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THE NOVELS OF

FRIEDRICH SPIELHAGEN.

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JUST PUBLISHED.

I.--PROBLEMATIC CHARACTERS.

II.--THROUGH NIGHT TO LIGHT.

III.--THE HOHENSTEINS.

The above translated by Prof. SCHELE DE VERE.

IV.--HAMMER AND ANVIL.

Translated by Wm. HAND BROWNE.

IN PRESS.

V.--IN RANK AND FILE.

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 its author's insight into the souls of his characters.... If Germany is poorer than England, as regards the number of its novelists, it is 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 civilization. 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*.

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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*."

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25 BOND ST., NEW YORK.

HAMMER AND ANVIL

A Novel

BY

FRIEDRICH SPIELHAGEN

Author's Edition.

NEW YORK

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25 Bond Street

1870.

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FROM THE GERMAN

BY

WILLIAM HAND BROWNE

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HAMMER AND ANVIL.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

We were standing in a deep recess at the open window of our class-room. The sparrows were noisily chattering in the school-yard, and some scattered rays of the late summer sun glanced past the old gray walls down to the grass-grown pavement; from the class-room, which was high-ceilinged, sunless, and ill-ventilated, came the buzzing sound of repressed talk from our schoolfellows, who were all in their places, bent over their Sophocles, and watching for the arrival of the "old man," who was looked for every moment.

"At the worst, you can shuffle through somehow," I was saying, when the door opened and he came in.

He--Professor Lederer, Provisory Director of the Gymnasium, and Ordinarius of the first form, [\[1\]](#) "the old man," as we used to call him--was in reality not exactly old, but a man past the middle of the forties, whose small head, already turning gray, rested upon a stiff white cravat, and whose tall and extraordinarily lean figure was buttoned up, from one year's end to the other, summer and winter, in a coat of the finest and glossiest black. His slender hands, of which he took extreme care, with their long and tapering fingers--when twitching nervously, as they had a habit of doing, close under my eyes--had always a sort of fascination for me, and more than once I could scarcely resist the temptation to seize one of those artistic-looking hands and crush it in my own coarse brown fist.

Professor Lederer always paced the distance from the door to his desk in twelve measured, dignified strides, head and eyes a little drooped, with the austere look of intensest meditation; like a priest approaching the sacrificial altar, or a Caesar entering the senate--at all events like a being who, far removed from the modern plebeian sphere, walked day by day in the light of the sun of Homer, and was perfectly aware of the majestic fact. So it was never a judicious proceeding to try to detain this classical man upon this short journey, and in most cases a prohibitory gesture of his hand checked the attempt; but the sanguine Arthur was so sure that his request would not be refused, that he ventured it, reckless of further consequences. So, stepping out in front of the professor, he asked for a holiday for the day, which was Saturday.

"Certainly not," said the professor.

"To go sailing," urged Arthur, not in the least deterred by the stern tone of the professor, for my friend Arthur was not easily abashed--"to go in my uncle's steamboat to examine the oyster-beds which my uncle planted two years ago. I have a note from my father, you know, professor," and he produced the credential in question.

"Certainly not!" repeated the professor. His pale face flushed a little with irritation; his white hand, from which he had drawn his black glove, was extended towards Arthur with a classical minatory gesture; his blue eyes deepened in hue, like the sea when a cloud-shadow passes over it.

"Certainly not!" he exclaimed for the third time, strode past Arthur to his desk, and after silently folding his white hands, explained that he was too much excited to begin with the customary prayers. And presently followed a stammering philippic--the professor always stammered when irritated--against that pest of youth, worldliness and hankering after pleasure, which chiefly infected precisely those upon whom rested the smallest portion of the spirit of Apollo and Pallas Athené. "He was a mild and humane man," he said, "and well mindful of the words of the poet, that it was well to lay seriousness aside at the proper time and place; ay, even at times to quaff the wine-cup and move the feet in the dance; but then the cause should be sufficient to justify the license--a Virgil must have returned from a far-off land, or a Cleopatra have freed the people from imminent peril by her voluntary, yet involuntary death. But how could any one who notoriously was one of the worst scholars--yes, might be styled absolutely the worst, unless one other"--here the professor gave a side-glance at me--"could claim this evil pre-eminence--how could such a one dare to clutch at a garland which should only encircle a brow dripping with the sweat of industry! Was he, the speaker, too strict? He thought not. Assuredly, no one could wish it more earnestly than he, and no one would rejoice more heartily than he, if the subject of his severe rebuke would even now give the proof of his innocence by translating without an error the glorious chorus of the *Antigone*, which was the theme of the morning's lecture. Von Zehren, commence!"

Poor Arthur! I still see, after the lapse of so many years, his beautiful, but even then somewhat worn face, striving in vain to hold fast upon its lips the smile of aristocratic indifference with which he had listened to the professor's rebuke, as he took the book and read, not too fluently, a

verse or two of the Greek. Even in this short reading the scornful smile gradually faded, and he glanced from under his dropped lids a look of beseeching perplexity towards his neighbor and Pylades. But how was it possible for me to help him; and who knew better than he how impossible it was? So the inevitable came to pass. He turned the "shaft of Helios" into a "shield of Æolus," and blundered on in pitiable confusion. The others announced their better knowledge by peals of laughter, and a grim smile of triumph over his discomfiture even played over the grave features of the professor.

"The curs!" muttered Arthur with white lips, as he took his seat after the recitation had lasted a couple of minutes. "But why did you not prompt me?"

I had no time to answer this idle question, for it was now my turn. But I had no notion of making sport for my comrades by submitting to be classically racked; so I declared that I was even less prepared than my friend, and added that I trusted this testimony would corroborate the charge that the professor had been pleased to bring against me.

I accompanied these words with a threatening look at the others, which at once checked their mirth; and the professor, either thinking he had gone far enough, or not deigning to notice my insolent speech, turned away with a shrug of the shoulders, and contented himself with treating us with silent contempt for the rest of the recitation, while towards the others he was unusually amiable, enlivening the lesson by sallies of the most classical and learned wit.

No sooner had the door closed behind him, than Arthur stood up before the first form and said:

"You fellows have behaved meanly again, as you always do; but as for me, I have no notion of staying here any longer. The old man will not be back any more to-day; and if the others ask for me, say I am sick."

"And for me too," cried I, stepping up to Arthur and laying my arm on his shoulder. "I am going with him. A fellow that deserts his friend is a sneak."

A moment later we had dropped from the window twelve feet into the yard, and crouching between two buttresses that the professor might not espy us as he went out, we consulted what was next to be done.

There were two ways of getting out of the closed court in which we now were: either to slip through the long crooked corridors of the gymnasium--an old monastery--and so out into the street; or to go directly through the professor's house, which joined the yard at one corner, and thence upon the promenade, which nearly surrounded the town, and had in fact been constructed out of the old demolished town-walls. The first course was hazardous, for it often happened that a pair of teachers would walk up and down the cool corridors in conversation long after the regular time for the commencement of the lessons, and we had no minute to lose in waiting. The other was still more dangerous, for it led right through the lion's den; but it was far shorter, and practicable every moment, so we decided to venture it.

Creeping close to the wall, right under the windows of our class-room, in which the second lesson had already begun, we reached the narrow gate that opened into the little yard of the professor's house. Here all was quiet; through the open door we could see into the wide hall paved with slabs of stone, where the professor, who had just returned, was playing with his youngest boy, a handsome black-haired little fellow of six years, chasing him with long strides, and clapping his white hands. The child laughed and shouted, and at one time ran out into the yard, directly towards where we were hidden behind a pile of firewood--two more steps of the little feet, and we should have been detected.

I have often thought, since that time, that on those two little steps, in reality, depended nothing less than the whole destiny of my life. If the child had discovered us, we had only to come forward from behind the wood-pile, which every one had to pass in going from the gymnasium to the director's house, as two scholars on their way to their teacher to ask his pardon for their misbehavior. At least Arthur confessed to me that this idea flashed into his mind as the child came towards us. Then there would have been another reprimand, but in a milder tone, for the professor was a kind man at the bottom of his heart; we should have gone back to the class-room, pretended to our schoolmates that our running away was only a joke, and--well, I do not know what would have happened then; certainly not what really did happen.

But the little trotting feet did not come to us; the father, following with long strides, caught the child and tossed it in the air till the black curls glistened in the sunshine, and then carried it back, caressing it, to the house, where Mrs. Professor now appeared at the door, with her hair in papers, and a white apron on; and then father, mother, and child disappeared. Through the open door we could see that the hall was empty--now or never was the time.

With beating hearts, such as only beat in the breasts of school-boys bent on some dangerous prank, we stole to the door through the silent hall where the motes were sparkling in the sunbeams that slanted through the gothic windows. As we opened the house-door, the bell gave a clear note of warning; but even now the leafy trees of the promenade were beckoning to us; in half a minute we were concealed by the thick bushes, and hastening with rapid steps, that now

and then quickened to a half run, towards the port.

"What will you say to your father?" I asked.

"Nothing at all, because he will ask no questions," Arthur replied; "or if he does, I will say that I was let off; what else? It will be capital; I shall have splendid fun."

We kept on for a while in silence. For the first time it occurred to me that I had run away from school for just nothing at all. If Arthur came in for a couple of days in the dungeon, he, at all events, would have had "splendid fun," and thus, for him at least, there was some show of reason in the thing. His parents, too, were very indulgent; his share of the danger was as good as none, while I ran all the risk of discovery and punishment without the least compensation; and my stern old father was a man who understood no trifling, least of all in matters of this sort. So once again, as many times before, I had helped to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for somebody else. However, what did it matter? Here, under the rustling trees, after our brisk race, it was more pleasant than in the stifling class-room; and for me, in those times, every silly, venturesome frolic had a pleasure in itself. So I felt it a special piece of magnanimity on the part of my usually selfish friend, when he suddenly said:

"Look here, George, you shall come too. Uncle charged me particularly to bring as many friends as I could. I tell you it will be splendid. Elise Kohl and Emilie Heckepfennig are going with us. For once I shall leave Emilie to you. And then the oysters, and the champagne, and the pineapple punch--yes, you certainly must come."

"And my father?" I said; but I only said it, for my resolution to be one of the party was already taken. Emilie Heckepfennig--Emilie, with her little turned-up nose and laughing eyes, who had always shown me a decided preference; and recently, at forfeits, had given me a hearty kiss, to which she was in no wise bound, and whom Arthur, the coxcomb, was going to leave especially to me! Yes, I must go along, happen what might.

"Can I go as I am, do you think?" I asked, suddenly halting, with a glance at my dress, which was plain and neat, it is true--I was always neat--but not exactly the thing for company.

"Why not?" said Arthur. "What difference does it make? And, besides, we have not a minute to spare."

Arthur, who was in his best clothes, had not looked at me, nor slackened his pace in the least. We had not a minute to spare, that was true enough, for as slipping through some narrow alleys we reached the harbor, we heard the bell ringing on board the steamer that was lying at the wharf just ready to start. The sturdy figure of the captain was seen standing upon the paddle-box. We pushed through the crowd on the wharf, ran up the gang-plank, which they were just hauling in, and mingled with the gay throng on deck, as the wheels began to turn.

CHAPTER II.

"How you startled me!" said Frau von Zehren, seizing her son by both hands. "We began to think, what was really impossible, that Professor Lederer had refused you permission. You see now, Zehren, that I was right."

"Well, it is all right now," replied the steuerrath.^[2] "The young ladies were inconsolable at the prospect of your absence Arthur--or am I saying too much, Fräulein Emilie and Fräulein Elise?" and the steuerrath turned with a polite wave of his hand to the young ladies, who tittered and nodded their dark broad-brimmed straw-hats at each other.

"And now you must speak to your uncle," he went on; "but where is your uncle, then?" and he ran his eye over the company that was moving about the deck.

The Commerzienrath Streber came bouncing up. His little, light-blue eyes glittered under bushy gray brows, the long peak of his old-fashioned cap was pushed back from his bald forehead, the left sleeve of his loose blue frock-coat, with gold buttons, had slipped half off his shoulder, as he hurried along on his little legs, cased in yellow nankeen trousers:

"Where has that rascal John put the----?"

"Allow me, brother-in-law, to present my Arthur----."

"Very good," cried the commerzienrath, without even giving a look at the presentee. "Aha!

there the villain is!" and he made a dart at his servant, who was just coming up the companion-way with a tray of glasses.

The steuerrath and his lady exchanged a look, in which "the old brute," or some similarly flattering expression, was plainly legible. Arthur had joined the young ladies and said something at which they burst out laughing and rapped him with their parasols; I, whom nobody seemed to notice, turned away and went on the more quiet forward deck, where I found a seat upon a coil of rope, and leaning my back against the capstan, looked out upon the bright sky and the bright sea.

In the meantime the boat had left the harbor, and was moving down with the coast on our larboard, where the red roofs of the fishermen's cottages shone through the trees and bushes; while on the narrow strip of level beach here and there figures were seen, seafaring folks probably, or sea-bathers, who were watching the steamer go by. To our right the shore receded, so that it was only just possible to distinguish it from the water; before us, but at a still more remote distance, gleamed the chalk-coast of the neighboring island over the blue expanse of sea, which now began to roughen a little under a fresher breeze, while countless flocks of seabirds now flew up from the approach of the puffing steamer, and now, with their cunning heads turned towards us, sported on the waves and filled the air with their monotonous cries.

It was a bright and lovely morning; but though I saw its beauty, it gave me no pleasure. I felt singularly dejected. Had the *Penguin* that, with a sluggishness altogether at variance with her name, was slowly toiling through the water, been a beautiful swift clipper, bound for China or Buenos Ayres, or somewhere thousands of miles away, and I a passenger with a great purse of gold, or even a sailor before the mast, with the assurance that I should never again set eyes on the hateful steeples of my native town, I should have been light-hearted enough. But now! what was it then that made me so low-spirited? The consciousness of my disobedience? Dread of the disagreeable consequences, now, to all human foresight, inevitable? Nothing of the sort. The worst could only be that my stern father would drive me from his house, as he had already often enough threatened to do; and this possibility I regarded as a deliverance from a yoke which seemed to grow more intolerable every day; and as the idea arose in my mind, I welcomed it with a smile of grim satisfaction. No, it was not that. What then?

Well, to have run away from school with an ardor as if some glorious prize was to be won, and then, in a merry company, on the deck of a steamboat, to sit away by myself on a coil of rope, not one of the gentlemen or ladies taking the slightest notice of me, and with not even the prospect that the waiter, with the caviar-rolls and port wine, would at last come round to me! This last neglect, to tell the honest truth, for the moment afflicted me most sorely of all. My appetite, as was natural for a robust youth of nineteen, was always of the best, and now by the brisk run from school to the harbor and the fresh sea-breeze, it was sharpened to a distressing keenness.

I stood up in a paroxysm of impatience, but quickly sat down again. No, Arthur certainly would come and take me to the company; it was the least that he owed me, after I had been so obliging as to run away with him. As if he had ever yet paid me what he owed me! How many fishing-rods, canary birds, shells, fifes, pocket-knives, had he not already bought of me, that is, coaxed and worried me out of, without ever paying me for them. Ay, how often had he not borrowed my slender stock of pocket-money, whenever the amount made it worth his while; for which sometimes even a couple of *silbergroschen* sufficed.

Curious, that just now, on this bright sunny morning, I should take to reckoning up this black account! It was certainly the first time since the beginning of our friendship, which dated at least from our sixth year. For I had always loved the handsome slender boy, who had such sunny hair and gentle brown eyes, and whose velvet Sunday jacket felt so soft to the touch. I had loved him as a great rough mastiff might love a delicate greyhound that he could crush with one snap of his jaws; and so I loved him even now, while he was flirting with the girls, and chattering and laughing with the company like the *petit maître* he was.

I grew very melancholy as I watched all this from my place, where nobody could see me--very melancholy and altogether dissipated. I must have been very hungry.

We were now just rounding a long headland, which ran out from the western coast. At its farthest low extremity, in a spot entirely surrounded by water, separated by a wide interval from the row of houses on the dune, and shadowed by a half-decayed oak, stood a cottage, the sight of which called into my mind a flood of pleasant memories. The old blacksmith, Pinnow, lived there, the father of my friend Klaus Pinnow. Smith Pinnow was by far the most remarkable personage of all my acquaintance. He possessed four old double-barreled percussion guns, and a long single-barreled fowling-piece with a flint lock, which he used to hire to the bathers when they took a fancy to have a little shooting, and sometimes to us youngsters when we were in funds, for Smith Pinnow was not in the habit of conferring gratuitous favors. He had, besides, a great sail-boat, also kept for the bathing company, at least of late years, since he had grown half blind and could not venture longer trips. The rumor ran that formerly he used to make very different voyages, of by no means so innocent a character; and the excise officers, my father's colleagues (my father had lately been promoted to an accountantship) shook their heads when Smith Pinnow's by-gone doings happened to be referred to. But what was that to us youngsters? Especially, what was it to me, who owed the happiest hours of my life to the four rusty guns, and the fowling-piece, and Smith Pinnow's old boat, and who had had the best comrade in the world in Klaus Pinnow? Had had, I say, for during the last four years, while Klaus was an apprentice to the locksmith

Wangerow, and afterwards when he became a journeyman, I had seen him but seldom, and, indeed, for the last half year not at all.

He came at once into my mind as we steamed past his father's cottage, and I perceived a figure standing on the sands by the side of the boat which was drawn up on the beach. The distance was great, but my keen eyes recognized Christel Möwe, Klaus's adopted sister, whom sixteen years before, old Pinnow's wife--long since dead--had found the morning after a storm, lying on the beach among the boxes and planks driven ashore from a wreck, and whom the old blacksmith, in an unwonted impulse of generosity, as some said, or to raise his credit with the neighbors, according to others, had taken into his house. The wreck was a Dutch ship from Java, as they made out from some of the things cast ashore; but her name and owners were never discovered--probably from the negligence of the officials charged with the investigations--and they named the little foundling Christina, or Christel, Möwe [*Gull*], because the screams of a flock of gulls in the air had attracted Goodwife Pinnow to the spot where the child was lying.

A noise close at hand caused me to look round. Two paces from me a hatchway was opened, and out of the hatchway emerged the figure of a man who was standing on the ladder, but whose head rose high enough above the deck to allow him to see over the low bulwarks. His short stiff hair, his broad face, his bare muscular neck, his breast open almost to the belt, his shirt which had once been striped with red, and his trousers which had once been white--were all covered with a thick black deposit of coal-dust; and as he was blinking with his small eyes almost shut in order to see more keenly some distant object, he would have presented an unbroken surface of blackness, had he not at this moment expanded an immense mouth into a joyous grin, and displayed two rows of teeth of unsurpassed whiteness. And now he raised himself a few inches higher, waved his great black hand as a greeting towards the beach, and all at once I recognized him.

"Klaus!" I called out.

"Hallo!" he cried, starting, and quickly bringing his small eyes to bear upon me.

"That was a mighty affectionate salute of yours, Klaus."

Klaus blushed visibly through his rind of soot, and showed all his teeth. "Why, in the name of --, George," cried he, "where do you come from, and what has brought you here?"

"And what has brought you here?"

"I have been here ever since Easter. I have had it in my mind for some time to come to see you and inquire after your health."

"You foolish fellow, why do you put on that respectful tone with me?"

"Oh, you belong to the great folks now," replied Klaus, jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the quarter-deck.

"I wish I were below with you, and you would give me a good thick slice of bread and butter. Hang the great folks, as you call them."

Klaus looked at me in astonishment.

"Well, but why in the world----" he began.

"Why am I here? Is that what you mean? Why, because I am a fool and an ass."

"Oh, no," remonstrated Klaus.

"Yes, I am--a complete ass. I wish all my friends were as good as you are, Klaus." Here I gave a glance towards the perfidious Arthur, who was strutting about among the guests with the parasol of the perfidious Emilie, while she had set his little straw-hat in a coquettish fashion on her curls.

"I am wanted below," said Klaus, with a friendly grin; "Good-by." And down the ladder he went.

"Was that a chimney-sweep?" asked a clear voice behind me.

I turned hastily round, rising from my seat. There stood a charming little lady of eight, in a little white frock with ribbons of cornflower blue at the shoulders and streaming from her straw-hat, whose great cornflower blue eyes first stared with intense curiosity at the hatchway through which my black friend had vanished, and then turned inquiringly to me.

At this moment the hatch was raised again, and Klaus's head emerged--"Shall I really get you a slice?"

"Oh, mercy!" cried the little lady. Klaus vanished instantaneously, and the hatch shut down with a bang.

"Oh, mercy!" cried the little maid again. "How it frightened me!"

"What frightened you, *ma chère!*" asked another voice. The voice was extremely thin, and so was the lady to whom it belonged, and who had just come out of the deck-cabin. So also was the worn dress of changeable silk that fluttered about her figure, and the reddish locks that drooped on each side of her pale face.

This lady was Fräulein Amalie Duff, and the little maid with the cornflower eyes and ribbons was her pupil, Hermine Streber, the commerzienrath's only child. Of course I knew them both, as indeed I was pretty well acquainted with everybody in our little town, as soon as they were out of long-clothes; and they might well have known me, for I had been two or three times with Arthur in his uncle's large garden at the town-gate, and a fortnight before had even had the honor to swing the little Hermine in the great wooden swing, from which, if you swung high enough, you could catch a sight of the sea through the tops of the trees. Fräulein Duff, moreover, was a native of the little Saxon town which was the birthplace of my parents; and when she arrived, some months before, she brought various messages and greetings from the old home, which unhappily came too late for my good mother, who had been resting in the churchyard for fifteen years. She had frequently condescended indeed no longer ago than the afternoon of the swinging to bestow her instructive conversation upon me; but she was very near-sighted, and I could not take it amiss that she applied her gold double eye-glass to her pale eyes, and with a sweeping reverence, which in the dancing-school is called, I believe, *grand compliment*, inquired: "Whom have I the honor to----?"

I introduced myself.

CHAPTER II.

"O ciel!" cried Fräulein Duff, "*mon jeune compatriote!* A thousand pardons!--my near-sightedness! How is your respected father, and your amiable mother? Dear me! how confused I am! But your sudden appearance in this retired corner of the world has quite unnerved me. I was about to say--the company are asking for you. How did you manage to elude observation?--they are looking for you everywhere."

"Yet I might have been found easily enough," I said, probably with a touch of wounded pride in the tone, which did not escape the quick ear of Fräulein Duff.

"Ah, yes," she said, conveying a look of intelligence into her pale eyes. "'Who solace seeks in solitude'--alas! too true.

"'For gold all are longing,
Round gold all are thronging--'"

"Not so wild, *ma chère!* The dreadful creature will tear your dress!"

These last words were addressed to the little Hermine, who had begun to romp on the smooth deck with a pretty little spaniel that had run to her barking and jumping.

"You have a feeling heart," continued the governess, turning again to me; "I see it in the pained expression of your mouth. Your soul shrinks from noisy joys; this boisterous merriment is odious to you. But we poor ones must submit to the inevitable--or I, at least must. Would I be here if it were not so? Upon this tossing bark, in terror for my life? And all for what purpose? to assist at a cannibal feast! Innocent oysters, which men tear from the maternal bosom of the sea to devour alive! Is that a fit spectacle to be exhibited to a child?" and Fräulein Duff shook her thin locks with an expression of the deepest solicitude.

"It remains yet to be seen whether we shall find any," I said, with something like a sneer.

"Do you think so? The other gentlemen doubt it, too. The water of the Baltic is not salt enough. True, we are informed that the Romans propagated them in fresh-water lakes near Naples--but why parade my modest bit of learning before a young scholar like yourself? The good commerzienrath! Yes, yes; despise reason and learning who will!--but here he comes himself. Not a word of what we have been saying, my young friend, I beseech you!"

I had no time to assure the pale lady of my discretion, for nearly the whole company came crowding on the forward-deck, in the wake of the commerzienrath, who had the fat Mrs. Justizrath Heckepfennig upon his arm, to look at a three-master that was just passing us under full sail. In the next moment I was in the midst of the crowd, and the ice, in which I had been

sitting, so to speak, was broken. Arthur, whose delicate face was already flushed by the wine he had been drinking, clapped me on the shoulder and asked where upon earth I had been hiding. The perfidious Emilie held out her hand and murmured: "Had you then entirely forgotten me?" and--as just at that moment a salute was fired from some small mortars on board the steamer--fell, with a little scream, into my arms. The three-master, that was just returning from the West Indies, belonged to the commerzienrath's fleet. They knew that she would arrive to-day; and it was by no means disagreeable to the commerzienrath to be able to carry his guests, on their way to his oyster-beds, past the finest of his ships. He mounted the paddle-box, speaking-trumpet in hand, and roared, at the pitch of his lungs, something which, amid the universal hurraing and the explosions of the mortars, was perfectly inaudible to the bronzed captain of the ship, who shrugged his broad shoulders as a sign that he could not catch a word of it all. What difference did it make? It was a splendid sight; and the commerzienrath upon the paddle-box, trumpet in hand, was the chief figure in it. That was enough for him; and as the *Albatros* with her wide wings swept by, and the short legs of the *Penguin* began to paddle again, and he descended from his pedestal to receive the congratulations of the company, his little clear eyes sparkled, his nostrils expanded, and his loud laugh rang like the crowing of a cock, exulting in the proud consciousness that he is the master of the dunghill.

The rest of the poultry freely acknowledged this superiority: there was cackling and clucking, bowing and scraping, and no one more obsequious than Arthur's father, the steuerrath, who kept constantly at the side of the great man, saying, in his smooth voice, flatteries, which the other received as a matter of course--something to which he was well accustomed, especially from that quarter--with an indifference which to most others would have been insulting. It is quite possible that the steuerrath did not find this behavior on the part of his rich brother-in-law altogether pleasant, but he was too much a man of the world to give any outward sign of his inward emotions. But his spouse was not quite so successful in her self-command, who, as born Baroness Kippenreiter, had an unquestionable claim to respectful attention, and a right to be dissatisfied if this were withheld. So she sought to indemnify herself for the humiliation by the extremest possible condescension of manner towards the other ladies, Mrs. Burgomaster Koch, Mrs. Justizrath Heckepfennig, Mrs. Bauinspector Strombach, and the rest of the feminine *élite* of our little town, though even this satisfaction could not roll away the clouds from her aristocratic brow.

I had hardly begun to feel at ease in the company, which happened quickly enough, when my natural vivacity, which bordered on rudeness, returned and impelled me to a hundred pranks, which were decidedly not in the best taste, though certainly not instigated by any intention to offend, and which I carried on all the more recklessly, as I perceived I had all the laughers on my side. I could blush with shame even now, when I think of my shallow attempts at wit, and how poor in invention and clumsy in execution were the comic imitations to which I must needs treat my respectable audience, because forsooth I had a sort of celebrity in the town for this sort of thing, (my masterpiece, I remember, was a lover bent on regaling his mistress with a serenade, and incessantly disturbed by barking dogs, mewling cats, scolding neighbors, and malicious passers-by, and finally taken up by the watch,) what foolish flippancy and want of tact in the speeches that I made at the table, and with how many glasses of wine I repaid myself for all my ridiculous exertions.

And yet this lunch under an awning on deck of the steamer that was now anchored in the calm, smooth sea, was the last real merry-making that I was to have for many long years. I do not know if it was this that keeps it so bright in my memory, or rather the youth that then glowed in my veins, the wine that sparkled in the glasses, the bright sunshine that glistened on the sea, and the sweet air that swept so softly over the water that it did not suffice to cool the flushed cheeks of the maidens. It was rather all together--youth, sunlight, sea-breeze, golden wine, rosy cheeks; and ah! the oysters, the unlucky oysters, that had had two years in which to multiply like the sand of the sea, and which the sea-sand and sea-currents had buried and swept away, all to a few empty shells! What an inexhaustible theme were these empty shells, displayed with humorous ostentation in a splendid dish in the centre of the table! how every one tried his wit on them, and what a malicious joy each felt that the millionaire's obstinate conceit had had a lesson, and that not all his millions could extort from nature what she had determined to refuse!

But the old fellow bore it all with the utmost good-humor; and after he had bewailed his ill-luck in a humorous speech, suddenly a loud clamor arose on the forward-deck, and the sailors dragged forward great barrels of oysters, which they declared they had just taken up. Then there was no end to the exultation and cheers to our magnificent host, who once more had shown that his sagacity and foresight were even greater than his conceit and his obstinacy.

I do not know how late the feast was protracted, while the ladies promenaded the deck; it was certainly kept up far too long for us youngsters. Very queer stories were told, in which the commerzienrath particularly distinguished himself; we laughed, we shouted--I must volunteer songs, which were received with storms of applause, and I was not a little vain as my powerful bass drew even the ladies to the table again, and did my best, when both ladies and gentlemen joined in unison in the glee, "What it means I cannot tell," to carry through a second voice (in thirds), keeping my eye all the while on Fräulein Emilie--an attention which naturally set the other young ladies to giggling and nudging each other, and occasioned Arthur such pangs of jealousy, that afterwards, as we were walking up and down the deck, with our cigars, he called me to account for it.

By this time it was evening, for I remember that, while talking with Arthur, I noticed on the coast of the island, which we had neared on our return, an old ruin, standing picturesquely on a high and steep cliff, and glowing in the light of the setting sun. The sight of this ruin gave an unpleasant turn to our discussion, which had already grown sharp. This tower happened to be the sole remnant of the ancient Zehrenburg, the ancestral seat of Arthur's family, which, in former times, had enjoyed large possessions on the island. Arthur pointed with a pathetic gesture to the ruddy walls, and demanded that I, here and now, with my eye upon the castle of his ancestors, should renounce forever all pretensions to Emilie Heckepfennig. "A plebeian like myself," he said, "was in duty bound to give way to a patrician." I maintained that there were no such things as plebeians or patricians in affairs of the heart, and that I would never consent to a pledge which would entail perpetual wretchedness on both Emilie and myself.

"Slave!" cried Arthur, "is it thus that you repay me for the condescension that has so long tolerated your society?"

I laughed aloud, and my laughter still further exasperated Arthur's drunken passion.

"My father is Steuerrath von Zehren," he cried, "and yours a miserable subaltern."

"Let us leave our fathers out of the question, Arthur; you know I will not endure any insult to mine."

"Your father----"

"Once more I warn you, Arthur, leave my father's name alone. My father, at the very least, is as good as yours. And if you say another word about my father, I'll fling you overboard," and I shook my fist in Arthur's face.

"What's the matter here?" asked the steuerrath, who suddenly appeared. "How, young man, is this the respect that you owe to my son--that you owe to me? It appears that you are disposed to add the crown to your disgraceful behavior all day. My son has invited you into his company for the last time."

"Invited me, indeed!" I said. "We ran away, both of us!"--and I burst into a shout of laughter that quite justified the steuerrath's qualification of my behavior.

"How!" he exclaimed. "Arthur, what does this mean?"

But Arthur was not in condition to give an intelligible answer. He stammered out something, and rushed toward me, apparently with the intention of striking me, but his father caught his arm and led him away, speaking very earnestly to him in a low tone, and as he went he threw a furious look at me.

My blood, already excited, was now boiling in my veins. The next thing I remember I was walking arm-in-arm with the commerzienrath--I have never been able to understand how I did it--and passionately complaining to him of the crying outrage I had received from my best friend, for whom I was at all times ready to sacrifice fortune and blood. The commerzienrath seemed as if he would die with laughing. "Fortune and blood!" he cried; "as for the fortune"--here he shrugged his shoulders and blew out his cheeks--"and as for the blood"--here he nudged me with his elbow in the side. "Full blood, capital blood, of course. I have had one of the breed myself; a Kippenreiter! Baroness Kippenreiter! My Hermann, at all events, is of the half blood. There she runs; is she not an angel? Pity she was not a boy: that's the reason I always call her Hermann. Hermann! Hermann!"

The little maid came running: she had on a red scarf, which her father, after kissing her, wrapped closer around her delicate shoulders.

"Is she not an angel--a pride?" he went on taking my arm again. "She shall have a count for a husband; not a poor, penniless sprig of nobility, like my brother-in-law, nor like his drunken brother at Zehrendorf, nor the other, that sneaking fellow, the penitentiary superintendent at What-d'ye-call-it. No, a real count, a fellow six feet high, just like you, my boy, just like you!"

The short commerzienrath tried to lay his two fat hands upon my shoulders, and tipsy emotion blinked in his eyes.

"You are a capital fellow, a splendid fellow. Pity you are such a poor devil; you should be my son-in-law. But I must call you *thou*: thou mayst say *thou* to me, too, brother!" and the worthy man sobbed upon my breast and called for champagne, apparently with a view of solemnly ratifying the bond, of brotherhood after the ancient fashion.

I have my doubts whether he carried this design into effect: at all events I remember nothing of the ceremony, which could scarcely have escaped my memory. But I remember that not long after I was in the engine-room with a bottle of wine, hobnobbing with my friend Klaus, and swearing that he was the best and truest fellow in the world, and that I would appoint him head-stoker in hell as soon as I got there, which would not be long coming as I must have a settlement with father this evening, and that I would let myself be torn in pieces for him at any time, and that I would be glad if it were done right at once, and that if the great black fellow there did not

stop swinging his long iron arm up and down I would lay my head under it, and there would be an end of George Hartwig.

How the good Klaus brought me out of this suicidal frame of mind, and how he got me up the ladder again, I cannot say; it must have been managed somehow, for as we steamed into the harbor I was sitting on deck, watching the masts of the anchored ships glide past us, and the stars glittering through the spars and cordage. The crescent moon that was standing over the spire of the church of St Nicholas seemed suddenly to drop behind it, but it was I that dropped, as the *Penguin* struck the timbers of the wharf, on which there was again assembled a crowd of people, not hurraing, however, as when we started, but, as it seemed to me, strangely silent; and, as I made my way through them, staring at me I thought in a singular manner, so that I felt as if something terrible must have happened, or was on the point of happening, and that I was in some mysterious way the cause of it.

I stood before my father's small house in the narrow Water street. A light was glimmering through the closed shutters of the room to the left of the front door, by which I knew that my father was at home--he usually took a solitary walk around the town-wall at this hour. Could it be so very late, then? I took out my watch and tried to make out the time by the moonlight--for the street-lamps were never lighted in Uselin on moonlight nights--but could not succeed. No matter, I said to myself, it is all one! and grasped resolutely the brass knob of the front door. To my feverish hand it felt cold as ice.

CHAPTER III.

As I closed the door behind me, old Frederica, who, since my mother's death, had been housekeeper for my father, came suddenly out of the small room on the right. By the light of a lamp burning dimly on the hall-table I saw the good old woman throw up her hands and stare at me with wide, frightened eyes. "Has anything happened to my father?" I stammered, seizing the table to support myself. What with the warm atmosphere of the house after the fresh night-air, and my alarm at Frederica's terrified looks, my breath failed me, the blood seemed to rush to my head, and the room began to go round.

"Wretched boy, what have you done?" piteously exclaimed the old woman.

"In heaven's name, what has happened?" I cried, seizing her by both hands.

Here my father opened the door of his room and appeared upon the threshold. Being a large man and the door small, he nearly filled up the doorway.

"Thank God!" I murmured to myself.

At this moment I experienced no other feeling than that of joyful relief from the anxiety which seemed on the point of suffocating me; in the next, this natural emotion gave way to another, and we glared at each other like two foes who suddenly meet, after one has long been seeking the other, and the other nerves himself for the result, be it what it may, from which he now sees there is no escape.

"Come in," said my father, making way for me to pass into his room.

I obeyed: there was a humming noise in my ears, but my step was firm; and if my heart beat violently in my breast, it was certainly not with fear.

As I entered, a tall black figure slowly rose from my father's large study-chair--my father allowed no sofa in his house--it was Professor Lederer. I stood near the door, my father to the right, by the stove, the professor at the writing-table in front of the lamp, so that his shadow reached from the ceiling to the floor, and fell directly upon me. No one moved or spoke; the professor wished to leave the first word to my father, and my father was under too much excitement to speak. In this way we stood for about half a minute, which seemed to me an eternity, and during which the certainty flashed into my mind that if the professor did not immediately leave the room and the house, all possible chance of an explanation between my father and myself was cut off.

"Misguided young man," at last began the professor.

"Leave me alone with my father, Herr Professor," I interrupted him.

The professor looked at me as if he could not believe his ears. A delinquent, a criminal--for

such I was in his eyes--to dare to interrupt his judge in such a tone, and with such a request--it was impossible.

"Young man," he began again, but his tone was not as assured as the first time.

"I tell you, leave us alone together," I cried with a louder voice, and making a motion towards him.

"He is mad," said the professor, taking a hasty step backwards, which brought him in contact with the table.

"Sirrah!" exclaimed my father, stepping quickly forward, as if to protect the professor from my violence.

"If I am mad," I said, turning my burning eyes from one to the other, "so much the greater reason for leaving us alone."

The professor looked round for his hat, which stood behind him on the table.

"No; remain, remain," said my father, his voice quivering with passion. "Is this audacious boy again to have his insolent way? I have too long been culpably negligent; it is high time to take other measures."

My father began to pace up and down the room, as he always did when violently agitated.

"Yes, to take other measures," he continued. "This has gone on far too long. I have done all I could; I have nothing to reproach myself with; but I will not become a public by-word for the sake of a perverse boy. If he refuses to do what is his plain duty and obligation, then have I no further duty or obligation towards him; and let him see how he can get through the world without me."

He had not once looked at me while he uttered these words in a voice broken with passion. Later in life I saw a painting representing the Roman holding his burning hand in the glowing coals, and looking sideways upon the ground with an expression of intensest agony. It brought at once into my mind the remembrance of my father at this fateful moment.

"Your father is right"--commenced for the third time the professor, who held it his duty to strike in while the iron was hot--"when was there ever a father who has done more for his children than your excellent parent, whose integrity, industry and virtue have become a proverb, and who through your fault is now deprived of the crowning ornament of a good citizen; that is, a well-disciplined son, to be the stay of his declining years. Is it not enough that inevitable fate has already hard smitten this excellent man--that he has lost a dear consort and a son in the bloom of youth? Shall he now lose the last, the Benjamin of his old age? Shall his unwearied solicitude, his daily and nightly prayers----"

My father was a man of strictest principles, but far from devout, in the ordinary acceptation of the word; an untruth was his abhorrence, and it was an untruth to say that he had prayed by night and day; and besides, he had an excessive, almost morbid modesty, and the professor's panegyric struck him as exaggerated and ill-timed.

"Let all that pass, Herr Professor"--he interrupted the learned man rather impatiently--"I say again, I have done my duty. Enough! let him do his. I want nothing of him--nothing--nothing whatever--not so much as"--and he brushed one hand over the other; "but this I will have, and if he refuses----"

My father had worked himself into a rage again, and my apparent composure only further exasperated him. Strange! Had I fallen to prayers and entreaties, I know that my father would have despised me, and yet, because I did what he himself would most assuredly have done in my position, because I was silent and stubborn, he hated me at this moment as one hates anything that stands in one's way, and which yet cannot be spurned aside with contempt.

"You have been guilty of a heavy offence, George Hartwig"--the professor began again in a declamatory tone--"that of leaving the Gymnasium without the permission of your teachers. I will not speak of the boundless disrespect with which, as so often before, you rejected the precious opportunity offered you of acquiring knowledge: I will only speak of the terrible guilt of disobedience, of insolent defiance of orders, of the evil example that your disgraceful conduct has presented to your class-mates. If Arthur von Zehren's facile temper has at last been warped into confirmed frivolity, this is the evil fruit of your bad example. Never would that misguided boy have dared to do what he has done to-day----"

As I knew the misguided boy so much better than he, I here broke into a loud, contemptuous laugh, which drove the professor completely beyond his self-control. He caught up his hat, and muttering some unintelligible words, apparently expressing his conviction that I was lost beyond all possibility of reformation, was about to leave the room, when he was detained by my father.

"One moment, Herr Professor," he said, and then turning to me--"You will instantly ask pardon of your teacher for this additional insolence--instantly!"

"I will not," I replied.

"Instantly!" thundered my father.

"I will not!" I repeated.

"Once more, will you, or will you not?"

He stood before me his whole frame quivering with anger. His naturally sallow complexion had turned of an ashy gray, the veins of his brow were swollen, his eyes flashed. His last words had been spoken in a hoarse, hissing tone.

"I will not," I said for the third time.

My father raised his arm as if to strike me, but he did not strike; his arm slowly descended, and with outstretched hand he pointed to the door:

"Begone!" he said, slowly and firmly. "Leave my house forever!"

I looked straight into his eyes; I was about to say something--perhaps "Forgive me, father; I will ask *your* forgiveness;" but my heart lay like a stone in my breast; my teeth were clenched like a vice; I could not speak. I moved silently towards the door. The professor hurried after me and seized my arm, no doubt with the kindest intentions; but I saw in him only the cause of my disgrace. I thrust him roughly aside, flung the door to after me, ran past the old housekeeper--the good old creature had evidently been listening, for she stood there wringing her hands, the picture of despair--and out of the house into the street.

CHAPTER IV.

I ran for a short distance like a madman, when suddenly my limbs began to totter under me; the moonlit roofs, the lighted windows in some of the houses, danced wildly before my eyes; the fumes of the wine I had been drinking, repressed for a while by my mental excitement, now rose again to my brain; I had to lean against a wall to keep myself from falling.

I had probably remained for a few minutes in a state of partial insensibility when the voices of some maids, who were bringing water from the adjacent fountain, recalled me to consciousness. I roused myself, and staggered down the street. Soon my strong natural constitution began to assert itself; my steps grew firmer, and I began to consider what I should do, and first of all, whither I should go. The idea of seeking lodgings at an inn I rejected at once; I had never yet passed a night from home; and besides, my whole stock of money did not exceed one *thaler*--my father always kept me on a very meagre allowance of pocket-money--and I had an indistinct notion that I should have to make this slender sum go a long way. Had I not quarreled with Arthur and parted from him in anger, I should probably have gone to him; but as it was, I felt it impossible to present myself at his house as a suppliant; and, besides, by this time he was most likely sleeping off his intoxication, and his parents had never been friendly disposed towards me. The *commerzienrath*! He had embraced me, called me *thou* and *brother*: he would assuredly receive me with rapture, have me shown to a magnificent chamber, with a grand four-post curtained bed----

But while I was indulging in the picture of my brilliant reception at the *commerzienrath's*, I was hastening steadily in the opposite direction, towards the harbor. I passed some low taverns in which sailors were roaring out coarse songs. How if I went in and joined the drinkers, and tomorrow went out into the wide world a sailor, like my brother Fritz? That would be a way to be revenged upon my father! To lose two sons--both in the same way! And then to perish at sea, and my corpse to lie at the bottom of the ocean, where my brother's bones had long been lying! "Shame upon you, George!"--I said to myself--"shame! The poor old man!"

How if I turned back? The professor had certainly long since left the house. My father was alone in his room. I would go to him and say--"Strike me if you will, father; I will not resist; I will not move an eyelid!"

But I did not return, nor even slacken my pace; I had already left the town behind, and was now in the wide street of the suburb, on both sides of which stood the little cottages which at this season were chiefly occupied by the bathing-guests. Here and there they shone through the dark trees; some of them had lamps burning in glass globes at the doors, and under trellises, and in the little gardens sat cheerful groups; song and laughter and the merry voices of children came up on the pleasant evening air; a light breeze just stirred the tops of the trees over my head, and

fire-flies twinkled in the bushes.

The moist, warm breeze from the sea seemed to refresh me; how pleasant it must be, I thought, over there beyond the houses; and on the instant, Smith Pinnow's cottage came into my mind. The very thing! there I was sure of a shelter. The old man would give me a bed, or at least a shake-down in the forge; or there was the old woman's great arm-chair--certainly she could not sit crouching in it all night as well as all day. Pity Klaus was not at home; but then the pretty Christel was there. Christel had always been a favorite of mine; indeed, at one time I had fancied myself really in love with her, and her charms had attracted me to the hut at least quite as often as the old man's four double-barrels and the long single-barrel, or the mulled wine which he used to sell in the winter to the skaters that thronged the beach.

Strange light-heartedness of youth! At this moment all the mischief I had done, my father's grief, my own serious position, were all forgotten; or, if not forgotten, they were only the dark background upon which shone brightly and cheerily the picture of the old ruinous hut with the glowing forge-fire, and above all the pretty figure of the brisk Christel moving lightly about. What was the school--what was my father's house and all the rest of my slavery to me now? At other times, when I had been out at this hour, I was haunted with anxiety how I should get in without the knowledge of my father, who went to bed punctually at half-past nine: now my father had himself driven me from his house. No need now to pull off my boots at the door, and creep softly up the creaking stair to my chamber; I was a free man and could do what I chose, and come and go at my pleasure.

The wide street and the suburbs were now behind me; I strode along the well-known path, on my left a little meadow, on my right a potato-field, here and there a solitary tree, blackly defined against the clear starlit sky, and on either side the water, whose hollow sound I heard plainer and plainer as the tongue of land narrowed, especially towards the west, the windward quarter, where lay the open sea. I noticed for the first time that I had no cap. I had either lost it or left it by the lamp on the hall-table; so much the better, the sea-breeze could play freely around my heated temples and in my loose hair.

A pair of wild swans flew high above me; I could not see them, but heard their peculiar wailing cry--two simple notes that rang strangely through the silence of the night. "Good speed!" I called out to them: "Good speed, my good comrades!"

A strangely happy feeling, mingled of sadness and joy, came over me, such as I had never known before. I could have thrown myself upon the earth and wept; I could have leaped and shouted in exultation. I could not then comprehend what it was that so singularly possessed me. Now I know well what it was: it was the sense of delight that must thrill through the fish when he darts like an arrow through the liquid crystal, the bird when he sweeps on expanded pinions through the air, the stag when he bounds over the wild plain; the rapture that thrills man's breast when in the full glow of youth and vigor he feels himself one with the great mother, Nature. The fore-feeling of this delight, the longing to taste it, are what drives the man from the narrow round of circumstances in which he was born, out into the wide world, across seas, into the desert, to the peaks of the Alps, anywhere where the winds blow free, where the heaven broadens grandly above, where he must risk his life to win it.

Does this after-thought excuse the insolent obstinacy of which I had been guilty towards my father; and the terrible rashness with which I staked my whole future on a cast of the die? Assuredly not. I will excuse nothing, extenuate nothing; but simply narrate what happened to me and within me during these events and those that followed; only giving an explanation here and there when circumstances seem to require it. Let the story tell its own moral; only this will I add, for the consolation of thoughtful souls, that if, as cannot be gainsaid, my conduct deserved punishment, this punishment was dealt out to me speedily, and that in no stinted measure.

