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Friedrich Spielhagen**

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**THE BREAKING OF THE STORM.**

THE

**BREAKING OF THE STORM.**

BY

**FRIEDRICH SPIELHAGEN.**

Translated from the German

BY

**S. E. A. H. STEPHENSON.**

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL I.

**LONDON:  
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1877.**

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**THE BREAKING OF THE STORM.**

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**BOOK I.**

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**CHAPTER I.**

The weather had grown worse towards evening. The groups of navvies on their way to the new railroad at Sundin cowered closer together between the piled-up barrels, casks, and chests on the fore-deck, while the passengers had almost disappeared from the poop. Two elderly

gentlemen who had been talking a good deal together during the journey now stood on the starboard side, looking at the island round which the steamer had to pass to the south-west, and whose level shores, sweeping in broad curves towards the promontory, appeared every moment more distinctly.

"So that is Warnow?"

"No. I beg your pardon, President--that is Ahlbeck, a fishing village, which is, however, on the Warnow estates. Warnow itself lies farther inland. You can just see the church tower over the edge of the dunes."

The President dropped the eye-glass with which he had vainly searched for the tower.

"You have sharp eyes, General, and are quick at finding out your bearings!"

"I have only been there once, it is true," answered the General; "but since then I have had only too much cause for studying this line of coast on the map."

The President smiled.

"Yes, yes; it is classical ground," said he; "it has been long fought over--long and vainly."

"And I am convinced that it was right that the struggle should be in vain: at least, that it should have only a negative result," said the General.

"I am not sure that it will not be taken up again," answered the President. "Count Golm and Co. have been making immense efforts lately."

"After you have so clearly proved that it is impossible that the railway should pay?"

"And you that the harbour would be useless!"

"Pardon me, President, the decision was not left to me: or, to speak more correctly, I declined to make it. The only place in the least suitable for the harbour would be just there, in the southernmost corner of the bay, protected by Wissow Head--that is to say, on the Warnow property. It is true that I am only a trustee for my sister's estates----"

"I know, I know," interrupted the President; "old-fashioned Prussian honesty, which becomes over-scrupulous sometimes. Count Golm and Co. are less scrupulous."

"So much the worse for them," said the General.

The two gentlemen turned and went up to a young girl, who was sitting in a sheltered place under the lee of the deck cabin, and passing the time as best she could, partly in reading, partly in drawing in a little album.

"You would like to remain on deck, I suppose, Elsa?" said the General.

"Are you both going into the cabin?" answered the girl, looking up from her book. "I think it is horrible down below; but it certainly is too chilly here for you, President."

"It really is excessively chilly," answered the President, turning up the collar of his overcoat, and casting a glance at the sky; "I think we shall have rain before sunset even now. You really should come with us, do not you think so, General?"

"Elsa is weatherproof," answered the General, smiling. "But you might put a shawl or something round you. Shall I fetch you anything?"

"Thank you, papa! I have everything I can possibly want here," said Elsa, pointing to her bundle of plaids and rugs; "I will cover myself up if it is necessary. *Au revoir!*"

She bowed gracefully to the President, gave her father a loving look and took up her book again, while the two gentlemen turned into the narrow passage between the cabin and the bulwarks.

She read for a few minutes, then looked up again and followed with her eyes the cloud of smoke which was still issuing from the funnel in thick, dark, eddying masses and rolling down upon the vessel. The man at the wheel, too, still stood on the same spot, still turning the wheel sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left, and again holding it immovable in his rough hands. And, yes, there was still the man who had been, walking up and down with such indefatigable perseverance from end to end of the vessel, and had showed in so doing a steadiness in his movements which Elsa, in the course of the day, had repeatedly tried to imitate, but with very doubtful results.

Otherwise, Elsa thought, he had not much to distinguish him; and she said to herself that she should hardly have noticed him amongst a greater number of people, certainly not have observed him attentively, perhaps not even have seen him; and that if in the course of the day she had looked at him constantly and really studied him, it was only because there had not been much to

see, to observe, or to study.

Her sketch-book which she was now turning over proved this. This was meant for a view of the harbour of Stettin. It would require a good deal of imagination to make anything out of that, thought Elsa. This one has come out better--the flat meadows, the cows, the floating beacon, smooth water beyond with a few sails, another strip of meadow, and the sea in the distance. The man at the wheel is not bad either: he stood still. But the "Indefatigable" is a terrible failure, a positive caricature! That is the results of being always in motion! At last! Only five minutes, Mr. What's-your-name! this really might be good, the attitude is capital!

The attitude was certainly simple enough. He was leaning against a bench with his hands in his pockets, and as he looked straight out into the sea towards the west, his face was in full light, notwithstanding that the sun was hidden behind clouds, and it was also--what Elsa always particularly liked to draw--in profile.

"A fine profile," thought Elsa, "although the finest features--the large, good-humoured blue eyes--are not seen at their best so. But, on the other hand, the dark beard will come out all the better, I can always succeed with beards; the hands in the pockets is very convenient, the left leg entirely hidden by the right, not particularly artistic but most convenient for the artist; now the bench--a little bit of the bulwarks and the 'Indefatigable' is finished." Elsa held the book at a little distance from her to look at the sketch as a picture; she was highly pleased. "That shows that I really can finish off a thing when I do it with all my heart," she said to herself, and wrote under the picture: "The 'Indefatigable.' With all my heart, 26th August, '72, E. v. W."

While Elsa had been so busily trying to put upon paper the young man's figure and features, her image also had been present to his mind; and to him it was all the same, whether he shut his eyes or kept them open, he always saw her with equal clearness, and always equally graceful and charming, whether at the moment of their departure from Stettin, when her father introduced her to the President, and she bowed so prettily; or as she breakfasted with the two gentlemen, and laughed so merrily as she put her glass to her lips; or as she stood on the bridge with the Captain, and the wind blew her dress so close to the slender figure, and the grey veil fluttered like a flag over her shoulder; or as she spoke to the navy's wife on the deck who was sitting in front of her on the coiled-up ropes and hushing her baby wrapped up in a shawl; as she stooped down, lifted the shawl for one moment, and looked with a smile at the hidden treasure; and as, a minute later, she passed by, and a severe look of the brown eyes asked him how he had dared to watch her? or as she now sat against the cabin and read and drew, and read again, and looked up to the clouds of smoke or to the sailor at the wheel. It was extraordinary how firmly her image had impressed itself on his mind in the short time; but then for more than a year he had seen nothing but the sky above and the water below. It was no wonder after all if the first pretty and nice-looking girl he saw after such long abstinence made so great an impression upon his feelings.

"And besides," said the young man to himself, "in three hours we shall be at Sundin, and then farewell, farewell for ever more. But what are they doing? You are surely not going over the Oster sands with this tide?"

With these latter words he turned to the man at the wheel.

"Well, sir, it's a fact," answered the man, rolling his quid from one cheek to the other; "seems to me, too, we ought to starboard a bit, but the Captain thinks----"

The young man did not wait for the end of the speech. In former years he had often made this voyage; but he had passed the spot towards which their course was now directed only a few days ago, and had been alarmed to see that where there had formerly been fifteen feet of water, there were now only twelve. To-day, after the strong west wind had kept the tide back to such an extent, there could hardly be ten feet, and the steamer drew eight. And yet there was no lessening of speed, no soundings were taken, not one of the proper precautions thought of! Was the Captain mad?

The young man ran so hastily past Elsa, and his eyes, as they fell upon her, had in them so singular an expression, that she rose involuntarily and looked after him. In another moment he was on the bridge beside the stout, elderly Captain, to whom he spoke long and earnestly, and at last even as it seemed warmly, while he repeatedly pointed with his hand to a particular spot in the direction in which the ship was going.

A strange feeling of anxiety came upon Elsa, such as she had not experienced in the whole journey. It could not be a small matter which roused such excitement in this quiet, good-humoured-looking man! And now she was certain of what she had already more than once guessed--that he was a sailor, and in that case no doubt a first-rate one, who was of course in the right, though the fat old Captain did shrug his shoulders so coolly, and point in the same direction, and then look through his telescope and shrug his shoulders again, while the other now hastily descended the steps from the bridge to the poop, and came straight towards her as if intending to address her.

But he did not do so at once, although, as he hastened by her, his look met hers, and he no doubt read the silent inquiry in her eyes and on her lips. He hesitated a moment, and--yes, really--

he turned back, and was now close behind her.

"Madam----"

Her heart beat as if it would burst. She turned round.

"Madam," he repeated, "it is wrong, I know, to alarm you, and perhaps without cause. But it is not impossible--in fact, I think it is probable--that within five minutes we shall be ashore. I mean we shall run aground."

"Good heavens!" cried Elsa.

"I do not think any harm will come of it," continued the young man, "if the Captain--- Ha! we have only got half-steam on now--half-speed; but he ought to have reversed the engines, and probably even that would be too late now."

"Can he not be made to do it?"

"On board his own ship the Captain is supreme," answered the young man, smiling, in spite of his vexation. "I am a sailor myself, and in similar circumstances would yield just as little to any persuasions."

He lifted his cap, bowed, and moved a step away, then stopped again. A deeper light shone in the blue eyes, and a slight tremor came into the clear, strong voice as he continued:

"There is no question of real danger. We are near the shore, and the sea is tolerably smooth. I only wished that you might not be taken by surprise. Forgive my boldness."

He bowed again, and then quickly retired, as if he wished to avoid further questions.

"There is no question of danger," murmured Elsa. "It is a pity; I should like to have been saved by him. But my father must know this. The President ought to be prepared; he needs it more than I do."

She turned to the cabin; but already the diminished speed of the vessel, which in the last half-minute had still further lessened, had attracted the attention of the passengers assembled there. Her father and the President were already ascending the steps.

"What is the matter?" called the General.

"We cannot possibly be in Prora already?" said the President.

At that moment they all felt what seemed like an electric shock, while an odd, dull, grinding sound fell unpleasantly upon their ears. The keel had touched the sand-bank, but had not stuck fast. A shrill whistle, a couple of seconds' breathless silence, then the whole ship shook and quivered with the force of the reversed motion of the screw.

But what only a few minutes before would have averted the danger was too late now. The vessel had to pass backwards over the same sandbank which it had only just managed to get over. A larger wave in its retreat had forced the stern a few inches further down. The screw laboured vigorously; the ship heeled over a little, but remained fixed.

"What the devil is the meaning of this?" cried the General.

"There is no question of real danger," said Elsa quickly.

"Bless my soul! my dear young lady!" cried the President, who had turned very pale.

"We are very near in shore, and the sea is tolerably quiet," said Elsa.

"What do you know about it?" cried the General. "The sea is not a thing to be trifled with."

"I am not trifling, papa," said Elsa.

The hasty movements and shouts and cries that suddenly surrounded them on all sides, and the singular and uncomfortable position of the ship, all sufficiently proved that the prediction of the "Indefatigable" had come true, and that the steamer was aground.

## CHAPTER II.

Every effort to get the ship off had proved unavailing; indeed, it might even be considered fortunate that the screw had not been broken by the tremendous effort required of it. The ship had not heeled over any more, however; and if the night were not stormy, they might lie here peaceably till the next morning, when a passing vessel could take off the passengers and carry them farther on their journey, if they had not got afloat before then, which, indeed, might happen at any moment.

So spoke the Captain, whose coolness was undisturbed by the misfortune which his own obstinacy had caused.

There was the fact that on the charts, by which he and every other captain had to steer, fifteen feet were marked at this place; and the gentlemen at the head of affairs might take the blame to themselves and provide better charts, or, at any rate, proper buoys. And if, as he very well knew, other captains had for years past avoided this shoal, and had preferred to go some miles out of their way, he had constantly since then, and even the day before yesterday, crossed this very spot. However, he had no objection to launching the large boat and landing the passengers, for them to get on their way afterwards as best they could.

"The man is drunk or mad!" said the President, when the Captain had turned his broad back and retired to his post. "It is a sin and a shame that such a man should command a ship, even a mere tub; but I will have a strict inquiry held, and he shall receive exemplary punishment."

The President's long thin person quivered with anger, fear, and cold; the General shrugged his shoulders.

"That is all very fine and very well, my dear President," said he; "but it will come a little too late, and will not help us out of our awkward position. On principle, I never interfere in matters which I do not understand; but I wish we had some one on board who could advise us what to do. We must not ask the sailors--that would be encouraging insubordination. What do you want, Elsa?"

Elsa had looked at him meaningly. He went up to her and repeated his question.

"Ask that gentleman," said Elsa.

"What gentleman?"

"That one there; he is a sailor, he can certainly advise you best."

The General fixed his sharp eyes upon the person designated.

"Ah, that man," said he. "He really does look as if he might----"

"Does not he?" said Elsa. "And he told me before that we should run aground."

"Of course he does not belong to the ship?"

"Oh no--at least, I think--but speak to him yourself."

The General went up to the "Indefatigable."

"I am told, sir, that you are a sailor."

"I am."

"Navigating officer?"

"Merchant captain: Reinhold Schmidt."

"My name is General von Werben. I should be much obliged to you, sir, if you would give me your opinion, as a sailor, upon our situation; of course in strict confidence. I should be sorry to ask you to give evidence against a comrade, or in any way to shake his authority, which we may still possibly stand much in need of. Is the captain, in your opinion, to blame for our mishap?"

"Yes and no, General. No, because the charts by which, according to rule, we must be guided, show a channel in this place. The charts were right, too, till within the last few years. Since then there has been a great deal of silting up, and also, in consequence of the west wind which has prevailed for some weeks, the water has been constantly falling. More prudent men avoid this spot on that account. I, for my part, should have avoided it."

"Good! And what do you think of our situation? Are we in danger? or are we likely to be in danger?"

"I think not. The ship lies almost straight, and on smooth sand. If nothing new happens, it may lie so a long time."

"The Captain is right, then, in keeping us on board?"

"I think so; all the more that the wind, for the first time for days past, seems inclined to veer round to the east, and if that happens, we have good grounds for supposing that we shall be afloat again in a few hours. However----"

"However?"

"Man is liable to error, General. If the wind--it is south-east now; the thing is not likely, but it is possible--if the wind should get round to the west again, and blow harder, perhaps very hard, then there might be serious danger."

"We ought, then, to take advantage of the Captain's permission to leave the ship?"

"As the passage would be easy, and perfectly safe, I cannot at any rate advise against it; but then it should be done while there is still sufficient daylight: it would be best immediately."

"And you? You would remain--of course?"

"Of course, General."

"Thank you."

The General touched his cap with a slight bend of the head. Reinhold lifted his for a moment, returning the movement with a stiff bow.

"Well?" asked Elsa, as her father came back to her.

"The man must have been a soldier," answered the General.

"Why so?" asked the President.

"I wish I could always get such clear, explicit reports from my officers. The case stands thus."

He repeated what he had just heard from Reinhold, and wound up by saying that he would speak to the Captain about the immediate disembarkation of such passengers as wished it.

"For my part, I do not intend to put myself to such inconvenience, which may be unnecessary too, unless Elsa----"

"I, papa!" cried Elsa, "I should not think of such a thing."

The President was in much embarrassment. It was true that he had only that morning, on leaving Stettin, renewed a very slight former acquaintance with General von Werben; but now, after he had been in conversation with him all day, and had taken every opportunity of showing attentions to his daughter, he could not well do otherwise than declare, with a quiver of the lips, which was meant for a smile, that he would share with them as formerly the pleasures, so now the disagreeables of the journey. Should the worst come to the worst, the Prussian Government would be able to console itself for the loss of a president, who besides, as the father of six hopeful children, would have his name handed down to posterity, and could therefore make no claim upon the sympathy of his contemporaries.

Notwithstanding his resigned words, the worthy official was very uncomfortable at heart. In secret he cursed his own inconceivable thoughtlessness in having trusted himself to a "tub," merely to be at home a day sooner, instead of waiting for the next day's mail-boat; he cursed the General's "stupid security," and the young lady's "coquettish affectation of courage," and when a few minutes later the large boat was really launched, and in an incredibly short time, as it seemed to him, filled with the happily small number of deck passengers, and a few ladies and gentlemen from the after-cabin, and at first with a few powerful strokes of the oars, and soon after with sails hoisted, made all speed to the shore, he sighed deeply, and firmly resolved, at whatever cost, even at that of a scornful smile from the young lady's lips, that he also would leave the ship before night.

And night was approaching only too rapidly for his fears. The evening glow in the western sky was fading with every minute, and from the east, from the open sea, it grew darker and darker. How long would it be before the land, which to his short-sighted eyes already appeared only as an indistinct outline through the evening mists, would disappear altogether from his sight?

And there could be no doubt, too, that the waves were rising higher every minute, here and there even for the first time that day showing crests of white foam, and breaking with ever-increasing force against the unlucky ship! Added to this the horrible creaking of the yards, the dismal howling of the wind in the rigging, the intolerable roaring and hissing of the steam, which was being almost incessantly let off from the overheated boiler! The boiler would blow up perhaps finally, and the shattered limbs of the man who but now was buttoning up his overcoat, would be sent flying hither and thither through the air.

The President grew so hot at this idea that he unbuttoned his coat and then buttoned it up again as he was struck by the ice-cold wind.

"It is unendurable!" muttered he.

Elsa had long since observed how very little the President liked remaining on board ship, and that he had only made up his mind to it with evident unwillingness, out of consideration for his travelling companions.

She had been maliciously amused at first with the embarrassment which he tried to conceal, but now her good-nature conquered. He was after all an elderly gentleman, and apparently not very strong, and a civilian! he could not of course be expected to have either the intrepid courage or the indifference to hardships of her father, who had not even put on his greatcoat yet, and was now taking his usual evening walk up and down the deck. But papa had made up his mind, once for all, to remain; it would be quite useless to try to persuade him to go. "*He* must devise some means!" said she to herself.

Reinhold had disappeared after his last words with her father, and was not now on the after-deck; she went forward, therefore, and found him sitting on a great chest, looking through a pocket telescope towards the shore so intently that she had come close to him before he remarked her. He sprang hastily to his feet and turned towards her.

"How far have they got?" asked Elsa.

"They will land directly," he answered. "Will you look through this?"

He handed her the glass. At the moment when she touched it the metal still retained some warmth from the hand which had held it. In general this was not at all a pleasant sensation to her, but on this occasion she did not perceive it. She thought of it for a moment as she tried to bring the spot which he pointed out to her within the focus of the glass.

The attempt was unsuccessful; she could see nothing but undefined mist.

"I would rather trust to my eyes!" cried she, putting down the telescope. "I can see it so, quite plainly, there close in shore--in the white streak. What is that?"

"The surf."

"What has become of the sail?"

"It has been taken in so as not to have too much way on as they run in. But really you have a sailor's eye!"

Elsa smiled at the compliment, and Reinhold smiled too. Their looks met, and remained turned upon each other.

"I have a request to make to you," said Elsa, without dropping her eyes.

"And I was about to make one to you," answered he, looking steadily into the brown stars which shone up towards him, "I wanted to ask you also to go on shore. We shall be afloat in an hour, but the night will be stormy, and we shall be obliged to anchor as soon as we have passed Wissow Head." He pointed to the promontory. "Under the best of circumstances the situation would not be pleasant, at the worst it might be very unpleasant. I should like to know that you were safe from either alternative."

"Thank you," said Elsa, "and now my request need not be made;" and she told Reinhold why she had come.

"That happens most fortunately," cried he, "but there is not a moment to lose. I will speak to your father immediately. We must go at once."

"We?"

"With your permission I will take you on shore myself."

"Thank you," said Elsa again, with a deep breath. She held out her hand to him; he took the small delicate hand in his, and again their looks met.

"That hand may be trusted," thought Elsa, "and the eyes too!" And aloud she said: "You must not think, however, that I am afraid of remaining here! it is really only on the poor President's account."

She withdrew her hand, and hastened away towards her father, who was already surprised at her long absence, and now came in search of her.

In the act of following her, Reinhold saw lying at his feet a little pale grey glove. She must have dropped it just now, as she took the telescope.

He stooped quickly, picked it up, and put it in his pocket.

"She will not have that back again," said he to himself.



## CHAPTER III.

Reinhold was right; there was not a moment to be lost. As the little boat which he steered cut through the foaming waters, the sky was gradually obscured by black clouds which threatened soon to extinguish the last gleam of light in the west. In addition to this the wind, which was blowing violently, veered suddenly round from south to north, and it became necessary, in order to enable the boat to return more quickly to the ship, to land at a different place from that where the large boat, which they already saw on its way back, had discharged its passengers. This had been at the fishing village of Ahlbeck, in the centre of the bay, immediately under Wissow Head. They were obliged to keep close to the wind, and more to the north, where there was hardly space for a single hut, far less for a fishing village, on the narrow beach under the bare dunes; and Reinhold might think himself fortunate in being just able to bring the boat round by a bold manoeuvre so near to the shore, that the landing of the travellers with the few articles of luggage which they had brought from the ship could be effected without much difficulty.

"I am afraid we have only fallen from the frying-pan into the fire," said the President in a melancholy tone.

"It is a comfort to me that it is not our fault," answered the General, not without some sharpness in his deep voice.

"Oh! certainly not, most surely not!" admitted the President; "*mea maxima culpa!* my own fault entirely, Fräulein von Werben. But you must confess that our situation is deplorable, really miserably deplorable!"

"I don't know," answered Elsa; "I think it is quite beautiful here."

"I congratulate you with all my heart," said the President; "but for my part I should prefer a fire, a wing of chicken, and half a bottle of St. Julien; but if it is a consolation only to have companions in misfortune, it is a double one to know that what to the sober experience of the one is a very real misfortune, appears to the youthful fancy of the other as a romantic adventure."

The President had hit the mark, though he spoke in jest. The whole thing appeared to Elsa as a romantic adventure, in which she found most real and sincere pleasure. When Reinhold brought her the first news of the threatening danger, she was certainly startled, but not for a moment had she felt afraid, not even when angry men, shrieking women, and crying children had hurried from the ship, which seemed doomed to destruction, into the large boat, which tossed up and down on the dark waves, while from the open sea the evening drew in darkly and gloomily. The tall sailor with the bright blue eyes had said that there was no danger; he must know; then why should she be afraid? And if danger should arise, he was a man who would be sure to do the right thing at the right moment, and would know how to meet the danger. This feeling of security had not deserted her even when they came through the surf, the little boat tossing about like a nutshell in the foaming waves, the President as pale as death perpetually exclaiming, "Bless my soul!" and even her father's grave face showing a shade of anxiety. She had only looked towards the man at the helm, and the blue eyes had shone as brightly as before, even more brightly as he smiled in answer to her inquiring glance. Then as the boat ran ashore, and the sailors carried the President, her father, and the two servants to land, and she stood at the end meditating a bold spring, she had found herself suddenly encircled by two strong arms, and so half carried, half springing, she hardly knew how, landed on dry ground without wetting the sole of her foot.

And so she now stood here, a few paces apart from the men, who were consulting together, wrapped in her cloak, and with a feeling of such happiness as she believed she had never yet experienced. How wonderfully beautiful it was, too! Before her the dark, raging, thundering, endless sea, over which the black and threatening night drew on; right and left as far as the eye could see the line of white foaming surf, the glorious moist wind blustering round her, howling in her ears, blowing her dress about, even driving some flecks of foam in her face; behind her the barren ghostly-looking dunes, on which, still visible against the lighter western sky, the long bent-grass was nodding and beckoning--whither? further into this delightful, charming adventure, that was not ended yet, that could not end, that ought not to end! it would be too hard.

The gentlemen came towards her.

"Elsa," said the General, "we have decided to make an expedition over the dunes inland. The fishing hamlet at which the larger boat landed is nearly a mile off, and the walk there in the deep sand would be too fatiguing for our good friend the President. Besides, we should hardly find any accommodation there."

"If only we do not lose our way on the dunes!" sighed the President.

"Captain Schmidt's knowledge of the ground will guarantee us against that," said the General.

"I can hardly call it knowledge of the ground, General," replied Reinhold. "I have only once, and that was six years ago, looked over the country inland from the top of these dunes; but I distinctly remember having seen a farmhouse, or something of the sort, in that direction. I will answer for finding the place; but what sort of accommodation there will be there I cannot venture to say."

"At any rate we cannot spend the night here," said the General; "so forwards! Will you take my arm, Elsa?"

"No, thank you, papa. I can get up without it."

And Elsa sprang up the side of the dune after Reinhold, who, hastening forward, had already reached the top; while her father and the President followed more slowly, and the two servants with the baggage brought up the rear.

"Well," cried Elsa gaily, as somewhat breathless she came up to Reinhold, "are we at the end of our resources, like the President?"

"You may laugh," answered Reinhold, "but I begin to feel a little anxious already about the responsibility I have taken on myself. There--" and he pointed over some lower dunes inland where the advancing evening mist obscured all individual objects--"it must be there."

"Must be there if you are right! but must you be right?"

As if in answer to her mocking question, a light suddenly appeared in the precise direction in which Reinhold's outstretched arm pointed. A strange thrill of terror struck Elsa.

"Forgive me!" said she.

Reinhold did not know what her exclamation meant. At this moment the others also surmounted the steep hill.

"Per aspera ad astra!" panted the President.

"I congratulate you, sir!" said the General.

"There was a good deal of luck in it," answered Reinhold modestly.

"And people must have luck, I suppose!" cried Elsa, who had quickly conquered that curious feeling, and now relapsed into her gay spirits.

The little company proceeded farther over the dunes. Reinhold again in front, while Elsa now kept with the other gentlemen.

"It is curious enough," said the General, "that our mishap should occur just at this part of the coast. It really seems as if we were to be punished for our opposition; and certainly if my opinion that a harbour for men-of-war would be of no good here does remain unshaken, it seems to me now that we ourselves have nearly suffered shipwreck here, that a harbour of some sort----"

"Is an object devoutly to be wished!" cried the President; "heaven knows it is. And when I think of the fearful cold I shall catch from this nocturnal walk in the horrible wet sand, and that I might instead be sitting in a comfortable railway carriage, and could sleep in my own bed to-night, I repent of every word that I have spoken against the railroad, and on account of which I have quarrelled with all our great people here, and not least with Count Golm, whose friendship now would be very convenient to us."

"How so?" asked the General.

"Castle Golm, according to my reckoning, is only four or five miles inland from here; the little shooting-box on the Golmberg----"

"I remember," interrupted the General; "the second headland to the north--on our right. We cannot be much more than a couple of miles from it."

"You see," said the President, "how convenient that would be! and the Count is probably there. To speak the truth, I have been secretly counting on his hospitality, in case, as I greatly fear, we cannot find decent accommodation at the farmhouse, and you will not overcome your objection to going to Warnow, which certainly would be the simplest and most comfortable arrangement."

The President, who had spoken with many pauses and pantings for breath, here stood still; the General answered in a morose tone:

"You know that I am not on terms with my sister."

"But you said that the Baroness was in Italy."

"She was to return about this time; has perhaps already returned, and if she were not I would not go to Warnow, if it were but ten paces from here. But we must hasten to get under shelter, or to all that we have already gone through we shall add a thorough ducking."

For some time past, in fact, single drops had been falling from the thickening masses of cloud, and they had just with quickened steps reached the farmyard, and groped their way between two barns or outhouses, over very uneven ground, to the house from whose window the light gleamed, when the storm, which had long been threatening, broke in full fury.

## CHAPTER IV.

It was a small, low house, strangely disproportioned to the tall, broad-shouldered man, whose attention had been called by the furious barking of the yard-dog, and who now, thrusting back a yelping cur with his foot, received the belated guests in the doorway which he nearly filled. Small and low also was the room on the left hand into which he led them, and very scanty its furniture.

There was another room opposite, said Herr Pölitz; but he was not quite sure whether it was in order. He hoped, too, that they would excuse his wife; she could not come to them at once, but would soon have the honour of waiting upon them.

As the man spoke he arranged chairs with awkward politeness at the large round table which stood before the hard little sofa, and invited them to sit down. His hospitable efforts were evidently well meant, but there was a depressed tone in his voice which did not escape Elsa. She begged to be allowed to go in search of the mistress of the house, and without waiting for permission left the room, but came back in a few minutes, and after sending away the farmer under the pretence that his wife wanted to speak to him, said:

"We cannot remain here; these good people, with whom affairs do not seem to be very prosperous, have two sick children; the poor woman does not know which way to turn; it would be cruel to add to her anxiety by asking her to entertain so many guests."

"Then there really remains nothing to be done but to claim hospitality from the Count," said the President, turning to the General; "the Count and I are the best friends in the world; our little differences are quite beside the question in such a case as this. Besides, he is very likely not at his shooting-lodge, and we shall only have to do with his steward. It is altogether my opinion that we should migrate to Golmberg. The only question is how to get there?"

The farmer, who had meanwhile returned to the room, would not hear of the proposal. The weather was frightful, and even should the rain soon stop, the roads were bad; his wife would manage; the gentlefolk would make allowances.

The gentlemen looked irresolutely at each other, but Elsa stood firm.

"Men know nothing about such things," said she; "this is woman's business, and I have settled it all with your wife, Herr Pölitz. She is making me a cup of coffee now, and the gentlemen shall have some brandy and water. And while we refresh ourselves Herr Pölitz shall send a man on horseback to announce us at Golmberg, so that we may not arrive quite unexpectedly. If the Count is at home we owe him so much consideration; if he is not, so much the better--we shall only have to do with the steward. Then when the rain has stopped, Herr Pölitz will have the horses put to--"

"I have only a cart to offer you," said the farmer.

"And that will be quite sufficient," cried Elsa; "a carriage would not be at all suitable for shipwrecked people. And now, Herr Pölitz, do you be as good and wise as your good, wise little wife!"

She gave her two hands to the farmer. There was a strange quiver in the man's sunburnt face.

"You are a good young lady," he murmured, as he tightly pressed the little hands that lay in his.

The President had already taken a leaf from his pocket-book, and sat down at the farmer's little desk to write his announcement.

"What did you say was your name, Captain?" he asked over his shoulder.

Reinhold was no longer in the room; he must just have left it. The maid who came in with the coffee told them that the gentleman had put on his macintosh in the outer-room, and said that he must see what had become of the steamer.

"A true sailor!" said the General. "He cannot rest in peace; it would be just the same with me."

"I suppose we must include him? what do you think?" asked the President in a low voice of Elsa.

"Certainly!" said Elsa, with decision.

"Perhaps he does not wish it?"

"Possibly; but we must not leave the decision to him. His name is Schmidt."

"Classical name," murmured the President, bending over his paper.

The messenger was sent off; the farmer came in to keep the gentlemen company, while Elsa went back to the wife in the smoky little kitchen to tell her what had been arranged.

"I must thank you," said the woman; "but it is hard, very hard----" She pressed the corner of her apron to her eyes, and turned away to the fire. "I do not mean about thanking you," she continued; "but I am sorry for my husband; it is the first time I am sure that he ever allowed guests to leave his house in this way."

"It is only on account of the children," said Elsa.

"Yes, yes," said the woman; "but we have had the children ill before, without being obliged to trouble other people about it. That was when we lived at Swantow, three miles from here; that is the Count's property too. We married there six years ago, but times were too hard, and the rent too high."

"Could not the Count have helped you?"

"The Count?"

The woman looked up with a sad smile on her worn face. She seemed about to say something, but left it unsaid, and busied herself silently over her pots.

"Is not the Count a kind man?" asked Elsa.

"He is not married," answered the woman; "he does not know what a father and mother feel when they must leave the house and farm where their first children were born, and where they had hoped to see them all grow up; and we should have got on here, though the rent is too high here also, if it had not been for the war. My husband had to go out with the Landwehr, and our two best men as well. I worked hard, even beyond my strength, but what can a poor woman do? Ah! my dear young lady, you know nothing of such trouble, and God grant that you never may!"

Elsa had seated herself on a stool, and was gazing into the flames. If she had known this before! She had thought that the Count was married. Strange, strange, that she had not asked about it; that the others had not mentioned it! If he should be at the castle, she was with her father and the good President certainly; but when Aunt Sidonie heard of it she would think it very improper; and if only he were a nice man, so that she could say on meeting him that she had already heard so much good of him from his tenants--it was most vexatious. Was it too late to change?

One of the children in the room next to the kitchen began to cry loudly; the farmer's wife hastened away.

"It is most vexatious," repeated Elsa.

A pot on the fire threatened to boil over; she moved it on one side, not without blackening her hands with soot. The wind, which roared down the chimney, drove the smoke in her face. The ill-fitting window rattled; the child in the next room cried more pitifully.

"Poor woman," sighed Elsa; "there is something terrible in being poor. I wonder whether *he* is poor? he does not seem rich. How does a merchant captain like that live when he is not at sea? Perhaps after all he is married, as the Count is unmarried; or does he love some one in a distant country, of whom he thinks while he paces the deck so restlessly? I must find that out before we part; I shall find an opportunity. And then I shall ask him to congratulate her from me, and to tell her that she will have a husband of whom she may be proud, of whom any girl might be proud. I mean a girl in his own station. For instance I--absurd! one does not marry for a pair of honest eyes, particularly when disinheritance would be the result of such a mesalliance! It is a curious arrangement, but Schmidt is not a pretty name: Frau Schmidt!"

She laughed, and then suddenly her heart softened strangely, and tears came into her eyes. She felt for her handkerchief, and found something hard in her pocket. It was the little compass which he had given to her in the boat, when she was sitting by him and wanted to know the

direction in which he was steering. She opened the case and looked inside. On the cover was prettily inlaid in gold letters the name, Reinhold Schmidt; and the needle trembled and pointed away from her, and always quivered in the same direction towards the name, however often she turned and twisted the case in her hands.

"As if it were seeking Reinhold Schmidt!" said Elsa; "how faithful it is! And I would be faithful if I once loved, and would stand by my husband, and cherish and tend the children--and in six years' time look as faded and pale and worn, as the poor woman here, who must certainly have been a very pretty girl. Thank heaven that I am not in love!"

She shut the case, slipped it back into her pocket, and looking into the little room where all was now still, said: "The water boils, but remain there, dear Frau Pölitz. I will take it in to the gentlemen;" and to herself she said: "He must be back now."

Reinhold had left the room and the house, to look after the steamer, about which he was still anxious.

The storm had broken sooner and more violently than he had expected. If the ship had not got afloat beforehand, much harm, perhaps the worst might be feared. He reproached himself for not having remained on board, where his presence at this moment might be so urgently needed. It was true that it was only by agreeing to go himself that they had overcome the obstinacy of the General, who would certainly otherwise have remained, and his daughter with him. But what did he owe them? For the matter of that he did not owe anything to the ship--certainly not: and the obstinate old Captain had bluntly and flatly rejected his advice. But yet--it is the soldier's duty to go to the front when the cannon are thundering; he knew that from the war; he had himself often done it with his breathless panting comrades, all inspired with but one idea: Shall we arrive in time? And now before him the thunder rolled nearer and nearer, as he hastily climbed the hill; but what good could he do now?

Thank God! the ship was out of danger! There--a couple of miles farther to the south--easily visible to the quick eyes in spite of night, and rain, and distance--glimmered a spark of light. And now the spark vanished; it could only be behind Wissow Head, where, on the best anchorage-ground, the steamer might peacefully weather out the storm. Thank God.

He had foreseen and foretold it; and yet it seemed to him as a special favour from heaven. And after that he could humbly submit to the pain of having seen that beautiful girl for the last time. Yes, for the last time. At the moment when they reached the safe shelter to which he had promised to guide them, his services ended. Whatever happened now was nothing to him; that was the General's affair. If they chose to move to the castle, for him there would be always a place at the farmhouse. He had only now to return once more, and say, "Farewell!--farewell!"

He said it twice--three times! He said it again and again as if it were the word that sounded in every wave that broke in thunder on the shore below him; the word that was whispered in the rough grass under his feet; the word that the wind moaned and wailed in long melancholy tones through the barren dunes; the word that sounded at every beat of his heart on which her glove lay, and on which he now kept his hand pressed close, as if the storm might tear his treasure from him, the only token that in future could say to him it was something more after all than a wild, delicious dream!

How long he thus stood dreaming in the dark blustering night he knew not, when he at last roused himself to return. The storm and the rain were less violent; here and there a star shone through the driving clouds. An hour at least must have gone by; he should certainly not find her now. And yet he walked quicker and quicker through the narrow sandy path which led through the fields to the farm. In the shortest possible time he had reached it, and stood now in the entrance between the two outhouses. Lighted lanterns were flickering about in the little farmyard, and before the house shone brighter lights, in whose glow he distinguished the outline of a carriage and horses and some dark figures busied about the carriage. They were not gone then!

A sudden fear thrilled through him. Should he plunge back into the darkness? Should he go forward? Perhaps they had only waited for him, were still waiting? Well, then, so be it; an obligation of courtesy! It would cost nothing to any one but himself.

## CHAPTER V.

The President had not been waiting for his return, nor even for that of the mounted

messenger, but rather to give the storm time to abate a little.

"Only a very little," said he; "it cannot signify whether we arrive half an hour earlier or later; and as for our nocturnal drive in an open cart on our roads, my dear young lady, we shall always experience that soon enough and painfully enough."

The President smiled, and so did Elsa, from politeness; but her smile had little heart in it. She felt uneasy and restless, she herself hardly knew why. Was it because their stay in the low, cramped, stuffy little house was being prolonged? Was it because their departure could not be many minutes delayed, and the Captain had not yet returned? The gentlemen could not understand his long absence either; could he have lost his way on the dunes in the darkness? It seemed hardly possible for a man like him. Could he have hastened to the fishing village to procure help for the endangered steamer? But a farm-servant, who had just come in from the shore, and--like all the people about here--was thoroughly at home in all seafaring matters, had seen the steamer steering southwards, and disappearing behind Wissow Head. That supposition therefore fell through. But what could it be?

"Have I affronted him in any way?" Elsa asked herself. "He has seen me to-day for the first time; he does not, cannot know that it is my way to joke and laugh at things; that I do it with everybody. Aunt Sidonie scolds me enough about it. But after all, she is right. One may do it to one's equals, even to superiors--towards inferiors, never. Inferior? He is a gentleman, whatever else he is. I have nothing to reproach myself with, but that I have treated him as if he were our equal, as I would have treated any of our young officers."

She went back to the sick-room to ask the woman whether it were really impossible to procure a doctor. The farmer, to whom she had addressed the same inquiry, had shaken his head.

"The young lady thinks it would be so easy," said he to the gentlemen, when Elsa had left the room; "but the nearest doctor is at Prora, and that is a three hours' drive, and three back, besides his time here. Who can blame the doctor if he thinks twice before he makes up his mind to the journey? In summer-time, and fine weather, he might come by boat, that is easier and simpler; but now, with our roads----"

"Yes, yes," said the President; "the roads, the roads! The Government cannot do as much there as it would like. The communes moan and groan as soon as we touch the tender place. Your Count, Herr Pölitz, is one of the worst grumblers at the Communal Assemblies!"

"Notwithstanding that he throws all the burden upon us," answered the farmer; "and he has made our lives hard enough already. Yes, sir, I say it openly; and I have said it to the Count's own face."

"And what do you think about the railroad?" asked the President, with a glance at the General.

A bitter smile came upon the farmer's face.

