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A Novel. Translated by Prof. Schele de Vere. Uniform with the above. 12mo. cloth. $2.00.

CRITICAL NOTICES.

"Such a novel as no English author with whom we are acquainted could have written, and no American author except Hawthorne. What separates it from the multitude of American and English novels is the perfection of its plot, and it's author's insight into the souls of his characters.... If Germany is poorer than England, as regards the number of its novelists, it in richer when we consider the intellectual value of their works. If it has not produced a Thackeray, or a Dickens, it has produced, we venture to think, two writers who are equal to them in genius, and superior to them in the depth and spirituality of their art--Auerbach and Spielhagen."--*Putnam's Magazine*.

"The name is suggested by a passage in Goethe, which serves as a motto to the book. Spielhagen means to illustrate what Goethe speaks of--natures not in full possession of themselves, who are not equal to any situation in life, and whom no situation satisfies"--the Hamlet of our latest civilisation. With these he deals in a poetic, ideal fashion, yet also with humor, and, what is less to be expected in a German, with sparkling, flashing wit, and a cynical vein that reminds one of Heine. He has none of the tiresome detail of Auerbach, while he lacks somewhat that excellent man's profound devotion to the moral sentiment. There is more depth of passion and of thought in Spielhagen, together with a French liveliness by no means common in German novelists.... At any rate, they are vastly superior to the bulk of English novels which are annually poured out upon us--as much above Trollope's as Steinberger Cabinet is better than London porter.--*Springfield Republican*.

"The reader lives among them (the characters) as he does among his acquaintances, and may plead each one's case as plausibly to his own judgment as he can those of the men whose mixed motives and actions he sees around him. In other words, these characters live, they are men and women, and the whole mystery of humanity is upon each of them. Has no superior in German romance for its enthusiastic and lively descriptions, and for the dignity and the tenderness with which its leading characters are invested."--*New York Evening Post*.

"He strikes with a blow like a blacksmith, making the sparks fly and the anvil ring. Terse, pointed, brilliant, rapid, and no dreamer, he has the best traits of the French manner, while in earnestness and fulness of matter he is thoroughly German. One sees, moreover, in his pages, how powerful is the impression which America has of late been making upon the mind of Europe."--*Boston Commonwealth*.

"The work is one of immense vigor; the characters are extraordinary, yet not unnatural; the plot is the sequence of an admirably-sustained web of incident and action. The portraitures of characteristic foibles and peculiarities remind one much of the masterhand of the great Thackeray. The author Spielhagen in Germany ranks very much as Thackeray does with us, and many of his English reviewers place him at the head and front of German novelists."--*Troy Daily Times*.

"His characters have, perhaps, more passion, and act their parts with as much dramatic effect as those which have passed under the hand of Auerbach."--*Cincinnati Chronicle*.

The N. Y. Times, of Oct. 23d, in a long Review of the above two works, says: "The descriptions of nature and art, the portrayals of character and emotion, are always striking and truthful. As one reads, there grows upon him gradually the conviction that this is one of the greatest of works of fiction.... No one, that is not a pure *egoiste*, can read *Problematic Characters* without profound and even solemn interest. It is altogether a tragic work, the tragedy of the nineteenth century--greater in its truth and earnestness, and absence of *Hugoese* affectation, than any tragedy the century has produced. It stands far above any of the productions of either *Freytag* or *Auerbach*."

IN PRESS.

III. The Hohenstein Family. Translated by Prof. Schele de Vere. IV. Hammer and Anvil. V. In Rank And File. VI. Rose, And The Village Coquette.

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PROBLEMATIC CHARACTERS.

A Novel

BY

FRIEDRICH SPIELHAGEN.

Author's Edition.

NEW YORK

LEYPOLDT & HOLT

1870.

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A Novel

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FROM THE GERMAN

BY

PROF. SCHELE DE VERE

Author's Edition.

> "There are problematic characters, who are not equal to any situation in life, and whom no situation satisfies. This causes an immense discord within, and their whole life is spent without enjoyment."
>
> **GOETHE**.

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1870

The New York Printing Company,
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New York.

FRIEDRICH SPIELHAGEN.

Extract from the Westminster Review, October, 1868.

From biographical notices of Spielhagen in German periodicals,[1] we gather that he was born in Magdeburg, in 1829, and is the son of a Prussian functionary of considerable rank (Regierungsrath). His youth was passed in the romantic old town of Stralsund, to which his father was removed in 1835, and the scenery of that neighborhood, and of the near lying island Rügen, appears to have become so deeply impressed on the opening mind of the boy, that he subsequently painted it with enthusiasm in several of his romances. His course of "gymnasial" education in Stralsund having been completed in 1847, he went in that year to the University of Berlin, intending to study medicine. But his poetical nature soon caused him to give up all thoughts of the medical profession, and the following year he removed to Bonn to study philology. He remained at Bonn till 1850, when he returned to Berlin, continuing his studies partly at that university and partly at that of Greifswald. Whilst at these universities he appears to have studied a variety of subjects, but discursively rather than with reference to any regular profession--for which both his poetical vein and his thirst for observations of actual life seem to have disqualified him. After serving his allotted time in the Prussian army, and occupying the post of tutor in the family of a Pomeranian nobleman, he went to Leipzig, in 1854, to devote himself to general literature, and he afterwards became a teacher (*Privat Docent*) of modern literature and æsthetics.

His first romance, "Clara Vere," was published in 1857, and in the following year a short romance, "Auf der Düne" ("On the Downs"), appeared, and attracted considerable attention. In the six years Spielhagen resided at Leipzig he wrote many critical essays for periodicals, translated a considerable number of French, English, and American works[2]--particularly of American poets, and published there two more short romances, one of which, "Röschen vom Hofe," a charming idyl, rapidly passed through four editions. In 1860 he went to Hanover, where he married; and the following year he removed to Berlin, where he has since resided, displaying great activity in connection with a leading periodical, and as romance writer. In 1861 his first large romance, "Problematische Naturen," appeared, and at once established for the writer a great reputation. It was followed the next year by a continuation, "Durch Nacht zum Lichte" ("Through Night to Light"). In 1864 another long romance, "Die von Hohenstein," was published, and lastly, in the autumn of 1866, "In Reih' und Glied" ("In the Ranks"), a romance in six volumes. [3]

The scenes of all Spielhagen's romances, with the exception of his first, "Clara Vere," are laid in the Baltic provinces or islands, in the Prussian capital, or on the Rhine.... The heroes in many of Spielhagen's romances are not made of common stuff. They are very unusual natures, gifted with more than the average of intellectual power, even for our intellectual age. A few have even Titanic qualities,--towering ambition, insatiable cravings, and overwhelming passions, which bring them to a miserable end. That the heroes in romances--which have been styled the modern epics--should stand at least a foot higher than ordinary men is but what we have a right to expect. It can interest none but the most unrefined minds, to be occupied chiefly in works of fiction with commonplace, vulgar natures and their unpoetical surroundings, or with stilted heroes clothed in tinsel, and talking in high-flown fashion amidst scenes of extravagant conception. In Spielhagen's heroes psychological truth is never violated. The principal personages in his romances live before us and fix our interest. Their dispositions are not described, but impressed upon our minds in action. The plots of his romances too, despite the

great number of scenes and characters introduced, are nevertheless skilful, consistent, and artistic. He makes no extravagant use of improbable coincidences, nor is the reader kept on the tenter-hooks of suspense whilst the intricacies of a plot are unravelled. It was Schiller, we believe, who called the romancist the half-brother of the poet. To Spielhagen's glowing descriptions of nature, which are never tediously minute, and are invariably brought into harmony with, or made to enhance by contrast, the moods and actions of his personages, a true poetical charm is given. In this respect they may be said to occupy a happy position between the vague and shadowy pictures formerly met with in German romances, and the photographic realism or word-painting, so wearisome to readers of taste in many of our modern English novels. With a skilful hand, too, he paints the tender emotions and longings of the heart, particularly in his female characters. Though the interest in his stories is generally well sustained, yet in many of them the *dénoûments* are sad, a foreboding of which, as the consequences of vices, errors, or weaknesses in the actors, too soon perhaps arises in the reader's mind.... But the comic elements, satire, wit, and humor, are not wanting to afford amusement to the reader. Apart from the national coloring pertaining to his characters, their peculiar qualities are shown to have little to do with external circumstances. We see the hereditary influences of temperament and other organic conditions indicated; and in descriptions of bodily gestures, and expressions of the countenance, much knowledge of human nature, in its morbid as well as healthy state, is displayed. But enough of general observation on this author. We have before us numerous criticisms of his works in well-accredited German periodicals, which could be cited in proof that we have not overestimated his powers nor his popularity. Indeed, in Germany he is generally acknowledged to occupy the foremost rank amongst modern writers of fiction; an opinion, moreover, confirmed to some extent by the publication of his romances in a collected form.

In agreement with German critics, we consider "Problematic Natures" to be the most interesting and poetical of our author's productions.[4] ...

Goethe says in his "Dichtung und Wahrheit": "There are problematic natures who are not equal to any situation in which they are placed, and for whom no situation is good enough. A fearful conflict results therefrom, which consumes life without enjoyment." These pregnant words of the great German poet are placed as motto on the title-page of the work before us, and Spielhagen has built upon them a tale full of poetry and psychological interest. In the course of the romance the author, through one of his personages, more specifically characterizes problematic natures as "beings for the most part liberally endowed by nature with good qualities; whose feelings and endeavors in general are directed to what is good, yet who all, without exception, come to a sad end, because they understand, either never or too late, that the most enthusiastic efforts and the loftiest aims not only remain uncrowned by success, but at length destroy the struggler himself if he overlooks the conditions of our earthly existence. Such people are not satisfied with anything--with themselves least of all. Possessed of endless susceptibilities, they seize everything with avidity, cast it, however, away as soon as its limited nature becomes clear to them. The world does not satisfy them, and they do not satisfy the world. The world lets those who despise it fall, despair, die of hunger, as may be; and it is right it should be so, for naturally those only can be rewarded who, sacrificing their egotistical desires, strive to serve the world earnestly and diligently."

... Detestation of the aristocracy is prominent in all Spielhagen's romances. The aristocracy in general--though there are several most favorable exceptions--is shown in them to be rotten and out of date. In some of his romances, a very pandemonium of "Junker" arrogance, frivolity, and debauchery--particularly of the military "Junker"--is painted, perhaps in colors somewhat too dark. In the people, including the *Bürger* class, healthy virtues and high intelligence are shown to dwell almost as prerogatives. Still, as regards the citizen classes, he has guarded himself against the reproach of one-sidedness, for several of his low-born characters are innately weak and vicious, and amongst his political democrats he has sketched popularity-hunting demagogues, actuated likewise by motives entirely base and selfish. Amongst the distinguished and good personages our author introduces, young physicians, and other students of science and nature occupy the foremost places. They are some of them evidently painted after life; and in his great appreciation of physical sciences, and the men who devote to them their energies, he does but give expression to sentiments now-a-days prevailing in Germany. And in his low estimate of the nobility, he forms no exception to modern writers of fiction in Germany. Indeed, Immermann, in his village tales, and even Goethe, in "Wilhelm Meister" and the "Wanderjahre," display anti-aristocratic sympathies. To these great writers of fiction the names of Gutzkow, Auerbach, Freitag, Schloenbach, and many others may be added.

One chief cause of the antipathy of the citizen classes in Germany to the nobility we have already mentioned in speaking of "Problematical Natures." Another cause may be found in the circumstance that the nobility, since 1848, has in general used whatever political influence it possesses in a reactionary, ultraconservative spirit. As a consequence, however, of the strict line of demarcation, based on pedigree, between nobles and the citizen classes in Germany, the vulgar conceit and mean struggles for social position, so well known in this country, and so fertile a theme with our satirical novelists, are but seldom experienced in that country. The characters in Spielhagen's romances most resembling our snobs are worldly-minded, sycophantic clergymen and the low-born *nouveaux riches*....

Although in some respects this popular German romance-writer displays subjective biases; yet, on the whole, he is objective, and most decidedly reflects opinions now prevalent in his

country. In fact, one of his critics avers, that "a psychological historian of the future may turn to his works for valuable data on many aspects of social life in the present times." As a delineator of individual characters--many of them types of different classes of society; as a painter of various situations, scenic and social, he appears to us unequalled by any other modern German writer of fiction.

Problematic Characters.

Part First.

CHAPTER I.

It was a warm evening in July in the year 184-, when an ordinary wagon, drawn by two heavily-built bay horses, made its way slowly through the heavy roads of a pine forest.

"Is this forest never to have an end?" exclaimed the young man who was sitting alone on the back seat of the carriage, and raised himself impatiently.

The taciturn driver answered only by cracking his whip. The slow bays made a desperate effort to trot, but soon abandoned the purpose, which was as little suitable to their tempers as to the deep sand. The young man leaned back again with a sigh, and commenced once more to listen to the monotonous music of the vehicle, as it tried to keep in the deep rots, and let the dark trunks of the pine-trees glide by, one by one, noticing how here and there a ray of moonlight fell upon them; for the moon was just rising above the wood. He began again to fancy what would be his reception at the château, and his new situation, upon which he was about to enter; but these dim visions of an unknown future became vaguer and vaguer, his weary eyes closed, and the first sound of which he was again conscious was the dull tramp of the horses on a wooden bridge which led to a lofty stone portal. "At last!" exclaimed the young man, rising and looking around him full of curiosity, as the wagon drove rapidly through a dark avenue of gigantic trees, followed a rounded-off curve on a large open courtyard covered with gravel, and then stopped before the doors of the château, on whose windows the rays of the moon glittered brightly.

The silent driver cracked his whip to make his arrival known. The only answer was the loud sound of a clock, quite near by, which slowly struck eleven o'clock. When the last stroke had been heard, the door opened and a servant stepped out, and behind him the figure of an old gentleman became visible, whose wrinkled face was lighted up by the glare of a candle, which he tried to protect with his hand against the strong draught.

The young man jumped briskly from the wagon to meet the old gentleman, who offered him his hand, and said to him in a voice full of kindness, but betraying his old age by its tremor, and marked by a foreign accent:

"Be heartily welcome, doctor!" The young man pressed his hand cordially and replied: "I come rather late, baron, but----"

"No matter, no matter at all," interrupted the old gentleman. "My good wife is still up. John, carry the doctor's traps to his room! Please come in here!"

Oswald had arranged his dress quickly in the hall, which had a beautiful tessellated floor, and now followed the baron into a lofty large room.

As he entered, two ladies arose from the sofa behind a table, where they seemed to have been

busy reading.

"My wife," said the baron, presenting Oswald to the older of the two, a tall, graceful lady of about forty years, who had advanced a few steps to meet the new-comer and now replied to his bow with some formality. Then he bowed to the younger lady, a delicate, small figure, with a sharp, thoroughly French face, framed in long curls; not thinking that he ought to neglect this act of politeness, merely because he had not been introduced to her also.

"You are late, Doctor Stein," said the baroness, with a deep sonorous voice, which was not exactly in harmony with the cold light of her dark gray eyes.

"As early, madam," replied the young man, cheerfully, "as the contrary wind, which delayed the ferry-boat in the morning for several hours, and the baron's driver, whose patience I had ample time to admire on the way, would permit me."

"Patience is a noble virtue," said the baroness, when she had resumed her seat on the sofa, while the others took chairs around the table; "a virtue which you no doubt value very highly, as you need it so much in your vocation. I am afraid the two boys will give you but too frequent opportunities to practise this virtue to its fullest extent."

"I promise myself everything that is good from my future pupils, and am quite sure, in advance, that the trials which they will make of my patience will be no fiery trials."

"I hope so," said the baroness, resuming her work, which she had laid aside when the young man entered. "But you will find the boys just now rather neglected, as your arrival has been retarded for several days, and your predecessor could not, or would not, do us the favor to delay his departure for a few days."

"I should not think fairly of the character of the boys," replied Oswald, "and still less so of the ability of Mr. Bauer, whom I have heard much praised, if I were really to fear that his influence had not survived a week."

"Well, Mr. Bauer had his virtues, but also his foibles," said the baroness, counting the stitches in her work.

"That is the fate of men," replied Oswald.

"Perhaps the doctor would like some refreshment, dear Anna Maria," said the old gentleman, suddenly. Oswald could not make out whether he was prompted by an impulse of hospitality, or by a desire to change the conversation, which was assuming a somewhat lively character.

"No, I thank you," said Oswald, dryly.

"You have not been long engaged in teaching," continued the baroness, taking no notice of the interruption, "if I understood Professor Berger correctly, who gave us your address."

"No."

"You will oblige me particularly if you will give me, at a favorable moment, your views about education. I am convinced in advance that we shall agree in all essential points. But, of course, we must be prepared to differ in some minor matters. I shall always tell you frankly what I may wish or think, and I beg you will be as frank with me. As to the knowledge acquired by the boys, you will be the best judge of that yourself. Nor do I wish to anticipate your opinion of their character; only one thing I should like to mention to you: you will find our son Malte a somewhat spoiled child; while Bruno--you know that Bruno von Löwen is a distant relative of my husband's, whom we have adopted after the death of his father--is a boy who has had no education at all, and is, therefore, perfectly wild."

"My dear Anna Maria," said the old gentleman.

"I know what you are going to say, my dear Grenwitz," interrupted the baroness. "Bruno is, once for all, your favorite, and our views concerning him will always be at variance. You may be perfectly right when you say that I am unable to judge him fairly; but that is less my own fault than his, as the boy's morose and reserved manner makes all approach on our part--I mean on my part--almost impossible."

"But, my dear Anna Maria----"

"Well, never mind, dear Grenwitz; we will not weary Dr. Stein on the very first evening he spends under our roof by the spectacle of discord between husband and wife. Besides, Doctor Stein must be tired. Mademoiselle, please ring the bell." The last words, spoken in French, were addressed to the young lady who had been sitting immovable at the table, without ever looking at the new-comer, and holding the book, from which she seemed to have been reading aloud, still in her hand. Now she rose and went to the door, near which the bell-rope was hanging. Oswald anticipated her, saying: "Permit me, mademoiselle." The girl looked at him out of her large brown eyes with a half-wondering, half-frightened glance, which betrayed clearly enough how little she was accustomed to be treated with such courtesy. Then, casting down her eyes quickly, she went

back to her seat at the table. A servant entered, and received orders to show Oswald to his room.

"I hope you will find everything as you wish it," said the baroness, as Oswald took his leave with a silent bow; "if anything has been forgotten, or does not suit your taste, I beg you will let us know at once; I am exceedingly anxious for our own sake that you should be comfortable in our house."

Oswald bowed once more and followed the servant to his room.

They went across a hall, on the walls of which Oswald noticed, by the flickering light of the candle, full-size portraits of gentlemen and ladies in old-fashioned costumes; then up a stone staircase, through long galleries and a suite of rooms into a larger apartment.

"This is your room, doctor," said the man, lighting the two candles which stood on a large round table in the centre of the room. "That door opens into your bedroom."

"And where do the boys sleep?" asked Oswald.

"If you go through your bedroom, you get into the young gentlemen's room. Have you any orders, sir?"

"No, I thank you."

"I wish you a good-night, sir."

"Good-night."

Oswald was alone. He had remained standing, one hand resting upon the table, and listened mechanically as the footsteps of the servant became gradually fainter and fainter down the long passage. Then he took one of the candles, passed through his chamber to the door which the servant had told him would admit him to the boys' room, opened it cautiously and went in, carefully screening the light with his hand.

The beds of the two boys stood close by each other. Before one bed lay a carpet, before the other none. Above the bed without a carpet hung a small silver watch; above the bed with a carpet, a still smaller gold watch. In the bed below the gold watch lay a boy of perhaps fourteen years, with light, straight hair, and a delicate, finely-cut face, which, at that moment, looked rather silly, thanks to the half-open mouth. In the bed with the silver watch lay a boy who might have been a year older than the other, but who looked at least three years his senior, and formed in every way the most singular contrast with him. While the arms of the younger lay languidly on the coverlet, those of the other were firmly crossed on his chest. The compressed lips and the slightly frowning eyebrows, drawn together perhaps by a troublesome dream, gave to the irregular but not unattractive face an expression of dark defiance and pride, which would not have been amiss in the heir to a throne.

"Poor boy," said Oswald to himself, looking with deepest interest at the enigmatical face of the child; "you have had already tears in the spring of your life, if you ever really had a spring."

He was deeply moved, scarcely knowing why. But he bent over the sleeping child and kissed his forehead. The boy turned in his sleep, his arms relaxed, and opening his large, deep blue eyes, he looked at Oswald through the mist of his dream. All of a sudden a ray of sunlight seemed to flash across his face; the dark expression vanished, and a warm, inexpressibly sweet smile played over the animated features.

"I love you," said the boy.

"And I love you, too," replied Oswald.

Then Bruno turned over, and Oswald saw from his deep, regular breathing that he had fallen fast asleep once more.

"Has he really seen you or were you only a dream to him?" the young man asked himself, as he went back to his room after the little scene which had moved him deeply. He put the candle on the table, went to the window, opened it and looked out.

The sky was covered with clouds and fogs, through which the full moon shone like a ball of red fire, far down near the horizon. In the east sheet lightning flashed to and fro. The air was hot and oppressive. In the garden below the windows the flowering fruit-trees shone with a white sheen, while the oaks and beeches, which rose like giants along the wall around the garden, up to the heavens, lay buried in deep, dark shadow. Nightingales sang in long, full notes; a fountain played merrily, but in subdued tones, as if dreaming.

Oswald felt strangely excited. His past arose before his mind's eye in dim images, scene after scene, as the veil of clouds drove over the face of the moon; visions of the future flashed across them, as the lightning toward the east. Suddenly the trees rustled, and the loud bell, which he had heard at his arrival, struck twelve in slow, measured beats.

He started. "Did you not mean to give up dreaming?" he asked himself, smiling. "Well then,

you had better go to bed if you cannot stay awake without dreaming."

CHAPTER II.

Oswald had been a week at Castle Grenwitz, and the week had seemed to him but a day. It was his nature to take up every new thing with a passion, even though the new thing was ordinary enough in itself, and here it was far from being so. He had a new situation, new surroundings, new acquaintances. All this caused him, with his sanguine temper, for a time a most delightful sensation; he found it easy to discover charms, and at least something interesting, in all with whom he came into contact; in the baroness, with her cold, severe features; even in the reticent coachman, against whom he had been so strongly prejudiced on the very first evening; even in the humble familiar servant, with his everlasting: "What are your orders, sir?" The letters which he wrote at this time to his friends all bore the impress of this happy, conciliatory disposition. "Here I am," he said in one of them, "here I am in this new station of my strange life, and upon my word I think I shall stay here, in spite of the impatience for which you blame me so often, until Father Chronos has changed the horses in his stage, and blows his horn once more. If I were not afraid of calling down upon me your bitter irony by my enthusiasm, I might go so far as to thank the kind star that has led me here. I am just in the temper to do so. I have breathed in these days so freely in this air of salt water and forests, that my poor head, filled with the dust of miserable old folios, is quite unsettled. Certainly, if the people here are not altogether unfit for this paradise, I have the finest future for some years to come.

"Pardon me, my dear friend, that I did not ask your special permission before I took the decisive step which brought me here. I have heretofore followed your higher wisdom with implicit obedience, and so you had a right to expect that I should have consulted you first. But I had determined to take this step. I knew you would refuse your consent, and therefore I preferred to meet your full-armed reasons with an equally full-armed *fait accompli*, so as not to deprive your good advice of its old privilege--to come too late. Besides, the whole thing came so suddenly, and I had to decide so quickly, that I had but just time to inform you of the fact. Finally, Professor Berger is the only cause of the whole proceeding; he has to bear the blame of it, if blame there must be, and him alone I make herewith solemnly responsible for all the consequences.

"We have corresponded but rarely and very briefly, you know, since we parted about a year ago in the capital. Thus I have probably hardly ever mentioned Professor Berger to you, and it is high time to make you acquainted with this original, who has of late played so important a part in my life, and to whom alone I owe it if I did not miserably fail in that principal scene of the tragi-comedy, my examination.

"When I left B-----for Grunwald, in the vague hope of being able to find the necessary repose in this quiet seat of the Muses, with the grass growing in the streets, which I could not obtain amid the literary circles, the æsthetic teas, and musical suppers of the great city, I found here, among the terrible judges who could make me happy or condemn me forever, Professor Berger as the most terrible of all. My poor fellow-sufferers, whose acquaintance I could not avoid making in spite of all my objections, told me really fearful things of his amazing erudition, and much that disquieted me about his eccentricities and droll whimsicalities. They had numerous stories about his great influence over the other members of the Board of Examiners, who were completely overawed by his learning, and still more so by his caustic wit, which spared no one, from the lowest to the highest. I had never yet met the terrible man in person. He had one of his hypochondriac attacks, during which, I was told, he kept himself locked up in his room during the day, and wandered about all night in the woods of the neighborhood.

"One day I received an invitation to dinner from a family to whom I had brought letters of introduction. The company was very numerous; I took a young lady of the house in to dinner, a pretty, fair-haired girl, whose merry ways attracted me exclusively during the first part of the dinner. But when the usual topics which are apt to be discussed with young ladies fresh from school were nearly exhausted, I found my attention engaged by a gentleman who sat opposite me. He was a small, elderly man, with a massive brow, as if cut in granite, from beneath which two clever eyes shone forth brightly. The somewhat full cheeks betrayed a fondness for good living, which was not belied by the earnestness with which the man did honor to the gifts of Ceres and Bacchus. But the lines around the firm, well-shaped mouth were enigmatical: sensuality, wit, humor, and melancholy demons and genii--all seemed to dwell there.

"The conversation at our part of the table soon became general, and I could venture to join in without presumption. They discussed art, literature, and politics. Everywhere the strange man seemed to be perfectly at home; everywhere he surprised us by clever views, startling antitheses,

and odd paradoxes. It seemed to give him special pleasure to throw in a little spark of purgatory-fire, and then to see how the tiny flames from below tickled the noses of the good people. Thus he would suddenly assert that revolutions had never done any good to mankind, and never would benefit us. You know my views on this point, which have often been the subject of our discussions. I accepted the challenge; I grew warm in speaking of my pet theme, and all the warmer as my adversary tried hard to confuse me by all kinds of odd questions. I forgot everything around me; I became pathetic, satiric--I felt that I said some good things, at least that I had never in my life spoken as well. At a later day I learnt to my humiliation that the good man had highly enjoyed the sham fight,--for such it was to him,--but then I only noticed that he gave up the combat and listened to what I said, bending his large head a little upon his right shoulder, smiling at my energy out of his large bright eyes beneath the bushy eyebrows, and sipping one glass of hock after the other. Soon afterwards we left the table. As I took my lady back to the room where tea was served, I asked her: 'And who was the gentleman with whom I carried on a conversation, which I fear was very dull to you?'

"'What! you do not know Professor Berger?' the little lady asked, quite amazed.

"'That was Professor Berger?'

"'Certainly; shall I introduce you?'

"'For heaven's sake, no!' I cried, with genuine terror. 'Oh me! what a misfortune!'"

"'Why, what is the matter?' asked the pretty girl. 'What is the matter?'

"I had let her arm slip out of mine and made my escape to the remotest room. There I threw myself upon a low sofa in a dark corner, and lay brooding over the grievous blunder I had committed. While I thought I was playing with a good-natured poodle-dog, I had been engaged with a formidable bear! They had represented this man to me as just as malicious as he was learned and witty. Would he not be sore to remember my sarcasms and bitter sayings in that evil hour when I was lying helpless on the examination-table, ready to be dissected? It was a desperate case.

"I heard a noise near me, and raised my head--before me stood Professor Berger. I jumped up instantly.

"'Allow me to sit down by you,' said the eccentric man, and sat down on the low sofa, beckoning me to follow his example. 'I like you, and I wish to become better acquainted with you. I am Professor Berger; whom have I the honor to address?'

"'My name is Stein.'

"'You are a student, or, rather, you have been a student. What have you studied?'

"'I wish I could simply answer, Philology; but as that would not be exactly true, I can only say I would I had studied Philology.'

"'How so?'

"'Because then I would be less afraid of the honor of becoming better known to you.'

"A smile played around the lips of the professor, passed up the cheek, and was lost in the corner of the right eye.

"'You are a candidate for honors?'

"'Yes; but with little hope.'

"The smile came down again from the eye to the lips.

"'And therefore you are frightened at seeing me, as Hamlet was before his father's ghost?'

"'At least I do not see you very clearly.'

"'Well, then, you see yourself that we must become better acquainted with each other. Will you come to-morrow evening, or some other evening, when you have time and inclination, and drink a glass of punch with me?'

"Of course I did not refuse.

"And this was the beginning of my acquaintance with this strange man, whom I now may call my friend. We have ever since that day met daily, as long as I remained in Grunwald, and I value the deep insight into one of the most remarkable characters which was thus afforded me by the intimate intercourse with him, far more highly than the practical advantages which I derived from my friendship with so great a scholar. I am almost afraid there must exist some affinity between him and myself, or we would not so quickly have discovered what was sympathetic in each of us; nor would we have learnt so soon to speak with such unreserved candor, and to understand each other by a mere word or a hint. I say I am afraid, because Berger is a most

unhappy man. The bright lights of his brilliant wit play upon a dark background full of storms. He is standing alone in the world, misjudged by everybody, feared by many, loved by none. Why that is so, I dare not tell even you, for friendship is a temple to which no third person can be admitted. But I shudder whenever I think of the dark night that must break down upon him as soon as old age dims the light of the bright torch which now alone illumines the terrible waste of his miserable heart. Perhaps, however--who knows?--that may prove fortunate for him. Perhaps the words which he now often quotes, half in bitter irony and half in melancholy conviction: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit!' may yet become a truth for him.

"My intimacy with the learned man had surrounded me, in the eyes of the world, with a halo, which made me hope that under such protection I might, like the heroes of Homer, safely pass through the dangers of the impending battle--the examination. On the morning of the decisive day, Berger said to me: 'Do you know, dear Stein, I have a great mind to reject you?'

"'Why?'

"'Because I fear to lose you--to lose you twice. Great God! what changes may not happen to a man whom we seat in the easy-chair of an office, and whom we crown with the night-cap of a dignity! You may actually see the day when you will consider Horace a great poet and Cicero a distinguished philosopher--why, you may in due time, and from sheer disgust of life, become a learned professor like myself.'

"The examination had been held, and I had received, as Berger called it, license to thresh empty straw. One day he came to me, an open letter in his hand, and asked:

"'Would you like to become a tutor in a nobleman's family?'

"'I hardly think I would.'

"'Perhaps so; but the offer is so tempting that it is at least worth your while to consider the matter. You would have to bind yourself for four years.'

"'And you call that a tempting offer? Four years? Not four weeks!'

"'Just listen. Of these four years, two only will be spent at the house; the other two you are to travel with your pupil. You want to see the world, and you ought to see it, even if it were only in order to learn that men have a right to like dogs everywhere. You have no means of your own, and you are too civilized to be a good vagabond. Well now, here you have the finest opportunity, such as may not present itself a second time in all your life.'

"'And who is the Alexander whose Aristotle I am to be?'

"'A young lord, like the hero of Macedonia. I have seen the noble race last year in Ostend. The father, a Baron Grenwitz, is a nullity; the baroness, an unknown quantity, which I could not ascertain. At all events, she is a clever woman. I know that that is no small attraction for you. She speaks three or four modern languages, to say nothing of her mother tongue. I even suspect her of having secretly read Latin and Greek with her present tutor, a certain Bauer, who has studied here, and was a thoroughly well-educated youth.'

"'And you, who have told me yourself that you have written a book about the nobles and against the nobles, which, unfortunately, cannot be printed anywhere in Germany, although specially intended for Germany--you advise me, who hold the same pariah notions about this Brahmin caste, to go over to the army of our hereditary enemies?'

"'That is exactly the fun,' laughed Berger. 'I want you to go there like a Mohican into the camp of the Iroquois, and I am delighted at the spoil you will bring back with you. We will hang them up in our wigwams, and enjoy them heartily.'

"'And if I lose my scalp among them--what then?'

"'Then I am the last of the Mohicans, and smoke my calumet in loneliness on the grave of my Uncas.'

"He rested his head on his hand, and stared grimly at the distance. 'Yes, yes, I know,' he growled, 'the Big Serpent, when it is tired hissing at men, will creep into a deep morass and perish there alone.'

"I took his hand in mine: 'That shall not be so; at least not as long as I live.'

"He looked at me sadly.

"'But you will die before me,' he said; 'the big Serpent is tough and you are soft--much too soft for this hard world. But let us leave that alone. What do you think of my offer?'

"'That I like it only so-so.'

"'Then I must play my last trump,' cried Berger, jumping up. 'Hear, then, you incredulous man, that the house to which I wish to send you owns an angel in the shape of a most lovely girl. She is

the sister of your Alexander, and, God be thanked, as yet at a boarding-school in Hamburg. I hate her, for she has caused me infinite trouble. All the mad dreams of my youth revived when I saw her, and worried me like fair ghosts. At last I ran away as soon as I saw her coming on the smooth sand of the beach, with her light straw-hat. Yes, I must tell you; I wrote those sonnets which I read to you the other day, and which I told you I had composed thirty years ago at Heligoland, only last year at Ostend. You were good enough to call them glowing with love, and heaven knows what else--well, I was bewitched by the fair demon, and I wrote them with blood, the blood of my heart. But you will not tell that to anybody?'

"'Why not? Not a soul would believe me.'

"'There you are right And now?'

"'Now I am less inclined than ever. I do not wish to repeat the foolish story of the love affair between a tutor and the daughter of a noble house, which I have read over and over again in so many a novel. And if the girl is really so beautiful and lovely, that----'

"'That even the dry branches put out fresh leaves--what might then happen to the green wood?' interrupted me Berger, laughing aloud. 'Well, then, fall in love! why not? My dear fellow, the book of life, for people like ourselves, has the same title as one of Balzac's novels: *Illusions Perdues*. Every day only adds a new chapter, and the shorter the book, the better and the more interesting it is. But since it must needs be written, and cannot be written by any other means, it is, after all, immaterial whether we go east or west; we pass through the same experiences here and there. Therefore I say once more: Go to Grenwitz!'

"What could I do? It seemed to me my duty to fulfil the wish of my friend, to whom I owed so much. And then, was not Berger right in saying that it was immaterial whether I went east or west? In fine, I packed my trunks, bade my Mentor farewell, and went across to this island."

CHAPTER III.

Oswald had always lived in the city. His manners, his views, his attachments were all those of a city man. Thus it happened that when he saw himself suddenly, and as if by magic, transferred to the country, he was charmed and almost intoxicated with the unspeakable beauty of the first bright summer days at a beautiful country place. He enjoyed it more than most men. Everything was so new and yet so strangely familiar to him, as when we find ourselves in a country which we fancy we have seen before in a dream. Was the dark blue vault, which rose higher and higher every day, the same sky which hung so sadly and mournfully over the ocean of houses in the great city? Were these sparkling lights the same lonely stars to which he had now and then glanced up as he came from the opera or from a party? Could a summer morning really be so rich in splendor, a summer evening really so soft and almost lascivious? Had he never heard birds sing, that he must now listen forever to their simple piping? Had he never seen flowers, that he must stand and gaze at their bright colors and strange forms without ever being tired? He felt like a person who comes back to life again after a severe illness. The recent past lay behind him, covered with a thick veil; but days long since gone by, memories drowned in an ocean of oblivion, rose once more before his mind's eye like a dazzling, deceiving Fata Morgana. "Why, there is larkspur!" he cried out one of those days, full of happy surprise, as he saw the flower blooming brightly on many a bed of the garden in which he was walking up and down.

"To be sure," replied Bruno, who accompanied him; "have you never seen it before?"

"Yes, long since," murmured the young man, bending down and looking with deep emotion at the fanciful flower. He saw in his memory a little cozy garden near the town wall, where he played about, gathering small stones, flowers, and other rarities, and carried them to a beautiful but pale young woman, who always stroked his head when he came to throw his burden into her lap, and with a mother's patience never tired to answer his thousand questions. Then he had brought her such a flower, too, and the beautiful lady had said: "That is larkspur!" And then she had gazed so long at the flower that the tears had gathered in her eyes, and she had taken him passionately and pressed him to her bosom, and there he must have fallen asleep, tired from playing so long, for he remembered nothing more. The beautiful young lady he knew was his mother; she had died before he was five years old. Who has not experienced it himself, that amid the stir and turmoil of life, where one image continually crowds out another, and we are forever tyrannically held fast by the moment, everything gradually fades away, even what we held dearest upon earth, even the parents to whom we owe our life! Thus Oswald also had almost forgotten that he had ever had a mother; now the simple little flower awakened in him forcibly the memory of the long lost mother. The first weeks which he spent in the solitude of country life

recalled to him the first years of his life, for he had never since communed so closely, so intimately, with nature, or beheld her charming face so near by. He remembered now also his father, who had died two years ago in the same isolation in which he had lived, and felt for him now that grateful affection, which, unfortunately, never blooms out fully till those are long gone whom its fragrance would have rejoiced most. He remembered his father, a strange pygmy in form, whom the son at eighteen years already overtopped by more than two feet; an eccentric misanthrope, who was known all over town as the "Old Candidate," and whose wornout black dress coat, in which he appeared winter and summer alike, was familiar to every child in the street. He remembered how the strange, enigmatical man jealously locked up the rich wealth of his learning and his goodness from all the world except from his only son, whom he loved with ineffable affection, whom he nursed and tended with all a mother's tenderness, and for whom even he, the miser, thought nothing too dear.

These pleasant, and yet also painful recollections passed through Oswald's mind as he roved about in his leisure hours, wandering alone, or with his pupils, through the garden, the fields, and the forest, and daily growing fonder of life in the country. Often he would run down into the great garden early in the morning before the lessons commenced, and look into the dew-filled flowers and listen to the song of the birds, and then it appeared to him marvellous how anybody, how he himself, had ever been able to live in a city.

It is true that Castle Grenwitz and its surroundings were such as to excite the admiration of eyes more familiar even than his with landscape beauties, although the crowds of tourists who every summer visited the island rarely penetrated so far. If some accidentally discovered it, they wondered why so charming a place, with so many points of interest about it, could have been forgotten in the hand-books for travellers, merely because it lay a few miles from the great high-road.

The château bears, to this day, traces of the wealth and the power of the old knightly race of the Barons of Grenwitz, who have been landowners here from time immemorial, and who built the castle for their own defence, and in defiance of the neighboring barons, towards the middle of the fourteenth century. The lower story of one of the wings, with its colossal blocks of stone, dates from that early period; so does also the big round tower, at the point where the old and the new castle now meet. The new part was built in the seventeenth century, in the prevailing style of that day, and looks, with its ornamented pillars and queer decorations by the side of the plain, massive tower, like a man of fashion of the time of Louis XIV. by the side of a knight in armor of the days of Crécy and Poitiers.

All around the château and the numerous outbuildings runs an immense wall, at least twenty feet high, which dates back into even greater antiquity than the tower; it leaves ample space open, so that even the enormous building looks but small in the wide circle. This wall has, however, long since been changed into a peaceful promenade, overshadowed on high by lofty beeches, walnut-trees, and lindens. The broad moat which follows it all around is now partly obliterated, forming a low swamp filled with reeds; and wherever the water has held its own, it is covered with a green carpet of water-plants, in which half-wild ducks love to feed and fatten. The wall and the moat had evidently been intended to afford safe protection not only to the inhabitants of the castle, but also to the faithful vassals of the warlike barons, with their wives and children, their herds and their provisions. Even the farm buildings, which, since the erection of the new château, had been removed to a distant part of the farm, had originally been enclosed within the wall. In those days there had been a single passage in the wall, a huge fortified gate under a tower, which opened upon a drawbridge, and then led to a strong *tête de pont*. Now the tower had been demolished; the drawbridge refused to move, and the fortification had long since been changed into a number of ovens and other useful contrivances. From this principal gate an avenue of magnificent lime-trees, some of which were several hundred years old, led to the great portal of the château. To the right of the avenue and in front of the castle was a vast lawn, with a stone basin in the centre; a naiad stood over it as patroness, but she had long since lost her head, perhaps from grief that for half a century the water had refused to come at her bidding.

The remaining space inside of the wall was filled with gardens and plantations, which dated from the time of the new building, and clearly enough betrayed the character of that period by the straight walks, carefully trimmed evergreen hedges, huge pyramids of box, and an abundance of gods carved in sandstone. Here and there, however, a spirit of innovation seemed to have been at work. Box-trees had made desperate efforts to stretch out their crippled branches, and to grow for a while as nature prompted them; the two sides of a long, stiff walk had made common cause, and formed, united, an impenetrable bosquet; and a gardener, who had no taste for the silent language of yew pyramids and box avenues, had defied all æsthetic rules, and boldly planted fruit-trees of every kind wherever he had found an open space; even vegetables were met with, encroaching impudently upon trim beds of flowers. A sister of the naiad in the courtyard was completely hid under brambles and briers; but, more easily resigned than the other goddess, she had preserved her head, and prattled in silent nights merrily of the good old times.

Thus every generation had for a thousand years contributed something to the strengthening or beautifying of the old castle, from the giant wall which belonged to pagan times, to the asparagus beds that had been laid out this spring. Much had disappeared without leaving a trace; much also had been preserved; but as even the oldest parts bore the marks of life, of continued usefulness, there was no sudden break visible, and the whole produced a most pleasing impression, as if everything was just as it ought to be. Castle Grenwitz had lost, it is true, its primitive character,

and Oswald hardly thought he was looking upon an old feudal castle, built by robber-knights, but fancied rather he saw a peaceful convent of contemplative monks, when he returned in the evening from a walk with his pupils, and remained standing at a certain place of the wall, from whence he could look down upon the grass-covered yard in its dark shade, the garden with its countless flowers, and the castle itself, whose gray walls shone dimly in the twilight, while the swallows were flying swiftly to and fro, twittering merrily in their evening sport.

CHAPTER IV.

A quiet, convent-like life it was which they led at Castle Grenwitz. The region enclosed by the old wall lay virtually behind an ivy-covered churchyard wall, and no noise, no disturbance was ever heard there. No dogs barked there, no horses neighed; the hours glided quietly away, like the shadow on the sun-dial above the portal--quietly as the flowers in the garden bloomed and gave out their perfumes. The very wind seemed but to rustle gently in the branches; the birds sang low melodies in the tree-tops; and as for the inhabitants of the castle, why, the large hall-clock in its oaken stand could not do its daily work more punctually and systematically, or be freer from all desire of innovation than they were. The servants did their work with the regularity of automatons. Even the furniture seemed to be imbued with this spirit of order, so that Oswald could not get rid of the idea that the chairs and sofas moved by themselves back to their proper places, if by a rare chance they had been dislodged for a time. Little as Oswald had ever been accustomed to such a methodical life, and much as he disliked it by nature, he still had enough elasticity in him to adapt himself readily to the profound peace which reigned all around--an effort in which he was largely aided by his gentle disposition, full of good-will towards man. He did what he saw others do, and returned the formal bows with which people greeted each other on all occasions, with the same air of solemnity which he would have assumed when dancing a minuet at a masked ball.

At first he had not been over-punctual in the matter of the lessons, and taken more delight in enjoying himself with his pupils in the open air. They had explored the beech forest, which extended for half an hour from Castle Grenwitz down to the sea-shore; they had discovered an ancient tumulus and a cave, and often they had climbed down from the lofty chalk cliffs to the beach below, where, standing upon a huge block, they had enjoyed seeing the tide rush up, and shouted aloud to see if the breakers overpowered their voices.

During these excursions, which Oswald jestingly called preliminary studies for Homer, he had had constant opportunity to study the character of his two pupils. A greater contrast could hardly exist. Bruno was tall for his years, but slender and agile, swift like a deer. Malte, the young heir, looked stunted and sickly by the side of his proud companion. He was narrow-chested and hollow-breasted; his angular, awkward movements contrasted strangely with the marvellously graceful carriage of Bruno, and the effect was still greater when the latter was running or leaping. Malte shrank back from every danger, from every exertion, conscious of his feeble strength, and from native or acquired cowardice; for Bruno no tree was too high, no rock too steep, no ditch too broad; it seemed almost as if he were trying to subdue the passionate heat of his soul by bodily exhaustion. Oswald bound a wreath of oak-leaves together and placed it on the boy's bluish-black curls, to make him still more like one of the Bacchantes. But as in his native land, Sweden, the icy night of winter suddenly gives birth to fragrant, smiling spring, so in his mind also sunshine and tempest changed in a moment. Now it was exuberant joy and now sad melancholy which prevailed; now he abandoned himself like a child to others, and now he became rigid in sudden defiance; and all this suddenly and without transition, as lights and shadows change on the mountain slope on a day when the wind is driving the clouds like arrows across the face of the sun. Thus Oswald found the boy, a stranger in the house of his relations, hated by some, feared by others, an inexplicable riddle for all, even for the good old baron, who always took the part of the boy, though generally more from inborn magnanimity than from conviction. But for Oswald a single glance at the dreamy dark eye of the boy had sufficed to recognize in him a kindred spirit, and the mystic alliance which they had formed at that moment had been strengthened by every hour of their intercourse since. Bruno had met him on the first day of their meeting with the dark, defiant look which he was wont to show to everybody. He had then watched him with his shy but penetrating glances for two or three days more, and then Oswald's kindly, cheerful manner had dissipated all suspicion, as the sun scatters unwholesome fogs. His eye had become more open, more brilliant, as if the unexpected happiness of meeting a man who loved him, and cared to be loved by him, was dazzling and confusing him; and at last all the passionate tenderness of his soul had broken forth, the long pent-up current of affection had overflowed its banks--powerfully, irresistibly, like a mountain torrent which breaks through a rocky gate and pours its waters exultingly into the broad valley.

"Do you know," said the boy to Oswald, "that I was determined beforehand to hate you?"

"Why, Bruno, is hatred so sweet?"

"Oh, no. But I thought all tutors were like our first, and so I said to myself that what was good for one was good for all."

"And how was Mr. Bauer?"

"Well, he was a boor," said the boy, bitterly.

"Why, my proud little lord, will you despise all low-born men?"

"Certainly not," exclaimed the boy, warmly; "my own father was but a peasant, although he was a nobleman; I have often seen him behind the plough; but this man was coarse and rude, and a coward into the bargain. Once after dinner, I do not know what I had done, he slapped me in the face because aunty was present, and he thought she would be pleased to see him do so. Yes, he beat me," and the boy's eye flashed as he recalled the insult, and the big vein on his forehead, where wrath lies hidden, swelled up high.

"And then, Bruno?"

"Then I took the knife that was lying before me on the table and jumped at him, and the wretch ran away, crying for help. And when I saw that, and all the pale faces around me, I could not help laughing, and went quietly out of the room. And I would have liked to run away into the wide, wide world on the spot, but uncle came after me and promised me that that man should never touch me again. Uncle is very kind; you don't know how kind he is. But he is afraid of aunty; everybody is afraid of her--and yet I am fond of her, for she has pluck like a man, and I hate only cowards. Malte is a coward."

"Malte is weak and sickly, and you ought to be patient with him; but if you are really fond of your aunt, why are you so cross to her?"

"Am I cross?" The boy became silent. A cloud passed over his brow, his nostrils quivered, and his dark-blue eyes looked like a thunder-cloud when he said, glancing quickly upward:

"I know I am cross; but how can I help that? I am only on sufferance here in the house; shall I be grateful for that? I cannot be so; I will not be so, and if they were to turn me out. Look here, Oswald, I have often wished they would drive me away; I have done things on purpose to make them send me off; then I would go into the wide world and earn my own bread, as thousands of boys do who are not half as strong and as brave as I am. Even to-day, as we were walking along the strand, and the great three-decker rose on the horizon and disappeared again, I wished, oh! so eagerly, I could have sailed away in her as a boy, as a sailor--only away, away from here, no matter where to."

When the boy thus laid open the most secret wishes of his heart to his friend and teacher, the latter often wondered whether he, with his own doubts as to the way which he ought to follow in life, was exactly the right person to guide a wild, passionate boy. But the less he felt himself able to keep down the vague wishes and chimerical hopes which he shared with him in secret, the more the distance disappeared between him and his pupil, the more brotherly became their relations. No human being had ever yet made so deep an impression upon Oswald as this strange boy. He loved him as the artist loves the work with which he is occupied, as the father loves his son in whom he hopes to realize what he has himself failed to accomplish, as a mother loves her child for whom she has to work, to watch, and to care. Every night, when he was weary from long reading and studying, he went, before seeking his own bed, into the boys' room. He would not have been able to sleep if he had not first seen his favorite once more. That reserve which makes it impossible for nobler natures to show the whole fulness of their tenderness, made him during the day withhold his caresses; but then, at night, he took the boy's hands in his own and stroked them, and kissed the sleeper on his brow.

"They call you unfeeling, my pet, you whose heart is hungering and thirsting after love! And if all misjudge you and hate you, I understand you and love you."

CHAPTER V.

The farm-buildings and tenant-houses which belonged to the estate lay beyond the wall, and in order to make the communication between the castle and the farm-yard easier, a door had been

broken through the wall. A wooden grating which could not be moved, and a bridge which could not be raised, bespoke the peaceful disposition of the descendants of those warlike barons who had built the massive gates on the other side, with its ponderous drawbridge suspended by iron chains. The intercourse between the castle and the farm was, however, generally limited to the exchange of energetic notes between the steward and the housekeeper, as the two officials were often at variance with each other as to the quantity and quality of provisions which the former had to send to the latter. The farm itself was, like all the other estates of the family, rented out; the tenant, a Mr. Bader, lived on one of the other farms, which he had also rented, and rarely came to Grenwitz, which he left to the management of his steward.

Oswald, to whom farming was as new as the life in the country itself, frequently went to the farm-yard, in order to be shown by the steward over the barns and stables, and to be introduced by him into the mysteries of agriculture and cattle-raising. The steward, whose name was Wrampe, was a giant who always went about in huge top-boots, and who seemed to cherish the superstitious belief that he would lose his strength if he were to trim his immense black beard, or ever deprive the rain of its exclusive privilege to wash his face. The broad jargon of that region was his native and his only tongue; he hated the pure German of the educated classes, and in his heart suspected all who spoke it of being dishonest; his voice sounded, when heard from afar, like the roaring of a slightly hoarse lion. His enemies accused him of the bad habit of getting drunk every now and then; but as he did so only once a month, and then always for several days at once, in order to show all the more energy during the rest of the time, his friends winked at it, and even his employer preferred to ignore his little foible. Oswald liked to talk with the man, who was a fair representative of the people of that region in his blunt good-nature, his straightforward though often rude speech, and his fondness for proverbs.

Thus he had one afternoon taken a walk towards the farm-yard with the two boys. They found it deserted. The men and the horses were all in the fields. In the stables nothing was left but the baron's four bays, who played a melancholy quartette on the iron chains of their halters. The silent coachman was sitting at the door, gazing at the blue sky, as he had nothing on earth to do when the horses had been fed. A big black cat was wandering slowly around his feet; it was his *spiritus familiaris*, which accompanied him everywhere, and even on the box sat between his feet under the apron. In the cow-stables they found but a single cow, who was trying to shape her new-born calf, by industrious licking, into that form which may appear most desirable to a respectable cow-mother of certain pretensions. On the dungheap the chickens were scratching industriously, utterly unmindful of a battle royal between two young roosters, who had fallen out with each other about a little beetle, that lay on its back quietly awaiting its fate. An old cock, who might possibly have been the father of the two hostile brethren, was perched on the pole of a wagon, and crowed again and again, either from joy at the chivalrous nature of his offspring, or in order to report a cloud which was coming up above the roof of the barn. At one end of the roof sat a stork on her nest. The husband was just coming home, bringing the trophy of his hunt, a small snake, in his bill. The wife rattled her bill to give voice to her delight, and the stork, proud of having done his duty, was not slow to answer. From the little pond near the big stable a lot of ducks had begun their single file march across the yard, under the command of a majestic drake; they had evidently received an authentic report that behind the barn a sack of corn had burst, and the grains were lying about.

Oswald had been looking with much pleasure at this still-life picture of a farm-yard during a warm summer afternoon, while Bruno had tried to engage the reticent coachman into a conversation on the only two topics on which he could hope for success--his horses and his cat. Malte was tired, as there were few things anywhere in which he could take much interest, and ducks and chickens surely were not among them, at least as long as they were wandering about in the light of the sun. He asked, therefore, that they should go on; and so they passed through the yard, and a little cluster of miserable huts, into the open field. At some distance before them, on the road lined with willow trees, a servant seemed to have upset his wagon. The horses were standing across the road, and he was pulling at them, and cursing fearfully, as people of his class are apt to do under such circumstances. At last he seemed to have lost the little patience which nature had given and which liquor had left him. He seized the bridle of one of the horses and kicked it unmercifully with his heavy feet, encased as they were in immense boots. Oswald hardly noticed all this, till Bruno flew at the man like an arrow, crying out: "What a barbarian! what a brute!"

In an instant he was by his side, and ordered the man to stop his ill-treatment; his voice trembled, but more from indignation than from the effort of running.

"I know what I am doing!" replied the servant, and kicked the horse, which had become entangled in the traces, harder than ever.

"Let the horse go this instant, or----"

"Oh!" replied the servant, "or what?"

"Or I stab you with this knife."

The man started back and gazed at Bruno with amazement. It was not the fear of the knife which the boy held in his uplifted right hand--for the servant was a large, powerful man, who might have felled the boy with a single blow, and was, moreover, half drunk--but it was the fear

of the demon that showed himself in Bruno's flashing eye, the fear of the terrible passion which made the boy's blood flow back from his cheeks to his heart, and caused his nostrils to tremble and his lips to quiver.

"The beast is so savage," stammered the man, as if to excuse himself.

But Bruno did not deign to answer. With quick hands, and as cleverly as if he had managed horses all his life, he undid the traces in which the animal had become entangled. Oswald tried to help him, but his efforts were more distinguished by good-will than by great success. Then the boy ran to the ditch, filled his straw-hat with water, and washed the wounds on the ill-treated legs of the horse.

At that moment a horseman leaped across the same ditch and alighted on the road. It was the steward, Wrampe, who had witnessed the scene from a distance and came galloping up at full speed.

"Now I come," said the slater, as he fell from the roof; "what on earth does that mean? Why do you drive through the ditch, if you have a bridge within ten yards? and to ill-treat brown Lizzie! I will pay you for your laziness, you--" and here followed a curse of two minutes' length.

To deliver this energetic speech, to jump down from his horse, to spit in his hands in order the better to take hold of the heavy riding-whip, and to begin belaboring the broad back of the servant according to rule--all this was the work of a moment for the impetuous steward.

"I will not be beaten, sir," remonstrated the man.

"You won't be beaten, you rascal," replied the other, never stopping for a moment; "I dare say not, but you'll get your beating notwithstanding."

Oswald, who suffered witnessing the scene, although he knew well how fully the man had deserved his punishment, begged Mr. Wrampe to let him go now. The latter gratified his wrath by a few last blows of great energy, and then said, as if concluding a quiet argument:

"Well, now come along, John, we'll get the wagon right again."

Then he put his broad shoulders to the wagon and got it into the road as if it had been a child's carriage; the horses, who had had time to recover, pulled heartily, and the servant could go on his way.

"Drive slowly home, you hear, and don't forget what I have told you," the steward cried after him.

"But you have told him nothing; you have only beaten him," said Oswald, smiling.

"And do you think these people understand any other kind of talking?"

"Have you ever tried it?"

Mr. Wrampe seemed to be slightly embarrassed by this question. He said, in reply: "That has made me warm."

Then he pulled a brandy-flask, which held at least a quart, from his pocket, put his thumb against the place down to which he meant to empty it, drank, held the bottle against the light, and then, as he seemed to think that he had not done the whole of his duty, he took another good pull. After that he mounted his horse, which had stood quietly by him as if accustomed to such scenes, wished them a good evening, leaped once more across the ditch, and rode off at full gallop.

With Bruno everything turned into a passion. The glow of his imagination changed the fictions of poetry into men of flesh and blood. The death of Hector drew tears of sympathy and indignation from his eyes, and the moral disgust which he felt, when he witnessed an act of injustice or of cruelty, was so intense that it caused him a physical indisposition.

Thus, when Oswald the same night approached the bed of his favorite he found him, contrary to his usual habit, still wide awake. His face was paler than ordinarily, and large drops of perspiration stood on his forehead. Oswald was concerned, and learnt, after some hesitation on the boy's part, that the latter had concealed his sickness in order not to trouble his friend, and was now suffering great pain. Oswald was about to wake up everybody in the house and to send for a doctor, but Bruno begged him not to do so, because such a thing was always looked upon at the château as a very grave affair of state, and he disliked excessively to give so much trouble to others; besides, he confessed that the hubbub they made about the matter was apt to make his sickness only worse.

"Moreover," he said, "I am quite used to these attacks, and if you will be good enough to make me some tea, and to give me a few drops of the medicine which the doctor prescribed for me the other day,--the phial is on my desk,--you will see that I shall be right again directly."

Oswald hastened to bring him what he wanted. He gave the boy the medicine, made him drink

his tea, arranged the pillows, brought another blanket, and did it all with that thoughtfulness and handiness, in which men of delicate feelings, even when they are not accustomed to sick-rooms, often far surpass professional nurses.

"It is almost a pleasure to be sick when one has you for a nurse," said Bruno, gratefully pressing his friend's hand.

"Hush! hush!" replied the latter; "now do me the favor and get rid of your pain."

"I will do my best," said the boy, smiling.

Oswald's good wishes were soon fulfilled. The cold drops on the patient's brow became warm, and kindly nature lulled him to sleep, in order to restore in silence and secret the disturbed equilibrium of his system. At first, the delicate narrow hand which Oswald held in his own would now and then twitch a little; then all became quiet, and the improvised physician congratulated himself on the good success of his treatment. But he probably had some fears of a relapse; for he quietly slipped his hand from that of the boy, went for an easy-chair to his own room, and then sat down at the head of the bed. He had screwed down the lamp, so that the unusual light should not disturb the sleeper, and thus he sat in the dark, watching the moonlight as it was slowly sinking on the wall through an opening in the curtain, and listened to the regular breathing of the boy until weariness overcame him also and he fell asleep.

CHAPTER VI.

It was in the evening hours of one of the next following days when two ladies were seated in the garden saloon of the château; one was the Baroness Grenwitz, and the other a young lady who had ridden over from her seat in the neighborhood to pay a visit. The glass door which led from the room into the garden was wide open, and showed immediately before them a large lawn enclosed by tall trees, in the centre of which a Flora, carved in sandstone, had now for a century and a half poured stone flowers from her cornucopia. Within the room, which lay towards the north, it was almost dark already; but outside, the evening light was still lying warm on the green turf and the magnificent beech-trees and oaks; and the outlines of the two ladies, as they sat near a table pushed into the door, were sharply defined against the bright background.

A greater contrast than that which they formed could hardly be imagined. The Baroness Grenwitz was scarcely forty years old, but her large, cold gray eyes, which she always fixed long and piercingly upon those with whom she conversed, her lofty stature, far exceeding the ordinary height of women, and especially her peculiar way of dressing, made her sometimes look almost ten years older than she really was. Whether from love of extreme simplicity, or, as others would have it, from a love of economy which degenerated into avarice, she preferred materials more famous, like the wedding-dress of the worthy wife of the Vicar of Wakefield, for their durability than for other showy qualities, and she chose a way of having her dresses made which could not be called old-fashioned, because there never had been such a fashion in existence. The first impression which she generally made was that of imposing dignity; the careful observer noticed, moreover, in her always perfect carriage, and especially in the unfailing quietness of her deep, sonorous voice, and her carefully chosen language, which was scrupulously free from any vulgar expression, a consciousness of the impression she produced, and a desire not to break the charm by any fault of hers.

We cannot say with certainty whether the lady who was with the baroness really was overawed by her stately appearance, or merely appeared to be so; this much only was evident, that she endeavored at that moment to assume an air which harmonized neither with the expression of her features nor with the costume which she wore. She was dressed in a riding-habit of dark green velvet, which she had tucked up sufficiently not to be troublesome in walking, and not to hide her small feet in their elegant little boots. The tight-fitting dress set off to great advantage the well-rounded outlines of her youthful form; and the little round hat, now lying with the gloves and the whip on a small table near by, must have been exceedingly becoming to the well-shaped head with the rich brown hair, which, simply parted in the middle, was falling in rich waves over forehead and ears, and was then gathered up behind in a wreath. She is seated opposite the baroness, who is a pattern of industry, and sews zealously on a piece of linen, which may possibly become a napkin, while the visitor is busy embroidering a cipher in another napkin. This is strange kind of work to be done in a riding-habit, and the lady does not seem to be particularly fond of it; at least she quickly throws up her head, when the baroness rises in order to look for something in another part of the room, and shows a pretty face, with soft, child-like features, and large brown eyes, full of moist tenderness. Just now, however, the face bears rather the expression of a wilful school-girl, when her rigid teacher's back is turned for a moment.

"What were you saying, my dear Anna Maria?" asked the lady, bending once more over her work as the baroness turned round.

"I was asking, dear Melitta, whether you had enough red yarn?"

Melitta looked as if she were going to say, "More than I want!" but she contented herself with the reply: "I think I have enough."

The baroness had taken her seat again and continued the conversation, which had been interrupted for a moment.

"Then there if little hope of complete recovery?" she said.

"Little or none," replied Melitta, "especially now, since his violent attacks have ceased. Doctor Birkenhain writes that only a miracle can save Carlo from insanity, and I presume that means simply, he is irrevocably lost."

"It is a sad fate which the Almighty has decreed for you, my poor Melitta," said the baroness.

Melitta shrugged her shoulders, but said nothing.

"It was in this very room," continued the baroness, taking it apparently for granted that the subject could not be in any way painful to Melitta, "that I saw Berkow the last time. I must confess that I could not overcome a slight suspicion already, on the evening on which he had that disagreeable quarrel with your cousin Barnewitz, when Baron Oldenburg tried in vain to make an end to the trying scene."

Melitta von Berkow did not seem to be specially delighted with this evidence of the admirable memory of the baroness; she became restless, and asked, apparently without knowing what she was saying:

"Have you heard from Oldenburg?"

"The baron came back a week ago."

"Oh!" cried Melitta, in a tone which made the baroness look up from her work.

"What is the matter, Melitta?"

"I am so awkward," said the latter, and pressed a tiny drop of blood from a finger of her left hand. "So Oldenburg is back again? What brings him back to us? Has he found Egypt as tiresome as our own country here?"

"The contracts with his tenants expire next November, like some of our own. I presume that was the cause of his return. He seems to have become a greater misanthrope than ever. Griebenow, one of our men, met him in the forest; he has not been here yet."

"Well, my dear Anna Maria, you will not mind, I am sure, that want of attention on his part; you never were very good friends, I believe."

"I am not aware that Oldenburg ever desired to be a friend of mine. He never had any friends. A man who openly scoffs at all religion, who forgets the honor of his caste and the interests of his equals so far as to speak in the National Assembly and at every meeting in favor of all innovators; a man who apparently only comes among us in order to laugh at us--such a man has only to blame himself if we bestow our interest and our sympathy upon others who deserve it better."

"Well, I should not have thought that he was ever made to feel the want of interest in himself. Nor will he be left without it now. I never could understand why all the world took so much trouble about a man who minds the world as little as he does."

"That is easy of explanation, dear Melitta. The Oldenburgs are one of our oldest families; we cannot look on with indifference when the last scion of such a race becomes a plebeian."

"Oldenburg will never be a plebeian," said the younger lady, with some warmth.

"Why, dear Melitta, you take the baron's part very warmly. Would you also defend his immoral way of living, and his love affairs with which he has enriched the *chronique scandaleuse* of this and other districts?"

"I have never done anything immoral, as far as I know, nor approved of it," said the visitor, with greater heat than before. "And as for Baron Oldenburg's private life, I do not presume to judge it, because I know nothing of it. However," she continued, after a short pause and in a much quieter tone, "I should really be astonished if Oldenburg were such a Don Juan as people make him out to be. You must admit, my dear Anna Maria, that he has neither the beauty nor the address which are commonly expected in such a character?"

"Now that is a point on which *I* do not presume to judge," said the baroness, with an effort to be ironical. "I leave that to you young people."

"Young people!" exclaimed Melitta, laughing. She let her work fall into her lap, and leaned back comfortably in her chair, looking at the baroness, who worked on industriously, and showing much humor blended with a goodly share of malice. "Young people? Do you know, dearest Anna Maria, that I shall be thirty this very year? My Julius will be twelve next month--only four years younger than your Helen. By the way, how is the child? Is she to remain forever in the boarding-school in Hamburg? How long has she been there now? Two--no, it is already three years! and not once has she been back here all that time! You will not know your own child any longer, dear baroness."

"The boarding-school is so very superior, everybody praises it so highly, that I should blame myself if I did not leave the child there as long as I can. But you seem to have forgotten, dearest Melitta, that we saw Helen last year at Ostend; and since you seem to have such a longing for the young lady, I will tell you in secret that you will be able to see her here at Grenwitz this summer."

"This very summer? Why see there! Has that any connection with Oldenburg's return? Pardon my indiscretion! But I recollect that some years ago, when the baron came back from his first great journey, you said a match with Oldenburg would perhaps not be objectionable to you."

"Then I did not know the baron as I have unfortunately learnt to know him since. Nor would that fall in with my husband's wishes, who, I believe, has promised Helen half and half to somebody else."

"To somebody else? Not to your worthy cousin Felix?"

"As I said before, I know nothing positive about it; Grenwitz is very reserved; but I almost guess so, from the fact that he has procured for Felix a year's leave of absence, and he is going to spend that year here. They say his health is very much impaired."

"I hope not as much so as his fortune," said Melitta, dryly.

"His fortune? What do you know of his circumstances?"

"I only repeat what the world says. You must agree, my dear, that if the *chronique scandaleuse* has something to say about Oldenburg, it is far more eloquent about Felix, and the lieutenant surely has furnished topics enough."

"Felix is very young."

"Not younger than Oldenburg."

"Five years."

"One would not think so upon looking at him. But then he has lived rather fast."

"One could really imagine, my dear Melitta, that Felix was nearer to you than he really is. Candidly, I should like to know what you think of this match, if Grenwitz should not abandon the project."

"Well, then--I should consider it a misfortune, a very great misfortune, and in proportion as Helen is beautiful and innocent; what in all the world can suggest to the baron such a match? For I shall never believe that a mother could consent to such a union, which cannot fail to make her daughter inexpressibly unhappy."

Melitta had risen and cut the air with her riding-whip, as if she wished to say: That is what he deserves, who offers to aid in such a piece of rascality. Her tall, slender form looked a different being from her who had been timidly bending over her work or negligently reclining in her easy-chair. Even the features of her face seemed to change, and to become sharper, older; the fire in her large eyes blazed forth ominously. The mention of this match had evidently struck a chord in her soul which vibrated painfully through her whole system. She continued in the same excited tone:

"Felix is notoriously a fast young man. How can such a man feel love? And even if Helen's beauty, her youth, and her innocence should for a time get the better of his exhaustion, that would not last long. A man like him, thoroughly *blasé*, never becomes again a real man, and can Helen ever love such a person? And is life worth anything without love? And can you prevent all the misery that must needs spring from such a match? I know----"

The young wife suddenly stopped and walked rapidly up and down the room. Then, after a short pause, she said:

"And what external advantages can such a match have? Felix has satisfied his excessive vanity at the expense of his fortune as well as of his health. His estates are mortgaged beyond their real value; and he has, as far as I know, no expectations."

"Except that in case Malte should die, which God prevent! he would inherit the Grenwitz fortune," said the baroness.

"Ah! indeed," replied Melitta, with a strange emphasis. This last remark of the baroness had

presented the whole matter in a new light to the generous woman; it was a ray like the light from the dark lantern of the thief, which falls upon the strong-box he is about to steal. But she took good care not to let the baroness see what was going on in her heart, and continued in an unconcerned tone, throwing herself once more into the easy-chair:

"I hope Malte will not be so kind to the creditors of Felix as to die before his time. I see he is getting stronger visibly, and if you would only give the boy a little more liberty----"

"Liberty!" exclaimed the baroness. "Must I hear that word again? I give him as much liberty as a sensible mother ought to give her child. My opinion is that a man who, like Malte, will have a large fortune at his command, cannot learn too soon to obey, to economize, and to deny himself all that is superfluous and unnecessary. We have in our nephew Felix an example of the sad effects of too great indulgence."

"That is very true," said Melitta; "but----"

"We had, if I am not mistaken, agreed to avoid all discussion on the subject of education," said the baroness, with a smile of superiority. "I know what I am doing, and I hope, with the help of God, to carry it out successfully."

"By the way, did I tell you that I mean to send my Julius, a few days hence, to the college at Grunwald?"

"What a venture again!" replied the baroness. "That is the kind of public education, as they call it, which Baron Oldenburg enjoyed when he was young, and you see what the results are. To be sure, private tutors have their dark sides also."

"You have a new one, I believe?" said Melitta, who had risen and was leaning against the door-frame. "How is he?"

The baroness shrugged her shoulders.

"But what a question, to be sure," said Melitta, laughing. "He is probably like all the rest: terribly learned, awkward, pedantic, a bore. Bemperlein, Bauer--they are all after the same pattern. I should know a tutor at a hundred yards. Ah! who is that young man, crossing the lawn there with Bruno?"

The question remained unanswered, for at that moment Mademoiselle Marguerite entered the room, and the baroness rose to give her some orders. Melitta turned round, but the baroness had left the room with the words, "Pray excuse me!" Melitta was alone, and had to find the answer to her question for herself. She drew a little back behind the door and examined the form of the unknown young man.

CHAPTER VII.

Oswald and Bruno had stepped forth from the trees which surrounded the lawn, just opposite to the château. His right arm was resting on the boy's shoulder, who again had put his arm round Oswald's waist, and looked smilingly up into the face of the young man. They were eagerly talking to each other, and stopped when they had advanced a few steps on the lawn. Oswald pointed in the direction from which they had come, and Bruno ran back into the wood. The young man stood waiting for his return, and whisked off, to pass his time, the heads of some grasses which had shot up too high. He had no suspicion that, at a little distance from him, a pair of beautiful sharp eyes were carefully examining every feature in his face and watching every motion.

"If that is the new tutor, he is one more proof of the old saying, that there is no rule without exception. He certainly does not look as if he belonged to the family of the Bemperleins. That elegant summer costume you must have bought in the city. Very neat, indeed, for a tutor. You seem to be rather vain, my dear sir, and to hold long interviews with your tailor. But you are well made, I must confess, and the little moustache is extremely becoming to you. I wish you would please raise your head a little more, so that I could see your eyes. That is right--ah! *sauve qui peut!*"

Oswald had raised his head and looked at the windows; Melitta stepped quickly back and hid behind the door. She cast a glance at the mirror that was hanging close by, and smoothed her hair in an instant. Then she approached the door once more stealthily.

Bruno came rushing forth from the shrubbery and showed Oswald a small volume. "Here it is," he cried, "but you shall not have it." Oswald tried to catch the provoking boy; but the latter only allowed him to approach quite close in order to escape again by a sudden turn, or by a leap such as Uncas himself would have boasted of frankly.

Melitta, attracted by the pretty scene, had stepped out of the room. As soon as Bruno perceived her he ran up to her, and Oswald, who had stopped in surprise at the unexpected sight, saw how the boy seized her hands and pressed them eagerly to his lips.

"There you are, little savage," said the lady, stroking the dark curls of the boy; "where have you been all the afternoon?"

"I have been out walking--with Oswald--I mean with Dr. Stein," said Bruno, and then turning to Oswald, who had come up in the mean while and bowed, "this is Frau von Berkow, of whom I spoke this morning; this is Mr. Stein, dear aunt, whom I love dearly, and whom you must like for my sake."

"We must not praise our own wares too much," said Oswald, bowing once more to the fair visitor, "or the purchaser will become suspicious."

"Not when the merchant enjoys such confidence as this wild little fellow," replied Melitta, blushing lightly. "How long have you been here at Grenwitz, doctor?"

"About a fortnight."

"I think the baroness told me you came from the capital?" asked Melitta, who was curious to know if her suspicions about Stein's costume were well founded.

"Not directly; I have been living in Grunwald lately."

"In Grunwald! I am glad to hear that. You will be able to give me the information I want. The thing is this--but I fear I am troubling you with indiscreet questions."

"Not at all! I should be very happy, indeed, if I could be of the slightest service to you."

"You are very kind. The thing is this: I want to send my son, who is about Bruno's age----"

"Oh, aunt, he is three years younger than I am," cried Bruno, balancing himself on a swing at some little distance.

"What keen ears the child has!" said Melitta, lowering her voice. "Well, I want to send my son Julius to Grunwald to college. Or rather, I have to do it, because his tutor, a Mr. Bemperlein, who has been six years at my house, has obtained a place as minister, and is going to leave us in a few days. Now I do not know--but here comes the baroness, and I must postpone for some other time my thousand and one questions about all kinds of things, of which I know as little as my good Bemperlein. I never knew how things look in a great city, and he has long since forgotten what he may have known. Here we shall never find an opportunity. What do you say, doctor--could you do me the honor to pay me a visit some one of these days? Perhaps to-morrow afternoon?"

Oswald--bowed assent.

"I have asked the doctor to pay me a visit to-morrow," said Melitta, turning to the baroness, who had just come back into the room with Mademoiselle Marguerite. "It is about that affair in Grunwald. You have no special engagement, I hope, for to-morrow afternoon, for I should not like to make Doctor Stein lose too much."

"We, an engagement!" said the baroness. "Don't you know our quiet life, my dear Melitta? On the contrary, I think a little diversion of that kind will be very welcome to the doctor, who must have begun to be tired of the uniformity of our life here. I had thought myself of proposing a visit to you, Doctor Stein,--to our minister, who is, I fear, a little hurt that you have not yet been presented to him."

"Well, we can do both things very easily," said Melitta; "to-morrow is Sunday; the Reverend Mr. Jager will be delighted if you increase the small number of his hearers by your presence. If you go through the forest you will find Berkow only half an hour's walk from Faschwitz. I would ask you at once to dine with me, but I know the minister's wife will not let you off so cheap. Well, what do you say, doctor?"

"I can only express my thanks to the ladies, that they are kind enough to dispose of my time so much better than I could possibly have done myself," replied Stein, with a polite bow.

"That means, the wise man yields to inevitable fate," said Melitta, laughing. "And here comes the baron with Malte, and we can go in to dinner, a step which I am perfectly ready to take."

The dinner was set on the terrace, which had been added to the château on the side towards the garden, and which ran the whole length of the building. A tent protected the guests against the sun. The evening was beautiful. The sun was near setting. Rosy lights were playing in the tops of the lofty beech-trees which surrounded the well-shaded lawn. Swallows flew about,

dashing to and fro through the clear atmosphere. A peacock came, attracted by the well-known clattering of plates, and took his place at the foot of the terrace, where he picked up the bread-crumbs which the baron threw him over the stone balustrade.

The conversation was much more lively than usual. The baroness could make a very agreeable hostess when she chose, and was by no means so entirely free from vanity that she should have remained inactive when she feared to be neglected for the sake of Melitta. Melitta herself was in her most amiable humor; she jested and laughed, she teased and was teased, unconcerned and innocent, like a mere child. Oswald did not dream, while abandoning himself willingly to the charm of Melitta's attractions, that his presence contributed largely to the greater cheerfulness. And yet this was exactly the case. There are few women who are perfectly indifferent to the impression which they produce on the company in which they are, and Melitta was certainly not one of those few. Her disposition was rather to be easily excited, and to be bribed by pleasing forms and clever words, in a manner which is utterly unintelligible to colder natures. Oswald was perhaps not exactly what the world calls a handsome man; but yet nature had not neglected him, and the good society in which he had always moved had added to the innate gracefulness of his manners. All this surprised Melitta the more agreeably, as she had not expected it in a man of such humble pretensions. Oswald appeared to her every moment of greater importance; she began to fear that her brusque invitation had been out of place, and yet she was charmed with the idea of seeing the young man at her own house. She felt flattered when she met more than once, Oswald's admiring glance across the table; and yet she always cast down her long silky eyelashes, searching and eloquent as her eyes generally were.

After dinner the baroness proposed a game of graces, as Melitta declared that she could remain a little longer. Bruno ran off to bring the hoops, which were neither out of place nor out of repair,--a fact which spoke volumes for the scrupulous order that reigned at the château. Soon the company was standing about on the lawn in a wide circle, and the graces flew around merrily through the soft, warm evening air. All, even the baron, showed more or less skill in the game, except Malte, who could never catch the hoop when it did not fall straight upon his stick. Melitta, on the other hand, never failed to avail herself of his missing, for the purpose of sending her hoop, with lightning speed, out of the regular order, at the head of some one of the other players, and Oswald noticed that he was more frequently distinguished in this way than any of the others.

In the mean time it had become nearly dark; the old baron had noticed a few dew-drops on the grass, and the evening dew was, in his opinion, sheer poison for Malte, who had suffered for some time of diphtheria when a child. He proposed, therefore, that they should all go in. Melitta found that it was high time for her to return, and begged that her groom might be ordered to saddle the horses. Bruno had hurried away with the order; the baroness and mademoiselle had gone into the sitting-room; the baron was busy wrapping a thick shawl around Malte's throat to prevent his taking cold, and thus Oswald and Melitta found themselves alone for the first time since their short conversation before. Melitta had broken a rose from a bush which grew at the feet of the stone Flora, and stood looking thoughtfully at the brilliant flower.

"I must beg your pardon," she said suddenly, in a low, quick voice, but without raising her eyes, "that I committed the blunder of asking you *sans façon* to pay me a visit which may give you some trouble."

"Not at all; I repeat quite sincerely now, what I before said from common politeness, that I shall be very happy indeed to be of some service to you."

"Then you will come to-morrow?"

"At your service."

"No, as I wish it!--Just see how marvellously beautiful this rose is! Are you as fond of roses as I am?"

"I love everything beautiful," said Stein, looking not at the rose but at Melitta.

She raised her long eyelashes and looked deep and full into the young man's brilliant eyes.

"There!" she said suddenly, holding the rose towards him as if to let him smell it; but he only felt how the slim fingers of the lady touched his lips like a mere breath.

"Here are the horses, aunt!" cried Bruno.

"I am coming!" replied Melitta, and left Stein.

The rose was lying at his feet; he quickly stooped, picked it up, and hid it in his bosom.

Mademoiselle Marguerite brought Melitta her gloves, her hat, and her whip.

"Is the baroness in the parlor?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll go and say good-by to her."

The old baron, Oswald, and the boys went through the gate in the iron railing of the park into the courtyard, where a groom was walking two horses up and down. Oswald admired the beauty of the animals, especially that with the lady's saddle, a thoroughbred, and Melitta's pet--Bella.

Melitta stepped quickly out of the portal, followed by the baroness and mademoiselle. The old baron helped her in the saddle.

"Good-by! good-by!" she called out. "*Allez*, Bella!" and thus she galloped away out of the courtyard into the dim evening air.

The others had gone back into the house. Oswald alone remained, his eyes fixed upon the gate through which Melitta had disappeared, and sunk in deep thought.

"Had we not better go in, Oswald?" said Bruno, seizing his hand. "It is quite dark now."

"It is quite dark now," repeated the young man, and followed the boy dreamily.

CHAPTER VIII.

The baron had offered Oswald a carriage to drive to church, but the young man declined, remembering still the evil thoughts to which he had been tempted by the slowness of the bays on the night of his arrival. Bruno and Malte were looking for a visit from the sons of a neighbor. Bruno would have liked best to accompany Oswald, but as the latter begged him to stay at home, he said:

"You are very glad to get rid of me for a few hours, I know, but I know also what I shall do. I shall go into the woods, and not return home till evening."

"You will not do that, I hope, Bruno?"

"And why not?" asked the boy, angrily.

"Because you love me."

"Well, then, I'll stay here for your sake; nor will I beat stupid Hans von Plügger, and altogether behave so remarkably well that even aunty will have to be satisfied."

"Do that, my dear boy. Good-by!"

"Good-by, dearest, best of all friends!" cried the boy, and threw himself passionately on the bosom of his only friend. Then he tore himself away and ran off into the garden, there to be alone with his wild, unbridled heart.

Oswald took the path which he knew would lead him to the village where the minister lived. The sun was shining brightly in the blue sky, on which large white flakes of clouds were standing quietly about. The air was not oppressive, for the vicinity of the sea tempered the summer heat. Larks were singing their jubilates on high. Near the edge of the great forest, which sent an outrunner, as it were, far into the cultivated fields, an immense bird of prey was drawing its wide circles. No laborers were to be seen in the fields, and the ploughs and harrows were lying idle about. In an enclosure near the road, fat cows and calves were ruminating in peace and comfort; a couple of merry colts came up to the fence and looked with curiosity at the wanderer.

Oswald had gone beyond the farm-yard. He came to the place in the road where the scene between Bruno and the servant had taken place. Involuntarily, almost, he stopped; the whole scene came back to his mind; he saw the fair boy, angry and threatening, like a youthful god, and the mean, frightened hind. He almost regretted having persuaded his favorite to stay at home. He was so happy, so cheerful on this beautiful morning, and it had become quite a habit with him to share all his joys with the boy. "You wild, good, noble fellow," he said to himself, "what are you doing in this world of womanish men? Are they not afraid of you already now, when you are a mere boy; what will they do when you grow up to be a man? All the world cries aloud, 'We want men!' How can you ever expect to have men, when home and school and life all unite to break the proud strength of youthful hearts in the germ already? They take the bow and whittle away at it more and more, and then they wonder if the delicate thing breaks suddenly in their hands. Pygmies, who try to bind and fetter with a thousand slender threads the giant whom a lucky accident has brought to their desert island!"

Oswald was very near working himself into a most melancholy state of mind; but the bright,

clear morning did not let him indulge long in dark night-thoughts. An image, the image of a beautiful woman, which had remained last night, before sleep closed his eyes, clearly before his soul, which had passed like a pleasant shadow through all his dreams, and which this morning had hovered around him like the echo of some charming melody, now came vividly before his mind's eye. He tried in vain to banish it. Who has not experienced the persistency with which the forms of persons who are often perfectly indifferent to us will present themselves before us, with every detail, against our earnest desire, whilst we cannot, by any effort of our own, conjure up the picture of those who are dearest to our heart? Is it because we are so rarely able to look upon these calmly and deliberately; or is it because where heart speaks to heart, and soul mingles with soul, the outward form is consumed as by a flash of lightning? Is it because the mind, capable of seizing what is imperishable, eternal, has no need of the mere perishable body? While Oswald was thinking only of Melitta, and wished to think of nothing else, he saw continually before him the baroness, Mademoiselle Marguerite, and a number of ladies of his acquaintance; but the Amazon in the green riding-habit was forever dissolving into capricious vapors. "Well, then, fare thee well, fair vision!" cried the young man, and endeavored to lead his thoughts into a new channel.

The ground on which he had been walking had so far been undulating; now it became level, like the surface of the sea during a calm. A vast heath lay before him; beyond it the village with the church, which was the goal of his pilgrimage. Other farms appeared here and there against the horizon. The willows, which so far had followed the road on both sides, became scarcer, and at last disappeared entirely. Here and there the turf had been taken off and the peat lay bare, or was piled up high in long black rows, for the purpose of drying. In the ditches glimmered the black waters. Pee-wees and other marsh-birds were flying to and fro. In the whole wide expanse Oswald did not see a human being, except a woman who was sitting a few hundred yards before him, upon a boundary-stone. As he came nearer he saw that it was an old woman, dressed very poorly, but scrupulously neat. She must have fallen asleep on the stone from the fatigue of her journey, for she quickly threw up her head when Oswald approached, and looked with astonishment at the young man.

"Good-morning, mother," said the latter, stopping; "is the village there before us Fashwitz?"

"Yes," said the woman, with a vivacity rare at her time of life; "are you going to church there?"

"Yes, mother. When does service begin?"

The old woman glanced up at the sun, and said:

"I have slept too long; it is too late now for me; my old legs won't carry me fast enough; but you are a young man. You will be in time yet I beg your pardon, sir, but what is your name?"

"Stein--Oswald Stein."

"Stein? I must have heard that name somewhere."

"Maybe. It is not a rare name."

"Stein--hm, hm; I beg your pardon, sir, where do you come from?"

Oswald, who was rather amused at being questioned in this naïve way, and who liked the manner of the old woman, sat down opposite to the old lady on the trunk of a fallen willow-tree. He knew there was time enough for him; and while she, with her wrinkled hands resting on her knees, fixed her deep-sunk but expressive eyes firmly upon his face, he said to her:

"From Grenwitz, mother."

"From Grenwitz? Is it possible? That is where I came from. I beg your pardon, sir, are you on a visit there?"

"Not exactly. I teach the boys."

"Is that possible?"

"Why not?"

"Well, the candidates for the ministry generally look very differently."

Oswald laughed.

"And you are walking the long way quite alone, mother?"

"I have not a soul who could walk with me; my husband died ever so long ago, and my boys died and my girls died--they all died."

The old woman smoothed the folds of her dress on her knee as if she meant to say: All buried, and the earth smoothed down over them, and there is an end of them all.

Oswald felt deep pity for the lonely, helpless old age of the woman. He said, merely in order to

say something which he thought might be of some little comfort to the poor old soul:

"Well, you will see all your dear ones again in the other world."

"In the other world?" said the old woman, glancing up at the blue sky. "I believe in no other world."

"What! You do not believe in it?" asked Oswald, astonished.

The old woman shook her head.

"You are quite young yet, Mr.--how was your name? Stein--yes--you are quite young yet, Mr. Stein; but when you have seen as many people die as I have, you too will no longer believe in it. When a man dies, he is dead--really dead. And then, at the resurrection, as they call it, what would become of all the people? In our village there is not a soul left of all who lived when I was young. And the others, who were born after me, they have grown old and they are dead too. And thus new ones are coming all the time, and more new ones. No; the whole earth would not have room enough for all these people."

"But perhaps in other stars?" suggested Oswald.

"How could they get there? No; no one gets away from the earth, but they all get under the earth--all--all;" and the old woman again smoothed the folds of her dress on her knees.

"The body, yes; but not the soul."

"Well, I don't know," said the matron, shaking her head; "but I know this much, that when any one dies he is really dead, and we say, Now the poor soul is at rest. And what better can we wish one another than rest, whether we are noblemen or peasants, young folks or old?"

"But why do you walk all the way to church if you do not believe in anything?" asked Oswald.

"Who says that?" said the matron, almost indignant; "I believe in God, like every good Christian; and everybody ought to be upright and pious; that has nothing to do with the resurrection; and we must do our duty, that no one need be told. And now, young master, make haste and get away, or you'll be too late. I'll turn back again. Goodby!" And so she got up, seized an oak stick which had been leaning by her side against the stone, offered Oswald her withered, trembling hand, which the latter pressed, not without a feeling of reverence, and set out to walk back slowly the way she had come.

"That is a remarkable woman," said the young man to himself, walking on rapidly. "I must inquire about her. Who would have imagined that the doctrines of modern philosophers--doctrines which, to be sure, are only ancient coins with a new image and superscription--are current even among these classes of the people? Well, well, when even the poor in spirit and the simple in heart begin to remember that they have eyes to see and ears to hear, the last day of lying prophets must be near at hand."

CHAPTER IX.

The village of Fashwitz is an experiment made at the expense of the government. Originally the estate had been, like the whole larger part of the island, the property of a noble family, and had lapsed back into the possession of the crown when that family had become extinct. The government, desirous to obtain a nucleus of small landowners or independent farmers, which are here almost entirely wanting, had established here and on other estates genuine farmers' colonies, by laying them out in small parcels and selling these to all who chose to buy for merely nominal prices. The community at Fashwitz had a church built for them, and a minister was sent there; it was surely not the fault of the government if the good people of Fashwitz did not prosper.

It seemed, however, highly desirable that they should avail themselves of their other privileges and prerogatives a little more zealously than they seemed to do of the opportunity to obtain spiritual food on Sundays. For when Oswald obtained admittance to the church through a side-door--the great door was locked--he found that the devout listeners consisted of a few Sunday-school children, who were there *ex officio*, a handful of old women, faithful to the old traditions of their youth, and the families of some landowners in the neighborhood who tried to set their tenants and dependents a good example. The interior of the church formed a large, well-lighted hall, with a flat ceiling, in which pulpit, altar, and benches were discreetly arranged--everything

bran new, perfectly practical, and very unattractive. There were no small stained window-panes, no pictures on the walls or over the altar, no angels of wood or bronze blowing their trumpets with swelling cheeks, no votive tablets, no faded wreaths, in fine, none of those means by which the Catholic, to whom the church is but the antechamber to heaven, gives expression to his longings for a higher life. The only poetical feature in the church were the shadows cast by the linden-trees before the windows, which waved to and fro on the bright wall opposite, and the broad bands of light which fell diagonally across the building, and formed so many golden bridges on which the thoughts could escape from the unattractive interior to the summer morning, which, outside, lay warm and fragrant on meadows, fields, and forests. No one in the audience, however, seemed to stand in need of such a road, or to find it at all practicable, except, perhaps, a pretty little girl about ten years old, with long golden curls, who seemed to have a strong longing after the bright flowers and white butterflies in the garden of her father, a stout old gentleman nodding devoutly by her side, and who, on that account, was frequently admonished by her governess to sit still and behave herself properly. The majority of the people looked as if they had left their minds carefully at home, and a few bore the infliction with the resignation of well-bred men.

And, indeed, it would have been strange if the congregation could have been edified by such a sermon and such a minister. Oswald, who had found a seat opposite the pulpit, and behind the pew of the great nobleman, discovered at the first glance at the preacher, and after a few words of his sermon, that there was about as much sympathy between the minister and the congregation as between a learned missionary and a tribe of good-natured savages. The minister, a small, lean man of about forty, with his dried-up, withered face, seemed to feel this himself very clearly, for he had scarcely seen Oswald when he began to address himself to him almost exclusively, as the only one capable of appreciating the precious pearls which an unwise government forced him to cast here before the swine.

"Oh, my devout brethren," he exclaimed, fixing his eyes through his spectacles upon Oswald, who tried to hide as well as he could behind the golden curls of the little girl, "Oh, my devout hearers, you see how weak our reason is in face of these momentous questions. And yet, and yet, oh, much beloved, there are misguided brethren and sisters who still rely on the dim rushlight of reason long after the sun has risen for them also. Alas! this little stump of a farthing candle seems to them bright enough in the days of feasting, frolicking, and jubileeing, but not so in the days of old age with its solemn thoughts and grave anxieties. Therefore, abandon your faith in reason, and hold fast on faith! Abandon your idle trust in sound common-sense, as you call it! Oh, my devout hearers, this sound common-sense is a sick, very sick sense, is a device of the devil's, and a will-o'-the-wisp which leads you inevitably into the pool of perdition."

Oswald was strangely, but by no means pleasantly affected by this sermon, which continued for half an hour more, richly larded with quotations from Holy Writ. He was deeply impressed with the contrast between the simple, childlike submission of the old woman to the great, eternal laws of nature, and her modest but solemn way of stating them, and the arrogant self-assurance with which the man in the pulpit decided on the most solemn questions, and condemned every sound sentiment and natural impulse of our heart as empty show and deceitful delusion. The unadorned wisdom of the matron was fresh and fragrant, like a flower on the heath; the boastful knowledge of the preacher, like a plant grown in the hot, oppressive air of a greenhouse, luxuriant in leaves and stalk, but without sap and strength and flowers. Oswald was glad when the learned preacher came at last to say amen! after having once more denounced the morality and anathematized the souls of all who thought differently from himself.

"That is most assuredly not so," he said to himself, as he tried on tiptoe to reach the little side-door by which he had come in. And when, outside, the blue sky once more rose high above him, and the fragrance of the linden greeted him, he breathed deeply, like one who comes from the hot, stifling atmosphere of a sick-room into the balsamic air of a garden.

"I shall not make this man's acquaintance if I can help it," he continued his monologue, making his way down the little hill on which the church stood, and past several grand carriages, which had in the mean while overtaken him, till he reached the village. "What have I in common with him? His thoughts are not my thoughts, and his language is not my language. We would never understand each other. I do not believe in that vague humanity, which is on good terms with everybody and rejects no one; nor do I believe in that philosophy of the beetles, which hum around all flowers in the hope of finding somewhere the hidden treasure of sweet honey. The wise merchant sails past the coast which is too poor for barter, and the great words, 'Who is not with me is against me,' fell from the same holy lips which taught that love is the first duty of man."

Oswald had, as was his wont, given way to his thoughts with such utter forgetfulness of everything around him, that he wandered for some time about in the unknown village, where houses and barns and stables, walls and gardens, lay in inextricable confusion by each other, and presented to the stranger a perfect labyrinth. He was just leaving a narrow alley by the side of a large house, in order to get into a wider street, when the minister met him, coming from church. He could not possibly avoid the meeting, and his attempt to pass by with a polite bow was a total failure, for the minister had no sooner seen him than he stepped literally in his way and addressed him at once with these words:

"Ah! I surely have the pleasure and the honor to see before me Doctor Stein? How kind in you

to come and see me! To tell the truth, I have expected you for several days. When I was last at Grenwitz, to pay my respects to the baroness, I learned, to my regret, that you were out on a walk with your two pupils; otherwise I should not have denied myself the pleasure of calling on you at your room. My wife will be delighted to welcome you at our humble home. Pray, this way! Pray come without ceremony!"

"No escaping this," thought Oswald, and for the sake of politeness, that ape of humanity, he allowed himself to be forced to accept a hospitality which he had determined, only a minute ago, to decline under all circumstances!

"Gustava! Gusty! Gusty!" called the minister, as he entered. The desired lady was, however, not willing to give up the vantage-ground of her position behind the curtained window in the kitchen-door, from which she reconnoitred in security the appearance of the stranger and the purpose of his visit. The minister, therefore, showed the way into his study, where he begged Oswald to allow him to take off his gown, and then to inform his Gustava of the honor that his house was receiving.

The reverend gentleman's study was a large room with two windows; a few book-shelves, some pictures of saints on the wall, a hard sofa covered with black horse-hair, a round centre-table littered with books, and a desk with a chair, which turned on a screw, near the window, formed the simple furniture; the atmosphere was heavy with tobacco-smoke. Oswald was so oppressed by this perfume that he had to open a window, and in doing this he felt a strong temptation to jump from the low casement upon the street and to make his escape.

The attempt to seek safety in flight was, however, defeated by the return of his host. The reverend gentleman appeared now in a summer costume of black shining material. He begged Oswald to remain a few minutes in his "cell," since "Gustava was ruling still in the kitchen."

Oswald, who had abandoned all hope of escape, had not even the heart to decline an invitation to dinner.

"You will find, it is true, nothing but the *paternum mensa tenui salinum*, the ancestral furniture on the simple table," said the minister, desirous to show his guest that he had not forgotten his Latin; "but you know: *vivitur parvo bene*: we can live well upon a little. May I offer you a cigar till dinner is ready?"

Oswald declined, as he did not smoke.

"Oh! an excellent habit! a classic habit!" said the minister, laughing at his own wit; "the ancients did not smoke, and Goethe, whom a frivolous but witty author calls 'the great pagan,' was a bitter enemy to pipes and cigars. You permit me to remain faithful to my habit of smoking a light cigar after my sermon?"

"I pray you will do so."

"Don't you find"--puff! puff!--"that smoking"--puff! puff!--"is a thoroughly Germanic, I might almost say, a thoroughly Christo-Germanic element?" said the minister, who was determined to show his cleverness.

"You would certainly furnish a new weapon to the scoffers at our religion, if you really thought so," said Oswald, dryly.

"How so, my dear sir?"

"Said scoffers might reply that to show them only smoke, and no fire, was essentially a Germanic, a Christo-Germanic characteristic."

The minister cast at Oswald a quick, watchful glance over his glasses, as if he would have liked to see how far he might safely trust his guest. But as he considered it unsuitable for a man of classic tastes not to enter at once into a joke, even when it bordered very closely upon a frivolity, he replied with a bitter-sweet smile: "Not so bad! not so bad! But who is safe against scoffers? To be sure we might reply: *Ex fumo lucem! ex fumo lucem!* light out of smoke! But let us sit down, dear friend, let us sit down! How is our dear good baron, and how is the excellent baroness? Ah! you are a happy man, my dear sir, to live in such a house, with such admirable people, who unite to native nobility the nobility of the soul--especially the baroness, a pious and high-bred lady who wants to know everything *ex fundamento*. She is now reading Schleiermacher's discourses on religion." ...

"Do you think she really understands them?" observed Oswald.

The minister looked again at Oswald with that peculiar glance over his glasses, as if he must take a close look at the man who had the courage so openly to utter a view which he entertained himself, but only in greatest secrecy. He contented himself, however, with a gesture, he drew down the corners of his mouth, he shrugged his shoulders and raised his eyebrows--a gesture which might mean either "All vanity, dear friend!" or "The capacities of that good lady are beyond all measure!"

"You will, of course, miss Grunwald; especially your intimacy with a man of such vast erudition as Professor Berger. But I am in the same sad condition. I also can say: *Barbarus hic ego sum, quia nulli intelligor.* I pass here for an original, because no one understands me. Our great landowners are certainly excellent, worthy men, who fear God and serve the king; but, between us be it said, culture they have not; I mean, of course, scientific culture. Ah, if these gentlemen could have enjoyed in their youth the advantages of a genuine rational education, like young Malte ..."

"You are too kind, sir, although only the smallest part of that compliment would belong to me. I only wished the *ratio* would show itself for once in Master Malte, for until now he appears to me a most irrational small quantity."

"Is it possible you are disappointed in the young baron?" said the minister, in a tone as if he heard something entirely incredible and unexpected. "Ah! I understand, I understand. Certainly nature has endowed Bruno in many respects far more richly, although he is not very accessible to the great truths of our religion, as I have noticed when I was honored with the duty to prepare the two young gentlemen for their confirmation. But *non omnia possumus omnes--omnes*," repeated the minister, not knowing exactly how to continue. "Yes, as I said, but then Malte is heir to a magnificent estate."

"All the more desirable, it seems to me, that he should be a man in the full sense of the word. But is the Grenwitz estate really so magnificent?"

"Why, my dear friend," exclaimed the minister, in a tone of gentle reproach that Oswald should display such deplorable ignorance in such all-important matters, "is it magnificent? There are in this neighborhood alone five, no--with Stantow and Baerwalde, which to be sure are not entailed, there are seven large estates belonging to it. And in other parts of the island--let me see--there are one, two, three more. That is a capital of at least a million and a half. A million and a half!" he repeated, as if his mind could not part easily with such a lofty conception.

"And the estate is entailed?"

"Why, certainly. With the exception, of course, of two of the finest estates, which the last baron, the cousin of the present baron, inherited from his mother, and which he tied up in a very peculiar manner. Just imagine, my dear friend: the late baron, who, between us be it said, was a prodigiously wild and dissipated man, left these two estates to the son of one of his mistresses?"

"But did you not just now count the two estates as part of the family fortune?"

"Well, between us we can do so, I think," said the minister, in a low voice, coming up closely to Oswald. "Nobody knows, you see, where the boy is, nay, whether he is at all alive, nay, they do not even know if it is a boy or a girl."

"Why, that is a curious story," said Oswald, laughing.

"A very curious story," said the reverend gentleman, "a ridiculous story, you might say. Just think: Baron Harald,--they have all of them odd names in the family--that wild fellow, who ought to have lived somewhere in the middle ages, fell in love with a poor girl, the daughter of a mechanic, a case which no doubt was of frequent occurrence in his life, but never had such disastrous consequences. He carried her off, almost by force, and brought her here to his château. Half a year later she escapes in the middle of the night. No one knows to this day whether she ran away to live in obscurity, or to hide her shame in one of our dark moors. The baron was furious, beside himself. He searched through the whole island. Then, in order to drown his grief and his remorse, he drank and gambled and led a life even worse than before, so that he died in delirium a few weeks later. When they open his testament, they find that he has left the income derived from those two superb estates to the mother, and the estates themselves to the child of his lady-love, whether it be a girl or a boy, provided only it be born within a given period. He had evidently had a fit of penitence before dying, or, it may be, it was a mere caprice. What do you say to that?"

"The story certainly is rather tragic than comic," said Oswald; "and have they never found any trace of the mother or her child?"

"Never! and yet they publish every year--it is a terrible disgrace, and I pity the poor baroness with all my heart--an advertisement in all the papers of the province, inviting the lost one to come forward and claim her rights."

"How long has that being going on?"

"Some twenty years or more."

"Then it is hardly probable that the poor woman is still alive?"

"Certainly not; and nobody thinks of it," laughed the minister. "They would make a pretty face at Grenwitz, if all of a sudden a young vagabond should present himself there, claiming to be the most obedient nephew of the baron, and demand the two farms, with the interest for twenty years! It would not suit the baroness, I can tell you; for she has not a farthing of her own, and, as

the whole estate is entailed, she and her daughter would, after the baron's death, be as poor as she was before she married."

"You seem to be a great advocate of entails?"

"Certainly, I am. I consider it fortunate that such large estates cannot be parcelled away by subdivision, and that thus an aristocracy of wealthy landowners is formed, which serves as a kind of ballast for the ship of state in times of peril--which God, I pray, may long avert from our beloved land."

"Well," said Oswald, "there are two sides to that question, as to most questions."

"Of course, I know," said the obliging minister. "But I, for my part, I have too long enjoyed the honor and the happiness of being intimate with wealthy families, noble in the true sense of the word, not to be a warm adherent of the aristocracy of the land. Besides which, I have had too many sad experiences of the fatal effect which large property often has upon the minds of plebeians, to use the historic expression; I mean the vanity, pride, and worldliness which it begets."

"I am sorry to hear such things of my friends."

"Of your friends?" asked the minister in astonishment.

"Yes, of my friends. For, without any purpose of mine, and often without, exactly knowing why, I have always found myself on the plebeian side, whenever in history the conflict between patricians and plebeians has become marked. I was a sworn adherent of the Gracchi and other Roman demagogues; I fought with the Independents against the Cavaliers, and I confess that even in the terrible peasants' wars I felt more sympathy for the poor oppressed serfs, whom brutal treatment had brutalized, than for the high-mighty, all-powerful barons and counts, who were not a whit less brutal for all their splendor and power."

The minister listened to these words with a smile of incredulity, as if he were listening to the rhodomontades of goslings who assume the air of accomplished roués.

"Very good! very good!" he said "You clever people are fond of paradoxes. You bring that home with you from the æsthetic teas in the great city, and you wish not to get out of practice, although nobody may listen to you but a poor country parson."

"I assure you, sir----"

"Never mind, never mind. But when you have lived five years among the rustics-- Do you believe it, I have never been able to induce these people even to buy a bell for the church, although they are bound by law to provide for the house of God? But when they are called upon to provide for a merry-making, or to carry out some worldly purpose, they have always an abundance of money."

"Well," said Oswald, "the nobles of this neighborhood are not exactly famous for their repugnance to merry-making, as you call it."

"The nobles? My dear sir, that is a very different thing. Their device is and must be: Live and let live! But, you know, the same thing does not suit all."

"And many things are not suitable for anybody," added Oswald.

"Ah, here comes my Gustava," cried the minister, glad to be able to break off a conversation which he liked less and less every moment.

The minister's wife, who just then came into the room, was a lady of about forty, with sandy hair, very light blue eyes, and a face which, at that moment, was rather red from the kitchen-fire and the hurry in which she had dressed; ordinarily she looked pale, faded, and old-maidish. She wore a dress of yellow raw silk, with a gold watch in the belt, and a cap with yellow ribbons, so that on the whole she made upon Oswald the impression of an elderly, unhealthy canary-bird, hung up in a room which looks towards the north. She, too, could hardly find words--and yet they came in crowds--to express her joy at seeing the friend of the great house under her lowly roof--evidently a stereotype phrase common to husband and wife. She felt so grateful for the visit, as her poor man had no well-educated neighbor at all, and now, she knew, the want was at once supplied by Oswald's arrival.

"My poor Jager"--that was the husband's name--"my poor Jager will become a hypochondriac here," she exclaimed, fixing her watery blue eyes with great tenderness upon the object of her apprehensions. "I do what may be in my feeble power to make him miss the society of clever and learned men as little as possible, but a poor ignorant woman cannot do much in that direction."

"You will compel me to contradict you," said Oswald, in whom the sense of the humorous had been getting the better of the disgust with which the hypocrisy of the worthy couple had at first filled him. "I shall insist upon it that ignorance and Mrs. Jager have never yet met, much less can they ever have made acquaintance with each other."

"You are very kind; I am sure you are too kind," said the delighted lady. "I cannot deny that I have all my life endeavored to relieve myself, for one, of the popular reproach that women are unfit for the sphere of highest----"

"Dinner's ready!" cried the parlor-maid in at the door.

"Now you see; that is the way our daily life is always asserting its rights as soon as we try to rise a little higher," said the dweller in the spheres of highest cultivation. Oswald offered her politely his arm, and the minister laid his cigar carefully aside, so that he might easily find it again after dinner.

CHAPTER X.

Dinner was served in a cool, shady room which looked out upon a somewhat bald and very sunny garden, and the conversation soon became quite animated. Oswald's residence at Grunwald was an inexhaustible theme. His hostess was a native of that city, one of the many daughters of a higher church dignitary there, who had just lived long enough to procure for his son-in-law the best cure in the diocese. She was very proud of her Doctor of Divinity, for the minister had actually obtained that academic honor by a most erudite dissertation on the writings which an obscure father of the church, of whom literally nothing was known beyond the name, might possibly have left behind him. But Oswald could not help noticing that he had certainly not been caught by her personal attractions, and no longer wondered why the table was so small and the house so quiet. The good lady also knew Professor Berger, and some other families with whom Oswald had become acquainted. Thus they could enjoy a delightful dish of gossip with each other, and Oswald understood what devastation the double-edged sword of his hostess must, in her time, have caused in a small town like Grunwald.

In the mean time the dessert had been put upon the table, and the minister had opened a second bottle with a certain solemnity; the lady had left them, and ordered coffee to be served in a garden-house. The minister had lighted a cigar, unbuttoned his black satin waistcoat half-way, and seemed to be determined to indulge himself in the illusion that he had enjoyed a sybaritic feast. He summoned Oswald to drink with him to the health of that most illustrious family with whom he had the good fortune to reside, a compliment which Oswald returned by offering a toast to his amiable, learned, and yet modest hostess.

"Many thanks, many thanks, my dear young friend," said the flattered minister, pressing Oswald's hand over and over again. "Yes, you are right, a learned, modest woman. Have you noticed that she corresponds with more than one of our greatest literary men, and that she contributes under the name of Primula to some of our magazines?"

"Is it possible?" said Oswald

"I assure you it is so, my dear friend, and you may imagine what pleasure it gives me to read in the 'Correspondence' of the paper: 'Fashwitz, Primula Veris (that is Gustava's cipher), a thousand thanks for your amiable letter;' or, 'You have given us great pleasure by sending us your admirable poem; it will appear in the next number,' etc."

"I can well imagine," replied Oswald, in an absent manner. "But had we not better follow our charming hostess into the garden?"

"*Festina lente*," cried the minister, upon whom the wine began to tell a little. "We shall not meet again as young as we are now. A good glass of wine is a thing not to be treated lightly, and Gustava is too generous to shorten our enjoyment. But the Bible tells us, that of every good thing there are three; so let us have a third bottle." ...

"But, Jager, the coffee is getting cold," cried the piercing voice of Primula Veris from the garden through the open window.

"We are coming, we are coming," replied the obedient husband. "I give thanks for you and me, my dear young friend"--and with these words he embraced Oswald; "my dear friend"--another embrace--"and----"

"But we forget that coffee is waiting for us," said Oswald, barely escaping a third embrace and making his way to the garden, while the minister, before following his guest, quickly poured the last contents of the bottle into a glass and emptied it in a hurry, probably giving thanks only for himself this time.

The garden was not exactly the most pleasant place in the world at that hour of the day. The plantations were quite young yet; the small trees scarcely as high as a man, and the garden appeared, therefore, most prosaic and bare, affording no shadow anywhere. Oswald could not help comparing it to the theology of his reverend host, even with regard to the eminent place given here also to the practically useful. For the vegetables were flourishing, while flowers were few and far between; a few sun-flowers alone recalled the appearance of Primula Veris, and by their tendency to turn always towards the sun, in whatever part of the heavens it might stand, the practical philosophy of her illustrious husband.

