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THROUGH NIGHT TO LIGHT

A NOVEL

BY

FRIEDRICH SPIELHAGEN

FROM THE GERMAN

BY
PROF. SCHELE DE VERE

Author's Edition

"Ex fumo dare lucem cogitat."

HORACE

REVISED EDITION

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THROUGH NIGHT TO LIGHT.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

The sun hung glaring red near the horizon. In the valleys of the mountain ranges dark-blue shadows were gathering, while high on the forest-crowned tops the warm evening light was still aglow. The trees were gorgeous in their gay autumn livery, but in this part of the mountain dark forests of sombre evergreens covered the narrow ravines up and down, and all the swelling heights.

On the turnpike which led in manifold windings towards the main ridge of the mountains, and was lined on both sides with unbroken rows of dwarf fruit-trees, an old-fashioned carriage was slowly making its way. It was one of those broad but clumsy vehicles, drawn by two raw-boned, broken-kneed horses, and carefully provided with a huge drag-chain, which are hired in the cities for a few days' excursion into the mountains. The horses lagged, with drooping heads, heavily in their harness, and labored painfully step by step up the hill, for the road was steep and the carriage heavy. The driver encouraged them from time to time with a friendly Gee, bay! up, sorrel! as he walked slowly by their side, and the two gentlemen who had employed him for some days had gotten out at the foot of the mountain and were leisurely following at some distance behind him.

They were a couple of young men, evidently belonging to the best classes of society, that is, to the middle classes, in which intelligence and culture are nowadays almost exclusively found. They were both tall and showed the slight build and the elasticity belonging to their years. One, the smaller one, whose mouth and cheeks were nearly hid under a close, deep-black beard, would probably have been thought the more interesting of the two, as his finely-cut features, full of intelligence, were sure to please the more careful observer, and yet he was neither as tall nor as handsome as his companion, who at once attracted the eyes of all fair maidens and matrons in the towns and villages through which they had passed.

The two young men had for a time walked on in silence, separated as they were by the whole breadth of the turnpike, which was here covered with small broken stones, to the despair of horses and foot-passengers. Now, when they had passed the bad places, they approached each other again, and the one with the black beard put his hand in a kindly manner on the other's shoulder and said affectionately: "*Eh bien*, Oswald, why so silent?"

"I return your question," replied the latter, turning his beautiful, earnest eyes towards his companion.

"I enjoy in full draughts the glory of this evening's landscape," said Doctor Braun; "and enjoyment, you know, is silent, because the very pleasure is business enough, and leaves us no leisure for talking. But tell me, is it not a wonderful country, this Thuringia? Is it not worthy to be the heart of Germany, and thus the heart of the heart of our continent, in fact of the inhabited globe? Stop a moment where you are; we have just here a view which would be unique if there

were not thousands and thousands like it in these lovely mountains. There is the valley, which we have just left! you can now follow easily the meandering course of the willow-fringed brook through the meadows. There is the village, a dirty place when seen near by, but now how beautiful it is, half veiled by its gay cloak of trees, and the blue columns of smoke, which rise straight up from the chimneys, and gradually dissolve on the sides of the mountains into blue, transparent clouds. And now these beautiful heights with their evergreens! how they rise one behind the other with their deep coloring. And now, here to our left, the glimpse of the blue mountains which we crossed this morning. And, above all, this marvellously fair sky, clear and deep and unfathomable, like the eye of some one we love. Oh, there is something divine in these outlines and these lights. They are surely intended to be more than a mere pleasure for the eye, or even a study for the painter: they are meant to comfort us and to admonish us. A glance at the enchanting face of our mother nature puts our wild hearts to sleep, makes us forget the eccentric character of our so-called culture, brings us back to the first harmony of the soul, and awakens and revives in us the conviction that everything true, beautiful, and noble, is infinitely simple, and that the well of contentment gushes forth at the bidding of every one who seeks it with a pure heart."

While Doctor Braun had spoken these words in his usual animated and impressive manner, Oswald had looked with sad eyes into the far distance. Now, when his companion ceased, he said--an ironical smile playing around his lips--

"Are you quite sure of that? And suppose it were so, who will blame the unfortunate man whose heart is not pure, who is cursed with blindness, and never sees the well of contentment? We shall meet one of these unfortunate men to-night. If you will open his closed eyes and restore to him the purity of his heart, I will worship you as a god."

Doctor Braun seemed to be much affected by these words, which had towards the end assumed a passionate tone of bitterness. He was silent for a few moments while they ascended the mountain, and then he said,

"I thought the journey would have calmed you and made you more cheerful, Oswald. I begin to doubt my professional skill when I see that the old dreams are as powerful as ever in you. You seemed to be almost cured of the fatal desire to sit down, like Heine's young man, by the sea coast, and to ask the restless waves for an answer to the painful old riddles of life, and now----"

"Now I am once more bored with the old complaint! No, Franz, I will not bring disgrace upon your mental cure and try to find the world as beautiful and reasonable as you do. That was only a recollection of the past. Is it not natural, is it not quite intelligible, that it should turn up just now, when we approach the end of our pilgrimage, and I am about once more to meet face to face the noble, unfortunate man to whom I owe so much, and that after an interval during which so much, so very much, has changed for him and for myself! I have followed your advice faithfully, as well as I could. I have let the past bury the past; I have practised industriously the art of forgetting, and I have sent the very shadows of the departed back to Hades, when they became troublesome. But here comes the form of a living man who is dead, of a dead man who still lives, and I find neither in my mind nor in my heart the magic words which will lay this spirit, whom I reverence, whom I mourn with tears, like the others."

"Then let us turn back," said Doctor Braun, with great vivacity. "If you do not feel the strength in you to maintain the position which you have yourself chosen, against every objection and every authority, it would be madness to expose yourself to such danger. Let us turn back; it is time yet."

"No," said Oswald, "that would be both cowardly and foolish. We do not overcome danger by avoiding it. I must see Berger and speak to him. This interview must be the test of the problem that has occupied us these four weeks. Either I recover myself from my own insanity by seeing this madman, or----"

"There is no *or*," cried Franz. "Really, when I hear you talk so, Oswald, I have a great mind to let you starve and thirst till you come again to your senses, or consent to do honor to reason. You are an enigmatical man, a thoroughly problematic character. There are incongruities in your character which I have not yet learnt to explain, in spite of our long intimacy. Natural disposition and education, which jointly make the man, must in your case have been most strangely intermingled. I have so far always avoided speaking of your early youth, because I felt a natural reluctance to inquire after what you evidently did not care to reveal. But my friendship for you is greater than such considerations, which are after all of little account between such intimate friends as we are. What do you say, Oswald, while the sun is gloriously setting behind those mountains, and our poor horses are painfully dragging themselves up the hill, you might tell me something about your early years--much or little, as you are disposed. Will you do it?"

"Willingly," replied Oswald. "I also have been thinking much of my youth in these last days. If one is engaged in settling his affairs, as I am now doing, at a certain epoch of one's life, it is almost indispensable to trace that life back to the beginning. It is true you are the first man, and perhaps the only one, whom I could permit to look into those dark portions of my existence; but I will do it."

"I shall be all the more attentive," replied Doctor Braun.

CHAPTER II.

"To begin at the beginning," said Oswald, after a pause, during which he seemed to have collected his thoughts, "I was born in the capital. My father was a teacher of languages, my mother the daughter of a mechanic. You see, therefore, that I have no claims to nobility, and that my hatred against the nobles is the very natural and legitimate hatred of the plebeian against the patrician, of the Pariah against the Brahmin.

"I have never learnt why my father left the capital, and shortly after my birth--I was, and remained, the only child of my parents--he went to live in the little Pomeranian port W----. It is true I never knew much of the history of my parents and of all that happened before my birth. I do not even know whether I have any relations on the father's or the mother's side. If there are any, I have never made their acquaintance.

"My mother also I only recollect dimly, after the manner of a person whom we have seen in a dream. But even now I sometimes dream of a fair young lady, with great, sweet blue eyes. She says in a soft tone some words which I do not understand, but which sound like the music of heaven, and always move me to tears even in my sleep. I know that this lovely creature of my dreams is my mother, for she never changes. She died before I had ended my fourth year.

"If ever man succeeded in replacing a mother to an orphaned, motherless child, my father solved that problem. When I was a little child, he sang and talked me to sleep; when I was sick, he watched day and night by the side of my little bed; he sat by me in the garret window and blew alternately with me bright soap-bubbles from a little clay pipe into the air; he taught me the alphabet and to make ships from the bark of trees; he made me learn the first Latin words, and taught me to swim and to skate; he gave me the first lessons in Greek, and in pistol-shooting and fencing. I had no other friend but him, until I went to the University."

"He was a strange, unfathomable man, even so far as his outer appearance was concerned. Imagine a figure of dwarfish size, but exceedingly well proportioned, very agile and active, dressed in winter and summer, early and late, invariably in a worn-out black dress-coat, black shorts, black stockings, and shoes with large buckles, walking in sunshine or rain, always hat in hand, through the streets of the city. Imagine this figure ending in a disproportionately large head, with a well-set brow, bald on the temples, beneath which a pair of sharp eyes sent out flashes of lightning, and a face which, though fine and sharp of outline, either had never known how to laugh or forgotten how to do it for long, long years. This was the figure of my father, the Old Candidate, as he was called in W---- by everybody, even the boys in the street, with whom I had many a battle royal, when they dared to laugh at the old gentleman's appearance.

"The nickname, besides, had no application to my father, if I except the word Old. He had never in his life been a candidate for any office, clerical or political, as far as I know, and, in spite of his enormous erudition, he would not have been fit for any office, for his eccentricity and odd disposition would have made it impossible for him to fulfil his duties.

"In later years I have often and often tried in vain to find out what bitter experience of life, what sad misfortunes, could have changed my father into such an odd character. He was a hypochondriac and a misanthrope at once, who avoided most carefully every contact with the world, and who, therefore, was as carefully let alone by everybody else. Those who claimed to be men of refinement and religious convictions called him a cynic because he had emancipated himself from all social obligations; and an atheist, because he never appeared at church. The superstitious rabble crossed themselves when they saw him, as if he were standing in nearer relations to the Evil One than was proper for a good Christian. If he had lived two hundred years sooner, they would no doubt have burnt him as a sorcerer or a magician.

"I must confess, to be candid, that the refined and the unrefined rabble were not so far amiss when they attributed to my father ideas and notions which are not ordinarily met with in the brains of the majority. He had a supreme contempt for all faith founded merely upon authority, because he felt himself fettered by it in the freedom of his existence; and an intense hatred for all worldly tyranny, because it prevented him from acting freely. He openly declared a republic to be the only form of government under which a man who had the right *point d'honneur* could live happily. Every prerogative granted to one, to a few, or to the many, was to him an injustice, which could only be explained by the insolence of the ruler and the cowardice of the ruled. He could see no difference in the end between a flock of sheep driven to the slaughter-house by a stupid servant and a savage dog, and a people who allowed themselves to be oppressed and ill-treated by a proportionately small number of men. The men, he said, only managed to cover their disgrace with bright-colored garments, while the sheep were not able to do the same.

"His special hatred, however, was given to the nobility. As soon as he happened to speak of their caste, he had a whole dictionary of opprobrious epithets at his command. He never entered the house of a nobleman; and whenever young men of noble birth proposed to take lessons from him, he immediately refused. Once, as we were firing at a target--a practice in which he excelled--he told me that in his youth he had hoped thus to engage himself against a nobleman who had mortally offended him. Unfortunately the man had died before he could carry out his plan. That is the only hint which I ever received as to my father's former life.

"And thus I grew up, exclusively communing with this strange man. The relations between us were as extraordinary as he himself. Although my father did more for me than generally both parents jointly do for their child, and although he apparently lived and suffered only for my sake, I still do not think he really loved me. He was a purely spiritual man. Either his heart had received, at some time or other, a fatal blow from which it had never recovered, or his sentiments had all evaporated into mere notions under the influence of his scepticism. Whatever he did, he did from a sense of duty, from a conviction that it was right; for, as he said himself, Justice is higher than Love; it does all that Love does and a great deal more.

"More, and yet not quite so much," interrupted Franz, "What we do from affection for those we love, we ought to do for others from a sense of justice; that is, from a conviction that the interests of all men are represented in each. Love and Justice stand in the same relation to each other as individual and species. One can not exist without the other, for they need each other mutually. Justice can never teach us all the thousand little acts of tenderness which we lavish upon those we love, as individual love does not aid us any longer when we are called upon to help a brotherhood, a nation, or all mankind."

"You may be right," replied Oswald, "and what you say renders it easier for me to make a confession which I was about to make. I honored my father deeply, but I did not love him; on the contrary, I often experienced, as I only felt clearly in later years, a fear approaching repugnance, when I came in closer contact with the strange man. Now I hardly wonder at it, since I have found out that nature probably never produced two beings more radically different than my father and myself. We were as unlike in body as in mind and in inclination. I loved already, as a boy, with perfect passion, everything brilliant and splendid, and whatever is beautiful in nature and the world of men. I was enthusiastically fond of my schoolmates, who rejoiced in the youthful ornaments of golden locks, red cheeks, and bright eyes. I loved to visit in houses where everything was elegant and in style, after the manner of those days. I attached much importance to my dress, and liked to hear it when women called me a handsome boy.

"You may imagine how little a young fellow with such wants and such inclinations must have suited, as a companion, a misanthropic hypochondriac, whose manner of life he was nevertheless forced to share to a certain degree. For although my father allowed me a certain amount of liberty, which was hardly in keeping with his general views, and although he indulged me in my love of fine clothes and the comforts of life to a degree which I have never been able to comprehend, I knew nevertheless that he was deeply offended by this fondness of mine for a world which he despised. I tried, therefore, very hard, to wean myself from such a life, and succeeded all the more readily in my efforts, as I soon discovered in the solitude, which was at first intensely hateful to me, a source which changes the most desolate desert into a blooming paradise--the Castalian spring of poetry.

"We lived in a small house built against and upon the city wall. The solitary small window from which my room received its light was pierced in the thick wall, so that the whole looked very much more like a prison than anything else; and yet, what marvellously blessed hours I have spent in that room! From my window I had an unlimited view over the wall and the ramparts of the city--upon smooth ponds, lined with beautiful copses of trees--upon rich meadows, with willows scattered over them here and there, far out to the sea, which glittered like a dark-blue ribbon through the green woods.

"Here, at this window, I used to sit on summer evenings, when the sun was setting in brilliant splendor, my heart full to overflowing of chaotic sentiments, and my head weaving thoughts as fair and bright, and, alas! as perishable as soap bubbles! I remember I often wrote verses in bright summer days and in dark autumn evenings, afterwards, while I was sitting in deep meditation over my books, to remind me of the happy days then, which had dropped one by one from the cup of time, bright and brilliant, into the ocean of eternity.

"But why should I any longer attempt to describe to you these relations to my father, which appear only the more enigmatical to me the more clearly I desire to present them to you. If I ever had felt, as a child, true, hearty love for my father, it grew less and less as I became older and more independent. I had to hide in my heart all the feelings, all the tenderness, which we ordinarily lavish upon our mother and brothers and sisters and friends, for I could not feel any confidence in him who, as matters happened to stand, ought to have stood me in place of all of them. The constant intercourse with a mind so sombre and sceptical gave to my mind a coloring which was little in harmony with my sanguine and passionate disposition. I was an Epicurean sitting at the feet of a Stoic, a Sybarite on terms of intimacy with a Cynic philosopher. My exuberant fancy dreamed of the most magnificent worlds, which my cool judgment destroyed pitilessly; I exhausted myself in subtle devices, while my hot blood was filling my heart to overflowing; I sat in my cell and studied dusty old parchments, while my adventurous mind was longing for the marvels of the East and for lofty deeds of chivalry.

"Thus matters continued till I went to the University, when I was nineteen years old. I parted without grief from my father. What he felt at the parting I cannot tell. He spoke to me, when I said good-by, like a philosopher who dismisses his pupil, and recalled to my mind once more all the great principles of his harsh worldly wisdom. The letters which he wrote to me at regular intervals were in the same tone. There were not many of them; for about six months after I had left him I received a letter from the authorities of my native place, in which they dryly informed me of the death of my father. He had left me a little property, the fruit of his long and painful saving; it was just enough to support me in a modest way during my university course, and perhaps some little time beyond that. No will had been found; nor had there been any papers, letters, diaries, or anything which might have possibly given me a clue to the former history of my parents.

"Thus I was standing alone in the world--a young man in years, with the weary mind of an old man. I was far too old for my fellow-students, who looked to me like children at play; and yet I was far too young and inexperienced myself to resist the temptations of a large city, or to wander about in such a Babel without ever and anon losing my way. How could a young man, in whom the current of full youthful life had been so long artificially dammed up, avoid going astray? I became the hero of many an intrigue, of which I was in my heart thoroughly ashamed, as I ought to have been. I was spoilt by the women, and became the innocent victim of many a heartless coquette. I gathered much experience without growing any wiser--the worst thing that can befall a man. And the most remarkable of it all was that I loathed in my heart the enjoyments to which I gave myself up; that my heart yearned after true love at the very times when I wasted it upon women unworthy of such a gift; and that I cherished the most extraordinary plans for the future, while I squandered my strength in senseless amusements.

"A friend, who in those days had some influence over me, rescued me from the whirlpool in which I would have perished sooner or later. He advised me to go to Grunwald. I followed his advice.

"From that moment you know my life, at least in its outlines. You know that I became there acquainted with the unfortunate man whom we are about to visit. You will now also be able to understand why it was utterly impossible for me to resist the charm of Berger's extraordinary character, and how I entangled myself by my intercourse with him only more and more deeply in the thorns and briars of internal conflicts, which finally made my heart bleed to death.

"Berger wished me to go to Grenwitz and to take there a position in a noble family, which suited me about as well as a dove-cote suits a hawk. You have followed me through the great periods of my life there with an observant eye, and at the same time as a philosopher and as a friend. I do not know--and I do not want to know--how much you have seen, how much you have understood, and what may have remained an unexplained mystery for you. A part of these events I dare not touch upon; another part I am in duty bound to leave untouched. When the catastrophe came which you had anticipated, and the frivolous world in which I was living, crushed me--then you stood by me as a friend; you snatched me out of the confusion, and you laid upon yourself a burden which has no doubt made you sigh more than once since. But no! that cannot be! You are as clever as you are wise, and as wise as you are kind. Tell me, Franz, what Odysseus was your father, what Penelope bore you, that Pallas Athene, goddess of wisdom, should always so manifestly have held you under her gracious protection?"

"I believe everything in my life has happened in the most ordinary way," said Franz, laughing. "I pray you will not think I escaped altogether from either Scylla or Charybdis! I have been, like yourself, on the point of despair. What has saved me is the conviction that the world is, after all, but a Cosmos, in which everybody, be he what he may, has to fill his modest place--a conviction which came to me first very dimly, then more and more clearly and distinctly, and finally filled my heart with triumphant certainty. This idea has given me that cheerful calmness without which life would in the end become unbearable. I said to myself: This world, of which you know after all but very little, is such an old, solid, and well-finished edifice that you need not give up the plan on which it was built, even if you should not comprehend it in all its details. This race of ours, which maybe is intended for as many millions of years as we now know thousands, is such a marvellous and unfathomable problem of creative power that you will never come to an end studying it, if you were to live ever so long. Goethe tells us that no man ever possessed art, and I add, no one ever possessed philosophy.

"Starting from this conviction, I determined to find a sense and a meaning in life, and I cannot help saying that my efforts have been crowned with some success. Mistrusting even as a school-boy the results to be obtained from mere speculation, I chose a science which reveals the processes of our soul, as it were, *ad oculos*--Medicine. I chose it, moreover, because in its practice it brings us advantageously into intimate contact with other men, from whom we hold but too generally aloof--whatever may be said in praise of solitude. He who has once understood the solidarity of all human interests--that fundamental principle of all moral and political wisdom--knows also that his individual existence is but a drop in the vast stream, and that such a drop has no right to claim absolute independence. It would be different if men fell like ripe fruit from the trees. But we are brought into this world through the agony of a mother, in order to be the most helpless of all created beings, entirely dependent on the faithful care of parents; we are then allowed to grow up, if fate favors us, amid brothers and sisters, in order not only to share with them all the joys of life, but also to obtain them by their assistance; and, even later, we cannot enjoy any true pleasure, any delight of our heart, except through others and with others.

All this teaches us that we are true children of men, the offspring of this earth, with the right and the duty to work out our life here below upon our inheritance side by side with other children of men, our brethren, who have the same rights, and of course also the same duties, as we ourselves.

"Thus you see, Oswald, the world becomes a Cosmos, and we cease to be mere atoms whirling about in the infinite space without a reasonable government, while nobody knows whence we come and whither we go. The great fault of your life, which it is true you could hardly avoid with such an experience as you had in your young days, is that you have always lived for yourself only and never truly for others. Thus you have drifted into a false position, in which you could not be useful to the world, and the world could not be useful to you. Now, all this will be different. From friendship for me, you have made the sacrifice of taking a step which I know well--and better now than before--must be very painful to your whole nature. But I am convinced you will bless this step hereafter. The trial year which you mean to devote to the college at Grunwald will be in more senses than one a trial year for you. You will see whether you can obtain the hardest of all victories, the victory over yourself--over your own arbitrary, sovereign will. I wish you were, like myself, engaged to some good, sensible girl. That would compel you to work and compel you to struggle, if not for your own interest, at least for the sake of her who is dearer to you--ten thousand times dearer to you--than your own life, and you would see how easy the battle, how easy the victory would be to you."

Oswald made no reply. He felt convinced of the truth of what his companion said, but at the same time he felt painfully ashamed. For the face of truth is stern, and makes him tremble who does not worship it at the cost of every feeling of his own.

Thus they walked side by side in deep silence, until they reached the top of the mountain, where the carriage was waiting. They got in again, and now they rolled in a quick trot down hill towards the little town which was lying at their feet in the bosom of a secluded valley, surrounded on all sides by well-wooded hills, and veiled at this moment by the gray evening mists. It was the end of their day's journey, and for Oswald the place of his destination--a watering-place, called Fichtenau, renowned far and near on account of its charming position, its invigorating baths of spruce leaves, and more recently yet its large and admirably-kept insane asylum, which Doctor Birkenhain, a man of great intelligence and large experience in such matters, had founded there a few years ago.

Oswald's heart was filled with strange sensations as he saw from the corner in which he was leaning back the rocks and the trees flit by, and felt that every step brought him nearer to the place which had occupied his mind during the last months so persistently and so painfully. How unmeaning the name had sounded to him when he first heard it mentioned at Grenwitz as the place where Melitta von Berkow's suffering husband was living! Then he did not know Melitta yet, then he did not anticipate that he would a few days later be enchained by the charms of that beautiful woman. Afterwards he had heard her mention the name, though only rarely, and always with much reluctance, and in his state of boundless delight the place had given him very much the impression with which the owner of a superb, brilliant house looks upon a dark room which he does not like to open, and of which he avoids speaking, because years ago a person who was dear to him had committed suicide there. Then the time had come when Melitta obeyed Dr. Birkenhain's summons and went to see her dying husband--at last the painful, wretched days during which he knew she was at Fichtenau by the side of her unfortunate husband, and when he received from Fichtenau those letters in which every word was a longing kiss. In those days Fichtenau had appeared to him alternately the grave and the cradle of his happiness, as he at one moment fancied Berkow's death would remove all impediments in the way of his marrying Melitta, and then again feared the very same event might forever separate him from her. Then came the fatal day when he found out that the man whom he had from the beginning looked upon as his most formidable rival was with Melitta; when malicious tongues had whispered the most hateful explanations of this fact in his ear, and he, unhappy man, had but too readily listened to these abominable slanders. Alas! he had even then betrayed his own love by his own acts, and, like a ship-wrecked man, who, in order to save himself and his treasures, pitilessly pushes his best friend from the frail plank into the ocean, he had sacrificed Melitta in order to justify his passion for the fair Helen before the tribunal of his own heart! And finally, to fill the cup to overflowing, and to prove as it were to his troubled mind that the whole world was out of joint, and one error more or less did not matter much, the same place must hold both the woman he loved so ardently, who sought comfort for the moments she must needs spend at the deathbed of her husband in the arms of a fascinating roué, and the revered friend and teacher, whose genius, so like a bright blazing torch, had just been extinguished in the deep darkness of insanity! Only a little later death had robbed him of the boy whom he had learnt to love as a brother, and Fate had broken, in a most painful manner, his connection with a great and noble family; then he had seen his rival wounded unto death by his ball, lying at his feet, and separating him forever by this one deed from the beloved girl, from whom a thousand other reasons would, even without this, have compelled him to flee. Was it a wonder that he felt as if the whole earth had no more suitable asylum for him than a cell adjoining that of his friend and teacher in Doctor Birkenhain's famous Insane Asylum at Fichtenau?

Doctor Braun had originally suggested to him this trip for scientific purposes, but now Oswald had insisted upon starting at once, although the former had endeavored to postpone the visit under one pretext or another for some time, and this for good reasons. He had written to Doctor

Birkenhain, without telling Oswald, and asked him to give him a minute description of Berger's case. Doctor Birkenhain had replied, that Berger's insanity consisted exclusively in the fixed idea of the absolute non-existence of all things, but that otherwise he was in full possession of all his mental powers, and would have been dismissed from the institution long since but for his own urgent desire to prolong his stay there. Doctor Braun knew perfectly well that under these circumstances a visit to Fichtenau might be extremely dangerous to Oswald's eccentric mind, excited as he was by all that had happened of late. The sight of a madman might have restored him to tranquillity; but the intercourse with a hypochondriac, whose genius shone brightly even in its aberrations, might possibly only tend to confirm him in his extravagant ideas.

Moved by this apprehension Doctor Braun had postponed the visit to Fichtenau till the end of their journey, instead of going there at first, as Oswald had wished. He had hoped that the frequent intercourse with other men, the beneficent influence of a journey through a beautiful country, brilliant in all the glory of autumn, would bring Oswald back to calmer and more reasonable views of life, and enable him to meet Berger, if not with the superiority of this calmness, at least without danger for himself.

Now Franz saw himself deceived in his hopes. He was by no means pleased with Oswald's excited manner, and would have liked best to turn back, if that had still been possible. He sat casting now and then an anxious glance at Oswald, who, throwing himself back in his corner, looked with fixed eyes upon the little town below, and he determined at least to shorten the visit as much as possible, and to prevent his friend's being alone with Berger while they were there together.

CHAPTER III.

The sun had already set for half an hour behind the broad back of the well-wooded hill, which embraces Fichtenau on the western side, when the carriage left the mountains and rolled down into the plain in which the town is situated. The wearied horses enjoyed the level ground and the easier motion of the carriage, and hastened to meet their good supper of oats. They seemed to gather new strength from the shrill notes of a clarinet which were heard high above the unfailling roll of a big drum, from the midst of a close circle of men on the commons near the town-gate, who surrounded a band of rope-dancers. The road passed close by the place, and as the crowd of curious people had overflowed upon the turnpike, the driver saw himself compelled to drive more slowly, and at last to stop altogether, as the people were not willing, in spite of his scolding and cursing, to give up their vantage ground, and persisted in remaining on the spot, from which they could comfortably look down upon the performance.

The good people thought it naturally quite hard to be disturbed just then, as the wandering artists were at that moment engaged in performing their masterpiece, with which they always wound up the evening's work, so as to dismiss the audience with the most favorable impression.

They had stretched a rope from the little circus to the top of a tall but broad-branched oak-tree which stood upon the common, smaller ropes ran on both sides down to the ground, and were there held fast by stout boys, who had volunteered to perform that service for the sake of High Art. The increased shrillness of the clarinet and the growing thunder of the big drum announced the coming of the great moment when the famous acrobat, Mr. John Cotterby, of Egypt, called the Flying Pigeon, would have the honor to perform, with permission of the authorities, his great feat, admired by all the potentates of Asia and Europe, viz., to fetch down a flag fastened to the top of a steeple four hundred feet high, on the extraordinary path of a single rope, and moreover walking backwards all the time, a feat which he hoped the nobility and the highly cultivated public of Fichtenau would not fail duly to appreciate.

The tower, four hundred feet high, of which the placards at all the street corners had spoken, had changed, it is true, into an oak of perhaps forty feet in height, and the enemies and rivals of the Flying Pigeon--and what great artist is without enemies?--insisted upon it that this change in the programme diminished not only the danger but also the interest of the daring feat. But it was not Mr. John Cotterby's fault, surely, that in the Thirty Years' War the Imperialists had shot to pieces the steeple of the little church on the public square of Fichtenau, which was then held by the Swedes. Nor was he to be blamed if the paternal government had now for two hundred years annually determined to rebuild the steeple, but never accomplished it yet. What could he do, Mr. John Cotterby, of Egypt, if, for want of better times to come, the church on the square was to this day without a steeple? Certainly, if the conscience of the Flying Pigeon was as innocent of every other crime as of this, he could perform his great feat, even with the change of the programme, unblushingly before the potentates of Europe and Asia, and the nobility and highly cultivated public of Fichtenau.

And without blushing--unless the carmine of his rouge should be interpreted as the flush of modesty--the Flying Pigeon now presented himself upon a little scaffolding, hung with soiled linen sheets, to begin his journey heavenward, accompanied by desperate efforts of the clarinet and the big drum, which were at that solemn moment reinforced by the tinkling of a triangle and the squeaking of a tuneless fiddle. He was a handsome, well-made man, and quite young; his dark curly hair was confined by a narrow band of brass, and his whole costume consisted of a suit of stockinet which had long lost its first color of innocent white, and a jacket of the same material, to which on the shoulders two wings had been fastened, which, however, had evidently performed such very hard service that they had lost many a feather on previous occasions.

Encouraging applause greeted the artist and drowned easily the hissing of the opposition; he bowed gracefully all around, with an air which is only found among circus riders, rope-dancers, and other members of that airy guild, while other mortals in vain endeavor to imitate it, and thus to rob them of their exclusive secret. But the applause ceased suddenly, when to the astonishment of the whole audience a huge, shapeless figure was seen climbing after the courteous artist upon the platform, and presenting him, after a hearty slap upon the place between the Icarus wings, with a long slip of paper! The white nightcap, the large blue apron, but above all the enormous, deep-red nose, left no one who was learned in such matters long in doubt as to the nature of the man; they saw at once in him the owner of a beer-shop, or something of the kind, and in the paper an unpaid bill.

The artist would not have been a true artist if he had not been deeply embarrassed by this sudden intrusion of stern reality upon the bright regions of art. There followed a pretty pantomime; the Flying Pigeon shrugged his shoulders and pointed at the place in his stockinet where people with trousers of larger dimensions indulge in pockets, in order to express his very evident inability to pay, and seemed to implore the landlord with much wringing of hands and plaintive gesticulating to have patience. The latter replied, however, as it seemed, only by making fearful faces and by striking his hand with his closed fist, and thus made it very clear that he was inexorably hard-hearted.

The highly-cultivated public of Fichtenau and the surrounding country looked upon the scene as a very serious affair, and showed their amazement and deep interest in every feature. But the excitement rose to a painful intensity when next, upon a sign from the red-nosed landlord, two fellows with huge moustaches, in blue coats and black tri-cornered hats, came climbing up on the stage, and filled the hearts of the innocent spectators with horror as they raised their arms upon the bidding of injured Justice, and, seizing the unlucky artist with fearful grimaces and gesticulations, bound his impecunious hands behind his winged back.

And now, at this most painful moment in the earthly career of an artist, it was to be shown that the great god Apollo knows how to lead his saints wonderfully out of troubles and trials, and to secure to them the well-earned apotheosis, if not in this vale of tears, at least in heavenly regions.

For, from the thickest of the oak-tree, where the rope had been fastened to a mighty branch, there suddenly appeared the figure of a lovely genius, winged like the Flying Pigeon, with a wreath on the hair and a bright banner in the right hand. This was evidently the flag which Mr. John Cotterby, of Egypt, usually fetched down from a steeple four hundred feet high, and which he saw himself on this day forced, for want of a suitable tower, to bring down from heaven itself. For was not the winged genius one of the heavenly choirs?

When the messenger from Olympus showed himself so opportunely, the servants of earthly Justice and the wine-colored dispenser of abominable beverages were, as in duty bound, seized with sudden terror. They abandoned their victim and fell with all the signs of deep contrition upon their knees, while the Flying Pigeon relieved himself of his fetters and began to ascend the narrow path that leads to heaven, with all the swiftness and agility which had won such honor for his name and reputation. When he had gone up half-way he knelt down before the heavenly apparition, who had beckoned him on with unceasing waving of the flag, rose to his full height and made there, far above the earth and all earthly fear, a gesture towards his conscience-stricken pursuers, which is universally understood upon the earth. Loud applause and cheerful laughter accompanied the humorous artist up to the very heavens, where the genius handed him the flag, crowned him with the wreath, and then disappeared once more in the branches. Mr. John Cotterby then returned to the stage, where the constables had in the meantime learnt to appreciate the value of the ideal and of the divine nature of art, and now received him with deep bows, while the red-nosed landlord yielded to the impulse of the moment, and with most praiseworthy repentance tore the enormous bill from end to end, thus giving the spectators a comforting assurance that the Flying Pigeon was, at least for the present, safe against all attacks upon his freedom.

The performance was at an end. The generous landlord, who now appeared in the character of manager of the company of artists, alone remained behind on the stage, and in his epilogue promised the nobility and highly-cultivated public of Fichtenau and the surrounding country on the next day a far more splendid representation. The audience dispersed very suddenly, for a suspicious ringing of money on tin plates reminded them suddenly of a duty which the ungrateful among the spectators did not hold themselves bound to perform, while many grateful admirers regretted deeply their inability to prove their gratitude.

Nevertheless the majority of those unable to pay were still honest enough to allow the unwelcome plate to come quite near to them, and those who were not kept by honesty remained from curiosity to find out how the genius who dwelt in the branches of oak-trees might look when seen near by. For it was Apollo's own messenger who deigned to make the collection for the benefit of his children upon earth.

The cunning director could not have made a better choice. The genius--it was hard to tell whether it was a boy or a girl--had a pair of magnificent brown eyes, which looked with such bewitching modesty and so imploringly into every face that the purses opened together with the hearts. Kindly words followed the child everywhere, and one or the other of the well-to-do citizens seemed to think himself entitled by his gift of a few cents to pinch the brown cheeks; but the genius appeared by no means disposed to appreciate the caress.

The driver had been on the point of leaving as soon as the crowd allowed him to pass, but Franz and Oswald, who had followed the drama of the artist's earthly career and his apotheosis with great interest, and now and then with hearty laughter, ordered him to stop till the genius should have made his way through the dense crowd to the carriage. They had not to wait long, for a travelling carriage with two gentlemen inside was surely worth more than a dozen of poor citizens of Fichtenau.

Franz was looking for some small change in his purse when he was startled by a loud exclamation.

"What is the matter?" he asked, looking wonderingly up at Oswald, who had jumped up and uttered the cry.

Oswald did not reply, but leaped with a single bound out of the carriage, and hurried to meet the genius, who no sooner recognized the young man than he dropped the plate with all the silver and copper coins, and fell into his arms.

"Czika, is it really you?"

"Yes, man with the blue eye," replied the child, eagerly and affectionately, still hanging on his neck; but then suddenly tearing herself away and anxiously looking toward the carriage:

"Is the other one there also?"

"No, Czika," said Oswald, knowing very well that the other of whom she spoke was Oldenburg. "But are you quite alone?"

"No, mother is with me; mother does not leave the Czika. Come and help me to collect the money again." And the child stooped down to pick up the coins that were half hid in the dust.

"Oldenburg's child among rope-dancers," said Oswald to himself, mechanically obeying the child's injunction and unconscious of what he was doing, kneeling down and picking up here and there the scattered pennies.

The highly-cultivated public thought this meeting of an apparently great personage with a rope-dancer's child, and their warm embrace, more remarkable than anything they had seen that evening. Young and old they crowded around them, forming a close circle, and apparently determined not to leave the place till they had solved the mystery of this extraordinary meeting.

Franz, who had witnessed the scene from the carriage, had scarcely been less amazed than the crowd. Very soon, however, he recollected the mysterious reports about a gypsy girl whom Baron Oldenburg was said to have harbored at his lonely house for several weeks, until she had escaped from him one fine day, and, with that rapidity of combination which is often found in strong heads, he at once concluded that Oswald, who no doubt was in the baron's secret, had recognized the gypsy girl in the beautiful genius. His next thought was to shorten the scene, for Oswald's sake mainly, and in order to diminish as far as possible the sensation which it had already produced. He jumped, therefore, from the carriage, hastened to Oswald, and said,

"Let us go on! At least till the crowd has dispersed."

At the same moment the director of the company, who had also observed the scene from the stage, on which he had harangued the public, pushed his way through the assembly. His curiosity to know what was going on, and his indignation at seeing the important business of collection interrupted at the critical moment, had made him forget that he still wore the costume of the red-nosed landlord, and that he, therefore, ought not to have mingled with the people unless he wished to sacrifice the dignity of his art. Franz was justly afraid that the tragi-comic scene might become decidedly disagreeable if that personage should join them, and therefore anticipated his questions by meeting him before he came near, and whispering to him in a tone just loud enough to be heard by the bystanders,

"I am a physician, sir. This young man (pointing over his shoulder at Oswald, who was still kneeling down with Czika) is rather eccentric. You understand. Here is something in compensation for the loss he may have caused you."

The man considered this explanation, which was given in a very solemn manner, perfectly satisfactory, since the possible loss was amply made up by the two silver dollars which Franz had slipped into his hand. He smiled cunningly, and said, pulling off his night-cap and bowing low,

"Understand, understand, your excellency. Only pray get him away quickly, so that the Czika can go on with the collection."

"Where are you staying?" inquired Franz.

"At the Green Hat, your excellency. Your excellency will rejoice a poor artist's soul if you will bestow upon him your gracious patronage."

"Well, well," said Franz, and then turning to Oswald, who had risen in the meantime,

"I pray you, Oswald, let us go on now. I know where these people are staying; you can go and see them some other time."

Oswald, who had recovered from his first overwhelming astonishment at finding Czika in such company, now saw very clearly the extraordinary character of his position, and knew too well how sensible his friend's advice was to neglect it any longer.

The Czika had shown the wonderful self-control which this remarkable child never lost but for a few moments, and was going on with the collection as if nothing had happened. She did not even cast a glance at Oswald as he went back to the carriage, almost forced to do so by Franz.

The carriage drove off. The crowd had quickly seized upon the fable of Oswald's insanity, which Franz had invented with such admirable presence of mind, and dispersed all the more rapidly as the increasing coolness of the evening air reminded them forcibly of the warm supper that awaited them in their warm rooms at home.

CHAPTER IV.

It was a few hours later. The evening had come completely. The mountains of Fichtenau were wrapped in their double veils of night and mist; on the dark sky a few lonely stars peeped here and there through the drifting clouds. The narrow streets of the little town were deserted; lights, however, were shining from the windows of the low, simple houses. People were sitting around the stove after their frugal suppers, and the husband told his wife, who for good reasons had not been able to venture into a crowd, what wonderful feats of strength, agility, and skill he had seen outside of the town on the great meadow; how an insane gentleman had driven up with his physician (who no doubt was bringing him to Doctor Birkenhain's great institution), and how he had embraced the pretty gypsy girl, who was going around with the plate, before all the people. The old, half-deaf grandmother, who was nodding in her arm-chair near the stove, and only heard half of what he was saying, remarked,

"Yes, yes! gypsies are the devil's children; everybody knows that. My sainted great-grandfather lent a hand when five of them were burned on the great meadow."

There was great feasting that night in the Green Hat, a low drover's inn near the gates of the town, and not far from the great meadow. The Green Hat was also the headquarters of all wandering rope-dancers, and therefore a most attractive place for all lovers of art among the people of Fichtenau.

The long table in the public room, which was filled with tobacco smokers, could scarcely hold the number of guests, although they were sitting closely enough on the hard benches. At the upper end, especially, the crowd was great, for there the artists sat and drank in the full consciousness of their dignity and the hearty enjoyment of a free treat. The director, Mr. Caspar Schmenckel, from Vienna, presided as a matter of course. He had laid aside all the insignia of the last part he had played, except a few patches of rouge which still adorned his bloated face; he had taken off his nightcap and the blue-checked apron, together with the pillow with which it was stuffed. He appeared now in the comfortable and elegant costume of a gentleman who has relieved himself of his coat and waistcoat, and who forgets, in the consciousness of his artistic fame and of his broad, richly-embroidered suspenders, that his linen is not of the cleanest. Mr. John Cotterby, of Egypt, who sat on the right hand of his lord and master, had been compelled to make a greater alteration in his toilette, especially since the artistic wardrobe boasted only of a single suit of stockinet, and it was therefore of the utmost importance for him to do all that could be done in order to preserve its delicate whiteness. Mr. John Cotterby, of Egypt, wore a short,

gray coat with green trimmings, and would have looked, all in all, far more like a handsome Tyrolese (which was, by-the-by, his real character) than the son of the land of mystery through which the Nile rolls its waves, if the narrow brass band which still confined his dark locks, and the broken German which he composed most artistically for the occasion, had not vouched for his mystic descent. There were two other artists sitting a little further down the table; one a modest, silent, tall man, who took his craft in earnest, and meditated deeply how he might introduce a new feature in his far-famed performance, the Gigantic Cask; the other, the clown of the company, a round, odd-looking creature, who produced a new grimace at every glass which he drank with a new guest, and thus proved the immense stock of those valuable commodities which he owned, since this process of touching glasses occurred on an average every five minutes.

Mr. Casper Schmenckel, director, etc., had been a fine-looking man until the abundance of his potations had injured the fair symmetry of his person, and he loved to recall the many gallant adventures of which he had been the hero, and in which even great ladies, whose eyes had been well pleased with the gigantic proportions of the Hercules, played a prominent part. When Mr. Schmenckel had emptied his third glass he was apt to become eloquent about this heroic age of his life, and tonight he had already more than doubled the mysterious number which loosened the chaste seal on his lips. The young men who pressed around him glass in hand would have fared better, probably, as far as their morals were concerned, if they had not honored the Green Hat on that particular evening with their presence.

Mr. Schmenckel's fancy was exuberant, and where ordinary eyes saw but a number of midges dancing in the air, his rolling orbs beheld a host of elephants. He calculated with incredible boldness upon the credulity of his listeners; above all he endeavored to surround himself and the members of his company with a nimbus of adventurous glory. The accident on the great meadow, which had brought the madman and the Czika into contact with each other, was far too useful for such a purpose not to be fully employed by Mr. Schmenckel. It is true the gypsy and her child had joined his troop quite accidentally a few days ago, as they were making their way across the mountains towards Fichtenau, and Mr. Schmenckel knew as little of their former history as any one in the company; but his imagination was only the more perfectly free to rove at random, and he invented a magnificent story in order to satisfy the curiosity of the guests, who continually came back to the beautiful child and the gypsy woman who had appeared as a dancer in the first part of the performance.

"Yes, you see," said Director Schmenckel, "that is a very mysterious story, and I should be quite ready to tell you all about it, but it is so very incredible."

Mr. Schmenckel dived with his red nose into his beer and slowly absorbed the remaining half, while his eyes twinkled with delight as he looked by turns through the swollen lids at one and the other of his friends.

"Tell us, tell us, Director!" cried half a dozen voices.

"Another bumper for the Director!" cried another half dozen.

"It may be about ten or twelve years," began Mr. Schmenckel, after having diminished the contents of the new glass to a considerable extent, "when I was making a trip to Egypt----"

When he said Egypt all eyes turned to Mr. John Cotterby, who leaned back in his chair and smiled mysteriously.

"What were you going to do in Egypt?" asked a voice.

"May I tell, Mr. Cotterby?" asked Mr. Schmenckel.

"Fideremkankinsavalilaloramei," replied the Egyptian, who could not imagine what his lord and master wanted to be allowed to tell.

"Thanks, Cotterby," said Mr. Schmenckel, "modesty adorns a man, but why should I conceal it that it was on your account I was making that journey? You must know, gentlemen, that the fame of Mr. Cotterby was in those days filling the whole Orient, and that nobody spoke of anything but the Flying Pigeon. I said to myself: You must induce this man, the greatest artist whom the world ever saw, to join your company, as sure as your name is Caspar Schmenckel. No sooner said than done. I went to Egypt, where I was told Mr. Cotterby was then residing, but Mr. Cotterby was nowhere to be found. At last I learnt from an old Dervish who had sold me the talking serpent, which I shall have the honor of exhibiting to-morrow, that Mr. Cotterby was staying somewhere far away in the desert near the pyramids. May I tell why you did so, Cotterby?"

"Framtebaramta! Tell what you wish to tell," replied the Egyptian, with a generous, modest smile.

"Mr. Cotterby, you must know, had retired for some time into the desert, and sworn a fearful oath that he would not again appear in public till he had ascended every one of the pyramids on a rope."

"What are those pyramids?" inquired a voice.

"Pyramids!" said Mr. Schmenckel, dictatorially, "are immense heaps of stone, which the old Egyptians raised in honor of their gods, a thousand feet high, or more, and so steep that a cat can hardly get to the top. On the top there is a pointed stone pillar, called obelisk; to this Mr. Cotterby fastened one end of a rope, while the lower end was held by two thousand black slaves of his, and thus he walked up and down, so that those who saw it felt their hair stand on an end. That was the way I found Mr. Cotterby engaged in the desert, and of course I became more anxious than ever to engage him for our company; but he refused. What was I to do? I had nothing left but to climb at night to the top of the pyramid at the risk of my life, and next morning, when Mr. Cotterby arrived there, to seize him around the waist and to cry: Either you consent to an engagement for three thousand a year, or I send you head over heels down this pyramid, as sure as my name is Caspar Schmenckel. May I tell what you replied, Cotterby?"

The Egyptian nodded assent.

"If you are Mr. Schmenckel from Vienna," said Mr. Cotterby, "you need not have made such an ado about it. I should have come to you any way to Vienna, as soon as I had done with this pyramid. There is only one Schmenckel, as there is only one Cotterby; both ought to be together, like bread and butter. But that was not exactly what I was going to tell you, gentlemen," said Mr. Schmenckel, emptying his glass and holding it up to the light, as if he wished to convince himself that there was really nothing left in it.

"A glass for Director Schmenckel," cried a dozen voices.

"Thanks! thanks! gentlemen! Your health!--but how I made the acquaintance of Madame Xenobia--or Kussuk Arnem, as her true name is. But that story is almost still more incredible, and contains certain episodes which I can only touch upon in the way of delicate allusions----"

"Oh, never mind! Just go on and tell us!" exclaimed the listeners, crowding more closely around him.

"Well, then, I will tell you! A short time after I had thus secured Mr. Cotterby for my company, I was giving a few representations at Constantinople on the great square before the Sultan's palace. He took uncommon interest in our art, and had given us permission to fasten our rope to the uppermost turret of his palace, upon the flat roof itself. Now, you must know that the upper story of this palace contains the rooms of the wives of the Sultan, and on that account it is called the harem. I had always felt the most intense desire to make my way some time or other into such an harem, which otherwise is utterly inaccessible to everybody. And now Cotterby had told me that whenever he came by the top story the most beautiful black eyes in the world were glancing at him through the narrow crevices between the planks, which are nailed over the windows of the harem. What could I do? I say to Cotterby: 'Cotterby,' says I, 'you can do anything. Suppose you take me to-morrow in the wheelbarrow which you carry up and down the rope, and then let me get out on the roof. I must see how things look up there. You can bring me back the same way the day after. Will you do it?' 'Why not?' says Cotterby, 'if you wish it particularly.' The next day the thing is done. I hide myself in the wheelbarrow. Cotterby carries me up to the roof; he turns the barrow over and there I am, on the roof, quite alone, for Cotterby had gone back immediately, so as to create no suspicion. Now you may believe it or not as you choose, gentlemen, but I assure you I felt rather peculiar in that position. How easily the head of a black guardsman might pop out through one of the openings in the roof--and then farewell to my sweet life! But there I was, caught in the trap, and I was determined not to leave again until I had a taste of the bait. While I was still considering what I had better do next, I suddenly hear the rattling of spears and of swords on the staircase which leads up to the roof. It was the Sultan himself, who wished to admire Mr. Cotterby from that elevation. I, in my terror, run up to the nearest chimney which rose out of the roof, creep into it, and--I had not time to think for a moment--down I go some twenty feet deep--and where do you think, gentlemen, I came out again? In the fire-place of the bed-room of the Sultan's first favorite. But here I must ask the pardon of all the gentlemen present if, to spare the honor of a great lady, I can only assure them that the next twenty-four hours were among the happiest which Caspar Schmenckel has ever enjoyed in this life. On the day following, Cotterby brought, as a matter of precaution, a much larger wheelbarrow, and carried me safely down again. We left Constantinople that very night, and from that moment our company was richer by one great artist, and the harem of the Sultan had lost its fairest flower."

Mr. Schmenckel looked around him triumphantly. He could well be satisfied with the impression which he had made by his stories on his audience; they sat there listening with breathless attention. At that moment a lady came running into the room; it was the same one who used to sit at the ticket office, and who attended to all the domestic affairs of the company; she whispered a few words in the director's ear, of which the company only heard one or two, which sounded like "woman--run away." The director did not seem to be pleased with the information. His face darkened perceptibly. He grumbled something about the devil and his luck, and left the table without finishing his glass--a proof that the news he had just received must have been of the utmost importance.

And the news was important, for it amounted to nothing less than that the fair flower, which Mr. Schmenckel had stolen ten years ago with so much daring and such cunning from the palace of the Lord of the Faithful, had been lost again. Alas! he had allowed her to rest ever since on his broad bosom, he had seen the tender bud of the beauteous flower unfold itself under his watchful

care, and now both flower and bud had been torn away by a storm, carried off by the deeply-injured Sultan, or at least they could not be found anywhere in their chamber or in the whole house! Mamselle Adele had made the discovery as she was about to invite the gypsy to the common supper of the ladies of the company, which was laid in another room. Mamselle Adele, a lady with an abundance of black curls, the genuineness of which was strongly suspected by envious rivals, a dark face full of energy, and a voice chronically hoarse and rough, informed Mr. Schmenckel of her discovery with that gift of the gab and that dramatic power which is given to ladies who are in the habit of addressing the public from the open steps of a wooden booth. The news was soon confirmed by the result of a thorough search of the whole house, in which he himself took the lead; it fell upon him like a flash of lightning from a clear sky. The escape of the gypsy woman was to him what the death of his best lioness and her cub would have been to the owner of a menagerie. He lost in the mother and child a capital which had cost him next to nothing, and which yet promised to produce abundant interest--the ornament, the glory, the poetry of his establishment. Even Mr. John Cotterby, of Egypt, might have been replaced more easily. Flying Pigeons are rare, but after all they can be procured; but a genius with such eyes, such deep, brown eyes, with such a kindly, serious smile, that could tempt the stingiest green-grocer to lavish profusion, was not to be found again. Mr. Schmenckel would not have been a man and a director, and above all he would have had to drink, instead of so many glasses of bitter beer, as many gallons of the milk of human kindness, if he had borne such a loss with stoic repose. Mr. Schmenckel was a man, he was a director, he had been drinking beer and not milk--and Mr. Schmenckel gave himself up to fearful wrath. The first explosion fell very naturally upon the bearer of the bad news, especially as Mr. Schmenckel had had full opportunity during the many years of their intimacy to become aware of the jealous temper of this lady, as well as of her other foibles. He accused her in terms which ought to be impossible even among the most intimate friends, of having compelled the gypsy by her intrigues to seek safety in flight. Mamselle Adele, whose temper was naturally not of the gentlest, and who found herself in this case considered guilty when she was really quite innocent, replied in a tone which betrayed her inner excitement but too distinctly. Mr. Schmenckel belonged to that class of heroic men who, in the consciousness of their superiority--especially when they have drunk deep--allow of no contradiction, and whose proud motto in decisive moments is: "Works, not words." Mamselle Adele no sooner felt the heavy hand of her master upon her cheeks than her burning heart burst forth in flames, and her tongue began to ring the alarm-bell with such loudness and shrillness that the guests inside started up from their seats and hurried to the door, apprehending that some dire calamity had taken place in the hall, where the scene between Mr. Schmenckel and Mamselle Adele was then under way.

The sight of so many uninvited and undesirable witnesses brought the director, who was always anxiously concerned for the good name of his troop, very quickly to his senses; but the poor lady, who saw her honor thus compromised before a great crowd, was exasperated beyond endurance. So far she had only threatened to let the director feel her nails; now she added the act to the threat. The highly-cultivated public of Fichtenau, as far as it had assembled at the Green Hat, were unspeakably shocked when they saw the celebrated artist, the hero of so many adventures, the master of the far-famed pyramid-climber, the robber of the Grand Sultan's own palace, in such a state of suffering. Mamselle Adele's attacks did not cease for a moment; they were even carried out with irresistible energy, force, and agility. Some wished to come to the assistance of the defeated general; others laughed and encouraged her; still others, men in blue blouses and heavy hob-nailed shoes, who were regular customers at the Green Hat with their wagons and horses, and bore no good-will to the rope-dancers, because they interfered with their accustomed comfort, spoke loud of "rabble," and "turn them out," a sentiment which in its turn displeased a few enthusiastic admirers of high art. Angry faces, threatening arms lifted high, and curses loud and many, formed a tableau, which in the twinkling of an eye was changed into another, in which even the landlord of the Green Hat, who was leaning against the kitchen door in phlegmatic composure, his pipe between his lips, could no longer distinguish any details. Dense clouds of dust half concealed and half revealed a heap of struggling men, rolling to and fro on the floor of the inn, while everybody was striking out with his natural weapon of the fist, or the artificial weapon of a leg of a chair, against his real or imaginary adversary.

CHAPTER V.

Oswald had been hospitably provided for in the elegant "Kurhaus" of Fichtenau, but he had not been able to resist the desire to visit little Czika that same evening. He hoped to learn from the Brown Countess how they had become mixed up with such strange company, and at the same time to persuade her either to return to Baron Oldenburg, or at least to give up the child to him. He thought he should be able to accomplish by management what the violence of the baron had rendered impossible, and this all the more readily as the Brown Countess seemed to be kindly

disposed towards him, and little Czika evidently felt more confidence in himself than in the "other," who was her father. And then there was still another feeling besides the personal interest which he felt in the beautiful child and the gypsy, whom he had first met on that eventful afternoon when he was lost in the forest on his way to Melitta, and who, therefore, had in a manner been the instrument to bring him to Melitta, to say nothing of their subsequent connection with Oldenburg, all of which prompted him to act energetically. He felt the burden of the gratitude which he owed to Oldenburg for his chivalrous assistance at Bruno's death, and in the duel with Felix. He did not like to be under such obligations to a man against whom he had felt a strong antipathy from the beginning, and whom he had afterwards, in the days of his love for Melitta, feared as his most dangerous rival--a man whose determined strength of will had something imposing to him in spite of his reluctance to acknowledge it, and whom he yet accused--heaven knows with what justice!--of duplicity and inconsistency!--a man who had betrayed him all these days in the most humiliating manner, if the relations between Oldenburg and Melitta were at all like what they were represented to be by the Barnewitz family and other friendly spies and gossips. If he could now succeed in rescuing the child whom he had almost given up, and render him the very great service of restoring her to him--then the oppressive debt of gratitude would be paid, he would have acquitted himself of all he owed, and Oswald Stein would have no reason to cast down his eyes before Baron Oldenburg, if fate should ever array them against each other as foes--and the young man apprehended that such a moment might come.

These thoughts and feelings filled Oswald's heart as he followed a servant from the Kurhaus through the silent streets of the town towards the Green Hat, where he had been told by Franz that he should find the rope-dancers. Franz himself had remained at the Kurhaus, as he was too discreet to intrude upon a secret which was apparently kept from him. For when he had laughingly endeavored to explain to his friend how he had managed to interpret, for the benefit of the crowd, the strange scene with the rope-dancer's child, Oswald had remained perfectly silent, and Franz had seen no other way to explain this reticence than by supposing that his companion was either not willing or not at liberty to give any further explanations about the matter. When Oswald, therefore, remarked that it would probably be too late that evening to pay a visit to Berger, he had simply answered: "I think so!" and refrained from offering his company when Oswald, after walking up and down in his room for a quarter of an hour in perfect silence, had at last declared his intention to take a walk in the cool of the evening. Franz adapted himself all the more readily to the fancies of his companion, as he was busily occupied at that moment with his own affairs. He had hoped to find in Fichtenau a letter from his betrothed, but his hopes had not been fulfilled. This disappointment caused him some apprehension, as Sophie generally wrote very punctually, and they had come to Fichtenau several days later than they had originally intended. He consoled himself, however, with the hope that the last mail, which was expected every moment, might yet bring him the much-desired letter.

In the meantime Oswald arrived at the hospitable shelter of the Green Hat at the very moment when it sent a part of the odd crowd that had assembled there that evening through the open house-door into the street, where the conflict in large masses, as it had been carried on in the hall, changed into a fight between isolated groups. For a moment they blazed up, like the remains of an exhausted fire, only to sink the next moment into utter night for want of fuel. Peace was soon restored, for nobody knew exactly why they had been fighting each other with such rage, and there were quite enough closed eyes and bruised limbs for such an intangible cause of war. The excitement, it is true, was not allayed, and there was still a good deal of noise, but it was only the long swell of the ocean after the violence of the storm has been broken. They cursed and swore, they bragged and threatened--but they sat down again and drowned the last remnants of hostility in beer.

Oswald was so anxious about Czika that he had not been so much disgusted with the horrible scene as he would have been under other circumstances. Fortunately he saw neither the child nor Xenobia in the crowd, but the mere thought that they might have been mixed up with such a pandemonium was terrible to him, and he determined to remove them at any hazard. He pushed his way through the noisy fighting crowd, who did not notice him at all, and inquired of the one and the other why they were fighting, and where Xenobia the gypsy was, with her child? No one had time or inclination to answer his questions, until at last he happened to speak to a young man who looked a little less rowdyish than the rest, and who told him that some members of the rope-dancer's troop had run away, a gypsy woman and her daughter, and that this had given rise to a general fight. He pointed out to him a man who was wiping the blood off his face and speaking with most animated gesticulations, intimating that that was the director, and that he would probably be able to tell him all he desired to know.

Oswald felt greatly relieved when he heard this. Xenobia and Czika were gone, and it mattered little where they had gone to, so they were free from this association. He considered for a moment whether he had better return without having anything more to do with the rope-dancers; but the desire to hear more, and to ascertain, perhaps, the place to which the fugitives might have escaped, overcame his reluctance, and he addressed the person who had been pointed out to him as the director.

Mr. Schmenckel was a man of remarkable elasticity of mind, and had readily recovered the imperilled harmony of his soul after the battle, from which he had come forth covered with honorable wounds. As soon as the first storm of his passions had subsided a little, he generally

exhibited a high degree of that philosophic resignation which submits with dignity to the inevitable, and makes every effort to adapt itself to the circumstances. Since the gypsy woman was gone, all lamentations about his loss would only make him ridiculous, and it became a noble character to forgive and forget. He pretended, therefore, to ignore the whole occurrence, and treated it as something by no means unexpected. "Ingratitude is the world's reward--easily won, easily lost--to-day it is I, to-morrow it is another. Let us sit down again, gentlemen. Director Schmenckel is not so easily thrown out of gear. We have other means still in reserve to entertain a highly-honored public, and you shall see that the performance which I shall have the honor to give to-morrow--what does the gentleman wish?--you wish to speak to me? I am at your service--a director must be always ready." Mr. Schmenckel followed Oswald, who had asked him for a few moments conversation, very readily, since the circumstance that an elegantly-dressed gentleman came all the way to the Green Hat in order to have an interview with Director Schmenckel, was well calculated to make a sensation.

"What does your excellency desire?" inquired Mr. Schmenckel, when they were in the hall.

"I should be glad if you would give me some information about the gypsy woman, who, I am told, has left your company this evening."

Mr. Schmenckel was startled; the question sounded suspicious. He availed himself of the light of the lamp before the house--for they had reached the street by this time--to examine Oswald's face more carefully, and he now recognized in him the gentleman whom the Czika had embraced. Mr. Schmenckel knew at once how the matter stood. This young gentleman was an immensely rich lord who had a mania for gypsies, and was in the habit of buying up young gypsy children for his amusement. Mr. Schmenckel reflected that the woman might possibly return, and that the greater his claims were upon her, the higher the price he might ask for the child.

"Well," he said, in order to gain time for consideration, "why would your excellency like to know?"

"That does not matter," replied Oswald; "it will suffice for you that I do not mean to leave the man who gives me the information I desire to obtain unrewarded," and he slipped a dollar into Mr. Schmenckel's hand.

"Thanks, your excellency," replied Mr. Schmenckel, whose suspicions were only confirmed by Oswald's liberality, "nevertheless I should like to----"

"But I do not understand why you should hesitate to tell me what little you may possibly know about the woman?"

"Well," replied Mr. Schmenckel, "perhaps it is not so very little I know about her. When one has had somebody thirteen years in the company----"

"But I have met the gypsy only this summer at--never mind, not very far from here, and quite alone."

"That may very well be," replied the cunning director; "it is not the first time to-night that Xenobia has run away, but she has always come back again."

"Thirteen years!" said Oswald, who did not think for a moment of doubting the fable; "how old was the child, then, when she came to join you?"

"How old?" said Mr. Schmenckel. "Why, your excellency, when she came to us, she had no child. I know that, as a matter of course, ha, ha, ha!"

"You?" said Oswald, and he shuddered. "You?"

"Well! why not? Do I look to your excellency's eye as if a pretty young woman could not possibly fall in love with me; and did not this girl, moreover, take wages from me? I can tell your excellency that I have made very different conquests in my time. Has your excellency ever been in St. Petersburg? There is the Princess--but, after all, I am not at liberty to speak as freely of such a great lady as----"

"In one word," said Oswald, scarcely able to restrain himself, "the Czika is your child?"

"I couldn't swear to that," said Mr. Schmenckel, smiling, "but I can take my oath that she might be my child, and that I have always looked upon her in that light."

"And you think the gypsy will come back again?"

"Oh, your excellency may rely upon that; she is never as well off as when she stays with me."

"But why does she run away so often, then?"

"Yes, just think of it, your excellency; women are a strange kind of people," said Mr. Schmenckel, philosophizing, "and the kinder you are to them, the sooner they will play you some trick or other. There is no truth and no faith among them, and especially these gypsies----"

"Very well," said Oswald, who was overcome with disgust, "we will talk about that some other time." And he went away quickly.

Director Schmenckel followed him with his eye for awhile, shook his head, put the dollar, which he was still holding in his hand, in his pocket, laughed and returned into the public room, feeling very happy in the pleasant conviction that he had cheated a greenhorn. Within peace had in the meantime recovered its sway, and the whole company had joined in singing the favorite ballad: "Blue blooms a blossom."

While Oswald was receiving this doubtful information about the true history of poor little Czika from the truth-loving lips of Director Schmenckel, Franz was waiting for his return with painful impatience. The mail had really brought him the long-desired letter from his betrothed, but unfortunately had also confirmed the vague apprehensions which had of late troubled his mind. Sophie wrote in a hand almost illegible from anxiety, that her father had had a stroke of paralysis, from which the physicians feared the very worst. Her father, she added, was at that moment, several hours after the attack, still speechless and unable to move. If there were any hope for her father, help could only come from Him whom she looked up to with trusting confidence and perfect submission.

Franz had formed his resolution instantly. As the driver who had brought them to this place declared he was unable to go any further, he had at once ordered post-horses, in order to reach the nearest railway station that night. To think of his sweet love in such bitter need and sorrow--watching and weeping by the sickbed, perhaps already by the coffin of her father--and he, her comfort and her hope, some four hundred miles away--all this was enough to disturb even so firm a heart as that of Doctor Braun was under ordinary circumstances. He felt as if the ground was burning under his feet. The few minutes before the carriage could be made ready, seemed to him an eternity.

At last he heard the horses coming, and Oswald also returned. Franz told him the sad news he had just received, and what he had determined to do. He begged his friend, in a few parting words, not to prolong his stay at Fichtenau beyond what was absolutely necessary, and above all to be punctually at the appointed time at his post in Grunwald. Oswald had been so thoroughly excited by the many extraordinary occurrences of the last hours that he apparently expected nothing but surprises, and thus he received his friend's communications with an air of indifference. He promised, however, what Franz asked of him, as he accompanied him to the carriage.

"What do you say, Oswald," said Franz, who had already settled himself down in the carriage; "Come along with me! You may find my proposal somewhat extraordinary, but the strangest way is often the best way."

"I cannot do it, Franz," said Oswald. "I cannot leave here without having seen Berger, and besides----"

"I know all you can possibly say on that subject," replied Franz, "and I must tell you frankly that I have no good reason whatever for making the proposition. But I feel as if I ought not to leave you here alone--as if there was something in the air here that boded you no good. Come with me, Oswald!"

"I will follow you as soon as I can."

"Then farewell! Go on, driver!"

Franz once more pressed Oswald's hand. The carriage rattled over the uneven pavement of the little town and disappeared around a corner.

"What a pity the gentleman had to leave so soon," said Louis, the head waiter at the Kurhaus, who was standing near Oswald, a napkin under his arm and a pen behind his ear. "A most pleasant gentleman--would you like to have supper now, sir? You will find very agreeable company in the dining-room, sir."

Oswald went back into the house. If Franz could have repeated his request at that moment, Oswald would not have again refused to accompany him. For since Franz had left him he felt as if his guardian angel had abandoned him, and as if the air of Fichtenau was really laden with mischief.

CHAPTER VI.

On the next morning Oswald awoke late from his broken slumbers, which had been much disturbed by strange haunted dreams. Melitta, whom he had so ardently loved but a short time ago, had appeared to him, her fair, pale face disfigured by sorrow, her brown, gentle eyes overflowing with tears, and looking at him with an expression of ineffable sadness. Thus she had sat by him--her sad, sweet smile on her full lips, which he had so often kissed, intoxicated with love! And Oswald's heart had been overflowing with love and pity! He had forgotten all that had come between her and himself the bad weeds sown by whispering tongues which had grown up to maturity so suddenly, thanks to the fickleness of his own heart; he had forgotten everything except the remembrance of those sunny days of inexpressible happiness. And he had thrown himself at her feet and shed tears, bitter-sweet tears, upon her knees, and stammered words of repentance, and implored her forgiveness. Then an icy-cold hand had been laid on his brow, and as he looked up it was no longer Melitta, but Professor Berger; but not the man of the melancholy humor and the biting satire, who had so often sat opposite to him with his sardonic smile on the mysterious lips when they met at æsthetic teas, but a gruesome mask of wax, motionless and silent. And of a sudden there had begun a quivering and a stirring in the cold, rigid face of the mask, as when one tries to speak and the tongue refuses to serve him; then the mask had actually spoken, not in human language, but in a mystic idiom, of things half intelligible, half mysterious, of unspeakable, fearful things--awful secrets of another world.

Oswald had not been able to endure the horror any longer, and his soul had made a desperate effort to rise from the intolerable twilight into the bright light of day. But the light of day had not brought him the right kind of cheerfulness, for the visions of the night still cast their spectral shadows upon the day. Woe to him whose heart is not clear of sin! Woe to him whose heart conceals recollections, which he drives away with a slight frown, when they obtrude upon him in moments of wakefulness and preparation! He may well see to it. What dreams are coming to him in his sleep?

Oswald spent the whole forenoon in this heavy state of mind. He could not summon courage to undertake the painful task of going to Doctor Birkenhain's Asylum; he postponed the visit till the afternoon, and tried to persuade himself that he would then be in better humor, and better prepared to stand once more before Berger, face to face. He went down to take his dinner at the table-d'hôte, where he found, in spite of the advanced season, quite a number of persons still, who, were either drinking the waters of the place or travelling for their amusement. He sat quietly sipping his wine, and amused himself with listening to the brilliant conversation of some commercial travellers, as it flitted to and fro, touching a thousand subjects, and among them also the escape of the gypsy woman and her child, and the "enormous row" which had arisen in consequence, disturbing the peace of the Green Hat and the nightly rest of a considerable part of the little town. Some of the young gentlemen who had witnessed the exhibition on the great meadow enlightened more recent arrivals as to the beauty of the gypsy, and regretted eloquently the disappearance of that "famous person." The little one, also, was represented as a "famous" thing, with really "famous" eyes. An eccentric Englishman, who had been near the stage, they added, had instantly fallen in love with her, and there was no doubt at all but that this Englishman, of whom no one had afterwards seen or heard anything more, had eloped with the gypsy girl.

Oswald was rather troubled by these authentic reports of the fate of Xenobia and the Czika, and left the table for the purpose of returning to his room. He was naturally less than ever disposed now to call upon Berger, and he had therefore to make a great effort at last to ring for the waiter, and to inquire of him the way to Doctor Birkenhain's institution.

"Doctor Birkenhain's asylum, sir? Quite near by, sir. The best way is through our garden up the hill, then always turning to the left, on the height along the river, until you come to a large house. That is Doctor Birkenhain's asylum. You have perhaps a relation of yours there? We have many people coming here who have relations at Doctor Birkenhain's. Only this summer there was a lady here from your country, who stayed several months at the house. Very beautiful lady, sir, perhaps you may know her; a Frau von Berkow, with her brother, a Baron Oldenburg--very tall gentleman, with a black beard----"

"Is Baron Oldenburg a brother of that lady?" asked Oswald, not without some reluctance.

"Why, certainly, sir. The gentleman and the lady were at least two weeks here, and always together. But the brother had to leave before the lady's husband died--what a misfortune for such a beautiful lady! Will you be back in time for supper, sir? No? But you will certainly stay over night, sir? Oh, I thought so--of course. Nothing else I can do for you, sir? How far is it? Oh, at most, ten minutes' walk. I'll show you the way, sir."

When the loquacious waiter had at last left him, Oswald walked slowly along the path which followed the slope of the low range of hills. On the left hand prattled merrily a clear mountain brook, rich in trout, which gave its name to the town, and flowed evenly beneath tall trees. Here and there the water peeped out from between the dense foliage, but only to disappear again, like a playful child that likes to tease. At one point the brook had been stopped and forced to turn the wheels of a mill. The little vagabond did not seem to like the delay. It poured its waters wrathfully into the mill-race, shook and struck the buckets with all its might, and then rushed off, foaming and pelting, in angry haste.

Oswald sat down on the low railing opposite the mill, and looked wearily into the water, as it played and purred, drawing wide circles and pushing wave after wave. He thought of Melitta, how often she had probably come down this way, hanging on the arm of "her brother," and stopping no doubt frequently at this very spot, whose picturesque beauty could not have escaped her attention.

He felt sad unto death. His feelings boiled within him as the waters did in the mill-race; his thoughts were whirling around like the foam-bubbles on the surface. Was his hatred to be as blind as his love? Was there anything wrong and anything right in the world?--the world to be a cosmos? Yes, for him whose glance was content with skimming the surface, where the waters flowed merrily over the level ground in the shade of beautiful trees--but also for him who sounded the depths, where all was rushing and roaring chaotically? Up! up! to him, the man of sorrow! He had sounded the depths of life, he shall tell me what he has seen there, what masks and spectres, that he should ever after close his eyes in horror and disgust!

Oswald rose and continued his journey; the path became steeper until it led to a large building, which lay at a short distance from the highroad on a moderate hill, amid gardens. Surrounded as it was on all sides by high walls, it looked too much like a castle to be a private residence, and yet too much like a prison also for a castle. It was Dr. Birkenhain's asylum.

Oswald rang the bell by the side of the iron grating, with some palpitation of heart. A window opened in the porter's lodge; the gate-keeper looked out and asked what he wanted. Oswald wished to see Doctor Birkenhain.

"Do you come by appointment?"

"Yes."

"Your name?"

Oswald gave his name.

The man looked at a table, on which the names of those who were to be admitted seemed to be written; then he put his head out again, and said through the small window,

"Go straight across the court to the main entrance; there ring again!"

The gate opened, and closed again when Oswald had entered. He went towards the house across the large court-yard, which was covered with gravel and adorned here and there with groups of trees and shrubberies. On a bench under one of the trees, amidst a group of several persons, sat a young man remarkably well dressed. When Oswald passed him he rose very politely, and taking off his hat and making a deep bow, said,

"I surely have the honor of addressing the Emperor of Fez and Morocco?"

As Oswald answered No! to the strange question, the young man shook his head sadly, and looking at Oswald with a vacant stare, he added,

"It is very remarkable! the emperor had promised me solemnly to come for me this summer; and now the summer is nearly gone and the emperor has not come yet. I shall have to wait till next summer. But then he will be here most certainly. Don't you think so?"

"I do not doubt it for a moment," replied Oswald. A faint ray of joy flashed across the pale face of the unfortunate man. He bowed again, put on his hat, and went back to his seat on the bench.

Oswald went to the front door, rang the bell, and a servant who appeared at the summons opened the door for him and showed him into a parlor. Then he took his name, and begged him to wait a few moments. Doctor Birkenhain would be in directly.

It was a handsome, lofty apartment. A few excellent oil-paintings hung on the walls; antique heads and busts stood about on brackets, the Apollo Belvedere, the Zeus of Otricoli, the Ludovisi Juno; upon the centre-tables lay books and portfolios with engravings. All breathed the highest kind of enjoyment, and nothing reminded the visitor that he was in a house of disease and death.

After a few minutes the door opened and Doctor Birkenhain entered. Oswald had of course formed to himself some idea of the man who had recently become so very important to him, and was grievously disappointed when he found that there was not a feature of his portrait in the man before him. He had imagined Doctor Birkenhain to be a venerable old man, full of dignity and gravity, and now he found himself standing before a man little older than himself--he had surely not passed his thirtieth year--tall and thin, with spare, light-brown hair and carefully-trimmed moustache and beard, a pale face of a sickly, sallow color, a lofty brow, and large light-blue eyes, in which one could instantly see that they were accustomed to read the hearts of men, and whose intense piercing sharpness became after awhile almost unbearable.

Doctor Birkenhain greeted Oswald with due politeness, and then expressed his regret that he should have been deprived of the pleasure of making Doctor Braun's acquaintance, whom he had wished to congratulate upon having secured to himself a place among the first physicians of

Germany by his admirable treatise on typhus. Then he added:

"I have looked forward to your visit with the greatest interest, because I hope great things for Berger from the effect of your meeting with him. I know through Mr. Bemperlein, and also from Berger's own lips, that you are the most intimate friend, and, so to speak, the favorite, of the unfortunate man--that you were so at least before the breaking out of his disease. If anything can succeed in reviving once more the interest in life which has been almost entirely extinguished in Berger, it is love--not the universal love of mankind, which is only another kind of egotism, but the special love for a single individual, with whose joys and sorrows he can heartily sympathize. Love is the most vigorous of all feelings; it resists annihilation better than any other and outlives all others. The greatest psychologist who ever lived, and to whom we physicians are deeply indebted, Shakespeare, makes Lear say to the fool shortly before insanity overwhelms him: 'I have one part in my heart that's sorry yet for thee.' This one part of the heart is the sound part, where the cure must begin, and so it is with Berger. I beg, therefore, you will try to interest Berger by all means in your own fate. Tell him all about your plans and purposes, your hopes and your wishes--about your joys and your sorrows; speak to him especially of your griefs, if you have any--and you will pardon such an indiscretion in a physician--I think your confidences will be particularly ample in that direction. You smile! Well, perhaps I am mistaken, and what I thought I read in your face is the result of mere bodily uneasiness, and not of mental suffering; but, however that may be, do not conceal from Berger the shady side, and even the night side of your life. On the contrary, complain--and the more impressively, the more painfully, you can do that, the better--only mourn and grieve like a sick man, who longs after health like an imprisoned bird that yearns after freedom. The sufferings of those we love are a thousand times more touching to us than our own, and the burden which Berger hardly feels in his own case will appear to him unbearable when he sees it on the shoulders of one who is dear to him. For, I repeat it, that is the only way to approach such a man. He is too deep a thinker, too subtle a philosopher, not to be clad in impenetrable armor against all reasoning. If you prove to him the dignity and usefulness of life, he meets you with ten arguments which prove the contrary; and if you split a hair, he splits each half over again. On the other hand, you need not fear that he will involve you, as formerly, in long philosophic discussions. The science which was once his delight, is now a horror to him; he will hear nothing of it and see nothing. And now, one thing more: how long do you propose staying in Fichtenu?"

"Four or five days at most."

"Very well; I was just about to ask you not to extend your visit beyond that. The purpose is to make a deep impression upon Berger; and after the pleasure he will feel at seeing you again, he must experience the pain of parting so soon. Perhaps we may thus lure him back into the world, from which he now turns away in disgust."

"Has Berger been made aware of my arrival?"

"No. I wished to profit even by the surprise. I shall not go with you, so that there maybe nothing to diminish the surprise. You can tell me afterwards how he received you. He generally takes about this time a walk in the mountains, which he occasionally extends into the night. I give him perfect liberty, as any restraint would only be injurious. You know, besides, that his coming here was his own wish and resolution. Go with him when he takes his walk; heart opens to heart more readily under the great dome of heaven than under the ceiling of a room."

"One thing more," continued Doctor Birkenhain, as they were rising. "You will find Berger much changed in appearance; try to influence him in that direction also, though of course you will have to use your discretion. Such apparent trifles are of great importance; a missing glove-button may make a dandy lose his composure, and we have a different temper in our dressing gown and in evening dress. Now let us go, if you like; I will show you the way to Berger's door."

The two gentlemen went from the reception room across the hall, with its tessellated floor, up the wide stone steps, through lofty, airy passages.

They were met by several persons whom Oswald would not have taken for patients if Doctor Birkenhain had not told him so; they gave such sensible answers to the casual questions of the physician.

"This wing is for the slightly-affected patients," said Doctor Birkenhain; "as it is such fine weather most of them are in the garden or in the court-yard. How do you do, counsellor?"

"Thank you, doctor," replied an exceedingly corpulent, good-looking man, whom they met passing with a watering-pot in his hand, "thank you, I should be perfectly well, if----"

The counsellor cast a glance at Oswald, and then came quite close to the doctor, whispering something in his ear, of which Oswald could only catch the words, "bundle of hay"--"in my side." "Oh, that matters very little," replied Birkenhain, in a tone full of confidence, which sounded as if it must have been inspiring to the greatest hypochondriac; "we'll soon settle that." The patient gratefully shook hands with his physician and went on, evidently quite comforted and delighted with the probable victory over his imaginary ailment.

"I wish Berger's case were as easy as that man's," said Doctor Birkenhain, as they were

walking down the long passage; "but pills and ointments have no effect on his complaint. Here we are; now you go to the end of the passage, and the last door to the left is Berger's room. I am very curious to hear what you will have to tell me. Will you dine with me to-morrow? I shall take great pleasure in presenting you to my wife. At three o'clock. Will you come? *Au revoir*, then!"

Doctor Birkenhain shook hands with Oswald and went into one of the rooms which they had passed. Oswald went alone to the end of the passage, full of the deep impression which the man who had just left him had made upon him, and at the same time very much troubled about the part which he was to play. He was to help Berger to recover his interest in life, and he had himself lost all such interest! Was he not of all men the least fitted for such a mission? And yet he had accepted it! He must fulfil it!

Oswald came to the door which had been pointed out to him. Upon the brown panel was something written in chalk, and evidently in Berger's hand:

"Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate."

Oswald shuddered as he read it. He remained standing undecided before the door, and it was some time before he could make up his mind to knock. He listened to hear if anything was stirring within; he heard nothing. At last he summoned courage and knocked with a strong hand. As no answer came, he knocked still louder; again no answer. A great fear overcame him; he hastily opened the door and entered the room.

CHAPTER VII.

Oswald need not have feared. Berger was sitting in the centre of the darkened room, all the curtains being closed, before a table covered with books. He was resting his head in both hands, and seemed to sleep, for he did not stir even when Oswald stepped up close to the table. Oswald did not dare wake him. He remained standing by the table and looked at the poor sufferer, his eyes filling unconsciously with tears. What havoc these few months had made with the face once so proud, so full of energy; the dark curling hair was grizzled; the massive brow, hewn apparently out of the live granite, appeared even more powerful and imposing, thanks to the increased baldness at the temples. A full beard, formerly an aversion to Berger, now flowed, silver-gray, from cheek, lips, and chin, so that the end nearly touched the table. His hands, once so plump and carefully kept, had become so thin, so transparent! And what a costume! A blue smock-frock, instead of the black coat which was never allowed to show a particle of dust; a coarse, ill-fitting shirt, instead of the fine, dazzling white linen upon which he formerly insisted. On the table a worn-out slouched hat and a stick, which had evidently not long ago formed part of a hedge of thorns, in place of the smooth silk hat from Paris, and the clouded cane with its gold head! If the outer man could change to such an extent, what a revolution must have taken place in the lowest depths of the soul!

Berger stirred. He raised his head, opened his eyes, and looked at Oswald. His eyes were deep and clear, and looked larger than usual; he did not start nor betray astonishment, wonder, or fear, at the unexpected sight.

"I had but just now dreamt of you, Oswald," he said, rising, with a low voice, from which all former sharpness and energy seemed to have departed.

Oswald could restrain himself no longer. He sobbed aloud and threw himself into Berger's arms. Now only, lying on the bosom of this man, he felt all his sufferings fully, as he thought; now only, in the arms of this man who had endured so much, he fancied he need not be ashamed any longer of the tears which his heart had bled when his eyes refused to weep.

Berger held him in his arms, as a father holds his son who comes home from a far country in which he has fed with the swine.

"Weep on," he said, "weep! Tears relieve a young, overflowing heart. When I was as young as you, I wept as you do; now my eyes have forgotten how to weep."

"Berger, dear, dear Berger!"

"I knew I should see you again. I expected you long ago. I did not think you would stand it so long in the great desert outside. Weep on! Tears are the price with which we buy our souls back again, when we find what a wretched bargain we had made before we knew better. Ere we give up life we have to learn that it is better not to live. Some learn that sooner, others later. Be glad

that you are one of those who during the bitterness of the Sansara have already a foretaste of the sweetness of the Nirvana."

He left Oswald, and took his hat and cane from the table.

"Come!" he said.

Oswald was so deeply moved by this scene that the recollection of Berger's odd costume only suggested to him the conviction how utterly impossible it would be to speak to such a man of such things. He would as lief have reminded a mother who was weeping over the body of her child of some defect in her toilet, a bow out of place, or a ribbon which had come loose.

They passed through the long passages, down the broad stone staircase and out into the courtyard. As they went across the latter, the young man who was sitting on the bench came up to them and repeated the question which he had before asked of Oswald:

"I certainly have the honor to address the Emperor of Fez and Morocco?"

"No!" replied Berger, "The emperor is not coming; you may rely upon it."

"Is not coming!" repeated the young man; and his pale face became still paler, and his eyes wandered restlessly to and fro; "is not coming! how do you know that?"

"Because, if he should come it would not be for your happiness, as you imagine, but for your final ruin. Why do you wish him to come? To bring you gold, which you will gamble away? and jewels, which you will lavish upon your mistresses; to afford you the means of continuing a life which you ought to thank God on your knees you have escaped from--if you believe in any God? What appears to you a star of promise, is a will-o'-the-wisp from the moors. Do not trust in its glimmer--it lures you hither and thither, and each time deeper into the moor. Turn resolutely back from it! I tell you once more, the emperor is not coming! and it is fortunate for you that he does not come!"

"Do you know his majesty so intimately?" stammered the young man.

"Very intimately," said Berger, and a peculiar smile played on his features, "only too intimately. I also was misled by his majesty. You expect from his promise money and lands. I was promised--never mind what; and thus he promises everybody something else, in order to fool and trick everybody. The conviction that his majesty's promises are nothing but wind--that is the beginning of wisdom, and the last conclusion of wisdom into the bargain."

Berger had uttered the last words with a suddenly-sinking voice, as if he were speaking to himself. He paid no further attention to the young man, who was standing there, hat in hand, with an indescribably sad face. Nor did he seem to notice Oswald, who followed him silently, and most painfully affected by the touching scene.

Berger apparently felt what was going on in his companion's heart, for they had left the gate which was opened to them without delay, and found themselves on the turnpike, which followed first one bank, and then, after crossing the river on a bridge, the opposite bank, rising higher and higher into the mountains. He suddenly broke his silence and said,

"You are wondering why I did not treat the poor fellow more tenderly, instead of destroying so rudely his absurd illusions? This apparent cruelty was in reality a great kindness."

"Who is the unfortunate man?"

"A Count Mattan, from our country. He has spent during the last few years a fortune of half a million in senseless extravagance. Now he hopes for the fabulous emperor, who is to restore to him all his losses."

"But if your robbing the young man of his last consolation should deprive him of the last feeble remnant of sense----"

"You speak like Doctor Birkenhain. It makes me laugh to see how these optimists blindly try to arrest the power which drives man irresistibly into destruction, like children who try to stop a river with their little hands. My study here is the observation of this peculiar struggle, which would be grand if it were not so ludicrous. These doctors move in the dark, as if they were playing blindman's buff, and think they have cured the disease when they have gotten rid of the symptoms. They do not know, they do not even suspect, that life itself is the shoe that pinches, the garment of Nessus which burns our living body--and that to pull off this shoe, to throw away the garment, is not only the best but the only remedy by which we can escape the wretchedness of existence."

They had left the highroad and reached a clearing in the forest, which was thickly overgrown with moss and heather. Before them was a view over the tops of pine trees into the plain from which they had ascended, and far into the land of hills; behind them the forest extended upwards. It was quiet, perfectly quiet, around them. Long white gossamer floated through the thin, clear air. The flowers were gone; the birds had forgotten their songs, the locusts their chirping;

summer itself had died, and Nature sat in silent grief by the corpse. Even the autumnal sunshine had something sad in it, like a widow's smile; the blue of the sky was sickly, like the tearful eye of a mourner.

Berger had seated himself on the low stump of a tree, and Oswald lay down close by him on the thick heather. In this silence of the forest, which reminded him so forcibly of the woods of Berkow and Grenwitz, and of the painfully sweet days he had spent there, he felt that irrepressible impulse to speak which at times overcomes us all of a sudden. As the Catholic is moved to whisper his deep-hidden secrets into the ear of the priest, his personified conscience, so Oswald felt impelled to confess to the unhappy man by his side, in whom he had ever seen another self, all that he had experienced, tried to obtain, suffered and sinned, during these last eventful, fatal months. He did not think of Doctor Birkenhain's suggestion to interest Berger by all means at his command in his own fate, and thus to play the part of the physician to his patient. Was he not a very sick patient himself? But, whatever might agitate his heart--the man by his side had suffered worse things; what, he hardly dared confess to himself--the man who was wandering with lowered head in the dark labyrinth of his soul, and could find no way to light, he could hear all, all. And thus he told him, first hesitatingly, then with animation, with passionate excitement, all he had to tell: his love of Melitta, his love of Helen, his friendship for Bruno, and how jealousy and sickness of heart had robbed him of the one, and strange circumstances and death of the other.

Berger had listened in silence, supporting his chin in his hand, and looking with his large eyes fixedly at the distance, without once interrupting Oswald. At last, when the young man wound up with the painful complaint "Why did you send me into this troublesome world? Why did you let me wander about so long in this darkness?" Berger raised his head, turned his eyes towards him, and said slowly, thoughtfully,

"Because you had to learn this also; because, as long as you were with me in Grunwald, you still believed in that great falsehood which we call life; because the pride with which you insisted upon its being a truth had to be broken. I have led you the shortest and safest way to wisdom. I knew you would allow yourself to be dazzled by false splendor; I knew you would hasten with beating heart, with parched tongue, through the lonely, white sand of the desert, towards the blue lake with the wooded shore, which drew back further and further as you thought you were coming nearer, until you would at last break down, cursing your sufferings and your existence. Be joyful! You have gone through with it; you have finished your first and hardest course in as many weeks as it took me years. You have opened your eyes and looked at what was there, and behold! it was not good! The value of life, the purpose of life, has become doubtful to you. You have begun to understand that the assertion of superficial optimists: Life is the purpose of life! is hardly correct--unless one could find satisfaction in striving after a purpose which can never be accomplished, or which, if it be accomplished, is worth nothing. You have seen how indissolubly untruth, stupidity, and vulgarity are interwoven with truth, honesty, wisdom, and majesty. This knowledge, which only the brutalized slave, grinning under the lash of the driver, receives with indifference, but which saddens noble hearts unto death, is the beginning of wisdom, the entrance to the great mystery."

"And the great mystery?"

Berger made no reply; he looked again with fixed eyes at the distance. Oswald dared not repeat his question.

Deep silence all around. Silently the light gossamer floated through the clear air; silently the evening sunshine wove its golden net around the heather and the dark-green tops of the pine-trees.

They sat thus speechless side by side--silent and sad, like two children lost in the woods. But while the one, who had wound up his life, and who was fearfully in earnest with his contempt of the world, suffered himself to sink deeper and deeper into the abyss of his grief, the young, fresh vitality of the other struggled mightily towards light and air.

"What is this in me which rouses me at this very moment, when I least expected it, to oppose your wisdom?" he inquired, looking up at Berger. "My reason tells me you are right, but my eye drinks with delight the beauty of this evening landscape; drinks it down into the heart, and there, in my heart, a voice whispers: 'The world is so fair, so fair! and even if life makes you suffer bitter things without end, it is still sweet.' Tell me, Berger, did you ever love with all the strength of your heart? and can love die, as the summer dies, and the flowers, and the warm sunlight?"

Berger smiled--it was a strange, weird smile.

"Did I ever love?"

He cast down his eyes, and took off with his stick a piece of the thick crust of moss at his feet.

"What good does it do," he said, "to lift the veil which so many years have spread over the past? You see what is below--decay and destruction."

"And yet," he said, after a pause, "it is but right you should learn that also. Hear, then:"

"It is now thirty years. I was then at your age, but without having made your experiences; clinging to life in full, unbroken strength, and thinking it as sweet and precious as a love of my heart. If ever man was enthusiastic about liberty and beauty--about all those fair fancies with which we try to beautify our miserable existence here, and to hide its wretched hollowness--if ever man was raving about those bloodless images which we call ideals--I was that man. In my madness I fancied that eternal bliss might be won even here below wherever men were living in a free country. I believed in my native land, and sealed my faith with my blood on the battle-fields of Leipzig and Waterloo. I returned full of burning zeal to complete the great work. But before I could undertake to heal the wounds which my country had received during the war, I had to think of healing my own wounds. They sent me, when I recovered, to Fichtenau.

"In those days Fichtenau was not what it is now. There was no Kurhaus then, and no asylum for the insane; nevertheless the town was always full of visitors, for the poetic halo with which the great men of Weimar had surrounded these valleys attracted the crowd. I kept aloof, and lived only for my health and my studies.

"I boarded in the house of an old schoolmaster with whom I had become acquainted, and whose friendship I cultivated because he possessed quite a large library, and books were not so easily accessible then, especially in this remote part of the world. But the old gentleman possessed yet another treasure, besides his library--a most beautiful daughter. The daughter soon became more interesting to me than the library. You asked me if I had ever loved with all my heart. If you had known Leonora, and seen how high and how powerfully my heart then beat, you would not have asked me that question.

"It was a summer day--a marvellously beautiful summer day. We had gone out into the woods after dinner--a mixed company--young and old. We lay down on the swelling moss in the shade of the pine-trees. How my eye dwelt upon her graceful form as she did the honors of the company with merry modesty; how my ear drank in the tones of her silvery, sweet voice! It was the old song of the sirens, which was heard thousands and thousands of years ago, and which will yet be heard thousands and thousands of years hence--till the time is fulfilled.

"After the coffee we strolled about in the forest--in groups, by pairs, as accident and inclination brought it about. I had followed Leonora, who was gathering a bunch of wild-flowers. I helped her, although I did not know much of these things, and was often laughed at by the teasing girls on account of my odd selection. She however became more and more silent the deeper we went into the wood and the further we left the others behind. As she became more silent and anxious, I grew more animated and pressing. Her silence and the blush on her cheeks told me what I had long since desired in secret, what I had prayed heaven to grant me, and what I had yet never hoped to obtain.

"Then we stepped out upon this clearing. The same mountains which are there lying before us looked as blue to us, and the same sun which looks down from heaven now poured a dazzling light lavishly down upon us. And the golden light shone brightly on her dark, curling hair, and played upon her round, white shoulders; and here, on this very place, we fell into each other's arms and swore each other eternal love, amid hot kisses and hot tears.

"The stump on which I am now sitting was then a tall, slender, powerful pine-tree, and I was young and slender, and full of exuberant strength. The tree has been cut down and burnt in the fire; I--I have become what I am----"

Berger paused and stirred up the moss at his feet with his cane. Oswald looked with reverence at the unfortunate man; but he dared not speak, nor even seize Berger's hand, which was listlessly hanging down by his side. Lofty calmness rested on Berger's face; not a gesture betrayed what was going on in his heart; but he did not look like one who requires sympathy or expects sympathy.

"Not at once," he suddenly continued--"the strength within me was great and could only be broken by piecemeal. I spoke, after our return home, to the old gentleman; he liked me and was heartily glad to see our affection. A few days later I returned to the University in order to resume my studies, which the war had interrupted. I studied with increasing diligence, for my thirst of knowledge was hardly less of an incentive than my desire to be able as soon as possible to carry Leonora home with me as my wife. I therefore went only rarely to Fichtenau, and then stayed only a short time to sun myself in Leonora's love, and to return to my work with new courage and new strength. But I had another lady-love, whom I worshipped with no less ardor--Liberty. I shared that passion with many other noble young men. We did not mean to have shed our blood on the battlefields in vain; we were not willing to become the prey of so many jackals and wolves, after we had successfully overcome a lion. But the jackals were on their guard, and the wolves broke in our fold.

"I had been engaged in teaching for a year; I had prepared everything for the wedding; the day was fixed; I was counting the days and the hours. Suddenly, one night, I was seized in my bed by armed men. My papers were sealed up; and the next night I slept in a casemate of a fortress.

"Or, rather, I did not sleep--I was enraged, I was maddened; my hands bled from my efforts to break the bars of my cage. Gradually I consoled myself with the hope that this captivity could not last long, and Leonora--well! she would bear her hard lot like a heroine. A second Egmont, I saw

freedom and my beloved hand in hand. Through night to light! Through battle to victory! That was the mystic word with which I tried to frighten back the serpent-haired monster. Despair, when it was pressing upon me and about to strike its fangs into my heart. The mystic word had ample time to prove its power. I remained in prison for five years!

"You may imagine if my faith in the so-called divine nature of the world's government was shaken during this time, which I measured by the beats of my heart, and the drops which fell, one by one, from the damp ceiling of my cell. But, I told you before, my strength was great, and I was sternly determined to live. I had heard, to be sure, in the silent nights which saw me tossing restlessly upon my hard couch, the great word that releases us, but I had understood it only half, and perhaps not quite half. I had but just begun to spell the letters in my long apprenticeship; life itself was to be my school, before I should be able to read it fluently.

"I had scarcely been set free when I hastened to this place--you may imagine with what feelings! In the beginning of my captivity I had received one or two letters from Leonora, in which she conjured me to endure patiently, and to remain faithful, appealing to the God to whom she was hourly sending up her prayers for my release. Her letters had become rarer, and after about two years none had come any more. That was my greatest sorrow; but I always believed that it was the cruelty of my jailors which denied me this consolation, and I ground my teeth and cursed my tormentors.

"I had done them injustice.

"It was far in the night when I reached Fichtenau. I drove directly to the familiar house. I jumped from the carriage and pulled the bell. A window was opened up-stairs; an old woman looked out and asked what I wanted? I inquired after the schoolmaster. 'He died three years ago,' was the curt answer. 'And where is his daughter?' 'You must ask the great gentleman who eloped with her three years ago,' said the woman, and shut the window with violence. I stood thunderstruck. Then I laughed aloud; but I was silenced by an intense pain in the heart--for, Oswald, I had loved Leonora.

"I never knew how I reached the inn. Late in the night I roused the good people from their slumbers by my wild laughing and furious raging. They broke open the door of my room--I was in full delirium. The air of the prison had affected my health, and the fearful blow, finding me utterly unprepared, had shaken the weakened edifice to the foundation. I struggled four weeks for my life, but I clung to it fiercely, and Death had to give up its prey. Woe to me! That death would not have been the ordinary death to me--it would have restored me to life! If I should die now I would die for ever!"

Oswald shuddered. What was the meaning of these mysterious words: "Die forever!" Did they contain that great mystery which was yet hidden from him by a thick veil?

"My convalescence," continued Berger, "lasted long, for my strength had been utterly exhausted. I crept through the streets of the village, leaning on a stick, and rejoiced to find that I could climb, day by day, a few steps higher, until I succeeded at last in reaching this spot here--the scene of an oath, which I had fancied to be sworn for eternity, and which had passed away with the breath of her lips. I came every day here to weep over my lost happiness, and to quarrel with Heaven who lets his sun shine upon the unjust, and hurls his lightnings at the just. For I was, like King Lear, a man more sinned against than sinning. I had meant well and faithfully in all I had hoped and striven for in life. I had loved my native land as a child loves its parents, with a simple, believing heart; and in return it had made me suffer five years in a dungeon. I had loved Leonora with every drop of blood in my heart; and in return she had betrayed me. Up to that moment I had so lived in the world that I could face all and say: Who can accuse me of a sin?--and yet! and yet! I racked my brain to solve the mystery. I had never yet understood fully that life itself is the great sin, from which all other sins flow necessarily, as the stone, once set in motion, must roll inevitably down the precipice. Thus only I gradually comprehended that He cannot be a God of love who created and still creates a world in which the sins of the fathers are punished down to the third and fourth generation--a world, the whole government of which rests on the fearful Jesuitical principles that the end sanctions the means. So far I had always tried to find out only what was good in the world and in men; now my eyes had been opened by sore sufferings for the sufferings of my fellow-beings. I now saw how every page of our history bears the record of some fearful deed that makes our hair stand on end, and our blood curdle in our veins; I saw that there is a dark corner in every man's heart which he never dares look into; that no man yet has lived who did not wish once in his life that he had never been born; I saw that the life of countless multitudes is nothing more than a desperate struggle for existence; that sickness and sin, repentance and sorrow, undermine our life most thoroughly and eat their way to the core like worms in ripe fruit; that at best our pleasures are a dance upon graves--that, if life really ever was precious, death, inexorable death, is forever scorning and scoffing at this precious life. And I looked around on nature, in which poets see an idyll, and I found that it was either dead and insensible, or, when it does feel and sympathize, only repeating the bloody drama of human existence in a ruder and more shocking form. I saw that the different races of animals are engaged in fierce, implacable warfare against each other, uninterrupted by a moment's peace, and that their wars are carried on with a cruelty by the side of which even the most refined tortures of the Inquisition appear at times very harmless proceedings.

"And whilst I thus tore the gay rags to pieces, under which cowardice and stupidity try to

conceal the wounds and sores of society, there arose in my heart a feeling which I had not known before--hatred. It was only my love in another form, although I tried to persuade myself that I had forgotten the faithless one; it was only another expression of my fondness of life, although I had fancied that I had forever closed my account with life. When we really give up life, we know nothing more of love or hatred.

"At that time, however, I did hate. Passionately as I had loved, my whole being was concentrated in the one, burning desire to be revenged. Revenge! revenge! on him! on her!--this was the cry of a voice within me, which I could never silence again. They all knew my misfortune in Fichtenau, and felt for me with that cheap sympathy which is composed of delight in scandal and the pleasure we take in the failures of others. They told me, unasked, all that was known about Leonora's flight.

"About the time when my letters had first failed to come to me, a young Polish count had arrived in Fichtenau and taken the rooms in the old schoolmaster's house which I had occupied. Soon the whole town had been full of him, of his beauty and his wealth. They had teased Leonora about her handsome lodger, but she had rebuked all such jests on the part of her young friends with great indignation. Soon, however, they no longer dared to say openly to her what they thought about her relations to the young count, but only whispered it about with bated breath that they had been seen together late at night at such and such places, and that the gold chain which she was now wearing had not been in her possession before. And then came a day on which they had no longer whispered, but proclaimed aloud in the streets, that the schoolmaster's Leonora had eloped the night before with the handsome count, and that her poor old father, a confirmed invalid, had been so deeply affected by the news as to be dangerously ill. A few days later the old man had really died. Of Leonora nothing had been heard since that night.

"Fortunately the name of the count was well known, and that was all I desired in order to carry out my plan of revenge. I took what little remained of my fortune and began my travels--first to Warsaw. There the count was very well known; they described him to me as a profligate young man, who made it the business of his life to seduce beautiful women. An acquaintance added, that he had seen him about two years before in Venice in company with a beautiful lady, who might have been Leonora from his description.

"I went to Venice. There also he was well remembered; he had lived there several months and had then moved to Milan. From Milan they sent me to Rome. There I met with a friend of my youth, a painter. He had seen the count and Leonora very frequently, and pitied the poor girl long before he knew that she had ever been dear to me. He told me that the count had treated her very badly, and laughingly told everybody that no one could do him a more valuable service than by relieving him of this burden. Then the painter hesitated and declined to say more. I conjured him to tell me all, assuring him that I was prepared to hear the worst. At last he yielded, and told me that after some time the count had really found a successor in the person of a French marquis, or at least a pretended marquis, who had taken Leonora with him to Paris. This had occurred about a year ago. The count was said to be living in Naples. I went to Naples, with my friend the painter. I had told him my purpose to have my revenge. He thought it would be very difficult, since the count was as cunning and brave as he was dissipated and cruel. But when he saw me firmly bent upon my purpose, he offered to accompany me. I accepted the offer; for the painter had many acquaintances among the great men of the world, and could introduce me into the circles frequented by the count, to which I would not otherwise have found access.

"We reached Naples. The count was still there, the spoilt pet of the women and the horror of fathers and husbands. The painter succeeded without any trouble in introducing me in good society. For some time chance seemed to defeat every effort I made to meet the count at one of the parties where he was expected. At last I met him at a great soiree given by the Russian Minister. I saw him standing in the centre of a group of ladies and gentlemen, and could not deny him the praise of really superb beauty and an almost irresistible charm of manner. I approached the group, with the painter by my side.

"'Count,' said the painter, 'Doctor Berger, of Fichtenau, desires to make your acquaintance; permit me to present him to you.'

"At the mention of Fichtenau the count had turned pale, and changed countenance in such a manner that all the by-standers were struck by it.

"'I shall not detain you long, count,' said I, stepping forward, 'I only desire to learn from you the present place of residence of that young lady whom you carried off from her paternal home three years ago, and whom you finally sold to a French adventurer in Rome.'

"I said these words calmly, slowly, weighing every syllable. My voice was heard all over the room, for at the first words I uttered everybody had become so silent that you could have heard a pin drop.

"The count had turned still paler, but he soon recovered himself and said:

"'And what right have you to ask such a question at a time and place which you have chosen marvellously well?'

"I had the misfortune of being engaged to the young lady.'

"And if I decline giving you the information----'

"Then I declare you before all these ladies and gentlemen to be from head to foot nothing but a vulgar blackguard.'

"With these words I threw my glove into his face and left the company, after having asked their pardon for the necessity that had forced me to provoke so unpleasant a scene.

"An insult of this kind could only be wiped out by blood, according to the views of the society in which the count moved. To prevent his pleading too great a disparity in social rank I had taken the precaution of wearing my officer's uniform; and besides, the well-known name of my friend, the painter, secured me against the suspicion of being an unknown adventurer. The very favor which the count enjoyed with the ladies had, moreover, made him very hateful to the men, so that everybody was glad to see him thus publicly exposed, and if he had refused to fight me he would probably have lost his standing in society. His few friends had, therefore, shrugged their shoulders, and his enemies had smiled with delight, when he had left the house soon after my departure, and an hour afterwards I received a challenge for the following morning. That was all I desired. I was delighted; and the few hours still wanting till I should see the seducer of Leonora, the murderer of my earthly happiness, at the mouth of my pistol, seemed to me an eternity. I could not bear the confinement of my hotel; I wanted to cool the fever of revenge that burnt in me in the balsamic night air. My friend begged me not to do so, since I might easily take cold during my nightly promenade, as he called it, with an ironical smile. But excited and maddened as I was, I insisted on my purpose, and he accompanied me, but only after having provided daggers for both of us.

"I was soon to learn how much better the painter knew the character of my enemy and the manners of the people among whom we happened to be. We had scarcely gone a few hundred yards from the hotel, and were just turning into Toledo street from a narrow lane, when four men suddenly jumped forth from the deep shadow of a house and fell upon us with incredible fury. Fortunately the painter was a man of gigantic strength, and I also had my good arm and presence of mind. The murderers seemed to be surprised by our resistance. After a few moments they took to their heels. I was going to follow them. 'Let them run,' said the painter, wiping his bloody dagger; 'I fear I have scratched one of them rather too deep. But the fellow was really too zealous to earn the few dollars which the count had given him.'

"I had lost all desire to continue my walk. We returned by the nearest way to our hotel, and awaited the appointed hour with impatience.

"The painter tried to persuade me that I ought not to fight a duel with a man who had resorted to assassination, but should knock him down like a mad dog; but I replied to him that that was exactly what I meant to, do, and that the duel was only an empty ceremony. We became quite warm in the discussion.

"Very unnecessarily so. Morning broke at last; we were the first on the spot; no adversary was to be seen. At last, an hour later, the count's second appeared--a young Italian nobleman--pale and overwhelmed with shame. He told us how sorry he was to have kept us waiting so long, but that it was not his fault. The count had left his house late at night, after having arranged everything with his second, leaving orders for his man servant not to sit up for him. Since that moment he had not been seen again. It seemed to be highly probable that some accident had befallen him, for of course it would be ridiculous to presume for a moment that a man of the count's high social position should have escaped by flight from a duel.

"The painter replied that we could very well afford to wait, and that delay was not defeat. The young nobleman promised to inform us of anything he might learn concerning the count's movements. But the count remained unseen, and I had at last to take the painter's view, which he had already mentioned on the night of our encounter with the assassins, that the count himself had led the attack, being in all probability the very person whose violence had been most conspicuous, and who had been so severely punished by the strong arm of the painter. Either he had died in consequence of the wound received on that occasion, or, what was more probable, he was only wounded and remained concealed in order to avoid giving an explanation of his condition. Perhaps, also, he wished to escape the investigation of the affair by the police, who showed an unusual activity in the matter, as if they had been stimulated by the enemies of the count, and at the same time to escape from an adversary who attached such vulgar importance to matters which in his circle were passed over with a slight smile.

"However this might be, my adversary did not re-appear, and after the strange affair had been for four weeks the favorite topic of conversation all over town--for it had created an enormous sensation--I saw myself compelled to leave Naples without having accomplished my purpose.

"I went by way of Rome--where I took leave of my friend--to Paris. I felt that I had fulfilled my duty only half; the hardest part was yet to be done. I was afraid to meet Leonora again; and yet I wished it almost as earnestly. You will ask how I could take so deep an interest in a person who had so frivolously trifled with my happiness, and who had lost the last relic of respect which might have remained alive for her after her elopement with the Pole, by running away with the

Frenchman. But I told you I had loved Leonora with an ardent, demoniacal love, the fire of which had never yet burned out, and which was to burn, alas! long after all was consumed. Besides, I knew that Leonora, however recklessly she might have acted, was in reality not ignoble, but had probably in Rome been forced by a most fearful necessity to leave the man whom she had followed so far from love. I felt that now, if she was still alive, she must most assuredly be wretchedly unhappy.

"I reached Paris. The city was quite familiar to me, for I had already paid two visits there, in company with a few thousand armed friends. Moreover, I had provided myself in Naples with letters of introduction from the painter and several distinguished Italian and French gentlemen, whose acquaintance I had made there. A few inquiries confirmed at once the painter's original suspicion, that the marquis who had carried off Leonora from Rome was an adventurer. A marquis of that name did not exist, had never existed, at all events not in the Faubourg St. Germain. I had to continue my search in other less aristocratic quarters.

"A young Frenchman, an author, whose acquaintance I had made years ago, was my faithful companion in all my wanderings. He was a pleasant man, warmly attached to myself, and has ever since remained my best friend. I had, of course, told him the whole of my sad story; and he, who was far superior to me in knowledge of the world, and especially of that little world which makes up Paris, had first suggested to me to carry my investigations into the Quartier Latin, and other still more modest parts of the city. 'Paris,' said the Frenchman, 'is a place where men and things rarely preserve their original value long; they rise and fall in price with amazing rapidity. During a whole year the poor girl may have passed through very sad changes. If she has not committed suicide--and this is hardly probable, as she would probably have killed herself already in Rome, if she had had the courage to die--she has certainly sunk very low. I pray you prepare yourself for the very worst.'

"You may imagine how my heart bled when I heard these words, and felt how true they were likely to be. I felt like a man who is grappling in a lake for the body of his drowned child.

"One evening, as we were wandering about at haphazard through one of the most crowded suburbs, my companion surprised me by asking me: 'Did Leonora have any talent for dancing?' When I told him that she had always been perfect in that art, he said, 'We ought to have thought of that before. How strange that I never thought of asking you before.' He was so taken up with his new idea that he did not deign to answer when I inquired what the art of dancing had to do with our search. He hailed a cab; we went back into the city. We stopped at one of those dancing-halls which were then less brilliant, perhaps, but certainly not less crowded than nowadays. 'Look around, if you can see Leonora anywhere! We searched the whole establishment; Leonora was not there. 'Then let us go on.' We drove to another dancing-hall, and, when our search was here also fruitless, to a third, and a fourth. All in vain. I was so exhausted by the sad scenes I had witnessed, by the dust and the heat which filled these crowded rooms, by the efforts to find one certain person among so many, who were constantly changing from place to place, and by the excitement, the anxiety, and the very fear of finding what I was looking for, that I begged my companion to abandon the search, at least for to-night. 'Only one more locality,' he replied; 'I have on purpose left it for the last, because the probability of finding her there is strong enough, but also very painful.' 'How so?' 'The establishments which you have seen so far,' replied the Frenchman, 'are after a fashion quite respectable in spite of what is going on there. The visitors are beyond measure reckless, arrogant, frivolous, but after all not exactly vicious. They are students with their ladies, clerks with their grisettes, well-to-do mechanics who want to have a frolic, in company with their girls. The society into which I am now going to introduce you is far more elegant, but not quite so harmless. It is a house frequented mainly by wild young men of rank from the aristocratic quarters of the town, who seek here compensation for the dullness of their own saloons, and by foreigners who come to Paris to ruin their health and to waste their fortune. The fair sex is such as suits these people. You find here the most beautiful, but also the most corrupt of women, men-catchers, who drive to-day a four-in-hand, and die to-morrow in the hospital--mainly foreigners: Creoles, English, Italian, or German girls, who here find countrymen in numbers. Prepare yourself to look for her--I trust in vain--in this pandemonium.

"We reached the place. Broad marble steps led up. My heart beat violently; I could scarcely stand, for something within me told me that I had reached the goal of my wanderings; that the disfigured, swollen head of the dead body would the next moment rise from the black waters.

"We entered the brilliantly lighted hall. The orchestra played bacchantic music, and in bacchantic madness the dancers rushed by each other. The dazzling lights, the loud trumpets, the crowds, the heat, the narcotic fragrance of exotics, with which the room was adorned, and the fearful excitement under which I labored, took away my breath. I had to lean for a moment against a pillar, and closed my eyes in order to collect myself. As I was standing thus, faint and nearly falling, a voice fell upon my ear which stung me at the first note like an adder. The ear is a faithful monitor; it never in all this life forgets a voice whose notes have once been sweet and dear to it. It had not deceived me.

"Close before me, so close that I could have touched her with my hand, stood a girl, talking fast to a handsome young man; she was tall and slender, had large, brown eyes, which shone with feverish brightness, and a face far too sharply accented, too much worn out by life for so young a person, but nevertheless still very beautiful--and this girl was Leonora.

"Strange! when I had first heard her voice my heart had trembled as at the moment when I stood at night before the house in Fichtenau, and the old woman called down to me that Leonora had eloped. But after the first spasm I felt calm, quite calm. The chord had been stretched too far, it had broke; it now uttered not a sound of joy or of grief. I looked down upon Leonora as coldly as if she were a picture on the wall. I heard every word she said to her partner, as we hear words just before we are going to faint--as if they had been spoken at the other end of the hall. I examined her from head to foot, even her costume, with the calm criticism of an artist. I noticed that she was rouged, and that her dark eyebrows and lashes were dyed still darker. I noticed that she wore her hair exactly in the same manner in which I had myself once arranged it, after an antique, and as she had ever after worn it as long as I knew her. I heard everything, I saw everything, and yet I heard and saw nothing; for I had no clear perception of what I saw and heard.

