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## **A DIVIDED HEART**



**PAUL HEYSE**

**A DIVIDED HEART**

AND

**OTHER STORIES**

FROM

**PAUL HEYSE**

***TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH***  
**With an Introduction**

BY

**CONSTANCE STEWART COPELAND**

**New York:**

**BRENTANO'S**

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To  
My Mother

C. S. C.

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**INTRODUCTION--PAUL HEYSE**

## **PAUL HEYSE.**

### **INTRODUCTION.**

It occasionally happens that a reader expecting to find the customary account of an author's early struggles for bread and knowledge, his bitter disappointments, his late and almost joyless success, is surprised by the record of a singularly fortunate life; of a life which advances easily and naturally from a peaceful and promising childhood to an equally peaceful, famous old age. Goethe's was such a life; and reading it, one feels that sharp encounter with the hardest facts of existence would have lessened his greatness, would have disturbed that perfect serenity of soul which made him philosopher as well as poet, and fostered his fidelity to high ideals of life and art.

A countryman of Goethe's, Paul Heyse, born in Berlin in 1830, two years before the great poet's death, was no less fortunate in the lot to which fate assigned him. Heyse's power was unlike Goethe's in kind and degree, but the opportunities for its development were equally favorable. His father was a philologist and lexicographer, whose home was comfortable and refined, and whose friends were cultured and literary. He took charge of his son's early education, and naturally laid great stress on language, inculcating the love for purity and exactness in its use, which is one of Heyse's best qualities. Stimulated by the atmosphere of his home, and by these studies in literary *technique*, Heyse began to try his skill in original work at a very early age, and was only seventeen years old when his first book, "Jungbrunnen: New Tales by a Travelling Scholar," appeared. Although this production encouraged his friends in the belief that a great future lay before him, it made no impression whatever on the world at large, and the young author pursued his studies at the Berlin University without astounding anyone by phenomenal brilliancy or success.

Finishing at Berlin, he betook himself to Bonn, and spent a year studying Romance and philology with the famous Diez. So great was the interest in mediaeval languages which Diez succeeded in awakening in the young man, that in 1850 Heyse travelled to Italy and employed a year in examining the precious manuscripts of the old Italian libraries. The results of these researches were afterwards published under the title "Romanische Jnedita auf italienischen Bibliotheken gesammelt;" and a book of Italian songs was also presented to the world.

Upon his return to Germany, Heyse at once began serious literary work, and put the first rung in the traditional ladder to fame. Although his present place in literature is due to his work as a novelist, his first creations were dramas in verse. He aspired to become a poet; not a singer of songs and lyrics, but a great dramatic poet, whose lines should chant, and whose thoughts should create a new era. To this end he experimented with the various styles of dramatic composition and tried the Shakespearian, the Greek, and the late French, in rapid succession. His work was so beautiful in form and so faultless in finish that it attracted immediate attention. A master's hand was evident in every line, and albeit there was a subtle something lacking of the true poetic fire, a certain circle of fastidious and critical *literati* found the dramas highly satisfactory and hailed Heyse as a rising poet. In 1854, King Maximilian II. of Bavaria, whose court was a veritable literary academy, called him to Munich and assured to him an audience and an income. After a time the income was discontinued, but Heyse's works were then amply remunerative, and he has lived in Munich to this day. No environment could be imagined more congenial to a man of Heyse's tastes than that of the court at Munich;

and once settled there, he began to fulfil the hopeful prophecies of his friends. In 1857, his drama, "The Sabine Women," took the prize offered by the king, and was produced on the royal stage. Notwithstanding that it satisfied the literary sense of the court, it failed to please the people. There was too much finish, too much studied elegance, and too little warmth of feeling, to appeal to their sympathies. Not until "Colberg," "Elizabeth Charlotte," and "Hans Lange" had appeared, would the general public acknowledge Heyse as a great dramatist. Even then they found a flaw; for, although the characters were strong and interesting, and some of the situations were intensely dramatic, Heyse's dramas, as a whole, were lacking in one essential quality, action. They were more suitable for the study than the stage; more interesting to one appreciative reader who could enjoy the beauty of the workmanship and feel the strength of the conception, than to an indifferent audience expecting to be amused or excited by actual happenings.

In fact, they were dramatized novels, instead of true dramas, or dramatic poems. "Not deep the poet sees, but wide," and Heyse's view was not wide. He lacked a poet's objectivity, the power to create the type from the individual, the power to discern the universal and essential beyond the particular and accidental. He studied life attentively and described it vividly and truthfully, but he saw no new message, created no new thought.

Evidently, Heyse was neither a great dramatist nor a great poet; and although he was a man of unquestionable power, he reached forty years of age without having made any permanent impression on his time. But the good fortune which had attended his youth did not desert him in middle age. He lived amid congenial surroundings; wrote constantly and with increasing power; and gradually attained a self-knowledge which enabled him to recognize the true field for his exertions.

He began writing novels in verse, then short stories in prose, and at length, in 1873, he wrote his great novel, "Children of the World." In this he expressed his philosophy of life. The man Heyse, with his intense admiration of physical beauty, his love of nature, his utter disregard of conventionality, his keen insight into the uttermost corners of human hearts, looks out of every page. The reader, whoever he may be, and however strongly he may disagree with much that he reads, is spellbound from first to last. The scenes between Edwin and Toinette in the first part of the book are as idyllic and unworldly as those between Marius and Cosette in "Les Miserables." Toinette herself, so exquisitely beautiful, so courageously true to her conception of her own nature, and so pitifully mistaken in that conception, fascinates us as she does Edwin, and excites our deepest compassion. Edwin, too, grave, and thoughtful, and warm-hearted as he is, seems no mere "character," but a living man. They are all children of the world, living entirely in the present without hope or desire for a future life. The existing world supplies them with all they ask. As Edwin says: "O beloved, a world in which we may attain such triumph over fate, over our own and that of those we love; in which the tragical is glorified by a gleam of the beautiful; in which intense joy of life sweeps through us, bringing softening tears, even as we shudder in the presence of death--such a world is not desolate." It is Heyse's own creed, this of the all-sufficiency of the present life. In one of his lyrics he has expressed it more explicitly--"Kein Ernst und Drüben, nur ein Jetzt und Hier!", and later on in the same poem he says:

"Das eine wissen wir:  
Auch wir vergehen, und das ist Trotz genug."

Since this was written at the time of his son's death, his disbelief in immortality must be at least sincere.

Having now abandoned his aspirations towards poetic and dramatic fame, Heyse worked as his own nature dictated, and soon made for himself a distinctive place in German literature. In 1876, his other long novel, "In Paradise," a story of artist life in Munich, appeared. Unlike "Children of the World," "In Paradise" is full of humor and has little philosophy.

But the short story is Heyse's favorite form of expression, and it is in the short story that his power is best revealed. With the exception of a few essays, dramas, and one-act pieces, he has written nothing but short stories for the last fifteen years, and in that time he has produced so many that they would fill several shelves in a large library.

Since Heyse believes that every story should embody some specific thought, something to distinguish it absolutely from every other, it is easily comprehensible that many of his tales are morbid and unreal. But the best of them are veritable bits of life; life viewed not only from the outside as any keen observer may see it, but life as the philosopher knows it, the inner life which gives value and purpose to this "fleeting show." He spares no detail of common experience, which may give strength and vividness to his stories, but he chooses the themes themselves from the world of ideas. His stories are not primarily character studies, though the men and women produce the impression of actual life; nor are they stories with plots and thrilling events. They are histories of crises in human lives, of strange problems and situations, of subtle influences working unexpected issues. The majority are stories of love, psychological, like most modern love tales, but picturesque and human as well. Although the hero and heroine are separated, if separation must be, by some obstacle in their own natures rather than by any untoward circumstance of life, they are not dissected and analyzed till they lose all human semblance. They are as unconsciously true to themselves as living beings, and are not less difficult to comprehend. Heyse has searched human hearts to the depths; he has read the motive behind the act; he has seen the thousand thoughts and feelings which make that motive complex; but he has not made his great knowledge an excuse for writing semi-scientific treatises in the guise of fiction. His characters never lose personality; they give fascinating glimpses of their deeper selves, but they make no full confessions; they are elusive and surprising, and therefore indescribably charming and real. All classes of German society have contributed to enlarge Heyse's world of fiction, but it is of the educated middle class that he most often writes. While a certain sameness in type is noticeable in his characters, there is no marked sameness in the individuals. The men are usually cultured, thoughtful, and passionate; the women are beautiful, noble-minded and vivacious; but each man and each woman has traits which make his or her personality distinct from all others. The women are strangely captivating. Toinette, in "Children of the World," Lucile and L.'s wife in "A Divided Heart," Christel and the Governor's lady in "Rothenburg on the Tauber,"--they all claim our interest and sympathy as they do that of the people about them. In fact, Heyse always forces us to feel what he wishes to tell us. He is never guilty of writing about a character; the men and women are before us and we are left to draw our own conclusions. Yet we inevitably sympathize with him, and blame or praise as he would have us do.

Heyse uses nature merely as a background for human beings. He never indulges in long rhapsodies over sunsets and beautiful views, or in lengthy descriptions of any scenes whatever; but he has Thomas Hardy's power of making places absolutely real in a few vivid words. Nature must be very dear to him, and he must understand her very thoroughly, or he could never reproduce her charm so truly. "Rothenburg on the Tauber" is a story of the spring-time; and reading it, we breathe the cool air of spring, see her pale tints, live through her sunny days and misty, moonlit nights. In "Minka," the gloom of a sombre autumn day depresses us as it does Eugene, and lends some of its own unearthly sadness to the strange story.

All of Heyse's writings have atmosphere, that indefinable quality which no amount of mere description of places and people can give, but which comes of itself from the heart of the sympathetic writer. And Heyse is evidently deeply in sympathy with every subject which he treats. Feeling intensely himself, he wishes his readers to share his feeling, and he is so consummate a master of his art that he is sure of this effect. From the first word it is plain that he has something important to say, and the reader has no choice but to read on to the end. Nor is it possible by reading ten of Heyse's stories to divine what the eleventh may be. He is true to his principle of making each one utterly unlike all the others. This, perhaps, is one of Heyse's greatest charms. Prolific as he is, he never wearies one with sameness; his twentieth volume is as interesting and surprising

as his first.

Whether or no Heyse's works will live is a problem which must be left to its own solution. They are purely modern products, tales of nineteenth-century people, actuated by nineteenth-century thoughts and feelings; and though many of them are artistically perfect, they are saturated with the author's own personality, and have not that universal truth of application which usually characterizes the world's classics. "L'Arabiata," "On the Banks of the Tiber," "The Maiden of Treppi," "The Mother's Picture," "A Divided Heart," and "Rothenburg on the Tauber," are among the best of the short stories. His "Tales of the Troubadours" are very beautiful, but are somewhat marred by a freedom of speech which approaches actual vulgarity. It is this unfortunate and unnecessary frankness which has brought against Heyse the accusation of immorality, although all his stories have an "upward tendency," and are time to the highest ideals. No one reading "A Divided Heart," or "Rothenburg on the Tauber," could doubt the rectitude of the writer's moral sense, or his love for the best in human nature.

Since Heyse is still living, the thousand and one interesting facts and anecdotes which come to the world's knowledge only after a great man's death are not yet told of him. His life has been even and uneventful; poor in those startling changes of fortune which make the usual attractive biography, but rich in inner experience, in the vivid impressions, intense feelings, and great thoughts, which make actual life full of interest and meaning.

A number of Heyse's works have been translated into English, but many more deserve wider popularity than their own language can give them. Their great writer, realistic as Balzac, analytic as Tolstoi, picturesque as his own countryman, Ebers, should become as famous here as he is in Germany, and add one more to the increasing list of great men whose writings are precious, not alone to their own countries, but to the world. C. S. C.

## A DIVIDED HEART

### A DIVIDED HEART.

It was still early when I left, although the company was one of those which do not become lively until after midnight. But a gloomy uneasiness which I had brought with me, would not yield to the good wine and tolerable humor which seasoned the bacchanal; so I seized a favorable moment and took French leave. As I came out of the house and inhaled the first breaths of the pure, night air, I heard some one following me and calling my name.

It was L., the eldest and gravest of our circle. I had heard his voice scarcely twice the whole evening among the noisy chatter of the others. I esteemed him very highly, and was usually delighted to meet him. But just then I desired no man's company.

"It has driven you out also," he said, as he caught up to me, and, stopping for breath,

glanced at the starlit spring heavens. "We were neither of us at home among those hardened bachelors. When I saw you slipping out, a melancholy envy, which you must pardon, came over me. Now, thought I, he is going home to his dear wife. She has been sleeping for some time; he steps on tip-toe to her bedside; she at once awakens from her dream, and asks--'Is it you already? Did you enjoy yourself? You must tell me about it tomorrow.' Or, she has been interesting herself in a book, and opens the door herself when she hears your footstep. To be so received means to be at home somewhere in this world. In my lonesome cell there is no one waiting for me. But I enjoyed that good fortune for twelve whole years, and am far better for it than our young friends yonder, who have no perception of the best things life can offer, and who speak of women as the blind do of colors. Are you not of my opinion, that one only half knows them when one speaks merely from hearsay, and says, with the usual irony, a 'better half?'"

He put his arm in mine, and we walked slowly along the deserted streets.

"You know, my dear friend," said I, "that I am a marriage fanatic, with good reason. If I neglected to preach its gospel to the heathen this evening, it was only from a general disinclination to speak where I am not altogether at ease. I feared, too, that my usual eloquence on the subject might leave me in the lurch. But, truly, it would not be the first time that I have argued alone against a whole gang of obstinate bachelors."

"I admire your courage," he replied. "For my part, I am always hindered from contradicting the scoffers by an absurd heart-beating; it seems to me a desecration to gossip of the school in which one learns to fathom the deepest and most beautiful secrets of human life."

"You are quite right," said I, "and I have often reproached myself for being beguiled into discussing in prose, after the manner of a scientific problem, what one may properly confess only in verse. And yet certain silly speeches always excite me to protest again. When I hear it said that marriage is the death of love; that the obligation to fidelity quenches passion; and that, since no man can master his heart, even the best should hesitate before forming a life-tie, my vexation at the foolish babble runs away with my reason, and I begin to speak of things which one regards as mere exaggeration unless he has himself experienced them."

To this he did not reply, and we walked silently side by side. I observed that he was lost in recollections which I did not wish to disturb. I knew nothing of his marriage, except that he had lost his wife many years before, and mourned her as if it were but yesterday. An old lady who had known her told me that she was an irresistible person, with eyes which no one who had once looked into them could ever forget. Her daughter, lately married, I had met once at a social affair; she impressed me as an amiable, but very quiet, young woman.

L. had been a military man in his younger days; but being severely wounded in the Schleswig-Holstein war, he had withdrawn to a country estate and passed his best years there with his wife and child. After he became a widower, a spirit of unrest seemed to drive him over the earth, and it was only from time to time that he made a brief appearance among his old friends. He was a stately, handsome man even yet. His hair, although streaked with gray, stood thick and curly above his high, bronzed forehead, and in his eyes there gleamed a quiet fire which told of imperishable youth.

At the next crossing he stopped.

"My way properly leads down there," said he, "but, if you do not object, I will accompany you for a distance. My sleep has not been worth much for some time, and 'In that sleep what dreams may come' seldom amount to anything. Besides, I am going away in a few days. Who knows when we can chat with each other again."

We set forth on our, or rather on my way, but for a long while the talk would not take the right channel.

The warm, night wind was as soothing as the murmur of a cradle-song; the stars



blinked like eyes which can scarcely keep themselves open. A fine mist moved slowly across the heavens, weaving a veil over the shining firmament.

"Bear in mind," said I, "we shall be wakened from our first sleep by a spring thunderstorm."

He neither answered nor glanced at the heavens, but continued to look fixedly at the ground. Suddenly he began, "Do you know what I have always lamented? That Spinoza was never married. How that would have improved his ethics! He had no conception of certain problems; and I have always wondered how he would have regarded them if they had come under his observation."

"Which do you mean?" I asked.

"You know he was the first to deny the power of reason over our passions, and to advance the profound thesis that a passion can be displaced only by one stronger. But what happens if two equally strong passions together rule the same soul?"

"Are there then two precisely similar passions?" I asked; "I myself have never experienced anything of the kind, and am inclined to be sceptical until I see it proved in another man."

"There are certainly no test-scales for feeling," he replied, "but whoever has had such an unfortunate experience will have no doubt of its reality. But one can scarcely make it comprehensible to a third person, because the psychological constellation under which alone this situation arises seldom comes into position, and can almost never be observed as quietly as other phenomena. Even you as a novelist would hardly be able to make use of such an occurrence. You must have heard often enough that you novelists search for psychological problems and dispense with probability. Wonderful people! They wish to learn something, and yet, if one tells them of what is not to be found on every highway, they refuse to believe it. If a botanist discovers and describes a new plant accidentally bearing blossoms on the root instead of the stalk, no one doubts his veracity. But a new growth of human flora, heretofore unnoticed by the thoughtless observer, is immediately designated as a daring invention."

"You forget," I broke in, "that people wish to enjoy fiction with the heart alone, not with the intellect, and that the heart refuses everything which is not closely akin to it. Therefore I feel very lenient toward the average reader. In real life he is interested only in certain things which he understands, prizes, and considers desirable; such as money and land, social reputation, family happiness, and more of the same sort. Consequently, he likes in books only such stories as deal with rich and poor, rogues and honest men, and, for a sort of relish, with a little of the so-called love necessary to complete a happy marriage. Whatsoever there is beyond that, is evil. Yet in every human breast there lives a still presentiment that there is something glorious about the unusual, about a feeling, for instance, that fills the heart to overflowing, even to the breaking of all conventional bonds. But my poor wise Leopardi was right; the world laughs at things which it otherwise must admire, and, like the fox in the fable, blames what it really envies. A great love, for example, with its passionate joys and sorrows, is universally envied, and therefore unsparingly condemned. They consider it dangerous, and I have found this view sanctioned everywhere in men's judgments of life and fiction. 'Do not destroy my home!' cries the peaceful citizen to the passion which is breaking into his house like an armed man. And if he feels himself adequately protected by his armor of conventionality, more invulnerable than iron or steel, he fears for children and parents, and the tender heart of his wife. Although the danger may not have been great after all. Only what we recognize as true has power over our souls; and surely you yourself have seldom encountered in this cold world of ours any strong passion or heart-instinct out of the catechism, and yet truly felt."

"That is true," he said, "and therefore I have never yet discovered, either in psychology or romance, a trace of that peculiar situation which I mentioned. Once I imagined that, in the writings of one whom I consider a true artist, I had found something similar when, in looking over Alfred Musset's short stories, I came across the

title '*Les Deux Maitresses*.' But no, the hero loved one and flirted with the other. That happens thousands of times. But what I mean--"

He broke off, seeming to regret that he had gone so far. I allowed only a slight word to betray my intense interest. I did not wish to elicit any confidence which he would not freely give me. I knew also that there is a midnight hour for long-buried histories, when they burst the bars of the closed breast and rise up to walk about once more in the pale light of a starry heaven. One must then guard his tongue well, for a careless word may frighten the timid ghosts back to their graves.

So I remained silent and waited. We were approaching a little enclosure, a grove of ash-trees, and on the seats under the wind-tossed branches several homeless men lay sleeping peacefully. In the darkest corner of the shaded place stood an empty bench.

"If it suits you," said L., "let us sit here a moment. I would like best of all to imitate yonder vagabonds and spend the night here *sub divo*. The south wind possesses me."

Then, after we had been sitting dumbly side by side for some time, "Of what were we speaking?" he began; "was it not of people's inability to imagine situations which they themselves have never been through? How can one expect it of them, since even the individual himself cannot always comprehend what he has too undeniably felt?"

"And when I now look back on that time and observe everything calmly from a distance, does not my own heart oftentimes seem to me a riddle? To you, indeed, that which is unintelligible to most people will seem natural enough; namely, that the love I bore my wife was strengthened instead of weakened by the years of unclouded happiness. One might say that every deep and earnest affection is artistic. As the artist and the poet bear and cherish the burning thought within them, ever striving to approximate it to their highest ideal, so love, if not mistaken in its object, is a ceaseless advance. But I see this comparison halts a little. Let it be. Only you must know that I was one of those fortunate beings who consider the possession of a beloved wife as a daily gift from the gracious gods; and that I was still feeling a sort of lover's devotion when the young likeness of the dear woman had already outgrown childhood.

"I do not know that you would have understood this better, if you had known the woman. Many passed her by without suspecting what a rare spirit looked out upon the world from those quiet, all-understanding eyes. I myself, in our first hour of meeting, felt indissolubly bound to her. But I shall not attempt to describe her. At this moment, as is always the case with those whom I hold dearest, I see her picture only in uncertain outlines, although I could draw any indifferent face even to the wrinkles. It was so even when she was living; I carried with me the feeling of her personality as a whole, and when she appeared it was like a new revelation.

"Many did not consider her a beauty, and she had not the slightest desire to please in that way. But to others she seemed supremely charming, and far beyond comparison with any merely pretty woman. I often pondered over this mysterious charm of hers. I came to the conclusion that, while the good qualities of the average lovable person affect us at different times, with her the whole character revealed itself every moment. Goodness, cleverness, earnestness and cheerfulness, grace and firm strength,--her entire treasure was always at hand. But I see I am still praising and describing. I will only say that the first meeting decided my fate.

"I immediately realized that it was not one of those sudden, short-lived passions which I had often experienced during my frivolous officer-life. Until now I had never, even in the warmest love-affair, been able to think of a union for life without feeling a quiet aversion to the loss of my freedom. In the first hour I knew that this love concerned my soul's welfare; that I could never again be my own master, even though I should be obliged to remain away from her forever. I could not long endure the uncertainty as to her feeling for me. I was somewhat spoiled by previous successes. Yet it scarcely distressed or surprised me, when, though she acknowledged that my presence was pleasant to her and that she would be glad to see me often, she said she did not return my passionate feeling, and thought too highly of a union for life and

death to enter into it half-heartedly, as into something of little moment.

"She became still dearer to me through this refusal, although from any one else such treatment would have sorely wounded my vanity. Before her all mean and petty feelings disappeared, and a man's best nature was aroused, as alone worthy of her.

"It never occurred to me to withdraw myself, grumbling and pining, in order to make myself missed. After the first pain was over, I seemed to myself rashly presumptuous in having proposed at all. I believed that I could not better atone for this ridiculous hastiness than by remaining unassumingly near her. Her parents kept open house; and, being always welcome, I exerted myself to be cheerful, and to suppress every feeling of jealousy toward my companions in misery. But my nights were wretched, and I often brooded over the darkest resolves.

"Now imagine my feeling when one morning I received a note from her; I might call upon her during the day. She had something important to say to me.

"I found her alone. She met me in the greatest agitation, stretched both hands to me, and cried, 'You live! God be thanked!' Then she told me that toward morning she had had a frightful dream, in which she had seen me lying dead before her with a deep wound in my forehead. An unspeakable grief had suddenly seized her, almost as though a hot, buried spring had burst forth from her inmost soul and gushed from her eyes in an inexhaustible stream of tears. In that instant she knew that she loved me, and must die if I did not revive. When she awoke from the dream and reflected upon it, her happiness at finding it untrue was nearly fatal to her; her heart beat as violently as if it would leap from her, and she was scarcely able to write the note to me.

"From that morning until her death, that warm spring of love was never exhausted. Whenever I remember--no, I dare not. I would seem to you a strange visionary, or, at best, weary you with confessions that could give you nothing new. I am no poet; and even Dante, with all his display of color and sound, could not save Paradise from monotony.