Fortunately, the bower in which coffee was served was thickly overgrown with jessamine and afforded a welcome shelter against the sun, whose rays were burning fiercely. Here they found the minister's wife, with a work-basket by her side, in which Oswald discovered, with some anticipation of evil, a small volume amid a host of sewing materials.

"Woe is me," he said to himself, "if that be a collection of Primula's poems, taken from the magazines to which she contributes!"

He tried to interest the minister in his vegetables; he insisted upon examining himself the great improvements which his host had made in beehives; at last he spoke of the necessity which forced him to take his leave at once--in fine, he did all that a man in his critical situation can do, but all in vain!

"We could not think of letting you go in this heat," said Primula, letting her hand gently glide into the work-basket, a movement which did not escape Oswald. "We are not overshadowed here by the tall pine-tree or the white poplar, but at least we are in the shade, and you surely would not exchange that for the heat and dust of the highroad? Out of question! Another cup, my honored guest? This is not Falernian, as the great Roman calls it in the ode from which I quoted just now, but a beverage which has become somewhat classic in its turn, since our great Voss has sung 'its praises in his noble verses.' Tell me, dear sir, has not the sojourn under our lowly roof reminded you of certain parts of his lovely idyl? Have you not felt with me, that here, far from the turmoil of the markets of men, the voice of poetry is heard speaking to us distinctly?"

"Now the terrible event is approaching!" thought Oswald.

"I admire your gift," he said, "to bind so sweetly old and new things, reality and poetry, into a common wreath, full of fragrance. I myself have unfortunately of late come in contact with the prose of daily life alone; and, I confess it with reluctance, I have done the thing I formerly considered impossible, and reconciled myself with it, although of course I have had to pay a penalty by losing all taste for the charms of poetry."

"Oh, you must not think so," exclaimed Primula. "The well of poetry may at times pour forth less abundant waters, but it never dries up entirely. You accuse yourself of being no longer susceptible to the charms of poetry. That--here she put her hand openly upon the little volume in black and gold--that ought perhaps to deter me from my purpose to read to you a few of those poems which you may have noticed, under the pseudonym of Primula Veris, in several of our prominent magazines. But my faith in the power of poetry, and especially of the latent poetry of the heart, is too great to allow my being convinced of the contrary by your self-condemnation. May I venture the attempt to put the correctness of my views to the test?"

"How have I deserved such very great kindness?" murmured Oswald, leaning back in full resignation, and closing the eyes in a manner which fortunately is common to persons who are half asleep as well as to those who are in ecstasy.

"I have given the title of Cornflowers to my little work," said Primula, turning over the leaves in sweet bashfulness, "because most of my poems have bloomed forth while I was walking through waving wheatfields, and at all events amid rural surroundings."

"How clever!" breathed Oswald.

"Following the rules of the masters of our art, and imitating the example of the Greeks, who placed a tragedy before a comedy, or rather, who made the comedy always succeed the tragedy, I shall read you first a serious, then a comic, then again...."

"Certainly, certainly; that will much enhance the charm of each poem," said Oswald, frightened at the endless perspective.

"Would you not rather, dearest Gustava----" said the minister.

"Let me have my choice," replied the poetess, in a soft but decisive tone, and then, clearing her throat--

"On a Dead Mole."

"On what?" cried Oswald, starting up with amazement.

"Well, you see, dear friend," said Primula, "how the mere title already electrifies you."

"Yes, indeed!" murmured Oswald, sinking back in his corner.

"On a Dead Mole," repeated the poetess, "which I found by the wayside:--

"How do you lie so quiet there
  With black and shining skin!
Your fate, alas! I cannot bear,
  Poor fellow, black as sin!
They scornèd you, they scoffed at you,
  They said that you were blind!
They surely were but people who
  Are of the same blind kind.
You do not show your face by day,
  Like those to whom the world is dear;
Yet light shone on your honest way,
  And in your heart 'twas clear!
And to the stars on God's own sky,
  High in the heaven's dome,
You looked from your own hill on sly,
  You little learned gnome.
You lived so quiet, harmless, still,
  In honor and in truth below!
You did not steal, you did not kill,
  Alas! and now you're lying low!
Now do you lie so quiet there
  With black and shining skin!
Your fate, alas! I cannot bear,
  Poor fellow, black as sin!"

"That is beautiful," said Oswald. "That is genuine lyric poetry, such as we find but rarely in our day. Not the hot-house poetry, which begins with reminiscences of Heine, strikes then a few of Lenau's accords, and ends with a blast after Freiligrath's manner. What deep genuine feeling there is in these stanzas! and yet such energy of language. A fellow dark as sin, that is simple but beautiful; that you have learnt from Goethe."

"You are really too kind, dear friend," said Primula, highly pleased. "Indeed you make me blush by your liberal praise. But, pray be candid, and tell me if you do not think that the whole is, after all, a little too idealistic for our modern taste?"

"Perhaps for our realists, who certainly go too far in their demands, and whose desire to make everything perfectly natural will probably lead them ere long, when Faust is played, to bring a real poodle on the stage, and to make him howl and yell by pinching his tail. But I am sure you could satisfy even those gentlemen if you wished to do so."

"What do you think of this poem?" asked the poetess, "On my Rooster?"

Oswald leant back in his corner.

"Like Richard Duke of Normandy
  My hero fought most bravely,
  All trembled when they heard his crow:
        Cockadoodledoo!"

"That is naïve!" said Oswald.

"Is it not?" said Primula.

"He never stirred late at night
  But in the morning early bright
  The cattle woke, when they heard his crow:
        Cockadoodledoo!
  "He spared no pains for his lady love,
  For her he scratched below, above,
  She heard with ecstasy his crow:
        Cockadoodledoo!
  "Of genius boasts my hero not,
  And poetry did not fall to his lot,
  Yet do I love indeed his crow:
        Cockadoodledoo!"

"Well, what do you say, dear friend?"

"What can I say," replied Oswald, "except that you have fully accomplished your purpose. The hearer imagines he is in the poultry-yard. The notes you strike are the very notes of nature; they come from the heart of things. The poem is a little gem of the realistic school of our day. But now, gifted lady, one more request: However much it may enhance the value of a poem to hear it from the eloquent lips of the poetess herself--I should not like the impression which the last stanzas have produced to be effaced by another poem; whatever else there may be in store for me, this is your highest triumph."

"Only one more you must allow me to read. It forms, so to speak, a trilogy with the other two, a summary of all that I have learnt by close study of nature. May I begin?"

"I pray you will."

"To A Maybug lying on his Back."

"Oh thou Bacchante of a merry night of May!
Hast thou indulged in nectar of the flowers,
Hast thou enjoyed the fragrance of the bowers,
From evening until early break of day?
Hast thou forgotten, ah! that life is short?
That all below is destined for the silent grave,
Where lies the beauty now and all the brave,
The far renowned, the great of ev'ry sort?
I read with awe thy sad and solemn mien,
Where doubtful rhymes alone are written.
Alas! thy life was but an idle, glist'ning sheen,
By those thou lovedst thou art smitten,
Thou bug of May, thou image of false love!"

The fair reader ended. Oswald appeared to be plunged in silent delight; Primula sat expectant, when suddenly the rolling of a carriage was heard, which soon after stopped at the house.

"Oh mistress, oh mistress!" cried the parlor-maid, in a tone of great anxiety.

Oswald felt relieved. Here was a visitor, and the reading, he hoped, was brought to an end. Perhaps this even gave him an opportunity to end his visit.

"It is the Pluggens family, dear Gustava," said the minister, who had reconnoitred the new arrival through the garden-hedge. "The lady herself, and her two daughters. Could you make a little haste." ...

"Excuse me, my dearest friend," said the poetess, hurriedly closing the book; "but you know: as often as we attempt to take a bolder flight----"

"Oh mistress, oh mistress!" cried the voice with increasing anxiety from the garden-gate.

"I am coming," replied the poetess, in great perturbation, and hastened on the sunny walk toward the house.

"Shall we not too----" suggested the minister.

"Excuse me, I pray, but I shall have to go," said Oswald, interrupting him.

"But why, my dear sir? The lady is a most excellent person, and the daughters, although not very beautiful----"

"And were they as fair as angels, I should have to deny myself the pleasure of seeing them. Good-by! Good-by! Pray make my excuses to Mrs. Jager. That gate there is open, is it not? *Au revoir.*"

And so Oswald hurried towards the gate. The minister had far too good an opinion of himself and his Primula to ascribe the "dear friend's" precipitate flight to any other reason than his shyness and his reluctance to meet this high and noble family, to whom he was unknown. Oswald, in the mean time, made his way down the village street and out into the open fields, and did not relax his steps until he was safe under the fine old trees behind which, as he knew, was hid the estate of Melitta.

CHAPTER XI.

The forest path, on which Oswald was walking merrily, seemed to be little frequented by foot-passengers, and still less by vehicles. It must have been nearly impassable in winter; but now, in midsummer, it was all the brighter and really romantic. The ditches on either side were badly kept, and every now and then the grass and the broad plantain would creep all the way across from side to side, and in many places the tall beeches and old oak-trees formed a dense canopy overhead. The farther Oswald penetrated into this leafy wilderness the quieter the forest became, so quiet and almost lifeless that he stopped the song which he had begun in his joyous happiness, as if he feared to disturb the forest in its slumbers.

For in these hot afternoon hours the forest assuredly does slumber. The green ocean of leaves no longer moves in swelling waves; quiet and immovable it drinks in the heat of the sun. Scarcely a leaf rustles here and there in one of the trees. Perhaps the little noise awakens another sleeping neighbor, and they whisper and tell the disturber of their peace that this is not the hour for chatting, and then they fall to dreaming again. The birds are hid in the thickest foliage and await the cool of the evening. The tiny mothers doze on their nest over their half-fledged young, and papa sits near by on a branch, his little head snugly ensconced under his wing, and sleeps, tired as he is with his early rising, his indefatigable singing all day long, and his busy hunting after worms and midges. They know that now is the good time for them, and dance merrily in the red rays of the sun, which slip stealthily through the branches, or they creep and hurry, and hasten through the warm, soft moss. Deep silence! But suddenly there arises a hoarse peculiar cry, in short, rapidly uttered notes, which sound like the voice of anger. That is the hawk, the robber of the forest. He is a wicked fellow, whom his bad conscience rarely allows to sleep, and that is the reason why his cry is so sharp and hoarse, as he is drawing high up in the blue air, proudly and lonely, his wide mysterious circle above his realm, the peaceful sea of leaves.

A curly-headed boy, who was watching his geese near the edge of the forest, had told Oswald that the road to Berkow was only about half an hour long, and could not well be missed. Of course he had taken it for granted, in giving his information, that the traveller would mind his way and not go astray. But as Oswald had not attended to the road, but, as was his habit, rather to everything else, as he had preferred leaping the ditches on either side every now and then, and rushing into the sacred halls of the beautiful forest, with their mighty pillars and lofty domes, he had long since lost his way. He had, indeed, for some time followed a narrow footpath, which led nowhere in particular, and only tempted him to penetrate deeper and deeper into the forest.

Oswald stopped and listened; he thought he might hear the voice of a human being, or the blows of an axe; but he heard nothing but the cry of the hawk and the beating of his own heart. He called out merrily: "Which is the way to Berkow, O hawk?" and the echo answered as merrily: Hawk!

At last it became lighter between the trees. He fancied he saw the end of the forest. But instead of that he only stepped out upon a clearing, which was almost entirely occupied by a small lake, covered with reeds and rushes. Walking along the edge, he frightened a loving couple of summer ducks, who rose from the reeds and flew with wild haste across the morass towards the wood. Then again deep silence!

"Wait and watch," said Oswald, to himself. "In the mean time I will rest a little, for I begin to feel rather tired."

He hung his straw hat upon a branch, spread his handkerchief over a moss-covered root of a secular beech-tree, and stretched himself comfortably on the soft heather.

"This place is made to sleep in," he said to himself, dreamily following with his eye the dragon-flies, who now shot like arrows across the dark waters and now stood as if spell-bound. "Who knows but this may be an enchanted wood, a fragment of forgotten romance, a little remnant of the grand old forests of which we read in legends and fairy tales; a portion perhaps of that forest in which the count lived, who, every time when his notes became due and he could not pay them, sold one of his daughters--a way of paying old debts which they say has not yet gone entirely out of fashion. And he who falls asleep in this forest, as I fancy I shall presently do myself, has to sleep on for a few hundred years, and when he wakes up once more his beard is snow-white and hanging down to the belt. Then he is justly astonished at himself, and asks the first peasant he meets with where the way to Berkow is!"--"Berkow," replies the man, politely; "never heard of such a place."--"I mean the château in the forest, where Melitta lives."--"Melitta? But, my dear sir, that's an old fairy tale."--"A fairy tale?"--"Why certainly! My old grandmamma has told it me I know not how often." Many, many hundred years ago there was a great forest standing in this country; and in the forest lived a fairy, and her name was Melitta. She had the most beautiful dark-brown eyes, such as the children of men are never known to have, and a voice sweet as honey, and that is why the people called her Melitta. She was the most beautiful and sweetest of fairies in the world; but she had one little weakness; from time to time she would allure a young man into this forest and make him lose his way amid the tall oaks and beeches, each one of which was exactly like the next one. Then she rejoiced. And when she wanted to set a poor fellow wandering in this way, she mounted her horse Bella--for this fairy had nothing but what was

beautiful around her--and travelled far and wide, till she found a stupid man. For she liked stupid men the best. Then she charmed him with her beauty, with her soft, teasing, bewitching ways and her honey-sweet voice; and in order to make the enchantment lasting, she gave him something--perhaps a rose. If he was stupid enough to accept that, he had to wander the very next day into the forest, whether he would or not. Then, of course, he lost his way, and ran to and fro and round about, till at last he would lie down to sleep at the foot of an old beech-tree. And when he is lying there watching the dragon-flies as they try to catch each other, and looking at the water, and listening to the whispers in the rushes, and the low murmurs in the branches above, he hears low voices saying----"Melitta, are you never coming? Get down from Bella. Do you not see that I am chained to this place? Oh, you darling, you sweetest, you most lovely of women! Melitta, sweet one! a kiss, one single kiss! And you are going, going now--but what is that? Away, brown witch! No, no--you are not Melitta."

Oswald raised himself on his elbow and stared, drunk with sleep, into the brown face that was bending over him. "What do you want?"

"No harm done, my dear young gentleman! Saw the young gentleman lying there; did not know if dead or asleep. 'Tis dangerous to sleep in the forest so near the swamp, if one is not accustomed to it from childhood up."

Oswald, who had in the mean time recovered himself entirely, examined the woman more closely and recognized in her one of the many gypsy women who infest that country, telling fortunes, hawking trifles, playing on the jewsharp, begging, or more frequently stealing. Thus they go from fair to fair, and from village to village. This one might have been twenty-five or thirty years old, as far as one could judge from the fire of her black eyes, the round, half-naked arms, and the firm carriage of her tall, slender form; but wind and weather, hunger and sorrow, perhaps also evil passions, had made sad havoc with the once good-looking face. The features were too sharply marked, the eyes too deeply sunk, and even the abundant bluish-black hair showed already here and there many a silvery streak. And yet it was a pity she did not rather display the thick tresses in their graceful windings than the rags of red stuff, which she had wrapped, turban-fashion, around her well-shaped head. Her dress was poor and much patched, her feet quite bare. Oswald now also noticed that an oddly shaped instrument was hanging on one of the trees, and a variety of quaint tools were lying about. A donkey, adorned with a red feather and a bright-colored blanket, was wandering thoughtfully through the trees and enjoying now and then a mouthful of the rich, hard grass.

"Are you quite alone, my good woman?" asked Oswald.

"No; I have my boy here, the Cziko; he is gone into the wood to fetch water; this here is fit only for frogs and toads."

"And how did you get to this secluded spot?"

"Know the place for years. Always stop here when I come to this country. Cheaper lodgings here than in the tavern, my good gentleman."

"Then you can show me the way to Berkow, I suppose. Is it far from here?"

"Not far at all. The boy, the Cziko, shall show you."

The woman put her hands to her mouth and imitated the call of the wood-dove in the most perfect manner. At once the cry of the hawk came back from the forest, and soon afterwards a boy came running out, who, however, stopped short, with an air of distrust and apprehension, as soon as he saw the stranger. The mother uttered a few words in an unknown tongue, and he seemed to feel at once reassured. He came forward, offered Oswald fearlessly the tin cup which he was holding in his hand, and said: "Will you drink, sir?"

The cup was not particularly neat, but the boy far too strikingly handsome to be refused, even if Oswald had been less thirsty than he really was. Cziko was perhaps ten years old, but he also looked older. The damp fogs drifting over autumnal fields, and the snow-storms whistling through the hawthorn bushes had washed out the youthful freshness of the boy's face, and given an expression of sorrow and defiance to the dark gazelle eyes, so that one could not look at them without feeling saddened.

The woman saw at once, with the doubly sharp eye of the beggar and the mother, what a deep impression her boy had made upon the stranger.

"Yes, he is a fine boy, the Cziko," she said, "swift like a squirrel, and brave like a wild-cat, and he plays the cymbal like no other."

"Is that a cymbal hanging on the tree there?" asked Oswald, somewhat surprised that the instrument was really existing somewhere else but in Holy Writ and poetry.

"Go, Cziko, show the gentleman what you know," said the woman.

The boy took the instrument down, laid it carefully on the stump of a tree, and, seizing the two sticks, began a most wondrous music, striking first slowly and then quicker and quicker. His

heart seemed to be overflowing with music; his hollow brown cheeks flushed up; his dark eyes, which he raised now and then dreamily to the tree-tops, shone brightly. Then he fell into another movement and another air, and after a few bars, the woman, who had in the mean time made a brisk fire under a kettle, began to sing, in a low, melodious voice, one of those Sclavonic national songs, whose plaintive air is apt to make the heart melancholy and the eyes tearful. Oswald sat there, leaning his head on his hand and listening as in a dream. He felt as if the sad notes, such as he had never heard before, were calling forth entirely new feelings in his bosom; as if they excited deep sympathy in him with his own life, and the life of all other beings, and made him long and yearn after an infinite, nameless happiness.

The song came to an end. Oswald started up. He looked at his watch. Three hours had passed away since he had entered the forest; if he wished to see Melitta to-day he must not lose another moment.

"Can Cziko show me the way to Berkow?" he said, going up to the woman and offering her a few pieces of money. The gypsy swept the money from his open hand, as if she only wanted to see the lines in it better, and holding it by the tips of the fingers, she seemed to study them eagerly.

"Well," said Oswald, "not much that is good there?"

"Much good, much evil," said the gypsy, shaking her head.

"That is the way of life," said Oswald, "and what is the good?"

"Much good, much evil," repeated the woman. "Every good line crossed by a bad line; cannot tell you the good without the evil."

"Well then, read it as it comes!" said Oswald

"Much happiness, and yet not happy," murmured the gypsy. "The enemy of men and the friend of women; quick to hate, quick to love; varied life, early death."

"Well," said Oswald, "I do not object to that. But how about the women? I am interested in that."

"Much good, much evil," repeated the woman, bending still lower over the hand, as if she did not wish the faintest line to escape her. "Much love, very much love, and yet so little happiness, ah! so little!"

"Am I in love now?"

"Yes."

"And with whom?"

"A very great lady, very beautiful and very rich."

"Hm! And does she love me?"

"More, far more, than you love her."

"And where is the evil?"

"Much evil, much evil! You cannot be faithful."

"How do you know that?"

The fortune-teller shrugged her shoulders. "Here stands another lady, and there still another--you love them all. That ought not to be. Brings you no good luck."

"But about the varied life and early death, is that quite sure? Well then, the harm cannot be so very great. Here, take this as a reward for your good news."

"Thanks. Take only for good luck, which I foretell, not for ill luck."

"Then I do not wonder that you are so poor, my good woman. Then take it for the trouble I am giving Cziko."

The gypsy took the money with real or feigned reluctance, and called the boy, who had, in the mean time, continued to improvise new melodies on his instrument. She whispered a few words in his ear, in her own language, and at once the boy started up and said to Oswald: "Will you follow me, sir?"

"Good-by, my good woman," said Oswald, looking with a feeling of interest into the dark, brilliant eyes of the gypsy woman. "When you come to Grenwitz, you must not forget to ask for Doctor Stein."

The woman crossed her arms over her swelling bosom and bowed low. Oswald picked up his hat and followed Cziko, who was already half concealed by the trees.

CHAPTER XII.

"Not so fast, Cziko," cried Oswald, loosening his coat from the thorns of a bush; "have a little consideration for my state of civilization."

The boy went more slowly, but always kept at a distance from the stranger. Oswald tried in vain to engage him in a conversation, whilst he was busy pushing the branches aside, through which the boy had just slipped before him like a wildcat. Thus they might have been walking on for a quarter of an hour when they found themselves suddenly in a small wood, which probably belonged already to the park of Berkow. The paths were carefully kept; here and there a well-chosen seat, or a weather-beaten Hermes pillar; everywhere traces of the hand of man. Then they came to a wider road, which was probably the continuation of that road on which Oswald had walked at first, and soon after to a pair of iron gates, which opened upon a fine court-yard. Cziko stopped suddenly; he pointed silently to the gates, bowed with crossed arms to Oswald, and ran back into the bushes, behind which he was almost instantly concealed.

"A mysterious beginning," said the young man to himself, as he walked slowly, almost hesitatingly, towards the gates. "I wonder if it is the after-effect of my strange encounter with those gypsies, or an anticipation of what is to befall me here which gives me such a strange feeling. Perhaps I had, after all, done better to accept the carriage which the old baron offered me yesterday. I might have escaped the minister and his Primula, and, at all events, I should not arrive here in a sadly neglected and disordered costume, after the manner of a vagabond, but in state, drawn by two magnificent bays. Well, well! A man is a man for a' that, and Melitta, if I am not grievously mistaken, prefers the kernel to the shell of the nut."

He opened the gates, which were not locked, and entered the court-yard. A huge Newfoundland dog who had been lying on the grass rose slowly when he heard the gates grating on their hinges, and came up to Oswald wagging his tail. "Well, here at least I meet with a kindly welcome," said the young man to himself, caressing the enormous animal. On the right hand he noticed a bright garden, separated by a low fence, in a line with the front of the mansion. It was a low house of two stories, very simple, but rather picturesque, thanks to a massive stone balcony over the front-door, and two superb linden-trees just in front. The three other sides of the large square were filled with offices and farm-buildings. A low fence and a row of dwarf fruit-trees formed a line of division between the court-yard and the lawn immediately before the house. As Oswald walked along the front of the house, he saw the high windows open; but there seemed to be nobody in the fine rooms beyond. The front-door was also open, and allowed him to look into a noble hall with a floor of colored marble. A large hall-clock alone broke the deep silence with its slow ticking. The court-yard even was buried in silence. The whole place looked deserted, and only the sparrows were twittering and making quite a noise in the linden-trees, and the swallows flitted low under the eaves to their young in the nests, and then as swiftly shot back again for more food.

"There is probably no one at home," thought Oswald. "You have made the long journey for nothing. Or can you perhaps tell me where your mistress is, my good dog? Shall we look in the garden?"

The dog looked as if he had understood Oswald's question, and trotted off towards a gate close by the house, which evidently led into the garden; there he stopped and looked round at the stranger.

"Then she is in the garden?"

Oswald opened the gate. The dog ran before him past a number of flower-beds into a narrow walk with hedges on either side, down to a flight of steps, which led through the hedge upon a kind of terrace. There he once more looked round at Oswald. Then he ran up the steps. Oswald followed.

The creature had disappeared in a group of tall, blooming shrubs. In the mean time the young man had advanced a few steps, and there a picture presented itself to his eyes which fixed him motionless to the spot. He looked upon a small open space which was framed in on two sides by the tall hedges that enclosed the whole terrace. In the centre a huge pine-tree with broad-spreading branches rose in full might like a lance. At the foot of the tree, and upon the carpet of brown leaves, stood a round garden-table and a few chairs. In one of these chairs Melitta was sitting, surrounded by the soft dreamy light of the summer afternoon, her head resting on one hand and the other mechanically caressing the dog, who was pressing closely to his mistress. She wore a white dress, which fell in graceful folds around her, and concealed her shoulders and her

bosom but just enough to betray their charming outlines. On the table lay a glove, a broad-brimmed straw hat, and an open book.

She was sitting there so deep in thought that she did not hear Oswald's light step till he was standing before her. Then she threw up her head, and scarcely suppressed a cry of delighted surprise as she saw the man actually before her with whom her thoughts had been so busy just now. For a moment the blood stopped in her heart, and then, rushing forth with vigor, it poured out upon her cheeks a rich glow of purple.

"See there!" she said, quickly rising and offering Oswald her hand.

"I beg your pardon, madam," said the young man, reverently carrying the fair trembling hand, which lightly rested on his, to his lips, "if I come unannounced----"

"But not unexpected, to interrupt your *dolce far niente* and so forth, and so forth"--interrupted Melitta. "Come, come, no phrases, if you please. Leave that to our empty-headed young gentlemen. Sit down and be thankful that you find me at all. Bemperlein and Julius have given you up long ago, and are away to pay a visit in the neighborhood; so you must be content with myself. That is your just punishment."

"If the punishment is just, it is fortunately also very mild," replied Oswald, "and I submit to it with all the humility required of a penitent sinner."

"You do look like a penitent sinner! But, seriously speaking, why do you come so late, and----"

"In such a condition? Seriously speaking, I could not come sooner and could not come otherwise. Walking on foot and over utterly unknown roads----"

"But why did you undertake that?"

"I am fond of such undertakings."

"Then we are kindred spirits. Well, go on!"

"And meeting on the road an old woman, who delivers lectures on immortality, a country parson, who preaches on the same subject, and a literary lady, who tells in sweet verses what she has heard from the beasts of the field, and----"

"Oh, you poor man!" cried Melitta, clapping her hands.

"Losing my way afterwards in the forest, falling asleep on the edge of a swamp, dreaming there all kinds of sweet, foolish things, finding upon awaking a gypsy standing before me, who tells me my fortune, getting her boy to show me the right way, and finding upon arriving at your enchanted castle no one who could lead a stranger to the lady of the house, but an amiable dog, who listens as attentively as if he understood every word we say--do you not think that doing all this requires at least as much time as I have taken to tell it to you?"

The dog laid his head confidingly on the lap of his mistress and looked up at her. "Art my brave Boncœur," she said, caressing her pet, "doest honor to thy name. Thou watchest nicely over house and home, and knowest full well that nobody else does it but thou and Baumann. Do you know that you excite my deepest interest by your encounter with the nut-brown countess, I mean the gypsy woman, and with her daughter Czika--for it is a girl, as I must tell you, to the honor of your sagacity."

"A girl, the Czika?"

"The Czika is a girl, you may rely on it. Where did you meet the two?"

"About a quarter of an hour's walk from here, in the forest, near the same lake, on the banks of which I had fallen asleep."

"Then it was upon my own soil--I am glad of that."

"You seem really to be deeply interested in the fair mother and her still fairer daughter. I recollect now that the child was much too beautiful for a boy. How does the gypsy woman get the name of the nut-brown countess?"

"Ah," laughed Melitta. "That is a long story, and one of those foolish undertakings of mine, in which I sympathize with you. It is now about six years since Isabel came for the first time into this district. She was then about twenty years old--perhaps, for she herself does not know her age accurately. Her child, the Czika, was four years old, that she knew, for she was her own child and not a stolen princess."

"How do you know that?"

"From the striking likeness between mother and daughter, which must have struck you also. Both of them were at that time extremely beautiful; in fact, I have never seen anything like it. I do not think any one could have remained unmoved by the sight of this youthful mother with her

magnificent child, which in the theatrical costume and the dark, abundant curls might pass as easily for a boy as for a girl. I have seen the like of it only in Murillo's paintings, with their sunny glow and fierce passion. It so happens that I fancy I know something of picturesque beauty, and try my hand occasionally at painting myself--so they set me drawing all day long, and I went to work on gypsy heads from morning till evening. I forgot to tell you that I kept the two gypsies for a few days here at Berkow. On one of these days I was obliged to give a large party. And--now comes the folly of the thing--in order to get a joke a tour absurd people here, I dressed Isabel up in the richest costume that I possessed, and handed the Czika over to my chambermaid, to deck her out, and then I introduced the two as the Countess of Kryvan, with her little daughter Czika, whose acquaintance I had made the year before at a watering-place, and who had just arrived from Hungary to pay me a visit."

"And what did the company say?"

"They were delighted. I had previously made it known that Isabella belonged to the old Magyar nobility, who had pledged themselves never to use any other language but the national tongue, and occasionally a little Latin."

"Did the people really believe that, and did the gentlemen try to keep up the conversation in Latin?"

"You can make our people believe anything you choose; and as for the gentlemen, Latin is Greek to them. Isabella, I can assure you, took her seat on the sofa with almost regal dignity, and our greatest people in the neighborhood overwhelmed the countess with attentions, regretting again and again their inability to speak Latin, and thus to enjoy the interesting and attractive conversation of the great lady. The little girl was taken from lap to lap, and almost smothered with titbits and with caresses. In fine, the comedy was played successfully to the very last scene, and for several days afterwards the whole neighborhood was full of the 'nut-brown countess,' as they took it into their heads to call the friend of Melitta von Berkow. Well, how do you like my story?"

"To be candid, only so-so. I enjoy the mystification of your high-mighty visitors with all my heart, but I confess I feel rather pained to see a poor helpless woman made the toy of the rich and the great simply because she is poor and helpless."

Melitta looked full at Oswald and replied, without the slightest trace of resentment:

"Now look, that is nice in you to think so, and I think it still nicer that you tell me so openly. But I told you beforehand it was a foolish thing I did; and afterwards I felt heartily sorry for it, and did all I could to make amends for the evil consequences which followed. Only listen, and see how the matter ended. I had, of course, presented the Brown Countess with all the things which she and the Czika had worn during the comedy. The poor woman, not knowing what to do with the plunder, tried to sell it in the next town. They thought she had stolen the things, and demanded that she should explain how she had come in possession of such a wardrobe. That she could not do, for she had forgotten my name and the name of my place, and besides, nobody could understand her jargon. The justices, therefore, in their wisdom, concluded to put the Brown Countess into jail as a vagabond and a thief, until the matter should be cleared up in some way or other. Unfortunately, I had myself left a few days before for a watering-place in the neighborhood, and whilst I was there enjoying the fresh sea air in full draughts, the poor woman had to suffer for weeks in a damp prison cell. Alas! and these people value freedom above all things! You see, I shall never forgive myself for all this! It was only after my return that I heard, by a mere accident, of what had happened. Of course, I did at once all that could be done. I drove myself into town and opened the prison-doors to my Brown Countess. But how I found her changed! Pale, emaciated, worn out, she looked as if every week of her imprisonment had cost her a year of her life. Little Czika looked, if possible, still worse. I took both of them back with me to Berkow; I nursed them and comforted them; I made them presents, and tried all I could to make amends. But repentance came here, as usually, too late. Little Czika had been grievously injured by the damp air of the jail. She fell, soon after her arrival here, in a raging fever, and I thank God to this day that she escaped with her life. What could I have done if she had died!"

Melitta was silent, and something like a tear glistened in her eyes. But the next moment she laughed again, and said:

"Well, after all, she did not die, but grew as fresh and bright as before, and played with my Julius till she recovered her red cheeks and bright eyes. The children had become exceedingly fond of each other, and I should have liked nothing better than to keep the little girl here and have her educated with Julius. The child showed remarkable talents; she was a perfect genius for music. The Brown Countess I should have kept as my waiting-maid, or anything she might have accepted. I offered to let her arrange her mode of life as she chose, if she would only consent to stay here. But it was the old story of the frog and the golden chair. For a few weeks she stood the quiet life, pretty well; and one fine morning she had disappeared--she and the Czika. Afterwards they have repeatedly come back to this country, but they have never visited me here. Isabel is either still angry with me, or she is jealous of me and afraid I might steal her little Czika. And yet she ought to see that I mean it well with her. The people in the village have my orders to do all she may desire; the keeper has been directed not to molest her in the forest, and I myself have abstained from seeking her out, because I do not wish to frighten her away altogether. That is my

story of the Brown Countess. Are you still angry with me?"

"What right have I to be so?"

"Well, you frowned just now in a way which made me feel like a very wicked sinner."

"You are pleased to jest. What can my opinion matter to you?"

"More than you pretend to think, in your half-assumed modesty. A woman always thinks much of a man's opinion, because she feels instinctively that his head thinks more soberly and thoroughly, though not as quickly as her own. And for you learned gentlemen we have a special respect. You have all of you, about the eye and the corners of the mouth, something mystical, something unfathomable, something----"

Oswald could not help laughing.

"Yes, you may laugh as you choose. You may not think so, but we, we are afraid of your learning, even when we try to make fun of one or the other among you, who is good-natured enough to offer himself for our amusement There is my Bemperlein, my faithful, good Bemperlein. Well, he is most assuredly no genius, and knows as much of the world as I know of Greek, and yet I invariably succumb when we dispute. That vexes me, when I compare him with our country gentlemen! There are handsome, very handsome men among them, and they look remarkably well in their militia uniforms, with their light mustaches, their sunburnt faces, and bright blue eyes; but in evening costume they look stupid. They are as stupid and lifeless as the faces of horses and dogs. The only one among them who has been to college looks as if he belonged to another world."

"Who is this phœnix?"

"Baron Oldenburg."

A shadow passed over Melitta's animated face as when a cloud drifts rapidly over a sunlit landscape. She looked for a few moments straight before her, as if she had lost the thread of the conversation. Then, awaking from her dream, she said:

"Yes--as I said before--that is why I want Julius to go to school. But here I chatter and chatter and do not even ask you if you are hungry and thirsty, and yet you must be so after all your travels on highways and byways. Come, we will go in and see if we cannot hunt up somebody to bring us some refreshment. I want it as much as you do, for I just remember that I have not dined to-day. Have you never been in the house?"

"Yes, at least in the great hall; I asked a large old clock if I might present myself before the lady of Berkow, but it answered: Non-sense! Non-sense! so I went away again."

Melitta had risen and put on her straw hat, without troubling herself about the ribbons, of which one hung down on her bosom, and the other on her back; now she said, smiling, while Oswald had picked up the book and was looking at the title:

"I suppose you also read something in all you see?"

"Yes, generally. This book, for instance, tells me: My mistress would have done better not to read me, since there are so many better books that she might read."

"Alas! we poor creatures who live in the country, we must read what the circulating library or the bookseller sends us. But why do you dislike these *Mystères*?"

"In the first place, it annoys me to find them wherever I go. In Grunwald the book was lying on every table; I was not two days at Grenwitz before it followed me there, and here I must find it even in your house. I have never been able to read farther than the second volume, and here you are, to my amazement, already in the fourth. How *can* you take an interest in this Chourineur, this *maître d'école*, this Chouette and all the other rascally people? Surely, not half as readily as in the beasts of a menagerie, for these are at least God's own creations, whilst those men are nothing better than the misshapen children of the wanton imagination of a used-up poet's brains."

"You may be right," said Melitta, as they were coming down from the terrace. "It is perhaps a real misfortune that such books are written, and a greater one yet that we, and especially women, whose education and training are every way grievously neglected, find after all a kind of pleasure in them. For the rest, I accept all that Sue says of that canaille as gospel truth, as I do with the reports of travellers in distant lands and the marvels they have seen on shore and on board ship. I believe him perhaps all the more readily, as he paints that sphere of society in which I live, partly at least, with great truth, fulness, and accuracy."

"You do not really think *Rudolphe, grand duc régnant de Gerolstein*, to be true to life?"

"That I do not know; but I do know that stories like that of the Marquis d'Harville and his wife occur almost daily in actual life."

Oswald made no reply; he recollected what he had heard about the relations between Melitta and her husband, and how the latter had now been for seven years the victim of incurable insanity. A faint suspicion of the painful scenes that must have preceded the actual crisis, the fearful catastrophe, overcame him; he regretted having touched unconsciously the curtain that hid so dark a family drama. But at the same time he was filled with deep, unspeakable sympathy for the charming woman who was condemned to lead a lonely, mournful life in this green wilderness, in spite of all her youth and beauty. What were to her youth and beauty and wealth without love! and did she obtain that love which she deserved so well, and for which she yearned so ardently, she whose gentle, longing eyes betrayed an unfathomable depth of tenderness and passion?

Sympathy is the first-born brother of the sweet sister Love. While Oswald was pitying the fate of the fair lady, he felt how a spring of painfully sweet feelings gushed forth warm from his heart and filled it to overflowing. And if old classic love was born in the foam of the waves, romantic modern love not unfrequently prefers the soft, perfumed air of a luxuriant garden full of sweet flowers and fragrant foliage. Voluptuous shadows dwelt in the cozy bowers; the afternoon sun lay dreamily upon the green lawns; the birds were singing joyously in the dense crowns of mighty trees, butterflies were dancing merrily above the sun-drunk forests of bright flowers.

Slowly the two tall companions sauntered through the green gardens, now stopping to admire a rose-bush, which outshone all its neighbors in its exuberant splendor, and now following with the eye a squirrel, as it merrily flew from branch to branch and from tree to tree. More and more Oswald began to feel as if he were walking in a glorious dream, as if he were only dreaming of all this sunshine, this fragrance of flowers, this singing of birds--as if he were only dreaming of Melitta's sweet voice and Melitta's love-speaking eyes--and Melitta also felt as if she were seeing to-day very differently with her eyes, and hearing very differently with her ears. The strange man, to whom she was showing her possessions, looked so familiar to her; she felt as if she had known him many many years, as if she had known him all her life. On the other hand, the things she had seen every day for long years, looked to her almost strange now. So true is it that, after all, man takes most interest in his fellow-man, and understands nothing else as well in the whole range of his surroundings. For the sake of a single human soul, which chimes in harmoniously with our own, we cheerfully throw overboard all the plunder which in idle hours, and when higher enjoyments are wanting, has to fill up our life. And if this is true for men, it is doubly so for women. They know but one kind of bliss upon earth: to love; and only one happiness: to be loved. Melitta's heart, which for years had been forced to content itself with superficial affections and empty flirtations, was yearning after a true, deep passion. When the young man now raised his half-reverent, half-defiant glances with sincere admiration and an almost caressing devotion to her face, and wove around her a magic net, whose meshes were constantly drawing more closely, she felt far too happy not to be heartily grateful towards him who afforded her such sweet enjoyment.

Thus she felt ineffably happy, and yet also more seriously inclined than she was accustomed. The storm of wild passion, which was gradually rising on the horizon of her soul, cast its dark shadows in advance on her sun-lit mind, and the first cold breath tore the veil which time had slowly woven over so many a bright picture of past days. While Oswald was sketching a plan of education for Julius, such as seemed to him best, he accidentally came to speak of his own life; allowing the beautiful woman to catch many a glimpse of the innermost recesses of his heart. She felt this as a sign of his love and his veneration for her, and was deeply moved by it. Many thoughts which the young man presented to her in his lively manner with pleasing eloquence, had been suggested to her once before, and in almost the same words, by a man who had been very dear to her, and whose uncommon character had attracted and enchained her active mind while his roughness had repelled and offended her gentle disposition. Here, now, she found once more the roses whose voluptuous fragrance had then intoxicated her, but without their thorns; here she found what she had so painfully missed in those days: beauty of form, grace of motion, and harmony of speech.

CHAPTER XIII.

Sauntering up and down in the walks between the flower-beds, they only recalled their first intention to go into the house when they came near it a second time. They entered through the open door into a room whose admirable proportions, and simple, tasteful decoration made at once a most pleasing impression on Oswald. The tall chestnut-trees before the windows kept the room shady and cool. The subdued light was grateful to the eyes after the overwhelming sunshine of the garden. Comfortable chairs in various shapes and sizes, American rocking-chairs, French causeuses, a large grand-action piano, tables covered with books and portfolios, scattered here

and there over the large room, gave it, amidst all the abundance of objects, something cozy, which contrasted most delightfully with the stiff regularity at the château of Grenwitz.

"I am quite curious to see if anybody will come when I ring," said Melitta, throwing her hat on a table and going towards the bell-rope; "it is by no means impossible that we may have to go ourselves to the pantry, provided always we can find the key."

She rang the bell and turned again to Oswald, who was looking at one of the marble busts with which the walls of the room were adorned.

"How do you like that mask?"

"Very much indeed--it is the Rondanini Medusa."

"Ah! I see you are a connoisseur."

"At best only an amateur. I have seen a good deal in the capital and elsewhere, but mostly only casts. It has been from boyhood up my most ardent wish to make a pilgrimage to Italy, in order to be able to worship at the feet of the great god Apollo Belvedere."

"Well, that is a very reasonable wish."

"Not so very reasonable, after all, if it is reasonable only to wish what we can attain."

"Then it would be unreasonable to wish for some refreshments now, as that does not seem attainable," said Melitta, in a playfully complaining tone. "But do we not often obtain something from Fate, merely because we wish for it most ardently, almost impertinently? Fate grants us our wish, as a mother often does the piece of cake to the importunate child, only to get rid of us."

"Fate is no capricious lady, but a hard, stony-hearted god, and if we want anything of him we must be firm."

"That may be so with you men, and perhaps it is well it should be so, else you would be too overbearing. But we women--what on earth would become of us if we had to be firm like that when we want a little happiness? We rather go to work and beg and pray, and when we are just about to give up all hope and to despair of all happiness--why, just then--you see, there comes Baumann, and with him a prospect that we may get some refreshments."

The door opened, and the form of a tall, thin man appeared on the threshold. He had quite a martial air with his old wrinkled face and bushy eyebrows; a deep scar ran across the bald forehead, past the left eye, and down the whole cheek, and his mouth was shaded by a heavy iron-gray mustache.

"Madam," he said, in a voice which seemed to rise from a deep cavern.

"Ah, Baumann, is everybody out?"

"Yes, ma'am!"

"But I did not say they might go out. Where is mam'selle?"

"In Fashwitz, ma'am."

"And John?"

"Gone to see the forester."

"And the maids?"

"In the village."

"My good Baumann, we should like to have some supper."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Can you get us some?"

"Hardly!"

"Or can you find the key to the pantry?"

"Will hardly be possible."

"My dear Baumann, you must really see what can be done."

"Yes, ma'am."

Thereupon the strange fellow turned on his heels and marched out again.

"Well, what do you think of my *maître d'hôtel*?"

"I think the man is a great original; but why did he look at me all the time, with his big bright eyes?"

Melitta laughed.

"You must know that old Baumann was my father's servant, after having made all the campaigns against Napoleon in his regiment. He has rocked me, when I was a child, on his knees, has never left me since, and will not leave me till I die or he dies. Twice he has saved my life, and, without my knowing it or desiring it, shared every one of my sorrows, and, I may say, every joy. If I were to say to him: Baumann, you will have to go to Australia to-morrow for me! he would say: Yes, ma'am! pack his things over night, and be on his way before sunrise. And if I said: I cannot help it, Baumann, but you will have to die for me! he would say, Yes, ma'am! and not move a muscle. But if I said to him, *Please* hear, Baumann, or call him *Mr.* Baumann, he would think our friendship at an end. Now he is angry because I have not told him who you are. When he will know that, and find out that I am glad to see you here, he will be content again. Now mind what will happen. He will come back to tell us that he can do absolutely nothing for us. Thereupon I will give him the information about you, and make believe to go myself. Then we shall have peace. But you must look friendly when I mention you to him, you hear?"

"Don't fear, madam. I will be friendly, and smile as mildly as one of Guido Reni's angels."

The door opened once more. The old servant entered, marched into the room, remained standing precisely on the same spot as before, and said, looking again at Oswald:

"No possibility whatever, ma'am!"

"But, Baumann, that is a great pity. Here is Doctor Stein, who has specially come over from Grenwitz, and on foot, too, to talk with Mr. Bemperlein about Julius. And now both have driven out, and we cannot offer him a mouthful to eat or a glass of wine. And I myself have eaten nothing, as you know, since the morning, and am almost perishing for hunger."

Oswald found it difficult to keep the smile, which he had been ordered to show, from degenerating into broad laughter as he saw how the old man's face grew brighter and brighter with every word which Melitta uttered. At last he turned his look from one to the other, as if he were going to say: Well, you see, young people, after all, you can do nothing without old Baumann! Then he said:

"Well, as to the cellar-key, I have that in my pocket, ma'am."

"To be sure, and how about the key to the pantry?"

"Barely possible that mam'seile has put it again under the doorsill, although I have warned her against that many a time."

"Won't you look, Baumann, if it is there?"

"Yes, ma'am."

As soon as the door had closed after the old man, Melitta threw herself laughing into the rocking-chair.

"Did I not tell you?" she cried, rocking to and fro, joyous as a child that has had its will; "did I not tell you?"

Oswald had taken a seat opposite to her, at the large round table, on which an open album and drawing materials lay scattered about. His hand was playing with the pencil while he looked at Melitta, lost in thought.

"Are you going to draw my likeness?" asked Melitta.

"I wish I could."

"Why not? There is my album."

"That does not help me. You will have to teach me first how to draw directly with the eye."

"Ah, that is exactly what I always wish I could do. How often, when I am interested in a face, a figure, or a landscape, have I thought: Now you will hit it! and when I try to fix it on the paper, clear as it is before my eye, it is nothing but a caricature."

"I am sure your album will say the contrary. Is it permitted to look at it?"

"Not generally, but you may. In fact, it has no value but for myself; for I find there not only what I have drawn, but also what I have wished to draw. Besides, my album is a kind of diary. I probably commenced this one shortly before my Italian journey."

"Then you have been in Italy?"

"Two years ago, with my cousin Barnewitz and his wife. I wish you had been with us; first, on your account, for you deserve to see Italy, and then, on my account, because I should then not have been condemned to wander through the most beautiful landscapes and the richest collections alone, or in company with figures of wax. I used to tell then, as I always do, everything to my album, which received patiently what no one else cared to listen to."

Melitta had risen and placed herself by Oswald's side, who wanted to get up in order to give her a chair. But, in order to prevent that, she laid her hand lightly on his arm and let it rest there an instant--an instant only, and yet it was long enough to make Oswald's hand tremble and his voice shake when he said, turning over the leaves:

"These sketches must have been made before the journey to Italy. Here is the mysterious pond, at the edge of which I slept and dreamt this afternoon."

"You have not told me yet what you dreamt?"

"Yes, I told you all sorts of sweet foolish things."

"Of course about a lady?"

"Yes."

"Ah, then I must not ask for more?"

"Ah, how charming!" exclaimed Oswald, as he turned over a leaf. "How snugly ensconced this cottage lies in the forest. The old pine-trees stand around like gigantic guardians. The beech-tree spreads its mighty branches over it like a protecting deity. And here the creepers, climbing up and waving before the low windows, as if they were whispering: You are ours. And how dreamily that brook creeps along between reeds and ferns and down the deep green meadow in the foreground! That is a beautiful idea," said Oswald, looking up to Melitta from the book.

"And as you have found it all out so nicely, I will show it to you this very evening!"

"What! This is not a fancy picture?"

"Oh no! Perhaps those ducks hiding in the rushes from the hawk up there. The brook is the outlet of your mysterious lake in the forest."

"Ah, and thus only a continuation of my dream," said Oswald, turning over leaf after leaf.

A loose leaf fell into his hands. It had on it the head of a man in profile, drawn in beautiful bold lines. In a corner stood the letters A. V. O. and a date.

"That leaf will drop out," said Oswald.

"Let it drop, then!" replied Melitta.

The tone in which she said these few words was so peculiar, so entirely without the ordinary sweetness of her voice, that Oswald involuntarily looked up at her. He saw that her beautiful brows were contracted as if in anger, and her lips trembling. He looked down again instantly, and was about to put the leaf back in its place, when Melitta laid her hand on his arm and said:

"How do you like the head?"

A storm rose in Oswald's heart. He might have thrown himself instantly at Melitta's feet to cry out: Do I not love you, Melitta? How can you ask my opinion about a man whom you have loved, whom you perhaps still love? But he checked himself and said, with apparent calmness:

"It is the head of a man who recalls to me Tasso's words:

'And if all the gods united
To bring him gifts to the cradle,
The Graces, alas! were not there.'

This man can never be happy, because he will never desire to be happy."

"And that is why this man will drop out of my life as this leaf drops out of my album. If one could kill memory as one can destroy a paper, it would no longer be here. But since that cannot be done, let it stay there. Go on!"

The storm in Oswald's heart had passed by. Like a soft spring breeze the thought came to him: She could not and would not tell you that if she did not think you deserved her confidence and her friendship. And he felt a sense of unspeakable happiness in this thought. It was one of those solemn, sublime moments which flash once or twice through the night of every man's life--one of those moments when we see the heavens open, and the angelic choir go up and down singing.

Peace! Peace! unto our ready heart ...

In this blissful disposition he looked over the other drawings which Melitta had made during her Italian journey--landscapes in clear, well-defined lines; sketches from cities, palaces, streets, and ruins; between, a lazzaroni face or a dreamy girl's countenance. Then came studies from the antique, generally very painstaking studies; then again some subject was drawn over and over till it satisfied Melitta's keen criticism. A head of the Venus of Milo was particularly fine. On one of the following pages was the whole statue.

"Where did you draw that?" asked Oswald. "Surely not from a copy?"

"No, from the original! had become half a Catholic in Italy, and when I saw the lofty form in the Louvre in Paris, I said to myself, This, and no other, is your saint! Oh, you cannot imagine how beautiful she is! how beautiful and good! and this expression of heavenly goodness, which is not found in any other Venus, not, in fact, in any other antique head, but only in the Venus of Milo, touched me even more deeply than her heavenly beauty. When I saw that statue I felt for the first time in my life how it might be possible to *pray*, to pray sincerely, earnestly, before an image made by the hand of man. Why do you look so solemn and thoughtful? Here, take that pencil and write under the statue what you have just been thinking, for I saw you were making verses."

Oswald took the pencil which Melitta offered him, half in earnest, half in jest, and wrote, with a trembling hand, while Melitta was looking over his shoulder:

Away in Paris, in a lofty hall,
Amid the forms of ancient gods untold
Of fairest marble, and like marble cold,
She thrones on her high pedestal.
She, whom in secret, silent lawn,
When dreamy mists were floating o'er the brook,
Anchises in his mighty arms once took,
Till she escaped from him at early dawn.
The goddess died. They found the fair remains
And bore the lovely corpse up to the fane,
Where, altho' dead, she in her realm still reigns.
But ah! the faithful pray to her in vain!
No more her godlike face to bend she deigns,
Prefers eternal calmness to maintain!

Oswald put down the pencil and looked up at Melitta. His glance met hers. For a few moments their eyes rested upon each other as if they wished to read in each other's souls.

Then old Baumann appeared in the door leading to the adjoining room, from which the clinking of plates and glasses had been heard for some time; he had a napkin on his arm, and said, as solemnly as the statue in Don Giovanni:

"Ma'am, dinner is ready!"

"Quick, come before our porridge is cold," called out Melitta.

"Let me only look at these few leaves," said Oswald. "I see there are but a few more."

"There is nothing worth looking at there," said Melitta, almost impatiently.

"Why, here is the Park at Grenwitz," exclaimed Oswald, as he turned over the last leaf in the act of rising. "The lawn behind the château. Here the Flora, there Bruno in full career----"

"And here are you!"

"Where?"

"There."

"That misty outline?" said Oswald, pointing at a spot by the side of the Flora where the faint traces of a figure were still perceptible, which had been rubbed out.

"That misty outline?" laughed Melitta. "I wished to draw you as you really looked, but I did not succeed. Now you shall appear as Erlkönig, who tries to catch Bruno--bodily, I mean, for his soul is yours already. How in the world did you manage to tame the wild leopard in so few days?"

"Only by a little sincere affection. Shakespeare calls flattery an infallible means to catch men; but I think love is a much safer one, and at the same time much nobler."

"And is not love the greatest flattery?"

Oswald and Melitta had exchanged these words while they were going into the adjoining

room, a lofty, beautiful room, filled with old-fashioned furniture of great value. In the centre stood a small round table, on which refreshments were set out most invitingly. Old Baumann stood straight, like a taper, his napkin on his arm, behind one of the two high-backed, richly carved arm-chairs, and waited for some acknowledgment of his signal merits and for further orders.

"Well, what does our magic table have to offer?" said Melitta, sitting down, and inviting Oswald, by a gesture of the hand, to follow her example.

"Cold roast meat--preserves--charming, Baumann! Mam'seile will be angry that we could do so well without her."

"The housekeeper has come back from Fashwitz," said Baumann, opening a bottle at a side-table.

"I dare say she has never been away," whispered Melitta, smiling. "What have we to drink for our guest, Baumann?"

"Steinberger Cabinet, forty-two," said Baumann, filling Oswald's glass with the golden wine.

"And for myself?"

"Fresh spring water, perhaps a little raspberry-juice," replied Baumann, coolly, placing the bottle, with the cork in it, before Oswald.

"That will not satisfy me to-day, Baumann! How is it about our champagne?"

"No more, ma'am."

"But they sent us a box only the other day?"

"Has never been opened. Is down in the cellar."

"Ah, what a pity!" cried Melitta. "And I am almost perishing with thirst, and must needs have such a desire for champagne just to-day!"

"Well, well," said Baumann, comforting her, "maybe we can manage it."

Whereupon he marched out.

"You see, I have to beg for everything in my own house," said Melitta. "But why do you not eat? And what a little piece you have taken! The worst, too, in the dish! Oh, what unpractical creatures you men are! I see I shall have to take pity on you."

And although Oswald assured her that he had no appetite at all, she insisted upon helping him to the best that the table offered.

"You do not like it," she said at last, quite sadly, when she saw that the young man hardly touched the dishes. "Are you unwell?"

"I was never better in my life. But have you never felt as if eating and drinking were the most superfluous things in the world, and as if the gods of Olympus themselves, who only needed nectar and ambrosia, were the most wretched creatures, because they ate and drank?"

"Oh, yes! I have often felt so," replied Melitta. "I remember I felt so when my aunt took me to my first ball. But that is long, long ago, and since then my feelings have, as far as I remember, never had anything to do with my appetite."

In spite of this boast, however, Melitta also treated everything on the table, except some preserves, as a mere show-dinner. The sweet fire which made her bosom rise, and gave new lustre to her beautiful eyes, needed no food from the hands of Ceres. For the first time that day there were pauses in the conversation. Neither ventured to speak of that which filled their hearts to overflowing, and everything else appeared so little, so insignificant! They were both overcome by an embarrassment which they in vain tried to conceal under an assumed indifference. Both felt that a strong, unseen hand was gently lifting the mask which we all use in daily life to hide our real faces. When we hear the voice of the god of love, asking us in our paradise: "Where art thou?" we conceal ourselves and dare not answer ...

They felt almost relieved when old Baumann came in, bringing the merry child of Champagne in its silver cradle filled with ice, which he placed before Oswald on the table. How he could have succeeded so suddenly in bringing the desired wine from the deep cellar and out of the box, this was one of those enigmas which the old man loved dearly, and which he considered, beyond the power of man to divine. Opening the bottle with skilful hand, he filled the foaming wine into the tall graceful glasses, and looked highly pleased when his mistress drank the sweet beverage almost with eagerness, and then, holding up her empty glass, exclaimed: "*Encore*, Baumann! and take a glass for yourself and drink our guest's health!"

The old servant did as he was ordered, filled a glass at the sideboard, and then drawing nearer

to the table, he said:

"First your health, ma'am! for that I value above all. And may God always let your eyes shine as brightly as they do now! And then your health, sir! And may Heaven bless your coming into this house, so that nothing but peace and happiness may follow it. And that is old Baumann's hearty wish."

Then he slowly emptied his glass, throwing back his head, until his eye looked straight at the full-cheeked angel in the stucco ornaments of the ceiling; and placing the glass again on the sideboard, he went to the window; turning his back to the company, as if he did not wish to interrupt their conversation any further.

The presence of the old servant and the fiery wine had loosed the tongues once more, and made the glances bolder. They chatted, apparently quite at ease, about indifferent things, until Oswald reminded Melitta of her promise to show him to-day the cottage in the forest.

"Did I promise?" asked Melitta. "Well, then I suppose I have to do it, although I am almost sorry for it, for you do not believe in my saint, and are therefore not worthy to enter into my chapel."

"Your saint?"

"The great lady of Milo. I must tell you now also how great my enthusiasm was for the deity. After my return home, the memory of the beautiful statue in the Louvre pursued me so persistently that I did not rest till I had procured an excellent copy from Paris. But as I did not dare to set up my saint here in the house, I had her carried to the cottage in the forest, which thus became a forest-chapel. Whenever visitors come to Berkow, the key is lost; when I am alone I spend days and nights there, especially when the world has annoyed me more than ordinarily; or when I desire to be rather alone, than to have such company as I do wish to have."

"I should not have expected such hypochondriacal caprices in you."

"Why not?"

"Because you look--can look so good and so cheerful."

"And do you not know that cheerful eyes weep most readily?"

"I should not like to see you weep for anything in the world; I believe I should forget how to laugh forever."

And again their glances met and their souls kissed each other.

"Well then, come!"

"We shall have a thunder-storm," said old Baumann, from his window, without turning round.

"We shall be there long before it comes up," replied Melitta, who had already risen. "And if you are not more afraid of a thunder-storm than I am--or are you afraid?"

Oswald smiled.

"Then that shall not keep us. Besides, I do not see a trace of a thunder-storm," she said, in the door of the garden room.

At the same moment a blue shadow swept over the garden, and a few swallows flew past the door, twittering and almost grazing the ground.

"Had we better not go?" said Melitta, who had already crossed the threshold, turning back to Oswald.

"I am not afraid of the storm," replied Oswald, not looking at the sky, but into her eyes.

"And the forest is so beautiful after a storm," said Melitta. "Good-by, Baumann! When the carriage comes from Grenwitz, send it over to the forester. Tell the coachman to report at the cottage."

Baumann looked after the two until Melitta's white dress had disappeared in the bushes.

Seeing him stand there on the threshold of the house, the tall old man with his white beard and scarred face, crossing his strong arms on his broad chest, and thoughtfully looking with his bright, truthful eyes into the distance, one would have imagined a better guardian could not be found. But alas! the house was empty; the beloved mistress had gone away, into the storm-threatening twilight, with the stranger, a man whom she did not know yesterday! And he, the faithful servant, sighed deeply as he went slowly back to the supper-room, with bent head, and then began to clear the table. "The gracious gifts of heaven scarcely touched!" he murmured. "I do not like that. When young people are not hungry, they have mischief brewing. And the wine hardly tasted! There is the bottle more than half full ... and to-morrow it is unfit for the table ...

to-morrow." The old man sat down by the table and rested his careworn gray head in his wrinkled hand. "But young people don't think of to-morrow. To-morrow the young gentleman with the soft voice and the large blue eyes is back again at Grenwitz, and who knows where the day after to-morrow finds him? But old Baumann is here--to-morrow and the day after to-morrow, and when the guests are gone the house looks very differently, and when they sweep it they find ... Yes, yes--old Baumann sees what no one else sees, and hears what no one else hears. Ah! Baumann, I wish I were dead! ah, Baumann, why did you carry me that day out of the fire? Now she says; I am not afraid of the thunder-storm! and Baumann! don't send the carriage for us. Hm, hm! I ought not to have consented; I ought to have taken her aside and said to her: Look here, child, so and so; think of this and that! ... But when I see the little one so happy, so cheerful--as in those days when she was riding her pony, a little girl of twelve, and she said: Please, please, dear Baumann, let us have a race now; why, I never could say no to her, and away we went as fast as the creatures would run. She had the same big, brilliant eyes again to-night, and she looked just as rosy and fresh again! Poor, poor child! Yes, yes. You wanted to see if all the windows are properly closed; it is only on account of the thunder-storm!"

Oswald and Melitta hastened joyously, like children coming from school, out of the house through the green avenues to the gate, which led from the garden into the meadow. Behind the sloping meadow lay the forest. Close by the gate, and for some distance along the garden, there was a pond, half bog, and here and there a few willows on the banks; for the waters of the brook were caught here by an old dam and turned around the court-yard, from which they ran merrily down through the village. Even the meadow had become partly boggy, and in spring was often quite under water; now large stones served as a kind of rough bridge at the very wet places.

"The path is rather rustic for city gentlemen," said Melitta, skipping lightly, like a gazelle, from stone to stone; "we children of nature are accustomed to such things. I might have led you the longer way through the park and the forest, but you ought to learn to know also the dark sides of Berkow."

"Well, if this is a dark side of Berkow, I do not wish for the sunny sides," said Oswald, smiling, pausing on one of the stones and taking off his hat to wipe his forehead. For the air was oppressive, the blue shadows had passed, the sun shot fiery rays from the edge of the forest, and they had been walking fast.

"Already tired?" said Melitta, also pausing and taking off her hat, so as to push her full brown hair backwards. "Come, the faster we run the sooner we shall be in the shade in the forest. I will count one, two, three, and he who gets there first----"

"Well?"

"Oh, we'll see. One, two, three--oh!"

Melitta had sprung from the stone upon which she stood on a lower one, and fell, with a cry of pain, on her knee. In a moment Oswald was by her side.

"Great God! What is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing! I have sprained my foot a little in jumping down; it will soon be over."

She rested on Oswald's arm, pale, and pressing her lower lip between her teeth to control her pain. But her color returned as she looked up at Oswald.

"Do not trouble yourself," she said--and her voice sounded sweeter than ever. "You have won the wager. Well! now I can walk again."

She was about to withdraw her arm from Oswald's arm, but he was not willing to let his captive escape so easily.

"You cannot walk without support, and will you not grant me the pleasure to render you this slight service?"

"I am only afraid the way is unpleasant enough to you; the sun is so burning. Oh!"

A false step made Melitta sink down once more.

"We shall have to stop here," she said.

"I will carry you the few steps to the wood. There you can at least rest in the shade."

Melitta smiled. "I am not as light as a doll."

"And I am not as weak as a girl of ten," answered Oswald, who seized Melitta around the waist, and lifting her up carried her safely, as the mother carries her child, on the last stones up to the edge of the forest, where the broad branches of the beeches gave shade and coolness. There he let her glide gently from his arms on the thick moss and remained standing before her. Melitta had no longer resisted as soon as the young man had boldly lifted her up; she felt very quickly that he was strong enough to carry her, and she thought it folly not to make the burden as easy as possible to him by clinging closely to his arms.

"How strong you are!" she said, now looking up at him with admiration.

Oswald's heart beat high, and his bosom rose, more from inner excitement than from the exertion. He still felt the elastic form which he had pressed in his arms, the soft hair playing around his face, and the sweet breath that had fallen upon his brow.

"Under such circumstances it would be difficult not to be strong," he said.

"But confess, it has tired you? Come and sit down here; there is room for more than two on this moss sofa."

Oswald sank down into the soft moss by the side of Melitta, who was leaning against the trunk of a beech-tree; he rested his head on his arm and looked thoughtfully in her cheerful face. Was the dream near the pond about to be fulfilled? Is the dear face about to bend down and to kiss him, as it did in the dream? Oswald was overcome by the strange feeling as if he had gone through all this once before; as if he knew the place from of old, the tall dark forest, from which came the pecking of a woodpecker, the meadow before him, with the red evening lights touching up the tall grass, the silent garden yonder, and from the green foliage the gray château of Melitta rising on high. He felt as if he had seen Melitta often in former years, as a boy, when he had been deep in a beautiful fairy tale, till at last the sweet princess stood bodily before him. And Melitta also must have felt something like it, for quite at her ease, as if he had been her brother or her husband, she took his hat off and pressed her delicate fragrant handkerchief repeatedly on his warm brow and on his blue dreamy eyes.

Oswald seized the white hand and pressed it to his lips.

"Your hand I must return, but the handkerchief I can really not give you back," he said.

"Then keep it as a souvenir of this hour. But now let us go on. It is quite a distance yet to the forest chapel, and the sky looks really threatening now."

Melitta leaned on Oswald's arm as they followed the narrow path, which led first under beeches, and then through a young plantation on one side and tall old pine-trees on the other side, deeper into the forest. The sun poured its fiery red rays over the low branches of the tall trees; a little bird was pouring out soft plaintive melodies, as if it were taking leave of the sun and of life itself. Then the purple glow became extinct on high; the little bird was silent, and shade and silence surrounded the loving couple. But the shades became darker and more threatening, and the silence was strangely broken by the groaning and creaking of the pine-trees, which stretched and strained their powerful limbs as if they wanted to try their strength to defy the storm that was rising over the forest. And now it began to whisper and to whistle mysteriously in the bushes; dry leaves flew up and drifted along, as if in mad anxiety, before the whirlwind, which beat down the green waves on high, twisting the crowns of the beech-trees as in a wild dance, bending low the tall tops of the pine-trees and starting the whole forest to its remotest depths from its pleasant repose. The pale gleam of lightning shot across the sky, and big warm drops began to fall through the leaves.

Melitta had come up close to Oswald, whose heart was exulting in the storm. Pressing the beloved one with one arm to his side, he stretched out the other one, as in defiance to the tempest-torn sky. "Go on, go on," he murmured through his firmly closed teeth; "I am not afraid of thee.... How, is your courage already exhausted? Oh! it is so beautiful in the stormy, thundering forest!"

Melitta did not say a word; without raising her eyes from the ground, she hurried forward faster and faster, until the forest opened upon a large clearing; and there lay before them the forest chapel, just at the moment brilliantly illumined by the red flashes of lightning. A few steps more and they were under the projecting roof of the cottage. It was built in the style of Swiss houses, and a jewel of a cottage. Melitta quickly walked up the steps which led to the low veranda, took a small key from a pocket in her dress, unlocked the lock, but instead of opening the door she leaned trembling against the door-frame. She was pale; her strength seemed to be gone; she pressed her hand on her heart. Thus she stood when Oswald turned his eyes from the steaming meadow--a sight which always filled him with a peculiar kind of delight--to her again.

"Great God! what is the matter? Are you unwell?"

"Oh! nothing, nothing!" she said, gathering herself up at the first sound of his voice. "I have run too fast; now it is better already. Come in!"

She opened the door and Oswald entered. But he drew back startled when he saw in the mystic twilight within a tall white figure, which seemed to float down from out of the wall.

"What is that?" he exclaimed, in his first surprise.

"What?" said Melitta, who was opening the windows to let the fresh air into the hot room, full of the fragrance of flowers.

"The Venus of Milo!" cried Oswald, and a voluptuous shudder passed over him.

"My saint! Did I not tell you? Well, how do you like the chapel?"

It was not a very large but a very high room; on the right and on the left a window looking out upon the veranda; opposite the door, in a niche and upon a low pedestal, the image of the goddess. A few comfortable garden-chairs, a *chaise longue*, a table covered with books, papers, drawing material, a half-finished embroidery, riding-whip and gloves, in picturesque disorder--this was the whole, simple but suitable, furniture of the room.

"Did you get very wet?" asked Melitta, throwing her hat on the table, without waiting for an answer to her first question. And then:

"Go away from the window; you will take cold. Come here, or rather, sit dawn on the lounge and rest yourself."

And again:

"If I only could find something for you! But--to be sure I can make tea for you. Where are the tea-things, I wonder? Here--no, there, in the cupboard."

All this she said hurriedly, as if pressed by an inner painful restlessness, while she was walking up and down in the room with quick, unequal steps.

Oswald took her hand.

"First of all, I pray, take care of yourself; that little rain will not hurt me, I assure you. Your dress is damp, and your thin boots are not made for the wet grass on the meadow."

"Oh, as for me, I am easily helped. I have everything I need in the next room."

"The next room!"

"Yes! Did I not tell you that I often spend a night here? That door leads into my dressing-room."

"Then go at once and change your dress."

Melitta drew her hand from the young man's hand, and went without saying a word; she disappeared through a door close by the statue, which Oswald had not noticed before. He threw himself into one of the arm-chairs, and rested his head on his hand; then he started up again, leaned against the window, and stared with troubled eyes into the rain and storm; then he walked hastily up and down in the room; at last he threw himself down before the pedestal of the goddess and cooled his hot brow against the marble feet.

The rustling of a dress close by him aroused him from his feverish dream.

"Melitta!" he cried, looking up at her with tears of happiness in his eyes. "Melitta!"

She bent down to him and kissed him softly on the forehead; then she rushed away, threw herself into an arm-chair, and sobbed as if her heart were breaking.

Oswald knelt down before her; he seized her knees; he pressed his glowing face on her dress; he kissed her dress, her hands. "Melitta! sweet one, dear one, don't cry! How can you cry when you make me so inexpressibly happy? Your tears kill me, Melitta! Dear, dearest Melitta! Take my heart's blood, drop by drop. Are not my blood, my life, my soul, all your own? Melitta, I shall never cease to thank you for this moment; do you hear, Melitta, never, never, by----"

"For God's sake! do not swear," cried Melitta, starting up and placing her hand on his mouth. Then she took his head and kissed him passionately on brow and eyes and lips.

And again she started up and walked with rapid steps up and down the room. "Oh! my God, my God!" she cried, wringing her hands. She hastened towards the door, as if she wished to flee, but she broke down before she reached it. Oswald caught her in his arms and carried her to the sofa. He covered her cold hands, her trembling lips, with glowing kisses; a cry of joy arose from his breast when the rigid form at last began to move once more.

She raised herself partly, and fixing her eyes upon him with an expression of ineffable love, she said in a low voice, low yet firm, as when a patient asks his physician whether it will end in life or death----

"Oswald, listen to me! Do you love me now, at this moment, as you think you can love a woman upon earth?"

"Yes, Melitta!"

"Well, then, Oswald, I love you, now and forever!"

The storm had passed; the refreshed, fragrant forest was silent again and at rest, and over the forest rose brightly from the purple evening sky the beautiful star of Venus.

CHAPTER XV.

What a strange feeling it is when we enter, in travelling, at early morn the streets of a town! The sun is gilding the steeple, the air is fresh and cool, the birds are singing in the linden-trees before the old gable-houses on the market-place--nature is awaking and blooming forth in morning beauty--and men are still lying in the bonds of sleep, within their musty, oppressive chambers. The traveller can hardly understand why no shutter opens, and no smiling face appears, to enjoy with him the glorious morning.... It is the same feeling which overcomes the lover who has just been assured of the return of his love, who looks around with beaming eye, and would like to press flowers and all to his overflowing heart. But the flowers do not mind him, and the people have the same everyday faces, worn with care or heavy with sleep and evil dreams. The sun of his love, which rouses him to a new life, has neither light nor heat for the others in the musty, oppressive chambers of their joyless, unloving existence.

Oswald felt this as he awoke on the following day, after a short, restless sleep, which had rolled like a Lethe stream over the recollections of the day before. But the soul receives impressions which no sleep can efface, unless it be the last, the eternal sleep; and thus he also had scarcely opened his eyes when the image of that glorious woman stood bright and clear before his soul. What had happened, up to that moment when the Venus image floated down to him in the forest chapel, he had forgotten; what had happened afterwards, till he had pressed Melitta once more in his arms, not far from the carriage, to which she had accompanied him through the forest, he knew it no more. But the kisses which he had given and received were still burning on his lips; the sweet breath which had mingled with his own was still there, and the loving eyes that had rested on his were still shining brightly before him. Oh, those eyes, sparkling with animation, those two bright stars which the morning dawn cannot efface, how they still shone, and sparkled, and pursued him everywhere! He saw them when he closed his eyes; he saw them when he looked out of the window up to the bright morning sky; he saw them when he lost himself in the blue shadows which filled the spaces between the tall trees down in the silent, dewy garden. He felt as if he could have wept unto death, as if he could have shouted for joy, as if his whole being might float away like a harmony of sweet sounds.... There are moments in our life when our bodies seem to us a mockery. We would like to fly away, and we are chained to the spot; we would pour forth a world of sensations in eloquent words, and our tongue stammers; we would like to be entirely different, and we remain the selfsame men. Oh, that is a torment equal only, perhaps, to that of a person in a trance, when they close the coffin and he cannot raise a finger nor move his lips to tell them--I am alive!... Oswald slipped on tiptoe into the boys' room. He wanted to see at least one dear face, Bruno's face. The first dawn was peeping into the room through the closed curtains; it was quite cool there. Bruno had again left the window open all night, as he liked to do. Oswald closed it, for the morning air was blowing in and Bruno's face was heated by a restless dream. Again he was lying there, as in the first night when Oswald saw him, with his arms crossed on his breast, dark defiance on his weird, beautiful face. But when Oswald kissed him on his forehead he did not open his eyes, as before, to smile upon him in blissful dreams; he did not open his lips, as before, to whisper to him the touching words: I love you! the dark brows almost met, and pain contracted the proud lips. At any other time Oswald would have looked upon this as a mere accident, but now, in his momentarily softened humor, it pained him. "Is he still angry," he thought, "because I left him at home yesterday? Does he feel that he has no longer all my love? And yet, do I not love him all the more now?" He pushed the hair gently from the boy's forehead; he wrapped the covering closer around his delicate limbs, and crept out of the room again, with heavy heart. A sad anticipation of a great sorrow passed through him. Was it to happen to him, to Bruno, and alas! perhaps, even to her, after this blessed happiness! He hastened down into the garden to breathe more freely in the open air, and wandered about in the walks and avenues, and shook the dew from the branches into his feverish face, and looked with his dim, wearied eyes into the pious, childlike eyes of the flowers. In the kitchen-garden he found the gardener at work. He was a man, at least, and Oswald longed to hear a human voice. He spoke to the man, a thing he had never done before; he asked him if he was married? Whether he had any children? Did he love his children very much? The man gave him those awkward, half answers, which such people generally return to our questions--it is not that they feel less than the higher classes, but they are not accustomed to analyze their feelings and to clothe them in appropriate words. It is this which often gives them the appearance of indifference. He became more talkative when he was questioned about his work; he spoke with delight of the glorious weather, magnificent sunshine, alternating with warm rains and thunder-storms. But Oswald only heard him half, and left the old man suddenly, who lifted his cap, looked after him in astonishment, shook his head and continued his work. Oswald wandered on and on restlessly, but soon the garden felt too confined; he passed through the open space enclosed by the high wall, and hurried out into the fields, from the fields into the forest, and on and on towards the roar which fell upon his ear, first indistinctly, then louder and louder.

Then he stepped out from under the beech-trees, which formed a dense canopy overhead with their broad branches, upon the chalk cliffs, and the holy, eternal sea lay before him, vast and infinite. Far out the white combs of the waves glittered in the light as they came on with irresistible power, and broke at his feet with incessant thunder amid the enormous rocks on the beach--wave after wave, ever new ones and new ones, innumerable, overwhelming, marvellous. Not a sail was to be seen in the whole view, only, far on the horizon a dark trail of smoke was moving slowly from east to west It came from the smoke-stack of a steamer--who knows from whence? and whither bound? Above the foaming breakers white gulls were fluttering; now they threw themselves screaming into the briny flood, and now they reappeared and winged their way whither? High up in the air a sea-eagle was drawing his majestic circles, higher and higher, till it appeared to Oswald's eye but a black moving point. But even the magnificent sight of the sea could not fill Oswald's heart to-day. The ocean is not as large and not as deep as the heart of man; and however he had formerly admired the music of the waves, he had heard a more marvellous music a few hours ago. He envied the eagle, however. "One beat of your powerful wings and you fly over forests and fields far off to Melitta's house."

He started up and hastened back to the château, up to the top of the tower; perhaps he could see Melitta's house from there; and he shouted with the joy of surprise as he really could discern the uppermost gable-end of her house rising just above the edge of the forest. He shuddered with mysterious delight; he felt as if he had touched the hem of her garment. In love, as in religion, everything is mystical. Why are millions of faithful believers strengthened when they turn their faces to the East at prayers? Why is it a comfort to lovers merely to stretch out the hand in the direction of the beloved one?

The hour at which Oswald usually began his lessons had struck. He went to his room, but he did not find the boys, who, contrary to the rules of the house, were still down stairs at breakfast. His own breakfast was on the table.

Somebody knocked gently at the door, and the old baron entered, holding a bundle of papers in his hand. After the first words of polite inquiry, he excused himself on account of the unseasonable interruption, and said:

"You could do us (he never said me, since he was unable to think of himself without his wife), you could do us a great favor, doctor."

"I presume it is in connection with the papers which you hold in your hand, baron?"

"Yes, yes. You know that Grenwitz and Stantow will have to be rented again at Michaelmas. Now we should like to have the two farms surveyed anew, as the plats which were made twenty-five years ago are very indifferent. The first letter, therefore, which we would beg you to write for us, is to a surveyor. His name is Albert Timm, and he lives in Grunwald. You would ask him to come immediately, in order to make some arrangement. The second letter is for our lawyer, also in Grunwald. Anna Maria wants him to revise the contracts. Here is a copy of the last. Anna Maria has marked on the margin what changes she desires in the new contracts. If you could copy this document for us--it is asking a good deal----"

"Give it to me, baron. When do you want the papers?"

"If you could write them till dinner-time? We have told the boys that they would drive down to Stantow with us. You do not object?"

"I suppose it is all right."

"Well then, good-by, doctor, and pardon our troubling you with these matters. But you know, Anna Maria----"

"No excuse, baron."

Any one who has ever been in the state of mind in which Oswald had been, before the baron came to him with his formidable request, will readily understand why the young man hurled the whole package of papers contemptuously into a corner as soon as he was alone again.

He threw himself on the sofa and closed his eyes to dream of Melitta. But the more he tried to recall the image of the beloved, the more obstinately the wrinkled face of the baron presented itself instead. Then again it would change into the face of the Brown Countess; then the Reverend Mr. Jager made him a face, and suddenly Bruno was standing before him, clad in long, flowing white garments. Oswald tried to laugh at the mad masquerade, but when he looked at the boy's face his laugh died on his lips, his hair stood on end, he shivered with cold--that waxy-white complexion, contrasting so strangely with the bluish-black hair, the wide open fixed eyes, a nameless something in those lack-lustre, broken, and yet eloquent eyes--that was not Bruno, that was Death, Death in person, under the beloved form of Bruno! Oswald started up with a wild cry. The terrible vision had vanished, but it took several minutes before the young man could convince himself that it had been only a vision. He had seen everything so very distinctly; every piece of furniture in the room, the ray of the sun that came in at the window, and the atoms of dust dancing in the light.

Suddenly he heard the cracking of a whip and the grating of wheels on the gravel before the

great portal of the château. The baron was riding off with the boys.

Oswald walked hurriedly up and down in his room.

"Why must I see that fearful vision just to-day? Must Bruno die, die before me, in order that I may love Melitta? Is it impossible to love a boy and a beloved one at the same time, and with equal fervor? Is the heart of man so small that one sentiment must crowd out another to find room there? and is faithlessness a law of nature?"

The young man had calmed down, but the ambrosial beauty of the summer morning had disappeared. The sun was without beauty for him; the song of the bird was no longer sweet to his ears; the overflowing fountain of joy in his heart was dried up.

You are just in the right frame of mind, he said to himself, to do the dry piece of work; and he picked up the papers in the corner where he had thrown them. He sat down at his table and began to write. First the letter to the surveyor--that was easy enough; the letter to the lawyer also came happily to an end, though not without a few secret imprecations; but in order to make a copy of the two contracts he required all his patience. The work was tedious enough, but what annoyed him far more were the notes of the baroness, in which she tried to explain her reasons for the changes she desired to be made. The rent was raised in both cases to double the amount, a fact which excited Oswald's astonishment all the more, as he had heard the steward say repeatedly: Mr. Pathe, the tenant of the two farms, is an exceedingly industrious, able, and economical man, and yet he is so situated that a single bad year must ruin him infallibly. In one note she said: "Mr. P. is a negligent monsieur, and his fine steward W. is not much better. The kinder one is to such people the lazier they grow." In another: "The rent payable in kind, and to be delivered at the château, must in any event be doubled, for we can safely assume that we receive after all only half what is due, while the other half remains in the hands of these people." The following words were marked out, but so that they could still very easily be read: "If anything should be left unused, it can easily be sold every Saturday in the market town." In another place: "Could it not be stipulated that the stewards, headmen, housekeepers, etc., of the tenants must be confirmed by the baron? We would then know what sort of people we have to do with, and we would have some hold on their honesty."

"And these men have a fortune of millions!" said Oswald, and angrily threw down his pen. "Let somebody else copy that stuff! Am I to be the most humble tool of these selfish, haughty, heartless aristocrats?"

And the young man's heart grew heavier and heavier. It was not the first time he was reminded of the awkwardness, the inconsistency of his present position. And what had induced him to accept it, except his friendship for Professor Berger, whose advice he had followed, contrary to his own conviction? He remembered that he had not answered his odd friend's last letter. So he sat down and wrote:--

"'There is nothing wrong in the world except a contradiction'--this is, if I remember right, one of your pet maxims, and the fundamental law by which you judge all men's doings. Well, then! You were altogether wrong to persuade me to accept this position, for it consists, in whatever light you may look at it, of nothing but contradictions. I to instruct others, who need instruction myself! I, the enemy of the aristocracy, who hate all nobles, in the bosom of a noble family--half friend and half servant! And what is still worse is, that I see myself share the enjoyments of this aristocratic life as if it were all harmless, and I had never trembled with awe at the words: 'The son of man hath not where to lay his head.' Were not these words written for me also, who think no cushion too soft, no carpet too yielding, no dish too delicate, and no wine too costly? I, who, far from being disgusted at such luxury, not only disdain gulping it down at once, but savor it slowly, thoughtfully, and accept it as something that is self-understood, as something I was born and bred to enjoy. Can it be that the great baroness was right the other day when she said that all so-called friends of the people, now and in ancient times, had only thought of their own interest? One, she said, sells his principle a little dearer than the other--one takes money for his apostasy, another place, a third something else--but that is all the difference. Then I objected, of course, vehemently--it was in the first days of my stay here--but I do not know whether I would have the courage to do so now. For, my friend, I think of Marie Antoinette, and think if another woman as beautiful and as bright as the unfortunate queen, a woman with the eyes, the sweetness of voice, the charms of--well, of my ideal, of the woman I could love, I would have to love--if she said to me: Abjure your principles and I will love you!--Oh God! She will not say so, she cannot say so, for I must believe that in the fairest body dwells the fairest soul; but, if she should be so imbued with the prejudices of her class--how then? Oh, I feel, I know I should not be able to resist her words, her tears; I know that my proud strength would melt like wax under the fire of her glances and the warmth of her kisses; that I should not be able to tear myself away from her soft words; that my oppressed heart would have no word of anger and of scorn to utter, but only the one word: I love you!

"You smile: oh, my dear friend, why can a mere supposition excite me to such a degree? You think such fantastic hot-house plants cannot thrive in the cool air of reality. Well, the whole thing is but a problem, and would to God it could remain problematical forever."

CHAPTER XVI.

"Glad to see you, esteemed colleague! Kindest regards from Frau von Berkow, and here she sends you Bemperlein and Julius to look at; cut copies are not taken back by the publisher!"

With these words there entered a small pale gentleman, with spectacles on his nose, and dressed in an old-fashioned but neat costume. He might be thirty or more, and held a boy by the hand.

"Heartily welcome!" said Oswald, hastily rising from his corner of the sofa in which he had been sitting, lost in thought, and half embarrassed; he shook hands with the new-comer. His eye rested with deepest interest on the boy, the son of the woman he loved. Julius was a charming boy. The blouse of dark green velvet, which he had fastened around the waist with a broad leathern belt, gave him the appearance of a charming little page. Dark curls hung gracefully around his well-shaped head; his face was almost girlish in its beauty and delicacy, and Oswald trembled as he held his soft warm hand for a moment in his own and looked into his large light-brown eyes. He felt as if he had touched Melitta's hand, as if he had looked into Melitta's eyes.

"It is very kind in you, Mr. Bemperlein," he said, mastering his confusion, "to have found time to come and see me. To tell the truth, I partly expected you to-day, especially because Bruno thought it was absolutely impossible that Julius should leave without having said good-by to him."

Here the door opened and Bruno rushed in, a huge slice of bread and butter in his hand. "Hurrah, Julius, sugar man!" he cried. "Lucky that you came! I should have run after you to Grunwald and whipped you in the open street. There! take a bite! The last piece of bread and butter we shall share for a long time! And now come! Let us run once more through the garden and the wood. You are going to spend the evening here, Mr. Bemperlein?"

"*Non Monseigneur!*" replied the latter, who had sunk into a chair and was wiping the perspiration from his brow; "our moments are counted. You would, therefore, oblige me by not extending your excursions beyond the garden, and especially by not throwing Julius again into a ditch, as you did the last time."

"Julius, did I throw you into a ditch?"

"No; but you pulled me out of a ditch when I had fallen in."

"Well, then, come along, sugar man," cried Bruno, lifting the light boy in his arms and carrying him bodily out of the room.

"That is a boy!" said Mr. Bemperlein. "By my life, what a boy! Really, my dear sir, I admire you."

"How so?"

"Because I see you dressed in a light summer coat instead of triple brass, like Horace's first sailor, and as everybody ought to be dressed, in my humble opinion, who has to do with such a sea-monster, such a shark, such a spiny ray--I mean Bruno."

"For heaven's sake, Mr. Bemperlein, if you wish us to be friends, do not tell me that you dislike Bruno."

"I dislike Bruno! I love him as I love a storm at sea which I can watch from the shore; like a wild horse that runs away with somebody else; like a thunder-storm which strikes a tree at a few miles' distance.--Apropos! that was a terrible storm yesterday! We did not reach home till eleven o'clock. Frau von Berkow told me you had been caught by the rain in the forest cottage."

"And you will really go to-morrow?" said Oswald, to turn the conversation.

"I will," said Bemperlein, in a plaintive tone. "I will not at all, my dear sir, but I must. That's the trouble. Alas! if I had my will I would never leave Berkow again as long as I live; and not even afterwards, for I would ask it as a last favor to be buried there. And, really, I do not like to think what is to become of me when I am gone. If you had lived, as I have done, seven years at one and the same place, and that place had been Berkow, and you had taken root there, so as to know every sparrow who builds his nest near your window, and every horse that is in the stable, and if you were then to try to tear yourself away, you would feel how painful that is."

The good fellow took again his handkerchief and passed it, under the pretext of wiping off the perspiration, several times over his eyes.

"I can understand that perfectly," said Oswald, with unaffected sympathy.

"You cannot understand that, my dear sir! You see, I commenced last year to train some ivy against my window, and all the summer and winter I fancied how pretty it would look in fall, when the window should be shaded by the leaves, from top to bottom, and we--I mean my canary-bird and my tree-frog--could hide behind the broad leaves. You do not know what very broad leaves the ivy has--as large as grape-leaves--and this fall the window will be completely filled up. But the room will be empty, and the sun will send its rays through the leaves, and the raindrops will run down on them, and not a soul will derive any pleasure from them."

"I think I can feel that with you," said Oswald

"Impossible, my dear sir, impossible!" sighed the other. "I tell you there is no such window in the wide world. In the deep embrasure stands an arm-chair, covered with black morocco, which Frau von Berkow gave me as a birthday present two years ago--a cushion, which she has herself embroidered for me on my last birthday, lies against the back--well, I cannot describe it all. But then, to sit there on a summer evening, when the voices of Frau von Berkow and Julius come up to me from the garden, and the smoke of my cigar floats away through the leaves----"

With these words Mr. Bemperlein blew two huge blue clouds of smoke from his cigar through the open window at which he sat, and shook his head sadly, as if to say, Here, that produces not the slightest effect; but you ought to see it in my arm-chair!

"Yes, indeed----" suggested Oswald.

"No, my dear sir, you cannot possibly feel as I feel. You do not know what a charming boy Julius is. I have been there seven years now, and if he has given me a single unpleasant hour, a single minute even, my name is not Anastasius Bemperlein. And then--Frau von Berkow--you do not know her."

Oswald turned his face, for he felt how the blood rose in his cheeks.

"You have no idea what an angel of goodness that lady is! What do I not owe her--all! Before I came to Berkow, I knew just as much of the air and the sun, of everything that is beautiful on earth, as a mole. I was a real bear, a perfect rhinoceros, and if I now look a little more like a man, I owe it all to her. And what has she not done for me in every respect! Once, I remember, I was laid up for weeks with typhoid fever. The first person I recognized, when I awoke from my stupor, was Frau von Berkow, and then old Baumann. It was an afternoon in summer, just as to-day. The bed curtains were half closed. Baumann and his mistress were standing at a little distance from me, near a table. 'If I am not to be sick myself, Baumann, I must ride out this afternoon for half an hour,' said Frau von Berkow. 'Don't let Bemperlein die in the mean time, you hear!' 'Yes, ma'am,' said old Baumann. But you must not think, my dear sir, that I think this kindness on the part of Frau von Berkow is anything like a special favor due to my special merits--far from it. I have seen Frau von Berkow lavish the same grace and goodness upon entirely indifferent persons. I really believe the heart of the lady is not made of the same material of which other hearts are made. I think she cannot help doing good and making others happy, just as a canary-bird must sing and a squirrel must jump, because it is their nature and they cannot help it. Pardon me, my dear sir, for detaining you with these things, which cannot possibly interest you, but really, my heart is too full--I cannot keep it from overflowing, and I trust you will not, for all that, set me down as a sentimental fellow."

"I can only assure you, Mr. Bemperlein, that your confidence is not misplaced, even though you will not allow me to sympathize with you fully."

"I will not allow you! It is my greatest wish that you should do so, especially as I came here, to tell the truth, with the very selfish design to ask your advice in a very important matter of business."

"My advice?"

"Yes, yours! I will tell you candidly how it happens that I come to you, as people used to go to a hermit in the woods to relieve them of their scruples. You have been appointed to that important voice by an authority from which I know no appeal--I mean by Frau von Berkow. I tried to explain to her this morning what I shall presently tell you, if you permit me. She listened to me with angelic patience from beginning to end, and then, placing her hand on my arm, she said, 'Dear Bemperlein, you ask for my advice?' 'Of course, madam,' said I. 'Well, then,' said she, 'dear Bemperlein, go over to Grenwitz, present my compliments to Doctor Stein, and tell him at full length what you have just told me, and what he says is my answer.'"

On Oswald's lip a proud smile began to appear. He saw in Melitta's humility a compliment paid him; he felt that she could give no clearer expression to her love than this avowal, that henceforth her life was bound up with his.

"How you are going to relieve me from my embarrassment," continued Mr. Bemperlein, "that is your part; you have been appointed my confidant, and you must play the part as well as you can. The thing is simply this, or rather not simply, but is, a very complicated matter. I am--I have--no, I cannot tell you all that here, I must have the pure heavens above me, for the thoughts

which have brought about such a revolution in my mind have come to me under the pure heavens. You would do me a great favor, my dear sir, if you would accompany me to Berkow. I will make my confession on the way. Now I will go and call Julius, and say farewell to the baroness. You can get ready in the mean time, but, I pray, do not keep me waiting long. Ten minutes are amply sufficient, and I could not stand a *tête-à-tête* with the baroness for more than that. Then, *au revoir* in ten minutes; it will do no harm if it is in nine minutes."

When Oswald came down, Mr. Bemperlein was just bowing himself out of the sitting-room.

"Not a step further, baron! Uff! Now let us be off, my dear sir. Where is my Julius?"

They found the boys in the courtyard. Bruno was sitting on the edge of the basin of the headless Naiad, and was arranging Julius' curly hair while he was standing between his knees.

"How will you get along without your pony, Julius?"

"Well, I don't know. Perhaps I'll send for it."

"You happy fellow. I believe you would send for your mamma and for Mr. Bemperlein, if you could not get on without them. I wish I could go with you; I do not want to see this wretched hole any longer."

"Mamma says you are very fond of Doctor Stein--is that so?"

"I fond of him?" said Bruno, raising his head defiantly; "why should I be fond of him? He is perfectly indifferent to me. He does not care for me! He! Why, yesterday he has been running about all day long without me, and today he has not looked at me once; he is perfectly indifferent to me, you hear? You can tell your mamma so. Perfectly indifferent!" And thereupon he hid his face in Julius' curls and sobbed bitterly.

"What is the matter, Bruno?"

"The matter? Nothing! What should it be?"

"Bruno, I am going with Mr. Bemperlein," called Oswald across.

"Doctor, I am going with Julius!" Bruno called back.

"Where is Malte?"

"Am I Malte's keeper?"

"Malte is in the baron's room," said Mr. Bemperlein. "The drive has fatigued him very much, and the baron has made him lie down on the sofa, where he is snugly coiled up like a kitten. Which way shall we go?"

"Suppose we go through the forest?" said Oswald.

They crossed the drawbridge, which had not been raised for two hundred years, through the linden avenue into the wood, Mr. Bemperlein and Oswald ahead, Bruno and Julius following at a little distance. Bruno had put his arm around Julius' neck; he had no interest to-day in anything but his friend, whom he had always loved dearly, and on whose brown eyes he had written more than one poem, and whom he now, in the hour of parting, overwhelmed with caresses.

"You are going away, Julius," he moaned; "and when you have been away for three days you will have forgotten me."

"I shall never forget you, Bruno!"

"Ah! Are you quite sure of that? You have a better memory, then, than Oswald--I mean Doctor Stein. He told me the same thing, that he loved me like a brother, and since night before last he has forgotten that I am in the world. Now he is probably telling Mr. Bemperlein that he loves him like a brother--just look how he takes his arm! And nobody cares for me! Ah! I hate him! I hate everybody--except you, Julius."

While the poor boy was thus pouring out his love and his sorrow into his friend's bosom, and felt clearly that he also did not understand him, and that he was alone, quite alone on this joyless earth, Mr. Bemperlein spoke thus to Oswald:

CHAPTER XVII.

"I told you, I think, my dear sir, that my father was a minister; nay more, my grandfathers on both sides were ministers, for my mother was a minister's daughter; my great-grandfather was at least a sexton, who had married the daughter of a shepherd--though of another flock. Farther I cannot trace my pedigree--but *ex ungue leonem*! You see that all of my family have pursued the same business, to keep flocks--of men or of sheep. The spirit of my ancestors seems to dwell in me. It was always my passion to carry animals to pasture, and even now I can stand by the hour leaning against a fence and looking at calves and colts. There is no doubt something paradisiacal in this kind of enjoyment which reminds us of the earliest times of mankind and me of my early youth. Sir, my first friend was a boy who kept the geese on the common; then a swineherd became my Pylades, and the intimate intercourse with this *Eumæus posthumus* has given me a relish for certain parts of the Odyssey, which others lack who have not had the same previous training. When my Pylades obtained the rank of regular shepherd I left our native village, in tears, to go to college at Grunwald; there I entered an advanced class, but my teachers, as well as the boys, looked at me as a kind of monster; the latter mainly on account of my fabulous costume, of which a pair of trousers consisting of good ox-hide up to the knees was by no means the most remarkable part. My learning seemed to be as fabulous to the professors. I knew half of Virgil by heart; I read the New Testament as easily in the original as the others in the translation--and all this at thirteen! I am shocked even now when I think of it. Knowledge, however, was power, and I reaped the benefit at once. For my father, who had a numerous family, and who was as poor as a mouse in his own church, could give me next to nothing when I left home, except his blessing and letters to six families in town, who gave me as many free dinners every week. The seventh day, on which nobody invited me, became thus naturally my regular fast-day. I was, therefore, left entirely to myself; but I had no expensive habits; instead of them the talent to be content with bread and butter, to read with a train-oil lamp, and to write with pointed matches; to sit through my six hours' tuition, and to be able to give as many private lessons. Thus I could not only pay punctually the rent for my garret and the bills for the necessaries of life, but actually exchange, two months later, my ox-hide trousers, for another pair, of more suitable shape and material. But I kept forever the nickname of Leather-stocking, which my companions had given me, and which I had hoped to shake off on this solemn occasion. Other inconveniences at school I avoided mainly by a strict line of policy. I had found out that the biggest and strongest boys in any class were generally also the laziest and the most stupid. I never failed, therefore, to form an alliance with them, which was based upon these two fundamental principles: I write your tasks, and, in return, you neither molest me yourself nor allow anybody else to molest me. I must admit that the treaty was always religiously observed. When I was seventeen my teacher decreed that I had been for a year ripe for the University, and this was true, if we understand by it that I was as full of learning as the yolk of an egg, but in every other respect as ignorant and helpless as a chick that has just broke the shell. It was a matter of course that I must study theology. The sons of former captains are made cadets, and the sons of country parsons go to the seminary; that is as much a matter of course as any part of natural history. Well, I studied divinity; that is, I attended lectures diligently, and wrote whole wagon-loads of most abstruse erudition. Otherwise I continued very much the same kind of life I had led before; I had even kept my garret and gave my private lessons as heretofore, especially as one of my younger brothers was now staying with me who fell heir to all my little privileges. The three years' course passed away monotonously enough, but not unpleasantly. One day looked very much like all the others, only Wednesday appeared somewhat dismal to me, because on that day we had pork and beans for dinner, a dish which I have never been able to like, in spite of my liberal views on such subjects. It reminded me always too forcibly of the beautiful summer mornings when I sat by the side of my Eumæus posthumus, reading Virgil's eclogues, and I could not swallow anything. You may think that sentimental, but we all have our foibles. Of actual life I saw about that time as much as a camel sees of the desert in a menagerie. The number of my friends was very small, strictly proportioned to my means; for I have noticed that the wealthier students are seen in lots together, while the poorer walk singly through the streets. I do not know if it is so in life also. But I had an enormous respect for these wealthier students, for there are some even in Grunwald, and in my eyes every one of them who had a hundred a year was a Crœsus. These mustached puss in boots appeared to me like select creatures, and I could never quite comprehend how a government, otherwise so anxiously concerned for the repose of its subjects, could allow them to go about in such perfect freedom. I must confess that I lived this three years in constant apprehension of a challenge. Not that I am lacking in personal courage. I have fortunately had several times occasion to convince myself of the contrary; but I was afraid of the embarrassment such an event might produce. I always looked upon students' duels as the most abominable nonsense, injurious to health, but far more injurious to morality, for the custom compels young men to subject their thoughts and their feelings to a Moloch of barbarous notions about honor, the most ridiculous caricature of a moral code. It accustoms them thus, systematically, to that blind obedience which seems to me the true sin against the Holy Ghost. I do not know if we agree on this point, my dear sir?"

"Perfectly," replied Oswald. "Well," said Bemperlein, "and yet the most surprising thing to me is the length of time during which that intoxication lasts, long after the University years have been forgotten. There is a Baron Lylow living near us at Berkow, a man of forty, who has been married at least ten years. Well, yesterday, when I took leave of him, with Julius,--the children have always been very intimate,--the baron fell, after supper, to talking about his University time, and gave us--I mean his tutor and myself--a sketch of his heroic deeds in those days. Fortunately, my colleague had been a fast young man in Halle, and could tell the baron all about the present fashion as to duels. And now you ought to have seen how the good gentleman became excited,

how he pitied the low state of students' minds in our day, how he regretted the small number of duels, the miserably small quantity of beer which was consumed at night, and so on. His eyes actually sparkled as he recalled the past glory, and he became so deeply moved that he finally gave vent to the pious wish that all the Rhenish Democrats, as he called them, those people who talked about freedom of the press and such stuff, might have but one neck, in order to make an end to all their cries by--here he made an expressive gesture with the hand."

"Of course," replied Oswald. "When these great men are young, they sing, 'Oh, Liberty, dear Liberty!' that is very poetical heard from afar, and they sing and drink and sing, till they verily believe they hold said opinions. But that is a mere hallucination, or if they ever really think of it in earnest, they mean by it the liberty to smash windows, to insult helpless men, to create a disturbance in public places, and to achieve other heroic deeds of the kind with impunity. Then comes another liberty--the liberty to remain forever, with undying respect, your most humble, obedient servant, as long as they are subalterns, and to treat the world like dogs when they become ministers. But we have drifted away from our subject. You were spared, I trust, the unpleasant alternative of hurting the feelings of those privileged beings, or your own honor?"

"Yes, thanks to my policy to keep my existence as unknown as possible, for what could a mouse like myself do against puss in boots? When my three years were over, and I had succeeded in my first theological examination, my fears were at an end, for nobody expects a candidate for the ministry to fight. I should have liked at once to accept a place as private tutor in the country, but my brother had but just entered the upper class at college, and I did not wish to leave him alone during the two years which he had still to stay there, as I saw that he was not as perfect in the art of writing with pointed matches, and the other secrets of life, as was desirable for the interests of the family of a poor country parson. For this second brother was expected to do unto the third as I had done unto him, and this younger brother was to enter the third class when the others entered the University, just as I began my studies when he entered the third class."

"But how could that be?" said Oswald, astonished.

"Well, you see, my dear sir," replied Mr. Bemperlein, "how it could be I cannot tell you, but that it was so I can swear to. I am the oldest of them all, and born the twenty-second of March; then comes a sister, two years younger, for she was born on the twenty-first of March; then a brother, then again a sister, then a brother, and again a sister. How many does that make?"

"Half a dozen, I should say," replied Oswald, smiling.

"Quite right--half a dozen, all two years apart, and all born in March with the exception of my youngest sister, whose birthday is in April. But then she is a kind of comet in the planetary system of our family. Just imagine, only eighteen, and already engaged!"

"I do not see anything extraordinary in that, with so lovely a sister as she no doubt is," observed Oswald.

"Nothing extraordinary!" cried Mr. Bemperlein--"nothing extraordinary? Such a baby! Marry! At eighteen! I do not even know if that can be done. You are laughing? Maybe. I never understood women, and I am sure I do not know how I should have learnt to understand them, unless the knowledge was given to me, on account of my special simplicity, in a dream. I remained, therefore, two years longer in Grunwald, coaching students and giving private lessons, by which I made enough to live very well--the fast day I still observed, but merely from old habit and to support my brother, as was my bounden duty. This brother gave me some trouble, which afterwards appeared to have been unnecessary, for he is already assistant-minister, although only four and twenty; but he learnt rather slowly, had weak eyes, and was inconceivably sensitive to cold and hunger. I saw, therefore, that it would be barbarous to put upon him the care of his next younger brother, who was then coming up to town, especially as he was weakly; he is now a hearty fellow of twenty, a brave, diligent youth, who will shortly pass his theological examination--well, but what was I going to say? Oh yes! He was then rather weakly and sickly, and needed much attention. But to provide for two----"

"And for yourself?" suggested Oswald.

"Well, that was the smallest part. But I saw the thing could not go on any longer so, and the offer to become tutor at Berkow was, therefore, most welcome. Full board, a fabulous salary--I was beside myself. Now I had both hands free, and could at last do something for my family."

"I should think you had been doing that to your full power, or rather beyond your power," said Oswald.

"Oh, nonsense," said the other. "My wish was good enough, but my strength very feeble, and now they needed support more than ever. My poor mamma had been suffering for some time, now father also was taken dangerously ill, and his iron constitution so undermined that he has never fully recovered, and we feared, of course, the worst. My three sisters, too, were still unprovided. How fortunate, therefore, that I had two hundred dollars in gold! I gave half to my brothers----"

"And the other half to your sisters?"

"And the other half to my sisters," continued Bemperlein, and rubbed his hands with delight.

"But what did you keep for yourself?"

"For myself?" said Bemperlein, quite astonished. "Did I not tell you I had full board? And now listen! I had been a year at Berkow, when one fine day the good lady sends for me, and after we have been talking about this and that, she says:--

"You have been here a year now, dear Bemperlein; now tell me candidly, how do you like it here?--That needs no answer, Madam, replied I.--Well, I am glad of that, said she, but have you no special desire?--Not that I know, said I.--But your salary is evidently too low, said she, with the kindest face in the world. I was so astonished at these words that I could find no answer.

"I must tell you frankly, she said, with angelic goodness, that I have looked at the time up to now only in the light of a trial, and that I regulated the salary accordingly. I never imagined that a man, to whom I can intrust my child's education with perfect confidence, could be paid with money at all; and if I now ask you to let me double the salary which you have heretofore received, I beg you to understand that I still remain your debtor.

"If I had been surprised before, I was much more so now, or rather, I was deeply moved--not so much by her generosity, as by the indescribable kindness with which the offer was made, so that the tears trickled down my cheeks. I stammered something about not being able to accept so much and such like, but then she became quite angry, so that I quickly recovered myself, and told her I would accept her present, not for myself, because that would be unwarrantable, but for those whom I had to support, because they could not support themselves.--Do with it what you like, she said, in going out, but remember that you owe something also to yourself. There the matter ended, but not so Frau von Berkow's goodness, which has no end. But I was going to tell you something very different; I mean, how I came to discover the error which had crept into the account of my life, and what that error is."

CHAPTER XVIII.

At this moment a horseman passed them at full gallop, who had turned a few moments before from a byway into the high-road. A large Newfoundland dog, whom Oswald at first took for Melitta's dog, galloped in long strides by the side of the horse, a superb jet-black thorough-bred, whose chest was covered with white foam. The horseman, as far as they could judge in passing, was a man of perhaps thirty, tall and thin, and, contrary to the custom of the country gentlemen of that region, in long trousers instead of top-boots; his seat on horseback was utterly unlike that of a country gentleman. But this was perhaps more the effect of negligence and the habit of carelessness than real awkwardness, for when he found himself suddenly close before the two wanderers, whom he had not noticed before in his thoughts or his reveries, he threw his horse with such force and skill on his haunches, that he proved his horsemanship beyond all doubt. "*Excusez, Messieurs*," he said, touching his hat and riding off again.

"Do you know that gentleman?" said Oswald, pausing and looking after the man, whose features seemed to him familiar and yet strange.

"*Tiens!*" said Mr. Bemperlein, also stopping; "that must have been Baron Oldenburg. Yes, it was the baron!" he cried, as he saw the gentleman stop when he reached the two boys, with whom he shook hands. "I should not have recognized him with his black beard and his sunburnt face. He looks like a veritable Cabyle. When can he have come back?"

"Has he been travelling?" asked Oswald, with assumed indifference.

"He has been travelling these ten years," replied Mr. Bemperlein. "Three years ago Frau von Berkow, the two Barnewitz, met him in Rome, and then they travelled together through Southern Italy. In Sicily they parted again. My friends prepared to return home, but the baron went on to Egypt, Arabia, and heaven knows where else his restless spirit has driven him. But we have again lost sight of our subject."

Mr. Bemperlein began his tale once more with his inexhaustible fund of details; but if Oswald had before only listened with one ear, his thoughts now were far away. That, then, was the man who had played so prominent a part in Melitta's life! So great a part! How great a part? She had never really loved him--perhaps--no, certainly never loved him--but is true love always the last reward of a woman's highest favor? Is there no such thing as desire without love? Or love without desire? Only a wish to hold him captive by all means, among them, by the memory of pleasure

enjoyed. Has she ever been happy by the side of this man, at whose cradle the graces had failed to appear; happy, though not perfectly so, not as happy as she had hoped, but still? Oh! that thought brought intolerable torment!

The demon of jealousy was whispering and hissing bad thoughts in his ear, which made his blood boil and big drops of perspiration to break out on his forehead--no wonder, then, that he heard Mr. Bemperlein's tale only in a dream. This only he understood, that the strange man had only now begun to think of his so-called science, his long-cherished profession only now, when all the troubles of life seemed to be ended, and he could breathe, a free man, in the green solitude of Berkow. He had now only begun to make the acquaintance of the heroes of modern literature, especially of Shakespeare; and from the poets he had passed to the philosophers, here again above all in Spinoza finding a new world opening before him which he had not suspected in his scholastic studies. Under such influence he had been led to the study of nature, to botany, mineralogy, and physics; he had built himself, with old Baumann's aid, a small laboratory, where he had industriously pursued his new sciences, and there, alas! he had found, amid phials and retorts, that his orthodox faith, as far as the reading of the philosophers had not destroyed it already, had altogether evaporated!