But at the time the haggard form with the lame foot was still too far behind to cast the shade of her terrors upon me; two other figures, however, as I hastened with a quickened pace over the heath, appeared in sight, who had assuredly nothing spectral about them, for they were standing in a close embrace. They sprang apart, with a cry of alarm from a female voice, as, turning sharply around a hillock, I came directly upon them. The maiden caught up a great basket, which she had set upon the ground, having just had other employment for her arms, and her companion gave an "Ahem!" which was so loud and so confused that it could only have proceeded from a very innocent breast.

"Good evening," I said; "I trust----"

"Good Lord! is it really you?" said the man. "Why, Christel, only think it's him!"--and Klaus caught Christel M \ddot{o} we, who was about taking to flight, by her dress, and detained her.

"Oh! I thought it was *him*!" stammered Christel, whose mind did not seem entirely relieved by the discovery that if they had been espied it was by a good friend.

Although the position in which Klaus and Christel evidently stood to each other did not exactly require an explanation, still I was somewhat astonished. As long as Klaus lived with his father, from the commencement of our friendship, I had never detected in the good fellow's heart anything more than brotherly affection for his pretty adopted sister; but then that was four years

ago. Klaus was but sixteen when he went to work with locksmith Wangerow; and perhaps this temporary separation had aroused the love which otherwise would have calmly slumbered on, and possibly never awakened of itself. This was confirmed by what the lovers themselves told me, as we walked slowly on together towards the forge, often stopping for a minute at a time when the story reached a point of particularly critical interest. One of these points--and indeed the most serious--was the strongly and even violently expressed aversion of old Pinnow to the engagement. Klaus did not say so, but from all that I gathered I surmised that it was not altogether impossible that the old man himself had cast an eye upon his pretty adopted daughter; at least I could see no other reasonable explanation of the fact that year by year, and day by day, he had grown more morose and rancorous towards Klaus, and at last, after much snarling and storming over his gadding about, and his shameful waste of time, had ended by forbidding him the house, without the good fellow--as he solemnly asseverated, and I believed him--having ever given him the slightest cause of complaint. Therefore they--the lovers--were under the necessity of keeping their meetings secret, a proceeding not without considerable difficulties, as the old man was extraordinarily watchful and cunning. For instance, he would send the deaf and dumb apprentice, Jacob, to the town to make the necessary purchases, although he was certain to make some blunder or other; and to-day he would not have sent Christel, had he not heard that Klaus had some late work to do on board the steamer, that would prevent his coming ashore.

As I had a sincere affection for the good Klaus, who had been my comrade in many a merry frolic by land and water, and was no less fond of the rosy, soft-voiced Christel M \ddot{o} we, I felt the liveliest sympathy with them; and improbable though it may seem, their love, with its sorrows and its joys, and the possibility of its happy termination, lay at this moment nearer my heart than the thought of my own fortune. My mind, however, recurred to my own situation, when, as we reached a slight elevation in the path, the forge, with the light of the kitchen-fire shining through its low window, appeared close at hand, and Klaus asked if we should now turn back. He then for the first time learned that it was no mere evening stroll that had brought me so far from the town across the heath, and that my intention was to ask his father for shelter for a day at least, or perhaps for several days. At the same time I briefly explained to him the cause that compelled me to so singular a step.

Klaus seemed greatly affected by what he heard; he grasped me by the hand, and taking me a little aside, asked in an agitated whisper if I had well considered what I was about? My father, he said, could not mean to deal so harshly with me, and would certainly forgive me if I returned at once. He himself would go and prepare the way, and let the storm spend its first wrath upon him.

"But, Klaus, old fellow," I said, "you are no better off than I. We are comrades in misery: your father has forbidden you his house, just as mine has done with me. What difference is there between us?"

"This difference," Klaus answered, "that I have done nothing to give my father the right to be angry with me, while you tell me yourself that you--don't take it hard of me--have been playing a very ugly trick."

I answered that, be that as it might, home I would never go. What further I should do, I did not know: I would come on board the steamer to-morrow and talk the matter over with him; it was very likely that I would need his assistance.

Klaus, who saw that my resolution was taken, and who had always been accustomed to adapt himself to my plans, gave my hand another hearty grasp, and said: "Well, then, till to-morrow."

His good heart was so full of what he had just heard that he was going off without bidding Christel good-by, had I not, laughing, called his attention to this highly reprehensible oversight. But he did not get the kiss I had hoped for him; Christel said I had been very wicked; and so we departed, Klaus going back towards the town, and soon disappearing in the darkness, and Christel and I keeping on to the forge, where through the window the fire was now blazing brighter than before.

"How does the old man come to be working so late?" I asked the girl.

"It just happens so," she answered.

I put other questions, to all of which I received but the briefest possible answers. Christel and I had always been the best friends in the world, and I had ever known her as the brightest, merriest creature. I could only suppose that she had been seriously offended by my bit of sportiveness. As it was never my nature, unless when overcome with passion, to wound the feelings of any one, least of all a poor girl of whom I was really fond, so I did not for a moment hesitate to frankly ask her pardon, if I had offended her, saying that what I had done was with the best intention in the world, namely, that her lover should not, through my fault, leave her without a good-by kiss. Christel made me no answer, and I was about placing my arm around her trim waist, in order to give more emphasis to my petition for forgiveness, when the girl suddenly burst into tears, and in a frightened tone said that I must not go with her to "his" house; and that it was anyhow of no use, for "he" would certainly give me no lodging there.

This declaration and this warning would have made most persons hesitate. The forge was in such a lonely place, the reputation of the old smith was far from being a good one, and I was

sufficiently versed in robber-stories to recall the various romantic situations where the robber's daughter warns the hero, who has lost his way, against the remaining members of her estimable family, and at the same time reveals her love for him in a style equally discreet and intelligent. But I was never subject to those attacks of timidity to which imaginative persons are so liable; and besides, I thought, if the old man is jealous of his son--and this I set down as certain--why may he not be so of me?--and in the third place, a little cur at this moment rushed, furiously barking, at my legs, and simultaneously appeared a stout figure at the open door of the forge, and Smith Pinnow's familiar voice called out in his deep bass: "Who is there?"

"A friend--George Hartwig," I answered, tossing the little yelping brute with my foot into the bushes.

Christel must have given the old man an intimation of what I wanted as she pushed by him into the house, for he said at once, without moving from his post in the doorway, "I can give you no lodging here; my house is not an inn."

"I know that very well, Pinnow," I answered, stepping up and offering my hand; "but I thought you were my friend."

The old man did not take my hand, but muttered something that I did not catch.

"I shall not return home, you maybe sure of that," I continued. "So, if you do not mean that I shall lie here in the bushes, and join your dog in howling at the moon, you will let me in, and mix me a glass of grog--half-and-half, you know; and take a glass or two yourself: it will do you good, and put better thoughts in your head."

With these words, I laid my hand on the shoulder of the inhospitable smith, and gave him a hearty shake, in token of my friendly feelings.

"Would you attack a weak old man in his own house?" he exclaimed in an angry tone, and in my turn I felt on my shoulders two hands whose size and steely hardness were, for "a weak old man," quite remarkable. My blood, which the cooler night air had by no means yet lowered to the desirable temperature, needed but little provocation; and besides, here was too favorable an opportunity to put to the proof my much-admired strength; so I seized my antagonist, jerked him at a single effort from the threshold, and hurled him a couple of paces to one side. I had not the slightest design of forcing an entrance into his house; but the smith, who feared that this was my intention, and was resolved to prevent it at all hazards, threw himself upon me with such fury that I was obliged in self-defence to exert my whole strength. I had had many a hard tussle in my time, and had always come off victorious; but never before had I been so equally matched as now. Perhaps it was from some small remains of regard for the old man who now assaulted me, in sailor fashion, with heavy blows of his fist, that I refrained from repaying him in the same coin, but endeavored to grapple with him. At last I felt that I had him in my power: seizing a lower hold, I raised him from the ground, and the next moment he would have measured his length upon the sand, when a peal of laughter resounded close at hand. Startled, I lost my hold, and my antagonist, no sooner felt himself free, than he rushed upon me again. Unprepared for this new attack, I lost my balance, stumbled and fell, my antagonist above me. I felt his hands of iron at my throat, when suddenly the laughter ceased. "For shame, old man!" cried a sonorous voice, "he has not deserved that of you;" and a pair of strong arms tore the smith from me. I sprang to my feet and confronted my deliverer, for so I must call him, as without his interference I do not know what would have happened to me.

CHAPTER V.

He was, as well as I could distinguish by the faint light of the moon that was now partly obscured by clouds, a man of tall stature and slender frame; so alert in his movements that I took him to be young, or at least comparatively young, until, at a sudden turn he made, the flickering glare of the fire through the open door fell upon his face, and I saw that his features were deeply furrowed, apparently with age. And as now, holding my hand, he led me into the forge, which glowed with a strong light, he seemed to me to be neither young nor old, or rather both at once.

It is true, the moment was not precisely favorable to physiognomical investigations. The stranger surveyed me with large eyes that flashed uncannily out of the crumpled folds and wrinkles that surrounded them from head to foot, and felt my shoulders and arms, as a jockey might examine a horse that has got over a distance in three minutes that it takes other horses five to accomplish. Then, turning on his heel, he burst into a peal of laughter, as the smith turned upon the deaf and dumb apprentice, Jacob, who all this time had been blowing the bellows, quite

indifferent to what was going forward, and gave him a push which spun him around like a top.

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the stranger, "that was well done! Easier handling him than the other--eh, Pinnow?"

"The other may thank his stars that he gets off so easily," growled the smith, as he drew a red-hot bar from the coals.

"I am ready to try it again at any time, Pinnow," I cried, and was delighted that the stranger, with an amused look, nodded his approbation, while with affected solemnity he cried: "For shame young man, for shame! a poor old man! Do you consider that a thing to boast of?"

The smith had seized his heavy forge-hammer, and was plying the glowing bar with furious strokes until the sparks flew in showers, and the windows rattled in the frames.

The stranger stopped his ears. "For heaven's sake, man," he cried, "stop that infamous noise! Who in the devil's name can stand it, do you think? Do you suppose that I have your plebeian ears? Stop, I say, or----"

He gave the smith a push, as the latter had just before done to his apprentice, but the old man stood more firmly than the young one. With a furious look he raised his hammer--it seemed as if the next moment he would bring it down on the stranger's head.

"Have you gone mad?" said the stranger, casting a stern look at the enraged smith. Then, as the latter slowly lowered the hammer, he began speaking to him in an undertone, to which the old man answered in a muttering voice, in which I thought I could at intervals distinguish my own name.

"It may be," said the stranger; "but here he is now, and here he shall stay."

"Excuse me," I said, "I have not the least idea of thrusting my company upon you: I would not have set my foot in the house, had not----"

"Now *he's* beginning again," exclaimed the stranger, with a laugh of half vexation; "will you ever come to your senses, you two? What I want is peace and quiet, and above all, some supper; and you shall keep me company. Hallo! Christel! Where is the girl? You, Pinnow, take off your leather apron and come in too."

With these words he opened the low door on the right of the forge-fire, which led from the forge into the living-room. I had often enough been in the latter, and indeed I knew the whole place well: the living-room was a moderately large apartment, but only half as high from floor to ceiling as the forge; the sleeping-rooms lying above it, which were reached by a steep stair, or sort of ladder, in a corner of the room, passing through a hole in the ceiling. There was also a door, reached by two steps, which led into a small side-room, where the smith's mother slept. This old woman, a prodigy of age, was now crouching in her easy-chair in her usual corner, close to the stove, which was heated from without. In the middle of the room stood a heavy oaken table, and on the table the great basket which Christel had brought from the town. Christel herself was apparently searching for something in a closet at the further end of the room.

"Now, Christel," said the stranger, taking a light to look into the basket, "what have you brought? That looks inviting. But bestir yourself, for I am hungry as a wolf--and you too," turning to me--"are you not? One is always hungry at your age. Come this way to the window. Sit down."

He made me sit on one of the two benches that stood in the recess of the window, seated himself on the other, and continued in a somewhat lower tone, with a glance at Christel, who was now, with a noiseless despatch, beginning to set the table:---

"A pretty girl: rather too much of a blonde, perhaps; she is a Hollander; but that is in keeping here: is not the old woman nodding there in her easy chair just like a picture by Terburg? Then old Pinnow, with the face of a bull-dog and the figure of a seal, and Jacob with his carp's eyes! But I like it; I seldom fail, when I have been in the town without my carriage, as happens to-day, to look in here, and let old Pinnow set me over; especially as with a good wind I can get across in half an hour, while by the town-ferry it takes me a full hour, and then afterwards as much more before I reach my estate."

The stranger spoke in a courteous, engaging manner, which pleased me exceedingly; and while speaking, repeatedly stroked with his left hand his thick beard, which fell half-way down his breast, and from time to time glanced at a diamond ring on his finger. I began to feel a great respect for the strange gentleman, and was extremely curious to know who he was, but could not venture to ask him.

"What an abominable atmosphere in this room!" he suddenly exclaimed; "enough to make one faint;" and he was about opening the window at which we were sitting, but checking himself, he turned and said: "To be sure! the old woman might take cold. Christel, can't you get the old lady to bed?"

"Yes, sir; directly," said Christel, who had just finished setting the table, and going up to the

old woman, screamed in her ear, "Grandmother, you must go to bed!"

The old woman received this intimation with evident disfavor, for she shook her head energetically, but at last allowed herself to be raised from her crouching position, and tottered from the room, leaning on Christel's arm. When Christel reached the steps that led to the side room she looked round. I sprang to her assistance, and carried the old lady up the steps, while Christel opened the door, through which she then disappeared with her charge.

"Well done, young man," said my new acquaintance, as I came back to him; "we must always be polite to ladies. And now we will open the window."

He did so, and the night air rushed in. It had grown darker; the moon was hidden behind a heavy mass of cloud that was rolling up from the west; from the sea, which was but a few paces distant, came a hollow roaring and plashing of the waves breaking on the beach; a few drops of rain drove into my face.

The stranger looked out intently at the weather. "We must be off presently," I heard him say to himself. Then turning to me: "But now we will have some supper; I am almost dying of hunger. If Pinnow prefers grumbling to eating, let him consult his taste. Come."

He took his seat at the table, inviting me by a gesture to place myself beside him. I had, during the day, eaten far less than I had drunk, and my robust frame, which had long since overcome the effects of my intoxication, now imperatively demanded sustenance. So I very willingly complied with the invitation of my entertainer; and indeed the contents of the basket which Christel had now unpacked were of a nature to tempt a far more fastidious palate than mine. There were caviare, smoked salmon, ham, fresh sausage, pickles; nor was a supply of wine wanting. Two bottles of Bordeaux, with the label of a choice vintage, stood upon the table, and out of the basket peeped the silvery neck of a bottle of Champagne.

"Quite a neat display," said the stranger, filling both our glasses, helping himself first from one dish and then from another, and inviting me to follow his example, while chatting at intervals in his pleasant fashion. Without his questioning me directly, we had somehow come to speak of my affairs; and, unsuspecting and communicative as I was, before the first bottle was emptied I had given him a pretty fair account of my neither long nor eventful life. The occurrences of the past day, so momentous for me, occupied rather more time in the recital. In the ardor of my narration, I had, without observing it, filled and drunk several glasses of wine; the weight that had laid upon my spirits had disappeared; my old cheerful humor had returned, all the more as this meeting with the mysterious stranger under such singular circumstances, gave my imagination room for the wildest conjectures. I described our flight from the school, I mimicked Professor Lederer's voice and manner, I threw all my powers of satire into my sketch of the commerzienrath, and I fear that I smote the table with my fist when I came to speak of Arthur's shameful ingratitude, and the outrageous partiality of the steuerrath. But here my talkative tongue was checked; the melancholy dimness of my father's study spread a gloom over my spirits; I fell into a tragic tone, as I swore that though I should have to go on a pilgrimage to the North Cape, barefoot, as I was already bareheaded, and beg my bread from door to door--or, as begging was not my forte, should I have to take to the road--I would never more set foot in my father's house again, after he had once driven me from it. That what I was in duty bound to bear from a parent had here reached its limits; that nature's bond was cancelled, and that my resolution was as firmly fixed as the stars in the sky, and if any one chose to ridicule it, he did it at his peril.

With these words I sprang from the table, and set down the glass from which I had been drinking, so violently, that it shivered to pieces. For the stranger, whose evident enjoyment of my story had at times encouraged me, and at others embarrassed, when I came to my peroration, which was delivered with extreme pathos, burst into a paroxysm of laughter which seemed as if it would never end.

"You have been kind to me," I exclaimed; "true, I think I could have held my own without your assistance; but no matter for that--you came to my help at the right moment, and now you have entertained me with food and drink. You are welcome to laugh as much as you please, but I, for my part, will not stay to listen to it. Farewell!"

I looked round for my cap; then, remembering that I had none, strode to the door, when the stranger, who in the meantime had also risen from his seat, hastened after me, caught me by the arm, and in the grave but kindly tone that had previously so charmed me, said:

"Young man, I entreat your pardon. And now come back and take your seat again. I offer you the word of a nobleman that I will respect your feelings, even if your expression of them takes a somewhat singular form."

His dark eyes gleamed, and there were twitchings in the maze of wrinkles that surrounded them.

"You are jesting with me," I said.

"I am not," he replied, "upon the word of a nobleman. On the contrary, you please me extremely, and I was several times on the point of interrupting your story to ask a favor of you. Come and stay awhile with me. Whether you are reconciled with your father, as I hope, or if the

breach be past closing, as you believe, at all events you must first have a roof over your head; and you cannot possibly stay here, where you are evidently not wanted. As I said, I will feel it a favor if you will accept my invitation. I cannot offer you much, but--there is my hand! Good! now we will pledge good fellowship in champagne."

I had already forgiven my mysterious but amiable acquaintance, and pledged him in the sparkling wine with all my heart. With merriment and laughter we had soon emptied the flask, when the smith entered. He had thrown off his leather apron, donned a sailor's jacket, and wrapped a thick muffler round his muscular neck. It now struck me for the first time that he had not on the great blue spectacles which for several years I had never seen him without, and which he wore on account of his alleged near-sightedness: and it now occurred to me that he was not wearing them at the time of our quarrel. Still, I might be mistaken on that point; but I had no time to reflect upon so unimportant a matter, for my attention was at once fixed by some words exchanged in a low tone between the smith and the stranger.

"Is it time?" asked the latter.

"It is," replied the smith.

"The wind is favorable?"

"Yes."

"Everything in order?"

"Except the anchor, which you would not let me finish."

"We can do without it."

"Not well."

The stranger stood for a few moments in thought; his handsome face seemed suddenly to have grown twenty years older; he stroked his beard, and I noticed that he was observing me from the corner of his eye. He then caught the smith by the arm and led him out of the door, which he closed behind him. Outside the door I heard them talking, but could make out nothing, for the stranger spoke in a subdued voice, and the smith's growling speech was at all times difficult to understand; presently, however, the dialogue grew louder, and, as it seemed, more and more vehement, especially on the part of the smith.

"I will have it so!" cried the stranger.

"And I say no!" maintained the smith.

"It is my affair."

"And my affair as well."

The voices sank again, and presently I heard the outer door creak. They had left the forge; I stepped to the open window and saw them go to the little shed close to the beach, by which Pinnow's boat was usually drawn up on the sand. They disappeared in the shadow of the shed; then I heard a chain rattle, and a grating on the sand; they were launching the boat. All was then still: the only sounds audible were the stronger roaring of the sea, mingled with the rush of the wind in the leaves of the old oak, which threw its half-decayed boughs over the forge.

I heard a rustling in the room, and turned quickly round. It was Christel; she stood behind me, looking with an intense gaze, as I had just done, through the window into the darkness.

"Well, Christel!" I said.

She placed her finger on her lips, and whispered, "Hush!" then beckoned me from the window. Surprised rather than alarmed, I followed her.

"What is the matter, Christel?"

"Don't go with them, whatever you do. And go away from here at once. You cannot stay here."

"But, Christel, why not? And who is the gentleman?"

"I must not tell you; I must not speak his name. If you go with them, you will learn it soon enough; but do not go!"

"Why? What will they do to me, Christel?"

"Do? They will do nothing to you. But do not go with them."

A noise was heard outside; Christel turned away and began clearing the table, while the voices of the two who were returning from the beach came nearer and nearer.

I do not know what another would have done in my place; I can only say that the girl's warning

produced upon me an effect precisely opposite to that intended. True, I well remember that my heart beat quicker, and that I cast a hurried glance at the four double-barrels and the long fowling-piece that hung in the old places on the wall; but the desire to go through with the adventure was now fully awaked in me. I felt equal to any danger that might beset me; and, for the matter of that, Christel had just said that no harm was intended to me.

Besides--and this circumstance is, perhaps, the real key to my conduct that evening--the stranger, whoever he might be, with his partly serious and partly jocose, half-sympathetic and half-mocking language, had somehow established a mysterious influence over me. In later years, when I heard the legend of the Piper of Hameln, whom the children were irresistibly compelled to follow, I at once recalled this night and the stranger.

He now appeared at the door, dressed in a coarse, wide sailor's jacket, and wearing a low-crowned tarpaulin hat in place of his cloth cap. Pinnow opened a press in the wall, and produced a similar outfit for me, which the stranger made me put on.

"It is turning cold," he remarked, "and your present dress will be but little protection to you, though I trust our passage will be a short one. So: now you are equipped capitally: now let us be off."

The smith had stepped to Christel and whispered her a few words, to which she made no reply. She had turned her back upon me since the men had entered, and did not once turn her head as I bade her good-night.

"Come on," said the stranger.

We went through the forge, where the fire had now burnt down, and stepped out into the windy night. After proceeding a few steps, I turned my head: the light in the living-room was extinguished; the house lay dark in the darkness, and the wind roared and moaned in the dry branches of the old oak.

The noise of the sea had increased; the wind had freshened to a stiff breeze; the moon had set; no star shone through the scudding clouds which from time to time were lighted with a lurid gleam, followed by a mutter of distant thunder.

We reached the boat which was already half in the water, and they made me get on board, while the stranger, Pinnow, and the deaf and dumb Jacob, who had suddenly made his appearance out of the darkness, and was, as well as I could make out, also in sailor's dress and fisherman's boots--pushed off. In a few minutes we were flying through the water; the stranger stood at the helm, but presently yielded it to Pinnow, when the latter with Jacob's assistance had finished setting the sails, and took his seat beside me.

"Now, how do you like this?" he asked me.

"Glorious!" I exclaimed. "But I think, Pinnow, that you had better take in another reef; we are carrying too much sail, and over yonder"--I pointed to the west--"it has an ugly look."

"You seem to be no greenhorn," said the stranger.

Pinnow made no reply but gave the hasty order: "Take in the foresail," at the same time putting up the helm and letting the boat fall off the wind. It was not a moment too soon, for a squall striking us an instant after made her careen so violently that I thought she would founder, though luckily she righted again. The jib was taken in altogether, and the foresail now hoisted only half-mast high, and under this canvas we flew through the waves, upon whose whitening crests played the pale glare of the lightning at ever shorter intervals, and still louder and louder followed the roll of the thunder.

After a while the squall abated as rapidly as it had come up, and the stars began to shine here and there through the clouds. I came aft--I had been helping Jacob to handle the sails--and took my seat again by the stranger. He passed his hand over my jacket:

"You are wet to the skin," he said.

"So are we all," I answered.

"But you are not used to it."

"But I am nineteen."

"No older?"

"Not two months."

"You are a man."

I felt more pride from this short speech than I had ever felt shame during the longest diatribe of Professor Lederer, or any of my other teachers. There were few things which I would not have been willing at that moment to attempt had the stranger required it; but he offered no compact

with the powers of darkness, nor anything of the sort, but only advised me to lie down in the boat and be covered with a piece of canvas, as the trip was likely to last longer than had been expected, the wind having hauled round another quarter; I could be of no more service now, and "Sleep is a warm cloak, as Sancho Panza says," he added.

I protested, affirming that I could keep awake for three days and three nights together; but I yielded to his insistence, and had hardly stretched myself on the bottom of the boat, when sleep, which I had thought so far, fell upon me heavy as lead.

How long I slept I do not exactly know; but I was awakened by the grating of the keel upon the sand of the shore. The stranger helped me up, but I was still so heavy with sleep that I cannot remember how I got ashore. The night was still dark; I could distinguish nothing but the gleaming crests of the waves breaking on a long level beach, from which the land rose higher as it ran inward. When I had recovered my full consciousness the boat had already pushed off; my unknown friend and I were following a path that ascended among trees. He held me by the hand, and in a friendly, pleasant manner pointed out the various irregularities of the path, in which he seemed to know every stone and every projecting root. At last we reached the top of the cliff; before us lay the open country, and in the distance a dark pile, which I gradually made out, in the dawning light, to be a mass of buildings, with a park or wood of immense trees.

"Here we are," said the stranger at last, as, after passing through a silent court-yard, we stood before a great dark building.

"Where?" I asked.

"At my house," he responded, laughing. We were now standing in the hall, and he was trying to light a match.

"And where is that?" I asked again. I could not myself have told how I found the boldness to put this question.

The match kindled; he lighted a lamp which was in readiness, and the light fell upon his long dishevelled beard and haggard face, in which the rain and surf seemed to have deepened every wrinkle to a fold and every fold to a furrow. He looked at me fixedly with his large deep-set eyes.

"At Zehrendorf," he replied, "the house of Malte von Zehren, whom they call 'The Wild.' You don't regret having come with me?"

"That I do not," I answered him with energy.

CHAPTER VI.

On awaking the next morning, it was long ere I could arrive at a clear consciousness of my situation. My sleep had been disturbed by frightful dreams, which had left an oppression upon my spirits. It still seemed to me that I heard my father's voice, when a part of my dream recurred to my memory. I had been fleeing from my father, and came to a smooth pond, into which I threw myself, to escape by swimming. But the smooth pond suddenly changed into a stormy sea, upon whose waves I was now tossed towards heaven, and now plunged into the abyss. I was paralyzed with terror; and strove in vain to call to my father for help, while my father did not see me, although he ran up and down the shore, within reach of me, wringing his hands and breaking into loud lamentations over his drowned son.

I passed my hand repeatedly over my brow to drive away the frightful images, and opened my eyes and looking around, found myself in the room into which my host had conducted me on the previous night. The light in the great bare apartment was so dim, that I thought at first it must be very early; but my watch had stopped at nine, and on examination I discovered that this greenish twilight was produced by the thick foliage of trees whose branches touched the solitary window. At this moment a ray of sunlight found its way through some aperture, and fell upon the wall in front of me, upon which I at first thought the most singular and fantastic figures were painted, until closer observation showed me that the dark hangings had here and there detached themselves from the lighter ground, and hung in irregular strips, which seemed the strange garments of grotesque forms.

Altogether the appearance of the room was as inhospitable as it well could be: the plaster in several places had fallen from the ceiling, and lay in white fragments upon the floor, which was laid in parquetry, but now cracked in all directions. The whole furniture consisted of a great

canopied bed, the curtains of which were of faded green damask; two high-backed chairs, covered with similar materials, one of which possessed its normal complement of legs, while the other, which in years had not yet learned to stand upon three, was propped against the wall; and finally, a pine washstand painted white, in singular contrast to the great oval mirror in a rich antique rococo frame, which hung above it; although it is true that the gilding on this piece of magnificence was in many places tarnished by age.

I made these observations while putting on my clothes, which in the short time I had slept by no means dried as thoroughly as I could have desired. But this was but a trifling discomfort: the thought that troubled me was, how should I dress myself the next day, and after? upon which followed the associate reflection:--what was going to become of me altogether?

The answer to this question was by no means clear; and after some consideration I hit upon the idea that it would be as well, before I came to a decision--which in any event was not a matter of such instant urgency--to consult my friendly host upon the subject. Singular enough! up to this day I had always rejected the advice of those whose position and knowledge best qualified them to give it, and had always maintained that I knew best what I had to do; and now I found myself looking with a sort of superstitious reliance to a man whom I had but just learned to know, and that under circumstances by no means of a nature to inspire confidence, and whose name was in evil repute, far and near. It was in this fact, possibly, that lay the greatest attraction for me. "The Wild Zehren" had held a place in my boyish imagination by the side of Rinaldo Rinaldini and Karl Moor; and I had keenly envied my friend Arthur, who used to tell the wildest stories about him, the possession of such an uncle.

Of late years he had been less talked about: I once heard the steuerrath, in a public garden, in the presence of my father and others, thanking God that the "mad fellow" had at last shown some signs of reformation, and the family might consider itself relieved from the perpetual fear that sooner or later he would come to some bad end. At the same time some allusions were made to a daughter, at which several of the gentlemen whispered together, and Justizrath Heckepfennig shrugged his shoulders. Later, Arthur told me that his cousin had eloped with a young tutor, but had not gone far, as his uncle gave chase to the fugitives and caught them before they reached the ferry. She was very beautiful, he said further, and on that account he the more regretted that his father and his uncle were on such unfriendly terms, for, owing to this disagreement, he had never seen Constance (I remembered the name) but once, and that was when she was a child.

All this and much more in this connection came into my mind while I finished my simple toilet before the dim mirror with the tarnished rococo frame; and as I thought of the pretty cousin, I felt chagrin at the tardy development of the beard that had begun to sprout on my upper lip. I caught up the sailor's hat which I had brought with me when I landed, and left the room to look for Herr von Zehren.

Pretty soon it became evident that this very natural intention was not so easy of accomplishment. The room which I left had, luckily, only two doors in it; but that which I entered had three, so that I had to make a choice between two, not including that which led into my chamber. Apparently I did not hit upon the right one, for I came upon a narrow corridor, very dimly lighted through a closed and curtained glass door. Another which I tried, opened into a hall of stateliest dimensions, the three windows of which looked out upon a large park-like garden. From this hall I passed into a great two-windowed room looking upon the court, and from this one happily back to the one adjoining my chamber, from which I had set out. I had to laugh when I made this discovery, but my laughter sounded so strangely hollow as to check my mirth at once. And indeed it was no wonder if laughter had a strange sound in these empty rooms, which seemed as if they had heard few sounds of merriment in recent times, however joyous they might have been in years by-gone. For this room was just as bare and cheerless as that in which I had slept; with just such ragged hangings, crumbling ceilings, and worm-eaten, half ruinous furniture, which might once have adorned a princely apartment. And so was it with the other rooms, which I now examined again more attentively than at first. Everywhere the same signs of desolation and decay; everywhere mournful evidences of vanished splendor: here and there upon the walls hung life-size portraits, which seemed to be spectrally fading into the dark background from which they had once shone brilliantly; in one room lay immense piles of books in venerable leather bindings, among which a pair of rats dived out of sight as I entered; in another, otherwise entirely empty, was a harp with broken chords, and the scabbard of a dress-sword, with its broad silken scarf. Everywhere rubbish, dust and cobwebs; windows dim with neglect, except where their broken panes offered a free passage to the birds that had scattered straw and dirt around--to a plaster cornice still clung a pair of abandoned swallow's nests; everywhere a stifling, musty atmosphere of ruin and decay.

After I had wandered through at least a half dozen more rooms, a lucky turn brought me into a spacious hall, from which descended a broad oaken staircase adorned with antique carved work. This staircase also, that once with its stained windows, its dark panels reaching almost to the ceiling, its antlers, old armor, and standards, must have presented an unusually stately and imposing appearance, offered the same dreary picture of desolation as the rest; and I slowly descended it amazed, and to a certain extent confounded, by all that I had seen. More than one step cracked and yielded as I placed my foot upon it, and as I instinctively laid my hand upon the broad balustrade, the wood felt singularly soft, but it was from the accumulated dust of years, into which, indeed, the whole stair seemed slowly dissolving.

I knew that I had not come this way the previous night, when my host conducted me to my chamber. A steep stair, as I afterwards learned, led from a side hall directly to that dark corridor which adjoined the room I had occupied. I had, therefore, never before been in the great hall in which I was now standing; and as I did not wish to go knocking in vain at half-a-dozen doors, and the great house-door that fronted the stairs, proved to be locked, I succeeded with some difficulty in opening a back-door, which luckily was only bolted, and entered a small court. The low buildings surrounding this, had probably been used as kitchens, or served other domestic purposes in former times; but at present they were all vacant, and looked up piteously with their empty window-frames and crumbling tile-roofs to the bare and ruinous main-building, as a pack of half-starved dogs to a master who himself has nothing to eat.

I was no longer a child: my organization was far from being a susceptible one, nor did I ever lightly fall into the fantastic mood; but I confess, that a strange and weird sensation came over me among these corpses of houses from which the life had evidently long since departed. So far I had not come upon the slightest trace of active human life. As it was now, so it must have been for years, a trysting place and tilt yard for owls and sparrows, rats and mice. Just so might have looked a castle enchanted by the wickedest of all witches; and I do not think that I should have been beyond measure astonished, if the hag had herself arisen, with bristling hair, from the great kettle in the wash-house, into which I cast a glance, and flown up through the wide chimney upon one of the broom-sticks that were lying about.

This wash-house had a door opening upon a little yard surrounded by a hedge, and divided by a deep trench, bridged by a half-rotten plank; which yard, as was evident from the egg-shells and bones scattered about, had formerly been a receptacle for the refuse of the kitchen, but grass had grown over the old rubbish-heaps, and a pair of wild rabbits darted at sight of me into their burrows in the trench. They might possibly preserve some legend of a time when the trench had been full of water, and these burrows the habitations of water-rats, but at such a remote period of antiquity that the whole tradition ran into the mythical.

Hearing a sound at hand which seemed to indicate the presence of a human being, I pushed through the hedge into the garden, and following the direction of the sound, found an old man who was loading a small cart with pales, which he was breaking with a hatchet out of a high stockade. This stockade had evidently once served as the fence of a deer-park; in the high grass lay the ruins of two deer-sheds blown down by the wind: the stags who used to feed from the racks, and try their antlers against the paling, had probably long since found their way to the kitchen, and why should the paling itself not follow?

So at least thought the withered old man whom I found engaged in this singular occupation. When he first came upon the estate, which was in the life-time of the present owner's father, there were forty head of deer in the park, he said; but in the year '12, when the French landed upon the island and took up quarters in the castle, more than half were shot, and the rest broke out and were never recovered, though a part were afterwards killed in the neighboring forest which belonged to Prince Prora.

After giving me this information, the old man fell to his work again, and I tried in vain to draw him into further conversation. His communicativeness was exhausted, and only with difficulty could I get from him that the master had gone out shooting, and would scarcely be back before evening, perhaps not so soon.

"And the young lady?"

"Most likely up yonder," said the old man, pointing with his axe-handle in the direction of the park; then slipping the straps of his cart over his decrepit shoulders, he slowly dragged it along the grass-grown path towards the castle. I watched him till he disappeared behind the bushes; for a while I could still hear the creaking of his cart, and then all was silent.

Silence without a sound, just as in the ruinous castle. But here the silence had nothing oppressive; the sky here was blue, without even the smallest speck of cloud; here shone the bright morning sun, throwing the shadows of the aged oaks upon the broad meadows, and sparkling in the rain-drops which the night's storm had left upon the bushes. Now and then a light breeze stirred, and the long sprays, heavy with rain, waved languidly, and the tall spires of grass bent before it.

It was all very beautiful. I inhaled deep draughts of the cool sweet air, and once more felt the sense of delight that had come over me the evening before, as the wild swans swept above me, high in air. How often, in after days, have I thought of that evening and this morning, and confessed to myself that I then, in spite of all, in spite of my folly and frivolity and misconduct, was happy, unspeakably happy--a short lived, treacherous bliss, it is true, but still bliss--a paradise in which I could not stay, from which the stern realities of life, and nature itself, expelled me--and yet a paradise!

Slowly loitering on, I penetrated deeper into the green wilderness, for wilderness it was. The path was scarcely distinguishable amid the luxuriant weeds and wild overgrowth of bushes--the path which in by-gone days had been swept by the trains of ladies fair, and by which the little feet of children had merrily tripped along. The surface grew hilly; at the end lay the park, and over me venerable beeches arched their giant boughs. Again the path descended towards an opening

in the forest, and I stood upon the margin of a moderately large, circular tarn, in whose black water were reflected the great trees that surrounded it nearly to the edge.

A few steps further, upon a slightly elevated spot, at the foot of a tree whose gigantic size seemed the growth of centuries, was a low bank of moss; upon the bank lay a book and a glove. I looked and listened on all sides: all was still as death: only the sunlight played through the green sprays, and now and then a leaf fluttered down upon the dark water of the tarn.

I could not resist an impulse of curiosity: I approached the bank and took up the book. It was Eichendorf's "Life of a Good-for-Nothing." I had never seen the book, nor even heard of the author; but could not refrain from smiling as I read the title: it was as though some one had called me by name. But at that time I cared little for books: so I replaced it, open, as I had found it, and picked up the glove, not, however, without another cautious glance around, to see if the owner might not be a witness of my temerity.

This glove, I at once divined, belonged to Arthur's beautiful cousin--whose else could it be? The inference was simple enough; and, indeed, the circumstance of a young lady leaving her glove on the spot where she had been resting, had nothing in it remarkable. But the fancy of a youth of my temperament is not fettered; and I confess that as I held the little delicate glove in my hand, and inhaled its faint perfume, my heart began to beat very unreasonably. I had walked, times without number, past Emilie Heckepfennig's window in hope of a glance from that charmer; and had even worn on my heart, for weeks together, a ribbon which she once gave me as I was dancing with her; but that ribbon never gave me such feelings as did this little glove; there must have been some enchantment about it.

I threw myself upon the bank of moss, and indulged my fancy in the wild dreams of a youth of nineteen; at times laying the glove on the seat beside me, and then taking it up again to scrutinize it with ever closer attention, as though it were the key to the mystery of my life.

I had been sitting thus perhaps a quarter of an hour, when I suddenly started up and listened. As if from the sky there came a sound of music and singing, faint at first, then louder, and finally I distinguished a soft female voice, and the tinkling notes of a guitar. The voice was singing what seemed the refrain of a song:

"All day long the bright sun loves me;
All day long."

"All day long," it was repeated, now quite close at hand, and I now perceived the singer, who had been concealed from me hitherto by the great trunks of the beeches.

She was coming down a path which descended rather steeply among the trees, and as she came to a spot upon which the bright sunshine streamed through a canopy of leaves, she paused and looked thoughtfully upwards, presenting a picture which is ineffaceably imprinted upon my memory, and even now after so many years it comes back to me vividly as ever.

A charming, deep brunette, whose exquisitely proportioned form made her stature appear less than it really was; and whose somewhat fantastic dress of a dark green material, trimmed with gold braid, admirably accorded with her striking, almost gypsy-like appearance. She carried a small guitar suspended around her neck with a red ribbon, and her fingers played over its chords like the rays of sunlight over the lightly waving sprays.

Poor Constance! Child of the sun! Why, if it loved thee so well, did it not slay thee now with one of these rays, that I might have made thee a grave in this lonely forest-glade, far from the world for which thy heart so passionately yearned--thy poor foolish heart!

I was standing motionless, fascinated by the vision, when with a deep sigh she seemed to awake from a reverie, and as she descended the path her eyes and mine met. I noticed that she started lightly, as one who meets a human being where he only expected to see the stem of a tree: but the surprise was but momentary, and I observed that she regarded me from under her drooped lids, and a transient smile played round her lips; in truth, a beautiful maiden, conscious of her beauty could scarcely have seen without a smile the amazed admiration, bordering on stupefaction, depicted in my face.

Whether she or I was the first to speak I do not now remember; and indeed I clearly retain, of this our first conversation, only the memory of the tones of her soft and somewhat deep voice, which to my ear was like exquisite music. We must have ascended together from the forest-dell to the upland, and the sea-breeze must have awakened me to a clearer consciousness, for I can still see the calm, blue water stretching in boundless expanse around us, the white streaks of foam lying among the rocks of the beach perhaps a hundred feet below, and a pair of large gulls wheeling hither and thither, and then dipping to the water, where they gleamed like stars. I see the heather of the upland waving in the light breeze, hear the lapping of the surf among the sharp crags of the shore, and amid it all I hear the voice of Constance.

"My mother was a Spaniard, as beautiful as the day, and my father, who had gone thither to visit a friend he had known in Paris, saw her, and carried her off. The friend was my mother's

brother, and he loved my father dearly, but was never willing that they should marry, because he was a strict Catholic, and my father would never consent to become a Catholic, but laughed and mocked at all religions. So they secretly eloped; but my uncle pursued and overtook them in the night, upon a lonely heath, and there were wild words between them, and then swords were drawn, and my father killed the brother of his bride. She did not know this until long afterwards; for she fainted during the fight, and my father contrived to make her believe that he had parted from his brother-in-law in friendship. Then they came to this place; but my mother always pined for her home, and used to say that she felt a weight upon her heart, as if a murder were resting on her soul. At last she learned, through an accident, the manner of death of her brother, whom she had devotedly loved; and so she grew melancholy, and wandered about day and night, asking every one whom she met which was the road to Spain. My father at last had to shut her up; but this she could not endure, and became quite raving, and tried to take her own life, until they let her go free again, when she wandered about as before. And one morning she threw herself into this pool, and when they drew her out she was dead. I was then only three years old, and I have no recollection of her looks, but they say she was handsomer than I am."

I said that could hardly be possible; and I said it with so much seriousness, for I was thinking of the poor woman who had drowned herself here, that Constance again smiled, and said I was certainly the best creature in the world, and that one could say anything to me that came into one's head; and that was what she liked. So I was always to stay with her, she said, and be her faithful George, and slay all the dragons in the world for her sake. Was I agreed to that? Indeed was I, I answered. And again a smile played over her rosy lips.

"You look as if you would. But how did you really come here, and what does my father want with you? He gave me a special charge on your account this morning before he set out; you must stand high in his favor, for he does not usually give himself much care for the welfare of other people. And how come you to have a sailor's hat on, and a very ugly one at that? I think you said you came from school; are there scholars there as large as you? I never knew that. How old are you really?"

And so the maiden prattled on--and yet it was not prattling, for she remained quite serious all the time, and it seemed to me that while she talked her mind was far away; and her dark eyes but seldom were turned to me, and then with but a momentary glance, as though I were no living man, but an inanimate figure; and frequently she put a second question without waiting for an answer to the first.

This suited me well, for thus at least I found courage to look at her again and again, and at last scarcely turned my eyes from her. "You will fall over there, if you do not take care," she suddenly said, lightly touching my arm with her finger, as we stood on the verge of a cliff. "It seems you are not easily made giddy."

"No, indeed," I answered.

"Let us go up there," she said.

Upon what was nearly the highest part of the promontory on which we were, were the ruins of a castle, overgrown with thick bushes. But a single massive tower, almost entirely covered with ivy, had defied the power of the sea and of time. These were the ruins of the Zehrenburg, to which Arthur had pointed yesterday, as we passed on the steamer; the same tower on which I was to fix my gaze as I renounced in his favor all pretensions to Emilie Heckepfennig. This I had passionately refused to do--yesterday: what was Emilie Heckepfennig to me to-day?

The beautiful girl had taken her seat upon a mossy stone, and looked fixedly into the distance. I stood beside her, leaning against the old tower, and looked fixedly into her face.

"All that, once was ours," she said, slowly sweeping her hand round the horizon; "and this, is all that remains."

She rose hastily, and began to descend a narrow path which led, through broom and heather, from the heights down to the forest. I followed. We came to the beech-wood again, and back to the tarn, where her book and guitar still lay upon the bank. I was very proud when she gave me both to carry, saying at the same time that the guitar had been her mother's, and that she had never trusted it to any one before; but now I should always carry this, her greatest treasure, for her, and she would teach me to play and to sing, if I stayed with them. Or perhaps I did not mean to stay with them?

I said that I could not tell, but I hoped so; and the thought of going away fell heavy upon my heart.

We had now reached the castle. "Give me the guitar," she said, "but keep the book: I know it by heart. Have you had breakfast? No? Poor, poor George! it is lucky that no dragon met us; you would have been hardly able to stand upon your feet."

A side-door, that I had not previously noticed, led to that part of the ground-floor inhabited by the father and daughter. Constance called an old female servant, and directed her to prepare me some breakfast, and then she left me, after giving me her hand, with that melancholy transient smile which I had already noted on her beautiful lips.

CHAPTER VII.

The breakfast which the ugly, taciturn old woman--whom Constance called "Pahlen"--set before me after about half an hour, might well have been ready in less time, for it consisted only of black bread, butter, cheese, and a flask of cognac. The cognac was excellent; but the remainder of the repast far from luxurious, for the bread was sour and mouldy in spots, the butter rancid, and the cheese hard as a stone; but what was that to a youth of nineteen, who had eaten nothing for twelve hours, and whose silly heart, moreover, was palpitating with its first passion! So it seemed to me that I had never had a more sumptuous repast; and I thanked the old woman for her trouble with the utmost politeness. "Pahlen" did not seem to know what to make of me. She looked askance at me two or three times, with a sort of surly curiosity; and to the questions that I put to her, replied with an unintelligible grumbling, out of which I could make nothing.

The room in which I now found myself--it was the same into which Herr von Zehren had conducted me on our first arrival--might, in comparison with the deserted apartments of the upper story, be called habitable, though the carpet under the table was ragged, several of the carved oaken chairs were no longer firm upon their legs, and a great antique buffet in one corner had decidedly seen better days. The windows opened upon a court, into which, my breakfast once over, I cast a look. This court was very spacious, the barns and stables that enclosed it of the very largest dimensions, such as are only found on the most considerable estates. So much the more striking was the silence that prevailed in it. In the centre of the space was a dove-cot built of stone, but no wings fluttered about it, unless perhaps those of a passing swallow. There was a duck-pond without ducks, a dunghill upon which no fowls were scratching--one peacock sat upon the broken paling--everything seemed dead or departed. Here was no hurrying to and fro of busy men, no lowing of cattle or neighing of horses--all was vacant and silent; only from time to time the peacock on the paling uttered his dissonant cry, and the sparrows twittered in the twigs of an old linden.

As Constance did not return, and as Pahlen, to my question about the dinner hour, responded by asking me if I now wanted dinner too, I came to the conclusion that for some hours at least I would be left to my own devices. I therefore walked into the court, and then perceived that this part of the castle was an addition, which formed a continuation to the main building, and had probably served as the manager's house. In the castle the shutters on the ground floor were closed, and secured with massive iron bars, a fact which did not by any means tend to give the old pile a more cheerful appearance. That a manager's house had long been a superfluous appendage, the surroundings plainly showed. In truth, there was nothing here to manage; the buildings, which at a distance still presented a tolerable appearance, proved, when near, to be little better than crumbling ruins. The thatched roofs had sunk in decay and were overgrown with moss, the ornamental work had dropped away, the plaster peeled off in patches, the doors hung awry on their rusted hinges, and in many places were entirely wanting. A stable into which I looked had been originally built to accommodate forty horses; now there stood in a corner four lean old brutes that set up a hungry neighing as they saw me. As I came out again into the court, a wagon, partly laden with corn and dragged by four other miserable jades, went reeling over the broken stones of the pavement, and disappeared in the yawning doorway of one of the immense barns, like a coffin in a vault.

