraid? Brockelmann's room is next door.'

"Susanna did not reply, but made another exceedingly graceful courtesy and vanished.

"Do let the old woman sleep with her,' said Klaus; 'think how forlorn her first night in a strange house must be!'

"But Anna Maria did not reply; she got her brother's pipe from the shelf, and, smiling, pushed him into his easy-chair, and took up her knitting again.

"There, Klaus, I beg of you, don't be so nonsensical in the future as to sit on a footstool. That was very uncomfortable.'

"Sooner dead than impolite!' he replied good-humoredly.

"Everything in its time!' she rejoined. 'Susanna Mattoni is to be a member of our household, and there is nothing so tiresome as formal politeness and constraint. Susanna can sit on that stool just as well as you.'

"Bon, Anna Maria! But now, what do you really think of her?'

"Since you ask me plainly, Klaus, I will answer you plainly. I say that I expected to receive something different into the house.'

"So did I,' he rejoined laconically, drawing the first whiffs from his pipe.

"And that if anything is to be made of the girl, the old woman must go away to-morrow.'

"She is right," thought I to myself, 'if it is only not too late!'

"Klaus took up the newspaper. 'Well, Anna Maria, there may be something to say about that by and by; but let her stay a week or two, so that she may see how Fräulein Mattoni gets on.'

"Am I to bring up the girl or not?" Anna Maria interrupted, with a roughness such as she had never before shown toward her brother. 'How is this spoiled lady of fashion to learn to take care of herself and to use her hands, if that person remains at her side, to put on her shoes and stockings for her whenever it is possible, and turn her head with flowers and frivolities? Twenty-four hours I have said, and not a minute longer; two such totally different methods as hers and mine cannot agree.'

"Klaus looked in surprise at the excited face. 'You are right, Anna Maria,' he said appeasingly. 'I am only afraid that this being will never develop according to your mind. She seems to me—'

"Made of different material!" finished Anna Maria ironically. 'I tell you, that will be no hindrance to me, in educating a girl whose calling it is to make herself useful in the world; affected dolls, painted cheeks, and theatrical pomp, I will not endure in my house!'

"She had risen, and all the indignation which the old woman's skill at the toilet had called forth now glowed on her red cheeks and shone from her sparkling eyes.

"Klaus laid down the newspaper which he had just taken up. 'I beg you, Anna Maria,' he said, almost indignantly, 'cannot that be settled quietly? The girl has only this minute come into the house, and is she to make discord between us already?'

"Anna Maria sat down again in silence, and took up her knitting. But after a little while she rose hastily, tied a black lace scarf over her fair hair, and went out.

"Klaus followed her with his eyes. 'Aunt Rosamond, what is this?' he asked, sighing.

"She expected something different, Klaus,' I said; 'it is a disappointment.'

"The girl is charming, Aunt Rosamond. I can understand the Professor's anxiety about her. But how will she get on with Anna Maria's energy? There are not only hens and such useful creatures in the world, but the good God has made birds of paradise as well!'

"Klauschen,' came from the depths of my heart, 'let the bird of paradise fly away; it is not suited to your nest.'

"Never, Aunt Rosamond,' he replied quickly. 'I am bound by the last wish of the man whom I loved best in the whole world!' He was red, and his eyes shone moistly, and it struck me, at this moment, what a handsome, stately man he was.

"Brockelmann's entrance put an end to our conversation. She was hunting for Anna Maria, and looked irritated: 'It is too provoking, master; the old woman isn't suited with her bed, and means to sit up all night in her young lady's room. And there is a fire there hot enough to roast an ox, and that in May! She is doing some cooking, too; the whole room smells of green tea.' Muttering away, she disappeared.

"Klaus laughed aloud. 'Open rebellion, Aunt Rosamond! Do me a favor, and look after these two strangers. Perhaps you will be able to point out to the old woman that—well, that she can't stay here.'

"This really seemed to me the best thing to do, and I went up-stairs. Through the hall window I caught sight of Anna Maria in the damp, moonlit garden; she was standing motionless, like a dark shadow, and looking out toward the dusky country. 'Strange girl,' thought I; 'if an ugly little creature in a patched dress had come to the house to-day, she would have taken it to her heart, and kissed it—and now?'

"As I entered Susanna's room without knocking, the old woman hastily motioned to me to come softly, for her charge was asleep. She was sitting in a high-backed chair by the bed, and, as I came nearer, rose and drew aside the curtains for me to look at the girl.

"There lay the young thing in the deep sleep of fatigue, breathing softly and quietly, a smile on the red lips; the drooping lashes rested like dark shadows on the child's pale cheeks. Her little night-dress, trimmed with imitation lace and adorned with a profusion of bows, did not look badly in the dim light which came from two candles and the dying embers in the fire-place. The slender hands were folded, and the dark hair lay loosely over the white pillow. Yes, she was charming, this maiden in her sweet slumber.

"Is she not beautiful? Is she not lovely?" said the old woman's proud smile.

"I nodded. 'Poor little bird of paradise!' I thought, 'how your gay, shining feathers will be plucked. Well for you if you do not miss them!' And, bethinking myself of my promise to Klaus, I turned and beckoned to the old woman. By the fire-place I overturned a little silver kettle and a cup that were standing on the floor. Aha, the tea-making apparatus! On the sofa lay the clothes which Susanna had worn to-day, in picturesque disorder; one little shoe was on the floor, the other I noticed on the dressing-table, and beside it hats, ribbons, and all sorts of frippery, in the wildest confusion.

"Will you not put the things away in the wardrobes intended for them,' I asked softly, 'so that

Susanna can find them without your help?'

"'She will not need to,' the old woman replied confidently, and looked at me with a friendly grin. 'They surely cannot be so cruel as to separate us.'

"'Certainly, my dear, you will leave the house to-morrow, and Susanna Mattoni will remain under our protection, as her father was promised. There was nothing said about you in this matter.'

"'Then give me a rope at once,' whispered the old woman passionately, 'that I may hang myself on the nearest limb! What am I to do, then? Where shall I go? I had a foreboding as we drove through the gate that ill-luck awaited me!'

"'My niece will surely allow you to visit your former charge from time to time,' I said, to console her.

"'And what is to become of her?' she asked, pointing to the sleeping girl. 'She is not accustomed to be without me for a moment! No, no, I am not going; I cannot go. If this young lady has no sympathy, surely the kind gentleman will have, who used to come so often to the Professor. Where is he? I will beg him on my knees, I will beg him to let me stay here.'

"'Listen, my friend,' I said earnestly, and took hold of the flowing silk sleeves of her dress. 'It will be for your young lady's best good if you are parted from her. This much I know, that Professor Mattoni has left the girl quite without means, and it is now high time she learned to put on her shoes and stockings alone. A poor demoiselle, of citizen's rank, needs no lady's maid. She must learn to work and to make herself useful.'

"'Oh, Heaven!' sobbed the little dried-up woman, 'I thought she was to be a guest in this house, and you will make a servant of her.'

"A harsh answer was at my tongue's end. Had her tenderness for the girl made this woman perfectly crazy? At any rate, she was not to be reasoned with. 'Go down-stairs,' said I, in vexation, 'and carry your complaint to the master. He will know better, at least, how to make you comprehend what sort of a position Susanna Mattoni is to occupy here.'

"She dried her tears, seized a candle, and flew to the mirror, bustled about with comb and brush, and spread over her yellow face something from various little jars. I began to feel a real horror of the old woman, with her artifices. Now she tied her cap-strings afresh, pulled from the trunk a lace-edged handkerchief, and holding it theatrically in her hand, said she was ready to pay her respects to the master.

"'Were you formerly on the stage?' I asked, wondering at her red, full cheeks.

"'For ten years, Mademoiselle!' she replied; 'I played the gay, her mother'—she pointed to Susanna—'the tragic lovers. Oh, it was glorious, that acting together!'

"What she further related I did not understand. 'Merciful Heaven!' I faltered, as I opened the door softly and showed her out into the hall, 'what has Klaus brought upon us, in his kind-heartedness?'

"I sat still by the girl's bed, and looked at the young face. God only knew in what slough this fair flower had grown! It was clear that the old woman must go away, if anything was ever to be made of the girl; please God it might not be too late!

"The light from the candles scarcely sufficed to light up the nearest objects. Dense obscurity lay in the corners, but the oil-portrait of the Mischief-maker was feebly illuminated, and her black eyes seemed to give me a demoniacal look. A vague fear came over me; involuntarily I folded my hands in prayer: 'O Lord, Thy ways are wonderful! Lead us gently, let not the peace go out from us that has dwelt so long beneath this roof, let no second Mischief-maker have crossed this threshold, preserve the old, sacred bond between Klaus and Anna Maria. Amen!'

"At this moment the door opened and the old actress came back. She did not deign to look at me, but knelt down by the bed, laid her head on the pillow, and began to weep bitterly.

"'Isa! Isa!' murmured Susanna in her sleep. The old woman raised her head and pressed the dark hair to her lips.

"'I am going, Mademoiselle,' she whispered to me; 'no one has a heart here in this house. But if a hair of her head is hurt, or a tear falls from her eyes, I—I—' She gasped out a few words more, and threw herself down again beside the bed.

"'When shall you leave?' I asked.

"'Early in the morning,' she replied, in a lifeless tone.

"'Then lie down now, and go to sleep,' I said, pointing to the sofa, and prepared to leave the room.

"'Oh, Mademoiselle!' She sprang up and held me fast. 'Promise me you will be kind to Susanna, you will speak a kind word to her if she cries!'

"'Certainly, as far as I can; but she will receive only kindness from every one here.'

"'Not from the blonde lady,' she said. 'She is a girl without a heart; perhaps she never had one,

perhaps it is dead. She does not know what youth, beauty, and love are. She never laughs. I notice that people who cannot laugh are envious of every being that can be happy, that pleases others by its charm; she will never love Susanna!

"She spoke pathetically and theatrically, yet a tone of deep pain rang through her words.

"Life is so serious,' I returned.

"But laughing, cheerfulness, beauty are the air she breathes,' began the strange person again.

"I promise you to look after the child,' said I, about to go; but in vain. She held me by the dress, and begged me to hear first, for God's sake, that it was not tyranny or arbitrary choice that bound her to the child, but a sacred promise. And whether I would or not, I had to listen to a story which the old woman delivered as if she were on the stage, and which, in spite of the whispered tone in which it was given, was, by means of gestures and rolling of the eyes, a perfect specimen of high mimic art. I could not now repeat the words as they came from the lips of the old actress, but only know now that she contrived to announce that she was just forty years old and had been very beautiful. The old song came into my head, which a poet puts into the mouth of his old harpist:

"I once was young and fair,
But my beauty's gone—ah, where?
On my cheeks were roses red,
And bright curls upon my head.
When I was young and fair!
When I was young and fair!"

"I did not dispute her pretended forty years, and she now unrolled before my eyes a phase of life so varied and irregular, and yet again so full of the poetry of a vagabond existence, that Father Goethe would surely have been glad to have it to insert in 'Wilhelm Meister.' To make a short story of it, Professor Mattoni had really loved *her*; when, in consequence of a mood, to her inexplicable, he transferred his affection to her fellow-actress. 'I was senseless from pain, Mademoiselle,' she threw in, 'but I governed myself. I became the most indispensable friend of Mattoni's young wife.'

"She now described this person as a dreamy creature, beautiful as a picture but quite uneducated; and the Professor, as an imperious man, who, when he failed to find in his wife the companionship of his soul's creation, treated her worse than a servant-maid. '*En vérité*, Mademoiselle, she was stupid; the thickest wall would have—' And she made a gesture, as if to test with *her* head whether the walls at Bütze were a match for it. 'Oh, the men, even the wisest and best of them are blinded when they love, Mademoiselle! He had received his punishment for his breach of faith toward me.'

"Then followed a description of the Mattoni household, in which Isabella Pfannenschmidt, as my informant was called, heartily interested herself. She became housekeeper for Frau Mattoni, who read novels all day long or played with her cat. The women lived in a little back room, and the Professor occupied two rooms as formerly. They received from him such scanty means of support that often they knew not how to satisfy their hunger. The troupe with which Isabella Pfannenschmidt had an engagement went away from Berlin, but she could not go with them: 'for, Mademoiselle, she and the child would have perished in dirt and misery; she was a person who would go hungry if food were not put right under her nose, rather than get up from her lazy position on the sofa, and the Professor took all his meals at a restaurant. He did not want people to find out that he had a wife and child, anyway. We dared not stir if any one was with him. Susanna's first frock was made from a cast-off red velvet dress, cut over, in which her mother once used to play queens. The father never looked at the charming child till his wife had closed her dreamy eyes forever. Then, as he went up to her bier, and his child reached out her little hand after the few scanty flowers I had bought with my last penny, he was first shaken out of the stupidity of the last few years. He knelt down with the child and prayed God to forgive him his wrong-doing! Well, good intentions are cheap, to be sure! He did give somewhat more for our household expenses, and I was enabled to dress Susanna so we could show ourselves publicly without attracting attention; he even let her have lessons, and she learned bravely. He never inquired for me, and yet I have remained true to him all these long years; it was as if my care and work were a matter of course. He had no longer a look for me, the past seemed to be wiped out from his memory; and yet I have passed my youth in sorrow for his sake, I have taken care of his wife and child, and now—now she is taken from me! What have I done to deserve this?'

"I was truly sorry for the little weeping woman, though the facts as to her age and former beauty might be somewhat different, and though her statement that he once had loved her might not be strictly true; at any rate, she had loved him as truly as a poor, weak woman's heart can love. For his sake she had loved his child, and without a murmur suffered want and hunger for her sake. And now he repaid her by taking the child away from her. Poor Isabella Pfannenschmidt, you have lived in vain! The flame which burns in your heart shines forth triumphantly over all the theatrical trumpery and baubles clinging to you, poor old Isabella! And yet it would be a pity for this child to have to breathe in that dusty, paint-scented atmosphere any longer. No, Isabella, you must go, though the heart of the once gay actress break over it.

"Susanna will always be fond of you,' I comforted her, 'and never forget what you have done for her.'

"Oh, that she will—that she will! She has her father's nature,' sobbed the old woman; 'she will forget me, and, what's more, she will be ashamed of me.'

"You make a sad exposure of the child's heart, my dear,' said I reprovingly.

"She started up. 'Oh, no, no! she really is good.' she murmured, 'very good. And,' she continued, 'I shall not go very far away either, only to the nearest town. What should I do in Berlin? I should die of longing. I will hire a room in S—— and sew for money; I can embroider well, with colored wool and gold thread. And if the longing becomes too great, I can run up the highway, and if need be up here, to look at the house where she lives.'

"And now she began, amid streaming tears, to pick out one after another of the garments lying around, and to lay them in a white cloth, and in so doing caught up the little shoe on the table, and pressed the narrow sole to her cheek.

"Don't forget the little jar of paint,' I whispered, in spite of my sympathy.

"She shook her head. 'No, no, I shall pack up everything. I will do it at once, for if she wakes I cannot say good-by. I shall go before daybreak.'

"I held out my hand to her, for I was sorry for her. 'Go away easy; the child is well off here—and may the thought console you, that it is for Susanna's best good.' I went out, and as I turned again, in closing the door, I saw in the dim light the little gypsy-like creature sitting on the floor, amid all her rubbish and trumpery, and weeping, her face buried in her hands."

CHAPTER VII.

"My first inquiry the next morning was for the old woman. She was gone, I learned, and the Fräulein was already with the stranger in her room. 'Anna Maria's education is beginning,' I said with a sigh, and ate my rye porridge less cheerfully than usual. Yesterday lay behind me like a confused dream, and Susanna's presence in the house oppressed me with the weight of a mountain. Soon I heard Anna Maria's metallic voice in the corridor; she was speaking French, so speaking to Susanna at all events. I caught only a few disconnected words, before she knocked at my door, and came into the room with the young girl.

"We wish to say good-morning to you, aunt,' she began pleasantly. I gave a searching glance at Susanna; a pair of great tears still hung on her lashes, but the laugh—which was her element—lay hidden in the dimples of her cheeks and shone from her beautiful eyes, as if only waiting an opportunity to break forth.

"She wore her black travelling-dress of yesterday, but Anna Maria had tied a woollen wrap about her shoulders. In spite of that, the sight of her was like a ray of sunshine.

"I would like to ask, Aunt Rosamond,' said Anna Maria, 'if you have some little duty for Susanna, and beg you to let her profit, in the future, by your skill in needlework. I have been examining her—she can do nothing!'

"Certainly, Anna Maria!' I was glad to have, in a certain degree, a slight claim on the girl. 'Do you like knitting, Susanna?' I asked.

"She laughed and shook her head. 'Oh, no, no! I grow dizzy when I see knitting always round and round.'

"Anna Maria did not seem to hear this answer. 'Fräulein von Hegewitz will teach you netting and plain knitting,' she said; 'with me you shall learn to understand the mysteries of housekeeping. And now we will have breakfast, and then begin at once. Klaus has been in the field for a long time already,' she added; 'the first grass is to be cut to-day.'

"And they went. Susanna tripped along, with hanging head, behind Anna Maria. 'Is she pursuing the right method with this child?' I wondered. 'With her energy she will destroy all at once, all the results of former education; but it surely is not possible. God help her to the right way!'

"Later, as I was taking my walk through the garden, I saw Susanna coming along by the pond; she did not walk, she actually flew, with outstretched arms, as if she would press to her heart the green tops of the old trees, the golden sunshine, and all the birds singing so jubilantly to-day, and all nature. Her short skirts were flying, the woollen wrap had disappeared, and her white shoulders emerged like wax from the deep black of her dress. Indescribably charming she looked, thus rushing along; she must have escaped somehow from Anna Maria. Close by my hiding-place she stood still, and looked up at the blue sky; then, singing lightly, she stooped, picked a narcissus and fastened the white flowers in her bosom, and then put her hand into her dress pocket, and drew out something which she put quickly into her mouth, but which did not interfere with her singing, for now as she went on she trilled the words:

'Batti, batti, o bel Masetto
la tua povera Zerlina.'

"I followed her slowly, and observed lying in the path a little object wrapped in white paper,

which she had evidently lost. 'A bonbon! Well, that is the height of folly!' said I, taking it up in vexation. 'One could not expect anything different from such bringing up.' And as I unwrapped the thing, I found in it a French motto, a more sugary and frivolous one than which could scarcely have been composed in the time of Louis XIV., supposing that bonbon mottoes were known at that time. 'If Anna Maria knew of this, with her pure, maidenly mind!' I thought, shaking my head. 'Oh, Klaus, for my part, I wish your bird of paradise were in the moon, at any rate not here.' I overtook her at the next turn of the path, where there was a red thorn in the splendor of full bloom; it bent its branches almost humbly under this superabundance of rosy adornment, at which Susanna was looking admiringly.

"'Oh, how charming!' she cried, as she saw me. 'Oh, how wonderfully beautiful!' And the purest joy shone from her eyes. How did that accord with the bonbon motto?

"In that moment I resolved not to lose confidence in the girl's character, and at every opportunity to help lift the young spirit into higher regions. I have honestly striven to fulfil this promise. I may testify to it to myself—not so violently, not in so dictatorial and severe a manner as Anna Maria did I proceed; not like Klaus either. Ah, me—Klaus! Those first eight weeks in general! Ah, if I only knew how to describe the time which now followed! There is so little to say, and yet such an immense change was brought about in our house.

"Whether Susanna Mattoni ever missed her old nurse, I did not know. When she awoke on that first morning and found Anna Maria by her bed instead of the little actress, to inform her that the latter had left the house, great tears had streamed from her eyes. Anna Maria had said: 'Be reasonable, Susanna, and do not make a request that I cannot grant.' And Susanna had replied, with an inimitable mingling of childishness and pride: 'Have no fear, Fräulein von Hegewitz, I never ask a second time!'

"Anna Maria told me about it later, years afterward. Indeed, there was no slight amount of pride in that little head.

"Anna Maria began the practical education with the thoroughness peculiar to her in everything. With her iron constitution, her need of bodily activity, she had no suspicion that there were people in the world for whom such activity might be too much. Susanna had to go through kitchen and cellar, Susanna was initiated into the mysteries of the great washing, and Susanna drove with her, afternoons, in the burning heat into the fields, in order to explore the agricultural botany. Anna Maria's face showed a glimmer of happiness; she now had some one to whom she was indispensable, so she thought.

"And Klaus? Klaus had never in his life sat so constantly in his room as now; he went into the garden-parlor seldom or never, and only at mealtimes came to look into the sitting-room or out on the terrace. And then his eyes would rest on Susanna with a strange expression, anxiously and compassionately it seemed to me. He said not a word against Anna Maria's management.

"'Aunt Rosamond,' the latter said sadly to me one day, 'I fear Susanna's being here is a burden to Klaus; he is quiet, depressed, and not at all as he used to be.'

"'Why *that* cause, Anna Maria?' said I. 'Klaus does seem out of humor, that is true, but may it not be something else? Farmers have a new cause for vexation every day, and are never at a loss for one.'

"'Ah, no, Aunt Rosamond!' she replied. 'There has not been the prospect of such a harvest for years; it is a pleasure to go through the fields.'

"And Susanna, the breath of whose life was laughing? She wandered about like a dreamer. How often, when she sat opposite me in the sewing-room, her hands dropped in her lap, and she went to sleep, like an overweary child. And I let her sleep, for on the pale little face the marks of the unwonted manner of life were only too perceptible. Once Klaus came into the room, as she sat there, fallen asleep, like little Princess Domröschen, only, instead of the spindle, the netting-needle in her hand. He came nearer on tip-toe, and looked at her, his arms at his sides. Then he asked softly:

"'Do you not think she looks wretchedly, aunt?'

"'The altered mode of life, Klaus,' I answered, 'the strange food, the——'

"'Say the over-exertion, aunt,' he broke in; 'that would be nearer the truth. Poor little one!'

"'Why do you not say so to Anna Maria, Klaus? I, too, think that too much is required in this early rising and continually being on the feet.'

"He grew very red, bit his lips, and shrugged his shoulders in place of an answer, and left me before I had time to speak further.

"Susanna, moreover, never uttered a word of complaint; but it would happen that Anna Maria had to seek her, seek for hours without finding her, and that Klaus very quietly remarked, 'She must have run away!' But she would appear again suddenly, with bright eyes and red cheeks, to be sure; she had gone astray in the wood, she said, or gone to sleep in the garden. Sometimes she would shut herself into her dull room, and open the door to no knocks. Once, as she pulled her handkerchief quickly out of her pocket, a paper of bonbons fell to the floor. Anna Maria, who despised all sweetmeats, confiscated it at once; I can still see the look of punishment she gave

the blushing girl. We were all sitting on the terrace, just after supper; Klaus had been reading aloud from the newspaper, and this was usually a moment when Susanna waked from her dreaming; her shining eyes were fixed on Klaus, and a rosy gleam spread over the pale face. Klaus held the good old 'Tante Voss,' and read aloud every little story which alluded to Berlin; that habit was now quietly introduced, whereas he had formerly read only certain political news, that he might talk about it with Anna Maria.

"The falling bonbon package broke right into a report from the opera-house, where Sontag had sung with wild applause. Klaus let the paper drop, observed Anna Maria's look and the gesture with which she laid the unlucky package beside her, and saw Susanna's confusion.

"Show me the package, Anna Maria,' he asked; and unwrapping one of the bonbons in colored paper, he said, 'Ah! these are miserable things indeed; they must taste splendidly!' He smiled as he said this, and the smile put Susanna beside herself.

"I—I do not eat them at all!' she cried, 'I only have them for the little children who come to the fence there below; they are pleased with them, I know, for nothing was more beautiful to me when I was a child than a bonbon!'

"She said this so touchingly and childishly, in spite of her excitement, that Klaus begged for her hand as if in atonement.

"Susanna, you might poison the village children with this bad stuff. I will get some other bonbons for you that will taste good to you yourself.'

"Anna Maria rose, apparently indifferent, put the dish of fragrant strawberries which she had been hulling for preserving on the great stone table, and went slowly down the steps into the garden. When she came up again, an hour had passed, and the moon appeared over the gabled roof and shone brightly into her proud face.

"Where is Susanna?' she asked. The child had just gone down to the garden, and Klaus was smoking a pipe in peace of mind. She seated herself quietly in her place and looked out over the moonlit tree-tops into the warm summer night. Then she said suddenly:

"May I say something to you, Klaus?'

"Certainly, Anna Maria,' he replied.

"Then do not give Susanna any bonbons; that is, do not contradict me so directly when I have occasion to reprove her.'

"Klaus sat bolt upright in his wooden chair. 'Anna Maria,' he began, 'I don't think you can complain of my having found fault with or revoked any regulation of yours with regard to Fräulein Mattoni; although'—he stopped, and knocked the ashes from his pipe against the flagstones.

"Did I do anything with Susanna which displeased you?' she asked.

"But she got no answer, for just then the subject of discussion flew up the steps, and sat down again, modestly, in her place. Anna Maria rose, took a shawl from her shoulders, and wrapped it about the girl who was breathing very fast. 'You are heated, Susanna, you might take cold.' Klaus now smoked the faster, and on saying good-night held out both hands to Anna Maria; but she placed hers in them only lightly.

"Ah, yes, the first omens, slight and scarcely noticeable! Perhaps they would have escaped my eyes if I had not had, from the very first, a foreboding of coming evil. I do not know if Susanna received the promised bonbons. Probably not; and after that episode everything went on in the usual course, until there came a day full of unforeseen events, full of developments, which placed us all at once in the most dreadful entanglements.

"It was an oppressively hot day, just in the middle of the harvesting. In the court-yard and in the house a veritable deathly stillness reigned, and not even a leaf on the trees stirred under the scorching midday sun. I sat in one of the deep window-niches of the great hall which lies on the garden side of the house and opens out on the terrace. Here it was endurable, for the heat could not easily penetrate the thick walls, and the tall elms which shaded the terrace, and the wild-grape which covered it with its luxurious festoons, made a cool, green, dim light. Even now the garden-parlor is my favorite retreat during the warm weather. At that time, however, there was no carved-oak furniture here, nor was there a gay mosaic pavement on the terrace; the white varnished chairs and the couches covered with red-flowered chintz answered the same purpose, as did the worn old sandstone flags with which the terrace was paved, in whose crevices grass and all sorts of weeds sprung up picturesquely; and the heavy gray sandstone railing had quite as feudal a look as the artistic wrought-iron balustrade there now, and, to tell the truth, pleased me better. Some of us have such an affection to the old things; but that is pardonable, I think.

"So I was sitting in the garden-parlor, and growing a little dreamy, as I still like to do, and listening abstractedly to Anna Maria's voice as she went over her accounts, half aloud, in the sitting-room close by. Klaus was in the fields again, for the first wheat was to be brought in to-day, and I was waiting for Susanna to come for a sewing lesson, but in vain. She must be asleep, I thought, half content to think so, for the heat fairly paralyzed my will-power. And so a long time passed, till a heavy step sounded on the stone flags outside, and immediately after Klaus, dusty

and red with heat, came in and threw himself wearily into the nearest chair.

"Where is Susanna?" he asked, wiping his hot forehead with his handkerchief.

"She is sleeping, probably," I replied.

"Are you sure of that, Aunt Rosamond?"

"No, Klaus, but I think it may be assumed with tolerable certainty. I know her."

"It is strange," he remarked; "I could have sworn I saw her vanish in the Darnbitz pines a little while ago."

"For Heaven's sake!" I cried incredulously. "Impossible! in this heat! It is half an hour's walk from here!"

"So I said to myself; but the gait, all the motions, the small, black-robed figure—indeed, I rode across the field at once, but of course nothing was to be heard or seen then."

"I will wager she is sleeping quietly up-stairs in her canopied bed, or staring at the "Mischief-maker," said I jestingly.

"And now, aunt," began Klaus again, "I have a piece of news which will please you as it has me; but I do not know if Anna Maria—But then, it is nearly three years since that painful affair!"

"As he spoke he took a letter from the pocket of his linen coat, and looking at it said: 'Stürmer is back again, indeed has been for two weeks; I do not understand——'

"At that instant something fell clattering to the floor, and in the door-way stood Anna Maria, white as a corpse. In questioning alarm her eyes were fixed on Klaus's lips. I had never seen the strong-willed girl thus. Klaus sprang up and went toward her; I heard her say only the one word 'Stürmer.'

"He is here, Anna Maria," replied her brother; "does that startle you so?"

"She shook her head, but her looks belied her.

"I have just received this note," continued Klaus, and he read as follows:

"MY DEAR OLD FRIEND:

"I landed here again two weeks ago, for the longing for home finally overcame me; and when one has wandered about for three years, it is time, for various reasons, to return to the ancestral home. I come from—but I will tell you all that when I see you. I have already been twice before your door, to say good-day, but—I am meanwhile of the opinion that the past should not interfere with our old friendly relations. I certainly came off conqueror! It will not be hard for Anna Maria to receive an old friend, which I have never ceased to be, and which I shall always endeavor to remain. May I come, then? To-morrow morning, after church, I had intended to make a call, if you permit it. My compliments to the ladies.

"Ever yours,

"EDWIN STÜRMER."

"A deep pink flush had mounted to Anna Maria's cheeks as he read, and at the words 'I certainly came off conqueror! It will not be hard for Anna Maria to receive an old friend,' there was a quiver of pain on her delicate lips. When Klaus finished, she had quite recovered her self-possession. 'I shall be glad to see Edwin Stürmer again,' she said clearly; 'ask him to eat a plate of soup with us.'

"That is lovely of you, Anna Maria!" cried Klaus, rejoiced. "The poor fellow has gotten over it, it is to be hoped; meeting again for the first time is naturally somewhat painful, but you have done nothing so bad. How could you help it that he loves you, and you not him? Splendid old fellow, he —"

"Anna Maria's eyes wandered with a strange expression over the green trees outside; she kept her lips tightly closed, as if making an effort to repress a cry, and was still standing thus when Klaus sat down at the writing table near by, to answer Stürmer's note.

"Where is Susanna?" she asked at last.

"She must be asleep," I replied.

"She turned and left the room.

"Klaus," I said, going up to him, "it seems to me a dangerous experiment for Stürmer to return here."

"Why, aunt?" he asked; "Anna Maria certainly does not love him; and he? Bah! If he were not sure of his heart, he would not come; he simply declares himself cured!"

"Are you so sure that Anna Maria does not love him?"

"He looked at me, as if to read in my face whether or no I had lost my senses. 'I don't understand that, aunt,' he replied, shaking his head. 'If she loves him she would have married him; there was nothing in the world to hinder. For Heaven's sake, aunt, don't see any ghosts. I am so inexpressibly glad to have a man again in the neighborhood with whom one can talk about something besides the harvest and the weather.'

"Yes, yes! He was right, of course. I did not know myself at that moment how the thought had really come to me.

"And Klaus rode into the field again, and I sat waiting for Susanna; round about, the deepest silence, only a couple of flies buzzing about on the window-panes; an hour slipped away, and yet another. Why, why, the hands of the clock were pointing all at once at half-past six; I had had a nap, as ailing old maids have a right to do occasionally. The sinking sun was now peeping, deep golden, through the trees; one such impertinent ray had waked me. Had Susanna been here? I rose and went to my room, and then across to Susanna's: it was impossible that she should still be sleeping.

"No, the room was empty. The sun flooded it for a moment with a crimson light, and made it seem almost cosy; or was it the bunches of flowers all about on the tables and stands? Even the 'Mischief-maker' had a garland of corn-flowers hung over the frame, and a sunbeam falling obliquely on her full lips lit them up with a crimson light. No trace of Susanna; her black gauze fichu lay on the floor in the middle of the room; on the sofa, half-hidden in the cushions, was a note. I drew it out—old maids are allowed to be curious—and my eyes fell on a bold handwriting which, to my surprise, read as follows:

"'Three o'clock this afternoon, in the Dambitz pines!'

"How every possibility whirled through my head then! Klaus had seen aright! But who, for Heaven's sake, had written this? With whom had Susanna a meeting there! I thought and thought, and all manner of strange ideas arose in my mind, and Susanna did not come; she had never stayed away so long before. The supper-bell rang, and we three sat alone again at the table, for the first time in a long while, and worried about the girl. All the servants were questioned, and two lads sent along the Dambitz road.

"I did not know if I ought to speak of the letter. I should have liked to speak first to Susanna alone; so I decided to wait and not cause any further disturbance. Anna Maria was noticeably indifferent, and thought Susanna would certainly come soon, she had probably gone to sleep in the wood. But she must have felt an inward anxiety, for her hands trembled and her face was flushed with excitement.

"Klaus rose without having tasted anything. After a little we heard again the sound of horse's hoofs on the pavement of the court; he was riding out then to search for the missing one. Anna Maria mechanically gave her orders for next day, and I walked alone through the dusky paths in the garden. It was an unusually warm August evening; the moon was rising in the east, the steel-blue sky above was cloudless, and from the wood there came a light, refreshing breath of air. From the court came the sound of men and maids singing, as they made merry after the hot day's work. Ah! how many, many such evenings had I known here, and this one brought back to me a precious memory of my youth, with all its pleasure and all its suffering. Every tree, every bush I had known from my earliest youth. Everything which life had brought to me was associated with this little spot of ground. That feeling is known only to one who can say to himself, 'Here on this spot you were born, here will you live, and here will you die,' and it is a sweet feeling! So I sat down in perfect content on a bench at the end of the garden, and in my dim retreat rejoiced in all the beauty about me, yet at the same time worrying about Susanna. Then I suddenly heard some one talking not far from me:

"'And then don't look so sorrowful to-morrow, do you hear, Susy? And in any case wear the white dress to church to-morrow; I have my reasons for wishing it. And to-morrow afternoon I will come; it has been long enough, I can certainly come to visit you for once. And don't let out anything, darling. What will you answer if they ask you where you have been so long?'

"'Nothing at all!' answered Susanna's voice defiantly. 'I do not like to tell a lie, I shall not do it; but I shall not come to Dambitz again, it is too far away for me.'

"'Very fine!' was the reply; and I now recognized the voice of the old actress. 'I have walked about with you in my arms all night long many a time, no step was too much for me; and you will not go an hour's distance away for my sake? I think of nothing but you and your future; I devise plans and take pains to make your lot happy; I take up my abode in a wretched peasant's house with a shingle roof, and everlasting smell of the stable only to be near you; I sew my eyes and fingers sore—and you—?' And she broke out in violent sobbing, which, however, it seemed to me, made no impression upon Susanna, for she remained still as a mouse.

"'Go, Susy, be good,' the old woman began again. 'I have just given you the pretty little dress to-day; look at it by and by and see how carefully it is embroidered.' And now her voice sank to a whisper, and immediately after Susanna's little figure ran quickly from the thicket and passed close by me; she carried a white parcel in her hand, and her round hat on her arm. I could distinctly see her flashing eyes and red cheeks. I rose quickly, I *must* speak before any one else saw her. 'Susanna!' I tried to call, but the name remained on my lips; for in the path along which she flew stood, as if charmed thither, the tall figure of a man, and Klaus's deep voice sounded in my ears:

"Susanna! Thank God!"

"Had I heard aright? They were only three simple words, words which perhaps every one would say to a person who had been missed and anxiously sought. But here a perfect torrent of passion and anxiety gushed forth, as hot and stifling as the summer night in which the words were spoken.

"I sat down again and leaned my swimming head on my hand. 'My God, Klaus, Klaus!' I stammered. 'What is to come of this? This child! Their circumstances compare so unfavorably, he cannot possibly want to marry her; what, then, draws him to her? What conflicts must arise if he really thinks of it! God preserve him from such a passion! It is surely impossible; it cannot, must not be! Oh, Susanna, that you had never come to this house!'

"And round about me whispered the night-wind in the trees; the full moon had risen golden, and bathed field and wood with a bluish light. And Susanna is so young, and Susanna is so fair! Was it, then, strange if Klaus loved her? What cared love and passion for all the considerations which I had just brought up. And their—Oh, God! what would Anna Maria say?

"And I rose, quite depressed, to go to my room and collect my thoughts. Klaus must have taken Susanna into the house long ago. Now Anna Maria would ask where she had been. And she would not answer, as often before, and Anna Maria would speak harsh words and Klaus walk restlessly about the room! Nothing of all this. As I went slowly along the path I caught sight of a dark figure on the stone bench under the linden. 'Anna Maria?' I asked myself. 'Is she waiting here for Susanna?' She looked fixedly out toward the dark country, and the moon made her face look whiter than ever.

"Anna Maria!' I called, 'Susanna has come back!' She sprang up suddenly, hastily drawing her lace veil over her forehead; but I saw, as I came nearer, that tears were shining in her eyes.

"Have you been anxious?' I asked, and put my arm in hers, to support myself, as we walked on.

"Anxious?' she repeated questioningly. 'Yes—no,' she replied absently. 'Ah, you said Susanna has come? I knew perfectly well that she would, aunt, she is so fond of roving about; that comes from the vagabond blood of her mother, no doubt.'

"Anna Maria!' I exclaimed, startled.

"Certainly, Aunt Rose,' she repeated, 'it is in her, it ferments in her little head and shines from her eyes. So often I have noticed when she is standing by me or sitting opposite me, busied with some work, how her looks wander away, in eager impatience; how only the consciousness 'I must obey' compels her to stay still by me. Then she naturally makes use of every opportunity to rush out, to lie down under some tree and forget time and the present. Happy being, thus constituted, through whose veins runs no slow, pedantic, duty-bound blood!'

"We were standing just at the bottom of the terrace, and I involuntarily seized hold of the railing to steady myself. Was it Anna Maria who spoke such words! Was not the whole world turned upside down then? And I saw in the moonlight that her lips quivered and tears shone in her eyes. Had Anna Maria something to regret in her life? And, like a flash of lightning, Edwin Stürmer's handsome face came before my mind's eye.

"Anna Maria,' I whispered, 'what did you say? Who—?' But I got no further, for the sound of a woman's voice fell on our ears; so full, so sweet and ringing the tones floated out on the summer night, so strangely were time and tune suited to the words, that we lingered there breathless. Anna Maria looked up toward the open window in the upper story. 'Susanna!' she said softly.

'Home have I come, my heart burns with pain.
Ah, that I only could wander again!'

sounded down below.

"But what was the matter with Anna Maria? She fairly flew back into the garden. I stood still and waited; the singing above had ceased. 'Anna Maria!' I called. No answer. What an evening this was, to be sure! Anna Maria, who took the most serious view of the world, who hated nothing more than sentimentality and moonlight reveries, was running about in the garden, moved to tears by a little song! They were all incomprehensible to me to-day—Klaus, Susanna, and Anna Maria, but especially the latter. How could I talk to her about Susanna to-day? I had to keep my discovery to myself; the best thing I could do would be to go up myself to Susanna and ask her, for we should hardly assemble about the round table in the sitting-room this evening, and Anna Maria would hardly be in the mood to read aloud the evening prayers as usual. And Klaus? No, I would not see him at all; better to-morrow by daylight, when he would be his old self again, when his voice would have lost its sultry summer-night cadence, it was to be hoped. No more to-day, I had had enough. I should not be able to sleep, as it was.

"And so I went, like a ghost, up the moonlit steps, and stole along the corridor to Susanna's door, and knocked softly. No answer. I lifted the latch and went in. The room was lighted only by the moon, and the heavy odor of flowers came toward me; a pale ray shone just over the white pillows of the bed and fell on Susanna's face. She was fast asleep; her neck and arms glistened like marble. Should I wake her? She would surely stifle in this air. I stole past her, opened a window, and set the bunches of flowers out on the balcony. The room looked topsy-turvy, but on the sofa was spread out with evident care the toilet for to-morrow—the white dress, little shoes

and stockings, even hat and hymn-book for church.

"I closed the window again softly and stole out of the girl's room. Let her sleep; in this enchanted moonlight it would be impossible to say anything reasonable, I thought. Indeed, I reproached myself afterward for not having waked her from her dreams, in order to have brought all my old maid's prose to bear against all this flower-scented poetry. But what would it have availed? For God Almighty holds in his hands the threads of human destiny. It had to be thus."

CHAPTER VIII.

"The next morning broke as prosaic and calm as I could desire. The sun shone with obtrusive clearness into the most remote corner, and mercilessly set out everything in a dazzling light. From below, out-of-doors, I heard the sound of Anna Maria's voice, and caught something about 'string-beans for the servants' kitchen.' Klaus whistled out of the window, and immediately after I heard a dialogue concerning Waldemann (the *Teckel*), who was just limping across the court, having jammed his foot in the stable-door, according to the coachman's account. Klaus's voice, thank God, had not a suspicion of that weak intonation of last evening. Relieved, and smiling at my fears of yesterday, I got ready for church. If we can only get well over the first meeting with Stürmer, it may be quite a pleasant Sunday, I reasoned; I was wishing some visitor would come, that we might not be so much by ourselves.

"When our church-bell began to ring we three of the family were standing down-stairs in the sitting-room waiting for Susanna. Anna Maria looked weary and unnerved, and an old sort of expression lay about her mouth; she moved quickly and was plainly out of humor at Susanna's want of punctuality. The festal earnestness that usually pervaded her whole being in going to church was lacking to-day. 'Rieke!' she called to the housemaid, 'go to Fräulein Mattoni and ask if she will be ready soon; we are waiting for her.' The girl came back with the answer that the young lady had not quite finished her toilet, and begged the others to go on.

"'I will wait for her,' said Klaus quickly, right out of his kind, chivalrous heart, but it brought to my mind the voice of last evening.

"'You will let your old aunt limp to church alone, for the first time?' I asked jokingly.

"'Ah, *pardon!*' he replied at once. 'Old my aunt certainly is not yet; on that ground I might leave you; but I—may I beg the honor?' he asked, offering me his arm.

"Anna Maria walked ahead; there was something majestic in her walk, and as she stepped from the garden through the gate of the church-yard, and, walking between the rows of graves, recognized the peasants with an inclination of her fair head, kindly stroking the flaxen heads of the children, and here and there saying a friendly word to an old man or woman, all eyes followed her with reverence and admiration, while Klaus received more trusting looks, and even cheers. When in our pew in the church, she bent her head low and prayed long, and then cast a shy look toward the opposite gallery, the place of the Dambitz gentry; Dambitz had always been in the parish of Bütze, and many a happy time have the Stürmers sat on that side and the Hegewitzes on this, and listened to the simple discourse of the clergyman and bowed the head in devout humility. Those were the good old times, when the nobility led the way before the people, with the motto: 'Fear God and honor the king!'

"All at once a thrill went through Anna Maria's body, but her face looked coldly over to the Stürmer gallery; she bent her head slightly and returned a greeting. There he was standing bodily, my old favorite, and I almost nodded my head off at him and made secret signs with my handkerchief. His dark eyes sent a happy greeting across to me—Edwin Stürmer was really there.