"What I think of it?" he returned. "Well, sir, we all had to sign the petition. It looked very well upon paper, but unfortunately we do not believe a word of it. What do we want with a railway? We have no money to spend upon travelling, and the little wool and corn that we sell when things go well, we could carry to the market at Prora in an hour and a half, if we only had a high-road, or even a good road of any sort, as we easily might have if the Count and the rest of the gentry would put their shoulders to the wheel. And then, as you know, sir, the sea is our real high-road, and will always be so; it is shorter, and certainly cheaper than the railway."

"But as to the harbour!" asked the President, again looking at the General.

"I do not understand anything about that, sir," answered the farmer; "the General will know more about it. For my part I only know that it would be very difficult to build a harbour in our sand, which is blown by the wind here to-day and there to-morrow, and that we country people and the sailors and fishermen need no harbour, whether for war or peace; and that the best and only thing for us would be just a breakwater, and a certain amount of regular dredging. Railroad, harbour, ah! yes, they will swallow up many a tree that will be cut down for them and turned into money, and many an acre of sand which is not worth sixpence now, and many an acre of good land too, on which now some poor man drags on his life in the sweat of his brow, who will then have to take his staff in his hand, and set out for America, if there is still room there for the like of us."

The man's rough voice trembled as he spoke the last words, and he passed the back of his sunburnt hand across his forehead. The President looked at the General again, but this time not inquiringly as before. The General rose from his seat, walked a few paces about the room, and went to the window which he opened.

"The messenger is a long time," said he.

"I will go and look after him," said the farmer, leaving the room.

The General shut the window, and turned quickly to the President:

"Do you know, I wish we had not sent to Golmberg. Our visit there, however involuntary it may be, puts us under an obligation to the Count, and--"

The General rubbed his high forehead that was already getting bald at the temples, and angrily pulled his thick grey moustache; the President shrugged his shoulders.

"I am in a much more ticklish position," said he.

"It is different with you," answered the General; "you are acquainted with him, on friendly terms: you have been so, at any rate. And you cannot altogether avoid intercourse with him; business must bring you constantly together; this is only one instance amongst many. I, on the other hand--"

The President smiled.

"My dear General," said he, "you speak as if intercourse with the Count were a serious matter in itself! Confess now, it is not the stupid business of the railway and harbour that have set you against the Count, but the conversation of the worthy farmer."

"Are the man's complaints unfounded?" asked the General, turning on his heel.

The President again shrugged his shoulders.

"That is as you choose to consider it. The Count might perhaps do more for his tenants, but we must not be too hard upon him. The property was heavily embarrassed when he came into it as a very young man. To retain it at all it was necessary to raise the rents as high as possible. He was not in the happy position of your late brother-in-law, who allowed himself to be guided rather by the impulses of his kind heart than by economic considerations in his leases. The Warnow property falls in next Easter, does it not? You will be obliged then, as one of the trustees, to concern yourself more particularly about the condition of affairs here. Who knows whether this day year you will lend so willing an ear to the complaints of people whose discontent with everything has become a second nature?"

"I shall then, as I have hitherto invariably done, abstain as far as possible from all direct interference in the matter," answered the General hastily. "You know that I have only once inspected the property, as was my duty when, six and twenty years ago, Herr von Wallbach, Councillor Schieler, and I had to undertake the care of the estate after my brother-in-law's death, and since then I have left everything in Schieler's hands. I have never since been here, and now---"

"You are here," cried the President, "by the strangest accident, undoubtedly; but a wise man, and a soldier too, must allow for strange accidents in his calculations. I think the rain has stopped, and if we cannot remain here, it is high time to mount our cart. I had almost said the scaffold."

The President put aside the rug which he had carefully spread over his knees, rose from the corner of the little sofa, and came up to the General at the window. At this moment the yard-dog began to bark furiously, the farmer's little terrier rushed yelping out at the hosedoor; two bright lights appeared between the outhouses, followed soon by others, and the trampling of horses and rolling of wheels sounded on the uneven pavement.

"It is the Count himself, I will wager!" cried the President, forgetting all the General's scruples and considerations at the joyful sight of the carriage. "Thank heaven! we shall not at any rate be tortured! My dear Count, how very kind of you!"

And he cordially stretched out both hands to the gentleman who quickly came in at the door which the farmer opened for him.

## CHAPTER VI.

The Count responded no less cordially to the President's greeting.

"Kind!" he exclaimed, holding fast the other's hands; "and kind of me? Why it is kind indeed, wonderfully kind; but of you, of all of you, to be cast here on the heights of Golmberg, to be thrown upon this most inhospitable shore--inhospitable because no creature ever comes to us, or can come from that side. And now may I ask you to be so kind as to introduce me to General von Werben?"

He turned towards the General, who answered his extremely courteous bow with some reserve.

"It is not the first time that I have had the pleasure," said he; "I had the honour formerly at Versailles----"

"I could not have believed that General von Werben would have remembered so insignificant a matter," cried the Count, "a poor knight of St. John!"

"Our meeting occurred on a very remarkable day," said the General; "on the 18th of January."

"The day of the proclamation of the German Empire!" interrupted the President, to whom the General's last remark, and the tone in which he made it, seemed of doubtful courtesy; "and here comes our heroine! Fräulein Elsa von Werben, here is our deliverer in the time of need: Count von Golm."

"I am highly honoured," said the Count.

Elsa, who had just entered the room, answered only by a bow.

"Now we are all assembled," cried the President, rubbing his hands.

"Captain Schmidt is still missing," said Elsa, looking beyond the Count to her father.

"I am only afraid that we shall put the Count's patience to too great a trial," answered the General in a tone of annoyance.

"I put myself absolutely at your disposal," said the Count; "but may I ask what the question is?"

"There is another gentleman with us, a captain in the merchant service," said the General.

"Whom I mentioned to you," interrupted the President. "He went out again after our arrival here to look after the steamer. I almost think that he must have lost his way among the sandhills, or that some accident has happened to him."

"Some men with lanterns should be sent after him," exclaimed the Count. "I will give the order at once."

And he moved towards the door.

"You need not trouble yourself," cried Elsa; "it has already been done at my request."

"Oh!" said the Count, with a smile; "indeed!"

The blood rose to Elsa's cheek. As she came into the room, and the Count turned quickly towards her--with his regular features and clear bright colouring, set off by a fair moustache--she had thought him good-looking, even handsome; the smile made him positively ugly. Why should he smile? She drew herself up to her full height.

"Captain Schmidt rendered us the most essential service during our passage; we have to thank him that we are here in safety. It seems to me only our duty not to leave him in the lurch now."

"But, my dear madam, I am quite of your opinion!" said the Count, and smiled again.

The veins in Elsa's temples were throbbing. She cast a reproachful glance at her father. Why did he leave her to defend a cause which after all was his? She did not know that her father was extremely vexed at the turn the conversation had taken, and was only doubting whether he could not use the Captain's absence as a pretext to avoid for himself and his daughter at least the Count's hospitality. She did not hear either with what marked emphasis he agreed to the necessity for waiting still some time longer, as she had left the room after her last words.

In the little entrance, in which through the wide open door the light from the carriage lamps now brightly shone, she stood still and pressed her slender hands against her brow. What had come over her so suddenly? Why had she been so eager? To provoke a stranger's smile by her over-eagerness, to draw upon herself the suspicion of taking a too lively interest in the person, when it was only the cause she cared about, only that a debt of courtesy, to say nothing of gratitude, might be paid? Supposing the people who seemed to be just leaving the yard with their lanterns should not find him? How long might she still wait? When ought she to say, We must start? Or, supposing he returned only to say that he was not thinking of going with them, and that childish scene had been acted for nothing? For the third time, and now with right and reason, the Count might smile.

"That I could not bear!" said Elsa, and stamped her foot.

A figure stood in the outer doorway; his wet macintosh shining in the light of the lanterns, the waterproof cap shining, and the eyes in the brown-bearded face shining too--and it all looked so odd and so funny, that Elsa laughed aloud, and laughing exclaimed:



"Have you come straight out of the water, Captain Schmidt? They are getting frightened about you in here. Make haste and come in. We must be off at once."

"I had thought of remaining here," said Reinhold.

Elsa's laugh was checked. She made a step towards Reinhold:

"I wish you would come with us. You must."

She disappeared into the passage which led on the right to the kitchen and the children's room. Had it been jest or earnest? Her voice had trembled so oddly at the words, and her large eyes had shone so strangely!

The door opened; the General appeared on the threshold, with the two other gentlemen behind him.

"Ah, Captain Schmidt!" said the General.

"At last!" exclaimed the President. "You must tell us by-and-by where you have been hiding. This is Captain Schmidt, Count Golm. You are ready, I suppose, Fräulein von Werben?"

"I am ready," said Elsa, who, in hat and cloak, accompanied by the farmer's wife, appeared again in the entrance. "I think we are all ready, are we not, Captain Schmidt?"

"At your orders," answered Reinhold.

"Well, then, good-bye, dear Frau Pölitz! a thousand, thousand thanks for your kindness! and as to the children, you must really send for the doctor, or you will wear yourself to death."

Elsa had spoken the last words so loud, that the Count could not but hear them.

"Are your children ill, Frau Pölitz?" he asked.

"Very ill," answered Elsa. "And Frau Pölitz declares that she cannot expect the doctor to come so far."

"I will myself send from Golmberg to Prora," said the Count hastily: "of course; depend upon it Frau Pölitz! the doctor shall be here to-night--to-night!"

"Then we will not lose another moment," cried Elsa, hastening to lead the way to the carriage.

## CHAPTER VII.

The Count had made his arrangements very comfortably. A groom with a lantern rode in front; next came the close carriage, in which the General, Elsa, and the President took their seats; then a dogcart with himself and Reinhold; finally a small luggage-cart for the servants, who were joined by his own man.

In the luggage-cart they were very cheerful.

"Do you always carry so much baggage with you?" asked the Count's servant, giving the carpet-bag a contemptuous kick.

"The rest is on board ship still," answered Johann; "but the President never takes much with him; little and good is what he says."

"Just like my General," said August; "it is always the case with us military men. In France we had only one trunk from first to last."

"We had six," said the Count's servant.

"Were you there too, then?"

"Of course, as knights of St. John."

"That is a fine thing!"

"It was very fine for me!" cried the man. "I would go again to-morrow: wine and women to one's heart's content. My master knows what is what, I can tell you. I should not stay six weeks

with a man like your General."

"It is not so bad, after all," said August; "if one only does one's confounded duty one can get on with him; it is not so easy, I allow, with the Fräulein."

"Oh! but she looked a very good sort."

"Yes, she! but the old lady, the General's sister; we have no wife, you know."

"I never serve in a house where there is a wife," said the Count's servant, "and above all children."

"Then you would not do with us," said Johann; "we have got a wife and a houseful of young gentlemen and ladies; one of them is married already even. How is it with you?"

"Oh! we are a widower," said August, "not long since, after I came into his service, that may be about five years ago. Since then Fräulein Sidonie is by way of managing the household--I should think so! That is to say, she would like to manage it; but as far as our young lady can, she won't let it be taken out of her hands. Thank goodness! The old lady was a maid of honour once, at a court where the very mice don't get enough to eat. That is always the worst sort. We have got a young gentleman, too, the lieutenant. Ah! he's a thoughtless one. Good Lord! whatever comes into his hands doesn't stay long! But I have no harm to say of him; live and let live is a good motto. He throws a hard word at your head, and a thaler after it. If he only had more of them!"

"With my old gentleman there are no hard words, but no thalers either," said Johann.

"And with my Count hard words enough, but no thalers," grumbled the other.

"Well, but you said--"

"Oh, one must understand how to manage it, you know. In perquisites one can make it up."

"Ah; in that way!" said Johann.

"That is another matter," said August.

"For instance this bottle of Cognac here," cried the Count's servant, pulling out a flask; "how do you like that?"

"Not so bad," said August.

"Particularly in this cold!" said Johann, "it is like December!"

While the servants passed the bottle merrily round, amid talk and laughter, in the first carriage, the President, who now that he foresaw a comfortable end to his uncomfortable adventure, had quite recovered his good-humour, had almost alone sustained the burden of conversation. As a suitable introduction to their visit to the Castle, he gave a succinct sketch of the Count's genealogy. The family was one of the oldest in the island, probably even older than the Princes of Prora, whom they had formerly rivalled in wealth, influence, and power. Latterly they had certainly been going down hill, especially from the extravagance of the great grandfather of the present man, the builder of the castles of Golm and Golmberg, who had spent also fabulous sums upon the celebrated picture gallery at Golm, and the collection of armour at the shooting-lodge.

The grandfather, a careful man, had settled the fragments of the property in an entail--fortunately!--for the father of the present Count, his late dear old friend, had followed in the steps of his grandfather.

In the character of the present man, as so often happened in old families, might be seen blended in the most curious manner both his ancestral qualities, frugality and extravagance. At one moment you would take him for a mere fine gentleman, the next he would surprise you by the display of qualities which you would only expect to find in a speculative man of business.

"Such talents do not make the descendant of an ancient family more respectable in my eyes, Herr von Sanden," said the General.

In the darkness of the carriage the President allowed himself an ironical smile; the General called him for the first time to-day by his own name, evidently to remind him that he too was of an ancient family.

"Neither do they in mine," replied he; "but I am not now criticising, only characterising."

"There are some characteristics which criticise--and judge themselves."

"You are sharp, General; sharp and severe, as a soldier should be; I, as a Government official, having more to do with worldly business than I very often like, am glad to keep to the good old saying 'Judge not, that you be not judged.'"

"And I gladly hold to another, which, if not so sacred, is at least as old, perhaps older; as old, that is, as nobility itself--*Noblesse oblige!*"

The President smiled again in the darkness.

"A two-edged saying," said he, "at all times; but more so now than ever."

"Why so?"

"Because our situation was never so precarious as it is now. In the dusty arena in which, in this levelling century of ours, the battle for existence must be fought out, we have long stood on the same ground with the classes which have been pressing upon us from behind, or rather indeed are already against us; but sun and wind are not evenly distributed. Many weapons, of which the middle classes avail themselves with immense success, are forbidden to us, for *noblesse oblige*. Very fine! We have no longer any special privileges--Heaven forbid!--but special duties enough. We are to keep our position in the state, and in society, and always to preserve our superior moral qualities! And often enough that is a very difficult matter, sometimes impossible; it is expecting a man to square the circle! Take such a position as the Count's here. He did not choose it for himself; he was born to it. He came into a mass of debts, which he might no doubt have lessened by mere humdrum frugality; but it would have been a long process, for a high-spirited young man inconveniently long. He thinks now that he has discovered a way by which he may attain the eagerly-desired end in the shortest possible time, and make good all the sins of his forefathers at one blow. And if our ancestors do not, as in this case, make our lives a burden to us, then our descendants do it. Nine-tenths of our nobility could tell you a tale about that, and I among others. The proletariat of officials is no chimera, but sober reality; and I wish to Heaven I could drive my six-in-hand through life over a smoother road than we are condemned to travel upon here; for what sins of our ancestors or descendants I know not. *Mon dieu!* I think the Count must mean to show us the necessity of the railroad, which he is so certain--Oh! it really is abominable. It is impossible to talk comfortably when one's words are so shaken and jolted out of one's mouth."

The President was not sorry to break off a conversation which was taken up in such a very different spirit on the other side. He did not know how disagreeable the turn it had lately taken must be to the General, to whose circumstances every word fitted so cruelly, who was so painfully reminded of these circumstances by the situation in which they now were! How he had hated this part of the country for many a long year! He had avoided setting foot in it as far as was possible, notwithstanding the pressing occasion for doing so caused by his trusteeship for his deceased brother-in-law's estates. He had even, for the first and last time in his life, almost neglected his official duty when the project of the harbour had first arisen, and instead of informing himself on the spot of the state of matters, he had sent Captain von Schönau here in his place, and had even transferred to Colonel Sattelstädt the duty which properly fell to himself of making a report upon the business. And now after all he found himself here shaken and jolted over these horrible roads, and with all his gloomiest thoughts reawakened in him. It was a miserable irony of fate, but he had played into its hands by his foolish weakness. They might so perfectly have remained on board ship, and would have been spared all these delays and discomforts, all the considerations that must be attended to, and the obligations that must be undertaken.

And then Elsa's extraordinary behaviour to the Count! To make a request of him at her first meeting with a man whom he would so gladly have avoided, and whose civilities were already oppressive to him! As if they had not enough to do to think of themselves! What in the world did it signify to her how or whether these farmers got the doctor? No, no! it was a part of Elsa's character to give help wherever she could; and here as ever she had shown herself his good noble-hearted daughter; but it was unlucky for all that, very unlucky!

While her father thus worked himself into worse and worse spirits, a shade of melancholy had fallen even upon Elsa's cheerful temper. She had hardly heard anything of the conversation between the two men. She was meditating uneasily upon the nature of the request that she had made, at least indirectly, to the Count; but there had been such a despairing look on the pale face of the poor farmer's wife at the last moment, as she came out of the sick children's room to take leave of her guests, that she had followed the impulse which crossed her mind without considering whether she thus put herself into a false position. He might take it as he pleased; so much the worse for him, if he did not take it as he ought.

Could she with a good conscience say the same as regarded Captain Schmidt? She was now nearly certain that he had only remained absent so long to allow them to drive away,--to separate himself from them for good or for evil.

Why should he leave them? Perhaps he was not at his ease with them; perhaps it was unpleasant and awkward for him to join in the society that he would find at the castle? to be drawn into the conversation which would arise at table, and in which he could not take a part? which he would probably not even understand! And then to see him sitting there, confused, awkward! the lips compelled to silence which had given the brief words of command with such strong, clear tones, amidst the howling of the wind and the thundering of the waves! and the blue eyes troubled and confused which had shone so brightly in the hour of danger. What a pity to lose the beautiful, delightful recollection, as if a successful sketch were to be spoiled by adding

careless inappropriate touches!

And what would he think of her insisting upon his joining their party again? For she really had insisted upon it! What in the world had she been thinking of? Had she really only wanted to look for a few hours longer at the handsome sunburnt face and the blue eyes, in sheer defiance of the Count, in whose face the question, "Am I not a handsome man?" was so clearly written. What were the two talking about? or were they sitting as silently together as she in her narrow prison here, to the close atmosphere of which it was, of course, owing that her heart was beating so nervously!--Oh!

The front wheels stuck fast in one of the deep ruts made by heavy waggons in the soft sandy soil, the spirited horses started forward, and Elsa fell into the arms of the President, who was sitting opposite to her.

"I must apologise for the length of my unfortunate nose," said the President in a melancholy voice, wiping away the tears which ran down his thin cheeks.

Elsa laughed, and laughed the more heartily from the absurd contrast of this ridiculous scene to the gloomy and sentimental thoughts from which she had been so suddenly startled.

The gentlemen in the other carriage had had no reason to complain of want of fresh air. After the heavy rain it had really grown cold; and though their almost constantly uphill road lay mostly through thick woods, where the great beeches gave them some shelter, the east wind struck them all the more sharply at the open parts which they had to pass. The Count was freezing, notwithstanding his cloak; and he took for mere perversity or bravado Reinhold's assurance that he was too much inured to wind and weather to feel cold now, and that he really did not require the rug offered to him. The fellow was a most unnecessary and burdensome addition to the party. On his account he had given up the fourth seat in the close carriage, and therewith the neighbourhood of that charming girl, very likely quite unnecessarily. In the haste with which, on his return from shooting, he had read the President's note, he had taken the captain spoken of for some aide-de-camp or other member of the General's staff, to whom he must of course pay proper attention. He had now discovered, to his astonishment, that he was only a merchant captain, whose acquaintance with the rest of the party was but a few hours old, who appeared to have been of some small service during the passage from the steamer to the shore; and who, if it was necessary to take him with them at all, might have found a place in the luggage-cart. What was he to say to the fellow? Was there any occasion indeed for speaking to him at all? The Count came to the conclusion that there was no occasion, and that he did more than could be required of him in letting fall from time to time a few words about the roads, the weather, or such matters.

Reinhold, who did not feel quite sure if these brief utterances were fragments of a soliloquy, or awkward attempts to begin a conversation, answered when it seemed required of him, and at other times pursued his own thoughts.

There, on the dusky background of the wind-stirred trees, he saw her again as he had seen her to-day for the first time against the blue of the morning sky. Again he saw the slight graceful figure, and the fair face with its delicate yet expressive features; again the brown eyes shone upon him which had looked at him so mockingly and fearlessly, and then so gravely and severely.

Was it an enchantment? He had seen more beautiful women without being so struck with their appearance: he had thought himself in love, perhaps had loved, but never at first sight; bit by bit the feeling had grown--but here it had come upon him like a storm, like a whirlwind, which threw all his sailing-gear into confusion, and gave no time for reefing and tacking, tore down masts and rigging, made all steering of the ship impossible, and tossed the helpless wreck from wave to wave. What business had he, a stranger to the sphere in which she moved, to be thinking of such things? Were not these foolish aimless fancies childish even in his own eyes? Was he now to make himself ridiculous to other eyes, perhaps to hers? Had he not already done so when he unresistingly obeyed her command? Would she not say to him scornfully: "I only wanted to see if you really were such a helpless, poor-spirited fool"?

Strange! that now, just now, the most terrible moment of his life should recur to his memory, when, riding alone through the Cordilleras from Santiago to Mexico, he was taken prisoner by Indians between Mazatlan and Inpic, forced to ride at full speed through mountain gulleys, away from the track into the desert, with the fear that the end of the ride might be a couple of shots, and a bleeding corpse falling from the saddle, and writhing in the last death-agony on the dried-up grass.

The only apparent chance of escaping with his life lay in the absolute obedience with which he complied with every order of the Indians, and yet he found it easier to resolve to extinguish that last ray of hope, and begin the mad struggle for freedom, than any longer to endure the shame of being in the power of these wretches. But a man can snatch from his holsters a pistol, overlooked by the robbers, and, setting spurs to his horse, plunge from the steep path down the sides of the ravine, so as at least to die in his own fashion; while he cannot jump from the seat of a smart dog-cart, into which he has climbed at the command of a pretty girl, and take refuge in the forest, even if the fine gentleman sitting beside him had no objection to such a flight, and would merely laugh at it.

"Here we are!" said the Count.

They had come to an opening in the forest, in the centre of which stood a stately building, flanked as it seemed with towers, and whose windows were brightly illuminated. The carriages rolled quickly over the smooth approach, and stopped at the entrance, from which several servants now came forward, to assist the visitors to alight.

## CHAPTER VIII.

The President had remarked in his note that the want of a mistress of the house might be felt by the young lady of their party, but as the want was one that could not be at once made good, he promised the Count absolution beforehand. The Count had immediately sent off a mounted messenger to his neighbour, Herr von Strummin, with the pressing request to come with his wife and daughter to Golmberg and make arrangements for passing the night there. The family were quite ready to do him this neighbourly service, and Frau and Fräulein von Strummin received Elsa in the hall and conducted her to her apartment, which adjoined their own.

The President rubbed his thin white hands together before the fire in his own comfortable room, while Johann arranged his things: "Very nice! very nice indeed! This ought quite to reconcile our self-willed young lady to her mishap, and restore her grumbling old father to a more sociable frame of mind."

Elsa was thoroughly reconciled. Set free from her moving prison, to find a brightly-illuminated castle in the depths of the forest--servants with torches at the entrance--and in the ancient hall, with its curiously-twisted columns, the unexpected appearance of two ladies, who, stepping forward from among the weapons and armour with which the walls and pillars were hung, welcomed her warmly, and led her into the cosiest of rooms, a flaming fire on the hearth, wax candles burning brightly before a tall looking-glass in a rich antique frame, silk hangings of the most wonderful pattern repeated in every possible variety on the heavy curtains over the deep-set windows, the *portières* to the lofty gilt doors, and the hangings of the old-fashioned bed--all was so strange, so charming, so exactly what an adventure ought to be. Elsa shook the motherly-looking Frau von Strummin by the hand and thanked her for her trouble, and kissing the pretty, mischievous-looking, grey-eyed little girl, asked permission to call her "Meta," as her mother did, who had just left the room. Meta responded with the greatest warmth to her embrace, and declared that nothing in the world could have pleased her more than this evening's invitation. She and mamma had been so dull at Strummin--it was so horribly dull in the country--and then the Count's letter came! She always liked coming to Golmberg, the forest was so beautiful, and the view from the summit of the tower or from the top of the Golmberg over the woods and sea was too enchanting. She did not often come here though; her mother did not much like the trouble of moving, and the gentlemen thought only of their shooting, their horses, and especially of themselves. So that she really had been not a little surprised at the Count being in such a hurry to provide company for the strange young lady, just as if he had known beforehand how sweet and charming the stranger would be, and how pleasant it would be to keep her company, and to chatter all this nonsense to her; and might she call her "du"? because then they could talk twice as comfortably. The permission, readily given and sealed with a kiss, enchanted the excitable little girl.

"You must never go away again," she cried, "or, at any rate, it must be only to return in the autumn! He will never marry me; I have got nothing, and he has nothing, in spite of his great estates, and if we cannot manage to get the railroad and the harbour made here, my papa says we shall all be bankrupts. And your papa and the President have got it all in their own hands, my papa said as we came here, and so if you marry him, of course your papa will agree to the concession--that is what they call it, is not it? And you are already concerned in it in a sort of way, for my papa says that the harbour can only be made on land which belongs to your aunt, and you and your brother will be her heirs, or are already co-heirs with her. My papa says it is the most wonderful will, and he should very much like to know how the matter really stands. Do you not know all about it? Do, do tell me! I will not tell any one."

"I really do not know," answered Elsa, "I only know that we are very poor, and that as far as I am concerned you may still marry your Count."

"I would do it very readily," said the little lady seriously, "but I am not pretty enough for him with my insignificant little face and my snub nose. I shall marry some day a rich city man, who will be impressed with our old nobility--for the Strummins are as old as the island, you know--some Herr Schulze or Müller or Schmidt. By-the-bye, what is the name of the officer who came with you?"

"Schmidt--Reinhold Schmidt."

"No; you are joking!"

"No, really; but he is not an officer."

"Not an officer? But how is he a captain then?"

"He is captain of a ship."

"In the navy?"

"Only a merchant-captain."

"No! you don't say so!"

It came out so comically, and Meta clasped her little hands in such *naïve* amazement, that Elsa could not help laughing, and laughed all the more to hide the blush of confusion which rose to her cheek.

"But then he will not have supper with us?" said Meta.

"Why not?" asked Elsa, suddenly becoming quite grave again.

"Only a merchant-captain!" repeated Meta. "What a pity! such a good-looking man! I had quite counted upon him for myself! But a merchant-captain!"

Frau von Strummin here came in to accompany the two girls to supper. Meta flew to her mother to communicate her great discovery.

"It has all been arranged," answered her mother. "The Count asked your father and the President if they wished Captain Schmidt to be invited to join the party. Both gentlemen expressed themselves in favour of it, and so he will appear at table. He really seems a very well-mannered sort of person," concluded Frau von Strummin.

"I am really curious to see him," said Meta.

Elsa said nothing; but as, coming into the corridor, she met her father just leaving his room, she whispered to him, "Thank you!"

"One must make the best of a bad job," answered the General in the same tone.

Elsa was a little surprised; she had not thought that he would have taken so seriously the question of etiquette which he had decided according to her view. She did not consider that her father could not understand her words without some explanation, and did not know that he had given them quite another meaning.

He had been put out, and had allowed his annoyance to be seen--even when they were received in the hall. He thought that this had not escaped Elsa, and that she was pleased now to see that he had meanwhile made up his mind to submit quietly and calmly to the inevitable, and therefore met him with a smile. The young sailor had only been recalled to his mind by the Count's question. He had attached no importance to the question or to his own answer, that he did not know why the Count should not invite Captain Schmidt to his table.

Happily for Reinhold himself he had not even a suspicion of the possibility that his appearance or non-appearance at table could be a question to be seriously discussed by the other members of the party.

"What is begun may as well be continued," said he to himself, as with the help of the things he had brought with him in a handbag from the ship in case of accidents, he arranged his dress as well as he could; "and now away with melancholy. If I have got aground by my own stupidity, I shall get off again in time. To go about hanging my head, or losing it, would not make up for my folly, but only make matters worse, and they are quite bad enough already. But where are my shoes?"

At the last moment on board he had changed the shoes he was wearing for a pair of high seaboots. They had been most useful to him since through rain and puddles, in the wet sands on the shore, and on the way to the farm; but now! Where were the shoes? Not in the bag, at any rate, into which he thought he had thrown them, and out of which they would not appear, although at last in his despair he tumbled all the things out and strewed them around him. And this garment which he had taken up a dozen times and let fall again, half the skirt was missing. It was not his blue frockcoat, it was his black tailcoat, the most precious article in his wardrobe, which he had only been in the habit of wearing for a dinner with his owners, or the consul, and on other most solemn occasions.

Reinhold rushed at the bell--the broken rope came away in his hand. He tore open the door and looked into the passage--not a servant to be seen. He called softly at first, then louder, not a servant would hear. What was to be done? The rough pilot-coat which he had worn under his

waterproof, and which yet had got wet through in some places, had already been taken away by the servant to be dried. In a quarter of an hour the man had said the Count begged him to come to supper, twenty minutes had already passed; he had distinctly heard the President, whose room was some doors off from his, walk along the passage on his way downstairs. He must either remain here in the most absurd captivity, or appear before the company below in the extraordinary attire of seaboots and a dress-coat! Before the eyes of the President, whose long, thin figure, from the crown of his small aristocratic head to the soles of the polished boots which he had worn even on board, was a model of the most painfully precise neatness; before the stiff, tightly buttoned-up General; before the Count, who already showed some disposition to consider him of small account in society; before the ladies; before her--before her laughter-loving brown eyes! "Well, if I was fool enough to follow a sign from those eyes, this shall be my punishment; thus will I do penance in tailcoat and seaboots."

And with one effort he pulled on the garment which he had still held in his extended left hand, looking at it from time to time with dismay, and again opened the door, this time to pass with steady step along the corridor, down the broad stairs, and into the dining-room below, whose whereabouts he had already ascertained from the servant.

## CHAPTER IX.

The rest of the party were already assembled. The two girls had appeared arm-in-arm, and kept together, although the Count, who had come forward hastily to meet them, directed his conversation to Elsa alone. He hastened to inform Fräulein von Werben that the carriage that was to fetch the doctor from Prora had been gone a quarter of an hour. Did Fräulein von Werben take any interest in painting, and would she allow him to direct her attention to some of the more important objects that he had brought from the gallery of Castle Golm for the decoration of the dining-room here, which really had appeared to him too bare. This was a Watteau bought by his great-grandfather himself in Paris; that was a fruit-piece by the Italian painter Gobbo, surnamed Da Frutti, a pupil of Annibale Caracci; this large still-life scene was by the Dutchman Jacob van Es. This flower-piece would be peculiarly interesting to her, as it was by a lady, Rachel Ruysch, a Dutchwoman, of course, whose pictures were in great request. Here, on the *étagère*, was a service of Dresden china, formerly belonging to Augustus the Strong, from whom his great-grandfather, who for many years had been Swedish ambassador at the court of Dresden, had received it in exchange for a team of Swedish horses, the first which had been seen on the Continent; here was an equally beautiful service of Sèvres, which he himself the preceding year had admired at the château of a French nobleman, and had received as a gift from him, out of gratitude for his successful efforts to preserve the château, which he (the Count) had converted into a hospital.

"You do not care for old china, however?" said he, observing that the lady's dark eyes only very briefly inspected his treasures.

"I have seen so little of it," said Elsa; "I do not know how to appreciate its beauty."

"And then we are all rather hungry," said Meta, "I am at least. At home we have supper at eight, and now it is eleven."

"Has not Captain Schmidt been told?" asked the Count of the butler.

"Yes, sir, a quarter of an hour ago."

"Then we will not wait any longer. The courtesy of kings does not seem to be shared by merchant captains. Allow me."

He offered his arm to Elsa; hesitatingly she laid the tips of her fingers upon it, she would gladly have spared the Captain the awkwardness of finding the whole party at table. But her father had already offered his arm to Meta's mother, the gallant President had given his to Meta herself; the three couples were moving towards the table which stood between them and the door, when the door opened, and the wonderful figure of a bearded man in a tailcoat and high seaboots appeared, in whom Elsa, to her horror, recognised the Captain. But the next moment she was forced to smile like the others. Meta dropped the President's arm and fled into a corner of the room, where she tried to conceal behind her handkerchief the convulsive laughter which had seized her at the unexpected appearance.

"I must apologise," said Reinhold, "but I have unfortunately only just discovered that the haste with which we left the ship was not favourable to a careful choice in my wardrobe."

"And as that haste was for our benefit, we have the less occasion to lay unnecessary stress upon the small mishap," said the President very courteously.

"Why did you not apply to my valet?" asked the Count, with mild reproach.

"I think the costume is very becoming," said Elsa, with a desperate effort to recover her gravity, and a severe look at Meta, who had indeed come out of her corner, but without venturing yet to remove her handkerchief from her face.

"That is much more than I could have possibly hoped," said Reinhold.

They took their seats at the table; Reinhold exactly opposite the Count and nearly opposite Elsa, while on his left hand sat Meta and on his right Herr von Strummin, a broad-shouldered man with a broad, red face, the lower part of which was covered with a big red beard, and whose big loud voice was the more disagreeable to Reinhold that it was perpetually breaking in upon the gay, good-humoured chatter of the young lady upon his left.

The good-natured girl had determined to make Reinhold forget her previous rudeness, and the keeping of this resolution was so much the easier to her, that now, when the tablecloth kindly covered those absurd boots, she found her first idea of him quite justified; the Captain with his large, bright blue eyes, his sunburnt complexion, and curly brown beard, was a handsome--a very handsome man. After she had attempted to convey this important discovery to Elsa by various significant glances and explanatory gestures, and to her great joy had perceived from Elsa's smiles and nods, that she agreed with her, she gave herself up to the pleasure of conversing with this good-looking stranger all the more eagerly that she was certain her eagerness would not remain unnoticed by the Count. Did she not know by experience that he was never pleased, that he even took it as a sort of personal affront, when ladies to whom he did not himself pay any particular attention, were especially civil to other men in his presence! And that this man was only a merchant-captain, whose fitness for society had been just now called in question, made the matter the more amusing and piquant to her mischievous imagination. Besides she really was very much amused. The Captain had so many stories to tell--and he told them so well and simply!

"You cannot think, Elsa, how interesting it is," she exclaimed across the table; "I could listen to him all night long!"

"That good little girl is not too particular in her tastes," said the Count to Elsa.

"I am sorry for that," said Elsa; "she has just chosen me, as you hear, for a friend."

"That is quite another thing," said the Count.

The conversation between these two would not flow properly, and the Count frequently found himself left to Frau von Strummin, to whom he had to talk so as not to be left in silence, whilst Elsa turned to her other neighbour--the President. And more than once, when that lady's attention was claimed by the General, he really was obliged to sit dumb, and silently to observe how well his friends entertained themselves at his own table without him. To fill up these enforced pauses he drank one glass of wine after another, and did not thereby improve his temper, which he then exercised upon the servants for want of any one else. He certainly would have preferred the merchant-captain for that purpose. He thought the fellow altogether odious, everything about him--appearance, manners, look, voice; it was all the more provoking that he should himself have brought the fellow to his house in his own carriage! If he had only not asked any one's opinion and left him in his room!

He told himself that it was ridiculous to vex himself about the matter, but he did vex himself about it nevertheless, and that all the more because he could not conquer the feeling. At any cost he must make the conversation general to free himself from a mood which was becoming intolerable.

Opposite to him Herr von Strummin was shouting his views upon the railroad and the harbour into the ear of the General, who appeared to listen unwillingly. He had made up his mind, for his part, not to touch upon this ticklish topic at table, but any topic was agreeable to him now.

"Excuse me, my good friend," said he, raising his voice, "I have been hearing something of what you have been saying to General von Werben about our favourite plan. You always say 'we' and 'us,' but you know that in many essential points our views differ; so I must beg you, if you do speak about the matter, to do so only in your own name."

"What! what!" cried Herr von Strummin; "what great difference is there? Is it that I want to have a station at Strummin, just as much as you want one at Golm?"

"But we cannot all have stations," said the Count, with a pitying shrug of the shoulders.

"Of course we can't, but I must! or I should not care a brass farthing for the whole project!" cried the other. "Am I to send my corn two or three miles, as I did before, and have the train steaming away under my nose an hour later! I would rather give my vote at the Assembly in that case for the road which the Government offers us; that would run just behind my new barn; I could send the waggons straight from the thrashing-floor out into the high-road. Could not I,



President?"

"I really do not know, Herr von Strummin," said the President, "whether the road runs just behind your barn; it certainly crosses the boundary of your fields. But my views have long been known to you both;" and he turned again to Elsa, to continue his interrupted conversation with her.

The Count was furious at the rebuff which the last words seemed to imply, the more furious that he knew he had not deserved them. He had not begun upon the matter, but now it should be further discussed.

"You see," said he, turning to Herr von Strummin, "what disservice you do us--I must say 'us' now--by this perpetual overzealous putting forward of private interests. Of course we look to our own advantage in this; what reasonable man would not? But it must come second--first the State, then ourselves. At least, so I consider, and so does the General here, I am sure."

"Certainly I think so," said the General. "But why should I have the honour of being referred to?"

"Because nobody would gain more if this project were carried out than your sister, or whoever shall some day possess Warnow, Gristow, and Damerow."

"I shall never possess a foot of the property," said the General, knitting his brows. "Besides, as you know, Count, I have as yet had absolutely nothing to do with the question--not even so far as to express an opinion--and am, therefore, by no means in a position to accept the compliment you offer me." And he turned again to Frau von Strummin.

The Count felt the blood rising to his forehead.

"The opinions of a man of your standing, General," said he, with well-affected calmness, "even when he gives them no official shape, could as little remain hidden as the most official report of our excellent President."

The General's bushy eyebrows frowned still more sternly.

"Well, then, Count Golm," he cried, "I avow myself openly as the most determined opponent of your project! I consider it as strategically useless, and I hold it to be scientifically impracticable."

"Two reasons, either of which, if well founded, would be absolutely crushing," answered the Count, smiling ironically. "As to the first, I bow, of course, to such an authority, although we need not always have a war with a non-naval power like France, but might possibly have one with a naval power like Russia for instance, and should then find a harbour facing the enemy very necessary. But as to the practicability, General; there, with all submission, I think I may put in a word in my amphibious capacity of a country gentleman living by the sea. Our sand, however heavy it makes the roads, to the great inconvenience of ourselves and the President, is a capital material for a railway embankment, and will prove good ground for the foundation of our harbour walls."

"Until you come to the places where we should have to build on piles," said the President, who, on the General's account, felt himself bound to speak.

"Such places may occur, I allow," cried the Count, who, in spite of the other men's exasperating opposition, at any rate had now the satisfaction of seeing all other conversation at the table silenced, and he alone for the moment speaking. "But what do you prove by that, excepting that the making of the harbour may take some months or years longer, and cost some few hundred thousands, or, for aught I know, millions more? And what would that signify in a work which, once completed, would be an invincible bulwark against every enemy that threatens us from the East?"

"Excepting one!" said Reinhold.

The Count had never supposed that this fellow would interfere in the conversation. An angry flush rose to his brow; he cast a dark look at the new opponent, and asked, in a short, contemptuous tone:

"And what might that be?"

"The tide coming in with a storm!" answered Reinhold.

"We are too much used in this country to storms and high tides to fear the one or the other," said the Count, with forced calmness.