I strolled further on, passing one or two dilapidated hovels, where half-naked children were playing in the sand, and a couple of fellows, more like bandits than farm-hands, were lounging, who stared at me with looks half shy half insolent, and reached the fields. The sun shone brightly enough, but it lighted up little that was pleasant to the eye: waste land, with here and there scattering patches of sparse oats, overgrown with blue cornflowers and scarlet poppies, a little rusted wheat, an acre or so where the rye--late enough for the season--still stood in slovenly sheaves, and where a second wagon was being laden by two fellows of the same bandit appearance as the men at the hovels, and who stared at me with the same surprised and skulking looks, without answering my salutation. At some distance appeared through the trees and bushes the roofs of farm-buildings, evidently upon another estate, to which belonged, doubtless, the far better cultivated fields which I had now reached. Further to the right, above a larger collection of houses, arose the plain white steeple of a church. But I did not care to push my exploration further: an impulse drew me back to the park, which I reached by a circuitous route on the other side, for I wished to avoid the castle and the grumbling old Pahlen.

I had hoped here to meet Constance again; but in vain did I listen more than an hour under the trees and among the bushes, watching the castle until I knew by heart nearly every broken tile upon the roof, and each separate patch--and they were not few--where the rains of so many years had detached the plaster and laid bare the stones beneath. No one was to be seen; no

sound was audible; while the afternoon sun gleamed upon the window-panes, save when the shadow of a passing cloud swept over them.

My spirits began to yield to the depressing influences of this scene of sunlit desolation. I felt as if the silence, like an invisible magic net, was folding around me closer and closer, until I scarcely ventured to move--scarcely to speak. In place of the careless audacity, which was my natural temperament, a deep sadness took possession of me. How came I here? What was I to do here--what did I want here, where no one troubled himself about me? Was not all that had happened to me since yesterday only a dream, and had I not merely dreamed the beautiful maiden with the dark eyes and strange smile?

A sense as of home-sickness came over me. I saw in fancy the town with the narrow, crooked streets running between the old-fashioned gabled houses; I saw my little room, to which I would have returned from school by this time to fling my wearisome books upon the table and then fly to my friend Arthur, who I knew had arranged a boat excursion in the harbor. I saw my father sitting at the window of his bureau in the excise-office, and crept close to the wall to avoid being seen by him. How had my father borne my departure? Was he anxious about me? Assuredly he was; for he still loved me, notwithstanding our mutual alienation. What would he do when he learned--as sooner or later he must learn--that I was with the wild Zehren? Would he allow me to stay? Would he command me to return? Perhaps come for me himself?

As this thought came into my mind, I looked uneasily around. It would be intolerable to have to go back to the stifling class-room, to be scolded again, like a boy by Professor Lederer, and never more to see Fräulein von Zehren Constance! Never would I endure it! My father had driven me from his house; he might take the consequences. Rather than go back, I would turn bandit--smuggler---

I do not know how the last word came upon my lips, but I remember--and I have since often thought of it--that when I had uttered the word half aloud, merely as a heroic phrase, without attaching any distinct meaning to it, I suddenly started as if some one had spoken it in my immediate vicinity; and at the same moment the adventures of the previous night and what I had since observed, arranged themselves in a definite connection, just as one looking through a telescope sees heaven and earth blended together in dim confusion, until the right focus is attained, when a distinct picture stands before him. How could I have been so blind--so destitute of ordinary apprehension? Herr von Zehren over at Pinnow's, the strange connection that manifestly existed between the nobleman and the smith, Christel's warnings, Pinnow's behavior towards me, and the night sail in the terrible storm! And then this uncared-for house, this ruinous farm-yard, these desolated fields, this neglected park! The solitary situation of the place, upon a promontory extending far into the sea! I had learned already from frequent conversations between my father and his colleagues in the excise-office, how actively smuggling was carried on in these waters, what a flourishing business it was, and how much might be made at it by any one who was willing to peril his life upon occasion. All was clear as day; this, and no other, was the solution of the mystery.

"You must be mad," I said to myself again, "completely mad. A nobleman like Herr von Zehren! Such doings are for the rabble. Old Pinnow--yes, yes, that is likely enough; but a Herr von Zehren--shame upon you!"

I endeavored with all my might to shake off a suspicion which was really intolerable; and thus afforded another proof that we all, however free we think ourselves, or perhaps have really become, still ever in our feelings, if not in our thoughts, are bound by other imperceptible but none the less firm ties to the impressions of our childhood and early youth. Had my father been a king and I the crown-prince, I should probably have seen the Evil One embodied in the person of a revolutionist; or in a runaway slave, had I been the descendant of a planter; so, as I had for a father a pedantically rigid excise-officer, to my conceptions the most hideous of all stigmas was affixed to the smuggler's career. Yet at the same time--and this will seem surprising to no one who remembers the strange duplicate character of the devil in the Christian mythology--this murky gate of Tophet, by which my childish fancy had so often stolen at a timid distance, was invested with a diabolical fascination. How could it be otherwise, when I heard tell of the privations which the wretches often endured with such fortitude, of the ingenuity with which they knew how to baffle the utmost vigilance of the officers, of the fearlessness with which they not seldom confronted the most imminent peril? These were perilous stories to reach the ear of an adventurous boy; but far too many such were talked over in our town; and what was the worst of all, I had heard the most terrible and most fascinating from the lips of my own father--naturally with an appendix of indignant reprobation always tacked on in form of a moral; but this antidote was, of a surety, never sufficient entirely to neutralize the poison. Had not Arthur and I, shortly before an examination in which we had the most confident assurance that we should cut but a poor figure, for a whole day taken earnest counsel together over the question whether we, in case we failed--or better yet, before standing the trial--should not turn smugglers ourselves, until we actually were scared at our own plans? That had been four years ago; but, although in the meantime the vehement antipathies and sympathies of youth had been moderated by maturer reason, still the thought of having fallen into the hands of a smuggler had even now the effect of making my heart beat violently.

"You must be mad--stark mad! Such a man--it is not possible!" I continually repeated to myself, as I hurried along the path I had followed that morning--for indeed I then knew no other--through

the park into the forest, until I again reached the tarn with the bank of moss.

I gazed into the calm black water; I thought of the unhappy lady who had drowned herself there because she could not find the way back to Spain, and how strange it was that her daughter should select precisely this spot for her favorite resting-place. Behind the bank lay her other glove, for which we had looked in vain in the morning. I kissed it repeatedly, with a thrill of delight, and placed it in my bosom. Then leaving the place hastily I ascended the cliff, and passing the ruined tower, went out to the furthest extremity of the promontory, which was also its highest point. Approaching the verge, I looked over. A strong breeze had sprung up; the streaks of foam lying among the great rocks and countless pebbles of the beach had grown broader; and here and there upon the blue expanse flashed the white crest of a breaker. The mainland lay towards the south-west. I could have seen the steeples of my native town but for a cliff that intervened, rising abruptly from the sea, and now of a steel-blue color in the afternoon light. "And this is all that remains!" I said, repeating the words of Constance, as my eye, in turning, fell upon the ruined tower.

I descended and threw myself down upon the soft moss that grew among the ruins. No place could have been found more fit to inspire fantastic reveries. The wide expanse of sky, and beyond the edge of the upland a great stretch of sea, and the nodding broom around me! In the sky the fleecy clouds, on the water a gleaming sail, and in the broom the whispering wind! How luxurious to lie idly here and dream--the sweetest dream of sweet love that loves idleness: a dream, of course, full of combats and peril, such as naturally fills a youthful fancy. Yes! I would be her deliverer; would bear her in my arms from this desolate castle, a dismal dungeon for one so young and so fair--would rescue her from this terrible father, and these ruins would I erect again into a stately palace; and when the work was done and the topmost battlements burned in the evening-red, would lead her in, and kneeling humbly before her, say, "This is thine! Live happy! Me thou wilt never see more!"

Thus I wove the web of fancy, while the sun sank towards the horizon, and the white clouds of noon began to flush with crimson. What else could I have done? A young fellow who has just run away from school, who has not a *thaler* in his pocket, and a borrowed hat on, and who scarcely knows where he shall lay his head--what else can he do but build castles in the air?

CHAPTER VIII.

As I entered the court through a little door in the park-wall, there stood a light wagon from which the horses were being unharnessed, and by the wagon a man in hunting-dress, his gun upon his shoulder--it was Herr von Zehren.

I had planned to assume towards my host a sort of diplomatic attitude; but I never was a good actor, and had had, besides, so little time to get up the part, that the friendly smile and cordial grasp of the hand with which Herr von Zehren received me, completely threw me out, and I met his smile and returned his grasp with as much fervor as if I had all day been waiting for the moment when I should see my friend and protector: in a word, I was entirely in the power of the charm with which this singular man had, from the first moment of our meeting, captivated my young and inexperienced heart.

But in truth a maturer understanding than mine might well have been ensnared by the charm of his manner. Even his personal appearance had for me something fascinating; and as he stood there, laughing and jesting with the setting sun lighting up a face which seemed really to have grown young again from the excitement of his day's sport, and as he took off his cap and pushed the soft fine locks, already touched with gray, from his nobly-formed brow, and stroked his thick brown beard, I thought I had never seen a handsomer man.

"I came to your bedside this morning," he said, in a sportive manner; "but you slept so soundly that I had not the heart to waken you. Though if I had known that you could handle a gun as well as you can rudder and halyards--and yet I might have known it, for fishing and shooting and--something else besides--go together, like sitting by the stove and sleeping. But we will make up for it: we have, thank heaven, more than one day's shooting before us. And now come in and let us talk while supper is getting ready."

The room which Herr von Zehren occupied was in the front part of the building, just in the rear of the dining-room, and his sleeping apartment immediately adjoined it. He entered the latter, and conversed with me through the open door, keeping all the while such a clattering with jugs, basins, and other apparatus of ablution, that I had some difficulty in understanding what he was saying. I made out, however, that he had this morning written to his brother, the *steuerrath*,

requesting him to apprise my father where I was now staying. My father certainly would not be sorry to hear that I had found shelter in the house of a friend, at least until some arrangement could be effected. In similar circumstances, he said, a temporary separation often prevented a perpetual one. And even should this not be the case here, at all events--here his head dipped into the water, and I lost the remainder of the sentence. Under any circumstances--he was saying when he became again intelligible--it would be as well if I mentioned to no one where it was that we had happened to meet. We might have met upon the road, as I was about to be ferried over to the island. What was to prevent a young man, whose father had just driven him from his house, from going, if he pleased, as far as the blue sky spread overhead? and why should he not meet a gentleman who has a vacant place in his carriage, and asks the young man if he will not get in? This was all very simple and natural. And in fact this was the way he had stated the circumstances in his letter to his brother this morning. He had given old Pinnow his cue yesterday evening. And besides, the question of where and how was really nobody's affair. He added some further remarks with his head inside his wardrobe, but I only caught the word "inconveniences."

I felt relieved from a load of anxiety. My frightful dream of the morning, of which I had not thought during the whole day, had recurred to my memory in the dusk of the evening twilight. For a moment an apprehension seized me that my father might think I had made away with myself; but it was but for a moment, for youth finds it so unlikely that others will take things more seriously than it does itself. One point, however, was clear: that I must give some account of myself to my father. But at this thought the old misery came back; I could, in any event, no longer stay here. And now I suddenly saw a way of escape from this labyrinth. The steuerrath, being his immediate chief, was, as I well knew, looked upon by my loyal and zealous father as a kind of superior being; indeed he knew upon earth but four other beings higher than himself; the Provincial Excise-Director, the General Excise-Director, His Excellency the Minister of Commerce, next to whom came His Majesty the King--which latter, however, was a being of distinct and peculiar kind, and separated, even from an excellency, by a vast chasm. If, therefore, Herr von Zehren wished to keep me with him, and the steuerrath would use his influence with my father--but would he? The steuerrath had never liked me much; and besides, the evening before, I had deeply offended him. I expressed my doubts on this point to Herr von Zehren. "I will make that all right," he said, as, rubbing his freshly washed hands, he came out of his chamber.

"And now then," he went on, stretching himself luxuriously in an easy-chair, "how have you spent the day? Have you seen my daughter? Yes? Then you may boast of your luck--many a time I do not see her for days together. And have you had something to eat? Poor fare enough, I warrant; the provision is but indifferent when I am at home, but execrable when I am away. Moonshine and beefsteak are two things that do not suit together. When I want good fare, I must go from home. Yesterday evening, for example, at old Pinnow's--wasn't it capital? Romantic too, eh? Friar Tuck and the Black Knight, and you besides as the Disinherited Knight. I love such little adventures above everything."

And he stretched himself at ease in his great chair, and laughed so joyously that I mentally asked his pardon for my suspicions, and pronounced myself a complete fool to have had such an idea enter my brain.

He went on chatting: asked me many questions about my father, my family, the past events of my life, all in a tone of such friendly interest that no one could have taken it amiss. He seemed to be much pleased with my answers; nor did I take offence again when, as he had done the evening before, he broke into loud laughter at some of my remarks. But when this happened, he was always careful to soothe my sensitiveness with a kind word or two. I felt assured that he meant well towards me; and to this day I have remained in the conviction that from the first moment he had conceived a hearty liking for me, and that if it was a mere caprice that drew him towards a young man who needed assistance, it was one of those caprices of which none but naturally generous hearts are capable.

"But what keeps our supper so long?" he cried, springing up impatiently and looking into the dining-room. "Ah! there you are, Constance!"

He went in; through the half-open door I heard him speaking in a low tone with his daughter; my heart beat, I could not tell why.

"Well, why do you not come?" he called to me from the dining-room. I went in; by the table, that to my unaccustomed eye seemed richly spread, stood Constance. The light of the hanging lamp fell upon her from above. Whether it was the different light, or the different arrangement of her hair, which was now combed upwards, so as to rest upon her head like a dark crown, with a golden ribbon interwoven in it, or her different attire--now a plain blue close-fitting dress, cut low at the neck, which was covered by a wide lace collar, worn somewhat like a handkerchief--whether it was all these together, and in addition the changed expression of her face, which had now something indescribably childlike about it, I cannot say; but I scarcely recognized her again; I could have believed that the Constance I had seen in the morning was the older, more impassioned sister of this fair maidenly creature.

"Last half of the previous century," said Herr von Zehren--"Lotte, eh? You only want a sash, and perhaps a Werther--otherwise superb!"

A shadow passed over the face of Constance, and her brows contracted. I had not entirely understood the allusion, but it pained me. Constance seemed so fair to me; how could any one who saw her say aught else but that she was fair?

Gladly would I have said it, but I had scarcely the courage to look at her, let alone speak to her; and she, for her part, was silent and abstracted; the dishes she hardly touched; and indeed now I cannot remember ever to have seen her eat. In truth, the meal, composed of fish and pheasants which Herr von Zehren had brought in from his day's shooting, was of a kind only suited to his own appetite, which was as keen as a sportsman's usually is. During supper he drank freely of the excellent red wine, and often challenged me to pledge him; and indeed he directed his vivacious and genial conversation almost exclusively to me. I was fairly dazzled by it; and as there was much that I only half understood, and much that I did not understand at all, it sometimes happened that I laughed in the wrong place, which only increased his mirth. One thing, however, I saw clearly; the constrained, not to say hostile, relations between father and daughter. Things of this kind are easily perceived, especially when the observer is as well prepared as was I to catch the meaning lurking under the apparent indifference of a hasty question, and to mark the unnecessarily prolonged pause which preceded the answer, and the irritated tone in which it followed. For it had not been so long since my father and I had sat together in the same way; when I used to thank heaven in my heart if any lucky chance relieved us sooner than usual of each other's presence. Here I should have been a disinterested spectator had I not been so inordinately in love with the daughter, and had not the father, by his brilliancy and amiability, obtained such a mastery over me. So my heart, shared between them both, was torn asunder by their division; and if a few hours before I had formed the heroic resolution to protect the lovely and unhappy daughter from her terrible father, I was now fixed like a rock in my conviction that to me had fallen the sublime mission to join these two glorious beings again in an indissoluble bond of love. That it would have better become me to go back to the door of a certain small house in Uselin, where dwelt an old man whom I had so deeply wounded--of that I never for a moment thought.

I breathed quick with expectation as a carriage came rattling over the broken pavement of the court and stopped at the door. It was a visitor whom Herr von Zehren had said he was expecting; a fellow-sportsman and the owner of an adjoining estate, who brought with him a friend who was staying at his house, and who had been out with them shooting. Constance had at once arisen from the table, and was about to leave the room, in spite of her father's request, uttered in a tone that almost made it a command, "I beg that you will remain!" when the gentlemen entered. One was a tall, broad-shouldered, fair young man, with handsome, regular features, and a pair of large, prominent blue eyes that stared out into the world with a sort of good-natured astonishment. My host introduced him to me as Herr Hans von Trantow. The other, a short, round figure, whose head, with its sloping brow, and almost deficient occiput, was so small as to leave scarce a hand's breadth of room for his close-cropped, stiff brown hair, and whose short turned-up nose, and immense mouth, always open, and furnished with large white teeth, gave their possessor a more than passing resemblance to a bull-dog--was called Herr Joachim von Granow. He had been an officer in the army, and on his succession, a few months before, to a handsome fortune, had purchased an estate in the neighborhood.

Constance had found herself compelled to remain, for the little Herr von Granow had at once turned upon her with an apparently inexhaustible flood of talk, and the bulky Herr von Trantow remained standing immovable so near the open door that it was not easy to pass him. From the first moment of seeing them I felt a strong antipathy to them both: to the little one because he ventured to approach so near to Constance, and to talk so much; and to the large one, who did not speak, indeed, but stared steadily at her with his glassy eyes, which seemed to me a still more offensive proceeding.

"We have had but a poor day's sport," said the little one in a squeaking voice to Constance; "but day before yesterday, at Count Griebenow's, we had an uncommonly splendid time. Whenever a covey rose I was right among them; three times I brought down a brace--right and left barrels; and that I call shooting. They were as jealous of me--I expected to be torn to pieces. Even the prince lost his temper. 'You have the devil's own luck, Granow,' he kept saying. 'Young men must have some luck,' I answered. 'But I am younger than you,' said he. 'Your highness does not need any luck,' said I. 'Why not?' 'To be a Prince of Prora-Wiek is luck enough of itself' Wasn't that a capital hit?" and he shook with laughter at his own wit, and shrugged his round shoulders until they nearly swallowed his little head.

"The prince was there, then?" Constance said.

It was the first word she had uttered in reply to the small man's chatter. Perhaps this was the reason that I, who had been standing by, taking no interest in what was said--Herr von Zehren had left the room, and Herr von Trantow still held his post at the door--suddenly gave all my attention to the conversation.

"Yes indeed; did you not know it?" said the little man. "To be sure, your father does not come to the shooting at Griebenow's; but I supposed Trantow would have told you."

"Herr von Trantow and I are not accustomed to keep each other *au courant* of our adventures," answered Constance.

"Indeed!" said Herr von Granow, "is it possible? Yes; as I was going on to say, the prince was there: he is going to be betrothed to the young Countess Griebenow, they say. At all events, he has fixed his quarters at Rossow; the only one of his estates in this part of the country, you know, that has anything like a suitable residence, and then besides it lies very handy to Griebenow. A capital opportunity--if a prince ever needs an opportunity. But that is only for us poor devils--ha! ha! ha!"--and the little fellow's head again nearly disappeared into his shoulders.

I was standing near enough to hear every word and observe every look, and I had clearly perceived that as Herr von Granow mentioned the young prince, Constance, who had been standing half-turned away from the speaker, with an inattentive, rather annoyed expression, suddenly turned and fixed her eyes upon him, while a deep blush suffused her cheeks. I had afterwards sufficient reason to remember this fact, but at the moment had not time to ponder over it, as Herr von Zehren now returned with the cigars for which he had gone; and Constance, after offering Herr von Granow the tips of her fingers, giving me her hand with great apparent cordiality, and saluting Herr von Trantow, who stood, as ever, silent and motionless at the door, with a distant, scarcely perceptible bow, at once left the room.

As the door closed behind her, Herr von Trantow passed his hand over his brow, and then turned his large eyes on me, as he slowly approached me. I returned, as defiantly as I was able, his look, in which I fancied I read a dark menace, and stood prepared for whatever might happen, when he suddenly stopped before me, his staring eyes still fixed upon my face.

"This is my young friend of whom I was speaking to you, Hans," said Herr von Zehren, coming up to us. "Do you think you can manage him?"

Von Trantow shrugged his shoulders.

"You see I have laid a wager with Hans that you are the stronger of the two," our host continued. "He is counted the strongest man in all this part of the country; so I held it my duty to bring so formidable a rival to his notice."

"But not this evening," said Hans, offering me his hand. It was just as when a great mastiff, of whom we are not sure whether he will bite or not, suddenly sits on his haunches before us, and lays his great paw on our knees. I took it without an instant's hesitation.

"Heaven forbid!" said Herr von Zehren to Trantow's remark. "My young friend will make a long stay with me, I trust. He wishes to learn the management of a country place; and where could he sooner attain his object than upon such a model estate as mine?"

He laughed as he said it. Von Granow exclaimed, "Very good!" the silent Hans, said nothing, and I stood confused. Von Zehren, in our previous conversation, had made no allusion to my staying with him as a pupil. Why had he not done so? It was one of the happiest of ideas, I thought, and one that at once cleared away all the difficulties of my position. As for his "model estate," why might I not succeed in changing this ironical phrase to a real description? Yes; here I had a new mission, which went hand in hand with the other: to reconcile father and daughter, to reclaim the ruined estate, to rebuild the castle of their ancestors--in a word, to be the good genius, the guardian angel of the family.

All this passed through my mind as the gentlemen took their seats at the card-table; and with my brain still busy with the thought, I left the room, under the pretext of wanting a little fresh air, and strolled about the now familiar paths among the dark shrubbery of the park. The moon was not yet up, but a glimmer on the eastern horizon showed that she was rising. The stars twinkled through the warm air that was ascending from the earth. There was a rustling and whispering in bush and copse, and a screech-owl at intervals broke the silence with her cry. From one of the windows on the ground-floor of the castle came a faint light, and the breeze brought to my ear the notes of a guitar. I could not withstand the temptation, and crept with hushed breath, startled at the least noise that my footsteps made, nearer and nearer, until I reached the stone balustrade which surrounded the wide, low terrace. I now perceived that the light came from an open casement, through which I could see into a dimly-lighted room. Thick curtains were dropped before the two windows to the right and left. From the place where I stood I could not see the occupant, and I was hesitating, with a beating heart, whether I should venture to advance, when she suddenly appeared at the open casement. Not to be discovered, I crouched close behind a great stone vase.

Her fingers glided over the strings of her guitar, trying first one note and then another, then striking an uncertain chord or two, as if she were trying to catch a melody. Presently the chords were struck more firmly, and she sang:

"All day long the bright sun loves me,
 Woos me with his glowing light;
But I better love the gentle
 Stars of night.

From the boundless deep above me
 Come their calm and tender beams,

Bringing to my wayward fancy
Sweetest dreams.

Sweetest dreams of love unending,
Bitter tears for love undone;
For the dearest, for the fairest,
Only one.

Falsest-hearted, only chosen--
Soon the short-lived dream was o'er--
He is gone, and I am lonely
Evermore."

The last words were sung in a broken voice, and she now leaned her head against the casement-frame, and I heard her sobbing. My agitation was so great that I forgot the precaution which my situation demanded, and a stone which I had dislodged from the crumbling edge of the terrace rolled down the slope. Constance started, and called with an unsteady voice, "Who is there?" I judged it more prudent to discover myself, and approached her, saying that it was I.

"Ah, it is you, then," she said.

"I entreat you to forgive me. The music of your guitar attracted me. I know I ought not to have come: pray forgive me."

I stood near her; the light from the room fell brightly upon her face and her eyes, which were lifted to mine.

"How kind you are," she said in a soft voice; "or are you not dealing truly with me?"

I could not trust myself to answer, but she knew how to interpret my silence aright.

"Yes," she said, "you are my trusty squire, my faithful George. If I were to say to you: watch this terrace tonight until the break of day, you would do it, would you not?"

"Yes," I answered.

She looked in my face and smiled. "How sweet it is--how sweet to know that there is one creature upon earth that is true to us!"

She gave me her hand; my own trembled as I took it.

"But I do not ask anything of the kind," she said; "only this one thing, that you will not go away except by your own determination, and not without my permission. You promise? That is so kind of you! And now go; good-night!"

She lightly pressed my hand before letting it go, and then re-entered her room. As I turned away I heard the casement close.

I stood under one of the great trees of the park and looked back towards the house. The moon had risen above the trees, and the great mass of buildings stood out in bolder relief against the dark background; a faint light occasionally appeared and vanished in one of the windows of the upper story. The light from Constance's window came towards me with that magic lustre which shines upon us once in our lives, and only once.

The lawn before me lay in deep shadow; but just as the first rays of the moon began to illuminate it, I thought I perceived a figure, which, coming from the other side, was slowly approaching Constance's window. In this there was nothing to excite suspicion, for it might be one of the laborers; but it is the duty of a faithful squire to make sure in any case; so without a moment's hesitation I started across the lawn to meet the figure. Unluckily I stepped upon a dry twig and it snapped. The figure stopped instantly, and began to retreat with swift, stealthy steps. He had but little start of me, but the thick coppice which closed in the lawn on that side, and was the limit of the park, was so near that he reached it a few moments before me. I distinctly heard some one pushing through the branches, but with my utmost exertions I could not reach him. I began to think that my ear had led me in a wrong direction, when suddenly a loud crashing and clattering close at hand proved that I was on the right track. The man was evidently clambering over the rotten paling which fenced in the park on this side. Now I knew he could not escape me. On the other side lay a wide open space, and I had never yet met the man whom I could not overtake in a fair race. But at the instant that I reached the paling, I heard a horse's feet, and looking up saw a rider galloping across the open in the clear moonlight. The horse was evidently one of great power and speed. At each stride he cleared such a stretch of ground, that in less than half a minute horse and rider were lost to sight; for a brief space I still heard the sound of the hoofs, and then that also ceased. The whole adventure passed in so little time, that I might have fancied I had dreamed it all, but for the evidence of my heart beating violently with excitement and the exertion of the chase, and the smarting of my hands, which were torn by the thorns and briers.

Who could the audacious intruder be? Certainly not an ordinary thief; doubtless some one who had been attracted by the light from Constance's window, and not to-night for the first time; it was plain that he had often followed that path in the dark.

That it was a favored lover, I did not for a moment suppose. Such a surmise would have seemed to me an outrage, and upon one, too, whose dreamy eyes, whose melancholy song, and whose tears rather told of an unhappy than of a requited attachment. But they surely told of love. Not that I was presumptuous enough to indulge in any hope, or even wish; how could I dare to lift my eyes to her? I could only live and die for her, and perhaps another time break the neck of the rash mortal who had dared under cover of the night to approach her sanctuary.

This idea somewhat solaced my dejection, but my former happiness had departed never to return. It was with a heavy sense of anxiety and apprehension that I re-entered the room where the gentlemen were still at the card-table.

They had commenced with whist, but were now engaged at faro. Von Zehren held the bank, and seemed to have been winning largely. In a plate before him lay a great heap of silver, with some gold, and this plate lay on another which was filled with crumpled treasury notes. The two guests had already lost their ready money, and from time to time they handed over bills, which went to swell the pile of notes, and received in exchange larger or smaller sums, which evinced a strong proclivity to return to the source from which they sprang. Herr von Trantow appeared to bear his ill-luck with great equanimity. His good-natured handsome face was as passionless as before, only perhaps a shade or two deeper in color, and his great blue eyes rather more staring. But this might very well be the effect of the wine he had been drinking, of which they had already emptied at least half-a-dozen bottles. Herr von Granow's nerves were less fitted to bear the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. He would at times start up from his chair, then fall back into it; swore sometimes aloud, sometimes softly to himself, and was plainly in the very worst of humors, to the secret delight, as I thought, of Herr von Zehren, whose brown eyes twinkled with amusement as he politely expressed his regret whenever he was compelled to gather in the little man's money.

I had taken my seat near the players, in order better to watch the chances of the game, of which I had sufficient knowledge from furtive school-boy experiences, when Herr von Zehren pushed over to me a pile of bank-notes which he had just won, saying, "You must join us."

"Excuse me," I stammered.

"Why so punctilious about a trifle?" he asked. "There is no need for you to go to your room for money; here is enough."

He knew that my whole stock of cash did not amount to quite a *thaler*, for I had told him so the previous evening. I blushed crimson, but had not the courage to contradict my kind host's generous falsehood. I drew up my chair with the air of a man who has no wish to spoil sport, and began to play.

Cautiously at first, with small stakes, and with the firm determination to remain perfectly cool; but before long the fever of gaming began to fire my brain. My heart beat ever quicker and quicker, my head and my eyes seemed burning. While the cards were dealing I poured down glass after glass of wine to moisten my parched throat, and it was with a shaking hand that I gathered up my winnings. And I won almost incessantly; if a card was turned against me, the next few turns brought me in a three-fold or a five-fold gain. My agitation almost suffocated me as the money before me increased to a larger sum than I had ever before seen in a heap--two or three hundred *thalers*, as I estimated it in my mind.

Presently my luck came to a pause. I ceased winning, but did not lose; and then I began to lose slowly at first, then faster and faster. Cold chills ran over me, as one after another of the large notes passed into the banker's hands; but I took care not to imitate the behavior of Herr von Granow, which had struck me so repulsively. Like Herr von Trantow, I lost without the slightest change of countenance, and my calmness was praised by my host, who continued encouraging me. My stock of money had melted away to one-half, when Hans von Trantow declared with a yawn that he was too tired to play any longer. Von Granow said it was not late; but the candles burnt to the sockets, and the great clock on the wall, which pointed to three, told a different story. The two guests lighted fresh cigars, and drove off in their carriages, which had long been waiting at the door, after having arranged a shooting expedition, in which I was to join, for the following day.

My host and I returned to the room, which reeked with the fumes of wine and the smoke of cigars, where old Christian, for whom the difference between night and day seemed to have no existence, was busy clearing up. Von Zehren threw open the window and looked out. I joined him; he laid his hand upon my shoulder and said: "How gloriously the stars are shining, and how delicious the air is! And there"--he pointed back into the room, "how horrible--disgusting--stifling! Why cannot one play faro by starlight, inhaling the perfume of wall-flowers and mignonette? And why, after every merry night, must repentance come in the form of an old man shaking his head as he counts the emptied bottles and sweeps up the ashes? How stupid it is; but we must not give ourselves gray hairs fretting about it--they will come soon enough of themselves. And now do you go to bed. I see you have a hundred things on your mind, but to-morrow is a new day, and if not--

so much the better. Good-night, and pleasant rest."

But it was long ere my host's kind wish was accomplished. A real witch-sabbath of beautiful and hideous figures danced in the wildest gyrations before my feverish, half-sleeping, half-waking eyes: Constance, her father, his guests, the dark form in the park, my father, Professor Lederer, and Smith Pinnow--and all appealing to me to save them from some danger or other;--Professor Lederer especially from two thick lexicons, which were really two great oysters that gaped with open shells at the lean professor, while the commerzienrath stood in the background, nearly dying with laughter:--and all whirling and swarming together, and caressing and threatening, and charming and terrifying me, until at last, as the gray dawn began to light the ragged hangings of the chamber, a profound slumber dispersed the phantoms.

CHAPTER IX.

If, according to the unanimous report of travellers by that route, the road to hell is paved with good intentions, I am convinced that several square rods of it are my work, and that the greater part of it was laid down in the first fortnight of my stay at Zehrendorf. There could, indeed, scarcely have been a place where everything essential to this easy and pleasant occupation was provided in ampler abundance. Wherever one went, or stood, or turned the eyes, there lay the materials ready to hand; and I was too young, too inexperienced, and I will venture to add, too good-hearted, not to fall to work with all my energy. Of what unspeakable folly I was guilty in undertaking to set right the disordered and disjointed world in which I was now moving, after I had already shown that I could not adjust myself to the correct and orderly world from which I came--this thought did not seize me till long afterwards.

No; I was thoroughly convinced of my sublime mission; and I thanked my propitious star that had so gloriously brought me from the harsh slavery of the school and of my father's house, where I was pining away; from the oppressive bonds of Philistine associations which hampered the free flight of my heroic soul, into this freedom of the desert which seemed to have no bounds, and behind which must lie a Canaan which I was gallantly resolved to conquer--a land flowing with the milk of friendship and with the honey of love.

True, the letter which soon arrived, with a great box containing my personal chattels, from my father to Herr von Zehren, for a while gave me pause. The letter comprised but very few lines, to the effect that he--my father--was fully convinced of the impossibility of ever leading me by his road to any good end, and that he was compelled to give me over, for weal or woe, to my own devices; only hoping that my disobedience and my obstinacy might not be visited upon me too heavily. Herr von Zehren showed me the letter, and as he observed my grave look upon reading it, asked me, "Do you wish to go back?" adding immediately, "Do not do it. That is no place for you. The old gentleman wanted to make a draught-horse out of you, but, tall and strong as you are, that is not your vocation. You are a hunter, for whom no ditch is too wide, and no hedge too high. Come along! I saw a covey of some two dozen over in the croft; we will have them before dinner."

He was right, I thought. I felt that my father had given me up too soon, that he might have allowed me one chance more, and that, as it was, he had forfeited the right to threaten me in addition with the retribution of heaven. And yet it pained me, when an hour or so later Herr von Zehren, who had used up all his wads, took my father's letter from his pocket, and tearing it up, rammed it down both barrels of his gun, with the jesting phrase that necessity knows no law. I could not help feeling as if some misfortune would happen. But the gun did not burst, the birds dropped, and nothing remained of the letter but a smouldering scrap which fell in some dry stubble, and upon which Herr von Zehren set his foot as he thrust the birds into his game-bag.

If I had any doubt left whether I was right in setting myself upon my own feet, as I phrased it, a letter which I received from Arthur was only too well adapted to confirm me in my notions of my finally-won liberty.

"A lucky dog you always were," he wrote. "You run away from school, and they let you go, as if it was a matter of course; while me they catch as if I were a runaway slave, cram me in the dungeon for three days, every hour cast up to me my disgraceful conduct, and in every way make my life a perfect misery to me. Even my father carries on as if I was guilty of heaven knows what; only mamma is sensible, and says I mustn't take it too much to heart, and that papa will have to come round, or the professor will not let me go into the upper class, and there will be more botherations. It is really a shame that I, just because my uncle, the commerzienrath, wills it so, must go through the final examination, while Albert von Zitzewitz, no older than I, is at the cadets' school, and has a pair of colors already. What has my uncle to do with me, anyhow? Papa

says that he will not be able to support me during my lieutenancy without the help he expects from my uncle; and that is likely too, for things get tighter with us every day, and papa went quite wild yesterday when he had to pay sixteen *thalers* for a glove-bill of mine. If mamma did not help me now and then, I don't know what I should do; but she has nothing, and said to me only yesterday that she did not know what would happen at New Year, when all the bills came in.

"Now you might help me out of all this trouble. Papa says that Uncle Malte never looks at money when he happens to have any, and anybody that would hit the lucky moment might get as much from him as they pleased. You, lucky fellow, are now with him all the time, and you might watch your chance, for the sake of an old friend, and slip in a good word for me. Or better, tell him that you have some old debts that you are worried about, and wouldn't he lend you fifty or a hundred *thalers*, and then do you send it to me, for you can't want it, you know. You'll never come back here, whatever happens, for you cannot imagine the way people here talk about you. Lederer prays an extra five minutes every day for the strayed lamb--that's what he calls you, you old sinner. Justizrath Heckepfennig said that if ever it was written in a mortal's face that he would die in his shoes, it is in yours. In Emilie's coterie it was resolved to tear out of all their albums the leaves on which you had immortalized yourself; and at my uncle's, day before yesterday, there was a regular scene about you. Uncle said at the table that you must take powerfully long strides if you meant to outrun the --- and here he made a sign, you understand, at which Hermine began to cry terribly, and Fräulein Duff said it was a shame to talk that way before a child. So you see you have a pair of firm friends among the females. You always did have, and have still, the most unaccountable luck in that quarter. Don't break my pretty cousin's heart, you lucky dog!

"P. S.--Papa once told me that Constance gets a small sum of money every year from an old Spanish aunt of hers. She certainly has no use for it. Maybe you could coax something from her--at all events, you might look into the matter a little."

As soon as I had read this letter, which offered me such an opportunity of heaping coals of fire on the head of my still-loved friend, I resolved to help him out of his difficulties with a part of the money I had won on that first evening; but this intention, which I cannot maintain to have been in any sense a good one, was destined never to be carried into execution. For the same evening Herr von Zehren gave his guests their revenge at Hans von Trantow's, and I lost not only all the money I had won with such palpitations, to the very last *thaler*, but a considerable sum besides, which my obliging host, who was again the winner, had forced upon me. This ill fortune, which I might have foreseen if I had had a grain more sense, struck me as a heavy blow. In spite of my frivolity, I had always been scrupulously conscientious in my small money-matters; had always paid my insignificant debts cheerfully and as promptly as possible; and as we were driving home at daybreak after this unlucky evening, I felt more wretched than I had ever done before. How could I ever be in a position to pay such a sum--especially now that I had resolved never again to touch a card? How could I venture in broad daylight to look into the face of the man to whom I was already under so many obligations?

Herr von Zehren, who was in the best of humors, laughed aloud when, after some urging on his part, I confessed to him my trouble. "My dear George," said he--he had taken to calling me George altogether--"don't take it amiss, but you really are too absurd. Why, man, do you really think that I would for one instant hold you responsible for what you did at my express request? Whoever lends money to minors, does it, as everybody knows, at his own risk, and you certainly remember that I forced the money upon you. And why did I do it? Simply because it gave me pleasure, and because I liked to see your honest, glowing face across the table, and to compare it with Granow's hang-dog look and Trantow's stony stare. And when a young fellow that is my valued guest, to please me, accompanies me out shooting, or to the faro-table, and he has no money and no gun, it is right and fair and a matter of course that I should place my gun-room and purse at his disposal. And now say no more about the trifle, and give me a cigar if we have any left."

I gave him his cigar-case, which he had handed over to my keeping, and murmured that his kindness crushed me to the earth, and that my only consolation was in the trust that an opportunity might yet offer of my repaying the obligation in some way or other. He laughed again at this, and said I was as proud as Lucifer, but he liked me all the better for it; and as for the possibility of my repaying the obligation, as I called it, he was a man in whose life accidents and lucky hits and mishaps and chances of all kinds had played so important a part, that it would be a wonder if, among all the rest, the chance I so longed for did not turn up. So until then we would let the matter rest.

In this airy way he tried to quiet the twinges of my conscience, but he only succeeded in part; and I went to sleep, and awaked a couple of hours later, with the resolution to set decisively about the execution of another resolution, namely, in my capacity of pupil to devote myself to the neglected estate; to acquire, with the utmost possible dispatch, a complete insight into all matters of rural economy, and by the help of this knowledge and of untiring diligence, and the exertion of all my faculties, to change this ruined place in the shortest possible time--say one or two years--into a paradise, and so relieve my kind host from the necessity of winning at the card-table the resources which he could not win from his fields.

I at once devoted my attention to the forlorn-looking stables, to the cattle-sheds, only tenanted by a few wretched specimens of the bovine genus, and to a score of melancholy sheep; so that

Herr von Zehren, who had an acute sense of the comic, could never get done laughing at me, until an incident occurred which gave him an opportunity of speaking a serious word with me, which to a certain extent damped the ardor of my economical studies.

That old man whom I met in the park on the first day after my arrival (whose real name was Christian Halterman, though he always went by the name of Old Christian), in his capacity of under-bailiff, and in default of a master who paid any attention to the management, and of a head-bailiff, a post that was not filled--was the wretched chief of the whole wretched establishment. Such orders as were given emanated from him; though it required no extraordinary perspicuity of vision to see that of the whole bandit-looking gang that called themselves laborers, every man did just what pleased him. When the old man, as I had once or twice seen, fell into an impotent rage, and more to relieve his wrath than in the hope of any effectual result, scolded and stormed in his singular, creaking, parrot-like voice, they laughed in his wrinkled face and kept on their own way, or sometimes even openly insulted him. Their ringleader in this insolence was a certain John Swart, commonly called "Long Jock," a great, tall, broad-shouldered fellow, with long arms like an ape's, whose physiognomy would probably have appeared to Justizrath Heckepfennig more unprepossessing even than mine, and of whose matchless strength the others told all sorts of wonderful stories.

I came one morning upon this man, quarrelling again with Old Christian. The subject of dispute was a load of corn which the old man wanted thrown off, and which the other refused to touch. The scene was the straw-littered space before the barn-door, and the spectators a half-dozen fellows who openly sided with Long Jock, and applauded every coarse jeer of his with whinnying laughter.

I had observed the whole affair from a distance, and my blood was already boiling with indignation when I reached the spot. Thrusting a couple of the laughers roughly aside, I confronted Long Jock and asked him if he intended to obey Old Christian's order or not. Jock answered me with an insolent laugh and a coarse word. In a moment we were both rolling in the trampled straw, and in the next I was kneeling upon the breast of my vanquished antagonist, and made the unpleasantness of his position so apparent, that he first cried aloud for help, and then, seeing that the rest stood scared and motionless, and that none could deliver him out of my hand, begged for mercy like a craven.

I had just allowed him to rise, badly bruised and half strangled, when Herr von Zehren, who from his chamber-window had been a witness of the whole scene, came hurrying up. He told Long Jock that he had got no more than he richly deserved, and that he would do well to take a lesson from it for the future; reproved the others, but as I thought by no means so severely as their conduct demanded, then took my arm and led me a little aside, until we were out of hearing of the men, when he said, "It is all very well, George, that these fellows should know how strong you are; but I do not want to turn them against me by any repetition of the proof."

I looked at him in surprise.

"Yes," he went on, "you would have to repeat the process on a thousand other occasions, and not even your strength would suffice for such Herculean labor."

"Let us try that," I said.

"No; let us by no means try that," he answered.

"But the whole estate is going to ruin in this way," I cried, still under excitement. Herr von Zehren shrugged his shoulders, and said, "Well, it has not very far to go--two or three steps at the farthest. And now you understand, George, the word is, Things as they are! As for the men, they are no bees in point of industry, but they have this much of bees about them, that when they are meddled with they are very apt to sting. So be a little more cautious in future."

He said it with a smile, but I perceived very clearly that he was thoroughly in earnest, and that the paradise I had been planning must be renounced. A paradise in which these brigand-looking malingerers slouched about at their pleasure, presented too glaring a contradiction to escape even my inexperienced eyes.

I cannot say that it cost me much to give up my plans of radical reformation. I had chiefly thrown myself into them because I hoped thus to free myself of my load of obligation to my host. If he did not choose to be paid in this way, it was clearly no fault of mine; and when he reiterated to me every day that he wanted nothing of me but myself, that my company was inexpressibly delightful to him, and, so to speak, a godsend, whose value he could not sufficiently prize--how could I help believing assurances that were so flattering to me, and how could I withstand the allurements of a life that so exactly corresponded with my inclinations?

Fishing and bird-catching--there is associated with these words an ominous warning, whose justice I was destined to have a long time and a desperately serious occasion to verify; but even now I cannot condemn the fascination that clings to those occupations at which the proverb is aimed. Fish cannot be caught without gazing at the water, nor birds without gazing into the sky; and then the gliding waves and the flying clouds get a mysterious hold of us--or at all events did of me, from my very earliest youth. How often as a boy, coming home from school, did I go out of

my way to sit for half an hour on the outermost end of the pier, and yield to the lulling influence of the light lapping of the waves at my feet. How often at my garret-window have I stood gazing over my wearisome books at the blue sky, where our neighbor's white pigeons were wheeling in ethereal circles. And I had always longed just for once to be able to listen to my fill to the plashing waves, and gaze my fill at the drifting clouds. Then as I grew older, and could extend the range of my excursions, I enjoyed many a happy hour, many a boating-trip, many a ramble into the forest, many an expedition after water-fowl on the beach with one of Smith Pinnow's rusty fowling-pieces; but these at best were only for a few hours at a time, which were far from sufficient for the exuberant energies of youth, and were bought at the price of too much incarceration at home and at school, too much care, trouble, vexation, and anger.

Now for the first time in my life I enjoyed in full measure all that I had longed for all my life: forest and field and sea-shore, unlimited space, and freedom to wander through all these at my pleasure from the earliest dawn until far in the night, and a companion besides than whom no fitter could be desired by a youth whose ambition it was to excel in these profitless, ruinous arts. The "Wild Zehren's" eye was perhaps not so keen nor his hand so steady as they had been ten or twenty years before, but he was still an excellent shot, and a master in everything belonging to field-sports. No one knew better than he where to find the game; no one had such well-trained dogs, or could handle them so well as he; no one could so skilfully take advantage of all the chances of the chase; and above all, no one was so delightful a companion. If his ardor during the sport carried all away with him, no one could so happily choose the resting-place in the cool edge of the forest or under the thin shade of a little copse by the side of a brook, or so charmingly entertain the tired party with mirth and jest and the most capitally-told stories. But he always seemed most charming to me when we two together were on a long tramp. If in a large company of sportsmen he could not conceal a certain imperious manner, and the better success of another filled him with envy which found vent in acrid sarcasms, there was no trace of all this when he was with me. He taught me all the arts, adroit expedients, and minor dexterities of woodcraft, in which he was so well skilled, and was delighted to find me so apt a scholar; indeed he often laughed heartily when I brought down a bird which he had marked for his own gun.

And then his talk, to which I always listened with new delight! It was the strangest mingling of excellently-told sporting stories and anecdotes, acute observations of nature, and biting satire upon mankind, especially the fairer half of it. In the life of the Wild Zehren, women had played an important and disastrous part. Like so many men of ardent passions and fierce desires, he had probably never sought for true love, and now he charged it as a crime upon the sex, that he had never found it; not even with that unhappy lady whom he had carried off from her home under such terrible circumstances, and who brought him nothing but her parents' curse, beauty which faded but too soon, and a narrow, bigoted spirit, uncultured and perhaps incapable of culture, which already bore in itself the germs of madness.