"The clear voice with which Anna Maria joined in the singing drew my looks to her again. She sang quietly with the congregation, but a crimson flush of deep agitation lay on her face; it was evidently excessively painful to her to see him again.

"What the sermon was about on that day I cannot tell, for before the clergyman ascended the pulpit something occurred which nearly put an end to the devotions of all the small congregation and obliged me to leave the church.

"I had fixed my eyes steadily on Stürmer, as if I could not look my fill at the man's handsome curly head; and the good God surely forgave me, for I was as fond of Edwin as if he were my own child. All at once, during the singing, I saw him start and look intently across to me; and, following the direction of his gaze, I observed—Susanna. She had on a white muslin dress, her neck and arms lightly covered by the misty material; she held her hat in her hand, her black hair clustered in rich curls about her small head; a white rose was placed carelessly in her hair, and a bunch of the same flowers rose and fell on her bosom, and as white as they was her sweet face as she raised it again after a short prayer.

"Most beautiful was this young creature, but, may God forgive me! I was bitterly angry with her for being so and for coming to church dressed up as if for a ball. 'Incorrigible comedian blood,' I scolded to myself. I thanked God that Klaus could not see her from his seat, and gave Stürmer an unfriendly look because he kept looking over at our pew. All at once, as the clergyman was

singing the liturgy, Susanna put her hand to her forehead, as if to grasp something there, and then sank back silently, with closed eyes, into her seat.

"I cannot tell now the exact order in which all this happened; I only remember that a chair was overturned with a loud noise, that the clergyman was silent for an instant, and that there was a movement among the congregation; at the same time Klaus left our pew, carrying out the white figure in his arms, like a feather. I rose at once to follow him. Anna Maria's head was bent low over her hymn-book; was she going to take no notice of the affair? But now she slowly rose, and went behind me down the narrow, creaking flight of steps which led up outside the church to our pew; it was provided with a wooden roof as a protection against wind and storms, and the ivy which grew over the whole church adorned it like a bridal arch with green festoons.

"Klaus was just disappearing into one of the nearest cottages, whose shining window-panes looked out like clear eyes beneath the gray shingle-roof, not at all sad at the constant view of the little church-yard. Marieken Mårtens and her husband lived here; she had been in Anna Maria's service, a quick, industrious girl, but once was sent away in the utmost haste because she—but that has nothing to do with the case. Anna Maria had her brought back again at that time, and she was married from the manor-house, and since then Anna Maria and I had each held a curly brown head over the font. When there was anything going on at our house—that is, when there was extra work—Marieken came and helped.

"She was at the threshold coming to meet us already, wiping her hands on her clean apron, and pushing back her eldest child. 'She is lying on the sofa inside,' she whispered. 'Oh, the master looks pale as death from fright!' Anna Maria stepped by me into the little room; she made a sign for me to stay outside, so I sat down on the wooden stool that Marieken placed in the entry for me, and listened intently for every sound from within.

"For a little while all was still. Marieken ran in with fresh water, and then I heard Anna Maria say: 'How are you now, Susanna?'

"'Go back to church quite easy,' came the reply; 'it was a momentary weakness. I am very sorry to have given you such anxiety and trouble.' And the next moment the girl was standing on the threshold, a crimson blush overspreading her whole face, and without noticing me at all, she flew to the outside door and across the church-yard; her fluttering white dress appeared again for an instant in the frame of the gateway leading to our garden; then she had vanished like an apparition.

"Shaking my head, I rose to go into the little room and hear what was to be done now. But I sat down again, almost stunned at the sound of Klaus's voice, which came out to me so crushingly cold and clear:

"'I should like to ask you, Anna Maria, to occupy the girl hereafter in some way better suited to her; this swoon was the natural effect of constant over-exertion.'

"I could not picture Anna Maria to myself at this moment, for Klaus had never used such a tone to her before. My old heart began to beat violently from anxiety. 'It is here! It is here!' I said to myself. 'Yes, it had to come!'

"'I think this swoon is rather a consequence of Susanna's running about too much in the fearful heat yesterday,' she replied coldly. 'However, as you wish; I will leave it entirely to you to decide what occupation is most fitting for Susanna Mattoni.'

"'Great heavens! Anna Maria, do you not understand?' Klaus rejoined, almost imploringly. 'Look at the girl: she is delicate and accustomed to the easy life of a large city, never to a regular life. I beg you not to take it amiss, it is my opinion and—'

"'I am sorry that I have made such a mistake,' Anna Maria interrupted, icily. 'I have tried to do my best for this unfortunate child, who has grown up in most wretched circumstances. I wanted to make a capable, housewifely maiden of her, but I see myself that such miserable comedian blood is not to be improved, and I ask you now only for one thing—'

"She broke off. What would come now? I looked about me in horror to see if any one were listening. But Marieken was clattering about with her pots and pans in the kitchen, and the children were playing before the outside door.

"'That you will not require me to endure this frivolous creature, this frippery and finery, this trifling, flighty being. I have an unspeakable aversion to her,' she concluded.

"'So that is your confession of faith, Anna Maria?' asked Klaus, and his voice sounded angry. 'I tell you Susanna Mattoni remains here in the family. I will have it, for a sacred promise binds me, and I hope that you will never let her feel what you think of her. Her light-mindedness, her unsteadiness, and all the faults which you have just cited, cannot be laid to her charge, for from her youth up she has never learned to recognize them as faults. Of frivolity, moreover, I have no evidences, for a couple of bonbons do not seem to me sufficient proof.'

"'I cannot act contrary to my convictions,' returned Anna Maria, 'and if I am no longer to educate Susanna as I think well for her, you had better find another place for her.'

"I had sprung up and laid hold of the door-handle; for Heaven's sake! there would be a quarrel. But the storm had already drawn near.

"Susanna is to remain, I tell you!" thundered Klaus. "Do you quite forget who is master of the house? It appears to me I have let you go on for years in an immeasurable error, in letting you govern uncontrolled, and assenting to all your arrangements. It is time for you to remember whose place it is to decide matters at Bütze."

"Merciful Heaven! My knees trembled; how was this to end? And now there was no sound there within; only the low singing of the young wife was heard from the kitchen, where she was rocking her youngest child to sleep; and I stole softly away from the door and sat down on the wooden bench before the house. Over the quiet, green graves in the church-yard lay a Sunday calm, only a light breath of wind rustled in the tall trees. Over in the little church the sermon was just finished, the sermon for the fifth Sunday after Trinity. The sound of the organ and singing of the congregation floated across to me, and my lips repeated the words:

"Ah! stay with thy clearness.
Precious light, with us stay;
Let thy truth shine upon us,
That we go not astray."

"Ah, yes, clearness, clearness and truth and peace; help us in all time of need! I knew Klaus, I knew Anna Maria. An almost exaggerated sense of duty, an iron will when she thought she was doing the right thing, inflexibility—that was the Hegewitz character; good, solid qualities when they got on peaceably together, but thus? And there was Stürmer coming out of the church door; he had not waited till the hymn was finished, and was now hastening up to me.

"Fräulein Rosamond, you still here?" he asked. "Who——"

"But I did not give him time to finish. 'Come, Edwin, give me your arm, I have been waiting for some one to escort me back.' And actually dragging away the astonished man, I succeeded in getting him into the park without betraying the presence of Klaus and Anna Maria in the little room.

"And now, a thousand times welcome, dear Edwin," said I, breathing freely again, as we walked under the shady trees. "How have you been? How delightful it is to have you here again, and how well and strong you are looking!"

"He bent to kiss my hand. 'Yes, thank God that I am among old friends again!' he replied heartily. 'How have things gone here? But why do I ask? Well, of course; at least, I saw you all unaltered in church. But I would like to ask, at the risk of appearing curious, who was the young lady who—oh!' He stopped, and pointed toward the thick, dark shrubbery at one side, holding my arm so firmly in his that I was obliged to stand still.

"There sat Susanna in the deepest shade of the thicket. She was leaning her elbows on the table, and her oval face rested on her clasped hands; motionless, like a lovely statue, she was looking down before her.

"A golden sunbeam flitted back and forth over the white figure; an expression full of pain and woe lay on the lovely face, which I had never before seen so sad and tearful.

"The poor child!" I sighed involuntarily. And as Stürmer almost forced me into a side-path, I briefly satisfied his curiosity. "She is the daughter of Professor Mattoni; you remember Klaus's old tutor?"

"My head was in a whirl, for I knew not what more might happen to-day.

"And is she to live here always?" inquired Edwin Stürmer.

"Yes—no!" I returned hesitatingly; I did not know what to answer. I sought to reach the terrace and garden-parlor as quickly as possible, and to my inexpressible relief saw Klaus, as if transported there by magic, coming to the door to meet his guest; an uninitiated person would scarcely have seen the slight cloud on his brow.

"I did not linger with them, but went to seek Anna Maria, and found her in the sitting-room, pale but calm. I was glad to avoid the greeting between her and Stürmer, and caught only his look as he bent low over her hands.

"Anna Maria was a perfect enigma to me; I understood the outbreak of passion of last evening as little as this decided opposition to-day. Yet the latter was less inexplicable, for she too, must have seen the sparks already glowing in Klaus's heart. But she had taken the wrong course. Any man of chivalry, if told that he must turn a weak, helpless woman out of the house where she has found a shelter, will refuse to do it; particularly if she be as young, as strikingly beautiful as Susanna, and—if he is already in love with her. To me it was an incontestable fact: Klaus loved the girl! Perhaps he did not know yet himself how much; but that he did love her I had seen and—feared.

"I came to the table in a thoroughly unpleasant frame of mind. 'To-day is the beginning of the end: what will the end be?' I said to myself, sighing. That was a strange dinner; Susanna had excused herself, Klaus was chary of words, and Anna Maria forced herself to be talkative and affable in a way quite contrary to her nature; a little red spot burned on her chin, the sign of violent agitation.

"Brockelmann announced that the old actress had suddenly arrived; to be sure, I had quite forgotten about her. Anna Maria made no answer; Klaus looked sharply at her, and then gave orders for the old woman to be given some dinner. Stürmer talked a long time about his travels, and Pastor Grüne came to coffee. The gentlemen were soon involved in a scientific conversation about the excavations at Pompeii, at which Stürmer had been present several times, and Anna Maria walked slowly up and down on the terrace, now and then casting a look at the gentlemen, through the open door of the garden-parlor.

"I sat under the shady roof of the wild-grape, and knitted, and followed her with my eyes. Anna Maria had on a light-blue linen dress, and a thin white cape over her rosy shoulders; her heavy plaits shimmered like gold, and her complexion was fresh as a flower. Anna Maria had made her toilet with especial care to-day; she was the picture of a typical North German woman, tall, fair, slender, and clear-sighted, serene, and calm.

"All at once she stopped in front of me. 'Aunt Rosamond, do you think that Susanna Mattoni has been overworked in any way? I mean, can her temporary weakness be the result of that?'

"'Yes, Anna Maria,' I replied, 'I am convinced of it, for she had not been accustomed to doing anything. She has hitherto sat in a cage like a bird; when such a creature tries to fly all at once, it is soon made lame by the motion.'

"She made no reply, and continued her walking. The conversation grew louder indoors; the gentlemen were now sitting over their Rhine wine. The cool breeze of approaching evening began to blow, and the sun was hidden behind a bank of clouds.

"'Ah! Stürmer, do stay till evening,' I heard Klaus say. 'It will never do not to finish the day together, after beginning it so; do not pervert our good old custom.'

"Anna Maria stood still and listened. But instead of an answer we heard the chairs pushed back, and then Klaus's voice again:

"'Ah! Susanna, have you quite recovered? Allow me to present Baron Stürmer.'

"Anna Maria turned and looked out toward the garden.

"Pastor Grüne inquired after the health of the young girl, and soon they all came out on the terrace. Susanna went up to Anna Maria at once, and held out her hand, saying: 'Forgive me for having frightened you this morning. I do not know how it happened; everything grew dark before my eyes, and——'

"'Oh! certainly,' interrupted Anna Maria, touching the girl's hand but lightly; 'I was not at all frightened; a swoon is nothing so unusual.'

"Susanna blushed up to her black curls, and sat down quietly by my side.

"'Has Isa gone?' I asked her.

"She nodded. 'She went half an hour ago.'

"'Just where does she live?' I inquired.

"'In Dambitz,' was the reply.

"I let my work drop from astonishment. 'In Dambitz? How did she happen to go to Dambitz?'

"'S—— was too far away, Fräulein Rosamond,' stammered Susanna shyly, 'and so she has hired a little room there at the blacksmith's. But she says she does not notice the noise of the forge at all; her windows look out on the castle garden, and that is wonderful, she says. She may live there, may she not?' she added, beseechingly; 'it is certainly far enough from here.'

"'Of course she can live where she pleases, Susanna,' said I; 'we have no right to lay down commands about that.'

"Meanwhile Brockelmann had set the table for supper on the terrace, and we seated ourselves. Candles were now burning on the table, and their unsteady, flickering light fell on Susanna's beautiful pale face. Her white dress was made quite fresh again, and even the withered roses were replaced by fresh ones; one could see that the old Isabella had been helping the child.

"Susanna was seated between Klaus and me, Stürmer and Anna Maria opposite. There was a strawberry *bowle* on the table, and Susanna drank eagerly; gradually color came into her cheeks, and her dark eyes began to shine. And then all at once she was in her element—laughing, jesting, and mirth. And how she could laugh! I have never heard such a laugh as Susanna Mattoni's. It ran the whole compass of the scale, so light and delicious that one was forced to join in it; and as she laughed, her red mouth displayed the prettiest white teeth, and prattled mere nonsense and follies, and as she held high her glass to touch with Stürmer, I saw Klaus look at her with an expression that spoke even more plainly than his trembling voice yesterday.

"Anna Maria sat silent opposite her, and not the faintest smile passed over her lips; this graceful trifling was decidedly unpleasant to her. But Susanna had the majority on her side, for even honest old Pastor Grüne did not conceal the fact that he was fascinated by her.

"I tried to think how I might silence the little red lips, but in vain. At last a thought struck me. 'Susanna 'I cried in the midst of her sweet laugh, 'Susanna, what do you say to a song? I heard

you singing so prettily last evening.'

"'Ah! no, no, Mademoiselle,' she objected; 'I cannot sing before people.'

"But the gentlemen echoed my request with one voice, and Stürmer proposed to extinguish the candles, saying that one could surely sing better by moonlight.

"'Yes, yes!' she said joyfully, 'then I will sing!' And soon the reddish light had disappeared, and the pale moon's silvery rays fell on the bright figure of the girl, who had sprung up and was now standing by the railing.

"'What shall I sing?' she asked, 'Italian or German?'

"'German! German!' cried the gentlemen.

"'Oh! please Susanna,' said I, 'the song you were singing last evening; Anna Maria and I did not understand the words very well.'

"Anna Maria suddenly rose, but as if thinking better of it, sat down again. Stürmer had turned half around in his chair and was looking at Susanna.

"And now she began, leaning on the balustrade; and the same tones came to us, soft and sweet, and the same words we had heard last evening:

"Far through the world I have wandered away,
And the old strife goes with me wherever I stray;
Home have I come, and my heart burns with pain,
Ah, that I only could wander again!
I am held not by walls, not by bolts, not by bars—
Two great blue eyes hold me, that shine like the stars I
And were but my fiery steed by my side,
Again on his willing back fain would I ride;
He would bear me away, far away from my home—
But I've seen thee again, and can never more roam!

"I looked at Anna Maria in alarm, but her face was turned away, and only in her trembling white hands, which she had clasped, did I detect the agitation wrought in her by this song. Who had thought of such a song? And Stürmer? He had sprung up and stood close by Susanna.

"'Another song, Fräulein,' he demanded, almost vehemently, 'a different one. You are much too young for such melancholy!'

"'A German knows no different songs, Herr Baron,' objected Pastor Grüne. 'Old national songs are sad, usually the lament for a faithless love, for a dead treasure. Let our nation be as it is in this. I would rather have one little German national song than a dozen French *chansons*.'

"Stürmer did not answer, and there was a painful silence.

"'Another song?' asked Susanna at last—'a lively one?'

"'Yes!' cried Klaus, 'a lively one, a hunting-song, Susanna, or a drinking-song! 'He had risen in embarrassment at the critical situation, and filled his glass afresh.

"And Susanna began, in a merry strain:

"In the early morn
A-hunting I went,
Past my darling's house
My steps I bent.

"Up to the window
A glance I threw.
Ah! if she would look down,
Good luck would ensue.

"In vain, she's still dreaming;
But something stirred.
By the apple-tree yonder
A laugh was heard.

"And bright as the rosy
Morning so fair,
My dear little treasure
I saw standing there.

"Nodding and smiling,
She beckoned away,
But not one lucky shot
Had I on that day.

"Are they bewitched, then,

My powder and lead?
Each ball flies away,
Bringing down nothing dead.'

"Susanna suddenly stopped, as if exhausted, and drew a long breath. The laugh had vanished for a moment from her face.

"More, more!" cried the gentlemen. "The charming song cannot possibly be finished?" asked Stürmer.

"No, the conclusion is surely wanting," added Pastor Grüne. And Susanna drew a long breath and sang on:

"And again past the house
I was going to-day;
Little grandmother peeped at me
Over the way.

"With a shake of the head.
She calls with sweet grace,
"God greet you, and are you
Off to the chase?"

"And with all my might
I cursed the old dame;
But my arm remained steady,
I missed no aim.

"And when in surprise
I told Liebchen the tale.
She began to laugh
In a perfect gale.'

"The last verse ended in a real laugh, so roguish and charming and so irresistible that we were all drawn into it.

"Now that is enough!" she cried at last. "Oh! I do so like to hear how people have to laugh with me when I begin! Oh! I have done it so often when Isa tried to scold me, but now"—she suddenly stopped—"I haven't laughed for so long, I thought I should have forgotten how, but, thank fortune, I can still do it! Oh, I do like to laugh so!"

"Anna Maria rose and went into the garden-parlor, as if she had something to attend to there, but she did not come back, nor did she come when Stürmer and the clergyman wished to take their leave of her. Klaus looked for her in the sitting-room, and even went up to her bedroom, but he returned alone, and the gentlemen had to leave without bidding her good-by.

"Pray excuse Anna Maria, dear Edwin," I heard Klaus say; "she probably does not dream of your going so early; you are certainly in a great hurry."

"It was true; Stürmer's departure was very abrupt; toward the last he had scarcely spoken a word. I thought it was because he was reminded of his first love; that melody and the words still kept ringing in my ears; an unfortunate song!"

"Susanna had long been in bed when Klaus and I stood together in the sitting-room again. I had firmly resolved to inform him of my observations of the evening before, for I saw that Anna Maria was not to be spoken to again about Susanna.

"Klaus!" I began. He was walking slowly up and down, his hands behind him, and an anxious wrinkle on his brow. "Klaus, do you know where the old actress is living now?"

"He stood still. 'No, aunt, but—do not take offence—it is quite a matter of indifference to me. Forgive me, my head is so full.'

"I was silent. 'Good!' thought I; 'he is indifferent at last, then.'

"Please tell me," he now turned around to me, "what you think about Anna Maria? I do not understand her at all as she is now."

"You do not either of you understand each other, as you are now," I replied, not without sharpness.

"Klaus blushed. 'That may be,' he said, stroking his face.

"Klaus," I continued, "do not let it go further, do not let this discord between you take root. You are the eldest, Klaus, a reasonable man——"

"No, aunt, no; in this I am right!" he interrupted vehemently. "You do not know what passed between us this morning——"

"He broke off abruptly and turned to his newspaper at the table, for Anna Maria had come in. The basket of keys hung at her side, and she had tied a white apron over her dress. Brockelmann

followed her with the silver that had been in use to-day, and was now rubbed up, ready to be put away. Anna Maria opened the carved corner-cupboard, and began to lay away the shining silver, piece by piece, in its place.

"Klaus had seated himself and was turning over the newspapers; the clock already pointed to midnight. The windows were open, and from time to time faint flashes of lightning lighted up the sky over the barns and stables. I had become wide awake again all at once; I could not and would not let these two be alone again to-night; they should not speak together about Susanna.

"But Anna Maria now closed the cupboard and went up to her brother. 'Klaus,' she said in a soft voice, 'let us not leave each other thus; let us talk the matter over once more, quietly.'

"He laid down the paper and looked at her in surprise. A faint flush lay on her face, and her attitude was almost beseeching. 'Gladly, Anna Maria,' he replied, rising; 'you mean concerning Susanna's future employment? Have you any proposals to make?'

"'Yes,' she said, firmly; and after a pause continued: 'I will yield to your opinion that physical labor is not the right thing for Susanna. But a life of dreamy idleness I consider far more injurious to her. Indeed, Klaus, my personal feelings toward Susanna do not speak in this. I do not hate her, but that her nature is uncongenial to me I must own. So, then, without regard to that, Klaus, I must repeat what I said this morning: let Susanna go away from here, take care of her somewhere else; she is out of place here; do it for her own sake.'

"She had spoken beseechingly, and stepping nearer him, laid her right hand on his shoulder.

"'Well, what more?' he asked, rapidly stroking his beard. 'Where would you think best to banish this child?'

"'Send her to a good boarding-school; let her be a teacher; she is poor, and it is an honorable position, or——'

"'You are probably thinking of Mademoiselle Lenon in this connection, Anna Maria?' rejoined Klaus. 'I still have her "honorable position" distinctly before my eyes, which she held in dealing with your stubbornness. If there ever was a being totally unfit to take upon herself the martyrdom of a governess, it is Susanna Mattoni!'

"A slight shadow passed over Anna Maria's face as he spoke of her stubbornness, but she was silent.

"'Perhaps,' continued Klaus bitterly, 'you would also like to make an actress of her because she happens to have a voice and recites charmingly.' He pushed away the newspapers and sprang up. 'I am unutterably exasperated, Anna Maria, that you should venture to repeat this proposition. I was not prepared for it, I must confess! What makes you appear so hostile toward Susanna? Do you know, you who live here in happy security, what it means for a girl so young, so inexperienced, to be thus thrust into the world? Surely not! You fulfil your duties here, you care and labor as hundreds would not do in your place; but here you act the mistress, inaccessible, untouched by all the common things of life. You do not know, even by name, those humiliations which a woman in a dependent position must endure. I know, indeed, that hundreds *must* endure them, and hundreds, perhaps, do not feel what they are deprived of; but this girl *would* feel it, and would be unhappy, most unhappy!'

"He paused for a moment and looked at Anna Maria. She had clasped her hands, and coldly and steadily returned his look; an almost mocking smile lay on her lips, and put Klaus beside himself.

"'You certainly have no comprehension of this!' he cried, his face flushed with anger. 'You have everything, Anna Maria, but you have never possessed a heart! You can do everything but that which glorifies and ennobles a woman—love. Anna Maria, that you cannot do! I feel deep pity for you, for you lack a woman's sweetest charm; love and pity go hand-in-hand. I could not imagine you as a solicitous wife, or even as a mother; how can I expect pity for a strange child?'

"'Klaus! for God's sake, stop!' I entreated in mortal terror, for Anna Maria had grown pale as death, and her eyes stared out into the dark night with a vacant, terrified expression, but not a word of defence passed her lips. Klaus shook off my hand, and continued with unchecked vehemence:

"'It is time for me to tell you, Anna Maria; it must be said some time. I am your guardian, and it is my right and my duty. I must, alas! accuse myself of having given you too much liberty, and you have abused it. You have become cold and hard; I said before I could not imagine you as a loving mother, as a wife—that you will never be, for you will not bend. You would never do a rash, thoughtless act, but you are unable to make a sacrifice from real affection from your innermost heart—because you do not understand loving, Anna Maria. As I looked at Edwin to-day, my heart and courage sank; if ever a man was created to win a maiden's love, it is he! But you, Anna Maria, just as you let him go away, so you will let Susanna; it is not hard for you, because you have no heart——'

"'Stop, Klaus, stop!' Anna Maria's voice rang through the room, in piercing woe; despairingly she stretched out her arms toward him. 'Say nothing more, not one word; I cannot bear it!' One could see that she wanted to say more; her trembling lips parted, but no sound passed them, and in another moment she had turned and gone quickly out of the room.

"Oh, Klaus!" I cried, weeping, 'you were too hard; you had no occasion to speak so!' But I stood alone in my tears, for Klaus also left the room, for the first time failing to pay attention to his aunt, and slammed the door behind him.

"Yes, I stood alone and believed myself dreaming! Was this the comfortable old room at Bütze, where formerly peace had dwelt bodily? The candles flickered restlessly on the table, a chilling draught of air came through the open window, and thunder faintly muttered in the distance. No, peace had flown, and injustice, care, and animosity had entered, had pressed their way between two human hearts which till now had been united in true love; and there, up-stairs, lay and slept a fair young fellow-creature, and the picture of the Mischief-maker smiled down on her, as if glad of a successor. Yes, Klaus was right, and Anna Maria was right; how was the difference to be made up? Ah! how quickly is a bitter, crushing word said and heard, but a whole world of tears cannot make it unsaid again."

CHAPTER IX.

"I could not sleep that night; I rose from my bed again and sat down by my window in the gray dawn, and my old heart was fearful for what must come now. I loved both the children so much, and, God knows, I would have given years of my useless life if I could have blotted out the last few months. And I was groping about wholly in the dark, for Anna Maria was reserved and uncommunicative, and Klaus—what would he do? He could not come and say, 'Aunt Rosamond, I love Susanna Mattoni, and I wish to marry her!' I should have had to throw up my hands and laugh! Klaus, the last Hegewitz, and Susanna Mattoni, the child of an obscure actress! And Klaus would have had to laugh with me.

"It was a rainy day, just beginning; wonderfully cool air came through the open windows and the leaves rustled in the wind, and the rain pattered on the roofs; the maids were running across the court with their milk-pails, the poultry was being fed, and Brockelmann talking to the maids, and there went the bailiff in the pasture; everything was as usual and yet so different.

"Then a carriage came rolling into the court-yard. Heavens! that was our own with the brown span. It stopped before the front steps, and Klaus came out of the house and greeted the gentleman getting out. I had leaned far out of the window, but now drew back in alarm—it was the doctor, our old Reuter, and at this early hour! Anna Maria was my first thought. I ran out; but no, there she was, just coming out of Susanna's room. She still wore her blue dress of yesterday, but there were blood-stains here and there on the large white apron.

"Susanna?" I faltered. She nodded, and gave me her hand. 'Go in, aunt; I wish to speak with Reuter first,' she said softly; 'Susanna is ill.' Almost stunned, I let myself be pushed through the open door. The curtains were drawn, but on the chimney-piece a candle was burning, and threw its dim, flickering light on the girl's face, so that I could see the dark fever-roses which had bloomed upon it during the night. Her eyes were wide open, but she did not know me; she thought I was Isa.

"Isa, I have sung, too; Isa, don't be angry; it was so beautiful in the moonlight, and it did not hurt me at all.' And she began to sing:

"Home have I come, my heart burns with pain—
Oh! that I only could wander again!"

"And then she passed her small hands over her white night-dress. 'Take away the red flowers, Isa!"

"I laid a white cloth over it for her. Poor child! The swoon, the laughing, the sweet singing, that was already fever.

"Old Reuter came into the room and stepped up to the bed. Anna Maria stood behind him, the torment of expectation on her pale face, and from outside, through the unlatched door, came the sound of heavy breathing; that must be Klaus. The old gentleman felt Susanna's pulse long and cautiously; he was not a man of many words, and one could scarcely find out from him what one's disease was; but he turned at last to Anna Maria:

"A pitiful little lady, Fräulein; the good God made her expressly for a knick-knack table; wrapped in cotton, sent to the South, and treated like a princess, without making any sort of exertion herself, something might yet be made of her. But first"—he drew his watch from his pocket and took hold of her hand again—"first we have enough to do here. Who will undertake the nursing?"

"Doctor, do you think that bodily exertion—I mean, very early rising and domestic activity—could be the cause?" asked Anna Maria, with faltering voice.

"Up at four, and from the kitchen into the cold milk-cellar, and then again in the glowing sun, at the bleaching place, and so alternately, was it not?" asked the old gentleman. 'By all means the surest way to completely prostrate a person of such a constitution; moreover, you might have perceived it before, Fräulein.'

"Anna Maria grew a shade paler. 'But day before yesterday she walked for an hour in the heat,

and sang a great deal,' I interposed, for I felt sorry for Anna Maria. "'Then one thing has led to another,' declared the old gentleman. 'Singing is poison—no more of that! Will you undertake the nursing, Fräulein Hegewitz?' he asked me.

"'No, I,' replied Anna Maria.

"'Isa! Isa!' called Susanna.

"'Where is she staying?' asked Anna Maria, while Dr. Reuter had gone out to write a prescription.

"'In Dambitz,' I returned, oppressed; but she did not look at all surprised. She only begged me to stay with Susanna till she had changed her dress, and sent a messenger to the old woman. Then she came back, so as not to stay long away from Susanna's bed, for, strangely enough, Mademoiselle Isa Pfannenschmidt did not appear.

"Anna Maria had sent Brockelmann in a carriage to fetch the old woman. Meanwhile Susanna pushed Anna Maria away with her weak hands, and called 'Isa!' incessantly in her delirium. With a white face Anna Maria pushed her chair behind the curtains and listened to the low, eager whispering of the sick girl. But once the surging blood shot from neck to brow, as Susanna spoke of Klaus, and Anna Maria turned her eyes almost reproachfully toward the door, behind which a light step had just stopped.

"That was surely Klaus again; certainly twenty times during the day he came to the door to listen; yet who could have closed the little red mouth which had just called his name again, quite aloud, and laughed, and talked of bonbons, of moonlight, and of songs?

"On the way to my room I met Brockelmann, who had just returned, and was standing in the corridor by Klaus. Her face was very red; she pointed to my room, and here began to describe, in a voice half-choked with indignation, all that she had found in the dwelling of the old comedian, excepting herself. The blacksmith's wife had told her she had lately boiled some red pomade, and put it in a number of little porcelain jars, and taken them away to sell. She would often go away so, and be gone a fortnight. 'She is an old vagabond,' added Brockelmann, 'a beggar-woman whom the constable ought to shut up in the nearest tower!' And with a contemptuous air she drew forth one of the little boxes in question, which was correctly tied up with gold paper, and bore a label which explained at length the red pomade and its value: '*Rouge de Théâtre, première qualité!*'

"'Paint!' said I, smiling.

"'And for these sinful wares she gets a pile of money,' continued the old woman, 'and what does she do with it? She eats cakes and chocolate, and the children at the forge run about with gay silk ribbons on their rough pig-tails; and all around in the corners there were heaps of knick-knacks, enough for ten fools to trim up their caps with. It is a shame!'

"'When is she coming back?' asked Klaus.

"'The Lord only knows; she went away yesterday.' Brockelmann turned to go, irritated by her vain mission, which had taken so much time. But she stopped at the door, and a friendly expression lay on her face. 'I am charged with best greetings from the Herr Baron,' she said; 'he was not a little surprised to see me looking into his garden from the old woman's window; I explained to him shortly what brought me there.'

"'Is the house so near the castle garden?' I asked.

"Brockelmann nodded. 'Yes, indeed, the old woman sees the whole beautiful garden; and what a garden!' With that she went out.

"'It is well, on the whole,' said Klaus, after a pause, 'that the old woman is not there. But will Brockelmann be able to nurse her?'

"'No,' I replied, 'Anna Maria.'

"'Anna Maria?' he asked, and his lip quivered.

"'Klaus,' I begged, 'don't humbug your own self. You must be convinced in your inmost heart that this girl could not have a better nurse than Anna Maria.'

"'I have been perplexed about her,' he answered gloomily.

"'And she about you!' I replied.

"He grew red. 'For what reason?' he asked. 'Because I took this girl under the protection of my house? Because I interfered with an over-taxation of her strength? Because——' he broke on.

"'Anna Maria fears that—well, that *la petite* will be too much spoiled,' I replied.

"Klaus shrugged his shoulders. 'Well, and now?' he asked. 'Listen, aunt, I thought nothing in the world could alter me; I thought I had become a calm, quiet man; but every nerve has twitched since I have been compelled to see how this girl is treated. Once, as a little boy, I looked on, powerless with rage, to see two great boys tormenting a may-bug; they had climbed a tree because I had scratched and bitten them; my small limbs would not carry me up there, but the dumb fury, the rising tumult in my childish heart, I have never forgotten to this day; and I felt exactly the same way when I heard those little feet tripping here and there about the house—on,

on, now on the kitchen-stairs, now in the corridor. Do you not suppose I could see how they kept growing more and more weary, and what a mighty effort they made when Anna Maria's merciless voice called, "Here, Susanna!" or "*Venez donc*, Susanna!" "Quickly, we will go into the milk-cellar!" "Susanna, where is the key of the linen-press?" I was a coward to endure it, not to have interfered till it was too late. Great heavens! it shall be different,' he cried, and his clenched fist fell threateningly on the table. The great, strong man was beside himself with anxiety and rage.

"I did not venture to answer, and after a few minutes he left the room. I heard him lingering again at Susanna's door, and then go away softly. The misfortune was here! Poor Anna Maria! Poor Klaus!

"Toward noon Anna Maria came to me, even paler than before. 'She talks incessantly of Klaus,' she said slowly. 'I knew that it must come, but Klaus did not understand me. She loves him, aunt, believe me.'

"My thoughts were so full of Klaus that I said, quite consistently: 'And he loves her!'

"Anna Maria did not understand me aright. 'What did you say, aunt?' she asked, the weariness all gone from her eyes.

"I said Klaus is tenderly inclined toward Susanna Mattoni,' I repeated boldly.

"The girl broke into a smile—nay, she even laughed—and I saw her firm white teeth shine for the first time for many a day; then she grew grave. 'How can you joke now, aunt?'

"*Mais, mon ange*, I am not joking,' I replied warmly. Anna Maria puzzled me; she must have noticed it for a long time; then why was she so opposed to the child?

"You are not joking, aunt?' she asked icily. 'Then you little understand how to judge Klaus. Klaus, with his cool reason, his calm nature, he who might have had a wife any day if he had wished, should care for this child—it is ridiculous, perfectly ridiculous!'

"But, Anna Maria, are you so blind?' I cried.

"I am not blind,' she replied, with one of her glances which showed plainly her contempt of my opinion. 'Not till I see the two come, united, out of the church will I believe that Klaus loves her, and that, Aunt Rosamond, neither you nor I will live to see.'

"Stop, Anna Maria!' I begged. 'It is, of course, possible that I am mistaken, but—God grant that you are right,' I added.

"Anna Maria was silent for a moment. 'No,' she said then, as if to herself, lifting up her arms—'no, Klaus is not capable of such an error. I believe in Klaus. His kind heart, his compassion for the orphan, impel him to be hard toward me; our opinions as to Susanna's welfare are so contrary. But I know, aunt, that Klaus loves me so much, that I stand before any other in his heart, so I will gladly bear the harshness; perhaps he has borne something harder for my sake. When Susanna is gone we shall find the old good-will back again.'

"I do not believe that Susanna will go away, will be allowed to go away,' I threw in, uncertainly, touched by her confidence.

"Her eyes shone. 'Leave that to me, Aunt Rosa,' she replied; 'she *shall* go, take my word for it.'

"And if you vex Klaus afresh by such a demand?'

"Klaus desires Susanna's best good, and he will find some other place for her as soon as he learns that he is not an object of indifference to her. Klaus is a man of honor, and a glance will suffice.'

"What, Anna Maria?' I groaned; 'you would inform him that—that—'

"Yes,' she replied.

"I beg you, Anna Maria, do not do it; do not pour oil on the fire, my child; be silent—'

"Never, aunt; I have been silent too long already!' she said decidedly. 'I saw it coming on, it had to come, and I had not the courage to warn Klaus, and say: "Protect this child from the saddest thing that can come to a maiden's heart; do not let it awaken into a first love, which must then be renounced."'

"Anna Maria, for Heaven's sake,' I implored, 'how do you know so certainly that Susanna no longer regards Klaus with indifference? You cannot take her feverish talk for anything positive. She talks about Stürmer as well as Klaus. I beg you, keep silent. It is only a conjecture of yours; Susanna may be in a state of uncertainty still, herself.'

"A precocious, passionate nature, like that girl's?' she asked, and went to the door, about to leave; 'there is nothing uncertain there. I owe it to her.'

"Anna Maria, let her get well first; it is over-hasty, and may make a dreadful jumble!'

"She did not answer, but gave me a nod that agreed with her earnest look, and then left me alone with my thoughts.

"How sorry I was for her, this young maiden with the heart of an old woman! How this firm

confidence in Klaus touched me! I had expected a little jealousy from her, had supposed that Susanna's appearance seemed dangerous enough to her to rob her of her brother's heart; but nothing of all this—that she wished to preserve the girl's peace of mind. She believed in Klaus with a firm, unshaken trust. 'I know that I stand before all others in his heart, only our opinions about Susanna differ widely.' Klaus was a man of honor, Klaus could not marry Susanna; it lay beyond the reach of possibility! A love without this final end was not conceivable to her pure mind; of a passion which could outreach all bounds she seemed to have no foreboding. It did not occur to her to consider her brother's altered manner, his hasty vehemence of the day before, as anything but the expression of his lively anxiety about an orphaned child, as excessive chivalry, as a justified irritation at her energetic opposition; but if she had only first spoken——

"Ah, me! My old head showed me no outlet. What should I do, with whom speak? Neither of them could judge of the matter as it lay now; the only remaining way was to appeal to Susanna's maidenly pride. But dared I? Had I the right to contrive an intrigue behind Klaus's back? For, although I meant well, still it was an intrigue. And suppose that I did tread this by-way, what certainty was there that it would lead to the goal? And how, after all, should I tread it?

"Susanna's illness was violent but brief. The delirium had ceased by the next day, but she lay very feeble for a week after, without speaking or showing interest in anything. But her great eyes continually followed Anna Maria, as she moved noiselessly about the sick-room. Anna Maria's manner toward Susanna was altered; there was a certain gentleness and tenderness about her that became her wonderfully well. Whether it was sympathy with the invalid, or whether she wanted to show the girl whom she had wished to send away from the shelter of her home that she cherished no ill-will toward her, I do not know; at any rate, she took care of her like a loving mother.

"After about a week Susanna raised her head, begged to have the windows opened, and showed an appetite; and when the doctor came he found her sitting up in bed, eating with excellent appetite the prescribed convalescent's dish, a broth of young pigeons.

"'Bravo!' cried the gay little man, 'keep on so! A small glass of Bordeaux, too, would do no harm.'

"'And to-morrow I shall get up!' cried Susanna.

"'Not to-morrow; and day after to-morrow I shall inspect you again before you do it,' answered the doctor.

"Susanna laughed, and then, with the pleasant feeling of returning health, lay back on the pillows, took a hundred-leaved rose from the bunch of flowers which Klaus sent daily through Anna Maria, to be placed by the sick-bed, and asked—what! did I hear aright? Horrified, I turned my head away and looked for Anna Maria; fortunately, she had gone out with the doctor—and asked: 'Has Klaus—Herr von Hegewitz—ever inquired for me?' And as she spoke her dark eyes flashed beneath the long lashes.

"'Oh, yes, Susanna, but he is very much occupied with the harvesting now,' I said deceitfully, 'and he knows you are having the best of care.'

"She nodded. 'And has not Herr von Stürmer been here? Did he not know that I was ill?'

"'Stürmer? Yes, I think he has been here frequently,' I replied.

"'And hasn't he asked at all how I was?' she questioned me further.

"'You are assuming, *ma mignonne!*' said I, irritated. 'He has inquired for you, perhaps—yes, I remember—nothing more.'

"'How ungallant!' whispered Susanna, sulkily. At that moment the door opened and Brockelmann entered with a little basket of choice apricots, with a fresh rosebud placed here and there among them.

"'An expression of regard from Baron von Stürmer, who sent his wishes for the Fräulein's improvement, hoping that she might like to eat the fruit.' With these words the basket was set down rather roughly on the table beside the bed. The old woman's glance met mine, and in her eyes was plainly to be read: 'Well, let anybody who can understand such a state of affairs; I can't!' But Susanna, with a cry of joy, had seized the basket, and buried her nose in the flowers, inhaling their spicy odor. Then she rested it on her knees, put her delicate arms around it, leaned her head on the dainty handle, and with a happy smile closed her eyes, and thus Anna Maria found her. She frowned at this ecstasy. 'It is very kind of Stürmer,' she said, quietly; 'he always shows such delicate attentions when he knows any one to be ill and suffering.' Then she rang for a plate and silver fruit-knife. 'Give them to me, Susanna; I will prepare some of the beautiful fruit for you.'"

CHAPTER X.

"Late in the afternoon one dull rainy day we were sitting in the garden-parlor, Anna Maria with her sewing, Klaus reading the newspaper and smoking, when Stürmer came in to talk over some matters with Klaus. Then conversation about horses ended in a political discussion, in which

Anna Maria took part with a certain degree of liveliness, and Klaus joined warmly, drawing strong whiffs from his pipe. Stürmer, who had never taken a pipe in his mouth, now and then drove back the clouds with his silk handkerchief in sport, and I amused myself with listening to the ready answers which came from Anna Maria's young lips.

"The demeanor of brother and sister toward each other was singular. Anna Maria waited upon her brother with almost humble tenderness, while he seemed distrustful, and then again secretly touched by the self-sacrificing spirit of the nurse who devoted herself to Susanna. He especially avoided looking at her, or speaking to her directly.

"How is Fräulein Mattoni getting on?" broke in Stürmer in the midst of a well-turned sentence of Klaus's about the recent attempts to make beet-root sugar.

"Well!" replied Anna Maria; 'she is reading an old family history which I hunted up the other day, and enjoying your delicious apricots. Thank you for them, Stürmer; they give Susanna great pleasure.'

"Then the conversation turned upon the lately deceased Duke of Weimar, Charles Augustus, and from him to his celebrated friend, Goethe, of whom Stürmer affirmed that he was intending to marry again after the death of his wife. Anna Maria rejected the idea incredulously; she could not believe that he, at his great age, would be so foolish. She was a sworn enemy to Goethe. Her plain, straightforward mind had been disagreeably affected by Werther; such an overflow of feeling could but seem strange to her. Goethe's numerous love-affairs set him out in a light which brought the ideal conception of him down to the atmosphere of common mortals. That genius draws different boundaries, that a fiery spirit like his was not to be measured by the common standard, did not occur to her, and so she now indignantly shook her head.

"A fable!" I, too, cried, smiling.