"I know that," answered Reinhold; "but I am not speaking of ordinary atmospheric changes and disturbances, but of a catastrophe which I am convinced has been preparing for years, and only awaits the final impulse, which will not long be wanting, to burst upon us with a violence of which the wildest fancy can form no conception."

"Are we still in the domain of reality, or already in the realm of fancy?" asked the Count.

"We are in the region of possibilities," answered Reinhold; "that possibility which, as a glance at the map will show us, has already at least once proved a reality, and, according to human calculations, will before very long become such again."

"You are making us extremely curious," said the Count

He said it ironically; but he had truly expressed the feelings of the party. All eyes were turned upon Reinhold.

"I am afraid I may weary the ladies with these matters," said Reinhold.

"Not in the least," said Elsa.

"I am wild about everything connected with the sea," cried Meta, with a mischievous glance at Elsa.

"You would really oblige me," said the President.

"Pray continue," said the General.

"I will be as brief as possible," said Reinhold, directing his looks towards the President and the General, as if he only spoke for them. "The Baltic appears to have been formed by some most extraordinary convulsions, which have given it a character of its own. It has no ebb and flow, its saltness is far less than that of the North Sea, and decreases gradually towards the east; so that the fauna and flora---"

"What are they?" asked Meta.

"The animal and vegetable kingdoms," said he, courteously turning to her--"of the Gulf of Finland have almost a fresh-water character. But none the less do we find, besides the visible connection, a constant mutual influence between the ocean and the inner sea--a perpetual influx and reflux, resulting from a most complicated connection and combination of the most varied causes, one of which I must more particularly mention, as it is precisely that to which I am now referring. This is the regularity of the winds blowing from west to east, and from east to west, which, moving on the surface of the water, accompany and cause the ebb and flow of the under-currents. Seamen reckoned upon these winds almost with the certainty with which they might count upon a constantly recurring natural phenomenon; and rightly so, for within the memory of man no essential change had occurred, until a few years ago the east wind, which used always to appear in the latter half of August and continue till the middle of October, suddenly failed, and has not since returned."

"Well? and the consequence?" asked the President, who was listening with the most rapt attention.

"The consequence is, sir, that enormous masses of water have accumulated in the Baltic in the course of these years, which have been the less remarked that they have of course attempted to spread themselves equally on all sides, but the greatest pressure has always been in ever-increasing proportion towards the east, so that in the spring of last year at Nystad, in South Finland, four feet above the usual water-mark were registered; at Wasa, two degrees farther north, six feet; and at Tomeo, in the northernmost arm of the Gulf of Bothnia, there were even eight. The gradual nature of the rise and the almost universally high shores have to a great degree protected the inhabitants of those parts from any serious calamity. But for us, whose shores are almost without exception flat, a sudden reversal of this stream, which for years has tended uninterruptedly to the east, would be fearful. This reversal must however happen in case of a gale from the north-east or east, especially if it lasted for many days. The water driven westward by the power of the wind will vainly seek an outlet to the ocean through the narrow straits of the Belt and the Sound in the Cattegat and Skagerrack, and like some furious wild beast in the toils, will throw itself upon our shores, pouring for miles inland, tearing down everything that opposes its blind fury, covering fields and meadows with sand and rubbish, and causing a devastation of which our grandchildren and great-grandchildren shall speak with awe."

While Reinhold thus spoke, it had not escaped the Count that the President and the General had repeatedly exchanged looks of understanding and approval, that Herr von Strummin's broad face had grown long with amazement and terror, and--what above all angered him--that the ladies listened as attentively as if a ball were in question. At any rate he would not let him have the last word.

"But this wonderful storm is at best--I mean in the most favourable case for you--a mere hypothesis!" cried he.

"Only for those who are not convinced of its inevitableness as I am," answered Reinhold.

"Well, well," said the Count, "I will suppose that you do not stand alone in your opinion, even more, that you are right in it, that the storm will come to-day or to-morrow, or sometime; still it cannot happen every day--perhaps can only happen once in a century. Well, gentlemen, I have the deepest respect for the farsighted previsions of our authorities; but such distant perspectives must seem inappreciable to the most farseeing, and ought not to decide them to leave undone

what is required at once."

As the Count's last words were evidently addressed to the General and the President, and not to him, Reinhold did not think himself called upon to answer. But neither did they answer; the rest kept silence too, and an awkward pause ensued. At last the President coughed behind his slender white hand, and said:

"It is strange that while Captain Schmidt, here, in that decided tone which only conviction gives, is prophesying to us a storm, which our kind host, to whom certainly it would come nearest, would prefer to remove into the land of fancy--it is strange that I have been reminded at every word of another storm----"

"Another!" cried Meta.

"Another storm, my dear young lady, and of quite another sort; I need not tell these gentlemen of what sort. In this case also the usual course of affairs has been in the most unexpected manner interrupted, and there has been an accumulation of waters, flowing in immense streams of gold, ladies, from west to east. In this case also the wise men prophecy that such an unnatural state of affairs cannot be of long continuance; that it has already lasted its time, that an ebb must soon come, a reaction, a storm, which--to preserve the image which so strikingly applies to the matter--will, like the other, come upon us, destroying, overwhelming everything, and with its troubled and barren waters cover the ground, on which men believed their riches and power to be for ever established."

In his eagerness to give another turn to the conversation, and in the pleasure of his happy comparison, the President had not considered that the topic was still the same, and that it must be more unpleasant to the Count in this new phase than in the former one. He became aware of his thoughtlessness when the Count, in a tone that trembled with agitation, exclaimed:

"I hope, President, that you do not confound our plan, dictated, I may say, by the purest patriotism, with the enterprises so much in favour nowadays, which mostly have no other source than the vulgarest greed of gain."

"My dear Count! how can you suppose that I could even dream of such a thing!" exclaimed the President.

The Count bowed. "Thank you," said he, "for I confess that nothing would hurt my feelings more. I have always considered it as a political necessity, and a proof of his eminently statesmanlike capacity, that Prince Bismarck has made use of certain means for carrying out his great ideas, which he certainly would have preferred not using, if only to avoid too close contact with persons, all intercourse with whom must have been formerly thoroughly distasteful to him. I consider it also as a necessary consequence of this misfortune, that in order to reward these persons he has inaugurated, has been obliged to inaugurate, the new era of speculators, and of immoderate greed of gain, with those fatal millions. Meanwhile----"

"Excuse my interrupting you," said the General; "I consider these compacts of the Prince's with those persons, parties, strata of population, classes of society--call them what you will--as you do. Count Golm, most certainly a misfortune, but by no means a necessary one. On the contrary; the *rocher de bronze*, upon which the Prussian kingdom is established, formed as it was of a loyal aristocracy, a zealous body of officials, a faithful army--all these were strong enough to support the German Empire, if it must needs be German rather than Prussian, or indeed an empire at all."

"Yes, General, it had need to be, and to be German," said Reinhold.

The General shot a dark look at the young man from under his bushy eyebrows; but he had listened before with satisfaction to his explanations, and felt that he must let him speak now, when he disagreed with him.

"Why do you think so?" asked he.

"I judge by my own feelings," answered Reinhold; "but I am certain that they are the feelings of every one who has lived, as I have, often and long together far from home in a foreign land; who has experienced, as I have, what it means to belong to a people that is no nation, and because it is not one is little regarded, or even despised by the other nations with which we deal; what it means, in the difficult position in which a sailor so easily may find himself, to have only himself to look to, or, what is still worse, to have to request the assistance and protection needed from others, who give it grudgingly and would prefer not helping at all. I have experienced and gone through all this, as thousands of others have done, and have had to swallow as best I could all this injustice and unfairness. And I went abroad again last year after the war, returning only a few weeks ago, and found that I had no longer to stand on one side and sue for protection. I might step forward as boldly as others, and, gentlemen, I thanked God then with my whole heart that we had an Emperor--a German Emperor; for nothing less than a German Emperor was needed to demonstrate equally to English and Americans, Chinese and Japanese, that they no longer had to deal with Hamburgers and Bremeners, with Oldenburgers and Mecklenburgers, or even with Prussians, but with Germans, who sailed under one and the same flag--a flag which had the will and the power to shelter and protect the least and poorest of those who have the honour

and happiness of being Germans."

The General, to whom the last words were addressed, looked straight before him, evidently some chord in his heart was sympathetically touched; the President had put on his glasses, which he had not used the whole evening; the ladies hardly turned their eyes from the man who was speaking so honestly and straightforwardly; the Count saw and noted all, and his dislike to the man increased with every word that came from his mouth; he must silence this odious chatterer.

"I confess," said he, "if there was nothing further involved than that the gentlemen who speculate in sugar and cotton, or who carry away our labourers, should put their gains more comfortably into their pockets, I should regret the noble blood that has been shed upon so many battle-fields."

"I did not say that there was nothing else involved," answered Reinhold.

"No doubt," continued the Count, appearing not to notice this interruption, "it is a good thing to be out of range of the firing; and one can sun oneself comfortably in the honour and glory which others have won for us."

The General frowned, the President dropt his glasses, the young ladies exchanged terrified glances.

"I do not doubt," said Reinhold, "that Count Golm earned his full share of German fame; for my part I am well content with the honour of having been not out of range of the firing."

"Where were you on the day of Gravelotte, Captain Schmidt?"

"At Gravelotte, Count Golm."

The General raised his eyebrows, the President replaced his glasses, the young ladies again exchanged glances--Elsa this time in joyful surprise, while Meta very nearly laughed outright at the Count's confused look.

"That is to say," said Reinhold, the blood rising in his cheek at the attention which his rash speech had roused, and turning to the General, "to speak precisely, on the morning of that day I was on the march from Rezonville to St. Marie. Then, when it appeared, as you know, General, that the enemy was not in retreat upon the northern road, and the second army corps had completed the great flank movement to the right upon Verneville and Amanvilliers, we--the eighteenth division--came under fire near Verneville, about half an hour before midday. As you will remember, General, our division had the honour of commencing the battle." Reinhold passed his hand across his forehead. The frightful visions of that fateful day rose again to his mind. He had forgotten the contempt which had lain in the Count's question, and which he had wished to repel by the account of his share in the battle.

"You went through the whole campaign?" asked the General; and there was a peculiar, almost a tender, tone in his deep voice.

"Yes, sir, if you reckon the fortnight, from the 18th July to the 1st August, while I was being drilled at Coblenz. As a native of Hamburg and a sailor, I had not had the good fortune of learning my drill properly when young."

"How came you to be in the campaign?"

"It is a short story, which I will briefly relate. On the 15th July I was with my ship in the Southampton Roads, bound for Bombay--captain of my own ship for the first time. On the evening of the 16th we were to weigh anchor. But on the morning of the 16th came the news of the declaration of war; by midday an efficient substitute had been found, and I had said good-bye to my owners and my ship; in the evening I was in London; on the night of the 16th-17th on my way, by Ostend, Brussels and the Rhine, to Coblenz, where I offered myself as a volunteer, was accepted, went through a small amount of drill, sent forward, and, why, I know not, attached to the--regiment, eighteenth division, ninth corps, with which I went through the campaign."

"Were you promoted?"

"I was made a non-commissioned officer at Gravelotte, acting sub-lieutenant on the 1st September, the day after Bazaine's great sortie, and on the 4th December----"

"That was the day of Orleans?"

"Yes, sir; on the day of Orleans I got my commission."

"I congratulate you on your rapid promotion," said the General, smiling, but his face darkened again immediately. "Why did you not introduce yourself to me as a fellow-soldier?"

"The merchant-captain must apologise for the lieutenant of the reserve, General."

"Were you decorated?"

"Yes, sir; I received the Cross with my commission."

"And you do not wear it?"

"I have dressed so hastily to-day," answered Reinhold.

Meta broke into a laugh, in which Reinhold joined heartily; the others smiled too; a civil, approving, flattering smile, as it seemed to the Count.

"I fear that we are putting the patience of the ladies to too long a trial," he said, with a significant movement.

## CHAPTER X.

The ladies retired as soon as the table was cleared. Frau von Strummin, who was accustomed to go to bed at nine o'clock, was really tired, and Meta professed to be so too. But her sparkling eyes belied her; and the two girls were no sooner alone, for their rooms communicated, and Meta insisted on acting as Elsa's lady's-maid, than she fell upon the latter's neck and declared that she loved to distraction the Captain, who, after all, was really a lieutenant.

"He is the very man I have always dreamt of," cried she; "young, but not too young, so that one can feel respect for him; wise, but not too wise, so that one is not afraid of him; brave, but no boaster; and then such beautiful white teeth when he laughs, and he laughs so readily and pleasantly. I should like him to be always laughing."

"How could you laugh as you did?"

"What was I to do? I had been serious for so long, I must laugh at something. And his dress! But do you know, as we said good-night to him just now, I was not at all inclined to laugh, I was quite agitated, and felt more like crying. I felt as if I should never see him again, and ought to apologise to him for all my rudeness. Now you are getting serious too; confess that you, too, are in love with him."

"I agree to everything that you have said of him, but as to being in love, that is going rather far."

"Not for me, not for my heart; only feel how it beats! Five minutes is enough to set my heart at work. I do not know how it is, but to see and to love are all one with me. One often makes mistakes, however; very often."

Meta seated herself on a stool, began to unplait her red gold hair, and said in a tragical tone:

"The first time--it is an immense while ago, I was about twelve years old--I fell in love with my brother's tutor. I have got a brother, you must know. He lives now in Lower Pomerania, where for the least possible amount of money the largest possible amount of sand can be bought. Of course the tutor has been married a long time now, and is a clergyman, and of course lives also in Lower Pomerania, close to my brother, and I saw him there this winter at a christening. Oh, how ashamed of myself I was!"

And Meta covered her face with her hands, and shook out her hair in front of her, till it fell like a thick veil to the ground.

"How ashamed of myself I was! It was dreadful! And if it had been only once! But the same story has been repeated at least twenty times--the last time in February, in Berlin, at the opera, in the first row of boxes. Papa said he was a pickpocket; but papa sees pickpockets everywhere when he is in Berlin, and spoils every enjoyment and destroys every illusion, and yet it is so pleasant to have illusions, when one is seventeen and inclined that way! Are you asleep already?"

"No, but I am very tired; give me a kiss, and then go to bed too."

Meta threw back her hair, sprang up, embraced Elsa with the warmest kisses, and whispered in her ear: "Do you know, I am as certain as I stand here that I shall be an old maid--a very old maid with a bent back, and great spectacles over my sunken eyes, and knitting an everlasting stocking with trembling hands! It is hard, you know, when one has a warm heart, and would take a husband on the spot, if he were only good and nice, and would be faithful to him till death, and beyond death, too, if he died first and really made a point of it. For you see our 'von' and our pretensions to nobility are all nonsense. They cannot make any one happy, particularly when

there is nothing to support them, as is the case with us, and when one has a snub nose and red hair, and eyes of which one cannot tell oneself whether they are grey or green, or blue or brown. You have such wonderful soft chestnut-brown hair, and such a deliciously straight nose, and such beautiful, heavenly, hazel eyes, which are positively shining now in the half-light; and when you are the Countess you must be kind to poor little ugly Meta, and let me come here very often, that I may talk and laugh as much as I please--it does one so much good! oh, so much!"

And the strange little creature hid her burning face on her new friend's shoulder, and sobbed bitterly. Then she drew herself up suddenly, put back the hair from her face, and said: "I think I am tired too; I really do not know what I am saying. Good-night, you dear, beautiful thing!"

She raised herself, but dropped down again on the edge of the bed, bent over Elsa and asked in a whisper: "Have you never been in love? Do tell me, as you love me!"

"As I love you, no!"

"I thought so. Sleep well, and pleasant dreams to you!"

She kissed Elsa again, gathered her dressing-gown round her and glided away.

## CHAPTER XI.

The gentlemen, too, had remained but a short time together. Herr von Strummin's proposal of a rubber of whist before going to bed fell through, as it appeared that with the exception of himself and the Count no one played. Even the cigars offered by the Count found no favour excepting with Herr von Strummin, as the General and the President did not smoke, and Reinhold professed to be the less willing to encroach further on the Count's kindness, because he must take his departure early the next morning, and would therefore ask permission to take leave of the Count now with many thanks for the hospitality he had experienced. He was anxious to know how the *Neptune* had stood the gale, and he was certain of finding the ship either still at anchor at Wissow or already at Ahlbeck, where she must return to take up the passengers landed there yesterday.

The Count hoped that Captain Schmidt, if he really was determined to go, would at any rate make use of one of his carriages; but Reinhold declined the civil offer with equal civility; he was a good walker, and if he took a boat from Ahlbeck would reach Wissow sooner than the carriage could convey him there. He earnestly begged the Count not to disturb himself, and asked the General and Herr von Strummin kindly to make his excuses to the ladies. Herr von Strummin exclaimed that the ladies would be inconsolable, and would have further dilated on the subject in his own fashion when a look from the Count showed him that he was on the wrong tack. The General said shortly, as he gave Reinhold his hand, "Au revoir in Berlin, Lieutenant Schmidt!" The President, who had until now kept silence, came up to him at the last moment and whispered, "I wish to speak to you again."

Reinhold had got to his room, and was thrusting his unfortunate dress-coat back into his travelling-bag and considering what the President's mysterious words might mean, when there came a knock at his door. It was Johann, who came to inquire if Captain Schmidt would receive the President for a few minutes? Reinhold sent the servant back to say that he would come at once to receive the President's commands, and followed him immediately.

The President received his midnight guest with a cordiality which struck Reinhold the more that till now he had thought that the reserved and rather haughty-looking old gentleman had hardly noticed him. The President must have read Reinhold's thoughts in his face, for as he invited him to sit by him on the sofa, he said, "I must begin with a confession. It is my habit, nourished and perhaps justified by a long official career, to observe a certain, often I dare say too great, reserve towards all who for the first time come under my notice. But whenever I have good reason for interesting myself in any one my interest is full and entire. You, Captain--or must I, like my worthy friend, call you Lieutenant Schmidt?"

"Supposing you omit any title, President?"

"Very well--you, Herr Schmidt, interest me. You are frank and bold by nature, and have fortunately remained so although you have thought and studied and learned more than most members of your profession. However, I am not keeping you from your night's rest only to make you this very sincere compliment. I have two requests to make of you, of which the first is easy to grant, provided that your expedition after the *Neptune* is not merely an excuse."

"An excuse, President?"

"You took my side on the harbour question too warmly not to come into collision with the Count, whose sensitiveness on this point is unfortunately only too easy to understand. You would perhaps avoid, for the sake of the rest of the party, a possible continuation of the discussion which puts our host into such an inhospitable temper, and----" The President's keen eyes shot a rapid glance at Reinhold's face, as he coughed behind his white hand.

"That is exactly the state of the case, President," said Reinhold.

"I thought so. You will then in a few hours be on board the *Neptune*. I left lying about in my berth a document which I was studying on the way--a memorial to the Minister upon that very harbour question, and upon the condition of our water-highways, pilotage, coast-beacons--reforms in all these directions--and other matters. I should not like the papers to fall into strange hands even for a time; and you would greatly oblige me----"

"Thank you heartily for the confidence you put in me, President," said Reinhold; "the papers shall reach you in safety----"

"But not before you have looked into them," interrupted the President quickly. "And this is the prelude to my second request. You look surprised. The matter is simply this. The worthy old Superintendent of pilots at Wissow must, and will, soon retire. The post will be vacant next spring, perhaps even in the course of the winter. In the present state of affairs, with the many questions which are sure to crop up and require attention, the position is one of importance, far exceeding that usually attached to similar posts. I can only propose to the Minister for this post a thoroughly trustworthy and intelligent man, and one of whom I know that he will heartily support my plans from conviction of their propriety. Now if you can find such conviction for yourself in those papers, and would willingly continue the work with me, I would, with your permission, send in your name to the Minister."

"Really, President," said Reinhold, "you offer me such great and flattering confidence, a man of whom you really know nothing----"

"That is my affair," interrupted the President, smiling. "The question is now, are you inclined--supposing, of course, that the other circumstances of the position, which are not brilliant, but still sufficient, should suit you--to agree to my proposal? I do not expect, I do not even wish, for any answer at present; I only ask for it when you return the papers to me at Sundin, and we can discuss the matter further over a cutlet and a glass of Burgundy."

The President rose. Reinhold felt that he must accede to the wishes of this strange man, and not further pursue the question here or now, and took his leave, expressing his thanks in a few words which came from his heart, and were received by the President with a kindly smile. He had already reached the door when the President called after him:

"If you like to hand over to my servant anything which might be in your way for your expedition, it shall be carefully looked after among my luggage, and kept as a pledge for my papers."

A bow from the aristocratic grey head, a wave of the slender white hand, and Reinhold was dismissed.

"Very graciously, but very much as if I were already in the Government service and his," said Reinhold, laughing, as he walked up and down his room, considering the proposal which had come to him so unexpectedly, and yet like the natural sequel to all that had happened in the day. The grounding of the steamer in an uncertain channel; the want of proper signals from the shore; the absence of all precautions in case of need, and principally of a lifeboat; the difficulty, even impossibility, of putting a boat to sea in stormy weather, from that low, unprotected shore--all this had passed through his head. There was so much to be done here! And then that insane project of a harbour, that had been, as it seemed, within a hair's breadth of being carried out, perhaps might still be carried out, if experienced men did not raise their voices loudly against it, and expose this delusion of the Count's. The President was right. The position of a Superintendent of pilots in these waters was far more important than might appear at first sight, and was well worthy that a man should give his best strength to it, and sacrifice to it all that he had still hoped and promised to himself from life.

For a sacrifice it was. His almost completed negotiations with the great Hamburg firm, who had offered him their finest ship for some years to come, for the South American and China trade; his plan of a North Pole expedition, which he had worked out from a completely new point of view, and for which he had already planned and spoken so much, and with such success--such far-reaching views, such important designs to be given up, that he might confine himself to this narrow horizon! to help to prevent this intricate channel from being quite silted up! to organise some useful improvements on this coast; to---

"Be honest!" said Reinhold, suddenly standing still. "Confess to yourself that it is to avoid putting a few thousand miles between her and you, to remain in her neighbourhood, to have the possibility of seeing her again, to make a fool of yourself as you have done to-day. For it is folly! What good can come of it? This daughter of a general officer, of noble family, would raise her

brown eyes with a good deal of astonishment if the very unaristocratic Superintendent of pilots were to venture seriously to lift his eyes to her; and to the General himself I am, and remain, the Lieutenant of the Reserve--something that is neither fish nor flesh, and which one only puts up with in case of necessity, and then very much against the grain. I think I might have known that. And supposing that the most improbable thing in the world did happen, that I could gain the love of this beautiful girl and the friendship of her father, what sort of society should I find myself in in future! How would it please me to be perpetually meeting Count Golm, Herr von Strummin, and Co.? to be always reading in their looks and manners: "What does the fellow want amongst us? Can he not remain with his equals? or does he really think that he, or his democratic uncle---" Reinhold could not help laughing. "Uncle Ernst! He had not seen him for ten years; but if he found him again in Berlin--grumbling, bitter, dissatisfied, and apparently impossible to satisfy, as he was formerly--the stubborn old radical and the stern old soldier would make a fine piece of work together! And good Aunt Rikchen, with her anxious little face under her great white cap, and her little mincing steps, how would she get on with the beautiful aristocratic young lady? And his little cousin Ferdinanda--she must by this time be his grown-up cousin, and, if she had kept the promise of her childhood, a very pretty girl. But she might, perhaps, fit in better, although--- Have I really gone out of my mind? What is the good of all this? What is it all, but the wildest imagination, of which I ought to be ashamed, of which I shall be ashamed tomorrow! To-morrow? Why it is morning already!"

He went to the window. It was still dark; the great trees, which seemed to surround the whole house, rustled monotonously, like the rippling of the waves upon a level shore. The sky was completely overcast with black clouds. Reinhold gazed out into the darkness.

"It would be difficult to steer a straight course here," he said to himself, "and I have given away my compass. I cannot even find out how I stand. And yet, if but one star appeared, the star of her love, I should know what to do, and would find my way past all rocks and all obstacles!"

He started with a thrill of joy. As if called by enchantment from the black clouds, directly before him there shone a bright steady light--a star--Venus herself! By the hour and the inclination towards the horizon it could be none other than Venus!

It was a chance--of course a chance; but he had never been able to laugh at sailors' superstitions even if he did not share them, and he would not laugh now. No; he would take it as a sign from heaven, as a confirmation of the principle to which he had held as long as he could remember--not with childish self-will to strive after the unattainable, but on a really worthy purpose, attainable by courage and strength and perseverance, to set all his courage, all his strength, and all his perseverance.

Venus had disappeared in dark clouds, but other stars peeped out; there was a louder rustle in the trees, whose heavy masses began to stand out from the sky--the morning was breaking.

Reinhold closed the window. He wanted an hour's repose, and felt that now he could take it. A gentle peace like the lull after a storm had come upon his spirit--he felt that he was himself again, that he had no need to blame or quarrel with himself further, and with fate he had never quarrelled.

He put out the candles, which had nearly burnt down to their sockets; sank into the great arm-chair which stood before the fire, stared for a few moments at the embers which here and there shone amongst the ashes with a feeble and ever feebler glow, and then fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

## CHAPTER XII.

It was long, very long, before Elsa could sleep. As soon as she closed her eyes the bed changed to a ship that rocked up and down in the waves, and when she raised her weary eyelids more and more wonderful shadows flitted between the heavy folds of the curtains in the dim light of her night-lamp. The events of the day passed through her mind in the most varied form and in the utmost confusion. She was sitting by the sick-bed of the children in the close farmhouse room; but near her sat, not the farmer's wife, but Meta, who had let her loosened hair fall over her face, and told her with sobs how ashamed she was of being in love with a merchant captain whom she had never seen before. And then, again, it was the farmer's wife who sat upon the side of her bed and begged her to forget what she had said about the Count, who had sent for the doctor the moment she asked him, and who was certainly a kind gentleman in his own way, although he did not care about children and poor people, and looked sometimes so proud, and would be very angry if he knew that she always kept the little compass concealed in her pocket, which she must



return to its owner to-morrow, for she had promised it by her friendship.

That must have been the last flickering thread of the half-waking thoughts with which her dreams now played the most grotesquely painful tricks. Through narrow passages on board ship, and magnificent saloons, through dark forests, over foaming waves, now in a rocking boat, now in a shaking carriage, then again running hastily across the sandhills, where the ground at every step gave way under her eager feet, as she vainly endeavoured to hold by the waving grasses--always and everywhere she hastened after the Captain, to whom she must speak, she knew not why, to whom she must give something, she knew not what; she only knew that her happiness depended upon her speaking to him, upon her giving this thing to him. But she could not find him, and when she was certain that he was only hidden behind a curtain, behind which she could even see his figure, and called to him to come forward,--she knew very well that he was there, and at last wanted, laughingly, to lift the curtain,--some one always held her back, sometimes her father shaking his head with displeasure, then the President, who put up his eye-glass and assured her that he could see through the thickest curtains, but there was nobody there. It was not a red silk curtain either, but thick dark smoke, which only shone so red from the blood which had been shed behind it; but that blood was the life-blood of the Captain, who had just fallen in the battle of Gravelotte, half an hour before mid-day. She could do nothing to help him now.

"But I must see him again. He gave me his heart; I have it in my pocket, and it is always quivering and wanting to get back to him. I cannot give it back to him, but I will give him my own instead, and then his will be at rest again."

"If that is the case," said the President, "just put your heart here upon his tombstone."

And he drew back the red smoke as if it had been a curtain. There she saw a great iron cross, flooded with bright morning light; and at the foot of the cross, on the green turf, sat he whom she sought, in dress-coat and fisherman's boots, and by his side Meta von Strummin; and they had a casket in their hands, in which lay a heart. She could not see it, but she knew that it was a heart.

"You must not give that away," said she.

"Why not?" cried Meta. "I can give away my heart as often as I please, you know; I have given it away twenty times already."

"But that is my heart--my heart!"

Meta would not give her the heart, and then she grew so anxious and fearful. She caught Meta's hands, and struggled with her.

"Do wake up!" said Meta. "You are sighing and groaning so that you quite woke me."

"I thought the cross was red!" said Elsa.

"You are dreaming still. That is the shadow of the window frame; I have drawn back the curtains to let in the light. The sun must rise soon, the sky is quite red now. It looks beautiful! Do just sit up, and that will rouse you altogether."

Elsa sat up. The whole room was filled with a red glow.

"What have you been dreaming about?" asked Meta.

"I do not know," said Elsa.

"How pretty you are," said Meta; "much prettier even than you were yesterday evening. Did your dream give you such rosy cheeks, or is it the morning glow!"

"The morning glow," said Elsa. "How I should like to see the sun rise! I have never yet seen it."

"No!" cried Meta, clasping her hands together; "never yet seen the sun rise! Is it possible! Oh, you town people! Come! it never rises more beautifully than here at Golmberg, but we must make haste. I am half-dressed already. I will come and help you directly."

Meta came back in a few minutes and began to help Elsa to dress.

"I was born to be a lady's-maid," said she. "Will you have me? I will dress and undress you all day long, and be as faithful as a lapdog to you; for one's heart must cling to something, you know, and my heart has nothing now to cling to, you know. There now, just a veil over your beautiful hair, and this lovely shawl round you--you will want them; it will be quite cold enough."

But a soft warm air met them as they stepped from the glass door on to the little balcony, from which a small iron staircase led down into a strip of garden which had been laid out between the two wings of the building.

"The gate is never locked," said Meta; "we can get straight into the forest, you know, and be there in five minutes; but we must make haste if we want to see anything."

She dragged her faintly-resisting companion quickly on. "Don't be afraid," she cried, "I know

every step of the way; we shall not meet a soul, at the utmost only a roedeer-look!"

She held Elsa back by the arm and pointed to the broad path.

There stood a deer not a hundred yards from them. It seemed to see nothing alarming in their two figures, but bent its delicate head, which it had raised for a moment, and quietly went on grazing.

"That is what I delight in," said Meta, as they quickly pursued the narrow path.

"So do I," said Elsa.

"Then you must marry the Count."

"You must not say that again if we are to remain friends," said Elsa, standing still.

"Your eyes look as solemn as the deer's," said Meta. "Now you are laughing again, and that is much more becoming. But now shut your beautiful eyes tight, give me your hand, and don't be afraid to walk on; but do not open your eyes. Mind you do not open them till I say, Now!"

Elsa did as she was bid. A low rustling sound which she had perceived for some time past became louder and louder, the wind blew more and more strongly against her, a rosy light shone through her closed eyelids.

"Now!"

Elsa uttered a cry.

"Do not be afraid; the railing is strong, and I am holding you," said Meta.

Elsa was startled, but only with delight at the wonderful picture which was spread before her. Below her, far below, a sea of rustling, rosy, glowing boughs, and beyond the forest billows, the real sea, as far as the eye could reach, tossing in waves whose foaming crests shone here and there in a crimson glow, answering to that which overspread the heavens. And a crimson glow was on the shore, which swept in graceful curves out to the right hand as far as the rugged promontory, against whose steep cliffs, plainly seen notwithstanding the great distance, the surf leapt high up in foam and froth.

"Well, what do you say?" cried Meta.

Elsa could not answer; her soul was too full of the wonderful sight, and yet, as she repeated to herself, "How beautiful! oh, how beautiful!" her heart, which had been so light, grew sadder and more sad. With the impetuous music of the wind through the rustling branches at her feet, in the sullen thunder of the waves as, unseen by her eyes they broke upon the level shore, there mingled a melancholy tone--the reverberation of the dream from which she had awoke in such terror. Was not that crimson cloud, paling momentarily before the trembling light in the horizon, like the crimson curtain which had been drawn aside to show her that wonderful picture at the foot of the cross as it shone in the morning light; that picture of the two who were playing with her heart and laughing, while she was breaking it in grief and pain?

Lighter and lighter grew the horizon, their eyes could hardly bear the glory. At last the sun leapt up--a mass of light, a sheaf of rays, a ball of flame, before which the glow on sky and sea and earth as if in terror fled and vanished. Elsa was forced to close her eyes; she turned away, and when she opened them again--good heavens! what did she see?

They were standing a few paces from her, holding each other's hands and smiling, with the golden light of the sun shining full upon them. Was she dreaming again? or was it a delusion of her bewildered senses!

"This is too delightful!" cried Meta.

"Good-morning, Fräulein von Werben!" said Reinhold, as he withdrew his hand from Meta, who in her surprise had kept it a most indecorously long time, and came up to Elsa. "I must apologise again for disturbing you here. But how could I suppose that I should meet you in the forest at sunrise?"

"And may I ask what you are doing in the forest at sunrise. Captain Schmidt?" asked Meta.

Reinhold pointed with his hand over the sea, to a ship which had just rounded the promontory, and now seemed to be steering straight across the bay, leaving behind it a long straight streak of dark smoke:

"That is our steamer," said Reinhold, turning to Elsa. "She has been lying all night at anchor, behind Wissow Head, and is coming now, I suppose, to pick up our fellow-passengers. There, in the centre of the bay, you can just see the roofs over the edge of the dunes, lies Ahlbeck, the village where they were landed. The farmhouse, where we were yesterday evening, lies much nearer, and more to our right; but the spurs of the hill on which we now stand come between us and conceal it. I must make haste now to be able at least to signal to her from the shore. They

will be surprised to see me come on board alone."

"Why should not we also go on board, if it would be so easy?" asked Elsa.

"You will get to Neuenfähr almost as quickly, and much more comfortably, by road," answered Reinhold. "That was settled yesterday by the gentlemen, after the ladies had retired, and I could only agree with them."

"And you?" asked Meta.

"I belong to the ship. There, she has just turned, and is coming in shore now. Besides, I have a commission from the President to execute. But it is high time for me to be off."

"Good-bye, Captain Schmidt," said Meta; "we shall meet again, I hope."

"You are very kind," said Reinhold. "Good-bye."

He had turned to Elsa. Something like a shadow dimmed his blue eyes, and they did not look at her, but beyond her, perhaps towards the ship.

"Good-bye, Captain Schmidt."

At the sound of her voice the shadow vanished; the blue eyes that now turned towards her shone brightly, brightly and joyfully as the sun, only that she had no need or desire now to close her eyes, but answered the deep earnest look frankly and earnestly, as her heart prompted her.

And then he disappeared.

The two girls retraced their steps, but without talking as they had done on their way out. They walked silently side by side, till, at the spot where the two paths crossed, and where they had before seen the deer, Meta suddenly threw her arms round Elsa's neck, and kissed her passionately and repeatedly.

"What is the matter, Meta?"

"Nothing--nothing at all! Only you have such beautiful eyes!"

Reinhold, meanwhile, hastened down the narrow woodland path, which led from the place where he had found them, by a sharp descent over the side of the hill, between tall beeches and thick underwood, down to the sea-shore. He had not felt so gay and lighthearted since the days of his childhood. He could have sung and shouted for joy; and yet he was silent--quite silent, that he might not disturb the echo of her voice.

Only, as at a turn of the path the forest suddenly opened out, and the sea, his beloved sea, appeared in the bright morning sunshine between the trees that sloped down to the shore, he spread out his arms and cried:

"I will be always true to you--always!"

Then he laughed at the double meaning of his words, laughed like a schoolboy, and ran down the steep path as if he had wings to his feet.

## **BOOK II.**

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### **CHAPTER I.**

"Tickets, please! This is the last station, gentlemen."

Reinhold handed his ticket to the guard, and cast a glance upon his sleeping fellow-traveller. He, however, did not stir.

"Ticket, sir, please!" said the guard, in a louder voice.

The sleeper roused himself. "Ah, yes!" He felt in the side pocket of his grey shooting-coat, gave up the required ticket, leaned back in his corner again, and seemed to be already asleep when the train started.

When first he got into the train, some two or three stations back, two other men in shooting-dress having accompanied him to the carriage, and taken a somewhat noisy farewell, it had struck Reinhold that this was not the first time that he had seen the slight active figure, and heard the clear, imperious voice.

That the traveller was a military man, was evident from his conversation with his friends, but in vain did he ransack his recollections of the campaign to get on the right tack; it was all too confused, incidents crowded too quickly on each other, there was nothing to link these memories together. But as the sleeper changed his position, and the light from the lamp fell more clearly upon him, Reinhold looked with increasing interest upon the face which seemed so strangely familiar. The well-formed forehead, shaded by short, curly, brown hair, the fine straight nose, the delicate lips, with the slight dark moustache, the finely chiselled though rather long chin--now he knew where and when that face, more beautiful, it is true, and more fascinating, had last been seen by him!

He of the grey shooting-coat, who had opened his eyes and was carelessly glancing at his companion, turned his head aside, and then immediately turning back, said:

"I beg your pardon, but it strikes me that we must have met before."

"So I think," replied Reinhold courteously; "but my memory has played me false."

"In the campaign, perhaps?"

"That was my first thought, too."

"Perhaps my name may be some help. Ottomar von Werben, Lieutenant in the ---- Regiment, No. 19."

A joyful thought struck Reinhold.

"My name is Lieutenant Reinhold Schmidt, of the Reserve. I had the pleasure, not long ago, of travelling in the steamer from Stettin to Sundin, with a general officer of your name, and his daughter----"

"My father and sister," said Ottomar. "Strange coincidence that--very!"

He sank back in his corner, from which he had raised himself, with a civil bow.

"The Lieutenant of Reserve affords but slight interest to the Guardsman," thought Reinhold to himself.

Under other circumstances he certainly would not have continued the conversation which the other had cut so short; but now he could not resist making an exception.

"I hope that the General and his daughter are well?" he began afresh.

"Perfectly," said Ottomar; "at least, I believe so. I have hardly spoken to them since they came home the day before yesterday. I have been on leave since yesterday morning shooting. You shoot?"

"I can hardly call myself a sportsman, though I have had opportunities of joining in very unusual sport."

"Unusual?"

"I mean unusual for Europeans. A sailor----"

"Are you a sailor?"

"At your service. What I was going to say was that a sailor comes across strange things sometimes."

"You interest me; tell me something about it. Shooting is a perfect passion with me."

Ottomar had seated himself nearer to Reinhold, and looked at him with his inquiring brown eyes. Those eyes found it easy work to charm an answer out of Reinhold.

So he related his adventures in a buffalo hunt in the Arkansas prairies, and in a tapir hunt in Ceylon, to which Ottomar listened attentively, only now and then correcting some unsportsmanlike expression, or begging for a clearer explanation on some point which either he did not quite understand, or which seemed to be of importance.

"That is capital!" he exclaimed at last. "He must be a good shot that--what's his name?--the Englishman, Mr. Smirkson; and you can't shoot badly either, but then you are a soldier. By the way, do you still not remember where we came across each other? It must have been in Orleans, as, so far as I can remember, that is the only time that my regiment came in contact with yours."

"And it was in Orleans!" cried Reinhold--"of course it was in Orleans, when our two regiments combined to furnish a guard; and a jolly guard it was, too, thanks to your being such good company and having such a cheery temper. How could I have failed to remember it, and even your name, in the last few days? Now it is all coming back to me. Several of your brother officers came in afterwards--a Herr von Walbach."

"Walbach--quite right; he fell afterwards before Paris, poor fellow. I am very intimate with his family. Perhaps he has got the best of it; it is horridly dull work since the campaign was over!"