That he, at that time in his fortieth year, who had seen so much of the world, and had such wide experience, should perceive and acknowledge that the whole was his own fault, that he had to attribute to himself all the misery and misfortune ensuing upon so wicked and insensate a union--all this never occurred to him for a moment. He was the man more sinned against than sinning; he was the victim of his generosity; he had been cheated out of his life's happiness. How could a man have domestic habits who never had any enjoyment in his home? How could he learn the charm of a calm and peaceful life at the side of a woman restlessly tormented night and day by madness and superstition?

"Yes, yes, my dear George, I once had fine plans of my own: I meant to restore the old castle, laid waste in the time of the French invasion, to its ancient splendor; I thought to regain all the possessions that once belonged to the Zehrens; but it was not to be. It could not be, in the years when I was still young and full of hope; and do you think now to make a careful, economical proprietor of me, now that I am grown old and half savage? You buoyant, hopeful young--- See! there he goes! That comes of talking. No; don't shoot now, he is too far. To heel, Diana, old girl! So frivolous in your old days? Be ashamed of yourself! Yes; what I was going to say to you, George, was--beware of the women. They are the cause of every man's misfortunes, just as they have been of mine. Take my brothers, for instance. There is the *steuerrath*, whom you know: the man was predestined to a fine career, for he is as fond of the shining things of this world as any thievish magpie, cunning as a fox, smooth as an eel, and being a man without passions of any sort, unpretentious, and so could easily hold his own. If he absolutely must marry, then, at a time when he made no pretensions, it should have been some plain sensible girl, who would have helped him make his way. Instead of this, when he was a mere penniless barrister, he lets himself be caught by a Baroness Kippenreiter, the oldest of two surviving daughters of an army-contractor, made a baron, I believe, by the King of Sweden, who wasted in speculation the fortune that had ennobled him, to the last farthing, and finally blew out his brains. And now the *steuerrath* must take the consequences. A Baroness Kippenreiter will not seal her letters with a coat-of-arms twenty years old, and have the richest man in the province for a brother-in-law, for nothing. If such a thorough plebeian could rise to such distinction and to the dignity of *commerzienrath*, her husband, sprung from the oldest family in the province, must die prime minister at the very least. The lithe fox with no pretensions would have found his way into the poultry-house; but when with hunger and debt he is changed into a howling and ravenous wolf, he is hunted off with kicks, clubs, and stones. One of these days they will put him off with a pension, to be rid of him once for all.

"Then there is my younger brother Ernest. He is a genius; and like all geniuses, modest, magnanimous as Don Quixote, full of philanthropic crotchets, unpractical to the last degree, and helpless as a child. He should have taken a wife of strong mind, who would have brought order into his genial confusion, and had the ambition to make something out of him. He had the stuff in him, no doubt; it only wanted fashioning. And what does he do? When a first lieutenant, twenty years old--for already, when he was little more than a boy, he had distinguished himself in the war for freedom, and came back covered with orders, so that attention was drawn to him, and he had a fine career before him--what does he do? He falls in love with an orphan, the daughter of a painter, I believe, or something of that sort, who had served as a volunteer in his battalion, and on his death-bed left her in his charge--the generous soul! He marries her; farewell promotion! They give our lieutenant, who is bent on a *mésalliance*, an honorable discharge, with the rank of captain; make him superintendent of the prison; and there he sits now, for these twenty-five years, in Z., with a half-blind wife and a swarm of children, old and gray before his time, a wretched invalid--and all this for the sake of a stupid young goose, whom the first tailor or cobbler would have suited just as well. Women! women! Dear George, beware of women!"

Had Herr von Zehren, when he talked to me in this way, any special object in view? I do not think he had. I was now so much with him, we often set out so early, so seldom returned at noon, and usually came home so late at night--as a consequence I saw so little of Constance, and that almost invariably in his presence, when I felt so embarrassed and ill at ease on account of the constant hostilities between father and daughter, that I scarcely ventured to raise my eyes to her face--it was not possible that he could know how I admired the beautiful maiden, how I found her more lovely every time I saw her, and how my heart beat when I merely heard the rustle of her dress.

Then there was another reason which contributed to his unsuspectingness on this point. Fond as he was of having me with him, and sincerely as he admired my aptness for everything connected with sport, and my remarkable bodily strength, which I liked to display before him, still he scarcely looked upon me as a creature of his own kind. Poor as he was, leading a problematical existence as he had done for many years, he could never forget that he sprang from a most ancient race of nobles, who had once held sway over the island before the princes of Prora-Wiek had been heard of, and when Uselin, my native place, afterwards an important Hanseatic town, was a mere collection of fishers' huts. I am convinced that he, like a dethroned king, had in his heart never renounced his pretensions to the power and wealth which had once been his ancestors'; that he considered that Trantow, Granow, and a score of other titled or untitled gentlemen who held estates in the neighborhood that had once belonged to the Zehrens, had come to their so-called possession of these estates by some absurd whimsy of fortune, but had no genuine title which he recognized, and that wherever he hunted, it was still upon his own ground. This mystical *cultus* of a long-vanished splendor, of which he still fancied himself the upholder, gave his eye the haughty look, his bearing the dignity, his speech the graciousness, which belong to sovereign princes whose political impotence is so absolute, and whose legitimacy is so unassailable, that they can allow themselves to be perfectly amiable.

Herr von Zehren was an enthusiastic defender of the right of primogeniture, and found it highly unreasonable that younger brothers should bear and transmit the nobility that they were not permitted to represent. "I have nothing to say against a councillor of excise, nothing against a prison superintendent," he said, "only they ought to be called Müller or Schultze, and not Zehren." For the nobility of the court, the public offices, or the army, he cherished the profoundest contempt. They were only servants, in or out of livery, he maintained; and he drew a sharp distinction between the genuine old and the "new-baked" nobility, to the former class of which, for example, the Trantows belonged, who could trace back an unbroken pedigree to the middle of the fourteenth century; while Herr von Granow had had a shepherd for great-grandfather, small tenant-farmer for grandfather, and a land-owner, who had purchased a patent of nobility, for his father. "And the man often behaves as if he was of the same caste with myself! The honor of being permitted to lose his contemptible money to me, seems to have mounted into his foolish brain. I think before long he will ask me if I am not willing to be the father-in-law of a shepherd-boy. Thank heaven, in that point at least I can rely upon Constance; she had rather fling herself into the sea than marry the little puffed-up oaf. But it is foolish in her to treat poor Hans so cavalierly. Trantow is a fellow that can show himself anywhere. He might be put under a glass-case for exhibition, and nobody could find a fault in him. You laugh, you young popinjay! You mean that he was not the man that invented gunpowder, and that if he keeps on as he is going, he will soon have drunk away what little brains he has. Bah! The first fact qualifies him for a good husband; and as for the second, I know of a certainty that it is pure desperation that makes him look into the glass so much with those staring eyes of his. Poor devil: it makes one right heartily sorry for him; but that, you see, is the way with every man that has anything to do with women. Beware of the women, George; beware of the women!"

Was it possible that the man who held these views and talked with me in this way, could have the least suspicion of my feelings? It could not be. I was in his eyes a young fellow who had fallen in his way, and whom he had picked up as a resource against ennui, whom he kept with him and talked to, because he did not like to be alone and liked to talk. Could I complain of this? Could I make any higher pretensions? Was I, or did I desire to be, anything else than one of my knight's retinue, even if for the time I happened to be the only one? Could I have any other concern than for the fact that I could not at the same time devote the same reverential service to my knight's lovely daughter?

CHAPTER X.

Since that memorable walk with her through the wood to the ruins on the promontory, I had not again been alone with Constance for a long time. During the three rainy days I saw her at the dinner table, and perhaps about as often at supper when we returned from shooting; but always in the presence of her father, and usually of Herren von Trantow and Granow, our companions of the field and the card-table. On these occasions she scarcely lifted her lovely eyes from her untouched plate, while the tall Hans stared at her after his fashion, the short Granow chattered away as usual, undisturbed by her chilling silence, and Herr von Zehren, who in his daughter's presence always seemed in a singularly irritated mood, loosed at her more than one of his keen sarcastic shafts. These were for me sad and bitter hours, and all the bitterer as I, with all my desire to be of service, felt myself so utterly helpless, and what was worst of all, thought I observed that she no longer excepted me from the aversion which she openly manifested towards her father's friends. In the first days of my stay at the castle it was entirely different. In those days she had always for me a ready friendly glance, a kind word occasionally whispered, a cordial if hasty pressure of the hand. This was all now at an end. She spoke to me no more, she looked at me no more, except at times with a look in which indignation seemed mingled with contempt, and which cut me to the heart.

And had I been short-sighted enough to mistake the meaning of these looks, a word dropped by old Pahlen would have opened my eyes.

I hit upon the idea of asking permission to occupy, instead of my present room in the front of the house, one of the empty apartments looking on the park. Into this I carried from time to time various articles of furniture, most of them still valuable, which were lying about in the dilapidated regions of the upper story, until I had brought together an accumulation which presented a very singular appearance. Herr von Zehren laughed heartily when one day coming to call me to dinner, as I in my new occupation had forgotten the hour, he caught me hard at work arranging my worm-eaten and tarnished treasures.

"Your furniture does not lack variety, at all events," he said; "for an antiquary the rubbish would not be without interest. Really, it is like a chapter out of one of Scott's novels. There, in that high-backed chair, Dr. Dryasdust might have sat; you must set that here, if the old fellow does not tumble over as soon as you take him from the wall. So! a little nearer to the window. Isn't that a splendid piece! It comes down from my great-grandfather's time. He was ambassador at the court of Augustus the Strong, and the only one of our family, so far as I know, who as head of the house ever entered public service. He brought from Dresden the handsome vases of which you see a potsherd there, and a decided taste for Moorish servants, parrots, and ladies. But *de mortuis*--Really the old chair is still right comfortable. And what a magnificent view of the park, just from this place! I shall often come to see you, for it is really charming."

In fact he did come once or twice in the next few days, while a heavy rain kept us all in the house, to smoke his cigar and have a chat; but when the weather cleared up, he thought no more about it, and I was careful enough, on my part, not to recall my museum to his recollection. For I had only arranged it in order to be nearer to Constance, and to have a view of the park, about whose neglected walks she loved to wander. I could also see a strip of the terrace that lay under her windows, but unfortunately only the outer margin, as the part of the castle in which she lived fell back from the main-building about the breadth of the terrace. But still it was something: the faint light which in the evening fell upon the balustrade came from her room, and once or twice I caught an indistinct glimpse of her form, as she paced up and down the terrace, or leaning upon the balustrade gazed into the park, over which night had already spread her dusky veil. And when I did not see her, I heard her music and her songs, among which there was none I loved better than that which I had heard the first evening, and now knew by heart:

"All day long the bright sun loves me,
 Woos me with his glowing light;
But I better love the gentle
 Stars of night."

In truth I also loved them well, the stars of night, for often and often when the pale light had vanished from the balustrade, and the song I so loved had long ceased, I still sat at my open window gazing at the stars, which shone in all the splendor of a September night, and listening to the solemn music of the wind in the ancient trees of the park.

In the meantime the happiness which only young hearts, or such as have long retained their youth, can appreciate, was, as I have said, but of brief duration. The singular change in Constance's manner towards me, plucked me from my heaven; and I tortured my brain in the effort to discover what cause had brought me into her disfavor. But think as I might, I could find no key to the mystery; and at last I resolved--though a foreboding of evil warned me against it--to have recourse to Pahlen, who, if any one, could solve me the enigma that weighed so heavily upon my foolish head.

This ugly old woman had lately been rather more obliging. I had soon discovered that she was extremely fond of money, and I did not hesitate now and then, under one pretence or another, to slip into her wrinkled brown hands two or three of the *thalers* that I won at the card-table--for naturally enough I had abandoned my resolution to play no more. The glitter of the silver softened her stony old heart; she no longer growled and grumbled when I ventured to speak to her, and once or twice actually brought coffee to my room with her own hands. When I thought that the taming process was sufficiently advanced, I ventured to ask her about the subject nearest my heart--her young mistress. She threw me one of her suspicious looks, and finally, as I repeated my question, puckered her ugly old face into a repulsive grin, and said:

"Yes; catch mice with cheese; but you need not try that game; old Pahlen is too sharp for you."

What was the game that I need not try?

As I could not find a satisfactory answer to this question, I asked the old woman on the following day.

"You need not make as if you did not know," she said, with a kind of respect, inspired probably by my innocent manner, which she naturally took for a masterpiece of deception; "I am not going to betray my young lady for a couple of *thalers*. I have been sorry enough, I can tell you, that I helped to clear up this room for you, and she has complained bitterly enough about it."

"But, good heaven," I said, "I will cheerfully go back to my old room if the young lady wishes it. I never thought it would be so extremely disagreeable to her if I caught a sight of her now and then. I could not have supposed it."

"And that was all you wanted?" asked the old woman.

I did not answer. I was half desperate to think that--heaven knows how involuntarily--I had offended her whom I so deeply loved; and yet I was glad to learn at last what my offence was. Like the young fool I was, I strode up and down the great room, and cried:

"I will quit this room this very day; I will not sleep another night in it; tell your young lady that; and tell her that I would leave the castle this very hour, only that I do not know what to say to Herr von Zehren."

And I threw myself into the old worm-eaten, high-backed chair, at imminent risk of its destruction, with the deepest distress evident in my features.

The tone of my voice, the expression of my countenance, probably joined with my words to convince the old woman of my sincerity.

"Yes, yes," she said, "what could you say to him? He certainly would not let you go, although for my part I do not know what he really wants with you. Do you stay here, and I will speak with my young lady."

"Do, dear, good Mrs. Pahlen!" I cried, springing up and seizing one of the old woman's bony hands. "Speak with her, tell her--" I turned suddenly red, stammered out some awkward phrase or other, and once more adjured her to speak with her young lady.

The old woman, who had been watching me all the while with a curious, piercing look, remained thoughtful for a few moments, then said curtly she would see what could be done, and left me.

I remained, much disturbed. The consciousness that the old woman had penetrated my secret, was very painful to me; but I consoled myself with the reflection that if she was really, as she seemed to be, Constance's confidante, I certainly need feel no shame to take her into my confidence also; and finally, what was done was done, and if Constance now learned for the first time that I loved her, that I was ready to do or to suffer anything for her sake, she would certainly forgive me what I had done. What had I done, then? How could she, who at first received me so kindly, who in jest which seemed earnest chose me for her service, who on that evening exacted of me the promise not to go until she gave me permission--how could she feel offence at what at the very worst she could but regard as a token of my love and admiration?

Thus, under my inexperienced hands, the threads of my destiny were wound into an evermore inextricable clue; and with violent beatings of the heart I entered an hour later the dining-room, where to-day, besides our usual guests, three or four others were assembled. They were waiting for the young lady's appearance to take their places at the table. After dinner they were to go out for a little shooting.

As was usual with her, Constance subjected her father's impatience to a severe trial; but at last she appeared.

I do not know how it happened that this time I, who always, when guests were present, took my seat at the foot of the table, happened to be placed next to her. It was certainly not intentional on my part, for in the frame of mind in which I was, I would have done anything rather than obtrude my presence upon my fair enemy. So I scarcely dared to raise my eyes, and in my excessive confusion loaded my plate with viands of which every morsel seemed about to choke me. How joyfully then was I surprised, when Constance, after sitting for a few minutes in her accustomed silence, suddenly asked me, in a low friendly tone, if I had not time to fill her a glass of wine.

"Why did you not ask me, *meine Gnädigste*?"^[3] cried Herr von Granow, who sat on the other side of her.

"I prefer to be served in my own way," answered Constance, almost turning her back upon the little man, and continuing to speak with me. I answered as well as I could, and as she continued speaking in a low tone, I imitated her example, and leaned towards her in order better to catch her words; and thus, as I looked into her dark eyes, I forgot what she had asked me, or answered at a venture, at which she laughed; and because she laughed I laughed also, and all this together made up the most charming little confidential *tête-à-tête*, although we were speaking of the most indifferent things in the world. I took no notice of anything else that was passing; only once I observed that Hans von Trantow, who sat opposite us, was staring at us with wide-open eyes; but I thought nothing of it, for the good fellow's eyes usually wore that expression.

Much sooner than I could have wished, Herr von Zehren rose from the table. Before the house were waiting a lot of barefooted, bareheaded boys, with creels on their backs; the dogs were barking and leaping about the men, who were arranging their accoutrements and loading their guns. Constance came out with us, which she had never before done, and called to me as we were about starting, "I cannot wish *them* good luck, and would not wish *you* bad." Then, after including the rest in a general salutation, she gave me a friendly wave of the hand and re-entered the house.

"Which way are we going to-day?" I asked Herr von Zehren, as I came to his side.

"It was long enough discussed at dinner. Your attention seems to have been wandering."

It was the first time that he had ever spoken to me in an unfriendly tone, and my countenance probably expressed the surprise that I felt, for he quickly added:

"I did not mean to wound you; and besides it was no fault of yours."

We had reached a stubble-field, and the shooting began. Herr von Zehren posted me on the left wing, while he kept upon the right; thus I was separated from him and did not once come near him during the rest of the day. This also had never before occurred. He had hitherto always kept me by him, and was delighted when, as often happened, more game fell to our two guns than to those of all the rest. My shooting was this day poor enough. The happiness which Constance's unexpected friendliness had given me, was embittered by her father's unexpected unkindness. The birds which my dog Caro put up--Herr von Zehren had given me one of his best dogs--flew off untouched while I was pondering over the unhappy relations between father and daughter, and how I could not show my affection for the one without offending the other, and what was to become of my favorite scheme of reconciling the two.

I was quite lost in these melancholy reflections when Herr von Granow joined me. It was already growing dusk, and the day's sport was virtually over, only now and then we heard a distant shot among the bushes of the heath. No order was now kept, and I soon found myself alone with the little man as we ascended a slight hill.

"What has happened between you and the old man?" he asked, hanging his gun across his shoulders and coming to my side.

"What do you mean?" I inquired.

"Well, it struck me in that light, and not me only; the others noticed it too. I can assure you that he looked once or twice across the table at you as if he would eat you."

"I have done nothing to offend him," I said.

"That I can well believe," continued the little man. "And this afternoon he scarcely spoke a word with you."

I was silent, for I did not know what to say.

"Yes, yes," pursued my companion; "but do not hurry so, nobody can keep up with you. You are in an ugly position."

"How so?" I asked.

"Don't you really know?"

"No."

Herr von Granow was so convinced of his superior acuteness, that it never occurred to him that my ignorance might be feigned in order to draw him out.

"Yes, yes," he said. "You are still young, and at your years one is often deaf and blind to things which we who know the world seize at the first glance. The old man and the young lady live together like cat and dog; but really, when one thinks of it, neither has such great cause to love the other. She leads a wretched life through his fault. He would gladly be rid of her, but who is going to take her off his hands? I have considered the matter from all sides; but it can't be managed--it really can't."

I was in doubt, when my companion began to talk in this way, whether I should strike him to the earth for his impudence, or burst into loud laughter. I took a side-look at him; the little man with his short trotting legs, his foolish face scarlet from his exertions, and his half-open mouth--I could not resist, but fairly shook with laughter.

"I do not see what you are laughing about," he said, rather surprised than offended. "The little comedy which she played for you and the rest of us this afternoon, can hardly have turned your brain, if I may so express myself. And it is just upon that subject that I would like to give you some information.

"What can you mean?" I asked.

My merriment was at an end, and I was serious enough now. A comedy which she had played for me? "What can you mean?" I asked again more urgently than before.

Herr von Granow, who had been walking at a little distance from me, trotted up close to my side, and said in a confidential tone:

"After all, I cannot think hard of you about it. You are still so young; and I often do not know myself on what footing I am standing with the girl. But this much is clear: out of pure obstinacy against her father, and perhaps a little calculation to raise her own value, and perhaps, too, because she thinks it will make no difference anyhow, but mainly out of mere stubbornness and self-will, has she put on these airs of a princess, and behaves as if for her I and the rest had no existence. If she suddenly began to coquet with you in my--I should say in our presence, that really signifies nothing; it is but a little pleasantry that she allows herself with you, and which has no further consequences; but it must provoke the old man, and it did provoke him. You did not observe it, you say, but I can assure you he bit his lip and stroked his beard as he always does when anything vexes him."

The little man had no notion what a tumult he was stirring up in my breast; he took my silence for acquiescence and for acknowledgement of his superior wisdom, and so proceeded, in delight at being able to speak of such interesting topics and to have secured such an attentive listener.

"I fancy that the whole conduct of the young lady puts a spoke in his wheel. Do you know how much I have lost to him during the six months that I have been here? Over eight hundred *thalers*. And Trantow nearly twice as much; and all the rest are cursing their ill-fortune. He has had a wonderful run of luck, it is true; it is not always so; but then when he loses one must take it out in his wine and his cognac, and you can imagine the prices he rates them at. Well, one wants something at least for one's money; for the sake of such a pretty girl one lets a couple of hundreds go, and does not watch the old man's hands too closely. But it used to be all quite different; she used to join in the play, and smoke cigars with the gentlemen, and go out shooting and riding--the wilder the horses the better she liked it. It used to be a heathenish life, Sylow says, and he ought to know. But since last summer, and that affair with the prince----"

"What affair was that?" I asked. I was consumed with the desire to hear everything that Herr von Granow had to tell. I no longer felt the contumely which this man was heaping upon my kind host and upon the maiden I adored; or if I did, I thought that the reckoning should come afterwards, but first I must hear all.

"You don't know that?" he inquired, eagerly. "But, to be sure, who could have told you? Trantow is mute as a fish, and the others don't know what to think of you. I hold you for an honest fellow, and do not believe that you are a spy, or leagued with the old man; his looks at dinner were too queer for that. You won't tell him what I have been saying to you, will you?"

"Not a word," I said.

"Well then, this is the story. Last summer the old man was at D----, and she was with him. At a watering-place people are not so particular; any one who chose might go about with him. The young Prince Prora was there too; he had persuaded his physicians that he was unwell and needed sea-bathing, so he was sent there with his tutor. The old prince was at the Residence, just as he is now, and the young one made good use of his liberty. I had just bought my place here, was no sooner on it than I caught a devilish rheumatism on these infernal moors; and so I went there for a week or so and saw something of it, but the most was told me by others. Naturally

enough there was high play; but the highest was in private circles, for at the *Spielsaal* they only allow moderate stakes. The prince kept constantly in the old man's company, some said for the sake of the play, others, to pay his court to the young lady; and probably both were right. I have often enough seen them sitting and walking together in the park of an evening; and they were gay enough, I can testify. Now they say that the old man had bad luck, and lost twenty thousand *thalers* to the prince, which he had to pay in two days. Where was he to get the money? So, as they say, he offered the prince his daughter instead. Others say he asked fifty thousand, and others again a hundred thousand for the bargain. Well, for any one who had the money, it may be that was not too much; but unluckily the young prince did not have the money. It will be two years before he is of age, and then, if the old prince is still alive, he will only get the property of his deceased mother, of which not much is ready cash, I take it. In a word, the affair hung fire; and one fine day here comes the old prince, who had got some wind of the matter, tearing over from the Residence, read the youngster a terrible lecture, and offered Zehren a handsome sum to go out of the country with Constance until the young prince was married. Now the thing might have been all arranged, for all that Zehren wanted was to make a good hit of it, if he and the prince could have kept from personally appearing in the business. But Zehren, who, when he takes the notion, can be as proud as Lucifer, insisted upon arranging the affair with the prince in person, and so the scandal broke out. There was a terrible scene, they say, and the prince was carried for dead to his hotel. What happened, nobody exactly knows. But this much is certain: the late princess, who was born Countess Sylow--I have the facts from young Sylow, who is related to the count--fell in love with Zehren when he was a young man staying with the prince at the Residence and attending the court balls, and only married the prince because she was compelled to it. The prince either knew it then, or found it out soon afterwards, and they led a miserable life together. It is probable that Zehren and he, in their dispute, raked up some of these old stories; one word led to another, as always happens. Zehren is like a madman when he gets into a rage, and the prince has none of the coolest of tempers--in a word, the thing came to an explosion. Zehren left the place; and the prince a day or two later, with a pair of blue marks on his throat left there by Zehren's fingers, they said."

"And the young prince?"

"What did he care? All pretty girls are the same to him; he knows how to enjoy life. I wonder if he holds fast this time. He has already been over three weeks at Rossow. I should feel rather queer about staying in this part of the country after what has happened. I would not for my life meet Herr von Zehren if I knew that my father had given him deadly offence."

"What does he look like?"

"Oh, he is a handsome young fellow; very slender, elegant, and amiable. I fancy Fräulein von Zehren owes her father small thanks for having broken off the affair, for I will say for her honor that she does not know what the scheme really was. True, others say that she knew it very well, and was perfectly satisfied with the arrangement."

I listened with intensest interest to this narrative of my companion's, as if my life depended upon its result. This then was the mystery: it was the young Prince of Prora who was the "chosen one" of her song. Now I remembered how she blushed when Granow that evening alluded to the prince, and at the same time I recalled the dark figure in the park. Had I only got him in my hands!

I groaned aloud with grief and anger.

"You are tired," said the little man, "and besides I see we have strayed considerably out of our way. We must keep to the right; but there are two or three ugly places in the moor, and in the dusk I am afraid we shall not be able to get through. Let us rather go round a little. Heaven knows how little you big fellows can stand; there was a Herr von Westen-Taschen in my regiment, a fellow, if anything, bigger than you, only perhaps not quite so broad across the shoulders. 'Westen,' I said to him one day, 'I'll bet you that I can run'--but, good heavens, what is that?"

It was a man who suddenly arose out of a little hollow, in which we had not noticed him--probably could not have seen him in the dusk--about twenty paces from us, and disappeared again instantly.

"Let us go nearer," I said.

"For heaven's sake no," whispered my companion, holding me fast by my game-pouch.

"Perhaps the man has met with an accident," I said.

"God forbid," said the little man. "But we might, if we did not keep out of his way. I beg you come along."

Herr von Granow was so urgent, and evinced so much anxiety, that I did as he entreated me; but after we had gone a short distance I could not refrain from stopping and looking round as I heard a low whistle behind me. The man was going across the heath with long strides, another rose from the same spot and followed him, then another and another, until I had counted eight. They had all great packs upon their backs, but went, notwithstanding, at a rapid pace, keeping

accurate distance. In a few minutes their dark figures had vanished, as if the black moor over which they were striding had swallowed them up.

Herr von Granow drew a deep breath. "Do you see?" said he, "I was right. Infernal rascals that run like rats over places where any honest Christian would sink. I'll wager they were some of Zehren's men."

"How do you mean?" I asked.

"Oh, well," he went on, "we all dabble in it a little about here, or at least make our profit of it. In the short time that I have been here, I have found out that there is no help for it, and that the rascals would burn the house over your head if you did not look through your fingers and stand by them in every way. Only the day before yesterday, as I was standing by my garden-wall, a fellow comes running across the lawn and says that I must hide him, the patrol is after him. I give you my word I made him creep into the oven, as there was no other hiding-place handy, and with my own hands heaped a pile of straw before the door; and when the patrol came up, five minutes later, said I had seen the fellow making for the wood. Upon my honor I was ashamed of myself; but what is one to do? And so I would not say anything against the old man, if he only would not carry things to such extremes. But he drives it too far, I tell you, he drives it too far; it must take a bad turn; there is but one opinion about that."

"But," said I, taking the greatest pains to speak as calmly as possible, "I have been already about three weeks here, and I give you my honor" (this phrase I had lately caught) "that as yet I have not seen the slightest thing to confirm the evil repute in which, as I hear to my great uneasiness, Herr von Zehren stands, even with his friends. Yes, I will admit that when I first came here, some such fancies came into my head, I cannot tell how, but I have long driven so disgraceful a suspicion from my mind."

"Suspicion!" said the old man, speaking with even greater vivacity, and taking shorter and quicker steps; "who talks of suspicion? The thing is as clear as amen in the church. If you have observed nothing--which really surprises me, but your word of course is sufficient--the reason is because the weather has been so bad. Still, the business is not altogether at a stand-still, as you have yourself just now seen. I declare, one feels very queer to think one is sitting in the very middle of it all. And last Thursday I had to take a lot of wine and cognac from him, and Trantow as much more a couple of days before, and Sylow still more, but he, I believe, divides with somebody else."

"And why should not Herr von Zehren dispose of his surplus stock to his friends?" I asked, incredulously.

"His surplus stock?" cried Herr von Granow. "Yes, to be sure there was a great deal left over from the last vintage; he has enough in his cellars, they say, to supply half the island. And that is a heavy load for him to carry; for he has to pay the smuggler captains in cash, and the market at Uselin has grown very poor, as I hear. Lately they have got very shy there. Since so many have taken to dabbling in the business, no one thoroughly trusts another. Formerly, I am told, the whole trade was in the hands of a pair of respectable firms. But all that you must know much better than I; your father is an officer of the customs."

"True," I answered, "and I am so much the more surprised that, among so many, I have never heard Herr von Zehren's name mentioned--supposing your suspicion to be founded on fact."

"But don't keep always talking about 'suspicion,'" cried the little man, peevishly. "It is there just as it is everywhere else, they hang the little thieves and let the big ones go. The gentlemen of the custom-house know what they are about. A couple of *thalers* or *louis-d'ors* at the right time will make many things smooth; and when one has, like the old man, a brother councillor of excise, Mr. Inspector will probably not be so impolite as to interfere with the councillor's brother."

"That is an insult, Herr von Granow," I cried in a fury; "I have already told you that my own father is an officer in the customs."

"Well, but then I thought that you and your father were not on the best terms," said Herr von Granow. "And if your father has driven you off, why----"

"That concerns nobody!" I exclaimed, "unless it be Herr von Zehren, who has received me into his house, and been kind and friendly to me always. If my father has sent me away, or driven me off, as you call it, I gave him cause enough; but that has nothing to do with his integrity, and I will strike any man dead, like a dog, who asperses my father's honor."

As Herr von Granow did not and could not know in how many ways all that he had said had lacerated my tenderest feelings, my sudden wrath, which had been only waiting an opportunity to burst forth, must have appeared to him terrible and incomprehensible. A young man, who had probably always appeared to him suspicious, and now doubly so, of whose bodily strength he had seen more than one surprising proof, speaking in such a voice of striking dead--and then the desolate heath, the growing darkness--the little man muttered some unintelligible words, while he cautiously widened the distance between us, and then, probably in fear of my loaded gun, came up again and very meekly declared that he had not the slightest intention to offend me; that

it was not to be supposed that a respectable officer like my father had knowingly placed his son with a notorious smuggler. And that, on the other side, the suspicion that I was a spy in the pay of the authorities, could not possibly be reconciled with my honest face and my straightforward conduct, and was indeed perfectly ridiculous; that he would with all his heart admit that everything that was said about Herr von Zehren was pure fabrication--people talked so much just for the sake of talking. Besides, he, who had only recently come into the neighborhood, could least of all judge what there might be in it; and he would be extremely delighted, and account it an especial honor, to receive me as a guest at his house, there where we could now see the lights shining, and where the others must have arrived long ago, and to drown all unpleasantness in a bottle of wine.

I scarcely comprehended what he said, my agitation was so extreme. I replied curtly that it was all right, that I did not believe he intended to offend me. Then asking him to excuse me to Herr von Zehren, I strode across the heath towards the road which I knew so well, which led from Melchow, Granow's estate, to Zehrendorf.

CHAPTER XI.

The following morning was so fine that it might well have cheered even a gloomier spirit than mine. And in my fatigue I had fallen so promptly asleep when I laid my tired head upon the pillow, and had slept so soundly, that it required some consideration upon awaking to recall the circumstances that had caused me so much agitation the previous evening. Gradually they recurred to my memory, and once more my cheeks burned, and I felt, as I always did when under excitement, that I must rush out into the free air and under the blue sky; so I hurried down the steep back-stair into the park.

Here I wandered about under the tall trees, which waved their light sprays in the morning breeze, along the wild paths, and among the bushes brightened with the sunlight, at intervals listening to some bird piping incessantly his monotonous autumn song, or marking some caterpillar swinging by a fathom-long filament from a twig overhead, while I bent my thoughts to the task, so difficult for a young man, of obtaining a clear view of my situation.

I had told Granow the evening before but the simple truth: so long as I had been upon the estate nothing had occurred to confirm his suspicion. During the whole of this time I had scarcely left the side of Herr von Zehren. No strangers had come about the place; there had been no suspicious meetings; no goods had been received, and none sent out, except a barrel or two of wine to the neighbors. To be sure, the people on the estate looked as if they were accustomed to anything rather than honest industry, and especially my tall friend Jock could not possibly have a clear conscience; but the cotters on the various estates around were all a rough, uncouth, piratical-looking crew, as indeed many of them had been fishermen and sailors, and were so still when occasion offered. That the gang which we had seen crossing the heath did not belong to our people, I was convinced when I passed the laborer's cottages, and saw Jock with two or three others lounging about the doors as usual.

And then, granting that Herr von Zehren was really all that evil tongues called him, still he did nothing more or worse than his neighbors. They all dabbled a little in it, Granow had said; and if all these aristocratic gentlemen made no scruple of filling their cellars with wine that they knew to be smuggled, the receiver was as bad as the thief, and Herr von Zehren was here, as always and everywhere, only the bolder man who had the courage to do what the others would willingly have done if they dared.

And, after all, I was bound to him by the firmest ties of gratitude. Should I go away for a mere suspicion, the silly gossip of a prating tongue, and abandon him who had always been so kind, so friendly to me?--who had given me his best--no, his second-best gun and dog; whose purse and cigar-case--and ah, what exquisite cigars he had!--were at all times at my service? Never! And even if he really were a smuggler, a professional smuggler--but how could I find out once for all whether he was or not?

Most simply, by going directly to himself. I had justification for doing so. My honesty was questioned by his friends; they did not know what to think of me. I could not allow this to go on unnoticed. Herr von Zehren could not expect that I should, on his account, incur the dishonoring suspicion of being either a spy or an accomplice. But suppose he were to say: "Very well; then go. I do not detain you."

I seated myself upon a stone-bench under a spreading maple at the edge of the park, and resting my elbow upon the half-fallen table, and leaning my head upon my hand, gazed at the

castle which threw its shadow far over the lawn, now golden in the morning sun.

Never had the ruinous old pile seemed so dear to me. How well I knew each tall chimney, each tuft of grass growing upon the gray moss-covered roof of tiles, the three balconies, two small ones to the right and left, and in the middle the great one upon which the three glass doors opened from the upper hall, resting upon its massive pillars with the fantastic voluted capitals. How well I knew each window, with the weather-beaten wooden shutters that were never closed, and the most of which, indeed, were past closing. Some were hanging by a single hinge, and one belonging to the third window to the right always slammed at night when the wind was from the west. I had a dozen times resolved to secure it, but always forgot it again. The two windows at the corner to the left were those of my room, my poetic room with the precious old furniture, which to my eye had such an imposing effect that I felt like a young prince in the midst of all this magnificence. What happy hours had I already passed in this room! Early mornings, when, joyous in the anticipation of the day's sport, I sang as I dressed myself and arranged my ammunition; late evenings when I returned home with my friend, heated with wine and play and jovial discourse, and sitting at the window, inhaled the fragrant aroma of my cigar, or drank in large draughts the pure, cool night-air, while thoughts crowded one another in my mind, foolish and sentimental thoughts, all turning to the fair maiden who doubtless had been slumbering for hours in her chamber by the terrace.

What was it that the shameless slanderer had said of her? I scarcely dared to recall his words to my mind. I could not comprehend how I could have borne to listen to them, or how it was that I let him escape unchastized after so desecrating the object of my idolatry. The miserable creature! The conceited, upstart, envious little oaf! Little blame to her that she would have nothing to do with such a lover as he, or the rest of her country squires. And for this they now breathed their venomous slanders against her: said that she would have sold herself--she, the lovely, the noble, the pure, for whom a king's throne would have been too low! Was there any head more worthy of a diadem--any form more fit to be folded in the mantle of purple? Oh, I desired nothing for myself; it was enough for me if I might touch the hem of her vesture. But the others should honor her as well as I. No one, not if he were prince or king, should dare to approach her without her permission. If she would only, as she had jestingly said that night, let me keep watch at her threshold!

Thus humbly I thought of her in my full, young heart, that was breaking with love and longing. And I did it in the most assured conviction, in the firmest faith, of the nobility and purity of her I loved so dearly. I can truly say there was no drop of blood in my veins that did not belong to her. I would have given my life for her had she asked it of me, had she taken me for the true heart that I was, had she dealt honestly with me. Was it a presentiment of the brief space of time that I was still to cherish the simple faith that there is a spark of virtue in every human breast that nothing can entirely extinguish, that made me now bow my head upon my hands and shed hot tears?

I suddenly lifted my head, for I fancied I heard a rustling close behind me, and I was not mistaken. It was Constance, who came through the bushes hedging the path to the beech-wood. I sprang suddenly in confusion to my feet, and stood before her, ere I had time to wipe the traces of my tears from my cheeks.

"My good George," she said, offering me her hand with a gentle smile, "you are my true friend, are you not?"

I murmured some indistinct reply.

"Let me sit here by you a little while," she said; "I feel somewhat tired; I have been up so long. Do you know where I have been? In the forest by the tarn, and afterwards up at the ruin. Do you know that we have never again gone there together? I was thinking of it this morning, and was sorry; it is so beautiful up on the cliffs, and walking with you is so pleasant. Why do you never come there to bring me home? Don't you remember what you promised me: to be my faithful George, and kill all the dragons in my path? How many have you killed?"

She glanced at me from under her long lashes with her unfathomable brown eyes, and abashed I looked upon the ground. "Why do you not answer?" she asked. "Has my father forbidden you?"

"No," I replied, "but I do not know whether you are not mocking me. You have shown me lately so little kindness, that at last I have hardly dared to speak to you or even to look at you."

"And you really do not know why I have lately been less friendly towards you?"

"No," I answered, and added softly, "unless it be because I am so much attached to your father; and how can I be otherwise?"

Her looks darkened, "And if that were the reason," she said, "could you blame me? My father does not love me; he has given me too many proofs of that. How can any one love me who is 'so much attached to my father?'"--she spoke the last words with bitterness--"who perhaps reports to him every word that I say, and to the watchers and tale-bearers by whom I am surrounded adds another, so much the more dangerous as I should have expected from him anything but

treachery."

"Treachery--treachery from me?" I exclaimed with horror.

"Yes, treachery," she answered, speaking in a lower tone, but more rapidly and passionately. "I know that Sophie, my maid, is bribed; I know that old Christian, who skulks about, day and night, watches me like a prisoner. I am not at all sure that old Pahlen, who shows some devotion to me, would not sell me for a handful of *thalers*. Yes, I am betrayed, betrayed on all sides. Whether by you--no; I will trust your honest blue eyes, although I had really good reason for suspecting you."

I was half distracted to hear Constance speaking thus; and I implored her, I adjured her, to tell me what horrible delusion had deceived her, for that it was a delusion I was ready to prove. She should, she must tell me all.

"Well then," she said, "is it delusion or truth that on the very first evening of your stay here, by order of my father, who brought you here for that purpose, you kept watch under my window, when afterwards you pretended to me that it was my music that had attracted you?"

I started at these last words, which were accompanied with a dark suspicious look. That dark figure then had really been stealing to a rendezvous; and he had been there since, else how could she know what had happened?

"You need make no further confession," said Constance, bitterly. "You have not yet sufficiently learned your lesson of dissimulation. And I, good-natured fool, believed that you were my faithful George."

I was near weeping with grief and indignation.

"For heaven's sake," I cried, "do not condemn me without a hearing. I went into the park without any special intention; without an idea that I should meet him--any one. If I had known that the man whom I saw from this point come out of the shrubbery yonder, came with your permission, I should never have intercepted him, but would have let him go unmolested where, as it seems, he was expected."

"Who says that he came by my permission, and that he was expected?" she asked.

"Yourself," I promptly answered. "The fact that you are informed of what none but he and I could know."

Constance glanced at me, and a smile passed across her features. "Indeed!" she said, "how skilful we are at combinations! Who would have believed it of us? But you are mistaken. I know of it from him, that is true; but I did not expect him, nor had he my permission. More than this: I solemnly assure you that I had no idea that he was so near. 'And now?' your look seems to inquire. Now he is as far as he ever was. He wrote to me by a medium--no matter how--that he made an attempt to see me on that evening, in order to communicate something which he did not wish me to learn from another. I answered him by the same way that I had already learned it through another, and that for the sake both of his peace and my own, I entreated him to make no attempt to approach me. This is all, nor will there ever be more. It is not my custom to ask of those that love me, to sacrifice for me their futures and their lives. And that would be the case here. That person can enter into no engagements without his father's consent, and my father has taken care that this consent shall never be given. He will only be free after his father's death. Before this happens years may pass. He shall not sacrifice those years to me."

"And he consents to this," I cried, indignantly; "he does not rather renounce his title and inheritance than give you up? He does not rather allow himself to be torn to pieces than renounce you? And this man possesses millions, and calls himself a prince."

"You know, then, who it was?" asked Constance, apparently alarmed, adding with bitterness: "To be sure, why should you not? Of course you are my father's confidant, and told him the whole adventure at once, as in duty bound."

"I never breathed a word of it to any living creature," I answered, "nor has Herr von Zehren ever in my presence uttered the name of the prince."

"What need of the name?" she retorted. "Things can be plainly told without mentioning names. But, whatever he may have told you, he never told you that Carl is my betrothed; that our union was prevented by his fault alone; that he has ruthlessly sacrificed my happiness to a haughty caprice, to revenge himself upon the father of my betrothed at the cost of us both; and that far from offering me an at least tolerable existence in requital for the brilliant future out of which he has cheated me, makes my life a daily and hourly torment. He killed my mother, and he will kill me."

"For God's sake, do not talk in that way," I cried.

"This life is no life; it is death--worse than death," she murmured, letting her head sink upon the table.

"Then you still love him who has abandoned you?" I said.

"No," she replied, raising her head; "no! I have already told you that as it is, so it must remain. I have freely and entirely renounced him. I am too proud to give my heart--which is all I have to give--to one who does not give me all in return. And, George, can one give more than his heart?"

I would have answered, "Then, Constance, you have my all;" but my voice failed me. I could but gaze at her with a look in which lay my whole heart--the full heart of a youth, overflowing with foolish, faithful love.

She pressed my hand, and said, "My good George, I will--yes, I must believe that you are true to me. And now that we have had our talk out, and are good friends again, let us go to the house, where old Pahlen will be expecting me to breakfast."

She had fallen at once into the tone in which we had commenced the conversation, and continued:

"Do you go shooting to-day? Are you fond of shooting? I used to go sometimes; but that is long ago--so long ago! I used to be a good rider, and now I think I could not keep my seat in the saddle. I have unlearned everything; but chiefly how to be gay. Are you always cheerful, George? I often hear you singing in the morning such charming merry songs; you have a fine voice. You should teach me your songs; I know none but sad ones."

How enchanting this prattle was to me! But as her recent unkindness had made me silent and reserved, so now the unlooked-for kindness she showed me produced the same effect. I went by her side, with a half confused, half happy smile upon my face, across the wide lawn to the house, where, on reaching her terrace, we separated, after exchanging another pressure of the hand.

In three bounds I had ascended the steep stair, flung open violently the door of my room, but stopped upon the threshold with some surprise, as I saw Herr von Zehren sitting in the great high-backed chair at the window.

He half turned his head, and said:

"You have kept me waiting long; I have been sitting here fully an hour."

This did not tend to restore my composure; from his chair one could see across the lawn directly to the seat under the maple. If Herr von Zehren had been sitting here an hour, he had certainly seen with his keen eyes much more than I could have wished. I returned his salutation with great embarrassment, which certainly did not diminish when he said, with a gesture towards the seat: "Mary Stuart, George, eh? Sir Paulet the cruel jailor with the great bunch of keys? Enthusiastic Mortimer--'Life is but a moment, and death but another'--eh? Faithless Lord Leicester, who has the convenient habit of taking ship for France as soon as heads are in danger!"

He flippid the ash from his cigar, and then with one of those instantaneous changes of humor to which I had grown accustomed, began to laugh aloud, and said:

"No, my dear George, you must not turn such a look of indignation upon me. I am really your friend; and, as I said to you yesterday, it is no fault of yours, and I frankly ask you to forgive me if I yesterday for a moment made you suffer for what you are entirely innocent of. She has to play her comedies; she has done it from a child. I have indeed often feared that she gets it from her unhappy mother. Many a one has suffered from it, and I not the least; but you I would willingly save. I have often enough warned you indirectly, and now do it plainly. What are you about?"

I had, at his last words, hurried across the room and seized my hat, which hung by the door. "What are you about?" he cried again, springing from his chair, and catching me by the arm.

"I am going," I stammered, while my eyes filled with tears that I vainly endeavored to repress, "away from here. I cannot bear to hear Fräulein Constance thus spoken of."

"And then it would be such a happy opportunity to get away from me too," said he, fixing his large dark eyes upon mine with a piercing look; "is it not so?"

"Yes," I answered, collecting all my firmness, "and from you too."

"Go then," he said.

I moved towards the door, and was feeling for the latch, for my eyes were blinded with tears.

"George," he cried, "George!"

The tone cut me to the heart; I turned, and seizing both his hands, exclaimed:

"No; I cannot do it. You have been so good to me; I cannot leave you of my own will."

Herr von Zehren led me gently to the great chair, and paced several times up and down the room, while I buried my head in my hands. Then he stood before me and said:

"What did Granow say to you yesterday? Did he slander me to you as he has slandered you to me? Did he warn you against me, as he has warned me against you? No; do not answer; I do not want to know. It is just as if I had been there and heard it all. Every one knows how double-tongued old women talk."

"Then it is not true?" I exclaimed, starting from the chair. "Certainly, certainly, it is not true; I never believed it. I did not believe that miserable creature yesterday--not for one moment."

"And now only, for the first time?" said he, turning his piercing look again upon me. But I did not again lower my eyes; I met his gaze firmly, and calmly answered:

"I will not believe it until I hear it from your own lips."

"And if I confirm it, what then?"

"Then I will implore you to have nothing more to do with it. It cannot end well, and it fills me with horror to think that it might end terribly."

"You think," he said, and a bitter smile contracted his features, "that it would not be a pleasant thing to read in the papers: 'To-day Malte von Zehren of Zehrendorf was condemned to twenty years' hard labor, and in pursuance of his sentence was conveyed to the penitentiary at S., the director of which, as is well known, is the brother of the criminal?' Well, it would not be the first time that a Zehren was an inmate of a prison."

He laughed, and began to speak with vehemence, sometimes pacing the room, and then stopping before me.