"Thus matters went on for a while," said Mr. Bemperlein, "but the moment came when it was my duty to decide whether I should openly avow my apostasy from the faith of my fathers or not. A very lucrative cure in this region, which was in the hands of an uncle of Frau von Berkow, became vacant by the death of the incumbent. The gentleman thought he would please his niece by offering the place to me; I had nothing to do but to go the following Sunday and preach my trial-sermon. Now, you must know that when the thing was first mentioned to me I was so much overwhelmed by surprise and by fright, and so unwilling to hurt the kind man's feelings, that I said: 'Yes.' You know Frau von Berkow intended to send Julius to Grunwald, and thus I could not have stayed at Berkow any longer at best. I also sat down to compose my sermon. I had so far succeeded in avoiding every call to show my theological talent of declamation, and now I felt, to my horror, that I had completely forgotten the pulpit-talk, and, what was worse, the pulpit logic. Three nights in succession I began my Sisyphus work, but I never got farther than 'My dear brethren!' In the third night, when I had gone to bed quite in despair, and had fallen asleep in great sorrow, thinking what my good father and my worthy grandfather, whom I had known still, would have said if they could see their son and grandson in full incredulity, after he had been so carefully trained in orthodoxy, I had the following curious dream, which no doubt partly arose from an animated description Frau von Berkow had given me of the Louvre.

"I dreamt, then, I was entering into a lofty, large hall, with pictures and statues on all the walls. There sat God the Father himself, a handsome, bearded old man, and held forth his hand and created heaven and earth; then came Adam and Eve, in white marble--Eve pretty well preserved, but Adam had lost his head; then 'Cain's Fratricide,' a large oil-painting, and by its side 'Adam and Eve find the corpse of murdered Abel,' on which the form of the deadly pale youth, who looked like broken white lilies, was deeply touching. Thus I went on and on, looking at statue after statue and painting after painting. I was not alone in the hall; on the contrary, a crowd of people was moving along the walls and amid the forest of statues. Large groups were standing before some of the most prominent works; for instance, the passage of the children of Israel through the Red Sea, a gigantic fresco, and smaller groups before other paintings, less remarkable for historic importance than for the piquancy of the scene they represented. Thus I was much annoyed by a crowd of young people who stood before 'Lot drunk,' and put their heads together and laughed. Altogether, the deportment of the company appeared to me highly improper. The women were laughing and talking and coquetting; the men chatted and ogled, and a few, with long legs and long teeth,--probably English,--actually kept their hats on. Almost all had a book in their hands, into which they looked conscientiously from time to time, when they wished for information about one of the works of art. This book seemed to be a catalogue of the Museum, and I wished to obtain one, because I had forgotten the order in which the prophets came, and thus could not tell whether the bearded man in No. 8 was Habakkuk, and the young man in No. 9 Zephaniah, or not; I turned, therefore, to an old gentleman whom I had seen busy with a fly-brush, and whom I therefore took to be one of the keepers. As I approached him the man turned round, and what was my surprise when I recognized my own grandfather. 'What do you desire, young man?' he asked, in a severe tone. I repeated timidly my question. 'Here is a catalogue,' he said, taking one of the books which lay in large numbers on the table and handing it to me, 'it costs half a dollar.' I opened the book; 'I wanted a catalogue,' said I, 'you have given me--' 'To be sure,' said the old man, in a melancholy tone of voice, 'this is the catalogue of the Old Museum; the door to the New Museum, in which you will find the works of art from the year one of our Christian Era till the year 1793, when the Christian religion was abolished, and the goddess Reason ascended the throne--is there.' He pointed towards a fine flight of broad stairs, which led up to the other halls. 'You will do well to buy another catalogue there. It costs much less, and you must speak about it to your father, who holds there the same office which I fill here.' And thereupon the old man turned his back to me and began once more to dust the statues and pictures with his tall fly-brush. 'Excuse me, dear grandfather,' I said.--'I am not your grandfather,' replied the old man, quietly going on with his occupation. 'Well, are you the keeper?' I asked. 'Yes, indeed, keeper of the Museum, nothing else.'--'And where have they put all the works of art which have been produced since that time?'--'Since that memorable year,' said the old man, 'nothing worth speaking of has been achieved. A few schools of art have been formed here and there, but they have produced nothing that can be called artistic. The artists lack the proper faith, and without faith nothing great can be painted or sculptured or written'--

when he said this he looked at me reprovingly--'Or written,' I repeated, abated, thinking of my unsuccessful efforts--'Or written,' he continued, 'and then the world has become so indifferent, and critics have become so very sharp and severe, that they have lost that naïve simplicity and dreamy security without which, unfortunately--but now I must beg you to leave; the bell has been ringing for some time, and you are the very last.' He accompanied me to the entrance, showed me the door, and invited me with a stiff bow to walk out. I did so--the door closed with a crash and--I awoke.

"After that dream," continued Bemperlein, "I made no more efforts. Without faith no sermon can be written, I said to myself, and even if one could be written it could not be delivered, at least not by a man like yourself, who has a little conscience left, and neither chick nor child, such as have tempted many an honest man to write and say things which he can only on that plea defend before God and the world. I felt clearly that I could not become a minister of the gospel, and I therefore wrote this morning to the patron of that church, thanking him for the honor he had done me, and declining his offer, because I had decided to accompany Julius to Grunwald. For, as I was writing the sentence, the idea occurred to me. I went at once to Frau von Berkow to tell her of my resolution, and she seemed to be delighted. Now, my dear sir, after you have had the goodness to listen to this long story of mine, pray tell me, what would you do in my place? Consider that I am already twenty-eight years old, and that I still have all my twenty-eight teeth. The wisdom-teeth have not yet appeared, perhaps because Nature has forgotten them, or because of a wise provision of Fate, which remembered how little I would often have to bite in this life."

"What I would do in your place," said Oswald, "if I were such a brave, conscientious, excellent----"

"Pray don't, my dear sir," said Bemperlein, blushing all over.

"I say conscientious, excellent man? Well, that question can easily be answered. I would do what you have already done. I would cheerfully turn my back upon the paradise of naïve thoughtlessness and harmless orthodoxy, after having, tasted of the tree of knowledge. I would not allow myself to be cooped up in that stall in which the hypocrites, the vile dogs in the sheeps' clothing of humility, are whining and howling so fearfully."

"Very well, very well!" said Mr. Bemperlein, rubbing his hands with delight, "and what would you do next, my dear sir?"

"Then," replied Oswald, "if I were you, I would remember what sufferings I had endured as a weak boy, and what industry and perseverance I had shown, simply in order to acquire a vast mass of knowledge which I am now glad to be able to forget again. I would remember this, I say, and now study a science which I should not wish to forget again, because I could be a pupil there without first fettering my reason, and because this science is fruitful for myself and fruitful for my fellow-beings."

"Excellent! excellent!" said Mr. Bemperlein. "Go on, go on!"

"In one word, I would devote myself," continued Oswald, "with all my strength to those sciences which you have already tried, and I would, for that purpose, return to Grunwald and enter my name once more as a student, but not in order to study Theology, but this time Medicine."

"The Medical Faculty in Grunwald is excellent," said Mr. Bemperlein.

"It is acknowledged to be one of the best in Germany," continued Oswald. "Then I would go to some other universities as long as the money lasts."

"Money like hay, money like hay," continued Mr. Bemperlein--"for six years a princely income and full board--I pray you, my dear sir, I have enough to live on for half a century."

"Then I would become a famous physician----"

"Do you know," said Bemperlein, standing still and looking back at the boys, in a whisper, "I have already poisoned some of Julius' rabbits secretly, and dissected them afterwards, and the frogs in the swamps behind our park have no reason to be friends of mine."

"Well done!" laughed Oswald. "And then I would marry."

"Really?" said Bemperlein.

"Well, of course, and--have a half-dozen little Bemperleins who would, after a while, all turn out great Bemperleins, bright, shining lights in modern science."

"And the girls?" said Bemperlein, laughing.

"The girls will marry brave, truthful men, and thus help to bring on the good time when we shall have, 'Oh Liberty, sweet liberty!'"

"Yes, yes," cried Mr. Bemperlein, "so must it come. Thanks, a thousand thanks, my dear friend;

you have scattered the last clouds of doubt by your encouraging words. Tomorrow I go with Julius to Grunwald."

"I will give you a letter of introduction to Professor Berger," said Oswald; "he is connected with all the great men in Natural Science."

He tore a leaf from his pocket-book, wrote a few lines to Berger, and gave it to Bemperlein.

"Thanks! many thanks!" said the latter, taking the note. "The acquaintance with such a man may become very useful to me."

"Most assuredly. Speak quite candidly with him, without any reserve whatever, and then you may feel assured that he will not conceal from you anything that is in his heart. Perhaps he will advise you to go at once to a larger University, as, for instance, that at the capital. You must follow his advice."

"*Nous verrons! nous verrons!*" said Mr. Bemperlein. "But here we are at the park gate. Won't you come in?"

"No, no," replied Oswald, hastily. "I must get back to Grenwitz."

"Well, then, farewell! As soon as I have installed Julius in Grunwald, and as soon as I have obtained all the information I want from Berger, I shall be back again to take formal leave. In the mean time, farewell, my dear sir."

"Good-by, good-by!" said Oswald, pressing Bemperlein's hand, and then Julius', and taking Bruno back with him into the forest, as if an angel with a flaming sword was keeping watch at the park-gates of Berkow.

CHAPTER XIX.

The boy and he walked for a time in silence through the wood. Bruno was too proud to begin a conversation with one who seemed to have forgotten him entirely, and Oswald was too busy with his own thoughts.... Every person with whom we happen to come in contact is a mirror which reflects our own image, and Oswald had beheld his own face in the crystal clear mirror of that man's pure, childlike soul--but how beheld? torn by passion, darkened by doubt, so that he was startled. "And this man," he said to himself, "comes to you for advice! the seeing to the blind, the healthy to the sick! He discovers an error in the account of his life, and he sits down and counts and counts till the sum is right, and all is smooth and as it ought to be again, while you, you rush through life like a reckless merchant, adding debt to debt, rushing from one speculation into another, unconcerned about the day of reckoning. That man would sooner cut off his right hand than use it to seize anything which he has not earned in the sweat of his face--you accept the gifts of the golden Aphrodite, and whatever else kind fate offers you, as if it were due to you, and grumble to find it not more than it is. Now you are already dissatisfied with Melitta's love, for which you ought to thank her on your knees; now you want her to have loved you before she knew you, or at least to drown all recollection of this man. 'If I could kill memory,' she said. Well, what is indifferent to us we forget easily enough, and what we do not and cannot forget--that is not indifferent to us. Then she hates this man? But hatred is the brother of sweet love! Perhaps she loves him still?--And where did he come from just now? From her! No doubt--Bruno, does this byroad lead anywhere else, except to Berkow?"

"No; and I really do not think the road is interesting enough to walk it twice the same day. Here is another one, which will bring us out of the forest and then along the edge of the wood almost to the house. Shall we go this way?"

"Very well!" said Oswald, falling back into his bad dreams. "Then he came from her. But that cannot be ... 'A rolling wheel has formed the woman's bosom; the lily-hills conceal what ever changes:'--the baron may have read that in the Fritjofs Saga as well as I. He is a learned man, and baron, and rich.--The man cannot miss it; but Melitta shall give me an account of it; she shall tell me that I have reason to hate the man as I do."

Bruno had walked in silence on the opposite side of the road. He noticed Oswald's excitement; he saw how his face grew darker and darker, how his lips trembled with pain, how his hand closed angrily; he saw that his friend was not happy. More was not needed to make the generous boy forget all his own sensitiveness, his own complaints; he came gently up to Oswald, and seizing his hand, he said:--

"What is the matter, Oswald? why do you not talk? Are you angry with me?"

"I, angry with you?" that was all the young man said; but there was enough in the tone in which he uttered these words, and in the look with which he accompanied them, to convince Bruno that his suspicion was groundless, and to let the long pent-up torrent of his affection break forth in wild haste. He embraced Bruno and caressed him amid sobs and tears.

"Bruno, Bruno, what does that mean?" called out Oswald, frightened by the boy's passionate tenderness.

"I thought you had ceased to love me," sobbed Bruno; "and look here, Oswald, if you cease loving me, I'll die."

The pale, death-like image, of which Oswald had dreamt so fearfully in his feverish excitement, reappeared before his mind's eye and gave a terrible meaning to the passionate words of the boy. Speechless with emotion, he drew the sobbing boy to his heart, and repeated within himself the vow to be a brother to the poor forsaken boy. Thus they stood in close embrace ... Red evening lights were playing in the tops of the pine-trees--the soft plaintive song of a little bird came from the forest--a sweet, solemn moment.

Suddenly hideous sounds fell upon their ear; they came from near by; loud threatening voices of men who seemed to be angrily disputing--scolding, cursing--then for a moment deep silence, and finally the loud cry: "Great God! Help! help! Is no one near! Here!"

Oswald and Bruno, who had listened for a moment breathlessly, rushed at full speed towards the place from which the cries came. They reached a place close to the forest, where people had been cutting wood, and here and there cords of wood were piled up in long rows. By the side of a four-horse wagon a man was lying on the ground, who kicked with hands and feet, while another man was bending over him, either to calm or to ill-treat him--they could not distinguish which! As they approached the latter rose--it was the steward, Wrampe--and cried: "Quick, doctor, for God's sake! The fellow is dying before my eyes."

The appearance of the man who lay on the ground was indeed fearful in the extreme. His face was distorted, the eyes rigid, so as to show only the white, foam on his lips, his hands closed, the body in spasms; Oswald could hardly recognize the gigantic servant who had excited Bruno's anger by his cruelty towards the horses.

Oswald had knelt down by his side; he wiped the foam from his mouth, he loosened his stiff cravat, and tried to make him lie easier.

"Is there nothing to put under his head?" he called to the steward, whose red-bearded face, full of helpless anxiety, looked inexpressibly foolish.

"Under his head? under his head? here!" and he pulled off his coat and put it as a cushion under the man's head.

"Is there no water near by?" asked Oswald again.

"Water near by? No; but in the coat pocket is a bottle--there it is--that may be as good--great God!"

Oswald washed the sick man's forehead with the brandy; he became more quiet.

"How did this happen?" he asked.

"Why, I don't know," cried the steward, in a sad voice. "I came riding up here because the fellow was idling too long in the wood, to help him to move faster; there he sits on a stump and does not stir. What are you sitting there for? I say. Why should I not sit here? says he. Are you drunk again? says I, for I saw his eyes were quite watery and his bottle lay empty by his side. Drunk yourself! says he. You infamous rascal! says I. Rascal yourself! says he. Well, doctor, I couldn't stand that, of course. So, down from my horse and a few good licks upon his back was all done in a moment. He, in perfect rage, makes at me--all of a sudden he falls down like an ox, and commences--a, great God, he is at it again. I never saw the like in all my life!"

The man had another attack of spasms. Oswald began to fear the worst "Quick, quick!" he said. "Down with the wood from the wagon; we must drive him home slowly. In the mean time somebody must go for the doctor."

"Yes, yes; I'll go for the doctor!" cried the steward, glad to escape, and one foot in the stirrup.

"You stay here!" commanded Oswald; "how can I lift the man without you? Are you not ashamed, Mr. Wrampe, to be such a coward? Take an example of Bruno!"

Bruno had helped Oswald as well as he could; now he was standing on the wagon, throwing down the wood with great energy. "I will go for the doctor, Oswald!" he said, jumping down.

"I presume that will be the best, Bruno," said the latter. "You know the road, and I cannot well leave him. Shorten his stirrups, Mr. Wrampe!"

"Directly," said the latter, but Bruno had done it already, and with one effort, without using the stirrups, he was in the saddle and had the bridle in his hand. The fiery horse, feeling the light burden, reared.

"He'll throw you," said the steward.

"Never mind," replied the boy. "Your whip! Up, *allez!*" and he cut the horse over the neck and galloped off at full speed. Oswald just saw how he leapt the broad ditch and took a short cut through the wood in order to reach the highroad more quickly, and thus to get through Fashwitz to the little town where the doctor lived.

CHAPTER XX.

The steward and Oswald had in the mean time succeeded, though not without difficulty, in putting the patient on the wagon, after having made him a kind of couch with the aid of some clothes and hay from the adjoining meadow. Mr. Wrampe's giant power seemed to be perfectly paralyzed by the fright. Oswald got into the wagon to support the servant, who was now in a state of lethargy, and the steward undertook to drive. Fortunately the distance was not very great, as the cottages lay on this side of the barns and outbuildings, and therefore much nearer than the château itself.

"You know where the man lives?" asked Oswald, as they came near the village.

"The very first house," answered Mr. Wrampe, turning round in the saddle and pointing with his whip at a cottage, which looked more like a large kennel than a habitation of men.

"Is he married?"

"Has been married," replied Mr. Wrampe, "but his poor wife--" here he broke off, casting a shy look at the man's pale face, as if he meant to say: Of the dead and deadly sick we ought to speak no evil.

"Has he any children?"

"Two; there they are at Mother Claus' door. Mother Claus! he! Jake has had his troubles again; put the children out of the way or they'll be frightened." The steward's sense of propriety had evidently been wonderfully developed by his wrong. The old woman seemed to be enjoying the last rays of the sun before the door of her cottage, while two little children were playing in the sand at her feet.

When the old woman looked up, Oswald recognized the old lady with whom, the day before, on his way to church, he had had the singular conversation about immortality. The old woman cast a look at the wagon, took the children, led them into the house, and came out again just as the wagon stopped at the door.

"Is he dead?" she asked, coming near.

"No, mother," said Oswald.

"Why, to be sure, the young gentleman again! Well, I like that in you, that you take pity on a poor fellow. Just carry him in, will you? I have put the children up stairs."

The steward and Oswald lifted the man, who was perfectly motionless, out of the wagon, and carried him, bending low, through the house-door through a narrow passage into the low room, where they put him on a broad bed with a blue counterpane. The old woman followed them, asked the steward to help her in undressing the man, and then said to him:

"Well, you can go now. Mr. Stein and I can manage Jake."

The steward was very glad to receive permission to go. With a few unintelligible words he left the room, and Oswald saw through the window how he took a long pull from his bottle before he mounted his horse, as if he were standing in special need of some such refreshment after the unusual physical and mental efforts which he had made.

Oswald had taken a seat on a low settee near the small open window. He looked around him and saw, at the first glance, that a good spirit was prevailing in the humble cottage in spite of the coarse drunkard on his bed. The bed itself was freshly covered; the ceiling and the walls were

scrupulously clean, the floor sprinkled with white sand. The air in the room was fresh and sweet; the small window-panes as bright as their old age and greenish hue would permit Mother Claus had seated herself by the bed and performed, as it seemed to Oswald, some mysterious, perhaps magnetic, passes over the sick man, who had apparently fallen into a pleasant sleep. She rose and said: "I will put the children to bed, if you will stay here while I am away."

When Oswald promised to do so, she went away; but after a quarter of an hour she came back and sat down by the young man near the window. She had her knitting in her hand, and knit with marvellous rapidity, for one so old, a little baby's sock. There she sat, now listening for the sick man's breathing, and now counting the meshes of her knitting; at times glancing at Oswald with a look of kindly interest from her gray, deep-set eyes.

"I know what that is," she said suddenly, as a bright ray from the setting sun fell through the window upon Oswald's face. "I must have seen you before."

"Why, to be sure," said Oswald, "yesterday, on the heath."

"No, no--not yesterday, no, a few years ago--perhaps forty--let me see, fifty years ago."

"How old are you, Mother Claus?" asked Oswald, surprised to hear her speak of forty and fifty years as a few years.

"I'll be eighty-two next Christmas coming," replied the old woman, resuming her knitting as if she had been warned that she would not have much time left.

"Eighty-two!" cried Oswald, astonished; "and have you lived all the time in this village?"

"Yes, here and at the big house. I was born there, on Holy Christmas Eve, in the year one thousand seven hundred and sixty-four, on the same day and in the same hour as the father of the late baron----"

"How long is it since he died?"

"Well, it may be some forty years--he would be just as old as I am, eighty-two years, hm, hm, eighty-two years--I wonder how he would look--wrinkled like me? and he was a fine fellow--yes, he was a fine fellow!"

The memory of the third baron, counting upwards, seemed to have a special interest for the old woman; she let the thin brown hands, with the knitting, sink into her lap, and stared dreamily into vacancy. "A fine fellow!" she whispered once more, and her wrinkled face brightened up with a sweet smile; then two big tears slowly appeared between the cast-down lashes and rolled down the wrinkled brown cheeks, upon her wrinkled brown hands.... What was she looking at in that moment, the old woman? Did she see herself again as she was sixty-five years ago, a tall, beautiful thing, with large gray eyes full of fire, and an abundance of soft, dark blonde hair, as she stole down at night into the garden of the château, to give a rendezvous to the young baron? The wild young baron, with whom she had grown up like a sister, and whom she loved like a brother--and like her best beloved, since he vowed he would make her a baroness as soon as he was master at Grenwitz. Then she was young and he was young; and the sun shone in those days so warm and mild into her young, fresh heart, and the larks sang so merrily, and the moonlight danced about slyly in the park, and the nightingale sobbed and wailed in the shrubbery as if her full little heart was breaking with loving joy and loving pain--for alas! the young baron had gone away that morning--how far? Beyond the sea, sent to Sweden to his relations there, to make an end to that foolish story with pretty Lizzie. And he sent her not a word, not a word, for one, two, three years, and when he came back from Sweden--great God! he was not alone then--a beautiful young wife sat by his side, and the old master and mistress were delighted, and the servants cheered, and they danced and shouted for joy. But in the thickest shrubbery near the château a girl had hid herself, the prettiest of all the girls far and near, and she was sobbing gently, gently, and the tears were rolling down one by one, and from much weeping her beautiful eyes were sunk deep down, and the glorious hair had turned gray, and--there she was now sitting, an old, immensely old woman--and the tears were still rolling down, one by one, over the wrinkled brown cheeks, over the wrinkled brown hands.

"A fine fellow," she said. "I have never in my life seen so fine a one again until yesterday morning, when you were suddenly standing before me on the heath. Then you looked so familiar to me, and now I know wherefore. By your leave, young master, how old are you now?"

"Twenty-three!"

"Twenty-three years; yes, yes, I know that, twenty-three years--you have not grown old, you are still young and fair."

Again she looked at Oswald, not with the careful look of shy examination, but openly and joyously, as an old grandmother looks upon her grandchild by her side. Suddenly she rose, went up to Oswald, and putting her withered, trembling hands on his head, she said slowly and solemnly, in a voice which did not seem to be hers, but to belong to another world: "The Lord bless thee and preserve thee, Oscar!" Then she sat down again on her low chair and began her knitting once more, busily, busily, that the needles sang, and she nodded her gray head and

smiled so happy, as if a voice, which she alone could hear, was telling her an old, long-lost fairy tale of wondrous beauty about youth and love and the songs of nightingales.

CHAPTER XXI.

It began to darken in the low room; the needles of the old woman were still clicking busily; the cuckoo clock in the corner was ticking louder and louder in the deep silence, and Oswald was still sitting by the open window, his head leaning on his hand, as in a dream.

The rolling of a vehicle which came up the village street aroused him. A light open carriage, with two horses, stopped at the cottage door; a man stepped out lightly and entered the room.

"Good evening," said a dear, rather decided voice. "Doctor Stein?--very glad to make your acquaintance--my name is Braun. Bruno told me I would find the Good Samaritan here--how is our patient?--ah, there in the bed?--what do you say, my good woman, could you get us a light, while Doctor Stein has the kindness to tell me all he knows about the case?"

Oswald described what he had seen as well as he could.

"I thought so," said Doctor Braun; "it is an attack of epilepsy. Has your son ever had an attack before?" he asked the old woman, who was coming back, protecting a thin tallow candle with her hand, so that only a faint gleam fell upon her wrinkled face.

"He is not my son, and his wife was not my daughter," said Mother Claus, placing the candle on a settee near the bed; "but his children are my dear grandchildren."

The doctor cast a searching glance at the face of the old woman--and then his eye turned to Oswald--but he kept the remark he was going to make to himself, took the light, and examined the face of the sick man.

Oswald took the candle and said: "Please let me help you."

"Thank you," said the doctor, examining the patient

In the mean time Oswald looked more closely at the newcomer. He was a man of from twenty-five to thirty, tall and rather thin, dressed in a simple, comfortable, but elegant summer costume. His head was remarkably well formed, and thickly covered with very dark hair, which refused to curl, and stood like a kind of cap around the firm, somewhat prominent forehead. The nose did not belong to any well-defined class, but it was finely cut and full of expression; so was also the mouth, with its lips sharply defined, and yet delicately formed, as we find them in antique heads, especially in Mercuries, as if they might fully part for the sake of a pleasant, intelligent word. A thick silky beard covered chin and cheeks, harmonizing in color and feature with the hair, and completing the manly fair character of the face. Oswald also noticed, as the doctor was raising the eyelids of his patient, that his hands were of almost womanly delicacy and beauty of form.

"It is as I thought," said Doctor Braun, rising; "an epileptic attack. I can prescribe nothing; nature will help. For the present he must be kept quiet. To-morrow he will be rather weak, but otherwise quite well again."

"Then such attacks are not dangerous?" asked Oswald.

"They can become fatal," replied the doctor, "especially when the patient is a hard drinker, as I presume is the case here. A radical cure is not to be expected, at least not under these circumstances; it is always long and tedious."

"I had made up my mind to spend part of the night here," said Oswald; "but now, I suppose that is not necessary?"

"By no means! Rest, as I said, is all that is required. The man is a widower?" he added, looking around in the room.

"Annie is dead," said Mother Claus; "but I'll take care of Jake. Old people like myself don't need much sleep; we shall soon have time enough to sleep. You can safely go home, young gentleman. You are very good; I always said so. Good-by, doctor; many thanks for Jake, as he can't thank you himself, and perhaps he wouldn't thank you even if he could. Good-by, young master."

With these words she showed the two to the door and out of the house.

"Will you come with me a little way?" said the doctor, as they were standing outside the door. "I shall go by Berkow, where I have to make a call in the village, and you can get out whenever you wish. The evening is really magnificent, and you are, at any rate, too late for supper at Grenwitz, as I can tell you from best authority, for I have taken supper there myself."

"You have taken supper there?" said Oswald, taking a seat in the doctor's carriage; "did Bruno not find you at home?"

"The poor boy had his ride for nothing; for while he was racing at full speed to my house, I was quietly enjoying myself at Grenwitz."

"And may I ask what brought you to Grenwitz?"

The doctor laughed. "*O tempora, o mores*--there you are! Mentor protects and nurses other people's children and does not know that his own Telemachus is lying dangerously ill at home."

"You are pleased to joke."

"Indeed I do; Malte is as well as a boy can be who wants to have no lessons to-morrow. But he had taken a long walk and was tired; this looked to the baron and the baroness like the beginning of typhus fever, and as there was no sensible man present to raise his voice against it, they sent at once for the unlucky man who enjoys the unenviable privilege of having to account for all the nonsense that can be found in people's heads--I mean the doctor. We had just finished supper, which--as you know, or, to speak with the baroness, as you ought to know--is always punctually served at eight o'clock, and I was just stepping into my carriage when that jewel of a boy, Bruno, came at full speed into the court-yard. You ought to have seen the horror of the baron and the baroness! He told us in breathless haste that Jake was about to die, and that Doctor Stein was by his bedside, and that I must come instantly. But, *à propos*, what does it mean that the old woman called you in that odd way, 'Young master?' I suppose I shall have to call you Baron Stein hereafter?"

"What an idea!" laughed Oswald, who was very much pleased with the manner of his new acquaintance. "No; I am as little of noble birth as Mother Claus, who, I cannot imagine why, but probably misled by some dim recollections of her early days, insists upon making me her young master."

"She is a strange old woman," said the doctor. "Just see how beautifully the moon rises there over the edge of the forest, and how lightly the mist is resting on the meadows--a very strange woman! I remember now that I have been struck by her before--she looks like--well, like what?"

"Like an old, old woman from Grimm's Fairy Tales, who at the proper time changes into a beautiful princess!"

"That is it--she has a wonderful fire in her deep-sunk eyes. She always looks to me as if her old face was only a mask under which she hides a youthful soul."

"So it is in reality," said Oswald, and he told the doctor the strange conversation he had had with Mother Claus the day before on the heath, and how her words had appeared to him as natural and truthful as the song of the lark on the heath, and how little he had been pleased afterwards with the sermon of the self-sufficient preacher.

"Yes indeed," said the doctor. "There is truth in Goethe's words: It annoys men to find the truth so simple. They always try to make people believe truth is a marvel, a great wonder, and therefore they adorn it with all kinds of gay rags and fragments, and then carry it about in procession; while such people, like our old woman, read only one chapter in the great book of the universe, but they read it again and again, for sixty, seventy years, till they know it by heart. And as the whole book is but one great revelation, they learn in the end just as much as the great crowd of partially learned men, who turn in restless haste leaf after leaf, pick out a little here and a little there, and are finally about as wise or as stupid as they were before."

"Yes indeed," said Oswald; "a striking proof of the justness of your remark is, for instance, the Baroness Grenwitz. What has she not read! German, French, English, and Swedish; sacred books and profane books; the best and the worst books. To-day I find her reading Rousseau's Confessions, to-morrow a catchpenny novel; to-day she studies Schleiermacher's religious discourses, to-morrow she is deep in the last horror by Dumas or Eugene Sue. In small matters she has good sense enough, but as soon as you approach the higher mysteries of our life here below, or as soon even as the question arises how a general conclusion can be obtained from the mass of details, she begins to talk nonsense, and produces such foolish aristocratic commonplace phrases that my head swims."

"This tendency of the baroness, I should think, does not serve to make your position in Grenwitz very pleasant?"

"Not exactly," replied Oswald, lightly; "but I try to weaken the addition of wormwood by avoiding as much as I can the philosophical effusions of the baroness, and by confining my

intercourse with the family generally to the least possible frequency."

"But with all consideration to your time and your disposition, might you not have fixed these limits a little too narrow?" said the doctor, knocking off the ashes of his cigar.

"How so?" asked Oswald, not without some surprise.

"You will pardon my indiscretion," said the other, turning more fully towards Oswald, so as to look at him with his bright intelligent eyes. "You know that physicians are condemned to play the disagreeable part of confidential friends in the families in which they practise. At one or the other point, everything in life is, after all, closely connected with our body, and as we have the control of that part of our patients, we gradually are made judges of everything, even of such things which seem to belong before any other forum rather than that of the physician. And even if there happens to be no connection whatever between the two questions of soul and of body, the patient is very apt to think: If you have told him so much you may just as well tell him a little more. Thus the baroness could not help telling me to-day--I am not going to flatter you or to annoy you, but only to give you a hint, which you may follow or not, just as you like--that you, who possessed such a very great gift to make yourself agreeable, and who could, if you chose, be so perfectly at home in well-bred society, were rather disposed to make no use of these talents. She regretted this all the more, she added, as this reserve caused a great loss to Malte, who was by nature a domestic boy and never so happy as in the family circle, and who now could not enjoy the privileges which he would otherwise derive from being in your society and becoming intimate with you."

"Is it not strange," said Oswald, after a short pause, "what inapproachable beings some of us children of Adam are? What you have just told me, I have told myself more than once. I have admonished myself that having once agreed to sell my time and my talents for the benefit of this family, I am bound to make all necessary concessions--and yet, now that I hear you say the same thing, it wounds my feelings.... But I beg to assure you that it is not you I blame, but only myself, and that I am all the more pleased with myself because the hint you are giving me with such kind intentions ought certainly not to have disturbed me for a moment."

"I was sure," said the doctor, "that I had to do with a man who knows how to separate the chaff from the grain; if I had not been sure of that, you may be convinced I would not have spoken."

There followed another pause in the conversation of the two young men; the doctor repented perhaps in silence having been led by his good-nature to perform the ungrateful duty of giving advice unasked, while Oswald pursued his thoughts, and seemed to forget entirely that the pine-trees were swiftly gliding past him, and the doctor's swift horses had nearly accomplished the distance between Grenwitz and Berkow. He started in great surprise when he saw a light shining through the branches to the right of the road. He knew it came from the house of the forester at Berkow. On the other side a path led up to the clearing in the forest, where Melitta's hermitage stood. At this very place where they now were, the baron's carriage had been waiting for him the day before.

"Pray let me get out here," he said hurriedly to the doctor. "I am amazed to see that we are actually near Berkow. It is high time for me to return."

The carriage stopped and Oswald got out.

"I hope," he said, shaking hands with the doctor, "that this has not been the only distance nor the longest distance on the great road of life on which we shall keep each other company."

"I hope and wish the same," replied the other. "It seems to me as if our thoughts and feelings had much in common with each other, and to meet thus a kindred nature is far too fortunate a thing to be easily given up again. At all events, I shall soon be again in this neighborhood. In the mean time, good-by."

The carriage rolled away; the sounds soon ceased to be heard; the light in the forester's house disappeared--Oswald was alone amid darkness and silence.

And at once Melitta's image appeared again before his mind's eye, and swiftly glided before him along the narrow forest path on which he now crept stealthily and silently like a poacher. Suddenly he found himself on the clearing; he stopped, frightened as if lightning had fallen by his side--there was a light in the window of the cottage! He had left Melitta at the château, and she was here, not fifty yards from where he stood--he had only to cross the meadow and to ascend a few steps--to open a door. Oswald leant against the trunk of a beech-tree to calm his wildly beating heart. And if anybody should see him here! If he should recklessly endanger Melitta's reputation! Breathless he listened ... the night was silent ... he heard nothing but those strange, mysterious voices which are never heard in broad daylight, and which are born at the break of night: a whispering and twittering up in the branches, a rustling and rushing below in the dry leaves on the ground--the subdued barking of a dog far out in a village. An owl came swiftly and silently on its broad wings and nearly touched his face; it flew off like an arrow. Otherwise all around still as the grave. But what is that? A low, threatening growl, close to his ear? It was Melitta's gigantic dog, who kept watch and guard at the entrance to the cottage. The faithful

guardian probably had discovered the presence of a stranger, for he rose, jumped down the steps, and came bounding along, running around the house like a shepherd's dog around his flock.

"Boncœur?" called Oswald, as the animal came near him; "*ici!*"

The intelligent creature started at the well-known call, which he heard so constantly from the lips of his mistress, and quickly recognizing Oswald, he came rushing up to him and welcomed him by putting his huge paws on his breast and his shoulders.

"Ah!" said Oswald, caressing the beautiful animal, "ah! you permit me then to see your mistress? Come!"

Holding the dog by his long, curly hair, Oswald went across the meadow. On the steps the noise of Boncœur's paws deadened the sound of his own light footsteps, and thus he crept along on the veranda which surrounded the cottage till he came to the window. The window was open, and through the Venetian ivy which had been trained over it Oswald looked into the room. On the table stood a burning lamp, the globe of which was covered with a red veil, so that the sacred image of Venus looked, in the rosy light, as if it were alive. Melitta was sitting at the foot of the statue near a table, turning her face toward Oswald. She had an open book before her, but she was evidently not reading; the delicate hand which supported her head was buried in the dark, abundant hair, and she seemed to be buried in thought. An inexpressibly touching expression, full of plaintive melancholy and of surpassing happiness, lay on her chaste, childlike features. Oswald had to make a great effort not to destroy the incomparably beautiful picture as it stood before him in the frame of the small window. At last he whispered her name.

Melitta raised her head, and fixing her large eyes fully upon the window, she listened for a moment. But then she smiled sadly, as if she wished to say: It was but a dream, and rested her head again in her hand.

"Melitta--it is I."

This time she had not dreamt. She started up with a cry of joy, to the door, to meet Oswald. She wound her arms around his neck, she felt his burning lips again and again on her own; she laid her head on his bosom; she looked through her tears up at him and said: "See, Oswald, I was just thinking of you. I said to myself: If he loves you he will come, he will surely be here to-day, and if he does not come, he does not love you! Oswald, you do love me--don't you? Not as much as I love you, but still, you love me a little, eh, Oswald?"

Speechless with emotion and happiness, Oswald embraced her again and again.

"Melitta, you are inexpressibly good and beautiful--whoever loves you must love you boundlessly."

Before the door of the hermitage, on a straw mat, his colossal head between his forepaws, lies Boncœur. The swift motion of his ears, as soon as he hears a noise from the forest, shows he is keeping faithful watch. He would tear any one to pieces who should dare to intrude upon this temple of love.

CHAPTER XXII.

Several days had passed since that evening.

Bemperlein and Julius had gone to Grunwald, and the former had already written letters to Melitta and to Oswald. His pupil had found a home in the family of a government officer, who had two sons of nearly the same age as Julius. He wrote Oswald that he had a long and most interesting conversation with Professor Berger, the results of which he promised to tell his friend on his return to Berkow, some time in the next week, in order to take a final farewell. This only he added, that he was more decided than ever, and ready to enter immediately upon his new profession.

The day after Bemperlein's departure, the surveyor had arrived at Grenwitz; he had stayed only a few hours, however, to hold a conference with the baron and the baroness, and then he had gone to another estate which was to be surveyed, and where, as he told Oswald, he would "raise his wigwam" for the present. Oswald had found him to be a very lively, witty, and apparently well-read man, quite young yet, but well educated, and he was glad to have a prospect of seeing more of him, as Mr. Timm was soon to come to Grenwitz to make plats and drawings.

The baroness, always looking forward, had already ordered two rooms in the same wing in which Oswald lived to be prepared for him, and large tables had been arranged there.

For next Sunday the family at Grenwitz, with Doctor Stein, had been invited to dine with Baron Barnewitz, Melitta's cousin. Oswald had been very much tempted to refuse the invitation at once, but he had yielded to Melitta's advice and accepted.

"What am I to do there," he had said to Melitta, "they only invite me either because they want partners for the dance, or to pay a compliment to the old baron, but surely not for my own sake. I shall be looked upon there like a Mohican among the Iroquois, like a spy in the camp. I know the nobles. The nobleman is only courteous and agreeable to the not nobly born as long as the two are alone; if there are several nobles present, they run together like mercury, and show their *esprit de corps* to the outsider. I tell you, Melitta, I know the nobles, and I hate them."

"But you love me, Oswald, and I also belong to the proscribed class."

"Unfortunately," said Oswald, "and that is the only defect, sweet one, which I have ever seen in you. But then you are so very sweet and good, and you go through all the mire without receiving a single stain on your robe. And much as you must gain by comparison with these vain, stupid peacocks, I can yet not help fearing that unawares some spark of the fiery hatred which I feel for the whole concern, may fall upon you also. Now you are my queen, my châtelaine, who has stolen away from her château to embrace her beloved by stealth for a moment, and I forget your rank, your greatness here in this charming forest solitude. You are nothing to me but she whom I love, whom I worship,--just what you would be to me if you were the beggar's daughter,--but there, in the brilliantly lighted rooms, surrounded by your great people, flattered and honored by everybody, there I cannot shut my eyes, and shall be painfully reminded that I ought not to have raised my eyes so high."

"Now, Oswald," said Melitta, fixing her eyes firmly on his, "is that kind in you? Are you mocking me when you talk so? I hear it in the harsh tone of your voice; I see it in the restless flashing of your eyes, which contrasts so strangely with their usual calm and steady light, that you feel very well how you appear in our midst like a born ruler, thanks to your mind, your superb manly beauty and strength. I have given myself to you; you are my lord and master; I would willingly accede to your maddest whim; I would bear everything from your hand, even death would not seem cruel to me coming from you--but why will you pour even a drop of wormwood into the cup of love, from which I drink with such thirsty, eager desire? Oswald, do not laugh at me."

"I do not, Melitta; I am sure of your love, although I deserve it so little; I know that your love is humble, as all love is which beareth all things and believeth all things--but you see, darling, that is the curse of these abominable institutions, that they sow distrust and hatred and discord in the hearts of men, even in such hearts which God has created for each other. And this poisonous seed flourishes and kills the roses of true love. I do not blame you for this; I blame no single person, who perhaps unconsciously suffers as much under these social distinctions as I do. But be sure it is so. The Catholic will never see his equal--his brother--in the Protestant, nor the noble in the humbly born, nor the Christian in the Jew--and vice versâ. Nathan's pious wish, that man might at last be content with being a man, is still far from fulfilment: who knows whether it will ever be fulfilled."

"And until then," said Melitta, in her usual playful manner, pushing Oswald's hair from his brow, "until then, you dreamy dreamer, and incorrigible censor of the world, we will enjoy the fleeting moments, and that is why you must go to Barnewitz to-morrow. Pray, pray, dear Oswald, come,--and I will talk with no one else, dance with no one else,--I must go to this party in order to gain the right to refuse ten others, at which I--at which I--would feel less free than here. And without you I shall not have the least benefit from going; on the contrary, I shall be as sad as a little bird that has been caught and put in the cage. But if you are there, dearest, I will be cheerful and dance and sing--no, not sing--but I will look pretty, very pretty, for your sake. Shall I go in white? with a camellia in my hair, or a rose? You have never told me yet how you like me best. Oh! what a wooden knight you are!"

Next day, it was a Sunday, in the afternoon, at five o'clock, the gala-coach was waiting at the portal of the château at Grenwitz. The heavy bays had the best harness with the silver ornaments; the silent coachman wore his state-livery; the baron appeared in evening costume, with the decoration in his button-hole, which one of the many German princes in miniature had long ago bestowed upon him; and even the baroness appeared in a costume which made her exceptionably look only five years older than she really was. After the necessary ballast of cloaks and shawls for the return had been stowed away, and the baroness, already seated, had once more invested Mademoiselle Marguerite with the dignity of châtelaine--she would have much preferred going too--she stopped the coachman in order to examine the pretty French-woman once more for ten minutes on all the points on which she had obtained precise orders and regulations. Then only the order to start was given, and the coach moved with that solemnity which happily suited the disposition of the bays and the temper of the silent coachman equally well. As they passed under the bridge Bruno appeared above, at the head of Malte and a lot of hired boys who were weeding in the garden, and gave three cheers, an idea which induced even the grim baroness to smile. However, the good lady seemed to be to-day in an unusually mild and even communicative humor, perhaps in order to prepare herself for the party. She thought the

weather quite fine, only a little too warm; the road excellent, only rather dusty; she hoped for cooler weather on the return, only she feared there might be a thunderstorm brewing, for a cloud on the western horizon looked to her very suspicious. Then they discussed the question whether Miss Marguerite, if the storm should really come up,--a case for which no instructions had been left,--would have the good sense to order the upper windows to be closed, and then, whether she would generally do her duty. As it was not feasible to obtain a majority of votes, the baroness denying the question at once, Oswald affirming it as positively, and the old baron being unable to form any opinion whatever, the discussion was abandoned, and they proceeded to inquire with far greater solemnity into more important questions. Had Count Grieben recovered from his attack of acute rheumatism, and would he be able to be present to-night? How would Baron Trantow's gout be, and so on, till they had easily drifted into the regular family gossip, which is as current among the high and highest nobility as among Tom, Dick, and Harry; only they speak there of Tom and Dick, and here only of Dick and Tom. Generally, when this favorite subject was mooted, Oswald had a habit of not listening, an art in which he had become quite an adept in the short time of his residence at Grenwitz; but to-day, when he was to see himself all the persons of whom they spoke, the topic had a little more interest for him, especially as Melitta's name was repeatedly mentioned. He learnt on this occasion that Baron Barnewitz and Melitta were first cousins, and that Melitta's father, Baron Barnewitz's brother, had been an officer in the Swedish service, had fought as such in the campaign against Napoleon, and died very soon after the marriage of Melitta with Baron Berkow.

"However, you know, Grenwitz," said the baroness, "Melitta will not be there to-night!"

Oswald listened attentively.

"How do you know, dear Anna Maria?" replied the baron.

"The servant showed me the list of invited guests; I always make him do so, in order to know whom I shall meet. I read it carefully. Frau von Berkow was not on it."

"Perhaps a mistake?"

"I think not. You know Melitta and her cousin, the baroness, are not very good friends. It would not be the first time they choose not to invite Melitta. But then there will be another remarkable personage there--just guess, Berkow?"

"The Prince of Putbus," said the old gentleman, almost frightened, and regretting in his heart that he was not in full official costume; "surely not the Prince?"

"No. Can you guess, doctor?"

"The man from the moon?"

"Well, a man who is scarcely less famous: Baron Oldenburg. His name stood close behind ours on the list."

"The Oldenburgs are of ancient family?" asked Oswald, who had learnt to understand the meaning of that remark.

"The Oldenburgs are, after the Grenwitzes, the oldest noble family in the country," said the baroness, with grand self-satisfaction. "The Grenwitzes can trace their pedigree up to the beginning of the twelfth century; the Oldenburgs date from the end of the thirteenth century, when Adalbert, the founder of that noble family, was created a baron by the Emperor."

"And the name of Oldenburg?" asked Oswald.

"The Oldenburgs would be sovereigns, like the dukes of their name, if they were legitimate."

"And what makes such a remarkable personage of the baron, aside from his illustrious descent?" asked Oswald.

The baroness was rather embarrassed by his question. What was in her eyes so very remarkable in the baron, his sovereign contempt of rank, his sarcastic, ironical manner to those of his own caste--this remarkable feature, which appeared almost immaterial in her eyes, was not exactly a fit subject to be discussed with a man of low birth. She contented herself; therefore, with the vague answer:--

"The baron has very eccentric views about most things in the world, so that I am often afraid for his mind."

At that moment a horseman came galloping from a by-road and stopped his horse as the carnage passed. It was a young man with a pleasant, dark face, on which a blond mustache appeared to advantage.

"Ah, baroness--baron--delighted to see you," he called out, doffing his hat and riding up to the coach--"have not had the honor for an eternity----"

"That is, *mon cher*," said the baroness, with her sweetest smile, "because you have not been at

Grenwitz for an eternity."

"Ah, very kind, baroness--very kind--baroness, you have not had the goodness yet to introduce me--Baron Felix, I suppose?" continued the dandy, lifting his hat to Oswald.

"Doctor Stein," said the baroness, "my son's tutor--Baron Cloten----"

"Ah, ah, indeed," said Baron Cloten; "delighted--indeed--yes, yes, what I was going to say, baroness, where are you going? if I may ask."

"To Barnewitz."

"Ah, just my way--quiet, Robin, quiet!"

"But, Baron Cloten, it will be a large party," said the baroness, looking at his top-boots and hunting-coat.

"Impossible, baroness; Barnewitz asked me yesterday, as I met him accidentally, to come over to a game of whist; but he did not say a word about a dinner-party."

"It was a joke of his, you may be sure."

"Ah--very likely! Barnewitz has such funny notions. Quiet, Robin!--devil of a fellow, that Barnewitz--no doubt thought it great fun to see me come into the dining-room in top-boots--spoil the fun--I beseech you, baroness--gentlemen--tell nobody you have seen me. In a quarter of an hour at Barnewitz. *Au revoir!*"

Thereupon the young man threw his horse round and galloped off at full speed in the direction from which he had come.

Soon afterwards the carriage drove across a rather rough corduroy road, which led straight across the farm-yard of Barnewitz up to the lawn before the great house.

A servant approached to open the carriage door; in the door appeared the figure of a broad-shouldered, bearded man, who would have been superb-looking if indolence and high living had not seriously impaired the harmony of his features. It was Melitta's brother, Baron Barnewitz.

"You are the very first we see," he said, showing his guests into the large room on the right hand of the hall, where they were received by Frau von Barnewitz, a pretty blondine.

"You know how much I value punctuality," replied the baroness, taking the offered seat on the sofa.

"Capital quality," replied Baron Barnewitz; "entirely my conviction--always been--main thing in life and at snipe-shooting--snipe comes up--puff--lies--punctually! Ha--ha--ha!"

"How is it?" asked the baroness, turning to her hostess; "are we going to have a large company?"

"Only forty, or fifty at most."

"That means pretty nearly our whole circle."

"Pretty nearly."

"And--we were discussing the question on the way--will your charming cousin be here also?"

"You must ask my husband; he has attended to the invitations."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the latter. "Capital joke--must tell you before the others come. You know we travelled with Melitta all over Italy, and there Baron Oldenburg joined us. Well, we had a very merry time--for Oldenburg can be very pleasant when he chooses. All of a sudden our peace is gone!--all to the devil--excuse me, ladies--one went here, another there. Melitta and Oldenburg said nothing but sharp things to each other, and one fine morning Oldenburg had disappeared--gone--left a note; the air in Sicily too oppressive for a consumptive--would make a little trip to Egypt. Since then three years are gone--now Oldenburg back again--but he only called here to see me, as he said--to see my wife, as I say----"

"But Charles----"

"Well, dear Hortense, among friends--you know, a mere joke--well then, to see us both. When I ask him to come, he says: Yes, if your cousin is not to be there. A few days ago I meet Melitta--I ask her and she says: Yes, if your friend Oldenburg is not to be there. Of course, I assured both of them they might be quite sure they should not meet the object of their detestation. To make the thing still safer, I sent out two servants with two different lists--on one was Melitta's name--on the other, Oldenburg's. And now they will both come--is not that a capital joke?--Excuse me, I pray, I hear a carriage coming up."

Gradually the room filled up, and then the adjoining suite of lofty and superb rooms, which

ended in the rear of the house in a large hall, from which two steps led through folding-doors into the garden.

Oswald had been presented to several ladies and gentlemen, who returned his bow with that cold politeness which the nobles always adopt towards a man of low birth, especially when he fills a position which, in their eyes, is a very subordinate one. He had then withdrawn to one of the deep bay-windows, from which he could observe the new arrivals outside and the company inside at once. A young man with pleasing features and kindly blue eyes joined him there.

"I have the pleasure of addressing Doctor Stein?" he said. Oswald bowed.

"My name is Langen. I am told you were a student at Berlin. Did you know a Mr. P. there? He studied physiology and was my best friend there. I should like to know what has became of him."

It so happened that Oswald knew him and could give Baron Langen the desired information. The sincere interest which the latter manifested for a man who, as Oswald knew, had no earthly recommendation beside his natural abilities and unwearied industry, prepossessed him in favor of his new acquaintance. He was well pleased, therefore, in spite of his inner restlessness, to see the conversation go on, and he felt somewhat more at ease in thus having found one man among so many unknown ones who cared to make his acquaintance.

"What do you say, Baron Langen," he said, after some time, "if in return for my information you were now in your turn to give me some information about the company? Who, for instance, is that old gentleman there in the blue dresscoat with the white hair and red face, who speaks so fearfully loud, as if he wished to make himself heard by somebody standing on the other side of a mountain torrent?"

"That is Count Grieben, one of our richest noblemen. Do you know the pretty story they have about him and the king?"

"No, please let me hear it."

"The king was on a journey and came to our seaport. At the wharf, where the highest officials, the nobility, and so forth had formed in order to receive him, stood the count's carriage with six magnificent bays; on each wheel-horse a jockey in the count's rich livery. The king admired the superb turnout 'All my own raising, your Majesty,' cries the count, with a bold gesture of the hand. 'Including the jockeys?' replied the witty monarch."

"Not so bad," said Oswald; "and who is that fat lady with the masculine features who is just coming in with her three pretty daughters?"

"A Baroness Nadelitz. She is a Catherine of Russia in miniature. Formerly she kept the geese of her future husband. She is said to have been so wonderfully beautiful that everybody fell in love with her, and yet so kind-hearted that no one went away mortified. Their marriage, however, was not over happy."

"At all events, she has very pretty daughters," said Oswald. "Then the baron is dead?"

"Yes, and since then she is virtually the master. She shows it literally, for I have seen her myself walking across the fields with her steward, in top-boots and heaven knows what. To be sure the soil was clay, and she sank every moment in above the ankles."

"Who are the two pretty girls who are just now coming across the room, walking arm in arm?"

"Emily von Breesen and Lisbeth von Meyen. They have but just been confirmed last Easter, and wear to-day, as far as I know, for the first time, long dresses. Shall I introduce you?"

Oswald did not reply, for at that moment the door opened, and Baron Barnewitz, whose face was beaming with delight at the surprise he had so cunningly contrived, ushered in a gentleman whose appearance evidently created quite a sensation. The loud voice of Count Grieben was hushed, several gentlemen put their heads together, and in the circle of the ladies around the hostess there followed quite a pause of expectation. The new-comer was a man of tall, but almost too slim figure, whose careless carriage brought out still more forcibly the disproportion between height and breadth. Upon the long body sat a small head, whose well-formed outlines were partly hid by the short, thick black hair. A beard of the same kind covered chin and cheeks and mouth, so that only the upper part of his face could be examined successfully. But on this half more than one riddle was clearly written. The forehead was rather high than wide, but surrounded by exceedingly fine and yet bold outlines. The brows, drawn as with a pencil, passed in a bold curve over the gray eyes, the expression of which was not very pleasant, at least as they swept at that moment over the company; as unpleasant was the smile which flashed like sheet lightning every now and then around the finely chiselled nose with the sensitive nostrils. Both smile and glance seemed to be all the answer the man vouchsafed to give Baron Barnewitz, who overwhelmed him with polite speeches as he led him up to the place where the lady of the house received her guests. She rose to greet the new-comer, who kissed her hand, and, after a slight bow to the other ladies, fell into an empty chair near her, beginning at once a lively conversation with her, without paying the slightest attention to anybody else.

Oswald had watched the new-comer with the eye of an Indian who follows the track of his mortal enemy, for he had instantly recognized that horseman who had met him and Bemperlein in the forest. It was Baron Oldenburg.

"Now look," said Baron Barnewitz, walking up to Oswald and rubbing his hands with delight.

"I am all eye," said Oswald, with a somewhat constrained smile.

"What are you to look for?" asked Langen, while Barnewitz was turning to another group.

"Baron Barnewitz has had the goodness to call my attention to Baron Oldenburg, as a most interesting man."

"Ah! That is Oldenburg!" said Langen; "I had not seen him yet."

Another carriage drove up, and Oswald recognized Melitta as she stepped out. It was fortunate for him that Langen was eying the party on the sofa at that moment, for he would not have been able to conceal his excitement. The few minutes which Melitta spent in the dressing-room appeared to him an eternity. At last she entered through the open door, and Oswald thought the whole room was filled with light and with roses. Melitta wore a white dress, which covered up bosom and shoulders, while the delicate neck was enclosed in a lace frill. A light shawl hung around her sloping shoulders. A deep red camellia in her hair, this was her only ornament. But what ornament is needed where beauty and grace are combined, and Melitta's appearance was so beautiful and graceful that her entrance created even a greater sensation than Oldenburg's. The older men broke off their conversation to pay their respects to her; a few younger men hastened up to get, if possible, the first waltz, the second polka--anything that could be had, and she smiled at old and young, answered here a question, begged there for patience, and all this while she was crossing the large room to join the other ladies. Baron Oldenburg had quietly remained sitting on his chair while the lady of the house had risen to advance toward her cousin. His arm resting on the back of the chair, he did not even turn round to look at the cause of the general commotion. But then Melitta's name must have struck his ear, for he started up, looked around, and stood face to face before Melitta, whom her cousin held by the hand. Oswald had been drawn, as by a magnetic power, toward the place, so that not a word, not a look escaped him. He saw Melitta turn pale, and her eyes flash as if in anger, when Oldenburg made her a low bow.

"Ah, madam," he said with a peculiar smile, "when we met last the sun of Sicily was shining over us, and now----"

"The moon shines--you mean to say," replied Melitta, and around her lips there appeared a line of bitter irony which Oswald had not yet seen. "On the contrary, dear baron, when we met last the moon was shining. Do you not remember, it was in the garden of the Villa Serra di Falco, near Palermo--and now that we meet again, the sun is shining, at least for myself."

The meaning of these last words was probably a secret for all except for him for whom they were spoken. Melitta had noticed Oswald, as she turned half round to speak to Oldenburg, and had so kindly smiled upon him that Baron Barnewitz interrupted his enjoyment of the skilfully prepared scene to ask him, "You knew my cousin before?"

"Yes!" said Oswald, leaving him and bowing deeply to Melitta.

"Ah, doctor," said Melitta, with well-assumed surprise, "that is nice, that I meet you here. Just think, Bemperlein has written already; Julius is well--but sit down here and I will tell you all at leisure--Julius is perfectly well and has become quite a dandy in the five days he has spent at Grunwald. He has been at a children's ball, has danced a cotillon, just think! a cotillon, and that against the remonstrances of half a dozen young gentlemen."

"The poor fellow," laughed Oswald, "he will have to fight half a dozen duels."

"May be! But you know Julius is as brave as a lion, and will risk all for the lady of his heart--Ah! Baron Cloten, is that really you? I was told you and Robin had broken your necks at the last fox-hunt?"

"*Quelle idée, madame!*--no doubt invention of Barnewitz. Devilish clever fellow, Barnewitz! Beg ten thousand pardons! Am quite well, thanks! Ah, yes--would beg for a dance, if possible, the cotillion. Must try once more, if I cannot persuade you to sell me Brownlock."

"*Non, mon cher*; for such a purpose you shall not get the cotillon, nor any other dance. But if you will leave me Brownlock, to enjoy him in peace, you shall have the first waltz. I shall probably not stay for the cotillon. Are you satisfied?"

"Ah, madam--satisfied--*quelle idée!* happy!...."

"I pray you, Baron Cloten, calm yourself. Have you a *vis-à-vis*?"

"No, not yet. Look for one at once."

"Here, ask Doctor Stein--let me introduce----"

"Ah! Have had the pleasure," said the dandy, apparently noticing Oswald now for the first time, though he had been standing within a yard of him.

"All the better," said Melitta; "that is settled then?"

Cloten and Oswald bowed, and then Melitta sent them both away with a graceful wave of the hand. "I wonder," said Langen to Oswald, as he returned to the window, "how you can speak so freely to her; I would not have the courage."

"You are jesting."

"Upon my word, no! There is something in that woman's look and in her voice which would make me fear for the salvation of my soul. I know I am not alone in that."

"Perhaps I am not sufficiently concerned for the salvation of my soul," said Oswald.

In the mean time Oldenburg had studiously watched the group of Melitta in a huge mirror, while he appeared to converse with several gentlemen in perfect indifference.

"See there, Cloten, how are you, *mon brave*?" he said, suddenly turning to the young man, as he came near him.

"Baron Oldenburg! 'pon honor, would not have known you--such a horrible beard!"

"Horrible, *mon cher*? Do not make me unhappy; I have cultivated it now for three years, and it has cost me at least a million."

"Ah, nonsense," said the dandy, stroking his handsome mustache.

"Upon my word and honor," said Oldenburg. "The thing is simply this:--I made in Cairo the acquaintance of an English family, whom I met frequently on the Nile; I was lucky enough to render them some service. The family consisted of father, mother, and daughter--but what a daughter! *mon cher*, I tell you----"

"Ah, yes, I understand!" said Cloten, "thoroughbred! These English misses, divine--beautiful--saw one in Baden Baden--never forget her in all my life."

"Just so was my Mary," said Oldenburg.

"Not possible?"

"You may rely upon it. All English misses look alike, as one lily looks like another. *Eh bien!* The girl falls in love with the man who has saved her life. The father likes me; the mother consents. I am not a millionaire, like Mr. Brown; but then he was only a retired dealer in iron, and I an old German baron. Enough, we ratify the bargain. Then Mary says one evening--it seems as if it had been yesterday--we were sitting in the moonlight on the terrace of the temple at Philæ, and looked dreamily at the quiet river, and emptied drop by drop the full cup of love. Then she says, coming close up to me,--oh! I hear her voice still so distinctly,--Adalbert, says she--What, sweet one?--Adalbert, pray, dearest love, cut off your horrible beard--it's so vulgar."

"Ah, yes! divine, divine--these English misses.--But what did she mean?"

"She meant to say: My boy, beards are vulgar in England. Cut it off!"

"Why, that was too bad!"

"That is exactly what I told her. She begged, she besought me; at last she fell on her knees. I remained firm like the Colossus before us. Then she sprang up, and arming herself with all the pride of England, and raising her hand to the starry heavens, she exclaimed: 'Sir, either you cut off your beard or I must cut your acquaintance.'"

"Then cut my acquaintance," said I.

"Famous!" said Cloten. "What did she do?"

"Oh, nothing! Apropos, who is that young man with whom you were talking just now? There he is, standing near the door, with old Grenwitz."

"Well, guess?"

"How can I guess? I suppose it is his nephew, Felix."

"That is what I thought. And now just think, *cher baron*, the man is a fellow of low birth, not noble at all; his name is Stein, Doctor Stein, I believe, and he is--well, guess again!"

"From the horror in your face I should conclude that he was the son of the executioner of Bergen."

"Executioner! *Quelle idée!* What strange notions you and Frau von Berkow always have! No--

tutor at Grenwitz. Is not that wonderful?"

"I do not see anything wonderful in that. There must be tutors in the world, as there must be laborers in the arsenic mines, although I should not like to be the one or the other."

"But the fellow looks almost genteel?"

"Almost genteel? My dear friend, he looks not only almost genteel, but extremely genteel, more so than any gentleman in the whole company, you and myself not excepted."

"Ah, baron, you are again in your divine humor to-day."

"Do you think so? Well, I am glad of it. But that does not prevent me from thinking the man genteel; and, what is probably of still greater value in your eyes, he has not only the air of a well-bred man about him, as we find it in any nation on earth, but he has the particular type of the nobility of this region."

"Oh, I thought typhus was a disease!"

"Typus, *mon cher*, not typhus. Type means, when several people have the same nose, boots, eyes, and gloves. Now, look for yourself, if all that does not agree in Doctor Stein; for instance, in comparison with yourself, for surely you have everything that is characteristic in our nobility most highly developed. He is tall and well made, like yourself, only half a head taller, and a few inches broader in the shoulders. He has the same light brown, curly hair, only you have your hair curled by the hair-dresser, and his curls naturally. He has blue eyes like yourself, and you must admit that his eyes are large and expressive."

"Ah, yes--I admit, he is a deuced handsome fellow," said the dandy, angrily, casting a sidelong glance at the object of his forced admiration.

"Well, and as to his manners," continued Oldenburg, "I would give one of my farms if I could move with the same dignity and the same gracefulness."

"That is strong--why?"

"Because the women love dearly to see such a small foot, a well-shaped leg, and so forth. Such pretty dolls like the doctor are born Alexanders; they fly from one conquest to another, and generally die young at Babylon."

"Ah, baron, what a man you would be if you were not so furiously learned."

"Do you think so? May be! I have inherited that disease. It was my mother's fault; she used to read the racing almanac and many a novel besides. That explains the bad features in my character."

"Gentlemen, would you like to try my new pistols?" asked their host, who came up just then.

"I thought there would be dancing?" said Cloten.

"After dinner. You are coming, Oldenburg?"

"Of course. You know my motto: *Aux armes, citoyens.*"

CHAPTER XXIII.

The company had all assembled, and were gradually finding their way from the close rooms into the garden, where the superb afternoon attracted them all. The elderly ladies and gentlemen walked up and down in the shady avenues, or inspected the superb greenhouses; the younger people tried to arrange games on a beautiful lawn, which was partly overshadowed by old, broad-branching trees; and from a corner in the park, where a shooting-gallery had been improvised, firing was heard at intervals. Melitta remembered the adage, that the reputation of young women is made by old women, and thought that as she intended to enjoy a certain degree of liberty at the ball, she had better pay for it now by a few small sacrifices; she joined therefore a party of old ladies, the Countess Grieben, the Baroness Trantow, and others. Oswald had at first joined the young people, to whom Langen had introduced him, and had helped to arrange some games which he had known in the capital, and which he adapted skilfully to the exigencies of the day. The company had met his suggestions with universal applause, and he was on the high way of

becoming eminently popular. But when he saw that Melitta would not join the circle in which he was, he availed himself of a suitable opportunity to escape. Langen had followed him, and overtook him in a narrow path between two rows of bushes, where Oswald enjoyed the innocent pleasure of picking gooseberries.

"God be thanked!" said Langen, following Oswald's example and plundering a currant-bush, which hung full of blood-red clusters. "We have escaped that horror! Curses be upon the man who invented social games! Are the gooseberries ripe?"

"Delicious!"

"You must pay me a visit soon. My estate is only an hour or so from Grenwitz. My wife, who has presented me a few weeks ago with a beauty of a little girl, and who is not yet strong enough to go to large parties, will be glad to make your acquaintance. If you will fix a day, I will send my carriage for you."

"I accept your invitation with pleasure," said Oswald, who was almost put to shame by this extraordinary kindness on the part of a man from that class which he denounced so severely. "Suppose we say next Sunday?"

"You are always welcome. If you would like to bring the boys, do so; I have a couple of ponies, which the boys will like better than Nepos and Ovid together.--Ah me! *Incidit in Scyllam qui vult vitare Charybdim!* There comes the Countess Grieben at the head of her staff. *Sauve qui peut!*"

The young men slipped into another garden walk which crossed the first at right angles, and were soon beyond the reach of the ladies' eyes. Oswald, for his part, would have liked to stay, for he had noticed Melitta in the "staff," and had hoped to catch a look in passing; but he considered it his duty not to abandon his new friend, who had shown himself so very amiable during the whole afternoon.

"You do not seem to be very fond of society. Baron Langen," he said, smiling at the hurry of the young man.

"That society--no! I was brought up in almost absolute solitude. My father, who is not very wealthy, sacrified society to the interest of his children. Then I was sent to school. I should have liked to go to a university, but my father needed me on the farm, especially as he grew older and could not do as much as formerly himself. Since then my good father has left us, and I have hardly ever been away from the *paterna rura*. Are you anything of a sportsman?"

"No; I have never yet had an opportunity to cultivate the Nimrod talent, which no doubt is quietly slumbering somewhere in my nature."

"Oh! that is a pity. But that will come. We have excellent sport: wild-fowl and hares. You ought at first to practise a little with the pistol. One learns to take aim and to have a steady hand."

"Well, pistol-shooting I have practised perhaps too much in my life," replied Oswald. "My father, a teacher of languages and a very peaceful man, had a real passion for pistol-shooting; it was his only amusement. He shot as I have never seen anybody shoot, with marvellous skill. I have never found out what could have given him such a passion for it. Once I thought I would ask him about it. I shall never forget the tone in which he answered; 'There was a time when I hoped I should be able to kill a man who had mortally offended *him*. When I was perfectly sure of my aim--the man died. Since then I fancy I am firing at him; every ace of spades which my ball hits is his false, cruel heart.' I begged him to give me the name of the man. 'That I cannot do,' he answered; 'but if you choose to have your share in my feelings--take it for granted that the ace of spades is the heart of some nobleman or other.'"

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Langen; "and have you really inherited this fanatic hatred against my caste from your father?"

"Only partially," said Oswald, "as I have only inherited a part of his skill in pistol-shooting.--Shall we go for a moment to the stand? I judge from the sound we must be quite near."

"Bravo, bravo!" cried a number of voices from there; "Cloten, I bet on you."

"I bet on Breesen," said another voice.

They found at the stand half a dozen gentlemen perhaps, all greatly excited, with the exception of Baron Oldenburg, who, leaning against his tree, and his hands in his pockets, looked at the marksmen and hummed stanzas from the Marseillaise through his teeth.

"Bravo, Cloten. Again the bull's-eye--the fellow shoots like the devil!" cried several voices.

"Has anybody else a desire to bet?" said Cloten, looking all around with a wonderfully self-complacent air.

"I should like to bet, if you please," said Oswald.

"You?" said the dandy, with a look of speechless surprise.

"I bet a sovereign on the gentleman," said Oldenburg, grinning. "Who will take it?"

"Done! Done!" cried several voices.

"I take it all!" said Oldenburg, who seemed to enjoy the joke of the thing highly.

"Our bets have been a dollar so far--does that suit you?" said Cloten to Oswald.

"Of course."

"But Doctor Stein does not know the pistols," said Langen; "and Cloten has no doubt become quite familiar with them. That is hardly fair."

"If it was only a question of money," said Oswald, "I should try. But as others choose to bet on my shooting, I should like to have a trial shot first."

"Of course," said Breesen; "that is a matter of course," cried Baron Barnewitz.

"Won't help him much," said Cloten, in a low tone.

"Do you see that pine cone up there, Baron Langen?" said Oswald, when they had handed him a loaded pistol; "that one at the extreme end of the branch?"

"Yes; but that is at least fifty feet."

"Never mind. These pistols look as if they would be safe even at a greater distance."

Oswald raised his pistol. All eyes were intently gazing at the pine cone.

"Ah, yes!" said Oswald, dropping his pistol again. "Would you have the kindness. Baron Barnewitz, to introduce me to the gentleman who has been pleased to form so good an opinion of my skill?"

"Quite forgot. Beg ten thousand pardons. Baron Oldenburg--Doctor Stein."

"Ah, Baron Oldenburg," said Oswald, lifting his hat with his left hand. "I hope you see the pine cone, baron."

"Quite distinctly!" replied Oldenburg, bowing politely.

Oswald raised his pistol once more, aimed a second--the pine cone came down, shattered to pieces.

"Famous!" cried Baron Barnewitz. "Cloten, you have found your master."

"*Nous verrons!*" said Cloten. "You have the first fire, Doctor."

Oswald took the other pistol and fired, almost without taking aim.

"Centre!" cried the servant at the target, making a bow to the marksman before putting a patch on the hole.

"Cloten, pay forfeit!" cried Oldenburg, jingling money in his pocket.

"Centre!" was heard once more from the target

"You see?" said Cloten, handing his pistol to another servant to be loaded again.

"I think we had better take another aim or a greater distance," said Oswald; "with a bull's-eye the size of a dollar, and only forty feet off, Baron Cloten and I will have to fire a long time before the match is decided. Are there any cards to be had?"

"I am content," said Cloten.

"Have you any cards, Frederick?" Baron Barnewitz asked.

"Yes, sir!"

"Take away the target and nail an ace of spades against the tree!"

"Of course, we shall only count the balls that pierce the ace itself, or at least touch it," said Oswald.

"Of course!" said Cloten.

"Now the thing is fairly under way," said young Breesen, and rubbed his hands with delight.

"Cloten, pay forfeit," said Oldenburg once more, and sang through his teeth:

"Pine cones--ace of hearts--
Why, my love, why, it smarts?
Is it hatred--is it love?"

Cloten aimed carefully, but whether the new aim disturbed him, or his hand had become nervous, his ball only grazed the upper edge of the card. Oswald stepped forward, his eye took in the whole number of noblemen who surrounded him. "Take it for granted that the ace of spades is the heart of some nobleman or other," he heard a well-known voice whisper.... He fired, and in the place of the ace there was a hole a little smaller than his ball.

"Console yourself, Cloten," said Oldenburg. "'*Non semper arcum tendit Apollo*'--that means: failures must come."

"Really superb," said Baron Barnewitz, showing the card to the company; "the ace cut out clean."

"Do you wish your revenge, Baron Cloten?" asked Oswald.

"No, thank you, some other time. Feel my hand is not quite steady to-day."

"Why did you not pay forfeit, Cloten?" laughed Oldenburg, pocketing the money he had won.

"Here they are! here they are!" said suddenly a dozen girls' voices, and from behind the shrubbery which separated the shooting-gallery from the path there appeared Emily von Breesen, her cousin Lisbeth von Meyen, and one of the three Misses Nadelitz, like so many white butterflies.

"You are nice gentlemen--spoilers of fun--instantly you come back with us!" said one after another.

"Surely, you might do something better, Adolphus, than to spend the whole afternoon here with your stupid firing," said Emily to her brother.

"He must come, too," cried Lisbeth, "we take them all captive. You, Emily, take the doctor, you are the strongest and he is the leader--Natalie, Natalie, hold Baron Langen! he wants to run away."

"Gentlemen!" said Oswald, "resistance would be high treason!--Ladies! we surrender unconditionally," and he offered Emily von Breesen his arm.

The two other gentlemen followed his example, and the three handsome couples ran off laughing.

"An elopement in *optima forma*," grinned Oldenburg.

"I suppose we had better go too," said Barnewitz, "for I fear if we were to wait till the young ladies come for us we would have to wait forever."

"*Allons, enfants de la patrie!*" sang Oldenburg, in the falsest possible tone, and with a voice which sounded very much like the crowing of a hoarse rooster on a rainy day, and took Cloten under the arm.

"Cloten, *mon brave*, we are growing old," he said, as they were walking towards the house, a little behind the others. "If we do not make haste to get married we shall lose all our prospects of conjugal happiness, legitimate paternity, and a speedy death. Amen!"

"Ah, nonsense! Baron, you are at least five years older than I am."

"That did not prevent the young ladies from treating us both like dogs."

"That little Emily is a prodigiously pretty little girl."

"*Si, signore*, and what eyes she made the doctor! Great, big, gray eyes, full of love! At sixteen that is doing well."

"Wretched doll-baby."

"Who? Miss Emily?"

"Ah! that man, the doctor."

"Ah, indeed! Did I not tell you so? The girls are crazy about him. And how the man shoots! Cloten! I should not like to stand at ten feet distance from him, with the seconds behind us?"

"Ah! Thank you! Don't fight with a man of low birth. Too unfair. Don't you think so, baron?"

"Perhaps the man owes his life to a visit of the sons of heaven to the daughters of earth?"

"What does that mean?"

"Don't you know that was the way before Abraham to speak of the children of nobles who had married beneath their rank?"

"No, never heard of it before! Sons of heaven? famous! Generally, Holy Writ too severe for me. Just imagine, baron--that idea--all men from a single pair! Nobles and not nobles!--Nonsense, impossible, ridiculous! Always thought Holy Writ must have been translated by men of low birth. Always annoyed when old tutor explained it otherwise."

"Cloten," said Oldenburg, standing still and placing his hand on his companion's shoulder. "Cloten! You are a great man. That thought is worthy of the deepest thinker of all ages!"

"Ah, pshaw!--are you in earnest, baron, or are you trying to chaff me again?"

"My dear Cloten," said Oldenburg, passing his arm again under the arm of his companion and continuing on his way; "let me tell you once for all, I am invariably and terribly in earnest in all I say, and the subject of which we were speaking is really of such immense importance that it won't bear joking. Hear then--but you must not make any improper use of what I am going to say--Cloten."

"Certainly not--*parole d'honneur!*"

"Hear then, that the same question which your genius has answered in an instant with unfailing tact, has occupied my mind for years. I also said to myself: The distinction between nobles and not nobles is not a mere distinction of name, of caste--it is a distinction of blood, of mind, of soul--*enfin*, of our whole nature. How can men so entirely different from each other, descend from the same original pair? Where would be the difference, if that were so? It overwhelms the mind to think of the consequences!"

"Why, baron, at last you talk like----"

"Like a baron. I know. Hear again! This question occupied me so persistently that I at last determined to solve it, cost what it might. You all make fun of my solitary life, my studies, and so on. Do you know, Cloten, what I was studying while you were amusing yourselves with hunting and gambling?"

"No--'pon honor."

"Aramæic, Chaldaic, Syriac, Mesopotamic, Hindoostanee, Gangobramaputric, Sanscrit----"

"For Heaven's sake! Why, that is horrible! What for?"

"Because I was firmly convinced that there must be, somewhere in the convents of Armenia, in the catacombs of Egypt, or elsewhere in the East, a Manuscript which explains the matter. When I had learnt to speak all these languages as fluently as French and German, I began three years ago my great journey to the East. In passing through Italy I searched all the libraries there. In Rome I met the Barnewitz party. This meeting was very disagreeable to me, to tell the truth. I had to accompany them to Sicily, as a matter of politeness. But in Palermo I escaped as soon as I could."

"Ah, that explains your sudden disappearance--the 'Interrupted Sacrifice,' great opera, and so forth."

"'Interrupted Sacrifice?' You never recollected that expression, Cloten?"

"No--'pon honor--an invention of Hortense's; I mean of the Baroness Barnewitz," the young man corrected himself. "She insists upon it--*entre nous*, baron--that your meeting in Rome was not quite so accidental on your part, and the whole journey from Rome to Palermo--is not that the name of the place--was a perfect triumph for the Berkow; Sacrifice--'Interrupted Sacrifice.' Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I do not understand you, Cloten?"

"Well, *entre nous*, Hortense has a good deal to say about that journey. For instance, a scene during the passage from Ciproda----"

"Procida, you mean," said Oldenburg.

"Procida, I don't care which. I can't remember all those absurd names. Well, from Procida to Naples."

"Well?"

"But, really, baron, you put the thumb-screws on too tightly. You had a little fisher-boat, and there came a real storm--the waves were as high as houses, and you were expecting the boat to capsize every moment. Then you said in Italian----"

"The Barnewitz does not understand a word of Italian, as far as I know," said Oldenburg.

"Not Hortense, but the boatmen, who told her afterwards."

"Then," growled Oldenburg, "she examined them. Well!"

"Then you said to the Berkow: Dear soul, to be drowned with you is worth more than to live a hundred years with your cousin, or any other woman!"

"Indeed! Does Hortense tell her friends such pretty stories? Well, Cloten, I'll give you a piece of advice: Believe in every kiss that you have had from Hortense's lips, or that you are going to have----"

"Ah, nonsense, baron!" said the dandy, with that smile which is meant to be modest, and which is so horribly impudent.

"But do not believe a single word she utters. Can you really think that I should have had nothing better to do than to court Melitta von Berkow, when such grave, yes, such almost holy things filled my soul? Let me tell you: I went from Sicily to Egypt, then up the Nile to Aboo Simbul, back to Cairo, from there to Palestine, Persia, India--examined every temple, every ruin, every crevice in the rocks. I did not find what I looked for. At last--I was almost desperate--in the library of the great monastery on Mount Athos----"

"Where is that, Baron?"

"Between the Indus and Oregon--there in the old library I discovered at last the long-looked for Manuscript. There I found the whole story."

"What was it?"

"There it was stated in purest High-Bramaputric, that--translate all that into our modern notions and expressions----"

"Yes, for Heaven's sake do so, or I won't understand a word."

"That there were, from the beginning, two pairs of human beings created; as it could not well be otherwise: the one noble and the other not noble. The name of this first noble race is not recorded in the Manuscript. At the very place where it once stood, there is now a big blot. So much is certain, it was not Oldenburg; it began with a C, and somewhere in the middle there was a t."

"Perhaps Cloten," said the other.

"It may be, but I cannot swear to it. Nor is it said what family his wife belonged to; she is simply called a noble damsel."

"But I thought she was made from the rib of man?"

"Why, you would not believe that stupid nonsense, Cloten? She is expressly called a noble damsel, and so she must have been of noble blood."

"But that is a curiously complicated story."

"Not so very complicated as you imagine. Enough, the noble gentleman and the noble damsel, who soon became a noble lady, had a villa, which was called Paradise--why should not a villa be called Paradise, Cloten?"

"Nevertheless, very curious name."

"Why? Does not one call his place Solitude, another Sans Souci, and still another Bellevue--why should not one of them have called his Paradise? *Eh bien!* The nobleman's servant was called Adam. Good name for a man-servant. When he became old and stiff, they called him old Adam--have you ever heard of a noble who was called Adam, Cloten?"

"Never in my life."

"You see there is the best proof at once. He called his servant Adam, and his wife's chambermaid Eve--little Evy, very nice name for a maid. My mother had a charming little maid, and her name was Evy. But Adam was a bad fellow, just as our servants nowadays are bad fellows. And Eva was no better. At last the old gentleman took his riding-whip and drove both from the place. In their deportment-book he wrote: Dismissed on account of dishonesty, fondness of dress, and laziness. That is the story, of course only in the outline."

"Really, very remarkable, quite famous! 'pon honor! Did you bring the book home with you, baron?"

"No; but an authenticated copy, endorsed by the justice of the peace of the place."

"Are there justices of the peace out there?"

"But, my dear friend, how could there be a country and no justices?"

"To be sure. Still, it would be better if we had the book itself."

"Perhaps we can get it. The monks are wretchedly obstinate. I had a great mind to poison them all with prussic acid. I shall probably do it yet, if I ever get to that district again. Until then, we must be satisfied with a copy."

"I say, baron, could you not let me have a copy like yours? Of course I mean in the translation, and not in Bramaputrid, or what the nonsense is."

"Hm! But you must promise not to show it to anybody?"

"Rely upon it."

"Perhaps to one or the other of our own circle."

"Ah! May I do that?"

"Oh yes! But do not mention my name. Tell them it was a mere hypothesis of yours----"

"A what?"

"A mere idea, which had not yet been confirmed. When we get hold of the original, then comes the time for your triumph and the triumph of the good cause at once."

CHAPTER XXIV.

The summer sun had set for some time behind the tall trees of the park; dark shadows were falling upon the thick bosquets; here and there a bird was still chirping, before he put his head under his wing for the night; otherwise all had become silent in the garden, where just before all had been noise and uproar. But it was all the louder inside the house. The dazzling light of a hundred wax candles on lustres and girandoles shone from the windows upon the great lawn before the garden room. Music resounded through the opened folding-doors, and the peasantry, who were standing around at a respectful distance, saw through the open window the dancing couples float by one by one. In the rooms adjoining the ball-room card-tables had been placed for the older guests, and Count Grieben's screeching voice could continually be heard, as Baron Grenwitz, who was a very indifferent player, missed a trick, or, led away by his timidity, committed one of those blunders which jar so painfully on the mind of an accomplished player. Baron Barnewitz and his wife cut in, so that one of them could always be in one or the other room, and no party was favored at the expense of the other. At first, Hortense had intended to dance all the evening; but after two or three dances she became so angry at the admiration which her cousin excited, that she proposed this arrangement to her husband, who was all the more willing to accede to it, as he was, in spite of his corpulency, very fond of dancing. He not only danced very well besides, but was a great admirer of married and unmarried ladies in ball toilet. And such were not wanting. There was a bevy of beauties there such as would have enchanted more thoughtful men than the baron was. The most beautiful and most lovely of all was, in the judgment of the gentlemen at least,--for the opinion of the ladies was very much divided on the subject,--beyond all doubt, Melitta. Her cheeks, generally rather pale, were slightly flushed from dancing, her eyes beamed with light and life, her slender elastic form moved along with marvellous grace in rhythmical change--thus she floated over the smooth parquet of the ball-room like the very Muse of the Dance. By the side of this dazzling apparition the pretty women of her age looked mere wax dolls, and the younger girls very nice marionettes. Thus it seemed at least to Oswald, as he saw her fly by him in the waltz or met her halfway in the cotillon. A strange mixture of contradictory sensations filled his heart. Since the moment when he had seen Baron Oldenburg's portrait for the first time in Melitta's album, he had never been able to get rid of the thought. What were their relations? But, often as that question had been on his lips, he had never dared to utter it, and the higher the sun of his love arose on the heavens, the paler became the threatening shadow. But to-day his half-dormant doubts had been cruelly aroused by Barnewitz's story, by the appearance of the man himself, and by Melitta's conduct. Again the question arose on his lips, and again he drove it back to its secret place in his heart. He was angry with Melitta, that she should cause him such suffering; he was angry with himself, that he had been persuaded by her to follow her to this party, into this world of nobles, who, he knew, only tolerated him; into this world of frivolous enjoyment and haughty conceit, this noisy, blinding world, which contrasted so miserably with his romantic love and seemed to scoff at the blissful, almost sublime

solitude at the forest cottage! It seemed to him an old, old fairy tale, that he had held this wonderful woman in his arms--that he had pressed his lips upon her rosy lips, alas! how often! she looked to him so changed, a perfect stranger. He could not persuade himself that this was Melitta, who was laughing with young Breesen and talking with Cloten, and answering his foolish sallies so politely. And then again, when her bright eye met his, when her hand in the cotillon pressed his so sweetly, when on such an occasion a: Sweet love! you darling!--became barely audible to him--then it was again Melitta, his Melitta! And once more doubts, rising to insane anxiety, chased after certainty, which filled him with unspeakable happiness, as dark shadow and bright sunlight are chasing each other across a fair summer landscape; and in order to escape this sweet anguish, this bitter delight, he sipped with hasty, eager desire the intoxicating beverage, which consists of dazzling light, joyous music, and voluptuous perfumes, and in a ball-room excites and confuses so strangely the senses of all the guests, till they approach Bacchanalian rapture.

Oswald laughed and talked as if in the best humor; here a reckless, bold word, there a delicate compliment here a satirical sneer, there a sentimental appeal. The ladies seemed entirely to have forgotten his low birth: he was such a capital, indefatigable dancer; so handsome a man, so skilful a flatterer. And if here and there an anxious mother scolded her noble daughter for her intimacy with that young man. Doctor Stein, the words fell, golden as they were, on sterile soil, and the girl consoled herself, in her noble conscience, by saying to herself: Well, it is only for to-night! There can be no doubt that Oswald's success with the ladies on that evening deeply disgusted many a noble soul; but the expressions of such hostility remained confined to an occasional sneer, which never reached Oswald's ear, and to a few angry looks, which, if he chanced to notice them, only increased his enjoyment. He knew perfectly well how slippery the ground was; but the presence of danger, which paralyzes weak minds, only steels strong hearts; and the consciousness that he might be insulted by impertinence at any moment, gave to his manner towards the great men present a boldness, a security, which challenged their indignation, but also warned them that the consequences would be serious. Besides, it must be said to the honor of these young nobles, that among twelve or fourteen there were at least two or three who were not so blinded with prejudices that they should not have appreciated Oswald's chivalrous manner. Such was Baron Langen, who took Oswald familiarly by the arm, and during a pause between the dances, walked up and down with him through the ball-room; such also young Breesen, the handsomest and cleverest of the crowd, who asked Oswald to give him some lessons in pistol-shooting, and who, when his sister had made a mistake in the dance, and interrupted the tour, asked his pardon in her name, and carried him up to her so that she might make her own apologies. Such was, of course, also Baron Oldenburg, who praised Oswald's virtues as a dancer and a marksman to many friends, although he left it undecided whether he did so from sincere conviction or in order to annoy his young companions.

He was not very courteous to others. When Baron Barnewitz had asked him if he would like to take a hand, he had replied: Oh yes! if you will play faro! and when Lisbeth von Meyen had wondered why he did not dance, he had said: Ah, at this moment I regret, for the first time in my life, that my dancing-master never succeeded in teaching me the difference between the first and the second position, nor my music-teacher to distinguish a waltz from an anthem. Thus he sauntered about among the card-tables, and excited Count Grieben's ire by looking into everybody's hands by turns, and then offering good, or rather bad advice to them all. Now again he was seen in the ball-room, looking at the dancing couples with the eyes of a good-natured tomcat who sees black and white mice play merrily on the barn-floor before him. In this pleasing occupation he was interrupted by Baron Barnewitz, who came hurrying in and said:

"Oldenburg, as you have nothing to do----"

"Why, my dear friend, I have a great deal to do."

"Come with me in the dining-room and help me arrange the seats. Please come!"

"Your confidence in my organizing capacity is highly honorable to me, *mon ami*," said Oldenburg, and followed his host across the hall, up the well-carpeted staircase, into the brilliantly illuminated dining-room, where the servants were just finishing setting the tables.

"Here, Oldenburg, are the cards, all written; now tell me, shall we----"

"Honored sir," said Oldenburg to a servant, "could you, perhaps, bring me the useful and ingenious instrument by which this bottle might be opened? There, thanks--*Festina lente!* Barnewitz, that means: thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn! Your health, my boy! This young Cliquot is one of the more virtuous members of his numerous race. Really drinkable," and he sipped one glass after another. "Now, here I am at your service. Put the bottle on that side-table, my man in the gold lace! there are some glasses left--Countess Grieben--Baron Oldenburg--Baroness Nadelitz--are you mad, Barnewitz? I to sit two hours hemmed in between the two mummies! I had rather help to wait. No, we'll do it so. The whole of the old people go to one end of the table, and Young Germany to the other. You can go with your flock of he-goats and she-goats to the East, and I will go to the West with my kids and little sheep."

"Well, I suppose that's the best," said Barnewitz. "Here are your cards."

The servants had left the room; the two gentlemen, beginning at opposite ends, began to put

the cards on the napkins.

"Miss Klaus," said Oldenburg, holding up a card; "who, by all the Olympic gods, is Miss Klaus?"

"Our governess. Have you not noticed her? A little thing, very pretty, and with eyes bursting with high treason. We could not well leave her in the nursery--Great heavens! Here is again husband and wife side by side!--because we wanted her in the cotillons. You can give her to Doctor Stein. Like and like, you know."

"Well!" said Oldenburg, and grinned.

"Who is to have the Berkow?"

"Oh, pray, leave me alone! You, for all I care."

"*Bon!*" said Oldenburg, and drank a glass of champagne.

After a short pause.

"Who is to have the honor of sitting by your wife?"

"Great heavens!--to be sure, that is important. You know, Oldenburg, give her the most significant; no one can say anything to that!"

"All right," said Oldenburg, and looked among the cards till he had found the right one. "I will pay you for your unauthenticated fisherman's stories," he growled between his teeth.

"Have you done, Oldenburg?"

"Directly--now!"

"Well, baron, now let us do this: you go into the ballroom and tell every gentleman what lady he is to take in, and I will do the same in the card-room."

"*Ainsi soit-il!*" laughed Oldenburg, following his host

As he entered the ball-room, they were just arranging a cotillon. Immediately after that they were to go to table.

"This is a good opportunity," he said, and, like a black-feathered, long-legged bird who picks out frogs on a wet meadow, he walked up and down with great gravity behind the line of the dancers and whispered to each gentleman, as the opportunity offered, the name of his lady. Oswald was dancing with the Baroness Barnewitz, who had taken the place of Miss Klaus until the latter should have carried an important order to the kitchen; their *vis-à-vis* were Cloten and Melitta. Oldenburg had informed all the gentlemen of their fate, which seemed to be favorable to all, for they nodded with a well-contented air. At the very last he slipped up to Cloten and whispered to him:

"Cloten, I have given you the Barnewitz."

Then to Oswald: "Doctor, you will take Frau von Berkow."

Then he went away hurriedly.

"Hortense," whispered Cloten, overjoyed, to his lady, "do you know who is to take you in?"

"Not you, Arthur?" she asked, frightened.

"Yes, my angel."

"Impossible, Arthur. Go straight back to Oldenburg and tell him he must give you another lady."

"But----"

"Hush, not so loud! You are mad. I tell you Barnewitz is very suspicious. That would make him more so than ever."

"*Changez les dames!*"

"Melitta; I am to take you to table."

"Impossible, Oswald. You must try to have it changed."

"Why," whispered Oswald, and his brows met.

"Do not look so angry, darling. I will explain it to you."

Miss Klaus appeared in the adjoining room. As soon as Oldenburg saw her he walked up to her, and reverently bowing to her, he said, in a tone of unusual gentleness:

"Miss Klaus, I am to have the pleasure of taking you to supper."

The poor little thing was thunderstruck. Baron Oldenburg, the strange, mysterious baron, to take her in!

She looked up to him with an air of serious doubt.

"I have arranged the seats myself, Miss Klaus; if you have any special preference tell me so, and I shall be very happy to do what you like best."

"Oh no, baron----"

"*Eh bien, nous voilà d'accord!* Will you give me your arm? I see they are making ready."

At that moment Cloten came up, out of breath.

"One word, Oldenburg--pardon me, Miss Klaus--Oldenburg, you must get me another lady. I cannot go with Hortense."

"*Pourquoi pas, mon cher?*"

"Because--oh, pshaw!--because----"

"*Je suis au désespoir, mon brave*; but Barnewitz has proposed you himself!"

"Are you sure?"

"You may rely on it."

He hastened back to his lady, his face beaming with joy.

"Oswald," said Melitta, "I have reconsidered it. It is better so--there is no prospect for the cotillon. Now come, give me your arm, and be good again."

The older people had gone into the dining-room first, and were standing behind their chairs; the company from the ball-room came now. Baron Barnewitz came for a moment across to see that all was right. He looked very black when he saw his wife on Cloten's arm, and Melitta standing by Oswald, and still more so when Oldenburg himself entered, leading his lady like a princess by the hand.

"Oldenburg, what a mess you have made!" whispered Barnewitz, furiously. "I do not want Cloten to sit by my they are quite enough talked about already."

"Well, my dear fellow, you told me to take the most insignificant; that left me no doubt!"

"And Melitta with the doctor; you with Miss Klaus--that is too absurd."

"Well, Barnewitz, it's done now, and please do me the favor not to interfere any more with my arrangements. Go quietly to your seat, the Countess Grieben is looking for you with her big owl eyes!"

"I wash my hands of it," growled Barnewitz, hurrying away.

"And I drink a bottle of champagne in honor of my successful *coup d'état*," grinned Oldenburg, sitting down by the little governess, just opposite Melitta and Oswald, and not far from Cloten and Hortense.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I hope you will join me in drinking, silently but enthusiastically, the health of the man who has assigned us all our places, and who, while he looked to the common welfare of all, yet has known how to fulfil the wishes of every guest. I pray you will bear in mind that a want of enthusiasm at this solemn moment would deeply wound the feelings of that man, and at the same time inexpressibly pain one of your neighbors, whom you are bound to love at least as your neighbor. Ladies and gentlemen, drink with me the health of your and my best friend, Adalbert Oldenburg!"

As a matter of course, no one within reach of the Baron's moderately strong voice dared to refuse to join in this ironical toast. The glasses clinked, and soon a lively conversation began all around the table, like fire in a bundle of straw which has been set on fire on all sides at once; that humming, chirping, chuckling, tittering, laughing conversation, in which very soon the most brilliant witticism and the most foolish remark have the same value.

"Mind your eyes, Oswald," said Melitta, in that rapid manner in which speech can hardly be distinguished from mere breathing, and when yet every syllable is distinctly heard--"Your sweet love-letters are caught on the way by profane eyes, broken open, and read."

Cloten had in vain tried to convince Hortense that it had been her husband's own wish that he

should lead her to table.

"Don't be such a fool, Arthur," she said, "it is a trick of Oldenburg's, you may rely on it. Have you ever talked with Oldenburg about me?"

"Never, Hortense--*parole d'honneur*!"

"I am sure you have done it. You will ruin me with your foolish way of talking."

"But, Hortense----"

"Hush, Oldenburg is watching us all the time."

"Cloten," said the Baron.

"What, baron?"

"Will you go with me to Italy next fall? You know in that matter?"

"Should like it furiously, baron; but, you know, a thousand reasons against it; first, hunting season; secondly, races; thirdly, I hate travelling; fourthly, I do not understand a word of Italian."

"Well, that is the least of all. What one has to know is only, *Si*, *signore*, *anima mia dolce*, and all other things you learn by examining boatmen."

Cloten blushed to the root of his hair, for, as Oldenburg said these words he felt Hortense's foot on his own, and heard her whisper in a voice half drowned by tears:

"There, you see, Arthur; did I not tell you?"

Melitta also, who had become quite silent ever since she found herself sitting opposite Oldenburg, seemed to be particularly struck by this remark. She suddenly cast down her long lashes, as if she wished to conceal what was going on in her heart.

"I appeal to you to bear me witness," said Oldenburg to her. "Has your Italian been of much use to you?"

"On the contrary," said Melitta, and her dark eyes flashed brightly. "It only made me listen to many a false, untruthful word, which would otherwise have remained unintelligible."

"Yes, yes, the Italians are great liars," laughed Oldenburg.

"Let us rather say, there is much lying done in Italy," replied Melitta.

"Defeated again," murmured the baron. "That woman is still as beautiful as an angel and as wise as a serpent. Yes, she is more beautiful than ever. Her eyes are larger and more brilliant; her shoulders are rounder; her voice is softer and sweeter--and all that for the sake of the handsome fellow by her side! Hm!--Doctor, will you do me the honor to take a glass of champagne with me? I thought I saw a cloud on your forehead. Let us drive it away! You know: *Dulce est desipere in loco.*"

"What kind of a horrible lingo is that again, baron?" asked Cloten.

"Low-Bramaputric, *mon cher*. Your health, doctor!" The more the meal approached its end, and the quicker the servants filled the ever-empty champagne glasses, the noisier and coarser became the conversation, so that it drowned even the voice of Count Grieben, which had heretofore been heard as distinctly as the screeching of a parrot in a menagerie. The thin varnish of outer culture, which constituted the whole so-called refinement of this privileged class, began to give way under the influence of streams of wine which were incessantly poured over it. The sight was a frightful one; naked, wretched nature lay open. The young men told the young ladies their adventures in hunting, at the races, their heroic deeds while they were in the army, or they were pleased to converse in a manner which they meant to be airy and witty, but which was heavy and coarse in the eyes of every well-bred woman. Unfortunately, however, the young ladies seemed to be but too well accustomed to this kind of conversation to feel any unpleasant effect. On the contrary, they allowed themselves to be forced to drink one glass of champagne after another; they were dying with laughter at the odd notions of some of the young men, and especially of young Count Grieben, a very tall, very thin, and very blond youth, whose appearance reminded one irresistibly of a giraffe. Oldenburg seemed himself to worship Bacchus more zealously than usual, or at least to take special pleasure in increasing the Bacchanalian tumult around him; he drank and talked incessantly, and urged others continually to drink. He did this especially with Cloten, who, at the beginning, frightened by Hortense's reproaches, had kept very quiet and looked embarrassed, but who had no sooner emptied a bottle than he forgot all the precaution which his lady-love had impressed upon him as absolutely necessary, and now replied to her reproachful looks with fiery glances, and to her whispered: "But, Arthur, have a care what you are doing," with an almost audible: "But, child, what do you mean; nobody sees us." The young nobleman carried his imprudence so far that he once, when picking up Hortense's napkin, kissed her hand, and at another time exchanged her glass for his; in short, he took every means to let the world know what they had heretofore but vaguely suspected.

"I am going immediately after this is over," said Melitta to Oswald, who had for the last quarter of an hour spoken almost exclusively to Emily von Breesen, his left-hand neighbor.

"I wish you had never come, or left me at home," said the young man, bitterly.

"Scold me?" said Melitta, and her lips trembled with pain. "Ah, Oswald, I wish you could come with me, and forever!"

"Perhaps Baron Oldenburg will permit us," replied Oswald, who had noticed how the baron's gray eyes continually watched Melitta and himself, while he seemed to devote himself altogether to little Miss Klaus.

Melitta said nothing, but the tear which suddenly glittered in her long eyelashes, and which she quickly wiped away with a quiet gesture, was answer enough.

"Pardon me, Melitta," whispered Oswald, "but I am very unhappy."

"I am not less so--perhaps more so--and that is exactly why I wish you at least were happy, and I could make you so."

"You can do it by a word."

"What is that, Oswald?"

"Tell me that you love me."

"Oswald, love does not ask so; that is jealousy."

"Is there any love without jealousy?"

"Yes, true love, that feareth nothing and believeth all things."

"Then my love is not true love. To be sure, we, who are not noble, cannot lay claim to anything that is true, I suppose; our mothers and sisters wear glass instead of diamonds; we ourselves have no true honor, no true love, that is clear." ... If Oswald could have looked into Melitta's heart as he was uttering these mad words, if he had but cast a glance at her face, he would have died for shame. Melitta did not answer; she did not cry; she only looked fixedly before her, as if she could not comprehend the fearful thing, that the hand which she had stooped to kiss had slapped her face, that the foot which she had knelt to wash with ointment had repelled her cruelly ... How she had looked forward to this evening; how happy she had fancied she would be in the midst of the crowd, alone with the beloved one, listening to his words, stealthily pressing his hand, and while beautiful women are slyly coquetting with him on all sides, to read in his eyes: I love only you, Melitta! And beyond this evening she had looked into a rosy future--a land of hope--not in clear outlines, but full of peace and love and sunshine ... And then her past had come up like a gray venomous mist, and had covered the promised land with its thick veil ... and now the face of the beloved one looked to her, through the foul mist, as if it were disfigured by hatred, and his voice sounded strange to her ears. Was that his face? Was that his voice which now said: "Baroness, they are rising from table: may I offer you my arm?"

As they passed down the stairs Melitta said nothing; Oswald also was silent. When they had reached the reception-room he bowed deep; and when he raised his head, he looked for an instant into her face. He saw that pain made her lips tremble; he saw a touching complaint dim her eyes, but his heart was locked, and he turned to a group of young girls and men who seemed to be disposed to continue the reckless table-talk yet for a while. Melitta followed him with her looks for a moment, saw how pretty Emily von Breesen turned to him eagerly, and how he met her with a merry jest, how she replied as merrily and tapped his arm with her fan. That was all she saw; when she came to herself again she found herself seated in a corner of her carriage. The bright light of the lamps fell upon the trees and hedges as they danced by the windows, but Melitta saw it all through a dim veil of mist, for her heart and her eyes were full of tears.

PART SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

With Melitta the good genius seemed to have left the company, and given it up to the agency of demons. The violins sounded louder and louder, the glances of the men became bolder, their words freer, and the motions of the dancers more passionate and more energetic. And still champagne was flowing in streams. New candles had been put into chandeliers and candelabras throughout the house; It looked as if there was to be no end to the enjoyment. The elderly people had returned to their card-tables, and from a smaller room adjoining, to which five or six gentlemen had retired some time ago, the rolling of gold-pieces could be heard, and the hoarse cry: "*Faites votre Jeu, messieurs!*"

Oswald had at the beginning of the second ball, as they called it, looked all around for Baron and Baroness Grenwitz, for he had not noticed, and was told only now, that they had both left the house before the company went to table, and that the carriage would be sent back for him. He had thought to find Melitta, who had not reappeared in the ball-room, in one of the other apartments. A servant, who passed him with a waiter full of wine-glasses, answered his question if he had seen Frau von Berkow: "The lady has just left. Lemonade or champagne?" Oswald took a glass of wine and drained it at once. "Gone away without farewell! Excellent!" He went back to the ball-room and the darkness increased in his soul. Now he was no longer angry with himself for having insulted her whom he loved, and for having let her go with that feeling in her heart, but he was angry with her, that she had left without giving him an opportunity to ask her pardon. He felt as a soul may feel that has gone to hell for its sins, because it disdained to receive the priest's absolution, and which now rages against itself and against the priest. Mad thoughts floated in his excited brain--he would have been delighted if one of these young noblemen had taken offence at his haughtiness and insulted him mortally. He actually tried to provoke a collision; he scoffed and scorned in the most reckless manner; but either the half-drunk young men did not comprehend him, or they had sense enough left to remember that a duel with a man whose ball never misses was not an agreeable amusement. He tried to persuade himself that among the other young ladies more than one was as beautiful and lovely as Melitta--that it was folly to grieve for one, where there were so many ready to give him comfort. Why should he not fall in love with Emily von Breesen? Why not? She was a lady who in a day might unfold into a magnificent rose. Why should he not watch the transition and enjoy the first balmy fragrance as the full-blown flower opened to new-born love? And was she not tall and lithe like a deer? And were her rosy lips not half opened as if for a kiss? And did she not look up to him with her dark-gray, half-shy, half-bold eyes, full of curiosity, and yet so full also of intelligence, as he bent over the back of her chair and chatted with her?

"You must call on us, Mr. Stein! I shall invite Lisbeth, and then we can ride out together."

"You can leave Miss Lisbeth at home. I prefer duos to trios, decidedly."

"Is that really so? But my cousin is very pretty. Don't you think so?"

"Miss Lisbeth is a charming creature, who has but one defect--that you are her cousin, and who makes but one mistake--to stand too frequently by your side."

"Come, come! I shall tell her."

"You would expose me to her hatred, and then you would owe me a compensation."

"And can I afford you any compensation?"

"Yes; I see it in your eyes."

"Oh, you wicked man! Come, it is our turn now."

Oswald had sauntered about after his dance for some time. When he came back to the ball-room he saw Emily nowhere. Partly looking for her, and partly without any plan or purpose, he wandered through a suite of rooms which connected with the ball-room on the other side of the house, and in which he had not yet been. Here only a few lights were still burning in a chandelier or before a pier-table, and showed him, as in a bad dream, an old family portrait or his own pale face. The chairs stood all about in disorder. The windows were curtained. Through a crevice here and there the moon was shining in, and drew occasionally a bright line across the carpets. Oswald went to one of the windows to get a breath of fresh air. As he drew back the heavy, dark curtain, a white figure, which had been sitting on a low chair in the deep embrasure of the window, lost in thought, started up frightened and uttered a low cry of surprise. Oswald was just about to let the curtain drop again and to retire, when the form approached him and stretched out a hand toward him.... And two soft arms encircled him, and a swelling bosom rose passionately before him, and two burning lips pressed on his, and a low voice breathed: "Oswald, oh my God, Oswald!"

A boy who in playing with his little sister wounds her seriously, cannot be more thoroughly frightened at seeing her blood flow than Oswald was when he felt the tears of the girl on his cheeks. His mad intoxication of love and jealousy was gone in a moment. What had he done? He

had played the wicked part of the bird-catcher; he had lured the poor little bird with flattering words and loving glances, until it came fluttering up to him and sought peace on his bosom ...

"Miss Emily," he whispered, trying gently to raise the head of the girl, who was now bitterly sobbing on his bosom, "Emily, my dear child, for Heaven's sake, calm yourself. Consider, if anybody should see you here, or hear you----"

"What do I care for the others? I love you," whispered the girl.

"My dear Miss Emily, I beseech you, collect yourself and make me not wretched----"

"Then you do not love me?" said the passionate girl, raising herself suddenly, "then you do not love me? Well, I am going----"

She took a step towards the curtain, but the storm of passion had exhausted her strength. She uttered a loud sob, and would have fallen down if Oswald had not caught her in his arms. His situation was extremely painful. He feared every moment to hear voices in the room, to see the curtain drawn back,--and yet, to leave the poor child fainting there, especially as he could not well send anybody to her assistance,--it was out of the question. And yet he must tear himself away, for he felt that the fever in his senses, suppressed for a moment, was returning with tenfold strength the longer this trying situation continued ... Tender, affectionate, passionate words began to mingle, he did not himself know how, with his low beseeching prayers; an irresistible force made the youthful form cling closer to his arms, and, ere he well knew what was done, their lips met, the soft hair mingled with his ... But, more than any words could have done, the contact, these signs of the love of a passionate child, brought him back to his self-respect.

"Then you do love me, Oswald?" she whispered, clinging more closely than ever to him.

"Yes, yes, sweet one; who could be cruel enough not to love you dearly. But by your love I beseech you leave me now, before it is too late. I shall see you again in the ballroom."

The girl put her small head once more to his bosom, as if she felt that it was the first and the last time she should ever rest there, and raised her rosy and willing lips once more, as if she knew that such sweet stolen kisses would not be given to her again in this life ... The lithe white form had disappeared, and only the pale moonlight fell upon the dark red curtains which separated the window from the room. And now, as Oswald put his hand on the curtain, in order to return by some roundabout way to the ball-room, he heard the voices of two men, who were just then entering the room.

CHAPTER II.

"Who on earth was that?" said one voice,--it was Baron Oldenburg,--"was not that the pretty Emily? What has the little angler been fishing for here in these troubled waters?--But now, Barnewitz, I ask with Hamlet: Whither do you lead me? Speak, I will go no further. Twice I have brought my baronial knees into unpleasant contact with coarse chair-legs, thanks to the abominable *clair obscur* which prevails in these rooms. Heaven be thanked! here is a causeuse: *eh bien, mon ami; que me voulez-vous?*"

"I pray you, Oldenburg, be serious for a moment," said Baron Barnewitz, and his voice sounded strangely subdued--"I really do not feel in the least like laughing."

"You are a strange creature! You and the like of you. You think an honest fellow cannot utter a serious word without making a face like a mute's. Humor is an unknown luxury here. Well then, my serious friend, what is the matter?"

"Listen, Oldenburg----"

"Hush! Are you quite safe here? It seemed to me I heard a cat behind the hangings."

"It was nothing."

"*Eh bien*; then announce to me your fatal tale in the fewest possible words."

The voices of the speakers became lower, but not so low that Oswald could not hear every word distinctly. He deplored his position, which compelled him to listen, but he saw no chance of escaping. As Oldenburg had recognized Emily von Breesen, he would have compromised her honor if he had shown himself now. He tried to open the window, in order to escape by a bold

leap over the gooseberry bushes, which were right underneath, into the garden, and from there through the open door back again into the ball-room; but he abandoned the plan as too hazardous, and tried to reconcile himself as well as he could, though not without secretly cursing his evil star, to his half-ludicrous, half-painful situation.

"Oldenburg," said Barnewitz, "did Cloten ask you to let him sit by my wife, or was it a notion of your own?"

"Why do you ask that curious question?"

"Never mind. Just answer."

"Not before I know what you are aiming at."

"I want an answer and no subterfuge," said the furious nobleman.

"Your threats do not terrify me, Cassius," replied Oldenburg, in a tone, the royal dignity of which contrasted strongly with the hoarse, passionate voice of the other. "I tell you once more, Barnewitz, either you tell me what you mean by that question, or I refuse to answer."