"My companion, who had looked all around the hall in the meantime, now returned to where I stood. 'I have not been able to find any one corresponding to your description,' he said. 'God be thanked! I breathe more freely; I should not have liked, for the world, to have found her whom we look for in this place. But, *mon Dieu*, what is the matter? You look like a corpse!'

"'I have found her.'

"'Where?'

"'There!'

"He took his glass and examined Leonora for a few moments with most intense interest. She was still perfectly unconscious of those who were so near to her, and chatted and coquetted with her dancer.

"Then he shrugged his shoulders with pity and dropped his eye-glass. His face had become very serious.

"'Pauvre homme!' he whispered to himself.

"The music was breaking forth louder than ever; a new figure began in the Française, and it was Leonora's turn. She had evidently made great progress in her art since the day when I had seen her last dance at a club-ball in Fichtenau. I can candidly say I have never before or afterwards seen anything more perfect. It was the enchanting gracefulness of a jet-d'eau swaying to and fro in the light breeze, and yet at the same time a passionate rapture, such as we find nowhere else except perhaps among the Zingarellas of Spain or the Ghawazees of Egypt. At one moment it was the soft longing and yearning of gentle and subdued love, at the next moment it was the very soul of passion, trembling in every nerve and vibrating in every muscle, but here as well as there, a beautiful rhythm of marvellously complicated and yet ever harmoniously united movements was never wanting. This dance was a song--a song of love--but not of German love, dreamy, fragrant with the perfume of blooming lime-trees and softened by the pale light of the moon, but of sensuous Oriental love, hot with the burning rays of a Southern sun, and breathing narcotic voluptuousness. And with all that, her features were calm, not a muscle moving, not a trace of that repulsive, stereotyped smile worn by so many far-famed artists. Only her eyes burnt with uncanny fire, which blazed up brighter with every step, with every motion. Her partner rather walked than danced all the steps required with much elegance, but with a lofty carelessness, as if he looked rather ridiculous in his own eyes while performing the ceremony, and this calm composure seemed to make the passionate woman almost desperate, and determined to rouse him from his weary apathy by all the arts of which she was master. Perhaps this was really so; perhaps it only looked so--at all events this gave to the dance a rich dramatic interest, and afforded the by-standers a most attractive sight.

"'Ah, la belle Allemande!' cried an enthusiast near me.

"'Grand Dieu, qu'elle est jolie!' cried another; '*Brava! brava!*' and he applauded energetically with both hands till all the by-standers followed his example. '*Brava! brava! Vive la reine Eléonore! Vive la belle Allemande!*'

"My friend seized my arm and drew me further back under the pillars near which we had been standing. 'Come!' he said. 'Where?' 'Away from here!' 'Never!' 'Why, it is impossible you can feel an interest in such a creature! What can you do with her? I tell you she is lost! irreparably lost!' 'We will see that!' I murmured. The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders. 'You Germans are a strange people. But, at least follow my advice. Do not make a scene here; you would most likely have to fight half a dozen duels. Call upon the girl to-morrow, or whenever you choose. I will find out in a few minutes all about her residence, and whatever else you may want to know.'

"I saw that his was sensible advice. While he slipped away through the crowd, I threw myself into a chair and rested my head on my hands. Those were terrible moments. My temples were beating, my limbs were trembling--and yet within me all was calm, deadly calm and quiet. And, Oswald, in those moments, while I sat there alone, my face hid in my hands, in silent, unspeakable sorrow, amid the noisy crowd; and while my idol, the beloved of my youth, the woman whom I had worshipped in my dark dungeon like a glorious saint, was dancing a few steps from me, after a wicked, voluptuous music, the voluptuous dance of Herodias--in those

moments, Oswald, I bid an eternal farewell to happiness, to life. It was then that the curtain which had so long concealed from me the Great Mystery suddenly parted in the middle, and I stood shuddering at the threshold, which I yet dared not cross, and which I only crossed many, many years afterwards, for then I had not yet drained the cup to the dregs.

"The dance had come to an end. It became very lively all around me; laughter and joking, the rustling of rich dresses close to my ear. They took seats at the small tables, to cool their fever with ices and champagne. To my table also came a couple, who either could find no other place vacant, or thought the sleeper was not likely to be a dangerous listener.

"*Et vous m'aimez vraiment, Eléonore?*" said a soft but manly voice.

"*Oui, Charles!*"

"*De tout votre coeur?*"

"*De tout mon coeur!*"

"I thought what an impression it would make upon Leonora if I should suddenly raise my head from the table and say to her: 'Did you not tell me precisely the same thing on the meadow in the forest of Fichtenau?' But I checked myself and listened to the conversation, which continued for some time. At last the gentleman said:

"And when shall I see you again?"

"Whenever you wish."

"What does that mean?"

"That I am always at home for my friends."

"And where is at home?"

"*Boulevard des Capucines, Numéro Dix-sept.* You have only to inquire after Mademoiselle Eléonore----"

"Or rather *la Reine Eléonore. Adieu, ma reine!*"

"You won't go already?"

"Unfortunately I have to go."

"Why?"

"My betrothed is waiting for me at her mother's, and she will be inconsolable if her faithful shepherd keeps her waiting much longer."

"You are engaged--oh, poor man!"

"I hope, *ma reine*, you will help me bear my misfortune?"

"*Nous verrons.*"

"And the two went off laughing; Leonora's silk dress struck me as she passed.

"My companion came back and put his hand on my shoulder.

"I have learnt everything," he said.

"So have I," I replied, raising my head.

"How?"

"She has told me all herself."

"My friend thought I was delirious. 'Come,' he said, 'the heat has been too much for you.'"

"You may imagine that I did not sleep much that night. I formed a thousand plans and rejected them again. Only one thing was certain: I must save Leonora from this hell. I did not doubt what was my duty for a moment.

"And yet I rose next morning without having formed a resolution. I was not afraid for myself, for my heart could not be torn more fearfully than it had been torn the night before. I was afraid only for Leonora, that a sudden meeting might humiliate her too fearfully, might kill her perhaps. A few days passed, and I found no better plan after all than to go straight to her. My friend shook his head whenever I spoke of my project. 'But, *mon cher*,' he said again and again, 'don't you see that you still love her?' Was he right? I do not know. At all events, this kind of love was very different from ordinary love, for it knew nothing of humiliated pride, of mortified vanity--nay, nothing even of the fear of possibly becoming ridiculous, by attempting to save a woman who did

not at all desire to be saved.

"When I had at last decided in my own heart, I went one forenoon to the house on the Boulevard. The porter smiled as he gave his customary reply: '*Qui, monsieur, au troisième!*' to my question if Mademoiselle Eléonore was living there. But he added: 'Mademoiselle will hardly be at home for anybody; she only came home towards daybreak.'

"I ascended the staircase covered with costly carpets; in the third story I read on a china plate near a bell-rope: '*Mademoiselle Eléonore de Saint Georges.*' How many names had the poor girl had, since she had laid aside the honest name of her father?

"I rang the bell. An ugly woman, half waiting-maid, half companion, and looking all the uglier because of the neatness of her dress and the affected respectability of her manner, opened and asked me what I wanted, I wished to see Mademoiselle Eléonore.

"Mademoiselle is indisposed and cannot see anybody to-day.'

"But I must see her.'

"Impossible,' said the woman, 'I have just sent for a doctor.'

"But, madame, I am the doctor.'

"Ah, *c'est autre chose, entrez, monsieur le docteur.*'

"She led me through a small entry into a lofty, stately apartment, furnished with almost princely splendor, and asked me to wait there a few minutes, until her mistress should be able to see me.

"Has mademoiselle got up yet?'

"Yes; I shall be back in a moment.'

"She disappeared behind a thick curtain.

"I remained standing in the centre of the room, and looked upon all the splendor by which I was surrounded--the luscious paintings by Watteau and Boucher in their broad, gilt frames; the Chinese pagodas upon the marble mantelpiece; the vases and cups of finest porcelain, the luxurious divans and sofas--and I felt like the physician who is looking upon the lace cuff of a hand which he is called in to amputate. Had I not come here as a physician? Was I not here now under the pretext of being a physician?

"The maid returned, and begged me to follow her. She drew back the curtain to let me pass. I entered a half-dark room, covered like all the others with thick, soft carpets, and hung with deep red-silk hangings, the chamber of the mistress of the house, and then through another curtain into a second room, light and bright. Of the furniture of this room I saw nothing; I saw only the slender, white form which rose when I entered from the divan on which she had been resting, and now advanced a few steps to meet me. And this slender, white form, with the pale, worn-out, beautiful face, in which the large dark eyes shone with almost ghastly brightness--this beautiful being, broken in body and soul, lost for eternity, was my Leonora, whom I had worshipped, and who had once been blooming like a rose in innocence and youth!

"I have sent for you, doctor,' she said in a low voice.

"Then she raised her eyes and looked at me. Her lips grew silent; she stared at me with eyes which seemed to leap forth from their orbits; then she uttered a piercing cry and fell down, before I or her maid could seize her in our arms.

"We carried her back to the divan. She was deadly pale and cold; I thought for a moment the sudden blow might have snapped the frail thread on which her life was hanging. I should have hailed her death as a rescue from hell, as a mercy from heaven. But soon I became convinced that life was not going to let her loose for some time yet. I knew enough of medicine to remember what was to be done in such an emergency. While I was busy with the fainting girl, I asked the maid if Leonora was at all subject to such attacks; what was the general state of her health? The woman thought it her duty to drop her assumed respectability before a physician. 'She had been only about six months in the service of mademoiselle. Since then matters had gone down hill very fast indeed. But mademoiselle was really living too fast in all conscience. Dancing every night till three or four o'clock in the morning, drinking champagne without stopping--no one could stand that long, least of all a lady of such delicate structure. She was begging mademoiselle every day to abandon such a life, but she received always the same answer: the sooner it is over the better. And over it will be very soon,' cried the woman; 'and I shall lose my poor dear mistress, whom I love like my own child, although she does not lead a life such as she ought to lead.'

"The invalid began to recover. I sent the maid away, ordering her to buy some salts at the druggist's; for I did not want to have any witness present when Leonora should fully awake. The old hypocrite had hardly left the room when Leonora once more opened her eyes and looked at me with a confused, incredulous glance. I noticed that in proportion as her mind returned her

horror at my presence increased anew, and threatened to make her faint a second time. This painful shrinking from one whom she used to meet with open arms was harder to bear than all the rest, and nearly moved me to tears. I felt not a trace of hatred, of anger, in my heart, not even of contempt--no, nothing but pity, boundless, unspeakable pity. I do not know what I said--but I must have spoken good, mild words of love and of forgiveness, for her rigid features began gradually to become softer; her eyes, dilated with horror, filled with tears, and at last she broke out into passionate weeping, hiding her head on my bosom as I was kneeling by her side. It was a terrible weeping; it was as if all the tears of the last years, which she had concealed under laughter and jests, were breaking forth from their deep, deep cells and would never cease to flow; and between a sobbing as if her heart were breaking, a crying as if her innermost soul were pierced by two-edged swords. I have never in all my life, either before or afterwards, witnessed anything like this fearful breaking forth of repentance in a soul stained with sin, but noble by nature.

"We seemed to have exchanged the parts allotted to us. It looked as if she had been offended, and I was the criminal. I exhausted myself in prayers, in implorations, to pour soothing oil into her wounds, to calm the terrible grief that was raging with such violence. Gradually I succeeded in calming her after a fashion. She wept, quietly resting her head on one hand, while I spoke to her holding the other hand--how white and slender and transparent her fingers had become!--spoke to her as a brother would speak to his sister in such a case. I begged her to look upon me as a brother, to confide in me as her best, perhaps her only friend. I conjured her by all that was sacred to her, by the memory of her youth, by the memory of her parents--who were both now resting under the green turf--to tear herself away from this whirlpool which must swallow her up sooner or later, and to follow me. I promised to take her, if she wished it, into a desert--to the very ends of the world--only away, away from this gilded wretchedness.

"It is too late; too late!" she murmured. "You are kind, I know; inexpressibly kind; but it is too late, too late!"

"I do not know how long this struggle might have lasted if a strange episode had not occurred, which decided it to my great astonishment quickly in my favor.

"While I was yet kneeling at Leonora's side, I suddenly heard somebody say behind me: '*Mais vraiment, c'est superbe!*' I rose, full of horror. Before me stood a young man elegantly dressed, who examined me through his eye-glass from head to foot and back again, and then repeated: '*Superbe! mademoiselle*, I congratulate you on this new conquest.'

"The young man was one of Leonora's friends, whose lavish liberality had procured for him the privilege of being looked upon by her as her only lover. He knew that Leonora was by no means rigorously faithful to him, and did not mind it much; but he did not like to meet his rivals at her house, which he had furnished at his own expense, and with princely magnificence.

"I beg you will explain this scene, mademoiselle, he said, turning to Leonora, in a tone of insulting indifference, which drove all the blood from my cheeks to the heart.

"I was opening my lips to give him an insulting answer, when Leonora anticipated me. As soon as she had seen the new comer she had risen, and stood now, pushing me gently back, between him and myself.

"This gentleman," she said, pointing at me, "has a right to be here."

"What right?"

"The right of one who has been unfortunate enough to love me once."

"Ah, mademoiselle," replied the young man, smiling ironically, "the gentleman shares that misfortune with many others."

"Sir," said I, "whatever claims you may have upon mademoiselle, I have older claims, and I cannot allow you to insult a lady to whom I was once engaged in my presence."

"Ah," said the young man; "you were engaged to mademoiselle. It is not possible! and now, I dare say, you propose to marry her, after I--with a glance at the furniture--have had the folly to provide mademoiselle with a trousseau. Very well conceived, upon my word!"

"Stop, sir!" cried Leonora, rising to her full height, "enough has been said. You think you can control me, and insult me, because I have accepted your presents. Here, I return you all you have ever given me. There, and there, and there!" and she tore with feverish excitement the gold bracelets and all the jewels she wore from her and threw them at the feet of the young man.

"The passion with which she did this was too deep to be for a moment misinterpreted, and evidently made a great impression upon the dandy. 'I have had enough of this,' he said. 'I shall see you again, mademoiselle, here is my card, sir!' and he hastened to leave the room.

"Come! come!" cried Leonora; "not another moment will I stay here. Rather at the bottom of the Seine than here!"

"I took her at her word. I begged her to change her dress while I wrote in her name a few lines to the Marquis de Saintonges--this was the name of Leonora's lover--and placed the lodging, which he had rented for Leonora, and everything he had ever given her, once more at his disposal. We left the house, handed the keys to the porter, and gave the letter into the hands of a messenger, who promised to deliver it immediately, and a few hours afterwards I had settled all my affairs, said farewell to my friends, and the city was several miles behind us.

"Our journey was for the present not to be a very long one. A few stations beyond Paris, Leonora became so unwell, we had to stop in a little town. The physician who was called in was fortunately an able man, and told me that mademoiselle, my sister (for such Leonora appeared to be), was threatened with inflammation of the brain. His diagnosis was unfortunately but too correct. The very next day the terrible disease showed itself clearly. The poor sufferer raved in her delirium of the hot orgies in the *Jardin aux Lilas* and of the cool shades in her native woods, of the Marquis de Saintonges, and other Paris acquaintances, and of myself, now appearing as her guardian angel, and now as an avenging demon, while I sat by her bedside and meditated on our strange position. During my eager pursuit of Leonora I had followed rather a blind impulse than very clear motives, and never, in all my dreams, had it occurred to me that we might be placed in a situation like that in which I now found myself. But amid all my troubles one thought rose high above all doubt: I must never again quit Leonora, if she should recover.

"After a little while symptoms appeared which gave us hope, and one fine morning the physician brought me the news that a crisis had taken place in the disease, and that Leonora was for the present out of danger. 'Nevertheless,' he added, with a very serious expression, 'I must not conceal it from you that, according to human calculations, your sister is not destined to survive this attack very long. I apprehend that her lungs are seriously affected; she must have been ill a long time before I saw her. I do not know your circumstances, and cannot tell, therefore, whether you will be able to follow my advice. My advice is this: Go with your sister to a southern climate--to Italy; if you can, to Egypt. In a less genial climate mademoiselle would succumb in a very short time.'

"My resolution was instantly formed. I had nothing more to win and nothing to lose in Germany, where my political cure was to be completed by a prohibition to teach publicly during the next five years. My means had been nearly consumed during my long wanderings; there was only a small remnant left, but I might spend that sum just as well in Italy as elsewhere; besides, I hoped to derive abroad some advantages from my knowledge of languages; and, finally, I had no choice. I would have rather endured extreme suffering than to omit doing anything that could benefit Leonora. A few days later we were on our way to Italy.

"I settled down a few miles from Genoa, upon the coast of the glorious Mediterranean. I was fortunate enough to obtain a few lessons in the family of a rich Englishman, who had come to the place for the same reasons which brought me there, and thus I was relieved of all anxiety on the score of money. All the greater was my anxiety for Leonora.

"Our flight from Paris had been so sudden, and was for Leonora so entirely the result of a momentary impulse--her sickness, following immediately afterwards, had so completely broken down all her energies that she had willingly acceded to all my arrangements, and was only now coming to a clear understanding of our situation--I had not thought of it at first, and became aware of it only now through Leonora's manner towards me--that in this dependence on a man whom she had shamefully betrayed, and in the constant company of him before whom she would have loved to hide herself in the lowest depth, she suffered probably the severest punishment that could have been inflicted upon a person in whom the last spark of honor and self-respect was not extinguished. Leonora did not hesitate to say so; but she added, 'the punishment is severe but just; it was the only way, perhaps, to teach me how grievously I had sinned against you.' While Leonora found thus a soothing comfort for her conscience in her deep repentance, I had in my unspeakable sorrow only one very modest consolation: to act towards Leonora as my conscience dictated. I was at liberty to drain the cup of sorrow to the very last drop. That was the fulfilment of all the precious happiness of which I had dreamt so much in the golden days of Fichtenau, and even later in the dark nights of my imprisonment in the fortress! This pale, feeble form--that walked slowly along the sea-coast in the evening sunlight, hanging on my arm and never lifting up the weary head--she by whose sick-bed I sat watching day after day, when sickness confined her in her room, and in whose broken heart it had become my duty to pour soothing balm, of which I stood so much in need myself--this was the girl whom I had chosen to be my wife, and in whom I had worshipped, full of bright hopes, the mother of my children. Oh, Oswald! Oswald! the most fanatical optimist might have been appalled--the most orthodox soul might have been led to doubt if there were not after all a great deal of truth in Voltaire's assertion, that life was nothing but a *mauvaise plaisanterie*.

"And yet it was good for me to pass through this trial also. It was a bitter medicine; but it cured me thoroughly of that disease which others call joy of existence and pleasure in life.

"Leonora's humility in bearing her sufferings put me altogether to shame. In proportion as the disease was destroying her bodily form, the original beauty of her soul began to reappear. She had led a sinful life; when she died, she died like a saint.

"It was late in the evening. I had carried the poor sufferer, who was specially excited on that day, and anxiously yearned after air and light, in my own arms from the fisherman's cottage

which we occupied, to the edge of the black basaltic rocks which here hang over the sea. She was resting on a couch formed of cushions. The sun was setting in resplendent magnificence, and just sinking into the sea. Not a breath stirred the smooth surface of the waters, and the emerald and golden lights which shone in the sky were purely and calmly reflected below, as in a mirror. Upon the pale face of the patient also fell an enchanting sheen--a rosy lie--the lie with which the sun and life scoff at the night and at death. And in that hour Leonora took leave of the sun and of life. She told me that she had always loved me, even at that moment when vanity and folly had blinded her; that her whole life since that day had been but a continuous effort to drown her remorse. She did not desire to live, even if it were possible that I should ever love her again. She felt herself to be unworthy of being my slave, much more so of being my wife. She was shuddering at the mere thought. 'Oh never, never more,' she continued, and her beautiful eyes shone with a supernatural fire, 'never upon this earth, where I have so tearfully sinned against you. But when this desecrated body has crumbled into dust, and the soul has been freed from the fetters that bound it to the dust, then I will hover around you, I will wait for you; and when you come, your soul will kiss my soul, and by that kiss I shall know that all has been atoned for, that all is forgotten and forgiven.'

"I told her that I had long since forgiven her fully, and that I now loved her with a purer and holier love than in the days of our happiness.

"I kissed, weeping, her white hands and her pale lips.

"'This is our wedding-day,' she whispered--'poor, poor man.' She sank back upon the cushions.

"I carried her, quite exhausted, back to the cottage and to her bed.

"It was the last time.

"That night Leonora died."

Berger had risen, and Oswald had followed his example. The former was entirely filled with the recollections which had just passed before his mind's eye, clothed by his powerful imagination with all the accuracy and clearness of reality; the latter thought of nothing but what he had just heard; and thus both hardly noticed the road which led them gradually higher and higher through the dark pine forests.

Thus they found themselves suddenly upon the bare top of the mountain, which the people of the neighborhood call the Lookout, and which is by far the highest all around among all the brothers and sisters.

The sun had set, but the western sky was still glowing in all the splendor of the evening glory, and a faint reflex gave even to the eastern horizon a faint, rosy tinge. Here and there one of the higher mountain-tops, steeped in purple, looked after the parting light of the day; but the larger valleys were already filled with gray shadows of the evening, and whitish mists floated in the narrower glens. The pine-trees, whose heads rose from below to a level with the travellers' feet, stood calm and rigid, like a breathless multitude in anxious expectation.

Berger gazed into the glow of the setting sun, resting on his stick, and watching it as every instant some tinge vanished and another turned pale. Oswald's eye hung upon his features, which seemed every moment to become more and more spiritual. Was it the effect of the ghastly light, or merely the expression of what was going on within? Suddenly Berger dropped his cane, spread out his hands as if in prayer, and said: "Mother Night, all-powerful original Night, from whose bosom the creature tears itself away in mad desire to live, only in order to return after long wanderings, penitent and humiliated, to your faithful maternal heart, I hail you, even in this faint, earthly image! Yon bottomless bourn of oblivion, yon sweet cradle of unbroken rest, how I long for you with my whole heart! Oh, take it from me, this intolerable burden of life; spare me the daily returning grief to open these weary eyes to a light which they hate; take from me this remnant of dust, which weighs me down with its sinfulness, and which becomes only the more painful as it daily dwindles away! Let it, oh, let it quickly be consumed! I know I could quickly come to you if I but took a single step beyond the edge of this rock; but even if my bones were broken into atoms below, my soul would find no rest, for it has still a few drops left in the cup of life; perhaps--who can tell?--the very bitterest of them all. No! no! get thee away from me, Satan, who allurest me down into the abyss! The abyss is not death; life in all its splendor, is true death. I know thy old tricks; thou didst try them with the carpenter's son of Nazareth! But he rebuked thee and thy temptations--honor, power, and the favor of women--all he rejected, in order to hunger, to thirst, and not to have where he might lay his head, to wash off the last remnant of earthly life in the bloody sweat of the night on the Mount of Olives, and in order to die the death of a murderer on the cross at Golgotha! Oh that I could go forth into all the world, to preach the word, the sacred word, that frees us now and forever--the word that leads us back again to our good, mild, dear Mother Night, whom we have left in order to suffer infernal punishment in the bright sun-glow of life, while our tongue is parched and our temples are beating! The word, the holy, mysterious word, which has become a mere mummery, a derision, and a mockery, in the vain show with which they fancy they serve their God. Forgive them, oh Mother, for they know not what they do; they would willingly come to you if they had but ears to hear your sweet voice, and eyes to see your mild beauty. I can see your holy face; its smile fills me with hope and comfort. I can hear your voice; it whispers, 'wait, wait but a little while, and you shall sink back

into my faithful arms, back to eternal peace."

The rosy hues had vanished from the sky; gray twilight was spreading over the valleys, and the evening breeze began to whisper and to murmur in the tops of the pine-trees.

Oswald was seized with vague terror. He felt as if that mystical Night, which Berger had invoked in his strange prayer, was chilling him already with a breath from the grave--as if the sun had set never to rise again. But this fear was not without a strange admixture of delight. The narcotic fragrance of thoughts of death which had been borne to him on Berger's ecstatic words, filled his heart, together with the perfume of the heather and the aroma of the pines.

He thought of Helen and of Melitta, but not with the restless anxiety of the morning, but in calm melancholy, as we think of the departed whom we have loved. He thought of the troubles and blunders of his gay drama in the château of Grenwitz, but it looked to him like a puppet-show for children. He thought of the future, but it had no longer any charms for him; it filled him neither with hope nor with fear; it was as if his whole life were withdrawing from without, as if the world were not worthy of so much love or so much hatred.

Thus he sat, resting his head on his hands, upon a large rock, and looked out into the evening, which was spreading its dark wings wider and wider over the heavens.

A hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Come!" said Berger, "let us return to the dead!"

They descended from the summit and plunged into the damp darkness of the forest. Berger seemed to know every path and every stone in the mountains. He went on, supporting himself every now and then with his stout cane, at a pace which made it difficult for Oswald to follow him, though he was considered a good pedestrian.

Thus they had reached a meadow lying in the very heart of the forest. As they followed the edge of the wood they suddenly saw a light glimmering on the opposite side. It came from the flame of a pile of briars which had just been kindled. Within the bright circle of the flames two persons were visible--a woman, as it seemed, and a child.

Oswald's sharp eyes confirmed him in a suspicion which had entered his heart at the first glance.

They were Xenobia and Czika.

He hastened as fast as he could across the meadow towards the fire, but he had hardly accomplished half the distance when he sank up to his ankles into the morass. He saw that he could not go any further. He cried as loud as he could: "Xenobia! Czika! it is I! Oswald!"

But his call had scarcely broken the peace of the silent forest when the fire vanished, and with the fire the two forms he had seen.

All was quiet--quiet as death. Oswald might have imagined that his fancy had played him a trick.

"What was the matter?" asked Berger, when Oswald joined him again.

"Did you not see the fire!"

"It was a will-o'-the-wisp in the swamp," replied Berger. "Let us go on."

CHAPTER VIII.

It was completely dark when the two wanderers left the last spur of the mountain, and reached the first houses of the village. Oswald, who was for the first time in this region, and whose sense of locality was not strongly developed, had of course allowed himself to be entirely guided by Berger, and had expected that the latter would return by the nearest road to Doctor Birkenhain's asylum. He was, therefore, not a little surprised when he found out that they were approaching the town from the opposite direction. There were the huge wagons laden with bales, there was the wide court-yard with its hospitably open gates, there was the green lamp burning in dismal dimness over the door of the house, and casting a mournful light upon one-half of the leaden hat which had once shone in all the splendor of oil-paint, but which had since passed through many a

storm, losing its youthful freshness under the action of wind and weather and rain. There they heard in the low room to the right of the hall, with its four tiny windows and its dim light, the clinking of glasses, as thirsty guests knocked them impatiently against each other, and the concentrated noise of some twenty male voices, which were by no means delicate, and yet insisted upon being all heard at once.

It would scarcely have needed all these unmistakable signs to convince Oswald that he was near the hospitable roof of the Green Hat.

The sudden meeting with the gypsies in the forest had reminded him most forcibly of this whole affair, which Berger's recital had nearly driven from his mind.

He should have liked much to consult Berger in this matter, as the latter had in former times given him frequent opportunities to admire his skill in unravelling intricate situations and problematic characters; but he was loth to trouble a mind which was constantly seeking the truth in the mysterious depths of mysticism, with stories in which Director Schmenckel was playing the most prominent part.

What was his amazement, therefore, when Berger suddenly stopped at the door of the Green Hat, and said:

"I am thirsty; let us go in here for a moment!"

"Here?" inquired Oswald, who shrank from the idea of introducing the dreamy, delicate man, with his horror of the mere odor of tobacco, to such vulgar society. "The company in there is hardly suitable."

"What does that matter?" replied Berger. "Are they not the children of men?"

With these words he entered through the open house-door into the halls where yesterday the enthusiastic admirers of art had fought their battle royal with their adversaries, and through the door of the room which was also open into the coffee-room.

The appearance of the latter was nearly the same as on the previous day, before and after the fight, only that the table at which the artists had their seats was to-day much less sought after by the other guests. The glory of artists is apt to fade quickly in the eyes of men who still feel the smarting of the blows which they have received a day before on account of this very glory, and who are prosaic enough to recollect the number of glasses of beer which the artists have drunk at their expense, solely for the purpose of not interfering with the general good-temper of the company. Thus it came about that many who, in their enthusiasm for art, had utterly forgotten their old friends in the blue overalls and the heavy shoes, to-night joined them once more, and granted to new comers the privilege of listening to Director Schmenckel's long stories, and of paying his long bills.

Mr. Schmenckel was far too great a philosopher to lose his good humor and his temper on account of this insulting desertion by his friends. His fat face shone as bright as ever--it was redder than usual, even, because its original color appeared still richer and more intense in contrast with a few patches of black which had become indispensable in consequence of his fight with Mamselle Adele. His swollen eyelids winked at everybody as cunningly as ever, his linen was perhaps a shade less white, but the suspenders had not lost a line of their width, and none of the embroidered roses seemed to have suffered in the least.

And as rosy as this indispensable part of his wardrobe, was also the temper of the man whose broad bosom it adorned.

"How do you like the beer, Cotterby?" he said, laying his broad hand upon the shoulder of the man of the pyramids.

"Sour!" was the laconic reply; for the hero had received but meagre applause to-day, since the genius in the oak-tree had not been there to hallow his flight.

"Pshaw!" said Mr. Schmenckel, "you are spoilt, Cotterby. It is of course not as good as you drink it in Egypt, but nevertheless it is good, very good indeed. Your health gentlemen."

The director put the glass to his lips, but only swallowed a moderate quantity, a circumstance which might have convinced the impartial observer of the correctness of the judgment of the Flying Pigeon, whose beer had not been paid for to-night by enthusiastic admirers of art.

At that moment Berger and Oswald entered the room and approached a table at which the artists sat, because it had some vacant seats. Mr. Schmenckel's observant eye had scarcely seen the new comers--whom he recognized instantly as the insane young count of the day before, and an old gray-bearded fellow of curious appearance whom the count had picked up for his amusement after the escape of the gypsies--when he rose from his seat, went up to Oswald, bowed low before him, and said, with a voice which he intended should be distinctly heard all over the room,

"Ah, your excellency, count, that is nice in you, that you come to call upon a poor artist in his

lowly inn. Sit down here by the side of Director Schmenckel! Move on a little, Cotterby! That's it! Now, gentlemen, take your seats; delighted to make your acquaintance, old fellow, much honor. Two fresh glasses of beer for the gentlemen, and one for Director Schmenckel! Empty your glass, Cotterby! So, now bring four glasses! Who would have thought that we should have such excellent company to-night?" and Mr. Schmenckel rubbed his hands with delight as Oswald and Berger took seats in his immediate neighborhood.

"Well, here is the beer--fresh from the cask, my angel--well, all the better! Here gentlemen! Your health, count, and your health also, old man! Ah! that was the first mouthful I have relished this evening. Odd! is it not? Bad company spoils good beer; good company makes bad beer good! Am a lover of sociability, count. See that you are another. Will you have the kindness to introduce me to the old gentleman? Director Schmenckel likes to know with whom he has to do."

Oswald glanced at Berger to see what impression was made upon him by this company and these surroundings, and to judge from that what he had better do for Director Schmenckel. To his astonishment, Berger seemed to listen to the prattle of the rope-dancer with some interest. He had hung his hat upon the back of the chair, placed the cane by his side, and was now leaning with both arms upon the table, exactly like one who does not intend to leave the place very soon again.

"My name is Berger," he answered to the director's question.

"Professor Berger," added Oswald, with the good intention of making an impression upon Mr. Schmenckel by the title, and to put, if possible, a check upon his familiarity.

"Professor!" repeated Mr. Schmenckel, with a look at Berger's blue blouse and ill-kept beard. "Ha! ha! ha! Very good! May I make you acquainted with my friend Cotterby? Mr. John Cotterby, of Egypt, known as the Flying Pigeon. Mr. Berger, known as Professor! Ha! ha! ha!"

"Shall we go again," inquired Oswald, who was seriously embarrassed by Mr. Schmenckel's conduct.

"I think we had better stay a little longer," replied Berger.

"Your fist, old boy!" said Mr. Schmenckel, seizing Berger's small thin hand and shaking it warmly. "I like you prodigiously. When your tile is losing its glue, and your blouse is going to tatters completely, you must come to me. Director Schmenckel will be delighted to receive a man like you as a member of his company. Your beard alone is an ornament for the whole land. You would create a sensation in a pantomime. What did you think of our performance to-day, count?"

"I was unfortunately unable to see it," replied Oswald, encouraged by a smile upon Berger's lips to continue the strange conversation.

"Oh, you have lost much, indeed very much," said the director in a tone of sincere regret, shaking his huge head slowly to and fro. "The performance was by far the finest we have given for a long time. Director Schmenckel has convinced everybody that the absence of a few estimable members of his company could in no wise impair the general efficiency of the same. I do not mean myself--although the world-renowned Schmenckel-act, with three cannon-balls of forty-eight pounds each, has never yet been imitated by anybody in this world, and my *fontaine d'argent*, with ten silver balls, is as yet unequalled. But, gentlemen, you ought to have seen Mr. Cotterby on the trapeze; I tell you the ring-tailed apes of the Island of Sumatra are miserable bunglers in comparison--absolutely miserable bunglers! And then Mr. Stolsenberg with his gigantic cask! I tell you--come nearer, Stolsenberg. An artist such as you are need not be so very modest, and the count here does not mind another glass of beer, or even several he is not like ordinary men. And then Mr. Pierrot, as contortionist!--come this way, Pierrot! Artists ought always to keep to each other. I tell you, count, your penknife is a ramrod in comparison with Mr. Pierrot. I have said it again and again: Pierrot, if we ever should travel by rail together, I mean to pay only for myself; I shall put you in my hat-box. Ha! ha! ha! A clever idea! Is it not, count? But the professor's glass is empty; and by all the Powers! mine is empty too! I verily believe that man Stolsenberg has secretly emptied my glass, and his own into the bargain! You had better drink yours too, Pierrot. You will save the pretty waiting-maid some trouble. Here, my angel, five fresh glasses; but really fresh, my beauty--fresh, like the roses on your cheeks. Fond of pretty women, count?--such a pretty child, with brown eyes, dark hair, and a slight, graceful person, like Czika? Eh? Just let her grow a few years older and you'll see something; she'll give you pleasure!"

"Have you any news about them?" asked Oswald.

Mr. Schmenckel, who had not the remotest idea of what could have become of the two gypsies, but who considered it wrong to destroy all hope of meeting the last object of his mad fancy in the heart of a man who was immensely rich and passionately fond of young gypsy-children, winked cunningly with his swollen eyes, put his fat finger against his nose, and said: "Are not far from here, in the woods--have certain information--can get her when I want her--don't want her, though--women must have time to get over their tantrums--then they come of their own account, and are thoroughly cured of their fancies. Yes, you have to know them well! Women are troublesome people to deal with, only they are all alike--and yet not one is like the other. What do you think about that, old boy?"

"I think you a great philosopher, from whom one might learn a great deal yet," replied Berger, looking with a curious smile into Mr. Schmenckel's face.

"Well, I should think so," said the director, throwing out his capacious chest and resting his hands on his hips. "Mr. Schmenckel, of Vienna, knows where the hare burrows, and the man who wants to lead him astray has to rise early in the morning. But, by all the Powers! it is no wonder after all if I know rather better than others how the world wags; I have been shaken about in it, upside and down, round and round and round, like a cork in an empty bottle."

"An empty bottle," said Berger. "That's a capital comparison; perfectly correct. How did you get hold of that?"

"How I got hold of it?" replied the director with an air of astonishment. "How I got hold of it? Probably, because I have an empty glass standing before me. Ha, ha, ha."

"It looks as if you had not been displeased, so far, with the beverage of life," said Berger, while Mr. Schmenckel made use of the interval, till the new glass of beer could come, to fill his short clay pipe.

"Well, and why not?" replied the director, lighting his pipe at the flame of the tallow candle that stood near him on the table, and disappearing for a few moments from the sight of the bystanders in thick, blue clouds. "Life is a prodigiously funny thing for a man who knows what's what, like Caspar Schmenckel, of Vienna. Thanks, my angel!"

"I am not your angel, sir," said the girl, snappishly, as she pushed back violently the arm with which Mr. Schmenckel had embraced her waist, and cast a stolen glance at Oswald.

Mr. Schmenckel's only reply to this insulting correction was this: he pressed the five fingertips of his right hand against his thick lips and cast a kiss after the girl as she slipped out, and then, closing his left eye, winked cunningly with the other at Oswald, who was sitting on the opposite side.

"Nice girl, your excellency, isn't she? Pretends to eat me up alive, and is head over ears in love with me."

"You seem to be very successful with ladies," said Oswald, merely in order to say something.

"Well, can't complain, your excellency," said Mr. Schmenckel, laughing complacently. "Women are like the weather. To-day too hot, and to-morrow too cold; to-day sunshine, and to-morrow rainy weather. Must take everything as it comes from them, just as from the Great One above."

"I should think that depended solely upon yourself," said Berger, whose look dwelt imperturbably upon his jovial companion, as if his mind could not comprehend so remarkable a phenomenon.

"How so, old fellow? You think I should let them alone, every one of them? Well, old gentleman, that might do very well for you; but of Caspar Schmenckel, of Vienna, you cannot expect such a thing. The deuce! Leave them alone? Why, I had rather be dead and buried!"

"That would certainly be the best of all," said Berger.

"Look here, old gentleman," replied the director, with an effort to be serious, which sat very oddly upon him. "Don't commit such a sin! I tell you again, life is a mighty good thing, and we must not paint the devil's likeness on the wall. Oh, pshaw! Why do you let your beer grow stale, and make a face like a tanner whose skins have been washed down the stream? Come, drink a glass with Caspar Schmenckel! Well, that's right! Schmenckel is a merry fellow, and likes to be in company with merry fellows. Well, gentlemen, what do you say, shall we have a nice song? Cotterby, you have a voice like a nightingale! Come, fall in! Does your excellency know the song of the midges?"

"No; but let us hear it."

"Well, here goes; Stolsenberg, Pierrot, fall in!"

And Mr. Schmenckel took the pipe from his mouth, leaned back in his chair, and began with a tremendous bass voice, while his three friends sang chorus:

"Good morning, fiddler,
Why are you so late?
Retreating, advancing,
The midges are dancing,
With the little killekeia
With the big cumcum.

"Then came the women,
With scythe and sickle,
To keep the midges

From dancing like witches,
With the little killekeia,
With the big cumcum."

"Well, gentlemen, isn't that a fine song?" cried Mr. Schmenckel, after having finished off the remarkable air by pummelling the table with both hands so that the glasses began to dance.

"Very fine," said Berger; "do you know any more?"

"Hundreds," replied Mr. Schmenckel, "but Mr. Cotterby knows the best. Sing us a solo, Cotterby."

The Egyptian smiled complacently, twisted his small, jet-black moustache, and passed his hand through his dark, well-oiled hair, leaned back in his chair, closed his eyes half, and began in quite a pleasant tenor voice:

"A peasant had a pretty wife,
She loved to stay at home,
She begged her husband by her life,
To go abroad and roam,
Through the grass and through the hay,
Through the grass--alas!
Ha, ha, ha; ha, ha, ha; hideldeedee!
Hurrah! hurrah!
To go abroad, and in the grass."

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed the director. "That is a good song--very good. That reminds me of a pretty story, which I will tell if you say so, gentlemen. You can finish the song afterwards, Cotterby."

The Egyptian seemed to take it rather amiss that he was thus interrupted; but Mr. Schmenckel did not notice it, or did not choose to notice it. He took a long pull at his glass of beer, and said to the waiting maid, whom the song or the presence of the young, distinguished stranger had brought back to the table,

"You go a little outside, my angel. The story which Director Schmenckel is going to tell is not made for young girls."

The pretty girl blushed up to her ears and ran away, looking back for a moment at Oswald. Mr. Schmenckel cleared his voice, leaned over the table, and began with a voice which sounded all the hoarser for his efforts to subdue it:

"Gentlemen, you know that all thinking men divide women into two classes--such as serve, and such as are served. But love knows no such distinction, for love masters them all. I have myself experienced this very often in life, but it has never become quite so clear to me as some----" Here Mr. Schmenckel looked almost anxiously around, to see that no unauthorized ear, especially no female ear, should catch the chronological fact which he was about to mention. "Some twenty years ago, in St. Petersburg. Have any of the gentlemen ever been in St. Petersburg?"

They said no.

"How did you get to St. Petersburg?" inquired the hopeful son of a citizen of Fichtenau, who had in the meanwhile joined the company.

"Schmenckel, of Vienna," replied the director, in a dogmatic tone of voice, "has been everywhere. You may expect him, therefore, at any place on earth. St. Petersburg, gentlemen, is a beautiful city, as you may judge from the fact that the palaces of the emperor and of all the great nobles are cut of blue and white ice, which shines brilliantly in the sun."

"How can that be," inquired again the man from Fichtenau; "don't they melt in summer?"

"In summer," said Mr. Schmenckel, by no means taken aback; "in summer? Why, what are you thinking of? I tell you, sir, in St. Petersburg there is no summer. Snow and ice, ice and snow, all the year round, from one New Year's Eve to the next New Year's Eve. You have no idea, in your country here, of such a cold; the human mind can't conceive it. I tell you, the breath from your mouth falls instantly as snow to the ground, and when two persons have been talking to each other for some time in the street, a heap is formed between them so high that when they part they have to climb up in order to be able to shake hands. Why, it is so cold there that the milk freezes in the cow; and when you say: here, give me a glass of beer, or a little mug-full, the Petersburg people say: give me a slice, for the beer freezes into a thick syrup, and is not poured out, but cut into long, thin slices, put upon buttered bread, and eaten in that way."

"That must be quite uncomfortable," remarked the oldest guest of the Green Hat.

"Every land has its ways," replied Mr. Schmenckel.

"But we know that expression, too," said the fat landlord, who had come up to the table.

"Well, then, just let me have a slice, my good man," said Mr. Schmenckel, draining his glass and handing it over his shoulder to the landlord, "but Christian measure, if you please!

"In one word," continued the director, after he had graciously accepted the applause which his wit received as a tribute due to his superiority, and after trying cautiously the contents of the new glass, "in a word, St. Petersburg is a fine city, and when you see how the sun glitters on all the ice palaces, and how the Russians, wrapped in their bearskins, drive furiously through the streets in their sleighs with four reindeers abreast, you feel as if your heart was laughing within you with delight, and you must go into the nearest shop to take a good glass of gin.

"Well, then, we were in St. Petersburg, and liked it mightily. We--that is to say, the famous circus company of my uncle, who was the director, Francis Schmenckel, and myself, who had the honor to be engaged as Hercules--I can say that we created a sensation, especially our horses; for the Russians know horses only from hearsay. The emperor alone has two or three shaggy creatures that look like big dogs in his stables. Everybody else, as I said before, drives only reindeer--even the cavalry is mounted in that way; and I can assure you, gentlemen, that a Russian cuirassier of the guards, mounted on his reindeer stallion, is not so bad a sight after all.

"We had immense audiences. The emperor and the whole court were every evening at the circus. His majesty applauded so furiously that he had to put on a new pair of white kid gloves every five minutes, because he had torn the others to pieces. During the entire act I had to be on my post at the door of the Imperial box, so that I could show his majesty the way behind the scenes and into the stables, where his majesty condescended to pat the best animals most graciously on the neck, and to pinch the cheeks of the handsomest ladies in the company, with his own hand. But more than anybody else did I enjoy the emperor's favor. I cannot tell exactly why! I only know that the emperor sent for me to his box the very first night, and said to me before the whole court: 'Mr. Schmenckel, you are not only the strongest but also the handsomest man I have ever seen. Ask a favor!' 'Your majesty,' I replied, bowing gracefully, 'I ask only for a continuance of your favor, which I esteem above all things else.' 'That you shall have, and patents of nobility into the bargain,' exclaimed his majesty, most enthusiastically. 'Give me your strong hand, Mr. von Schmenckel; with a company of men like yourself, I would dictate laws to the whole world.'

"From that moment we were sworn friends. 'Mr. Schmenckel, come this evening and take a cup of caravan tea with me! Will you drink a glass of wutki punch with me to-night, after the performance is over? dear von Schmenckel. You know, quite *entre nous*, perhaps, a few ladies and gentlemen of my court. Will you come?' That was the way, day by day.

"Well, gentlemen, Mr. Schmenckel, of Vienna, is not a proud man, but he likes to be in good company----"

Here Mr. Schmenckel made a courteous bow to the bystanders, and continued:

"And an emperor is, after all, always an emperor, and it is a pleasure, which I will not deny, to be on such terms of intimacy with such a man.

"Those were famous evenings which I spent, so to say, in the bosom of the imperial family. The gentlemen of the court were very pleasant people, and the ladies----"

Mr. Schmenckel closed his eyes, kissed his hand toward! the ceiling, and sent a deep sigh after the winged messenger of his love. "The ladies! I tell you, gentlemen, he who has not seen the women of Russia, has not seen any women at all. Such hair, such eyes, such figures, such fire; and if Schmenckel of Vienna, was to live four thousand years, he would never forget the winter in St. Petersburg!

"The Russian women are beautiful, and you may feel a little twitch of envy, gentlemen, when I tell you that I had the pick among the fairest of the fair. You may think that sounds like brag, gentlemen, but I cannot help it, it was so. They sent me whole wagon-loads of locks of hair, bouquets and little notes, which always began thus: 'Divine Schmenckel, or Apollo Schmenckel,' and always ended thus: 'Meet me at such and such a place, at such and such an hour.'

"But, as it happens most frequently in such cases, she whose favor I should have valued most highly was not one of my admirers. This was a young and very beautiful lady, whom I saw every evening at the circus; but she always assumed a prodigiously haughty and reserved air, although I invariably made her a special bow when they applauded.

"How do you like our ladies?' the emperor asked me one evening as we were walking, arm-in-arm, up and down the reception room.

"So so! your majesty,' I replied, for discretion was always Caspar Schmenckel's special gift.

"You are hard to please,' said the emperor. 'How do you like the little Malikowsky?'

"What name was that?' suddenly asked Berger, who had been sitting immovable, his brow buried in his hand, and who now, for the first time, raised his head.

"Malikowsky, old gentleman," repeated Mr. Schmenckel. "Another Russian slice, landlord. With your leave, gentlemen. I'll fill my pipe once more."

Oswald looked at Berger. He felt as if a strange nervous twitching was agitating his calm, serious features, and as if the eyes betrayed an unusual excitement but the next moment Berger had again hid his brow in his hand. Mr. Schmenckel continued his story:

"The little Malikowsky?' I asked. 'Who is she?'

"Have you never noticed a lady in black who sits very near the imperial box? Pale face, large eyes, chin rather long?'

"Certainly, your majesty; but she seems to be a shy bird.'

"Nonsense! dear Schmenckel; sheer nonsense! Between us be it said, the lady once stood in somewhat nearer relations to our house than I liked. We have given her a husband, a Polish nobleman who was ruined; her reputation was not very good, his is very bad; he has nothing, she has half a million souls----"

"How much is that in Prussian money?" inquired the fat habitué of the Green Hat, who kept a grocery-store in the town.

"Five million dollars, twenty-six silver groschen, and fourpence--thus they suit each other exactly. When she wants to get rid of him for a time, she sends him to his estates in Poland. Just now he is again on his travels. You had better make a conquest of her, and I will say then that Schmenckel, of Vienna, is not only the strongest and the handsomest, but also the luckiest man on earth.'

"Your majesty's wish is my command,' I replied, and went home considering how I could win the heart of the beauty. 'Only by doing something which no man ever yet has been able to do,' I said to myself, and then, gentlemen, it was I invented the famous Schmenckel-act, with the three cannon balls of forty-eight pounds each. On the first evening I played with one of them as with a boy's ball--she smiled; on the second I played with two--she clapped her tiny hands; on the third I played with all three of them--she threw me a bouquet. I was sure of my success now. But here, gentlemen, I must beg you to excuse me if I follow my invariable custom when a lady is mentioned in my recollections, and if I only suggest, therefore, in a general way, that the same evening a pretty maid presented herself at my rooms and asked me to follow her to her mistress who was dying of love for me. I may add that Schmenckel, of Vienna, has too good a heart to let anybody die for him, and least of all for love for him, if he can help it, and that the next four weeks belonged to the happiest of his whole life."

"You are a fortunate man, director," said the native of Fichtenau, who had been for four years secretly in love with the daughter of an alderman, and had already triumphed so far over all obstacles as to have obtained, almost, a kiss from her.

"As you take it, young man," replied Mr. Schmenckel, with paternal benevolence, "where there is much light, there must also be dark shadows. I ought properly to let my story end here, but I suppose I must finish it for the benefit of such young hot-blooded creatures as you are. Master Miller, and you Cotterby, you abominably fast man, and you Pierrot, the greatest scamp I know. Well, just listen, gentlemen! The pretty maid was not less passionately fond of me than her mistress, for, as I said just now, in that matter of love all the women are alike. What happens, therefore? One fine evening, as I was drinking my cup of tea with the lady--in all honor and propriety, gentlemen, upon my word of honor--somebody suddenly knocks with great violence at the door which leads into the count's apartment, and which was locked from inside. 'Open the door! open the door!----'

"Great God, the count!' whispered the countess, pale with terror. 'Nadeska has betrayed us.'

"Open the door!--and here followed a fearful oath--'open the door!'

"Well,' said I, 'that's a nice predicament; what's to be done next?'

"Schmenckel, you must save me.'

"With pleasure; but how?'

"I'll slip into my chamber, and lock the door behind me.'

"Very good; but what am I to do?'

"You have broken into the house, through that window--and as she said this she opened the window, took the candelabra with the lights, passed through the second door, locked it, and began to cry as loud as she could--'Help! Help! Thieves!'

"Well, gentlemen, just imagine my position, if you can. Before I could collect my five senses the door was broken open, and the count rushed in, holding two pistols in his hands, and five men-servants with lights and big sticks behind him."

"How did the count look?" Berger asked in a low voice, without raising his head.

"Well, old gentleman, I had not exactly time to look closely at him. I only know that he was a fine-looking, tall man, with a pair of eyes that fairly burnt with fury. 'Ah, I have caught you, rascal?' he cried. Crack! went a ball past my left ear--crack! and another ball went past my right ear. Well, gentlemen, that was, after all, a little too strong, and not exactly the way to make Caspar Schmenckel's acquaintance. What could I do? I seized the count around the body, and threw him out of the window; and in case he should have broken something in falling, I threw one of the servants right after him. The others were frightened and ran away as fast as they could. I ran after them through the other rooms across the hall and down the stairs, and, gentlemen, when I had gotten so far I found the way into the street easily enough by myself. How do you like my story, professor?" and Mr. Schmenckel put his broad hand upon Berger's shoulder.

Berger raised his head. His face was deadly pale, his eyes were rolling fearfully, his gray hair hung down into his face.

"If you can tell the truth, man," he said, with weird-sounding voice, "answer me; have you told the truth?"

"I believe the old gentleman has taken a little too much," said Mr. Schmenckel, good-naturedly.

"Yes, I have drunk too much," cried Berger, gesticulating violently with his hands--"too much of the wretched beverage of this miserable life, which is utterly good for nothing, and the liquor has gotten into my head. Ha! ha! ha!"

It was a terrible laughter; but the half-drunk visitors thought it highly amusing.

"Oh, ho! the professor is taking to it very kindly," cried Mr. Schmenckel, holding his sides. "Speech, speech! Let the professor give us a speech!"

Oswald had jumped up and stood by Berger's side. He tried in his anxiety to calm the over-excited man, and to persuade him to leave the house.

Berger paid no attention to him. He stood there, leaning with both his hands upon the table, as Oswald had seen him do so often in his lecture-room.

"Write, gentlemen," he said, "this is the quintessence of the long syllogism, the parts of which I have just explained to you:

"I climbed on a pear-tree,
I wanted to dig beets,
Then have I all my life
Eaten no better plums."

"You will say that this is not a speculative idea, but an old drinking song; but, gentlemen, in a world where good people are made fun of, and led by the nose by impudent demons--where folly with the fool's cap on the head is ruling supreme, and causes its lofty conceptions to be executed by stupidity, vulgarity, and brutality--there speculation becomes a drinking song, and the idea--the grand, all-sublime idea--why, you are the idea yourselves, gentlemen, rough, vulgar fellows as you are."

"Oh, ho! old man, I won't stand that," cried Mr. Schmenckel, who could hardly laugh any longer.

"Yes indeed, yourself," continued Berger, growing more and more violent. "You, Director Caspar Schmenckel, of Vienna, you represent the justice of heaven! The idea can do nothing without you; you are the idea, the incarnate idea. I told you life was good for nothing, but no--that is saying too much--it is worthy of you. I detest you, but I honor you; I shudder at the sight of you, but I worship you. Come into my arms, that I may measure the depths of this wretchedness, that I may touch with my own hands the incredible."

"Come to my heart, old boy," cried Mr. Schmenckel returning the embrace. "You are a trump--a perfect brick; let us be brothers."

He let go Berger and seized his glass.

At the same moment Berger fell, pressing his hand upon his heart, with a fearful cry, and fainted away.

It was a fearful cry indeed--like the cry for help of a drowning man at the instant of sinking--a cry that was heard high above the din in the room, that silenced all the chatting and chaffing, and made the drinkers jump up from their seats in utter consternation. They crowded around the fallen man, and glared with stupid, half-drunken eyes at him, as Oswald tried in vain to raise him from the floor. No one lent a hand to assist the young man. The fright seemed to have paralyzed the crowd.

"Will nobody help me?" cried Oswald, supporting the burden of the lifeless body in his arms.

These words were addressed to Mr. Schmenckel, who until now had been quietly standing near, with open mouth and fixed eyes, his pipe in one hand, the glass of beer in the other.

Oswald's appeal brought him back to his senses.

"You are right, count," he said, "we must do something for the old gentleman."

He put his pipe on the table, took Berger, who was still unconscious, from Oswald's arms, lifted him without effort on his shoulder, and carried him out of the room as a lion bears off a dead gazelle.

Oswald and the landlord followed him.

"Here, come in here," said the landlord, opening the door of the room on the opposite side of the hall, where more distinguished guests were commonly received.

Mr. Schmenckel laid the patient on the sofa.

"The old gentleman had an empty stomach," said Director Schmenckel, whispering his information gravely into Oswald's ear, while the latter was busy about Berger.

"Your excellency ought to have made him eat a good slice of ham with brown bread, and a glass of brandy."

Berger began to stir. He opened his eyes and looked wonderingly at the by-standers, like somebody who is awaking from a heavy dream. Then he rose fully, with Oswald's assistance, and said in a low voice:

"I thank you, my friends. I have given you much trouble. We are dependent one on the other in this life. I hope I shall soon meet you again; perhaps I may be able then to reciprocate your kindness. Come, Oswald, let us go."

"Do you feel strong enough? Had we not better send for a carriage?"

"Oh no! Horses and carriages are not for people like me."

He went to the door. Suddenly he stopped again.

"Pay the people what we owe them, Oswald; we must not remain in anybody's debt on this earth."

Oswald paid the landlord his bill, including in it, to Mr. Schmenckel's evident satisfaction, all that the ropedancers had consumed.

A few moments afterward he and Berger had left the house and were walking slowly through the silent streets of Fichtenau, back to Doctor Birkenhain's asylum.

Berger observed a silence which Oswald dared not break. The young man reproached himself in secret to have been so imprudent as to have left Berger so long in such company. He ascribed his exaltation mainly to the heat and the drinking of the strong beer, to which he was not accustomed. He had no suspicion of the close connection between Berger's history and the grotesque adventures of the circus-director, whose story he had scarcely heard. He only thought of Dr. Birkenhain, and how little he had attended to his suggestions. He was reflecting whether his presence was not perhaps rather injurious than useful for Berger, and thought of leaving Fichtenau as soon as possible, for his own benefit as well as for Berger's.

Thus they had reached in silence the road which led past the mill to the gateway of Doctor Birkenhain's asylum, when Berger suddenly said:

"You must leave us to-night, Oswald!"

"To-night?"

"Rather to-day than to-morrow. You have to go out into the desert once more; I cannot spare you the trial. And I, myself--I have to learn much yet, and you cannot assist me. It is better for us, therefore, to part. You go your way, and I shall go my way--it is the same road and although I am a little ahead of you, you learn quickly and will soon overtake me. Until then, Oswald farewell!"

Berger embraced Oswald and kissed him.

Oswald was deeply moved.

"Let me stay with you," he said, his voice half-drowned in tears; "let me stay with you and never leave you again. I hate the world, I despise the world, as much as you do."

"I know that," said Berger, "but to despise the world is but the first stage of the three on the road to the Great Mystery."

"And which is the second stage? Mention it, so that I may reach it at once!"

"To despise one's self."

"And--the third?"

They were standing before the gateway. Berger rang the bell; the door sprang open.

"And the third--the last stage?"

"Despise being despised."

"And the mystery itself--the Great Mystery?"

"He who has passed all three stages knows it and understands it without asking any questions. He who asks about it does not know it, and cannot understand it. Oswald, farewell; we shall meet again!"

Berger pressed Oswald once more to his heart; then he entered through the gate, which closed immediately upon him.

Oswald remained standing near the gate, like the beggar who has been refused the refreshing drink for which he has asked; then he went, with drooping head, back the way he had come with Berger.

The night was dark; hardly a star on the murky, cloudy sky; the poplars by the wayside were whispering to each other; and the mill-race down below said in its own way: To despise the world--to despise one's self--to despise being despised.

CHAPTER IX.

During the time when Oswald and Berger had watched the sun from the summit of the Lookout Mountain, as he sank slowly into the green ocean of the forest, a guest had arrived at the Kurhaus, whose arrival caused a certain joyous sensation in the hotel. It was a fair young lady, dressed in a dark, remarkably elegant costume, and accompanied by a not less handsome boy of about twelve years, who looked, however, pale and sickly. With them came an old man, whose gray moustache and military carriage gave him a very marked appearance, and who seemed to be partly a servant and partly a friend of the lady. The lady had spent several weeks in Fichtenau during the summer, though then without the boy, in order to attend her husband, who had been for seven years in Doctor Birkenhain's asylum, and who was now dying. Her sad fate, not less than her great gentleness and kindness towards everybody, especially the poor and the sick, had won her the love and admiration of the inhabitants of the little town to such a degree that even now they were blessing, in more than one family, the remembrance of the "good lady" with deep gratitude.

It did not look as if this time, also, a pleasant purpose had brought the lady to Fichtenau, for she had scarcely been shown by the landlord himself, amid countless bows and scrapings, into the best parlor of the second story, when she sat down to write a few lines to Doctor Birkenhain, which the old servant had orders to carry immediately to the asylum, a hotel servant showing him the way. In the meantime the boy, who was exceedingly tired from the journey, had been put to bed. Two rooms to the left of the parlor had been fitted up for the lady's use, and great regret was expressed that unfortunately the room on the right could not at once be added, since it was yet occupied by a gentleman, who, however, would certainly not stay beyond the next morning.

An hour later Doctor Birkenhain had driven up before the Kurhaus with the old servant by his side; he had gone up to the lady in her parlor, and had been engaged with her in a long conversation, which could not have been very satisfactory, for Jean, the waiter attached to those rooms, had seen, when he carried the tea-things into the parlor, that the lady had been weeping, and was trying to wipe her eyes.

Doctor Birkenhain had, after the conversation was ended, walked up once more to the bed of the boy, who was fast asleep, had put his hand on his heart, bent over him, and pressing his ear on the boy's bare breast, listened attentively for some time. Then he raised himself again, carefully covered the sleeper, pushed the abundant curly hair from the fair, pale brow, and turning to the lady with a smile on his lips which positively lighted up the stern, serious features of the man, said to her, while she held a light in her hand and looked up to him with the strained expression of painful uncertainty,

"Calm yourself, madame; I can, of course, not decide positively, but all that I have seen so far gives me great hope that matters are not half as bad with our little patient there as my colleagues in Grunwald seem to have fancied."

A beam of joy lighted up the lady's face, and her large eyes filled with tears.

Doctor Birkenhain took the light from her hand and escorted her back to the parlor.

"I shall come again to-morrow morning," he said, taking his hat and cane; "if it comforts you, you can let old Baumann sit up with the boy. But you yourself must go to bed early, and take one of these powders. You are very much exhausted and require rest."

"Stay another moment, doctor!" said the lady. "I have one more question to ask."

Her features betrayed great emotion, her bosom rose and sank with agitation; she seemed to be about to give utterance to a thought which she was unable from great fear to clothe in words.

Doctor Birkenhain laid down again his hat and cane.

"Sit down, madame, I pray you!" he said, sitting down by her side on the sofa. "I know what you are about to ask. I have read the question all this evening in your anxious eyes and upon your trembling lips. You do not believe in the disease of the heart, of which the physicians at Grunwald have said so much; if you did you would not have come to me, however kindly you may think of my modest knowledge and my experience. You fear the evil is more serious--in fact, that it is a hereditary disease, the first germ, the beginning, of an affection which has already once been so fatal for you. Am I right?"

The lady's answer was a flood of tears, which broke irresistibly from her eyes, like a long pent-up torrent. Sobbing, she pressed her handkerchief to her face.

"My dear madame," said the physician, taking her hand in his, "I pray you, I implore you, calm yourself. As far as I can judge from the written reports of my colleagues, from your own account, and from my observation, there is not the slightest ground for your terrible apprehension. Insanity is hereditary, to be sure; it descends through many generations, turning up here and there, often after a long interval; but in your husband's family his own case is the very first in the whole history of his family, and consequently for many hundred years. And this exceptional case had its own peculiar and very sad causes, which could affect only the individual, and could not possibly have any effect upon his descendants. Herr von Berkow was naturally in the enjoyment of very good health, perhaps even superior in his physique to most men; but remember, I pray that it is a physician who is speaking now--he had ruined this powerful constitution by dissipation. That which often saves others in his position--the marriage with a chaste, pure being--became in his case his ruin, for he felt his own unworthiness--felt it so deeply that he despaired of ever winning your love or attaining your forgiveness, and therefore abandoned himself hopelessly to that melancholy in which he quickly lost all pleasure in life and all energy of mind. The sins of the father will not be visited on the next generation. If there should really be an affection of the heart, it has as yet made very little progress and can easily be cured, with the aid of Julius's youth and excellent constitution. Therefore I pray you, madame, lay aside all your anxiety; confide in me; confide in your good fortune; the clouds that are hiding your star for a moment will soon disappear."

"My star?" asked the lady, with a melancholy smile; "my star? Why, doctor, I fear, if there ever was such a one, it has set long since and forever."

"That we shall see," said Doctor Birkenhain, rising. "I believe in favorable stars, and above all in your good star. One so fair and so dear and so good as you are must not and shall not be unhappy! Good night!"

Doctor Birkenhain took the lady's hand, raised it reverently to his lips, and left the room.

She remained sitting after the physician had left her, resting her head in her hand, and sunk in deep meditation.

As in a dream, all the scenes of her life passed before her mind's eye.

She saw herself a rosy-cheeked, wild child, playing in her father's park with a solemn, awkward boy, whom she at times loved dearly and then again hated bitterly; who, now haughty and imperious, resisted her caprices, and then, when she was kinder to him, spared no trouble and feared no danger in order to fulfil her childish wishes. She saw herself, a few years later, in company with the same boy and a few other boys and girls, perform very complicated steps in the large room of her father's chateau, while a poor man accompanied them with the violin, and the grown people, men and women, expressed their delight and overwhelmed the little coquette with praises and caresses; and she saw the boy, whose awkwardness she had ridiculed and derided in her exuberance of spirits, sit in a distant corner and weep bitterly. She saw herself again, a few years later, in the fresh brightness of a beauty of sixteen years, courted and admired on all sides, thoughtlessly sipping the sweet, precious beverage from the rose-crowned cup of life with eager thirst; flitting from pleasure to pleasure, as a light-winged butterfly flits from flower to flower, and yet feeling, amid all these blissful enjoyments, in her heart's deepest depth, a continuous

restlessness, which made the golden Present appear gray and colorless in comparison with the bright-colored, glorious Future, which was to fulfil all her plans and all her hopes. She had lost sight of the solemn, awkward boy in those days. What could he have done in the midst of this fairy world, full of brightness and fragrance, in which nightingales sang, and all were playful and happy. But the Future had become the Present, and nothing had been fulfilled of all her promises; a poisonous dew had fallen upon her bright flowers, and had robbed them of their beauty and their fragrance; the nightingales had ceased to sing, and the whole spring landscape was concealed under a gray, dismal veil--a veil through which now and then fearful scenes became visible--a father kneeling before his daughter and beseeching her by his gray head, which he must bury in dishonor if she did not comply with his wishes to marry a man whom she does not love, and against whom an instinctive feeling warns the pure, innocent maid; a husband who--away, away with these fearful visions, which make the unfortunate woman hide her face with shuddering, even now, after an interval of so many years. And then she sees once more the form of the solemn, stubborn boy in the shape of a haughty, cold man, who yet, whenever he meets her, changes his haughtiness into humility, and his coldness into unspeakable kindness and love; who assists her with counsel, comfort, and help; who turns aside whatever harm he can avert, and helps her bear it where he cannot prevent it; who ever tries to take everything upon his own shoulders. And now the thought occurs to her, more and more frequently, that, after all, this man is probably worth more than all her fantastic dreams; but as yet she cannot, by any effort of her own, abandon all the ideals that once filled her youthful heart. She treats the man as she has treated the boy; she sends him on his travels as she used to send him in the garden, when he was not willing to fall in with her caprices.

And now come peaceful visions of years spent in the green solitude of her estate, and among them continually re-appearing the forms of a fair, delicate boy and an old gray-bearded servant in varied and yet always similar situations--peaceful visions, although a certain fragrance of melancholy attaches itself to all their bright perfumes, the effect of unsatisfied longing and vain hopes. She thinks often enough of the man whom she has sent into exile, but no longer with the warm heart, which is in truth ashamed of its ingratitude. Some bitterness has begun to mingle with her feelings towards this man, since he has dared--it happened during a journey to Italy--to speak openly of his love for her; since she has rejected him, fancying in her false logic that she was consistent when she only adhered obstinately to a caprice; and since he, proud as he was, had at once accepted her decision, and left the country to travel in Egypt and Nubia. She imagines even that she has begun to hate the companion of her youthful years, the faithful friend who has stood by her in every need and danger; and yet, any one who knows the human heart might have told her that hatred is only the wild brother of the sweet sister love, and indifference the only really impenetrable armor for a woman's heart.

And now there appears amid these peaceful scenes the form of a man whose beauty delights her artistic eye, whose gentle kindness lingers around her like the breath of spring, whose longing finds in her own heart, full of vague yearning, an eloquent echo--of a man who in everything seems to be the realization of all her dreams. And as in a dream she accepts his love, returns it with thousand-fold fire; she will not see the danger, she will not wake, she insists upon being happy once in her life. But morning breaks; it becomes impossible to keep her eyes closed any longer, and to retain the visions of her dream. Her friend has returned, contrary to all expectations, and appears before her, warning her, and the very next hour his prophecy has become true. Blow upon blow, misfortune falls upon her. Did he dream of it, when it drove him from the ruins of Karnak to his home in the far North? The news of the approaching death of the man whose name she bears summons her away from the arms of him whom she loves; she hastens to fulfil a duty which is all the more sacred to her because of the blissful happiness that she has enjoyed during the last weeks; and she returns, her heart full of sweet hopes, and at the same time full of painful anticipations, and she hears and sees that the man to whom she has abandoned herself with boundless love has betrayed her. And, as if that was not enough punishment for her short, secret happiness, her only child--that beautiful, lovely boy, who was her delight and her pride--is taken down with a disease which appears to her the beginning of an affection such as she has just seen end in the most fearful manner in the father of that child.

But this second blow is perhaps a blessing in disguise. It stuns her so that she scarcely feels the wound in her heart. The love of the woman is swallowed up in the love of the mother. She watches day and night by the bedside of the boy; she has eyes and ears only for his wants and his wishes; and as soon as he recovers slightly, she takes a journey to the man in whose experience she has unbounded confidence, and from whose lips she means to hear the sentence, the decision of life or death--no! a thousand times worse than death itself! And he has spoken; he has left her some hope; he has even encouraged her to hope--her boy is going to live; he will recover; the sins of the father are not to be visited on the next generation.

And now that her soul has been relieved of the fearful burden--now she thinks for the first time again of her betrayed love.

Was not this betrayal a just punishment for having cared so much for her own happiness, and so little for that of the boy? For having committed treason against her own child; for was not the love for a man who filled her whole heart treason against her child?

Here, in this very room, she had during the past summer dreamt so often of a future which was to be realized in such a sad present, and now the current of life had floated her back to the same place, almost into the same situation! Was it not as if Fate wished to give her time to

consider before she acted--before she laid her own happiness, and that of her child, into hands which were far too feeble to defend such a treasure successfully?

Here, in this very room, her friend had warned her against these hands that were grasping with childish eagerness at everything that was great and beautiful, in order to cast it aside again in childish caprice, as if it were worth little. Here, in this very room, he had prophesied to her things which had since come true, word by word.

Here, in this very room, he had spoken to her thus: "And when you lie crushed by this blow, and wish to die, and yet cannot die; then you will be able to feel what anguish a heart suffers when it sees its love betrayed and despised; then you will make me amends in your heart, and be sorry for the wrong you have done me."

Where was he now? this faithful, noble friend, who--she had often felt it, though never so deeply as at this moment--was wasting his proud strength for her sake in idleness or senseless adventures, as a tree whose heart has been taken out breaks forth in abundant branches and leaves, but never bears fruit again? Once more he was wandering restlessly, like the wandering Jew, through the wide, desert world. And, as if he should never call anything his own, the child whom he had loved before he knew her to be his child, had vanished again like a short, fair dream. He had let her go, because his sense of justice told him that he had no claim upon this child, for whom he had done nothing but to call it into existence. Was it really to be his fate to sow love and reap indifference?

No! no! not indifference; although it might not be love such as he felt, and such as he wished for, but certainly not indifference! Did she not feel hearty friendship, deep, sincere regard for him? Would she not have sacrificed whole years of her existence, if by so doing she could have restored his child to him?

Where was he now? She had become so accustomed to seeing him by her side, whenever the dark hours of her life were coming, that she missed him sadly now, when he was for the first time absent. And yet, what right had she to a love which she had refused a hundred times, and which she had so grievously insulted by her love for another man?

The fair lady had been so lost in such thoughts that she did not hear a gentle knock at the door. The door opened, and an old, gray-bearded face peeped in. Behind the grim, bearded face the form of a tall man was visible.

"Madame," said the moustache, "a good friend who has just arrived wishes to present his respects, if possible yet, this evening."

"Who is it?" asked the lady, rising with surprise from her seat.

The tall gentleman entered.

"Oldenburg!" cried the lady; "Oldenburg! Is it really you?"

"Yes, Melitta!" said the baron, seizing the proffered hand of the lady and carrying it to his lips. "It is I, in person."

The old man had remained where he stood, rubbing his hands and looking at the two, as they were shaking hands, with an eye full of hope and apprehension. When he saw the unmistakable expression of joyful surprise upon the fair face of his beloved mistress, and the tear which glistened in her eye as the baron bent over her hand, his own eyes slowly filled with tears. He left the room with noiseless steps, closed the door very gently, and one who could have observed the old man afterwards--but there was no one there to see him--would have seen how he folded his hands, when he was outside, and murmured an ardent prayer with trembling lips, in his gray beard--a prayer which thanked God for this meeting between his mistress and the only man whom he thought worthy of her, and implored Him to turn everything, oh everything, to the best, in this the eleventh hour, by His infinite mercy and kindness.

* * * * *

When old Baumann had left the room, the baron had, according to his old habit, walked silently up and down the room with long strides, to overcome a feeling which threatened to get the better of his self-control. Melitta had seated herself on the sofa, since her own excitement, which was probably not less strong than Oldenburg's had deprived her of the power of standing.

After a few minutes the baron came and took his seat by her side on the sofa, and said with a soft voice, which did not show the slightest trace of the vehemence of his rough manner,

"And you do not ask, Melitta, what has brought me here through night and storm, across these mountains, to this village and this room?"

"No!" replied Melitta, looking full and clear into his eyes; "no! for I know it without asking."

"I thank you, Melitta!"

This was all he answered; but the whole heart of the man was in these few words.

"Yes, and even more than that," continued Melitta. "I was but just thinking of you--of the faithful friend who has as yet always stood by me in the hour of misfortune, aiding me by counsel and deed, however I may have rejected his advice and rewarded the sacrifices he has made for my sake with bitter ingratitude.

"Sacrifices--ingratitude!" said Oldenburg, and a melancholy smile played around his lips; "those are words, Melitta, which have no meaning for us--I mean for myself. At least they have none now, whatever else I may have thought of them in former years. In the end everybody submits to his fate; and when the captured lion has come to an end with his despair, and sees that his strength can do nothing against the iron bars of his cage, he lies down in the corner and is for the future as gentle as a lamb. But no more of that; I did not come here to plead for myself, and to renew a suit which has already been lost in all the stages of appeal; I did not come for my sake, but for yours. I was told in Grunwald, where I was on business, that Julius had been attacked by serious sickness, and that you had gone with him to Fichtenau. I feared the worst, and followed you at once, travelling day and night, in order to help you as far as I could. Fortunately our apprehensions were unfounded. I have spoken with Birkenhain downstairs, after he left you. He has completely reassured me, and thinks you can go back as soon as you feel strong enough. That is all I wished to know; and now, when the purpose of my journey is fulfilled, and I have been able by a lucky accident, thanks to the gods, to see you and to hold your dear hand in mine--God bless you, Melitta! and may misfortune--for good fortune has nothing to do with us--not make us meet soon again."

The baron said these last words with a smiling air, but in his voice there was a secret pain, the pain of a noble heart full of love, which finds no home in all this wide, rich world.

He had taken Melitta's hand in bidding her farewell, and was about to rise; but he could not do it, for the hand so dear to him not only returned warmly the pressure of his--he felt, at least he thought he felt, that Melitta would not let him leave her, that she would be pleased to see him stay.

This was something so new to him that he looked at her, wondering whether it were really possible--whether his presence was for once no punishment to her.

"You must not go yet," said Melitta, with some precipitancy, while a passing flush colored her pale cheeks for a moment. "I cannot bear to see that, while all the world praises my kindness and every beggar leaves me contented, you alone should look upon me as upon a statue, which never gives and always takes without ever saying Thank you! You have not told me a word yet about yourself; not a word how and where you have been all this time. You come from a distance of several thousand miles to look at my Julius, and you mean to go again before I have even been able to ask you if you have had any news of your Czika? Is that generous? Why, it is not even right in you."

The baron looked at Melitta as she said this, almost frightened.

"Melitta," he answered, so seriously as to be almost solemn; "it is not right to awaken the desire to live, in a man who is sick unto death. Do not spoil me, from pure pity, with a kindness which does not come from the heart!"

"Not from the heart!" repeated Melitta in a low voice. "To be sure I have deserved that reproach; I ought not to complain."

"I did not mean to reproach you, Melitta."

"And yet I deserve it. Yes, Oldenburg, I must tell you, or it will oppress my heart beyond endurance. I feel deeply ashamed before you. The burden of gratitude which you impose upon me weighs me down."

"A burden, Melitta! A burden! By God, I did not wish to lay any burden upon you by the few services I have been able to render you."

"You will not believe me. I cannot measure and weigh my words as you do. If there is no voice in your heart speaking for me--if you are not willing to listen to me with your heart, then----"

Her voice was drowned in tears.

"What is this?" said Oldenburg, seizing his head with both his hands. "Am I dreaming? Is this my head? Are these my hands? Am I Oldenburg? Are you Melitta? You, who are shedding tears, because I, Oldenburg, do not understand you, or will not understand you?"

"You shall understand me," said Melitta, drying her tears, with an impetuosity very unusual in her. "You have seen me so often weak and irresolute in our intercourse, that you do not think me any longer capable of forming a resolution. And yet I have the strength to do so; and that I have it, I owe to you, Adalbert. During the sickness of my child you have spoken to me, and I have not closed my heart to your voice. I have heard it very distinctly during the long, anxious night hours which I spent watching and weeping by the bedside of my child. Then I have asked my child's pardon with silent, burning tears, that I could ever forget being a mother. Then I have vowed to myself that I would never, never forget it again. Then I have----"

She was silent; burning shame flooded her cheeks with deep glowing blushes; but she made a great effort and said,

"Then I have abjured a passion which humiliates me in my own eyes, in my child's eyes, and, Adalbert, in yours."

"Stop, Melitta! stop!" cried Oldenburg, rising suddenly. "You are beside yourself! You are not alone! You are in the presence of another person--of a man who loves you, Melitta. He does not want to hear what you ought to say to no one but to yourself."

"Let me finish, Adalbert! I trust in your goodness, as I trust in your strength. I have not told you all yet; not even all the vows I have made by the bedside of my sick child. I have often thought of your child, then, and that a most terrible fate has robbed you of the love of your child as well as of the love of her whom you love. And then I vowed that, if I cannot make you as happy as you deserve to be; if much, far too much, has happened which parts you and me forever; I can yet help you bear your fate, as far as in me lies. I will try to reconcile you to life, and live for you as far as I am able."

Melitta had, while she said these words, risen from the sofa. She stood before him with deep-red cheeks and beaming eyes.

Oldenburg had heard her with breathless excitement, with an emotion which grew stronger and deeper with every word. His eyes flashed, his bosom heaved, he pressed his hands upon his heart, which felt as if it would burst with unspeakable bliss.

When Melitta's last word had dropped from her lips he approached her, knelt down before her, and said, with a voice deep and firm, like the sound of an iron shield,

"And now hear my vow, Melitta! As surely as I have loved you ever since I can think, as surely as the night of my life has been lighted up but by a single star, as surely as I have wandered about restlessly and aimlessly in the vast desert of life, only because I despaired that that star could ever shine down upon me benignly--so surely will I, from this moment, strive to attain the highest aim of man with all the power I may possess. I will lay aside all little weaknesses and all my cowardice; I will try to make up for the time which I have lost in inactivity. And as sure as my heart is at this moment overflowing with a happiness which words cannot describe, so surely will I seek neither rest nor repose till you love me as I love you--till you are mine. Do you hear, Melitta--till you are my wife!"

He had risen, too.

"And now, Melitta," he cried, and his words sounded like shouts of joy, "farewell! I cannot bear it any longer under this roof; the whole, wide world has become too narrow for me. Farewell! farewell! till we meet again!"

He embraced Melitta impetuously, and kissed her on her brow. Then he hastily left the room.

Melitta had remained standing in the middle of the room, as if she were petrified. She had not had the strength to keep Oldenburg back, nor to return his farewell. She placed her hand upon her beating temples.

"What have I done? What have I said?" she asked herself. And the voice of her heart answered: "Nothing you need be ashamed of, before yourself or before your child."

She hastened into the adjoining room. She bent over the sleeping boy; she kissed him amid burning tears.

Then she heard the rolling of a carriage, which rapidly drove away from the door of the hotel.

"That is he!" she said, listening; and then, pressing her face in the cushions, "Farewell! farewell! till we meet again!"

CHAPTER X.

While this interview between Melitta and Oldenburg was taking place at the Kurhaus, and, as by the blow of a charmed wand, the barriers fell which had seemed to be destined to part two good hearts forever, there had been sitting in the room on the right hand--which "was occupied by a traveller who would surely not stay beyond the next morning"--this very traveller quite near the

door which led from one room to the other, supporting his feverish head with his hands, and suffering in his lacerated heart unspeakable anguish.

Oswald had returned, on his way from the asylum, along the river, almost as in a dream; for when he left Berger at the gate of the institution, the parting with him and the last terrible words of the unfortunate man had quite overwhelmed him, and kept him from every effort of thinking calmly.

His brains and his heart were a perfect chaos, filled with all that he had heard and seen since his arrival in Fichtenau on the preceding evening--with all the impressions which he had so suddenly received, all the thoughts that had been stirred up, all the passions that had been unchained. He had a dim presentiment that such a state of mind must in the end lead to insanity, if it were not already itself a kind of insanity.

Ought he not to turn back and knock at the gate behind which Berger had disappeared? Was not that house, with its high prison-walls, the best refuge for hearts that were as weary of the world as his was? Or still better, ought he not to throw himself over the railing into the river below, where it rushed, deep and silent, between the steep, high banks, gliding noiselessly along like a serpent? Would he not be sure thus to cool his heated brow forever, and to silence the hammering pulsations in his temples for all eternity? How could he hope ever to find an issue into rosy light from a labyrinth in which so noble, so lofty a mind as Berger's had lost its way irretrievably? Was not Berger far superior to him in strength of mind, as well as in nobility of soul? And yet, and yet--"that I may fully measure the depth of this wretchedness, that I may touch with my own hands the incredible," the poor man had said, when he fell into the arms of the rope-dancer. Was that, then, the last conclusion of wisdom? The high-minded idealist saw himself excelled by the rude slave of sensuality in courage of life and joyousness of life! The pupil of Plato acknowledged a drunken clown as his master! The man who, like the youth of Saïs, had striven all his life only after truth, fraternized with a coarse story-teller, a charlatan, who defied all rules, of probability even, and lived merrily and cheerfully on the credulity of others, as the swallow lives on midges. As old Lear in the tempestuous night on the heath tears the royal mantle from his shoulders, so as to have no advantage over poor Tom, the "poor bare-backed animal, whose belly cries for two red herrings," so Berger also had laid aside the philosopher's cloak, that did not warm him half as well as the rope-dancer's bare vulgarity. Berger had learnt from this man that only he can hope to enjoy real happiness who gives up all pretensions to wealth, to honor, and splendor, and who sees neither a punishment nor a disgrace in the contempt of the world. Did those men of olden times think differently about it who fed on locusts, and exposed their bodies to the heat of the sun and the chill of rains--Indian penitents. Christian anchorites, Flagellants, pillar-saints, and ascetics of every kind? Is asceticism not the consistent pursuit of holiness? Is not contempt of the world, and of one's self, the consistent effect of asceticism? Can we reach the Holiest of Holies--the blissful original state, the sweet Nirvana--unless we first annihilate ourselves, as far as it can be done in life? And is such annihilation possible as long as we continually cling to life and to all that makes life dear to us? Is it an accident that saints appear odd in the eyes of the multitude, and the company of publicans and sinners is the best in the eyes of holy men? Yes, indeed! Berger and Schmenckel, arm in arm! Was that the solution of the great mystery, the squaring of the circle?

Oswald could not get rid of the picture, and the terrible impression it had made upon him at last brought him back to calmer views. His sense, of the beautiful was shocked by the abhorrent garb which that ascetic wisdom had adopted. He agreed with all his heart to join the order of the threefold contempt, but he could not be reconciled to the costume of the order. He thought of himself in the dress in which he had seen Berger--a blue, faded blouse, a coarse slouched hat, a stick cut from a thorn-bush--and he shuddered all over. He thought of Doctor Braun, and what he would have said if he had met him in company with Berger--he who gainfully fastidious about his appearance, and considered it a fundamental principle, that if we wished to remain physically and psychically healthy, we must be careful not to come in contact with bodily or mental uncleanness. Despise the world!--why not? Despise one's self! I have done that often enough; and, alas, generally for very good reasons. But despise being despised! Never!--rather die!--rather, a thousand times.

And why die? Why not rather live? Is life so very contemptible? Have I not found in Braun a friend of whom I have every reason to be proud? Might I not succeed in finding my way out of this labyrinth, if I had such a friend by my side? May not much come right again, even if everything does not turn out well? Suppose I were to make up my mind to abandon this striving after exalted ideals which threaten to ruin my mind? If I were to turn back, even at this the eleventh hour, from the way which leads in the end to Doctor Birkenhain's insane asylum? If I were this very night to leave Fichtenau, where the air is filled with ill luck for me, as Doctor Braun anticipated.

Oswald was standing before the Kurhaus. A carriage which had just arrived was waiting at the door. In the dining-room, at the end of the long table, two gentlemen were sitting in close conversation. He thought one of them was Doctor Birkenhain. He did not desire in the least to meet the physician, whose wishes with regard to Berger he had so lamentably failed to fulfil. He would drop him a few lines before leaving, and excuse himself on the score of pressing business and Berger's express desire, for his failure to say good-by in person.

He went to his room and rang the bell.

"Is there any mail leaving to-night?"

"In half-an-hour, sir."

"I shall leave by the mail, then. Secure me a seat in the coach, and bring the bill," said Oswald, already busy packing his things.

"Yes, sir, directly."

"Yes! yes! I must leave here," murmured Oswald, passionately, strengthening himself more and more in his resolution. "Away from here before more ill luck befalls me!"

"The bill, sir!" said the waiter, coming back again. "Much obliged to you, sir. Need not be in such a hurry, sir; you have twenty-five minutes left; the office is close by here. Thought you would stay over night, sir. Might have given this room to a lady, sir, if we had known, who has just arrived; she has taken the parlor next door, and two rooms on the other side. We had to give her those rooms, although they are not good enough for such a grand and beautiful lady."

The waiter uttered these words in a whisper, which made it clear that the doors of the Kurhaus were not exactly impenetrable to sound.

"Who is the lady?" asked Oswald, locking his trunk.

"A Frau von Berkow; old customer of ours. Told you this morning about her, sir. Will send the porter directly to carry your trunk to the office. Anything else, sir?"

The waiter left the room, waving his napkin in a most graceful manner. Oswald rose. His face was deadly pale. He had to support himself on the table; his limbs trembled.

Had he heard right? Melitta here? In this house? Next door? How did she get here? What did she come for? To this place, which had such mournful associations for her? Was it an accident? Was it purpose? Could she have come for his sake? Could she have found out the purpose of his journey? Was she looking for him? Had she failed to receive the letter which he wrote to her after Bruno's death, and an hour before his duel with Felix--that letter in which he told her with unfeeling cruelty, though he thought it heroism then, that "his heart was no longer exclusively hers, that he did not intend to deceive her and himself, and that he was bidding her--and perhaps life itself--an eternal adieu?" Or had she received it, and read it with the incredulity of a loving heart, which does not comprehend faithlessness, because it knows itself no other love but true love? Had she come to tell him that she had forgiven him?--that she was still his Melitta? If he were to hasten to her and to fall at her feet, would she raise the repentant lover and tell him that all was forgiven and forgotten?--that she had never ceased to love him?

He listened to hear if anything was stirring in the adjoining room. He heard nothing--nothing but the beating of his violently-agitated heart.

She was alone. She waited for his coming. Were the blissful days of Berkow really to return once more? Was really everything to end well, after all?

He listened. A door opened.

Probably a waiter, who has executed an order.

A deep male voice. The soft notes of a woman's voice.

The soft voice was Melitta's! But the other?

He listened. The voices rose, became more distinct.

A convulsive spasm flew across the features of the listener; a hoarse, unpleasant laugh broke from his lips. The man who was speaking so warmly to Melitta was Baron Oldenburg.

The sofa on which the two speakers were sitting, stood close against the door which led from one room to the other. Oswald could not hear everything they said, but why was that necessary? The meeting of the two in this remote little town, which had already once before been the scene of their stealthy rendezvous, spoke eloquently enough. He had been right, after all! The two had after all but made a fool of him! He had done Melitta no wrong which she had not inflicted on him also. They were quits.

A knock at the door.

The porter came to carry the gentleman's trunk to the office.

"It is high time, sir. The postilion has blown his horn twice."

Oswald followed the man mechanically down the long passages, out of the house, across the dark street to the coach.

A minute later and the heavy coach was rumbling over the pavement. The postilion played a

merry melody in the silent night-air, and Oswald furnished a text to the air: to despise one's self, despise the world, despise being despised.

CHAPTER XI.

It was an early hour of a murky day in autumn. Fogs were brewing in the mountains around Fichtenau, and hung so low that the traveller on the high road, which makes a steep ascent close behind the village and loses itself in thick woods, could scarcely distinguish the pine-trees on the edge of the forest.

By the wayside, at a place where two roads crossed each other, sat Xenobia and Czika. Their faithful companion in all their wanderings, the little donkey, with the red feathers on his head and the scarlet saddle-cloth on his back, was grazing peacefully in the ditch on the short, ill-flavored grass. He did not seem to relish it much; he shook his head indignantly, as if he wanted to say: I am frugal, but everything has its limits.

Nor did the gypsy woman and her child seem to enjoy the weather any more. They sat there, each wrapped in a large coarse shawl, silent and motionless, like a couple of Egyptian statues. This attitude, natural as it might be to the woman, had something very uncanny in so young a child as Czika.

And Xenobia herself was no longer the hearty woman whom Oswald had seen on that afternoon in October in the forest near Berkow. Was it the effect of the weather, or was it sickness and sorrow--but her features had little now of that haughty energy which formerly made them so remarkable. Her brow was furrowed with small lines; her eyes had sunk deep into their orbits and did not shine with the same brightness as of old, as she now glanced in the direction from which her sharp ear heard the noise of a carriage coming from Fichtenau.

"That is not theirs," she said, letting her head sink again. A few minutes later a well-closed travelling carriage, drawn by two horses, appeared rising out of the fog. On the box, by the side of the driver, sat an old man with a long, silver-gray moustache. He turned round continually, to cast a look at the inside of the carriage, and to smile respectfully and yet amicably at the occupants--a lady and a boy.

Thus he had failed to notice the gypsy woman, who had stepped forward as she saw the great lady in the carriage, and asked for alms. What was his amazement therefore, when he saw that the lady suddenly called to him to stop the horses, exhibiting all the signs of extreme consternation, and that she was standing in the road itself long before the horses could be checked.

"Isabel, it is you! and the Czika! My God, how fortunate!" cried Melitta, seizing both hands of the gypsy. "Now I shall not let you go again. My God, how very fortunate!" and the young lady embraced the gypsy woman with tears in her eyes.

But the latter freed herself almost violently, and stepping back some little distance she crossed her arms on her bosom and looked at Melitta with a suspicious, almost hostile glance.

"Do you not know me, Isabel?" said Melitta; "it is I! Have you forgotten the days at Berkow five years ago? That is my Julius, there! And how tall and how beautiful the Czika has grown."

Julius had jumped out of the carriage; old Baumann also had climbed down from the box.

Melitta hastened up to Czika, embraced the child, and kissed and caressed her over and over again. The others spoke to Xenobia, who paid no attention to them, but looked with anxious eyes at Melitta, who now came back to her, holding Czika by the hand.

"Isabel!" said Melitta, "you must, really you must, give me the little one. I dare not, I cannot, continue my journey without her."

"Why will you not leave us as we are?" said the gypsy. "You are a great lady, fit for the house; the gypsy is fit only for the forest. You would die in the forest; the gypsy would die in the house. I cannot go with you."

"Then give me the Czika?"

"Will you give me your boy?"

Melitta did not know what to answer. She felt too deeply that the gypsy woman could not act differently, and that she, in her place, would have done the same. And yet could she let the two go out again into the wide world? To see Oldenburg's little daughter, whom he yearned after, whom he was searching for everywhere, disappear once more, after an accident such as might never happen again in all her life, had brought her right in her path--she could not bear the thought, and like a child that feels how helpless and friendless it is, she broke into tears.

The gypsy woman seemed to be touched. She took Melitta's hand and kissed it.

"You are very kind, I know," she said; "I know it well. I would rather give you the Czika than anybody else."

She reflected deeply. Suddenly she took Melitta's hand once more and led her aside.

"Do you know," she asked, "who Czika's father is?"

"Yes."

"And are you doing what you do for the father's sake, or for your own?"

Melitta's cheeks reddened.

"For the sake of both," she replied, after some hesitation.

"Where are you going to now?"

"Home--to Berkow."

"And are you going to stay there?"

"Yes; at least during the winter."

"Then listen to me. I swear to you by the Great Spirit, I will bring you the Czika as soon as I feel that I am to be gathered to my fathers. That may be very soon. More I cannot promise; more I dare not say."

Melitta felt that she must be satisfied with this promise. She knew the character of the Brown Countess too well not to be aware that if she had once formed a resolution, all persuasion was in vain. She re-entered her carriage, therefore, sadly, after having embraced Xenobia and the child once more, and soon was out of sight.

The rattling of the wheels and the trot of the horses were no longer heard. The gypsies were still sitting by the wayside.

Another carriage came up in the direction of Fichtenau. One could hear from afar off the cries of the driver, and the clanking of chains which formed part of the harness.

A few minutes later the wagon appeared out of the mist. It was a huge box--a whole house on four wheels, stuffed up to the roof and high above the roof with chests and boxes, kettle drums and trombones, stage scenery, poles and ladders, and all kinds of kitchen utensils and stage property. The four horses who drew this Noah's Ark had hard work of it.

Before the wagon a number of men were walking on foot--Cotterby, the Egyptian; the artist of the gigantic cask, Mr. Stolsenberg; and the clown, Pierrot. All these gentlemen wore gay-colored shawls around the neck, and had short pipes in their mouths. From the open windows of the ark the crying of children was heard, and the scolding voice of Mamselle Adele. Behind the wagon followed, apparently in eager conversation, the director, Mr. Schmenckel (also with a bright shawl around the neck and a pipe in his mouth), and a man in a blue blouse, with a heavy stick in his hand, and an old slouched hat on his head. Director Schmenckel had made his acquaintance a few nights before under very peculiar circumstances, in the drinking-hall of the Green Hat; he had met him since very frequently at the same tavern, and found him quite unexpectedly that morning, ready to join the rope-dancers, just as they were leaving the village.

When the wagon reached the cross-roads the driver stopped to let the horses breathe.

The gypsy woman with her child stepped up and was vociferously greeted by the rope-dancers.

Mr. Schmenckel shook hands with her, and patted the Czika paternally on her brown cheeks.

"That's right, Xenobia! here you are, back again!" he said. "By the great dickens, we could not get on at all without you. Good-by, professor! Thanks for the escort! You must turn back here, or you won't find the way to Fichtenau."

"I'll go a little further with you," replied the man in the blouse.

"All right!" said Mr. Schmenckel; "the further the better. Such a good old brick, like yourself, we do not meet with every day. Is all right in there? Well, go on then!"

The wagon was set in motion. After a few minutes the whole procession--wagon, horses, and men, had been swallowed up by the thick gray fog.

CHAPTER XII.

The town of Grunwald played, in days previous to those to which this story belongs, a far more important part than now. It had been an honored member of the great Hanse League, and rivalled Hamburg, Bremen, and Lubeck in wealth and power. Its ships sailed on all the northern seas, and the Grunwald flag was well known even in the ports of Genoa and Venice. The citizens were a broad-shouldered, hard-headed race, strong in their love and their hatred, and thorough in all their ways. They were justly proud of their liberties and their privileges, and trusted implicitly in their secure position, amid the ocean and bottomless swamps, and the high walls and ramparts of the city, but more fully yet in the sword by their side and the brave heart in their bosom. Even in the Thirty Years' War, Grunwald still proved its ancient reputation in fierce battle against the Imperialists, and the recollection of the glorious deeds of their forefathers survives to this day in the hearts of the present inhabitants.

They must unfortunately fall back upon past glory, for modern times have done little for them in this respect. The long and tortuous canals in the great bay on which the town is situated admit only of small vessels of light draught, and navigation nowadays cannot well get along with such ships; trade has, besides, sought other roads and found other markets, and Grunwald has slowly but steadily sunk from its proud eminence, till it has fallen at last to the level of a small provincial town of no account in the great world, as far as political influence and commercial importance are concerned.

The harbor is filled up now, the ramparts are razed, and the once enormous walls exist only in fragments, and yet there is a melancholy sheen of former greatness about the old Hanse town which attracts the thoughtful traveller, as the mouldy smell of an old parchment charms the book-worm. In spite of all the efforts made by the last generations to give the town a sober, trivial appearance, they have after all not been able to straighten all the crooked narrow streets, and to destroy all the poetry of many an old house, with its narrow, lofty, and richly-adorned gable-end. And above the labyrinth of streets, lanes, and courts, with their half-modern, half-mediæval character, there tower still the steeples of glorious churches, which are far too grand for the reduced proportions of Grunwald. But at night, when they cast their gigantic shadows far over the town which sleeps beneath them in the pale moonlight, or in the evening as you approach the harbor from the open sea, and gray mists rising from the water spread over the whole a mysterious veil, the illusion is yet strong, and the effect full of grandeur.

Justice requires, however, to add that Grunwald can be called insignificant only in comparison with former days of great power and surpassing splendor. The town is still of vast importance for the whole province in which it is situated. If her flag no longer waves on every sea, her port is still continually crowded with schooners and sloops, and near her wharves many a larger vessel awaits completion on the stocks. If her walls have been torn to pieces by the artillery of the Imperialists, and her ramparts have been razed by the French, the town is still a fortress, whose commandant would not sleep quietly unless he had received from all the guards and posts the report that all is quiet. If the town has lost her ancient privileges, and no longer enjoys as of old perfect freedom and sovereign independence, she has profited on the other hand largely by becoming an integral part of a great monarchy. Grunwald has not only a numerous garrison of infantry and artillery, but is also the seat of the highest court of the province; and above all, as everybody knows, enjoys a university, although the light shed by this seat of the muses cannot be said to penetrate far into distant lands. Grunwald is, moreover, the favorite residence of the surrounding nobility, which is particularly rich, and enjoys a very great influence on public life. When the magnificent crops upon their vast domains have been safely housed, when the trees in their parks lose their foliage in the autumn winds, and the crows migrate from the bare woods to the towns, then all the counts and barons and smaller noblemen also come to Grunwald. From the great island, which lies right opposite the town, and from the whole surrounding country, they come in their lumbering state carriages, all driven four-in-hand, and settle down with children, servants, tutors, and governesses for the whole winter. They own stately houses all over the town, which in summer are easily known by their utter silence, the closed curtains, and the grass growing in idyllic happiness between the flags of their court-yards--far different from the ordinary houses inhabited by ordinary people, who have to pay taxes, enjoy no privileges, and are forced to work summer and winter alike.

CHAPTER XIII.

It is autumn. The fields are bare; from the linden-trees in the court-yard at Grenwitz the brown leaves are falling in showers. Thick fogs cover the sea, the high shores of the island with their noble beech-forests, and the low coast of the continent. The towers of Grunwald rise out of the mist like giants of former days, and around the lofty steeples crows and blackbirds are fluttering, having left the inhospitable forests to move to warm cities.

The sun has set for an hour, and the last blood-red streak, just above the edge of the sea, has turned pale in the shadow of the heavy, low-drifting clouds. The streets of the town have grown silent, and the lamplighter is lighting one after the other the oil lamps, whose dim light is useful only in making the mist still denser and the darkness still darker. He has just done with two unusually large and bright lamps before the entrance-gate to a huge, massive building in one of the streets that lead down to the harbor. It was the first time this year--a proof that the great family which has owned this house for many a generation, and which lives on its estates regularly in summer, and quite frequently in the winter also, has moved into town on that very day.

Nevertheless the windows of the mansion which look upon the street are still dark. They are, to be sure, rarely seen lighted up, only on solemn occasions, when the family gives one of those stiff evening parties, to which of course only the nobility and the very highest officials in the government service are ever invited.

Ordinarily these state apartments remain closed, exactly like the lofty halls and grand reception-rooms of the hereditary castle in the country, and the family are content to live in the less gorgeous rooms which look upon the rear. The modest, exceedingly unpretending taste of the mistress of the house prefers the latter, all the more as the front rooms can only be heated at great expense, and the woods of the Grenwitz estate, as far as entailed, are rented out at the ludicrously small sum of ten thousand dollars.

In one of these rooms, which was stately enough, sits the Baroness Grenwitz on a sofa before a round table, on which two wax-candles are burning brightly. She looks as if the last six weeks had added as many years to her age. Her forehead has become narrower and more angular, the dark hair shows here and there a silver thread, her eyes look larger and more fixed and meaning than ever. Her nephew, Felix, is lounging in a most comfortable position opposite her, in a large easy-chair, filled with soft cushions. The young man wears his right arm in a sling, and the sickly pallor of his face contrasts strangely with his hair, as carefully parted and curled as ever, and with the whole toilet, which is as perfect as usual. Between the two stands a table, covered with letters and papers, all of them written in the same handsome handwriting. The baroness and Felix seem just to have finished the perusal of these documents, and to be still too busy with the thoughts which have been suggested by them, to be able to speak. They are brooding in silence over the impression produced on each one, while the monotonous tic-tac of the pendulum of the rococo clock on the mantel-piece is the only noise heard in the room.

At last the young man breaks the silence.

"The thing looks more serious than either of us thought," he says, raising himself slightly in his easy-chair, and taking up once more the paper he had been reading last.

"I still do not believe a word of it," replied the baroness.

"That is saying a good deal, *ma tante!* although you have read the whole story in black and white."

"In Timm's handwriting! In Timm's handwriting! what must the scamp have invented and written up!"

"Certainly nothing but what is in the original documents."

"And why does he not send us the originals?"

"But, pardon me, *ma tante*, that is rather a naïve question. To surrender the originals--that is to say, the weapons which he means to use against us--would be an act of generosity or stupidity such as you cannot possibly expect from my good friend Timm, who is a very sly fox, I assure you. He evidently does not fear to be unmasked, but only to be deceived or over-reached by us, else he would not have made the offer to submit the original papers in the presence of a third party, an umpire, to our minute examination. No, no, dear aunt; do not give yourself up to idle hopes. These letters and papers are really in existence; you may take poison upon that."

"What do you say?"

"I mean, you may rely on that. I, for my part, am as fully convinced that this Monsieur Stein is related to the family of Grenwitz as of my own existence, and therefore I hate the man, as one is apt to hate such an interloper of a relative, especially if he happens to be a conceited, vain, puffed-up, impertinent, accursed blackguard, like this scamp of a good-for-nothing fellow."

This flood of names, little suitable to the place, would under other circumstances have infallibly brought down upon the ex-lieutenant a severe reprimand from his highly moral aunt. At this moment, however, the lady was too busy with other things.

"But nothing has as yet been proved," she said, with obstinate vehemence, "as long as the identity of that man with the child of that Marie Montbert has not been fully established by the clearest evidence. I grant the thing is probable--it may be plausible even; nevertheless we cannot afford to throw away hundreds of dollars for mere probabilities or plausibilities."

"Hundreds?" replied Felix, with a contemptuous smile. "You may say thousands! Timm will not let us slip out of his tight grip so cheaply."

"You cannot be in earnest?" said the baroness, raising her eyebrows, Juno-fashion. "That man will surely not carry his impudence so far as that!"

"*Nous verrons!*" replied the dandy, laconically, and fell back into his easy-chair.

There followed a pause in the conversation of the accomplices, which Felix improved to subject his fingernails to a minute examination, while the baroness busied herself in arranging the papers on the table according to their numbers (for they were all methodically numbered).

"The gentleman keeps us waiting," said the baroness.

"He pretends to be indifferent," replied Felix. "I know him from of old. Whenever he pretended to be tired, and to wish to go home, we could be sure that he was determined to break the bank!"

At that moment the servant announced: "Mr. Albert Timm desires to pay his respects."

"Show him in," said the baroness, raising herself upright, with her accustomed dignity; but her voice was not as firm as usual.

"For heaven's sake keep your temper, aunt!" said Felix in great haste, while the servant went to show in Timm. "If the rascal sees that our pulse goes faster, he'll pull the screws tighter, and---"

"I am perfectly calm," replied the baroness, although the unusual flush on her cheeks and the quick breathing announced just the contrary.

Half a minute's intense excitement on the part of the persons in the room and the door opened, admitting Mr. Timm, who walked in rapidly.

His appearance was, aside from a somewhat more carefully chosen costume of fashionable cut, precisely the same which lingered still in Anna Maria's recollection from last summer: the same white brow, the same smoothly-brushed light hair, the same fresh, rosy cheeks, and the same impertinent smile upon the smooth, handsome face. If the baroness looked at her favorite, in spite of his unchanged appearance, with very different eyes now, the fault was evidently her own. Mr. Timm was not disposed to allow the cold reception to have the slightest influence on his own warm greetings.

"Good evening, baroness! Good evening, baron!" said Mr. Timm, in his clear, fresh voice, kissing Anna Maria's right hand, which she granted him most reluctantly, and heartily shaking Felix's left hand (the other was in the sling). "Delighted, baroness, to see you look so remarkably well--so cheerful too; and as for you, baron,--well, I may say, considering the circumstances, not so bad! Permit me to follow your example----"

And Mr. Timm moved one of the heavy arm-chairs which were standing around the table, sat down, and looked at the two with eyes beaming with insolence and intense delight, as far as one could judge, through his glasses.

"Mighty comfortable!" he continued, stretching out his legs and patting the arms of the chair with his hands "And the baron stayed at home! Must be devilish uncomfortable in the big, damp, old box."

"The baron had to attend to some very important business," said the baroness, merely to say something.

"Business!" cried Mr. Timm. "How can anybody trouble himself about business when his business is, like the baron's, not to have any business at all! Incomprehensible!"

"You ought to be able to comprehend that very well, Timm," said Felix, with very perceptible irony; "otherwise I should not be able to guess why you have troubled yourself about a certain business."

"A lawsuit is no business," remarked Timm.

"But it may become one," said Felix.

"For instance, if one borrows money from the Jews, and sues them afterwards, when they want to be paid, for usury," replied Timm.

This recollection from the early life of Felix was so little to the taste of the ex-lieutenant that he turned over impatiently in his chair, and said in an audibly irritated tone:

"I think we had better come to the point."

"With pleasure," said Mr. Timm, drawing up his chair close to the table, with an expression which by no means belied his words.

"You have been kind enough," began Felix, while the baroness stared with furrowed brow and downcast eyes into her lap, "to send us, at our request, copies of certain letters, and so forth, which you say you have found among the papers of your deceased father."

"You mean, which you have found, baron!"

"Very well, then; which you have found. We can admit that without committing ourselves, for there is nothing in them all to show how this fabulous son of my uncle Harald can be helped by your aid--as you are good enough to state in your letter--to the inheritance he may claim."

"That depends entirely upon the *point de vue* from which you look at the matter," replied Mr. Timm.

"And may I beg you will inform us of your own?"

"Why not? It gives me special pleasure to do so. According to my view the thing is this: I have here a number of documents and papers, which not only shed a light on the relations once existing between Baron Harald and Mademoiselle Marie Montbert, but which would also, in the hands of an able, practical man (such as any good lawyer would represent), give a certain clue to the subsequent fate of the said Marie Montbert and of her child; that is to say, of the two persons who according to the last will of Baron Harald are alone entitled to the possession of the estates of Stantow and Baerwalde."

"What do you call a certain clue, Mr. Timm?" inquired the baroness.

"A clue that can be established upon evidence, madame. It can be established that the person to whom I have referred, and in whom I believe I have discovered by a fortunate combination of very remarkable and almost miraculous circumstances the heir in question, bears, in the first place, the same name which Monsieur d'Estein (pray look at letter No. 25) says he intends to assume after the elopement with Marie Montbert. In the second place, it can be established that a man called Stein, and accompanied by a young woman who passed for his wife, and by a child which passed for his son, settled shortly after Baron Harald's death in the town of W----."

"How do you know that?" asked Felix.

"I have been myself to W----, and have spoken with the old woman in whose house Mr. Stein lived from the first to the very last day of his residence in that town."

"Go on!"

"In the third place, it is established that this Mr. Stein is the same person who eloped with Marie Montbert from Grenwitz, viz., Monsieur d'Estein, who alone had a right to help the young lady, and who alone was obliged to do so."

"Why the same person?"

"Because the man who managed the elopement looked exactly like the man who a few months afterwards settled in W----."

"That might not be so easy to prove," cried Felix with a smile of incredulity.

"Easier than you think. I have (quite accidentally) discovered the man at whose house Monsieur d'Estein, then already under the name of Stein, stayed a fortnight in order to ascertain the opportunities at Grenwitz, and who afterwards drove in the night of the elopement the couple in his carriage from Grenwitz to that very ferry on which you crossed to-day. This man's name is Clas Wendorf; he lives in Fashwitz, and is well known to everybody (even to the Rev. Mr. Jager) as a perfectly trustworthy man. If this man were to be confronted with Mrs. Pahnke in W----, the identity of the man who eloped with Marie Montbert, viz., Monsieur d'Estein, with the French teacher Stein in W----, would be established beyond all doubt."

The baroness and Felix looked at each other, while Timm was making his statement, in a manner which betrayed but too clearly the consternation which the irresistible logic of their enemy produced in their minds.

"You have made good use of the last four weeks," said Felix.

"Perhaps so," said Timm, good-humoredly. "The days are getting to be short now. Besides, I had to be exceedingly cautious in making my inquiries, since I had promised you not to let anybody into the secret until I should have communicated the matter more fully to you, and I meant to keep my promise. Hereafter, when I can go to work without any such precautionary measures, and when I can avail myself of all the assistance which the law affords in such cases, I shall probably be able to do more in four days than I have now done in as many weeks."

And Mr. Timm rubbed his hands with delight.

"Then you really think of making this ridiculous affair public?" said Anna Maria, in a tone which she meant to be ironical.

"I do not understand you, madame!" replied Mr. Timm, with an air of ingenuous simplicity which, in a farce, would have earned him the applause of all the connoisseurs in the pit.

"I mean: do you really intend, contrary to our wishes and intentions, to expose to common gossip and the scoff and scorn of vulgar plebeians, an affair which concerns no one but our own family, and which, moreover, has been forgotten and buried these many years?"

The applause of the connoisseurs would have become louder and louder, as they watched the peculiar expression in Mr. Timm's face.

"Contrary to your wishes and intentions ... An affair which concerns no one but your family ... I really have not the advantage of knowing how I am to interpret the lady's words. I find it impossible to believe that a lady who is so universally known for her stern sense of justice as the Baroness Grenwitz should wish anything different from the last will of a dying man, when chance or providence brings it about, when, against all human expectations, that last will can after many years be fulfilled; I find it impossible to believe that. But what am I saying? You will laugh at me that I have taken a jest, by which you wished to ridicule my over-great desire to serve you, for a moment in good earnest. Do I not know better than anybody else that I have acted exactly according to your views by preserving all the documents, the sacred relics of departed friends, like a precious treasure, and by doing whatever I could do towards securing the property to the rightful owner? Do I not know that your hesitation, your incredulity, your mistrust even, are only the result of your apprehension to awaken in the heart of a fellow-being brilliant expectations, which may not be realized, for, however improbable, it is not absolutely impossible that we may be mistaken. Do I not know that all the parties concerned are of one and the same opinion, and that your husband, whom you have no doubt promptly informed of all the details, is overjoyous to pay off an old debt which fortunately is not yet extinguished by limitation?"

The position of a captured she bear, whom the increasing heat of the bars of her cage forces to rise on her hind legs and to dance as gracefully as she can, while she would like nothing better than to break out of her prison and to tear her adversary to pieces, resembles exactly that of the baroness as she was now sitting opposite to Mr. Timm. The cruel irony with which Mr. Timm appealed to that sense of justice and equity of which she had boasted all her life, and of which she after all had nothing but the outward appearance, seized her like a hot iron. Her cold, selfish heart boiled over with indignation. Rage and fury filled her soul. She would have liked to strangle Timm, who sat smiling before her--to stab him, poison him. And she could do nothing, nothing, but swallow her wrath, and to say with all the calmness she might command:

"Mr. Timm, you do not look upon the matter exactly as we do; and it is, of course, quite natural that you, who are standing outside, should also see nothing of it but the outside. Unfortunately I am too tired to-night to explain to you my own views of the affair. I have requested my nephew, Felix, to do it in my place, and I beg you, therefore, to look upon anything he may tell you as if it were coming from myself. I am fully persuaded that you will find no difficulty in choosing between the good will of the family of Grenwitz and the friendship of a nameless adventurer. Good-by, Mr. Timm!"

"Regret infinitely not to be able to have the pleasure of seeing you any longer, baroness," said Mr. Timm, accompanying the baroness to the door; "hope it is nothing but a passing indisposition, which will soon disappear after a good night's rest. Hope you will rest well, madame!"