"Not the first time. When I was young--it may now be thirty years ago, or more--there stood in their cursed nest, in a waste place between the town wall and the ramparts, an old half-rotten gallows, and on the gallows were nailed two rusty iron plates, upon which there stood half-defaced names, and one of these names was *Malte von Zehren*, with the date 1436. I recognized it by the date; and one night, with the friend of my youth, Hans von Trantow--the father of our Hans--I wrenched it off, cut down the gallows, and pitched it over the rampart into the fosse. Do you know how my ancestor's name came there? He had a feud with the Peppersacks there in the town, and they had sworn, if they caught him, to hang him on the gallows. And though he heard of it, and knew that there would be no mercy for him, he slipped into the town in disguise, during the carnival, for the love of a townsman's pretty daughter. You see, my dear George, the women--they are at the bottom of all mischief. And they caught him too, early next morning, as he was stealing away, flung him into the dungeon, and the next day he was to be hanged, to the delight of all the good townfolk. But a page who accompanied him, and who had escaped, carried the news to Hans von Trantow, and Hans sent off a score of riders to all cousins and kinsfolk over the whole island, and that night they crossed over in twenty boats, two hundred of them, with Hans at their head, forced their way into the town, broke into the dungeon and rescued my ancestor, the good fellows, and then set the old nest on fire at its four corners and burned it down. So as the townsmen had lost Malte von Zehren, they contented themselves with nailing his name upon the gallows.

"And what was the origin of the feud? The Sound-dues, which the Lords of Zehren had levied for centuries, and which the Peppersacks now laid claim to. By what right? I ask you now, by what right? At a time when their pedlars' nest was a mere cluster of hovels inhabited by wretched fishermen, the Zehrens were living as lords and masters in a block-house surrounded by a rampart, as men used to do in the earliest times; then in a castle of stone, with towers and battlements, and as far as the eye can reach from up yonder over forests and coves into the island, no hearth smoked in house or hut at which vassals and retainers of the castle did not warm themselves; and as far as the eye can reach from up there over the sea, no sail swelled and no pennon flew that did not pay tribute to the castle. Do you think, young man, that things like these can be forgotten? Do you suppose that I can learn to feel myself under one law with a crew that crawled before my ancestors in the dust? or to acknowledge any master over me? *By the grace of God*--and what is that? Where were these fellows 'by the grace of God' four or five hundred years ago? I could sit where they sit now, with just as good a right; my escutcheon instead of theirs would flaunt on every gate and guard-house, and in my name would tolls and taxes be levied. And now 'sdeath! here I sit, a Lord Lack-all, in this box of stone, which before long will fall in over my head, and not a foot of the soil on which I tread can I call my own. See there--" he stepped to the open window, and pointed out with a hand trembling with emotion--"you once asked me why I did not turn those into money. There are thousands upon thousands in the forest, and I answered that I had not the heart to have the old trees hewn down. It was the truth; I could not do it; and the only right that I have over them is that I can keep them from being cut down as long as I live. Not a tree belongs to me--not a sapling--not enough to serve for my coffin; every twig belongs to that mountebank, your Cræsus, who calls himself commerzienrath, and is well named Streber [Striver.] I see the stockfish still, distorting his crooked mouth as he counted down the pittance on the table and crammed the contract into his pocket. He thought: 'It will not last him long, and then he will blow out his brains.' It has not lasted long; and he may have been as correct in his other anticipation.

"But I cannot imagine what talkative demon possesses me this morning; I believe that I have been infected by that old washerwoman, Granow. Or perhaps it is because I have to make up for

yesterday evening. In truth, George, I missed you exceedingly. Trantow, the good fellow, brought me home out of pure compassion, because he saw what a trial it would be to me to smoke my last cigar alone. And I tell you it cost me dearly that you were not with me. It went hard with me, George, terribly hard. Old hawk as I am, they plucked me until the feathers flew; but we will pay them back this evening. We shall meet at Trantow's, where I have always been lucky; but you are not to quit my side. And now drink your coffee, and come down in half an hour; I have a letter or two to write; the steuerrath wants to be once more delivered from his thousand-and-one embarrassments; but this time I cannot help him, at all events not today; he must wait awhile yet. In half an hour then, and afterwards we will go down to the beach. I feel a little feverish to-day, and the sea-breeze will do me good."

He went, and left me in a singular frame of mind. I felt as if he had told me everything, and yet, when I thought it over, it was no more than what he had often said to me before. I felt as if I had bound myself to him body and soul, and yet he had taken no promise from me. But this was just the thing which made me feel more than ever attached to this singular man. If he was magnanimous enough not to take me with him upon his ship, which he saw was driving to destruction, could I stand calmly on the safe shore and watch him struggling and sinking in the waves?

My youthful fancy kindled at his romantic story of the knight who had been at feud with my native town. I wished that I had been there; I fancied myself playing the part of the page who made his way out at risk of his life to bring help and rescue to his beloved lord. Should my thoughts be more mean, my actions more craven than those of that boy? And were we not in similar circumstances? Was not my knight at the last extremity? Had not the Peppersacks taken his all?--left him nothing of all the heritage of his ancestors--him, that kingly man? How he had stood before me, the tall noble form with flashing eyes, and anguish imprinted in his pale, deeply-furrowed face with its flowing beard. This man to have planned to sell his daughter! And a creature like the commerzienrath should one day be lord here in his stead! The creature with his close-shaven fox-face, his blinking, thievish eyes, and his clumsy, greedy hands; the man who had foredoomed me to the gallows. Yes, they had dealt with me no better than with my knight. They had driven me out of the town, and now, thank heaven, I had a right to hate them as I had always despised.

Thus my foolish brain was heated more and more. The charm of adventure, the inward delight in this uncontrolled life, which I called liberty, a monstrous confusion of the conceptions of right and duty, gratitude, hot blood of youth, passionate first-love--all held me spell-bound in this charmed circle, which was a world to me. All drew me with irresistible force to the man who seemed to me the perfect ideal of a knight and a hero, to the lovely maiden who so far exceeded my wildest dreams. And the fact that these two, to whom I clung with equal love, stood opposed to each other, only tended to confirm the dream of my own indispensability. In their several ways, each had been equally kind to me, had shown me equal confidence. The fulfilment of my most ardent wish, that of seeing them reconciled, had never appeared so near as this morning, when I paced my room and looked out of the windows at the blue sky, in which great white motionless clouds were standing, and upon the park whose majestic groups of trees and broad expanses of grass were magically lighted by the splendor of the sun.

How could I have believed that these white clouds would so soon spread into a sable pall and obscure that sun--that I had seen my paradise in its magic radiance for the last time?

CHAPTER XII.

The confidence with which Herr von Zehren had looked forward to that evening, which at the very least was to repair his former ill-fortune, was after all a deceitful one. It may be that an incident which occurred just previously, deprived him of that coolness which this evening he more than ever needed. For on our way up from the beach, where we had shot a brace of rabbits among the dunes, as crossing the heath we drew near to Trantowitz, a cavalcade of ladies and gentlemen, attended by a couple of liveried servants, came galloping by. My attention was entirely attracted by a slender young man riding a superb English horse, who, at the moment he passed me, was leaning over to one of the ladies with a charming smile on his pale face, on which a downy moustache just darkened the upper lip. The lady gave her horse a sudden cut with the whip, and they shot on in advance. I gazed for a moment after the company, and was turning to Herr von Zehren with the question: "Who are they?" when I checked myself in surprise at the change in his countenance. We had just been chatting pleasantly together, and there now lay in his looks an expression of the blackest wrath, and he had unslung his gun and half raised it to his shoulder, as if he would send a shot after the retreating party. Then he flung it hastily over his

shoulder again, and walked a short distance silent at my side, until he suddenly broke out into the most furious execrations, which I had never before heard from him, though he could be angry enough upon occasion. "The hound!" he exclaimed, "he dares to come here upon the soil that belongs to my friend Trantow! And I stand quietly here and do not drive a charge of shot through him! Do you know who that was, George? The villain who will one day be lord of a hundred manors which by right are all mine, whose ancestors were my ancestors' vassals, and whose scoundrelly father came to me to tell me in my own apartment that he desired to marry his son according to his rank, and that he trusted we could come to some satisfactory arrangement. I clutched him by his accursed throat, and would have strangled him if others had not come between us. The thing has been gnawing at my heart incessantly, ever since I heard that the villain was going about the neighborhood here. And now you know why Constance and I are upon so unfortunate a footing. Heaven knows what fancies she is nursing; and it drives me mad to see that her thoughts still cling to the miscreant who has offered her the grossest insult that man can offer to woman; who has tarnished my ancestral escutcheon, and should fight me to the death, but for----"

He checked himself suddenly, and walked silently by my side, gnawing his lip. Not noticing the irregularities of the wretched road, he stumbled once or twice, and this stumbling, combined with the expression of his face, in which the wrinkles deepened to furrows whenever he was under strong emotion, gave him the appearance of a broken old man consumed by impotent anger. Never before had he appeared so much in need of help, so worthy of compassion, and never before had I pitied him so, or so yearned to assist him. At the same time I thought that so favorable an opportunity to clear up the misunderstanding that evidently existed between father and daughter in reference to their relations with the prince, would not easily again occur. So I plucked up a heart and asked:

"Does Fräulein Constance know how much she has been insulted?"

"How? What do you mean?" he asked in return.

I told him what I had been speaking of with Constance that morning; how little suspicion she seemed to have of the outrage that had been offered her; that on the contrary she had expressly told me that she had been betrothed to the prince, that their predetermined union had been prevented by Herr von Zehren's fault alone, and that she had renounced freely and utterly all thought of the possibility of their marriage. But the audacity with which he had attempted to approach her, the correspondence which had taken place between them, I kept to myself, feeling that this would only awaken anew the wrath of the Wild Zehren, and render him deaf to all reason.

But it was all to no purpose. He listened to me with every sign of impatience, and when I paused for breath in my eagerness, he broke out:

"Does she say that? What will she not say? And that too now, after I have told her not once, but a hundred times, what was asked of me, how my honor and my name were trampled in the mire! She will next asseverate that the Emperor of China has been a suitor for her hand, and that it is my fault that she is not now enthroned in Pekin! Why not? *Turandot* is as pretty a part as *Mary Stuart*. Prepare yourself soon to see her in Chinese attire."

It was easy to perceive how little mirth lay in these mocking words, and I did not venture to press further so painful a theme. We came, besides, in a few minutes to Trantowitz, where Hans received us at the door with his good-natured laugh, and led us into his living-room, (which, besides his chamber, was the sole habitable apartment in the great house,) where the other guests were assembled.

The evening passed like so many others. Play began before supper, and was resumed after that meal, during which the bottle had circulated freely. I had resolved not to play, and could the more easily keep this resolution, as all the rest, with the exception of our host, whom nothing could move from his accustomed equanimity, were entirely absorbed by the unusually high play, and had not time to pay any attention to me.

So there I sat, in the recess of a window, at a little distance from the table, and watched the company, whose behavior now, when I was not a participant in it, seemed strange enough. The fiery eyes in the flushed faces; the silence only broken by the monotonous phrases of the banker, or a hoarse laugh or muttered curse from the players; the avidity with which they poured down the flasks of wine; the whole scene wrapped in a gray cloud of cigar-smoke which grew denser every moment;--it was far from a pleasant sight, and strange, confused, painful thoughts whirled through my weary brain, as I sat watching the fortunes of the play, and listening at intervals to the rustling of the night-wind that bent the old poplars before the house, and drove a few rain-drops against the windows. Suddenly I was aroused from a half doze by a loud uproar that broke out among the players. They sprang from their chairs and vociferated at each other with wild looks and threatening gestures; but the tumult subsided as quickly as it had arisen, and they sat again bending in silence over their cards, and once more I listened to the wind in the poplars, and the dashing of the rain against the panes, until at last I fell asleep.

A hand upon my shoulder aroused me. It was Herr von Zehren. The first look at his pale face, from which his eyes were flashing wildly, told me that he had been losing again, and he

confirmed it as we walked back the short distance to Zehrendorf through the black tempestuous night.

"It is all over with me," he said; "my old luck has abandoned me; the sooner I blow out my brains the better. To be sure, I have a week yet. Sylow, who is a good fellow, has given me so much time. In a week perhaps all may be managed; only to-morrow the draft falls due, and of course my brother cannot pay it. I must see about it, I must see about it."

He spoke more to himself than to me. Suddenly he stopped, looked up at the black lowering clouds, then walked on, muttering between his teeth:

"I knew it, I knew it, as soon as I saw the villain. It could not but bring me ill-luck; his accursed face has always brought me misfortune. And now to have to see how they quaff the foam from the beaker of life, while they leave us the bitter dregs! And I cannot have revenge--cannot take his life!"

We had reached a piece of woods near the house, which was really a projecting corner of the forest, but was considered as part of the park. The road here divided; the broader fork led along the edge of the wood; and the narrower, which was only a foot-path, ran directly through the trees. This was the nearer way, but also the rougher and darker, and Herr von Zehren, who in his present ill-humor had more than once grumbled at the darkness and the bad road, proposed that we should not take our usual path through the park.

"I should like to find out," I said, "if the buck whose tracks we saw day before yesterday, is belling in the south forest again. We cannot hear it from here, but in there we ought to hear it."

"You go through, then," he said, "but do not stay too long."

"I expect I shall be at the other side before you."

It was not so dark in the woods as I had feared; at times the moon shone pretty bright through the scudding clouds. I reproached myself for leaving Herr von Zehren alone at this hour, and had thoughts of turning back; but, impelled by the hunter's ardor, I pushed on, slowly and cautiously, often stopping and listening, while I held my breath, to see if I could catch any sound of the buck in the woods. Once I thought I heard a faint bellow, but I was not quite sure. If so, it must be very distant, and in a different quarter from where we expected the buck to be at this hour. It might be another. I was anxious to find out, and stood still again to listen. Suddenly I heard a noise behind me like the trot of a horse coming along the path in which I was. My heart stopped for an instant, and then began to beat violently. Who could be the rider, in the dead of night, upon a path lying alongside the main road to the castle?

The sound of the horse's hoofs, at first faint, had grown louder, and then suddenly ceased. In its place I now distinctly heard the steps of a man coming through the woods towards the place where I was standing, a little out of the path, in the dark shadow of some high trees. It could be no one but *he*. My heart, that was violently beating, cried to me that it could be no one but he. I tore the gun from my shoulder, as Herr von Zehren had done at the sight of the man he hated. Then, as he had done, I threw it back over my shoulder, so that I had both arms free. What did I need for such a fellow but those two arms of mine?

And just then I saw him plainly before me, as the moon slipped from behind a black cloud, and threw through the trees a clear light exactly upon the place where he was passing: the same slender form, and even in the same riding-dress--a low-crowned hat, close-fitting coat, trimmed with fur, and boots of soft leather reaching half-way up the thigh--one bound, one clutch--I had him in my hands!

The surprise must have paralyzed him at the moment, for he uttered no cry, and scarcely made a movement. But this was only for a moment, and then with an exertion of strength for which I had not given him credit, he strove to free himself from my grasp. So might a leopard, caught in the hunter's net, struggle frantically, leap, rend with his claws, and waste his strength in convulsive efforts. The struggle lasted perhaps a minute, during which time no word was spoken on either side, nor was any sound audible but our panting. At last his struggles grew weaker and weaker, his breath began to fail, and finally, yielding, he panted:

"Let me go!"

"Not so soon!"

"In my breast pocket is a pocket-book, with probably a hundred *thalers* in it; take them, but let me go!"

"Not for a million!" I said, forcing him, as his strength was utterly exhausted, down to his knees.

"What do you want? Do you mean to murder me?" he panted.

"Only to give you a lesson," I said, and picked up his riding-whip, which had fallen while we were struggling, the silver handle of which caught my eye as it glittered in the moonlight.

"For God's sake, do not do that," he said, grasping convulsively the hand in which I held the whip. "Kill me on the spot; I will not move nor utter a cry; but do not strike me!"

Such a request in such a tone could not fail to make a powerful impression upon a heart like mine. I no longer beheld in my antagonist the enemy of the Wild Zehren his daughter's lover. I saw in him only a boy who was in my power, and who would rather die than undergo disgrace. Involuntarily the hand with which I grasped him by the breast unclosed; indeed I believe I lifted him to his feet.

Scarcely did he feel himself free, when he hastily stepped back a few paces, and in a tone the lightness of which was in strong contrast with the terror he had first felt, said:

"If you were a nobleman, you should give me satisfaction; but as you are not, I warn you to be on your guard: I do not always travel without arms."

He slightly touched his hat, turned upon his heel, and walked back by the way he had come.

I stood as if rooted to the spot, and gazed after the slender figure, which soon vanished in the dark shadows of the forest. I knew that with a bound or two I could overtake him, but I felt not the slightest impulse to attempt it. The young prince had rightly judged the young plebeian. I would as lief have hewn off my hand as to raise it again against a man whom I had in a manner pardoned. And then I thought of what Granow had said, that were he the prince, he would not like to meet Herr von Zehren, and how very nearly this meeting had taken place, and that too at a moment when it would have given the Wild Zehren delight to shed his enemy's blood, and his own afterwards.

And now I heard a slight neigh, and then the gallop of a horse.

"Thank heaven!" I cried, drawing a deep breath, "it is better so, and it will be a lesson to him."

I thought no more of the buck. I scarcely listened when he began to bellow, at no great distance from me. I hurried on at a run to make up for the time I had lost, and in deep anxiety lest Herr von Zehren should have heard the gallop of the horse, for it was not possible that he could have heard anything that had happened in the wood.

But my anxiety was without cause. The Wild Zehren was too safely plunged in reflections over his misfortune for his senses to be as acute as they usually were. He did not even ask me about the buck; and I was glad that I was under no necessity of speaking. Thus we walked silently on until we reached the castle.

In the hall we were met as usual by the sleepless old Christian. Letters had come by express: he had laid them on his master's writing-table.

"Come in," said Herr von Zehren, "while I see what they are about."

We entered. "This one is for you, and so is this," he said, handing me two of the letters from the table.

The first letter was from my friend Arthur. It read:

"You have not sent me the money I asked you for; but that is the way: when we have anything, our friends may look out for themselves. I only write to you now, in order through you to entreat my uncle to do something to help papa. Our affairs must be in an awful state, for the merchant G.--you know whom I mean--from whom I borrowed twenty-five, saw papa about it to-day, and I did not get the smallest scolding. Mamma howls all day long. I wish I was a thousand miles away.

"P. S.--Papa has just come from Uncle Commerzienrath with a terribly long face. It is plain that the old Philistine will do nothing for us. I tell you Uncle Malte must help us, for we are in a terrible strait."

The second letter was from my father.

"My Son:--In renouncing your filial obedience to me, you compelled me to abandon all control over you. I have vowed not to restore you to your place as my son, until you acknowledge your misconduct and entreat me to do so; and this vow I will keep. To the choice that you have made for yourself, I have offered no opposition, have allowed you perfect freedom of action, for which you have always hankered, and am resolved to do this for the future. But all this cannot prevent me from wishing, with all my heart, that it may be well with you in the path that you have chosen for yourself, though I doubt it much; nor can it keep me from warning you where warning seems necessary. And this is now the case. Things have reached my ears concerning Herr von Zehren, which I trust in heaven may be founded upon error, but which are of such a nature that I think with horror of my son being in the house of a man under such suspicions, even if false. What I have heard I cannot reveal to you, as the information has reached me in the line of my official duties.

"I know that notwithstanding your disobedience, you are incapable of a base action, and that therefore you are so far safe, even if those suspicions are true, which God forbid. Still I entreat

you, if you have any regard left for my peace, to leave the house of Herr von Zehren at once. I add what is scarcely necessary, that for the obedient son I shall be, what I have always been, his strict but just father."

I had read this letter twice through, and sat still gazing at the writing, incapable of clear reflection, when Herr von Zehren aroused me by asking: "Well, George, and what have you there?" I handed him both letters. He read them, paced the room a while, and then stopping before me said:

"And what do you propose to do?"

"The opportunity is a good one," he went on, seeing that I hesitated to answer. "I have a letter from the steuerrath which compels me to start for the town within the hour. I will take you with me; it is now twelve o'clock, and in three hours we can be there; you can ring up the old gentleman; sleep an hour or two in the garret of which you have so often told me; thank God tomorrow morning that you are clear of the Wild Zehren, and--go back again to school."

He spoke the last words with a slight contempt, which galled the most sensitive part in the heart of a young man, that of false pride.

"I will go with you wherever you go!" I exclaimed, starting up. "I said so this morning, and I now repeat it. Tell me what I shall do."

Herr von Zehren again paced the room for a few moments, and then paused before me and said in an agitated voice:

"Remain here--for a day or two at all events, until I return. You will do me a service."

I looked at him interrogatively.

"If you return now to-day," he continued, "that will only have the effect of confirming the rumors of which your father writes. The rats are leaving the house, they will say, and justly. And just now it is of importance to me that people shall say nothing, that as little attention as possible shall be directed to me. Do you understand, George?"

"No," I answered; "why now especially?"

I looked fixedly at him; he bore the scrutiny, and after a while answered, speaking slowly and in a low voice:

"Ask no further, George. Perhaps I would tell you if you could help me; perhaps I would not. They say of me that I use men and then throw them away when they can be of no further service to me. It may be so; I do not know that the most deserve any better treatment. With you, at all events, I would not thus deal, for I like you. And now go to bed, and let the Wild Zehren play out the game. Perhaps he will break the bank, and then I promise you it will be the last of his playing."

At this moment the wagon drove up; while reading my father's letter, I had not heard the order to old Christian to have the horses put to. Herr von Zehren looked through his papers, put some in his pocket, and locked others in his cabinet. Then old Christian helped him on with his furred cloak, he put on his hat, and stepping up to me, offered me his hand.

I had watched all his movements in a sort of stupefaction.

"And I cannot help you?" I now asked.

"No," he replied, "or only by waiting quietly here until I return. Your hand is cold as ice; go to bed."

I accompanied him to the door. His hunting-wagon was waiting, and long Jock, who usually filled the office of coachman, was on the front seat.

"The wagon will only take me to the ferry, and then return," said Herr von Zehren.

"And Jock?" I asked in a whisper.

"Goes with me."

"Take me in his place," I asked, imploringly.

"It cannot be," he said, with his foot upon the step.

"I entreat you," I urged, holding him by the cloak.

"It cannot be," he repeated. "We have not a minute to spare. Good-night! Drive on!"

The wagon drove off; the dogs yelped and barked, and then all was still again. Old Christian hobbled across the yard with his lantern, and vanished into one of the old buildings. I stood alone before the house, under the trees, in which the wind roared. The rain began to fall in torrents;

shivering I returned to the house and carefully secured the door.

The light was still burning in Herr von Zehren's room. I went to get it and also my letters that were lying upon his table. As I took them I espied a paper on the floor, and picked it up to see what it was. A few words were written upon it, and I had read them before I thought what I was doing. The words were these:

"I am ruined if you do not save me. G. will give me no more time; St. is immovable; the draft will be protested. I put myself in your hands. You have held me above water too long to let me drown now. The moment, too, is as favorable as possible for the matter you know of. I can and will take care that no one sees our cards. But whatever is done, must be done at once. I have not always the game in my hand. Come at once, I adjure you, by what is most sacred to you--by our ancient name! Burn this at once."

The paper was not signed, but I recognized the writing immediately. I had seen it often enough in the documents on my father's table, and I could at once have affixed the signature with its pretentious flourish, which I had often enough tried to imitate.

This paper Herr von Zehren must have dropped while hastily thrusting it with the others into his pocket.

I looked at it again, and was once more trying to unriddle its enigmatical contents, when the candle, already burned to the socket, gave signs of going out. "Burn this at once!"--it was as if a voice had uttered this command close to my ear. I held the paper in the flame; it blazed up; the candle went out at the same moment; a glowing scrap of tinder fluttered to my feet, and then all around me was thickest darkness.

I groped my way from the room, through the dining-room to the hall, up the narrow stairway to my chamber, and after searching in vain for a match, threw myself dressed upon my bed.

But in vain did I, tossing restlessly upon my couch, endeavor to sleep. Every moment I started up in terror, fancying in my excitement that I heard a voice calling for help, or a step hurrying towards my door, while I kept racking my brain in the vain attempt to devise some plan for rescuing the two so dear to me from the ruin which I had a presentiment was impending over them, whose coming the elements themselves seemed to announce in thunder; and execrated my cowardice, my indecision, my helplessness.

It was a fearful night.

A terrible storm had arisen; the wind raved about the old pile, which shook to its foundations. The tiles came clattering down from the roofs; the rusted weather-cocks groaned and creaked; the shutters banged, and the third shutter to the right made frantic efforts now or never to get loose from the single hinge by which it had hung for years. The screech-owls in the crevices of the walls hooted dismally, and the dogs howled, while the gusts of wind dashed torrents of rain against the windows.

It seemed as if the ancient mansion of Zehrendorf knew what fate was awaiting its possessor and itself.

CHAPTER XIII.

My first sensation, as I awaked late, was a feeling of thankfulness that it was day; my second was one of shame at having been so powerfully affected by the terrors of the night. When but a small boy, I used to think that I cast the most odious reproach upon an adversary when I termed him a coward, and this morning I felt that the same stigma might be justly affixed to myself. But that comes, I said to myself while dressing, from not looking things in the face and telling people the truth. Why did I not frankly say to Herr von Zehren, I know the object of your journey? He would then have taken me with him, and I should not have to sit here like a child that is kept in the house when it rains.

I opened a window and looked out, in a gloomy frame of mind, and the scene that met my eyes was far from cheerful. The wind, which blew from the west, drove swirling masses of gray mist through the gigantic trees, which tossed their mighty arms about, as if in torment, above the wide lawn which had so often charmed me with its long waving grass, and which now was a mere morass. A flock of crows flew up with harsh cawings into the stormy air, which hurled them about at its pleasure. At this moment the wind flung to a shutter with so much violence that fragments

of the rotten wood flew about my head. I tore away from the hinge what was left of it, and threw it down. "I'll not be troubled by you tonight, at all events," I said, fastening the window again, and then I determined to take the rest in hand. Leaving my own room, I made the round of the upper story. As I opened the door of the room where the pile of books lay, a dozen rats sprang down from the window-sills and dived into their hiding-places. The rain had driven in through some broken panes, and the gray rascals had been enjoying the welcome refreshment. "You have not quitted the house yet, it seems," I said, recalling Herr von Zehren's words; "should I be more cowardly than you, you thievish crew?"

I climbed over the pile of books to the nearest door, and wandered through the empty rooms, securing all the shutters that had any fastenings left, and lifting from their hinges and throwing down those that were past securing. The one belonging to the third window, which had been the principal object of my expedition, had terminated its afflicted existence in the night.

On my way back I entered the hall with the great staircase, where in the dim light that fell through the dull panes covered with dust and cobwebs, it looked more ghostly than ever. A suit of armor which was fastened to the wall at some height from the floor, it required no great stretch of fancy to turn into the corpse of a hanged man. I wondered if it was the armor of that Malte von Zehren whose name, in default of himself, the honest burghers of my native town had affixed to their gallows.

I do not know what put it into my head to descend the staircase and wander about the narrow passages of the lower story. My footsteps sounded eerily hollow in the vacant corridors; and the chilly damp from the bare walls, like those of a vault, seemed to strike doubly cold to my feverish frame. Perhaps I had an idea of punishing myself for my terrors of the past night, and of demonstrating to myself the childishness of my apprehensions. Still it was not without a start and a decidedly uncomfortable feeling that I suddenly came upon an opening in the wall at a spot which I had often before passed without perceiving any sign of a door, through which opening I caught sight of a yawning black chasm, at the bottom of which a faint glimmer of light was perceptible. Peering more closely into it, I could make out the commencement of a flight of steps. Without a moment's hesitation I began, at peril of my neck, to descend a narrow and very steep stair, slowly groping my way with both hands touching the wall on each side of me, until the faint glimmer at the bottom suddenly disappeared. As I reached the floor of the cellar it became visible again, but not now an uncertain glimmer, but a distinct light moving about a short distance from me, and apparently proceeding from a lantern in the hand of a man who was exploring the cellar. As I moved faster than the man, whose shuffling footsteps probably covered the sound of mine, I speedily overtook him, and laid my hand upon the shoulder of--old Christian, for he it was. He stopped with a half cry, luckily without dropping his lantern, and looked round at me with the utmost terror in his old wrinkled face.

"What are you doing here. Christian?" I asked.

He still stared at me in silence. "You need not be afraid of me," I said: "you know I am your friend."

"It is not for myself," the old man answered at last. "I dare not bring any one down here; he would kill me."

"You did not bring me down here," I said.

Christian, whose feeble old limbs were yet trembling from his first fright, now sat down upon a chest, and placed the lantern by him. While he was recovering himself, I took a survey of the cellar. It had a low vaulted ceiling, supported at various points by strong columns, and was evidently of considerable extent, though how considerable I could not determine, as the extremities were lost in darkness.

Against one of these columns not far off stood a desk with a great lantern over it, and on the desk lay a large thick book, like a merchant's "blotter." Near this were chests of tea, with Chinese figures marked on them--evidently original packages--piled up to a great height, and everywhere that I looked were empty boxes and casks, piled in a certain business-like order. Many a year must have passed ere all these boxes were emptied and all these casks drained; many a dollar must have been lost and won in the process, and many a human life must have been risked, and probably lost too. At that time not a year passed that the smuggling in this region by land and water did not cost more than one life; and how many did it cost whose loss was not known? Peter, for instance, who was shot by the coastguard in the woods, and dragged himself, mortally wounded, to his hut; or Claas, who, flying hastily across the morass, missed his footing and sank; whose kindred found it prudent to say as little about the matter as possible.

Many things of this sort I had heard from my father and his colleagues, and they recurred to my mind as I looked around this vast cellar, which wore in the pale light from the old man's lantern much the appearance of a gigantic church-vault, in which mouldering coffins that had done their service were piled up around, and the damp chilly vapor in which might be fancied to proceed from fresh graves dug in lightless space beyond the columns.

This then was the foundation of the house of the Von Zehrens. That high-born race had dwelt over this vault, and lived upon these heaps of decay. No wonder the fields lay fallow, and the

barns were tumbling to ruin. Here was the sowing and the harvest--an evil sowing, which could bring no other than an evil harvest.

I will not maintain that precisely these thoughts passed through my mind in precisely this order, while I stood by the old man and let my gaze wander through the recesses of the cellar. I only know that my old feeling of horror for that traffic into whose secret adyta I had penetrated, returned upon me with full force, and with the clearly defined sensation that I now pertained to it and was one of the initiated, and that it was foolish and to a certain extent offensive in the old man to wish to make any secret to me of matters and relations which I so thoroughly fathomed and so well understood.

"Well, Christian," said I, taking a seat opposite the old man, and lighting a cigar at his lantern as a mark of my perfect composure, "what will we get this time?"

"Tea or silk," muttered he; "if it were wine, brandy, or salt, he would have ordered the wagons."

"To be sure, he would then have ordered the wagons," I repeated, as if this were a mere matter of course. "And when do you expect him back? He told me to-night that he could not possibly determine."

"Most likely to-morrow; but I will open the great door anyhow, as we cannot be certain."

"Of course we cannot be certain," I said. The old man had arisen and taken up his lantern, and I arose also.

We kept on, and came into another space filled with the scent of wine, where casks were piled on casks, as the old man showed me by holding up his lantern as high as he could reach.

"This all lies here from last year," he said.

"Yes," I answered, repeating what Granow had said; "the business is bad just now; the people in Uselin have grown shy since so many have taken to dabbling in it."

The old man, who was taciturnity itself, did not answer, but it seemed that I had attained my aim of gaining his confidence. He nodded and muttered an assent to my words, as he shuffled along.

The cellar seemed to have no end; but at last Christian stopped and placed the lantern upon the ground. Before us was a broad staircase, above which was an apparatus of strong beams, such as is used for lowering casks and heavy boxes. The staircase was closed above by a large and massive trap-door, covered with plates of iron, and secured by immense bolts. These the old man pushed back with my help.

"So," said he, "now they can come whenever they please."

"Whenever they please," I repeated.

We returned silently by the way we had come, and ascended the steep stair at the entrance. The old man pressed a spring, and the opening in the wall was closed by a sliding door which was fitted so artistically, and was so exactly of the same tint of dirty gray, that none but one of the initiated could have discovered its existence, to say nothing of opening it.

Old Christian extinguished his lantern, and went before me to the end of the corridor, after which we separated in the smaller court-yard. He passed through a small gate into the main court; I remained behind and looked cautiously around to see if any one was observing me; but there were only the crows, who, perched upon one of the low roofs, with heads on one side, were scrutinizing all my movements. This little court had looked poorly enough in the sunshine, but now in the rain its appearance was inexpressibly forlorn. The buildings huddled together as if trying to shelter themselves as well as they could from the wind and the rain, and yet seemed every moment in danger of tumbling down from sheer dilapidation. Who would look here for the entrance to the secret cellar? And yet here somewhere it must be. I had noticed the direction and extent of the subterranean space, for I wanted to know all, since I already knew so much. I wished to be no longer kept in the dark as to what was going on around me.

My conclusion was verified: in the miserable old servant's kitchen, from which a wide door led to the inclosed space with the heaps of refuse, under a pile of old barrels, boards, half-rotten straw, heaped together, as I now perceived, with a careful imitation of carelessness, I detected the same trap-door which the old man had bolted in the cellar. Here upon the outside it was secured with a massive iron bar, and a lock, the key of which doubtless Herr von Zehren carried about him. I replaced the rubbish, and stole away as furtively as a thief, for the proverb says truly that "the concealer is as bad as the stealer," not only before the law, but even more surely before his own conscience.

I turned into the park and strolled about the walks. A heavy drizzle was still falling, but the fog had lifted a little, and was rolling away in heavy gray masses over the tops of the trees. I stood at the stone table under the maple whose spreading boughs afforded me some shelter, and gazed

steadfastly at the great melancholy house, that to-day, since it had disclosed to me its secret, wore quite another look in my eyes. Could she know what I now knew? Impossible! It was a thought not to be harbored for a moment. But she must learn it as soon as possible--or no! she must rather leave this place, where ruin was threatening her. Away--but whither? to whom? with whom? What a wretched, pitiful creature was I, who could offer her nothing but this heart that beat for her, these arms which were strong enough to bear her away as easily as a child, and with which I could do nothing but fold them over my breast in impotent despair. Happen what might, she must, must be saved. Her father might sacrifice me to his vengeance, but she must escape free!

Some one came from the terrace--it was old Pahlen. She appeared to be looking for me, for she beckoned to me from a distance with her bony hands, while her gray hair, flying loose in the wind from under her dirty cap, would have given her to any one else the appearance of the witch that had brewed the bad weather. But to me she was a most welcome apparition, for from whom could she come but from *her*? I ran to meet her, and scarcely gave her time to deliver her message. A few moments later, with a heart beating high, I entered Constance's apartment through the casement-door.

It was the first, and was to be the last time that I entered it, and I can scarcely give an accurate description of its appearance. I have only a very dim recollection of large-leaved plants, an open piano, music, books, articles of dress, all scattered about, of two or three portraits on the walls, and that the entire floor was covered with a carpet. This last feature particularly struck me. Carpets covering an entire room were a rarity at that time, especially in the good town of Uselin. I had only heard of such luxury by report, and I hardly knew where to place my foot, although the carpet, I believe, was extremely threadbare, and in places even torn and worn into holes.

But these, as I have said, are but dim recollections, from which stands out, clearly and ineffaceably, the picture of Constance. She sat upon a divan near the window, and at my entrance dropped a piece of embroidery into her lap, at the same time extending her hand with her peculiar sweet melancholy smile.

"You are not angry that I sent for you?" she asked, motioning me to take my place by her side--thereby placing me in no slight embarrassment, for the divan was low, and my boots not as clean as a young man could wish who is for the first time received in a carpeted chamber by the lady of his heart. "I wished to make a request of you. Pahlen, you can go; I have something to speak of with Herr George alone."

The old woman gave me one of her suspicious looks, lingered, and only went after Constance had repeated her order in a sharper tone.

"See, this is the reason I sent for you," Constance began, with a gesture of the hand towards the door by which the old woman had departed. "I know how good you are, and how true a friend to me; since yesterday I have new proof of it, though for a while I was weak enough to hold you no better than the others. But these others! They do not know, and cannot, and must not know. Such treasures must be kept secret; they are too precious for the coarse world. Do you not think so?"

As I had no idea on what it was that she desired my opinion, I contented myself with fixing my eyes upon her with a look of respectful inquiry. She dropped her eyes again to her work, and continued in a voice not quite so steady: "My father has gone away, I am told; do you know whither, and for how long a time? But even if he had told you, it would make no difference; my father is not accustomed to bind himself by any such announcements. He will go for a stay of three weeks and be back in three days; he will start to be gone three days, and I will look for him in vain for as many weeks. There is no probability that he will this time make any exception to his rule; and whether he really makes a long or short stay, we must take measures accordingly. It is not cheerful to be all alone in this desolate and comfortless house, especially when there is such a terrible storm as there was last night. It is so pleasant to know that there is some one near at hand in whose faith and strong arm--they say you are so very strong, George--we can always trust; but still, so it must be. You feel that as well as I do, do you not, George?"

This time I knew what she meant: I must go away from here, must leave her alone, just now, at the very time when I was tormenting myself to devise some plan to get her away; at the very time when my mind, not yet recovered from the effects of the terrible night and the adventures of the morning, was filled with a gloomy presentiment that calamity was impending over both the house and its inhabitants. I neither knew how nor what to answer, and looked at Constance in helpless confusion.

"You think it very unfriendly, very inhospitable of me," she said, after a pause, as if awaiting my answer; "it would be both more hospitable and more friendly if I myself went away for the time to visit some female friend; and I admit that any other lady would do so; but I am so poor as to have no female friend. My father has taken good care of that. So long as you have been here, has a solitary lady entered this house? Have you ever heard me speak of a friend, of an acquaintance of my own sex? 'Constance von Zehren only associates with men;' that is the way I am spoken of; but heaven knows how entirely without fault of mine. Do you wish, my good faithful George, to give evil tongues the opportunity to make my reputation worse than it already

is? Or do you think, with the others, that it cannot be worse? No; sit still. Why should not friends, as we are, speak calmly of such things, and calmly consider what is to be done on such an occasion? Now, what I have thought, is this: You have friends. There is Herr von Granow, who regularly pays court to you; there is Herr von Trantow, our good neighbor, who would be so glad to have you with him for a few days. And then you are quite near me; I can send for you if I want you; and you know that if ever I need a friend I will turn to no one sooner than to the only friend I have."

She offered me her hand with an enchanting smile, as if to say: "So that matter is settled, is it not?"

Her smile and the touch of her dear hand completed the confusion into which her words had thrown me; but I collected myself with a desperate effort and stammered:

"I do not know what you will think of me for allowing you to speak so long on a subject which of course I could not but understand at once; but I cannot tell you how hard it is for me just now to go away from you--to leave you just now. Herr von Zehern expressly charged me to remain here and wait his return, which would happen in a few days, perhaps to-morrow. He no doubt did that--even though he did not say as much--with the best intentions; that you might have some one near you, and might not be left alone in the desolate old house; that----"

I did not know how to continue, Constance fixed her eyes upon me with so peculiar an expression, and my talent for fiction having always been of the poorest.

"My father has never shown this tender consideration before," she said. "Perhaps he thinks that the older I grow, the more I need watching. You understand me. Or can you have forgotten our discourse of yesterday?"

"I have not forgotten it," I cried, springing hastily from the divan. "I will not again become an object of your suspicion. I now leave you, and forever, if you wish it; but others who are assuredly no worthier than I, shall not enjoy an advantage over me; and if they still venture to thrust themselves into your neighborhood, or lurk around like a fox around a dove-cot, they do it at their own peril. I shall not be so considerate as I was that evening."

"What do you mean? Of whom are you speaking?" exclaimed Constance, who had also arisen at my last words. She had turned quite pale, and her features had assumed a new expression.

"Of whom am I speaking?" I said; "of him who, on that evening when I kept watch at your window, ran from me like a craven; and who last night, as I was coming with your father from Trantowitz, and took the way through the woods alone, tried to conceal himself under the trees; whom I spared out of pity, for I knew that had I betrayed the pitiful wretch, Herr von Zehren would have shot him dead like a dog. Let him take care I do not meet him again in the night or by day either: he will see how much I respect his princeliness!"

Constance had turned away while I thus gave vent in anger to the despair I felt at leaving the beloved maiden forever. Suddenly she turned her pale face again upon me, with eyes flashing with a strange light, and exclaimed, holding out her hands as if in supplication:

"That I should hear this from you!--from you! How can I help it if that man--supposing you were not mistaken, which yet is quite possible--is driven restlessly about by his evil conscience? It is unhappy enough for him, if it be so; but how does that concern me? And how can any danger from that quarter threaten me? And were he now--or at any time and anywhere--to come before me, what would I, what could I say, but 'We can be nothing to each other, you and I, now nor at any future time.' I thought, George, you knew all this without my telling you. How can I wonder that the others so misjudge me, when your judgment of me is so false, so cruelly false?"

She resumed her seat upon the divan and buried her face in her hands. I lost all control of myself, paced the room in agitation, and finally, seeing her bosom heaving with her emotion, threw myself in despair at her feet.

"My dear, good George," she said, laying her hands on my shoulders. "I know well that you love me; and I, too, am very fond of you."

The tears rolled down my cheeks. I hid my face in her dress, and covered her hands with kisses.

"Stand up, George," she whispered, "I hear old Pahlen coming."

I sprang up. In truth the door opened slowly--I think it had never been entirely closed--and the ugly old woman looked in and asked if she had been called.

Yes, she had been called. Herr George, who was going to visit Herr von Trantow for a day or two, had probably some orders to give.

"Farewell," she said, turning to me, "farewell, then, for a few days." And then bringing her face nearer to mine, and sending me a kiss by the movement of her lips, she softly whispered, "Farewell, beloved."

I was standing outside the house; the rain, that had re-commenced, was beating into my burning face; I did not feel it. Rain and storm, driving clouds and roaring trees, how lovely it all was! How could it be possible that the world should be so fair--that mortal could be so happy that she loved me!

When I reached my own room, I gave vent to my rapture in a thousand idiotic ways. I danced and sang, I threw myself into the old high-backed chair and wept, then sprang up again, and at last remembered that I had all that I should need for a stay of but a day or two, ready packed in my game-bag, and that she would expect that her orders would be promptly obeyed. Yes; now--now I was ready to go.

And throwing my gun over my shoulder, and calling my dog Caro, who lay moping under the table, I left the castle.

CHAPTER XIV.

Striding along the road to Trantowitz, under the rustling willows, scarcely seeing the way before me in my excitement, I several times barely escaped falling from the slippery path into the deep ditch in which the rain-water was now running in a torrent. More than once I stopped to look back to the castle where she was. Caro, who was moodily trotting after me, also stopped on these occasions and looked at me. I told him that she loved me, that we were all going to be happy, that all would turn out well, and that when I was a great man I would lead a joyous life, and would take good care of him as long as he lived. Caro gave me to understand, by a slight wag of his tail, that he was fully satisfied of my good intentions, and even to a certain extent moved; but his brown eyes looked very melancholy, as if on so dismal a day he could not form a very clear picture of a joyous future. "You are a stupid brute, Caro," I said; "a good, stupid brute; and you have no notion of what has happened to me." Caro made a desperate attempt to look at the matter from its brightest side, wagging his tail more violently, and showing his white teeth; then suddenly, as if to show that his well-trained mind, usually occupied with hunting matters alone, felt this to be a day when all discipline was relaxed, ran, furiously barking, at a man who was just approaching around a plantation of willows on the left of the road.

It was a man who had partly the appearance of a sailor, and partly that of a working-man of the town, and whose innocent broad face beamed with so friendly a smile as he caught sight of me, that Caro became at once conscious of the impropriety of his behavior, and came to heel ashamed, with drooping ears, while I, who had recognized the traveller, hastened towards him with extended hand.

"Why, Klaus, what in the name of wonder brings you here?"

"Yes, I thought I should surprise you," answered Klaus, giving me a cordial grasp of his great hard hand, and showing, as Caro had before done, two rows of teeth which rivalled the dog's in whiteness.

"Were you coming to see me?" I asked.

"Of course I was coming to see you," Klaus answered. "I arrived in the cutter an hour ago. Christel is with me. Our old grandmother is dead; we buried her yesterday morning. She has gone to a better place, I hope. She was a good old woman, although she had grown very infirm of late, and gave poor Christel a great deal of trouble. But that is all over now. What I was going to say is this: my father has been so good as to bring me over here himself, and Christel is with me too; she has come with me to Zanowitz to take leave of Aunt Julchen [Julie], father's sister, you know. My father is from Zanowitz, you know."

"To be sure," I said.

"You have been there once or twice yourself," Klaus went on. "Aunt Julchen always saw you, but you never took notice of her. I suppose you did not recollect her; she used often to come to my father's. And then you have become such a great man now"--and the honest fellow's admiring looks wandered over my hunting-dress, my high boots, and Caro, who pretended not to hear a word of this conversation, and with pricked-up ears was staring into the ditch as if he had never seen a water-rat dart into its hole before in all the days of his life.

"Never mind about that, Klaus," I said, shifting the sling of my gun a little higher on the shoulder. "So you are going away? And where are you going, then?"

"I have got a place as locksmith in the machine-shops of the Herr Commerzienrath at Berlin," said Klaus. "Herr Schultz, the engineer on the *Penguin*, you know, has given me a first-rate recommendation, and I hope to do no discredit to it."

"That I am sure you will not," I said in a cordial, friendly, but rather patronizing tone, while I considered with some embarrassment what I should do. Here was Klaus had come to see me, and I could not keep him standing in the open road, under the dripping willow. How the good fellow would have stared if I had taken him into my poetical room!--but that was not possible now. My embarrassment was increasing, and it was a great relief when Klaus, taking both my hands, said:

"And now, good-by; I must go back to Zanowitz. Karl Peters, who has been loading corn for the Herr Commerzienrath, sails in half an hour, and takes me with him. I would have liked to stay a little while with you, but you have something else on hand, and so I will not keep you any longer."

"I have nothing whatever on hand, Klaus," I answered, "and if you have no objection I will go with you to Zanowitz, and take the opportunity to say good-day to Christel. When is the wedding to be, Klaus?"

Klaus shook his head as we walked on together. "The prospect is but a poor one," he said. "We are too young yet, the old man thinks, although the proverb says: 'Early wooed was never rued.' Don't you think so?"

"Decidedly I do!" I cried, with an earnestness that extremely delighted Klaus; "I am two years younger than you, I believe, but I can tell you this: I would marry, if I could, upon the spot; but it all depends upon the circumstances, Klaus, upon the circumstances."