"Every day we experienced some new happiness, especially after our child was born. She was a lovable child; and yet it was a long time before I could learn to love her for her own sake. During the first years, I loved her because of her mother, and she pleased me only so far as she resembled her. It was, so to speak, only an additional charm of this dear woman's that she had given life to such a child. I tell this to you, that you may know what a boundless love filled me, and how it never grew cool or more rational with years.

"Indeed, she even succeeded in displacing another passion, to which I had formerly given all my spare time, but which now scarcely ever manifested itself. Even in the cadet school, I had been an enthusiastic violinist, and believed that I could not live without music. And when I realized that my wife was a stranger to the true nature of music, it pained me for a moment. But I would have renounced as unnecessary or troublesome, anything in which she had no part. Indeed, I easily convinced myself that this lack was but one perfection the more. Her true, simple nature, always at one with itself, shrank from the mysterious depths, the spiritual twilight, into which music lures us. It troubled her that she could not find the key to this fascinating riddle; but she seemed to fear that she might be drawn into a moral perplexity which would admit of no redemption. It was not indifference toward the musical world, but rather a lack of sensitiveness, which barred her way to the heart of it. She thoroughly enjoyed a folk-song or dance melody. A Beethoven symphony pained her--indeed, could drive her to despair.

"All her artistic sense was in her eyes. She enjoyed every visible thing with the most exquisite feeling, and would study the lines of a face, a landscape, or a building, for hours together. Her hand was well-trained, but she placed little value on her sketches and aquarelles. Her technical skill did not equal her power of artistic perception. Besides, within the limits of our country estate, amid entirely commonplace surroundings and unattractive people, she had little opportunity to perfect herself.

"Thus, for different reasons, both our talents remained dormant. But, occasionally, the desire to take my violin from its case and play through my old favorites once again, would seize me like a physical necessity. This I would do in perfect secrecy in some distant part of the woods. When the longing was satisfied, and I returned to the house like some penitent sinner, we would both laugh if she chanced to meet me with the violin under my arm. She often implored me to ignore her weakness; perhaps I might cure her of it. But her untroubled cheerfulness was more to me than all the sonatas in the world.

"For nearly eight years we lived thus, entirely for ourselves, and reminded only by little excursions and visits to the city, that any world existed beyond our pine woods. Then our child sickened with the measles, and retained from them a bad throat-trouble, which our physician advised us to check at once by a sojourn in milder air. Although it was harvest-time, we soon decided to leave home and take our child to Lake Geneva, for which place my wife had always preserved a tender feeling since her school-days at a French *pension* there.

"In Vernex, where, as yet, the hotels had not rendered the beautiful shore unsafe, we found an excellent house, entirely after our own hearts. It was arranged for only a dozen guests, and was situated in the midst of a beautifully green garden, with a most glorious view of the lake and the mountains on the south shore. We settled ourselves in two spacious rooms on the second floor. My wife and child slept in the small room; the large one adjoining it served as the sitting-room, and at night my bed was made on the divan. The corresponding rooms on the ground floor beneath us were occupied during the first day by an English couple, who disturbed us by continual playing on the piano; but when they departed on the following day, they left such stillness behind them that we might have considered ourselves the only persons in the paradise, had not the usual meals, in an elegant dining-room, reminded us that we still had half-gods near us.

"On the first evening I was surprised by a tender stratagem of my wife's. As I unpacked the great trunk belonging to her and the child, which she herself had filled at home, I struck something hard, which proved to be my violin-case.

"I embraced her heartily as I saw her smile with pleasure because she had accomplished this so cleverly and secretly.

"'As I brought my color-box,' she said, 'there was no need for your instrument to remain at home. I know a hundred places by the lake and on the road to Montreux, where I can carry on my daubing by the hour, while you are conjuring your uncanny spirits up here.'

"Yet it happened otherwise than I had first thought in my excitement over her loving forethought. The case remained unopened, and for a full week not one musical thought occurred to me. I would sit by the hour on the balcony with an unopened book in my hand, wholly absorbed in the nobly beautiful picture before me. Or I would accompany my wife and child on their walks; and when my wife had settled down to sketch the magnificent chestnut-trees, or the white houses surrounded with fig-trees and vineyards, glimmering on the slopes in the ravines between Montreux and Veytaux, I would stretch myself in the shade near by; chat with the child, who was visibly improving; and feel so completely satisfied with God and man, that that sultan who vainly searched the world for the happiest man would finally have found him in me.

"One morning I allowed them to go out alone, for I had several necessary letters to write. It was a quiet, beautiful day; not a breath of air ruffled the mirror-like lake; I had moved my table before the open balcony door, and was congratulating myself on the deep stillness of the house, when, in the room beneath me, I suddenly heard that fateful piano, which I had so often cursed, sound again, and so loudly that I knew the lower balcony door must also be open. In my vexation I at first closed mine; but after listening a moment or two, I reopened the door and stepped outside, in order not to lose the slightest tone. The ten fingers playing Bach's Prelude on the little piano below me belonged to no Englishwoman. Late last evening new guests had moved in--so the

chambermaid had announced--a French man and woman, brother and sister. Which of the two was then playing I naturally did not know. But from the touch, although it was firm and strong when necessary, I decided upon the sister. I have seldom heard such beautiful, distinct, and, as it were, mature playing; yet it had no trace of so-called classic objectivity, but rather a very personal charm, as if the player's deepest nature were speaking to me. I would have wagered my head that the musician was a brunette, with those gray eyes which Spaniards call 'green.' I know it is folly; but it is not the only one of which you will find me guilty, and it had not less power over me because a sound human intelligence might resist it.

"You know that Gounod composed a violin accompaniment for this Prelude. The purists and Bach-pedants reject it. But it has such an irresistible melody that every violinist learns it by heart. It was not long before I had taken my instrument from its case, tuned it sufficiently, and placed the bow in position. And then began a most wonderful duet on two floors, played with as much calmness and precision as if it had been well practised. There was not the slightest hesitation; my violin was never in better condition, and the little piano rang as full and soft as if it had been changed over night into a powerful concert grand.

"After we finished there came a pause, and I wondered with some trepidation if another approach than that of sounds would be proper. I stepped out on the balcony, hoping that the player would appear on the terrace. But a new piece which she began drew me forthwith back into the room. This time it was a Chopin Impromptu which I knew perfectly. Since I had been unable to play much, I had read an unlimited quantity of music, and my memory was very well trained.

"Again seizing my bow, I attempted a modest accompaniment to the somewhat quaint, but passionately musical, confession. Then came something from Schumann, and so on *ad infinitum*. I believe we played three full hours at one stretch. When my wife finally returned--it was the second breakfast--hour she found me much overheated, and bathed in perspiration.

"She even listened to the last bars of a Beethoven sonata, to which I was playing the treble. 'What duet have you arranged for yourself?' she asked, smiling, and when I told her that I knew the pianist as little as she did, she laughed outright. 'I did not bring the violin in vain, after all, and if I sketch chestnut-trees by the hour, I shall know that you are busy and happy.'

"I attempted to reply somewhat jokingly, but made a miserable failure. The music had moved me exceedingly; and, although I never believed in presentiments, I was unable to shake off a premonition of something unusual and uncanny. I longed to remain away from dinner, but felt ashamed of such a boyish feeling. But my shyness about making the player's acquaintance was unnecessary. She did not appear at table; so we met only her brother, a slender, serious young Frenchman, whose hair and complexion at once proclaimed his southern origin. In fact, we learned later that his home was at Arles. His father had been an Alsatian from an old German family, a merchant, who, conducting a branch business in that city of beautiful women, had finally lost his heart to the most charming one. He had afterward settled there and founded a great banking-house, that the son, who was inclined toward a diplomatic career, might find the way easily open to him. Both parents had died recently, and the son was still in mourning for them; but he seemed either very reserved for his age, or oppressed by some secret trouble, so that, beyond a few courteous words of greeting, we heard little from him. His sister, after whom my wife immediately inquired, was still tired from the journey, and also from the music, he added, with a side glance at me. Her physician had forbidden her to play, but she could not refrain from it. In the register, which was brought to him after dinner, he wrote a simple, commonplace name, but beneath it that of his sister--Countess So-and-so.

"So she was married, and perhaps we should meet her husband also. I do not know why this thought affected me unpleasantly, since I had never yet seen the lady herself. I awaited the evening in strange suspense. On entering the dining-room we saw the

brother and sister seated directly opposite us. I was not in the least surprised. The young woman appeared precisely as I had imagined; beautiful dark hair, slightly curly, and bound in a simple knot at the back of her head; a face far from regular, but charming for its pale ivory-color and beautiful teeth; and, truly, gray eyes, the iris inclosed with a dark ring and shot through with golden lights, exactly as I had fancied from her playing.

"She talked little, addressing herself only to my wife when she did speak. It was nothing new to me to see that the latter could at once attract even this shy and reserved heart.

"After dinner, when we went out into the garden, over which the stars were twinkling, it was not long before I observed the two sitting together absorbed in earnest conversation. One could hardly have imagined anything lovelier than this pair, so unlike, yet so truly equal in charm and nobility of appearance and manner. They were nearly the same size, although my wife was stately and well-developed, while the stranger was girlishly slight; but her arms and neck, which I saw later in lighter clothing, were perfectly rounded, and resembled those of some Arabian women whose pictures I had seen in a friend's sketch-book. The brother had withdrawn; I walked to and fro on the lower part of the terrace, smoking my cigar, gazing absent-mindedly over the shimmering lake, and now and then hearing a detached word from the conversation of the women. The child was sleeping quietly upstairs, for she was put to bed every evening before we went to dinner.

"'She is extremely charming,' my wife afterwards said to me, 'but even more unhappy than she is beautiful and lovable. She has been separated for two years from her husband, who is a *mauvais sujet*, a gambler and spendthrift, who has already wasted her whole dowry. When she realized that she had married a worthless man, she insisted upon returning to her parents. So you may imagine that when her mother and father both died, it was much harder for her to bear than for many other loving daughters, who find comfort in their husbands. She is now living with her brother, but, although he adores her, she cannot have him with her forever. Sometime she will be entirely alone and dependent on herself, and, since she is a Catholic and cannot release herself from her hateful tie, she looks forward to a hopeless future. When I showed active sympathy because of her mourning, she told me all this without the least sentimentality, and with the calmness of a strong soul. But when she mentioned that the Count occasionally came to see her to extort money, although he no longer has the slightest claim on her property, her voice trembled, the mere thought of the villain is so repulsive to her. Her health has suffered under all these emotions. I promised to care for and pet her like a loving sister, and you should have heard how prettily she laughed. The poor young woman! I am much pleased that your violin travelled with us. She said your playing seemed so sympathetic.'

"She never wearied of talking about her new friend. I teased her because, contrary to her usual habit, she had allowed herself to be so quickly conquered.

"'Only beware of yourself!' she replied, laughing. 'I certainly do not understand the language of tones, but I know that with them one can confess far deeper secrets than we revealed to-day with words.'

"'As long as there is a solid floor between us, there is no danger,' I interrupted, jokingly. But I knew very well the first evening that it would not be safe to jest with those dangerous gray eyes.

"For a long while I could not sleep. The theme from the Prelude sounded constantly in my ears. At midnight I arose, and, going softly into the neighboring room, gazed at the beloved faces of my wife and child by the light of the little night-lamp. The charm worked, and I passed a perfectly quiet, dreamless night. But my first waking thought was again--danger!

"You will understand why the matter seemed so serious to me, when I tell you, that I am one of those with whom all spiritual crises complete themselves on the instant,

without delay or hesitation, with the calm fatality of a natural law. Although it is often well to understand one's self at once without being obliged to question mind or heart--like the commander of some fortress, who, recognizing the superiority of the besieger, needs no council of war--yet, in either case, if time can be won, everything may be saved, and the relief may come which would have been too late, if there had been a premature surrender.

"Thus, perhaps, it might have been better for me, and I might have acted more wisely that morning, if I had not regarded the matter as an unavoidable decree of fate. The symptoms were indeed precisely the same as when I fell so suddenly and violently in love with my wife. But the situation was different. With a wife and child, and eight added years--acknowledge that you find it inexcusable to yield thus passively to a passion, instead of opposing it with all my strength, and calling the good spirits of house and home to my aid.

"Strange to say, notwithstanding this new affection, I was not for a moment untrue to what I had previously loved; neither did I think coldly of my wife, nor wish her absent that I might have only that other face before my eyes. It was as if one of my heart's chambers had been empty and was now occupied; but between it and the next the door was standing open, and the two occupants were on the best of terms, even crossing the threshold now and then to visit each other.

"That may seem to you merely an idle fancy. It is only a miserable attempt to explain the remarkable condition in which I found myself--a condition not quite so clear then as to-day, since at first it seemed treason towards my dear wife, and I bitterly reproached myself for it. Soon, however, I reassured myself that I took nothing from her by this division of my heart; that, on the contrary, my strong, pure love for her received new nourishment through this quickening of my inner life.

"All this I tell to you alone. Thousands would consider it self-deception or morbid extravagance. Knowledge of the human heart is still in its swaddling-clothes, notwithstanding the age of the world, and most people never go beyond the A B C, even though they consider themselves experienced.

"As I said, the situation was new to me, and I needed time to understand and pardon myself. I remained at home again that morning, for, on the day before, I had not written a single letter.

"'I shall not disturb the duet,' said my wife, smiling, as she went out with the child. But I did not touch the violin, although the little piano beneath seemed to demand it. The pen remained unmoistened. I lay motionless in my hammock, listening. It sounded even more magical than before. Now I had the player's face definitely before me: the beautiful, unvarying pallor of the cheeks; the sensitive mouth, with its full, red lips, always slightly apart; the small, white hands. Often it seemed to me as if my wife, stepping behind the player, looked at the music over her shoulder. Then, calmly comparing them, I could not decide which was the more charming; they agreed as well in life as in my heart.

"When my wife returned--she brought an extremely clever study, and the child had her hands full of harvest flowers--she was much surprised to hear that I had not touched the violin. She urged me to arrange a regular practice hour with the Countess; I objected that the little piano stood in the room where she lived and slept, and that I would not accompany her if she played on the miserable instrument in the *salon*. At table there was some talk about it, but since she herself failed to encourage it, and especially since the brother, who believed music injurious to her health, showed no interest, the matter was not mentioned again. Altogether, it seemed as if the beautiful 'danger' and I were never to become better acquainted. If I began any conversation whatsoever with her, it soon came to a pause; and she on her part never addressed me without some obvious reason. On our walks she took my wife's arm, and went ahead; I followed with her brother; the child, running from one couple to the other, soon attached herself trustfully to the quiet, strange lady who was so friendly to her. Often

we all chatted together, and on these occasions my wife was always conspicuous for her charming gayety. She persuaded the Countess to try the broken German which she had learned from an old Alsatian nurse. This gave occasion for much lively joking and teasing, and even enlivened the serious brother. He was working hard at a statistical paper, through which he hoped to obtain a place in the ministry. For the rest, he was a most pleasant companion, paid court to my wife in all honor, gave fruits and sweetmeats to the child, and, in a weak, but pleasing voice, sang Provençal folk-songs, the only music for which he had taste or talent.

"Thus we were very sorry to hear one day that his chief had unexpectedly recalled him. He was obliged to depart at once, but would not allow his sister to accompany him. He begged us to persuade her to remain a few weeks longer in the glorious air and scenery of the lake, for she had visibly improved during the past eight days, and had slept better and suffered less from headache than usual.

"My wife embraced her warmly, and declared she would not allow her to leave her care as yet. She had wagered with her that it would not be impossible to entice a little color into her velvety cheeks, and, for at least four weeks longer, she would use all her arts to win the bet. The little one, clinging about her neck, insisted that she would forget all her beautiful French if 'Aunt Lucile' went away. But when I heard a brief '*Eh bien! Je reste,*' from her, it was as if a hand which had been clutching my throat suddenly freed me again. I promised her brother to supply his place conscientiously, and, although I was fond of him, saw him depart with a certain sense of relief, as if he had stood between his sister and me, and had now left the field clear.

"Yet his departure changed nothing whatever. To be sure, his room being empty, she had her bed taken in there, and arranged the other, where the instrument stood, as a sitting-room. We visited her there now and then, and she often came up to our room; but duets were not mentioned.

"Indeed, she herself seemed to have lost all desire for music. Occasionally I heard her open the piano and begin this or that well-known piece. In the midst of it she would break off, often with a bad discord, as if in some unusual, ill-tempered mood. It seemed as though she began only to demand my violin as accompaniment, and proving unsuccessful in this, found the music suddenly distasteful. Once or twice I yielded to the temptation. But the playing excited me to such a feverish pitch that I, too, broke off in the midst of a passage, excusing myself afterward with an awkward pretence of an interruption, which she did not seem to believe.

"In truth, it was just as my wife had said, I knew how much could be confessed in music, and shuddered before the sin of betraying to this stranger that I had lost half of my heart to her.

"I was better able to guard my words and looks. We were scarcely ever alone together longer than a few seconds. She stayed in her room or on the terrace outside most of the time, and in our walks in the cool of the evening, she never left my wife's side; so that I, leading my child by the hand, often remained a long distance behind the two women, and pondered my strange fate without addressing a single word to her during the entire walk.

"The evenings grew longer. The general sitting-room was not pleasant to us; so, after dinner, we assembled alternately in her room and our own; she and my wife with their handiwork, chatting or reading, while I either smoked my cigar on the balcony, or read aloud from some book. She liked to hear me read German poetry.

"My wife sketched her in many different positions. A profile sketch, with the head sorrowfully drooping, was especially good, and I could never look at it enough. I still remember when, at one of these sittings, I for the first time touched her hair; until then I had not once felt so much as the tips of her fingers in my hands. It went through my nerves like an electric shock. There was a peculiar fragrance about her from some costly French perfume that she used. I knew even long afterwards if she had lingered in a place, either been sitting in my hammock, or standing by the bookcase in the *salon*.



"One evening, as we were preparing to visit her for a little chat before bedtime, our door suddenly opened; she rushed in, the very picture of terror, bolted the door after her, and sinking on the nearest chair, broke into such a storm of tears that she could not speak. We were extremely anxious about her, but my wife at length succeeded in calming her so far that she could tell what had occurred, with tolerable composure.

"Somebody had come into her room without knocking; and, as she had looked around, she had seen her husband standing in the middle of the chamber. He had greeted her politely, asked after her health, and, when she made no reply, seated himself on the divan, as if perfectly at home. In spite of his subdued voice and quiet manner, she had noticed an air of suppressed excitement about him; but, owing to her own agitation, could not determine whether wine or some other cause rendered his look unsteady and his voice grating and harsh. Then he had commenced in a listless way; he would tell her the motive of his visit; he had been robbed in a gambling house in Geneva, and was *sans le sou*. A good friend had paid his steamer fare here. He now wished nothing more than the means of escaping from his *guignon*, and hospitality for that night. He would be satisfied with the sofa.

"She had given him whatever she could spare at the moment, a not inconsiderable sum, and commanded him to leave on the instant.--Did she expect any one? He would remember her situation, and not embarrass her. With this he had tried to take her hand, and had looked at her with a smile which almost congealed her blood. And as he appeared firmly determined not to yield, she had gone out under pretence of making arrangements for the night. She implored us to assist her, and protect her from the rascal.

"I exchanged a glance with my wife, who had taken the weeping woman in her arms like some sick child; and leaving them thus, I hurried downstairs.

"I found the Count indulging in a quiet doze on the soft couch. Since he did not hear me enter, I had sufficient leisure to observe him. His face showed that irresistible drowsiness so apt to seize gamblers after long excitement; the lips were pale; eyelids and nostrils, reddened. Beyond this the perfect type of a *bel homme*, faultlessly attired and thoroughly dissipated.

"Finally comprehending where he was, and that a stranger was facing him, he arose composedly, and asked what I wished. I had to impart to him only his wife's desire, that he should leave her room and the house without delay or further sensation.

"And if he would not?

"Then the Countess would use her house-right. He regarded me with a certain cold-blooded insolence, which, even in that painful moment, struck me as amusing.

"He asked if I were the hotel porter; meanwhile adjusting his eye-glass to his right eye.

"I replied that the Countess's reason for asking this service of me was not his concern--I lived in number so-and-so, and would be at his service next day for any satisfaction he required. For the present, I would simply execute my commission, and hoped, for his own sake, that he would avoid any unnecessary disturbance.

"He reflected for a while; now looking at me doubtfully with a cold, impudent smile, now appearing resolved to remain. At length he took his hat, murmured several unintelligible words, brought out a cigar and lighted it from the candle on the table, bowed very civilly, and with a 'To-morrow, then,' left the room.

"I immediately closed the balcony door, and carefully fastened the shutters. After which I returned upstairs and announced the quick result of my mission, of course without mentioning the parting words. The two women were sitting together on the sofa, and the Countess was motionless and silent. She was trembling nervously from the effect of her fright; but this ceased when my wife, who dabbled in homeopathy, forced her to take a few of her 'wonder-drops.' Taking up a book which we had been reading

the day before, I attempted to go on with it. Not one of us understood a word that I read.

"At ten o'clock the Countess bade my wife good-night, and allowed me to escort her downstairs. She was tormented by the fear that he might yet find some way of slipping in.

"'You see, the field is clear,' I said, with a smile, after I had inspected both rooms. 'You can rest in peace!'

"'In peace!' she said, shuddering throughout her slender body--'in peace! And at what price!' And then, coming closer to me, 'You ordered him out. Oh, I am sure of it, otherwise he would not have gone so quickly! And now for my miserable sake'--

"I sought to comfort her as well as I could, promising to do nothing without her knowledge; but her distress only increased. 'Think of your wife, of your daughter! O God! if I should be the cause--'

"I seized her hand; she sank on my breast in uncontrollable emotion; and as if in a dream, I held her thus embraced, and felt her slender figure trembling in my arms, yet did not even touch her hair with my lips; in that moment all passionate impulses yielded to the deep pity which I felt for her.

"And so, drawing myself away, I bade her a cheerful 'Good-night!' and went to my room.

"I was obliged to quiet my wife also, for she feared that the affair would have consequences. I myself did not believe it. I knew that in professional gamblers all feelings, even those of honor, become completely deadened. And I judged correctly.

"I remained at home all the following day. He neither appeared himself, nor sent a messenger. The Countess took refuge with us, for she was in constant fear of a surprise. The two women sat together on the balcony with their embroidery, apparently engaged in careless conversation, but in reality watching me. Not a word was said of that which occupied our thoughts. When the day had passed without bloodshed, my wife accompanied her friend to her room, and remained with her that night. On the next day, we heard that the Count was again in Geneva, whence he soon afterward disappeared to some other German gambling house.

"You will comprehend that this *intermezzo* bound us still more closely to each other. We were together nearly all day long, and I occasionally wondered that my wife, who had formerly known all my thoughts even before they were clear to myself, allowed, indeed, unmistakably favored, this harmful playing with fire. She did not hesitate to leave us *tête-à-tête*, although, as a fact, there was no enjoyment in such a talk. I usually took refuge at such times in a stubborn silence, which, to any third person, would have seemed veritable rudeness. I often denied myself the pleasure of seeing her by pretending indolence, absence of mind, or pressing business; all of which excuses were accepted without comment. At first mild-tempered and somewhat melancholy, she gradually became irritable and capricious. My wife, noticing this, often reproved her gently, and, with sisterly patience and kindness, tried to calm her wild moods of rebellion against fate.

"My wife and I no longer spoke of her. Yet often, when I looked up from my reading unexpectedly, I encountered a strange, questioning look in my wife's eyes; a look such as a physician casts upon a mortally sick man by whose bedside he watches.