"Not at all," rejoined Stürmer; 'I have it from Von N——, who is correctly informed, depend upon it!'

"My!" said Klaus, 'he must have become an old icicle by this time, scarcely able to go among people any more.'

"A man who has created a Gretchen ossify?" threw in Stürmer. 'Never!'

"And a Werther?" said I, in joke.

"Werther is insupportable!" declared Anna Maria, 'bombastic, overdrawn! A man who behaves like Werther is in my eyes no man at all, but a weakling!'

"Stürmer's dark eyes looked quietly over at her. 'Your opinion, Fräulein von Hegewitz, is surely a rare one among women. A woman usually discovers from her standpoint, and naturally, that with a lost love the value of life is gone, and why should not this be the case with a man as well? Of course, in a man's occupation, in the demands which his life makes of him, there are a thousand aids offered to enable him more quickly to recover from such a pain. But to regard it purely objectively, that demands such a cool manner of contemplation that I am fain to believe that those who thus judge do not know what loving really means.'

"At these last words Anna Maria had grown as white as the linen on which she was sewing. She dropped her head, as if conscious of guilt, and her trembling hand could scarcely guide the needle. A painful pause ensued; Klaus cast a compassionate glance at Stürmer; it was the first time that he had given expression to the pain of his bitter disappointment in her hearing and ours.

"Heavens, what a storm!" I cried, as a perfect flood of water was hurled against the windows; even the despised subject of water satisfied me to break the awkward silence.

"Indeed," said Stürmer, rising, 'it is bad; I must make haste to get under shelter while it is yet daylight.' He took leave with a haste that left me to imagine he wished to be alone with his bitter feelings.

"Adieu, dear Edwin," said I, tenderly, pressing his hand. Neither brother nor sister gave him the customary invitation to spend the evening here. Anna Maria had risen and laid her hand on Klaus's shoulder, who was now standing beside her. She was still very pale, and said her 'Good-night, Stürmer!' with a wearily maintained steadiness.

"As soon as the gentlemen had left the room, she went to the door and opened it impetuously; breathing hard, she stood in the door-way, and the storm blew back her skirts, and the rain-drops beat in her face and lay like pearls on her fair locks. Once or twice it seemed to me as if her bosom heaved with suppressed sobs, so that, in alarm, I turned my head to look around the curtain, but to no purpose, for as Klaus reëntered the room she turned back too, and an almost transfigured expression lay on her face.

"She went up to him and took his arm.

"Dear brother," I heard her say, and again there was a quiver in her voice; she leaned her head against his breast. 'Dear Klaus!' she repeated.

"Anna Maria?" he asked, taking hold of her hand.

"Klaus, let what has lately passed between us be forgotten! Forgive me for having so violently opposed you; it was very wrong of me——"

"No, no, my old lass; I was more violent than was necessary," he replied hastily, drawing her to him; "we were both in fault."

"Yes, Klaus; you see I was not honest; I ought to have spoken at once, but I was not sure enough of it. I did not wish to make you uneasy."

"By what?" said Klaus hastily.

"Anna Maria hesitated, but held her brother's arm more firmly. I cleared my throat as a warning from my corner by the window, but Anna Maria paid no attention to it; she acted from quick, firm resolution in all that she did, and when occasion came she bravely met the difficulty, which she thought easy enough to overcome.

"By telling you of a fact which makes Susanna's remaining in this house questionable," she said, quietly, but decidedly.

"The old song again, Anna Maria?" he said. "Your vehemence did not suffice; do you think to catch me this way?"

"No, Klaus, in Heaven's name, no!" she replied. "Something different drives me to you now; I did not mean to speak of Susanna to you again; I wished in this hour only one word from you as of old, a single kind word; that it happened thus was the course of the conversation. Forgive me!"

"You have judged Susanna very severely, Anna Maria," Klaus began, after a pause, "and now you have nursed her devotedly and made up for it a hundred times; and yet the same sentiments?—now, when she is ill, and may perhaps remain sickly?"

"I have expected too much of Susanna's constitution, Klaus, and day and night I have prayed that God might restore her to health. I have desired only her good, believe me. But my opinion of Susanna's character I cannot alter."

"They were not standing close together now, but opposite one another. 'But beneath all the show and glitter which I despise there beats a quick, warm human heart, Klaus. Susanna is no longer the child you think to see in her. Susanna has—Susanna is—Susanna *loves* you, Klaus!'

"The twilight had gradually deepened. I could no longer see Klaus's face distinctly, but only heard a quick, violent breathing. He did not answer, he stood motionless. 'Foolish child!' thought I, looking at Anna Maria.

"You do not believe me, Klaus?" she asked, as he remained silent. "But it is so; I am not mistaken! Susanna talked of you incessantly in her delirium; I know it from a hundred little indications. Such an affection increases daily and hourly—is the girl to become unhappy? Perhaps she does not know it yet herself, but the awakening must surely come."

"Again no answer. Klaus sat down in the nearest chair, and looked before him, motionless. The servants' supper-bell was now ringing outside, a fresh shower of rain came pelting against the sandstone pavement of the terrace, and there was a spectral light in the great, dim room. I imagined phantoms were rising out of every nook and corner, and the great flowered portière moved slightly, as if some one were standing behind it, listening.

"You are right," said Klaus, at length, in a lifeless tone; "what is to become of her? The wife of a Hegewitz—that is impossible; so you think, do you not, Anna Maria?"

"Yes," she replied, simply.

"Yes," he repeated, springing up and pacing the room with long steps. "And whither would you banish the girl?" he asked, stopping before his sister.

"Not *banish*, Klaus; that sounds so different from what I intend," she said, frankly. "Take her to a *pension* in a southern district, perhaps in Switzerland, and so give her an opportunity to thoroughly heal her sick heart."

"That sounds reasonable and well-considered," he returned, bitterly. "Meanwhile, Susanna is not yet restored to health." And after a pause he added: "I have put off for a long time a necessary journey; I shall go to-morrow to O——, in Silesia; I shall be acting to your mind so, shall I not?"

"Anna Maria started. 'To O——, do you say?'

"Yes," he replied, very red; "I have been a little negligent, and affairs are in such a bad condition there a meeting of creditors is unavoidable. Platen has repeatedly urged me to come myself, in order to check the thing; you know my mortgage is the largest, but——"

"And you have not gone, Klaus?" said Anna Maria reproachfully. "Why?"

"I shall start to-morrow morning," he answered, shortly.

"She evidently did not understand him aright, but she went up to him and put her arms around his neck. 'Do not let a misunderstanding arise between us again, Klaus. Shall I act contrary to my conviction?'

"No, no!" he replied in a hollow tone; 'I thank you.' But he did not draw her to him, he freed himself from her arms and left the room. Anna Maria stood motionless for a moment looking after him. Then she shook her head energetically, as if to ward off intrusive thoughts, and taking up her basket of keys went out too.

"Half an hour later we were sitting at the supper-table. Anna Maria had brought Klaus from his room; he looked disturbed and let his soup grow cold, and crumbled his bread between his fingers in a distracted manner.

"Have you been to Susanna's room?" I asked Anna Maria.

"She nodded. 'I was in a hurry, but stopped at her door up-stairs, and called to ask what I should send her for supper. But I got no answer; she was probably asleep, so I closed the door softly and came away.'

"And what do you intend to tell her as a pretext for her removal?" I asked further.

"Her health is a sufficiently cogent reason, aunt," replied Anna Maria.

"I was silent and so were the others; we finished the meal in silence, and then sat silent about the table in the sitting-room, without a suspicion of what was happening meanwhile. Each was occupied with his own thoughts, and without the monotonous rain still fell splashing on the roof and poured from the animals' heads on the gutters upon the pavement of the court. There was an incessant drizzle and splash, and the storm, coming over the heath, swept together the rain-drops, and drove them pelting against the well-protected windows.

"All at once Brockelmann entered the room; frightened and startled her eyes sped about. 'Is not Fräulein Mattoni here?' she asked excitedly.

"Susanna?" we all three cried with one voice, and Klaus sprang up.

"She is not in her room! Merciful Heaven, where can she be!" she continued. 'Before supper she got up and dressed herself, laughing and tittering; she meant to go down-stairs to surprise the family. I scolded, but what good did it do? Oh, she must be hiding somewhere!' The old woman's voice was choked with anxiety; Anna Maria had hurried out of the room, and her flying steps reëchoed from the corridor, fear lending her wings. Brockelmann took a candle from the table and began to search the adjoining garden-parlor, and Klaus stood, pale as a corpse, as if rooted to the spot.

"She must be here!" said I.

"He did not hear. His whole attention was concentrated upon Anna Maria, who was just crossing the threshold, and looked at her brother's serious face with eyes that seemed twice their usual size.

"She is gone, Klaus," she said, tremulously; 'I know not whither—why?'

"He stepped past her without a word.

"Klaus!" Anna Maria called after him, 'take me with you!' But she received no answer. 'She heard it, my God, she heard what I said to him,' she whispered. 'Aunt, I beg you, go with him, do not let him go alone!' She hastened away and came back with shawls and wraps. I could hear from the court the hasty preparations for departure—indeed, how I got to the carriage, where Klaus was already sitting on the box, I do not know to this day.

"It was a half-covered chaise in which we rolled out on the dark highway; the rain beat against the leather hood, and the wind assaulted us with undiminished strength; Klaus's coat-collar flapped in the light of the carriage lamps, whose unsteady light was reflected in the water of the one great puddle into which the whole road was transformed. Klaus drove frantically; to this day I do not understand how we came, safe and sound, in the pitch-dark night, before the Dambitz blacksmith's shop. The little house lay there without a light. When Klaus pounded on the door with his whip-handle the watch-dog gave the alarm, upon which a man's voice soon asked what we wanted, and if anything had happened to the carriage. It happened sometimes, doubtless, that the man was called from his sleep because of an accident.

"Is your lodger at home?" asked Klaus, in place of an answer.

"Since this noon, your honor!" was the polite answer. The man knew the master of the Hegewitz manor from his inquiry, for it was known all over the village that the Bütze people had the foster-child of the old actress with them.

"Is she alone?"

"Ah! has your honor come on account of the young mam'selle?" cried the man. 'She came here an hour ago, wet as a rat, and is lying in bed up-stairs there. I will open the door at once.'

"Klaus helped me out of the carriage. 'Will you go up to her?' he asked, and pressed my hand so hard that I nearly screamed.

"Certainly, certainly, my lad!" I made haste to say; 'we will soon have the fugitive back at Bütze.' But sooner said than done. The blacksmith's wife, who had also appeared on the scene, carefully lighted the way up the creaking, dangerous flight of stairs, which I was scarcely able to climb

with my lame foot, and there, in the low, whitewashed back room of the forge, stood Isabella Pfannenschmidt before me, like a roused lioness. She stood with outstretched arms before the bed, which was in an alcove-like recess, and was half covered with fantastic hangings of yellow chintz. With theatrical pathos she called to me: 'What do you want? You have no more right to this child!'

"Without further ado I pushed her aside and looked at the bed; from a chaos of blue and red feather-beds emerged Susanna's brown head.

"She turned her face to the wall without looking at me, and remained thus, motionless.

"Susanna, was that right?' I asked.

"No answer.

"Why did you run away so suddenly, my child? Do you know that you may have made yourself ill and miserable for life by this recklessness?"

"Silence again, but the breathing grew heavy and loud.

"You are an obstinate, naughty child!' I continued. You frighten the people who love you half to death, and sin against yourself in an unheard-of manner!"

"The old actress meanwhile stood with folded arms, and an indescribable smile played about her mouth.

"Are you well enough to get up and drive home with me, Susanna?' I asked.

"No!' cried the old woman. 'Why should she go to you again? Sooner or later they will be sure to show her the door!"

"Susanna, Klaus is below; he has been anxious about you; and Anna Maria is impatiently waiting at home. Be reasonable, be good; you owe us an explanation."

"But in place of an answer a violent fit of coughing followed; she suddenly began to toss about and clutch at the air, and her eyes looked over at me, large and fixed, strangely unconscious. The old actress fell on the bed with a piercing cry, and wound her arms about the girl. 'Oh, Lord, she is dying!"

"Had Klaus heard this cry? I know not; I only know that all at once he was in the room, and pushed the old woman away from the bed, and that that moment decided the fate of two human beings. All that had been fermenting in him for weeks, the stream of his passion which had been wearily held back by cold reason, was set free by the sight of the girl lying thus unconscious. No more restraint was possible; he threw his arms about her, he kissed the little weak hands, the dark hair; he called her his bride, his wife, his beloved; never again, never, should she go from his heart, who was dearer to him than all the world! In dumb horror I heard these impetuous words rush on my ears. Thank God, Isabella Pfannenschmidt had left the room; she had evidently rushed out for a restorative, for tea or water.

"I laid a heavy hand on the man's shoulder. 'Are you mad, Klaus? Do you not see that she is sicker than ever?' Susanna now lay in his arms, really swooning; her head had fallen on his shoulder, and the small face, like that of a slumbering child, showed a slight smile on the lips.

"Aunt,' said the tall, fair man, without getting up, tears shining in his honest blue eyes, 'she shall not die; I should reproach myself with it forever!' He pressed his lips to her forehead again and went out, without looking about him; he sat on the stairs there a long time. Susanna opened her eyes at last, under our efforts. She then let dry clothes be put on her without resistance, but there was no sign, no look, to betray to me whether she had heard Klaus's wild whisperings of love. But she did not for a moment object to accompanying me to Bütze, and energetically chid the old woman's lamentation. Warmly wrapped, I led her over the threshold of the low room; she wavered for a moment, as she saw Klaus on the stairs by the light of the oil-lamp. Then he raised her in his arms, and in the smoking, unsteady light of the lamp, which was being put out by the draught, I saw how he went down the steps with her, how two slender arms were put around his neck, sure and fast. With tottering knees I followed them, to take Susanna Mattoni to Bütze again.

"And the way home! Never has a drive seemed so endless to me. I sat silent beside the girl; I was angry with her, bitterly angry for being loved by Klaus. The pride of a pure and ancient stock arose in my heart in its full strength, and if ever I hated Susanna Mattoni it was on that night, in the dark carriage. Then I felt her lightly touch my clothes, slip to the floor beside me, and embrace my knees and lay her head on my lap. 'I was going away, Fräulein Rosamond,' she whispered; 'why did you come after me?"

"They were only a few simple words, but such a persuasive truth lay in them that my anger vanished almost instantly. A feeling of deep sympathy pulled at my heart, and sent a flood of tears to my eyes.

"What avail the arduously established limits of human law and order, even though uprightly preserved for centuries long, against the storm of a first passion? A single instant—the proud structure lies in ruins, and the crimson banner of love waves victoriously over all considerations, over all reflections.

"I felt Susanna's hot lips on my hand; they burned me like glowing iron. I did not draw away my hand, but left it to her, without pressure, without a sign that I understood her. Before my eyes hovered the image of Anna Maria. 'Oh, Anna Maria, I could not prevent its happening thus!'

"And now the carriage rolled under our gateway, rattled over the paved court, and stopped before the steps. I saw Klaus swing himself down from the box, and saw Anna Maria, in the light of the lantern, standing in the vaulted door-way. Klaus opened the carriage-door; Susanna first raised herself up now, and he carried her like a child up the steps, past Anna Maria, into the house. They had forgotten me; the lame old aunt clambered out of the carriage with Brockelmann's help, and on entering the sitting-room I found Anna Maria and Susanna alone—Susanna, with a feverish glow on her cheeks, in Klaus's arm-chair, Anna Maria standing before her with a cup of hot tea.

"Not a question, not a reproach passed her lips; she silently offered the warming drink, and Susanna silently refused it. 'You must go to bed, Susanna,' she then said. The girl rose and took a step or two, but tottered, and held on to her chair. 'Put your arms around my neck, Susanna!' Anna Maria cried, and in a moment had raised her in her strong arms, and went toward the door as if she were carrying a feather. Brockelmann followed; I heard her muttering away to herself, 'That caps the climax!'

"Utterly exhausted, I sank into my chair. What was to be done now? God grant that Klaus and Anna Maria might not see each other again this evening, only this evening!

"Half an hour had passed when I heard Anna Maria's step in the hall; the door was wide open, and I could distinctly see her tall figure approach, in the faint light of the hall-lamp. She stopped at Klaus's door and knocked. I leaned forward to listen; all was still. 'Klaus!' I heard her say. No answer. Again I thought I detected a suppressed sob in her voice. 'Klaus!' she repeated once more, imploringly, pressing on the latch. She waited a minute or two, then turned away and went up-stairs again.

"'He is angry with her,' I murmured, half aloud, 'and she wants to conciliate him. My God, turn everything to good!' I put out the lights in the sitting-room and went over to Klaus's door and listened. Regular and heavy came the sound of his steps; he was there, then! 'Klaus!' I called, with an energy which frightened myself. The steps came nearer at once, the key was turned, and he opened the door directly.

"'Come in, aunt,' he bade me. I looked at him in alarm, he looked so pale, so exhausted. His hand seized mine. 'It is well that you are looking after me, aunt; something has come over me, I know not how.'

"'And now, Klaus?' I asked, letting him lead me to the sofa, which had descended from my father and still stood on the same spot as of old, under a collection of about fifty deers' antlers, all of which had been taken on the Bütze hunting-grounds, and had decorated that wall as far back as I could remember.

"He had stopped in front of me. 'And now?' he repeated, passing his hand over his forehead. 'It is a strange question, *au fond*, aunt—Susanna will be my wife. I can give you no other answer.'

"It was out! I had long known that it must come, and yet it fell on me like a blow.

"'Klaus,' I began. But he interrupted me impatiently and indignantly.

"'I know all you would say, aunt; I have said it to myself a hundred times! I know as well as you that Susanna belongs to the common class, that her mother came from doubtful antecedents. I know that Susanna is a trifling, spoiled child, who seems little suited to my seriousness. I know that I am old in comparison to her; and I know, above all, that Anna Maria will never regard her as a sister. Nevertheless, aunt, my resolve stands firm, for I love Susanna Mattoni, love her with all her childish faults, which are hardly to be called faults. I love her in her charming, trifling maidenhood; it will make me happy to be able to educate and guide her further, and the love that Anna Maria denies her I will try to make up to her.'

"I was silent, there was nothing more to be said.

"'You do not look happy, aunt,' he said, bitterly. 'Listen: this afternoon I was thinking of flight; but when Anna Maria said, "Susanna loves you!" it almost crushed me. Amid all the happiness which this revelation opened to me, yet much that has been sacred and not to be trifled with forcibly appealed to me. But when I beheld Susanna, like a dying person, in that poor room, all at once it was clear to me that everything in the world is powerless against a true, deep passion, and then —'

"'And Anna Maria, Klaus?'

"'I cannot talk with her any more this evening, aunt,' he replied; 'wait till I am quieter; there is time enough. I grow violent if I think that it was her words that drove Susanna out in the stormy night. God grant that it may do her no harm!'

"'Yet do not misunderstand the fact, Klaus, that Anna Maria wished Susanna's best good,' I besought him, tears streaming from my eyes. 'Think how she loves you, how her very existence depends upon you. I shall wish from my heart, Klaus, that what you have chosen may be the right thing; but do not expect that Anna Maria will, without a struggle, see you take a step which may

perhaps bring you heavy burdens and little happiness.'

"Klaus did not answer. He stood before his writing-desk and looked at Anna Maria's portrait, which she had given him at Christmas three years before; it was painted at the time that she refused Stürmer. The clear blue eyes looked over at Klaus from the proud, grave face, which had the slightest expression of pain about the mouth, as if she were again speaking the words she had said to him at that time: 'I will stay with you, Klaus; I cannot go away from you!'

"I do not wish to proceed violently, aunt,' he began, after a long pause; 'I am no young blusterer who would take a fortress by storm. Susanna, too, requires rest; she ought not to be disturbed and excited any more now. Believe me, I love Anna Maria very dearly, but I cannot give up a happiness a second time for her sake; then she was a child, and toward the child I had obligations; to-day she is a maiden, who sooner or later will be a wife.'

"No, no, Klaus," I cried.

"Very well, not so, then. She is different from others I admit; at any rate, hers is a nature that is sufficient to itself. She is, and remains, in my heart and in my home, my only and beloved sister, who will ever hold the first place, next to—Susanna. But with that she must be satisfied, and in return I demand love, and above all, consideration for her who will be my wife. But, as I said before, I cannot possibly speak quietly with Anna Maria about it now. I will let it wait over, with my absence, perhaps three weeks, perhaps longer, and we shall all have time to become more calm—I, too, Aunt Rosamond. I thought of writing to Anna Maria about this affair, calmly and lovingly, and almost believe it is the best thing to do.'

"And when shall you start, Klaus?"

"Frederick is packing my trunk now; the bailiff is coming at four o'clock for a necessary conference; at five the carriage will be at the door.'

"And does Anna Maria know?"

"No—I would like—to go without saying good-by.'

"You will make her angry, Klaus; it is not right.' I sobbed.

"Let time pass, aunt, that the breach may not grow wider; you know her and you know me. There have been discussions between us of late which have left a thorn in my heart. I do not want to be violent toward her again.'

"And Susanna?"

"Susanna knows enough,' he replied, simply; 'you will be so kind as to explain to her that I had to go on a necessary journey, and hope next to see her well and sound again.'

"Will she not interpret it falsely, after that vehement storm of love to-night?"

He blushed to the roots of his curly hair.

"No, aunt,' he said, 'it would be untimely were I to make her any assurances. Susanna knows now that I love her, and I think she returns my love; of what use are further words?"

"Honest old Klaus! I can still see you standing before me, in the agitation which so well became you, and so truly brought out your fine, brave character.

"Farewell, then, Klaus,' said I, placing my hand in his, and he drew it to his lips and looked at my tearful eyes. 'Hold your dear hands over my little Susanna,' he asked tenderly; 'I will thank you for every kind word you say to her. And should she be in danger, should she grow worse again, write me. I will leave a few lines for Anna Maria.'

"God be with you, Klaus; may all be well!"

He accompanied me through the dim hall as far as the stairs. A short whirr from the old clock, and two hollow strokes were heard. Two o'clock already! I waved my hand again, and went upstairs, with how heavy a heart God only knows!

I stopped at Susanna's door and softly lifted the latch. By the uncertain light of the night-lamp I saw Anna Maria in the arm-chair beside the bed; her head rested against the green cushion of the high back, her hands were folded over her New Testament in her lap, and she was sleeping quietly and soundly. I glided softly in and looked at Susanna; she lay awake, her eyes wide open. As she caught sight of me she dropped her long lashes, pretending deep sleep, but raised them again, blinking, as I withdrew. Was it any wonder that she did not sleep and that her cheeks glowed like crimson roses?

My sleep was restless that night, full of confused, troubled dreams. Toward morning I woke with a start; I thought I heard the rumbling of a coach. 'Klaus,' I cried, and a feeling of anxiety came over me. I rose and glided to the window; a thick, white autumnal mist hung over the trees and roofs of the barns; it was perfectly still all about, but the door of the carriage-house stood open and a boy was slowly sauntering into the stable; the gates were opened wide, showing a bit of the lonely, poplar-shaded highway.

I stole away and sought my bed again; so far everything was certainly quiet and orderly. I had been sleeping soundly again, when suddenly opening my eyes, I perceived Brockelmann by my

bed.

"'Fräulein,' she said, unsteadily, 'the master has gone off early this morning!'

"'He will come back, Brockelmann,' I said, consolingly. 'Does Anna Maria know yet?'

"'To be sure!' replied the old woman; 'and she was not a little frightened when Frederick brought her the letter which the master left for her. But you know, Fräulein, she always judges according to the saying, "What God does and what my brother does is well!"' With that the old woman went.

"I believe I sat at the window for two hours after that in *déshabillé*, thinking over yesterday's experience; Klaus had gone, and when he returned Susanna would be his wife—that was ever the sum of my reflections.

"When I came down-stairs I found Anna Maria engaged in business transactions with the bailiff and forester. How clearly she made her arrangements! The men had not a word to reply. Offers had been made for the grain; the harvest was richer than ever before, and the price of grain low. Anna Maria did not wish to close the bargain yet; in Eastern Prussia the grain had turned out wretchedly. 'Let us wait for the potato-crop,' I heard her say. 'If that turns out as badly as seems probable now, we shall need more bread, for our people must not suffer want.'

"She proceeded with calmness and caution. Oh, yes. Klaus was right; his house was in good care. As she followed me afterward into the garden-parlor she pressed my hand.

"'Klaus's departure seems like a flight,' she said; 'but it must be all right.'

"Not a word of yesterday's occurrences! Nor in the future either. Susanna observed the same silence. When I went to her bed to inform her that Klaus was gone on a journey, a bright flush of alarm tinged her pale face for an instant, but she was silent.

"For some time yet she had to keep her bed; then her childish step was heard again about the house, her slender figure nestled again in the deep easy-chair in the garden-parlor, and she went about the park as of old, idling away the days, and gradually signs of returning health appeared in her cheeks.

"She evidently missed Klaus; it was most plainly to be seen in her dress. She seemed astonishingly negligent; at a slight word of blame from me, the question, 'For whom?' rose quickly to her lips, but she did not speak it, and turned away her blushing face. Isabella Pfannenschmidt came to the house a few days after Klaus's departure, while Susanna was still in bed. I entered the room soon after her, and found the old woman by the bed, a vexed expression on her face. My ear just caught the words: 'Yes, now, there we have it: the egg will always be wiser than the hen!'

"She was embarrassed at my entrance, but remained fierce and surly. I purposely did not leave them alone, and toward evening she took her leave, with a thousand fond words to Susanna, and a cold courtesy to me. 'All will yet be well, my sweet little dear; only wait!' she whispered before she went."

CHAPTER XI.

"Life went on quietly in the house without a master. Anna Maria was busy until late in the evening; she possessed an endless capacity for work. 'I can bear Klaus's absence easier so,' she said, when I urged her to give herself some rest. 'I miss him infinitely, aunt!' Stürmer came occasionally to inquire for the ladies. Once he arrived at the same time with Anna Maria; she, like him, was on horseback; they had probably met on the highway, for Anna Maria came from the fields, the bailiff behind her. I was standing at the window with Susanna. 'What a splendid couple!' said I, involuntarily, and indeed I thought I had scarcely ever seen Anna Maria look so handsome.

"Klaus wrote rarely; those times were not like the present, and one was well satisfied to receive a letter once a fortnight. Anna Maria answered promptly; her accounts must have been sufficiently detailed, for no letter or inquiry in regard to our secret came to me. Anna Maria used to read Klaus's letters, with the exception of the business portions, aloud, after supper. There was a certain homesick sound in the words, calmly and coolly as they were written. But her face beamed at every word which he wrote from the enchanted Silesia in praise of the poor home in the Mark; it stirred her whole heart. Next to her tender affection for her brother, she clung with an idolizing love to her home; no mountain lake could compare with the brown, oak-bound pond in the garden, no high mountain-range with the charm of the heath, with the pine-forests in the cradle of Prussia.

"And the object which doubled all the longing, which made the old manor-house at Bütze seem in the eyes of the distant owner like a fairy castle, like a rendezvous of the elves—this object sat playing with her kitten during the reading, and now and then I even had to tap her shoulder as she yawned slightly.

"'Is that only feigned indifference?' I asked myself. Then, again, a sad, weary smile would play about her mouth if Klaus were the subject of conversation. I thought at the time that she was

fretting over the long-delayed continuation of that hot declaration of love; that she, with her ardent nature, was tormenting herself to death with doubts. And I could not speak a consoling word to her; Klaus did not wish it. Why should Susanna be spared a

"Hangen und Bangen
In schwebender Pein'?"

"One morning a peasant lad came running into the yard, bringing a letter for Susanna; the old mam'selle at the forge had sent him, he said. I met him on the steps, just as I was coming in from the garden, and bade Brockelmann go up to Susanna with the note, which was written on the finest letter-paper. The boy trotted away, and I sat down with Anna Maria in the sitting-room. In a few minutes Susanna's light step was heard in the hall, and she entered the room in haste.

"I must beg you for a carriage, Fräulein Anna Maria!" she cried, out of breath; 'my old Isa is ill: I must go to her.'

"Anna Maria put down her pen, rather unwillingly, at this disturbance; she had been making out accounts.

"But, Susanna, how often have I requested you not to walk so fast? You are out of breath again.'

"Shall we not find out first what is the matter with Isa?" said I, for all at once Klaus's words, 'Hold your hands over this girl!' fell heavily on my soul. Klaus had asked it of me. Klaus was no child; he was a calm, strong-willed man, and he was going to make her his wife, and I knew he would accuse me, bitterly accuse me, if a hair of her head were hurt.

"It might be a contagious disease, Susanna," I continued, with all the decision at my command, as her eyes sparkled at my opposition.

"And what if it were the plague?" she cried, and clinched her little hands, and swung her foot impatiently under the folds of her dress.

"Anna Maria stood up. 'For shame, Susanna! I think you are quite right to wish to take care of Isa; it would be unnatural if you did not have this desire. But you have scarcely recovered, and a long stay in that musty little sick-room would be poison to you; and besides, as Aunt Rosamond says, the disease may be contagious; we must find out about it first.'

"And meanwhile she may grow worse and die!" cried Susanna passionately. 'What if I do take the disease? I must go to her!' And bursting into tears, she threw herself into a chair, and buried her head in the cushions. Anna Maria went up to her and bent over her.

"Susanna," she said, kindly, 'a sensible woman shall go at once to your Isa. And now compose yourself; I have a quiet word to say to you when I come back.'

"God knows what that may mean!" I thought, looking at the weeping girl. 'What does she mean to say quietly to her?' I stroked Susanna's hair gently. 'Do not cry, *ma petite*,' I said, consolingly. 'Everything is in God's hand. He guides and rules every human life according to his will; trust him, he will bring it right!' I do not know if Susanna understood me; a fresh burst of tears was the reply, and all inconsolable sounded this bitter sobbing.

"Anna Maria came back and sat down opposite Susanna. 'Will you listen to me rationally?' she said, somewhat severely.

"Susanna started up and gave her a defiant look. 'I am listening,' she said.

"Just then I was called away; the pastor's sister, an early friend of mine, had come to pay me a visit. I went, not without anxiously regarding the two girls. What in the world could Anna Maria have in view?"

"After two mortal hours Mademoiselle Grüne took her leave; she no doubt found me more distraught than is usually permissible; even talking over a wedding festivity which we had attended together in the remote period of our youth, at which Minna Grüne came very near becoming engaged, and which ended in a fire, failed to interest me as usual. When I came downstairs again I found Anna Maria over her housekeeping books; Susanna was not to be seen.

"Anna Maria," I asked, more hastily than is my wont, 'what have you been talking about with Susanna?'

"I wanted to talk with her about her future," she replied, 'but——'

"About her future?" I repeated, faintly.

"Yes, indeed, aunt, for things cannot go on in this way any longer. Susanna suffers from a dreadful disease—she has *ennui*. In my opinion this doing nothing is enough to make the most healthy people ill.'

"And what did she say, Anna Maria?'

"She? she ran away as soon as she heard the one word future! Susanna is a naughty child, and it is high time for Klaus to come back and put her in a pension; she is worse than ever since he went away.'

"I had to smile, and yet tears came suddenly into my eyes, and yielding to an involuntary impulse,

I asked: 'Anna Maria, do you really believe that Klaus will send Susanna away.'

"She turned about and gave me a startled look. 'Can you doubt it? He has no doubt gone away for that express purpose. Do you not suppose the justice could have despatched that business?'

"The next day Susanna, pale and low-spirited, drove to Dambitz, to take care of her Isa. She had cried all night long, did not get up in the morning, and kept on crying in her bed, till Anna Maria ordered a carriage for her.

"Isa was said to be suffering from a stitch in the back, quite free from danger, so there was no contagion to be feared. Susanna packed up a host of things, as if she were going to a watering-place. Without ado, Anna Maria took flowers, ribbons, laces, and white dresses out of the trunk, and put in half a dozen strong aprons. 'You will have more use for these,' she explained, gently. I was entirely opposed to this journey; in consideration of my private instructions, I could not approve of it, yet it seemed right to Anna Maria. 'I cannot bear the old woman either,' she said; 'but if she is ill and wants Susanna, she must go.'

"How could a man fall in love with this childish little creature?' I thought, as she leaned back in the carriage with a happy smile of satisfaction; the black crape veil floated about her small face, her little feet were propped against the back seat, and she gracefully waved her hand to me again. Oh! mademoiselle had the manners of a duchess, mademoiselle will already act as Frau von Hegewitz. If Anna Maria dreamed of that!

"A letter from Klaus came that evening. My heart began to beat, as it always did when one came, for each time I thought Klaus would write his sister of his love. I watched Anna Maria closely as she read; she frowned and shook her head.

"Klaus has had to take possession of the property, in order not to lose everything,' she said. 'He writes that he had expected to be back in a week, but now, alas! he is obliged to stay longer. "The harvest festival should be kept just as if I were there," she read on. "You can say a few words to the people in my place. As may easily be imagined, I have my hands full, and there are not a few disagreeable things: in the midst of the harvesting and nothing in order; the people a lazy, Polish element; the bailiff a knave whom I sent off the first day! The situation of the manor is wonderful, as well as the building itself and the great, shady garden; however, I shall be glad when I am free from the business at last. The high hills not far away depress me; they shut out the view too much; how far do you suppose I can see from my window? Just through the space between the two barns, over the wall of the court-yard. As soon as I have things in some degree of order here I shall have Beling (the bailiff) come and take the management in my place. I hope you are all getting on well. Is not Aunt Rosamond going to write me at all? Is Susanna well, perfectly well? You did not mention her in your last letter."

"Aha!" thought I, as Anna Maria, reflecting, let the letter drop, 'the longing! Oh, you foolish Klaus! And if I were to write him now, "Susanna is in Dambitz," what would he say?'

"I should like to drive over to-morrow to look after Susanna,' said I, turning to Anna Maria, who was drawing in and out the colored wools on the table-cover she was embroidering for Klaus.

"I will wager, aunt, she will be back again to-morrow; do you think she will hold out long there in that mean room, with the uncomfortable bed on that neck-breaking sofa? Just wait; she will be here again before we know it.'

"The next day Anna Maria was sitting with her table-cover beside my bed; I had wrapped a rabbit-skin about my arms and shoulders, for the evil rheumatism. Such an attack sometimes chained me to my bed for a week or more, and this time I lay there feeling like a veritable culprit. I kept thinking of Susanna, and this tormented me into a state of nervousness. And there sat Anna Maria beside me, in her calm way taking one stitch after another. I followed her large yet beautifully formed hand, and the trefoil which grew under it; the lions supporting a shield were already finished, and the last leaf would be done to-day. 'Fear thy God, kill thine enemy, trust no friend,' was the strange motto of our family. It doubtless originated in those times when races lived in perpetual feud with one another, each ever ready for combat on the fortress of his fathers.

"Anna Maria!' I began, at length.

"She started up out of a deep revery. 'Shall I read the paper to you?' she asked.

"No, thank you, *mon ange*; but tell me, do you know if Susanna—is she——'

"She is still with her Isa, aunt,' replied Anna Maria. 'I packed up a little basket of food for her this morning. Marieken carried it, and——'

"Well, Anna Maria?'

"Oh, well, she sits by the old woman's bedside, Marieken tells me, and round about her lie laces and ribbons and flowers; Susanna is making a new hat or two for herself. Marieken says she had no eyes for my appetizing basket; with cheeks as red as roses, she was all absorbed in her finery.'

"Incorrigible!' I murmured; 'Anna Maria, why have you let her stay away? Is the old woman really so ill?' I added, out of humor.

"Well, it did not seem to me so alarming from Marieken's account. If you were not a patient

yourself, aunt, I would have driven over.'

'I lay back with a sigh. Of course, I had to be ill just now. Out of doors a cold wind was blowing over the bare fields; we should have an early autumn. My good times were over, and now were coming again the days of stove-heat and confinement to the house, of rabbit-skins and herb-bags.

'I shall invite no one to the harvest festival this year, aunt,' began Anna Maria, after a pause. 'What would all the people do here without Klaus? It will give me no pleasure without him; on the contrary, it is painful to me.'

'But Klaus wishes——'

'Ah, aunt, but he will be content *au fond*. I know him!' said the girl, with a smile.

Just then Brockelmann announced Baron Stürmer. Like a flash of fire a sudden blush mounted to Anna Maria's face, the fingers which held the needle trembled, and her voice was unsteady.

'Excuse me to the baron. I am prevented, unfortunately; aunt is ill.'

'Anna Maria had hitherto seen him only in the presence of others; she feared being alone with him; was that indifference?

'Ask the baron to come up here,' said I with sudden resolution. 'I am certainly old enough to receive him in bed,' I added to Anna Maria.

'Come, *mon cher* Edwin, if you are not afraid to see a sick old woman in bed,' I called to him, as he was now entering, and pointed to a chair by the head of my bed, opposite Anna Maria. Edwin Stürmer was the most versatile man I ever saw, and at once master of a situation. And so he was soon sitting by me, chatting pleasantly. The twilight deepened, and Anna Maria let her hands rest. She listened to us as we spoke of old times; I saw how her eyes were fixed on his face, how now and then a slight flush spread over it. She spoke little, and all at once rose and left the room.

'Anna Maria is quiet, and looks badly,' I remarked; 'the work is too much for her.'

'He did not answer at once; then he said: 'She was always so still and cold, Aunt Rosamond.'

'No, no, Stürmer, she is in trouble, she is worried about Klaus.'

'Of all things in the world, that is a needless anxiety,' he returned, laughing. And evidently trying to get away from the subject, he asked: 'But where is Fräulein Mattoni?'

'Nearer to you than you think, Edwin.'

'With the old witch, her duenna?' he asked, with that indifference which involuntarily suggests the opposite quality.

'Yes; the old woman is ill and Susanna is taking care of her. *Eh bien*, you will come, of course, to our harvest festival? Anna Maria intends to celebrate it very quietly, quite *entre nous*; but you must come, Edwin.'

'What?' he asked, absently.

'For pity's sake, tell me where your thoughts are hiding?' I scolded, irritably.

'He laughed, and kissed my hand. 'Pardon, Fräulein Rosamond, I was still thinking about Klaus.'

'And the result, Edwin?'

'Is that I have come to none; he is really incomprehensible to me.'

'Why?'

'Do allow me *not* to say it,' he replied; 'but I *envy* him.'

'May I not also know what?'

'Yes,' he said, rising, 'his cool temperament. How much needless agitation, how many sleepless nights one to whom such calmness has been given is spared!'

'But Klaus is not cold; I do not know what you mean,' said I, reproachfully; 'as little cold as Anna Maria, and—as you.'

'He sat down again, and without regarding my objection, continued: 'For Heaven's sake, do tell me where they got this even temperament, this indifference, this coolness. The father was an eccentric, energetic man, warmly sensitive, even to passionateness—perhaps the mother was so?'

'I assure you, Edwin,' I repeated, almost hurt, 'you know them both very little yet when you speak thus. They are neither indifferent nor cold-hearted; but both have, alas! inherited too much of the father's warm feelings and eccentricity. Believe me,' I added with a sigh. I was thinking of the scene in the Dambitz forge.

'Edwin Stürmer laughed. 'Well, well,' he said, 'I am far from reproaching Klaus with it; it is only incomprehensible to me. I suppose I seem odd to you?'

'Oh, Stürmer, such a hot-head as you Klaus has never been, certainly, and I know that you owe to your vivacity my brother's love, which preferred you before his own son. You may be convinced

that just that passionate, changeable nature of my brother has made the children so earnest, so deliberate.'

"Klaus is the best, the noblest of men; he is my friend!" cried Stürmer, with warmth. 'Do I say, then, that I reproach him? But he has not learned to know life; he has never come from mere fidelity to duty and deliberation, to call his a moment of inspiration which is able to carry one quite out of himself; he has ever kept to the golden mean, blameless; he has always done enough, but not too much. In short—in short, such men are model men. But what life means, Aunt Rosamond, that he does not know, and only *he* could trust himself—'

"He broke off suddenly. 'I should like to know how I came to deliver such a lecture to you,' he added, jokingly.

"It was almost dark in the room now. I could scarcely distinguish Stürmer's profile. He twisted his beard rapidly and nervously.

"You may say what you will, Stürmer, but cold my two children are not,' I declared, and just at that moment Anna Maria entered.

"A light will be brought directly,' she said, cheerfully, stepping over to her chair. 'Pardon me, baron, for staying away so long; I was kept by domestic duties, which occupy me more closely than when Klaus is at home.'

"He made no reply; I only saw him bow. Anna Maria could have said nothing more pedantic, I thought. Conversation would not flow, the light did not come. Anna Maria was just on the point of ringing for it when the bell in the church-tower began to ring in quick, broken strokes.

"Fire!' cried Anna Maria, in alarm, hurrying to the window. Already there was a commotion in the court-yard; Stürmer had also thrown open a window. 'Where is the fire?' he called down.

"With beating heart I sat upright in bed. 'Where?' called Anna Maria, 'where is the fire, people?' Then the words were lost in the tumult.

"In Dambitz,' at last came up the reply, amid all the tramping of horses and noise of the people. '*Sacre Dieu!*' murmured Stürmer, overturning a chair in the darkness; 'Dambitz!'

"I will light a candle,' said Anna Maria, calmly; 'give me a moment and I will go with you.' Below, the fire-engine was just rattling across the court. The candles flared up under Anna Maria's hand.

"Send me a wrap, aunt, please; I wish to go over on Susanna's account; do not worry. I am ready, if you will take me with you in your carriage,' she added to Stürmer; and again a red glow spread over her face.

"The carriage is ready, if you please, Fräulein.' He was already hurrying out of the room.

"For God's sake, Anna Maria, bring back Susanna to me!' I cried. And then I lay alone for hours. Brockelmann came up once: 'The whole sky is red,' she informed me; 'it must be a big fire.' The little bell rang unremittingly its monotonous alarm, and before my eyes stood the burning houses, and I fancied Anna Maria beside Stürmer in the carriage, driving rapidly along the lonely highway, and Susanna in danger. And my thoughts flew to Klaus: 'Hold your hands over this girl. I will thank you for it all my life!' 'My God, protect her!' I prayed in my anxiety.

"And hour after hour passed, the bell became silent, after long pauses, and Anna Maria did not come. Brockelmann said the fire-light had disappeared. I heard the carriages and people returning home; then the court was quiet. And then Brockelmann came in again: 'It broke out in the second house from the forge, the lads say, and the forge is half-burned, too.' Oh, Heaven, and Anna Maria does not come!

"The old woman sat down by my bed. 'She does not think of herself,' she complained; 'she will run into the burning house if it is possible. Ah, if the master were only here!' Good Brockelmann, she knew better than Stürmer how to judge Anna Maria.