"Yes, of course;" answered he, with a sigh; "I could very well support her now, for I shall work upon a fixed contract, and can do well if I please, and Christel would not sit with her hands in her lap; but what good is all that if the old man will not consent? He is Christel's guardian, and she owes him everything, even her life, for she would have perished miserably on the beach, poor little creature, had father not sent mother down to the strand to gather drift-wood, and had mother not found her there and brought her home. And you see all this has to be taken into account; and although he is not at all kind to her, and I cannot tell why he has treated me so badly all these years, yet still it is written: Honor thy father and thy mother. And as I have no mother any more, I must honor my father doubly. Don't you think so?"

I did not answer him this time. In my coat-pocket lay the letter of my father, in which he commanded me to leave Herr von Zehren at once and return home. I had not obeyed his orders, because I could not leave until Herr von Zehren's return; but now I could go--oh yes, I could go now! I cast a glance back at the castle, which loomed darkly through its dark masses of trees, over the heath, and sighed deeply.

Klaus crossed the wet road to my side, and said to me in a low mysterious tone, although over the whole heath, as far as the eye could reach, there was no human being in sight:

"I beg your pardon; I did not mean to hurt your feelings."

"That I am sure of, Klaus," I answered.

"For you see," he continued, "I know that you and your father are not on good terms, but he is such an excellent man, that he certainly wishes no harm to any human creature, and least of all to his own son; and as for what people say about you, that you are leading so wild a life here, and--and--I don't believe a word of it. I know you better. Oh yes, you might be a little wild, of course, you always were that; but wicked? God forbid! I would sooner believe them if they said I was wicked myself."

"Do they say that of me?" I asked, contemptuously. "And who says so, then?"

Klaus took off his cap, and rubbed his sleek hair.

"That is hard to say," he answered, with some hesitation. "If I must tell you honestly, they all say so, my Christel of course excepted, who is your fast friend; but the rest don't leave a good hair on your head."

"Out with it," I said; "I don't care for it, so let us hear it all."

"Well, I can't tell you," answered Klaus.

It was some time before I could get it out of the good fellow. It was quite terrible for him to be compelled to admit that in my native town, where everybody knew everybody else, and took the greatest interest in his fortunes, I was unanimously considered a castaway. The firemen on board the *Penguin* had spoken of it, and the old pensioned-off captains leaning over the parapet of the pier, and meditatively chewing their quids, talked the matter over. Wherever Klaus, whom all knew to be a great friend of mine, came, everybody asked him if he had not heard what had become of George Hartwig, how he was going about in the very worst region of the whole island, and playing the buffoon for noblemen with whom he was leading the most shameless life; that he would lose more money in gambling in a single night, than his poor father made in a whole year,

and heaven only knew how he came by it. But the worst of all was something which Klaus only mentioned after again solemnly assuring me that he did not believe a word of it. He had been the evening before to take leave of Justizrath Heckepfennig, who was Christel's godfather, and at whose house he was a frequent visitor. The family were just at tea. Elise Kohl, Emilie's dearest friend, was there too, and they had done Klaus the honor to offer him a cup of tea, after he had said that next day he was going to Zanowitz and meant to look me up. The justizrath urgently dissuaded him from doing so, adding that his long-fixed conviction that I would die in my shoes, had recently received a confirmation, which, however, he was not free to disclose. That then the girls had sat in judgment upon me, and decided that they could forgive me everything else, but could never forgive me for being the lover of Fräulein von Zehren. They had heard of it from Arthur, who of course knew; and Arthur had told such things about his cousin that a girl of any self-respect could hardly listen to them, and which it was quite impossible to repeat.

Klaus was terrified at the effect which his account produced upon me. In vain did he repeat that he did not believe a word of it, and had told the girls so at the time. I vowed that I renounced now and forever so faithless and treacherous a friend, and that I would sooner or later be most bitterly avenged upon him. I gave vent to the most terrible threats and maledictions. Never would I again, with my own consent, set foot in my native town; I would rather cause an earthquake to swallow it, if it stood in my power. Up to this time I had felt twinges of conscience as to whether I had not acted too rashly in leaving my father for so trifling a cause; but now should my father a hundred times command me to return, I would not do it. And as for Herr von Zehren and Fräulein von Zehren I valued a hair of either of their heads more than the whole town of Uselin, and I was ready to die for both of them here on the spot in these water-boots of mine, and the devil might afterwards beat the boots about the justizrath's old mop of a head.

The good Klaus was stricken dumb with horror when he heard me utter these frightful imprecations. It is quite probable that the idea struck him that my soul was in a more perilous state than he had hitherto supposed. He did not say this, however, but presently remarked, in his simple way, that disobedience to a father was a very serious thing; that I well knew how much he had always thought of me, in spite of all that people said, and that he had always been disposed, and was still disposed to agree with me in everything; but that here I was clearly in the wrong; and that if my father had really ordered me to return home, he could not see, for his part, what should prevent me from obeying him; that he must confess to me that my disobedience to my father had been troubling him ever since he heard of it, and that he could go away with an easier mind, now that he had frankly told me this.

I made him no answer, and Klaus did not venture to continue a conversation that had taken so unpleasant a turn. He walked silently by my side, giving me a sorrowful look from time to time, like Caro, who trotted with drooping ears by my other side; for the rain was falling still more heavily, and my aimless wandering in such weather over the wet dunes, was a mystery to Caro which grew darker the more he pondered over it.

Thus we arrived at Zanowitz, where the poor mud-hovels were scattered about over the undulating sandy dunes, as if they were playing hide-and-seek. Between the dunes the open sea was visible. This had always been a sight that I loved, when the sun shone brightly on the white sand and the blue water, and the white gulls wheeled in joyous circles over the calm sea. But now all was of a uniform gray, the sand, and the sky, and the sea that came rolling in in heavy waves. Even the gulls, sweeping with harsh cries over the stormy waters, seemed gray like the rest. It was a dreary picture, the coloring of which harmonized with the frame of mind in which my conversation with Klaus had left me.

"I see Peters is getting ready to sail," said Klaus, pointing to one of the larger vessels that were rocking at anchor a short distance from the beach. "I think we had better go down; father and Christel will be down there waiting for me."

So we went down to the strand, where they were about pushing off one of the numerous smaller boats drawn up upon the sand. A crowd of persons were standing by, and among them old Pinnow, Christel, and Klaus's Aunt Julchen, a well-to-do fisherman's widow, whom I remembered very well.

Poor Klaus was scarcely allowed a minute to say good-by. Skipper Peters, who had to deliver in Uselin the same day the corn he had shipped for the commerzienrath's account, swore at the foolish waste of time; Pinnow growled that the stupid dolt would never have common sense; Christel kept her tearful eyes riveted on her Klaus, whom she was to lose for so long a time; Aunt Julchen wiped the tears and the rain from her good fat face with her apron; and the deaf and dumb apprentice Jacob, who was among the rest, stared uninterruptedly at his master as if he now saw his red nose and blue spectacles for the first time. Klaus, looking very confused and very unhappy, said not a single word, but taking in his left hand a bundle which Christel had given him, he offered his right to each in turn, and then springing into the boat, seized one of the two oars. A couple of fishermen waded out and pushed the boat off; the oars were laid in the rowlocks, and the skiff danced over the waves to the cutter, on which the mainsail was already hoisted.

When I turned again, Christel had gone, and the fat aunt was just about following her. The poor thing no doubt wished to shed her long pent-up tears in quiet, and I thought that I should be doing her a kindness if I detained her father awhile upon the beach. But Herr Pinnow was in no

haste to leave, as it seemed. With his blue spectacles over his eyes, which I knew to be sharp as a hawk's, he gazed into the foaming waters, and exchanged with the Zanowitz sailors and fishermen such remarks as naturally fall from old sea-rats on the beach watching the departure of a vessel.

These were in truth faces by no means adapted to inspire confidence, these high-boned, lean, weather-beaten, sunburnt visages, with light-blue blinking eyes, of the men of Zanowitz; but I had to say to myself, as I stood by and observed them one by one, that the face of my old friend was the most unprepossessing of all. The wicked, cruel expression of his wide mouth, with thick close-shut lips, that even when he spoke scarcely moved, had never so struck me before; perhaps I saw him to-day with different eyes. For indeed, since yesterday evening, the suspicion which had repeatedly entered my mind, that old Pinnow was deeply implicated in Herr von Zehren's hazardous undertakings, had been aroused anew. In fact I had come to an almost positive conclusion that he would take an active part in the expedition on hand; and I had been much surprised to hear Klaus say that his father had ferried Christel and himself over. So, whatever his connection with Herr von Zehren might be, he was not with him this time, and that fact partially relieved my uneasiness.

The smith seemed not to have forgotten our quarrel on that evening. He steadily pretended not to see me, or turned his broad back upon me while he told the others what a quick passage he had made, and that he would not have ventured out in such weather, and with his weak eyes that grew weaker every day, had not Klaus been in such haste. And even though it should blow less hard this evening, he would rather not take back Christel with him; she could stay at his sister's, and in her place he would take some active young fellow from here on board to help him, for as for that stupid blockhead, Jacob, he could not be relied on.

The tobacco-chewing men of Zanowitz listened to him and assented, or said nothing, and did their part in thinking.

To remain on the beach with the wind driving the rain and spray into one's face, was by no means comfortable, so I turned away from the group and walked up the shore. I knew where Aunt Julchen's cottage stood, and I thought I would look in and say a few friendly words to Christel if I could. But as if he suspected my intention and was determined to thwart it, old Pinnow, with a pair of fellows of much the look of gallows-birds, came after me; so I gave up my design for the time and went through the town, and ascended the dunes, intending to cross the heath to Trantow.

I had just crossed the summit of the highest dune, which was called the white one from the peculiar brilliancy of its sand, and from which one commanded an extensive prospect up and down the shore, when I heard my name called. I turned and perceived a female figure crouching in a little hollow under the sharp ridge of the dune, upon the side that looked away from the village and the sea, and beckoning eagerly to me. To my no little surprise I recognized Christel, and at once hastened to her. When I came up, she drew me into the hollow, and intimated to me with gestures rather than words that I must sit still and keep the dog quiet.

"What is all this for, Christel?" I asked.

"There is no time to be lost," she answered, "and I must tell you in two minutes. At three o'clock this morning Herr von Zehren came to see 'him;' they thought I was asleep, but I was not, because I had been crying about grandmother, and I heard everything. This evening a Mecklenburg yacht laden with silk will arrive. Herr von Zehren has gone by extra-post to R. to tell the captain, who is waiting for him there, to set sail. He will return himself with him on the yacht. Then they planned how to get the goods off the yacht; and 'he' offered, as the coast was clear, to take them off himself with his boat. Always before, the goods have been concealed in Zanowitz, and he took off such as were intended for Uselin from Zehrendorf, later, as opportunity offered. When Herr von Zehren objected that it might attract notice if he had his boat out without any apparent reason, and in such bad weather, 'he' said that Klaus had been wanting to go see his aunt before he went away, so he would take him over, and carry me along too, that there might be no possibility of suspicion. Then they called in Jock Swart, who had been waiting in the forge, and told him to come over here at once and have ready for to-night twelve of the surest men from Zehrendorf and Zanowitz, to accompany him on board--as carriers you know. Jock went, and after about a quarter of an hour Herr von Zehren went too, and then after another quarter of an hour, Jock came back again. I wondered at this, for Herr von Zehren had told him expressly and several times over, not to lose a minute, but to set out at once; but 'he' must have given him a sign, or had some previous understanding with him. Then they put their heads together and talked so softly that I could not make out what they said, but it must have been something bad, for 'he' got up once or twice and came and listened at my door to see if I was awake. Then he went away, but Jock stayed. About an hour later, just as day was beginning to break, he came back with another man--the customs-inspector Blanck. He had not his uniform on, but I knew him at once, and would have known him anyhow by his voice. So now the three whispered together, and after a little while went away. About six 'he' came back alone, and knocked at my door, for I had been afraid to come out, and asked if I was not going to get up to-day? Klaus would soon be there, he said, and we were to come over here together, and I was to bring some things with me, as very likely he would leave me here with my aunt."

While Christel was telling me this, she looked cautiously from time to time over the ridge of

the dune to see if the coast was clear.

"I did not know what to do," she went on, "for I could not tell Klaus; he is like a child, and knows nothing about it all, and must not know; and I thank God he is away. I put it into his head to go and see you, for I thought very likely you would come down with him, as you did, and I wanted to tell you, if possible, to see if you could do anything. Herr von Zehren has always been so good to me, and the last time he was here said he would take care of Klaus and me, and that I need not be afraid of 'him,' for 'he' knew very well, and he had moreover told 'him,' that if he did me any harm he would shoot him dead. And since then 'he' has left me in peace; but he swears horribly at Herr von Zehren, and vows that he will be even with him, and now his plan is to bring him to the gallows."

She had begun to cry, but wiped away the tears with her hand, and went on:

"I can do nothing more. See if you can do anything; and do not be uneasy on my account, even if 'he' learns that it was my doing."

Her face suddenly flushed to a deep crimson; but the brave girl was determined to say all that she had to say, and she added:

"I have been talking with my aunt, and my aunt will keep me with her, and as she has a great number of friends here, he will not venture to give her any trouble. And now I must go back; run quickly down the dune; they cannot see you below there; and good-by!"

I pressed her hand and hurried down the high bare dune, which was surrounded by a number of other lesser ones confusedly heaped together and overgrown with beach-grass and broom, between which I was tolerably safe from observation. Still I kept on in a crouching attitude, and did not raise myself to an erect posture until I had gone a hundred paces or so over the heath, where concealment was no longer possible. When I looked back to the white dune, Christel was nowhere to be seen; she had evidently seized a favorable moment to slip back unobserved into the village.

CHAPTER XV.

Caro probably saw no reason, as I rather ran than walked along the narrow path leading over the heath to Trantowitz, to be more satisfied than before with his master's proceedings. I no longer spoke to him as I had been doing. I had no eye for the unfortunate hares which he routed out of their damp forms to relieve his extreme dullness of spirits, nor for the flocks of gulls that had been driven inland by the storm. I hurried on as if life and death depended upon my reaching Trantowitz five minutes earlier or later; and yet it was but too certain that Hans, when I had taken him into my confidence, would be as much at a loss as myself. But Hans von Trantow was a good fellow, and a devoted friend of Herr von Zehren, as I well knew. And then he loved Constance; for Constance's sake, even if he had no other reason, he must help me to save Constance's father, if any rescue was now possible.

And so I tore along. Under my steps jets of water sprang from the marshy soil into which I often sank to the ankles; the rain dashed into my face, and the gulls screamed as they wheeled above my head.

From Zanowitz to Trantow was a half-hour's journey, but it seemed to me an age before I reached the house, a bald and desolate-looking building even in the sunshine, and now doubly forlorn and cheerless in the rain. In front of the one-storied dwelling with its eight tall poplars, whose slender summits were wildly swaying in the storm, stood Granow's hunting-wagon and horses. That detestable fellow was there, then; but no matter for that; I must speak with Hans von Trantow alone, if I had first to pitch Herr von Granow out of the door.

Entering, I found the gentlemen at breakfast; a couple of empty bottles on the table showed that they had been sitting there some time already. Granow changed color at my entrance. It is probable that with my heated and agitated face, my clothes saturated with rain, and my hunting-boots covered with the sand of the dunes and the mud of the moor, I presented a rather startling appearance, and the little man had not, in reference to me, the clearest conscience in the world. Trantow, without rising at my entrance, reached a chair and drew it up to the table, then gave me his hand, and nodded his head towards the bottles and the dishes. His good-natured face was already very red, and his great blue eyes rather glassy; it was plain that the empty bottles were to be set chiefly to his account.

"You have certainly not been out shooting in this horrible weather?" asked Herr von Granow, with sudden friendliness, and politely placed bread, butter, and ham before me, which, in spite of all my anxiety, I attacked with energy, for I was nearly famished, and the hot air of the room had given me a sensation of faintness.

"We have been sitting here these two hours," he went on, "and were just deliberating how we should spend the day. I proposed cards, but Hans will not play; he says he means to give it up. Gambling is a vice, he says."

"So it is," muttered Hans.

"Only when he wins, you understand," said Granow, laughing at his own wit. "He considers it vicious to take from other people the money which they very likely need. He has no need of money himself; have you Hans?"

"Got no use for it," said Hans.

"There, you hear him yourself; he has got no use for it. He must marry, that's the thing for him; then he will find out a use for his money. We were just now talking about it."

Hans's red face took a somewhat deeper shade, and he cast a shy look at me. It struck me that I had myself been one of the subjects of their conversation.

"He will not find it so easy as you who have only to ask and have," I said.

"I do not understand you," said the little man, with evident embarrassment.

"I mean that this is what you told me yourself the day before yesterday," I answered. "You even mentioned names; but it can't be managed; it really can't, although Herr von Granow has considered the matter from every side."

I uttered the last words in an ironical tone, turning to Hans as I spoke. Hans, whose head was never particularly clear, could catch no glimpse of my meaning at all; but Herr von Granow understood me perfectly.

"A jest should not be taken more seriously than it is meant," he said, pouring himself out a glass of wine with a hand that visibly shook.

"Or better, one should not venture to jest upon certain subjects at all," I retorted, following his example.

"I am old enough not to need any admonitions from you," said the little man, with a pitiful attempt to assume an intimidating tone.

"And yet you have not yet learned to bridle your tongue," I replied, looking him steadily in the face.

"It seems you intend to insult me, young man," he cried, setting down hastily the glass of which he had only tasted.

"Shall I make that fact clear to you by throwing this glass in your face?"

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" cried Hans.

"Enough!" exclaimed the little man, pushing back his chair and rising; "I will bear these insults no longer. I will have satisfaction, if this gentleman is entitled to be dealt with in that way."

"My father is a respectable officer in the customs," I answered; "my grandfather was a minister, and so was my great-grandfather. Yours was a shepherd, was he not?"

"We shall meet again," cried the little man, rushing out of the room, banging the door after him. In another moment we heard his carriage rattling over the pavement of the court.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Now, what is the meaning of all this?" asked Hans, who had never moved from his chair during the whole scene.

I broke into loud laughter.

"It means," I replied, "that Herr von Granow is a blackguard who has had the audacity to defame a lady whom we both respect, in a manner which deserves far more serious treatment; but besides this, I wanted to get him away--I must speak to you. You must help me--you must help him----"

I did not know how to begin, and in my excitement I strode wildly up and down the room.

"Drink off half a bottle at once," said Hans, meditatively; "that is a specific for clearing the brain."

But without having recourse to this specific, I was presently calm enough to tell him what it was that so agitated me. I related to him everything from the beginning; my first suspicion of Herr von Zehren, which had been completely lulled until Granow's loquacity had aroused it again; then Herr von Zehren's half admission of the previous evening, and the circumstances of his departure--keeping silent, however, about the letter of the *steuerrath*, which was not my secret--and then my exploration in the cellar this morning, and finally Christel's disclosure. I wound up by saying: "Herr von Trantow, I do not know what you think of his conduct, but I know that you have a great regard for him, and that," I added, coloring, "you deeply respect Constance, Fräulein von Zehren. Help me if you can. I am resolved to risk everything rather than let him fall into the snare which clearly has been set for him."

Von Trantow's cigar had gone out while I was speaking, nor had he made the slightest attempt to re-kindle it--an evidence of the rapt attention with which he was listening to my statement. As soon as I paused, he stretched out his great hand to me over the table, and was about to say something, but perceived that both our glasses were empty, so replenished them instead, and leaning back in his chair, sank into the profoundest meditation.

"I do not think it probable," I proceeded, warmed by his speechless sympathy, "that they will capture him; for I am convinced that he will defend himself to the last extremity."

Hans nodded, to intimate that he had not a doubt of it.

"But to think of their bringing him to trial, of their throwing him into prison? Herr von Trantow, shall we suffer that, if we can prevent it? Only yesterday he told me how one of his ancestors, also named Malte, when a prisoner in Uselin, was rescued by the strong arm, and at the sword's point, by one of yours, named Hans like yourself, upon a message brought by a faithful squire. The whole story has come round again. I am the faithful squire, and you and I will cut him out as they did then."

"That we will!" cried Hans, smiting the table with his heavy fist so that the bottles and glasses rang. "If they shut him up, we will blow up the prison."

"We must never let it get to that point," I said, smiling involuntarily, despite my anxiety at Hans's blind zeal. "We must warn him beforehand; we must get to him before anything happens; we must frustrate the whole plan founded upon Pinnow's and Jock's villainous treachery. But how? How can it be done?"

"How can it be done?" echoed Hans, thoughtfully rubbing his head.

We--or rather I, for Hans contented himself with playing the attentive listener, and incessantly replenishing my glass, with the view, apparently, of assisting my invention--designed a hundred plans, of which each was less practicable than the previous one, until I hit upon the following scheme, which, like all the others, had the fullest and promptest adhesion of the good Hans.

If their plan was to seize Herr von Zehren *flagrante delicto*, as Christel's revelation indicated, it was most probable that, as was their usual plan of operations in similar cases, they had laid an ambush for him. This ambush could only be posted upon a road that he must of necessity take, or upon one to which he was purposely enticed. In the latter case we could form no conjectures of its disposition; but in the former we might assume with tolerable assurance that the ambush would be stationed in the neighborhood of the castle. In every event our aim must be to reach him as soon as possible. But to effect this but one plan was practicable; we must set out at once with Pinnow, and as he was not likely to take us voluntarily as passengers, we must be prepared to compel him to it. How this was precisely to be done, we could leave to chance; the all-important thing was that we should be in Zanowitz at the right time. Pinnow would certainly not sail before night-fall, as the smuggler-yacht would unquestionably come in under cover of the darkness, and then would approach as near the shore as possible. When we were once on board, it would be time to think about the rest.

We next took another point into consideration. That our scheme was not to be accomplished without force, both Hans and I were thoroughly aware. Nothing could be done with guns in the darkness, nor would cutlasses or hunting-knives be sufficient against Pinnow and his men, who all carried knives. We must trust to pistols.

Hans had a pair; but one pair was not sufficient. I remembered that there was another pair hanging in Herr von Zehren's chamber, and these we must get. I thought little of Constance's

prohibition from entering the house before her father's return; here were heavier interests at stake; this was a matter of life and death. Indeed it was a question if it would not be judicious to give Fräulein von Zehren a hint at least of the state of affairs; but we concluded not to do so, as she could not possibly help us, and would only be alarmed to no purpose. But we thought it prudent to take into our counsel old Christian, who could be relied upon in any case. We could arrange a pre-concerted signal with him, a light in one of the gable windows, or something of that sort, by which he could let us know at a distance, in case we got back unmolested to Zehrendorf, whether the coast was clear about the castle.

By the time we had got so far with our deliberations, it I was two o'clock, and we had until dusk at least three hours, which were to be got through with with as much patience as we could muster--a hard task for me, who was in a burning fever of impatience. Hans showed himself the most amiable of hosts. He brought out his best cigars and his best wine; he was more talkative than I had ever known him; the prospect of an adventure of so serious a character as that which we had in view, seemed to have had the good effect of arousing him out of his usual apathy. He recounted the simple story of his life: how he had early lost his parents, how he had been sent to a boarding-school at the provincial capital, where he was prepared for the gymnasium, in which he remained until his seventeenth year and rose to the fourth class. Then he became a farmer; took his estate in hand as soon as he was of age, and had been living upon it six years--he was now in his thirtieth--quietly and placidly, using his weapons only against the creatures of the forest and the field, raising his wheat, shearing his sheep, smoking his cigars, drinking his wine, and playing his cards. There was but one romantic feature in all his prosaic life, and that was his love for Constance. It was in the year that he came to live upon his estate, that she came back to her father; and to see Constance, to love her, and to love her still more devotedly long after he had been convinced of the hopelessness of his passion, to drown this hopeless passion in wine, so far as was in his power--this was the poor fellow's fate. He accepted it with perfect resignation, convinced that he was not the man to make his own fortune, any more than he had been able, when at school, to do his own exercises. Why and for whom should he plague himself with work? He had all that he wanted in the present, and there was no future for him to look forward to. He was the last of his race, and had not even a kinsman in the world. When he died, his estate, as a lapsed fief, reverted to the crown. The crown then might see what was to be done with the ruined barns and stables and with the dilapidated house. He let decay and weather work their will. He only needed a room, and in this room we were now sitting, while Hans went on with his recital in his monotonous way, and the rain beating against the low windows kept up a melancholy accompaniment.

A conversation in which there was a continual reference to Constance, even if her name was not actually mentioned, had a strangely painful charm for me. Although Hans did not breathe a syllable of complaint against the fair girl, it was plain from his story that she had at first encouraged his bashful attentions, and only altered her behavior to him after her meeting with Prince Prora at the watering-place two years before. And Hans was evidently not the only one who had received encouragement. Karl von Sylow, Fritz von Zarrentin--in a word, almost every one of the young noblemen who formed Herr von Zehren's circle of acquaintance, had earlier or later, with greater or less right, held himself to be the favored one. Even Granow, although from the first he was made the butt of his companions, might boast that he was favorably looked upon by the young lady during the earlier months of his residence; indeed Hans still considered Granow's chance by no means desperate, for the little man was very rich, and she would only marry a rich man, he added, with a deep sigh, as he filled his glass once more.

At Hans's last words I sprang from the table and threw open the window. I felt as if I must suffocate, or as if the low ceiling with its bent beams would fall in upon me.

"Is it still raining?" Hans asked.

"Not at this moment," I said. But one of those thick fogs of which several had passed over in the course of the day, was drifting in from the sea.

"Real smugglers' weather," said Hans. "The old man ought to be ashamed of himself to drag his friends out on such a day. But that cannot be helped. Shall we not drink another bottle? It will be cursedly cold to-night."

I said I thought we had already drunk more than enough, and that it was high time to start.

"Then I will get ready," said Hans, and went into his chamber, where I for a long time heard him rummaging among his water-boots.

I had always considered myself pretty cool in moments of danger; but in Hans I had met my master. While he was overhauling the things in his room, I heard him through the half-open door whistling to himself as cheerily as if we were going out to shoot hares, instead of an adventure of life and death. To be sure, I said to myself, his is a case of hopeless love, and Herr von Zehren is merely a friend, neighbor, and equal, whom he feels it his duty to assist against the hated police. That Hans, in combating for a cause that did not really concern him, was doing much more, or at least acting far more disinterestedly than I, did not occur to me.

And now he came out of his room, if not the wildest of all wild warriors, yet in appearance one who would be very appropriately selected for an adventure that demanded a strong and bold

man. His long legs were incased in immense boots; over a close-fitting jacket of silk he had put on a loose woollen overcoat, which he probably wore when hunting in winter, and which could be drawn close with a belt or allowed to hang loose, as at present, he having buckled the belt under it around the jacket, and thrust his pistols into the belt. With a jolly laugh he displayed his equipment and asked me if I would not have an overcoat also, as he had another; an offer which I gladly accepted.

"We look like two brothers," said Hans; and in fact we might easily have been mistaken for brothers, as we both had the same stature and breadth of shoulders, and were dressed almost precisely alike.

"If there are not too many of them," said Hans, "we can easily manage them."

"A half-dozen to each of us, or so," I said, and laughed; but I was very far from a mirthful feeling as we closed the door after us, and Caro, whom we had left behind, broke out into a dismal howling and whining. Poor Caro, he was in the right that morning when he reminded me with his woebegone looks that we should never praise the day until the evening.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was four o'clock when we set out, and already it was growing dusk as we took the foot-path through the stubble-field to Zehrendorf. No clear judgment of the weather was to be drawn from the appearance of the sky and clouds, as the whole atmosphere was filled with watery mist, through which every object took a singularly strange and unnatural appearance. We pushed on rapidly, sometimes side by side and sometimes in single file, for the path was narrow and very slippery from the incessant rains. We were just deliberating what we should say to Constance, in case we should unfortunately meet her, when we saw upon the road bordered with willows, which was but a few hundred paces distant from the foot-path, a carriage drawn by two horses coming from the castle in such haste that in less than half a minute it had vanished in the mist, and we could only hear the trampling of the galloping horses and the rattling of the carriage over the broken causeway. Hans and I looked at each other in astonishment.

"Who can that be?" he asked.

"It is the steuerrath," I answered.

"What can bring him here?" he asked again.

I did not answer. I could not tell Hans of the letter that proved the direct or indirect complicity of the steuerrath, nor explain how likely it was that he would attempt to warn his brother that the affair had taken a wrong turn. What information could he have brought? Might it still be of service to the unfortunate man whose movements were dogged by treachery?

"Let us hasten all we can," I cried, pressing on without waiting for Hans's answer, and Hans, who was a capital runner, followed closely upon my heels.

In a few minutes we had reached the gate which opened on this side into the court. At the gate was a stone-bench for the accommodation of persons waiting until the gate was opened, and upon this bench sat or rather lay old Christian, with blood trickling down his wrinkled face from a fresh wound in the forehead. As we came up he seemed to be recovering from a partial swoon, and stared at us with a confused look. We raised him up, and Hans caught some water in his hollow hand from a neighboring rain-spout and sprinkled it in his face. The wound was not deep, and seemed to have been inflicted with some blunt instrument.

"What has happened, Christian?" I had already asked half-a-dozen times, before the old man had recovered his senses sufficiently to answer feebly:

"What has happened? She is off; and he struck me over the head with the butt of his whip as I was trying to shut the gate."

I had heard enough. Like some furious animal I rushed to the house. The doors were all standing open: the front door, that of the dining-room, and that of Herr von Zehren's chamber. I ran in, as I heard hammering and rattling inside. Old Pahlen was kneeling before Herr von Zehren's *escritoire*, scolding furiously to herself while trying her best, with a hatchet and crowbar, to force the lock. She had not heard me enter. With one jerk I dragged her to her feet; and she started back and glared at me with looks flaming with impotent rage. Her gray hair hung in elf-locks from under her dirty cap, and in her right hand she still clutched the hatchet. The

horrible old woman, whose vile nature was now openly shown, was a hideous object to behold; but I was not in a frame of mind to be checked by any sight, however repulsive.

"Where has she gone?" I thundered at her. "You must know, for you helped her off."

"Ay, that I did," screamed the old hag, "that I did; and may Satan fetch my soul for doing it! The thankless, worthless creature promised to take me with her, and now leaves me here with shame and abuse in this robber's den; but she'll live yet to come to it herself when he flings her out into the street, the----"

"Another word, woman, and I strike you to the floor," I cried, raising my fist threateningly.

The old woman burst into a screech of laughter. "Now *he* begins!" she cried. "And didn't they make a fine fool of him, the stupid blockhead! Thought he was the man, to be sure, while the other one was with her every night. Lets himself be sent out of the way, for the other to come in his coach and carry off the pretty lady." And the old wretch burst again into a screech of horrible laughter.

"Be that as it may," I said, struggling to keep down the rage and anguish that were tearing my heart, "you have been rightly served, at all events; and if you do not want me to have you hounded off the place for a thief, as you are, you had better take yourself off at once."

"Oh, indeed!" screamed the hag, planting her arms a-kimbo, "he carries matters here with a high hand, to be sure! I a thief, indeed! I only want my money. I have had for this half-year no wages from the whole beggarly lot, the smuggling gang!"

She had received from me, during the two months of my stay at Zehrendorf, more than her whole year's service could amount to; and I had myself seen Herr von Zehren pay her wages but a few days before, and add a handsome present besides.

"Begone!" I said. "Leave the place this instant!"

The old woman caught up the hatchet, but she well knew that she could not intimidate me. So she retreated before me out of the room, and out of the house, screaming out all the time the vilest abuse and the most furious threats against Herr von Zehren, Constance, and myself. I closed the great gate after her with my own hands, and then looked for Hans, who was just coming out of the lodge, into which he had been taking old Christian.

Hans was deathly pale, and did not look at me as he came to my side. He had heard enough from old Christian to make it unnecessary for him to seek from me any further particulars of Constance's abduction; and he probably did not care to let me see how hard the blow had struck him, which hurled into the mire the image of his idolatry, and so cruelly destroyed his solitary illusion, the last glimmer of poetry in his cheerless life. I seized his hand and wrung it hard.

"What now?" I asked.

"Suppose I ride after him and knock out his brains," said Hans.

"Excellent!" I replied, with a forced laugh; "if he had carried her off by force; but as it seems she went with him quite willingly--come on; the thing is not worth thinking over a moment longer."

"You have not loved her for six years," said poor Hans.

"Then saddle Herr von Zehren's bay and ride after him," I said; "but we must come to a decision at once."

Hans stood irresolute. "By heavens, I should like to help you," he said.

"Ride after the rascal and punish him, if you want to," I cried, "I am perfectly satisfied. But whatever is to be done must be done at once."

"Then I will!" said Hans, and went with long strides to the stable, where he knew Herr von Zehren's horse stood, a powerful hunter, but now past his prime, and much neglected of late since Herr von Zehren had given up riding.

There was on the place a half-grown youth who did odd jobs, and was much cuffed about by the others. He came up now and said that Jock had been there an hour before and taken with him Karl, who was cutting straw in the barn-loft, and Hanne, who was sitting in the lodge, and so he was left to do Karl's work. Of what else befell, he in his dark loft had seen and heard nothing.

To entrust to this simple, scarcely more than half-witted youth the part which Christian should have taken in our plan would have been folly; but as he was an honest fellow, we could trust him to take care of the old man and keep guard over the house. I ordered him to go the rounds from time to time with the dog, whom I unchained, and under no pretext whatever to let in the old hag whom I had driven off the place, and from whom I expected mischief. Fritz promised to observe my orders faithfully. Then I hastily caught down Herr von Zehren's pistols, which were hanging, loaded, against the wall.

When I came out into the court again, I saw Hans just galloping out of the gate. A wild jealousy seized me. Why could I not be at his side? The composure, the indifference, which I had just exhibited--all was mere sham; I had but a single desire, to revenge myself on him and on her; but I must leave it to Hans; he had loved her for six years!

Thus I raged in spirit as I hastened at a rapid rate through the fields and meadows, and finally across the heath to Zanowitz. Strive as I might to fix my thoughts upon the immediate exigency, they perpetually reverted to what had just taken place. A weight as of a mountain lay upon my heart. I remember more than once I stood still and shrieked aloud to the gray, cloudy sky. When I reached the dunes, however, the necessity of devising some definite plan of operations brought me back to my senses.

The weather had somewhat cleared up in the meantime, and the wind had hauled; the rain had ceased, and the fog had lifted; there was more light than an hour before, although the sun had set by this time. Looking down from the height of the dunes upon Zanowitz I saw the dark sea, where the waves were still tumbling, though not so heavily as in the morning, cutting with a sharp horizontal line against the bright sky. I could still distinguish, though with difficulty, the larger vessel in the roadstead, but could clearly make out the row of boats drawn up to the beach, as well as a little yawl that came rowing towards a group of men assembled on the strand. If these were the last of Pinnow's party I had not a minute to spare.

It was also possible that this group of dark figures might be functionaries of the custom-house; but I was satisfied that the probability of this being the case, was but small. Zanowitz was crowded with smugglers, and Pinnow could hardly venture upon open treachery. Not that any attempt would have been made to resist by violence an expedition of the officials conducted by him; but from the moment in which he appeared in that capacity, he would be marked out for vengeance, and his life would not be worth an hour's purchase. However the treachery might have been concocted, the traitors had assuredly taken care to conceal their own share in it from all other eyes.

But I had no time for much consideration on these points; and indeed did not pause to reflect, but ran down the dunes. As I neared the group a man came out from it and advanced to meet me. He had turned up the wide collar of his pea-jacket, and pulled the brim of his sou'-wester as far as possible over his face, but I recognized him at once.

"Good evening, Pinnow," I said.

He made no reply.

"I am glad to have met you," I went on; "I heard this morning that it was possible you might sail for Uselin this evening, and I wanted to ask you to take me along with you."

He still gave no answer.

"You will have to take me, whether you like it or not," I proceeded. "I have made every preparation for the trip. Look here," and I threw back my overcoat and drew one of my pistols half out of my belt, "they are both loaded."

He still kept silent.

"Shall I try them on you to see if they are loaded or not?" I asked, drawing one from my belt and cocking it.

"Come on," said Pinnow.

I lowered the hammer of the pistol, replaced it in my belt, and then walked on Pinnow's right, keeping a little behind him. Presently I said:

"Do not expect to find any protection among the men down there. I will keep close to your side, and upon the first word you let fall, tending to raise them against me, you are a dead man. How many have you already on board?"

"Ten men," muttered Pinnow. "But I do not know what you want with me; go with us or stay behind as you please; what the devil do you suppose I care?"

"We shall see," I answered, drily.

We now joined the group, which consisted of my long friend Jock, the men Karl and Hanne, and the deaf and dumb Jacob who had rowed the yawl over.

"He is going with us," said Pinnow, laconically, to his men, as he lent a hand himself to push off the yawl.

I thought that I perceived a look of alarmed surprise pass over the brutal features of Jock at seeing us. He looked at his accomplice for an explanation of the mystery, but Pinnow was busy with the yawl. The two others were standing apart; they evidently did not know what to make of it all.

"There are only four wanted," said Pinnow.

"Very good," I said. "You, Karl and Hanne, go home and keep perfectly quiet, do you hear?"

"I can go home too," said Jock, surlily.

"One step from the spot," I cried, levelling the pistol at his head, "and you have stood on your long legs for the last time. Get on board!"

Jock Swart obeyed.

"You next, Pinnow!"

Pinnow obeyed. I followed.

We had about twenty minutes rowing before we reached the cutter, for the surf was heavy, and the cutter was anchored pretty far out on account of her deep draught. This frustrated a plan which occurred to me at the last moment, namely, to put the whole party on shore, and go out to the yacht with Pinnow and Jock alone. But I saw that in the rowing back and forwards that would be necessary, at least an hour would be lost, and it was all-important to have speech of Herr von Zehren as speedily as possible. What might not happen in an hour?

We reached the cutter that was dancing at her anchor upon the waves, like an impatient horse tugging at his halter. We pulled alongside, and I sprang on board among the dark figures.

"Good evening, men," I said. "I am going along with you. Some of you know me, and know that I am a good friend of Herr von Zehren; and besides, Pinnow and Jock Swart will answer for me."

The two that I named accepted the sponsorship by their silence; but I believe that it was unnecessary. I had often been with Herr von Zehren in Zanowitz--indeed we had been there but the day before--and had probably occasionally spoken with every one of the men. They all knew my intimate association with him, and could see nothing remarkable that I should take part in an expedition made for the account of one who was to a certain extent my patron as he was theirs. No one answered me--these people were not in the habit of wasting speech--but they willingly received me among them. My impression that Pinnow and Jock Swart were the only traitors, was confirmed. So in every sense he was now in my power. If I told the men what I knew, the two accomplices would probably have flown overboard; for the Zanowitz men were not to be trifled with in these matters.

I said as much to Pinnow as I took my place beside him at the helm.

"Do what you please," he muttered, putting a quid of tobacco into his wide mouth.

Although Christel's information was so positive, a doubt came over me as I marked the imperturbable calmness of the man who knew that his life was every moment at risk. Had Christel's hearing deceived her in her excitement? Had the good Hans and I unnecessarily mixed ourselves up with this lawless crew, who were plying, in darkness and mist, their perilous trade?

By this time the cutter, a capital sailer, was flying through the waves. The sky had grown much clearer; there was still light enough to see pretty plainly at two or three hundred yards distance. But it was bitter cold, and the surf that dashed, often in heavy masses, over the deck, by no means added to the comfort of the situation. The small craft was crowded with the fourteen men that were on board. Wherever one looked, there lay or crouched a dark figure. Pinnow sat at the helm. As I kept my post at his side, and had thus an opportunity to watch him closely, I grew more dubious with every minute whether there was not some mistake in the whole affair. There sat the broad-shouldered man, moving not a muscle of his face, except when from time to time he slowly turned his quid from one cheek into the other, or fixed his sharp eyes upon the sails, or turned them out to sea. When we tacked, a manœuvre which was performed almost every minute, and he called "Luff!" for us to stoop and let the boom pass over our heads, his voice rang always firm and clear. Was it possible that a traitor could have so sure a hand, so sharp an eye, and could chew his tobacco with such equanimity?

"How far do you think we shall have to go before we find the yacht?" I asked.

"We may come up with her at any moment," Pinnow growled; "and very likely we may see nothing at all of her."

"How so?"

"If they should have caught sight of one of the coastguard boats, they would stand out to sea again."

"How long will you look for her?"

"One hour; so it was arranged."

"Between you and Herr von Zehren, or between you and Inspector Blanck?"

Pinnow squirted his tobacco-juice overboard and growled:

"For the last time I tell you that I do not know what you want. The foolish wench Christel, I suppose, has made you believe that I am playing false; but she is more likely to have done it herself. I should be sorry if she gave up her old foster-father in order to get rid of him; but what will such a wench not do?"

These words, that the smith grumbled out in his surly way, made a strong impression upon me. Had I not but an hour before had proof what a girl would do to carry out her will? And Pinnow was only her foster-father. Could she have invented a plausible tale to set Herr von Zehren and myself against the old man? Could she have herself perpetrated the treachery that she ascribed to him, and have given the information to the officers, in order in this way to be rid of one whom she had good reason for wishing out of the way? And had her conscience smitten her at the last moment, when she reflected that his ruin would involve that of Herr von Zehren, to whom she owed a debt of gratitude? Was her story to me but an attempt to save him through my means?

I admit that a minute's calm reflection would have sufficed to convince me of the extreme improbability of this idea; but how could I calmly reflect in the situation and in the frame of mind in which I then was?

A wild merriment seized me, and I laughed aloud. Was it not a thing to laugh at, that of us two conspirators, Hans was galloping after the pretty pair over the wretched road through mist and drizzle, without the shadow of a reasonable ground for such a race; and was it not just as ridiculous, that I, who with such extravagant zeal and blindness, had been running from the morning until now, through storm and rain, tortured by countless anxieties, was a mere puppet, moved by a string whose end was held by two girls' hands, the one of which I, in my gratitude, had passionately kissed, and the other at least pressed cordially. Truly it would have been better if we had both stayed by our bottle in the warm room.

"Look there!" said Pinnow, touching my shoulder, while at the same moment he gave the word, "Luff!" in a peculiar, long-drawn, suppressed tone.

I perceived at but a few hundred yards distance a trimly-rigged schooner of moderate size, and I recognized at a glance one of the vessels of the coast-guard, named the *Lightning*. I had too often been on board her, and had sketched her too often under every possible arrangement of sails, to be deceived in her.

"That is the *Lightning*," I exclaimed.

At the same moment that the cutter went about, the *Lightning* also altered her course and bore down on us.

"Boat ahoy!" came through a speaking trumpet over the dash of the waves.

My heart seemed to stop beating; my hand lay on the butt of my pistol. If Pinnow laid the cutter to, his treachery was proven.

"Boat ahoy!" came over the water again.

"Haul aft the foresail!" ordered Pinnow.

I breathed again. Pinnow's order was equivalent to *sauve qui peut*.

"Boat ahoy!" came their hail for the third time, and almost in the same moment there was a flash on board the *Lightning*, and the report of a musket, deadened by the distance and the plashing of the waves, reached my ear.

"Shake out that reef in the jib!" ordered Pinnow.

I took my hand from the pistol. There was now no doubt that Pinnow was doing his utmost to escape the pursuing vessel. My heart leaped with joy; the man at my side, of whom I had once been so fond, though he had never deserved my affection, was at all events no traitor. What would I have done if I had known that this was all a carefully arranged plan, in carrying out which the cold-blooded old villain was not in the least disturbed by my clumsy interference; that this meeting with the schooner was preconcerted in order to lead the latter upon the right track? That the flight and pursuit were merely feigned, to conceal the treachery from the other smugglers, and that the three or four blank cartridges that were fired from the schooner had the same object? What would I have done if I had known all this? Well for me that I did not know it; at least no blood of a fellow-creature cleaves to my hand.

CHAPTER XVII.

The cutter now flew gallantly along under a press of canvass that laid her lee-bulwarks nearly under water, while the *Lightning* fell astern, and in brief time was lost to our sight.

A sort of life had come into the silent and almost motionless crew of the cutter. They raised their heads and exchanged remarks upon the incident, which to them was nothing so unusual. Every one of these men had at some time or other been brought into dangerous contact with the revenue service. The liberty, and possibly the life of every man there had at some time or other hung by a single thread. So no one exhibited any special excitement, but Smith Pinnow least of all. He sat at the helm just as before, casting keen glances at the sails and into the dusk, chewing his tobacco, and otherwise not moving a muscle. He did not say a word to me, as if it was not worth the while of an old sea dog to speak to so young a fellow about things which he did not understand. I felt a dryness in my throat that compelled me to cough once or twice, and I buttoned my overcoat closer over my pistols.

And now another vessel loomed through the dusk, and this time it was the long-looked-for yacht, a tolerably large craft, with but a single sail, but a full deck. In a few minutes we were alongside of her, and immediately the bales of goods, which were all in readiness, were lowered from the deck of the yacht, and taken on board by the crew of the cutter, who were now alert enough in their movements. The whole went on with extraordinary silence; hardly now and then could be heard a suppressed exclamation, or an order uttered half aloud in the gruff voice of the captain of the yacht.

I was one of the first to board the yacht, but I looked around in vain for Herr von Zehren. I was already congratulating myself that he was not on board, when he suddenly emerged from the hatchway that led to the cabin. His first glance fell upon me, and he came towards me with an unsteady gait, caused, as I supposed, by the motion of the vessel.

"And what in the devil's name has brought you here?" he cried with a hoarse voice; but I had no time to give him any explanation. The cutter had now all her lading on board, and the captain of the yacht coming up, said, "Now, be off with you!" He had just learned that a revenue schooner was about, and had no desire to risk his vessel and the rest of his cargo. "Be off!" he repeated, in a rough tone.

"To-morrow evening, then, at the same time," said Herr von Zehren.

"We'll see about it," said the captain, and sprang to the helm, for the yacht, which had already weighed her anchor, and whose mainsail was now half-mast high, began to come round to the wind.

A scene of confusion followed. The yacht's manœuvre had been performed without any consideration for the cutter alongside, and came very near sinking our little craft. There was a burst of oaths on both sides, a tremendous grinding and cracking, a perilous leap from the deck of the yacht to that of the cutter, and we pushed off, while the yacht, which had already caught the wind, went on her course with full sails.

All this had taken place so rapidly, and, besides, the bustle and confusion of such a number of men on so small a craft, as they set the sails and stowed the cargo in the fore-hold, were so great, that some time passed ere I could get to Herr von Zehren's side.

He was still swearing at the villain of a captain, the coward who was running from a miserable revenue-schooner that he could run down and sink in five minutes. Catching sight of me he asked again, "What has brought you here?"