"I was certainly ill, yet not so desperately but that I still sought for a cure, though with ever-lessening hope of finding one. Music, to which I resorted in the hope of relief, poured oil upon the flames. After I had played an hour or two alone, the piano below would begin its reply, so it was not a conversation or duet, but a discourse in long monologues. Surrendering to this dangerous comfort on two mornings, I ended in a species of intoxication. I then tried the effect of separation, and arranged a climbing party which kept me away over night. Then I felt the truth of what I told you at first; the

new passion was equal to the old, but not stronger. I missed them both with the same longing--indeed, could no longer separate them in my thoughts. When I saw them again, I felt the same heart-throbs twice. I was not then so philosophical that I could accept this as something rational and ordinary; it was strange and unprecedented, yet I felt that it was not immoral. It harmed no one, and far from estranging me from myself, rather enriched my inner life. No, it was not immoral, though I realized, at the time, that it was a great misfortune, and would become a sin if it undermined my dear wife's peace and happiness. I tried to find some way of escape, though I knew it would be at the price of killing or forever stifling half of my heart.

"We lived thus for about fourteen days after her brother's departure, each day bringing something new, either a trip on the boat or a walk to a neighboring place, when, one afternoon, we arranged to meet at the landing-place below the garden, and make a boat-trip to Chillon. I was first. I had hired a boat in Vernex from a boatman who allowed me to take his son, a powerful fellow, fourteen years of age, as rower. The Countess came soon after, dressed in a black barége-cloth garment through whose fine meshes her beautiful arms and shoulders were plainly visible; she wore a flower in her hair, and carried her straw hat on her arm. I had never seen her so beautiful, or so pale.

"'You are ill,' I said; 'you are suffering from the sultriness.'

"'What does it matter?' she replied; 'I am suffering from something worse--from living. Where is your wife?'

"My wife came as I was helping her friend into the boat, but came without the child. She was not well, my wife said. She complained of headache, and wished her mother to remain at home with her; then, too, the weather was uncertain. We immediately arose, preparing to get out of the boat. But this my wife would not allow. There was not a shadow of danger or cause for worry; I knew how our darling was troubled; she would sit with her and read something aloud; and she wished us a pleasant day. After giving the skiff a little push with her foot, she went back to the house; and although neither of us, as we glided out over the waves, felt pleased or at ease in this forced *tête-à-tête*, neither one had the ready courage to confess it at once and return to land.

"I took the second pair of oars and pulled as vigorously as if for a wager, though in reality it was in order to be excused from conversation. She was sitting nearly opposite me, but I could see only her little feet and the edge of her dress, for I kept my eyes obstinately cast down. Suddenly she began to speak of my wife, making a long, passionate declaration of love for her. She spoke at first of her goodness and warm-heartedness, of her fine mind, her strong and ready will; every word was true, a perfect portrait of her deepest nature. Then she described her appearance, feature by feature, with the idealizing penetration of a lover, and after I had listened for a long while, she asked me how I had learned to know her. I then told her of our first meeting; and as I recalled everything, I felt deep gratitude and happiness that nothing had changed; that my good star had given me even more than it had then promised; that even the woman opposite me could alter nothing. We were speaking French, and the words almost escaped me, '*Rien n'est changé; il n'y a qu'un amour de plus.*'

"I restrained myself, however, and, instead, rose from my seat, extended my hand to her, and said, 'I thank you for having learned to know and love her so.'

"Her hand lay in mine like that of a corpse. We did not venture far out into the lake, for it was already beginning to roughen. You know how quickly it breaks from the deepest calm to the wildest uproar; and a dark cloud, toward which our boatman from time to time cast a watchful glance, was even then appearing above the Savoyard mountains. Therefore, as we stepped out upon the rocks near the Castle of Chillon, and saw the first breakers with their narrow silvery crests surging against the shore, I proposed to return on foot. She regarded me with a look which strangely transformed her face, but which had still greater power over me than her usual gentle and kindly expression.

"'Do you fear the storm?'

"Not for myself,' I said, 'I can swim like a fish. But it is my duty to bring you home in safety.'

"I release you from that obligation. Whoever is to suffer, does not die. Come! Turn, the boat around.'

"Very well,' said I, '*vogue la galère!*'

"And then we pushed out through the angry, swelling waves, while the air about us grew ever darker, and the houses at Montreux gleamed above us in dazzling sunshine. Muffled thunder came from the peaks beyond, but as yet no drops fell. As we were then rowing, we would reach home in half an hour. No one spoke a word. She had drawn her veil half over her face. I could see only her pale mouth. Her lips were slightly parted, and I saw them quiver now and then, more from scorn than pain. Suddenly she arose and hurried over the seats to the stern, where the boatman sat at the rudder.

"What are you going to do?' I cried.

"Nothing wrong. I merely wish to relieve the boatman for a while. I understand how, perfectly well.'

"Before I could interfere, she had taken the rudder from the boy's hand and seated herself in his place. I was somewhat disturbed at this, as her voice sounded unnatural. But, in order to lose no time, I let her remain there, and redoubled my own exertions. In a short time, I saw that she had given the boat a direction which drove it into the very midst of the raging lake. Yet her delicate arms had so much strength that, in spite of my efforts, I could not turn the boat back again. Suddenly I realized that she was doing this with a clear purpose.

"You are steering falsely,' I cried to her. 'I beg you, for God's sake, give up the rudder. We are in the very centre of the storm.'

"Do you mean it?' she answered softly. 'I thought you had no fear. Only look at the beautiful waves. They do nothing unkind; they receive one in their arms more gently than mankind. Look, look! Could anything be merrier!'

"A large wave broke over us; we were instantly wet to the skin. The first sharp flash of lightning darted down from the black mountain-wall.

"I could not leave the oars; I bade the boy take the rudder again; he shrugged his shoulders, and pointed to the Countess. Undisturbed by everything about her, she was staring wildly into the distance. We were already so far from shore that the houses were scarcely distinguishable through the gray storm-twilight. Some action was imperative. Standing up, I motioned the boatman to take my oars, and strode, wavering and staggering, to the other end of the skiff. Her eyes met mine through the veil with a stubborn, threatening look.

"Be reasonable!' I said in German; 'I shall not suffer this any longer. Give me the rudder, will you? Well then--' Seizing her hands with a quick movement, I pressed them so hard that she released the rudder. I held her thus for a moment, although I must have hurt her. She gave no sign of pain, but gazed steadily into my eyes with a look of hate or the deepest rage. Then her face changed; her mouth trembled; her eyes closed with an expression of unutterable misery and despair; as I freed her hands, she threw herself at my feet, and I heard a stifled sob and the words, '*Pardonnez-moi! Je suis une folle!*'

"I seized the rudder, and, in my distress and bewilderment, could only whisper to her that she must control herself and rise again. In a few moments she was once more seated on the bench, but this time with averted face and bowed head. I did not speak to her again, for I was obliged to exert all my strength to bring the boat back into the right course, and to steer for the land. But the brief scene affected me so powerfully, that one thought was continually uppermost in my mind--what rapture it would have been, amid this wild upheaval of the elements, to clasp her close, and with her go to the bottom!

"The storm helped us, and we landed much sooner than I had expected. Springing out first, I offered to assist her, but she refused my aid and jumped out on the beach without help. She was trembling through and through in her wet clothes. I asked if she were ill, but she shook her head. Yet she took my arm as I accompanied her back to the house.

"My wife was standing on the balcony, and welcomed us cheerily. She had been greatly worried about us. She would come down and help her friend undress.

"'Oh, no, no!' cried the Countess, withdrawing her arm from mine, 'I need nothing, thank you--good-night!'

"Thereupon she hurried away from me, without so much as a backward glance or a wave of the hand. I followed slowly; I felt very much exhausted, and went upstairs still staggering from the motion of the boat. The storm was entirely over; a crimson sunset glow filled our room. My wife had already laid out dry clothing for me; she received me in her usual quietly affectionate manner and then left me alone, for I had to dress myself from head to feet. It did not occur to me that she said very little, and asked for no detailed account of our adventure in the boat. My own feelings were absorbed by my recent experience, and I changed my clothes mechanically, as if in a dream.

"Then I remembered the child. As I entered the other room, I saw the little one sleeping in an arm-chair near the open window. My wife whispered to me that she had given her some medicine, which had caused her to fall asleep during the reading. I might go to dinner alone; she herself had no appetite, and would content herself with a cup of tea.

"So I went down, although I also would have preferred to remain away from the table. I had no wish to sit alone opposite Lucile. But this ordeal was spared me. She too remained in her chamber. I did not speak a word during the lengthy dinner. I usually smoked my after-dinner cigar in the garden. By doing so I did not separate myself from the women, but could chat back and forth with them; for though of late both had been together, the Countess usually sat at her window or on the terrace, and my wife on the balcony above. Tonight, balcony and terrace were empty, and I soon withdrew to the most remote part of the garden.

"I would lie if I should say that I had seriously considered my condition. I endured it that was all. I had a definite feeling that things could not remain so; that something must happen, be decided, or expressed, if I were not to be stifled by the suppression. But what the something would be I could not imagine. My cigar had long gone out; yet I remained on the parapet of the little pavilion and gazed out over the dusky surface of the lake, which appeared like some vast, metallic mirror framed in black mountains. Not till the first stars began to glimmer forth could I decide to return to the house. For the first time, the thought of meeting my wife was painful to me. Therefore it was an actual relief when, knocking gently at her door, I heard instead of 'Come in!' the whispered request not to enter then; she had just put the little one to bed and did not wish to disturb her. She bade me good-night. So for the present I was alone with my troubled soul.

"I lighted the lamp and attempted to read. The letters danced before my eyes. I took up my wife's portfolio and looked at her drawings leaf by leaf; but when I came to the portrait sketch I closed the folio hastily, as if I had caught myself entering upon forbidden paths. Then, for a long while, I sat perfectly passive before my writing-table with my head resting on my hand, and sank ever deeper into an abyss of hopeless wishes, sorrows, and self-reproaches.

"By and by the door was opened softly, and my wife entered. She had on her night-cap, but was otherwise completely dressed. Evidently in the act of going to bed she had suddenly resolved on something else.

"Her face was unusually pale; her beautiful eyes glistened strangely as if a slight shower of tears had passed over them. A certain air of timidity made her seem ten years

younger, indeed, almost girlish. I had never felt so clearly what a treasure she was to me.

"I shall not trouble you long,' she said, 'but I must talk with you. Perhaps we shall both sleep better.'

"She seated herself with her back toward the open balcony-door.

"Shall I close the window?' I asked.

"Why? It is nothing secret. I could say it as well before a third person. It has been clear and comprehensible to you yourself for a long time.'

"What?' I asked, looking past her out into the night.

"That you love her. One can see it easily enough. And she too is no longer an inexperienced child. I would only like to know if you have told her, and how she received it.'

"I sat before her as if in a spiritual swoon, or as when one dreams of being almost naked in a gorgeous company, and would perish for shame.

"How can you imagine----' I stammered.

"It has not been easy for me,' she continued with a sad smile; 'but it will not be otherwise, because I wish it so. I saw it coming, and had time enough to become used to it, if it is ever possible to accustom one's self to certain experiences. It is always best not to close the eyes and seal the lips when people love each other. And you love me yet, I know, in spite of everything.'

"Thank you for those words!' I exclaimed, and rushed to take her in my arms. But she repelled me with gentle firmness.

"No, stay there,' she said; 'we will talk it over calmly. I am no heroine, and this discussion is very hard for me. But tell me.'

"I assured her, on my honor, that no word had passed my lips which could have betrayed the state of my feelings. Then I told her, even to the smallest detail, all that had happened on the lake that day, and also everything which I had felt.

"I suspected something of the sort,' she replied quietly. 'She avoided my eye, and you--you had no thought for our child. It is a passion; that we cannot hide from ourselves. You will not think me so childish as to surrender to a miserable jealousy, overwhelm you with reproaches, or make any scene which might show our friend how much harm she has done me. Can I blame you for loving her? She is so lovable, that I myself, even yet, love her as an only sister. It does not surprise me. I knew it at the first sight of her charming face. If, in spite of that, I did nothing to keep her away from us, indeed, rather brought her into closer intimacy, it was because I have always considered that old proverb--'Out of sight, out of mind--' perfectly false. No, the absent are preferred to all present people; our hearts idealize them; love and longing grow with separation. I hoped that the first witchery would be paled and effaced by frequent meeting. It has certainly happened otherwise, and the future is very dark to me.'

"Let us go away!' I said. 'We could pack this evening and go to Lausanne tomorrow at dawn. I promise you, this sickness will leave my blood with change of air.'

"She shook her head gently.

"Out of sight, *in* mind,' she said. 'Yes, even if it were only a whim; you a light-minded, fickle-hearted man, and she a pretty theatre princess. But consider how everything about her touches you--her unhappiness, her loneliness, the nobility of her whole character, and her music. At the first sound of a violin you would live it all over again. No, my dear friend, we dare not flee, and I dare not appear cowardly in your eyes. I am not so. I know that we are too firmly united to be parted by any power whatever. But I

am not so high-minded that I can share you with another. I would rather die!

"We sat facing each other in sorrowful silence. I felt that any word, any assurance of my good faith, would be trivial, a desecration of the situation which she regarded so purely and nobly. At length she arose.

"I feel much better now,' she said, smiling with an indescribably brave and beautiful expression. 'Do not think any more about it. Good counsel comes in the night. But promise that you will keep your confidence in me, and that you will never hide anything for fear of hurting me. The concealment itself would pain me. Are we not human, and therefore poor creatures unable to master our own hearts? No one is responsible for his inclinations, but only for his deeds. And you, I know, will never do anything which could really divide us. Good-night!

"She gave me her hand. I wanted to take the noble woman in my arms; but, retreating, she bade me farewell with her eyes, and disappeared into her room.

"You can imagine that I fell asleep late. But this time it was not because of the fever of an unreasoning, godless passion, like that which had kept me dreamily half-awake for so many nights. The clear, quiet words which I had just heard dropped upon my burning wound like a powerful balsam. I felt myself already in a sort of convalescence, because of whose great charm I could not sleep. I could scarcely conceive how any other woman than my own wife could ever have gained power over me. More than once I longed to steal into her chamber, kneel by her bedside, and, if she awoke, declare my love to her. But I was forced to remember that she had pushed me away, and that my warmest protestations might perhaps find no belief. Thinking thus, I finally fell asleep.

"I awoke before sunrise. You know that, on that shore, it is day some time before the sun appears above the Dent-du-Midi. Downstairs, all was already awake and astir. In the neighboring room nothing was moving. She, too, did not close her eyes till late, and needs the morning sleep, thought I.

"But I myself felt impelled to go out. I dressed noiselessly and stepped softly down stairs. I longed for a bath in the lake; the blood was burning in my veins. As I came down and approached her door, I saw that it stood ajar; and within, seated upon a chair in the middle of the room, and surrounded by locked trunks, I saw Lucile herself, her bill and its amount in gold lying on the table before her.

"Involuntarily I stood still. At the same instant she glanced up and recognized me. I crossed the threshold in intense excitement.

"You intend to go away, Countess?' I exclaimed; 'why this sudden decision?'

"My brother telegraphed for me last evening,' she said hurriedly, without looking at me. 'He is worried about the affair with the Count, which I did not conceal from him. He wishes me to come at once to Paris--he is perfectly right--it is best in every respect--'

"She stopped and bent over a small satchel in her lap. I went to the piano and lingered some music lying on it, merely to make a noise. If it remained so still, I feared that she would hear my heart beat. I could not speak a word.

"Remember me to your wife,' I heard her say. 'It is so early--she must be asleep--I will not disturb her to say good-by. I shall write to her from Paris--meanwhile, tell her--'

"She faltered again. Her voice sounded so timid and humble, she was so perfect a picture of contrition and helplessness as she sat there, afraid to look up, that I could not bear to let her suffer alone.

"I turned quickly toward her.

"Shall we seek to deceive each other at this hour?' I said. 'It is generous of you, but it shames me too much. I know why you wish to leave us so suddenly; your brother has nothing to do with it; no, there shall be no falsehood between us. I alone drive you away. You know that I love you passionately. Listen to me patiently; I shall say nothing

unworthy of either of us. We three know it, therefore we can no longer remain together. No one has been to blame. You esteem my wife too highly, and me also--I know that you are my friend--to wish to bring any trouble into our lives. Nothing is changed between my wife and me, we live for each other as always before; but you are right, one should not presume on such good fortune, and in time, even with the purest intentions--'

"I do not know what more I said. I was looking down at her, and I can see her head before me even yet, the narrow white part in the curly, blue-black hair, and at the neck, the simple, heavy knot with a silver pin. I saw that her bosom heaved painfully, and that the small hands on the satchel trembled slightly. But I could not see her face.

"Suddenly she looked up, and her eyes as they met mine were full of gratitude, but streaming with tears.

"'Lucile!' I cried, and falling on my knees before her, I drew her head down with my hands. 'Farewell!' I stammered. She did not speak. I pressed my lips to both her eyes, then tore myself away and fled from the room. I hastened out of the house, down the nearest street, and up the steep road toward Montreux. About half way there was a bench standing against a vineyard wall. Halting there, I remained seated for awhile with my eyes closed, in that stupefied state between pain and pleasure, which usually comes to one who has done his duty at the cost of a deep heart's need, or has renounced forbidden fruit.

"The morning remained sunless; a strong south wind wrapped the Savoyard mountains in mist, and at length a slight rain began to fall. Looking around, I saw the steamer which had landed at Vernex already well on its way toward Vevey. I vainly strained my eyes to discover, among the figures wrapped in rain-cloaks on the forward deck, her who was leaving me forever. Then I slowly retraced my steps to the house, intending to tell my wife of what had happened. But, first, I could not resist entering the small salon below, for the door was still open.

"The traces of a hasty departure were still visible--torn bills, flowers withered and scattered, and on the piano-stool a single sheet of music torn through the centre. I picked it up. It was the first music I had heard from the little piano, that prelude through which we had learned to know each other--*Galeotto fu il libro!* It was a sorrowful hour indeed when she vented her defiance and misery on the innocent music. I carefully pocketed it.

"Then I went upstairs. Still no sound from my wife's sleeping-room. Finally I knocked softly at the door, and when no one answered, entered the room. Neither mother nor child were to be seen; the windows were open; hats and wraps had disappeared.

"I do not know why this seemed so strange to me. Nothing was more natural than that they should start on their morning walk when they failed to find me. I called the chambermaid; she had seen my wife and child going in the direction of Chillon; she had received no message for me. As it had begun to rain, I imagined they would soon return, and decided to wait for them. But I could not endure this half an hour.

"I strode down the street which, following the shore, between houses and vineyards, leads to Chillon. At every bend in the road I expected to see them. Each time I was disappointed. Finally reaching the isle of Chillon, I asked the guard on the bridge if a lady and child had gone into the castle. Excepting a few Englishmen, there had been no visitors during the whole morning. I shall not attempt to describe my feelings at this information. Immediately turning about, I returned in half the usual time. Drenched, exhausted, and feverishly excited, I once more reached the house.

"Dinner-time was past, and they had not arrived.

"For the time being I was incapable of going out and renewing my search for the fugitives. I searched her chamber and my own, her desk, each of her trunks and boxes, in the hope--or rather in the fear--of finding a note which might give some clue to this mysterious disappearance. I found nothing. That completely disheartened me. I



stretched myself on a sofa, and for a full hour was tormented by the most incredibly horrible fancies, and suffered the bitterest distress in my poor soul, a purgatory wherein I richly expiated my sins.

"At length I arose.

"It was about two o'clock, and the rain was lighter. Although I felt lame and exhausted, I nevertheless resolved to go out again and search in the direction of Montreux, where she had often sketched. Perhaps the rain had surprised her there, and for the child's sake she had taken shelter under some hospitable roof until the rain should cease.

"Just as I was ready to go, the door opened, and a man in a coachman's blouse entered. He asked my name, and gave me a note. She wrote from Vevey, whence the man had just come in his wagon. She had suddenly decided that morning to carry out her plan, and visit the principal of the *pension* where she had lived as a girl. She begged me to excuse her for not informing me before. She would tell me about it when she saw me. She meant to remain there for the night; the room which she had formerly occupied was empty, and she wished to sleep once more in the bed where she had dreamed her girlish dreams, and to show the child all the places which were dear to her in her youth. She would return next day.

"While I was reading, the messenger related in his *patois* a rambling story about a Fräulein from the *pension* whom he was obliged to take to Vevey, and about the strange lady who had given him the note just as he was harnessing; and now he must go. I listened with little attention, gave the man his fee, and was once more alone.

"I could not believe it had happened so accidentally. I recognized a little stratagem of my wife's, a ruse to make me feel what it meant when she failed me. 'Out of sight, in mind' was indeed her maxim. She proved it only too cruelly.

"I did not wish to prolong my penance unnecessarily. It was two hours before another steamer left. The railroad was then only a subject for conversation. Little time would be gained by taking a carriage, and I knew that the slow movement would madden me.

"To be brief, I arrived in Vevey about seven o'clock, and was at once driven to the *pension*. They sent me into the garden. It had become a perfectly clear and beautiful evening, and although the sun had long since set, the light was still so strong that one could read out-of-doors. I saw the fugitives in the distance. My dear child ran to meet me with a cry of joy, and threw herself as impetuously about my neck as if she suspected what suffering the separation had caused me. My wife approached more slowly, for she was walking with the old directress; but her face wore a most loving expression, and she blushed slightly, as if ashamed of being caught in a trick. She presented me to her old friend, an excellent little spinster with snow-white hair, merry black eyes, and an obstinately black and visible mustache. I went the rounds of the house and garden, saw all the historical places, and, finally, my wife's narrow, neat little room, where a bed for the child had just been made on the sofa. It was then vacation, and most of the scholars were visiting their parents. I was invited to dine; but although we remained by ourselves and chatted about many things, what had taken place in the morning was not once mentioned. When I departed at nine o'clock, intending to spend the night in a hotel, my wife pressed my hand warmly, yet, at the same time, with a look which forbade any further tenderness--I remained in uncertainty whether out of respect for the half-cloister-like house-customs or from another reason.

"I brooded over it for a time. But I was so extremely tired by my hard day, that I fell asleep almost instantly in my cheerless hotel room, and was awakened by the morning sun.

"We took a carriage to return to Vernex. Since our little daughter sat opposite us, any expression of deep feeling was of course impossible. On arriving at the house, the child at once ran out into the garden with a playfellow. We two ascended the stairs, passing our friend's empty apartment.

"I have regards for you,' I said; 'she went away early yesterday morning. She will write to you from Paris.'

"My wife looked at me with a charming smile, half shy and half roguish.

"I too have a greeting for you,' she said; 'at any rate, the last hand-clasp, after we had embraced three times, was certainly intended for you. But the letter from Paris will be omitted. We made no arrangements for a correspondence. Yes,' she continued, as I looked wonderingly at her, 'I do not have fine ears in vain. I heard very plainly how my lord and master paid his morning call below, and knew from the unusual stir and movement that her departure was decided upon. I wished to accompany her a little distance. Why should we part so silently and secretly? Did we think unkindly of each other? I, at least, was not vexed because she found you lovable; she shared that weakness with me. And how could she help it that I had met you first? For a moment I even thought of begging her to remain. But that would have been a foolish challenge to fate. But I sat by her side as far as Vevey, and we explained ourselves as well as we could without calling things by name. Are you satisfied with me?'

"She held out her hand. I took it somewhat hesitatingly. 'If you were only satisfied with me!' I exclaimed. 'I found her miserably unhappy, as if she had done something for which she could never forgive herself. It seemed unkindly to let her believe that I was cold to her feeling. So I expressed myself, and truly, called things by their right names. Indeed, at the last, I kissed her on both eyes, and she suffered it. This is all I have on my conscience.'