And Mr. Timm closed the door after the baroness, came back, sat down in his easy-chair opposite to Felix, put his hands on his knees, and said, in a dry, short manner, which contrasted very strangely with the smooth kindness of his language so far:

"*Eh bien!*"

No answer came for some little time. The two men looked for a few seconds at each other with sharp, suspicious glances, like two combatants who try to find out their weak points--like two tricky gamblers, each one of whom knows how carefully he must watch the hand of the other, and who yet is not quite sure that he will not be duped. They both remembered, moreover, that there was an old account to settle between them, which dated back from the time when Ensign Baron Grenwitz had treacherously abandoned Ensign Albert Timm in order to save himself (it was a matter, of security on a bill), and Felix knew perfectly well that Albert was one of those

men who, whenever they can get the law or the right of the stronger on their side, insist upon being paid by their debtors to the very last farthing.

He had therefore to summon all his skill and self-control, in order to overcome an unpleasant sensation which threatened to master him as he faced his adversary, who was armed *cap-a-pie* and utterly without pity. Still he succeeded in assuming a tone of good-natured frankness (which sat very awkwardly upon him) as he said:

"I think, Timm, we had better treat the whole matter without reservation or trick, like men who know the world and what they are about."

"If you know as well what you are about as I do, why, then, the whole thing is easily settled," replied Albert, dryly.

"Well, tell me then frankly, what do you ask?"

"I am the seller, you are the buyer; it is your duty first to say distinctly what you wish to buy."

"We want the originals of those papers on the table, and your word of honor that you will never inform any one, whosoever it be, by writing or by word of mouth, or in any other way, of the discovery which you have made."

"*Bon!* I understand what you want."

"And what do you ask on your side?"

Albert bent over a little, and said in a low but very distinct voice, with his eyes firmly fixed on his adversary:

"Twenty thousand dollars in Prussian current money, payable between now and eight days."

"The devil!" cried Felix, jumping up from his chair, in spite of his feebleness, and running around the room. "Twenty thousand dollars! why, that is a fortune."

Albert shrugged his shoulders.

"Two years' interest of the sum represented by the two estates of Stantow and Baerwalde. You must know best, of course, what the legacy is worth to you."

"But that is atrocious!" cried Felix, still running about in the room; "atrocious!"

"Don't hollow, Grenwitz; your people might hear you down in the kitchen. Sit down, if you please, and let us talk the matter over like men who know the world."

The unconquerable coolness and the cutting irony with which Albert uttered these words acted like a douche upon Felix's violent agitation. He sat down, and said, in a calmer tone:

"My aunt will never listen to such a demand."

"I should be sorry, for your sake, and for your aunt's sake, if you were not to accept my offer. I can only make you both responsible for the consequences."

"You speak as if it depended on no one but yourself who was to have the two estates!"

"And on whom else can it depend?" replied Albert, and his lips seemed to grow thinner, his nose more pointed, and his whole face sharper, as he spoke: "I tell you, I have made the net so close and so strong--leaving only a few meshes open on purpose till I should hear your decision--that I can draw it together at any moment, right over your head, and you may struggle as you may; it will not break, but you will die. You know, Grenwitz, that I have rather a good head for such things, and you know also that I have no cause to show you the shadow of generosity."

"Me! I have no personal interest whatever in the whole matter."

"Do you think I am a child, Grenwitz? Don't you want to marry Miss Helen? and are not the two estates to be the dower of the young lady?"

"I marry Helen! Who says so? I don't dream of it."

"Well, then, don't marry her; hand the young beauty over to the man whom you have more reason to hate than all other men--who is even now your favored rival--at least evil report has it so--and who will lose nothing, I am sure, in Miss Helen's eyes, if he can present himself a second time as her cousin, and the lawful heir of a very considerable fortune."

Felix had turned alternately white and red as his adversary was inexorably punishing him with these words. His vanity, deeply wounded by the allusion to his fatal encounter with Oswald, writhed like a worm on which somebody has trod. He could not but confess that for the moment Albert was by far the stronger of the two, and that he, who was so proud of his cleverness and adroitness, was utterly helpless in the power of an adversary whom he had in reality always despised.

"Lower your demands a little, Timm," he said, in a subdued voice. "I must confess it is a matter of the very greatest importance for me to bury the whole affair in silence, and if it depended on myself alone I might not be unwilling to pay you the sum which you demand. But you know my aunt, and you know that she would rather let matters go on to the last point than to make such an enormous sacrifice. I tell you, Timm, it can't be done; upon my word, it can't be done. And what do you want with so much money at once? You will lose it in a few unlucky nights at roulette, and then you are poorer than you ever were before. Come, now, I'll make you an offer. We will pay you for one year four hundred dollars a month, and at the end of the year six thousand dollars in a lump."

"Altogether ten thousand eight hundred dollars," replied Albert. "Won't do; and besides, what security can you give me that all the payments will be made?"

"The documents, which in the mean time you may retain in your possession and which you are not expected to hand over till the six thousand dollars are paid."

"Well!" said Albert, "it is not much; but among good friends we ought not to insist too strictly. I accept."

"Let us make it out in writing."

"Why? If we do not wish to keep our word, we'll break it, anyhow; and besides, a paper of that kind might, if it should fall into the hands of the wrong person, commit the family of Grenwitz more seriously than they would like, and would, after all, but put one more weapon in my hands. You see I am perfectly candid."

"*Bon!*" said Felix. "Do you want the first four hundred at once?"

"I should think so."

Felix rose, took one of the lights, and went to a bureau which was standing back in the room, opened a drawer, took a few packages of bank-notes from it and placed them on the table before Albert.

"Count them!"

"It is not necessary," said Albert, slipping the parcel into his pocket; "your aunt never makes a mistake in counting. Well, Grenwitz, that matter is nicely arranged; now let us have a bottle of wine upon it--I have talked so much I am quite thirsty. If you permit me I will ring the bell."

"Pray do so!"

Felix ordered the servant who came to bring a bottle of Hock and two glasses.

Felix was rather pleased to see that Albert was in better humor; he had another question to ask yet, which no one could answer as well as he could.

"You have seen, Timm," he said, filling the glasses, "that I have met you half way, as far as I could. One service is worth another. Will you do me a favor?"

"Let us hear."

"Then tell me, how is little Marguerite?"

"What interest have you in her?"

"Well, I do have an interest in her."

"And why do you think I know anything about her?"

"Because I have observed you both at Grenwitz, and besides--well, for divers other reasons."

"For instance?"

"I will be frank with you. From sheer ennui I had begun at Grenwitz already to pay her some attentions, and afterwards, during my sickness, I saw still more of the little thing, till it ended in my thinking the girl really very charming and prodigiously attractive. But she pretended to be so very reserved that I suspected at once she had a serious attachment. Now I cannot think of any one else who could have been in my way but yourself."

"Very complimentary," said Albert. "I am, indeed, as good as engaged to the young lady."

"But, Timm, are you going to run into your ruin with your eyes open? You and a wife! and worse than that, a poor wife!--what has become of your former principles? Upon my word, I should not have thought you could be so mad."

"Nor I, myself," replied Albert, emptying his glass and filling it again.

"Are you in love with the girl?"

"There you ask me more than I know myself."

"Look here, Timm, I will make you an offer. We are, it seems, in the way of speculating. Let me have the girl, and I assume the three hundred dollars which you have borrowed from the poor little thing."

"Who says so?" said Albert, furiously.

"Your fury just now, for one; besides that, however, little Louisa, Helen's maid, and my own man's lady love, who happened to see it, when Marguerite gave you the money in the park at Grenwitz."

"Nonsense!" said Albert, who could not repress his anger at this inconvenient exposure.

"Don't be angry!" said Felix; "rather be glad that you find somebody who is willing to relieve you of this troublesome burden. What do you say?"

"We will talk about that another time," said Albert, rising and taking his hat. "Farewell, Grenwitz."

"Good-by, Timm! Be reasonable, and come and see your old comrade as soon as you can."

The worthy pair shook hands, and Albert went away rapidly. His face was darker than when he came. Either the second part of the conversation had not been to his taste, or he thought it good policy to assume an air of being offended. Felix, who knew him pretty well from former days, was disposed to take the latter view.

CHAPTER XIV.

About the same time, and while these transactions were going on in the Grenwitz mansion, a young man was impatiently walking up and down in front of a large house in one of the suburbs of Grunwald. His impatience looked very much like that of an honest lover who is waiting on a cool autumn evening in a dense fog for the lady of his heart, whom he has orders to call for "punctually at seven, but be sure to be punctual," to see her home from a little party, and whom he sees at half-past seven sitting near the brightly-lighted-up window, engaged in most lively conversation. It may be he sees really her whom he loves; it maybe the shadow belongs to a very different person.

The young man is Doctor Braun; the house before which he patrols, Leporello-fashion, is the famous boarding-school of Miss Bear; and the young lady for whom he is waiting is his betrothed Sophie, the only child of the privy councillor and professor, Doctor Roban, a physician of great renown in Grunwald, and a distinguished member of the university.

"What a vague idea of time even the cleverest of women have!" murmured Franz, pulling out his watch and looking at it by the faint light of a badly-burning cigar; "it is a psychological fact which I must treat of one of these days in a monograph."

He throws away the short end of his cigar, which threatened to singe his moustache, and looks up once more at the lighted window.

"Heaven be thanked, they are getting ready! Dark shadows are flitting to and fro near the curtains! Now for the cloak, and the bonnet--a kiss to say good-by then a little bit of a chat of ten minutes about the next place of meeting--then another farewell kiss. The window is looking darker; there is a light in the hall; now a final discussion on the steps--*enfin!*"

"Do you come at last, *ma mignonne*?" said Doctor Braun, greeting the slight maidenly form which had come out of the house, and now hastened with light steps across the little garden which divided the house from the street, to the iron gate.

"Poor Franz! You have not been waiting for me," answers the girl, affectionately leaning on the arm of her betrothed.

"Oh, not at all! Nothing to speak of! Half an hour or so!"

"I really did not know it was so late. The time passed so quickly, although the whole party

consisted only of two persons. Can you guess who they were?"

"Yourself, probably, for one."

"Very well--and the other?"

"Helen Grenwitz."

"Exactly! She sends you her best regards. Only think, she will probably stay with the Great Bear, although her friends are coming to town for the winter, if they have not already come to-day. That will be a fine subject for gossip. Poor Helen! I pity her with all my heart!"

"Why?"

"How can you ask? Is it not bad enough that the whole town will ask why a girl of sixteen--no, sixteen and a half--should be sent back to school when she has hardly been four weeks at home? And as long as the Grenwitz family was not living in town, there might have been some explanation; but now--oh, I think it is abominable. People must think of her--I don't know what; and it is not so much to be wondered at if they connect Helen in some way or other with the duel fought by her cousin and your amiable friend, Stein."

"And what says Miss Helen?"

"Nothing! You know how she is. She never speaks of family matters; at most she occasionally mentions her father, whom she seems to love most tenderly. She is quiet and serious; but not exactly sad."

"I believe she is much too proud ever to be really sad."

"How so?"

"Sadness is a passive disposition; the disposition of one who sees that he cannot struggle with fate, and therefore submits to endure it as well as he can. But there are characters which resist as long as it is possible, and when nothing more can be done, instead of laying down their arms, break them to pieces and throw them fiercely at the victor's feet."

Sophie came up closer to her betrothed and said, after a pause:

"I am not one of those characters, Franz. I am not too proud to be sad; I have been very often sad these last days. I was sad when you left us with Doctor Stein, although at that time I had no particular reason for being so. But since then, when papa was taken sick and I sat by his bedside, and my greatest anxiety--next to that about papa's life--was whether you had received my letter ... You might have travelled on and on, and my heart was all the time breaking with longing for you! You went to see him, I am sure, before you came to call for me at Miss Bear's."

"Of course! He is better. I begged him to lie down, but he insisted upon sitting up till we should come back."

"And I have wasted so much time! Let us go faster!"

"A few minutes, more or less, do not matter; and besides, I should like to speak with you definitely about our future. We must at last make an end to this provisional state, which is pleasant to no one--not to God--I mean Nature--nor to man--and is daily becoming more oppressive. An unmarried man is a fish; but an engaged man is neither fish nor flesh. When two people are in their own heart and conscience man and wife through their mutual love, they ought to be man and wife also in the world, before men, provided circumstances admit of their marrying. Now, that is the case with us. We have enough for our support, and for the present we need no more; whatever else may be necessary will come. In short, shall we have our wedding day four weeks from to-day?"

"But, Franz, I have not finished half of my trousseau!"

"Then we'll marry with half a trousseau."

"And what will papa say? You know how very hard it is for him to let me go from him; and shall I just now ask such a sacrifice from him, when he needs me more than ever? I have not the courage to propose it to him."

"But I have it; your father knows that I am not less anxious for your happiness than he is, and he is far too sensible not to see that my plan is the best. Come, my darling, don't hang your head. To-day four weeks we are man and wife."

"Ah, Franz! I wish it could be so. But I fear, I fear, Heaven does not mean it so well with us!"

"Why not? Heaven means it well with all who have the courage to determine upon their own happiness. For, how says the poet: 'In our bosom are the stars of our fate.'"

The haste with which Franz pressed her had a very good motive in the illness of her father.

Franz, as a physician, knew best that the life of the excellent man was hanging on a very slender thread. He had rallied quickly enough from a stroke of apoplexy, which had attacked him a fortnight ago, but several bad symptoms announced that another attack was not improbable, and with his nervous, very delicately-organized system, this was likely to be fatal. But if the father died before his daughter had been married, the poor girl would have been placed in a very painful position, as her mother had been dead for many years, and she had neither brothers and sisters nor any near relations. The world with its prejudices would have hardly been willing to admit that under such circumstances her only home should be in the house of the man whom she loved, but would have been inconceivably shocked if the daughter had married "before the shoes were worn out in which she had followed her father's funeral." The whole city would have broken out in one cry of indignation against such a fearful crime against decency and propriety.

Sophie loved her father with a love which bordered upon enthusiasm, little as enthusiasm generally formed a part of her clear and sensible character, which shrank instinctively from all exaggeration. And the father was well worthy of such love.

The privy councillor, Roban, was a man of rare distinction in many respects. As a man of science he stood very high; he was considered the very first pathologist in Germany. But a remarkable versatility of mind enabled him to gather, outside of the studies which his profession required, information upon the most varied fields of knowledge, and to attain to a high degree of perfection in more than one of the arts. In the morning he would take his pupils, hour after hour, from bed to bed in the hospital, and open to them views into the innermost workings of nature. Then again he would wander for long hours from house to house, soothing here a sufferer's pains, comforting others, and exhorting them to patient endurance. And yet in the evening, when a circle of intimate friends were gathered under his hospitable roof, he would be ready to take an active part in an animated conversation about art, literature, or politics, or perhaps take his favorite instrument, the violoncello, between his knees, and delight even the best cultivated ears by his correct and yet deeply-felt playing in a quickly-improvised quartette.

Where there are lights there must be shadows, and where there are shadows there is never a lack of people who take pleasure in painting everything in the darkest and blackest of colors. Thus it was with the little foibles of the excellent man, which his rivals and enemies subjected to pitiless criticism. Some declared he was a charlatan, who understood his business tolerably well, but the necessary bragging and boasting about it still better; others declared his bon-mots were better than his prescriptions, and a good story more welcome to him than the most famous case in his practice. Still others said that the essence of his nature was a restless vanity, which induced him to try all the arts and to play the Mæcenas for all travelling artists and spoilt men of genius. Still others--so-called practical men, who laid no claim to any opinion in matters of art and science, but who demanded in return that everybody should comply with their standard of morality--shook their heads when people spoke of the councillor's hospitality, and said: "If everybody would sweep the dust before his own door, many things would be seen that are hidden now; and if certain folks would remember the old saying: 'Save in time and you'll have in need,' they would be better off than they were."

Of all these reproaches none really affected the distinguished professor, except the last. Money was to him what it is to Saladin in Lessing's great drama, Nathan: "the most trifling of trifles;" he looked upon it, as Saladin did, as "perfectly superfluous when he had it," much as he appreciated the necessity of being provided with it whenever he was reminded of it by his liberality, his generosity, and his intense antipathy against all bargaining and all haggling. If he had lived economically he might have become a very rich man, for his income was considerable; but Mammon would not stay in his hands, which were ever open to all who were poor and suffering. He never could force himself to accept money from the hard hand of a mechanic, even if the sum had been ever so small. "It is bad enough," he used to say, "that Nature has not wisdom enough to allow only such people to be sick as have leisure and money enough for it; but for the poor, sickness itself is a punishment severe enough, not to sentence them moreover into the payment of costs." Thus it happened to him very often that he poured the golden reward he had earned by his attention and his skill in the palace of rich Sinbad a few minutes later into the open hand of poor Hinbad, and reached home with a lighter purse than he had carried out.

His house also was an expensive one, although the whole family consisted but of himself and his daughter. A nature as richly endowed and as productive as his own was not made to be content with meagre fare and thin beer; he was fond of rich, savory dishes and fiery old wines; above all he loved to share the pleasures of his table with others who were as willing to be pleased as he himself with the good things of this world, and especially with one of the best among the good--a pleasant table-talk.

All this might have been accomplished without causing a deficit in the budget of the privy councillor, if a careful, sensible housewife had managed the whole, and spent what was coming in properly and economically. His wife, however, an exceedingly amiable, intelligent woman, died the second year after their marriage; and her husband, who had loved her above all things, could not summon resolution to fill the place in his heart which death, inexorable death, had made vacant, and to give a stepmother to his daughter, in whom he soon concentrated all his affections. He remembered too well the old saying, *apud novercam queri*! He had seen the fairy tale of Cinderella repeat itself in too many families. Thus he left his child in the hands of nurses and governesses whom he paid magnificently, and sent her, when she was old enough, to Miss Bear's boarding-school, in case anything should have been forgotten in her outward polish or her

inner culture. In the meantime he kept a kind of bachelor's hall, which soon became a very costly life, owing to the thievishness of his servants and the incapacity of a housekeeper in whom he placed implicit confidence. He comforted himself, however, whenever Mrs. Bartsch had forced him into a very uncomfortable discussion about credit and debt, with the prospect of the time when his daughter could relieve him of all this *misère*, and of the answer to the question: what shall we have for dinner, etc., which ought not to be allowed to trouble a good Christian's peace of mind.

The time came at last, but Miss Sophie's return to the paternal home did not exactly mend matters. Sophie was too young and too inexperienced to see the cause of the evil and to reform the abuses, which were deeply rooted after so many years' toleration. Mrs. Bartsch, who could not adapt herself at all to the new regime, was dismissed, it is true; but--as the doctor said, "the bad one is gone, the bad ones have stayed"--the servants stole just as before, and the privy councillor did not know yet "what in all the world could have become of the miserable money?" As it could not well be otherwise under such circumstances, the accounts agreed less and less every year, and instead of saying, "I must learn to be more economical hereafter," he only said, "I must work harder." He felt himself yet in the full vigor of his strength. He saw before him yet long years of energetic activity, during which he might make up what had been so long neglected.

But it was not to be so, and the beautiful fruit-bearing tree, in whose broad, hospitable shade so many who suffered from the burning heat of life sought shelter and refreshment, and found it too, was to be irreparably injured by a flash of lightning which fell from a clear sky. Like wildfire the news flew one morning all over town that Privy Councillor Roban had had a stroke of paralysis over night, and was now laid up without hope. People told it one to another with grave faces, and said it would be an irreparable loss to science, especially as far as the university was concerned, which had had in Roban its only really great man since Berger had become insane. But of all who suffered by the loss, the poor were most seriously threatened, since they lost in the privy councillor their generous friend and protector. For many and many a day one might have seen old women dragging themselves painfully along on crutches, men so old and feeble that they had to be led by a boy, young pale mothers with a baby in their bosom--all sitting on the steps of the house, bathed in tears, and asking every one who came out whether things were not going a little better with the privy councillor, or whether there was really no hope at all that the good old gentleman would recover?

In the meantime the patient was lying in that terrible state which is neither night nor day, but a painful twilight, when the sun is about to set, and the darkness is rising full of threatenings on all sides. For a long time it remained uncertain whether life or death would be the end, and when at last the cruel conflict was decided in favor of life, death only yielded after having marked his victim unmistakably forever. One might even have said, that he had taken all the reality away with it, and left only the shadow of existence.

To-day was the first time that the privy councillor had risen for a few hours; they had rolled him in his large easy-chair from his bed-chamber, before the fire-place in the sitting-room. He had insisted upon it that his daughter, who since the beginning of his sickness had scarcely left his bed, should go out to her little party; and he had dismissed his son-in-law, who had taken his practice provisionally in hand and came to see him every evening--for he wished to be alone. He felt the necessity of availing himself of the first hour in which the pressure on his brain was less overwhelming, for the purpose of thinking over his situation. As a physician, he would probably have warned his patient against such an injurious excitement; but now he was physician and patient at once, and made the experience in himself that the physician may very often demand certain things which the patient is unable to do with the best will in the world.

Poor, unfortunate man; doubly and trebly poor, because you have been doubly and trebly rich and happy before, in the fulness of your mental and physical strength, in the elasticity of your sanguine temper, nay even in the easy humor which bore you like a bird high over the greatest difficulties! Where is now your restless activity, which formerly made it impossible for you to sit still in one and the same place for any length of time, which induced you even at table frequently to change your place among your guests? Where is your sharp, penetrating mind, which used to solve the hardest problems as in play? Where your brilliant fancy, which threw even upon everyday occurrences a bewitching light? Where, above all, your Olympian cheerfulness, which made it so easy for you not to be angry or excited, but allowed you to fight at most with a humorous smile and satirical wit against the misery and wretchedness of life, against the stupidity and vulgarity of men? Where are the thousand arguments with which you often nearly overwhelmed the pessimist views of your friend Berger, when you tried to persuade him that this earth was by no means a vale of tears from the rising to the setting of the sun, but a wide, fair landscape, in which hill and dale, waste deserts and Elysian fields alternated very wisely, and that in most cases man was not only at liberty but even commanded to avoid the one and to enjoy the other? Have you all at once changed your views? Has a brutal blow of fate suddenly reduced you in the discussion to an *absurdum*? Has the pressure which weighs on your brain and paralyzes the elasticity of your mind transformed you all of a sudden from an optimist into a pessimist, so that you see the world and your own situation in dark colors, as you are counting the beats of your pulse mechanically, and sit there, rolled in a ball in your easy-chair, glaring in dull thoughts at the dying embers of the fire-place?

And indeed there were reasons why it was hard for the privy councillor to drive away the gray

shadowy form of care, as it pressed more and more closely upon him the darker the room grew. He who had himself observed so many similar cases, could least of all disguise from himself how precarious his physical condition was. He knew but too well that he was doomed to be henceforth a cripple in body and mind, that he was only a pensioner on life, and that death might come at any moment to collect the debt which was long since due. And yet, much as he was attached to life, this was his least sorrow. The physician did not struggle against omnipotent fate, which had never yet granted him one of its victims; the pupil of Epicure knew that joy and grief, delight and suffering, are inseparably interwoven in our life. But what made his heart particularly heavy, was the thought of his inability to arrange his circumstances, that he should have to leave life a bankrupt, and that after all he should have to rob his creditors of their rights by his death. Had he not always referred them to the future, and now the future refused to accept the draft; now the credulous man was to be denied credit at the very bank on whose credit he had so implicitly relied.

The unfortunate man sighed, hiding his deep-bowed head in his hands.

And his daughter, his darling daughter! Where was now the hope he had cherished to endow her with a fortune which was forever to free the spoilt, tender child from all the vulgar cares of life? which was to afford her the means always to enjoy a comfortable existence such as alone seemed to be suitable for the character of the young girl? Now he could not only leave her no fortune--no! but not even an honest, stainless name!

She had no idea of the painful pecuniary situation of her father. He never had the courage to trouble her childlike mind with cares which he tried to keep from himself as long as he could. She took it for granted that her father was, if not a rich man, at least well-to-do, and that she could enjoy the simple comforts by which she was surrounded with a clear conscience.

And was she the only one who labored under this illusion, and whom he had allowed to remain blind from fear of an explanation? Did not his friends think the same? Above all, the youngest and dearest of his friends, the man who had won his daughter's heart, and whom he himself loved with hearty, paternal love; who deserved such friendship, such love, by his upright, noble bearing, by his ability and his goodness; what would he say, what would he do, if he should learn what sooner or later he would have to learn--nay, what the father of his future wife was under such circumstances bound to tell him without further delay, if he did not mean to renounce all claims to be considered an honest man?

The privy councillor pressed his trembling hands upon his eyes and groaned loud, like one who is suffering cruel torture.

And suddenly he felt soft arms embracing him, and a girl's voice asked anxiously: "Papa, dearest papa, you are surely sick again;" and the kindly, firm voice of a man who had taken his hand to feel the pulse, and who now said: "You have stayed up too long! we must try and get you into bed again."

These voices, these words, fell like a mild, refreshing rain falling upon a sunburnt plant, upon the heart of the poor man, who was so sick in body and soul. He put his arms around the slender waist of his daughter and drew her to his heart in a long, silent embrace. He could have wept, but he was ashamed. Sophie asked again and again if he felt worse. Franz, who had ordered lights to be brought in, begged more and more urgently that he should not risk what had been so painfully gained by sitting up any longer. But the privy councillor would not hear of going to bed; he said he felt very comfortable in his arm-chair, and not in the least fatigued. Besides, he had to talk to Franz, and Sophie might in the meantime attend to the supper.

Franz, whose clear eye had well observed the restlessness, the excitement of his patient, considered it best to humor him in his wishes, and gave a nod to his betrothed to leave him alone with her father. Sophie went out with an anxious, inquiring glance at Franz, which the latter answered by a reassuring smile.

The door had hardly closed after the slender form of the young girl, when the privy councillor seized Franz's hand and said, in a voice which was in vain striving to be firm,

"I have something to tell you, Franz, which I cannot any longer conceal from you under the circumstances, and, since I may have to meet death any moment, without acting dishonorably."

"What is it, my dear sir?" asked Franz, moving a chair close to the privy councillor's seat and taking his hand into his with a gesture of great kindness.

"It is this!" said the privy councillor--and now he told Franz, that partly the want of prudent economy and partly the loaning of countless sums of money to poor and needy people, which were never returned, had gradually brought him seriously into debt; that he had hoped to work himself out by means of increased industry in the coming years, but that now all such hopes were futile, as he felt but too painfully.

The privy councillor paused here, partly because he was too much exhausted for the time, and partly because he expected an answer from Franz. But the young man sat there with cast-down eyes, remaining silent, and the patient continued with a lower and more trembling voice:

"Pardon me, my dear Franz, that my perhaps criminal selfishness, for which I hope you may find some excuse, has made me hesitate so long before making this communication to you. But it is a terrible task to have to afflict a man whom we love; to have to impoverish a man whom we would like to load with all the world can give."

He paused, and tried to draw his hands from those of the young man, as if the revelation he had just made had interrupted and ended their friendship. But Franz moved nearer to the sufferer and said, looking at him with his clear, truthful, bright eyes:

"I have let you finish, my dear sir; and now let me have my say. Suppose a man were to give the friend he loves best an unspeakably valuable treasure, a treasure which the other values so much that he could not live without it, and he were then to say to this friend, 'My dear, while I was guarding this treasure I had not the time, as you may readily imagine, to attend with proper care to the management and settlement of all my other affairs. There are a few creditors who wish to be paid, and who must be paid. Will you take that upon yourself? You are younger and stronger, and have no objection to business.' Suppose, I say, the giver should speak thus to him who receives, and the latter were to answer: 'The treasure which is to make me immeasurably rich for all time to come I am ready to take, but as to your other affairs you can see how you can manage them yourself. I will have nothing to do with them.' Would you not justly look upon a man who could give such an answer as a monster of heartlessness, as a horrible instance of ingratitude? Exactly such is the relation in which we stand to each other. You are the generous donor; I am the man who receives the costly gift--the immeasurably precious treasure itself is my own Sophie. Between us there can be no longer any question of mine and thine; what I have is yours, for you are to me all in all--my friend, my teacher, and my father. What I have amounts to about ten or eleven thousand dollars, left me by an aunt whom I have never seen in my life, and they are entirely at your disposal. I know that this sum will not suffice to free you from all responsibilities. But it will be a relief to you, a help; and I beg, I conjure you to make any use of it you may choose. No, my dear sir, don't shake your head! You can't help it. You owe it to me to Sophie, to yourself, not to refuse me. And then, I am not going to ask you to do this favor without asking one for myself in return. We have never yet agreed upon the day for our wedding. We were afraid to speak of it, because we feared you would refuse, or at least give your consent only with reluctance. Now I have become bold, and ask neither for Flanders nor for liberty to think, Oh, King Philip, but for your permission to make your daughter, Dona Sophie, my wife, this day four weeks. Look! there she is herself! Kneel down, darling, and thank your lord and father for his kindness. He consents to our marriage this day four weeks."

Sophie, who had entered the room during the last words spoken by Franz, hastened to her father.

"Good, dear papa! dearest darling of a papa!" she cried, embracing the privy councillor and kissing him tenderly on brow and lip. The privy councillor was deeply moved. His trembling lips tried in vain to utter a word; his tear-flooded eyes turned now towards his daughter, who was kneeling before him, and now towards the noble man, who stood by his side leaning over him and looking at him with tenderness. His mind, weakened by his sickness, could not at once overcome the chaos of conflicting thoughts, but in his heart he heard a voice assuring him that he could die now in peace.

Franz, who had his reasons for fearing that the violent emotion might change the condition of the patient for the worse, hastened to make an end to the scene. He rang the bell and asked the servant to help him carry his master to his room. The privy councillor suffered them to do as they chose. Franz and the servant rolled the chair to the door of the adjoining room, which had been opened by Sophie, lifted it over the sill, and closed the door behind them, while Sophie remained alone in the sitting-room.

After a few minutes Franz returned. He was moved as Sophie had never yet seen him; but she saw also that his emotion was not painful. His eyes shone brightly, his step was elastic like that of a conqueror, and his voice, generally rather sharp, sounded softer and fuller, as he said, folding his betrothed almost violently in his arms,

"Rejoice, my girl; all goes well, excellently well. I have won your father's consent by gentle means and harsh means. Did I not tell you we should be man and wife four weeks hence? Did I not tell you, 'In our heart are the stars of our fate?' Oh, I feel a whole heaven in my heart! dear, dear Sophie!"

"Dear, dear Franz!"

And the lovers held each other embraced in that bliss for which the ordinary language of earth-born men has no words.

Then, when the torrent of glorious feelings had sobered down to greater quiet, they walked up and down in the room, arm in arm, and their voices grew low like their steps on the carpet, and what they whispered to each other was sweet and cozy, like the dim rosy light of the lamp under its veil, and yet as hot and as glowing as the coals shining through the light covering of ashes in the fire-place.

It was a lovely pair, the two lovers; and Zeus of Otricoli, whose lordly face with the god-like

brow beneath the ambrosiacal curls that shade Olympus, looked majestically down upon them from a niche in the wall, must have enjoyed the sight as they walked again and again past his bust, although neither the young man nor the girl could lay claim to a beauty exactly classic. Their tall forms were too lithe for that, wanting in the voluptuous fulness of the Grecian ideal; their faces, full of expression, were wanting in that architectural regularity, that indelible antique harmony, which knows no struggle, at least no struggle that excites the soul to its innermost depths.

Sophie Roban had, if you examined her strictly, nothing that could be called beauty, except a graceful, delicate figure, though connoisseurs would have objected to her arms as too thin, and a pair of large, soft, deep-blue eyes, of which connoisseur and ignoramus spoke with equal delight. Her mouth is rather large, and it is fortunate for her that her teeth, which are in consequence seen very frequently, are, if not literally "two rows of pearls," at least beautifully white and regular. The cheeks are round and full, the nose belongs to no special category. The best feature of the whole is, probably, next to the large blue eyes, the abundance of chestnut-brown hair, which forms a frame of soft waves for the somewhat low but smooth and most intelligent brow, and is very artlessly but tastefully arranged. Sophie is so tall that Franz, who is above medium size, scarcely rises a head's length above her--a proof, as Sophie says, that she has some claims to be counted among Jean Paul's "lofty beings," an opinion which Franz is by no means disposed to accept. He says, on the contrary, that she falls short, if not in everything, yet in much of that great honor, especially in that exuberance in thought and sentiment which the author requires for "lofty beings," and of which Sophie has not a trace, unless it be when she plays on the piano, and the genius of Beethoven, her favorite composer, lends her soul the wings which are otherwise wanting. Franz mentions besides, in his diagnosis of his betrothed, a certain cool sobriety of views and judgment, a kind of shyness to go beyond her own self, and a mistrust of all who do not possess this shyness and are too ready to sing their own praises or their own complaints, without inquiring whether the gods have given them a talent for stating what they suffer or not. Sophie, on the contrary, is disposed to be very quiet in moments of great enjoyment or great sorrow, on which account Franz prefers classing her with Jean Paul's "silent children of heaven." Besides, he attributes to Sophie the following qualities and peculiarities, all of which are more or less incompatible with the character of "lofty beings." She is particularly fond, he says, of canary birds, dogs, tree-frogs, rabbits, horses, and even of donkeys, which evidently shows a predilection for Dutch pictures of still life; she betrays a highly improper indifference for literature, unworthy of the daughter of a man of science, and the betrothed of a man who may possibly yet become famous in the world; she will not condescend to use a dictionary, even in cases of necessity, when she reads French or English authors; and as to the productions of her mother tongue, her indifference is so great that she has actually dared to fall fast asleep when Franz has been reading to her aloud the most beautiful chapters from Goethe's *Truth and Fiction* or his *Italian Journey*. Then she has a decided fancy for putting on her hat on one side, and to catch her dress when walking out in all the thorn-bushes by the wayside, both of which habits indicate a dreamy, twilight life, utterly incompatible with the manner of "lofty beings." She is even suspected of clairvoyance, for she had actually once told her maid, when she was dressing her for a ball and wanted a pin, that there was one lying way back in the parlor under the fourth chair from the window.

The conversation of the two lovers had gradually approached this topic of the little weaknesses of his betrothed, which Franz was apt to play upon in countless variations. He had a talent to jest gracefully, and to conceal the sober face of a well-meaning preceptor under the smiling mask of a good-natured but ironical critic. Sophie, who was not fond of ample explanations, felt grateful to her lover for this mode of instructing her, and Franz adopted this method all the more readily as it gave him an opportunity to admire the cleverness and the wit with which Sophie knew how to defend herself against his insidious attacks, and to deny her faults, or even to pretend that they were in reality nothing but very lovable virtues.

They were so deeply engrossed in their conversation, now playful, now sober, occasionally interrupted by a half-suppressed laugh or a stolen kiss, that a person who was in the habit of coming every day at this hour to the privy councillor's house, and of entering unannounced, had to knock three times at the door before they answered with an unisonous "Come in!"

CHAPTER XV.

"Good evening, most honored friends and betrothed," said he, as he entered the room; "do I disturb your devotions?"

"Good evening, Bemperlein," replied Sophie, loosening Franz's hold and cordially offering her

hand to the little man, who came with careful steps to her side; "you are just in time to protect me against this arch-scorner."

"Good evening, Bemperlein," said Franz; "you are just in time to help me in my efforts to convince this obstinate sinner."

"Before I can do the one, and not the other," replied Mr. Bemperlein, drawing off his gloves and folding them up carefully, "I beg leave to inquire, as in duty bound, after the privy councillor's health."

"He is much better," replied Franz.

"I hoped so from your joyous disposition," said Bemperlein; "well, I am delighted. Then we can at least take our supper to-night without feeling as if every morsel would stick in our throats from sheer melancholy and mourning, as has been the case for the last fortnight. *Ad vocem* supper; is it ready. Miss Sophie? I--who am not lucky enough to be able to satisfy my hunger with the ambrosia of confidential talk, and to quench my thirst with the nectar of love--I feel an unmistakable longing after earthly food and drink."

"I believe supper has been on the table for half an hour," said Sophie; "I had forgotten all about it."

"Then let us lose no more time," said Bemperlein, offering Sophie his arm, and leading her the familiar way into the adjoining room, where supper was regularly laid out.

Miss Sophie and Mr. Bemperlein were great friends. The excellent man had at every epoch of his life found somebody to whom he could offer his devotion and his love. When he had come over to settle in Grunwald, he had felt for a few days unspeakably lonely and wretched. Unable to live in solitude, and full of childlike trust, he had no sooner been introduced into the house of Privy Councillor Roban than he had poured out his complaints into the willing ear of Miss Sophie; whose large blue eyes encouraged him wonderfully. Sophie had not only listened to the little, lively man, who opened his whole heart to her with Homeric *naïveté*, as if he could not help doing so; but after following him with great attention to his last words; "that is all over now! over, and forever!" she had given him her hand with most cordial kindness, saying: "You must come and see us very often, Mr. Bemperlein. Papa is very fond of you and so am I. We'll try if we cannot make some amends to you for the loss of Berkow."

It was a strange friendship that bound the two to each other. Sophie, although twelve years younger than Bemperlein, was the admonishing, reproving, directing Mentor, and he the obedient, attentive, and docile Telemachus. She had aided him in arranging the modest lodgings which he had rented at some little distance from the privy councillor's house, and she made with him, and sometimes without him, the necessary purchases. Her attention went even beyond that. She trained him, after a fashion, for his entrance into society, for there was much to be done. She made him aware that it was not exactly the thing to hold gentlemen with whom he conversed continually by a coat-button, or to turn his back persistently upon ladies by whose side he had found his seat at table, however tedious they might appear in his eyes. "You must not do this, Bemperlein! You must stop doing that, Bemperlein!" the young lady continually said to him, and the good-natured man obeyed her implicitly, and was but too happy and proud if she said another time, "Bemperlein, that was well done! You played quite the cavalier to-night, Bemperlein!"

Bemperlein was soon even fonder of Miss Roban than he had been of Frau von Berkow. The latter remained, with all her kindness and goodness, after all, the great lady, the benefactress, the mistress; and the impression she had made upon him when he, a poor, bashful, awkward candidate for the ministry, had arrived one summer afternoon at Berkow, and been presented by old Baumann to the great lady, had never been wholly effaced in the seven long years which he had spent at her house. But Sophie was not grand; she laughed as heartily as any one of them; she looked at him so trustingly with her big, blue eyes; she made no pretensions; you could speak to her as to an equal, you could love her like a brother, without being all the time filled with awe and reverence.

And such paternal love Bemperlein felt for the hearty girl. Even if she had not been already engaged, it would never have occurred to him to fall in love with her. But to sympathize with all that interested her; to declare that her betrothed, whose acquaintance he made soon afterwards, was the most amiable and excellent of men; to render her any service which he could read in her eyes, and, when the privy councillor was ill, to watch with her till Franz should come back, day and night, with womanly patience and tenderness, by the bedside of the sufferer; and now, when he heard that the latter was better, to rejoice like a child to whom a father is restored, and to conceal this joy under a hundred innocent tricks and teasings--that was in the power of the ex-candidate of divinity and actual student of philosophy, Mr. Anastasius Bemperlein.

* * * * *

"I fear the potatoes are cold," said Sophie, raising the cover off the dish.

"Then they have exactly the temperature of this fish," said Franz, presenting her his dish.

"Or of this sauce," said Bemperlein, handing her the sauce-dish from the other side.

Sophie shrugged her shoulders.

"Nothing is eaten quite as warm as it is cooked, gentlemen. I must know that best, as future housewife!"

"For we are to be married in four weeks from to-day, Bemperlein," said Franz; "that is to say, if your dress-coat, which you have intended to order ever since you first came to Grunwald, can be ready by that time, Bemperlein, otherwise it cannot be."

"The coat shall be ready! The coat shall be ready!" cried Mr. Bemperlein; "even if I have myself to cut it out, to sew it, and to press it."

"That would make a nice coat, Bemperlein."

"Not so bad, perhaps, as you think. At all events it would not be the first dress-coat I have made with my own hands."

"Impossible, Bemperlein!" cried Franz, with amazement.

"As I tell you. It is a long time since, to be sure--perhaps fifteen years; and I was, during that Robinson Crusoe period of my life, much more inventive and industrious than I am now; but still I do not think I should find it impossible even now."

"But how did you come to make such a funny experiment?"

"Through the author of all inventions--necessity. You know, Miss Sophie, that I belong to those of God's children, or rather did belong, for now I have been promoted to another class, to whom the heavenly kingdom is promised, because they call nothing their own upon earth. This compelled me, when I left the Elysian fields of my native village and came to this town, to lead a life like a cicade, and to avoid all unnecessary expenses. Thus it occurred to me also, after long and painful meditation, that it might be feasible, even in this century of ink-consumption, to manufacture my own clothes, like Eumaeus of old, the god-like keeper of swine. No sooner thought than done. I had formed a great intimacy with a boy--his name was Christian Sweetmilk, the son of the old tailor Sweetmilk in Long street--who was to be a tailor and wished to be a doctor. We made a covenant that I should teach him every evening, when papa Sweetmilk's stentorian voice announced the closing of the shop, his Latin and Greek grammar; while he in return should instruct me in the use of the needle and the goose. Our studies were carried on with equal secrecy and industry, for I had good reason to fear the jibes of my school-mates, and he the never-missing yard-stick of his father and master. Oh! those were precious hours which we thus spent together, hours never to be forgotten again! I can see us still sitting by the light of a miserable train-oil lamp in our diminutive garret, on an autumn evening like this to-day, when the rain was pattering down upon the tiles right over our heads, and the gutter was overflowing, and the owls and rooks in the steeple of St. Nicholas were crowing and croaking. We were not cold however, although there was no fire burning in the little cast-iron stove, for the sacred flame of friendship warmed the blood in our veins with a gentle glow, and I was sewing till the thread smoked, and he was learning his grammar till his head smoked; and when I had finished a seam in masterly style, and he could tell his *typto, typteis* without a mistake, we fell into each other's arms and envied no king on his throne in all his splendor."

Mr. Bemperlein paused and looked deeply moved into his glass.

"Hurrah for old times!" said Franz.

"Hurrah for the new ones, too!" replied Bemperlein, touching glasses with the betrothed.

"But how about the dress-coat, Bemperlein?" asked Sophie. "I hope it was not the coat in which you were confirmed?"

"You have guessed it, fair lady; it was my confirmation coat. The time for the ceremony was drawing near. A merchant, to whose children I had given lessons in reading and writing, and at whose table I dined every Friday gratis, had presented me with the cloth for a dress-coat. The good man even told me to have it made at the tailor's at his expense. But I thought it would be abusing his goodness if I should avail myself of that offer too, and I asked his permission to have the coat made by my own tailor. Well, you may imagine who 'my own tailor' was. But alas! Papa Sweet milk had found out our 'abominable tricks,' as he called the sacred hours devoted to friendship and hard work, in his vulgar language. He had discovered the Greek grammar, which Christian used to throw quickly into 'hell,' the place of remnants and rags, when the Boeotian father suddenly entered, and the effect of this fatal discovery was, that he first used up his yard-stick on the shoulders of the attic youth, and then ordered him peremptorily to give up all intercourse with me hereafter, under penalty of being immediately and permanently banished from the paternal house, and of being disinherited besides. My faithful friend told me of the fearful sentence, weeping bitterly, as I met him the next day at the corner of the street. 'But I will not submit any longer to such tyranny,' he cried, flourishing a pair of trousers, which he was ordered to carry to one of his father's customers, with more energy than grace. 'This one more slavish service I will render (and he struck the dishevelled inexpressibles with his closed fist in wild fury) and then I will go into the wide, wide world. Will you go with me? 'It took me some time to quiet the boy. I knew that nothing pained him more than the thought that he would now

be unable to help me with my dress-coat. I reminded him of the commandment, that we must honor father and mother, if we wish to live long in the land which the Lord our God has given us. I told him his father would probably give way after a while; and as for the dress-coat, I promised him that the pupil should do credit to his master. Christian shook his head sadly. 'You can't do it, Anastasius,' he said; 'you will not get it done, even if you had any idea how to cut it out.' 'What will you bet, Christian?' I cried. 'You shall see me to-day week at the confirmation in church, wearing the coat I have made without your assistance, and you shall have to confess that it fits me well. If I win, you shall give me your bird; if you win, I'll give you the Odyssey, Heyne's edition. What do you say?' 'Done!' said Christian, laughing, in spite of his troubles. 'I ought not to bet, because you are sure to lose, but since you will have it so, let it be so.'"

"Well, and who won the wager?" asked Sophie, full of interest.

"On the following Sunday, at St. Nicholas," said Mr. Bemperlein, and his voice trembled, and the glasses in his spectacles were dim, "on the following Sunday I was kneeling amid a number of youths before the altar, and the music of the organ was floating through the vast edifice, and the minister proclaimed God's blessing over us; but I heard nothing of all that. I only looked up to the gallery, to a boy with long, brown hair and brown eyes, who kissed his hand to me, and whose dear face was beaming with pride and joy that his friend should look so well, contrary to all his expectations. When my turn came that 'the Lord might bless me and preserve me and let His countenance shine upon me,' he folded his hands piously and prayed for me earnestly with bent head."

Bemperlein paused again. He had taken off his glasses, which had become dimmer and dimmer, and was now rubbing them bright again with his silk handkerchief.

"And what has become of Christian?" asked Franz.

"He is now professor of ancient languages in one of the best lyceums in Belgium; his grammar of the Doric poets is considered a most valuable work for philologists. I had a letter from him day before yesterday, sixteen pages long."

"And what has become of the dress-coat?" asked Sophie.

"It hangs still, as a valued memento of former days, in my wardrobe," replied Bemperlein, replacing his spectacles, and looking with a smile at Sophie; "and what is more than that, it still fits me so well that I can present myself in it at any time, if my gracious lady should entertain any doubts as to the truthfulness of this veracious story."

"Will you do me a favor, Bemperlein?" said Sophie, with unusual seriousness, offering him her hand.

"Anything!" said Bemperlein, enthusiastically, and seizing the girl's hand.

"Then don't order a new dress-coat for my wedding, but come in the old one, which has become very dear to me through your touching story."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"Well, then," said Mr. Bemperlein, kissing Sophie's hand reverently, "I will be at your wedding in the coat which I have made myself for my confirmation."

The little company finished their cold supper and then went back to the cosy sitting-room, where Sophie made tea, while Franz went to inquire after the privy councillor. He returned with the welcome news that papa was, for the first time since the beginning of his sickness, lying in quiet, refreshing sleep, and that the servant who was watching by his bedside said "he had fallen asleep almost immediately after having murmured a few unintelligible words, with folded hands."

Franz assured them that the recovery would now progress with rapid strides, and that he felt very little doubt any more of a perfect restoration. Sophie embraced and kissed him as a reward for this good news, and Bemperlein vowed he would hereafter acknowledge a fifth most profane evangelist, besides the four in the Bible--namely, a St. Franciscus.

They were sitting around the fire-place. The steam of the tea-kettle and the smoke of the cigars which the gentlemen had lighted, rose in clouds up to the Olympic Zeus, who now became a comfortable Zeus Xenius. Franz was in a peculiarly elated humor, which Sophie placed on the ground of the favorable turn in her father's disease, but which had a very different reason. It was the nervous excitement which overcomes even the bravest before the beginning of a battle; for Franz felt and knew that to-day the battle of life had commenced for him in good earnest. He had assumed most serious obligations, which might have incalculable consequences for his own future and for Sophie's future. The very heaviest responsibility was henceforth resting on his shoulders. He saw of a sudden the ocean, on which the vessel which contained their joint fortunes was sailing, filled with most dangerous reefs, which it would require an always clear head, an always bold heart, and an always steady hand to clear successfully. Sophie did not suspect what her betrothed was then experiencing; she began, with Bemperlein's aid, to draw a

picture of the future--a little paradise, full of peace and comfort, quiet and sunshine.

"You must get married too, Bemperlein," she cried.

"With the greatest pleasure," replied Mr. Bemperlein "if you will find the main thing."

"What is that?"

"A girl who is willing to love me, and whom I can love."

"I'll pick you out one, Bemperlein. I know your taste, and I know exactly what the future Mrs. Bemperlein must be like."

"I am rather curious to hear," aid Mr. Bemperlein, comfortably ensconcing himself in his chair.

"In the first place," said Sophie, "as regards the exterior--for you do attach some importance to appearances, Bemperlein, do you not?"

"Certainly," said Bemperlein, eagerly.

"Well, then, your future wife must not be tall."

"Why not?"

"Because you are not a giant yourself Bemperlein; and, you know, like and like ... I therefore submit that she ought to be delicate and well made, a nice little figure, with dark hair and dark eyes, clever, active, gay, and mobile. Are you content?"

"Hem!" said Mr. Bemperlein. "Not so bad! not so bad! Go on!"

"Then, as regards fortune; she must not be rich. You know why."

"Because I would not know what to do with the money."

"Exactly so. Am I right?"

"Perfectly. But now tell me why said lady must necessarily have brown hair and brown eyes?"

"As far as I recollect, I have only spoken of dark hair and dark eyes; but if you have a decided preference for brown, Bemperlein----"

"Preferences" said Bemperlein, almost anxiously "I have a preference! What do you mean?"

"Bemperlein, you blush! That is a very suspicious sign. Do not you think so too, Franz?"

"Very suspicious," replied Franz. "I propose that the accused be examined most rigorously, and persuaded by every available means to make an open and full confession."

"Yes, he must confess! he shall confess!" cried the overjoyous girl, clapping her hands; "he shall give an account of that treacherous redness on his cheeks. Accused! I ask you, upon your conscience, do you know a lady with brown hair and brown eyes?"

"But how can you ask me that, Miss Sophie?" replied Mr. Bemperlein, blushing deeper than before.

"Let your words be Yea, yea! or Nay, nay! accused, and nothing else!"

"Well then, I have!" said Bemperlein, laughing.

"And when you spoke of brown hair and brown eyes, did you think of this lady?"

"Yes!" replied Bemperlein, after some hesitation.

"Now we have him! He has thought of her! He has thought of her!" cried Miss Sophie, and laughed with delight.

"But who is *she*?" asked Franz.

"We shall learn that presently. Accused! does she live in this city?"

"Yes."

"Franz, take that down: she lives in the city. Accused! do you see her frequently?"

"No."

"Then, have you seen her to-day?"

"But, Miss So----"

"No subterfuges! Have you seen her to-day?"

"Well, I see I shall fare better by confessing everything at once," said Mr. Bemperlein, who in spite of all his efforts to appear unconcerned had become more and more embarrassed. "Hear, then, oh severe judge, and you, grave assistant judge, with your diabolic smile, the strange story which has happened to me to-day, and which seems to be specially intended to lead me from one trouble to another."

"Tell us, Bemperlein; tell us!" cried Sophie. "The affair begins to look romantic."

"Well, then, you know, Miss Sophie, that the Grenwitz family has come to town to-day."

"We are aware of that. Go on, accused!"

"But you do not know that the baroness wrote to me immediately after her arrival, and asked me to call on her in the course of the day. She said she had to confer with me on a matter of the utmost importance."

"The affairs of the baroness are always of the utmost importance," said Franz.

"That I knew; and therefore I did not exactly hasten to pay my visit. Towards evening, however, just before I came here, I went to the house."

"Well, and what was the great trifle?"

"I never found it out, for I was not fortunate enough to be admitted. In the house-door I met Mr. Timm, who was in such a hurry that he nearly ran over me, and he had barely time to say to me 'What on earth are you doing here, Bemperlein?' In the ante-chamber to which the servant had shown me I found Mademoiselle Marguerite."

"Has she brown eyes, Bemperlein?"

"She has brown eyes. Miss Sophie; very fine brown eyes; which appeared to me at that moment all the brighter as they were filled with tears."

"Oh," said Miss Sophie, unconsciously dropping her gay tone; "why so?"

"Do I know it? I had entered without knocking, as I did not expect there would be anybody inside. When I came in, the young lady, who had been sitting with her head on a table and sobbing, jumped up and did her best to hide her tears. When I asked if I could see the baroness, she replied that she would go and see. But she did not go, at least not beyond the nearest door, where she stopped and again broke out into tears. You may imagine how embarrassed I was. I cannot see anybody weep, much less so young, poor, and helpless a creature as Mademoiselle Marguerite. I went up to her, took her hand--upon my word I could not help it--and said--what else could I say?--'why do you cry, Mademoiselle?' Her tears flowed only the faster. I repeated my question again and again. '*Je suis si malheureuse!*' was all she could utter amid her sobs. That was all I heard. I pitied the poor child, with all my heart. I asked if I could help her. She shook her head. I tried to comfort her, and said whatever can be said in such a state of things. Gradually she calmed down, dried her eyes, pressed my hand, and said, '*Oh, que vous êtes bon!*' Then she stepped out at the door. I was as wise as before. After a few minutes there came, in her place, Baron Felix, to tell me that his aunt was exceedingly sorry not to be able to see me to-night. She was too much fatigued from the journey. I might call again in the morning. As Baron Felix also seemed to be in a great hurry, I took my leave very quickly. When I was in the door he called after me, 'Apropos, Mr. Bemperlein, do you happen to know when Doctor Stein will be back again?' 'I believe in a few days,' I replied, and left. There you have my romantic story."

"Which is full of suggestions," said Franz. "For instance, I should like to know myself when Oswald will be back. He ought to be here by this time."

At that moment a maid came in, to hand him a card.

"Is the gentleman still there?" asked Franz, rising quickly.

"No, sir. He asked if you were alone? I told him, 'No, Mr. Bemperlein was in the room.' Then he said he would call again, and left."

"Who was it?" asked Sophie.

"Oswald!" replied Franz. "What a pity! I should have liked to see him."

CHAPTER XVI.

Oswald had reached Grunwald a few hours ago. The early autumn evening was coming on apace, as he approached the old town on the turnpike--for this part of the Prussian Vendée was then not yet in possession of a railway. The high towers rose dimly like Ossian's giant bodies in the floating gray mist; mists hung low upon the meadows between the causeway and the sea, and mists hovered over the wide waters between the island and the firm land.

Oswald wrapped himself, shivering, more closely in his cloak, and fell back in the corner of the coupé. What was he to do in Grunwald? What did he want in Grunwald? He did not know it himself. Even the low trees by the wayside, bent by the northeast storms, which slipped by in wearying monotony as he drove on, did not know it; the raw-boned stage horses, dripping with wet and trotting mechanically along with drooping heads, did not know it; even the old, bearded guard, who was pulling out the list of passengers for the hundredth time, from sheer weariness, and was conning it over once more, even he did not know it. Nobody knew it, unless it was the crow, which had delayed too long in the woods and was now flying lonely and sadly above the stage-coach towards town, and vanished in the mist. And the trees danced by, more like spectres than ever; and the horses shook more impatiently the heavy collars, and the mist rolled up in closer and darker masses, and through the close and dark mist a few lights become visible; and now the coach rolls across the drawbridge, through the narrow town-gate, into the narrow, ill-paved, tortuous street, and stops before the post-office. The sudden quiet after many hours' shaking, jolting, and rattling, is indescribably sweet for one who reaches the end of his journey, but indescribably painful for him whose journey has no end, or for whom the end is not the desired goal. He would rather the jolting, shaking, and rattling should begin once more and carry him further and further away from all men into eternal night.

But he is now in a civilized city among civilized men, who have no sympathy with eccentricities of any kind, and who hold to the opinion that a gentleman who arrives in Grunwald by the express stage-coach at the appointed hour, half-past seven o'clock, is bound to give the guard a fee, to ask him respectfully to pick out from the other boxes and trunks his own trunk and hat-box, marked in legible letters with a "Doctor Stein, passenger for Grunwald," and then to send these things by a porter to the Hotel St. Petersburg. Here Doctor Stein thought he would be kindly remembered from the time when he studied and passed his examination here under the auspices of Professor Berger, and used to drink many a bottle of wine at said hotel in company with the latter; but now nobody knew him, for the old landlord had died several months ago, and the new landlord had engaged new waiters.

This had the effect that the clerk looked upon him as a stranger in the fullest sense of the word, and treated him as such, presenting to him at once the large book in which he was to enter his name. "Mr. Drostein? Thank you!... Doctor O. Stein? Ah! I beg pardon; thought it was all one name. Are you going to honor us with your presence for any length of time, sir? No? Much life in town just now: theatre, horse-fair, student's ball.... Doctor Braun? Know him very well, practices in the house since the privy councillor has been paralyzed. Was here to-day.... Where he lives? Quite near here. Post street, second house on the right, close by the privy councillor's. Are you going to order supper, sir? No appetite? sorry to hear it! Very fine fresh oysters! Natives! Anything else? water to drink? Pitcher of water? Directly, sir, you shall have it at once!"

An uncomfortable-looking room; two lighted candles on the table before the sofa; a trunk on a low trestle; a hat-box on the chair close by; all around silence, when the step of the waiter is no longer heard in the long, narrow passage. Oswald did not think the situation calculated to cheer up a melancholy man. He made haste to leave the room and the house.

It had been his first intention to call on Franz, the only one in Grunwald from whom he could be sure of receiving a hearty welcome--a friend's reception; but he soon abandoned the plan and wandered aimless and purposeless through the streets. He had never felt at home in Grunwald; but yet he had not found the town looking so utterly strange to him, even in the first days of his former residence here. Was it only the effect of his melancholy humor? Was it the dark, misty evening? He did not recognize the streets--the squares through which he used to walk so often; and when he thought he recalled one or the other feature, it was only like something seen in a dream, where we confound the near and the far chaotically in some great unknown distance. At last he found himself in one of the streets leading down to the harbor. Here he was more at home, for the harbor with its crowd of boats and ships, its smell of the sea and of tar, its monotonous sailors' songs, and its ceaseless hammering and knocking and sawing, had ever been his favorite part of the town, and the almost daily end of his walks.

But to-night everything was deserted and death-like, even in this the only lively portion of the old Hanse town, every other part of which looked as if it had been fast asleep for centuries, and was at best murmuring in a half dream something about its past glory and power. Here and there a light was visible through a cabin window, now and then a dog barked on the deck of a vessel, or a sailor's hoarse call was heard; otherwise all was silence and darkness.

He walked upon the wharf that stretched far into the sea, and along which vessel lay by vessel, out to the uttermost point. Here he stood for some time, sunk in silent meditation, and

looked with folded arms out into the darkness which rested on the waters, and listened to the low, monotonous splashing of the waves which were all the time kissing and caressing the massive blocks of the breakwater. Was this his dearly-beloved sea, on which his dreams and his hopes had so often taken wings in company with countless gulls? Was this the dark abyss, in which his hopes and dreams had been irretrievably swallowed up for all eternity, like the treasure of a shipwrecked vessel?

Beyond, on the other side of the black waste of waters, lay the island, so near and yet so far off, like the time which he had spent there--the short span of time that held all he had ever known of happiness and peace in this life. A ferry-boat, which came from the island across, sailed close by the outer end of the wharf on which he was standing. He heard the measured dip of the heavy oars as they struck the waters, and the peculiar low screeching which they cause as they rub against the gunwale; he heard the confused voices of the passengers; he could even, as they came nearer, distinguish single words; he thought he heard Helen's name. Perhaps it was only an illusion, or an echo in his own heart; but it struck him with peculiar force, and all of a sudden a desire overcame him to seek out the house where, as he knew, the fair maid was staying at the time.

He went back into the town; he crossed the market-place. He stopped before the house where Berger had lived. There was no light in the windows. He could see by the light of a street-lamp that the green blinds were closed, as in a house whose owner had died. From the steeple of St. Nicholas the solemn music of a choral was heard, in which, according to an ancient custom, Grunwald bids every evening at nine o'clock farewell to the day that has gone by. Ordinarily the organist only sends four men up to sing; but on days when a citizen of distinction has been gathered to his fathers, he sends half, or the whole of the choir, according to the desire of the survivors, who wish to give an expression to their grief in this extraordinary manner. To-day all the voices were fully represented--the deceased must have been a man of very uncommon importance.

Oswald listened till the last note had died away. He thought of death, and the Great Mystery which the grave does not solve, but makes only darker, and how happy the men are, after all, who find their trust in believing in a Saviour and a Redeemer.

The long-drawn summons of the sentinel before the main-guard awaked him from his dreams. The squeaking voice of a youthful hero gave the command: "Carry arms! Ground arms! Helmets off for prayer!" Piety by order--effusions of heart, according to the paragraph of the regulations! In a well ordered state everything must go by rule.

"Why," said Oswald to himself, while he was walking towards the town-gate, "why are you not a pedant among pedants, since fate does not permit you to be a Roman among Romans? Why do you kick against the pricks to which all the cattle patiently submit? You might be as well off as the others. After all, it may not be so bad a thing to sit, as Berger used to call it, in the easy-chair of an office; the night-cap of a sinecure may protect one against many an attack of rheumatism--the effect of a draught in this windy outside world; and he who has a virtuous wife lives twice as long; and when he is compelled to die, like everybody else, they play and sing from the steeple, that the whole town hears it and prays for the peace of his soul."

Above him it rustled in the tall trees with which the street was lined that led to the suburb and to Miss Bear's boarding-school. The evening breeze has torn the dense veil of fog, and the crescent of the increasing moon was dancing through the clouds in their spectral flight. A horseman galloped past him towards town. The horse snorted; sparks flew. A moment later, and the noise was scarcely audible, and soon ceased altogether. "Somebody, I dare say, who rides for the doctor; a husband, perhaps, whose wife is taken ill; a father, whose son is lying on his death-bed." Oswald thought of the night when Bruno died, and of his fearful ride across the heath from Grenwitz to Fashwitz. If Bruno had only lived! Oswald thought everything would have happened differently then. It seemed to him as if the death of the boy alone had made him so miserably poor--as if he could have challenged a world in arms, with him by his side. With him and good fortune! no sacrifice would have been too great for Bruno's sake; not even the sacrifice of his love for Helen. He would have willingly and cheerfully given the fair girl to Bruno--but to him alone, in the world. Given? What had he to give--he the beggar?

Now he was standing before the house he had come to see, and supported himself against the iron railing of the garden. There was not a window lighted up in the whole house. The inmates had probably all retired to rest. He thought of the summer nights when he had stood looking by the hour at the open window with the curtains lowered, from which the music of a piano was wafted to him through the soft, silent air; and hours afterwards, long after the light had vanished behind the red curtains and the music had ceased, and he had still wandered up and down between the flower-beds and under the tall beech-trees, sometimes till the first purple streak of morning-dawn appeared on the eastern horizon, and the birds in the thick bushes began dreamily to twitter above him.

A breath of wind rushed through the two tall poplar-trees on both sides of the lofty portal and whispered mysteriously in the dry leaves, a window-shutter flapped in the house, a dog in a neighboring house began to bark.

Oswald shivered as if he had a fever. The momentary excitement after his long journey in the

stage-coach had passed away; he felt tired and sick. He buttoned up his overcoat and turned to go back into the city. A carriage came rapidly towards him. A horseman with a lantern in his hand galloped before it--probably the same who before had galloped madly through the dark night into town.

Could it be Doctor Braun, who was going away? The thought that he might possibly not find his friend at home, awakened in Oswald the desire to see him and to talk to him. In a few minutes--for the distances in Grunwald are not considerable--he stood before the house which the waiter had told him was Doctor Braun's house. The girl who opened the door said her master was at the privy councillor's, adding that he spent all his evenings there. Here Oswald was told that Bemperlein was in the sitting-room--Bemperlein, the only one, with the exception of old Baumann, who knew his relations to Frau von Berkow--the only one whom he feared to meet; whose reproachful glance, in case he should not yet have been informed of the most recent events, must be painful to him.

He only remembered, when he was in the street again, that his going away in such a manner must have appeared extraordinary, if not ridiculous. This disturbed him and made him feel worse than before. He would have liked best to hide himself in the lowest depth of the earth; to forget in sleep the misery of life. In sleep? Why not in wine, when sleep is not to be had? "The best of life is but intoxication," says Byron; and there where a solitary lamp shines dimly between two stone pillars, is the entrance to the cellars of the old city hall. Down the long, broad staircase with the low steps, down into the bowels of the earth, where nobody cares for sentiments that make the heart heavy, and for thoughts that confuse the head!

CHAPTER XVII.

The city cellars of Grunwald cannot rival those of Bremen, but nevertheless they are very respectable cellars. The low, spacious vaults stretch far under the city hall, and extend even below the market-place, on which it is situated. There are rooms enough that have in former days served as drinking rooms of every size, and may even to-day be used for larger and smaller companies, but what is most needed is wanting--the guests. The good old times, when Grunwald was wealthy and powerful, are no longer. Those who built these vaults and filled them with ringing of cups, with songs of cheerful converse--the honorable sober-minded burgesses with their broad shoulders, their full, well-trimmed beards, and the broad-swords by their sides--they sleep, all of them, sound, good sleep in the old graveyards, or under the huge slabs of stone with which the churches are paved, if they were members of the council, or otherwise great men, and there "await a blissful resurrection." Their grandchildren crowd together in dark, narrow chambers, and drink stale brown beer, instead of fiery, golden wine; many a one, whose ancestor went down these steps day by day, whenever the rosy summer evening was lying on the high gable roofs, or the storms of winter were careering through the dark, narrow streets, hardly knows how it looks down there in the city cellars.

Nevertheless they do not seem to be entirely deserted by the good people of Grunwald. The dim little lamp at the entrance burns night after night--often far into the small hours, sometimes till daybreak--and the solemn citizen who has been belated at some Christening feast or other great festivity, and now walks home with wife and daughter in the silent night through the deserted streets, and past the city cellars, often sees a dim light shine through the unwashed windows, and hears perhaps low confused voices, which seem to rise from the bowels of the earth and make an uncanny impression at that hour and in that place.

But there are no gnomes carrying on their wicked doings below there, only gay companions, jovial, or at least not very pedantic fellows, who can fully appreciate the value of a good glass of wine, taken from a good cask, and enjoyed in good society. There are men who do not relish all of life so very heartily that they should not at times desire to wash the dusty, unpleasant taste down with a glass of wine; others who have neither chick nor child at home, and get tired at night among their silent books; still others who, wearied of the monotony of married life, want to have a merry night for once; and still others, who have quite accidentally found their way down the broad cellar-steps, and cannot very well get up again a few hours later, however broad the steps may be. There are young professional men, artists, actors--if there happen to be any in town--young literati, now and then a farmer from the neighborhood, or an official--these make the main ingredients of the public which is apt to assemble every evening in the great vault to the left of the entrance, and sometimes, when they wish to be still more exclusive, in a smaller room on the other side of the building.

Oswald knew the place very well from his former residence here, although he had never reached the dignity of an habitué. He had been occasionally at the cellars with Berger, without

taking much notice of the rest of the company that might be there. Thus the damp, cool air, filled with the peculiar odor of marvellously-ancient walls, and the fragrance of last year's wine, greeted him pleasantly, and he found without much trouble the way to the low door which opened into the drinking-hall.

Except the waiter, there happened to be at that moment nobody in the long, vaulted, and badly-lighted room, but a single guest, who sat with his back to the door, and did not allow himself to be disturbed in the least by Oswald's entrance. He was pleasantly engaged in discussing fresh oysters, and Oswald, who had taken his seat not far from him at one of the small round tables, noticed with some astonishment what a mountain of shells the indefatigable worker had already accumulated. And yet he did not look tired. At least he leaned only now and then back in his chair, in order to sip with evident satisfaction a glass of wine, and then renewed his labors with a zeal which certainly spoke as eloquently for the good quality of the oysters as for the excellency of the digestive powers of the consumer.

The last shell was dropping from the mountain, and the last drops were flowing from the bottle into the glass.

"*Sic transit gloria mundi*," said the man; "nevertheless, we can easily renew this *gloria*. Carole, bring another dozen of these excellent dwellers in the deep, and half a bottle of this most praiseworthy hock."

Oswald listened. The voice was familiar to him; it reminded him of by-gone, happy days. That fresh, clear voice had refreshed and encouraged him more than once, as the wind does the prisoner blowing in through the open windows of his prison; it did not fail to-day to have the usual effect on his darkened mind. Of all men this was the one whose company was by far the most welcome to-night.

He rose, therefore, approached him, and greeted him with unusual animation.

"*Ah, dottore, dottore!*" exclaimed the oyster-eater, rising at once and seizing the proffered hand. "You here? Well, that is a most sensible notion of our stupid friend's accident. Carole, a whole bottle instead of half a bottle, and several dozen oysters instead of one."

"Am I really at this moment a *persona grata* to you, Timm?" said Oswald, taking a seat by Albert's side.

"*Persona grata!* at this moment!" cried Albert Timm. "Don Oswaldo! Don Oswaldo! I have missed you sadly, upon my word, ever since we parted at Grenwitz, and I am as delighted as a snow-bird to see you here again. Where on earth have you been hiding all this time? I have inquired of everybody. Since when are you back?"

"Three hours ago."

"And, of course, you are hungry and thirsty, just as you were when you left the stage-coach; at least you look so. Carole, Carole! Why does the fellow not come? At last! Here, dottore, is food for a sound stomach, and drink for a sick heart! Here's your health! Welcome in Grunwald!"

And Mr. Timm's face smiled so kindly as he said these kind words that it would have looked like blackest ingratitude to doubt the sincerity of his sentiments.

Oswald at least was most pleasantly affected by this cordial reception of a man whose friendship he had never tried to win, whose amiable frankness he had often met with repulsive coldness, and he felt this all the more deeply as he had suffered a few moments before acutely from a sense of loneliness in the world.

"One service deserves another, Timm," he said, while the latter was filling the glasses again. "I can tell you that I am heartily glad to have met you the very first night I spend again in this town. Let us have another glass! Here's our good friendship!"

"With pleasure!" cried Mr. Timm, heartily grasping Oswald's proffered hand. "We will hold together honestly. Heaven knows this wretched old-fogy place does not have an abundance of men with whom one can hold together, or like to do it. But this league of two noble souls ought to be celebrated in a nobler beverage. Carole! A bottle of champagne--Clicquot and *frappé*--else, by the bones of my fathers, the lightning of my wrath falls upon your bald pate. And now come, *dottore mio*, tell us something of your wanderings; or, rather, tell us that some other time; and let me know, first of all, for that is most interesting to me, has Fame told us falsely in making a most wonderful mixture of great and small things of the last scenes of your farce, your drama, or your tragedy at Grenwitz?"

"Before I can answer that," said Oswald, whom the oysters, the wine, Timm's company, and the whole atmosphere, were gradually putting into better humor, "I must know what it is Fame has reported."

"Do you really wish to know?"

"Certainly."

"Well, there were two readings; but you must not blame me, Stein, if I touch a sore place in your heart without knowing."

"But, Timm, do you think I am a child?"

"In some respects all men are children, and remain children, dottore, and you are no exception to the rule. Whatever flatters our self-love, goes down as easily as a rich oyster; whatever hurts our vanity, tastes like wormwood and quinine. *Eh bien!* Some say you had favored an understanding between Bruno--what a pity, by the way, the poor boy had to bite the grass so young!--and Miss Helen; that Felix had come to you to hold you to an account about this in the name of the parents; that this had led to a difficulty between you, which had ended in a scuffle; that Felix had slipped, in his endeavor to turn you out of the house, and that he had broken his right--some say his left--arm, once; some say twice."

"The accursed rascal," murmured Oswald, between his teeth, hastily throwing an empty oyster-shell to the others.

"Did I not tell you I might annoy you, Oswald? Come, don't be a child, and wash your anger down in a glass of this famous wine. The other reading is not half so bitter."

"Let us hear!"

"According to this variation it was not the pupil, but the teacher, whom the young lady looked upon with favor; and the broken arm of the baron was not the effect of a fall, but of a pistol ball, which was applied to his aforesaid extremity in the presence of witnesses, and according to all the rules of art."

"Well, and which reading do you prefer?"

"Of course the latter, my brave Knight of La Mancha. Here, Oswald--nobody hears us in these halls, sacred to friendship and love--fill your glass and drink! Drink it to the last drop of silvery foam! Her health!--the health of the only one, the sweet, the fair, the beautiful one, with the blueish-black hair and the dark sea-deep eyes! Drink! I say, by the bones of the eleven thousand virgins at Cologne! Drink! How, noble Don, are you ashamed to confess the lady of your overflowing heart? and to deny her before me--me, the wise Merlin, who can hear the grass grow and the eyes sigh? Have I not heard the sighing of your beautiful eyes in those sunny days which are no more, when you and she, two children of a rare kind, played innocently under the rose-bushes and thought that no one saw you, not even the Creator of heaven and earth who gave you the warm breath with which you playfully whispered to each other the sweet mysteries of love? And did I not hear how serpents' tongues hissed around you? Did I not see with what intense hatred basilisk eyes glared at you? Oh, I have seen and heard all that, and I knew before that it would come thus, but I said nothing; for speech is silver, but silence is gold, and he who meddles with love affairs would do better to go and sit down in a bed of nettles."

"Tell me, Timm, have you--have you seen her since she has come to Grunwald?"

"I have seen her, my master!--not once, but many times, by the side of other fair beauties, among whom she looked like the rose of Sharon amid dandelions, gliding over the pavement of Grunwald, through dismal streets; and the paving-stones in the streets and the bricks in the houses received speech, and they spoke and sang: Blessed art thou among women!"

"She is at Miss Bear's house, is she not?" Oswald asked, who thought it would be folly to try and conceal his attachment from a man of such sharp observation as Albert.

"Yes, she is at the She Bear's--this pearl of an argus-eyed female. There she dwells, and sits at the window and sees the clouds drift over the tops of the poplars; and if you pass by there at noon, between twelve and one, you can see her sit there yourself, as I have seen her every time I have passed there at that hour. And always she raised her beautiful eyes, and always she looked at me inquiringly: Can you bring me no news of him--of him, the only man I love dearly? Why, Oswald, I--a prosy old foggy--I speak in verses whenever I think of the maid; and you, who are a poet, mean to deny that you love her with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind? Fie upon you; you do not deserve that I take so much trouble about you--that I have thought of you these last weeks more frequently than you have done during the whole time. But ingratitude is the reward of the world, and--Carole, another bottle!--I shall hereafter not trouble myself about you and your fate any further."

Timm rested his head in his hand, as Oswald had been doing these last ten minutes. A pause followed, while bald-headed Charles placed a new bottle of champagne into the wine-cooler, turned it round a few times in the ice, and then left them again as noiselessly as he had come.

This sudden transition from exuberant hilarity into such melancholy silence, in an elastic nature like Surveyor Timm's, was somewhat too sudden to be perfectly natural. Oswald, however, was too busy with his own thoughts to notice this. He thought Timm was sincere, and he was flattered by the lively interest which he had excited in a man whom he had heretofore looked upon as altogether frivolous and selfish. He filled his own glass and Albert's from the new bottle, and said,

"I am not ungrateful, Timm; I am really not so; and least of all in this case. And if I have heretofore not put full faith in your friendship, it was only because I felt how little I had deserved it. Let us have another glass together! You know you must not be exacting with a melancholy man like myself!"

"Well, I should think I knew that," said Timm, with his usual merry laugh, pushing back the long fair hair that had fallen down upon his forehead, and emptying his glass at a single draught. "And I have often wondered how a man like yourself, who has a right to enjoy life more than any one else, can look upon the world in a way which seems only fit for sick canary birds and like invalids. I should say nothing if you had never commenced to enjoy it from mere bashfulness, or if you had wasted your strength in enjoyment; but as neither the one nor the other is evidently the case with you--as you are not an enthusiastic saint nor a worn-out roué--as you suffer neither from an exuberance of strength nor from too great weakness, I really cannot tell what is the matter with you, except one thing."

"And what is that?"

Mr. Timm rested his elbows on the table, and the smooth face in his white hands, and smiled craftily at Oswald.

"And that is--what, Timm?"

"Ten thousand dollars annual income." Oswald laughed.

"A very prosaic remedy for contempt of the world."

"But a very radical one, and in your case infallible."

"Why exactly in my case?"

Timm filled the glasses once more, lighted a fresh cigar, and said:

"Heine, you know, divides men in two classes: fat Grecians and lean Nazarenes. I have found this distinction as acute as true. The former believe in Our Lady of Melos, the latter worship the Virgin Dolorosa. The former enjoy the good things of life in cheerful happiness; the latter prefer a grumbling resignation and meditative asceticism. In order that both classes should be right, that the Grecians should be able to live well and the Nazarenes pray well, the former must have an abundance of money, and the latter must be poor, very poor indeed."

"Before you go on with your exposition, Timm, tell me first to which of the two classes you belong yourself."

"To both, or to neither of the two, as you choose. I have the good digestion, the sound teeth, the fine perception--in a word, the desire and the capacity to enjoy which belongs to the Grecians; but I have also the tenacity and frugality necessary to the Nazarenes for the practice of their peculiar virtues. I have the invaluable talent of the camel to be able to thirst a long time without losing heart or appetite; on the contrary, abstinence only serves in my case to sharpen the appetite and to season the next drink more attractively. When I have travelled through the desert, and--as just now, for instance--the branches of mimosas and the fans of palm-trees wave over me, and the icy-cold well--as just now, for instance, from the bottle--I meant to say, from the rock--foams and purls--then I bend my long camel's neck and drink and drink and drink, and bless the dry, brown desert which has led me to such a delicious well."

And Mr. Timm poured down a full glass of champagne with the hasty eagerness of a traveller whose tongue is glued to the palate.

Oswald watched the exulting companion who sat opposite to him with a peculiar sense of pleasure, not unmixed with envy. How sharp and bold, and yet how fine and intelligent, were the features in this smooth, almost boyish face! How well that haughty superciliousness suited him, which played around his delicate nostrils and curved the sharply-accented red lips! How the words flew from these lips, swift as feathered arrows, each one of which hits the bull's-eye! What a sovereign contempt for mere phrases, for any kind of ornament, for all those rags with which hypocrites and fools try to cover their nakedness! How eloquent the whole bearing of the man, his head thrown boldly back, as he blew the smoke of his cigar from him, or as he took the bottle from the cooler, shook it, and filled again and again his empty glass to overflowing! How light the burden of life seemed to be to this man, light as to the lion who leaps with the colt in his teeth swiftly over hedges and ditches!

Oswald was not inclined at that moment to cast a glance into the bottomless abyss of selfishness which lay concealed under the surface of this humor, dancing about in merry waves. The time and the place were not favorable to such an analysis. He felt down here, in this deep, quiet cellar, with its dim, mysterious light of two small candles, as if he were thousands of miles away from the rest of the world. He had come here to drink himself into oblivion; he had succeeded in his wishes. His brow was all aglow, as he followed the example of his companion and poured down glass after glass. He had not felt so free and so happy for a long time as he did at that moment.

"As for you, now, noble knight," continued Timm, "you are a Grecian, without the means of being so at all times, and without the gift of simply transferring the time during which you cannot be so to the account of the future. Instead of doing that, you play the Nazarene, and feel just as happy during the time as the eagle whose wings and claws have been clipped, and who wears a chain around his foot. The exuberant strength, which you cannot employ outwardly, turns within and checks the normal growth of your nature, which has once for all been intended for enjoyment. This is not the first time I call your attention to this contradiction in you. Do you recollect what I told you already at Grenwitz? You hate the nobles, you hate the rich, you hate the powerful, because the ten fingers of our hands itch with a desire to be noble and rich and powerful yourself. Do not talk to me of your moral humbug of the nobility of mind, the wealth of a pure heart, and the power of truth! All that is mere stuff for those who know what merchandise is sold in the market of life. Pshaw! what has a man like you to do with poverty--a man of your youth, your charms, your pretty face--for, by heaven, Oswald, you are a handsome fellow, a man whom the women embrace without his asking, A man of thoroughly aristocratic tastes and tendencies! It is simply ridiculous! You ought not to be a poor schoolmaster, but a wealthy baron, like those Grenwitz people with whom, by the way, you have a most striking resemblance; then you could enjoy life, and afterwards blow out your brains with some show of reason; then you could marry the fair Helen; could do, in a word, or not do whatever you liked! That is why I say again: you want an income of ten thousand dollars. I wish I could get it for you, I would do it, and were I to take them I know not where."

"I really believe you were capable of doing it, Timm."

"Why not? And if it were only from curiosity to see how you would act in such a case towards your old friend."

"I would do with the mammon, you may rest assured of that, as I did when I was a boy with the cherries people gave me--I would share it with my friends."

Albert looked fixedly at Oswald, as he said these words with flushed cheek and raised voice. Suddenly he said, as if awaking from a dream:

"I am a curious fellow, Oswald; as sceptical as a heathen, and yet as fond of all sorts of omens as an old woman. As I was sitting here alone eating my oysters, I said to myself: you happen to have a few dollars in your pocket and you would like to spend them with a friend. And then there occurred to me, as to Wallenstein, the question: who of all those whom I meet here evening after evening meant it best and most honestly? and that it should be the one who would first enter at the door. But, strange enough, contrary to all the customs of the place, not one of them came. Instead of that, you came--you, of whom I had not thought at all. Oswald, I do not know how you think about such matters, and it may be that my request will offend you, but I should like to drink with you to our future, our intimate friendship. What do you say?"

"With all my heart!" cried Oswald. "There is just one more glass for each of us in the bottle."

"And no one shall ever drink again out of this glass!" cried Albert, and threw the empty glass on the floor.

Oswald did the same; but the noise of the breaking glasses sounded shrill and painful to his ear, like the laughter of delighted demons.

Bald Charles, who had sat behind his counter at the other end of the hall, nodding, started up when he heard the noise, and came gliding up, drunk with sleep, thinking they had called him.

"How is it, Oswald," cried Timm; "I think we had better have another bottle. We shall not meet again as young as we are now."

"No," said Oswald; "let us be content. My head burns. And I have to call, to-morrow, on Tom, Dick, and Harry. What is to pay?"

"Stop!" cried Mr. Timm, holding Oswald's arm. "Mine is the helmet, and it belongs to me! Carole, if you accept a red cent from this gentleman, I break this empty bottle on your bald skull! Come! Make yourself paid out of this rag for to-night and for the last nights; and what remains over, why you can buy yourself on the way a wig with it, my Carole!"

With these words Timm had drawn a twenty-five dollar note from a bulky parcel which he took from his coat-pocket, and handed it to the waiter, who seemed to be not a little astonished at this sudden wealth in the hands of one of his very worst customers. At least he grinned in a very peculiar manner as he took the note, while Mr. Timm put back the package with an air of perfect indifference, and tilting his hat on his head, sang:

"I am the last of guests to-night,
Come show me out of the house!
And we wish each other good-night,
I take a kiss from my little mouse!"

They were standing outside in the street. The mist had disappeared entirely, and the moon was shining brightly on the dark sky. The lamps had gone out, and deep shadows alternated with broad streaks of light in the narrow streets between the high gable-ends. A watchman standing at the corner with his long spear and antediluvian horn, called out the twelfth hour. Nothing else was to be seen in the death-like streets through which Oswald and Albert were now walking home, arm in arm, as it became such good and intimate friends: Oswald unusually heated and excited, Albert as cool and fresh as if he had been drinking nothing but water in the city cellars at Grunwald. They talked over the members of the town council and of the college on whom Oswald had to wait the next day, and Oswald's career at the college especially, which Albert declared was a fabulous idea, such as no one could have conceived but a Knight of La Mancha. Thus they reached the door of the hotel, then they wished each other good night. Oswald went in; Albert lounged down the main street, his hands in his pockets. But suddenly he stopped and seemed to meditate for a while. Then he turned into a by-street and vanished in a labyrinth of lanes and courts, formed by rheumatic little cottages, whose exterior did not belie the reputation enjoyed by this part of the town.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The official dwelling of the rector of the college, Doctor Moritz Clemens, was shining to-night in unwonted splendor. They had not only removed the covers from all the sofas, sofa-cushions, and chairs, in the best room and the sitting-room, so that the luxurious light of two lamps and half a dozen stearine candles poured in floods over the displayed magnificence; but even the rector's study, on one side, and the sitting-room and chamber of the two daughters, on the other side, had been changed into salons by removing the writing-table in the one, and the beds in the other, while each was lighted up with a lamp and three candles. The aromatic fragrance which always rises when incense is strewn on the hot-plate of the stove, perfumed all the rooms, and sufficed in itself to produce a festive excitement in every well-regulated mind.

The Clemens family is in grand gala, and awaits the guests who are to come. The Clemens family consists of four persons: father, mother, and two grown daughters. Rector Clemens is a man of fifty years, who must have been very handsome in his youth, and who may still pass for very good-looking. He wears his curly brown hair very long, and, contrary to all fashion, his collar turned down *à la Byron* over a loosely-tied handkerchief, which gives him, in connection with a somewhat vague softness of his features, an ideal, not to say an effeminate expression. He is fully conscious of the soft character of his appearance, and does all he can to heighten the effect. His speech is soft, his voice is soft, his movements are soft. "I am called Clemens, and I try to do honor to my name," he is accustomed to say, modestly, whenever anybody compliments him on the "perfect humanity" of his manner and his appearance. "Humanity" is his pet word. The learned world knows him as the author of a moral philosophical work "Purification of Man towards Perfect Humanity;" and the public at large through his dramatic poem, "John at Patmos," which has appeared in a second edition in the bookstores of the University of Grunwald, and bears the motto, "*Homo sum, nihil humani mihi alienum puto.*"

Mrs. Rector Clemens is, at least in her outward appearance, a perfect contrast to her husband. Her figure rises far beyond the ordinary size, and is broad and strong. The features of her face are proportionately heavy and massive; her voice is a tolerably deep bass, and her movements and manners remind you forcibly of a vessel rolling in a trough of the sea. She is indeed the daughter of a captain of a mail steamer, and has made in her young days twice the voyage to the Indies. It is hard to understand why her etherealizing husband with his enthusiasm for Hogarth's line of beauty, should have chosen her above all others, and the only explanation is to be found in that mysterious affinity which unites the strong and the weak, the stern and the gentle. The contrast between the two characters, however, does not appear quite so striking upon closer observation. The husband has succeeded in lending short wings to the somewhat clumsy psyche of his wife. He has talked to her so much about true humanity, that she is determined to become æsthetic in spite of her colossal size, and to be refined in spite of her defective education. She reads a good deal, although she does not understand it all; and she is the founder and manager of a dramatic club, although she has never been able to distinguish very clearly between a dative and an accusative.

The two Misses Clemens are eighteen and nineteen years old, and enjoy the beautiful old German names of Thusnelda and Fredegunda. The latter resembles her mother, Thusnelda her father, but the difference in character, which the common longing after humanity has nearly effaced in the parents, is still very perceptible in the daughters. They quarrel very frequently, are almost always of different opinions, and resemble each other only in one point--the very high opinion they entertain of themselves.

"It seems to me our dear guests keep us waiting rather long," said Rector Clemens, looking at his watch for the twelfth time in the last twelve minutes, as he nervously walked up and down in the room.

"I cannot comprehend why the good people don't come," said Mrs. Rector Clemens, sitting down for a moment on the sofa and wiping her heated brow with her handkerchief. "I had asked Doctor Stein expressly to be sure to come before seven, because I wanted to read his part over with him."

"Will he be able to read the Captain?" said Miss Fredegunda Clemens from the adjoining room, where she was busy with her dress before a mirror.

"He'll read it at least as well as Broadfoot," replied Miss Thusnelda in an irritated tone.

"But, children, surely you are not going to quarrel now," said the mother, trying to appease them.

"Fredegunda cannot stop teasing me," said Thusnelda.

"And you are always trying to be better than everybody else," said Fredegunda, appearing in the door.

"For heaven's sake, children, I pray you, keep quiet," cries Doctor Clemens, with imploring voice, raising his hands as if in prayer; "I hear somebody in the passage."

The door was really opened at that moment by a maid, and in walk Professor Snellius, Mrs. Professor Snellius, and Miss Ida Snellius.

The broken peace of the Clemens family is immediately restored. They receive the new-comers as heartily as people who have worked their way to genuine humanity are apt to welcome their friends.

Professor Snellius, teacher of the first form and con-rector, a man of some forty years, aspired, like Rector Clemens, and perhaps even more energetically, to the ideal, and was perhaps even more favored in these efforts by his outward appearance. While the beauty of Rector Clemens had something vague about it, the character imprinted on the clear features of Professor Snellius was unmistakable; even the most malicious critic could not have denied that he bore a more than passing resemblance to his favorite poet, Schiller. His admirers found in him the same boldly-curved nose, with the electric spasms around the nostrils, the same earnestness, the same majesty, the same tall form, which, however, was not dressed in ideal costume, but yielded so far to the demands of the time as to submit to a plain black suit, in which the painful neatness is interrupted only by the spotless white of a somewhat tight cravat. Professor Snellius is a pedagogue in the fullest sense of the word. His erudition is literally overwhelming. He teaches all the modern languages, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Sanscrit, and is not quite unacquainted even with Chinese, which he reads in his leisure hours. He is enthusiastic about the young and his vocation as a teacher of the young. He has proclaimed his views on this most important task, and his propositions how to solve its problems in the best manner, in his voluminous work: "History of Education among the West Asiatic Nations prior to the times of Rhamses the Great." The motto of this work, and at the same time the professor's own motto, is: "Through struggle to victory!" Professor Snellius looks soberly upon life, and stammers a little whenever he becomes excited, as very frequently happens to him, about the want of ideal enthusiasm in his pupils, or about any other of his favorite subjects.

Mrs. Professor Snellius is a little lady who would be insignificant if she were not the wife of such a very great scholar. Miss Ida Snellius is an exceedingly tall and exceedingly awkward girl of sixteen, who looks marvellously like her father, and has the reputation of having inherited largely the erudition of her father. She likes to converse with highly-educated gentlemen--with others she does not speak at all--of comparative philology, and of Wilhelm von Humboldt, and is reported to have read through the twelve volumes of her father's famous work. This report, however, is so monstrous, that its truth may well be doubted.

The long-drawn salutations between the families Clemens and Snellius had not yet come to an end, when the door opened once more to admit Dr. Kubel with wife and daughter. Kubel teaches the third form, and is a round, jovial little man, with a smoothly-shaven face, and white, well-kept hands--so round and so jovial that our days no longer produce the like, and that they were found only in the peaceful, stagnant waters of the period from the Congress of Vienna to the year 1848, in out-of-the-way colleges and other quiet districts of quiet Germany. His voice is loud and squeaking, and reminds you, as the figure of the man himself does, of the harmless dwellers in morasses. His erudition is not remarkable. Scoffers maintain that his only merit as a philologist consists in his having a very pretty daughter. Mary Kubel is indeed a very pretty, brown-eyed girl, ever cheerful and ready to laugh, who is unspeakably despised by the Misses Snellius and Clemens; by the former because she has once confounded Alexander and William von Humboldt; and by the latter because she has no idea of reading dramatic compositions. To-day she especially roused the indignation of Thusnelda and Fredegunda, because she arrived at the same time with the two doctors, Winimer and Broadfoot, and therefore has the appearance of having them in her train. Now Thusnelda and Fredegunda are accustomed to claim the attentions of

these two gentlemen as their own exclusive right, and that not without reason, for Mr. Winimer has already worn a lock of Thusnelda's hair near his heart for about six months, and exhibits it in sentimental moments to his intimate friends, threatening them with fearful disgrace if they should ever, ever betray him; and Mr. Broadfoot has lost at least a dozen philippines, and, some say, his heart with them, to Fredegunda, during the six months since he received his appointment at the college. Doctor Winimer is a slender young man of medium size, whose tact in the intercourse with the fair sex is a proverb among his colleagues, and who is always in more or less nervous excitement--thanks, no doubt, to the many delicate relations in which he stands, and of which he speaks in mysterious terms. Doctor Broadfoot is a gentleman whom a stranger might take for a butcher, and who is the continual butt of his friends, on account of his enormous hands and feet, and his ordinary manners.

"Now, our club is nearly assembled," says Rector Clemens, rubbing his hands softly and raising his voice moderately. "Our dear guests alone have not come yet."

"Our guests, dear *collega*?" says Professor Snellius. "I thought the question was in the singularis of *hospes*?"

"*Minime!*" smiled the rector. "I have prepared a dual, yes, I may say a plural of surprises for you to-night, gentlemen and ladies. There will be two new guests here, besides our new colleague, of whom I expect great things for our social intercourse. Can you guess who they are?"

"But, Moritz, it was to be a surprise!" says Mrs. Clemens, in a reproachful tone.

"I think, my dear, it is better to prepare the club beforehand. Is it not our wish to receive the persons in question, not only as our guests for to-night, but to win them permanently over for our little club; and for that purpose, you know, we must have the consent of all the members, according to the regulations which you have prepared yourself."

"Who is it, rector." asked Doctor Winimer. "You torture us."

"A gentleman whose name has a good sound in the republic of letters, and a lady who will be of special interest for you, *Collega* Winimer, in your capacity as lyric poet?"

"A lady?" cried Mr. Winimer, passing his hand through his carefully-arranged hair, his pride and his ornament, a gesture for which he receives his punishment immediately in a reproving glance from the lady whose lock he wears upon his heart.

"Yes; a lady, a highly-gifted lyric talent."

"No doubt, Primula; I mean Mrs. Professor Jager!" cries Mr. Winimer.

"You have guessed it; the poetess of the 'Cornflowers' and the interpreter of the fragments of Chrysophilos, will appear to-night as stars, and, we hope, be willing to accept a permanent engagement hereafter," said Rector Clemens, with his softest smile.

A long-drawn, unisonous "Ah!" of astonishment, testified to the interest felt by the company in this announcement.

"I had another reason, besides, why I invited Mr. and Mrs. Jager to-night," continues the rector; "it was, so to say, a consideration of humanity for our new colleague, Doctor Stein. He is an entire stranger in our circle, and seems to be remarkably shy, embarrassed, and little accustomed to move in larger circles. Mr. and Mrs. Jager, he told me himself this morning, are old acquaintances of his--from the time when he was a tutor, I believe--and he will no doubt be glad to meet to-night among so many strange or nearly strange faces, at least a few old friends."

"This delicate attention does you honor, *collega*," says Professor Snellius, pressing the rector's hand, and displaying in the act the elegiac feature near the nostrils.

"But I think, Mrs. Clemens, the parts have all been distributed," says Doctor Winimer, who is to read "Max," and is all the more opposed to any change of programme, as his beloved Thusnelda reads the "Thekla," and he has spent four weeks' arduous study upon learning his part.

"I have given Doctor Stein the Captain, who was not yet given out," says Mrs. Clemens, in the tone of one not accustomed to contradiction, and allowing no opposition. "That is a very nice part, and he can show to-night whether he can read or not. I should have liked, to be sure, to read it over with him, but he must look but for himself now. As to Mr. and Mrs. Jager, I have given them the Devereux and MacDonald, who were still vacant."

"But, my dear Mrs. Clemens," squeaked Doctor Kubel, "do you really think those parts are quite suitable for our new friends at their first debut?"

"Why not, dear doctor?" asks the manager, with a frown of impatience.

"I only think they will hardly like it particularly to make their first appearance among us as murderers," says Doctor Kubel.

The lady manager, whose brow has become darker and darker as her jocose guest speaks, is about to reply, but is prevented from doing so, for the door opens at that moment in order to admit Mr. and Mrs. Professor (ex-pastor) Jager into the room.

The noble pair have not left the "lowly roof" and the "country fields" behind them without a change which might possibly escape the careless observer, but which the sharper eye would at once discern in many a characteristic symptom. Professor Jager knows but too well the use which the mask of humility, of modesty, and unpretending simplicity has rendered Pastor Jager, to lay it aside now when he has barely reached half of his ambitious end. He has only aired it a little, and he who has eyes to see, can at times very clearly discern underneath, his true face, marked with the double impress of the scholar's conceit and the priest's pride. Mrs. Jager affords the same sight, only translated into childish and foolish words. The author of the "Cornflowers" has the air of a person who expects every moment an effusion of overwhelming praise, and is quite determined to deprecate it. If the appearance of the professor reminds one of the well-known wolf in sheep's clothes, and one cannot very well feel quite safe in his neighborhood, his wife's appearance recalls the familiar crow, who thought herself Juno's own bird, and it requires an effort to remain serious. The change in the outward appearance is less perceptible; the interpreter of Chrysophilos has exchanged his plain glasses in horn for a pair of gold spectacles, and Primula wears in her golden hair a few artistic imitations of those blue flowers that have furnished her with a title for her poems. Both hold in their hands a copy of Wallenstein, full of joyous anticipations, hoping to carry off the honors of the evening by their masterly declamation, and without the most remote suspicion of the mortal insult which is to be inflicted upon their pride during the next ten minutes.

Full of hope and free of suspicion they enter the room, welcome the "highly-honored landlord and landlady," and greet the younger gentlemen of the college, who are formally introduced. This is the first large party at which they appear since their triumphant return to Grunwald. Rector Clemens is known for the intelligent and interesting company he has at his house; he surpasses in this the other professors of the university even, unless it be Privy Councillor Roban, whose parties, however, do not consume half as much poetical sentiment. Mr. and Mrs. Jager are determined that this circle shall soon be only the nebular preparation for the brilliant light of their own superiority.

"Ah! my worthy friend," says Professor Jager, after having saluted Clemens and Snellius, to Doctor Kubel, under whom he has been sitting as pupil, pressing the fat, white hands with great warmth; "how delighted I am to meet you, my highly esteemed teacher, and to see you in such excellent health! Indeed, one might say of you as of Wallenstein, that the swift years have passed over your brown hair without leaving a trace. Indeed, indeed, *mens sana in corpore sano*. I learnt that from you, but you have practised what you taught, Doctor Winimer, I rejoice exceedingly to make your personal acquaintance; both myself and my wife have known you long and held you dear, through your charming 'Mayflowers.' Permit me to present you to my wife; I should like to see the Cornflowers and the Mayflowers bound up in a bouquet, ha, ha, ha! Doctor Broadfoot, I am happy to meet a man of science, of your great merit. Your admirable monographs on Origenes and Eusebius have rendered me essential service in writing my Fragments. I am glad to be able, at last, to thank you in person."

While Professor Jager was thus making the round, winding snake-like through the circle of the gentlemen. Primula flitted sylph-like through the circle of ladies. She had, like the "maiden from afar," a gift for every one. She pays a compliment to the elder ladies. She envies Thusnelda and Fredegunda their "charming, highly-poetical" names; she congratulates Ida Snellius on her progress in Portuguese, and pats Mary Kubel on the blushing cheeks and calls her a dear, sweet child.

"But our colleague comes really a little too late," says Rector Clemens, looking at his watch. "I think, Augusta, we might have tea."

"Whom do you expect, my dear sir?" asks Professor Jager of the rector.

"Whose foot did not yet cross this threshold?" asks Primula, who is full of reminiscences of Wallenstein, of the lady manager.

At the very moment, when the professor and his wife are about to answer these questions, the door opens and Oswald's tall form appears in the frame.

CHAPTER XIX.

When the last comer at a party enters the room he always excites a certain sensation in the assembled company, especially when, as was here the case, the arrival of the guest has been looked for with some curiosity. Oswald was a perfect stranger to the whole circle. His only acquaintance was the rector, whom he had met officially. The other gentlemen and ladies, belonging to the college, he had perhaps seen now and then in company during his former residence in Grunwald, but without noticing them or being noticed by them. When he had paid his visits during the day, he had found nobody at home except the Kubel family. The gentlemen were curious to see their new colleague, the older ladies the young man who might possibly become one of these days their son-in-law, and the young ladies the new acquisition for their social meetings--all were ready to examine him and to criticize. Thus there followed a pause in the merry conversation, as he entered, and he had to encounter the eyes of the whole company.

Undismayed by this cross-fire of glances, Oswald approached Mrs. Clemens, kissed her hand, excused his late arrival, and begged her to present him to the other ladies, whom he was not yet fortunate enough to know. After this ceremony had been performed in due form, he begged the rector in like manner to make him acquainted with the gentlemen; then he turned again to the ladies to pay a few compliments to his hostess, and at last to Primula, who immediately entered upon a lively conversation with marked eagerness. Primula had taken Oswald from the first moment into her poetic heart, on account of his "fair, chevalieresque, and truly romantic appearance," as she called it, and all the admonitions of her husband had not been able permanently to arrest the current of her sympathetic sentiments. She had, to be sure, paid due respect in the country to existing circumstances, and dropped the fallen greatness, but she had determined in her heart to follow the impulse of her soul freely whenever she should be able to let her captive psyche fly with untrammelled wings. That moment had come now; she greeted Oswald, who had become more interesting than ever to her through his "exceedingly romantic catastrophe at Castle Grenwitz," with the double warmth of friendship and of admiration. Oswald, however, who was determined, if possible, to make himself acceptable to all the ladies, could not be kept long by all the charms of the poetess; he talked seriously with the elderly ladies, he teased the younger ones, and after ten minutes he seemed to have accomplished his end.

In the meantime he had been carefully watched by the gentlemen, who had gathered around Professor Jager. The interpreter of the fragments of Chrysophilos hated Oswald with a very hearty hatred. Oswald had never paid the vain man the attention which he claimed, and had even treated him with undisguised contempt, especially during the latter part of his stay at Grenwitz. Professor Jager had never forgotten the insult offered to Pastor Jager, and waited only for a suitable occasion to pay off the long accumulated debt. He was, however, far too clever and too cowardly to come out with it openly, as the gentlemen of the college now questioned him about Oswald, whom he declared he knew perfectly. He contented himself with mysterious hints, as: "a young man, about whom much might be said--you will see yourselves, gentlemen--I only hope he has grown more prudent in the meantime; hem! hem! You know he is one of Berger's pet pupils. Well, Berger is a remarkable man, a brilliant man; but he is at the asylum in Fichtenau, and we see once more that 'all is not gold that glitters;' hem! hem!" These and similar words fell like poisonous malaria upon the harmless souls of the pedagogues.

"If we had known that, *collega!*" said Rector Clemens secretly to Professor Snellius.

Professor Snellius shrugged his shoulders, and replied,

"I hope much from the advantages he will have in his intercourse with us. The acquaintance of really well-bred, learned---"

"Truly humane," supplied the rector.

"Truly humane men," continued the professor, "is the best training for genuine culture and erudition---"

"And humanity," supplied the rector.

"What do you think of our new colleague, Winimer?" asked Doctor Broadfoot, who had noticed with great disgust how merrily Miss Fredegunda, who generally distinguished herself by a certain morose reserve, was now chatting and laughing with Oswald.

"I believe the gentleman is a great dandy," replied Mr. Winimer, passing his hand through his hair. "He has a way of bending over ladies in their chairs which is downright intolerable. I am afraid we shall never be good friends."

"But that is too bad," cried Mr. Broadfoot, and advanced with the intention to interrupt the conversation between Oswald and Fredegunda, but he lost his courage on the way; and in order to mask the unsuccessful attack, he took a cup of tea from the waiter which a maid presented to him, and then, cup in hand, he remained standing in the centre of the room, the picture of helpless embarrassment.

He was fortunately soon relieved by the question of the lady manager, whether they should now begin the reading of Wallenstein--the original purpose of their meeting--and the invitation to follow her into the adjoining room.

"In which part will you, madame, give us an example?" asked Oswald. "But why do I ask?"

There is in Wallenstein only one part for you, as in this company there is but one lady fit for that part--yourself!"

"You are jesting," said the poetess, tapping him gently on the arm with the book which she was holding in her hand; "why should I have any privilege?"

"But, surely, there can be but one opinion about this that the most poetical character in the piece ought to be represented by the most poetical character in the company; and again, there can be but one opinion as to who that is."

"And who--ha! I will try to overcome my childish bashfulness--who could that be?" asked Primula, with melting voice, raising her eyes in sweet anticipation to Oswald.

"Permit me to take the copy you are holding in your hand, a moment. Thanks! I see there is a mark. Let us see where it is. 'Act Third.--Scene First.--Countess Terzky: Thekla, Fräulein von Neubrunn.' Thekla under-scored. I thank you, Thekla!"

"That is an accident," cried the blushing poetess, pressing the book, which Oswald handed back to her with an ironical bow, to her bosom. "I swear it to you by the nine Muses, it is an accident."

"And I swear by father Apollo himself, and by all the other Olympians besides, that I believe in no accident, at least only in the most fortunate accident which has led me to-night once more into the company of--may I venture to say so--of a friend."

"If you may say so!" cried the poetess, tenderly pressing Oswald's arm with her own; "if you may say so! Oh believe me, Mr. Stein, I have been your friend ever since you put your foot on our humble threshold; I have always taken your part when prosaic minds, without reverence for the Great and the Beautiful----"

Primula was forced to arrest the overflowing waters of her tenderness, which Oswald had called forth so suddenly by his coarse flattery; for at that moment they had reached the adjoining room, where a part of the company were already seated around the long table, which was covered with a white cloth, and lighted up with two lamps and two candles. At the upper end stood Mrs. Rector Clemens, the founder and manager of the "Dramatic Club," looking at her company like a herd at his flock, and appointing to the still homeless guests their seats, gesticulating fiercely with her arms, and letting her deep voice out more fully than seemed absolutely necessary.

"Sit down by Fredegunda, Doctor Broadfoot. Will you take a seat by my daughter Thusnelda, Doctor Stein? Mrs. Jager, you will please take a seat by Professor Snellius. Professor Jager, you by Mrs. Kubel. Well, now we are all seated."

Mrs. Manager seized a bell, which stood before her on the table, and began to ring it for half a minute with all the energy of a president of a parliament who wishes to drown the mad voices of a few hundred furious representatives of the people. As the absolute silence reigning in the whole assembly furnished no pretext for this display of energetic efforts, Mrs. Manager at last put the bell down on the table, and seized instead a sheet of paper, on which, as on a theatre bill, the parts in the piece and the names of the company were arranged in double columns.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" she said, examining the faces of the audience, as they looked up to her, with satisfaction. "You know that we have chosen at our last sitting 'Wallenstein's Death' for this meeting with universal acclimatization; I meant to say, acclamation. As unfortunately the piece has more parts than we have members, I have been forced to leave out several which did not appear to me essential. But even then there remained a few which I could not well fill, and which would have remained blank if some of our dear guests who give us the pleasure of their company to-night had not put it into my power to complete the bill to the general satisfaction of all, I hope. Although most of you already know which part has been allotted to you, I will for the sake of regularity, and especially for the benefit of our dear guests, read the whole list from the beginning once more. Listen then, I pray, attentively!"

Mrs. Manager cleared her voice and read, amid the attentive silence of the company:

Wallenstein,	Rector Clemens.
Octavio Piccolomini,	Professor Snellius.
Max Piccolomini,	Doctor Winimer.
Terzky,	Fredegunda Clemens.
Illo,	Doctor Kubel.
Butler,	Doctor Broadfoot.
Gordon,	Mrs. Kubel.
Seni,	Miss Ida Snellius.
Duchess,	Mrs. Snellius.
Countess Terzky,	Myself.
Thekla,	Thusnelda Clemens.

Fräulein Neubrunn,	Marie Kubel.
Swedish Captain,	Doctor Stein.
Devereux,	} Mr. and Mrs. Jager.
MacDonald,	

Oswald, who had been not a little amused by this original distribution, had to bite his lips not to laugh loud, when he saw the foolish faces made by the last-named persons as they heard their names coupled so intimately with the names of the murderers of the hero. Professor Jager drew down the corners of his mouth lower than Oswald had ever seen them; and Primula, who had turned as white as the lace collar on her pale-yellow dress, seemed to be on the point of breaking into tears.

That was, then, the triumph which she had hoped for from this night! Was this the hospitable house of dear friends, who were so proud of their perfect humanity? or was it a blood-dripping cave of brutal Troglodytes? Was he the interpreter of the fragments of Chrysophilos, or was he not? Was she the famous author of the "Cornflowers," or was she not? And no cry of indignation broke forth from the throats of all who had heard with their own ears this desecration of names so renowned in science and in art!

The professor and his wife looked at each other across the table with eyes in which an attentive observer might have read these and other questions; then they glanced around the company at the table to see what impression such blasphemy must needs have produced upon the audience. But no one seemed to think any harm about this disgraceful insult to scientific and poetic fame; no one, with the exception perhaps of fat Doctor Kubel, who replied to an interrogative glance of the professor with a friendly grin, and Oswald, who stealthily pressed Primula's hand under the table as a sign of his sympathy, for Primula sat on his left, while Thusnelda was his right-hand neighbor. Otherwise nobody troubled himself about the insulted sufferers, each one was busy only with his own part, and the impression he hoped to make upon the others, and all awaited now the signal for beginning. The lady manager gave it at once, with the same grace and the same noise with which, in a menagerie, the docile elephant rings the bell for dinner, and the bear or the monkey for supper.

Mrs. Clemens presented next, in a neat little speech to Miss Ida Snellius, the offer to "come down, as day was breaking and Mars in the ascendant," whereupon the young lady begged her to "let her observe Venus first, that was just rising and shining in the east like a sun," but her voice was so indistinct as to be almost inaudible, either from the great remoteness of the astronomer or from the embarrassment of the performer.

The rest corresponded with this interesting beginning, and they inflicted upon the unlucky drama all the horrors which art-loving ladies and gentlemen are apt to practice when they assemble for the purpose of reading a drama with "distributed parts," as they call it. Rector Clemens changed Wallenstein into the gentle member of a Moravian brotherhood; Professor Snellius, the clever, intriguing Octavio, into a wooden pedant; Doctor Winimer howled and groaned as the noble son of an ignoble father, so that unspeakable horror befell every heart; and Doctor Kubel seemed to take Illo for Chamisso's washerwoman; while Doctor Broadfoot read silent Butler's words as if he had been a charlatan dentist at a fair. Countess Terzky became one of Pappenheim's Cuirassiers; and Thekla, in the hands of Miss Thusnelda, a love-sick seamstress.

And with all that, there was a holy zeal animating them all and inducing them to turn over the leaves long before their turn came again, and thus to produce a continuous rustling; and with all that, an unvarnished enthusiasm which rewarded the performances of some, as those of Doctor Winimer; and with all that an unselfish modesty with which less gifted members, like Marie Kubel, submitted to correction on the part of Rector Clemens, who enjoyed, by the regulations of the club, the privilege of interrupting the reader and of pointing out to him or to her the mistakes made in reciting.

Oswald enjoyed this Babylonian confusion, this nibbling of mice at the club of Hercules, until gradually disgust overcame him, and even the sight of Mr. and Mrs. Jager was no longer able to cause him to laugh heartily. The professor sat, lost in his large easy-chair, immovable, the corners of his mouth drawn down so low that its outline presented the form of a horse-shoe, while he looked with his small, green eyes over the frame of his large, round spectacles at his wife, his fellow-sufferer, his companion in his disgrace. The conduct of the poetess was, of course, far more striking, as might have been expected from so eccentric a character. Now she would throw herself back in her chair with crossed arms and fix her eyes on the ceiling, and now she would lean forward and support her head, with the golden hair and the wreath of blue cornflowers, in her hands. Then again she smiled a smile of supreme contempt, or she yawned as if overcome by intolerable ennui. Oswald was very curious to see what she would do when her turn came, for she had whispered to him at the beginning, in feverish excitement, "I will not read; rely upon it, I will not read!"

However, his curiosity was not to be so easily satisfied, for after Mr. Winimer had declared himself at the end of the third act, with a final effort of all his voice, "ready to die," Mrs. Clemens once more began to ring with all her might, and gave thus the signal for a long pause, which, according to § 25 of the statutes, occurred in a drama of five acts invariably after the third act, and in a piece of four acts after the second, and during which, according to § 26, wine and cake

were handed round.

In order to comply with the tenor of these paragraphs, the company left the table and returned to the sitting room in the highly excited condition in which people come from a finished artistic performance. They sat, and stood about, with glasses in their hands, and talked of the piece and the declamation. They all agreed that Doctor Winimer had this time, as always, surpassed them all, and that Miss Marie Kubel had not yet spoken loud enough, although, generally speaking, she might be said to have made some progress. The gentlemen gave each other marks, as they did with their school-boys, and of course all received the highest number. The ladies spoke of the sublime poet, of the chaste nobility of his verses. Miss Ida Snellius insisted that Schiller reminded her frequently of Euripides, whereupon the circle fell into a learned discussion, in which the words Sophocles, Goethe, Schiller, Aristophanes, Æschylus, Euripides, Don Carlos, Oedipus upon Colonos, and Wallenstein, were tossed to and fro like snow-flakes.

Oswald looked for the author of the "Cornflowers," whom he had lost sight of since the beginning of the pause. He found her in a window-recess of the second room (otherwise the chaste bed-chamber of the two Misses Clemens), whispering eagerly to her husband. He was about to withdraw modestly so as not to disturb the *tête-à-tête*, but Primula rose as soon as she saw him, seized his hand and drew him into the recess.