I was somewhat embarrassed how to answer this question. My suspicion of Pinnow had entirely vanished, and Pinnow sat close beside us at the helm and heard the question put in a loud tone. I contented myself with saying:

"I was afraid some misfortune might happen to you, and wanted to be with you!"

"Misfortune!" he cried. "Stupidity, cowardice, that is the only misfortune! The devil take the stupid poltroons!"

He sat down by Pinnow and talked with him in an undertone. Then turning to me, he said:

"You sent two of the men home; you should not have interfered with them. I need their services; every back is now worth a thousand *thalers* to me. Or did you propose to carry a pack yourself?"

He said this in an irritated tone that roused my indignation. If I had acted injudiciously, I had done all for the best; and to be rebuked for my faithful service in the presence of Pinnow, it was too much. I had a sharp answer at my tongue's end, but I gulped down my anger and went forward.

He did not call me back; he did not come after me to say a friendly word as he had always before done, whenever in his hastiness he had wounded my feelings. Presently I heard him rating two of the men in a shrill voice, for what, I could not understand; but this shrill tone which I had never before heard from him, told me at once that what I had feared was the truth; he was intoxicated.

A horrible feeling of disgust and wretchedness came over me. For the sake of this man, who was gesticulating there like a maniac, I had done what I had; for his sake I was here among this abandoned crew as accomplice of a crime which from boyhood had always seemed to me one of the most detestable; for his sake I had well-nigh become a murderer. And even now I had in my pocket my father's letter, in which the old man had given me such a solemn warning, and commanded me, if I had any regard for his peace, to return to him immediately.

I felt for the letter, and my hand came in contact with the pistols in my belt. I felt a strange impulse, here upon the spot, in the midst of the smuggler-gang, and before the eyes of their drunken leader, to blow out my brains. At this moment I thought of the good Hans who was risking himself for a cause that was not a whit better. And yet he may thank heaven, I said to myself, that he is not on this expedition.

"Boat ahoy!" suddenly rang over the water as before, and the *Lightning* again loomed out of the dusk, and a couple of shots were fired.

This was the signal for a chase which lasted probably an hour, during which the cutter, while seeming to make every effort, by countless dexterous and daring evolutions, to escape her pursuer, drew ever nearer and nearer to that part of the coast which had been agreed upon between Pinnow and the officers, about half a mile above Zanowitz, where the depth of the water would allow her to run almost immediately upon the beach. From here one could proceed to Zehrendorf by a wagon-road which ran along the strand to Zanowitz, and from there over the heath; or one could go directly across the heath; but in the latter case there was a large and very dangerous morass to be crossed, which could only be done by secret paths known to the smugglers alone. It was ten to one that Herr von Zehren would choose the way over the moor instead of that along the coast, from the spot to which the cutter had apparently been driven.

While the chase lasted, I did not move from the spot in which I was, fully determined to take no active part in the affair, happen what might. Herr von Zehren made my passive part an easy one; often as he came near me, he never once took any notice of me. During this hour of excitement his intoxication seemed to have increased; his behavior was that of a raging madman. He shrieked to Pinnow to run the schooner down; he returned the fire of the officers with one of Pinnow's old guns, which he had found in the cabin, although the *Lightning* prudently kept at a distance which would have been too great for even a rifle of long range; and as the cutter, after a long tack out to sea, on which she distanced the schooner, stood in again and reached the shore unmolested, he leaped out into the shallow water, and his men had all to follow him, after each had been loaded with one of the heavy packs which were made up for this purpose. There were eleven carriers in all, as Pinnow offered the services of the boatmen he had brought from Zanowitz, saying that he could get along with the deaf and dumb Jacob alone; and thus the place of one of the two men whom I had sent home was filled. But there still remained a twelfth pack, which lay upon the deck, and would have been left, as there was no one to carry it, had I not managed to get it on my shoulders by laying it on the gunwale of the boat, and then springing into the surf, which reached to my knees. I was resolved that if I parted from Herr von Zehren that night, he should not be able to say that I had caused him the loss of a twelfth part of his property, won with so much toil and care, with the risk of the liberty, and lives of so many men, and at the price of his own honor.

A boisterous laugh resounded behind me as I left the cutter. It came from Pinnow; he knew what he was laughing about. The cutter, lightened of her lading, was now afloat, and as I gained the beach and turned, she was slowly standing out to sea. He had done his shameful work.

At this moment it flashed upon me, "He is a traitor, after all!" I do not know whether it was his laugh of malicious triumph that again aroused my suspicion, or what suggested the thought, but I said to myself, as I closed the file which was headed by Herr von Zehren and Jock Swart, "Now it will soon be decided."

CHAPTER XVIII.

We had passed the dunes, and were marching in single file across the sandy waste land on the other side. No word was spoken; each man had enough to do in carrying his heavy pack; I

perhaps the most of all, although none of the men, unless it might be Jock Swart, equalled me in strength; but in such things practice is everything. And then in addition to my pack, which probably weighed a hundred-weight, I bore another burden from which the others were free, and which pressed me far more heavily--the burden of shame that my father's son was bending under this bale of silk, of which the revenue was defrauded, because I would not cause a loss of property to the man whose bread I had been eating for two months. And then I thought with what happiness my heart beat high when I left Zehrendorf in the morning, and that I was now returning deceived by the daughter, insulted by the father, contaminated by the defilement of the base traffic to which I had lent myself, and that this was the end of my visionary splendors, of my adored liberty! But the end had not yet come.

Without a moment's rest we kept on, the wet sand crunching under our feet, when of a sudden a word was given at the head of the file and passed on in an under-tone from man to man until it came to me, who being the last could pass it no further--"Halt!"

We had reached the edge of the moor. It could be entered on this side only by a narrow strip which was passable; then came a stretch of dry land, a sort of island, surrounded by the morass on every side, which closed in again at its opposite extremity, perhaps two thousand paces distant, and there was again only a narrow path which a heavily laden man could pass without sinking into the morass. After this came the heath, which extended from the lands of Trantowitz and Zehrendorf on one side to the dunes of Zanowitz on the other, and which I had already crossed three times to-day.

The place where we halted was the same where I had stood with Granow three evenings before. I recognized it by two willows which grew on the edge of the hollow from which I had first seen the band of night-prowlers emerge. This hollow lay now a little to our left, at perhaps fifty paces distance; and I could not have distinguished the willows in the increased darkness, but for the extraordinary keenness of my sight. On account of this darkness the men had to close up in order not to deviate from the narrow path, and this was the reason that a momentary halt had been ordered.

But it was only for a moment, and again we struck into the moor upon the narrow causeway: to the right and left among the rushes gleamed a pale phosphorescent light from the stagnant water which lay around in great pools, and the ground on which we were treading oscillated in a singular manner, as we crossed it in a sort of trot.

The path had been safely passed, and the men were marching more slowly, when my ear caught a clicking sound like the cocking of a gun. The sound was behind me; that I had plainly heard; and I knew besides that none of our party was armed. I stopped to listen, and again I heard the same sound; and presently I distinguished upon the spot where we had just passed, a figure emerge between the tall rushes, followed immediately by a second and a third. Without thinking to throw the heavy pack from my shoulders, and indeed without being conscious of it, I ran to the head of the file and touched Herr von Zehren, who with Jock Swart was leading the march, upon the shoulder.

"We are pursued!"

"Nonsense!" said Herr von Zehren.

"Halt!" cried a powerful voice behind us.

"Forward!" commanded our leader.

"Halt! halt!" it was repeated, and half-a-dozen shots were fired in quick succession, the bullets whistling over our heads.

In an instant our whole party was scattered, as is the custom of contrabandists when they are hotly pressed, and, as in the present instance, they are not prepared, or not disposed to offer resistance. On all sides, except in the direction of our pursuers, I saw the men, who had at once cast off their packs, stealthily slipping away, some even creeping off on all-fours. In the next moment Herr von Zehren and I were alone.

Behind us we heard the ring of iron ramrods in the barrels. They were re-loading the muskets that had been fired. This gave a brief pause.

Herr von Zehren and I were standing together. "How many are there?" he asked in a whisper.

"I cannot make out," I answered, in a similar tone; "I think more are coming up. There can hardly be less than a dozen."

"They will not advance any further in the darkness," he said.

"They are coming now," I urged.

"Halt! Who goes there!" came again from the pursuing party, who were not more than a hundred paces off, as well as could be judged in the darkness, and again a bullet or two whistled above our heads.

"I entreat you!" I said, taking his arm to urge him forward.

He let me fairly drag him a few steps. Then suddenly he seemed to awake as from a dream, and with his old voice and old manner said to me:

"How the devil did you come by this? Off with it!" and he flung down violently the pack from my shoulders.

"I have carried it the whole way," I murmured.

"Shameful!" he muttered; "shameful! But it all comes from---- My poor boy! my poor boy!"

The effect of the spirits he had drunk, to deaden as far as possible his feelings of shame, had entirely passed away. He was again all that he could be at his best moments, and at once my old love for him returned. My heart began to throb with emotion. I was again ready to give my life for him.

"Let us make haste," I said, seizing his cold hand. "It is high time, by heaven!"

"They will not venture any further up here," he replied, "even if they have a guide. One man cannot guide them all. But there is treachery at work. Did you not say something of the sort to me?"

"Yes; and the traitors are Pinnow and Jock Swart."

"Jock was the very one that advised this route."

"Exactly."

"And the villain was the first one to make off."

"He was in haste to join his new friends."

We thus spoke in short detached sentences, while we hurried almost at a run over the open space, where the darkness, which was now intense, offered the only security--but an ample one, it is true--against pursuit. A light rain began to fall; we literally could hardly see our hands before our faces. Nothing was to be seen or heard of our pursuers.

"The blundering dolts came too late," said Herr von Zehren; "they clearly planned to catch us on the narrow path. If our rascals had not run off, we might now go on comfortably."

"We cannot go back to Zehrendorf," I said.

"Why not?"

"If Jock Swart has betrayed us, as I would take my oath he has, they will certainly search Zehrendorf."

"Let them try it once," cried the Wild Zehren; "I will send them home with broken heads. No, no; they will not venture that, or they would have tried it long ago. At Zehrendorf we are as safe as in Abraham's bosom."

Just as he said these words there was a sudden gleam of light in the distance ahead of us, like a faint flash of lightning. Before I could frame any conjecture as to its cause, it flashed out once more, this time more vividly, and not vanishing again. The light increased every moment, rising higher and higher against the black sky with a steadily widening glare.

"Trantowitz is on fire!" cried Herr von Zehren.

It was not Trantowitz; it could not be Trantowitz, that lay further to the left and much lower. At Trantowitz there were not the lofty trees whose summits I could now distinguish in the glow which burned now red and now yellow, but ever brighter and brighter.

"By heaven it is my own house!" said Herr von Zehren, He rushed forward for a few paces, and then stopping, burst into a loud laugh. It was a hideous mirth.

"This is a good joke," he said; "they are burning the old nest down. That is smoking the old fox out of his den with a vengeance."

He seemed to think that this also was the work of his pursuers. But I recalled the threats which old Pahlen had uttered when I drove her off the place. I remembered that among the rest she had said something about "the red cock crowing from the roof."

But however the fire had originated in which the old castle was now rapidly consuming, it could not have occurred at a more critical moment for the castle's master. Although we were fully a mile distant, the flames, which now towered above the gigantic trees of the park, cast their light to our very feet; and as the awful glare was caught up and reflected by the black clouds, now changing to a lurid crimson, a strange and fearful light spread over the whole region. I could clearly see Herr von Zehren's features: they were, or appeared to me of the paleness of death.

"For God's sake let us hasten to get away from here," I said to him.

"The hunt is about to begin," he said.

The hunt had begun already. The pursuing party, who had beset the narrow pass, and had probably no other orders than to cut us off there, were now, by the strangest accident, enabled to continue the pursuit, and they made the best use of the opportunity. Spreading out like skirmishers, without venturing too dangerously near to the morass on either side, they pressed rapidly on, rousing from their hiding-places the fugitives, some of whom were stealing across the open space to the narrow outlet, and others crouching to the earth or lurking in hollows, in hope that the pursuit would be given over. Here and there a flash pierced the dusky glow, and the report of a musket rang out; and everywhere I saw the figures of pursuers and pursued flitting through the uncertain light, and heard wild cries of "Halt!" "Stand!" and a loud halloo and laughter when one was caught.

The blood seemed frozen in my veins. To be hunted down, and shot down in this fashion, like hares at a battue!

"And no arms," muttered Herr von Zehren, through his clenched teeth.

"Here!" cried I, tearing the pistols from my belt and placing one in his hand.

"Loaded?"

"Yes!"

"Now then, *en avant!*"

At a rapid run we had nearly reached the outlet-pass, distinguishable to those who knew the localities by a dead oak and a clump of hazels, when I caught the gleam of musket-barrels above the bushes. It was as I had dreaded: the outlet was beset.

"I know another way," whispered Herr von Zehren. "Perhaps it will bear us, and if not----"

I did not let him finish--"On! on!" I cried.

We turned sharply to the right and entered the tall rushes that bordered the morass. But they had already caught sight of us; there was a cry of "Halt!" and shots were fired at us; and some came rapidly running towards us.

"It must be here," said Herr von Zehren, parting the high rushes and plunging into them. I followed closely behind him.

Slowly and cautiously, crouching almost to the earth, we crept forward. It was a desperate attempt. More than once I sank to the knees in the black morass. I had made up my mind, in case I stuck fast in it, to blow out my brains.

"We shall do it yet," said Herr von Zehren in a whisper to me over his shoulder. "We have passed the worst now. I know it well. I was here after snipe last spring, and the villain Jock was with me. So: now we are through."

He pushed through the rushes, and at the same moment three men, who had separated from the rest, and must have been lying for some minutes in ambush a few paces from the outlet, sprang upon us. The foremost man was long Jock Swart.

"Dog!" hissed Herr von Zehren through his clenched teeth. He raised his pistol, and long Jock fell to the ground a dead man.

At the same moment, I also fired, and one of the others reeled and fell with a loud cry. The third shot off his piece, and ran at full speed back to the morass. The wounded man then rose to his feet and limped off with considerable celerity, but with loud cries of pain.

Herr von Zehren, in the meantime, had stepped up to the fallen man. I sprang to his side, and seized the man, who was lying on his face, by the shoulders to raise him up. As I lifted him his head fell heavily forward. A cold shudder ran through me. "My God!" I exclaimed, "he is dead!"

"He would have it so," said Herr von Zehren.

The body of the dead man slipped from my hand. I arose, trembling in every limb; my brain began to swim. Here stood a man with a discharged pistol in his hand; there lay another like a log upon the ground, and a red glow, as if from the open gate of hell, fell upon them both; the smoke of powder filled the air, and the rushes of the morass gave a hissing sound as of a thousand serpents.

However deeply the fearful sight and the feeling of horror with which I gazed upon it, imprinted themselves upon my memory, I remained stupefied and aghast for but a single moment. Then all other feelings were lost in the one thought: He must be saved; he must never

fall into their hands! I believe I could have caught up the unhappy man in my arms and borne him off, had he resisted; but he offered no resistance. I now know that he was not flying to save his life; I now know that he would not have stirred one step from the spot, had he known that I had the leather pouch with ammunition for the pistols in my pocket; but he supposed that he was weaponless, and he was resolved not to be taken alive.

CHAPTER XIX.

At the edge of the morass, where we now were, there was a hollow, in which, among the deeper marshy spots overgrown with long reed-grass, there were higher patches, like islands, covered with thick clumps of alders, hazels, and willows. For any other, who did not know every foot of this wild region, it would have been impossible to find any way here; but the old huntsman, who was now the fox upon whose track the hounds were following hard, was not for a moment at fault either in the direction to be taken, or the pathless way that was to lead us through this wilderness. I have never been able to comprehend how a man of his age, hard pressed as he had already been, and wounded besides, as I presently learned, was able to overcome such difficulties as nearly vanquished my youthful strength. Whenever, since, I have seen an old thoroughbred, broken down under the saddle or in harness, who still, when his generous blood is roused, by his fire, his strength, and endurance, puts his younger rivals to shame, my mind reverts to the Wild Zehren in this night of terror. He burst through almost impenetrable thickets as though they were standing grain, he bounded over wide chasms like a stag, and did not check his rapid course until we came out of the hollow upon the dunes.

Here we took breath, and held a brief consultation which way we should next pursue. To our right lay Zanowitz, and could we reach it safely, certainly some friend or other would help us across the sea, or at the worst I was sailor enough to handle a sail-boat alone; but it was only too probable that the village and its vicinity were already beset with soldiers sent to capture any of the fugitives who might seek refuge there. To attempt to cross the heath between Zehrendorf and Trantowitz and reach the house of some one of Herr von Zehren's friends, would have been mere madness now that the whole sky was reddened with the still increasing conflagration, and the heath illuminated with a light that almost equalled that of day. But one chance was left us; to keep to the left along the strand as far as the promontory, there ascend the chalk-cliff in the vicinity of the ruined tower, and so reach the beech-wood of the park, which was but the continuation of the forest which bordered the coast for about eight miles.

"If I can only get so far," said he; "my arm begins to grow very painful."

Now for the first time I learned that he was wounded in the arm. He had not known it himself at first, and then supposed he had only struck it against some sharp projecting bough, until the increasing pain showed what was really the matter. I asked him to let me examine the wound; but he said we had no time for anything of that sort, and I had to content myself with binding up the arm as firmly as I could with his handkerchief, which indeed did but little good.

Here among the dunes I remembered for the first time that I had ammunition in my pocket, and by his direction I reloaded the pistols. A shudder came over me when he handed me his, and I touched the cold wet steel. But it was not blood, though in the red light it looked like it: it was but the moisture from the damp atmosphere still heavy with rain.

We emerged from the dunes upon the strand, in order to proceed more rapidly over the hard sand. The light was now, when apparently all the buildings were involved in the conflagration, so strong that a dull crimson glow, reflected from the reddened clouds, was thrown far out to sea. Even the lofty and steep chalk-cliffs under which we were presently passing, looked down upon us strangely in the strange light. There seemed something unearthly and awful in it; despite the considerable distance at which we were, notwithstanding that hills and woods lay between, notwithstanding that we were passing under the shelter of cliffs more than a hundred feet high, the light still reached us and smote us, as if what had been done, had been told by the earth to the heavens, and by the heavens to the sea; and earth, sky, and sea called out to us--For you there is no escape?

CHAPTER XX.

Some feeling of this kind must have been in the breast of the unhappy man at my side, for he said once or twice, as we clambered up the ravine, up which a steep path led between thick bushes from the strand to the top of the cliffs, "Thank God, it is dark here at least!"

During the ascent he had several times complained of his arm, the pain of which had now grown intolerable, and at last he was scarcely able to move forward, although I supported him as well as I could. I hoped that when we reached the top, and he had rested a little, the strength of which he had already given such extraordinary proof, would return; but no sooner had we gained the plateau than he sank fainting into my arms. True, he instantly recovered and declared that it was but a momentary weakness, and that the attack was over; but still he could hardly stand, and I was glad when I succeeded at last in getting him to the ruin, where an excavation, half filled with rubbish, between the walls, offered at least some protection from the east wind, which blew sharp and bitter cold over the ridge.

Here I begged him to sit down, while I descended the ravine, where about half-way from the top there was a tolerably abundant spring, at which we had made a short pause in our ascent, to get him some water, as he complained of a burning thirst. Fortunately, on account of the rain, I had put on in the morning the oil-skin hat which I had on at my arrival at Zehrendorf, but had not since worn, as Constance expressed such a dislike to it. This hat now served me for a bucket, and I was glad when I succeeded with some difficulty in filling it to the brim. I hurried back as fast as I was able without spilling the precious fluid, full of anxiety for the man to whom my heart drew me all the more powerfully, as calamity smote him with such terrible blows. What would become of him if he were not able soon to continue the flight? After what had happened at the edge of the morass, no exertion would be spared to take us; and that an amply sufficient force could be employed, was but too certain. The second pass had been beset by soldiers; that I had plainly seen. How long a time would elapse ere they came up here? If we were to escape, we must be at least six or eight miles from here before morning, and I thought with a shudder how he had twice fainted in my arms, and the wild words in which he had asked for water "that was not burning: it must not be burning." Perhaps he might revive after quenching his thirst. I had so firm a faith in the inexhaustibility of his strength.

Thus I tried to encourage myself as I hastened carefully to the ruin with the water in my hat, and from dread of stumbling scarcely cast a glance in the direction of the beech-wood, over which the flames were still glowing. While still at some distance, I thought I heard Herr von Zehren's voice calling my name, then resounded a shrill laugh, and as I rushed up in terror, I saw the unhappy man standing at the entrance to the excavation, his face turned to the fire, gesticulating wildly with his uninjured arm, and now pouring out execrations, now bursting into frenzied laughter, or calling for water "that was not burning." I drew him in deeper between the walls, and made him a kind of bed of the heath that grew thickly around, over which I spread my coat. Upon recovering from a brief swoon into which he again fell, he drank deeply of the water, and then thanked me in a voice the gentle tone of which singularly contrasted with his previous shrill vociferations, and deeply moved me.

"I fancied," he said, "that you too had abandoned me, and I must perish miserably here like a wounded stag. Is it not strange that the last Zehren who is worthy of the name, here, from the ancient fortress of his ancestors, now a pile of ruins, must watch the house that later generations built, consumed by the flames? How did it take fire? What do you suppose? I have many other questions to ask you, but I feel so strangely--such strange fancies pass through my head. I never felt thus before; and my arm too is very painful. I think it is all over with the Wild Zehren--all over, all over! Let me lie here, George, and die quietly. How long will it be before the fire eats its way through the subterranean passage, and the old Zehrenburg flies into the air?"

Thus reason and madness contended in his fevered brain. Now he spoke connectedly and intelligently of what was next to be done, as soon as he had recovered his strength a little, and then he suddenly saw Jock Swart lying before him on the ground, and again it was not Jock but Alfonso, the brother of his wife, whose heart his sword had pierced. And yet--and I have often reflected upon this, while pondering over the singular character of this man--these terrible memories recurring in his delirium were accompanied with no words that indicated the slightest remorse. On the contrary, they had been rightly dealt with, and so should it be with all that ventured to resist his will. If they had burned his house, all castles and villages for leagues around should be ravaged by the flames. He would see if he could not punish his vassals as he thought fit, if they dared to rise in revolt. He would chastise them until they howled for mercy. Such utterances of his haughty spirit, exalted to madness by the fever that was raging in his veins, contrasted frightfully with the utter wretchedness of our position. While in fancy he was charging through burning towns that his wrath had given to the flames, his frame was shivering with ague, and his teeth chattered audibly. The cold, which grew ever keener towards daybreak, seemed to pierce to my marrow; and as often as the unhappy man, whose head rested upon my lap, ceased for a while his ravings, my head sank forwards or sideways to the cold wall against which I was leaning; and with ever more painful exertions I strove against the weariness which oppressed me with leaden weight. What would become of us if my strength gave way? Indeed what would become of us as it was? We could not remain thus. I was afraid that he would die in

my arms if I could get no assistance. And yet how could I go for help without the risk of abandoning him to his pursuers? And how could I leave him now, when he was wanting to dash his head to pieces against the stones, and was craving to drink up the sea to assuage his consuming thirst?

During the night I had several times gone to the spring for water, and when I brought it he was always very grateful. Indeed, towards daybreak he grew much quieter, so that I indulged the hope that after all we should soon be able to get away. At last, overcome by exhaustion, I fell asleep, and must have slept some time, for the dawn was already glimmering when I was awakened by the touch of a hand on my shoulder. Herr von Zehren stood before me; I looked at him with horror. Now I saw what he had suffered in that fearful night. His healthy bronzed face was of a clayey pallor, his large brilliant eyes were dull and deeply sunk in their sockets, his beard dishevelled, his lips white, and his clothes torn and covered with dirt and blood. It was no longer the man that I had known, but more like a spectre.

A faint smile played about his pale lips, and there was a touch of the old vivacity in the tone of his voice, as he said: "I am sorry to have to awaken you, my poor boy, but it is high time."

I sprang to my feet and put on my coat, which he had carefully laid over my shoulders.

"That is, it is high time for you," he added.

"How so?" I asked, in alarm.

"I should not get far," he replied, with a sad smile; "I just now made a little trial; but it is impossible."

And he seated himself on a projecting piece of the wall, and leaned his head upon his hand.

"Then I also stay," I said.

"They will soon follow us up here."

"So much the more reason for my remaining."

He raised his head.

"You are a generous fool," he said, with a melancholy smile; "one of those that remain anvils all their life long. What advantage in the world could it be to me, that they caught you with me here? And why should you give up, and let yourself be caught? Are you brought down to nothing, and less than nothing? Are you an old wounded fox, burnt out of his den and with the hounds on his track? Go, and do not make me entreat you any more, for it hurts me to talk. Good-by!"

He reached me an ice-cold, trembling hand, which I pressed with tears in my eyes, and said:

"How can you ask it of me? I were the vilest wretch alive to leave you thus. Happen what may, I remain."

"It is my will that you leave me--I command you."

"You cannot--you must yourself feel that you cannot. You cannot command me to cover myself with disgrace."

"Well then," said he, "I will make a confession to you. It is true that it so happens that I cannot get away; but were I in condition to escape, I would not and will not do it. I will not have a hue and cry raised after me, and placards posted as if I were a vagabond or common criminal to be hunted through the land. I will await their coming here--here where my ancestors beat back so many an attack of the shopkeepers. I will defend myself to the last; they shall not take me from this place alive. I do not know what I might do, if I were altogether alone in the world. Probably this would then not have happened. I have paid dearly for the folly of trying to help my brother in his distress. And then I have a daughter; I do not love her, nor she me; but for this very reason she shall not be able to say that her father was a coward, who did not know when it was time to die."

"Do not think of your daughter!" I cried, losing all my self-control. "She has rent the single tie by which you were still bound to her." And briefly and in hurried words I told him of Constance's flight.

My intention was to tear away at all costs every pretext that he might allege for not doing what he considered unworthy a Zehren. It was most inconsiderate in me to make such a disclosure to him at such a moment; but my knowledge of human nature was then very slight, and my faculties were confused by the anguish of the last thirty-six hours, and my fear and distress for the unhappy man at my side.

And it seemed that my design had succeeded. He arose, as soon as I had finished my hurried recital, and calmly said:

"Is it then so with me? Am I a vagabond, and my daughter dishonored? My daughter a harlot,

who throws herself into the arms of the very man whose hand she cannot touch without dishonoring me? Then may I well do what others would do in my place. But before we set out, get me another draught of water, George. It will refresh me; and I must not fail soon again. Make haste!"

I caught up the hat, joyful that I had at last persuaded him. When I had gone a few paces he called me back again.

"Do not mind my giving you so much trouble, George. Take my thanks for all."

"How can you speak so?" I said. "Step back out of the cold wind; I shall be back in five minutes."

I started off at a run. There was no time to be lost; streak after streak of pale light was appearing in the east; in half an hour the sun would rise. I had hoped that by this time we would have been leagues away in the depth of the forest.

The spring in the ravine was soon reached, but it gave me some trouble to fill the hat. In the night I had trampled the earth around it, and stones had rolled in, which nearly blocked it up. While I was stooping over it and clearing away the obstructions, a dull report of fire-arms reached my ear. I started and felt involuntarily for the pistol which was still in my belt. The other I had left with him. Was it possible? Could it be? He had sent me away!

I could not wait for the water; I was irresistibly impelled to hasten back. Like a hunted stag I sprang up the side of the ravine, and bounded over the plateau to the ruin.

All was over.

Upon the very spot where I had parted from him, where I had last pressed his hand, he had shot himself. The smoke of the powder was still floating in the excavation. The pistol lay beside him; his head had fallen sideways against the wall. He breathed no more--he was quite dead. The Wild Zehren knew where a bullet must strike if the wound was to be mortal.

CHAPTER XXI.

I was still sitting, stupefied and incapable of reflection, by the dead man, when the first rays of the sun, which rose with tremulous lustre over the sea, fell upon his pallid face. A shudder ran through me. I arose and stood trembling in every limb. Then I ran, as fast as my tottering feet would bear me, along the path that descended from the ruin to the beech-wood. I could not now say what my real intention was. Did I simply wish to flee from this place of terror, from the presence of the corpse whose glazed eyes were fixed upon the rising sun? Did I wish to get assistance? Did I design to carry out alone the plan of escape I had formed for both, and thus save myself? I do not now know.

I reached the park and the tarn, the water of which looked blackly through the yellow leaves that yesterday's storm had swept from the trees. In this water had drowned herself the wife of the man who had borne her from her far-off home over her brother's corpse, and who was now lying dead in the ruins of the castle of his forefathers. Their daughter had thrown herself into the arms of a profligate, after deceiving her father, and playing a shameful game with me. This all came at once into my mind like a hideous picture seen in the black mirror of the tarn. As if some pitiless god had rent away the veil from the pandemonium which to my blinded eyes had seemed a paradise, I saw at a glance the two last months of my life, and what they really were. I felt a nameless horror, less, I think, of myself, than of a world where such things had been, where such things could be. If it be true that nearly every man at some time in his life is led or driven by malignant demons to the verge of madness, this moment had come for me. I felt an almost irresistible impulse to throw myself into the black water which legend represented to be of unfathomable depth. I do not know what I might have done, had I not at this moment heard the voices of men who were coming down the path that led from the park. The instinct of self-preservation, which is not easily extinguished in a youth of nineteen, suddenly awaked within me. I would not fall into the hands of those whom I had been since the previous evening making such prodigious exertions to escape. In a bound I sprang up the bank that surrounded the tarn, leapt down on the other side, and then lay still, buried in the thick bushes and fallen leaves, to let them pass before recommencing my flight. In a minute more they were at the spot I had left. They stopped here, where the path branched off towards the ruin, and deliberated. "This must be the way," said one. "Of course; there is no other, you fool," said another. "Forward!" cried a third voice, apparently belonging to the leader of the party, "or the lieutenant will get there from the

beach sooner than we. Forward!"

The patrol ascended the path towards the ruin, and I cautiously raised my head and saw them disappearing among the trees. When I thought them at a sufficient distance, I arose, and struck deeper into the wood. The impulse to self-destruction had passed; I had but one desire, to save myself; and the almost miraculous manner in which I had just avoided a peril from which there seemed no escape, filled me with new hope, as a losing player feels at the first lucky cast.

When we boys played "robbers and soldiers" in the fir-wood around my native town, I had always managed to be of the robber party, and they invariably chose me their captain. The duties of this office I had always so discharged that at last none were willing to take the part of soldiers. The boast that I had so often made in our merry sports, that no one could catch me unless I allowed myself to be caught, was now to be tested in deadly earnest. Unfortunately just now, when life and liberty were at stake, the most important thing of all was wanting, the fresh and inexhaustible strength that carried me through my boyish exploits, and which now by reason of the terrible mental emotions of the last twenty-four hours, and the excessive physical exertion I had undergone, was well-nigh broken down. To my other sufferings, I was tormented with gnawing hunger and burning thirst. Keeping always in the thickest of the forest, I came upon no spring nor pool of water. The loose soil had long since absorbed the rain of the previous day, and the slight moisture that I was able to suck from the dead leaves only increased my sufferings.

My intention had been to traverse the forest, which bordered the coast for about eight miles, in its whole length, in order to place as much distance as possible between me and my pursuers, before I made the attempt to leave the island at any point to which chance might conduct me. I had trusted that I should be able to accomplish this distance at the latest by noon; but I was compelled to admit to myself that in the condition in which I was, and which grew worse every minute, this was no longer to be thought of. I had also formed no just conception of the obstacles that impeded me. I had often before been in this forest, but only for short distances, and I had never been compelled to keep to a certain direction, and at the same time anxiously guard against every possibility of being seen. But now, unless I made long detours, I had to break through dense thickets scarcely penetrable even by the deer, or again take a circuit which took me far out of the way, to avoid some open space where there was no sufficient concealment. Then I had to bury myself in leaves and bushes while I listened to discover whether some sound that I heard really proceeded from human voices, and to wait thus until all was again silent. More than once I came upon forest-paths, where double caution was necessary; and with all I felt my strength constantly diminishing, and looked forward with terror to the moment when it should fail me altogether, and I should sink, probably to rise no more. And to lie here dead, with wide-open, glazed eyes, like what I had seen--by this time they had probably found him and carried him down, and then in some fashion or other they must bury him--but how long would I lie here in the depth of the forest before I was found, unless it were by the foxes?

But why did I fly, after all? What had I then done to deserve such extremity of punishment? What could they do to me worse than the torments I was now suffering? And what was this? Here was a path that in half an hour would bring me out of the forest. Possibly I might then at once come upon the soldiers. So much the better; then there would be an end of it.

And I really went some distance along the path, but suddenly I stopped again. My father! what would he say when he saw me led by soldiers through the town, and the street-boys shouting after me? No, no; I could never bring that upon him; better that the foxes should devour me than that!

I turned again into the forest, but ever more agonizing grew the strain upon my fast-failing powers. My knees tottered; the cold sweat ran from my face; more than once I had to stop and lean against a tree, because all became dark before my eyes, and I feared that I should faint. Thus I dragged myself for perhaps half an hour more--it was by my calculation about two in the afternoon--when my long agony found an end. In the edge of a small clearing which I had just reached, stood a little hut, lightly constructed of branches and mats of straw, looking almost like a dog-kennel, and which probably had been built by wood-cutters or poachers. I crawled in, buried myself in the straw and leaves with which the floor of the hut was deeply heaped, and which happily were tolerably dry, and fell at once into a sleep which was almost as heavy as death.

When I awaked it was quite dark, and it was some time ere I could recollect where I was and what had happened; but at last I recovered full consciousness of my desperate situation. I crept out of the hut with great difficulty, for my limbs felt as if they were broken, and the first steps I took gave me excruciating pain. This, however, presently passed off. My sleep had somewhat refreshed me; but my hunger, the cravings of which had aroused me, was now so torturing that I resolved to appease it at every hazard, especially as I felt that unless this was done, I must of necessity soon give way again. But how was this to be done? At last I hit upon a plan to which nothing but my desperation could have prompted me. I determined to keep to the left through the woods, until I reached the open country, which I calculated must happen in about an hour. I would then strike for the nearest farm-house, and there either by fair means or foul get something to appease my hunger, and perhaps also a supply for the next day.

Accident seemed to favor the execution of this plan. In a few minutes I came upon a sort of road, which I followed, although it did not run in the direction that I desired. But how great was

my astonishment and my alarm, as, in far less time than I had hoped, I emerged from the woods, and by the starlight distinguished a region of country which I could not by any possibility mistake. There on the right were the cottages belonging to Herr von Granow's estate, Melchow; further on, embosomed in stately trees, was the proprietor's house, and from a slight eminence rose the white steeple of the new village church. Further to the left, lower down in the valley, lay Trantowitz, and still further, but on higher ground, had Zehrendorf stood. Indeed, as if to leave me not an instant of doubt that I had got back to the old well-known district of country, there suddenly sprang from the immense pile of ruins where the castle had stood, a flame so high and so vivid that the steeple of Melchow church glowed with rosy light. But there must either have been little fuel left for the fire, or else in the day there had been ample provision made for its extinction, for the flames sank again immediately, the bright light vanished, and there only remained a feeble glow, as from the embers of a burnt brush-heap in a field.

So at the sacrifice of all my strength, I had wandered about the whole day in a circle, and now at night-fall found myself not far from the spot from which I had started in the morning. This was not very consolatory, but it was ridiculous; and I laughed--not very loud nor cheerfully, it is true, but still genuine laughter. And at the same moment the fancy seized me that perhaps my good genius had led me here against my wishes. Where would I be less likely to be looked for than exactly here? Where had I better friends than here at Trantowitz, for example, where everybody at the house and in the village knew me; where I could knock at any door and be sure to find help and relief. Besides, the circumstance that during the entire day I had met no human creature, to a certain extent assured me that the pursuit towards the last had not been so hot, and finally I was at the point of starvation, and had no choice left me, so I pushed on, almost carelessly, over the fields to Trantowitz, for the first time since we had separated, thinking seriously of the good Hans, and wondering what had become of him. Had he overtaken the fugitives? Had there been a scene, as in that night when the Wild Zehren was pursued and overtaken by the brother of his mistress, and their blades crossed in the uncertain light of the Spanish stars? Had blood flowed for the daughter, as well as for the mother? Had Hans fallen a victim in his bad cause, or had he been victorious? If so, what then? Were the officers of justice after him as they were after me? Had they caught him, perhaps red-handed? Was he now sitting behind bolts and bars?

I grew very sad at heart as this idea struck me. Hans behind bolts and bars was a melancholy picture--one could as well fancy a polar bear fireman on a steamer.

Without observing where I was going, I had approached the house nearer than was necessary to reach the village. From the field a path led across a dry ditch into a wilderness of about two acres extent, of potatoe, cabbage, and salad-beds, blackberry thickets, and stunted fruit-trees, which Hans, by a singular delusion, called his garden, and prized highly because he here in winter shot the most hares from his chamber-window. Towards this chamber, famous in all the country round, my eyes involuntarily turned, and to my great astonishment I perceived a faint glimmer of light in it. The window was open, and the light, as I discovered upon a nearer approach, came from the sitting-room, the door between the two not being closed. I listened, and heard the clatter of a knife and fork. Could Hans be at home again already? I could not resist the temptation, clambered through the window into the chamber, looked through the door, and there sat Hans, just as I had seen him the previous morning, behind a couple of bottles and an immense ham, from which he raised his blue eyes at my entrance and stared at me with a look of astonishment rather than alarm.

"Good evening, Herr von Trantow," I said.

I was about to say more, and explain how I had come, but involuntarily I clutched a just-opened bottle with shaking hand, and drained it before I set it down. Hans gave a nod of approval at my prompt recourse to his universal specific. Then he arose without a word, went out and closed the shutters of both windows, came in and bolted the door, took a seat opposite to me, lighted a cigar, and waited in silence until my ravenous hunger was appeased sufficiently to allow me to converse.

"Suppose in the meantime you tell me what happened to you," I said, without raising my eyes from my plate.

Hans had but little to tell, and told that little in the fewest possible words. He had galloped a couple of miles or so along the road to Fährdorf--the only one which the fugitives could possibly have taken--when he observed that his horse, who had so far exhibited no signs of fatigue, began to fail. After riding another mile at a more moderate pace, he was convinced of the impossibility of continuing the pursuit. "The road was very bad," Hans said; "I am a heavy rider, and the poor brute had probably had neither feed nor water for twenty-four hours." So he dismounted and led the horse at a walk the nearest way to Trantowitz, where he arrived safely at nightfall. "By the time I had saddled my Wodan and ridden to Fährdorf," he said, "they were far away. And then--it is always the way with me that I can never manage to do what other men would do in my place; and----" Here he drained his glass, refilled it, leaned back in his chair, and enveloped himself in a cloud of smoke.

The good Hans! he had meant all for the best--even his plan of smashing the skull of our happy rival. How could he help it if on this occasion, as so often before--always in his life indeed--he rode a slow horse? He could not founder the animal in a cause which really did not concern it in the least.

About eight o'clock, while he was sitting in his room, he saw the light of the fire, and saddled Wodan and hurried to it, followed by all his wagons. Men came over with wagons and fire-engines from the other estates; but it was not possible to save anything; old Pahlen, who no doubt had no difficulty in eluding the vigilance of the stupid stable-boy, had done the work too well--the flames burst from all parts of the building at once. "I rode home," he went on, "and went to bed, and waked up this morning. I don't know why, I had much rather never have awaked again."

Poor Hans!

This morning, for the first time, he had learned from his men what had happened; how the night before, the officers of the customs, with the assistance of half a company of soldiers, had hunted down the smugglers; and that they had caught four or five, who would all be hung. And a soldier had sunk in the morass, one of the custom-house men had been wounded, and Jock Swart shot dead. Herr von Zehren had been found dead this morning at the ruin. That it was a lucky thing for him not to have lived to learn that his daughter had run away, and that the old Pahlen, whom the stable-boy Fritz and Christian Halterman had caught in the act, had set fire to his castle and burned it to the ground. And they would have hanged him, just as they meant to hang George Hartwig, the son of customs-accountant Hartwig at Uselin, who had been the captain of the smugglers, as soon as they caught him.

Hans filled my glass again, and invited me by an expressive look to empty it at once, as if so I could best afford him the consolatory assurance that they had not hanged me so far.

Now it was my turn to relate. Hans listened, silently smoking; but when I described the death of the Wild Zehren, and how I had last seen him--dead, with his pale face turned to the rising sun, the first beams of which fell in his glazed eyes--he sighed deeply, rocked his great head from side to side, and drank deep draughts of wine.

"And now, what do you advise me to do?" I said, at last.

"What is your own idea?" asked Hans.

That my position was a most serious one, even Hans perceived. I had forced Pinnow, pistol in hand, to take me with him; I had taken the most direct and most active part in the expedition; I had fired upon the officers; I had accompanied Herr von Zehren in his desperate flight. In the eyes of the law these were far from being meritorious performances; and the less I came into contact with the law henceforth, the better it would be for me.

"And yet," I said, "would that this were my greatest trouble; but my father would never outlive the shame of having a son in the penitentiary; and therefore I am resolved to fly, though it were to the uttermost parts of the earth."

Hans nodded approbation.

"What if I went to America?"

So brilliant an idea as this, which at a blow removed all the perplexities of the situation, secured the instantaneous adhesion of Hans.

CHAPTER XXII.

But the most dazzling ideas are frequently found to have their dark side when it comes to putting them in execution. The financial question Hans thought he had settled when he went to his desk, which was not--and apparently could not be--locked, took out a box, and poured its contents between us on the table. There were from four to five hundred *thalers* in gold, silver, and treasury notes, mixed up with invitations to hunting-parties, receipted and unreceipted bills, dance-cards (apparently from an earlier time), samples of wool, percussion-caps, and a few dozen buckshot, which rolled upon the floor and awaked Caro, who had been asleep under the sofa, and now crept forth, yawning and stretching, as if he considered that buckshot belonged to his department.

Hans said that he had at the moment, so far as he knew, no more in the house; but if it was not sufficient, he would search his coats, in which he had from time to time found quite considerable sums between the cloth and the lining.

I was much affected by Hans's kindness; but even were I to avail myself of it, how was the

flight to be accomplished? Hans had heard--and it appeared only too probable--that search was being made for me everywhere. How could I, without being seized, make my way to Bremen or Hamburg or any other port from which I could get a passage to America--at least so long as the pursuit was still hot?

After much consideration, Hans hit upon the following plan, the inspiration to which sprang from his generous heart. I was for a while to remain concealed in his house, until the first heat of the pursuit was over. Then--always supposing that he was himself unmolested--we would undertake the journey together, I being disguised as his coachman or servant. The question now arose about the passport, without which, as I knew, no one was allowed to go on board the ship. Here also the inventive Hans found an expedient. A certain Herr Schulz, who had been his overseer, had intended to emigrate the previous spring, and procured the necessary papers, but had died before his project was accomplished. These papers Hans had kept, and after some searching we found them. It appeared from their contents that the emigrating overseer was not nineteen, but forty years old; not six feet without his shoes, which was my stature, but only four and a half; and moreover, he was distinguished by being very deeply pitted with the small-pox. Still, Hans was of opinion that they would not look into the matter so closely, and a hundred *thaler* note would reconcile all the little discrepancies.

It was two o'clock by the time we had matured this ingenious plan, and Hans's eyes were growing heavy with weariness. As he insisted that I should sleep in his bed, I was obliged to leave him the sofa in the sitting-room, on which he had scarcely stretched himself when he began to snore. I covered him with his cloak, and went into his chamber, where, tired as I was, I still took time to avail myself of the simple apparatus for ablution that I found there, to my great comfort. Then dressing myself again, I lay down on Hans's bed.

I slept soundly an hour or two, and as I awaked at the first gray glimmer of dawn, a resolution with which I had lain down, arose clear to my mind. I would go: the good Hans should not on my account be brought into any more serious troubles. The longer I remained with him, the greater was the probability that his complicity, which it was just possible might remain concealed as things were, would be discovered, and it would then appear in a so much more serious light. Besides, I had in truth but little faith in the availability of the pass of the deceased overseer of four feet and a half high; and finally, as a youth of no craven spirit, I was possessed with the conviction that it was my duty to take the consequences of my action, as far as possible, upon my own head alone.

So I softly arose from the bed, wrote a few words of gratitude to Hans for all his kindness, filled my game-bag with the remains of the supper, stuck the note in the neck of a wine-bottle on the table, in the assurance that Hans would not overlook it there, gave a parting nod to the brave fellow who still lay in the same position upon the sofa in which he had fallen asleep two hours before, patted Caro, who wished to accompany me, and signified to him that I could not take him, took my gun, and went out by the same window at which I had entered.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Food, drink, and sleep had completely restored my old strength, and I was now in a condition to play my part in the game of "robbers and soldiers" more successfully.

The following days--there were three or four of them--form a strange episode in the history of my life; so that it often seems to me that I cannot really have lived them, but must have read the whole in some story-book. Yes, after so many years--there are thirty of them now--the remembrance of those days comes before me like some story about the bad boy who lost himself in the woods, and to whom so many uncomfortable things happened there; and yet who drank so much sweet pure air, and bathed in so much golden sunshine, that one would give who knows how many stations in the monotonous turnpike of his orderly life, could he but once experience such romantic suffering and happiness.

As if heaven itself was disposed to be good to the bad boy who, whatever his errors, had erred but through youthful folly, and perhaps, all things considered, was not after all so utterly bad, it sent him two or three of the loveliest autumn days for his adventurous flight. The recent rains had cleared the air to a crystalline transparency, so that the remotest distance seemed brought near at hand. A flood of bright but indescribably soft sunlight streamed from the cloudless sky, and penetrated into the inmost recesses of the forest, where from the huge old trees the yellow leaves silently floated down to the others, with which the ground was already strewn. Not a sound was audible in the sunny wilderness except the melancholy chirp of a yellow-hammer in the thicket, or the hoarse cawing of a crow who regarded with disfavor the gun which I was

carrying, or the faint cry of cranes that, careless of what was going on below, were winging high in air their proud flight to southern lands.

Then again I lay in the heart of the forest upon some hillock, perhaps a "giant's barrow," as they were traditionally called, and watched sly Reynard steal out of his Castle Malepartus among the great stones, to bask in the morning sun, while a few paces farther off his half-grown cubs chased each other and rolled over and over in merry romp; or I marked in the evening light a herd of deer crossing a clearing, the stag in front with head proudly held aloft, and only lowered occasionally to pick a peculiarly tempting tuft of herbage, while the does came peacefully grazing after.