"Well then, the thing is briefly this: Cloten is in love with Hortense!"

"Oh! and *vice versâ*: is your wife in love with this lovely youth?"

"I wish he were where the pepper grows!"

"A very charitable wish, in which I join you with all my heart. Since when has this comedy been played?"

"Since our return from Italy."

"And what evidences have you?"

"A thousand!"

"And what do you mean to do?"

"Great Heavens! Oldenburg. You ask me as if I had been playing whist! I want to kill the rascal; I want to drive him from my place here with the whip!"

"*Bon!* And will you mention one of the thousand proofs?"

"Well, I should think to-night had given proof enough. First, she lets him take her to table; then she coquets with him in the most impudent manner----"

"Stop! Who told you all that?"

"Young Grieben."

"Then tell young Grieben that he might employ his sparrow-brains for a better purpose than to invent such foolish stories, and to report them to you. I sat nearer than he, and I am sure I observe as well as he, and I tell you that your wife and Cloten have behaved just as well at table, as,--well, as you can expect from a nobleman and a lady. And then, please consider that the whole arrangement was only a notion, and, as I now see, a bad notion of mine."

"I can rely upon that, Oldenburg?"

"I generally mean what I say."

"But it is nevertheless true," screamed Barnewitz.

"My dear friend, I have no opinion about that, and you would oblige me very much indeed if you would leave me out of the matter entirely. But if you want my friendly advice, I am quite at your service."

"What ought I to do?"

"Hang your horsewhip on its hook and avoid in every way making a scandal, in which no one suffers more in the end than he at whose expense the whole spectacle is performed, I mean the husband. Then I advise you to remember that our *chronique scandaleuse* is rich in such stories, and that, if every king among us should in each such case use his whip, there would soon not be saddlers enough in the country. Thirdly, I beg leave to advise you: abolish half of your kennel and all of your mistresses, if you have any. Let the hares eat their cabbages in peace, and the young fellows in the village kiss the pretty girls themselves; take some pains about Hortense, who, like all wives, asks for nothing better than to be beloved, and who is far too sensible not to appreciate your attractions at once, if she has any choice between yourself and Cloten; and finally, let us go again among men, for this philosophic controversy in this mystic twilight has nearly exhausted me, and I long heartily for a glass of champagne."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the drunken host, who, as it generally happens to simple men, fell from one extreme into the other; "yes, you are right, I am a very different sort of a man from Cloten, a miserable whippersnapper, and Hortense knows that pretty well. Ha, ha, ha! you are right, I have lived rather fast of late. You see that journey to Italy has demoralized me. Those wonderful women with their bright black eyes--yes, and *à propos* of bright eyes, I always wanted to ask you, is it all over with yourself and the Berkow?"

"With me and Frau von Berkow? What a mad notion is that now! what is to be over between us?"

"Why, Oldenburg, you don't want to persuade an old fox like myself that you only looked at the sweet grapes from a distance?"

"Listen, my jewel," said Oldenburg, and his voice sounded like a two-edged sword; "you know I take a joke like anybody, but he who dares touch Melitta's honor, by the great God, he dies by my hand!"

"Well, now, you see how you flare up again!"

"I flare up! I am as cool as iced champagne.--Yes, as I told you, Barnewitz; promise me not to do anything in this matter to-day, nor to-morrow, nor at any time, till you have conferred with me; especially don't let your wife see anything--you hear, Barnewitz, not the least sign?"

"Well, your good advice comes too late," said Barnewitz. "I told Hortense in passing a few words; she turned pale like a sheet. The rascal."

"That was very wrong, and not very chivalrous, my good knight of the sorrowful countenance," said Oldenburg; "old women talk, but men act. Such scenes between a noisy husband and a weeping wife are beyond all measure plebeian and vulgar, and if we know that we are right and others are wrong, we should be doubly mild, delicate, and tolerant. To be wrong and to have to confess it is punishment enough."

"Ah, Oldenburg, that is too refined for me; and then you don't know the women, if you think they take such matters very much to heart. In at one ear and out at the other. Come, Oldenburg, and convince yourself, if you can see, that I told Hortense ten minutes ago I would break every bone in Cloten's body if the abominable story was not instantly brought to an end!"

"Yes, you are a genuine Othello! And I, in my stupid good-nature, must try to wash this brutal Moor into a civilized European! *Quelle bêtise!*"

When Oswald heard the voices of the two men no longer, and the music sounding across from the ball-room indicated that dancing had begun again, he came forth from his concealment. He expected that this suite of rooms ended in a long passage, which he had noticed in going up to the dining-room. He was not mistaken. There was a door into the passage in the next room; from there he slipped into the hall, and thence, unobserved, into the reception-room. Here and there they were still at whist, but most of the players had gone to the ball-room, where the German was to be danced. Oswald followed the crowd. His eyes sought and soon found Emily von Breesen. He hardly trusted his eyes, she looked so changed; the wild hoyden of just now had grown up into a young lady. She appeared taller and more dignified; her face, rosy before, was pale now, but her eyes shone with an unusual fire, and the jests of her partners elicited not even a smile. As soon as she saw Oswald, a smile flashed over her face. She turned towards him as he approached and said:

"One word, doctor,"--and then in a low voice, "I shall dance the German with you; I know you are not engaged. I have driven Count Grieben to such despair, he is gone off with the old people. He thought, no doubt, he would stun me--the fool! Pardon me, Baron Sylow, I am too tired yet. Dance with my cousin, she will be glad--Heaven be thanked! He is gone.--Oswald, you love me? love me really? I can hardly believe it. My head swims; I could scream for joy. Oh, please don't look at me so, or I must--I must fall on your neck and kiss you as just now. Are you angry, Oswald? It was bad in me, very bad, I know. But you see I could not help it. Why don't you talk, Oswald?"

"Because it is sweeter to listen to you."

"I am such a child, am I not? But why do you talk so formally?"

"Do you think we only love those we treat unceremoniously?"

"No, but we drop ceremony with those we love. Oh, I like that so much! Heaven be thanked, the polka is over. Come, let us try and find a good place; there by the window."

The gentlemen were busy obeying the ladies' orders and arranging the chairs; the circle was almost formed, when all of a sudden, high above the tuning of the obstinate instruments of the musicians and the clinking of glasses on waiters and of cups in the hands of thirsty people, voices were heard in an adjoining room which did not sound very festive. There were loud voices, hoarse with wine and rage--threats fell here and there--only a few words, but just enough to startle all who were in the ball-room, for a moment, out of their forgetfulness of the world. It was only for a

moment, for a quarrel in coarse words was by no means a rarity in this refined society, and often lasted much longer than this time. Nor would this interruption have made any more impression than many others on similar occasions, if a second occurrence in the ball-room itself had not lent to the former a peculiar significance, which was quite clear to the cleverer part of the company. For hardly had the hoarse, threatening voices in the next room been silenced by a third voice, which seemed to exercise an undisputed authority over them, than Hortense, who was just about to dance the German, seized the arm of her partner and fell fainting on a chair, which the latter had just had time enough to draw up. The consternation was, of course, very great. Although a dozen smelling-bottles were at once ready, and cologne was poured on brow, eyes, and temples of the fainting beauty, it still lasted several minutes before she recovered enough to smile her thanks, with pallid lips, and to beg them, more by looks than by words, to take her back to the other room. This was done promptly, and those who remained behind looked at each other as if they did not know what to make of the event.

"I suppose the ball is over now?" asked Adolph von Breesen, who was to dance the German with Lisbeth, whom he adored, of Oswald, in an under tone.

"I am afraid so," replied the latter.

"Are we going to dance?" asked a third.

"Impossible," replied Langen; "I have ordered my horses."

"What was the meaning of that affair between Barnewitz and Cloten just now?" asked still another.

"Who knows? They had taken a glass too much. That is all," said Langen.

"I should be glad if that were all," said Breesen, "but I fear there is more behind it. They tell me Cloten left the house on the spot."

Baron Barnewitz appeared by Oldenburg's side in the ball-room. The face of the latter looked as calm as ever, but that of his host was purple with excitement, anger, and overmuch wine; his eyes were swimming, and his voice was unsteady, as he tried to persuade the gentlemen to go on dancing.

"Go home?--nonsense--can't let you go--Halloh! Champagne here--Home?--why? My wife faints at any time, for reasons and without reasons--why? I couldn't see anybody if that--Music! Hi! Go on, music!"

But in spite of these hospitable words, the effect of which was seriously impaired by the evident excitement of the speaker, and in spite of the first notes of the orchestra, which began with a truly fearful discord, very few only were disposed to continue the ball. All the others discovered suddenly that it was quite late, that they had been much longer at table than they imagined, and that it would be unwarrantable to continue festivities in which the hostess herself could take no part--and all the phrases of that kind with which people try to excuse their retreat when they have once determined to leave. One carriage after the other drove up to the door. Mothers looked for their daughters; these for their shawls and fans; everybody was making ready, saying good-by, dropping here a loud joke, there a malicious remark, and at times a stealthy word of love.--Oswald hardly saw anything else but the form of the pretty, impassioned child who had become so dear to him in a few moments.--Love is such a very strange thing that even the mere consciousness of having set loose the supernatural power in others suffices to awaken in us a sensation, which may not be love itself, but which resembles love most strikingly. Love itself is a mirror which reflects our image beautified, so that even the wisest and the most modest cannot help feeling gratified at the sight. Love makes gods of us, and we would not be men, would not be brothers of Phaëton and Ixion, if we did not all of us desire once upon a time to play the god, or at least to dine for once at the table of the gods. But what nectar can be as sweet as the kisses from the dewy lips of a young, lovely creature? as the glances from the eyes of a girl whose bosom swells, for the first time in her life, with loving longing?--as her words, confused and yet so intelligible, like the twittering of a young bird, who would like to break forth in full melodies and still cannot find the right notes *as yet*.

And Oswald had felt the touch of such lips; Oswald saw such young, beaming eyes rise to his full of bliss, and Oswald heard such low, love-breathing words. Was it a wonder that he spent the last few minutes of his interview with her in giving love for love; that he looked forward to the moment of parting with hardly less dread than she herself, who nearly broke out in tears when her carriage was announced? Emily had availed herself of the opportunity, when Oswald led her back to her aunt, to present him to this lady, who stood to her in her mother's place. A few clever and complimentary words had quickly won him the favor of the matron, who liked nothing better, thoroughly kind-hearted as she was, than to laugh a little at other people's expense. She also invited Oswald to come and see her very soon at Candelin (the estate of Emil's father, who was laid up with the gout, and could not go out).

"Yes, and then we'll have some pistol-shooting," said Adolphus, who came up to tell the ladies that the carriage was ready; "I shall invite a few other gentlemen, so that you won't be too badly bored at our house."

"I have only a very modest talent for being bored, and besides, I think the presence of these ladies, and your own, will be a better preventive against that malady than the company of a hundred persons," said Oswald, with a polite bow.

"You see, Adolphus," said the lively old lady, "Doctor Stein says exactly what I have told you a thousand times: only slow people are bored; you, for instance, and your sister, who are both dying a hundred times a day for sheer *ennui*."

"I am never bored, dear aunt," said Miss Emily, eagerly.

"Child, you begin to talk wildly; it is high time you should get home. Then *au revoir, monsieur*."

"I beg you will allow me to see you to your carriage," said Oswald, offering the old lady his arm.

"*Vous êtes bien aimable, monsieur*," she replied, accepting the offered arm; "are you quite sure, Mr. Stein, you are not of noble birth?"

"As sure as of my existence, madam. Why?"

"This: you have in your whole manner something chivalrous, that we do not often see nowadays, and then only in our young men of the best families. Adolphus has still much to learn in that direction. Do you hear, Adolphus?"

"I always hear what you say, dear aunt," replied the young man, who followed them with his sister, "even when I have heard your words once or twice before. Emily, child, where are your eyes? That carriage was on the point of driving over you."

The ladies had taken their seats; Adolphus gave the coachman on the box some instructions about the road he was to take. Oswald was standing by the still open door; the aunt had snugly ensconced herself in her corner, and Emily was bending forward a little. The light of the carriage lamps and those at the house door fell upon her face. Her eyes were fixed upon Oswald; but she hardly saw him, for they were veiled by tears; she dared not speak; her trembling lips were eloquent enough. Her brother jumped into the carriage, and drew the door to. "All right!" The horses pulled. A little hand in a white glove beckoned from the window. That was the last sign. The next moment another carriage was on the same spot.

Oswald returned into the house. The company was quite small now, and among the few who were still there, waiting for their carriages and wrapped up in cloaks and shawls, there was no one of those with whom Oswald had come in contact during the day. Langen had been the first to leave, after repeatedly asking his new friend to be sure and pay him soon a visit. Oswald had inquired of the servants if the Grenwitz carriage had come back for him, but they had seen nothing of it. The smaller the company grew, the more embarrassing became his situation. He saw himself already, in imagination, the very last of all the guests, and had resolved rather to return on foot than to have to claim the hospitality of Baron Barnewitz. Just then, however, Oldenburg came from an adjoining room, and seemed to look for somebody. As soon as he saw Oswald, he came up to him and said:

"What do you say, doctor, I think we had better go."

"I should have been gone long ago," replied Oswald, "but just now I am without horses and carriage; I suppose the baron's coachman, who was to come back for me, has fallen asleep on the way."

"I take special pleasure in offering you a seat in my carriage," said the baron. "For the little *détour* which I shall have to make, in order to set you down at Grenwitz, I shall be amply compensated by the pleasure of your company."

"I accept your kind offer very thankfully."

"*Eh bien, partons!*"

In the hall they met their host, who was evidently scarcely able any longer to perform his duties as such. His eyes were bloodshot, his voice had become most unpleasantly rough and hoarse. He talked of all sorts of things incoherently, while he made an effort to dismiss every one of his guests with a civil little speech, as he saw them to their carriage. "Want to go already--well, stay at home well--John, your carriage for your mistress--My respects to your husband! Ah! Poggendorf! old boy! Had not seen you here at all! Don't let that wife of yours go home alone! Glass champagne? Eh?--Oldenburg, doctor, not already? Nonsense! Glad to make your acquaintance--shoot devilish well--all right that you put down that Cloten--all right--famous fellow, doctor (tender embrace)--you are my bosom friend (sobbing)--my best friend (another embrace)--you ought to have killed him--the blackguard."

"Come, Barnewitz, I have to tell you something," said Oldenburg, slapping his host vigorously on the shoulder, and leading him a few steps aside from the carriage; "Excuse me a moment, doctor; Charles! make room, so the other carriages can come up!"

The two men walked up and down for some time in eager conversation, now disappearing in the dark part of the courtyard, and now visible again in the illuminated semicircle before the door. Oswald could readily imagine the subject of their conversation. Several times Barnewitz raised his voice, but he lowered it instantly upon a 'St! or a Hush! as a wild beast in a menagerie breaks out in a howl or a growl, and is instantly hushed by the look or the whip of the keeper. "That man has a magic power over others," said Oswald to himself, as he watched the tall, grim form of the baron walking alongside of Barnewitz, who was a head shorter, like Conscience in person by the side of a poor sinner. "I feel something of his dominion myself. There is a demon in that man, a demon which one must either love or hate, or rather love and hate at once; for I feel disposed to hate that man and I cannot do it. And what is he to me after all? If he still loves Melitta, as I think he does, I am more of an enemy to him than he to me. But why did Melitta never tell me how she stands with regard to that long ghost there? I would not have offended her to-day. Poor Melitta! How she looked at me--and what would she say if she had witnessed the scene in the window? Oh, that sweet, charming girl! And her eyes, too, were full of tears, as she sat in the carriage and looked at me so fixedly! Oh! who can be cruel enough to refuse the love of such a heart? And yet

'All this blending of heart with heart
Brings but pain to us from the start.'

Ah, Goethe! Goethe! What have you not to answer for? You also did not disdain the lily because the rose was so fair, and that is why they surround your head so often with a wreath of lilies and roses. You too would have accepted Emily's great heart, and you would have smoothed her brown hair and kissed her tenderly on her tender eyes! Oh, ye everlasting stars, how lovely the child was at that moment! For, all in all, she is but a child, and to-morrow she will awake in her soft little bed and think she has dreamt the scene in the bay-window during her sleep."

Thus Oswald tried to silence the voice of his conscience--for the moment he was successful.

"Will you get in now, doctor?" the baron said, as he came up with his host. "You understand, Barnewitz?"

"Rely upon it, I'll do what I promised," said the latter, who seemed to be very much benefited by the conversation with his Mentor and the cool night air. "Rely upon it, I give you my word of honor, that I----"

"Hush! Are you comfortable, doctor? Good-by, Barnewitz! All right, Charles!"

CHAPTER III.

The horses started; the light wagon rattled over the rough road across the court-yard. In an instant the château, with its still brilliantly lighted windows, the dark barns and stables, and the little cottages all lay behind them, and they were far off between waving grain-fields and mist-covered meadows. The short summer night was already waning. In the East a faint streak of light announced the new day; the early dawn covered the whole landscape as with a thin veil. From the North, however, came sheet lightning, and rent from time to time the thick fog. All was silent yet in the fields; even the lark, the herald of day, was still asleep. Oswald was leaning back in his corner and looked dreamily into the twilight; only at times, when the smoke from the baron's cigar floated by him, he looked at the latter, who seemed to be lost in thought as he sat there, with his hat pushed back a little, the collar of his coat drawn up, and his long legs stretched out to their full length. They might have been sitting thus for a quarter of an hour, when the baron suddenly said:

"You don't smoke?"

"No."

"May I offer you a cigar?"

"Thanks! I never smoke."

"That is strange."

"Why so?"

"Because I cannot understand it, how a man can endure this nineteenth century of ours without smoking tobacco or opium, without eating hasheesh, or trying in some other way to deaden the desperate disgust with which this age fills our hearts. And I understand this least of all in your case."

"Why just in my case?"

"Because, if I am not totally mistaken, you are affected with the poet's deadly disease--the longing after the Blue Flower--and will die one of these days of your unsatisfied longing. You recollect the beautiful story in Novalis' works? The Blue Flower, after which the great Minnesinger was longing? The Blue Flower! Do you know what that is? That is the flower which mortal eye has never yet seen, and the fragrance of which fills the whole world. Not every creature is delicately enough made to be able to perceive the perfume; but the nightingale is intoxicated with it when it sings and sobs and sighs in the moonlight or at early daybreak; and all foolish men have been and are drunk with it when they cry in prose and in poetry to heaven, pouring out their sorrow and their grief; and all the countless millions to whom the gift was denied to utter what they suffer, and who in their speechless sorrow look up to merciless Heaven. Ah! and there is no cure for that malady! No cure but death! He who has once breathed the perfume of the Blue Flower, has no more peace and quiet in this life. As if he were an accursed murderer, as if the angel with the flaming sword were after him, he is driven on and on, although his sore feet pain him and he yearns to lay down his weary head to rest. He asks, in his torments of thirst, for a drink at this or that cottage door, but he returns the emptied cup without thanks, for there was a fly in the water, or the cup was not quite clean, or--well, well, he was not refreshed by the drink. Refreshed! Where is the eye which satisfies us so that we would never like to look into another again, more brilliant, more fiery than the first? Where is the bosom on which we have once rested, which keeps us from desiring to listen to the beating of another heart, more ardent, more burning with love? Where? I ask you where?"

The baron paused: Oswald was strangely moved. What the eccentric man by his side had been saying, more to himself than to be heard, in an almost elegiac tone, which contrasted strikingly with his ordinarily sharp, strident voice--it was his own thoughts, which he had had often and often, from early boyhood up, so that he was almost frightened by the close resemblance of his Double. He had no answer for the baron's question, which he seemed to have propounded to himself.

"I have always been thinking about the necessity," continued the baron, "which forces men first to forget their own existence more or less, before they reach the condition which we call happiness, for want of a better word, and that they are the happier, the more fully they can forget it. 'The best of life is but intoxication,' says Byron. Yes indeed! The love of Romeo and Juliet, for which we face death as readily, as we go to a feast, is also but intoxication. 'To sleep is better than to be awake,' says the wisdom of the East; but the best of all is death."

"And yet comparatively few men kill themselves," said Oswald.

"Yes, and that is remarkable enough," replied the baron; "especially in our day, when most people are not afraid any more even of Hamlet-dreams that might trouble us in our eternal sleep."

"Might not that be a proof that, after all, the much talked of unhappiness of such people is not so very great?"

"Perhaps so; but perhaps, also, it only proves that man is very reluctant to abandon his last hope. Why does the wanderer who has lost his way drag himself forward through the deep snow? Why does the poor shipwrecked mariner strain his eyes for half a century gazing over the wild waste of waters? Why does the criminal condemned for life not dash his brains out against his prison walls? Why does the poor fellow who is to be hanged on the morrow not hang himself the night before? Before their unhappiness is not so very great? Pshaw! You do not believe that. Simply because a faint glimmer of hope still shines through the hell of their suffering, like the pale streak there in the east. If that faint gleam too should fade away, then, yes, then old Mother Night would have to take back her poor lost child, the mild, good, loving Night of Death."

After a short pause, during which the baron had been puffing great clouds of smoke from his cigar, he continued in a somewhat calmer tone:--

"I am several years older than you, and Fate has allowed me to see in a short time more of life than is commonly given to man. I have that, of which Goethe's friend in gray wished him the greatest possible amount: Experience. I might have learnt, and I ought to have learnt, therefore, that there is no hope in life for me and people like me; but, although I say: I have no more hope! I still go on hoping in secret that some happiness will come, as the consumptive ever hopes to be cured. Take for instance a party like that which we have just left. I know how hollow the joys of these people are; how many care-worn faces, how many guilty blushes are hid behind the smiling company-masks; I know that this pretty girl will be, ten years hence, an unhappy wife, if she is not an idiot; that this handsome fellow, who carries his head so high, and looks as if he could perform the twelve labors of Hercules in a single day, will be a coarse country bumpkin, who ill-treats his tenants and strikes his wife; I know that, and I know more than that, and I have seen it a thousand and ten thousand times in life, and yet I am not blasé for all that. This treacherous

Fata Morgana has yet charms for me; every budding girl-flower awakens the hope in me, I might really for once love and be loved; every fine manly fellow makes me believe once more in friendship. Would you have believed me such a fool?"

"I should not have thought you could think and feel thus."

"And you were perfectly right," said the baron. "I only think and feel so when I am dead drunk, as now.--What was that?"

A loud cry came from a little distance through the silent morning--and once more, louder, desperate, as if a woman, for it was a woman's voice, sees the murderer's knife raised in his hand. Before them lay a piece of woodland; the road went around it; the cry must have come from the other side, which was hid from them by a few detached oak-trees and thick underwood.

"Go on, Charles, faster!" cried the baron.

The coachman whipped his horses. The noble creatures, as if amazed at such undeserved treatment, rushed headlong forward, so that the two men in the carriage began to tremble. In an instant they were at the corner. As soon as they could see the other side they beheld a strange sight--A strangely dressed, dark-complexioned woman, with a piece of red stuff twisted like a turban around her bluish-black hair, ran shrieking after three horsemen, who spurred their horses to make their best speed, and instantly disappeared behind another turn in the road. As the baron's carriage came thundering up, the woman jumped aside and cried, with screaming voice, lifting her hands as if in prayer: "My child--my child! they have robbed me of my child!"

The coachman found it hard to stop the horses. Oswald, who had at once recognized the Brown Countess in the woman, had jumped down from the carriage.

"Save my child, sir, save my child!" cried the gypsy, throwing herself down before him and embracing his knees.

The baron laughed.

"A very romantic situation, doctor," he said from the wagon. "Morning dawning, woods whispering, gypsy, the king's highway--really, quite a novel! In the mean time, while you console the bereft mother I will pursue the robbers, who are probably only sheep in wolf's clothing, a couple of empty-headed gentlemen of our neighborhood, who look upon the whole as capital fun."

"The one on the gray horse was Baron Nadelitz," said the coachman, who could hardly hold his horses, turning half around.

"Drive on!" said the baron. "We'll give them a lesson."

The carriage went off thundering.

The gypsy had raised herself again. She looked after the carriage, which flew with mad speed over the rough forest road and now disappeared behind some trees. A strange smile passed over her face as she stood there, listening in breathless excitement. Then, as her ear ceased to hear the rolling of the wheels, she crossed her bare arms on her full bosom, the restless heaving of which alone spoke of the violent storm which had just shaken her whole system, and stared rigidly before her. Suddenly she raised her head and said, fixing her glittering eyes on Oswald:

"Do you know the dark man who brings me my Czika back?"

"Yes, Isabel."

"Is he your friend?"

"No."

"But he will be?"

"Perhaps."

"Is he a good man?"

"I think so."

"Do you remember the evening on the edge of the water, sir?"

"Yes, Isabel."

"Could you find the place again?"

"I believe I could. Why?"

"Will you bring the dark man to that place when the full moon stands in the heavens as it does now? Oh say yes! I beseech you by your love to the beautiful, kind lady, by the bones of your mother, say yes!"

The gypsy was kneeling once more before Oswald, and looked, with folded hands, imploringly up to him.

"Get up, Isabel," said the young man, "I will do what you wish, if I can."

The gypsy seized his hands, as he stretched them out to help her get up, and kissed them with passionate gratitude. Then she started up, hastened across the road toward the forest, and had the next moment disappeared in the dense underwood, through which she sped with the strength and the swiftness of a deer.

Before Oswald could recover from the speechless astonishment which the conduct of the Brown Countess had caused him, he heard the rolling of the carriage, which returned as swiftly as it had left. But before the wagon had reached the trees, behind which it had before disappeared, it suddenly stopped, and the baron appeared, bareheaded, and carrying little Czika on his arm.

"We have hunted, we have caught," he called out from afar. "The cowardly wolves let the fair booty go as soon as they saw us in pursuit, and escaped in haste.--There, little Ganymede, now see if your feet will carry you again."

The baron let the child glide down. "But what has become of the mother, or whoever that brown woman was?" he asked, surprised to find Oswald alone.

Oswald told him, in a few words, what had happened during his absence.

"Well, that is not so bad," said the baron; "the thing becomes more and more romantic. Full moon, edge of lake, gypsy women, cunning of Egypt, and two simple German boys, who are cheated! What are we to do with little Czika, as you call the little princess?--for I am sure she is a king's daughter, stolen from the cradle----"

"If we do not wish to leave her on the high-road, we shall have to take her with us, I suppose."

"But will the child go with us? Listen, little Czika, will you go with me?"

"Yes, sir!" said the child, who had so far shown no sign of apprehension, fear, or anxiety.

"Hm!" said the baron, "here I have an adopted child without asking for it!"

He had become very serious of a sudden. He stroked Czika's bluish-black curls and her fine brow, and looked at her steadily.

"How beautiful the child is," he murmured, "how very beautiful! And how it has grown!--Come with me, little Czika, you shall be happy at my house, very happy; I will love you more than your mother, who has left you so basely, has ever loved you."

"Mother has not left Czika," said the child, quietly looking up at the baron; "mother is where Czika is; mother is everywhere."

Turning away from the two gentlemen, she put her little hands to her mouth, and sent a cry into the silent forest exactly like the call of a hungry young falcon.

The child inclined her head on one side and listened; the baron and Oswald instinctively held their breath.

There came from the forest, but evidently from a great distance, the answer; the clear, wild cry of the old falcon when he has spied out his quarry far down below him.

"You see, sir," said the child, "mother does not leave Czika; if you wish to take Czika with you, Czika will go with you."

"Well, then, come, young falcon," said the baron, taking the child by the hand. "Come, doctor! I believe Charles has mended the strap which broke just around the corner. There he is. All right again, Charles?"

"Yes, sir."

The gentlemen got in and took the child between them.

"Go on," said the baron. "Let them trot out."

They soon came upon the wide heath which extends from Fashwitz to Grenwitz, the same heath on which Oswald had met the old woman from the village. It wanted yet half an hour to sunrise. On the eastern sky a series of purple streaks rose one above the other. The air came cool from the sea across the damp moor.

The little Czika had come up close to the baron and was fast asleep.

"How thinly the child is dressed," said the latter; "it will take cold in the fresh morning air!"

He rose, pulled off his overcoat, wrapped it around the little one, took her in his lap, and rested her head on his bosom.

"So, so!" he said, kindly! and then to Oswald, who had been silent, meditating on the enigmatical character of the man by his side:

"I look to you a little crazy, doctor, eh?"

"No," said the other, looking up, "not in the least."

"That is because you suffer of the same disease as I do; what makes others speechless with amazement appears to us perfectly natural; and what the good people and bad musicians consider a matter of course, seems to us nothing less than fabulous. You will, for instance, readily believe that I have met this same child now for the third time in my life, and that I am superstitious enough to see in this threefold meeting much more than a mere accident. Besides, like Wallenstein, I believe in no accident."

"And where and when do you think you have seen Czika?"

"The first time, four years ago, in England. I was riding with a couple of English friends in a distant part of Hyde Park. As we turned round a corner at full speed, a child was standing before us--a brown child, with big black eyes, raising its tiny hands imploringly. I scarcely noticed it, being engaged in an animated conversation. After we had gone on perhaps a hundred yards, I felt suddenly as if spirits were drawing me back. I cannot describe the sensation. I felt, however, as if my riding past the sweet, helpless creature had been a crime, which made me perfectly wretched. I turned round; I raced back to the place like a madman. The child was gone. I called after her; I searched the shrubbery all around; my friends aided me, in spite of my madness, as they called it; but all in vain.

"The next time, I saw the child in Egypt. It is now two years. We--I mean a small caravan of Nile travellers, who had met by accident,--were riding on our little donkeys through the narrow winding streets of Asqut. By the side of an open door, through which we could look into the silent shady court of a mosque, stood, in a niche in the wall, a child, older than that in Hyde Park, and younger than that here in my arms, but the same brown child, with the bluish-black curls, and the bright gazelle eyes. Again she stretched out her little hands towards the passers-by, and called the cry you hear everywhere in Egypt: Bakshish! howadjee, bakshish! I saw the child, and yet I did not see it; for I was in those desperate fits of humor which occasionally overcome me, when eyes and ears are wide open, and yet neither see nor hear. As we turned round the next corner, I felt precisely the same sensation as in Hyde Park. I left my donkey; I ran back as fast as I could.--The niche was empty. The door leading to the mosque was open, as I said. The yard had on the other side a second door, which was also open, and which led upon one of the main streets, where, at this hour,--it was towards sunset,--men, camels, and donkeys were closely crowded together. The child was gone, and I returned to my companions with a heavy heart; as usual, they had explained my sudden disappearance by assuming a fit of madness.--Do you think it possible that this child, which I first saw amid English mists, and next under the bright sky of Egypt, should cross my path a third time in a German beechwood?"

"And even if it were not the same child,--and, to tell the truth, I consider it highly improbable that it is the same,"--replied Oswald, "it would be the same to you. I believe in an eternal, ever-changing, ever-constant world-spirit. I believe that that lark which there rises from the heath, and wings its way singing to the sky, is the same lark which I followed, enchanted, as a boy, until it was lost in the blue ether even to my sharp eyes. I believe that all heroes are brethren, and that every sufferer is that neighbor whom heart and reason alike command us to love like unto ourselves.--It matters little whether this child is the same which you have twice sought in vain, it matters only that the appeals of the poor forlorn creature every time pierced through the triple brass around your bosom into your very heart.... You will pardon, I am sure, such language in a man who is so far inferior in experience and intelligence, and who draws courage to speak them only from the regard he feels for you, almost instinctively. And allow me to add one word: if you could make up your mind to love this child, it would be a gift to you more precious than Aladdin's marvellous lamp. Love is everywhere except in hell, says a deep word of one of the Minnesingers; it means, where there is no love, there is hell. Love is the fragrance of that Blue Flower, which, as you said just now, fills the whole world, and you will find the Blue Flower, which you have sought in vain all your life long, in every being which you love with all your heart." A strange melancholy smile played around the baron's lips as Oswald spoke these words.

"You cannot solve the riddle," he said sadly, in a low voice; "for this very condition, that we must love with all our heart, if we wish to get rid of the torment which makes life a hell, is the impossible thing. Which of us can love with all his heart? We are all so driven, so weary, that we have no longer the strength nor the courage which true, real love requires. I mean that love which knows neither rest nor repose till it has made its own every thought of our mind, every sentiment of our heart, and every drop of our blood. If you are still young and ingenuous enough for such a love, I congratulate you! For my part, I can only repeat: I have given it up to find the Blue Flower, that wondrous flower which blooms only for the happy one who is still able to love with all his heart.--But here we are at the gates of Grenwitz, and must break off a conversation which I trust we shall very soon continue. Farewell, and come and inquire as soon as you can after the well-being of the little creature who is your protégée almost more than mine."

The carriage rolled off. Oswald followed it long with his eyes; then he crossed the bridge, bowing his head, and went up to the château. The sun had risen, and was flooding the gray walls with rosy lights; in the dewy garden the birds were singing their carols--but Oswald saw a dark gray veil drawn over the charming morning, for in his ear sounded yet the baron's words: Which of us is still able to love with all his heart? Which of us has yet a whole heart?

CHAPTER IV.

"Do you fell refreshed by your nap, dear Grenwitz?" asked the baroness.

"I thank you, dear Anna Maria, very much!" replied the old baron. It was the afternoon after the eventful ball at Barnewitz; the speakers were in the same room, looking out upon the garden, in which, a week before, the conversation between Melitta and the baroness had taken place. The baroness was again sitting, as then, near the open glass-doors which led upon the great lawn, on which Melitta's eyes had for the first time fallen upon Oswald, and again the admirable lady was sewing industriously, as if she had to earn her daily bread by her needle. The baron sat opposite to her, in the same rocking-chair which Melitta had occupied. He was just awaking from an afternoon nap, and looked, with his old glazed eyes, through the open door upon the lawn, where his pet, the peacock, displayed his gorgeous plumage in the bright sunlight.

"Very much," he repeated, stretching his limbs.

"But you look very tired yet," said the baroness, fixing her cold gray eyes searchingly upon the baron's faded features; "these pretentious, noisy parties are real poison for you, and I have reproached myself, while you were sleeping, that I did not make you go home sooner yesterday."

"But I assure you, my dear Anna Maria, I am very well; I mean, not worse than usually; not much worse," said the good old man, timidly; for he was too well trained ever to contradict his Anna Maria, whom he loved and honored above all things.

"But you must take particularly good care of yourself these days," said the latter, sewing busily; "we must start at least in a week from to-day, and you will need all your strength to bear the fatigue of such a journey. Would to God we were all safely back again! I really am very reluctant to go! Your feeble health--the dangers of a sea-voyage--and then: will Heligoland really benefit you? Doctor Braun says so, to be sure, but who can trust all physicians? If their advice brings success, they are triumphant; if not, why, it is not their fault, but the patient's, who has not done all he ought to have done. And what does it matter for the doctor, whether you come back sick or well, whether you live or die--but I, but we--oh Grenwitz, what would become of us if you should be taken from us!"

The baroness looked up from her work, and in her eyes appeared something which in other women would have been a tear.

The old baron rose from his chair, approached his wife, and kissed her tenderly on her forehead.

"You must not give way to such thoughts, dear Anna Maria," he said most kindly. "God will not let me die so very soon; I pray every morning, and thank Him for every additional day which He grants me, not for my sake--for I am an old man and we must all of us die--but for your sake, because I know how much my death would grieve you, and also because I should like to see your and Helen's future secured before I die."

The old man had resumed his seat, and taken a pinch from a gold snuff-box, which was standing near him on a small round table, in order the better to overcome the emotion into which he had talked himself; the baroness quietly resumed her work.

"You are so kind," she said, "much too kind; for you are so even to those who do not deserve your kindness, and thus you prepare for yourself much trouble, which you might easily avoid by a little more--I will not say egotism, for I hate the word, but--discretion. Now you are concerned for my future and Helen's future--and justly so. This concern you would be relieved of if you had not leased your estates, when you fell heir to the entail twenty-four years ago, to people who have grown rich at your expense, and crown their impudence by accusing us of avarice, because we are unwilling to renew the leases on the same terms. And if you had not then assumed Harald's enormous debts--a thing I never understood, and never will understand--you would not have had to use for their payment all that we could save with the utmost economy."

The old baron did not seem to relish the subject his wife had entered upon; he took one pinch after another while she was speaking, and at last he said, not without some animation:

"I cannot say, dear Anna Maria, that you are altogether wrong, nor yet that you are altogether right. The old leases are very favorable to the tenants, that is true; but then the times were different in those days. Money was very scarce after the war, land was quite low, and our estates had been thoroughly neglected in consequence of Harald's mode of life. The tenants, surely, found it at first no easy task, and if they have since become rich and impudent, that is not exactly my fault. I meant it well, God knows. But as to my conduct with regard to Harald's creditors, I really do not know, even to-day, how I could have acted otherwise. The honor of my family made it my duty to assume his debts, for the creditors knew very well that they had lent their money, not to Baron Harald Grenwitz, who could never break the entail, and consequently never pay them, but to the great Grenwitz family, who would never permit any member to be dishonored. And besides, I was under obligations to my cousin. When he and I were young officers together in the same regiment, and later in life, he had always behaved like a brother to me. It is true I have never abused his kindness, and for every hundred dollars of my debts which he paid then, I have paid a thousand of his debts afterwards; but I am sure he would have helped me under all circumstances, for his generosity knew no bounds."

"You excite yourself without necessity, dear Grenwitz, quite without necessity," said the baroness, calmly, as the old man sank back into his chair, exhausted by his unusually long and lively speech; "I do not dream of reproaching you. You know how little I value riches for myself, how modest my wants are, and that, if I do care for the future, it is not for my sake, but for my children's sake."

"I know that, dear Anna Maria," said the baron, "I know that; I did not mean to hurt your feelings, and I ask your pardon if I was excited."

During the pause which followed, the baroness sewed more industriously than ever; the baron had put on spectacles, taken a newspaper, which the servant had brought an hour ago from the office, and began to plunge into its perusal, moving his lips slightly--for reading and writing had never been the forte of the old man.

"Army personalities," he murmured. "Colonel--Major--all old acquaintances. Young Grieben First Lieutenant? Rapid advancement. Second Lieutenant Felix Baron Grenwitz--resignation accepted--why, what is that? I thought Felix was to ask for leave of absence, and here I read he has resigned."

"Indeed!" said the baroness, reading the paragraph which her husband pointed out to her; "well, I am glad of it, very glad. I must tell you, Grenwitz, I advised Felix to do that, and made his resignation one of the conditions for his obtaining Helen's hand."

"But why that?" asked the baron, in surprise.

"Why?" answered the baroness. "Well, I should think, dear Grenwitz, the reason was clear enough. I think it is high time Felix should begin another kind of life, and as long as he remains in those circles in which he now moves, we can hardly expect such a change; I see from the step he has taken--for I did not think he would act so promptly--that he must really be in earnest about Helen, and therefore I say again I am glad of it, very glad indeed."

"But, dearest Anna Maria," said the baron, rubbing his nose almost angrily, "we thus assume a responsibility which we may not be able to discharge. If our child, if Helen----"

"Should not agree, you mean," interrupted him the baroness, rising in her chair and contracting her eyebrows; "oh, I think she will agree; I think she will have learned that a child owes some obedience to its parents."

"But if she cannot love Felix?" said the old man, concerned.

"Why, Grenwitz! I do not understand you," replied the baroness: "this match has for a long time been our favorite plan. Helen has no fortune, aside from the few thousand dollars which we have saved, and what else we may yet be able to save; for Stantow and Baerwalde do not belong to us as yet, but, thanks to the generosity of Baron Harald--to any adventurer who may have the impudence to present a few forged documents and to claim the farms. Felix's estates are, to be sure, heavily mortgaged; but he can retrieve his fortunes, I am sure, if he is in earnest, and if we help him a little. And if Malte should--God forbid it! but in such things we must think of everything, even the worst--if Malte should die before his time, Felix becomes master of Grenwitz, and I should imagine you would be pleased to think that your daughter would, as it were, thus step into Malte's place."

At that moment the door opened slowly, a face with spectacles looked cautiously in, and a squeaking voice asked:

"May I enter, madam?"

"Ah, see there! Our pastor!" said the baron, advancing towards the new-comer; "heartily welcome! Will you sit down?"

"Pray, pray, baron--don't trouble yourself--I can find a seat--a thousand thanks," said the reverend gentleman. "I did not intend to detain you--thank you--prefer this chair--I only wished to inquire how you and the baroness were, for I was told this morning that you had both honored the brilliant festivities at Barnewitz with your presence. No bad effects, I hope! Not very well! Ah! the baroness really looks a little tired;" and the minister looked with an expression of deep commiseration at the great lady, inclining his head, like a sick parrot, towards the right shoulder.

"I am tolerably well," said the latter, resuming her work, which had rested for a moment; "but Grenwitz seems to have paid more dearly for the enjoyment."

"Oh, indeed!" said the minister, quickly inclining his head on the left shoulder. "May I offer you my drops, baron? from six to twelve on a lump of sugar."

"You are a true physician for body and soul," said the baroness, while the minister, after the baron's refusal, wrapped up his phial again in a newspaper and put it in his pocket.

"Yes, yes, *mens sana in corpore sano*, a sound, that is, a pious body in a sound, pious soul--I learnt that as a boy at school and I now try to practise it as a man. But where are the dear boys? Still at school? Yes, Dr. Stein seems to be a very industrious, ambitious young man by whose instruction the two young gentlemen will soon make great progress, with help from on High."

The reverend gentleman thought that by praising Oswald he would please the baron and even more the baroness. Oswald's calm, self-possessed manner had made a great impression on his cowardly soul; Primula Veris, whose opinions on men and things were gospel to him, had been singing for a week the praise of her new friend, who had paid her more compliments in an hour than she ordinarily received in a year; and this morning a lady of the neighborhood had called on Mrs. Jager to bring her a full report of the ball that had taken place the night before. This lady, who had grown-up daughters, but liked to be considered quite youthful yet, was delighted with Oswald, who had assured her solemnly that she might safely pass for the youngest of the daughters. She told Primula, who listened, all eagerness, what a sensation Oswald's skill in pistol-shooting had produced among the men; what an impression his fine figure and his good manners had made upon the ladies; how he had danced with Hortense, taken Frau von Berkow to table, and, in fine, how he had been the lion of the evening. The mere fact that Oswald had been invited to a party given to such an exclusive set of people was, in the eyes of the minister, who knew them well, a remarkable sign, full of deep meaning. And, in addition to all this, there was another circumstance which made the minister desire the favor and friendship of Doctor Stein. The holy man was not without ambition. He felt he was intended for better things than to preach the gospel to the boors of Fashwitz. He did not wish to have ruined his eyesight in vain in searching old manuscripts at Grunwald, nor to have published in vain a most learned dissertation on the long-forgotten fragments of a long-forgotten father of the Church. He was a doctor, and wanted to become a professor--professor in the same University town through whose streets he had crept fifteen years ago as a poor forlorn student of divinity.

He wished it all the more eagerly as Primula wished it; Primula, who was heartily tired of the fields, in which her "Cornflowers" had bloomed forth, and who saw herself, in imagination, preside at an æsthetic tea-table of the seat of the Muses, the congenial wife of a famous professor. In order to attain this lofty end, Professor Berger could be of infinite use to him; for his vote was decisive in the appointing board. It is true he thoroughly detested him in his heart, as an avowed adherent of Voltaire and Spinoza, a declared atheist; nevertheless he had more than once made great efforts to obtain his patronage. A recommendation from Oswald was worth more than a learned dissertation--consequently, Oswald's friendship a "consummation most devoutly to be wished for," and an occasional eulogy, which might come to his ears, "no bad theology."

Thus the minister thought and calculated.

What was therefore his surprise, when the baroness answered his gracious phrase in a tone of voice which promised nothing good:

"Tell me sincerely, Mr. Jager, what do you think of the young man?"

To hear the pupil of Berger, the favorite of Primula, the lion of the party of last night, called simply a "young man!" He did not trust his own ears. He looked over his round glasses at the baroness, to see if her face furnished him perhaps a commentary on the enigmatical question. As he saw himself disappointed in his hope, and was absolutely uncertain what he ought to reply, he resorted to his usual remedy in such critical cases: he raised his shoulders and his eyebrows as much as he could, and he drew down the corners of his mouth to their full extent, leaving the indiscreet questioner to interpret his gesture in any way *she* chose.

"You hesitate to answer," said the baroness; "I admit it is not very easy to understand Doctor Stein. He certainly has some very estimable qualities, and his manners are surprisingly good for a man of such humble birth. Only yesterday Countess Grieben thought I was trying to mystify her, when I told her that the young man who came with us was our tutor. But, unfortunately, a tolerable carriage, clever speeches and such things are not all, and I am not quite sure yet whether we have really made a good acquisition in the young man."

"But, dearest Anna Maria," said the baron, "why not rely on Professor Berger, who----"

"Dear Grenwitz, I rely on no one but myself. The professor may have been won over by Stein's pleasant manners, as well as you and others, and suppose even that his literary qualifications are really satisfactory----"

"Well, that is, I think, settled, madam," said the minister, who wished to be safe on that side at least, even though he saw he would have to sacrifice Oswald; "it cannot be presumed for a moment that the professor should have allowed himself to be imposed upon by an ignoramus, with whom he has been so intimate. We may think what we choose of his unchristian, or at least unchurchlike views, but his sagacity and his erudition are undisputed."

"I assume no judgment in literary matters," said the baroness; "and I believe readily that Doctor Stein may have found time for strictly scientific studies, as well as for pistol-shooting, in which I am told he excels; but no one can have good manners, and learning into the bargain, and yet be an immoral man."

"But, dearest Anna Maria," said the old baron, quite frightened, while the minister was drawing down the corners of his mouth and nodded assent.

"I repeat it, an immoral man. If I had known, what I have unfortunately learnt too late, that the professor, with all his far-famed erudition, is looked upon by many as an atheist and democrat,--I do not know which of the two is the worst, for he who does not honor God cannot honor the king, and *vice versâ*--I say, if I had known that the professor is a freethinker and a man of revolutionary ideas, I should never have allowed him a voice in the choice of an instructor for my son."

"But, dearest Anna Maria," said the baron, "it is quite possible after all that your fears with regard to Doctor Stein may be unfounded. I never have heard a word from him, as far as I can remember, which would confirm your terrible suspicion."

"Well, Mr. Jager," said the baroness, "are you also firmly convinced of the young man's innocence?"

"I should not honor the truth," said the latter, with an air of deep regret, "if I were to deny that I have heard him say things which approach to frivolity, I might almost say, to sacrilege; they pained me deeply. But I consoled myself with the thought that the best of wines is apt to be tasteless and muddy in the time of fermentation, and relied on the goodness of Him who changed Saul into Paul."

"That is very fine and very Christian," said the baroness, "but it does not comfort me at all. If my child's *soul* is poisoned, then it matters very little to me whether the poisoner repents his crime or not, and I confess that the events of last night have almost convinced me of the suspicions which, I can safely say, I have cherished against Stein from the very first moment."

"Did anything special occur, madam?" asked the minister, drawing his chair half an inch nearer to her.

"I do not like to speak of it," replied the baroness; "and if I do it now, it is only because I know you as an old friend of our house, and can rely on your discretion."

"My sacred duty, madam," said the minister, bowing deep and putting his hand on his heart.

"You know Baron Oldenburg?" continued the baroness.

"Not personally, madam; only what I heard you and the baron say when I have been kindly permitted to listen to your conversation."

"Then you know what his sad reputation is! You know that we have to endure the sorrow of seeing the last scion of one of our oldest and noblest families running with open eyes--for the baron is a remarkably gifted man--into his own destruction."

"But, dearest Anna Maria," said the baron, who was nervously moving about on his chair, "I should not think the subject of this conversation was exactly suited----"

"I know what I owe to my rank," said the baroness, "and I shall act accordingly. The baron's apostasy from the faith of his ancestors is unfortunately so notorious that I am sure I need not use any reserve on that subject with a friend of the nobility (the minister bowed twice), and a friend of our house (the reverend gentleman placed his hand on his heart). You know, Mr. Jager, that the baron avoids our society in order to frequent that of all kinds of people whom we generally try to escape; that he is constantly talking of friends of the truth and lovers of the people, and that to be distinguished by him is almost equivalent to being a lost man, if his favor falls upon one whose social position is so very far below his own. Now, last night, the baron distinguished Mr. Stein in a most striking, not to say offensive manner; he not only did his best to introduce him to everybody, but he also treated him as his own and as our equal, and to crown his conduct, which I do not care to designate more accurately, he took him in his own carriage, because the Grenwitz carriage had not had time to come back for him. He actually brought him as far as the gates, thus making a détour of at least two miles!"

"But, dearest Anna Maria, anybody would----"

"Pardon me, dear Grenwitz; anybody else would not have done so, and least of all the baron, whose rough, unpleasant manner, even to men of his own rank, has become proverbial, if he had not found in Mr. Stein a man of his own way of thinking, an atheist, and an enthusiast for so-called Liberty, *enfin*, an immoral man, to repeat the word which excited your indignation, and which I hope you will now concede is not ill-applied in Mr. Stein's case."

The baroness paused, proudly conscious of having victoriously defended her view; the minister remained silent, in order not to interrupt his noble patroness in her enjoyment, and the baron said nothing, because he had nothing at all to say. This compound silence was suddenly interrupted by a noise from the hall, upon which the door opened, the mewing of a cat, and immediately afterwards the angry bark of a dog. Such a noise was unheard of at Castle Grenwitz, where neither cats nor dogs were admitted, and hence all three looked amazed.

"What can that be?" asked the baron, rising and opening the door.

"Ah! I see you, baron!" a clear loud voice sang out.

"It is Mr. Timm!" said the latter, turning round to his ends in the room, and then to the person outside.

"Will you come in, Mr. Timm?"

CHAPTER V.

The invitation was immediately accepted by a young man of perhaps twenty-five, although the fresh complexion of a perfectly beardless face made him at first sight appear several years younger. The well-shaped head was covered with smooth blond hair, long enough to be brushed back, and to leave the very white forehead free, which rose boldly above his light-blue eyes; at least such appeared to be their color, as seen through the glasses which he wore. His figure was of medium size, but broad in the shoulders, and his compact muscular frame seemed to be made to bear fatigue easily. The young man seemed to care little for his appearance. His costume consisted of a light summer-coat of doubtful color, which seemed to have been exposed to many a tempest, and of trousers of the same material, color, and quality. His linen had evidently been whiter when it left the hands of the laundress. His carriage corresponded with his appearance: it was less elegant than easy, and agreed in this point also, that Mr. Timm might easily have improved it if he had chosen.

"Beg ten thousand pardons," he said, laughing, as he made a very informal bow to the baroness and gave a familiar nod to the minister, "if I have interrupted an interesting conversation by my lyric Intermezzo; but I really did not know what else to do, as I have not the honor, madam, to know your servants by name, and in vain looked for a bell in this part of the house. I had peeped into several doors already, and if I could have suspected that the fifth, which I had not even noticed before, should have been opened by the baron himself, I should have saved myself my musical performance, which was intended solely for the less sensitive ear of some serving spirit--How are you, madam? Fatigued by the heat? Shouldn't wonder--eighty-five in the shade--real hot-house temperature.--I bring you much love from your wife, Mr. Jager; saw her an hour ago in Fashwitz. She'll come towards evening with the one-horse chaise, to fetch you home. I have surveyed the whole of Sassitz, baron. If you agree, we'll draw up the plats at once, if the baroness will have the kindness to give me a room in the château."

Mr. Timm paused, and put his hand in his pocket to take out his handkerchief and to wipe his forehead, on which the perspiration stood in big drops. But as he recollected in time that this very useful part of his toilet was by no means in a fit condition to be exhibited in such company, he left it where it was, passed his hand over his forehead and his hair, and looked as cheerful and happy as if he was the sole and legitimate heir to the Grenwitz estates, which he had to survey in the sweat of his face.

"Certainly," said the baroness, who liked Mr. Timm on account of his unpretending manner, and who, imperious as she was, or rather because she was so imperious, instinctively appreciated a man who was afraid of no one and whom nothing could disconcert for a moment; "certainly, Mr. Timm. You know you are always welcome. You will be better able to work here, where nothing interrupts you, than in town, and it is our mutual advantage to have the work done as soon as possible. You have brought your things, I hope?"

"Is all in the hall, where the rustic youth, who guided the ponies which brought me here in a fair dog-trot, has put them down," said Mr. Timm, whose "things" consisted of a small trunk of

melancholy appearance, filled with some clean and not much soiled linen, a few articles of a wardrobe which no one could call extravagant, and a large portfolio with drawings, surveys, etc. "I only need the guidance of one of your serving-spirits to show me the room you may have kindly appropriated to my use, and I shall at once establish my domestic altars there."

"Will you have the kindness to pull that bell-rope twice?" said Anna Maria, with a gracious smile.

"With pleasure," said Mr. Timm; "this instrumental method of conjuring up the spirits of the deep is more convenient than my vocal method, and also more efficient, as I see."

The servant who entered received his orders to show Mr. Timm his room.

"It has been ready for you several weeks, Mr. Timm," said the baroness.

"You are kind and provident, like providence itself, madam," said Mr. Timm, rising, and unceremoniously kissing the baroness' hand; "*au revoir*, gentlemen, till supper, at which I hope to see you in the same frame in which I shall appear--I mean in good-humor and with still better appetite," and then he briskly followed the servant.

"Really a nice man, this Mr. Timm," said the baroness; "so harmless, so unpretending, so perfectly aware of his position in society, and never assuming any airs, like certain other people."

"Yes indeed!" affirmed the minister; "a very nice, modest young man. He really deserves encouragement, both on account of his talents, which are quite eminent, and on account of the good family to which he belongs.

"Gustava knows his family and all about them very well; I also recollect, from my time in Grunwald, his father, a distinguished lawyer, who lost his large fortune, shortly before his death, by some unlucky speculation. His relations are still in very good places. One of his uncles is a major in the army. Mr. Timm himself was intended for the army, and, I believe, actually served as ensign; but his father's losses compelled him to abandon that career and to become an engineer or surveyor. He is very desirous to attend lectures at the Institute at the capital, but unfortunately he lacks----" the minister here made a sign with his thumb and forefinger as if he were counting money.

"Why, what a pity!" said the baroness. "I wish we could help the poor fellow. Could not his uncle the major lend him a few hundred dollars? But, to be sure, these gentlemen in the army have generally hard enough work themselves.--*Ah! mademoiselle, vous arrivez bien à propos! Veuillez avoir la bonté!*"

The baroness had risen to give her instructions to Mademoiselle Marguerite.

"Would you like to see my beehives, Mr. Jager?" said the baron.

"With the greatest pleasure," replied the latter, taking his hat and cane.

"Don't stay away too long," said the baroness, "we shall have a little supper.--*Que voulais-je dire? Ah oui! Du chocolat, mais pas si énormément sucré que la dernière fois et prenez garde, ...*"

The evening had come, and with it Mrs. Jager, in the one-horse chaise. Primula wore the same dress of raw silk in which she had appeared to Oswald last Sunday, and, fatigued as she was by the great heat of the day, she looked more than ever like a sick canary-bird. Her husband had taken the first opportunity, after the long-winded greeting between her and the baroness was finished, to whisper to her, that it would be better not to appear too enthusiastic about her new friend. He told her that the young man seemed by no means to enjoy the favor of the baron and the baroness in a very high degree--a piece of news which so astounded the "dweller in higher regions," that she was hardly able to return Oswald's salutation when he appeared in the parlor, shortly before supper was announced.

Oswald's good-humor would have probably been excited by this strange conduct of his enthusiastic hostess of the Sunday before, if he had only become aware of it. But unfortunately he was in that state of mind in which, as Oldenburg said, we have eyes and ears wide open without seeing or hearing anything. The shadow of the events of the last day and last night were still lying on his soul and on his brow. His usual vivacity had given way to melancholy calmness; he looked pale and thoughtful, but so very handsome and distinguished, that Primula's delicate soul began once more to feel the charm which the young stranger had exercised on his first meeting with her. She forgot, thus, the warning of her husband all the more completely, as she noticed the particular courtesy with which the baroness and her husband treated the man who had just now been denounced to her as a fallen greatness. She was in her heart preparing a sermon which she was to deliver to Mr. Jager on their return journey, because he had, as usually, not seen "the forest amid so many trees." The worthy minister was himself, at first, not a little disconcerted by the contrast between the words and the actions of the baroness. But he knew better than anybody else that men do not always appear such as they really are, and that they are not always what they seem to be; he thought it best, therefore, faithfully to imitate the manner of his patroness, an effort which was not difficult for such a master in the noble art of hypocrisy.

Nevertheless, the conversation at the supper-table would probably have been very far from lively, in spite of the apparent concord and harmony of the company, if Mr. Timm had possessed the happy gift of assuming the color of the company in which he found himself; this was, however, not at all the fact.

Mr. Timm had fully come up to his promise to appear at table in good-humor and with a better appetite. He found the chocolate, which was by no means *énormément sucré* excellent, the bread excellent, the butter excellent, everything excellent; and what a delightful idea to have the table set just on that part of the terrace from which one had such a charming view of the garden! How wonderfully fine those lights and shades were on the tall trees beyond the lawn! Really, a genuine Claude Lorraine! "Really, baron, if I were not Diogenes I should like to be Alexander! But then we cannot all dwell in marble palaces; there must be dwellers in tubs also, and happy the man whose tub is to him a castle! You ought to immortalize that thought in an epigram, Mrs. Jager! You have such a decided talent for that branch of poetry; even in your best lyric poems I have often found an epigrammatic turn. Thus in the charming little poem on the May Bug. How was the last line, 'The false image of May?' or like that? That is in itself already an epigram. Do you know that in Grunwald they have never yet got over your desertion? Only quite lately Professor Shylight, whom I met at Dean Black's, said: It is unwarrantable that a certain great scholar, whom I will not name, should bury the great wealth of his erudition in the solitude of a village. I replied that it was still more unwarrantable in the author of the 'Cornflowers' to live forever among cornflowers."

Thus he rattled on with great alacrity, and yet all that Timm said seemed to drop accidentally from his lips, as if he had not the slightest idea of being clever or witty. One listened to him as to a merry canary-bird, too loud perhaps in his merriment, but who sees the sun come into his cage, and takes it into its little head to pour out all its songs and melodies for once. Oswald, however, could not help thinking at times that Timm's humor was, after all, not always quite as natural as it seemed to be. He fancied Timm was playing his well-studied and well-calculated part in a perfectly natural manner, to be sure, but so as to ridicule and chaff the whole company, while he seemed to be a good-natured *bon vivant* and an ingenuous child of nature. He was confirmed in his suspicions by the fact that Timm always assumed an entirely different tone whenever he spoke to him, as if he meant: I must not venture upon such tricks with you; but they do not find me out so easily.

None of the others, however, seemed to share this suspicion, which suggested itself all the more naturally to Oswald, as he himself frequently amused himself thus at the expense of the company, for whom he felt such thorough contempt. Perhaps Bruno might have thought something like it. He was sitting by his side, more sombre and reserved than usual, and never moving a muscle to smile, even when everybody around him--Oswald included--was laughing aloud, especially towards the end of the supper, when Mr. Albert Timm began a conversation with his neighbor, Mademoiselle Marguerite, in which he mingled French and German in the most ludicrous manner. The pretty bashful Genevese girl had taken great pains to follow Mr. Timm in all his odd sayings during the conversation, turning continually with a sudden: *Que veut dire cela?* to her neighbor on the other side; but Malte answered these questions but rarely, as he himself did not understand more than half of what the inexhaustible talker had said till the latter commenced the amusing jargon with her, breaking off, however, with great tact as soon as he saw that the pretty girl was embarrassed by the laughter of the others.

It had become quite dark, when the baroness rose and invited Mr. and Mrs. Jager, who were thanking her in many words for the delightful evening they had spent, before taking formal leave, to stay and play an old-fashioned game of whist with the baron and herself, "such a staid old game, you know, Mr. Jager, as suits staid old people like ourselves."

Malte had gone to bed. Oswald and Bruno, Albert and Mademoiselle Marguerite were walking in pairs around the lawn and in the nearest garden-walks.

"You never told me yet, Oswald," said Bruno--he now called his friend, when they were alone, always Oswald simply--"whether you saw Aunt Berkow yesterday?"

"Yes, Bruno."

"Did she look pretty?"

"As ever."

"Did she send me her love?"

"Of course."

"Do you know, Oswald, I think Aunt Berkow is quite fond of you?"

"Why, little fool?"

"She was always looking at you so the other evening--so very kindly--and I don't know how--but her eyes looked brighter--and she sometimes looks at me so, when she strokes my hair, and still it was not quite the same way."

"Ah, Bruno, you do not know what you are saying."

"I know it very well, but I cannot express it as well as you big, clever people. I was quite jealous of you that evening, for before that she was almost most kind to me. I should not know how Aunt Berkow looks when she is fond of somebody! I know it perfectly well!" said Bruno, defiantly.

"And I know more than that," he continued, after a pause. "I ought not to tell, because aunt warned me against letting anybody know; but now I think she was not in earnest when she said so."

"What was that?" asked Oswald, with assumed indifference.

"I will tell you," said Bruno. "Last Saturday, in the afternoon, when you were writing letters, I had gone into the forest towards Berkow, because that is my favorite walk. Suddenly aunt comes riding up, quite alone, not even Boncœur with her. She rode Brownlock, whom she always takes when she wants to go fast, and she must have been riding fast then, for Brownlock's neck and chest, and even her riding-habit, were all covered with white foam. Why, Bruno! she said, offering me her hand, where are you going to? Nowhere, aunt, as usually, said I, but where are you going to!--Nowhere, like yourself, she answered, laughing; so we can continue on our way together.--If you will walk your horse, I said, not otherwise. And thus we went for half an hour or more through the forest, and the whole time we talked of nothing but of yourself, and aunt asked me if I was fond of you, to which I replied, of course, No! How you looked and if you were cheerful? Whether you studied much? and a hundred other things, which I have forgotten. At last she charged me to give you her regards, and to ask you if you still had the engravings you had been speaking of, and if you would not send them to her--and then she called me back, and said I had better not remind you of them, and not tell you that she had spoken of you--but, as I told you, now I do not think she meant exactly what she said."

"Why not now, Bruno?"

"Because----" the boy was silent; suddenly he said in a low tone, as if he feared the dark bushes would hear it:

"Tell me, Oswald, how is it, when people are in love?"

"How do you mean?" asked Oswald, not a little embarrassed by the boy's question.

"I mean, what kind of love is that of which the books have so much to say? I love you, love you very much, but I think there must be some other kind of love. Thus I never understood why we should not love anybody we choose to love. Now, I love my Aunt Berkow above all things. I could do anything for her! I sometimes wish she would fall into the water and I could jump after her; or, as it happened the other day, Brownlock would be rearing and I would seize the reins and struggle with him, and not let him go again, although he should trample upon me with his hoofs.--Now, such wishes never occur to me when I am near you, Oswald, or when I think of you at a distance."

"Because I am a man, Bruno, and you know that I could and would help myself, without aid from others. But the love we feel for a woman partakes of the consciousness that we must protect her who cannot defend herself with our superior strength and courage, and that makes our love deeper, and fuller of sympathy. And then there is still another feeling mixed up with it, of which I can only tell you that it is pure as nature itself, but also as chaste, and which therefore must not be awakened before the right time, if it is not to become as fatal to rash man as the boldness of the youth, whom the thirst for knowledge drove to Saïs and to the temple where she dwelt, hid in close veils, Isis, the chaste, holy goddess of nature."

"I do not quite understand you, Oswald."

"The world and life are full of riddles, Bruno. Life is a Sphinx and we are Œdipus. And it is the curse of Œdipus that he must solve the enigma, although the solution makes him unhappy."

"You are not angry with me, Oswald?"

"I angry, darling! Why should *I*?"

"Because I trouble you with such absurd questions."

"You ought to ask me, Bruno; ask me about everything which causes you doubt or trouble. Your soul ought to lie open before me like a book, which I may peruse over and over again. Would to God I could write nothing but what is wise and good on its white pages."

"You are always kind, so very kind towards me, Oswald, and I return only ingratitude and obstinacy!"

"No, you do not do that--and then, are we not brothers? Brothers must love, and bear, and support each other, and have no right to keep their troubles apart. Bruno, if I could cherish the pious faith of many, that the spirits of the departed hover around the beloved ones whom they

have left behind upon earth, I would say: From yonder, in the bright starry sky, our mothers are looking down upon us, and rejoice at our union and our love. Let us stand by each other in this wild strife of life, for defence and offence. It will not be long before you are a man like myself, and would to God a better man than I am. Then the last difference, the difference of years, which I do not feel even now, will have disappeared. It may be that then I will look up to you, as you now look up to me; then you will repay me a hundred-fold what I may be able to do for you now; then I shall be--oh, so willingly!--your debtor!"

"Ah, that will never be!" said Bruno. "You will always be unattainably far ahead of me. I shall never be what you are even now."

"You little fool!" said Oswald, and affectionately caressed Bruno's hair. "Now you are sitting in the pit before the stage of life, and the pasteboard roll looks to your enthusiastic eye a huge mountain, and all the tinsel genuine gold. When you are on the stage yourself, the sweet rosy veil of illusion will drop from before your eyes, and you will see your mistake. But be it so! After your first painful disappointment, you will soon understand that it cannot be otherwise; you will not despise your brother, because you now see that his proud knightly cloak is of faded silk, and sadly patched, and his spurs nothing but brass--but hush! here comes Mr. Timm and mademoiselle! It seems Mr. Timm improves the opportunity to cultivate his French. We will not disturb him in his praiseworthy purposes. Let us turn off here."

Mr. Timm, who had not noticed Oswald and Bruno, now came by, arm in arm with Mademoiselle Marguerite, speaking eagerly, but carefully softening his clear, loud voice. He had indeed known how to improve the "opportunity," though in another sense than that to which Oswald alluded. The young man attached very little importance to his pronunciation of French, but very much to the evident advantages he might derive from the good-will of the young lady, who seemed to preside over the interior of the household. As he would probably spend several weeks at the château, this was a matter of great interest to him, and he had taken prompt measures to secure the favor of the little Frenchwoman, which might in many ways mitigate the monotony of country life. During the delightful, cosey little *tête-à-tête*, the conversation had been carried on in German, with an occasional use of French, as mademoiselle spoke German quite fluently and Mr. Timm spoke French very badly, and the harmless, innocent, and truth-loving young man hated nothing more than the possibility of being understood imperfectly, or, worse than that, of being misunderstood.

"And you have been here long?" he asked.

"Three years."

"Is it possible? And you did not die of *ennui*! You must have a famous constitution."

"*Plaît-il?*

"I mean, it is desperately tiresome to live year after year in this hole, and, moreover, to live here in such very charming society. But I suppose you have much to do?"

"*Enormément!* I have to work like a *forçat*."

"Like what?"

"*Vous ne savez pas ce que c'est qu'un forçat?*"

"No--never mind. We'll say, like a horse; that will do, I dare say. You say then, they make you work like a *forçat*?"

"*Justement!* I have to open and to lock all doors----"

"That's not so bad," remarked Timm.

"I must hear all the day: Mademoiselle, do this! Mademoiselle, do that! And the evening, when I am tired that I cannot keep open the eyes, I must read the stupid old books till madam has the kindness to say: *C'est assez!--Non, madame, ce n'est pas assez; c'est trop--mille fois trop!*" said the lively little lady, and stamped with the foot.

"You seem to have a lively temper," said Mr. Timm. "But that is all right; relieve yourself--that makes the heart lighter--but if the baroness has so much confidence in you, I suppose you are in high favor with her?"

"*Au contraire!* She me uses, because she me needs. She would give me my *congé* rather to-day than to-morrow. She me likes, because I not need much sleep and I eat little."

"Well, then, I shall never be in favor with her," said Mr. Timm. "But you, poor child, are in a horrible position here. Much work and no thanks; early rising, and, in return, late retiring; all day threshing corn, like the good-natured beast in the Bible, but no privileges granted, as there recorded--who can stand that? You ought to get married, mademoiselle?"

Marguerite shrugged her shoulders. "Who will marry me? *Je suis si pauvre et si laide!*"

"What is that?"

"I say: I am poor and I am ugly!"

"I grant the former," said Mr. Timm; "the other is vile slander. You ugly? *Au contraire*: you are pretty, mademoiselle, *très* pretty, very *belle*----"

"*Vouz plaisantez, monsieur*."

"No jest," said Mr. Timm. "You are a strikingly handsome girl. In the first place, you have a charming figure----"

"*Trop petite*," said Marguerite.

"Not a bit," replied Mr. Timm; "secondly, you have prodigiously fine brown eyes, a charming hand, an enchanting little foot----"

"*Mais, monsieur!*"

"Well, what? It is true, and we can say what is true. I bet *monsieur le docteur* Stein is of my opinion. Do you love the doctor?"

"I him love?" said the little Frenchwoman, with much animation. "I him love? I him 'ate!"

"Come, come!" laughed Mr. Timm; "why should you? He is a fine-looking man."

"*C'est un bel homme, mais c'est un fat*."

"*Un* what?"

"He is one fool, *oui*, one fool, *qui est monstrueusement amoureux de lui-même; mais avec toute sa fierté je me moque de lui, je me moque de sa fierté, oui, je m'en moque, moi.*"

"Pray, don't get excited, and above all speak German, if you wish me to understand you. What harm has the unfortunate man done you?"

"*Lui malheureux? Il n'est pas malheureux, ce monsieur là! Tout le monde le flatte, le cajole*----"

"But for Heaven's sake speak German, I say!"

"Do you believe that he has ever spoken ten words to me since that he is here?"

"That is abominable, to be sure. Ugh! there, I have hurt my foot once more against a miserable root. I am as blind in the dark as a mole. You would really do a work of charity if you would take my arm and help me a little."

"*Très volontiers, monsieur*."

"Ah, a vain man is this Doctor Stein," said Mr. Timm, holding pretty Marguerite's arm very close and firm, probably because he was so very near-sighted; "well, who would have thought so! Do you know, dear Marguerite--what a pretty name that is: Marguerite!--I may call you Marguerite, may I?--well, as I was going to say: Don't trouble yourself about the foolish man, dear Marguerite! If he does not speak to you, that is his own loss, and if he does not think you pretty, other people think very differently. I, for instance, although I am very near-sighted, especially in this dark avenue, where one can hardly see the hand before one's eyes.--Are you afraid, little Marguerite? No? Why does your heart beat so? Or could you really, by mere chance, be a little fond of me? Are you a little fond of me, dear Marguerite? Don't hesitate; I am an easy kind of man. People say anything to me. Or, rather, say nothing and give me a kiss.--You won't?--Well, that is sensible; you French people, and especially you Frenchwomen, are a charming nation. But why do you cry, little simpleton? Is it high treason with you to give a man a kiss, and that in the dark?--Pshaw! There comes that fool, the doctor, with his monkey.... *Bon soir*, gentlemen, we can play at hide and seek here."

"Or blindman's buff," said Oswald, "and that without bandages. I suppose we had better go in. If I mistake not, the baroness has been inquiring for mademoiselle."

Mr. and Mrs. Jager had taken leave with many protestations of their respect and their gratitude, in order to return in the one-horse chaise to "their lowly roof" in Fashwitz; Bruno had retired some time before, and Timm and Oswald were walking up the broad staircase which led to their rooms.

"This is your room, I think, Mr. Timm," said Oswald, stopping at one of the many doors which opened upon the passage. The latter led, sometimes rising a few steps, sometimes descending, in many windings, through the whole of the older part of the château in which Oswald and Mr. Timm were quartered, and in which several of the less elegant guest-chambers were situated.

"And where is your tent, doctor?"

"A few doors further on."

"Are you very sleepy?"

"Not particularly so."

"Well, then, permit me to go with you to your room for a few minutes. I feel the very natural desire to smoke a good cigar in sensible company after all the nonsense which I have heard talked and which I have talked myself."

"Well, come," said Oswald, who would much rather have been alone, but who had too high an idea of the duty of hospitality to refuse so direct a request. "I am doubtful, however, whether my cigars will be good enough and my company sensible enough."

"For Heaven's sake! No more compliments for to-day," cried Mr. Timm. "I have had more than enough, I assure you. Pray, show me the way----"

"A charming tent," said Mr. Timm, as they entered the room. Oswald lighted the lamp on the table before the sofa and took a box of cigars from his bureau. "A very nice tub for a cynic who occasionally attends lectures with the Sybarites; really famous, too comfortable for my taste. That big arm-chair in the window, from which one can look so cosily on one side into the garden, and on the other, 'still and deeply moved,' upon that beautiful Apollo there; nature and art *vis-à-vis* and one's self between, as the aëronaut said when he fell from his balloon.--This cigar is superb, genuine Habana, and no stinkador--do you smoke? no? and you keep such a weed for your friends and acquaintances!--Most noble of men! Saint Crispin is a highwayman in comparison with you! What is that in the very suspicious-looking bottle up there on the book-shelf? I verily believe it is Cognac----"

"And very good old Cognac," said Oswald. "At least my friend Mr. Wrampe, the steward, says so, who has almost forced me to accept this bottle,--probably smugglers' ware----"

"And never yet opened! *Me Hercule!* We must really see if the steward has told the truth. Do you ever drink grog?"

"Never! But don't let that keep you," said Oswald, good-naturedly taking down the bottle and drawing the cork. "I'll make you hot water in an instant."

"No indeed! Why such ceremonies? Cold water answers just as well, especially in small quantities,--this is a charming evening," said Mr. Timm, rubbing his hands joyfully. "Now please sit down in that corner there, on the sofa, so that I feel you are comfortable, if one who does not smoke and does not drink ever can be comfortable. I will move this big chair up,--what a weight the fellow has! And now let us have a chat, as two good people ought to talk, who laugh at all the absurdity of the so-called great world and good society."

With these words Mr. Timm drew up with his foot another light chair, to rest his legs upon, and then stretched himself out comfortably, bending his head back a little, to be able to look the longer at the smoke of his cigar.

The light of the lamp fell full upon his face, and Oswald now noticed, for the first time, that Mr. Timm's features were really surprisingly handsome and interesting, especially seen in profile, when the bold, clear-cut outlines were fully seen. This discovery was by no means a matter of indifference to Oswald. He went a step farther than Voltaire, thinking that the *genre ennuyeux* was the worst not only of books, but of men also; and as his sense of the beautiful in forms was very keenly alive, he allowed himself so very largely to be governed by his love for all that was picturesque or statuesque, that his sense for the True and the Good frequently suffered. It was so in this case. Mr. Timm's unceremonious manner and his thinly veiled materialism had offended him more than once in the course of the evening, and he had half and half determined to limit his intercourse with the impudent fellow to the absolutely necessary meetings; but as he now followed with his eye and his mind the outlines of the handsome face, he forgot quickly his resolution.

"Will you please keep still for a few minutes," he said, instinctively seizing his pencil, in order to sketch Albert's profile on the first piece of paper which he found on the table amid books and papers.

"Half an hour, if you wish it," replied the other; "I am perfectly comfortable as I am; only let me smoke, talk, and occasionally take a sip of this earth-born nectar."

"That will not interfere in the least," said Oswald, drawing busily.

"This old castle is after all a strange old box," said Albert, dreamily. "I do not think I have any mind for romance, and yet I have only to put my foot on the winding staircase which leads up this wing, and I feel all the horrors of the middle ages. Even my language changes, and I begin to talk, as you hear, like a novel-writer. What walls! we would make a dozen of them now! If there were people in those days, as I presume, who could storm doors and walls, what thick skulls they must have had!"

"Would you be good enough to take off your spectacles," said Oswald?

"With pleasure. If I had lived in the middle ages I should not have ruined my eyes by reading dusty old books. If the middle ages really had any advantages over ours, it was this, that people were not compelled to learn so much. Just imagine: no schools, no Cornelius Nepos, no history of the middle ages, no examinations, only a few sparring lessons with an old soldier who had served a number of masters and knew how to tell a good story of every one of them, and then if a man wanted to be very highly cultivated, a few lessons on the lute from a strolling minstrel--a merry, boisterous fellow, who was full of pretty songs and gay tricks, who had sung under a thousand windows and kissed a thousand girls,--what a life it must have been! And above all, this facility of changing your residence; this perfect freedom to move about at will, limited at most by a couple of stout fellows, who knocked your brains out in a hollow lane, if they pleased. Georges Sand has said a pretty thing in one of her novels, the only one I remember, probably because it was spoken as from my soul: 'What is there finer than a highroad?' Is not that well said? I could kiss the woman for that sentence, though she is a blue-stocking, and I hate blue-stockings like poison. I won't say like the devil, because he is after all but an unappreciated man of genius, and therefore deserves the sympathy of every educated man. But if a man of our day is pursued by the devil's own knaves, his creditors, where can he flee to? Then in those good old times a man would pack his knapsack some fine morning, or, if he had none, pack himself and march out of the city gate, and after a quarter of an hour, when he was outside the corporation, he was safe, and before evening came he had passed through so many adventures already that he had long since forgotten the old city and the pretty nut-brown maid, for whom but yesterday he vowed to live and die. Have you done? Well, let us see! Hm! You draw like some great painters, the face not as nature has made it, but as nature ought to have made it, if she had not unfortunately been blind at the proper moment. Very pretty, indeed, but I prefer the original. And you are a poet, too, as I see!"

"How so?"

"Well, the other side of this paper, I see, is covered with verses, and above all, sonnets, which I love passionately. May I read them?"

"They are not worth reading," said Oswald, visibly embarrassed by Albert's question.--The verses were addressed to Melitta; they had been written in memory of their first meeting in the forest cottage! He thought he had put the papers carefully away in his writing-desk, and now bitterly repented his imprudence, which had placed them now in the hand of his impertinent guest, whom he had every reason to fear was by no means discreet. Fortunately, Melitta's name was not mentioned.

"Not worth reading?" said Albert; "we'll see that directly. Poets have no clear idea of their productions. Think for a moment that I had written these verses and felt impelled to read them to you? Listen! 'She loves me.' The beginning is as original as truthful. But you must admit that so old a subject cannot well be treated in a novel manner in our day. Albert read the two sonnets which he found in the paper clearly and intelligently, almost with a certain air of feeling. Oswald was grateful to him. He had been afraid the impudent fellow would have profaned his poems, which he only valued, after all, as true expressions of what he had really felt. He was glad to get off so cheap.

"Do you never make verses?" he asked, taking the paper, and adding it to some others, which seemed likewise to contain poetry.

"I?" said Mr. Timm, refreshing himself heartily from his glass, "Heaven save me! I am much too practical. Practical and poetical views of the world agree like cat and dog. When the little kitten Poetry mews in her tenderest tones, the dog Prose begins to bark furiously and the little enthusiast is silenced. Why would you, for instance, die instantly, 'if Fate should deny you such wondrous bliss?' That is as unpractical as it can be. Why should you poets anyways insist upon purposely spoiling all the little pleasure that is left us on this melancholy planet? But, to be sure, I talk as the blind man talks of colors. Perhaps you are, after all, better off in your home in the clouds than we on this dark earth, where one has to suffer much of corns and other earthly sensations which are unknown to you airy dwellers on high. I have often wished I had a decided talent for one or the other arts: poetry, music, operations on corns, painting, grimacing, sculpture, prestidigitation--anything, any notion, which might console me when the waves of life wash over my head. I remember I once saw a badger at a fair, who showed me what a blessing such a talent is in misfortune. All the other brutes, without talents, were running about like mad in their cages, or roared from hunger and rage, or at best resigned themselves to their fate in despair. But Master Badger, true to his artistic instinct, worked indefatigably at the imaginary den in his cage, scratching, scratching, all the time scratching, from morn till evening. This evidently made him forget hunger and cold, even his captivity; he found perfect happiness in the exercise of his talent, even under such desperately unfavorable circumstances. I wish I were a badger!--That Cognac is really capital! You ought to take a glass too, doctor, to drive away those clouds on your Apollo brow. When I was a boy people looked upon me as a marvel because I could imitate everything, precisely as the magpie whistles what others play. That boy will be a great genius, said the foolish people, whenever I astounded them by some *tour de force* of my memory, which retained good things and bad things equally well. I wish I had been forced to sit still and to study, like the other poor boys whose compositions I then wrote, and who are now great men, while I am little better than a vagabond. But *vive la joie! vive la bagatelle!* There must be vagabonds also in the world, simply because otherwise there would be no staid, respectable people. Vagabonds are the salt of the earth, or at least the seeds flying about which scatter

vegetation over the whole earth, instead of letting it be confined to a few spots. Vagabonds founded Carthage, vagabonds founded Rome. An honest fellow, born in Europe without a cigar in his mouth--gold spoons are out of fashion, I believe--can do nothing better than to emigrate to America, if he feels an earnest desire to smoke a really good cigar and does not choose to steal it, or if he has not the good luck to stumble over a nice young man like yourself, who keeps cigars and Cognac for his friends, and listens to their idle talk till his eyes droop with sleepiness. Upon my word! I have diminished the contents of that bottle by a third! How swiftly all here below passes away! *Buona notte, Don Oswaldo!* Sleep well and dream *dolcemente* of the *begli occhi della donna bella, amata, immaculata* of your sonnets. I for my part will follow Hamlet's example and go to my prayers, for unfortunately I have not even a talent for sleeping, much less for dreaming. Good-night, *dottore!*"

"Good-night!" said Oswald, rising half asleep from his sofa and accompanying Mr. Timm to the door.

"Not a step farther, *dottore*," said the latter. "Everything with moderation!" and when the door had closed behind him he remained standing there a moment, put the thumb of his right hand to his nose, quickly moving the other four fingers--a gesture which was less complimentary to Oswald than expressive of the childlike, ingenuous mind of Mr. Timm.

CHAPTER VI.

The oppressive heat which had prevailed of late was followed by a few cool, rainy days.

On such days Castle Grenwitz looked more grim and lonely even than ordinarily. On other days, if no one else came there, the light of the sun at least entered in at the windows, and penetrated into all the rooms, even those locked-up staterooms in the upper stories, with their costly though faded brocade furniture, and greeted here and there a portrait which it knew now for a hundred years or more. On other days, if no one else was merry, the sparrows at least twittered, who had made their nests in the crevices of the old tower and the stucco-ornaments of the new addition, and who quarrelled as unconcernedly about their private affairs as if the baronial mansion was a common cottage or a miserable barn. And if you felt, in spite of all that, too lonely and deserted in the château, you could go down into the garden, where the flowers shone in much fairer and brighter colors than the tapestry and the chairs and the sofas in the staterooms, where gay butterflies hovered over the gay flowers, where the birds were caroling, the bees humming busily, and everywhere rich, active life was going on, full of joy and brightness for him who had eyes to see and ears to hear.

On rainy days all that was changed. Then the portraits on the wall could tell each other undisturbed old, old stories, to their hearts' content, and the curious sunlight would never so much as see them blush; then even the sparrows were at peace for a time, or fought at least in silence for the best and the driest places, and in the garden the flowers hung their rain-washed heads, and all the rich, gay life looked as if it had died out. In the wet walks and over the parterres cold winds played with each other, and mercilessly tore pretty, delicate flowers to pieces, and upset tall beanpoles, and swept up the trees to shake the branches, and make an infinite ado.

This melancholy weather harmonized with Oswald's state of mind. Since the day he had passed at Barnewitz a great change had taken place in him, which he could hardly explain himself. He felt as if suddenly a close veil had fallen on his eyes, which made everything look to him discolored and unattractive; he felt as if a hostile hand had mixed a drop of wormwood with his cup of life, from which he had recently drunk so eagerly. Even the image of the beautiful lady who was enthroned in the holiest of his heart seemed to have lost its magic power. Where was now all the happiness he used to feel when he recalled her and the sunny hours he had spent with her? Where the restless longing to see her face, to hear her voice? Where the feverish impatience with which he followed the course of the sun and wished for the night, so he might steal down the narrow stairs that led from his room into the garden and hasten to the forest, to spend hours and hours watching around the forest chapel? And yet he knew that she was mourning for him now in her solitude; that she had long since forgiven his boyish defiance and his childish impatience; that not a word of reproach, not a glance of reproof would receive him if he should return; that she would open her arms wide, and welcome him to her loving heart! Alas! It was not she whom he doubted, nor her love; it was himself and his own love that he doubted! Oldenburg's last words: Who of us is still able to love with all his heart? Who of us still has a whole heart? fell again and again upon his ear like the low tolling of a bell, like the song at the grave. And a voice which he could not silence whispered to him, wherever he went and stood, by night and by day: Not you! Not you!--Is it not written in the lines of your hand? Did not the brown

woman in the forest see it at the first glance? Not you! Not you!--And when you fell at Melitta's feet, and when you stammered the vow of love and faithfulness, did she not hastily and anxiously close your lips, as if she wished to save you from the crime of perjury: Oh, do not swear! I may swear to you love now and evermore, but not you! not you!

Rainy weather! How the wind drives the big drops against the panes, so that they become dim, like eyes that have wept too much! How heavy and low the clouds are drifting, the gray mourning cloaks, as if they must touch the tops of the poplar trees on the castle wall with their hems! Ah! that I was lying out there beneath the wet black soil, relieved of all anguish of doubt or repentance! Ah! that I could partake of the deep peace of Nature! Be one with the elements! Rush along with the wind, flare up to heaven with the flame, pass away with the water of the stream in the ocean!

Are the wise men of the East right when they say that the whole life of man is but one great mistake? Are we all of us lost sons, who have forsaken our good old father's house to feed upon the husks? And is it true that we may return to him at any time, if we only wish to do so with all our heart? Who of us has still a whole heart for living or for dying? Not you! Not you!

Self-confidence is like the cloud sent by the gods, which surrounds us, and then we are enabled to walk unhurt through all the troubles of life, and when we fall to fall like heroes, with the death-wound on our brow or in our brave hearts. Doubt of ourselves is like a sudden vertigo, which seizes us on a steep height, which chills our blood, loosens the strength of our sinews, and at last hurls us irretrievably into the abyss.

In such painful moments man is apt to join any one who wanders merrily along the path of life, defying the perils of the road, as a lost child in the woods runs up to the first one it meets.

Such a bold wanderer Oswald thought his new acquaintance, and thus it came about that he sought in these evil days most industriously the company of Albert Timm, who was ever ready to laugh and to joke and to play tricks. This readiness surprised him all the more, as he was generally most fastidious in the choice of his friends.

Albert needed as little time to make himself perfectly at home in a new place as the Arab needs to pitch his tent. Arrangements he had none to make. He left it to his things, which were not many in number, to seek their place in his room. If one boot preferred standing bolt upright on top of a chair, and the other liked to lie on the floor, heel upwards--he did not object. If his dress-coat, the only really respectable garment he owned, preferred to forget its existence, rolled up in a little ball and put away between sorted linen in a corner of his melancholy little portmanteau, he did not disturb its enjoyment. And he himself, the happy owner of all these treasures, was standing there in his shirt-sleeves, in spite of the cool weather, bending over his drawing-board, whistling, drawing, singing, and laughing at Oswald, who came to visit him on account of what he called his mute's look.

"Dottore, dottore!" he said, "you look as if you suffered excruciating pain from the grog which I have drunk last night. Upon my word, you disgrace the weather! Did you ever sit, as a boy, in a garret window, sending from a short clay pipe beautiful soap-bubbles into the bright air, while down stairs among the leaden soldiers a half-finished exercise was lying, which was to earn you, a few hours later, a sound whipping on the part of your teacher? You see, that is a picture of life. Our knowledge is a half-finished exercise, and our best exercises remain fragments; the most brilliant soap-bubbles will burst, and the hardest whipping is forgotten in an hour or two. All is vanity, but especially our regret that all is vanity! Why? I did not make the world, and, as far as I know, you did not make it Why, then, should we two rack our brains about it? I rack my brains about nothing, for instance, not even about this line, which I have evidently made too short, and which I must now at random extend gracefully till it meets this angle--by the by, a most romantic corner of the wood, where I met a most charming little red-cheeked peasant girl, who, no doubt, is the cause of my mistake. Well, no matter! The account does not always tally, why else should we have fractions, and the Grenwitz entail remains, for all that, a very beautiful invention, especially for that poor boy Malte. Is the boy really as stupid as he looks?"

"By no means," replied Oswald, who shared the little sofa in the room with a tin box for dried plants, from which a stocking of blue yarn was bashfully peeping forth. "Malte can count up to five, and considerably beyond. He has a decided talent for many things, especially for arithmetic, while Bruno, who lacks that talent, remains a long way behind him."

"Yes, Providence is wise," said Albert, preparing his sepia within a little porcelain vessel; "it gives to him who is to eat turtle-soup in life, a gold spoon at his birth, and he to whom she doles out the ship-biscuit of poverty receives kindly a number of hollow teeth, so that he need not be long annoyed by his hard fare. I, for my part, received by mistake a set of excellent teeth, and thus I relish my hard-tack prodigiously,--so much, in fact, that I can never feel very angry at these empty-headed, thick-bellied children of my step-mother Nature, who are eating turtle-soup with gold spoons, and are thoroughly spoilt in the bargain. But one thing I should like, and that is, if there should turn up a claimant to the codicil in the last will of Baron Harald, who died in delirium tremens, and no doubt now sleeps in the bosom of Father Abraham."

"Then you know the sad story?" asked Oswald.

"Who does not know it?" replied Albert, lighting a cigar and seating himself on the back of his chair so that his feet rested on the seat of the chair. "Do they not publish it every year, to the infinite dismay of the haughty Anna Maria, who is as miserly as she is haughty? Still, I hardly think it has been done these last years!"

"I am only astonished," said Oswald, "that I never heard a word of the whole story till I came here, and never read anything about it in the papers."

"You know nobody reads court advertisements, proclamations, and the like, as long as he has nothing to hope and nothing to fear from such advertisements. Nor would I, in all probability, know anything more of the original idea of this defunct baron, if my father had not felt a lawyer's interest in the matter, and, I believe, himself had something to do with it. Perhaps he was engaged in forming the codicil to the testament, or in writing the latter. The proclamation was, besides, expressed in very vague terms, and amounted to little more than this: The young lady in question, or her child, male or female, if one had been born within a certain period, I do not exactly remember when, were called upon to present their claims--of course, duly authenticated in all formality since a considerable legacy had been left to them by Baron Harald, who had been 'gathered to his fathers,' probably a set of men not much better than their profligate descendant. The amount of the legacy was not mentioned. I, however, know, as many other people also know, that it amounts to nothing less than the two magnificent estates of Stantow and Baerwalde, situated on this very island. I know them very well, since I surveyed them only last summer."

"It would indeed be a charming surprise for our amiable family here if such a claimant should present himself," said Oswald.

"I should think so," replied Albert "Unfortunately there is very little prospect for it, as the bequest only continues valid twenty-five years, and then relapses into the family. Of these twenty-five years, at least twenty-two or three must have elapsed, for I am now twenty-six, and I recollect I always used to regret that I had not the prescribed age."

"Why?"

"I might have indulged at least in the charming uncertainty, whether I might not by chance be the Ivanhoe who wanders about on earth, unknown and driven from his paternal inheritance; who has to make friends with swine-herds in spite of his knightly descent, and to borrow money from dirty old Jews, until he can at last drop his incognito and lead the beautiful Rowena home as his wife, although I would, for my part, attach less importance to the last-mentioned event."

"Did you ever communicate this wish to your father, when you conversed with him about this mysterious affair? It would have been so peculiarly complimentary to him."

"I do not remember; but if I ever did it, my father was liberal enough to think such a childish idea perfectly natural. We cannot help ourselves in that respect: we must have a father, although this wise institution is at times highly inconvenient, as, for instance, when we have done a foolish thing, or mean to do one; and therefore I do not see why I should not prefer a father who leaves me two magnificent farms, to another father who sends me into the wide world as the crocodile pitches its young into the water, I mean, with two rows of excellent teeth and nothing to bite withal. It matters very little to me, I am sure, if the former has adopted in his life oriental Mahommedan views with regard to certain usages, which are differently interpreted in Christian countries."

"That is a matter of taste," said Oswald.

"Certainly," replied Albert, "although I am persuaded that if you give one hundred men the alternative, not as a problem, but in tangible reality, ninety-nine would confess to share my views--perhaps with a blush of modesty--or they might claim to hold your view, but they would seize the bequest, nevertheless, if they could. Did not even the great Goethe feel such a temptation, although his tall size made him naturally look for golden apples higher up, and suggested to him an emperor as father, while I would be content with a baron!"

"The great Goethe was, at the time when he felt thus tempted, very small Goethe, and had, like other children, childish notions."

"Well, I do not know whether the old Excellency would not have bid the two estates welcome, too; for in certain matters, for instance, in a preference of roasted apples over raw potatoes, we all of us remain children, even at the age of Methuselah. But let that be. If you are specially bent upon being your father's son, I would do wrong to interfere with your enjoyment. What do you say, doctor; shall we continue our philosophic conversation as peripatetics in the open air? The sky looks, to be sure, still like a wet rag, but it has ceased raining, at least for the moment, and I, for my part, prefer swimming about in a deluge to sitting all day in Noah's ark, even if I should be compelled to stay there, if we may believe the record thereof, without the corresponding representative of the fair sex. You know how to swim?"

"Oh yes!" said Oswald, laughing.

"Well, then, put on your cap and let us go; the boys are busy down stairs, and can dispense with their Mentor for an hour, I am sure."

The two new friends went down the narrow staircase, which led close to Oswald's room, through the immensely thick wall into the garden. It had ceased raining; the wind also did not blow any more, but the sky was still covered with heavy lowering clouds, which seemed to sink lower every moment. The raindrops were standing in the flowers like bright tears in overflowing children's eyes. Now and then a wailing sound was heard in the broad branches of the trees, where little birds sat shivering; all else was silent like the grave.

Inexpressible sadness filled Oswald's heart. Life seemed to him nothing but a heavy, harassing dream, through which beloved forms were gliding with veiled faces. He thought of Melitta as if she were dead.

Albert also had become silent in the quiet garden. "Let us go on," he said; "this is like a graveyard."

They went out of the decayed gates, across the drawbridge, into the forest, on the way to Berkow, the same road under the tall, solemn pine-trees on which Oswald had come in the carriage the first evening of his arrival at Grenwitz, and which he had since seen so often again with very different sensations.

That evening had made a division in his life, the importance of which he only now began to feel. Since that evening the wide world beyond the silent woods had disappeared for him, and a new world had arisen, a paradisiac world, full of love and happiness. And now he felt as if this world also were disappearing, and the old world outside, beyond those silent woods, was lying beyond his reach. Should he ever return into that world with fresh, bold mind? Would he not ever yearn to return to the Blue Flower, which had here bloomed near to him, nearer than ever, so near that the fragrance had entered his very heart? What had become of the high notions which he had formerly loved to dwell upon? What of the great plans he had cherished? Was it all over? And over for the sake of a woman whom he loved, and who yet could never be his own?

No! A thousand times No! He must tear himself away from this intoxicating magic world, and should it break his heart? What mattered it to any one? He had no whole heart to lose besides. But she? What was to become of her?

"I believe your melancholy is contagious, dottore," said Albert, after they had walked for some time silently by each other. "How can a man of your cleverness allow himself to be thus influenced by the weather, or whatever else it may be! You melancholy men are, after all, odd creatures! You are always going from one extreme to the other. Horace's *aurea mediocritas* has been preached to you in vain. You will not listen to it, because your pride is offended at being taught to be mediocre, and yet you ought to see that we mediocre children of nature are ten thousand times happier than you. Really, dottore, your portrait, taken at this moment, might be hung up among the family portraits of the Grenwitz up stairs; no one would doubt your being a member. They all look so miserably melancholy. It seems to me the whole race shows that every one of them must go to the dogs, one way or another, and surely they have done it, as far as I know, without exception so far. The faces--I examined them to-day after dinner, one by one--would make admirable illustrations for terrible robber and murder stories. They speak of a thousand evil deeds, of nights of hard drinking, and, above all, of many, many fair women who have kissed them till they died of them. For such faces must be perfectly irresistible for women, especially when they belong, as in this case, to rich barons. I was especially struck by Harald, the veritable rat-catcher of Hameln. He is not as handsome as his cousin Oscar, whom you resemble, by the way, strikingly when you look so dismal as just now,--but he looks the very type of this grandly noble and greatly dangerous race, with his large, seductive blue eyes, and his delicate and yet so voluptuous lips."

"You really do me undeserved honor, if you couple me thus unceremoniously with this noble set," said Oswald.

"No, jesting aside," replied Albert, "you really have in your face the fatal feature of the Grenwitz race. I do not mean that as a compliment, for others, for instance I myself, prefer decidedly not to have it. I go even farther than that, I bet my plats against the estate, that if you came in possession of the entail, you would lead the very same life which has heretofore been the hereditary manner of life with the main line. The side branch, which is now in possession, has sadly degenerated."

"You really overwhelm me with your benevolence, and the good opinion you seem to have of my talents and my inclinations."

"You may be as ironical as you choose. I insist upon it, you would do just as these mad barons have done before, in spite of your pretended aversion, which you perhaps only cherish like the dog that is put into traces to pull a wheelbarrow, and snarls at the dog that is running about free."

"But what in heaven's name makes you think so? What justifies your presumption?"

"My profound though superficial studies of physiognomy," replied Albert. "I have been an adept in that science from my boyhood, perhaps even a martyr, for my excessive zeal in pursuing that study often earned me a terrible whipping at school. Instead of listening attentively, I used

to draw the cleverest caricatures of the sparrows, the monkeys, sheep, and other heads all around me; for I need not tell you that the best way to find out the character of a face or a figure is to try to caricature it. Now, if I bring out the melancholy feature in your face with special emphasis, it becomes the veritable face of a Grenwitz, sad, and yet irresistibly sensual,--the very face which a poor innocent maiden would lose her soul for. I will be hanged if you are not going to be the luckiest man alive, as far as women are concerned--unless you have been so already."

"And if I assure you of the contrary?"

"Then Baron Harald was not the rat-catcher of Hameln, but a night-watchman, and he did not die from his excessive fondness of wine and women, but from over-study; then little Marguerite--who is by the way a really charming girl, and not unnaturally reserved--told me a story when she said she hated you, which in our language means: I am desperately in love with him; then report has lied when it couples your name with that of another lady, fairer and of far higher pretensions than poor little Marguerite."

"What do you mean?" asked Oswald, feeling that the blood was rushing to his face.

"Nothing, *mon prince*, nothing," replied Albert, laughing; "is it absolutely necessary always to mean something when we say something? I was only to beat the bush to see if the birds would fly out. For one needs no glasses such as I have to wear, nor the knowledge of a Lavater, to see that the weather is not alone to be blamed for your melancholy. Whenever one of us is melancholy, a pair of black or blue eyes is invariably at the bottom of it. Now I do not ascribe it to Miss Marguerite's pretty black eyes, for I have seen the sovereign indifference with which you treat the poor child; so it must be another pair of eyes, and consequently, if that is so, these eyes must belong to somebody, and if that is so----"

"Enough, enough!" said Oswald, laughing at the merry jingling talk of his companion in spite of his melancholy state of mind; "you will presently prove that I am the man in the moon, and about to plunge head over heels into the great ether from love for a fair princess who lives on the star Sirius."

"Why not?" asked Albert "I am the wise Merlin; I know all the whims a man can have in his head; I hear a report, which I may have started myself, long before it comes near me, and I prophesy that if we do not reach some shelter before five minutes have passed, we shall be washed clean as we never were before."

The two men were on an open field between the forest and the tenants' cottages belonging to Grenwitz. Albert's prophecy seemed to be on the point of being fulfilled. The dark heavy masses sank lower and lower, so that it looked almost like night at the early afternoon hour; a few big drops came pattering down.

"*Sauve qui peut*," cried Albert. "What do you say, dottore, shall we have a little race to that cottage?"

"Well!" said Oswald.

"Ah! That was in the nick of time," said Albert, when they were safe under the projecting roof of the hut, and shook himself like a dog. "My coat might have been benefited by the washing, but I prefer being here. How it rains! Shall we go in and see the interior of this palazzo, dottore, or do you think the old woman there, who is looking at us from the little window, is the same old witch who has conjured up this abominable weather?"

"Good-day, Mother Claus," said Oswald, recognizing his old friend whom he had met on his way to church.

"Many thanks, young master," said Mother Claus, and nodded kindly. "I expected you. Just come in, and the other one too, if he is your friend."

"Well, now--what does that mean?" asked Albert, surprised.

"Just follow me," replied Oswald. "You shall make the acquaintance of a remarkable old woman."

And, not without stooping low, they entered through the door into the hut.

CHAPTER VII.

"Walk in here," said Mother Claus, seizing Oswald by the hand and drawing him from the dark passage into a little room with one window, opposite to the larger room on the other side, into which Oswald, aided by the steward, had carried the sick servant the other day. She did not trouble herself about Albert, as if she knew that the young man possessed a talent for finding his way in the dark. "I have looked for you; for I know from of old that you love to run about in such weather, to cool your hot youthful blood. Are you quite wet through again, as usually? Well, not so badly this time! There, sit down in the easy-chair. None of you have ever sat there since the day on which Baron Oscar died in it, forty-three years ago."

"Not a particular recommendation for superstitious minds," said Albert, seating himself on a large wooden chest in the background of the room, while the old woman was pushing Oswald into the easy-chair and sat down at his feet on a footstool; "but honor to whom honor is due. You look quite grand, doctor, on that single gala-piece of furniture in this otherwise very plain room, especially in the Rembrandt light that falls on you, and with the old woman, Murillo fashion, at your feet, like a banished king who seeks shelter with an old fairy in the forest, while his faithful squire sits modestly in the background. I really believe our race has tired me, and I could sleep a few moments. Wake me, dottore, when it stops raining--" and Albert stretched himself full length on the old chest, put his hands under his head, and, in spite of the uncomfortable position, he seemed to have fallen asleep after a few minutes, while the monotonous ticking of the old cuckoo clock in the corner, and the dripping of the falling rain, alone interrupted the profound silence in the little room.

Mother Claus had taken up her knitting and was at work as busily as the other day at a tiny child's sock, busily, busily, that the needles clinked merrily. Only from time to time she would look up at Oswald and nod kindly, as if she was glad that he was sitting so comfortably in the soft old armchair, here in the cosey room, while the rain came down pitilessly outside.

"Is it not a good chair, young master?" she said, laying down her knitting for a moment, and putting her right hand on Oswald's knee. "The baroness gave it to me after the baron died. She could not bear to look at it, she said; for it reminded her always of the moment when they brought him in, after he had fallen with Wodan, and put him into that chair; and Harald came running in and cried, when he saw his father so pale and disfigured, and she, too, was running about in the room and wringing her hands, and I stood by the baron and wiped the cold sweat from his forehead. I had no time for crying then, but I knew I would have time enough afterwards."

"And how old was Baron Harald when his father died?" asked Oswald.

"Ten years," answered Mother Claus, "and it would have been better for him if he had died too--for him and many others."

The old woman had taken up her knitting again, which had been lying idle in her lap, and was knitting more busily than ever, as if she wanted to make up for lost time.

"Yes, yes," she said; "it would have been better. Then he was a beautiful, innocent boy, with rosy cheeks and violet eyes, and when he died----"

The old woman paused--the needles clinked and the rain beat against the panes.

"Well," said Oswald, "and when he died----"

"Then he was a bad man, and it was a bad death. I alone know it, for I alone was with the poor man when death seized him with the iron hand. Then they struggled with each other, strong Harald and strong Death, and it was a horrible sight, so horrible that all the others ran away; but I would not abandon him in his last hour, for he was, after all, Oscar's son, and I had borne him in my arms when he was an innocent babe, and rocked him on my knees. So I held on and prayed, while he swore and cursed God, till Death struck him on the heart, and he cried out aloud and fell back on his pillow. Then it was all over with him, and his poor soul was at rest."

"And had the baron no friend who might have stood by him in his last hour?"

"Friends enough, and men among them who were not afraid of a death-bed; but they were afraid of Harald; he would have strangled and torn to pieces any one who would have come to him at that hour. I only wish they had come, one after the other; there was not one among them but deserved to have his neck twisted."

"And who were these sad friends?"

"First, Baron Barnewitz, not the one at Sullitz, who is still alive,--he is a good man and harms no one,--but he at Smittow, who afterwards lost all his money at play to Baron Berkow, and then sold him his daughter to pay his debts."

"Melitta!" groaned Oswald, and his hands seized nervously the back of his chair.

"What ails you, young master?" asked the old woman.

"Nothing, nothing," murmured Oswald, with a supernatural effort to overcome a mingled

feeling of horror, pity, hatred, and revenge, which arose in his heart when he saw the image of his beloved one thus dragged through the mire of vulgar passions.--Melitta sold, sold by her own father, to a man who did not love her, whom she only married to save her father from disgrace! Oswald felt that such a thought would madden him if he followed it out, and at the same time he was afraid that cunning Mr. Timm, of whose profound slumbers he was by no means quite convinced, in spite of an occasional snore from the great chest, might notice his emotion. He forced himself, therefore, to sit still and to ask, with apparent calmness:

"Was Baron Berkow one of Harald's friends? Was he not too young at that time?"

"He was the youngest," said Mother Claus, "and the best too. He did what he saw the others did, without thinking whether it was right or wrong. He was not as powerful as the others. When he drank one bottle, Harald drank three, and yet Harald remained master of himself and Berkow fell under the table."

"Was he a handsome man?" asked Oswald.

"Not as handsome as Harald, and far less so than you are, young master. He was smaller and weaklier than either of you, and Harald could have mastered six like him. But then there was far and near no one as bold and as strong as Harald. He could stop the wildest horse running at full speed, and make it as gentle and obedient as a dog, and he always jumped in the saddle without touching the stirrup. They told wonderful stories of his gigantic strength, but it was just as I tell you. When he was angry--and he was very often angry--he would break a heavy oaken chair or table as if it were glass. Then the veins on his forehead would swell like thick branches, and white foam would froth at his mouth, so that it was a horrible sight; but when he laughed and was in good humor, you could not help loving him again. Then he could be so sweet, and say such nice things; no one would have thought him such a bad man. For bad he was, after all; whatever pleased him he must have, cost what it might, and if everything else should perish."

"Were you all that time up at the castle?"

"Why do you speak so politely to me, young master? You never did it before, I am sure. Yes, I was up at the castle. You know my husband was dead, and the boys were dead, and the girls, and I was the only one who looked a little after things up there since the death of the baroness. I did not like to stay there, Heaven knows, for Castle Grenwitz was no better than Sodom and Gomorrah. Every day came friends, and often half a dozen other visitors besides, and then playing and drinking till late in the morning."

"Did ladies ever come to the castle?"

"No, even the boldest were afraid of these wild men. And most of them were not married then, like Baron Berkow; or their wives had died, like Baron Barnewitz, and thus they could carry it on undisturbed. There never were any women there I would speak of, except one, except one----"

"And who was that one?"

"The last one--a beautiful, innocent angel, who might have converted devils even; but Harald and his companions were worse than devils."

"What was her name? Where did she come from?"

"We called her Miss Marie; where she came from I never heard, nor where she went to."

"Then she did not take her own life, as people say?"

"No--she was too good and too pious to do that; she would have borne her cross to Golgotha. Oh! she was so young and fair, and so gentle and so sweet; my eyes have never seen anything like it before or after. If I had known they meant her when Baron Harald, over the wine, betted Baron Barnewitz I do not know how many thousand dollars that the girl should follow him, of her own free will, to Castle Grenwitz--I would have poisoned them all in their wine, like a nest of vile rats."

"And how did Baron Harald go about to win his wager?"

"That is a long story, young master, and I will tell you. I tell you, if all the drops that are now falling out there were tears, and all were wept for the sake of the poor child--I would say they were not nearly enough.