"One has to get accustomed to everyday life again certainly," said Reinhold; "but you soldiers remain in the same profession, and I do not think that Count Moltke will let you rest long on your laurels."

"Heaven knows! It is hateful work; the campaign was child's play compared to it!"

"But look you, it is a good deal harder upon us civilians, both in time of war--which is certainly not our trade, so that we can hardly meet the claims which are made upon us and which we make upon ourselves--and after the war too, when we are expected to return to our trade as if nothing had happened, and then generally find, to our cost, how hardly men learn, how easily they forget. Luckily, my profession is something like war--at least, in the moral qualities which it requires of a man--and that may be the reason why I, for my part, cannot join in the complaints which I have heard from so many upon this point."

"Just so--exactly," said Ottomar; "no doubt. Shall you stop long in Berlin?"

He was looking out of window, from which many lights were now visible.

"A few weeks--perhaps months; it depends upon circumstances--matters which I cannot foresee."

"I beg your pardon--I do not want to be impertinent--what did you say your name was?"

He rubbed the window with his handkerchief where his breath had dimmed it. Reinhold could not help smiling at the careless manner of keeping up the conversation. "I can bear more from you than from most men," he thought to himself, and repeated his name.

The face pressed against the window turned sharply towards him with an expression of surprise and curiosity, for which Reinhold could not account.

"I beg your pardon if I ask a very stupid question--have you relations in Berlin?"

"Yes. I have not seen them for years; to visit them was the original object of my journey."

"I--I know several people of your name. General----"

"We Schmidts are middle class, very middle class. My uncle, I believe, has very considerable marble-works."

"In the Canal Strasse?"

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"Only by sight; a very stately old gentleman. We live in the Springbrunnen Strasse, back to back, or rather shoulder to shoulder. The court-yard of your uncle's place of business runs far into the Park Strasse at the back, and the little garden belonging to our house (the grounds were originally part of the same property) on one side joins the large garden belonging to your uncle. We see each other over hedges and walls without being acquainted--I mean formally, for, as I said, I know your uncle by sight very well, and your cousin."

He let down the window; the train ran into the station.

"Are you expected?"

"Yes; it would otherwise be a doubtful experiment when one has not met for ten years."

"Can I be of any use to you?"

Ottomar had risen and taken up his gamebag; he had held his gun between his knees all the

time.

"Thanks, very much."

The train stopped. Reinhold took his things out of the net. He could not collect them all at once. When he turned round Herr von Werben had already jumped out, Reinhold saw him once hastily threading the crowd, and then lost sight of him as he let his eyes wander till they caught sight of a man who was standing at some little distance. The stately, broad-shouldered figure, the pose of the head held up so proudly, while turning to right and to left as he looked about him, the thick beard, almost entirely grey--how could he have doubted his recognising that face at the first glance!

It was Uncle Ernst.

"Ah! my dear boy!"

Such a hearty tone was in the deep strong voice, and hearty and strong was the pressure from the large muscular hand which was stretched out to Reinhold.

"The very image of your father!" said Uncle Ernst.

The fine eyes which were fixed on Reinhold's face grew dim. The hand which held his loosened its grasp, and his uncle caught him to his breast and kissed him.

"My dear uncle!"

His own eyes were wet; he had not expected to be received with so much affection by this strong stern man. It was but a passing emotion, and Uncle Ernst said, "Your things came yesterday. Where is Ferdinanda?"

"Is she here?"

"There she comes."

A tall handsome girl came hurriedly up to them. "I had quite lost you, father. How do you do, my dear cousin! Welcome to Berlin!"

A pair of melancholy blue eyes glanced at him with what Reinhold thought a rather uncertain look. There was a sort of hasty indifference, too, in the tone of the full deep voice, while the pressure of the hand she gave him was but slight.

"I certainly should not have known you," said Reinhold.

"Nor I you."

"You were still a child then, and now----"

"And now we will try and get out of the crowd," said Uncle Ernst, "and you can say what you have got to say to each other on the way and at home."

He had already turned and went on a few steps; Reinhold was about to offer his arm to his cousin when suddenly Herr von Werben stood before him.

"I must say good-bye."

"I beg your pardon, Herr von Werben, but you disappeared so suddenly----"

"I had hoped to be of some use, but I see I am too late. Will you introduce me?"

"Lieutenant von Werben--my cousin, Fräulein Ferdinanda Schmidt."

Ottomar bowed, hat in hand. Ferdinanda returned the bow, very formally it seemed to Reinhold.

"I have often had the pleasure of seeing Fräulein Schmidt at the window when I have been riding by. I will not presume to think that I have been honoured by any such notice in return."

Ferdinanda did not answer. There was a gloomy, almost severe, expression upon her face, which made her look like her father.

"I will not detain you," said Ottomar; "I hope to have the pleasure of meeting my fellow-traveller again. Good-bye, Fräulein Schmidt."

He bowed again and walked quickly away. Some knots of people collected at the entrance came between them.

"Oh, do come!" said Ferdinanda.

She had taken Reinhold's arm and suddenly pressed forward impatiently.

"I beg your pardon, but I could not help introducing that man to you. You did not seem to like him?"

"I? Why should I mind it? My father cannot bear waiting."

"Who was that?" asked Uncle Ernst.

"A Herr von Werben--a soldier. I knew him during the war, and fell in by accident with some of his people on my way here."

"A son of the General's?"

"Yes."

Reinhold felt a touch from the hand which lay on his arm, and a low voice said in his ear, "My father hates the Werbens--at least the General--since '48----"

"Yes, by the way," said Reinhold.

Ferdinanda's shrinking from the introduction, her haste to put an end to it--all was clear to him; and then he felt that sensation which is common to every one who has suddenly seen a vista of pleasure opening out before him, and as suddenly seen it withdrawn.

"There is my carriage," said Uncle Ernst. "Friedrich!"

A large carriage with two strong brown horses drove up. Uncle Ernst stepped in; Reinhold helped in Ferdinanda. As he was following, casually glancing on one side, he saw Ottomar von Werben standing at some distance, with a soldier servant near him holding a dog in a chain. Ottomar waved his hand. Reinhold answered the friendly greeting with equal cordiality.

"I do not hate the Werbens," thought he to himself as he sank back in the carriage.

## CHAPTER II.

From the short letters which he had received from his relations during the last ten years, Reinhold had gathered that at all events his uncle's business prospered fairly. Ferdinanda's handsome dress, and the smart carriage in which they dashed at a tremendous pace through the long, crowded, twilight streets, led him to expect that his uncle must have become a well-to-do, if not a rich man, and the entrance to the house quite fulfilled these expectations. The broad marble steps before which the carriage stopped, at the entrance; the square marble staircase, decorated with flowers, divided from the entrance by a glass door, and which led, in three flights, to the gallery that ran along two sides of it, whence various doors opened to the living rooms; the spare room on the upper floor, to which his uncle himself led him, with the request that he would make himself comfortable and then come down to supper--everything was of the best; rich, without show, showing taste even; but still it struck Reinhold as not comfortable. There was a chilliness about it, he thought, and then felt that this was but imagination, the result of that state of mind so common to any one suddenly coming without much preparation to a new place, where he is expected to be at home at once, amongst people who, without being absolute strangers, are yet strange enough to lead one to anticipate at any moment something odd and chilling, because unexpected, unhopd-for, or even undesired.

"But in fact that is how it always is in this life," said Reinhold to himself, as he put the finishing touches to his dress. "And if I did not know it before, the last few days might have taught it to me. How much that was unexpected and unhopd for have they not brought! And just now again, a good-looking young fellow, tired out with a long day's shooting and a little too much wine, after sleeping for an hour, at the last moment discloses himself as a fellow-soldier and her brother! It is like a romance, and yet it all comes so naturally! And to think that she is living close by, that the boughs of the trees which rise above the gables of the house are perhaps in her garden, that she whom I never hopd to see again--Reinhold, tell the truth!--you know that you have always cherished a hope that you would see her again! You certainly did the day before yesterday, the last time that you gazed into her eyes. Those loved and lovely eyes showed you a faint glimmering of hope which must not, cannot be extinguished, even if there should be but slight sympathy in this house with your aristocratic tastes, unless it come from Aunt Rikchen."

Uncle Ernst's sister had hastened to him with open arms, and embraced him over and over again, with an exuberance of emotion which could hardly find sufficient vent in tears and exclamations, a wonderful contrast to the suppressed emotion with which her brother had

received him. Even this scene Uncle Ernst speedily put an end to with a short gruff, "If you have cried enough, Rike, I might perhaps take Reinhold to his room." Whereupon his aunt, taking advantage of a final embrace, whispered to Reinhold: "He still calls me Rike! but I shall be Aunt Rikchen to you, shall I not?"

"Poor old aunt! For indeed she has grown quite old, though, by the way, I suspect she really is younger than her stately brother! And passing years do not seem to have improved the terms on which they are together. He still calls her Rike! But no doubt they unite in spoiling my pretty cousin."

Reinhold carefully combed out his beard, and then punished himself for his vanity and for the grievous wrong thus done to the love and truth which he had sworn to Elsa von Werben, by disarranging it again with his hand, but only moderately, "half-measures," thought he, smiling to himself, as he ran downstairs to the dining-room, where Uncle Ernst and Ferdinanda were already awaiting him.

"Of course Rike cannot be in time," said Uncle Ernst.

"Aunt is in the kitchen," said Ferdinanda.

"Of course she is somewhere, only she never is where she should be."

"I beg your pardon," said Aunt Rikchen, who just at that moment entered, and hastily went towards her place, stopping at the sideboard on her way, to busy herself over something else.

"Are we to sit down to supper to-night?" demanded Uncle Ernst.

"Directly--directly!" said Aunt Rikchen.

The large round table was only laid for four. Reinhold had hoped now to meet his cousin Philip, after whom he had not been able to make any inquiries during the first interchange of question and answer; so he asked now.

His question was addressed to Ferdinanda.

"Philip does not come often," she replied.

"Say, rather, that he never comes."

Reinhold gazed in astonishment at his uncle, who had said this with a displeased look, and in a harsh, stern voice; and he thought that he observed on the two women's faces an anxious, confused expression. He had unwittingly touched upon a string which sent a sharp discord through the whole family.

"This is a good beginning," thought Reinhold, as he seated himself between his uncle and aunt, with Ferdinanda opposite.

### **CHAPTER III.**

Luckily, however, it seemed that his fears were groundless. It is true that Aunt Rikchen could hardly open her mouth without Uncle Ernst cutting short the thread of the story. Nor did Ferdinanda join much in the conversation; but that at first was not so remarkable, and was easily explained by the fact that Uncle Ernst was most anxious to obtain from Reinhold a comprehensive account of his life and adventures during the many years in which they had not met, and listened to him with attention that would admit of no interruption.

During their conversation, Reinhold had many opportunities of observing the unusual extent and depth of his uncle's knowledge. He could not mention any town, however distant, of which the situation, history, and mercantile relations were not thoroughly well known to him. He expressed to his uncle his surprise and admiration at this.

"Why, what would you have?" was the answer. "When a man is born a poor devil, and not, like you, lucky enough to be able to follow his own inclinations in his profession, but, as boy, youth, and man, ground down with hard work for his daily bread, till he has reached old age, and it is too late for him to set out on his wanderings, what is there left for him but, with map in hand, to read and study, that he may find out how vast and how beautiful the Almighty has made this world?"



When Uncle Ernst spoke thus, all harshness and severity vanished from his voice, and all gloom from his stern features; but it was only for a moment, then the dark cloud settled once more upon eyes and brow, like the grey mist upon the snowy mountain-top, which but a moment ago glistened in the sunshine.

Reinhold could not look enough at the fine old face, with its ever-changing expression, though there was never the least trace of weakness or littleness--it was always strong and resolute; and at the noble head, which, with its thick curly hair and bushy beard, now turning grey, seemed more dignified, more commanding even than in former years. And he could not help being constantly reminded of another face, opposite which he had sat but a few evenings ago--General von Werben's--also the face of a handsome, stern old man, more concentrated and self-controlled, indeed, and lacking that mighty fire which in the other burst forth in brilliant flashes, to be, as it were, forcibly restrained, and left to smoulder and perhaps flame afresh.

From the very first, Reinhold had thought that this inward fire, so hardly restrained, was threatening to burst forth in all its thunder and storm, and was only awaiting its opportunity; and it was soon proved to him that he had not been mistaken.

He had arrived in his account of his wanderings at the day when he received in Southampton the news of the Declaration of War, when, throwing up all engagements and forsaking his usual occupation, he hurried back to Germany to fulfil his duties to his threatened Fatherland.

"This resolution," he cried, "was called forth by enthusiasm; it was carried out with absolute devotion, and with all my mental and physical powers, from first to last, without once, I may truly say, getting weary, once faltering, once doubting that the cause to which I had devoted myself was a holy one, however unholy and sanguinary the garb in which it might, indeed must, be decked. Then when the great goal was reached at last--greater, better, more complete than I--ay, than any who were with me in the battle--had thought or expected, hoped or wished--then I returned to my old employment, and once more launched my ship upon the seas, with the calm and joyful feeling of having fulfilled my duty; safe, wherever the uncertain career of a sailor may lead me, to find a spot of home under the German flag; and in the full assurance that you, in our beautiful Fatherland, will never lose what has been so hardly won, and that in good time the great work so nobly planned, so powerfully begun, will be finished and completed, and that when I returned home it would be to a country full of joy and peace, and sunshine in every heart and on every face. I must own, however, that during the short time that I have been at home, I have noticed many things which would seem to mock my hopes, but I cannot believe that I have seen rightly. On the contrary, I am convinced that it has so chanced that I have only come in contact with men who, upon some entirely personal ground, are dissatisfied with the state of affairs, or, at least, not perfectly satisfied with their present condition, as was the case with several men whom I met at Count Golm's. Even in that exclusive circle I did not conceal my opinion, not even from the sceptical President of Sundin, whom I met only yesterday; rather I expressed myself openly and strongly. And now here, amongst my own family, at your table, Uncle Ernst--you who have struggled and suffered so much for the happiness and honour of your country--there can be no question of reserve, and I may feel secure of the warmest sympathy and most entire approval."

Uncle Ernst had been listening, with his head supported on his hand, in silence; suddenly he looked up, and in a voice which boded no good, said:

"Forgive my interrupting you, to point out to you that I agree with the minority to whom you refer. I always think it right that when a man is speaking he should know if his audience does not agree with him."

There was an unusually stern look in the commanding eyes, which Reinhold did not fail to observe. One moment he hesitated whether to be silent or to continue. But supposing he only stayed a few days in the house, this topic must constantly form a subject of conversation; and if, as unfortunately there was now no doubt, his uncle differed from him in opinions, it would be worth his while to arrive at the ideas of such a man upon the point. So he said:

"I am very sorry, my dear uncle, for the sake of the cause, and--forgive me for saying so--for your sake."

"I do not understand."

"I mean that the cause is so important and so weighty that it needs every pair of strong shoulders to help it on, and it is so great and so sacred that I pity those who either will not or cannot help and advise with all their hearts."

"Or cannot!" exclaimed Uncle Ernst. "Just so! Have I not helped and advised as long as I could! At the barricades in the days of March, on the benches of the National Assembly and everywhere and at any time where it was possible for a man--at least a man of honour--to put his shoulder to the wheel as you call it. I will not dwell upon the fact of that shoulder having been wounded, more than once, of my having been cavilled at, interfered with, summoned before the authorities, and shut up in prison; that was natural, other and better men than I have fared no better, but worse--much worse. Well! it was a struggle then--a struggle carried on with very unequal weapons, perhaps, a desperate one, but still a struggle. What have we got now but a market and a huckster's shop, where you may bargain, backwards and forwards, over the counter

for piece after piece of our old proud flag of freedom, with the man who has them all in his pockets and who they know has them there?"

The cloud upon his brow grew darker, his eyes flashed, his voice took a deeper tone, a storm was at hand; Reinhold thought it advisable to draw in a little.

"I am no politician, uncle," said he, "I think my talents do not lie in that direction, and I have had but little time to cultivate them. At all events I cannot contradict you when you say that unhappily everything is not as it should be in this country; but then you too must admit, as those gentlemen of whom I spoke admitted to me, that the cause viewed from another point, I mean from without, from the deck of a ship, from some distant port across the waters, takes another and far better aspect; and I think you cannot take it amiss if I say that I think more highly of this man--and, in fact, have a great respect for him, feeling that it is owing to him that the name of Germany has gained the respect of the whole world."

"I know the burden of that song," said Uncle Ernst, "he has sung it often enough, crafty old bird-catcher! he is always singing it to snare the birds into his net. Who brought about the events of 1864, of 1866, of 1870? *I did!* I! I!

"And is he not right?"

"No, a thousand times no!" cried Uncle Ernst. "Because a man removes the last spadeful of earth, has he an exclusive right to the treasure which other men, with untold labour and fatigue, have toiled and digged for in the depth of the earth? Schleswig Holstein would still be Danish if our young nobility had had to conquer it; Germany would still be in a thousand pieces had it been left to them to join it together; still would the raven be hovering over our ruined hovels were it not for the thousands and thousands of patriotic hearts and heads that have been filled with enthusiasm for the unity of Germany, the hearts and heads of men who have thought day and night of her greatness, but have never been gifted and honoured with pensions and titles!"

"Do you know, uncle," said Reinhold, "I think that it is with German unity as with many another great matter. In imagination many started to go round the world, in reality one man did at last go, and he discovered--America."

"It strikes me," said Uncle Ernst angrily, "that he who discovered it was called Columbus, and was imprisoned in lieu of thanks, and died in misery. He who came after him and reaped his glory, and after whom the new world was named, was a miserable thief unfit to tie the other's shoes."

"Now really!" exclaimed Reinhold, unable to resist a smile, "I do not believe that there is another man in the world who would speak like that of Bismarck."

"Very possibly," replied Uncle Ernst; "I believe that there is not another man in the whole world who hates him as I do."

Uncle Ernst drank off the glass, which he had just filled, at a draught. Reinhold noticed that he had already made rather free with the bottle, and he thought he observed that the hand which guided the glass to his lips again trembled a little, and that the formerly steady glance of the great eyes was troubled and uneasy.

"That comes of arguing," said Reinhold to himself. "What did I excite his anger for? Let every man think as he likes. I ought to have changed the subject."

While they were driving through the town he had already mentioned the wreck of the steamer and the subsequent events, so that he was able without any difficulty to refer back to it and continue his account of how very kindly he was received by the President in Sundin, and what prospects had been opened before him. He pictured the man to the life, now veiling himself in diplomatic obscurity, now giving his opinion upon men and things with the greatest freedom, but through every apparent change keeping his aim in view.

"You do not describe the man badly at all," said Uncle Ernst. "I knew him very well, as far back as 1847, when he sat on the extreme right in the United Parliament. Now he belongs to the opposition, I mean to the concealed opposition of the old-fashioned officials who quarrel with the all-powerful Majordomo and would be glad to see his clever rule cut short to-day rather than to-morrow. There are worse men than he, but I wish you had not gone to such lengths with him."

"I have not yet committed myself to anything," answered Reinhold; "nor will I do so till I have quite convinced myself that the situation which I am offered will be a sphere of action to which my talents and capacities are suited. If that is so--then I must take it."

"Must? Why?"

"Because I have vowed to serve my country by land and sea," replied Reinhold, smiling. "My duty by land I have performed, now I must seek it by sea."

"It seems to me that service has become necessary to you," said Uncle Ernst, with a grim smile.

Reinhold could see that he was trying to joke, but he was determined, as far as it concerned himself and his own ideas and convictions, not to give in to his inexorable opponent in the smallest degree.

"Why should I deny," said he, "that the strictness of Prussian military discipline has deeply impressed me. At home in our little republican community everything is pretty slack; no one thoroughly understands the art of commanding, and no one will allow himself to be commanded. Now in a ship there is but one who ought to command, the rest must obey. But none have learnt what they have now got to put in practice; the officers are too often found wanting; they begin with abuse and bluster, where mild firmness would be proper, and then again let off the men very easily, and drop the reins where they ought to pull them tight. The men bear such capricious management the less well that they are mostly an unruly set, who are only waiting for an opportunity to throw off the yoke which oppresses them. So there come rubs on all sides, and one must be thankful if matters do not go from bad to worse, as happens unfortunately often enough, and has happened to me more than once. And if during a long sea-voyage a man is lucky enough to get his authority established and to introduce some order and discipline amongst the crew, he is in port again by that time, and at the next voyage the whole thing has to be begun over again. There is no question of all this in the army. Every man knows beforehand that unquestioning obedience is his first and last duty; yes, and what is more, each one, even the most unruly, feels that disobedience would be not only a crime, but that it would be madness, for if one man commit the slightest mistake the whole body is put out, he feels that this wonderful, fearfully complicated machine called the Army, can only work when every little wheel and every screw is in its place, and doing what is ordained for it to do at the precise moment."

"For example they must shoot down in the ditch at Rastadt those who do not agree with them as to what is good for their country--and so on," said Uncle Ernst.

Reinhold did not answer. What could he answer? How could he hope to come to any understanding with a man whose views were so diametrically opposed to his own in all things, and who always pushed these views to their furthest limit without offering any concession to him even as a guest, when only an hour ago he had received him with such hearty affection almost as a father would welcome his son after a long separation?

"Perhaps I have made a lasting breach between us," thought Reinhold. "I am sorry, but I cannot give myself up bound hand and foot to the mercy of this old tyrant. If I am not able to find a topic which will please this rugged nature, I must get the ladies to help me; it is their place."

Aunt Rikchen had plainly read his thoughts in his face. She answered his silent request by a quick furtive glance and an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders, as if to say, "He is always like that now! There is no help for it." Ferdinanda did not seem to notice the interruption. She sat as she had sat almost throughout the whole meal, with a fixed, absent look on her face, gazing straight before her, and took no notice even now, when her aunt turned towards her to say a few words. Uncle Ernst, who was just about to refill his empty glass, set the bottle down heavily upon the table.

"I have begged you fifty times to stop that dreadful whispering, Rike! What is the matter now?"

A slight flush of anger rose in Aunt Rikchen's withered cheeks as the hated name sounded in her ear; but she answered in the voice expressive of resigned indifference, with which she was accustomed to reply to her brother's reproofs:

"Oh, nothing! I only asked Ferdinanda whether Justus was not coming this evening."

"Who is Justus?" asked Reinhold, delighted that a fresh subject had been started.

"Rike likes to call everybody by their Christian names," said Uncle Ernst.

"And why not, when they almost belong to the family?" replied Aunt Rikchen, who seemed determined this time not to be put down. "Justus, or, if your uncle prefers it, Herr Anders, is a young sculptor."

"Aged one and thirty," said Uncle Ernst.

"Aged one and thirty," pursued Aunt Rikchen, "or, to be more precise, three and thirty. He has lived here--who knows how long he has lived here?"

"Don't you know, Ferdinanda?" asked Uncle Ernst.

"Ferdinanda is in fact his pupil," continued Aunt Rikchen.

"Oh!" said Reinhold. "I congratulate him."

"It is not worth while," said Ferdinanda.

"His favourite pupil!" exclaimed Aunt Rikchen. "He told me so only yesterday, and that the committee are very much pleased with her 'Shepherd Boy.' I must tell you that Ferdinanda has

sent to the exhibition a shepherd boy, executed from the description in Schiller's poem--"

"'Uhland,' aunt."

"I beg your pardon, I have not had such advantages in education as some people--now I don't remember what I was saying."

"It won't make much odds," grumbled Uncle Ernst.

"You were speaking of Ferdinanda's 'Shepherd Boy,'" said Reinhold, coming to her assistance.

His aunt shot a grateful look at him, but before he could answer the bell rang, and a clear voice was heard asking whether they were still at supper.

"It is Justus!" cried Aunt Rikchen. "I thought so. Have you had any supper?"

## CHAPTER IV.

"Not yet, Aunt Rikchen," said the new-comer. "How are you all? I must apologise, Herr Schmidt, for coming so late. Captain Schmidt? Should have known you from the family likeness, even if I had not heard you were expected to day. Delighted to make your acquaintance. Now no ceremony, Aunt Rikchen; I only want a bit of bread and butter and a cup of tea, if there is one, nothing more. How goes the world with you, Fräulein Ferdinanda? The 'Shepherd Boy' has got a capital place in the first room by the window. My bust's in the second--not so bad except for that abominable reflected light; but my group in the third! Night and darkness surrounds them; nor will silence be wanting--the silence of the public--broken by the shrill cackle of the critics. We poor artists! Might I ask you for a piece of sugar, Herr Schmidt?"

Reinhold could hardly help laughing. The appearance, manners, and speech of this bearded, partially bald-headed little sculptor, his cheerfulness, friendliness, and ease, all formed such a marvellous contrast to the rather stiff and irritable tone of the former occupants of the table. And now he was asking Uncle Ernst for a bit of sugar! It seemed rather like asking a lion to dance! But the lion did what he was asked, and did it amiably, with a kindly smile such as was seldom seen on that stern face.

"He succeeds better than I do," thought Reinhold. "More shame to me."

At sight of this man, who with the innocence of a child seemed able to go about the world either not seeing, or at least not caring for its dangers, Reinhold quite recovered his usual temper, and hailed with joy the appearance of this more cheerful addition to the party. The sculptor on his side was attracted by the powerful-looking man, the frank open countenance, clear blue eyes, and curly brown beard; his own small, restless, rather red eyes constantly turned in that direction, and he addressed his conversation mostly to him.

"Don't let your uncle put you out of conceit with Berlin," said he. "Let me tell you it is a charming place, and is getting more so every day. We have now got the only thing that was wanting--money, and when our pockets are full of money, you don't know all that we can do here in Berlin. Berlin is to be the capital of the world. Don't look so indignantly at me, Fräulein Ferdinanda. It is an old story for us, but Captain Schmidt is probably not in the secret yet, and we must warn him lest he should be utterly overpowered with astonishment when the sublime image of the monster is unveiled before him to-morrow, with its hundreds and thousands of heads, legs, and arms. What trouble we take over it. We feed the monster with our heart's blood. I am nothing but skin and bone as it is, and that reminds me that I have got another commission, Aunt Rikchen."

"Another monument in memory of our victories?" asked Aunt Rikchen eagerly.

"Of course! You must know, Captain Schmidt, that no small town exists, however insignificant, but must have its monument. And why not? The good people in Posemuckel are quite as proud of the six brave fellows whom they sent into the field, as we are of our six hundred or our six thousand, and are anxious to let posterity know how Tom, Dick, and Harry fought and conquered in so many battles and skirmishes, and that Fritz Haberstroh, widow Haberstroh's only son, was shot dead as a door-nail at Sedan for the honour and glory of the German Empire. And quite right and proper too, I think, and the fact that they always collect a few pounds less than will pay any living man to make anything for them, is not their fault."

"And how do you get over that difficulty?" asked Reinhold.

"He just puts a new head on an old statue, and the Victory of Germany is ready," said Uncle Ernst.

"I protest utterly against such atrocious calumny," cried the sculptor. "I tried the experiment only once, by taking away the venerable head of a Homer, who had stood for a long time in my studio, and changing him into a Germany; but it was only on account of those splendid folds, those really perfect folds, of which Hähmel in Dresden had spoken so very highly!"

"And the experiment failed?" asked Reinhold.

"Yes and no," answered Justus, rubbing his bald forehead. "No, because my Germany stands firmly fixed upon her sandstone pedestal in Posemuckel, and with the uplifted left hand holding a laurel wreath, blesses the German Fatherland and her faithful Posemucklers, while the right hand, heavily armed, sinks wearily by her side; but when the veil was drawn away, and the schoolboys sang 'Nun danket alle Gott,' then I still saw my venerable, dusty old Homer of blessed Dresden memory; the laurel wreath in the left hand became again a lyre, the sword in the right hand a Plektron. And I thanked heaven too, but it was because my fine classic folds were in Posemuckel, and not on the Dönhofsplatz here."

And the sharp red eyes of the sculptor twinkled, and every feature of his happy face that was not hidden by the rough beard sparkled with fun. Reinhold joined heartily in the laugh, as the last trace of discord vanished, and even Uncle Ernst looked from under his bushy eyebrows at the cheerful little man much after the fashion of a good-natured lion permitting a little dog to jump and bark round him.

"I wish, though, that your Germany was in the Dönhofsplatz," said he.

"Why?"

"An old and venerable trunk upon which some clever conjuror has placed a new head, which does not fit it--that seems to me a perfect picture of the new German unity, and it would be a very good thing if our compliant representatives could see it whichever way they turned."

Justus laughed heartily, as if Uncle Ernst had perpetrated the mildest of jokes.

"Listen to that," said he, turning to Reinhold.

"That is so like your uncle. His ruling passion is jealousy! He is jealous of the Almighty having made the beautiful world."

"For shame, Justus!" said Aunt Rikchen.

"And of a poor little earth-worm like myself, for every noble statue that leaves my studio. He feels that of course he could have done it so much better, and so far he is right. He is a born artist, a Michael Angelo--at least in imagination--a Michael Angelo without arms. And every stroke of the saw which cuts the marble into steps or such like contemptible articles goes through his heart, for each time he thinks, what might have been made or shaped out of this!"

"Do not talk such nonsense," said Uncle Ernst.

"It is the simple truth," cried Justus, still addressing Reinhold. "He has ideas in abundance, great ideas, sometimes not quite practical--somewhat Titanic, after the manner of Michael Angelo--but no matter. One can cut them down to one's own dwarf-like proportions and secretly laugh when he is brought face to face with the completed work, and shaking the Titanic head, murmurs, 'I had imagined something quite different. They have spoilt my idea again!'"

Uncle Ernst at this point did indeed shake his head, though not at all angrily, but with a somewhat grim enjoyment, such as Reinhold had not seen him express during the whole evening. "Can he be as susceptible to flattery as other tyrants?" thought Reinhold.

"And what is the new commission?" he asked.

"A most noble commission," answered Justus, swallowing his third cup of tea. "This time they really have got money--no end of money; that is to say, of course there will not be any over for me; it will all be spent in the actual cost of materials, unless your uncle will provide the marble, which, considering how he hates the whole business, there is very little chance of; but, at all events, the matter can be properly set going. I have been thinking it over on my way here from the committee, where it has all been pretty nearly settled."

"Well, tell us about it," said Uncle Ernst.

He had thrown himself back in his chair, and was puffing great clouds of smoke up to the ceiling from a cigar which he had just lighted. Reinhold had wished to abstain from smoking, out of respect to the ladies, but his uncle would not allow it, and said his womankind were accustomed to it. Justus, who did not smoke, was rolling little pellets of bread into a ball; he was evidently already at work.

"It is the old story, to begin with," said he; "three or four steps--we will say three--of

sandstone, supporting a quadrangular pedestal of granite, upon which is a square box, upon which box finally stands Germany--Germany this time without any classic folds. The box is for the inscription--there are a lot of brave Fritzes and Johanns to be mentioned--laurel wreaths, badges, etc.; that is all easy enough. But the bas-reliefs on the pedestal--there is the difficulty. Siemering has done everything in that line that is to be done so well, and, besides, has so much more space than I have, that every one will say: 'Siemering, of course--this is all copied from him.' But it is no use thinking of that; if one has got to make a horse, he must have four legs; and if one has got to portray a campaign, there must be the march out at one end, and the return home at the other, and a fight in the middle, and patriotic ambulances; and not a line of that can be omitted. If you can't be original in your conception of the whole, you must be in detail; and as my originality entirely depends upon the merits of my models, this time I shall be wonderfully original, because my models will be wonderfully good. Departure of one of the Landwehr--for the whole thing must be popular--one of the Landwehr--Captain Schmidt."

"I?" exclaimed Reinhold, astonished.

"You and none other; I made up my mind to that an hour ago. Heaven has sent you to me, and the fact of your having been promoted from the ranks during the campaign will be very useful to me; you will know why presently. To continue. Aged father straining his son to his heart at the moment of departure." Justus lowered his voice, and glanced at the servant who had waited upon them and now left the room. "Of course old Grollman, with his queer old face, with its hundreds of wonderful wrinkles, will always be my model for the aged fathers. More of the Landwehr in the background, three or four of our workmen--fine handsome heads. Number two: Office of the District Relief Committee. Women bringing offsprings; Aunt Rikchen, as a member of the committee, examining, with a critical glance, the heaped-up offerings--that will be perfect! In one corner Cilli making lint--superb!"

"That is a very fine idea," said Uncle Ernst.

"Who is Cilli?" asked Reinhold.

"An angel," answered Justus, applying himself still more eagerly to his occupation of shaping his bread pedestal. "She is the blind daughter of good old Kreisel, your uncle's head clerk, who of course officiates as superintendent, bending over his desk and making a list of the offerings. He alone will make my work immortal. Thirdly: Battle Scene. A mounted officer waving his sword; the Landwehr, with fixed bayonets, rushing to the attack; 'Forwards! march! hurrah!' commanded by our Captain here, already promoted to be a non-commissioned officer--you see now?--and so on. Fourthly: the Return Home. The loveliest girl in the town presenting laurel wreaths--of course Fräulein Ferdinanda, now the daughter of the burgomaster; the burgomaster, a stately personage, Herr Ernst Schmidt."

"I beg you will leave me out of the question!" said Uncle Ernst.

"I beg you will not interrupt me," cried Justus. "Where in the whole world should I find so perfect a representative of the good old genuine German burgher?"

"The old genuine German burgher was a Republican," grumbled Uncle Ernst.

"So much the better," cried the sculptor. "A monument of victory is also a monument of peace. What would victory have done for us if it had not brought us peace? Peace without and peace within, irrespective of party feeling! The stronger the party feeling expressed on the faces of my figures, so much the more apparent will be the deep patriotic symbolism that my work will show forth. So my burgomaster must let people see his Republican principles and hatred of the nobility a hundred yards off, as my general must be a concentration of feudalism and aristocraticism. And there, again, I have got quite as classic a model in its way--General von Werben."

Reinhold looked up startled; the name came so unexpectedly, and Ferdinanda had said to him before, "My father hates the Werbens!"

And, indeed, Uncle Ernst's face had suddenly become black as night, and the ladies were in evident fear that the storm might burst upon them at any moment. Ferdinanda's beautiful features were suddenly covered with a rosy flush, and as suddenly turned deadly pale. Aunt Rikchen glanced at the sculptor with a quick, anxious look, and furtively shook her head as if in warning; but he did not seem to observe anything of all this.

"It will be the culminating point of the whole thing," cried he. "On the proud warrior's face shall be a look of satisfaction, mingled with the suppression of bitter party feeling, as though he were saying, 'Dissension between us is at an end for ever;' and my general leans down from his horse and stretches out his hand to the burgomaster, who grasps it with manly emotion, which says, as plainly as any words, 'Amen!'"

"Never!" exclaimed Uncle Ernst in a voice of thunder. "Before I grasp his hand, let my right hand wither! And whoever offers me such an insult, even in effigy, between that man and me there shall be war to the knife." And he drew the knife, which he had seized, across the table, threw it aside, pushed his chair back, and staggered to his feet.

But it was only an explosion of Berserker wrath; for, as Reinhold sprang up to support him, he completely recovered his steady bearing, and said, in a voice whose forced calm contrasted strangely and painfully with the previous wild outbreak:

"We have sat too long after dinner; it stops the circulation, and then all the blood goes to the head. Good-night, Reinhold; I shall see you again to-morrow morning. Good-night all of you."

He was gone.

"What, in Heaven's name, is the meaning of that?" asked Justus.

He still sat there, the rough bread model of his monument in his hand, with wide-open staring eyes, like a child who sees a black devil jump out of a harmless-looking box. "What in the world is the matter?"

"What possessed you to mention that unlucky name?" said Aunt Rikchen. "Goodness me! that was the only thing wanting, and now you have done it!"

Ferdinanda, with a half-sigh, tried to rise from her chair; but, pressing her hand to her heart, fell back again immediately, deadly white, her beautiful head sinking against the cushion.

"What is the matter with you?" cried Aunt Rikchen. "Water--quick!--and ring the bell!"

Reinhold filled a tumbler from the water-jug, Justus flew to the bell; a maid-servant hurried in soon, followed by a second, and all the women busied themselves over the fainting girl.

"I think we are in the way here," said Reinhold, and led Justus, who was still overpowered with astonishment, into the hall.

"Now can you explain this to me?" exclaimed Justus.

"I had hoped to get some explanation from you," answered Reinhold. "I only know that my uncle hates the General, has done so since '48, so I suppose something must have happened between them then."

"By-the-way, yes. Now I recollect," cried Justus; "Aunt Rikchen did once tell me about it, but I had quite forgotten it; and even if I had not, how could I know that the old madman would get into such a state about it? Shall I come up with you?"

"Thanks, I can find my way. And you?"

"I live at the back here over my studio. You must come and pay me a visit to-morrow, and we will talk further over this wonderful business. Do you stay long?"

"I had meant to, but after this scene----"

"Oh, you must not think too much about that; I know him well. To-morrow there will not be a trace of it. He is a capital old fellow through it all. Felicissima notte! a rivederci!"

Reinhold easily found his way to his room through the well-lighted stairs and passages. The candles stood on the table, but he did not light them, the crescent moon gave light enough, and a warm breeze came in at the open window, by which he stood in deep thought.

"What a pity," he murmured; "I should have liked to cast anchor here for some time, and might have got on with the old gentleman. He seemed to me rather queer, and sometimes lets go the rudder, but it is not a very uncommon thing, and perhaps it will all pass over by to-morrow. I could soon learn his ways. He drank at least three bottles, and his eyes were bloodshot and wild before he flew out in that way. I am afraid it is rather a family failing; our old sailor grandfather--but it is not the worst of faults, and we Schmidts cannot be expected to have the aristocratic manners of the Werbens. Ferdinanda is unquestionably very handsome; the sculptor was right: 'the prettiest girl in the town!' And yet, the noble carriage, the inexpressible grace of movement, the beautiful look of the eyes, the ever-changing and always sweet expression of the features--she cannot be compared with Elsa, and indeed who could? Then she has not spoken three words. Is there nothing behind that beautiful forehead? Is that gloomy silence only a cloak whose 'classic folds' she has borrowed perhaps of her master to conceal her insignificance? I had pictured to myself something quite different when first I saw her. There was some life about her when she cut short that introduction at the railway station, and hurried me away. Certainly since then I have discovered why it was painful for her. Capulets and Montagues, only divided by a garden wall. What was that?"

The moon had risen higher; the shrubbery walk at the bottom of the garden, down which Reinhold could see some distance from the window where he stood, was in parts quite light between the bushes. Across one of the light spots a female form had just glided, only to disappear, and did not pass into the light again. But she must do so if she belonged to the house; the path went round a grass-plot in its immediate vicinity, and lay in the full light of the moon, and by leaning out a very little he could easily see over it. But why should she belong to the house? On one side of the garden was a small outhouse in which there was a lighted window. The figure might have come from thence. "And at any rate," thought Reinhold, "it is no business of

yours, and you can go to bed."