"It is little--and yet, quite enough,' she replied softly; 'let us speak of it no more.'

"And so it was. Indeed, I not only ceased to speak of her, but in an unexpectedly short time forgot to think of her. Many things aided me in this. I was hastily called home by a letter from my inspector, for my presence on the estate had become imperative. Then came an early winter which brought me many cares, since I was occupied with the purchase of a small neighboring estate. In these cares of house and field, my wife, with her prudent forethought and encouraging cheerfulness, was of the greatest assistance, and no one, seeing us together, would have suspected any change in our admirably sympathetic life. And yet there was a change.

"A sword lay between us, invisible, but not unfelt.

"At first I bore it calmly, when she quietly but firmly resisted any show of tenderness on my part. In other ways she was not cold or distant towards me; in fact, her loving care increased, and she constantly endeavored to fulfill even my unexpressed wishes. But a certain shy reserve never left her. When I finally asked if my presence was distasteful to her, or if she wished to punish me by denying these innocent caresses, she shook her head earnestly and blushed like a girl.

"I am not sure that you will understand me,' she said. 'But it seems to me as if we were never alone, as if some one else were looking in on our privacy, and even you--it seems as if you saw me and another at the same time. Let us wait awhile. We shall somehow succeed in being alone again.'

"The winter and part of the summer passed by. The letter from Paris did not come. Politics were added to my usual occupations, and my head was full of symbols and party programmes. When, now and then, I had time to observe my inner self, I found only one of the two heart-chambers occupied, and that one filled with the most ardent love. The other was as empty and musty as a room which has not been aired or opened to the sun for a long time. On the wall hung a picture whose frame was dusty and whose colors were faded.

"I was scarcely surprised that this had happened so quickly. In the strange second courtship in which I was living with my wife, my passionate nature was completely engrossed by distress at our estrangement. But I knew that she was not to be won 'with prayers, and with whinings, and with self-exalting pains.' Perhaps another dream will

come to your aid, thought I. The transformation occurred in the daytime, however.

"One morning we were sitting at breakfast alone, for the child had a study hour with the pastor. Among the papers which we were looking over was a French one, which a neighbor received and shared with us. I was glancing mechanically down the columns, when my eyes suddenly fastened on a name.

"'Look!' said I; 'at length we have the explanation of the missing Parisian letter. Have you read it?'

"She looked at me searchingly, but did not reply.

"'In court circles they are talking of the betrothal of the Duke of C. to the beautiful Countess Lucile of ----, who, as is well known, enjoys the intimacy of the imperial court, and whose husband met such a sad end three months ago after a great loss in play at Monaco. They say the empress has given the bride a magnificent ornament, and so on. I own,' I added, 'that no news has given me greater pleasure for a long time. Poor Lucile! She certainly deserved imperial reparation for her sorrowful youth.'

"My wife still remained silent. Then, rising, she came and threw her arms around me, and kissed me on both cheeks. 'I have known it since yesterday,' she said. 'Will you believe that I was weak enough to fear how you might receive it?'

"'Oh, child,' I said, 'you have always seen ghosts. Will you now believe that we are alone?'

"From that day there was never a shadow between us. Our happiness, like every other real happiness, was never exhausted. Our motto might have been those beautiful words:

"'The more I give to thee,  
The more I have, for both are infinite.'

"And when the end came--after three short years--the effect was immeasurable, as in all true endings. But of that I cannot speak."

He stood up. Just then the clock struck one.

"I have detained you a long time," he said; "Now I shall take you home by the shortest way. You will be wet through."

In fact, a light, warm rain was beginning to fall.

"And do you know nothing more about the Countess?" I asked. "I confess, her hasty marriage touches me strangely. Perhaps she wished to end all hopeless longings."

"You wrong her," he said; "there is something more to be told. I myself thought that, but must humbly apologize for it. You know that when I became a widower I could find no rest anywhere. I leased my estates, and took my daughter to that excellent dame at Vevey, who had been such a true friend to her mother. People often congratulated me upon possessing in the child a perfect likeness of the mother. But this resemblance affected me peculiarly. I was pained that she should resemble her mother physically, without showing a trace of spiritual likeness. She was much like me, and had my love of music. But this did not make me happy; indeed, rather sharpened my pain; and it is only recently that I have been able to recognize and enjoy the many good and lovable traits which she possesses.

"Only by continual movement, by ceaseless journeying from place to place, could I conquer my uneasiness. I had been a homeless and joyless man for nearly two years, and had advanced to the limits of the thirties. I had tried occasionally, from a sense of duty,

to interest myself in business. I scarcely need to say that I had replied with a mere shrug of the shoulders whenever solicitous friends, especially women, urged me to a second marriage.

"It happened one autumn day that, much against my will, I was obliged to stop in Switzerland and look after one of my estates which was to have a new tenant. After staying for several weeks in Engelberg, I came down the road to Stansstad on a most beautiful, sunshiny day, to cross the lake to Luzerne.

"About half way down there is a pleasant spot under magnificent walnut-trees, where the wagons coming up from the valley usually stop for a quarter of an hour to breathe their horses. As I reached the first houses I saw a carriage stop in front of the inn, and two ladies presently alight from it. One of them, dressed entirely in black, attracted my attention by her graceful bearing. She had already vanished into the house, when I suddenly remembered who it was that had carried herself so. A slight depression fell upon me. But I at once determined to pass on without attempting to confirm my suspicions.

"As my light open wagon was rolling by the inn, a face only too well known to me looked from an upper window. She recognized me at once; I saw it by the startled way in which she drew back, as if a phantom from some long-buried past had suddenly risen before her. In the next instant she controlled herself sufficiently to bow to me. There was nothing else to do. I stopped and hastened to her.

"She met me perfectly unchanged; her beauty was only heightened by an additional fulness; her cheeks, with their ivory color, were slightly flushed from the excitement of this meeting.

"She took my hand in both of hers and pressed it warmly, as if I were an old friend.

"'I know everything about you,' she said; 'I sorrowed with you, and how deeply! Although you did not know. I tried several times to write--but the words always failed me.'

"At first I could say nothing in reply. I felt with too much consternation that her power over me was as strong as in those first days. The tones of her voice; her dark, often passionately burning eyes; the beautiful lips that seemed to have forgotten to smile; the whole witchery of long ago was again active. We walked up and down the empty room; her companion did not appear. I could hardly preserve a tolerable composure.

"Instead of personal things, I spoke about her journey, and learned that she was to remain a week or two in Engelberg. Her nerves were unstrung; she suffered from insomnia. Then her brother was to come for her, as she had decided to accompany him to his embassy at Madrid.

"'And your husband?' I asked carelessly. She looked at me distantly, almost reproachfully. 'He has not been among the living for some years,' she said in a monotone; 'I thought you knew it. Were not the sad circumstances of his suicide at Monaco in all the papers?'

"'Certainly,' I replied; 'but I read of a new marriage--'

"'It was a foolish rumor,' she said, staring gloomily at the ground; 'I would never have left my brother to play a *rôle* in the farce of the Second Empire. Could you really believe that of me?'

"I was unable to answer. A storm was raging in me which swept away all power of thought. She was free, and I? Was I still bound? How was it that her power over me died in the very moment when I might have yielded without hesitation? I saw the beautiful, once-loved woman near me; it seemed as if I had but to hold out my arms and take her, and--my arms hung heavily at my sides. Did a sword lie between us then, as before between my beloved wife and me? While we were standing silently side by side near the

window, gazing down into the glorious valley, my mind became calm and clear. I realized distinctly and sadly that if I now offered her half of my heart I should act immorally. Strangely enough, these words sounded always in my ears, 'She sleeps, that we may be happy;' and even while I felt all the magic of her warm, breathing life, a cold shudder ran through me, as if a corpse were standing near, a past far mightier than the most warm-blooded present.

"Out of sight is indeed *in* mind.

"She must have perceived my feeling. She too was silent, and I saw her bosom heaving painfully. She asked about my daughter, but evidently did not hear my answer. An intense pity seized me as I looked at her--the beautiful, noble, unhappy woman, with so long a life before her still and so little hope of happiness. Was it a foolish, unreal fear that prevented me from taking her in my arms? Do you believe that I could possibly have been happy with her? Who can know how the years will change one! But at that time it would have been a lie and a crime.

"The companion came with a glass of milk. Lucile drank a little and returned the glass with a gesture of aversion. 'I am no longer thirsty,' she said; 'is the carriage ready?'

"I offered my arm to escort her down. On the stairs she stopped an instant.

"'Do you play much now?' she asked.

"'I have not touched the violin since I became a widower,' I replied. 'Music is a pleasure only when one is cheerful and sociable. In solitude it revives all buried sorrows.'

"'Yes,' she said, 'it does, and one is grateful for it. There are people so poor that their only possessions consist of old griefs, without which they could not live. They remind one that there was once a time when the heart was living, for only a living heart can feel misery. You have the advantage of me in not feeling this truth.'

"I felt her hand trembling on my arm. 'Lucile!' I cried, pressing her arm to me. Who knows what might have happened then if, her pride being suddenly roused, she had not drawn away from me and hastened down the remaining steps alone. Before I could reach her she was seated in the carriage.

"'Farewell! Remember me to your daughter. And--no! I was about to say *Au revoir!* But we shall probably never meet again.'

"She extended her hand to me from the carriage with a look that hurt me, for it seemed to ask whether I had either hope or desire to see her again. I bent over the small, white hand, and kissed it. Then the horses started, and I stood alone in the sunny street, until her veil, fluttering in the fresh mountain breeze, vanished from my sight."

**MINKA**

## MINKA.

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It was a few years after the French war. The fall review had incidentally brought together again a number of young officers who had earned their iron crosses in the array of the Loire, and they had invited good comrades from other regiments to join them and celebrate the reunion from an inexhaustible bowl. Midnight was past. The talk, which for some time had concerned personal recollections and experiences, had taken a thoughtful turn and was becoming profound. It was impossible to realize how many were absent without touching on the everlasting riddle of human life. Besides, the horrible death of a popular young hero, who had fallen into the hands of the Franc-tireurs, and been killed in the most revolting manner, and the consequent destruction of a treasure of brilliant gifts and talents, hopes and promises--had brought again to the front the old problem, whether universal destiny and the fate of the individual will be according to our idea of justice; or whether the individual's weal or woe will be quietly subordinated to the vast, mysterious design of the universe. All the well-known reasons for and against a providence ruling morally and judging righteously, as human beings conceive it, were discussed again and again; and at length the oldest and most distinguished of the young soldiers formulated, from the animated argument, this result:--that even the most enthusiastic optimist, in face of the crying horrors to which poor humanity is exposed, cannot prove the existence of a compensating justice on earth; indeed, can only save his belief in a righteous God by hoping for a world to come.

"But will donkeys go to heaven, too?" suddenly asked a calm, rich voice from a quiet corner.

For a moment all were silent. Then followed an outburst of gay laughter, agreeably enlivening to the majority, who were tired of the philosophical talk.

"Hear! hear!" cried some.

"One will not be able to understand his own speech at doomsday if all the resurrected donkeys bray to one another," said a lively young captain. "Although, Eugene, if the sainted Antonius's pig is in heaven--"

"And so many pious sheep!" another broke in.

"You forget that the question is long since decided," said a third; "one has only to read Voltaire's 'Pucelle' in so many cantos!"

"Were you merely joking, Eugene?" then asked the senior president, who had not joined in the laugh, "or was the question seriously meant, because it is certainly not yet decided whether or no an immortal soul lives in animals also?"

The person thus addressed was a young man about thirty years of age, the only one at the banquet who wore civilian's dress. A severe wound had forced him to give up a military career. Since then he had lived on his small estate, more occupied with the study of military science than with the tilling of his fields. He had come to the city on the occasion of the review in order to see his old friends.

"The question," he now said very earnestly, "is really not my own, but is a quotation, whose brusque simplicity embarrassed me myself not long ago. A strange little story, certainly not a cheerful one, depends on it. But since we have again soared into speculations which are beyond jesting, it may perhaps be fitting if I tell where the quotation originated. I can hardly maintain that the story is calculated to throw any light on the dark problem."

"Only tell it," cried one after another.

"Who knows whether the donkey that you will ride before us may not finally open his mouth, like Balaam's prophetic ass, and teach us the system of the world."

Eugene shook his head with a peculiar smile, and began. "You know that I suffered from my wound during the entire winter of '71 and '72, and could only limp around with a cane. When spring came, I surrendered myself to the care of my married sister. My brother-in-law's manor is surrounded by endless pine forests, in which I was to take air baths. Whatever I gained in physical strength, as I wandered about each day in those lonely thickets, or lay lazily buried in cushions of deep, luxuriant moss, I lost again in my moral condition. Even in the hospital I had not seemed to myself such a miserable cripple as here. Everything about me was overflowing with life and strength; every old knot bore countless bright-green shoots; even a rotten stump made itself useful as barracks for a swarming army of ants--and I, condemned to detestable idleness at twenty-four--enough! I moped about half the time, and was on very bad terms with God and the world.

"About this time, too, I lived through a sickness which might have ended my brooding. The neighborhood is thinly populated; the people are very poor; the women frightfully ugly,--Bohemian types degenerated by crossing with the Saxons, pinched and rendered half savage through privation and suffering. But I was perfectly contented that nothing charming crossed my path. It would have made the consciousness of my invalidism still more painful. You know, indeed, how long it takes for the last trace of the typhoid poison, so paralyzing to all energy, to disappear from one's system. The North Sea was to do me this service.

"Well, for several weeks, like mad Roland, though somewhat more mildly, I roamed through pine and fir-covered ravines without making a shot, although a hunting-piece was slung at my back. It was truly, in spite of all world-griefs, a heavenly time; never have I had such intimate acquaintance with nature, never felt so vividly what is meant by 'our mother earth' and 'our father air.' But that does not belong here. I will come to the point.

"One afternoon I allowed myself to be lured farther than usual from the house by a most beautiful path winding among young woods, whose slender trees, scarcely taller than I, allowed the May sunlight to stream through unchecked. When I found myself entirely astray, I decided to strike through to the edge of the forest, in order to regain an open view. A gentle slope, sparsely covered with birches and berry-bushes, led upwards. Beyond, through the tall firs which enclosed the clearing like a fence, I could see blue mountain-tops shimmering in the distance, and knew that I might thence easily find my way. But as I came out of the forest, I realized for the first time how far I had wandered. From the forest edge the land sank by a tolerably steep slope to a plain; and far below lay a small town, well known to me on the map, but so distant from our estate, that in all my reconnoitring I had never seen it till now. I was startled when I realized where I was, for, with my lame leg, I could not possibly undertake to return on foot. But I thought I might obtain a team in the village.

"I seated myself on a newly-fallen trunk to rest a little before descending to the town. The land beneath me lay in the deep calm of afternoon; thin clouds of smoke drifting up from the chimneys of the old houses announced that the good housewives were making their coffee. The broad, level plain, gayly checkered with fields of promising, green crops, stretched beyond; while almost exactly half way between the forest-edge and the first houses, and bordered by a few bushes and elders, lay a great fish-pond, peculiarly dark in color, although the purest spring-heaven was mirrored therein. The ground about it was marshy, and it seemed as though all the water of the neighborhood flowed into the depression as into some monstrous cistern. I do not know why the black basin appeared so uncanny to me, for the birds nesting in the shrubbery on its banks flew over it continually with cheerful twitterings. But my gloomy humor drew nourishment just then from the most innocent sources.

"When I finally raised my eyes to look about for some smooth, gradually-descending path, I noticed at the right, scarcely a stone's throw from my seat, a forlorn, mean little house standing in shadow close by the roots of the foremost trees. The old, tumbled-down fence surrounding a bit of ground; the dove-cot, in which no living thing was stirring; the tiled roof, whose damages had been poorly repaired with shingles and

stones from the fields--all looked desolate and dilapidated, but since a path must surely lead thence to the town, I arose and dragged myself slowly towards the hut.

"As soon as I perceived the extreme desolation of the old barracks, I gave up my conjecture that a lumberman dwelt there. All the mortar had fallen away from the wall on the weather side, and the rain must have had free entrance through the holes in the deeply sunken roof. The piece of land behind the crumbling fence, which in times past might have supported a little garden or a few vegetable beds, had become a waste rubbish heap, upon which a single black hen tripped about, excitedly scratching between the weeds and nettles for something eatable. The north side, turned towards the slope, had two small windows with broken panes; and in the middle, a door standing wide open. I glanced into the unattractive entrance. No human being was to be seen or heard. I was about to go back and follow a little foot-path which seemed to wind down into the valley, when I was startled, indeed, truly frightened, by a donkey's bray; for never in my life have I heard that odd cry given so passionately, and with such peculiarly mournful modulation, as at that moment.

"The cry of pain came from the other side of the house. As I turned the corner, I saw in the meadow, close to the wall, an idyllic group crouched in the young grass: an old woman, clothed in a torn jacket of flowered calico and a coarse woollen petticoat, and wearing wound about her head a gray handkerchief, from beneath which her black hair, thickly sprinkled with gray, hung down in disorder; and near her, stretched upon the ground, a young donkey with noticeably slender limbs, dark-edged ears, and a coat of silver-gray, adorned on the back with a black stripe extending to the head. It was a fine animal, an honor to its race, and it would certainly have taken a prize at any show. But I immediately perceived why the poor creature relieved its oppressed heart in so particularly doleful a manner. A hand's-breadth on its left shoulder-blade was disfigured by a foul wound; this the old woman was attempting to cover with wet bandages, although the wounded brute restively tried to prevent her merciful ministrations with kicks and stampings of its forelegs. A shallow bowl by the woman's side held some dark liquid, with which she saturated the rag in order to cool the wound. She quietly continued this operation as I approached her.

"'Good-morning, dame!' said I. She merely nodded her head wearily. Beginning to speak of the wound, I asked how it had been received, and what remedy she was using. No answer. It occurred to me that she did not understand German. But as I turned away, exclaiming half to myself, 'What a pity! Such a beautiful brute!' her gray eyes suddenly flashed so powerfully upon me from under her bushy, black brows, that the whole withered, leather-colored face seemed ten years younger.

"'Yes indeed, sir!' she said in notably pure German, with but a slight Bohemian accent. 'It is truly a pity, and Minka is certainly beautiful. If only you had seen her before she was hurt! She could jump about almost like a young horse, and her coat was like silk and velvet. Now, for seven months she has lain thus miserably on her belly, and if she gets up on her legs, how her knees bend, poor creature! Besides, what use is she? "Betty Lamitz," said the forest warder only yesterday, as he passed and saw the trouble I had with the brute--for now one must bring even its bit of fodder close to its muzzle--"you should have her killed," said he; "the skinner will give you a thaler for the hide." But no! said I; it's only a beast, but it shall have care like any other Christian being, or like an honest servant fallen sick in service! Yes, so I said. Whoa, whoa, Minka! don't roll about so! Look, sir, she lies on her back and rubs her wound all the time, so no plaster holds, and it spreads farther and farther. Whoa! Be still!'

"Then, fairly embracing the beast, she tried to quiet it, and keep it in its bed. Suddenly she released it, ran to a wooden well standing in shadow back of the house, and having filled a low pail from the old stone trough into which the water was trickling down, she thrust it under her charge's pink muzzle. Minka drank in long draughts, and her feverish excitement visibly abated. The old woman sat near her, looking on with great contentment, and seeming once more entirely oblivious to my presence.

"At length I repeated my inquiry as to the origin of the bad wound between the



shoulder-blades. But the old woman again remained silent; she merely sighed, and scratched her lean arms with her withered fingers till white streaks stood up on the brown skin.

"'Yes, yes!' she said absently, after a long while--'such a poor female! What matters beauty against bad luck? And how she has worked, always cheerfully and willingly! I could load her as much as I wished, she never once kicked, or even shook her ears at me. To be sure, I have brought her up from her tenth day. She was a twin. The forester at Freithof had a she-ass that presented him one morning with Minka and her sister. "Would you like to have a handsome nursling, Mother Lamitz?" said he, just for a joke. Well, I held him to his word. He owed me a little gold for a piece of linen that I had woven for him. A couple of florins were still lacking, and for them I took the young ass. I had trouble enough, first in getting it home, and then in raising it, for milk was scarce with us. But we have never rued it. A hard worker, sir, this Minka! We have had to drag many things from the woods, berries and mushrooms down to market in summer, then our winter wood, and whatsoever else was needful. I--good heavens! I can trace all my bones, although I am barely fifty, and Hannah--well, she was still too weak. And look you, such a faithful beast, a god-send, our only help--to be so hurt and disgraced in its young years--oh!'

"'Dame,' said I, 'look at me! I too am still young, yet I limp through the world, and my food must be brought to me because I can no longer gain it by my own strength; and whoever gives a thaler for *my* hide is a fool and a spendthrift. Yet who knows, but that sometime we shall both prance gayly about once more.'

"I chatted in this strain for some time to cheer her, but, without heeding me, she stared fixedly at the wound. She had meanwhile covered it with a firm plaster, since the brute would no longer suffer the bathing.

"'Tell me once for all,' she suddenly commenced, and by the gleam of her eyes I saw that when young she must have been far from homely--'tell me once for all, sir, do you believe that donkeys go to heaven?'

"I laughed.

"Why do you ask that, mother?

"I once asked our parson about it. He said it was a foolish question; that only Christian people go to heaven; and that animals have no immortal souls. "But, parson," said I, "if the great God is just and merciful, why doesn't He pity the beasts too, as human beings do if they are not scoundrels? For instance, why does Minka's sister live like a princess, have nothing to do but draw a little play-wagon in which the young masters take an occasional pleasure drive, always receive kind words and the best fodder, and even have a love-affair with the valley-miller's donkey? And our Minka, who has just as good a character, who wears herself out with work, and is often on her legs with a load for ten hours together, now has all four struck from under her, and if she should die to-morrow, what pleasure in life has she had? Is that just, parson? And if it is not sometime paid back to her there above--" But then he forbade me to speak, and said such blasphemy led straight to hell. You tell me, sir, do you know anything about it?'

"You can imagine that I did not have the most spirited expression, when the pistol was thus placed against my breast, and the explanation of the world-secret demanded of me. Fortunately, however, just at that moment a woman's clear voice began to sing within the house, and with it one heard a child's feeble crying, which the song was evidently intended to still.

"'Who is singing there, Mother Lamitz?' I asked.

"'Who should it be but Hannah?' she grumbled.

"'Your daughter? May I venture to look in at her?'

"The old woman did not reply; muttering to herself, she took the pail and carried it

back to the well; then she rolled forward a wheelbarrow piled high with grass and weeds, and busied herself in giving handfuls to the sick beast, almost shoving the food into its mouth. I did not wait long for an expressed permission, but approached the house, and, after knocking, entered by the door at the left.

"A suffocating steam greeted me, mixed with the smell of some drying clothes, which hung across the room on a tightly stretched rope. I saw immediately that there were only a few miserable swaddling-clothes and baby-frocks, coarse and much patched.

"In one corner stood a great loom, thickly covered with dust; in the other, upon a heap of straw, distinguishable from the bed of an animal only by a woollen covering, sat a fair-haired young woman, holding a half naked babe at her breast. She herself had nothing on her body but a shirt, which had fallen far down on her shoulders, and a red woollen petticoat, which left her white feet visible to the ankles.

"As I entered, she gazed at me searchingly, and for an instant ceased her singing. She seemed to have expected someone else; but, seeing that I was an entire stranger, she at once recommenced her cradle-song, though somewhat more softly, apparently not at all disturbed because I had surprised her in the performance of a mother's most sacred duty, and in such incomplete attire.