"When Harald made that terrible wager with Baron Barnewitz, they had just been absent together for two or three weeks; I know not where, but I believe they had gone to a large city, far away, and there, I think, they had seen the poor child. Soon afterwards he left again, and this time he stayed two months. At last he wrote he would come back, but not alone. His Aunt Grenwitz, he wrote, would come too, and I was to air the rooms of the late baroness and let the furniture be attended to, and prepare everything for her reception. Now I knew the baron had a great-aunt, his grandfather's sister, but she must be eighty years and more; she had never in her life been at Grenwitz, and had never troubled herself about Harald, nor he about her. I was, therefore, not a little surprised at the strange idea to undertake such a journey at her time of life,

for she lived many, many miles from here; but I did as I was ordered. They arrived on the appointed day; I received them and wondered how active the old lady was, though she walked with a crutch and had silver-gray hair and eyebrows. Harald was full of respect for her; he led her on his arm through all the rooms of the castle, and showed her everything very carefully, especially the family portraits in the gallery, where her own was hanging, as a girl of eighteen.--They stopped before it and laughed immoderately, and the old lady began to cough, and Harald slapped her on the back. I did not know why they laughed so--I thought it was because the pretty girl had become such an ugly woman, for then I did not suspect anything of the disgraceful plot.

"Early the next day the baron sent for his carriage and he and the aunt drove off. 'We shall be back to-night,' he said, 'though perhaps very late. We shall bring a young lady home, a young companion for Aunt Grenwitz. She is to have the room next door, do you hear?'--'But, master,' I said, 'the baroness died in the red-room, and everything is left there exactly as it was on the day of her death.'--'Then let everything be cleared out,' he said; 'do you hear, everything, and have it put in another room. Put some furniture in it. The young lady must sleep near Aunt Grenwitz.'--'What do you say, dear Harald?' asked the aunt, who was deaf in one ear and did not hear particularly well in the other ear, so that she could never understand me, even when I spoke ever so loud. 'Nothing, nothing, dear aunt,' said the baron, 'all right, Jake!'

"It was late in the night when they returned. I had sent all the servants to bed except the new valet, which the master had brought home with him from his travels. The young lady was in the carriage. When they entered the hall and the light of the candles, which the man--his name was Baptiste--carried in his hand, fell upon the rosy face of the young lady, his features grinned most unpleasantly. But I saw Harald frown and make a sign with his eyes, and at once Baptiste was all submission and zeal again.

"'Show the ladies to their rooms, old one,' said Harald to me, and then he bowed gracefully and wished the ladies a good-night.

"'Will you give me your arm, dear Marie?' said the aunt, as I was showing the way with the light in my hand; 'my limbs are a little fatigued after the long ride to-day.'--'How shall I ever thank you for your kindness?' said the girl, with a voice so soft and sweet, that I could not help turning round and looking at her. The old woman and the girl were standing on the landing of the steps. There were three candles in the branches which I held, and the light fell bright upon the two, and I shall never forget the sight, if I were to live another eighty years. The aunt had never looked so hideously ugly to me, and in all my life I had never seen anything half as fair and sweet as the young lady. 'You know best, dear child,' said the old lady, making a good-natured grimace, which made her look still uglier, if that was possible. 'I have only one wish upon earth; it lies with you to see it fulfilled or not.' The girl did not answer, but great tears started in her eyes, and then she bent her tall, slim figure quite low and kissed the old witch's hand. 'Well, well,' she said, 'you are a good child; we shall agree, I doubt not, and my Harald, my pet, will be happy yet.--Tell them to give you your candle, dear Marie; I know the home of my ancestors well enough, although I have not seen it for more than sixty years now. You can go to bed, Claus; I do not like to trouble the servants unnecessarily.'

"And that was true. We heard her bell very rarely. She dressed herself and undressed herself; it took her several hours, it is true, but none of us was allowed to render her the slightest assistance; once, when one of the maids had come into her chamber while she was dressing, she was very angry, and ever after locked herself in. She had strange ways about her, the old lady. Thus she never was tired at night, and I have seen her wander about in her room till early dawn; but then she slept till late in the afternoon. At table she never had any appetite, but in her room she could eat and drink without end; sometimes she had two, and sometimes three bottles of wine sent up stairs. But the most remarkable thing was this: to-day she looked fifty, and tomorrow she looked eighty; at one time she was stone deaf, and at another time she could hear a mouse slip across the room; now she scarcely could drag herself along with her crutch, and then she came down the steps faster than I, although I was only sixty then, and quite active yet. I felt very uncomfortable about the old lady, and was glad when I could keep out of her way."

"And what was Miss Marie doing in the mean time?"

"She was almost always with Harald. I saw them together early in the morning, wandering among the dewy flowers in the garden, arm in arm; she with bashfully cast-down eyes, he talking eagerly to her. I saw them in the afternoon, sitting in the cool rooms which face the park; he reading aloud from a book, or more frequently his arm leaning on the back of her chair, and she looking up at him very happy, whereupon he would cast burning glances at her, and smooth from time to time her silken brown hair. I saw them in the evening, wandering once more in the garden, or slowly walking up and down in the brilliantly lighted rooms, while Aunt Grenwitz was sitting on the sofa, reading, or pretending to read. Ah! those were glorious times for the poor child, and she always looked so perfectly happy that I feared and trembled how it all was to end; and when she met me she always had a kind word for me: 'How are you, dear Mrs. Claus?' or, 'Can I help you, dear Mrs. Claus? You work too hard. I am ashamed to be so idle here.'

"One afternoon I met her in the garden. It was a hot, sunny day; she wore a white dress, and a broad-brimmed straw hat was hanging on her fair round arm. The baron was out riding, the first time for a long while, and the aunt still asleep. I had long determined to speak to the girl at the first opportunity, and to open her eyes. I gathered courage, therefore, as she was about to pass

by me with a 'Good-day, Mother Claus, how are you?' and said: 'Many thanks. Miss Marie, have you a moment's time? I should like to say a few words to you.'--'What is the matter?' she said, and as she looked into my face, which was probably quite sad and sober, she cried: 'For heaven's sake, I hope nothing bad has happened?'--'No, Miss Marie,' I said, 'but that might easily come about if you do not look about you; and I should be heartily sorry for that, for you are so young and good, and you look so chaste and good, and as innocent as an angel.'--'What do you mean?' said the poor child, and turned deep red. 'Come this way, Miss Marie,' I said, and drew her into the beech avenue, where we could not be seen from the castle; 'I will tell you everything I have on my conscience. I am an old woman and you are a young girl who knows little how the world goes, and how things go here in Grenwitz!' And then I described to her the life at the castle as it had been before she came, and what a wild, sad man Harald was, and how he was as false and as cruel as a tiger. She turned to me with glowing cheeks, never once raising her long silken eyelashes to look at me with her beautiful blue eyes, and without interrupting me once; then she said, in a low voice: 'I thank you, Mrs. Claus--but what you tell me I have long known.' I was thunderstruck. 'You knew it, and yet you accompanied the old lady here? You know it, and you remain here. You know it, and you are not afraid to stay alone with the baron for hours and days? Oh, child, child! what must I think of you?'--'Think nothing that is bad of me,' she said, placing her hand on my shoulder, 'and think a little better of the baron. He will never again be as wild and as bad as he has been.'--'How do you know, Miss Marie?' 'Because he has promised me.'--'And you think he will keep his promise?'--'Oh, certainly.'--'Why?'--'Because he loves me!'--'Oh, child! child!' I cried, 'for heaven's sake, it is high time: flee, or you are surely lost. Poor child! to believe his vows! He shoots the horse that he likes no longer, and he breaks the vow that becomes a burden to him. What he has promised you is an old song; he sings it as a bird whistles his air, without thinking what he does. What he has promised you he has promised a hundred others, who perhaps were no better than he is.'--'Stop,' said Miss Marie, vehemently, 'I cannot and must not listen to you any longer.' And then she added, smiling: 'You will soon see, my good woman, how you have wronged my Harald--how you have wronged Baron Harald.'--'Your Harald?' I said, 'poor child! He'll never be your Harald. He takes whatever chance throws in his way, and as you happen to be here----' 'And if I should not happen to be here,' she said, laughing merrily; 'if I should not be here for the sake of the baroness, but the baroness for my sake, and if I should not go away again, but remain here forever?----' At that moment Harald came suddenly into the avenue in which we were walking up and down. He started when he saw me alone with the girl. 'Miss Marie,' he said, 'I believe my aunt wants you.' And when the girl had left us, he came up to me and said, hissing the words through his white teeth: 'What did you tell her, old one?'--'That you cheat her, Harald.'--'I shall twist your neck for that,' he said, and the vein swelled on his forehead. 'Better that than to break the poor thing's heart.'--'Listen, old one,' he said, 'what if I meant it in good earnest this time? What if I am really tired of this wild life, which must, after all, lead me sooner or later to the devil? What if I want to marry the girl?'--'Is she of noble birth?' said I, Harald laughed: 'She is a tailor's daughter. I shall have to put a goose and the shears in my coat of arms.'--'If she is not of noble birth,' I said, 'you will never marry her, and at best it would only be one cruel act more. The poor creature would die amid the gibes of your friends, like a hunted stag under the teeth of the dogs. Send the girl home; I beseech you, Harald, rather to-day than to-morrow. And the old baroness, too,' I added. He looked at me with open eyes, and laughed and said: 'You are less clever than I thought, old one.' Then he turned his back on me and went singing into the castle.

"I did not know what to make of all that. Had Harald really promised to marry the girl? Did she, who knew his former manner of life, really believe he would keep his promise? She looked so bright and sensible, with her big blue eyes; how could she let him deceive her so? How had Harald gone about to get the better of her so completely? It troubled me day and night, until I was made sick. I should have liked so much to save the poor innocent child, and to save Harald that additional sin. But I did not know how to go about it. Since that conversation in the garden Miss Marie avoided me everywhere; the aunt did not leave her rooms till evening, and kept her head wrapped up, in spite of the warm weather. Harald had not said another word to me for days. He really seemed to have changed entirely. Since Miss Marie had been at the castle he had not been drunk once; he had not beaten the servants; he had not killed a horse by furious riding, while formerly not a day passed without some such calamity. Then he had flown into a rage upon the slightest provocation; now he was mild and kind towards everybody, only not towards myself, because he knew he could not impose on me, who had known him from childhood up,--and towards his new valet. That was a hideous creature, constantly smiling, and constantly running after the girls, who could not bear him. He had nothing to do all day long but to lounge about, his hands in his pockets, and to make faces at everybody. He did nothing for the baron since Harald had one day kicked him, so that he was disabled for a fortnight. None of us could understand why the baron did not turn him out.--During this whole time not one of the gentlemen had been here who formerly used to come and go at the castle. I had been hoping some of them might come, so that I might have a chance of speaking to Miss Marie. But Harald never left her alone. If they formerly had seemed to be fond of each other, matters were very much worse now. Whenever they thought themselves unobserved they were in each other's arms, and such kissing and caressing! Well, well, such things happen between lovers, and I did not do differently when I was a young girl, and I knew myself very well how the Barons Grenwitz flatter the girls,--but I also knew what the girls have to pay for it in the end. One fine morning, when I met Miss Marie again and asked her how she was, she turned purple and stood and trembled like an aspen leaf. When I saw that I knew what had happened, and my heart felt so heavy that I sat down on a bench and cried. When Miss Marie saw that she began to cry too, and sat down by me, and wound her arm around my neck and said: 'Don't you cry, dear Mother Claus! It will all come right!'--'God grant it,

child!' said I, 'but I don't believe it'--'But,' said she, 'don't you see yourself how kind and good the baron is, and yet he is so only because he loves me, and if he did not mean to marry me, why should he have brought the aunt here? And if the aunt does not object, she who Harald says is so proud and haughty, how can the other relations say anything against it?'--'Then you are not the old lady's companion?' I asked, surprised.--'No!' she said, 'I saw her here for the first time!'--'But how in Heaven's name did you get here, if you did not come as her companion?'--The poor child cried more violently than before. 'I must not tell you,' she cried. 'I have promised the baron to keep it from everybody till----' she paused as if she had said too much already. 'I dare not tell you,' she repeated, 'but you may believe me, I am not a bad girl, as you seem to think.'--Then she kissed me on my forehead and hurried away toward the castle.

"After that day I saw that Miss Marie had often been crying. She had cause enough for it, the poor child. Harald did what I had long apprehended: he commenced his old life again; of course only gradually. The friends did not come to the castle yet, but he himself rode out frequently and remained away half a day or a whole day. When he returned he was often in bad humor, treating the servants to whippings and kickings, and demolishing the furniture; still times were golden in comparison with what had been before, and he was still always quite gentle with Miss Marie, especially after his violence had once frightened her nearly to death. With the aunt he seemed to have nothing at all to do, after they had been quarrelling once or twice in the parlor at night, so that we heard it down stairs. I thought the old lady was scolding him, and so I sent her as many good dishes and as much wine to her room as she wished, although it was inconceivable what she could consume.

"Then it was that I was one night walking through the house after all had gone to bed, as I always did, to see if all the lights were out, that suddenly a bright light struck me, which came towards me in the passage that leads from the tower to the old castle, where the ladies were staying. In my fright, and hardly knowing where the danger was, I cried Fire! Fire! as loud as I could. At the same time I ran along the passage towards the place where the fire was. Suddenly Harald was by my side. I knew but too well where he had been.--'Hush, old one,' he said, 'it is only a curtain!' And then he commenced to tear it down and to stamp the fire out with his boots. Suddenly the door opened which led to the rooms of the baroness, and which lay just opposite the burning window, and out rushes the old witch with a bundle under her arm, and the valet with a still larger bundle on his shoulder. They had nearly run over us; but Harald seized the valet by the shoulder and hurled him back so violently that man and bundle rolled on the ground. 'Are you again together, rascals,' he roared at the old woman, who began to tremble in all her limbs when she saw the baron in such a fury; 'trot back to your room or I'll help you!' All of a sudden he commenced laughing again, and I also could not help laughing when I saw that the old lady, in her hurry, had forgotten to put on her wig, and her own red hair was hanging down from her soiled cap in not very short braids. This and some other changes made her look so different that I hardly recognized her.--'Go to the devil, old witch,' cried Harald, still laughing heartily, 'and get yourself painted up again, or the world will see too clearly where you come from.'--The old lady murmured something which I did not understand, and went back to her room; the valet had in the mean time gathered himself up again and slipped down the narrow staircase which led from the passage into the garden. 'Go to bed, old one,' said the baron to me, 'and think you have dreamt all this, or think what you like. It is all the same to me. The comedy has lasted long enough.'

"And the comedy was played out. Next morning the old lady and the valet were not to be found, and none of us has ever heard or seen anything of either of them; none of us has learnt where they came from and who they were. This only was certain, that the old lady was as little the baron's aunt as I was his mother. The servants laughed and the baron laughed, although they had carried off as much plate and clothing as they could manage; but I did not laugh, and there was somebody else who did not laugh. The poor dear child! At first she would not believe it that the baron had deceived her so badly. She walked about with open, fixed, and tearless eyes, and when she met me she looked so sad, so anxious and grieved; it wrung my heart. Alas! I could not help her! I could only weep with her, and that I did as soon as the poor child had recovered from her first horror and found tears once more. We were now often together, for since that night Harald cared less for Miss Marie. He rode out every day, and now the gentlemen also came back to the castle, as of old, and the former life began once more. Harald became wilder and more reckless than I had ever seen him, and the servants avoided him wherever they could. Perhaps he wished to silence his conscience or make up for lost time; who knows?

"One evening, when the gentlemen were again at the castle--it was about seven o'clock, and they had been at table since three--Miss Marie was in my room, where she now spent most of her time, when Harald suddenly came in. I saw at the first glance that he was drunk. His face was all aglow, and his eyes shone like those of a wildcat. When he saw Marie, who had started up at his entrance, frightened, he laughed and said: 'Do I find you here, my dove? I have looked all over the house for you. Come, pet, I want to introduce you to my friends; one you know already--but you must be quite nice and polite, you hear?'

"Marie had turned pale as death when he said this, and was trembling in all her limbs. I saw how she moved her lips to reply, but she did not produce a sound. I could not bear it any longer.

"'Are you not ashamed, Harald,' I said, 'to tease the poor, innocent lamb in this way? Fie, Harald--I have always known you were bad, but I did not think you were so bad!'--He started up with one bound and seized me by the throat.--'Say another word,' he ground out from between his

teeth, 'and I break your neck, old witch.'--I knew he could do what he threatened, but I was not afraid of death. 'Do what you like,' I said, calmly, 'but as long as I have a breath in me, I will tell you to your face you are a wretch.' I looked firmly into his eye; I saw how his anger rose in him, and I felt that his fingers were encircling my throat as with an iron band. I thought my last hour had come.--Suddenly Marie was standing by our side; she put her hand on Harald's arm, and said, in a low voice: 'Let her go, Harald, I will go with you!'--That was all she said, but it was enough to move even Harald's wild heart. He dropped his arms and stared at Marie, as if he were aroused from a dark dream. Suddenly he fell on his knees before her, hid his burning face in the folds of her dress, and sobbed: 'Forgive me, Marie, forgive me!' Then he started up when he saw her smiling, lifted her up in his arms like a child, carried her up and down in the room, caressing and kissing her. Then he put her down into an arm-chair, the same chair you sit in, and knelt down before her, kissing her hands and her dress, and turning to me, he said: 'Go, old one, and tell Charles to have the horses saddled. I am unwell, or whatever they choose to say, but I cannot see the gentlemen to-day again, nor to-morrow. Is that right so, darling? I am not quite so bad, am I, as the old one says?' I went, crying for joy, and thought: 'Maybe after all it will all come right!'

"But it did not. After a few days all was as of old. Similar scenes occurred again and again, but Harald's good resolves lasted only a few days, and we had to pay with bitter tears for every laughing remark of the gentlemen. I say we, for I loved the poor girl now as if she had been my own child. And now the poor child needed help and counsel more than ever. She was sorely concerned for the fate of the child she knew she bore--'What is to become of me,' she said, 'matters little. I would die to-day if I could; but I must live and will live for my child's sake. And I will not cry and complain any more; it does no good, and Harald says he hates nothing more than red eyes.'--I asked her if she had no parents, no relations, no friends, to whom she might go. She shook her head sadly: 'I have no one in this wide world; no one but you, good Mother Claus, and one other, who would do anything for me, if he knew where I was; but he does not know it, and never shall know it.'--She had never said anything about her former life: 'I have promised the baron to keep it secret till he is publicly married to me, and,' she added, sadly smiling, 'you see yourself that it will probably remain secret forever.'

"She hardly ever left me now, and as for Harald, he seemed to have forgotten of late that Marie was still at the castle. Only at times, when I was alone with him, he would ask a few abrupt questions about her, which showed me that he knew everything about her condition.

"Thus matters were standing. The summer had come to an end; autumn came, with wind and rain, and the dry leaves were dropping fast from the trees. It was one afternoon, when Harald had been away for several days; I was with Marie in the garden, and tried to comfort her, as she was particularly sad that day. Suddenly a Jew, a pedler, looked over the fence, and when he saw us he cried into the garden: 'Nothing you want? Nothing you want?' I happened just then to be in need of something, I forget what, and so I called him in. He came. It was a dirty old man, with a white beard and spectacles of blue glass on his nose. He showed us his goods, and as the things were nicer than what such people generally had, Marie and I bought several things. He asked very moderate prices, but yet it amounted to more than we had, and I went back to the castle to get money. By chance I could not at once find the key to my drawer, and when I had found it, it occurred to me that I had to attend to something in the kitchen; thus half an hour might have passed before I came back in the garden. I found Marie alone. 'Where is the Jew?' I asked.--'He is coming back to-morrow.' 'What is the matter, child?' I asked, for I saw that she had been crying, and looked very much troubled.--Then she fell on my neck, crying, but much as I asked her to tell me what had happened, I could learn nothing.

"The Jew did not come back the next day, but Baron Harald. He brought several gentlemen with him. They had been hunting, and were very tired. This made them retire earlier, after having drunk a few bottles of wine.

"I might have been a few hours in bed without being able to sleep, for it rained and blew that night fiercely, and the shutters creaked, and the hounds howled.--Then I heard a soft step in the passage before my door, and a hand seeking the knob of my door; somebody came in and walked up to my bed.--'Who is that?' I cried. 'It is I, Mother Claus,' said a low voice. It was Marie. 'Are you sick, child?'--'No,' she said, sitting down on my bed, 'I only come to say good-by to you, and to thank you for all the love and kindness you have shown me.' I thought she was going to take her own life, and said, horrified: 'For God's sake, child, what do you mean?'--'Don't be afraid, Mother Claus,' she said, and embraced me amid hot tears; 'I am going, but only from here. I have long wished it, and now the hour has come.'--'Why now?' I asked, 'where will you go to now, at night, and in such a night? Don't you hear how rain and wind howl with the hounds? And you know not the way.... You run into the jaws of death, and if you do not think of yourself, think at least of the child.'--'I am thinking of it,' she replied. 'It must not see the light here where its mother has been so very wretched; it must never know who its father was. Farewell, dear Mother Claus! may God bless you and preserve you! And fear not for me: I am not going alone; I have somebody with me, who will protect me and watch over me, and who would give his life for me.'--'Are you quite sure of that, child? I thought you had learnt what to think of the vows of men? Who is it?'--'I cannot tell you,' she replied, 'and now I must be gone.' She had risen from the bed. 'Wait,' I said, 'I will at least see you out of the castle.'

"She begged me to stay, but I did not mind her; I had soon put on some clothes; I was firmly determined not to let her go, till I was quite sure that she knew what she was about. I was still

afraid she might think of suicide.

"When she saw that I was not to be turned aside from my purpose, she helped me to dress, and said: 'Well, then, come, Mother Claus; at least he will see now, that I have not been forsaken by everybody here.'

"We went, holding each other's hand, on tip-toe down the passages, then down the staircase which leads from the old castle into the garden. It had ceased raining, and the moon was shining at intervals through the black drifting clouds. I still held Marie's hand in mine; she hastened onward, drawing me after her through the familiar avenues. When we passed a bench in one of the darker walks, where she had often been sitting with Harald, she stopped for a moment, and I felt her hand tremble. But she recovered herself instantly. 'No, no,' she whispered: 'he is right, Harold has never loved me, and I must not stay here any longer.'

"We went through the garden into the court-yard, and through it and the great gates into the forest, on the road to Berkow. When we had gone a few hundred yards, a man came to meet us. 'It is he,' said Marie; 'you must leave me now, Mother Claus; I have promised him to come alone, and not to tell anybody that I am going.'--'You ought not to have promised that, child; I think I have a right to know what is to become of you.'

"In the mean time the man had come near, 'Is that you, Marie?' he said. 'Why do you not come alone?'--'Because I did not let her,' I said, 'and because I shall not let her go until I know what is to become of her.'--'She is in God's care and under the protection of a friend,' said the man. His words sounded so truthful and safe, that all my anxiety vanished in a moment.

"The moon peeped forth from the clouds, and I could see the man, who was now walking by our side, more distinctly. He was small, and not very young, and had a hooked nose, like the Jew of the day before. He had on a long overcoat, and when the wind blew it open I noticed by the light of the moon the muzzle of a pistol, which he wore in a belt around his waist.

"A few yards farther, a carriage with two horses was standing. 'It is high time,' said the man on the box. He spoke Low German, and I thought I knew his voice. 'Quick, quick,' said the man with the spectacles, and drew Marie to the step, which had been let down. 'Good-by, good-by,' she sobbed, embracing me once more; and as her head was resting for a moment on my shoulder, she whispered in my ear: 'Tell him I have forgiven all, all!'--'Quick, quick! Marie,' exclaimed the man impatiently, stamping with his foot, and helped her into the carriage; then he turned to me: 'If you really love the unfortunate girl,' he said, 'keep this secret for forty-eight hours. I am prepared for everything, but I should wish for Marie's sake that we should have no use for this;' and he struck his hand upon the pistol.--'Rely on me,' I said, 'and I will rely on you.'--'You can do that safely,' he replied; 'all men are not scoundrels and barons.'

"He jumped into the carriage and closed the door. The horses started, and already, a few minutes later, I heard nothing but the wind in the pine-trees.

"I walked slowly back to the castle, and reached my room without having been seen by anybody. I locked myself in; then I threw myself on my bed and wept as if a dear child of mine had died; and yet I was happy, and thanked God that he had taken pity on the poor child and rescued her from this hell.

"When I awoke next morning the sun was already standing high in the heavens. It was a cool, bright morning, and Harald went hunting with his guests. I was glad of it, for thus Marie's flight could be kept from him at least till evening. The servants, to be sure, had to be told towards noon that I could not find Miss Marie,--had they seen her anywhere? They were not a little frightened, for there was not one who had not liked the gentle, beautiful girl. They searched the houses, the country around, the forest down to the shore, and even the great fosse; for they all agreed that the poor child must have taken her own life.

"Late at night Harald came back. He was alone. As he entered the house he read in the disturbed faces of the servants that something had happened. His bad conscience told him at once what it was. 'Is she dead?' he asked, and turned as white as chalk. 'We do not know, master,' said old Jake, 'we have been looking all day, but we have not found her.'

"He went past the servants to his room without saying a word. When he was in the door, he turned around and beckoned to me.

"He was walking up and down in the room; at last he stopped before me, and said, with a hollow voice: 'Did Marie ever tell you she would take her own life?'--'No,' I said. 'Was she particularly sad of late?'--'Yes.'

"Again he walked up and down, with uneven steps, and murmuring unintelligible words. Then he stopped once more before me. 'And if she has taken her life, I am her murderer,' he said.--'Who else?'

"He started as if a knife had been thrust in his heart. 'It cannot be,' he said, 'it would be too fearful.'

"I knew the anguish he was feeling at that moment; but I also knew that the proud man would

rather know her dead than belonging to anybody else, and besides, I had promised secrecy. Thus I remained silent, and waited to see what he would do.

"He ordered me to ring and send for all the servants. They came.

"'Those of you who are tired may go to bed,' he said; 'those who are willing to search on with me shall have whatever they may ask.'

"All expressed themselves willing to help him, not for the sake of the reward, but because any way none of them would have been able to sleep from excitement.

"He ordered all the lights to be brought that could be found, and now they commenced the search once more--below in the cellars, through all the rooms down stairs and up stairs, in the garrets, up into the old tower,--Harald always ahead, searching every nook and corner, with his eyes everywhere, giving his orders with a firm voice, indefatigable, till morning broke.

"Now the women were sent to bed, but the men followed him still, as many as could stand it. With these he searched the shrubbery, the garden, from the fosse to the drawbridge, and the fosse itself. It was raining that day as fast as it could come down, and the servants were nearly exhausted; but Harald, for the first time in his life, I believe, spoke to them kindly, and besought them not to give it up, and promised them a mint of money. Thus they stood it till noon; but then they had to give it up. Now Harald took the others, who had rested in the mean while, and with these he went out on the moor near Fashwitz, and into the forest of Berkow, and down to the sea-shore.

"Towards evening they came back, dripping with rain and the moor-water, in which they had been wading about for hours. The men were so tired they slept as they walked, but Harald's strength was unbroken. He told me to bring a few bottles of wine, and while he poured them down his throat he said to me, 'Listen, old one; I do not believe she has drowned herself. It would be too horrible; it would drive me mad. She cannot have intended to avenge herself on me so cruelly; she was too good for that, and she was too fond of me. Did she ever tell you that she would leave me? Did she ever speak to you of a man who was at all times ready to receive her at his house?'

"I thought I ought to leave Harald some little hope, and said:

"'Yes, Maria has often told me so, especially of late.'

"'You see,' he said, and put the glass out of which he had been drinking, so violently down on the table that it broke into pieces; 'now the hounds scent the track. Now we'll have a regular fox-chase.'

"He pulled the bell-rope till the handle came off. 'Order horses!' he cried to old Jake, who came in, 'instantly!'

"I begged him to sleep at least a few hours, for I saw that his eyes were burning with fever, and he trembled in all his limbs.

"'Pshaw!' he said, 'I sleep? I have other things to do than to sleep. I do not know how long I shall be away, old one, but I shall either bring her back or,--will you make haste!' he cried into the hall; 'I'll teach you how to hurry, you scamps!'

"And he went off without having changed his clothes, even. He stayed away four weeks; no one knew where he had been. One evening he came back. The first question he asked me was: 'Have you heard from her?'--He looked so pale and haggard that I hardly knew him again. His eyes had sunk deep into his head and were burning like coals of fire. 'I did not find her,' he said, when we were alone in the room; 'give me wine, old one; I must drown the hellish fire that burns within me in wine.'

"I pitied the unhappy man; for I felt now only how very dearly I loved him. I told him all I knew about Maria's flight. Contrary to my expectation, he remained quite calm! 'It amounts all to the same,' he said, 'whether she is dead or not. She is dead for me; she could not help herself; she had to leave me; she was too proud to suffer herself to be treated like a dog,--I have treated her like a dog, worse than a dog,--wretch that I am!'

"He beat his forehead with his closed hand; then he threw himself into an arm-chair, put his head in his hands and sobbed. 'And yet I loved her! And I love her still! Oh my God, my God!'

"It was a fearful sight to see wild Harald weep! I lifted up his head; he put it against my bosom and wept, as he had often wept there when he was a boy. I begged him to calm himself. I told him what Marie's last words had been: 'I forgive him all!'

"'And if she has forgiven me, I shall never forgive myself,' he cried. 'Go to bed, old one; we will talk about it tomorrow.'

"But when old Jake came into his room next morning, Harald was lying in high fever. That lasted seven days, seven terrible days. Then it was all over with Harald Grenwitz!"

The old woman paused, smoothed the sock she was knitting over her knee, folded it up and said:

"Well, young master, now you go home. I have to look after the children, who are sleeping in the other room on Jake's bed. It does not rain just now, but it is going to rain worse. Therefore don't stop on the way. Good-by!"

"Come!" said Oswald to Albert, who had just risen from his hard couch and was yawning and stretching his arms. "It is high time, if we mean to reach the château in time for supper. Good-by, Mother Claus."

"Good-by, good-by, young master," said the old woman.

When the young men found themselves in the muddy village street, Albert pointed with his thumb over his shoulder at the hut they had just left, and said:

"Odd old lady that! Was not that a famous story, dottore?"

"You were not asleep, then?"

"Not a bit! At first I wanted to sleep, but you did not let me sleep, and then when she commenced the story about Baron Harald I could not sleep. But I remained quietly where I was, and snored from time to time to reassure the old lady, who evidently did not want anybody to hear it but her young master. Why does she always call you her young master, dottore?"

"I do not know," said Oswald.

"Or you do not mean to know," replied Albert; "well, no harm done. We must not wish to know everything. Why did Baron Harald want to know what had become of that pretty girl Marie? Without that quite superfluous curiosity he might have drunk his Burgundy to-day. Strange that a sensible man should have had such absurd romantic notions in his head! Can you understand it, dottore?"

"Well, perhaps I can," said Oswald; "but let us speak of something else."

"As you like it, my dear sir. What do you think of immortality?"

CHAPTER VIII.

On the following day the weather had cleared up. The morning sun had been hid behind thick mists, but a few hours later it had rent the gray veil, and was now pouring its golden light upon the refreshed earth. In the garden of the château all looked paradisiacally fresh and fragrant, as on the first day of creation. The flowers raised their heads again, and if here and there a few drops were still hanging in a calyx, they looked in the bright sunshine like sparkling tears of joy; the birds were singing with delight in the thick branches of the trees, and the little worms that had been waiting patiently in all the crevices, under the leaves and under the stones, came forth in restless activity.

And around the gray walls of the castle, which were now flooded with rosy light, swift swallows were flitting to and fro, and on the roof, in the gutters, between the stucco ornaments quarrelsome sparrows were resuming their difficulties. In the large hall, where the portraits of Grenwitz barons and baronesses were hanging on the walls in long rows, from the fabulous Sven down to the great-aunt of the baron, "as she had been at eighteen," and to Oscar, "who fell with Wodan," and Harald's, "who would have done better to weep himself to death at his father's coffin;"--the atoms were dancing about, as they rose from the old gala-furniture with the faded damask covers, in the three slanting bridges of light formed by the three arched windows.

Down stairs, in the breakfast-room, the baron and the baroness were enjoying their frugal meal. They looked ready for their journey, and Anna Maria had already put on her huge bonnet with wide projecting wings, as it had been worn some twenty years ago. The great travelling carriage was waiting at the door. The four heavy bays whisked their bobtails thoughtfully to and fro, and the silent coachman cracked his whip regularly every five minutes, from mere force of habit, and not to admonish his master to be in a hurry, for that would have been incompatible with the respect he owed them as well as with his phlegmatic nature.

"I knew it," said the baroness, offering her husband half a glass of Moselle wine,--"drink that, dear Grenwitz, it will give you strength for the journey,--I knew it. He refuses our kind offer

because he is not very well! Ridiculous."

"He really looks as if he were not very well," said the old baron, "ever since we were at Barnewitz, and then it does not look quite well, it seems to me, that we should ask him to accompany us just when the carriage is at the door! We ought to have done it sooner, perhaps."

"I do not understand you, dear Grenwitz," said the baroness. "Don't you talk as if Mr. Stein was our equal! No wonder that the young man is running over with pride. To ask him a week ahead to pay a visit in the neighborhood! That would be nice! Why, we have not even mentioned our Heligoland journey to him!"

"I should have done so long ago, if you could only have come to some definite conclusion about it," said the old gentleman, scratching himself behind the ear.

"I have now formed my resolution," said the baroness, angrily; "formed this very moment. If he does not choose to accompany us on a little trip in the neighborhood for three days, if it gives him too much trouble to go with us when we take leave of our neighbors, who have all treated him with the utmost condescension, then he shows clearly that he does not mean to take leave, and so he may stay where he is."

"But, dear Anna Maria," said the baron, "that is, after all, not exactly the same thing; and then where is he to stay in the mean time, and how can we get along with the two boys quite alone?"

"I tell you, dear Grenwitz," replied the baroness, "I do not care where he stays. He likes generally to go his own way--let him go his own way in this case also. He can make a pedestrian tour through the island, or visit his friend Oldenburg, or at worst remain here, although that would, of course, be more inconvenient. Our journey is expensive enough, and he would only be a burden to us. He will, as usual, interest himself exclusively in Bruno's welfare, and leave Malte entirely on our hands. If he stays, Bruno will be compelled to be more with Malte, and as the question during vacation is only about a little supervision of the boys, I am willing to intrust them to John as readily, and perhaps rather than to Mr. Stein. Besides, if we bring Helen back with us, we would not have room for him in the carriage. No, no; let him stay here; I see my way clear now--quite clear."

"I do not know," said the old gentleman, out of humor.

"But I do know," said the baroness, rising; "and formerly that was enough for you, dear Grenwitz. Come, it is time for us to start, if we wish to reach Count Grieben's for dinner. There is Malte. I hope you are warmly dressed. Where on earth is Bruno?"

"Up stairs with the doctor. He wants to stay if the doctor stays."

"There you see, dear Grenwitz; there you have it. A nice education, indeed. At once go up stairs, Malte! Bruno must get ready instantly; do you hear, instantly!"

"I won't tell him any such thing," replied Malte. "You can do it yourself."

"So I will," said the baroness, ringing the bell. "Tell Dr. Stein I beg him to come down for a moment!" she said to the servant.

The servant disappeared; the baroness walked up and down in the room with rapid strides.

"Only for Heaven's sake no scene, dear Anna Maria," said the old gentleman, who had risen.

The baroness did not vouchsafe an answer, for at that moment the door opened, and Oswald and Bruno came in--Bruno with a dark, defiant face and traces of recent tears in his eyes, but quite ready to start; a straw hat covered with oil-cloth in his hand.

"You wish to see me, madam," said Oswald, bowing to the baroness.

The baroness was not a little disconcerted by this unexpected solution of the difficulty.

"I was told Bruno refused to accompany us," she said "and so I thought----"

"Pardon me, madam," said Oswald, interrupting her; "of course, a refusal on the part of Bruno to obey your orders is utterly out of question. Bruno would have preferred to keep me company. It required only a word, however, to remind him that he must not on my account forget for a moment what he owes to you and the baron."

"Well, that is what I thought," said the baroness, who in her heart was very glad to have escaped a "scene" with Oswald, of whom she was more or less afraid, little as she was willing to confess this humiliating weakness even to herself. "He shall not repent having complied with our wishes. The weather is splendid, and I hope we shall have a delightful ride. What a pity, dear doctor, you cannot be one of us! Well, I hope we shall find you quite well again when we return--probably in two or three days.--Ah, mademoiselle, everything in readiness? Well, let us start, dear Grenwitz. Adieu, my dear doctor! *Adieu, mademoiselle; n'oubliez pas ce que je vous ai dit!* Ah, Mr. Timm! really, I had nearly forgotten you."

"Very flattering and very natural," said Mr. Timm, who had just made his appearance, his pencil stuck behind his ear, and his toilet in very imperfect condition, in order to bid them good-by, and who now helped the baroness into the carriage. "*Bon voyage.* My kindest regards to Count Grieben! famous old gentleman, who keeps a capital glass of wine! All right! Up!" and Mr. Timm gave the nearest horse a sound blow with his open hand, and then kissed his hand to the people in the carriage as it began to get into motion.

"God be thanked," he said, as the carriage had disappeared, and rubbed his hands with delight "Now we are all alone among the girls. What shall we do for sheer delight! *Qu'en dites-vous, Monsieur le docteur? Qu'en dites-vous, Mademoiselle?*"

"I have to write some letters, and will go to my room," said Oswald, going into the house.

"Then we'll take a French lesson in the garden, little Marguerite," said Mr. Timm, putting the young lady's arm unceremoniously in his own.

"I have not time," said the pretty Frenchwoman, trying to withdraw her arm.

"Ah, nonsense!" said Albert "If you have not time now that the old scarecrow is gone, when will you have time? We have made very good progress already in the verb *aimer*: *J'aime--tu aimes--nous aimons*!"

And Albert drew willing Marguerite into the garden, and those who took a special interest in the romantic couple, could see them roam about there, arm in arm, till dinner-time, and notice, moreover, that they decidedly preferred the divers shrubberies and darker avenues to the more exposed parts, which was perfectly natural in the burning sunlight.

It was afternoon, and Oswald was sitting at his writing-table, which he had only left to share a very silent dinner with Albert and Margerite, when a servant brought him a note. Oswald had, since he lived at Grenwitz, received so few letters that he was quite surprised, and asked the bearer from whom it came.

"From Baron Oldenburg," was the answer, "and the baron's carriage is at the door."

Oswald opened the note. It ran thus:

"Dear friend! If you can get rid of the studious boys, and have nothing better to do, I wish you would come and keep a lonely hypochondriac company for a few hours, and convince yourself, at the same time, how well the little heath flower has borne the transplanting into a strange soil. My coachman brings you this. He has orders to return with you or upon you. You may choose! Your Oldenburg."

Oswald hesitated what he should do. With the sunshine his longing for Melitta had returned. He could not comprehend how he could have let three days pass without making an attempt to see her. And yet he was reluctant to take the first step towards a reconciliation, although he knew that the cloud conjured up by the scene in the ball-room had long since disappeared, and that he had himself repented a thousand times his grievous wrong. We all know the contradictions in which so young a heart is apt to lose itself when pride and love contend for the mastery! And Oswald's proud heart had to beat many years yet before it learnt true love, which the Bible knows under the beautiful image of Charity, that beareth all things and believeth all things. True love can live only in hearts that have lived much and suffered much, as the sweetest and most highly prized fruits hang on those trees which the autumnal winds begin to strip of their summer dress of rich leaves.

Oswald took a sheet of paper to write the baron, that he could not accept his invitation, but the next moment he had taken up his hat and run down. The same elegant light wagon in which the baron had brought him back from Barnewitz, with the two fiery black horses, was at the door. The coachman, a handsome young man with an immense beard, smiled when he saw him, remembering the liberal fee he had received on that evening. As he got in, Albert called out over the garden wall:

"Can you take me with you, *Monsieur le docteur*?"

"Not very well!" said Oswald.

"Well, then, go alone!" said Albert; "to the devil," he added, as the carriage rolled away. "You are right, Marguerite," he said to the little Frenchwoman, who now came out of the shrubbery in which she had hid from Oswald, "the doctor is really a *fat*, as you say, and I shall soon be near hating him."

In the mean time the object of Mr. Timm's rising hatred was driving through the smaller gate towards the lane which went all around the ramparts into the beechwood. The latter came up to this place from the sea-shore, and had to be passed by all who drove from Grenwitz to Cona, the old home-place of the Oldenburgs. It was a delightful drive through the lofty cool halls of beech-trees, where the blue sky shone through the thick green tops of the trees; and on the left, when the underwood in places flourished less thickly between the grand old trunks, the blue sea occasionally flashed through, at first at rare intervals only, then, as they approached the edge of

the forest, more and more frequently, till at last, at the end of the wood, it lay before them blue and boundless, sparkling in the glorious sunlight.

The road followed the bluffs above the beach,--at times coming quite near to the brink, so that the roaring of the breakers among the great rocks below could be distinctly heard,--then again receding for some distance. On the right the eye swept over enormous grain-fields, which covered the whole table-land. The tall, strong stalks bent under the burden of the full ears, and waved to and fro in the mild breezes which came from the sea. Here and there a lark was fluttering, whose nest was close by the road, and then winged its way singing up into the blue sky.

Then the road descended into a low valley, through which a considerable brook, the outlet of the Fashwitz moor, was hurrying towards the sea. A village extended along the brook and close down to the sea, in which mostly fishermen lived, who paid rent to Baron Grenwitz, The carriage had to pass through the village, which looked very pretty with its small, tidy cottages, and the little gardens before the doors, in which all the flower-beds were edged with shells. At the door of one of the larger houses, which bore a sign with a large ship sailing swiftly through the green waves, and thus announced itself as an inn, a horseman was stopping. He was on a marvellously beautiful thoroughbred. He wore a long overcoat, and Oswald could not see his face, as he was just bending down to take a glass of brandy, which a pretty blue-eyed girl with a charming little snub nose held up to him.

"That horse is worth his two hundred pounds," said the coachman, who was a connoisseur.

"Who is the gentleman?" asked Oswald.

"Can't tell; I could not see his face."

Behind the fishermen's village the road ascended quite suddenly to a greater height than before. The landscape also changed its aspect entirely. The ground was less level; instead of golden grain, russet heather covered the soil--a desert, with large and small stones here and there, and at times with large plains of sand, on which a few spare signs of turf appeared at intervals. The air even seemed to be less mild, and where the road approached nearer to the brink of the steep bluff one could hear the roaring of the sea very distinctly. A sea-eagle was drawing its vast circles on high, and at times its blue shadow would darken for a moment the sunlit, rocky road.

"Is it far to Cona?" asked Oswald.

"The farm lies in that direction," said the coachman, pointing with his whip to the right across the heath; "you cannot see it from here. I have orders to drive you to the Swiss cottage."

"And where is that?"

"Straight before us, in the pines."

A small wood of pines crowned the highest point on the shore, to which the road now led upwards, becoming more and more rocky and steep. When Oswald turned round to look back, he noticed, at a distance of four or five hundred yards, the horseman whom he had seen at the inn. He rode keeping pace with the carriage, and when the latter stopped accidentally, because something was out of order in the harness, he also checked his horse till the carriage moved on again. Oswald, who had been struck by this manœuvre, asked the coachman a few minutes later to stop again. He turned round: the horseman also was stopping. He repeated the same manœuvre once more with the same success.

"That is very strange," said Oswald.

"Yes," replied the coachman; "I do not know what it can mean."

At that moment the horseman left the road and trotted off across the heath in the direction in which the coachman had said the farm-buildings of Cona were lying.

The carriage had reached the pines, which stood so close that one could not see the sea, and only heard its roaring as it mingled with the rush of the wind in the tall trees. Then it suddenly flashed up again at a turn in the road, and they saw before them, upon an open place looking upon the sea, a house built in Swiss cottage style, Oldenburg's summer-house.

CHAPTER IX.

When the carriage stopped on the open space before the door, surrounded by trees, and covered with dry brown leaves as with a carpet, Oldenburg appeared up stairs on a gallery, which divided the two stories and ran around the whole house. The next moment he was down at the door and shook Oswald heartily by the hand.

"There you are," he said. "I was almost afraid you would have done like most people, who, when they have once been in my company, do not care to renew the experiment."

"I do not know, baron, whether you show yourself to most people as you did to me," said Oswald; "if that is so, then I have at least a different taste from most people."

"Really, a salam in *optima forma*," said Oldenburg, smiling; "a couple of old gray-bearded sons of Mohammed could not do it better. Nothing is wanting but that we should now kiss the tips of our fingers. But come into the house; we'll be more-comfortable there."

They stepped into a small hall, from which they reached, by means of an easy, wide staircase, a larger hall in the upper story, which was lighted from above. From here they went into a large, quite high room; a glass door opened upon the broad gallery, which afforded an uninterrupted view upon the sea, and seemed to overhang the steep precipice, although there was still a distance of about thirty yards between it and the brink. Below was the surf howling between the shingle and huge blocks of stone.

The view from this elevated point out upon the blue, boundless sea, and upon the high white chalk-cliffs, which stretched far to the left, and ended finally in a cape crowned with the beech forest of Grenwitz, was indescribably grand, and Oswald could not suppress a loud cry of admiration.

"Well," said Oldenburg, leaning over the railing of the gallery by Oswald's side, "was it not a good idea of my worthy grandfather's to build a house at this point, which, by the way, is one of the highest in the whole island. I recall the old gentleman yet, with his long snow-white beard, and can see him even now sitting here on this gallery, and looking out with his dying eye upon the sea, like the king of Thule. He revered it as a grandson reveres his grandmother, and loved it as a young man loves the idol of his heart. I wish he could have bequeathed to me, beside his size, also his capacity of enjoying the beauties of nature. Unfortunately I have missed inheriting that."

"Are you in earnest?" asked Oswald.

"Certainly," said Oldenburg. "I have often enough regretted it in travelling, and been heartily ashamed of my æsthetic stupidity, which kept me from feeling anything at places where others would make summersets for pleasure or weep sentimental tears. I tried in vain to do like the English misses and sob: Beautiful, very fine indeed! I read in vain in Byron and Lamartine till I knew them nearly by heart,--it was all in vain. I never could do more than poor Werther, who saw in nature but a well-varnished picture; and a couple of beggar-boys, who fought in the sand by the sea-shore, or a poor fellah turning his heavy water-wheel, were more interesting to me than the Gulf of Naples and the Nile. I delight in men and the manners of men,--Nature is beyond me."

"But why do you exile yourself into this solitude? Why do you, who could so easily afford it, not rather live on the *Boulevard des Capucines*, or in Pall-Mall, London, than on this northern shore?"

"For the same reason that the falcon is made to fast twenty-four hours, before he is taken out on the gazelle-hunt,--to sharpen my hunger after my favorite dish. When I have lived here a few weeks my senses become fresh again and susceptible, and the sight of man's busy life has its old charms for me once more."

"And how much longer do you expect to stay here?"

"I do not know yet. My Solitude--this is the name my grandfather gave this place--pleases me this time better than usual. I have led an odd sort of life for the last few years, and seen so many children of Adam of various races and degrees of civilization that at last they all looked alike to me, an evidence that my senses had become dull and a new fast was necessary. You and Czika must see to it that I do not starve altogether."

"And where is our little foundling?"

"Somewhere on the heath, where she lies down in the blooming broom and stares at the sky; or on the beach, where she climbs about among the rocks and claps her hands with delight if a wave wets her bare feet. She has not been persuaded yet to put on shoes; I leave her in perfect freedom since she declared, on the second day of her stay here, when I refused to let her run out in the most inclement weather: Czika dies if she cannot go in the rain!"

"Does she pine after her mother?"

"Do you really think that brown woman, whom I at least saw only in passing, is her mother?"

"Certainly! The likeness between Czika and the Brown Countess is unmistakable."

"From whom have I heard that expression before?" said Oldenburg, thoughtfully; "probably from you the other day, but it sounded so familiar to me. Does the name come from you?"

"No; from Frau von Berkow," said Oswald, fixing his eye upon Oldenburg.

"Ah, indeed!" said the baron.

This was the first time that Melitta's name was mentioned by the two men, and it was characteristic enough, that at once a pause occurred in the conversation.

"On what occasion did Frau von Berkow make the acquaintance of the gypsy?" asked the baron, after a little while.

Oswald told him in a few words the story of the Brown Countess, as he had heard it from Melitta.

Oldenburg smiled. "Yes," he said, "now I remember. Frau von Berkow told me that anecdote some years ago. The story is a very pretty one, especially for those who take an interest in Frau von Berkow, because it is very characteristic of the amiable lady, who is as kind-hearted as she is fond of such little *escapades*."

The baron said this as simply and calmly as if there had never been a period when he would have risked his life for a smile of this "amiable lady."

"But had we not better go in?" he continued; "I see Hermann, my raven and my factotum, has put all kinds of nice things on a table, and there comes Thusnelda, his wife and my nurse, to invite us solemnly to take some refreshments."

A venerable-looking old lady of large size appeared in the glass door, dropped a low courtesy and said:

"Master, the table is set."

"Very well," said Oldenburg. "Have you seen the Czika?"

"I thought she was here," replied the matron, looking anxiously around.

"No. Bring her up if she comes while we are at table. Just go and look out for her. Come, doctor, I hope the long drive has made you hungry, or at least thirsty; Thusnelda has prepared for both cases."

While they took their seats at the richly served table, Oswald looked around in the room. The large apartment was well filled with chairs and sofas of various shapes, which seemed to have no fixed place, and a large writing-table of oak. Along the walls stood huge oak cases filled with books. Books were lying upon the tables and on the sofas and chairs; books strewed the floor. A few busts, copies from the antique, and some large engravings, were the only ornaments of the room, which evidently had no special claims to elegance. Between two of the bookcases, where an engraving ought to have hung, there was a green silk curtain, which conceded either an awkwardly placed window, or a portrait that was not to be seen by the curious eye of stray visitors.

Then his attention returned once more to the baron himself, who appeared to him to-day, in his long coat of yellow linen hanging loosely around his tall, thin form, quite another man. But then the altered costume struck Oswald even less than the changed expression in his face. The ironical line near the mouth, which even the close black beard could not effectually conceal, the small, sharp wrinkles on the high forehead, around the eyes, and near the nostrils--all these were to-day effaced by a benevolent smile, which gave an expression of mildness and goodness to the usually sharp eyes. Oswald could hardly trust his eyes, although he had overcome much of his former prejudice against the baron. Now the thought that a woman could and might love this man with her whole heart did not appear to him any more so very strange as at the ball at Barnewitz. He thought of the leaf in Melitta's album; he thought of his own words: This man will never be happy, because he will never desire to be happy, and of Melitta's answer: "Therefore this man is taken out of my life, as his portrait is taken out of my album;" and he said to himself: Ah, he might have been happy if he had desired to be so! Why did he not desire it? What has parted the two?--Which of them spoke the word that parted them, as it seems, forever?

These thoughts no longer awakened in Oswald that wild jealousy which had torn his heart on the day when he first met the baron in the forest. But the mysterious darkness which brooded over these events which he could not penetrate, and, what was worse, which he did not dare to penetrate, filled his soul with that sadness, that pity, which we feel for ourselves when our devotion is interrupted just when we most desire to pour out our overflowing heart in prayer.

Oswald tried to master his emotion; he felt as if the baron's sharp eyes were able to read what was going on in his soul. But the latter remained apparently quite unconcerned, and entirely preoccupied by the subject of their conversation: Czika and the Brown Countess. Both men tried

in vain to solve the enigma of this remarkable affair with all their ingenuity. What could have induced the Brown Countess to leave her child, which she seemed to love most devotedly, so unceremoniously in the hands of strangers? How could she gather courage to part with her at the very moment when the brutal jokes of the young noblemen--young Count Grieben's groom had told the whole story to Oldenburg's coachman--and the playful elopement with the child had excited her rage to such a degree? Had she given the girl to Oswald or to the baron, or had she not given her but merely sold her, postponing the day of payment for a month, in the hope that the two men, or either of them, would in the mean time become so attached to the child that she would receive a higher price for her?

"My special apprehension," said Oldenburg, "is that the Brown Countess may repent of her bargain and take the child again from me, or that the Czika cannot resist the longing after her young life, and vanishes some fine morning or other. I confess it would be a severe blow for me. Your prophecy that I would find in the sweet child a treasure more precious than Aladdin's magic lamp, seems to have been fulfilled. I should like to be the child's father! I should like to endow this silent heart with speech, to see my own thoughts beautified and ennobled in the new language. I should like to bind her to me with all the ties that can bind a daughter to her father, a father to his daughter--of course only in order to see these ties torn, and some jackanapes come and ask me to throw her into his arms, because his coat fits him a little better than his neighbor's! I am now in that period of life when one longs to have children; when one is not a Swiss, who, you know, proposed to eat children, though not from love; I long for them as a tired wanderer desires a staff to support his weary limbs. When we feel that we have reached the turning-point in our life, and that we must go down hill henceforth, while the land of our youth is gradually disappearing behind the top of the hill, then we would like to hear joyous children's voices reach us from the other side, which recall to us our own happy childhood. You will ask me why I do not yield to my prosaic desires and marry?--Or perhaps you will not ask me so; for you will see yourself that marriage is out of question for a man who has spent the ten best years of his life in all kinds of *liaisons dangereuses* and *innocentes*, I do not want a wife who does not wish me to say to her: I love you! and how can I tell her so without making myself ridiculous in my own eyes, after having said so to I know not how many in all the languages I know? No, no! With such views a man may become a Turk and establish a harem, but he is too bad in all conscience for marriage in the highest and purest sense, which is a wonderful alchemy changing two into one."

"And yet," said Oswald, "genuine love has a purifying, hallowing power, which scatters all doubts as the rays of the sun scatter fogs and mists. True love, like true hatred, wipes 'all foolish stories from the tablets of memory,' and changes us in an instant from wild barbarians into Hellenes of delicate feelings. Rude strength, which before simply asserted itself in destruction or in production, now assumes a pleasing shape, and where before it created a Siva, whose fiery glance destroyed all creatures, it now creates an Olympic Zeus, who blesses all creation with his paternal eyes."

"Well said," replied the baron; "will you try this hock, a wine of some merit,--very well said and also perhaps true,--only not for Problematic Characters."

"What do you call Problematic Characters?"

"It is an expression which Goethe uses in a place that has ever given me much trouble of mind. There are problematic characters, says Goethe,--I believe in his Fact and Fiction,--who are not equal to any position in which they may happen to be, and who are not satisfied with any. This, he adds, produces a violent contradiction, and leads to the consumption of life without enjoyment.--It is a fearful word of his, for it is a sentence of death pronounced with Olympic calmness on a numerous class of men, of whom we have but too many in our day, who are very good men and very bad musicians.--There is Czika!"

"Where?"

"Behind you!"

Oswald turned round. Within the open door which led out on the balcony stood the pretty child, surrounded by the red light of the setting sun. Her luxuriant bluish black hair fell in long ringlets on both sides of her face upon her shoulders, which rose from a blue Turkish blouse, while a light shawl of red silk was tied around her slender waist Turkish trousers reached down to her feet. When she had seen that there was a stranger in the room, she had been about to slip away again as stealthily as she had come, till the baron's words had arrested her and Oswald had turned around. At seeing him a joyous smile passed over her dark, solemn face, and her brown gazelle eyes looked almost tenderly up at him, as he now was standing before her, holding one of her hands in his own, and parting with the other her luxuriant hair.

"Czika knows you," she said. "You are very kind. You love the poor; the poor love you."

"A declaration of love!" said Oldenburg, who had remained seated at the table; "how many have you had, doctor, this week? Doctor, you are a dangerous man, and I shall see myself compelled to forbid you the house?"

"Why are you not always here?" asked Czika, turning her large eyes from the baron upon

Oswald. "Czika will sit by you near the great water; Czika will gather flowers for you on the heath. Why are you not always here?"

"He cannot be always here, Czika," said the baron, "but he will come very often. Won't you, doctor?"

The door to the anteroom opened, and Mrs. Muller, or Thusnelda, as the baron called her, looked in.

"I cannot--ah! there she is! Where have you been, darling doll? Come, I will put you a little to rights. How you look again!--quite covered with heather, as usual; what are the gentlemen to think?"

With these words the matron led the child out of the room.

"You must know that there is a strong attachment between the two," said the baron. "My old nurse has had many blooming children who have all died young. Other women's hearts often grow hard under such calamities; hers has remained soft, and now she loves the Czika as if she were her first-born. But that is just as if a dove had hatched a falcon. Czika's determination to enjoy unbounded liberty causes the old lady ten times every day infinite trouble and despair. And then, another difficulty. Thusnelda is very pious, and Czika has--*horribile dictu*--no religion whatever, unless it be some mysterious worship of the stars, which she performs at night, when she steals away from her couch and dances in the moonlight on the beach, as Thusnelda swears she has seen her do, to her own unspeakable horror and disgust. And, to tell the truth, I believe Thusnelda is right. At least I have noticed more than once that if the gypsies have any object of worship it is the sun, the moon, and the stars."

"Have you often had opportunity in your travels to come in contact with this interesting race?"

"Oh yes!" said the baron, "even into very close contact, especially once in Hungary--now twelve years ago."

The baron paused, filled his glass, and drank the wine slowly, fixing his eyes on the tablecloth like a person whose thoughts are completely preoccupied with some recollection.

"Well," said Oswald, "how was that?"

"What?" said the baron, as if awakening from a dream; "oh yes; well, you shall hear what I had to do with gypsies in Hungary."

"I presume that was a romance?"

"Of course," replied the baron; "I was at that time at an age when every man is more or less romantic, unless he be born a mere stick. I was enthusiastic about moonlit magic nights, about wells and forest noises, and, above all, I was enthusiastic about slender maidens, with or without a guitar and a blue ribbon.

"All my views of life were eminently romantic, especially my morality. The whole of life had no more meaning for me than a puppet-show at a fair, and sovereign irony was the only real feeling which I appreciated. In a word, I was a nice fellow, and if they had hung me on the nearest gallows it would have been my just punishment, and, I trust, a good warning for others.

"I was heartily tired of my student's life at Bonn and at Heidelberg. I had looked in vain into a thousand books to solve the mystery about which so many better men have racked their brains, and I wanted to try it in a new way. I wrote to my guardian, and conveyed to him my intention to travel a few years. My guardian approved the plan, as he approved everything I ever suggested,--so he could get rid of me for a time,--he sent me money and letters of introduction, and I went on my journey. I travelled over Southern Germany, Switzerland, and Northern Italy. But if you were to ask me even for a superficial account of my journey I would be seriously embarrassed. I know as much of those countries as of the landscapes I have seen in my dreams. Last, I went to Hungary. Chance, which was always my only guide, had led me there. In Vienna I had become acquainted with a Hungarian nobleman, whose father owned large estates at the foot of the Tetra mountains. He had invited me to visit him, and I went. We led quite an idyllic life; the main features of which were wine, women, and dice. He had a couple of beautiful sisters, with whom I fell in love one by one. Then I became enthusiastic about the French *dame de compagnie* of his mother, who had just come from Paris and put all the young Hungarian ladies to shame by the grace of her manners, her taste in matters of toilette, and her skill in conversation.

"Once I was roaming about in the forest, my mind full of this sweet goddess, whom I then believed in as I did in genuine pearls and real gold, but whom I afterwards met again in Paris under different circumstances; I was dreaming, and thus lost myself, or was led by my guide, Chance, to a clearing which a band of gypsies had chosen for their temporary encampment. A few small huts built of clay and wickerwork in very archaic style, a fireplace over which an old dame was roasting a stone-martin, deerskins and rags hanging on the branches to dry--this was the picture which suddenly met my eye. The whole band was away with the exception of the old witch, a few little babies who rolled about in the sand in paradisiac nakedness, and one young girl of about fifteen--"

The baron filled his glass and drank it at one gulp.

"Of about fifteen--perhaps she was older--it is difficult to determine the age of gypsy girls. She was slender and agile like a deer, and her dark eyes shone with such a magic, supernatural fire, that I was seized by a rapture of delight as I looked deeper and deeper into them, while she was telling me my fortune by reading the lines in my hand. My fate could be read much more clearly in her eyes than in my hand. I was delighted, enraptured, beside myself--the world had disappeared in an instant. You must bear in mind that I was twenty years old, and romantic as few men are, even at that early age; but I felt that to be a gypsy, to feed upon stone-martins, and to sun one's self in the eyes of a gypsy girl was the true and only purpose of life upon earth. I stayed with the gypsies I know not how many days. My friends at the château thought I had been torn by wolves. But one evening, when the sun had already disappeared behind the mountain wall which protected our encampment towards the north, and while the band were still away, I was sitting with the Zingarella at the foot of an old oak-tree, and was happy in my young love--when----

"I verily believe there is somebody coming"--the baron said, interrupting himself--"was not that a strange voice?"

"I hope not," said Oswald.

The door opened; old Hermann looked in and said:--

"Baron Cloten wishes to present his respects, sir; are you at home?"

"Oh no!" replied Oldenburg; "but, to be sure, I cannot very well decline seeing him; he comes to--hm, hm!"

"Do not let me prevent you from being hospitable," said Oswald, rising.

"I pray, stay!" said the baron; "I hope he will not remain long. He comes in a certain affair in which he wants my advice. That is all. Show him up stairs, Hermann."

A moment afterwards Baron Cloten entered. He wore a riding-coat and top-boots, and seemed to have had a long ride. At least he looked very much heated. Oswald's presence seemed to annoy or to embarrass him; at least he spoke to him with striking formality, after having shaken hands with the baron.

"Very warm to-day," he snarled, seating himself in the chair which the baron had offered him; "Robin is covered with sweat,---told your groom to rub him down with a wisp of straw. Keeps an animal marvellously well. Pleasant wine--what is it?--famous wine--had some the other day at Barnewitz--not half as good. Apropos Barnewitz--no bad effects, baron? Left somewhat early--heat really abominable----"

"Won't you put down your hat, Cloten?"

"Thanks! Am going away directly. Only wanted to see--quite near here--was at Grenwitz--everybody out there--came over here to see how all were."

"But you surely have a few minutes?"

"Not a moment--'pon honor," said Cloten, emptying his glass and rising; "call in to-morrow, perhaps. Good-by, baron."

Cloten again bowed very formally to Oswald and went to the door, accompanied by the baron.

"I pray, don't trouble yourself," said Cloten.

"I just want to have a look at Robin," replied Oldenburg, and then to Oswald; "excuse me a moment, doctor."

Oswald was alone. The remarkably cool manner of the young nobleman had offended his pride, though he tried to convince himself that he despised him. He walked up and down in the room, much excited. His hatred of the nobility had been fanned into a flame; even Oldenburg's manner seemed to him to have been less cordial while Cloten was there.

His eye fell upon the green silk curtain between the two bookcases, which had struck him before.

"I wonder what this veiled image means? Perhaps a voluptuous Correggio. At all events, a key to the better knowledge of this strange man. You'll excuse my curiosity, *monsieur le baron*?"

Oswald pulled the silken cord of the curtain, and the youth at Saïs, who lifted the veil before the sacred image of Isis, could not have been more startled than Oswald was when he saw, not a richly tinted Italian painting, but in a niche, a bust of chaste white marble, which, in spite of the antique hair-dress and a slight attempt to idealize, was nothing else than a striking portrait of Melitta. There was her rich waving hair; there her beautiful smooth brow, the straight, delicate nose; there were the soft lips, looking dewy even in marble!

Before Oswald could recover from his amazement to find himself thus face to face with his beloved one, the baron entered.

"Please excuse my indiscretion," said Oswald, who had not been able to draw the curtain back again; "but why do you keep veiled images here which belong in a sanctuary, and not in a common reception-room?"

"You are right," replied the baron, without a trace of confusion; "this green veil is, like most veils, only a provocation; and, by the way, it is very foolish to conceal the copy when the original can be seen at any time by those who will take the trouble of going to Palermo and asking for leave to see the villa Serra di Falco."

"Indeed?" said Oswald, annoyed by the imperturbable calmness with which the baron tried to make him swallow his story. "Ah! in Palermo? I had been tempted to look for the original nearer home."

"You mean in Berlin, at the Museum!" said the baron. "There is a Muse there which looks very much like this bust, but if you examine it more closely you will soon see the difference."

"Yes," replied Oswald; "the nose there is more decided, and the carriage of the head is slightly different, and altogether the resemblance with Frau von Berkow much less striking than in this bust."

"Do you think so?" said the baron, rising and going up to the bust. "Really, you are right. There is really a slight resemblance between this bust and Frau von Berkow. Well, that does not make me like the work any less, as there are few ladies in the world whom I love more to be reminded of than that amiable and clever lady."

The baron drew the curtain over the bust, as if he wished to end the conversation.

"Come, doctor," he said, "sit down and try to forget that Cloten, this cleverest of all young men, has ever been here."

"I believe it is high time for me to be gone," said Oswald; "the sun is near setting--I should not like to get home too late, to-night especially."

"As you like it," said the baron. "Welcome the coming and speed the parting guest! I have a great mind to accompany you some distance. Are you fond of riding?"

"Rather so."

"Then we'll go on horseback, if you like it I will take one of my servants. Excuse me a moment--I must change my dress and give a few orders."

* * * * *

"You sit your horse very well, doctor," said the baron, as they were slowly riding along on the height of the bluff a quarter of an hour later. "It is really remarkable what talents you have in these things. I believe there is no branch of bodily skill in which you would not quickly become a master."

"It is all the more remarkable, because my plebeian descent and my modest education do not entitle me to any of these aristocratic gifts."

"What a pity my name is not Cloten," said the baron.

"Why?"

"Because then I would not suspect your irony in the most remote way, and, on the contrary, be moved by your touching modesty to overcome an antipathy amounting almost to hatred."

"Is that Baron Cloten's sentiment towards me?"

"Do you think any dandy likes to see another man surpass him in pistol-shooting, dancing, courting, etc., if that is the pride of his little soul? Women and weak men never forgive that superiority. I amused myself royally that night at Barnewitz to watch the faces they were making at you, of course behind your back, and unfortunately enjoyed the malicious pleasure of doing everything to fan the flame of their jealousy."

"Why unfortunately? I assure you I mind very little whether these gentlemen think well of me or not."

"Oh, no doubt you do. But as long as you live in this neighborhood you are compelled to meet these people, and it is a rule of the simplest wisdom of the world not to offend your fellow-passengers by treading on their corns.--Who on earth comes racing over there across the fields?"

This exclamation was caused by the mysterious horseman whom Oswald had noticed at his arrival, and who was now trotting across the heath so as to reach the road at a distance of

perhaps six hundred yards ahead of them.

Oswald told the baron his experience with the horseman.

"We must find that out," said the baron; "let us trot."

They had scarcely trotted a few yards when the man before them started his horse also. It looked as if he were stealthily turning round now and then, but as the twilight had come on it was not easy to be quite sure of that.

"Let us try a gallop," said Oswald; "I see the mysterious man is repeating his manœuvres of the afternoon."

They were on a wide level plain, which sloped off gradually towards the fishermen's village, following the stony and less level ground on which Oldenburg's villa was built. The soil was nothing but a thin crust of earth, covered with meagre heather, and spread directly over the rock itself, so that the horses going faster and faster beat hard upon the stony subsoil.

The mysterious man had no sooner heard the sound of their hoofs than he had followed their example; he was now galloping before his pursuers, keeping exactly the same distance.

"Stern chase is a long chase!" said Oldenburg, who seemed to take pleasure in the matter. "That fellow must have a capital horse. Just look how he flies, scarcely touching the ground! Don't you know, Charles, who that can be?"

"No, sir," said the groom, who was now riding in a line with the two gentlemen. "It cannot be anybody from the neighborhood, or we would have overtaken him long since."

"Charles flatters himself with the idea, you see, that he commands the best and the fastest horses far and near," observed the baron.

"He won't stand it long, sir!" said Charles.

"We must see that," replied the baron.

"Suppose we make an end of the matter by giving the reins to our horses," said Oswald, a few minutes later. "We shall then soon see whether we can overtake him or not."

"Very well," said Oldenburg, "*en avant!*"

The three riders gave the reins to their horses. The noble animals, delighting in their freedom, and as if they knew that their reputation as the best racers in the whole neighborhood was being tested, rushed along with maddening speed, first breast to breast, till Oldenburg's black horse took the lead and maintained it in spite of all efforts on the part of the other two horses.

The mysterious man had allowed his pursuers to approach him to within about four hundred yards. They thought already the chase was over and the groom had saved his own honor and that of his horses, when suddenly the man before them gave the spur to his thoroughbred, and, bending his head low down upon the mane of the animal, shot off with a speed which soon made even the incensed groom aware that it was useless to try to overtake him.

"I believe it is the devil himself," he said, through his teeth.

Oldenburg laughed. "So do I," he said. "Let us give it up."

It took some time before the excited horses could calm down again. The mysterious man was still riding at full speed, and in a few moments he had disappeared in the lane which led down to the fishermen's village.

Half an hour afterwards they reached the gates of Grenwitz. Oswald got off his horse and gave the reins to the groom, to shake hands with the baron.

"If you were not too much bored," said the latter, "I hope we may repeat the experiment soon again. Good-by!"

Oswald reached his room without having met a soul in the quiet courtyard or in the silent house. As he was leaning out of the open window and looked down into the darkening garden, he saw two persons walking up and down in the avenue, whispering and laughing. They were Albert and Marguerite. They had evidently improved the good opportunity to advance in their conjugation of *aimer*.

CHAPTER X.

"DEAR SIR! To succeed in all undertakings equally well is not given to any one, not even to the most favored knight. You will therefore, it is hoped, understand why a person, who has watched with much astonishment the process you have made in the favor of a certain lady, is anxious to become personally acquainted with the magic charm you possess, and therefore desires to see you. If you are disposed to afford him this pleasure, you are requested to take a walk this evening, at eleven o'clock, near the smaller Grenwitz gate. Under the old beech-tree on the road to Berkow you will, if you consent, find a carriage to convey you to the place of rendezvous. There you will find everything required to begin a more intimate acquaintance.

"It need hardly be mentioned, that, of course, an affair of so much delicacy has to be treated with the utmost secrecy. The coachman will ask you '*Qui vive*,' and if you answer '*Moi*,' he will know that you are the right person. *Au revoir, monsieur!*"

This was the text of a letter which the mail-carrier from the neighboring town handed Oswald on the evening of the next day.

He read the odd note several times before he could recover from his surprise. Who was the "person" who wished to make his personal acquaintance? What "lady" was meant? Had the mystery of the forest chapel fallen into indiscreet hands? Could Baron Cloten be the author of the challenge? The peculiar, cool manner of the young nobleman at their last meeting favored this presumption. Or was the meeting accidental, and the mysterious rider the real writer? Was he, perhaps, one of Cloten's spies? On the other hand, was not the conversation which Baron Barnewitz had had with Oldenburg, and which Oswald had heard as an unwilling listener, sufficient evidence that Cloten had quite enough to do with his own difficulties?

Oswald passed in his mind all the young nobles in review whose acquaintance he had made at the ball, and his suspicion was finally fixed upon young Count Grieben, that tall blonde youth who made such amusing efforts to be brilliant, and to win favor with the coquettish Emily--efforts in which he failed with equal success. He seemed to be most likely to be the author of some of the phrases in the letter.

What was he to do? Should he expose himself to the perhaps very ignoble vengeance of the young noblemen? Should he enter the lists without knowing anything of the weapons, the witnesses, the place, or even his adversaries? Could any fair-minded man blame him if he took no notice of the challenge of an anonymous writer?

But he probably had not to deal with fair-minded men. Had he not already found out, and seen it proved by his experience, that in these privileged circles the pleasure of the individual stood for right, and the most frivolous whim of the moment served as a motive for action? Had he not found this to be so even in the two characters which were so far above the common mass, in Melitta and Oldenburg?

And would they not charge him, if he declined the challenge, with want of that delicate sense of honor of which these nobles were so proudly boasting?

No, no; he must take up the gauntlet, however contemptible the hand might be that had thrown it down in the dark. He must show these young noblemen that he was not afraid to meet their revenge alone, friendless, and unarmed.

His blood was boiling. He walked up and down in his room in great excitement.

"Come on! Come on!" he hissed through his teeth. "I wish they would place themselves one by one opposite to me; my hatred would give me strength to overthrow them all. Quite right! Quite right! What have I to do here among these wolves? To be torn or to tear. I ought to have foreseen that."

Oswald felt how a new evil spirit rose from the deepest bottom of his soul, which his eye had never yet fathomed. A wild passion, a burning thirst for revenge, a mad desire to destroy seized upon him; it was the intense, frantic hatred of the nobility which he had felt as a boy, while he loaded the pistols for his father behind the city wall, when the latter shot at the ace of spades and each time aimed at the heart of a noble man; when he read at school, in Livy, of the haughty arrogance of the Tarquins, or in his room, of the tearful story of Emilia Galotti. And they were no fictions! Here, in this castle, perhaps in these same rooms which he now occupied, a victim of the cruelty of a nobleman had bled to death; here the poor, unhappy, and beautiful Marie had paid with a thousand burning tears for her folly in believing the word of a noble tempter.

She had been victimized because she was a frail woman, and because she had no weapons but tears--tears which found no pity. Those tears had never been atoned for. How if he should arise as her avenger--if he should avenge those tears of a low-born maid in the blood of a nobleman?

Such thoughts passed through Oswald's mind while he was making a few hasty preparations for the case of an unlucky event--little as he thought it likely to happen, for he saw himself only in

the part of an avenger. He burnt a few letters which he did not wish to fall into strange hands; he arranged his other papers, and finally wrote a few lines to Professor Berger; but he soon tore them up again and threw them into the fire.

"*Tant de bruit pour une omelette*," he said, "the wretches do not deserve that I should give myself so much trouble for their sake."

He awaited the appointed hour with impatience.

At last the great clock struck ten. He heard the servants going to bed; even from Albert's room a light was shining down upon the dark garden. It struck half-past ten. Oswald dressed himself carefully, took a rose from a bouquet which he had gathered in the garden, and put it in his button-hole.

Then he slipped noiselessly down the narrow steps on which Marie, on that stormy night had escaped from the château into the garden, through the garden and out at the gate which led into the courtyard, and from which it was only a short distance to the little gate where he was told he would find the carriage.

The night sky was covered with clouds, through which a few scattered stars only pierced their way; it was so dark that Oswald had to walk very slowly, until his eye had become accustomed to the darkness, if he did not wish to risk falling into the ditch on either side of the road.

Suddenly a large dark object loomed up before him, and at the same moment a rough, deep voice cried out: "*Qui vive?*"

"*Moi!*" answered Oswald.

He saw the outlines of a tall form which opened the door of the carriage and let down the steps.

As soon as he had got in the door was closed after him, and the horses started; he could not see whether the person had jumped upon the box, or whether it was the coachman himself.

Coachman and horses must have known the road well, or be able to see as well at night as in open daylight, for the carriage drove with a swiftness to which even an impatient lover could have had no objection. The road was in good order, and although now and then a stone was lying in the track, the carriage was so well hung on excellent springs that one hardly perceived the jolt.

Oswald leaned back in the swelling cushions. The soft velvet seemed to exhale a perfume, which filled the narrow compartment like the boudoir of a pretty woman. Oswald even fancied it was the same perfume which Melitta ordinarily used. And suddenly he felt as if Melitta were sitting by his side--as if her soft warm hand were touching his--as if he felt her breath on his brow--as if her lips were lying lightly like a zephyr on his own.

And this delicious dream effaced the reality. Oswald forgot what was before him; he did not think of the future; he knew not where he was--and only she, she herself filled his soul. The memory of her sweet grace, her goodness, her intoxicating beauty overcame him like a spring-tide of bliss. The precious images of those happy hours which he had spent by her side, at her feet, rose before his mind's eyes with marvellous clearness; he saw them all, from his first meeting on the lawn behind the château at Grenwitz, to the moment when she turned from him, tears in her eyes, in that night of hapless memory, when the demon of jealousy struck its sharp claws into his wounded heart.

"Forgive me, Melitta! forgive me!" he groaned, burying his head in the cushions.

Suddenly the carriage stopped. The door opened, the tall man who had let down the steps before helped him get out, gave him his hand, led him a few steps up to a large glass door, where, through the red curtains, a faint light was bidding him welcome. The door opened, and Oswald found himself in the garden-room in Melitta's château, and Melitta wound her arms around his neck, and Melitta's voice whispered: "Forgive me, Oswald! Forgive me!"

"You cruel man," said Melitta, after the first wild storm of delight, with its showers of joyous tears, had passed away. "How could you shut up your heart for so many days when you knew I was standing outside knocking for admission? But I will not scold. You are here and all is right again."

She leaned her head on his breast and looked up at him smiling through her tears. "Is it not, darling? Is not all right again? Now Melitta is again what she was before to you, what she will ever be to you, in spite of all pretty girls of sixteen, be their name Emily or----"

"Melitta!"

"Or Melitta! For there is but one Melitta, if thousands bore that name, and that one am I! And how could you forget such a weighty matter! What trouble you have caused old Baumann! I will say nothing of myself, for joy follows grief and grief follows joy, and if two love each other honestly, a few tears more or less, a few sleepless nights, a few letters begun and torn to pieces

again, matter, after all, very little--but poor Baumann! Just imagine! The first day I was very calm, for I thought: he will come soon enough, and fall down at your feet and ask your pardon! But when you did not come, nor on the second, nor on the third day, then my heart failed me, and I dare say I looked wretched enough, for as I was sitting here, resting my head in my hands, I suddenly felt a hand on my shoulder, and when I looked up, good old Baumann was standing before me, and said: Shall I go and see why he is staying away so long?--Ah do, dear Baumann, I said. Then the good soul went, without saying a word, and did not return till late at night. Did you see him?--Yes, ma'am! He is well and hearty; I have had a race with him."

"Then old Baumann was the mysterious horseman?"

"Of course, and he laughed in his quiet way when he told me that you had been after him, as if he meant to say: The children! They thought they could overtake me on Brownlock!"

"Then that was Brownlock, of whom Bruno has told me so much! Well, now I can explain it all."

"Can you? Then you will also explain it, I hope, why Baumann sat down and wrote that letter at my dictation. The old man refused, and said: A duel is no child's play, and that is carrying the joke too far. But I laughed and wept till he gave way; so he took Brownlock once more this morning and rode to town to mail the letter."

"And if I had not accepted the challenge?"

"Baumann asked me the same question, and I answered: Fie, are you not ashamed to say such a thing, Baumann?"

Oswald laughed. "Of course! we must always be ashamed when we say or do something that does not suit the world, as it exists in your little heads."

Melitta made no reply, and Oswald saw that a shadow flitted across her face. He knelt down before her and said, seizing her hand as it hung by her side:

"Have I offended you, Melitta?"

"No," she said, "but you would not have said so a week ago."

"How do you mean?"

"Come, get up! Let us go into the garden. It is hot in the house; I long to breathe the cool night air!"

They went down into the garden and walked up and down, arm in arm, till they came to the low terrace, where Oswald had found Melitta when he called upon her that Sunday afternoon. They sat down under the pine-tree, which spread its branches over them as if in protection. The night was marvellously silent. The trees stood quiet, not a leaf stirring, as if they were fast asleep; fragrant perfumes filled the warm, dry air, and glow-worms were wandering through the night like bright tiny stars.

"You did not answer my question, Melitta," said Oswald. "What is it the last eight days have changed in me? Am I not the same I was; only that the bitter regret at having hurt your feelings has made my love for you deeper and warmer?"

Melitta made no reply; suddenly she said, speaking low and quick:

"Have you seen much of him since that Sunday at Barnewitz?"

"Of whom, Melitta?"

"Well, of--of Baron Oldenburg. God be thanked, I have said it. It is so childish and foolish in me to have hesitated so long to speak of Oldenburg, and to tell you what our relations have been,--and yet I felt you had a right to know it, and I was bound to lift the veil from my past, wherever it might appear dark to you. This feeling grew so overwhelming in me, especially when I found that you had become intimate with the baron, that I wanted to see you at any price, and this suggested to me the foolish plan."

"I have no such right as you say," replied Oswald, "to be foolishly curious. I have to be grateful for the love which you grant me, and I am grateful for it, as for a sweet gift from on high. There was a time, I confess, when my love still knew what doubt was, but that was not yet true, genuine love. Now I cannot imagine that I could ever cease to love you, or that you could ever do so. I feel even as if this love was not only intended to be eternal, but had actually existed before, in all eternity. I do not know if you ever loved before; it may be, but I do not comprehend it, and would not comprehend it, even if you were to say so expressly."

"And I assure you," said Melitta tenderly, coming closer to Oswald, "I have never loved till I saw you; for what I before called love was only unsatisfied longing after an ideal which I bore in my heart, which I could find nowhere, and which I had long despaired of ever finding."

"And you fancy that I am this personified ideal? Poor Melitta! How soon you will awake from this dream! Awake, Melitta! awake--it is time yet!"

"No, Oswald, it is too late. There is a love which is as strong as death, and there is no awaking from it. No! No awaking. I feel it. I know it. And if you were to turn your face from me, and if you were to push me from you--with you I know not what offended love, what insulted pride are--nothing but immeasurable, unfathomable, inexhaustible love. Till now I only knew that I could love; how much I could love, you first have taught me....

"And now also I can speak freely of the time when I did not yet know you--for then my life was only apparent life and all I felt and thought was only a vague dreaming without connection and sense. I know that now--now since I have opened my eyes in the sunlight of your love, and life lies clear and transparent before me, so that the deep night which surrounds us looks to me brighter than formerly the brightest day. Now I can speak of the Melitta of former days as of a strange person for whose doings and sayings I am no longer responsible; now I can and will tell you what that portrait in my album means--that detached leaf which frightened you so, darling.--Yes, I saw it all; you changed color, and you did not comprehend how I could ask your opinion of a man whom you could not but think my lover. And yet Oldenburg never was my lover, or there must be strange degrees in love, of which the lowest is as far from the highest as the earth is from heaven.

"I knew Oldenburg from my childhood. My father's estate adjoined Cona, where you were yesterday. My aunt, who undertook my education after my mother's death, and Oldenburg's mother were warm friends, and met almost daily. So did we children. Oldenburg was several years older than I, but as girls are always ahead of boys in their development, we did not feel the difference in age much; we played and worked together; we were good comrades--ordinarily, for not unfrequently we fell out, and then we had sharp words and quarrels and tears. I rarely gave cause for them, for I was not obstinate, and always ready to give way, but Adalbert was excessively sensitive, stubborn, and self-willed. The double nature of his character, which he afterwards tried to harmonize and to conceal from all but the most sharp-sighted, was then very evident. It was impossible not to become interested in him, but I doubt if anybody really loved him. This he felt, and this feeling, which he bore about with him like a concealed wound, made him early a hypochondriac and a misanthrope. It was of little use to him that everybody admired his eminent talents, and that no one doubted his courage, his love of the truth--his stubborn, self-willed ways repelled all and offended all. Even his tall, ungraceful figure and his awkward motions contributed to turn the hearts of men away from him. At least it was so with me. I had from childhood up felt irresistibly attracted towards all that was beautiful and graceful, and had a real horror of what was ugly and ill-shapen. I could not love Adalbert, although he was sincerely attached to me with great tenderness, which he carefully hid under an appearance of coldness and rudeness. When his passionate temper got the better of his attempted calmness, he would even reproach me bitterly on account of my heartlessness and my fickleness.

"Such were our relations till Adalbert, at sixteen, went to college, for he had persuaded his guardian--his mother had also died in the mean time--to let him go to the city. Now he came but rarely to Cona, and then only for a few days. Then I was for two years at boarding-school. Thus it came about that we met only in passing, till he went to the University at Heidelberg. When he returned from there, and from a long journey, I had been married two years.

"He did not come to Berkow till a considerable time afterwards. Our meeting was strange enough. He seemed to accept the changed state of things only as a *fait accompli*, which we submit to because we cannot help ourselves. He did not trouble me with questions; he asked for no confidential communication, which the sole friend of my childhood and early youth might well have demanded. He did not reproach me; he did not tell me that he had loved me, that he had hoped to obtain my hand, although I afterwards learned that that had been so, and that the news of my marriage, which he received at Heidelberg, had nearly driven him mad, and laid him for weeks and months upon the sick-bed. He tried by silent observation to obtain a clear idea of my situation. I saw that nothing escaped him, that not a word I uttered, not a gesture I made remained unnoticed. This consciousness of being continually watched by such sharp eyes was by no means agreeable, especially as there was much that ought to have been very different from what it actually was. Soon we were as we had been in childhood; only there occurred no violent scenes, as our passions had subsided. As he then had brought me all the pretty shells, and stones, and flowers which he found on the beach, among the rocks, and in the garden, so he now told me all his indefatigably active mind could discover in the field of science: now a fine poem and now a deep thought--and he felt it not less deeply now, if I treated his treasures as carelessly as I had done with the flowers which I allowed to perish, and the stones and shells which I threw away. I knew I had no better friend than he, and he knew that in all I felt for him there was no love; all the more disinterested was his friendship, and all the more unwarrantable the fickleness with which I treated him.

"His friendship was soon to be proved. The melancholy into which Carlo had fallen, soon after Julius' birth, assumed a more and more dangerous form. Attacks of unexpected violence, the precursors of the last fearful catastrophe, became more frequent. He would now admit no one near him but Adalbert, although he, the *bon-vivant* of former days, had been in the habit of laughing ruthlessly at the baron, who was his junior, and yet thoughtful and melancholy himself. How often had he ridiculed him, how often called him contemptuously the Youth of Saïs! Now he accompanied him everywhere; now Oldenburg's voice was the only one which could drive away

the dark demons that fought for his mind, at least for the moment. And the self-sacrificing spirit with which Oldenburg performed this service of love cannot be sufficiently praised, and I ought to thank him for it all my life long. Then came the catastrophe. Oldenburg stood faithfully by me in those dark days, or rather, he took all the burden and the responsibility upon himself, and managed all and everything with such energy and sagacity that I had only to consent.

"Carlo had been carried to an Asylum at the South, and I was left alone here at Berkow, devoting myself entirely to the education of my Julius, who was then five years old, and for whom I had secured Bemperlein as a teacher and a friend, thanks to Oldenburg's recommendation. The baron came less frequently than formerly, but still quite frequently, as I thought. It seemed to me that a tender note mingled at times with his friendship, and hardly had I noticed this than I thought it my duty to point out to him, as gently as I could, that his visits were probably too frequent. This was perhaps very ungrateful in me, but we women find it very difficult to be grateful to those whom we do not love.

"Next day Oldenburg had left the country. No one knew where he was. Somebody reported him, six months afterwards, in Paris; a year later he was seen in London. He was here, and there, and everywhere, carried about by his wild heart and his insatiable thirst for information.

"Thus four years had elapsed and little had changed in my position. I thought but rarely of Oldenburg; I had nearly forgotten him. I yielded then--now three years ago--to the persuasions of my cousin and his wife to accompany them on a trip to Italy. One evening as we were in the Coliseum Oldenburg suddenly stood before us. 'At last!' he said, pressing my hand. He pretended to have met us quite accidentally; but he confessed to me afterwards that he had heard in Paris, I know not from whom, of our proposed journey, that he had followed us from Munich and missed us everywhere, till at last he had overtaken us here. I must confess I was heartily glad to meet him, and was a little gratified to find that it was not quite accidental. Everything combined to give Oldenburg a good reception. We easily become attached even to strangers in travelling; how much more welcome is the friend of our youth whom we unexpectedly meet with abroad? Oldenburg had travelled all over Italy, and knew the painter of every altar-painting in every church and convent. His instructive conversation contrasted most markedly with the stupid talk of my relatives, and besides, Oldenburg had by this time polished off the rough edges of his character in the intercourse with good society. His manner was, in spite of his almost extreme abandon, as you now see it, thoroughly aristocratic. In a word, he now impressed me in a manner which I would have believed impossible before. It was not love that I felt for him, but it was more than the cool friendship which I had so far offered him alone. But, strange enough, the more I felt my secret antipathy, which I had cherished from early childhood, give way to an almost cordial attachment, the harsher and colder became his manner towards me. When we were all together, he addressed his conversation almost exclusively to my cousin, and treated me like a spoilt child, who is only indulged to keep it from crying. This offended my vanity; and this offended vanity, and the jealousy I began to feel of my cousin, made me try in good earnest to win Oldenburg's affection, which I feared I had lost by some unknown cause. This produced an entire revolution in Oldenburg's manner. He overwhelmed me with attentions; he seemed completely to forget Hortense, and whenever we were alone he exhibited a passion which first made me wonder and then frightened me. And yet he avoided any open declaration, and left me continually in doubt whether this was one of the mad freaks in which he still quite frequently indulged, or the expression of a deep-rooted attachment. It was impossible not to admire Oldenburg at that time. His genius unfolded its most brilliant powers. He was the soul of every society; they vied with each other who was to have him, and as he spoke French, English, Italian, and I know not how many languages, with fluency, every nation seemed to be willing to admit him as one of their own. And yet he made me the queen of every festivity, he compelled all to do homage to me; he displayed the treasures of his richly stored mind only to lay them at my feet;--what wonder that I could not long remain indifferent, and that I soon fancied I loved him? Without openly encouraging him, I let him go on, and permitted him, when we were alone, to treat me with the familiarity of our childish years; when we met in company, to show me all those attentions which we generally accept only from a declared lover."

"Hush, Melitta, I think I hear somebody in the garden."

"I heard nothing."

"Are we quite safe here?"

"Quite so. But let us go into the house; it seems to me the night dew is beginning to fall."

They rose and went arm in arm towards the steps which led from the terrace into the garden. As they came down the last step, a man suddenly stood before them. The meeting was so unexpected to Oswald and Melitta that they involuntarily started back. But it was impossible to escape it, and besides, Mr. Bemperlein--for it was he, and no one else--had already recognized them, as the stars had come out in full splendor, and the light from the window of the garden-room fell directly upon their faces.

"Great heavens, madam! what brings you here?" cried Mr. Bemperlein.

"And I ask that of you," said Melitta; and then to Oswald, whose arm she was still holding, in a low voice: "Be calm, darling, he will not betray us."

"Julius has not had an accident? Speak, Mr. Bemperlein, I have no secrets for--Oswald."

Mr. Bemperlein seized Oswald's hand and pressed it, as if he wished to say: Now I know all, you may rely on me.

"No," he said, "Julius is well and hearty. But I have received a letter from Doctor Birkenhain, who says that Baron Berkow's condition is such that they expect his end every day. It is not thought that he will recover his consciousness before he dies; but Doctor Birkenhain thought it his duty to let you know how matters stand. I presume at least that this is what the enclosure means. I brought it myself, so that you may dispose of me at once, if you should decide to go on. The carriage in which I came is still at the door; I cut across the garden."

The three had reached the garden-room by this time. Melitta had drawn her arm from Oswald's and gone up to the lamp to read the letter which Bemperlein had brought. Oswald saw her turn very pale, and her hand which held the letter tremble nervously. Bemperlein stood there, turning his eyes from Oswald to Melitta, and back again from Melitta to Oswald, like one who has been suddenly roused and cannot convince himself whether what he sees is reality or a dream.

Melitta had read the letter. "There, Oswald," she said, "read and tell me what I must do."

Oswald glanced at the letter, which summoned Melitta, as Bemperlein had presumed, to start immediately for Birkenhain if she wished to see her husband once more before his death.

"You must go, Melitta, beyond doubt," said Oswald, folding up the letter. "You would never forgive yourself if you neglected this duty."

Melitta threw herself passionately into his arms: "I meant from the beginning to go, but I wanted you to confirm my decision," she said. "I shall start to-night, instantly. Will you go with me, Mr. Bemperlein?"

"That is what I came for," said Bemperlein. "We have prepared the whole plan. If we start in an hour we shall reach the ferry by sunrise. On the other side we can take post-horses to B----, and thence go by railway. Thus we reach Birkenhain day after to-morrow, at the latest."

"You dear, good friend," said Melitta, taking both of Bemperlein's hands in her own and pressing them cordially.

"Pray, pray, madam," cried Mr. Bemperlein, "quite on the contrary--I mean--only my duty, nothing more."

"I will get ready at once," said Melitta, taking a candle. "You stay here, Oswald. If any one should see you here, you will have come with Bemperlein. But no one will see you."

Melitta had left the room. Soon the silent house awoke to the sound of hurried steps, of doors which were hastily opened and closed, and of low voices speaking anxiously one to another.

Of the two men, neither dared for a time to break the silence. Both felt the strange nature of the position in which they suddenly found themselves, especially Bemperlein, who had not yet been able to recover from his surprise. Melitta stood so unattainably high in his eyes that he found it absolutely impossible to comprehend how any mortal could attain so high; and yet he was so accustomed to look upon everything she did as undoubtedly right and good, that he dared not make an exception of this case.

"We meet quite strangely again, Mr. Bemperlein," Oswald said at last.

"Yes indeed, yes indeed!" replied Mr. Bemperlein. "My coming here was neither expected nor desired, I understand that perfectly. The poor lady! But what courage! What decision! I have always said she is not made of common clay. A real blessing that Doctor Birkenhain had the good idea not to write to her directly. Thus I can do something, little though it be, for her support."

"You happy man!" said Oswald "You can work for her and help her, while I can do nothing but wish her a pleasant journey, and then fold my hands idly in my lap."

"I really pity you with all my heart, really," said Mr. Bemperlein. "It is a hard task which you are expected to perform; but where there is much light there is also much shade. We will write diligently. You shall hear of every step we take. And then, I hope, our journey will not be long, and especially I trust we shall find Baron Berkow dead when we get there."

"You hope that? And yet you seem to think it important to go there?"

"Assuredly!" said Mr. Bemperlein. "There are certain sad duties which must be performed--not to please the world, which could, and might not, blame us if we left them unfulfilled, nor for the sake of others whom we could benefit by what we do, but because of the respect we owe to ourselves. But you know all that, of course, much better than I do. You have yourself advised this journey, although you lose most by it. It must be a terrible sensation to be thus suddenly torn from one's paradise! Strange, strange! The more I think of it, the more natural it seems to me. Yes, yes; that you should love this glorious woman is perfectly natural, is,--I might say, so logical

that the contrary would be sheer nonsense. Everybody must love her, and the nobler the soul is that loves her the deeper the love. Your heart is a noble heart, your soul harmonizes with all that is beautiful, hence you cannot but love, love with all your heart and soul this best and most beautiful of all women. And on the other side: Is she not free? If not before men, certainly before the Judge who looks into the heart? Did she ever love her husband? Could she love him, sold as she was by her own father to a man who bought her with money, at a time when she was too young still, and too innocent even to suspect such villany? Oh! it makes my blood boil to think of it! I am so glad it has all come about in this way! I congratulate you most heartily. I am a plain, insignificant man, and would never have dared to lift up my eyes so high; but when I see another man boldly and bravely stand on that eminence my heart fills with admiration, which is perfectly free from envy, and once more I wish you joy and all blessings with my whole heart!"

Mr. Bemperlein seized both of Oswald's hands and pressed them warmly. His eyes filled with tears; he was deeply moved.

"And I thank you with all my heart," said Oswald, touched. "The good opinion of a man whom I esteem is worth a thousand times more to me than that of the whole stupid world. The world will condemn our love, but the world knows nothing of justice."

"No," said Mr. Bemperlein, "and yet it does judge us, and we have to submit to its sentence whether we choose or not. And this thought alone casts a deep shadow on the sunny pictures of such pure, disinterested love. But I will not make your head heavier at such a moment, when it is no doubt heavy enough. Fortune favors the brave and the strong. You are bold and strong; you are doubly so since you love, and faith is said to be able to move mountains. What faith can, love surely will not find impossible. But hush! there comes the baroness."

The door opened, and Melitta appeared in her travelling costume. Old Baumann stood by her.

"I am ready, dear Mr. Bemperlein," she said, and then throwing herself into Oswald's arms: "Farewell, darling, farewell!"

CHAPTER XI.

The Baroness Grenwitz had more than one good reason for not taking Oswald with them on their projected trip to Heligoland, and during the three days' visiting at all the neighbors, she had considered maturely how she might manage this without compromising her dignity. She was delighted therefore when Oswald, at her return,--the day after Melitta's departure,--eagerly seized upon her question: If he would not prefer using the time of their absence for his own recreation. She was still more delighted when he went so far as to express his intention not even to remain at the château, but to make an excursion, perhaps over the island, which he had not yet seen, or perhaps to Berlin, where he was expected by friends. Anna Maria was so enchanted with this unexpected result that she did not trouble herself about the motives that might have influenced Oswald, nor about his sombre, absent manner, and the indifference with which he witnessed the preparations for their journey, and with which he even took leave of Bruno on the day of their departure. Perhaps he was angry because they did not invite him; perhaps he did not know where he was to stay. At all events, he would not remain at the château, and perhaps he might actually have his knapsack on his back at one gate, while the family coach with the four heavy bays and the silent coachman was grandly rolling out at the great portal.

But Mr. Albert Timm was allowed to stay. He had no such absurd pretensions as the haughty Dr. Stein; he was easily satisfied; and then he could work so comfortably in the lonely house, and it was so important to have the plats completed promptly. Mademoiselle had been ordered to provide everything for Mr. Timm. Strangely enough, it had never occurred to the baroness that it might not be considered quite proper to leave a young girl of twenty and a young man of twenty-six in a lonely château with only a handful of servants, who were under the control of the young girl. The virtuous lady would have turned up her nose, she would have thought it unpardonable, if she had been told that young Count Grieben and Emily von Breesen had been left alone in a room for five minutes, but the surveyor, Albert Timm, and the housekeeper, Marguerite Hoger--good Heavens! what was the use troubling one's self about such people? that would have been asking too much! And Marguerite had not even a father or a mother to whom one might have been answerable--she had no relations whatever--how can one be expected to be responsible for a person who is standing quite alone in the world? They had, however, asked Mrs. Jager to see from time to time that the orders of the baroness were strictly carried out. Mrs. Jager was an excellent lady, consequently Marguerite was under excellent supervision.

Little Marguerite was under such excellent supervision that Albert could not sufficiently praise

the wise foresight of the baroness.

"I wish they would never return," he said to the pretty Genevese as they promenaded in the garden arm in arm; "I wish they would capsize between Heligoland and the Downs, where it is deepest and we could live here, in clover, to the end of our lives. What do you think, little Margerite, would you like to be the wife of Albert Timm, Esquire, owner of Castle Grenwitz, etc.? Wouldn't it be famous? Then I would keep you a carriage and horses, and even a housekeeper, which you could plague as they plague you now."

"I am content with little if I can it share with you."

"Noble thought! But better is better, and--well, we'll see all that when we are married."

"And you will marry me, really? Ah, I can it believe scarcely! Why should a man, *comme vous*, to whom the whole world is open, marry a poor girl who not even is handsome?"

"That is my business. And besides, you are richer than I am. Three hundred dollars----"

"Three hundred twenty-five dollars," said Mademoiselle Marguerite.

"All the better--that is something to begin with. If I add my own fortune"--Mr. Timm felt in his pocket and produced a few coins--"we have three hundred and twenty-five dollars, seventeen silber-groschen and eightpence. That is quite a capital."

"We shall buy for it a little house."

"Of course."

"I shall give lessons in French."

"Of course."

"And you will be industrious and work."

"*Comme un forçat*--oh, it is going to be a charming life," and Mr. Timm seized the little Frenchwoman around the waist and waltzed her around in the bower in which they were chatting.

"I must go in now, to give the servants their supper," said Marguerite, withdrawing herself.

"Then run, you little monkey, and come back again as soon as you can," said Mr. Timm.

He looked after her as she ran away. "Stupid little woman," he said; "really thinks I am going to marry her. What a fool I should be--for three hundred dollars! Formerly I lost as much at play in a night. It is grand, what these girls fancy; and yet this one is not as stupid as she looks, and seems to have studied the great Goethe, in spite of her horrible jargon, to some advantage: 'Yield to no thief, but with the ring on your finger.' Hm, hm! I shall have to buy her a wedding-ring, after all! The three hundred dollars would not be so bad! These abominations of creditors! Not even here they leave me alone."

Mr. Timm felt in his breast pocket and drew from it several letters of suspicious appearance, which he carefully unfolded and perused, after having ensconced himself in the corner of the bench. His face, generally merry enough, grew darker and darker. "Upon my word," he growled, "these fellows are becoming insolent. If I could satisfy the roaring lions with a couple of hundreds they might be silent, at least for a while."

"Hm, hm! The three hundred dollars which little Marguerite has in the Savings Bank would be very convenient. It would, after all, be better for her to be poor. For, of course, every sensible man can see that I am not going to fulfil my promise to marry her unless I am forced to do so. If I am under moral obligations only, I fear I am not quite safe to her; but if I should be under pecuniary obligations to her, her chances are decidedly better. I can make her believe I will invest her money where she can obtain a better interest, or some such thing. When the stupid little things are in love they'll believe anything. And can she invest her money better than in the purchase of a handsome fellow for her husband, who would otherwise not think of marrying her? *Me Herculem!* I feel quite raised in my estimation by the thought, to become a benefactor of the poor little girl. I must see at once what I can do with her. If she refuses, I shall have to respect her for her wisdom, but I won't be able to love her any more."

Albert rose and slowly walked up to the château, his hands folded behind his back, as was his habit when his ingenious brain was busy with the solution of a problem. Marguerite was busy in the lower regions near the kitchen, and Albert went up to his room, in order to give a few more moments undisturbed to his great purpose.

He bent over the paper which was stretched out on his drawing-board, and on which he had done nothing since the departure of the family, that is, for a whole week.

"If that goes on so, Anna Maria will marvel at the progress I have made," he said; "it is really amazing what a superb talent for idleness I have, or, to express it more elegantly, for the *dolce*

far niente. There are evidently in life enchanted lazzaroni, as there are enchanted princes, and I am unmistakably such an enchanted son of sunny Naples, who has been changed into a surveyor, compelled to eat his bread in the sweat of his face. But how did it come about, I wonder, that I have thus given way to my natural disposition for a whole week? Is little Marguerite alone to blame for it? Hardly! Oh yes! Now I remember! I want a map from the archive-room, and asked for the key a week ago. I must go and get that map, or, by my burning love for little Marguerite, this unfinished plat will remain a fragment for all eternity."

Albert went into the archive-room, a large apartment on the ground floor of the old castle. The walls were covered, from the ceiling to the floor, with receptacles full of old yellow documents and papers of every kind, many of which were extremely old and would have been of very great interest to the antiquarian. While he was looking among these archives for the old map, a small bundle of letters fell into his hand, which he would have hurled back, in all probability, into its ancient home, like so many others, if his curiosity had not been excited by the address on the outside: "For Baron Harald Grenwitz, at Grenwitz." As excessive discretion was by no means one of Mr. Timm's most prominent qualities, he broke unceremoniously the red tape with which the letters had been bound together, and began to read one after another--an occupation which proved so deeply interesting that he forgot everything else, and did not even hear a carriage, which stopped at the great portal, and caused no small sensation in the château.

CHAPTER XII.

Oswald had spent the week which had elapsed since the departure of the family in the solitude of a fisherman's village, not far from Berkow, where he had been entirely cut off from all intercourse with the world. How he had got there he hardly knew himself.

Since Melitta had been so suddenly snatched away from him, he had been seized with boundless indifference for everything that was not in some way connected with her. She filled his whole soul. In this apathy he had parted even with Bruno quite easily. He acceded to the wishes of the baroness all the more readily, as he longed for solitude in his present frame of mind. Thus he said yes to everything, and when he saw the carriage start with the family inside, he felt as if he had been relieved of a heavy burden. He hurriedly said good-by to Mr. Timm and Marguerite, who remained at home, and flinging a light knapsack, which dated still from his university years, upon his back, he wandered gayly out at the door, like the hero in a fairy tale, without knowing where he was going, or where he was to rest his weary head that night.

The sun was burning hot; Oswald remembered that it would be fresh and cool in the forest. He turned off the road, and soon the pine-trees were rustling overhead. The low whispering of the thousand green leaves lulled him into sweet reveries. Dreamily he wandered on till he suddenly came out upon the clearing where Melitta's chapel stood, under the shelter of a broad, branching beech-tree that counted many hundred years.

The door of the cottage was locked, the green blinds were closed, the steps and the veranda carefully swept, as directed by the strict regulations of old Baumann, who was now ruling supreme. He sat down outside, lost in thought and resting his head in his hand. In the branches of the beech-tree overhead, a little bird was twittering his monotonous song in ever-repeated melancholy.... How lonely he felt--how lonely and forsaken! Like a child which on its way back to beloved parents has lost its way on the great heath. Here, at this very place, he had been seated, the night before the party, with Melitta; she had rested her head on his shoulder and her lips had whispered the sweetest, most precious words of love. Now all was silent--so silent that he could hear the beating of his own heart. Longing thoughts of the absent one passed through his soul, as birds in their flight to the South pass through the blue ether.

A ray of the sun, which made its way, hot and piercing, through the foliage, admonished him that it was time to go on. He was not in a hurry, it is true. It was an early hour of the afternoon, and he was likely to find some place or other where he might stay over night. Thus he sauntered through the forest on a path which he had not trod before, and which led him, before he was aware of it, down to the beach. Now he followed the strand, sometimes high up on a bluff, if the sea washed the foot of the chalk cliffs so as to leave no path; at other times on the clean shingle of the narrow beach. Here and there a brook came rushing out from the interior of the island, breaking its way through the tall ramparts, and covering by its moisture the whole dell with an almost Southern vegetation. But, with the exception of these few green oases, the eye saw nothing but bare rocks, sterile sand, the monstrous blue ocean, and here and there a white summer-cloud immovable on the blue sky, while below a lonely sail would dot the wide expanse. And with this monotonous view harmonized the monotonous music of the breakers, interrupted at times by the cry of a gull or the melancholy piping of a sandpiper.

The monotony of these lines, these hues, these sounds, would have been intolerable for a heavy, fresh mind, but it suited Oswald's state of mind. There are hours when we welcome rainy weather or a dismal landscape as old friends, on whose faces we can read their sympathy with our sorrow; hours when sunshine and birds' songs and the merry purling of a lively brook appear to us like an insult. Oswald's melancholy mood harmonized with this sober mood of nature that seemed to ignore happiness and joy, but knew all the more of the sorrows and sufferings of life. Did not the sudden cry, the shrill piping of the seamen sound like plaintive notes? Did it not sound as if the sea was perpetually murmuring the confused riddle of life in half insane tones, as the waves were breaking unceasingly and in monotonous accents against the strand? And his own life appeared to him as aimless and hapless as his wandering about among the rocks on the shore. Was it any better than the mark he made on the hard sand which the next wave washed away forever? Why was he born? why did he cause so much grief and pain to himself and others, if it was all to end in nothing? And if fortune really for once seems to smile, it is but for a moment; it is but an illusion which a wicked fairy summons up from the inhospitable, restless sea, to sink us the next instant in its unfathomable depth, just as we fancy we are reaching the shore, with its waving palm-trees and gorgeous palaces.

A small village which lay before Oswald was hid in the innermost recesses of a little bay, surrounded on all sides by tall chalk cliffs, except only a small opening towards the sea. There the water was as smooth and silent as a pond in a garden. A few huts lay near the beach; others followed the banks of the brook, which here fell into the sea, after having washed its way through the deep and wide dell. Little gardens, adorned with bright shells, were before the doors; on the passages within, seen through the open entrance, and strewn with white sand, nets were hanging on long poles; a couple of red-cheeked boys were busy tarring a new boat, and before one of the larger cottages sat three women knitting nets.

Oswald went up to them, and as they looked up with curiosity when they heard his footstep, he asked them if he might be permitted to rest a little there, and if they could get him a glass of water and a piece of bread.

"Stine," said the oldest of the three women--a matron of stately proportions, and an exceedingly good-natured, sunburnt face--to one of the two young girls by her side, "get up and give the gentleman your seat. Don't you see he is tired and hungry? Go into the house and bring out what we have. Sit down, sir. You are, no doubt, a painter?"

"Why should I be a painter?" asked Oswald, taking the proffered seat.

"Well, no man in his senses would climb about in such a heat; it is only people who are not quite right there (pointing with her forefinger at her forehead) that do so. Well, never mind, Mr. Painter, I have had one of your companions to stay with me here, who stayed two weeks; and if you are as steady and orderly as he was, you may stay also with Mother Carsten; but you must not bedaub the walls, I tell you that at once."