He was just about to shut the window when he observed the figure again, this time in the path which ran along the wall, or wooden paling (he could not distinguish which), that on the left hand separated the garden for a little way from the neighbouring one. The wall, or paling, was overshadowed by high trees on that side. The moon shone on the right hand, but the distance was too great to distinguish with certainty more than the outline of the dark figure, as it slowly walked up and down the path, and finally stood still close to the wall, so that Reinhold could no longer see the shadow which before had been perceptible on the light background. It seemed, however, as if she leaned her head against the wall for a long time, staying in this attitude for at least two or three minutes, then she stooped and took up something, which for a moment shimmered white in the moonlight, and which she pressed to, or perhaps concealed, in her bosom. And then she came away from the wall and farther into the garden, slowly walking up and down between the bushes as she had done before on the path, but each time coming nearer till she reached the grassplot. Then she stood still, and seemed to take a sweeping glance over the house; then she came over the grass-plot. It was Ferdinanda!

Involuntarily he withdrew from the window. "Why of course! Why should it not be Ferdinanda trying to calm her shaken nerves by taking a walk in the cool night air? Her slow gait, her repeated halting--of course the leaning against the wall was a return of the fainting! He ought to have run to her assistance and picked up her handkerchief which she had let drop, instead of stopping here playing the spy! It was too bad!"

He shut his window quietly, without venturing to light any candles in the present uneasy state of his conscience, but helped himself as well as he could by the light of the moon, which certainly was bright enough, so bright indeed that long after he was in bed he lay and watched the silver rays, through an opening in the curtains, shining further and further in upon the wall, till at last the usual deep and profound sleep closed his eyelids.

## CHAPTER V.

The next morning was lovely. The bright sun shone into his room from a blue and cloudless sky as Reinhold pushed the curtains aside and opened the window. Beneath him the dewdrops glistened upon the blades of grass in the round plat; in the bushes and amongst the branches of the tall trees, through which a soft breeze was playing, the golden light shone and twittering birds were flitting about. Reinhold cast a shy glance towards the left, upon the division between the two gardens, which he now perceived to be a high paling. If that garden were the same of which young Werben spoke yesterday, then those overhanging trees hid a secret amidst their green shadows, a secret which his rapidly-beating heart again whispered to him eagerly, passionately, as though there were nothing else in the world worth the trouble of beating for.

A knock at the door sounded. Reinhold hastily put on his coat. It was not his uncle, only Justus Anders' favourite model for aged fathers, the grey-haired, grey-bearded servant with the wonderfully expressive wrinkles in the withered face.

His master had inquired several times for the Captain; just now again when he came in for his second breakfast (he drank his coffee always at five o'clock, sometimes earlier), and he got quite angry at the Captain not having made his appearance. Fräulein Ferdinanda had been working in her studio since nine o'clock; but Fräulein Rikchen was downstairs in the dining-room waiting to make the Captain's coffee.

Reinhold had in honour of the day dressed himself in his best, or, in sailor language, put on his shore clothes, so he was able to follow the old man immediately, and to go in search of Aunt Rikchen. He was glad to be able to have a little gossip alone with his aunt, and notwithstanding the silence of last night, he did not fear that she had forgotten the art of gossip.

Aunt Rikchen sat at one end of the breakfast table behind the coffee-pot, and knitted (her spectacles quite on the tip of her nose) with extreme rapidity, so lost in occupation and thought that she did not observe Reinhold's entrance, and now jumped up with a little, nervous shriek. But she stretched out her hand to him with a smile which was meant to be very friendly, though her eyes were full of tears, which disappeared as suddenly as they came and left no trace.

"I have made fresh coffee for you," said she; "I thought that you were probably terribly spoilt in such matters."

"I am not spoilt in that way nor in any other!" answered Reinhold brightly.



"Ah! the good old Schmidt blood!" said Aunt Rikchen. "Just like your poor dear grandfather, whom you are as like as two peas." At these words her eyes refilled with tears and were as hastily dried.

"I think Uncle Ernst must be the image of him," said Reinhold, "and I am not very like him."

"Not like him!" cried Aunt Rikchen, "then I do not know what likeness is! Though for that matter I know nothing--so he says."

She had taken up her knitting and was again working with nervous haste: there was considerable bitterness, too, in the tone of the last words, which came sharply and pointedly from between her compressed lips.

"He" evidently meant her brother; but Reinhold thought it better to tuck about a little before he steered for that course.

"How do you mean, dear aunt?" said he.

"You won't understand," answered Aunt Rikchen, with a sharp look over her spectacles; "you won't see how he behaves to his only sister, and that he tyrannises over me and tyrannises over us all--there is no doubt about that."

"But, my dear aunt, that is my uncle's way, and you cannot expect anything else from him."

"But I can," exclaimed Aunt Rikchen, "for he always behaves worse to a poor thing like me. And why? Because he thinks I might take too much upon myself, and might end by contradicting him when he talks about his politics, and geography, and history, and all the stuff he crams his head with. We women understand nothing of all that! it is not our province; he alone understands it, and it is all to be kept for him. Of course it is all for him alone when he takes the books from under our noses and the newspapers out of our hands. He himself learnt nothing when he was a boy, and he ought to know how disagreeable it is to sit by without speaking, and having no idea whether Timbuctoo, or whatever it is called, is a town, or a fish, or an animal, and not daring to ask--he ought to know that!"

The knitting-needles clicked more nervously, the spectacles had slipped so far down her nose that they could not slip any farther without coming off; and it would have been impossible for the sharp words to find an outlet if the thin lips were to be more closely pressed together.

"Certainly it is not right of my uncle," said Reinhold, "to be so thoughtless of other people's feelings and to be so contemptuous of other people's desire for information; but it is often so with autodidactic persons."

"With whom?" asked Aunt Rikchen.

"With people who have no one but themselves to thank for their education. I once knew an old negro who without any assistance, but entirely by his own intense industry, attained the rank of ship's-captain, and really was unusually well-informed in nautical science and astronomy--that means knowledge of ships and stars, aunt--the result being that he looks upon every one else as helpless ignoramuses."

"And what does that mean?"

"People who know nothing."

"But your uncle is not a negro," said Aunt Rikchen; "and even a negro, if he has a daughter who is celebrated for her beauty all over Berlin, and might make a grand and rich match every day if she would, only she won't, and in matters of will she is quite his daughter, and no man could persuade her even if he stood on his head. And Anders assures me that she has very great talent, and everybody says so; I don't understand anything about it, indeed I don't understand anything, but of course he thinks it all stuff and nonsense."

"And yet I could imagine that my uncle is secretly very proud of Ferdinanda."

"Why?" Aunt Rikchen glanced inquiringly at Reinhold over her spectacles.

"Once or twice last night I saw him look at her with an expression in his eyes which I could not otherwise account for."

"Do you think so?" Aunt Rikchen had let her knitting fall into her lap, and her eyes once more filled with tears, which this time did not disappear. "Do you know," said she, "that is what I have often thought, I often think that it is impossible that he should love no one, for he cannot bear to see an animal suffer, and he delights in lending a hand in moving the great blocks of marble so that the strong horses may not be overworked. But in that way he overworks himself, and cares and works for every one whoever it may be, and they often do not deserve it, and repay him with the basest ingratitude. And then he must needs drink wine, for no Christian man could get through what he undertakes, and I have no objection to a glass or so; I often drink one myself when I am quite overdone, and it does me a great deal of good and comforts my old bones; but two bottles--or three--I am convinced that he will have a fit of apoplexy."

The tears broke through their former restraint and fell in torrents down her sunken cheeks. Reinhold too was touched; there was so much true love in this acknowledgment of her brother's good qualities, in this anxiety for him--an anxiety which he secretly felt was not without grounds.

"My dear aunt," said he, "you need not be so anxious. We Schmidts are a hardy race, and my uncle may do more than most people. Besides any one coming as I do fresh and unaccustomed amongst you, can see I think better and clearer what he really is; and I don't mind saying, my dear aunt, that I should not be surprised if my uncle purposely showed the rough side of his nature so that all the world should not know how soft and sympathising his heart really is. I have known more than one man like that."

"Have you?" said Aunt Rikchen eagerly, as her tears once more dried up. "Well, you have been a great deal about the world and have seen a great many people: heathens, and negroes, and Turks, and amongst them you may often see things that are not proper for a Christian; and even my stupid mind can understand things of that sort, but can you explain to me how it is possible that a father with a heart such as you speak of, could be on the terms with his son that he is on with Philip? explain that to me!"

"But I don't know on what sort of terms he is with his son, my dear aunt! There seems to be a complete break between them."

"Yes! is not it dreadful?" said Aunt Rikchen. "And the scenes that take place! Goodness me! when I think of it! But that is all over now; they have not met for two years, and Philip does not need our help now! he is getting so fearfully rich, he has made millions, Justus says, and is now building a house in the Wilhelmstrasse, where every square yard costs five thalers, or five hundred, or five thousand--I never can remember figures; and Anders has got to make four--or four and twenty statues for the hall and staircase, and the steps are to be of canary marble--that is what they call it, is it not? And I do not see the disgrace of that when a man has raised himself from being an ordinary builder as he was. Do you?"

"Till I know how he has raised himself, my dear aunt----"

"What! what!" cried Aunt Rikchen, "are you beginning to ask that already? What can he have done so very bad? Has he stolen it? Has he committed a burglary somewhere? or turned incendiary? or footpad? Wait till he does--wait till he does!"

"But indeed I have said nothing against Philip; I am utterly unprejudiced!" cried Reinhold.

"Yes, quite unprejudiced!" answered Aunt Rikchen, "when you take every earthly opportunity of flattering him and buttering him up till he is as proud as the grand Turk! And though Philip may sometimes be a little reckless and selfish, he has always been kind to me; and only yesterday when I met him in the Potsdamerstrasse he said: 'If ever you are in want of money, aunt, come to me; you can have as much as ever you want.' I do not want any, thank heaven! for he supplies me with all that is needful; but a nephew, who, meeting his poor old aunt in the Potsdamerstrasse in broad daylight, offers her any amount of money, is no robber, and no murderer, say I. And now you must manage to meet him; he does not generally inquire after or interest himself in any one, but he has always taken the greatest interest in you, and always marks your journeys on the map with a red pencil. And that is just as it should be. I don't mean about the pencil, but that clinging to one's family. I could go through fire and water for him! for him! for all of them, it is all the same to me; either a man is a Schmidt or he is not a Schmidt--he has either got the Schmidt blood in his veins or he has not. Perhaps that is rather a narrow view to take--*borné*, don't you call it? but it is my view, and I shall live and die in it. And when I am dead and buried you will then begin to see what a good old aunt I was to you all. But what I wanted to say was that Ferdinanda and Justus were talking of going to the exhibition to-day and wanted to know whether you would go with them? Of course I shall stop at home. I don't understand these sort of things; in fact, I don't understand anything."

The spectacles had fallen to their lowest possible point; the needles worked with inconceivable rapidity. Reinhold fancied he still heard them clicking even when he found himself in the garden, into which a glass-door led from the dining-room.

## CHAPTER VI.

He drew a deep breath. Here in the open air the sun shone so brilliantly, while the house seemed so full of dismal ghosts.

"Good heavens!" said he to himself; "can there be a more terrible lot than to go creeping and groping through life with unenlightened mind, like my poor aunt here!--always dreading treachery and deceit, sin and sorrow; seeing no more of the sunshine, of all the might and beauty of the world, than if she were blind, like that poor girl!"

A young girl was groping her way along the iron railing that divided the courtyard from the garden, which was on rather a higher level. She moved with slow and careful steps, holding in her uplifted left hand a plate, on which appeared to be slices of bread-and-butter, and with her right hand outstretched lightly touched every third rail. It was by these careful movements that Reinhold recognised the blind girl, even before she stood still, and, slightly raising her head, turned her face towards the sun. The sun was very powerful, but her eyelids never even quivered. She had opened her eyes wide, as a flower turns its open petals to the sun, and lovely as a flower was the expression of the sweet, pure, child-like features.

"Poor poor Cilli!" murmured Reinhold.

He had remembered the name from last night's conversation, and that the blind girl was the daughter of Kreisel, Uncle Ernst's head clerk. And the man who had been standing in the doorway of the low building a little way off, which from the desks in the windows seemed to be the counting-house, and now came towards the girl across the intervening part of the courtyard, must be her father--a little old man with a perfectly bald head, that shone in the sun like a ball of white marble.

The blind girl instantly recognised his footsteps. She turned her head, and Reinhold saw the two thick blonde plaits, as they fell so far over her shoulders that the ends were concealed by the stonework supporting the railing. She nodded repeatedly to the newcomer, and when he was by her, bent her head that he might kiss her forehead, and held up the plate with both hands, from which he took a slice of bread-and-butter and began to eat at once, at intervals saying a few words, which Reinhold in the distance could not catch, any more than he could the girl's answers. But he could have sworn that they were words of love that were thus exchanged, as from time to time the old man stroked the blonde hair with his left hand (the right was occupied with the bread-and-butter), while a happy smile played upon the girl's sweet face, which he now saw in profile. And now the old gentleman had finished his second slice of bread-and-butter, and taking a white handkerchief out of his pocket, he shook it out of its folds and wiped his mouth with it, then refolded it in its original creases and put it back in his pocket, while the girl, as before, presented her forehead for a kiss. The old man hobbled away, and stood in the door waving his hand; the blind girl waved her hand and nodded in return till he disappeared, exactly as if she could see what she really only heard with her acute ear, or calculated by the time it took, it being evidently a daily habit. Then again she raised her eyes to the sun with the self-same expression of child-like innocence on the pure face; and taking in her right hand the plate, which before she had held in her left hand, retraced her steps as she had come, lightly touching every third rail with the tips of her fingers.

Reinhold had observed the whole scene without moving. The poor blind girl could not see him, and the old man had not once looked that way.

Now for the first time he recollected himself. The touching scene had riveted his attention as though by a charm, and the charm had not left him, as he followed the blind girl's movements with breathless attention; mentally he touched each third rail as she did, as though he himself were groping along by the railing, following her light and graceful movements step by step. He waited for her reappearance from behind a white-thorn bush which grew against the railing, and now hid her from his sight, as a sailor waits for the reappearance of a star which he is observing, and which, as he gazes, is for some moments obscured by over-shadowing clouds. But she did not reappear as the moments passed, and the bush seemed to be moving. Perhaps she was trying to gather a branch and could not manage it. In a moment he was through the garden gate and at her side.

A thorn from the bush protruding through the railing had caught hold of the end of her little white apron as it was blown about by the wind, and would not let go, though she patiently exerted all her efforts to extricate it.

"Allow me," said Reinhold.

Before he came up to her she had raised herself from her stooping attitude, and turned her face towards him, which as he spoke was suffused with the loveliest blush. But there was not the slightest trace of embarrassment or terror in the pure features.

"Thank you, Captain Schmidt," said she.

The sweet, melodious tone of her voice harmonised wonderfully with the bright child-like smile that accompanied the words.

"How do you know, Fräulein Cilli, who it is that is speaking to you?" said Reinhold, as he stooped down and freed the light material from the thorn.

"From the same person who told you that my name is Cilli, and that I am blind--from Justus."

"Will you take my arm, Fräulein Cilli, and allow me to see you home? I suppose you live in the house that is just in front of us?"

"I walk safer alone; but give me your hand. May I feel it for a moment?"

She put out a small, soft white hand to him, which Reinhold touched with a feeling of awe.

"Just what he said," she murmured as though speaking to herself. "Strong and manly--a good, a true hand."

She let go his hand, and they walked on side by side, she by the railing again, feeling the rails, he close to her side, never turning his eyes from her.

"Did Anders tell you that too?" he asked.

"Yes; but your hand would have told me without that. I know people by their hands. Justus's hand is not so strong, though he works so much; but it is as good."

"And as true," said Reinhold.

Cilli shook her head with a laugh, that was as sweet and soft as the twittering of the swallows.

"No, no," said she, "not as true! He cannot be, for he is an artist; so he can have but one guiding star--his Ideal--that he must look up to and follow, as the kings followed the star in the East, which going before them stopped at Bethlehem over the house in which the Saviour was laid in a manger; but beyond that he must be free, free as the birds in the branches overhead, free to come and go, free to flit and flutter and sing to his heart's content."

They had reached the end of the railing. Before them stood the house in which Cilli lived. She rested the tips of her fingers upon the iron pillars which ended the railing, and raised her face with a strange dreamy expression on it.

"I often wish I were an artist," said she; "but I should like better still to be a sailor. Sometimes I have wonderful dreams, and then I fly over the earth on wide-spread wings. Below me I see green meadows and dark forests, and corn-fields waving their golden grain; silver streamlets wander down the hill-sides and mingle their waters in the broad rivers which glitter in the light of the sun as it sinks to the horizon. And as it sinks, and the waters, with the church spires reflected in them, take a rosy hue, a terrible anguish overwhelms me, as I feel that it will sink before I can see it--this sun which I have never seen, of which all I know is that it is above all things beautiful and great and glorious. And when the sun is so low that in another moment it must disappear, there lies before me, boundless, illimitable, the great ocean! It is impossible to describe what I feel then, but I fancy it must be what the dead feel when they rise to everlasting joy, or what great and good men feel when they have done the deed which renders them immortal."

A couple of swallows flitted chirping through the air. The blind girl raised her sightless eyes.

"They come over the sea, but I cannot, I never can get beyond the shore, never beyond the shore!"

For the first time a shadow came over the charming face that was uplifted to Reinhold, but the next moment it was once more lighted up by the bright, child-like smile.

"I am very ungrateful," said she, "am I not? How many people never see the sea even in their dreams as I do, and did only last night! Justus passed our window--we always have lights very late--and he called out that you had arrived, and were so nice and pleasant, and had told so many wonderful things about your long voyages. You must tell me about them. Will you?"

She stretched out her hand to him again.

"Indeed I will," cried Reinhold. "I am only afraid that your dreams are more, immeasurably more, beautiful than anything I can tell you about."

The blind girl shook her head.

"How strange! that is what papa always says, and even Justus, though he is an artist, and the whole world lies before him as beautiful as on the first day of creation, and now you say it, who have seen the whole world. I can look at the sun without flinching; you must hide your eyes from its glory. I--I cannot see the loving smile upon my dear father's face, cannot see the faces of those I love. How can my world be as glorious and lovely as yours? But of course you only say that not to make me sad. You need not be afraid; I envy no one. From my heart I can say that I grudge no man his happiness, especially those who are so good, so intensely good as my father and Justus!"

The face that was turned to him beamed once more with the brightest sunshine.

"When once I begin to chatter there is no stopping me, is there? And I have kept you all this time, when you have so much to do of far greater importance. I shall see you again."

She gave his hand a slight pressure, and then withdrew her own, which she had left in his till now, and stepped towards the door, which was only separated from her by the width of the path which on this side lay between the garden and the house. Then, however, she stood still again, and said, half turning over her shoulder:

"Was not Justus right when he said you were kind? You did not smile when I said I should see you again!"

She went into the house, feeling the door-posts with her finger-tips, turned once more as she stood on the threshold, nodded, and stepped into the hall.

## CHAPTER VII.

Reinhold had not smiled, but as the fair vision disappeared in the shadow of the entrance he passed the hand which she had held so long over his eyes.

"And you thought you knew how to love!" said he to himself. "What are our purest, holiest aspirations when compared with the heavenly purity and goodness of such a mind as this poor blind girl's, who is as unconscious of her beauty and her charm as are the lilies of the field? How could so lovely a flower have blossomed here?"

He looked around. The bell which had summoned the workpeople to their breakfast as Cilli came out of the house rang again. The men returned to their work. Looking round the corner of the house, he had a peep through the wide-open doors of the workshops, which seemed to occupy the whole of the ground-floor. Crosses and tombstones were being chiselled and carved by busy hands.

A chill came over Reinhold, to see this sad, gloomy sight just now, when the world lay so bright before him, lighted up by the fancies of the blind girl who lived over these melancholy workshops, and in whose dreams the tapping and knocking of these dreadful hammers and chisels must mingle!

He asked for his uncle. No one had seen him that morning; he might be in the engine-room or in some of the back yards. Where was Herr Anders' studio? Here in this very building, the first door round the corner; the second was the young lady's studio.

Reinhold walked round the house and knocked at the first door, near which was a high window half shaded from within. No one answered, and he was going on when the door opened a little way. But it was not the friendly countenance of the sculptor, with its bright eyes and cheery smile, that met him, but a strange, dark face, from which a pair of black, sparkling eyes glared at him.

"Beg pardon! I expected to see Herr Anders."

"Herr Anders is not here; he is in his own house, the third door upstairs."

He of the dark complexion said this in a forbidding tone and in German, which, though fluent enough, betrayed the foreigner in every syllable.

"Then I will go and look for him there."

"Herr Anders is going to the Exhibition; he is dressing."

"Reinhold now observed that the young man himself was in the act of dressing and still in his shirt-sleeves, whose extreme whiteness made the darkness of his complexion even more remarkable. The interruption of his toilette quite explained the unfriendly tone of his answers, and the want of hospitality that made him hold the door only just enough open for him to speak to the stranger.

"Perhaps you know whether Fräulein Schmidt is in her studio?"

The pertinacity of the question seemed to irritate the young man. The black brows frowned heavily, the delicate upper lip with its slight moustache curled sufficiently to show the white teeth for a moment. "*Non lo so*," he blurted out.

He shut the door, muttering between his teeth something else in Italian which did not sound like a blessing.

Reinhold felt convinced that Ferdinanda was in her studio, and that the ungracious youth knew it; but at the same time it would not make her very unhappy if he paid his visit later, or did not pay it at all. At all events he must look for his uncle first.

He returned to the yard, passing a place where huge blocks of marble were being cut through by the aid of large suspended saws, each of which was regulated by a man. It must have been fatiguing work, requiring great strength, and indeed was only undertaken when the machinery could not turn out enough work, as was now the case; there was no doubt that the machine certainly could do much more. So said the workman, taking the opportunity to get a little breathing-time. The steam saws were in that building; they had just seen the master go there. But Uncle Ernst was not near the steam saws, he had just been there; perhaps he was in the lathe-room close by.

Reinhold had some difficulty in taking in the words which a workman shouted in his ear, so loud was the screeching, overpowering noise of the immense saws as the steam power drove them backwards and forwards with inconceivable rapidity through great blocks of marble as high as a man; eight, ten, and twelve saws working at once through the same block and cutting it into as many inch-thick slabs. And between each two blocks was a man upon a small platform incessantly busied in throwing water, mixed with sand from a pail, upon the sparks caused by the saws; and the one who had got down to answer Reinhold sprang hurriedly back to his place to extinguish the sparks which now came from his block in trails almost a yard in length.

In the next room which Reinhold entered a less awful noise was going on. Though here, too, was heard the rattle of the driving bands as they stretched like interminable snakes from a wheel in one corner of the ceiling to another at the other end, and so descended to a second at a medium height, and once more went up and down in bewildering quivering lines; and here again wheels rattled and clattered, and the iron strained and screeched and creaked as it cut through the marble, boring holes, cutting with chisels, filing, shaving, scraping, and in every possible way converting it into skilful and sometimes even artistic forms. Entablatures with sharp plinths, slender fluted columns, elegant pedestals for candelabra or vases, even vases themselves which, rapidly revolving, were polished by busy hands with pumice stone.

Herr Schmidt had been here a few minutes ago--was perhaps now upstairs in the workshops where the fine work was done before it came here to be polished.

Those workshops lay on the opposite side of the yard, so that Reinhold now first obtained a true idea of the dimensions of the establishment as well as of the enormous extent of the business. He had already been into three workshops, and had glanced into as many more in passing. What an amount of capital must be sunk in these massive buildings, and in the ground alone which was taken up by them and the yard, and in these complicated ingenious machines, and in the already completed goods, and again in these masses of rough marble which lay about all over the yard, and between which ran the paved road for the strongly-built waggons, upon which the powerful horses dragged these enormous weights backwards and forwards.

And all this was done by the man of whom Aunt Rikchen had rightly said that he ought to understand the feelings of a person who has learnt nothing in his youth! This man who as a boy and youth had with his father gone up and down the Havel and the Spree in the great boat which was the only property of the family, till after the old man's death he had started a business in bricks and sandstone in the lonely spot above the town, in the modest little house where Reinhold had visited him ten years ago.

What industry, what energy and what intelligence had been brought to bear, to attain such a result, to create a world out of nothing! Was it to be wondered at if he who had created it carried his head higher than other men; or if this head, which had so much and so many to think of, to consider and to care for, were often shadowed by heavy clouds?

Loud voices, which sounded close to Reinhold, startled him out of these meditations, a high one and a deep one, in which he thought he recognised his uncle's. A dispute must be going on. The high voice got gradually louder, till a thundering "Silence!" stopped the flow. It could only be Uncle Ernst thus thundering.

He stood still, uncertain whether to go nearer or to avoid the disputants. They however came round the great blocks of marble which he had just been looking at, his uncle and a red-haired man, whose ugly face was distorted and inflamed with anger. On his uncle's forehead, too, from which the broad-brimmed hat was pushed back, lay a red angry cloud, but his large powerful eyes had a calm and steady look, and his voice, too, was calm and steady as now seeing his nephew, he said:

"Good-morning, Reinhold, though it is not a good morning for me."

"Do you require my presence any longer, Herr Schmidt?" asked the man.

"Certainly. You will dismiss the people in my presence."

"That I shall not do, Herr Schmidt."

"In my presence, and in that of all the others. Sound the bell!"

And Uncle Ernst pointed to a small platform over which hung a great bell.

"That is not my office," said the overseer hotly.

"True," answered Uncle Ernst, "for from this moment you no longer hold any office."

"I claim a quarter's notice."

"That we shall soon see."

Uncle Ernst went up to the bell; Reinhold stepped before him.

"Let me," said he.

He did not wait for his uncle's answer, and pulled the rope that hung down; immediately the mighty clang of the great clapper sounded through the yard, overpowering and drowning the screeching and shrieking of the saws, the tapping and knocking of hammers and chisels, and startling the workmen at their work. Presently they emerged from all sides with anxious faces.

While they assembled and stood in groups as they came from the workshops to the number of about two hundred, so Reinhold thought. Uncle Ernst stood leaning against a block of marble with folded arms, staring straight in front of him; a few steps from him stood the overseer, now very pale, and in whose alarmed and anxious looks it was easy to see that fear alone kept him in his place.

Reinhold had come up to the side of the block upon which his uncle was leaning so as to be near him in any case. Whatever was the matter it was certainly nothing pleasant, and as his glance fell upon the people, he noticed several desperate and even wild faces.

And now Uncle Ernst stood erect; the great eyes flashed over the assembled crowd, the arms fell from his broad breast, and from that broad breast came the mighty voice like thunder:

"Men, you know the rules of this establishment; they are all put before you, before each of you that enters my service; they are hung up in every workshop; no one can say that anything is not clear or is difficult to understand, and they shall be kept, as by me the employer, so by you the employed. If there is one amongst you who can come forward here and say that I have diverged one hair's breadth from what I promised you, or that I have in the smallest degree not fulfilled my duty and obligation, let him come forward and say so."

He paused, crossed his arms again, and looked down, as though he would not intimidate any one by his glance, but left them free to express an opinion. Reinhold saw that here and there a few heads collected together, and several quick secret glances were exchanged from one group which he had noticed before. A man stepped forward, but the others held him by the arm, and he went back. Uncle Ernst looked up again.

"No one has come forward; I must assume that you have nothing to say against me, that you have no grounds of complaint. I, however--I have grounds of complaint against some of you, and that you may all hear what it is, and who it is, and may behave accordingly in the future, and that any man who is secretly following in the same way may know how to behave if he is otherwise an honest man, is why I call you together now. Jacob Schwarz, Johann Brand, Anton Baier, stand forward!"

A considerable agitation arose amongst the people; all eyes were directed towards the group which Reinhold had already noticed. The same man came forward again decidedly, and looked behind him, whereupon two others followed hesitatingly.

"What is it?" said the first.

"You will soon know," said Uncle Ernst. "You know all of you that our rules forbid you to belong to any union; that I might have sent away these three on the spot when I found out what they were about a week ago, and that I allowed mercy to take the place of justice in not sending them away, but giving them time for consideration. Yesterday evening the time of grace expired; they did not give Herr Roller the required assurance yesterday evening that they had left the union. Herr Roller ought not to have allowed them to return to their work; he did do so and is consequently henceforth no longer your overseer, and is dismissed absolutely from my service."

There was a movement amongst the crowd; consternation was depicted on most faces, malicious satisfaction on many; the overseer attempted a scornful smile, but got no further than a sickly grin.

"You," continued Uncle Ernst, for the first time turning to the culprits, "take your things and leave the yard at once! And you others, let this serve as a warning to you and a reminder of what, indeed, you must all have known long ago, that I am not to be trifled with, and that when I say a thing I mean it--and now go back to your work!"

A good many of the men turned at once and began to disperse; but others--a few from almost every group--remained, and as the ranks thinned drew closer together, as if to afford each other protection. Those too who had moved away at first now stopped again, turned back, and also

drew together, so that in a few minutes the throng was divided into two parts; the last mentioned, who for the present were more amenable and conciliatory, were by far the larger number; but the others--of whom there might be about thirty, were evidently the bolder and more determined. Reinhold moved to his uncle's side.

"What are you waiting for?" asked Uncle Ernst, "what do you want?"

From the group of malcontents who had now clustered thickly together, a man stepped forward, not one of the three; a young man who would have been handsome if his youthful countenance had not been marred and distorted already by evil passions. His pale, bold eyes had a watery look, as if he were already too much addicted to the bottle. He waved his hand as if he were standing on a platform to speak, and with great fluency began:

"We wish to know, Herr Schmidt, why we should not be socialists and communists too, if we choose; who is to forbid us to enter the ranks of the army of workers who are marching against the hardhearted middle classes to win back the rights which are so shamefully withheld from us? We wish to know----"

"Silence!" thundered Uncle Ernst; "silence, wretched boy! and blush for shame if you have any shame left in you!" Uncle Ernst advanced a few steps, and the lad retreated before him like a jackal before the lion, and slunk back into the knot of men which had drawn still closer together. "What are you standing there for, laying your heads together and muttering and threatening? Do you think that I fear you any more than I fear this wretched boy, whom I took from the streets, and clothed, and fed, and sent to school, and who wants to know now why I withhold his rights from him! His rights? Your rights? To keep honestly to what you have promised, what you have pledged yourselves to by your own signatures, that is your right--neither more nor less! Who forced you to sign your names?"

"Hunger!" cried a rough voice.

"You lie, Carl Peters!" cried Uncle Ernst; "and if you did suffer hunger it was because you are a sot and carry the money which belongs to your wife and children to the gin palace."

"We are all socialists, every man of us!" called another voice from the crowd.

"Then you are all liars and cheats, every man of you!" cried Uncle Ernst. "You lied when you signed your names to what you knew you would not and could not keep! You have cheated me every day and every hour that you worked for me, when you knew that I would not tolerate in my house or my yards any one who is pledged to your insane principles; but that I would drive them out of my house or my yard as I do now all of you that stand there!"

A sullen murmur sounded through the crowd, and some single loud threatening shouts were heard. Uncle Ernst sprang with one bound straight in front of the knot of men.

"Be off with you!" he thundered; "be off with you at once!"

The foremost fell back upon those who stood behind them. Evidently no one had courage to proceed to action. They gave way gradually; the knot began to separate.

"Be at the office in half an hour to be paid off!"

The men were gone and the overseer with them. Uncle Ernst turned to Reinhold.

"There is a specimen for you of your fine Prussian discipline, which impressed you so greatly during the war; there is an instance of the last new German truth and honesty as it is learned in Bismarck's school."

"But uncle, excuse me, what has Bismarck to do with all this?"

"What has he to do with it?" Uncle Ernst stood still. "What has he to do with it? Who was it who gave the rule that might came before right? Or, if he did not say it, who gave such effect to it in his actions that the accursed maxim has become the leading principle with men nowadays, on which they regulate their conduct--both active and passive? Who has taught our good simple folk how a man may live in perpetual conflict with those whom it has chosen as its representatives, and grasp at his objects over the heads of these representatives?--how an army of followers may be created, and a docile party say 'Amen' to everything, or say anything else that is needed to attain these objects? Did you not hear what was said about the army of workers? That is no longer the mad dream of some crack-brained enthusiast. It is a reality, which is increasing threateningly as an avalanche, and which will sooner or later precipitate itself in wild destruction upon us all. Who can blame them? Might is stronger than right! And so the revolution is declared *en permanence*, and war between every man and his neighbour. For the present he has conquered--he thinks he has conquered--and glories in his victory and in the imperial crown which he has won for his master, and which he has taken from the shelf, where another laid it who would not take it from the hands of the people!--from the hands of the people of those days--a good, true, faithful people, whose most sacred dream was this crown! Ask them if they still believe! Ask them what they think of the crown by the grace of God! Ask them what they dream of now!"



Uncle Ernst pointed to the dismissed workmen, who were crossing the court, in larger and smaller parties, towards the lower building, from the door of which Cilli's father had issued before, and were gesticulating wildly and talking together.

"Will they be paid off without any disturbance?" asked Reinhold.

"The police-station is too near," answered Uncle Ernst, with a bitter smile. "They are still afraid of the police; you need be under no anxiety. And, before I forget it, thank you, my boy."

"What for, uncle?"

"There was no necessity for it, but I saw that you were ready to stand up for me at need."

"Had you doubted it?"

"No, in spite of your enthusiasm for Bismarck. And now go to Ferdinanda. You are going to the Exhibition?"

"I heard something of it; but, to tell you the truth, I have lost all inclination for it."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Uncle Ernst. "Ferdinanda would be inconsolable, and--I do not like to have my business arrangements interfering with the family affairs."

Uncle Ernst pressed Reinhold's hand heartily, and walked into the house, passing through the workmen, who drew back timidly on either side. Reinhold left the place with a hesitating step. He would have liked to remain with his uncle, at any rate; and he was more than doubtful that Ferdinanda would be inconsolable if he did not come.

## CHAPTER VIII.

The youth in the shirt-sleeves who had answered Reinhold with such scant courtesy, slammed to the door, and shaking his fist muttered a big oath in his native language between his sharp white teeth. Then he went back into the room and walked with light steps up to a door which divided his studio from the next one. He put his ear against the door and listened for a minute or two. A smile of satisfaction lighted up his dark face, he drew a deep breath as he stood erect, then stealthily as a cat he ran up the winding iron staircase which led to his own room, whence he had come on hearing Reinhold's knock.

In a few minutes he came downstairs again, this time without attempting not to make a noise; indeed, rather stepping more heavily than was necessary and whistling a tune. He had coat and waistcoat on now, and instead of the slippers which he had worn before, had varnished boots on his small feet, at which he glanced with much satisfaction as he walked downstairs. Arrived at the bottom, he went immediately up to a large and handsome Venetian looking-glass and examined his whole figure with the greatest care, arranged his blue tie, fastened one of the gold studs more securely into his shirt-front, and passed a comb through his shining raven-black hair. He whistled more and more softly, and finally left off altogether. Then coming away from the looking-glass, he moved rather noisily first one and then another obstacle as they came in his way, till there was nothing between him and the door against which he had just now listened.

Seizing a stool, which for this very purpose he had placed within reach against the wall, he stood upon it, and applied his eye, as just now his ear, to the door, close to it; for with great trouble he had bored a hole with a very fine gimlet, and with great trouble, too, had he learnt how to look through it so as to see into the next room, or at least to see her in the place where she worked.

The blood rushed into his dark cheeks as he thus looked. "O Bellissima!" he murmured between his lips, pressing a passionate kiss upon the wood.

Suddenly he sprang down noiselessly like a cat: the stool again leaned against the wall, and he stood before the unfinished marble of a colossal female figure as some one knocked at the other side of the door.

"Signor Antonio!"

"Signora!" exclaimed the young man from where he stood. He had grasped chisel and hammer, so as the better to play the part of one surprised.

"Can you come in here for a moment, Signor Antonio? Fatemi il piacere!"

"Si, signora."

He threw his tools aside and ran to the door, which was now unbolted. Notwithstanding this and his having received an invitation, he knocked before he opened it.

"Ma--entrate! How smart you are, Signor Antonio!"

Antonio dropped his dark eye-lashes and glanced at his slender figure down to the very tips of his varnished boots--but only for a moment. The next the passionate sullen eyes were fixed upon the beautiful girl, who, wearing her ordinary dark morning dress with a long apron, stood before him with her modelling tool in her hand.

"You have no need to think of dress; you are always beautiful!"

He said it in German. He was proud of his German since she had praised his accent during the Italian lessons he gave her and told him that every word in his mouth sounded new, new and delightful like meeting a friend in a foreign land.

"I feel anything but beautiful this morning," answered Ferdinanda, "but I want your help. My model has failed me; I wanted to work at the eyes to-day. You have finer eyes than your countrywoman, Antonio; do stand there just for a few minutes!"

A smile of gratified pride stole over the youth's handsome face. He stood before Ferdinanda in the precise attitude which she had given to her statue.

"Bravo!" said she: "it is difficult to say whether you are a better actor or sculptor."

"Un povero abbozzatore!" he murmured.

"You are no workman," said Ferdinanda; "but as you well know, an artist."

"I am an artist as you are a princess."

"What does that mean?"

"I was born to be an artist, but am not one, as you were born to be a princess and yet are not one."

"What a mad notion!"

She did not say it angrily, but rather in a tone as if she agreed with him, which did not escape the sharp ear of the Italian.

"You know it yourself," he said.

She made no answer, but went on working, though without much spirit.

"She has called me to say something to me," said Antonio to himself.

"Where were you last night, Antonio?" she asked after a pause.

"At my club, signora."

"When did you come home?"

"Late."

"But when?"

"At one o'clock. Ma perché?"

She was leaning over the small table which held her tools and feeling about amongst them.

"I only wanted to know. We went to bed very late last night. We had a visitor, a cousin of mine, and there was a great deal of smoking and talking; it gave me a dreadful headache, and I went into the garden for an hour. Will you sit any longer, or shall we give it up? I dare say it is difficult, and you seem tired."

"No, no," he murmured.

He placed himself again in the attitude, but not so well as before. His brain was full of bewildering thoughts, which made his heart beat.

"When did you come home?"

"I was in the garden for an hour."

Was it possible! No, no, it was impossible--it was only an accident. But if he had met her alone

in the garden in the dead of night, what would he have said, what would he have done?

Everything swam before him. He passed his hand, which he ought to have held up to his brow, across his eyes.

"What is the matter?" cried Ferdinanda.

The hand dropped, the eyes, which were fixed upon her, shone like flames of fire.

"What is the matter," he murmured--"what is the matter! Ho, non lo so neppur io: una febbre che mi divora; ho, che il sangue mi abbrucia, che il cervello mi si spezza; ho, in fine che non ne posso piu, che sono stanco di questa vita!"

Ferdinanda had tried to stop this outburst, but without success. She trembled from head to foot; the flaming eyes emitted a spark which penetrated to her own heart, and her voice trembled as she said, as quietly as she could:

"You know I cannot understand you when you speak so fast--so wildly."

"You did understand me," murmured the youth.

"I did not understand anything more than I can see for myself--that you are devoured with fever, that your blood boils to suffocation, that your brain is bursting, that you are tired of life; which means, in German, that you stayed too long yesterday at your club, raved too much about your beloved Italy, and consequently drank too much strong Italian wine."

The veins on his white forehead started out in blue lines, and he uttered a hoarse cry like that of a wild beast. He clutched at his breast, where he usually carried his stiletto, but the pocket was empty, and he looked around as if seeking for some weapon.

"Would you murder me?"