"As she sang she occasionally smiled at me, showing the pretty teeth in her large mouth; and I noticed that she clasped the child closer to her bared breast, and tried to draw the shirt up over her shoulders. Therewith a slight redness tinged her round, white face, and her blue eyes assumed a half imploring, half simple and dreamily vacant, expression.

"I excused myself for intruding; her mother had allowed me to come in; I would immediately go out again if she wished. She hummed her song without appearing to notice me; but from time to time she would suddenly lift her eyes, as if to see whether I were still there; then bite her full, red under-lip; rock the child back and forth; and, with her bare feet in the straw, beat time to her song.

"The child, which was but a few months old, had drunk and cried itself to sleep. The cradle-song grew ever softer; at length the young mother, kneeling down, wrapped the little one, which lay before her like some rosy, waxen doll, in a great woollen shawl. In the corner near the pillow I observed a little couch made of old rags and tatters. On this the baby was gently and carefully laid, and, in spite of the heat, covered yet again.

"Then the mother, always as if entirely alone in the room, began to let down and rebraid her tangled, yellow hair. The rest of her toilet seemed to be perfectly satisfactory.

"Indeed, no elegant costume could have displayed the poor young woman's charming figure to more advantage. The face was too like the old woman's to be considered pretty. Yet in the coloring and youthful contour of that round little head lay a charm, which was not lessened even by an evident trace of absent-mindedness, or downright imbecility. I felt intense sympathy for the poor, half-foolish creature, singing her lullaby so contentedly in such pitiable deprivation of all usual nursery comforts.

"She did not answer any of my questions even by a gesture. Since they had plenty of wood and did not grudge it, the oven was heated almost to bursting; although the air without was mild enough, even here on the windy height. So I did not wait until she finished arranging her heavy braids, but laid a shining thaler on the edge of the loom, nodded kindly to the harmless creature, and left the room.

"I found the old woman no longer by her sick darling, but at the well, where she was cleaning a handful of turnips and cutting them into a pot.

"'Mother Lamitz,' said I, 'you have a very pretty daughter. But she would not speak a word to me. Is she always so silent with strangers?'

"The old woman contracted her brows and stared gloomily at the pot which she held

between her knees. In this attitude she might have served an artist as model for a witch preparing some noxious potion.

"'Silent?' she asked after a pause. 'No, sir; it is not her tongue that is lacking. When she will, she can chatter like a starling. The lack is above. She was so even as a child. Well, it was not such a great shame. If she had had the best sense, would that have helped a poor, fatherless thing like her? Did it matter to me that I had all my five senses right? I was cheated in spite of them, and therefore I care not a whit whether the brat to which she has given life takes after her, as people say, or after me. Either way, the little Mary will sometime become a mother on the sly, as it came into the world on the sly. It is in the family, sir, it is in the family.'

"And then, after a pause, for I knew not what to say to this frank worldly wisdom--'Besides, the child will hardly grow old. Hannah treats it too foolishly. Indeed, reason has nothing to do with her actions. And when the winter comes, and we all must hunger--it is said, though, that God lets no sparrow fall from a roof without His will--I am curious to see whether He will trouble Himself about us four poor females up here.'

"Therewith she gazed pityingly at the donkey, which was now crouching quietly in its bedding. I could have laughed to see her so unconcernedly consider gray, long-eared Minka as the fourth in the family; but the horrible cold-bloodedness with which she spoke of her child and grandchild was not humorous.

"'You seem to care much more tenderly for the donkey than for your poor, little grandchild,' I said severely.

"She nodded her head calmly.

"'So it is,' she said; 'Minka needs me more. If I die to-day, she must come to a miserable end. Do you think Hannah would throw her even an armful of grass, although the poor beast can no longer seek it herself? No; she has no thought except for her baby, and beyond that, for the rascal who is its father. She waits for him every evening at sunset, although it is already a half year since he last crossed our threshold. And withal she is as happy as any one can wish to be, considers the dear God a good man, and lets her old mother do all the housework without any help. Why should I pity her or her brat? Both are already as if in heaven, and if it goes hard with them, and they must hunger and freeze, can they not make that good hereafter in Paradise? But Minka, look you, sir, has had no lover, and brought no young one into the world, and when she dies she will be thrown in the flaying-place, and on doomsday, when we other poor sinners gather our bones together, of her nothing at all will be left, and it will never be credited to her that she had a harder life than her twin sister. Look you, some other poor Christian mortal must pity the beasts if our Lord Jesus Himself cannot bring Himself to do it.'

"This logic allowed no reply. But I confess that the future of the little human being was more momentous to me, in spite of its immortal soul, than the question whether Minka would lose or not in the final distribution of justice. If to-morrow the only person among these 'four females' who had sound human sense should be struck by lightning, what would then become of the poor fool and her baby?

"'Does the father do nothing at all for the little one?' I asked at last. 'The child is as beautiful as if carved out of ivory, and it is by no means certain that it will become like the mother. Has he never shown himself again?'

"'He!' exclaimed the old woman, thrusting the knife with which she had been cleaning the turnips deep into the wooden well-spout. 'If I should drag him to justice, he would swear himself free, that he would, although he is the town-judge's own son. Do you think I did not see it in him, even the first time when he came into our little house to kindle his pipe at the hearth--so he said, the villain! He is unfortunately as pretty to look at as he is bad within, and the stupid thing, Hannah she was still innocent, and I could let her wander all day long in the woods alone with Minka, filling the two panniers with berries and mushrooms--she thought of no man then, and I--God knows how it

came about! Just because she is so foolish and weak in her head, I imagined that no one would trouble about her. But she pleased the judge's son, and was herself instantly carried away with him. After that I had trouble enough with her. She had worked bravely till then in the house and garden, and no work was too hard for her. Now, of a sudden, half the day her hands in her lap, and if I began to scold she would smile at me like a child waking from a lovely dream. If I sent her to the woods, she would bring the baskets back to the house scarcely a quarter full. It was Minka's misfortune too. You cannot believe, sir, how the beast clung to Hannah; it had human sense, anyway more than Hannah, and realized that the smart fellow with the black mustache had nothing good in mind. It always ran after the stupid girl, and gave a loud bray to warn her. I saw everything well enough, but what could I do? Scoldings and warnings were useless; she did not understand. And one cannot shut up a grown woman, who will use force to get out. She would have climbed from the window or even the chimney to rush into the very arms of ruin. Well, and so it happened. But the worst of it was that Minka suffered for it too. One evening she followed the girl into the woods, and soon afterward came limping home alone, with the wound in her neck, groaning and crying like a human being. Hannah came back an hour later. I questioned her closely as to how the brute had received the wound. "Ha!" said she, laughing insolently, "she screamed all the time and crowded between us, although Frank tried to drive her back with blows; so he suddenly became angry, drew his knife, and gave her a thrust." I struck the shameless thing for laughing about it, and put salve on the wound. But Minka rolled on her back as if crazy, and would bear no bandage, and so it has grown worse with her every day, and with Hannah too. Well, at least she has had her way, and nothing much better could have happened to her. Who would take one like her for his honest wife? And if sometime she realizes that it is useless to wait for her lover, and becomes crazy with grief at his wickedness, then she has little wit to lose. Whereas Minka, sir, who is cleverer than many people, believe me, she lies for days pondering why good and bad are so unequally divided on the earth; why she has nothing but a ruined life, while her sister trots about elegant and happy; and why our good Lord did not arrange it so that donkeys might go to heaven, and obtain their reward for all the flaying and toiling, beating and kniving, they have to bear.'

"She uttered these last words with such violence that she was obliged to stop for breath. Then, brushing back the loose hairs at her neck, she tied her head-cloth more firmly, and took the pot of turnips on her arm.

"'I must go in, sir,' she said hoarsely, 'or I shall go to bed hungry. Do you know the town-judge and his fine son? It does not matter. He will not have to pay for what he did to my girl and to Minka until he stands before God's throne. And for the rest, why should his conscience prick him? She wished nothing better; indeed, we all wish nothing better; if we were not silly, you men could not be bad. So it will be as long as the world lasts. At doomsday I shall not complain of that, but I shall ask our Lord whether donkeys go to heaven too, of that you may be sure--of that you may certainly be sure!'

"She nodded her head vigorously, passed by without another look at me, and disappeared in the house.

"You can imagine that, as I descended the slope, passing the black water, and finally reaching the village, all that I had seen and heard continually pursued me. Even when I had secured a carriage at the inn, and was rolling along the highway towards my brother-in-law's house, the figure of the old woman, and especially that of her blonde daughter with the naked babe clasped to her breast, seemed actually before my eyes. It chanced that my driver was an elderly man, who could give trustworthy answers to my questions about the inmates of the little house on the hill. He remembered Betty Lamitz's sudden appearance there twenty years ago very well. Her own home was in a neighboring place, where, her mother having died without leaving any property, the parish refused to receive her. She was a servant in an aristocratic house in Prague, and behaved properly enough until one of the sons of the house, an officer home on a furlough, noticed her. She had been a fine-looking person even at thirty, in spite of her flat nose and broad cheeks, a maid with unusual eyes, and when she laughed--which to

be sure she seldom did--she could cut out many younger women even then. But things simply went the usual way, in spite of her cleverness, and although she had always said she would never do as her own mother had done. Of course her master did not keep her in the house. He gave her a suitable sum of money, with which she bought the forsaken hill-house and the bit of garden plot, and since then, as she would not go into service again, perhaps could not, she had lived there and brought Hannah up, in perfect retirement. For the first few years the young count remembered her, and sent her something. After awhile he failed to do this, and she was obliged to struggle along by herself. She had done so; and certainly no one could accuse her of grief at her child's lack of reason.

"Then my driver spoke of the sad affair with the judge's son, against whom he expressed himself in very strong terms. Every one knew about it. But he was the only son of a most respectable family, and no one could expect him to make amends for the foolish mis-step by an honest marriage. A wild, insane thing! Why didn't the old woman watch her better? If he did a little something for the child, no one would blame him much for this youthful sin.

"I listened without entering into any discussion of the moral aspect of the case. In my heart--I know not why--I felt such intense sympathy for the poor creature, that if her betrayer had come in my way, I would have thrashed him with much pleasure.

"My first action, when I saw my people again, was to tell them of my experience, and induce my good sister to take some interest in the neglected young woman. She was true to her sympathetic nature. The next day she sent her 'Mamselle,' an experienced, elderly person, in a carriage to Mother Lamitz's hut, with a basket containing all sorts of good things--provisions for several weeks, baby-clothes, and several uncut dress pieces to provide for the winter. To this I added a trifle in cash, fully intending to go in person very soon, and see if this feeble attempt to make up the deficiencies of the world-system had been at all effectual.

"But I did not go. Our physician ordered me to take sea-baths earlier than I expected. I merely heard that our gifts were received by the old woman with but moderate thanks, and by the young mother with child-like exultation. Then I departed, remaining away the entire summer, and the inmates of that forest hut soon became of as little moment to me as any beggar into whose hat one tosses a groschen.

"Even when, after having washed away in the sea my invalidism and its accompanying world-sickness, I returned to the estate in the autumn for hunting, it did not occur to me for several weeks to inquire about the 'four females.' My sister and her husband had themselves been away, and been occupied with entirely different things. On a lonely tramp which I undertook one cold, cloudy, disagreeable day in the middle of October, I suddenly recollected that I had wandered over the same forest-path five months before, and that it had finally led me to the donkey with the 'immortal soul.' What might have happened to Minka in the meantime?

"I stepped along more briskly, for evening was already coming on. It was dark and comfortless in the forest; the moisture dripped heavily from the pines; the little clearings, with their bushes and birches, were not so cheerful, in spite of the red berries hanging plentifully on their faded branches, as on that day in May, when I alone wore a troubled face. When I finally emerged from the pines at the edge of the height, the land below me and the purplish peaks on the horizon looked as strange as if a terrible storm were impending. The air was perfectly still; one heard each drop falling on the dry leaves, and, from time to time, the crows, very numerous in that locality, cawing in the treetops. The noise was so hateful to me that, in a sort of sudden fury, I snatched my gun from my shoulder, and fired into the unsuspecting flock. A single bird fell fluttering and quivering at my feet. I felt ashamed of this childish outburst and hurried towards the hut, which, standing in its old place, and in the same condition, looked extremely desolate in the murky evening mist.

"The enclosed space had beautified itself with half a dozen tall sunflowers and with

several rows of pumpkin-vines growing over the rubbish-heap; but the black hen had evidently failed to outlive the summer. On the side of the house where the brook flowed, and where Minka had lain, there was no longer any trace of her. Possibly it was now too cold on this damp couch for the poor, wounded beast. But where had she gone? I laughed to myself as I realized that the fate of the brute creature was more interesting to me than that of the hut's human inmates. Of them nothing was to be seen or heard.

"In the room where the loom stood, excepting that the straw-bed was empty, everything appeared as at my first visit. But the oven was cold and all the windows were open. I pressed the door-latch of the single, mean chamber on the right of the narrow hall. Here I was amazed to find one at least of the 'four females,' the good Minka herself. She lay on a litter of yellow leaves, moss, and pine-needles, close to a low hearth, whereon coals were still glowing; and as she saw me enter, she lifted her head wearily.

"The old woman must have housed here, since, besides cooking utensils, all sorts of woman's trumpery was lying about, while on the other side of the hearth stood an ancient, grandfather's chair, with torn cushions, plainly Mother Lamitz's bedstead. She had evidently brought her sick darling into her immediate vicinity.

"I approached the poor creature and stroked her coat, for which attention her ears wagged a doleful gratitude. The wound had grown worse; indeed, her whole condition was serious, and for the first time I saw on an animal something like the hippocratic face. Seeing that I was friendly, she made a painful effort to unburden her distressed heart; but no longer able to express herself satisfactorily, she soon became silent again, and with an indescribably piteous look let her tongue loll from her mouth, thus taking away her last trace of beauty in my eyes. As I could not help her, I went out in a few moments, leaving the door open; for the close air, which I could scarcely breathe, must have been equally unbearable for a sick donkey.

"Outside I looked about in all directions. Of grandmother, mother, or child--not a trace. In the forest--but what could they be seeking there so late, and in such horrible weather? They have gone down to the town, thought I, to make some purchases. But nobody knows when they will return.

"To await them in the damp hut was out of the question. I thought that perhaps I might meet them on the way down, as I intended to descend and return by the highroad, instead of the dark, slippery forest path. So once again I took the little path between the meadows, and heard then, for the first time, a muffled sound of musical instruments, principally clarionets and contrabasses, evidently coming from the inn in the town below. Although dance music, it was far from merry; indeed, it seemed but a proper accompaniment to the melancholy song heaven and earth were singing together; as if cloud spirits were playing a waltz to which they might whirl madly over the cold mountain-tops.

"The neighborhood is not musical. Only occasionally, when a band of wandering Bohemians strays into this corner of the hills, does one hear merry tunes in lively time; but even a Bohemian band can seldom set in motion the clumsy feet of the men and maids.

"However, that scarcely belongs to my subject. I will be brief. I had not taken twenty steps when I saw, down by the fishpond, sitting on a mossy stone, a woman's motionless figure, with the back turned toward me. She seemed to be staring into the black water. I could scarcely see the outline, yet I recognized her at once.

"'Mother Lamitz!' I cried, 'Mother Lamitz!'

"At the third call, and when I was very close to her, she slowly turned her head, but I could not see her eyes.

"'Why do you sit here on a wet stone, Mother Lamitz?' I asked. 'Have you thrown a net and do you wish to haul your catch? Or for whom are you waiting in this unhealthy fog?'

"She looked straight into my face, evidently trying to remember the person to whom these features and this voice belonged. But it dawned on her very slowly.

"I helped somewhat by recalling to her mind my spring visit, and telling her that since then I had often considered whether or no donkeys would go to heaven, and had never arrived at any conclusion. She listened silently, but I was not certain that she rightly understood my meaning, for she nodded continually, even when I asked a question demanding a negative answer.

"But when I mentioned her daughter's name, she became suddenly alert, looking suspiciously at me from under her thick brows.

"'What do you want with Hannah?' she said. 'She is not at home. But she is very well, she and her brat. Did I tell you she was a trifle weak in the head? In that I lied. She had more sense than most of the foolish geese. Oh, I wish that I might have gone away so, but there are different gifts, and how does the Testament say? Those who are poor in spirit--yes, yes. O thou merciful One!'

"Stopping suddenly, she spread her hands on her knees and let her head fall upon her breast.

"She seemed more and more uncanny to me. It was ghastly there by the bank; the bats were beginning to flit among the low bushes, and the rising wind brought a musty swamp odor. From below came the unceasing music of the clarionets and basses.

"Merely to break the silence, I said, 'There seems to be high festival in the inn down yonder. Is it a feast?'

"She sprang to her feet, again looking distrustfully at me. 'Have you only just heard it? They have piped and fiddled so since noonday, and will go on till midnight. I have stopped my ears, but it is useless. Weddings are not funerals--one knows that very well--but if they knew, if they knew! To be sure they would not have one waltz the less. O thou merciful One!'

"'Whose wedding is it?'

"Spitting violently, she cast a furious look across the pond towards the house from which the sounds arose.

"'Go down there and look at the pair for yourself,' she snarled; 'they suit each other well. He is bad and handsome, and she is stupid and rich. A brewer's daughter, she measures her money by the bushel. But she has reason enough to answer a question correctly, and she did not say no when the parson asked her if she wished the judge's son for a husband.'

"'The judge's son! He?' Now, indeed, I knew the cause of the old woman's fury.

"'Poor Hannah! And does she know what is going on down there?'

"'How could she help knowing, sir? Do you think there are not sympathetic souls enough to carry such news wherever they are likely to earn God's blessing for it? She sat just before the door with her baby on her lap; she was decked out in her best clothes, that blue dress, you know, which the lady baroness sent her; and her baby was dancing to the music. Then the druggist's maid came down, pretending that she passed by accident, but it was the wickedest curiosity, dear sir, to see how the poor fool would act when she heard that her lover was holding his wedding feast down there. She did not tell it to Hannah. "Mother Betsey!" she screamed in to me, "the judge's son! What do you say to that?" and then she abused the badness of the world. I merely blinked at her, for I thought I should sink into the earth. I never believed he would marry Hannah, but she waited for him every evening, and was so happy doing so, that she might have expected him for all eternity, and sung her cradle-songs contentedly. And now the whole baseness of it, and the news of the marriage with the brewer's daughter, to come on her so suddenly--as if a trusted friend had thrust a knife in her breast. The words stuck in

the spiteful tell-tale's throat as she saw what she had done. She said she must hurry; her mistress expected her, and she ran off. I went out and saw the poor thing sitting on the bank, with her head leaning back on the wall as if too heavy for her, and her eyes and mouth wide open.

""Hannah!" I coaxed, "do not believe it--she lied," and as much more as I could bear to say. She did not speak, but all at once laughed aloud, and stood up, holding her child fast in her arms.

""Where are you going?" I said. "Come into the house. I will brew you some elder tea." But it was as if she did not hear me. She went slowly away from the house, down the path. I followed, trying to hold her back by her clothing, but there was something superhuman in her; her face was rigid and deathly pale. "Hannah," said I, "you are not going to him? Think what they would say if you went to the wedding. They would say you were out of your wits, and by and by the law would come and take away the child, because they dare not leave it with an idiot."

""That brought her to her senses for a moment. She stood still, clasping the child silently, and sighing as if her soul would leave her body. I thought I had won, and that she would turn back with me and gradually give in. If she could have cried it would have been her salvation, but her eyes were perfectly dry, and I saw her stare continually at the house down there, as if she would pierce the walls and destroy that bad man and his bridge with the wreath and veil. I begged her to come into the house. I realized then that I had nothing in the world but her, and I told her so, asking her to forgive me for all my roughness and unkindness to her. Dear God, when one is so miserable, and another hungry mouth comes into the house! But she heard nothing. The music seemed to bewitch her; she began to rock the child back and forth; then of a sudden she gave a loud cry, as if her heart had broken, and before I knew what she meant to do, she was rushing down to the pond. Her loose hair streamed after her, the blue clothes fluttered, she ran so fast, and--O thou merciful One!--with my own eyes I saw it--child and grandchild! I tried to scream, I was choking; I ran like a madman; as I came down, I saw only the black water, bubbling like a kettle at the place where--'

"She sprang up, and stood half bowed among the damp marsh grasses like a picture of despair, both arms outstretched toward the now motionless water.

"I could not speak a word. Every instant I thought she would throw herself in after them. The spot where we were standing seemed peculiarly suitable for a suicide. The bank shelved perpendicularly into the depths; no rushes grew out of the water; the alder bushes, retreating, left a gap several feet in width; and even close to shore the water was as dark as if the depths were bottomless.

"But the old woman seemed to intend nothing violent. Her body relaxed again and her arms fell loosely on her hips.

""Do you see anything there?' she asked suddenly, in an undertone.

""Where?'

""Down there by the willow? No; it is nothing. I thought her hair came to the surface. But she is lying at the bottom. At first something yellow floated out on the water--I would swear it was her hair--and the long rake there, left since haying-time--if I had taken it, and fished for the hair with it, and twisted it fast around the prongs, I believe I could have pulled her to land even then. But say for yourself, sir, what would it have mattered? She would have jumped in again. And wouldn't it have been wicked to rob her of the rest she has found down there? Who knows that I should have drawn out the poor brat with her! And without her only plaything, what could she do in the world?'

"She stopped again, rubbing her lean shoulders with her crossed arms as if she felt a fever-chill. The music paused in the inn below; I heard the old woman's quick, gasping breaths, and now and then a disconnected word as if of prayer. This sad stillness was suddenly interrupted by a hoarse bray from the woods above. We both looked around.



"Lame Minka stood before the hut's door, giving her most doleful signal of distress. Against the dark background the outline of the beast's gray form was plainly visible; we could even see her shake her drooping ears. She must have noticed us, for though we did not call her, she started down the rough and tiresome road to her old nurse.

"'Are you coming, too?' said the old woman. 'Are you thirsty, because I forgot to fill your pail? Do you see, sir, that I am right? Minka has human reason. She too would make an end of her trouble and misery. And it is better so; it will take her at once from her suffering, and I--do you know, that I believe even yet that donkeys go to heaven? If not, why have they human reason? Who knows, when he fears to die, that it is really the end? And now look at Minka, how steadily she trots toward the black water. Come, Minka, come, poor fool! We will help you down.'

"The brute came to the stone where the old woman was crouching. It thrust its large head in her lap, and fell on its knees. The old woman helped it up again.

"'Come, Minka,' she repeated, 'it will do no harm, and perhaps may help you to eternal happiness. Hannah has gone before, with little Mary. Mother Betsey will soon follow.'

"She drew the reluctant animal to the edge of the pond and tried to force it in. But entreaties and caresses were as vain as the pushes and blows to which she finally resorted. The poor victim, its whole body trembling, braced all four feet against the bank and gave a piteous cry. The old woman cast an imploring glance at me.

"'You have a gun at your back, sir. Will you not do my Minka this last kindness, and help her to her salvation? The Lord God will repay you the little powder and lead which you spend on a tortured creature; and if there is justice, and we meet again up yonder, Minka, too, will not be wanting, and then you shall see that, after the ass that bore our Lord into Jerusalem, there will be none more beautiful than Minka in all Paradise.'

"How could I withstand such a touching request? I cocked my gun, came close to the good creature, and shot a bullet through its head. It fell headlong into the water; the gray head appeared for an instant, then sank and left no trace.

"The old woman fell upon her knees; I saw her fold her withered hands and move her lips silently. Undoubtedly, she breathed a prayer for Minka's departed soul.