Oswald could not help smiling as he saw himself thus unceremoniously transformed into a travelling landscape painter. How? Should he accept the harmless part which chance seemed to allot to him? He was perfectly indifferent as to the place where he might stay; all he wanted was solitude, and could he find deeper solitude than here in this secluded bay, among these simple-hearted, good-natured people, who would not mind it if he should spend half his days climbing about among the rocks? And then he was near Berkow, from which he did not wish to go far, since he had arranged it with Melitta, that if her absence should be unexpectedly protracted, old Baumann would take charge of their correspondence.

"Then you would let me stay here a few days?" he asked.

"Yes, but you must not bedaub the walls," said Mother Carsten.

"I promise I will not do that," said Oswald, smiling.

"Then you can stay as long as you choose. That is right, Stine, move the table closer up to the gentleman; and look here, get some of the old Cognac which Claus brought from England; pure water does no good in this unreasonable heat."

* * * * *

Oswald had been staying nearly a week in the village, and he had never repented for a moment his acceptance of Mother Carsten's invitation. He enjoyed her highest favor. He had not made a line on the white-washed walls of his little bedroom; he always had a kindly word for everybody, even for the immensely old and almost crazy father of Mother Carsten, who sat all day long in his easy-chair, staring at the sun and at the sea, if his weary old eyes did not close in sleep, as was generally the case. Mother Carsten said Oswald was as "orderly and staid" a man as his predecessor, but that he was still less "right here,"--and the forefinger went up to the forehead again,--than the other one. Mother Carsten was induced to make such a strange remark by the fact that Oswald not only did not cover the walls of his bedroom with charcoal sketches of ships under sail, with cliffs around which the gulls were fluttering, and with original faces of weather-beaten sailors, as his predecessor had done, but that he did not draw or paint at all, but simply ran about all day long on the strand, or pulled himself all alone in a small boat so far out

into the offing that they could hardly make him out in the distance! How he could amuse himself all the time. Mother Carsten could not divine; she would have probably thought it as mysterious as ever if she had seen Oswald, as soon as he was alone, draw a letter from his pocket which an old, odd-looking man had handed to him several days before, and read it over and over again, as if he had not long since known every word and every letter by heart. The odd-looking old man, who rode one of those high-legged, long-necked horses that Claus had seen in England, was, of course, no one else but old Baumann on Brownlock. Oswald had sent him word, the day after his arrival at the village, that he intended for the present to stay there, and the same information had been sent to Grenwitz. The next day already had brought him a letter from his beloved. It contained only a few words, hastily written on the journey, just before retiring, in a small town of Central Germany--a few words, confused and sad, but sweet and precious, like kisses from beloved lips at the moment of wedding. He had sent his answer back by Baumann, and was now looking daily for another and a fuller letter with an impatience which was by no means altogether joyous.

All minds busy with ideals are apt to complain that nothing here below is perfectly pure, and that often as we strive to ascend into brighter and purer regions, a painful burden of earthy matter drags us soon down again to the eternal level.

Oswald also had frequently suffered from this difficulty; it had spoilt many of his pleasures, it had made him dislike many good people and bad musicians, it threatened even now to become fatal to his love. Not long ago he had made the terrible discovery in his own heart that treachery was lurking there when he thought it altogether filled with love. He had excused himself, it is true, as to the scene in the bay-window at Barnewitz, by saying: I was beside myself; I did not know what I was doing--but can jealousy ever be an excuse for faithlessness? And then: Was that jealousy at least perfectly dead now? Had it not blazed up again in bright flames when he found Melitta's image behind the curtain in the baron's room? Had he not listened to Melitta's recital with breathless apprehension, ever fearing lest now a fact might come out which would after all confirm his suspicions about that man--lest she might, after all, have loved this remarkable man, perhaps without knowing it herself? Had she not said: "I thought I loved him!" And at the very moment when her story had reached the catastrophe which was to explain everything, even her evident antipathy to Oldenburg at this time--just then a message is brought of such a strange and weird nature that it ends in upsetting Oswald's overwrought mind! It was not enough, that he had in Baron Oldenburg a rival facing him in bodily presence; he must now encounter, besides, a husband, or at least the ghost of a husband, who rises from a night of insanity that has lasted seven years, to beckon her to his dying bed--her, his beloved, his Melitta! Oswald felt as if his own mind would give way were he to follow out this thought. He had so completely forgotten that Melitta had ever been married, that she had ever lain in the arms of another man, it mattered little whether she had loved him or not--that she had ever accepted his caresses--he crushed her letter, he could have cried aloud with pain, he felt like dashing his head against the rocky cliffs. Why this poison in the cup of his love? Why must the pure garments of his angel be dragged through the mire of vulgar life? Why must a foul worm have been gnawing at the beautiful flower? And if she were only free now! But even when the night of insanity was to be swallowed up in the night of death, she would not be free yet. She is the mother of her child, of his child, and this consideration, forgotten for the moment, will resume its place in the foreground, and she will have to give me up! And yet, why should it not be so? Can I, the enthusiast for liberty, ever marry the aristocrat? Can I dream of intruding upon a class of men who will ever look at me askant? No! No! Rather live like these poor fishermen, who must earn their daily bread at the risk of their lives in their strife with the cruel ocean.

Thus Oswald's mind was wandering restlessly about in a labyrinth of painful doubts as he himself was wandering among the cliffs on the lonely shore, and who knows where this constant brooding on painful riddles might have led him in the end, if an event had not occurred which forced him unexpectedly, and very much against his will, to return to that society which he hated so bitterly.

CHAPTER XIII.

For when he returned on the next following day, towards evening, from a long absence to the village, he found a carriage and two horses standing before the door of Mother Carsten's cottage. This was so very unusual an event in this secluded part of the world, that Oswald at once presumed something extraordinary must have happened. Women and children, and the few men who were not out fishing, stood staring around the carriage and the door of the cottage. They wanted to know if Stephen, Mother Carsten's father, was really going to die this time, or whether the young doctor whom Mother Carsten had sent for a few hours ago, would once more save him

in spite of his fearful cough.

This was what Oswald learned when he came in their midst. They stood there with troubled faces, and were very talkative, contrary to their usual habit. For Father Stephen was the patriarch of the village, honored by all, even by Oswald, who, forgetful of his incognito, at once hastened into the house and the sitting-room. The white-haired old man sat there pale and languid, but apparently out of danger--thanks to the opportune assistance of Doctor Braun, who was just trying to escape from the expressions of gratitude with which he was overwhelmed by Mother Carsten, her daughters, and half a dozen other women.

"Welcome!" he said to Oswald, as the latter entered, "Welcome indeed, for I have a commission for you; will you permit me to deliver it at once, as my time is short?"

The doctor took Oswald unceremoniously by the arm and led him out of the house.

"Pardon my impatience," he said, as they were walking down the beach arm in arm, "but you see I am running away from the thanks of these good people; and secondly, I look upon you, although we have, to my regret, met only once before, as an old acquaintance, for you have been very much in my thoughts since we met last at Mother Claus' cottage. But now for my message! You probably do not know that the Grenwitz family have all returned from their great journey, which I had prescribed a few days ago."

"No!" said Oswald, very much astonished.

"How should you know it, to be sure, in this secluded village, inhabited only by rude ichthyophagi? Enough, they are all back! The baron--so says reliable Anna Maria had a terrible attack of fever in Hamburg. The doctor who was called in declared it would be madness to undertake a sea-voyage under such circumstances, and advised a return home. Anna Maria, who had always opposed the journey, approved highly of his advice--*bref!* they packed the whole family, Miss Helen included, into the old family coach, and here they are back again since last night! Of course they sent immediately for me. I have been there this afternoon, and when I accidentally mentioned that I would have to come to this village, the baroness begged me to tell you that they would be delighted at Grenwitz to see you once more within the old walls of the château. I replied that it gave me very particular pleasure to execute their commission, and that I would offer you my carriage and my company, if you were ready to return with me--an offer which I herewith most respectfully beg leave to repeat."

Doctor Braun said this cheerfully and with much animation, as was his wont, fixing his gray eyes, with the bright brown stars, steadily upon Oswald. "I am not very welcome, I see; you need not conceal it from me!" he added.

"Not at all," replied Oswald, "I mean I know very well to distinguish the messenger from the message, as Achilles did when they stole his Brisæis."

"And who is the beautiful Brisæis they have stolen from you?" asked the doctor.

"Solitude!" replied Oswald.

"Well, I do not blame myself much for that," said the other, laughing; "solitude is like the perfume of poisonous plants, sweet, but intoxicating, and in time downright fatal, even for the strongest constitutions. Will you follow my advice? Let the fair Brisæis go her way unhindered, wherever she wants to go; take a seat in my carriage, and let us drive to Grenwitz, where you will, moreover, find a girl that will make you cry out, at first sight: Here is more than Brisæis!"

"Miss Helen?"

"Miss Helen--also a Greek name, and one of better sound than the other. But the sun, or rather Helios, is lowering his chariot, and my horses are becoming impatient. You will come?"

"Certainly!" said Oswald.

* * * * *

Fifteen minutes later the carriage with the two young men was already rolling swiftly towards Grenwitz, which was only an hour's distance off. Oswald had been compelled to promise Mother Carsten that he would soon come back again. Old and young had crowded around him with great cordiality, calling Good-by, sir! after him, and thus showing that without any effort on his part he had succeeded, during the short time of his stay there, in winning the favor of the harmless good people in a high degree.

The evening was extremely beautiful. The sun was hanging like a red ball on the horizon and poured a magic light over the lonely landscape. In the tall heather the cicadæ were chirping; right and left, while above the swallows were swiftly shooting to and fro in the clear soft air. Oswald felt for the first time almost cheerful again, and had to admit that the wise man by his side was right in saying that the pleasures of solitude were paid for too dear.

"How sorry I am," he said, "that we have not been able to carry out our intention of meeting

more frequently."

"*L'homme propose et Dieu dispose*," replied Doctor Braun. "We must try to do better hereafter. You will remain, I am told, for some time in this neighborhood, and I also will probably not move to Grunwald as soon as I had intended."

"You mean to settle there?"

"At least for a time. I am in competition here with an excellent man, who has certainly far more experience than I have, but who still suffers by the good luck I have had in some cases where I have cured my patients, and because the world is ever running after something new, though it may not be any better than what they had before. Two physicians, however, is too much for this neighborhood; my colleague is old and has to support a large family; I am young and as yet only engaged to be married--consequently it is for me to make room for him."

"That is very generous."

"It may look so, but it is not quite so generous. I only pour out the good water because I hope to find it still better. My future father-in-law is one of the first physicians in Grunwald. Half of his practice I shall certainly fall heir to when he retires, which he contemplates doing. My future wife is at home in Grunwald, and as every fish is most comfortable in its own little pond, and as I am, besides, heartily tired of the company of Cyclops and Ichthyophagi--well, you see my generosity does not go very far, after all."

"Would it be indiscreet to ask you the name of your lady?"

"Not at all: Miss Roban."

"I have often had the pleasure of meeting Miss Roban in company, when I lived in Grunwald. My worthy friend, Professor Berger, used to call her the only swan in an enormous flock of geese."

"You lived some time in Grunwald?"

"I have but just left it, after having led a most idyllic life in the shady, silent street of the good old town for half a year, and after having passed through my examinations under Berger's auspices."

"But--I fear you will complain of my indiscretion--what induced you, when you once had that bridge of the blind and the lame behind you, to prefer the still life of a tutor in a noble family to a sphere of action in a larger circle? You have evidently all the qualifications for the latter, while here it is simply impossible for you to develop your full powers?"

"What induced me?" replied Oswald; "I hardly know myself. This only I know: I always had an innate horror of what the world calls a permanent place; then the influence of Professor Berger, who advised me earnestly not to tie myself down before my time, but first to wander a few years about in the world. My present engagement actually binds me to do so, as soon as my pupils shall have wings able to bear them abroad."

"Do you know, I fear, or rather I hope, you will not be able to carry out the plans of your eccentric friend as far as he intended?"

"Why?"

"Because--pardon me if I am too candid--because you are here in a false position, which must sooner or later become unbearable. Such a position is good only for one who cannot stand on his own feet, and is compelled to lean upon others; one who is accustomed from childhood up to subordinate his will to that of others, or rather, one who has no will and no opinion of his own. You are nothing of the kind. You are far too important for these people. They annoy you, and *vice versâ*. You think the baroness, what she really is, an ambitious, proud, avaricious person, stupid in spite of her reading; the baroness thinks you, what you are not, an immensely conceited, supercilious fool. You live in the same house, you eat at the same table, and yet you have no more points of contact than if a world lay between you. You stay together because neither of you chooses to say the word that will part you till the moment comes when one or the other will be compelled to utter it. Am I right?"

"I cannot deny it."

"You see! And the matter will be worse and worse."

"Why so?"

"Till now you had in this house of fools only one noble being whom you could love and pity, that admirable boy, Bruno; now, when you return, you will find there a second client. I fear the poor girl has been dragged away from her idyl, at the Hamburg boarding-house, in order to play the principal part in a family tragedy. I fear there is a terrible tempest ready to break upon the fair head of the unfortunate girl. As I know you, you will try to ward off the blow and you will be disconsolate if you fail. You look at me with open eyes, and I see that you know as good as

nothing of the secrets of the family with whom you have been living now for three months. The thing is this: Anna Maria lives in constant fear of the death of the baron, because, as soon as he dies, she loses not only an old husband, but also the prospect of laying up quite a fortune out of the surplus of her revenues. That is why Malte is of less importance to her. Nevertheless, she fears for him also, because at his death the entail passes out of the family, and into the hands of a younger line, of which Felix Grenwitz, an ex-lieutenant and well-known roué, is the representative. And now comes the deviltry: to secure her influence even after the death of the baron and of Malte, Anna Maria has concocted a match between Miss Helen and her excellent cousin Felix. The poor child knows nothing as yet of this interesting project; but I fear the great Felix knows all the more. He is coming to Grenwitz in a few days--as the baroness says, to recover his worn-out health, far from the exciting life of the city, in the peaceful retirement of country life. In a word, it is the usual *misère* of Credit and Debit, the ordinary farce in which an innocent doll-baby is trained and prepared, and you will have the happiness to be allowed admittance to this sublime performance."

"That shall never be," exclaimed Oswald.

"Then you will give up your place."

"I suppose I must--or----" a tempest of passion filled Oswald's soul. He thought of unhappy Marie, who now frequently appeared to him in his dreams, with her hands crossed on her bosom, and looking like a martyred saint; he thought of Melitta, who had been sold by her own father! Now the rascality was to be repeated--before his eyes.

"Never, never!" he said.

"Then you will give up your place?"

"No; at least not till I have defeated that plan in some way or other--before I have done all in my power to defeat it!"

"But what do you think you can do? My dear friend, generosity is a virtue which has to be examined very closely, lest the crown of the hero, of which we dream, changes into a fool's cap! Think of the noble knight of La Mancha, and how his knightly body was beaten and bruised for his benevolent intentions!--And then, are you sure that the Andromeda, whose Perseus you propose to become, really desires to be liberated? I do not know Baron Felix--perhaps he is better than his reputation; I never said two words to Miss Helen--perhaps she is by no means as good and sweet as she is beautiful."

"She is so, rely upon it," cried Oswald, warmly.

"It is well for you, you are not thirty yet!" laughed the doctor.

"Why?"

"Because you know what happens to enthusiasts at that time of life, according to Goethe? They die--on the same cross which they have been dragging through life so far. But here we are at the gates. Will you permit me to set you down here? I have to make a visit in the village and this is the nearest way; if I went through the castle it would detain one too long. Day after to-morrow I shall be in Grenwitz. I hope your pulse will be calmer then. I told you before: Solitude is simply poison for your system. Adieu!"

CHAPTER XIV.

It was a superb sight which the courtyard of Castle Grenwitz presented when Oswald entered through the dark portal,--a sight well calculated to lull a careworn heart to slumber. The red evening sun was still lying warm on the highest tops of the magnificent linden-trees, which led up to the portal of the château, and upon the lofty battlements of the old castle; but deep shadows had fallen already upon the space beneath the trees, the sides of the walls, and the tall grass, which everywhere cropped out between the pavement. The crowns of the linden-trees, which were covered with a snow of white blossoms, exhaled a sweet perfume which filled the whole atmosphere. All around reigned such perfect stillness that the busy hum of insects was distinctly heard; on the brim of the basin of the headless Naiad sat a little bird and sang to the setting sun; high up in the rose-colored air a few swallows were still swiftly shooting to and fro, as if they could not leave the glorious bright air for their homes below.

Slowly, almost reluctantly, Oswald approached the château. He felt the charm of this evening

hour, and knew that the first word spoken by man would break it. But he met no one. The whole courtyard was deserted. He ascended the winding staircase and went through the long passages, in which his footsteps sounded loud, to his room. The windows were open; the arm-chair stood in its right place; on the table, before the sofa, stood a vase filled with fresh flowers, and the head of the Belvedere Apollo had also been crowned with ivy. The room had been righted up by one who knew the owner's peculiarities. Evidently Bruno had been at work here.

Oswald was most pleasantly surprised by this silent and yet eloquent welcome. It was like a warm hand which kindly pressed his own,--like a breath that whispered his name. The storm in his soul, which had been roused by the doctor's words, had passed away, and its place was filled by melancholy sadness.

Oswald had been sitting at the window, leaning his head on his hand. Suddenly he thought he heard voices from the lawn on the other side of the château. He recollected that it was time he should seek out the company and speak to them. He dressed, took a carnation from the bouquet, and went down.

As he opened the door of the sitting-room, from which the glass door led upon the lawn, he heard the voices more distinctly, and when he had entered the empty room, he saw a part of the company busy upon the lawn with the favorite game of the baroness. He softly went up to the door, and remained standing at the very spot from which Melitta on that afternoon had seen him for the first time, when he came from under the trees, arm in arm with Bruno.

The company consisted of the baron and the baroness, Mademoiselle Marguerite and Mr. Timm, Malte and Bruno, and a young lady who was turning her back to Bruno, so that he could only see the slender, lithe figure, whose charming outlines a simple white robe set off to great advantage, and the luxuriant, slightly curling black hair, which, parted in the middle, was taken up behind in countless braids and plaits, following the contour of the marvellously well-shaped head.

Oswald's eyes were attracted, as if by magic spell, by this youthful figure who stood there motionless, without leaving the place for a moment, and who only at regular intervals raised the arms in order to receive the graces sent to her with unerring accuracy by her neighbor Bruno, or to send them on to Malte, who let them as regularly drop, and bitterly complained that Helen was throwing so badly. He added that she only did it to spite him, and that somebody else ought to take his place.

"Then come here, Helen," said the baroness. "You really throw too badly."

Mother and daughter exchanged places, and Oswald could now see Helen's face.

It was one of those faces that are never forgotten again; one of those faces which we remember with melancholy pleasure half a century later, as we remember a warm summer evening on which we little school-boys were playing in a garden and the laughing of the big girls came from the garden-house; one of those faces which smile upon us when we are most sad, like a ray of the sun on a dismal autumnal day, which, when all is sad and sorrowful in our hearts, make us believe once more in poetry, and in all that is good and divine.

Oswald was standing there lost in admiration, as we remain standing in adoration before a sublime painting. It was not the lovely oval of the charming face; it was not the large, dark, dreamy eyes which shone forth from under the long, black lashes with such magic light; it was not the full, rosy lips that laughed so bewitchingly, nor the dark carnation of her velvety complexion--it was all and everything. Who can catch the sunbeams? Who can reduce the song of the nightingale to notes? Who can analyze beauty? Oswald did not attempt it; he only felt that he never had seen, and never would see anything more beautiful in all his life, and he fancied a sweet dream he had so often dreamt was at last fulfilled, and he had found the Blue Flower for which he had been looking everywhere in vain.

Oswald wished to speak to the company, but he felt as if he were chained to the ground. An inexplicable anxiety seized him, a timid fear, as if something fearful must happen next; as if at that moment the secret powers of Fate were deciding on his weal and woe for life.... He would have liked to fly away to the deepest solitude.

He noticed just then that the old baron, who might have found it too cool out of doors, had left the circle, and was coming up to the house. He made an effort and stepped through the glass door to meet him. His appearance was of course noticed at once, and a universal: Ah, see there, Doctor Stein! See there, the doctor! greeted him, while Bruno, running and leaping up to him, had embraced him long before the others could come near to greet him.

"Why, this is charming, doctor," said the baroness, with her most gracious smile. "We were inconsolable at the thought that we would miss you for weeks yet, and now you are here in our midst. What do you say to our coming back so soon? Poor Grenwitz! he was very sick. Go in, dear Grenwitz, it is really quite cool out here. We will all go in. And our circle has been added to in the mean time. Where is Helen?--*Hélène, viens ici, ma chère!* Let me present my daughter Helen to you. I have made her hope that you will be kind enough to help her in supplying the many things she ought to have learnt and has not learnt. For you do not know how very imperfect the

education of girls in boarding-schools is in point of science! I am sure you will admit the little one among your pupils? *Mademoiselle, n'avez-vous pas mon fichu? Ah, le voilà. Merci bien! et dites-donc qu'on allume la lampe!* I think we will all go into the salon."

"Certainly," said Mr. Timm, who had been unusually quiet so far. "Hard weeks, pleasant Sundays, work in the day-time, and a merry bowl at night, as the old Privy Councillor says. No allusion, madam, I assure you!"

"But you would not be sorry, I am sure, if we understood the allusion, eh?" said the baroness, apparently determined to charm everybody to-night.

"I would not be true to myself if I were to deny it," said Mr. Timm, placing his hand on his heart, "and you know, madam, I hate all want of truthfulness."

"*Eh bien*," said the baroness, "and you shall yourself select the ingredients. Will you arrange it with mademoiselle?"

"Famous," said Mr. Timm; "madam, permit me to kiss your hand," and after having obtained and used the permission, he drew the little Frenchwoman aside to teach her the receipt for a famous bowl of punch.

They had been sitting perhaps for an hour in the salon, pleasantly chatting, Mr. Timm had sung several comic songs of his own composition with the accompaniment of the piano, and performed a few burlesque scenes, in which he represented two or three different persons with as many different voices,--in short, he had done all in his power to amuse the somewhat silent company, and yet been compelled to drink his self-brewed punch almost alone,--when the baroness proposed that they should retire. Mr. Timm requested, as his only reward for his efforts, the permission to kiss the ladies' hands, which was granted him very graciously by the baroness. Miss Helen, however, refused, and told him curtly, and slightly contracting her beautifully arched brows, that the artist's reward was in himself. Mr. Timm began to remonstrate, but Oswald cut the matter short by wishing everybody "Good-night!" and leaving the room with Bruno (Malte had gone to bed before), thus compelling Mr. Timm, who lived in the same part of the building, to follow his example. Altogether Oswald had not treated his old friend exactly well, and it required all the good-nature and the humility of the latter to bear it quietly, and to continue in his usual reckless way of talking till they had reached their rooms.

"God be thanked!" said Oswald, when he saw himself alone in his room with Bruno, "at last we are rid of the eternal talker. And I have not yet been able to ask your pardon, Bruno, for my coldness and indifference at our last parting, nor to thank you for forgetting it all like a good brother.--Was it you who prepared me such a friendly welcome? Who put those flowers there?"

"Yes----"

"And the ivy wreath around the head of Apollo?"

"Yes."

"And you put the arm-chair in its place?"

"Yes----"

"You dear, dear fellow! Come, let us both sit down in it, and now you must tell me all about your wanderings, of the cities you have seen, of the Cyclopes you have blinded, of the sufferings you have endured--all, all in order, you know, as Polyphemus milks his sheep."

Oswald had thrown himself into the chair, and drawn Bruno down on his lap. Thus they sat; the boy came close up to his only friend and began to tell,--first describing ironically the journey; how now the baron and now Malte had been unable to sit with their backs to the horses; how, at last, both had taken a seat on the box, while the postilion came into the carriage--and how much he, Bruno, had enjoyed it to see ever new towns and villages, and at last Hamburg itself.

Then his recital assumed another tone. He described quite seriously the impression made upon him by the city, the fine, stately houses, the crowd in the streets, the activity in the harbor, the great basin, in which the brilliant gas-lights were reflected, and what a superb effect that produced, and how he had come near falling into the water, if Helen had not held him. And when he had once mentioned Helen's name it turned up continually, like a bright star amid dark clouds; how Helen had wept upon leaving Hamburg; how she had dried her tears at her mother's words: "You seem to be quite sorry to return to your parents," and how she had scarcely ever smiled after that during the whole journey. For she is very proud, he added, but also very, very kind towards all she loves, for instance, towards her father and also towards me, although I would not pretend to say that she is fond of me. Only this, the boy said, he knew, that one evening, when it was very late and he very tired from the long ride, so that he could not keep his eyes open any longer, she had sat very quietly and patiently, with his head resting on her shoulder. He should never forget her for that; and if ever the opportunity offered to render her any service, he only wished it would be a matter of life and death, else it would not be enough for him.

Thus the boy talked on, and the words fell like fiery sparks from a house in full blaze, and his cheeks were all aglow. Oswald noticed that the beautiful girl had made a deep impression upon the wild boy, but he did not suspect how deep, how all-powerful this impression was, and what a revolution this first sudden affection had produced in his precocious and overflowing heart. He laughed at his pet's fiery enthusiasm all the more wittily, as he shared it in no inconsiderable degree, and Bruno, who accepted anything from Oswald, laughed too, and laughing and joking they said "Good-night" to each other. Bruno went to his room; Oswald sat down again in his chair.

The lamp was burning on the table before the sofa, but so dimly that even the faint gleam of the moon, which was just rising above the forest, could be distinctly seen in the room. A single star near the delicate crescent shone from the nightly blue of the sky. The soft balsamic air came in through the open window--it was so still that the noise of the falling dew-drops could be distinctly heard. And now, as Oswald sat and listened, he heard suddenly the sounds of a piano, coming to him like the echo of an Æolian harp. It was evidently a most skilful hand that produced them; first low, quite low, as if she feared to awake night from her slumber, then very gradually louder and louder. The accords floated slowly into a melody, and soon a soft alto voice began to sing the song to which the melody belonged. Oswald could not hear the words, but they seemed to be soft and sad as the air, which spoke wondrously to the heart with its simple touching complaint.

Such music at such an hour would have charmed Oswald even if he had not suspected who the singer was. But now that he knew there was no one else who could sing here but the beautiful girl, before whom he had that night bowed his soul in adoration as before an apparition from on high, at seeing whom he had felt as if a new revelation was vouchsafed to him--now it touched the innermost chords of his heart, and he felt as if he must seek words to give vent to the overwhelming impression which he could not otherwise master. He rose like a drunken man from his seat at the window, he went to the table and wrote in wild, incoherent words, which gradually arranged themselves and finally assumed the shape of a sonnet. He locked it up carefully and went back to the window. The moon and the stars were hid behind a dark storm-cloud, which had risen behind them and now overhung that part of the heavens. The song had ceased and the night wind alone sang in the trees.

He closed the window and went to his couch. A heavy sleep fell upon him, disturbed by anxious dreams. Now he was in a terrible fire, and now he was to be torn by wild beasts; then again he felt that indescribable anguish which seems to be a horror coming down to us from another world, but always at the moment of greatest need an angel appeared at his side and stretched a protecting hand over him, and this angel bore the features of--Melitta.

CHAPTER XV.

As Oswald was looking for something among the papers on his writing-table, on the following morning, he came upon a note, which he had overlooked the night before. He recognized at once the handwriting, which was as problematic as the writer, with its now bold and grand, now scribbled and confused characters. Oldenburg wrote:--

"I have just received information which compels me to start immediately on a distant journey, which may be extended I know not how long. Certainly not less than a week. I write these lines to drop them at Grenwitz, if I should not see you, which I would regret very much, as I have much to tell you. I take our Czika with me, as the solitude does not seem to me a safe place for her during my absence. I shall certainly be back for the day appointed by the gypsy woman. Until then, farewell.

"In great haste, and with still greater friendship,

"A. O."

Oswald was strangely impressed by this letter, for that divining power which plays so prominent a part in matters of the heart, made him at once suspect some connection between this sudden departure of Oldenburg and Melitta's departure. Whether much that he heard about the relations existing between the two appeared to him now in a new light since Melitta's recital, or whether it was merely the vagueness of Oldenburg's statement--enough, Oswald resented it as a kind of insult, that he was continually encountering riddles in that direction. He determined to

go across to Berkow this very day, and to see if old Baumann had a letter for him from Melitta.

Then his thoughts turned into another channel when his eye fell upon the verses he had written the night before. He smiled now as he read them over. "There your wretched imagination has played you another trick," he said to himself. "You have only to hear of a pretty girl who is to marry somebody else and not your highness, and you have a paroxysm of pity with the girl and a paroxysm of hate against the man. And then you have only to see the girl, and to find that she has large bright eyes, and looks more attractive than half-grown girls generally do, and a boy has only to tell you stories about this half-grown girl, and you are forced to write miserable verses like these, which I would put instantly in the fire if we were not unfortunately in the dog-days."

But Oswald held no *auto da fe*, although the light of a candle would have done him the same service, but put the paper away again in his desk.

The morning greeted him so kindly from the dew-refreshed garden, that Oswald could not resist the temptation to saunter about a little among the flower-beds and in the shady avenues. Besides, it was early yet, almost two hour's time, and the boys were still asleep.

Oswald hastened down and went to his favorite place, the immense wall which encircled the château, the garden, and the courtyard, and on which he loved to walk under the beeches and the walnut-trees, especially in the morning, when the red rays of the sun were peeping through the waving branches, and the half-wild ducks were enjoying themselves heartily on the moss-grown moat.

Oswald sauntered leisurely along, enjoying all the charming details of the delicious morning, and giving himself up to the enjoyment all the more heartily to-day, as the loveliness, the soft beauty that surrounded him here on all sides contrasted very strangely with the sombre monotony of the seacoast, which he had of late continually had before his eyes. Now he could hardly understand how he had been so completely overcome by his bad humor. The doctor was right: solitude is a sweet intoxicating poison which finally kills. I must consult the doctor frequently. A clear head, which sees men and things always in the right light. But still he is mistaken about the proposed match between Miss Helen and her cousin. In the first place, she is much too young; secondly, she is too beautiful; and thirdly, I won't have it. Do you hear, *madame la baroness*? I won't have it! You will not carry out your nice plan, however much you may stare at me with your big and presumptuous eyes, and draw yourself up to your full height.

It was fortunate that Oswald was not pronouncing these words grandly and pathetically, but murmured them merely in his beard, for just as he was turning round the corner of the walk, which a projecting shrub made still sharper, he found himself suddenly face to face with Miss Helen. The meeting was so surprising to both parties that the young girl scarcely succeeded in suppressing a loud cry, and Oswald, contrary to his habit, became exceedingly embarrassed, and hardly knew whether to speak to the young lady or pass her with a silent bow.

Miss Helen, however, relieved him from his doubts; for she found it quite natural that the young tutor, whose powers of conversation had not shone forth very brightly the night before, should not have the presence of mind to start immediately a conversation. She thought it, therefore, quite proper to help him, by making a harmless remark about the fine morning.

"The fine morning, I see, has brought you out too."

"Yes, the morning is really very fine."

"Delicious. Have you always had such fine weather of late?"

"Always--I mean, a few rainy days excepted."

"When one sees the sky looking so deep blue, one would be tempted to consider bad weather a fairy fable--don't you think so?"

"Certainly."

Miss Helen probably thought the very clever conversation had lasted quite long enough, and as they happened to have come to a place where a narrow flight of steps led down from the wall into the garden, she availed herself of this opportunity to end the scene in her own interest and that of her monosyllabic companion.

"Have you any idea what time it is?"

"Half-past six."

"Already? Then I must make haste to get back to the house before mamma finds out that I am not there."

Miss Helen nodded carelessly with her head, stepped down the steep steps, and went slowly between the flower-beds towards the house.

"The happy know no hour," said Oswald to himself, following the slender youthful figure with his eyes; "my meteorological observations have evidently not made her happy, and she was less

anxious to get back to the house than to get away from me. At all events, she seems to have time enough to gather a pretty bouquet. It is no doubt intended for me. I have evidently made a conquest. How she looked at me with her, wonderful eyes, half pitying, half contemptuous, as if she meant to say: I do you a great favor if I leave you alone with your bashfulness! She is proud, says Bruno, but how well that pride becomes her! How can a girl with such a face, such eyes, and such hair, be anything else but proud? It is her atmosphere, in which alone she can live, as the eagle in the highest regions of the air. The eagle is proud, too, and no one blames him for it.... How very beautiful she is! A superb beauty that need not be afraid of broad daylight, and that seems to be the greater the more costly the frame is in which it is set. A weird kind of beauty, too, that enchains us, and transfixes us as that of the deadly beautiful Medusa. Ah! now I know it! It is the very face of the Grenwitz family, of which Albert spoke--divine, and yet not without its trace of the Evil One! Feature by feature! it is Harald's face translated into the other sex; the same demoniac eyes, the same intoxicating feature around the full, almost exuberant lips, the same strength in the luxuriant bluish black hair which curls high up on the broad, firm forehead!--Gracious mamma! You are sorely mistaken if you fancy that forehead will easily bow to your decrees! Excellent Baron Felix, you will have to do great credit to your name as the lucky one, if you wish to succeed here! The morning is really delightful, and one would really be tempted to consider bad weather a fairy tale when one sees the skies so deep blue."

Oswald had of late been so exclusively occupied with his own affairs that he now felt the want, for a change, to interest himself in the affairs of others. The baroness was surprised at the sympathy with which he entered upon her ideas at table, and during a long conversation after dinner. He actually discussed with her several questions which she raised about his instruction: Would it not be expedient during the hot terms to commence the lessons at seven instead of eight? Might not the afternoon lessons be altogether omitted? Did he think the books which Helen had so far used for her studies of History and Literature still suitable for her? Would two lessons a week suffice for her? and did he think the morning or the evening better for the purpose?

The old baron also was pleasantly surprised when Oswald proved an attentive listener to the long history of his complaints. Oswald had always treated him with great courtesy, and he had looked upon him as a good and amiable young man, in spite of the decided opposition of Anna Maria and the somewhat doubtful assent of the Reverend Mr. Jager. He was glad, therefore, to be able to express this opinion today in harmony with Anna Maria. The journey seemed in fact to have produced a most happy influence on the baroness. Mademoiselle Marguerite, who certainly had the means of forming an opinion on that subject, told Albert: "She is changed *totalement*, she me has not scolded a single time the whole day;" whereupon the ingenuous Albert said: "Yes; I think myself the old dragon is quite enjoyable to-day." In a word, such peace and harmony reigned to-day at Castle Grenwitz as had not been known there for many a year. Everybody seemed to have forgotten his reasons for being discontented with the others. This might indeed be the result of different causes in each case, but as the effect was very pleasing to all, they took for good coin what everybody offered as such--of course reserving the right to pay him back in the same coin.

Oswald had not forgotten his meeting with Miss Helen in the morning, and, fully conscious of the impression he had then produced on the beautiful, proud young lady, he was pleased to find more than one opportunity during the day to make his natural advantages more prominent. When they asked him at table to tell what had happened to him during the absence of the family, he described his solitary life in the fishermen's village, assuming a half-amusing, half-sentimental part in the little drama, and taking good care to leave the romantic mystery undisturbed, in which he concealed his stay there. Good Mother Carsten became an heroic dame; her red-haired daughters, Stine and Line, were changed into lovely Undines, and the old half-idiotic Father Stephen into a wise Merlin. The chalk cliffs of the coast rose to immeasurable heights, and the breakers thundered amid the rocks with Ossianic majesty. The company, although feeling the exaggeration, listened nevertheless with breathless interest, and Oswald felt, as the fairest reward for his fantastic improvisation, that Helen's large brilliant eyes were immovably fixed upon him during his recitals, half in wonder and half in doubt.

He had become so completely the soul of the company that they seemed almost to resent it when he declared, directly after supper, that he could not join them on their proposed walk through the beech forest, because it was mail-day the next day, and he had to write several important letters. If Oswald meant by this refusal to comply with the well-known rule, that we must retire at the very moment when we have made ourselves necessary to the company, then he could be well satisfied with his success. Miss Helen, at least, condescended to ask him downright to stay, and as he insisted, she turned so abruptly from him that her anger was evident.

But Oswald had in this case other and better motives to keep him from staying any longer. The bright star which had just risen above the horizon, had not blinded him so completely that he should have forgotten the other constellation which had looked down upon him so long, and with such a constant, faithful, loving light. He had hoped to find a letter yesterday already; he was afraid old Baumann might have inquired after him the same evening on which he had left the village with the doctor. He had told Mother Carsten, to be sure, that he was going back to Grenwitz; but old Baumann could of course not bring him Melitta's letter to the château, where it might so easily fall into wrong hands. And yet Oswald longed anxiously for the long-expected letter.

As soon, therefore, as he had left the company he stole away through the garden and the big gate, which led almost immediately into the pine forest between Grenwitz and Berkow. It was dark already under the tall trees, with their broad overhanging branches. The wood, warmed by the heat of the day, gave out a fragrant aroma in the cool evening. The whole forest lay buried in almost painful stillness.

And now in this solemn evening hour, in this imposing forest temple, the memory of Melitta overcame Oswald's heart. Her tall form, so lovely in all its round fulness; her rich brown hair, which flowed so softly in swelling waves from the head down upon the shoulders; her dark affectionate eyes, her lovely playful manner,--and alas! above all, her unspeakable goodness and love,--how clearly her image stood before his soul! how ardently he vowed never, never to be faithless to her, the good, the sweet, the lovely one, not even in thought, and to return infinite love for her love, come what may!

Then he heard the hoofs of a horse on the soft ground of the silent forest, and soon a horseman rose in the twilight, who came up at a rapid trot. Oswald started with joyful surprise when he recognized old Baumann on Brownlock.

"A letter? Do you have a letter?" he cried, with such vehemence that Brownlock started aside.

"Quiet, Brownlock, be quiet!" said the old man, patting the horse's slender neck. "Good evening, sir! I have looked for you down at the village, but whereas I was informed that you had already yesterday gone to Grenwitz, I was on the point of riding over there----"

"But how if you had not found me there? and under what pretext could you gain admittance there?--But never mind--where is the letter?"

"Here," said the old man, who had in the mean time got down from his horse, drawing quite a considerable package from the deep pocket of his long overcoat.

"Hand it here!"

"Be patient, I pray, sir! I have thought of everything. This package, as you may see, is well tied up and sealed, and bears the inscription: 'Herewith the kindly lent books, with many thanks. Baumann will hand you the others as soon as I have read them,' and the signature: 'Your most obedient, B.'--that means, of course, Bemperlein as well as Baumann, eh?"

Old Baumann had, while he was speaking, untied the string, and taken from one of the three books which it contained a letter, which Oswald hastily opened and held towards the light to read. But the darkness was too great already under the trees; he could only decipher the signature: dearest darling.

"I cannot see," he said, sadly.

"If you had remained in the village, as you intended doing the other day, or if you had yesterday sent word to old Baumann, you would have been in possession of my mistress' letter before daylight was gone."

Oswald felt the reproach hid in these calmly spoken words, and he found no difficulty to confess his wrong to Melitta's faithful servant and friend.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "that I have given you all this trouble. I have blamed myself all day long for my thoughtlessness, and now I am severely punished for it, for I hold the dear letter in my hand, and yet I cannot see how Frau von Berkow is, whether she is well, if she has reached the town, and a thousand other things which I should like to know, and which, no doubt, are all mentioned here"--and he tried once more to read the letter.

"Well, well," said old Baumann, "don't trouble yourself about me; ten miles more or less don't matter much to me or to Brownlock; and as for the news you want to hear, I can tell you something about that, considering that Mr. Bemperlein has sent me a letter, in which he tells me at full length all about the journey and what has happened when they arrived there." The old man had hung the reins over his arm and walked by Oswald's side; the latter hastened his steps to get out of the forest, and to reach Grenwitz and his room as soon as possible.

"My mistress--God bless her," said the old man, "accompanied by Mr. Bemperlein, reached her destination on the third day, and without accident Mr. Bemperlein at once communicated with Dr. Birkenhain, and learnt that Baron Berkow was still alive, but not restored to consciousness, and so weak that his dissolution was expected every hour. That continued so till the day when the letter was posted, on which day my mistress, in company with Mr. Bemperlein and----"

The old man paused and coughed.

"Well, and----?" asked Oswald, whose suspicions about Baron Oldenburg were once more aroused.

"Well, and the doctor, of course, who else?" said the old man. "Well, what was I going to say? You have confused me with your question, sir. Ah, yes! In company with Mr. Bemperlein and the

doctor went to see the baron for a few minutes. He did not recognize her, and the baron was so changed that he looked to my mistress, as she had said herself, like a perfect stranger. He also spoke a few words, but not one could be understood. Then they went away again, and immediately the baron had fallen once more into a deep sleep, and the doctor said that would probably be his condition till he died--which the Lord may bring about very soon by his mercy, so that the poor man may be relieved of his sufferings and my mistress may at last be able to breathe freely."

"Amen!" said Oswald.

"For you see, sir," continued the old man, "my mistress has not had much happiness all her life long, and that grieves me, for I love her as if she were my own child, and perhaps better. For I have never had any children myself, but I see how other fathers do with their children, and how they are not ashamed to treat them not as fathers, and not even as Christian men. And the father of my mistress--well, he was my master, and I have fought through many a campaign with him, and we ought not to speak evil of the departed--but he was a bad man, and yet not exactly bad either, only wild and reckless, like the youngest officer in the regiment. The madder an undertaking was, the better he liked it, and mad deeds and bad deeds often look so much alike it is hard to distinguish them. He meant no harm with them, however, even when he remained as fond of ladies after his marriage as he had been before, but he broke my mistress' heart nevertheless, and she died when her only child was only two years old. Then there was nobody there to take care of her but old Baumann. I took her and played with her, and afterwards, when she grew up, I learnt to read and write with her, for I did not know it before, and a little French, and whatever else I could get into my old head. And then I taught her how to ride, so that she has not her equal on horseback, and thus I grew once more young with her, and never wanted any children of my own, for she was my precious, darling child, although I was but a poor ignorant cavalryman, and she a great lady of high and mighty family. And I have often thought in my mind, if she would not have had a better life of it if she had really been my child? For to be great and rich is all very well, but I think, nevertheless, those whom God loves are born poor. I should never have dreamt of selling my own blood and flesh for vile Mammon; I should never have been on my knees before my own child, beseeching her to marry such and such a person to save her father from disgrace, when I knew very well she did not love him, but that he had money enough to pay all my debts and to keep enough for her and for him. And matters were not quite so bad yet with Baron Barnewitz. What he had lost at play he might have won again at play, and he did win a good deal back again, so that he often told me afterwards, when he had taken a little too much: 'If I had known, Baumann, that I would have such luck at faro, then the--it is an ugly word and an honest man don't like to use it too often--then I would have given that man Berkow something else, but not my daughter. My only consolation is, he won't live long, and then she can marry to please her heart.' Well, my master did not live long himself, but long enough to see with his own eyes the mischief he had done. Then he would have given his life to undo what he had done, but those who deal with the devil need not wonder if God leaves them to their master. So the beautiful young lady became a widow, and yet she was not a widow. She had money enough now, but I think she would have been happier if she had lived under a thatched roof with a good man, than so miserably alone in a big, lonely house, There was Julius, to be sure; but one swallow does not make a summer, and a child is not a family. You see, sir, that often made my heart bleed, and when I saw my mistress wander so lonely through the garden of an evening, I have often prayed to God to take poor Baron Berkow in mercy up into heaven, and to let my poor mistress be happy for once in her life, like other women who are not worthy to unloose the latchet of her shoes. The man need not be rich, for she has enough for both, if wealth there must be--but he ought to have a head and a heart of the right sort, and he ought to love her better than the apple of his eye. And if I knew such a man, and could get her such a husband, and saw her happy by the side of such a man--then I should pray: Now, Lord, let thy servant depart in peace!--But here we are at the gate. Well, goodnight, sir! If you should have an answer ready to-morrow morning to the letter of my mistress, I will wait for it, between five and six, a little distance down the forest. My mistress would be glad, I am sure, if you were to write soon."

"I shall be there punctually at five," said Oswald.

"Well, half an hour does not matter," said Old Baumann, mounting his horse again. "The mail does not leave before eight o'clock, and till then Brownlock can make the way twice. I wish you once more good-night, sir."

The old man touched his cap, turned Brownlock round, and trotted through the pine-trees back to Berkow.

Oswald hastened to his room without meeting anybody, as the company had not yet returned from their promenade. With trembling hand he opened the letter, and perused it with breathless haste, in order to read it over and over again, as we read letters in which every word touches us like kisses that come from lips we love.

When he sat down late at night to write his answer, he heard the same voice singing which had produced such overflowing enthusiasm in him the preceding night; but to-day he closed the window, for he felt that his admiration for the beautiful girl was, after all, treason against his love of Melitta, although he tried, of course, after the manner of men, to silence the voice of his conscience as well as he could.

PART THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

Unfortunately, the next day was to give him ample occasion for practising that wicked art.

For that very morning, as he returned from his meeting with Baumann, who had been waiting for him in the forest at the appointed place to take his letter, he could not deny himself the pleasure of walking about a little in the garden. He intended only to stay a few minutes, to walk just once around on the great wall, but he had now made the turn twice from the great portal back again to the great portal, and was beginning to make it for the third time, for the morning was really delightful, and, if his eyes did not deceive him, a light dress was shining through the trees and shrubs on the other side. Probably one of the village girls at work in the garden. How he was surprised, therefore, when he found soon after that it was Miss Helen! He could not think of avoiding her. There were only a few flights of steps leading down into the garden. There was nothing left, therefore, but to cross his hands behind his back and to saunter slowly on, watching the birds as they fluttered about in the branches, and the ducks below in the moat, and to be a little surprised when he met Miss Helen precisely at the same time and the same place as yesterday.

Miss Helen returned his bow with that calm reserve which harmonized so well with the somewhat sombre character of her beauty, although it seemed almost too cold and too haughty for a girl of her youthful age. Perhaps her greeting would not have been quite so formal if Oswald had not on purpose suppressed every trace of pleasant excitement. Then followed a short conversation, by no means overflowing with cleverness, on the weather, and a few indifferent questions on Oswald's part about the promenade of last night, with short answers by Helen. Then once more a polite and cool exchange of formal phrases. Miss Helen continued her walk; Oswald had finished his promenade, which he "always enjoyed between six and seven on the wall,"--a statement by no means founded on truth,--and went back to his room. "What a pity," he said to himself, "that such splendid beauty should hold, after all, but an ordinary soul! What would Professor Berger say, if he saw his lovely bud unfolded now into a dark-red rose? Would he weave another wreath of sonnets and press it on her rich hair? Good, dear Berger, was it a suggestion of your good or your evil angel, both of whom continually struggle for the mastery in your great soul, to send me here into the camp of our enemies? I was to return laden with trophies, scalps of slain Iroquois which we were to hang up in our wigwams to feast our eyes--what would you say if you heard of the narrow escapes your Uncas has had from being scalped himself? But I will keep one promise: I will not fall in love with this early praised beauty--no, and if she were as clever as she is beautiful."

When Oswald came down to dinner he was most pleasantly surprised to find Doctor Braun, who had come a few minutes before, and had accepted the baroness' invitation to stay to dinner.

The doctor appeared in a larger circle to as much advantage as in private; an easy, sociable, and refined man, who evidently had very unusual powers of conversation and perfect self-possession. And what was still more attractive, and really won Doctor Braun the hearts of all, at least of all men of sense, was his real or apparent unconsciousness of all these advantages. Nothing was evidently farther from him than to make an exhibition of himself; on the contrary, he took pleasure in leading others to a clearer understanding of their views, and thus he was not less a good and patient listener than a skilful speaker--two virtues rarely found united.

Oswald saw with surprise that if the doctor distinguished any one in the company, it could only be Miss Helen, and with still greater surprise, that the young lady, when speaking to him, laid aside a part of her haughty reserve. They had made music together before dinner, playing a sonata for four hands; then Helen had sung a few songs, while the doctor accompanied her. At table they sat by each other, and conversed with animation about the different styles of music;

the doctor displaying a thorough knowledge of composition, and Miss Helen at least a lively appreciation of matters of music; and when he took leave, directly after dinner, she regretted his eagerness to go so warmly, and begged him so earnestly to be sure and send the promised music very soon,--no, rather to bring it himself, so that they might play it together,--that the doctor might have boasted of a great success if it had been his intention to make a favorable impression on the young lady.

"You are not fond of music?" he asked Oswald, whom he had accompanied to his room for the few minutes till the horses should be ready.

"No, and the harmony of sweet notes has so few attractions for me that I closed my window last night when Miss Helen sang that barcarolle which seemed to give you such delight."

"That is indeed remarkable. I do not remember ever having heard such a--what shall I say--such a mystic alto voice."

"Might not the beauty of the performer affect the impartiality of the judgment?"

"No; I assure you I judge quite impartially, although I must admit that such spiritual beauty seems to belong more to the realm of dreams than to stern reality."

The doctor had taken a seat in Oswald's arm-chair, and blew the smoke of his cigar, which he had just lighted, in blue clouds through the open window.

"Hers is a beauty," he said, "that would drive a painter to despair, because her most delicate bloom cannot be expressed by lines and colors; music alone can translate it. I wish Beethoven had seen her, or Robert Schumann, and then you ought to hear the ghost-like, demoniac composition which she would have inspired!"

"But which of us is now the enthusiast?" asked Oswald, smiling; "you or I?"

"You!" said the doctor, "for the highest grade of ecstasy is silence. He who still finds words for his enthusiasm has the reins still in his hands. And then I can see a beautiful girl and admire her, without enjoying, as you see, my cigar any the less. But you are capable of forgetting eating and drinking and everything else, of throwing yourself head over heels into the Charybdis of your enthusiasm, without bestowing a thought upon the way out!"

"Are you quite sure of that?"

"Quite sure; I have studied you of late thoroughly, and I have found that you are one of the finest specimens of a species of our race, which is quite common in our day--descendants of the departed Doctor Faust, *faustuli posthumi*, so to say, who have cut off their long doctors' beards and exchanged the romantic costume of the Middle Ages for the modern dress coat, without, however, losing their relish for all kinds of enjoyment, and, like Faust, starving in the midst of enjoyment."

"Problematic characters, Baron Oldenburg calls them," said Oswald.

"A capital definition," answered the doctor. "To be sure, the baron ought to know, for he belongs to the brotherhood, and I dare say he ranks high among them. At least I judge so from what I hear, for I have never spoken to him, and seen him only once."

"The baron is an enigmatic character, whom it is very difficult to judge fairly."

"How else could he be a problematic character? I am told you are one of the baron's special friends--one of the few he has on earth. And that is why I speak frankly. I cannot approve it, that a man of such eminent talents should waste his life in idleness--in a kind of busy idleness, the greatest reproach, in my opinion, that can be made against a man in our day, when there is so very much to be done."

"How can the poor baron help it, if the bread and butter of every day's life are not to his taste?"

"Do you think I like it?" said Doctor Braun, and he flushed up and his eyes sparkled; "do you think that the great god Apollo, when he watched the cattle of Admetus, and ate the mean food of a slave in the shade of an oak-tree, did not long for the ambrosia and nectar on the golden tables in the house of Zeus? Nevertheless he bore his fate and endured it, as a greater one did after him. But I have always thought that the true lot of man upon earth is to be subject to all that is human, and yet never to forget the heavenly part within him; to contend until death with the raving wolves of tyranny and falsehood, and to bear the cross of all that is vulgar and mean, for the sake of that which follows after Golgotha."

The doctor had risen; he walked a few times up and down the room with rapid strides; then he stopped before Oswald and said, with heart-winning kindliness: "Pardon me if I have offended you by one or the other word I have spoken; perhaps I have been inconsiderate. But it always excites me to see a superior man remain idle or follow false lights. The former is the sin against the Holy Ghost, the gravest of all our sins; the other is less grave, but almost equal. I absolve you

from the former, but I cannot but declare you guilty of the latter. You know what I told you the other day about your position here; now, after having seen you myself in this circle, I consider it still more objectionable. Give it up before it is too late! It may be unwarrantable indiscretion in me to speak to you thus, but you know we physicians have the privilege of being indiscreet. Are you angry?"

"I should be the greatest fool if I were so weak," replied Oswald. "On the contrary, I am very grateful to you for the sympathy you show me, and which I am not deserving, I fear. But I think you look upon things as a little too dark----"

"Only too dark?" said the doctor, laughing; "I do not see them gray nor black; I do not see them at all; I am blind, purblind, in both eyes. Adieu, *mon cher*, adieu! If after some days you should not feel quite as well as you do at this hour, send for me! You shall see I am not a doctor for the well only, but also for the sick!"

With these words the doctor hastily left the room, and a moment afterwards Oswald heard the grating of the wheels on the gravel before the portal of the château.

CHAPTER II.

We all know that it is the fate of good advice invariably to come too late, or only at the moment when it ought to be followed at once, but for one or the other reason cannot well be followed. The doctor's advice was excellent; even Oswald saw that, especially as he had always thought in the same way about his false position in this high and noble family. But he could not find the way out of this labyrinth; at least not for the moment. It was so natural that of late his love for Melitta should have made him forget everything else, and lead him to consider a measure which might remove him from her as the greatest misfortune. And even now, when Melitta's journey and Baron Berkow's impending death surrounded the present and the future alike with dark mystery, he could not possibly decide on a step which was as important for Melitta as for himself. And then, leaving Melitta out of the question, he had no plausible reason for abandoning a position which he had bound himself to retain for several years, unless he should resort to a violent rupture. Such a *coup d'état*, however, would always have been painful and repulsive to a Hamlet-like nature, such as Oswald's was; and now, when the baroness evidently made efforts to live in peace and harmony with all the world, he could not even find an adversary to pick up the gauntlet that he might choose to throw down for the purpose.

Besides, he had quite recently shown a most lively interest in the plans of the baroness for the education of the boys, up to the time when they should be ready for the proposed tour through Germany, France, England, and perhaps also Italy. This interest would now appear absurd or worse, if it should turn out that he never meant to carry out these plans. He had also readily acquiesced in the desire of the baroness to resume with Miss Helen several branches of study which she had pursued at the boarding-school, and these lessons, which the baroness proposed to attend for her own improvement, were to begin on the very next day.

And, setting all this aside, he should have had to leave Bruno if he went away from Grenwitz;--Bruno, whom he really loved like a brother, whose brilliant talents he hoped to develop, and whom he desired most ardently to introduce into the realm of science, and afterwards into life itself.

The little trip seemed to have had a most happy effect upon Bruno, as upon all the others. He had lost much of his sombre reserve; he sought out company which he had formerly avoided, in common with Oswald, and persuaded his teacher even to take part in promenades and other joint excursions of pleasure. He did not suspect that Oswald was by no means making a sacrifice when he yielded to his entreaties, but only pretended to be reluctant in order to excuse himself in his own heart for his inconsistency. When Oswald teased Bruno about this new interest in persons and things which had formerly been indifferent to him, the latter replied that he did not know what had happened to him; but that he felt like a bird who, after being kept in a cage, had recovered his freedom; like a flower when the sun was coming out, after storm and rain. And really Bruno was merry like a bird, and, in his joyousness, beautiful like a flower which is just opening to the light of day. One could not help admiring the glorious boy; his kind ways were as irresistibly charming as his defiance was repelling and at times offensive. All agreed on this one point, that a great change had taken place in Bruno, but how it had been brought about no one knew and no one suspected.

And yet the cause would hardly have escaped an acute observer, nor Oswald himself, if he had not been fully occupied with his own affairs. The very first conversation with Bruno on the

evening of his arrival might have furnished him the key. As then Helen's name was continually reappearing in his recitals, so now all he said and did had some reference to Helen, although he was instinctively careful to place others in the foreground, and to appear least interested in Helen herself--just as a bird tries to lure the pursuer away from his nest by his anxious fluttering to and fro. For not only shame is born in secret; love springs forth in the same way, especially when the heart that bears it is still young and innocent, so innocent that it hardly knows what is going on, and only feels the one thing, that a god has touched it. "What is the matter with the boy?" they asked, when they saw how his eyes shone, how bold and proud his carriage was, how elastic his step; when they heard his voice, which was now as soft as the evening breeze, and then, in the excitement of a game, or whenever his energy was roused, as clear and powerful as the sound of a trumpet.

And if it really looked at times as if Bruno had abandoned his secluded habits only for his cousin's sake, this could surprise the others all the less, as everybody seemed to have undergone some change, and was ready to worship the newly risen star. Why else was the baroness now all mildness and goodness? Why did she now always appear with a smiling face at table, and endeavor not to let the conversation die out during the meal? Why did the baron annoy the silent coachman by ordering the fat bays whenever anybody but uttered a wish to visit this or that remote place--an order which before the trip would have been looked upon as an event? Why had Mr. Timm, for the first time, drawn forth his dress coat from its corner in his trunk, and assumed, as it looked, with the coat a less careless and easy manner? Why did Miss Marguerite's voice sound less sharp now than formerly? And why had she just now remembered that there were in her wardrobe a few pretty bows, which had lain there unused for years? Why did even Malte pay attention to the game when they played at graces, and try to catch the hoops occasionally?

Did Miss Helen know that she was the cause of all these great and small changes? It was hard to tell whether Miss Helen observed anything at all; whether she was in good or in bad humor; even whether certain members of the company existed or not, as far as she was concerned. Her calm proud air rarely varied, and the smile she occasionally deigned to show was so fleeting in its very beauty that it never betrayed the share which the heart had in it. To her parents she was in all respects the attentive and obedient daughter; to her brother the older sister, who, if she knew how to respect his foibles, would also insist upon being respected by him; to Mademoiselle Marguerite she was the kind mistress, who is always fully conscious of the difference in their relative positions; to Oswald and Albert quite the young lady, who has been fully instructed how low the bow of a person in a humbler position of life ought to be--and only to Bruno she was more cordial; in her intercourse with him alone she gave up something of her haughty reserve, which at other times seemed to be as much a part of herself as the dark color of her magnificent hair, and the deep brilliancy of her large gray eyes.

But even if the baroness complained to her husband of the very great reserve in Helen's manner, and often remarked that her long absence from home seemed, after all, to have alienated her in some degree from her family, the fault lay less with the young lady than with the baroness herself. It had been her own wish to keep Helen so many years from the paternal house; it was she who had explained to her weak husband, when he longed for his dear child, how very advantageous it would be to Helen to be trained early in the strict discipline of a school, and to remain there as long as possible. Long ago, already when the little girl had affectionately leaned against her, she had only replied with a cold air and a few cool French phrases, until the child, growing older, had seen how hopeless the effort was to reach her mother's heart, and abandoned the hope to soften it by her caresses. The poor girl had to pay dear for the misfortune of not being a boy, and of being unable to contribute anything towards securing the entail to the family, and she would probably have been allowed to live a long time yet in exile if her mother had not suddenly conceived the plan of making her, after all, useful for that purpose by marrying her to Felix, the heir-presumptive of the estate. The energetic woman doubted not a moment that she would be able to carry out her project. Felix had not only approved of it highly, but taken already all the steps which the clever baroness had suggested to him as necessary for success. He had thrown up his commission; he had left the city, the theatre of his deeds, and gone to his estates, perhaps in order to look at the place where the beautiful forests once stood which he had mercilessly cut down to pay his most pressing creditors. Baron Felix was in the habit of promising anything and everything to those who lent him money--why should he not promise the baroness to marry her daughter if she engaged to pay his debts and to help him to make his exhausted and ill-managed estates once more productive? On that side, therefore, there were no difficulties to encounter. On Helen's side she expected as little trouble, or rather, up to this time, she had never thought of the possibility of resistance. She had forgotten that she had not seen her daughter for three years; that three years can make great changes, and, among others, can make a proud young lady of seventeen of a timid and submissive child of thirteen. She had forgotten that Helen had learnt not to tremble any more before her mother, and had become far too independent, thanks to her training by a strict but high-toned governess, to submit her will thus *sans façon* to that of another, whoever he might be.

The baroness saw this almost at the first glance, when she met her daughter in the reception-room of the Institute at Hamburg. There was nothing to be said against the carriage of the young lady, who advanced towards her mother neither too hastily nor too slowly, who kissed her hand, and then, as if awaiting further orders, remained there calmly and composedly. But the big eyes looked so firm and so proud, and the words fell so well measured from her lips, that the mother felt she could no longer count upon childlike submission or loving obedience from this daughter,

who looked to her almost a stranger. The great project which she bore in her head quite ready, suddenly appeared to her in a very uncertain light, and the first words she said to her husband were: "I think, dear Grenwitz, we shall have to be very cautious with our plan about that match. You would oblige me by leaving the matter entirely in my hands. An awkward beginning, nay, even a hint at the wrong time, might spoil it all,"--a suggestion which the old gentleman was very willing to obey, as even his strong faith in Anna Maria's infallibility had not been able to quiet all his scruples about the proposed match.

The baroness saw that if Felix should not find favor in Helen's eyes--and such a case was at least possible--nothing could be done by intimidation or violence, and that gentle measures were not merely the safest but the only way. This is what made her so kind, after her fashion, so exceedingly kind to her daughter; and in order that the others might not find out her purpose, or in order to keep in practice, she was kind to them also. It was strange, however, that this sunshine of favor seemed to warm her least for whom it was specially intended; Helen did not change her calm, measured manner, her coldly polite formality, in the least; the boarding school, which the baroness had always praised to the skies, had evidently produced in Helen a model young lady.

And yet this heart, apparently so cold and inaccessible, was well able to feel warmly. When she took leave of her friends and her beloved governess she had wept burning tears, though she dried them instantly when her mother remarked on them,--she showed her father many little attentions not easily suggested by mere politeness, and she could give money to a poor child and then take him by the hand and speak kindly to him. Her friends, of whom, however, she had only few, never found cause to complain of heartlessness in her, and the letters she wrote from Grenwitz proved that she was neither cold nor reserved with those she loved. Thus she wrote, among others, to Mary Burton, a pretty young English girl, whom she loved best of all her friends, and who had had a great influence over her:

"But those are *tempi passati*, my dear Mary! I have now to learn to enjoy my music alone, and to submit patiently to the company of people among whom you are not. I miss you everywhere; I miss some of the others also, and I do not yet see how it will be possible for me to be happy without you. Do not think, however, that they are unkind to me here! On the contrary, I must acknowledge that my good people here have all met me most kindly. I did not expect anything else from papa, you know--but, you have read my mother's letters! You thought they resembled each other like so many flakes of snow. But she also is much less severe than she used to be, and I may do and not do what I like, a thing we always thought would be perfect bliss when we were at school. My rooms are in the first story of the old castle, just above the garden, and a door opens from my salon right upon it. Thus I can live quite undisturbed, although I can reach the sitting-rooms through a passage by a few steps. You know I was always afraid I would not be able to indulge here in my favorite amusement of playing at night, when everything is quiet. I have no such fear now, and I have enjoyed my music every night since I have come here. I disturb nobody, unless it be a couple of gentlemen who live somewhere above me in the same part of the castle, but who fortunately belong to the class of men whom we candidly call nobodies. They are the tutor, a certain Mr. Stein, and a surveyor, whom papa employs, and who enjoys the aristocratic name of Timm. Both might pass for handsome, or, to tell the truth, I almost suspect you would call Mr. Stein 'handsome and very gentlemanly indeed,' but you need not think for all that that either of them has made an impression upon me. I have an antipathy against people in such subordinate positions, as I dislike calico dresses and false jewelry. They may do for governesses and such people, but not for us. I see them at dinner and in the evening--otherwise I ignore their existence. I sometimes meet Mr. Stein in the morning, when he takes his early walk in the garden. For the birds are singing here so close to my windows that I must get up, whether I choose or not. I would rather not meet him, but what can I do? The poor man has to give six or seven lessons in the forenoon, and so I cannot well forbid him to enjoy the only morning hour he has free; and if I were to go later I should lose the cream of the morning. I have to submit, you see, and can only say, *Non sono rose senza spine!* However, this Mr. Stein, although only an imitation diamond, is so well polished that a less practised eye might well take him for genuine. He has more self-control and better manners than we generally find with people of low birth. He has a way of telling you a compliment or an impertinence with the calmest air in the world, as if he did not care in the least who you might be, which amuses me at times.

"Thus he asked me yesterday, when we met the third time at the same hour and the same place on the great wall, and had exchanged the same phrases about the weather, if it would not be better hereafter to say simply: 'As yesterday,' unless the weather should have changed. We should thus avoid meeting in silence, which was always painful for people staying at the same house, and yet reduce the cost of conversation to a minimum, a saving which was not unimportant even for the cleverest among us--and an ironical bow. That was pretty strong; but, as I tell you, he says these things with such a quiet smile that it is hard to tell whether he is in earnest or not. They all seem to have a certain respect for him here, even mamma. But with Bruno he stands on a very peculiar footing, and it is really a beautiful sight to see them saunter through the garden, arm in arm, not at all like tutor and pupil, but rather like two intimate friends, a real Orestes and Pylades. This touching friendship, however, does not prevent Bruno from playing at being my knight on every occasion. The boy reads in my eyes what I want, or rather he guesses it and knows it even without my looking at him. At times this almost frightens me. When I think during the promenade: I might as well lay aside my shawl! Bruno is sure to say: Shall I carry your shawl, Helen? At table he sits at my side, and only hands me what I like; the

other dishes he lets pass, and says: I know you don't eat that, Helen! He is a darling of a boy, although that name hardly suits him, for he will soon be sixteen, and he is tall and strong like a youthful Achilles. I believe he would go through the fire for me; into the water he jumped only yesterday for my sake. We were walking in the evening on the wall, and the wind blew my straw hat into the moat. My poor hat! I cried. Do you want it? asked Bruno.--Why, of course, I said--but only jesting, for I knew the moat is quite deep, and at that place it was some twenty feet wide. The hat was floating towards the middle. Bruno was down the wall in an instant, and into the water. I was frightened, and I believe I actually cried out. Don't be troubled, said Mr. Stein, fortunately no one else was present,--Bruno swims like a Newfoundland dog, and even if he should not return, he would have died like a knight in the service of the fair. That is always a consolation.--Fortunately, Bruno came swimming back after two or three anxious minutes. Mr. Stein helped him on shore, and then they went off laughing, and left me quite alone--a touching picture, no doubt, with the soaked hat in my hand. But Mr. Stein seems to be quite offended at me for having exposed his pet to such danger. At least he did not appear this morning at the promenade; at table he was quite monosyllabic, and begged me to excuse him from the lesson in literature, which he gives me twice a week, because he had 'a headache.' This fortunately did not prevent him from standing out in the garden, in the broiling afternoon sun, for half an hour or more, as I noticed from my window. He remained there almost immovable, with folded arms, staring into the basin of a fountain, from which a Naiad looked smiling down upon him.--He is a strange kind of a saint...."

The young lady had no doubt intended to state nothing but the truth in this letter, which evidently revealed more of her innermost soul than she probably supposed, but as to the reason for Oswald's sombre and absent-minded ways she was nevertheless mistaken.

CHAPTER III.

It was the evening of the same day on which Helen was watching Oswald near the fountain of the Naiad, from her window, that in a room of the Hôtel Bellevue, at N., a place celebrated on account of Doctor Birkenhain's famous asylum for insane persons, a lady and a gentleman were sitting near a door opening upon a balcony. Twilight had come; guests were returning, dust-covered, from their afternoon excursions; from time to time a carriage rolled by, in which beautiful ladies were sitting, comfortably reclining on soft cushions. Then the street became more quiet, and over the gardens rose the evening star in the saffron-colored sky. The lady in the balcony door sat with her eyes fixed on the star; the gentleman, who sat further back in the room, looked at her. Both had not spoken a word for the last half-hour; now the gentleman rose, came close up to the lady's chair, and said in a low tone:

"I must go, Melitta."

"When will you call to-morrow?"

"I shall not come again to-morrow; I shall leave N. this very evening."

"But you promised to stay as long as possible, that is, till the appointment with the Brown Countess forced you to return?"

"I meant to do so, but it is useless. I have had a long conversation to-day with Doctor Birkenhain; he thinks it impossible that Berkow will awake again before he dies. And suppose he should be roused, what does it help him if I am present? The other day I came in twice, and what did he want? Nothing--to ask me if the testament was securely kept! That was all!"

"But he might change his last will----"

"No. At the time when he wrote his last will, before myself and old Baumann, he was still in possession of his mind, though sick and feeble; he made you his sole heir, as he was bound to do. He knew he owed you at least that sign of repentance. He meant to say by that: I am not quite as bad as you thought me; I see at least that I have made you very unhappy, and I would try to undo what I have done, if it were in my power."

"Let us drop that subject!" said Melitta, rising and leaning over the railing of the balcony to look down into the dark street. Then she came back into the room and said:

"Do you go straight back to Cona?"

"No, I mean to spend the time that is left me by going up the Rhine; perhaps I shall come back

here on my return."

"Then leave Czika here, will you? As a pledge that you do come back."

"Do you really wish it, Melitta?"

"You have once more been very kind to me."

"Then it is simply from gratitude?"

"And--friendship."

"Farewell, Melitta!"

"Happy journey, Oldenburg!"

The baron went slowly towards the door; there he stopped, and came back once more to say:

"Have you always been convinced that I was your friend, Melitta?"

"Yes."

"Have you always been convinced that I loved you?"

Melitta was silent.

"No? Never, at any time?" asked the baron, in a low voice.

"Let us bury the past!"

"No, Melitta, let us speak of it. I may not find another such opportunity in my life. No, no! For our old friendship, or whatever you call it, is dead, since I was fool enough to let you see that I loved you--and there is no bridge to span that abyss. For the moment we are united by common distress; as soon as I leave this room we shall be strangers again to each other. Melitta, by our former friendship, by the memory of our common youth and its happiness, tell me, did you never believe that I loved you?"

"I do not know----"

"That is hard," said the baron, "that is hard." He sank into a chair, leaned his arm on the back, and hid his face in his hand.

He rose again, walked up and down with long strides, crossing his arms on his breast, and said, as if speaking to himself: "Why should men complain, who love and are loved again, if they are cheated out of their hopes in one way or another? Why do they complain who love and are not loved again, but at least have the consolation of seeing that their grief is respected, and that others pity their suffering? No--to love, as a son of earth can love, with all his soul, with every drop of blood in his veins, and then to learn--not that he is not loved again--pshaw, that is nothing--but that he is looked upon as a pretender, a mere trifler--ha, ha, ha!--that is real bliss such as is dealt out to the poor devils who are undergoing torture."

"And if I cannot believe that you love me, who is to blame for it? Who arranged that scene in the garden of the village Serra di Falco? You or I?"

"What?" said the baron, stopping suddenly, "are you really such a novice in love that I must give you an explanation of that farce? Do you really think that I--who do not easily overlook anything--had not long since seen you behind the myrtle hedge before I sank at Hortense's feet and invoked the sun, which had set long ago, and the moon, that was not shining, and the stars, that knew better, to witness my burning passion? Could you take that for a moment in earnest?"

"What else?"

"It was an allegory. I wished to show you: See, that is what you will have left if you refuse me. You force me, who wish to worship a saint, to seek forgetfulness in the arms of a----. Melitta, Melitta, confess! You knew perfectly well it was a farce, but you found it convenient to take it in earnest. You wished to get rid of me, and even at the price of a misunderstanding!"

"And if that had been my wish--suppose it was my wish--is not the gentleman's duty to honor the lady's will, especially if he loves that lady?"

"And did I not honor it? Did I not leave that very night at a word, at a mere sign? Have I not wandered about for three years, like Ahasuerus, in foreign countries, and have I not, after my return, avoided every opportunity to meet you, because I apprehended a misfortune? Was it my will which made us meet at the ball at Barnewitz? Was it my desire which brought us here together? No, Melitta, you cannot complain of me. I have kept my love for you concealed in my bosom for long, long years,--for I have loved you ever since I could think; since I knew that the song of nightingales and sunshine and the roaring of the waves are precious things,--and if I was fool enough to forget for a moment how hopeless my passion was, I have paid dearly for my folly.

I knew as a boy already, that you loved your horse and your dog better than me, and yet I checked my pride, and yet I humbled myself again and again before you, I who never yet in all my life could utter a request to human being!"

The baron continued his restless wandering through the room for a time, and after some silence he paused again before Melitta and said:

"I humbled myself still more. I saw the woman whom my soul yearned for as Dives did for a drop of water beloved by another; I saw her return him a love for which I would have thanked God on my knees a thousand times--and I did not stir! I tried my best not to hate the fortunate man, I met him with cordiality and took him by the hand, I tried to win his confidence and his affection, not to betray him and you, but because I felt that your happiness was dearer to me than everything else, and that the man whom you loved must either be loved by me too, or die by my hand!"

"You are terrible, Oldenburg," cried Melitta, half rising from her chair; "it seems I cannot hide the secret of the innermost recesses of my soul from you."

"I am not terrible," said the baron, "I am only in the way, that is the privilege of a friend. Do not think I have obtained your secret by stealth! I have only kept my eyes open, that is all! Or do you think we do not at last learn to understand the faintest vibration in the face which we constantly see when we are awake, and, alas! but too often also in our dreams? And when we have at last abandoned all hope of being loved, we wish at least to be sure that he who is more fortunate is not unworthy of his good luck."

"Oldenburg!"

"He is not unworthy, but--I am your friend, Melitta! He is not quite worthy of you. He has many good and noble qualities, I know; but his character has not been steeled in the thrice sacred fire of misfortune, and thus he cannot appreciate good fortune. He is marvellously susceptible for all that is beautiful and graceful, and so he adores you; but this very susceptibility for all that is beautiful makes it very difficult for him not to forget a fair and lovely object for the sake of one that is fairer and lovelier. He cannot be constant. He is a poet, and the poet's love is the ideal. He is capable of pushing aside a precious jewel with contempt, if his sharp eye should notice the smallest flaw; he seizes whatever the earth offers him with eagerness, and casts it aside because it is of the earth; and even if it were divine he would despise it if it had but a remnant of earthy matter about it."

"You tell me only, Oldenburg, what I have told myself a hundred and a thousand times."

"I know I do. You cannot find it difficult to understand such characters, for they are akin to your own. But you are a woman, and women do not go to the same extreme. You are, after all, willing to submit at last, in spite of long resistance, and then you are proud of your chains; man may boast of them for a time, as long as they are new, but after a while he throws them aside. And so it will be here."

"No, no!"

"Yes, Melitta! It will be so, and--now I know what the dark storm-cloud meant which I saw the other day hang over your head. You may be sure the blow will fall upon you sooner or later, and when you are cast down by its violence and do not wish to live any longer,--though you cannot yet die,--then, Melitta, then you will perhaps be able to understand what I suffer; then you will be sorry in your heart for the wrong you have done me. Would to God you could be spared that awaking! The penalty is so enormous! But, but--you will have to pay it. Farewell, Melitta! Pardon me if I have pained you; it shall not happen again; it is the first and the last time I have spoken thus to you. Farewell, Melitta!--Melitta, have you not one kind word for me?"

Melitta had pressed her face into her hands; the twilight which reigned in the room concealed all but the mere attitude of her form--she would not or could not answer.

The baron held both his hands over her head.

"God help you, Melitta!" he said, and the voice of the proud, stern man sounded soft and mild like a father's voice.

When Melitta heard the door close behind him, she started up from her chair and stepped forward hurriedly. But halfway she paused.

"No, no!" she murmured; "it is better so; I must not leave him a ray of hope."

She went slowly back to her chair. She sat down again and covered her face once more with her hands. And now the long pent-up tears broke in streams from her eyes. "I know it will come so," she murmured, "but why must he cruelly break the short dream of my happiness?"

CHAPTER IV.

The postman who carried Helen's letter in the evening to town, had been there once before in the morning of the same day. He had brought Oswald a letter from one of his friends in Grunwald, who was at the same time one of the few with whom Professor Berger was intimate. This gentleman, a teacher at the University, wrote Oswald that he thought he was bound to inform him promptly of an event which had created, the day before, the greatest consternation in the city. Professor Berger had suddenly become insane; at least no one had had the slightest suspicion of his affection. He had come, as usual, at four o'clock to deliver his lecture on Logic, and had commenced his discourse as ably and ingeniously as ever. Then his words had gradually become more and more confused, so that one student after the other had laid down his pen, staring at his neighbor in wonder and terror. "Do you know, gentlemen," he had said, "what the youth of Saïs beheld when he raised the veil that hid the great secret?--the great secret which was to be the key to all the confused riddles of life? You see, gentlemen, I take my head, I open it thus, one-half in this hand, the other in that hand, what do you see in this head of the great Professor Berger, at whose feet you sit listening to his wise words, and taking them down with hideously grating pens in your tiresome note-books? What do you see? Exactly what the youth of Saïs saw, when he raised the veil of truth: Nothing! Absolutely nothing, nothing in itself, nothing for itself! And this lesson, that all our best endeavors amount to nothing, that we spend our life's blood for nothing, that, gentlemen, deprived the youth of Saïs of his senses, that has made me mad, and will one of these days send you to an asylum, if you have any brains in your empty heads. And now, gentlemen, shut up your stupid note-books, so that the scribbling may come to an end, and join me in the noble and significative song: There is a fly on the wall, a fly, a fly!" Berger had then commenced to sing in a loud voice, beating his desk with his hands; had run along the walls of the lecture-room, trying to catch imaginary flies, and had each time opened the hand cautiously, looked in, and cried out triumphantly: "Nothing, gentlemen, you see nothing, and ever nothing!"

Oswald's correspondent closed with the news that Professor Berger had immediately been sent to the celebrated Insane Asylum of Doctor Birkenhain, in N., and that he had allowed his friends to dispose of him as they thought best, after they had persuaded him that he was going to see there the Original Nothing.

Oswald was deeply moved by the contents of that letter. He had loved and honored Berger as a friend; he had won his good-will in an unusual degree, and been allowed to see more than anybody else, perhaps, of the inner life of the eccentric man. How often had he listened to his marvellous eloquence, when he, suddenly leaving the world of logic, had entered upon a world of which all we know has been revealed to us by intuition; a world so fantastic, so fabulous, but also so divinely beautiful and pure, that Oswald forgot everything else, and fancied he was walking bodily about in this Fata Morgana, till the magician let the gorgeous image sink and vanish by a word of bitter contempt and wild despair! And now this noble mind, with all its wealth, was destroyed! This lofty intellect buried in the hideous night of insanity!

Oswald felt as if the world was out of joint--so fearful, so inconceivable appeared to him this calamity. Must not all fall to ruin if such a magnificent pillar could stand no longer? Then friendship and love also were probably nothing but fables--then it was, perhaps, also more than a mere accident which betrayed to him this morning Oldenburg's present whereabouts?--For when Oswald had glanced at the letters which the postman had taken out of his mail-bag, to select his own, he had noticed one, which was evidently directed in Oldenburg's peculiar and unmistakable handwriting. The letter was for his steward at Cona. Why should the baron not write to his steward? But Oswald also noticed the stamp, which showed where the letter came from; and that was the same town to which Berger had just been sent--the same place where Baron Berkow had been living for seven years--the same place where Melitta had now been a fortnight, two days longer than Oldenburg's mysterious journey! Melitta, in her long letter which Oswald had received through Baumann, had not said a word about the baron; Bemperlein, however, must have written Baumann all about it, and hence the old man had been so embarrassed when he mentioned the persons who had been present at Melitta's visit to her husband. Why this mysterious manner in a man who looked like frankness and candor itself? Had he received orders to the purpose, or did he know his mistress so perfectly, that he preferred not to tell the whole truth in a case like this?

These were the evil thoughts which filled Oswald's heart, as he was standing bareheaded in the hot afternoon sun, staring at the water in the fountain with the Naiad, while Miss Helen, at her writing-table, was wondering whether she was perhaps herself the cause of this troubled state of mind. But before she could come to any satisfactory conclusion about it, there came a knock at the door. The young lady immediately locked her portfolio, and seemed to be deep in Lamartine's *Voyage en Orient*, when upon her invitation the door opened and the baroness entered.

"Do I disturb you, dear Helen?"

"Not at all, my dear mamma," said the young girl, rising and going to meet her mother.

"You were staying so unusually long in your room to-day, that I thought I had better see what keeps you here. Lamartine's *Voyage*! Well, quite a nice book, but a little too romantic, I should say. To be sure, at my age the views of life change, and with them our views on books and men. But I am glad you are not idle, as you have the talent to occupy yourself. I was almost afraid our monotonous life here would contrast too badly with the gay animation of the Institute, and you might feel the difference unpleasantly. We can do so little for your amusement here! That was always my reply when your father wanted you to come home from boarding-school."

"But I assure you, dear mamma, you trouble yourself quite unnecessarily," said Miss Helen, kissing her mother's hand respectfully. "I am very happy here, and how could it be otherwise? I am once more in my paternal home, where everybody meets me with love and kindness. I have all I can wish for. I should really be very, very ungrateful, if I were to forget that for a moment."

"You are a dear, sensible girl," said the baroness, kissing her beautiful daughter on the forehead. "You will give me great joy yet. That is my certain hope, as it is my daily prayer. Ah, my dear child, believe me, I stand in need of such a prospect, if I am not to succumb to the many cares which oppress me."

The baroness had taken a seat on a small sofa; she looked quite excited, and dried her eyes with her handkerchief.

"Why, dear mamma," said Miss Helen, with sincere sympathy, "I am only a simple, inexperienced girl, but if you feel confidence in me, tell me what it is? Even if I cannot advise or help, I can perhaps comfort you, and that would give me very great pleasure."

"My dear child," said the baroness, "you have been away from your father's house so very long,--come, sit down here, and let us have a nice confidential chat,--that you know of course very little about our circumstances. You think we are rich, very rich; but the truth is almost the contrary; at least as far as we women are concerned. The whole large fortune goes to your brother after your father's death--which God Almighty will, I hope, defer for a long time yet--I shall have nothing but the small insurance, and you, my poor child, will be left without anything at all."

"But, mamma, I have always heard that Stantow and Baerwalde belong to papa, and that he can dispose of them as he likes?"

"You are mistaken, my child; the two estates do not belong to him; they may belong to him one of these days, if the real heir does not come forward within a certain time. I cannot tell you all about that now, my dear child, because that involves certain facts connected with your uncle Harald, which are better not mentioned. Enough, we cannot count upon the two farms with any certainty. All that is left us will amount to a few thousand dollars, which your father and I have been able to lay by from the annual revenue."

"Dear mamma, I wish you would not trouble yourself about me," said Miss Helen. "I have not been spoilt in Hamburg, and the luxuries with which your kindness surrounds me here are quite new to me. I shall be able to be content with little--and then our dear papa is, God be thanked, so active and hearty again, and has so quickly recovered from his fever attack in Hamburg, that I hope we shall enjoy for a long time yet his love and his excellent management."

"God grant it," said the baroness, "but I fear we shall have to be prepared for the worst. Your father is by no means as hearty as you think. He is always suffering, although he does not let us see it. The doctor in Hamburg thought his case a very grave one. If he should be taken from us you might easily have an opportunity to prove your powers of endurance. But, dear child, you do not know what life is. It is much easier to talk of poverty than to bear it. I know it from experience; I was a poor girl when your father married me; I know what it means to have to turn a dress again and again, for want of money to buy a new one; I know what painful mortifications a poor girl of good family has to endure."

"I cannot think, dearest mamma, that things will ever be quite so bad as that. Perhaps it is because I am so young, or the fine summer-day outdoors--but I cannot see the clouds that you speak of so sadly. I shall----"

"Marry a rich and deserving man," said the baroness, with a smile which did not render her more attractive.

"But, mamma----"

"I know you meant to say something else, my child. It is a jest now, which, however, will soon change into reality, I hope. You are at an age now when a young girl may very well begin to give a place to such thoughts in her heart. Happy is she who chooses well; happier still, if she leaves the choice to her parents, who wish nothing but to see her happy, and who are aided in their efforts by the rich experience of a long life."

"But, mamma, that is a long way off yet."

"Very likely, my child; however, we cannot know what Heaven may have decreed. We have to leave these, as in fact all things in our life, to His direction.--But who in the world is that man who is standing there so immovable near that tree? I have left my glasses in my room."

"That is Mr. Stein, mamma; he has been standing there for half an hour; I believe he has grown to the place."

"A strange man, that man Stein," said the baroness. "He has something uncomfortable for me. I cannot by possibility understand him. How do you like him, dear Helen?"

"Why, mamma, I have never thought about it, and with such people there can be hardly a question about liking or not liking. I think they are all pretty much alike, and the few points of difference are so unimportant that they are hardly noticed. One is called Stein, the other is called Timm, and that is nearly all."

"You are right, dear child," said the baroness. "These people are mutes on the stage; they are only seen when the principal personages are going out. Fortunately, I can promise you soon better and more agreeable company."

"Who is that?"

"Your cousin Felix. I have just received a letter from him, the postman is still in the kitchen; you can give him a letter if you think of writing a few lines to Hamburg,--he announces his coming for to-morrow or the day after. But was not that your father's voice? Good-by, dear child; get ready; we shall dine a little earlier and go to pay some visits."

The baroness kissed her daughter on the forehead and left the room. Miss Helen drew out the letter she had so hastily hidden, in order to add: "Mamma, who has just left me, is, after all, very kind indeed. She told me of a visitor who is coming: Felix Grenwitz (the lieutenant). We shall have a little more life now at Grenwitz, for it seems we can no longer count upon Mr. Stein. Adieu, dearest, dearest Mary."

CHAPTER V.

If anyone should have taken a special interest in Mr. Timm, he would have noticed that something extraordinary must have happened to him lately. The black dress coat which he now daily wore, and the greater care which he bestowed on his appearance, together with other kindred changes in his general manner, might have been explained by Miss Helen's presence, and the higher style which seemed to prevail at Grenwitz. But what meant the grave expression which was now frequently seen on his white forehead and in his blue eyes? What the silence to which he, the talkative man, now condemned himself for hours? What, especially, the restless industry with which he stood all day long bent over his drawing-board, busy with pencil and brush? Up to the day on which the family returned, Mr. Timm had given himself entirely to the pleasures of a pleasant rural retreat; but from the hour at which he had gone into the archive-room, and there found a small package of letters tied up with a red silk cord, all had changed. Not that it had been in Albert's nature to repent of his *dolce far niente* during that pleasant week--he, besides, worked so rapidly and easily that it was a trifle to him to make up for lost time. It was surely not the plats and the surveys, therefore, which troubled him now. Any one might have seen that by looking on that afternoon into his room, which he had, to his habit, carefully locked after him.

Mr. Timm was sitting on a lounge in his room, one leg crossed over the other, his head resting in his hands, and blowing mighty clouds from his cigar, while he was evidently thinking deeply. By his side, on the lounge, lay the letters which he had found among the archives. There were not many of them, all written in the same delicate handwriting, and upon rather grayish paper, such as was universally in use, even for letters, some forty years ago. The letters were rather old, apparently, for the ink was very much faded; but no contrary date was to be found anywhere.

"These letters ought to be valuable in some way," said Albert, speaking confidentially to his best friend and only intimate, his dear own self, "only I do not know how. If I should succeed in finding the answers, it would go hard indeed if a clever fellow, such as I am, could not ferret out the whole of the great secret. Besides, I think I am on the track. It is improbable, though not impossible, that both should have died, mother and child alike. Marie was evidently a fine girl, and that little trouble and heart-sore could hardly have cost her her life. And the child,

illegitimate as it was, enjoyed, in all probability, the proverbial good luck of such children. Therefore, the mother may be alive, and the child may be alive. If they are both alive,--and I do hope and wish it,--they either know something of the codicil to the will of the noble scapegrace, or they do not. If they have been informed of it,--which again is not very probable, since it would be a perfectly sublime height of stupidity to shut the mouth against such a roast pigeon flying about and seeking to be devoured,--they must be made to apply for their property. If they should know nothing of it, which is more likely, we must assist them in their lamentable ignorance. In any case we must first of all find out where they are. It is not to be presumed that they have concealed themselves in the neighborhood. For in the first place Harald would have found them, when he spared no money and left no means unemployed in his search; and secondly, such people are very apt to run, on like occasions, as far as they can; and thirdly, this Monsieur d'Estein seems to have been a very sly fox, who would be sure to hide his little dove as safely as could be done from the fierce lion. This monsieur is every way a very inconvenient quantity in the problem, which I should like to eliminate if I knew how to do it. If he did not die soon afterwards, he probably did a good deal of mischief yet; perhaps he even married little Marie, adopted the child, carried both of them back to France or to America, and spoilt the whole game for me--who knows? That would be disgraceful; for the story might really become highly interesting to me and to others. I should like to see the faces of the two, if I appeared before them and said: My good friends, what will you give me if I help you to a nice little fortune of a hundred thousand dollars or so? Or perhaps--and that might be the more convenient way of doing the thing--I might present myself before dear Anna Maria some fine afternoon, and say to her: Pardon me, madam, if I interrupt you, but I found among the papers of my father, who, as you know, did business for your departed cousin Harald, certain documents which enable me to trace the legal owners of Stantow and Baerwalde with tolerable accuracy. My sense of justice, and the special respect I entertain for you and your daughter, are contending in my bosom. The one compels me to report my discovery to the proper court; the other whispers to me to keep the matter secret. What do you say, madam, if you were to re-enforce my disinterested veneration by a few thousand dollars, which, upon my honor, are very much needed just now?"

This suggestion seemed to inspire Mr. Timm. He jumped up from the lounge and walked up and down in the room, gesticulating actively. "That might become a gold mine for me," he said to himself. "I should worry the old woman till her big gray eyes were twice as large. I should put the thumbscrews on her, and every time I wanted money I would give a turn or two. She would do anything rather than risk a lawsuit. Then I should be, so to say, master in the house; then I could drop the fool's mask and show myself in my true form. Then I might say who was to marry Miss Helen; why, I might marry her myself if I chose, and calmly look forward to the arrival of my good friend Felix, which dear Anna Maria has just confided to me as a great secret. Not that I am much troubled by it, any way, for friend Felix was the worthy pupil of his master, and handled the cards as well as I did and would probably not have fared any better than I did if he had not belonged to an old family. As it was, Ensign Baron Felix Grenwitz escaped with a reprimand, while Ensign Albert Timm had to quit the service. I am curious how we shall meet. Perhaps he won't recognize me; perhaps he'll try to get rid of the troublesome guest as soon as possible. Ha! How things would change if these wretched letters did not skip over the most important points with a levity and carelessness of which women alone are capable!" Albert sat down again and commenced his letters once more, although he nearly knew them by heart. He had carefully numbered them, and perused them in the order in which they came.

No. 1.--"Sir:--I do not know you, and if you are the same person who, a few weeks ago, intruded upon a conversation between myself and my companion, and were so energetically rebuked by the latter, the same who every evening pursues me when I return home from the store--then you will find it but natural that I should decline making your acquaintance. I pray you to spare me further requests, and all other letters. I should have left this note unanswered like the others, if I were not afraid to encourage your boldness by my silence. Surely no man would refuse the request of a lady, and especially of an unprotected, helpless woman?

"MARIE MONTBERT."

No. 2.--"Sir:--You seem indeed to know how to obtain the forgiveness of a woman whom you have offended.--Whatever may have been the motives that induced you--you have dried many tears, you have saved a whole family from despair. I myself was unable to do anything for my poor countrymen--I could only pray to God to send them help. He sent you. Show yourself worthy of such favor! Remember that he who asks for reward has his reward already, and do not let your left hand know what your right hand has done.

"Your humble servant,

"MARIE MONTBERT."

No. 3.--"What do you know of my father's fate? For heaven's sake, sir, do not trifle with the heart of a child! You say you have learnt from a French colonel of the Grand Army, in whose

regiment my father made the campaign against Russia, everything about his experiences during that year, and all the minor details about his death, shortly before the passage of the Beresina. All this sounds so very improbable--and yet how could you know anything about it except from good authority?--even the colonel's name is right, as I see from my father's letters to my mother. I do not know what to believe--but why will you not give me this information, which you know must be of inestimable value to myself, in my house, I mean in the house of the good lady who has been in my mother's place for several months now? Why ask for a secret rendezvous? Why force a child, who expects information about the death of her father, to take a step which that father, if he were still alive, could never approve of? I am not appealing in vain to your generosity, I am sure.

"My lodgings are Ann Street, No. 21. If you are not afraid of three flights of steps, I shall be ready to receive you tomorrow morning, between 10 and 12 o'clock.

"Your humble servant,

"**Marie Montbert**."

No. 4.--"You insist upon a rendezvous which you say is by no means secret, as it is to take place in the open street, in one of the most frequented parts of the city, and at a time when the streets are still crowded with pedestrians. You will state yourself, you say, your reasons for declining to comply with my wish, 'however painful such a step may be,' and you vow I shall approve of your motives as soon as I hear them. Are you quite sure of that? But, it is true, you offer to give--I am to receive--and so I must needs give way to your wishes. I cannot, I will not, imagine that you mean to deceive me. You have been so generous towards poor and unhappy people, you will surely not be less so towards a poor unprotected girl.

"**M. M**."

No. 5.--"Dear Baron! Once more my heartiest thanks! Thanks also for the delicacy with which you had arranged it all! How much I have wronged you! But could I anticipate that you would make me acquainted with Colonel St. Cyr himself? That I would hear from the lips of that veteran, in my beloved mother-tongue, the heroic death of my father? You would not have it that the colonel should find the daughter of a hero, the last scion of a once rich and illustrious family, in such reduced circumstances; you wished to spare me the mortification of having to receive the Count of St Cyr and Baron Grenwitz in a garret. You preferred to present me to him as the governess of a family whom you knew, and it was after all perfectly right and proper that I should call in your company upon the old gentleman, tired as he was from his long journey, at his hotel. Once more a thousand thanks! Thanks also for the silence by which you honored my renewed grief during the long drive from the hotel to my lodgings! I know how hard it must have been to a man of your liveliness. How have I deserved the interest you take in my fate? Ah! I have been so ill-behaved towards you! You ask me, finally, whether I believe now that you mean it well with me? This letter may give you the answer. You leave the city tomorrow--farewell, and may the enclosed little keepsake, worked by my hand at night, remind you sometimes of

"Your grateful

"**Marie Montbert**."

"Now the little doll is ready and well trained," said Albert, who read the familiar letter, with a strange and unnatural zeal, over and over again. He sat there like a conjurer studying the rules of a rival in the Black Art. "This Harald, it cannot be denied, was the real Ratcatcher of Hameln. I should like to know what kind of a colonel that was who invented the pretty story of the 'heroic death, shortly before the passage of the Beresina.' Perhaps a colonel of devils; at all events, one of his associates--the thing must have cost Baron Harald an immense amount of money. However, it was spent to some purpose, for in No. 6 he has made great progress!"

No. 6.--"I can hardly recover from my surprise. You back again! And back for my sake! Back, because your desire to see me left you no rest! Oh God! What is to become of it all! You are a rich nobleman--I am a poor girl, who, whatever my ancestors once may have been, must now earn my daily bread by hard work. My judgment tells me that all this can only bring wretchedness upon me; that I ought to avoid you, flee from you. What did I tell you yesterday? What did I promise? Oh, give me back my promise! I cannot, I must not see you. I must never see you again. I beseech you, leave the city. You must do it if you really love me. Farewell. Thousand thanks!

"Your **Marie**."

"What eight days' absence must have done!" said Albert, lighting his cigar again, which had gone out during his perusal of the last note. "'Your Marie!' How the brave Harald must have chuckled when he read this tearful epistle--here are the traces of the tears now. But let us go on."

No. 7.--"You must take back the costly jewels which an unknown man left here to-day. How have I deserved it, that you should think so meanly of me? You know that I love you in spite of my reason, which reproaches me constantly for it; I have not been able to conceal it from you any longer, nor did I wish to do so; but you ought at least to leave me the consolation that my love is pure and disinterested. These costly rubies, this red gold, it burns in my hand like coals of fire--leave me as you found me! If the poor simple girl could win your love, you see yourself that poverty and simplicity are perfectly compatible with love.

"**M. M**."

"Prettily expressed," said Albert, putting the letter on top of the others, "but very stupid! Poverty and love are as compatible as fire and water. I should like to know the burning love that would not be extinguished if a bucket of poverty were poured on it! Pshaw! I ought to know better. I think I would be capable of marrying poor little Marguerite if I were a dignitary with an ample income guaranteed by the State; but as I am nothing but a poor devil, with a famous appetite and a real patent stomach, it would be a clear case of suicide if I were to share the scanty ration with another person. Love! Nonsense! Love is a most acceptable dessert after the dinner of life. A good dinner without a dessert--*bon!* a dinner with a dessert--still better; but a dessert without a dinner--well, women may be able to do even with that, but it does not suit my constitution. I wonder whether sweet Marie, if she is alive, as I fervently hope, does not sometimes regret having rejected the 'costly rubies and the red gold' for the benefit of other young ladies, who deserved them less well? In the next letter the virtuous little damsel becomes quite rampant."

No. 8.--"Aha! my dear, we can be jealous, can we? Who would have suspected Baron Harald Grenwitz of such plebeian foibles? I must change my lodgings--why? That I may not perish with cold in winter and with heat in summer; that I do not risk every day breaking my neck on the steep narrow staircase? Oh no! Simply because my good lord does not like Mrs. Black, with whom I live, and because my good lord has found out that a young Frenchman, a Monsieur d'Estein, lives on the same story with me; that I am quite well acquainted with said monsieur, and have actually been seen with him arm in arm late at night in the street! Horrible! But in good earnest, dearest Harald, you have no cause to complain. Mrs. Black is a very respectable, excellent woman, to whom I am deeply indebted, and who has been like a mother to me as far back as I can think; and as for Monsieur d'Estein, your jealousy will be lulled to sleep, I hope, when I tell you that he is the same little old gentleman on whose arm you saw me the first time in the Park. Monsieur d'Estein could very well be my father, and really was my father's friend. He is, like ourselves, descended from a family of French refugees, and would long since have gone back to the land of his fathers, since he has no relatives nor even friends here, if he was not justly afraid that he would starve there, since everybody there speaks the language which he here teaches to earn his daily bread. He is very eccentric, but the kindest heart in the world. He would go for me through fire and water, and be *au désespoir* if he had the slightest suspicion of our friendship. All this I would have told you last night, but I wished to see if you could bear contradiction. Are you satisfied now? *Au revoir, Monsieur le baron*.

"*Votre très méchante*

"**Marie M**."

"This is the only notice about this Monsieur d'Estein," said Albert, letting the letter fall back in his lap, and puffing out clouds of reflection from his cigar; "no doubt the same man who afterwards reappears as the Jew pedler in the old woman's story, when he first reconnoitred the locality and then eloped with the oppressed Innocence. I fear several letters must have been lost here, because the next following note shows matters very much advanced."

No. 9.--"I have just received the--why should I not tell you?--the long-expected letter of your aunt. She writes me in a trembling but legible hand, that she values the happiness of her nephew more highly than the peace of her few remaining days; that she was even pleased to have such a motive for returning to her ancestral home, the place of her birth, where she now also expects to die. She says she will start on her journey, the last before the great journey home, on the 13th, so as to reach Grenwitz before me, 'as you fear a *tête-à-tête* with my wild nephew' so much. I cannot tell how deeply I am touched by so much goodness and love! How grateful I am to the dear old lady, and how I long to kiss her withered old hands! Yes, Harald, if she, the matron, the oldest of your knightly race, has thought me worthy of you, if she blesses our union, I am willing to

become yours. What pains me is only this, that I am to steal away like a thief at night from the woman whom I love as a mother, and from the man who has been both father and brother to me. But then--it cannot be helped. You are right. They would only make the parting harder; they would blame the whole as a romantic adventure. They do not know you; they do not know how good and noble you are! But I may at least bid them good-by in writing! Thank them in a few words for all their love and kindness, and hold out a bright future to them as a compensation for the grief I must needs cause them now. Ah, that that future were the present! Your new valet, whom I, by the way, like much less than the old one with the good face, told me last night that all was prepared for day after to-morrow. I am glad I am to travel in your carriage, and accompanied by your servants; the thought of so long a journey rather frightens me. I hope soon to see you, my dearly beloved.

"**M. M**."

"Well, now the little bird is in the net," said Albert, adding this letter to the others, and tying them all up again with the red-silk ribbon. "I could imagine the rest, even if I did not know it from the old woman's story. I believe the old witch, the dear friend of my excellent neighbor Stein; could tell a good deal more if she chose. I must try to win her favor and to obtain admittance to her salons. I wonder if she has not some things that belonged to Miss Innocence in her possession, that might lead to further discoveries? The little one can assuredly not have cleared all her chests and drawers so completely, before her hurried flight at night, that the old woman should not have gleaned a nice store of ribbons, shoes and stockings, and perhaps also letters. She may keep all that in perfect security at the bottom of that big wooden chest on which I lay myself sore that afternoon, where it is now awaiting a joyful resurrection. There is an idea for you!"

Albert had risen and gone before the mirror, probably in order to see how such a clever head looked. "There is an idea," he repeated, and kissed his hand to his double in the glass, who returned the compliment promptly, "a very famous idea, which must be carried out at any hazard. Perhaps the Jew pedler may have been a real Israelite, and agent of Monsieur d'Estein; perhaps he only brought the girl a letter which contained the plan for the elopement, and perhaps this letter might, if found, put us on the track of the fugitives."

Mr. Timm suddenly paused in his monologue, and his face grew dark: "Confound it," he murmured, "there is no money, that *nervus verum*, that divining-rod by which alone treasures can be raised! Of course I shall have to make several trips in order to find it all out. I must go to Berlin, Ann Street, No. 21, third story, to look for information. But travelling costs money, and my assets amount to about five groschen, one of which I believe is counterfeit. I must make a forced loan. Marguerite must help. I was near enough doing it the other day, when the agreeable family suddenly returned and abruptly terminated our idyllic life. To be sure, these miserable plats must first be finished; otherwise Anna Maria won't let me go. I must submit to it."

And Mr. Timm lighted another cigar, unlocked the door, bent over his drawing-board, and worked with a zeal as if he had no other plans and knew nothing else in the world but the simple duty of a first-class surveyor.

CHAPTER VI.

Baron Felix had arrived--in the middle of the night. He had left the ferry early in his own carriage, when his valet suddenly remembered that his master's dressing-case might not be with the rest of the luggage, as he had placed it on board the boat between his feet and probably left it there. A timid suggestion to that end--terrible indignation on the part of Baron Felix, threats of boxes on the ear, beatings and dismissal--a thorough search in the middle of the road--finally return, as the *corpus delicti* was really missing. The ferry-boat, however, had unfortunately gone back in the mean time, and with it the precious box. Several hours had to pass before it would return, for the wind had lulled, and the men had to pull desperately with their heavy oars. Baron Felix watched them through his pocket telescope and became furious. At last, when the evening had come, the baron could start a second time, this time with the dressing-case. He was in a terrible state of mind. He had promised to arrive in Grenwitz early that day, as he could not await the moment to see his fair cousin. The delay might be interpreted unfavorably, and it was better, therefore, to arrive at night than not at all. On the other hand, it suited the taste of the ex-lieutenant by no means to travel by night through the forest and over damp moors, especially in an open carnage. He suffered--probably in consequence of indescribable exertions on the parade ground and at drill of rheumatism, and feared a cold like the plague. He chose, therefore, the

least of two evils, and only threatened Jean, his valet, to make his punishment on the next morning depend on the nature of his cold.

It was therefore a matter of great rejoicing to Jean when his master awoke next day in very good humor. They had tried to disturb the sleepers at the château as little as possible, and had quietly taken possession of the long-prepared rooms, with the aid of one of the more wakeful servants. Baron Felix ordered his cacao to be brought to his bed, and when he was dressed--he did very little of it himself--he sent Jean to ask Mr. Timm to come and see him for a few minutes in his room. For Albert's presence had been one of the first things he learnt when inquiring about the state of things at the château.

"Ah *voilà*, dear Timm, how do you do?" said Baron Felix, emphasizing the last word in a peculiar manner, when Mr. Timm entered. "Pardon me for troubling you so early; but I--why on earth has the donkey brought me hot water again instead of warm water?--excuse me--Jean, warm water, rhinoceros!--now tell me how are you, Timm? Glad to meet you here by accident. How do you do?" and the baron held out one of the fingers of the left hand, which he had just been drying.

"Thank you, baron, tolerably!" said Albert, touching the proffered finger very lightly with two fingers of his own hand, for it was not one of Albert's foibles to let himself be overawed by haughty insolence--"I really thought *you* would have forgotten me and my name."

"Oh no!" said Felix, "I thought of it directly this morning, when Jean counted out the company.--But how divine you look in citizen's dress! ha, ha, ha! if our comrades could see you! really divine! upon honor!" and Felix, a hair-brush in one hand and a small looking-glass in the other, remained standing before Albert, and stared at him from head to foot as if he were examining an animal from foreign lands.

"Do you think so?" asked Albert, dryly; "glad of it. Am sorry cannot return the compliment. This much I can tell you, however--you don't look any younger. Have you another cigar? or is the Havana you are smoking the last of the Mohicans?"

"There, on the table," said Felix, "in the ebony box--press the spring down--not younger? but I hope not older, I mean perceptibly--at least you see I still enjoy all my teeth, and five-sixths of my hair," and Felix brushed with infinite satisfaction the very pretty crisp curls which covered his well-shaped head in surprising abundance.

"Well, the hair is tolerably fair," said Albert, pitilessly; he had taken a seat on the sofa and examined Felix, as he stood before the long mirror, with great delight; "but what has given you all those wrinkles in your face? The bright morning light is really not good for you any more. Formerly I used to compliment you on your likeness to Byron; but now you are more like Byron's father. And then--you never were particularly stout, but now you are really reduced to a minimum."

"The slimmer the more elegant," replied Felix, "and besides that comes back. I have been kept rather short of late by my doctor."

"The old story?"

"Well, perhaps a new edition."

"Revised and augmented?"

"So, so; but it is all right now. We have become steady; we are going to settle down. How do you like these trousers? I had them built. A clever combination of the military cut and the civilian cut. We are going to marry----"

"You ought to leave that alone, baron."

"Why?"

"At least you ought to many a sensible elderly woman."

"Why?"

"Because ere long you will need a motherly friend much more than a pretentious young wife."

"Pshaw! *mon cher*, I have the honor to come from a race in which men can live fast and yet long. A little rheumatism--that is the worst. How do you like this coat?"

"Why, I cannot say. You know I never understood anything about these things."

"I know. You were always the unclean vessel into which our good colonel discharged his wrath. Do you know the poor devil has killed himself?"

"No; why?"

"Some say on account of debts; others, because he could not survive the disgrace of having

had a whole company appear in white trousers, instead of cloth trousers, at the last parade. The commanding general reprimanded him publicly."

"May he be happy!"

"Amen! Apropos, how long have you been here? I am told several weeks; you must know the company inside and outside. Oh, what I wanted to ask you! How is my worthy uncle and my excellent aunt? And how does my cousin look? Did you ever see such a watch! Double second-hand--the hand above shows months and days--direct from London--I believe it is the first that ever was brought to the Continent. Apropos, who on earth was that pretty black-eyed little thing we roused last night, and who slipped by us in the passage, in a delicious little night-costume---she looked like a sort of housekeeper, or some such thing? There is no other visitor here now?"

"No----"

"Ah, quite *en famille*, then? Will you please pull the bell just over your head? I think I look uncommonly well today?--Jean, did I not tell you, you camel, that you must not wear that coat here?--go instantly and put a new one on! and then go and ask if I can pay my respects to the baron and the baroness."

"The baron has asked already twice after the baron."

"Well, then say I am coming directly--*au revoir*, dear Timm; I hope to see you at dinner"--and with a last look at the mirror, and after pouring some Cologne on his handkerchief, Felix left the room, while Jean respectfully held the door open, without deigning to notice Albert, who followed close behind him.

Mr. Timm looked after his friend with a bitter smile on his thin fine lips. "Dear Timm," he murmured, "I'll teach you to say Dear Timm, you monkey!"

It was the evening of the same day. They had just finished dinner, which was always served on the terrace when the weather was good, and were getting ready for a walk through the beech-forest down to the beach, which the baroness had proposed. Oswald would have preferred remaining behind, but Felix, who seemed to take a great fancy to the silent, sober man, had begged him so earnestly not to spoil the pleasure, that at last he decided to accompany them. Bruno was rejoiced. They all started together, and soon reached the wood, where the red evening lights were still playing merrily in the green branches. Felix had offered his arm to the baroness, and Miss Helen walked by the side of her father; Oswald, Albert, and the boys, and Mademoiselle Marguerite, went before or behind, now singly, and now in pairs, as the narrow forest path permitted. Felix, whom the physician had warned against catching cold, found it cooler and damper in the forest than he had thought, and wished in his heart the excursion might soon come to an end. But he thought it best not to give utterance to his secret wishes, but to compliment the suggestion of this romantic promenade.