The right hand, which was still clutched in his breast, loosened its grasp and fell by his side; the left hand followed, and the fingers linked themselves together; a rush of tears broke from his eyes: the fire was extinguished, and, sinking on his knees, he faltered:

"Mi perdona! Ferdinanda, l'ho amata dal primo giorno che l'ho veduta, ed adesso--ah, adesso!"

"I know it, my poor Antonio," said Ferdinanda, "and for that reason I forgive you once more, for the last time. If you repeat this scene I will tell my father, and then you must leave the house. And now, Signor Antonio, rise!"

She gave him her hand, which, still kneeling, he pressed to his lips and forehead.

"Antonio, Antonio!" called Justus' voice from without, and then a knock was heard at the door, which opened into the yard. Antonio sprang to his feet.

"Is Antonio here, Fräulein Ferdinanda?"

Ferdinanda went herself to open the door.

"Still at work?" said Justus as he entered. "But I thought you were going to the Exhibition with your cousin?"

"I am waiting for him; he has not made his appearance yet. You go on with Antonio; we will meet in the sculpture-room."

"As you like. What you have done to the eyes to-day is no good at all--it is all wrong. You have worked without a model again. When will you learn that without models we are helpless! Andiamo, Antonio! if you are not ashamed to walk through the streets with me."

He had laughingly placed himself by the Italian, as if to amuse Ferdinanda by the comparison which he himself observed between his short little figure in the old velvet coat and light trousers of doubtful newness, and the slim, handsome, smart youth, his assistant. But Ferdinanda had already turned away, and again repeated, "We shall meet in the sculpture-room."

"Dunque andiamo!" cried Justus; "a rivederci!"

## CHAPTER IX.

The door was shut, the footsteps of the two men died away--Ferdinanda had not moved.

"Una principessa!" she murmured. "He is the only one who understands me. What use is it to be understood by him? If he were a prince, indeed! And yet it is delicious to know that one is loved like that--delicious and dangerous! He watches every step I take, nothing that I do escapes him; but really yesterday he does not seem to have been at home. He does not know yet that I dare not do anything when he is near."

She sank down upon a stool, and took the letter from her bosom which *he* had given her yesterday over the garden wall. She already knew it by heart, but she liked to see the trace of the loved hand.

"Why did you not try to let me know that you would be at the station? You could have written quite safely to Schönau; it was mere chance that I came by that train--mere chance that I made acquaintance with your cousin in the carriage. How can we ever get on, how can we even prolong our present miserable existence, if we leave everything to chance? If we do not struggle for our happiness by boldly meeting our cruel fate? As it was, I had to find some excuse for tumbling head over heels out of the carriage; and how easily I might have missed you, or found you with your father, and then there would have been another opportunity lost! I hope now things may be a little better. Your cousin is, so he told me, acquainted with my sister, and she herself explained how they had made acquaintance on the road, and he made himself extremely useful to the party. My sister speaks of him very highly, and assures me that my father is delighted with him. He will, of course, call upon my father; at all events I shall come and thank my 'comrade' for the service he has done my belongings, either commissioned by Elsa and my father, or without any commission at all--leave that to me. At all events it will give us an opening that will be very useful, as your cousin seems a pleasant fellow, with whom little ceremony will be necessary. Get on good terms with him, and make use of 'my cousin' to take you out walking and to concerts, theatres, and exhibitions. By the way, go to-morrow--splendid opportunity--to the Exhibition. I shall only be on duty till twelve o'clock, so perhaps at half-past twelve I may persuade Elsa to go, as she has already expressed a wish to do so. I can take the opportunity of introducing you to her all the more easily that we were formally introduced yesterday; so be prepared for it. I write these lines, as usual, in flying haste, during the few minutes that I dare steal away from the family circle; forgive such a scrawl. I kiss your lovely hand now in my thoughts as I did erewhile when you gave it me over the garden wall for the first time--not for the last, I swear!" ...

She let the letter fall into her lap. And no word of his father! not a word that could show that he was in earnest, in real earnest; that he would at least make an attempt to free them from their present humiliating situation! And he knew nothing yet of last night's scene! She crumpled up the paper which lay under one hand, and seizing it the next moment with both hands covered it with kisses, smoothed it carefully out, and replacing it in her bosom, laid her hot forehead upon the marble slab of the little table.

"Una febbre che mi divora," she murmured; "il sangue mi abbrucia, il cervello mi si spezza--sono stanca di questa vita! Yes, yes!" she cried, starting up, "I am tired of this life, which is no life at all, but a hideous mockery of life, a death before death--worse--a living grave! I will force my way out of this ghastly tomb, or die by my own hand!"

She walked up and down the room, wringing her hands and sobbing, now throwing herself upon a chair and gazing wildly before her, now starting up and again wandering about with gestures of despair. The loud clang of the great bell caught her attention for a moment. She knew that it was something quite unusual--perhaps some great accident had happened: a boiler burst, the saws of one of the machines bent, and the wall to which it was fastened pulled down and in ruins, as had happened a few months ago; perhaps a fire--what did it signify to her whether people were crushed and killed, or all burnt together? Was not she broken and wounded in soul and body, wandering amongst the ruins of the happiness which had never existed except in her dreams! A despairing woman, to whom a hair shirt would be suitable and ashes on her head, that head that she had once carried so proudly--like her father! It was all his fault. He it was, who had declared war between them! And he did not know yet; but the hour was coming soon, even to-day if she were followed--and then?

She had lain awake the whole night thinking over that question; she had racked her mind over it the whole morning. And then? and then?

How could she alone find an answer without him? And he--he! When last night she described in a few hasty words the scene that had taken place at table, had he given the one only answer that she had expected--"Then we must try to settle it without our fathers' consent!" He had answered nothing, not a word! and his silence confirmed what she had most feared--the only thing that she had feared and dreaded--that he was not prepared to carry the matter out to the last, to its extreme end--that he did not love her as she loved him!

Of what use were her courage and determination? She was helpless! She--helpless!

She stood still before a looking-glass which she was just passing. She examined her face, her figure as though she were the model whom she had ordered for the next day, and wished to see

whether the form thus reflected were really what it laid claim to be. Was she really as beautiful as they all said? Was the great French sculptor right who came to see Justus last year, and at sight of her stood thunderstruck, and then exclaimed that till he saw her he had never believed that nature could have produced so perfect a form.

But Antonio, too, was beautiful--beautiful as a dream, and yet she did not love him. And was he, who was not even an artist--was he to let beauty alone so fascinate him that he should give up family prejudice, rank, social position, all--for what? A woman never asks such questions if she loves; she makes no calculations, no bargains--she loves, and gives freely, joyfully, everything that she has to give--she gives herself.

She leaned back in her chair, buried her face in the cushions, and shut her eyes.

"He does not know how passionately I love him, how I would cover him with kisses," she murmured; and yet, how did it go? "The only charm which a man cannot withstand, and which he follows unresistingly ... and his gratitude for which is, in fact, only recollection and longing----"

It was from a French novel that she had gathered this melancholy piece of knowledge--not a good book--and she had not read to the end. But this sentence, which she did not dare repeat entirely to herself, had fallen into her heart like a spark of fire, and smouldered and burnt there--in her heart, in her cheeks, in her closed eyes, in the beating pulses of her temples--air! air!

She started up and clutched at the empty air like a drowning man. "I am lost," she cried, "I am lost, lost!"

A knock at the door, which she had already heard once or twice, now sounded louder. She let her arms fall, glanced round the room, grasped the letter hidden in her bosom, and passed her hands over her hair and brow and eyes and cheeks. "Come in!"

"I was afraid of disturbing you," said Reinhold, standing in the open doorway.

"Oh, come in and shut the door."

It was the Ferdinanda of last night, with the half-careless, half-sullen, impenetrable manner, and the deep, monotonous, tired voice.

Reinhold did as he was desired. She replaced the modelling tool, which she had caught up at random, on the little table, and gave him her hand.

"I have been waiting a long time for you."

"I should have been here sooner," answered Reinhold, "but a handsome young fellow next door, whom I seemed to disturb in the act of dressing----"

"Antonio, an Italian--Herr Anders' assistant."

"He either could not or would not give me any information. So I have been through the yards and the machinery department in search of your father, and--did you not hear the noise?"

"No."

Reinhold stared with astonishment, his heart was still beating and his mind still full of what he had seen and heard. The clang of the bell had frightened Aunt Rikchen out of the house, where he had just led her back only half quieted; the servants had run and stood in the distance, staring anxiously; blind Cilli had come into the doorway and had said a few kind words to him as he passed by; and here, fifty yards off, his own daughter had heard nothing!

"Do you artists live in a world of your own?" he asked in astonishment, and then he explained what had happened. "I am afraid," he added, "that half the manufactory will have to be closed. My uncle will suffer immense loss, for he has heavy contracts to fulfil, so the men told me before. Heaven only knows how it will all end!"

"What will it signify to my father?" answered Ferdinanda, as a bitter smile played about her lips. "The world may come to an end if only he can have his own way! You do not know my father quite yet," she continued more quietly. "We, unhappily, are accustomed to this sort of thing; all we know is that we live over a volcano. If we left off work every time there was a storm we should have no peace, and should never finish anything."

She had taken off her great apron. Reinhold was standing looking at her work.

"How do you like it?" asked Ferdinanda.

"It is beautiful," answered Reinhold, with sincere admiration; "but I could wish it were less beautiful if it might be less sad. The expression of the mouth, the look of the eyes as they are shaded by the head--the whole effect of the otherwise lovely face seems to me not quite in keeping with the peaceful and rural occupation suggested by the sickle and wheatsheaf. As I came in I fancied a maiden looking out for her lover. She is looking out for him, but woe to him when he comes! He had better be careful of the sickle! Am I right?"

"Perfectly," answered Ferdinanda. "And now I am more glad than ever that I am going with you to the Exhibition. It must be a pleasure to look at the work of real artists with any one who can so closely criticise the work of an amateur."

She was standing at the end of the room, and let the water from a tap in the wall run over her hands into a washhand-basin. "Excuse me," said she, "but that is what we are obliged to do here. Now tell me how you slept."

"Perfectly as soon as I got to sleep. I was a little excited at first."

"So was I. I had to walk for a long time in the garden before I could calm myself. May I confess? I was so ashamed of my father's losing his temper before you, as you could not know what he was like in such matters, and that he can work himself up into a perfect fury over a mere nothing. Luckily, he only fights these battles in imagination; and, for example, if the son of the man whose very name--heaven only knows why--puts him into such a state, if Herr von Werben were to pay you a visit, and my father met him, he would be courtesy itself. I tell you that because I presume you will not be able to avoid some intercourse with the Werbens, and might think the situation more serious than it really is. Indeed, I am convinced that if I had not, in my extreme nervousness, cut short the introduction yesterday at the station, and my father could have seen that Herr von Werben is a man very much like other men, that scene never would have occurred. But one can't think of everything."

So said Ferdinanda as she slowly walked through the garden, which led, by a back door, from the studio to the house. The sun threw a shadow from the trees upon the garden wall, as the moon had done last night.

"It really was only a shadow on the wall," said Reinhold to himself.

## CHAPTER X.

I am afraid you will spoil me so dreadfully that I shall find it very difficult to return to my simple "way of life," said Reinhold, as he drove through the Brandenburg gate of the Thiergartenstrasse sitting by Ferdinanda's side in his uncle's carriage.

"What is the good of having carriages and horses if they are not to be used?" answered Ferdinanda.

She had thrown herself back upon the cushions with the tip of her foot upon the opposite seat. Reinhold could hardly take his eyes off the exquisite figure, which was shown off to the greatest advantage by a pretty autumn toilette. He seemed to realise for the first time how beautiful his cousin was, and he could quite understand why she so plainly attracted the notice of the gaily-dressed crowds that thronged the walks, and why several riders as they trotted past turned in their saddles. Ferdinanda did not seem to observe it; the large eyes looked straight before her, or were raised with a tired dreamy look to the branches of the trees, which seemed tired and dreamy, too, as they drank in unmoved the mild warmth of the autumn sunshine. Perhaps it was this connection of ideas which made Reinhold ask himself about what age the beautiful girl might be? and he was rather astonished when he calculated that she could not be far from four and twenty. She had always lived in his memory as a tall thin girl, not yet blossomed into flower, but then certainly that was ten years ago. His cousin Philip, who was then a long lanky youth, must now be very nearly thirty.

A light two-wheeled carriage that had been following them now overtook them.

On the high driving-seat sat a tall, fine, broad-shouldered man, well, and it struck Reinhold rather over dressed, driving a pair of remarkably fine high-stepping black horses with his hands encased in light kid gloves, and a little groom on the back seat with folded arms. The driver had to get out of the way of a carriage that was coming towards him. His attention was turned to the other side of the road, but when he was some carriage-lengths off he leaned over his seat and eagerly waved his hand and whip, to which Ferdinanda replied in her usual careless way with a nod.

"Who was that?" asked Reinhold.

"My brother Philip."

"How strange!"

"What?"

"I was just thinking of him."

"That often happens, particularly in a big town and at the hour when every one is out. I shall not be surprised if we see him again at the Exhibition. Philip is a great lover of pictures, and draws and paints by no means badly. There, he has stopped! I thought so. Philip has good manners."

The next moment they were side by side with the phaeton.

"Good-morning, Ferdinanda! good-morning, Reinhold! I bless the light which showed me how to light on you the very first day! Bad pun that, Ferdinanda--eh? You look uncommonly well, my dear cousin, with your brown face and beard; and you need not be ashamed of the lady by your side either--eh? Where are you off to? The Exhibition? That is capital; we shall meet. That horse is like a mad thing to-day. Au revoir!"

He touched with his whip the black horses, who were already beginning to fidget, and drove quickly off, again nodding over his broad shoulders.

"I should not have known Philip again," said Reinhold; "he is not like you--I mean not like you or my uncle."

In fact, a greater contrast could hardly be imagined than between the big red beardless smooth face of the young man with his short hair, and the deeply-lined face of Uncle Ernst, surrounded and surmounted with its grey beard and hair, or the refined and unusual beauty of Ferdinanda.

"Lucky for him," said Ferdinanda.

"Why lucky?"

"He is what he looks, a man of the day; we are ghosts of the middle ages. Consequently it is he who is looked upon as the ghost amongst us; but it is not his fault."

"Then in this terrible rupture between him and my uncle you take his side?"

"We are not asked our opinion at home; you will see that by-and-by."

"I can do that now," thought Reinhold, as Ferdinanda again sank back amongst the cushions. "Ghosts, however, are not my favourite companions, particularly on such a bright sunny day. There are so many lovable people in the world--sweet Cilli, for instance. Whatever a man expects he finds."

As though he wished in all haste to make up this morning for any previous neglect, he now tried to fix his thoughts upon the image which he imagined was always present to his mind, but which now he could not call up before his eyes.

"That is all the fault of these crowds," said he angrily.

And certainly they were in a very disagreeable crowd. A regiment with its noisy band was marching down the Friedrichstrasse, cutting across under the trees. The stream of passers-by stood back on both sides, especially near the carriage. Police, mounted and on foot, tried to keep order amongst them with right goodwill, and to keep back the crowds which occasionally expressed their impatience loudly.

Even Ferdinanda seemed to be impatient at the long stoppage. She looked at her watch. "Half-past twelve already," she murmured; "we are losing precious time." At last came the tail of the battalion, just as the head of another left the Friedrichstrasse, with its band playing, and the crowds let free pushed and struggled vehemently against each other in the small space left between.

"Go on! go on, Johann!" cried Ferdinanda, with an eagerness which Reinhold could only attribute to the nervousness she might have felt.

They only came out of one crowd into another.

In the first great square room at the Exhibition, the so-called clock-room, the sight-seeing crowds were so thickly packed that Reinhold, who had Ferdinanda on his arm, saw no possibility of getting any further.

"It is not so full in the next room," said Ferdinanda; "but we must wait a little. They always take care to hang good pictures here. We will go separately, it is always easier to get on. How do you like this beautiful Andreas Achenbach? Is not that perfect? Wonderful! in his best and grandest style! Sky and sea--all in shades of grey, and yet how sharply the different bits stand out. And how well he knows how to bring life into what might seem monotonous by introducing that red flag in the background on the mast of a schooner, and here in the foreground by the flickering light upon the planks of the bridge as the water streams over it. Masterly! quite

masterly!"

Reinhold had listened to Ferdinanda's spirited description with the greatest enjoyment. "She can talk about that," thought he. "Well, she certainly is an artist. I can see it all, but could not express it, and should not be able to say why it is so beautiful."

He stood there lost in contemplation of the picture. "What would be the captain's next manoeuvre? He certainly must tack to get before the wind, but he was about a ship's-length too near the bridge for that: a puzzling situation!" thought Reinhold.

He turned to express his opinion to Ferdinanda, and very nearly spoke to a little fat old lady who had taken Ferdinanda's place, and with her glass to her eyes was examining the picture together with about a dozen other people, who stood round in a half circle. Reinhold made a fruitless effort to get through them and to join Ferdinanda, whom he saw at some little distance talking to one or two ladies so busily that she never once turned round, and for the moment had evidently forgotten him. "Another advantage of being separate which I will also make use of," thought Reinhold. A picture close by caught his attention--another sea-piece by Hans Gude, so said the catalogue--which pleased him almost better than the first had done. To the left was the open sea, where a large steamer lay at anchor; on the shore, which curved round in a great bay, were to be seen in the distance amongst the sandhills a few fishermen's huts, out of whose chimneys smoke was rising; between the little village and the ship was a rowing-boat, while another quite in the foreground was sailing towards the shore. The evening sky was overcast with heavy clouds above the sandhills, so that the smoke could hardly rise; only to the extreme west of the horizon over the open sea was a small streak of dull red. The night would be stormy, and a sharp breeze was already springing up and blowing the flag of the steamer straight out, and on the bare sands in the foreground the breakers were coming in heavily. Reinhold could not tear himself away from the picture. It was so exactly like that evening when he had steered the boat from the steamer to the shore. There in front the two servants had packed themselves, here sat the President, one hand on the side, the other clutching at the seat, not daring to pick up the covering which had fallen from his knees; here sat the General, with the collar of his coat turned up and his cap pulled far over his face, staring gloomily before him; and here, close to the man who was steering, she sat, gazing out so bravely upon the grey waste of waters and the foaming breakers in front of her, and then looking up so frankly, so happily at him with the dear brown eyes! Reinhold had forgotten the crowd around him, had forgotten Ferdinanda, and did not even see the picture; he only saw those dear brown eyes!

"Will they manage to get to land without a compass, Captain Schmidt?" asked a voice close to him.

The brown eyes were looking at him as he had just seen them in imagination, frank and happy; and the smile, too, was happy which played over cheek and lip as, without the slightest embarrassment, she gave him her hand as to an old friend.

"When did you arrive?"

"Yesterday evening."

"Then certainly you have had no time to inquire for us and to claim your compass. Am I not honesty itself?"

"What use would it be to you?"

"Who can tell? You told me I had a great talent for navigation. But let us get out of this crowd and look for my brother, whom I have just lost. Are you alone?"

"I am with my cousin."

"Then you must introduce me to her. I saw her 'Shepherd Boy' downstairs; it is charming! I have only just heard from my brother that it is your cousin who is the sculptor, and that we are neighbours, and all about it. Where is she?"

"I have been looking for her in vain."

"Now, that is delightful! Two lost children in a forest of people--I am dreadfully frightened!"

She was not a bit frightened, Reinhold could see that. She was in her own world, and was as much at home in it as he was at sea. How cleverly and gracefully she slipped past two ladies who would not make way for her! How carelessly she nodded to the enormously tall officer who made his bow to her from the farthest corner of the room over the heads of several hundred people! How will she manage to talk to Reinhold over her shoulder when he was near, as he followed her with difficulty into the small, narrow passage where the prints and water-colours were hung.

"I saw my brother go in here," said she. "There--no, that is Herr von Saldern. Never mind, we shall find him presently--and your cousin?"

"She is not here either."



"Nor does that signify. She is as little likely to be in want of friends as I am. As we are here, let us have a little chat? Or would you rather look at the pictures? There are some very fine Passinis here."

"I would rather talk."

"There is no better place for talking than the Exhibition during the first few days. People only come to talk and to see their friends after the long summer, when every one is away, and to examine the latest fashions which the bankers' wives and daughters (we army people are not thought much of) have brought from Paris. They have an immense deal to do, and they know the pictures will not run away. My brother tells me you are going to spend the winter here?"

"A few weeks at all events."

"Then of course you will stay longer. You cannot think how amusing Berlin is in the winter--particularly for you, to whom so many circles are open. Your uncle keeps open house--so says my brother, from whom all my information comes. Artists come and go of course when the daughter of the house is an artist, and so beautiful besides! Is she really so beautiful? I am so curious. At home we are very much quieter and rather monotonous, always the same people--officers; but there are some charming men amongst them whom you would like to talk to; and amongst the ladies are several who are very nice and pretty, both married women and girls. Then Fräulein von Strummin is coming--Meta! She swore it a thousand times at least at Golmberg, and has already written half a dozen letters on the subject. She generally writes every day, sometimes twice a day. The last was all about you."

"Now I am getting curious."

"I dare say; but I shall refrain from telling you--you men are quite conceited enough. Papa, too, thinks very highly of you; did you know that?"

"I did not know it; but I do not know anything that would make me prouder."

"Well, only yesterday evening, when Ottomar was telling us of his meeting with you, and that he had known you before in Orleans, he said what a pity it was you had not stayed in the army. You might have done it so easily, and could re-enter it even now."

"Very kind of him, Fräulein von Werben; and during the war I thought so too, and if it had gone on longer--there is no saying; but in time of peace a sub-lieutenant thirty years old! That would never do."

"True! true! But how would it be in the navy? You could rise there, and still keep to your own profession."

"I do certainly wish to remain in it," answered Reinhold, "and therefore I am thinking of accepting the proposal which President von Sanden made to me a few days ago, and which would immediately give me a command."

"A command!" exclaimed Elsa, with astonished eyes.

As superintendent of pilots.

"Oh!"

There was a tone of disappointment in the exclamation which did not escape Reinhold. He continued, smiling:

"That is to say, the superintendence of some dozen or so rough weather beaten seafaring men, and of some dozen tough weather-proof fast-sailing vessels, among which it is to be hoped there will be one or two lifeboats; a humble post, Fräulein von Werben, but not without its merits, and certainly plenty of danger; and taken for all in all, worth while for a man with no great pretensions in life, but who would willingly serve the world with his strength and talents, to give those strength and talents and anything else he may have got to it cheerfully. And I--well, I shall at all events stay in my own profession."

They were standing in a window, rather away from the stream of people who were passing rapidly to and fro in the corridor. Elsa was leaning lightly against the window-sill, and gazing out into the street. Reinhold doubted whether she heard what he said, till rapidly turning her head she answered with her former lively manner:

"You are right, it is your especial profession. Accept the proposal which our old friend has made you! You see you have friends in all directions. And is any special place named yet, if I may ask?"

"Yes, I should be stationed at Wissow."

"At Wissow?"

She clapped her hands together and laughed.

"In our Wisso? Now that is delightful! Then we shall be almost neighbours from Warnow and also from Strummin, if I pay my promised visit to Meta. Then we shall come and you must take us out sailing--quite far out, will you?"

"As far as you like!"

"An honest man is as good as his word! And now we really must set out on our voyage of discovery. Oh, dear! there is Princess Heinrich August with the Princesses! Those unlucky Passinis! She has seen me already, she sees everything at a glance. I dare not go now; but----"

"I will go," said Reinhold.

"Yes, do; that will be better. What, will you not shake hands with me? We shall meet again!"

She gave him her hand, which Reinhold held fast for a moment; she was already looking towards the Princess. He went down the corridor. As he looked back for a moment from the entrance, he saw Elsa making a deep courtesy to the Princess, who stood still and spoke to her.

"How will she explain it," thought Reinhold. "She cannot say that she was talking in the window to a Superintendent of pilots that is to be!"

## CHAPTER XI.

Ferdinanda only stood talking to her friends in the clock-room till she thought that Reinhold, who had repeatedly turned round to look for her, had forgotten her for the moment, and had given himself up to the study of the picture. Then she bowed to the two ladies, and allowed herself to be carried along by a stream of people who were going into the next room, waited a moment to be certain that Reinhold was not following her, and then walked quickly away with the air of a person looking for her lost companion, and who has therefore only a slight nod for any acquaintance she may meet, through this room and the skylight room into the fourth room, and out of these into the long suite of small rooms which from here led back to the chief room, and into which even during the first few days visitors rarely came.

Even to-day it was comparatively empty, only here and there isolated individuals, who with fleeting curiosity examined the pictures, never stopping long, and casting a look of astonishment at an officer who did not seem to be able to tear himself away from a very indifferent landscape. At last his interest seemed appeased; he walked rapidly away, when again his attention was attracted to a picture close to the entrance. It was the same picture before which Ferdinanda had stopped. The light was so unfavourable that there was only one spot from which the picture could be properly seen. So the officer was obliged to stand quite close to the lady, and in so doing he trod on her dress.

"I beg your pardon," he said aloud, and then in a low voice, which only reached her ear, "Do not turn round till I tell you; speak into the corner; no one will observe it. First of all let me thank you!"

"Why?"

"For coming here."

"I only came to tell you that I will bear it no longer."

"Have I nothing to bear?"

"No, not in comparison with me."

"I love you as you love me."

"Prove it."

"How?"

"By deeds, and not words."

"With my hands tied?"

"Break the bonds that hold you!"

"I cannot."

"Good-bye."

She turned to the door through which she had come; he forgot all caution, and stood in her way. They confronted each other, their eyes meeting.

"Ferdinanda!"

"Let me go!"

"You must hear me! for God's sake, Ferdinanda! Such an opportunity as this may not occur again for weeks!"

She laughed scornfully. "We have plenty of time."

Again she tried to pass him; he still stood in her way.

"Ferdinanda!"

"Once again let me go! You wish for an opportunity? You will perhaps never have so good a one of getting rid of me."

He stood back with a bow; she could have gone if she pleased, but she did not go; the hot tears had started into her eyes, she did not dare to meet people so, and turned back to the picture, where he immediately took his original position.

"Be kind, Ferdinanda! I have so looked forward to this hour. Why do you embitter the moments so precious to both of us? You know, you must know that I am prepared to go all lengths if it must be. But we cannot take the final step without considering everything."

"We have been considering for the last six months."

"With the garden wall between us, and in words which were only half understood, in letters where one cannot express what one wants. That is no use. You must meet me somewhere, as I have so often entreated. Am I never to take your hand in mine, never to press my lips against yours? and you ask for a proof of my love!"

She went up to his side and gazed into the beautiful, restless hazel eyes. Still more beautiful and darker eyes had gazed at her like that a few hours ago, and with more passionate warmth. She had been able to withstand them, these she could not withstand. The eyelashes fell upon her burning cheeks.

"I can not," she stammered.

"Say I will not, I have made innumerable suggestions to you. Only the other day I got introduced to your brother at the Club. He was delighted to make my acquaintance, pressed me to visit him, to come and see his pictures. How easily we could meet there."

"I dare not go and see my brother. I have not dared to go for a long time, and now after last night!"

"Then your cousin! Of course he will come and see us? I shall return the visit. Your father cannot turn me away from the door!"

"I have already thought of that and prepared him. But in that case it could only be for a very few minutes."

"Then I will think of something else, if only I knew what you would like; I will find something and write to you, or I should prefer telling you whenever you give me the signal."

"I dare not do it again."

"Why?"

"There is some one who watches every step I take. I am not safe from him for one moment--Antonio--I have told you about him; I am afraid."

"You are afraid of everything."

He turned quickly and impatiently towards the window near which he stood. At the same moment a handsome, remarkably smartly-dressed young man disappeared from the door at the other end of the gallery, where he had stood for the last few minutes, so placed that by bending a little to the left he could easily see the couple in the window with his dark, eagle eyes, without much danger of being seen himself. If necessary he had only to withdraw into the crowd which filled the large neighbouring room. He had seen enough now, and mingled again with the throng.

When Ottomar, after looking out of window for a few seconds, turned to speak to Ferdinanda the words of reconciliation which were on his lips and in his heart, her place was empty.

Ferdinanda could not help it. The acquaintances with whom she had before spoken had passed the door of the next room, close to which she stood, and luckily without seeing her. But they were standing quite close to the door, the dress of one of them was still in sight. At any moment they might turn into the gallery if she did not go forward to meet them and keep them till Ottomar, who would of course understand it all, should himself leave the gallery by the other side. And if he did not understand--so much the worse for him. Then it would all be over--better to-day than to-morrow if it must be!

But Ottomar had observed nothing, had not seen the two ladies, had not even seen Ferdinanda, who, to get out of the way of the people in the door, had been obliged to go a step or two into the room, and was now speaking to her friends. She had left him without a word of farewell or explanation.

"By heaven, that is rather strong!" said he, biting his lips and pulling his small dark moustache. "Well, as she pleases!" And he rapidly left the gallery and went through the same door where the handsome young man had stood into the large room.

## CHAPTER XII.

Here, meanwhile, the crowd had, if possible increased. Besides the Princess Heinrich August, various other princely personages had appeared with their suites, for whom at all events room had to be made. The result was that in some places the curious sightseers were so crowded together that any movement was hardly possible. It was the same in the last of the set of rooms. Two ladies had placed themselves upon one of the few sofas of which the Exhibition could boast. Near them stood a gentleman whose absent and fatigued expression plainly showed how glad he would be to sit down also. He stood first on one leg, then on the other, and cast from time to time an irritable glance at the two ladies, one of whom, who seemed a few years older than the other, but, notwithstanding her being rather too large, was the handsomest, leaned languidly back in her corner, while the younger and slighter one incessantly turned her eye-glasses from side to side, never moving them from her eyes.

"When you are enough rested, I think we will go," said the gentleman.

"I see no possibility of getting out," replied the stout lady, without changing her comfortable attitude.

"It really is intensely interesting," said the other, "quite too interesting. Who is that man, Edward?"

The glasses had turned in another direction.

"What man?"

"There--by the Emperor's portrait, with the fair moustache and bright colour--a country gentleman, I am sure. I fancy I have seen him before."

"By Jove, that is Golm!" exclaimed the gentleman, rousing from his indifference.

"Count Golm! quite true!" said the lady. "This really is quite too interesting! Bring him here at once, Edward!"

But the Count had already observed the party and came up to them eagerly, holding out both hands to the other gentleman, who went forward a few steps to meet him.

"My dear Wallbach, I am delighted to see you!"

"How long have you been here?"

"Since yesterday evening; will you introduce me to the ladies?"

"My wife--my sister Carla----"

"I had the pleasure two winters ago; but----"

"Oh, we have better memories in Berlin than you seem to give us credit for, Count Golm," cried Carla, "especially for gentlemen who make themselves so scarce. Why did we not see you last winter?"

"I was in Italy, Fräulein von Wallbach, and in Paris."

"Oh, that dear dear Paris! We have not been there for an eternity; the last time was the year before the war. They say it has not altered at all, but I cannot believe it. Then there was such a brilliant court--and now--c'est désolant! But sit down by us; there is room if we sit closer together." Carla drew aside her voluminous skirts.

"I am afraid of being in your way," said the Count, but sat down in the place so readily made for him, while Herr von Wallbach glanced despairingly at his varnished boots.

"We have been talking immensely about you this last few days," said Carla. "Dear Elsa! she is so enchanted with Golmberg, it must really be a perfect paradise. Is not Elsa enchanting? We all spoil her here, Ottomar says, and he spoils her more than any one."

"Who is Ottomar, if I may ask?"

"Herr von Werben!" said Wallbach, casting a glance of displeasure upon Carla, "the Lieutenant."

"Oh, his name is Ottomar!" said the Count.

"Our families are so very intimate," said Herr von Wallbach. "My poor brother, you know, fell at the siege of Paris by Von Werben's side."

"True! true! I remember," said the Count, who knew nothing about it.

"And naturally that increased our intimacy," said Carla. "Sorrow always brings people closer together," and she compressed still further the ample folds of her dress.

"True! true!" said the Count. "Sorrow--and happiness too."

"Ah, you are a philosopher! I love philosophy! Schopenhauer gave me the most intense pleasure. Are you not enchanted with Hartmann?"

"Who may that be?" thought the Count; and aloud he said, "Certainly--at least---"

"Then you do not know him, at least thoroughly; I know him by heart. There are only three men now to be studied, and studied again and again--Bismarck, Hartmann, and Wagner. The politics of the present, the music of the future, opened out to us by the philosophy of the unknown; in them you see the stamp of this century."

"I am quite anxious to make Herr von Werben's acquaintance," said the Count, by way of taking part in the conversation.

"Quand on parle du loup--mon Dieu! he really does look like a wolf," cried Carla, whose ever busy eye-glasses had perceived Ottomar the moment he appeared in the room, with the anger and displeasure at Ferdinanda's supposed flight still apparent in his troubled looks and gloomy eyes.

"He has been looking for you, Carla," said Frau von Wallbach, opening her lips for the first time.

"Pray do not call attention so openly to what is by no means settled yet," whispered Herr von Wallbach in her ear.

"What, not yet?" said Frau von Wallbach in an indifferent tone.

Herr von Wallbach shrugged his shoulders, then turned with a smile towards Ottomar, who was working his way in and out till he finally arrived at the party in the window.

"That is right, my dear Werben; we have been expecting you a long time."

"I must apologise," said Ottomar; "I have lost Elsa--been looking for her this half hour. Pray do not be angry with me, Frau von Wallbach, nor you, Fräulein Carla."

"Good-morning," said Carla, without moving her glasses from her eyes. "Who is that, Louise? Frau von Elmar? on her husband's arm? impossible!"

Ottomar had not written during the three days he had been away shooting--not a line--and he must be punished for it. Besides, since her approaching engagement with the smart Guardsman had become known, she had not found it so easy to fascinate other young men as before. The Count was fresh from the country, and could very easily play the part required of him for a day or two. "Count Golm!"

"Yes." The Count, whom Herr von Werben had just introduced to Ottomar, turned round.

"Look, Count Golm! That young lady in the lovely blue dress--that is Frau von Elmar, who had that affair with Count Wolkonski, the attaché at the Russian Embassy, two winters ago. Don't you know the story? You must hear it. Sit down again by me!"

"I thought we were just going!" said Herr von Wallbach.

"One moment," said Carla.

Herr von Wallbach shrugged his shoulders. He considered the game Carla was playing, and which he quite saw through, utterly misplaced. Ottomar's face was dark enough already, so dark indeed that he considered a word of excuse necessary. "She is still such a child," he whispered, with a side-glance at Carla. "You must not be angry with her."

"I am not angry with her."

"Then something else has vexed you," continued Wallbach, drawing Ottomar aside. "You really ought to leave Berlin for a time, this idle time of peace does not suit you. And I have already spoken to the Minister; he does not include you in his differences with your father. In fact he wishes that you should accept this post, only he also wishes for particular reasons not to have any more unmarried attachés there. You see, my dear Werben, I am open with you, and you will not mind that. Be so yourself, and show that you are in earnest! Believe me we shall all be better and happier--you and I and Carla. You cannot be surprised if at last we are getting a little impatient."

"No; I am impatient enough myself."

"Then we shall be quite d'accord, and if you agree--hush! Princess Heinrich August!"

The Princess had come into the room, and had got to the opposite corner without being observed by the group in the window, and now moved on, the crowd respectfully making way, rapidly examining the pictures and sometimes talking to Elsa over her shoulder. The group on the sofa got up hastily and bowed low.

"Now we are all together," said the great lady with kindly friendliness. "Here, you most unfaithful of brothers, is your sister! The company in which we find you must be your excuse. How are you, my dear Carla? You have not shown yourself out riding for three days. I always feel there is something wanting when you do not once canter past my carriage on your black horse. But he has been faithless to you too. Shooting--gentlemen are always shooting! I advise you to beware! You ought to ride too, my dear Wallbach! it would certainly do you good; my daughters begin next year. I should ride myself if--ah! Count Golm! What brings you from your lonely island to our dusty town? Certainly roses bloom here also. Fräulein von Werben has told me the adventure she had at Golmberg--quite romantic! I always say truth is stranger than fiction. Shall you stop here long, my dear Count? You must tell me the whole story. I take a great interest in your island, where I spent a delightful week last autumn. How is Prince Prora? Your little castle of Golmberg is said to stand in a still better position than his celebrated hunting-place. Perhaps you will all accompany me for a short time? Stay by me, dear Elsa! Then how long do you stay, my dear Count?"

The Princess moved away. The crowd which had formed a semicircle at a respectful distance, watching the great lady's interview with the group in the window, as hearing was not possible, opened out and then spread over the room in chattering groups.

"What a pretty woman!"

"Who were the people with whom she talked so long and so graciously?"

## CHAPTER XIII.

After happily saving Fräulein von Werben from the danger of being caught by the Princess talking confidentially with a merchant-captain, Reinhold had returned through the gallery and second room to the clock-room, in the assured hope of finding his cousin still there. But in vain did he turn his sharp eyes in all directions, plunging boldly over the long trains of the ladies, if he saw a brown velvet dress in the far distance.

After all she could not be far off, and in fact it was more that she had left him in the lurch than that he had left her. But still his uneasiness did not decrease when he got to the skylight-room without finding her. He stood still, doubting whether he should go on or return, when a hand, encased in a yellow kid glove, touched his shoulder.

"At last I have found you!"

"Philip!" exclaimed Reinhold, turning round and giving his hand to his cousin.

"Where is Ferdinanda?"

Reinhold explained his mishap.

"Then we will look for her together," said Philip. "I have just come out of the middle room, and she was not there; perhaps she is in one of the last rooms."

He linked his arm in Reinhold's with the familiarity of a cousin and intimate friend. Reinhold was agreeably touched, and a little ashamed that in the quarrel between father and son he was conscious of having already taken the side of the former.

"I really am pleased to see you," said he.

"I don't doubt the reality," answered Philip, laughing, "and only hope the pleasure will last; at any rate, at least fifty per cent. of the happiness falls to my share. It is always a good thing to know that the old man has got a sensible fellow to talk to; and he has always thought very highly of you--probably only to irritate me; but I don't mind that."

"I am so new to this state of affairs, my dear Philip---"

"Diplomatic? you need not try that with me. I am a straightforward, honest fellow, always speaking out what I have in my heart--a foolish habit; it is just what the old man has never forgiven me. He will not listen to the truth; the whole world must dance to his pipe--and a pretty world it would be, heaven knows!"

"But he has already created a little world of his own. I must confess that his manufactory----"

"Is very fine. He has just been pretty lucky--that is all, I assure you! Think what any other man might have done who held his cards! But he never knows what are trumps for the moment, and cannot forgive another man understanding it better. What has he told you about me?"

"Nothing--on my honour."

"It will come. But I warn you not to believe a word. He looks upon me as an egotist, a gambler, a speculator, a cut-throat--I don't know what not! And why? Because I am ten times richer than he is; because I could put his whole marble trade into my pocket without feeling it; because I--in a word, because I have been successful. I believe in Bismarck, whom he hates like sin. Bismarck is my man; I swear by Bismarck; I would go through thick and thin for Bismarck. He knows what he is about, and how to do it."

Philip sometimes raised his already loud voice till all the bystanders could hear him as well as Reinhold himself; and even when he spoke lower, his lively eyes penetrated the crowd, in which every moment he greeted some acquaintance with a wave of the gloved hand, or a familiar nod of the head, or sometimes with "How are you?" "All right?" "Morning--morning," and such broken sentences.