"Then she arose wearily. 'I thank you, sir,' she said. 'You have just done me a greater kindness than when you sent me the money. When you go home give my respects to the lady baroness. Tell her I need nothing more. Three are already at rest, and the fourth will not delay long. And so may God preserve you. I am freezing. I shall go back to the house and warm myself a little. The night will be cold and the house is empty. May God reward you a thousandfold, sir! No; you shall not go with me! I have no one, and the cursed music will let me sleep very well if I stop my ears tightly enough. Good-night, sir! Rest well. And the Lord God above will understand and deal kindly with us. Amen!'

"She crossed herself and bowed quietly. Then she climbed the slope across the meadow, and I watched her until she reached her hut above and closed the door behind her.

"I myself returned to the path in a state of mind that baffles description. The universal misery of mankind was about the drift of it. But other elements mingling with it gave the peculiar experience something at once grotesque and awful. A professional psychologist would have had difficulty in understanding it.

"Fortunately the weather took care that I did not lose myself in this bottomless pit of fruitless speculation. Just as I reached the first houses, the rain began to fall in such torrents that I was obliged to seek shelter and wait until the storm should abate before attempting to return to the estate. Naturally, I hastened to the inn. I had a certain curiosity to see the famous judge's son on this day, when his old sweetheart had quietly taken herself out of the world to make room for his new one.

"It was a middle-class wedding of the usual sort. I looked through the open door into the hall, where the table had been removed to make room for the dancers. The wedding pair immediately struck my eyes, not unfavorably either; he was precisely such a man as I imagined, curly-headed, therefore popular among women, and with a frivolous, insolent face; on the whole, a good-looking rascal of the most common type. The young wife in her myrtle wreath, a provincial beauty, appeared much in love with her husband, but, from continual dancing with him, was too red and overheated to be lovely. Since she was rich, the husband had in fact obtained a better lot than his villainous deed warranted, and it was hardly to be expected that compensating justice would make him do penance for his sins through this marriage. He did not seem to be a man who would endure such penance calmly, much less pass even one sleepless night in useless thoughts upon the moral system of the world.

"The wretch disgusted me. Joining the peasants in the bar-room below, I drank my glass of beer in a very bitter mood, while the floor above creaked and trembled under the stamping and springing of the dancers, and the rain beat against the windows. This continued for more than an hour; then the rain ceased, the clouds moved towards the mountains, and the moon appeared. I decided to look about for a team, since the roads were now unfit for walking, and the wedding uproar made the prospect of a night here intolerable.

"Fortunately, just as I was going out to inquire for a teamster, I found my brother-in-law's coachman before the door with the hunting-wagon, my sister having sent him to bring me home. Both he and his horses needed a rest and a thorough drying. The homeward journey was so slow that I found everyone at the house asleep, and could not tell my horrible experience of the previous day till the following morning as we three sat at breakfast.

"We were still under the influence of the strange tragedy--my sister, who had visited the 'four females' once during the summer, being affected even to tears--when the door opened, and my brother-in-law's steward entered. 'I merely wish to announce, Herr Baron,' he said, 'that there has been a fire during the night. God be thanked, it has not spread, and was not on our estate. But Mother Betsey's house is burned.'

"We looked at one another confounded.

"'How did the fire start, and was any one injured?' asked my brother-in-law.

"The man shook his head.

"'They know nothing positively, Herr Baron,' he said. 'At midnight, as the last dance was being played down in the inn--the judge's son was holding his wedding feast--they suddenly heard the fire-bells ring from the towers, and, rushing out, they saw Mother Lamitz's old hut up on the forest edge in bright flames. The fire streamed as quietly into the sky as if from a wood-pile, and although half the village was on foot, and the fire engine was dragged up the mountain, they could do nothing whatever, the flames having already devoured the last corner of the old rookery. It was only when there was nothing left to save that they mastered the fire; the ground walls, about a man's height, alone remain standing, if they too have not fallen by this time. At first there seemed to be nothing left of the women and the child. At length some one discovered in the corner where the loom had stood a ghastly heap of ashes and blackened bones, undoubtedly the remains of old Betsey, who, as old women can never be warm enough, probably heated the oven so hot that the rotten thing burst and the flames reached the rafters of the loom. She must have been quickly suffocated by the smoke and have died without further pain. But what became of her daughter and the little one nobody knows, and as for the donkey, which she esteemed so highly, not the smallest piece of its hide or bones can be discovered!'"

# ROTHENBURG ON THE TAUBER

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It was Easter Tuesday. The people who had celebrated this feast of resurrection by an open-air excursion in the gayly blossoming springtime were thronging back to their houses and the work-day troubles of the morrow. All the highroads swarmed with carriages and pedestrians, and the railroads were overcrowded in spite of the extra trains; for it was many years since there had been such continuously lovely Easter weather.

The evening express, standing in the Ansbach station ready to depart in the direction of Würzburg, was twice as long as usual. Nevertheless, every seat appeared to be occupied, when a straggler of the second class, trying to enter at the last moment, knocked in vain at every door, and peered into each *coupé*, meeting everywhere a more or less ungracious or mischievous shrug of the shoulders. Finally, the guard at his side made a sudden decision, opened a *coupé* of the first class, shoved the late-comer into the dim interior, and slammed the door just as the train began to move.

A woman who, curled up like a black lizard, had been slumbering in the opposite corner suddenly started up and cast an angry look at the unwelcome disturber of her solitude.

However, the blonde young man in plain Sunday clothing, with a portfolio under his arm and a worn-out travelling satchel with old-fashioned embroidery in his hand, seemed to strike her as nothing remarkable. She replied to his courteous greeting and awkward excuse with a haughty, scarcely perceptible inclination of her head; drew her wrap's black silk hood once more over her forehead, and prepared to continue her interrupted slumber as unconcernedly as if, instead of a new fellow-traveller, merely one more piece of luggage had been put in the compartment.

The young man, feeling that he was regarded as an intruder, took good care not to remind her of his presence by any unnecessary noise; indeed, for the first five minutes, although he had been running violently, he held his breath as long as he could, and remained steadily in the uncomfortable position which he had at first assumed. He merely took off his hat, and wiped the perspiration from his brow with a handkerchief, looking discreetly out of the window the while, as if he could only atone for his appearance in a higher sphere by the most modest behavior. But since the sleeper did not stir, and the passing landscape outside had no charm for him, he finally ventured to turn his eyes toward the interior of the *coupé*; and, after having sufficiently admired the broad, red plush cushions and the mirror on the wall, he even dared to look more closely at the stranger, slowly and cautiously surveying her from the tip of the tiny shoe peeping from beneath her gown, to her shoulders, and at length to the fine lines of the face turned towards him.

Undoubtedly a very high-born dame--that was instantly clear to him--and, furthermore, a Russian, Pole, or Spaniard. Everything she had on and about her bore the stamp of an aristocratic origin;--her gown; the fine red travelling satchel against

which she placed her tiny feet so regardlessly; the elegant tan gloves whereon she was resting her cheek. Moreover, a peculiar fragrance, not of any aromatic essence, but of Russia leather and cigarettes, surrounded her, and on the carpet of the *coupé* there actually lay several white half-smoked stumps, scattered about with their ashes and some Russian tobacco. A book had also fallen on the floor. Unable to content himself with letting it lie there, he picked it up carefully and saw that it was a French novel. All this filled him with that secretly pleasing horror apt to seize young men who have been brought up in provincial circles, when they are unexpectedly brought into contact with a woman of the fashionable world. To the natural power of woman over man is then added the romantic charm which the unknown and independent customs, the imagined passionate joys and sorrows of the upper classes, exercise over a fledgeling of the lower. The gulf yawning between the two classes merely increases this attraction; for, the opportunity sometime offering, the man probably feels a visionary, foolhardy desire to show his strength and cross the seemingly impassable abyss.

To be sure, the young traveller did not contemplate any such adventurous boldness. But when he was sufficiently convinced that the sleep of his strange neighbor was unfeigned, he quietly drew from his vest pocket a small book bound in gray linen, and furtively began to sketch the sleeper's fine and pale, though somewhat haughty, profile.

It was no light undertaking, although the rapid motion of the express helped him over several difficulties. He was obliged to keep himself half-poised on the seat and make each stroke with unerring certainty. But the head was well worth the trouble; and as, peering through the dim light, he studied the quiet face lightly framed by the folds of the hood, he said to himself that he had never seen such classic features on any living being. She seemed somewhat past her first youth, and the mouth with its delicate lips occasionally assumed, even in sleep, a peculiar expression of bitterness or disgust; but the brow, the shape of the eyes, and the rich masses of soft, wavy hair were still remarkably beautiful.

He had drawn zealously for about ten minutes and had almost finished the sketch, when the sleeper roused herself calmly, and demanded in the best of German:

"Do you know, sir, that it is not allowable to rob travellers in their sleep?"

The poor offender, greatly confused, let the book sink upon his knee, and said, blushing furiously: "Pardon me, my lady, I did not think--I believed--it is merely a very hasty sketch--merely for remembrance."

"Who gave you the right to remember me, and to assist your memory so obviously?" replied the woman, measuring him somewhat coldly and scornfully with her keen blue eyes.

She gradually raised herself to an upright position; and as the hood fell upon her shoulders, he saw the fine contour of her head, and in spite of his embarrassment, continued to study her with an artist's eye.

"In truth, I must confess that I have behaved like a veritable highwayman," he replied, trying to turn the matter into a jest; "but perhaps you will allow mercy to precede justice, when I return my booty, not with intent to propitiate justice, but to show you how little it is that I have appropriated."

He offered her the open sketch-book. She cast a hasty glance at her picture; then nodded kindly, though with a quick gesture of rejection.

"It is like," she said, "but idealized. You are a portrait painter, sir?"

"No, my lady; in that case I could have made the sketch really characteristic. I paint architectural pictures mainly. But just because my eyes are sharpened for beautiful proportions and graceful lines, and as they are not found in a human face every day--"

At a loss for a conclusion, he stared at the tip of his boot, attempted to smile, and blushed again.

Without noticing this, the stranger said, "Doubtless you have some of your sketches and paintings in that portfolio there. May I see them?"

"Certainly." He handed her the portfolio, and spread the contents sheet by sheet before her. They were mere aquarelles, representing in a versatile manner and with thoroughly artistic conception old buildings, Gothic turrets, and streets of gabled houses. The stranger allowed one after the other to pass, without addressing any questions to the artist. But she studied many pages for a long time, and returned them with a certain hesitation.

"The things are not perfectly finished yet," said he, excusing this and that hasty study, "but they all belong to the same cycle. I availed myself of Easter day to talk them over with an art-dealer in Nuremberg. I wish to publish all these sketches in chromolithographic work. To be sure, I have many predecessors, but Rothenburg is not even yet as well known as it deserves to be."

"Rothenburg?"

"Certainly. These are all views from Rothenburg. I thought you knew it, my lady, as you did not ask."

"Rothenburg? Where is it?"

"Oh, on the Tauber, not many hours' journey from here. But really, do you not know it? Have you never even heard the name?"

"You must pardon my ignorance," she replied, with a slight smile, "as I am not a German. But I have been with Germans very often, and confess to you, I never heard the name of Rothenburg on the--how was it?--on the Tauber?--until now."

He laughed, losing his timidity at once as he realized his advantage over this elegant woman on such an important point.

"Pardon me," he said, "for having behaved to you as all Rothenburgers do to strangers, even though my cradle did not stand on the banks of the Tauber. We are all so infatuated with our city, that we can scarcely imagine how our feeling appears to people who know nothing of Rothenburg. When I went there for the first time nine years ago, I myself knew little more of the old 'imperial' town than that it stood, like Jerusalem, upon a high plateau rising from the river valley; was even yet fortified with walls and towers as for the last half-thousand years; and had the honor, once upon a time, to count the founder of my race among its citizens. Permit me to introduce myself to you: my name is Hans Doppler."

He bowed smilingly, looking at her as if he expected that this name would arouse in her a joyful excitement, somewhat as if he had confided that his name was Hans Columbus or Gutenberg. But her expression did not change in the least.

"Doppler," he continued, somewhat hesitatingly, "is merely the new version of the name Toppler, and was introduced during the last century in the collateral line to which I belong. Yet it is authentically certain that the founder of our family was no less a person than the great burgomaster of Rothenburg, Heinrich Toppler, of whom you have undoubtedly heard."

She shook her head, evidently amused by his naïve confidence.

"I regret that my historical knowledge is just as defective as my geographical. But what did your ancestor do, that it is a disgrace not to know of him?"

"Do not fear, my lady," said he, now laughing at his own pretensions, "that from mere family pride I would bore you with a piece of Rothenburg history. That pride has good reason to be humbled; for I myself, as you see me, have nothing at all to govern in my ancestral home; but, for that very reason, I need not expect to be imprisoned and delivered up to death from hunger or poison by my fellow-citizens, as my ancestor was, after he had increased the good old town's military renown. A horrible end, was it not,

my lady? A fine return for so many brave deeds! And all because of a mere slander. He was said to have lost the town to a certain prince in a game of dice; but not a word of it was true. In the ancient language, Doppler, to be sure, meant dice, and in our family arms--"

He stopped suddenly, for it seemed to him that the lady's delicate nostrils were trembling in the effort to conceal a yawn. Somewhat mortified, he turned his attention to his aquarelles, and arranged them in the portfolio which he was still holding in his hand.

"And how did it happen," she then asked, "that you inherited this unjustly murdered man's estate? Did they wish to repay to you the wrong they did your ancestor?"

"You err, my lady," he said, "if you believe that Rothenburg would feel any honor about having a Doppler once more among them, or would allow this honor to cost them anything. When I, as I told you, merely curious to see the old fortress, strolled through the ancient gateway nine years ago, not a person there knew me, and even when I mentioned my name, they made little fuss about it. Indeed, as I was born in Nuremberg, and no longer have the T in my name, they greatly doubted that I really belonged to them. But, as the poet says, the history of the world is the final judgment; and what the magistrate of Rothenburg neglected to do--that is, to meet me ceremoniously, surrender to me for my sole possession the houses which the great burgomaster had owned, and support me for my lifetime as a living part of the city--fate, or providence, whichever you wish, did in another way.

"I came to Rothenburg merely to make a few studies and to take a look at the old-fashioned nest, and I found there my life's happiness and a warm, new nest of my own, to which I am now returning."

"May I know how it happened?"

"Why not, if it interests you at all. My parents sent me to the academy at Munich. They were not rich, but yet their means were sufficient to educate me suitably and to allow me to go through all the classes. I wished to become a landscape painter, and, after finishing school, to travel in Italy for several years. When I became twenty-one years of age I felt impelled, before undertaking the great art-journey, to visit my good mother at Nuremberg--father had been dead for some time. 'Hans,' said she, 'before you make your pilgrimage to Rome, you ought to take a trip to the place where the roots of our family tree stood before they were torn up and transplanted here from eastern Franconia.' She was a worthy old patrician, my good mother, and laid great stress on grand genealogical expressions. Well, there was nothing to hinder; I took my pilgrim's staff in hand and set out slowly toward the west, sketching industriously on the way; for this German landscape of ours was already far dearer to me than the unknown scenes of the south. Now, since you have looked through the portfolio, you may perhaps comprehend that the German Jerusalem impressed me strongly, and that I did not have hands and eyes enough to note all the remarkable things. But there was something in Rothenburg which won my approval even more than its dear antiquity; namely--I shall not treat you to any detailed love story--at one of the weekly balls given by the so-called 'Harmonic Society,' I became acquainted with the young daughter of a fine old citizen who had formerly been an alderman. She was full three years younger than I, and--I may surely say so--the prettiest child in the whole town. After the second waltz I knew my own mind well enough, but, unfortunately, neither hers nor her father's. And so it might have been a very sorrowful story, and the descendant of the great Toppler might, like him, have pined away in chains in this old 'imperial' town, if the before-mentioned fate had not interfered, and allowed me to cast a lucky throw with my family dice. In three days I was satisfied that the maiden liked me; and in three weeks, that the father would overlook my extreme youth and former misdoings, for he too--God knows why--had taken a foolish liking to me. It was especially pleasing to his Rothenburg heart that my name was Doppler, and that I knew how to paint the beautiful ruined walls, the wonderful turrets and strange fountains, of the old fortress. So, after a short year of probation, he gave me the hand of his only child, under the condition, to be sure, that I

should leave her in her old home during his lifetime, and should devote my art principally to the glorification of his beloved town. You comprehend, my lady, that I did not struggle much against this. My father-in-law was not only a reputable man, who owned house and gardens, vineyards and farm lands, but the best soul in the world as well, and never failed to see a joke except when some one praised other ancient towns unduly, or placed Nuremberg or Augsburg above the 'Pearl of the Valley.' He lived with us for four years; and whenever I sold any picture of Rothenburg at a foreign exhibition, he always brought a flask of Tauber wine from the cellar and drank my health. When he finally died, I myself was altogether too much at home in the primitive, angular old house to think of moving. Then, too, there was no lack of commissions and work just commenced. But if the old man had lived to see my colored prints published, I believe he would have lost his reason for joy."

Becoming silent after this long narrative of his short life, he looked out of the window into the ever-deepening darkness, and lost himself in quiet reverie. It finally occurred to him that the stranger had not said one syllable in reply; and at the same time he felt her eyes steadily regarding him from her dusky corner. "I am afraid," he said, "that after all, I have wearied you with these petty stories. But you yourself drew them from me, and if you knew--"

"You are greatly in error," she interrupted. "If I remain silent, it is merely because I am pondering a riddle."

"A riddle? That I have given you?"

"Yes, you, Herr Hans Doppler. I am asking myself, how I can reconcile the artist whom I recognize from this portfolio, with the staid, home-loving man--you have children too?"

"Four, my lady--two boys and two little girls."

"Well then--with the young husband and father who has settled down in his monotonous, commonplace happiness as in a snail-shell, and at most takes an occasional journey to Nuremberg--your drawings show unusual talent, for that you can take my word. I have seen the work of Hilderbrandt and Werner, and the whole Roman aquarelle club, and assure you yours would make a sensation among them. So much freedom and spirited ease, with such grace in the landscapes and *staffage*! And then to think that this unusual talent is doomed for the next thirty or forty years to no other expression than an endless variation of the towers, balconies, vaulted doors, and gabled roofs of a medieval nest which appears in our world like an excavated German Pompeii--But pardon me this criticism of your plan of life. I am not fitted to criticise it. However, as you wish to know the subject of my meditation, it was this problem: can a noble, liberal, artistic soul be so completely filled by commonplace family happiness? It must certainly be possible. Only to me, as I am accustomed to absolute freedom of existence, to boundless liberty, it is incomprehensible that you, scarcely thirty years old--"

"You are right," he interrupted, his frank, youthful face suddenly clouding. "You have expressed something which I often said to myself at first, but always thrust back again into a secret corner of my heart. Do you really find that my drawings show power for something greater and better? At the best I would fall far short of a great artist! Meanwhile, you know Schiller's poem, 'Pegasus in Harness.' A horse that suffers itself to be harnessed to the plough, even though it may be of good blood, proves that it has no wings. But perhaps it might have served for something better than ploughing. And yet, if you knew--if only you knew my Christel and the children!"

"I do not for an instant doubt that you have a charming wife and lovely children, Herr Hans Doppler; and nothing is farther from my thoughts than to render you suspicious of your domestic happiness. But that you, being so young, can regard it as final, as something never to be interrupted, never to be laid aside even temporarily for the sake of a higher aim--and you were even on the way to the beloved land of art, and had certainly heard and seen enough of it at the academy to have some presentiment of the joys awaiting you there--and nevertheless--"

"Oh, my lady!" he cried, suddenly starting up as if the narrow *coupé* had become too close and prison-like for him, "you are repeating my own thoughts! How often in the night, especially in clear spring nights, when I have awakened and heard my dear wife's quiet breathing near me; while the children were lying asleep in the neighboring room, and the moonlight was moving so weirdly and quietly over the low walls; and the ancient clock, which the old man wound so regularly, and which dates from the Thirty Years' War, was ticking drowsily to and fro--how often I have been forced to spring out of bed and look down into the valley through the little window with the round pane! And when I have seen the Tauber flowing along in its narrow bed as hastily as if it could not escape too soon from its restraining banks and throw itself into the Main, and with it into the Rhine, and thence into the ocean--how much I have suffered, as I ground my teeth together and slunk back to bed tired and saddened, I have never told a human soul. It seemed the blackest ingratitude against the kind fate which had dealt with me so gently. But the day after I could never touch a brush; and if I saw in a paper the word Rome or Naples, the blood rushed to my head as though I were some deserter caught on the road, and dragged handcuffed back to his barracks."

He thrust his hand through his curly hair, and fell back in his seat. She had regarded him during his excited speech with a keen, fixed look, and, for the first time, his face interested her. The innocent, youthful expression had disappeared; his clear, beautifully formed eyes blazed; and his slender figure, in spite of the common black coat, gained something animated, almost heroic, as well beseemed the descendant of the "great burgomaster."

"I understand your mood," said the stranger, composedly taking a cigarette from a small silver box and lighting it with a waxen taper, "but just so much the less do I comprehend your action. To be sure, I myself have always been accustomed to do only what satisfies my nature's deepest needs. I acknowledge no chains. Either they are too weak, and I break them; or they are too strong, and strangle me. To remain in them alive is for me an impossibility. Do you smoke? Do not be embarrassed. You see, I set the example."

He shook his head, thanked her, and became all attention.

"As I said," continued the lady, blowing the smoke slowly before her with her beautiful, expressive lips, "I have no right to criticise your plan of life. But you must allow me to wonder how a man can complain of a difficulty rather than help himself out of it, especially where it would be so easy. Do you fear that your wife would be untrue to you if you should take an art journey?"

"Christel? Untrue to me?" In spite of his gloominess he laughed aloud.

"Pardon!" she said calmly; "I forgot that she is a German, and, moreover, a Rothenburg woman. But just so much less do I comprehend why you condemn yourself to a lifetime of such work; representing only the church and *klimperthor*, or, as it is called--"

"*Klingerthor*, my lady."

"Well, then, all this trashy masonry and commonplace Gothic rubbish, as if there were no Colosseum, no baths of Caracalla, no theatre at Taormina! And what vegetation, what luxuriant growths there are among the ruins of those old temples; what pines and cypresses, what distant glimpses of ocean and mountains! Believe me, I myself, although I am not yet an old woman, would have been dead and buried long ago if I had not escaped from narrow, maddeningly lifeless surroundings, and found salvation in that land of beauty and freedom."

"Madame is not married?"

She threw the glowing cigarette stump out of the window, pressed her regular, little white teeth together an instant, and then said, in an indescribably indifferent voice--

"My husband, the General, was governor of a moderately large fortress in the interior



of Russia, and naturally could not accompany me. Then, too, at his age, it would have been hard for him to forego his home comforts. So we decided to arrange a rendezvous somewhere on the frontier for every two years, and since then each has lived much more contentedly.

"I well know," she continued, as he looked at her with some disapproval, "that this conception of married happiness is revolting to sentimental German prejudices. But, believe me, in many respects, we barbarians are in advance of your highly refined civilization; and we make up for our lack of political liberty by our greater social freedom. If you were a Russian, you would have emancipated yourself long ago, and followed the lead of your Tauber, though in the opposite direction. And what would you have lost by it? When you returned in a year or two as a well-developed artist, would you not find your house on the same spot, your wife as domestic and youthful as ever, your children, perhaps half a head taller, but as clean and pretty as you left them?"

"You are right! It is only too true," he stammered, pushing his hands nervously through his hair. "Oh, if I had but seen it so clearly before!"