"I am glad I have anticipated your wishes," said Anna Maria. "I confess I had not expected you would have so much taste for the simple pleasures of country life. How fortunate it is that Helen has the same taste! You will lead a very sensible, quiet life one of these days, as it suits your position."

"Well, my position, dear aunt----"

"Will be very good, I doubt not; but you will have to work hard, dear Felix, till you can breathe quite freely again. How long it has been before we could remove the most serious obstacles here in our own position! And, after all, our position will not be perfectly secured till Stantow and Baerwalde are positively our own, and the other farms are in the hands of new tenants. You ought to have your estates also surveyed anew, Felix. You would find Timm a clever and diligent workman. I was quite surprised to hear that you knew him before, as cadet, I suppose?"

"Yes, dear aunt; he was a great----"

"Favorite--I doubt not. We all like him very much."

"I did not mean to say that exactly," replied Felix, laughing. "Still, they were generally quite fond of him. He was an indefatigable joker, and whenever some bold prank was to be played he was sure to lead. However, it is well to keep an eye upon him; he is one of those people who, if you give them the little finger, are sure to take the whole hand."

"Ah! indeed!" said Anna Maria, raising her eyebrows; "I took the young man to be modesty personified; he certainly is far more modest than, for instance, Mr. Stein."

"Really!" said Felix. "Why, I thought Mr. Stein was fully aware of his position!"

"Well, you will learn to know him better. He is one of the most arrogant men of his class I have ever known."

"We'll soon get that out of him," said Felix, twirling his very diminutive moustache. "With such people short answers are best. I know that. These low-bred people are all alike. As soon as they

find out that we really mean to be what we are by right--the masters at home and in the State--they become submissive. It is our own fault if they are impertinent. They have to be kept down in a proper knowledge of their position. You have been too kind to that man, that is all. To tell the truth, I was wondering at dinner why Miss Helen should submit so very patiently to some correction or other."

"Well, Helen is not generally a friend of his. She has a thoroughly aristocratic aversion to everything plebeian. I hope you will encourage her in these principles. Besides, that is the nearest way to her heart."

"Well, I hope the way will not be so difficult to find," said Felix, with a self-complacent smile; "I have some experience in that line, *ma chère tante*."

"Which you will all need in this case, dear Felix. Helen is a very peculiar character, hard to understand. I confess I have not ventured yet to tell her of our plan. I wished first to see what impression you would produce on her heart. You have the finest opportunity here to show yourself in the most favorable light; there is not even a rival to fear. We live very retired, and I shall take good care that our retirement is interrupted as rarely as possible while you are staying with us."

"Pardon me, dear aunt," said Felix, "if I differ with you on that point. I should really have to pay forfeit if I had to be afraid of a comparison with the young men of my class here in the country. On the contrary, I am very anxious to measure myself with these goslings! Every one of them whom I defeat is a step nearer to my goal, if it is really so far off. No! Ask as much company as you choose. Make Helen's presence and mine the pretext for giving little dinners, suppers, teas. etc.; and then sum it all up in a great ball, on which occasion our engagement can be proclaimed, and thus produce a sensation such as these people have not often experienced."

"You are bold, dear Felix," said the baroness, who liked this method all the less that it was rather expensive.

"What else would have been the use of my wearing a sword by my side so long?" replied Felix, gallantly kissing her hand.

While the baroness and Felix were disposing so coolly of Helen and her fate, she and her father had had a conversation which oddly crossed the cunning plans of the baroness, and the idea of the victorious race which the young ex-lieutenant so naïvely expected to win.

The old baron loved his beautiful daughter with all the love of which his good heart was capable; he loved her all the better, as he had always had great doubts about the justice of the law which excluded the young girl from the entailed property. Besides, he felt the indifference with which his wife had so far treated their daughter, although he had been too weak to take measures to counteract it, and especially to make an end to the exile in Hamburg. He had, likewise, consented to the proposed match only because Anna Maria had persuaded him that thus the inequality in the fortunes of the two children could best be remedied, since Helen, as Felix's wife, would obtain possession of the whole estate, if Malte should die without heirs. But here also he had stipulated that Helen must give her free consent, and in return he had pledged himself to leave the whole management of this delicate affair in the hands of his wife, and especially not to divulge the project before the time.

Recent events, however, had seriously shaken his resolution. In the first place, he had thought of it while lying ill with fever in Hamburg, that he might die soon, and Helen would then stand quite alone, without his counsel, without his veto, which he was determined to interpose between her and her mother's plans if it should come to the worst. He had always loved his child, but now he almost worshipped her. She was so beautiful, so proud, and yet so kind and modest with him, that his heart was filled with anguish and sadness at the thought of leaving this world without having secured her fate. If Felix had been such a man as he desired for her, it would have been easier. But Felix was far from pleasing him. The old baron had been a soldier in his time, like Felix. He knew perfectly well to what temptations a rich young man of good family is exposed in the army; he had himself not always escaped from such temptations, and now, when his naturally serious mind had developed itself fully, he repented bitterly of the sins of his reckless youth. He had seen in his cousin Harald a fearful illustration of the terrible effects which unbridled passions have even on a superior man, and his experience in these cases made him see at a glance that his nephew Felix had been a slave to similar passions, and probably was so still. He had seen the young man a few years ago, when he first entered the army. Then he recollected him as a slender, well-built youth, with a fresh, handsome face, and bright, clear eyes; now he found nothing but a sad shadow of the pleasing form of those days. A ghastly leanness, deep furrows in the precociously old face, the large blue eyes looking glassy, or shining in feverish glow, and always with that impertinent, fixed gaze which speaks more eloquently than a whole biography--his gestures sudden and short, evidently in order to hide the weariness within; loud and quick in speech, and judging all things with the same superficial arrogance--his whole being eaten up with a diseased vanity--this was what the concerned father saw in Felix, in spite of his good-natured efforts to cover up the worst parts of the picture.

He regretted now having promised his wife not to interfere with her in this matter. It seemed to him as if he had been too hasty, and at all events he did not think he was breaking his promise

if he tried to sound Helen, how she felt herself on the subject. After they had been walking for some time in silence, he said, therefore, taking her arm in his:

"How is your health, my child?"

"Thank you, papa, pretty good; why?" replied Miss Helen, rather surprised at the question.

"I thought you looked a little pale."

"That is the unfavorable light here under the green trees," replied the young girl, merrily; "but I am really perfectly well."

"I was always afraid the sudden change of air, of diet, and even of friends, might injure you. You have been a long time away from home."

"That was not my fault, dear papa."

"I know--I know! Nor was it my fault; I always advocated your return from school, but----"

"Well, I am here now, and mean to make up for lost time. We will take a great many walks together; I will read to you all your favorite books, and we are going to have a quiet, happy life," and the young girl took her father's hand and carried it to her lips.

"You are a dear, sweet child," said the baron, and his voice trembled slightly; "God grant that I may long enjoy your presence here!"

"But, dear papa, don't give way to such melancholy thoughts! You are, God be thanked, quite as well and as hearty again as ever. Why should we not live a long time happily together?"

"But if you should leave us?"

"I am not going to die so soon, you may take that for granted," said Miss Helen, laughing.

"God forbid! But children part with their parents in other ways besides dying. When you marry we shall have to give you up once more, after having but just gotten you back."

"Why, papa, don't you speak as if I were to marry tomorrow morning! I have not even thought of it. Mamma, too, began to talk about that yesterday. I am afraid you want, both of you, to get rid of me again."

"Ah, indeed! Your mother has spoken to you about that, hm, hm?" said the baron, thinking of course that the baroness must have come out with her long-prepared project, and admiring the skill with which she had chosen the time, the day before Felix arrived; "ah, indeed? hm, hm! Well, and how do you like your cousin?"

"Whom? Felix?" asked Helen, as yet not in the least suspecting the connection of this question with what had gone before.

"Yes."

"He looks to me like the champagne we drank at dinner. The first drops tasted very good; but when the glass had been standing a little while, I found the wine quite flat and tasteless.--But you do not really intend me for Cousin Felix?" asked Miss Helen, very eagerly, as the thought suddenly flashed through her mind.

"Oh, no, by no means--unless you choose; I mean--we shall never force your will in this respect," replied the old baron, rather confused, as he dared not tell the whole truth, and yet did not choose to state an untruth.

Helen made no reply; but the thought she had awakened was actively at work in her mind. She compared the conversation she had had the day before with her mother with her father's words just now.... It required much less ingenuity than she possessed to discern the connection between many casual remarks and the two interviews. Her proud heart rebelled at the thought that her fate had been decided and her hand disposed of without consulting her wishes, and asking her own opinion; that this Felix, against whom her chaste heart was instinctively rising in arms, might already look upon her as his own! These thoughts occupied her mind so fully that she could not fall in with the loud admiration of the company, as they stepped out of the forest upon the bluff near the shore.

And yet it was a sight well worthy of enthusiastic admiration. The sun had just sunk into the ocean, and seemed to draw down with it the clouds shining brilliantly in a variety of gold and crimson hues. From the point where it had set bright streaks of light were shooting up in all directions, piercing the clouds, and losing themselves high up in the deep blue ether. The sea was like a mass of fire near the horizon, and golden sparks came dancing towards the shore on the crests of the waves. The chalk cliffs, with their colossal clefts, and the beech-trees crowning them, flamed up in the red evening light as in a blaze. All around was solemn stillness, broken only by the dash of the waves below upon the shingle, and now and then the shrill cry of a gull fluttering restlessly over the waters.

The company stood about in groups, lost in admiration of the glorious sight, which changed every moment Oswald, tired of the continuous Ahs and Ohs, in which especially the baroness and Felix vied with each other, had gone aside from the others and seated himself upon the exposed root of an immense beech-tree.

"Have you room for me there?" asked Helen, coming up to him.

"I pray you will take my seat," said Oswald, starting up.

"Only for a moment; I do not know why, but the walk has tired me more than usually."

"Perhaps you stayed too long in the garden this morning?"

"No, but *à propos*. how does it happen that I have not seen you to-day--nor yesterday?"

"A mere accident."

"I am glad to hear that."

"Why?"

"To tell the truth, I was afraid I had driven you out of the garden; I thought this constant meeting with one and the same person would have become quite intolerable to you."

"You are too modest, I am sure."

"No, do not laugh at me; I really thought so--yes, and worse still; you have become very silent since day before yesterday, and, as I fancied, especially reserved towards me. Nor did you give me my lesson in literature yesterday, which I anticipated with so much pleasure. Have I given you, unknowingly, cause to----"

"What can you mean?"

"Well, sometimes I say things that sound harsh or arrogant; at least I have been told so; but really I do not mean them----"

As Helen looked up at Oswald with her full, dark eyes, he stood before her utterly lost in admiration of her beauty, and in wonder at her sudden and inexplicable gentleness and sympathy.

"Why do you look at me so astonished?"

"Because I did not know so much kindness could be hid behind so much pride."

"Do you think the world deserves seeing our heart?"

"A strange question from the lips of so young a lady."

"To be sure, we are not expected to think. At best we are pretty dolls, to play with and to be given away to the first man who looks as if he would like to have us."

"Cousin!" called Felix, "we are going down to the beach; will you join us?"

"No," answered Helen, without looking round at the speaker.

"It is a charming walk," added Felix.

"May be," replied the young girl, curtly, without changing her position.

But Felix was not the man to be defeated so easily. He came up to the place where Oswald and Helen were sitting, and said:

"But, Helen, surely you will not refuse me the first request I ever made of you?"

"Why not?" replied the other, and her voice sounded peculiarly harsh and bitter. "I cannot bear begging and beggars, and you had better learn that at once."

"Have you twisted your foot, dearest cousin?" asked Felix.

"Why?"

"Because you sit so still, and are in such awful humor," replied Felix, laughing, and went to join the others, without giving a sign that he had been hurt by Helen's manner.

"Will you not join the company, doctor?" asked Helen, on whose cheeks the excitement of the last little scene was still glowing, while the others began the somewhat steep path which led down to the beach.

"Do you wish to be alone?"

"Oh, no! on the contrary, I am glad you mean to stay. After the very witty conversation at dinner, and since, I feel the want of talking sense for a little while. You have not told me yet whether I have hurt your feelings unwittingly, by some thoughtless word, perhaps?"

"No, not in the least. But I received some news night before last which has distressed me deeply.... Do you remember a Professor Berger, whom you met at Ostend three years ago?"

"Oh, very well! He is not so easily forgotten. I can see him now before me, with his magnificent eyes under the heavy eyebrows, and always something clever on his lips. What of him? He is not dead?"

"No, worse--than that--he is insane!"

"For God's sake! Professor Berger? The very picture of a clear and lofty mind. How can that be? Did you tell papa and mamma?"

"No, and I beg you will not tell them; I could not bear just now to hear the matter discussed."

"You were very fond of the professor?"

"He was my best, perhaps my only friend."

"How I pity you!" said Helen, and she showed very clearly in her beautiful face the sympathy she felt. "Such a loss must be terrible. And you are here quite alone with your grief, and no one to sympathize with your suffering?"

"I have been accustomed to that all my life."

"Have you no parents, no near relatives?"

"My mother died when I was an infant; my father died many years ago; I never had brother or sister, nor have I ever known any relatives of mine."

Helen was silent, drawing lines in the sand with the point of her sun-shade.

Suddenly she raised her head and said, in a tone that sounded half like complaint and half like defiance:

"Do you know that one may have parents and brothers--yes! and even relatives, and yet be quite alone, and feel very lonely! And you are, after all, well off, for you are a man; you can act for yourself, while----"

The young girl broke off here, as if she was afraid of being carried away by her feelings. She rose and went a few steps beyond Oswald, close to the edge of the precipice. It was a wondrously beautiful picture, this proud, tall figure on the bright background of the golden evening sky, which surrounded her glorious head as with a halo, while the sea-breeze was playing with her dark curls. And to Oswald she looked like a good angel, dropping kind, sympathizing words in his sickened heart, like soft rain falling upon a withered flower. And now, for the first time, he recollected his conversation with the doctor as they returned from the village. It was true, then! This sweet, this glorious creature was to be sold, to be sold like Melitta! She had said so herself. He had just heard it from her own lips! She was standing alone in the world; she could not act for herself; and yet she had still sympathy and comfort for him, she who stood in such need of sympathy and consolation herself. To protect the weak and the helpless is man's right and duty--there would probably have been few adventures into which Oswald would not have plunged without hesitation for the sake of the fair sufferer. He did not remember that the knight's first duty is to be faithful to the lady of his heart, and that to break a lance for another, at the risk of losing her, speaks neither of wisdom nor of generosity.

Suddenly a cry arose from the beach, where the others had in the mean time arrived, and as Helen, who was quite free from vertigo, stepped to the very brink and bent over the abyss, a second cry was heard, still more piercing and more anxious.

"For Heaven's sake," cried Helen; "what can have happened? I thought I heard Bruno's voice. Let us make haste and get down."

The two young people were quickly down, although the path which led down in zigzag on the chalk cliff was steep and dangerous. When they reached the beach, out of breath, they saw Bruno fainting and lying in Albert's arms, while the others were standing around helpless.

"Fetch some water, quick!" said Oswald, taking the boy, untying his neckerchief and unbuttoning his clothes. Nobody had thought of it.

"How did it happen?" asked Helen, taking Bruno's cold hands in her own, and gazing anxiously in his fair, pale face.

"None of us know how," said the baroness.

"Perhaps an attack of vertigo," suggested Felix.

In the mean time water had been brought, and Oswald had washed the boy's forehead and temples and chest. Helen remembered that she had a flacon of Cologne in her pocket, and helped Oswald in his efforts to revive the boy. He soon came to himself again. He opened slowly his large eyes, and his first glance fell upon Helen, who was bending over him.

"Are you dead, quite dead?" he murmured, closing his eyes again.

They thought he had lost his mind.

"Collect yourself, Bruno," said Helen, passing her hand lightly over the boy's brow and eyes.

Bruno seized the hand and pressed it firmly upon his eyes, while two big tears came oozing out from between the closed lids; then he raised himself, with Oswald's assistance.

"I am quite right again," he said; "have I really been fainting? How long have I been so?"

"Only a little while," replied Oswald, wiping Bruno's face with his handkerchief and setting his clothes in order again.

"You have really frightened us; what in the world was the matter?" asked the baroness.

"I do not know," replied the boy, whose pale cheeks suddenly flashed in deep purple glow; "it came very suddenly. Thank you, thank you, I think I can get on very well if Mr. Stein will help me."

"We'll go back," said the baroness. "How provoking that every little pleasure must be spoilt by some mishap or other."

They made their way slowly up again, and returned, out of temper, through the forest. Felix, who was afraid of taking cold, urged them to make haste; Oswald remarked, dryly, he did not wish to detain the company, and would follow slowly with Bruno. Helen declared her intention to stay with Bruno; and the old baron, who had exhibited throughout very warm, but very useless sympathy, proposed that the company should divide into a vanguard and a rearguard; he meant himself to stay with the latter.

"You will catch cold, dear Grenwitz," said the baroness; "I think you'd better come with us."

"No, I prefer staying with the others," said the old baron, with an earnestness which surprised all of them, and himself perhaps most.

He gave his arm to his daughter, but remained near Oswald and Bruno, chatting with them leisurely, as he liked to do, and inquiring from time to time how the boy came on.

"I am quite well, quite well," said Bruno, again and again; but Oswald felt that he leaned heavily on his arm, and that his hands were cold.

Thus they reached the house, one by one. The old baron disappeared, wishing Bruno a speedy recovery, while Oswald carried the boy at once to his room and sent him to bed.

"You are worse, Bruno, than you wish to confess," he said, sitting down on the edge of the bed; "you have your old pain, have not you?"

"Yes," said Bruno, and his teeth chattered, and cold perspiration broke out on his forehead.

Oswald hastened to use the same remedy as before; and he succeeded in this case also in relieving the patient, at least as far as the pain was concerned.

"Will you not tell *me*, Bruno, what brought on the attack?" asked Oswald.

"Oh yes!" said the boy. "I only did not like to tell while the others were present, because they would have laughed at me. I had stayed behind a little, and a projecting rock hid the others from my sight I thought I could overtake them at any moment, and so I was walking on slowly, often looking upward. Suddenly I saw Helen come so close to the edge of the precipice, which there comes down a hundred feet or more, that it looked as if she must fall if she moved ever so little. I cried out in my anxiety--then she came still nearer, actually bending over, and everything turned around me well, you know the rest. But there is Malte coming. Goodnight, Oswald."

"Good-night, you mad boy."

Oswald kissed his pet on his forehead and went in deep thought to his room. He leaned out of the open window and looked down in the garden, lost in meditation. The night was dark; only here and there a single star peeped for a moment through the canopy of clouds. At times a sound came from the trees, as if they were speaking to each other in low, confused murmurs; the fountain of the Naiad splashed gently and abruptly, as if it were telling a weird old story.

"Your life is like this night," said Oswald to himself; "here and there a star, which vanishes again, and then chaos and darkness. You were right, dear Berger, our life is nothing, and quite sad enough to make any man who has sense wish to get rid of it quickly. Now you are where

Melitta is, and Oldenburg too. Perhaps you see them pass by your cell, arm in arm; perhaps that will make your mind return to you, while others lose it at the sight. I might make a little trip to N., to see my good friends. Who knows? The place might prove so pleasant that I might stay there altogether."

"How is Bruno?" asked a voice from below. It was Helen's voice. Oswald saw her white dress shine in the dark.

"Thank you; he is well," he replied.

"Good-night."

And the light dress vanished in the shrubbery.

"No, life is more than an empty nothing," murmured Oswald as he closed the window. "If Berger had seen this girl, he would not have given up life. And yet he has seen her, admired her, sung her praises even in sweet verses, and yet he has lost his mind--oh, it is a fearful thing this life--dark and ghost-like, and nothing real in it but the sweet voice that bids you good-night!"

CHAPTER VII.

There are in the life of every family, as in that of nations, moments when all the members feel more or less distinctly that something great and extraordinary is going to happen. The dark future casts its shadow far back upon the present, filling the minds of some with dismay and of others with hope, but everywhere causing a restlessness which, in its turn, contributes to bring about the crisis.

Such a time of feverish excitement had come for the company at Castle Grenwitz also. Just now they had been so quiet--But Bruno's accident might have told the acute observer that beneath the smooth even surface, with its polite courtesy and its painful compliance with social forms, there was something seething and heaving; secret love and deep-hidden hate; hostility masked by the appearance of perfect peace and good-will--heartfelt sympathies under the cover of indifference and even antipathy. The very face of life had changed. The stillness, so perfect as almost to become oppressive, which had formerly reigned in the château, was now frequently interrupted. Baron Felix, who had little disposition to play the hermit, could not deny himself the pleasure of taking up one or the other of his favorite pursuits. The day after his arrival his two superb saddle-horses had already come, and thus larger excursions were made possible, when the carriage could be escorted by at least two of the gentlemen on horseback. In a remote part of the garden a rough shooting-gallery was knocked up, and during the late afternoon hours the short, sharp crack of rifled pistols could be heard in the quiet rooms that looked upon the garden. As riding, shooting, and hunting are amusements which demand numbers, Oswald, Albert, and even Bruno were never safe, lest Felix should come and beg them and plague them till they yielded to his wishes, and became his companions in one or the other of his pastimes. Felix was one of those men who are never idle, without ever being well occupied; he would spend hours at his toilet, and read between Béranger's songs or a few chapters in the *Liaisons Dangereuses*, his two favorite books; or he would play the first bars of a piece of music, stopping abruptly to complete the training of his handsome pointer, and thus continually waste very valuable natural gifts in the pursuit of frivolous and bootless purposes. For Felix had been richly endowed by nature, and even his idle and reckless life had not been able to destroy them all. No one could mistake the desire for something better that was in him, although it would show itself unfortunately only in a feverish restlessness with which he took up everything that was new, in an ambition to be everywhere the first, or at least to appear to be first, nay, even in his unmeasured vanity, and the incredible attention which he bestowed upon his appearance. He might have been saved, perhaps, if he had ever discovered the higher purposes of life, or at least had been forced to eat the bread of poverty. As it was, he slowly and pleasantly drifted down the current of his passions towards the point where he must infallibly sink and drown if a miracle did not intervene to save him.

Could he have been in earnest in the change of life which he so often discussed with the baroness? It may be doubted. He had become tired of living in garrison, and his position was such that when he applied for an extended leave of absence he was given to understand that he had better leave the army altogether, if his health was so very feeble. Just at that critical moment the baroness came with her offer about Helen. Felix found here a resource of which he had never thought,--for Anna Maria's views of money matters were well known to him from sad experience,--and he seized it with both hands; although he by no means liked the idea of marrying, still he was ready to yield that point. Great was his surprise, therefore, when he found in his cousin,

whom he had never seen before, a girl more beautiful and more attractive than any lady he had ever known before,--a being whom the proudest on earth would be happy to call his own. Thus not two days had gone by before Felix's heart was filled with a passion for his fair cousin, which, closely examined, was probably nothing but sheer vanity, but which appeared to him like a miracle. Selfish men are vain of everything, even of their simple and natural feelings, and thus Felix never tired of speaking to the baroness of his love, as of an eighth wonder of the world, and overflowed even towards Oswald with his admiration of his own bold hopes. Was his passion returned? Felix did not doubt it for a moment. Had he not so far succeeded in all cases? Had not his luck with women become proverbial among his comrades, each one of whom looked upon himself as a Paris? And had he not seen again and again that love is fond of hiding under the mask of indifference? It is true, his fair cousin seemed to carry the comedy almost too far; she treated him with a coldness, a contempt, which became almost offensive at times--but this did not disturb him in his firm faith in his irresistible charms, and he laughed at the baroness whenever she advised him to be cautious. For Anna Maria, undisturbed by personal vanity, saw much clearer in this matter than Felix. She could not help even admiring the consistent uniformity of Helen's manner, and the modest firmness with which she uttered and sustained her views; for the baroness valued energy of character above other things, and most so in herself. There was something in the haughty beauty of her daughter which she was compelled to respect--a light from a higher world than that, filled with self-interest and petty ambition, in which she was living herself--Helen had, since that evening on the beach, become, if possible, more quiet and reserved than before. She retired, whenever she could do so, to her room. When she appeared in company she generally attached herself to her father, or tried to manage it so that Bruno became her companion when they walked out. She always had some little service to give him to do; now he had to carry her hat or her mantilla, and now to gather a flower on the other side of the ditch, or to give her his hand in climbing up the steep shore. Bruno performed every duty with a gentle earnestness which often provoked Baron Felix to mockery; but the others, who knew the boy, and the unbridled passions in his heart, were unspeakably touched. His whole being seemed to be changed when Helen's eye rested on him. He became gentle and kind, ready to help and to serve; a word from her, a mere sign of her long, dark eyelashes, and he became quiet after a sudden burst of temper. He rarely, however, showed his violence now, except against Felix, for whom he entertained a hatred and a contempt which he hardly attempted to conceal. He always had a scornful word for him in readiness, and the many little exposures to which his unmeasured vanity made him liable, found in Bruno a pitiless censor. He became all the more annoying to Felix as his youth prevented the usual weapons from being used against him, while a skilful blow from above was apt to be parried with still greater skill. Felix himself felt this to a certain degree, and if the boy appeared to him insignificant, he still proved very troublesome. Wherever Helen appeared, there was Bruno also; and if she ever had stayed behind during a walk, and Felix was just on the point of speaking to her of his love, Bruno was sure to join them, as if by agreement, and Felix, who knew nothing at all of botany and mineralogy, had to leave the two to their scientific researches. How would he have wondered if he could have found out that these "researches," as he called them, were broken off the moment he was out of sight, and that Bruno, tearing the flower in his hand to pieces, cried out: "Look, Helen, that is the way you will tear my heart, if you ever love this man Felix!"--"The old story, Bruno?"--"Yes, the old story, and I will tell it as long as there is a breath in my bosom. Do you think I do not know what it means when aunty and Felix put their heads together, and look from time to time stealthily at you? Oh, I have sharp eyes, and good ears, too! Yesterday, as I passed them, the fine gentleman said: She'll come to her senses! She--that was you; and come to your senses meant: She will forget her self-respect and marry a wretched, vain peacock like myself"--"But how can you imagine such things, Bruno?"--"Well, I think that is not so difficult. And you imagine them too, I know, or why do you look so often straight before you, in deep thought, and then suddenly at Felix or Oswald, as if you were comparing the two with each other? Yes, just compare them! Then you will see the difference between a man and--an ape!"--"Are you very fond of Mr. Stein, Bruno? Is he always so sad and silent?"--"Oh, no! He can be as wild as a colt; I don't know what is the matter with him now, or rather I know it, but----" --"But?"--"But I must not tell--yes, I think I can tell you; for you are not like the others. I always feel as if you ought to look right down into my heart, as they say God does; as if I ought to have no secret for you."--"But I do not want you to betray a secret"--"I won't betray anything, because Oswald has never said a word to me. I only know that he is so sad and silent since Aunt Berkow is gone. We were talking of it at dinner to-day, how long she would stay away, and whether she would marry again after Uncle Berkow's death, and I saw how Oswald turned pale, and did not raise his eyes from his plate during the whole conversation. And then, when Felix remarked that Baron Oldenburg might be able to answer that question, as he had gone to N. after Aunt Berkow, he suddenly raised his head, with an angry look, and opened his lips as if to say something; but he said nothing and bit his lips; and to-night he is sadly out of humor."--"And all that means----" --"All that means, simply, that Oswald is very fond of Aunt Berkow, and does not like her to be talked about; just as little as I like it when aunty and Felix talk of you."--"Ah, you do not know what you are talking about"--"Of course, that is always the refrain: I don't know what I am talking about! I am a foolish boy, hurrah! hurrah! I have no ears to hear, no eyes to see. Why? Because I am only sixteen, and my beard is not as long as it might be."

How did Helen receive this news? Was she disappointed in her heart? Or did she find another explanation for the melancholy look in Oswald's blue eyes? Perhaps she would not have been able to explain it to herself, but at all events it did not diminish the interest she had felt for Oswald ever since that evening on the strand. She began to observe him more closely than heretofore; she watched every one of his words; she played and sang by preference the music he liked best,

and when he appeared once more in the garden in the morning, she was rejoiced. She thanked him in her heart if he, who was so silent everywhere else, always had some kind word for her, and entered cheerfully upon every subject she suggested, sometimes seriously, sometimes jestingly, but always in the cordial manner of an elder brother. Did the charm of Oswald's personal appearance really begin to have an effect upon the proud girl, susceptible as she was for everything beautiful and noble? Was it jealousy, or was it simply a kind of opposition to the plans of her mother, which appeared daily more clearly, that made her take such an interest in a man whom her aristocratic eye would otherwise have carelessly overlooked? The most contrary sentiments contended in her heart, as often, on a deep blue summer sky, light gray clouds are drifting aimlessly about till the tempest breaks forth in its full power.

CHAPTER VIII.

The baroness had found herself inclined to follow Felix's advice, to take a more active part in the social intercourse of the surrounding nobility. She had reflected on it for some time, and then formed her decision. Not a day passed now that the family was not either invited out, or, more frequently, entertaining company at the château. People seemed to be delighted at seeing Castle Grenwitz once more the place of meeting for all the busy idlers of the neighborhood, and thus regaining its ancient fame for hospitality. They approved highly of Anna Maria's determination to exchange the convent life which she had led so far for a new life, more brilliant, and more suitable to the old renown of her noble family; they paid her so many compliments on her powers of conversation, her talent to arrange large entertainments, that she tried to plead the absolute necessity for such an outlay before her own conscience, when it charged her with recklessness in going to all the expense paused by the unusual hospitality.

It had happened in this manner that Oswald had met once more with several persons whom he had seen at the ball at Barnewitz; but none of those for whom he felt a special interest. It was a remarkable accident which brought one afternoon almost all the persons together who had then become better known to him. Some had been invited, others had come by chance. Thus he saw, with very different feelings. Baron Barnewitz and his wife Hortense enter the room; then Count Grieben and a few others; but his interest in the matter became a very special and downright painful one when at last, and quite unexpectedly, another carriage drove up, bringing Adolphus and Emily von Breesen, with their aunt, whose toothless mouth and sharp tongue Oswald had by no means forgotten.

"This way, my fine young gentleman," cried the old lady, when she noticed him after the first introduction. "Why did you not come to see us, as you promised? Was that my reward for holding you up to my nephew as a pattern of a well-bred young man who knows what he owes to ladies? And for praising your pronunciation of French to my niece? Are you very much ashamed? I honor you with my displeasure!"

"I do not deserve it, madam," said Oswald. "I was not able to come as I would have liked to do; and even if I really should have committed such a sin of omission, I am sure I have lost enough to be spared the punishment of your displeasure."

"Oh yes--fine phrases, you never want them. You are not less uncivil, I fear, than the other young men; you are only a little less awkward, and I see I shall have to pardon you. Here is my hand, and now see how you can make your peace with my niece without her scratching out your pretty eyes."

Thereupon the lively old lady turned her back upon Oswald, and left him to a *tête-à-tête*, for which he had no desire just then, with pretty Miss Emily, who stood there before him with slightly flushed cheeks and heaving bosom, not daring to raise her eyes from the ground.

Oswald was determined not to renew the childish and yet dangerous play with the impassioned girl. He wished and hoped she would have seen her folly. He was rather pleased, therefore, when Miss Emily answered the few indifferent words which he addressed to her with apparent unconcern, and then joined a group of girls who surrounded Helen, and admired the new-fashioned cut of a dress which she wore for the first time to-day.

His meeting with Baron Cloten also was less uncomfortable than he had anticipated from his manner when they saw each other at Baron Oldenburg's house. The young nobleman pretended to be very glad to see him again; he inquired eagerly after Oldenburg, spoke of their pistol-shooting at Barnewitz, and asked if Oswald would now give him satisfaction.

Oswald was rather curious to see the meeting between Cloten and Barnewitz. To his great

surprise, however, there seemed to be an excellent understanding between the two gentlemen; Oldenburg had evidently proved an excellent diplomat in this affair. The fact was, he had persuaded both that each one was eager to drink the blood of the other, and thus induced the two men to listen to his suggestions for an amicable arrangement, as they found, both of them, life far too pleasant to risk it without very grave provocation. He had represented Cloten's little trifling with Hortense as mere child's play to Barnewitz, and vowed that he was persuaded Cloten had never stood in any other relation to the good lady than many other acquaintances, he himself for instance,--a wretched ambiguity, which the somewhat simple husband, however, gratefully accepted as an evidence of his wife's innocence. The young rustic Don Giovanni, on the other hand, he had advised to be once or twice very rude, and even impertinent to Hortense, in her husband's presence, and, above all, to pick out some pretty girl among his friends, and to court her publicly. Cloten was very glad to get off so cheap; he had followed Oldenburg's advice to the letter, and begun, on the spot, to pay the most devoted attentions to Emily von Breesen. So far, however, he had not been successful in his efforts. Far from it. The thoughtless girl had overwhelmed him with pitiless scorn and scoffing; his assurances of love and devotion were met with ironical remarks, and his chivalrous services were accepted with an indifference which would have driven him to despair if he had been in earnest. And, as it happens in such things, he had gradually come to be in earnest; Miss Emily was by no means one of those young ladies whom one could with impunity see and serve almost daily. She was so charming even in her wanton recklessness, so lovely even in her insolence, that the unlucky bird-catcher caught himself, from day to day, more and more in his own net, and would now have given almost anything for a single kind word from the lips he adored. What was therefore his delight when Miss Emily, whom he hardly dared to approach, to-day met him with the greatest friendliness, chose him as her companion during the promenade they made through the garden, sent him to gather flowers for her, and to bring her a handkerchief she had forgotten at the house, and, in a word, seemed to do everything to make amends in an hour for all the insults of the last weeks!

Cloten was overwhelmed with happiness; his watery blue eyes beamed with delight; he twisted his little moustache unceasingly, and smiled with stupid vanity whenever some one whispered to him: "Well, Cloten, all right, eh?" or, "That's right, Cloten, don't be afraid."

Oswald did not know what to make of the comedy. At first he thought Emily only wanted to show him that she did not want admirers, for he could not believe that so clever a girl, who, with all her faults and foibles, was very lovely and exceedingly pretty, should take a fancy to such a stupid man as Cloten. When evening came the company gradually retired into the rooms adjoining the lawn, but Emily and Cloten remained almost alone outside, and Oswald had at last to fall in with the unanimous opinion of the company, that the engagement between Baron Cloten and Miss Emily could no longer be doubted. He was sorry for the girl, who could throw herself away in this manner; but then he thought again: It was not worth while to reproach yourself so much about so heartless a girl! They are, after all, in all probability, quite worthy of one another. I wonder if Cloten is not ashamed to play such a farce before the eyes of the woman he has loved?

He turned to Hortense, who was standing alone in the embrasure of one of the windows. The pretty blonde seemed to-day to be pleased with this neglect on the part of the gentlemen, although it was most extraordinary, as she generally was one of the best-attended ladies.

"Are you not going to dance to-night, baroness?" asked Oswald.

"Are they going to dance?" she replied, as if awaking from a dream.

"Oh, certainly. They are just carrying the piano into the large salon. Mr. Timm has offered to play. May I have the honor of the first dance, if I am not too late?"

"Too late? Oh, no! Those times are gone by when I used to be engaged for weeks ahead. I leave that to the younger ones now."

"You are pleased to jest."

"By no means; you are the first who asks me, and as I am afraid you will be the last also, I think I had better not begin at all. I would rather say: Come and sit down a little by me here, and let us have a nice little chat while they are dancing. What do you say?"

"The question requires no answer," said Oswald, drawing up a chair for Hortense.

"Won't you sit down? I am told, doctor, you have a great talent for satire. Let me see a proof of your talent; you cannot be in want of material, if you cast a glance at the company from our place here. Which of the ladies do you think the prettiest?"

"You mean the least plain?"

"You scamp! It is true, though, that there is not much to be seen that is pretty. A few nice dresses, perhaps. How do you like Helen Grenwitz?"

"I do not see her at all. Where can she be?"

"There, on the right, near the door. She is speaking to her Cousin Felix. How do they stand

with each other? Has Cousin Felix yet made his declaration?"

"Certainly not to me."

"I suppose not. But do you think he will propose?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Because I consider the whole thing quite inexplicable."

"Are you enthusiastic about Miss Helen?"

"Infinitely so."

"I suppose you take a special interest in all girls who are fresh from school?"

"Only when they are really interesting."

"Not always. Or do you really mean to say that Emily von Breesen deserves being called so?"

"I have never been enthusiastic about her."

"Well--but then she has been all the more so about you. Lisbeth was the confidante of her grief, and Lisbeth has of course told me the whole story."

"Oh, that is simply impossible."

"Don't be excited! You see the child has found consolation. To-day she is hand in glove with Cloten; to-morrow she will have somebody else. That girl has talent. She will do much in that line. I am only sorry for poor Cloten."

"But why does he expose himself to the danger?"

"Certainly--and without his Mentor's advice?"

"Who is that?"

"Baron Oldenburg. He probably has misunderstood his friend's advice, and will marry little Emily from mere blundering."

"You are pleased to speak to me in unfathomable riddles."

"I beg your pardon. Tell me, have you really become the baron's bosom friend in this short time, as report says?"

"Report has, as usually, changed the mote into a beam."

"Do you think I mean it well with you?" said Hortense, and looked Oswald full in the face.

"I have no reason to suppose the contrary," replied the latter, who began to be peculiarly interested in the conversation, which he had begun without any purpose whatever.

"Then follow my advice: have a care of the baron as of your bitterest enemy."

"Why?"

"Because he is false to the core of his heart."

"Do you know him well? And--pardon me if I cannot at once believe so grave an accusation of a man whom, I confess, I have esteemed very highly until now--have you any evidence of his being false?"

"A thousand!"

"Can you mention one?"

"You will not betray what I am going to tell you?"

"I promise."

"Then listen. You know my cousin Melitta. Well, she has foibles as well as all of us, but at the bottom she is a charming woman, whom I love dearly, and whom I should be extremely sorry to see once more in hands from which I thought I had rescued her forever. If Melitta is not as good as she could be, Oldenburg alone has that on his conscience. He turned her head, when she was quite young, with his foolish notions, so that at last she knew no longer what was right and what was wrong. Then, when she made that capital match with Baron Berkow, he disturbed their good relations by his interference, and it was no wonder that Berkow at last lost his mind from jealousy. I saw how that came about. At last I succeeded in persuading Melitta to send Oldenburg

away for a few years. He went, but when we shortly afterwards were travelling in Italy he reappeared, I know not whether by accident or called in by Melitta. From her manner I should have supposed the latter. The old story began once more. Solitary walks, low whisperings and vows, which took place even in the presence of third persons--in short, it was a downright unpleasant sight for one who, like myself, thinks rather strictly in such matters. In vain I begged and besought Melitta to think of her sick husband and of her child. I preached to deaf ears. Then I determined to use desperate means. In order to prove to her Oldenburg's worthlessness--of which I had heard on all sides fabulous accounts--I pretended to let him fall in love with myself. It did not require much effort, for the baron is both treacherous and reckless in his passions. After a little while he pursued me with his adoration--of course without committing himself before Melitta. At the same time he spoke so heartlessly, so wickedly of my poor cousin, that I was scarcely able to wear the mask which I had assumed. And yet I had to do it till Oldenburg should be impassioned enough to run blindly into the net which I had prepared. I managed it so that one day, in the garden of the villa Serra di Falco, near Palermo, he made me a declaration of love, while Melitta was standing a few feet from us behind a myrtle hedge. Poor woman! It was a painful operation, but it was necessary. Oldenburg disappeared of course the next morning. I tried to amuse Melitta as well as I could, and I must confess she bore the bitter disappointment, the cruel humiliation, better than I had expected. I hoped the severe lesson would have opened her eyes, as to Oldenburg, forever, especially when I found that the baron gave her time for reflection by staying away for several years. But suddenly he turns up again a few weeks ago. I anticipated evil at once--for the appearance of this man is always the signal for some calamity. How he has managed to regain Melitta's favor, and how it is possible that Melitta could be weak enough to readmit him to her house, is more than I can tell. Both of them possess a remarkable talent of concealing their actions from the eyes of the world. I only know that a reconciliation has taken place,--which I presume must have been a complete one between two persons of such experience,--and, to keep the solemnity duly secret, they have made a journey together, and where? To Fichtenau, the place where Melitta's husband has been confined for seven years! Really, I am sorry for Melitta. If she intended to ruin her reputation, she could not have done more. For even if Berkow is really on the point of death, what can Oldenburg have to do there, he who is the cause of the whole misery? And does Melitta really think she can marry Oldenburg after Berkow's death? Alas! If Oldenburg had to marry all the women to whom he has vowed love in his life he would have a nice seraglio, from the duchess to the maid, in which all nations and all races would be represented. But, heavens! what is the matter with you? You look like a corpse. Are you unwell?"

"It is only the excessive heat," said Oswald, rising. "Pardon me, I pray, for leaving you so abruptly. I must try if the cool evening air will help me."

He made Hortense a very formal bow, and went without waiting for her answer.

"Well, what does that mean?" asked the latter, looking after him as he hastened out. "Has my excellent cousin made another conquest there? And have I unwittingly killed two birds with one stone? I meant only to rob Oldenburg of his new friend; but if I have robbed Melitta at the same time of a new admirer, so much the better. I should think that young man could be made useful. To be sure, I must be a little cautious, for Barnewitz has become a real Othello since that affair with Cloten--there he is now.... My dear Barnewitz, do you look a little after your poor, forlorn little wife? I have been sitting here all the evening waiting for you."

"Why don't you dance?"

"Do you think I like to dance when you are away?"

"I have arranged a little game at cards with Grieben and some others, but I can jump about with you some little time. Come! They are just beginning a waltz! That is exactly my forte."

And the happy couple entered the room where the dancers were.

In the mean while Oswald was wandering about in the garden, restless, like one who suffers terrible pain. From the open doors and windows came bright lights and merry voices; around the lawn colored paper lanterns had been hung by Anna Maria's direction, and the moonlight became almost superfluous. From time to time a few couples would come out and promenade in the balsamic night air. It was a pleasant, festive scene, which, however, offended Oswald in his present frame of mind, as when a friend smiles at our suffering. He went up on the wall, sat down on a bench and stared, his head resting on his hand, into the water of the moat, on which the rays of the moon were dancing in weird confusion.

"Would it not be better you made an end to your miserable life?" he murmured, "than to drag the burden of life still farther, to your own harm and to nobody's joy? Will you vegetate on and on till every illusion has been killed, and you have thrown everything overboard that was once dear and sacred to you? Will you wait till your patience is fully exhausted, like poor, great-hearted Berger? That, then, is the true portrait of the woman before whom you knelt as before a saint! That is the man whose hand you thought it an honor to press! You never were anything but a foot-ball for her high and noble caprices; and he condescended to make glorious baronial fun of you. But it cannot, cannot be! Why not? Is not their whole life an unbroken intrigue? Here the wife betrays the husband, and there the husband the wife? The father sells his daughter for money, and the mother disposes of her own flesh and blood. The friend cheats the friend. One

coquette proclaims aloud the secrets of another coquette, and you think they would treat you better--you, the plebeian, who have to work for your daily bread?--And yet! and yet! It is horrible! The wife whom you adored like a goddess, perhaps even now in the arms of another, deceiving him, deceiving you, only to be deceived by him in her turn! And you, good-natured fool, you struggle like a madman against your passion for the sweet, the glorious creature, the only pure one among these witches; for she is pure and good, or there is nothing pure left in this world. No, no! And if all around you is cheat and deceit, if all betray you, look up to this high star; it is your star, for only what is unattainably high is worthy of your love! Let the lizards and the toads quarrel about the will-o'-the-wisp as they dance over the morass."

A slight noise near him made him start up. A tall, slender figure in a white dress was standing before him. Through a little opening in the foliage above, a ray of the moon fell upon the slim form.

It was Emily.

"Hush!" she said, as Oswald rose with a suppressed cry of astonishment "Keep where you are! I saw you leave the salon; I followed you, because I wish to speak to you. I must do so. I shall not detain you long. I only ask one word--one single word--that is to decide my whole life. Do you love me? Yes or no?"

The young girl had seized Oswald's hand and held it with nervous violence. "Yes or no?" she repeated, in a tone of voice which betrayed but too clearly the intensity and madness of her passion.

But there was no echo to that voice in Oswald's heart; it remained closed, like the house of a man who has been robbed the night before.

"You mistake no doubt the person," he said, with cutting sarcasm. "My name is Oswald Stein; Baron Cloten is, as far as I know, somewhere in the house," and he tried to loosen his hand from that of the girl.

"Have I deserved that?" she said, in a voice almost stifled by tears, and let her arms sink in utter despair.

"The night is cool," said Oswald, rising; "the dew begins to fall; you will take cold in your light dress. May I have the honor to take you back to the house?"

"Oh my God! my God!" murmured Emily; "I cannot endure this! Oswald, do not treat me thus! How I have longed for this moment! How I have repeated to myself a thousand times all I would say to you. How I hoped you would again take me in your arms as ... oh God! what am I saying? Oswald, have pity on me! You cannot wish to punish my thoughtlessness of this evening so cruelly! I only wanted to tease you a little. I thought every moment you would come up and tell me,--but you did not come, and I had to keep up the comedy, *bon gré, mal gré*."

"Are you quite sure, Miss Emily, you are not playing comedy at this very moment?"

Emily made no reply. She sank with a groan upon the bench; she pressed her face in her hands, and sobbed as if her heart were breaking.

Oswald was not one of those men who can see a woman weep unmoved. He stepped close up to the unfortunate girl and said:

"Will you listen to me calmly a few moments?"

Emily's only answer was a violent sobbing.

"Believe me," Oswald continued, "I am heartily sorry for you; that such a scene should at all have been possible; and I feel that I, and I alone, am to blame for it. If I had told you that night what I must tell you to-day, your pride would long since have made an end to the matter.--I cannot love you. That sounds very strange, spoken to a woman of such loveliness and sweetness, but it is nevertheless true. Why then will you waste your love on one who shows himself so utterly unworthy of such a precious gift? Why not render somebody happy by it, who has more talent for being happy and for making others happy?--I am just now so low-spirited that I am more than usually incapable of looking at men and things in the right light. Pardon me, therefore, if I have offended you just now by my bitter words. I had no right to use them; it was thoughtless in me; I blame myself for them. I pray, I beseech you, forget all that has happened between us! And do not allow this mortification to lead you to sudden resolves, which you may and will regret hereafter. You see what it is to bestow your affections upon an unworthy person. If this cruel experience should aid you in the selection which you will sooner or later make, I am willing to endure for the moment your hatred and even your contempt."

Emily had, while Oswald spoke, gradually ceased to weep. Now she rose and said, in an almost calm voice:

"Quite enough! I thank you. You have opened my eyes. You shall never be troubled again, as far as I am concerned. Tell me only this one thing: Am I victimized for the sake of another? Do

you love another person?"

"Yes!" said Oswald, after a little hesitation.

"Very well! And now listen *you*! As I have loved you with all the warmth of my heart, so I hate you now; and as a few minutes ago I would have willingly given my love for you, so I wish now to be avenged on you for this disgrace. And I will be avenged; I will----"

Again she broke out into passionate tears; but she checked herself quickly.

"You do not deserve it, that I shed so many tears for you. Now crown your conduct and follow me into the house, so that the whole world may see what a fool I have been!"

And she hastened away from Oswald, down the wall, across the lawn, into the salon, where they were dancing merrily. Cloten, who had in vain looked for her everywhere, and now stood melancholy, leaning against a door-frame, saw her at once and hurried to meet her.

"Why, Miss Emily! Caused me real anguish! Upon my word, was *au désespoir*! Thought, in fact, one of the heavenly ones had eloped with you."

"I have been quietly reflecting. Baron Cloten, on what you told me a little while ago," replied Emily.

"'Pon my word! Are an angel! and I may hope?" asked Cloten, who of course interpreted the reddened eyelids and the excited manner of the young girl in his own favor.

"Go to my aunt!"

"Really? 'pon honor? I can't believe it!" exclaimed the young man, and his surprise was by no means fictitious.

"Then do not go!" replied Miss Emily, in a tone which would have made anybody else very much afraid about the firmness of the tie that was about to be formed here.

"Great God! Emily, angel, do not be angry. I hasten, I fly----"

And Baron Cloten went away in most abject confusion to seek out the aunt.

Emily remained standing on the same spot, pale, her arms folded, her eyes fixed upon the groups of dancers, without seeing anything more than if she had stared into vacancy.

"You are wiser than others," said a voice close by her.

It was Baron Felix; he had thrown himself into a chair, and wiped the perspiration from his brow with a delicate handkerchief.

"Ridiculous to jump about in this heat; I think it is time to stop. And now Helen has relieved Mr. Timm at the piano. That girl has strange notions. Don't you think so, Miss Emily?"

"Perhaps she had no one to dance with."

"Impossible."

"Well, perhaps not the right one."

"*C'est-à-dire?*"

"The one she likes to dance with."

"I have always been here."

"You do not imagine *you* are the happy one?"

"Who else?"

"Don't you know what has become of Mr. Stein?"

"No, why?"

"I only ask for Miss Helen's sake. Do you not see how her big, proud eyes are searching steadily, but unceasingly, all over the salon?"

"You are surely not in earnest?"

"Why not? Is not Mr. Stein a very handsome man? And has not Miss Helen very strange notions?"

"Miss Emily," said Felix, gravely, "will you do me the honor to tell me whether you have any special reasons for such an assertion?"

"Of course I have special reasons."

"And will you have the kindness to mention them?"

"That I cannot."

At that moment Baron Cloten returned, his face beaming with delight.

"Miss Emily," he said, "your aunt wishes to speak to you. May I have the honor to take you to her?"

"Directly," said Emily, and then to Felix: "Rely on what I told you. You have sharp eyes and ears."

She took Cloten's arm.

"I must find that out," said Felix to himself when he was alone again. "Helen's manner has really been extraordinary of late."

He went up to the piano. "Shall I turn the music for you, Helen?"

"Thanks," Helen replied dryly. "I play from memory."

After a short pause: "Please, cousin, go away. It makes me nervous to have anybody stand so close behind me."

"It seems to me Doctor Stein stood yesterday half an hour behind you and you did not show any great nervousness."

"Then I will rise," said Helen. She wound up with a short finale and left the piano, without paying any attention to the general Ah! of the dancers.

"That is rather strong," said Felix to himself.

"Why did Helen stop playing so suddenly?" asked the baroness, who had watched the scene from a distance, and now came up.

"I do not know. She probably took something I said amiss. She is more capricious and obstinate than I thought. Don't you think, aunt, that man Stein, with his corrupt notions, may exercise a bad influence on Helen as well as on Bruno?"

"I have always told you I have no faith in that man."

"Why don't you turn him out?"

"Without any cause?"

"Pshaw! That is easily found. Will you give me permission to find one?"

"But there must be no scene?"

"Let me manage that."

"You must bring it about that he shall himself ask to be relieved."

"Why?"

"I have my reasons.--And, Felix, do not speak of it to Grenwitz. Of late he has become very self-willed. I am even afraid he thinks of interfering with our plan. I pray you, Felix, be cautious! I should be beside myself if we fail, after having represented the whole matter everywhere as a *fait accompli*!"

"Pshaw! aunt! Anxious again? Rely on me; I'll carry out what I have begun!"

CHAPTER IX.

When Oswald came to his room, after the painful scene with Emily von Breesen,--for he found it impossible to return to the company,--he found on his table a parcel, which must have been placed there during his absence. The words: "Enclosed the books, with many thanks. Your faithful

B.," told him at a glance who had brought the parcel and what it contained. And, strange! he hesitated to open it. He felt as if he had no right to Melitta's letters, since his heart was no longer entirely hers, as if, above all, she, who had never entirely given him her heart, had no right to give him this sign of her love. At last, almost mechanically, he opened the package. There were three books within. From the middle one fell two letters--one from Melitta and one from Bemperlein. Melitta's letter contained only a few cordial words, complaining "of the long separation, during which, besides the long distance, other disturbing elements also might come to stand between their hearts," and finally expressed the hope of a speedy reunion. The letter had no signature. "It might fall into wrong hands," said Oswald, bitterly. "I will be still more generous; I will destroy this witness of a love of which she begins to be ashamed." He burnt the paper in the flame of his candle. Bemperlein's letter was fuller, but it spoke almost exclusively of Professor Berger. Bemperlein had, during his residence in Grunwald, seen very much of Professor Berger, to whom he had carried letters from Oswald, and had become as enthusiastically fond of him as the professor had become attached to himself. His dismay, therefore, was great when Doctor Birkenhain informed him one day that Professor Berger had just been brought to the asylum. Bemperlein wrote Oswald that he had at once asked permission to visit Berger; the permission had been granted, and he had since spent daily several hours with the patient, who preferred his company to any other. Berger, he said, spoke reasonably on all subjects except his fixed idea of the Nothing. He was perfectly reconciled to being in an asylum, "for," he said, "the difference between the people inside and the people outside is only this, that the latter may and probably will soon become what the people inside already are. If, for instance, Doctor Birkenhain would just have the kindness to take his head to pieces, he would perceive its utter emptiness with his own eyes, and choose a nice, sunny room in his house, in order to meditate undisturbed on the great Original Nothing." Bemperlein wrote that Berger's aberration of mind was considered only temporary, and that Doctor Birkenhain hoped to be able to restore the great man very soon to his friends and pupils.

"As for us," concluded Bemperlein, "the baroness will have told you all that is of interest. I only add that we shall (God willing) not remain here much longer. Baron Berkow is sinking fast; the consumption makes rapid progress. Birkenhain gives him only a few days more. We shall stay here, at all events, until all is settled. I anticipate that moment with some impatience, which is perfectly disinterested. The death of this unfortunate man, who has for long years already ceased to live, will give new life to two persons--two persons who are unspeakably dear to me."

"Really," said Oswald, letting the letter drop in his lap, "are you quite sure of that, good Bemperlein? To be sure, your innocent heart knows nothing of most noble treason and baronial cunning! And yet: Why does he also say nothing of Oldenburg's presence? Why does he keep it secret, when he knows of how much interest it must be for me? Is he too in the plot? Well, then I will henceforth trust no one except myself. We must howl among the wolves, and he is a fool who would be honest among cheats and liars. If you deceive, I can do so too; if you play a farce, I won't sit in the pit; if you laugh at others, I do not mean to cry, and all's well that ends well. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am glad to find you in such excellent humor," said a voice behind him.

Oswald started up from his chair and stared, frightened at the tall, slim form which seemed to have come out of the ground.

It was Baron Oldenburg.

"I beg your pardon," he said, offering Oswald his hand, which the latter took with some hesitation, "that I present myself thus unannounced, and coming, like Nicodemus, by night. But I have this moment returned from my journey, and learnt from a servant who passed me in the hall, with a waiter full of glasses and cups, that you had gone up to your room. The man had just time to tell me the way, and to go on with his glasses.--And here I am, and, as I said, delighted to find you so merry; otherwise I should hardly have the courage to tell you what brings me here. Do you know where we were a month ago this day? It is the night which the Brown Countess appointed for our rendezvous. If you are still sufficiently interested in myself and our little ward to follow me, we can go to the appointed place."

"I shall be at your disposal in a few minutes," said Oswald; "permit me only to change my dress."

He took one of the two candles that stood on the table and went into the adjoining room.

"Dress yourself warm," cried Oldenburg after him; "it is very cool now towards morning, especially in the woods."

"Hm!" he murmured, when Oswald had left him; "he looks pale and haggard, and was less friendly than usual. I hope he has heard nothing of my having been at Fichtenau. I wanted to keep it from him. I must try to find it out. It would be unpleasant, for I do not like to talk to anybody about Melitta and myself, and least of all to him."

In the mean time Oswald said, while dressing, to himself:

"Now, be wise as the serpent. If you play with me, I can play with you."

He came back to Oldenburg.

"I am ready."

"Then let us go.--My carriage is at the door," said the baron, as they went down the staircase that led into the garden. "The Czika is sitting inside, wrapped in my cloak. Don't you agree with me that it is better to take the child with us to the interview? If the gypsy woman is really the child's mother, we owe her at least this attention. At all events she can see that the child is alive and well, and tolerably well contented with her new home.--But what does all this stir mean at the château? Anna Maria is not ordinarily a friend of festivities. Did Malte run away and come back, and is this the feast of the fatted calf?"

"The question is not about a lost son but upon a returning daughter," said Oswald, forcing himself into a light tone; "Miss Helen has come back from school. Since then there has been no end of festivities."

"*Tempora mutantur*," Oldenburg said, laughing, as they were crossing the lawn; "I am exceedingly curious to see this marvel. I hope nobody will notice us."

He went towards the steps which led up to the terrace. The doors were now closed, as the air had cooled off outside; the windows likewise; but the curtains had not been let down, and one could see from the outside all that was going on in the brilliantly lighted rooms.

As they approached the window, they saw Helen sit just opposite to them at the piano. Felix was standing behind her chair. He bent over her and seemed eagerly to speak to her. Oldenburg's sharp eye had instantly caught the group.

"Who is that young man?" he asked.

As Oswald made no reply, the baron looked at him and saw that he was biting his under lip, while his eyes were fixed upon the two at the piano. Felix was bending still lower; Oswald bit his lip till the blood trickled down. Suddenly Helen rose and walked through the group of dancers, who were startled by the sudden ceasing of the music, straight to the window where Oldenburg and Oswald were standing. They moved back into the shade. When she reached the window she remained quiet, crossing her arms on her bosom and fixing her large gray eyes on the moon, whose golden disc was floating in the deep blue night sky. It was a face of irresistible power, mysteriously lovely and fatally beautiful.--A gentleman--Adolphus--approached her and spoke to her. She answered briefly, without changing her position, without scarcely moving her lips. He bowed and went away. Then, as if she had reconsidered, she turned round, went back to the piano, sat down and began to play again. As if touched by a magic wand, the dancers resumed their dance, and the gay picture which Oldenburg and Oswald had seen at first was quite restored.

"Who was the fool who caused this intermezzo?" asked Oldenburg, as they were going down the garden.

"Felix Grenwitz, her cousin."

"A nice little puppy; and the young beauty is to have him for her husband--is that so?"

"I believe so."

"And what do you say to that?"

"What Hamlet said: 'Weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of the world!'"

"My evil anticipations are about to be fulfilled," said Oldenburg, through his teeth.

"You said?"

"I was wondering whether Charles had raised the top of the carriage, so that my little Czika does not sit quite in the open air. I believe, however, she would like it best if she never had any other ceiling above her. During our journey she always was delighted when we travelled at night, and she could see her beloved stars on high."

"And may I ask what took you away so suddenly from our neighborhood?" asked Oswald, and his voice trembled.

"A matter of business which interests me only indirectly. The illness of a man whose death may be of the utmost importance to two persons who are dear to me."

The baron waited to see if Oswald would reply.

"I was vain enough to fancy that my departure would make some noise in our society here," he added, when Oswald remained silent; "this seems, however, not to have been the case."

"Everybody has been so accustomed for years to see you come and go of a sudden that they no longer wonder," said Oswald; "but I think there is the carriage!"

"Where is Czika, Charles?" asked the baron.

"She is fast asleep in the carriage, sir," replied the coachman, who had come down from his seat to let down the steps. "I have covered her carefully."

"We will take her between us, as the other day when we found her on the high-road on our return from Barnewitz."

The baron was already inside.

"Is that you, master?" asked the child, awaking.

"Yes, my darling!"

"Who is the man with you?"

"Your friend, the man with the blue eyes."

"He must stay with us," Czika murmured, overcome by sleep and pressing close up to Oswald, who had taken his seat. "Czika is tired; Czika wants to sleep in your arms!"

"I believe," said the baron, when the carriage was in motion, "you have made an indelible impression upon the child. She often speaks of you, and asks why the man with the blue eyes does not come back again? She always calls you so. The human heart is, after all, a curious thing. The wisest of the wise has no key to it. What trouble I have taken to win the heart of this child! I should like so much to call some one being in this wide world my own! And have I succeeded? I hardly know. She follows me, but only as a child would do when the mother has said: Go with that gentleman, and behave well! I have surrounded her with the tenderest affection, and yet I am to her now only what I was to her the first day. She accepts everything, like a gift which we do not refuse merely because we do not wish to offend the giver."

"But is not that more or less the way with all children?" replied Oswald. "Is it not their privilege to be loved without being specially grateful for it? And then: what is a love which counts upon a reward? Is it not here also true, that he who asks for a reward has already his reward?"

"I hope you may never experience that in your own case," said the baron, with much feeling. "And may others never learn it through your agency! You would not say so if you knew what hopeless love is; what it means to carry about in you the feeling that your love, true, warm love, is returned with indifference and coldness! No, no! A heart that loves us is a treasure which we must not despise, and if we owned every heart in the world; to have pained a heart that loves us is a recollection which sears our conscience, and which no new love can ever extinguish."

"And have *you* had such experience?"

"Unfortunately I have! I have formed and broken many ties of love, without feeling any remorse about it. I knew too well that I would not break the dear hearts! Only once--I was quite young yet, and that must be my excuse, if there can be one--only once I became guilty of the crime of rewarding a woman, who I knew loved me truly and faithfully, with vile ingratitude. The story would be ever present to my mind, even if the Brown Countess had not recalled it to me in a strange way. Did I not tell you how I met, quite accidentally, many years ago and far away in Hungary, a gypsy girl----"

"Yes," said Oswald, "I recollect your story very well. Baron Cloten's arrival interrupted you. I forgot afterwards to ask you for the continuation. Was it not this way? You were on a visit to a friend whom you had known in Vienna. You found the girl in a gypsy camp, as you were roaming through the woods far from the house. The band had gone away and left her behind. To see her and to love her was one. You spent several days with her in romantic bliss. The story ended with the following tableau: A gypsy encampment in the forest--sunset--under the overhanging shelter of a broad, branching beech-tree, a loving pair on a soft moss carpet----"

"You have a good memory," said the baron, "and you have reproduced my state of mind at that time very faithfully. I was sitting then with the Zingarella--Xenobia was her sweet name--in the manner mentioned by you. I was singing the old song of love which would never end, and the poor little bird trusted the false old melody, and came closer and closer to my heart. Suddenly horses' tramp was heard in the silent woods, and laughing and talking of a merry cavalcade. I had hardly time to push the little one rudely from my lap and to rise, when the troop came galloping from under the tall trees into the clearing. They were my friends: the young Count Cryvanny, with his sisters, and several ladies and gentlemen from the neighborhood. You may imagine the scene that followed--I was at once surrounded and overwhelmed with questions. Where had I been? How did I get there?--I thought you had been torn by wolves! said one--or you had killed yourself from unrequited love! cried another.--I have the key to the secret! Love is the cause, but by no means unrequited love.--Look there! and he pointed with the handle of his riding-whip at my poor Xenobia, who had crept behind the trunk of the tree. Universal laughter rewarded the witty man. One face only looked black. It was the youngest and prettiest of the three sisters, whom I had courted last, and who, I believe, honored me with her favor in her way--which, to be sure, did not amount to much. I was suddenly very much ashamed of my poor Xenobia, and had only one wish, to get out of this embarrassment without offending the proud

Georgiana. I pretended to be indignant; I said I had wandered about in the woods, and that I had but just reached the encampment. 'But where does the girl get the gold chain from around her neck, which we admired only the other day, when you wore it?' asked Georgiana.--'She must have stolen it from me,' I said, 'while I slept here, tired by my wanderings.'--Then take it back.--I could have murdered Georgiana, but I had bound myself by my bold falsehood. I could not recall it. Xenobia anticipated me.--Here, sir! she said; take what I have stolen! and she handed me the chain. I shall never in my life forget the trembling hand, the face disfigured by pain and indignation. Let us get back home! cried Count Cryvanny, there is a storm coming up!--I took the horse of one of the servants, and off we went through the darkening forest. I dared not look back at Xenobia. Georgiana, by whose side I was riding, would never have forgiven me. I had fully reconquered her favor, but at what cost? On the evening of the following day--I could not get away sooner I hastened to the forest to make amends for my wrong, but I found, after a long search, only the place of the encampment. Xenobia was gone. The band had no sooner found their retreat discovered than they had broken up their tents and moved, no one knew where? I have never seen a trace again of Xenobia."

The baron was silent, and puffed the smoke of his cigar in mighty clouds high into the air.

"You see," he began again, after a long pause, "I am pious enough, or superstitious enough, if you prefer it, to believe that this wicked deed of mine has brought upon me a curse which no repentance can remove. That curse is fulfilled in my aimless life. From that day it has been my fate to sow love and to reap indifference. And now you will also understand what Czika is to me--an angel in the highest sense of the word, a sweet messenger from on high, who sings Peace! Peace! to my sick heart. The child's face, you know, has been for years before my mind's eye, and I have told you how I thought twice to be near the realization of my dreams. Here is the red rose Xenobia once more, but in the morning dew of sweetest innocence. The red rose has no doubt long since faded and withered amid the storms of life, and even if I had kept it at that time--what would the world, the cold, impudent, slandering world have said of the romantic love of a baron and a zingarella! I was too young then, and could not have defended my poor wife against the world: now I am a man, and have to protect a child only, a foundling. I shall give the gypsy whatever she may ask, and my warmest, sincerest thanks into the bargain. I hope she has not forgotten the appointment--stop, Charles!--We must get out here and walk through the woods. I know the way from of old. This is the hour appointed by the Brown Countess. We are just in time."

"Had we not better leave the child here," said Oswald.

"Why?" inquired the baron, who had left the carriage.

"The child is so very much attached to the woman, who, after all, may be her mother. Perhaps when she sees her again her old love of the forest life may awake, and we shall at the very least have a painful scene."

Oswald spoke in a low voice, for Czika was moving in his arms.

"Czika wants to go too," she said suddenly. "Czika wants to go into the woods and see the moon and the stars dance in the branches. Czika knows every tree and every bush."

She was standing on the damp wood-soil and clapped her hands with delight, and danced and laughed and said:

"Come! come! You, master, and you man with the blue eyes! Czika will show you a beautiful place; Czika knows every tree and every bush along the whole road."

She slipped ahead on a narrow path, which left the road where the carriage was standing, to enter the forest sideways, and then she ran on, gliding through the bushes like a wild cat. The two men had much trouble to follow. Czika was not to be persuaded to moderate her zeal. Her only answer to all the Not so fast! of the two men was the clear merry cry of the young falcon, which she uttered again and again, louder and shriller each time. Suddenly an answer came through the forest, the same proud cry which Oldenburg and Oswald remembered so well from that morning when the gypsy woman answered the child's cry from a great distance.

Now a rosy sheen became visible through the trees, which grew brighter and brighter at every step. "We shall soon be there," said the baron, who walked ahead.

In a few minutes they really came out upon the clearing, which Oswald had seen on the afternoon when he saw Melitta for the first time at her house. At the same place, near the edge of the pool, where the gypsies were then cooking their meal, a fire was now burning, but large and bright, as if to throw a flood of light upon the scene. The tops of the mighty trees glowed in rich purple or were lost in dark shade as the flames of the pile of wood blazed up or sank low; on the black mirror of the pool another fire shone in dim glow, and surrounded by this magic illumination the Brown Countess was seen on her knees before Czika, whom she overwhelmed with kisses and caresses. The child tried in vain to draw her up, and at last threw herself down by her side, hiding her head in the bosom of the woman. This was the sight that greeted the two men when they reached the clearing at last, completely out of breath.

They stood there silent and motionless, almost overawed by the strange, touching spectacle.

Then the gypsy rose, and taking the child by the hand she came up to the two, and said to Oldenburg, who stared at her with his eyes wide open:

"Do you know me, master?"

At that moment the flames blazed high up and fell with the brightness of daylight upon every feature in the noble, proud face of the Egyptian woman, and upon every line of her slight, lofty figure.

"Xenobia!" cried the baron, opening his arms, "Xenobia!"

The brown woman threw herself, with a cry of mad rapture, on his bosom, and held him as if she would never part again with the man of her love. But the very next moment she tore herself away from him, stepped back, and stood there motionless, her arms crossed on her bosom. Czika was standing between her and the baron, turning her large dark eyes full of amazement from the one to the other.

The baron took her by the hand, and stepping up to the gypsy woman, he said to her, in a tone which, in spite of all his efforts, betrayed his deep emotion:

"Xenobia, is this child----"

He could not continue; in vain he tried to utter the word. At last he stammered:

"Your and my child?"

"Yes, master," said the gypsy, without stirring, but fixing her dark, bright eyes on the baron.

Oldenburg lifted the child in his arms and pressed her to his bosom. Oswald felt he ought to leave the three alone, and went back into the wood. There he sat down near the edge. It was the same place where he had been lying the other day dreaming such glorious things of Melitta, and where he had afterwards heard Czika play the lute, while the Brown Countess was busy with the fire, and sang with her deep, sonorous voice the Hungarian melody. What changes had taken place since that day! How much he had lost and won since! Then his heart beat high with expectation; now his soul was filled with sadness and grief. Why had she made him so indescribably happy if her love was, after all, but the sovereign whim of a moment, only an amusing play to fill up a vacant day? Had he not all the time felt in his soul that she, the haughty aristocrat, would drop him again sooner or later? Had he not, the very first time when he heard Oldenburg's name mentioned, recognized in that man almost instinctively his rival? And he had to confess now that that man possessed everything calculated to kindle a heroic passion in a great lady. Rank and riches, eminent talents, the courage of a knight without fear or reproach, and just enough of the character of a man of the world to captivate the fancy of a woman whose heart is not absolutely pure.

And how attractive even his weariness of the world was, and his air of suffering! One would imagine, hearing him complain as he did, that he was on the point of going into the desert, to live there on locusts. Now he will probably take the gypsy to his solitude, to while away the hours till Melitta returns....

Oswald increased thus wilfully his own troubles of mind. The new passion which inflamed his imagination made him deaf to the voice of his conscience, blind to the evident proofs of the utter groundlessness of his assertions. He had an indistinct consciousness of his own weariness and exhaustion; he felt sick at heart, and perfectly unable to come to any clear conclusions about himself. He pressed his face into his hands, to see nothing, to hear nothing....

A hand, which touched his shoulder, aroused him from his revery. It was Oldenburg. The baron was alone. The fire of the piled-up wood blazed up fitfully, and was on the point of expiring. The moon, half covered by drifting gray clouds, twinkled ghastly in the dark water of the pool. The wind was whispering and wailing through the long reeds near the shore.

"Where is Czika?" asked Oswald.

"Gone," replied the baron. "Let us go. It is late."

"Is she not coming back?"

"I do not know."

"And you have allowed this child, your child, to follow the wild gypsy woman into the wide world?"

"What could I do? Is she not her child a thousand times more than mine? Has she not borne it amid pains, fed it, sheltered it many, many years, in rain and in sunshine, in need and in poverty, in the dark woods and on the open highway? Has she not begged and robbed and done worse things than that perhaps for her child? What have I done for my child? Nothing! Nothing but to stamp the mother as a thief before the eyes of a mob of nobles, nothing but to drive her from me like a lost dog, for the sake of a wretched coquette! No! No! I have no right to the child!"

While the baron was speaking he pushed with his foot the half-consumed, glowing firebrands into the pool, so that they turned black one by one.

"Why did the Brown Countess wish to see you, then? Why did she manage to put the child into your hands? Why did she herself appoint this rendezvous?"

"She wished to see once more the beloved of her youth, the only man she had ever really loved. She wished to put his child into his hands and then dive back into the darkness of the woods. But she cannot live without the child, and the child cannot live without her. I had to let them go both!"

"But why not take them both with you to Cona?"

"Shall I chain the falcon? The falcon is happy only in the immeasurable ether on high; he dies in the foul air of our houses. Come! It is high time for us civilized men to go to bed!"

The baron pushed the last firebrand into the water; the men turned to go.

From between the hurriedly drifting clouds the moon was peeping blear-eyed at the dark water of the pool, and the long reeds that grew near the edges whispered: Here is a pleasant resting-place for all the sorrows of earth!

CHAPTER X.

"Well! That embarrassment is luckily over!" said Albert, pushing a parcel of bank-notes into a bulky, worn-out pocket-book, which contained among other things a number of mercantile communications, unanswered yet in spite of their ancient date. "After all, she is a nice little woman; not over-bright--but that is in this case only an additional virtue. I really think I could deny my nature and marry the little Samaritan. Perhaps it would not be so bad. Who knows? There may, after all, be somewhere within me the germ of a most excellent steady citizen, which only needs the warmth of a domestic hearth to sprout merrily. The thing is problematic, I admit, but not impossible, for all that I see myself walking soberly of a Sunday, by the side of my wife, through the fields, listening to the quarrels among the sparrows and the complaints of my better half against the extortionate bills of butchers and bakers, while before us walk two young citizens of the world who bear a slight resemblance to myself, and behind us, in a little wagon drawn by a maid of all works, a shrill little voice is heard, which furnishes unmistakable evidence of my wife's admirable qualities! Oh!..."

Albert groaned as if he had sprained his foot on a real stone during this imaginary promenade. He started up from the sofa, and walked thoughtfully up and down in the room, folding his hands behind his back. "The plats are ready," he said, stopping before his drawing-board; "Anna Maria has paid me; I have nothing more to do here, and the baroness' question, when I thought I would leave, was clear enough. How I hate this proud, good-for-nothing race--all of them, not one excepted, not even the beautiful, high-nosed Helen, who always looks at me with such cool contempt in her big, cold eyes; and least of all my noble friend Felix, who I think would be delighted if he could cut me out with Marguerite. If I could but play you all a good trick, that you should think of me your life long! If I could, for instance, discover the heir to Stantow and Baerwalde in the person of--Ah! There is the rub! In whose person?"

"I can do something with the letters I have, but not much. As yet I cannot even frighten excellent Anna Maria with them. If I could only have a chance of examining that big chest of Mother Claus'! It is a fixed idea of mine that there must be something to be gotten there. But I have in vain reconnoitred the whole house; I have in vain watched it by day and by night, to find a moment when the old witch should leave it for a moment--she sits there like a toad in the rock.--*Apropos* of that amiable young man! I thought of making him the Pretender, *nolens volens*, for he is too stupidly honest to look at the whole thing as a merry, and at the same time profitable, masquerade. It is wonderful how honest people are when they have all they want! The best way to get rid of thieves would be to pension every one of them. And this Stein is not even so lucky as that. He cannot have any money--why else would he plague himself with these boys? He would be just the man to spend a fortune handsomely. And so far everything seems to fit exactly. He has the requisite age; he has told me himself that he has never known his mother, or--his father excepted--any other relative. And, besides that, he has a striking likeness to the older line of the Grenwitz family. I only wish I were he, that is to say, with my brains added to what he has ..."

A timid knock at the door interrupted Albert's meditations. As upon his "Come in!" no one entered, he went to open the door. A little peasant boy, fair-haired and bare-footed, stood there,

looking at him with his stupid eyes wide open.

"Whom do you want, my boy?"

"Are you the candidate here?"

"To be sure!" said Albert, always ready for any fun or joke.

"Mother Claus sends me----"

"Who?" "Mother Claus sends me----"

"Come in, little one," said Albert, taking the boy by the hand and locking the door when they were both inside.

"What does Mother Claus want of me?"

"Mother Claus is dying, and sends me to tell the candidate to come and see her."

The boy breathed deep when he had relieved himself of the fearful burden of his message. Albert took up his cap.

"I'll come directly. You run on and tell her I am coming directly. And look here: If anybody in the house asks you whom you come from, just say you have delivered your message. Here is a groschen, and now make haste to get home again."

The boy scampered off, proud of Albert's generous present, and of course utterly forgetful of the order to run home. When he had reached the courtyard, he sat quietly down on the fountain of the Naiad, to decide at leisure whether he should buy at once the whole world, or for the present only a bullfinch, which another boy had offered him that morning.

He might have been sitting there a quarter of an hour when he fell fast asleep, tired as he was from running about all day. Thus Oswald found him when he returned from a lonely walk. As the sight of the ragged sleeping boy on the edge of the fountain looked picturesque, he walked up to him. The boy started up and rubbed his eyes in bewilderment.

"How do you get here, boy?" asked Oswald.

"Mother Claus sent me!" said the boy, not knowing at that moment whether he had delivered his message or not.

"What is the matter with Mother Claus?" asked Oswald, who at once suspected that something must have happened to his old friend.

"Mother Claus sends me," repeated the boy; "she is dying, and sends me to tell the candidate to come and see her!"

Oswald did not stop to hear more. He thought of the poor old woman, in whom he had from the beginning taken so warm an interest, now lying on her deathbed, perhaps alone, helpless, and no kind hand to smooth her pillow--and he hurried as fast as he could through the small gate on the road that led to the tenants' cottages, taking the same road on which Albert had passed a quarter of an hour before....

Albert had slipped through the small gate and the garden as soon as the boy was out of sight. No one had seen him leave the château. The family had gone out, and he thought Oswald was in his room.

"*Fortes fortuna juvat*," he thought as he was running along under the willow trees. "They are all out in the fields now. The old woman could not have died at a more suitable hour. I only hope she is dead when I get there, for I do not want to have to explain...."

He had reached the village in a few minutes, but he avoided the main street, running along the little gardens behind the cottages, till he came to Mother Claus' hut. Here he jumped over a low fence and entered through the open back door into the passage. He listened. Nothing was stirring. He only heard the ticking of the large Black Forest clock in Jake's room, and from the village street the laughter of a couple of children--Mother Claus' foster-children--who were wrestling in the sand to enjoy the evening sun.

"Now I hope to heavens there won't be some benevolent soul in the room," murmured Albert, cautiously pushing open the door which led into the old woman's room.

He entered on tip-toe. It was quite dark in the low, small chamber. Albert's first glance fell upon the chest, which was safe in its place in the corner; his next upon the old woman. She was sitting in the large arm-chair, "in which Baron Oscar had died." She had dressed herself in her Sunday costume, her oaken stick was by her side--one might have imagined she had been ready to go to Fashwitz to church, and had fallen asleep a little before undertaking the long, long journey.

"Is that you, young master?" she said, with trembling voice, and raising her head with the snow-white hair to look at the door. "Come nearer, quite near, that I may touch you. Where are you? It is all dark around me; I cannot see you. Is not the moon shining through the trees? Do you hear the nightingale sing? Listen! How sweet! how beautiful! Oscar, you must not abandon Lizzie; she will cry till she blinds her beautiful eyes; and you must tell Harald not to worry poor Marie so much, else she'll go out into the black night. Good-by, dear child!--Yes, I'll burn everything; it is all safe in the chest. Mother Claus cannot read, but the right man will come at the right time!"

The head of the poor woman fell on her bosom. Albert thought she was dead. He went to the chest, raised the heavy top, and hastily searched the contents. There were women's dresses, which could not have belonged to Mother Claus--city-made dresses, such as young ladies wore twenty-five years ago! withered bouquets, faded ribbons, a few simple articles of jewelry; a string of red corals; a little gold cross on a black velvet ribbon. All this might be of very great interest to somebody else; but Albert pushed it impatiently aside. And still he went on searching and found not what he looked for. At last--there! at the very bottom of the chest, in a corner, and hid under a black silk dress, quite a parcel--letters, documents--there they were! He slipped it into the pocket of his coat; he took with both arms what he had pulled out and stuffed it in again, pell-mell, as it came, closed the lid; and as he rose from his knees, was not that somebody coming? In an instant he was at the little window that looked upon the small garden behind the house. He opened it, he squeezed himself through the narrow aperture with a rapidity which would have done credit to an experienced housebreaker, crept on all fours through the currant-bushes, leaped the low fence, and disappeared amid the golden waves of a field of rye.

Just as Albert thus accomplished his retreat through the window, Oswald entered the room, breathless with haste. He feared he had come too late; he knelt down by the side of the old woman and chafed her withered, cold hands in his own.

And this touch seemed to restore the dying woman once more to life. She raised herself, and placing her hand on his head, she said, with a voice which sounded as if it came already from beyond the grave: "The Lord bless thee and preserve thee! The Lord give thee peace!"

"Amen," said Oswald.

The hands of the old woman fell gently on her knees. Oswald looked up. The light of the setting sun fell through the low window upon her face; it looked as if it were spiritualized in the rosy light. But the rosy light vanished, and the gray evening looked upon the pale face of the dead.

Oswald closed her eyes. From the other side of the house came the ticking of the big clock, from the street the laughing and shouting of the children at play.--What does life know of death? what death of life? What does eternity know of either?

CHAPTER XI.

Next morning before breakfast Mr. Timm was gone. He had asked the baron to send him to the nearest town from which he could take post-horses. The baron asked him hospitably why he was in such a hurry, and if he would not stay a few days to recover from his arduous labors? But Albert pretended to have received an important order--the postman had indeed brought him a letter--and the baron ordered the taciturn coachman to get ready his heavy bays. Mr. Timm bade all a brief farewell and drove off. Nobody missed him--nobody, with the exception of the little Genevese. But she shed her tears in the retirement of her chamber, and the company saw nothing of her grief but her eyes red from weeping, which she intended to explain by a pretended headache, if anybody should inquire. But no one inquired.

They all had enough to do with themselves! All were fully occupied with what was nearest to their own hearts.

The death of the old woman was another blow to Oswald. Again he had lost one of the few beings in whom he was interested. It seemed as if his troubled mind was never to have any peace--as if the last bright light was to fade on his sky, and deep night was to surround him on all sides. He had seen Mother Claus but rarely, and yet it had always been under such peculiar circumstances as to make in each case a deep and lasting impression on his mind; he felt as if he had lost an old relative, whose tender affections he had rewarded with indifference and ingratitude. When he was last at her hut with Albert, he had determined not to lose sight again of the old woman, to ask her if he could help her, to inquire if anything could be done for her. She

had thought of him in her last hour, while he had not had a minute for her in all these days! She had wished to bless him before she died--what had he ever done to deserve such a blessing?--It was of little use now that he provided for her funeral, that he and Bruno accompanied her to her last resting-place when they carried the simple coffin on a farm wagon to the graveyard at Fashwitz. It was of no use that he wrote to Grunwald, ordering a small marble tablet, so that her grave might not be too soon obliterated. But he thought how she would have thanked him during her lifetime for the smallest part of all the trouble he took for her now that she was dead!

Was it because he had not deserved it, that the blessing was not fulfilled? The peace which she had implored for him with the last breath of her lips would not come to his heart. Like a desperate man he struggled with the maddening passion which had overwhelmed him of a sudden like a fierce hurricane, but every day convinced him but more and more of his inability to resist. He spent daily several hours in the company of the beautiful girl; she met him with her kindly smile on her proud lips as soon as the bright summer morning had ended the short night, which yet to him seemed so long! At table he sat opposite to her; her lessons by his side, and a hundred other occasions, inevitable in so small a family at a country place, brought him again and again in contact with the lovely one. He himself called his passion not love, but friendship, deep interest--he tried to persuade himself that he would have felt the same friendship, the same interest, if his relations to Melitta had remained unchanged,--if accident had never revealed to him Melitta's image in a new light Oswald would have been the first to discover that it spoke neither of prudence nor of loyalty to make deceitful accident the judge of the weal or woe of a woman he loved so dearly, and that all these boastful reasonings were nothing more than cunning sophisms of a wild passion; he would have discovered this in any one else; but we lack only too frequently that prudence and loyalty in our own affairs which we always have ready for others, and to think and talk wisely and to act foolishly are, it is well known, different things, which still can very well go hand in hand.

It is true that an impassioned heart could not very well resist being touched by so much beauty, grace, and mind combined in one person. All who came in contact with Helen felt the charm, the wonderful charm, she possessed; it seemed almost impossible not to take at once part for or against her with enthusiasm, so that even in the servants' hall lively scenes occurred, in which her attractions were discussed. The taciturn coachman would growl out that all was not gold that glitters, and the good old cook would reply that the angels of course never came to visit bad and envious men; then followed an angry and unprofitable discussion about bad men in general and in particular, which led to strange and sharp sayings on both sides, while the master and his family were handled without gloves, and much was said down stairs that would have struck horror into the hearts of the company up stairs. Thus they were pretty well agreed in those lower regions that Baron Felix had not come to Castle Grenwitz for amusement only, and his valet hinted that some people could say a good deal about that, if discretion was not the first duty of a good servant. He only desired to add, that his master was apt to carry out whatever he undertook, and that, in his opinion, there was not a young lady in this world who could resist his master for any length of time--an assertion which called forth most violent opposition on the part of the ladies present.

What these people discovered, Oswald's eye, sharpened a hundred-fold by love, could not overlook. He saw daily how the baron made every effort to win his fair cousin's love, how he brought into play all the skill he had acquired in a thousand intrigues on the smooth floor of brilliant salons in the capital, all the cleverness with which Nature had lavishly endowed him, and all the advantages he enjoyed as a near relative. He could not fail to see that the baroness sustained these efforts with wise discretion in every useful way, seconding Felix as indefatigably as ably. He would say: No! or remain silent, when Bruno, after dinner or during a walk, would tell him, with angry face, of some new impudence of "that ape Felix," but he knew very well that the boy had seen or heard right, and his only consolation was that Helen's pride would never consent to a union with a man so totally unworthy of her hand.

As for Miss Helen, she went her quiet way, apparently looking neither to the right nor the left, only she had become still more reserved in her manner, and more sparing of her smiles. She also felt perfectly well that she would have to stand alone in the struggle which was impending; that she would appeal in vain to the heart of a cold, selfish mother, the weak mind of an old father, or the courtesy of a frivolous, reckless man like Felix, and that she would have to rely on no one but herself. But this consciousness, which would have overwhelmed any other girl of Helen's age, only served to rouse and to inflame the courage of this high-hearted creature, in whom the whole power of the family seemed to be concentrated, only in a nobler and purer form. The reconciliation which had taken place between her and her mother had only been apparent. Two persons are never more strongly opposed to each other than when they aim at different ends, and yet are equally well endowed with strength of will and powers of endurance. There was no permanent union possible between the baroness, who knew and pursued only worldly purposes, and her daughter, who followed an ideal which might have been exaggerated, but was always lofty and pure. Helen spoke freely of this in the letters, which she wrote more frequently now than formerly, to her dearest and most intimate friend, Miss Mary Burton. "Dearest Mary," she said in one of them, "how often have you accused your fate, which loaded you with riches but robbed you of all--parents, brothers and sisters, and even cousins--all those friends of both sexes, which nature herself gives us for our way through life! But, believe me, dear girl, there is a sadder fate than yours. The melancholy you feel when you think of your loneliness in the world has something sweet about it. How often have you spoken to me of your brother Harry, whom

you lost in the fall vigor of early youth, and of your sister Hetty, who died a mere bud. You told me then that they were not and could never be dead for you, because they lived brighter and fairer in your memory. You said that the shades of the departed were everywhere hovering around you, and that you felt far happier in their society than among the cold, selfish men of this world. Oh, surely life is not the first of earthly gifts, but love is. To live without love is useless; love without life can still be sublime. Your relatives are dead, but they live in you; my relatives live, but they are dead for me. It is a sad word, darling Mary, but I will not blot it out again, for it is true; and we have pledged each other to conceal nothing, even though the confession be ever so painful. Yes, they are dead for me, my relatives, and although I would give half of my life to call them back to life, good wishes can do nothing here. Who lives for us? Surely only those in whose hearts we can always find an asylum, to protect us against every grief that oppresses us and against every doubt that distresses us--those who wish only our happiness, and do not find it in the fulfilment of their own wishes, in the gratification of their own desires. And yet, this is the case with my relatives. Can I open my heart to them? Must I not always fear to offend them if I speak what I think? Do they care for my wishes? Do they not rather distress me with their plans and suggestions, which make the blood curdle in my veins? To be sure, my dear old papa--he would not abandon me if matters came to the worst; but, great Heavens, is it not bad enough to have to fear a worst? Ah, Mary, I cannot tell you how strange, how painful even the spirit that reigns in this house is to me; how I long to be back at school, where, if the outer world was closed to us, a fairer and a richer world was open to us in our dreams, and especially in our cordial friendship! Here I have no one whom I could admit into this inner world, no one but a boy, who, of course, cannot understand me, and a man whom I could love if he were my brother, but from whom I am parted by an impassable gulf. You know of whom I speak. I will not conceal from you that of late I have become more deeply interested in this man than I should ever have thought possible--a confession which may challenge your scorn, but which I owe to you, notwithstanding, from the sacred nature of our covenant. He stands alone in the world like yourself; his mother he has never known; his father died years ago, and he never had brother or sister. He is quite young yet, but great hearts live fast in a little while, and he must have seen and suffered much. There is a shadow of melancholy on his brow, and in his large, dark blue eyes, which is irresistibly touching to me; at times his lips quiver with pain, so that I would give anything if I could go up to him and say: Tell me what pains you, perhaps I can help you, and if I cannot do that, I can at least sympathize with you. You know, dear Mary, that I am a thoroughbred aristocrat, and that I have an innate antipathy to all that is common and plebeian. We have both of us grown up in the conviction that the lower classes lack not merely the nobility of birth, but also the nobility of thought, and that we cannot count, in them, upon an appreciation of what is best and highest in the world. I must tell you now that I have changed my views in this respect somewhat since I have come back to Grenwitz; that I have at least found how this rule also has its exceptions. Stein is such an exception. I never yet heard a word from his lips that would betray the plebeian, but, on the contrary, many that were spoken from my soul, and that found a loud echo in my heart. He speaks with more music in his voice than I ever heard before, so that I often try for hours afterwards to recall to my mind the manner and modulation with which he said one or the other thing. There is an indescribable charm for me in his sweet, melodious voice. I always felt as if men were speaking from the heart, and I could say, after a few words: This man has a good heart, and that man has a bad heart. And with Stein this proves to be correct. I have seen many proofs of his good heart. Thus, there died a few days ago an immensely old woman in the village, who was once upon a time housekeeper at the château, and drew a little pension from papa. Nobody took any notice of her except Stein, and he took care of her burial, and accompanied, together with Bruno, her remains to the grave-yard. They have blamed him for that at the house here, and I had to hear very heartless remarks about it; especially from a certain person, who ought to thank God if she ever thinks of a kind act, much less does one. But I will not honor this person by saying anything more about her. I have determined that she shall henceforth no longer exist for me, and hence I will not even speak of her any more...."

This letter, in which Miss Helen spoke so unreservedly about the persons by whom she was surrounded, never was answered, for it never reached its destination.

CHAPTER XII.

It was in the afternoon. The old baron was napping in the sitting-room. He sat in his large rocking-chair; the newspaper he had been reading had fallen from his feeble, withered hand. He looked very much worsted, like a really old man who had not many years to live, and whose life might be very suddenly ended by a trifling attack. Anna Maria, no doubt, thought so as she sat opposite to him in her accustomed seat, looking at him long and attentively, apparently lost in deep thought. Now she rose and spread a thin handkerchief over the sleeper's face. Then she looked at the clock on the mantel-piece. It was nearly four, the hour at which, according to the

unchanging rules of the house, coffee was served--in the garden, if the weather permitted it. The baroness was on the point of rousing her husband, but she reconsidered, went through the open door into the garden, and asked the servant who was carrying the coffee if Baron Felix had been called already?--Not yet, ma'am! Then go up stairs and tell him I beg he will come at once to see me, and--wait! tell mademoiselle she need not come to help to coffee; I'll do it myself; she had better stay in the linen-room.--And, what was it? Oh yes! You need not tell the others yet that coffee is ready!

The man went on his errands. Anna Maria passed the garden-house and entered a long, perfectly shady avenue of beech-trees, which led from the lawn to a copse, in which an old ruined chapel was standing. She seemed to have forgotten entirely that she had sent for Felix, for she went on and on, her eyes fixed upon the ground, till she reached the end of the avenue and the little chapel.

It was a sweet, pleasantly melancholy place. Very old trees of gigantic size overhung it with their broad leafy branches, so that not a ray could pierce. The ground was covered with thick moss; long, luxuriant grass was growing between the broken stones; the crevices in the old walls were all covered with dark-green ivy, and here and there a tall blooming shrub rose from the ruins. Upon the weather-beaten stone cross in the empty window sat a little bird and sang. That was the only sound heard far and near. It seemed only to make the stillness around more deeply felt.

A lover of solitude would have been delighted with the place. But the baroness hardly raised her eyes from the ground to look hastily around. She had at all times little eye for the rays of the sun that came trembling through thick foliage, for dark shadows and other features in a beautiful landscape, and now her mind was preoccupied with very different thoughts. She sat down on a stone bench immediately under the empty window frame in which the little bird was singing, took a letter from her pocket and began to read it once more.

It was the letter which Helen had written that morning, in the belief that her mother's assurance she would never inquire about her correspondence was to be relied on. Fully trusting in the sacredness of letters, she had given it to her maid, with orders to carry it to the kitchen, where the postman was refreshing himself with a cup of coffee. The maid had met the baroness in one of the passages, and the latter had asked her whose letter that was? Upon her answer that her mistress had given it to her, the baroness had taken it with the remark, that she would give it herself to the postman when her own letters were sent down.

Thus Helen's letter had fallen into her mother's hands. It was an accident--one of those accidents which evil spirits seem to bring about, for the very purpose of confusing doubting minds still further, and of leading them more surely away from the right path. Without this accident it would probably never have occurred to the baroness that she might thus find a way to her daughter's heart. But her plan of marrying Helen to Felix had become a fixed idea in her mind, as it happens often with selfish and self-willed characters. The state of her husband's health seemed to her--justly or unjustly--very dangerous; Malte had from his birth been very delicate, and the over-anxious tenderness of his parents had made him still more so; thus it appeared to her more than probable that Felix might ere long be master at Grenwitz, and she thought it therefore wise policy to bind him to her interests as much as she could. At first she had looked in this to Helen's advantage almost as much as to her own, and found it very convenient that her and her daughter's interest could be so pleasantly combined. Felix seemed to be made to become the son-in-law of an imperious mother-in-law. He was trifling, yielding, averse to business, and always disposed to let things go as they chose to go, if he had but money or credit enough. The baroness did not remember that such men are the hardest to manage, because reckless frivolity and intense selfishness can very well go hand in hand, and that these men are ever ready to sacrifice all who oppose their selfish desires. She thought she had nothing to fear from Felix. He had won her whole heart, as far as she had any heart, by his courteous, accommodating manner, and his ever ready: As you like it, dear aunt--do you settle that, please, dear aunt!

All the greater was her concern about Helen. She could not conceal from herself that all her attempts to draw her daughter nearer to herself had so far been fruitless. Of course, she blamed only Helen's "childish disposition" and her "overwrought notions" for the failure, but that did not change the matter itself. And now she had to see, moreover, that Helen had evidently more confidence in her father than in herself, that she was more warmly attached to Bruno than to her brother Malte, and that she treated Oswald, and even Mr. Timm, more courteously than her cousin. Felix had laughed when the baroness told him what she had noticed; he had even said it was a good sign. The ruder the better! was the ex-lieutenant's doctrine, which he accompanied with a gallant comparison between horses and girls strongly smacking of the guard-house. But the baroness had the habit of trusting her own eyes, and her own eyes confirmed daily the correctness of her observation. At last Felix also had begun to feel less sure of success. Emily's words on that night had pierced his self-complacency like a barbed arrow. Jealousy has hawk's eyes. Emily knew that only the love of another could have produced such a change in Oswald, and that wonderful instinct which in women more than replaces the slow logic of men, had in an instant revealed to her that her rival could be no one else but the beautiful Helen. Felix, in his rash manner of trying to get rid of a troublesome thought, had at once communicated the matter to the baroness, and she had meditated on it till she had come to the conclusion that Emily's suggestion was too probable not to be thoroughly investigated.

Just then accident had placed Helen's letter in her hand. This letter, intended only for her daughter's most intimate friend, would probably furnish her the key to her daughter's heart, and confirm or destroy her suspicion. That, this key in her hand became a thief's tool--what did it matter? She must have certainty at any price. And has not a mother the right to know her daughter's secrets? And if this daughter, as she feared, was going astray on a dangerous path, was it not the mother's sacred duty to bring her back by any means in her power?

Thus the baroness had tried to quiet her conscience. Man never is in want of excuses for an act which he has determined to commit at all hazard.

And there she sat now on the stone bench by the old walls of the chapel, with the little bird merrily twittering above, and the letter, the unlucky letter, in her hand. She knew it almost by heart. The fruit from the tree of knowledge, which he had so wickedly stolen, was bitter, very bitter! She had never loved her daughter; now she hated her daughter. It was true then! Her worst suspicions were confirmed. Black ingratitude the only return for all her kindness! Helen on the best terms with the two persons she hated most! Baron Grenwitz's only daughter in love with a hireling, a low-born person, who received wages and his board from her parents! For what meant, after all, those fine phrases about Oswald's goodness of heart, and the sympathy she felt for his secret sorrow? The baroness did not know much of the language of love; but she did know that indifference does not speak thus. It had come to this then! Helen wanted war! Well--war she should have. They would soon see who was the stronger--the mother or the daughter. Could she yield now? Let the disobedient child have her way? Sacrifice her long-cherished plans to a foolish girl's whims? No, and a thousand times, No!

But what was she to do? Try kindness once more, or drop the mask, and command where prayers had been of no avail? And above all, how much of the secret was she to tell Felix? Would his pride be roused if he saw how little Helen thought of him, how she despised him, in fact? Might he not draw back, and would not Helen then triumph after all?

Before the baroness could quite settle this point in her mind, she heard steps near by. She hastily folded up the letter and concealed it in the pocket of her dress.

It was Felix. He had found no one in the garden-house, and accidentally looking down the avenue, he had thought he saw the baroness at the other end.

"Ah! it is you," he said, as the baroness rose when he came near, "I really did not know if it was you. The coffee is waiting, but, like King Philip in the play, lonely and alone. Everybody seems to have slept too long, like myself."

"Sit down here, Felix," said the baroness; "the coffee can wait. We can talk here more at ease than over there."

"A charming secret place for a nice little rendezvous," replied Felix, laughing, and sitting down by the side of the baroness.

At that moment the little bird ceased to sing that had been sitting on the cross in the window, and flew into one of the trees. The pale face of a boy, framed in dark curls, showed itself for a moment in the opening, and looked down, but disappeared instantly at the sight of the two on the stone bench.

"You are still always ready for a joke, dear Felix," said the baroness.

"Still!" replied Felix, "what has happened that I should cry? I suppose you cannot forget what I told you the other night? Pshaw! I have long since recovered from the fright; it was a false alarm, you may believe me."

"I wish I could share your confidence, dear Felix; but I have my good reasons for differing with you on that point. I have observed Helen more carefully since then, and I cannot get rid of the idea that there is something in the suggestion."

"But, pardon me, dear aunt. You have a marvellous talent for seeing everything in dark colors. It was a childish notion of the little Breesen; she wanted to annoy me--*voilà tout*. I cannot imagine that Helen would prefer a schoolmaster to myself. Why, it would be ridiculous, *horriblement* ridiculous," said the ex-lieutenant, and looked with pleasure at his patent boots.

"And suppose Helen should not forget herself so far--or suppose it should be only a child's caprice, to vanish with the next moment, are you so well pleased with her manner towards yourself?"

"She will change her manner when she finds I am in earnest."

"And if she does not change it?"

"Well, then, we are, heaven be thanked, not married yet," said Felix, lost in admiration of his boot, and hardly knowing what he was saying.

"Then we had better break off our conversation," said the baroness, rising; "if you can speak

with such indifference of the failure of a plan which, I think, we both of us look upon with no small interest, it is hardly worth while to discuss it any further."

"But, my dearest aunt," said Felix, starting up and kissing the baroness' hand, "you are really in an awful humor today. How can you be so offended at a word, which did not mean anything at all, 'pon honor? It just slipped out so. You know my tongue often says things for which I should by no means like to be held responsible. Sit down again, pray! You were saying that Helen's manner towards me might not change. My solemn answer is: I shall many her nevertheless. Those things come all right when one sits in the carriage and is off for the wedding tour; at first tears, then sobs, then pouting, then a little smile, and----"

"Enough," said the baroness, "you are an incorrigible wag, who----"

"Succeeds wherever he wants to succeed. And therefore let your scruples go, and give us our coffee or it will be cold."

"Not quite so fast," said the baroness; "what would you advise now?"

"What I have always advised. Since I am not allowed to have anything to do with the matter myself, you had better tell Helen: You marry your cousin Baron Felix Grenwitz, and moreover within so and so many days! That is settled! Selah!"

"Are you in earnest?"

"In full earnest! When are you going to give your great ball?"

"Day after to-morrow."

"Good! that is a capital opportunity to make our engagement public. Just tell Helen: If you are not Felix's betrothed by Thursday evening, you march back to school on Friday morning. You will see that will settle it."

"I am afraid the threat will have the opposite effect. They have spoilt Helen in Hamburg. I believe she had rather go back to-day than Friday."

"*Eh bien!* Then send the little obstinate damsel to Grunwald, to the model institute of Miss Bear. The little Breesen has been brought up there, and she told me the other day it was rather a kind of penitentiary than a boarding-school; but the harder it is the more effective--I mean the threat. For I will be hanged if *ma chère cousine* lets matters go to such an extremity--pardon me, dear aunt, I know you do not like such strong expressions."

"It is certainly a very bad habit of yours," said the baroness, rising. Felix followed her example.

"Which I shall try to lay aside to please you," he added, offering his arm to the baroness.

"One thing more," said the latter, pausing a moment, "do you believe Grenwitz will consent?"

"If I believe it?" cried Felix, laughing in a manner which was by no means flattering for the poor old gentleman, "if I believe it? *Ma foi, chère tante*, has not my most worthy uncle been nearly twenty years under your orders? How long is it since I have the honor of serving under you? A few weeks, and I think I have learnt to obey pretty well already!"

"You are a flatterer," said the baroness, graciously, "but nobody can be angry with you."

And the worthy pair went off arm in arm.

When the voices could no longer be heard, the boy's face became visible once more in the open window. It was even paler than before. The boy threatened the two with a gesture of his arms, and his lips moved as if they were murmuring a grim malediction. Then, when the two had disappeared out of sight, he let himself down upon the bench where they had been sitting. By the bench on the thick moss lay a badly folded letter, which the baroness had dropped from her pocket. The boy picked it up, and when he saw that it was in Helen's handwriting he pressed it to his lips with passionate tenderness. Then he concealed it carefully in his breastpocket, looked once more cautiously around, and the next moment he had disappeared in the bushes.

CHAPTER XIII.

When the ex-lieutenant's cunning valet had spoken of the irresistible power of his master in all

love affairs, the fair sex of the kitchen had cried out against him as uttering an insult to them all. But the man of much experience had smiled mysteriously, leaning back in his chair, after the manner of his master, and looking askant, but with a most expressive twinkle of the eye at one of the ladies, who had shown the deepest moral indignation, and the highest degree of eloquence in the unprofitable discussion. At this glance pretty Louisa had suddenly turned very red and become silent, so that she attracted the notice even of the taciturn coachman, who gravely repeated his former remark, that all was not gold that glitters. Thereupon pretty Louisa had begun to cry, and the old cook had risen and openly charged the valet with an unfair attempt to injure a poor girl by vile insinuations and "hateful looks." The adroit fellow, seeing that he had gone too far, immediately retraced his steps and assured them that his remarks had not been intended for anybody present, and that the twinkling of his eye was perfectly accidental. This very loyal and perfectly parliamentary explanation had finally restored peace in the company assembled around the kitchen fire.

Unfortunately, however, matters were exactly as the great man had suggested--betraying, it is true, the secrecy which was due to his master as a faithful servant, and which he was disposed to claim as a special merit of his own. Baron Felix had the bad habit--bad for himself and bad for his valet--of falling in love with every pretty girl whom he met on his way through life, although it might be only for a few days, hours, or even minutes, and to avail himself of every possible opportunity for an intrigue. Thus he had not been twenty hours at the château before he had found out that mademoiselle and pretty Louisa were the two persons who might help him kill time at this tiresome place, and during his troublesome courtship. Albert, his old comrade in many a similar heroic affair, when they were both cadets, had given him information about mademoiselle, and Jean, the valet, had received orders to see how the land lay about pretty Louisa. Albert had considered for a moment, thinking it might not be amiss to favor Felix, so as to make his intimacy with mademoiselle a pretext for himself, if he should wish to break with her at some future time. But finally the hatred he felt against his former comrade, the lucky fool, and a kind of jealousy he felt most unaccountably, had carried the day. He assured Felix that mademoiselle had told him herself of her positive engagement "to a candidate of divinity," heaven knows where, probably in Grunwald; that he had tried himself to get into her good graces, but as he had failed, he was quite sure any effort to succeed with the "black-eyed Genevese girl" would be fruitless.

Felix was not generally the man to be intimidated by such suggestions, but he was quite willing to abandon this enterprise, as his experienced scout had reported to him, as the result of his reconnaissance in the other direction, that there success was easy and sure. Don Giovanni Felix had thereupon opened the trenches in due form, and was, of course, by no means surprised when, a few days later, the little fortification surrendered at discretion.

And yet it was by no means easy to carry out a gallant adventure in the château. It had such a labyrinth of passages, so many large and small staircases, which landed you suddenly in stories to which you had no intention of going, and so many doors which all looked alike, and made you enter any room but your own, that one who was not perfectly at home there was almost sure to go astray. Felix had paid the penalty of being a stranger, and had lost his way more than once by night, succeeding in regaining his room only after much trouble and hours of fruitless efforts. He preferred, therefore, to lie in wait for his little beauty in the garden, where shady walks and discreet bowers offered many a safe place for rendezvous, and which was as accessible to the denizens of the lower regions as to the great people of the château.

Thus he had stolen out this night also, and was waiting for his poor little victim in one of the bosquets, from which one could see the offices as well as the lower windows of the château. The great clock struck twelve--the hour fixed for the rendezvous. The moon was shining brightly; the dewdrops on leaves and flowers glittered in its rays; Felix could see by his watch that the castle clock was a quarter of an hour behind time. The lights in the château had disappeared one by one; only in two windows of the lower story towards the garden the light of a lamp was still shining through the red curtains. Felix saw the vague outlines of a figure at regular intervals appear, and then disappear again--evidently the occupant was walking up and down in the room. Then she must have sat down again at the piano, for single notes were heard, like the notes of a bird, who tries to sing his songs as he dreams in the moonlight; then they mingled into full accords, and at last Beethoven's glorious *Sonate pathétique* poured forth its rich melodies, as if angels were singing while they hovered at midnight, with outspread wings, over the earth, gathering all the joys and all the sorrows of this world in their godlike hearts, and pouring them forth in one solemn anthem full of unspeakable sadness and heavenly sweetness. It would have been strange if Felix had really dared to lift up his eyes and to raise his hands towards the pure, chaste girl who was playing, without some feeling of remorse; for as he stood there, leaning against a column with an urn on top, and listening, he felt his own want of purity. He was not altogether without feeling; he could even become enthusiastic about what was really great and beautiful, although his enthusiasm did not last but a few moments, and vanished like a pretty bright soap-bubble, with its thousand varying hues, at the first rising of a frivolous thought. Who knows but that, at that moment, he resolved to lead another life hereafter, and to lay aside his follies?--and he had such a very good opinion of himself that no doubt he thought it sufficient to resolve in order to succeed. He listened to the music with a vague sense of reverence. His knowledge of music told him that the Sonata could not have been played better, or with more expression; he whispered at one or two passages: Brava! brava! as if he had been in a concert-room. But Helen and Beethoven, virtue and music, and whatever else might at that moment have

passed through his mind--all vanished in an instant, like a Fata Morgana, when his ear heard a stealthy step approaching. It came from another direction than that from which Felix expected his friend. But, then, pretty Louisa might have gone out of her way to avoid the walks which the moon lighted up with its bright light. The steps came nearer and nearer, and Felix, conceiving the original idea of playing hide and seek, stole back into the shrubbery. But what was his surprise when he saw, instead of pretty Louisa, Bruno glide past him! He could not help laughing at his mistake; but the next moment it occurred to him how this might endanger his rendezvous, and that it would probably be wiser to go back to the house. "Who knows how long the boy may loiter about here? may be he is in love, or he is crazy? He looks as if he might be either. Or he is moon-struck, and walks about here for a few hours. The rascal! He is always in my way; I have a great mind to give him a tangible proof of my friendly attachment for him. At all events I had better leave here. It is not too late yet to plead my love of moonlight for being out, but in a little while the excuse would hardly avail. I mean, however, to tell my excellent aunt of these night excursions of Mr. Stein's pupils."