"Speak low," said Primula, with the hollow voice of a ghost.

"What is the matter?" asked Oswald, in the same tone.

"You shall tell me whether I ought to read!" breathed Primula; "Jager has no sensibility for such a disgrace."

"Oh! yes, dearest Augusta," whispered the professor; "but I should like to avoid a scene; I pray you, darling, what will the people say when--oh, I cannot think of it."

"I should be disposed to agree with the professor," said Oswald. "I do not see how you can be saved after being once entrapped into this lion's den."

"Is the author of the 'Cornflowers' a murderer--a wretched assassin?" whined Primula. "Never, never!"

"It is disgraceful," chimed in Oswald; "but the interpreter of Chrysophilos is in the same position, and you see he bears his hard fate with dignity."

A pressure of the hand from the professor rewarded Oswald for this flattery.

"Oh, you men have no feelings for insults," sobbed Primula. "Well, I will try, but if----"

The stormy ringing of the president's bell from the adjoining room cut Primula short. She stepped ahead of the two gentlemen with the air of one who has formed a resolution, happen what may.

"Now it will soon be our turn," said Doctor Winimer, as they took their seats under continued ringing of bells, to Oswald; "don't be afraid, and read bravely on. Even if you do not do very well the first time, it will be better the second time, and practice makes the master."

"Whom I admire and revere in you," replied Oswald, bowing.

"Well, well," said Doctor Winimer, rubbing his hair, with a smile; "it might be better. To be sure when I recently heard Holtei, who is probably the best reader in Germany, the old saying *Anch' i sono pittoré* came at once into my mind."

"I believe it," said Oswald.

The bell ceased to ring, and Doctor Broadfoot, as Colonel Butler, raised his voice, and cried so that the windows rattled:

"He is inside. Fate led him hither."

The murderous night at Castle Eger progressed now rapidly from scene to scene. Oswald was so curious about the manner in which Primula would take her fate, especially since he had seen her excitement grow apace as the fatal moment approached, that he could hear the words of Fräulein Neubrunn, "The Swedish captain is here," without excitement. He actually asked Princess Thekla--Thusnelda, quite coolly, and without the slightest palpitation of the heart, to pardon him for his "rash, inconsiderate words." Nor did he notice the uncalled-for warmth of feeling with which Miss Clemens recited the words:

"A fatal chance has made you,
A stranger, quickly my familiar friend,"

although her tone made Doctor Winimer feel bitter pangs in his heart. Miss Fredegunda looked most significantly at her Doctor Broadfoot. He did not notice the murmured applause which followed his recital of the death of the cavalry-colonel; and the following scenes also passed unnoticed, till at last the fatal net encloses Wallenstein altogether in its meshes, and dark Colonel Butler distributes, in the secrecy of his rooms, the parts to be taken by the murderers. Already Major Geraldine has hurried off with his bloody commission, and--now the moment comes, when (on the stage) the curtain parts and the grim captains Devereux and MacDonald present themselves in collar and tall riding-boots, and long swords at their side, before the commander of their regiment.

"What is she going to do?" thought Oswald, as he saw the face of the sufferer turn pale and red by turns; "she is not going to read."

But Primula overcame the noble indignation which made her heart swell, cleared her voice, and said, with the soft voice of a saint who surrenders himself into the hands of the executioners:

"Here we ARE, general!"

The lady manager, who thought the accent ought to have been upon the word *we*, because there were two murderers, availed herself of the right conferred on her by § 73 of the regulations, and said:

"Here WE are, general!"

That was too much. The string was overstrained; it snapped asunder; the insulted poetess rose, closed her book with a jerk, and said with pale lips:

"I am sorry if I disturb the company by my declaration that I am unable to read any more. But as I--can--not even--read a part--which--I must force myself--violently--to read--"

She could say no more, but fell back into her chair and broke into convulsive weeping.

The consternation which this scene produced in the harmless company could not have been greater. They rose suddenly from their seats; they crowded around the sobbing poetess; they asked one another what was the matter with Mrs. Jager? and the professor if his wife was subject to such attacks? Nobody suspected the true cause of her condition, which the gentlemen tried to remedy by persuasion, and the ladies by Cologne water. But Primula would accept neither the one nor the other. After a few seconds she rose from her chair, declared decidedly that she must go home, and went out without saying good-by to any one, hanging on the arm of her husband, who had made a very foolish face during the whole scene.

At the moment when the company, extremely surprised by the disappearance of such honored guests, were still standing about in the sitting-room and discussing the facts, a letter was handed to Oswald, which, as the parlor-maid said, "a young man had brought, who was waiting for an answer."

Oswald opened the note, which contained only the words:

"Make haste and come away. I am waiting below.--Timm."

Oswald did not neglect such an admirable pretext to escape from a company which became every moment more and more intolerable to him. He said he had received news which required him to return home instantly. The next moment he had joined Timm in the street.

"Heaven be thanked that I could get away," he cried, seizing Timm, who was delighted to see him, by the arm, and dragging him with him.

"Thought so," said Mr. Timm, "thought you were suffering infernal pains; meant to help you, poor fellow. Come, let us wash down the learned dust which you have swallowed, with a bottle of golden wine."

BOOK SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

"The Boarding-School for Young Ladies," in the suburbs of Grunwald, was not exactly a house of correction for young girls who were incorrigible at home, as the students of Grunwald and other wicked people maintained; nor was the principal of the institution, Miss Amelia Bear--known as the She Bear--altogether the female dragon which malicious tongues represented her to be. It is true, no one could deny that during the day the curtains were almost invariably down in the windows looking upon the street, and that after nine o'clock in the evening no light was to be seen in the whole house. The boarders were never seen in public, except in solemn procession, walking two and two, and with a teacher at the head and a teacher at the end; no letter passed the threshold of the house, going out or coming in, which was not first subjected to a close scrutiny in Miss Bear's study, and stamped there, so to say, with the official seal; but these and similar regulations are either common to all "boarding-schools for young ladies," or there was, in certain cases, a special reason for them. The institution was intended for the "higher classes," whose female offspring was counted upon for its support; this meant almost exclusively the high nobility of the district, as the daughters of persons not noble rarely sought admission, and still more rarely found admission. Now it happens that young ladies of rank born and bred in the country, and enjoying the twofold privileges of country life and an exceptional social position, accustomed to manage from their twelfth year their ponies with the skill of circus-riders, and at thirteen often more familiar with the humbugs of society than other girls ever become--that such girls are not to be treated as leniently as other daughters of Eve. They are used to the society of busy idlers as their only male companions: young land-owners, officers on furlough, and other men of frequently very loose morals; and great is the danger, therefore, that this inborn and inbred sovereign haughtiness may bloom forth abundantly, and bear equivocal fruit, unless they are restrained in time and with method.

This was the excuse which Miss Bear's friends made for the draconic laws of her institution; she was the responsible keeper of this precious but fragile ware, and who could wonder at the stern glance of her once perhaps beautiful eyes, and the crowd of wrinkles on her brow, which seemed to deepen and to multiply every year? Like so many among us, she was what she was, not because she wished to be so, but because she was forced to be so. It was her vocation to look stern, and to frown, as it is the vocation of others to smile forever, and to wear as smooth a face as they can produce. But as the greatest psychologist of our day has taught us that one may smile and smile forever, and yet be a very great rascal, so it is also possible to look like a chief inquisitor, and yet to have a truly womanly, gentle, and kindly heart.

Miss Amelia Bear was the living proof of such a possibility. Miss Amelia Bear had had a very hard time of it all her life long. She was the poor daughter of a poor village minister, and began at fourteen her thorny career as a governess in noble country families. In those days she was very pretty, and therefore exposed to many temptations; but her prudence and her cleverness had helped her to escape from all dangers, till she was old enough to be left alone, and to procure for herself a kind of independence by establishing a school upon the savings of long years and the presents she had occasionally received. Her honorable character was known to everybody; and this, and the experience she had gained in the field of education, justified such an enterprise, while her numerous relations to noble families promised almost certain success. She preferred the nobility, because the nobility preferred her; and she hesitated to accept girls of other families, because she was sure to lose or not to receive for one such boarder, six from the nobility.

Nevertheless she gave up the principle whenever a special case seemed to require an exception from the rule. Thus it had been with Sophie Roban. The privy councillor was the physician of the institution, and Miss Bear was under great obligations to him. Even her noble patrons, therefore, understood perfectly why she could not well refuse the widowed privy councillor, when he asked her to take for a few years a mother's place to his orphaned child.

Her relation to Sophie Roban was the best proof of the exaggeration which had given rise to so many fables about the dragon nature of Miss Bear. She had become a real mother to the motherless girl; she had guarded and protected her against every bodily and mental danger, not in order to earn her compensation honestly, nor for the sake of the reputation of her school, but because she loved the girl with her whole heart, as if she had been her own. Malicious people went so far as to say that she had not only raised but also spoiled the girl, and it could not be denied that Sophie--little Sophie, as the She Bear said--could dare what no other boarder, not even Emily von Breesen, who was at the same time there, and who passed for absolutely untamable, would ever have ventured to do. Sophie could interrupt Miss Bear in the most violent philippic against any wrong-doer who had done something especially horrible, *e. g.*, cutting

round holes in the curtains for the purpose of peeping at the people who passed by the house, and could fall upon her neck and say: Miss Mal, Miss Mal, I would not be so very angry if I were you! Sophie could at all times freely enter her study--that mysterious adytum to which the young ladies came with fear and trembling, and where the dispatches to their parents were prepared, and all their letters, coming and going, were subjected to rigorous scrutiny! Sophie could do what she chose.

These relations between teacher and pupil had ripened into a friendship of a peculiar nature after Sophie had left the school and become the presiding officer of her father's house. Miss Bear appreciated Sophie's good judgment, and did not disdain to consult the lady, young as she was, in critical cases; and what is more, she almost always followed the advice which her young friend gave, more in play than in good earnest, but always with perfect simplicity and impartiality. Such a case had occurred a few weeks ago, when the Baroness Grenwitz had expressed a wish to send her daughter Helen back for some time to the institution to finish her studies, especially in the sciences. Now such a step was remarkable enough in itself, as Miss Helen was coming straight from a well-known, superior school, in which she had spent four years; but it became still more embarrassing by the circumstance that the instructions which Miss Bear received from the baroness on one side, and from the baron on the other, differed essentially as to the degree of freedom to be granted the young lady. If Miss Bear obeyed the written instructions of the baroness, Helen was to be kept as a state prisoner, under latch and key; if she followed the requests made orally by the baron, when he brought, himself, his daughter to Grunwald, the young lady was to be left in absolute liberty. As both methods of education were equally incompatible with the system adopted in the school. Miss Bear was in great embarrassment, and turned, in her dilemma, to her young friend, to receive from her advice in this mysterious affair.

Fortunately Sophie had heard much from her betrothed about the state of things at Grenwitz, and what he had not explained she readily divined by the talent peculiar to all women of delicate feelings.

"They tried to marry Helen to a man unworthy of her," said the young lady, as she met her motherly friend soon after Helen's arrival in the mysterious adytum of her study, in order to confer with her about the Grenwitz affair, "and Helen has very properly refused to consent. In return, they have banished her for a time from her paternal home. You will surely not increase the hardship by being unnecessarily severe against the poor girl? Surely, Miss Mal, that would not be like you. Do what the father says: treat Helen not as a pupil--for that, she is too old; treat her as a young girl who has taken refuge with you from a tyrannical mother who ill-treats her, and from a father who is too weak to protect her. For that is, as far as I can see, the truth of the case."

When Sophie said so, she did, of course, not suspect Oswald's love for Helen, and Helen's love for Oswald, which, if known to her, would probably have made her speak somewhat differently; and afterwards, when Franz's reports about the catastrophe at Grenwitz, and many a word spoken by Helen herself, made her see more clearly this all-important point, she still did not change her advice, because she looked upon it as treason against a friend to tell others a secret of which she herself was not yet fully convinced. Helen, moreover, had become her friend in the meantime; at least she was most devotedly attached to the pretty girl, although she had reasons to doubt whether Helen, in her haughty pride and reserve, returned her love. It was mainly their common enthusiastic love for music which had brought the two young ladies so closely together. They soon found, not only that they shared this enthusiasm, but that they complemented each other in their knowledge of music as well as in their powers of execution. Sophie was the more learned; the mysteries of Thorough Bass--for Helen, a book with seven seals--were open to her; but Helen felt and appreciated music more fully. In comparison with Sophie, Helen was, on the other hand, a mere scholar on the piano, but she had a rich alto voice, as extensive as well trained, while Sophie said of herself that she had not a note in her throat.

Thus the two young ladies could play and sing by the hour, either in Helen's room at the institute, or more frequently in Sophie's parlor, without ever getting tired. Helen insisted that nobody had ever accompanied her as well as Sophie; and Sophie, that nothing had ever afforded her a greater musical enjoyment than Helen's sweet, melodious voice, full of deep feeling.

But, strange enough, although their souls met in the realm of music as kindred souls, and gave each other a sister's kiss, their tongues became silent as soon as they attempted to approach each other in human speech. Their conversation stopped frequently, and they had to turn again to music in order to fill a pause which threatened to become painful. Sometimes Sophie thought Helen was making a violent effort to break the charm which bound her in silence, but she never went in such moments beyond the first stammered sounds of intimacy, and the very next moment saw the young girl longing for friendship changed into the haughty lady of the world, calm in her self-satisfied repose, and unapproachable.

"She is a marble statue," said Sophie to her father, "in spite of her black hair, and her dark, brilliant eyes. You cannot get near to her. I believe she is secretly an Undine."

The privy councillor laughed.

"You may not be altogether wrong," he said; "for if the two entirely different elements, air and water, harbor also entirely different creatures, which cannot have real communion with each

other, it is perfectly logical that different moral atmospheres, like that in which the nobles live and that in which we live, must also produce morally different beings, who can never become real friends with heart and soul. Have you formed any friendship, during the time you spent at Miss Bear's school, which has lasted beyond those years?"

"Yes, papa, with Miss Bear herself," answered Sophie, laughing.

"There you see," said the privy councillor, with his satirical smile, "one can become good friends with she bears even, but not with Undines."

Sophie was too young yet to be able to share the suspicions suggested to her father by his long life and ample experience. She explained Helen's reserve by her innate or acquired reluctance to come out of herself, and forgave her this shyness all the more readily as she was not quite free from it herself. She was herself generally looked upon as stern and cold, and many people declared openly that "she was not at all like other girls." "She cannot help it," she would say to herself, "and we ought not to expect to gather figs from thistles. Helen would be just the same to you if the Robans had been barons at the time of Charlemagne."

This view did greater honor to Sophie's head than to her worldly prudence, and she would have perhaps become a convert to her father's views, "that Undines can at least be intimate with Undines," if she had been able to look over Helen's shoulder on the afternoon of the third day after Oswald's arrival in Grunwald. Helen was writing to her friend, Miss Mary Burton (an Undine beyond doubt, for she belonged to an old and noble English family), and the delicate gold pen was flying fast over the paper. Helen wrote:

"This is the first time for a long, long time, dearest Mary, that I have the heart to answer your letters--for there is quite a pile lying before me. But I could not get the courage to write to you, who have now entered the great world, and have been presented at court--who are engaged, and about to become the wife of an English peer, that I, Helen von Grenwitz, to whom you prophesied such a brilliant future, have been sent back to boarding-school! sent to boarding-school, like a naughty girl; sent to boarding-school, like a gosling from the country! You wonder; you smile incredulously; you lisp your 'It is impossible!' and when you find at last that you have to believe my repeated assurances, you seize me with both your hands and cry: 'but, for God's sake, what does it mean? what can it be?' and you force me to tell you the whole story from the beginning. Well, I see no possibility to escape from the punishment, but you will find it natural that I shorten the pain as much as I can.

"Therefore, in short, if not for good:

"The relations with my mother, which I wrote to you before were so satisfactory, became worse and worse in consequence of my decided refusal to accept Felix as my husband, until an open rupture, which I had long seen coming, was inevitable. I have borne myself in the whole affair as I thought I owed it to myself and to you. It was a fierce battle, I assure you. To oppose my mother requires courage, and my father supported me but feebly, for he is feeble. Well! the battle is over; the dead are buried, and the wounds begin to heal. Yes, Mary! the dead. My Bruno, my pride, my knight, *sans peur et sans reproche*, my brother, my friend, my darling Bruno, is no more! He died fighting for me, and has breathed the last of his young, heroic soul in a kiss upon my lips. The fierce grief about this loss--for I only knew what he had been to me when I had him no longer--made me dull and indifferent to everything and everybody around me. As this boy loved me, no one on earth ever can and will love me again. I was light and air to him; I was meat and drink to him; I was waking and sleeping--I was life itself to him. How often have I laughed at him when he told me so, with glowing cheeks and bright eyes and trembling lips! And I said, 'Come, Bruno, none of your extravagancies! none of your fables! you are a little fool!' Now I would give many a year of my life if I could but hear it once more from his proud lips. A suspicion, which I cannot shake off, tells me that I would have found in Bruno and with Bruno all the happiness that this earth can afford; and that in losing him I have lost every prospect of happiness here below. You smile; you think: a boy! but I tell you, you did not know Bruno.

"Do not ask me to repeat everything in detail. I cannot do it. My heart is too full. The remembrance of my lost pet does not leave me for a moment, and I should like nothing better than to lay down my pen and to cry to my heart's content. Tell me, Mary, is it really our fate, as we have so often told each other in sad hours, to go through life unsatisfied, without joy, without happiness, without the hope that the future at least may bring us the fulfilment of our wishes? Is fortune ever to appear to us only as a *fata morgana*--charming in its beauty and treacherously fleeting? Or is it ever to present itself only in a shape which, however great the inner value may be, offends our delicacy--our prejudices, if you choose to call them so? Your lot, to be sure, it seems, is to be different. In the same circles to which you belong by birth and training, you have found the man who would have been dear to your heart even if your judgment should not have approved of the choice of your heart. A man, a hero, a lord! Happy, thrice happy you are to have found one to whom you have to look up, proud as you are! Smile with your aristocratic curve of the lip upon--your friend at the boarding-school!

"It is true, I am very comfortable at this boarding-school. They treat me, not as a pupil, but as a guest, and I am sincerely grateful to the principal, a Miss Bear, for her goodness, and the delicate consideration with which she treats me, as if she knew all. Perhaps she does know all. Such events, in families like ours, are not apt to remain unknown. Have I not myself learnt much

about my own engagement only several weeks afterwards, and not from my father, with whom I have corresponded all the time, and who has even come to see me several times from Grenwitz (my mother, who I am told is here in Grunwald, has broken off all intercourse with me), but from a young lady, a Miss Sophie Roban, a former boarder here, whose acquaintance I have made, and with whom I have even formed a kind of friendship. She is engaged to our physician at Grenwitz, who has recently settled here, and thus her news seems to be reliable. She told me what had occurred after my departure from Grenwitz, and what papa had carefully kept from me; that the young man, of whom I wrote you already last summer, our tutor, Doctor Stein, has become my knight and my avenger, inasmuch, at least, as he has fought a duel with Felix, and given my great cousin a lesson which he will probably not forget very soon, as I learn from the same authority. I cannot tell you how strangely this news has affected me. At first--I may confess to you--my pride was offended that my name should be coupled in the world with the name of a man like Mr. Stein; that a stranger, a hireling, should have assumed responsibilities for me, as if he were a relative, and my equal in rank. But then I thought of the old saying, 'that if the people were silent the stones would speak;' I remembered that a brother could not have behaved more brotherly, nor a knight more chivalrously toward me than this man had done from the first moment. I recalled, above all, that this man was my Bruno's dearest friend, and I forgot my pride, and felt, not without wondering at myself, that I could be grateful to this man for his great kindness and affection without feeling, as I generally do, that this gratitude weighs upon me as a burden. Nay, even more, I felt the desire to see him, who was abroad, once more, in order to thank him in person, and when I saw him to-day, quite unexpectedly, pass by the window at which I was sitting, I felt--you will laugh at me, Mary--I felt that as I returned his bow the blood rushed into my face. When he had gone by I could not help following him with my eye, and then I leaned back in the window and wept bitter tears over the memory of Bruno, which the appearance of Stein had suddenly and powerfully revived in my mind. I wish I could speak to him undisturbed.

"But I must break off here. I hear Miss Roban, who comes to play with me, and Miss Bear, in the next room."

Helen rose to meet the two ladies, who had entered the room upon her *entree*! Sophie Roban passed Miss Bear and embraced Helen, with an affectionate haste which contrasted somewhat with the calm and dignified carriage of the young aristocrat.

"I have really longed to see you, Helen! Why have you not come to see me since the other night, when you promised to call again? Miss Mal has not put her veto upon it?"

"*Point du tout*," replied Miss Bear, pushing her glasses on the top of her head, in order to look more freely at the large, friendly blue eyes of her favorite. "You know, little Sophie, that Helen is perfectly free to dispose of her time. But that was not what I came for, dear Helen! Here is a letter for you; one of your servants brought it; I suppose it is from your father?"

Helen took the letter with a slight acknowledgment, cast a glance at the direction, and said: "Yes, indeed; from my father!" and put it on her portefeuille, which she had closed when the two ladies entered.

"I will not interrupt you any longer," said Miss Bear. "Little Sophie comes to carry you home with her. Shall I send a servant for you?--and when?"

"You are surely coming, Helen?" said Sophie, who had taken a seat on the stool before the piano, and was looking at a collection of music. "I have received some beautiful new songs. A splendid one by Schumann; we must look at it together."

"With all my heart," replied Helen. "But I cannot well stay long, because I must finish a letter for England to-night, so that I can send it off to-morrow morning. I am much obliged to you. Miss Bear, for the servant; but I shall be back before dark."

"As you like it, dear Helen," said Miss Mal, kissing first Helen very lightly on the forehead, and then Sophie Roban very heartily; "*adieu, mes enfants*."

And Miss Bear slipped her spectacles down again upon her nose, wrinkled up her brow in imposing severity, and rustled back to her sanctum, from which Sophie had unearthed her a few minutes before.

"How is your father to-day?" asked Helen.

"Thanks," replied Sophie, still looking at the collection of music; "he is much better; he has stayed up to-day a couple of hours longer. But now read your letter, Helen, and then get ready. We must go."

"Directly," said Helen, opening her letter, while Sophie was reading the music. A few moments later she looked up and found Helen holding the letter in one hand, which hung down, while her head rested in the other, and she was evidently deep in thought. The long lashes concealed the bright eyes, and the dark eyebrows were contracted as if in indignation.

"What is the matter?" cried Sophie, hastily closing the book and putting it down on the piano. "Have you had bad news?"

"Oh no?" replied Helen, who had gathered herself up at the first sound of Sophie's voice, and tried to smile. "Oh no! Papa will be here to-morrow, that is all!"

"To stay?"

"Yes!"

"And you--Helen?"

"I was just thinking about that. My father leaves the choice to me, but----"

The young girl paused, and assumed the same half-thoughtful, half-wrathful expression of face. She seemed to have forgotten Sophie's presence. All of a sudden she asked, her eyes still cast down,

"Would you, if you had been insulted, be the first to offer the hand for reconciliation?"

Sophie was seriously embarrassed by this question, the meaning of which she could easily divine. Helen had never spoken to her about her affairs, not even in allusions. She was not to know anything of them, therefore, and yet it did not suit Helen's candor, and her friendship for Helen, to affect an ignorance and an indifference which were not real.

"That depends," she replied, after a short pause, "on what the offence was, and above all, who was the offending person!"

"How so?"

"There are offences, I think, which only become such by our own making, and offenders who can never be such--who ought never to be such--I mean persons who stand so near to us, with whom we are so closely united by nature, that it would be unnatural, if----"

"They hated us," interrupted Helen, quickly. "But if such a case did occur: if those hated each other for once, who ought to love each other; if they persecuted and warred against each other, who ought to support, help, and bear one another--how then?" Helen had risen; her face was all aglow; her eyes sparkled; her hands were firmly closed--the image of a person rejoicing in combat and prepared for victory or death, but never for surrender.

"I do not know," replied Sophie, affecting a calmness which she did not possess; "I only know that I for my part could never be placed in such a position. I could never hate brother or sister, much less father or mother who gave me life, happen what would. Are they not--myself? And how can one hate one's own self?"

"Are you quite so sure of that?" answered Helen. "How do you know it? You never had brother or sister; your mother died very early; your father has, as you told me yourself, always overwhelmed you with unbounded affection; but I--I have other----"

Helen probably felt that if she added another word she would not be able to keep up her reserve hereafter, and broke off with a suddenness which showed the remarkable control this young creature had already obtained over herself.

"But we are losing time," she said, with a totally changed air, tone, and carriage, "and about most unprofitable things. Come, we must hurry to get back to our music!"

It was not the first time that Helen had thus suddenly given a new turn to a conversation that threatened to become too intimate. Sophie had to submit to it, although she was pained by this want of confidence, and especially as she felt how Helen was entirely left alone, and what a blessing it would have been to her to be able to pour out her overburdened heart into the sympathizing bosom of a true friend. She did not feel offended, therefore, by Helen's haughty reserve; on the contrary, she was more than ever resolved rather to make her way slowly and stealthily into Helen's confidence, than to return pride for pride and reticence for reticence.

There was to be more than one occasion offered her to-day.

They had been playing and singing at Sophie's house, almost without interruption, until it began to grow dark in the large room, which was in the lower story. They paused because they could not see very well any longer, and were walking up and down in the room, arm in arm, while the effect of the music was still vibrating in their hearts, and even Helen's proud heart felt milder and softer. She had been forcibly reminded of the death of her favorite by one of Robert Schumann's beautiful songs, which filled her with sweet pain. The sad, mournful words, with the sad, plaintive melody, continued in her ear--

"Thy face, alas! so fair and dear,
I saw it in my dreams quite near;
It was so angel-like, so sweet,
And yet with pain and grief replete.
The lips alone, they are still red,
But soon they also will be pale and dead."

She thought of the night when Baron Oldenburg had led her from the midst of the dancers to Bruno's dying bed; she saw again how at her entrance the boy's eye flamed up in his deadly-pale face.

"The lips alone, they are still red,
But soon they also will be pale and dead,"

she murmured, as if she were speaking to herself.

"This song seems to have made as great an impression upon you as upon Doctor Stein," said Sophie.

"Upon whom?" cried Helen, suddenly aroused from her dreams.

"Upon Doctor Stein! your Doctor Stein!" replied Sophie, as indifferently as if she had never given a thought to the relations which might possibly exist between Oswald and Helen.

"When did you see him?" asked Helen again, in her ordinary calmly-grand manner.

"Last night, here; for the first time. He had been two days in town without having seen Franz. Yesterday Franz met him accidentally in the street, and brought him home with him. Otherwise we should probably have had to wait a long time for his visit."

"How so?"

"Well, it did not look as if the visit gave him particular pleasure. Still I can hardly judge of that fairly, as yesterday was the first time I ever saw him. But to tell the truth, he looked to me as if nothing in the world was likely to give him much pleasure. Franz says it is not so at all, but he admitted that Mr. Stein had changed remarkably in the short time during which they had not seen each other. How was he when you knew him?"

Sophie thought she felt that Helen's heart was beating higher, as she asked this very harmless question. Yet she did not show any excitement in her voice, as she answered:

"I have seldom seen Mr. Stein except in company and, you know, there we have very little opportunity to see men as they really are. He looked to me generally very grave, almost sad, reserved, and silent, especially during the last weeks. But the state of things in my family at that time was such as to produce very naturally such an effect. How was he yesterday?"

"That is difficult to say for one who is as little of a psychologist as I am," replied Sophie, determined to tell the truth, even if it should hurt Helen. "He looked to me gay, almost exuberant, but not cheerful; talkative, but not communicative; witty, but not entertaining; in one word, a combination of striking contrasts, which produced a very painful impression on me, because I love, above all, what is clear, easily intelligible and simple. I was especially shocked at the manner in which he spoke about his position here and his vocation in life. He seemed to look upon everything as mere play. He gave us a sketch of a party to which he had been invited at Mr. Clemens's house, and poured a perfect flood of irony and sarcasm on the poor people. He described his solemn installation at the college, which had taken place that morning, and represented the whole as a scene in a puppet-show. Franz tells me he has something of Doctor Faust in his nature; to me he looked rather like Mephistopheles. Nor did I think him so very handsome, as Franz had represented him. He looked pale and haggard, as if he were sick, or had not slept for several nights. His large eyes had an expression weird and ghost-like. I had all the time to think of the lines: 'It is written on his brow, that he can make no vow of faithful love'--or however the verse may be."

"Then he must indeed have changed very much," said Helen.

The tone in which the young girl said these words was so very sad, that Sophie regretted having been carried away by the secret antipathy she felt in her heart against Stein, and perhaps still more by a desire to provoke Helen by violent contradiction, and thus to punish her for her reserve.

"Still," she said, to soothe the wound; "still, this is not to be my final judgment about Doctor Stein; it is nothing but a first impression. I shall probably think differently about him when I see him more frequently. Franz is so very fond of him, and, you know, we girls when we are engaged are apt to be jealous. But I just remember, he may be here every moment!" she cried, interrupting herself.

"Who?" said Helen, "Oswald?"

"I had really quite forgotten it. Thoughtless girl that I am!"

"What is it?"

"Stein and Franz had agreed to hear a lecture by Professor Benseler together. And Franz went directly after dinner to see a patient of father's in the country. I was to have sent word to Stein. I

wonder if it is time yet?"

"It is half-past five now," said Helen, stepping to the window to look at her watch. "It is almost dark and I must make haste to get home."

At that moment there came a knock at the door.

"There he is!" cried the two young ladies *unisono*, trembling like a couple of deer when a shot is fired in the wood.

Another knock.

"What shall we do?" whispered Helen, who seemed to have lost all her self-control.

"Of course we must say: 'Walk in!' What else can we do?" replied Sophie, laughing involuntarily. "Walk in!"

The person who entered was probably unable to recognize the ladies in the half-dark room; he remained standing near the door, as if he hesitated.

"Come nearer, doctor," said Sophie, holding Helen's hands. "I must ask your pardon for receiving you in the dark; but we will have light directly."

Oswald had approached her as she said these words, and had bowed to the ladies. Evidently he had not yet recognized Helen, who stood aside, looking towards the window.

"I have to ask pardon," he said, "for I fear I have interrupted the ladies. But as I found nobody in the hall----"

Suddenly he stopped; the blood rushed to his heart. He shuddered all over. Was not the silent figure by Miss Roban, Helen? He approached a little nearer. There was no doubt; that head whose outline he had so often admired almost reverently, could belong to no one but Helen ... He hardly heard Sophie say "You do not recognize Fräulein von Grenwitz; I will go myself to order lights." He heard the door close behind Miss Roban; he only knew that he was alone with her. He knelt down before her and seized her hand to cover it with burning kisses.

The surprise and the darkness favored Oswald's boldness. Helen trembled so violently that she could not prevent him; she had barely strength enough to say:

"For God's sake, Oswald, get up! I pray you, get up!"

It was high time, for at that moment Sophie returned, followed by a servant who brought a lamp.

Oswald succeeded in checking his emotion. Helen turned to the window, under the pretext that the sudden light was dazzling her eyes, and looked down upon the street, while Sophie explained Franz's absence.

"Then I will not deprive the ladies for another moment of the enjoyment of a friendly chat," said Oswald, bowing to take leave.

"Why, Doctor," said Sophie, gayly, "are you such a foe to friendly chats that your presence must need make an end to them? You ought rather to sit down and do credit to Franz, who calls you the most entertaining companion he knows. Come, Helen, take a seat here by the fire-place. Miss Mal will not cry too bitterly if you stay a little longer."

Oswald had just been about to accept the offered seat; but when he heard that Helen possibly might not stay, he contented himself with a silent bow, to acknowledge Sophie's invitation.

"Thanks, dear Sophie," said Helen, turning round from the window, "but I must really go--another time."

She had apparently regained her usual calmness; only a very acute observer might have noticed in the deeper red of her cheeks the last trace of past emotion, and in her cast-down eyes the desire to conceal the latter from observation.

Oswald, who was looking around for the means to retain Helen a few moments longer, saw the piano open, and music lying upon the desk. He took up the first piece he found; it was Robert Schumann's composition.

"Oh pray, pray, Miss Helen," he said, "if you have a minute to spare, sing this song. It deserves to be sung by you!"

"We have just sung it over," said Sophie; "it is really very fine, and Fräulein von Grenwitz sings it beautifully. Will you sing it, dear Helen?"

If there was a question of music, no one was more eager than Sophie. Taking Helen's consent, therefore, for granted, she had placed the music on the stand, taken her seat on the edge of the

piano-stool, as she liked to do, and was looking expectingly at Helen, while she played a few bars of a prelude.

Thus Helen saw herself forced to lay aside her hat, which she was already holding in her hand, and to step up to the piano, although she felt at that moment little disposed to sing, since her young, full heart was still trembling under the effect of the passionate scene which had just taken place.

Oswald stood a few steps off, leaning with folded arms against the mantelpiece, his eyes fixed immovably on the two slender forms. And, indeed, the sight was such as to arrest his attention; a more charming one could hardly have been found.

One might have doubted at that moment which of the two was--not the more beautiful, for Helen was indisputably the fairer--but the more interesting. The harmony of most lovely features, the velvety softness of a dark complexion, and the bluish blackness of her rich hair--all this spoke in favor of Helen, and seemed to raise her to inapproachable heights of beauty; but the expression in Sophie's face as she sat there, given up to her music, now bending over the keys, and coaxing out, as it were, the soft notes, and now looking up as if she was following the escaping sounds in the air, would have been ample compensation for him who finds the greatest beauty in the most spiritual expression. As a favorable glance of sunlight may often pour over a landscape, which has no charms of its own, a marvellous beauty, so the noble, art-loving soul of the girl lighted up and made brilliant her face, which was far from being really beautiful. There was something of Beethoven's nature in it--the meteoric light which the freed spirit of man casts through the vast night of sensuality into the unbounded regions of eternal brightness. And, strangely enough, in the same measure in which music heightened the expression in Sophie's face, it softened the harshness in Helen's energetic beauty, by giving her proud features a mildness which they never showed in ordinary life. The harmony of sweet notes awakened there the slumbering genius, and put here the demon of pride and ambition to sleep, so that the poetic excitement benefitted both, though in quite opposite ways.

So it seemed to Oswald, while his eyes rested on the charming picture of the two girls at the piano. Helen seemed to him almost a stranger; he had to become once more familiar with her beauty; and yet, it did not make the same overwhelming impression upon him as before. He ascribed this partly to the unaccustomed surroundings, partly to the attractive form of Sophie, which interrupted him in his devotion. He did not know that since he had seen Helen last, the mirror of his soul had become dim, and was no longer able to reflect a pure image purely. In vain he tried to catch a glance from Helen. If Sophie was so entirely given up to her music that she had really forgotten his presence, Helen seemed at least to be in the same state of mind. She did not raise her eyes from the music. Oswald rejoiced at it. He concluded from it that his stormy greeting was, if not forgiven, still also not yet forgotten.

They had drifted, as is apt to happen in such cases, from one song into a second, and from that into a third and fourth. But suddenly Helen declared she must go home now. Oswald, who thought that of course a servant from the institute was waiting outside, was just considering how he should manage to ask her permission to see her home, when Sophie's question: "but you cannot go home alone?" relieved him of his trouble. What was more natural than that he should make his bow and politely offer his arm to Fräulein von Grenwitz, and that Fräulein von Grenwitz should accept it with a haughty bend of her head!

Sophie was just buttoning the young lady's velvet cloak, and tying a white fichu around her neck, "that your voice may not come to harm, Helen!" and Oswald was standing, hat in hand, by her side, when the door opened, before any one had heard a knock, and in walked Mr. Bemperlein.

Oswald, who was standing with his back to the door, only became aware of Bemperlein's presence when he heard Sophie's greeting: "How do you do, Bemperly?" and turned round to see the new comer. At the same moment Bemperlein recognized Oswald.

They had not seen each other since that night in which Bemperlein had come to carry Melitta to Fichtenau and surprised the lovers in the park. They had then parted in cordial friendship; and now, after so many weeks, when they saw each other again, neither offered his hand to the other, neither greeted the other with a smile, nor with a hearty word of kindness. Their whole welcome consisted in a formal bow and a few indifferent phrases, so that Sophie, who had thought Oswald and Bemperlein were intimate friends, was not a little surprised and did not exactly know what she ought to do in such an unforeseen case. However, the embarrassing situation was not to last long; for Sophie had scarcely introduced Mr. Bemperlein to Fräulein von Grenwitz who either did not recollect the tutor, whom she yet had often enough seen at Berkow, or did not choose to acknowledge it in words--when Helen and Oswald left the room. Sophie went as far as the door with them, while Bemperlein remained standing near the fire-place, his hands on his back, and his eyes rigidly fixed upon the ground.

It was almost night when Helen and Oswald found themselves in the ill-lighted street.

"What way shall we go?" asked Oswald.

"I thought there was but one way?"

"Oh no! we might go the way by the ramparts. It is nearer and more pleasant walking there than on the rough pavement."

"As you like it!"

"Will you take my arm now?"

It was the first time Oswald had had an opportunity to take Helen's arm. He took pains not to shorten the pleasure of walking arm in arm with the girl he loved through the dark night. The way he had proposed was not only much longer, but also much darker. It led between the walls of the city and the ramparts of the fortress--a pleasant walk in summer and by day, but very unattractive on a dark autumn evening.

"It is darker than I thought," said Oswald, when they had left the damp gate in the city wall, where the last lamp was burning, and had reached the ramparts; "had we better turn back?"

"Not on my account; I like it quite well so."

"At least, please wrap yourself up well in your cloak; the wind is blowing very keen from the sea, and the air is damp and cold."

They went on for a few moments in silence. The dry leaves of the trees, with which the walk was covered, rustled under their feet; plaintive sounds were heard in the air; it sounded like the groaning and sighing of a shivering patient.

"How must it look now in the Grenwitz park?" asked Oswald.

"I was just thinking of it," replied Helen.

"I wish I could be there at this moment!"

"What would you do there?"

"I would saunter through the familiar walks, between the yew-hedges in the garden below, and under the beech-trees on the wall above, and talk with the slender crescent of the moon, as it dances in the clouds, and with the night-wind as it blows through the branches and around the castle, of the blissful hours that are no more, and can return no more."

"Then you like to think of Grenwitz."

"Why should I not? Have I not spent the happiest days of all my joyless life there? What do I care now for all the bitter drops that fell into the cup of intoxicating sweetness? I know nothing more of them. I feel as if I had lived then for the first and last time of my life, and as if I had since died together with the flowers in the garden and with the sunlight that was playing in the morning on the dewy branches and scattering strange shadows on the paths. Happy he whose life really came to an end with that precious summer."

"Happy indeed!" whispered Helen.

"Yes, happy! He enjoyed for an hour the sight of what was most beautiful, most glorious to him, and then he passed away like the rosy breath of morning in the rays of the much-beloved sun. He was relieved of the burden of the oppressive heat and the stifling dust of noon. He needed not cover himself shuddering against the sharp evening wind; he did not see the beautiful, gay world sink into weird darkness. Pardon me, I pray, Miss Helen; this is the second time to-night I am carried away by the recollection of my departed darling. But I cannot tell you how strangely the sight of you and your presence recalls to me his memory. The scarred wounds bleed afresh, and the dry eyes begin to weep once more."

"Is it not so with me too?" said Helen, and her voice trembled.

"Then you loved him too? But no, I did not mean to ask you that. How could you help loving him--fair and brave, good and marvellously lovely as he was, and when he loved you so! loved you inexpressibly! Oh, Miss Helen, do you really know how dearly he loved you? Do you know that he loved you unto death--that he loved you more than his own life?"

"I know it," said Helen, in a whisper.

"More than his life," continued Oswald, passionately; "beyond death. It was on his last day, a few hours before his death, that he showed me a medallion with a lock of your hair, which he wore in his bosom, and begged me to place it in his grave by his side. I was not able to fulfil his wish. You know that I left the castle the next morning, not knowing whether I should ever put my foot inside again, whether I should be allowed to watch over my departed darling till his last moment. I could not bear the terrible thought that the precious jewel might fall into profane hands; I took it therefore, with the intention to hand it to you, who alone have a legitimate claim to it. I still have it in my keeping. When do you desire me to send it to you?"

They had passed through the gate of the fortress, and were now walking down a street in the suburb, beneath tall, whispering poplar-trees. Oswald tried to read Helen's face by the uncertain

light of the moon, which was just peeping out from behind drifting clouds. She looked pale and deeply moved. Her arm rested more firmly on his arm, when she replied, after a pause,

"Is the medallion very dear to you?"

"Can you ask me?"

"No, no! do not misunderstand me; I am not insensible; not ungrateful for love and friendship. Keep the medallion! Keep it in memory of your--of our darling!"

"Only in memory of him? It is your hair, Miss Helen; and only in memory of him?"

"And--of me!"

Oswald took the small hand which was resting on his arm and carried it to his lips.

"You make me very proud and happy," he said. "I have done nothing to deserve so great a favor; but then, on the other hand, would grace be grace if it could be deserved?"

"You are overwhelming me with your modesty. You wish me to thank you for all your kindness, as I ought to thank you, and yet am not able to do. You have always been very kind to me; you stood by me when even my nearest relatives rose against me, and at the very last---"

"I did nothing but what I would do again at the peril of my life. But here we are at Miss Bear's house. Is the gate locked?"

"No."

They went through the small garden up to the house-door. Oswald rang the bell.

"Shall I see you again?"

"I go often to Doctor Rohan's!"

The door was unlocked from within.

"Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

Oswald seized Helen's hand and pressed it passionately to his lips.

The door opened.

"Till next time!" whispered Oswald.

"Till next time!" replied Helen, in a still lower tone. Oswald thought she mentioned his name also. The next instant she had disappeared in the house.

Oswald went back into the town in a state of excitement which was by no means altogether joyous. Pure, chaste joy could no longer enter his heart--as little as we are able to play a correct air upon an instrument out of tune.

Thus he reached town. Where Market street opens upon the square all the windows were brilliantly lighted up in the corner house, carriage after carriage drove up to the door, dressed-up ladies and gentlemen stepped out and disappeared under the lofty portal. When Oswald, walking close to the house, had come immediately in front of the door, another carriage was driving up. The driver checked the fiery horses too violently, and the servant, who was just jumping down from the box, was thrown violently upon the ground. He gathered himself up immediately, but the pain was probably too great--he remained immovable, as if stunned. Oswald, who had seen that there was only a lady in the coupé, who had already risen, expecting the door to be opened, seized the bolt, opened the door, and offered his hand to the lady, who, placing her hand in the well-fitting white glove unsuspectingly upon his arm, came down in a cloud of tulle and laces.

At that moment the light from the interior of the house fell brightly upon the lady and Oswald, and the former uttered a cry, remaining motionless, and staring at Oswald with wide, open eyes.

A deep blush overspread her face, her eyes flamed up--was it love or was it hatred, who knows? Her lips trembled; evidently she had been overcome with surprise.

The poor servant, who came limping up, hat in hand, broke the charm.

"Pardon me, my lady----"

Oswald's face showed an ironical smile.

"I congratulate you, *my lady*," he said, offering his hand to escort her up the steps.

Oswald felt the slender fingers grasping his arm very firmly.

"Was it not your will?" she whispered. And now he knew that the great gray eyes had flamed up with love, and not with hatred. "Many thanks! Let me see you soon. I promise you Cloten will receive you well!"

They had reached the last step.

Oswald bowed.

"Then I shall see you again?"

"I will come!"

The young lady entered the house. Oswald went down the steps, past the lame servant, who was still rubbing his knees, and looked wonderingly at his improvised colleague.

Oswald laughed aloud as he went on: "Emily Breesen--Frau von Cloten! And merely because I would have it so! And if I should not wish it to be so any longer--what then?"

CHAPTER II.

During the next eight days the last crows had come to town from the woods, and moved into their winter quarters in the steeples; likewise, it was reported in well-informed circles, that of the noble families who used to spend their winter in Grunwald not one of importance had remained in the country. The increased animation which filled the otherwise quiet streets, proved this sufficiently. At the theatre, the front boxes, which were exclusively reserved for the nobility, now overflowed every night. The good citizens of Grunwald were often frightened out of their first sleep by the noise of furiously-driven carriages, and twelve hours afterwards the same carriages came thundering back again through the streets, when the disturbers of their nightly rest had slept long enough, and felt an irrepressible desire to see each other again after so long an interval, and to exchange their views about the interesting events of the last ball--how often young Count Grieben had danced with the youngest Miss Nadelitz, and what a strange head-dress the Baroness Renrien had worn.

Last night there had been a great ball at Count Grieben's; and to-morrow was to be a great party at the Grenwitz mansion, the first they had given this season. As the local etiquette required that the invited guests should call on their host before the party, as well as after it, visits had to be paid to-day at both houses. The rolling of carriages had, therefore, no end to-day.

When visitors were expected in larger numbers, the large reception-rooms of the Grenwitz mansion, which fronted upon the street, laid aside their reserve and opened their doors to all comers. So it was to-day. A dozen visitors had been there; another dozen were expected. Just now there was a pause. It so happened that only the baron and the baroness were sitting in the parlor.

Any one who should have observed them just now, as they were escorting Mrs. Nadelitz and her three daughters with smiles and compliments to the parlor door, and who should have seen them after the door had been closed, would have been greatly astonished at their altered appearance. The old gentleman sank with an air of thorough weariness into his easy-chair, and Anna Maria sat down opposite to him on a sofa, with a face from which all smiles had vanished to give way to clouds of deepest indignation. There had evidently been a scene between the two before the last visitors came, such as is not unusual in regular family dramas, and the question was now, simply, which of the two was to resume first the interrupted dialogue.

In former days this would have evidently been the privilege of Anna Maria, who enjoyed strife, and felt sure of victory. But strangely enough, husband and wife seemed recently to have exchanged parts. The baron was almost transformed since Bruno's death and Helen's departure from home. Formerly good-natured, yielding, and peaceful, he had become sensitive, grumbling, and obstinate. This change might have been in part the effect of his bad state of health and his decline, which had become very perceptible in the last weeks; but sometimes it looked as if the cause was a deeper one--as if the recent events had roused the old gentleman from his lethargy, and shown him many things and many persons in a very different light from that in which he had seen them before. He who had formerly hardly taken a glass of water without first consulting his Anna Maria, suddenly began to act for himself, even to think for himself, and to have positive views of his own, which he maintained with that obstinacy and pertinacity which is often observed in weak minds. He had had attacks of this obstinacy in former years also, but now the sporadic occurrences seemed to have changed into a chronic disease. People are apt to say of somebody who acts in an extraordinary manner, "he won't live long;" and if there is any reason

for this assertion, the days of the baron must have been numbered. Perhaps this was really so, and the baron suspected it secretly, so that he made unheard-of efforts of his mind and his will, exactly as old, very sedate canary-birds are apt to hop about and to flutter with nervous violence a few minutes before composing themselves to sleep.

Such a nervous violence characterized the manner in which the old gentleman, taking a pinch from his gold snuff-box, closed the top, and then said, as if Anna Maria had given him the cue just then, and not half an hour ago:

"Stay! Everything must have an end; we cannot leave Helen forever at Miss Bear's."

"I am not accustomed," replied Anna Maria, taking up her embroidery--she liked to be found busy at work when visitors came--"I am not accustomed to say one thing to-day and another thing to-morrow. Others may think differently about it. We would make ourselves ridiculous before the whole world if we were to take Helen back after four weeks."

"It is nearly six weeks," growled the baron.

"Four or six, that makes no difference."

"It does for me. I am an old man; I may die to-morrow."

"You have said so these ten years."

"If I have said so for ten years," replied the baron, deeply offended by the indifference which lay in the words of his wife, "it is because I have not had a well day for ten years; and one of these days the morning will break when I am no more, and that is why I should like to have my daughter near me again as soon as possible."

"And of your son you say nothing; you do not mind whether Malte is well or unwell. And yet it is Malte in whom all our hopes are centring. You ought to thank God that you have a son who can inherit the estate; instead of that it is Helen, and all the time Helen, whom you consider as all-important."

"I thank God that I have a son, and I thank you that you have given me a son; not because he is my heir, but because he is my flesh and blood, whom I can love, as I love my daughter also. As to the estate, you know my views about that. I abhor entails, which only serve to create discord in the family."

The baron took a pinch, evidently in order to becalm; but the remedy seemed this time to have the opposite effect, for he continued, after this interruption, with increasing violence:

"Why did you absolutely want to marry your daughter to Felix? Because Felix may possibly one of these days inherit the entail! Why is Felix your special protégé? Because he may possibly inherit the entail! Why must O have Felix in my house, whom I cannot bear, and do without Helen, whom I love? Because Felix may inherit the entail?"

"Don't repeat yourself so often, dear Grenwitz," said Anna Maria in a quiet tone, which did not harmonize at all with the deep-red spots on her cheeks and the piercing sharpness of her large gray eyes, "and do not excite yourself unnecessarily so much, your cough will return directly. It matters very little how you think about entailed estates. You cannot change them, God be thanked. But as for me, you must permit me to think differently about it, and to do in that direction what I think is my duty. If, you have no duties to fulfil to your children, I have. If you are willing to give your daughter to the first adventurer who wants her, or whom she wants--you need not stamp impatiently with your sick foot; and you will spill the snuff on the carpet if you knock your box so violently on the arm of the chair. I say, if it is indifferent to you whom Helen marries, it is not so to me. I have advocated the marriage with Felix, not from obstinacy, which I leave to others, but because I thought it was a good match, the best which a girl without fortune could make. You can see how little obstinate I am when you consider that I am no longer in favor of the match since Felix's accident, since the doctor thinks he is consumptive. On the contrary, as soon as it is well ascertained that Felix wont live long, I shall be one of the first to drop him, especially as he will leave nothing but debts."

The old gentleman seemed to be by no means pleased with this exhibition of cold-blooded egotism. He had a kind of dim perception--not the first of its kind--that his highly moral wife might possibly have a very bad heart, and he sighed. It is bitter to have to give up in the evening of life an illusion which we have indulged in for a quarter of a century.

He fell into silent meditation. What it was that had occupied his thoughts, he showed in the first words that fell from him. After a pause, during which Anna Maria had been busy at her work, in nervous silence;

"At least, be kind to her to-morrow when she comes to see us."

"I have always known what my duty is," replied the baroness, looking up from her work and raising her eyebrows. "I shall know it in this case also."

The baron apparently did not feel quite reassured by her words; but before he could find words to express his apprehension, the servant opened the door and announced, "Baron and Baroness Barnewitz."

The two entered the room.

Baron Barnewitz and his wife had only come to town the day before. Baron Barnewitz was a great hunter before the Lord, and did not like to leave his dogs and his horses. He had not come much into the parlor since the hunting season had opened, and he still bore the traces of his last fox-hunt. His shoulders and his red beard looked still broader, and his voice was louder and hoarser than usual. Hortense Barnewitz, on the contrary, was a shade paler and lighter than in the summer, and looked a great deal more wearied and fatigued. Her lips were thinner, and her blue eyes had become sharper. She evidently began to find life, all in all, unprofitable, especially since last night. She had been sadly neglected at the ball for the sake of younger and more attractive ladies.

"Oh, at last we have the pleasure!" said Anna Maria, rising to meet her guests, with the stereotyped gracious smile which she always held ready for such occasions.

"Entirely our own pleasure, madame," cried the fox-hunter, kissing the thin hand of the baroness; "entirely our own. By God, could not come sooner. Arrived yesterday at noon; last night at Grieben's. Pity you were not there; famous, I tell you; had almost as much fun as at the last hunt. My wife was tired; had no encouragement. People are always tired when no encouragement. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You must pardon Karl's way of talking," said Hortense, taking a seat by the baroness on the sofa; "he has lived the last six weeks almost exclusively with grooms and huntsmen."

"And with you, my darling! ha, ha, ha!" laughed the gallant husband. "Well, Hortense needn't take it amiss. Husbands, wife, can afford a joke, eh?"

"How do things look at home?" asked Anna Maria, trying to give a more interesting turn to the conversation.

"Oh, so so!" said Baron Barnewitz. "The winter wheat is generally doing very well; here and there the mice have done some harm. The summer was too hot. I think the rain will do us some good now. *Apropos* of rain, Grenwitz! we must settle that question about the ditches, else we shall all of us be drowned one of these days. I talked about it to Oldenburg, a few days ago. He belongs to our district, with his estate at Cona. He thought, too, the thing would have to be done this fall."

"Why, does the baron nowadays take an interest in farming? That is something entirely new," said Anna Maria.

"Entirely new, madame," affirmed Baron Barnewitz; "the very last news, ha, ha, ha! since his return from his travels; that is to say, about a fortnight. I think he will be crazy next."

"Or marry your cousin Melitta," said the baroness, smiling.

"Perhaps that would be the same thing," suggested Hortense.

"But, dear Hortense, you ought not to be so satirical," said the baroness, threatening the satirical blonde with her uplifted finger jestingly.

"Are jealous; you are jealous!" cried Baron Barnewitz. "You have always envied her her beaux, because she has one for every finger."

"It is a great art to be attended by gentlemen, if one leaves no means of coquetry unused," said Hortense, dropping her cloak far enough to show her white shoulders.

"Well, it is not quite as bad as that," replied her husband.

Hortense shrugged her white shoulders.

"Bad is a relative idea. Melitta has given so much ground for gossip in her life that people are not so very strict with her."

"But that might be the case with Baron Oldenburg too," said Anna Maria.

"Possibly," said Hortense. "I do not know Baron Oldenburg well enough----"

The fox-hunter saw himself compelled to pull out his handkerchief, and to blow his nose furiously.

"Not well enough," repeated Hortense, who probably discovered some connection between her words and the violent blowing of her husband's nose; "but, if he can get over Melitta's last affair, he must, indeed, be very tolerant."

"Last affair!" said moral Anna Maria, raising her eyebrows; "why, I had not heard of anything!"

"Gossip, madame, gossip!" said Barnewitz, who remembered that Melitta was his first cousin, and that he had, as a boy of seventeen, worshipped the beautiful girl of twelve. "Nothing but the gossip of a set of old women."

"Old women often have very useful, sharp eyes," remarked Hortense, examining attentively the stucco ornaments of the ceiling.

"You make me very curious," said Anna Maria, sitting down comfortably in the sofa-corner.

"It is nonsense, madame, I assure you," said Barnewitz, angrily. "A couple of old women from our village, who were stealing wood at night in the Berkow forest--at least I cannot see how else they could have been there--say that Melitta has had secret interviews in her little forest cottage with--Heaven knows whom!"

"Why, that is quite a piquant story," said Anna Maria.

"Yes; and what makes it still more piquant," said Hortense, her eyes still busy at the ceiling, "is this: that the Heaven knows who always came by the road from Grenwitz, and always went back again the same way!"

Anna Maria's eyes opened as wide as they possibly could when she heard this statement.

"When is that reported to have taken place?" she asked, with severity, "I will not hope----"

"Oh, do not trouble yourself about it," interrupted Hortense; "Felix came much later. It was about the time when we gave our first ball, and Oldenburg, who was assigning the guests their seats at table with Karl, made my cousin go to table with Doctor Stein, and carried him afterwards home in his own carriage. It was a touching attention, though not without its comical side in this case; as well as the warmth with which Oldenburg afterwards took Mr. Stein's part when your nephew, Felix, had that unpleasant affair with him. Oh, it is too amusing! But nobody can accuse my cousin that she does not know how to make friends of her friends."

The old baron had listened to this interesting conversation in perfect silence, and apparently with utter indifference. All the more surprising was the vehemence with which he now said, shaking his gray head indignantly,

"Frau von Berkow is a dear lady, whom I esteem; Baron Oldenburg is a man of honor; I have always known him as such, and have had quite recently occasion to see it again in some very important business I had with him. I am sorry, my friends, to hear you speak of them in this hard and unfeeling manner--very sorry! very sorry!"

And the old man trembled so violently with deep emotion that he could hardly carry the pinch he held between his fingers to his nose.

Baron Barnewitz nodded his head, as if he wished to say: The old gentleman is not so far out. But Hortense was not in the humor to accept the correction patiently.

"Don't trouble yourself about that, my dear baron," she replied scornfully; "you know that the name of this Mr. Stein has elsewhere also obtained quite a celebrity in the annals of the past summer. The more frequently it is, therefore, coupled with my cousin, why, all the more rarely can it be put in connection with the names of other ladies."

It was fortunate for the old gentleman that he did not understand this allusion to Helen, since it had never occurred to him in the most remote way that his daughter could have been the cause of the duel between Felix and Oswald.

In the meantime Hortense seemed to feel that she had probably gone too far. She hastened, therefore, to say that it was quite late already, and she was just about to rise in order to take leave when more visitors were announced, which compelled her to stay. No one was to say of Hortense Barnewitz that she had fled before a rival. But such a rival was, in more than one respect, Emily Cloten, who now rushed in ahead of her husband.

Emily had been married a fortnight. She had preferred not to make any other wedding tour than from the estate of her parents, where the wedding had taken place, to Grunwald. She did not wish to miss the beginning of the season. She longed to appear at once on the stage of her future triumphs, in order to prevent any possible competition. Emily Breesen did not wish to become Frau von Cloten for nothing--the wife of a man to whom she had engaged herself in a fit of jealousy--whom she had married from pure caprice.

The success which she had obtained at the first balls of the season fulfilled her boldest expectations. She saw all the men at her feet, and the consciousness of the power of her charms furnished an excellent relief for her coquettish beauties. The certainty of victory beamed from her large, almond-shaped gray eyes; the certainty of victory played around her rather large but well-shaped mouth, with its dazzling white teeth; the certainty of victory peeped stealthily from the dimples in her rosy cheeks; the certainty of victory even proclaimed itself in the rustling of

her long silk dresses and the nodding of the white ostrich-feather on her black-velvet hat, from under which the luxuriant brown hair overflowed in all directions.

Baron Cloten, on his side, seemed to have found out that the sublime good fortune of being the husband of so brilliant a lady was somewhat equivocal. There was around his eyes a faint expression like that of a turkey-hen who has for weeks been dreaming and boasting of the hoped-for happiness to promenade in the poultry-yard at the head of a number of young, respectable turkeys, and who suddenly sees her brood swim on the pond in the shape of wild, disrespectful ducklings. Those who had known him before could not help noticing that he twisted his blond moustache less frequently, and that his voice sounded by no means as self-complacent as formerly. Perhaps he was all the more disconcerted as he had unexpectedly and without any desire of his own met his lady-love, whom he had faithlessly and somewhat cowardly abandoned; while on the other hand, this very circumstance seemed visibly to increase the good humor of his young wife. She had the pleasing consciousness of having totally eclipsed Hortense last night, and she now enjoyed the sight of her rival most heartily. Of course she greeted her with all the signs of most cordial friendship, and asked her with deep sympathy whether the night's rest had relieved her of her headache of last night.

"What a pity, dear Barnewitz, that your migraine compelled you to leave before the cotillon. I assure you, it was the most lovely cotillon I have ever danced. Prince Waldenberg--you know I led the cotillon with Prince Waldenberg; Max Grieben had begged us to do so--knew a number of the newest figures, as they dance them at the court balls in Berlin. I tell you such a cotillon was never danced yet in Grunwald. Was it not charming, Arthur?"

"Oh certainly, certainly?" rattled the obedient husband, who had been condemned to dance with a poor, hunchbacked countess; "I assure you, it was divine; upon my word, divine!"

"I thought the company, to tell the truth, was rather mixed," said Hortense, who looked a few degrees more *blasée* since Emily had come; "I counted not less than four--say four--artillery officers who were not noble."

"Why, that is very likely," said Emily, "although I had no time to count them. I have even danced with one of them--Jones, or Smith, or whatever his name was--and, by the way, he waltzed as magnificently as I could wish."

"But, dear Emily, might you not have escaped that?" said Hortense, drawing up her cloak.

"Precisely the same question which Prince Waldenberg asked. 'Your Highness,' I replied, 'I am no enthusiast about the artillery; but, after all, I would rather dance with a man who is not noble than not to dance at all.'"

This allusion to a misfortune which had twice occurred to Hortense last night, put the poor lady in such an excited state that the rouge on her cheeks became quite useless. She was just about to commit the folly of betraying by a violent answer how deep the venomous arrow shot by Emily had wounded her, when the servant announced "Professor and Mrs. Jager."

The man was so well trained that he did not, as usually, admit the persons he announced at once into the parlor, but closed the door behind him and remained standing there bolt upright, waiting for further orders.

"You will excuse me, my friends," said Anna Maria, apologizing, and turning to the company present, "if I receive the professor and his wife. The good people have always shown themselves loyal, and quite aware of their social position. I think it is our duty to encourage such people."

Upon a sign of his mistress the servant went out, and there appeared the man of the Fragment and the poetess making deep bows and courtesies, which were returned with a gentle nod by the noble company. Only the old baron rose, shook hands with them, and bade them welcome in his cordial, unvarnished manner.

If Primula, who looked somewhat shyly from under the cornflowers on her bonnet, seemed to stand rather in need of some such encouragement, the editor of Chrysophilos evidently could very well do without it. Humility, it is true, spoke from his small eyes, which squinted suspiciously above the golden rim of his spectacles as he approached with bent back; modesty, it is true, smiled from the unpleasant lines which, marked the large mouth with its low-drawn comers; but they were the humility and the modesty of a cat rubbing her back against the foot of the ladder which leads to the garret where the fat pigeons are cooing. He went up to the baroness, kissed repeatedly her graciously-extended hand, bowed low to the other two ladies, not quite so low to the gentlemen, seated himself after some hesitation on the edge of a chair which stood rather outside of the circle, and waited, his head slightly on one side, till somebody should feel disposed to honor him with a question.

The conversation of the company turned on a most interesting subject, the person of his Highness, First Lieutenant Prince Waldenberg, who had been ordered a few weeks ago from his regiment of the Guards at the Capital to the line regiment which was in garrison at Grunwald, and who had of course, from his first appearance, become, the lion of the whole country nobility now residing in town.

"Only I should like to know why he has been ordered here," said Cloten. "Felix, with whom I talked it over yesterday--*apropos*, it is very well, madame, you make him keep his room; he looks really very badly--Felix thinks the prince has probably had another duel; they say he is the most passionate man in the world."

"Why, Arthur!" said Emily. "You talk as if passion were a crime. I wish some people I know had a little more of it."

"Are not the Waldenbergs of Slavonic descent?" asked Hortense. "It seems to me the prince looks like a Mongolian."

"Oh! you have not seen him near, my dearest Barnewitz," said Emily; "he is one of the handsomest men I have ever seen, and he dances divinely."

"I believe the Waldenbergs are originally a Polish family," said Anna Maria.

"Not at all, madame," cried Cloten; "pure Germanic, upon honor, pure Germanic."

"I am sure Professor Jager can tell us something more about that," said the baroness, turning with a gracious smile towards the man of science.

"Indeed, my gracious lady," said the latter, glad to have found an opportunity for the display of his knowledge; "indeed, I have always taken special pleasure, while pursuing my historical studies, to trace out the genealogies of noble families, and thus it happens that have given special attention to the history of the Waldenberg family, which is in many respects a most interesting one. The Waldenbergs were, if you will excuse me for correcting your remarks, of purely German descent. They came originally from Franconia, and only went to Prussia with the German knights. Afterwards, it is true, they have largely intermarried with noble Polish families, and hence they own still large estates in the Lausitz, where the family estate lies, and in Russian Poland. The present prince, also, has both Slavonic and Germanic blood in his veins. His mother, the Princess Stephanie Letbus, of the house of Wartenberg, married in eighteen hundred and twenty-two, in St. Petersburg, where she has lived from her early youth--I mentioned before that part of their possessions are in Russia--a Count Constantin Malikowsky, the last scion of a once very rich and powerful Polish family, who is now, however, quite reduced. The Emperor Alexander, who, as they say, was under obligations to both families" (here the professor ventured upon a stealthy smile to the young princess, who was lady in waiting to the empress and exceedingly beautiful, and to the count whose family had been mainly ruined by Russian confiscations,) "has the credit of having made the match. Such influence was perhaps necessary, because the reputation of the count was--I trust you will pardon the veracity of a conscientious historian--was, how shall I call it, somewhat doubtful. Young noblemen must sow their wild oats, we all know that; but Count Malikowsky had probably carried the matter a little too far. However that may be, the offspring of this marriage of Count Constantin Malikowsky with the Princess Stephanie Letbus is the prince, who at first was in the Russian service; but when with the last Prince Waldenberg the male succession in the family came to an end, and the estates lapsed back to the crown, the King of Prussia as a special favor declared him qualified to succeed, and he entered our service as Prince Count Malikowsky Waldenberg. His full name is, as you may possibly not know yet, Raimund Gregorius Stephan, Prince Count Malikowsky Waldenberg, hereditary lord of Letbus."

The company had followed the genealogical lecture of the learned professor with the same attention with which a company of ordinary crows might listen to the report of an owl about the descent of a rare raven who measures four yards from tip to tip. The devout silence was suddenly interrupted by the voice of the servant, who opened the door with nervous haste and called out, "His Highness, Prince Waldenberg!"

The nervous servant seemed to have electrified the whole company in the room. A moment later and they all stood straight up before their chairs, anxiously looking at the door, through whose wide-open frame the prince was entering so quickly that Anna Maria was not able to make the three steps to meet him which etiquette required, but had only time for one and a half.

"You have had the kindness, madame," said the prince in excellent French, slightly bending over the hand of the baroness, "to anticipate my wishes by your invitation, before I had an opportunity to make myself worthy of such an attention. Permit me to try to make amends for my neglect."

"An effort, *mon prince*," answered Anna Maria, with her sweetest smile, also in French, "which in a gentleman like yourself is sure of success. I regret exceedingly that, rarely as we are from home, an unfortunate accident should have caused us the other day to be absent just when you thought of honoring us with a visit. Permit me to present to you my friends: the baron, my husband; Baron and Baroness Barnewitz; Baron and Baroness Cloten."

"I have already the honor," said the prince, smiling.

"Professor Jager, an excellent scholar, and a friend of our house; Mrs. Jager, a lady whose poetical talent deserves encouragement."

The prince bowed to each one of the persons presented--even to the last-mentioned, which made quite a sensation--with the same dignity and courtesy, and gave the signal to sit down by

choosing himself a seat by Anna Maria on an easy-chair.

During this long salutation those who had not known the prince before had an opportunity to study his outward appearance. His was a Herculean form, calculated to impress a professional boxer forcibly, and to create a sensation in a circus, dressed up as an athlete; but for ordinary life was, perhaps, a little too large. Upon the large, powerful body, whose height was in full harmony with the breadth of the shoulders and the magnificent chest, there was set a head more angular than round, covered all over with short, curling black hair, and firmly resting upon a neck which looked too short for the size of the head. The features of the face corresponded with the whole. The brow was low and straight, the eyes of bright darkness but small, and apparently still further reduced in size by the heavy eyelids with their dark lashes. The nose as well as the thick lips were somewhat protruding. A beard, thicker and blacker than the hair on the head, covered the cheeks and the upper lip. The chin alone, shaved smooth, in military style, was the energetic base of this energetic face. Taken all in all, the assertion made by Hortense that the prince looked like a Mongolian agreed as little with the reality as Emily's judgment that he was strikingly handsome. Nevertheless, the whole was a far too striking individuality and too full of character to be called plain, even if the strict rules of ideal beauty were not all observed. A physiognomist would in vain have looked for ideal qualities of any kind in the face of the prince, but he would have discovered, in return, a most energetic, powerful will; and, perhaps, if he had examined carefully, a boundless pride, which slept with open eyes behind the mask, like a lion behind the bars of his cage, and could be roused by a mere nothing.

The prince wore the simple uniform of the regiment in garrison in Grunwald, but the two decorations on his breast--a small cross set in diamonds, probably Russian; and the order of the Blue Falcon of the second class, with crossed swords--proved abundantly that he was a man whose importance was great, aside from epaulet and sword-knot.

Anna Maria treated her great guest with a distinction corresponding fully with this higher mystical importance, which was only revealed to the profane eye by the awe-inspiring sparkling of the diamonds. It was this that caused the modest silence into which Barnewitz and Cloten had fallen since his arrival; the coquetry with which Hortense and Clotilde tried to attract his attention, and the embarrassment of the author of the fragments and the poetess, who had a vague impression that they were more than superfluous in this most noble company, and yet did not dare to rise from their seats and to go away. The prince and the baroness at first kept up the conversation alone, until Hortense succeeded in wedging in a casual remark, expressed in excellent French, and thus to obtain the word to the great annoyance of Emily, who had to leave her adversary in the undisturbed enjoyment of this triumph, as she spoke French but imperfectly, and was hardly able to follow the rapid utterance of her rival. Hortense, who knew Emily's weak point, carried her malice so far as to turn round to her continually with a "*qu'en dites-vous, chère amie? N'est ce pas, Emilie?*" and to force her in this way to reply in a manner which might be clever in spirit but was very imperfect in form. Any one who could have noticed the intense delight with which Hortense enjoyed her triumph over her adversary would have been compelled to acknowledge that even malice has its moments of happiness. The delight, however, became almost too great to be borne, when at last the prince hardly noticed Emily any longer, and gave himself up entirely to the charm of Hortense's amusing conversation.

Emily, however, was far too frivolous and too bold to lose her good humor at once, because of such a momentary defeat. The prince was not to her taste, although she had before praised him in order to annoy her rival; and if he did not choose to speak German to her, as he had done the night before, he might leave it alone. Emily played with her beaux as a trifling child plays with its dolls; it was utterly indifferent to her whether she broke the head of one, or the other fell into the water; she felt it only when one of her favorite dolls and she had occasionally, for the sake of variety, one that she overwhelmed with caresses and kisses--was not willing to be tender to her and to return her affection. Oswald had been such a favorite, but cold, desperately cold doll for her. She might have married him and become his faithful wife if he had belonged to the same circles in which she lived--at least her fancy represented it to her as possible in dreamy hours--but now she was Baroness Cloten, and then--what did it matter to her? Was she not handsome and young, and ten times cleverer than her foolish husband with his everlasting "upon honor!" and "divine!" Why will foolish men marry clever and handsome young wives, especially when these wives have a fondness for fancies brighter than the dull gray of actual life? Are the wives to be blamed in such cases if they go their own way, which is sometimes so narrow and dark that virtue and honor, the faithful companions of good wives, are lost by the way?

Emily Cloten had been watching the whole time for an opportunity to enter into conversation with Mrs. Jager, who, she suspected, might be able to give her some news about Oswald, whom she had not seen again since the night before. She availed herself, therefore, of the favorable moment when the prince was speaking to the baroness and Hortense, and the baron to the reverend gentleman, in order to inquire of Primula about "that young man who was tutor at Grenwitz last summer--Fels, I think, or Rock, or Stein, or whatever his name was--since a friend of hers was in need of a teacher." Emily was not mistaken; Primula could give her all information about Mr. Stein--"not Fels, although he has a heart like the poet's hero, Felsenfest; not Rock, although he towers like a rock above all men"--as the enthusiastic poetess added warmly. He called nearly every day, she said (Oswald had been there once); he was like a member of the family, and as truly united with her in warm friendship as in their common aspirations. "Excelsior!" She did not think, however, Oswald would just now accept such a position, as he was

"suffering in the dull bonds of a school," but she would mention to him the offer.

"Perhaps you had better not say anything," said Emily, after a short meditation. "You know Mr. Stein--how could I forget the name--did not leave our circle in perfect harmony. He might reject the offer at once, if it came to him in that way. Could you not--how shall we manage it?--yes! that's the way! Could you not arrange it so, my dear Mrs. Jager, that I should meet him at your house as if by mere chance? I have long since desired to see the table on which the author of the 'Cornflowers' composes her beautiful poems."

"You overwhelm me with your kindness," cried Primula. "I can only say with Zeus at the distribution of the gifts of the earth: if you really wish to enter my lowly hut, as often as you come it shall be open to you. Shall we say day after to-morrow, at seven?"

"That will suit me exactly," said Emily.

Emily had given herself so completely to this interesting conversation that her husband had to remind her of the intended breaking up of the company. The prince had risen; the others had followed his example.

"*Madame*," said the prince, "*j'ai l'honneur*"--the word died on his lips, for he saw in the large mirror before him the form of a marvellously beautiful girl who had suddenly entered the room without being announced by the servant. He turned round almost frightened, and stepped aside, with a low bow, to make room for the young lady, who went up to the baroness. The young lady was Helen Grenwitz.

Her appearance here was unexpected by all except the baron and the baroness, and surprised and interested each one in his own way. The prince, who saw her now for the first time, was the only one who knew nothing of the difficulties in the family; the others had discussed the Grenwitz catastrophe for weeks with great zeal and vast ingenuity in all directions, and as Helen had thus been the common topic of conversation, this first meeting of mother and daughter was therefore to them all a most attractive scene. But if they had expected anything extraordinary they were doomed to disappointment. The baron, to be sure, showed some emotion as he rose to meet Helen and to kiss her brow, but mother and daughter met with courteous coldness, which furnished little food for the curiosity and thirst for scandal of the assembly, ready as they were to notice every gesture, and to treasure up every word.

"Ah, good-day, my dear child," said the baroness, in French, kissing Helen likewise on her forehead, but very lightly. "You come just in time. Permit me, *mon prince*, to present my daughter, Helen--His Highness, Prince Waldenberg, my child, the most recent as well as the most brilliant acquisition for our society."

Helen returned the low bow of the prince, apparently not dazzled by his high rank and his imposing appearance, and then turned to Emily Cloten, who welcomed her most heartily. Emily's sharp eyes had not failed to observe the impression which Helen's startling beauty had produced on the prince. Let the prince admire whom he pleased, so Hortense lost her triumph!

"Oh, how nice!" she cried, embracing Helen, "that you show yourself at last. I was coming to see you soon; we have a whole world to tell each other." And she seized her friend by both hands and drew her aside a few steps, so as to be able to say to her: "Look, the prince is done for, *totalement* done for! He does not take his black eyes off you for an instant! If you want him, I'll let you have him. He dances beautifully, but he is not my *genre*. Encourage him a little; it annoys the Barnewitz fearfully. Just think, the old coquette still wants to play her part, although she has now to paint even her veins blue, and last night remained twice without a partner! How do you like the She Bear? *Apropos*, have you heard anything of Oswald Stein? I shall never forget that evening at your house! We came too late with our warning, but he pulled through beautifully. Even Arthur says he acted like a perfect gentleman. Don't turn round, the prince is coming this way. He no doubt wants to secure the first waltz for tomorrow."

Emily's cunning had guessed right. The prince had really, while keeping up a conversation with the baroness, looked incessantly at Helen, and had been so absent in his answers that one could easily see his thoughts were elsewhere. Suddenly he interrupted a brilliant sentence of Anna Maria's by asking whether there would be dancing to-morrow, and whether he might be allowed to ask Fräulein von Grenwitz to keep him a dance? When both questions had been answered with a gracious "*Mais oui, monseigneur!*" he approached the two ladies with a bow.

"I beg pardon," he said in German, "if I interrupt the ladies in an interesting conversation; but I cannot leave without having made an effort to secure a dance for to-morrow. May I hope, madame? May I have the honor, Miss Helen?"

The madame and the miss had the goodness to grant the prince's request, and his highness left with a haste which clearly showed that nothing had kept him so long but the accomplishment of this important task.

The departure of his highness was a signal for the other company, who had been waiting for it to go likewise, to the great satisfaction of coachmen and servants in the street below, who began to be as impatient as the horses.

The carriages had rolled away. The reception-rooms were once more empty; only the baron and the baroness remained, for the two Clotens had taken Helen in their carriage; the interrupted dialogue might have been resumed. But it was not done. The old gentleman felt too tired, and Anna Maria began to look in an entirely new light upon the question whether Helen should remain at the boarding-school or not? For about ten minutes ago the thought had suddenly entered her mind that it might, after all, be wiser to be reconciled to her daughter, who had at least as much prospect as any other young lady, and probably more, to become Princess of Waldenberg Malikowsky, Countess of Letbus.

CHAPTER III.

A man who is to be married in a few weeks finds it usually very hard, even in ordinary cases, to do equal justice to his professional duties and to his duties as a betrothed. But in the case of Franz this dilemma, insuperable to many persons, was perhaps the easiest part of his task, although he had an abundance of business as one of the representatives of the privy councillor in his medical practice (another part had been assumed by one of his colleagues). But more difficult by far than these duties were the troubles arising from his effort to arrange the extremely complicated money matters of his future father-in-law. It appeared gradually that the debts of the privy councillor would not be so overwhelming, if it should be feasible to collect the sums which were due him on all sides. But this was in most cases highly improbable. The debtors of the privy councillor generally lived in garrets and cellars; they were the lame and the crippled, the infirm and the invalid, often widows and orphans, as often also unworthy people, who had wretchedly abused the well-known liberality of the privy councillor. What enormous and, alas! what useless efforts this man had made to fill the Danaids' tub of the poor! with what zeal he had made himself poor in order to overcome the poverty around him, like the fabled pelican, who feeds his young with his own blood. What embarrassments he had wilfully assumed, in order to relieve others from the same troubles! How often he had given up his own sleep that his neighbor might sleep! How he had borrowed money at usurious interest in order to pay the debts of others. How he had entered into the most hazardous speculations, of which he knew nothing, but which must succeed and return a hundred per cent, if you believed the originators, but which of course never did succeed, and overwhelmed the good-natured and credulous privy councillor with new indebtedness--only to help others on in their own business!

It would have been a difficult task for the most experienced lawyer to find his way through this vast mass of more or less complicated questions, and to decide in each case what was to be done for the moment, and what for the future; how much more for Franz, who had no experience in such matters of business. But love lent him miraculous power, and sharpened his natural delicacy in his peculiar relations to his father-in-law, which called upon him continually to encourage, to appease, and to persuade. "I should not hesitate a moment," he would say, "to jump after you into the water, if I saw you were in danger of drowning, and you and everybody who should see it would think it perfectly natural. Now you are in a danger which to many people appears more formidable even than drowning--for many escape it only by rushing into eternity--and I risk for your sake not my life, which you could not give me back, but a few thousand dollars, which you can pay me back at any time, when, as it seems highly probable, your health is completely restored, and which, even if the worst should happen, it would not make me unhappy to lose."

In this way Franz tried to help his father-in-law through many a sad hour, in which the sense of his disease and the consciousness of his position weighed too heavily on his soul. Franz hoped that the excellent constitution of the man would do the rest. The privy councillor had indeed hardly gained the conviction that--thanks to the able and energetic help of his son-in-law--no dishonor could be attached to his name, even if he were to die now, than he laid aside all thoughts of death and determined to get well as soon as he could. "Not quite well," he said, "for that I can never be again; but half well, or two-thirds well--just well enough to be able to bring the hay, which is now lying fresh on the meadow, dry into the barn. I feel it, there are a few evening hours left me yet; I mean to make good use of them. You shall not spend your money upon me, and into the bargain sacrifice your future prospects for my sake."

Unfortunately this sacrifice had already been made.

Just at this time it happened that a famous professor of the university in the capital had seen a monograph on typhus, published by Franz during the summer, and had then been reminded that Franz had formerly been one of his most talented pupils, for Franz had pursued his studies for three years in the capital. He wrote to Franz congratulating him on his work, "which gave excellent evidence of his sharp acumen, and of his astounding erudition, rare in so young a man. But," continued the letter, "while thanking you in the name of science for your book, I beg leave

at the same time to make you a proposition, which I hope you will consider promptly and seriously. Next Easter the place of first assistant in the great hospital here will be vacant. I know among our younger men of eminence none to whom I would entrust this place as readily as to you." The great man then spoke at length of the advantages which Franz would secure by accepting this position, and concluded with the words: "You see this is a prospect as favorable as you will ever have. I am, as you know, a very cool judge of men and things; and as matters stand now in our university, you cannot fail, if you wish, to obtain in a few years the appointment as full professor. I am convinced that my friend Roban, to whom I beg you will give my kindest regards, will look at the matter in the same light. Consult him, and let me hear from you as soon as you can."

Franz had answered, but without having consulted his father-in-law. He had declined the offer, though he was fully alive to the advantages it held out. The career which was opened to him was one of great attractions to a man of science, and promised in the end to satisfy even the most insatiable ambition; yet it did not appear to be lucrative for some years to come, but, on the contrary, to require at least a small independent fortune, which Franz did no longer possess. He had placed himself by his generosity in the disagreeable position to have to move into a new house before it is finished or dry--an embarrassment in which many honest men find themselves; or, to speak more clearly, to have to look to money-earning at a time when he needed money to spend on his full preparation for his profession. And for such a purpose Grunwald and his position as son-in-law of the most prominent physician of the place were peculiarly well adapted. Therefore--farewell thou golden toy of a life overflowing with mental enjoyment and high aspirations!

"Away, thou dream, so bright and golden,
But life and love are not yet lost."

Thus Franz consoled himself while he made this great sacrifice of his ambition and his hopes for the sake of those he loved, and his only great care was now to keep this sacrifice a secret from those beloved ones, especially from his betrothed.

This care seemed to be unnecessary. Sophie found an explanation for the clouds which darkened Franz's brow when he thought himself unobserved, in the overwhelming burden of his professional duties; and for his frequent and long interviews with her father, in the nature of his practice. Since the condition of her father no longer filled her with apprehensions, the happy cheerfulness of Sophie had fully reappeared. She worked hard at her trousseau, and complained to Franz of the confusion which the care for so many and so varied things produced in her head. How much would a knowledge of the transactions that took place between Franz and her father have interfered with the happiness which she enjoyed in these days, as she labored to build her little nest like a merry bird full of song and playful flutterings, if she had known that the money with which she paid her long bills so cheerfully had come from the purse of her betrothed? She had easily consoled herself as to the grief arising from her inability to get ready by the day on which Franz insisted with very unusual pertinacity; she had even openly confessed that she had never looked upon it as such a very great misfortune to have to begin her housekeeping with a few dozen napkins, towels, etc., which were not yet hemmed, or marked in full.

Nothing, therefore, was more painful to Sophie in these days of excitement and great pressure than that the familiar circle could not, as usually, assemble at night around the fire-place in the sitting-room. The father, although able to sit up daily a little longer, had yet to retire quite early; Franz was often down town till far in the night, or he had to study in his rooms; even "the third in the league," the old student, as he called himself, Bemperlein, *alias* Bemperly, did not show himself nowadays, and Sophie had at last deemed it her duty to inquire for him at his lodging, thinking that he might be sick, and that Franz had kept it secret from her so as to cause her no apprehension. But she found the old student in his laboratory, in the midst of phials, retorts, boxes, and instruments--looking, if not like Faust, at least like Faust's famulus--at all events very busy and industrious, but evidently not in danger of death from sickness. Bemperlein excused himself on the score of his work--a very complicated chemical analysis, which must not be interrupted. How could Sophie think he had taken anything amiss?--he, and take amiss! and from Sophie!--really, the analysis alone was to blame, and as an evidence of it he promised to come that very night and stay as long as ever.

Sophie's eyes, though a little near-sighted, were yet very well able to see things near by, and thus she had not failed to notice a certain veil of embarrassment which hung over Bemperlein's honest face, while he blamed the troublesome analysis. As the young lady was slowly walking homeward, and thought what might be the real reason why Bemperlein had stayed away, she came, just as she was turning around a corner, upon a gentleman who came hurriedly from the opposite direction.

"Pardon!" said the gentleman, lifting his hat and hurrying on.

It was Oswald Stein. He had evidently not recognized Sophie.

This unexpected meeting gave a new direction to Sophie's thoughts. She remembered now that Bemperlein had not been at her house since he had met Oswald there, who was just about to

leave with Helen; that the meeting of the two gentlemen had been very cold, strangely cold, and that Bemperlein had given evasive answers to all their questions about the relations in which he stood to Oswald. Was it Oswald, who had since spent several evenings there, once in company with Helen Grenwitz, who had frightened away Bemperlein? Was Bemperlein jealous?

As Sophie knew nothing of Bemperlein's former relations to Oswald, she could of course hardly expect to guess rightly. The truth lay somewhere else.

When Anastasius Bemperlein was no longer willing to shake hands with a man whom he had once esteemed highly and loved heartily, one might rest assured that a goodly portion of strong poison must have been mixed with his milk of human kindness. Anastasius Bemperlein had fully trusted Oswald Stein. He had seen the life and happiness of those he loved best in his hand without fear, and he had overcome all his apprehensions about a union formed so suddenly and resting on the unsafe basis of entirely different social positions. He had said to himself, "All this is idle nonsense in comparison with the invaluable price of true love. Is not love stronger than faith and hope; how can it fail to be stronger than foolish prejudices?" He had reached a point where he had seen in the union of Melitta and Oswald a triumph of pure humanity over the barbarism of civilization, and victory of truth over falsehood.

But only upon such a lofty basis was such a union justifiable and possible. If one or the other sank below the level, both were lost. Bemperlein had known Fran von Berkow for seven years; he knew that her heart was true and good. Bemperlein had known Oswald for as many weeks, and he thought Oswald was worthy of her. He thought so because he had no choice; because to doubt would have seemed to him to insult his much-beloved friend.

And yet such doubts had made their way to his heart, slowly, silently, as in our dreams a fearful monster drags itself towards us and we try in vain to escape. He had struggled against these doubts until he could struggle no longer.

Melitta had returned from her second journey to Fichtenau, on which Bemperlein had in vain offered to accompany her; but after a few hours' stay at Grunwald she had gone on with Julius to Berkow, without sending for Bemperlein. The latter did not hear of her having been there except through old Baumann, who had remained behind to arrange Julius's things, and to execute some other commissions. Bemperlein had never spoken to the old man about Oswald. This time the latter began himself. He told him that Oswald had been at Fichtenau when they were there, that he had learnt from the waiter that his mistress was at the hotel, but had left again without calling on her. Here he paused, evidently in order to hear what Bemperlein would say about this piece of news. But when Bemperlein said nothing but "so so!" "indeed!" the old man could no longer control himself, and poured out his full heart, and with it the full cup of his wrath over Oswald.

"He had never trusted the fine gentleman from the first moment, and now he thought it as clear as light that the scamp had deceived his mistress infamously. He had spoken himself to his mistress about it, with all deference--for he knew he was nothing but a servant, and knew his place--but also very seriously, for he had carried her about as a child in his arms, and had always loved her tenderly; and she had always confessed to him on all such occasions, not entirely and not by halves, but sufficiently full for him, who knew her as well as his own hand. And then he had had a great desire to shoot the fine gentleman who had played his mistress such a mean trick, like a mad dog; and little had been wanting one night on the heath between Grenwitz and Fashwitz. But now he thanked God that he had held his arm and saved him from such a crime, especially as He had allowed it to happen that the story did not break the good lady's heart, but opened her eyes and showed her the way in which alone she can find happiness on earth." What this way was the old man had not said, but had risen and marched straight out of the room, as if he wished to make all further questions utterly impossible.

It may easily be imagined how much this conversation, which confirmed his worst fears, had affected Bemperlein; and what impression it must have made upon him, when he came, quite full of these sensations, to Doctor Rohan's house, and the first man who met him there was Oswald.

This meeting had been so painful to him, and a possible repetition seemed to him so intolerable, that it took him a whole week to recover from his fright; and that he would perhaps never have recovered entirely if Sophie had not come and made an end to his indecision. Poor Bemperlein! He had longed to see his fair friend so much! He had to tell her matters of such importance--of amazing importance for Anastasius Bemperlein.

Fortunately Sophie was alone when he appeared an hour later in her sitting-room. Franz had just left, promising to be back later. Sophie was surprised by Bemperlein's repeated question: "But there will be no other visitor to-night?" and she naturally connected these questions with her suspicions about the causes of Bemperlein's absence. As it was not her nature to keep a thing long to herself, she said, after watching Bemperlein for a time in silence as he was continually stirring the fire with a poker,

"Was not the true reason, Bemperly, why you have not been here for a whole week, that you did not wish to meet Oswald Stein here?"

"Who says so?" asked Bemperlein, pausing in his occupation, quite frightened.

"A question is no answer," replied Sophie. "Out with it, Bemperly! It does not pay to attempt keeping secrets in your intercourse with such clever people as I am. I know everything."

"What do you know?" exclaimed Bemperlein, in great excitement, and jumping up from his chair.

"Why, Bemperly!" said Sophie, "you forget all consideration for my nerves. You frighten me out of my wits, standing there with the red-hot poker in your hands like the man in Shakespeare. Compose yourself, I pray you! I know nothing at all. But you would really do me a favor, if--pray sit down again and put the poker down!--well! if you would tell me in all peacefulness and friendship what is the matter with you, for the more I look at you the more change I see in you."

"Miss Sophie," replied Bemperlein, "you know we cannot always be quite open, even with our most intimate friends--and there is no one in the wide world I would trust rather than you--because our secrets are in many cases not our own, but are shared by others, and have to be kept sacred for their sake."

"Why, Bemperly!" said Sophie, "you surely do not think I want to pry into your secrets! I am neither so impertinent nor so curious. Let us drop the matter and talk of something else!"

"No, no," exclaimed Bemperlein, eagerly, "let us speak of it! You do not know how I have longed to talk with you--about--certain things--certain persons--who----"

Mr. Bemperlein had once more seized the poker, which had not yet cooled off, and stirred the coals more assiduously than ever. Sophie shook her head as she watched his doing so. It occurred to her that Bemperlein might have made too great exertions in his chemical analysis, and that his mind might have been somewhat injured.

"As for my not coming here," continued Bemperlein, of a sudden, "you were quite right. I stayed away because I did not wish to meet Oswald Stein here."

"But," said Sophie, "Franz told me you and Oswald Stein had been very good friends. How did you fall out?"

"How?" said Mr. Bemperlein. "Why, Miss Sophie, that is exactly what I cannot tell you, much as I would like to tell you. Would you be friends with somebody, or rather would you not try in every way to avoid meeting somebody, who had mortally offended a third person whom you love and revere?"

"Certainly," replied Sophie, "for then he would have offended myself. But are you quite sure that that is so? Have you heard both parties? As for myself, I am not so enchanted with Mr. Stein; or, to tell the truth, I dislike him the more the oftener I see him; but Franz, who is very clever, and a capital judge of men, is quite enthusiastic about him. How could that be if Stein were a bad man?"

"I did not say he was bad," replied Bemperlein, working hard at a big lump of coal; "bad is a very relative idea, and what I call acting badly, Mr. Stein calls, perhaps, only acting thoughtlessly, in a cavalier manner, or some such name. But I call it acting badly, if a man----"

Here Bemperlein interrupted himself, and poked more violently at the coal than ever.

"How would you call it, for instance--I do not speak now of Mr. Stein--if a man were to promise marriage to a poor dependent girl, without parents, without friends, who has not a soul in this wide, wide world to protect her, who has believed his oaths and is willing to follow him, and who then finds herself sold and betrayed to a--Oh it is rascally, it is atrocious!"

"But, for Heaven's sake, Oswald surely has not----"

"I told you I am not speaking now of Mr. Stein. There are more cavaliers of the sort in this world, and they look as much one like the other as one viper looks like another viper."

"My dear Bemperly, I pray you put the poker down; I can really stand it no longer. Take this cushion, if you must absolutely have something in your hand."

"Thanks," said Bemperlein, putting down the poker, and seizing the cushion; and then, holding it like a baby in his arms, sinking into deep silence.

Sophie began now in good earnest to be troubled about Bemperlein's excited condition. But what was her terror when Bemperlein suddenly jumped up, let the cushion in his arm fall on the ground, knelt down on it with both knees, seized one of her hands in his own, and bowing low before her, groaned in most piteous tones: "Oh! Miss Sophie, Miss Sophie!"

"For Heaven's sake, Bemperly," exclaimed the young lady, "get up! If anybody saw you--saw us!"

"Let me kneel," murmured Mr. Bemperlein. "I must tell you; and I cannot tell you if you look at me with your big eyes, or if you were to laugh----"

Sophie at first did not know whether she should laugh or cry at this unexpected declaration of love. For Bemperlein's sake she could have cried; but for her own person, she could hardly help laughing aloud. "Bemperly," she said, "Bemperly, compose yourself; think of what you are saying, of what you are doing."

"I know," murmured Bemperlein. "I have told myself so a hundred and a thousand times. At my age--"

"Leaving that aside," said Sophie, in whom the inclination to laugh gradually became too strong, "how can you, Franz's best friend, and--at least I have looked upon you in that light until now--my best friend----"

"I shall remain your friend; I shall remain Franz's friend," cried Bemperlein with great animation. "Love and friendship shall both find room in my heart; they shall become only the purer, the deeper, the holier, the one through the other."

"But, Bemperly, how do you reconcile it with such a lofty Platonic love to lie on your knees like a Don Carlos? If Franz should at this moment come in at the door----"

"And if he came," cried Bemperlein, jumping up, "*'il n'y a que le premier pas qui coûte.'* I feel, now that I have spoken--that I have spoken to you--the courage to tell it to all the world. Franz will approve of my choice when he knows her as I know her."

"As you know *me*?"

"And you also will approve of it," cried Bemperlein, utterly unmindful of her interruption, and waving the cushion like a flag in the air; "you will be a friend and a sister to the poor girl; you will do it for my sake, because I love you and esteem you so very much; you will do it for her sake, for you may believe me, Miss Sophie, she deserves it."

"But whom do you mean, Bemperly?"

"I thought you knew long since," said Bemperlein, suddenly, half frightened; and then he added in a very low voice: "Marguerite Martin, the governess at Grenwitz!"

Fortunately, Bemperlein's excitement was too great to allow him to observe the confusion created by this announcement in Sophie's mind. The knot was cut most unexpectedly. She had been so near committing a great folly by suspecting her friend of another great folly! And yet she was not quite free from a little disappointment that she was not the exclusive idol of Bemperlein! Such a feeling could of course only pass for an instant through Sophie's heart as a light breeze curls the mirror-like surface of a deep lake only in passing, and before Bemperlein had quite recovered his equanimity she was again wholly the sympathizing, prudent friend for whom Bemperlein had been longing in the anguish of his heart.

As to the fact that Bemperlein, quiet, old-maidish Bemperlein, had been seized with a passion--that did not surprise her so much. Her main apprehension was, that the modest, unsuspecting man, who in spite of his thirty years was utterly inexperienced, might have fallen into the net of a coquette; and this fear was all the more serious as she had heard the brown eyes of Marguerite spoken of more than once in connection with events which seemed to confirm her suspicion. Her first question was, therefore,

"Do you really know Mademoiselle Marguerite, Bemperlein? I mean, do you know that she is a good girl; that she has a good heart; in one word, that she is worthy of my good Bemperlein?"

"She worthy of me?" cried Bemperlein, most enthusiastically.

"You mean to say, that I am worthy of her?"

"I wanted to say exactly what I said. I, your best friend--for that privilege I am not willing to give up yet--I have the right and the duty to be strict, and to examine before I say: Yes and Amen."

"Oh, Miss Sophie, I assure you my Marguerite is an angel."

"Your Marguerite? Why, look at the lion-hearted Bemperlein? Has it come to that already? But, jesting apart, Bemperly! what do you know of the angelic character of your Marguerite? I mean of that angelic nature which is perceptible to other mortals also? Come, sit down here by me quietly, before the fire, and tell me the whole thing from the beginning. Here, take your cushion again, but please leave the poker where it is!"

In spite of the trifling words, Sophie's voice sounded so faithful and good, and her large blue eyes looked so full of sympathy and kindness, that Bemperlein was not in the least afraid now to let the dear girl look into the holiest of his heart, and to tell her everything, which he did not even dare to think of but with trembling!

"You remember, Miss Sophie," he began, "that I told you and Franz recently how I went to the Grenwitz House in order to find out what the baroness, who had sent for me, wanted of me. I told you also that I found Mademoiselle Marguerite in the ante-room, and the remarkable scene which

there took place; but I did not tell you, and I have not let anybody see yet, the deep impression which that scene had made on me. A man who has grown up in great poverty, as I have, and who has had to struggle hard with cares and troubles, learns to understand thoroughly what it means to be helpless and forsaken. You will understand, therefore, what I mean, when I say that such a man, when he sees others suffer, feels and thinks very differently from those who have never been in such a position. That was the reason why I could not get rid of the sight of the poor, forsaken girl in tears. I saw her continually before me as she was standing near the door which led to the rooms of the baroness sobbing and pressing her little hands upon her eyes, while the bright tears were slipping through the slender fingers. I heard continually the words: '*Oh, je suis si malheureuse,*' and I worried myself to find out why the poor girl should be so unhappy; for I could have sworn that there must have been another cause than the mere sense of dependence, or the pain of having been once more unjustly scolded.

"This troubled me so much that I could not sleep all night long, and the next day it seemed to me an eternity before the time came when I was to wait on the baroness. At last it struck two o'clock. I went to the house and was admitted at once. The baroness was alone in her room. She was uncommonly gracious, inquired after Frau von Berkow, asked how I liked Grunwald, if I had much to do, and at last came out with her request. She could not make up her mind, she said, to send Malte to college, for reasons which she mentioned, but which were so foolish that I will not repeat them here; but she was as little inclined to try another tutor after the sad experiences which she had made. The lady, therefore, decided to have him taught at home by private tutors, who must, of course, be tried men of well-known principles, and--now we came to the point--would I whom she esteemed most highly, aid her in her work, and give her son, daily, one or two lessons in ancient languages! Now you may imagine, Miss Sophie, that I would have refused under other circumstances without hesitation; because, setting every other consideration aside, I could employ my time much better than by sacrificing it for the sake of a stupid boy, whom I never could bear; but I considered that this might give me an opportunity to meet poor Marguerite more frequently, and as this was my most ardent wish, the offer of the baroness seemed to me a sign from on high, and I accepted it at once."

"Bravo, Bemperly!" said Sophie; "I see you have, after all, more talent for a little innocent intrigue than I expected."

"Oh, it comes still better," replied Bemperlein, smiling; "you will marvel at my talent. In the course of the conversation the baroness spoke also of French lessons, and mentioned how inconvenient it was to have to engage a French teacher, although she had a French woman in the house, because she had little confidence in mademoiselle's grammatical knowledge. I said at once--I do not know yet how I gathered courage to do so--that I was sure mademoiselle would very quickly learn grammar, and be able to teach it hereafter, if she had been carried once through a regular course of grammar. My time, I told her, was fully occupied; but half an hour every day--the baroness did not let me finish, and accepted my offer at once. The very next day the lessons were to begin."

"When did you have that interview with the baroness?"

"Yesterday was a week, on the same day on which I had come home very full of this interview, and of another which I had had on my return home with--with--I must not tell you, Miss Sophie, with whom--when I hastened to you. I found Mr. Stein here."

Bemperlein paused; his face darkened once more, and he took hold again of the poker.

Sophie took it quietly out of his hand, placed it further away, and said:

"You were excited that evening, and did not stay long. Does the other interview with the great unknown stand in any connection with your story?"

"Not directly," replied Bemperlein, seizing once more the cushion, "only, inasmuch as it increased my interest in poor Marguerite, to whom--and afterwards my suspicions have been most remarkably confirmed--some thing similar might have happened; but never mind that! Next day, then, I began my lessons. The lesson with that boy, Malte, was soon over. I was left alone in the room, and waited for my fair pupil; I can tell you, Miss Sophie, my heart beat! Why, I could not tell myself. I only know that I felt all of a sudden as if I were a very bad man. I had never yet in all my life played comedy; and these lessons in grammar were, after all, nothing but comedy. I had a great mind to run away; but as that could not very well be done, I could only pull up my collar, make a bow before the mirror, and say with my best accent: '*Ah, bon jour, Mademoiselle, comment vous portez-vous!*' As I repeated the question a third time--and this time to my complete satisfaction--the lady came into the room, a book in her hand, and I was so much confused by the fear she might have seen me before the mirror that I blushed all over, and stammered something, which might possibly have been French, but which certainly was very foolish, for Mademoiselle Marguerite smiled and said something of *bonté* and *enseigner*. Next I only know that we were sitting opposite each other, and that we were turning over the leaves without saying a word--what else can I tell you, Miss Sophie? What is best and most necessary I can, after all, not tell you. I have been with Marguerite now for a week daily, quite alone, during a whole hour. We have not studied grammar; at least, we never read beyond the first pages; but, in return, she has opened to me the book of her life, and I have been allowed to read it, word by word, from the first to the last page. I tell you, Miss Sophie, there is not a bad word in it, and not a page of which she

need be ashamed. She has had to fight her way through the world, poor thing--much worse than I! Her parents died so early that she has never known them; brothers and sisters or near relations she never had, except a wicked aunt, who made her life a hell, until at fourteen she fell among strangers, who at least did not beat her like her wretched aunt. Alas! Miss Sophie, if I were to tell you what the poor thing has suffered, you would say: 'Such things are impossible,' and your heart would overflow with sympathy as mine did."

Mr. Bemperlein paused because his emotion was too deep. Sophie took his hand and said, "Good Bemperly!" Bemperlein returned the pressure warmly, and continued, after having cleared his voice repeatedly to hide his emotion:

"She kept nothing from me; not even that she has of late come in contact with a bad man (I repeat, Miss Sophie, that I am not speaking of Mr. Stein)--with a man who has cheated her most egregiously, and who wished to hand her over to a notorious scapegrace. But that is such a mean, low story that I would rather not speak of it, even if I had not promised Marguerite never to mention the person in question to any one, whoever it be. And now," concluded Bemperlein, taking both of Sophie's hands in his own, "what do you say, now you know all?"

Sophie was somewhat embarrassed by the sudden question. She had formed a picture of Marguerite from casual remarks made by Helen, Oswald, and her betrothed, which was by no means flattering for the young lady; and even Bemperlein's account was not calculated to remove her prejudice completely. She was pained to have to hurt the feelings of the poor man, whose kind face was turned towards her with an excited, anxious expression, as if life and death depended on her decision, and yet she could and would not prevaricate, and an answer she must give. She assumed, therefore, a charming air of wisdom, shaking her head gently and thoughtfully,

"Love is a curious thing, Bemperly. I have often reflected on it since the time that I learned to know Franz and to love him. There are sensations which are very praiseworthy in themselves, but they are not love, and we must be careful not to mistake them for love. And the nobler the heart the more easily it falls into the danger of committing such an error, just as the most trustful people are always the readiest to take false money instead of good money. I, for instance, never failed to find a false coin in my purse upon returning from market, if there was a false piece in the whole crowd. Now, there is no sensation which looks so much like love, and which so readily deceives a noble heart, as sympathy. Might it not be, Bemperly"--and here the young lady put her hand upon Bemperlein's hand--"that, as your interest for Miss Marguerite first arose from sympathy, it may to this moment not be the genuine love, but only sympathy?"

Bemperlein's face had been growing longer with every word of this long exposition. He had expected a very different welcome for his news here. Almost despairing, he asked, therefore,

"But, Miss Sophie, how do you distinguish sympathy from love? Is not the love of our neighbor, the purest form of love, identical with sympathy?"

"The love of the neighbor?" replied Sophie; "yes! but not that love of which we are speaking--the love which we must feel if we wish to marry somebody--the love, for instance, which I feel for Franz, and which Franz feels for me. That is something very different, quite different,"--and the young philosopher nodded thoughtfully her wise head.

"But what is it then?" cried Bemperlein, desperately. "How can we find out if we really love?"

"That is very difficult," replied Sophie; "yet it is also very easy. For instance; have you always simply wished to transfer Miss Marguerite from her dependent position to a better one, to shelter her, to protect her against all trouble and danger; or have you sometimes desired----"

Here the philosopher hesitated and blushed.

"Well?" asked Bemperlein, eagerly.

"To give her a kiss!" said Sophie, determined to clear the matter up, even at the risk of being thought indiscreet,

"If that is all," said Bemperlein, triumphantly, "I can answer that question with 'Yes.'"

"Bravo, Bemperly! And *have* you given her a kiss?"

"No!"

"Have you confessed your love to her?"

"No!"

"How do you know, then, that she loves you too?"

"I don't know that."

The gradually decreasing certainty of these negations was so comical that Sophie could hardly keep from laughing.

"But, Bemperly," she cried, "how will you find that out?"

"I will ask her!" replied Bemperlein, resolutely.

"Very well! And if she says No?"

"She cannot say so; she will not say so;" cried Bemperlein, pale with emotion. "I have never thought of it, but that would be terrible. I--I thought it would be so beautiful if she should become my wife and I could work for her, and I could love her and she should love me back again! For I must love somebody with my whole heart, and I must feel that somebody loves me with her whole heart, or I should be the most wretched man in the world. Oh, Miss Sophie! surely, surely. Marguerite will not say No!"

His voice trembled and his eyes filled with tears. The kind-hearted girl was hardly less deeply moved. The passionate feeling of Bemperlein had touched a sympathetic chord in her heart. She felt suddenly under an obligation to protect the youthful love of her thirty-year-old pupil with all her power.

"What do you say, Bemperly?" she said, very decidedly. "We can soon find out. Bring Marguerite here!"

Bemperlein breathed freely again.

"May I, really?"

"Of course. I cannot very well call on her, because that would attract attention; but she can come here without its being noticed. Just tell her I should like to make her acquaintance. If she loves you, she will come soon enough; and if we once have her here, the rest will follow of course. Yes, yes," continued the young lady, clapping her hands with delight, "that is the way! that is the way! And when we are good friends, then we have another plan--oh, Bemperly, another plan--if you knew what--but no, no!--you must not know yet--nor must Franz know. Hush, there he is. Not a word, Bemperly, of *our* secret!"

CHAPTER IV.

Felix had changed sadly in these days, and it looked almost as if his last appearance as a star in Grenwitz, which had been such a lamentable failure, should also be his last performance in the salons where he had so often shone brilliantly. The wound which he had received in his duel with Oswald, though in itself not dangerous, had thoroughly undermined his whole system, already weakened by a wild, profligate life, just as a house in which the timber is affected with dry rot will be in danger of tumbling down at any time, if but one of the joists be removed. The ball had not injured any of the vital parts, and he had had the best of medical advice, and yet the wound would not heal. And when it began at last to look a little better, very grave symptoms of pulmonary disease in an advanced stage had suddenly shown themselves. The physicians who were called in shook their heads, spoke of the necessity of a change of air, and a longer residence in a southern climate.

But Felix refused to see what was very clear to all others. Those little scars?--why, I have been spotted very differently before. That little fever?--ridiculous; I have felt worse many a morning after a wild night. My lungs?--nonsense! What does that old wig, Balthasar, know of my lungs? I don't believe in wise wigs. Felix Grenwitz wont die so easily!

Perhaps it was a desire to confirm himself in this conviction which made the *bon vivant attempt* to succeed in the part of a lover as soon as he was allowed to leave his room again after several weeks' confinement with a diet of medicine and mucilage. He had looked upon neat, pretty, blue-eyed Madeline, as soon as he had seen her, as a rose-bud which it might be worth his while to gather, and he would have made some efforts in that direction long since if Albert had not, for very good reasons, dissuaded him earnestly. Besides, he had then not given up the hope of winning the fair Helen, and his eyes had been captivated for a time by her exceedingly pretty maid, Louisa. Now, when those hopes were gone, he found in the monotony of his convalescence the necessary leisure and ample opportunity to turn his attention towards little Marguerite. Felix Grenwitz knew only two classes of women: pretty women and ugly women; any other division, virtuous women and others, he did not admit. He did not believe in female virtue; he had never met with it; at most, caprice, coquettish cunning, and the art to enhance the value of the merchandise so as to induce the buyer to pay the highest price. Hence Felix Grenwitz did not believe that Marguerite was virtuous, and this all the less as this experienced man soon

discovered that "Mamselle" had carried on a love affair with Mr. Surveyor Timm while the masters were at the watering place. Timm thought about women just as he did himself, as Felix knew perfectly well; he had therefore won the game even before beginning it. Could Felix Grenwitz fail where Albert Timm had succeeded? Nevertheless, there was another item in the bill which he had overlooked, and the Don Giovanni was not a little surprised, therefore, when he failed after all. Little Marguerite had a soft heart, thirsting after love, and she had so small a share of love allotted her in life! Hence Albert Timm had been able to overcome the heart of the girl, but not her virtue. For little Marguerite was proud--proud as poor beings are who have been enslaved and ill-treated from childhood up without losing their native nobility, and whose only defence against the contempt of the world lies in their self-respect. She would have sacrificed for her lover the whole of her hard-earned little fortune, but nothing else. If Albert could not succeed who really loved her, Felix must of course fail, for she detested him. And yet he was not fastidious in the means he employed. He presented Albert to her in the darkest colors; he laughed at the poor girl for having allowed herself to be cheated by a man who wanted nothing but her few hundred dollars; a man who would do anything for money, and who would yet gamble away in a single night all the money he might have secured by fair means or foul. He effected by this description, which was unfortunately not untrue in its main features, nothing but that the little one said with flaming eyes and deep-red cheeks in her broken German: "And if *Monsieur Albert* is really a bad man, you are not any better by a hair, *Monsieur le Baron!*" Poor child! she was soon to become fully aware that *Monsieur Albert* and *Monsieur le Baron* were really of precisely the same value! She had been in the adjoining room when Felix and Albert Timm had been holding their conversation, and she had felt as if she ought to sink into the ground for shame and indignation when she heard how the two gentlemen bargained so unceremoniously for her virtue, as if they had bargained for a horse. To dispel every doubt as to what she had only half understood, she had managed to meet Mr. Timm when he left the baron in the ante-room. Here she had asked him, hot-blooded as she was, about the matter, and received an answer which caused her to be bathed in tears, when Mr. Bemperlein came in a few minutes later.

Felix, however, was content to have driven off his most dangerous rival, and did not pursue his advantage for the present. The whole affair had become too serious for his taste for one thing, and then another business was just now claiming his whole attention. His health had become so much worse during the last days that even his frivolity could no longer make him blind to the imminence of actual danger. The wounds, but half healed, opened once more; a slow fever undermined his nervous system by day and by night, and he had hardly fallen asleep when a hacking cough waked him from dreams so fearful that even sleeplessness seemed a benefit in comparison. The anxiety about his health was increased by other cares which he had formerly treated very lightly, but which now had a sad effect upon his hypochondriac temper, and confused and troubled him sorely. People would crowd into his bed-chamber who would not be refused admittance by his servants--people with odd faces and remarkably soiled linen, who had no sooner succeeded in making their way to his bed-side than they opened large pocketbooks and presented the baron with a little bit of a note "for two hundred or three hundred dollars--a mere trifle for the baron."

Perhaps the baron would have been able to redeem these ominous papers if he had been what he had hoped to be when he adorned them with his signature: the acknowledged affianced of Helen, and the son-in-law of the richest landowner of the province. But unfortunately he was neither the one nor the other, had no prospect of becoming such, and could therefore not be very much astonished if the baroness was less gracious every time she met one of these suspicious personages. It had been different a few weeks ago, when the sun of his invincible power of charming was still in the zenith. Felix knew perfectly well that his aunt was so liberal only, in spite of her natural disposition, because she knew him to be in possession of a grave family secret. But even this last tie, which could be replaced by no other, was hanging on a single thread.

For he could not doubt that it was only the fear of "the stupid honesty of the baron"--the identical words of his amiable wife--which kept her from bringing matters to a crisis in her conflict with Albert Timm, and Felix was by no means quite sure whether even this fear was likely to induce her to assent to the bargain which he had made with Albert in her name. He had, therefore, not dared yet to tell her the full amount for which he had purchased Albert's silence.

His timidity in the whole business had a very good motive in his critical situation. He had to keep his aunt in the best possible humor in order to obtain from her the sums he required for his personal wants. It would be time enough hereafter to enlighten her on the subject of Timm's demand. Felix hated Oswald intensely, and it would have been intolerable to him to see the hated man obtain possession of the large fortune with Albert's aid, and perhaps after awhile also of Helen's hand; but all that had to give way for the present to the imperative necessities of his position.

This was the condition of things when the baroness came on the morning after the party, where Felix of course had not been able to be present, to pay the patient a visit, after having been ceremoniously announced. Felix was wrapped up in a large dressing gown, and sat shivering close to the stove. His big eyes, once so supercilious, and now glassy and staring, and the sickly, well-defined red spot on his lean cheeks, bore witness to the rapid progress which the disease had made during the last days. Somewhat astonished at such a visit at so unusual an hour, he half rose from his chair, and offered his aunt his thin feverish hand.