"Fräulein,' she whispered, already following another train of thought, 'do you know—but you must not take it amiss—the baron comes so often now, and as I saw them both drive out of the yard to-day, then—I keep thinking she will marry him yet.'

"Oh, how can you talk such nonsense?" said I, chiding these words in vexation.

"Yet, I say, the next thing will be a wedding in the house!' declared the old woman. 'The great myrtle down-stairs is full of buds, and I also found a bridal rose in the garden. And last New Year's eve I listened at the door and heard the young master just saying: "Invite to the wedding!" And that will all come true. And then—but you must not act as if you knew it—I have had Anna Maria in my arms from the day she was born, and know her as no one else does, and I know how she cried over the note that the baron wrote her at the time when he went far away into the world, and, Fräulein, she always has it with her! Oh, I see so much that I am not intended to see; but she cannot dissemble, Anna Maria.'

"Ah! what the old woman was saying was of no importance to me; only news of Susanna; everything else later! 'My God, Susanna,' I murmured, 'if anything has happened to her!' And unable to stay quietly in bed any longer, I bade Brockelmann help me dress. At last a carriage rolled in at the gate and stopped before the house. I sat up in bed, and kept my eyes on the door. Susanna *must* come! Brockelmann had hurried down-stairs; I heard Anna Maria's voice on the

stairs, and her footsteps, and then she came in.

"For God's sake, where is Susanna?' I cried to her.

"With her old nurse, who has been made really ill from fright,' she said quietly, and sank exhausted into the chair by my bed.

"But, Anna Maria,' I wailed, 'the forge is burned down!'

"They are at the castle,' she replied, gently. 'Stürmer has given a shelter to all who were burned out.'

"In the castle?' At the first moment the thought was quieting to me, but then my heart grew heavy. 'Oh, but that is impossible! How could you let Susanna accept the hospitality of an unmarried man? It is wrong of you; you are usually so observant of forms. You *ought* to have brought her with you, and the old woman too!' I had spoken impetuously, in my anxiety. Anna Maria gave me a strange look.

"Isa is so ill she was in no condition to make the journey hither,' she replied. 'But Susanna lies across her bed with torn hair and face bathed with tears; she is nearer to her than all of us, and at such a moment, aunt, one does not think of—etiquette.' I first noticed now how pale and exhausted Anna Maria looked. Her fair hair had fallen down, and one golden tress falling over the white forehead lay on her plain dark-green dress; her eyes were cast down and her lips quivered slightly.

"Poor child!' I cried, seizing her hands. 'It has been too much, and here am I reproving you!'

"She let her hand remain in mine, but did not look up. 'I am quite well,' she replied; 'but it is painful—to behold human misery and not be able to help. It was fearful, aunt! And it has cost one human life—nearly two.' Her voice was strangely lifeless as she said this. 'An old man,' she continued, 'in the act of saving his cow from the burning stable, was buried beneath the falling building. Stürmer carried out his grand-daughter, who was trying to help him, unhurt—but it was at the very last moment—a falling beam injured his arm.'

"She had spoken in snatches, as if it were hard for her to breathe. And now the peculiar sobbing sound came from her breast; I knew that so well, for even as a child she had thus suppressed a burst of tears. I grasped her hands more firmly; she was feverishly hot, and her bosom heaved violently.

"The splendid, warm-hearted man! Just the same to-day as he ever was!' said I, gently. 'God be praised for having protected him!'

"Then we sat silent for a long time. The candles in front of the mirror had burned low, and flickering they struggled for existence; and the clock on the console ticked restlessly. I longed to beg the girl beside me: 'Anna Maria, confide in me; it is not yet too late! See, I know now that you love Stürmer—since to-day I am sure of it. Anna Maria, it is not yet too late!' But how could I do it? She had never given me the slightest right, never allowed me to share in what moved her heart. Oh, that she would come of her own accord, then, and speak, that she might know how much easier it is for two to bear a burden.

"I pressed her hand, beseechingly. 'Anna Maria, my dear child!' I whispered. Then she roused herself as out of a confused dream, and pushed the hair from her forehead.

"Susanna?' she asked; 'Susanna got off with a fright. I led her over to the castle myself, and Stürmer's old servant carried Isa; they are safe. As soon as the old woman can be moved I shall have her brought here, of course; to-day it was impossible. The excitement might be bad for Susanna, too, for such a passionate outburst of grief I never dreamed of. She loves the old creature more than I ever mistrusted, and her cry: "Isa, Isa, if you die I have no one else in the world!" was repeated till she broke down from exhaustion.'

"I listened as if stunned. 'Anna Maria,' I said, 'I must go over to-morrow.'

"She nodded. 'If it is possible—for I should be glad to avoid it.'

"It must be possible, Anna Maria. Go and rest, we are both tired; sleep well.'

"Wall, there I lay, and no sleep came to my eyes. Klaus and Susanna, Anna Maria and Stürmer, revolved in wildest confusion in my brain. I started up out of my dozing, for I thought I heard Susanna's voice: 'Isa, Isa, if you die I have no one else in the world!' And I dreamed that I cried in anger to her: 'Ungrateful one, have you not more than a thousand others—have you not the heart of the best and truest of men?' And I awoke again with a cry, for I had seen Stürmer hurry into the burning house, and seen it fall on him; and Anna Maria stood by, pale and calm, with disordered locks of fair hair over her white forehead; her eyes looked fixedly and gloomily on that ruin, but she could neither weep nor speak."

CHAPTER XII.

"It was a fearful night! I was almost astonished to see the bright sunshine streaming in my

window, and the blue sky, the next morning. Brockelmann helped me dress, for my shoulder was still painful.

"Some trouble oppressed the old woman; it was always to be observed that when anything weighed on her heart she used to smooth her hands over the hem of her apron, and therewith take aim at the person on whom she had designs. For a little while I watched it to-day, but when, after tying my shoes, she remained sitting on the deal floor, stroking her dazzlingly white apron, and seeking for a way to begin her speech, evidently a difficulty to her, I said: 'Well, speak out, Brockelmann; what is it?'

"But instead of an answer she threw her apron over her face and began to weep bitterly.

"Do write, gracious Fräulein, for the master to come back soon, or things will not go right in my life-time with Anna Maria,' she sobbed. 'It eats into my heart like a worm that he went away without a good-by. She says nothing, but, Fräulein, I have known her ever since she was born; I know her as well as I do myself. She stays for hours in the master's room, and when she comes out her eyes are red with weeping, and then it is always: "Brockelmann, the master would certainly do this so, and wish that so," and "When the master is here," or "When the master comes," is the third word with her. When Christian brings the mail she runs out into the court to meet him, and the first time the master wrote I was just going through the room, as she read the letter. She did not see me, but I saw how the letter trembled in her hands, and then she said to herself: "He is different from what he used to be; it is past!" And then she got up and went into the garden, and I looked after her and watched her as I used to when she was yet a wild thing with long braids. And then she walked up and down by the spot where her mother lies buried, up and down, up and down, oh! certainly for an hour. It was nothing to her that it rained, and that the wind blew her half to pieces. At last I went out there and asked her something about the housekeeping; I could not see it any longer. Then she came in with me. But last night, when she came back from the fire, when I had brought her a glass of mulled wine, she looked so wretched. When I knew she was in her own room I took it to her—I did not wish to disturb her here. But listen, Fräulein Rosamond, when I went in there Anna Maria had just been crying, crying as if her heart would break. She did not see me; she had laid her head on the table, and on Herr Klaus's picture, and her whole body shook and trembled. Then I closed the door again softly, for, believe me, it would have been dreadful to her to have had any one see that she was crying. Indeed, she does not like it if anybody cries aloud. But to-day I could not rest. Only write, Fräulein; when the master is here all will be well again!'

"Ah, good old Brockelmann, if that would settle it! Yes, Klaus would come, but it would never be again as it used to be, never again!"

"The old woman took my silence for acquiescence. 'And, Fräulein,' she continued, drying her eyes, 'I know perfectly well since when things have been different. If I had had the power I would have said to Christian at the time when the coach came driving into the yard with the theatrical people: "Turn around, for Heaven's sake, Christian; these are birds which are not suited to this nest!" But, good heavens, some of us are silent, and see and hear! The master is so kind-hearted, Fräulein, so kind-hearted; God grant that it may remain kind-heartedness! I could have fretted myself to death when it was rumored in the servants' hall, and in the village, that the Ma'm'selle who had snowed down was not unpleasing to the master. In Rieke, it has gone to a blockhead; she was not bad, but what is the use—the talk is once out—if Fräulein Anna Maria only doesn't hear of it, although it is nothing but lies,' she continued, after a short pause, and looked at me confidently, 'for the master could have the fairest and best any day, and doesn't need to wait upon such a vagabond thing, yet it would make the Fräulein ill if she were to hear of it.'

"So the servants are already talking about it,' said I softly, when the old woman had gone. 'And they are not far from the truth! Brockelmann, too, only sings so loud because she has fears, and she wanted to know what I thought of it. But Anna Maria will not believe, Anna Maria has other troubles.'

"As I went down to get into the carriage which was to carry me to Dambitz, Anna Maria was just coming out of Klaus's room. She was quiet and friendly as usual; there was no sign of yesterday's tumult. She asked how I had slept, and said she had just come in from the fields. 'The harvest is a blessing of God this year,' she added; 'look at the crops as you drive past the rye-fields. How pleased Klaus will be!' And as I was sitting in the carriage, she put a little parcel into my hand: 'Give that to Stürmer for the burned-out people, will you, please? Klaus will approve.' She was blushing crimson. 'It is out of the milk-fund; you know that is my own!'

"Touched, I nodded to her, and then the carriage rolled away with me, in the misty autumn morning. What a refreshing odor came from the pine-forests; a golden mist hung over the distant heath, and the sky seemed higher and bluer than I had seen it for a long time. And yet it seemed as if I were breathing the heavy air before a thunder-storm the nearer I came to Dambitz and the shaded manor-house. We drove past the burned houses; the charred beams and timbers were still smoking, and thin columns of smoke circled up from the ruins; a loathsome odor lay about the unfortunate spot, but human hands were already at work again. The blacksmith's shop was half demolished, the gabled wall was warped by the heat of the fire, and the blacksmith's young wife was bravely rummaging among her household goods, which had been thrown, *nolens volens*, into the street, a promiscuous heap of beds, clothing, and furniture. A little woman was sitting on a chest, weeping bitterly; it was her husband who had met with the fatal accident last night, the coachman told me. A young girl of perhaps sixteen was hunting about the half-burned and partially wet rubbish; her eyes were swollen with weeping.

"'You poor people,' thought I; 'no one can give you back what has been taken from you, but we will help to replace the earthly property.' And I looked at the small but heavy roll in my hand; it was a not insignificant sum in gold. Well for him who can give, and gives gladly and lovingly!

"We now drove along by the park wall; the great gate of skilfully wrought iron stood open; the luxuriant foliage of the beautiful park here parted, and let the eye roam over velvety green lawns and broad flower-beds to the white, castle-like buildings. Awnings protected the terrace from the sun's rays, and a black and white flag waved gayly in the morning wind. A delicious freshness lay over the garden; not a yellow leaf was yet to be seen on the broad gravel-walk; everywhere most painstaking neatness.

"I called to the coachman to stop, and had myself lifted out of the carriage, so as to walk through the park. I do not know myself how the idea came into my head. How long it was since I had been here! I was then still a girl; my sister-in-law was by my side, and Klaus and Edwin, wild lads, rushing about us. I felt very strangely; there was still the little bridge of tree-trunks, the ingeniously planned moat, which always used to be dry; to-day water was splashing in it. The trees had grown taller, the shrubbery more luxuriant, and a marble Diana stood out against the green of the taxus-hedge. Stürmer's taste for the beautiful struck me at every step. At home no one thought of marble statues and English turf; at home the wish had never yet been spoken to see such jets of crystal water as those shooting up before the group of fine old elms; there was still the same old garden with its gnarled oaks, its primitive arbors, its flower-sprinkled grass-plots; but it was pleasant and home-like, as it is to-day.

"I followed a shady path which I knew would bring me to the side of the house, but all at once I stopped short. I could not be deceived; that was Susanna's ringing laugh, floating like the note of a nightingale through the shrubbery. Susanna in the garden and Susanna laughing? I walked on and went up on a little knoll surrounded by old lindens; in the middle was a Flora on a stone pedestal; monthly roses were blooming in the flower-beds, mingling their fragrance with that of the mignonette. At one side was a group of pretty garden furniture, and in one of the seats was Susanna, leaning back and looking with a smile of delight at the spray of roses which Stürmer had just offered her.

"He stood in front of her, his arm still in a sling, and looked down at her. She had evidently made her toilet with the greatest care; the time at Isa's sick-bed had not passed unused, it seemed. She still wore a black dress, but her white neck gleamed beneath a quantity of delicate black lace, and filmy lace also fell over her arms; the fichu knotted below her bosom was held together by a pale rose, and there was also a rose in her hair; Susanna Mattoni looked charming in her half-Spanish costume. And yet if, with disorderly hair and careless toilet, and, instead of the lace, one of Anna Maria's aprons, I had found her at Isa's bed, could I have detected in her face a single sign of the fearful night before, I would have thrown my arms about the child and said: 'Come, Susanna, my little Susanna, your refuge is at Bütze.' But now? But thus?

"My heart seemed almost paralyzed. In another moment I was standing by Susanna, and was able to say pleasantly that I had come to take her home.

"Stürmer drew my hand to his lips, much pleased, 'Ah! my dearest, best Aunt Rosamond, again at Dambitz at last,' he cried. Susanna stood as if petrified by my unexpected appearance. 'Well, my child,' I said to her, as Stürmer, after pushing up a chair for me, went into the castle; 'how is your Isa? She is quite well again, is she?'

"Susanna shook her head. 'No,' she replied, 'Isa is still very weak.'

"'Who takes care of her then?' I asked, sharply.

"'Herr von Stürmer has engaged a woman to nurse her,' she informed me, 'who probably understands it better than I.'

"'And you were on the point of returning to Bütze, were you not?' I asked, severely.

"Susanna bent down her crimson face, and uttered a low 'Yes!' She had understood me.

"'Allons donc, my child, we will not delay.' I rose and went forward; slowly she followed me, with a decided expression of ill-humor. At the front steps of the castle we met Stürmer, a look of happy surprise still on his face.

"'Oh, dear Aunt Rosamond, you will breakfast with me!' he begged, giving me his well arm to escort me up the steps. 'Such a rare occasion!' And he gave me a look so winning, so truly delighted that it would have been more than uncivil to refuse. And the personality of my old favorite exercised such a charm over me that, smiling, I let myself be dragged away.

"Susanna flew past us up the steps; her lace-trimmed skirts stood out as she ran, fluttering about her light feet; the rose fell out of her hair and dropped in front of Stürmer. He picked it up, and held it absently in his hand. Susanna disappeared behind the glass door of the vestibule; Stürmer's eyes, which had followed her, now looked at me again, and our eyes met and remained for a moment fixed on each other, as if each would read the other's thoughts. Then he silently led me through the rooms of his house.

"How often had I been here before! I had always liked to think of the comfortable great rooms, which, with their oak wainscoting and huge tiled stoves projecting far out from the walls,

presented such an attractive appearance to the half-frozen guests who had come in sleighs from Bütze. It had always been a dream of mine to see Anna Maria ruling here some day, but the picture was erased from my mind when I entered the first room.

"Where were they, the comfortable rooms, the dark oak wainscoting, the old tiled stoves? Gilding and colored mosaics shone, with a foreign air, on the walls; odd draperies concealed doors and windows; low, dark-red couches in place of the sofas; fragile little bronze tables, and vases; everywhere mirrors reaching to the floor; groups of exotic flowers in the corners; a Smyrna rug on the floor, in which the foot sank deep. Astonished, I stood still on the threshold.

"*Mon Dieu*, Edwin, have you fallen among the Turks?"

"It is my furnishing from Stamboul, that I brought home with me," he replied, simply. "But, alas! I could not charm hither the view. Imagine that wall gone, Fräulein Rosamond, and in its place slender marble pillars, forming a covered walk, and then imagine yourself looking out between them on the blue sea; see the sweet pines, swaying in the fresh sea-breeze; yonder a cypress-wood, and on the waving billows a hundred white sails; and imagine a child of that South, slender as a gazelle, leaning on the balustrade, a pair of sparkling dark eyes shining through a white veil—then you have what I saw daily in those beautiful days."

"How did it happen? In the midst of this imaginary picture which he had just drawn for me I saw Anna Maria standing, in her dark dress, her basket of keys on her arm, and saw her great clear eyes wander in astonishment over this splendor. I smiled involuntarily; I could never imagine Anna Maria resting, in sweet indolence, on those cushions. I had to laugh at this idea, but it was a bitter laugh, and pained me.

"I followed him through several rooms; everywhere luxury, foreign furnishings; but at least the chairs were sensible. Everywhere a perfume of roses, costly rugs, a profusion of foreign draperies. In a one-windowed room was a little table spread for three persons, shining with glass and silver. Edwin escorted me to the seat of honor. 'Your little protégée will appear directly,' he said gayly. And kissing my hand, he assured me again how happy he was to have me here at last. 'I really do not know why you have not visited my solitary abode long before,' he said, jokingly.

"Why have you never told me, Edwin, that you have so many treasures from the 'Thousand and One Nights' here?" I returned.

"I do not like to seem boastful," he said, offering me a mayonnaise, which I declined, taking some cold fowl. 'My acquaintances have looked at the things *en passant*, and Klaus has been here often. I really supposed you were not interested in such things at Bütze.'

"Indeed, Klaus had told us nothing about all this; at the most had mentioned the costly furnishings and various rare articles from foreign countries; he had himself no fancy for curiosities of that sort. Just then Edwin Stürmer rose. I thought I saw a faint smile on his lips, which vexed me, I know not why. But it vanished again at once, and gave way to a different expression. He opened the door and let Susanna in; he had probably heard her step. She sat down opposite him at the richly appointed table; above her dark head waved the fan-shaped leaf of a great palm, and white blossoms crowded against the back of her chair; from a group of southern plants in another corner rose the Venus de Milo in purest marble.

"And yet this sumptuous little room seemed but to form the frame for Susanna's own peculiar beauty. She looked sad; she ate nothing, and only now and then lifted her slender cup to moisten her lips; she did not speak, either, and when she raised her lashes tears shone in the dark eyes. Stürmer was also quieter; he spoke of the fire at last, and told me that work was to be begun on the new buildings to-morrow.

"I delivered Anna Maria's little parcel to him; he grew red for a moment, but did not thank me with the warmth I had expected.

"And now," said I, rising, after the dessert, 'I will relieve you of a burden; I will drive Isabella and Susanna home. In a bachelor's establishment such patients must be more than a disturbance. Susanna, have the kindness to conduct me to Isa.'

"Susanna's eyes sought Stürmer, but he turned away. 'I fear the old woman is not yet able to be moved,' he said, politely. 'Besides, she is no burden to me. She cannot, to be sure, find such a nurse as at Bütze; we have to depend upon hired persons.' He offered me his arm and led me along the hall to a door which Susanna, running ahead, opened, and then he withdrew.

"Isabella lay in a beautiful large room, in a fine bed with white hangings; evidently a guest chamber. It looked out on the garden, and great linden-trees shaded the windows from the sun's rays. That Isabella and Susanna both slept here was evident. There was a second bed, still unmade, the pillows tumbled over each other; and Susanna's whole stock of knick-knacks and trumpery lay, just as it had been brought hither from the burning house, with the dress, cooking utensils, and salve-boxes of the other, tumbled together on the floor. An old woman in a neat dress and white cap stood among them, trying to restore order. She was probably the nurse of whom Susanna had spoken.

"I went straight up to Isa's bed. 'Mademoiselle Pfannenschmidt, are you well enough to drive to Bütze with Susanna and me?' I asked.

"No!" she replied, looking at me very angrily.

"Well, then, come after us as soon as you are well enough," said I, coldly; 'are you ready, Susanna?'

"Susanna stays with *me!*" she declared, her voice trembling with anger.

"She is going with me," I replied, quietly; 'spare yourself all further pains. I shall not leave Susanna in the house of an unmarried man; according to *our* views, it is improper.'

"Under my charge?" shrieked Isabella, sitting up in bed with a jerk; 'under my charge?'

"I shrugged my shoulders in silence, and turned to Susanna; she stood motionless, and looked at Isa.

"Will you take away the girl a second time?" cried Isa, wringing her thin hands. 'You will not even let me have the child on my death-bed? Susanna, my darling, stay with me!'

"You are far from dying, my dear," said I, in a clear voice. 'Have the kindness to submit quietly to my arrangements; they are for Susanna's good.' She was silent, and looked on, as I put a shawl over Susanna's shoulders, pulled out her straw hat from under a heap of clothing, and put it on her head.

"I shall ask Baron Stürmer to have you driven to Bütze as soon as you are at all well enough," said I, turning to Isa again; 'till then I know you will be well cared for. Farewell.' Without further ado, I pushed Susanna toward the door, and heard once more the shrill cry: 'Susanna, Susanna, stay here!'

"She stopped, and looked at me as if she meant to defy me and run back.

"*En avant!* my child," said I, energetically; 'you have been away from Bütze too long already; I shall never forgive myself for having let you go at all.' She was pale, and I saw her clench her little hands; but she followed me.

"Stürmer was waiting for us at the carriage, which was standing before the front steps. He was holding the spray of roses which Susanna had left lying in the garden in the morning, and handed it to her with a bow which, in my opinion, was lower than was really necessary. I could not see the look he gave her with it, for his back was turned to me, but I saw a crimson glow mount to Susanna's cheeks and a bright look flash over to him from under her long lashes, which alarmed me. I scarcely heard Stürmer commission me with greetings for Anna Maria, adding that he would bring his thanks himself for the money. I drew down my veil and motioned to the coachman to start, and we rattled across the court and out on the highway. Susanna's head was turned around, and her eyes sped over the rows of windows of the stately house; two shining drops escaped from them and fell on the roses.

"How it came about I know not, but all at once I had seized her firmly by the arm. 'There before you lies Bütze, Susanna Mattoni!' I cried, sternly. She started, and gave a little cry; her face had grown pale, but her eyes sparkled in rebellion.

"You punish me like a naughty child!" she cried, her lips quivering. 'What wrong have I done? I followed you without opposition.'

"Ask your own heart, Susanna," I returned, gravely. She blushed, and then began to cry bitterly, incessantly.

"Isa! Isa!" she sobbed.

"Are you really crying about Isa?" I asked, gently now, and took her hand. 'I do not believe it, Susanna; you have some other grief. Only place confidence in me. *Could* I not help you, if you were frank?'

"She pushed away my hand. 'No, never, never!' she burst out, violently.

"But if I only knew what is the matter with you, Susanna, I might, with a word——"

"She stopped crying, and a defiant expression came over her face. 'I really want no sympathy,' she said, with a gesture of inimitable pride. 'There is nothing the matter with me; am I not to be allowed to cry when the person who watched over my childhood lies ill and alone in a strange house?'

"I was silent; I thought where I had found her to-day—not indeed at the sick-bed! And she understood my silence better than my words, for she dropped her eyes in embarrassment, and remained quiet during the whole drive. Ah, and it was such a sunny day! I followed a lark with my eyes, as it joyously and on trembling wings rose high in the blue sky, till it looked like a mere dot. A herd of deer ran away over the stubble as we drove quickly past; in the meadows over yonder the peasant's cows were feeding; far in the distance earth and sky blended in a blue haze; and now the roofs of Bütze emerged, peaceful and sunny, from the dark foliage of the oaks and elms—the dear old father-house! To me it seemed all at once as if I were coming home from a long journey from distant lands.

"Anna Maria was standing in the door-way, with apron and bunch of keys, as ever. She had a few beautiful white asters in her hand, and as Susanna came up the steps she said, drawing the girl to her: 'Thank God, Susanna, that you have returned unharmed; it was a bad night!' And she shyly put the flowers in the girl's little hand, beside the bunch of roses. One could see that she

was really pleased. 'How is Isa doing?' she asked, 'and how is Stürmer's arm?' She turned to me when she saw that Susanna had been crying, and on my reply that the condition of both was hopeful, she turned again to Susanna.

"Do not cry,' and a lovely expression beautified her serious young face; 'as soon as Isa can drive she is coming, and you will nurse each other quite well again.'

"Anna Maria seemed transformed; there was a tenderness in her actions, in her voice, which only the consciousness of a great happiness, an endless gratitude for something undeserved, can give. This tone cut my heart like a hundred knives.

"Susanna begged to be excused from the dinner-table, on the plea of a headache, and she did not come down to the garden-parlor during the afternoon; she was sulky. Anna Maria had taken up her sewing, and sat opposite me in the window-recess; it was quiet and cosy in the comfortable room, so peaceful—and yet the threatening storm was drawing near with great haste, to drive away our peace for a long time.

"I would like to know if Klaus would miss me if I—were suddenly no longer here; if I should die, for instance, aunt?" asked Anna Maria all at once, quite abruptly. Then she quickly laid her hand on my arm: 'No, I beg you,' said she, preventing my answer; 'I know of course he would miss me, miss me very much!'

"After we had sat silent together for a little while the coachman entered with the mail-bag, which he handed to Anna Maria. She felt in her pocket for the key, opened the bag, and drew out letters and newspapers.

"Ah, from Klaus!' she cried, in joyful surprise; 'and what a thick letter, aunt; just look!' She held up a large envelope. How strange,' she remarked then; 'it is for you, aunt.'

"I started as if I had been apprehended of a crime. 'Give it to me!' I begged, and broke the crested seal with trembling hand, for I suspected what it was. An enclosure for Anna Maria fell out of the letter addressed to me, and I stealthily threw my handkerchief over it—Anna Maria had opened a business letter—and began to read:

"DEAREST AUNT: When I went away a few weeks ago, I said to you at the last moment I should write to Anna Maria to tell her that I love Susanna Mattoni, that she is to be my wife. Meanwhile, I had given up the idea, and thought I would speak quietly with Anna Maria on my return. But now I am again of the opinion that a written confession is best. When I ask you now to give the enclosed letter to Anna Maria, it is chiefly for this reason, that she may have a support in you. If I were to write to her directly, she would keep the matter all to herself, she is so reserved; but in this way she must speak, and will be more easily reconciled to what cannot be altered. That it will be hard for her I cannot conceal from myself, after various scenes between us. But my decision stands irrevocably firm. I love Susanna, and God will help us over the near future, and not separate the hearts of brother and sister, who have so long clung to one another in true love. I shall come as soon as I have news; the longing takes hold of me more than I can tell.'

"I let the sheet drop, the letters danced before my eyes. How should I begin to make this news known to her?

"As I rose hastily, the letter fell at Anna Maria's feet. She raised her head and looked searchingly at me, and saw that I was making a great effort to compose myself.

"Aunt Rosamond!' she cried, stooping and picking up the letter, 'what is it? Bad news from Klaus? Please, speak!' She knelt by my chair, and her anxious eyes tried to read my face.

"No, no, my child!' I caught hold of the letter which she held in her hand.

"It is certainly to me!' she cried, quickly taking it back.

"All at once I became master of my trembling nerves. 'It is to you, Anna Maria,' I agreed, 'and contains——'

"I will see for myself, aunt,' she said, and there was a tone of infinite anxiety in her voice. She rose and sat down in one of the deep window-niches of the hall. I could not see her face from my seat; I heard only the rattling of the paper in the stillness, and my heart thumped as if it would burst. The anxious pause seemed to me an eternity; then a cry of pain sounded through the room. I sprang toward Anna Maria; her fair head lay on the window-seat, her face was buried in her hands, and an almost unearthly groaning was wrung from her breast.

"For God's sake, Anna Maria!' I cried, embracing her. 'Compose yourself, be calm; you do him injustice; he is not lying on his bier!' But she did not stir; she groaned as if suffering from severe physical pain.

"Anna Maria, my dear Anna Maria!' I cried, weeping.

"For that, ah, for that, all that I have suffered!' she cried out, and raised her pale face, transfixed with pain. She stretched up her arms, and wrung her clasped hands. 'My only brother!' she whispered, 'my only brother!' Then, springing up impetuously, she ran out.

"As if stunned, I remained behind; I had not expected this; for such an expression of pain I was not prepared.

"And the old house was still; my steps creaked on the cement floor of the corridor before Anna Maria's room, and a long, long time I stood there and listened for a sound, but it remained quiet behind the closed door. The autumn evening drew on, night closed in, solemn and clear shone the stars from the sky upon the earth beneath. 'What art thou, child of man, with thy small trouble? Look up to us and fold thy hands,' said they in their dumb language. And I clasped my hands. 'He who created the stars to give us light by night will also lighten this spot!' I whispered.

"Eleven o'clock struck as I knocked at Susanna's door. She did not answer. I went softly into the room; a candle on the mantel, just on the point of going out, threw its unsteady light on the girl. She was lying on one side, her face turned toward the room, a smile on the red lips; beside the bed Stürmer's spray of roses, carefully placed in water.

"It was a dismal morning that followed. Anna Maria remained in her room; she did not answer our knocks, and there was no movement within. Brockelmann's eyes were red with weeping; she shook her head, and went about the house on tip-toe, as if there were a dead person in it. I was in sheer despair, and limped from Anna Maria's door to my room, and back again. The bailiffs came and inquired for her, and went away astonished—she did not appear.

"About eight o'clock I went softly to Susanna's room. She had just risen, and was arranging her hair. The windows were opened wide; through the branches of the trees golden sunbeams slipped into the room and played over the young creature who, trifling and smiling and fresh as a rose, stood, in her white dressing-sack, before the mirror. She did not hear me enter, for she went on trilling a little song half aloud; clear as a bell the tones floated out on the clear morning air. Isa's death-bed was forgotten; ah! and something else, probably.

"I closed the door again cautiously; I was never so anxious before in my life.

"'Is Fräulein Anna Maria ill?' asked Susanna, as she found only two places set at dinner. She had come from the garden, and had a bunch of white asters at her bosom, and her eyes shone with delight.

"'I think so,' said I, softly, and folded my hands for the grace. Susanna showed a pitying face for a moment, and then began to chatter; she was in a most agreeable mood.

"The day wore on. Anna Maria remained invisible. Brockelmann was quite beside herself. 'She is crying, she is crying as if her heart would break,' she said, coming into my room before going to bed.

"'She is crying? That is good!' said I, relieved.

"'She has never cried so much in all her life before, whispered the old woman; 'something must have happened that cuts deep into her heart.'

"'I cannot confide it to you, Brockelmann,' I replied, 'but you will know it soon.' I was sorry for the old woman; she was trembling in every limb.

"'Oh, I can guess it already, Fräulein,' she said; 'it would surprise me above all things if it did not come from that quarter!' She pointed in the direction of Susanna's room. 'One woman's head can ruin a whole country!'

"The following day was a Sunday, and a Sunday stillness lay over the house and court; even more than ordinarily, for the house down-stairs was stiller than usual, as Anna Maria had not yet left her room.

"Sadly I got ready for church, and then went to Susanna's door to call for her. As I looked in I saw her still lying in bed, still sleeping, her limbs stretched out, like a tired kitten. On the whole, I was glad; I would rather go alone to-day, with my heavy heart.

"The little church was unusually full on this Sunday, especially of Dambitz people. A danger commonly encountered, a great misfortune, brought them hither. They wanted, too, to hear what the clergyman had to say about the calamity of the fire. So it happened that the little nave was full to the last seat; only the seats of the gentry, above, were empty.

"'What God does is well!' sang the congregation. I folded my hands over my book, and tears fell on them. I spoke no words, but more warmly I surely never prayed, for Klaus, for Anna Maria. God knows all the sad thoughts that came to me. I had already fought in vain against one of them the night before: 'What if Anna Maria were not to yield; if she were, perhaps, to go out from the ancestral home, in defiance, in order to live no longer with Susanna? Oh! it was possible, with her temperament, and then what would become of them both?'

"Just then the door of the gallery moved, creaking slightly, and there, on the threshold, stood—Anna Maria! Was it really she? Her face was pale, with deep bluish shadows under the eyes; and beside her, even paler, her great eyes directed toward me, as if seeking help, stood—Susanna! Anna Maria held her hand and led her to the chair in which the mistress of Bütze had always sat, and which, of late, had been Anna Maria's seat.

"The girl sank into it, a crimson glow now on her cheeks, and bent her head. Anna Maria sat behind her, and folded her hands. It had been done, then; she had yielded to her brother's will.

What she had suffered in that her face showed plainly.

"Anna Maria raised her head only once during the sermon, when Pastor Grüne, in speaking of the Dambitz fire, mentioned the man who had perished, and, in a few moving words, uttered a prayer of thanksgiving that God had protected him who had risked his own life to save another, almost lost. Then she cast a long look across at Stürmer's empty seat. Susanna, too, raised her lashes, but dropped them at once, shyly, as if she were doing something wrong.

"On the way home Anna Maria walked beside me with her usual firm step, Susanna's hand in hers. There was something solemn in her manner, and when we stood in the garden-parlor, the tall, fair girl drew Susanna to her.

"'Make him happy,' she bade her softly; 'a nobler, a better man does not exist. God has bestowed a very rich happiness upon you.' She kissed the girl on the forehead, and went down into the garden. But Susanna suddenly fell on my neck and broke out in convulsive sobs.

"'Why, Susanna, are you not happy?' I asked. No answer; she only clung more closely to me.

"'Have you thought that you have now a home and the heart of a noble man; that you are his bride-elect, loved beyond everything?'

"She gave a shiver, and stopped crying.

"'Come, Susanna,' I begged, kindly; 'you belong to us now; you have now a family home and I am now your aunt,' I added, jokingly. 'Stop crying. Come, let us go down to Anna Maria; you have not said a friendly word to her yet.'

"She threw her head back, and seemed to be deliberating for a moment; then she ran out. I heard her swiftly retreating steps in the corridor. 'I will seek Anna Maria, at least to learn what has passed,' I murmured, and turned at once to the garden. So it had come about. Klaus was betrothed; how often I had imagined it formerly. And to-day? A sort of film came over my eyes, and the grayest of gray seemed the world round about.

"Anna Maria was standing by the little pond, looking into the brown water; she gave me her hand, quietly and kindly.

"'My dear Anna Maria,' said I, 'God leads human hearts together.'

"She nodded mutely.

"'Shall you write Klaus?' I continued.

"'It is already done. I wrote on that night,' she replied.

"'It has not been easy for you, Anna Maria?'

"She raised her hand, defensively. 'I love Klaus very much,' she said, gently.

"'When did you speak with Susanna, Anna Maria; may I know?'

"'This morning,' she replied. 'I went to her, as Klaus wished. He wishes the marriage to be very soon, and will return just a little while before, so that Susanna may not need to seek another shelter beforehand. So she will pass her time of being engaged without her lover. He does not wish that the engagement should be made public, either; he does not intend to give notice of his marriage until after the ceremony is over.'

"She had spoken very fast, and was silent now, drawing long breaths.

"'And did he write you everything, Anna Maria, in that letter, day before yesterday?'

"'Everything, aunt.'

"'And Susanna?'

"'I do not know,' she replied; 'I did not look at her, and she did not speak. Perhaps happiness makes one dumb?' she added, questioningly. It sounded as if she meant: 'I do not know—I am sure I do not know—what happiness is.'

"'Tell me just one thing, dear, good child,' I begged, seizing her hands. 'Did the thought really never come to you that Klaus might have a feeling of affection for this beautiful young creature?'

"She was silent for awhile, and her breast heaved with suppressed sobs. 'No,' she said, 'I had never thought that he would stoop for a poison-flower—'

"An infinite bitterness, a deep woe, lay in these few words, and as if she had said too much, she whispered: 'He is my only brother!' And then, no longer able to control her emotion, she cried, throwing her hands over her face: 'And I cannot hold him back, I cannot keep him from a disappointment; I have no right to!' It sounded like a wild cry of pain. And a hot stream of tears gushed forth between her fingers.

"I stepped up to her to embrace her consolingly, but she hastily averted it. 'Let me alone; I did not mean to cry, I thought I was stronger.' And drawing out her handkerchief, she turned into the nearest shady path.

CHAPTER XIII.

"A few hours later a carriage drove into the court. I recognized Stürmer's livery, and from my chamber window saw Brockelmann help out the old actress, hardly with the haste of anticipation.

"There, we really ought to have just such a sort of mother-in-law in the house!" I whispered, and smiled bitterly; but tear after tear fell on my lilac cap-strings. Like misfortune itself, the old woman came up the steps. Ah! Klaus, Klaus, whither have you gone astray? Our whole family seemed to me unspeakably fallen in this moment, and I could do nothing in the unfortunate affair, but only try to raise Susanna to us, to keep her away from everything which might remind her of the folly, of the frivolity of the sphere from which she sprang; again and again to point out to her what a rich, fair lot had fallen to her; to make her comprehend that the wife of a Hegewitz must also be a pattern of dignity and noble womanhood. I should have much preferred to bundle Isabella Pfannenschmidt into the carriage again, to send her to some place miles away, and against my will I was going out of my door, when I heard her slow, shuffling step in the hall.

"Please, ma'm'selle, come into my room a minute before you go to Susanna," I said to her. Frankly confessed, I do not know myself why I did it; but I felt instinctively that I must speak with her first, before she learned the latest turn in Susanna's fate from her own lips.

"The small person came slowly over the threshold, looking at me distrustfully. She seemed to me infinitely wretched in her rumpled bonnet and threadbare silk cloak, her face yellower than ever, and sunken, and she was somewhat bent, as if still suffering pain. She sat down in the nearest chair, and looked at me with her sharp, sullen eyes. I stood before her and tried to speak, yet no word passed my lips. All the craft, all the low sentiments which flashed out of those small eyes toward me reminded me anew of the sort of atmosphere in which Susanna had grown up. I had been walking up and down the room with these thoughts; now I took a seat opposite the old woman, who had silently followed me with her eyes. I wanted to tell her that a great, great happiness had befallen Susanna, and found no words for it. It seemed as if I were choked.

"I would like to inform you," I began, hesitatingly, but I got no farther, for Anna Maria came in. 'Dear aunt,' said she, 'I have to speak with Isabella Pfannenschmidt a moment.' I drew a breath of relief, and went into the adjoining room.

"Then I heard Anna Maria's sonorous voice. She spoke of a great piece of good fortune that had come to Susanna, and said that she hoped Susanna would reward so much love, such infinite trust, with all her powers, in order to make the man happy who offered her a name, a home, and a heart.

"Tears came into my eyes again; there was something in Anna Maria's voice that pained me infinitely. I pictured to myself the proud maiden before the vagabond actress, to whom she was now speaking as to an equal. That which I had considered impossible now happened, out of love to her brother. Now I thought the old woman must break out in an ecstasy of joy; I shuddered already at the thought of the theatrical glorification in her darling's good fortune. Far from it; she spoke quietly and coolly. I could not understand her, but it sounded like a murmur of discontent.

"I do not comprehend you," Anna Maria said, now icily; 'if I have rightly understood my brother's letter, Susanna gave her assent on the evening when she fled to you. What? Is she, meanwhile, to have changed her mind?'

"Again a murmur; then I heard disconnected words between the old woman's sobs: 'Defence—true love—' and so forth. This homeless woman was as pretentious as a ruling princess making arrangements to give her daughter in marriage to a man of a lower class.

"Then I heard her leave the room. When I reëntered Anna Maria was standing at the window, her forehead pressed against the panes, her clenched hand rested on the window-sill, and her lips were tightly closed.

"Anna Maria," said I, 'this person must leave the house.'

"Klaus may decide that," she replied, gently; 'I have no longer any voice in this matter.'

"She is an arrogant thing!" I continued, in my wrath.

"Anna Maria turned. 'Ah, aunt,' said she, 'the old woman loves Susanna like a mother, and such a relative naturally asks, in respect to the most brilliant match: "Will it be for the child's happiness?" I ought not to have taken it amiss; it was unjust in me.'

"I pressed her hand softly. Anna Maria's noble sentiments sprang forth in her pain, like flowers after rain. God grant that she was right in her excuse!

"Half an hour afterward, Isabella Pfannenschmidt came in with Susanna, whose eyes were red with weeping, and hair dishevelled. Isabella led her to Anna Maria, and Susanna made a motion as if to take her hand, but her own fell to her side again, and so, for a moment, the two girls, so unlike, stood opposite each other. Anna Maria had turned pale, to her very lips; then she put her arm about Susanna's delicate shoulders, and drew her to herself. But Susanna slid to the floor, and, sobbing, embraced her knees; it seemed as if she wished to ask forgiveness for a heavy offence, but not a word passed her lips. She only looked up at Anna Maria, with an expression

which I shall never forget my life long, she seemed so true in those few moments. But before Anna Maria could stoop to raise the girl, Isabella had already pulled her up with the sharp, quick words: 'Susanna, be sensible!'

"Did the old woman consider prostration before the sister of the future husband too much devotion, or did she fear that thereby her darling was subordinating herself, once for all, to the sister's strict *régime*? I could not decide at the time; I did not know till later that this moment was a fearful crisis in Susanna's heart.

"The next three days passed quietly. Anna Maria had given Isabella a little room next Susanna's, had told her Klaus's plans for his wedding; and the old woman agreed to all the arrangements without a word of opposition, but without showing any joy either. The sewing for the trousseau was to be begun immediately after the harvest festival. Isabella had arranged a cushion for lace-making, and under her thin, skilful fingers grew filmy lace of the finest thread—'for the wedding toilet!' she said softly to me.

"Susanna's manner was quite altered; she unsociably avoided not only our company, but Isa's as well. Meanwhile the old woman seemed little concerned that her darling ran about half the day in the wood and garden, looked pale, and ate little or nothing, and now and then started up impetuously from her quiet, absorbed state, looking about with terrified eyes. 'That is the way with people in love,' she would say in excuse, with a peculiar smile, if I worried about Susanna's pale looks.

"In a few days there came a letter from Klaus for Susanna. I went up-stairs to give it to her. The first love-letter, a wonder in every girl's life! With beating heart it is opened, read in the most secret corner, kissed a thousand times, and kept forever. After long years there still rises from such a yellow, crumpled paper a faint odor of roses; a blush flits over the wrinkled cheeks, the dimmest eyes shine once more in recollection of the hour when they first fell on those lines. I was in quite a festive mood. What might not be enclosed in that blue envelope? All the love, all the trust, all the true, noble sentiment that could come only from such a heart as Klaus's! And all this fell like a golden rain into the lap of the little vagabond girl.