"Before? A young man like you, not yet beyond thirty! But I see it now; you are too fond of the flesh-pots of Rothenburg. You are right; remain at home and earn an honest living. The proposition which I was just about to make would appear to you less rational than if I commanded you to travel in a desert and hunt tigers and crocodiles, instead of landscape motives."

She flung the sharp-pointed dart at him with so much quiet grace that he felt at once charmed and wounded.

"No, my lady," he cried, "you must tell me the proposition you had in mind. Although it is only a short time since I had the good fortune to make your acquaintance, I can nevertheless assure you that your appearance, each of your words, has made a deep and lasting impression on me. It is, to be plain, as if a complete change were going on in me, and these hours with you--"

He reddened and became silent. She noticed it, and came to his aid, although she was apparently looking beyond him.

"My proposition," she said, "will not by any means suffice to make an entirely different man of you, but only to release the true one from his narrow shell. I am now going to Würzburg to visit a sick friend. After staying with her for two days, I shall return on this same road, making no halt before Genoa, where I shall take passage on a steamer bound for Palermo; for as yet I have not seen Sicily.

"Now, what Goethe has written in his 'Italian Journey' about his companion, the artist Kniep, whom he engaged to sketch any wayside scene which pleased his fancy, has always filled me with envy. I am no great poet, and no rich princess. Yet I am not so poor but that I too may grant myself such a travelling companion. Of course we now have photography. But to you at least I need not explain how much better it is to have an artistic hand at disposal than any photographic apparatus whatever. I also thought it would be well for you to be introduced into this paradise by some one who understands the language perfectly and is no novice in the art of travelling. You would be entirely free to remain with me as long or short a time as you pleased. The first sentence of our compact should read: Freedom even to inconsiderateness. And if, on the return, you should wish to linger at Rome or Florence, the means for doing so--"

"Oh, my lady," he broke in, excitedly, "I would not think of trespassing on your kindness and generosity under any condition. I can well afford to spend a year in the south, and if I perceive in your proposal a sign from heaven, it is only because your suggestion, the prospect of seeing all these world wonders in your company, makes the determination so much easier. For that I shall be unceasingly grateful to you. It is indeed just as you say; my wife, my dear children--in fact, I shall offend them less than I now imagine. Christel is so intelligent, so self-reliant, she herself, when I explain it to her--or better, if you could say it to her as you have to me--truly, after Würzburg you

must--I cannot expect you to take a trip to Rothenburg--whoever has seen the Colosseum and the baths of Caracalla must regard our modest, commonplace, medieval--"

The whistle of the locomotive interrupted him. The train was moving more slowly, and lights were beginning to glimmer by the roadside.

"Steinach!" said the artist, rising and picking up his satchel and portfolio; "our ways part here. You go farther north; I shall take the little local train, and be home in half an hour. Oh, my lady, if you would set a day and hour, when you are on your return--"

"Do you know," she said suddenly, looking at her watch, "I have reflected that it would be more sensible for me to spend this night in Rothenburg, and continue my journey to-morrow morning. I would arrive in Würzburg too late to see my friend. Instead, since I am for once so near, I will make up the deficiencies of my historical and geographical education, and take a look at your Jerusalem on the Tauber. You will be so good, if your wife does not object, as to be my guide to-morrow for a while--"

"Oh, my lady," he cried in joyful excitement, "I would never have dared to ask so much! How happy you make me, and how shall I ever--"

The train stopped and the door of the *coupé* was opened. Having reverentially assisted his newly won patroness to alight, Hans Doppler accompanied her to a carriage of the second class. There she spoke several Russian words to a small, odd-looking person in a plumed hat, who, laden as she was with numerous boxes, satchels, and baskets, worked her way out of the overcrowded interior into the open air, and regarded her mistress's blonde companion with a not altogether friendly glance of her small, Tartar eyes. The lady appeared to explain the altered condition of things to her maid, although that overburdened creature did not answer a word. Then, taking her young fellow-traveller's arm, she strolled with him up and down the dark platform in lively conversation; talking of Italy, of Russia, of the German cities which she knew, so easily and cleverly, and with such an agreeable spice of wickedness, that her companion felt he had never before been so well entertained, and could never weary of listening to this irresistible Scheherezade.

In truth, was it not like a fairy tale, that he should be walking beside this beautiful woman, whom he had seen for the first time an hour before; that she should have decided to follow him to his little nest, far out of the usual route; and that such a fascinating future should be in store for him?

They knew him very well at the little station, but when they saw him appear in such elegant company, they doffed their hats more respectfully than ever before.

In the light of the swinging lanterns, her pale face seemed even more unreal and princess-like. She wore a peculiarly shaped cap of black velvet bordered with reddish fur, and a short hooded wrap with the same trimming. She had drawn off her gloves; and her young escort glanced down furtively from time to time upon the large sapphire gleaming on her little finger. He had scarcely ever seen such a slender, lily-white hand, every part of which seemed so expressive and elegant.

But when they boarded the little local train, which had only two small, second-class compartments besides the two-and-a-half horse-power engine, he became somewhat uncomfortable. All three seated themselves in one second-class carriage, since there was none of the first; and the train began to move slowly on through the softly enveloping moonlight. The maid betook herself to the darkest corner, and crouched there beneath her mountain of bundles. The full light from the lamp on the ceiling fell upon her mistress's face, and the young artist opposite became more and more devoutly absorbed in contemplating the nobly formed features, which corresponded so perfectly to the ideal of beauty that he had vaguely conceived in the model classes at the academy. But as the train approached the journey's end, he became disheartened and depressed by the thought that the rustic nooks of his old Rothenburg would appear very uninteresting to these wonderful eyes which had seen half the world.

Everything that he had known and admired for so long seemed suddenly mean and despicable; and he thought with dismay how disdainful her delicate face would look on the morrow, when she saw all that famous magnificence on which he had laid so much stress. His overawed fancy flew even into his own home, and, unfortunately, things did not seem much better there. How would his little unsophisticated wife compare with this world traveller; and his boys, usually running about with dishevelled heads; and his baby girls, as yet with so little knowledge of behavior?

He regretted intensely having meddled with this pleasant adventure, and the storylike atmosphere suddenly vanished.

Fortunately, he did not need to act just then. The stranger's eyes were closed, and she seemed to sleep in good earnest. The narrow-eyed Tartar, to be sure, was watching him steadily from her ambush, but she did not speak.

At last the train stopped; the sleeper awoke, seemed to find trouble in determining where she was, and then asked if there were any enduring hotels in Rothenburg. Her companion, whose patriotic pride was aroused by her contemptuous tone, recommended, with admirable reserve, the "Golden Stag," whose omnibus was waiting at the station. Was not his wife there to receive him? He had forbidden it, as the hour was so late--ten o'clock--and she did not like to leave the children alone with the maid. The next day he hoped to have the pleasure of presenting his family to her.

To this the Russian--no longer in her former friendly mood, and seeming, like him, secretly to regret her over-hasty decision--made no reply.

All three, without exchanging another word, climbed into the close hotel omnibus; and, driving through the sombre gateway, jolted over the uneven pavement into the sleeping city.

They reached the market-place just as the moon was emerging from a mist of clouds, and the stranger, looking out of the carriage window, expressed herself as well pleased with the majestic town-hall, now showing to the best advantage in the silvery moonlight. This revived her companion's sinking spirits, and he began to speak of the building, Rothenburg's especial pride, and its foundation after a great fire. It was an edifice of the best Renaissance style, and in summer-time, when the extensive space along the front was decorated with flowers, one could hardly imagine anything more majestic and delightful.

He was still talking when they stopped before the open door of the "Golden Stag." Hans Doppler sprang out first; then after having assisted the stranger to alight, he bade the host good-evening, and whispered to him to prepare his best chamber.

"Numbers 15 and 16 are empty," replied the host, bowing with great politeness.

"You will have a beautiful outlook into the Tauber valley, my lady," said the artist. "When the moon is higher, you will be delighted with the double bridge below and the little Gothic church. Early tomorrow morning I shall presume to inquire how you have slept, and when you wish to make your trip through the town."

She noticed that he was a trifle cool and ill-humored. Immediately she gave him her hand, pressed his as he respectfully kissed her slender fingers, and said: "Until tomorrow, dear friend! Do not come too early. I am a night-bird, and your Rothenburg moonlight in addition to the Tauber-nixy will not allow me to rest just yet, I am sure."

With this she followed the landlord into the house; and the maid, relieved of some of her burdens by a servant, hurried after her.

Hans Doppler set out on his way home with much less eagerness than was usual with him when returning from some short trip; indeed, he was like an extremely tired, thoughtful man who is uncertain of the welcome he may receive. His house, built close

to the town-wall near the Burgthor, faced the northwest; while the windows of the inn which he was leaving looked towards the southwest. He racked his brains on the way in the effort to decide which would be better: to make a full confession that evening, or postpone it till the morrow. As soon as he had escaped from the dangerous stranger's influence, the whole matter seemed to him extremely unpleasant, if not fairly dishonest and wrong. Yet he had already gone too far to extricate himself without dishonor. The next day must be lived through; after that he would feign some pressing obligation, which, by forcing him to remain at home, would prevent him from accompanying her just then.

Having thus satisfied his conscience with regard to his unsuspecting young wife, he became more at ease. Yet it was with ever-decreasing haste that he ascended the steep street above the market-place, till he reached the tower of the Burgthor. As he turned into the narrow alley leading to his house, he saw in the distance a dark figure standing beneath the round arch of the garden wall; and he scarcely had time to recognize his little wife before a pair of soft firm arms were thrown around his neck and a warm mouth sought his in the darkness.

As he was carrying a satchel and portfolio, he could neither return the embrace nor prevent it, as he was inclined to do; for he noticed that some of the neighboring windows were open, and feared that the tender welcome might be observed.

She saw his embarrassment, however, and calmed him by saying that they were only some old people, who knew long ago that she was still sentimental after seven years of marriage. Then, chatting softly and pleasantly of many small occurrences, she led him into the house, where every one was already asleep. It was an ancient ark, whose walls had outlasted many severe storms and severer wars. Its age was even more evident within, where all the woodwork was black and cracked, the stairs were steep and crooked, and the walls were parted at the seams, in spite of numerous props. But in order to remedy all these evils, it would have been necessary to demolish the old structure and build it afresh, and this the former owner could as little persuade himself to do as his daughter and her young husband, in whose veins the blood of the "great burgomaster" still flowed.

As Hans Doppler ascended the narrow, crooked stairs of this historic house, he for the first time found fault with it, although he was discreetly silent. As he entered the sitting-room, the low, raftered ceiling, the extremely old-fashioned furniture, and the family portraits on the walls struck him as shabby and ordinary; though the little brass lamp with its green ornaments looked very cheerful on the covered table, and lighted up the bright plates and dishes set out for his modest evening meal. At such home-comings he was usually bubbling over with merry speeches; tonight he was perfectly quiet, and, to conceal it, forced a continual smile, and stroked his pretty wife's cheeks in a fatherly manner which caused her much secret wonder.

But in the chamber where the children were sleeping the seal seemed to break from his heart and lips; especially when the younger boy, the favorite because of his close resemblance to his mother, awoke and threw his arms about his father's neck with a cry of joy.

Hans immediately gave him a toy which he had bought in Nuremberg and a large piece of gingerbread, both merely for a hasty look, as the lamp was soon removed again. Then, sitting on the old sofa, whose hair-cloth covering had never before seemed so cold and hard to him, he ate his supper, drank some of the red Tauber wine from his own vineyard, and told the fortunate result of his business trip to his young wife. Christel sat opposite, eating nothing, but resting her elbows on the table. And then he had chanced to journey from Ansbach with a Russian lady, the wife of an old general, and she had wished to see Rothenburg, and was stopping at the "Stag." Unfortunately, he could not avoid escorting her around somewhat the next day; indeed, he was considering if it would not be necessary to invite her to dinner.

"You know, Hans," said the young wife, "that our Mary understands very little about

cooking; and I myself, unless I know beforehand, cannot do things by magic. But why do you wish to invite this utterly strange old lady ceremoniously to our house so soon? She has not called upon us as yet. Is it in some way important for you to entertain her especially? Is she an old acquaintance of your Munich days? Then, indeed, I must do my best."

"No," he said, bending his head rather low over his plate; "she is neither a former acquaintance, nor is she particularly old. And you are right, child; we must let her come to us. She will certainly come, for I have told her so much about you and the children. You will see--an interesting woman--very artistic. Her goodwill may be very useful to me some time, for she knows half the world."

"Well, I am eager to see her," replied the young wife. "For the rest, that even Russians should become interested in Rothenburg--"

He reddened, knowing best what had caused the suddenly awakened interest in Rothenburg. "Child," he said, "go to bed now. Your bedtime hour struck long ago. I am still somewhat excited by my journey, but I shall soon follow you."

"You are right," she said, yawning heartily, thereby showing her large, but pretty, red mouth, with its shining teeth; "I noticed at once that you were not feeling like yourself; your eyes wander restlessly. Open the window and sit awhile in the cool air. Good-night."

She kissed him hastily and went into the neighboring bedroom, leaving the door open. Then he arose, pushed back the shutters, and opened the window with the small round pane. The night wind had scattered the mists from the moon; the winding valley, with its blossoming trees and freshly ploughed fields, lay beneath him in silvery dimness; and in the deep hush he could hear the whispering of the Tauber's waves as they rushed past the little, white water-tower which his forefather had built. He became very contented and peaceful; this time his thoughts did not follow the course of the little stream to the limitless ocean, although the conditions were as often before; he could hear at his right the quiet breathing of his children, on his left the gentle tread of his little wife, who before retiring had still this and that task to do. He felt as if he had merely dreamed the Russian fairy tale; at least, it would not disturb his sleep that night.

When Hans Doppler awoke in the early morning and found that his little wife, who had been busy in the children's room for some time, was no longer near him, his first thought was of all that lay in store for him with his elegant patroness. In sober morning light, his dwelling, his historical furniture, his dear wife and rosy-cheeked children seemed even less charming than on the previous evening. He found Christel's neat house-dress much too provincial in cut, and noticed for the first time that Heinz's trousers were patched with a piece of cloth unlike the rest of the stuff in color and pattern. His own attire of yesterday displeased him exceedingly. It was as respectably black as an office-seeker's; for it had seemed suitable to the young artist to conduct his business with the Nuremberg gentlemen in clothing which should sufficiently prove his business solidity. Moreover, he always dressed like every one else in the town, since, being the only one of his class, he would have been conspicuous everywhere if arrayed as an artist. But he had no wish to reappear before that cosmopolitan woman in the garb of a young Philistine; so from the deepest recesses of his clothes-chest he drew forth a velvet jacket, the same in which he had first come to Rothenburg, a broad-brimmed, black felt hat, and a pair of light trousers. Christel opened her eyes when he appeared thus attired. It was a shame for the good coat to hang in the closet for the moths, he declared. Moreover, now, when his fellow-citizens would soon learn that they were destined to become famous far and wide through him, he was no longer going to appear ashamed of his art.

To this the discreet little wife made no rejoinder, but regarded him with quietly critical eyes. She herself might well do a little extra to-day, he called back as he went out. It was uncertain when the general's wife would call. She would be welcome at any

time, replied Christel. Moreover, she was always in a condition to be seen, and the children too. Those who did not find them pretty enough in their every-day clothes had bad taste. In Russia, as she had read, they ran about perfectly ragged, and unwashed besides, like very beasts.

With this she lifted little Lulu on her arm, stroked back her curly, blonde hair, and kissed her with quiet pride on the bright blue eyes which she inherited from her father. Christel's eyes were brown.

Hans Doppler, suppressing a slight sigh, exerted himself to smile back at his little family; then hurried on his way to the "Golden Stag."

He knew it was still too early to call there, but he could not endure the narrow house and his secretly wicked thoughts. He had intended to stroll about a little before visiting the stranger, but as he came to the market-place and looked down the street towards the inn, he saw the lady standing in the centre of the street below, opposite the little Church of St. John, attentively studying through her lorgnette its Gothic windows and ancient carvings, among which a black *Christophorus* was especially prominent.

He was dismayed at his tardiness. But as she saw him hastening towards her, she greeted him from the distance with a cheerful nod, and called:

"You see, dear friend, the spirit of Rothenburg possesses me already. I am even now deep in admiration of the good old times. From mere impatience I could not sleep longer than seven o'clock, to Sascha's horror, for she is a marmot. I sprang out of bed in my bare feet in order to admire by morning light the Cadolzeller, no *Codolzeller* church, and the double bridge down in the valley; for they had already enchanted me by moonlight. Your Tauber-nixy is a maiden of very good taste. I have also learned some Rothenburg stories and sayings. When I praised the baking at breakfast, the head-waiter quoted to me the old proverb:

'In Rothenburg on the Tauber,  
Both milling and baking are clean;'

and as I came out of the house to reconnoitre a little by myself, the landlord immediately remarked to me that this was the famous *Schmiedegasse*, where, during the peasant revolt, blood had flowed like a brook when sixty rebellious leaders were executed on the place before the market by some Margrave. If I remain here three days I shall become a perfect Rothenburger. For truly, everything that I see pleases me. You too please me better than yesterday. Do you know that your artist costume is very becoming? But come, we must not linger so long in one spot. Do not take pains to show me the so-called remarkable sights, but rather the nooks that no Baedeker has noticed and marked. And as I am a commandant's wife, I will look first of all at the towers and walls, so that if Russia sometime lays siege to Rothenburg, I may revenge myself for its present conquest of me."

He gazed at her steadily, as she chattered on with easy volubility. She wore the travelling gown of yesterday, but with a more coquettish air, and the fur cap rested provokingly over one ear. Then he offered her his arm, and leading her through little side streets to the still well-preserved wall which enclosed the entire town, he told her that the town formerly had as many towers as there are weeks in the year; that most of them were still standing; and that in war-time, during many hundred years, both friends and foes had rushed to these towers either to seek refuge there with goods and families, or to seize them as points of vantage. She listened to his statements in decorous silence, glancing to and fro with her sharp eyes and occasionally interrupting him by an exclamation of pleasure, whenever they came to any unusual masonry, any artistic hovel hidden away among the buttresses, or the end of some street through which they could look back into the crooked old town. Then, climbing up some ancient steps leading to the top of the town-wall, they continued their way beneath the low, sheltering roof under which the worthy burghers had so often stood and returned the enemy's fire. Now

and then stopping at a loophole, she would look out and ask him to tell her the names of the surrounding country places, and of the roads that led through them. Thus they went from the dark tower on through the "Röderthor" to the white tower, where she finally declared that she had satisfied her curiosity about the fortifications and wished to return to the town. But an image of the holy Wolfgang claimed her attention for a while longer. He stands in a niche near his little church, one hand resting on a model of the church, the other meekly and sorrowfully uplifting his broken crosier.

"If I should remain in Rothenburg," she said, "this holy man would become dangerous to me. See what a lovely, innocent, and yet wise face he has! I have always wished to meet a living saint and play the temptress for a while. Do you believe that this one could have withstood me if I had disregarded his soul?"

He awkwardly stammered some jesting reply. In reality it seemed to him that neither worldlings nor saints could escape this fascinating woman, if she wished to cast her nets about them. As he beheld her slender figure gliding through the shadowy passages, her face now and then lighted by a gleam of sunshine, his heart throbbed with a strange excitement, which he attributed to artistic feeling. But it estranged and mortified him that she did not once refer to yesterday's plan of the Sicilian trip. And notwithstanding all yesterday's resolutions, in spirit he already saw himself climbing the steps of the amphitheatre at Taormina by her side, and heard her express her delight in terms very different from those of to-day over an old watchtower or postern-gate.

Once more she leaned upon his arm, and they returned to the town. Then he led her directly to the old Church of St. James, the town's only cathedral. However, she regarded the beautiful Gothic structure with much less interest than he had expected, and was coldly indifferent to the three famous altars with their admirable carving.

But she looked long at the glass case wherein the holy blood is kept, and crossed herself. He thought to impress her by telling her that Heinrich Toppler set up the high altar and collected the pictures by Michael Wohlgemuth, and by showing her the great burgomaster's arms with the two dice; but, stifling a little yawn, she requested to go into the streets again. There her interest was reawakened by the black stain on the arch of the gateway, beneath which a street passes through the church. A peasant, he told her, having cursed as he was driving his team through the place, was seized by the devil and flung high against the arch; the body fell down, but the poor soul stuck fast.

At this she laughed heartily.

"You are foolish antiquaries, you gentlemen of Rothenburg!" she cried, "and now let me see your town-hall, and then enough for to-day."

"Do you know," she said, as they were retracing the short way to the market-place, "that it really seems to me as if this German Pompeii were inhabited by nothing but good people, whose truth and honesty, having been covered up like the old stones for several hundred years, has now come to light again? As yet I have not seen one evil face. They all greet each other; it is like a large, well-bred family, wherein each one behaves politely because he is observed by all the others. You, too, once out in the world would seem more merry and enterprising. Now you have the same pious look. You must not take offence if I am often a trifle critical."

He eagerly assured her that, quite the contrary, her frank, witty comments on everything interested him very much. Soon afterwards in the court-room of the town-hall he was subjected to a severe test. While the castellan was relating the story of the great draught, that celebrated saving deed of the old burgomaster, Nusch, who redeemed the forfeited lives of the whole council, and obtained mercy for the townsfolk from wicked Tilly, their harsh conqueror, by performing the almost impossible feat of emptying a flagon of thirty Bavarian quarts at one draught--the haughty lady broke into merry laughter. The pretty story itself, she afterwards explained, did not seem so absurd to her as the solemn and affected manner of its narration, which inflated this mere feat

of strength to a deed of the most noble heroism; and it had also occurred to her that this legend somewhat resembled the story of the Roman knight Curtius, except that he had jumped *into* an abyss for his country's sake, whereas the Rothenburg Curtius had the abyss in himself--and several other irreverent jests.

He sadly acknowledged to himself that this woman, whom he considered a creature of unusual perfection in other respects, was completely lacking in the historical spirit.

"Do you wish to ascend the tower?" he asked. "It is a trifle appalling, but perfectly safe. The walls, from the ground to the highest point, are all fastened with iron braces, so that the hollow four-cornered pillars hold fast together; but often in a storm the tall, slender tower sways to and fro like a shaken tree."

"I am sorry the air is so quiet to-day," she replied; "of course we must go up."

He preceded her up the steep wooden steps until they reached the topmost part, where, after they had knocked, a trap-door was opened, and a little gray-headed man, the tower-keeper, greeted them kindly.

She looked observantly about the airy room, through whose four small windows the bright noonday sun was streaming, seated herself on the footstool from which the lonely, little tower-keeper had arisen, and commenced a lively conversation with him. On the table lay several sewing implements and a half-finished waistcoat; for the watchman was evidently a tailor, and adorned not only an official position, but his fellow-citizens as well. Putting on the steel thimble, in which her delicate finger tip was fairly lost, she took a few stitches, and asked whether he would not surrender his office and his work to her. He was the only man in the world whom she envied; since, in spite of his high position, he was not annoyed with visits; and if he happened to be struck by lightning in some thunder-storm, he would not be far from heaven. To this the little man replied that he had a wife and children, with a daily salary of only sixty pennies, so his life was not care-free after all. Then he showed her the signal apparatus for fires, and complained of the distress he often suffered when the tower swayed so that the water spilled over the edge of his keys. Then she inquired if they could go out upon the gallery surrounding the top of the tower. The watchman at once lowered a little ladder from the ceiling, climbed it, and opened a metal trap which covered a small triangular opening. Would the gracious lady risk crawling through there? Certainly she would; she was slim enough even yet; but the gentlemen should go first.