"*Bon jour, ma tante!* must I say, so early or so late? for you have been dancing till very recently. I heard the bass viol all the way down to my room here: brm! brm! brm! until it nearly made me crazy; and if you had not cured me of cursing, my dear aunt, I could have wished the accursed creature who made all the tantrum down to the deepest place in----"

"I hope your health is not worse to-day than your cursing," said Anna Maria, smiling. She settled down in an arm-chair before the patient, and took out some work as an evidence that she intended to pay a long visit. "But seriously speaking, dear Felix, I have been sorry for you, and I have come to ask your pardon for the interruption."

"Why, you are prodigiously gracious to-day, *ma tante?*"

"I thought I always was so," replied Anna Maria; "only there are people who will never be persuaded of it."

"I am not one of them, dear aunt."

"I know it, Felix; and I trust you will acknowledge that I have always done for you whatever was in my power."

"Yes indeed; yes indeed!" murmured Felix, reflecting whether this was a favorable moment to mention to his aunt a little affair in which he was involved--now nearly three months--with a certain Mr. Wolfson, of the firm of Wolfson, Reinike & Co., and which had to be settled in a few days.

"The company--who, however, broke up punctually at a quarter past two, dear Felix--seemed to enjoy themselves very much," continued the baroness, "and I was heartily sorry that you could not be there. It is really high time you should report yourself well again."

"God knows!" sighed the patient, impatiently tossing about in his arm-chair, "I am turning a perfect hypochondriac in this hole. But tell me something about yesterday. Who was there?"

"Oh, not a great many; you know I do not like very large parties: Grieben, Nadlitz, Bamewitz, Cloten----"

"That is not a bad arrangement of names," said Felix. "Did not Hortense and Clotilde scratch each other's eyes out?"

"Oh, no! they are the best friends in the world; and besides, yesterday they had no reason to dispute each other the palm, as that had been decided before by the unanimous judgment of the whole company."

"Oh, indeed! And who was this bird Phoenix?"

"Your cousin, dear Felix," said the baroness, counting the stitches in her work; "she looked really magnificent last night. I was quite surprised myself; but she was universally admired."

Felix listened attentively. To hear Helen praised by her mother was such a new air that he did not trust his ears.

"It looks as if the last weeks--five, six, seven--had, after all, had a very happy effect upon her. She has eight, nine, ten--lost a good deal of her haughtiness; the Countess Grieben congratulated me on her modest, truly womanly manners."

"Pardon me, dear aunt," said Felix, most bitterly; "but I can hardly rejoice as much as you at this favorable change. I wish it had taken place a few weeks before. Perhaps I should then not be lying here helpless, like a horse who has been hamstrung;" and he struck the arm of his chair violently with his sound hand.

"I know you have some reason to complain of Helen," said the baroness; "but hatred and revenge are very unchristian feelings, especially between relatives, whom nature has ordained for mutual love."

"Oh, certainly," interrupted Felix. "You are perfectly right, dear aunt! Our whole plan was built upon that supposition. What a pity, though, that Miss Helen did not care at all for this Christian love for our relatives!"

"You are bitter, Felix; and, as I said before, I admit that you may complain. But let us talk now of the matter that brought me here so early in the morning. The state of your health, dear Felix, causes me such great concern that I have been thinking of it all last night, and now I have formed a plan. You must start, and as soon as possible, on your trip to Italy."

Felix was destined to-day to pass from one astonishment into another. The physicians had advised this trip urgently for a fortnight; Anna Maria had opposed it as strenuously, because neither Felix, as she thought, nor she herself could at that moment afford to provide the necessary means. All of a sudden these means were forthcoming! All who knew the consistency of the baroness must have known that only a very extraordinary reason could have produced so sudden a change in her views.

What this reason was Felix did not learn in the further course of the conversation. He did not care particularly to know it. The last days and nights, full of pain, had broken his spirit; the frivolous haughtiness which he had so far boastingly exhibited had given way to mournful nervousness, in which but one thought remained uppermost--the desire to be well again at any cost. For this great purpose any means were welcome. If his aunt was willing to furnish the means for his travels, which he knew were indispensable for his recovery, well!--and all the better, the more she gave! Why she gave--why she gave now, after having declared it only a few days before utterly impossible to raise the means--what did he care for that? No more than a man who is in danger of drowning inquires from whence the saving log comes swimming down to which he clings at the very last moment.

When the baroness rose an hour later and folded up her work, the Italian journey was a settled matter. Felix was, if his condition did not grow worse, to start in a few days. "You know, dear Felix," said Anna Maria, "I am in favor of doing promptly what has to be done. And here there is danger in delay; besides, I should forever reproach myself bitterly if I had not done whatever was in my feeble power to avert this threatening danger from you."

She offered him kindly her bony hand, and Felix kissed it reverently. Anna Maria then left the room.

"The old dragon," grumbled Felix, sinking back exhausted; "what can have gotten into her head to make her all of a sudden so liberal? How lucky I did not tell her how much that rascal Timm is asking for! She will have to hear it one of these days; but not before I am down in Italy. Oh! my arm! I must submit to a regular cure; and, after all, every man is his own nearest neighbor."

"The foolish fellow," thought Anna Maria, as she slowly walked back to her room through the long passages; "it is hard that I have to go to such fearful expense after having paid so much for him already. But it cannot be helped. He must leave the house, and this is the most respectable and the least noisy way to get rid of him."

The explanation of the generosity of the baroness was very simple. The ambitious thought that her daughter had at least as much prospect to become the wife of the prince as any other lady, had been so much encouraged last night during the party that it had grown up into a well-built plan. The prince had distinguished Helen in the most flattering manner. He had not only against all rules, danced twice with her, but he had, besides, borrowed her from her regular partner as often as an opportunity offered; he had led her to supper, and during the whole evening not lost sight of her for a moment; he had, finally, spoken in the most exalted terms of the incomparable beauty of the young baroness to the Countess Grieben, who had reported his words five minutes later to the baroness. All this was the more striking as the cool reserve with which that grand seigneur generally received all the homage offered him by the provincial nobility had already become proverbial. What was poor Felix in comparison with this proud eagle? A poor crow, plucked bare by misfortune and countless creditors. And especially now since the physicians began to shake their heads ominously, and when the baroness asked them upon their consciences, answered: they would give the young baron six months, unless a miracle took place! What was Felix when he ceased to be the presumptive heir to the entailed estates? Nothing!--less than nothing; a very expensive pensioner on the bounty of the family, whose only merit was that he would in all probability not draw that pension long! No, no! That sun had set in mist and fogs; now a more brilliant, a more powerful sun must give its light. It was worth while to become the mother-in-law of His Highness Prince Waldenberg. Then the obstinate, intolerably obstinate old husband might die today or to-morrow, and the executors were welcome to add the revenues from the estates, which now belonged to her, to the principal. She had laid aside enough, thanks to her wise economy; and then there was the very respectable sum of Harald's legacy, which that impudent fellow, Timm, would no longer dare to trouble her about. And suppose even that the baron should leave Helen the greater part of his fortune, which seemed very probable, the gratitude of a princely son-in-law to whom she had given so beautiful a wife, and of a daughter to whom she had given a princely husband, was in itself a capital that must bring ample interest.

Strange! from the moment in which this brilliant perspective had opened for Helen she had no longer felt any resentment against the rebellious child. Even her pride, of which she had so bitterly complained, now appeared to her eyes as a merit in the girl. Was not this very haughtiness, together with the beauty which it served to bring out more strikingly, that feature which had evidently decided the prince to give the preference to her daughter over other young ladies like that very beautiful but blond and sentimental Miss Nadelitz, and even over pretty, coquettish Emily Cloten, and graceful, intriguing Hortense Barnewitz? For the past two days the baroness had actually felt some affection for her daughter--her beautiful, brilliant daughter--who, by her prudent management had secured the bright dazzling prospect of becoming Princess Waldenberg-Malikowsky, Countess of Letbus!

The first step towards this lofty goal was of course a full reconciliation with Helen. The catastrophe at Grenwitz had taught her to respect an adversary who was able to act with so much firmness in spite of her youth. Henceforth she would see if she could not succeed better with love and kindness; and how could she better prove this love and kindness than by recalling the disobedient and yet cherished child from her banishment back again (if only Felix would go quickly!) to the paternal house, to the dear parents who impatiently expected their beloved daughter! She had immediately begun this great work of reconciliation; this very day she hoped

to finish the preliminaries.

It was a late hour on that day. The windows in Miss Bear's boarding-school had been darkened for two hours, except one which looked upon the garden in the rear. He who could have watched this window from the garden, or from the public park which adjoined the garden--and there was really a young man leaning against the trunk of a beech-tree whose eyes were incessantly directed through the dense darkness towards the lighted window--might have seen that the light came from a lamp which was standing quite near it on an *escritoire*, and that the occupant of the room was sitting at the *escritoire* writing or reading; it could not be distinguished.

The occupant of the room was Helen Grenwitz. She was writing eagerly, with burning cheeks, as young ladies who have no confidant but a friend hundreds of miles away are apt to write:

"You quiet, prudent girl, with your quiet, prudent blue eyes! Ah, who could pass through life as you do, ever true to one's self! Who could have your peace of soul, in which everything is reflected, as in a deep still lake, in clear colors and sharp outlines! Whatever you think right to-day, you think so to-morrow; what you like to-day, you will not dislike to-morrow. The standard by which you measure men is, though severe, unchangeably the same; he who does not come up to it is, to your mind, not your equal, and you treat him accordingly, to-morrow as to-day, and every other day, with that mild kindness for which I have so often envied you. With me, alas! everything is different--so very different! My heart is a storm-tossed ocean, and the images of life tremble in it, changing and restless, and troubling me like so many spectres. On the surface, to be sure--well, there all is apparently calm; at least people say so, and I feel so; but down below!--there it seethes and boils; there are wishes growing up which I dare scarcely confess to myself; there thoughts are rising that frighten me; there a longing is forever blooming--a longing of which I have often told you, and alas! never in words equal to what I really feel, and which you always sent back into the realm of dreams. Is it possible that you were right? that the passion which is glowing within me is never to be cooled? that the voice which often calls from the depth of my soul in every still night, as just now, full of complaint, of yearning, of despair--that this voice is never to find an echo? My brow is burning, my eyes are blinded, my heart beats impatiently! What do you want, restless, wild heart!--Love? Yes! Power, and honor, and distinction? Yes! But how, if you cannot have all at once; if you must sacrifice the one or the other!--how then? Which are you willing to give up? Love? No! High rank? No! Oh no!... Well then! beat on restless and unsatisfied, and trouble me without pity, till this hand and this head shall be tired of counting your feverish pulsations!

"I see you looking at me expectantly, with your soft, blue eyes; I see your lips trembling with the question: What is the matter, dearest? Oh, dearest darling, *you* are to tell me! For some time now, I have not known myself any longer.

"I wrote you that I saw Mr. S. accidentally from my window, and that I wished very much to see him alone. My wish was to be fulfilled the same day. I met him at Miss R's, and as my servant did not come for me, he accompanied me home. We had a conversation on the way which affected me deeply, as it turned on Bruno, and I had, at last, an opportunity of thanking Mr. S., as I had so long desired to do. I was deeply moved when he took leave of me at the door. The charm which this man has always had for me, and which I can only shake off when I do not see or hear anything of him, had become once more all-powerful in his presence. I felt it; and yet, just on that account--you know me--I did not avoid seeing him again, although I might easily have done so.

"Two evenings later I met him again, also at Miss R's. This time the servant was behind us as we went home, but as we spoke French--Mr. S. speaks it beautifully; he told me he was half French by descent--our conversation was as free as if we had been alone. What the two days' absence had set right, two hours' intercourse destroyed again, and I found out to my great humiliation--and I write it with blushing cheeks--that the feeling which overcomes me when he is near is stronger than my pride. Not that he is so imposing by his lofty mind or by his male strength! Far from it. He does not resemble the ideal which I bear in my heart of the hero whom I might love; but there is something in the tone of his voice, in the glance of his large blue eyes, in his whole manner, which touches me unspeakably. And then--I mean to be candid with you--I know that he loves me, and, as it cannot be otherwise under the circumstances, loves me without hope, and that makes him dear to me, like the dagger with the bright Damascus blade and the golden handle which I, a girl of twelve, found in the armory at Grenwitz, and which I then took as a precious treasure to my room, and never have allowed to pass away again into other hands. I know--Oswald and the dagger--both belong to me; to me alone. It is so exquisitely sweet to be able to call something one's own of which nobody else knows anything, nobody suspects anything, and which is still sure to stand by us, and to assist us in extremity, when all others shall have abandoned us. Whenever I see Oswald's eyes fixed upon me I feel as if I were drawing the dagger half-way from the sheath and saw the blade glitter in the sunlight.

"But there is danger in this glittering. How often have I drawn out the weapon entirely, and, placing the sharp point upon my heart, said to myself: a slight pressure and you are no more! And there is danger in the presence of this man; a word from him, and he has ceased to live for me; and if I were weak enough to reply--I dare not think of it; I dare not think how near I have already been standing to the abyss.

"I have determined not to go any more to Miss R's, and I have carried out my determination. Day before yesterday, towards evening, when I was alone in the garden--the others were walking

out as usually with Miss Bear as leader--I heard the roaring of the sea so distinctly that I felt an invincible desire to see my favorite element once more eye to eye. Our garden adjoins a public park which extends down to the sea-shore. It belongs to the city, and is, I am told, a popular promenade in the summer. In autumn, however, and especially in the evening, when it is damp and cool, I had never seen anybody in the wide avenues under the tall trees. I therefore, opened, the gate, which was not locked, and went into the park. It was darker there than in the garden; the evening breeze was sighing in the bare branches of the mighty beech-trees; the sea roared grandly. Beneath my feet the dry leaves were rustling; overhead two crows were cawing, unable to find rest on the storm-tossed branches. I wrapped myself closer in my shawl and went on. The darkness was coming on apace, and the cool, damp breath of the woods and the sea brought their old charm to bear upon me, as I had felt it so often in early childhood. I felt no fear; the happiness to be for once perfectly alone with myself and my thoughts--alone amid such surroundings, which entirely harmonized with my state of mind--did not allow such feelings to rise in me. I went on and on, as in a dream, till I came to the end of the avenue. There a small open square, almost entirely overshadowed by tall trees, looks in one direction towards the sea, which breaks almost directly upon the moderately high but steep shore. An iron railing runs along the edge. There are benches here for the tired visitor, and for all who wish to enjoy the coolness of the place and the view over the sea. I was leaning on the railing and looking out upon the dark waste of waters, bright in its way amid the darkness, and I saw wave follow wave without rest and breaking into foam upon the smooth pebbles of the narrow beach. The thunder, which drowned every other noise, was like a nursery song for my stormy heart, and lulled me to dream wonderfully of happiness deep and boundless, like the deep, boundless sea, on whose fading horizon my eyes were hanging, and--would happiness else have any charms for me?--of fearful mysteries and unforeseen dangers.

"Suddenly a voice fell upon my ear from quite near by. I rose from my stooping position, and Mr. S. was standing before me.

"'I beg your pardon,' he said, 'if I interrupt you in pleasant dreams; but the accident which made me find you here at this hour is too remarkable to be looked upon as nothing more than a mere accident.'

"I was so surprised and frightened by this sudden meeting--and I suddenly saw how very improper the step was--that I replied coldly and sharply:

"'How do you mean, sir? I hope it is really an accident only which procures me at this moment the pleasure of your company?'

"He stepped back a step.

"'Pardon me, Miss Helen,' he said, 'I did not know you objected to my presence.'

"He bowed, and went away.

"The tone in which he had uttered these words cut me to the heart. When he was a few yards off, I could not bear it any longer. I called his name. The next moment he was again by my side.

"'Mr. S.,' I said, 'I beg your pardon. I was frightened I did not know what I was saying.'

"'No, no!' he replied. 'You were quite right. It is not an accident which has made us meet here. At least not on my side. I saw you enter the park; I followed you; I did not lose sight of you for an instant.'

"'And do you often come here?' I inquired, as we began to walk back the dark avenue.

"'Yes,' he replied; 'the unhappy find in darkness and solitude their most suitable companions.'

"I did not have the courage to ask him why he was unhappy; we went on side by side in deep silence. I hastened my steps, for the old charm was creeping over me and I was determined to escape. A few minutes brought us to the iron gate which leads from the garden into the park. Among the shrubbery and under the tall trees it was quite dark. My heart beat as if it would burst. I was determined, should it cost me my life, to reject his love, if he should begin to speak of love; and still I wished him to speak; I was angry because he did not speak. The few seconds seemed to be an eternity--an eternity of fear and hope. We were standing at the gate. Oswald opened it. I thanked him, and wished him good-night. He only answered by a silent bow. When the gate fell behind me into the latch I started like a prisoner who hears close behind him the door of the cell which parts him forever from life. At first I felt like stretching my hand after him through the grating and telling him--I know not what; but I checked myself and went, without looking back, rapidly up to the house; and when I had reached my room I threw myself on the sofa, and wept bitterly, bitterly--as I had never wept before in my life--as I did not think Helen Grenwitz would ever be able to weep!

"But then I rose and swore I would overcome this weakness, which was so humiliating, at any risk and sacrifice. My pride, I felt it, is my only property--the bright weapon which makes me, when I hold it in my hand, the equal of any adversary, even of my mother! I thought with trembling of the moment when I should feel humiliated before myself after having humiliated myself before others; when I should no longer be able to look boldly into her cold, stern eyes. I

knew--I knew with absolute certainty--that that moment would be the last of my life.

"And thus I went to bed; but sleep would not come. I was lying there, my hands crossed on my bosom, and I repeated to myself over and over again what I had sworn; and whenever my heart became heavy--ah, so heavy! from an unspeakable sense of wretchedness--then I put the point of my dagger upon my disobedient, rebellious heart, and it became quiet again and humble! It felt, so to say, that it had no hope of victory in a battle between pride and love. At last I fell asleep and dreamed I was reconciled to my mother. She covered me with kisses and with jewels; but the kisses were icy, and the jewels chilled me to the marrow of my bones. Yet I suffered it to be done, and she took me by the hand and led me through dark passages into the brilliantly-lighted interior of a church which was full of people. The eyes of all these people were fixed upon me. Then it was suddenly no longer my mother who held my hand, but a tall, strange man in a uniform dazzling with gold and diamonds. I could not see his face, for he held it always aside. Thus we approached the altar; a priest was standing on the steps. The organ sounded, and song filled the high vaults. Above the priest hung a large wooden crucifix, such as we have hanging in the chapel at Grenwitz, which always filled me with horror when I was a child. The same horror overcame me now; for while the priest was speaking, the image was continually shaking its head; and when I examined it more accurately it bore Oswald's features, but disfigured and deadly pale, and in the side of the body my dagger was sticking up to the hilt, and black drops of blood were trickling down one by one. Then it opened its lips and cried aloud--a fearful, yelling cry--and the cry scattered the crowd, the vaults came down with a crash, and the man by my side changed into a skeleton. I tried in vain to escape from its hold. It seized me with its bony arms and went down with me into dark depths--faster, faster, till I awoke with horror! The dismal autumn morning was looking into my room, but I thought I still heard the trumpets, and it took me some time before I could make out that they were the melancholy strains of a military band which escorted a funeral past our house to the graveyard near by.

"I tried to smile at my ridiculous dream, and I succeeded; because I *willed* it; because I was determined not to allow empty fancies of an excited imagination to influence my decision. Besides, I could now, when I was calm again, readily explain how the dream had come about. The night before I had seen Oswald take leave of me, suffering greatly; on this very day I was to meet my mother once more after a long, long interval. My father had brought about this interview. He wished me to be at a party which they proposed to give, and I could not refuse my good father this request.

"I went there in the morning at the time for visiting. The meeting was less painful than I had expected, I found fortunately a crowd of visitors there--the Clotens, Barnewitz, etc.; also an officer--a Prince Waldenberg--a remarkably stately, proud man, but not handsome. He had, of course, introduced himself to me, and asked me to give him a waltz for the next night. Soon afterwards the visitors left, and I also. Emily Cloten--I have often written to you about her--congratulated me, as she drove me back to my boarding-school in her carriage, on my 'conquest.' I told her I had no fondness for conquests which were so easily made. '*Chacun a son goût,*' she answered, laughing. 'I, for my part, think that what we do not catch on the wing is not worth catching. My motto is always: *l'amour ou la vie*. It is true I am a swallow, and live on midges. Royal eagles, like yourself, must have nobler prey: a prey which at need can defend itself. The princely quarry is too proud for me, I confess. But for you--*e'est autre chose*. Like and like, you know.'

"The frivolous words of the talkative woman had roused my curiosity. I resolved to examine the prince more closely during the party. In the humor in which I was I liked the idea of measuring my pride against the pride of another. Had I not sworn never again to admit softer feelings to my heart? Thus it was a kind of comfort to me that there were other people in the world who thought about it as I did.

"My mother received me on the evening of the next day with a kindness which, to say the least, I had not deserved. It was evidently her intention to show me that she intended a genuine reconciliation. She kissed my forehead, took me by the hand and led me to the ladies, who likewise overwhelmed me with civility. It looked as if the whole festivity was arranged only for my sake, as if I was the centre of the whole. Wherever I sat or stood I had a circle of gentlemen and ladies around me, like a queen.

"It was the first time since I had left Grenwitz that I could again move among my equals in fine, well-lighted rooms. I felt, more clearly than I had ever felt it before, that this was the only sphere in which I could move freely, that this was the only air I could breathe with comfort; in fine, that I was born to rule and not to serve. It seemed to me all of a sudden not so very difficult after all to keep the vow which I had burnt in that night into my heart with glowing tears. I only smiled at the fancies of a girl at boarding-school. And with a smile I received the homage which was profusely laid at my feet.

"Among those around me was also Prince Waldenberg. I did not need to inquire after his family and circumstances. Everybody was eager to furnish me with information. He is a native of Russia, and immensely rich. His mother's estates--she is Princess Letbus--lie in various parts of Russia; he is Prince Waldenberg through his mother, who comes of that family. Since he has succeeded to the estates, he has left the Russian service for our service. His father is a Count Malikowsky. Both parents are still alive, and he is their only child. You see, dear Mary, here appears in my letters for the first time a real grandee, who is the equal of your dukes and

marquises; and while the prince's black eyes, however far he was from me, were all the time looking at me, I was thinking of you, whether I would see an encouraging smile in your eyes if you were here, and you would say, 'He is worthy of you!' I hoped you would, for the appearance and the manner of the prince is as lofty as his rank. I noticed with heartfelt shame how sorry our own young men looked by his side, and how they all tried in vain to copy his way of walking and his carriage. He spoke several times very eagerly with me. One of his sayings I remember, because it came from my own heart. I asked him why he, who has thousands and thousands of serfs, was serving in the army like our young noblemen, who had nothing in the world but their swords? 'Because I am too proud,' he replied, 'to wish to rule where I am not fully entitled to rule.' 'How so, highness?' I am not sovereign; my ancestors were sovereign; I have to pay for the weakness of my ancestors.' 'Would you not have given up the sovereignty?' 'Never,' he said, and this was the only time that I saw a kind of genuine emotion in his cold, proud face; 'never! a thousand times rather my life. But,' he added after a short pause, 'I know somebody who also would rather die than be humbled.' 'And who can that be?' 'You yourself, Miss Helen.'

"The party did not end till late at night. Papa sent me home in our carriage. Mamma promised to return my visit the next day; that was to-day. She really came this forenoon. She was again exceedingly kind, paid me many compliments about my conduct last night, and expressed her desire to have me back again at the house, just as my father also wishes it. However, she left it entirely to me, whether I would come back at all, and when. 'You did not exactly have your free will when you went away,' she said; 'I want, therefore, at least to be perfectly sure that your coming back is quite voluntary.'

"And cousin Felix?' 'He leaves in a few days for Italy. I shall of course not expect you to stay with him under the same roof.'

"Certainly, even if my mother does not mean it honestly, she has at least found the right way to my heart. I am half decided to do what she and papa want me to do."

The young girl had, as it will happen, felt all the changes of her own heart which she described in her letter, once more in their full strength. The tormenting conflict between love and ambition, the desire to read clearly her own heart, had put the pen into her hand, and she had at last obtained in the process of writing that peace which had been so far from her when she began her letter.

She was leaning back in her chair with folded arms, and was looking fixedly before her as in a dream. She listened mechanically to the modulations of the night-wind in the poplar-trees before the window, through which she heard occasionally the low thunder of the ocean as it dashed against the shore. This music recalled to her the earliest recollections of her childhood, and with them very different sensations from those of which she had been writing. Suddenly she started and listened breathlessly towards the window. Through the mournful sounds of the wind she heard the singing of a soft, deep voice. At first she fancied it was a trick of her excited imagination, but as she listened more attentively, she distinguished the words. The voice sang:

"Thy face, alas! so fair and dear,
I saw it in my dreams quite near.
It was so angel-like, so sweet,
And yet with pain and grief replete,
The lips alone, they are still red,
But soon they will be pale and dead."

Then the wind became louder again and silenced the voice; then it began once more distinctly:

"The lips alone, they are still red,
But soon they will be pale and dead."

Helen trembled in all her limbs. She knew the singer could not look up into the lighted room; but she felt as if his eyes--his blue dreamy eyes--were resting on her. She dared not move, she hardly dared to breathe. Once more, but at a greater distance now, scarcely to be distinguished, he sang:

"The lips alone, they are still red, But soon they will be pale and dead."

Helen thought of the image in her dream, the pale crucified one, who shook his head so sadly when the priest was saying the blessing; and she thought of the dagger which had been thrust into his side up to the golden hilt, and of the drops of blood which slowly trickled down, and shuddering, she pressed, her face in her hands.

CHAPTER V.

From the moment when an accident had thrown into Albert Timm's hand that famous package of faded letters, bound up with red-silk ribbon, and long hid in the archives of Grenwitz, the lucky finder had not rested till he had found out, if not all, at least most of the threads of the secret web which he had so unexpectedly touched; then he had set to work making a good stout tissue of it. The work had not been easy. He had been forced to use all his ingenuity and all his inventive power, and finally, when the decisive moment occurred in the interview with Felix and the baroness, all his coolness and boldness. But the venture had succeeded. The captured quarry was struggling in the meshes, and the excellent huntsman rejoiced at it. No sportsman could blame him for his joy. Now farewell to labor and trouble! Welcome, sweet leisure, which would allow him to rest after his work! Four hundred dollars a month for a whole year, and then, "after so many sorrows," a few thousand dollars extra. Albert Timm would not have been the contented redskin he was, if he had not left it with unbounded confidence to the Great Spirit to care mercifully hereafter for his red child.

Nevertheless, Albert Timm was too good a sportsman, in spite of all his modesty, not to know the old rule, that one must always have "two string's to the bow." Albert Timm had a second string to his bow, and the manner in which he had twisted this string according to all the rules of his art out of innocent sheep-sinews was so odd that the artist himself could not help laughing heartily whenever he thought of the story. Or was it perhaps not odd at all, that the man whose the booty legally was, not only never suspected it, but actually had been good-natured and stupid enough to become the intimate friend of the poacher. Not odd at all that Albert Timm, feeling the first four hundred dollars, hard-earned money, in his pocket, and sitting in the city cellar of Grunwald to drink his own health and a happy issue of all his plans, should have used the *lupus in fabula*, Mr. Oswald Stein, and thus been able to treat him with champagne and oysters, for which he paid with the very money out of which he had cheated him. He who did not think this remarkably odd or witty, as Albert Timm called it, had doubtless no eye for comical combinations, such as accident from time to time shakes together in the kaleidoscope of life.

Partly to enjoy the comedy and partly for the sake of a "second string," Albert Timm had met his old acquaintance from Grenwitz with open arms, and had even carried the fun so far as to offer to become his intimate friend. He calculated thus: It cannot be a bad speculation in any case to be the friend of this disinherited knight. If the Grenwitz keep their word and pay punctually-good; then it is a beautiful evidence of your good heart, to let part of the abundance drop into the lap of the knight who has unconsciously procured it for you. If Anna Maria (he thought he was sure of Felix) wishes to break the contract, or if an unforeseen accident relieves you of your promise, still better; then your disinterested friendship for the knight whose claims you then boldly advocate, gives you the strongest claim upon his gratitude--in dollars.

Thus or nearly thus, the first sketch of his outline had been formed, when Albert met Stein that night in the city cellar. Since that time he had employed his leisure hours (and he had now an abundance) to fill up the sketch, and he was so much pleased with his new plan, that he was already considering whether it would not be better, after all, to overthrow the legitimate ruling dynasty, and to proclaim Oswald as the pretender. However, to act suddenly is not the manner of Indians, and to throw away muddy water before you have clear water, is folly. Albert found upon thoughtful reflection that Oswald was not quite ripe yet for the part which he meant him to play. Oswald was an enthusiast, and enthusiasts have all kinds of odd notions in their heads. For instance: "Property is theft," or "the true beggars are the true kings," and so forth. Might he not take up one of these odd notions at the very moment when he ought to have acted promptly? It is true he found Oswald greatly changed since he had seen him last. He seemed to have laid aside his dreamy sentimentality, and to be filled with a concealed restlessness, which broke forth now in extravagant merriment, and now in savage, ironical bitterness. But who can ever judge rightly of problematic characters? A remnant of the old ideology was no doubt still there, and that had first to be driven out thoroughly. Faust, just escaped from his cell, must find it impossible to return; he must be taught to relish gay life; and how could he have found a better teacher in this noble art than in the past grand master of all merry fellows, the invincible Albert Timm, whose very sight was a laughing protest against all old fogyism. And then there was a will-o'-the-wisp with which the knight, wandering helplessly in the labyrinth of his passions, could be led far into the morass, from where there was no escape. This will-o'-the-wisp was love; his love for a certain great and rich lady, for whose sake it was well worth while to leave the straight road; a love which the knight had in the meantime confessed to his friend, and which the friend fanned in a way which would have done honor to the cleverest Marinelli. When the knight was once lured far enough to make the return impossible, when he had been turned round and round till he knew no longer where his head was, then the moment had come when he might go up to him and say: Honored knight, what will you give your Pylades if he enables you to possess all the glorious things which heretofore have been mere phantoms seen in voluptuous dreams, in tangible reality?

Unfortunately Oswald spared him much of the trouble. He was at that time unhappier and less self-reliant than he had ever been before. Berger's doctrine of contempt was a bad seed, which had fallen upon soil only too fertile. And since Oswald thought he had been betrayed by Melitta, he had, in order to be able the more readily to betray her himself, irrevocably lost the better part of his self-respect. It did not avail him that he charged all the blame of the rupture with Melitta upon her, that he called her a heartless coquette, who had betrayed him disgracefully, and who now laughed at the poor victim (how many were there in all?) in the arms of her lover. There was a voice continually whispering to him, which he could not silence, and which repeated again and again: You lie, you lie; a woman with such deep, loving eyes is not heartless; a woman capable of such love is not a coquette; a woman with such noble thoughts and feelings does not betray the man whose happiness she knows is in herself alone.

But even his love for Helen was but a faint reflex of that heavenly, pure flame which had lighted up his heart like the moon in a dark night during the time of his love for Melitta. There was in this love much of that weird, consuming fire of an eager devouring passion which knows no holy reverence for its idol.

To all this must be added, that he felt indescribably unhappy in his position. His duties at the college were repugnant to him, when he had hardly begun them. The virtues required by the exceedingly difficult vocation of a teacher: industry, perseverance, patience, self-denial, he had practised little in his life. The close air of the class-room, and the noise of a crowd of merry boys were a torment for his over-wrought nerves. And then his colleagues! this Rector Clemens, overflowing with a false humanity; this stiff, wooden Professor Snellius; this Doctor Kubel, combining easy comfort with so-called wit; these lions of learning, Winimer and Broadfoot. Gulliver meeting, on his famous travels, with the man-like, and therefore awfully hideous Yahoos, could not feel a greater aversion for them than Oswald did for those people with whom his position brought him in daily contact. And these Yahoos were exceedingly obliging and familiar; they seemed to have no suspicion of their ugliness; they overwhelmed the new comer with all possible kindnesses; they invited him again and again to evenings at whist, and evenings at tenpins, æsthetic teas, and dramatic readings! They did not seem to mind at all his reserve, his chilling coldness; on the contrary, they saw in it the awkwardness of a young man who has not moved much in good company, and must be encouraged. Even the ladies seemed to be full of this notion, especially Mrs. Rector Clemens, who declared openly her intention to take the shy young man, who was standing so sadly alone in the world, under her wings, and who had already begun to carry out her threat. "I like you, dear Stein!" said the energetic lady; "you have conquered my heart, and gained by your reading of the 'Captain' a place in our dramatic club. I consider it my duty to polish the younger colleagues. True humanity can only be acquired in intercourse with refined ladies. For what says the poet: 'If you wish to know what is becoming, ask noble ladies!' Look at our colleague, Winimer! You have no idea what a bashful, awkward man he was two years ago when he first came here, and what a charming young man I have made of him! Well, with help from above, I shall probably do as well with you."

Oswald overlooked, of course, the natural bonhommie which prompted this and similar little speeches, and only saw the ridiculous form, at which he laughed mercilessly with Timm, whose company he sought regularly after these inflictions.

But there was in Grunwald, besides the fair manager of the dramatic club, yet another lady who thought she had an older and better right to humanize the young scapegrace, and who was the less willing to yield her part to a rival, as she had elsewhere also been mortally offended by her in her most sacred feelings.

This lady was the authoress of the "Cornflowers."

Primula still trembled whenever she thought of the terrible evening on which she had been expected to become the murderer of a great general and hero, and her only consolation was that so far from reading the part allotted her she had scarcely commenced it. But, however that might be, her hatred and her contempt for the people who had treated her with such indignity remained the same. She declared that an unexpected meeting with Mrs. Rector Clemens might have the most disastrous consequences for her health. She carried, even at first, the precaution so far that she never went out without sending her husband some twenty or thirty yards ahead, so that he could warn her in time of the probable approach of the "Gorgon's head;" and although this extreme nervousness gradually subsided, the mere mention of her adversary's name continued still to cause her immediately great and painful emotion.

But Primula's enterprising spirit did not rest long content with such an apparently passive resistance. Her adversary, and not she alone, but her whole kin and her whole circle, must not merely be despised in silence; they must be positively humiliated. She must be cut to the heart, or, as the poetess called it in Maenadic passionateness, "the flaming firebrand must be hurled upon her own hearth." This, however, could be done in no other way than by exploding the dramatic club by establishing another club in opposition, which should contain, under Primula's direction, all the intelligence of Grunwald, and eclipse the club of the schoolmasters as completely as the moon eclipses a fixed star of first magnitude. To preside over such a club at Grunwald had long been Primula's favorite dream when she was still wandering in the evening twilight by the side of the Fragmentist through the fields of Fashwitz, winding a wreath of blue cyanes for herself in sweet anticipation of the triumphs which she was to celebrate hereafter. She had thought this dream near its fulfilment when she crossed the threshold of the reception rooms

in Rector Clemens's house, her Wallenstein in her hand, and the part of Thekla word by word in her head. She had expected that evening to be the hour of her triumph. Was it not to be foreseen--or, more correctly speaking, was it not a matter of course--that as soon as she, Primula, had read the first lines, an immense storm of applause would break out; that the men would beat upon their shields (or books), and men and women would exclaim as with one accord:

"Hail, thrice hail, to the proud light
That makes our darkness bright!
Oh, poetess of lofty mien,
Be thou hereafter our queen!
Oh, don't deny this prayer of ours,
Great author of 'Cornflowers!'"

For this was the Pæan which the authoress had herself composed for the occasion.

Now she saw clearly that she had chosen the wrong road. The scales had fallen from her eyes. What had she, the thoughtful weaver of cornflower-wreaths, to do with the conflict of tragic passions; she, the poetess of the famous Ode to the Mole that she found dead by the wayside, and to the May-bug that lay on its back, in a *dramatic* club? A lyric club it ought to be; and to establish such a lyric club in open and explicit opposition to the dramatic club at Rector Clemens's house was the thought which, as the poetess sang in her own words, "was rushing through her soul like a mighty tempest in spring, calling forth a thousand germs irresistibly, and yet overthrowing everything in its path." Who could resist such inspiration?

Surely not the author of the Fragments, who was filled with like ambition, and whose vanity had been most deeply offended by the conduct of the pedagogues. He became the first pupil of the prophetess.

But a prophetess and one pupil make no congregation; and husband and wife, however clever they may be, do not make a club when they sit at the tea-table. The first condition of their success was, therefore, that prophetess and pupil should go forth as fishers of men; that is to say, of members of the new club. The task was not so easy. Professor Jager knew comparatively little of Grunwald society, which he had only seen at a distance when he was a poor student there. His wife, on the other hand, a native of the town, the seventh daughter of Superintendent Doctor Darkling, knew of course the society well; but the society knew her also as a bugbear of fright and disgust, on account of her eccentricities, long before Jager, then a candidate for holy orders, had courted her, and at last upon his appointment to the curacy of Fashwitz had carried her home under his lowly roof. Although the prophetess, therefore, stood at the shore and cast out her nets day after day, and from morning till night, she had as yet caught but few fish. This would have been extremely painful for a sensitive poetess if her favorite Oswald had not been among the few captives.

His conduct on that evening had won him Primula's heart, a large slice of which he possessed already before, and to a certain degree also the heart of the Fragmentist. Both had urgently requested him not to forget the "hospitable friends of Argos in the plains of the Scamander," and Oswald had accepted the invitation in a fit of malicious curiosity. He had vied during the visit with the professor and the professor's wife in sarcasm against the pedagogues and their wives, and had at last, when Primula revealed to him her plan of a club, entered into her views with the greatest enthusiasm. He had promised to interest the surveyor, Mr. Albert Timm, whom everybody in Grunwald knew as a very clever man, for the plan, and the poetess had in reward for such a happy thought embraced him before the eyes of her husband.

Since that visit not a day had elapsed on which a poetical epistle written by Primula had not reached Oswald. She inquired anxiously after the success of his efforts--little notes which Oswald carefully kept, and then read at night, of course without mentioning names, in the city cellar before the "Rats' Nest." This was the name of a secret society which held every evening its sessions in the above-mentioned rooms, and to which Oswald had the honor to belong as honorary member. His reading invariably provoked a Homeric laughter on the part of the assembled rats.

It was the day after the party at the Grenwitz house, when the professor's servant Lebrecht brought him once more one of these poetical inquiries, written on pink paper. This time, however, it seemed to be of special importance, for Lebrecht, a pale young man of fifteen years, who had been a charity boy a few months before, and still looked more than half-starved, remained standing near the door and said, with his hollow, orphan-house voice, "An answer is requested." Upon the envelope, also, in one of the corners, the letters A. a. i. r. were written daintily, surrounded by a wreath of forget-me-nots. The note was of course in verses, and ran thus:

TO A YOUNG EAGLE FLYING THROUGH THE CLOUDS.

The proud young eagle,
Why does he stay so far,

Amid gray crows and rooks,
He my life's only star?

Oh, how I love to see
The dark-brown eagle's hair,
On your dear noble head,
With the blue eyes fair.

Know not what was done!
Oh glorious conquest!
When in thy eyes I looked,
Was lost fore'er my rest.

But to the stars he soars,
He prizes naught below,
That I, poor Primula,
Am naught to him, I know!

Oswald read the verses twice and a third time without understanding what answer could be expected to such nonsense, until he discovered far down in the corner a microscopic "*tournez s'il vous plaît*". He turned the leaf over, and there, on the other side, he read:

"Dear O.: I must needs descend to prose. I was yesterday in most noble company, about whom I can tell you much if you will listen. This evening a lady is coming to see me (a member of the same society) who has very distinctly intimated her desire to meet you at my house, and who has something to communicate to you which may possibly be decisive for your future happiness. It is true I should be deeply grieved to lose you, but my friendship for the young eagle (see page 1) is as pure as the element which he beats with his mighty wings. Will you call at seven o'clock on

"Your servant, Primula."

A joyful fear fell upon Oswald. Who else could this be but Helen? It is true the step was a bold one, but what is it that love does not dare? He threw with rapid pen a few lines on the paper and gave it to Lebrecht, with the direction to be sure and not to lose the note, an admonition which seemed to be but too well justified by the exceedingly stupid appearance of the orphan boy.

The hours which had to pass till the evening came seemed to him to creep slowly. Misfortune would have it, besides, that he had to give two lessons that afternoon, and to an upper class, where the pupils disliked him particularly on account of his partiality. There was no lack, therefore, of annoyances and tricks, especially as their young teacher seemed to be in worse humor than usually, and Oswald allowed himself to be carried away by his passionate anger--a scene which restored quiet in the frightened class, but which caused him greater annoyance than anything else.

Wrath and disgust in his heart, he left the college. Not far from there he met Franz. No meeting could have been more inconvenient to him just then. He had cultivated the friendship of this excellent man very little; he had hardly been two or three times at Doctor Roban's house, and generally with a hope of not finding Franz there. He knew that such conduct towards a man to whom he was deeply indebted laid him open to the charge of gross ingratitude, but he preferred that to the sense of humiliation which he always felt when the grave eyes of his friend were resting upon him.

"How are you, Oswald?" said Franz, crossing over from the other side of the street and cordially shaking hands with him. "You must be desperately busy that we see so little of you."

"Not exactly," replied Oswald; "but what little I have to do is all the more disagreeable."

"How so?"

"That school! A single hour in the wretched treadmill spoils my temper for the other twenty-three hours of the day. Rather a sweeper in the streets than a teacher."

"I knew beforehand the thing would not suit you." said Franz, with his kindly, warm smile; "but, Oswald, you know habit is a great thing; and then, pray, consider, every profession requires self-denial and sacrifices, even the sweeper's profession. Good-by, Oswald; I have to call here. Do, pray, come and see us soon: I have something important to tell you."

Franz entered the house of his patient, and Oswald walked on.

"Self-denial--sacrifices!" he murmured; "that sounds very beautiful from the lips of one who is happy in his vocation. There is nothing more intensely disagreeable than to be lectured in such general phrases, which suit our position about as well as a blow upon the eye. Timm is right: Franz is a tiresome pedant."

Involuntarily he turned into the street that led to his friend's lodgings. Albert lived under the

shadow of the church of St. Bridget, in the house of the sexton, Toby Goodheart, a man who stood in the odor of very special sanctity, so that nobody could comprehend why the very unholy tenant should have chosen such a landlord, and still less how the two had been able to get along so well for many years.

Albert was at home. He was lying on a sofa, reading. The fragrance of a fine Havana cigar filled the room which formed a suitable frame for the occupant in its reckless disorder.

"Ah, here you are, '*Pompei, meorum prime sodalium*,'" he said, throwing down his book as Oswald entered, and rising. "I was just thinking of you, and wondering whether you like Horace as much when you interpret him from your desk to your boys as I enjoy him here on my sofa with a good cigar between my teeth. Isn't he a famous fellow? I always think of him as a small man with a bald head, a promise of a paunch, bright black eyes and large kissable lips, who lounges, his hands crossed behind him, through the streets of Rome, casting sheep's eyes at a pretty girl on his left and flinging a sarcasm at a citizen on his right, and whose whole moral code is contained in the words: 'Hurrah for Falernian wine and pretty girls! To live without them is not worth while!' Am I right?"

"I rather think you are."

"Oh heavens! What a sepulchral voice. What is the matter now? Have you a note to take up?"

"This wretched college!"

"Oh, is that all? Send it to the Evil One, who invented them all!"

"'*Mais il faut vivre*,' as the tailor told M. de Talleyrand."

"'*Je n'en vois pas la nécessité*,' as M. de Talleyrand replied; at least not the necessity to live as you do."

"How shall I live then? I have about three hundred dollars; when they are at an end--and that may be very soon--I must either work or make an end of myself too!"

"Don't be such a fool! A man like you, who has a thousand ways to make his fortune!"

"For instance?"

"For instance, by marrying the little Grenwitz, who seems to me to wish nothing more eagerly."

"That is easier said than done."

"Perhaps not, if you take the right road."

"And which is that?"

"Force them to give you the girl, whether they will or not."

"What do you mean by your riddle?"

"You are very hard of comprehension to-day."

Albert leaned back in his sofa-corner and blew, as he loved to do, ring after ring in the air. Oswald was absorbed in thought. He considered whether he ought to confide to Timm the secret of the rendezvous to which he had been invited for to-night. At last he said, almost against his own conviction,

"I received a curious note from Primula to-day; I should like to see if you can make more of it than I can."

"Let us hear," replied Albert, lost in admiration of a huge blue ring which he had just accomplished.

Oswald read him the address to the young eagle, and the mysterious postscript. Albert started up from the sofa.

"Oswald, you are the luckiest dog alive!" he cried. "Why, the thing is evident. The young lady can be nobody else but the little Grenwitz. The girl has indeed ten times more sense and pluck than her chaste lover, who understands so little of the great art of seizing fortune by the hem of her garment. In good earnest, Oswald, the cards have been dealt so well for you, it could not be better. Of course, it will not be quite so easy to take the fortress. The Jager has evidently said more than she was authorized to say; but never mind that--you have the outworks, and if you do not get on soon it is your own fault. When are you to be at Primula's house?"

"At seven."

"It is five now; we have two hours time. Come, let us consider the plan of operation with the help of a good glass of wine. Charles the Bald has an excellent hock, and you must drink of that

bravely, so that you may show yourself strong and hearty in your enterprise and permit no trace of sickly hesitation to be seen. Come!"

CHAPTER VI.

Primula was sitting in her study before a table covered with new books, magazines, and papers. The door was open towards the reception-room, which was also lighted up. She had just finished a longer poem, which had to be sent this very evening to the editor of a literary journal, in the "correspondence" of which the following notice had appeared three times already: "P. V. in Gr. Great and gifted friend:--We await the promised MS. *impatiently*." There it was now, the promised MS., written with the heart's blood of the poetess! She had but just placed the last dot over the last i, and already it was to be sent away into the wide heartless world, before he who had inspired all these glowing stanza had ever seen a line of the poem! If he would only come early, so that she might read him at least a few stanzas before that young Baroness Cloten came, in whose presence that would of course be impossible!

There, listen! Was not that a ring at the bell? The door is open below ... A deep male voice ... It is he! it is he! Thanks be to you, oh gracious gods!

Primula blushed, cast a glance at the mirror that was hanging over her writing-table and pushed the fair curls from her blushing face, seized a pen and began although there was no ink in the pen--to scribble with nervous eagerness on a blank sheet.

"Do I interrupt you?" asked the deep voice, close to her ear.

"Why, great heavens!" exclaimed the poetess, casting away the pen; "is it you, Oswald? I had not heard you come at all."

"You were kind enough, madame, to tell me in the most charming note that I have ever read---

"You flatterer! If you praise thus the simple lines of this morning, what will you say of these verses which I have written this evening with glowing brow and beating heart, thinking of no one but yourself? I must read you at least the beginning. She will not be here so soon; perhaps not at all."

"But who is it?"

"Pray, take a seat. It has to go to the post-office in half an hour. Listen! What do you think of this original metre, which seems to be worthy of our Freiligrath? The title is, 'The lion at the Cape.'"

The Castalian Spring once opened was not to be checked. Oswald had to submit to his hard fate and allow himself to be flooded by a genuine deluge of wretched verses. Suddenly the door-bell rang again. The sound seemed to be but a signal for the poetess to read with double and treble rapidity, while she laid her hand upon her hearer's arm, as if to prevent him from escaping. There were only about thirty stanzas yet to be read, when a silk dress was heard rustling in the adjoining room, and suddenly the graceful figure of Emily Cloten was standing in the open door which led to the reception-room.

"I do not interrupt, I hope?" asked the young lady, with a half shy and half bold glance at Oswald; "I'd rather go away again."

"Oh no, no!" replied Primula, in a melancholy tone, putting down the MS. and rising; "not at all! I was just reading to my young friend Stein a few stanzas of a poem. Why, it is nearly half-past seven, and the papers must be at the post-office by eight! Dear Baroness Cloten, dear Mr. Stein, excuse me for the hundredth part of an instant. Stay here in the sitting-room, and I will be back as soon as I have sent off the parcel!"

The excited poetess pushed her guests unceremoniously into the next room, whispering at the same time to Oswald: "What a pity! Only a poet can feel it! The *last* verses were by far the finest."

She dropped the curtain, partly to be undisturbed and partly not to disturb her friends, and Oswald and Emily stood gazing at each other--Oswald speechless from astonishment at this strange and unexpected solution of the mystery, and Emily also silent and embarrassed in spite of her boldness and cleverness, but only for an instant. Immediately afterwards she raised her drooping lashes, smiled at Oswald from the corners of her large, gray eyes, and said hurriedly

and in a whisper:

"You surely do not think it an accident which has brought us together here?"

"I hardly know what to believe," replied Oswald, unconsciously assuming the same hurried and secret tone.

"Then Mrs. Jager has not told you yet?"

"What?"

"I made her believe I had a commission to ask you if you would accept a place in the house of some friends of mine; of course, there is not a word of truth in it. I only came----"

A glance from her bright eyes and a quiver of the charming mouth filled quite eloquently the pause which the young lady made in her speech. Oswald was still unable to adapt himself at once to the situation. He had expected Helen, he found Emily--Emily, whose enchanting, coquettish beauty reminded him so forcibly of some of the most delightful and yet most painful scenes in the confused drama of his life--Emily, whom he had intended to meet with a tragic resolve of resignation! And now he was expected of a sudden to play the part of a lover! He felt a very decided conviction that he must give the young lady some answer or other, but the varied sensations which he experienced overcame him so entirely that he in vain sought for words.

"Why did you not call, as you promised the other day?" continued Emily, somewhat disheartened by this silence of her knight, in the tone of a spoiled child who cannot get the toy she desires, and who therefore is on the point of breaking into tears. "Is it right not to comply with the request--the harmless request--of a lady, and thus compel her to take a step which she can hardly excuse to herself, much less to the judgment of the world?"

Oswald stepped back unconsciously, and replied in a half serious half ironical tone: "It seems, madame, to be my fate to embarrass you always by my plebeian want of knightly gallantry."

He had hardly uttered these words when he would have given a world to take them back. Emily's lovely face, which had until now beamed with rosy smiles, became deadly pale. Her large eyes grew still larger and rigid, like the eyes of one who has to suffer an intense physical or mental pain; her pale lips trembled convulsively, as if she wished to say something and could not find the strength to do so. Her whole body trembled, and she grasped the back of a chair. He had not meant to wound her so deeply. Oswald was ashamed of his cruelty, especially as he was by no means so much in earnest with the Catoic severity which he had displayed. He went up to Emily; he seized her hand and held it, although she made a feeble effort to draw it away; he conjured her in passionate words to forgive him; he swore he repented of what he had said; his heart was sick, his head confused, his lips often said what his head and his heart did not wish to be said; she ought to give him time to recover and to justify himself before his own heart and before her.

Emily's pain seemed to be somewhat soothed by these words, and perhaps still more by the tone of deep feeling in which they were uttered. She had seated herself in the chair on the back of which her little hand was still trembling; her tears began to flow abundantly; she permitted Oswald, who was bending over her, to kiss her hand while he continued to implore her forgiveness for his insanity--as he called it--in low words, which became every moment more passionate and more tender. Her sobs subsided, like the sobbing of a little girl who feels at last that the doll which she was refused is laid in her arms amid kisses and caresses. Both Oswald and Emily seemed to have entirely forgotten that they were in a strange house, where the very next moment might prepare for them most serious embarrassment, and they were fortunate indeed that an unexpected and most ludicrous accident recalled them to their ordinary prudence, which they had completely lost in the intoxicating joy of the first blending of heart and heart.

Suddenly a cry--a yell--was heard in the adjoining room, and Oswald and Emily started in horror, both thinking almost instinctively that the poetess was wrapped in flames, and on the point of death. The first glance as they drew aside the curtain taught them, however, that the poetess was not in any danger of her life, and as they approached more closely they saw what had happened. Primula had given herself up so completely to the admiration of a successful stanza which had received at the last moment and by the insertion of an indescribably pathetic epithet a most marvellous additional charm, that she had committed a mistake, such as will happen to great minds, and to them most easily of all. She had intended to take up the sand-box, and she had taken the inkstand and poured its copious contents to the last drop over her manuscript, and thence in a black cascade over the whole breadth of her yellow-silk dress! And there she was standing now--the cruelly ill-treated sufferer--silent after the first anguish had forced her to utter that cry raising her sadly inked hands and her watery blue eyes overflowing with tears to the ceiling, as if she wished to call upon father Apollo himself to be a witness of the terrible fate that had befallen one of his most favored children. Oswald and Emily could hardly restrain their laughter; but all their efforts to preserve their composure became useless in an instant, when the poetess in tragic grief pressed both her hands upon her face, and a moment afterwards stood before them covered with terrible paint, like the wildest warrior of the wildest tribe of Indians.

"Do not laugh, my friends," said the offended lady, with gentle voice; "it does not become the friends of persecuted genius to belong to that sad world which loves to blacken----"

Emily, who was always quite as ready to laugh immoderately as to weep bitterly, could not resist any longer. She threw herself into an arm-chair and laughed till her eyes filled with tears.

"Baroness Cloten!" said Primula, with dignity, "I must say that your manner has something very offensive for delicately-strung minds like mine;" then turning to Oswald, in the tone of Cæsar dying: "Oswald, I have not deserved this!" and she turned to leave the room.

"Dearest, best Mrs. Jager," cried Emily, rising and stepping in her way; "I beg a thousand, thousand pardons; but, pray, see yourself if it is possible for any one to keep from laughing!"

And she pushed Primula gently towards the pier-glass, before which the poetess was in the habit of seeking inspiration from her own muse-like appearance. But now it was the work of a moment to look, to utter a piercing cry, as if she had beheld a gorgon-head, and then, without further warning, to fall fainting into Oswald's arms, who was fortunately standing behind her.

"Pray ring for the maid," said Oswald, carrying the poor lady to the sofa.

Upon Emily's furious ringing Primula's maid appeared at once, but the poetess had recovered so far as to be able to open her eyes partly and to say with feeble voice to Oswald and Emily: "I thank you, my friends! You had a right to laugh, *du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas*. But now leave me! Leave an unfortunate being, forced to bear her terrible fate in silence and solitude. Not a word! Not a word! Leave me!"

What was to be done? They had to obey a request made in such positive terms. Five minutes afterwards Emily and Oswald had been shown down the stairs by sleepy Lebrecht and were standing in the street.

"*Mais, mon Dieu!*" said Emily; "I never thought of it! I have ordered my carriage an hour later!"

"Then there will be nothing left for you but to accept my arm and to walk home on foot."

Emily gave her arm to Oswald, and thus they walked for some time in silence side by side.

It was a very dark, still evening. The autumn winds had bared the trees completely, and were resting now they had done their work. Winter was standing at the gate, but was delaying yet a little while before he knocked with his frozen hand. The streets were exceedingly dark, as the lamps had not been lighted for astronomical reasons. It was, therefore, but natural that Emily was hanging more closely on the arm of Oswald, who seemed to know the way perfectly well.

"Do you know where we live?" she asked.

"In Southtown, I think?" It was the same suburb in which Miss Bear's boarding-school was situated.

"Yes. It is a long way!"

"All the better!"

A gentle pressure of her round arm rewarded Oswald for the compliment.

They had reached the town gate, walking rapidly but saying little to each other. As soon as they were outside the town they began to walk more slowly, as if by concert. Oswald felt that the young beauty who hung on his arm was in his power--that it depended on him to make her happy--in her sense of the word, at least. The virtuous impulse which he had felt just now, and which had been produced partly by the pride of self-respect, had long since passed away. Emily's coquettish charms, whose power he had already once felt overwhelming in the window-niche at Barnewitz, had not failed to have their effect upon his wavering but extremely susceptible nature; and if he even thought at that moment of the greater beauty of Helen, and of what he called his true love, for which he had sacrificed so much--alas! so much!--this served after all only to make the sweetness of a stolen and half-forbidden passion all the more intoxicating.

"Are you still angry, Emily?" he said, with the most insinuating tone of his sweet, deep voice.

"I--and angry?" replied Emily, and she came up closer and closer to her companion; "can we be angry where we would love, love always, love inexpressibly, and----"

"And what, sweetest?"

"Perhaps be loved a little in return!"

The words sounded so childlike, good, and true, that Oswald could not understand how he had ever been able to reject the love of this most charming creature.

"And yet," he said, "you were once angry with me; and you had cause! I swear it by that

heaven which was then looking down upon us with its golden stars! How shall I make amends, oh sweet one! for what--oh! I cannot bear to think of that night at the ball at Grenwitz!"

"Really!" replied Emily, merrily; "oh, then it is all right again. Then I will not be sorry for anything that has happened since."

"For what has happened since! *What* has happened?"

"How can you ask? Am I not Baroness Cloten? And why am I that? Only because you would none of my love! Oh, Oswald, I cannot tell you what a tumult there was in my heart that night after I had left you. My heart was breaking; I could have cried aloud; I could have thrown myself down on the ground; I could have died. And yet I sent Cloten to my aunt to ask her for my hand. How could I do it? You do not know women, if you ask that. Cloten, or any one; I did not care who, at that moment I had only the one thought--to be avenged on you by making myself as wretched as I possibly could, so that you should have my unhappiness on your conscience, and I might be able to say to you one of these days: You would have it so."

"This 'one of these days' has come sooner than you probably expected. I would cheerfully give many years of my life--I would willingly die on the spot--if I could by so doing make you free again; as free as you were when we met for the first time at Barnewitz."

"What could I do with my freedom if I were to lose you?" replied Emily, tenderly and teasingly. "No, no, Oswald; ten thousand times rather just as it is now. If you will love me a little----"

"Can you doubt it?"

"Perhaps--but never mind; only a little, and I am satisfied. I can bear being called Baroness Cloten; I can bear your loving another----"

"Another!"

"Yes, sir, another; who certainly is very beautiful, but as proud as beautiful; and who, you may rest assured, would not hesitate to sacrifice her love to her pride, if she can ever love really, which I doubt. Oh, Oswald, I wish you had seen her last night! I know people call me coquettish, and I may be so when I have a chance of making a fool of a man; but then I do it merrily, and not by casting down my eyes prudishly, as Helen does. I can tell you I was angry with her last night for your sake. I thought: there is the poor man dying for love for you; and here are you, the lady of his heart, and you allow yourself to be courted to your heart's content, and by whom? By the essence of all foolish conceit that was ever put into a handsome uniform; by the king of all ball-heroes in varnished boots and well-fitting kid-gloves; by the fashion-model of our young dandies, who try in vain to imitate him in the way he holds his head and snarls out his *Non Ma'am, oui Ma'moiselle!*"

"And who is this hero?" asked Oswald, laughing, in a way which did not sound quite natural.

"A Prince Waldenberg--Waldenberg-Malikowsky-Letbus."

"Is he not a dark-haired man, as long as his name, with a face like a melancholy bulldog?"

"That's the man. Handsome, he is not; witty, he is not; good, he is probably also not exactly; but what does it matter? The prospect of becoming Princess Waldenberg-Malikowsky-Letbus, and to be the owner of a few hundred thousand souls--the prince is a Russian--covers the heartlessness of the future husband with a pleasant veil, and one can gracefully drop the dark silken lashes and smile."

While Emily was thus acting upon the principle that in war and in love all means are fair, and invoked the demon of jealousy to come to her aid, they had come quite near to Miss Bear's house, as their way lay in that direction. Emily paused and started, for suddenly a gigantic figure, wrapped in a large cloak, detached itself from the dark shadow of the poplar-trees at the garden-gate, where it had probably been standing for some time, and passed them slowly.

"*Quand on parle du loup,*" said Emily; "if it had been less dark we would have had an interesting encounter."

This meeting the prince at this hour and at this place was a confirmation of Emily's words which could not well be stronger. The drop of jealousy which had fallen into Oswald's heart set his blood on fire, and brought him with great suddenness to the same state of despair in which Emily had been on that night when she was rejected by Oswald and, with wrath against him and jealousy of Helen in her heart, went to become Cloten's betrothed. The only difference was, that Emily had never loved the man in whose arms she threw herself, while Oswald had been from the first moment deeply impressed with the lovely woman who was now hanging so temptingly on his arm.

"Here we are!" said Emily, when they had reached a villa which lay on the same side of the road. Between the villa and the next house a lane, which Oswald knew perfectly well, led straight down to the park.

"Have you the courage to walk a little further with me into the park?" whispered Oswald into her ear, as they stopped.

"Why not?" answered Emily, still lower.

But her courage could not be very great, after all for as they went on between the two houses and then down a very steep hill, which led by means of a short wooden bridge into the park, her heart beat as if it would burst; and when they at last found themselves under the tall trees, and the night-wind blew dull through the leafless branches, she hesitated, and said:

"It is very dark here."

"Then you are, after all, afraid, darling!" replied Oswald, bending his face so low that his breath touched her cheek.

"Not by your side, If we were going to face death!"

Emily hung around Oswald's neck; the lips, which did not meet for the first time to-day, touched each other in one long, burning kiss.

They walked up and down the avenue. They did not mind that they could not see the trunks of the trees at a few paces distance--that the cold breath of the sea blew on them; the darker it was, the further they felt removed from the world, which must not know anything of their love; and the colder it was, the more frequently would he wrap the warm shawl around her--the more closely could she press to his bosom, to his arms. The whole fire of passion which was burning in Emily's heart flared up in wild flames. She kissed his hands, she kissed his lips, she laughed, she cried, she was beside herself! "Oh, take me with you, Oswald! wherever you want--to the end of the world--where no one knows us, no one blames our love! I do not care for riches and for rank. I have not learnt to work, but I will learn it with pleasure for your sake. You laugh; you do not believe me. Oh, try me! Make me your slave; I do not complain, if I can only be near you! And, Oswald, when you do not love me any more, then tell me frankly; or no! rather tell me not! take, without saying a word--take a dagger and thrust it in my heart; and then, when all is over, allow me, for pity's sake, the unspeakable bliss of breathing my last in a kiss on your lips!"

Thus spoke the passionate woman amid kisses and caresses--now jubilant, now melancholy, now in broken stammering words, and now in winged words of eloquence, like a young little bird that would like to sing forth all that is in its beating bosom at once, and yet cannot accomplish more than a soft twittering, and now and then a clear note.

She could not understand why Oswald refused to visit her openly the next day, and thenceforth to show himself at her house whenever she saw company. She fancied such intercourse would be perfectly charming. "Cloten is often absent for half the day. When you are once introduced at our house we can spend the most lovely hours together undisturbed."

"Never!"

"Why never? You do not want to see me?"

"I should like nothing better; but the question is: Can I do it? But how can I return into your society, after leaving in the manner in which I did? It has always been my principle never again to set foot across the threshold of a house where I have been one insulted, purposely or accidentally; for what has been done once may be done again. And if it is not done, confidence and intimacy must needs be gone, and they are as little apt to return as innocence."

"But why do you mind the others? Those I do not wish to see and to notice, I never do see or notice."

"You can do that; but don't you see that that is utterly impossible in my case? Or do you think Baron Barnewitz, young Grieben, or whoever else belongs to that clique, would leave me unnoticed and unobserved?"

"They shall not come to our house; not one of them shall come. I will receive nobody; and those whom I receive, I will receive so that they will not call again!"

"My dear child, those are all pretty bubbles, which would burst at the very first breath of reality. And if you were really to enter the lists against your society for my sake--where after all you would be infallibly worsted--would your husband make the same sacrifice for the sake of a man whom he certainly does not love, and has good reason not to love?"

"Arthur does whatever I wish; I can ask Arthur to do anything."

"And if he were such a fool," said Oswald, violently; "I will not play this blind-man's-buff. If your husband really loves you, so much the worse for you and me and him. I know that you women possess in such cases the marvellous power of not letting the right hand know what the left hand does, but we men are made differently; at least I am. I do not talk to you of moral scruples, which we manage at needs to overcome when we thoroughly despise the man whose confidence we abuse; but I should suffer unspeakable anguish, for which all the delights of love

would be no compensation, if I saw with my own eyes how the man whom I despise was placing his arm in coarse familiarity around your waist; if I were to leave you and knew that you--oh, I cannot, I will not speak of what I do not dare to think."

Emily threw herself, sobbing, into Oswald's arms. "Oh, let me always stay with you! let me always stay with you! let me never go back to my house! I will not see him again! he shall never again touch my hand. I have never loved him, you know! Oh, Oswald, have pity on me! let me not suffer so terribly for something I did, after all, but from passionate love for you!"

"Poor, unhappy child," whispered Oswald, pressing her tenderly to his heart, "poor unhappy child; and unhappy through me! That is the bitterest part! Emily, sweet one, dear one, don't cry so! Your sobbing tears my heart. Leave the man who has already made you so unhappy, and who can do nothing but make you still unhappier. Forget that you ever saw him! Go back to your husband! You will not be happy with him; but who is happy in this world? You will get accustomed to him, as man gets accustomed to everything at last. And thus the stream of life will roll on quietly, a little stormy perhaps in the beginning, but gradually more slowly and lazily, until it falls finally into the Dead Sea of stolid resignation. Oh God! oh God! Come, Emily, it is of no avail to pity one another. The night is cold; your hair, your clothes, are as wet from the falling mist as your face from your tears. You must go home."

He placed his arm around her waist, and led her back the way they had come. Emily suffered it all. Her suppressed sobbing ceased after a while; she seemed to comprehend the helplessness of her situation. But suddenly, when they had reached the bridge which led out of the park, she stopped, seized both of Oswald's hands, and said with a low firm voice:

"I have considered it, and it is so. I will not live without you henceforth, since I know how glorious life is with you. If you cannot love me, I conjure you by all that is sacred to you, tell me. I will not say a word in reply--not a word. I will not cry--not complain. You shall not be troubled by me. I know what I shall do then."

"Emily!"

"No--let me finish. I tell you I will not live without you. If you do not love me, it must be a matter of indifference to you what becomes of me. But if you love me, then you must feel that we must be united in one way or another. How that can be done, I do not see yet; but I shall reflect upon it and you will reflect upon it, and we will find a way. Now tell me: Do you love me? or do you not love me?"

"I love you!" said Oswald; and he really believed at that moment what he was saying.

Emily threw herself into his arms. "And I love you, Oswald, as woman never loved you before--as woman never will love you again on earth: And now," she continued in a calmer tone, while they were walking on slowly, "let us consider our position. For the present, I see, things must remain as they are; but I must see you from time to time or I shall become insane. Here in the city, where a thousand eyes are watching us, that is difficult; but I have another plan. Over there in Ferrytown [this was a little village on the coast just opposite Grunwald, where the ferry-boats landed], an old nurse of mine is living, who is devoted to me. She is a widow, and has an only son of my own age, who would go through fire and water for me. She is an invalid; send her every day something, and often call on her; hence nobody will notice it if I go to see her again. Her son is a hand on the ferry-boat, which belongs to her, and he will carry us safely and secretly over and back again. In a few weeks, perhaps in a few days, the ice will hold, and then the thing will be much simpler. If we do not before.... What do you say, Oswald?"

"The plan is a good one," said Oswald, "especially because I see nothing better. When shall we carry it out?"

"To-morrow, if you choose."

"When?"

"At five o'clock in the afternoon. You know we must not cross at the same time. I will go earlier. You follow me when it is darker. We will arrange about the return. The house of Mr. Lemberg--do not forget the name--is the last on the right hand near the shore. Oh, Oswald! Oswald! Think of the happiness of being with you for hours and hours and no one to disturb us! But now, my Oswald, go! You must not be seen with me. I must be alone when I get home. Farewell--farewell till to-morrow."

The slender figure of Emily had reached the gate of the villa without being seen. Oswald heard the bell; the gate was opened and closed again; Oswald was alone.

He was alone; alone with a heart in which it was dark like the dark night which covered the cold, lifeless earth as with a black shroud. Not a star of hope in the heavens, and none in his soul; dark, all dark from sunrise to sunset. He could not fix his thoughts upon any point except the one that he would like to die--that it would be fortunate for him if his life could come to an end--for him and for others. Did not misfortune follow his footsteps? Was it not his fate to carry confusion and sorrow wherever he went? And this last bond, which bound him irrevocably, if he would not prove himself faithless as--as what?--as he had always been! Melitta! Helen! Emily!--what had

Emily that the others did not have, except that she happened to be the last?

Thus he wandered about in the park, down to the shore and back again, and once more to the sea-shore and back again, driven about by the furies of his own conscience. The damp cold air penetrated through his clothes, he did not mind it; he hurt himself against the dripping tree, he scratched his hand against the thorn-bushes, he did not feel it. Murmuring curses against providence, against mankind, against himself, he drank in full draughts from the cup of sorrow which a man prepares for himself in his folly, against the will of the gods and the counsel of fate.

At last he found himself--he knew not how--before the garden-gate of Miss Bear's boarding-school. There was light in one of the windows--Helen's window. It was the first light he had seen for hours, and he felt as if a star was once more shining down into the night of his heart. Comfort and hope he knew that star could not bring him, but it softened his despair into sorrow. He glided into that humor in which man rises from the chaos of his own passions, looks full of painful pity at the careworn features of his genius, and feels the sorrows of the world in his own sorrow. He thought not of himself; he thought of the Son of Man, as he raised his voice, gathering his strength once more, and walking on the road towards town, and sang:

"Thy face, alas! so fair and dear,
I saw it in my dreams quite near.
It was so angel-like, so sweet,
And yet with pain and grief replete,
The lips alone, they are still red,
But soon they will be pale and dead."

CHAPTER VII.

A few days later a little company was assembled in the sitting-room of Privy Councillor Rohan's house. It consisted of the privy councillor himself, his daughter, Franz, and a young lady who had been brought there by Mr. Bemperlein: Mademoiselle Marguerite Martin. They had had supper, after waiting a whole hour for Mr. Bemperlein. Now they were sitting around the fire-place. Upon a table near Sophie, where usually the tea-things were placed, stood to-day a small tureen, from which the young lady filled at rare intervals one or the other's glass. The conversation was not particularly animated; a veil of melancholy seemed to hang over them all. No stranger would have guessed that this silent melancholy company was celebrating what is ordinarily looked upon as a festive occasion--the eve of the wedding-day.

And yet this was the case. To-morrow in the forenoon the young couple were to be married in the church of the university by Doctor Black, and then an hour later they were to leave for the capital, where Franz had important business.

For at the eleventh hour before the wedding a great change had taken place in the plans which Franz had formed for the future. The sacrifice which he had wished to make in all quietness and secret, for the peace and the happiness of the family, had not been accepted. When he wrote his friend in the capital that he was compelled to decline the offered place as assistant physician in the great hospital, he thought the matter was settled. But his friend was not the man to abandon so easily a plan to which he had become attached. He wrote again, and--Franz had not anticipated this--he wrote to his father-in-law also. Thus the privy councillor learnt what, according to Franz's plans, was to have remained a secret forever. He fell from the clouds; but his decision was formed instantly with all his former energy. When Franz called on him half an hour afterwards he received him with the letter in his hand. At this decisive moment Roban found himself once more in the possession of all his original strength of mind and eloquence.

"Do you not see, dearest Franz," he said, "that this enormous sacrifice, which you make for my sake with a light mind, and, like all men born of woman, with a heavy heart, overwhelms me by its greatness, and annihilates me, so to say, morally? You have sacrificed your fortune for me. I do not underrate that, I am sure; but many a father has done that cheerfully for his son, why should not for once a son do that for his father? But when you refuse this place you sacrifice something which can no longer be counted and valued. You sacrifice your whole future. You sacrifice the ambition that fills every noble, manly heart, to reach the highest degree of perfection in the profession to which it belongs; but more than that, you sacrifice also what you have no right to dispose of--your duty towards your fellow-men. To whom much is given, of him much is expected and much demanded. You will find in the great city a sphere of action such as a Cæsar would envy, if a Cæsar could ever comprehend in what the true control over men consists.

You will be there, in reality, what the flatterers in Rome called a Nero and a Heliogabalus: *decus et deliciae generis humani*—ornament and a delight of mankind; for you will make the blind see, the lame walk, and those who are buried under the burden of their sufferings rise from the death-bed. And pupils, filled with enthusiasm by your words and your works, will go forth to every land, and thus your usefulness will extend infinitely, as that of every truly good and great man is sure to extend. What you can do in Grunwald, others can do also. What you can do there, few others can do; and it is right and proper that every soldier in the great army of progress should march in his own appointed place in the ranks.

"And now, setting aside these inner and moral motives, which bind you to answer to your friend's summons with an obedient Here! the actual circumstances also are more in favor of the step than against it. I know very well what motives you had for your refusal, but—pardon me, Franz, if I speak candidly—have you not perhaps underrated my strength, even if you did not overestimate your own? I am what the world calls a candidate for death; death has marked me already as his own, in order to hit me all the more certainly the next time, but the next time need not come so very soon. If you do not object to it peremptorily, I estimate my probable life yet some four or five years, perhaps even longer. During that time I shall hold my lectures and visit my patients as before, and if I cannot do it all by myself I shall choose an assistant, who will not be so dangerous a rival as my excellent son-in-law whom they already begin to prefer to myself. Seriously Franz we are here in each other's way. And when the question is, after all, how to make money, why then it is better you go to the east and shear your sheep there, and I do my shearing in the west."

Franz was not quite convinced by these arguments, but he felt that the privy councillor could not well act differently as a man of honor. So he went to his betrothed and told her he had received an offer to go to the capital. What did she say to that?

"Whether you ought to accept the call," replied Sophie, after a short reflection, "that I must leave of course to you and to papa to decide; for I do not understand that. But if it must be done, I shall certainly not say No! When do we leave?"

"I must be there at least at Christmas, but I have to go at once for a few days, in order to reconnoitre."

"Then I will go with you. You shall see that I am not so unpractical as you think."

One would have thought Sophie cold and unfeeling, from hearing her speak so calmly, almost coolly, of a plan which was decisive for her and Franz's future, and which separated her, if carried out, perhaps forever from her native town and her paternal home, from her friends and acquaintances, and from a thousand familiar habits. And yet she suffered unspeakably from the thought that she should have to leave her father, whom she loved so dearly and who loved her so devotedly. But she knew that he would adhere in the hour of decision to the principles which he had inculcated in his daughter, and that he would expect the same firmness from her. It was a hard struggle which these two noble hearts had to endure the night after the evening on which Franz had decided to leave Grunwald; a struggle such as every son of man has to go through once or twice—and alas! in many cases again and again—in his life; a struggle during which the perspiration runs in big drops from the pain-furrowed brow, and the suffering heart prays: Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass by me! But when on the next morning father and daughter embraced each other without saying a word, and held each other a long, long time, their eyes might gently overflow, but their brows were clear and their hearts sang heavenly melodies.

From that moment Sophie gave her whole mind to the one great purpose to arrange everything in the house so that her father might at least not miss the accustomed comfort when she should leave him. Especially was she anxious to find a person of her own sex who could fill her place at table and in the evening, and assume the general direction of domestic affairs. Her choice was soon made. The very day after that memorable conversation before the fire-place, Bemperlein had, at Sophie's express desire, brought Mademoiselle Marguerite to the privy councillor's house. Sophie had been much pleased with the pretty, black-eyed French woman, and congratulated Bemperlein sincerely on his selection. Then already it had occurred to Sophie, that Marguerite might, after her own marriage, manage her father's household. Now she hastened to carry out this plan. The father, upon whom the "little Lacerta," as he called the slim, slight figure, had made a very favorable impression, thought the plan "not so bad;" Franz "approved," and as for Bemperlein, it was a matter of course, that he adopted it with enthusiasm. He being the most suitable person for the purpose, was therefore deputed to sound Marguerite about her own views; and with such a fine diplomat as Anastasius Bemperlein, it was not surprising that his most delicate mission was crowned with the most brilliant success. Marguerite declared that she was willing to accept the proffered honor *de tout son coeur*, as soon as she was released from her present engagement. Nothing, therefore, was now wanting but to obtain the gracious dismissal of the Demoiselle Marguerite Martin from the position of subject to Baron Grenwitz. This was more readily accomplished, to everybody's surprise, than had been expected. The bright, sharp eyes of the governess had long been a serious inconvenience to the baroness, especially since many things had happened in her house, and were still happening, which could not bear very close examination. Besides, she had always had the principle that it was better to change her servants at certain intervals, since she thought she had found out by experience that "new brooms sweep well," and Marguerite had been allowed to remain long beyond the ordinary

term. She therefore gave her, willingly the desired *cong *, and permitted her even in consideration of the peculiar circumstances, to go after a few days at once to the privy councillor's house. It was a matter of course that Marguerite had to sacrifice a quarter's salary, "in consideration of the serious inconvenience and evident pecuniary loss which her sudden departure caused the baroness," for the young "person" who had served the baroness during five years with indefatigable zeal, had, after all, done nothing but her bounden duty.

Thus Marguerite had become a member of the privy councillor's family, and could of course not fail to be present to-night at the great solemnity in the family circle.

She was, moreover, the only one who could keep up the conversation to-night without great effort. She tried, to be sure, to adapt herself as well as she could to the solemn aspect of things, and not to offend the feelings of the others by her own cheerfulness, but her innate vivacity did not allow her to be silent for any length of time, and every moment she broke out into a "*dites moi donc, mademoiselle, savez vous me dire, monsieur le docteur?*" like a merry little canary bird who begins to sing loud and joyously again after the first fright has passed away when it finds its cage buried in darkness.

"But I should really like to know where in all the world Bemperlein can be to-night," said Sophie, looking at her watch; "he promised to be here by eight, and now it is half-past ten."

"Perhaps miss Marguerite can explain the matter," said the privy councillor.

"*Moi pas du tout!*" replied Marguerite, glad to have a chance to say something. "I have not seen him since last night. I am almost afraid he is sick; he has looked quite excited and *nerveux* for some days."

"I was at his lodgings to-day," said Franz.

"Well?" inquired Sophie.

"Well, just think, I did not see the odd fellow at all. He called through the closed door that he could not see me; he had an important chemical investigation to carry on, and could not leave it for an instant."

"I hope nothing has happened?" said Sophie. "Had you not better go to his house and see, Franz?"

"Very well!" replied Franz, emptying his glass and rising.

At the same moment, however, there was heard suppressed laughing in the hall, where the servants seemed to be assembled. The door opened and a strangely accoutred personage entered. Two huge goose-wings fastened to the shoulders and a bow in the hand, with the requisite quiver and arrows on the shoulder, together with a wreath on the head, proclaimed him undoubtedly as Amor, although the spectacles on his nose hardly agreed with the proverbial blindness of the god of love, nor the black evening costume with the classic simplicity on which the Son of Venus generally presents himself.

This strange figure approached the company with graceful steps, remained standing at a respectful distance, bowed and spoke:

"Most highly honored, happy pair, most worthy father of the bride and most darling demoiselle:

"I am--to see it is not hard--
The great god Amor.
Where'er my flames burn in a heart,
There I am, rich or poor.
Whoever hears my arrows rattle,
Forsakes the hope of doing battle;
The arrow sent from my good bow,
Strikes great and small and high and low.
And who is wounded by my hand,
Drops conquer'd on the sand.
I now will show you of my art,
A sample, which will make you start."

Here Amor took with great solemnity an arrow from his quiver, saying: Do not fear, ladies and gentlemen, the string is loose, and the arrows have, as you will please notice, huge India-rubber balls instead of points. Thereupon he placed the harmless arrow on the harmless bow and aimed it at Sophie, who caught it cleverly in her hand and pressed it with comic pathos to her heart. The same proceeding was repeated with Franz, except that it hit him on the head. After Amor had thus demonstrated that he was not idly threatening, he continued,

"Now two have been dispatched,

And all their peace is gone;
It can be clearly seen
That they're forever done.
They know no rest and no repose,
If snow comes down, or blooms the rose,
Until the parson makes them one,
And they are altogether gone.
Then fare thee well, paternal home,
I must through all the world now roam!
Then fare thee well, oh father dear,
We never shall again be here!
Then fare ye well, oh friends of ours,
Who were our joy at all good hours!
Then fare ye well, good people all,
I have to follow another call!
To-morrow, with the evening star,
I shall be gone, oh ever so far!"

The last words Amor uttered with deeply-moved voice. The faces of the company around the fire-place, which had at first beamed with merriment, had become graver and graver, and through the half-opened door, around which the servants were crowding, suppressed sobs were heard.

"Take a glass of our brewing, Bemperly," said Sophie, offering Amor a glass.

"Your health, Miss Sophie," replied Amor, emptying the glass at one gulp. "But now, sit down again; I have not done yet."

Amor stepped back again, rattled his quiver as if to convince himself that there were some arrows left, and then said:

"So fierce, as you have just now seen,
Are Amor's arrows sharp and keen,
Yet does at times he find it hard,
When SHE keeps anxious watch and ward,
The good young god is full of zeal--"

At these words he glanced adoringly at mademoiselle--

"But she thinks not of woe or weal,
When he of tender love then speaks,
'I do not understand!' she shrieks."

This allusion, quite intelligible to all present, called forth a universal smile, which changed into loud laughter when Mademoiselle Marguerite, who had hardly understood a single word of all that Amor had said, but who clearly saw from the laughter of her friends that something particularly witty had been uttered, turned round to Sophie and asked aloud: "I do not understand, *qu'est-ce qu'il dit?*"

Amor was clever enough to fall in with his own hearty laugh; but immediately he continued with greater gravity than before:

"Then comes the youth in greatest haste
And begs of me, who am Amor chaste,
'With sharpest arrow hit, I pray,
That wicked girl, so that she may--'"

With these words Amor laid his hand upon his heart:

"'Hereafter know how one does feel
When one does love her with true zeal.'
And I replied: 'my dear good boy,
I help you forthwith with this toy,
The sharpest arrow that is here,
I'll shoot it at her from quite near,
Whoever feels this sharp, good dart,
With love will burn deep in his heart.'"

Amor showed the arrow which he had taken from the quiver while reciting the last words. To

the India-rubber ball a slip of paper was fastened on which something was written, though it could not be read at such a distance. He aimed at Mademoiselle Marguerite and called out with a loud voice,

"If that's not good to awaken love, Tell me what better is, my dear sweet dove?"

The arrow flew from the bow into Mademoiselle Marguerite's lap. But Amor did not wait for the results of his heroic deed; he turned his back, adorned with the goose wings, and hurried out, followed by the loud laughter of the company.

"What is on the paper, Marguerite?"

"You must let us see the paper, mademoiselle!"

"Of course!" cried Sophie, Franz, and the privy councillor, who was highly amused by Bemperlein's unexpected dramatic farce. But Marguerite had hardly cast a glance at the paper, than her expressive face was covered with deep blushes. She tore off the paper hurriedly and threw it into the fire-place. But Sophie, who had anticipated this, pushed the paper aside before the flames could seize it, snatched it up and called out, "I have it! I have it!" Marguerite wanted to take the precious document from her, but Sophie ran away with it. Marguerite followed her, while Franz and the privy councillor laughed heartily at the efforts of the little Lacerta to reach up to the raised arm of Sophie, who was head and shoulders higher. In their haste the young ladies rushed at the door just as Bemperlein, who had in the meantime laid aside his Olympian attributes, was coming back, and thus it happened that Marguerite, unable to check her rapid course, ran right into his arms.

"Behold the sacred power of the god!" exclaimed Sophie, as she saw this, exulting. "Here, Marguerite, is your paper. I do not care to see now what was written on the prescription, since I have seen the effect."

With these words she made a deep courtesy and handed Marguerite the paper, who hid it hurriedly in her bosom.

"That was well done, Bemperly," said the young lady in her exuberance of merriment. "I must embrace you for it."

Hereupon she seized the blushing god of love by the shoulders and gave him a hearty kiss on the brow.

"I call you to be my witness, privy councillor," said Bemperlein, "that the ladies are fighting who is to have me, without my making the slightest advances, and that if Franz challenges me, I am not bound to give him satisfaction."

Bemperlein had brought new spirit into the company, and henceforth laughter and merriment were the order of the day. The good humor of the circle rose in proportion as the level sank in the punch-bowl. Only Marguerite was more quiet than before; but the joke had been carried quite far enough, and they did not tease her any more; they pretended even not to notice her, when she left her seat near the fire-place and began to walk up and down in the room, evidently buried in thought. Franz, Sophie, and the privy councillor were soon engaged in weighty family matters, and did not observe, therefore, that Bemperlein also had risen quietly, and joining Marguerite, had commenced a conversation in a low tone with her, which soon became so interesting that they had to adjourn to the deep bay-window, where the broad folds of a heavy curtain protected them safely against the glances of the company. Unfortunately, however, the stuff of which the curtains were made was not thick enough to break all the sound-waves completely, and thus it happened that after the lapse of perhaps five minutes those near the fire were suddenly startled by a noise which came from the window, and evidently arose from the sudden parting of the lips of two people, after they had rested upon each other for some time.

The origin of this very remarkable sound was the following:

The happy couple had--quite accidentally--wandered off into the bay-window; Mademoiselle Marguerite had at once desired to turn back again, but Bemperlein, bold as a lion, had seized her hand and said most impressively:

"Have you read what was on the paper?"

Marguerite had read it, of course, but she would not have been a little Lacerta if she had not answered the direct question by saying: "*Non monsieur!*"

"May I then tell you what it was?"

The little Lacerta began thereupon to tremble a little, not daring to say yes or no; Mr. Anastasius Bemperlein, however, interpreting her silence and her trembling in his favor, placed his arm around the slender waist of the little Lacerta, and whispered: "*Mademoiselle Marguerite Martin, je vous aime de tout mon coeur!*"

As she only trembled the more after this loyal declaration, and yet did not make any effort to escape from the arms of her knight, he said in a still lower and more impressive voice:

"Marguerite! do answer! Do you love me? Yes, or no?"

As Marguerite had answered this question with a very faint "*Oui!*" there was nothing left to do, for a man so perfectly at home in love affairs as Mr. Anastasius Bemperlein was, but to hold the lady more firmly in his arms and to press a loud sounding kiss upon her unresisting lips.

And this kiss was the noise which suddenly started the company at the fire-place. They looked at each other in silence. The privy councillor smiled; but Franz and Sophie, who had not quite so much self-control, broke out into loud laughter.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the little Lacerta, slipping, full of terror, out of the arms of her knight.

"Be quiet!" replied the knight. "They must learn it anyhow," said he, and seized the little lady by the hand, drew back the curtain, stepped, like the page in Schiller's *Diver*, "bold and brave" before his friends, and spoke:

"My friends, I have the inexpressible pleasure of presenting to you my dear betrothed, Miss Marguerite Martin!"

As Bemperlein had initiated Sophie, under the seal of secrecy, into his secret, and as the latter had communicated it under the same seal to Franz, and to her father, nobody could exactly be said to be much surprised, especially after the scene with Amor and the kiss in the bay-window. For all that the congratulations were none the less hearty. The men shook hands cordially, Sophie kissed Marguerite with more feeling than she usually showed, and it was some time before the stirred-up waves of deep emotion subsided again and left the surface once more calm and clear.

"We must authenticate such an event by a corresponding solemnity," said the privy councillor, who rang the bell, and ordered the servant who came in to bring up the last of twelve bottles of "Johannisberg Cabinet," which a sovereign once had presented to him after having been saved by the skill of the physician. And when the noble wine was sparkling in the glasses, he said:

"My dear ones! In the hour of joy we can easily speak of past sorrow, and, therefore, I propose to place the merry, pretty picture before us in a dark frame, which will make its bright colors appear all the more beautiful. While I was lying these last days helpless on my sickbed--I, whose office and duty it is to help wherever I can help--a word has constantly come back to me, a plaintive, tearful word, which once the poor Roman plebeians, overwhelmed with hard service, cried out before the patricians: '*Sine missione nascimur!*'--that means, you girls, 'We are born to have no leave of absence!' You do not care whether our strength is used up in the endless wars which you carry on in the name of our country, but for your own good profit and advantage only; or whether our lands lie fallow and our wives and children are dying in misery. To arms! to arms! you call from year's end to year's end; and we have to serve from year's end to year's end: '*sine missione nascimur!*'"

The privy councillor drank from his glass and continued, with deeply-moved voice:

"We also, we--the children of this nineteenth century--are born to have no leave of absence. The enormous tasks given us in science, in politics, in every department of human activity, claim from childhood up all our powers and consume them entirely. To arms! to arms! This is the unceasing cry which summons us also, whether our arms are the pen or the brush, the plough or the hammer, the compass or the lancet. And work--inexorable, imperious work--what does it care for the workman?--whether his temples are beating with fever, whether his brain is overwrought to insanity, or his limbs are trembling from exhaustion--work does not mind it. It rewards him with poverty, sickness, and suffering, and demands of the ill-treated, the oppressed, the labors of Hercules. Yes, my friends, we also are plebeians in the service of work as those Roman plebeians in the service of war, and we can complain with them and say, '*sine missione nascimur.*'"

"And yet, I asked myself, how is it possible that we, weaklings and degenerate offspring as we are, can accomplish deeds by the side of which those of Hercules and other heroes appear like the play of pigmies? That our time, so often reproached on account of the prevailing laxity and indifference, nevertheless is like a parturient mountain, which produces--not a ridiculous mouse, but snorting steam-engines, gigantic works of industry and triumphs of inventive genius of every kind? It is possible only by the complete change which has taken place in the relative position of men. Then, work and conflict were in the hands of a few heroes, while the masses were following in idleness and laziness with loud cries. Now the individual, however great he may be, counts for little; the whole strength of our day lies in the masses, which are pressing forward in close columns, slowly but irresistibly, in the path of progress. This is not yet clearly seen by many. Rulers, princes, and princes' servants, who have a dim apprehension of the matter, would like to bring back the olden times for the sake of their brutal selfishness and their frivolous vanity--the times when the individual was everything and the masses nothing; but it is all in vain. The army of progress, endowed with the death-defying instinct of the migratory lemur, marches on in long, unnumbered lines, shoulder to shoulder, each man stepping in the footsteps of the man before him, and when here and there a vacant space occurs the lines are closed up again in an instant.

"And this thought, my friends, which I tried to see clearly before my mind's eye, had something marvellously soothing for me. I thought, what does it matter whether you break down to-day or to-morrow? Behind you follows a younger and stronger soldier who will at once step over you, fill your place, and accomplish with the very arms which fall from your releasing grasp greater things than you could ever have done."

As he said these words, the privy councillor pressed his son-in-law's hand; but Sophie, who had long struggled with her tears, threw herself sobbing in her father's arms.

"No, no, my child," said her father, stroking her soft hair lovingly. "You must not cry; I wanted to prove to you, and to you all, that we must not weep and wail, but rejoice at it, that we are invincible and immortal in others and through others. Yes, it is a beautiful and a true saying, which I read to-day in Freiligrath's Confession of Faith: 'On the tree of mankind blossom blooms by blossom.' I see all around me budding and blooming; a whole spring of mankind in miniature. How long will it be before these buds and blossoms will change into glorious flowers, and ripen to luscious fruit? Will I live to see it? I wish to do so, I hope so; but even if it should not be so--if I should not be permitted to see your children at my knee--well, then, you dear ones, sorrow must follow joy as joy follows sorrow; where blossom is to crowd upon blossom, there the dry wood must be cut out and thrown into the oven; and if we must part, we had better part, if not cheerfully, at least bravely."

While the privy councillor had been speaking, a dull sound of steps and the confused noise of suppressed voices had been heard before the windows in the street. Then all had been silent again; and as the privy councillor said his last words there arose suddenly, in the magnificent tones of an immense chorus of men's voices, gentle as the spring breezes, and yet mighty as a thunderstorm, the song:

"It is decreed in God's own council
That thou must part
From all that's dearest to the heart;
Altho' in all this world the hardest is
To human heart
From those we love for e'er to part!"

Those in the room were startled as if a voice from on high were speaking to them. Sophie leaned sobbing on her father's breast; the eyes of the men were brimful of tears; Marguerite even, although she did not understand a word, was yet so excited that she pressed her handkerchief to her face and wept aloud.

Then all rose and went to the bay-window. Below, in the very wide street, and forming a large semicircle marked out by bright lamps, stood the singers--members of the Mechanics' Club, which the privy councillor had founded years ago, and whose president Franz had been during the last weeks. Further out an immense multitude, head to head--men and women, citizens, students, poor people--all pell-mell, silent, motionless, as in a church.

And higher rose the mighty sounds:

"But you must understand me right,
When men do part, they say with might,
Till we meet again!
Till we meet again!"

The music passed away; the lamps were extinguished. Quietly as they had come the crowds went away. It was dark again in the street; but in the hearts of those who were standing up-stairs in the bay-window, holding each; other in close embrace, it was bright, like a sunny morning in May.

CHAPTER VIII.

The great woods of Berkow are leafless. Where formerly birds were singing in the green twilight, and beetles and midges humming drowsily there the cold autumnal winds are now whistling through the bare branches; and where dry leaves are yet hanging on old oak-trees, they no longer whisper to each other lovingly as in the beautiful summer time, but rustle weird and

woefully. Only the evergreens look as if the season could do them no harm; but their fine foliage also is darker, and they look now, when all around is bare, blacker and more dismal than ever.

Rough autumn has blown through the thick yew-hedge and into the garden behind the castle, has swept the flowers from the whole parterre, and filled the trim walks with withered wet leaves. On the terrace, under the broad branching pine-tree, the favorite place of the mistress of the house, the little round table with the marble slab is still standing, because it is deeply rooted in the ground, but the green benches and chairs have been carried into the garden-house.

The open place before the house, which is divided off by a railing from the farm-buildings, looks melancholy. The shutters on this side of the house are almost always closed, and are only now and then opened by a wrinkled old hand, whereupon often, as just now for instance, the wrinkled old face that belongs to the hand, with its icy gray moustache, looks out for a few minutes to watch a wagon heavily laden with wood, which four powerful horses can hardly drag through the deep mud at the side entrance to the yard between two barns, where even in summer the passage is often quite dangerous. The old man contracts his brows angrily as he sees the servant whip the horses furiously, amid calls and cries and curses. He grumbles something about 'infamous fellow' in his gray beard; but he no longer raises his voice to give vent to a powerful oath or so, as he used to do; for after all it is not the servant's fault, but the tenant's, who has not been prevailed upon these five years to mend the road. This tenant is every way a vessel of wrath for the old man. He keeps his cattle in bad order; he is cruel to his hands; in the third place he knows, according to the old man's notions, nothing of farming; and, finally, he has a red nose, and is always hoarse, two peculiarities attributed to brandy, and equally disgusting to the old man's eyes and ears. And, above all, the terrible prospect of never losing sight of this man for the whole of his life (for his term has twenty years more to run, and the old man is not going to live so long); to have to drag him along, so to say, till his blessed end, like the abominable ball which the old man received in his leg on the battle-field of Waterloo, and which is still there to this hour--no, worse than this ball, for that only hurts in spring and in fall, and whenever the weather is not as it ought to be. But this rascal of a tenant--and the old man abandoned his thoughts to this unprofitable and inexhaustible subject, fixing his eyes all the while upon the bleaching bones of a buzzard which, he had shot many years ago, and which (as a solemn warning to all evil-doers in the air and on the ground) had been nailed to the barn-door, until the voice of a boy, who has just come from the garden and is looking around the yard, comes up to his ear:

"Hallo! Baumann!"

At the sound of this voice the face of the old man clears up, as when a ray of sunlight passes over a rough Alpine landscape. It is the same voice, at least the same tone of voice, which has warmed the old man's heart now for a quarter of a century and longer. He rests both his elbows on the window-sill and looks down upon the handsome uplifted face of the boy with the light-brown, hearty eyes.

"What is the matter, young gentleman?"

"Wont you take a ride with me, Baumann?"

The old man casts a glance of inquiry at the sky, where dark, heavy clouds are hanging low, looks down again, and says:

"It looks threatening, sir. I think we shall have rain, and perhaps snow, in half an hour; that is more than *vraisemblable*."

"Why, Baumann, you always have something to say," says the handsome boy, grumbling; "the pony is getting stiff from standing so long, and I should like so much to take a ride."

"Well, well," says the old man; "we were only yesterday all the way to Cona."

"That is a great thing! Three miles! And the doctor says I ought to ride every day."

"Oh, if the doctor says so, I presume we must do it," replied Baumann, who has only been waiting for a good pretext to give way without dishonor. "I will just open the windows in the parlor here, and then I'll come down. In the meantime go ask the baroness, and say good-by to her."

"Yes; but make haste."

"Well, well," says the old man, and his gray head disappears from the window.

The boy hurries back into the house, but his mother is not to be found in the "garden-room," where she commonly sits; nor in the "red-room" adjoining, to which she retires when she wishes to be alone. The boy hurries from the garden-room--leaving the door, of course, wide open--into the garden, and down the long walk between the clipped yews of the terrace. As he does not find his mother here, and yet is in such a very great hurry, he considers whether he has not done all that could be done. He hesitates for a moment, and is just about to turn back, when it occurs to him that Baumann is sure to ask him, sometime during their ride: Young gentleman, did you say good-by to the baroness? and that he would be ashamed to have to say, No! He jumps with one

leap down the steps which lead to the terrace and runs deeper into the garden, calling out from time to time: "Mamma! Mamma!"

"Here!" replies suddenly a female voice quite near; and as he turns quickly round a bush, which has been so well sheltered by old linden-trees that it has almost all its leaves yet, he nearly rushes into his mother's arms:

"What is the matter, wild one?" says Melitta, placing her hands upon the boy's shoulders.

"We are going to ride out," says the boy, who is in such a hurry that he can hardly speak.

"But the sky looks very threatening."

"Oh, Baumann says--no, Baumann says the same. But I am *so* anxious to ride! Please, dear mamma, please!"

"If it were not so late," said Melitta, looking at her watch, "I should like to go with you."

"Oh pray, mamma, do that another time. You would have to change your dress, and then it may really commence snowing, and then we can't go at all."

"You may be right," replied Melitta, unconsciously smiling at the boy's naïve egotism. "Then make haste and get away. But put on an overcoat."

She kisses the boy on his red lips, and the boy runs away delighted. Five minutes later old Baumann has himself saddled the boy's pony--he never allows the grooms to saddle either the pony or Melitta's horse--and the two gallop out of the main gate into the bare fields.

When the boy had left her, Melitta resumed her walk in the avenues between the cunningly-trimmed hedges of beech-trees and the yew-pyramids. They were the same avenues through which she had walked arm in arm with Oswald on a beautiful summer afternoon when the sun was sending down red rays through the green foliage above upon the flower-beds in all their splendor. How the scene had changed since then? Where are the red rays of the sun now? where the green leaves? and where the bright flowers? Is this the same earth that exhaled a soft, balsamic breath, like the kiss of a loved one? the same earth which shone in its wedding garment? which embraced the high sky like a bride in the light of countless stars? And she, herself--she had changed almost as much; but in her, summer has not changed into winter. She has altered, but surely not for the worse.

As she now turns round, having reached the end of the long walk, and is coming up again in the pale light of the autumnal evening, she can be better seen than before. How graceful and light her step is! How delicately slender her figure appears as she now draws the silk shawl closer around her sloping shoulders and wraps it around her arms! How prettily the black fichu which she has tied over her head, fastening it under the chin, frames the lovely oval of her fair face! And how much more clearly the expression of goodness of heart, which always made the handsome face so attractive, strikes the observer now! And yet the soft brown eyes look so much graver! the charming mouth, whose red lips formerly looked as if they were made only to kiss and to laugh, is now firm and resolute. It looks as if the beautiful and noble psyche of the woman had freed itself of all that formerly held it in chains, and was now free from the mists of passionate thoughts, lighting up the sweet, kindly face in all its nobility and beauty as the chaste light of the moon lights up a soft, warm summer night.

What is she thinking of as she now comes slowly down the walk, her eyes fixed upon the ground? First of all, probably, of her son, who is recovering his full rosy cheeks, and growing up so strong and so hearty, just as Doctor Birkenhain has predicted. She has written to Doctor Birkenhain to-day to congratulate him and herself on the fulfilment of his prophecy. Then as she passes a little niche in the hedge where a low bench is still leaning against a small table--it must have escaped the eyes of old Baumann--she stops for a moment. On this bench she sat on that eventful summer afternoon with Oswald, when they had watched two white butterflies who were hovering on their delicate wings over the flower forests of the parterre and caught each other and chased each other and then rose into the blue ether, embracing each other, then parting again to flutter hither and thither into the green wilderness. "Will those butterflies ever meet again in life?" she had asked Oswald; and he had answered: "That may happen, but whether they meet with the same delight, that is another question." She had not seen Oswald again since the first night when she left for Fichtenau. If she should meet him again! She started at the idea, for she felt that she wished it. Had she not loved him very, very much? Had she not been unspeakably happy with him? But no! Prudence and pride commanded her to forget the faithless man who knew only how to conquer but not how to preserve his conquests.

She crossed her hands more firmly across her bosom, and her face looked almost dark, as she went on; but soon it brightened up again, and now she laughs to herself. What is it? She cannot help it. She must think of the expression in Oldenburg's face as she said the other night, when the weather was so terrible and he was just rising to say good-by and to ride home, "Had you not better stay over night, Adalbert?" and he had cast one sharp glance at her, and then refused the invitation with a certain haste and embarrassment. Oldenburg, whose morality was constantly decried so bitterly; who had the reputation of having had countless *liaisons dangereuses* in his life; so carefully anxious, so tenderly concerned, for the good repute of a widow! Why did he treat

her so differently from all other women, of whom he got tired so soon? Will he come to-night? The hour has passed at which the hoof of his Almansor is commonly heard on the pavement of the yard. The young widow looks anxiously up to the dark clouds, which are threatening more and more, and from which now a few scattered snow-flakes begin to drop silently, the first of the season, but melting in a few moments on the black ground. If Julius only would not ride too far! But old Baumann is with him, and that ought to be enough for the most anxious heart. Perhaps they have gone over to Cona and will return with Oldenburg, who has forgotten the hour over his books. They will be half-frozen when they come; it would be better to get tea ready for them.

Melitta hastened back to the house and ordered supper, and sent for the lamp, for it is quite dark now, and she would like to look a little at Oldenburg's diary. He had read to her not long ago some of his notes about his travels in Egypt, and as he could not finish them that night he had left the book and asked her to read it for herself; and as she laughingly reminded him of the danger of letting a lady read his diary, he had replied: "In that book, as in my heart, there is nothing that you may not know." On the contrary, he had desired she should read it all; he did not wish to appear better or different from what he was. That was speaking boldly; and, Melitta soon became convinced, acting boldly. For there were strange things recorded in these sketches, thrown off with a daring hand. Here the traveller's glance had rested on the voluptuous charms of dancing Ghawazees. There half-naked Indian women are standing by the shore turning the creaking wheel of the Sakyee in the burning heat of the sun. There, on the market-place of Asyut, black slaves are crouching, who had but yesterday come down from Darfoor on the large Nile boats. But amid all these sketches not one single trait of frivolous sensuality! He describes the dancing of these children of the Sun with the calm words of a professional critic. When he sees the poor woman at the waterworks, he curses the tyrannical government which forces even helpless women to work for cruel taxes, and in the slave market at Asyut his heart is heavy with grief that man should permit the image of God to sink to the level of a brute, or even below! "Sorrow! sorrow!" he cries; "such as man cannot imagine--and the most sorrowful is that when we see such degradation we begin to despair of man himself, for we cannot help acknowledging to ourselves that beneath the civilized sentiments that shine on the surface, deep down in the darkness of our heart the same fearful passions are slumbering, which here crop out in all their shameless nakedness, merely because they may do so with impunity under this burning sun." And thus he shows everywhere the deep, serious mind with which the traveller observes the manners of men abroad. The same deep love with which he ever makes the cause of humanity his own, so that it seems altogether incomprehensible how this man could ever be looked upon as an eccentric oddity and a frivolous *roué*. There is no lack even of statistical tables, reflections on political economy, and other evidences of a mind not only bold and deep, but also learned and most industrious. And between these are verses, especially on the first pages of the diary, which are evidently of a much earlier date than the sketches from Egypt; at least this is clear to those who, like the fair reader that night, are sufficiently familiar with the author's life to recollect the different events which have occasioned one or the other poem.

Thus she recalls perfectly well how the baron, then a youth of perhaps nineteen, once walked with a young lady who was then perhaps fifteen, in the woods, after they had just eaten a philippine at table. He was to lose who first forgot to say *j'y pense* when he took anything from the hand of the other. She had cunningly made a most beautiful bouquet, and when the young man admired the flowers, she had said with a bashful smile, "Would you like to have it, Adalbert?" And when he, blushing at the unexpected favor, had taken the bouquet without saying a word, she had clapped her hands and cried out, "*J'y pense! j'y pense!* I thought you would lose it!" That was a long time ago, and the ink with which the poem was written had faded considerably. The poem ran thus:

J'Y PENSE.

I know a little maid--
 J'Y PENSE!
With eyes deep brown and staid--
 J'Y PENSE!
Her hair in brown curls fell,
Her laugh was like a silver bell--
 J'Y PENSE!

It was a summer's day--
 J'Y PENSE!
The wood in shadows lay--
 J'Y PENSE!
I took the flowers from your hand,
You laughed at me, the dreamer, and,
 J'Y PENSE! J'Y PENSE!

Oh, I forgot the word,
 J'Y PENSE!
Now sung by every chord,
 J'Y PENSE!

It takes my happiness and rest,
Oh, maiden say and be ye blessed,
J'Y PENSE!

Not all the poems are as naïve and full of hope as this, but they are all addressed to the same person.

Later, the poems become rarer and make way for philosophical and political reflections. Only on one of the last pages there was written in a very bold hand, as if the soul of the writer had burnt with hope and love while he was writing the lines:

Yes, thou art mine! I have aroused to life
Thy fair but cold and pallid face divine.
I gave thee life, and thus thou art now mine!

And I am thine! For all my mournful strife
Would but be wandering in a wilderness
Without thee, therefore I am thine!

The lady leaned back in her chair, let her hands fall into her lap, and looked for a time fixedly before her, absorbed in deep thought. Are these last verses true? "I gave thee life, and thus thou art now mine!" I owe him more than I can tell; he sowed the golden seed of varied knowledge in my young mind; and if I can look higher than most of my sex, if I have an interest in art and science, if I have a heart for the sick and the suffering--it is all his work. And who has ever faithfully stood by me in the strife of life, when no one else troubled himself about me? He, and always he! And yet, if I thus live through him only, do I therefore really belong to him? Melitta rested her head on her hands in order to be able the better to puzzle out this enigma, which, after all, the heart only can solve, and not the head. She does not succeed, therefore, any better now than before, and this only is clear to her, that Oldenburg has never been so near to her heart, and has never been so dear to her as now. But now for the reverse of the medal. "Therefore I am thine!" To be sure he has told me so a thousand times by words and by acts, but--but--is this love, which dates back to the first years of his boyhood, which, he says, he has carried within him through all the changes of his eventful life? is it more than an illusion, such as is not uncommon in fanciful men--one of those fixed ideas in which very obstinate minds take delight? Is it not, perhaps, the love of a Don Quixote, who seeks refuge in it when he is offended by the fearful prose of everyday life, so repugnant to a great and noble heart? Is it not but too probable that this mirage may look charming at a distance, but when seen near by, would quickly dissolve into ethereal vapor?

What can I be to him? Has he not nobler ends to live for than to make a woman happy? Can so restless a mind ever restrict itself to the narrow limits of a family circle? May not what he now aims at as his highest happiness, soon become to him an intolerable chain?

Melitta sighs as she comes to this hard knot in her tissue. She has mechanically opened the book once more, and as she turns over the leaves she comes to a place which she has not noticed before:

"They say love is a mere luxury for men, but a necessity for women; a *passer le temps* for the former, a life's end for the latter. But often it is just the reverse! How often do idle, unoccupied women (I speak only of the wealthier classes) look upon love as a mere article of luxury with so many others, while to the active industrious husband it is a pure refreshing element, which gives him ever new courage and ever new strength! To the laborer (and after all every man is a laborer, from the president of a cabinet to the president's bootmaker)--to the laborer, night is the reward of day, as Virgil says beautifully. And to this must be added: A woman, especially a beautiful woman, is overwhelmed with attentions from childhood up; wherever she goes, a hundred hands are ready to serve her. She is always surrounded by a whole court of flatterers and admirers. Is it not very natural that like all the great of the earth, she is likely to have her head turned? that the worship of a single one cannot count for much with her? that love loses its value because of the abundance of the supply! But man! if he is not exceptionally a prince, they do not make much ceremony with him in life. At school, at the university, he may, if luck favors him, have so-called friends who help him to bear existence; but he has no sooner entered upon actual life, than the host of friends is gone and forever, and he stands alone; he must bear alone his sorrows, his necessities, and what is almost as bad, his joys. Society opens for him; but when?--after he has succeeded; and until then?--till then he has to journey along a weary, dusty road, without shade and without resting-place, which robs him of the best part of his life's strength, and his life's joy. But if he succeeds, he is chastised with scorpions, though he was before chastised only with whips. Even his friends become now his rivals; and he finds himself reduced to lean on his own strength, his own courage, facing a world in arms, a world without pity, delighting in his failures, and at best indifferent. And oh! what bliss, if now, in this fearful crowd, a soft warm hand seizes his own, and a dear voice says to him, 'Be strong! persevere! if all abandon you, I will not abandon you; if others are envious of your triumphs, they will make me unspeakably happy; and if you fail in your work and they scoff and scorn you, or if you succeed and they pass you with cold indifference, then you shall rest your weary head on this bosom, then

I will cool your feverish brow with my kisses, I will pour the precious balm of good, compassionate, comforting words into your poor, torn heart.' Oh, thrice happy man; now let the world do its worst, you tremble not, you fear not! In your wife's love you have the point of Archimedes, from which you can move a world.

"And thus I have found more than one man in my life who was attached to his wife with a love which was simply unbounded, which burnt with the steady light of the north star, unchangeable, through the night of his life. And certainly, when we find in history an Arnold Winkelried, who defied death and made an opening for freedom with his body--did he do it for freedom's sake? Yes! For his country's sake? Yes! But above all, he did it for the sake of wife and children, who were to him more than freedom and country and life itself."

Melitta let the book drop into her lap and looked thoughtfully down; then she puts it again on the table, rises and takes an album from a bureau, with which she sits down once more at the table. In the album there are pencil sketches, and sketches in charcoal and sepia, of landscapes and portraits, etc. She has not had the album in her hands since last summer, and she has not taken it out now to draw or to paint. She searches till she comes to a loose leaf, upon which the profile of a man is lightly sketched in bold outlines. In the corner are the letters A. V. O., and the date, July, 1844. The leaf has not come loose of itself; it has evidently been torn out. What unnecessary trouble we give ourselves by indulging in a moment's caprice! now the detached leaf has to be carefully glued upon another! Well! it looks quite well again; but alas! there the name and the date have been cut off. What is to be done? name and date must be upon every sketch. The young widow takes a pencil and writes: Adalbert von Oldenburg; the 22 November, 1847; then she closes the album, puts it back in the bureau, and goes to the window.

It has become nearly dark, and instead of single flakes as before, the snow is falling pretty thick; nor does it melt now on the ground, but has already spread a thin, white cover over the lawn. Melitta begins to be troubled about the long absence of Julius. Perhaps he has had after all an accident; or perhaps it was the old man. She reproaches herself for having allowed the boy to ride out so late; she is angry at Baumann, that he at least has not been more prudent. And Oldenburg, too, is not coming. If he were here she would ask him to ride out and meet the two. How cheerfully he would do it!

She goes, seriously troubled, to the dining-room, to the right of the garden-room, from the windows of which she can see for a short distance the road which leads through the wood past Grenwitz to Cona. The snow is now falling so fast that she can hardly recognize any more the edge of the spruce forest, although it is only a few hundred yards off. She opens the window and leans far out, unmindful of the flakes which fall on her dark hair and melt on her brow. Was not that a horse's hoof? There they are coming out of the forest, one, two, three dark figures: Oldenburg, the old man, and between them Julius; Almansor and Brownlocks in full trot, the pony between them at full gallop so as to keep up. Melitta waves her handkerchief and calls out, and Julius answers with a hearty Holloa! and whips the pony across the neck, whereupon the pony shakes his shaggy head indignantly and begins to race so furiously that he finally beats his long-legged rivals, after all, by the length of his own nose.

The horsemen leap from their saddles. Julius runs up to the window and calls: "I was the first, after all, mamma!"

"Yes," says mamma, "only make haste and come in, and tell Uncle Oldenburg not to busy himself so long with Almansor's saddle."

CHAPTER IX.

It was after tea. Julius had gone to bed. Old Baumann had removed the tea-things, and then gone out, casting a benevolent glance at his mistress and her visitor. Melitta and Oldenburg were alone in the "red-room."