Felix had nearly reached the house on his return without seeing Bruno, and was already hoping the boy might have left the garden, and his rendezvous might still be accomplished, when he suddenly caught sight of Bruno, just as he was crossing the lawn. The boy was sitting on a bench, his eyes fixed on Helen's window, from which music was still pouring forth; and so perfectly lost in devotion that he did not notice Felix till the latter was quite near him.

"What are you doing here so late at night?" asked Felix, whose anger sought vent at least in a few rough words; "I shall tell your aunt."

"Mind your own affairs," said Bruno, who had started up in the first surprise, advancing a few steps; but now, as he recognized Felix, whom he hated, he stopped in bold defiance.

"You are an impertinent boy," said Felix.

"And you a blackguard," replied Bruno, standing before him with folded arms.

"Who will punish you for your insolence," said Felix, boxing the boy's ears. Bruno staggered back a few steps. Felix saw, half frightened, how the boy's eyes began literally to burn; then he uttered a low, fierce cry from the depth of his throat--a great leap, like that of a leopard pouncing upon his victim, and the next moment Felix lay on the ground, and Bruno's powerful hands held his throat with an iron grip. Felix struggled desperately to shake off the boy and to rise again, but in vain. As often as he rose a little, trying to push Bruno aside with his arms, he felt his efforts paralyzed by superior strength, and the slender fingers enclosed his throat firmer and firmer.

"Let me go, Bruno," he groaned.

"Commend your soul to God, for you must die," Bruno growled.

Felix felt his strength giving way, while that of his adversary seemed to increase every moment. Deadly anguish fell upon him. He wanted to call for help, but his trembling lips could not utter a sound; he felt a low buzzing in his ears, which grew stronger and stronger; it became dark before his eyes, though millions of small stars were shooting about; fearful thoughts drifted like storm-laden clouds through his brains.--Suddenly, when the last glimmer of consciousness seemed to be extinguished, he felt the horrible burden leave his chest, and when he at last gathered strength to rise from the ground, he was alone. The moon was shining on the dark blue sky, the light in Helen's room had disappeared, the music was at an end, and Felix might have fancied his struggle with Bruno but a dream, if the reality had not been too well attested by the violent pains he felt in more than one part of his body, the sand that covered his clothes, and the ground turned up all around him.

With a heart filled with shame and rage he went back to the house, like a wolf who had attempted to surprise a flock, and had been driven back to the woods, bitten and wounded by a noble watch-dog.

CHAPTER XIV.

The baroness had missed Helen's letter the same evening. This discovery caused her no small dismay. The letter might so easily fall into wrong hands--hands that might return it to the girl, and thus expose her in her own daughter's eyes to sad disgrace! She should then irretrievably lose all the advantage which she had obtained by this insight into Helen's state of mind, and which she thought of rendering profitable to herself by frequent allusions and threatenings. It

was unlucky, extremely unlucky!

The baroness remembered very distinctly having put the letter into the pocket of her dress as Felix was coming up the avenue. The probability therefore was, that she had lost it near the chapel. She remembered also having pulled put her handkerchief once during the conversation, in order to play the offended lady with greater effect. But it was too late that night to make any search for it; she had to spend a sleepless night, and wake up next morning with a violent headache. As soon as she could, she went into the garden and to the chapel. There was no letter to be seen, neither there nor in the beech avenue nor in the bower. Very much disconcerted, the baroness returned to the house.

There new trouble awaited her. Oswald sent word that Bruno had passed a sleepless night and was very unwell; would it not be better to send a messenger on horseback for Doctor Braun? He also begged that Malte might be kept down stairs, as he wished Bruno to be alone till the doctor came. The baroness sent back word that she hoped his indisposition would soon be over, and cause no interruption in the regular lessons. As for the doctor, she would let him know when they sent to town.

A few hours afterwards Felix sent his excuses for not coming to breakfast; he was quite unwell, but would be certainly down to dinner.

Felix was indeed rather worsted by his encounter with Bruno. First and foremost, the burning disgrace of having succumbed to a boy, and of having escaped with his life only, thanks to an accident or a sudden fit of generosity. It required the whole power of his frivolity to get over that painful thought. He tried to persuade himself--and after a while he did persuade himself--that the thing had not been so serious, and that, if he had not slipped so unluckily just when Bruno had leaped upon him, and if his "abominable rheumatism" had not paralyzed his arms, he "would have shaken off the boy like a troublesome fly, and treated him, besides, to a sound drubbing." That, however, in the mean time he had received the drubbing, and the fly had taken good hold of him, was clearly shown by the brown and blue spots which Felix had carried off. On neck and shoulders as sure signs of his defeat. His great valet was not a little surprised when he found his master in a condition which reminded him forcibly of former days, when he was still a cadet, and Cognac and Goulard Water formed regularly part of his toilet. The great man, however, quickly proved that he had no more forgotten the art of curing contusions and discolorations than his master had forgotten the art of getting them, and by dinner-time Felix was in a fit state to present himself in the drawing room. Still, he was doubtful whether he ought to appear at table or not. It was extremely painful to him to think of meeting Bruno, to see the boy's dark eyes rest upon him, full of scorn and satisfaction, and perhaps to have read in Oswald's face that he had been fully informed of the events of last night. He felt, therefore, no small relief when Jean told him that the company would be very much reduced at dinner to-day, as Mr. Stein and Bruno would not appear. He only cast a glance at the looking-glass, dropped a little more Ess. Bouquet than usually on his lawn handkerchief, and passed through the door which Jean obsequiously opened as light and free and as irresistible as ever, although burdened with the memory of his recent defeat.

The baroness also felt no small relief when she found that Helen showed no change in her manner or on her face, and in her large eyes. The baroness was more attentive than ever to her daughter.

Nevertheless dinner was duller than usual, although Felix did his best to make conversation. The old baron had gone himself to inquire after Bruno, and was angry that the doctor had not yet been sent for, and said that "if a wagon was going to town in the evening, to bring various things for the ball to-morrow, that was no reason why one of the servants might not have gone in on horseback early in the morning." The baroness did not relish the imputed blame, and replied that it was true she had forgotten that it was for Bruno and not for herself, although she had suffered from a very bad headache, nor for Felix, who had been quite sick during the night and the forenoon. Helen hardly raised her eyes from her plate, and said nothing, while little Marguerite's eyes were even more inflamed from weeping than on the preceding days. Felix and Malte quickly exhausted their topics of conversation, and thus the whole company was soon as silent as if they had been attending a funeral meal in Egypt.

The baroness and Felix were left alone after dinner, as the old baron withdrew to his rooms. Felix had been considering during dinner whether he had not better mention the occurrence of last night--of course in his own way--before Bruno should have an opportunity of speaking of it to any one else beside Oswald. He therefore availed himself of the *tête-à-tête* with the baroness for that purpose. Laughing, and begging her not to let the odd story get any farther, he then told her how the beautiful moonlight had tempted him to go into the garden, how he had found Bruno hovering around Helen's room in a very suspicious manner, and how at last the boy, refusing to go to bed as he had ordered him to do, had begun a quarrel, and made him slip and fall. He added, that as soon as he had recovered from the surprise he had inflicted due punishment on Bruno, who was probably still suffering from the consequences.

The baroness was by no means pleased with this humorous account of a very serious matter. Her apprehensions about the letter were excited anew. Bruno late at night near Helen's windows! What could he have to do there? The circumstance looked very suspicious. Could Bruno have found the letter? Could he have wished to restore it to her? The baroness groaned at the

thought.

"What is the matter, dear aunt?"

"Oh, nothing! I only sigh at the trouble that man Stein has already brought upon our house. If I regret anything in my life, it is that I did not send him off the very first time I saw him. I had a great mind to do so that evening, for hardly ever has anybody made so unfavorable an impression upon me as that young man."

"But, dear aunt, why don't you do now what you omitted to do then? Turn him out. I really do not understand why you hesitate."

The baroness was not disposed to acknowledge that she would have to pay Oswald a thousand dollars if she broke the contract during the first year. This sum she was by no means willing to sacrifice. But before she could get an answer ready, the Reverend Mr. Jager's voice was heard, inquiring if he would be permitted to see the baroness.

The next moment the reverend gentleman entered the room, accompanied by his wife.

There was no difficulty in seeing that something extraordinary had occurred to the worthy couple. The minister wore his new black dress coat, which he only displayed on the most solemn occasions, and Primula had adorned her bonnet with a most picturesque wreath of wheat-ears, which made her look a shade more yellow than usual. The minister's eyes tried in vain to assume their wonted expression of humility, the very glasses seemed to sparkle with triumph, and as for Primula, her poetic mind had evidently been freed from all earthly shackles; she could show herself now as she really was.

"I come, madam," said the minister, gallantly kissing the baroness' hand, "partly in order to inquire how you and all the dear ones are to-day, and partly to report to you an event which we--I hope I may venture to say we to my noble friend--which we have long looked for, I may add, long hoped for, and which yet has come at last very unexpectedly. I have received an appointment as professor at the University of Grunwald."

"At first only as adjunct professor," added Primula; "but the full professorship will follow soon."

"At the same time I have received a call to the University Chapel."

"Yes," added Primula, "Professor Darkling wrote expressly about that."

"Why, that is capital news," said the baroness. "Permit me to present my nephew, Baron Felix--the Rev. Mr., I meant to say, Professor Jager and Mrs. Jager, dear Felix--capital news indeed! At last, then! Well, I always said it must come sooner or later; it is true we shall be the losers, but then our friends will gain so much, and that ought to be our first consideration. Let me congratulate you most heartily."

"And me too," said Felix.

"Thank you, madam, thank you, baron, very much obliged indeed," said the professor, rubbing his hands with delight; "yes, yes; better late than never. I have been looking for this ever since the reviews spoke so--I may be permitted to say--so very handsomely of my last important work, in which I established beyond all dispute the real text of the long-lost works of Philochrysos, one of the fathers of the church."

"When are you going to leave us?"

"Well, probably in the fall; but possibly sooner. I propose to deliver during the winter session three courses of lectures, and one special course on the lost writings of Philochrysos."

"You attempt too much, Jager, too much!" breathed Primula in tender accents: "oh these men! these men! Every one of them is a Prometheus ready to take Olympus by storm."

"And who has inspired me with such bold hopes, if it is not you yourself?" said the minister, gratefully pressing Primula's hand.

"Do you like pistol-shooting?" asked Felix, to turn the conversation.

"Well, a little, that is, no, I cannot say I like it. I used to be tolerably successful in shooting hares and partridges, but since the higher church authorities have pronounced very energetically against such amusements, 'my irons lie idle in the hall,' as the poet says."

"Perhaps you might take up again the noble sport, now that you are a professor," said Primula. "Ah, I think it must be glorious to meet an enraged boar with a loaded pistol in your hand ..."

"I should advise your husband," said Felix, laughing, "not to venture upon such an encounter without a rifle, and possibly a good stout hunting-knife by his side. But seriously, professor, will you come and let us have a little shooting at a mark?"

"Certainly, certainly!" cried the minister, starting up; "I am at your service, at your service."

The reverend gentleman had turned rather pale; from his excitement one might have imagined he was rushing to fight a duel where his life was in deadly peril.

"Had you not better stay here?" asked Primula, who suddenly took a very dismal view of the matter. "You are not quite as composed to-day as usual. If an accident should happen just now, when you have reached the goal of your wishes, Jager, I should not survive it," and the poetess broke out in tears and clung to her husband, whose efforts to relieve himself of the sweet burden were by no means very energetic.

"Gustava," he whispered, "dearest Gussy, it is not so dangerous as you fancy. Are your pistols provided with hair-triggers, baron?"

"Certainly," replied Felix, not a little amused by this scene. "When they are cocked you must not sneeze, or I will not be responsible for the consequences."

"Stay, oh stay! husband mine!" Primula said imploringly.

"I suppose there is not much danger," said the minister, his lips pale with terror.

"So said a friend of mine the other day," added Felix. "Have a care, said I.--Nonsense said he, and took the pistol by the mouth. The next moment he had lost one of his fingers."

"That is decisive," said Primula, rising; "Jager, you stay, I insist upon it, I command you to stay. Do not meddle with things of which you know nothing. Pistol-shooting is no child's play."

Such strong arguments were irresistible even for a great mind like the Reverend Mr. Jager's. He sank back in his chair and said, wiping the perspiration from his brow:

"You see, baron, married men are not their own masters. When you are married you will see how the brilliant cavalier will change into the prudent father of a family. But how is it, may I not offer you my congratulations?"

And the minister inclined his head on the right shoulder, to smile at the baroness, and then on his left shoulder, to bestow the same favor on Felix.

"You may ask me again a few days hence," replied the baron, evasively. "But, as I was going to say: Your appointment will make up for the loss the university has suffered in Professor Berger. Are the two events perhaps connected with each other?"

"Not directly, at least," said the minister, "although I am not disposed to deny that Professor Berger would have used his influence by no means in my favor, and thus his attack may be looked upon as a favorable event, as far as I am concerned."

"Is there any explanation how this sudden attack has come on?" asked the baroness.

"No, madam, sudden it can hardly be called," replied the new professor, assuming a most grave manner, and drawing down the corners of his mouth; "I confess I was by no means surprised, because I have always looked upon the professor as partially insane. A man who can maintain, as he did, that all so-called arguments in favor of the existence of God, the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, are but a false conclusion, a *petitio principii*, such a man is already half insane. A man who can talk frivolously about the sacred institutions of kings, ruling by the grace of God, and of an hereditary nobility, is already mad, although he be a professor and his lectures be attended by hundreds of admiring listeners. I know very well it is written: Judge not, that ye be not judged; but, nevertheless, I cannot but say that I see the hand of God in this punishment."

"How would you like a game of ten-pins?" said Felix, who had been standing in the open door, and who had heard nothing of the conversation.

"With pleasure," replied the professor; "I understand all about those balls. I used to be great at ten-pins when I was a student at Grunwald."

"After coffee, dear Felix," said the baroness; "I have to talk with Mr. Jager about some important business.--Is it not terrible, dear Mr. Jager, that we must have a pupil of this abominable man in our own house? That I should have to leave the innocent soul of my poor child in such hands? For Heaven's sake advise me, what must I do to get rid of the man in a decent way?"

"You cannot send him off unceremoniously?"

"We are mutually bound for four years, and therefore if we----"

"I see, I see," said the professor, who was fully aware of Anna Maria's avarice; "hm, hm! We must find out some good reason! There is a law which requires tutors, who are at the same time candidates for the ministry, to obtain testimonials from the nearest minister, showing their good standing as to morals, etc. We might make it very difficult for Mr. Stein to obtain such a

certificate," and the reverend gentleman smiled cunningly.

"Do you know the last news?" cried Felix, holding a note in his hand, which one of the servants had just brought him, as coffee was served in the bower; "Cloten is engaged to little Emily; here he sends me, as his best friend, the first information; others will not hear of it till to-morrow."

"I can beat you there," said the professor; "who do you think, madam, returned last night?"

"Well?"

"Frau von Berkow."

"Impossible!"

"I am quite sure of it. She has, in compliance with her husband's wishes, brought his body to be interred at Berkow. The coffin will arrive to-night, and to-morrow I shall hold the usual services."

"Then we cannot invite the fair lady to our ball to-morrow?" asked Felix.

"But, Felix!" said the baroness, with a reproachful glance.

"Coffee is served," announced the servant.

"Then let us go in," said the baroness.

CHAPTER XV.

In the mean time Oswald had spent some sad, anxious hours at Bruno's bedside. He had noticed of late Bruno's excited state of mind, and felt deeply concerned about it. Explosions of violent passion, such as Oswald had witnessed when he first came, but which had then almost entirely disappeared for a time, had now again become more frequent and violent than ever. A contradiction, a failure, a slighting remark at table from the baroness, were sufficient to unchain the demon. In vain had Oswald begged and besought him to control his temper, which exposed him to the attacks of his adversaries and prevented his friends from defending him--"I cannot help it," was his invariable answer; "it is a power I cannot resist. It boils up within me, it gnaws at my heart, it beats in my temples, and then I do not know any longer what I am saying or doing."--If Oswald replied that he was not in earnest with his efforts to control himself, Bruno answered angrily: Well, scold me as the rest of them do; make common cause with them. I do not want lukewarm friends; he who is not for me is against me.--Then, when he saw how he had hurt Oswald's feelings by such speeches, he would throw himself passionately into his arms and beg his pardon amid burning tears.--Have pity on me, he said. You do not know how thoroughly wretched I am.--In vain that Oswald urged him to tell him what it was that oppressed him.--I do not know myself, Bruno replied; I only wish I were far, for away from here, never to return any more; and then, again, I do not want to go, not for anything in the world; I do not know what it is; I believe I should like best to be dead.

Oswald tried his best to find out what could be the cause of this strange state of mind; but, though often on the point of discovery, he never found out the real mystery, which the poor boy concealed in his innermost heart, perhaps from himself as much as from others. It is a well-known fact, that even clever men often commit the strangest blunders in their judgment of those who are nearest to them, while others, at a distance, see clearly and distinctly. Impossible! exclaims a father, who is told what a bad son he has; impossible! cries a brother, when he first hears that his sister has engaged herself to his best friend. At times we are blinded by affection, at other times by antipathy; here it is indifference which makes us ignore a miracle that happens before our eyes; there it is noble shame which makes us cast down our eyes in order not to see a cheek blushing with guilt. No prophet is accepted in his own country, and in most cases the heart of one brother is to the other a book sealed with seven seals.

Thus it was the case here. Oswald consoled himself with the thought that the years of transition from boyhood to manhood were always an age of storms, within and without, and that strong, passionate characters like Bruno's must, of course, suffer more than others. He knew, from frequent conversations on such subjects, that Bruno's mind was a noble one, and that his heart was pure "as the heart of waters." He was, therefore, quite reassured on this score; but he did not suspect that Bruno, noble and pure as he was, loved his beautiful cousin with all the power of his strong heart, with all the fire of youthful passion, with the unbounded happiness of a first attachment, with the silent despair of a first passion which is not returned and cannot be

returned.

He had never before seen Helen. When he was brought to the house of his relatives, three years ago, the young girl had already been sent to the boarding-school. They mentioned her very rarely in the family, and when they did so, it was with a few cool words only--a circumstance which probably excited Bruno's attention. With that sympathy which the poor have for the poor, and the forsaken for the forsaken, he felt instinctively that she was, like himself, a sufferer and an outcast. Gradually he formed in his mind a kind of ideal form of the absent beauty, an image of all that his fancy could suggest. The very name of Helen had something intoxicating for him, like the perfume of a hyacinth, and contributed still farther to make this ideal image dear to him. Then there had come a time when Aunt Berkow had for a while usurped the throne in his heart, becoming to him the personification of all that is highest and fairest in woman; when a kind word of Melitta, a simple: You dear boy! or a passing caress from her soft white hand could have sent him to brave every kind of deadly danger. It was just at the time when Oswald first came to Grenwitz, that this enthusiasm for Aunt Berkow had been at its highest. He had treated Melitta's son like a younger brother, as he was in the habit of treating the mother, in her youthful beauty, like an elder sister. Melitta used in those days to come quite frequently to Grenwitz, and to bring Julius, and Bemperlein, always mindful of his pupil's interests and pleasures, did all in his power to foster this intercourse; thus Bruno had constant opportunities of seeing Aunt Berkow, of rendering her a hundred little services, to wait on her like a page, when she mounted her horse or wanted somebody to hold her hat, her gloves, or her riding-whip. Aunt Berkow was in those days incessantly on his lips, and Oswald had had no objection to his telling him countless stories, in which Aunt Berkow invariably played the principal part Melitta had no doubt contributed largely to the rapid development of the boy, who passed in a few months through stages which detain less fiery characters for years. It is a very common error which women commit, to fancy that they can treat boys, who are almost men already, still as children, and permit them certain liberties which, a year hence, would be utterly inadmissible. They do not bear in mind that a young man's heart is, at that age, in a state of morning dawn, which may be disturbed by the slightest touch--a slow fire, glimmering almost unseen in the green wood, which the least puff of wind may fan into a blaze. They would be distressed if they were told that they had, in all innocence, destroyed the innocence of a friend, and yet that is but too often what they are doing.

Melitta saw herself, at last, that she could no longer put Bruno on the same footing with Julius, or even with Malte, as she had done heretofore, and when she now was speaking of the "boys," she meant exclusively the latter two. She had commenced treating Bruno like a friend or a younger brother; like a page who for the present does woman's service, but who at need may be called upon to show his brave heart and his strong arm. And indeed Bruno was so powerfully built that in any personal conflict the odds would have been with him as a matter of course. The classic statue of a Mercury, a Bacchus, or a youthful Faun could not have been more symmetrically formed or more delicately modelled than Bruno's lithe and yet powerful figure. His mere walk was a pleasure to an experienced eye. Oswald, whom nature had endowed with a keen sense of the beautiful, was delighted when he saw Bruno, before taking his bath near the sea-shore, leap lightly from rock to rock, with an accuracy which admitted of no doubt or fear, and then plunge headlong into the waves from the last projecting cliff. Bruno, in fact, knew no danger, and refused to see it where others trembled. Whenever a venture, was to be risked, from which everybody shrank, when a runaway horse was to be checked, a cherry to be reached on the topmost branch of a tree, or a ditch to be leaped which seemed to be impassable--Bruno would undertake it at once; he trembled with eagerness, his cheeks burnt, he cast imploring glances at those he loved, and they could not refuse him. They let him go, for they knew he could do more than others. Such was Bruno: a youth rather than a boy, with a fire in his heart that could have warmed a world.

Thus he saw Helen.

And all the melodies that had been slumbering within him awoke, and all that he dreamt of as most lovely and beautiful, stood bodily before him. The boy hardly trusted his own eyes; he was dazzled, almost intoxicated; he was like a person who awakes from a beautiful dream to a still more beautiful reality, and dares not speak, or breathe, in order not to lose what he thinks may be merely an illusion of his senses. Thus when the family first returned he went about the house as in a dream, mild and kind towards everybody, contrary to his usual manner. But then the blissful dream vanished, and his delight at the glorious reality became almost painful. He had never been at peace with himself, and his heart had ever been heavy; now he became the victim of unceasing restlessness, which deprived him of sleep, and hunger and thirst, which burnt within him like a fierce fever, and his poor heart felt like a man who carries what is dearest to him on earth on his shoulders, trying to escape from the enemy, and dreading every moment to be overtaken and spoilt. He dared not utter Helen's name for fear of betraying himself; he dared not open his eyes before her, and yet he saw everything that happened, and the plan of the baroness was no secret to him. His hatred of Felix was boundless, and he took no pains to conceal his feelings. He defied the roué on every occasion by scornful or satirical remarks, always hoping Felix would at last take up the gauntlet; but the ex-lieutenant, like most people who despise the world and themselves, submitted to much, and replied to the boy's sarcasm with more or less clever witticisms, so that he always kept the laugh on his side. And then he had, on the other hand, far too good an opinion of himself to enter into a serious contest with an adversary whom he thought so far beneath himself. Matters would not have come to a point, even on the preceding night, if he had not been so very angry with Bruno, or if Bruno had expressed

himself a little less violently.

And Felix might have congratulated himself that he had escaped so well from the encounter. He had been nearer to death than he thought. Bruno had been maddened by the events of the last days, and Felix's brutal treatment made the vessel of his indignation and hatred to overflow. And now that the lava stream had once broken through the crater, what could stop it on its destructive course? While Bruno was for a moment contending with Felix, and as he knelt on his breast, there was but one bloody red thought in the darkness of his soul: that Felix must die by his hand; that God had delivered him into his hand so that he might, at any cost, free the woman he worshipped from the monster he abhorred. A few minutes, a few seconds, perhaps, and Felix would never have risen again.

Just then Bruno had been startled in his terrible thoughts by a cry close by him. Looking up, he had caught a glimpse of a female figure, which he had at first taken for Helen. He had released his victim and risen. The person had moved away; he had followed her till she had vanished in the direction of the offices, and he had found out his mistake. To fall once more upon his enemy, after having abandoned him, seemed to be unmanly to him; he saw how Felix rose at last, after several painful efforts. That had contented him; he had stolen away to his chamber and his bed, his soul free from the guilt of murder. And yet he was as much excited as if he had shed blood. His heart was beating, his pulse went quick, and burning heat and cold chills alternated with each other. The confused image of the scene of his conflict ever presented itself to his mind, and the triumph of having conquered his deadly enemy was sadly embittered by the recollection that, after all, Helen was not free yet. This caused him far more suffering than the violent pains he felt in his side as soon as he became quiet again; they would not cease; on the contrary, they grew worse and worse, and seemed to spread from the small point where they had first commenced in all directions.

It was a long, painful night for the unfortunate boy, this short summer night. Towards morning his exhaustion made him fall into a state which only differed from waking by the increased horrors that filled his brain. He started up, aroused by pain; he tried to rise in order to wake Oswald, who slept next door (Malte had been sleeping down stairs for some weeks), but he could not. At last--his pride resisted for a long time--he called Oswald's name. A few moments more and Oswald was by his bedside.

He started as he saw the boy, whose face was sadly disfigured by his sufferings. His black hair hung in dishevelled locks over his pale face; his dark eyes had sunk deep into the head and were burning with fever.

"Give me some water!" said Bruno, as soon as he saw Oswald.

"For heaven's sake, what does this mean, Bruno?" cried Oswald, while the boy was eagerly draining the glass he had handed him. "Why did you not call me before? you never yet have had so bad an attack."

"It is not one of my usual attacks," said Bruno; "but it will soon pass; I am better already. Don't trouble yourself, Oswald; when I am lying on my side I feel it much less, hardly at all. It was only so bad during the night; now that you are here, and the sun shines, it will be better directly."

"Somebody must go for Doctor Braun directly," said Oswald, starting up.

"No, no!" Bruno begged; "don't do that. You know how I dislike that. Nobody is up yet in the house, I am sure; you would only have your trouble for nothing, and then--I want to ask you something. Come, sit down again on the bed. I feel I shall not be able to get up, and this letter must reach Helen at once."

Oswald thought Bruno was delirious; he felt his pulse instinctively.

Bruno smiled. It was a sad smile.

"No, no!" he said. "Don't fear; I am perfectly conscious; just listen, and you will see that what I say is quite clear and coherent."

Bruno then reminded Oswald that he had said from the beginning Felix had come to win Helen. Until yesterday he had had no absolute proof of this, but since yesterday he was sure of it. He told him then how he had in the afternoon sauntered down to his favorite place in the garden, the old chapel, where he was wont to indulge in his reveries, and how voices near by had roused him from the slumber into which he had fallen during the heat of the day. He explained to him the manner in which he had obtained possession of the letter, and how his desire to return it at night to Helen, when she was, as usual, playing near the open window, had brought about his encounter with Felix.

These passionate but clear and convincing words made naturally a profound impression on Oswald. To-morrow, then, the fearful sacrifice was to be made, and yet she herself knew probably nothing of it. They evidently wished to take her by surprise--to force her to make a promise which she would afterwards be too proud to take back again. And what could this letter mean, which was evidently directed in Helen's handwriting, and had been sealed with her signet ring--how could the baroness lose her daughter's letter? It was not difficult to see that there was treason in

this, and that it was absolutely necessary to return the letter to Helen, so that she might know the weapons with which she was to be attacked, and might be enabled to prepare herself for the impending crisis. The only question was, how the letter could reach Helen? Bruno wanted Oswald to carry it himself to her, and to tell her at the same time what Bruno had heard during the conversation of the baroness with Felix. But Oswald declared such a thing utterly out of question; Bruno, as a near relative and acknowledged favorite, might risk such an indiscretion, but he, a stranger, could not possibly venture to allude to such delicate matters.

"But," cried Bruno, "I thought you were her friend, I thought you were fond of her? And yet here her whole life and happiness are at stake, and you refuse to help her because it is not etiquette to do this and that! Just think of it--if they make her say yes! It will drive me mad; I shall not survive it."

"And yet, Bruno, I cannot speak about such a matter,--not I."

"Why not you?"

"Because--I told you, because I am a stranger; because she might say to me: Sir, what is that to you? I will give her the letter; it is her property, and she has a right to expect that the finder should restore it to her as soon as possible. Don't you see, too, that this one fact speaks volumes? She will know at once what she may expect from the other side, and the attack will find her forewarned."

"Then you will give her the letter?"

"Yes, I will, and at once. I presume she will come down to take her usual morning walk. But how are you?"

"Better, much better!" said Bruno, suffering agonizing pain, but fearing Oswald might lose his opportunity to see Helen, "much better! If I press my hand to my side thus, I hardly feel any pain. Make haste and go into the garden and listen! Give her my love and don't tell her I am sick! Say I am a little unwell--you know I am not really sick."

The boy sank back on his bed and tried to smile at Oswald. But it was a smile full of pain, and when the door had closed behind Oswald, Bruno hid his face in the pillows to smother his deep groans, the effect of his heart's anguish as much as of his bodily pain.

CHAPTER XVI.

Oswald had in vain waited for Helen long after the hour at which she usually came down into the garden. To-day she came not. He went repeatedly past her window, but without seeing her. At last, when the house began to be astir, he went back to Bruno, who was looking for him impatiently. Bruno was beside himself when he heard of Oswald's failure, and Oswald tried in vain to convince him that the baroness and Felix would, in all probability, postpone the execution of their plan to the last moment, and that therefore to-morrow morning would be time enough for the letter to reach Helen.

"And now," said Oswald, "I must make arrangements to have the doctor sent for; I cannot bear the suspense about your condition any longer."

Unfortunately, Oswald's efforts remained fruitless. The baroness had sent a servant to tell him that "a wagon would go to town any way in the course of forenoon;" but the man had not dared to carry him such a message, and had told him a messenger would be sent at once. Thus he waited patiently till noon. Then the old baron came to inquire after Bruno. He had not heard whether anybody had yet gone to town, but he promised to send at once. The old gentleman had been quite angry at this "remissness." Oswald thought that now, surely, efforts would be made to get a physician. But one hour after another passed, the evening came, and no Doctor Braun appeared. He went down stairs to inquire himself what was the matter. "The wagon that had gone to town had just returned, but the doctor had been called away and would not return for twenty-four hours. Another physician had been recommended, but as the servant had received no orders for such a case, he had not dared to bring him." Oswald was incensed at such neglect. He went at once to the baron, whom he found with the rest of the company in the garden, and asked for a horse to ride himself to town, so that something might at last be done in the matter.

"I dislike leaving Bruno," he said, "but I see no other way."

"The sickness, I presume, is not so very serious," said Anna Maria.

"I can judge of that as little as you," replied Oswald, sharply; "it seems to me that Bruno is in a critical condition, and I consider it my duty to act accordingly, until somebody who understands such matters has taken his case in hand."

"Come," said the old baron, "we will send old Jake. You need not leave Bruno. Jake is an intelligent person. You can rely upon him."

Oswald bowed formally to the company and left with the baron.

"It is nice when a young man has such decided, self-assured manners," said the Reverend Mr. Jager, ironically.

"The Apollo of Belvedere," said Primula, ironically, or under the inspiration of poetic ecstasy.

"I fancy His Highness will shortly come down from his pedestal," said Felix.

"Strict masters do not rule long," said the baroness, with a look of intelligence at the professor, which the latter answered with a cunning wink of his right eye over his spectacles.

"Bruno has all the time something the matter with him," said Malte, powdering his strawberries with sugar.

Helen said nothing. She sat quiet, fixing her eyes upon the ground. Then she rose and went, without saying a word out of the bower and towards the castle.

"You are coming back, Helen?" Anna Maria called after her.

"I hardly think I shall," replied Helen, turning round; "I feel rather cool out here."

She went on. The baroness and Felix exchanged significative glances.

Jake went to town and came promptly back to say that he had been unable to secure the other town physician also, who had been sent for to a great distance to set a broken arm. They had, however, promised to let the doctor know as soon as he returned, and thought he would certainly come out as soon as he possibly could.

Oswald found it hard to rest contented, but what could he do? Bruno's condition was much the same. The pain was perhaps less acute, but it had spread over a larger surface. He tried his best to calm Oswald, whose anxiety increased as hour after hour passed and no medical assistance came to his relief. "It is nothing; I'll be better to-morrow. I am much more troubled about the letter than about my sickness. Could you not try, Oswald, to throw it through the open window into her room? That is what I wanted to do yesterday. If you should meet Felix, you can tell him to remember last night, and you'll see how he will run; or rather, say nothing, but do what I ought to have done, and kill him at once."

At last, when all hope was abandoned, a doctor came. It was an old man, whom the repeated calls of the day had made impatient, and who murmured something about "trifling complaints, not worth troubling old men with," through his teeth. He scarcely looked at Bruno, said it was nothing, and promised to come again next day, when he would bring a lotion.

"Now we are as wise as before," said Oswald, when the doctor had left them again.

"I told you there was nothing the matter with me. Go to bed, Oswald, you need sleep as much as I do."

But neither of them found any rest that night. Oswald had had his sofa moved by the side of Bruno's bed, and did not undress, so as to be ready at any moment. Bruno's condition remained the same; only his restlessness increased and he wanted continually to drink. Towards morning Oswald had fallen asleep; Bruno waked him when the sun was about an hour above the horizon.

"Oswald, I cannot let you sleep any longer, sorry as I am for it. You must go into the garden; it is high time. If you cannot find Helen to-day I shall have to get up myself to give her back her letter, and if it should be my death."

"How do you feel?"

"Better."

"You always say so!"

"Make haste!"

Oswald went into the garden and up the wall where he had met the beautiful girl so many mornings when his heart was light. But he had never felt sadder than he did this morning. Bruno's sickness, the impending catastrophe in the family drama, whose gradual progress he had watched with such painful interest, and in which he saw himself now compelled to play the unpleasant part of go-between--all this weighed heavily on his soul and kept him from enjoying the beautiful morning. He saw neither the warm sunlight nor the bluish shadows of the morning;

the perfume of countless flowers, the whirling and dancing of myriads of merry insects, and the jubilees of joyous birds in the trees, all left him untouched. The flowers would not restore his beloved to health, and the birds could not attract Helen!

But see there! Her dress was shining through the trees and the shrubs on the other side. It must be she. She was walking more rapidly, now she had noticed him; she evidently wished to speak to him.

"God be thanked that I find you at last," she said, from a distance, already; "I have not closed my eyes all night long from care and anxiety. He is better--is he not? You would not have left him if he were not, I am sure!"

"He is better, at least Bruno says so. But I fear he is anything but well. You know he is a hero in endurance."

"Yes, indeed," said Helen. "I love him as I love my brother, no--much more than my brother. I cannot bear the thought of losing him. You cannot imagine how it troubles me to know that he is suffering."

"He is not less troubled about you," said Oswald.

"How so?" asked Helen, fixing her large eyes interrogatively on Oswald's face.

"I do not wish to lose the precious moments of this interview by a long introduction," said Oswald "This letter which I hold in my hand, evidently directed in your handwriting, was found night before last by Bruno near the old chapel, directly after a conversation between the baroness and Felix. Bruno, who happened to be in the chapel, had not well been able to avoid hearing it all. He has requested me to return your property to you. I need not tell you that it has been held sacred from the moment it fell into Bruno's hands."

Helen's embarrassment had increased with every word spoken by Oswald. Her beautiful face now blazed up crimson, and now turned ghastly pale. Her bosom rose, her hand trembled as she took the letter from the young man's hand, recognizing it at the first glance as her own letter written to Mary Burton. Horror at the treachery by which she had been victimized; maidenly shame at seeing her innermost feelings thus profaned, and indignation at the consciousness that somebody, whoever it might be, had been made aware how disgracefully she was treated by her family, by her own mother--all these feelings rushed at once upon her like a hurricane, that threatened utterly to overwhelm her.

And it was this last sense of insulted pride which first found expression.

"I thank you," she said, rising to her full stately height, "for your zeal to serve me. But you and Bruno have probably attached greater importance to the matter than it deserves. I have on purpose kept this letter, because it contained several things which mature reflection made me desirous should not be made known; I have probably dropped it unawares. I remember I was near the chapel night before last; I----"

She could not continue; the tears she had repressed so long gushed forth irresistibly and rolled down her cheeks. She turned aside, as if she felt she could no longer control herself, and beckoned Oswald to leave her alone.

Oswald was probably not less indignant than Helen. His whole love for the proud, beautiful girl, for whom he would have cheerfully given his life, and by whom he was in danger now of being so entirely misjudged, rose within him like a well of boiling water, and filled his bosom to overflowing. He would have liked to fall at her feet, to confess all he had so long concealed from her; but he controlled himself by a supernatural effort, and said, as calmly as he could:

"I assure you, Miss Helen, that this scene cannot be more painful to you than it is to me, and that I should not have given occasion for it, if Bruno's feverish impatience had allowed me any choice. I am grieved, deeply grieved at appearing in a false light before you; I apprehended at once, that it would be impossible for you to distinguish between the message and the messenger."

He bowed before the weeping girl and turned to go away.

"No, no!" she cried, stretching out her hand as if to retain him. "You must not leave me thus. Let those who have driven me to extremities answer for it if I am forced to expose the honor of my own family. Yes, you have rendered me a service, a very great service. This letter has fallen by treachery into the hands of those who have been so little able to preserve their booty. This letter separates me forever from them. But it shall not cut me off also from Bruno, whom I love dearly, nor from you, who have always been so kind and friendly. I have always looked upon you as a friend; always esteemed and honored you--how much so, you may learn from this letter. Read it if the whole world knows what I think of you, you may surely know it too."

And the young girl handed Oswald the letter. Her face was crimson, but not with anger or shame. Her dark eyes shone, but like the eyes of a heroine who is about to sacrifice herself for a holy cause.

"Read it, I tell you!" she said, with a peculiar smile, as Oswald stood gazing at her. "Fear not that I shall afterwards repent of it. I know your heart belongs to a friend who has returned yesterday. I do not ask you for anything but what I have already--your friendship. Read the letter, and when you have read it, burn it!"

Before Oswald could sufficiently recover from his boundless amazement at these strange words, to utter a single word, the young girl had already reached the courtyard below and was hurriedly walking through the rich parterres towards the château.

"What was that?" Oswald asked, trembling; "am I in a dream? Melitta has returned? And just now?--now? ha, ha, ha!"

It was a fearful laugh. Oswald started and looked around to see if anybody else had laughed, perhaps some grim demon enjoying his sufferings.

The letter was still in his hand. He felt as if to read it meant to lose Melitta entirely, and to cut the last tie that bound him to her. For a moment Helen appeared to him like a beautiful witch, who had come to tempt him.... If he should burn the letter without reading it? Might not then all come right? Might not Melitta remain his after all?

And while he was thinking this over, he had mechanically opened the letter and commenced reading it....

He had finished it.... he sat, his head resting in his hand, on the corner of the bench upon which he had sunk down unconsciously. Before him, on the green turf, bright lights and shadows were playing to and fro; in the thick foliage overhead the morning breeze was whispering, and birds were singing in subdued tones.... he saw it all, he heard it all, but he felt nothing, nothing but the one great fact, that if there ever had been a paradise for him on earth, he had been driven from that paradise forever.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was a few hours later. The baroness was sitting in her room, in her accustomed place near the open glass door. She had an embroidery in her lap; but her hands were idle, and only when steps were heard approaching the door, which opened upon the passage, she quickly took up her work and sewed a few stitches, letting it drop again in her lap when the steps had passed. This was several times repeated, for there was an active movement going on at the château. Everybody was more or less busy with preparations for the evening, and the economical baroness found it very difficult to sit still, doing nothing, when her presence was so necessary in kitchen and pantry. But she had sent a request to Miss Helen to come and see her when she had done with her practising, and she wanted her daughter to find her calm and disposed to enter into a friendly, though serious, conversation.

At least externally calm. For in her heart there was little peace. The trouble about the letter, it is true, seemed to be uncalled for. It had evidently not been carried back to Helen, and that was, for the moment, the main point. She felt at liberty to use all the arrows which she had gathered from the letter, without being afraid of their rebounding upon the archer. Nevertheless, the clever and courageous lady had never in her life so anxiously looked forward to a conversation with any one. And yet she had had many very serious interviews, as nearly the whole administration of the large estate was resting on her shoulders alone. She did not think very well of men generally, and valued each one according to the price for which he would probably give up his convictions. For the baroness believed that everybody had his price, a belief shared by everybody who, like herself, served the god Mammon with his whole heart, his whole soul, and his whole mind.

She would have liked to consider her daughter also under the general rule, of which she herself did not claim to be an exception, but she found it impossible. A secret voice, which she could not silence, told her: Helen will not sell her soul for thirty pieces of silver, nor for so many millions, nor for anything in the world. Another mother would have been delighted with such an idea; she would have respected her daughter as her better self, and worshipped her as her beau ideal. The baroness knew no such enthusiasm. The spirit that throned on her daughter's proud brow, and looked so great, so noble in her dark eyes--that spirit was to her a strange, unnatural, and hostile spirit. She had nothing in common with such thoughts. Helen was the child of her mind, but not of her heart. Helen had inherited the gentle disposition, and the honest upright character of her father the very qualities against which the baroness was, in truth, continually struggling. But she had, besides, the powerful intellect of her mother, and was thus enabled to

protect the holy things of her heart with the sharp sword of the mind, without yet ever desecrating it by using it in a bad cause and this combination made her so irresistibly attractive to noble souls, so hateful to low and ignoble souls.

At this moment, however, the baroness took much trouble to show a conciliatory, peaceful, and friendly disposition. The effort made her almost disposed to tears. It may be that she looked upon tears as, after all, probably the best means to touch her noble daughter's heart, and to win her for her own selfish views.

There came a knock at the door, The baroness snatched up her work. Upon her: Come in! Helen entered the room. The baroness was rather near-sighted, and did not at once notice that the noble, proud face of the young girl was deadly pale--not with that painful pallor which cowardice gives to the cheeks, but with that marble paleness which harmonizes very well with eyes full of heroic fire.

"I am sorry, dear child," said the baroness, "to have to interrupt you in your early studies. I sent for you in order to speak to you about a matter of the utmost importance. But sit down! Take that chair in which your father usually sits."

"Thank you," said Helen, and remained standing.

The measured, almost curt tone, in which these two words were uttered, made the baroness look up from her work. She noticed now for the first time the pale cheeks of her daughter, and her own cheeks lost their color.

"I hope you are not unwell," she said, and her voice was less firm than usual. "If you are, we will postpone our conversation till another time. You will need all your strength for to-night."

"I am perfectly well," replied the young girl; "I was myself on the point of asking you to grant me an interview, since I also have to speak to you of matters of importance."

"You to me?" said--the baroness, fixing her large, deep-sunk eyes upon her daughter's pale face. "You to me? What can that be? Speak out!"

"It is this!" said Helen; "I found night before last near the chapel a letter----"

The baroness raised her head, and cast at Helen a look in which consternation, wrath, fear, and defiance were strangely mingled.

"A letter," continued Helen, "which I had written and given to Louisa to be sent to the post-office. It was, of course, sealed when I gave it to Louisa; when I found it, it had been broken open. I can hardly imagine that Louisa, who is so very warmly attached to me, should take sufficient interest in my correspondence to commit such a wrong at the risk of being immediately turned out of the house. I must, therefore, assure you that there is somebody else in the house who takes the trouble to play the spy upon me. I intended, therefore, to come and ask you what I ought to do?"

The baroness had been steadily sewing at her work while Helen was speaking. Now she looked up and asked:

"For whom was the letter intended?"

"For Mary Burton."

"Did you speak very freely in your letter?"

"As friends write to friends."

"Did the letter contain things which you would not like to be seen by others?"

"Certainly."

"Not even by your parents?"

Helen made no answer.

"Not even by your parents?"

"Yes."

"For instance, that your parents are dead for you, as well as your other relations."

"You read the letter?"

"You see I did."

"Then I have nothing more to say or to ask."

Helen bowed and was about to leave the room.

"Stay!" said the baroness; "if you have nothing more to say, I have some questions to ask, which you will be good enough to answer. As for the letter, you need not give yourself any more trouble about it. When parents permit their children to correspond without surveillance, they expect that their children will be worthy of such a privilege. When they see themselves deceived in this expectation they withdraw the privilege. That is perfectly natural. But it is not at all natural that a child, after having received nothing but affection from her parents, should abandon them at once; it is not natural, when a child has the boldness to conceive such a thought, to write it down, and to communicate her disgrace to others. What can you say in reply?"

"Nothing."

"And if such a child takes all the love she owes her parents, and all the affection she owes her other relatives, and bestows them upon strangers, for instance, upon a so-called friend, whose only merit consists in having been at the same boarding-school, or upon a boy who has been taken into the house from charity, or upon a paid servant of her parents,--yes, miss! a paid servant, with whom the parents, moreover, are very much dissatisfied,--what can you say to that?"

"Nothing."

"And if your parents are still willing to forgive you, if your relatives, whose affection you do not deserve, are disposed not to give you up, if you see that parents and relatives join hands in order to save your imperilled honor,--if they propose to give you in the person of a husband a friend and protector, who will keep you hereafter from committing such follies, to use no harsher name, and if one of your relatives is willing to assume this difficult task of being your husband, friend, and tutor,--have you nothing to say to that also?"

"Oh yes," replied Helen, who had been standing there, pale and motionless, without moving a muscle, fixing her large dark eyes with an expression of invincible courage, till she had risen to confront her, "Oh yes! I have to reply to that, that I prefer death a thousand times to becoming Felix's wife."

She said this calmly, slowly, weighing, as it were, every syllable.

"And if your parents insist?"

"Then I cannot and shall not obey."

"And if they announce to-night your engagement to Felix to the assembled guests?"

"Then I shall say to the assembled guests what I have just said to you."

"Is that your final decision?"

"It is, so help me God!"

"Well, then I give you up, as you have given me up! Go then, and throw yourself into the arms of that beggar. But no! God be thanked, we have still means to conceal such a disgrace from the world. To-morrow you will pack your things, and day after to-morrow you will go back to school."

A ray of joy broke from Helen's dark eyes, and a slight blush covered her pale cheeks.

"I am perfectly willing to go!"

"But not to Hamburg," said the baroness, and there was cruel irony in her words. "I have had enough of Mary Burton. You will go to Grunwald. I have already written to Miss Bear. She is not quite as indulgent as Madame Bernard, but there is no call for kindness and indulgence now. Go to your room now. At six you will be ready dressed for the ball. Consider once more what you are going to do. I give you time till then. Now you can go."

Helen went to the door without saying a word. As she was about to go out, the old baron entered.

"Where are you going to, my darling?" he said, cordially stretching out his hand towards her.

Helen seized his hand, pressed it to her lips, and said:

"Do not condemn me till you have heard me, papa!"

Then she hastened out of the room.

"What is the matter with the girl?" said the old gentleman, looking after her in astonishment.

"Come, Grenwitz," said the baroness, "I have to speak to you about some important matters."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The conversation between the baroness and her husband lasted for some time, but Anna Maria was unlucky today in her diplomatic negotiations. She had not been able to bend her daughter's pride, and she was not able, now, to convert her husband to her views, yielding as he generally was. It is a well-known fact, that very pliant persons are apt to become most obstinate and self-willed on some points. It looks as if these points were impregnable fortresses, places of refuge for the will of such men, to which they retire when they have been beaten and overcome everywhere else, in order to defend their independence here to the uttermost. The baroness had experienced this more than once during her lone dominion over her husband. The latter generally confided blindly in her, and worshipped her with a kind of idolatry; but every now and then a spirit of opposition had risen in him, and frequently in matters where she had least expected resistance. She had always known how to avoid difficulties in such cases, by prudent and timely concessions. She had paid little attention to these occurrences, because they were generally caused by mere trifles. But if she had compared these cases of "stubbornness" of the old gentleman with each other, she would have found that they always showed the plain, honest good sense, and the inexhaustible goodness of the baron, as arrayed against some cunning, selfish measure on the side of his wife. The old gentleman might not be considered very clever, but there was something in him that was more powerful than all his wife's sophisms; a divine spark which, if needs be, could still blaze up in a flame. This spark of divine fire was the power of forgetting himself for the sake of others, and of finding his own happiness in the happiness of others. For there never was a greater truth uttered, than that charity is high above all the knowledge and the highest powers of man, and the greatest of all virtues.

People who look upon charity and love as very superfluous articles of luxury, and who have little opportunity to see their efficacy in themselves, are apt to forget these elements in their calculations. This is what happened to the baroness. It had never occurred to her that the baron might really love his child, and that he then would naturally value her happiness more highly than all worldly advantages. And now an almost incredible thing happened. The old gentleman declared most positively that, if Helen was sure she could not love Felix, the matter was settled once for all times. He did not deny the advantages which such a match could not fail to secure to all the parties interested, nor the pleasure with which he himself would have seen such a union. But he insisted upon due regard being paid to Helen's peace and happiness. And here he took his stand. Anna Maria did not spare words; she even had recourse to tears. She painted Helen's defiance and her improper conduct during the last interview in the darkest colors; she threatened the old man that she would resort to extremities, and leave him to choose between herself and his disobedient child, as she did not mean to be disgraced by seeing her daughter triumph over her in her own house--it was all in vain; the old gentleman maintained his position with the utmost tenacity. He would not admit that Helen was a bad girl; she might have been carried away by passion, but she was not bad at heart; she would soon come and ask her mother's pardon. And even if she should be less good than he believed her, even if she had behaved badly towards her mother, that was yet no reason why she should be forced into a hateful union. All the baroness could obtain was, that Helen, if she still refused, should leave home for a time. The father consented to this, because he thought it best for mother and daughter to part for a time, until the passions should have subsided a little on both sides. He did not object to Helen's going to Grunwald instead of Hamburg, because that would enable him to see her more frequently, and because he looked upon the whole arrangement only as a provisional one, which would, in all probability, not last long. Anna Maria, on the other hand, had to be content with this result, as she had constantly to fear that Helen, driven to bay, might make that unpleasant affair of the letter known to her father. This fear had made her less energetic in the whole conversation than she usually was. Her bad conscience had made a coward of her, and this cowardice had made it easier for the baron to triumph. He kissed his wife on the forehead, as he always did after a scene of more or less painful controversy, thanked her for her readiness to fall in with his views and wishes, and expressed a hope that the peace of the family would ere long be fully restored.

"I should feel wretched, if I had to see those I love best upon earth divided among themselves," the good old man said, with tears in his eyes. "I have prayed to God all these days for light to show me what I ought to do in this matter. I should be sorry to have in any way offended you, dear Anna Maria, for I know how much I owe you; but I have also duties towards my daughter, and I cannot consent that you should make her unhappy, with the best intentions in the world. God knows, I desire nothing but your happiness; and now, my dear Anna Maria, let us go to dinner, for, if I am not mistaken, dinner has been announced twice already."

The baroness was to have no rest to-day.

The melancholy dinner, at which neither Oswald, who would not leave Bruno, nor Helen, who excused herself on the plea of a bad headache, had made their appearance, was over, and the baron had just gone out to have a talk with Helen and to inquire after Bruno. The baroness had remained alone with Felix, and knew she would have to tell him the disagreeable news that their

joint plans had been utterly defeated by Helen's obstinate resistance and the baron's stubbornness. How could she make such a confession, she who had boasted so much of her unlimited power over her husband; she who had not only originated the plan, but who had carried on the whole transaction! It was a hard task for the selfish, ambitious woman.

How much she now regretted ever having read that letter! It had told her little more than what she already knew, and how she had compromised herself! She could no longer use her full authority against Helen, for her daughter had a formidable weapon in her hands. Anna Maria knew full well that the baron would never approve of such a breach of faith, especially in his present state of mind. Nor could she be more candid with Felix. She had to tell him that the battle was lost, and had not even the consolation to be able to show him that it was lost only by an unfortunate accident.

The bitter cap had to be drained. Felix could not trust his ears. He, Felix, Baron Grenwitz, had been refused, spurned with contempt, in the one single case in which he had been in earnest! And by whom? By a girl fresh from school! And possibly for the sake of an obscure person, whose sole merit was that he looked almost like a gentleman. Felix behaved as if the world must come to an end now. To lose Helen well, he might have found consolation for that; but to lose, with her, also the prospect of seeing his debts paid, or rather, of seeing his credit considerably improved, that was far worse, and a very serious matter to a man like Felix. Helen's dower, the sums which his uncle had promised to advance in order to enable him to make his exhausted estates once more productive, all to be lost--no! they could not trifle with him in this way! He had done all he could do; he had thrown up his commission (better: he had been forced to leave the army); he had been authorized by the baroness to make his engagement publicly known, and now--his commission, his future wife, his honor--all lost!

"I shall blow out my brains," he cried pathetically.

The baroness tried to calm him--and she succeeded very quickly--by promising him that, in spite of the failure in his courtship, the other parts of the agreement should stand as if he had succeeded.

When they had settled this important point they were able to discuss with a little more composure the question as to what might be the real reason for Helen's refusal. To Felix's great astonishment, the baroness insisted upon it, that there existed a regular attachment between Oswald and her daughter. She would not tell what made her think so with certainty; but she was so persistent that Felix at last admitted "the thing might be possible, ridiculous as it was." "That man is a cunning fox," he said. "Timm warned me against him from the beginning; I did not attach much importance to what he said, because he and Stein seemed to be good friends. But I see now Timm was right."

A servant brought the baroness a letter from Grunwald, that had been sent by a special messenger.

"From Mr. Timm," she said, surprised, when she had opened the letter. "I am quite curious to see what he can have to write. I hope he was paid properly. Excuse me, dear Felix."

Her face, however, gradually assumed such an expression of astonishment, consternation, and terror, as she went on reading, that Felix could not keep from saying:

"But, dearest aunt, what is the matter? You have turned as white as the wall!"

"Oh, it is hideous!" said the baroness. "It is scandalous! These scoundrels! It is a regular plot! These scoundrels!"

"But, for Heaven's sake, what is the matter?" cried Felix.

"There, you may read yourself!" said the baroness, handing him the letter, trembling with rage.

Felix took the letter and read:

"Madam:--It is not my fault if the contents of this letter should prove unpleasant to you. You know the veneration I feel for yourself and your whole family; you know the zeal I have always shown in your service, and the gratitude I have felt for your amiable hospitality in former days, and especially during the last happy days. If I must, therefore, speak and act in a manner which seems to contradict these sentiments, I hope you will see at once that the contradiction is only apparent, and that I am compelled to act by a principle which is even higher than personal friendship and individual respect: I mean the duty we all owe to Justice.

"This innate sense of right, which I have no doubt inherited from my sainted father, forces me to inform you, without the slightest delay, of a most remarkable discovery which I have recently made.

"You know that my father was a lawyer in Grunwald; that his practice was as large as his

reputation for uprightness, conscientiousness, and ability was extensive, and that he counted the very first families of the province among his clients. Thus he stood also in his business relations with Baron Harald Grenwitz, and was, moreover, as I have often heard him relate, bound to him by personal friendship. At least my father frequently mentioned that the late baron intrusted him with the management of the most delicate family matters. The truth of this assertion is strongly confirmed by the discovery of which I have spoken before.

"It consists in this: I have found, by chance, several packages of papers and letters, all of which once belonged to Baron Harald, and were by him intrusted to my father for unknown purposes (as there is no explanation given anywhere in the baron's handwriting, or in my father's). In all probability they were intended to help my father in discovering the child to which the baron had, in a special codicil, bequeathed a considerable fortune. There is no doubt, at all events, that such a search can only be begun by the aid of these letters and papers, and, of course, they are indispensable for success. I am also persuaded that nothing but my father's sudden death has prevented him from obtaining such a result, and that an able lawyer could easily take up the thread of his investigations where it dropped from the hand of my father.

"The papers consist of, 1. A bundle of letters of a certain Mademoiselle Marie Montbert, addressed to Baron Harald Grenwitz; 2. A like bundle of letters written by the baron to the young lady; 3. Several letters from a certain Monsieur d'Estein to Mademoiselle Montbert; 4. Several family documents concerning Mademoiselle Montbert; 5. A perfect copy of the last will of Baron Harald, together with the codicil, which contains, as you know, not only the conditions attached to the legacy, but also the means by which the child in question may most easily be discovered and authenticated. You know that the codicil contains, in this part, the names of Mademoiselle Montbert and of Monsieur d'Estein, and it need not be stated that these persons are the same as those who wrote the above-mentioned letters.

"So far, all I have reported to you has nothing especially surprising for those who are not personally interested in the affair. But what I have to say next is so extraordinary that I must ask your permission to state it in person, I can only tell you, that in Mr. d'Estein's letters the name occurs which that gentleman proposed to adopt after having succeeded in rescuing Mademoiselle Montbert, and that this name, if you simply leave off the d' and the E, agrees with that of a gentleman who has been living for some time in your family. I may add that, for my part, I am fully convinced of the identity of this person with the unknown heir to Stantow and Baerwalde, especially in consequence of communications made to me by that person himself about his family and his early youth.

"While this is my personal conviction, I have yet taken care not to mention it as yet to the person in question, as, after all, there might be some doubt about it yet, and I did not wish to excite hopes which might possibly not be realized.

"I break off here, in order not to anticipate too fully my oral report (perhaps you will shortly be in Grunwald? or do you desire me to come to Grenwitz?), and also in order not to risk too much in confiding these valuable secrets to a letter.

"Accept, madam, the assurances of my," etc., etc., etc.

"Here is a 'Turn-over,'" said Felix, turning over the last page.

"P.S.--As the papers are scarcely quite safe in my own rooms, I mean to place them in the hands of a lawyer, in case *you should not, very promptly, dispose of them otherwise*.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Felix; "there the fox shows his cunning! In case you should not otherwise dispose of them, underscored: *i. e.*, have the goodness to name the sum which you think you can afford to pay for these papers, and the secret goes no farther!--Ha, ha, ha! Yes, yes, Timm is a clever fellow, I always knew that."

"Then you think he has really found the papers?" asked the baroness, in astonishment.

"Why not?" said Felix. "The thing looks extremely probable, and I advise you to buy the papers before they rise in the market."

"And do you also think that this--that this man--I can hardly speak of it calmly--that this Stein is really Harald's son?"

"It is by no means impossible," said Felix.

"No, it *is* impossible," cried the baroness, with great vehemence; "the whole is a wretched plot, an abominable conspiracy between the two sharpers. The letters are forgeries; they have been concocted and written by the two rascals when they were here together. It is a mere invention to frighten us and to extort money from us--or perhaps, ha! now I see! Don't you see, Felix, what they are after? They want Helen! One is to have the money, the other the girl! Ha, ha, ha! Capital! What a pity Helen did not say anything of that also in her letter to Mary Burton, for I wager she is in the plot too. But they shall not get anything, not a dollar!"

"Do not take the matter too lightly, dearest aunt," said Felix. "I tell you Timm is a clever fellow, and if the letters are really forgeries, you will find they are prodigiously well done. They

will give you trouble. Will you listen to my advice?"

"Well!"

"Let me go to-morrow, or at some time, to Grunwald and talk with Timm. I have had, in former times, many a conversation with him, and he knows that I am not easily hoodwinked. We shall have to pay something, I am sure, but I can get the papers cheaper than anybody else."

"And what is to be done with Mr. Stein?"

"He must be turned out in disgrace. Will you leave that also to me?"

"Yes, do what you like. Only relieve me of that man."

"I'll do it. There will probably be an occasion for it this very night. The more noise is made about it the better. He shall lose all desire to have anything more to do with us. But you must not say a word of it to uncle."

"For heaven's sake no!" said the baroness. "He is capable of introducing Mr. Stein, this very night, to the whole company as our esteemed relative. He is almost childish now, and I can no longer trust him in anything."

"Well then," said Felix, kissing his aunt's hand, "rely upon me. We'll carry the matter through, I am sure. But I think, dear aunt, it must be high time to get ready. For heaven's sake, it is five o'clock, and some of the guests will come at six! How can I get ready in an hour?"

CHAPTER XIX.

Carriage after carriage came thundering through the great portal, drove round the courtyard, and stopped before the door. Ladies and gentlemen in full dress got out and followed the servants into dressing-rooms. A few minutes later the folding-doors were thrown open, and they were received by the old baron and Felix in the great reception-rooms in the lower story.

Thus the whole nobility of the neighborhood had gradually assembled. Not only the gala carriages in which they had come,--some with four, and a few even with six high-bred horses, to say nothing of the outriders in bright liveries,--but also the evening dress of the gentlemen and the brilliant toilettes of the ladies showed that they had come prepared for a magnificent entertainment. They thought, moreover, they could tell what was the special occasion for this party, as the baroness and Felix had not been sparing of allusions to an event which might possibly take place in a short time! The baroness and Felix had got themselves into a serious difficulty by these allusions, and were now on the point of learning how much more troublesome it is to silence gossip than to start it. The more modest among the guests looked full of expectation, curious friends ventured upon allusions, and a few impertinent neighbors even asked direct questions, till they could scarcely preserve their polite equanimity during such a cross-fire of examination. The company seemed to be determined to believe in the engagement, and patiently waited till supper-time, when they thought the truth would come out at last. A few only were sharp-sighted enough to notice certain indications which made them think the end not quite so near yet. They pointed out the unusually formal manner of the baroness, who was at times almost embarrassed; the frequent mistakes of the old baron, who was more absent-minded than ever, and by no means looked like a happy father; and, above all, the distance at which Baron Felix kept from Miss Helen, who looked more like a beautiful statue of cold marble than like a young girl on the day on which her engagement was to be made public.

For a time, however, the attention of the company was somewhat preoccupied by the appearance of a lady and gentleman who were in good earnest engaged, and presented themselves to-day for the first time as such in public: Miss Emily Breesen and Arthur Baron Cloten. The young couple had already paid the visits usual on such occasions in that province, but the neighborhood was very large and some had not been reached at all, while others had been unfortunately away from home. There were, therefore, countless congratulations yet to receive and to return. Emily and Baron Cloten formed the centre of a large circle of ladies and gentlemen respectively, who found little else to talk of but their happiness. Cloten seemed to be overjoyed; he was talking and laughing incessantly, and it seemed to be miraculous that a single little hair was surviving in his diminutive moustache--so very industriously did he twist and twirl it through his fingers. Emily seemed to bear her good fortune with more composure; the minority of sharp-sighted observers even thought they noticed a dim cloud on her brow, in spite of the efforts she made to smile upon everybody; they also fancied that her eye was ceaselessly examining the

company, without ever resting for a moment on her happy betrothed.

There was evidently abundant food for gossip to-night.

The intimacy between Baron Cloten and Baron Barnewitz's lovely, but dangerous wife, Hortense, had of course remained no secret in a society so full of spies and tale bearers, and the last large party at Barnewitz, with its unpleasant scenes between Cloten and Hortense's husband, during which the unlucky lady fainted so inopportunely, had lifted the last thin veil from this liaison. Everybody, therefore, was full of curiosity to see how Hortense would bear her loss, and especially to find out whom the blonde Loreley would choose for Cloten's successor. Some supposed it would be Count Grieben, others Adolphus Breesen. Both were equally eager to win the good-will of the dangerous Circe. The former was a rejected lover of Emily's, and therefore seemed to be specially fitted to become Cloten's successor; the latter was by far the handsomest and cleverest young man in the whole set--qualities which Hortense, with her own cleverness, appreciated fully.

"I bet upon Grieben," said young Sylow; "a basket of champagne. Who takes the bet?"

"I," cried Nadelitz; "pshaw! Don't I know Breesen?"

"Six bottles forfeit, up to the cotillon to-night?"

"Ha, ha! Do you hear? He is losing courage already; but I take it. Done!"

"Really a famous woman, the Barnewitz," said Hans Pluggen; "I wish I were one of the candidates!"

"Well, that wouldn't be so very difficult," said somebody else.

"I cannot imagine what you see in the Barnewitz," replied young Sylow. "Now, if it were the Berkow! I wish she were here!"

"I dare say there are plenty who wish so," said one, laughing. "But you know, I suppose, that Berkow is dead and the widow has come back?"

"Old news!"

"Well, do you know, too, that Oldenburg is going to be married?"

"Nonsense!"

"You may rely upon it. I have it from the Barnewitz. She surely must know."

"Is Oldenburg coming to-night?"

"Felix said he had promised to come; but Oldenburg has his own ways."

Melitta's return and her husband's death were discussed in other circles also besides those of the young men. Melitta was one of the most popular ladies in society, and yet she had, strange enough, few enemies and rivals. Now and then people spoke of her "eccentricities," of a desire to be apart and different from others; some said she was too learned, others, she was coquetting with liberal politicians--but generally her loveliness, her kindness, and unpretending manners were readily acknowledged. Aside from such remarks, moreover, the charms of her person were above all criticism. Hence, everybody seemed to be glad that she had at last been relieved of the terrible burden, which she had borne so sweetly, and was eager to know whom she would make happy by giving him her hand. For no one doubted that so young a widow would soon marry again. In some indefinite way a report had of late obtained currency that Baron Oldenburg had the best prospect; it was even whispered quite secretly, and as a mere *on dit*, for which no one wished to be held responsible, that the intimacy between the baron and Melitta was of old date, and that Baron Berkow had lost his mind very opportunely. A few details even were mentioned, by those who claimed to be particularly well informed, which could not have been true without compromising Melitta's reputation very seriously. No one knew with whom these reports originated. The sharp-sighted observers, again, ascribed them to Hortense Barnewitz, who, they said, had thus avenged herself on Oldenburg for a piece of advice he had given Cloten, which had led the latter in his blind obedience to find himself engaged to Emily Breesen before he well knew what he was doing.

In the mean time eight o'clock had come, and with it the hour at which the ball was to commence. The baroness opened it with Count Grieben. Count Grieben found it difficult to make himself heard, in spite of his screaming voice, as the music preceded them during the old-fashioned polonaise through all the rooms, and then, thanks to a happy inspiration of his genius, across the lawn, through the darkest parts of the garden, and back again into the principal ball-room, where it ended in a solemn slow waltz.

"That is a good old fashion, baroness!" he screamed, delighted, into his partner's ear; "my sainted father had it so, and my sainted grandfather, and a great many more, no doubt. The old ones knew a thing or two. Young folks are stupid folks. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, indeed, indeed!" replied the baroness.

Dance followed dance. The violins screamed, the bass growled. The faces of the dancers began to look heated; the ladies used their fans vehemently, and the servants, who continually went around with large waiters of refreshments, saw them disappear more and more rapidly--but there was no real enjoyment, and it seemed as if a cloud were resting on the whole company.

"What on earth can be the matter to-night?" said young Grieben, wiping his forehead during one of the pauses, and addressing a group of dancers who stood in the very centre of the room; "we work ourselves to death and nothing comes of it; there is no *en train* in the matter."

"Well, you can dance a long time before your long legs are tired," said young Sylow; "but you are right; I have drunk a couple of bottles, and yet the more I drink the sadder I become."

"That is exactly my case," said a third; "I do not know what it can be, but the ball at Barnewitz was a good deal merrier."

"What it can be?" said Breesen. "Well, I should think that was clear enough. The old baron looks like a wet chicken in the rain; the old baroness like a dethroned Hecuba--isn't it Hecuba? Felix quarrels with everybody who comes near him, and Miss Helen has not said three words all the evening. And you expect people to enjoy themselves? I feel as if it were a funeral."

"Well, there is a sick man at all events," said Pluggen; "the old baron just told me: Bruno has been sick in bed since yesterday."

"Ah, I suppose that is the reason why Doctor Stein has not come down?" said Count Grieben; "I thought he was correcting exercises, perhaps, and would come down after a while, ha, ha, ha!"

"Hush, Grieben," said Hans Pluggen; "the other day you spoke very differently about the doctor."

"I said he was a consummate fool, whom I would enlighten on the subject of his position, and I say so again."

"Why, that is word for word what Felix was saying just now; the doctor seems to be a great favorite with the gentlemen."

"He is all the more liked by the ladies," observed Nadelitz, ironically.

"Yes, indeed," added Breesen; "he is said to have made three sisters at once unhappy at the ball the other day."

"At least they have not cried their eyes out, as they say Miss Emily has done," replied Nadelitz, annoyed by Breesen's allusion to his three sisters.

"You must not say such things!" cried Breesen, angrily.

"What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

"I called no names."

"Because everybody knew idiom you meant."

"But, gentlemen, *tant de bruit pour une omelette*!" said Pluggen. "I wonder if you are going to quarrel about that man? why, that would be the very way to make people believe that he is a favorite with the ladies."

"Do you know the last news?" said Cloten, suddenly pushing his blonde moustache into the group.

"Well?"

"Just imagine that Stein--but hush, there is Grenwitz--not a word, I pray you!"

"Well, gentlemen!" said Felix, "will you please form a cotillon? I have already twice given notice!"

Felix said this in a somewhat irritated tone of voice. His face, generally pale, was deep red. He had evidently taken a good deal of wine.

When the dance was over the same gentlemen, whose conversation Felix had interrupted, met once more as if by agreement.

"Well, where is Cloten with his last piece of news?" asked Sylow.

"Here," said Cloten, coming up. "Just imagine this Stein--we are quite *entre nous* here?"

"Oh yes! Go on!"

"Has the impudence--well, guess! to fall in love with whom?"

"Ah, Cloten, you are unbearable! Are you going to tell us or not?"

"With Helen Grenwitz!" said Cloten, in a hollow voice.

"Well, not so bad!" said Sylow.

"That is just like the fellow," added Grieben.

"*Hinc illæ lacrimæ!*" laughed Breesen, who had retained a few Latin phrases from his school-days.

"And the best of it is," continued Cloten, "Miss Helen is by no means averse; *au contraire*, she is head over ears in love with him. Now, is not that charming?"

"Who on earth has made you believe that bloody story?" asked Breesen.

"I have it from very good authority," replied Cloten, with a significative wink of the eye towards that part of the room where Emily was standing in conversation with Helen.

"Hm, hm!" said Breesen.

"The story is not improbable," remarked Sylow. "That explains the deep melancholy of all the Grenwitz family; they look like mutes."

"Did not I always say there was something the matter tonight?" remarked Breesen, again. "I am quite glad now I did not become more intimate with the fellow; at first, I confess, I liked him very well. The man has really something very winning about him."

"He is a famous shot!" said Sylow, meditatively.

"Famous or not famous!" said Cloten, "I verily believe you give him a wide berth, gentlemen, because he is a tolerably good shot. No, gentlemen, that will not do, really, that will not do! I propose that we make amends for our first blunder and treat the man, if he should ever show himself again among us, as he deserves--with the utmost contempt."

"'Pon honor!" said Grieben, "Cloten, is right I shall make the fellow acquainted with my hunting-whip."

"It is a pity he is not here, so that you could carry out your threat at once!" said Breesen, ironically.

"*Quand on parle du loup*," said Sylow; "there he is! And his Pylades, Oldenburg, as a matter of course, by his side."

The open folding-doors were really just then showing Oldenburg and Oswald in the adjoining room. They conversed for a few minutes with each other; then Oldenburg entered the ball-room, while Oswald was held back by the old baron.

CHAPTER XX.

Oswald had spent nearly the whole day by Bruno's bedside after he had returned from his memorable interview with Helen. He had tried to forget himself while nursing his dear patient.

Bruno himself forgot his pain when he heard that Oswald had seen Helen and given her the letter; he was so happy he did not even notice Oswald's pale face and disturbed manner.

"Now all is right again," he said; "now she knows how she stands. Now they cannot hurt her any more, for now she is forewarned. Oh, that thought makes me feel quite well again."

Unfortunately, he was far from being well. The pain in his side returned after a few minutes with increased violence. Oswald hoped the doctor would certainly keep his promise and return in the course of the forenoon. But the forenoon passed and no doctor came. Bruno's condition did not grow worse, but neither did it mend, and Oswald knew too little of medicine to be aware that a condition which does not improve grows worse. However, when noon came without bringing the doctor, he did not rest till a messenger on horseback had been sent to town. The man brought back the lotion which the doctor had himself ordered at the drug-store, but reported that the

doctor was not in town, and that Doctor Braun was not expected back till nightfall. He had been at the house of the latter, and left word to send the doctor as soon as he should return. Oswald felt very grateful to the considerate man, who seemed to take a warm interest in Bruno's sickness. He breathed more freely when he heard of Doctor Braun's coming, for he had great confidence in him. In the mean time, however, he did not neglect the means prescribed by the other physician; but it had so little effect that Bruno at last begged not to be troubled any more with the useless remedy. Thus the long, long hours passed one after another with a weariness which only the sick man knows, who tosses restlessly on his couch, and the friend who sits, his heart full of unutterable, and, alas! helpless anxiety, by his bedside, waiting for the doctor who does not come, or a symptom of change which never appears.

The old baron sent several times to inquire how Bruno was, and in the afternoon he came up stairs himself. He thanked Oswald with great cordiality for his kindness, patted Bruno on his hot cheeks, and promised to give him the horse he had long wished for as soon as he should be well again.

"I am exceedingly sorry," he said to Oswald, as the latter accompanied him to the door, "that we must have company just to-day. It is very painful to me to think that the house is open, and dancing going on, while a member of my family is lying dangerously ill."

Oswald tried his best to quiet the good old gentleman, although his own heart was full of anxiety. Nor did he dare to mention to the baron at this time a resolution which he had formed during the last hours.

He had come to the conclusion that he could not remain any longer in this house.

How he should be able to live without Bruno; how he should tear himself away from the happiness of seeing Helen every day, he could not tell. He only knew he must go.

This he repeated to himself, over and over again, as he smoothed Bruno's pillow, as he took his burning hands in his own, brushed his hair from his brow, or moistened his parched lips. There was almost womanly tenderness in these loving attentions.

"If my mother were alive, she could not nurse me better," said Bruno, pressing his hand gratefully.

"You never knew your mother, Bruno."

"I was only three years old when she died; but I remember my father," and now the boy began to speak of his father with feverish excitement; how tall and strong and beautiful he had been; "not as slender as you, but broader in the shoulders, and with long, dark locks that flowed down upon his shoulders, like King Harfagar;" and of the little farm, high up in Dalecarlia, which the father had worked with two servants only, and how clever he had been at everything; and how he had wielded his axe, although he had been page at the queen's court in his youth, carrying her long silk train on state occasions; and of Thor, the fast trotter, whom the father put into his sleigh; and of the northern winter nights, when the stars on the black sky sparkled like diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, so bright that the snow glittered in their light; and of the northern lights, how they suddenly blazed up on the horizon and stretched out their fiery arms to the zenith.

"We must make a trip to Sweden together," he said; "here winter is mere child's play; there you will see real snow and ice! Here it is hot, intolerably hot--I wish I were amid snow and ice!" And the boy tossed his head restlessly on his pillow and asked for water.

Just then music was heard from the garden.

"What is that?" he said, standing up.

Oswald went to the window.

"It is the whole company," he said; "they are just coming out from among the trees. Count Grieben and your aunt are at the head of the procession. They were going to pass right under our window, but the baron, who came next to Count Grieben, is telling them to take the other way. The first couples are out of sight now, but more and more couples are coming out."

"Has Helen come by yet?" asked Bruno, raising himself.

"No, not yet."

"Oh, why must I be in bed!" cried Bruno, sinking back exhausted by the effort and the increased pain.

"There she is now!"

"Not with Felix, I hope?"

"No, with a young man I have never seen before."

"Never mind," said Bruno, "so she is not with Felix."

"Now the last have gone by," said Oswald, taking his seat again by Bruno's bedside.

Bruno's restlessness seemed to have been increased by this direct reference to Helen, which had heretofore been carefully avoided by both of them. He began once more to speak of Helen. Oswald had to tell him what she wore, whether she looked handsome, very handsome, handsomer than any of the other ladies? whether she had smiled? or looked up at his window?

"Oh, if I could but get up! if I could but see her for a moment!"

"You will see her soon again, Bruno!"

"I don't know; I want to see her so much just to-day, only for a moment. I feel as if I had something to tell her that oppresses my heart. And then, if she refuses Felix,--and she will certainly do so,--she is to go back to school, and then it may be a long time before I ever see her again. But I won't stay here if she goes away. Come, Oswald, let us go to Hamburg. You are clever and know so much; you will easily find employment, and I too--any kind of work, if I can only be near her and see her from time to time."

He fell into a kind of stupor, and then again he suddenly started up.

"Why did Helen go away?"

"You are dreaming, Bruno; she has not been here."

"Nor Aunt Berkow?"

"No, Bruno."

"And yet I saw them both so distinctly. They came in hand in hand through that door; Helen dressed in white, with a wreath of dark-red roses in her hair; aunt Berkow in black, and her hair as she always wears it. Aunt Berkow led Helen up to you, and you fell into each other's arms and wept and kissed each other; and then aunt Berkow came to my bed and said: Now, Bruno, now you can go to sleep. Then my eyes closed; it grew dark around me; I sank with the bed lower and lower, and quicker and quicker--then the fright waked me up."

"Do you feel worse, Bruno?" asked Oswald, troubled by these flights of his imagination.

"On the contrary," replied Bruno; "that sleep has done me a great deal of good. My pain is not as bad as before; but I feel very tired. I think I could sleep now."

He turned his head, but a few moments afterwards he started up once more.

"Oswald, will you do me a very, very great favor?"

"Certainly; what is it?"

"Pray dress yourself and go down stairs."

"Not for anything in the world."

"But, I pray you, do it for my sake! You see I am much better now, and I should like to sleep, and I am going to sleep. You cannot help me when I am sleeping?"

"But what am I to do down stairs?"

"You see, Oswald," said Bruno, "I should like to see Helen more than anything in this life. And I cannot do it. I have no strength in my limbs. But, if you see her, I shall feel as if I also had seen her. Please, please go down stairs! You need not speak to anybody; only, if you can manage it, tell Helen I send her my best, my very best love--and perhaps she will say something in reply, perhaps she will say: Give my love to Bruno! Then you must come straight back to me, so as not to forget the tone of her voice when she said it. And listen, Oswald, before I forget it. It might be, you know, that I die suddenly, no--don't laugh, I am quite serious then, do not let them undress me; I want to be put in the coffin just as I am. Look here!--You know I always wear a medallion on my heart; it is my mother's; but that is not the only reason why it is so sacred to me; there is a lock of Helen's hair inside, which I cut off a long time ago in jest. If they should take the medallion from me, I think I could not be quiet in my grave. And now, please go! or it will be too late."

Oswald did not know what to do. If he did not do what the boy wished, he might bring back his feverish excitement, which seemed to have abated considerably. On the other hand, he did not like at all to leave him, even for a moment. And yet he would have been delighted to see Helen--only for an instant--so much must have taken place during these last hours.

Bruno soon made an end to his doubts.

"You promised me," he said, sadly, "and now you will not do it. You do not love me."

What could he do now? Oswald went into the adjoining room, his bed-chamber, and changed

his dress. He had probably never in his life dressed for a party in a similar state of mind. The whole thing looked to him like hideous irony. He started back when he saw his own distorted face in the looking-glass. The last few hours seemed to have aged him as many years.

He came back to Bruno's bed.

"Let me look at you," said the boy, half rising. "How well you look! So stately and handsome!--kiss me, Oswald."

Oswald took the boy in his arms and kissed him on his fine, proud lips--so pale and parched, alas! Then he let him sink softly back on his pillow.

"I feel quite well, quite well," said Bruno. "Do not hurry yourself. I shall sleep delightfully till you come back."

CHAPTER XXI.

In the hall down stairs Oswald met Oldenburg.

"I have a great mind to turn back again," said Oldenburg, after a rather formal greeting, "I did not expect to find so large a party, and came on horseback, so that I am not exactly fit for a ball, as you see. Who is there?"

"I am but just coming down," replied Oswald; "Bruno has been quite sick since day before yesterday; now he has sent me away because he wanted to sleep."

"Oh, I am sorry to hear that," said Oldenburg; "I hope the boy is not going to be really sick. Did you not tell me he was a great favorite of yours?"

"Yes. Have you any news about----"

"About my Czika? No."

Oldenburg's face was clouded over. "Shall we go in?" he asked.

In one of the reception-rooms they met the old baron. Oldenburg exchanged a few words with him, and then went into the ball-room, while Oswald had to give the baron a circumstantial account of Bruno's condition during the last hours.

"Well, that is nice, that is very nice," he said; "I hope he will escape being really sick. I was almost afraid it might turn into typhoid fever. Go and tell my daughter that Bruno is better; I know she will be glad to hear it. She has asked me several times."

Oswald went into the ball-room. They were just commencing a new dance, the last one before the great pause, during which supper was to be served in the great dining-hall up stairs. There was a low divan running all around the ballroom, and Oswald remained standing on the step that led to it, near the door. The dancers near him were continually changing. Once Emily and her betrothed came to stand almost immediately before him. She pretended not to notice him; she laughed and talked aloud, perhaps a little too loud, but it is difficult not to exaggerate when one is playing a part which requires an effort; Baron Cloten, on the contrary, availed himself to the fullest extent of the privilege men in his position have a right to enjoy, and whispered unceasing nonsense in his lady's ear with a most expressive smile.

Oswald had heard of the sudden engagement of the two; he knew probably better than anybody else how it had come about. He recollected how disparagingly Emily had spoken of Baron Cloten that night at Barnewitz. Now she had promised to marry him! How happy they will be, Oswald thought, and he had to confess that, if harm came of it, no one was to blame but himself.

A few moments afterwards Helen found herself near him. She was dancing with Sylow. Oswald had observed her for some time, and noticed that she was standing cold and silent, like a marble statue, by the side of her partner, who seemed to have discovered his utter inability to begin a conversation, and was studying the chandelier with praiseworthy industry. As soon as she saw Oswald, a flash of life seemed to pass over her beautiful but sad features. She beckoned him with the eye to come near her.

"How is Bruno?"

"Thank you, better; he was going to sleep."

"Are you going to stay?"

"No, I am going back directly."

"Give my love to Bruno--and here--take this rosebud to him."

Helen took a rosebud from the bouquet she was holding in her hand and gave it to Oswald, who took it, bowing deeply. He noticed that Sylow had suddenly withdrawn his attention from the chandelier and was fixing his eyes upon his own face with an expression which was by no means agreeable.

The next moment another couple was standing in this place.

"Did you see your old admirer, Emily?" asked Cloten.

"Who do you mean?"

"Why, Dr. Stein! he was standing right behind us."

"Ah, yes! My old admirer? Are you mad, Arthur?"

"Well, well. You need not be angry. I don't believe a word of the whole story. But, for Heaven's sake! just look! He is speaking to Helen Grenwitz--she gives him a rose. Well, that is too bad! Upon my word, that caps the climax!"

"I told you there was an understanding between them. He beats you all."

"Upon my word! That is too bad! But I have taken care to make the matter known."

"What have you done?"

"Well, I have told everybody what you mentioned to me in secret. The whole ball-room knows it now, ha, ha, ha!"

"But I did not give you leave to do so."

"I thought you meant me to do so. Mr. Stein will pay for it if he does not get out of the way immediately with his rosebud."

"What are you going to do?"

"I am not going to do anything myself, but we mean to teach the fellow how to behave. It will be a glorious affair, I tell you. You shall hear all about it when its over. Ha, ha, ha!"

The happy man led his betrothed back to her place, as the dance was at an end, and turned to Sylow, who was coming towards him.

"Did you see it, Cloten?"

"I should think so."

"Is not it a scandal?"

"I am only sorry for poor Felix."

"We must tell him all about it. Do you know where he is?"

"He said just now he was tired dancing. He was going to the card-tables. I think Barnewitz is keeping bank somewhere. Suppose we go, too? There will be no more dancing until supper. We have just time to win a few louis. What do you say?"

"Of course I'll go."

Emily had watched their conversation from a distance. She saw them leave the ball-room, laughing, arm in arm. Oswald also had disappeared. Suddenly, a terrible fear overcame her. She had been the first to couple Oswald's name with Helen's name, to gratify her mad desire to be avenged on him, and it was she who had, for the same purpose, informed Felix of her pretended discovery. She had commenced telling the same story to-night again, merely for the purpose of making an end to Cloten's stupid teasing. Now only she became aware that she had gone too far, and that she had, in all probability, exposed Oswald to very great danger. And yet she loved him still with the whole strength of her passionate heart. She might have murdered him with her own hands when the fit of mad jealousy was on her, but the thought of exposing him to brutal ill-treatment at the hands of Cloten and others was terrible to her. She looked around in the ball-room to see where help might be found.

Her brother happened to come near her. She called him:

"What do you want, little one?"

"Have you seen Doctor Stein?"

"Yes, why?"

"Did you not intend asking him out for a few days during the hunting season? I am afraid it would look badly if we were to drop him so suddenly altogether."

Emily had blushed deep purple as she said these words; her usual presence of mind seemed to have forsaken her utterly.

"Invite him out!" cried Adolphus; "well, would not that be nice? So as to make the stupid report immortal that Lisbeth has started about you and him,--invite him to our house?--why, rather----"

"I pray you, Adolphus, be quiet! They can hear you all over the room!"

"Listen to me, little one," said the young man, in a low but very decided tone of voice; "I do not like that. You know I love you dearly, just as much as a brother can love his sister; but, for that very reason, I must take care to keep you from doing foolish things. And I shall take care, I assure you!"

With these words he turned his back upon her and went to join the others.

Emily could hardly repress her tears. Her anxiety increased with every hour. She must find means--one way or another. The resolute girl bethought herself of a desperate step.

She went up to Helen, who was sitting not far from her on the divan, with some other ladies, and said:

"One word, Helen."

"What is it?" asked Helen, rising.

"Come a little more this way.--Helen, you like Doctor Stein? I know you do!"

"What do you mean?" asked Helen, and the tell-tale blush rose to her pale cheeks.

"Never mind. I like him, too. Like him very much indeed, if you will have it,--and that is why I ask you to tell him--you can do it, and I cannot do it, or I would do it myself--to leave the party. Cloten, and my brother, and the other men are furious about him. I am afraid they have made a plot against him. Pray, pray, Helen, tell him to go--at once--I should be beside myself if the slightest difficulty arose between him and my brother or Cloten."

"But where is he?" said Helen, who knew, from other reasons, how very probable Emily's apprehensions were. "I believe he has gone up stairs again."

"If you are not sure of it, make it sure. Why not ask that servant there?"

"Have you seen Doctor Stein anywhere?" asked Helen.

"He is on the other side of the house, in the card-room."

"Oh God! what shall we do?" asked Emily.

"Baron Oldenburg!" called Helen, "will you have the kindness to come here for a moment?"

"With pleasure, Miss Helen," said the baron, who had been examining a picture on the wall, his hands folded behind his back.

"What are you going to do, Helen?"

"Never mind! Will you do me a favor, baron?"

"*Mais, sans doute!*"

"Do please find out Doctor Stein; he is in the card-room, and tell him I wish he would go back to Bruno at once. Do you hear: at once?"

It needed not Oldenburg's sagacity to see that this message, which might have been carried just as well by a servant, had a deeper meaning. Helen had taken the very greatest pains to state her request in a natural tone of voice, but the effort was visible, and this and Emily's intent gaze, together with her ghastly pale face, furnished a very clear commentary to Helen's words.

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"I shall obey your orders promptly and literally," said the baron, bowing, and leaving the ball-room with longer strides than usual.

In the mean time, Oswald had wandered about in the room without a fixed purpose. He had at first intended, as soon as he had spoken to Helen, to return to Bruno, but it occurred to him that the boy might be really asleep, and that he should then only disturb him. Perhaps, also, the vague hope of seeing Helen once more, and that demoniacal power which drives men, unconsciously and unwillingly, to drift towards their fate, kept him from carrying out his resolution. Hardly knowing how he had come to that part of the house, he suddenly found himself in one of the rooms on the other side of the château, where a number of gentlemen were crowding around a large table. Some were seated, others standing. Baron Barnewitz sat in the middle and held bank. He had apparently had much luck. Large piles of gold and silver and bank-notes lay before him, and were continually increasing. Felix sat near him. He played passionately, but, as it seemed, without luck. His face was very red, his eyes bloodshot, and the veins on his forehead swollen into knots. He hardly listened to what some of his friends behind him said; some of whom tried to encourage him, while others dissuaded him. Oswald happened to come to stand right opposite him; Felix only noticed him after some time, and it was very perceptible that his restlessness increased more and more. He drank glass after glass from a bottle that was standing at his elbow, and doubled and trebled his stakes, without any other result than that he lost twice and thrice as much as he had done before.

Another roll of gold had just wandered from his place to the great pile before Barnewitz; Felix drew out his pocketbook, and selected a very large bank-note from the papers it contained.

"You do not mean to venture the whole sum at once, Grenwitz?" asked Grieben, bending his giraffe-like neck over him.

"Are you mad, Grenwitz?" said Cloten, who had just entered with Sylow.

"Ah, pshaw!" replied Felix. "That shortens the process."

"*Faites votre jeu, messieurs!*" cried Barnewitz, taking a new pack of cards in his hand.

"Have you done, Grenwitz?"

"Yes. All right!"

"Queen of hearts for me. Ladies always for me. Thanks, Grenwitz. Glad to see you again in that way."

Felix did not look as if he could reply to such a friendly wish. His confused glance wandered around the table, and at last remained fixed on Oswald.

"Ho, there!" he cried, at the top of his voice, "bring me a glass of wine, sir!"

It was not until all eyes were turned upon Oswald, that he became aware of being himself the person to whom these rude words were addressed.

"The fellow does not seem to hear well," exclaimed Felix. "I say, bring me a glass of wine, do you hear?"

"I believe a glass of water would be more useful," replied Oswald, in a calm, firm voice, and without changing his position.

It was so still in the room, one might have heard a needle drop.

"How do you like that, gentlemen?" said Felix, looking around. "My uncle keeps a nice set of servants, don't you think so?"

"You had better show him who is master in the house," said Sylow.

"Or let him stay in school an hour longer," suggested Grieben.

"Or better still: Give him the switch, with which he punishes the poor boys," said Cloten.

"Or punish him with the contempt he deserves," added Breesen.

Oswald turned his eyes from one to the other, like a lion who is undecided whether he shall fall upon the dogs that bark at him or not. He had drawn himself up to his full height. His hand, which he had laid on the table, quivered a little, but surely not from want of courage.

"Are you going, or not?" cried Felix, jumping up and placing himself directly before Oswald.

"Do not carry the impertinence too far," said Oswald, putting the rose-bud, which Helen had given him for Bruno, into his button-hole; "else I must make an example of you for the benefit of the other boys."

Felix extended his arm to seize Oswald. The moment he touched him, Oswald took him in his

strong arms, lifted him up bodily and threw him on the ground, so that the glasses and the money on the table shook and trembled.

"Who wants to be the next?" he called out, with a voice of thunder; "Come on, you cowardly wolves, who hunt in packs."

His eyes shone with a wild desire to fight; his breast rose and sank quickly, his hands closed instinctively, and he did not think his life worth a pin at that moment.

All saw this, and no one dared to accept the challenge.

Felix had risen again, but only to fall into the arms of his nearest neighbor. He was stunned by the heavy blow; the blood was streaming from his nose and mouth.

A threatening murmur passed through the large room. Single voices were heard, exclaiming: "Shall we submit to that?--Knock him down!--Don't let him get away alive!"

They crowded around him; fierce cries and low mutterings were heard on all sides; Oswald was looking for the one whose turn it was to be next.

Suddenly Oldenburg stood by his side.

"How, gentlemen!" he exclaimed, raising himself to his full stately height; "twenty against one! The odds are too unfair in all conscience. Perhaps you would like to call in a few servants to help you!"

His words acted like a charm. Everybody saw at once the disgraceful scene in its true light. The more sensible felt obliged to the baron for having saved them from the disgrace in which they would have been involved a minute later. A few only seemed to take his interference amiss.

"The matter does not concern you, baron," cried Grieben, angrily.

"Pardon me, Count Grieben," replied Oldenburg; "the matter does concern me in two ways. First, because I think it is every gentleman's duty to see that such affairs are carried out, I will not say decently, but at least honestly; and secondly, because I have the honor of calling Dr. Stein my friend. If you or any of your friends here desire to hold me to an account for what I have said, I am at your service. In the mean time, however, I beg you will allow me to arrange the difficulty of my friend, Doctor Stein, in a manner fit for gentlemen. I shall be back here in a few moments, to place myself at your disposal. You will give me your arm, Doctor Stein?"

The baron took Oswald's arm into his, and led him out of the room, through the midst of the young noblemen, who readily made way for him.

When they were outside, he said: "Now you must go to your room. I will follow you in a few minutes. Of course you are the challenger?"

"Yes."

"Then I shall challenge Felix Grenwitz in your name. You choose pistols."

"Yes. You will please challenge him, and whoever else may desire to meet me."

"We will content ourselves for the present with Grenwitz. You do not care for the others half as much, I suppose. When?"

"As soon as possible. To-morrow morning, as far as I am concerned."

"*Bon*, Ten paces distance!"

"Or five."

"Ten is enough. Leave the rest to me. *Au revoir*, then, in your room."

The baron returned to the card-room, where the last scene had taken place. Twenty tongues at once were discussing the matter, but they all became silent when he entered. Oldenburg delivered his message to Grieben, who had undertaken to act as Felix's second. They agreed upon a meeting at five o'clock on the next morning, or at ten, if Felix should not have sufficiently recovered before, and the place was to be a small copse on Baron Cloten's estate. Then the gentlemen returned--it may be imagined in what state of mind to the ball-room, where the ladies had been waiting for some time, to escort them to the supper-rooms. Felix had been carried off by his friends to his rooms; he was too drunk and too much stunned by his fall to appear again in the company. Oldenburg returned to Oswald.

As he did not find him in his room, and presumed he was with Bruno, from whose room a light fell through the half-open door, he went softly across and found Oswald bending over the boy's bed.

"How is he?" he asked.

"I am afraid he is very ill," replied Oswald, looking up; "his sleep is very restless, and his pulse galloping furiously."

"Let me see," said Oldenburg; "I know something of these things."

"He is indeed very ill," he continued, after a short pause. "How long has this been so, and how did it come about?"

Oswald gave him, in a few short words, an account of Bruno's case.

"And the pain had entirely left him an hour ago?" asked Oldenburg.

"Yes, almost entirely----"

"Then you must be prepared for the worst I presume he has received a serious internal injury, and now mortification has set in. One of us must go for the doctor."--He looked at his watch. "It is ten; I was going to return home before supper. My Almansor stands saddled at the door. Do you go to town. I am perhaps of more use here, now, than you. You have bright moonlight. The road is good. It is a little over two miles to town. You can be there in ten minutes. Pull off your dress coat and put on an overcoat. There! You will not want a whip or spurs. Almansor is quite fresh. Now, don't spare him!"

The baron had helped Oswald to put on his coat, and placed his hat on his head. Oswald submitted to it all. He came to himself only when he was on Almansor's back, when the night-wind was whistling past his ears, and houses and trees, hedges and fields, and gardens on both sides were gliding by him spectre-like in the pale moonlight.

And now he was on the vast heath, which extended behind the village as far as Fashwitz. He saw the moonshine glitter mysteriously on the black water in the deep peat cuttings; he heard from time to time the hoarse cry of a marsh-bird, whom he had frightened from his nest; otherwise not a sound, nothing but the dull thunder of Almansor's hoofs and the night-wind as it swept wailing and complaining across the heath.

And now, while he was in the very heart of the heath was not that another horse he heard, or was it merely the echo? It came nearer and nearer; Almansor pointed his ears and went faster and faster, as if he were trying to escape from death. And yet it came closer and closer. Oswald turned round, and vague horror seized him as he saw behind him a black figure on a black horse, whose hoofs did not seem to touch the ground.

A second more and the black horseman was by his side; the horses were racing head by head and snorted at each other with wide open nostrils.

"What do you wish?" asked Oswald, mastering his terror.

"Not much!" replied the black horseman, in a deep, hollow voice. "Wish only to report that my mistress has been back since day before yesterday; thought the young gentleman might not know it. No harm done, sir! Beg pardon! Good-night and good luck!"

The horseman threw his horse around, Almansor raced on, and the next moment Oswald was quite alone once more.

Was it the offspring of his overwrought imagination? Was it reality? Was it a phantom? Was that really old Baumann on Brownlock? Oswald could not tell to save his life.

And again houses and gardens, hedges and trees flew by him on the right and on the left, spectre-like, in the pale moonlight. A dog snapped with a yell at Almansor's hoofs. The next moment all had vanished, and boundless fields of grain waved and whispered on both sides of the high road.

Then lights began to shine from afar; they came nearer and nearer. A bell struck loud once; already a quarter to eleven! and once more houses right and left, trees, and hedges, and gardens. Then a dark town-gate, and then Almansor's hoofs on the hard pavement.

"Where does Doctor Braun live?"

"Down the street; the last house on the left."

Before that house a carriage was waiting. Lights shone from the open house-door and the open windows of the lower story.

"Is the doctor at home?"

"Here!" said Doctor Braun, from a window. "Where from?"

"From Grenwitz. It is I. Make haste--Bruno is dying."

"Was just coming," called Doctor Braun, already at the door. "Take a seat with me. I will drive myself. Charles can ride your horse back slowly. Are you in? Good. Now let us be off."

The carriage thundered through the dark streets, through the narrow gate, out into the silent moonlit night, which lay dreamily on fields and gardens, on meadows and forests, full of sweet fragrance. They went back the same way Oswald had come. The doctor's powerful horses trotted fast; in a few minutes they were on the heath.

Neither of them had said much. Oswald had told Doctor Braun of Bruno's complaint, like most laymen, dwelling on trifles and leaving out what was most important. Doctor Braun had asked a few brief questions. Then both had been silent for some time.

"You must be prepared for the worst," began Doctor Braun. "From what you tell me, I should not wonder if we found Bruno no longer alive."

Oswald made no reply. He uttered a groan, like a man under torture when the screws have had another turn.

The doctor whipped the horses, who now went off at full speed.

A few minutes later the carriage was at the great portal of the château. Every window was bright with light. From the supper-room loud music was heard. The servants were busily running to and fro.

When they entered Bruno's room. Baron Oldenburg rose from the bed, over which he had been bending.

"God be thanked that you are coming," he said; "I have watched by many a sick-bed, but I have never felt a longer hour than this."

He wiped his brow; his sad face was pale; he seemed to be deeply moved.

Dr. Braun examined the patient; then he remained standing by the bedside, without looking at the others.

"Is there no hope?"

"None."

Then Bruno raised himself slightly.

"Is that you, mamma? Do you come to sing me to sleep? How was the old song?"

And in a wondrously sweet voice, low, very low, like the notes of an Æolian harp, he began to sing a Swedish song, as his mother might have sung it to him years ago.

He was leaning back again on his pillow. Through the deep stillness of the room Oswald's sobs alone were heard; the eyes of the other two men were filled with tears.

"Is that you, Oswald?" asked Bruno; "why do you cry? Good evening, doctor; where do you come from? I suppose I am at the end of my life. Where is Baron Oldenburg? Give me your hand. You have been very kind to me. Doctor, must I die? Yes?--tell me, I am no coward; I knew it yesterday already; must I die? Then, Oswald, one more request; bend over me, I will whisper it in your ear."

Oswald did as he was asked.

He rose and went to the door. Oldenburg had followed him.

"I know what Bruno wants. He has asked for her a hundred times. I will call her. It is the last prayer of a dying man."

He went out; Oswald approached the bed again.

"Is she coming?"

"Yes."

"Put my pillow a little higher, Oswald, and put the lamp there, so that the light falls right upon her. Thank you; that is right."

"She is not coming--yes, was not that her voice? Screw the lamp down, Oswald, it is too bright in the room.--Helen!"

A blissful smile passed over his features.

"Helen! How pale you are; and yet how beautiful! Give me that rose on your bosom. Oh, do not cry! Let me kiss your hand, Helen!"

Helen bent over him and kissed him on his lips.

Bruno put his arms around her neck.

"I love you, Helen."

His arms sank back on the coverlet Dr. Braun gently raised Helen. He bent over the bed and listened for a moment. As he rose again he softly passed his hand over the eyes of the departed.

CHAPTER XXII.

It was three days after the events of that night.

Early in the morning it had been raining. Now in the later forenoon the sun was peeping at times through the heavy clouds, which rolled slowly toward the east, driven by a damp west wind.

In the graveyard at Fashwitz, in the avenue of linden-trees which leads from one end to the other, dividing the graves of the nobles from the graves of the common people, two persons were walking up and down in earnest conversation. At one of the gates of the graveyard which opened immediately upon the high-road, an elegant carriage and two was standing. Near by, a groom was leading two beautiful saddled horses by the bridle. Coachman and groom conversed in subdued tones, as if they did not wish to disturb the meditations of the old man with the long snow-white moustache, who sat on one of the curbstones of the gate, and looking from time to time, from under his heavy, overhanging brows, at the two persons inside.

They were Melitta and Oldenburg. Melitta was not in mourning, but her sweet, fair face had an expression of melancholy which it had never worn before. Even the smile with which she replied to many a remark of her companion was not the old joyous smile; it resembled the glimpses of the sun through the dismal, melancholy clouds.

"And you mean really to go?" she asked, breaking a pause which had occurred in their conversation.

"I rode over to Berkow to pay my farewell visit and to ask if you had any commands for me. You see that it was not an idle ceremony, or I would not have followed you here to the graveyard, although graves and graveyards, you know, are not the places I love particularly to frequent."

"And where are you going now?"

"I do not know yet. What can I do here? As I cannot live for her for whom alone I care to live, and as our miserable age has no great purpose to which a man may devote his life, I mean to go, like another Peter Schlemihl, in search of my own shadow. I only fear I shall never find it, or, if I do find it, it will leave me again at once, like the last time."

"Have you never tried to find the Brown Countess?"

"No. It would have been of no avail. Wandering gypsies leave no traces behind them; they are like ships sailing through the water. If I should not return, Melitta, you must send for your bust, which I ordered from young Goldoni in Rome. It is in my study at Cona; or would you like to have it at once?"

"No," said Melitta, "you had better keep it. Your unbounded kindness deserves a better reward than cold marble."

"Or marble coldness?" asked Oldenburg, smiling.

"That I do not give you, Oldenburg," said Melitta, with warmth; "really not. I love you as one would love a brother who is a few years older, who stands somewhat in the place of a father, and to whom one looks up with cheerful respect and gratitude. It is our fate, that you must needs love me in a different way, and that I cannot love you in any other way."

"It is our fate, indeed, Melitta, and now let us say nothing more about it. Against fate nothing can be done. We can only bow our head, and accept the laurel wreath or the death-blow in silence. I might have learnt that in these last days, if I had not known it before. And now, Melitta, since you yourself have called me a brother, let me speak to you like a brother. May I?"

"Yes," said Melitta, who had lowered her head at these last words of Oldenburg's, after a short pause, and in a low voice.

"Overcome your love for Oswald! I cannot advise you to pull out the arrow by one single effort,

because I fear the wound might bleed till you die; but do not resist the effect of time, which is almost as powerful as almighty Fate. After a few weeks, or a few months, you will think more calmly about it; will you promise me, like a good sister, not to look upon these calmer and wiser thoughts as a sin against your love?"

"Yes."

"For, Melitta, he is lost to you, even if he should overcome this last passion of his. His mad hunt after an Ideal, which he cannot find anywhere upon earth, because it only lives in his imagination, will lead him to another and another love. He will ever think: This is what you have been looking for in vain; and he will ever discover the illusion, until he will take at last, in his bitterest disappointment, a step which will relieve him of all further care for this wretched world. These last days have brought him much nearer to this unavoidable end."

"How are matters at Grenwitz?"

"Felix is out of danger, although at first he was given up. But he will, in all probability, be an invalid for life--a heavy punishment for one who has so long 'enjoyed the sweetness of flowers and broken every flower.' Oswald's ball missed its aim only by a hair's breadth. Felix owes his life to Bruno's death. Oswald did not say a word during the whole duel; his face remained unchanged, only when Felix fell a kind of smile passed over his features; he looked the very image of perfect composure, and only the close observer could have noticed that it was the snow on a volcano, and that from time to time a feverish tremor ran through his limbs. He bore himself in the whole affair with consummate tact, and even the host of adversaries had to acknowledge that Cloten actually said, in his admiration, he was very sorry the man was not born noble."

"And Helen?"

"Helen left, a few hours after the duel, with her father for Grunwald. I believe they are going to keep the girl there for a time, in a kind of honorable exile, till they have brought about a reconciliation with her mother. In the mean time the good woman is simply beside herself, and would have moved heaven and earth, and the police besides, to destroy Oswald, if Cloten and others had not told her that Felix had given the first provocation, and that a duel was simply unavoidable."

"And--Oswald?"

"I thought he had written to you?"

"Yes, but nothing about his plans for the future."

"Nor do I know anything about them. We have not exchanged three words with each other. I only know that he has been staying with Doctor Braun in town, to await what would come of the duel. I am glad he has chosen so well. His new friend, Braun, seems to be a man of as much character and cleverness as of goodness of heart. God grant that he may be a wiser Mentor for our Telemachus than I have been able to be, with the best will in the world. But now I must go, Melitta. Else my Almansor will beat his hoofs to powder. Have you anything more to do here?"

"No," said Melitta, "we can go."

"Will you often come to this place?"

"Hardly. I only wished to see if my orders had been attended to. You know, best of all, that the deceased, whom I came to see, has not been alive for me for long years, and, properly speaking, never."

"Then let us go, Melitta."

The baron took the arm of the young widow, and led her down the avenue. They did not say another word. Old Baumann opened the door of the carriage. Oldenburg helped Melitta in and stood a moment, hat in hand, by the open carriage. When the horses were about to start, Melitta gave him her hand; he pressed it to his lips. He remained motionless for a few moments, and looked after the carriage as it rolled away. Then he beckoned to his groom, mounted Almansor, and rode off at full speed in the opposite direction.

Two men had been watching this last scene, who had come into the graveyard at the very moment when Melitta and Oldenburg left through the gate opposite. They had placed a couple of wreaths on a new grave near the gate, on the side of the nobles. They were Oswald and Doctor Braun; both in travelling costume. They stood, arm in arm, on the steps of the church, and thus witnessed the parting scene between Oldenburg and Melitta. When the baron kissed Melitta's hand, an ironical smile passed over Oswald's pale, sunken face.

"Let us make haste to get away from here," he said. "I feel as if the ground were burning under my feet."

"I am ready," said the doctor. "If you had followed my advice you would have left here long ago, and if you follow my advice now, you will never return here. Our journey will give you back

to yourself. You have lost much, but nothing that cannot be regained. You have despised reason and science, man's highest power, and yet you can never hope for happiness except by such help, for,--you recollect the words of your favorite poet:

'----what Amor has taken from us
Apollo only can restore:
Peace, happiness, and harmony,
And pure and powerful aspirations--'

Come--let the dead bury the dead! You must begin a new life now!"

FOOTNOTES:

Footnote 1: "Illustrirte Zeitung," Leipzig, 9th February, 1867. "Bibliothek der deutchen Classiker." Hildburghausen. Band xxix, p. 683.

Footnote 2: Curtis's "*Nile Notes of a Howadji*," 1857; Emerson's "*English Traits*," 1857; a volume of American Poems, 1859; sec. ed., 1865: Roscoe's "*Lorenzo di Medici*," 1859, etc.

[Footnote 3: Since the above was in type we have become acquainted with some charming "Novellen" by Spielhagen, but lately published, of which, however, we cannot now speak. (His later works are: "The Fair American Ladies," "Hans and Grete," "The Village Coquette;" his latest, and perhaps most remarkable work, "Hammer and Anvil," has just been completed. He also lately published two volumes of "Critical Essays," which are highly praised by the German reviewers. Two of the essays are devoted to careful and appreciative criticisms of the American poets Bryant and Poe.)

Footnote 4: "*Die von Hohenstein* is by some considered to be superior to *Problematic Characters*; not so romantic and poetic, but equally rich in psychological truth, and more concentrated in form, more crystallized."

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