Hans Doppler, who had never been able to persuade his little wife to force herself through the narrow hole, gave expression to his admiration of her spirit by an ardent look, and promptly clambered out after the watchman. The next instant he saw the beautiful woman appearing from the opening, and offered his hand to assist her. Then, separated from the dizzy depths below merely by a slender railing, they stood shoulder to shoulder in the narrow passage near the belfry, drawing deep breaths of the glorious air. The city lay at their feet as neatly spread out as a Nuremberg box of toys; the towers of the Church of St. James, with the swallows circling about them, were far below; they saw the silvery Tauber winding through the country, and the smoke from a hundred chimneys eddying upwards in thin spirals. It was midday, and the streets were almost deserted.

Suddenly she turned towards her companion. "If two people should kiss each other up here, could any one below see it?" she asked.

His face became darkly red.

"It would depend on whether they had good eyes or not," he said; "but as far as I know, no one has ever observed anything of the sort."

"Truly not?" she said, with a little laugh. "Do lovers never come up here on the tower, or even people who are tempted by the lofty point of view into some trifling madness? Only imagine how it would scandalize the good simpletons down there if, half squinting in the afternoon light, they should look up here and suddenly see such merry



misconduct. Then perhaps the magistrate would cause a bill to be posted: 'Kissing is officially forbidden under a penalty of three marks.'

He laughed in great embarrassment.

"I once ascended the dome of St. Peter's," she continued, "with a young Frenchman, who, as we were sitting in the great copper sphere, insisted that he positively must embrace me--that it was a venerable old custom. But I forbade it, just because up there one is perfectly safe from prying eyes. The danger of being seen might have attracted me. One must have spirit in foolish pranks, else they are nothing more than foolish. Do you not think so?"

He nodded violently. He was becoming more and more embarrassed and uncomfortable. Yet at the same time he realized this woman's great power over him.

"You are born for the high places of life," he stammered; "in your presence I feel so free and light that if I remained near you long I am sure I should have wings to carry me far beyond the conventionalities of life."

She glanced sidewise at him with a keen, penetrating look. "Well, then, why will you not let yourself be carried?"

He gazed perplexedly down into the depths below them. At this instant the clock at the Church of St. James struck twelve, and immediately the little watchman gave twelve strokes to the great, dark bell behind them.

The woman shrugged her shoulders and turned away. "Come," she said coldly; "it is late, and your wife will keep the soup waiting for you."

Then drawing her gown smoothly about her hips till it clung tight to her knees and ankles, she once more disappeared in the narrow opening, seeking the ladder rounds cautiously with her little feet. He came to her aid too late. When he arrived in the tower-room below she was already standing before the tailor's little mirror arranging her hair.

She seemed to have lost some of her friendliness, and he privately acknowledged that it was his fault. He reproached himself severely for having behaved like a blockhead, in neglecting to seize his good fortune by the forelock. Not that he intended any harm, any faithlessness whatever to his good wife! It was only meant for a merry pastime, like ransoming forfeits, and he had spoiled the game. What must she think of his Rothenburg stiffness! And would she trouble herself further about such a clumsy boor?

She bade a brief good-by to the tower watchman, and almost petrified him by pressing a thaler into his hand. On the way down neither spoke a word. And even in the broad, quiet *Herrengasse* he walked dumbly beside her; although a while before he would certainly have explained to her that the tablets which she saw on some of the houses announced where and how long this and that great monarch had lodged during the old-time imperial feasts. She divined that regret and vexation sealed his lips, and as his penitence pleased her very well, she began to chat in her old familiar way again.

As they came through the *Burghor*, out upon the narrow ledge covered with trees and flowers, which hundreds of years before had supported the real Rothenburg, she expressed a vivid pleasure in the old trees, with their still blossomless branches, and in the view at the right and left. Then he too became more cheerful, and pointed out to her the little water-tower down in the valley, which Heinrich Toppler had built, and in whose modest interior he had entertained King Wenzel. "And up there," he said, "where you see four small windows--the house wall forms a part of the town wall--there I live, and if you will do me the honor--"

"Not now," she said hastily; "I have dragged you around too long already. I shall go back to the inn alone, for I could now find my way through the town in clouds and darkness; and if I should lose my way, so much the better. *La recherche de l'inconnu*--that has always been my life purpose. You too go home now; I invite myself to your house this afternoon for a cup of coffee. But, understand, you are not to call for me.

Adieu!"

She gave him her hand, but after having scorned her lips, he could not persuade himself to kiss a mere glove. So, strangely agitated, he left her.

When Hans Doppler arrived at his house, he found that, instead of delaying dinner, Christel had saved his portion for him. She thought he would dine at the hotel with his ancient friend, and the children were hungry. She brought out the simple fare, now so distasteful to him, and then, seating herself opposite, prattled on in her calmly cheerful way; talking of many things which seemed thoroughly insipid and worthless to him to-day, after his glimpse of the "high places of life." All the children, except the oldest, who was now attending school, were playing in the garden, and were not in their best clothes.

"Listen, child," he said. "You might as well put another bow in your hair, and dress Lulu in her blue frock. The general's wife is coming to take coffee with us."

"Is this bow no longer good enough?" she replied, regarding herself in the mirror. "I made it only eight days ago. Why should we put on so much ceremony because an old Russian wishes to know us?"

"Hm!" said he. "I have already told you she is far from old--between thirty and forty--and very elegant, and since we have the things, why should we appear poorer than necessary? To be sure, we cannot change the old furniture, but you might at least put away those thin, brittle spoons, and have the new ones instead; and if you will not dress in state--"

He faltered, although she had not interrupted him by a word. But her look, seeking to read the depths of his heart, troubled him.

"Listen, Hans!" she said. "You amaze me. Hasn't everything seemed pretty and suitable to you until now? And didn't you yourself say that this old sofa, where we sat when our betrothal was celebrated, should never leave the house? And wasn't the little coffee-spoon good enough for you, when I put my first preserved cherries into your mouth with it? The new ones, you know very well, belong to Heinz, whose god-mother is to send him one each year until the dozen is complete. Ought I to borrow anything from our boy in order to make a display before a strange lady? My coffee is famous throughout the town. Mary shall run to the baker's for some fresh pastry; then, if we do not please your Russian, I am very sorry. For the rest, you appear to have studied her baptismal record more closely to-day. All the better, that she is no old woman. Tell me, has she children?"

"I believe not. She has not spoken of them."

"No matter. Her silver spoons may be more beautiful than mine. As for our children, they, I think, could compare with any general's children. I shall merely wash their hands a little, as they dig in their garden. But earth is not dirt."

Then she went out into the garden, while he, glad to be alone, pried about the room, rearranging and disposing things after his own mind in a more artistic fashion. Bringing a few aquarelles from the garret--which he had converted into an *atelier* by means of a half-covered north window--he hung them on the wall in place of the crayon portrait of some forgotten great-aunt. He put an easel in the corner near the little window, and placed a study in oils upon it. He heartily desired to remove a certain shelf loaded with glasses, cups, artificial flowers, and alabaster figures, and he would have had no objection to throwing it out of the window upon the wall; but he knew that this treasure house of tasteless keepsakes was too dear to his wife for her ever to forgive such an act of violence. At length he regarded his work with a sigh; the room did not look very much changed; he acknowledged that the stamp of provincial simplicity was too deeply impressed on his life to be erased by a mere wave of the hand.

But in truth this cage was too narrow for an aspiring artist. He must leave it at once, or the veil which had until now hidden all this pettiness from his eyes would soon envelop him completely.

Just then Christel returned; and, casting a wondering glance at the easel and the new pictures, she smiled slightly, but said not a word. After spreading a pretty coffee-cloth on the table, she took from the shelf several cups--her best, though long out of fashion both in shape and decoration; then, between the two plates which the maid had filled with cakes, she placed her principal piece of silver, a small sugar-bowl bearing on its lid a swan with outspread wings. Hans, meanwhile, sat at the window, apparently absorbed in a book. The little woman evinced no surprise at his seeming lack of interest in the preparations, though she laughed softly to herself now and then. Her pretty mouth looked very bewitching when she smiled, but Hans had no eyes to see this, and she soon left him alone again.

Thus a short hour glided by, and as he heard her working outside in the kitchen and talking with the servant, her calm, soft voice, formerly so pleasing to him, pained him; he himself did not know why. Suddenly he heard the door-bell ring, and, starting up, he rushed out into the hall. There he encountered Christel.

"Must you actually receive her on the threshold like a princess?" she asked calmly. "We are not such extremely humble people."

"You are right," he said, somewhat confused. "I only wished to see if you were there."

She preceded him into the room. Immediately afterward the stranger entered. Christel met her with graceful cordiality; the young artist merely bowed in silence. The lady almost ignored him, and devoted herself exclusively to the young wife. Christel invited her to sit beside her on the stiff little sofa, and thanked her for having found time during her short stay to visit them.

"Our little old house is not one of the noteworthy sights of Rothenburg," she said. "We have no such beautiful wainscoting as in the hall of the Weissbacher house; and, although everything is old, it is not therefore beautiful. To be sure, it pleases me, because I have known it from childhood, and have seen people whom I loved sitting on all those ugly chairs. But my husband," and she glanced roguishly at him, "would look on without a pang, if all our furniture went to the second-hand dealer, or was thrust into the stove. The best that we have is free to all, and is there outside of the window. You must see our view, my lady. Then you will find it comprehensible, that even an artist can be contented with this old nest--but who knows for how long!"

Once more she glanced mischievously at Hans, who was pushing back the table in order to show the view to their guest. But the lady remained seated, saying that she had studied the Tauber valley thoroughly from the castle, and was now here solely on Christel's account. She had evidently intended to be very gracious and affable, and to encourage the shy young wife in every way; but when she realized that there was no need of this, her own manner became somewhat constrained. She was unusually quiet, and listened in silence to Christel's ingenuous prattle and the husband's occasional comments. The maid brought the coffee, and Christel served her guest without any ado. Meanwhile, she observed, the stranger's face closely, and seemed to become more and more confident and cheerful in consequence. Then she inquired about the lady's journey, about her husband; and asked if she had any children. As the stranger hastily answered this in the negative, the subject was dropped. Soon afterwards Christel's three oldest children rushed upstairs into the room; the larger boy held his younger sister, just two years old, in his arms; all four looked pretty and rosy, and were only a trifle abashed when their mother bade them shake hands with the stranger. The latter regarded them through her lorgnette with apparent good-will, but evidently did not know what to say to them. So, with a glance at the shabby little piano standing against the wall, she at once asked if Christel played.

She had played as a girl. Now she had too many household duties, and opened the old instrument only occasionally to accompany her children in a song.

Of course the guest desired to hear one of these family concerts, and, although the father remarked that it would be a very moderate pleasure, the young wife was soon persuaded. Gently lifting the youngest child from her lap, she placed it in the sofa corner. Then, seating herself at the piano, she struck several chords with an unpractised but musical hand, and played the melody of the song "*In einem kühlen Grunde*." The two boys and little Lulu came softly behind her, and began to sing somewhat shyly. But by the second stanza the young voices sounded fresh and courageous; and the mother sang with them, in a voice whose charming quaintness lent peculiar strength and meaning to the tender love-song.

Hans, sitting by the window, cast furtive glances at the stranger, whose face assumed a more and more bitter and unhappy expression, the longer she listened. When the song was finished, she did not speak. Christel arose and whispered something to the children, whereupon, after a courteous bow, they left the room. Then she took the youngest, which had fallen asleep, and carried it out to the maid. When she reentered, the two were still sitting in silent absorption.

"Will you not show your friend the *atelier*?" she asked brightly. "There is more to be seen there than down here."

He at once stood up, and the stranger also arose. "You do not know how well you sing!" she said, offering her hand to Christel. "Music always makes me sad; not the great roaring operas and concerts, but a pure, sympathetic human voice. And now let us go to this work-room of art."

He conducted her up a small, dark staircase, and opened the door of the so-called *atelier*. The whitewashed walls of the spacious garret were covered with sketches and studies from his academic years; close to the window stood the table where he painted his water-colors, and on a couple of easels were two oil paintings, one completed and one but just commenced, naturally views of Rothenburg. But she appeared to take little interest in these works to-day; for she spoke only occasionally of some study, and soon turned to the window, whence one could look far beyond the soft, green slopes, down the Tauber, where, in the slightly misty spring air, a little town lifted its ancient tower among the tall, blossomless trees.

"There is nothing remarkable about those colors and outlines," he said, "but as a frame for the whole picture they are not bad. How different it must be to stand on the Capitol and see the beautiful, classic lines of the Alban mountain beyond the Forum and the imperial palaces! To be sure, I know it only from pictures!" he concluded with a sigh.

"You will certainly see the reality sometime; that and still more beautiful things. Meanwhile, this too is not to be despised, each in its place."

Then she spoke of other things. But he was contented because she had thus referred to his southern trip, for the first time during the whole day. He was reflecting how to continue this theme which she had started, when she turned from the window and asked him to take her downstairs again. Before departing, she had a few letters to write, since she would find more time for them here than in Würzburg. When did the evening train leave?

"At eight o'clock," he replied.

"Good. We shall see each other once more at the station? Now I must go home."

When they came down into the house, Christel was no longer there; the mistress was in the garden, said the maid, turning red and refusing what the stranger tried to force into her hand. Christel met them in the garden, her hands full of hyacinths and spring flowers, which she had just cut and made into a simple nosegay.

"You must be contented with these," she said, "for as yet I cannot offer you any of my roses, of which I am very proud. But I myself have raised these yellow hyacinths with the greenish calyxes, and more beautiful ones are not easily found. I have a skilful hand

with children and flowers--that is my only talent."

The stranger accepted the nosegay and embraced the giver, kissing her cheek. She then walked about the garden, which was surrounded with high walls, and, at this time of the year, had but little sunlight. A thick ivy covered the black walls, clothing them with a dusky green tapestry, against which the young shoots of the fruit-trees, and the beds of primroses, crocuses, and hyacinths stood out in pleasing contrast. The children were playing in one corner, and labored on in their own irregular little garden without noticing the visitor.

"I must now say farewell," said the stranger. "Unfortunately, I cannot invite you to return my visit in my so-called home. In our castle it is not so green and cheerful as here; and I have never found out whether I have a skilful hand with children and flowers. But I thank you for these beautiful hours. I shall never forget them; they have both pleased and pained me as nothing has done for a long time. Adieu!"

She embraced Christel again, and this time kissed her mouth. Then, nodding to the young husband with a scarcely audible "We meet again!" she quickly left the garden through the old arched gateway.

It was only half-past seven, and the sun had scarcely set, when the omnibus of the "Golden Stag" rolled through the eastern town-gate, and soon afterward halted at the little station. But before the porter could open the carriage-door, a young man who wore a black artist's cap, and who had been waiting there for some time, sprang forward and assisted the lady out first, then the Tartar maid, laden with the usual boxes and bundles.

He himself carried a large sketch-book under his arm, and over his shoulder a light overcoat from whose pocket a thick packet protruded. His face was somewhat flushed; his eyes were restless and excited. He inquired if the tickets had been purchased; then hastened to the office. Returning quickly, he gave two tickets to his patroness; a third he placed in his own pocket.

"You travel with us?" asked the stranger, suddenly standing still, while Sascha carried her baggage to the waiting-room.

He merely nodded, looking at her with astonishment and some agitation.

"Where are you going? You returned only yesterday."

"Where? I hope to learn that from you, my lady."

She regarded him for a moment as if he were a madman.

"Did you not urge it upon me," he commenced with a beating heart, "that I owed it to myself to see a little of the world before settling down forever in this narrow place? And were you not kind enough to desire me as your travelling companion, that I might sketch scenes that especially pleased you? I have given it mature consideration, and find that you are right; that I have no time to lose if I wish to take up my neglected life-plan once more; and so I am here at your service."

She still remained silent, but looked away from him into the darkening sky, where Venus, softly splendid, was just rising.

"Does your wife know of this decision, and does she agree to it?"

"My wife?--I merely told her I wished to bid you good-by at the station. I mean to telegraph her from Steinach that she need not expect me immediately, that I am going on a little sketching-trip. I shall write more to her from Würzburg, and explain my reasons for stealing away from her thus. A formal parting would have pained us both unnecessarily; and, God willing, we shall see each other again in a year or so. She is a very intelligent woman, much quicker and surer than I in all determinations, and she

loves me too well not to wish for my good. I have considered all this during the past twenty-four hours. Have you changed your mind in the mean time? I have brought only the most necessary things with me," he continued hesitatingly--"I did not wish to cause any delay. I am sufficiently provided with money; I shall buy a trunk on the road--but why do you look at me so strangely, my lady?"

"Dear friend," she said gently, "do you know that if I were not wiser than you, you would now commit an act of actual madness, in fact, a crime against yourself and your life's happiness?"

"For heaven's sake, my lady--"

"Be still! Do not speak a word, but listen to me. Only first answer me a little question honestly and frankly; is it not true that you are a little in love with me?"

"My lady!" he stammered, in extreme embarrassment. He let his sketch-book fall, stooped for it, and occupied a long time in picking it up and dusting it.

"You are right," she said, without smiling; "it was an artful question, and you need not answer it, for I know the truth already. Of course I am not angry with you for it, and you are not the first. It has come to me often enough when I have had less reason to be vain of it. But what have you imagined as the result?"

He was silent. She, glancing sidewise at him, amused herself a little with the spectacle of his helpless confusion.

"I will tell you," she continued; "it seems to you very romantic to allow yourself to be somewhat carried away, and to perform a little travel-romance in easy chapters, with pretty Italian landscapes for illustrations. To me also--I confess it--you are pleasing enough for me to find your company really desirable, as I am a lonely, discontented, and still unresigned woman. Indeed, that you may know it--for I shall claim no virtue which I do not possess--I have given myself some trouble--very little was needed--to turn your head. In fact, you seemed to me too good for a petty, provincial life in dressing-gown and slippers by the side of a worthy little goose such as I imagined your wife to be. I even represented to myself that I had a sort of mission to fulfil in saving an artistic soul from the curse of narrowness, or however you wish to express it. But I have become terribly ashamed."

"My wife--" he said.

"Do not speak of her!" she exclaimed passionately. "Do you know that you are unworthy of her? that, from the way in which you spoke of her, I expected to see a good, respectable, uninteresting creature? and instead all your famous Rothenburg has nothing to show more charming than this little woman! And you would forsake her to run after an utter stranger? Do not take it unkindly of me; you have been on the point of becoming a perfect fool, and I am not vain enough to find any particular excuse for mildness in the fact that you are infatuated with me."

Her voice sounded hard and shrill, and he perceived that she was speaking with painful effort. Then he strove to collect himself; seizing her hand, and pressing it slightly in his own, he said:

"I thank you, my lady, for all the kind and unkind words you have just said to me. I will not be less frank than you; yes, you have turned my head, truly not in the ordinary way, but because you gave me a glimpse of the ideals of life and art which I renounced so early to seek happiness in a modest, middle station. I have indeed found it, and am really not so blind and ungrateful as to think it worthless. But ought not a man to strive for the highest things? Ought he to be contented with a Rothenburg happiness--you yourself called it so--and especially if he devotes himself to art, should he not seek the unknown--"

"To strive for the highest," she interrupted him--"the unknown? Praise your fate that it has never made those beautiful words real to you. They are will-o'-the-wisps which

lead one astray into pits and swamps. Shall I tell you a story? There was once a beautiful young girl, the daughter of a humble serf; and a young man, the tutor at the great house, was in love with her; he resembled you a little, only his hair and beard were less artistic. He wished to marry the girl, and as he had a little property, it would have been a very good match. But the proud thing aspired to the 'highest,' and although as yet she knew no French, she had even then an inclination towards the *recherche de l'inconnu*. Then a general came to the estate, and he too found the girl strikingly pretty, paid court to her, and finally asked her to marry him. Well, there was the 'highest' of which she had dreamt, and the 'unknown' also, as the great world of St. Petersburg would be open to her. And so she forsook her humble suitor and became a general's wife; and when she saw the 'highest' by daylight it was mean and low; and when she learned to know the 'unknown' it was but insipid commonplaceness. Probably her heart would not have been filled with happiness beside a simple *magister*; but yet she would not have been quite so miserable nor made others so unhappy. Of course there were many who wished to help her atone for her error, and one of them might have succeeded. It was a pity that the general was such a sure hand with a pistol, and was not too proud to give a personal lesson to one of his young officers, thus striking the poor fellow out of the ranks of the living. But the woman, the fool--since then she has become restless, and seeks the 'unknown' throughout the world, or--if she feels herself in the mood for self-deception--the ideal. Do you know that, so far, she has found nothing more ideal than the quiet, wise, warm glance of your little wife, the peace of your old-fashioned home, and that skilful hand with children and flowers, which charms both into such fresh colors?

"So! Now I have nothing more to say to you. If you still believe that you cannot be happy without copying the old stones of the castle of St. Angelo instead of the old stones of the white tower, and without venturing upon grand and lofty themes, although you have scarcely the stuff for a Raphael, then come with me. The way is free, and perhaps long enough for my extremely unselfish mood to pass away once more. But if you are wise, you will postpone your art journey until the children are old enough to be left in another's charge for a few months. Then take Christel on your arm, and cross the Alps with her; and, I promise you, even if she is only a Rothenburg child, you could present her at Monte Pincio without being ashamed of her. Only beware that you yourself do not undervalue her. Always let her share your life and ambitions; for we are what you make of us, if we are good; otherwise--we are certainly what we make of ourselves, but neither good nor happy. Enough of this! Adieu, and remember me to Christel. And when your work on Rothenburg is published, send it to me at Rome, under the address of the Russian embassy. I subscribe for three copies. I will spread the fame of the German Pompeii."

She gave him her hand, which he pressed to his lips with intense feeling. Then, drawing her veil over her face, she hurried to the train, which was standing ready for departure. When she was seated in the *coupé* she nodded to him once more. The little engine whistled, and the black serpent glided out on the bare rails. But the stranger drew back into her dark corner, and for a long time stared before her like a statue. Suddenly opening one of her Russian leather satchels, she rummaged around in it, and finally drew out a case. "There, take it," she said in Russian to her maid. "You have always admired this bracelet so much, Sascha, I will give it to you. I am moved to generosity. I wish it never cost me more than such a shining toy."

Sascha fell on her knees before her, and kissed her hand. Then, playing with the gift, she withdrew to her corner. She believed she heard her mistress crying softly under her veil, but did not dare ask why.

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About this time Hans Doppler returned to his little wife. The children were already asleep. He was strangely softened and moved to tenderness. Again and again he stroked her wavy, brown hair, which she arranged so prettily over her ears. He gave her the stranger's last greeting without telling her anything more about the parting. Yet several times, as they were sitting together at their evening meal, he attempted to begin a full confession. At length he said:

"Do you know, my darling, that the general's wife actually planned to take me with her on an art journey through Sicily and Italy? What would you have said to that?"

"Well, Hans," she replied, "I would not have restrained you, if it had really been your wish. It is true, I do not know how I could have stood it. I can no longer imagine my life without you. But if your happiness had depended on it--"

"My happiness? That depends only on you!" protested the crafty fellow, endeavoring to conceal a blush. "You should have heard the general's wife comparing my unworthiness and your superiority. But you did you not become a little jealous?"

"Of whom? Of the old Russian?"

"Old? With that hair and complexion!"

"Oh, you blind Hans!" she cried, laughing, as she pulled his hair; "then you did not see that this dangerous Muscovite was powdered over and over, and had a thick false braid? But even if everything were all right about her, do you believe I would not trust myself to hold my own with her? And then the Tiber may be a perfectly beautiful river but it is certainly not to be compared with the Tauber!"

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