"Now tell me candidly, Adalbert, why you are so out of humor to-day," said Melitta, who sat on the sofa, while the baron was slowly walking up and down the room, as was his habit. "I am not out of humor."

"Well then, troubled?"

"That perhaps. I had a letter this afternoon from Birkenhain."

"That is strange. I have just been writing to him this afternoon."

"Have you heard from him lately?" said Oldenburg, pausing in his walk and looking kindly at Melitta.

"No; why?"

"Hem!"

"Is that an answer?"

"Certainly, and a very significant one. 'Hem!' means a good deal."

"In this case, for instance?"

"Do you know that we were in all probability at the same time in Fichtenau when Czika and Xenobia as well as Oswald were all there, and we never knew it?"

Melitta blushed deeply, and did not at once know what answer to give. Oldenburg, however, did not give her time to reply, but drew Birkenhain's letter from his pocket, sat down by the table, opposite Melitta, and said:

"You see, Birkenhain writes, after having advised me, at my request, regarding Julius's health--'Julius must be spared all studying till New Year'--as follows:

"You have so often and so kindly inquired in your letters after Professor Berger, dear baron, that it will interest you to hear again of this extraordinary man, especially after having made his personal acquaintance here at my house last summer. You may recollect from what he told you in your conversations with him, that his insanity belongs to the class of philosophical aberrations, and that he defended his fixed idea of the absolute non-existence of all things--or rather the great original Naught as he called it--with all the erudition and all the ingenuity which he possesses in so large a degree. My hope to be able to restore this distinguished man in a short time, was unfortunately ill-founded, and I confess that the method which I pursued in his case was, perhaps, not the correct one. I intended to arouse in him, by seclusion, withdrawal of books, etc., a sensation of weariness and loneliness, and through these a desire to see company, to exchange thoughts; in one word, a fondness for life. But I had immensely underrated the fund of inner life which was at the disposal of my patient. He could have lived for years on the treasures of his mind, and the only effect of my efforts was, that he gave himself up more fully than ever to his bottomless, original Naught. Nevertheless, I still hoped for some improvement, a reaction which I thought could not fail to arise in so vigorous a mind as Berger's. About that time--I think it was the very day on which you and Frau von Berkow were here, and I forgot to tell you in the hurry in which you were, anything about these matters which interested me deeply--a visitor, who had announced to me his desire to see Professor Berger, came very *apropos*. This was a young man called Doctor Stein"--Oldenburg did not look up as he came to the name--"of whom a colleague in Grunwald, with whom he was travelling, had told me that he had been Berger's favorite and most intimate friend. I hoped the very best results from this visit--a hope which I must confess was considerably weakened when I made the acquaintance of this Doctor Stein. I found him a remarkably handsome, distinguished-looking man, who, however, in spite of evidently rare talents and thorough cultivation, seemed to be completely at odds with the world and himself, as we find this to be the case, unfortunately, but too frequently, more or less, in our most gifted men, thanks to the inactive, thoughtless times in which we live. I ought to have been able to tell myself, if I had maturely reflected, that Berger would not have attached himself so heartily to this man just before the breaking out of his insanity, if he had not also been a hypochondriac. But here he was, and the thing could not be helped now; besides, I had given Doctor Stein very precise instructions before I allowed him to see Berger, and awaited with great interest the result of this interview, at which I was purposely not present. The result was strange indeed.

"When I returned from my interview with you and Fran von Berkow, I went at once to my patient, who had in the meantime taken a walk at my request. He had been to the woods in company with his visitor.

"At the first glance I felt convinced that something extraordinary had happened to him. He was walking up and down in great excitement. As soon as he saw me he paused and said: "What do you think of a theory, doctor, which has never been tried practically?" "Not much!" I replied; "but why do you ask?" "Oh, a thought occurred to me to-night, which lies so near, so near, that I cannot understand why it never occurred to me before." I asked him to explain. "I cannot do that now," he said, "but I will certainly do it as soon as I am able." I had to be content with his promise, for it was useless for me to press him further. I hoped to learn more about it from Doctor Stein. He had left the same night, "on account of pressing business," as he wrote me the next day in a little note from one of the nearest stations. What had happened between him and Berger remained a secret for me; I only learnt from others that they had been seen that night in a waggoner's inn, where they had been eating and drinking with rope-dancers, who happened to be in the place, and who had created quite a sensation there, less by their tricks than"--Oldenburg's voice began to tremble a little--"by a beautiful gypsy woman with a still more beautiful child. Berger was very quiet and taciturn the whole of the next day. I left him quite to himself, for I did not wish in any way to interfere with the crisis which was evidently taking place. He had from the beginning been free to go and come as he chose. It did not strike the waiters, therefore, nor the gate-keeper, as strange, when he went out of the asylum at seven o'clock in the morning of the

seventh day--it was the day on which Frau von B. left. But this time he did not return during the day nor at night, as he usually did, nor on the following day. He had disappeared.

"You can easily imagine what I felt when this occurred. Although the search which I immediately ordered, and which was carried out with great energy and circumspection, had no result, I was firmly convinced that Berger had not attempted his life. He had too often spoken most impressively against this way "of tying the Gordian knot still more firmly," as he called it. A letter written by him, which I received shortly afterwards, and which bore the post-mark of a small northern town, proved to my great joy that I had not been mistaken. In this letter the strange man asked my pardon if he should have caused me a few disagreeable days by his stealthy departure from Fichtenau; he had not known, he said, how else he could have carried out the idea which he had mentioned to me. He had joined, for the moment, a party consisting of "good people, but bad musicians," for the very purpose of carrying out that idea, and the idea itself was this: that he could not put his asceticism, the practical side of his theory of the non-existence of life, to a satisfactory test within the four walls of his room, or in solitude generally, but only in the wide world, and especially amid the lower classes of society, to which he had now descended for the purpose. He begged me, if I felt any interest in him, not to interrupt him in his experiment, and promised to inform me at the proper time of the result of his expedition, which promised to be very favorable."

Oldenburg folded up Birkenhain's letter, after having read so far, and looked at Melitta.

"How is it, Melitta?" he said; "you were several days in Fichtenau, I know; did you also hear people talk of this beautiful gypsy woman and her child, who must have been Xenobia and Czika, if I am not altogether mistaken?"

"More than that," replied Melitta; "it was Xenobia and Czika, and I saw them and spoke to them."

Oldenburg rested his head on his hand. "You did!" he murmured; "and you--why did you not tell me?"

"Because I feared to renew your sorrow about the lost one; because--listen to me, Adalbert, I will tell you. I would have told you long ago if I had had the courage." And she told Oldenburg of her meeting with the Brown Countess in the Fichtenau forest, how she had tried to persuade the gypsy to come with her, and how she had been grieved when she found all her persuasions and her prayers unavailing; and, finally, how she had received from Xenobia the promise to bring her the child if she should ever change her mind, and how she, Melitta, was firmly convinced that this would happen sooner or later.

As the young widow told him all this, the tears were running down her cheeks, and her voice trembled with deep emotion.

Oldenburg rose and silently kissed her hand, then he strode eagerly up and down the room, while Melitta continued to tell him how she had, shortly before her encounter with the gypsy, overtaken the wagon of the rope-dancer, and that she now recollected having seen among them a man in a blue blouse whom she had then taken for a peasant, but who she now knew must have been Professor Berger. "There is no doubt," she said, "that 'the good people and bad musicians,' of whom Berger speaks in his letter to Birkenhain, were none else but those very rope-dancers, whom he had joined, and with whom he has wandered to Northern Germany, as the letter says. Perhaps he is even now in our neighborhood. If Birkenhain had mentioned the name of the place, I would suggest to you to go there at once and to do what you can to bring Xenobia and Czika back with you; as it is, however, it would only be a wild-goose chase, from which you would return disappointed in your hopes, out of humor and out of health. I advise you, therefore, to write to Birkenhain and to await his answer before you undertake anything. I ought to add, candidly, that I consider it best, all in all, to leave the unravelling of this strange complication confidently to the future. Xenobia has a thousand ways and means to escape from you if she chooses; her resolution to return to us and to surrender Czika to us must be the work of her own free will."

"If you think that waiting is the best I can do in this case, why do you advise me then to do just the opposite?"

"Because I fear you will find it impossible to sit still after you have once more found a trace of the lost one; because I know that you yearn to see your child; because I know that the resignation to which you have now condemned yourself is unnatural; and, finally---"

"Finally?"

"Because, if I advise you to do nothing for the recovery of Czika it might look as if I did not wish you such happiness, and for all the world I would not have you suspect me for a moment of such heartlessness."

"The human heart is a strange thing," said Oldenburg, after having continued his promenade through the room for a little while. "Can you believe it, Melitta, that I could now almost wish you would show less readiness to restore to me my child, and the woman to whom I owe her?"

"Impossible, Adalbert!"

"And yet it is so. I have made up my mind to be always unreservedly candid towards you, as you are towards me; at least to try to be so; and therefore I can keep nothing from you. Formerly, when you seemed to be beyond my reach as far as the stars in heaven, I often longed for other human hearts to warm me, and to let me feel by their pulsations that everything around me was not as dead as I felt; or I threw myself into wild excesses and neck-breaking adventures, in order to feel at least that I was still living. But now all that has suddenly changed. Since there has come to me the faintest ray of hope that you may yet some time consent to be mine, the world has recovered all its youthful beauty in my eyes; but now I should also like to see the fountain from which I have drunk this water of youth, free of all admixture and undimmed. As you are all in all to me, so I should like to be all to you; to see you have no other desire than to be loved--loved more and more--as I have no other desire than to love you, more and more. What is the rest of the world to us? I have forgotten it; it does not exist for me any more!"

Melitta had let this storm of passion rush over her with bowed head. When Oldenburg paused she took the diary, which lay open before her on the table, turned over a few leaves, and said:

"Man strives according to his nature after the general and infinite; in woman, who stands in every respect nearer to nature, the characteristic feature of every being, self-love, is much more distinctly marked. Man represents the centrifugal power of the moral world; woman the centripetal power. If the former had the government, the world would soon be in the clouds altogether; if woman ruled, we should never rise above the top of the wheat-blades that nod over the lark's nest in the furrow. The way to reconcile the two tendencies is love. When he loves a beautiful woman, man learns that he is not merely a denizen of the spiritual world; and when a woman loves a noble man, she learns that there are higher interests than those of the domestic hearth. They must complement each other; she must remind him that mankind is made up of men; he must teach even the most gifted among us first to spell and then to read fluently the great words of our day: 'Liberty and Fraternity.'"

She closed the book and glanced up at Oldenburg, who stood at a little distance from her, his arms crossed on his bosom.

"You were right not to let me become faithless to my own convictions," he said; "and I should like to know but this one thing--whether your zeal to convert me is quite pure, or whether the priestess is not anxious to direct the eyes of the sinner to the idol itself, because their longing glances directed at her begin to be a burden to her?"

"Oldenburg!"

"Yes, Melitta, I must say it or it will crush my heart. You know how dearly, how unspeakably, I love you. The wish to possess you is all-powerful in me. I have nourished it so long that it fills my whole being, and all my life is concentrated in it. Without you I am nothing. With you I defy a world in arms. I know very well that we ought to do right for the sake of the right, and that he who asks for reward has already his reward. But I am not a saint. I am a man, with all the weaknesses and passions of a man, which rise over him and threaten to drown him like a raging sea, if the dear, the beloved hand is not stretched out to save him. Melitta, say that you will be mine, and my deeds shall not fall below my words."

Oldenburg had remained standing at the same place, in the same position. As in his carriage, so in the tone of his voice there was rather a tone of command than of prayer. That man would not have knelt down before a dozen rifles, nor have suffered his eyes to be bandaged.

Melitta felt this; but his pride did not offend her this time as it had often done before. She answered in an almost humble tone:

"Do not let us act rashly, Adalbert! You know how dear you are to me, and that must for the present content you. See, Adalbert, this letter comes just in time to remind us of our duty. You must recover your child. I should not enjoy a single hour of my life if I were to fear that your love for myself had extinguished in your heart its most sacred sentiment. And, Adalbert, think also of this; I am willing to believe it: You do not love any longer the woman who once inflamed the passion of the inexperienced youth; but she is the mother of your child! What will you say to your Czika, if she asks you why another person than the poor woman whom she calls mother is the wife of her father?"

"Where did you meet Oswald Stein the last time since you saw him in Fichtenau?"

Oldenburg said these few words slowly and with withering scorn.

Melitta turned scarlet. A spark of the evil passion of offended pride which raged in Oldenburg's heart set her own on fire, and kindled the spirit of opposition which had already been so often fatal to both.

"Who tells you that I saw him at all in Fichtenau?"

"I only thought so. Perhaps you kept this encounter from me as you did the others."

"And if I had seen him in Fichtenau?"

"That would be what I had expected."

"And if I had seen him since quite frequently?"

"That would only prove to me that my coming here is as improper for myself as it must be inconvenient to you."

Oldenburg went across the room and took his riding-whip and gloves from the console under the mirror. As he came back again to Melitta he stopped, and said: "Good-night, Melitta!" "Good-night!" replied the proud woman, without raising her eyes. He waited for a moment, and for another moment, hoping that she would look at him or say a word--but in vain. Not a word, not a sigh, rose from his crushed heart; he went to the door, opened it gently, and closed it as noiselessly again.

Melitta started. She hastened to the door; but instead of opening it she only leaned with uplifted arms against it and wept passionately. "I knew it would come thus," she murmured. "Poor, poor Adalbert!"

Suddenly she heard a horse's foot-fall close by the window. She ran from the door to the window and opened it, she leaned far out and cried "Adalbert! Adalbert!" but the storm that drove the icy snow-flakes in her face swept away her voice, and the black shadow of horse and rider, which was but just now gliding noiselessly over the white plain and through the gray night, was at the next moment no longer to be distinguished.

CHAPTER X.

Winter has come during the night to the island, and still the snow-storm rages; and the countless flakes, swept down by its swift wings from northern lands, fall thick upon roofs and trees, upon meadows and fields; and one who looked for a time into the darkling air, from which the white stars are dropping forever, felt as if he were rising upward with moderate rapidity--up and up, into the gray boundless space.

Oldenburg seemed to-day to enjoy the melancholy sight to his heart's content. He is standing by the window in his study at the Solitude, and looks fixedly at the sea, or rather at the snow-filled air, for of the sea little or nothing can be seen to-day. He has been standing there many hours to-day, and scarcely noticed Herrman, who comes and goes with mournful mien, and packs several large trunks which stand open about the room, filling them with clothes and linen and books. The good servant's good wife Thusnelda, the comfortable fat housekeeper, has repeatedly bustled into the room under some pretext or other, and once actually dared to ask her master if he would not come to dinner. But he had only replied,

"Very well, my good woman."

Since then several hours have elapsed. The baron had intended to leave directly after dinner, but he had not ordered the horses yet. He can hardly hope that the weather will clear up, for the store-houses of snow seem to be inexhaustible; and besides, it would be the first time that he allows the bad weather to keep him from carrying out his purpose. Moreover, if he had intended to reach the ferry before night, noon would have been the very latest hour at which to start. He is probably not very much pressed to go. Perhaps he is rather pleased to see the snow-storm, as it gives him an excuse from without; or it may be he expects some important news, for he has repeatedly asked during the day. "Has nobody been here?" And every time when his old Herrmann has been compelled to answer, according to the truth, "No, sir!" he has turned again to the window and continued to drum upon the panes with his fingers.

It does not look very probable now that anybody will come. The muddy-red streak far down on the horizon shows that the sun, which has been invisible all day long, is sinking into the sea. A fierce blow, shaking the windows and racing with a howl and a groan around the house and through the high tops of the pine-trees, tears the snow-filled air asunder, and the infinite waste of gray waters, with their foam-crested waves, spreads out in fearful solemnity before the glance of the solitary man. He opens the door and steps out on the balcony; he leans upon the railing through whose iron bars the wind is whistling in shrill notes. He does not cast a look at the tall chalk-cliffs which stretch far out to the right and the left, and which now, with the stern forests they bear on their rugged brow, shine in the setting sun for a moment in blood-red colors. He looks fixedly down, where, a hundred feet below him, the wild ocean lashes the huge blocks of

rock on the shore with grim thunder. The white spray rises at times in eddies, driven up by the fierce wind between sharp edges of the steep walls, till it reaches him and fills his hair and beard with icy-cold drops. But he does not mind it. In his soul there rages a wilder and stormier tempest than without. He feels as if he were utterly alone in this desert of a world--as if upon this desert an eternal night were gradually sinking down, and as if he were condemned to live on in this eternal darkness.

It serves you right! he murmured. Why did you let yourself be led by the nose once more, when you ought to have known perfectly well how it would end? And yet! She was so sweet, so kind all these days; she has never been so before. Could I close my ear to the siren-song that never sounded nearer or dearer to me? Siren-song--that it is! What do women know of the true love which men feel in their hearts? All is caprice with them--idle play and vanity. A pair of blue eyes, a smooth tongue, and courteous ways, and you have the doll that pleases good little children. They do not ask whether the little doll has a heart in her bosom, or brains in her head. On the contrary, that might be inconvenient, tedious; that would not suit the nursery.

Well, let it be, then! Let me lay aside the fool's cap forever and for aye! As the evening twilight darkens yonder on the rocks, I will wipe off this rosy illusion from my soul and grow rough like the wintry sea; and as nobody loves me, I will love nobody in return. I will go through life lonely, as that snowbird is winging his way through the pathless air, and not even ask whether he has prepared for himself a sheltering nest under some overhanging cliff on the coast.

"That you will not do! You are a man; and a man is a great deal more than the birds under the heavens."

Oldenburg turned round in amazement, to see who it was that could have spoken these words in such a calm, firm tone. Close behind him stood old Baumann.

"I come," said the old man, answering Oldenburg's anxiously inquiring looks, "by order of Frau von Berkow."

"What is it?" said Oldenburg, his blood rushing madly to his heart; "speak out! Frau von Berkow is ill, is she?"

"Not Frau von Berkow," replied Baumann; "another woman, who came about an hour ago to our house, with a child, and who wishes to see the baron once more before her death, which seems not to be very far off."

"A woman--with a child!" It seemed as if a veil had fallen from the baron's eyes.

"Come!" he said.

Melitta's sleigh, with two powerful bays, was standing before the door of the Solitude. The men got in; Oldenburg took the reins and the whip from the hands of the servant, who sat behind, and off they went at full gallop through the dark pine-woods; out of the woods into the level land, which gradually falls off towards Fashwitz, and into the wide snow plain, with its distant gray horizon, and a few scarcely-perceptible trees and cottages here and there, thickly covered with snow. The road also was nearly hid, and even the track made by the sleigh in coming had long been effaced by the storm. It required all of Oldenburg's familiarity with the country, and all of his skill in driving, to be able to race as he did through this wilderness, up hill and down hill, between bottomless morasses on both sides. Not a word was spoken on the way, and half an hour later the sleigh with the steaming horses was standing before the door of the great house at Berkow. They went into the house.

"Will you please, sir, step into the garden-room?" said old Baumann.

He went in first. A lamp was lighted on the table, and in the grate a fire on the point of going out. The old man screwed up the lamp, kindled the fire afresh, and then disappeared through the door which led into the red-room.

Oldenburg was standing before the fire-place, warming his cold hands. A thousand confused thoughts filled, his mind at once; he walked up and down the room a few times, and then stood again before the fire.

"Melitta was right," he said to himself. "Before this wrong is atoned for, I cannot expect any happiness. And how can I make atonement? Is it not the curse of an evil deed that it brings forth more and more evil deeds? It was the shadow of to-day which fell upon our souls yesterday in anticipation. How stupid I was, how blinded by passion, that I did not understand the warning! Yes, she has an older, a holier right; and woe is me if I were to disregard this right! It would rise ever and again and testify against me! But it is terrible that the Furies should follow us even into the temple where we desire to purify ourselves of our guilt--even into the sacred shrine which holds our whole happiness!"

The rustling of a lady's dress behind him made him start. He turned round, and there stood Melitta, pale and serious, her sweet, fair eyes shining with the traces of recent tears.

"Melitta," said Oldenburg, offering her both hands, "can you forgive me?"

"I have nothing to forgive, Adalbert," she replied, placing her hands in his; "let us bear in patience what must be borne."

They looked silently into each other's eyes for a moment.

"There is still much between us," said Oldenburg, sadly. "I cannot see to the bottom of your heart."

"That is why we must bear in patience," said Melitta.

Oldenburg let go her hands.

"How is she?"

"She is very feeble: in a state between sleeping and waking, but she knows me; and she has asked for you several times."

"Is Czika with her?"

"Yes."

"May I see her?"

"Let me first go in alone. I shall be back directly."

After a few minutes, during which Oldenburg had walked up and down in the room, his arms crossed on his breast and his eyes fixed on the ground, Melitta reappeared in the door.

"Come!"

Oldenburg followed her through the red-room into a half-dark room--Melitta's chamber. It was the first time in his life that he saw it; and, as she led him by the hand to the door, the thought passed through his head, what a strange circumstance it was that admitted him to this room. At the door on the opposite side Melitta stopped, and whispered: "She is in there."

They went in. It was a large, very magnificent apartment, filled with rococo furniture, which belonged to the guest-chambers of the great house. Heavy curtains of yellow silk darkened the windows, the sofa and the chairs were covered with the same material, and the light of the fire that was burning in the grate was reflected here and there by the highly-polished floor of inlaid wood. The mantel-piece was supported by two little Amors, and on it stood an ormolu clock, representing the entrance to a grotto, guarded by genii and butterflies, from which a man with a scythe came forth whenever the hour struck. Paintings in the taste of the rococo period, full of sheep, shepherds, and shepherdesses, adorned the room, in heavy gilt frames. A massive lustre with glass crystals hung from the ceiling, and played in the fitful light which filled the room in all the colors of the rainbow. And in the midst of all this splendor, in an immense tent-bed, the silk curtains of which were drawn back, lay upon snowy pillows a poor woman, sick unto death, who had first seen the light of the stars in distant Hungary behind a hedge, and who had spent her nights through all her life in barns and stables, and still more frequently under the open sky, on the heath, or in the woods, beneath the lofty vaults of ancient beech-trees. Her large eyes, shining with feverishness, wandered restlessly over all the costly objects that surrounded her, and ever and anon remained fixed for a while on her child, as if this were the only point where her troubled spirit could rest in peace. Czika was standing by her bed, dressed in the fantastic gay costume which she commonly wore, even outside of the stage, in the interest of art. Her beautiful face looked more serious and careworn than usual. She did not take her eyes from her mother. She showed evidently that she knew perfectly well what all this meant; that she saw death in the yellow hue of her mother's brown cheeks, in the pallor of her red lips, and in the cold drops of perspiration which were bedewing her painfully-corrugated brow.

Near a small table, close by the bed, stood old Baumann. He was very busy preparing a cooling drink, and he hardly looked up from his occupation when Melitta and Oldenburg very quietly entered the room.

But the sharp ear of the sick woman had heard them. A faint smile of satisfaction passed over her wrinkled face. She beckoned them to her.

As they approached the bed, Czika came to stand between them. This seemed to please Xenobia. Her smile became brighter, then it vanished, and she said, in broken German:

"Put your hands on Czika's head."

Oldenburg and Melitta did so. Oldenburg's hand trembled as it touched the soft hair on the fair young head.

"And give me the other hand!"

Xenobia took their hands, and when she saw the chain formed in this manner, she murmured something which the others did not understand, and which might have been a curse or a blessing, or both, for the expression of her face changed at every word.

Then she said:

"Swear that you will not abandon the Czika!"

"We swear!" said Oldenburg; while Melitta, unable to utter a word, only moved her lips.

Xenobia let go their hands, in order to cross her own hands on her bosom.

"Now leave Xenobia alone," she said, in a very low tone of voice; "only Czika is to stay, and the old man."

Oldenburg and Melitta looked at each other, and then at the old man, who came up with the cooling drink. He nodded his venerable gray head, as if he meant to say: "Do what she asks."

Oldenburg did not dare refuse. He took Melitta's hand and led her out of the room. The clock on the mantel-piece began to strike. The man with the scythe was slowly coming out of his cave.

They went back into the garden-room. Neither said a word. Oldenburg threw himself into an arm-chair near the fire, and glared with troubled looks at the coals. Suddenly he felt Melitta's hand on his shoulder.

"Adalbert!"

He looked up at her with a questioning look.

"You will not leave, I am sure?"

"If you wish it--no!"

"And you will wait in patience till--you can see the bottom of my heart?"

"Yes!"

"Give me your hand on it."

Oldenburg pressed her hand to his face; she felt his tears flowing. She bent down and kissed his brow. Then she sat down on the other side of the fire and fell into deep thought.

The bells of a sleigh interrupted the silence. It was Doctor Balthasar. While the old gentleman was warming his hands by the fire, Oldenburg told him what was the matter.

"Hem! hem!" said Doctor Balthasar. "Know all: tubercles in the lungs--travelling in this weather--can't recover. Hem! hem! Where is she?--let us have a look at her."

As the three were turning round to leave the room, the door opened, and old Baumann, with Czika by his side, entered.

"You are too late!" he said to Doctor Balthasar.

Melitta, sobbing aloud, drew Czika to her heart.

"Hem! hem!" said Doctor Balthasar; "the old story--always call me when all is over--hem! hem! Let us have a look at her."

CHAPTER XI.

Two men from the village have, under old Baumann's superintendence, removed the snow in the park of Berkow at a place close to the edge of the beech forest, and where in summer a beautiful view may be had over the meadow, which slopes gradually down to the garden and the castle. They have dug a grave there in the black earth, and in the deep grave the gypsy woman sleeps now the deep, eternal sleep, weary from her restless wandering through this checkered, restless life, which has brought her so little happiness.

When the weather cleared up, a few days later, and the store-houses filled with snow seemed to have been emptied for a time, and when it had been possible to clear the walks through the garden and the park down to the forest itself, Melitta might often be seen, with Julius and Czika by her side, walking down to the grave of the gypsy, which is now marked by a large lock of granite, bearing simply the name of *Xenobia* on its one smoothly-polished side. Melitta is almost

always holding the brown child by the hand, and speaks more frequently to her than to her son, who in his turn waits on the child with almost chivalrous tenderness. "When the roads are a little better I will drive you in my sleigh, Czika. Oh, I have a beautiful sleigh; I'll show it to you when we get back. And we will go out quite alone. The pony knows me better than any one else; I have only to clack my tongue, and off he goes like lightning; and when I say: Brr, Pony! he stands as quiet as a lamb. Don't you think, mamma, I can go out quite alone with Czika?"

"If Czika is willing to go with you, why not?"

Czika's dark face had brightened up a little while Julius was speaking, but now a cloud was passing over it once more.

"Czika would like to have Hamet back again," she said, looking with her gazelle eyes into the far distance.

"Who is Hamet, Czika?" inquired Julius.

"Hamet? Hamet is Czika's donkey!"

"Pshaw; a donkey!" cries the boy, curving his upper lip contemptuously; but a glance from his mother's eye makes a sudden blush of shame to rise on his cheek.

"Where is your donkey, Czika?" he asks, with kindly sympathy.

"Hamet is dead, Mother and I buried him in the forest."

"Why, that's a pity. Well, never mind, Czika; I will buy you another one. You know, mamma, Mr. Griebenow, the gamekeeper at Fashwitz, has a big donkey, with such immense ears. Oh, Czika! the pony always shies when we meet him. But that does not matter. He must get accustomed to it, or else"--and Julius threatened him with his switch--"I'll soon teach him better. Wont you, mamma, wont you let me go over with Baumann and buy the donkey? Griebenow has offered him to me several times. Wont you, dear mamma?"

"Certainly," said Melitta; "and his name shall be Hamet."

"Oh that is beautiful," cried Julius; "and then we can ride out, all three of us. You on Bella, I on the pony, and Czika on Hamet; and then--but no, I am afraid Hamet wont be able to keep up with us!" he interrupts himself, and looks very grave and sober.

"Then we will go slowly."

"Well, to be sure, we can do that. We will ride very slowly, Czika; I should not like you to have a fall for anything in the world."

Thus the boy prattles on; and Melitta is delighted to see that his prattling and his cheerful ways have some effect upon Czika. She thinks of the time when the Brown Countess first came to Berkow, and how she had wished even then, long before she had any suspicion that the girl could be Oldenburg's child, to keep her, and to bring her up with her Julius; and how strangely her wish had now come to be fulfilled. And then her thoughts are wandering into the future, and of the possible time when she may call these children "our children." And when they get to the granite block, and she has placed a wreath of immortelles on it, she takes the two children in her arms and kisses them, and says: "My children, my dear dear children!"

Melitta was all day busy with Czika; and if Julius had not been himself so devoted to the pretty little girl he might well have become jealous. Czika even sleeps with his mother, and mamma puts her to bed herself every evening--or, rather, puts her on her couch, for Czika's bed consists as yet only of a few blankets spread on the floor, for she has declared, in her own grave and solemn way: "Czika will die if you put her into a bed." The little one retires very early--generally as soon as it is dark out-doors; so that Oldenburg, who comes over at that time from Cona, does not find her any more in the sitting-room. He has occasionally gone with Melitta and stood by her couch, but he does not do it any more, as the child sleeps very lightly, and the slightest noise wakes her up. He is content now to hear from Melitta that "their daughter" is doing well, that she has been out walking or riding with "their children," and that "their Czika" has called her "mother" to-day, for the first time.

"I fear I shall never hear her call me father," says Oldenburg, sadly.

"We must be patient, Adalbert," replies Melitta.

Hermann has taken more pleasure in unpacking his master's trunks than in packing them on that melancholy day. Oldenburg thinks no longer of leaving, since Melitta has asked him to stay, and the house at Berkow holds everything that is dear to his heart. Every day towards dark his sleigh jingles its bells in the courtyard of Berkow, and the young widow often appears on the threshold to welcome her daily visitor. Since the evening on which his child had been restored to him, Oldenburg has become more cheerful than he has ever been. He seems to have taken to heart Melitta's words--that it would be best to bear in patience what must be borne. He knows perfectly well what the beloved one had meant; he knows why she cannot yet look straight into

his eyes with her own dear, sweet eyes. He is sorry it should be so; but he, who knows Melitta's noble soul better than anybody else, would have wondered most if it had been otherwise. Melitta no longer loves the man who had conquered her heart in an unguarded hour and in a storm of passion, but the wound which the joy and the sorrow of this love has inflicted on her heart is still bleeding, and here also time must do what reasoning cannot accomplish. The peculiar situation in which Oldenburg stands to Melitta is no doubt of great influence, for the time, on his whole manner of thinking and of feeling. He has laid aside the plans for the improvement of the world, which he formerly cherished, as impracticable, since he has found that he will have need of all his patience, prudence, and caution to steer the vessel that bears his own fortune, safely into port. He is all the more interested now in the management of his estates, and follows the politics of the day with unwearied interest. He regrets, when the representatives of his province hold their annual meeting, that he has dreamt away on the banks of the Nile the time which he owed to his country. Now it seems to him more important to discover new sources of public prosperity than those of the Nile. He perceives in his solitude the first traces of that revolution which is not only threatening in France, but which will unchain at the first outbreak the fearful thunderstorm that is now hanging gloomily over his own country.

Melitta takes a lively interest in all his hopes and fears, his wishes and plans, even in his impatience for the speedy coming of the hour which he feels must come. She understands it perfectly well that he wants to go to Paris in order to exchange his new views with his old friends there. He knows that this time she does not wish him away, but only thinks of himself, and on this account he decides to go.

Shortly before he leaves, Czika, who has become somewhat more communicative, tells him a remarkable circumstance. After Paris has been several times mentioned in her presence, the child suddenly begins to speak of an old man who had accompanied them for a long time, and who had at last brought them to this very place. Not far from the gates of Berkow, she says, he turned back. That man also had intended to go to Paris. They press the child, and at last there remains no doubt that the old man of whom she speaks was Berger. Who can tell why he left those whom he had so tenderly befriended almost at the threshold of the house? Who can tell what the strange man wants in Paris? Perhaps he is anxious to put his shoulder to the wheel and help them when help is needed; or, it may be, he will only convince himself that the restless mountain of revolution is once more to give birth to--nought!

Still, Oldenburg is startled by the news. He has made Berger's acquaintance in Fichtenau, when he was there on a visit to Melitta. He had then had many a philosophical and political conversation with the shrewd, enthusiastic man, in which the word Revolution was mentioned quite frequently.

"The musty odor of casemates, and the foul air of a state where the police is supreme, which I have been compelled to breathe all my life, have made me what people call crazy," the professor had once said; "I feel as if nothing but a breathful of free air in my own country would ever lift the burden that lies here," and with these words he had repeatedly pointed to his breast.

"A breathful of free air in his country!" repeated Oldenburg, as he packed his trunks; "yes, indeed! that would ease us all, every one of us, wonderfully!"

CHAPTER XII.

The baroness had with her own tenacity held on to her plan to make her daughter Princess Waldenberg. She had spared no trouble, nay--what was much more in her case--no expense, and had spent an immense amount of hypocritical friendship and love, many smooth words, and still smoother compliments, in order to fulfil the duty of an affectionate mother towards her daughter.

She had conquered the ground foot by foot. In the first place, Felix, who had once enjoyed all her favor, and who was now fallen so low, had been compelled to leave the field, and to take his trip to Nice, according to the directions of the physicians. Felix had gone quite willingly. He had nothing more to gain in Grunwald, and nothing to lose but the last faint hope of recovery. His existence in Italy had been secured for several years by his generous aunt, who knew perfectly well that he had only a few months more to live. He had arranged all his affairs, and spoken candidly to his aunt about everything except that one unpleasant story about Timm. He left Anna Maria under the pleasant impression that the impertinent young man had been intimidated by him, and that he had been satisfied with a few hundred dollars. Felix, of course, did not desire to spoil his aunt's good humor by touching this sore point, and thus to ruin his own prospects. He thought he could arrange such matters much better in writing, and "when she sees that the thing cannot be helped, she will submit to it." Thus he left the house, followed by the sincere good

wishes of his uncle, and bedewed with the tears of his aunt.

"Heaven be thanked, he is gone!" thought the baroness, as she returned to her room through the assembled servants, pressing her handkerchief upon her eyes; "now for Helen to come back, and--the rest will follow."

On the same day she paid a visit to the boarding school, and had first a long conversation with Miss Bear. The baroness was very tender to-day. She had just said farewell to a beloved relative whose fate oppressed her heart, and who went probably for a long time, perhaps forever--here the handkerchief performed its duty once more. Her heart was consequently deeply distressed. "Ah, believe me, my dear Miss Bear," she said; "it is hard to have to part in such a way with a young man whom I have loved as my own son; to have to see his youthful vigor cruelly broken, and with it all the fond hopes which had been cherished for his future. And poor Helen, also, will feel the blow sadly; for, if I am not altogether mistaken, a tender attachment had begun to bud between the two relatives, whom Heaven itself seemed to have formed for each other. An attachment which was at first concealed, as happens often enough, by an apparent aversion, and that so successfully that I myself was deceived for a time, and--quite *entre nous*, dear Miss Bear--felt quite angry against the poor child. Now"--and the handkerchief goes once more to the eyes--"now, I know better. But all the greater is my desire to have my dear child back again. Would you take it amiss, my dear Miss Bear, if I were to carry off the precious jewel so soon again, after having entrusted it to your kind and prudent hands?"

The She Bear had too much sense not to perceive the contradiction in the former and the present manner of the baroness. She received, therefore, the confidence of the great lady with great reserve, and only asked whether Helen was to return to the paternal home at once, or only at a later time.

"I think we had better leave that to the dear child," replied Anna Maria, still afraid of a possible refusal on Helen's part. "I know she likes to be here; and, besides, I should not like to interfere in any way with her studies, her plans, and even her fancies. Helen knows my wishes. For the present, therefore, I would only ask you, dear Miss Bear, to use your influence over my child in my favor--in favor of a poor woman who is sorely afflicted by a grievous loss."

Anna Maria had scarcely left the institute when Miss Bear went up to Helen to communicate to her the conversation she had just had. She had taken off her gold spectacles for that purpose; she had smoothed down the official wrinkles on her brow, and carried up with her as much kindly feeling as a sober, pedantic She Bear can possibly feel for a fair young girl who, in her opinion, has been badly treated by her mother.

"Let us be candid with each other, dear Helen," said Miss Bear, taking the slender white hand of the young lady familiarly into her own bony hands. "My dear Sophie, who has just written to me, and who sends you much love, informed me at the beginning of our acquaintance of certain facts which helped me to understand what would otherwise be inexplicable in the conduct of your mother. You need not blush, my dear child; not a word has been said that could injure you in my eyes; on the contrary, Sophie and myself have only pitied you heartily, that you should have so much to suffer while you are still so young. We looked upon your removal from your father's house as upon a kind of banishment, and we thought at the same time you might find a desirable asylum here. If this is so, and if you still look upon it in that light, pray say so. It is not my way to create discord, especially between mother and daughter, but as matters are, I do not think it can be wrong in me to choose the side I like best."

The She Bear paused. Helen seemed to be more affected than she generally showed, but her self-control did not fail her even now. Almost cheerfully she said,

"You are very kind. Miss Bear; kinder indeed than I deserve; but your friendly interest in me has probably made my mother's conduct appear in too unfavorable a light to you. We have, for a time, stood in somewhat decided opposition to each other; but I hope mamma has forgotten it all as completely as I have. You know how fond I am of your house, and how much I like to be here; but if my mother really wishes me to return, as it seems she does, I should consider it my duty to obey her wishes, without asking whether it agrees with my own wishes or not."

The She Bear was by no means particularly pleased with this answer. She had opened her heart to the young girl; she had, to a certain extent, committed herself in order to win Helen's confidence; and now, instead of confidence, instead of frankness, she met nothing but reserve and diplomatic prudence! The good old lady felt deeply hurt, and left the room with pain at her heart, after having skilfully led the conversation into another channel.

The baroness had shown by her conduct to-day that she knew the heart of her daughter, at least in one direction. It flattered Helen's pride that her mother should not even venture to come with her request directly to her, but prefer hiding behind Miss Bear. She had decided, on the evening on which she wrote to Mary Burton, that she would return to her father's house. While she was describing the triumphs she had enjoyed in the salons of her mother, and the homage that had been offered her on all sides, she had felt a delight which, to call it by its proper name, was nothing else but the sweet sense of gratified vanity after deep humiliation. Helen's friendship for Mary Burton by no means excluded envy--for such are the friendships of girls; and Miss Burton had, it must be confessed, done all she could do to fan the fire of this evil passion in her

friend's heart. The young English girl had no sooner returned to her country from the boarding-school in Hamburg than she had made a great match, marrying one of the most eligible men in all England. Helen recollected very well how the romance which had come so suddenly to a happy end had first commenced. She and Mary, then girls of fourteen, had made a trip to Heligoland in company with the principal of the school and half a dozen other girls from Hamburg, and on this occasion they had gone on board a British man-of-war, lying at anchor there. The officers had, of course, received their charming visitors with the greatest courtesy and after refreshments had been offered, they had wound up with an exceedingly pleasant little ball on the main deck. The captain of the frigate, a handsome young man, with a dark sunburnt complexion, had especially attracted the attention of the young ladies, and would have been still more popular with them all if he had not so signally distinguished his countrywoman, Mary Burton. The consequence was that Miss Mary Burton was henceforth incessantly teased about the handsome captain, until at last the trip to Heligoland and all that belonged to it was forgotten amid new and more stirring events. But two persons had never forgotten it, and these two were the captain and Miss Mary Burton. When the young lady returned to England, three years later, one of the first persons she met at the house of a relative, a great lady in town, was Captain Crawley, who now, since his father and elder brother had died, was Lord Crawley and the owner of a magnificent property. A week later the fashionable world was surprised by the marriage of his lordship with Miss Mary Burton, a young lady utterly unknown before. But no one was more painfully struck by this news than Helen Grenwitz. She had been Mary's most intimate friend; she had always been seen with her, spoken of with her; but, and this was the bitter thing, she had always been considered the prettier by far and the more striking, and nobody had acquiesced more readily in this decision than Mary in her modesty. Mary worshipped her brilliant friend; Helen Grenwitz was in her eyes an inapproachable beau ideal; she invariably submitted to her better judgment; and when the two girls built their castles in the air for the future, Mary built magnificent palaces for Helen, and contented herself with a thatched cottage by the side of a purling brook. Helen had accepted this worship as a princess accepts the attentions of her ladies in waiting. Mary had told her so often that she was the more beautiful, the more charming of the two--Helen would have been a marvel of nature if, with her pride and self-sufficiency, she had been able to resist the effects of this affectionate worship.

And now it was this humble friend who made such a brilliant match, which raised her at once to the very highest rank in society, and actually brought her in connection with more than one sovereign family, while she--Helen dared not think it out. But now, when an opportunity offered to escape from this humiliating position; now, when even her proud mother condescended to proffer a request which she did not dare present in person; now there could be no doubt any longer as to what she ought to do; and Miss Bear, who offered her with troublesome kindness an asylum at her institute, simply did not know how matters stood at that moment.

When Miss Bear had left her, Helen walked up and down in her room with folded arms. At last she stepped to the window and gazed into the autumnal evening. On the sky, heavy dark clouds were drifting slowly; below them light-gray little clouds passed with the swiftness of arrows. The almost bare branches of the slender poplar-trees rocked to and fro in the sharp wind which hissed and whistled through the few leaves, while a crow came flapping her wings, sat for a few moments on the topmost branch of one of the trees, rocking restlessly to and fro, cawed as if the inhospitable treatment was too provoking, and flew away again. Helen opened the window. The cool, damp breath of evening brought her the sharp odor of mouldering leaves. The poplars in the garden rustled louder, and the tall beeches in the park waved ghastly, and every now and then the low roar of the waves of the sea came in monotonous intervals far inland.

She looked out; she did not mind the damp air which in an instant covered her black hair with a dewy veil; she only stared more perseveringly into the evening as it grew darker every moment. Strange visions passed through her mind. Proud palaces rose by the side of blue lakes, in which dark forests were reflected; and from the palace came a merry hunting train with horn and bugle; and at the head of the long procession rode a lady on a small horse by the side of a man who negligently curbed his fiery black horse and never turned his dark face from the young lady by his side; and all, as far as the eye could reach--castle and lake and forests and fields, which spread down, down along the lake, and far, far into the country--all belonged to the young lady and her husband, the knight on the proud horse. And then castle and forests and fields sank into the lake, and the lake grew into a sea which beat high up against the white chalk-cliffs with their crown of lofty beech forests; and up there on the high bank, in the glow of the setting sun, stood the same young lady who had been riding on the small graceful horse by the side of a man who was not the cavalier on the black horse, and they looked both out upon the glorious sight as the sun sank in the swelling masses of waves; and as they stood and looked, they folded their hands like praying children, and looked at each other with eyes full of love and overflowing with tears.

The wind rushed wildly through the poplars, and the young girl started up from her reveries. She cast a glance at the dim twilight that was hovering over the park. Two figures--a man and a woman--were passing the open space between the bosquets, walking arm in arm. It was only an instant, but the sharp eye of the young girl had recognized them both; at least she thought she had recognized them. A feeling such as she had never yet experienced overcame her. She must be sure that she had seen correctly--that Oswald Stein had really met Emily Cloten at this hour here in this place. The next moment she had wrapped herself up in a shawl, put on a hat with a close veil, and had hurried down the stairs which led into the garden, and was now standing at the gate that led from the garden into the park. All of a sudden her courage left her. She was

ashamed of an impulse that had misled her, and made her take so unwomanly a step, of which she heartily repented. She was just about to turn back again, when the two figures once more came up the avenue which led past the garden gate. She hid behind one of the pillars of the gate, so as not to be seen; but a single glance at the two had convinced her that she had not been mistaken before. There was no doubt: it was Oswald and Emily who were passing her, lost in secret, anxious conversation. Helen's heart beat as if it would burst. She understood now why Emily asked her the other day if she had any news of Oswald Stein; she understood now Emily's anxiety at the ball at Grenwitz, when Cloten and the other young noblemen were loudly threatening Oswald ... Fooled then! and fooled by whom? By a man who could not resist Emily Cloten. Helen crept back to her room, threw aside hat and shawl, and now it was settled that she would return to her parents.

CHAPTER XIII.

Prince Waldenberg had not been able to find anything to interest him in Grunwald until he had become acquainted with Helen Grenwitz. He could not exactly say that he was tired of it, or that the town and the people had been particularly unpleasant to him, for he scarcely knew such a state of mind; at least he never showed any symptoms of weariness or disgust. His stern, rigid face never betrayed pleasure or annoyance; it looked as if his features had been frozen, for all time to come, in the northern climate in which the prince was born, and as if they could not thaw in the glow of love or of hatred. And it was really so, to a certain extent. The ordinary sensations of common mortals were not capable of that sublime self-consciousness which was given to him. He could not laugh at the wittiest anecdote, nor could he look disgusted at a stupidity. His servants never heard a bad word from him; he never showed childish wrath before his soldiers. Nevertheless the men trembled before him, and even the general did not inspire half as much respect as First-Lieutenant Prince Waldenberg; for the servants knew that their master never scolded, but dismissed them upon the slightest neglect, and the men had terrible stories to tell about him in the guardhouse and in the barracks. The rumor was that the prince had the unpleasant habit, if a soldier showed the faintest sign of insubordination of killing him on the spot--a habit which he had quite recently indulged in at the capital, and which had led to his being detached from the Guards and sent to a line regiment in garrison at Grunwald. The story was probably a myth, like so many others; the prince had been sent to Grunwald in order to study fortification and coast and harbor defence, and other useful branches, in preparation for the high position to which he was entitled, if not by his military genius, at all events by his high rank; but the myth proved how the common people, who have a very keen eye for the virtues and the faults of the higher classes, thought about First-Lieutenant Prince Waldenberg. The officers, however, seemed also to treat him on their part with some misgivings, and certainly with great circumspection. No one presumed to speak to him at the mess-table, or at night at the club, or wherever else they happened to meet, in that cordial tone which is generally used between comrades. On the contrary, they rather avoided him, and, when that was not possible, they confined their words to what was indispensable; especially the captain of the company to which the prince was attached--a gentleman like a ball, who barely reached up to the shoulder of his lieutenant, and who felt probably all the smaller by his side as he was not even noble. It was most amusing to hear Captain Miller at drill exclaim, in almost piteous tones, "First-Lieutenant Prince Waldenberg will have the kindness to step forward--a mere thought!" and even the old, gray-headed sergeant could hardly keep from smiling.

The prince was thus very much left to his own company, even at the evening parties, which he occasionally frequented. He met here again his comrades, who had already avoided him at parade, and a lot of old and young country gentlemen, whose talk about tillage and cattle-raising could not exactly interest him much who had more estates than they had acres of land, and more shepherds than they had sheep. As for the ladies--why there were some very pleasant ones among them, like the beautiful Misses Frederika, Nathalie and Gabriella Nadelitz, Hortense Barnewitz, a trifle *passée* but all the more clever and interesting, Emily Cloten as piquante as she was coquettish--but they were either not to the taste of his highness, or the prince was altogether inaccessible to the charms of the fair sex. For a time, at least, it seemed as if he were not disposed to pay special attention to any one of these ladies.

But no sooner had the prince seen the beautiful Helen Grenwitz in the salons of her mother than the rumor began to spread--nobody knew how--that his highness was very much pleased with beautiful Helen Grenwitz, and that an engagement was not very far off. The report continued to live, and was even confirmed by numerous details, the discovery of which did great honor to the ingenuity of the before-mentioned lovers of gossip and watchers of features. The Countess Grieben knew positively that the prince was spending every evening at the Grenwitz mansion; others had it that he passed the institute of Miss Bear daily after dress-parade, on his

superb Tcherkessian stallion; and still others, that he was frequently seen at night walking up and down for hours before the house, concealed in a large cloak. Hortense Barnewitz whispered into Countess Stilow's ear: "Now I know why poor Felix had so suddenly to go to Italy;" and the Countess Stilow whispered in reply: "You'll see, dear Hortense; it will not be a week before Helen, who seemed to be banished forever, will be back again."

A smile of satisfaction lighted up all faces when the prophecy of the toothless Countess Stilow was actually fulfilled, and Helen Grenwitz exchanged her modest little room in Miss Bear's boarding-school for the stately rooms of the Grenwitz mansion.

It was strange, however, that the old baron, who had so urgently desired this step before, should now seem to be least pleased with it of all. The old gentleman had of late become exceedingly capricious, obstinate, and violent, so that one hardly recognized in him the kind good-natured man of former days, and everybody pitied and admired poor Anna Maria, who bore her cross with truly Christian patience and forbearance.

"Ah, you may believe me, dear Helen," the excellent old lady said to her daughter on the first evening after her return, as they were sitting on the sofa in the reception-room, and after the baron had left the room to retire; "it is very difficult now to get along with your father, and I need your kind support more than ever. Malte is too young, and I fear too heartless, to admit of putting any confidence in him. I have been so long accustomed to bear all alone that I can hardly realize the happiness of having a friend and a confidante." And the good lady shed tears while she was gathering up her work in order to follow her husband.

The relations between mother and daughter seemed indeed to promise a better understanding for the future. It was not in the nature of either of them to be particularly affectionate. They treated each other as adversaries who have mutually tried their strength and found out that they had better be friends again.

After Anna Maria had thus taken the second step toward the attainment of her end she pursued her plan with greater security. She had every reason to be pleased with the results. Prince Waldenberg came almost every evening; and as he did not play cards, and it could not well be presumed that he found many charms in the conversation with Count and Countess Grieben, who were near neighbors, and also came very frequently to play a game with the baron and the baroness, the magnet could be none other than Helen, with whom, indeed, he spent the whole of his time.

Anna Maria took care that the prince and Helen should not be disturbed more than was unavoidable; and as in these circles the older people had no other way of spending time than in playing cards, and young people were but rarely invited, the task was not very difficult. The prince and Helen spent long hours alone in the little boudoir by the side of the large room with three windows, where the card-tables were placed, at least until supper was announced, and even then they were generally again left very nearly to themselves, as the others had to discuss the different games that had been played.

It was most creditable to the conversational powers of the prince that the young lady, with her pretensions, was never tired of these interviews. And yet, what he said could not be called interesting, exactly; at all events the manner in which he said it was not so. He was never heard to speak in that animated and quick manner which is peculiar to young people (and the prince was very young yet, perhaps twenty-four), especially when they speak of favorite topics, or are excited by opposition. It was always the same monotonous utterance, as if the words were men and the sentences sections, and they were all marching about, carefully keeping pace. It was significant, too, that the prince preferred speaking French, a language which has naturally such a logical rhythm, although he spoke German as well and as fluently. It was perhaps due to this fact--that the conversation was almost exclusively carried on in a foreign idiom--that Helen felt the strange character of his mind so much less. For the prince was, after all, in his appearance, and not less so in his manner of thinking and feeling, more of a Russian than of a German. All the memories of his childhood and youth, with the only exception of the short time which he had spent in France, and more recently in Germany, were Russian. He had been page at the court of the Emperor Nicholas, and the daily sight of this magnificent monarch, with whom he was even said to share certain peculiarities of figure and carriage, had probably not been without influence on the character of the young prince. He had received a purely military education among the cadets of the Michailow palace, the same palace whose vast apartments witnessed in that fearful night the murder of an emperor, when the wife of Paul I., frightened by the low sound of a number of voices and clanking of arms, snatched the young Princes Nicholas and Michael from their beds and hastened with them through the long suit of rooms to the emperor's apartments, when icy Count Pahlen met her, carried her almost forcibly back to her rooms, and locking the door carefully, said: "*Restez tranquille, madame; il n'y a pas de danger pour vous.*" The prince had quite a number of similar stories, and they did not fail to have their effect upon the mind of the fanciful girl. It was a new version of the adventures with which the warlike Moor filled the heart of the daughter of the Venetian patrician. Desdemona also shuddered at the blood flowing in streams, through his accounts, but the hero appeared only the more marvellous; and although Helen often felt an icy breath rising from these palace souvenirs of the Russian page, she was none the less captivated and ensnared by the secrecy and the horrors that surrounded them with an irresistible charm. She dreamt of a life in comparison with which the life she was now leading appeared very pitiful and mean. She saw herself a lady in waiting at a court where beauty and

cleverness are all-powerful; she fancied herself the soul of grand enterprises, as the confidante of generals and statesmen; and then she started from her reveries and looked at the calm, dark face of the giant who had rocked her to sleep with his strange stories, and she asked herself whether she would ever venture to enter, on his hand, those lofty regions towards which she was drawn by the ardent wishes of her proud, ambitious heart.

The prince must have been particularly interested in winning the young girl's confidence, for he laid aside the cool reserve with which he treated all others, when he was alone with her. He even spoke of his family with the greatest frankness. He told her that, as for his parents, he only knew his mother really, because he saw his father but very rarely. His mother was living in St. Petersburg, where her influence at court was still very great, although an incurable affection had sadly disfigured the once surpassingly beautiful woman, and made her a melancholy enthusiast. His father, Count Malikowsky, he said, was spending most of his time in travelling and at watering-places, as he was still passionately fond of the pleasures of life in spite of his age and his delicate health, and thus could combine at these Spas pleasure and profit. He, the prince, had, properly speaking, nothing to do with his father. They exchanged short letters with each other once or twice a year, on special occasions; he had seen his father the last time at the capital, when he was swearing his oath of allegiance to the king, and he had been shocked by the sad appearance of the old gentleman, which the latter had tried in vain to conceal by the subtlest arts of the toilette. The count and the princess harmonized very little, as their characters were so utterly different. The count went once a year to St. Petersburg, appeared at court, showed himself once or twice at the Letbus House, and disappeared again, in order to send friendly greetings for another year from Homburg, Baden-Baden, Pyrmont, etc.

Nor did the prince conceal his views on other subjects. He had evidently thought much about matters which are usually of no interest to young men of his rank; but as he was far from being brilliant, and as he looked upon everything from the unchangeable standpoint of the officer and the aristocrat, his views and thoughts were all more or less stiff and wooden, as if they had been so many well-drilled recruits.

Of his profession he thought very highly.

"I consider the soldier's profession," he said, "not only the noblest, but also the most useful; the noblest, because here alone every faculty of man is roused and developed; the most useful, because it is the only security for all the other professions, which cannot exist without it. If the peasant wishes to raise his cabbages, if the mechanic wants to sit quietly in his work-shop, the artist in his atelier, and the scholar in his study they must all thank the soldier, who for their sake stands guard at the town-gate, patrols the streets at night, disperses noisy revellers, and fights the enemy when he threatens the country. Compared with this profession, all others are low and vulgar. And that it is beyond doubt the highest and noblest, is proved by the fact that the rulers of the earth adopt its costume for their daily wear, or at least for all solemn occasions. Therefore I think that nobles alone ought to be officers. And I think it a deplorable mistake that, of late, others also have been admitted to our ranks, for which the penalty will have to be paid sooner or later."

"But do you really think that all who are not nobles are unfit for this profession?" asked Helen.

"Certainly," replied the prince, with energy. "Sport and war ought to be reserved for the nobility, not because those who are not noble cannot also fire a gun or wield a sword, but because they cannot do it in the right spirit. Nor is this mere theory; the question has its practical side also. The spirit of innovation, of insolent disobedience to the order of things as ordained by God, is everywhere stirring. In our state they have most unfortunately attempted to keep it down by gentle means and by concessions. I believe that sternness and severity alone can check this spirit. We are sure of the men who have been for three years under, our control and influence; but we are not sure of the officer who is not noble. Send a platoon under a Lieutenant Smith, or Jones, against a rebellious mob, and ten to one he will see among the mob a brother Smith, or a cousin Jones, and therefore hesitate to give the command Fire! at the right moment. Take your officers from the nobility, and only from the nobility, and such a thing cannot happen; and you can quell the rising of a whole town like Grunwald with a single battalion."

The prince spoke with great energy and strong condemnation of the concessions which the king had made that spring to the liberal party, and to the spirit of the times generally, by convoking a legislative assembly of the whole people.

"I do not see," he said, "where this is to end. If the king does not wish--and I believe he really does not wish--that a sheet of paper, which they call a constitution, should rise between him and the people, according to which he is forced to govern, whether he will or not, then he ought not to have conjured up even the shadow of a constitution. The shadow is soon followed by the substance. I confess that I am disgusted by the patience of the king, while these fellows cry so loud; and that I have long doubted whether I could honorably serve a monarch who thus misjudges the duty of a king 'by the grace of God.'"

When the prince was thus judging things by the standard of his Russian ideas of absolute government, it sometimes happened that there arose in Helen's naturally good and affectionate heart a repugnance, not unmixed with terror, towards one who could utter such inhuman thoughts in cold blood. At other times she would have shrunk from the fearful consequences of

such principles, but now she was too deeply irritated by the wound which Oswald's treachery had inflicted on her proud heart, and, as is the case with violent dispositions, she had hastened from one extreme to the other. Helen hated Oswald. She wept tears of indignation and of shame when she thought how dear this man had been to her, and how near she had been to the danger of showing him her love for him. The treachery itself was no longer doubtful to her mind. Emily's manner had changed so strikingly of late that even outsiders had noticed it. The young lady who had formerly found happiness only in the wildest turmoil of pleasure, now avoided society as much as she had formerly sought it; and when she could not escape from invitations to her former circles, she seemed to have only scoffing and scorn for all she had admired in other days. She declared that the officers were stupid, dancing a childish amusement, and a masked ball the height of absurdity. She treated the ladies with undisguised irony, and the men with open contempt, especially her husband, who did not know what to make of the strange change, and only discovered gradually the one fact, that of all the many foolish things which Albert Cloten had done in his time, the making of an accomplished coquette, like the "divine Emily Breesen," his wife, was beyond all doubt the most foolish. Most people laughed, and said: "It is a whim of the little woman's; she will soon come right again." Others, who were less harmless, said: "There is something behind that! When a young woman treats the whole world, not excluding her husband, *en canaille*, she does so only for the sake of a man who is himself her whole world." But they racked their brains in vain to find out who the lucky man could be. Some guessed it was young Count Grieben, who had formerly courted her; others, Baron Sylow; still others, even Prince Waldenberg; and only Helen Grenwitz knew that they were all mistaken, and that the object of Emily's love was not to be met with in the aristocratic circles of the Faubourg St. Germain of Grunwald.

If Anna Maria had known what an admirable ally she had at that moment for the execution of her plan in Oswald Stein, she would probably have been less displeased with this excessively objectionable and dangerous young man. At all events, it seemed as if the relations between Helen and the prince were gradually assuming the desired shape. She considered it at least a good sign that Helen expressed no desire to improve the conversation in the boudoir next to the card-room by inviting other young men to take part in it, and that she did not frown contemptuously when she (Anna Maria) recently ventured to say: "That would be a son-in-law to my heart," but quietly let the dark lashes droop upon the gently-blushing cheeks.

CHAPTER XIV.

Any one who had seen Oswald Stein and Albert Timm sitting every night behind their bottle, in the city cellar of Grunwald, both full of jokes and jests and merry tales, would have been convinced that both of them lived fully up to the motto of the illustrious club of "the Rats," to which they had the honor to belong. They evidently enjoyed life; and yet this was true only of Albert Timm, who had seriously adopted the first and sole article of faith of the secret society: "Live as thou wilt desire to have feasted when thou diest," and made it the principle of his existence. For Oswald, on the contrary, this wild life was but a means to stifle within him the incessant, painful longing after a nobler model of life. The memory of all "that had once been his" mingled like the notes of an Æolian harp with the wild allegro of his present life. His enthusiastic youth, when rosy clouds edged the horizon, and behind them lay a mysterious, wonderful future; his days of supreme happiness at Grenwitz, where the old legend of the paradise seemed to be repeated for him; his friendly intimacy with great and at least good men;--whither had all this flown? His youth was gone forever, with all the sweet rosy dreams of youth. Of the paradise, nothing was left but the bitter taste of the fruit from the tree of knowledge: that fickleness of heart and true love can never go hand in hand And his friends? With Berger he had parted, and probably forever, at the gate of the insane asylum; in Oldenburg he now hated a rival, and the rich aristocrat, the favorite of fortune, who easily overcame all impediments that exhausted the full strength of others. Franz, who had stood by him like a brother in the most embarrassing moments of his life, he had treated with black ingratitude; and in vain did he try to excuse himself on the ground that he could not possibly have continued to be the friend of a character which, in its self-poised calmness and dispassionate seriousness, was so entirely different from his own. From Bemperlein, the good, harmless, honorable man, who had met him with the offer of his enthusiastic friendship, he was separated by the consciousness that he had mortally offended him through her whom he worshipped, so that when he met him in the street he was apt to look to the other side in his painful embarrassment.

And what had he gained in return for so much lost happiness? The few rare moments which Oswald gave to serious thoughts on his present situation were unsatisfactory enough. His position in the college was almost untenable, and yet he had occupied it scarcely three months. The whole "humanity" of the rector, Clemens, was not sufficient to cover with the cloak of charity

the great and the small vices which Oswald had committed in his official capacity; and Mrs. Clemens declared before the assembled dramatic club, with regard to the same unfortunate young man, that "she had cherished a serpent in her bosom." And the worthy lady had good reason to complain. She had met Oswald with a three-fold friendship: as the mother of two marriageable daughters, as the wife of his superior, and as the president of the dramatic club, and she had been deeply offended in all these capacities. Oswald had not only failed to return the bashful attachment which had begun to germinate in the hearts of Thusnelda and Fredegunda, but he had called these victims of his caprice before a numerous company "little goslings, who wanted nothing but the plumage to be perfect." Ah, it had all been duly and faithfully reported! He had compared the fair president, the wife of his presiding officer, with an old turkey hen, who was so proud of the goslings she had hatched that her empty head was utterly turned; and, finally, he had not only ceased to frequent the dramatic club, after reading there three times amid general applause, but he had passed over, with flags flying, so to say, into the hostile camp, and had become an active member of the lyric club which had rapidly risen under Mrs. Jager's direction to a splendor unheard of in the annals of the dramatic club. Certainly, if Oswald had felt no other misdeed but this on his conscience, the cloud of dark discontent which was continually hanging on his brow would have seemed natural enough.

But Oswald had to answer for more than this faithlessness. His connection with Emily Cloten, which he had so suddenly begun, partly from caprice and partly from real attachment, now weighed upon his soul like a heavy burden, especially since the reckless, passionate temper of the young lady threatened to betray their secret at every moment. Emily no sooner felt sure of Oswald's affections than she thought she could throw down the gauntlet to the whole world. "To love you, and to be loved by you, is my sole wish and will--everything else is utterly indifferent to me," she said; and she acted accordingly. Was she to bridle her inordinate desires, now that her heart for the first time clearly felt its own capacities? And she loved Oswald with the whole passion of a naturally most tender, affectionate heart, and with the whole recklessness of a woman who had all her life looked upon the world only as a football of her sovereign pleasure. It was in vain that Oswald reminded her of the duties of his position--of the difficulties arising from his narrow circumstances. "I cannot conceive how you can hesitate between the weariness you feel in teaching your boys and the delight we feel in each other's company. Why don't you give up the stupid college, and live only for me?" "But, my dear child, I am already living almost alone for you; and if matters continue so much longer. Rector Clemens will not only consent to my leaving the college, but desire that I should only live for you." "Oh, wouldn't that be splendid!" cried Emily, clasping her hands; "then we could carry out my pet wish, and go to Paris, where there are no stupid people watching every step we take." Oswald shrugged his shoulders. "And what are we to live on in Paris?" Emily made a long face; but the next moment she was laughing again, and said: "Oh, that will take care of itself if we are once there."

The desire to get away from Grunwald, where indeed her position was every moment liable to be exposed, had of late become a fixed idea with Emily, and she returned constantly to the danger they were running. She wanted to enjoy Oswald's love without interruption, and not to pay for every half-hour spent stealthily in his company with long days of care and anxiety. So far they had met either in Primula's boudoir, or in Ferrytown at the house of Emily's old nurse, Mrs. Lemberg, which they could easily reach as long as the ice held that covered the bay between the island and the continent. Primula had been initiated into the secret after Emily's recklessness had once led to a most ridiculous scene of discovery, and it was characteristic that the author of the "Cornflowers" had soon overcome her first feeling of jealousy, and henceforth looked upon this "union of loving souls" as extremely romantic, and found that the lovers in their helplessness, threatened by an unloving world, were highly pitiable, and she herself, as the protector of such an "heroic passion," worthy of all admiration! She dreamt herself more and more into the part she was playing, and the subscribers to the "Daffodils," for whose "album" Primula Veris was now writing her poems, were forced to read long pages about "the twisted thread of love; the silent, secret doings of secret love, shunning the light of day;" and especially of the "chaste guardian of the faithful love." She even warned her readers not to imagine that the latter was "the moon--the pale virgin," but hinted very explicitly at the meaning.

Primula also favored Emily's plan. "Flee, my children," she said, "from this rude Cimmerian sky to milder skies, away from these wild cyclopes and soulless ichthyophagi! Amid snow and ice even the blue cyane cannot thrive, much less the red rose of wild love."

Oswald was not so blinded that he could not have seen the insanity of the project, but he was pleased with the adventurous nature of the plan, and he was dazzled by the hope of thus ridding himself at one blow of all the troubles that beset him, no matter what the blow might cost. Finally, his attachment for Emily had grown from a mere whim into a full passion, which did not exactly warm his heart but influenced his imagination, and which he did not care to combat very earnestly because it afforded him a kind of excuse for his fickleness. He began to reflect seriously on the plan for an elopement, especially as the little remnant of his fortune was rapidly disappearing, owing to the life he was now leading, and he saw, therefore, that he would have to do quickly whatever was to be done.

Oswald would have liked to consult his friend Albert on this embarrassing subject, but he no longer ventured to speak to him about Emily. At first he had now and then dropped a word about his last romance, and Albert was one of those clever men who need be told only half a word to be at home in the most complicated affair. He had never troubled Oswald with curious questions,

and yet knew how to draw from him very quickly nearly all he desired to hear. He knew that Oswald had secret meetings at Mrs. Jager's house, and across in Ferrytown; he knew who the young, thoughtless woman was, and he was yet by no means misled when Oswald suddenly ceased speaking of Emily. He only concluded that matters had entered that stage where silence becomes a duty.

Timm had not exactly desired that matters should go quite so far. Timm did not object to Oswald's reviving his taste for an aristocratic mode of life by an affair with a great lady, and to his becoming thus more and more anxious for larger means; but he did not desire that this should turn into a serious attachment, which might lead no one could tell where, and which, above all, threatened to become fatal to Oswald's romantic passion for Helen. For it was upon this love that Timm had based his whole plan. If Oswald could not be induced by any other means to enter into a lawsuit with the Grenwitz family for the legacy, then the hope of winning Helen should be his motive. Thus it was why Helen must not be lost for Oswald, nor Oswald for Helen. And even this might now happen. Albert, whose eyes were everywhere, had not failed to learn that Prince Waldenberg was daily at the Grenwitz mansion; he had discovered, besides, other suspicious evidences of the favorable progress of the new relations between Helen and the prince; as, for instance, magnificent bouquets ordered at the first florist's establishment by the prince, which were "to be sent that night to Grenwitz House." Since the snow was firm, and the *jeunesse dorée* was devising sleighing parties in all possible directions of the compass, he had, moreover, repeatedly seen Helen by the side of the prince in a magnificent sleigh, whose costly coverings, with the three horses harnessed abreast after Russian fashion, pointed it out as the property of his highness. He had as frequently warned Oswald against so dangerous a rival, but the latter had only given evasive answers. This state of things displeased Albert altogether, and he considered how he might, to use his own words, "get the cart into a new track."

He had not reappeared for some time at Grenwitz House. Felix had sent him, before leaving, four hundred dollars in advance for the month of November, taking it from his travelling money, and requesting him at the same time to address himself hereafter, "in all business matters," directly to his aunt, the baroness. Albert had as yet not availed himself of this permission, as it was difficult even for him to spend four hundred dollars a month in the modest town of Grunwald; and he had, besides, been specially successful at faro of late. Nevertheless, he proposed to pay his visit very soon, and to avail himself of the opportunity for a better examination of the whole situation.

It happened in these same days that Albert received one evening, just as he was going out, a letter by the town mail, which put him into such bad humor that he gave up his original intention to attend an extraordinary meeting of "the Rats" in the city cellar, and instead, paid a visit to his landlord--the sexton, Toby Goodheart--the man who had filled all the little crooked streets and lanes around St. Bridget's with the odor of his sanctity.

Mr. Toby Goodheart was a bachelor, because he was too ugly to obtain a wife, as he said himself: because his heaven-aspiring mind did not condescend to such worldly thoughts, as his admirers insisted upon believing. But neither the one nor the other could be the true reason, for Mr. Toby was not ugly, but a very good-looking man of some forty years, whose high forehead, bald at the temples, gave him a most god-fearing expression. Nor was Mr. Toby really so very god-fearing, unless his piety consisted in the solemn manner with which he stepped, Sunday after Sunday and year after year, dressed in his shiny-black dress-coat, black trousers, and a long flowing black gown fastened to the collar, through the church, pushing his velvet bag by means of a long pole under the noses of the "devout listeners." That Mr. Toby was in reality a son of Belial was known to but very few men in Grunwald, where the excellent man had now been living for twenty years--perhaps only to one single man, and that was the occupant of the two best rooms in the sexton's official dwelling: Mr. Albert Timm, surveyor.

Mr. Toby had dropped his mask in an evil hour, when the spirit of his much-beloved grog was stronger in him than the spirit of lies, and shown his true face to Mr. Timm, the "famous fellow." Mr. Toby Goodheart and Mr. Albert Timm had since that hour formed the closest intimacy, a friendship which was cemented and secured in its firmness and duration by a remarkable community of fondness for women, wine, and dice, and the common possession of delicate secrets.

Albert Timm entered the little room behind the parlor, where his landlord used to sit, with his hat on his head, and found the excellent man engaged in the pleasant occupation of preparing a glass of his favorite beverage.

"You may make one for me too," said Albert, throwing his hat upon a chair and himself into the corner of the well-padded sofa.

"As heretofore, Albert mine?" asked the obliging landlord, taking another tumbler and spoon from the cupboard and placing it on the table by the side of the smoking tea-kettle.

"Rather a little more than less," was the mysterious reply.

While Mr. Toby was brewing the hot drink according to this prescription, Albert was gazing at the tips of his boots.

"You are not in good humor to-night, Albert mine!" said Toby, looking up from his occupation.

"It would be a lie to say the contrary!"

"What's the matter? Has little Louisa caught you?"

"Little Louisa be d----d."

"Or have they sent you a little note, which you had conveniently forgotten?"

"Something of the kind!"

"Well, what is it?" asked Toby, placing the grog he had mixed for Albert upon the table and stirring it busily. "There, take a mouthful, and then speak out!"

Albert took the tumbler, tasted, to see if it was neither too hot nor too cold, neither too sweet nor too bitter, neither too strong nor too weak, and when he had gained the conviction that it came fully up to his standard, he more than half emptied it at one draught.

"It goes down easily to-night," said Toby, good naturedly. "Try it again."

"You recollect that I commenced last summer at Grenwitz a foolish sort of a thing with a little black-eyed witch of a French girl?" continued Timm.

"I know," said Toby, smiling cunningly; "I know what's the matter now."

"No, you don't. The little thing was as shy as a wild-duck. In other respects, to be sure, she was as stupid, too, for you know she lent me, poor as I was, three hundred dollars, which she had put into the savings bank."

"That was noble in her."

"But now she wants them back."

"Did you give her a note?"

"No!"

"Why, then, you have only to say that you know nothing about it, and it's all right. Selah!"

"That is not so easy. She has great friends, with whom I should not like to have trouble."

"Why not?"

"Did I not tell you that Marguerite is no longer with the Grenwitz people?"

"Not a word. Where is she?"

"At Privy Councillor Rohan's."

"How did she get there?"

"I believe through Bemperlein, the candidate for the university, forsooth; the hypocrite who, I am told, is now the privy councillor's right hand, and as others say engaged to my pet of other days."

"Much good may it do him!" said Toby. "But who has dunned you?"

"The old privy councillor himself; look!"--and here Albert drew from his pocket the letter he had received half an hour ago. "The old sinner writes, 'Dear sir! As Miss Marguerite, who now does me the honor,' etc., etc., 'tells me,' etc. 'As the relations which formerly may have existed between yourself and the young lady are now entirely and forever broken off--you know best why--you will understand that you cannot, as a man of honor, keep a moment longer a sum of money which was placed at your disposal under very different circumstances. Finally, I beg leave to say that the young lady feels a very natural inclination to leave the matter untouched, but that I learnt accidentally from members of the Grenwitz family that Miss Martin had been enabled to save a little capital while staying with that family, and that this led me to question the young lady on the subject, and to insist upon being told,' etc. 'Of course, I must consider it my duty,' etc., etc. Well, what do you say of that?" asked Albert, crushing the letter and stuffing it angrily into his pocket.

"That is a bad thing," replied the honorable Toby, scratching his grizzly head. "The privy councillor is a man of high standing in the town, especially since he has paid his debts--heaven knows how; so that you cannot enter the lists against him. I am afraid you will have to pay."

"So am I," replied Albert. "That cursed gossip, the baroness! It is malice in her; but she shall pay for it. I'll put the thumbscrews on her, till----"

Albert paused, and poured the rest of the drink down his throat.

"Look here, Albert mine," said Toby; "how are you standing with the baroness? I hope, Albert mine, my boy, you have got all the lots of money which you have made such an unusual show of, of late, in an honest way?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, the baroness is not so bad yet, and----"

"Nonsense. That old vixen! I am not so low yet."

"Then tell me; how did you get the money?"

"First tell me what you mean by your mysterious allusions to the power you have over the Grenwitz family, and let me hear it all."

"Will you then tell me where the money comes from?"

"Yes."

"Well! But let us first brew another tumbler, and then we can begin our stories. But look here; honor bright, Albert mine; honor bright, and no prattling!"

"One crow does not peck at another!" said Albert.

Mr. Toby smilingly nodded his venerable head, mixed the grog with artistic care, unbuttoned his black satin waistcoat, leaned back in his chair, and said,

"I have not always lived in Grunwald; and I have not always been sexton at St. Bridget's."

"I know! The capital has the undisputed honor to call you her own; and whose sexton you were before you became St. Bridget's own sexton, the gentleman in black will probably know best."

Toby Goodheart seemed to take this as a high compliment. He smiled contentedly, and sipped his grog with evident delight.

"Don't be coarse, Albert mine, or I cannot go on," he said. "My father was a servant; and I was, from tender infancy, intended for the same profession. You may judge what remarkable talents I had for my vocation, when I tell you that I had had twenty masters before I was twenty years old. About this time it occurred to me how much more pleasant it would be to be my own master; and as I had laid by a considerable little sum during the time of my service,"--here the honorable Toby smiled with his left eye and the left corner of his mouth--"I had capital enough to open a house of entertainment."

"Nice entertainment, I dare say, you gave," said Albert.

"Yes, indeed!" replied Toby, adding another lump of sugar to his grog; "at least the fair sex was abundantly represented in my nice little business. I made it a principle to have only female waiters, and so the 'Cafe Goodheart' was well frequented. I had at least six or eight young ladies to do the honors of my house."

Albert Timm seemed to listen to these statistics with much delight. He leaned back in the corner of the sofa and broke out into a loud laugh, while the honorable Toby again only smiled--but this time, for the sake of change, with the right eye and the right corner of the mouth.

"Hush, hush, Albert mine!" he said; "the people might hear us in the street. How can a prudent youth like yourself ever laugh aloud? I have never in all my life done more than smile, and I have succeeded pretty well. But never mind that. The young ladies were, of course, always very pretty; and I can say that, of all my colleagues, I managed to get the prettiest. But I must also confess that this was not so much due to my own good taste as to the discrimination and cleverness of a lady with whom I had once upon a time stood in tender relations, when we were both in service, and who was still a friend and a partner in business. This lady, called Rose Pape, was in her way a very remarkable woman, with a marvellous talent for business."

"I can imagine what kind of business that was," said Albert.

"You can imagine no such thing, young man," replied Toby. "Mrs. Rose Pape was an excellent lady, whose society was not only sought after by the most respectable ladies, but also paid for with large sums of money, and whose night-bell was well known in the whole thickly-settled neighborhood in which she lived. But Mrs. Rose Pape took not only a warm interest in young wives, but very consistently, also, in those who might become such; and thus she had as extensive an acquaintance among the pretty chambermaids and seamstresses as among the wives of high officials and rich merchants.

"One fine day, now, Mrs. Rose came to see me, and told me that an immensely rich baron of her acquaintance had fallen desperately in love with a pretty girl, and had charged her, Rose, to help him, without regard to expense. She had already formed a plan, but she was in need of a valet of special abilities in order to carry out her superb conception. She added that there was a lot of money to be made in the business, and asked me to join her.

"It so happened that just at that time the police had found occasion to interfere with the management of my café, and I was afraid of unpleasant consequences; I seized, therefore, with eagerness the opportunity of leaving the capital for a time in such good company. Twenty-four hours later I was on my way, accompanying the young lady in question, and riding in the comfortable carriage of my new master, who was going to--well, guess, Albert mine, where he was going?"

"How can I know? But you were surely not going to give me the complete history of your life? I thought you were going to tell me how you got to Grenwitz," said Albert, who had been busy with his own affairs, and had not listened very attentively.

"Why, you hear, we are on the way to Grenwitz," said Toby, glancing at Albert from the corner of his left eye across the rim of his tumbler; "for my new master was Baron Grenwitz, and the end of our journey was Castle Grenwitz, where you were last summer."

An Indian, who on his pursuit has discovered his enemy's track in the grass of the prairie, cannot exert himself more powerfully, with all his senses, than Albert did as soon as he heard the last words. He had instantly recognized in Toby Goodheart the valet who had played so ambiguous a part in the story of Mother Claus; but he did not betray by a word or gesture the importance of this discovery, but asked, with well-feigned indifference,

"The old baron? Upon my word! I should not have expected such things from the old boy!"

"Not the present baron, but his cousin, of the older line--Baron Harald; or Wild Harald, as he is still called by those who have known him. I tell you, Albert mine, it was a merry life we were leading at Castle Grenwitz in the year of the Lord eighteen hundred and twenty-two. Wine and women in abundance! and with all that we played comedy--well, it was equal to the best thing I have ever seen on the stage. Just imagine: my good friend. Rose----"

"She was there, too?"

"Certainly! Did I not tell you the baron had engaged her to play his great-aunt?"

"His what?"

Toby smiled--this time with both eyes and both corners of the mouth.

"She played the great-aunt of the baron, with wig and crutch: because that foolish thing, Marie--Marie Montbert was the name of the little monkey; and as pretty a girl she was as I have ever seen with these eyes of mine--I have never seen the like of her. What was I going to say? Yes! Marie had made a *conditio sine qua non*, as we scholars say, that an old lady of the baron's family should be at the castle, if she was to come there. Well, now we had an elderly lady, a famous elderly lady, eh! Albert mine, eh?" and the honorable Toby tittered, and poked Albert most cordially in the side.

"Well, and how did the matter end?" asked Albert, who did not want to hear the part of the story which he knew.

"Why, I did not see it end; for we, Rose and I, ran away sometime before. To tell the truth, we were afraid the whole story might upset; for Marie had many friends in the city, who might make a great noise about it, and get us all, especially Rose and myself, into serious trouble. So we slipped off one fine morning, or rather one fine night, without taking leave, but requesting various things which happened to fall into our hands to keep us company in going away with us. Here in Grunwald we parted, or rather we were separated. For I was taken so sick--probably in consequence of the high living we had enjoyed at Grenwitz--that I could not go on, and had to be carried to the hospital. What I then thought was a great misfortune, turned out afterwards to be the most fortunate thing; for the late Dean Darkling, the father of Mrs. Professor Jager, who was then chaplain to the hospital, fell in love with my modest smiles, and insisted, as soon as I was well again, upon my entering his service. Well! from the servant of a minister to the sexton of his church, it is but a step!" and Mr. Toby sipped comfortably the remainder of his grog.

"And did you ever hear anything more of your friend Mrs. Rose?"

"She is living at the capital, and carries on her business with double entry, and more profitably than ever. If you ever go up to town, Albert mine, you must not forget to call on her. She lives at the corner of Gertrude and Rose streets, third story."

"I am going to take that down at once," said Albert, entering the address in his note-book. "But what has become of Marie, or whatever the stupid thing's name was?"

"Well, that is a curious story. Shortly after we had left, there really did come one of her friends, a Mr. d'Estain, and stole her away from the baron, who was so furious at the whole story that he died soon after from sheer anger. But the most curious part of the whole is this: Just imagine! Rose has hardly taken up her business again, when the bell wakes her one fine night, and who do you think wants her? The same Mr. d'Estain! and for whom? for the same Marie, who is in need of a midwife!"

"Impossible!" cried Albert, forgetting for a moment his assumed indifference.

"As I tell you. Rose wrote to me at once, and I could have killed myself laughing at the fun of the thing. First, she is great aunt; and then--ha! ha! ha!" Toby was so very much amused at the thing that he could not help laughing aloud, contrary to all his principles.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chimed in Albert. "Very good! Ha, ha, ha! Perhaps Mrs. Rose knows also what became of the child?"

"Maybe," replied Toby; "but I rather think she does not want to know anything about it. Otherwise she would no doubt have presented herself at the time when Baron Harald offered in all the newspapers a very liberal reward for any information concerning Marie's present residence, etc. I think she was afraid of the consequences, and has done as I have done--kept her counsel for twenty odd years, till the grass has grown over the whole affair. Well, but now, Albert mine, it is your turn to tell me how you have managed to be such a rich man of late?"

"Upon my word! I just remember I must attend the meeting of the Rats to-night!" cried Albert, starting up. "Why, this is foundation-day! Good-by, Toby; another time. I cannot stay, upon my word!"

And Albert put on his hat and hurried off, paying no attention to the grumbling of his friend and hospitable landlord, the honorable Toby Goodheart, who at once went to work drowning his anger in his favorite beverage--a plan in which he succeeded so well that the watchman, who was sent about midnight to fetch the key of the vestry, had to knock half an hour before Mr. Toby could disentangle himself from between the legs of the table, under which he had fallen after his sixth tumbler.

BOOK THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

"The season" had not been as brilliant in Grunwald for many a year as it was this winter. It seemed as if the people were already feeling the first breath of coming spring, and as if they could not make enough of the little time that was still remaining. Party followed party, and Heaven alone could tell how the old gentlemen and ladies could stand the incessant whist and the young people the incessant dancing; and how all of them could find pleasure in meeting night after night precisely the same company, for the circle which was thus kept in constant commotion was quite limited, and consisted of perhaps twenty or twenty-five families, including the highest military and civil officials, the family of the commandant of the fortress, Grunwald, his excellency von Bostelmann, and that of the president of the province, von Fitzewitz, etc. It may have been that the smallness of the circle favored to a certain extent the stupid delight with which these select fashionables were continually turning around themselves, although everybody knew everything about everybody else, or thought at least he knew or wanted to know it, so that there was never a lack of topics for gossip.

Each week had a special topic of its own, however, which was discussed with much animation. During the last but one, the strange conduct of Emily Cloten had furnished the favorite subject. There had, of course, been two parties--one in favor of the young lady, and another in favor of her husband. The former claimed that Emily had become crazy because of Arthur's faithlessness; the latter insisted upon it that, on the contrary, Arthur had been made crazy by his wife's faithlessness and was, in this state of mind, seeking consolation in the arms of his former favorite, Hortense Barnewitz. Emily's friends seemed to be sure of success, for the young lady--was it from caprice, or from better reasons?--reappeared suddenly in society, and began to play her former part as a reckless coquette more zealously than ever, utterly ignoring all that had occurred in the meantime.

Thus the spies, cheated out of this scandal, as it seemed, were compelled to turn their sharp eyes during the present week upon the relations between Prince Waldenberg and Helen Grenwitz, which had been already canvassed by everybody, and which yet, far from being exhausted, had only become more and more interesting, for it was believed that during the last few days these relations had assumed a definite form.

The spies had seen correctly. Since yesterday Helen was engaged to His Highness, Prince Raimund Waldenberg. Count of Malikowsky, hereditary Lord of Letbus.

For the present only in secret, since much time was required before all the preliminaries of an alliance between the princely family of Waldenberg and the most noble family of Grenwitz could be satisfactorily settled. Besides, the public announcement of the engagement was to take place in the capital, to which the prince was to return soon after New Year in order to join his regiment again, and where the prince's parents had promised to meet him, the mother from St. Petersburg, the father from Paris.

The baroness had, then, attained the goal of her wishes, and her exulting joy at her success amply compensated her for all the humiliations and disappointments, for all the sleepless nights, full of care and anxiety, of the past months. She carried her head as high as ever. Did she not owe all the successes she had ever had in life to herself alone, and so also this last one? Did she not owe it solely to her own prudence, moderation, and discretion that she, the simple nobleman's daughter, who had no fortune whatever, had become Baroness Grenwitz and mother-in-law of Prince Waldenberg? Had she not had to struggle through all her life, not only with circumstances, but also with those who stood nearest to her; with her weak husband, who had no energy and no sense for great comprehensive plans, and with her haughty, self-willed daughter? Had she not been forced to think and care for them all; to compel them almost to accept their good fortune? Truly, if these people were not grateful for their happiness, which they owed to her alone--well, it was not her fault!

Were they grateful? Any one but the baroness would have doubted it. The happy ones showed little of joy and elation in their features; on the contrary, since the decisive word had been spoken, a veil of embarrassment, if not of annoyance, seemed to have fallen upon their faces. The prince's dark countenance looked a shade darker, and his black eyes rested often with a strange, inexplicable meaning upon the fair, haughty features of his betrothed, who walked about in startling silence, very pale, and looking much more like a marble bride than like a happy girl. Still, those who chose need not have looked far for an explanation. The deep melancholy seemed to be justified by anxiety for the father, who had long been an invalid, and who had suddenly been taken seriously ill.

In the night which followed the day of the betrothal the old gentleman had had an attack of his old complaint, the gout, and the physicians who were called in declared at once that, this time, they could not answer for the result. From that moment Helen had been chained to her father's sick-bed, especially as the latter would allow no one else to be near him, to hand him his medicine and to smooth his pillow.

The early winter evening had come already. The streets were covered with deep snow and perfectly silent; only now and then the jingling of bells interrupted the stillness. No one happened to be near the patient but Helen. She was sitting near the bed, holding her father's withered hand trembling with feverish excitement, in her own soft hands, and trying, as well as she could, to soothe the increasing restlessness of the patient.

"Where is mother?" he asked, suddenly.

"She has gone to her room."

"And your--and the prince?"

"I asked him to take a walk."

"Raise my head a little!--that's it! Now give me both your hands!"

The patient paused a few moments, and then he spoke with great clearness and decision, so that it was evident he had long contemplated what he was about to say and turned it over in his enfeebled mind.

"My dear child! It is a good thing to be rich, when he who is rich has also a good heart; but I believe it is very rare to find the two together, or to see them stay together. And to be clever is also a good thing, but without a good heart it is worth little.

"Look here, dear child! Your mother and I--we have lived together eighteen years, and, next to God, I have loved and honored your mother more than all things. I think she has taken pains to love me back again, and I do not blame her if she has not succeeded. No, not her, only myself. I ought to have taken a wife who was more suitable to my age and to my ways; but I was vain and proud, and I wanted a handsome, stately, and clever wife, such as the world admires, and your mother was handsome, stately, and clever; far too pretty and too clever for me, an insignificant, simple man, who never was made for the great world. I felt it, therefore, all the time in my heart that I was not the man to make your mother happy; but she never let me know it distinctly until

quite recently."

The old man bowed his gray head sadly, and repeated:

"Quite recently--when she wanted you to marry your cousin Felix, and I could not say Yes! and amen! to it--then I saw very clearly that we thought and felt in the most important and most sacred things so very differently; and whether I was right or she, that does not matter now; but, my dear child, it is a bad thing when those who ought to love each other cannot do it--a bad thing, my dear child, which may easily break a heart!"

And as the old man spoke these words the tears were rolling down his pale, wrinkled cheeks.

Helen sat there, silent and pale. Her hands trembled. Her father's words had apparently touched her to the heart.

"Therefore," continued the baron, after a short pause, "it has always been my principle, that parents ought not to interfere with the affections of their children, but only to pray to God that He would lead their hearts to choose well. Thus I have left you your choice, then and now. Then you could not decide; now you have decided. I cannot conceal it from you that I cannot understand the prince, and that I wish your future husband were less grand and less rich; but, as it is, I hope God will turn it to the best. You are a good, clever girl, and I think you cannot have chosen thoughtlessly, or from mere ambition; no! no! not thoughtlessly, nor from ambition, for you are my good, clever girl!" repeated the old man, as Helen, unable to control her emotion any longer, hid her beautiful head on his bosom, and gave way to a passionate fit of weeping.

"What is the matter, girl?" he said, frightened by this sudden vehemence; and then, as if a flash of lightning had lighted up for an instant the dark places in his daughter's heart, "For God's sake, child, you have not let your eyes be dazzled by Mammon! You do not love the prince? You have not followed the voice of your heart, which warned you against the stern dark man, but the counsels of your mother? Oh, my child! my unfortunate child! My fears, then, were not groundless! But it is time yet to turn back. I will speak myself with the prince; I will speak with him at once; he will have pity on a poor old man, who is sick unto death."

And he raised himself with spasmodic efforts in his bed.

It was a terrible struggle which was raging in Helen's heart while the baron said these words. Was there really a way yet out of this horrible labyrinth, in which she had lost herself? Could the step, the fatal step, be retraced? At what price? At the price of seeing her pride humbled! Her proud betrothed was to have pity! Pity with her poor old father! Pity with herself! Never ... Never!

"No, no, no!" she cried, seizing both of her father's hands. "You are mistaken, father! I am not unhappy! I have not been dazzled and tempted! I--I love the prince--I shall love him--I will try to love him--I will----"

She could not continue; her throat was closed by a spasm; her pale lips moved, but were unable to shape the words with which she uttered her own sentence of death.

"Oh, great God!" prayed the old man, "enlighten my child's heart! Child! child! Do not let your father leave this world with such a terrible doubt on his mind! Oh, if I could but tell you all as I feel it. Ah, this pain! My God ... My ..."

The sufferer fell back on his pillow.

Helen held him in her arms.

"Papa! dear papa! I will do all you ask; for I will tell the prince--great God! what is that?"

The hands of the old man began to tremble; cold perspiration bedewed his brow.

It was Death! Helen saw it with horror, and no help at hand--no help! She rushed to the bell and pulled, but the bell-rope remained in her hand. Then she rushed back to the bed, but the cold hands trembled no longer: the rolling eyes were fixed. Whatever help might come now, it came too late; and Helen threw herself, sobbing aloud, upon the body of the kind old man, whose brave and true heart had beaten to the last moment so warmly for her, and now stood still forever.

CHAPTER II.

While death was settling, up-stairs, life's account by a single dash, the question of credit and debit had been most actively discussed down-stairs in the apartments of the baroness.

The baroness's whole life was given up to this great question, and she had naturally a sharp eye for all that was going on upon the market. Her husband's death, which she was expecting as a certainty, was likely to change her position entirely, but on the whole she was not displeased with the prospect. It is true, her savings from the revenues of the entailed estates, which had so far benefitted herself and Helen, and which, after the baron's death, had to be carried to the principal till Malte came of age, would be lost; but the sum total of these savings amounted already to nearly a hundred thousand dollars, all invested in first-class securities--a sum small enough, in comparison with the whole estate, but quite sufficient if the two farms belonging to Harald's bequest were added.

She had apparently arranged everything to her satisfaction, and if Grenwitz should really die now, why ...

At that moment a letter was brought in. "From Felix!" she said, in a low voice, and casting a glance at the direction; and then she stepped to the window to read the letter.

It was a short note, evidently written with pain by the trembling hand of a sick man, and ran thus:

"Dear Aunt: I have been in such a wretched state for some days, that when this letter reaches you I may possibly have ceased to exist, if this way of living, amid pain and misery, which is fast coming to an end, can be called an existence. But whatever may come, it is high time for me to enlighten you on the subject of the * * * affair. * * * has not been satisfied, as I told you. He has a right to demand four hundred dollars a month till the claim to Uncle Harald's legacy expires by prescription, and besides six hundred dollars, if he keeps silent until then. You will do better to pay the fellow, if you do not wish him to get you into no end of trouble. I sent him his four hundred for the month of November before I left Greenwood. I am exhausted.

"Yours faithfully, Felix.

"P.S.--If you love me, I pray you will let my rascally creditors wait a little longer. Moses Hirsch has a note of mine for one thousand dollars. Offer him two hundred for it; he will still make fifty per cent."

The baroness came back from the window, went to the fire-place, laid the note carefully on the burning coal and waited till the flames had seized and consumed it. Then she walked slowly up and down in the room, which began to grow dark. This twilight was most favorable for a face which was downright disfigured by anger. She murmured curses against Felix, against Albert, against Oswald, through her teeth. "Not a farthing the scamp shall have! Not a red cent! I'll send for him and tell him so to his face; and, besides, I'll warn him not to say a word ... What is it?" she interrupted her monologue, as the servant once more entered the room.

"Mr. Timm desires to wait upon you on business."

Anna Maria started. This unexpected call of the young man looked like a threat. All of a sudden she lost all desire to tell Mr. Timm to his face that he need not expect a red cent from her.

"Tell Mr. Timm I regret not to be able to see him; the baron has been taken ill very suddenly."

"I have told him so; but he said he must see you on very important business, and would detain you but for a moment."

"Well, show him in; but--you had better bring lights; and--John, stay in the next room, in case I should want you."

"Yes, ma'am."

The servant immediately ushered in Albert Timm, and then went out, closing the door behind him.

"Good-day; or rather, good-evening," said the young man, approaching the baroness apparently with an air of perfect unconcern; "I beg ten thousand pardons if I interrupt you. The old gentleman is sick, they tell me! I hope it is not much. I should have gone away again, but I have to inform you of an important discovery I have made in the affair--you know--which admits of no delay. Shall we sit down in the meantime? Allow me!"

And Mr. Albert Timm pushed an arm-chair toward the baroness, and the next moment was comfortably seated himself.

Anna Maria had not quite decided yet in her mind how she should treat the young man. But she felt very clearly that it would not be very easy to get the better of him. She sat down, therefore, in the seat he offered her, and said, in her most solemn tones:

"You will excuse me if I beg you to be as brief as possible; the sad state of things here, which

the servant has mentioned to you----"

"Pray, pray!" said Albert; "exactly my purpose. Only two words and I have done. The thing is this: I have learnt quite accidentally--for it is wonderful what a great part accident plays in the whole matter--I have learnt that two persons who were in Baron Grenwitz's service at the time when Miss Marie Montbert was at Grenwitz, are still alive. They were honored by Baron Grenwitz with his special confidence; and, for instance, initiated into the whole story of the elopement. Now they are quite ready, I dare say, to appear as witnesses in a suit which might possibly arise out of the question of the legacy. The evidence of these two persons would be all the more weighty as they are both persons of excellent standing in society, and enjoy the confidence of a large circle of friends and acquaintances. One of them is sexton here in town--a man who is universally respected; the other--a woman lives in the capital, and is, in spite of her advanced age, still actively engaged in her profession, which, by the way, is that of a superior nurse. If I had ever had any doubt that the young man in question is really that is, legally--the son of the late Baron Harald, my doubts would have been completely removed by this last discovery; and I am sure, baroness, you will agree with me."

If anything else besides Felix's letter had been needed to kindle in Anna Maria's heart the flame of wrath, it was the manner in which Albert Timm was presenting to her the topic which she so bitterly hated. Nevertheless she answered with a calmness which she observed strictly in all matters of business.

"May I beg to know, Mr. Timm, why you honor me with this communication?"

"Certainly, baroness; certainly. That is what I came for. You know that a bird in hand is worth a great deal more than a bird on a tree, and that a man who sells his property for less than its value is entitled to the name of a fool. Now you know under what conditions I have promised Baron Felix to keep my counsel with regard to that legacy----"

"Pardon me if I interrupt you, Mr. Timm. I know nothing of such conditions. I directed my nephew to pay you a certain sum, solely for the purpose of getting rid of you; and my nephew assured me, shortly before he left us, that the matter was finally settled. I must therefore beg you will please not return to matters fully settled; and excuse me if I cannot see you any longer."

The baroness was on the point of rising, when Albert said, in a most decided and incisive manner: "Pray, keep your seat for a moment longer, baroness!" She obeyed his request, half wondering and half frightened.

"I am tired of being played with in this manner," continued Albert, in the same tone. "If Baron Felix has not told you the arrangement on which we agreed, he was afraid of you, or he had a purpose of his own. After all, it does not matter much whether you know the former agreement; for I have come for the very purpose of telling you that, after what I have recently discovered, I am no longer disposed to let you off so cheap. I now demand nothing less than thirty thousand dollars, payable within the next fortnight, and request that you will with like candor tell me whether you are ready to pay or not?"

"This impudence exceeds all bounds," said Anna Maria, rising from her seat and seizing the bell, which was standing by her on the table.

"Let that thing alone," said Albert, coolly; "that bell might cost you pretty dear. Consider well what you are about to do! If we cease to be good friends we become mortal enemies, and you may rest assured Albert Timm gives no quarter. Once more: Are you willing to pay or not?"

At that moment the door opened. The servant entered with two lighted candelabra, and close behind him came the prince. The servant placed the lights on the table and went out; the prince had come up half-way before he became aware that the baroness was not alone!

"Ah! pardon, madame," he said. "I thought the servant said you were alone. Do you wish me to leave you alone?"

"By no means, prince," replied Anna Maria. "I have nothing more to say to this young man." And she made a motion with her hand, as if she wished to intimate to Albert that he was dismissed.

Mr. Albert Timm wagged his hat, which he held in both hands behind his back, and said with imperturbable indifference, putting one foot a little forward:

"It seems, baroness, you wish me to repeat my last question in the presence of this gentleman!"

"Who is the young man?" asked the prince, somewhat astonished at Albert's manner and the excited state of the baroness.

"A man," replied the latter, "who has annoyed us for some time with impudent demands for money, under the pretext of possessing certain pretended family secrets. I am afraid I shall have to invoke the assistance of the police to get rid of him."

The prince looked at Albert from the height of his lofty figure, went slowly towards the table, took the little silver bell, and touched it.

The servant entered immediately.

"Show this man out!" said the prince.

The servant was so amazed by this order that he did not trust his own ears. He looked, with a face full of embarrassment, first at the prince and then at Mr. Albert Timm, who was still standing quietly there, wagging his hat after the manner of a dog's tail, and again from Mr. Albert Timm to the prince.

"Did you hear me?" said the latter, contracting his brows in a threatening manner.

The servant came a step nearer to Timm.

"My good friend, I will spare you the alternative either to have your nose knocked into your face or to be dismissed from the army," said Albert, good-naturedly, "and prefer, on that account, to go myself. As for you, baroness, we shall see each other again shortly, but upon a different footing; and as for you, *young man*, I should like to advise you hereafter not to meddle with matters which do not concern you in the least, in spite of the great airs you are giving yourself."

The prince made a motion towards his left side. Fortunately he had left his sword in the hall. Albert did not wait for any further measures on the part of the lion he had roused, but made an ironical bow and left the room.

The prince, who had never in his life been treated in this way, looked aghast; the baroness cast down her eyes.

"That could not have happened at home, in Russia," said the prince.

"I regret," said the baroness, "that accident should have made you witness so unpleasant an occurrence."

At the same moment the servant re-entered the room, deadly pale, and cried, breathlessly:

"Oh, ma'am! come quickly! The baron is dying!"

"*Oh, mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the baroness, and seemed on the point of fainting.

"Compose yourself madame! compose yourself!" said the prince. "Bear what has to be borne. Will you take my arm? Ho, there! show us the way!"

CHAPTER III.

About the same hour--perhaps a little earlier two gentlemen displayed at the billiard-table, in the restaurant near the main guard-house on the square, that industry which is so becoming to busy idlers. The two gentlemen who met at this favorite lounging place of the *jeunesse dorée* of Grunwald, were Cloten and Barnewitz. The former, who excelled in all the arts which required a sure eye and a steady hand, and no head work, had beaten his adversary in every game, and hence the young man was in excellent humor, while the other was nearly angry.

"Another game, Barnewitz?" asked Cloten, triumphantly, after having finished the twelfth with a brilliant carom.

"Thank you; no!" said Barnewitz, throwing his cue on the billiard-table; "am not in the right humor for it to-day. I cannot play well anyhow in this miserable twilight!"

"We can have the lamps lit."

"No, thank you! Another day! We can play quits to-morrow."

Cloten now laid down his cue also, stepped before the looking-glass and twisted his blonde moustache, while Barnewitz threw himself upon the sofa and yawned.

"It is wretchedly tedious here," he said; "don't know how on earth to kill the whole afternoon!"

"Let us take a walk."

"It is too abominably cold."

"A game at piquet?"

"Too tiresome."

"A bottle of claret?"

"Well, that's better."

"Waiter! a bottle of Pichon and a light."

The waiter brought what was ordered. Cloten threw himself into an arm-chair opposite to Barnewitz, and stretched out his legs.

"Well?"

"Well!"

"Don't you know anything?"

"No! Do you?"

"No!"

After this exchange of bright thoughts there followed, as a matter of course, a pause of exhaustion, and the ship of conversation remained for a quarter of an hour stranded on a sandbank, while the two men smoked their cigars and sipped their wine.

Cloten and Barnewitz had been apparently excellent friends ever since their terrible collision in summer, but in reality they had watched each other with unbroken distrust. It is true, the distrust was but too well founded in this case. Hortense Bamewitz had no sooner come to Grunwald than she cast out her net--experienced fisher of men as she was--after her old lover, and Cloten had at that time already discovered that happiness in the arms of his former lady-love was far more attractive than the honor of being the husband of the most fashionable lady in town. Barnewitz, on the other hand, gave the noble couple ample opportunity for meeting; for he threw himself, at Grunwald, head foremost into a vortex of amusements, of which there was no lack there for a rich nobleman who cared more for quantity than for quality. Nevertheless, he was as much the victim of jealousy now as before, and he was therefore highly pleased to see, what all others saw as well, that Emily treated her husband like a school-boy, and had evidently found a worthier object for her loving heart.

Barnewitz had long wished for an hour when he might inform Cloten under the mask of friendship of the reports which filled the town about him and his wife. The day before he had accidentally heard of some new scandal, and to-day Cloten's superiority at billiards had greatly annoyed him. After thinking the matter over for some time, therefore, he exploded:

"How is your wife, Cloten?"

"Thanks! Pretty well; why?" replied Cloten, not a little astonished at the brusque question.

"Well, I suppose it is permitted to inquire after your wife! Or do you allow no questions to be asked?"

"Certainly; but what do you mean?"

"Because she has been so very charming for a little while past."

"Is that so very uncommon?" asked Cloten, slightly embarrassed, and torturing his moustache.

"Yes; for she had just before treated everybody, yourself included, so very badly, that one could not help wondering at the sudden change. At all events, I was not the only one to notice it; the whole world is full of it."

"The whole world ought to pull its own nose," said Cloten; and his hand trembled with annoyance as he filled his glass.

"Certainly; but they don't do it."

"---- the whole world!"

"Certainly; if you wish it. But if you would rather talk about something else;--I only thought that, as your oldest friend, it was my duty to call your attention to certain things."

"Well, then, come; out with your story," said Cloten, with nervous vehemence. "What is it? Out with it!"

"I shall take good care not to say anything more, if the first word puts you into such a state."

"I am not in any state," said Cloten; and to prove it, he dashed his glass upon the table, so that the foot broke to pieces and the wine flooded the marble top.

"You are a queer fellow," said Barnewitz. "Wait till you have cause to get angry. What does it amount to? They say that you are not exactly Darby and Joan; that your wife has her own way; that you quarrel occasionally so that the servants hear it in the kitchen, and the like."

"Who says so?"

"The whole world!"

"And you believe it?"

Barnewitz shrugged his shoulders.

"I shouldn't like to hurt your feelings, Arthur; but I cannot deny it that the way your wife acts looks very suspicious to me. I should not wonder, and no one in our circle would wonder, if she had some little *liaison*, and I rather think I know the person."

"I insist upon it that you tell me all you know," said Cloten, with great pathos.

"Do you recollect the party at my house last summer? But of course you do, for we came near killing each other on that occasion. Ha, ha, ha! Well, on that evening already your wife began to flirt with that confounded fool--that Doctor Stein--in a way which struck everybody, and me too. But I had totally forgotten the whole affair till I was reminded of it yesterday. You recollect I had left Stilow's because, to tell the truth, the wine was too bad, and I was very thirsty. I found in my way to the city cellars, where the company is low enough but the wine excellent. There were a dozen people--authors, actors, and such stuff--sitting round a table and drinking; among them our old friend Timm the surveyor, who talked very big. I sat down at some distance, ordered a few dozen oysters and a bottle of champagne, and listened, because I could not help listening. They talked, heaven knows what stuff. I did not understand a word, and was just thinking what a lot of sheep they all were, and my eyes were beginning to be heavy, when I suddenly heard somebody mention your name, or rather your wife's name. Of course, I was wide awake in a moment. 'Who is she?' asked somebody. 'A wonderful creature,' said Timm. 'Well, and friend Stein is in love with her.' 'That's it!' 'What a fellow--that man Stein!' 'How did he get hold of her?' 'Oh, that is a long story!' said Timm; and then they put their heads together and talked so low that I could not hear the rest. At all events they laughed like madmen, and I had a great mind to pitch a few bottles at their heads."

"Why didn't you do it?" asked Cloten, angrily.

"I do not like to get into trouble in a strange establishment; I have had to pay for it often enough," replied the philosophic nobleman, pouring the rest of the bottle into his glass.

Then followed a pause, after which Cloten cried out with much vehemence: "I don't believe a word of it."

Barnewitz shrugged his shoulders.

"That's the best for you to do."

"Don't say so! I won't have it!" exclaimed Cloten, furiously.

"I only say what the world says," replied Barnewitz, sipping his wine leisurely.

"And you think the world says nothing about you?" asked Cloten, ironically.

"What do they say about me?" cried Barnewitz, starting up. "---- the fellow who dares say a word; and I think you, of all men, ought to be most careful not to open your mouth."

"Careful or not, I don't see why I should not talk as well as you."

"What! a fellow like you?" said Barnewitz, thrusting his hands into his pockets with an air of contempt "I suppose you think you are wonderfully successful with the sex?"

Who knows what serious consequences might have arisen from this word-combat if the door of the billiard-room had not opened just then to admit Professor Jager, who crept in cautiously, after having first reconnoitred the room through his round glasses.

Professor Jager's appearance was never specially inviting, but on this evening there was something peculiarly unpleasant about the man's pale face. His stereotyped smile, and the drooping corners of the mouth, contrasted with his effort to give an air of solemnity to his forehead, and to look as melancholy as possible through his spectacles, so that he appeared on the whole not unlike a black tom cat who glides purring and with raised back around a person's leg, preparing to scratch his hands the next moment furiously.

Thus he drew near to the two noblemen, made a very low bow, and said:

"I beg ten thousand pardons if I am disturbing the *entente cordiale* of two bosom friends, but--
--"

"Come here, professor," said Barnewitz, who welcomed the interruption; "join us in a glass of Pichon. Waiter! another----"

"Pray, don't; many thanks. Regret infinitely that I should have interrupted you in your cozy talk; but I heard at your house, Baron Cloten, that I should find you here, and a matter of importance which I had to communicate----"

"Don't mind me, gentlemen," said Barnewitz. "I'll go into the reading-room till you have done."

"Pray, pray; I have only two words----"

"Well, all right. Call me when you have done!"

With these words Barnewitz went into the adjoining room, where he rested his elbows on the table and his head on his hands, and then plunged into the mysteries of the Grunwald official journal.

He had no sooner left them than Professor Jager turned to Cloten and said, whispering mysteriously:

"Baron Cloten, I have to tell you something that will frighten you."

Cloten turned pale and stepped back. His first thought was that his stables had been burnt, and Arabella and Macdonald, his two thoroughbreds, had perished in the flames. The professor did not leave him long in this terrible uncertainty; but with a low, spectral voice, and drawing the corners of his mouth so low down that they seemed to meet under the chin, he said: "Your wife----
"

"Ha!" cried Cloten. "What is it? What has happened?"

"I don't know," replied Jager, "but I fear for the worst. Look at this paper [he searched his pockets and produced a folded-up piece of paper]. I found it just now on my wife's writing-table. But before I read to you what is on the paper you must swear you will never tell from whom you have heard it."

"I'll swear anything you want," said Cloten, with nervous excitement. "What is the matter with the paper?"

"Directly, directly! First, let me tell you that for some weeks now your wife and mine have become great friends, an intimacy which from the beginning has puzzled me sorely. Their meetings, I was told, had a purely poetical purpose--you know my wife is president of the Lyric Club--but I was struck by the fact that a third person appeared there always, or at least very frequently, a person against whom I have ever felt an unconquerable aversion. This person is----"

"Doctor Stein! I know! Go on," said Cloten, breathlessly.

"You know!--ah, indeed!" replied the professor, with a Mephistophelian smile, which gleamed unpleasantly behind his glasses. "Oh, well; then the hardest part of my task has been performed by others. Well, sir, if you know it already I will not detain you by telling you how the first spark of suspicion fell into my simple soul; how subsequent observations fanned this into a bright flame, which threatened to consume this heart of mine, that only beats for the welfare of my brethren [here the professor laid his hand with its black glove on the left side]. I dared not forbid my wife all intercourse with the person in question. You know, sir, poetic minds are apt to be eccentric, and the æsthetic standpoint from which----"

"But I pray you, professor, come to the point," said Cloten, who was standing upon coals. "What was on the paper?"

"Why, you see," said Jager, opening the paper, "it is the rough sketch of a poem, which I found quite wet yet on my wife's bureau; the servant told me she had just left the house to pay a visit. Shall I read it to you?"

"Yes; in the devil's name!" cried Cloten, who hardly knew what he was saying.

Professor Jager arranged his spectacles carefully on his nose, drew the light somewhat nearer, and read, in a half-loud, rattling voice, while the young nobleman was looking over his shoulder: "'Grunwald, December 10, 1847.' You see the date corresponds exactly.

'FOR THE ALBUM OF AN ESCAPING PRISONER.

'You flee!--by the light of the twinkling stars,
In rapturous flight through Cimmerian night;
You flee! and alas I would break all the bars,

I, who have watched over you day and night!
But terrible bonds have forged me a chain,
Which ever in bondage will here me retain.
You flee!--and I stay in Cimmerian night.'

"You see this poetical eccentricity of a soul generally chaste and full of affection," said the professor, who had read the last lines with a somewhat unsteady voice.

"Go on! go on!" urged Cloten, whose sufferings made him indifferent to the sufferings of others.

The professor continued:

"You flee! and the icicles glitter so bright,
The hoofs now thunder on quivering ice,
You are not frightened by terrible night,
You follow the lurings of glorious price.
You flee! and you do what is proper and right!
Why should you remain with a wretched wight
A puppet of wood on a couch of ice?"

"That is meant for me!" said Cloten, furiously, grinding his teeth.

"Certainly, certainly!" said the professor; "but listen:

"You flee! and yonder on rockiest strand,
In nurse's familiar house by the sea,
There falls in a moment the hampering band
That bound you before, and there is he!
There love in a thousand fiery brooks,
Breaks forth in caresses and tenderest looks
In Nurse's familiar house by the sea.

"You flee! and alas 'tis not to the port,
Where spies are no more nor watching eyes!
Oh flee to the safe, to the only resort,
Where wait for you milder and happier skies!
Oh flee to the banks of the beautiful Seine,
Where love is at freedom, amain! amain!
And free from society's hateful lies!"

The professor folded up the paper again, pocketed it, and said:

"This poem troubled me sorely, for I know the way my wife makes her poems. She takes the subject from actual life. But I was much more startled yet, when I went on using a husband's right and examined the papers that were scattered all over her table. I found this little note [here the professor put his hand in his waistcoat pocket]. Do you know the hand-writing, Baron Cloten?"