"Shall you never come back to your father's house?" asked Reinhold.

"No. Why should I?"

"Now, Philip! As if it were the most natural thing in the world for a son never to enter his father's house!"

"Natural! What do you mean by natural? I call it natural for a man of my years not to allow himself to be treated like a foolish boy. At the same time, I have no principles concerned in the matter, just now less than ever. Only get me an invitation!"

"I will try, on one condition."

"Well?"

"That you do not abuse your father in my presence."

Philip laughed.

"You are too particular, my dear Reinhold; in these times, neither men nor things must be handled with silk gloves, or you are apt to get a fall before you are aware. Bismarck does not do that; he grips fast."

"Many things are allowed in politics which are unbecoming in common life."

"Oh, we have got beyond all that! On the contrary, we have, thank heaven! arrived at the conviction that, in any circumstances, every advantage may be taken. Just look at that little dark man with the great fat wife. Two years ago he was a wretched little stock-jobber, who did not know from day to day what he had to live on. Now he has got two millions, and if the 'New' Kaiser-König Iron Company--which is started tomorrow--pays, he will have three millions this

year. The 'Old' stand at 135. I myself am deeply interested, and reckon upon a dividend of at least 25. I can get you some shares if you like."

"I do not know what I should buy them with."

"You must have made a good lot of money."

"I have laid by a small sum, which I should like to keep."

"Prudence is the mother of wisdom--and the grandmother of poverty."

"Then I am her legitimate grandson."

Philip suddenly drew his arm out of Reinhold's, who thought he had annoyed him by his last remark; but it was only to stand erect and take off his hat to the Princess, who, with her suite, was passing by. Reinhold, who was pushed aside by people getting in front of him, could see the whole party perfectly without being seen himself--the Princess chatting sometimes with Elsa, who was walking on her left side, and sometimes with Count Golm, who was a little behind her on the right; then various ladies and gentlemen, and amongst the latter Ottomar, talking busily to a lady. The subject of their talk seemed to be amusing, as she laughed incessantly behind her eye-glasses, which never left her eyes.

A curious sensation came over Reinhold. His former flight had something absurd about it from the haste with which it had to be made, and he had himself laughed heartily about it afterwards. Now he could not laugh. In the midst of this respectful, bowing crowd, as it made room for the Princess, he felt the difference of the social position between himself and the young lady who moved at her side to be quite another thing to what he had thought before. He belonged to the crowd, not, as she did, to that select circle--she and Count Golm! Had he made the journey back with them? Did he follow her? What did it matter?--a Count Golm had but to come!

He turned with a secret sigh, and close behind him saw Ferdinanda. She did not see him; her eyes, like every one else's, were turned on the Princess's party, with a fixedness which curiosity alone could not explain. Was it displeasure at being so long alone that he saw in the beautiful gloomy face?

"Ferdinanda!"

She started as if awaking from a dream. A deep glow spread over her cheeks. Reinhold excused himself as well as he could. Philip joined them.

"Did you see her? Beautiful woman! I am quite in love with her. The little Werben girl seems marvellously intimate with her. The man on the other side, I hear, was Count Golm, grand seigneur, but over head and ears in debt. Now is the time to save himself if he is clever. I hope soon we shall do some business together in grand style; don't know him personally--know his signature very well. And did you see young Werben, Ferdinanda, with Fräulein von Wallbach? It must be all right there--not a bad match; she is worth about a hundred thousand; and her brother, who manages her property, was there too--there, Reinhold--with rather a bald head, he is not half a bad fellow; and young Werben himself--well, just now he is rather shaky, but no doubt he will pick up again."

"Shall we go?" said Ferdinanda.

She stepped forward without waiting for any answer, and rather to Reinhold's horror, right in front of the Princess and her party. The Princess had, however, again stopped to accost some other important people who had just arrived. Her attendants had stepped back a little, and were conversing together in low tones, and so it was to be hoped that they might slip through unperceived, but just as he was crossing he caught Elsa's eye, and she nodded to him so cordially, and indeed heartily, that Count Golm, whose attention was attracted, half turned, and certainly recognised him, although his light eyes instead of greeting him, slightly fell, and immediately looked in another direction; but Reinhold had not observed that Ottomar, who had also turned, bowed to Ferdinanda, whose dress touched him, with polite indifference, and immediately continued his interrupted conversation with Fräulein von Wallbach with increased earnestness, while Ferdinanda returned his bow with a blank, fixed look.

But the scene had not escaped some one else's eyes, the dark, gleaming, fiery eyes of the handsome young man, who had already observed from afar the rendezvous in the gallery. He had been standing now in the very centre of the dark wall of the room leaning against one of the columns, and suddenly came forward and stood before the two as they were going.

"Thank heaven I have found you at last, signora," said he in his soft voice, which seemed to tremble a little from breathless haste. "I have looked for you everywhere, to tell you that Signor Anders has not been able to wait downstairs any longer. He was obliged to keep an appointment which was settled for two o'clock."

"So much the better," answered Ferdinanda; "I was just starting to go home."

"It is a pity!" said Philip. "I wanted to hear your opinion of a wonderful young Bacchus by



Müller; Herr Anders has not yet sold his 'Satyr;' I am doubting between the two, perhaps I shall buy both, and your 'Shepherd Boy' too, Ferdinanda, if you will only put a decent price on it."

"Are you coming with us, Antonio?" asked Ferdinanda impatiently.

"I think I will stay a little longer," answered the Italian, hesitating.

"Very well. Come. Addio, Signer Antonio!"

"Addio, signora!"

The Italian remained in the door between the second room and the clock-room, his black eyes following the receding figures till they disappeared through the entrance; then they turned back upon the second room, and remained fixed upon Ottomar with a look of deadly hate.

"Now I know from whom the letters are which she so often reads! You shall pay for it, per Bacco!" he murmured between his white teeth.

## CHAPTER XIV.

That same evening in the elegant salon of the Royal Hotel, Unter den Linden, sat Count Golm and Councillor Schieler at a table covered with maps and plans. The two gentlemen had conversed long and eagerly over a bottle of wine; the bright colour in the Count's cheeks was deeper, and a certain look of displeasure appeared in his face as he now leaned back in his rocking-chair, and began silently to rock himself backwards and forwards; the Councillor still continued to turn over the plans for a little while, sipped his wine, and then also leaned back, and said:

"I find you, take it all in all, Count Golm, less inclined to concur in our project than our correspondence had led me to believe."

"But is it our project?" cried the Count, rousing himself. "What does it signify to me if you want a harbour in the north instead of in the east? The railway will cut one of my properties in half, and come in contact with another. Voilà tout! I don't see why I should excite myself about that."

"We only want the northern harbour because we cannot get the eastern one," answered the Councillor coolly. "A harbour to the north might be conceded by the Government. As to one to the east--well, Count Golm, I think that after such very interesting explanations as you heard at your own table from the lips of the General and the President, we must give up any hope of it. Get the concession for the harbour to the east for us, and the Sundin-Wissow Railway Company will be formed to-morrow."

"How can I do so if you cannot, who are at the very fountain-head?"

The Councillor shrugged his shoulders.

"You know, Count Golm, that I no longer hold any office, and have only now and then to give an opinion; that I have not failed to do so on this side you will believe without my trying to convince you."

"And you have not been able to get the concession?"

"It is not so easily to be had, and especially now when he is busy getting that bill through. People do not dare go to him with many questions which would seem to touch upon the great principle of self-government, which is the order of the day. However--I say it in the strictest confidence--as soon as this bill, which you know goes very much against the grain with him, has been brought through the House of Lords by means of a new creation of peers, and at the same time as I and all patriots feel the grave of Prussia has been dug, he will retire in displeasure from his uncomfortably prominent position in the ministry, and we shall have a better chance next year."

"But I do not want to wait so long," said the Count. He had sprung up and paced up and down the room with hasty steps; now he returned to the table where the Councillor, certain that the interview would not be terminated thus, remained quietly sitting. "And supposing that I wished to wait so long--the very important question arises of whether I could. This is a confidential interview. Councillor Schieler. Well, I am in a bad way. The interest on my debts almost swallows

up my income, and by the first of October there will be an additional sum of fifty thousand thalers."

"Have you spoken to Hugo Lübbener? I should have thought such a rich man, and your banker for so many years----"

"He has only been so for three years, since you recommended him to me so strongly, and besides now my account is very low; my banker's book has not been made up since last July. I cannot ask any more from Lübbener; I have not even once been to see him."

"Humph!" said the Councillor, with the air of a man who, thinking he knows something, now sees it in a new light. "I thought your affairs were--apart from temporary embarrassments--quite in order. What you now tell me, with I hope some of the exaggeration of despondency, surprises me very much indeed--very much."

"I do not exaggerate," replied the Count; "indeed I have said rather too little than too much."

"But then still less do I understand why our project does not suit you. The value of both your properties would be doubled, and a directorship is also certain. That is always something."

"It is nothing--nothing at all!" cried the Count vehemently. "A straw to a drowning man. What should I do with the paltry hundreds, which I can win in one evening at *écarte*? No! if once I go in for speculating it shall not be for nothing; if I make a haul it shall be a good one which shall compensate for the prick of conscience at going in direct opposition to all the traditions of my family and doing what Prince Prora would never condescend to, and which will make me secure in the future."

The Councillor scratched his long nose with a pencil to hide a smile, and suppressed the answer which was on the tip of his tongue.

"How can a gambler be safe in the future?" He said instead: "You should marry, Count Golm!"

"The three negro heads in my coat-of-arms would seem to indicate a dowry of a round million. Tell me of some fascinating young Jewess!"

"I could name several, but I had no lovely daughter of Israel in my mind; on the contrary, the daughter of a house which, even if the blood of the Wends flows in their veins, is nearly as old as yours: Fräulein Elsa von Werben."

"Are you joking?"

"I never was more in earnest; I have been turning the matter over in my mind for the last three days, that is to say since the luckiest of all accidents brought about a personal interview between you and the Werbens under circumstances which render further social intercourse a mere matter of duty on both sides. Think now, Count Golm; the chief opponent of the eastern line of railway is the General--upon strategical grounds perhaps, but I know the man well enough, certainly for personal motives also. The harbour can only be upon Warnow ground, so that the Warnow property must be bought by our company; but it cannot be bought, at least not at present, without his consent as co-trustee of the Warnow estates. Very well; marry the daughter, who must some day inherit half the property, and we shall soon see whether he will withhold from the son-in-law what he refuses to the Director of the Sundin-Wissow Railway and Harbour Company. It is not written in vain: 'Lead us not into temptation.'"

"I think I have learnt to know the General also," cried the Count, "and I bet a hundred to one he will resist the temptation."

"I never bet," answered the Councillor; "I always calculate, and I find that the calculation that drops will wear away a stone, though uncertain, is on the whole correct. But listen! Herr von Wallbach, as my colleague in the management of the Berlin-Sundin Railway, is as deeply concerned as I am that the Sundin-Wissow Railway, which would set us afloat again (you see, Count Golm, I am candour itself), should be carried out. But Herr von Wallbach, since the death of his father the minister, has taken his place as one of the trustees of the Warnow estate; and Ottomar von Werben, who is co-heir, is engaged--or as good as engaged--to Wallbach's clever sister. Wallbach is too good a man of business not to know that if half the property is sold, and sold to us, it will be worth double--double, did I say? it will be worth three or four times what the whole thing is now; but he is afraid--from some remnants of aristocratic prejudices (excuse the word) to push the General too hard. Make common cause with him! I mean marry the daughter, as his sister marries the son, and--why, I very nearly made a bet then!"

The Count, who, while the Councillor had been speaking, walked up and down softly over the carpet, and often stopped so as not to lose a word, now turned round sharply.

"Good!" said he, "charming! but in any case I am to be the vendor!"

"How do you mean, Count Golm?" said the Councillor.

"Why it is plain enough," answered the Count. "I as neighbour and son-in-law get the property

considerably cheaper than the company, who, besides, cannot possibly want the whole thing. So I prefer selling what they want to the company, then buying back from the company what is necessary for the completion of my estate. I think that is clear."

It was very clear to the Councillor, had been quite clear from the first moment, and he had only wanted time to recover from his surprise. The Count's move was a masterly one, which he had never expected from the reckless young man. He was in the strange position of being obliged to curb the ardour which he had so artfully roused.

"Bravo!" said he. "We shall have a skilful director in you. I congratulate ourselves and you in the prospect. At the same time, we will not divide the skin till we have killed the bear. Till now we have been reckoning without one person, who is, however, very powerful--without the Baroness Warnow herself."

"But if she is in the hands of her trustee, and you and Wallbach could get the better of the General---"

"Only till the first of October! From that day, which happens to be her fiftieth birthday, the Baroness, by her husband's will, has a voice amongst the trustees, who then, if you like, become only a committee of management under her."

"And you think that the Baroness will be against our plan?"

"I think that the opinion of the Baroness upon this and every other matter is of infinitely less importance to us than that of Signor Giraldi."

"Her steward?"

"Steward--secretary--companion, I do not know what."

"They say that she is married to him?"

"She will take care not to do that!"

"Why?"

"Because by taking such a step she would lose all right to the estate, which would then fall immediately to Fräulein von Werben and her brother, provided they had not imitated the folly of their aunt in marrying below their rank. Then no one would have any of it except various benevolent institutions."

"I have, as you may imagine, heard all possible and impossible things of that wonderful will. Can you and will you satisfy my curiosity, which now hardly deserves that name?"

"Willingly," said the Councillor. "The slight indiscretion which I shall commit in so doing I will put down to my credit in our accounts; but where shall I begin?"

"At the beginning," said the Count. "I know a great deal--I know very little--I know nothing. You see I am already practising the jargon with some facility. Shall I send for another bottle?"

"Thanks, thanks. I have still another visit before me; but you are right, you must know all now, and I will endeavour to be as brief as possible."

He put his watch which he had just taken out back into his pocket; the Count leaned back in his chair, and began to rock himself, while the Councillor scribbled on a bit of paper, and was silent for a few moments, as if to collect his thoughts.

"You must not expect a private history from me; I could not tell it to you even if I wished, as in regard to the intimate relations and feelings of those concerned, I am no better informed than other people, and I never venture upon the dangerous path of guesses except in general meetings, when the shareholders are very unruly. So I must limit myself to relating the facts in chronological order. Well, you know that the Duchess of --- is a distant relation of our royal family. Fräulein Valerie von Werben, as well as her elder sister, Sidonie, grew up here in Berlin with the Princess. When the Princess married she first took Valerie to her new court, and when the latter also married, she allowed the far less interesting and amusing Sidonie--I think out of charity--to take her place. But that is only by the way.

"Baron Warnow made Fräulein Valerie's acquaintance in ---, where--for in those days we were still courteous enough to send ambassadors even to small courts--he held that office. To see, love, and marry the handsome and clever girl, and to give up his office to be able to devote his whole life to her, was the result of a single impulse. That was in the year 1840.

"From '40 to '43 the young couple lived in Warnow--how? I should be sorry to say positively; but to judge from my knowledge of mankind, at first happily, then less happily, and at last--I infer from the disclosure made me by the Baron in '43--decidedly unhappily. The Baron and I were friends as students; from that time he honoured me with his confidence. I had repeatedly acted as his legal adviser, and so was to a certain extent entitled to receive his confidences, which however never entered into details.

"The Baron wished to try a different matrimonial régime, to travel with his young wife, to see the world. I urgently advised it. They went to London, Paris, and finally to Italy, where however they only stayed a very short time. When they returned the Baron again came to see me; he looked wretched; the perpetual change of place had upset his nerves; he had not been able to stand the climate, and so forth. The truth of the matter was that he was really ill, only that the seat of his illness was less in the stomach and nerves than in the heart; in fact he was jealous, and we may be quite sure not without grounds. At first he seems to have had various suspicions, but they finally concentrated in one person, who alone was named--a certain Gregorio Giraldi, whose acquaintance the Baroness had already made when she was a girl, while he held some subordinate position as secretary or something of the sort to the papal ambassador at the Court of ----. However that may be, they made or renewed acquaintance with Signor Giraldi in Rome. An old impression was revived, or a new intimacy formed, which certainly belonged to the category of 'dangerous,' though at least appearances were kept up, and a ray of hope was left for the miserable husband, or it would have been impossible that he could have given his consent to a second journey to Italy a year later. From this he did not return quite so quickly as from the first, but when he did, it was--alone! The climate had been even worse for his nerves, so that he could not recover from the shock, and in fact never did, but failed for six or seven months, and died in 1845, from a broken heart, as the novels say, or after long suffering from a heart complaint, as it appeared in the obituary announcement.

"Luckily death had left him time to make his will, which it took us an immense time to draw up through the obstinacy of the General, then a major lately married, and the father of two children since dead. Of those now living Ottomar was, if I am not mistaken, born in 1847, and the daughter some years later. From the first moment that the Baron made the acquaintance of his brother-in-law, which as far as I can recollect was about the time of his own betrothal with the sister, he formed the deepest friendship with him--a friendship which matrimonial disturbances the less interfered with that Werben, who from the beginning had sided with his brother-in-law, with his usual determination, held fast to this line of conduct, and in consequence had many a stormy scene with his giddy but tenderly-loved sister. By the first draft of the will he was to inherit everything in trust for his children, while the Baroness only received her legal portion. Werben positively refused the inheritance for himself, but accepted it for his children after long consideration, though with the strangest restrictions. From the very first he had advised and at last obtained that the possibility of marrying again should not be taken from his sister, as this step would help her to return to a proper life, provided that the marriage should be with an equal, and in every way fitting. Upon the equality and other proprieties of this hypothetic second marriage the trustees--Herr von Werben himself, Herr von Wallbach (the father of the present man), and I--had to decide, as well as upon every other detail of the will. If the Baroness made an unequal second marriage against the will of the trustees, she was then reduced at once to her legal portion. If she remained unmarried, then the use of half of the revenues of the estate would be left to her entirely. The other half was to accumulate as capital, deducting a very moderate sum for the education of the General's children, who on their side would receive equal parts of the revenues of the second half on attaining majority, only that the daughter would attain majority upon her marriage, whose propriety and equality were to be decided by the trustees as in the first case. If they, the children, whether son or daughter, contracted an unsuitable marriage, they lost thereby all claim to the succession, and their portion lapsed as if the delinquent were no longer alive.

"To put it shortly: the Baroness and the General's children succeed one another in turns, so that, for instance, if the General's children die or lose their rights in the way I have mentioned, the Baroness becomes sole heiress of the estates and has free disposal of everything, as, on the contrary, either of the other heirs would have free disposal if the Baroness died or forfeited her rights."

"A strange will," said the Count, who had listened with such breathless attention that he had even forgotten to rock himself.

"I am only answerable for the drawing up," answered the Councillor; "the actual provisions are entirely the General's work, who is, by the way, the most conscientious or rather pedantic of men, and with his speeches about uprightness and justice on all sides makes life intolerable to every one. I assure you he might have had the whole thing without any trouble, and now all these restrictions and obstacles! I have mentioned one already which especially for us just now is very important."

"The Baroness taking part in the management?"

"Exactly, which takes place in a few weeks. If we are then in a position to get the Baroness--or her factotum, which comes to the same thing--on our side, we shall certainly have the upper hand, and the General's opposition will be broken down, so far at all events. In any other case--and we must be prepared for such--our beautiful plan of getting the Warnow estates into our own hands is as like a soap-bubble as one egg is like another."

"And you have not once tried to sound the Baroness?" exclaimed the Count in a tone of reproach.

"I thought there would be time enough when the Baroness arrived here for the approaching arrangements for which her actual presence is indispensable. She is already on her way

according to the last letter from Munich, where she proposes to spend this month. But now I will certainly do all I can to persuade her either to come sooner herself, or at least to send her factotum."

"You know this gentleman?"

"Not personally, only through letters. Signor Giraldi is unquestionably a remarkable individual; scholar, diplomatist, artist, and man of business--the latter of the very first rank; a contest with him--à la bonne heure! I would rather have the devil himself as an adversary. But I am wasting time in chatter, though in a very pleasant way."

The Councillor rose; the Count rocked himself again, looking put out.

"You are very kind," said he, "but excuse my observing that I am no wiser than I was before."

"Then excuse my remarking, Count Golm, that I think you are rather ungrateful," replied the Councillor, drawing on his gloves. "I have done more for you than I would for our own shareholders, even if they went down on their knees to me in a body. I have laid before you the actual position of the Berlin-Sundin Railway Company; I have confessed that our only hope is a continuation of the Sundin railway through your island to some harbour which will be, as it were, the head of the serpent; in other words that we can only save our first project by a second, which will be supported by the first. On this point our interests are common, however much apart they may be elsewhere. It is our interest to obtain this continuation, even if that head of the serpent, the harbour, were in the moon, let alone anywhere upon the island, even in the north. Your interests demand that an Eastern terminus should be chosen, to which the railway would run through your whole property. Good. I come to you--offer you, so to say, my outstretched hand, show you the means and the way, how, by some quite possible cleverness, you may set aside all present obstacles which are in your way--remember that, Count Golm--not in ours--for this object put you in possession of a family secret as I did before of a business secret, and finally offer you, if I may so express myself, the hand of a young, handsome, and charming woman, and you tell me that I have come in vain!"

The Councillor took up his hat, but the Count still did not move from his seat.

"It certainly is most ungrateful of me," said he, "but you know no one is pleased with the most agreeable of prospects when he is in such a disagreeable position as I am."

The Councillor slowly brushed the top of his hat round and round with his elbow.

"I am going to make a proposal, Count Golm. We have both spoken warmly; a walk in the cool of the evening will do you good also; take your hat and let me have the honour of taking you with me on my visit."

"Who are you going to see?"

"The contractor of our railway, Herr Philip Schmidt."

The Count raised himself in his chair, and then let himself immediately fall back.

"I hate the name," he said moodily.

"What in all the world has the name to do with the matter?" answered the Councillor; "and really Herr Philip Schmidt will take it as a matter of course that it should be a great honour to him to make the personal acquaintance of Count Golm; and, furthermore, Herr Schmidt is not only a rich but a rising man, and, as our contractor, is very intimate with our banker, Herr Hugo Lübbener, who is also Count Golm's banker--enfin, the most appropriate individual to arrange a temporary difficulty for the Count, or if as I can fancy this way would not suit him, to enable him to settle the various accounts with Lübbener in the most speedy manner."

"But one cannot storm a man's very door," cried the Count; "you must at least make some excuse for me."

"That is easily done," said the Councillor; "Herr Schmidt is the happy possessor of one of our finest private picture-galleries. Count Golm's passion for art is well known; what more natural than that Count Golm should call upon Herr Schmidt, as Herr Schmidt, with the best will in the world, cannot bring his gallery to the Count's hotel?"

"Only that nine o'clock in the evening is perhaps not the best hour for such a purpose," said the Count, looking at the clock.

"For what purpose were reflectors invented?" answered the Councillor, smiling.

"I will go with you!" exclaimed the Count, springing up.

The Councillor coughed behind his hat, and thus happily hid the smile that played about his broad, beardless lip.

"After all it will not do," said the Count. "I promised Herr von Werben----"

"The Lieutenant?"

"Of course, to be at home; he wished to fetch me at ten o'clock, to take me I do not know where."

"Herr von Werben would not think much of such an obstacle," said the Councillor, with well-acted repressed impatience; "write on a card that you are at So-and-so's, and beg him to come and fetch you."

"But he does not know this man!"

"Yes, he does; I happen to know it from Herr Schmidt himself."

The Count had rung for his servant to give him his hat and gloves. The two gentlemen went towards the door.

"If only his name were not Schmidt," said the Count, standing still.

"What a strange mania! all great men are afflicted with something of the sort!--After you, Count Golm."

"Not at all! I am at home here!"

And the gentlemen left the room.

## CHAPTER XV.

Philip walked impatiently up and down his study, then seated himself at his writing-table, touched the spring of a secret drawer, and took out the Councillor's note, really only to assure himself that he had not mistaken the hour, but then as he had the letter in his hand, besides having nothing to do, he read it through as carefully as if it were for the first time:

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"The Count is of the greatest importance to us, though you seem always to have underrated him. The fact of his being over head and ears in debt is in my eyes only one more chance for us--we shall get him all the cheaper; and have him we must. The loss caused by Prince Prora's positive refusal to be one of the promoters, and taking part only as an ordinary shareholder, can only be met by the Count's siding with us. We must positively have a noble name to support us. You do not understand the insular feelings. The bell-wether must first jump over, and then, of course, the whole flock follow. You must provide a bait for the bell-wether; that is to say, in figures: you or Lübbener must advance fifty thousand thalers, which I know he is in great need of; then a promise of a tolerably big lump in case the Eastern Railway comes to anything--a case which is almost impossible; thirdly, to balance the fifty thousand and the big lump--a promise on his side to become a director of a Northern Railway. I will fire all these mines this evening, and bring him, with some excuse which I will notify on entering. Lübbener must be there too; or, still better, come later--quite by accident, of course! Should I still find the Count, contrary to my expectations, obstinate and quite disinclined to take the first step, I will break up the interview at nine o'clock, and come alone.

"P.S.--Get hold of young Werben. It is an expensive friendship, I know; but we must not shrink from cost now, and must encourage the relations between the Count and the Werbens in every way. It would be capital if you could serve him up this evening to us as dessert. But you must not openly invite him; and I beg you, above all things, to keep in mind that the whole thing throughout must have an appearance of accident and impromptu--you will understand that!"

Philip laughed to himself as he shut up the letter.

"I think I do understand it," said he; "but"--and he cast a glance at the clock--"if they do not come soon, all my beautiful arrangements may go to the devil."

He was about to rise impatiently, when the door-bell rang. He immediately seized some papers which he had laid ready on purpose, took up his pen, and was deeply engrossed in writing when

the servant announced Count Golm and Councillor Schieler.

"Beg the gentlemen to come in," said Philip over his shoulder, bending again over the paper and scribbling away.

The servant had already opened the door for the two gentlemen. Philip threw down his pen, rose hastily, and passing his hand over his forehead, said:

"I beg you a thousand pardons! I had hoped to finish the thing--the report, you know, Herr Schieler. Count Golm, I consider myself happy."

"We disturb you, my dear fellow," said the Councillor; "but I have been saying so much about your beautiful gallery to Count Golm, and he is here for such a short time----"

"But quite long enough to be able to return at a more convenient hour," said the Count.

"I would not let you go on any account," exclaimed Philip; "there is no such hurry about this business."

"But we are keeping you from something else."

"From nothing more interesting or agreeable, Count Golm. I give you my word, I happened to have nothing for to-night--positively nothing. I think, any way, I should have stayed at home."

The Councillor shook his finger at him.

"Upon my honour, Herr Schieler." Philip rang the bell. "Light the lamps in the drawing-room and in the dining-room. And Count Golm, Councillor Schieler, will you do me the honour to join me in my bachelor supper? Now, that is most kind of you; so put three places, Johann."

"No ceremony, I beg!" said the Count.

"None, I assure you. May I show you the way?"

The servants had opened the folding-doors into the drawing-room.

"You seem to have some beautiful things here," said the Count, standing and looking round the exquisite little study.

"A few trifles, Count Golm, such as a man likes to have round him."

"But that is a Vautier," said the Count, stopping before a picture. "Do you call that a trifle?"

"Only from its size. I have a larger picture of his in the next room. And this little Scheurenberg ought to please you; at least, it is very much praised by connoisseurs."

"Charming--quite charming!" said the Count. "And this exquisite water-colour--Passini, of course?"

"The office of showman is easy with Count Golm," said Philip to the Councillor.

"It runs a little in my family," said the Count. "My great-grandfather was a celebrated collector, also my father. You must some day come and see my small gallery at Golm."

"I only wish that you would give me an opportunity!"

"Is an invitation opportunity enough?"

Philip bowed. "I shall not fail, Count Golm."

"This autumn, I hope? Do you shoot?"

"Oh yes!"

"Then you will not lack amusement when you come to Golm."

"That I am certain of, in the company of the possessor of Golm."

The Count bowed. Philip turned to the servants who at that moment entered the room.

"How provoking! They have just let in a man who wants to see me for a few minutes on important business."

"I can only repeat my request," said the Count.

"And I protest again against your kind consideration, which is really quite unnecessary. I shall only be a minute."

Philip led the two gentlemen to the drawing-room, and shut the doors after him.

"Pleasant sort of fellow, this Herr Schmidt," said the Count.

"Is not he?" answered the Councillor. "This time your prejudices were at fault."

"It is not a prejudice. I made the acquaintance of a man of that name a few days ago--even had to entertain him at my own table--who was most objectionable to me."

The Councillor had heard from his friend the General an account of the circumstance, which had taken place at Golmberg, before he met the Count, and knew well enough whom the Count honoured with his dislike, and also in what relationship Reinhold stood to Philip. But why tell the Count that, and spoil his good humour? The Count cast a glance of astonishment through the splendid room, whose almost over-crowded pictures and magnificent furniture glittered in the light of chandelier and candelabra.

"But this is princely," said he.

"And still it is only a faint shadow of the splendour that the man has decked his new house in the Wilhelmstrasse with. It is all ready, except a few details; but will not, I think, be open before next spring. He must show it to you; you would delight in it."

"I don't know," answered the Count; "this luxury has something overpowering in the eyes of one of us."

"On the contrary, I should say something encouraging," said the Councillor. "When people with no name, or rather with such a name! without connections, without help from home--Herr Schmidt is by trade only a builder--bring matters to such a result, what is there in the world unattainable to such men as you who have such enormous advantages of birth, connections, and influence, provided that you free yourselves from certain very respectable prejudices and set to work heart and soul as these people do."

"And what has this man got to show that is so remarkable?"

"In the first place his intelligence, inventive genius and energy; in the second, certain lucky speculations in houses and lands, of which the crowning point is certainly the starting of our railway."

"Now it is quite clear to me why your shareholders are always lamenting so loudly that you build so extravagantly," said the Count, with a sarcastic smile.

"What do the poor devils understand about it?" answered the Councillor; "if they settled matters we should have to take the roasted chestnuts out of the fire without getting anything for it."

"Then there is fire?"

"Before which a man in his old age may warm his knees with much pleasure!"

And the Councillor waved his hand towards all the magnificence around them. The Count laughed, the Councillor himself thought that a smile was allowable. Philip came out of his study and shut the door behind him.

"I hope you will not mind," said he in a low voice, turning to the Count, "but I thoughtlessly mentioned your name, and my business friend begged so earnestly----"

"Who is it?" said the Count.

"Herr Hugo Lübbener."

The Count changed colour slightly and cast a quick furtive glance at the Councillor, who however met it unmoved.

"My banker," said the Count.

"He did not tell me that!" cried Philip; "then certainly I may venture."

"I shall be very happy," said the Count rather crossly.

"This all fits in wonderfully," whispered the Councillor to him, while Philip called through the door which he had left open into the study.

"Come in, you most discreet of men! I should have thought that the firm stood so well with the Count----"

"As well as the Count stands with the firm!" said Herr Hugo Lübbener as he came in. "Excuse my freedom, Count Golm, seeing you have not honoured me."

"Why, I assure you, I have not had time yet," exclaimed the Count, taking in the tips of his fingers the hand which Herr Lübbener offered somewhat timidly. "A world of business----"



"We can understand that, living in the business world as we do, can we not, Councillor?" said Herr Lübbener. "But now that I have had the honour and pleasure I will not stay a moment longer."

And he moved to the door; the Count glanced at the Councillor, who lifted his eyebrows.

"You are not going on my--our account, Herr Lübbener," said the Count; "we are here to admire the splendid collection of our kind host."

"Whose greatest admirer and appreciator is Herr Lübbener himself," put in the Councillor.

"Because I possess a few good things?" said Herr Lübbener. "Why, by Jove! a man must patronise art or at least the artists nowadays. Our friend Schmidt always fishes the best things away under our noses. Yesterday this Riefstahl was in Lepke's window, now of course it hangs here. What did you give for it?"

"What do you think?"

"Not more than half, I am sure."

Philip laughed as if he heard the old stockbroker joke for the first time; the Councillor cackled hoarsely like an old hen in rainy weather; the Count appeared highly amused.

"What would you have?" said he; "such a picture is really invaluable."

Philip turned the light of the reflector upon the picture, which now showed all its beauty for the first time.

"Really magnificent!" said the Count.

He had stepped a little nearer so that he himself was in the light of the lamp. The appearance of the Count standing there in the full light seemed to have something peculiarly comic for the three other men who were standing a little back. They glanced quickly at each other, and each face wore a malicious smile. The Councillor laid his finger on his long nose; Philip bit his lip.

"I have a Hildebrandt here," said he, "which I consider may be called the gem of my collection."

"At all events it is in his best style," said the Count.

They went from picture to picture, criticising and naming great artists, and not less great sums, till Philip, foreseeing danger to his plans, grew impatient.

"I do not know why," said he, "but nothing seems so good as usual to-day."

"It was just the same with me when I was a boy, I always thought my exercises were faultless till they came into the master's hands," said the Councillor.

"You really make too much of my small powers of criticising," said the Count in his best humour. "Why! are we not at the end yet?"

They were at the door of the dining-room, which the servants at that moment opened.

"You will find a few more pictures here," said Philip, "but before you look at them I must beg you to take some supper."

"Or the oysters will be cold," said Herr Lübbener.

"I begged there might be no ceremony," said the Count reproachfully as he took his place at table with the others.

"Not at all, Count Golm; the servants got the oysters from the nearest restaurant--and there is always a chicken to be found in a bachelor's kitchen."

"Long live the bachelors!" said the Councillor, lifting his glass.

"But how are they to do it?" cried Philip, swallowing an oyster.

"From hand to mouth!" said Herr Lübbener, who was busy in the same way.

"For heaven's sake, Lübbener!" cried Philip, "if you have no pity for us, at least spare Count Golm!"

"I think I can appreciate a good joke as well as the rest of you," said the Count.

"Listen to that!" exclaimed Herr Lübbener. "Come, Schmidt, forget your vexation! The fact is I came to tell him that with the best will in the world, I cannot allot him shares in the New Kaiserin-Königin for more than about a hundred thousand."

"If you say another word about business you shall not have a drop more of my Chablis," cried Philip.

"I was just going to ask for a glass of Bordeaux," answered Herr Lübbener.

The Councillor laughed aside to the Count, and shrugged his shoulders as though to say, "Boys will be boys! they go on like that all day." The Count returned the smile most courteously.

"At Rome one must do as the Romans do," said he. "I confess it would interest me very much to learn something authentic about the Kaiserin-Königin Iron Company which is so much talked about now."

The Count had given the signal; he could not be surprised that for the next half hour nothing was talked but business, in fact he was so interested and excited, that he drank glass after glass, while the blood mounted to his forehead. They went from the Kaiserin-Königin Company to the Lower Saxony Engine Manufactories; from that to the North Berlin Railway, and so arrived at the Berlin Sundin Railway. The other men were able to give him the most interesting details of the history of this railway, which after so glorious a beginning now stood on the verge of bankruptcy in the eyes of people who did not know that the stock had been artificially kept down in order to buy back the shares, shares which as soon as the concession for the construction of the railway was obtained, would rise like a Phoenix from the ashes.

Would Count Golm take any shares? Now was just the right moment! He had no spare money? Nonsense! Money had nothing to do with the matter. How much did the Count want--fifty thousand, a hundred thousand, a hundred and fifty? The Count had only to name the sum. It would be no gift to him. The statement that he would eventually be one of the directors of the Island Railway would be worth fifty thousand amongst friends!

"Take care that I do not take you at your word!" exclaimed the Count.

"Take care that we do not take you at your word!" answered Philip.

"By Jove! let us take each other at our word!" exclaimed Herr Lübbener.

"Had we not better put it in writing?" asked the Councillor.

"Are we not carrying the joke a little too far?" said the Count, with an uncertain, inquiring glance at the last speaker, who answered it with an encouraging smile.

But the right moment it seemed was past. For the first time there was a pause, which Philip assumed to think was caused by a servant bringing him a waiter, on which lay two visiting cards, and whispering something as he stood near him.

"Can't I have a moment to myself? Well, what is it?"

He took the cards from the waiter and broke into a laugh.

"This is a good joke!"

"May I ask what?"

"I hardly dare say, Count Golm, for fear of damaging my reputation as a serious man in the eyes of my friends here. I can show the cards to a man of the world."

"Then let us see the cards," said Herr Lübbener.

The Councillor looked astonished.

"Herr von Werben could not send in two cards!"

"But, good heavens!" exclaimed the Count, "don't let the ladies wait in the anteroom."

"Oh no. Ladies!" exclaimed Herr Lübbener.

"Two friends who are sometimes good enough to look in after the opera, or rather the ballet, to have a little supper," explained Philip. "I assure you, Lübbener, not what you are thinking of, so leave off grimacing, and imitate the deportment of our worthy friend the Councillor."

"Splendid fellow!" whispered the Councillor in Herr Lübbener's ear, as the gentlemen rose.

"He outdoes himself to-day," whispered Herr Lübbener in return.

Philip went to meet the two ladies, who stood in the doorway with well-acted dismay.

"Prisoners!" said he; "there is no use in resisting. Be reasonable!"

He seized them by the hands and drew them into the room.

"Permit me, Count Golm, to present you to Fräulein Victorine, the most beautiful mezzo-

soprano that female throat can produce,--Fräulein Bertalda, called 'The Incomprehensible,' because no one can comprehend how she can jump so high off such little feet."

"You are intolerable!" said Victorine.

"For shame!" said Bertalda. "And give us something to eat instead, if you really won't let us go away again at once!"

"I will have another table laid," cried Philip. "Johann!"

"We will sit closer," said the Count, himself bringing a chair for Victorine, whose luxuriant beauty had delighted him from the very first moment. Bertalda seated herself opposite, between Philip and Herr Lübbener; two fresh places were laid in a moment; the Count had now nothing to say against champagne, which at first he had declined. He was already a little the worse for drink, and was the less likely to notice that the fumes were getting into his head; that since the entrance of these lively young ladies the tone of the party had become freer, and very soon got rather wild. It no longer surprised him that the young men called each other by their Christian names, to say nothing of familiar nicknames, such as "old fellow!" and "old boy!" and even the Councillor himself became a "dear old Councillor," and he thought it capital fun when Victorine drank off a full glass to Bertalda, saying, "Here's a bumper to you, Bertie!" and Bertalda replied, "Right you are, Vicky!" Presently they all moved from their places, and the Count seized the opportunity to seat himself by Bertalda, whose beautiful and, as he thought, inviting eyes deserved this response. Victorine pretended to be very jealous, and, to the intense delight of the other gentlemen, exclaimed, "Ungrateful man! he has forsaken me! Ungrateful!" while Bertalda, by her fascinating airs and graces, and other gestures, showed that she meant to keep the captive knight fast in her net. The Count, thinking it necessary to support the beauty in her part, put his arm round her--a spirited idea--which was loudly applauded by the company, when Bertalda suddenly sprang up from her chair with a slight shriek, and hastened forward to meet a gentleman, who had entered unperceived by the rest.

"Is it possible? No! is it possible? Herr von Werben--Ot----"

"Are you mad!"

The girl dropped her uplifted arms; the others had risen to greet Ottomar, whose apologies for coming so late were hardly heard amidst the din of voices which arose on all sides. A lecture at a military society which he had to assist at, endless discussions afterwards--his throat was dry with learned dust, pray let him have a glass of wine!