"I opened her door and looked in. Isabella sat, making lace, at the open window. Susanna lay on the sofa, her head buried in the cushions, apparently dreaming. The golden autumn sun streamed in through the trees, which were already becoming less shady, and played upon the inlaid floor, and Susanna's little kitten, with a blue ribbon around its neck, was jumping nimbly about after the bright, moving flecks.

"'Susanna, a letter from Klaus!' I cried, going to the sofa.

"She started up, and stared at me with frightened eyes, but she did not reach out for the letter in eager haste; her little hand made rather an averting gesture. Isabella, on the other hand, was standing beside me in an instant. 'A letter from the lover, Susanna!' she cried, cheerfully. 'Well, well, before I would be so affected! Quick, take and read it!' The words had a certain harsh sound, and Susanna seized the letter, took her straw hat from the nearest chair, and slipped out of the door; but it was not the joyous haste of anticipation, it looked rather like a speedy escape from Isa's sharp eyes.

"'A strange child, Fräulein Rosamond,' said the old woman, smiling and shaking her head. 'She is different from others, God bless her!' Then she began to rummage in Susanna's bureau, and brought out a little portfolio, from which she took a sheet of gilt-edged paper, with a bird-of-paradise with outstretched wings, sitting on a rose, on the upper left-hand corner, and arranged blotter, pen, and ink-stand. 'She will want to write immediately, when she has read the letter,' she explained, 'and a first love-letter like that is not easy, for one dips in the pen a hundred times, and still what one would like to say does not come.'

"I went away with the thought that Susanna would know well enough what to write. When the heart speaks, the pen is easily guided. Anna Maria had a great deal to do on this day; the animals were to be killed for the harvest festival. In the housekeeping rooms a restless activity reigned. Marieken was required to help, as on all such occasions, and Brockelmann had poured the flour to be used in cooking for the festival into a great tray in the baking-room. Anna Maria was in the storeroom; I found her sitting on a great sugar-firkin, with a slate in her hands; at her feet lay the scales with different weights, and Brockelmann was just bringing great bowls of raisins and sugar to be weighed for the cakes. Anna Maria wore, as usual, her great white housekeeping apron over her simple dress; her fair hair lay, smooth as a mirror, in luxuriant plaits on her beautifully shaped head; her sleeves, being pushed up a little, exposed her white arms; not a blemish on the whole appearance, from the lace-trimmed mull kerchief about her shoulders to the shapely foot in the little laced shoe. Would Susanna ever practise household duties thus?

"Never! That princess, that will-o'-the-wisp, with the curly hair and little, childish hands! But would Anna Maria remain here forever? Lost in thought, I stood for a moment at the door of the cool cellar. Anna Maria drew a line below her figures, laid the slate aside, and took up a letter. 'From Klaus,' she said, as she caught sight of me. 'I will read it by and by in my room.' On the table lay another letter, significantly smaller than the first, and already opened. Anna Maria noticed that my eyes rested on it a moment, questioningly.

"'Stürmer announces his coming to the harvest festival,' she explained, bending forward quickly and putting something on the table. When she raised her head again a slight flush still lay on her cheeks.

"You have accepted, Anna Maria?"

"Yes,' she said, quickly; 'I think it is only right to Klaus.'

"Klaus has written to Susanna too,' said I; 'did you know it?'

"She quivered, noticeably. 'No,' she replied, 'but that must be.'

"She has run, the Lord knows where, with her treasure,' I continued, smiling; 'she will probably answer it to-day, too.'

"Anna Maria nodded. 'We will go up,' she said; 'I would like to read, too.' We went through the busy kitchen and up the stairs. Anna Maria went at once to her room, and I to the upper story, to seek my own room. In the hall I stopped; the sound of Susanna's sobbing came to my ear, and the indignant voice of the old woman:

"For shame, Susanna!"

"No, I cannot, I will not!" sobbed the girl.

"They had forgotten to latch the door; I slipped nearer, but did not understand Isabella's hissing whisper, nevertheless.

"No, no!" cried Susanna again, but with little resistance. Fresh whispering, then a kiss. 'My little hare, my Susy, it may all be yet; now the thing is, to put a good face on the bad game!' in genuine Berlin speech. 'Now at it; you are brave!'

"An icy chill crept over me, even to my heart; I could not account for it to myself. But I was in no mood then to open the door, and went to my room with the consciousness that something wrong, something mysterious, was going on over there.

"An hour later Isabella came to me with a letter. 'Here it is,' said she proudly. 'Susanna is ready with her pen, she gets it from her father, and all that she says in this is beautiful. It is a shame that you haven't read it, Fräulein; how pleased Klaus will be.'

"Herr von Hegewitz!" I corrected, bluntly.

"Pardon!" returned Isabella, 'the name came so easily to my lips; I have heard it so often from Susanna that——'

"Very well!" I interrupted. 'Now, to return to the letter; it almost sounds as if you knew the contents. I hope Susanna does not conduct her correspondence under your direction!'

"Isabella Pfannenschmidt grew crimson. 'Heaven forbid!' she said, casting an angry glance at me. 'Susanna only spoke in a general way of what she was going to write, to tell him how grateful she is and how honored and how she loves him.'

"I do not wish to know anything about it,' I replied, coldly. 'I only expect of Susanna that she will not allow all that she has to say to-day to her lover—something which, it seems to me, should be as sacred as a prayer—to be desecrated by meddling eyes.'

"Isabella smiled in embarrassment; she evidently did not understand me. 'To whom can I give this letter,' she asked, 'to send it to the post-office?'

"Leave it here; I will see that it is put into the mail-bag,' I replied. When I went down later, I found Susanna sitting motionless on a bench in the garden. She seemed to be buried in a book; but her first letter was already with a messenger, on the way to the city.

"Anna Maria had grown calmer than I expected; it seemed as if some great force had carried her half over her sorrow about Klaus. She brought me his letter at supper time; it contained warm expressions of thanks, infinite love for his sister, permeated with rapture at the possession of Susanna. The world seemed to him more beautiful than ever; he pictured to himself such a wonderful future, with Susanna, with Anna Maria. Again and again came a fervent, 'But how shall I thank you, Anna Maria, for this, that you will love my little bride as a sister? I have always known that we think an infinite deal of each other, and it seems to me as if my love for you had become even greater! Anna Maria, how I wish for you such a happiness as mine!' He added that he should be as pleased as a child at the first lines from Susanna, that he had an endless longing to come home, but, unfortunately, business made it impossible; the fatigues of the journey he would think nothing of.

"Anna Maria silently folded the letter which I returned to her, and put it in her pocket, 'Have you seen Susanna since she received her letter?' she asked.

"No, Anna Maria.'

"How happy she must be, aunt!"

"I find Susanna very quiet for an engaged girl,' I replied.

"Yes,' she agreed. 'But I cannot describe to you how infinitely better she pleases me; it is quieting to me that she does not take the matter lightly.'"

CHAPTER XIV.

"The harvest festival was celebrated more quietly than usual this year, at least at the manor-house. Otherwise everything was as usual. Under the four great oaks in the yard, near the garden wall, the dancing-floor was laid; gay garlands, tied with bows of ribbon, hung on the old trees, the whole court-yard seemed to be made as clean as a room, and everywhere there was an odor of pine-boughs and fresh cake.

"The weather was splendid on this October day, a little hoar-frost, to be sure, on the roofs, but the sun soon melted that away. Early in the day everything was under way; the village children, in new red flannel dresses and dazzling white shirts, appeared first to receive their cakes from Brockelmann. In the servants' kitchen three maids were cutting a regular wash-kettle full of potato salad, and the odor of roast beef and veal rose seductively to the noses of the farm people and day-laborers just assembling in the court for the festal church-going.

"Anna Maria was standing in the hall waiting for me as I came down-stairs. 'Are you bringing Susanna with you?' she asked. At the same time steps were heard behind me; Isa came down, begging excuse for Susanna, who felt fatigued, and could not make up her mind to go to church.

"Anna Maria frowned. It was the custom in our family that not a single member should be absent to-day. 'Is it absolutely impossible?' she asked.

"'Yes!' declared Isabella, and Anna Maria and I went alone. The bells were ringing gayly, and the sun shone brightly in at the windows of the little church, upon the garlands of corn with their red and blue ribbons, on the altar, and upon the happy faces of the people. With festal gladness was sung the 'Now thank we all our God.' It had, indeed, been a blessed harvest year. And in earnest words the clergyman charged the people with heartfelt gratitude to God, who gave this year of blessing, gradually passing on to speak of the seed in the heart of man. 'Take care that there may be a blessed harvest here, too, when, by and by, it will be autumn with you; think of the heavenly Harvest Home; well for him who brings precious fruits, ripened in humility, planted in love!' He then counselled the men to labor, the women to gentleness in the home, and finally remembered in his prayer the absent master of the manor. Anna Maria's head was bent low; I saw how she joined with her whole heart in the prayer for her brother, how a great tear fell from her eye upon the leaves of her hymn-book.

"When the last verse had been sung we had to hurry home; for immediately after service the people always brought the harvest wreath, and to-day Anna Maria had to thank them in her brother's place. She cast a glance across to Stürmer's seat; it was empty. Perhaps he was already waiting at the manor. We walked through the greeting throng as rapidly as my lame foot would allow, and Anna Maria quickly laid aside hat and shawl in the garden-parlor, for we already heard the music in the village street.

"'I don't know about it, aunt,' she said. 'It is dreadful to me without Klaus; if only Stürmer, at least, were here!'

"'The baron has been in the garden for an hour,' remarked Marieken, who had just run in, in dazzlingly clean attire, to inform us that the people were coming.

"'Then go and look for him, Marieken,' I bade. 'I will call Susanna and Isa.'

"'There comes the baron, now,' cried Marieken, with a glance at the window, and opened the door leading to the terrace.

"I could not believe my eyes; yes, there he was coming along the garden-path, and beside him—Susanna. She did not walk, she floated, as if carried along by the sound of the march, borne hither on the warm autumn air. A pink dress fluttered and blew about her delicate figure, and her lips and cheeks were tinged with the same color. With outstretched arms she flew up the steps.

"'Oh, Anna Maria, oh, Fräulein Rosamond, listen, just listen!' she cried, in ecstasy.

"Stürmer followed her, smiling, and offered Anna Maria his arm. Hesitatingly, with a long look at Susanna, she took it. The latter looked after them in wonder, and walked silently beside me.

"Before the house a crowd of people had assembled, in eager expectation; then came the children, dancing and skipping, in at the gate; behind them came the musicians, and over the long procession which followed hovered the wreath of golden corn, adorned with colored ribbons, waving gayly in the warm autumn wind.

"Anna Maria stood beside Stürmer, on the front steps, her hand still resting lightly on his arm; she wore her blue dress and white lace kerchief. A sad smile lay on her lips as the speaker, followed by two girls bearing the wreath, now advanced to the steps, and, making a sign for the music to stop, began the old speech:

"'God be praised, who gives sun and rain;
God be praised, who gives his blessing again;
God be praised, who, in this year,
Has blessed our fields so richly here.
May he give further fortune good,
To man and beast, to field and wood,

And may his gracious blessing fall
On man and beast, on people all.
And on the house we hang to-day
The wreath, that blessings here may stay.
A pious wife, and children fair,
May they ere long be dwelling there!
That is our wish upon this day;
God will provide for come what may.
Take not this speech of ours amiss.
Full of good-will, indeed, it is!

"A peal of music accompanied the three hearty cheers of the people; the two pretty girls laid the wreath at Anna Maria's feet as she kindly shook hands with the speaker. 'I thank you heartily, people,' she said in her deep, mature voice. 'I thank you in the name of my brother far away, who is much grieved not to be able to stand here to-day. I thank you for the honest diligence and labor of this year, and wish that the good old harmony may continue between gentry and people as has ever been the manner at Bütze. And now, in my brother's name, enjoy the present day, and be happy as befits this feast.'

"'Long may she live, our gracious Fräulein!' cried the people; the lads tossed their caps in the air, and with music the procession went into the great barn, where long tables were set for the harvest banquet.

"Anna Maria had dropped Stürmer's arm as she stepped forward to speak. He appeared strangely moved, and a slight, indefinable smile lay on his lips. I remembered his once saying that nothing was more dreadful to him in a woman than to see her, even for a moment, assume the position of a man, and in that light he evidently regarded the speech.

"During the shouting I looked around for Susanna; she had disappeared. There was not much time to reflect where she might be. Anna Maria now made the round of the tables; she had to have her health drunk, and drink in return. Stürmer accompanied her; it was a pretty sight to see them walking together across the court.

"On that day not the slightest thing escaped me, but now I cannot tell exactly what this and that one did; it only came to me upon reflection, much later; and then one thing after another came into my mind. At the time I did not wonder at the rose-colored dress which Susanna wore, and which was so charmingly suited to her transparent complexion; it did not occur to me at all that she was still in mourning for her father, nor did I think about her having been too indisposed to go to church in the morning, and then, soon after, coming running from the garden, with rosy cheeks. I thought nothing of it, that at the table—to-day there was a long row of us, the clergyman and his sister, two bailiffs, three farm-pupils, a forester, and Isabella (by way of exception)—she laughed through the entire scale every minute, and carried on all manner of nonsense.

"Anna Maria sat at the head, beside the clergyman, Susanna at her right, and Stürmer next; I sat next to Pastor Grüne, and we formed the upper end of the table. I could see that Anna Maria often looked gravely at Susanna; yet a ray of pleasure broke from her eyes when they rested upon this embodied rosebud, and saw how roguish were the dimples in her cheeks, how her eyes shone, and her little teeth flashed behind the red lips, and how she chattered all manner of pretty, foolish stuff. Isabella's face shone with pride and she looked at the guests in turn; almost every eye was fixed on the girl.

"Then Stürmer rose, and proposed the health of the master of the house—'his best friend,' as he said—and 'the house that was as dear to him as a paternal home.'

"And Anna Maria's face glowed as she raised her glass to touch with him. But Susanna trembled, and put her glass down untouched; she grew pale and quiet, and scarcely spoke again.

"Pastor Grüne raised a full glass to the lady of the house; 'the mistress of Bütze,' he called Anna Maria. The old man was much moved as he made mention of her youth and how serious and careful she was; nevertheless, a Martha, who was never weary in working and doing. Anna Maria let the current of his remarks pass her by, and quietly thanked him as she raised her glass. All crowded about her to touch her glass, last of all, Stürmer; she did not look at him as their glasses touched. But Susanna fixed her eyes on Anna Maria with an expression of astonishment; she had probably never reflected that there was anything great about such activity. I noticed, too, that she shivered suddenly, as if under a disagreeable impression.

"Then there came sounds of music through the wide-opened windows; the dancing was beginning under the oaks, and the family must not be wanting there. Anna Maria rose from the table, and beckoned to Susanna; we old people sat still longer, and chatted of this and that. My old friend was enjoying her afternoon coffee, which she declared she never could do without, too much to leave; the pastor lighted a pipe, and leaned comfortably back in his great arm-chair. Ah! how long we had known each other, had borne together joy and sorrow. We had, indeed, no lack of conversational matter.

"But I did not stay here long, for there is nothing I like so much to see as happy young people dancing. 'Oh, let us go under the oaks,' I said; but Mademoiselle Grüne preferred to take a nap up-stairs in my quiet room, assuring me that she would follow soon; so the pastor escorted me

down. When we arrived at the dancing ground, which was surrounded by people, I saw Anna Maria with the head-servant, and Stürmer with the upper housemaid, turning in the floating waltz, for they had to dance with all in turn. But where was Susanna?

"I went around the living wall of people. Under one of the oaks, chairs and tables had been set apart for the family, and, the people had respectfully kept away from this spot. Here stood Susanna, her arm thrown around the rough trunk of the tree, her great eyes fixed on the dancing couples; her delicate nostrils quivered, her breast heaved violently, and tears sparkled in her eyes.

"'I want to dance, too,' she burst forth, passionately; 'I want to dance, too, just one single time!'

"Already Stürmer was coming through the crowd and hurrying up to her. There was no ceremonious request, for a dance, he forgot every formal bow, she was even stretching out her arms toward him, longingly. I think he carried her through the throng rather than that they walked; then he put his arm around her. Was it my imagination, or did he really press her so fast to him that they scarcely touched the ground? As in a dream, I heard Pastor Grüne say something about a Titania. I only saw the gracefully swaying figures, the fluttering pink dress, the bright rose in the dark hair, whirling in the rapid dance, and heard the floating melody of the waltz. And above them the old oaks swayed their branches, letting sportive sunbeams through. So distinctly, ah! so distinctly, I can see all this before me.

"Then she stopped, out of breath, and leaned on his arm, a smile of rapture on her glowing face. Was it all only my fancy? Anna Maria so quiet yonder, scarcely breathing after the quick dance; it was surely my imagination that made me think Susanna ought to have looked a little less enchanted, that she ought not to have danced, being betrothed to another. Yes, indeed, I was carrying it too far. And with whom was she dancing then? With Stürmer, with Klaus's best friend. Could there be any danger in that now, when everything was plain between them?

"My thoughts went no farther, for just then the clear tone of a post-horn rang out in the midst of the dance-music, a yellow coach rattled into the court and stopped before the steps, and a man swung himself out.

"'Klaus!' I cried out, and at the first moment would have gone to meet him; then I thought of Susanna—he came on her account, of course; they could not meet here, in the face of all these witnesses. I turned hastily to lead Susanna through the park to the house.

"She was lying unconscious in Isa's arms. 'The dance, the fatal dance!' lamented Isa; 'she cannot bear it!'

"Anna Maria, pale with fear, bent over her. 'Alas! just at this moment! Aunt,' she whispered, 'go to Klaus, or I—no, you, I beg you.'

"I limped across the court as quickly as I could; he was already coming toward me in the hall, his whole handsome face glowing with pleasure; without further ado, he took me in his arms.

"'They are under the oaks, are they not?' he asked. 'I wanted to be here to dinner, but these post-horses are miserable nags; they went like snails.' And he took my hand and pressed it to his lips. 'Is she not—Susanna—she—'

"'No, Klaus, they are no longer there. Wait a minute, come into your room; Anna Maria will be here at once. The fact is, Susanna is not quite well to-day; I would rather tell her first that you have come, so unexpectedly.'

"I pushed him back into the sitting-room; Stürmer was just coming in through the garden-parlor. A frightened look came over Klaus's face, but the question died on his lips as Stürmer cordially held out both hands to him, and then, turning to me, said: 'What is the matter with Fräulein Mattoni? Can it really be the effect of dancing? Only think, Klaus, a moment ago she was rosy and happy, and just as you came rattling into the yard, I saw her turn pale and totter, and before I knew what it meant, her old duenna had caught her, and was lamenting, "That comes of dancing!" Is that possible?'

"'Of course!' I declared, quickly; 'Susanna is delicate, and the giddy round dance—' I broke off, for Klaus looked so anxious I feared he might betray himself on the spot.

"'Dear Edwin,' I begged, 'will you take my place with the guests outside for a moment longer? Pastor Grüne is sitting quite alone on the bench; you know he is sensitive. Klaus, you will excuse me; I will see how things are going up-stairs, and send Brockelmann to you with something to eat.'

"I do not know if Edwin Stürmer was enraptured at my request, but like an ever-courteous man he went down at once.

"Anna Maria met me on the stairs.

"'Where is he?' she asked hastily, without stopping.

"'Susanna is not seriously ill!' she called back; 'she has opened her eyes again already.' Her blue dress fluttered once more behind the brown balustrade; then I heard the cry, 'Klaus, dear Klaus!' a sob, and the door closed.

"Susanna was lying on her bed; her dress had been taken off, and she was lightly covered with a

shawl; she held both hands pressed to her temples. Isabella was perched before her, holding a flask of strong-smelling ether. She tenderly stroked the girl's cheeks, and whispered eagerly to her. When she saw me, she got up.

"How disagreeable, Fräulein! Just in this joyful hour the foolish child has to faint; but so it goes, if young people will not listen,' she began, in a remarkably talkative mood. 'Susanna, my heart, are you better? I have said a hundred times you mustn't dance; it isn't even a refined pleasure to whirl about among those common people. Heavens! what a smell! But, obstinate as ever—wait, I shall tell your *fiancé* of it, that he may keep a firm hand over you. Oh, yes, young people—'

"Susanna gave her nurse a look which expressed everything possible except love and respect.

"Come, come, be brisk, Susy,' she continued inexorably, 'or do you think it is pleasant for Herr von Hegewitz to be waiting for you like this?'

"Susanna raised herself with a jerk. 'Do be still,' she said, folding her hands, 'I am so dizzy, so ill!'

"Lie still, Susanna,' I said, to calm her. 'Perhaps you will be better toward evening. Klaus must have patience. Shall I take any greetings to him, meanwhile?'

"She lay back on the pillow, her face turned away from me, and nodded silently. 'Let her sleep,' said I to Isabella; 'she is really exhausted.'

"The old woman shrugged her shoulders. 'I cannot do anything to help matters, either,' she whispered. 'It is unpleasant, but she will soon recover. I know—the nerves, yes, the nerves!' And she sat down on the girl's bed. She looked strangely grotesque and weird, in her enormous black cap with bright orange-colored bows.

"Anna Maria and Klaus were just going down the front steps to the dancing-ground, and he had his arm around her. When they saw me they turned around. Klaus looked troubled, and in Anna Maria's eyes there were traces of tears.

"You will see her to-day, yet,' I said to him, consolingly. He pressed my hand, and sighed.

"He is only going to stay till to-morrow, aunt," Anna Maria informed me; 'he only came on Susanna's account.' She spoke pleasantly, and looked up at him with a smile.

"Alas, alas!' said Klaus, 'affairs are so involved there; but I just wanted to see how such an engagement is good-for-nothing without having once expressed one's self in words. Anything written sounds so cold, doesn't it? It seemed so to me! And then I am glad that I have come, for Susanna's health does not seem to be quite firm yet. I will speak with the doctor, and after the wedding will go south with her.' A very anxious expression lay on his countenance.

"Poor Klaus, such a reception!' bewailed Anna Maria. 'I do not understand it, either; Susanna was so suddenly seized; she was just seeming so bright again.'

"You must not let her dance,' said he in reproof.

"Oh, the kobold was between them before we could prevent it,' I joked.

"Stürmer dances so madly,' remarked Klaus.

"Meanwhile we had arrived at the scene of festivities. The dancers were still floating gayly about there; Stürmer was leaning, with folded arms, against a tree, and was apparently out of humor. As soon as the people discovered their master, he was received with a storm of greetings, for they were all waiting to welcome him. Klaus spoke a few words to them, and then would have withdrawn, but that was not permitted; he had to dance with the upper housemaid. With a half-amiable, half-morose expression, he took a few turns with the girl, who blushed red at the joy and honor.

"Anna Maria had seated herself in one of the chairs under the trees; Edwin was standing before her, and a happy smile was on her lips. The rays of the setting sun glimmered over her fair head and tinged her face with a warm color.

"She looked wonderfully pretty at this moment; Stürmer looked meditatively down at her. I thought of everything possible as I looked at the two. What will one not think under a blue sky, amid sunshine and gay music?

"It was deep twilight when Isabella came into my room to say that Susanna was ready to see Klaus, and to ask if the meeting might be here. I assented joyfully; the old woman went away, and a moment after a slender white figure entered, and leaned, almost tottering, against the great oaken wardrobe by the door. Isabella went away, saying she would inform the master.

"Slowly Susanna came as far as the middle of the room. I made haste to light a candle, but she begged me not to do it; her voice sounded almost breathless. When I heard Klaus's rapid step in the hall, I went into the adjoining room, whereupon Susanna took a few hasty steps after me, as if she would detain me; but I would not have spoiled this quarter of an hour for Klaus by my presence for anything in the world. Why should a third person hear what two people who are to belong to each other forever have to say? And so I drew the door to, and only heard a voice, full of emotion, cry: 'Susanna!'

"I stood at the open window, and looked out on the moonlit court; in the house all was still. Edwin

Stürmer had driven away before supper, rightly supposing that we should have a great deal to talk about during Klaus's short stay; the guests from the parsonage, too, had gone home early. Isabella had doubtless called Klaus from Anna Maria's side to Susanna; the people were dancing on gayly under the oaks, by the light of lanterns; the sound of music, and now and then of a bold shout, came over to me, or the beginning of a song from a girl's fresh voice; and the air was mild as on a spring evening.

"Anna Maria?—what is she doing now?" thought I. And the minutes ran away and became quarter-hours; with a clank, the old clock struck seven. I sprang up; no, the old aunt did not quite forget the requirements of etiquette. I opened the door and went into my room. I saw the two standing at the window; he had put his arm around her, and was bending low over her.

"And now, say *one* word, Susanna; say that you love me as I love you!" I heard him whisper, hotly and beseechingly.

"The moonlight fell all about her bright, delicate figure, and I could distinctly see her arm begin slowly to slip from his shoulder. The music out of doors had just ceased; for an instant there was a breathless silence, then the deep, sad tones of a young man's voice floated in at the open window:

"I thought I held thee wondrous dear,
Ere I another found;
Farewell, I know it first to-day
What 'tis to be love-bound,"

came up the sound. Susanna's arm slipped quite down. Once more I heard him whisper, more softly than before. 'Yes!' said Susanna, quickly and in a half-stifled tone, and I saw Klaus take her in his arms impetuously and kiss her.

"The following day fairly flew away, I can scarcely toll how, now. There were so many things to be talked about, agreed upon, and arranged.

"Klaus had talked with Isabella about the wedding, and they were agreed that the 22d of November should be the festal day. Isabella came out of his room with a new silk dress on her arm; she did not look wholly enraptured, for he had told her that he was going to hire a comfortable little dwelling in Berlin, and provide for her support; until the wedding she might stay here. Anna Maria had prevailed upon him to do this, and he himself did not consider the old woman exactly a desirable appendix to his wife. She cast an enraged look at Anna Maria as she went out; she knew to whom she owed this arrangement, so little to her mind.

"On Susanna's hand sparkled a brilliant ring. Klaus was constantly at her side. I saw them in the morning wandering up and down the garden-paths, and once, too, heard her charming laugh, but it was shortly broken off. She was quiet, but nevertheless let herself be adored like a queen by her attentive lover.

"How happy he looked, the dear old fellow, and how truly concerned he was about the little maiden to whom he had given his heart! Like an anxious mother, he bundled her up in shawls and rugs when she sat out on the terrace in the warm midday sun. Every sentence which he uttered began: 'Susanna, would you be pleased if it were thus?' and concluded: 'If you are content, of course, my darling!'

"Anna Maria had a great deal to do out of doors. Was it really the case? Did it pain her to see the two thus? Had a feeling of real jealousy come over her? She left the tiresome business of a *dame d'honneur* almost entirely to me.

"At evening Klaus had to go away again, and the hour drew quickly near; he grew silent and tender the nearer the moment of separation came. After supper we sat in the garden-parlor, about the lighted lamp. Klaus's travelling cloak and rug lay on a chair; Susanna had gone to her room for a moment, and Anna Maria to the kitchen to prepare a glass of mulled wine for Klaus, for he had grown icy cold. Klaus held a knot of ribbon in his hand, which he had taken from Susanna's hair.

"Aunt Rosamond,' said he, suddenly, looking over at me, 'Stürmer comes here very often now, doesn't he?'

"Yes, Klaus, very often.'

"Does he intend to ride a pair of horses to death to—to play whist with you?' he asked, smiling.

"I don't know, Klaus,' I replied.

"He came nearer to me. 'If it only might be, aunt,' he said gently; 'do you think that this time Anna Maria would, again——'

"No, Klaus; if I understand Anna Maria aright, she still loves Stürmer.'

"Still, aunt? *Now*, you mean to say?'

"I knew not what answer to make.

"I should be so glad,' he began again, 'if Anna Maria and Edwin——'

"He broke off, for Susanna had entered; she had such a light, floating gait that we did not notice her till she was already standing in the middle of the room. Slowly she came nearer; she was doubtless suffering at the thought of separation, for she looked very pale and scarcely spoke that evening. When Klaus folded her in his arms on his departure she looked up into his true, agitated face, and for an instant, raising herself on tip-toe, she put both arms around his neck, but for his affectionate words she had no reply.

"She remained standing beside me on the front steps, looking after him, as, wrapped in his great cloak, he got into the carriage. Anna Maria went down the steps with him, and put extra rugs and foot-sacks in with her own hands. The brother and sister held out their hands to each other, but Klaus's looks sped past Anna Maria up to the delicate figure standing motionless in the flickering light of the lanterns. Brockelmann looked, suddenly transfixed, at the girl, who only waved her hand lightly. The carriage drove rattling away; once more he leaned his head out; then the carriage rolled through the gateway, out into the night.

"Susanna did not wait till Anna Maria had come up the steps; she ran back into the house as if pursued, and I heard her light step going up-stairs.

"Anna Maria and I went back to the garden-parlor. Neither of us spoke; I laid my knitting-work and glasses in my work-basket, and Anna Maria stood, reflecting, in the middle of the room. All at once I saw her take a few steps forward and quickly stoop over; when she stood upright again she had grown pale. Her hand held a small, shining object—Susanna's engagement ring!

"She said not a word, but put the ring on the table and sat down. She waited for Susanna. She *must* miss the ring, and would hurry down directly, anxiously hunting for it.

"An hour passed. Anna Maria had taken up one of Scott's novels; she turned the pages at long intervals. I had taken out my knitting again. At last she laid aside the book.

"'We will go to bed, Aunt Rosamond,' said she. 'Will you give the ring to Susanna?'

"I took the little pledge of love, wrought in heavy gold. 'It must be too large for her,' said I, in excuse.

"'Yes,' replied Anna Maria, harshly, 'it is not suited to her hand.' And nodding gravely, she left the room before me.

CHAPTER XV.

"It seemed as if the autumn had only delayed commencing its sway in order not to interfere with the Bütze harvest festival. Now it broke in all the more violently, with its gusts of rain, its storms, and its hatred toward everything which reminded one of summer. Each little green leaf was tinged with yellow or red, and the garden was gay as a paper of patterns; the purplish-red festoons of the wild grape hung moistly down, and in the morning a heavy white mist lay over the landscape. The storks' nest on the barn roof was empty, whole flocks of wild geese flew away screaming over the village, and inevitably came the thought of the long, monotonous winter which Anna Maria and I were to pass alone.

"Anna Maria did not give herself up to idle reveries; she took hold of work, even too much work, as the best defence against worry and against a growing sadness. Only in the twilight she would sometimes stand idle, and look away across the court-yard, and listen to the measured sound of the threshing that came across from the barn. Then she would pass her hand over her forehead, light a candle, and move up to the table with her work—and work there was in abundance.

"Anna Maria had taken Susanna's outfit in hand without delay. She led the young girl to the huge linen-chests, and, with the pride of a housewife, showed her the piles of snow-white linen, told her which pieces she had spun herself, and spread before her eyes the choicest sets of table linen. Susanna stood beside her, and cast a look rather of astonishment than admiration at these splendors; she did not understand what one could do with such a monstrous pile; it was more than one could use in a hundred years, she thought. Isa, too, seemed to have no appreciation of the important treasures. 'Too coarse, too coarse, mademoiselle!' was all she said, letting the linen, which three seamstresses were making up into Susanna's underclothing, slip through her fingers. 'That will last forever, and will rub the child's tender skin to pieces.'

"Susanna grew somewhat more interested when dress-patterns arrived from Berlin, by Klaus's order. The small hands turned over the gay little pieces with real satisfaction; she ran from Anna Maria to Isa, and from Isa to me, asking whether we preferred satin or moiré antique, brocade or *gros de Tours*. And every evening, punctually at seven o'clock, came Edwin Stürmer, through autumn darkness, rain, and wind.

"I remember how one day he came into the room and inquired after the health of the ladies; how, when he was preparing to leave, Anna Maria said her friendly: 'Will you not stay with us, baron?' And how he then laid aside hat and riding-whip again, ate supper with us, and then sat down at the whist-table—all as usual, and yet so different.

"Susanna was a careless and not a clever player; she threw her cards down at random, never

knew what had been played, and had no idea of the real meaning of the game. Anna Maria took this, like every occupation of life, seriously, and examined it thoroughly.

"But, Susanna, do pay attention; you are playing into your opponent's hand!' she would say during the game; or, 'Please, Susanna, do not look at Aunt Rosamond's cards; you must not do that!' It had a pedantic sound when one looked at that smiling, rosy creature, who held the cards in her little hands with such charming awkwardness, forgot every instant what was the trump, laughed out from pure pleasure when she took a trick, and would be so truly disheartened when she lost. 'Oh, *est il possible?*' she would ask, shaking her head; 'not a trick?'

"Stürmer played this whist with the patience of an angel; he picked up Susanna's fallen cards unweariedly, smiled when she laughed, and when Anna Maria scolded an almost imperceptible wrinkle came between his brows. Occasionally, when he was Anna Maria's partner, she would appear confused and embarrassed, and he distracted; and once or twice they lost the rubber, just as they had done before. 'Unlucky at cards, lucky in love!' said Pastor Grüne, who sat behind Anna Maria's chair on such evenings. She blushed suddenly, and her hand, which still held the last card, trembled. Edwin Stürmer, with fine tact, seemed not to hear the allusion, and Susanna was silent and looked at Anna Maria with, all at once, a strange sparkle in her eyes. Of her relation to Klaus no mention had ever been made in the presence of a stranger, according to agreement; she herself had the least thought of betraying herself by a hasty utterance. Once I had asked if Stürmer might not be initiated. But Anna Maria declared that Klaus would not wish it, so I kept still.

"Susanna rarely spoke of her absent lover; but Isa put two letters to him into the mail-bag, regularly, every week, in answer to his frequent, longing epistles. In her room, meanwhile, all manner of presents accumulated, which Klaus bought for her in Breslau—knick-knacks, ornaments, fans, and such useless things, which I could never think of in connection with Anna Maria. Klaus had never cared for such things before, either, and therefore did not exactly understand choosing them, and many an old, unsalable article may have been put into his hand as the latest novelty for the sake of heavy money. Susanna had a remarkably well-developed sense of beauty, and the charming way of women, of wearing a thing out of devotion because a beloved hand gave it, seemed totally unknown to her. But she exulted aloud when she discovered a little old lace handkerchief which Anna Maria had found, in rummaging in a long-unopened chest; and in the evening, when Stürmer came, she wore it daintily knotted about her neck, and in the delicate yellowish lace placed the last red asters from the garden.

"Anna Maria was more serious and chary of words after every visit from Stürmer; but an unmistakable expression of quiet, inward happiness lay on her proud face. She reminded me daily, more and more, of that Anna Maria who once, on a stormy spring day, came into my room, fell on my neck, and almost—oh, if it had only happened!—confided to me the secret in her young heart. Unspeakably pleasing she appeared, in her quiet happiness, beside that young, childish bride-elect, who was never still, who now laughed more wildly than a kobold, and the next minute wept enough to move a stone to pity. Yes, Susanna Mattoni could laugh and cry like scarce another human being.

"Often I saw Anna Maria standing in the twilight under the old linden; motionless, she looked over yonder, where, in the evening haze, the dark, gabled roofs of Dambitz emerged from the trees of the park. She had fallen into a dreamy state, out of which she would suddenly start, when she was reminded of Klaus by some eccentricity of Susanna's. Then she would look again in warm anxiety at the mercurial little creature, and then run into her solitary room, and not appear again for several hours.

"One day, just three weeks before the appointed wedding-day, I was returning, toward evening, from a visit to my old friend, Mademoiselle Grüne, at the parsonage. It was windy and wet and cold, a regular autumn evening, such as I do not like at all. I drew my veil over my face for protection, wrapped my cloak more tightly about me, and took the shortest way across the church-yard and through the garden. The manor-house looked gloomy behind the tall trees; not a window was lighted, but from the great chimney the smoke blew away over the roofs, like long, dark, funeral banners, and wrestled with the wind which dissipated it in all directions.

"I began to think with pleasure of the comfortable sitting-room, of a warm beer-soup, and the regular evening whist-table. Just as I was passing a side-path, I saw a dark figure sitting under the linden. 'Anna Maria!' I murmured, 'and in this storm!' For an instant I stood still, with the intention of calling to her, for a fine, drizzling rain was now falling, and I feared she would take cold on this dreary evening. But I gave it up, because I thought, on reflection, she would not probably want to be seen at all, or have an inquisitive look taken at a shyly guarded secret, and I made haste to walk away down the path as quickly as possible, to get away unobserved.

"But my foot stopped again; a horseman was coming along by the hedge, and, in spite of the gray twilight, I recognized Stürmer; he waved his hat in greeting over toward the arbor, and there some one beckoned—I very nearly had palpitation of the heart from joyful fear—with a white cloth, and this little signal waved in the misty evening air till he disappeared behind the trees on the other side of the bridge.

"'Anna Maria! Is it possible?' said I, half-aloud, as I walked on—that it sounded like a cry of exultation I could not help. Ah, all must be well yet, and surely all would be well! I hurried up the steps to write a few words to Klaus. 'Anna Maria and Edwin were nearer than he had hoped'—how pleased he would be! But I did not accomplish that to-day. Brockelmann came to meet me in

the entrance-hall, and in spite of my happy agitation, I had to listen to a long story, for which she even urged me to come into her neat little room. A married niece of hers, living in the village, had had a quarrel with her husband yesterday, in the course of which he had emphatically tried to prove conclusively the 'I am to be your master!' with a heavy stick. The good Brockelmann was beside herself at the 'wicked fellow,' and would not let me go till I had solemnly promised to take the tyrant to task. 'Anna Maria understands it even better, perhaps,' she added, 'but I don't know what is the matter with her now. I think I might tell her a story ten times over, and at the end she would look at me and ask: "What are you saying, Brockelmann?" I wish I could just get at the bottom of it!'

"'Well,' I said, smiling, 'I will see to it; send the rude old fellow up to me to-morrow.' She followed me into the hall, and clattered down-stairs in her slippers, scolding away, and in a very bad humor, because Rieke had not yet lighted the hall-lamps.

"In my room still glimmered the last ray of daylight, and in this uncertain light I saw a figure rising from the arm-chair by the stove. 'Anna Maria, is it you?' I asked, recognizing her.

"She came slowly over to me. 'Yes, aunt, I have something to deliver to you. Stürmer has been here; he wanted to speak to you; about what, I don't know.' She spoke hesitatingly and softly. 'Then he asked me to hand you this note, which he wrote hastily.'

"She pressed a note into my hand. 'Here, aunt, read.' I sat down in the low chair by the stove, and held the sheet in the flickering light of the flames, but the letters danced indistinctly before my eyes. 'We must have a light,' said I; 'or read it aloud to me, Anna Maria, it takes so long for Brockelmann to bring a lamp.'

"Anna Maria knelt down beside me, and took the letter. 'Ought I to know, too, what it contains?' she asked.

"'Oh, of course I allow it, only read!' And Anna Maria began:

"MY DEAR, ESTEEMED AUNT ROSAMOND:—Unfortunately I did not find you at home. Please expect me to-morrow afternoon at five o'clock. I have something to discuss with you, and want your advice in a matter upon the issue of which the peace and happiness of my heart will depend. Say nothing yet to Anna Maria!

"In haste and impatience,

"Your most devoted

"EDWIN STÜRMER.'

"Anna Maria did not read it just as it stands here; it came out in broken sentences; then the sheet fluttered to the floor, she buried her fair head in my lap, and threw her arms impetuously about me. 'Aunt, ah, aunt!' she groaned.

"I took her head between my two hands, and kissed her forehead; tears flowed from my eyes. 'Anna Maria! ah, at last, at last!' I sobbed; 'now everything may yet be well.'

"She did not answer; she rose and began to walk up and down the room, her arms crossed below her breast, her head bent. I could not distinguish her features in the deep twilight, but I knew that she was deeply affected. 'Aunt,' she said at last, coming up to me, 'what answer shall you make to Stürmer?'

"'That I will receive him, Anna Maria.'

"'No'—she hesitated—'I mean to-morrow, to his question—'she said, slowly.

"'What you will, Anna Maria. Shall I say yes?'

"Slipping to the floor, she threw her arms around my neck. 'Yes!' she said, softly, and burst into tears. The pain borne quietly for years gushed with them from her soul; I stroked her smooth head caressingly, and let her weep. How long we sat thus I know not. Then the girl rose and kissed my hand. 'I will go down,' she whispered.

"'Yes, Anna Maria,' I bade, 'you ought to rest a little or your head will burn. Let Brockelmann make you a cup of tea; you have surely caught cold in your head out in the wet garden.'

"She had her hand already on the door-latch, and now turned about again. 'I have not been in the garden, aunt,' she said; 'I have been waiting here up-stairs for you, certainly for half an hour, since he went away.' She nodded to me once more, then she went out, and left me standing in unutterable bewilderment.

"Anna Maria not in the garden? Who in the world could have stood there and beckoned to him? An oppressive fear overwhelmed me, and almost instinctively I went across to Susanna's room; my first look fell upon her, sitting on the floor before the fire-place; the bright light illuminated her face with a rosy glow, and made her eyes seem more radiant than ever. Her hands were clasped about her knees, and she was looking dreamily at the flickering flames. Isa was bustling about at the back of the room; she came nearer as she caught sight of me.

"'Susanna,' I asked, 'were you in the garden a little while ago?'

"She started up and looked at me with frightened eyes. 'No!' answered Isabella in her place. 'Susy has not left the room all the afternoon. What should she be doing out of doors in this weather?'

"I do not know—but I surely thought I saw you, Susanna?"

"She turned her head and looked in her lap. 'I was not down there,' she said, hesitatingly.

"I went away; my old eyes were failing then. Close by the door my foot caught in something soft. I stooped down; it was the lace veil that Susanna used to wear over her head, heavy and wet with rain. Without a word I laid it on the nearest chair. Why did Susanna tell a lie? Why was she frightened?"

"And all at once an ugly, shocking thought darted like lightning through my brain, that made me almost numb with fear. But no, surely it was not possible, it was madness; how could one imagine such a thing? I scolded myself. With trembling hand I lit a candle and went to my writing-desk; to this day I cannot account for my answer to Stürmer being as it was, and not different. I wrote under the influence of an inexplicable anxiety. Strangely enough the letter sounded:

"MY DEAR EDWIN:—I shall be glad to see you here to-morrow afternoon at five o'clock, and can also tell you an important piece of news, which will please you. What do you say to this, that Klaus, our old Klaus, is engaged; and that the bride-elect is no other than Susanna Mattoni? Very likely you have guessed it easily?"

"They have been engaged for some time, but it has been kept a secret for the mean time; but an old chatterbox like me may surely make an exception in your case.

"Affectionate greetings from your old friend,

"ROSAMOND VON HEGEWITZ.'