"That is my wife's hand," cried the young nobleman, casting a glance at the paper. "What does she say? Let me see! 'All remains as agreed upon, dear Primula. Everything is ready. We meet at Mrs. Lemberg's. Tomorrow at this hour a world divides us. Shall I be able to embrace you once more? I shall be at home at three. I should like to see you so much, but--can you venture to come without rousing suspicion? I leave the matter to you. Good-by, good-by, dearest! Free to-day! Oh, I can hardly conceive such happiness! Good-by--a thousand farewells!' By the Almighty!" cried the happy husband, crumpling up the paper and pushing it into his pocket. "Now I see it all! I never could understand why she was all the time going to see that old woman in Ferrytown! But I'll spoil the fun; I'll---"

As the happy man did not exactly know what he was going to do, he broke down, and walked up and down, like a man suffering with a furious toothache.

Professor Jager looked at him, his head inclined on his right shoulder, and folding his hands in sympathetic emotion; but he had the air of an ear-owl, gazing with big, staring eyes at a poor foolish bird that has been caught in a snare.

"You may believe me, my dear sir," he said; "I am heartily sorry for the whole thing; and I assure you I would have kept it all to myself if I did not think it was the good shepherd's duty to snatch the lamb from the jaws of the wolf. For this man is a raving wolf. I found him out at first sight, but they would not believe me. Now they see it clear enough. Only this morning Doctor Black, one of the trustees of the college, came to see me, and to tell me that Doctor Clemens had called for an official inquiry into the conduct of the terrible man, which could not fail to end in his

dismissal--his dismissal in disgrace. And while I was still considering how we could best make it known to all the world that he was a wolf in sheep's clothes, chance came to my aid and caused these papers to fall into my hands, which prove clearly that the worst that was reported about this man was not as bad yet as the truth. I knew at once what my duty was. Certain that my wife would never hear of the exposure to which I had been morally forced, and relying on the discretion of a nobleman, I hastened----"

"I must consult Barnewitz," said Cloten, suddenly; and he made a motion as if he were going into the room where Barnewitz was waiting.

"For God's sake, my dear sir," cried the frightened professor, "are you going to ruin me? Consider, I pray, you have solemnly promised not to expose Mrs. Jager----"

"Nonsense!" said Cloten; "you surely would not have me go into such a serious matter alone. Barnewitz!"

"What's the matter?" said the latter, looking up from his paper.

"Just come this way! I have something important to tell you."

Barnewitz came, and Cloten told him rapidly what the matter was, while the professor stood by, rubbing his hands, in great embarrassment.

"It cannot be doubted," continued Cloten. "I must tell you frankly I had my suspicions; but, to be sure, I did not guess that rascal--that man Stein ... But I see it all now. I knew she was going over to Ferry town again to-day; and now I remember she said, contrary to her usual way, she would not be back before night. And then you saw last night--oh, no doubt it is all so! What am I to do? What ought I to do?" And the young man struck his forehead with his closed fist.

"What ought you to do?" said Barnewitz. "Let her run!"

"Pardon me," said the professor; "that would cause an unheard-of scandal, which even now, I think, can only be prevented by very energetic measures."

"The professor is right," said Cloten; "we must not let them get off; but I cannot prevent it alone. Will you help me, Barnewitz?"

"*Avec plaisir*," replied Barnewitz. "I never could bear the fellow!"

"But *periculum in mora*, gentlemen. You must go to work at once!" chimed in the professor.

"Well, we will," said Cloten. "Come, Barnewitz; I'll tell you on the way what I think we had better do. The professor will accompany us part of the way."

"With pleasure; with great pleasure!" replied the professor. "To be sure, my time is very limited now; very limited. Ah--here is the door; I pray, after you, gentlemen!"

And the three gentlemen hastily left the restaurant.

CHAPTER IV.

The broad sheet of ice between the main land and the island had been for many a week an immense bridge. People no longer reflected that they were walking on frozen water, and that the hoofs of the horses were ringing so loud because they were trotting over a vast abyss. What fear they might feel was easily dispersed as they looked at the gigantic blocks of ice which the fishermen had placed as warning-posts around the large holes cut for the fish, provided they did not carelessly drive or walk right into them, which was not likely, at least in the daytime. And as long as the slanting rays of the sun shone on the bright ice, which covered the sound for miles and miles east and west of the town, there were crowds of pedestrians to be seen among numerous sleighs, which were often drawn by two and not unfrequently even by four horses. But when the sun had set and the mists were thickening, the moving black thread which connected by day the town with the little village of Ferrytown became thinner and thinner. The fishermen, who have been out fishing miles away, come in on their low sledges; or, standing upright on their sleighs, and pushing them with a long iron-shod pole, they sweep by, one by one, drifting with marvellous swiftness through the gray fog, like ghosts of the desert, like spirits from the northern regions. And now lights are seen on both sides of the sound: a few on the island, many more on the side of the town; now the stars also, which until now have peeped stealthily here and there

only through the dark evening sky, begin to sparkle and shine in groups, so that the eye cannot see enough of their great splendor. But no one minds them. The moving black thread is no longer seen; only here and there a belated wanderer, who hastens his steps, although knowing full well that nothing can happen to him if he but follows the path; or a sleigh, one of those small, light one-horse sleighs which are fitted up in vast numbers during winter by fishermen and ferrymen in order to serve the restless public.

Such a sleigh was just trotting past through the dim twilight as night was sinking lower and lower every moment, and fogs and mists began to cover the fields of ice. There was but a single passenger sitting in the sleigh by the side of the driver; he had a fur cap drawn low over his face, and the collar of his cloak was drawn up high.

As long as they were meeting near the harbor sleighs and foot-passengers on their return, not a word was said by passenger or driver; but when they rode out on the wild desert of ice, when the lights in town were looking dim, and the trot of the crop-eared hack was sounding loud and clear, the gentleman raised himself in his corner and said:

"All in order, Claus?"

"Yes, sir," replied the handsome youth, turning, half round on his seat.

"Have you heard from your cousin?"

"I saw him yesterday myself. He will be on the strand near Barow punctually at five. He has his two best horses. They will trot with you until to-morrow at the same hour."

"That is more than I want, if you know the track to Barow?"

"If I know it? I drive it every day. But I should not advise any one who does not know it as well as I do to drive alone."

"Why not?"

"The Barow people have cut hole upon hole into the ice; and where they stop the Ferrytown holes begin. You see nothing but blue water on your right and on your left. Cheer up, Fox!"

The crop-eared horse went faster, and the two men relapsed into silence. Both listened carefully, but with very different feelings. Claus Lemberg enjoyed the adventure, because it stirred up his strong nerves most delightfully, and brought out his cunning and his courage, the two qualities which he was proudest of in his whole nature. The other man looked at it more thoughtfully. He knew he was taking a step which he could never retrace, a step which was to decide not only his own fate--that mattered little--but also the fate of another being, a woman, who had won a right to his love by her own sacrificing love, a woman who had given up rank and riches, and every advantage which her birth and her social position gave her, for the sole purpose of being his, and who now was waiting for him in anxiety and anguish on yonder shore, from which the lights began to beckon to him. His heart was naturally full of anxious care. He had broken off the bridge behind him; he was hastening toward a future as black as the night by which he was surrounded, but by no means lighted up by as many bright, sparkling stars. But no matter--the die is cast; he cannot go back. Forward then, forward! What is that? A sleigh coming behind us?

Oswald raised himself and listened, but Claus's sharp ears had already discovered the direction from which the sound came.

"It is a two-horse sleigh from over yonder," he said, turning a little to the right. "They have fine horses; they'll be here directly."

Almost at the same moment they saw the sleigh--a dark mass, which slipped through the darkness like a flash of lightning. As they passed each other the driver checked the horses a moment, and a voice asked:

"This is the track, isn't it?"

"Straight ahead?" was Claus's reply.

Then again the same voice:

"The ice is strong enough for two horses?"

"Oh, for four!" replied Claus.

"Thanks!"

"Welcome!"

And the sleigh moved on swiftly again.

"Strange!" murmured Oswald; "I thought I heard Oldenburg's voice. What strange tricks our

fancy can play us!"

The rest of the journey to Ferry town was accomplished in silence. They reached it in a few minutes, lights were shining in the houses up on the bluffs. Below, near the ferry, where an inn was standing, there was much life; the windows were bright; music was heard; sleighs were standing before the door.

Claus stopped; Oswald got out.

"I'll drive along the beach as far as our house," said Claus, "and wait for you there. But make haste. In half an hour the moon rises, and then they can see us two miles on the ice."

"Don't be afraid. We shall not keep you waiting."

Oswald went past the inn, up the steep village street; then he turned to the right and hastened along the low cottages, which there line the beach, until he came to the last of the row. Through a crack in the shutters which protected the low window there came a faint ray of light. Oswald gave three measured knocks against the shutter. Immediately the door was opened cautiously. Oswald slipped in. In the hall he was met by an old woman of tall stature and large frame, holding a light in her hand; by her side stood a frail, youthful person, who fell into Oswald's arms as he entered.

"At last! at last!"

"At last! Emily? Why, I come at the minute!"

"Maybe! I am nearly dead with impatience."

"Is everything ready?"

"Yes."

"Did anybody see you when you left?"

"No one, except Jager's wife; she insisted upon coming with me. I could not get rid of her. She is in the room there."

"The fool!"

"Don't scold her. We owe her much; be kind to her!"

"She will show our enemies the way."

"I am not afraid of that. Cloten is quite unsuspecting. I told him I would not be back till night. Come in!"

Emily drew Oswald into the little low room, where Primula was standing by a table, making tea. As soon as she saw Oswald she rushed into his arms.

"Oswald!" she cried, "this is the last moment! A cup of tea, some rum, and you must go! Be brave and firm!"

"Time is precious," said Oswald, disengaging himself from Primula's embrace. "We must go, Emily."

"Not without having drained this cup," said Primula, pouring the tea into a cup. "You know, Oswald, it is cold without, and in the night air we shiver; even we immortal gods."

Primula's effort to be jocular was a failure; tears drowned her voice, she sat down on a settee, pressed her hand on her face, and sobbed. But a moment and she jumped up again.

"No womanly weakness, Primula," she cried; "we must be strong now. Drink, friends, drink; and then out into the dark night and the star-crowned life!"

"Come, Oswald," said Emily, who stood there ready for the journey; "Mrs. Jager is right; a cup of tea will do no harm, and a few minutes more or less can make no difference."

"I wish we were off," said Oswald, taking the cup she was offering him from her hand.

He had hardly uttered these words when somebody knocked violently against the shutter.

All looked at each other frightened.

"Hallo!" cried a voice.

"For heaven's sake! That is Arthur!" said Emily. "We are lost."

"Farewell, my friends!" cried Primula, and dashed into the adjoining chamber, after having in vain tried to break open the door of a huge wardrobe.

"Hush!" said the old woman. "We are not so easily caught here in Ferry town. Not a word!"

She went to the window and said, "Who is there?"

"Is the Baroness Cloten here? I have important news for her."

The old woman turned round and whispered, "Make haste and get away; I will try to keep him here. What do you want of her?"

Oswald and Emily did not hear the reply. They slipped stealthily, holding each other's hand, through the hall to the back door, which opened upon the sea. A flight of steps led down to the beach. Below was the sleigh. Once in the sleigh they were safe.

"Stay behind me," said Oswald when they came to the door.

The door was closed by an iron clasp. Oswald opened it cautiously. Everything was quiet. The wintry sky looked down with its bright stars.

"There is nobody here," whispered Oswald. "Come!"

They had no sooner stepped out than the door was closed violently and with a bang, evidently by somebody who had been standing behind it, who now, as if to cut off the retreat of the fugitives, was leaning against it with his broad shoulders.

In such moments the mind acts promptly, and Oswald recognized instantly by the aid of the starlight and the sheen of the snow that the broad-shouldered form before him was that of Baron Barnewitz.

"We are betrayed," he whispered; "but they shall pay for it. Quick Emily, step into the sleigh; I'll follow."

"But not just now!" said Barnewitz, leaping upon Oswald, and seizing him by the shoulders with both hands.

Oswald tore himself away, and jumping back a little distance, so as to have elbow-room, he seized one of the iron-shod pikes which the fishermen use in propelling their sleds, and of which several were standing in the corner. He struck his adversary with it so terrible a blow that the latter, in spite of his gigantic size and enormous strength, fell down without uttering a sound.

In an instant Oswald had overtaken Emily, and putting his arm around her waist he bore her down the steep steps.

Below, on the snow of the narrow beach, stood the sleigh.

He put Emily in and followed her.

"We are betrayed, Claus," he said; "drive fast. It is a matter of life and death."

Claus clacked his tongue and the crop-eared hack went off.

"Thought so!" said Claus, turning half round. "A minute ago a sleigh came and stopped not a hundred yards from here. I saw two men get out and climb up the bluff. I was just going to follow them and to warn you, when you were coming out a the door. Now it's all right. I should like to see the horses that can overtake Claus Lemberg and his Fox."

"You might soon have that satisfaction," said Oswald who had been looking behind; "there they are coming. It seems these bulls do not fall at one blow, and want to make the acquaintance of a bullet. Where is the box I gave you, Claus?"

"Just behind you, in the straw."

Oswald opened the box, took one of the two pistols that were in it, and cocked it.

"For Heaven's sake, Oswald, what are you going to do?" said Emily, who had not uttered a word since they were in the sleigh.

"Shoot down the first man who dares touch you."

"Oh, God! oh, God!"

"For whom do you tremble; for me? or for him? You have time yet. He will forgive you, I am sure, if you turn back now;--perhaps lecture you a little in Barnewitz's presence."

"How can you talk so? I turn back? Rather dead at the bottom of the sea!"

"That may come too," murmured Oswald.

Oswald thought the crop-eared hack, however swiftly he cut with his rough-shod shoes into the ice, could certainly not long keep up the speed so as to escape from the two thoroughbreds

before the sleigh of his pursuers. He had a start of a few thousand yards, but that could not avail much, as the distance from Ferrytown to the village of Barow was over a mile. There they were to find another sleigh, provided by one of Claus's cousins, who was overseer on one of the Breesen estates, and ready to do and to risk anything in the world for Miss Emily.

"Once more, Emily: what do you want me to do if they overtake us?" asked Oswald, bending down to the little woman, who sat there silently, wrapped up in her furs.

"Defend yourself like a man!"

"And if I succumb?"

"Then I jump into the first air-hole we meet with! Better at the bottom of the sea than in his power!"

"Are you quite sure?"

"As sure as I live, and as I love you."

Oswald bent down and kissed the beautiful, pale face.

"Now it is all right," he said; "now come what may." Those were terrible minutes, and the gloomy surroundings only heightened the impressive character of the situation. All was perfectly silent around them; nothing was heard but the ceaseless striking of hoofs on the ringing ice, and that peculiar sound, resembling a long-drawn sigh, which is produced when an object moves with great rapidity over a plain of ice. As far as the eye reached nothing but the fearful solitude of a plain covered with a thin layer of snow, and the dark night lowering over it like a leaden cover. Even the stars were now hid by a light, drizzling fog, and yet it began to be lighter and lighter every moment. A reddish streak on the gray sky announced the rising moon. The sleigh of the pursuers could already be seen more distinctly, like a great black spot, which grew every instant greater and blacker as the light on the sky grew brighter.

Only a few minutes had passed since they had left Ferrytown, but they appeared to Oswald an eternity. He looked ahead for the shore, but nothing could be seen yet; he looked behind at the pursuers, and the great black spot had again grown larger and blacker.

"We can't do it, Claus," said Oswald.

"What will you bet, sir?" replied Claus. "I will eat Fox alive if he does not win. Why, sir, there is no such horse to be found far and near. We are some twenty sleigh-owners in Ferrytown, and thirty over in Grunwald, and all of us have good horses in our sleighs, but Fox beats them all. Eh, Fox?"

And, as if Fox had been cheered by the praise of his master, he shook his cropped mane, and cut with his sharp hoofs faster and faster into the clear ice.

"But those are uncommon horses."

Claus laughed.

"And that's exactly why I don't trouble myself. They can't stand it; and then they are afraid of the air-holes. In a few minutes you will see they will fall behind, or I will eat Fox alive."

Perhaps Fox was afraid of the terrible fate with which he was threatened if he should allow himself to be overtaken, and made desperate efforts; perhaps Cloten's horses began really to be tried by this unusual chase on the smooth ice, or to be frightened by the black water of the air-holes; at all events, Claus's prophecy began to become true almost as soon as he had uttered it. Although it was dawning brighter and brighter on the horizon, the black spot became perceptibly smaller and less distinct; and when at last the full moon rose over the gray edge of the ice, and poured her pale light over the vast level plain, the black spot was no longer to be seen on the white surface.

"Well, didn't I tell you?" asked Claus, turning round and showing his white teeth, "that there isn't a horse that can overtake Fox? Up, Fox!"

Claus had turned round towards his horse. On, on they flew, with the swiftness of an arrow, over the low thundering abyss, past the weird glittering of waters, on which the pale moon cast an uncanny sheen. The icy north wind whistled around their ears as it swept mournfully and plaintively over the snow-covered fields. Oswald and Emily held each other in close embrace. Glad to have escaped the danger, they enjoyed the bliss of a love whose sweet flowers they were gathering on the brink of a fearful abyss, and willingly forgot for a few moments how deep that abyss was, and how full of unspeakable horrors.

CHAPTER V.

It was March. On the twenty-fourth of February the Republic had been proclaimed in France. The grand event spread its effect in concentric circles over the whole of the civilized earth. Berlin too had been excited, and a feverish agitation had prevailed for a few days in all circles of society--a kind of confusion, of nervous trembling, such as befalls men when they are suddenly roused from deep sleep by a dazzling light, and do not know exactly where to find their head; and at the same time they feel a secret horror of the night in which they have so long slept an unnatural sleep--a confused idea that, after all, the golden light of the sun is a very precious thing; a hopeful expectant stretching and moving in all their limbs, so that the watchmen, who have kept and guarded the gigantic sleeper in his dreams, become anxious to begin to converse with each other. "We will have to put him in iron chains," they whisper, "or he may actually rise; and then, woe unto us!"

There was a lively time one fine bright evening at the "Booths," the principal resort of respectable citizens, who were in the habit of amusing themselves here on Sunday afternoons with wife and child by enjoying a mixture of music, beer, and sausages; but any one who had at all followed the events of the last days in the great city might have doubted for a moment whether this was a political meeting or a popular entertainment. Perhaps it meant both. Work, that strict task-master, had been cheated out of an hour only; and the simple fact that such masses were here assembled, which no police constable would readily dare interrupt or trouble, aroused in the assembled crowds a sense of exuberant self-respect, a very unusual festive excitement. Then the blue sky of early spring looked so lovely; the slender, leafless branches and twigs of the trees in the park were so clearly defined against the clear background, and the evening sun was shining warm and hopeful down upon the thousands who crowded the vast open space between the coffee-houses and the river on one side, and the park on the other side. The pressure was especially great near the wooden stand on the edge of the park, which was ordinarily occupied by a band, but from whence to-day a very novel kind of music was heard--a music which was so strange to the people, and perhaps on that account far more attractive than all the waltzes of Lanner or Strauss. Further off, towards the coffee-houses, where the speakers could no longer be heard distinctly, people seemed to be merrier. Here the waiters could scarcely hurry up as many glasses of the favorite white beer as thirsty gullets were clamoring for. Itinerant venders offered rolls and sausages, half-grown boys praised their cigars with gosling voices, and even jugglers and acrobats played their tricks.

Two men were slowly making their way arm in arm through the heaving crowd. Their appearance was signally different from that of the mass of the people, which consisted mainly of men, especially young men, of the lower classes. One of the two was very tall and thin; his gray eyes looked so keen and bright from under the heavy brows, and around the well-shaped straight nose there was so much life and meaning, that one could very easily supply the lower part of the face, which was completely covered with a close black beard. His carriage was careless, like that of a man who is too busy with his thoughts to lay much stress upon external forms; and his clothes, which were made after the last fashion, and of the very best material, hung so easily and comfortably on his spare form that one could easily see the owner believed in the doctrine that clothes were made for men, and not men for clothes. The appearance of his companion was perhaps even more striking. He was nearly a head shorter than his tall friend, but much broader in the shoulders. And yet he stooped like a man who has spent half of his life in reading books. His large well-shaped brow, and his deep, meek, dreamy eyes, also bespoke the scholar, the thinker. His hair, which he wore rather long, was already nearly gray, and so were the bushy eyebrows, and the beard, which flowed in abundant masses from cheeks, lips, and chin, down to his waist. He glanced restlessly at the crowd, and communicated his observations to his companion with a passionate energy, which characterized his whole manner; the other simply smiling, nodded his head, or replied in a few short words to the point.

"Well, how do you like it?" asked the man of the broad shoulders.

"Not so badly," replied the tall one.

"But do you think this people will ever dare venture upon a revolution?"

"Why not?"

"Look at these stupid faces, listen to these miserable jokes with which they try to drown their instinct of the grave nature of the situation, and the painful feeling of their own insignificance. See how the people, at the very hour when they hear liberty and justice eloquently discussed, still have time and relish for *panem et circenses*, and you see enough to smother the last spark of hope that these men will ever talk of freedom, much less fight for it."

"You are still a pessimist, Berger! and in spite of the golden sunlight which at last shines once more after so many dark years of your life."

"It is this very sunlight which fills my heart with such impatience. During the gray winter days

we think it quite natural that the trees raise their bare branches to the sky; but when the first balmy air of spring plays around us, and the sky is blue once more, we long to see the green ocean of leaves twittering and rustling in the breeze; and above all, when the winter has been so long and so hard that it has taken all our strength from us, and we have no right to hope to live into summer!"

"The dead travel fast! You have seen that in Paris."

"At that moment a man approached them who had for some time looked at the two gentlemen as if he did not quite trust his own eyes, and said to Berger,

"Is this really you, professor?"

"Why, see there! my old friend!" replied Berger, letting go Oldenburg's arm, and offering his hand to the new-comer. "How did you get here?"

"Alas!" said the man, "that is a sad story. If you will come with me a little way--I would rather speak to you alone."

"Excuse me a moment," said Berger to Oldenburg, and went aside with the man.

Oldenburg looked at the latter not without astonishment. His was a powerful body, with a broad, well-developed chest and long arms, while the head appeared not less massive. In the coarse, bloated features one might read, by the side of much good-nature, and jovial humor also, not a little cunning, but of a perfectly harmless nature. To judge by his appearance the man was not exactly well-to-do. His gray felt hat had evidently seen many a stormy day before it had been reduced to its forlorn condition. The black velvet coat, very shabby and covered with rusty-looking frogs, had evidently seen better days; so also the large linen trousers, the color of which was not easily distinguished, and the boots, which began to burst in a threatening manner. A red-silk handkerchief, boldly twisted around the sunburnt, muscular neck, completed the expression of reduced artistic merit which the whole person bore in all its features.

Berger spoke a few minutes earnestly with the man; then they went a little further aside, and Oldenburg's sharp eye saw how Berger pulled out his purse and pressed a few pieces of money in the hands of the stranger. Then they separated; the man disappeared in the crowd, the professor came back.

"Who was that strange person?"

"A man of whom I have often spoken to you: Director Caspar Schmenckel, of Vienna."

"Ah!" exclaimed Oldenburg; "why did you not tell me so at once. I should like to make the acquaintance of a man with whom Czika has lived so long."

"He will call upon us in a few days. The poor man is in despair since Xenobia and Czika have left him; he has met with nothing but misfortune. First, his clown died; then his first artist ran away; and the others he has been compelled to dismiss on account of chronic want of money. Now he lounges about in all the inns of the city, and gives performances on his own account."

"We must take care of him," said Oldenburg. "He has treated Czika well, and I am under obligations to him. Besides, he seems to be a good fellow. But let us go home. The thing here comes to nothing, as I expected, at least for to-day."

As the two friends were leaving, a young man had just gone up on the stand and demanded to speak. He was of a coarse, thick-set figure, but the handsome, well-shaved face was full of life and cleverness; and as he now took off his hat, brushed his long light hair from his white, well-shaped forehead, he looked more like a precocious boy who has put on spectacles for fun, than like a man who has a right to address thousands. If the finely-cut features had something aristocratic, his more than modest costume placed him far from the privileged classes. His voice was peculiarly high and sharp and clear, and when he became more animated it sounded somewhat like the clang of a trumpet, so that it could be heard all over the large square to the furthest corner.

"Gentlemen," he said, and a smile of irony played around his lips, "what would you say of a man who has a pointed arrow in his quiver, and the strongest bow to shoot that arrow; and who, nevertheless, is good-natured enough to send the sharp arrow, not by means of the strong bow, but with his feeble hand? Well, gentlemen, we are exactly like that foolish man. The arrow in the quiver is the petition with the nine articles, as we modestly call the just demands of a nation; the deputation chosen from among us, which is to present the address to-morrow to the king, is the feeble hand. How far will it send the arrow? To the threshold of the king's palace--no further! I tell you, gentlemen, the feeble hand of the deputation will in vain knock at the gate. His majesty will be graciously pleased to refuse accepting our petition, and the deputation will return without having accomplished anything."

When the orator had finished the phrase, raising his voice very high, a murmur passed through the assembly not unlike a violent gust of wind that sweeps over the sea. A few cried "bravo!" among them the gentleman in the shabby velvet coat, who had pushed his way close to

the platform, and who had listened to the speaker with great delight, which he tried to express by nods, grunts, and more violent applause. The majority, however, was evidently opposed to energetic measures. For one who cried bravo, there were a hundred who shook their heads and whispered their misgivings.

The young man was not intimidated by these signs of dissatisfaction. He repeated with great emphasis,

"The deputation will return without having accomplished anything! And it serves us right. Why do we use the hand, when the bow lies idle in the grasp, close by us? Do you want to know who the bow is? We are the bow; I mean the whole assembly. If we went four, five, or six thousand, as many as we are here, in close phalanx, and carried the petition, our speaker ahead, up to the palace, I should like to see the gates that would not open, the menials who would refuse to admit us, the chamberlain who would dare to say: Gentlemen, his majesty is at tea, and cannot see you."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried, the gentleman in the velvet coat, and clapping his hands furiously. But the crowd was not at all pleased with this humorous way of treating so serious a matter. They hissed and whistled and cried from all sides. It was only with great difficulty that the president, a man in a broad-brimmed hat and with a long beard, who looked somewhat like an author, could restore peace by repeatedly knocking with his cane on the table. The orator, quite unconcerned, gathered the whole strength of his clear voice, and trumpeted down upon the assembly:

"I have not offered the resolution to proceed in a body to the palace because I expected it to be adopted, but simply in order to show you what manner of men you are. Pioneers of freedom, my predecessor called you. Yes, indeed! Freedom will be much benefited by you, if you are not even now able to rouse yourself from the sleepy confidence in which you have rested these thirty years----"

Whatever else the young man said could not be heard, for the last words had brought down the storm which had been brewing for some time. "Down with him!" cried those who stood nearest; "Knock him down!" those at a distance.

It is not improbable that the last threat would have been carried out by the insulted men if the powerful man in the velvet coat had not embraced the orator enthusiastically as soon as he came down from the platform, declaring himself thus openly his friend and protector. No one seemed to desire engaging in a fight with a man of such herculean build; at least they allowed the two to leave the assembly unmolested, in spite of the striking minority in which they had found themselves.

The new friends turned into one of the avenues which lead near the stand from the open space of the "Booths" into the park. As soon as they were alone the man in the velvet coat once more shook hands with the young man of the light hair, and said, with great cordiality,

"I am exceedingly delighted to make the acquaintance of such a capital fellow."

"So am I! So am I!" replied the young man, examining his admirer with a quick, sharp glance from his blue eyes, and pushing his spectacles with his finger higher up on his nose in order to be the better able to do so. "With whom have I the honor?"

The gentleman in the velvet coat stepped back, threw his chest out, lifted his much-trying hat, and said,

"I am Director Caspar Schmenckel, from Vienna."

"Ah," replied the other, lightly; "glad to make your acquaintance. My name is Timm, Albert Timm."

"You are not an artist?" said Mr. Schmenckel, confidentially.

"How so?" asked Mr. Timm, evasively.

Director Schmenckel imitated the gesture of one who throws a very heavy object with both hands straight up in the air, in order to let it fall again upon the neck.

"Aha!" said Mr. Timm, who quickly understood in which region of the fine arts the director had been gathering his laurels; "pardon me that I was not personally acquainted with a man of your distinction; but I have only been here a few days."

"Well, I thought so," replied Mr. Schmenckel, as they proceeded arm in arm. "You are a noble fellow; very different from these poor creatures hereabouts. You speak as you think; as you feel in your heart. Caspar Schmenckel likes such fellows, and if he can be of any service to you say the word and it's done."

"Much obliged, director. Delighted to have the honor of your acquaintance. I presume you are performing here in the capital with your troupe?"

"Performing?--Hem! hem!" said Mr. Schmenckel, clearing his throat. "To tell the truth, you do

not see Director Schmenckel just now *in floribus*, I have been compelled by many reasons to disband my old troupe, and I am just now engaged in forming a new one--a task which has its difficulties, as you may imagine. In the meantime----"

"You are living in private?"

"In a certain way, yes; that is to say, I perform from time to time before a few friends; but, you know, only to keep my hand in, that is all."

"Of course."

"Thus I am in a certain way engaged to perform to-night in a very noble locality, where I meet the very best society; and if you will do me the honor----"

"You are very kind."

"You will find very nice people there; perfectly free and easy; all of them democrats to the core, although they drink prodigiously little water, I should think. Ha, ha, ha! I have been a daily guest at the 'Dismal Hole' ever since the winter began, and yet I have never liked it so well as since we have gotten a new landlady. She has been there about a week."

"Indeed!"

"I shall be proud to make you acquainted with her. Mrs. Rose Pape is a model of a woman."

"What did you say?" suddenly asked Mr. Timm, with great animation.

"I said Mrs. Rose Pape is a capital woman."

"Did you not say she had taken the business quite lately?"

"Yes; for she used to be a midwife. The French revolution has made her an innkeeper."

"That is original."

"Isn't it? But then Mrs. Rose is an original, too. She has a wonderful knack for business; and when the trouble commenced in Paris, she said: 'Now golden days are coming for beer-houses with female waiters!' The next day she had rented the 'Dismal Hole.'"

"I am exceedingly anxious to make the acquaintance of the excellent lady."

During this conversation the friends had followed little frequented paths in the park, and were now near the magnificent gate which leads on this side straight from the park into the city. The crowd at the Booths must have dissolved immediately after they had left it, for the head of an immense procession coming from that direction had just reached the gate. Here they met the crowd that were still coming from the city into the park. It could not be avoided; the crowds met and filled the narrow passages of the great gate immediately before the guard-house, where a company of soldiers was standing with arms grounded. The people gazed and wondered at the unusual sight. Others pushed their way up to see what was the matter. In an instant the guard-house was surrounded by hundreds of men standing in a semi-circle, which was steadily growing smaller and smaller. The captain in command of the company, a tall officer with a savage expression in his sharply-marked features, cast furious glances at the multitude, but did not deign to say a word. It was easy to see what was going on in his soul. Suddenly he gave an order with an angrily-shrill voice: "Attention! Eyes right! Shoulder arms! Attention! Load!"

The ramrods rattled, and in an instant the order was obeyed.

It had been intended as a warning merely for the crowd; but, as it will happen in such cases, it produced exactly the opposite effect to what had been intended. Those who stood nearest could not move back, and those behind had only become more curious to know what the noise of the ramrods meant. A fatal encounter between the soldiers and the people seemed unavoidable.

Just then a tall man pushed his way between the idlers and walked up to the captain.

"Allow me to say a word to you."

"What do you want?"

"My name is Oldenburg. I have the honor to address Count Grieben?"

The officer touched his helmet to salute. "Glad to see you again, baron, after so many years. Come in time; shall be compelled to fire upon the rabble."

"It was to prevent that that I begged leave to introduce myself. You have a simple and infallible means to induce these people to move on, and thus to prevent an irreparable calamity."

"What is that?"

"Let your men retire into the guard-house."

"What are you thinking of! to make such a concession to the rabble? Besides, it is against orders."

"Then at least call upon the people to go home."

"I have no desire to open negotiations with the *crapule*."

"Will you permit me to do so?"

"As you like," replied the officer, leaving Oldenburg with cold politeness.

Oldenburg advanced a few steps towards the close semi-circle and said, speaking as loud as he could,

"Gentlemen, you are in some danger if you remain standing here. Many of you have been in the army, and know that the soldier has to obey orders, and no questions allowed. Don't, therefore, force your fellow-citizens, who are here under arms, to turn against you. Let us avail ourselves of our right to go where we choose to go. It is a bore to remain standing so long on the same spot."

"He is right," said a square-shouldered citizen from the head of the crowd. "I will begin to scramble off!"

The people laughed. And as the shrill voice of a cigar-dealer began to sing, "Move slowly, slowly, good Austrians, now!" the dense crowd gradually got into motion, especially as at that moment cries and other noises arose in a different direction and attracted the curious among them.

Some distance higher up the Lindens--for Unter den Linden is the name of the superb street which leads from the gate to the palace--a collision had taken place between the people and one of the numerous patrols which had been marching up and down for some hours between the palace and the gate. Unfortunately there had been no Oldenburg here to interfere and prevent the mischief. The commander of the patrol--a second detachment was marching on a level on the opposite side of the street--was an officer of gigantic stature, whose dark, threatening mien announced the firm determination to punish the slightest resistance instantly and without mercy. Everybody had so timidly given way before him, as he marched down at the head of his men, that he seemed to be justified in smiling contemptuously whenever such an event occurred. But now he came to a place where a narrow but much frequented side street opened upon the Lindens. This passage was crammed full of people, who wanted to see what was going on in the main street. From the Lindens others came who wished to go down that passage. Thus an immense mass of people had been crowded together here, and the confusion, great as it was, became still more awkward, when the patrol marched straight down upon them.

"Make way!" ordered the officer, marching into the crowd without looking right or left.

Those who stood nearest gave way to the side, but others pressed back upon them. A short confusion arose, during which the officer was cut off from his men.

"Make way!" repeated the officer, in still harsher tones.

"Make way yourself!" cried a young man in the crowd.

He had no sooner uttered the words than the officer rushed upon him, seized him by the collar and tossed him, by a slight effort of his powerful arm, into the midst of his men, saying:

"Arrest the rascal!"

The soldiers seized the young man, who tried in vain to free himself.

"Knock the dog down if he resists!" cried the officer.

Who knows but the soldiers would have done his bidding if at that moment Mr. Schmenckel had not suddenly appeared before the officer, crying out:

"Let the man go, your excellency, or ten thousand----"

The officer of the Life Guards and the man of the people stood a few moments opposite each other, both of them men of gigantic size, surprisingly alike in their tall figure, their full chest and ample shoulders, with long, muscular arms; yes, as they stared at each other with fierce passion, there was some resemblance even in the massive, coarse features.

But it was only a moment during which they stood thus; at the next moment the officer had hit the man with all his strength upon his chest in order to gain room to draw his sword. But he might as well have tried to move a rock from its place as the man in the velvet-coat. The blow sounded dull on the broad chest--that was all; but at the same time the man extended his powerful arms, seized the officer around the waist, lifted him sheer from the ground, and threw him with such violence against the soldiers, who had their hands full in holding the young man, that officer, men, and prisoner all rolled together in a heap.

"Hurrah!" cried the delighted crowd, admiring the display of physical strength. "Hurrah! At them! Down with the soldiers!"

Mr. Schmenckel probably did not expect much assistance from the courage of the crowd. He drew the prisoner with one great effort from out of the confused heap of men, and before the officer could regain his feet both had disappeared in the crowd, who readily opened to let them pass.

It was high time, for the two detachments had been able in the meantime to break through the crowd and to unite their forces.

The officer started up and ordered with a voice shrieking with rage: "Left Wheel! Forward! Charge bayonets!"

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried the soldiers, pressing with lowered bayonets into the crowd. The people scattered, crying and howling.

CHAPTER VI.

While such scenes were taking place, Under the Lindens and the inhabitants of the adjoining streets felt a feverish excitement, so that the crowd scattered at the mere sight of an approaching force, merely however to reassemble at another temporarily safe point, and arrests were made in large numbers. The inhabitants of distant parts of the city dwelt in profound peace, utterly ignorant of what was going on elsewhere, and enjoying the calm monotony of an idyllic country village.

In a small one-story house in one of these quiet streets, which derived, from a garden before the door and a slight iron railing between the garden and the gate, somewhat of the appearance of a villa, there sat just before sunset two persons in eager conversation. A little aquarium with gold-fish stood near the window, a bright cage with a canary bird hung between the curtains, and flowers were seen all about in pots and in vases, so that everything bespoke the presence of a lady, although the inevitable work-stand was not to be seen. The man was not exactly young, although even the bald places at the temples would hardly have justified any one in calling him old; the lady was much younger. They conversed eagerly, like two good friends who have not seen each other for months, while in the interval events have happened of the greatest importance for both, which indeed may be said to have inaugurated a new epoch in their lives.

"And Franz is perfectly satisfied with his position here?"

"Perfectly! How pa would have been delighted, if he----"

The young lady did not end the sentence, but turned towards the window and busied herself with the flowers. The gentleman looked at her kindly through the glasses he wore, and after a while he laid his hand lightly on her arm and said:

"You must not only appear firm, my dear friend; you must be so;--you, the daughter of such a father!"

"You are right, Bemperly; I will try to be as firm and as reasonable as I look. But now let us speak of something else. What does Marguerite say to our new plan?"

"She is delighted--or *charmée*, as she says. But I think it is less because our position will be better--although, quite *entre nous*, a married student is a very remarkably amphibious creature--as because she will be able to be near you again. You do riot know what an impression you have made on *ma petite femme*."

"She is so kind-hearted! And I have done so little for her; been able to do so little for her! I have, properly speaking, done nothing but tease her. Even that last evening--you recollect Bemperlein, when you appeared as author--when you kissed each other in the bay-window, when we drank the old hock, and pa afterwards gave his grand speech, the last I ever heard from his lips. Now only I know what it was that moved him so deeply. He took leave of us, not only for the moment, but forever."

Sophie tried to master the emotion which threatened to overcome her, and then she continued:

"I have done so little for Marguerite, and she has done so much for me! Do you know,

Bemperlein, that I was weak enough to become quite jealous of the little one when I saw, in papa's letters, how very fond he was of her, and how he disliked the idea of your getting married even more than our own marriage?"

"And yet it was only by his assistance that we were able to marry; at least Marguerite is indebted to him alone for her trousseau and the furnishing of our house, both of which would otherwise have been almost out of the question. You know, I am sure, what I mean!"

"The Timm affair! Marguerite wrote me about it. What amazed me most was, that Timm should have returned the money so promptly."

"We were all astonished; no one more so than I, who knew best how overwhelmed he was with debts--a fact which led me to dissuade your father earnestly from making a useless effort. The whole affair has caused me, *entre nous*, a good deal of heart-ache; and little reason as I have to like Mr. Timm, I have still been quite sorry when I heard soon afterwards of his being sent to jail. He was unable, it seems, to pay a note long since due, and perhaps only because he had paid us. For all I know, he is a prisoner still."

"What!" said Sophie, "has my old admirer really come to that at last?"

"Your old admirer?"

"Yes; don't you know it? I went to the same dancing master as Timm; and I can well say that I liked him best of all with whom I talked or danced. He is an extremely clever man, and can be most agreeable when he chooses to be so. I am sincerely sorry that he should manage his great talents so very badly. He resembles in that respect----"

"Oswald Stein, you mean. Well, say on. I have fortunately mastered the feeling of bitterness which used to overcome me in Grunwald every time I heard the name mentioned. He does not exist any longer, as far as I am concerned, especially after his last adventures."

"That is hardly right, Bemperly. You know I never liked Stein particularly; but since you all rise in arms against him, and since even Franz, who used to excuse him so long, begins to chime in, I have a great inclination to take his part."

"Of course," said Bemperlein, with a slight touch of bitterness; "that is the old story. Women like a man the better, the worse he is. Even my Marguerite, who generally cannot bear him, breathed the other day a *pauvre homme* in her softest notes! *Pauvre homme!* I should like to know what sensible man would think so of him. If a man rushes madly through life, acting not upon principle but upon impulse; if he must needs gratify all his caprices, and if he meets with difficulties breaks out in furious anger; if, instead of loving his neighbor like himself, he runs away by night with his neighbor's wife--they say of him, with tears of sympathy in their fair eyes: *Pauvre homme!*"

"Bravo, Bemperly," cried Sophie, almost with her old cheerfulness; "bravo! You could not preach better if you were yourself the happy neighbor! But tell me, has no one heard anything yet of the reckless couple?"

"As far as I know, no one? The earth seems to have swallowed them up."

"But how does the unlucky husband bear his misfortune?"

"Ah," said Bemperlein, almost angrily, "it is not worth while to sympathize with that class of people. They deserve nothing better, and reap what they sow. Just think, Miss Sophie--I meant to say *Mrs.* Sophie--this man, this Cloten, who, when Stein had run away with his wife, behaved himself as if he never cared to see the sun shine any more, not only found comfort in a very short time, but has inflicted the same injury on his neighbor's house that he himself suffered. Baron Barnewitz, Frau von Berkow's cousin--the one with the red beard, you know, and the broad shoulders. Oh, you must have seen him. No? Well, it does not matter--*Eh bien!* Baron Barnewitz comes home the other day at an unseasonable hour and finds--so gossip has it--the door to his wife's room locked, suspects mischief, breaks a window, pulls out the whole sash, rushes into the room and catches Baron Cloten, whom his wife is just pushing out at another door! Then follows an explanation; and the result is that Hortense has gone to Italy, and Baron Cloten, after keeping his bed for a week, has retired to his estates without taking leave of anybody."

"What a treasure trove that must have been for the good gossips of Grunwald!"

"You may believe it; almost as great as when Helen Grenwitz became engaged to Prince Waldenberg."

"How is that?"

"As far as I know, the solemn betrothal--I mean the official ceremony--is to be celebrated here in the city in a few days. Anna Maria told me recently that Helen would be here at the beginning of March."

"Then you are still keeping up your relations with the family?"

"I could not well find an excuse for giving up the lessons. Anna Maria honored me all the time with her special favor; and, besides, I have recently become better reconciled with her ways. I believe we have wronged her in many points. She has her very objectionable sides, no doubt; but, if we wish to be just, we must acknowledge also that her position is a very peculiar one. If she procures Helen a rich husband, she does after all only what every mother in her position would do likewise. And her circumstances are by no means as brilliant as they think. Since her husband's death she has nothing but a comparatively small annuity and the income from what she may have saved, but the whole amounts to very little in comparison with her former revenue. And if Malte should follow his cousin Felix's example, and die of consumption, she would lose even that--and the poor fellow looks shocking; he is nothing but skin and bones."

"Ah," said Sophie; "why, then Helen's marriage is almost a kind of necessity in the meaning of these people, although I am convinced it must be a very sad necessity for Helen."

"Why?"

"I will tell you in confidence. I think she had given her heart to somebody else when she accepted the prince. Would to God she had been less reserved towards me, perhaps it would all have come differently."

"Don't believe that! The girl has a kind of obstinate pride that no man can bend, perhaps not even fate. She will allow no one an absolute control over her decisions."

"Tell me, Bemperly, what is the truth of this report, that your Frau von Berkow and Baron Oldenburg are living on very intimate terms with each other?" asked Sophie, after a short pause.

"Nothing; nothing at all!" said Bemperlein, very earnestly. "I should like to know what people have to do with that. There is an old friendship between them, which dates back to the years when they were children. That is all. Then they are neighbors, and must needs see each other frequently--is not that perfectly natural? Why could not they marry each other if they liked it? Instead of that the baron goes to Paris, and leaves her, amid snow and ice, quite alone at Berkow. Does not that show as clear as daylight that there is no question of love between them?--or it must be a strange kind of love."

At that moment Sophie started with joy. She had caught a glimpse of a tall, elegant man with a black beard, who was hastily passing the window.

"There is Franz!" cried the young wife, her large blue eyes brightening up and her cheeks blushing a deep red. "Hide yourself, Bemperly!"

"But where?" said Mr. Bemperlein, looking around in the room.

"There, behind the curtain! Hold it together in the middle, so that it cannot open--thus!"

The bell was rung. Immediately afterwards the door of the room opened, and Franz entered with rapid steps.

"Has not Bemperlein come?"

"Do you see him anywhere?"

Franz, it is true, did not see Mr. Anastasius Bemperlein, but upon a chair a gentleman's hat; and, besides, the folds of the heavy curtain arranged in a manner which very clearly betrayed the efforts of a hand to hold them together.

So he said:

"That man Bemperlein is, after all, an utterly unreliable, frivolous, unconscionable whippersnapper; a man without faith, without principle; a quack, whom I have regretted over and over again to have recommended to Mr. Planke as director of his chemical manufactory, so that he has actually engaged him with a salary of a thousand a year and five per cent, of the clear receipts. He is a perfect Don Giovanni of a Bemperlein, who has secret interviews with the wives of his friends, hides himself when they return behind curtains, and is stupid enough to leave his hat in the middle of the room. A harlequin of a Bemperlein---"

"Stop!" said that gentleman, opening the curtain "I am found out!"

The two friends embraced with great cordiality.

"Do you know whom I have just seen?" asked Franz after the most important questions had been fully answered.

"Well?" cried Bemperlein and Sophie.

"Baron Oldenburg and Frau von Berkow."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Bemperlein, casting an embarrassed look at Sophie, and receiving in return a triumphant smile.

"As I tell you. I met them arm in arm near the palace. Frau von Berkow has given me her address and asked me to call on her. There! Broad street. No. 54. She has furnished lodgings. This, and the circumstance that she has her children with her, make me believe that she has come here for some time. I told her we were expecting Bemperlein to-day, and she seemed to be very glad to hear it. Baron Oldenburg also sends his best regards, and wants you to know that he has returned only yesterday from Paris, in company with Professor Berger. You know, I suppose, that the two met in Paris and witnessed the whole revolution? They are staying at the Hotel de Russie Unter den Linden. I have advised Frau von Berkow, if she has not very pressing business here, to leave the city, because we shall in all probability have very troublesome times soon. Albert street is full of people, swarming to and fro like an ant-hill in uproar. Aids and orderlies are galloping through the streets at full speed. At the corner of Albert and Bear streets they had actually guns in position. Under the Lindens, they say, there has actually been a collision, and an officer of the guards is said to have been brutally ill-treated by the mob. Some said it was Prince Waldenberg. The excitement was so great that the people left the grand opera, although they were giving a new ballet, soon after the beginning of the performance. In Fisher street the mob has attacked a gun-shop, and an acquaintance of mine saw in Gold street the beginning of a barricade. In one word, the city is in a state of feverish excitement, and therefore, little wife, you had better bring out your tea, instead of standing there with your mouth wide open and swallowing the horrible news."

Sophie fell upon her husband's neck, pressed a kiss on his lips, and went out to order supper. The two friends sat down on the sofa and discussed their own and public affairs with that seriousness and thoroughness which becomes wise men.

CHAPTER VII.

The "Dismal Hole" was one of those suspicious places to which respectable people never resort, even after a long and dusty walk, when some refreshment seems to be needed. Young men, perhaps, who have less virtue than desire to enjoy life, and whom the spirit of mischief has led far from their accustomed haunts, occasionally drift into its sombre halls, and find next morning their heads aching furiously, and their minds filled with confused but by no means pleasant reminiscences of the night. Nevertheless the "Dismal Hole" was found in a by-street of a very fashionable quarter of the city, and very modest in the day. It shone forth at night by means of a blood-red lamp, which looked up and down the street invitingly until the sun came and extinguished it. During all these hours it seemed to be irresistibly attractive to many people; at least it was almost always crowded with customers. Thus it was on this evening also. There was scarcely a vacant chair in the four or five large rooms which formed the "Dismal Hole." Eliza, Bertha, and Pauline, the three pretty waiters, had their hands full in bringing the beer to each thirsty guest, and in giving him time to pinch their cheeks, or at least to say a civil word. These confidential interviews, short as they were, no doubt interfered somewhat with business, but what could be done? Thirsty gentlemen, belonging to a certain class of society, insist upon holding the pretty hand that brings them the mug of beer, though it may be slightly moistened with foam, a little while in their own; and in this case such a desire was all the more justifiable, as the three girls were really very pretty, and did all honor to the good taste of the landlady of the "Dismal Hole."

Mrs. Rosalie Pape was a lady of fifty or more, who struck you at first sight by her enormous size. It was only after more careful examination that you noticed the coarseness of the features, which were half hid in fat, and the short and square fingers of the plump white hands; and only the experienced observer could discover that the brown hair which adorned abundantly the head of the matron could not possibly be her own, and that the small, bright blue eyes, in spite of the apparent kindness of the broad mouth, had a sharp and at times even a downright wicked and dangerous expression.

The guests at the "Dismal Hole," however, were not the men to make such observations. In their eyes Rosalie was a charming, splendid woman, under whose management the fame of the place was spreading far and near, and they were delighted when the good lady left her place behind the bar and made a tour through the whole basement. Here she would familiarly clap an acquaintance on the shoulder, or welcome a newcomer; there she would graciously accept the praise of her beer, or try to disarm a critic by putting his glass to her own lips and taking a pull of which a sergeant need not have been ashamed.

Thus she had just now approached two men who were sitting alone in a corner, and putting their heads close together whispered so eagerly that it was evident the topic of their conversation must have been of the greatest importance.

"Well, little Schmenckel, how do?" said Mrs. Rosalie, putting her fat hand upon the broad shoulders of the strong gentleman in the velvet coat; "it seems to me you look rather warm. Do not drink too much, or you will not be able to show off well afterwards. You have a large audience to-night."

"I fear I wont be able to do much to-night," said the director, with stammering tongue, his face flushed and almost painfully.

"But, Schmenckel, you promised!" replied Mrs. Rose, and her eyes did not look very kindly at him. "One good turn deserves another, you know."

"My friend Schmenckel will consider it," said the other gentleman, a man with light hair, and wearing spectacles over his sharp blue eyes; "he happens just now to be somewhat excited by an encounter he had an hour ago Under the Lindens. However, I am particularly delighted, madame, to have found out your new address through Mr. Schmenckel. I had been looking for you all over town for two days, and all in vain."

Mrs. Rose Pape cast a glance at the speaker. There was something in his whole appearance, and in his way of speaking, which attracted her.

"With whom have I the honor?" she said.

"All on my side! Will you favor us with your company for a few moments?" said the young man, offering Mrs. Rosalie the third yet vacant chair near the little table. "My name is Albert Timm, from Grunwald. I have a letter of introduction to you from an old friend, who sends his kindest regards. May I be permitted to place the document in those beautiful hands?" And Mr. Timm handed the lady an unsealed letter, which he had drawn from a very shabby pocket-book.

Mrs. Rosalie seemed to be a little embarrassed by this communication. She cast one more searching glance at the stranger, looked all around the room to see that she was unobserved, opened the note, turned ralf-round to get the benefit of the gas-light, and read:

"Dear Rose: The bearer is a very good friend of mine, whom you can trust *unconditionally*. He will tell you something about that matter at Grenwitz that will make you open your eyes wide. If you and Jeremiah will help him, we can, I am sure, help a certain gentleman to his inheritance, and make a prodigious profit out of it ourselves. Good-by! I hope you are well; and I hope the same of your still warmly attached T. G."

"You know the hand-writing?" asked Mr. Timm of the good lady, who, after reading the letter twice, and folding it up carefully to put it in her pocket, had been looking at him for some time with suspicious glances.

"It seems to me the hand-writing is familiar," she said.

"Well, for the present that is the main point. As for the rest, I will tell you more at the proper time. I hope you will grant me, to-night, the favor and the honor of a confidential talk. I am sure we shall be the best friends in the world by to-morrow."

There was a confidence and self-assurance in the manner of the young man which decidedly imposed on Mrs. Rosalie, however nicer people might have been shocked by the air of vulgar impertinence with which it was flavored. She returned the familiar pressure of Timm's hand and rose, as just at that moment one of the three Hebes came to say that she was wanted at the bar.

Mr. Timm turned once more to Director Caspar Schmenckel, from Vienna, who was so drunk or so absorbed in his thoughts that he had paid little or no attention to the conversation between his friend and Mrs. Rosalie, and then he said:

"I don't see how you can be doubtful a moment. I tell you, as you were thus facing each other I was struck by the likeness, although I had little leisure at that time to make observations. I grant the accident is marvellous which has brought you together once more after so many years, at an hour and at a place where you perhaps least expected ever to meet. But what does that amount to? I have a great respect for Master Accident, for he has helped me over and over again out of many a predicament when all cleverness and wisdom were at fault. And this accident is too famous not to be something more than a mere accident. And what is the great wonder, after all? You court, twenty-two years ago, a frivolous lady, and you succeed. When the husband returns, and finds you under suspicious circumstances, you pitch him out of the window. The lady never has had but one child, and the age of that child agrees to the day. You were in St. Petersburg, you tell me, in September, eighteen hundred and twenty-five, and the prince was born in May, twenty-six ----"

"How do you know all that?" asked Mr. Schmenckel, and shook his head incredulously.

"I tell you, my man, I know it! That is enough for you. And suppose the fellow is not your son, then----"

"But why shouldn't he be my son?" cried Mr. Schmenckel, striking the table with his gigantic hand "Do I look as if I was not up to having children?"

Mr. Timm took off his spectacles, wiped the glasses carefully, put them on again, looked laughingly at Director Caspar Schmenckel's flushed face, and said good-naturedly:

"Look here, old man, you are a funny old creature. First, I talk till I lose my breath to prove to you that you are the father of this hopeful youth; and then, when I merely assume it might not be so, you become disagreeable, and look as if you were going to beat me. I only meant to say this: Suppose the man is not your son, then, that also does not matter much. We can only try. We can ask if the princess remembers a certain evening at St. Petersburg, and so forth, and so forth. I'll wager my head against an empty pumpkin we frighten her out of her wits, and the roubles come tumbling down into our lap."

"But wont they hand us over to the police?" asked Mr. Schmenckel, shaking his head thoughtfully.

"Pshaw! They will be glad if no one else hears of it. There is no better ally for people like us than a bad conscience. I tell you I have some experience in that department."

Mr. Schmenckel reflected so deeply on the grave matter that, what with the mental effort, and perhaps also with too much beer, his head began to glow. Suddenly a thought occurred to him which might throw some light, if not upon the matter itself, at least upon the character of his new friend.

"But," he said, "what, after all, is the whole story to you?"

"Fie, director," replied Timm, with great indignation "I should not have expected such a question from you. Did you not save me from the paws of the soldiers! Does not one hand wash the other? Is there no such thing in the world as gratitude? If you insist absolutely upon being a poor devil for the rest of your life instead of living in your own house with an annuity of a few thousand roubles, and of driving your own carriage, I have nothing to say to it! I beg your pardon for having troubled you with all these things. Come, let us talk of something else!"

"Now, come, don't fly off at such a pace!" cried Mr. Schmenckel, anxiously. "I don't dream of taking anything amiss, especially if you want to make me the father of a live prince. But that I should have such a grand son, and that I should have whipped him so unmercifully the very first time I ever set eyes on him, that is surely amazing enough. If Caspar Schmenckel were to tell anybody else so he would not be believed."

"I do not see," said Timm, "why that is any more amazing than that I must be the only one of the thousands in the park to run right into the arms of the prince; that I alone happen to know him from former times; that I remember his name, mention it to you, and thus call up in your mind a remembrance which helps us to make this important discovery. I can assure you I was at first quite as much amazed as you are; but such things, thank God, do not last long with me."

Mr. Timm threw himself back in his chair and picked his teeth. Mr. Schmenckel looked with infinite astonishment, not unmixed with fear, at the man whom even such an extraordinary event could not move from habitual coolness. Mr. Schmenckel was not the man to reflect deeply on the relations in which he stood to this man; but still, he had an indistinct feeling about it. As he was looking at him thus, he felt a decided inclination to give the young man a hearty drubbing, or to punish him in some other way for his superiority, as an elephant sometimes may dream of the pleasure he would enjoy if he could hurl his Carnac on the ground and trample upon him with his feet for a few minutes.

It was a few hours later. Only a few guests had remained in the "Dismal Hole," where they had had very lively times--the excitement was intense everywhere; beer was drunk by the cask, and speeches were made without number and without end. They sat scattered about, in groups of three and four persons, mostly people of rather peculiar appearance, such as are only seen in large cities, and there also rarely or never in the day-time and on the streets. Men in shabby, often fantastic costumes, with dissipated and yet attractive features, and with eyes which now blazed up in wild passion, and now gloated stolidly on vacancy--strange figures, who tell the knowing eye without opening their lips long stories of proud plans and childish deeds, of great talents and still greater recklessness, of lofty pride and low disgrace, of senseless dissipation and gnawing hunger, of incredible efforts condemned to end like the labors of Sisyphus, and of an ambition leading only to the sufferings of Tantalus, until efforts and ambition and every virtue, nay, every good instinct, is drowned in the morass of apathetic indifference.

But these groups also gradually disappeared; one light after another was put out by the poor girls, who had for the last hour been nodding here and there in the corners, their pretty faces buried in their round arms; and at last there was nobody left but Mr. Schmenckel, who was asleep, drunk, on one of the sofas, and two other gentlemen who were sitting with the landlady around one of the small tables over a bottle of champagne. One of these men was Albert Timm, from Grunwald; the other was a man of middle age, who had only come about an hour ago, and whom Mrs. Rose had introduced to Mr. Timm as the brother of his landlord in Grunwald, Mr. Jeremiah Goodheart. From his clothes and his whole general appearance he might have been taken for a modest citizen in tolerably good circumstances; a grocer, perhaps, or a tobacco dealer; but in his small eyes, overshadowed by heavy eyebrows, there was something that seemed to indicate that the occupation of the man was not quite so harmless, or at least had not

always been quite so harmless.

The three persons had been conversing very eagerly, and Mr. Timm now summed up what had been said.

"Then there are two questions," he said. "First we must get a peep at the baptismal register at St. Mary's; or, better still, obtain a certified copy of the entry; and, secondly, we must find the principal personage in this comedy--I mean Mr. Oswald Stein."

"But how do you know he is to be here?" asked the man with the odd eyes.

"I do not know it; I only presume so. He wrote me a week ago from Paris that he could not support himself any longer there, and that he must try to reach home before his money was at an end. It seems to me, beyond all doubt, that he must have come here, where he had had literary engagements when he was a student here, and where he has therefore the best prospect of finding some means of support for himself and his sweet one. Only I think he will not appear under his true name, so as not to expose himself to disagreeable encounters with the relations of the Baroness Cloten, who, I know, are still after him, and would very soon find him out here. This might therefore be the more difficult task of the two, unless accident, my faithful old ally, should again come to my assistance."

"That item you may quietly leave in the hands of my friend here," said Mrs. Rosalie, familiarly placing her hand on the head of the man with the odd eyes; "and now, gentlemen, I believe it is time we should part. Tomorrow is another day. Yes; but what shall we do with the big fellow there on the sofa, who has been drinking for twelve to-day?"

"We shall have to carry him home, if you, fair lady, have not perhaps a snug little place for him somewhere," replied Mr. Timm, with a look full of meaning.

"You scamp!" said the lady, pinching Mr. Timm's cheeks. "I will have to stop you."

"I hope so--with a kiss."

"You scamp, you!" said the lady, evidently not unwilling to try the experiment.

Mr. Timm seemed to be afraid of it, for he suddenly turned to Mr. Schmenckel and began to shake him, first gently, then more vigorously, and at last as hard as he could.

"Uff!" groaned the giant, half asleep yet; "let me go, I'll manage the boy."

"What will he do?" asked the man with the odd eyes.

"Oh, he is talking in his sleep," said Mr. Timm, "give me a glass of water, Lizzie; I believe that will wake him up."

At last the colossus stood upright, but not without swaying to and fro like a beacon in a storm. Still he could stand on his feet now, and, as Mr. Goodheart happened to know where he lived, the task of carrying him home seemed feasible. Mr. Timm seized him by one arm, the man with the odd eyes by the other, and thus they managed to lift him up to the cellar door and into the street.

The night was as dark as a night can be when there are no stars visible. The wind was sweeping mournfully through the deserted streets and threatened to extinguish the few gas-lights that were still burning. Mr. Schmenckel recovered in the fresh air somewhat, and embraced his companions tenderly; then he vowed them eternal friendship, and promised each of them a hundred thousand roubles as soon as it should be fully established that Prince Waldenberg, whom he had whipped that day under the Lindens, was really his own son. Thus they reached the street, then the house, and at last even the little bed-room in which Director Caspar Schmenckel, from Vienna, was residing for the present. Mr. Schmenckel sank down upon his modest couch, and his two companions left him, but not until Mr. Jeremiah had pulled out a dark-lantern from his pocket and gone about, to Mr. Timm's great astonishment, examining every corner of the room. What he found was not much: iron balls, brass balls, sticks and staves of all kinds, drums and trumpets, odds and ends, all in fearful disorder.

"Now you must fill the measure of your kindness," said Timm, when they were in the street again, "and tell me my way home. I live----"

"White Horse, Falcon street, No. 43, back room," interrupted Mr. Jeremiah Goodheart, closing his lantern and putting it back into his pocket.

"Are you the devil?" cried Mr. Timm, nervously retreating a step. "How can you know where I live; I have told nobody."

"Do you think so eloquent a speaker at the great meeting at the Booths can long remain unknown to us?" said Mr. Goodheart.

"To us? To whom?" asked Timm.

"Never mind that. Anyhow, I would advise you to deliver your speaking exercises rather within

the four walls of your house, especially for the sake of our little affair, which might be sadly interfered with if, for instance, you should go to jail."

"Pshaw!" said Timm; "do you think I covet the glory of a political martyr? I have given the good people a speech because I like to talk; and secondly, because I was angry at the fools."

"All the better," said the other, dryly.

As they were passing under a gas-light Timm cast a glance at his companion, and all of a sudden he understood the enigmatical appearance of the man, and the "us" which he had used.

"Excuse me, Mr. Goodheart," he said. "I think I have heard your brother say that you are a highly-valued member of the Secret Police. Is that so?"

The man with the odd eyes smiled.

"You are a cunning fox," he said, "and have a keen scent. My brother, to be sure, did not tell you any such thing, for he knows nothing about it; nor did Rosalie tell you, for she knows it, but she has her reasons not to speak of it; consequently----"

"The evil one must have told me," interrupted Timm, quite restored to his former sense of security by this proof of his ingenuity. "I think I might have made a good detective."

"That might depend on yourself alone."

"How so?"

The man with the odd eyes did not answer his question, but said, as they had reached a corner of the street:

"That is your way. I shall call at eleven o'clock. Then we will talk the matter over more fully."

The two men parted. Their footsteps were heard for a while down the lonely streets, while the gray twilight was slowly rising over the house-tops.

CHAPTER VIII.

In a fine room of a large private hotel in Broad street there sat, a few days later, Melitta and Baron Oldenburg. A lamp was burning on the table; lighted wax-candles were standing on the mantel-piece and on the consoles. Frau von Berkow expected other visitors that night, and Oldenburg had only availed himself of the privilege of an old friend to come before the appointed time.

"It seems to me you are very silent to-night, Adalbert," said Melitta, putting her work on the table and turning with a kindly smile to Oldenburg. "I talk to you of the children, how hearty the boy has grown, and how pretty Czika looks in her fashionable dresses, and you look--well, how do you look?"

"Like the knight of the rueful countenance, most probably; at least I feel so, from head to foot;" replied Oldenburg, rising and walking up and down in the room.

"Not exactly!" said Melitta. "I thought, on the contrary, you looked very well in your brown paletot."

"Jesting apart, Melitta, I am quite sad to-night."

"That is a pretty compliment for me, who have made the long trip from my home-nest to this tedious city only for your sake--you hear, sir, only in order to give you what I thought would be a pleasant surprise to you; bringing you the children too. For your sake, I say; so that we might see and talk unobserved. For this reason only I have taken rooms here at a private hotel, like a farmer's wife; and now, in return for all this apparently wasted goodness and love, I am told: 'You might as well have remained at home!'"

"Do you believe it, Melitta? That thought has occurred to me really more than once, yesterday and today!"

"That is hard!" said Melitta, and her face showed that she did not exactly know whether she ought to take Oldenburg's words as a jest or in earnest.

The baron did not leave her long in uncertainty. He sat down again by her, seized her hand, and said:

"My dear Melitta, my words may sound hard, but I ask you yourself, if I, as a man, must not think and feel so. I need not assure you, I hope, that I am heartily grateful to you for your kindness, for you know that; or, at least, you ought to know it. Even that you do not mind evil tongues for my sake I do not count for so much, since I know how little the judgment of the world is worth; I have despised it all my life. There is something else which prevents my enjoying your presence here heartily, and I will tell you what that is. Look, Melitta: it is natural to man to wish to work and to care for her whom he loves; more than that, he likes to see the beloved one in a certain way dependent on him; I mean on his strength, his courage, his wisdom. Many a warm affection has died out simply because it was impossible to arrange matters in this way, and many an affection is even now fading away for the same reason. Thus it is with my love for you. As matters stand I can only live for you, care and work for you, in trifles; but not at every hour, every minute, as I must do, if I am to be happy. In the country, where we, as neighbors, could often spend half of a day together, without being observed and watched, it was easier; and yet, even there, the feeling of my uselessness was so painful to me that I was grateful for the political storm which drove me to Paris, where I could at least imagine that nothing parted us but distance. But here, in a large city, the painful feeling overcomes me; it looks to me as if the moment at which we meet had been expressly chosen to show that the relations between us are unnatural and false. We are standing here on a volcano, which may break out every moment. The soil is trembling under our feet, and before many days are passed we shall have seen unheard-of things. I am not afraid of the end; on the contrary, I desire a decision, for it is necessary and will do us good. But in order to stand firm in days when our people are going to be in trouble and in danger, in order to be a man in the full sense of the word, I must have peace within me and that I cannot have as long as we stand thus. I shall have no peace, Melitta, till you are mine, till we are one; till I know that I speak and act and fight, and, if it must be, die for wife and child! Melitta! in your own name, in my name, in all our names, I ask you: Will you be at last my wife, after I have served you for more years than Jacob served for Rachel?"

The baron's voice trembled, although he evidently made a great effort to speak as calmly and as convincingly as he could. He had bent over Melitta, who held her beautiful head bowed low; when he paused she looked up, and showed Oldenburg her pale, tear-flooded face. She said in a low voice:

"Would to God, Adalbert--for your sake, for my sake, for all our sakes--I could answer you Yes!"

"Why can you not do it?"

"You know!"

"But, Melitta, is the memory of the man whom you cannot possibly love any longer, and of whom you say yourself that you do not love him any longer, to part us forever? Have you not paid the penalty of your wrong--if wrong it was to follow the impulse of a free heart--with a thousand tears? Are you not now to me what you have always been? And, if there must be a reckoning between us, have you not to forgive and forget far more in me than I in you? Is it reasonable to sacrifice the wife to a rigorous moral law, which the husband does not consider binding? Who has made that unwise law? Not I; nor you. Why then should you and I obey it? I tell you, the day of freedom, which is now dawning, will blow all such self-imposed laws to the four winds, and with them all the ordinances devised by a dark monkish prejudice to fetter nature and to torment our hearts."

"Whenever that day comes--and when it comes for me," replied Melitta, "I will greet it with joy. If it is a mere notion which prevents me from falling into your arms and from saying: Take me; I am yours, now and forever!--have pity on me, it makes me suffer as much as yourself. But Adalbert, I am a woman; and a woman can wait and hope for the day of release, but she cannot fight for it. And until that day comes, until I feel as free as I must be in order to be yours in honor, things must remain as they are now."

Melitta had said this with a low and sad but yet firm voice, and Oldenburg felt that it would be cruel to press her further. He took her hand, kissed it, and said,

"Never mind, Melitta! I am patient. I know that you do not make me suffer from obstinacy. That is enough for me. And then the day of release which you wait for, and which we fight for, must come sooner or later."

At that moment old Baumann knocked and entered to announce the expected visitors. Melitta passed her handkerchief over her face, while Oldenburg advanced to greet Sophie, who entered with her husband and Bemperlein by her side.

Melitta and Sophie met to-night for the first time, but the meeting was free from all ceremonious formality. The two ladies had heard so much of each other (especially Sophie of Melitta) that they knew each other down to the smallest details of their outward appearance, and then it was natural to both of them to lay aside all restraint when they felt a sympathetic attraction. Nevertheless they looked at each other with much interest as they shook hands and exchanged the first words. Sophie noticed that Melitta appeared much milder and gentler than

she had expected from the great lady; and Melitta observed, on the other hand, that Sophie did not look half as serious and thoughtful as Bemperlein had made her believe of the clever and highly educated daughter of the privy councillor. Sophie saw also Baron Oldenburg for the first time, and she cast from her seat on the sofa many a trying glance at the tall man in black, who stood in the centre of the room talking to the two gentlemen. He also had never seen her before, and, on his part, observed carefully the two ladies. It struck him that both had an abundance of soft, curling hair, and in that feature, as well as in the cut of their large, expressive eyes, a certain resemblance like two roses, of which one, the darker and fuller, has entirely opened its calyx, while the other lighter one is but just unfolding the delicately-colored leaves to the light of day.

As a matter of course, Sophie was especially curious to see how Oldenburg and Melitta would behave towards each other, for, in spite of Bemperlein's assurances she had persisted in believing that there were close relations between them. But Melitta was too much of a lady of the great world, and Oldenburg had too much self-control, to show anything more than a tone of perfect politeness and mutual esteem.

There was no lack of topics for conversation in those days of great excitement, when feverish restlessness had seized on all minds, because all felt, more or less, the shadow of the coming events. Franz was not a politician, properly speaking. His fondness for the Fine Arts, which at first threatened to divide his strength, and then the study of his great science which gave him finally peace and satisfaction, had left him little time for politics. But he was liberal in all respects, and besides, his profession had given him frequent opportunities to become acquainted with the wants of the people themselves, and an insight which had convinced him of the necessity of an entire change of social relations. He was not quite as clear about the doctrine that this could not be done without first changing the political forms of the state, especially because his eye was more busy with details than with the whole. "I am at heart a Republican," he was wont to say, "but I have no desire to hear a Republic proclaimed, because I do not believe that that would help us essentially as long as the evil is not taken hold of at the root. But I see the root of the evil in the dark superstitions which reverse nature and change men from free citizens of this earth into helots of a supernatural world."

Franz expressed himself in this sense to-night also to Oldenburg, but he found him a decided adversary.

"I believe, doctor," said the latter, "that you attach too little importance to the results obtained by a well-ordered commonwealth--*res publica*, ladies, the Romans used to call it--and to the difference between a sensible and an unwise form of government. I wish you could have heard the discussions I have had with Professor Berger, speaking of the sad character of a time which produces hardly anything else but problematic characters."

"Where is the professor?" asked Bemperlein. "I had half promised Mrs. Braun that she should meet her father's old friend."

"I cannot tell you," said Melitta; "do you know, Oldenburg?"

"No; I lost him at the meeting at the Booths from my arm, and could not find him again in the crowd. I am quite sure, however, that he will yet come."

"Problematic characters!" repeated Franz, who had been so absorbed in his thoughts that he had not heard the last words. "Do you know, baron, that when I heard that expression of Goethe's the first time it was in connection with your name, and from the lips of a man who was once very dear to me, and in whom you also, as far as I know, once took a very lively interest? You need not beat the devil's tattoo on the table, Bemperlein; I know that you, who are generally as gentle as a lamb, have talked yourself into a most unchristian hatred against Oswald Stein, and I only mention our former friend because he, as well as his teacher, Berger, appeared to me always as a type of such problematic characters."

As Franz had not the least suspicion of Oswald's former relations to Melitta, to Oldenburg, and to Bemperlein, he did not notice the blush which suddenly spread over Melitta's cheeks so that she bent low over her work in order to conceal it; and the vehemence with which Bemperlein exclaimed: "I should think, Franz, that man does not deserve being mentioned here," only excited his opposition.

"Do you too think so, baron?" he said, turning to Oldenburg; "would you relentlessly condemn a man whose greatest misfortune it probably was to have been born in these days?"

"No," said Oldenburg, calmly and solemnly; "I have not yet forgotten the old word, that we must not judge if we do not wish to be judged. I have always sincerely admired the brilliant talents which nature has lavished upon that man, and I have as sincerely regretted that a mind so richly endowed should, like a luxuriant tree, bear only sterile blossoms, which can produce no fruit whatever."

While Oldenburg spoke thus his eyes had been steadily fixed on Melitta, who had raised her face once more and now looked as eagerly up to him as if she wished to read him to the bottom of his soul. Franz was still too warmly interested in Oswald to be really satisfied by Oldenburg's

words. He replied, therefore, in his earnest, hearty manner:

"I was sure you would judge Stein fairly. I have heard Stein himself quote you too often not to know how fully you understood the peculiar condition of his mind, and your intimacy with Berger was a guaranty for me that you are a physician for the sick, and not for the healthy, who, Bemperlein, need no physician. Berger and Stein are two characters strikingly alike in talents and temper. How else could they have formed so close a friendship, with their great difference in age?--a friendship which, I fear, has contributed more than anything else to develop in Oswald those eccentricities which sooner or later must lead him to insanity or suicide."

"But don't you see, Franz," said Bemperlein, who was always particularly tenacious in matters connected with Oswald, "that Berger has successfully rid himself of the alp of his disease, which was evidently more bodily than mental, and has thus shown that there is a very different energy in him from Stein?"

"Do not praise the day before the evening comes!" replied Franz. "I desire, of course, as anxiously as either of you, the complete recovery of Professor Berger; but I am bound to say, as a medical man, that I do not consider a relapse yet out of question. And if I am not mistaken, Bemperlein, you mentioned only last night that my father-in-law had expressed himself in the same manner?"

"But would not that be fearful?" said Melitta.

"I do not say, madame, that it will be so; I only say it may be so."

"Have you lately noticed anything peculiar in Berger?" asked Melitta, turning to Oldenburg.

"Yes!" said the latter, after some hesitation. "I cannot deny that his manner has seemed to me lately much more excited than before. Since the revolution in February, in which, you know, he took an active part, he seems to be undermined by a kind of feverish impatience, which often reminds me of the restlessness of a lion who walks growling up and down behind the bars of his cage. Minutes seem to grow into hours to him, and hours into days. I have told him in vain that the history of great ideas counts only by thousands of years. 'I have no time,' is his invariable answer. 'If you had, like myself, wandered forty years through the desert, you would comprehend the longing of the weary pilgrim to breathe at last the air of the promised land. This delaying and deferring, this hesitating and halting, will cause me to despair.' But, gentlemen, what is that?"

All listened. From afar off there came a low but steady sound, louder than the rattling of carriages.

"That is the beating to arms!" said Oldenburg, and his cheeks flushed up. "I know the sound; I heard it just so on the evening of the twenty-third of February, along the *Boulevard des Capucins*."

Oldenburg had hardly said these words, and they were all rising to go to the window, when the door was hastily opened, and a man rushed in, whom they found it difficult to recognize as Berger. His long gray hair hung in matted locks around his head; his face and beard were covered with blood, which seemed to come from a wound in his forehead; his coat was torn to pieces, as if sharp instruments had cut and pierced it in different places. His eyes were glowing, his breath came with an effort, as he stepped close up to the table and, gazing at the company, said, in a hoarse voice,

"Up! up! You sit and talk, while without your brothers and your sisters are murdered! Up! up! With these our bare hands we will turn aside their bayonets and strangle these executioners."

"He is fainting," cried Franz, seizing Berger, who had already while he was yet speaking begun to sway to and fro, and now broke down completely.

The men ran up and carried their fainting friend to a sofa.

"Some cologne, madame," said Franz; "thank you. Do not be afraid; it amounts to nothing this time, but I fear for the future."

They all stood around the patient, whose breathing became more quiet in proportion as the beating of the drums became more subdued in the streets.

CHAPTER IX.

While the small company in Frau von Berkow's rooms in the second story had been so suddenly and so terribly startled, there was a young lady sitting quietly in a room a story higher, who had only arrived at the house a few hours before with her husband (at least they took the young man who had accompanied her to be her husband). As the luggage was marked "Paris," and the gentleman had spoken French to the lady, the people of the house took it for granted that they were French, especially as the hotel was always full of French travellers. Mrs. Captain Black, the owner of the hotel, had herself shown the strangers to their rooms, and as the young lady seemed to be tired and suffering, she had asked her very kindly if she could do anything for madame? The young man (the young lady did not open her lips) had asked her to send up some tea, but declined all other assistance. Soon afterwards the young man had left the house.

He had not been gone five minutes when a cab, which had been waiting at a little distance up the street ever since the strangers had arrived, drove up to the house. A young man stepped out and asked the porter if a gentleman and a lady who had arrived from Paris perhaps a quarter of an hour ago were at home? When the porter replied that the gentleman had just left, remarking he would be back in an hour, but that madame was, as far as he knew, in her rooms. The young man asked him to show him up at once. The porter--a man of great experience--saw that the young man, who evidently belonged to the higher classes of society, was in a state of great excitement; and as nine o'clock at night did not seem to him the most suitable hour for visiting a lady who, besides, was alone in her room, he replied that he did not think the lady could be seen now. Would not the gentleman be pleased to call again to-morrow morning?

"I am in a great hurry," said the young man; "I--I must see the young lady--on family business. Will you be good enough to inquire if she receives company, and carry this--this card?" he added, after some reflection.

With these words he took a small card-case from his pocket and gave the porter a card. It had on it the name of Adolphus Baron Breesen.

The young man's hand trembled so violently as he gave him the card, and his face looked so pale and disturbed, that the porter was more convinced than ever that all was not right, and that the interview of the newcomer with the French lady was probably possible only at the expense of the gentleman who had gone out.

"Why, I forgot," he said; "there is the key! They are both out."

The young man still held the case in his hand.

"I am sure," he said, drawing a gold-piece from a side pocket and slipping it into the porter's hand, "that the lady is at home, and that she will receive me when she sees the card."

The porter was an honest man, but he had a large family, and to-morrow the school-money for his two eldest children was due.

"Third story, second door in the passage, on the left," he said, grumbling.

The young man did not wait for more. He ran up, taking three steps at once, and knocked at the door.

"*Entrez!*" answered a low voice.

When her companion had left her, to take a stroll through the streets, the young lady had remained seated where she was, immoveable, her head supported in one of her hands, and the other hanging listlessly by her side. The light of the two wax candles on the table fell bright upon her face. The face was evidently a lovely one when it beamed with joy and exuberant spirits, as it was wont to do; but now it was pale, and disfigured by much weeping. The large gray eyes stared fixedly at the ground, the beautifully arched brows were painfully contracted, and the lips closed firmly. Mechanically she said "*Entrez!*" when the waiter knocked to bring tea; she did not even look up while he set the things upon the table; and he had to ask twice if she had any more orders before she answered a short "No!" She had totally forgotten that he had been there as soon as the door closed behind him, and when another knock came she said, quite as mechanically as before, "*Entrez!*"

"Emily!"

The young lady started up with a cry, and stared with wide-open eyes at the young man who stood before her, as if she had been suddenly roused from a deep sleep and did not know whether she were still in a dream or saw what was real before her.

"Emily!" the young man said once more, and opened his arms.

"Adolphus!" she cried, and threw herself on his breast.

The two held each other embraced as they had done in the days of their childhood when the brother came home during vacations, and the sister had gone to meet him at the park gate.

But the days of childhood's innocence were long past. Emily tore herself from her brother's

arms, and cried, stretching out her hands as if to keep him away from her,

"Where do you come from? What do you want here?"

"Can you ask that, Emily?" he replied, sadly; "What I want here? You! Where I come from? From Paris; where I have searched for you months and months; where I found a trace of you at last, just as you were leaving town, and from whence I have followed you from town to town, from hotel to hotel, without ever succeeding in finding you alone. Not that I am afraid of him!" said the young man, unconsciously drawing himself up proudly to his full height, "but I wanted to speak to you kindly and gently, and I knew I should not be able to do that in his presence."

Adolphus approached his sister to seize her hand. She stepped back.

"What do you want of me?" she murmured.

"Emily!" he said, sadly; "is that your old love? Emily! child! come to yourself! What else can I want of you than to free you of these chains, which must have long since become intolerable to you! Oh, do not say no! I see it in your eyes, I see it in your dear, pale face, that you are very unhappy! Emily, sister! darling sister! come with me! By our old father, who is dying for grief and sorrow; by the memory of our sainted mother; by all you hold sacred, I beseech you, come with me!"

Emily had thrown herself into a corner of the sofa, sobbing and hiding her face in her hands. Adolphus knelt down before her. He took both of her hands in his own; he kissed her brow and hair and eyes; he spoke to her with that eloquence which even the simplest of men find when their heart is full of true love. He told her that he did not mean to carry her back to her husband, whom he could not respect, and whom she had married against his wishes; that she should not even return home if she did not wish it; that he would take her to Italy--anywhere. He tried every chord in her soul which he thought would vibrate under his touch, but for a long time it was all in vain.

"I cannot leave him!" she repeated over and over again, amid tears and sobs.

"But, for Heaven's sake, Emily!" cried the young man, "is it possible that such a folly can last so long? Is it possible that you still love this man?"

"Yes; yes! I love him; love him better than I ever did before!"

Adolphus started up and paced the room for some time. Then he came once more to Emily and said,

"I must believe it, since you say so; but Emily, upon your honor--for it is your honor now which is at stake--answer me this question: Are you as sure of his love?"

Emily's only answer was more violent sobs; and crying bitterly, she shook her head.

"Oh God!" said Adolphus bitterly; "have you fallen so low that you follow a man who no longer loves you? to whom you are a burden? who would give much to get rid of you again? Is this my proud sister? Well, well! I shall have to break my coat of arms, and to cast down my eyes before every wretched creature in the streets, and take it in silence if anybody calls me a coward!"

The young man beat his forehead with his hand, and tears of wrath and shame filled his eyes.

Emily started up from the sofa.

"Come!" she said hurriedly. "Come! You are right! I am a burden to him. He will be glad to get rid of me. Come!"

"God be thanked!" said Adolphus.

"Let us go this instant!" cried Emily, following up her resolve of the moment in her usual passionate manner. "I do not wish to see him again. I will write to him----"

"Yes, yes!" said Adolphus. "Here is a leaf from my pocket-book; pen and ink are here. Write to him, but just a few words."

Emily sat down at the table; but she had only written a few words when she broke out once more in violent weeping.

"Oh God! Oh God!" she said, dropping her pen; "I cannot do it."

"Let me do it," said Adolphus, taking the pen; "I will do it. In the meantime get your cloak; I shall be done in a moment."

While Emily was getting ready, Adolphus wrote rapidly a few lines. He was not generally very expert in such things, but now the words came, as it were, by themselves.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes!"

They went down. No one met them.

Adolphus gave the porter the keys to the rooms.

"Tell the gentleman, when he comes home, that the lady has gone out and will probably not come back again."

Adolphus had put Emily into a cab.

The cab drove up with unusual rapidity.

"Hem!" murmured the porter, as he hung the key to No. 36 again on its hook on the board; "I thought at once it would be so. Well, I cannot keep the people if they must needs run away."

CHAPTER X.

In William street, the real Faubourg St. Germain of the great city, Prince Waldenberg's head steward had bought shortly before New Year one of the largest and finest town mansions, the owner of which had recently died. The prince himself, who came soon afterwards from Grunwald, had superintended the inner arrangements, and pushed them so rapidly, in spite of the magnificent style in which they were carried on, that he could move in with his numerous household before the end of January. He took one wing for himself; the other wing remained unoccupied, as he did not wish to anticipate the desires and the good taste of his betrothed, who was to leave Grunwald with her mother in the beginning of the month and to come to Berlin. The upper story, however, was full of workmen and upholsterers. Here his mother, the princess, was to stay and to receive company.

He was gratified to see this part of the house also fully furnished and ready for her reception when he left the town on the first of March for the harbor of Stettin, where the steamer from St. Petersburg was expected in a day or two. At the same time his steward had engaged a suite of rooms at the Hotel de Russie, Unter den Linden, for his father, Count Malikowsky, who was expected from Munich.

It was the same evening on which the above mentioned events had taken place in the furnished lodgings in Broad street.

In one of the magnificent rooms of the Hotel Waldenberg, in a well-padded easy-chair, which had been moved quite close up to the bright fire burning in the fire-place, the Princess Letbus was reclining. The prince stood by her, bending his tall form down to her, as if to spare his mother even the trouble of speaking loud. As the fire was blazing up brighter, so that brilliant flashes of light fell upon the two figures, the group with its background of tall mirrors and costly pictures would have formed a superb subject for the hand of a modern Rembrandt. It would not have been easy to find two more striking representatives of frail womanly beauty and overpowering male strength than the forms of mother and son. While the latter, with his broad shoulders and long muscular arms, looked as if he were made to perform the labors of Hercules, the lady, sitting bent and drooping, and wrapped up in costly furs in spite of the blazing fire, might have suggested that even the weight of a fly could have been troublesome to her. Nor was there any resemblance to be traced in the features. Although the lips were languid and the cheeks faded; and although the brow of the lady, who could hardly be over forty, looked narrow between the sunken temples and beneath the dark hair with its numerous silver threads, the connoisseur could still see that these lips and these cheeks must have once been of surpassing beauty, and that the hair once upon a time furnished a frame of glorious curls around a blooming face of marvellous perfection. The large black eyes were very beautiful still, when she raised her long silken eye-lashes, which she ordinarily held drooping, and a deeper emotion brought back for a moment the fire which had shone in them in days gone by, with too great lavishness, perhaps, and fatal danger. There could have been no stronger contrast with this soft melting beauty than the low forehead of the prince, half hid under thick, crisp curly hair, which stood in perfect harmony with the coarse though energetic lines of his face. And yet in spite of this thorough difference in their physical natures, mother and son felt for each other a tender affection, which in the former almost rose to enthusiasm, and in the latter formed almost the only sentiment which acted as a counterpoise to his boundless pride, and the prevailing passion of his energetic but unintelligent mind.

"Good-by, dear mamma," said the prince, bending still lower, and carrying his mother's feeble

hand to his lips. "It is time for me to go, if I do not mean to be too late at the station; the train will be in."

"Adieu, my dear son," replied the princess. "Welcome your betrothed in my name. Tell her she will find a second mother here. Has the count consented to be present when the ladies come?"

"Yes, dear mamma."

"Well, then, my dear son, go with God; and may He bless your going out and coming in!"

She breathed a kiss on the brow of the prince, who then arose and noiselessly stepped on the thick carpet to the door.

The princess remained deeply imbedded in her easy-chair after her son had left her. There were evidently no pleasant thoughts passing through her mind at that moment, for her features became darker and darker, and the black eyes stared more fixedly than ever at the blaze in the fire-place, so that they shone like weird fires in the flickering light, and contrasted almost painfully with the pale face. At last a shudder seemed to pass over her and to rouse her; she rang the tiny silver bell that stood close by her on the little buhl table.

Immediately her first waiting-woman, Nadeska, entered the room.

Nadeska was a serf, who had grown up with the princess, and gradually made herself indispensable to her mistress by her pliant submission, and especially by her perfect skill in carrying on all kinds of intrigue. The princess had, in her somewhat stormy youth, required the assistance of such a person; and when she became afterwards a devotee, being sick in body and soul, she was not disposed to dismiss a servant who had always been near her person, and knew, therefore, all her secrets in their minutest detail. And, besides, Nadeska had always been faithful to her, and even made many a sacrifice for her. Only once, in one of the most serious difficulties to which the princess had been exposed by her evil inclinations, had she suspected her of having played false. But Nadeska had sworn by all the saints of the almanac; and as there was no evidence against her, her mistress had at last received her back again in her favor.

"What does your grace desire?" asked Nadeska, in a tone of voice which betrayed, through all its deep respectfulness, a certain familiarity.

"Have the candles lit in the rooms, Nadeska; and, you hear, let all the servants be called together to receive the ladies in the great hall. Whom will you give them for their personal attendants?"

"I thought Katinka, Mademoiselle Virginie; and, among the German girls, Mary and Louisa."

"Very well. You will receive the ladies yourself at the door, and show them to their rooms."

"Has your grace any other orders?"

"No, Nadeska."

The woman courtesied and went to the door. When she was quite near it, the princess called her back. She came again to her chair.

"Did you notice the count this morning, Nadeska?"

"Yes, your grace."

"Did you observe anything particular?"

"He looked more dandyish, and was rouged more than formerly."

"Nothing else?"

"No!"

"Nadeska, I am terribly afraid he is plotting against us."

"You have always feared so, your grace, every time the count has come to see you; and you are especially afraid now, because you were positive he would not accept the invitation of the prince."

"Well, does it not look like mockery that he is coming? What does he want here? But that is not all. He asked me yesterday again for an enormous sum of money."

"Which I hope you gave him."

"No, Nadeska; my patience is exhausted, as well as my exchequer. Michail tells me he cannot procure the money."

"He must get it. Consider how much is at stake!"

"But this tyranny is intolerable!" cried the princess, and her large black eyes shone in the reflex of the fire like burning coals.

Nadeska shrugged her shoulders.

"What can you do? You know the count hates you as much as the prince. If he does not indulge his hate, and if he does not utter the single word which would part mother and son forever, it is not from fear of the disgrace--when has the count ever minded disgrace?--but from fear of poverty, which he hates still more. Let him find out to-day that his silence is to be no longer profitable to him, and to-morrow he will speak!"

The princess knew that her confidante was perfectly right, and she groaned like a tortured prisoner, pressing her thin hands upon each other.

"Oh, Nadeska! Nadeska!" she whined; "why did the count come home at that unlucky moment! Why did you leave your post at that very hour, which was the decisive hour? If I had only had five minutes' warning the count would have found me alone, and with all the suspicions he might have, there would have been no more evidence then than at any previous time."

Nadeska was standing by the side of her mistress and a little back of her. This enabled her to make a scornful face before she replied,

"Your grace will pardon me, but *this* time there was evidence, even without the sudden coming of the count. It was certainly an ugly accident that the birth of the prince took place just nine months after a strange man had thrown his father out of the window of his own bedroom!"

The remembrance of this tragi-comic accident dispelled for a moment the melancholy of the princess. The half-ludicrous, half-horrible scenes of that mad night passed very clearly before her mind's eye, and the image of the hero of the night--the man of the people, whom she, the high-born princess, had honored so highly--reappeared to her as he had appeared then, the beau ideal of exuberant vigor and manhood.

"I wonder if he is still alive?" she asked, quite lost in her recollection.

"Who, your grace?" asked Nadeska, who knew perfectly well of whom her mistress was thinking.

The princess made no reply, and Nadeska began noiselessly to light the candles in all the rooms. Gradually a voluptuous twilight spread over the salon in which the princess was, which grew brighter and brighter without losing its soft characters, for all the lights were burning in rosy shades. This was the only light which the irritable nerves of the princess could endure; and even during the day, which generally only began for her in the afternoon, the windows were invariably darkened with rosy curtains. Scoffers maintained that the princess avoided a bright light merely because her faded features and injured complexion could not well be exposed to bright day-light.

Nadeska had just lighted the last candle when the maid on duty slipped into the room and whispered something into her ear, for no message was brought directly to the princess.

"What is it, Nadeska?" asked the latter.

"The count wishes to see you," replied her confidante.

The princess trembled.

"What can he want?" she said. "He ought to be at the railway station."

"He probably mistook the hour."

"Maybe! Let him come; but stay in the room."

Upon a nod from Nadeska the maid went out, after waiting humbly at the door. Immediately a gentleman entered rapidly.

He was a tall, slender man, dressed with exquisite taste, who looked at the first glance as if he might be twenty-five, and grew older and older the longer one looked at him, until at last one was disposed to think him sixty years old. This required, however, a very careful examination, as his mask was finished down to the minutest details. His black hair and brows, his curly beard, his snow-white teeth, his broad shoulders and full hips, were triumphs of art; and if his valet had been able to give a little lustre to his eyes, to calm the paralytic trembling of his hands, and to remove the bad, tiny wrinkles which lay like diminutive snakes around his eyes. Count Ladislaus Malikowsky might still have been a dangerous man for women, at least for a certain class. He had been irresistible when a young man; but now nothing was left him of his youth but an insatiate desire for enjoyment, and a reckless profligacy, which went hand in hand with the cool, calculating prudence of old age.

This disgusting caricature of youth approached the princess, kissed her hand courteously, and said, while sinking carefully into one of the arm-chairs before the fire:

"You wonder, Alexandrina, that I do not appear with the others----"

"Indeed I do."

"Do not think it a want of consideration for the betrothed of my son"--the count uttered the last word with a peculiar accent, and never without showing his false, white teeth--"on the contrary, it is the very interest I take in the welfare of the young couple which brings me here, I may say, out of breath. A discovery which I have made--but, Alexandrina, may I beg that that person may leave the room; my communication is strictly confidential," whispered the count, bending over towards the princess.

"Leave us alone, Nadeska; but stay in the ante-room," said the princess.

"Alexandrina," said the count, when Nadeska had gone into the adjoining room to place her ear to the key-hole, "you were not disposed yesterday to help me in my embarrassment. I have lost heavily at cards, and my exchequer is exhausted. Well I might have been offended by your refusal, especially considering the peculiar relations existing between us. But for my part I know how to do with little, and I should not like, for anything in the world, to be troublesome to you, or to my son [here the white teeth actually shone]. I am all the more sorry, therefore, to have to appeal once more to you, not for myself in this case, but for one who has stronger claims than I have."

"I am not so fortunate as to guess even the meaning of your words," replied the princess, sinking back into her chair with half-closed eyes.

"Perhaps," said the count, drawing from his coat-pocket a letter, which he opened slowly, as his hands were tightly encased in close-fitting kid-gloves--"perhaps this letter, which was handed me half an hour ago by a young man, may give you the desired explanation. Permit me to read it to you."

The count did not wait for an answer, but adjusted his gold eye-glasses on his nose, and read, glancing every now and then over the paper at the princess:

"Most noble count:--At a moment when his highness, Prince Waldenberg, is bringing home his fair betrothed, the Baroness Helen Grenwitz, to present her to his mother, the princess, it cannot be but desirable that all the members of the family should be united by that harmony without which even less important festivities are often very sadly interrupted. You yourself, most noble count, set an example, when you kindly dropped a veil over certain events which took place in the night, from the 21st to the 22d November, 1820, in the Letbus mansion in St. Petersburg. I should like to follow your example, if circumstances permitted. But I have no alternative, and see myself compelled to present my business personally to you, or to trouble certain persons with it, who have special reasons for keeping certain matters a secret from his highness the prince. I beg leave, therefore, to address myself to his excellency, Count Malikowsky, as the most suitable person for an arrangement, with the request that immediately fifty thousand roubles in silver be paid me by his bankers in town; if not, I shall see myself compelled to present my request in person to his highness the prince.

"In the meanwhile (which I beg to limit to eight days from to-day) I remain, etc., etc., etc.,

"Director Caspar Schmenckel, from Vienna.

"P.S.--If you should prefer to negotiate directly with me, I may be found every evening after 7 o'clock in the 'Dismal Hole,' Gertrude street. No. 15. The same."

"Well, what do you say, Alexandrina?" snarled the count, letting his eye-glass drop, and putting the letter back in his pocket.

"That the whole thing is a poor invention of yours."

"*Comment?*" exclaimed the count, with an astonishment which was not affected in this case.

"Do you really think, sir," said the princess, trembling with rage and secret fear, "there is a particle of truth in the whole thing, and that I would be caught in such an ill-made snare? That I do not see what it all means? That you have only thought of this impudent invention because I am unwilling to waste the rest of my fortune upon your mad dissipation?"

"Really, Alexandrina. Hearing you speak so, one might actually believe your conscience was as clean as my gloves. Why, you are blinded by anger, my dearest! Please observe, this letter contains things of which I have no idea, nor can have an idea, *e. g.*, the name of the good man in question. You know I have never been so happy as to hear yet whose blood flows in the veins of my son" (the count's teeth were glittering in a perfectly frightful manner); "and besides, you have an infallible means to ascertain the genuineness of this letter. Send for the writer! Twenty-one years will hardly have changed him so much that you should not recognize him."

"You think I am not going to do that? You are mistaken. I insist upon your bringing me this man of straw, with whom you wish to frighten me. Give me the letter."

"*Avec le plus grand plaisir!*" replied the count "There! But, Alexandrina, I hope the interview will take place in my presence, or I shall not be able to contain myself for jealousy."

"Devil!"

"Oh, my angel! Do you call the man so to whom you owe so much?"

"Owe so much? to you? I, who picked you up from the gutter?"

"But I have given you my good name."

"Good name! A name dragged through every mean vice, and every blackest sin----"

"And yet good enough for the friend and----"

"Have a care!"

"Why? The heavens are high, and the czar is afar off. But you are quite right in demanding that too much importance should not be attached to this connection. The whole world knows pretty well that, in some respects, no rank or position came amiss to you."

"That goes too far. I----"

"Keep quiet, *ma chère!* I hear a carriage coming. No doubt, our dear ones. We must give them an example of conjugal love."

* * * * *

It was perhaps two hours later. Helen was wandering restlessly up and down in her superb room. Nadeska had left her, and the baroness, fatigued by the journey, had retired to her chamber. Helen could not sleep. Her soul was oppressed by an indescribable anxiety, which was all the more painful because so vague. She felt in the midst of all the splendor by which she was surrounded like a child in an enchanted castle, where in every corner into which the light does not penetrate fully, and behind every silk curtain gently waving in a current of air, some unspeakable horror might be lurking. Was this the realization of her proudest hopes? She could not get rid of the impression made upon her by her reception in the salon of the princess. She still felt her icy-cold lips on her forehead; she still saw the repulsive, impudent smile of the count and the dark frown of the prince. It was an uncomfortable spirit that dwelt in this house. And she had surrendered herself to this spirit; she had sacrificed to it her freedom, her young girl's dreams, her future! And what was she to gain in return! High rank, great wealth--how little all that seemed to her at this moment! How willingly she would have given it all up for the mere shadow of the unspeakable happiness she had enjoyed last summer, when she stepped from her cool apartments into the golden morning light of the park, and slowly sauntered about between the bright flowers, expecting at every turn around a shrub or a bosquet to meet Oswald! How far, how irrecoverably far, this was lying behind her! As far as the paradise of her childish years, which no longing of ours, no return of spring, can bring back to us! She was quite surprised, herself, that all her thoughts were wandering back to-day to Grenwitz; that a thousand little scenes, which she thought she had long forgotten, came back to her now: a walk with Bruno and Oswald through the fields when the evening sun was hanging low, like a huge ball of fire, near the horizon, and bright lights were playing fitfully over the golden grain, while the larks were jubilant high above them in the deep blue of the heavens. And again, one hot afternoon, when she had fallen asleep on a bench in a shady avenue in the garden, tired by the monotonous humming and whizzing of insects, she awoke at the moment when somebody--it was Bruno--was placing a wreath of dark-red roses on her head, while a few steps from them, somebody else--it was Oswald--was peeping from behind a tree. And ever it was Bruno and Oswald who gave life to the idyllic picture--Elysian forms in Elysian fields. Oh, were not both dead? Helen had suffered indescribably when Oswald's elopement with Emily had become the common gossip of Grunwald; for only now, when a whole world parted him from her, she felt how dear this man had been to her. She tried, it is true, to master her passion and to be reconciled to her fate, which she had after all brought upon herself. But she caught herself only too frequently comparing her betrothed with Oswald, a comparison which invariably resulted in the conviction that the former lacked everything which had made Oswald so attractive: the graceful, elegant carriage, the bright and yet so tender eyes, the deep voice with its gentle music, the ever-changing and ever-interesting expression of his face. She had never felt as deeply as this evening how little her heart had to say to her betrothed. She recollected with a shudder that when the drums had beat in the streets, when the war of the excited multitude had been heard from afar, and the prince had started up to hasten to his post, she had felt only that this gave her a good opportunity to retire to her rooms.

And the poor girl's heart grew heavier and her eyes dimmer. She thought she was thoroughly wretched; she pitied herself that she was so alone and had no one to share her sorrow. But had she not prepared her isolation herself? Had she not repelled good people, who had come to her with open hearts, by her cool politeness? How she now wished for good old Miss Bear; for clever, cordial Sophie Roban! But was not Sophie in town? Might she not look up the friend whom she had so sadly neglected during the last days in Grunwald? Helen clung to this thought, while she hid her beautiful face in the silken cushions;--proud Helen! who looked as if she could go on her path, lonely, like a bright star, unconcerned about the doings of poor men far down in their

CHAPTER XI.

The excitement in town grew daily. In vain were troops massed by whole brigades, and held ready day and night in their barracks; in vain every assembly was dispersed with the bayonet, and the loudest criers arrested. Every day brought new and more serious disturbances. The assemblages of the people, especially on the large public squares near the palace, became more formidable; the threatening cries and whistlings and cheers of the masses were heard more frequently; and the soldiers, maddened by their incessant duties, could less and less resist the terribly provoking irritation. Paving stones on one side, and drawn swords on the other, encountered each other daily and hourly. The number of more or less seriously wounded persons which were carried to the public hospitals had become considerable. The last evening had been especially fearful. A detachment of cuirassiers of the guards, galloping forward with loose reins and drawn swords, had driven a large crowd of people into one of the smaller streets that opened upon the square near the palace, and at the other end a picket of dragoons prevented escape. There ensued a scene of fearful confusion and consternation in the crowd, thus hemmed in on both sides, while the men were forcing their horses pitilessly into the thickest, striking right and left with their heavy swords. The howl of anguish of women and children, mingled with the cries of rage of the men, and the curses of the soldiers, while imprecations and threats came down from the windows of the houses, where peaceful men were frightened at their quiet work. The commotion quickly spread further and further, and even in remote parts of the city groups were formed in the streets, when the report came that the imperial city on the Danube, generally looked upon as thoughtless and frivolous, had had a complete revolution, and that the oldest master of diplomacy, the cunning ruler of a whole generation of men, had at last been driven from the scene of his triumphs. A thousand cheers arose when the good news was proclaimed, and the great results which a month before would have been looked upon as impossible, were made known in detail. They asked one another why they should submit any longer to misrule and ill-treatment by a privileged caste, if it required but a firm resolve to establish freedom and equality among them.

While thus even the most indifferent were gradually drawn into the whirlpool of the revolution, one man sat in apathetic calmness in his room, unconcerned about what was going on around him.

When Oswald returned the night before, after wandering aimlessly through the crowded streets, and found his room empty and Emily's letter on the table, he had laughed out so loud that an old lady who had been living next door for twelve years was frightened out of her first slumbers. Then he had thrown himself on the sofa. He was too wearied and exhausted to be able to sleep. But after a while he started up with a cry. He had dreamt that he was walking with Emily arm in arm by the side of a precipice, whispering of love and caressing her hand, and suddenly she had fallen away from his side down into the deep, from rock to rock into fearful abysses, from which now cries for help and groans of anguish were rising up to him. Oswald tried in vain to shake off the horrible image; it had imprinted itself too deeply on his over-excited mind. He would have sought rest and oblivion in sleep, but he felt no longer tired. A thousand thoughts and images were chasing each other wildly through his head, and he found himself unable to lay the weird ghosts. He could only look on. Scenes of former days ran into events of recent date, and the fat gentleman who had been in their coupé from the last station suddenly changed into the public crier of his native town, whose big bell he had followed often as a boy.

Oswald made a violent effort to rouse himself. He rang the bell and ordered the fire to be rekindled. Then he sat down before the blaze and recalled the first evenings at Paris, as they were sitting in their modest lodgings in the fifth story of a house in the Quartier Latin before the fire-place, and congratulated each other that at last they were "at home." They had tried to make each other forget their troubles and anxieties by jesting and caressing, and forming a hundred bright plans for the future. But the golden, hopeful future had become a dark, comfortless present; the jests had ceased, and the caresses had become colder and colder. And then came evenings when Oswald came home out of sorts and out of temper, having in vain called upon publishers who "could not avail themselves of" his manuscripts; when he found Emily in tears, and had to tell himself that he and he only was responsible for these tears. Then came wretched scenes, when regret at their own folly sought concealment under reproaches and accusations of fickleness and heartlessness, and the tender little flower of love was ruthlessly trodden under foot in the fierce encounter. And yet it had always been Emily who, good-natured and light-hearted as she was, and full of tender love for Oswald, had offered her hand to make peace. "I do not reproach you," she had often said; "I should be perfectly happy if I could but see you happy.

But to see you unhappy, and unhappy through my fault, that makes me wretched." Had she spoken the truth? Oswald had then doubted it; now an inner voice told him that it was so, and that she would never have left him if he had not driven her from him. He took the letter he had found on the table and stared at the "Dear, dear Oswald!" written by Emily's trembling hand, and then marked out by another hand, and the two stains on the paper--the trace of tears she had wept at parting with him. Oswald dropped the letter into the fire, and groaned aloud as he saw how eagerly it seized the paper and consumed it, and the hot draft carried away the black ashes. So there was an end of that also.

And as he sat staring into the smouldering embers, his head resting in his hand, the fever spirits began their mad dance once more. Faces of marvellous beauty looked at him with large, loving eyes, and then changed in a moment into grinning negro grimaces; Rector Clemens and Professor Snellius came walking solemnly in grave converse and broke it off abruptly to dance a wild Mazurka; Melitta, Helen, and Emily floated by on a rosy cloud which changed into dismal rain, and the three witches of Macbeth were shaking their snaky locks. Thus the whole wearisome night passed away. When twilight began to peep in at the windows the spirits grew paler and paler. Oswald opened a window and let the cool morning air play around his heated temples. This refreshed him somewhat. But as the streets began to become more lively he closed the window again and let down the curtains; he wanted to see and to hear nothing of life, for he hated life.

Emily's escape had hardly been noticed in the house. The only one who knew more about it, the porter, felt no disposition to speak about it, as he was not quite sure of his own share in the matter. It was thought, therefore, that the lady had not been the gentleman's wife, as was first believed, but his sister, and that the other gentleman who had come for her had been her husband. The times, moreover, were too eventful to leave much room for such small matters.

Such were Mrs. Captain Black's ideas when she called next day at noon on Oswald, after the custom of the house. For it was the lady's notion that she ought to inquire in person after the welfare and the wishes of those of her guests who seemed to propose staying there for some time. This was partly a matter of courtesy with her, and partly prompted by her good old heart. She had a twofold interest in Oswald. The young man's appearance, the expression of his eyes, and the tone of his voice, had struck her, and reminded her wonderfully of long by-gone days, and of a person whom she had loved tenderly and whose loss she had never yet been able to forget. Then the young man came direct from France, from where that unfortunate young friend had also come, and where she had probably died. It is true the poor girl had never given a sign of life, and it was highly improbable therefore that she was still alive, but that did not keep Mrs. Black from feeling glad whenever a Frenchman came to her house, as it looked like another chance to hear something of the poor girl.

The good old lady was, therefore, not a little astonished and grieved when she saw how pale and haggard Oswald looked this morning, a mere shadow of the stately young man of last night. He had had a bad night to be sure. It must have been a very bad night to pull down a young man so grievously. Should she send for the doctor? No? But a cup of strong beef tea with an egg stirred in? *Qu'en dites-vous, Monsieur?* The good old lady tripped away to attend to the beef tea herself, as no one else could make it as well. And while she was busy about it she shook her gray head again and again, because Monsieur Oswald--the stranger had given that name--spoke German so very well, and looked so very sick and unhappy, and yet had some resemblance to the lost one. Her eyes filled with tears and she decided to ask him about the cause of his grief at the risk of being considered indiscreet.

With this desire she entered Oswald's room once more and found the young man in the same position in which she had left him. He was sitting on the sofa, his arms crossed on his bosom, his eyes staring fixedly at an old French engraving, in which Andromeda was represented chained to the rock and guarded by a dragon, while Perseus was coming through the air to her rescue, with the gorgon's head in his hand. He had noticed the picture in the early twilight, and long tried to find out in the imperfect light what it could mean, till at last, as day broke, he found it out. The engraving was extravagant, as most pictures of that epoch. Andromeda was rather too small, a mere child in comparison with the very tall and slender hero, who was just putting one foot on the rock and preparing to strike a blow at the monster, which opened its huge mouth wide and stared at him with basilisk eyes. Still, it was not without merit in the conception, nor without delicacy in the execution. The spark of hope which appeared in the girl's eyes and the whole of her childish, beautiful features, and the heroic indignation in the face of the youth, were well rendered; while the landscape--a lonely rock in the boundless ocean, with the sun rising above the horizon and the first rays trembling on the waves up to the rock--showed something of Claude Lorraine's cheerful vigor and grandeur. Oswald had looked at the picture again and again with a feeling of painful sadness. The beautiful meaning of the ancient myth--that bold courage carries the happy possessor with god-like wings over land and sea, that the hero overcomes danger by a mere glance, and finally that for him alone there blooms the sweet flower of love and beauty on the rude rock in the vast inhospitable ocean of life--all this had reminded the dreamer painfully of what he also had already called his own of love and beauty; but only, alas! to lose it in a short time and forever, forever!

Even now--when Mrs. Black at his request took a seat on the sofa, and told him all she knew about the excitement in the city, the bloody scenes which had taken place last night quite near by, in Brother street, the large assemblies of people Unter den Linden, and the sad times in

which everything seemed to be turned upside down--even now Oswald could not take his eyes from the picture. The old lady noticed it and said:

"Yes! It was just so twenty-five years ago! It used to belong to a countryman of yours, a dear old gentleman who has lived here many years, and whom I loved like a brother. The picture is here, but he----"

She sighed so grievously that Oswald, whom his own sorrow had not made insensible to the sorrows of others, asked her kindly:

"He died, the old gentleman, did he?"

"I do not know," replied the old lady. "He went into the wide world in order to save a girl whom I had brought up as my own child; a sweet, lovely creature; but he did not come back, and she did not come back, and I grieve over my loss, although it is now nearly twenty-five years old. Have you, monsieur--ah! it is foolish in me to ask, but after all nothing is impossible in this world--have you, monsieur, ever heard anything of a Mademoiselle Marie Montbert and a Monsieur d'Estein?"

The old lady had asked the question so often, and received so often nothing but a curt: *Non madame!* in reply, that she scarcely noticed Oswald's regretful shake of the head, and continued with animation:

"Ah, I knew it was so! No one ever heard of them. The world is so large, and there are so many people in it! And in this great world and this multitude of people how soon are two unhappy beings forgotten!"

The manner of the old lady was, with all her ingenuousness, so refined and dignified; the deep-sunk eyes, still full of expression, looked so gentle and kind; and her voice had such a true, good sound, that Oswald felt strangely moved, and begged her with cordial warmth to tell him something more about the two persons whose unhappy fate she deplored so painfully after so long a time. Mrs. Black smoothed her black-silk apron, and told him in simple words a simple, touching story.

Her husband, a brave but wild and reckless man, had compelled her for years before he lost his life on the battle-field of Waterloo to provide for her own support. She had taken lodgings in the rear part of the building which she now owned, and rented out the larger part of the rooms to single gentlemen. She had always tried to keep up pleasant relations with her "foster-children," but with none of them had she been on as friendly a footing as with a certain Monsieur d'Estein, a descendant of French refugees, who supported himself by giving lessons in the tongue of his ancestors. Monsieur d'Estein was an old bachelor of kind heart but very eccentric, who had fallen out with the whole world, and yet shared his last mouthful of bread with any one who asked him for it. He had his own ideas about everything, and brooded constantly over plans how to overthrow the whole world, while he led all the time a most simple, harmless life.

Monsieur d'Estein had been living with her several years and had become a warm friend of hers, who listened patiently to all her complaints about hard times and domestic troubles, when one fine day a Colonel Montbert, of the French army, came and called on his relation, Monsieur d'Estein. The colonel was under orders for Russia--it was in 1812--and he was accompanied by a little daughter of eight, a lovely child, whom the father loved tenderly, and perhaps all the more tenderly as she stood perfectly alone in the world, and had no one on earth to love and protect her except her father. Until now she had followed the colonel in all his campaigns, but the brave old soldier trembled at the idea of exposing his only treasure to the dangers of a winter campaign, the results of which he might even then have anticipated. As he had been in Berlin in 1807, and had then made Monsieur d'Estein's acquaintance, he came now once more to ask him to take care of Marie till he returned; and if he should not return, there were the family papers, and a large sum of money in gold and bills of exchange; and the friends looked at each other and shook hands. The colonel kissed his little girl, promised to bring her a sleigh with two reindeer from Russia, kissed her once more, cried: *Adieu, ma chère! Adieu, ma petite!* mounted his horse and was gone.