He tossed down the wine, certainly not the first glass he had drunk that evening; a gloomy fire shone in his beautiful eyes; he tried to drown memory in drink, and even if he could not accomplish that, in a few minutes he was the wildest of the wild. The Count, for his part, felt easier in the society of another man of his own rank, who, in passing him, whispered sarcastically in his ear, "Le roi s'amuse!" and proceeded to set him so good an example. They laughed, they sang, they romped; the young ladies' overflow of fun had hardly any limits. Being in the society of promoters, they would just like to know what promoters were? How did people promote? They would play at being promoters!

"Let the ladies form themselves into a provisional board!" cried Philip.

"But as an unlimited liability company, if I may venture to advise," said Herr Lübbener.

"Under the title of Love and Wine," said the Councillor.

"I propose as solicitor Councillor Schieler," cried the Count, who was not going to be behindhand.

The motion was carried with applause.

The Councillor accepted the honour with thanks, and began to draw up the prospectus of the company, in which the others helped, and each tried to outdo the rest in suggestions. The plan was of a railroad to the moon, with a proviso for a continuation of the line to the Great Bear as soon as the man in the moon should have converted his last silver crescent into cash. Philip proposed that the capital should be seven thousand million fixed stars; at which the company's lawyer thought it necessary to observe that this word might arouse an unpleasant connection of ideas on the Stock Exchange; would not "comets" inspire more confidence? But then it must be ten thousand million, as too many false ones were in circulation, which even in the weights could not be distinguished from falling stars. The ten millions were immediately subscribed. Ottomar and Bertalda, who subscribed for the smallest sums, were not permitted the honour of being amongst the directors, who were grouped at one end of the table, but had to take their places as mere shareholders at the other end. The Count was to be chairman, with Victorine as deputy. The Count protested that Victorine ought to be president; they argued, they fought, they quarrelled in due form. Bertalda seized the opportunity to draw Ottomar away from the table to a sofa close by.

"Why have you not been to see me for a year, Ottomar?"

"I am going to be married, my dear child."

"Have you got another love?"

"I have not got another love."

"Why are there clouds then on your beautiful brow? why do you look so sad, darling Ottomar?"

"Dear Bertalda!"

"Am I that indeed? Do you still love me a very little?"

"Yes! yes!"

"Then"--she threw her arm round his neck and, putting her mouth close to his ear, whispered a few words just as a roar of laughter came from the table. Ottomar sprang up. "They are calling us." The girl sank in the corner, and with closed eyes waited for his return and his answer, with her full lips pouting for a kiss.

She looked up and passed her hand over her heated eyes; what had happened? Ottomar was no longer in the room; perhaps he was in the anteroom? She stole in on tiptoe. Herr von Werben had taken his hat and coat and left the house. "Bah!" said the girl, "I must not make a fuss about it, I must laugh!" And she laughed madly as she sat down again at the table where Ottomar's disappearance was scarcely observed, and the others laughed wildly at a speech in which the Councillor, with wonderful dry humour, gave the health of the members of the committee, the first subscribers, the legal adviser and directors of the Earth, Moon, and Great Bear Railway, with double and treble honours, in case any of them should act in a double or treble capacity.

"The next step of respectable promoters will be made, according to all experience, behind the scenes," said Philip with a cynical smile, holding his glass out to the Count.

"In the green-room, in fact," replied the Count, casting a side-glance at Victorine.

"Long live the green-room!" cried Hugo Lübbener.

"Behind the scenes for me," said the Councillor.

The glasses rang together, the riot of mirth rose higher and higher, and finally overwhelmed the last remnants of propriety and good manners.

## **BOOK III.**

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### **CHAPTER I.**

The General was working in his study; Aunt Sidonie was probably writing her "Court Etiquette;" Ottomar had not yet returned from parade; Elsa had fulfilled her household duties, had dressed herself, and had now time, before breakfast, to read Meta's letters.

This morning two had again arrived together. Elsa had put them unread into her pocket when they were given to her, knowing that Meta's letters were not of pressing importance. She had now gone into the garden, and was strolling under the tall trees near the wall of the Schmidts' garden, her favourite walk, and with a smile on her face was deciphering one of the letters, the first she had put her hand upon; it did not generally signify in what order they were read. It was no easy task; Meta wrote a characteristic but not a particularly legible hand. Each letter stood by itself without reference to its neighbours on the right or left, and all had a decided objection to the horizontal, and either ran gaily up to the height above or drooped sadly towards the lower

regions which belonged properly to the next line. Interspersed amongst them were strange hieroglyphics resembling swords or lances, which were probably meant for stops, but as they were never to be found where they were expected, and, indeed, in their superabundant zeal frequently appeared in the middle of a word, they rather increased than lessened the confusion.

Elsa at length made out the following:

"Cruel one! I understand all now, I may say for the first time in my life; and you--you yourself, your last letter--oh! that last letter! When men are silent stones will talk; if after five long anxious days the unhopèd-for, unexpected meeting with the man she appeared to love, only gives the proud Elsa matter for a humorous description of that very meeting, poor Meta may dare to hope, does hope, and--loves! Yes, she loves--loves him whom you scorn, whom you coldly turn your back upon because the skirts of a princess have touched yours! You will say that this is pity--not love! But are not pity and love twin sisters! Yes, I have suffered with him, I still suffer with him; I see his honest blue eyes swimming with tears, I see those tears falling persistently and slowly down the sunburnt cheeks into the curly beard; but the last tear--the very last--before it vanishes in the clouds of tender melancholy, I will myself wipe away--yes, I! I have made up my mind. To-morrow morning papa shall have the horses put to--to-morrow evening you will see the face of one who pities you but is determined not to spare you the indignant countenance of his avenger and of your too happy

"META."

The second letter was as follows:

"You will not see it! Beloved, adored Elsa, forgive me! now in the depth of night, when all is still, so still that I can hear the blood coursing through my temples, and I start if our Castor barks in the courtyard; if an apple, which I had forgotten, or which I could not reach, rustles through the dry leaves of the tree in front of my window and falls to the ground--they still look wonderful, but are all rotten--now, only when I read your letter for the second time, do I understand it, and perceive the earnest, sorrowful tone that pierces through the hollow ring of your mirth. One word has made all clear to me; one single, deep, heartfelt word, so deep and so heartfelt as can come only from the heart and the pen of my Elsa. You write: 'He walked up the gallery, the Princess spoke to me very graciously, as was apparent from her smiles and the kind tone of her soft voice; but I confess, to my shame, that her first words were Hebrew to me.' To your shame?--Elsa--Elsa! to mine, to my deepest, most heart-rending shame! Oh, heavens! what does not lie under that one word 'Hebrew!'" Your grief, your sorrow, your penitence, your love! Well, then, love him! I resign him; I must do so! and my visit to you also. Papa cannot, as it happens, let me have the horses to-morrow, because he must send his fat sheep to Prora, and mamma wants to make plum-jam. Let me weep and sob out my sorrow in solitude and plum-jam, and keep a little love for your too unhappy

"META."

"What absurd nonsense!" said Elsa.

But she did not laugh, but said it, on the contrary, very gravely; read the scrawl again very carefully, and only dropped the letters into her pocket when Aunt Sidonie appeared through the door of the room which opened into the garden and came down the steps towards her.

"I must rest a little," said Sidonie.

"How far have you got?" asked Elsa.

"To an extremely difficult chapter--to the marriage festivities. Malortie leaves me altogether in the dark upon this point. The examples which he gives on page 181 of the second volume, give an immense amount of information, but only of use for the chamberlains at great courts: 'Marriage of their late Majesties'--à la bonne heure! 'Programme of the marriage by proxy of his Majesty the King Don Pedro of Portugal and Algarve'----"

"Who did he marry?" asked Elsa.

Sidonie, who was walking by her side with her hands behind her back, stood still in astonishment.

"Child! child! is it possible? You read me that chapter yourself only yesterday evening. I have been lying awake and racking my brains over it all night, and you have forgotten that his Highness's illustrious bride was the Princess Stephanie of Hohenzollem-Sigmaringen? But the fact is, that you take no interest in my work; you do not, or will not, understand what an immense

benefit a really comprehensive complete book on ceremonial, suited to small courts, would be! Well, well, child, I am not angry with you. You have never had much to do with such matters; how should you be expected to understand their importance, though you do now and then suggest very useful ideas on some of the most difficult points! Now imagine this: at the wedding of his late Majesty two Lieutenant-Generals, Herr von Brauchitsch and Herr von Kessel, who stood at the two ends of the table, carved the dishes, gave them to the footmen standing behind them, these to the pages, and from the latter they were received by the lords and gentlemen in waiting. That is all very well, but how are two Lieutenant-Generals to be found at a small court such as ours was?"

"Then take two Lieutenants," said Elsa.

"Capital!" said Sidonie. "That--no, that will not do! What would become of precedence if I began with Lieutenants? But you are not listening."

"Indeed I am, aunt. I was only thinking that this very evening we shall have two Lieutenant-Generals here, and that I should much prefer a few Lieutenants. We really have too few dancing men."

"Ottomar can bring some of his brother officers; besides, there are not so very few. There is Count Golm, who told me he was passionately fond of dancing; there is Tettritz, there is Schönau--he says he has given up dancing, but that cannot be allowed in a Second Captain. There is----"

Her aunt named half a dozen names, but not the only one which Elsa wished to hear.

Elsa was stooping over the trellis which ran along the wall between the two great elm-trees.

"And Captain Schmidt, has he refused?"

"I did not send him the invitation, my dear child."

"You did not send it!"

Elsa started up quickly; her expressive face showed surprise and annoyance.

"How can you excite yourself so over such a trifle, my dear child? It occurred to me, just as I was giving the letters to August, that we are going to give another party in a few weeks, to which we must invite Major Müller and some of that set; the Captain can be asked with them."

"But why should he be!" exclaimed Elsa; "I remember that evening at Golmberg, when, without intending it, he was almost the only speaker at the table, and gave Count Golm besides a lesson which it is to be hoped he has not forgotten."

"That is exactly what decided me," said Sidonie; "just that warm discussion which you and your papa told me of between the two gentlemen--the two gentlemen, you hear, Elsa, I make no distinction of rank. We are giving a party in honour of the Count, and as a return for the civilities he showed you. Would it be courteous, would it be becoming, to invite at the same time a gentleman--mark that, Elsa--a gentleman with whom he has had at his own table--tranchons le mot!--an altercation!"

"But he deserved the lesson."

"And I suppose is to have a repetition of it here."

"That he certainly will not. Captain Schmidt is courtesy itself."

Sidonie stopped in her walk, her good-natured eyes looked almost sharply into Elsa's face, which was flushed with the warmth of the dispute.

"If I could not see into your heart, Elsa, as clearly as in a looking-glass, I really should not know how to explain the perverseness which leads you to praise the courtesy of a simple merchant-captain at the expense of your aunt's. Child, child, do not you bring sorrow on your dear papa, who already takes such a gloomy view of life; and on your aunt, who lives only for her 'Court Etiquette' and for you."

"I do not understand what you mean, aunt," answered Elsa, blushing up to the roots of her hair.

"Nor I either, thank God," answered Sidonie, wiping her eyes; "only I get so anxious when I see your papa so out of spirits, as he was this morning when he gave me Aunt Valerie's letter; he never answers her letters himself, although this last one is really so touchingly humble, that I shall find it very difficult to be severe with her again."

"How can one be severe with a person who is so unhappy as you say Aunt Valerie is?"

"Child, you cannot understand," answered Sidonie; "you must trust to your papa and me. There are things which can never be forgiven."

"Not even if one is sorry for them, as Aunt Valerie evidently is? Is it only a brother who is to be forgiven until seventy times seven, and not a sister also?"

This was another of Elsa's terrible ideas which Sidonie did not know how to meet. Her kind eyes looked around as if seeking for help, and rested at last on the trellis, where they wandered up and down.

"At last I have got it into order," she exclaimed: "see, Elsa, for the last three days the bed has not been trodden down nor the leaves torn off the trellis. It is only a wild vine, but it was beginning to look so pretty; August swore he did not do it; but how can one believe people? Well, I have gained my object."

"It is wonderfully quiet over there to-day," said Elsa.

"I wish to heaven it were always so," answered the aunt.

"Even the manufactory chimney is not smoking," continued Elsa. "Good heavens! I have only just remarked it. I hope no misfortune has happened! Have you heard anything, August!"

August, who came to call the ladies to breakfast, was astonished that the ladies had not heard of it. Herr Schmidt had dismissed twenty or thirty men last Thursday, because they--with respect be it said--were Socialists and Communists; and the rest, who are not much better, seized the opportunity and demanded from Herr Schmidt enormous wages. Well, Herr Schmidt of course turned off the ringleaders, and they came back with the others in great crowds to murder Herr Schmidt, when the Captain, who was at Golmberg with the General and Fräulein Elsa, stood in the doorway and--did you not see?--pulled out a pair of pistols; and they all took to their heels and went on strike, as they call it, when they do not work, and drink schnaps. Since yesterday evening there has not been so much as a cat in the entire building, and the workmen at the other marbleworks have also struck, to keep them company. And they say it will cost Herr Schmidt several thousand thalers a day, and that he will soon have to give in; but I don't believe that, for Herr Schmidt, as the ladies know, is A 1."

"Shocking!" said Sidonie, shaking her head; "such near neighbours! I warned your papa when he bought the house. It really is not safe. And people like that are to be invited!"

Elsa did not answer. When the servant mentioned Reinhold, her tell-tale heart beat rapidly, and she had involuntarily felt for the compass which, since their last meeting at the Exhibition, she had always carried in her pocket, that she might return it to him at the first opportunity. Her aunt's observation had filled her with speechless indignation. But when, a few minutes later, she sat opposite to her father at the breakfast-table, she asked him, to Sidonie's great dismay, without further preparation, if he had heard what had happened to the Schmidts; and that Herr Schmidt and the Captain had been apparently in danger of their lives; and should not Ottomar go to-day and return the Captain's visit, the rather that her aunt had postponed to the following week the invitation she had already written him?

"Certainly!" answered the General; "Ottomar shall take the invitation himself. I want to speak to the Captain, and quite reckoned upon seeing him this evening."

Elsa cast down her eyes to avoid seeing the flush of embarrassment which she felt sure must cover her aunt's cheeks at that moment.

"Has my son returned?" asked the General of the servant.

"The Lieutenant has just returned from parade, and has gone to his room to dress." The General commissioned the ladies to inform Ottomar of his wishes with regard to the visit and the invitation, and to tell him that there was a letter for him on his writing-table; he had to attend a board, and was already a few minutes late: he begged them not to disturb themselves on his account.

The General rose, made a stately bow to the ladies, and left the room. He had, contrary to his custom, eaten scarcely anything, and appeared absent and gloomy. This had not escaped Elsa; but she did not venture to ask any questions, any more than she ventured now to ask her aunt what she was thinking of, as she silently and with unwonted energy picked the last remnant of meat from an unlucky wing of chicken. She knew too well that it was not "the difficult chapter" in the "Court Etiquette." Fortunately Ottomar soon appeared; but neither did he bring cheerfulness: the Major had again been unbearable--the same evolution over and over again; he had blown up the officers after the parade as if they had been school-boys; it was unbearable, he was sick of the whole business; he had rather throw it all up at once.

Elsa thought the opportunity a bad one for troubling her brother, while he was so put out, with the commission which lay so near her heart, and was glad that her aunt did not start the subject, as she had feared. But the letter which was awaiting him on his father's table could not be delayed.

"Why was not the letter brought to my room?" said Ottomar to the servant, raising his eyebrows.

"I know nothing about it, sir," answered August.

Ottomar had already laid aside his napkin, and was rising, but now said: "I dare say it is not very important; will you hand me that dish, Elsa? I am as hungry as a wolf."

All the same he hardly touched the food, but poured out successively several glasses of wine, which he drank down quickly.

"I am too thirsty to eat," he said; "perhaps I shall have a better appetite an hour hence. Shall we leave the table?"

He pushed back his chair, and went to the door leading to his father's study, but stopped a moment on the way and passed his hand over his forehead and eyes. "That confounded parade," he said; "it would make the strongest man nervous."

He was gone; his behaviour had struck Elsa painfully. She could not believe that the parade was the sole cause of his bad spirits: he had borne the same wearisome duties easily enough before. But for some time past he had seemed changed: his cheerful spirits and good humour had vanished; in the last few days especially she had been struck by his gloomy, disturbed manner. She thought she knew what was the cause, and had determined more than once to speak to him about it. It was wrong not to have done so, and now it was perhaps too late.

Elsa thought over all this while again walking in her favourite haunt in the garden; she was too much excited to undertake any of her usual occupations. Perhaps Ottomar would come into the garden too; or she might call him when he left his father's room, the door of which she could see through the open door of the dining-room.

He stayed long, as it seemed to her impatience. Perhaps he was answering the letter at his father's table; but at last he emerged, buttoning his uniform, and came into the garden; he had no doubt seen her in the walk under the trees.

He had not observed her. With head bare and eyes cast down, still fingering the buttons of his coat, he came slowly towards her. His handsome face was dark as night, in spite of the bright sunlight which shone upon it; Elsa saw how his lips trembled and quivered.

"In heaven's name! what is the matter, Ottomar?"

"How you startled me!"

"And you me still more! What has happened, Ottomar? I implore you to tell me! Is it the letter? --a challenge?"

"Or a sentence of death, perhaps? Nothing of importance--a registered letter which my father received for me."

"An unimportant letter--registered! But if it is not the letter, it is what has for so long worried and absorbed you. How do matters stand between you and Carla, Ottomar!"

"Between me and Carla? What an extraordinary question! How should matters stand between oneself and a lady to whom one will shortly be betrothed?"

"Ottomar, look me in the face. You do not love Carla!"

Ottomar tried to meet her glance, but was not quite successful. "You are silly," he said, with an embarrassed smile; "those are girlish fancies."

"And is not Carla a girl? And do you not think that she has fancies too?--that she has pictured to herself the happiness that she hopes for at your side?--that for her, as for every other girl, this happiness can only exist with love, and that she, that you both will be unhappy if this love is absent on one side or the other, or on both? Do you not believe this?"

"I do not believe a word of it," said Ottomar.

He looked at his sister now and smiled; but his eyes were fixed and hard, and his sad yet ironical smile cut Elsa to the heart.

"And yet?" she said sadly.

"And yet! Look here, my dear child; the matter is very simple. I require for my own expenses, and to pay off the debts that I was obliged to incur before I came into the enjoyment of my fortune this spring, ten thousand thalers a year. My income is, as you know, in consequence of the absurdly small rents on the property, five thousand. Carla has five thousand a year; the two together make ten thousand. Therefore I mean to marry her, and the sooner the better."

"In order to pay your debts?"

"Simply in order to live; for this--this everlasting dependence, this everlasting concealment about nothing at all--because everything is known, after all--this--this----"



The words would not come; he trembled all over. Elsa had never seen him so. Her limbs trembled also; but she was determined to do what she thought her duty--what she had never so clearly recognised as her duty till that moment.

"Dear Ottomar," said she, "I do not ask if you really require such a frightful amount of money. Papa has often told us----"

"That when he was a lieutenant, he managed upon eighteen thalers a month. For heaven's sake, no more of that! Times were different then. My father was in the Line; I am in the Guards; and he and I--are like the Antipodes."

"Very well. I take it for granted that you require as much as you say. In three years I shall also be of age, and shall then have five thousand thalers; I will gladly give them to you, if----"

"I am not married by that time.' Is that what you meant to say?"

"I will not marry then. I--I will never marry."

She could not any longer keep back her tears, which now streamed from her eyes. Ottomar put his arm round her.

"You dear, good Elsa," said he. "I really do believe that you are capable of it; but do you not see that it would be a thousand times more hateful to save oneself at the cost of a sister whom one dearly loves, than at the cost of a woman whom one does not love certainly, but who very probably does not wish to be loved?"

"But, Ottomar, that--that is just it," exclaimed Elsa, drying her tears. "Why marry Carla, of whom I cannot say that she is incapable of loving; who, indeed, I am persuaded, does love you at this moment, in her way? But her way is not your way; and that you would soon find out, even if you yourself loved her, which you avowedly do not. You are not suited to one another. With the one exception that, in spite of her short sight, she rides well and is passionately fond of it, I do not know a single interest that you have in common. Her music--that is to say, her Wagner music--about which she is so enthusiastic, is hateful to you; her books, which I am convinced she very often does not understand herself, you will never look at; and it is the same on every subject. And the worst of all is, that what she understands by love is not what you understand by it. You have--say what you will, and brilliant man of society as you are, and I hope always will be--a tender, kind heart, which longs to beat against a heart of the same nature. Carla's love is, I fear, too much mixed with vanity, lies too much on the glittering, sparkling surface of life; and if you longed some day to hear a deeper note, and struck that note yourself, you would find no echo in her heart."

"Why, Elsa, you are wonderfully learned in matters of the heart!" said Ottomar. "Whom did you learn it all from--from Count Golm?"

Elsa blushed up to the roots of her hair; she drew her arm out of her brother's. "I have not deserved that," she said.

Ottomar seized her hand and pressed it to his lips. "Forgive me," he said. "I feel myself that my jokes are always unlucky now. I don't know why. But Golm himself is the cause of this one. He is mad about you, as you probably know already, and he talked of nothing but you when we met in the park just now as we were riding home. He was riding one of his own horses, which he has had sent after him; so it looks as if he meant to stay here. However, I may tell you for your comfort that I am not so very fond of Golm. I do not think we should ever be very great friends, unless he happened to present himself in the capacity of--but I will not make my little Elsa angry again. How many have accepted for to-night? Does Clemda come? He was not on parade to-day."

It was evident that Ottomar wished to change the subject, and Elsa knew that she had spoken in vain. Her heart was heavy; misfortune was approaching her, invisible but unavoidable, just as it did when he had told her that the vessel would run aground in ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. And then he had been at her side, had remained by her; she had looked in the brave blue eyes and felt no fear, for she had known that this man was inured to dangers. And as she walked silently at her brother's side--who, silent and gloomy also, had evidently fallen back into his melancholy musings--her faithful sister's heart told her that the amiable, careless, light-hearted young man would and must succumb to a serious danger, unless some stronger hand than hers interfered to save him. Perhaps--no, certainly--his hand could do it; only that there was scarcely a possibility of bringing the two young men into such close relations. But, after all, what was not possible if one only had true courage?

"Before I forget it, Ottomar, papa wishes you to go over and invite Captain Schmidt for this evening. Aunt----"

And she told him what had passed.

"August or my servant can do that quite as well," said Ottomar.

"Not quite so well," said Elsa. "The Captain paid us a visit--or, at least, left his card, as nobody was at home, which comes to the same thing. It is only civil, therefore, that you should return his

visit, and take the opportunity to give him the invitation."

"I am so tired and knocked up; I must go and have a nap."

"Then go later; there will be plenty of time."

"It seems to me, Elsa, that you have rather a weakness for the Captain," said Ottomar, standing still and looking his sister in the face.

"Yes, I have; and he deserves it," said Elsa, bravely meeting his glance. "He is a good, noble man; I know few like him, and should be very glad if you knew him better. I am sure you would like him; and perhaps--there are so few people, Ottomar, that one can trust, that one can count upon in every difficulty and danger."

"As I can on you!" said Ottomar.

His eyes rested thoughtfully on his sister's brave honest face, and then turned as if accidentally from her towards two windows of Herr Schmidt's house, which could be seen from the place where they were standing. The blue silk curtains of one of the two windows were drawn; they had been for the last three days; it meant, "I do not expect you this evening." Should he confide to the prudent, brave, faithful girl, the secret that weighed on his heart? Should he unburden his heavy heart by an open honest confession, here where he was sure to find, if not approval, at least comprehension, interest, and pity?

Pity? and if only scorn awaited him from behind those curtains, if he were finally dismissed, and must say to-morrow, "Do not trouble yourself further, Elsa; it is all over and at an end: she has dismissed me--me!" he should have humbled himself to no purpose, exposed himself uselessly. No, no! there would be time enough for that. He would hear first from her own lips.

"I will go over, Elsa," he said, "and I will go at once; I can sleep later."

"You dear, good Ottomar!" exclaimed Elsa, throwing her arms round her brother and kissing him; "I knew you would."

"Elsa, come here a minute, please!" called Sidonie from the dining-room door.

"I am coming, aunt."

Elsa hurried away; Ottomar looked gloomily after her, as the two ladies disappeared into the house.

He walked a few paces farther till he was quite shut in by the thick shrubs and concealed from all eyes. He still looked cautiously round him, tore open his coat, and pulled out the letter which he had found on his father's table.

In the envelope were several papers, he took out a small sheet in his father's handwriting. On the sheet was written:

"Received this morning the two enclosed bills, which I have settled and receipted for you--1200 thalers; the last debts that I pay for you, for the reason that my own property, as you will see by the accompanying accounts, has been spent, with the exception of a small portion, in the same manner, and I cannot pay another penny without depriving my family of the means of living as our position demands, or running into debt myself, and must beg you to act accordingly.

"V. WERBEN."

A beautiful gay butterfly fluttered across the blue sky. A sparrow darted down from a tree, seized the butterfly, flew with it to the top of the garden wall, and there devoured his prize.

A bitter smile played on Ottomar's lips.

"You have soon frittered your life away, poor butterfly! Everything must have an end, one way or another!"

## CHAPTER II.

Reinhold had vainly attempted the day before to persuade his uncle to agree, for this once at least, to the increase of pay demanded by the work-people; he would so evidently be the greater sufferer if he were prevented, by the threatened strike of the work-people, from completing his contracts within the stipulated time. Uncle Ernst was not to be moved. The work-people, on the other hand, who were quite alive to their favourable position and perhaps over-rated it, had adhered no less obstinately to their demands, so that after hours of discussion backwards and forwards, during which everybody got more and more excited, matters had come to extremities, and Reinhold, who had expected this result and had silently prepared for it, had been obliged, pistol in hand, to drive the furious and drunken mob back from his uncle's threshold. At the same moment the police had appeared, had with some difficulty seized the ring-leaders and put down the riot. But the agitation had spread like lightning through the other marble-works; everywhere there had been more or less disturbance; the men in the brick and stone yards joined the rising; since this morning all these works were at a standstill, and the yards were empty. The masters had speedily arranged a meeting, which was to take place in an hour. Uncle Ernst was just ready to start, Reinhold was with him in his room, attempting once more to persuade the obstinate man to greater mildness, or at least to take a calmer view of the state of affairs.

"It seems to me, uncle," he said, "that this is just like a mutiny at sea. If a man is not strong enough to overpower the scoundrels and does not care to lose his ship and its cargo, to say nothing of his own life, he must try to come to terms with them. It is not easy for a proud man, as I know from experience, but in the end it is the wisest course. The men know that the masters have undertaken large contracts, that you will lose thousands upon thousands if you stop the works and are thereby prevented from fulfilling your engagements; they know all that, and they know also that you must give in at last. I should have done so yesterday in your place, before matters had gone so far that you were forced to uphold your authority by force on your own ground. To-day matters have changed; to-day the question is not of one solitary case, but of a general calamity, which must be decided upon general principles. And if you do not agree with this view of affairs, well, give way for once; let yourself be ruled if it must be so; do not throw the weight of your name and credit into the balance of the disputants."

Uncle Ernst laughed bitterly.

"The weight of my name, of my credit! My dear Reinhold, you forget who you are talking to! Am I Bismarck? Am I the Chancellor and President of the Council? Do all sit in breathless silence when I rise to speak? Do all tremble when I frown? Do all shrink when I raise my voice? Do all give way when I threaten to desert them? Is there an army at my back if I stamp my foot? Bah! my name is Schmidt, and there is an end of it."

"No, no, uncle!" exclaimed Reinhold, "there is not an end of it; you have only shown that we must do in small matters what he does in great ones. Even the great Bismarck knows how to trim his sails and tack when it is necessary, and does it very skilfully so far as I can understand. We must take example even from our enemies. It sounds hard, I know, and is a bitter pill; but when you come home, as you probably will do, angry and wrathful, we will sit down to dinner, and I will help you manfully to wash down your anger and wrath in an extra bottle or two."

Uncle Ernst did not answer at once; he walked up and down the room with his head down, sunk in deep thought, his hands behind his back, occasionally stroking his grey beard, or passing a hand through his bushy hair. At length he shook his head several times, stood still and said:

"I cannot do it; I cannot give in without giving myself up, without ceasing to be what I am. But why not? I no longer suit this world any more than it suits me. Neither of us loses anything in the other--on the contrary, he who succeeds to my place will know better what should be done or left undone, in order to live in peace with the world. Will you be that other, Reinhold?"

"I?" exclaimed Reinhold, astonished,

"You! You are a true Schmidt, and have been so shaken and tossed about by the waves, that it must be a hard blow that you cannot stand up against. You learnt something in your youth, and since then have been out in the world, and you probably see things from a clearer point of view than we who have always remained at home and have by degrees lost our clear-sightedness. You are tied to no past, to no scheme of life by which you must stand or fall, but may, on the contrary, start on an entirely fresh one, according to your own judgment and the light in which matters appear to you; and then the reason why I would choose you before all others for my successor is--"

Uncle Ernst broke off, like a man who has still got the most difficult thing to say, and can only gather strength for it by a deep breath.

"Is that you are dear to me, Reinhold, and--and--I believe that you have a little love for me, and that is more than I can say of any one else in the world."

He had walked to the window and stood there. Reinhold followed him and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Dear uncle----"

Uncle Ernst did not move.

"Dear uncle! I thank you from my heart for your love, which you give me so freely, for how could I have deserved it? What I did yesterday I would have done for any captain under whom I had served for four and twenty hours. If indeed love deserves love, then I deserve yours, for I love and honour you as I would love and honour a father. But that I am the only one who loves you, you only say because you are out of spirits, and I hope you do not think it; and if you do think it, I know better than you."

"Indeed!" said Uncle Ernst. "You know better? You know nothing about the matter. Have you ever waited in helpless anguish and despair, tearing your hair because nature seemed to do her work too slowly? Have you ever sunk on your knees in gratitude when your child's first cry smote on your ear? Have you ever nursed children on your knees, and secretly found all your happiness in their laughing eyes, and then seen how those eyes ceased to laugh at you, how they looked shyly past you and turned away, eyes and hearts both? To know such things a man must have experienced them."

"At the worst you can only be speaking of Philip," said Reinhold, "and even there you take too gloomy a view; but Ferdinanda! And even if all is not as it should be, is it not partly your own fault, my dear uncle? A girl's heart needs sunshine, constant sunshine! During these last few days I have never once heard you speak so kindly to her as you have just done to me."

"Because you understand me," exclaimed Uncle Ernst. "Ferdinanda does not understand me. I do not expect that she or any other woman should. They are not sent into the world for that; they are here to cook and to knit, like Rike, or if they cannot all cook and knit, to spend their time in playing the piano, playing at sculpture, and so on. I consider it one of the principal causes of the feebleness and worthlessness of the present day that women are allowed so much liberty, and can interfere in so many things that are quite beyond their province. Besides, if you think so much of the girl--and I allow she is worth rather more than most of the chatterboxes--marry her! You would then at once have a right to take the business off my hands."

Was this one of his uncle's grim jokes, or was it earnest? Reinhold could not tell. Happily he was spared the necessity of answering by a knock at the door.

It was Cilli's father, old Kreisel, who at Herr Schmidt's "Come in!" stepped into the room.

"What is it, Kreisel?" asked Uncle Ernst "But, my good man, what an extraordinary get up! Are you going to a funeral?"

The old man's attire seemed to justify Uncle Ernst's question. His little bald head only just appeared above the stiff collar of his old-fashioned, long-tailed coat, while his boots, on the contrary, at the end of the short shabby black trousers, had full liberty. He carried in his hands a tall chimney-pot hat, with a very narrow brim, of the most antiquated fashion, and a pair of gloves whose past lustre had faded with time as the colour had faded out of his shrunken face, the careworn, wasted look of which was only too well suited to his attire.

"In truth I am going to a funeral," he answered with his low, tremulous voice.

"Well then, be off!" said Uncle Ernst.

"Whose is it?"

"My own."

Uncle Ernst stared. "Are you mad, old friend?"

"I think not," answered Kreisel; "but I will speak to you at a more convenient time."

"To your own funeral?" repeated Uncle Ernst. "I am not in the humour for jokes. Wait a bit, Reinhold! And now out with it, Kreisel! What is the matter? What do you want?"

"My discharge!" said the old man, taking a white handkerchief from his coat pocket, and wiping his bald head, on which great drops of perspiration were standing. "And I may well call that my funeral."

"Well, go and be buried then!" thundered Uncle Ernst.

The old man shrank together, as if he had really received his death-blow. Reinhold stood embarrassed and troubled. Uncle Ernst paced the room with hasty steps, then stopped and turned sharply towards the little man and growled down upon him from his superior height:

"And this is the way you treat me! Fourteen years have we worked together in joy and in sorrow; you have never heard a hasty word from my lips that I have not afterwards asked your pardon for, because you with your weak nerves cannot stand anything of the kind, and I would as soon do anything to hurt you as to your poor Cilli. And if I have not done enough for you, it is not my fault--I have of my own accord doubled your salary, and would have tripled it if you had asked me: but you never said a word, and I have always had to press it on you; and now, when--the devil may understand it! I cannot!"

"And you are not likely to understand, Herr Schmidt, if you will not allow me to tell you my reasons," answered the clerk, turning his hat round and round despairingly.

"Well then, tell me in--in my nephew's presence; I have no secrets from him."

"It is not exactly a business secret," said the clerk; "it is my secret, which has long been burning into my soul, and it will be comparatively easy to tell it in the presence of the Captain, who has always been so kind to me and my daughter. I must leave you, Herr Schmidt, before you send me away, as you sent away those thirty men on Thursday; I also----"

He held his hat steady now, and his voice no longer trembled; and he fixed his small, twinkling eyes firmly on Uncle Ernst.

"I also am a Socialist!"

The determination was doubtless an heroic one for the old man, and the situation in which he found himself was tragical; and yet Reinhold almost laughed out loud, when Uncle Ernst, instead of storming and thundering, as was his wont, only opened his eyes wide and said in an unusually quiet, almost gentle voice: "Are you not also a Communist?"

"I consider Communism to be, under certain circumstances, allowable," answered the old gentleman, dropping his eyes again, and in a scarcely audible voice.

"Then go home," said Uncle Ernst, "and take an hour's sleep to calm your excitement, and when you awake again, think that it is all a dream; and now not a word more, or I shall be really angry."

The old man did not venture to answer; he bowed himself out of the door, with a glance at Reinhold that seemed to say: "You are witness: I have done my duty."

Reinhold seized his uncle's hand. "Thank you!"

"What for? for not taking the poor old fool at his word? Pooh! he understands as much about such matters as a new-born baby, and has picked it all up out of his books, over which he spends half the night because he cannot sleep, and his Cilli, good little thing, keeps him company. That sort of Socialism will not do much harm.--Well!"

Grollmann, the old servant, had entered with an embarrassed look and a visiting card, which he passed from one hand to the other as if it were a bit of red-hot iron. And Uncle Ernst, as soon as he had glanced at the card, threw it on to the table as if it had burnt him. "Are you mad?"

"The young gentleman was so urgent," said Grollmann.

"I am not at home to him--once for all."

"It would only be for a few minutes; the Captain had spoken about him already."

"What does this mean, Reinhold?"

Reinhold had read the name on the card: "Philip did beg me," he answered, "the first time I met him, and yesterday again when I called upon him----"

"You called upon him?"

"I thought it my duty--and he begged me to ask your consent to an interview; I----"

He did not like to continue before the servant, well as the old factotum must know all the family affairs; Uncle Ernst also seemed embarrassed:

"I must go to the meeting," he said.

"You have still a quarter of an hour, uncle," said Reinhold.

"It will only be for a few minutes," repeated Grollmann.

Uncle Ernst turned an angry glance from one to the other, as if he wished to make them responsible beforehand for the consequences. "He may come in!"

"Do you wish me to stay, uncle?"

"You had better leave us alone."

Reinhold was not of the same opinion; he knew too well Uncle Ernst's expression not to feel sure that a storm was brewing. But his wish must be obeyed.

He met Philip in the doorway. Philip was quite distressed to disturb Reinhold; doubtless he and his father had important business together; he could come another time.

"I do not know that I shall be at home to you another time," growled Uncle Ernst.

Reinhold pretended not to hear these unkind words, and excusing himself, hurried away.

The door had closed behind him; father and son were face to face.

"What do you want of me here!" asked Uncle Ernst, as if he were speaking to a third person crouching on the floor a few paces to the right of Philip.

"I come on business," answered Philip, as if the person he addressed were floating in the air a few feet to the right of his father.

"I decline to transact any business with you."

"But perhaps not with the directors of the Berlin and Sundin Railway Company?"

"I decline all business with the Berlin and Sundin Railway Company."

"You are standing in your own light. The business would be highly advantageous to you. We have got in our pockets a concession for the island railroad which is the continuation of our own railroad. Our station must be added to. When I had the pleasure of working with you, we bought together the land on which the station stands----"

"Upon your share," allow me to remark.

"Upon my share because you would not part with yours----"

"I had advanced you the money for the purchase of yours; so far as I know you had none then."

"I am the more indebted to you; you laid thereby the foundation of my present prosperity; for, recognising and profiting by the opportunity, I sold a portion to the company----"

"Which you had no right to sell."

"I had already repaid you your money, to the last farthing, with the proper interest."

"And had only forgotten the small circumstance that I gave you the money for the sole purpose of erecting--in partnership with me--cheap dwellings for workmen on that ground. It is true there was no written agreement."

"Fortunately for me, and I should say for you too! After what happened yesterday, you have probably lost all desire to improve the condition of these heroes of strikes and riots, as you have hitherto done to your own cost. But you can now repay yourself what you have spent. Your colony of work-people has, one way or another, never thriven, and is now at its last gasp. Put an end to it once for all. Quarter-day is at hand; we do not want the land before the new year; some of the houses will be empty now, particularly if you put some pressure on the people, and we will pay as if your cottages were so many four-storied houses."

"Where will you get the money from, if I may venture to ask?"

"Where from? Where we have always got it."

"Where you have always got it?" returned Uncle Ernst. He turned for the first time a stern, fixed look upon his son. "That is to say, out of the pockets of the public, whose credulity you have, in the most shameless manner, deceived and betrayed with false and lying prospectuses; whose anxious hopes you feed with sham dividends, which they must pay themselves; whose loud complaints you boldly stifle in your so-called general meetings, till at length it occurs to the legal authorities that might is not always right. I do not care to have anything to do with the legal authorities--and my carriage is at the door."

"So is mine," said Philip, turning on his heel and leaving the room.

Uncle Ernst went to a side-table and poured out a large glass of wine--the bottle knocked against the glass; he had some difficulty in pouring out the wine--and drank it down at one gulp.

He stood there with an angry cloud on his brow, one hand leaning on the table, in a kind of stupor.

"I did not wish it," he murmured; "I wished to keep calm. When he came in he reminded me of his mother--a vacant face too; she never understood me; but he is only a caricature of her--the vacancy supplemented by vice! And then his voice--her voice also--her thin voice when she inflicted upon me her commonplace wisdom--only it is enlivened by insolence--wretched, insolent boy!"

He drank down a second glass. The cloud on his brow had only grown darker.

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