"In the greatest haste I folded the note, rang, and gave it into the immediate charge of the coachman. I was seized with a nervous trembling as I heard him ride out of the yard. I sent down word to Anna Maria that I should not come to supper; I was rather fatigued.

"About eight o'clock I heard Susanna's light step in the hall; she was coming from supper, and trilling a love-song. Then the door of her room closed, and all was still.

"It was long past midnight when I stole out to the hall window to see if Anna Maria had gone to bed. She was still awake; in the candle-light which fell from her windows over the flower-beds of the garden a shadow was moving to and fro, incessantly, restlessly. In the anxiety of my heart I folded my hands: 'Lord God, send her no storm in this new spring-time,' I whispered; 'let her be happy, make me ashamed of my care and anxiety. Let my fear be an error. Ah! give her the happiness she deserves!'

"The next day broke gray and dark, not at all like a day of good fortune. Anna Maria stood at the open window in the sitting-room, breathing in the warm air, which was unusually sultry for a November day. She had a stunted white rose in her hand. 'See, aunt,' she said, holding the flower up to me, 'I found it early this morning on the rose-bush on mother's grave; how could it have bloomed now? We have had such cold weather lately, it is almost a miracle, like a greeting for the day.' And she took a glass and carefully put the awkward little rose in fresh water, and carried it to her room.

"In the mail-bag which came at noon there was, beside a letter for Susanna from Klaus, also one for Anna Maria from him concerning arrangements for the longer absence of the master of the house. 'Since I do not know how long I shall be away with Susanna,' he wrote, 'and since I probably shall not find time in the short stop at home to talk this over quietly with you, I have written down for you about how I think this and that will be best arranged.' Various arrangements of a domestic nature now followed. 'If any alteration seems necessary to you,' he continued, 'do as you please; I know it will be right. The furnishing of Susanna's rooms can be attended to during our absence. I should be very grateful to you if you would sometimes have an eye upon the work, that the nest for my little wife may be as comfortable as possible. In her last letter she told me a great deal about Stürmer's furnishings, and I have taken care to get something similar, at least, for her, as far as it in any degree agrees with my own sober taste; the terrace is to be re-paved, too. Now for the chief matter, my dear Anna Maria: on the right hand, in the secret drawer of my writing-desk, lie the papers which are necessary for the banns. Take them out and carry them to Pastor Grüne; Susanna's baptismal certificate and marriage license, which I had sent on from Berlin, will already be in his hands, as I am sending them off with this letter. Remember me to the old man, and say to him that he must not let us fall too roughly from the pulpit next Sunday.'

"Anna Maria had given me the letter, and gone with her key-basket into her brother's room. 'How will it be,' I whispered, looking over the long columns of these domestic arrangements, 'when he has *her* no longer? He has been fearfully spoiled by her.' As I read about the banns, my old aunt's head began to whirl like a mill-wheel with what had happened yesterday—what was to come to-day. How would it result?"

"I limped over to Anna Maria; she was standing before her brother's open desk, the papers in her hand. 'Aunt Rosamond,' said she, 'I wish this day were over, for see, when I think of Klaus I almost lose my courage!' And she laid the yellow papers on the flat shelf of the wardrobe-shaped

desk, and folded her hands over them. 'It will seem almost wrong to me that I should think of my own happiness when he—is not going to be happy. Aunt, ah, aunt!' she sobbed out, 'I cannot help it; I love him none the less on that account, believe me! But I have not the strength to thrust from me a second time something which—' She did not finish; she colored deeply, took up the papers again with trembling hands, and closed the desk. 'I don't know what I do to-day,' she whispered, 'and I don't know what I say. I wish it were night, I am so anxious!'

"You need not speak out, Anna Maria," said I, seizing her hands. 'I have long known that you gave Stürmer up at that time only because you would not forsake Klaus.'

"She took a step back, and gave me a frightened look. 'No, no; it is not so!' she cried, 'it was my duty; he had lost so much for my sake!'

"Anna Maria, I do not understand you," I rejoined.

"His bride! I know it," she nodded. 'Because I was in the way, she forsook my poor, dear Klaus. How he must have suffered!'

"How you came to know of that affair, my child, is a riddle to me," I returned; 'but tell me, was that the reason that you—'

"Oh, hush, aunt!" she cried, 'I know nothing any longer, it all lies behind me like a dark, oppressive dream. I could not tell you now what I thought and felt at the time, for it is not clear even to me. Some time I will tell you everything, but not now, not to-day. But you must promise me one thing,' she continued, beseechingly, looking at me through her tears; 'you must always keep an eye on Klaus; you must read from his face if he is in trouble, if he is unhappy, and then you must tell me. Ah! aunt, I cannot really believe that he will be happy with her! Dear Aunt Rosa, why must it be *she*? Why not some one else who would be more worthy of him?'

"Do not worry about it, Anna Maria," I begged her; 'all is in God's hands.'

"You are right, Aunt Rosa," she replied, a crimson flush spreading over her face. 'I will not let this trouble me to-day; I will rejoice, will be happy. Ah! aunt, I do not know, indeed, what that really is; I am such a stupid, dull being. Listen, last evening I could have opened my arms and embraced the whole world from happiness. I could not sleep, I walked about my room restlessly, and read his letter a hundred times; as long as my eye rested upon it I was calm, and when I had folded it up doubts came to me, such anxious, evil doubts, such as, "What if you have made a mistake? What if he has something to say to Aunt Rosamond which does not concern you at all?" And then it seemed to me as if I were sinking into a deep, black abyss, and there was nothing that I could hold on to, aunt. Oh! it was frightful, so empty, so cold, so dead! Dear Aunt Rosamond, do laugh me out of these foolish thoughts, scold me for a stupid girl; tell me how faint-hearted I am, that a doubt of Edwin's love should come to me! He does love me, Aunt Rosamond, does he not? One can never forget it when one has once loved a person with his whole heart. I know it; yes, Aunt Rosamond, I am a foolish, childish creature; do laugh me right out of it, please, please!'

"She had drawn me to the sofa as she spoke, and hidden her face on my shoulder. Amid laughing and crying the words came out, all self-consciousness was gone, that unapproachable harshness of her nature had disappeared, and she was now like any other girl expecting her lover. She trembled and sobbed, and wound her arms tightly about my neck—the proud, cold Anna Maria had become a happy child. What a fulness of love and resignation now gushed from her heart, now that happiness touched it! 'So do laugh me well out of it, aunt,' she said, again.

"I stroked her hair caressingly; how gladly would I have laughed her out of it! But in my soul, too, there were doubts, inexplicable doubts; and why? There was really no reasonable ground for them, no, no! Susanna might have denied the walk in the garden because the evening air was prohibited on account of her health; and just because she stood under the linden and waved her handkerchief—was that any proof? And I thought of my letter to Stürmer, and really had to laugh.

"Anna Maria," said I, 'I will laugh at you, but you must laugh back at me. Only think, yesterday I sent an announcement of the engagement to Stürmer; I could not keep it to myself any longer that Klaus is engaged.'

"She straightened up with a start.

"Heavens, the papers! I forget everything. The banns—I must see to that first, aunt.'

"To-day the hours seemed to pass much more slowly than usual. Toward four o'clock I sat waiting at the window; my heartbeat as violently as Anna Maria's, perhaps. She, I knew, was down-stairs in her room, restless and anxious. Half-past four struck, five, and Stürmer was not yet here. Instead, Susanna came into my room and sat down opposite me; she had her kitten in her arms and began to play with it.

"I should have liked to send her away, but no suitable excuse occurred to me at that moment. It is fearful how slowly the minutes pass when one is counting them in anxious expectation; heavy as lead, each second seems to spin itself out to eternity, and one starts at every sound. No, that was a farm-wagon, now a horseman; ah! it is only the bailiff.

"Susanna felt my silence and restlessness painfully at any rate. 'Oh, it is fearfully tiresome in the country in winter!' she sighed. 'What can one do all day long?'

"Have you written to Klaus yet?" I asked.

"O dear, no!" she replied, with a suppressed yawn. "I don't know what to write him; I have no experience, I hear and see nothing."

"Well, an engaged girl is not usually at a loss for something to write to the future husband," I remarked.

"Indeed?" she asked, absently. "Yes, it may be, but I—I find it so stupid just to drag out variations of the theme, "I love you.""

"Klaus has written you, no doubt, Susanna, that you are to be published from the pulpit on Sunday?"

"She started, and stared at me with wide-open, awestruck eyes. 'I don't know,' she stammered, 'I—'

"But you must know what is in his letter," I said, impatiently.

"Yes, I—" She put her hand in her pocket and drew out a letter. "I haven't read it yet; I was going to this evening—but—"

"You have not opened the letter yet?" I cried, quite beside myself. "Well, I must say, this case is unparalleled! You complain of *ennui*, and yet carry quietly about in your pocket the most interesting thing that can exist for you! The variations on the familiar theme do, indeed, seem tiresome to you, Susanna!"

"I had spoken bitterly and loud. Susanna remained silent, and the same choking feeling of fear came over me as yesterday. I heard the girl sob gently, and was sorry at once for my vehemence.

"Susanna," said I, softly, "you are standing before a very serious turn in your life, and you trifle along like a child!"

"She suddenly broke out in loud weeping. "What can I do, then?" she cried, wringing her hands. "Have I not a will of my own? must I be treated like a child?" And the passionate little creature flung herself on the floor and embraced my knees. "Have pity on me, dear, dear Fräulein Rosamond. Do not let me be unhappy. I—"

"She got no further; the door opened, and the sound of Anna Maria's voice came in, so constrained, so forbidding, that my heart stopped beating, and the girl sprang up hastily from the floor.

"Aunt Rosamond, Susanna—Baron Stürmer wishes to—say farewell to you."

"I can see them all so plainly as they were at that moment: Anna Maria, pale to her lips, holding firmly on to the back of a chair for support; Stürmer beside her, his eyes fixed on Susanna; behind them Brockelmann with the lamp, and the trembling, sobbing girl, clinging to me, a troubled expression on her tear-stained face, and her great eyes unintelligently returning the man's look.

"At the first moment all was not clear to me; I did not understand how Stürmer had come to Anna Maria, but that a deep wound had been made in a young human heart, that I saw, and an icy chill crept over me.

"Anna Maria," I stammered, and sought to free myself from Susanna's arms. Then Stürmer came up to me.

"I am going away to-morrow for a long time, Fräulein Rosamond," said he, in a firm, clear voice, "and want to take my leave of you. It is a hasty decision of mine, but you know that is my way. I thank you, too, for the letter, Fräulein Rosamond." He kissed my hand and turned to Susanna. There was a tremble on his lips, as with a formal bow, he expressed a brief congratulation on her engagement.

"She looked fixedly at him, as if she did not understand him, her arms slipped from my waist, and she made a movement toward him; but he had already turned away. He bent again over Anna Maria's hand and left the room. I can still hear the closing of the door and his reëchoing steps in the hall, and can still see the vacant expression with which Anna Maria looked after him. She was standing, drawn to her full height, her proud head slightly bent, yet she seemed inwardly broken, and a ghastly smile lay on her firmly closed lips.

"Anna Maria!" I cried, hastening over to her. She did not look at me, but pointed to Susanna, who had slipped, fainting, to the floor.

"Her!" she said, lifelessly—"he loves *her!*—both love *her!* And I?" She passed her hands over her forehead. "Nothing more, aunt, nothing more, in the great wide world; nothing more!"

"She bent down to the unconscious girl and raised her in her arms, and the beautiful head with the dark curls rested on her breast. Anna Maria looked for an instant at the pale, childish face, and then carried her over to her room and laid her on the bed.

"Take care of Susanna," said she to Isabella, who stood before the bed, wringing her hands. "If it is necessary, send for the doctor." She went past me out of the room; I hurried after her; what did I care for Susanna at this moment?

"Anna Maria," I begged, "where are you going? Come into my room, speak out, have your cry out;

do not stay alone, my poor, dear child!

"She stood still. 'I do not know what I should have to speak about, aunt—and cry? I cannot cry. Don't worry about me; nothing pains me, nothing at all. I would like to be alone, I must think about myself. Do let me.'

"She went away with as firm a step as ever; she even turned down a smoking lamp in passing, and the sound of her deep, pleasant voice came up to me from the stairs as she spoke to Brockelmann; then I heard her steps die away in the hall.

"What sort of storm may have shaken her in her solitary room I know not. When, late in the evening, I listened at her door there was no sound of movement within; but that she watched through the saddest hours of her life in that night, her pale face, her sunken eyes, and the expression about the corners of her mouth told me the next day.

"Ah, and over it all lay, like a veil, that old coldness, and her fair head was poised just as obstinately as before, and her words had an imperious sound. Anna Maria was not desperate, Anna Maria had no passionate complaints to make. With her maidenly pride she had subdued the sick heart; no one saw, now, that it was mortally wounded. The pain within, the struggles, they were *her* affair. Who would dare even to touch that closed, strongly guarded door?

"And so the next morning she went up to the bed in Susanna's room, where the sobbing girl lay. Susanna had begun to cry on regaining consciousness the day before, and kept on crying, as if she would dissolve in tears. Isabella sat by the bed, with a red face; she had doubtless talked herself hoarse with consolatory arguments during the night; now she was silent and feigned ignorance of all that had passed. 'I don't know, Fräulein Anna Maria,' she whispered, 'what is the matter with Susanna—these unfortunate nerves; I don't understand it!' She looked very much cast down, the little yellow woman.

"'Susanna,' said Anna Maria, clearly and severely, 'stop crying, and tell me the cause of your trouble; perhaps I can help you.'

"'Oh, heavens! no, no!' screamed Isa, vehemently, pressing close up to Anna Maria. 'She is so excited; don't listen to her words, she doesn't know what she is saying!'

"But Susanna made no answer; she stopped sobbing, turned her head away from Anna Maria, and lay still as a mouse; but in the quick rising and falling of her bosom one could see how excited she was.

"'Be calm, Susanna,' repeated Anna Maria; 'and where you are, I have to speak with you concerning the explanation of a great mistake.'

"She turned quietly from the invalid, and observing the glasses beside the bed, asked Isabella if Susanna liked lemonade, and went away. She had given me only a hasty greeting; now she came back, and we stood together in the hall, and I held her hand in mine.

"That words of consolation were not to be thought of in dealing with a nature like Anna Maria's, I knew well; yet I could not help tears coming into my eyes as I looked at her. She looked at me for a moment, her face quivered as with a passionate pain, and the sobbing sound came from her breast. But she composed herself by an effort, and pointing to Susanna's door, said: 'There is the worst thing—my poor Klaus!' She pressed my hand, and then went about her household duties as usual. It is not every one that would have done as she did!

"When I entered Susanna's room again I found her sitting up in bed, wringing her clasped hands. 'Nobody has asked *me* about it!' she repeated, amid streaming tears; 'my wish is of no account; they have pushed me away where they wanted me to go! And now, now—' She murmured something to herself, which I did not understand, and stopped weeping, only to begin anew with the passionate cry: 'No one loves me, no one!'

"'Do not listen to her,' Isabella implored me; 'she really does not know what she is doing; leave me alone with her! The little creature was in a thousand terrors. She ran from the bed to the window, and then back to the bed; she called the weeping girl all sorts of pet names, she besought her by heaven and earth to be quiet—it was in vain. Susanna wept herself into a state of agitation that made us fear the worst; she struck at Isa, and then wrung her hands again, like a person in perfect desperation. I stood by, helpless; as long as the girl was in this state of excitement I could not step up to her, and say: 'Susanna, what have you done? You have given your word to a man of honor, and you love another! You have made mischief in the house which was so hospitably opened to you; you have made three human hearts miserable! Is that your gratitude for all this kindness?'

"And then her cry, 'No one asked me; they pushed me away where they wanted me to be, and I had not the power to defend myself!' sank deeply into my heart, and my thoughts went back to that evening when she had run away in the storm and rain, and how Klaus had brought her back, and called her 'his!' Had he asked if she loved him? No; he had not even thought of the possibility that such might not be the case; he had gone away with firm confidence in her love. And then Anna Maria had pressed her to her heart one day, and called her 'sister,' and Klaus had come, and had put the engagement ring on her hand. She had not dared to send him away, and had gone on, in her light manner, trifling with that engagement ring, while becoming deeper and deeper involved in the passion for another. Her lover was away, he did not hear her. Now Stürmer was going into the wide world, a fresh thorn in her heart. Susanna was shaken out of her

dreams, and near despair. And Anna Maria, and Klaus—what was to become of them?

"Then Brockelmann brought me a letter from Stürmer. I went into my room and read it; it was written from Dambitz, and ran as follows:

"HONORED FRÄULEIN:—I do not like to go away from you without a word of explanation, or without thanking you for your letter, which kept me from taking a step which would have been painfully hard for me in more than one respect. You have, with delicate tact indeed, rightly discerned that Susanna Mattoni is not an object of indifference to me, and you wanted to save me from a disappointment. My dear Fräulein Rosamond, why should I deny it? I love Susanna very much, and I intended yesterday to beg for your mediation in my suit. I *had* to suppose that she returned my love.

"I have no luck in your house—a second time I have been bitterly undeceived. Now I have come to consider myself one of the most arrogant men the world contains. Anna Maria does not love me. I required years to get over that first disappointment; it was not easy, for I believed myself perfectly sure of her reciprocal love. Well, I succeeded at last; I will even assert that Anna Maria was right. We were ill-suited to each other; perhaps she would have been unhappy with a man of such entirely different inclinations. Then I see Susanna and—love the betrothed of my best friend!

"What remains to me? Again I turn my back on my home and seek to forget.

"In Bütze everything will remain as of old, and I—go. But I do not like to leave you, who have suspected it, in darkness. Pardon me if I have caused you anxiety; I did so unconsciously. Think of me kindly! When I come home again some day, Susanna will be the wife of my friend, and I—a calm man, who will have forgotten all the dreams of youth. I kiss your dear hands, and beg you to let what I have said here remain our secret. Susanna will be most likely of all to suspect why I went—she will secretly mourn for me, but only soon to forget me in her young happiness.

"Farewell, with most heartfelt respect,

"Your most devoted

"EDWIN VON STÜRMER.'

"The sheet trembled in my hands, and every instant tears hindered my reading.

"About half-past three in the afternoon Pastor Grüne came with his sister to offer congratulations on the engagement. Ah, me! yes, yesterday the appointment for publishing the banns was made. Anna Maria and I sat in painful embarrassment, receiving the hearty congratulations of the two old friends. They inquired for the young bride-elect, and the pastor praised her beauty and her happy, child-like nature. When he saw Anna Maria's pale face, he took her hand:

"My dear child,' said he, kindly and earnestly, 'marriages are made in Heaven. God leads the hearts together, and when they have found each other no human being may disturb them. So few marriages are made to-day out of true, unselfish love that it ought to be a real joy for every one who experiences it, to see a couple go before the altar who are restrained by no earthly consideration from belonging to each other in true love. God's blessing be upon Klaus von Hegewitz and his bride!' He was much moved, the old man who had held Klaus and Anna Maria over the font, but in surprise he let the girl's hand drop, with a look of disapprobation at the cold, unsympathetic face. She did not answer a syllable.

"My old friend had, a little while before, drawn a sheet of paper from her knitting-bag and put it in my hand. I first glanced at it now; it was the printed notice of the engagement of Klaus and Susanna. 'We received it this morning,' she nodded, 'but I saw it yesterday at Frau von R——'s at Oesfeld; I was there to coffee. You ought to have been there, Rosamond, to see how the ladies contended for that little sheet.'

"I looked in alarm at Anna Maria, who blushed suddenly and then grew pale again. Now the engagement was in everybody's mouth, and up-stairs lay the bride-elect, wringing her hands and weeping for another! Of what importance was Anna Maria's own sorrow in the face of that which threatened Klaus? She seized the sheet, and after the first glance pushed it from her in abhorrence. It was a most painful quarter of an hour, and many, many such followed that day.

"The news of Klaus's engagement had spread with lightning speed. Visitor after visitor came; it seemed as if the whole neighborhood wished to make our house a rendezvous. Carriage after carriage drove into the court; people whom we had not seen for years came to offer congratulations on the happy event. Anna Maria sat like a statue among the questioning, chattering people, and with trembling hands and ashen face Brockelmann offered refreshments. The faithful old soul felt with us the pain that every question gave; only by an effort could she suppress her tears, and as she passed me she said, in a hasty whisper: 'I truly believe the end of the world is coming!'

"Anna Maria had, nevertheless, forced a smile. She said that she was sorry not to be able to present Susanna, but the young girl had been suddenly taken ill; it was to be hoped it was nothing serious.

"But now do tell us how it came about. When did he become acquainted with her? From what

sort of a family does she come?' asked the elder ladies.

"Is she pretty, Fräulein Rosamond? Ah, do describe Klaus von Hegewitz's *fiancée* to us; she must be something remarkable!" the young girls teased me.

"And beneath all these curious, interested questions there lurked something which could not be defined and which seemed like a very slight sort of surprise, and I heard Frau von B—— whisper to the wife of Counsellor S——: 'The sister doesn't seem exactly enchanted?' and she was answered: 'No, her rule is at an end now; until now she has just had the good Klaus under her thumb.'

"Poor Anna Maria! she answered all the questions so mechanically. She told them that Susanna was very beautiful; she said that the girl's father had been a most fatherly friend to her brother—but the way she did it was strangely stiff and uncomfortable. They looked at her in surprise and interchanged glances.

"Meanwhile the brisk housemaid brought the lamps and lighted the candles on the old chandelier of antlers, and the outside blinds were closed with a creak. Some of the guests rose; the ladies looked about for their fur cloaks, the gentlemen took up their hats. I thanked God, for Anna Maria's appearance frightened me. Then something unexpected happened, something which caused me to drop back into my chair, quite disconcerted. Brockelmann had suddenly opened the door, and there stood one whom I had certainly not expected to see at that moment—Susanna! Isabella's small figure was seen for an instant in the background, then the door closed again.

"A pause ensued, all eyes being directed toward the young girl. She was really embarrassed for a moment, and this gave her beauty an additional bewitching charm. Like a shy, confused child she stood there, in the little black lace-trimmed dress, which so peculiarly suited her, her head somewhat bent, and the blush of embarrassment on her cheeks.

"It was an infinitely painful moment, for Anna Maria did not take a step toward her. I saw how Susanna's beseeching eyes turned away at her fixed look, which seemed to ask: 'What right have you to be here?' and here her lips were firmly closed. It was only one moment; the next I was standing by Susanna and introducing her as Fräulein Mattoni, and therewith the ice was broken. They crowded about her, shook hands with her, and devoured her with admiring eyes. Her cheeks grew crimson, her eyes shone, and not a trace of the morning's tears remained; the mouth which had poured forth such fearful laments now smiled like a child's, and Anna Maria stood alone yonder. God knows what pain she must have felt!

"The guests sat down for another minute, out of respect to Susanna, and after the storm of customary formalities had subsided, they spoke of country life, wondering if a city girl could accustom herself to it. They asked Susanna how the Mark pleased her, and at last the old wife of General S——, whose estate touched Dambitz on the south, remarked: 'Tell me, Fräulein von Hegewitz, is it true that Stürmer is going away on a journey again?'

"She had turned to Anna Maria, who was sitting bolt upright beside her, and whose color now suddenly changed. 'He is on his way to Paris, your excellency,' she replied.

"The butterfly!' joked the amiable old lady. 'I did hope that he would settle down here with us, but he seems to prefer the unfettered life of a bachelor. To Paris, then?'

"Well, Paris is not a bad place for a man of Stürmer's stamp,' said Captain von T——, smiling, who was known as a pleasure-loving man. 'Any one who can avoid it would be a fool to bury himself in this old sand-box and the *ennui* of the Mark.'

"Anna Maria looked into space again. Susanna's eyes sparkled at these words; she seemed to be considering something, and then she laughed. Was this the same Susanna whom I had seen afflicted to death this morning, who was now sitting, in all the bliss of a happy bride, among these people, and turning red with pleasure at each admiring look? Oh, never in my life was there so long a half-hour as this!

"And now, at last, the guests rose and took their departure. Susanna was commissioned on all sides with greetings and congratulations for Klaus, and she thanked them with her most charming smile and a beaming look from her great eyes.

"By Heaven, Fräulein,' said the captain to me, twirling his mustache, 'your future niece is the prettiest girl I ever saw, a pearl in any society. I hope the young ladies will not disdain our winter balls?' He turned to Susanna with this request: 'The place is not very comfortable, but the society —' He kissed the tips of his fingers, murmuring something about the crown of all ladies, and Susanna laughed and promised to come, 'because she was so fond of dancing.'

"And by the time the last of the guests were in their carriage Susanna had made at least a dozen promises which all had reference to a pleasant, lively intercourse. We accompanied the guests to the steps; in the confusion of parting words Susanna must have taken herself off, for when the last carriage rolled away I was standing alone beside Anna Maria in the dimly lighted hall.

"Come, my child,' said I, taking her cold hands and drawing her into the room. And then she sat in Klaus's chair for perhaps a quarter of an hour, without speaking a word, her hands folded on the table, her eyes cast down. The clock ticked lightly, the wind rustled through the tall trees out-of-doors, and now and then a candle sputtered; it began to seem almost uncanny to me, sitting there opposite the silent girl.

"Anna Maria!' I cried at last.

"She started up. 'Yes, come,' she said, 'We will ask her! Rather the shrugs of those people than a misery here in the house. I would rather see Klaus unhappy for a time than deceived all his life long. Come, aunt.' And with firm step she went out of the room, along the corridor, and up the stairs.

"I followed her as quickly as I could; my heart beat fast with anxiety and grief. 'Anna Maria,' I begged, 'not to-day, not now. Come into my room, you are too excited.' But she walked on. Upstairs, in front of Susanna's door, I perceived by the light of the hall lamp a great flat chest; white tissue-paper showed under the lid, which had not been tightly closed.

"'What is that?' Anna Maria asked Brockelmann, who was just coming out of the room.

"'The chest came from Berlin to-day,' the old woman replied; 'I suppose from the master.'

"Anna Maria nodded and opened the door quickly. A flood of light streamed out toward us, and surrounded the slender white figure before the large mirror; soft creamy satin fell in heavy folds about her, and lay in a long train on the floor; a gauzy veil lay, like a mist, over the nearest arm-chair, and a pair of small white shoes peeped out from their wrapper on the table. She turned around at our entrance, and stood there with a shamefaced smile—Susanna Mattoni was trying on her wedding-dress.

"Anna Maria let go of the door-handle and stepped over the threshold, looking fixedly at Susanna, her face crimson.

"'Take off that dress!' she commanded, in a voice scarcely audible from excitement.

"Susanna drew back in alarm, and turning pale looked up at Anna Maria.

"'Take off that dress!' she repeated, in increasing agitation; 'you are not worthy to wear it. So help me God, this wretched comedy shall come to an end!'

"'Anna Maria,' I begged, full of fear, catching hold of the folds of her dress, 'keep calm! For God's sake, stop!' But she paid no attention to me; the girl, usually so cool and collected, was beside herself with pain and anger. Her *own* suffering she had borne in silence; but the thought of Klaus, the conviction that he was deceived where he had completely surrendered his kind, honest heart, robbed her of all consideration and self-control.

"Susanna stood speechless opposite her, an expression of penitence on her childish face. She was incapable of a defence, of an apology. Then, as ill-luck would have it, the old woman stepped between them, with a theatrical gesture placing herself in front of Susanna.

"'Do not forget that you are standing before your brother's betrothed,' she said, with a tone and a gesture which would have been ludicrous at any other time.

"Anna Maria contemptuously pushed the small figure aside like an inanimate object, and laid her hand heavily on the girl's shoulder. 'Speak,' she said, with a wearily forced composure; 'do you not feel what you are on the point of doing? Are you then still so young, still so spoiled, that you have entirely lost the sense of honor and duty? Is this wretched comedy your gratitude for all that this house has given you?'

"Susanna tried to shake off her hand.

"'I do not know what you mean!' she cried, in anxious defiance; 'I have done nothing wrong!'

"Anna Maria stared at her as if she could not grasp the words. There was a pause of breathless silence in the room; then the storm broke loose, and the proud girl's wrath carried her away like a whirlwind.

"'You have done nothing wrong?' she blazed forth. 'You have done nothing wrong, and you are on the point of deceiving the best of men; you are ready to perjure yourself? Your eyes have looked after another, and wept for another. I tell you, so long as I have power to move my tongue, I will not cease to accuse you before my brother! He shall not fall a victim to you!' And she shook the girl violently for a moment; then, recollecting herself, she pushed back the delicate form. The girl fell staggering to the floor, and struck her head heavily against a carved chair-back.

"It was a fearful moment; Susanna had cried out in pain as she fell, and Isa now held her in her arms and wailed. The girl's eyes were closed, but a narrow red stream was trickling down from her temple, staining the white lace of the bridal dress. A sort of numbness had come over us; even Isa grew silent, and with trembling hands dried the blood on Susanna's cheek.

"Anna Maria looked absently at the swooning girl; then suddenly, recollecting herself, she threw her hands over her face, and hastily turning around, left the room. I helped Isabella carry Susanna to the bed, and take off the unfortunate dress. It is still hanging in the wardrobe over there, just as we hung it up at that time, with the blood-stains on the white lace frill. Isa did not speak; she did all in a tearless rage. Now and then she kissed the girl's small hands, and dried the tears that were trickling, slowly and quietly, from under the dark lashes, over the young face.

"I did not speak either; what would there have been to say? I went away to look for Anna Maria as soon as I saw that Susanna was coming to herself, and left it to Isa to put the compresses on the wounded temple.

"I found Anna Maria in the sitting-room, in her chair, with her spinning-wheel before her, as on every evening, but her hands lay wearily in her lap, and her eyes were cast down. As I came nearer she started up and began to spin; her foot rested heavily on the frail treadle, her hands trembled nervously as they drew the threads, and her face was fearfully white and her lips tightly closed, as if no friendly word were ever to pass them again in the course of her life.

"Anna Maria," said I, stopping in front of her, "what now?"

"She did not answer.

"You have let yourself be carried away," I continued. "How will it be now between you and Klaus?"

"Again she made no reply, but the treadle of the spinning-wheel broke in two with a snap; she sprang up, and pushed back the stretchers. 'Leave me, leave me,' she begged, putting her hand to her forehead.

"Write to Klaus; tell him he must come," I advised. She sat down again, and leaned her head on her hand. 'I will bring you paper and ink, Anna Maria, or shall I write?'

"She shook her head. 'Do not torment me,' she wailed; 'I no longer know if I am in my senses; leave me alone!'

"I still lingered; she looked fearfully. Her face was so pale and distorted one could scarcely recognize the blooming, girlish countenance. 'Go,' she begged; it is the only thing that you can do for me.'

"I went; no doubt she was right. In such an hour it is torment even to breathe in the sight of others. But why did she not fly to her room? I turned around once more at the stairs; I wanted to ask her to drink a glass of lemonade, and go to bed. The sitting-room was dark, but through the crack of the door which led to Klaus's room came a ray of candle-light; she was in there.

"Two days had passed since that evening, and Anna Maria continued to go about without speaking. At dinner she had sat at the table, but had eaten nothing, and she wandered about for hours through the garden, in rain and storm. Brockelmann insisted upon it, with tears, that I ought to send for the doctor, for her young lady was bent upon doing something which, she thought, pointed to the beginning of a disease of the mind. Anna Maria was no longer like herself. Did she rue her violence, or did she fear seeing Klaus again? I knew not. She had not written to him. I intended to do so in the beginning, but then gave it up; he *must* come, and the more time that elapsed, the calmer our hearts would be.

"Susanna sat by the window up-stairs, in her room, a white cloth bound about her forehead, and her eyes, weary and red with weeping, looked out upon the leafless garden. I had been to her room several times to speak with her as forbearingly as possible. I wished to set before her her own wrong, to tell her that a warm, almost idolatrous love for Klaus, and the fear that he might not be happy, had driven Anna Maria to an extreme. But here, too, I met with silent, obstinate resistance—that is, I received no answer, only that Isabella said to me, with a sparkle in her black eyes: 'She has been abused, and she has been pushed, my poor child!' Whether or not Susanna had written to Klaus I did not learn."

CHAPTER XVI.

"It was almost evening, on the 13th of November, as an extra post drove quickly into the court. 'Another visit!' was my first thought, so many people had been turned away in those days. 'You will fare no better,' thought I; 'you will soon turn around and drive home.' But, no, the carriage stopped, and a gentleman swung himself out. My heart stood still from fear—Klaus! How came Klaus to-day?

"Should I hurry out to meet him? Prevent him from meeting Anna Maria? Prepare him, forbearingly? But how? Could I speak of the conflict without mortally wounding him? It was too late already; I heard his step on the stairs; he was going up to Susanna first of all; he had probably been told that she was up-stairs. I stepped into the hall quite unconsciously, and at the same time Susanna's door opened, her light figure appeared on the threshold, then she flew toward the man who was standing there with outstretched arms. 'Klaus, Klaus! my dear Klaus!' sounded in my ear, tender and exultant with joy. Oh, Anna Maria, if you were to speak to him with the tongue of an angel it would avail you nothing; it is too late!

"I saw Klaus press the slender figure to him, and saw her throw her arms about his neck, and again and again put up her lips to be kissed; and I heard her begin to sob, first gently, then more vehemently, and cry: 'Now all is well, all, now that you are here!' And she clung to him like a hunted deer.

"I stepped back softly; I still saw how Susanna drew him into her room, caressing him, and heard his deep, passionate voice; then the door was closed behind them. 'Caught!' said I, softly, 'caught, like Tannhäuser of old in the Hörfelsberg!' And bitter tears ran from my old eyes as I went down-stairs to go to Anna Maria.

"Brockelmann came toward me in consternation. 'The master is here,' she called to me, 'but Anna

Maria will not believe it.' I went into her room without knocking; she was sitting on the little sofa, her New Testament before her on the table. In the dying daylight her great blue eyes looked forth almost weirdly from the face worn with grief.

"Klaus has come, my child,' I said, going up to her.

"She looked at me incredulously.

"I have seen him, Anna Maria; it is true.'

"Where is he, then?' she asked. 'Why does he not come to me?'

"My dear child'—I took her hand—'Klaus is with Susanna.'

"She let her head drop. 'But then he will come,' she said; 'he must come, of course! He will want something to eat, and he will want to scold me. I wish he would tell me how bad I am, how unjustly I have acted, so that I might tell him everything, everything that lies so heavily on my heart. Perhaps, perhaps my voice may penetrate him once more, when he thinks of all that we have lived through in common, when he thinks how I love him!'

"I pressed her hand and sat down silently beside her; that sweet, clear 'Klaus, Klaus! my dear Klaus!' still rang in my ears, and then the sobbing. And now, if he should hear from her own lips why she wept? If he should lift the white cloth from her brow? The calmest man would become a tiger, and he was not calm, any more than Anna Maria—God help them! I trembled at the thought of those two standing face to face.

"And the darkness fell and concealed the objects in the room; before the windows the branches of the old elms swayed, ghost-like, in the wind, ever bending toward us, as if beckoning with their lean arms. And Anna Maria waited! At every sound in the house she started up—I thought I heard her heart beat—and each time she was deceived.

"At last, at last! That was his step on the stairs! She rose, all at once, to her full, proud height. 'Klaus,' she said, 'my brother Klaus!'—as if she must be encouraged in mentioning the entire, intimate, sacred relation in which they stand to each other—'my only brother!' In these few words lay the destiny of her whole life.

"The sound of Klaus's voice came in to us; it sounded as if he were giving various orders; now it came nearer in the hall, then the steps retreated, and at last reëchoed the creaking of the front door.

"He is going!' shrieked Anna Maria, 'he is going, and I have not seen him, and he has not asked for me!'

"No, no, my child,' I sought to calm her, 'he is not going away, he cannot go; whither should he? Only be calm; he wants to speak to the bailiff, or to see about his baggage. Let me go, I will find out; and you—come, sit down quietly in your place. I will bring Klaus to you, I promise you.'

"It was an easy thing for me to lead her back from the door and push her to the sofa; the tall, strong girl seemed stunned by anxiety and weariness.

"I kissed her forehead and hurried out; Brockelmann was in the hall, coming toward me with rapid steps. She looked heated, and her white cap was all awry on her gray hair. She carried a lighted candle in one hand, and with the other quickly unfastened her great bunch of keys from her belt. The housemaid followed her with a basket of fire-wood.

"Great heavens, gracious Fräulein,' said the old woman, when I asked, in surprise, the meaning of her haste; 'if I knew myself! The hall is to be heated and lighted; in an hour everything must be ready, and the dust-covers haven't been taken off for a whole year in there. I think the master has lost his head!' And with trembling hands she unlocked the folding-doors which led to the two rooms which, under the names of the 'Hall' and the 'Red Room,' had been, from my earliest youth, opened only on particularly important occasions. Here was formerly assembled, several times a year, a very aristocratic company, who, after a fine, stiff dinner-party, would close the evening with a dance; here had been held, for generations, the christening and wedding feasts of the Hegewitzes; here, too, had many a coffin stood, before it was carried out to the vault in the garden below.

"What did Klaus mean to do to-day? Involuntarily I followed Brockelmann into the hall; the candle lighted the great room but faintly; its feeble light made here and there a prismatic drop among the pendants of the crystal chandelier sparkle, and the gray-covered pieces of furniture stood about like ghosts. The old woman began to arrange things in the greatest haste, and under the hands of the maid the first feeble flame was soon flickering up in the fire-place. I beheld it as in a dream.

"What, for God's sake, does this mean?' I asked again, oppressed.

"Brockelmann did not reply at once; she wanted to spread out the rug in front of the great sofa. 'Go, Sophie, the fire is burning now; Christopher may come in a quarter of an hour to light the candles.—They will surely last,' she added, with a glance at the half-burned candles in the chandelier and sconces.

"The girl went; the old woman stopped taking off the dust-covers. 'One experiences a great deal when one is old and gray, and nowhere are there stranger goings on than in this world!' said she,

excitedly; 'but that anything like this should happen! Do you know, Fräulein, where he has gone, the master, without even having said "Good-day" to his sister? To Pastor Grüne. And there upstairs sits the old Isa, and has cut bare the little myrtle-tree which you gave to the—the strange young lady, so that it looks like a rod to beat naughty children with. And the young thing lies on the sofa, playing with her cat, and laughs out of her red eyes, and she laughs with all her white teeth, because things have gone so far at last. Gracious Fräulein, they have wept and lamented. If the master has lost his reason, I can understand it. Not an hour longer will they stay here in the house, the little one cried, where they were trodden under foot and scolded. And when the master sent for me he was holding her in his arms, and looked as pale as the plaster on the walls. I must put things in order here as well as possible, said he, but quickly—in an hour, Fräulein; there will be no more disturbance to be made about it. And though the king himself were to come, in an hour they will be man and wife.'

"'Is it possible?' I stammered. 'Anna Maria—' My head whirled about like a mill-wheel. It was decided, then; Susanna was to be his wife!

"Klaus had been stirred up to the utmost extent; that his hasty decision proved. Of what use would it be if I were to go now to Anna Maria and say: 'Compose yourself, it is not to be altered now!' In her present state of mind she would throw herself at his feet and accuse Susanna, though he were already standing with her before the priest. In his passion for this girl he would believe nothing of all this; he would require proofs. And proofs? Who would accuse her of infidelity? How could *she* help it that Stürmer loved her? That she had wept and wrung her hands, was that anything positive? That Stürmer fancied himself loved by her, could that be made out a crime on her part? It would have been madness to excite Klaus further, to say to him now: 'Leave her; she will not make you happy.'

"With fixed gaze I followed the old woman about, and in restless anxiety saw her begin to light the candles beside the great mirror; their light was reflected from the polished glass and fell sparkling on the gilt frames of the family portraits; deep crimson color shone from the curtains and furniture, and a warm breath now came from the fire through the chilly air. Was it a reality?

"Then I started up. Anna Maria was still sitting alone and waiting; my place was with *her*. I found her in the dark, still in the same spot, and sat down beside her.

"'He has gone away,' she asked, 'has he not?'

"'No,' said I, 'he is coming back directly.'

"'To me?'

"'I do not know, my child.'

"'What is that loud slamming of doors?' she asked after a while. 'And why do I sit here so cowardly, as if I had something to fear, when I have done nothing wrong? I need not wait for him to come to me; I can go to him first.'

"And she stood up again. With firm step she went to the door, but before she could put her hand on the latch the door opened, and Pastor Grüne, in full official robes, crossed the threshold.

"Involuntarily the girl drew back at this unexpected appearance. The old man was plainly embarrassed. After a moment's hesitation, he went up to Anna Maria and took her hands. 'I come, commissioned by your brother,' he began. 'He wishes, through me, to put a request most fervently to your heart. Herr von Hegewitz intends, for reasons which he has not shared further with me, to consummate his marriage with Fräulein Mattoni to-day.'

"Anna Maria's pale face turned crimson. 'It is impossible!' she said, in a lifeless tone; 'it is not true!'

"'But, my dear child,' the old gentleman went on, laying his hands kindly on the girl's shoulders, 'look at me. I stand all ready in official robes to perform the solemn act. But first your brother would have peace made with his sister; he would not take this step until she, to whom he has been hitherto so closely bound in fraternal love, has again extended her hand to him in reconciliation.'

"'I am not angry with my brother,' came the denial.

"'Not with him, perhaps, but with her who in a short time will be his wife. His heart is heavily oppressed by this situation, and he begs you earnestly to speak a single word to his bride.'

"Anna Maria suddenly shook off his hand. 'I am to beg her pardon?' she cried, raising herself to her full height, her eyes flaming—'I beg Susanna Mattoni's pardon? Has Klaus gone mad, to think that I will humble myself before that girl? Go, Herr Pastor, tell him he must come himself to speak with me. I will fall at my brother's feet if I have grieved him, but I will also tell him what drove me to push the girl from me, and—go bring him before it is too late, or I—'

"'Anna Maria,' the old man broke in, raising his voice, 'cease from this defiance! Judge not, that ye be not judged, says the Scripture! You have no right to press yourself between these two; you have been prejudiced against your brother's bride from the first moment, you have judged her childish faults too harshly. Do you think by complaint to tear a man's love from his heart? Foolish child! then you do not know what love is, which forgives everything, overlooks everything. Stop, control yourself! Anna Maria, you have an uncommonly strong will, a courageous heart; do not

wholly imbitter the solemn hour for your only brother; it lacks already the consecration of a festal feeling. Your brother tells me he means to go away this evening with his young wife. Come, my child, follow your old teacher and pastor once more; come!

"She drew back a few steps. 'Never!' said she, gently but firmly.

"'Anna Maria, not so, not so; bitter regrets may follow,' he said, appeasingly.