Colonel Montbert never fulfilled his promise about the sleigh and the reindeer. His little girl waited and waited for the sleigh and the father till she was a tall young lady, but sleigh and father never came.

Marie had grown up a tall, fair girl, so beautiful that the whole neighborhood called her, unanimously, pretty Marie. She was a good girl too, with a good heart, that could be merry with the joyous and weep with the sorrowful. Her only fault was an over-active imagination, a fondness of strange, extraordinary things--an inheritance from her father, the French colonel of cavalry, whose adventurous, fantastic disposition Monsieur d'Estein said approached very near to insanity.

This peculiarity of the girl caused much anxiety to Monsieur d'Estein and to Mrs. Black, but especially to the former, whose plain, straight-forward mind was utterly averse to everything irrational or fantastic. "The girl ought to have no time for dreams," he used to say; "she must learn to think and to act. She ought to have a counterpoise to her gay dream-world in the prosaic

reality of life. No man ought to live in castles in the air." According to these views he sketched out a plan of education for little Marie, with which Mrs. Black never could fully agree, in spite of the unbounded respect she had for Monsieur d'Estain's intelligence and character. Marie was to dress in the simplest way, like the children of humble mechanics; she was to learn every kind of domestic labor: and when she was grown up Monsieur d'Estain carried his oddity so far that he sent her to a respectable milliner. "One could never know but that it might become useful to her in after life." Mrs. Black shook her head, but she could not be angry at the old gentleman's odd notions when she saw how well he meant it, and especially how successful he was. For the girl grew brighter and fairer every day, and looked, in her simple calico dress and her plain straw bonnet, as refined and as distinguished as the greatest lady in the land.

Mrs. Black was proud of the girl. She had never had any children of her own, but she felt as if she could never have loved one of her own better. And was she not the child's mother? Had she not watched over her in health, and nursed her in sickness? And was the girl not as fondly attached to her as a daughter could be to a mother? Mrs. Black was almost jealous of this love (she had had so little love in her life) and did not like it that Marie had not evidently more confidence in her than in her adopted father. But the latter was, for his part, not less jealous. Mrs. Black even sometimes suspected that monsieur was cherishing very different feelings for his beautiful niece, as he called her, from those of an uncle for his niece, and that his system of education which confined Marie very strictly to the house, might have been prompted by other than pedagogic considerations. Monsieur was at that time only forty years old. It was the mere shadow of a suspicion, but subsequent events gave it strength.

One evening--it was a Sunday--monsieur returned from his promenade with Marie very much out of temper. Marie also looked excited, and showed traces of tears in her beautiful eyes. She went to bed as soon as supper was over, and Mrs. Black begged monsieur to tell her what had happened, till he at last consented.

Marie and he had been walking up and down in the long avenues of the public park, chatting cozily with each other, and had then gone into one of the public gardens, there to order some refreshments for Marie and himself. They had just taken their seats at a table when two gentlemen, who had before been sitting at a distance, had come and taken seats near them. Monsieur, who turned his back to them, had not noticed them, and only became aware of their presence when he saw Marie, who was talking to him, cast half-curious, half-embarrassed glances at somebody behind him. He turned round to see what was the matter. At the same moment one of the gentlemen approached their table. He was a remarkably handsome man--monsieur could not deny that, in spite of his irritation--a lofty, noble figure, a superb head, a fine though somewhat exhausted face, large deep-blue eyes, with a haughty and yet kindly expression. He lifted his hat and in very good French--monsieur and Marie had as usual conversed in French--he asked leave for himself and his companion to join their company. Monsieur was the most courteous man in the world, but he said there had been something in the manner of the distinguished stranger which had filled him instantly with a violent aversion against him, and he had therefore replied dryly and curtly that he and mademoiselle preferred remaining alone. Thereupon a slight altercation between him and the stranger had taken place, which ended in his rising and leaving the garden with Marie, pursued by the scornful laugh of the two gentlemen. From that evening Marie showed a decided change in her whole manner. Formerly gay and cheerful, she now hung her head, turned pale and red by turns, was at one time immoderately merry and at another time wretchedly sad. Neither Mrs. Black nor monsieur knew what to make of it. Misfortune would have it that monsieur must be taken sick just then, so that Mrs. Black had to spend nearly her whole time in his room nursing him, and Marie consequently was left much to herself. Formerly monsieur had regularly gone for her to the place where she learnt her profession; now she had to come home alone. What happened to her during these days, into what snares she had fallen, Mrs. Black never found out. But one morning, when she came to wake the poor girl, she found the room empty, and a little note on the table, in which the unfortunate child stated that irresistible reasons, which she could not now explain, compelled her to leave town; that she begged her benefactors with tears in her eyes to forgive her if she rewarded them for their great love with apparent ingratitude, and that she hoped to God the day would come, and come soon, on which all this sorrow would be changed into joy.

That day had never come, but the poor lady had suffered more and more. Monsieur had nearly lost his senses when he heard of Marie's escape, and had sworn a fearful oath that he would not rest an hour till he had rescued Marie from her miserable seducer and personally avenged himself on the man. Monsieur was the man to keep his word. The little weakly body harbored an energetic soul. This became evident now, when a ruthless hand had cruelly destroyed the happiness of his life. For Mrs. Black could now no longer doubt that the strange man had loved the lost one with all that intense passionateness which is so often found in such reserved, eccentric characters. He carried on his search with restless activity. Success crowned his efforts. He found traces. Where they led him? He said nothing about it, but observed the strictest silence upon the whole affair, even to his friend, Mrs. Black. He packed his trunks as if for a long journey, tore himself from her, promising to send her news in a week--and now twenty-five years had passed, and Mrs. Black was still waiting for a fulfilment of that promise....

The old lady had so completely abandoned herself to her own recollections that she had forgotten her first intention to inquire after Oswald's troubles. She was only reminded of this when she noticed how pale the young stranger's face had become during her recital.

"But you are really worse than I thought, dear sir," she said. "Your hand is burning hot, and--pardon an old lady--your forehead also is hot. Let me send for my physician!"

"I beg you will not do it," said Oswald, making a violent effort. "I must tell you: I have not slept a moment all last night, probably from over-fatigue during my long journey."

"Then you ought at least to lie down for a few hours," begged the old lady. "I know very well young people cannot do without sleep like us old people."

"I mean to do it," replied Oswald, as Mrs. Black rose. "You'll see a few hours' sleep will set it all right again."

"God grant it!" said the old lady, cordially pressing Oswald's hand once more. "Pray, pray, no ceremony! I will inquire again a few hours hence."

What had he been told just now? At the very first words of the old lady he had no longer doubted that this was the continuation of the story which mother Claus had told him in Grenwitz that evening when he and Timm had sought shelter in her hut. All the details agreed. Just as the old lady had described the strange gentleman, the portrait of Baron Harald looked now, put of its broad gold frame; and had not the beautiful poor girl, whom he had so sadly ill-treated, borne the name of Marie d'Estein, like the adopted daughter of Monsieur d'Estein?

But that was not the reason why his blood froze in his veins and his limbs shook as in violent fever. It was another terrible fear, which rose with demoniac power from the lowest depths of his soul. Was it the work of fever spirits--was it incipient insanity--which changed in his inflamed imagination Monsieur d'Estein, the eccentric teacher of languages, into his father, the strange old man? and the beautiful daughter of the French colonel into the lovely young woman with the sweet eyes, around whose knees he once used to play during bright summer mornings in the cosy garden behind the town wall, while the white butterflies were fluttering about the blue larkspur?

And mad thoughts chased each other once more in wild haste. Old, long forgotten thoughts awoke and answered clearly from long ago; strange doubts, that had troubled him as a boy and as a youth, came again, and said: There is the solution! So much that he had never been able to explain in his life became of a sudden quite clear to him. It had not been pure fancy, then, which made Mother Claus see in his face continually the features of Baron Oscar, "who fell with Wodan;" nor mere humor, when Timm declared, "You have the very face of the Grenwitz barons!"

Oswald darted up and went to the mirror. A deadly pale face with strange, wild eyes stared at him there. "See there! The evil spirit not laid yet! It has not had victims enough yet! Must there be many more sacrifices? Can a vampire die of his own venomous glance? A bullet? Eh! a bullet, nicely driven in at the temples--that might make an end to the gruesome story! But what will bring death really--a death from which the soul can never awake again?"

Oswald uttered a fierce cry. A hand seized his arm, and over the shoulder of his image in the mirror he saw a distorted face grinning at him.

"Oho!" said Albert Timm. "Are you going on the stage, dottore, that you stand before the looking-glass and rehearse monologues which might frighten an honest man out of his wits? Let me look at you in the light? Upon my word, you have a strange look about you. Little Emily, eh? You ought to be glad she is gone, before she made you a mere shadow of your shadow! You see, I know everything; and I know a good deal more; and I am going to tell you something that will make you wish to live again, you melancholy Prince of Denmark! But before I tell you, send for a bottle of port wine or something; I am as dry as a salted cod this morning."

Mr. Timm, as usual, did not wait for Oswald's answer, but rang the bell and ordered port wine and caviare. "None in the house? Go to the Dismal Hole, just around the corner, my man, quite near by. Give Mr. Albert Timm's respects to Mrs. Rose Pape, and come back in a trice, curly-headed youth!"

Mr. Timm's statement, that he had taken nothing that morning, was evidently untrue. He diffused a remarkable smell of liquor around him; his face was very red, and his eyes less bright than usual. Possibly he might have sat up all night; his whole appearance made it probable. His linen was less tidy than ordinarily, and the brown overcoat had evidently made the acquaintance of numerous whitewashed walls and stained tables. Mr. Timm's circumstances had not improved since Oswald had seen him last.

He did not deny it; on the contrary he raised, unasked, the veil from the unattractive picture of the last months.

"Ill-luck has pursued me step by step," he said, throwing himself on the sofa and stretching his legs. "At the very time when I made the discovery which I am going to tell you as soon as the wine comes, you disappeared from Grunwald, leaving not a trace. The next day the police caught us at faro, and--I was banker--confiscated all I had--several hundred dollars--which I needed sorely, since on the following day a bill of mine became due. I could not pay it, of course. The horrid manichean, to whom I owed the money, had me put in prison, and there I have been till about a week ago. How I got out? My landlord, the old scamp, at last bethought himself of going to Moses and threatening him with certain stories--well, never mind that! Here I am, a free man

once more, and here comes the wine and the oysters. Come, Oswald, fill your glass! Hurrah for the brave! Man! I tell you I am beside myself at having found you out so soon. I was prepared for a long hunt. And now I am going to tell you a story that will make you jump out of your skin. Yes, out of you skin! For you will have to lay aside the whole miserable creature you are now and put on an entirely new man, whom I have made ready for you, without any merit or claim of your own, but from pure friendship on my part. And now another glass and I'll begin!" Mr. Timm pushed the plate with the oyster-shells, which he had quickly piled up, from him, and swallowed a full glass; filled it again, drew a bundle of papers from his pocket, laid them on the table before him, leaned his head on both arms, and with a loud hearty laugh at Oswald, he said:

"What will you give me, *mon cher*, if I change you from a poor fellow into the son and heir of a great baron, with a rental of ten or twelve thousand a year? But I see you are already nearly overcome. I do not mean to harass you any longer. Listen!"

There are moments in our soul's life when the overwrought brain looks upon the most extraordinary, the most fantastic events, as ordinary and quite natural occurrences. Thus it was now with Oswald. That Timm brought him the confirmation of his suspicions, that he proved to him in black and white that he had not dreamt, that he transformed a wild fancy into a legal, well-authenticated document--all this appeared quite natural to Oswald. There were Marie Montbert's family papers. Her real name was that of her mother, Marie Herzog, who had found her way to Paris, there to meet Colonel Montbert. And Oswald knew that his mother's family name was Herzog. There was a copy of the church-register, obtained by Timm's indefatigable activity and mysterious connections, which proved the marriage performed at St. Mary's between M. d'Estein *alias* Stein, and Marie Elizabeth Herzog. And then the baptismal certificate: On the 22 December, 1823, a son was born unto Amadeus Stein and his wedded wife, Marie Herzog, who in holy baptism received the name of Oswald. There were the letters which Baron Harald had written to Marie during his residence in town in the spring of 1823; there Marie's letters to the baron; a letter written by M. d'Estein to Marie during the summer of the same year, in which he tells her that he has at last discovered her hiding-place at Grenwitz, and beseeches her by the salvation of her soul, to follow him when all shall be prepared for her flight, etc.

"You see," said Timm, "it is all right and complete, and you can trace every thread of this curiously complicated affair from beginning to end. The identity of the persons can be established by documents and by witnesses alike, for the evidence of Rose Pape alone would upset every argument on the adversary's side. She knew your mother and was present at your birth and at your baptism. The woman, it is true, is not willing just now to appear in court and to testify to facts which make her appear in an unfavorable light; but money makes the devil dance, and Mrs. Rose will speak out if she is well paid. That is no trouble, therefore. My only fear is that you have not energy enough for such a thing. I must tell you frankly, I thought at first it might not be wise to tell you anything at all about it, you have such very absurd notions about many things, and so I dropped the old baroness a hint or two, but she did not receive them very graciously, and----"

"In a word," said Oswald, and he turned still paler than he had been before, "you wished to sell your discovery to the baroness, and she did not pay you the price you demanded."

"Hear! hear!" said Albert, with sincere admiration. "You develop there a talent for business which I did not expect. Well, take it for granted it was as you guess; that will not prevent you from making proper use of your claims. But, dearest *periculum in mora!* if you wish to become not only the nephew of the baroness but also her son-in-law, you must make haste. Things have come about which I foretold you last winter. Helen is engaged to Prince Waldenberg, and the engagement is to be made public in a few days here in town. Anna Maria arrived last night, and stays at Prince Waldenberg's house with the Princess Letbus, the mother of his highness. Now I have already dug a superb mine underground, in order to create a useful confusion in the enemy's camp, and we can begin the attack. I am as sure as of my own life that Helen has no fancy for the prince, and that she would say No! even at the last moment, if she knew that you are her cousin, and that she can recover the fortune she loses by the discovery, by marrying you. But she will not believe anybody who would tell her of the whole affair, except one man, and that man is--yourself. Oswald, consider the stake! One single bold step, and the girl whom you love--don't deny it!--whom you love madly, is yours. A fortune such as you never dreamt of is yours. You will have at once all that others spend a lifetime to gain; all that they would unhesitatingly risk their very life for! Surprise works wonders! Drive to the prince's house in William street; ask to see the young baroness; tell her, if it must be, in her mother's presence, not that you want to marry her--for that will come as a matter of course--but that you have made this discovery under such and such peculiar circumstances; and I will eat my own head if the girl does not fall upon your neck and let the prince go when he chooses."

Albert was prepared to see Oswald at first reject this adventurous plan altogether; for, suitable as it was for a man of Timm's character, and capable as he was of carrying it out boldly, he knew Oswald's hesitating disposition. His most sanguine hope was to find it accepted after a long discussion. Great therefore was his joyful surprise when Oswald, who had not said a word during the whole long explanation, now rose and said:

"You are right. There is but one way. I must go myself, and at once."

"Brother!" cried Timm, jumping up and enthusiastically embracing Oswald; "that is the most sensible word you ever spoke in your life."

Oswald shook himself free, with a shudder which Timm did not notice in his great excitement.

"Leave me alone now!" he said. "You see how very much I am surprised and shocked by your revelation. I must collect myself for the interview."

"For Heaven's sake; only no new scruples!" cried Timm. "Fresh fish is good fish! I am afraid, if I leave you, you will discover a thousand Buts!"

"I promise you upon my word I will go to her within an hour. I suppose you can leave me the papers? They might be necessary if the baroness makes opposition."

Timm cast a malignant, suspicious glance at Oswald. He did not like to give up the papers. If Oswald should play false; if--but there was not time to consider long; and there was something in Oswald's manner which made him shrink from making objections, a decisive firmness in the firmly-closed pale lips, a dismal fire in his large eyes. Timm had never seen him thus. It was no longer the old, fickle Oswald Stein; it was Baron Harald's son who was standing before him.

"Well," he said, "do as you please. I see you are determined to go the whole length! But, Oswald, if the enterprise succeeds, and I cannot doubt now but it must succeed, do not forget the man who has furnished you the means."

"You may be sure," said Oswald, with a strange smile, "that, as far as material advantages are concerned, you shall not fare worse in the matter than myself."

This promise moved the generous Timm so deeply that he was much inclined to embrace Oswald once more. But the latter made a gesture which looked not unlike disgust, but which failed to have any effect upon Timm. He only laughed, and said: "Well, I see you are learning your part. I will not detain you any longer. Good-by, Oswald! Play your part well. It is three o'clock now. At four I will come again and inquire how you have succeeded. Adieu till then."

Oswald paced the room slowly after Timm had left him. Then he went up to the engraving, and looked at it long and anxiously. "It is too late!" he murmured. "I cannot save her; I cannot set her free from the rock to which fate has chained her. But I will see her once more, and clear my memory of the disgrace with which this blackguard, no doubt, has loaded me. She shall not believe that I could use such unfair means. Who knows how far this man has used my name in order to attain his end."

He stepped to the table and arranged and folded up the papers. Then he began to dress himself for the proposed interview. It took him some time. He felt as if he were benumbed in all his limbs, and had to sit down more than once to let an attack of vertigo pass off. At last he was ready. He put the papers in his pocket and left the room.

CHAPTER XII.

At the same time a carriage drove rapidly through the deserted street in which Doctor Braun lived, and many faces appeared at the windows to see what it was. It was an elegant coach, with two high-bred horses, and a large coat-of-arms on the doors. On the box, by the side of the coachman, a servant in gorgeous livery was seated. The coach stopped before Doctor Braun's house, the servant jumped down to open the door, and a young lady stepped out. She walked rapidly through the little garden up to the door.

"Is Mrs. Braun at home?"

"I do not know," replied the maid, casting a shy glance at the velvet cloak and the charming white bonnet of the lady. "I will see."

"You need not go," said Sophie, who suddenly appeared, adorned with a long kitchen apron; "here I am."

With these words she hastened with open arms towards the lady, who, for her part, drew back the white veil and flew into her arms.

"Dearest Helen!"

"Dearest Sophie!"

Sophie drew her friend into the room, helped her to unbutton her cloak with trembling hands,

took off her bonnet, and seizing her with both hands, she said:

"Well, now let me look at you in broad day-light, you darling; beautiful as usual, wondrously beautiful! But you look pale and haggard, it seems to me. Can I do anything for you? You see I have been at work in the kitchen."

Helen smiled. It was a melancholy smile, which made her dark eyes look still darker.

"I thank you, Sophie! I only wished to refresh myself by seeing you. Ah! you do not know how I have longed for you!"

Sophie was deeply touched by this unusual expression of Helen's feelings. But she was even more deeply touched by the sad tone of voice in which Helen said she had longed to see her. Such a confession, which the boarder at Miss Bear's institute would have been too proud ever to have made, was still stranger in the betrothed of Prince Waldenberg.

All this passed through Sophie's mind while she held Helen's hands in her own and looked deeper and deeper into her dark eyes.

"Poor Helen!" The words escaped her; she hardly knew what she was saying.

But the low, sympathetic words awakened in Helen's heart all the painful feelings which had kept her from sleeping during the night, so that she scarcely had more than an hour's rest near morning. Pity for herself, such as she had never known before, overcame her, tears filled her eyes, and she threw herself into Sophie's arms, hiding her beautiful pale face on her friend's bosom.

"For Heaven's sake, dearest Helen! what is the matter?" said Sophie, now seriously concerned. "I have never seen you so; I never thought I should see you so; and that now, when I thought your whole life was full of joy and glory!"

"Did you really think so?" asked Helen, raising herself and looking at Sophie fixedly with her large sorrowful eyes.

Sophie cast down her own before this look. She did not wish to say No; and she was too honest to say Yes. But she never hesitated long. Now or never was the moment to tell Helen all she had had on her heart for so long a time.

"Helen!" she said, looking up frankly and calmly with her deep blue eyes; "I cannot feign and will not feign for any one, and least of all for you whom I love dearly. Come, sweetheart, sit down by me on the sofa here, and let us talk like two sisters; and let us be sisters, if never again, at least for this hour. If you did not wish me to speak candidly to you, I think you would have hardly come to me, when you have so many brighter and greater friends. Am I right?"

"Go on!" said Helen, as if it were comfort and consolation merely to hear the voice of her friend.

"You ask me," continued Sophie, gathering courage as she spoke, "whether I really thought you were happy. I do not. You do not look like a happy woman. Your beautiful, pale face says No, even if your tongue should say Yes. I have often read in your face--I have read there long, long stories of which your lips did not say a word, and I will tell you what I read. Shall I do it?"

"Go on!" said Helen.

"I read on your brow that your mind is not satisfied with anything except what is great and extraordinary, and even not always with that; and I have read in your wondrously-beautiful eyes that your heart longs for love as much as human heart can wish for it. Thus, there has always been a struggle between your mind and your heart. You wish to rule and to love at the same time, and that cannot be done. Helen! love, true love--and there is no other love--must be humble; it bears all things and believes all things; it wants only to be one with the person loved, one in joy and one in sorrow. Look, sweetheart! such love has fallen to my share, and therefore I know what I say. Franz and I have but one will: he wants to do what is right, and so do I; and even if our views ever should be apart, our hearts are always united. All joys are doubly great, and all sorrows are diminished by half. I felt that when my dear papa died. What would have become of me if Franz had not been there?"

"I had no one when my father died!" Helen said, sadly.

"I know it, darling; and often, when I thought how lonely you were, and how you did not have a soul to whom you could pour out your grief, I have thrown myself on Franz's bosom, who many a time could not imagine what brought me to him so suddenly and so passionately. You stand alone, even now when you are on the point of being married; and what is a thousand times worse, you are quite sure in your heart that it will always be so--that your husband will never be your friend, your brother, your beloved, before whom your soul lies open and clear, like a crystal-clear mountain lake, into which the sun looks brightly down to the very bottom."

"Never! never!" whispered Helen.

"I knew it," said Sophie, sadly; "but, Helen, if it is bad enough for you to marry the prince without loving him, it is still worse to become his wife while you are cherishing in your heart the image of another man."

Deep blushes flew over Helen's face as Sophie said these words in a firm voice, and at the same time looked at her so gravely and reproachfully with her large blue eyes.

"No, darling; don't be ashamed of having loved him. That is not what I blame you for. He is a man of uncommon attraction, and gifted by nature with all that can charm woman. I do not even blame you for loving him still. Who can cast aside true love so promptly? But, Helen, since it is so, do not marry the prince! You ought not to do it from respect for yourself, from respect for him, if he deserves respect."

"It is too late!" said Helen, hiding her face in her hands.

"Never too late!" exclaimed Sophie, passionately, and showing how deeply her heart was moved. "It is never too late to confess a mistake which must make you and him unspeakably unhappy. Do not misunderstand me, Helen! I do not speak in favor of that man who, if he ever really deserved your love, has long since forfeited all claim to it. I never was a friend of his; his so-called brilliant qualities never attracted me, because they were not founded upon goodness of heart; and, in my eyes, good old Bemperlein stands immeasurably higher than Oswald Stein. But, because he is not worthy of you, must you therefore marry a man for whom your heart feels nothing, however estimable he may otherwise be? Are there no other men in the world but Oswald and the prince? Oh, Helen! I wish I had the tongue of angels to touch your heart, so that you might humbly bow before the truth, and esteem all the splendor of the world as nothing in comparison with the happiness you would find in being true to yourself!"

Helen shuddered as if really one of the heavenly hosts were speaking to her.

"Oh, you are so good!" she said. "I wish I were like you."

"You can be so, if you but choose."

"But how can I escape? I have pledged my word! I cannot take it back!"

"Speak openly to the prince!" said Sophie, who thought such a remedy quite simple and natural.

"Rather die!" murmured Helen.

At that moment there came a knock at the door. The servant appeared with a note in his hand.

"A special messenger, ma'am, on horseback, with a note from the baroness."

Helen seized the note hastily.

"From mamma!"

She cast a glance at it and trembled.

"What is it, Helen?"

"Mamma has just heard from Grenwitz, that brother has been taken very ill. She must go back immediately!"

"Poor girl!" said Sophie. "How pale and frightened you look! Shall I go with you?"

"No, no!" said Helen. "You stay! I must go alone. Good-by, dearest Sophie! Good-by!"

Helen tore herself from Sophie's arms.

Sophie accompanied her to the carriage. She held her friend's hand firmly in her own, and said: "Let me hear from you, Helen! And, Helen, whatever you do, follow the voice of your warm heart; it is a better counsellor than your cold intellect!"

"I will do so," said Helen, already in the carriage; "you may rely upon it, I will do so. Good-by!"

The servant closed the door; the carriage dashed off. Sophie followed it with her eyes till it had turned the nearest corner, then she went slowly back to the house, her lovely face bent thoughtfully to the ground.

CHAPTER XIII.

In a room in the second story of the Hotel de Russie, Under the Lindens, Berger was closeted that same afternoon with Director Schmenckel. They had had a long interview, and Mr. Schmenckel was just rising to say good-by. Berger rose likewise.

"You know exactly what you have to say?"

"I should think so," replied Mr. Schmenckel, and cleared his throat.

"Had we better go over it once more?"

"Might do no harm," replied Mr. Schmenckel.

"You will say, then, that you are sorry to have caused the princess so much trouble. You, yourself, would never have thought of it; but that man--how did you call him?"

"Timm!"

"---had led you on! Now you had found out that such proceedings were not worthy of an honest man, and, that you promised the princess, upon your honor, never to let another word of that whole affair escape your lips."

"My lips!" repeated Mr. Schmenckel, like a school-boy who repeats a lesson the teacher tells him to say after him.

"And as for that man, Timm, you will tell the princess not to trouble herself about him; but, if he should come and ask for money, to have him turned out of the house by the servants. As you do not intend to support him in any way, he cannot expect to make much out of the story. Have you got it all well in your head now?"

"I think it will do," said Mr. Schmenckel, meditatively.

"And, above all, you will accept no money from the princess, neither much nor little. Don't forget that; do you hear?"

"All right!" said the director, putting his hat on his head with a great show of resolution. "Adieu, professor!"

"Adieu!" said Berger, shaking hands. "Go and become once more the honest, upright man you have been heretofore."

"And now," said Berger to himself, when the door had closed after Schmenckel; "now the moment has come to pay an old debt." He went to a bureau and took from a drawer a small box of ebony and a medallion. Then he left the room and went down the passage till he came to a door, before which he stopped, listening for a moment. The key was in the key-hole. Berger noiselessly drew it out and knocked.

"*Entrez!*" cried a shrill voice.

Berger entered.

The man he came to see stood with his back to the door, before a looking-glass, busy finishing his toilet. He turned round, thinking it was a waiter. The new comer cast a rapid look around the room, locked the door quickly and noiselessly from within, and then went to the middle of the room.

"What do you want?" asked Count Malikowsky, still busy with his cravat.

"My name is Berger. I have already told you what I want."

"If you have any demand upon me you can speak to my valet. I do not trouble myself with such things."

"I know very well," said Berger, without changing a feature, "that Count Malikowsky likes best to have demands which are presented to him in person attended to by others, even by assassins, if needs be; but this time I trust he will make an exception."

With these words he approached the round table in the centre of the room, placed the little box on it, and took from the box the two pistols which it contained.

The count had witnessed these proceedings with an amazement which made him for a time speechless and motionless. The sight of the pistols, however, brought him to his senses again. With a rapidity which one would not have thought possible at his age he hastened to the door.

Berger stepped in his way, the pistols in his hand.

"One more effort to escape," he said, "one sound, and you die like a dog! Stand over there, on the other side of the table; so!"

"The man is mad!" murmured the count, obeying Berger's command and trembling in all his limbs.

"Maybe!" said Berger, with an uncomfortable laugh; "but if I am mad it is your fault, count. You do not know me?"

"No; indeed, I do not!"

"Maybe I have changed slightly since I last had the equivocal honor of meeting you. I will assist your memory. Do you know this?"

He opened the medallion and held it towards the count across the table. The count took his gold eye-glass and looked at the miniature. It was a well-painted portrait of a marvellously beautiful, brown-eyed girl, in the costume of the year 1820.

"Leonora!" cried the count, starting back.

"Yes; Leonora!" repeated Berger, closing the medallion again and putting it away. "And now I hope you will know who I am, and what the account is which we have to settle."

The count had turned pale even under his rouge; his false teeth rattled; he had to sit down in an arm-chair which stood near the table, as he could not stand any longer.

Berger seemed to enjoy the wretched sight.

"How the coward trembles!" he said. "How the mean heart in the hollow bosom knocks against the ribs for the sake of a useless bit of life! Miserable coward! You can seduce girls, but you cannot face a man! Here, take this pistol and end a life full of disgrace by an honorable death!"

"I cannot do it," whined the count; "have pity on me! You see, I am an old man; my hands tremble from gout; I cannot hold a pen, much less a pistol, steady!"

"Is that so?" asked Berger; "are you really nothing but a whitewashed grave? Why, then, it would be harder punishment to let you live!"

Berger bowed his head and thought a moment.

"Be it so!" he said. He put the pistols back in the box. The count breathed freely.

"I have longed for this hour these thirty years. I thought revenge would be wondrously sweet; but the cup in which it is offered to me is too disgusting. I do not want it."

Berger had said this as if speaking to himself. Now he raised his lids, fixed his piercing eyes on the count, who was still trembling in the corner of his chair, and said:

"I have done with you. I will leave you your miserable life, but under one condition: You will leave town in an hour, and never appear again in Germany. I do not want a blackguard like you to breathe German air."

"As you wish it! as you wish it!" said the count. "I shall be glad to get out of the wretched country."

Berger put the box in his pocket. Suddenly wild tumult was heard in the street. Berger was instantly at the window. Crowds of people--men, women, and children--were rushing down the broad streets. "We are betrayed! They fire at us! To arms! To arms!"

"To arms! To arms!" cried Berger, raising his arms on high in wild joyousness. "At last! at last! Thanks, Great Spirit!"

He turned away from the window, seized the count, whom curiosity had roused from his terror, by the breast, and shaking him with perfect fury, he cried:

"Do you hear, coward? to arms! A whole nation calls to arms! Women and children! Now all the old debts shall be paid that you and the like of you have contracted for the last thirty years!"

He pushed the half-dead man contemptuously from him, opened the door, and rushed out.

He ran against an officer, who was just about to enter.

It was Prince Waldenberg.

"Pardon me, father, if I cannot keep my promise to accompany you to the princess," said the prince, out of breath; "but you hear the rebellion is out again. I expect every moment to hear the drums beat."

The count was still quite beside himself from the encounter with Berger. He stared at the

prince with a pale, disturbed countenance.

"What is the matter, father?" asked the prince, who now only noticed the change in his appearance.

"Go to the devil with your father, sir," cried the count, in whom the wild hatred he had cherished for so many years against his wife's son at last broke out into full fury. "I am not your father. I do not choose to be your father. If you wish to see your father go to your mother. You will find him there!"

"What do you mean, father?" said the prince, fearing the count had become insane.

"Father!" mimicked the count, scornfully. "Delightful! Charming! But I am tired of the farce. You can all go to the devil!"

He rang the bell.

"My carriage; do you hear?" he cried, as the waiter came. Then turning to the prince, "Will you go now, sir, or not?"

The prince looked at the count like a man who does not know whether he shall believe his own ears and eyes or not. Suddenly he seemed to have formed a resolution. He cast one more look at the count, who was running about like a madman, and left the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mr. Schmenckel walked slowly down the Linden to William street. He had crossed his arms behind and pressed his hat low down on his brow. People made way for him, for he stared fixedly at the pavement, and continually murmured unintelligible words through his teeth. But Mr. Schmenckel was neither drunk nor mad; he was only a little excited, and repeated the lesson which Berger had taught him. It was a hard task; but Mr. Schmenckel felt that he was only doing his duty if he broke up the plot into which he had been entrapped by the cunning of Mr. Timm. How fortunate that he had revealed it all to the professor in his great anxiety! How that man talked! Why, he had frightened him out of his wits! Schmenckel had always said that the professor was a man of very special gifts. And that the Czika turned out to be a baron's daughter, that was no wonder to Director Schmenckel, of Vienna. She had such wonderful eyes, that girl, and he had always treated her well; it was not so strange, therefore, that the baron should have offered old Caspar Schmenckel a place as steward on one of his estates. No; Caspar Schmenckel, from Vienna, need not try to obtain money by foul means. Caspar Schmenckel could hold his head high again and----

"Why on earth, old man, are you coming only now?" said suddenly a very sharp voice near him. "You ought to have done with your visit by this time!"

It was Mr. Timm who had uttered these angry words. He had been patrolling up and down William street, in the neighborhood of the Waldenberg mansion, in order to hear the result of Oswald's interview with the Baroness Grenwitz. He thought Director Schmenckel was by this time on his way to the Dismal Hole, where they had appointed to meet in case they should miss each other in the street. Timm had had his reasons for sending Schmenckel an hour sooner than Oswald to the house. If Oswald's interview with the baroness was to be successful, the baroness must first have read a certain letter; and in order to make the letter effective, Schmenckel must first have had a conference with the princess. In Mr. Timm's exquisite plans each measure fitted into the other as in the works of a watch. Mr. Timm had, therefore, good reasons for being very indignant at Mr. Schmenckel's dereliction.

"It is enough to drive one mad," he continued, in his irritation. "I cannot leave you alone for a moment but you commit a stupid blunder."

"Oh! not so rude, my friend!" replied Mr. Schmenckel, feeling in his virtuous purposes quite able to cope with the serpent-wisdom of his accomplice, "or I'll become personal too!"

Mr. Timm saw that he had gone too far.

"Well, well!" he said, gently; "between friends no offence ought to be taken. Only make haste now to go in. All may come out right yet. You have seen the count this morning?"

"No!" growled Mr. Schmenckel.

"But why on earth haven't you seen him?" exclaimed Timm, whose indignation was roused once more.

"Because I did not choose!" said Schmenckel, defiantly. "Because I do not want to have anything more to do with you anyway!"

"Ah!" said Timm; "you would like to raise the treasure by yourself? I have burnt my fingers to draw the chestnuts out of the fire for you, eh? No, my dear sir, we are not quite such fools. He who wants to be paid must work."

"I do not want a farthing of that wretched money!" cried Schmenckel. "I am going to tell the princess that I am an honest fellow, and that she need not trouble herself any further."

"Are you piping in that way?" asked Timm. "You mean to betray me a little, do you? Have a care, man; you might have to pay dear for the fun!"

"I shall do what I like," said Schmenckel, assuming a very determined air, and walking off with long strides.

"You shall not enter that house!" cried Timm, and seized Schmenckel by the arm.

Schmenckel's reply to this challenge was a blow, which hurled Mr. Timm very unpleasantly across the sidewalk against the wall. The next moment the great portal had closed behind Mr. Schmenckel.

The little altercation with Mr. Timm had put him in a kind of heroic ecstasy well suited for the interview he was about to have. Thus it happened that he was not abashed by the gorgeous livery of the servants, nor by the splendor of the rooms through which he was led. But his courage failed him and his heart sank when the servant stopped at a door and whispered: "Her grace is in there; go in without knocking; she expects you." Mr. Schmenckel passed his hand through his thick hair, cleared his voice, held his hat firmly under his left arm, and entered cautiously.

A rosy twilight received him, and in the rosy twilight he noticed two women, one of whom was seated in an arm-chair near the bright fire that was burning there in spite of the warm weather, while the other stood a little sideways behind the chair. Both of them examined him as he approached with eager curiosity. His reception caused him to shorten his steps more and more till he suddenly came to a stop half way between the door and the fire-place.

"Come nearer, my friend," said the lady who was standing behind the chair.

Mr. Schmenckel advanced a few inches and came again to a stop, quite determined this time not to approach nearer to those formidable eyes.

"You are the man who wrote to Count Malikowsky day before yesterday?" asked the lady behind the chair.

"Yes, your grace." Mr. Schmenckel felt as if these words, which he no doubt had uttered himself, had been spoken by some one else at the other end of the large apartment. This was by no means calculated to bring back the heroic frame of mind which the rosy twilight and the bright eyes had so seriously damaged. He blushed all over, and cleared his voice in order to convince himself that it was really he himself who was speaking to the ladies.

"Your name is Schmenckel?" asked the lady behind the chair.

"Yes, your grace."

"And you were in St. Petersburg twenty-four years ago?"

"Yes, your grace."

"And you visited at Letbus House?"

"Yes, your grace."

"Do you recognize me?"

Mr. Schmenckel fixed his eyes, which had been resting upon everything in the room except the two ladies on the speaker, and said, after a short reflection,

"I should think so; although I should not like to swear to it. If it was not such a very long time since, I should say you were the Nadeska, the chambermaid of the princess, who was all the time bringing me notes and rose bouquets into the Black Bear."

Nadeska bent over her mistress and whispered a few words into her ear, to which the latter replied in the same tone. Then Nadeska left the room.

"Wont you sit down, Mr. Schmenckel?" said the princess, as soon as they were alone.

Mr. Schmenckel seated himself on the outer edge of an arm-chair.

"Do you recognize me also?" asked the lady.

Mr. Schmenckel bowed, placing his hand on his heart.

"Why did you not come to me directly?" the princess continued in a tone of gentle reproach. "Why did you take the count into your confidence? Have I ever been ungenerous towards you. Was it my fault if our last meeting ended as it did?"

Mr. Schmenckel was about to reply, but the princess continued.

"If I had known that you were still living, and where you were living, I would have provided for you liberally; and I am still willing to do so. But one condition I must make: you must have nothing to do with the count; and, above all things, you must never dare come near the prince. If you will comply with these conditions you may ask what you choose, and if Alexandrina Letbus is able to do it it shall be done!"

The princess extended imploringly her thin, transparent hand; her black eyes filled with tears; the rosy twilight gave a spiritual beauty to her pale but still beautiful features. Mr. Schmenckel had a susceptible heart in his bosom, and the humility of the great lady moved him deeply.

"Let me say a word now, too, your grace," he said "I am not the scoundrel you make me out. I should never have dreamt, your grace, of writing a letter to the count, if I had not been persuaded to do so by an awfully bad man. Timm is his name. I never knew at all that Caspar Schmenckel, of Vienna, had such a great lord for his son. But that man Timm said to me: No harm in beating about the bush; no harm in that! Then he wrote the letter, and carried it himself to the count. The count came the same evening to the Dismal Hole to see me, and told me he was very glad if I could make life a little hard to you, Mrs. Princess. But he said I must not say a word to the prince, or there would be an end to the fun. And then, says he, you ask too much; a fourth of it is enough. And he told me to talk it over with your grace and then he would pay me the money this forenoon at his hotel. Now, your grace, you may believe it or not, as you choose, but Caspar Schmenckel, from Vienna, is an honest fellow, and don't like to do any harm to anybody, least of all to a beautiful lady who was once upon a time very kind to poor Caspar. And when your grace sent for me, and let me know that you wanted to see me yourself, I said: Caspar, says I, go to the princess and tell her so and so, and she must not trouble herself about it any more; Caspar Schmenckel will never come near her in all his life. And as for the money, I tell your grace, not a penny do I want to touch of it, not if it were to turn into pure gold on the spot. And so, your grace--princess, good-by to you! And if we don't see each other again you must remain well, and don't you trouble yourself any more about Caspar Schmenckel; he'll never do you any harm. I kiss your hand, your grace!"

With these words he rose and made his best bow.

The princess was very much touched.

"Good fellow," she said, with trembling voice.

Her eyes dwelt with pleasure upon the herculean proportions of the man who was the father of her son. The extraordinary resemblance between them, in figure as well as in face, filled her with mournful satisfaction. She thought of the days when this man, a lion in strength and agility, had conquered not her heart but her imagination. But at the same moment a sudden fear overcame her lest her son should find his father here--lest her son with his pride and his passionate temper should ever discover that this juggler, this rope-dancer, was the father of Prince Waldenberg.

"You must go!" she said, hurriedly. "Here,"--she took a superb ring from her finger, in which the diamonds shone in all the colors of the rainbow as they caught the light of the fire--"here; no words, take it! I wore it long, long ago, even when Nadeska first brought you to me; take it as a keepsake from Alexandrina Letbus! But now go, go!"

She touched the silver bell. Nadeska entered.

"Show him out! Mind that no one sees you!"

Nadeska took Mr. Schmenckel, who would have liked to say something, but was too confused and embarrassed to find words, and led him through a secret door which led near the fire-place into a narrow passage, and then through a private staircase into the courtyard.

The princess sank exhausted back into the cushions of her easy-chair, and hid her eyes behind her hand. She did not notice that a heavy curtain on the right hand from the fire-place, which had been moving several times during her conversation with Mr. Schmenckel, now opened and admitted the prince. She only heard him when he was close by her. She opened her eyes, and at the same moment she uttered a piercing shriek--his unexpected appearance and a single glance at his pale, disturbed face told her that he had heard all.

"Mercy, Raimund! Mercy!" she cried, raising her folded hands in agony towards him.

Raimund's broad chest was heaving as if it were struggling with an overwhelming burden, and his voice sounded like a hoarse death-rattle, as he now said, pointing with the finger at the door through which Schmenckel had left,

"Was that man who has just left you my father?"

"Mercy, Raimund! Mercy! Are you going to kill your mother?"

"Better you had never borne me than this!"

The powerful man trembled as if violent fever were shaking him; a groan broke from his breast which resounded fearfully through the gorgeous apartment.

"By all the saints, Raimund, hear me, I beseech you! I will tell you all!"

"I need not hear any more. I know too much already. The count called me a bastard! I thought he was mad! He called me by my right name."

He put his hand to his side--he had laid aside his sword in the ante-room. His eyes looked searchingly around as if looking for a weapon. His mother understood him.

"Raimund, Raimund, what are you going to do?"

"Make an end of it as soon as possible!"

"No man will ever know----"

"*Will* know? Who does not know it? Nadeska! the count! this man! Are my rank, my honor, my fortune to depend on the whim of a chambermaid, the discretion of a heartless roué, and the silence of a rope-dancer?"

"Am I to wait till the people in the street----"

"I will kill every man who knows it! They shall die--they shall all die, if you but remain my own."

"And if they were to die, and if no one knew but you and I--yes, mother, if you were dead and the secret were buried in my bosom, I should not think it safe even there; I should hide myself and my disgrace in the lowest depths of the earth."

The princess covered her pale face with her thin hands. But this was not the moment to abandon herself to idle grief. She knew her son's character too well not to be aware that it was a question of life and death.

"Raimund," she said, starting up again, "you do not kill yourself only; you kill me too! You are my all, my sun, and my light! I never had another child but you. You do not know what it is to have a child and to love it, especially when one is as unhappy as I have been! I never loved the count. I could not have loved a roué who has wasted his fortune and his health in abominable profligacy. I became his wife because--because the czar would have it so. And I was so young at that time, and so frivolous and thoughtless, grown up in all the splendor and luxury of the most splendid and most luxurious court on earth! I was not a faithful wife--nor was the count a faithful husband. It mattered little to him; but he wished to get a hold on me in order to force me to provide for his mad expenditures. He had long watched me--till at last, I do not know yet by what unlucky accident or by whose treachery, he discovered my secret. From that moment my life has been a perpetual torture; I have grown old before my time. I never had anything but you and your love to warm my heart in this icy-cold world. If you rob me of that also, I must succumb. Raimund, is this your gratitude for all my love?"

The son had listened to his mother's cunning words, which interwove truth and fiction so skilfully, with an air as black as a wall of thunder-laden clouds.

"Show me the possibility of living," he replied, "and I will live. As it is, I cannot live. I cannot endure the consciousness that my blood is no better than that which flows in the veins of my groom."

"Am I not your mother?"

"Is that low person not my father?"

"Yes, Raimund, he is, and to him you owe your proud strength; to him you owe it, that all men appear weaklings by your side. Would you rather be the count's son and inherit his wretched feebleness, his poisoned blood? And do you fancy that in our veins no other blood flows but noble blood?--that your case is the only one in which a degenerate race has been renewed by an admixture of sound but humble blood? Shall I tell you a few anecdotes of our own circles? And do you think it is different in higher and the very highest families?"

The princess rose lightly from her chair and whispered something in her son's ear. But he grimly shook his head.

"Is it thus with us?" he said. "Then we had better break our swords to pieces, and drag our coats-of-arms through the mire. I have kept my honor unsullied; I have no sin on my conscience, but I must atone for the sins of others, before the tide rises higher and higher, and I get deeper and deeper into the mire. Do you know that the man with whom I had a personal encounter Under the Lindens a few days ago was this very man!" The prince pointed at the door through which Mr. Schmenckel had made his way out. "Do you know that I escaped but by a hair's breadth staining my sword with the blood of him who is my father? No! no! The measure is full to overflowing!"

"And Helen?" The prince shuddered.

The princess saw how deep that arrow had entered. A gleam of hope appeared to her; she thought she might after all be victorious in this conflict.

"Are you going to destroy your greatest happiness? will you make this angel also wretched? will you humiliate yourself before her, the proud beauty? Impossible! You cannot mean it. You are bound to life with chains of steel and with chains of roses. You can break the former, you dare not break these."

"It is in vain," said the prince; "all your words cannot remove this terrible burden!" He placed his hand on his breast. "Henceforth Farewell!"

He turned to go.

"Raimund!" screamed the princess, rising suddenly from her chair and clinging to her son, "what do you mean to do?"

"Nothing mean, be sure," he said, trying to disengage himself gently from her arms. "Farewell!"

"Go then, barbarian, and murder--" She could not finish; the terrible excitement of these last two scenes was too much for her suffering nerves; she sank fainting upon her chair.

At that moment Nadeska came back. A glance at the scene in the room told her what had happened.

"You will kill the poor lady," she said, hastening to assist her fainting mistress. "And why all this? It will never be known."

The prince laughed. It was a fearful laugh.

"Do you think so, Nadeska?" he said. "But suppose you talked in your dreams? Or have you sold your dreams also to the princess?"

He beat his forehead with his closed fist and rushed out.

CHAPTER XV.

As the prince hurried through the ante-room, like Orestes driven by the furies, he met the Baroness Grenwitz, who came to take leave of the princess. He thought he would sink into the ground for shame, as she looked fixedly into his eyes. She said something to him, but he did not hear what it was. His ears were ringing with strange sounds. He uttered an inarticulate sound, which was to represent an apology. Then he rushed out.

The baroness followed him with a sombre, suspicious look.

Anna Maria had not had a happy moment since she had entered the house. The reception last night had touched her to the quick. The constrained manner of the prince, the unprofitable efforts of the princess to give to the interview a more cordial tone, the thinly-veiled irony of the count, who ridiculed every affectionate word--all this had filled her with sad apprehensions for Helen's future. She had passed the night without sleep, thinking over the riddle, and again and again she had come to the conclusion that the princess must have been faithless to her husband at some time in her life, and that the count thus had an iron hold on her. Perhaps the striking want of resemblance between father and son might have contributed to such a conclusion. Thus she had risen late in very bad humor, and with a violent nervous headache, and was rather pleased to learn that Miss Helen had driven out to visit her friend, Sophie. Helen had scarcely left the house when two letters were brought in, one from Grunwald, the other from the city

itself. She opened the one from Grunwald first. The news of Malte's illness filled her with consternation. She had always trembled for his life, from childhood up; were her fears to be realized now? And if Malte should die--oh that God in His great mercy would prevent that!--the whole entailed estate went, now that Felix also was no more, to a Captain Grenwitz, the son of her former husband's first cousin, a beggar, whom she had never liked, and who had always looked like a hungry pike eagerly snapping at the estate. He was henceforth to be master at Grenwitz? Why, after all, she would have preferred to find out that Oswald Stein was really Harald's legitimate son.

Mechanically she opened the second letter. It was from Albert Timm and ran thus:

"Madame:--After our last interview you will not be surprised if I now use the weapons *against* you, which I until then had been using *for* you. Mr. Stein has been fully informed. Before the year is out--you may rely on it--he is master of Stantow and Baerwalde, and you will, besides, have to pay the back interest for twenty-four years. This is simple ruin for you. I might rub my hands with delight at your discomfiture; but Albert Timm is a good-natured fellow and offers you a piece of good advice in return for your ingratitude. Make your peace with Mr. Stein before it is too late! Better a small sacrifice than an entire loss. I send your adversary to you; receive him kindly, and if you are wise give him the hand of your daughter, who loves him madly. The princely match is anyhow at an end, considering that the prince is not the son of a count, but of a rope-dancer, and the matter is in such a position that the whole world will soon enjoy the grand scandal. But I must resist your desire to hear the full explanation of this interesting affair, which you might disregard as you disregarded certain other explanations of mine. Perhaps you may change your mind after the interview with Mr. Stein, and become convinced of the sincere friendship with which I have the honor, etc., etc."

At any other time the baroness would have looked upon this letter merely as a renewed effort on the part of Mr. Timm to regain his lost position; but this morning her mind was so disturbed that the letter and everything else appeared to her in quite a new light. Was not, after all, everything and anything possible in this false world? It was evident that this Mr. Timm knew more than most people, and at all events the persistence with which he adhered to his statements was very remarkable. Even Felix in his last letter had admitted the fact!

The usual energy of the baroness gradually gave way under the heavy pressure. And now Helen, whom she had sent for, was not coming back; and in an hour the train would start by which alone she could reach Grunwald next day! Her trunks were not packed, the question whether Helen should accompany her or stay had not been decided, and she had yet to take leave of the princess and the prince. But that, at all events, could be done in Helen's absence! Necessity released her from the rules of etiquette; and, besides, the princess herself had asked her the night before to come unannounced to her rooms.

Thus Anna Maria left her rooms and went hastily down the long passages and through the ante-rooms which led to the apartments of the princess, when suddenly the prince rushed out, evidently in a high state of excitement, and passed her without saying a word.

"That is strange!" said the baroness. The door opened again suddenly, and Nadeska rushed out with terror in her face.

"Where is the princess?" asked the baroness.

"In there. She is unwell. No one is coming to answer the bell. I am going to look for the servants."

"Do so!" said the baroness. "I will stay in the meantime with the princess."

Nadeska did not look as if she liked the arrangement, but she dared not prevent the baroness from entering. She hurried away, while Anna Maria stepped into the rosy twilight of the apartments of the princess.

She was still lying in the arm-chair near the fire. Her half-closed eyes and the convulsive movements of her hands showed that she had not quite recovered yet from a fit of fainting.

"Give me back my son, Nadeska!" she murmured. "He must not wrestle with that Hercules; the father is stronger than the son. You see! you see! how he takes him around the waist and lifts him up. He will throw him down, here at my feet. There, there----"

The unfortunate woman broke out in hysterics, mixed with a horrible laugh. Between times she raved:

"Don't let the count know! The count will tell the baroness! The baroness will tell her beautiful daughter, and then she wont take the rope-dancer's son! There he comes, his head cut open, and---"

A fearful cry broke from the bosom of the sufferer. She started up, and stared with haggard looks at the baroness. Immediately she sank back once more, fainting anew. Nadeska came in with a couple of Russian maids. She seemed to be anxious to get the baroness out of the way.

"The princess has these attacks quite often," she said, in her smooth, humble manner, while the servants took up the fainting lady and carried her into her bed-room. "She must be left alone in such cases; the presence of strangers makes it only worse."

"I am not going to disturb her, my dear," said the baroness, coldly; "especially as I have to leave in an hour. I shall write a few lines to her grace."

"What does that mean?" said Nadeska. "Does she also know more than she ought to know?"

The baroness returned to her rooms in a state of indescribable excitement. What was that she had seen and heard? The wild expression in the prince's face, the confused speeches of the princess, the suspicious manner of the waiting woman, who evidently knew all about the family drama--what was she to think of it? What ought she to do? It was perhaps the first time in her life that the clever, sensible woman was utterly at a loss. But was not the ground giving way under her feet? Was the indestructible pillar of her success not snapping suddenly like a bruised reed? The prince a rope-dancer's son! A family secret anxiously guarded for twenty-odd years, suddenly proclaimed in the streets and on the house-tops! Her son, the legitimate heir to the immense estate, sick unto death! An unknown scion of a former owner, rising unexpectedly from obscurity, a lost will in his right hand, which made him owner of a fortune that the baroness had all her life regarded as her own! And what would Helen say? How her pride would suffer when she learnt that the diamonds of the princely crown were nothing but vile glass, unfit for the lowest of the low!

A carriage came dashing into the court-yard. It was Helen. The heart of the baroness beat as if the decisive moment was only now approaching. A few anxious moments and the beautiful daughter came, pale and distressed, into the room, and threw herself into her mother's arms with a passionate vehemence which contrasted most strangely with her usual reserve and coldness.

"God be thanked you are back!" said Anna Maria. "I must go; I wanted to ask you if you will go with me!"

"Can you ask me?" cried Helen. "I should stay here, and without you?"

"Then you do not feel happy here, Helen?"

"No, no! I do not love the prince! I have never loved him!" And Helen hid her face on her mother's bosom.

The baroness was much surprised. Helen's words, and even more the tone in which she said them, and her whole strange, passionate manner, suddenly gave her an utterly new insight into her daughter's character. She had a dim perception that large portions of her inner life had so far been utterly unknown to her, and that all her cleverness, of which she was so proud, had not enabled her to see clearly in her own daughter's heart.

"Why did you give your promise then?" she asked.

"I cannot tell. I was--I did not know what I was doing. But now I do know it. I cannot marry the prince; he must give me back my word. If you insist upon the marriage I shall die!"

"And if I do not insist?"

It was now Helen's turn to be surprised. She looked at the baroness with wondering eyes.

"As I say, my dear child, I have made certain discoveries this morning which have startled me, to say the least, very much, and which have brought me the conviction that we have proceeded in this whole matter with a want of caution which might possibly have been quite disastrous to us all."

"I do not understand you, mamma!" said Helen.

"Well, it is hard to understand," said Anna Maria, plaintively. "I hardly know where my head is. I am perfectly miserable!"

And the baroness threw herself into a chair as if she were broken-hearted, and commenced weeping bitterly.

Helen had never seen her mother weep. The unusual sight touched her deeply. She knelt down by her, and tried to console her with kind, soothing words. But it was all in vain.

"It is not that alone, though that is bad enough," sobbed Anna Maria; "but we also are threatened with a similar exposure," and under the pressure of a moment, yielding to the natural impulse of all helpless sufferers to cling to others at any hazard, she told Helen in a few words all about Oswald's claims on her fortune, and that if these claims should be legally established she and her daughter alike would be beggars.

Helen had listened to her in breathless excitement. Her color came and went continually, her eyes were fixed on her mother, her hand held her mother's hands with a firm grasp.

"Beggars! you say? Better so and a clear conscience than in abundance and fainting with anxiety! Come, mamma, I am not afraid of poverty! You have often told me how poor you were before you were married to papa. Why should I be better off? I do not see that being rich has made you happy, or papa; he told me so in his last hour. I have seen it with my own eyes how much happier people are who have nothing but their affection, who rely on nothing but their own strength. I have strength; I can and will work for you, if it must be so. But now let us go away from here. You are sick and weary; your hand is icy cold, and your forehead is burning; stay, do not get up. I will pack your things; you need not trouble yourself; I shall be down in five minutes."

"No," said the baroness, "let me do that. Mary can help me. You can do something else for me. We cannot well leave without writing a few words of farewell to the princess, as she is too unwell to see us, and we are in such a hurry. Sit down and write a few lines, kindly and politely, but neither more nor less than what is indispensable."

"I will do so," said Helen, sitting down at her *escritoire*, while her mother went into the adjoining room.

Helen had just taken up her pen when she heard a noise behind her which made her look up. In the middle of the room stood Oswald, deadly pale, his large eyes, brilliant with fever, fixed upon her. Helen was so terrified that she could not speak nor move. She thought for a moment it was an apparition.

Oswald seemed to guess so.

"It is really I!" he said. "Pardon me for my abrupt appearance. I asked for the baroness; they showed me in here."

"I will call my mother," said Helen, rising.

"I pray, stay," said Oswald; "I pray you! I have only two words to say. I would rather say them to you than to the baroness."

There was something so solemn in Oswald's manner and tone of voice that Helen had not the heart to refuse his request.

"Will you sit down?" she said, sinking herself into a chair and pointing at another chair near her.

Oswald sat down.

"I do not know, Miss Helen, if your mother has spoken to you of certain intrigues by which she has been troubled of late, and which originate mainly with a certain Mr. Timm?"

"I have just this morning heard of it for the first time."

"That was my own fate. And this is what brings me here. I cannot bear the thought; I believe I could not die quietly if I thought that you believed me capable of employing such vile means against you. Will you please tell the baroness so?"

"I will."

"And tell her also, I pray, and believe yourself, how bitterly I regret that you have been troubled with such a matter."

"It was nothing but an invention of Mr. Timm!"

"No, Miss Helen!" said Oswald, with a sorrowful smile. "I presume it is more than that. I am only too much afraid it is the real truth, and that is the second reason why you see me here."

"You surely do not imagine we would refuse to acknowledge legitimate claims against us?"

"That case will never arise. I have no desire to make such claims. I should never have done so, under any circumstances; and least of all now."

He cast a look around him. The splendor of the apartment reminded him forcibly in whose house he was.

"Least of all now!" he repeated. "Here are the papers which prove this most unfortunate of all stories. I desire the baroness to take them and to keep them, so as to be secure at all times against that man's machinations."

He placed the documents and papers which Timm had brought him a few hours before upon Helen's *escritoire*, and bowed to take leave.

"One moment, sir!" said Helen, rising likewise. "Do you imagine my mother will accept such a gift? Who has given you the right to think so little of us?"

"I think, Miss Helen, your pride misleads you in this instance. There is evidently no one whom

this whole matter concerns except myself, and I desire to be relieved of an unpleasant suspicion. It was hardly necessary to remind me that a few hundred thousand dollars, more or less, mattered little to the mother of the owner of Grenwitz, and to the betrothed of Prince Waldenberg."

"Circumstances ought not to affect our duties," replied the young girl, rising to her full height and curving her lips contemptuously; "and you need not believe that I am so indifferent to your claims because, I am proud of our wealth and our rank. We are at this very moment on the point of leaving for Grenwitz, where my brother is lying dangerously ill; and there, on my escritoire, lies the beginning of a letter in which the princess will be told that I shall never be her son's wife."

Helen's dark eyes were shining brightly; the hot blood gave greater depth to the red on her cheeks. Oswald had never seen her so beautiful, so marvellously beautiful. And this at the moment when he had already in his heart bid farewell to life, which had no longer any charms for him. Just now this glorious beauty, this highest beau-ideal of his wildest dreams, must present herself to him, not at an inapproachable distance, but within reach attainable to his bold desires--to his firm will, perhaps! Why did she tell him that she would never marry the prince? And why did she tell it in such a defiant tone, if she did not mean to humble him--the weak, hesitating, fickle man--by the strength of her will, by the promptness with which she abandoned all this splendor, merely in order to remain true to herself?

These thoughts passed swiftly through Oswald's mind, which worked all the faster as he had been so long sleepless and feverish. He knew that she would never have told him all this if she had not loved him at some time or other; if she did not perhaps still love him; and yet he knew with absolute certainty that they were separated from each other irretrievably by all that had happened. There was therefore no bitterness, but deep sadness in his voice, as he fixed his eyes immoveably upon the heavenly beauty before him and said, slowly:

"Let us not sadden one another still more by violent, bitter words! Who knows whether we shall ever speak to each other again? I feel like a dying man, and what I am going to say I do not say for myself, but from an earnest desire to state the truth. Helen, I have loved you from the hour when I saw you first in the park at Grenwitz! I have never forgotten that moment. I know that you also would have loved me if I had but been true to myself; you might have become my own. But when I forsook myself you also forsook me, and now there is an abyss between us over which there is no bridge. And what seemed to be about to bring us together--the discovery of this morning--only parts us forever. I feel it clearly. You will never be disposed to accept a gift, as you call it; and I would rather burn my right hand than stretch it out after the inheritance of a man who made my mother the most wretched of women. There is no peace possible between us, even if everything else were as it ought to be. And now, Helen, before we part--probably forever--one more request; give me your hand across that gulf which parts us, as a token that I am forgiven!"

Helen laid her hand in Oswald's.

Thus they stood and looked deep into each other's eyes; and as they so looked they saw all the golden summer mornings in the past at Grenwitz under the whispering trees, and all the purple-glowing evenings in the green beech woods near the sea-shore--and then they saw nothing more, for a close veil of tears hid the enchanting images.

"Farewell, Helen!"

"Farewell, Oswald!"

"Forever!"

"Forever!"

Oswald did not take the beloved one in his arms; a feeling of holy reverence kept him back. He felt that the time for repentance which was granted to him was too short, and swearing new vows which he felt no strength to keep was not making amends for so many broken ones.

He let the hand go which he had held in his own, and--the next moment Helen was alone.

She was still standing so, her eyes fixed on the door through which Oswald had disappeared, when the baroness came back to the room.

"It is high time, Helen," she said; "the carriage is waiting. Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"What papers are those on the escritoire?"

"Did he not take them again?"

"Who?"

"Oswald."

"Has he been here? What did he want?"

"He came to say good-by. Take those papers, mother. He brought them to you."

"Helen, you look pale; and you have been crying! What does that mean? Do you love that man? Must I lose my last child then?"

"Be calm, mamma. I shall not leave you in our misfortune. There is the letter to the princess. One moment, mother."

She sat down and wrote in great haste a few lines.

"Well, that is done! I am free once more! Come, mamma; I will show you that I have still strength and courage enough for life. Come!"

And she drew the baroness, who willingly yielded herself up to her daughter's superior energy, with her out of the room.

A minute later the two ladies had left Waldenberg House, and half an hour afterwards the train carried them away from the city.

CHAPTER XVI.

As Oswald hurried down the street, scarcely knowing what he was doing, he felt suddenly some one seize him by the arm. It was Mr. Timm.

After his encounter with Mr. Schmenckel Mr. Timm had been compelled to abandon his post of observation near the princess's house in order to go into the courtyard of one of the adjoining houses, and there wash off the blood which the director's weighty fist had drawn from mouth and nose. Timm was as angry as he had ever been in his life. It was the rage of the hunter when he sees a wild beast tearing his cunningly-woven nets and escaping from his most ingenious trap. This booby of a Schmenckel, with his stupid honesty! How he had worked at the man to dazzle him with golden prospects; and now! It was enough to turn a man's brain! The glorious fortune all lost! And why? For nothing but a fit of honesty! And if Oswald, too, should be such a fool! These blockheads can never be left alone for a moment! And just now the bleeding will not stop! What enormous strength that fellow has!

Thus it came that the martyr of stupid honesty saw neither Mr. Schmenckel nor the prince leave the house, nor Oswald go in, and he was now also but just in time to overtake the latter as he was rather running than walking down the street.

"Hallo! sir!"

"What is it?"

"Well, I ask *you* that!"

"Is that you?"

"Who else? How did it go? Did the old one give in promptly?" And he was about to slip his arm familiarly in Oswald's arm; but Oswald stepped back.

"Don't touch me!" he said, "or I will beat your brains out!"

"Oh ho!" said Timm, giving way; "is he crazy too?"

"Wretch!" cried Oswald. "You wretch! who make vulgarity your profession, and speculate on vice. Let me never find you again in my way, or you will repent it!"

He left Timm, who had first turned ashy pale and then broken out into loud laughter, and hurried away. He did not mind where his feet carried him! He went as in a dream, and what he saw and heard appeared to him only like dreamy images: curious, terrified faces of women and children in doors and windows; dense crowds of men, who seemed to tell each other fearful things with wild gestures and loud exclamations; running and shouting, yelling and whistling on all sides, and between the mournful ring of alarm-bells from all the steeples. Then, as Oswald left the aristocratic portion of the town further and further behind him, a new sound mingled with the others: a very peculiar rattling noise, and a low thundering, which made the very houses tremble.

But all this did not rouse him from his waking dream. The sorrow for his ruined happiness had made him blind and deaf to the sorrow of a whole ill-treated nation. Suddenly a ghastly spectacle startled him. From one of the side streets a young man came running out, who cried: "Treason! treason! They are firing at us!" The young man's blouse was torn and covered with blood; his face was pale, his hair dishevelled; he staggered like a drunken man, and suddenly he fell down right before Oswald. Oswald raised him up, and in an instant a crowd of men and women were around them. "He is dying!" cried the men. "A curse upon the executioners!" The women shrieked. One cried out: "Take him; don't you see the gentleman can hardly stand himself!" A man took the dying youth from Oswald's arms. Suddenly Oswald felt some one touch him. He turned around and saw Berger. Oswald's soul had during the last hours been so overwhelmed with strange, exceptional events and sensations that he was prepared even for the most extraordinary occurrences. And if there was a man in this world whom he wished to see just then it was his friend and teacher, the companion of his fate. Oswald did not ask him how? and whence? He threw himself into Berger's arms.

"Glad you are here," said the other, hurriedly; "come! let the dead bury the dead. We must work and be doing as long as it is day!"

They hastened off together.

With every step they came nearer to the crater of the revolution which had broken out a few hours before. In this part of the city barricades were going up, built by a thousand brave and skilful hands, and manned by death-defying men and boys, mostly belonging to the lower classes of the people. These improvised fortresses did not inspire much hope of being able to resist long, for they consisted mostly of one, or at best of several, heavy wagons, torn-off planks, and other similar objects, hastily piled up together, while the arms of the small garrison were generally only rusty old swords, pikes, guns without locks, and similar instruments.

Berger stopped here and there giving advice, encouraging others, and calling with his deep, sonorous voice "To arms! to the barricades!" But whenever Oswald offered to lay hand on the work himself he kept him from it.

"Not here," he said; "these are only our outposts, which must be given up quickly. No barricade can be defended successfully in this straight, wide street. The gross of the revolution is further back."

Thus they came to Broad street, near Mrs. Black's private hotel.

The hotel was a corner house, and a narrow by-street led past its side into Brother street. In the narrow alley was the Dismal Hole. Here the excitement was intense. From the great square, near the palace, platoon firing was heard, and quite a cannonade; but no trace of barricades was yet to be seen.

"Are these men mad?" cried Berger. "If they do not mean to throw up fortifications here, where will they do it?"

On the steps of the hotel, surrounded by a crowd, stood a gentleman in a white cravat who spoke eagerly to the people: "His majesty has been pleased to receive the deputation." "Away with your majesty!" cried an angry voice. "His majesty is pleased to shoot his faithful subjects and to receive them with grapeshot!" cried another voice. "Gentlemen!" shrieked the orator, "do not give way to feelings of hatred and revenge. His majesty consents to withdraw the troops as soon as you lay down your arms." "And as soon as we offer our throats to the knife!" cried a tremendous voice, and a man suddenly stood by the side of the orator in the white cravat.

It was Berger. His gray hair was hanging wildly around his uncovered head; his eyes were burning as if the revolution itself had taken his form and voice. "Will," he continued, "you hesitate, and fear, and negotiate, while your brethren are murdered in the next street? Are you ever going on trusting, you trusting, deceived, cheated people. You will gain nothing but what you conquer, arms in hand; you will have no liberty which you do not purchase with your blood. Do not chaffer and bargain any longer, but give the high price--your life's blood!--for the precious boon!--for liberty! To arms! To arms!"

"To arms! To arms!" It resounded with the voice of thunder on all sides. "Victory or death! To arms!"

The unarmed hands rose, as if to swear.

Berger had hurried down the steps. They surrounded him; they pressed his hands. Some asked him to "take the matter in hand," a leader they must have.

Berger looked around. Suddenly he rushed towards a tall, thin gentleman who was pushing his way through the crowd.

"There is your man!" he cried, taking the tall stranger by the hand.

"He must be our leader. Step up there, Oldenburg, and speak to them only a few words. You understand that better than anybody else!"

Oldenburg was on the porch.

"Gentlemen!" he said, raising his hat; "let us follow the fashion of the day and build a barricade. I practiced the art a fortnight ago for a little while in the streets of Paris. If you will make use of my experience for want of a better man, I am heartily at your service. I am ready to build with you, to fight with you, to conquer with you, and, if it must be, to die with you!"

The iron ring in Oldenburg's voice, his manner of speaking easy and yet so persuasive had a charm which the crowd could not resist. It flashed like an electric shock through all hearts.

"You shall be our leader!" they cried on all sides. "Let the black-beard be our captain!"

"Well, then," said Oldenburg, raising his voice; "every man to the barricade!"

The magic word brought about incredible activity. The confused, helpless mass suddenly came to order. In all minds but one thought seemed to be uppermost--to build a barricade--and all hands were busy at the one common work.

"We must be done in ten minutes!" said Oldenburg, "or we might just as well not have commenced at all."

Oldenburg's marvellous coolness and quickness, his sharp eye and his firm decision, did honor to his place as leader. He seemed to be everywhere at once, and his clear, loud voice was heard at all points. Here they tore up the pavement as he commanded; there they raised the large slabs of the sidewalk to arm the sides of the upturned wagons, which had to serve as bulwarks here, as well as in all places where time is pressing. Doors taken from their hinges, planks bridging over gutters, bags filled with sand, completed the strength of this structure, which rose with a rapidity proportionate to the feverish excitement that beat in all hearts. Every muscle, every sinew, was strained to the utmost; boys were carrying loads which ordinarily a man would have considered heavy; men who only knew how to use a pen suddenly seemed to be endowed with muscles of steel. Above all, however, a man in a worn-out velvet coat signalized himself by exploits in comparison with which all the rest seemed to be but the work of pigmies. Wherever anything was to be lifted or to be dragged which no one could master, they called laughingly for "Hercules"--the popular voice had given him the name after the first five minutes--and Hercules ran up, stretched out his mighty arms, or leaned his broad shoulders against it, and the immovable mass seemed of a sudden to become a mere trifle.

"Bravo, Mr. Schmenckel!" said Oldenburg, patting the giant on the back; "but spare your strength; we shall need it all."

"Pshaw, your excellency, baron!" replied Mr. Schmenckel, wiping the perspiration from his face with his sleeve; "that is not anything."

"Hercules, here!" some one called.

"Coming!" replied Mr. Schmenckel, and hurried to where he was wanted.

"Now we want the best!" murmured Oldenburg, looking at what had been done and casting an inquiring glance at the roofs of the houses on both sides of the barricade, where men were busy taking off the slates and tiles as he had directed. "If Berger does not bring arms all our work is for nothing."

Just then Berger came with five or six young men. Each of them had a rifle. Others were dragging along a large bag filled with ammunition.

Berger, who had anticipated the revolution for several days and made his preparations in his mind, knew all the gunsmiths and shops where arms were kept in the whole neighborhood. He had taken possession of the nearest. A shout of joy arose when the little troop reached the barricade. Soon after an old fowling-piece and a rusty gun with an old-fashioned flint-lock were brought up, and last of all four pistols from the lodgings of a couple of officers which had been luckily discovered. The arms were at once distributed, and every man had his post assigned him. Every armed man had another man by him to load. In the kitchen, in the basement of an adjoining house, bullets were cast under the direction of an old one-eyed man who was an old soldier; and boys, merry storm-petrels of every barricade-fight, were appointed to carry the balls to the defenders.

The quarter of an hour which Oldenburg had allowed as the longest time that could be given to the erection of the barricade was out, and the very next moment showed how accurately he had calculated. The rifles had but just been loaded and the men had taken their places when a battalion of infantry came marching up the street. A major rode at the head. He ordered "Halt!" at some distance from the barricade, and rode up alone till within a few yards. He was an old, gray-haired soldier with a good-natured face, who evidently did not like the duty he had to fulfil. His voice sounded wavering, and trembled a little as he raised it as high as he could, and said,

"You, there! I must get through here with my men; and if you do not take that thing there out of my way willingly, I shall have to use force. I should be sorry, for your sake, to have to do so."

Oldenburg appeared on the barricade.

"In the name of these men!" he said, raising his hat politely to the major, "I declare that we are determined to stand by each other, and to hold this barricade as long as we can!"

Oldenburg's appearance and his words evidently made an impression on the old soldier.

"You are the leader of these men?"

"I have that honor."

"You seem to be an intelligent man. Then you must see that that thing there is of no avail, and that your few charges cannot possibly do you any good. Pull that thing down; it is all right."

"I am sorry I cannot comply with your request, and must adhere to my resolution."

"Well, then," said the major, more annoyed than angry, "you will all go to the devil."

With these words he turned his horse and galloped back to his men.

Oldenburg was glad when the conversation was at an end. His quick eye had showed him that the kindly words of the major had not failed to make an impression on the crowd, and that more than one looked undecided and doubtful. In a mass of people enthusiasm effervesces quickly. He turned round and said:

"If there is one among you who had rather live for country and liberty than die for them, he had better say so now. It is time yet!"

The men stood motionless and silent. Many a heart no doubt beat painfully, but every one felt that the die was cast, and that it would be disgraceful treason to turn back now.

The drums beat on the opposite side, and the terrible summons drove every hesitation out of their hearts.

Oldenburg cried, with a voice which drowned the rattling of the drums like loud trumpet-sound: "Every man to his post! Not a shot before I give the sign! Not a stone must move!"

Oldenburg remained standing on the top of the barricade and saw the column approaching at quick-step; in the centre the drummers, and the major, who commanded with his sepulchral voice,

"Battalion! Halt! Aim! Fire!"

The flash came; the balls hailed upon the barricade and the walls of the houses.

"Shoulder arms! March!"

"Hurrah!" cried the men, rushing with charged bayonets upon the barricade.

"Hurrah!" cried Oldenburg, still standing on the barricade and waving his hat.

And the rifles of the little garrison gave fire, and the stones came down rattling from the roofs upon the heads of the unlucky soldiers; and when the smoke and the dust slowly blew away, the company which had come up in military regularity was seen running away in wild flight, and before them a riderless horse, and between them little groups of three or four men who carried dead or wounded men on litters beyond the reach of the barricade.

Of the men of the people only one had been wounded, and not by a hostile ball; the old, rusty flint-lock had burst at the first discharge, and a piece of it had struck the head of one of the marksmen. This accident only increased the good humor of the company. They cried hurrah! they congratulated each other, they laughed, they joked, and everybody was in the best of humor.

There was perhaps but one man behind the barricade who did not share the general joy, and this man was Oldenburg. He was as fully convinced as any one that fight they must, but he doubted a happy issue. He had been in Paris during the month of February; he had fought there; and he could not but see the difference. There he had seen a people fully conscious of the weakness of the government against which they rose, and clearly understanding the whole situation; here he found nothing but uncertainty, divided opinions, and doubts. But the genius of mankind does not always require a clear, perfect understanding in its defenders; a vague impulse, a dim perception even, leads often to glorious deeds. These harmless men, knowing little of politics, and quite willing to rest content with very small concessions, might be fighting only against the brutal rule of a single caste, and not for the free republic of the future; but great effects could not fail to be obtained even here, and he who cuts off a diseased limb may by it save the whole body.

Thus Oldenburg tried to console himself for the fears with which the appearance of this revolution had inspired him. He had been on the square near the palace when the fatal two shots fell which were destined to be the signal for the explosion, and when the troops had made their

first attack *en masse* against the unarmed multitude. He and other good men had in vain tried to stop the shedding of blood; they had pushed their way through the soldiers at the risk of their lives in order to explain to the commanding officer the madness of such a butchery. But all they had heard in reply was open scorn, and at best rude orders to mind their own business. When Oldenburg saw that he could not be of any use in this way, and that matters had come to a crisis, he had tried to reach Melitta's lodgings in Broad street to place her and the children in safety. But he had been compelled to make a wide circuit, for the troops had already taken possession of all the approaches from the side of the palace, and he barely escaped more than once being arrested. Thus it happened that he reached the hotel only at the moment when the people were deliberating whether they should offer resistance or not. Oldenburg took only time to inquire at the hotel after Melitta, where he heard to his delight that she and the children had already gone early in the morning to Doctor Braun's, who lived in a remote suburb, to which the *émeute* was not likely to extend. Then he had thrown himself heart and soul into the torrent of the revolution.

And now he stood, after the first attack had been successfully repulsed, with crossed arms on the barricade, in a sheltered position, from which he could overlook at once the movements of the enemy and the space behind the barricade, anxiously awaiting the return of Berger, whom he had sent out with a patrol to procure if possible more ammunition, and to establish a communication with the nearest barricades. For so far the rising was without any organization; no concerted plan to produce united efforts; every barricade was fighting by itself. Besides, day-light began to fade away, and night, although it might leave the troops in doubt as to the strength of the enemy, also tended to increase the confusion on the side of the people, which is always an element of weakness in popular risings. Berger returned soon afterwards, bringing a few more guns but no comfort. The adjoining streets, he reported, were also barricaded; but the barricades were badly constructed, and held by too few men, especially the nearest one, in Brother street.

"I do not think they can hold it long," he added, "and then we are lost, because the troops can flank us here through this narrow alley"--and he pointed to Gertrude street, which passed by the hotel and led from Broad street into Brother street. "We must necessarily stop up that street also and occupy it, which can easily be done. I have directed Oswald and Schmenckel to do it at once."

"Whom?" inquired Oldenburg, who had no suspicion that Oswald could be here, and thought he had misunderstood Berger.

But he had not time to wait for Berger's reply, for at that moment the drums beat once more, and the second company came up to storm the barricade. This time the major on his white horse was not there. The old man, who had been dangerously wounded in the head by a ball, was on his way to the hospital.

The second attack was more serious, although no more successful than the first. The captain in command gave the order to fire three times in rapid succession, and then rushed his men with great violence upon the barricade. But as Oldenburg and his men had again reserved their fire till the last moment, the loss was very great for the attacking party; upon whom, moreover, such a storm of bullets, tiles, and stones rained down from the adjoining houses that they once more retreated, carrying their dead and wounded with them.

But this time the men of the people also had their losses. A young man who had imprudently exposed himself was shot through the breast and died instantly, while another had his arm shattered by a ricochet ball.

Thus the men of the barricade had had their blood baptism, and now only they felt as if they were indissolubly bound to the cause of the revolution. Men who had seen each other to-day for the first time shook hands and pledged themselves not to leave each other till death should part them forever. Women, who ordinarily went out of their way to avoid meeting common people, now went about among the fighting men and distributed bread and wine. Among these gentle Samaritans one was especially remarkable by her stately appearance and her venerable gray hairs. It was Mrs. Black, who found ample opportunity to-night to gratify her passion for feeding the hungry and nursing the sick.

Oldenburg now suggested what he had learnt in Paris to be eminently useful under such circumstances: that lights should be placed in all the windows which looked upon the barricade, so as to improvise a brilliant illumination, to which the full-moon, shining bright and clear on the blue sky, contributed generously. It was a strange contrast: the sacred peace high up in the heavenly regions, and down here a city raging in the fever of revolution, where the howling of alarm-bells and the thunder of cannon, the rattling of small arms and the mad cries of the combatants, were horribly mingled with each other. And to make the appalling scene still more so, low, hot clouds of smoke came now floating slowly over the roofs of the houses. Fire had broken out at several places at once; the city was threatened with a universal conflagration! Who had time to-night to help and to save?

Oldenburg looked for Berger but could not see him anywhere. He wanted to ask what he had meant when he spoke of Oswald, for he now recollected having caught a glimpse of a man who had reminded him somewhat of Oswald Stein. But just then loud cries were heard from Gertrude street, and a few shots fell. Oldenburg, fearing the troops might have taken the barricade in Brother street and were pushing on through Gertrude street, rapidly collected a handful of men

and with them rushed down into that street. Here a surprise had been in contemplation, and the danger had only been averted by Schmenckel's giant strength and by the heroic bravery of Berger and Oswald.

Oswald had joined the barricade-builders in Gertrude street in order to avoid Oldenburg, whom he had seen to his great surprise first on the steps of the hotel in the midst of the excited crowd, and then as captain on top of the barricade. He felt it impossible to meet just now the man whom he had at one time revered as a superior being, and at another time hated as his bitterest enemy. He did not wish to renew the contest between such feelings in his own heart; he was so weary, weary unto death! The excitement around him felt to him like a song rocking him to sleep with his weary sick heart, and when he heard the first bullets whistle around him during the attack upon the barricade where he then was, his only thought was: Oh, that one of them were intended for me!

He said so much to Berger, as they were sitting on the barricade in Gertrude street to rest for a moment from their exhausting efforts.

"No," replied Berger; "that is not right. Death itself does not pay our bills; it only tears them, without paying them, and throws the fragments at the feet of the creditor. But death in the cause of liberty!--it pays them all."

He seized Oswald's hand, looking around anxiously to see that no one could hear them.

"I am afraid of life, Oswald! Death is a fearful asylum, in which one may awake again! Suicide is such a death to me, Oswald. If that were not so I should long since have died by my own hand. For it is easier to die, in order to escape from ourselves, than to live for others. I have found that out. I have drunk the bitter cup, and the dregs are very bitter. Oswald! at first I had courage enough, and lived bravely; but after six months of such life my courage is gone and my strength exhausted. My nerves cannot bear it any longer. That is why I feel so joyfully this day, on which the people have at last shaken off their disgraceful apathy to rise in their might. If I could die to-day for this people, whom now for the first time in my life I find not to be contemptible any more--Oswald! it would be such good fortune as I had never expected. And then," he continued, after a pause, "another piece of good fortune has befallen me to-day. I have met again my oldest enemy, whom I hated most bitterly, and my youngest and most beloved friend."

He pressed Oswald's hand, who said, smiling:

"Found your oldest enemy? was that fortunate?"

Berger told Oswald in a few words of his meeting with Count Malikowsky that morning, and that Schmenckel, who had helped them gloriously in building up the barricade, was Prince Waldenberg's father. "The low-born man the father of a prince, the prince the son of a low-born man--that would make a nice novel," he said with a grim smile.

"Perhaps I can give you a companion-story to yours," answered Oswald; and he informed Berger of the discoveries he had made that day with regard to his own birth. "That is strange!" said Berger; "very strange! And did you not tell me you loved Helen?"

"More than my life!"

"And you refused all that splendor to remain faithful to your old flag?"

Oswald shook his head.

"No, Berger!" he said; "I am not good and great enough for that, as you think in your goodness and greatness. She could never be mine. Too many things had happened that could never be forgiven and forgotten. I had preferred others to her, and she had preferred another man to me. That Prince Waldenberg was her betrothed."

"Why do you say *was*?"

"Because I found them leaving town. She had recollected at the last moment that she had a heart in her bosom whose longing not all the riches of the world could satisfy."

"Strange! strange!" murmured Berger. "You, both of you: the baron's son who makes common cause with the people, and the low-born man's son who sits among princes, are rivals for the favor of the same lady! And she rejects you because she has no suspicion of your noble birth, and she accepts the prince because she thinks that the same blood flows in his veins, of which he is so proud! What a pity the world does not know this and must not know it! They might possibly find out then what the difference is between noble blood and common blood!"

"You, at all events, do not seem to value the difference quite as much as formerly. I can remember the time when you thought it morally impossible to be the friend of a nobleman."

"You allude to my friendship with Oldenburg," said Berger, calmly. "I tell you, Oswald, if there ever was a man who deserved to be loved and honored, Oldenburg is that man. If any man could ever have reconciled me with the world, Oldenburg would have been that man. If I ever could

humble myself before any man and acknowledge him to be my lord and master, that man is Oldenburg. I know you hate him because the woman whom you have forsaken thinks more of him than of the whole world. That is not fair, Oswald. Oldenburg has also spoken of you like a friend. I should be very happy, Oswald, if you could be reconciled with each other before I leave you forever."

"My turn comes first!" said Oswald. "Do you know what you once told me in Grunwald? 'You will die before me,' you said, 'for the Big Serpent is tough of life, and you are too soft, far too gentle for this hard world.'"

"That was long ago. This last year has made the Big Serpent dull and feeble. But what is that?"

A noise, coming from a low restaurant with steps leading up from the basement, made both men jump up from their seats. They seized their arms and hurried, followed by other men of the same barricade, to the place, where now several shots were fired. These were the same shots which Oldenburg had heard when he was roused from his effort to seek rest on his barricade in Broad street.

CHAPTER XVII.

Albert Timm had stopped, after his violent altercation with Oswald, looking after his faithless friend and laughing so loud and so bitterly that the passers-by had looked at him in surprise. Then he had hurried away in another direction, murmuring violent words, gnashing his teeth, and shaking his hands at imaginary enemies. Albert Timm was savage, and from his point of view he had reason to be furious. He was in a desperate position. The debts he had left behind him in Grunwald and elsewhere were not particularly pressing--he was great in bearing such burdens!--but the small sum he had brought with him to town was at an end; and even if that could be borne, all his bright prospects for a brilliant future had been suddenly blown to the winds and burst like a many-colored soap bubble.

Cursing the world and himself, he had thus walked through several streets before he reached that part of town where the rising was general. He delighted in it not because he had any sympathy with the cause of the people or liberty, but because he felt instinctively that in such times, where all is turned upside down, he--the man without a home, the adventurer--could lose nothing, and possibly gain much. This thought restored to him his full elasticity. He hurrahed merrily with the crowd, he chimed in with the cry: To arms! to arms! and had real pleasure in finding the excitement growing apace as he came nearer the place of his destination, the Dismal Hole. Thus he reached Broad street just at the moment when Oswald and Berger approached it from the other side. He noticed both, also Mr. Schmenckel, who had come by appointment to have an interview with Berger. By no means desirous to be seen by his enemies he slipped aside, and was about to creep into Gertrude street when some one seized hold of his coat. When he looked around he found himself face to face with his friend and patron, Jeremy Goodheart.

"Well, how did matters go?" asked the detective, who had in the meantime become Timm's friend, and was fully initiated in his intrigues.

"All up!" sighed Timm, angrily. "Lost my labor and my trouble! All up! I could roast the two rascals!" He pointed at Oswald and Schmenckel.

"Hem, hem!" said the policeman. "You must tell me that at leisure. Come to Rose; but let us first hear what the mad professor has to say."

"Do you know him?" asked Timm.

"Hush! We know him. Deceived people!--all right! To arms!--excellent! Just wait!--we'll catch you! And there comes the tall baron, who makes such revolutionary speeches at the election meetings! Why, there is the whole nest of them!--build barricades!--hurrah! Bravo!--hurrah! All men to the barricades! Hurrah!" cried the detective, and waved his hat with admirably feigned enthusiasm. Then he seized Timm by the arm and said: "Now we must get away quickly or the fellows will shut us up here with their barricade."

The two companions crept down Gertrude street and disappeared in the Dismal Hole.

Mrs. Rose Pape received them with unusual cordiality.

"Well, darlings, do you come with full purses? Have you got it, eh?"

"Hush!" said the detective, "and bring us beer; we can't stop."

"Without telling me how the----?" said the worthy matron indignantly, and made with her thumb and her forefinger the motion of counting money.

Mr. Timm shrugged his shoulders in reply, and pulled out the empty pockets of his trousers.

Mrs. Pape was of choleric nature, and the failure of such magnificent expectations filled her with just indignation, to which she gave vent in a flood of oaths and vile invectives, some of which were aimed at the detective. "But I will pay Schmenckel, with his big paunch," she said. "Let him come here again and have no money to pay for his beer; I'll show him home, the old rascal!"

At that moment the firing was heard as the troops charged the barricade in Broad street; and almost immediately afterwards a great noise was heard at the windows. They began building the barricade which was to close up Gertrude street. The detective and Timm, who looked stealthily out at the window, saw Oswald, Berger, Schmenckel, and other men, hard at work. They withdrew, following their landlady to the remoter depths of the basement.

"That is a charming trap," said the detective. "We are hemmed in on all sides, and if they find us here the rascals will kill us."

"It is not quite so bad as that," said the woman. "I can get you out safely. Come along."

She led the two men through the last room and a hidden door down a few steps into a deep cellar, which was used as a store-room. On the wall a thin little gas-flame was burning. The woman screwed it up.

"Now," she said, "you go through that door!"--she pointed out an iron door on the opposite side; "then you get into a narrow court-yard; keep to the left, and thus you can get through my brewer's house into Brother street. Good-by!"

"Is it always open? asked Timm, when he found the iron door was not locked.

"Only to-day," replied Rose; "we expect more beer that way. The fellows are like sponges to-day."

When the two gentlemen had safely passed through the door, the little court-yard, and the brewery, into the space above the barricade in Brother street, they stopped and looked at each other. The same thought was uppermost in the mind of both.

"What a mousetrap this would be!" said Timm.

"If you will lend a hand," said the detective, "you can make sure of the president. We want people like you. I have already spoken about you to the old man."

"And that would avenge us, too, on the rascals."

"The thing is not free from danger, though," said the policeman.

"Faint heart never won fair lady," said Timm. "I confess I like the idea of catching my good friends in this funny way. If you do not choose to undertake it I'll do it alone."

"Well, then, come!" said the detective. "We'll see if the military are disposed to look at it as we do."

And the two men advanced boldly upon the colonel, who was waiting on horseback at some little distance surrounded by his officers, and furious at the obstinate resistance of the two barricades in Broad street and Gertrude street, which he had been ordered to take by storm.

* * * * *

When Mrs. Rose had helped her friends out and returned to the public rooms she found there Mr. Schmenckel, with ten or twelve other men from the barricades, who wished to refresh themselves after their fatigue. They were mostly old customers of the locality, the same men with long beards and dishevelled locks who had been in the habit of meeting here to condemn the "rotten condition of the state," the "hateful police," and the "brutalized soldiery." Mr. Schmenckel had always been highly respected by these people, and now, when they had seen that he could not only speak boldly but also act courageously, he became the hero of the day.

Under these circumstances Mrs. Rose deemed it more prudent not to carry out her resolution, and to leave the waiting upon the barricade men to pretty Lisbeth while she herself took her accustomed seat at the bar.

Pretty Lisbeth was very fond of Mr. Schmenckel, whose gallantry was universal. She had overheard part of the conversation between her mistress, Timm, and Goodheart, and their leaving through the back-door had roused her suspicions. She thought she ought to tell her admirer what she had seen, especially as she liked to show him what a false pussy-cat Mrs. Rose was--a fact of which she had often tried to convince him in vain. Schmenckel at once appreciated

the importance of her communications. If there was a door in the basement which led into Brother street, and if Timm and Goodheart, whom Schmenckel by no means trusted, knew this door, then it was most assuredly very expedient to see if that door was carefully locked.

Schmenckel let Lisbeth go, and told the men at his table what he had heard. They all were of opinion that a reconnoissance ought to be made at once. But at the very moment when the men took up their arms and turned to the door which led into the store-room in question, the door was opened from the other side and a troop of soldiers rushed in, Albert Timm and the detective in their midst.

The sudden appearance of the shining helmets and guns, and the firing which began instantly, though fortunately quite at random, filled some of the barricade men with such terror that they rushed helter skelter up the steps and fled into the street. Here they were met by Oswald and Berger, who had been attracted by the firing, and now came to Schmenckel's assistance, who had until now alone contended with the soldiers.

Schmenckel had seized one of the guns which had just been fruitlessly discharged, and attacked the invaders, first with the butt end, and when this was broken with the iron barrel, so powerfully that two or three were lying disabled on the floor, and the others were retiring panic-struck through the back door. There, however, they met their advancing comrades, and this caused a fearful confusion, especially as Oswald, Berger, Schmenckel, and the other men, who had recovered from their surprise, now also pressed down into the half-lighted rooms and engaged in a terrible conflict.

The attacking party was perhaps half as strong again as their enemies, and better armed; but these advantages were offset by Berger's and Oswald's impetuous valor, and the gigantic strength of Schmenckel. The powerful man wielded his terrible weapon indefatigably, and not a blow fell in vain upon the heads of the unfortunate soldiers. Thus he cut his way to the door which led into the court-yard, at which he met several escaping soldiers, while others were eagerly crowding after them. And now he had attained his end. Seizing with his irresistible arms a few of the men hemmed in between the door and the door-frame, and pulling them down into the store-room, he closed the heavy iron door, pushed the strong iron bar across, leaned his broad back against it, and cried, whirling his gun-barrel in a circle around him.

"Now we have gotten our sheep together, professor! No one can get out or in any more. Caspar Schmenckel will see to that."

The horror had reached its crisis. In the narrow badly-lighted room, under-ground and reeking with mould and blood, men fought like wild beasts. The soldiers defended themselves desperately; but as their friends could only thunder at the inner door without coming to their assistance, the result was not long doubtful. The butchery, however, might have continued for some time if Oldenburg had not come down with part of his men from the barricade. He threatened to shoot down instantly every man who should not at once lay down his arms. The soldiers, deprived of all hope of succor, surrendered, and entered one by one from the lower room into the drinking saloon, where they were disarmed. The poor fellows presented a piteous sight. There was not one of them who was not seriously wounded. Their bright uniforms in rags, out of breath, pale with fright and exhaustion, stained with blood and dust and dirt--thus they stood there surrounded by the barricade men, who likewise bore the marks of a severe conflict. But the low cellar contained greater horrors than these. When lights were brought two bodies were seen lying lifeless in their blood, a soldier and a civilian. The soldier had in his wild flight thrown himself upon his own bayonet, which pierced him through and through, and no doubt had killed him instantly. The civilian had received a terrible cut across the head. He was still groaning as they carried him up stairs, but he also died in a few minutes. At first they thought it was one of the barricade men, but no one knew him. Oswald also approached the table on which he had been laid, and after having examined the distorted countenance for a moment, he saw to his indescribable horror that the stiff bleeding corpse was all that remained of the Merry Andrew, the inexhaustible clown and punster, his boon companion of so many a wild night, the same man from whom he had parted in anger and hatred a few hours ago--Albert Timm.

CHAPTER XVIII.

During the next hour a pause occurred in the fight near the barricade in Broad street. The regiment of the line, which had charged it five times in vain, had been reinforced by several battalions of the Guards who had been fighting in King street, and successfully taken several barricades. These troops followed different tactics; they did not advance in close columns, but in small detachments on both sides of the street, as much as possible under cover, and keeping

apart till they could form once more close before the barricade. But if their losses were smaller, their success was by no means greater. The besieged systematically saved their fire till the last moment, and then fired so coolly at the right moment, that the position seemed to be simply impregnable. In fact the firing on the part of the troops had ceased for some time, and the men behind the barricade could rest awhile.

They needed it sadly. Mostly entirely exhausted, blackened with powder, all more or less dangerously wounded, they sat and lay about in small groups, strangely lighted up by the red light of the watch-fires that had been kindled in the middle of the street, by the white glare of the candles in the windows, and the pale rays of the full moon, which was still gliding gently and silently through the blue ether above. Amid the groups of fighting men, women and girls were seen bringing provisions from the neighboring houses. There was no lack of beer, and wine even, and it looked as if here and there too much had been distributed. At least every now and then sudden shouts and yells were heard from one or the other group, after which the deep silence became all the more oppressive. Upon a cask which formed part of the barricade sat Oldenburg; his long legs were hanging down, and he blew thick clouds of smoke from his cigar. His air was that of a man who has assumed a serious responsibility and is determined to carry out what he has undertaken. He did not doubt for a moment that the barricade would be taken, and that he would fall at the head of his men; but this was the last thing he thought of. To die in a good cause had no terrors for him. Oldenburg actually fancied he felt a faint desire for death in his heart. Had he not seen how the sweet hope of at last calling Melitta his own had been recently put off once more, and further than ever? He could not blame her that the memory of her fondness for Oswald was weighing her down like an Alp, and made it impossible to her to raise her eyes boldly to a better and more faithful man; but the very fact that he could not but honor her for the feeling which parted them made him so very hopeless and helpless. He had often and often repeated to himself the word that Melitta spoke so touchingly whenever she saw him sorrowful: Patience! But in vain! He was consumed by impatience, by his inability to do anything else for his happiness than to fold his hands in his lap and to wait with trusting heart for something vague and uncertain.

Just then the revolution had broken out and Oldenburg breathed more freely, as thousands with him. Every one had borne some intolerable burden, which he now hoped to shake off. Oldenburg was glad that Melitta was not present. He had at the very beginning sent her word through old Baumann to stay at her safe place of refuge. When he sent the old man to her he thought in his heart: We meet again happier or never more! He now only wished for Oswald to fight by his side for liberty and for Melitta. The issue might then be an ordeal, and Melitta crown the victorious survivor.

And his wish was fulfilled. For an hour Oswald had been fighting by his side like a man who prefers death to life. Wherever a defective part of the barricade had to be repaired under the fire of the enemy, wherever danger was most threatening, there Oswald was sure to be; and as Oldenburg also chose the most exposed positions, the two men were constantly side by side. But as soon as the danger was over Oswald withdrew, and Oldenburg did not follow him as his withdrawing was evidently intentional. And yet the noble man was anxious, now that every hour might be their last, to tell his former friend that they ought to forget the past and join the hands that were on both sides engaged in a great and holy cause.

Oldenburg's eyes followed Oswald, as he went to his post, at some little distance from him, and stood there, rifle in hand, near Berger, by the watch-fire. In the changeful light their forms now stood forth brightly, and now were lost in the dark shade. This lent them something strange, almost supernatural. Oldenburg could not help thinking of the spirits who beckon to the ferryman on the banks of the Acheron.

He rose and went up to them.

"What do you think, gentlemen," he said; "are we going to be left alone long?"

"I believe," said Oswald, "they are either short of ammunition or they have sent for reinforcements."

"I think that is more likely. What do you think, Berger?"

Berger had been standing there, his arms crossed, and his large eyes fixed immoveably upon the flames. Suddenly he stretched out his hands and said, in a hollow, spectre-like tone of voice,

"Listen! They are coming! The earth trembles beneath them! How they whip their horses, who are tired dragging more and more weapons against the people! Now they alight! And now they cram the iron mouths full to bursting. We will----"

"Berger!" said Oldenburg, placing his hand on his arm.

Berger started like one who is suddenly roused from a heavy dream. He looked around in confusion.

"What is it?" he asked, staring at Oldenburg.

"You are exhausted by excessive efforts, Berger. Lie down for an hour. I will have you called

when you are needed."

"Exhausted?" said Berger, relapsing into his dreamy state. "Yes; exhausted unto death. But that is why an hour is not enough; when I go to sleep, it must be an eternal sleep."

At that moment Schmenckel stepped up, who had been on guard upon the barricade, and said,

"There is something very peculiar going on. I believe they are going to give us artillery now."

Berger started up.

"Did I not tell you?" he cried. "The decisive hour has come. Up! up! you brave men; all of you! One more merry dance with the weird fairies of life, and then to unbroken rest in the cool night of death. Up! up!"

At this call some of the men rose from their resting-places near the fire, seized their arms, and hastened with Berger to their posts. Others remained where they were and laughed at the false alarm. But they also were quickly enough upon their feet when an explosion came which shook the houses to their foundations, and grape and canister came rattling against the barricade and the faces of the houses.

"Now they are in earnest," said Oldenburg, turning to Oswald. But the place where Oswald had been standing was empty.

"He avoids me," said Oldenburg, sadly, "and yet my conscience is quiet. I have no reproach to make to myself as far as he is concerned."

He hastened to the barricade, where the captain's presence was more needed than ever.

The first gun, which had opened the dance, was now joined by three more, and the thunder came almost uninterruptedly, and with it the iron hail. There was no doubt they wanted to make a break in the barricade, and then charge once more with better result. Oldenburg, not wishing to expose the lives of his men unnecessarily, had given orders that they should keep as much as possible under cover, and not return the fire of the enemy, but save every shot for the moment of the charge itself. He had also doubled the number of men with stones on the house-tops. Finally he chose from among the men who had shown most bravery a select corps, which was to fall upon the attacking party and engage them till the others should have had time to seek shelter behind the barricades in the adjoining streets.

Oldenburg had just given his directions when battery opened a most terrific fire and then suddenly became silent.

One moment all was perfectly still.

Perfectly still, and then the iron clang of twenty drums beating the charge. And with every beat the column drew nearer, a living wall, apparently irresistible in its approach.

Not a sound on the barricade. Up on the roofs stand men and boys, with heavy stones in their hands; in the windows of the houses, and near the openings in the barricade, the marksmen are watching, with their rifles close to the eye.

And the drums beat and the living wall comes nearer. Already one can distinguish the handsome uniform of the Guards; one can see the beardless faces of the men, and the black-bearded countenance of the gigantic officer who leads the attack. And now the officer gives a command, drowned in the beating of the drums; and as he waves his bright sword the men cheer, and with three hurrahs they rush forward. But before they reach the barricade twenty rifles are discharged, and hundreds of stones are hurled down from above upon the living wall, and it wavers and trembles like a huge wave in the ocean which dashes its foam-crested waters against a rocky coast.

Nevertheless it rolls on, and now it breaks against the barricade. The officer pulls out huge pieces. Nothing, it seems, can resist his gigantic strength. But suddenly a man in a worn-out velvet coat, who wields as his only weapon a rifle-barrel without the stock, leaps down and faces the officer. When the officer sees the man he starts back as if struck by lightning, and roars to his men: "Halt! Halt!"

They halt.

The men of the barricade avail themselves of this pause and fire once more. The officer falls dead, face foremost; with him half a dozen men fall, more or less dangerously wounded. A panic seizes the troops. The officers try in vain to lead them to the attack.

The barricade is safe once more; they cheer again and again; they embrace each other with tears of joy in their eyes. But they have paid dearly for their victory. While part of the men repair the barricade, which is half destroyed, another part is busy with the dead and wounded. The man in the velvet coat brings up the corpse of a man, who has fought like a hero in the front rank, and who has fallen by his side, pierced with the enemy's bayonets.

Oldenburg comes up to help them.

"Is he dead?"

"Yes."

They place him on the ground near one of the fires. The pale face is so quiet, so peaceful, and a gentle, happy smile plays about the pale lips.

Oldenburg looks over to Oswald, who is kneeling on the other side, of the body. He is startled. The young man's countenance is as pale as that of the dead man, and his eyes glare like those of a madman.

"Great God, Oswald! are you wounded?"

"I am afraid I am," replies Oswald, and sinks down by the side of Berger's body.

CHAPTER XIX.

The sun has risen twice since the night of the barricades. A wondrously beautiful spring day is shining upon the immense city. The splendid palaces show their noble outlines clearly against the bright sky, while their mighty columns and richly-adorned friezes are bathed in the golden morning sun. And so there are bathing in the same golden morning sun thousands and thousands of happy men who wander in endless crowds through the city. All the pilgrims feel like pious pilgrims who have long painfully wandered through desert wastes and over rough mountains to the sacred image of Our Lady, and at last they behold the Holy One, and she smiles upon them forgiveness of their sins, and peace and joy and hearty confidence. Now they go back to their homes, silent and full of emotion, or loud in pious songs, praising the Holy One who has done wondrously for them....

"Poor, gullible people! As if all the saints of the almanac could help you if you do not help yourself--as if the sins of a generation could be atoned for in a single night--as if a diseased state could be cured in a day! You are willing to forget and to forgive those who have never, never forgiven you anything, and who will never forget that you have sinned against them as they look upon it. Your houses still show the traces of the fratricidal struggle. Your roofs, from which in your despair you hurled stones upon the heads of your enemies, are still uncovered. The pavements which you tore up to form a wall against reckless tyranny, have not yet been replaced. The dead even, who shed their blood for you, have not yet been buried. The wounded--the mortally wounded, are still waiting on their sorrowful couch for the hour of release----"

It was Oldenburg who spoke these words to himself as he stood in one of the windows of the hotel, and looked down upon the people who now merrily swarmed over the place where two days ago a huge barricade had been erected; where men had fought with bitter hatred and gallant bravery; where many a noble patriot had breathed his last.

Two of these victims were in the hotel.

Below, a few feet only above the pavement on which joyous crowds were thronging, a pale man was lying in his coffin, from whose face a gray beard was flowing in ample locks over a deep wound, from which night before last his heart's blood has escaped.

And in the same room, on his bed of sorrow, lay a young man who had been mortally wounded by the side of the gray-haired enthusiast, and whose powerful, youthful strength had so far struggled fearfully with pitiless death, causing him unspeakable suffering.

After the charge in which Berger fell and Oswald received his fatal wound, the troops had not renewed the attack; partly because the position was really held to be impregnable, partly because hesitation prevailed among the ruling spirits, and partly because the death of Prince Waldenberg, who had led the last charge with almost rapturous bravery and had fallen in the attack, had disheartened the men, so that the leaders dreaded a second failure. They had contented themselves with an occasional fire at the barricade; and at last, towards five o'clock, the last shot had been fired.

Oldenburg had stood by his post till he was certain that no new attack was to be expected, and that the troops had received orders to retreat. Only then he had called Schmenckel, who had stood by him like a true squire through the whole fight, and they had left the partially abandoned barricade the last of them all.

Schmenckel had told Oldenburg that same night, with big tears rolling down his cheeks, that the officer who had fallen before their eyes, had been his son. Oldenburg had been greatly surprised when he heard the somewhat confused account which honest Caspar Schmenckel gave of his life, and especially the events of the last days--the plot of poor Albert Timm, whose body had been carried to the hospital--of brave Jeremy Goodheart, who had led the surprise in the Dismal Hole, and who had been the first to escape--the interviews between Count Malikowsky and the Princess Letbus, and the manner in which Albert Timm had boasted he could transform Oswald Stein at any moment into a Baron Grenwitz.

Oldenburg knew the world, and especially the higher regions mentioned in Schmenckel's story, too well to doubt for a moment that the events he narrated were possible or even plausible.

Did Oswald know his own history? But after all that was now perfectly immaterial. Death was not likely to make any difference between the son of Baron Harald and the son of Mr. Stein, teacher of languages; and Oswald was no longer his own, he belonged to death.

That had been ascertained an hour after he had been wounded. About that time medical aid had been procured; Doctor Braun arrived in company with Melitta. The latter had still been with Sophie when old Baumann brought the news of the conflict and that Oldenburg was in command at the barricade in Broad street. Melitta had at once decided to join Oldenburg, and Sophie saw very well that Franz could not stay at home, when so many thousands were risking their lives, and therefore said nothing when he declared his intention to accompany Melitta. Old Baumann and Bemperlein, who were also present, were to stay with Sophie to guard her and the children.

Melitta and Franz found much difficulty in making their way, and it was only after several hours wandering, and often at the peril of their lives, that they reached Broad street.

To see his beloved there, was, however, ample compensation to Oldenburg for all he had endured. Melitta embraced and kissed him amid tears, in Braun's presence; she clung to his arm and could not let him go again. She had trembled for his life, and was all joy now to find him again, blackened with powder but in the full glory of his manhood, till he whispered in her ear that Oswald was lying, mortally wounded, in one of the rooms of the hotel. Then Melitta had withdrawn her arm from his, and had said--pale and distressed, but not overcome--that she would attend to the poor man, as it was her duty.

Since then a day and a night had passed--an eternity for those who watched by the bedside of the patient. The wounded man suffered indescribable agony. He would now rise madly, so that it required all of Schmenckel's gigantic strength to put him back in his bed, and now describe volubly all the fearful images which crowded his overwrought brain. He who in life was so reserved, had thus revealed the secret of his birth, a revelation which perfectly overwhelmed Mrs. Black, and made her bitterly regret her long-continued longing for Marie, which was so sadly gratified by the sight of Marie's son--on his death-bed. The old lady, however, remitted none of her tender cares; she was ever busy; and if for moments nothing could be done, she folded her hands and prayed Heaven to save the son of her darling daughter.

But that had been from the beginning a hopeless wish. Franz had immediately pronounced Oswald's wound fatal, and given him one or at best two days' life. It is possible, however, he added, that he may recover his consciousness once more before he dies.

Melitta looked forward to that moment with great sadness. She now knew that she loved Oswald only as an unfortunate brother. Oswald had not once mentioned her name in all his wanderings; he had only spoken of a dear, sweet woman, against whom he had sinned grievously, and who could never forgive him for what he had done. This recollection had each time brought bitter tears to his eyes, and Melitta had wiped them from his face and wished she could tell him that she had long since forgiven him all.

Then the wounded man had groaned so loud that Oldenburg turned quickly from the window and stepped up to the bed where Melitta was sitting. But the groan had not been one of pain; it was the deep breathing of a breath which had been relieved of an unbearable burden. What Franz had foretold had happened now--the pain had left him, and with it the last hope of life.

As long as the pain of the torn vitals had raged within him the mind of the poor sufferer had been sunk in an abyss of horror, amid hideous masks that stared at him through hollow eyes, amid monsters that tore him with their sharp teeth, and dead men who glided by wrapped in their winding sheets, and displaying as they turned some sweet faces that had been dear to him. And the abyss had grown still darker--he had been driven through narrow crevices, pursued by demoniac howls which re-echoed fearfully from the bare rocky walls, and the hot breath of hell all around him. Then he heard a voice calling, Oswald! Oswald! And at the silvery sound of this dear soft voice all the masks and monsters had vanished and the howling of demons had ceased. The hot, narrow passages widened into lofty, airy halls which began to sway gently to and fro, so that there were no longer arches of stone but the majestic tops of venerable, giant trees, with merrily singing birds skipping through the green foliage, and here and there golden rays of the sun. And again the voice called Oswald! Oswald! and he flew towards the sound, through the dark shady woods, over mossy ground, through which silvery veins of water were playing. And it grew lighter and lighter around him; his eye saw beyond the cool twilight, which felt so sweet and pleasant to him, a land full of blooming life, of golden harvests, and smiling sunshine. And as

his eye eagerly drew in the unaccustomed sight there came floating over the flowery fields and the ripening wheat-fields two lofty, beautiful forms. At first he did not know them, but as they came nearer he recognized both. They were Oldenburg and Melitta; and he stretched out his arms towards them and said: "You dear and good ones! can you forgive me?"

Then they bent over him, and he felt their kisses on his lips. He would have wept aloud with blissful delight, but he could not. Sweet weariness flowed through his limbs. He wanted to open his eyes, but a dear warm hand softly closed them; the land of harvests and sunshine faded away, the lofty forms floated back into soft mists, the woods sounded louder, he was drawn back again into the cool twilight, and then it was night aboriginal, eternal night.

* * * * *

And once more the spring sun has risen twice, and once more the immense city wears a festive air; but the color of this solemnity is that of mourning, for the feast they celebrate is the feast of the dead.

Black banners are waving from the towers and parapets of the royal palace; mourning crape is floating from all the windows; crape is seen on the bonnets of ladies and on the hats of men, on the arms of countless numbers, who are all making their way towards the beautiful open square in the heart of the city, where, amid temples bathed in the rays of the noon-day sun, the coffins of all the victims of that night of terror are standing on a huge platform. One hundred and eighty-seven coffins, some containing women and children, innocent flowers, that fell under the pitiless scythe when the grim mowers of the bloody harvest were reaping the field on which the seed of liberty was to have ripened.

And even this did not complete the bloody harvest. The hospitals, as well as numberless private houses, had besides their wounded men, many of whom were never to see the golden day of freedom.

And now the bells begin to toll solemnly on all the steeples--the same bells which in the night of the barricade had rang the alarm.

The church ceremonies are ended. The procession is in motion. A procession such as that city had never seen; such as the world's history perhaps never recorded.

In endless length the coffins with their rich loads of flowers are borne on the shoulders of citizens, and twenty thousand men of every age and every rank form the escort. On every coffin is a paper with the name of the deceased. Unmeaning names! Who was Oswald Stein? Who was Eberhard Wolfgang Berger?

What is there in a name? What matters it who they were in life? what they did and suffered, blundered and sinned, desired and failed to achieve? All desires are crowned, all sins are expiated, by their dying for freedom. This was felt by the hundred thousands who stood on both sides of the streets through which the procession moved, reverently baring their heads before every coffin.

And thus the endless procession moves slowly in silent, solemn stillness to its destination, a high hill at one of the gates of the city, where the men of the barricades have on the day before dug out an immense square hole. The procession enters the cutting. The bearers quietly set down the coffins and move on, and so the others, till the whole procession has passed out again.

And the thousands are standing around in solemn silence. Guns are fired and a whole nation prays at the graves of its martyrs.

For whom?

For the dead?

They need their pious wishes no longer in their cool resting places, in their eternal sleep.

But the living?

Their lot is not worse, but harder. They must work and be useful in the hot dust of every day's life, without rest or repose, for tyranny never sleeps. They must work and watch, lest the night come once more in which the brave feel sad and the wicked delight; that night full of romantic masks and fantastic spectres; that night so poor in sound strong men, and so rich in problematic characters; that long, wretched night, out of which only the thunderstorm of revolution can lead through bloody dawn to freedom and to light.

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THROUGH NIGHT TO LIGHT: A NOVEL ***

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