"'Never!' she repeated. 'I cannot go against my conscience; I should be ashamed to stand at the altar and listen to a lie! I had placed my entire hope on speaking to Klaus, on begging him to leave her. He does not wish to see me, or he would have come. I cannot do what he wishes; believe me, I have my reasons. Farewell, Herr Pastor!'

"She turned and went to the window, and pressing her head against the panes, looked out on the sinking darkness of the November evening. She was apparently calm, and yet her whole body shook.

"Meanwhile a familiar step was heard outside, pacing up and down. I stepped out. 'Klaus,' I begged, looking in his pale, excited face, 'why this terrible haste?'

"'How am I to do it, then?' he cried, impatiently. 'I cannot stay here, I am still needed in Silesia, so I must take Susanna away; what else can be done? Do you think I will expose her to this treatment any longer? By Heaven, aunt, when the girl's desperate letter came, it was fortunate that I could not come here on wings, that the vexations of the journey, and in M—— the procuring of the marriage license, detained me, or I should not have been able to control myself. Anna Maria is a stubborn thing; she has no heart or feelings, or she would at least be ready now to hold out her hand to Susanna and me.'

"'Anna Maria loves you more than you think,' said I, grieved, 'and if she was angry with your bride, she had sufficient cause.'

"He stood still, white as chalk. 'Aunt,' he implored me, with a wearily maintained composure, 'do not completely spoil this hour for me. Susanna has told me everything, and Anna Maria, in her views of united prudery and onesidedness, has regarded as a deadly sin what was an innocent, perfectly innocent act on Susanna's part.'

"At this moment Pastor Grüne came out of Anna Maria's room—alone. I shall never forget the sad look with which Klaus met the eyes of the old man.

"So we three stood there; Klaus was just taking a step toward the door when in the same instant Isa stood beside him, as if charmed hither. She already had on her black silk dress, and her withered face shone with joy and triumph.

"'Susanna is waiting, sir,' she whispered.

"'I am coming,' he replied, and turning around he said to me: 'It is better for me not to see her. I know *her*, I know myself, and I wish to remain calm.'

"Indeed it was better! God knows what would have happened if they had met. I promised to be present at the marriage ceremony, but first I went again to Anna Maria. She was still standing at the window, and did not turn on my entrance.

"'Anna Maria,' said I, 'I will come back soon; you shall not remain alone long.'

"Then she suddenly slipped to the floor, and buried her head in her mother's old arm-chair. 'Alone!' she cried, 'alone, forever, forever!'

"A few minutes later I was on my way to the hall. Several lamps had been lighted in the corridor, and the servants, with curious, pleased faces, were pressing before the open door. The report that the master was to be married to-day had, with lightning speed, reached even to the village. Right in front by the door stood Marieken, looking anxiously into the lighted room, in which Brockelmann was still busy, helping the sacristan arrange the improvised altar. She put another pair of cushions before the table, covered with a white damask cloth into which the crest was woven, and set the heavy silver candlesticks straight.

"Pastor Grüne stood waiting at the back of the room. He came toward me with an inquiring look.

"I shook my head. 'She is not coming!'

"'It is bad,' said he, 'when a good kernel is covered by such a prickly shell. Anna Maria lacks humility and gentle love; she has no woman's heart.'

"'You are mistaken in the girl!' I cried, imbibited, with tears in my eyes. 'She is better than all the rest of us put together!'

"'And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,' said he, impressively, 'and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.'

"My poor, proud, honest Anna Maria! If they only knew what I know, if they could only see right into your heart! thought I, and bitterly my eyes fell on the ravishing, lovely creature, now crossing the threshold on Klaus's arm. She did not wear the unfortunate white dress; she was in that little black lace-trimmed dress which she had worn the first time Klaus saw her, nothing but the myrtle-wreath adorned with white flowers in her hair to remind one of a bride. But if ever

Susanna understood how to make her external appearance effective, it was now, as she came, without ornament or parade, to the altar. It was no wonder that Klaus did not turn his eyes away from her, that he pressed the delicate arm so closely to him, that he dismissed as groundless chattering what people might say about this pure, childish brow.

"And then the low whispering stopped; Pastor Grüne was beginning to speak.

"If I could only tell now how he opened his address! The words went in at one ear and out at the other; I saw only Klaus, his handsome face, so proud, so penetrated with kind, honest sentiment, with a glimmer of tender emotion over it; and I thought of Anna Maria lying over there on the floor, in pain and fear. Then I saw Klaus make a quick, convulsive motion, and now every word went to my heart:

"It was on this spot that you once stood by the coffin of your dead mother, holding in your arms a dear legacy, promising with hand and heart to take care of the child and protect her in all the vicissitudes of life. And the way you did this, it was a joy for God and man to see! There is no more intimate bond than that which united the orphaned brother and sister; and let not this bond be broken, let not the knot be untied by the coming of a third person! The wife—he turned to Susanna—'must be a peacemaker; she must strive that unity may dwell under her husband's roof; that she may be to him a blessing and not a curse! A love between brother and sister is not less holy than between married people. There are old, sacred claims which brother and sister have upon one another, and therefore, young bride, let your first word in your new life be a word of peace; take your husband's hand and join it in reconciliation with that other which is not folded here in this place with us to pray for you. Do not leave this house without a word of peace, even if you think injustice has been done you in this hour which gives you, the homeless orphan, a home and a protector. Be gentle and ready for peace; ask yourself how great a share in the burden you bear.'

"A few shining drops ran down the cheeks of the bridegroom, while Susanna, like a child, listened with wide-open eyes to the clergyman's words, evidently painfully affected by the seriousness which he imparted to the situation.

"Then the affair came quickly to an end; the rings were exchanged, the solemn decisive 'Yes' died away—Susanna Mattoni was Klaus's wife. The servants withdrew, the doors of the hall were closed, Pastor Grüne spoke a few more affecting words to Susanna, and Klaus silently pressed my hands.

"Brockelmann served a cold lunch and presented a glass of champagne; Isa brought in furs and cloak; the young couple intended to start in half an hour. Then the clergyman went away, Brockelmann and Isa had already left the room, and I was alone with Klaus and Susanna. He had drawn the smiling young wife to him. 'Susanna,' I heard him whisper, 'let us go to her, tell her that you forgive her; let us part in peace from Anna Maria, my sister.'

"The smile vanished, she stood there defiantly looking down to the floor, a deep blush on her face, and gradually her eyes filled with shining tears.

"My first request, Susanna,' he repeated beseechingly. She remained silent, but rising on tip-toe, flung her arms about his neck; with infinite grace her head was slightly thrown back, and she looked up to him with her sweet eyes moist with tears. Impetuously he drew her to him and kissed the red lips and the little red scar on her forehead again and again.

"I stole softly out. The word of peace remained unspoken!

"An hour later the candles in the hall were extinguished, the house lay dark and silent."

CHAPTER XVII.

"Anna Maria did not become ill, as we expected; hers was too firm, too strong a nature; but she had grown bitter and gloomy. She did not belong to that class of people whom a great sorrow makes tender.

"Joyless times followed that wedding—days and weeks, empty and cold. At first I had besought her to write to Klaus, not to let the breach become wider. She had answered me with a cold smile, and torn in two a letter from her brother after the first glance. I saved the pieces and found an effusion of honeymoon bliss, and nothing different could have been expected. Anna Maria had probably not observed the short business announcement that he had advantageously sold the estate in Silesia, and now thought of going to Paris with Susanna.

"Klaus wrote again, several times, to Anna Maria. She would carry a letter from him about with her all day, unopened, then occasionally tear it open, and begin to read, only to throw it into the fire before she had half finished. Later these letters to Anna Maria were discontinued. The old bailiff appeared now and then in the sitting-room, to tell her that the master had written him, and wished this and that, thus and so. Anna Maria would usually nod her head silently, and the man would stand, embarrassed, at the door a little while, and then go quietly away again.

"'Things are not as they ought to be any longer,' he declared to me. 'Formerly the Fräulein used

to concern herself about every trifle, so that I often cursed her zeal; to-day anything may happen that will, it is all the same to her; and even if all the barns and granaries should burn down in the night, she would not stir.'

"It was true, Anna Maria no longer asked about anything; she seemed to have sunk into a regular apathy. It was a grief to see this young creature, from whom everything on which her heart was fixed was taken, and who now, without check or purpose, in the most tormenting pain of soul, shut her eyes and ears in dark defiance.

"'Diversion!' said the doctor.

"I looked at him in astonishment. 'I beg you, you have known the girl since her childhood, have you ever known a time when trifles and nonsense could give her pleasure, or could divert her at all from a sorrow?'

"'Nonsense!' replied the old man, 'but she is only a woman. She ought to marry, then everything would be different! It would be a pity if that girl should become a dried-up old maid.'

"I shook my head sadly.

"'Why the devil is she so unreasonable, too, as to fret about her brother's marriage?' he continued, undisturbed. No gray hair need be made grow over that. Take the young lady, pack her trunk, and go to Berlin for a few weeks. Go to the theatre every evening for my sake, and see something classical; but take her away from here!'

"'Ah, doctor, you do not know Anna Maria.'

"I made an attempt, nevertheless. She let me have my say, and then said: 'I do not understand the outside world at all. I miss nothing here, I complain of nothing. Do not tease me any more!'

"When the workmen appeared, one after another, to put in order the rooms for the young couple, when the dear old articles of furniture were taken out and the wall-papers torn off, she fled to her room. The writing-desk at which her father had formerly sat and worked was to remain in its place, at Klaus's express desire; but the old thing looked so ridiculously awkward beside the *Boule* furniture that paper-hanger and cabinet-maker refused to receive it, so Anna Maria had it taken into her room. She now sat there all day at the window before her mother's sewing-table, and looked blankly out on the wintry garden, every stroke of the hammer from the workmen making her start. The bunch of keys no longer hung at her belt; Brockelmann had taken charge of that.

"No one came to see us in those desolate winter days, except the old brother and sister from the parsonage, and even from them she fled. I stood by her faithfully, and beheld the struggles of her proud heart.

"At first Isa had lived on quietly up-stairs by herself, disregarded by Anna Maria. Then one day toward Christmas she came into my room, beaming with joy, and announced to me that the young Frau wanted her to come to her; she was in need of her help at her toilet, and she was to have the position of lady's maid with her. '*Je vais à Paris ce soir, à Paris*, and from there to Nice. Oh, I speak French excellently!'

"I wished her a prosperous journey, and commissioned her with messages. Then I sat down and reflected. Klaus, quiet, easy-going Klaus, who valued the comfort of his arm-chair in the evening beyond everything, in Paris, the gay Paris, with a young wife who needed a maid to make her toilet? I could not make that rhyme without a dissonance.

"In the rooms down-stairs an exquisite elegance was being gradually revealed, and I learned from the workmen that the pale blue silk hangings of the boudoir (the little library next to Klaus's study was converted into a boudoir), and the dainty rosewood furniture, Frau von Hegewitz had chosen herself in Berlin; that the crimson silk drapery for the salon cost ten *thaler* a yard, and that the Smyrna rug in there was real. Tears came into my eyes. What had become of our dear old, comfortable sitting-room? What had we ever known of salons and boudoirs at Bütze?

"As in passing through the garden-parlor one day Anna Maria's feet sank in a Persian rug, and she perceived the low divans which ran along the sides of the room, and the gold-embroidered cushions; and as she caught sight of a gleaming, gay mosaic floor on the terrace instead of the honest stone flags over which her childish feet had so often tripped, on which she had stood so many a time beside Klaus; and saw, instead of the gray stone balustrade, a gilded railing, a slight tremble came upon her lips, and a few great tear-drops ran down her cheeks, and she slowly turned her back to the room. She always went to the garden through the lower entry afterward.

"It was on a stormy evening in March that Anna Maria for the first time broke her long, habitually sober silence. I had not seen her all day; her door remained closed to my knocking. And yet I would have so gladly said a few affectionate words to her—to-day was her birthday.

"In vain had Brockelmann made the huge pound-cake wreathed with the first snow-drops, and in vain placed a couple of blooming hyacinths on the breakfast-table. The door of Anna Maria's room had not been opened. A letter addressed to me had come from Klaus, requesting me to give to his sister the enclosed open letter. It was affectionately written, begging that she would soften her heart, and requesting a few lines from her hand. 'What sort of a home-coming will it be for Susanna and me,' he wrote, 'if the unhappy misunderstanding is not forgotten? We are ready to

consider all as not having happened, if you will come to meet us in the old love. Be friendly to Susanna, too. I can honestly confess to you that I long to be at home, in our dear old house, regularly employed. A life like this here is nothing to me; I always hated idleness. Susanna's health, so far as temporary demands are made upon it, is satisfactory; but for her, too, I wish, especially now, the quiet of the less exciting life at home. Let me once more add to the heartiest wishes for your welfare the desire that we may soon meet again in the old fraternal love.' A dainty visiting-card, 'Susanna, Baroness von Hegewitz,' with a lightly scribbled wish for happiness, lay with the letter.

"In his letter to me Klaus repeated that he was longing for home, that he earnestly besought me to induce Anna Maria to be gentle, for he made his home-coming especially dependent upon her state of mind, as he could not possibly expose Susanna now to excitement and unfriendly treatment. But he cherished a strong desire to return at the beginning of spring at the latest, for this and other reasons.

"The two letters lay before me on the table; how should I make their contents known to Anna Maria? For she read no letters at all. And how would she receive the news of his return? A change in her feelings was not to be hoped for so soon, not even at the announcement of this glad news.

"Brockelmann had come in and complained, with a shake of her head, that Anna Maria had not eaten a mouthful to-day, and it was four o'clock already. 'She is growing old before her time,' added the old woman; 'does she look now as if she were under thirty? Yesterday I brushed her hair and found two long silvery threads in it. O Lord! and so young!'

"In the depth of twilight Anna Maria came suddenly into the room. She did not say 'Good evening' at all, but only, 'Please do not allude to my birthday, aunt!' And after a pause she added: 'Things cannot remain as they are here; Klaus will want to come home, and then there will be one too many in Bütze. I have been considering lately how I should manage not to be in his way, and have at last decided to go at once to the convent in B——.'

"'You would grieve Klaus to death, Anna Maria,' said I; 'it does not do to carry a thing too far. You are both defiant, you are both stubborn, but Klaus has been the first to extend his hand, and he still offers it. Here, read his letter, read it just this once, and be of a different mind.'

"I lit a candle, and pressed the letter into her hand; and she really read it. A slight blush rose to her pale face, then she nodded her head seriously. 'Believe me,' she said, 'he will really be best pleased if he does not find me here. Write him that, aunt. In this way no possible conflict can ensue.'

"'Anna Maria, you would—you could really go away from here?' cried I, pained. 'How can it be possible? Truly I had expected more feeling, more attachment in you. You can be heartless sometimes!'

"She was silent. 'Stürmer is coming back next month,' she said at last, in a strangely trembling voice, 'and I would like to be as far away as possible.'

"I sprang up, and threw my arms around her. 'My poor, dear child,' I begged, weeping, 'forgive me!'

"And she went, she really went away! On one of the first days of April, early in the day, the carriage which was to take her away stopped before the front steps.

"Anna Maria went down the steps with me, followed by Brockelmann. She quickly got in, and drew her dark gauze veil over her face. 'Greet Klaus heartily for me,' she whispered to me again; 'all the happiness in the world to him and his wife!'

"Then she was gone, and I went quietly up the steps. It seemed unspeakably strange and lonely here to me all at once. I wandered through the newly furnished rooms; they had all been heated and the windows opened. Comfortable, elegant, very pleasant it looked all about here, as if made expressly for Susanna's beauty; but they were no longer the old Bütze rooms, with their ancestral comfort, their dear associations. I stood now in Susanna's little boudoir; I noticed a fold of the pale blue portière yonder hanging, out of order, over an indistinguishable object—the upholsterer surely had not intended it so. I went over and lifted up the heavy silk to lay it again in regular folds on the carpet, when my eye fell upon a little old wooden cradle, painted with a crest, and oddly curved, strangely contrasting, in its rude form, with the elegant appointments of the room; and gently rocking in it were shining white, fine, lace-trimmed pillows, daintily tied with little blue bows; a basket pushed half under the couch of the young wife concealed little clothes of the finest linen, most beautifully sewed, hem-stitched, and trimmed with lace, made as only a skilled hand knows how.

"'Anna Maria,' I said, softly, looking with moist eyes upon the old cradle in which she, in which Klaus had once lain, and which now stood here, a greeting of reconciliation to the heart of the young wife who had robbed her of her peace and happiness.

"Two days later there was a lively stir at Bütze. Unfortunately, a bad headache banished me to a sofa in my dark room, so that I could not welcome the young couple on the threshold of their home. But I heard up here the unusual moving about; the bell in the servants' room, which had been formerly so seldom used, rang a regular alarm, and there was such a slamming of doors and rushing and running about for the first few hours that I had to draw the thickest pillow over my

aching head in order to have any quiet.

"Klaus came up to me very soon; he sat down quietly by my bed and pressed my hand.

"You are glad to be at home again?" I asked kindly. "How is your little wife?"

"Thank you," he replied, "she is asleep now. I do not know; I must accustom myself to it first; it has been made so different, so strange, with all these alterations. And then"—he was silent—"one misses Anna Maria everywhere," he added.

"You incorrigible people, you!" I scolded vexatiously, "Bend or break, but not yield, and then perish with longing for each other! A silly, stupid set you are!"

"He made no reply to that. 'After three months in the country,' said he, 'I will go and get her. Now it is better that Susanna should remain alone.'

"You have been living very happily there?" I asked.

"Oh, Heaven, yes!" he replied. "The gay life was new to Susanna, and amused her delightfully. Thank God that we are here! How do you really like the rooms down-stairs?"

"Well, they are very beautiful, Klaus, without doubt. But if I am to be honest, it was more comfortable before."

"Susanna is quite enchanted with them," he continued. "But I had a melancholy feeling when I found the sitting-room without the old stove, the great writing-desk, and Anna Maria's spinning-wheel. I really cannot sit in these spider-legged easy-chairs without fear of breaking down." He laughed, but it had not a hearty sound.

"Shall you be able to eat supper with us?" he asked.

"I promised to do so if I were well enough. If you will let me sleep a little longer now, Klaus, I shall be able to come down." And then he went away.

"Toward evening I was awakened from a light slumber by the ringing of bells again; again I heard doors shutting, and footsteps of people hurrying to and fro. At the first instant I thought of an accident, but then recollected that it had been just so in the afternoon, and made my toilet and went down.

"The first person to step up to me was Mademoiselle Isa. She greeted me very warmly, and with a certain pretentiousness. 'The gracious Frau had drunk a cup of chocolate and was quite well,' she added, as she opened the door of the former sitting-room, which was agreeably lighted by two lamps, and pointed to the drawn-back portière: 'The gracious Frau is in her boudoir.'

"Indeed, I was curious to see Susanna again as 'gracious Frau,' and limped quickly across to the little room. The soft carpet had deadened the sound of my steps, and I entered the snug little room unperceived. Susanna was resting on the divan; I saw her beautiful black curls falling over the blue cushions, a tiny lace cap was half-hidden among them. Her face was turned toward the fire, which, notwithstanding the warm April evening, was burning brightly in the little fire-place.

"Susanna!" I called softly. She started up, and with a cry of joy fell on my neck. 'Aunt Rosamond, dear aunt!' she cried, and kissed and patted me with the pleasure of a happy child. 'My good Aunt Rosamond!' And she seized my hands and drew me, without letting go, to the sofa. She exercised the same old charm upon me; I had never been able to be angry with her; her grace was irresistible, and took heart and mind prisoner.

"I raised the round chin a little and looked at her. It was the old, sweet, childish face, only still more attractive by reason of a slight pallor and a strange, sad look about the mouth; the eyes had lost the questioning look which sometimes gave them such a peculiar expression, but I thought they had grown larger and more brilliant. She threw her arms about my neck again, and kissed me and laughed, and then came a tear or two, and then she laughed again.

"She chattered about Nice, about Paris, and said she wanted to live here quietly only a little while, and then fell on my neck again and whispered a thanks.

"No, no!" said I, smiling, "I am not guilty of that; your thanks belong to Anna Maria."

"She grew silent and pale. Then she sprang up and drew me into the salon. I had to gaze at a hundred things which she had brought with her—worthless toys, knick-knacks, fans, and all manner of folly, of whose existence I had never dreamed till now, and which struck me as infinitely useless. 'Klaus has had to give me everything, everything,' she cried, joyfully, 'except this. Aunt, do you see?' She pointed to a charming shepherdess of Sevres porcelain. 'That is a present from Stürmer.'

"I stared at her. 'Have you met him on the way?' She did not return my look, but her face glowed as rosy red as the ribbons on her white dress. 'Yes,' said she lightly, 'we were with him a day in Nice, but he went away in haste, and this is a souvenir.' And then she told me about the sea and the palm-trees, of gondola-sails by moonlight, till her cheeks grew crimson at the recollection.

"Ah, life is so beautiful, so beautiful!" she cried, "and—" She broke off, for Klaus entered. He wore a short coat and high boots, and his face was radiant with joy in the long-suspended activity.

"I have been clattering all over the fields," said he gayly, "and am tired as a dog, little wife, and

hungry and thirsty. Do you know what would particularly please me?' He pushed the curls from her forehead and kissed her. 'A slice of honest German ham and a good glass of beer! The French sauces had a miserable after-taste to me, brrr—! Holla! ho!' he called out at the door, 'will supper be ready soon?'

"He did not seem to notice at all that Susanna made a wry face at his declaring it was unnecessary for her to make a fresh toilet for supper, and that she took his arm reluctantly. 'Ah, but we will live here in comfort,' said he beseechingly, holding her two hands over the table, 'not as in a hotel. When we go to Nice again I promise you always to appear in dress-coat. Here I should have no time at all for the continual changing of dress; and as for you, you do not look more charming in any state costume than in that white thing there.'

"She shook her head, laughing, and showed him a little fist. 'Wait,' said she, 'what did you promise me?'

"Well, then, in the future,' he persevered; 'but to-day, and to-morrow too, let me enjoy the comfort I have so long done without—do.'

"Susanna smiled; and he ate German ham and drank German beer to his heart's content, while she took a roll spread with something or other, with her tea, which Klaus prepared for her. I saw, in astonishment, how carefully he made the tea, how he heeded her every glance; now attentively passed her pepper and salt, and now cut a fresh sausage and roll, or carefully removed bones and tail from a sardine, every instant asking if it tasted good to her, if she were satisfied with her rooms, if she liked the flowers in the salon. He treated her like a little spoiled princess.

"After supper I was going to withdraw; I thought they must be tired from their journey. Susanna had lain down again on her couch; she kissed me once more, and Klaus accompanied me as I went out. I saw that he held a book in his hand. 'Good-night, aunt,' he said, 'I am going to read aloud to Susanna.'

"For heaven's sake!' I cried, 'you are already yawning privately!'

"Yes, I am tired to-night,' he replied, 'but Susanna is so accustomed to it; she does not go to sleep before one o'clock.'

"Klaus, Klaus!' I warned him, 'if she has accustomed herself to it, let her become disused to it. Only think, when you want to rise early in the morning!'

"He heard me not. 'Aunt,' said he, holding me fast by the hand, his eyes shining so happily, 'is she not a good, charming little wife?'

"I smiled in his face. 'Very charming, Klaus!'

"And who prophesied to me that I should be unhappy all my life, eh?' he asked.

"Oh, Klaus, not I, indeed!' I contradicted earnestly. 'If Anna Maria had apprehensions, they were certainly not without foundation, and a housewife Susanna will never be.'

"No, she is not yet a German housewife,' he broke in, in a somewhat disheartened manner, 'but she can be, and will be yet.'

"I nodded to him: 'Sleep well, Klaus!'

"Is it not so?' he asked, holding me back.' You will write to Anna Maria that we are happy with one another; you will tell her how good and charming she is?'

"Yes, my boy, and now, good-night.'

"Anna Maria's letters were brief and meagre; her handwriting very large and angular, as it is to-day. She wrote me that she was very well there, occupied a pair of pretty rooms, and was much with the abbess, who had been a friend of her mother. 'But I miss activity,' she added; 'a life on the sofa, in the company of stocking-knitting and books, is hateful to me; that is not resting.' A greeting for Klaus and Susanna was added.

"I answered her, writing that Klaus worshipped his wife and was happy.

"May God keep him thus!' she answered laconically. She was not to be reached with that; she had no belief in a happiness with Susanna.

"Stürmer, who, as Anna Maria thought, was to come in April, was not yet here. He was a migratory bird, only without the regularity of one."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"May came on in the country in all its glory; the trees blossomed and the seeds sprouted, and Bütze lay as in a snowy sea. The sun laughed in the sky, as Susanna walked through the trim garden-paths on Klaus's arm. Now and then I saw her cross the court, with straw hat and parasol, in a light summer dress, and go a little way into the fields to meet him. The people stood still as she passed, the women and girls courtesied, the men made as deep a bow to her as to the rest of

us from the house, and the children ran up to her in troops, and the sound of their 'Good-day, gracious Frau,' and Susanna's clear, laughing voice came up to me; her charms fairly bewitched everybody. Then she would return on her husband's arm, a great bouquet of field flowers in her hands, he leading his horse by the bridle and carrying her parasol and shawl; and her chatter and his deep voice, calling her a thousand pet names, reëchoed from the old walls when they had come into the house.

"If Anna Maria could only have seen them thus, thought I, would she have been reconciled? Poor, lonely Anna Maria!

"Susanna never inquired for her; her stay here seemed to be entirely taken up with all manner of little trifles. Occasionally there came a perfect swarm of guests, and then the sound of laughing and chattering was heard in the garden-parlor till far into the night, and Brockelmann, with a very red face, bustled about at the sideboard.

"I don't feel my feet at all, any more,' the old woman would sometimes complain; 'I really must have some one else to help me. In old times one used to know it beforehand when there was to be a great supper; but if any one came unexpectedly, he took just what there was in the house and was satisfied. But how should I dare take thinly sliced ham and fresh eggs and a herring salad to the Frau? I tried it once—how she turned up her nose and begged her guests to excuse it! And then the master comes and says: "Good Brockelmann, though it is a little bit late, do get us a couple of warm dishes, and this and that, and a little fowl, for my wife does not like a cold supper when there is company; you must have some asparagus or green peas?" Heavens and earth! And then old Brockelmann is so stupid, too, as to run her heels off and make the impossible possible. Oh dear, oh dear, if Anna Maria knew how my storeroom looks, and my account books!"

"And she put her hands up under her cap and shook her head.

"You may believe it, Fräulein Rosamond,' she would sometimes add, 'the Frau is well enough yet, at least she doesn't concern herself about me; but the old woman—O Lord! She sticks her nose into everything, and more than a hundred times she has brought her chocolate out to me again—it wasn't hot enough, or was burned, or the Lord knows what! As if the old creature understood anything about it, anyway! Oh, yes, and then, if my patience is utterly exhausted, the master comes into the kitchen. "Good Brockelmann," he says, in his friendly way, "do keep peace with Isa, that my little wife may not be vexed." Well, then I keep still; but I see how he takes to heart everything that concerns his wife. And then I think how loud and angrily he has often spoken to Anna Maria in spite of all his love, and here he even spreads out his hands for the little feet to walk on!"

"Indeed, she had not said too much. He did lay down his hands for the little feet, and they walked on them without particularly noticing it. Klaus had a boundless love for his wife, and she received this love as a tribute due her. She had no conception of what she possessed in him.

"I do not know if he felt this. Occasionally, when Susanna was asleep, or making her toilet, or gone to a drive, and he had an hour to spare, he would sit with me up in my room, and would look so weary and oppressed. We spoke often, too, of Anna Maria; but when Susanna was present he did not mention her name, for at that a shadow regularly passed over her face, and her chattering lips grew silent.

"My old Anna Maria!" he would say; 'she is still angry with me, and yet she is such a good, reasonable girl.' The last words were unconsciously accented. 'How pleasant it would be if she and Susanna could live together like sisters—the unfortunate stubbornness. Do you suppose, aunt, she will come when the old cradle down-stairs—?' And his eyes grew moist at this thought.

"I do not know, Klaus, but I think so,' said I, 'if Susanna can only forget—'

"Ah, aunt, I place my entire hope on the cradle about her, too. Anna Maria shall be godmother; I will not have it otherwise. Please God, it may not be far off!"

"And was it then so far off? On a dull, sultry August night, I was still sitting in my easy-chair by the window, and could see distant flashes of lightning over the barns; the air was uncomfortable and stifling, or was it only the imagination of my old, restlessly beating heart, and my thoughts, which were below with Susanna, anxious and prayerful?

"Ah, what does not pass through one's soul in such an hour—trembling joy and happy fear, and each minute seems to stretch out endlessly. I listened to the walking down-stairs, to the sound of the opening and shutting of doors; would some one never come up with the glad news?

"And my thoughts wandered back to the night when Anna Maria was born, when I sat up here in the same fear and anxiety. Klaus had gone to sleep in the arm-chair over there. I had not disturbed him, had let him sleep, till his father came to call him to his mother's death-bed. The boy's pale, frightened face stood before me so plainly this evening, as he knelt before the cradle of his little sister.

"Below, in the court-yard, it was still as death; only old Mandelt, the watchman, was going slowly along, shaking his rattler; and above the slumbering world glittered the brilliant stars of the August sky as through a light mist.

"Then I started up; heavy steps were approaching my door, and now Brockelmann called into my room: 'A boy, Fräulein Rosamond! Come down-stairs—such a dear, splendid boy!"

"Never did I hurry down those stairs so quickly as on that night, nor did Klaus ever take me in his arms so impetuously, so full of thankful jubilation, as then, when he came toward me to lead me to the cradle of his child. The strong man was quite overcome, and the first words that he whispered to me were again: 'How Anna Maria will rejoice!'

"If ever a child was welcomed with joy it was this one. His presence worked like a deliverance upon us all; even Brockelmann and Isa spoke pleasantly to each other to-day. Isa's anxiety about her darling had reached the highest pitch, and she had left her place in the room of the young mother to the quiet old woman; and Brockelmann—well, she would not have been the honest old soul that she was not to rejoice with her master over his son. Whatever grudge against Susanna may have still lingered in her heart, this day wiped out; with a truly motherly tenderness she presided at the sick-bed. And did it fare better with me? I, too, old creature that I was, knelt down between the bed and the cradle, and kissed the little pale face again and again; in this hour everything with which she had once troubled us was forgotten.

"And Klaus sat at his writing-desk and wrote to Anna Maria. 'Do you think she will come?' he asked as he came in again. He had sent a special messenger to E— with the letter to his sister. 'Will she come?'

"'Surely, Klaus!' I replied.

"The messenger was gone three days; then he returned with a letter from Anna Maria. Heartfelt words it contained, here and there half blotted out by tears. She would come soon, she wrote, come soon—in a week or two, perhaps—but would it be right to Susanna?

"I was sitting by the bed of the young wife as Klaus came into the room with this letter. She was holding the small bundle of lace in her arms. Isa had had to adorn the young gentleman's toilet to-day with blue ribbons. Susanna played with him as if he were a doll, and wanted to know what color would best suit the young prince. She was so merry and pretty about it, and laughed so heartily when the little thing made a queer, wry face.

"'Oh, see, just see!' she called to her husband. 'Who does he look like now? Only look!' Of course we stood in dutiful admiration and looked at the little creature. But Brockelmann, who was just going through the room, said: 'Ah, I have seen it from the first moment. He has a real Hegewitz face; he looks most like his aunt, Anna Maria.'

"Susanna started up as if the greatest injury had been done her. 'It is not true!' she whispered, and kissed the child. But Klaus had heard it, nevertheless; he had grown very red, and slowly put the folded letter in his pocket, and an expression of disappointment passed over his face. He sat down by Susanna and kissed her hand, but did not mention his sister's name.

"What Klaus wrote in reply to Anna Maria I never learned; but he said: 'Anna Maria is always right; it was well that she did not come immediately, as I wished.'

"And three weeks more passed. Susanna already walked up and down on the gay mosaic pavement of the terrace occasionally, and Isa walked about in the sunny garden with the blue-veiled child. Then one rainy evening, about six o'clock, a slender woman's figure walked into my dim room.

"'Anna Maria!' I cried joyfully; 'my dear old child, are you really here again?'

"She put her arms around my neck and laid her head on my shoulder. 'Yes, aunt,' she said softly, and I felt her heart beat violently. 'Yes—but now take care that I may greet Klaus first alone; we have so much to say to each other!'

"He had entered, meanwhile, before I could answer. 'I saw you coming through the garden, Anna Maria,' he cried joyfully, holding her two hands; 'thank God that you are here again!'

"The next instant she fell, weeping, on his neck. They had so much to say to each other; I would not hear them beg forgiveness of each other, and went softly out.

"And Susanna? I asked myself. I found the young wife down-stairs in the salon the sound of her merry laugh came toward me. There were one or two ladies from the neighborhood there, and Isa had just brought in the child. There was so much laughing, chattering, and congratulating that I got no chance at first to inform Susanna that her sister-in-law had arrived. At last the ladies took their leave, and we two were alone. Susanna walked up and down the great room, playing with the child.

"'So stupid,' she scolded, 'that I don't know a single cradle-song! But I can't bear the silly things they sing here, about goslings and black and white sheep. But it is all the same, he doesn't understand the words.' And lightly she began the old refrain:

'Home have I come, and my heart burns with pain.
Ah, that I only could wander again!'

"'Susanna,' said I, quickly, 'Anna Maria has come back, a little while ago.'

"She stood still, as if rooted to the spot. I could no longer distinguish her features in the deep twilight, and she spoke not a word. 'Susanna!' I cried, in a low, reproachful tone.

"Just at that moment Brockelmann brought in a light. 'The master is coming with Fräulein Anna

Maria!' she cried joyfully. 'Oh, Fräulein, Anna Maria—how pleased she will be with that little doll!'

"Hand in hand Klaus and Anna Maria entered the room. She had been weeping hot tears, but now a smile was on her lips, and she went up to Susanna, who had dropped into the nearest chair.

"Let everything be forgotten, Susanna,' she begged. 'Let us be sisters!' She knelt beside her and kissed the slumbering child. 'I shall love him very much!' And now she raised her tear-stained face to Susanna and offered her lips, but the young wife slowly turned her head to one side.

"Anna Maria stood up instantly; a reproachful look met Klaus.

"Susanna!' said he, going up to his wife and taking the child from her arms, 'give Anna Maria your hand and be at peace with her!'

"Slowly she extended her right hand, coldly and briefly the two hands touched, then the young wife went quickly out of the room, and directly after Isa came to take away the child.

"Why have I come?' said Anna Maria, bitterly.

"Klaus walked up and down with long strides. 'Forgive her, Anna Maria,' he begged; 'she is still ill, still weak. I will speak quietly with her.'

"No, Klaus,' replied the girl; 'wherefore? I will be no disturber of the peace. She is your wife, you are happy, and I—I will go away again.'

"But this is your father-house! This is *your* home as well as *mine*!' he cried, irritated. 'By Heaven, I would never have believed that it was so hard for two women's hearts to agree!'

"Isa called him to Susanna. He went in; we heard him speak loud and vehemently, and then heard Susanna crying.

"I shall go away again to-morrow, aunt,' said Anna Maria, and her pale face with the red eyes had the old stubborn expression. 'I did not come to make discord.' How I pitied the girl! I knew well how hard it had been for her to take the first step toward Susanna, what a struggle it had cost her proud heart, and yet she had done it for Klaus's sake, and for—

"Klaus returned, leading Susanna on his arm; he took her hand and placed it in Anna Maria's.

"There now, be reconciled," he said, with a sigh. 'Give each other a kiss; there must be no more allusions to old tales. I forbid it herewith!'

"They did kiss each other, but their lips touched only lightly. We then sat down, and Klaus and I started a conversation with difficulty. Anna Maria talked about her convent, but after had to stop; it seemed all the time as if she were choking down the tears. Susanna spoke still less, and only answered when Anna Maria asked about the child, and upon a direct remark of Klaus. Brockelmann, who summoned us to the table, burst out with the question whether Anna Maria were to assume the direction of the housekeeping again.

"I am not going to remain here,' she replied, smiling sadly.

"We shall see about that,' said Klaus, quickly. 'First of all, the child is to be baptized, and then I have so much to talk over with you—everything has been lying over! No, you can't go away again so quickly.'

"When is the christening to be, then?' I asked.

"Oh, we have not talked about that at all yet, have we, Susanna?' said he, turning to her.

"No, but it must be soon,' declared the young wife. 'Isa says it is not proper to wait more than four weeks.'

"As you like,' he replied, heartily glad to have the way paved for some sort of an understanding. He hoped, indeed, that these two would become reconciled, and that Anna Maria would stay in the father-house.

"Yes, she did stay, but it came about in a different way from what he thought.

"Anna Maria came in search of me the next morning. To-day I first saw how she had altered; her face had grown thin, and fine lines were drawn about her mouth. She was sad and sat still by the window.

"Have you seen the baby to-day?' I asked cheerfully.

"She shook her head. 'Klaus wanted to take me in with him, but Isa said Susanna was at her toilet. I only heard him try his voice.'

"And have you talked with Klaus about the christening?'

"She nodded. 'On Monday,' she replied, 'and in the day-time. Susanna wishes a great festivity.'

"Well, Brockelmann will be in despair!' I cried; 'and Klaus will not be exactly enchanted. But what is he to do?'

"What is he to do?' asked Anna Maria, in astonishment. 'He is to exercise his authority as her

husband, and say "No!" Great heavens! has she entrapped you all together, that you still do what *she* wishes?' She had sprung up. 'Everything, everything here dances as she pipes, even Brockelmann. She has trained you all like poodles; you do beautifully, if she only raises a finger!'

"Anna Maria, I begged, 'do not be so angry right away; she is still ill, and she——'

"No, no,' cried the girl, 'it is dreadful here! What has become of Bütze, our dear old Bütze? Where now are order and regularity? Everything goes topsy-turvy, and things run over each other in order that the gracious Frau need not wait. Whether or not the master of the house gets his dues, or the servants theirs, is of no consequence, if only madame smiles and is friendly. I wish I had never come back!'

"Anna Maria,' said I, 'are these your good resolutions?'

"Oh, have no fear,' she replied, her lips quivering. 'I have repented bitterly enough letting myself be carried away *once*; I shall not do so again. But in my father-house I shall not stay; the torment would be greater than I should be able to bear.'

"She went to the window and looked out. Klaus was just riding in at the gate; he had probably been in the fields. His eyes sped to the ground-floor, and he kissed his hand up there. 'Susanna is standing at the window with the child,' thought I.

"Klaus looks fatigued,' remarked Anna Maria. 'Is he well all the time?'

"I think so,' I replied; 'at least, I do not remember his having complained.'

"Complained!' she repeated. 'As if Klaus would ever complain!'

"But he did complain; we met him at the breakfast-table down-stairs. Anna Maria was right; he looked wretchedly. 'I have a fearful headache,' he said, as she looked at him with a troubled face.

"Susanna did not hear it. 'Klaus,' she begged, coaxingly, 'we will illuminate the garden day after to-morrow, shall we not? Will you get me some more colored paper lanterns?'

"Yes, Susy, willingly,' he replied; 'but I have no messenger. If you had only spoken of it earlier; Frederick has already gone to the city for Brockelmann, and I can spare no one from the harvesting, for I must make use of the little good weather.'

"But you did know it, Klaus,' she pouted; 'I thought it would look so charming when evening comes, with the whole garden hung with lanterns.'

"He passed his hand over his aching head. 'Forgive me, my darling, I had forgotten it; I had so much on my mind. You shall have the lanterns.'

"Have you written the invitations, Klaus?' the young wife continued.

"Yes, yes,' he replied, 'I did it all very early; they are already on the way, and you shall have the lanterns to-morrow.'

"To-morrow?' she asked, disappointed.

"If my headache is better I can ride over this afternoon,' he said.

"Anna Maria sat by silently and looked at her plate. Then Isa brought in the child; Susanna was still eating. 'Oh, do give it to me,' begged Anna Maria, her eyes shining. She rose and went to the window, and scrutinized the little face.

"He resembles our family, Klaus,' she said; 'he has your nose and your kind eyes.' And she kissed him tenderly.

"Isa had hurried out again. There was a great din in the usually quiet house; beating and brushing everywhere, and everything seemed to be turned upside-down. Klaus rose at length. 'Anna Maria,' he asked, going up to her, 'would you help me to go over some things in my books which it is necessary to attend to?'

"She looked up joyfully. 'Gladly,' she said, 'but must it be done to-day? You look so wretchedly.'

"Yes,' he replied, 'I would like to put the matters in order; the headache will surely go away.' I took the child from Anna Maria, and the brother and sister went out.

"Klaus did not come to dinner; he had gone to lie down. When he appeared at coffee he looked red and heated. Anna Maria looked at him in concern. 'Only don't be ill, Klaus,' she said anxiously.

"He smiled. 'Perhaps the ride to the city will do me good.'

"For Heaven's sake!' cried Anna Maria and I in one breath. 'You surely are not going to take that long ride?'

"Oh, it will do no harm!' And he looked tenderly at Susanna, who lay on one of the low divans, playing with the bows of her dress. She made no reply; she did not say: 'If you have a headache, why stay; it is only a childish wish of mine.' She did not ask: 'Is it really so bad?' She was simply silent, and Klaus went to order his horse.

"Susanna,' begged Anna Maria, very red, 'I think he really has a violent headache; do not let him

go.' She spoke in real anxiety. Susanna stared at her coolly. 'He is his own master,' she replied, 'he can do as he pleases.'

"Yes; but you know that only your wish—if he should be ill you would reproach yourself.'

"Susanna laughed. 'Klaus ill? How funny! Because he has a little headache?' And she went humming into the next room. Then we heard her call out of the window: 'Good-by, Klaus, good-by!'

"She means no harm,' I said, taking Anna Maria's trembling hands.

"It is heartless!' she said, and went down into the garden.

"Klaus did not return until nearly dark.

"Your package will come soon,' he said to Susanna. 'Stürmer has it in the carriage; I met him in the city; he had just arrived with the Lüneburg post.'

"Stürmer?' she asked, in an animated tone. 'Did you invite him to the christening, Klaus?'

"No; indeed, I forgot it,' he replied.

"She flung her arms about his neck. 'Oh, do write to him yet,' she coaxed. 'Yes, please, please! Mercy,' she cried then, 'you are quite wet!'

"Well, it has been raining hard for two hours,' he replied. 'But don't be offended if I do not write to-night, for I feel miserably; to-morrow will do? I would like to lie down.' He kissed her forehead and went into his sleeping-room. I saw how he shivered, as if he had a chill. 'Thank God that Anna Maria did not hear,' I thought; but I went to tell her that Klaus was not feeling well, while Susanna sprang up to hasten to her writing-desk, and with a happy smile took up a pen.

"Anna Maria was in her room. I told her that Klaus was lying down on his bed. She sat quite still. 'Poor Klaus,' she whispered.

"Stürmer is back again, too, my child,' I added. She made no answer to that. We sat silent together in the dark room.

"After a while Brockelmann's voice was heard at the door. 'Fräulein, perhaps it would be better if you were just to look after the master. The gracious Frau'—she spoke lower—'probably knows no better; she sits there chattering to him, and he doesn't seem at all well to me.'

"Anna Maria had sprung up impetuously. Then she slowly sat down again. 'Dear aunt, go,' she begged.

"Willingly,' I replied; 'I only thought you should be the one to go to him.'

"I?' she asked, in a tone that cut me to the heart. 'I? No; it is better that I should not go; I could not keep calm.'

"I found Klaus's sleeping-room brightly lighted, Susanna sitting by the bed, her tongue going like a mill-clapper. Over the nearest chair hung a pale blue silk gown, richly adorned with lace; the candelabra were burning on the toilet table, and the lamp stood on the little table beside the bed, throwing its dazzling light right into Klaus's red eyes. He held a cloth pressed to his forehead and was groaning softly.

"From out-of-doors came the sound of beating carpets and furniture, and in the hall opposite they were at work with wax and brushes, none too quietly.

"Then I may send off the note, Klaus?' Susanna was saying. 'Can Frederick ride over now, or shall the coachman take it? Do you think Stürmer is at home by this time? Klaus, do answer, dear Klaus!'

"He made a motion of assent with his hand, and turned his head away.

"If you are so tiresome, I sha'n't try on the dress again,' she pouted.

"But, dear child,' I whispered, 'do you not see that your husband is ill?' I took away the lamp, and laid my hand on his white forehead.

"Ah, only a little quiet,' he moaned.

"Come Susanna.' I begged the young wife, gently; 'go over to your room; I think Klaus is in a high fever, and he must have quiet.'

"Susanna looked at me incredulously. 'But it will be better to-morrow?' she asked quickly. 'You will be well again to-morrow, won't you, Klaus?'

"He nodded. 'Yes, yes, my darling; don't worry.'

"Well, then, I will go away quickly, so that you can sleep. Good-night, Klaus!' she said, taking the silk dress on her arm. And she hastily bent over him and kissed his forehead. Then she disappeared, but her silvery voice floated over here once again: 'Isa, Isa, here; Christian is to go to Dambitz directly, to Herr von Stürmer; he must wait for an answer.'

"Suddenly Klaus gave a deep groan. 'My poor boy.' I lamented over him; 'are you feeling very

badly?'

"'I think I am going to be very ill,' he whispered. 'I can't control my thoughts, everything turns round and round. Anna Maria, bring me Anna Maria.'

"Brockelmann was just outside in the hall. 'Call the Fräulein,' I bade her, 'and make them be quiet outside.' Anna Maria came, and went up to the bed. He seized her hand.

"'My old lass,' he said feebly, 'I fear I shall give you a great deal to do.'

"'Do you feel so ill?' she asked anxiously, and bent down to him. He groaned and pointed to his head. 'Don't worry Susanna,' he begged.

"Anna Maria did not answer, but she had grown very pale. Then she set about procuring him some relief. Cold compresses were soon lying on his forehead, a cool lemonade stood on the table by the bed, and outside the tired horses were once more taken from the stable, to go for the doctor. It had become quiet in the house, quiet in the next room also. Susanna lay in her boudoir, reading; she did not know that the doctor had been sent for, she did not hear how her husband's talking gradually passed into delirious ravings, or know how his sister sat by the bed, her fair head pressed against the back, and her eyes fixed on him in unspeakable anxiety.

"When the doctor came, Susanna was sleeping sweetly and soundly; and with noiseless steps Isa carried about the awakened child, that it might not disturb the mother.

"Klaus was ill, very ill. The dreadful fever had attacked him so quickly, so insidiously, and had prostrated him with such force, that a paralyzing fear came over the spirits of us all.

"The servants went about the house whispering, no door was heard to shut, and the bailiff had straw laid down in the court, so that no sound might penetrate the curtained sick-room.

"Susanna would not believe at all that Klaus was seriously ill. She had come merrily into the room, the child in her arms, and had found the doctor at the bedside, and looked in Anna Maria's red eyes. She resisted the truth with all her might. 'But he must not be ill,' she cried, 'just now. Oh, doctor, it is too bad!' But when the confirmation in the wandering looks of the invalid was not to be rejected, she flew to her sofa and wept pitifully. It was not possible to reach her with a word of consolation; she sobbed as I had seen her do but once, and Isa knew not which she ought to quiet first, the screaming child or the weeping mother. But Susanna did not for a moment attempt to make her hands useful at the sick-bed.

"The doctor came again toward evening. The fever was raging with increased power; Klaus talked about his child, called for Susanna, and even in his delirium everything centred in his wife. Sometimes he seized Anna Maria's hand and pressed it to his lips, with a half-intelligible pet name for Susanna; he called her his darling, his wife. And Anna Maria stroked his forehead, and tear after tear rolled down her cheeks.

"'Shall I have her called?' I asked the doctor. The old man shrugged his shoulders. 'Well, since she has not come of her own accord, she spares me a great deal of trouble,' said he; 'I should have had to carry her out. She is still weak, and——'

"I went away to look up Susanna. Isa informed me that she was in the salon.

"'Is she still crying?' I asked.

"The old woman shook her head. 'Baron Stürmer is in there.' I heard Susanna's voice through the portières. I heard her even laugh. My first impulse was to hurry in, but it suddenly became impossible to me. I only looked at the child, and went away, weary and weakened from watching and anxiety, up to my room.

"A basket of garlands was standing in the corridor, and beside it the package of the unfortunate lanterns. The baptism was to have been to-morrow, but the coachman was already on his way to inform the numerous guests that it was given up, as the master was ill. My God in heaven, let not the worst come, be pitiful! What would become of Susanna, of his child—ah! and of Anna Maria?

"Then I sat down in my arm-chair and listened to the pattering of the rain, and the wind blowing against the windows; after a little while there came a knock at my door, and Edwin Stürmer entered. He was quite changed from what he used to be; indeed, the news of Klaus's illness might well make him so. Conversation would not flow. I could not help thinking of how I had last seen him, when he took leave of Susanna and me; how she had wept, and how he had written to me afterward. 'There have been great changes here!' said I, in a low tone.

"He did not answer immediately. 'How does Anna Maria get on with—with her sister-in-law?' he asked.

"'Anna Maria?' I was embarrassed. Should I tell him that those two had not learned to understand each other yet?

"'She is here very little,' I said at last; 'she has been living in the convent since Klaus's marriage.'

"He started. 'Still the old quarrel?' he murmured. 'Anna Maria never liked her; I noticed it from the beginning. She is a strange character. There are moments when one might believe she has a heart; but it is ever deception, ever delusion!'

"Edwin,' I cried bitterly, 'you think you have a right to affirm that; you are mistaken! Perhaps she has more heart than all of us.'

"It may be,' he remarked coldly, 'but she never shows it.'

"He too, he too! My poor Anna Maria! If I could have taken him down to the sick-room, if I could have shown him how she knelt beside her brother's bed and buried her weeping face in the pillows, if I could say to him: 'See, that is the secret of all her actions; she has too much heart, too much generosity. She has done everything for the sake of her only brother, who once lost a happiness on her account.' If I only might show him this—"

"Slowly the tears ran from my eyes.

"I did not mean to grieve you, Aunt Rosamond,' said he, tenderly. 'I am in a hateful mood, and ought not to have come over. The empty house has put me out of humor; an old bachelor ought to have no house at all—everywhere great empty rooms, everywhere solitude. One wants to talk to one's self to keep from being afraid. I knew it well, and for that reason put off my return from day to day.' He gave a shrug. 'I shall go away again; that will be the best thing.'

"I now first looked at him attentively. He had altered, he had grown years older. I did not know how to answer, he had spoken so strangely. After a while he rose. 'I wish for improvement with all my heart. Do not worry; God cannot wish that he should go now, right from the most complete happiness.'

"God cannot wish it! So we mortals say when we think it impossible that some one should leave us on whose life a piece of our own life depends. God does not wish it—and already the shadow of death is falling deeper and deeper over the beloved face. Such times lie in the past like heavy, black, obscure shadows; that they were fearful we still know, but *how* we felt we are not able to feel again in its full terror.

"Days had passed. Anna Maria had long ceased to weep; she had no tears, for breathless fear. Without a word she performed her sad duties, and listened benumbed to the wandering talk of the invalid—Susanna and the child, and ever again Susanna.

"Then came a day on which the physicians said, 'No hope.' In the morning Klaus had recovered his senses, and Anna Maria came out of the sick-room with such a happy, hopeful look that my heart really rose. She beckoned to me, and I took her place at the sick-bed for a moment.

"He reached out for my hand. 'How is Susanna?' he said softly.

"Well, dear Klaus; do you wish to see her? Shall she come in?"

"No, no!" he whispered, 'not come; it may be contagious—but Anna Maria?"

"She will be here again directly, Klaus,' said I. And, as if she had been called, she came in at the door, and, kneeling by his bed, laid her cheek caressingly on his hand.

"Anna Maria,' he complained, 'my thoughts are already beginning again—my child, my poor little child—'

"She started up. 'Klaus, do not speak so, dear Klaus!'

"It is so strange,' he whispered on; 'I don't see Susanna distinctly any longer, but I hear her laughing, always laughing. I shut my ears, and yet I hear her laugh.'

"Anna Maria gave me a sad look. 'I will stay with your child, Klaus,' said she. He pressed her hand. His eyes were already glowing feverishly, and all at once he started up, the sound of a silvery laugh came in. Susanna was actually laughing, perhaps with her child—I know not. The next moment the door opened a little way. 'How is Klaus to-day?' she asked.

"Anna Maria did not answer; her eyes were looking at Klaus; he had already fallen back, and his fingers began to play, unnaturally, over the silk quilt.

"I hastened to Susanna. 'He is not very well, my child,' I whispered to her; 'the fever is returning.' Her face grew grave, and she quietly closed the door. 'Always the same thing!' I heard her say, disappointed.

"Stürmer came toward evening, almost at the same time with the two physicians. Susanna was sitting in her blue boudoir, reading. With a sigh of relief she laid her book on the table when Stürmer was announced. He entered quickly. 'Well,' said he, sympathetically, and breathing fast, 'I hear he is not so well again to-day?'

"Susanna gave him her hand. 'So-so, baron,' she replied; 'they are not very wise about the case. The physicians themselves do not know what they ought to say, and Anna Maria is so fearfully anxious, and Aunt Rosamond no less so. They think he is going to die right away. People do not die so easily, do they?' she asked confidently. 'I know from myself; I have been delirious, I—'

"She got no further, for our old family physician suddenly came into the room. I knew what he meant as soon as I looked at him—Klaus was worse.

"Susanna gave him her hand, and went to the bell to order wine, she said. Isa came with the child and presented it to the old gentleman. 'How is my husband?' asked Susanna. 'He is better, is he not, than Aunt Rosa's and Anna Maria's funeral faces predict?'

"He did not answer, but looked at her, almost benumbed. At last he said slowly: 'All is in God's hands. He can still help when we mortals see no longer any way before us.'

"Susanna sprang up out of the chair in which she had just taken her seat, the color all gone from her face. Her horrified eyes were fixed on the old man's face as if they would decipher if those words were truth. And when she saw his unaltered, sad expression, she began to totter, and would have fallen to the floor if Edwin Stürmer had not caught her.

"'Is it really so bad?' he asked the doctor, reluctantly, as he carried the young wife to the couch.

"'The end has come,' he replied, looking after Susanna.

"She had lost consciousness only for a moment. She awoke with a loud cry, and now all the passion that dwelt in the delicate woman broke forth in its full force. She screamed, she fell at the doctor's feet; he should not let Klaus die, she could not live without him! She wrung her hands and began to sob, but not a tear flowed from her great eyes. She sprang up and threw herself upon the cradle of the child, whose frightened crying mingled with a terrible sound with her sorrowful laments: 'I will not live if Klaus dies, I will not!'

"'Calm yourself, gracious Frau,' bade the doctor, much shaken; 'think of the child, take care of yourself.'

"'I made him ill,' screamed the young wife. 'I sent him to the city in the rain, in spite of his feeling poorly then; I am guilty of my husband's death!' The lace on her morning dress tore under her convulsively trembling hands; she ran up and down the room, accusing God and demanding death. Silently Isa took the cradle with the child and carried it into another room. Meanwhile Dr. Reuter had poured a few drops of a sedative into a spoon and begged the young wife to take it.

"She pushed the medicine out of his hand. 'I will not!' she cried, sobbing. 'If you knew anything you would have saved Klaus! Oh, if I had only taken care of him! But you did not let me go to his bed once, and now he is dying!'

"'Susanna, control yourself,' said I, severely, as the doctor shrugged his shoulders. 'Is this proper behavior in the hour in which a human life is making its last hard struggle? Surely there should be peace,' I added, weeping.

"She grew silent, not at my words, but at the entrance of Anna Maria.

"'Come, Susanna,' said she, in a lifeless tone, 'let us go to Klaus. Before the last parting, the doctor has told me, there sometimes returns a clear moment. His last look will seek you, Susanna, he has loved you so much.'

"The young wife let herself be led away without resistance, but her face had grown deathly pale. When they reached the door, she tore her hands impetuously away from Anna Maria's. 'I cannot!' she cried, shuddering, and turning her terrified eyes toward us; 'I cannot see him die, I cannot!'

"Anna Maria looked sadly at the young creature, who was now on her knees before her, beginning afresh her despairing lamentations. Then she silently turned away and went back to Klaus. We carried the young wife to the sofa, and Dr. Reuter busied himself with Isa about her.

"I started to go into the death-chamber, and Edwin Stürmer followed me. In going out he cast a peculiar look at Susanna. In the next room, through which we had to pass, stood the cradle; alone and unwatched slumbered the poor little fellow in it, without a suspicion that the black wings of death were hovering so near to his young existence. 'No hope!' They are fearful words.

"Stürmer came with me into the chamber of death. I did not wonder at it; it seemed to me as if it must be so, as if he, the best and oldest friend of the family, had a right to come to the dying bed of our Klaus. Anna Maria was on her knees beside the bed, her hands folded; she was waiting for that last look.

"Then the house grew still, the servants stole about on tip-toe, and outside, before the front door, stood the day-laborers and the men, with their wives, looking timidly and with red eyes up to the windows. Edwin Stürmer sat opposite me, deep in shadow, behind the curtains of the bed; he leaned his head on his hand, and looked at Anna Maria and at the pale face there on the pillow. I could not distinguish his features, but I heard his deep and heavy breathing. I do not know if Klaus looked at Anna Maria again, I could not see the two from my place. But I heard him whisper once more: 'My child—Susanna' and 'Anna Maria, my old lass!' with an expression of warm tenderness.

"It was deathly still in the room; no sound but the swift, low ticking of the clock. I started up all at once at this stillness. When I came up to the bed Anna Maria was still on her knees and holding her brother's hand, her fair head buried in the pillow.

"Seized by a terrible foreboding, I went up to her. She started up. 'My only brother!' she sobbed out. To my heart penetrated this shrill, broken cry: 'My only brother!'

"Then I heard the door open softly, and saw Stürmer go out; he held his hand over his eyes, though it was so dark round about us, so fearfully dark."

CHAPTER XIX.

"As formerly Anna Maria had been baptized beside the dead body of her mother, so now was the little boy at his father's coffin. On the same spot where, scarcely a year before, the clergyman had married the young couple stood the black, silver-mounted coffin, almost covered over with wreaths and flowers. The folding-doors of the hall were opened wide; the last crimson ray of the setting sun fell through the windows and made the light of the numerous candles appear feeble and yellow, and touched Anna Maria's face with a rosy shimmer, as she bent over the child in her arms.

"The long white christening-robe of the child contrasted strangely with the deep black of the mourning dress which enveloped the tall figure of the girl. I stood beside her, my hands resting on the child; by my side was Isa in a profusion of black crape. A throng of mourners filled the hall, gentlemen and ladies. I do not remember who they all were, but I can still see Stürmer's pale face.

"A chair had been placed aright for Susanna, and she sat in it as if petrified in pain and sorrow—a strange sight, this child in widow's garb. The raging pain had abated, she had wept and sobbed herself weary; now only great tears rolled down her marble cheeks. Bluish rings lay about her eyes, and made them shine more ardently than ever. She kept her slender hands folded and listened to the words of the clergyman, a picture of the most hopeless and comfortless pain.

"How many eyes then grew moist; how the servants wept outside the door! The clergyman spoke affectingly; once before he had thus baptized a child in this house. A quiver went through Anna Maria's tall figure, but she pressed her lips firmly together. She did not weep, she only pressed the child closer to her; then she took it to the young mother. I can still see how Susanna sat there, with the little boy on her lap, as the clergyman blessed them. She bent her head so that the black veil almost covered her and the child.

"But now the clergyman passed on to the funeral address, and when he mentioned the full name of the dead man I saw Isa spring up quickly—the young wife had fainted. She was carried to her room. A murmur of sympathy went through the assembly. 'A bruise for her whole life,' I heard whispered behind me. 'Poor young wife—still half a child! She will never recover from it!'

"Of Anna Maria, who stood there, no one thought. No one had said a sympathetic word to her. All the pity belonged to the young widow, still so young, so charming, and already so unhappy! They knew she was not on good terms with her sister-in-law. They knew Anna Maria only as proud and cold.

"Anna Maria, if they could have seen you late that evening, in the dark garden, at the fresh grave; if they had found you, as I found you, so undone with grief and pain, kneeling on the damp earth, unwilling to leave the flower-strewn mound under which your only brother lay—would they not have granted you, too, a word of sympathy?

"Those were sad, dreadful weeks which now followed, weeks in which we, first regaining our senses, began to miss him who had left us forever. Everywhere his kind, fresh nature, his ever-mild disposition, were wanting. It seemed every moment as if he must open the door and ask in his soft voice: 'How are you, aunt? Where is Anna Maria?'

"Anna Maria! The whole weight of the extensive household management rested on her shoulders, the whole wilderness of the inevitable domestic business which her brother's death had caused. She found no time to indulge in her grief. She had to drive into the city at fixed times, she had to look through Klaus's books, letters, and papers, with her trembling heart. And if then, in her swelling pain, she but threw her hands over her face, she always regained the mastery over herself, and could work on.

"Susanna mourned in a different way. She fled to her little boudoir, and always had some one about her. She was afraid in bright daylight, and in twilight her heart would palpitate, and she was short of breath, and Isa had to read aloud to her constantly. The little boy, who had been named 'Klaus' for his father, was not allowed to be called so; she called him her little Jacky, her treasure, the only thing she had left in the world, and yet sometimes would start back from the cradle with a cry, he had looked at her so terribly like Klaus!

"Then came the mourning visits from far and near, and Susanna received them in the salon. She sat there, so broken down, her charming face surrounded by the black crape veil, the point of her little widow's cap on her white forehead, and her black-bordered handkerchief always wet with bitter tears.

"Anna Maria was never present during such calls. She fled to the garden and did not return till the last carriage had rolled away from the court. She was gentle and tender toward Susanna—'he loved her so much!' she said softly.

"It was November. In Susanna's little boudoir the lamp was lighted, and the young wife lay, in her deep black woollen dress, on the blue cushions; she held a book in her hand, and now and then cast a glance at it. Occasionally she coughed a little, and each time quickly held her handkerchief to her lips. I had come down, as I did every evening, to look after her and the child. The little fellow was already asleep—'thank God,' as Susanna added. The nurse was probably asleep with him in the next room, it was very still in there. Isa was bustling busily about the stove, for it was

bitterly cold out-of-doors; on the table beside Susanna lay a quantity of colored wools, as well as a piece of embroidery begun, and extremely pleasant and comfortable was this little room. Who in the world could have desired a more comfortable spot on a snowy, stormy evening?

"Where is Anna Maria?' I asked pleasantly, after the first greeting.

"Susanna shook her head. 'I don't know,' she said feebly, and let her book drop.

"Fräulein Anna Maria is in the master's cabinet,' Isa answered. 'Herr von Stürmer has just ridden away.'

"Susanna's eyes flamed up for a moment. 'Why did he not come in here?' she asked. She raised herself a little. 'Ah! aunt,' she whispered, 'I think I am going to be ill. I have a constant irritation in my throat, and I feel so wretchedly. Dr. Reuter said last week I ought not to spend the severe winter here. Ah! and yet I cannot bring myself to decide to go away.'

"I can feel with you, my dear child,' I returned. 'I would not go either, in your place.'

"Her eyes suddenly filled with tears. 'Yes, it is all the same if I die *here!*' she replied.

"Oh, don't believe any such thing, Susy,' I said jestingly. 'You must live for your child; you are exhausted by all this dreadful affair; the winter will soon be over.'

"At this juncture Anna Maria entered. 'How are you feeling, Susanna?' she asked kindly.

"I am ill,' sobbed the young wife; 'very ill! I shall stifle yet in these overheated rooms; I have not your sound lungs.'

"Anna Maria looked down at her in astonishment. 'I am very sorry for that,' she said sympathetically.

"Oh, if Klaus were only alive, he would have gone south with me long ago!' cried Susanna; and Isa shook her head doubtfully.

"That was Anna Maria's weak spot. 'Dear Susanna,' she said tenderly, 'if it is necessary, then go. I know that you are delicate, that you have a cough; let us consult with the doctor to-morrow, and decide where. And then we will pack you both up and—'

"Both?' asked Susanna. 'That is just it; I cannot take the baby with me!'

"And you cannot make up your mind to part from him?' Anna Maria asked hesitatingly.

"No, no!' sobbed Susanna.

"I suppose,' said the maiden softly, the bright blood mounting to her cheeks, 'you will not intrust him to me'—she hesitated—'even if I promise to watch over him day and night?'

"Susanna stopped sobbing. 'But why not, then?' she cried. 'He is Klaus's child, and you are so fond of him!'

"Anna Maria turned and went out of the room, and Susanna sprang up and followed her. After a while they came back, and for the first time there was a smile on the lips of each. Susanna would fly away out of the desolate, snowed-in house of mourning, and Anna Maria had one more care. She might fondle and care for the child of her only brother to her heart's content; the child to whom she had only ventured timidly, in order not to excite Susanna's jealousy, should now belong to her alone for a long time.

"And Susanna went away with chests and trunks, and with Isa. She was overcome with pain at the parting from her child; at the last moment she wanted to tear off hat and cloak again and stay here. However, she got into the carriage. That she would not be here at Christmas did not disturb her; it would be no festival this year, she thought, it would only make her sadder. The doctor had really advised her going south.

"And so we were alone in the solitary house—Anna Maria, the child, and I. The child's cradle stood in her room; she would lie for hours before it, and could not look her fill at the round, childish face. She could still weep, weep bitterly, for Klaus; but her grief had grown gentler, much gentler.

"On a stormy evening, a few days after Susanna's departure, Stürmer came to speak with Anna Maria. He had not been here for more than a week.

"Brockelmann showed him at once to Anna Maria's room; we had not heard him come, and she was right on her knees before the cradle, talking to the child, so simply and affectionately, so sweetly and naturally, about the Christ-child and the Christmas-man. All the great, overflowing love of which the girl was capable, an infinite tenderness and gentleness, sounded in the tone of her voice. But Anna Maria had no heart—how often had the man said that, who was now standing still at the door and looking at her as in a dream.

"She sprang up in confusion as she caught sight of him; the old proud, impenetrable expression returned to her face at once.

"It is so lonely over there,' he said apologetically, 'and then I had to bring you the mortgage from the mill; the old crow has begged so hard, Fräulein Anna Maria, I think we will leave it to him, or,

if you prefer, I will take it too.'

"She shook her head. 'Oh, never,' she said calmly; 'the money must stay at the mill; Klaus promised it to the man.'

"He was still holding his hat in his hand. 'May I stay here half an hour?' he asked.

"'If our sad society is not too tiresome for you, Stürmer,' replied Anna Maria. 'You give us a pleasure.' Then she suddenly turned and went out of the room.

"'Now tell me, for Heaven's sake, Aunt Rosamond,' asked Stürmer, 'what is the matter now? Why do we sit here, and where is Frau von Hegewitz? Have the two fallen out again, perhaps?'

"'Susanna? Ah! you may not know yet, to be sure,' I replied. 'Susanna went away to Nice three days ago; she had a cough, and feared the winter.'

"He sprang up impulsively, and began to walk up and down the room; then he stood before the cradle, and looked at the slumbering child. 'And this young Frau has gone *alone*?' he asked at length.

"'No, Edwin, with Isa.'

"'Of course,' he said. He began his walking to and fro again, till Anna Maria came in, followed by the child's nurse, who carried the little sleeper into the next room. Then we sat silent about the table. It was almost as in the old days, with the old furniture from the sitting-room, and ticking of the clock under the mirror. Anna Maria had brought out her spinning-wheel, and Edwin Stürmer looked at the floor, and, lost in thought, played with a tassel of the table-cloth.

"Then all at once he started up; the clear sound of children's voices came in from the hall:

"Martins, martins, pretty things,
With your little golden wings,'

echoed the old Martinmas ditty.

"'To-day is Martinmas,' said I. Edwin Stürmer looked at me. It was a strange look; what did he mean? And all at once Anna Maria—the proud, heartless Anna Maria—threw her hands over her face, and bitterly weeping, went out.

"'What is that, Edwin?' I asked; and, as he did not answer, I tapped him on the shoulder with my wooden knitting-needle. And the strong man rose too, stood at the window, and looked out without replying a word.

"Little summer, little summer, rose-leaf,
Village and city,
Give us something, O maiden fair!'

died away the old song."

CHAPTER XX.

"The winter passed quietly away, and with the spring, just as the trees were blossoming, Susanna came back. Anna Maria had sent the best carriage to meet the home-comer, and put a little white dress on the child. The table was set in a festal manner in the dining-room, and at Susanna's place was a bunch of splendid white roses. I went to the front steps to meet the young wife. Stürmer, who happened to have come over, remained with Anna Maria in the salon; she had the child in her arms.

"Susanna jumped down from the carriage, fresh and rosy, and fell on my neck. 'Here I am again, dearest aunt, here I am again!' she cried. 'How have you been, and how is my dear little boy?' She flew up the steps like a bird, so that all the lace and flounces of her elegant mourning dress stood out and blew behind her. Like a child she ran through the hall; I could scarcely keep up with her; then she stood in the salon.

"The baby had grown; the baby sat there quite sensibly already, on the arm of his fair aunt; his bright curly hair fell about his lovely baby face, and he was just grasping after Uncle Stürmer's watch. The young mother rushed to the child with a cry of delight, pulled it into her arms, and covered it with kisses. But the young gentleman misunderstood this; he did not know the strange lady at all who had come in so suddenly, and with a pitiful cry he stretched out his arms toward Anna Maria.

"Susanna was confounded, and then began to weep, affectingly and bitterly: 'She had lost her child's love!' It was a painful scene. Stürmer went into the next room, and Anna Maria tried to console Susanna. 'It is only because he is not accustomed to you; he has not seen you for so long, Susanna. Just hear what he has learned,' she begged.

"And going up to the weeping woman, she said: 'Ma—ma!'

"Mamma!" stammered the little fellow, quite consoled.

"Susanna laughed, and promised to change her dress quickly; then she came to the table. The grief was already overcome; and she showed herself, in course of time, none too eager to regain the child's love. Anna Maria silently retained all the cares she had undertaken; but sometimes the young wife would embrace her child in a sudden outbreak of tenderness, and not let him out of her arms for hours.

"The summer did not flit away so quietly as it had begun; there were frequent visitors, and sometimes Susanna's laugh would echo, terribly clear, through the rooms. Anna Maria was sad; she fled to her room whenever a carriage full of guests arrived, or a pair of saddle-horses were led slowly up and down before the house. But Stürmer was now a daily guest; it really pained me when I saw him ride across the court.

"Baron Stürmer is with Frau von Hegewitz," Brockelmann announced one afternoon, as she came into Anna Maria's room, where I was sitting by the window. "The baron inquired for the baby, and the Frau was just coming out of the salon; she took him in with her, laughing, and said I was to get the child."

"Silently Anna Maria lifted him up from the carpet, where he had sat playing, and with a kiss gave him to the old woman. "There, now, go to mamma and be good."

"She then bent over her housekeeping book.

"Will you not go down, Anna Maria?" I asked.

"She raised her head. "Oh, aunt, I have something important to do now, and—he will not miss me. He will be here again often," she added. And a faint, traitorous blush tinged her face. "I think they still love each other."

"I shook my head. "Ah, Anna Maria, she still wears her widow's cap!"

"It will come, nevertheless," whispered the girl, and an expression full of anguish lay about her mouth; "and then she will go away with him, and will take the child with her, and at last the cup of my unhappiness will be full. Then I shall feel nothing any longer, no longer call anything in the world *mine*, not even a miserable hope!"

"I was silent and looked at her sadly. How many hundred times I had said to myself that this would come. I shuddered at the thought of an empty, icy-cold future—poor Anna Maria!

"And it certainly was as Anna Maria had said. Stürmer came often, Stürmer came every day. We sat together at coffee in the garden-parlor, or on the terrace on warm summer evenings. Susanna had quite regained her old happy disposition. Sometimes, too, a white rose shone out from her dark curls, and her eyes laughed down over the garden, without a thought of the grave there below. It seemed sometimes as if something took hold of me, as if a dear, familiar voice said to me: "So quickly am I forgotten?"

"And Anna Maria would sit for hours with the child on her lap, and say the word 'father' to him countless times, and rejoice like a child over his first awkward attempts. She guided his first steps; she did not let him out of her arms, but carried him about everywhere, all over the house and in the garden. "Perhaps he will retain a recollection," said she, "and this is all his; he will live here some time, in his home, and then he will be tall and strong like his father, and dear and good to his old Aunt Anna Maria."

"Was Stürmer really drawing nearer to Susanna? I could not bring myself to perceive it, and then—it could not be announced yet, the year of mourning had not expired. But perhaps she had her word already; he loved her, had already loved her as a girl; no other hindrance except the mourning lay any longer between them.

"The day following the anniversary of Klaus's death some one gave a quick, excited knock at my door. Stürmer entered; he wore a short coat and high boots, as if he had come from hunting.

"Dear Aunt Rosamond," said he, throwing himself into a chair, as if exhausted, and drying his moist forehead with his handkerchief—"dear Aunt Rosamond, we have always been good friends, have known each other so long. I have a favor to ask of you, a very great favor."

"Of me?" I asked, my heart beating hard from a painful fear.

"He looked pale, and quickly threw his gloves on the table. "Speak for me!" he begged. "I am a coward. I cannot tell you what would become of me if a second time I—" He hesitated.

"Are you so little sure of your case, Edwin?" I asked, bright tears running from my eyes. I thought of Klaus, I thought of Anna Maria, my dear old Anna Maria!

"I am not at all sure of my case," he replied, "or should I be standing here? Should I not long ago have explained an old, unhappy mistake?"

"You are in great haste, Edwin," said I bitterly. "Yesterday was the first anniversary of Klaus's death!"

"It has been very hard for me to wait so long," he answered, in the calmest tone. "Well, if you will not, I must devise some means by myself," he declared impetuously. "Where is Anna Maria?"

"No, no," I begged, "for God's sake! It would grieve her to death. I will go. I will speak for you, if it must be!" And again burning tears came into my eyes. "So tell me what message am I to deliver?"

"He was silent. 'If—if—I beg you, aunt, I do not know,' he stammered at length; 'it will be best for me to speak to her myself.' And before I could say a word he had hurried out.

"I do not know how it happened, but I was bitterly angry with him—he, usually the man of tenderest feeling and greatest tact! 'To think that love should sometimes drive the best people so mad!' I said angrily, wiping the tears from my eyes.

"And now there would be a love-affair and an engagement; yesterday deep widow's weeds, tomorrow red roses! I clinched my fists, not for myself, but for Anna Maria. I was pained to the depths of my heart. For Anna Maria it was the death-blow. The love for Stürmer was deeply rooted in her heart. She would get over this, too; she would rise up from this, too; but the spirit of her youth was broken forever. She could no longer call anything in the world hers, for Susanna would take the child away with her. I did not want to hear or see any longer. I took my shawl and went into the garden.

"The first yellow leaf lay on the ground, a fine mist hung in the trees, and the sun was going down crimson. I walked down the path to the little fish-pond. I saw the decaying boat lying in the clear brown water, and the reflection of the oaks. Then I suddenly stopped. I had recognized Edwin Stürmer's voice. They must be standing close by me, behind the thicket of barberry and snow-berry bushes.

"No, no, I shall not let you again!" he said, strangely moved. I turned to go. It seemed to me I must cry out from pain and indignation.

"I walked back quickly. I know not what impelled me to go first to the child's bed, as if I must look in that little innocent face to still believe in love and fidelity in the world. The little man was asleep, the curtains were drawn, and the night-lamp already lighted. The door leading to Susanna's room was just ajar. All at once I started up, for the sound of Isa's voice came in to me and made my heart almost stop beating.

"It won't do to put off any longer, my lamb; if you have said A, you must say B too. This is the third letter already, and you can't remain a widow forever. Oh, don't make faces now; over there—that is nothing. If I am not very much mistaken, he has turned about now, and—" She probably made a sign, and then she laughed.

"Now I heard Susanna, too. 'My child!' she sobbed.

"But, darling, do be reasonable. One can't take little children about everywhere. What would you do with the rascal? Let him grow up on his inheritance; few children have so good a one. You can see him at any time, too, darling," she continued, as Susanna kept on sobbing. "You will only have to come here. Oh, don't be so fearfully unreasonable; have I ever given you any bad advice? Do you mean to live on here, under the sceptre of your sister-in-law? I should laugh!" said she, after a while, playing her last trump.

"Susanna's weeping suddenly ceased. 'I do not know yet,' she said shortly.

"Then I roused myself from my numbness, and hurried through the garden-parlor to the terrace. There they stood—yes, in truth, there they stood—under the linden, Anna Maria and Stürmer, and looked over toward Dambitz. The last ray of the setting sun tinged the evening sky with such a red glow that I closed my eyes, dazzled; or were they dimmed by tears of joy? Now I heard a light rustle behind me, and, looking around, I saw Susanna. She had laid aside her widow's dress, and had a white rose in her hair. The tears of a few minutes ago were dried.

"I took her by the hand and pointed mutely to the two under the linden. She looked over in surprise. 'Anna Maria?' she asked softly.

"And Edwin Stürmer!" I added. She did not answer. But she had grown pale, and looked at them fixedly.

"They have long loved each other, Susanna," said I, gravely; "even before you ever came here. But Anna Maria once refused his proposal"—Susanna's eyes were fixed on my lips—"because she would not forsake her only brother!"

"The young wife was silent; but, as Anna Maria and Stürmer now turned in the direction of the house, she turned and went in. Now they came walking up the middle path. And when they stood before me, I saw a happy light in Anna Maria's eyes which I had never seen shine before. She bent over to me and kissed my hand.

"She has made it very hard for me, has Anna Maria," said Edwin Stürmer, drawing the girl to him. "She tried to put on her icy mask again; she could not go away from Susanna and the child. But this time I was too quickly at hand. Was I not, my Anna Maria?"

"Very early the next morning I heard a carriage roll away from the court. I rang for Brockelmann. 'The gracious Frau has gone away with Isa; and has left a letter for Anna Maria down-stairs on the table.'

"Have you delivered it yet?" I asked.

"The old woman nodded. 'There is some secret about it,' she said sadly; 'Isa was altogether too important.'

"Anna Maria came, very much surprised, with the open letter.

"I don't understand it, aunt. Susanna has a rendezvous in Berlin with an acquaintance from Nice?"

"I shrugged my shoulders.

"She is angry with me,' she whispered, with pale lips. 'She did love him, aunt; it is horrible!'

"No, no, my child,' I tried to calm her, 'no, do not believe that.' But she made an averting gesture, and left me with tears in her eyes. Already a shadow lay over her happiness. Reluctantly I followed her down-stairs, and then went, almost aimlessly, into Susanna's room. Here all was topsy-turvy, just as occasionally in former times. In the haste of departure all sorts of things had been left lying about, on every chair some article of clothing, fans, ribbons, strips of black crape, and books, and in the fire-place was still a little heap of burned paper. The fragments of a letter had fallen beside it, in the hurry probably. I picked them up—a bold handwriting, English words.

"I beg for something positive at last,' I read. 'To Berlin—no hindrance—my love—in a short time—mine forever—Robbin.'

"I sat quite still for a while, with the bits of paper in my hand. Now it gradually became clear to me—Susanna's restless, distraught manner, Isa's mysterious conduct, her words of yesterday, and the sudden departure. Susanna was gone, Susanna would never return; in a short time she would be the wife of another, of a perfect stranger; she would never belong to us any more!

"And I took up the pieces of the letter and went to look for Anna Maria. She was sitting at the window, looking over toward Dambitz. 'Here, Anna Maria,' said I, 'your fear is groundless.'

"She read, and a painful expression came over her face. 'I pity her, aunt. She thinks her happiness is floating about without, but it is slumbering here in this little cradle. She will find it out sooner or later, and she will return, don't you think so?' she asked, anxiously confident.

"Then her face lighted up: Stürmer was coming across the garden; he was leading his horse by the bridle, and sent up a greeting.

"Your lover, Anna Maria!"

"She grew very red. 'Is it not like a dream?' she asked softly.

"It was in November, the day before Anna Maria's marriage, that a letter with a strange post-mark lay in the mail-bag for me, the address in a man's handwriting. I gave a start; I recognized the bold hand, the peculiar flourish at the last letter of a word. It was the same hand that had written that letter whose remains I had found in Susanna's room.

"I broke open the envelope; it contained two letters. The one which first fell into my hands was a formal announcement of the marriage of Frau von Hegewitz, *née* Mattoni, to Mr. Robbin Olliver, London.

"I took up the other letter. 'Dearest aunt,' my astonished eyes read, 'the accomplished fact has just come to your knowledge; forgive me, forgive me everything! I am not wicked, not light-minded; I have only sought for myself the freedom which is as necessary to my life as air to breathing. I shall gladly follow my husband, with whom I became acquainted in Nice, to Brazil, out of the narrow circle of rusty old customs, to a more stirring, varied life, in which to-day and to-morrow, weeks and months, do not follow each other in dull repetition.

"With longing I think of my child. I have no right to take him with me over the sea; he belongs to his ancestral home, and I know that Anna Maria must love him more than I. Forgive me, I beg you once more from my heart, and send me occasionally—it is the last request I shall make of the family which chains me with inward bonds—a lock of my child's hair, and teach him to think without ill-will of his mother.'

"No signature, nothing more. I turned the sheet over—nothing! I gave a sigh of pain, and yet it seemed as if the weight of a mountain had rolled from my heart.

"And now I must tell Anna Maria about it. But no, not to-day or to-morrow. These days ought never to be troubled. I went down-stairs toward evening. Anna Maria was by the graves in the garden. Brockelmann informed me; and the old woman showed me with pride what she had arranged in the hall for her Fräulein's wedding-day—all about, evergreen, and countless candles in it.

"It is no great festival,' said she; 'only two or three people are coming; Anna Maria will have it so, and he too. But just for that reason it should be right beautiful.'

"I went into the girl's sleeping-room and stepped up to the child's little bed. He was slumbering sweetly, without a suspicion that his mother had left him forever. But be quiet, you poor little fellow; you still have a mother, a true, earnest one—Anna Maria. I stood in the recess of the window and listened to the breathing of the boy.

"After a while the door opened softly and Anna Maria entered. She did not see me, but I saw that

she had been weeping. She knelt down to the child and kissed it, and then stood with folded hands before the bed a long time.

"Then footsteps sounded in the next room. 'Anna Maria!' called Stürmer. She flew to the door. 'Edwin!' I heard her say jubilantly. They whispered together a long time, and when I came in they were standing at the window.

"'Is that a nuptial eve?' I asked, in jest. 'In the dark thus, and without any ringing of bells and music?'

"They both laughed. But then the church-bell began its evening peal, and from the next room came in the clear sound of a child's voice: 'Mamma, mamma, Anna Maria!' Then she threw her arms about my neck and kissed me. 'And do you call that without ringing of bells and music?' she asked happily. Then she brought in the child, and they sat together on the sofa, with it between them, and spoke of Klaus, of past days, of the future, and of their happiness.

"It was Anna Maria who first mentioned Susanna's name. 'It is so long since she has written,' she said. 'I have received no answer to two letters. Can she be coming, Edwin? She knows that tomorrow is to be our wedding-day.'

"'Susanna?' I replied. 'No, Anna Maria, she is *not* coming!'

"'Have you news?' they asked, both together.

"'She is married, Anna Maria, and is no longer in Europe.'

"Neither of them answered.

"'And she lays the child on your heart.'

"Then she bent over and kissed the baby, who had gone to sleep on her lap. 'Edwin,' she whispered, in a strangely faltering voice, 'this is the wedding present from my only brother!'"

So ended the manuscript. It was the third evening of the reading. The young man laid the sheets on the table and looked in the agitated face of his wife. "My mother died in America," he said. "Mother Anna Maria tied a strip of crape about my arm one day, and cried, and kissed me so often; we were living right here in Bütze then; and then we went up to Aunt Rosamond, and she cried too, and kissed me. They told me that my mother was dead, but I did not understand them, because I saw Anna Maria before me, and I did not know or care to know any mother but her."

The young wife took his hand. She was about to speak, but did not, for just then the door opened and a tall woman's figure crossed the threshold.

"Mother!" they cried, both springing up, "Mother Anna Maria!" And the young man tenderly put his arm around her and kissed her hand.

"Good evening, children," she said simply, and her eyes looked gently over to them, under the white hair.

"Oh, dearest mother, how charming of you!" cried the young wife, exultingly. "How are father and the sisters?"

"Edwin is well," she replied; "and the sisters are looking forward to Sunday, when you are coming over."

"And you, mother?"

"Well, I had a longing to see my eldest daughter and my only son," she said lovingly; "and besides, to-day is Martinmas."

She let bonnet and cloak be taken off, and sat down on the sofa. "What have you there?" she asked, turning over the papers. Then her eyes rested upon them; she read, and a delicate blush gradually mounted to her face.

"Those were the sad years," she whispered; "now come the bright ones. When I am dead then write underneath:

"'She was the happiest of wives, the most beloved of mothers!'"

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