Again I stood on the heights, close to the verge of the steep chalk-cliff, and looked longingly out over the blue sea, where on the farthest horizon a little cloud marked the spot where the steamer which I had been watching for an hour had disappeared, while in the middle distance glittered the sails of a pair of fishing-boats. The speck of cloud vanished, the white sails dwindled away, and with a sigh I turned back into the forest, scarcely hoping now that I should succeed in getting off the island.

Twice already I had made the attempt. Once at a small fishing village that lay at the head of a narrow cove in a recess of the shore, and was the picture of isolation and loneliness. But the men were all out fishing; only a very old man and a couple of half-grown youths were at home with the women and children. If the catch was a good one, it might be two days before the men came back; and it was not likely then that any one would take me so far. So said the old man, when I asked; while a pair of red-haired children stood by staring at me with open mouths, and an old woman came up and confirmed the man's statement, while the sun sank below the horizon, and a cool breeze blew down the cove towards the darkened sea.

It was the second day of my wandering. The first night I had passed in a sheep-fold: I thought I might venture for once to sleep under a roof; and the good wife to whom I made the proposal willingly gave up to me the chamber of her son, who had sailed away three years before, and not been heard of since. I might, very likely, have spent days in this retired nook without being discovered; but the necessity of my getting off the island was too pressing, and early on the next morning I set out to try my fortune elsewhere.

My next trial was made in a large village. There were boats enough and men enough there, but no one would take me; not even though I offered ten dollars, half the money I had, for the short passage to the Mecklenburg coast, where I might consider myself tolerably safe. I do not know whether, as was possible, they knew who I was, or merely saw something suspicious in the wild-looking young man with a gun on his shoulder who asked a passage to another country; or whether, as I seemed in such extreme haste, and appeared to have money, they merely wished, by delay and apparent reluctance, to extort a higher fare. But after an hour had been spent in parleying, and Karl Bollmann said he was willing to take me, if Johann Peters would lend his boat; and Peters, for his part, was ready to go, but only in Bollmann's boat; and Christian Rickmann, who was standing by with his hands in his pockets, said he would take me with his boys, but not for less than thirty dollars; and all then held a whispering consultation together, during which the whole population, women and children included, gathered around--I thought it prudent not to await the result, but turned abruptly away, and strode off towards the dunes. A half-dozen followed me, but I showed them my gun, upon which they kept back.

The same day I had another proof that the pursuit for me was still kept up, which indeed I had never doubted. It was towards evening, when reconnoitring from the edge of the woods a piece of open country that I had to cross, I caught sight of two mounted patrols on the road, talking with a shepherd who had driven his flock upon the strip of heath between the road and the woods. I observed that they several times pointed to the forest, but the shepherd's answers seemed satisfactory, for they presently rode away in the opposite direction, and disappeared beyond some rising ground. When I thought them far enough, I came out of my concealment and joined the shepherd, who was knitting a long black stocking, and whose simple face gave a sufficient guaranty of the security of the step. He told me, in answer to my inquiries, that the patrol were on the track of a man who had committed a murder. He was a tall young man, they had said, and a desperate villain; but they would have him yet.

The lively imagination of the stocking-knitter had probably had sufficient time in the interval between the departure of the patrol and my appearance, to paint the portrait of the fugitive from justice in the most frightful colors. At all events he did not recognize me, but took me at once for what I gave myself out to be: a huntsman, who was stopping on a visit at one of the neighboring estates, and not knowing the country well, had lost his way. He gave me minute directions how to find my way, thanked me for the coin I put in his hand, and dropped his knitting in astonishment as he saw me, instead of following his directions, strike across the heath into the forest.

The vicinity of the patrol had startled me, in fact, and I had determined to pass this night in the woods. It was a bad night. Warm as it had been in the day, it grew cold at nightfall, and the cold steadily increased as the night advanced. In vain did I bury myself a foot deep in the dry leaves, or try by brisk walking backwards and forwards to gain a little warmth. The dense mist that arose from the earth soaked my clothes through, and chilled me to the marrow. The long hours of the autumn night crept on with dreadful slowness; it seemed as if it would never be day. And in addition to these physical and almost intolerable sufferings of cold, hunger, and fatigue,

the recollection of what I had recently gone through presented itself to me in ever more frightful pictures the longer the night lasted, and the more hotly the fever burned in my veins. While, half dead with fatigue, I staggered backwards and forwards in a clear space between the trees, I saw myself again on the moor at Herr von Zehren's side, with Jock Swart lying dead at our feet, while the flames of the burning castle wrapped us in an awful glare, so fearfully bright that it seemed the whole forest was burning around me, while yet my limbs shivered and my teeth chattered with cold. Then Herr von Zehren sat before me as I had last seen him sitting, with the rising sun shining in his glazed eyes; and then again it was not Herr von Zehren, but my father, or Professor Lederer, or some other, but all dead, with glassy eyes open to the sun. Then again I became conscious of my real situation, that it was dark night around me, that I was excessively cold, that I had sharp fever, and that despite the risk of discovery I must resolve to kindle a real fire instead of the frightful visionary one which I still saw in my feverish hallucination.

I had provided myself against this necessity with a large piece of touchwood which I had broken out of a hollow tree and placed in my game-bag. By its aid I succeeded after a while in kindling a pile of half-dry wood, and I cannot describe the delicious sensation that thrilled through me as at last a bright flame sprang up. The cheery light drove back the fever-phantoms into the darkness from which they had sprung; the luxurious warmth expelled from my veins the icy cold. I dragged together great quantities of fuel; I could not sufficiently luxuriate in the sight of the curling smoke, the leaping flames, and the glittering sparks. Then I seated myself at my forest-hearth, and resolved in my mind what I should do to escape a situation which I clearly saw I could not long endure. At last I hit upon a plan. I must make the trial to get away at some one of the points from which there was a regular communication with the main-land, and which I had, on good grounds, hitherto avoided; and the attempt must be made in disguise, as otherwise I should be recognized instantly. The difficulty was, how to obtain a suitable disguise; and here a happy thought struck me. I had noticed in the chamber in which I had slept the previous night, a complete sailor's dress hanging against the wall; very likely the kind old woman would sell it to me. If thus disguised I could get off the island, I was pretty confident that by a night-march I could reach the Mecklenburg frontier; and once there, I would let chance decide what was next to be done.

At early dawn I began to put this plan into execution; and although I had a walk of eight or ten miles to the lonely fishing village, I reached it just after sunrise. The good old dame would not hear of any sale; I needed the things, and that was enough; perhaps some one in some strange land might do as much for her son, if he was alive--and a tear rolled down her aged wrinkled cheeks. My clothes and my gun--for I had left my pistol at Hans's--she would keep for me; I should have them any time that I came for them. I do not know for what the kind old creature took me; but no doubt she thought that I was in distress; and she helped me thus because I said that this was the only way to help me. The worthy soul! Later in my life it was in my power in some measure to repay her kindness, if indeed a kind deed can ever be repaid.

So I set out at once upon my way, which took me, through many perils, directly across the island to a point where I determined to wait until evening before entering Fährdorf, which I could reach in an hour. Relying upon my sailor's dress, which fitted me perfectly, and, as I thought, completely disguised me, I had chosen the ferry which led most directly to Uselin. In this way, it was true, I should have to go through my native town; but it was probable that just there I should be least looked for; and at that time, I confess it, it took but a little to rouse in me the old daring spirit which had already played me so many an unlucky trick. With a grim satisfaction I imagined myself pacing at night through the silent streets, and even considered whether I should not write on the door of the *Rathhaus*^[4] the old saying of the Nurembergers, and sign my name to it.

At nightfall I entered Fährdorf. I had missed the boat; but the next one, which was the last, sailed in half an hour. As I had seen through the window of the tavern that the large tap-room was almost empty, and as I must of necessity strengthen myself for my night-journey, I entered it, took my seat at the farthest table with my face to the wall, and ordered some supper of the bar-maid.

The girl went to get it for me. On the table, beside the candle which she had lighted, lay a beer-stained copy of the Uselin Weekly News of the previous day--another cleaner copy is now lying beside the page on which I am writing. I took it up, and my first glance fell upon the following announcement:

NOTICE.

FREDERICK WILLIAM GEORGE HARTWIG, former pupil of and fugitive from the Gymnasium in Uselin, strongly suspected of smuggling, of violent resistance to officers of the Government, and of murder, has still, notwithstanding every exertion on the part of the authorities, evaded arrest. As it greatly concerns the public welfare that this apparently most dangerous person should be brought to justice, he is hereby summoned voluntarily to surrender himself; and all persons who may have any knowledge of the place of concealment of the aforesaid Hartwig, are called upon to give notice thereof without delay to the undersigned. We also urgently and respectfully request the various authorities, both here and abroad, to keep a strict watch for the aforesaid Hartwig, (description at foot), to arrest him promptly, should he be discovered, and forward him to us at our expense, under the assurance of the readiest reciprocity on our part in a similar case.

District of * * *

Uselin, November 2, 1833.

I will not copy the description that followed. The reader could learn from it nothing except that at that time I rejoiced in dark-blond, curly hair ("sorrel-top" the boys used to call me when they wanted to tease me), stood six feet without my shoes, and, as a well-finished specimen of humanity, had no special marks, or at least none in the eyes of Herr Justizrath Heckepfennig.

But in truth, at this moment so critical for me, I scarcely noticed the description of my person; the Notice occupied all my thoughts. When, the evening before, the shepherd said that the man whom the patrol were after was charged with murder, I did not believe it for a moment. He was such a simple-looking fellow, that I thought the patrol had been telling him a frightful story to scare him, or to enhance their own importance. But here it stood in large clear letters in the *Weekly News*, which, as but few other papers had ever fallen into my hands, was always to my uncritical youthful mind invested with a certain magisterial authority--I might almost say, bore the stamp of infallibility. "Suspected of murder!" Was it possible? Was I then looked upon as the murderer of Jock Swart? I, who had thanked God when I saw the man at whom I had fired, limping briskly off? I, whose only consolation in these last days of suffering, was that at the worst no man's death weighed upon my conscience? And here it was proclaimed to all the world that I was a murderer!

The bar-maid brought the refreshment I had ordered, and I think advised me to waste no time, as the ferry-boat would soon start. I scarcely heard what she said, but left my supper untouched, and sat staring at the paper, which I had hastily turned over as the girl entered, as if my printed name might betray me. But on the other side it again appeared in a paragraph headed *City Items*. The paragraph ran thus:

"Yesterday evening, in some unaccountable way, a rumor got afloat that George Hartwig, whose name is now in everybody's mouth, had taken refuge in the house of his father, Customs-Accountant Hartwig, and was there in hiding. An immense crowd, of probably more than a hundred persons, assembled in consequence in the Water street, and tumultuously demanded that the young criminal should be given up to them. In vain did the unhappy father, standing on his threshold, protest that his son was not in his house, and that he was not the man to obstruct the course of justice. Even the vigorous exertions of those dauntless public servants, officers Luz and Bolljahn, were ineffectual; only the eloquent appeals of our respected mayor, who had hurried to the spot at the first news of the disturbance, succeeded at last in dispersing the excited crowd. We cannot refrain from earnestly warning our fellow-citizens of the folly and lawlessness of such proceedings, although we willingly admit that the affair in question, which unhappily seems to assume even more serious proportions, is of a nature to strongly excite the minds of all. But we appeal to the men of intelligence--that is to say, to the great majority of our fellow-citizens--and ask them if we cannot repose the fullest confidence in the authorities? Should we not be convinced that the public welfare is in better keeping in their hands than in those of a thoughtless, ungoverned mob? And in reference to the occurrence of yesterday, we earnestly appeal to the good feeling of all well-meaning persons. Let them remember that the father of the unhappy George Hartwig is one of our most respectable citizens. He would, as he declared, and as we for our part firmly believe, be the last to obstruct the course of justice. Fellow-citizens, let us respect this assurance; let us respect the man who gave it. Let us be just, fellow-citizens, but not cruel. And before all, let us take care that the reputation of good-order and of a law-abiding spirit which our good old town has so long enjoyed, be not lost through our fault."

The well-known signal summoning the passengers on board, now sounded from the wharf, and at the same moment the girl came in again and told me I must make haste.

"But you have not eaten a bit!" she exclaimed, and stared at me with surprise and alarm. I suppose that I looked very pale and agitated. I muttered some reply, laid a *thaler* on the table, and hurried from the house.

Notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, the boat was crowded with passengers. On the forward-deck were standing two saddled horses, which could only belong to the mounted patrol; and I soon discovered their riders, who were the same that I had seen talking to the shepherd, as I gathered from their conversation with a couple of peasants. They were complaining bitterly of being recalled, for they were sure, they said, that they would have caught the villain, who must be somewhere hidden on the island, though six more besides themselves, two on horseback and four on foot, had searched it through in every direction. Now the others would gain the reward, while they were sent for to keep order in the town, which was no affair of theirs; there were Bolljahn and Luz to attend to that duty.

I sat quite near them, and could hear every word they said; and I thought what delight it would give the brave fellows if I were suddenly to stand up and say, "here's the villain." But I

could not afford them that pleasure; what I had resolved to do, must be done voluntarily. So I kept quiet, and it never occurred to the wise servants of the law that the young sailor who was listening to them with such apparent interest was the man they were looking for.

The wind was fair, and the passage quick; in half an hour the boat reached her wharf. The horses pawed, the patrolmen swore, the passengers crowded out of the boat, and went up the wharf with their luggage. At the upper end of the wharf, just by the gate, stood fat Peter Hinrich, the landlord of the sailor's tavern, and asked me if I would not lodge in his house. I said I had a lodging engaged elsewhere.

So I passed through the ruinous old port-gate, which was never shut, and entered the Water street. When I arrived at the small house, I paused for a moment. All in the house was dark and silent, and it was dark and silent in the street; but only two days before there had been commotion enough here, and there upon the threshold my father had stood and said that he was not the man to obstruct the course of justice. He should not incur the suspicion of having concealed his son in his house; he should see that his son had still some regard for his father's good name, and that he had the courage to face the consequences of what he had done.

The exhortations of the *Weekly News* had not been in vain. The little town seemed as if life had departed; the energetic Luz and Bolljahn, with the best will in the world, could have found no field for their activity. My steps resounded along the empty alleys, which struck me as being singularly narrow and crooked. Here and there was light in the windows; but folks went early to bed in Uselin, and the authorities could therefore extinguish the street lamps at a very early hour, especially when, as now, the new moon over St. Nicholas's church looked sadly down through driving clouds upon the empty market-place.

I stood in the market-place before the house of Herr Justizrath Heckepfennig. It was one of the stateliest mansions in the town. How often had I passed it when I came out of school at mid-day, and cast a glance of respectful longing at the left-hand corner-window in the second story where Emilie used to sit behind a vase of gold-fish, and always happened, just as I passed by--a little dim window-mirror gave her faithful notice--to have her attention attracted by something in the market. Now I again looked up at the window, but with very different feelings. There was a light in the room, which was the usual sitting-room of the family. The justizrath used to smoke his evening pipe there. I had a presentiment that the visit that he would presently receive would cause it to go out.

The good people of Uselin did not usually fasten their street-doors until they went to bed; but whether it was that the recent disturbances so energetically and successfully contended with by the officers Luz and Bolljahn had rendered greater precautions advisable; or whether the justizrath, in his double capacity of wealthy man and officer of the law, insisted upon a stricter rule in this matter--in any case his door was fastened, and it was some time before my repeated ringing was answered by a female voice that called through the keyhole in rather a quavering tone to know who was there. My reply, "one who wishes urgently to speak with the Herr Justizrath," did not seem by any means entirely to satisfy the portress, who could be none other than the pretty housemaid Jette. A whispering followed, from which I inferred that Jette had brought the cook with her; then a giggling, and finally the answer that she would tell her master.

I was patrolling up and down before the house in my impatience, when a window opened in the sitting-room above, and the Herr Justizrath in person, putting out his head a very little way indeed, repeated the question of the housemaid, and received the same answer.

"What is your business?" asked the cautious man.

"I come from the island," I replied at a venture.

"Aha!" cried he, and closed the window.

For some days the justizrath had done nothing but give audience to people who professed to be able to throw some light upon the great mystery. A sailor or fisherman just from the island, and who urgently desired to speak with him at ten o'clock at night, could come with but one object: to make some important communication which might bring some illumination into the obscurity of this mysterious affair. I for my part believed that the justizrath had recognized me by my voice, and that his exclamation meant: "So! here you are at last!" I was soon to learn how greatly I was mistaken.

The door was opened, and I hastily entered. Scarcely had the light of the candle which Jette was holding up in her hand, fallen upon my face, when she gave a loud scream, dropped candlestick and all, and ran off as hard as she could, while the cook followed her example, at least so far as screaming and running went. The cook, who was an elderly female, ought to have had more sense; but still she only knew me by sight, and for a long time had heard nothing but horrors about me, so I cannot blame her. But the conduct of the pretty Jette admitted of no defence. I had always been very friendly to her, partly on her mistress's account, and partly on her own; and she had always freely acknowledged it, coquettishly smiling whenever I met her, saluting me with her deepest curtsy whenever I entered the house, and now--but I had now something else to think of than the ingratitude of a housemaid. I passed through the dark hall, ascended the stair I knew so well, and knocked at the door of the justizrath's study, which

adjoined the sitting-room, and to which he had doubtless betaken himself to receive his late visitor.

"Come in!" said the justizrath, and I entered.

There he stood, just as I expected to find him, a tall, broad-shouldered figure, wrapped in his loose flowered dressing-gown, his long pipe in his hand, his low, narrow forehead wrinkled into deep folds as he fixed his little stupid eyes with a look of curiosity upon me at my entrance.

"Well, my friend, and what do you bring?" he asked.

"Myself," I answered, in a low but resolute voice, stepping up nearer to him.

My presentiment that he would let his pipe go out was fulfilled by his simply letting it drop upon the floor; and without saying a word he caught up the skirts of his flowered dressing-gown in both hands, and fled into the family-room.

There I stood by the broken pipe, and trampled out the glowing ashes which had fallen upon the little carpet by the writing-table. While engaged in this certainly not criminal occupation, I was startled by a cry for the watch from the adjacent window that opened on the market-place. It was the voice of the justizrath, but it had a very hoarse and lamentable sound, as if some one had him by the throat. I stepped to the door of the sitting-room and knocked.

"Herr Justizrath!"

No answer.

"Frau Justizrath!"

All silent.

"Fräulein Emilie!"

A pause, and then a frightened little voice that I had so often heard laughing, and with which I had sung so many a duet in parties by land and water, piped feebly out:

"What do you want?"

"Tell your father, Fräulein Emilie, that if he does not at once stop calling the watch, and does not immediately come into his study, I shall go away and not come back."

I said this in a tone in which resolution and politeness were so blended, that I was sure it could hardly fail of its effect. I could hear a whispered discussion within. The women seemed to be adjuring the husband and father not to adventure his precious life in so manifest a peril, while the husband and father sought to calm their terrors by heroic phrases, such as, "But it is my duty," or, "It might cost me my place!"

At last, assisted by these weighty considerations, duty triumphed. The door slowly opened, and by the side of the flowered dressing-gown I caught a glimpse of the cap of the Frau Justizrath, and of the curl-papers of Fräulein Emilie, whose golden ringlets I had always supposed a beautiful work of nature. But so many great illusions of mine had been dissipated in the last few days, that this small one might well go with the rest.

Hesitatingly the justizrath closed the door behind him, hesitatingly he came a few paces nearer, stopped and tried to fix me firmly with his eye, in which, after some difficulty, he almost succeeded.

"Young man," he began, "you are alone?"

"As you see, Herr Justizrath."

"And without weapons?"

"Without weapons."

"Without any weapon?"

"Without any weapon."

I unbuttoned my sailor jacket to convince my questioner of the truth of my statement. The justizrath evidently breathed more freely.

"And you have come----?"

"To surrender myself to justice."

"Why did you not tell me so at once?"

"I do not think you gave me time."

The justizrath cast a confused glance at his broken pipe on the floor, cleared his throat, and seemed not to know exactly what was to be done in such an extraordinary case. There was a pause of silence.

The ladies must have inferred from this pause that I was engaged in cutting the throat of the husband and father; at least at this moment the door was flung open, and the Frau Justizrath, in night-gown and night-cap, came rushing in and fell upon the neck of her spouse in the flowered dressing-gown, whom she embraced with every mark of mortal fear, while Emilie, who had followed close behind her, turned to me, and with a tragic gesture of supplication, raised both her hands as high as her curl-papers.

"Heckepfennig, he will murder you!" sobbed the nightgown.

"Spare, oh spare my aged father!" moaned the curl-papers.

And now the door leading into the passage opened. Jette and the cook were curious to see what was going on, though at the peril of perishing in the general massacre, and appeared upon the threshold wailing aloud. This mark of courageous devotion so touched the night-gown that it burst into a flood of hysterical tears, and the curl-papers tottered to the sofa with the apparent intention of swooning upon it.

Here the justizrath showed, for the second time, how great emergencies bring out the strength of great characters. With gentle firmness he freed the flowered dressing-gown from the embrace of the night-gown, and said in a voice that announced his resolve to do and dare the worst: "Jette, bring me my coat!"

This was the signal for a scene of indescribable confusion, out of which, in about five minutes, the victim of his devotion to duty emerged victorious with coat, hat, and stick: a sublime sight, only the effect was a little damaged by the hero's feet being still covered with embroidered slippers, a fact of which he was not aware until it was too late, when we were standing on the pavement of the market-place.

"Never mind, Herr Justizrath," I said, as he was about to turn back. "You would not get away again, and we have but a few steps to go."

In fact the little old *Rathhaus* was at the other side of the by no means wide square, and the pavement was perfectly dry, so that the victim of fidelity had not even to fear a cold in the head.

"Herr Justizrath," I said, as we crossed the market-place, "you will tell my father, will you not, that I gave myself up voluntarily, and without any compulsion; and I will never mention to any one a word about the broken pipe."

I have spoken many foolish and inconsiderate words in my life, but few that were more foolish and more inconsiderate than this. Just as I was touching the point which I might say was the only thing in the whole affair to which I attached importance, namely, to show my pride to the father who had disowned me, I failed to perceive that I gave mortal offence to a man who would never forgive, and had never forgiven me. Who can tell what other turn the affair might have taken, if, instead of my unpardonable stupidity, I had intoned a pæan to the heroic man who knew how to guard himself from a possible and indeed probable attack, and then did his duty, happen what might. But how could I know that, young fool that I was?

So we reached the open hall of the *Rathhaus*, where in the day time an old cake-woman used to sit in a chair sawed out of a barrel, before a table where plum-buns and candies lay upon a cloth not always clean, that was constantly fluttering in the wind that blew through the hall. The table was now bare, and presented a very forlorn appearance, as if old Mother Möller, and not only she, but all the cakes, plum-buns, and candies of the world, had departed forever.

A desolate feeling came over me; for the first and only time this night, the thought occurred to me that perhaps after all I had better make my escape. Who was to prevent me? Assuredly not the slippered hero at my side; and as little the old night-watchman Rüterbusch, who was shuffling up and down the hall, in front of his sentry-box, in the dim light of a lantern that swung from the vaulted roof. But I thought of my father, and wondered if his conscience would not smite him when he heard the next morning that I was in prison; and so I stood quietly by and heard the night-watchman Rüterbusch explaining to Justizrath Heckepfennig that the matter would be very hard to manage, since the last few days so many arrests had been made, that the guard-house was completely full.

The guard-house was a forbidding-looking appendage to the *Rathhaus*, and fronted on an extremely narrow alley in which footsteps always made a peculiar echo. No townsman who could avoid it ever went through this echoing alley; for that gloomy appendage to the *Rathhaus* had no door, but a row of small square windows secured with iron bars and half-closed with wooden screens, and behind them here and there might be seen a pale, woe-begone face.

A quarter of an hour after the conversation between Herr Justizrath Heckepfennig and night-watchman Rüterbusch had come to a satisfactory conclusion, I was sitting behind one of these grated windows.

PART SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

This little alley by the *Rathhaus*, in which footsteps gave such a singular echo, had never, even within the recollection of the most ancient crow on the neighboring steeple of St. Nicholas's church, enjoyed such a reputation for uncanniness as in the last two months of this year, and the first two of the next. It was also observed that in no previous winter had the snow lain so deep in it, and it grew dark much earlier in the evening than had ever before been known. And Mother Möller, the old cake-woman in the *Rathhaus* hall, who always hitherto, in the winter season, packed up her wares at the stroke of five, now did it regularly at half-past four, because, as she affirmed, just as it grew dark there was "what you might call a kind of corpsy smell about," and her old table-cloth flapped about in a way no natural table-cloth would do. On the other hand Father Rüterbusch, the night-watchman, asseverated that for his part he had not observed either in the hall or the alley anything out of the common, not even between twelve and one o'clock, which was the fashionable hour with ghosts, let alone at other times. Yet people were more disposed to accept the views of the old cake-woman than those of the still older night-watchman; as the first, though she took a nap now and then, still on the whole was more awake than asleep; while in regard to the other, the regular customers of the *Rathhaus* cellar, who had to pass his post at night, maintained precisely the contrary. By these assertions they deeply wounded the good heart of Father Rüterbusch, but did not confute him. "For, d'ye see," he would argue, "you must know that a sworn night-watchman never goes to sleep, on any account; but it may happen that he pretends to be asleep, in order not to mortify certain gentlemen who would be ashamed if they knew the old man had his eye on their doings. And mark you, I am willing to be qualified to what I say, upon my oath of office; and none of them can say that. And even if many of them, for instance Rathscarpenter Karl Bobbin, come and go the same way every evening, that is to say every night, for nigh on to twenty years now, a habit is not an office, mark you; and I for my part have never heard, for example, that the customers of the cellar ever took any oath or were qualified in any manner, shape, or form; and yet it was only last Easter I celebrated my jubilee, for it was then fifty years I had held this place, and I went to school with Karl Bobbin's father, who was never of any account, for that matter."

However, be that as it might, during the winter of '33-'34, there was but one opinion of the matter in Uselin; and that was, that if there *was* anything queer about the Rathhaus alley, nobody need wonder at it, as things were.

Things were certainly bad enough, and worse for no one than for me, who, as was admitted on all hands, was by far the chief figure in the great smuggling case; for into such proportions, thanks to the inquisitorial genius of the justizrath who had charge of the investigation, a thing which to my eyes was of extreme simplicity had now been developed.

As if it was of the least importance how the case looked in *my* eyes! As if anybody gave himself the trouble to inquire what *my* thoughts or wishes were! But no; I will do Justizrath Heckepfennig and co-referent Justizrath Bostelmann no injustice. They gave themselves the very greatest trouble; but they had no desire to find out where the truth lay, and where I told them it might be found.

"Why had I left my father?" they asked.

"Because he ordered me out of his house!"

"A fine reason, truly! Angry fathers often tell their sons to be gone, without the idea ever seizing the sons to start off into the wide world. There must be something more behind. Perhaps you wanted to be sent off?"

"To a certain extent I admit it."

"Perhaps you admit it unqualifiedly?"

"I admit it unqualifiedly."

"Very good. Actuary, please to take down the reply of the prisoner, who admits without qualification that he wished to be sent off by his father. And when and where did you first make the acquaintance of Herr von Zehren?"

"On that evening at Smith Pinnow's."

"Had you never seen him before?"

"Never, to my knowledge."

"Not even at Smith Pinnow's? Pinnow declares that Herr von Zehren was so often at his house, and you also so often, that it is incredible that you never met before."

"Pinnow lies, and knows that he lies!"

"You still persist then that your meeting with Herr von Zehren was entirely accidental?"

"Entirely."

"How much money had you about you when you left your father?"

"Twenty-five *silbergroschen*, as well as I can remember."

"And had you any prospect of obtaining anywhere a permanent position?"

"None."

"You had no such prospect, had but twenty-five *silbergroschen* in your possession, were anxious that your father should send you off, and yet you persist in asserting that your meeting on that same evening with the man who took you at once into his house, and with whom you stayed until the final catastrophe, was purely accidental! You are sharp enough to see how extremely improbable this is; and I now ask you for the last time, if, at the risk of casting the strongest suspicions on your veracity, you still persist in that statement?"

"I do."

Justizrath Heckepfennig cast a look at Actuary Unterwasser as much as to say: Can you conceive such impudence? Actuary Unterwasser smiled compassionately, and sadly shook his head, and scratched away with his pen over his paper, as if his shocked moral sense found some relief in getting such inconceivable things at all events down in black and white.

Thus it went on with I do not know how many interrogations and examinations; summary examination, examination in chief, articular examination. Often I could not tell what they were aiming at, and what was the object of all the long-winded interrogatories, and short cross-questions, in which last Justizrath Heckepfennig considered himself particularly great. I complained bitterly of this to my counsel, Assessor Perleberg, saying that I had told--or, as they preferred to express it, confessed--everything to the gentlemen.

"My dear sir," said the assessor, "in the first place it is not true that you have confessed everything. For instance, you have refused to say who was the person whom caller Semlow saw, about four o'clock on the evening in question, with you on the path leading to Zehrendorf. And in the second place, what is confession? In criminal jurisprudence it has but a very subordinate value. How many criminals cannot be brought to confess at all? and how many confessions are false, or are afterwards recanted? The real object of the examination is the detection of guilt. Consider, my dear sir, your entire so-called confession might be a fabrication. It has often happened before, the criminal record--"

It was enough to drive a man desperate. Years after, my counsel became a great beacon and luminary of jurisprudence; and indeed he was such at that time, though he was not then a professor, a privy-councillor, and a man of wide reputation, but an obscure assessor of the superior court, a very learned man, and of wonderful acuteness--a world too learned and too acute for a poor devil like me. With his "in the first place," and "in the second place," he would have prejudiced a jury of angels against innocence herself, to say nothing of a college of learned judges who could not avoid the conclusion that a man whose defence required so extraordinary an expenditure of learning and acumen, must of necessity be a very great criminal. I can still see him sitting on the end of the table in my cell, which was fastened with iron clamps to the wall, jerking his long, thin legs, and flourishing his long, thin arms, like a great spider who finds a broken mesh in his web. It was probably a hard task for so learned a spider, into whose web a clumsy blue-bottle had blundered and was floundering about in his awkward way, to extricate him with scientific nicety. And now for the first time I began to find out how far-spreading this web was, and how many flies, besides myself, were entangled in its meshes.

There were very careless flies that under the masks of respectable citizens and honest tradesmen of my native place and the neighboring towns, had for years carried on an extensive business in smuggled goods, and defrauded the revenue of thousands upon thousands. This sort of flies was very dirty and disgusting. For as soon as one had caught its foot in the web, and found itself entangled, it turned traitor to its companions, and did not rest until all were fast in the web.

Then there was another and honester species, though it was far from wearing so honest an appearance. These were my old friends, the weather-beaten, tobacco-chewing, silent men of Zanowitz and the other fishing villages on the coast. They had by no means had so good a time of it as the gentlemen in the counting-houses and behind the counters. They had had to fight with wind and storm, to keep watch and ward, to suffer hunger and cold, and carry their lives in their hand, and all for small gain, many of them for only just enough to keep wife and children from starving; and yet, though four of them had been taken prisoners in that terrible night on the moor, the examiners could draw nothing from them. No one betrayed his comrade; no one knew who had been the man at his side. "The night was dark, and in the dark all cats are gray; every man had enough to do to look to himself. If Pinnow has said that this man and that man was there, why he can probably make oath to it." In vain did the justizrath ask the most ingenious questions, in vain did he wheedle and threaten--they had to let go a dozen or two that were very strongly suspected, and console themselves with the reflection that at all events they had four who had been taken in the act.

Yes, it was a very peculiar sort of flies who had thus been caught with the others in the web of law; a tough, rough sort, very inconvenient for the guardians of the flesh-pots of an orderly government, but still honest after their fashion, and not the sneaking crew that the others were.

These two species of flies had for a long time played into each other's hands, but without any proper system, and consequently at great disadvantage, until, about four years before, the business had taken a sudden and enormous expansion. For some one, who hitherto, like all the proprietors along the coast, had obtained his wine, his brandy, his salt, his tobacco, from the smugglers in small quantities, had hit upon the idea that what was needed was an intermediary between the supply and the demand; a middleman who should provide a sort of warehouse or magazine for the smuggling trade, and thus afford the furnishers an opportunity of getting rid of larger quantities at once, and the purchasers the means of procuring their supplies as they needed them, and at convenient times.

This plan, founded on the soundest commercial principles, begotten of necessity, and joyfully welcomed by the naturally adventurous spirit of the man, he carried out with the audacity, the judgment, and the energy, which so highly distinguished him. The solitary position of his estate upon the long promontory, with the open sea on one side and a narrow strait on the other, was as if it had been made for the very purpose. If before the dealings were in boat-loads, now whole ships' cargoes were received at once, or in a couple of nights, and stored in the cellars of his castle, from which they were gradually delivered to the purchasers, the neighboring proprietors, and the tradespeople in the small towns of the island and the little seaports of the mainland.

This part of the business was chiefly undertaken by Smith Pinnow. Smith Pinnow had been long known to be a smuggler, had been frequently overhauled by the officers of justice, and more than once punished, when of a sudden he found that he was going blind, had to wear great blue spectacles, and could only in very fine weather, with the help of his deaf and dumb apprentice Jacob, take some of the bathing-guests at Uselin out in his cutter for an hour or two's sail. This affliction befel the worthy man just at the time that the great smuggler-captain on the island, whose attention had been drawn to so highly qualified an assistant, one night paid a visit to the forge, and took him, so to speak, into his service. From that time forth the two acted in concert; and by the time the four years had passed, the smith had amassed so much money that he would never have thought of betraying his chief, had not jealousy got the upper hand of the old sinner. "If you do not leave the girl in peace, I will shoot you down like a dog," the Wild Zehren had said; and Smith Pinnow was not the man to quietly put up with such a threat, especially when he knew in what deadly earnest it was uttered.

From that time a rumor, of which no one knew the source, spread abroad in the city, but especially in the offices of the customs, that the Wild Zehren at Zehrendorf was the soul of the whole smuggling trade, which was carried on with such activity for leagues up and down the coast. At first no one gave credit to the rumor. To be sure the Wild Zehren was a man whose name was used as a bugbear to frighten children with in Uselin; and no doubt things were known or believed of him which people hardly ventured to whisper--he had stabbed his brother-in-law, he had horribly maltreated his wife and afterwards drowned her in the tarn in the woods, and more of the same sort--but these were things that were to be expected of the Wild Zehren, while smuggling--no, it was not possible! A man of the most ancient nobility, and whose brother moreover was the highest officer of the Revenue Department in the province!

This was the general opinion. But now and then there would be a voice heard, but very softly indeed, remarking that however different the brothers might be in disposition, mode of life, and even in person, they resembled each other at least in this, that both were deeply in debt; and similar causes might very well produce similar effects. If the Wild Zehren's undertakings had been accompanied with such extraordinary good fortune during these years, the reason probably was that the custom-officers had no clue to his movements, while he, for his part, was perfectly

well informed when and where there was no risk of meeting any of them.

The matter might still have been long quietly argued *pro* and *con*, had not an unlucky chance happened to give effect to Smith Pinnow's treachery. In the same night when Pinnow and Jock Swart, who could have turned traitor to his master from no other cause than sheer black-heartedness, lodged their information with Customs-revisor Braun, the provincial customs-director arrived in Uselin. The revisor, who belonged to the party that distrusted their chief, did not go to the latter, as he would certainly have contrived to render the denunciation harmless; but went straight to the director, who at once laid his plans with great skill and forethought, to strike a strong blow at the smugglers, in which he succeeded but too well.

Was the *steuerrath* guilty? There was no direct proof of the fact, if it was a fact. The *steuerrath* had always declared that for a long time he had broken off all personal intercourse with his brother, whose conduct--though in truth he was greatly reformed of late--was of a nature to compromise a faithful public officer. And in truth, the Wild Zehren had in the last year never been seen with his brother, nor even in the city. If, notwithstanding, there had been any personal intercourse between them, their meetings must have been kept extremely secret. Any letters he might have received from his brother, the *steuerrath* would of course have destroyed; and if the Wild Zehren was less cautious, he was now dead, his castle burned to the ground--who or what was there to bear witness against the *steuerrath*?

I was the only one who could have done it. I remembered well the expressions which Herr von Zehren had always used in speaking of his brother; I knew that this last expedition had been made chiefly on that brother's account. I had held in my hands the proof of his guilt, and--destroyed it.

It seemed as if something of the sort was suspected. Suddenly the name of the *steuerrath* made its appearance in the examinations to which I was subjected, and I was closely questioned as to what I knew of the relations between Herr von Zehren and his brother. I firmly denied all knowledge of anything of the kind.

"My dear sir," said Assessor Perleberg, "why do you wish to screen the man? In the first place, he does not deserve to be spared, for he is a bad subject, take him as you will; and in the second place, you thus do yourself irreparable injury. I will tell you beforehand, you will not get off with less than five years, for in the first place----"

"For God's sake let me alone!" I said.

"You grow less reasonable every day," said Assessor Perleberg.

And he was quite right; but it would have been a marvel had it been otherwise.

I had been confined now for nearly half a year in a cell but half lighted by a small grated window, and which I could traverse with four steps lengthways and with three across. This was a hard trial for a young man like me, but harder, much harder, were the mental sufferings that I endured. The confidence in humankind which had hitherto filled my heart, was all now gone. That no one visited me in my prison, I could lay to the account of Justizrath Heckepfennig, who felt it to be his duty to see that so dangerous a man held no communication with the outer world; but that men to whom I had done nothing, or at the worst had perhaps at some time or other, in my clumsy way, ruffled their pride a little, should set their hearts upon trampling a fallen man still deeper into the dust--this I could not forgive; this it was that filled my soul with bitterness unspeakable. Ten witnesses were called to prove my previous good character; and of these ten there was but one, and that one the man whom of all others I had most deeply wounded--Professor Lederer--who ventured to say some words in my behalf, and to put up a timid plea for lenity. All the rest--old friends of my father, neighbors, fathers whose sons had been my friends and companions--all could hardly find words to express what a miscreant I had been all my life long. And good heaven! what had I done to them? Perhaps I had filled the pipe of one with sawdust; I had caught a pair of pigeons that belonged to another; the son of a third I had sent home with a bloody nose--and this was all.

I could not comprehend it, but so much of it as I did understand, filled me with inexpressible bitterness, which once even broke out into indignant tears when I learned through my counsel that Arthur--the Arthur whom I had so dearly loved--when interrogated as to his association with me, declared that for years I had talked to him about turning smuggler, and had even attempted to persuade him to join me; that I had always been on the most intimate terms with Smith Pinnow, and that if he were asked if he believed me capable of the crime laid to my charge, he must answer unequivocally Yes.

"That ruins you," said Assessor Perleberg. "You will not get off under seven years; for in the first place----"

I brushed away the tears that were streaming down my cheeks, burst into a wild laugh, and then fell into a paroxysm of frantic rage, which finally gave place to a stony apathy. I still felt a kind of interest in the sparrows that I had taught to come every morning and share my ration of bread; but all other things were indifferent to me. I learned, without feeling any special interest in the news, that Constance was already deserted by her princely lover, who had yielded to the

entreaties and threats of his father; that Hans von Trantow had disappeared and no one knew what had become of him, but the general opinion was that he had met with some accident in the forest or on the moor; that old Christian had never recovered from the effects of his young mistress's flight, his master's death, and the burning of the castle, and had been found one morning lying dead among the ruins which he could never be prevailed on to leave; and that old Pahlen had escaped from the jail at B. in which she had been confined. I heard all this with indifference, and with similar apathy I received my sentence.

Assessor Perleberg, with his "first place" and "second place," had been perfectly right. I was condemned to seven years' imprisonment in the prison at S.

"You may think yourself lucky," said Assessor Perleberg. "I would have condemned you to ten years and to hard labor; for in the first place----"

It was no doubt a mark of youthful levity that I had no ears for the very learned and instructive exposition of my counsel, and that too when it was my last opportunity. But I was really thinking of something quite different. I was thinking what the Wild Zehren would have done had he been alive and learned that they had shut up his faithful squire in prison and placed his own brother as jailor over him.

CHAPTER II.

It was an evening of May, as the wagon in which I was conveyed, escorted by two mounted gendarmes, drew near the place of my destination. On the left of the road, which was lined with stunted fruit-trees, I saw numbers of laborers working on the new turnpike which was to connect my native town with the provincial metropolis; on the right, open meadow-land stretched away to the sea, which was visible as a wide dark-blue streak. On the other side of the water, from a low beach of sand, green fields sloped upwards to a moderately high upland which was crowned with woods. This was the island, which here lay much nearer the mainland than it did near Uselin, and which I now beheld again for the first time. Before me, still more than a mile distant, I could perceive two towers rising high above a range of hills that we were slowly approaching.

My feelings were strange. During the whole journey I had been looking through the rents in the cover of the little wagon, but only watching for an opportunity of escape. But however determined I was to seize the very first that presented itself, there was none, not even the slightest. The two gendarmes, of whom one was one of those who had hunted me in vain upon the island, rode on the right and left close behind the wagon without exchanging a word, their moustachioed faces looking straight between their horses' ears, or turned sideways towards the wagon. There was not the slightest doubt that the first movement that looked like an attempt to escape would bring the butts of their carbines to their shoulders. To make the attempt in the presence of two well-armed, well mounted, and thoroughly determined men, would have been to seek, not liberty, but death.

And none of the chances had happened which I had imagined possible. We had passed no bridge over which I might have leapt into a torrent, we had entered no crowded market-place in which I might have sprung into the throng, and perhaps found shelter with some compassionate soul. Nothing of the kind; we travelled the seven or eight miles of the journey at a walk, or a short trot, without a single halt, and without an interruption of any kind, and now before me rose the towers in whose shadow lay my prison.

And yet at this time I no longer felt the wrath and burning indignation which had filled my breast the whole time that I was in custody under examination. The two hours in the open air had done me inexpressible good. It had been raining for some time before, and I had held out my hands to catch the drops; I had inhaled with delight the fresh air that blew into the wagon. Now the sun had again broken through the clouds, and, as it was near its setting, cast long ruddy streaks over the green sprouting fields and the sparkling meadows. Birds sang and twittered in the trees by the wayside; just before us in the east stood a brilliant rainbow with one foot on the mainland, and the other on the island. All nature seemed so calm and gentle, so free from hate or anger; on the contrary all things wore so mild a beauty and breathed such sweet peace, that I who from a child had sympathized with every mood of nature, could not close my heart to her soft solicitations. My heart sang with the birds; it floated on the moist pinions of the gentle breeze that bore blessings over the fields and meadows; it bathed in the bright hues of the bow of hope, which sprang from earth to heaven and back to earth again. The feeling that I was, as it were, a part of all these, and yet was sitting a prisoner in the jail-van, begat in me such a sense of pity for myself as I had never before experienced. I covered my face with my hands and wept.

The sun had now set; the eastern and western skies were glowing with the most splendid hues as the van rolled through the town-gate, rattled up two or three narrow, badly-paved streets, and stopped at last at a gateway in a high dead-wall. The gate slowly opened, the van rolled across a wide yard shut in on all sides with lofty blank walls and tall, gloomy-looking buildings, to the gate of the tallest and most forbidding of these, and there stopped. I had reached the place where I was to spend seven years because I had endeavored to guard my friend and protector from the results of a crime which I myself abhorred.

Seven years! I was determined that it should not be so long. I had read the adventures of Baron Trenck, and knew that it was possible to pierce thick masonry and undermine great fortress-walls. What he had succeeded in doing, I thought I could not fail to accomplish.

So my first proceeding, when the door closed behind the surly warden, was to examine my cell as closely as the faint remains of daylight would allow. If all the prisoners were so well lodged, there were certainly many of them that fared much worse when at liberty. The walls of the small room were simply whitewashed, it is true; but so were those of my garret at home. There was an iron bedstead with what seemed a very comfortable bed, a clothes-press, at the solitary window a large table with a drawer, two wooden chairs, and, to my surprise, a great arm-chair covered with leather, which strongly reminded me of the one in my room at Castle Zehrendorf.

Yes, I was again the guest of a Zehren, though this time he was only the superintendent of a prison. It seemed as if the Zehrens were inextricably woven into my life. They had brought me but little good fortune; and the proud lustre that had formerly seemed to me to illumine the name, had greatly paled in my eyes. The *steuerrath*, in whom the boy had beheld the incarnation of the highest earthly authority, what was he in the eyes of the prisoner but a liar and hypocrite who had ten-fold and a hundred-fold deserved the misfortunes he had brought upon men who were better than he? And the man here, who, sprung from such a family, had been willing to undertake such an office as his, must be even worse than the hypocrite and liar. I would let him feel the full measure of my contempt when I met him; I would tell him that if he chose to be a jailor, he ought at least to renounce the name which his noble brother had borne, who preferred dying by his own hand to falling into the hands of those who would have brought him here, behind this triply-bolted door, and these windows with massive bars of iron.

The window was by no means so high as those in the guard-house, and I looked with curiosity through the bars. The prospect might have been worse. True, a high and perfectly blank wall shut out the view to the left, but on the right I could see into a court planted with trees, in which at no great distance was a two-storyed house presenting a gable covered entirely with vines. Behind the house there seemed to be a garden: at least I could catch glimpses of fruit-trees in blossom. All this had a very lovely and peaceful appearance in the dim light of the spring evening; and the shrill twittering of the swallows that skimmed in flocks past my window, might have made me forget that I was a tenant of a prison, had I not been painfully reminded of it by the sharp angle of one of the bars against which I had pressed my forehead.

I seized the bar with both my hands, and shook it with my whole force. Six months of confinement had not deprived my muscles of their strength, as I well perceived. I felt as if with one wrench I could bring away the whole grating. Did I deceive myself, or did it yield a little? I was not mistaken; either the screws were loose, or the wood-work decayed; I could not at the moment determine which; but this seemed no grating that could hold me. My heart beat with the exertion and the joyful surprise. I had vowed to myself that they should not keep me seven years! But caution! it was not the grating alone that made a prisoner of me. Were the grating away, there was a depth of at least thirty feet to the stone pavement of the court. And were I safely down, there were doubtless other difficulties to overcome, and a baffled attempt at escape might make my position incalculably worse.

I heard a rustling in the passage. Footsteps drew near and came to my door. I sprang back from the window and stood in the centre of the room, when there was a rattling of keys on the outside, the door opened, and a man of tall stature entered, passing the turnkey, and the door was closed after him. He stood for a moment at the threshold, and then approached me with a peculiar light step. From the ruddy evening clouds there still fell a pale rosy light into the room; in this rosy glow I always see him again when I think of him--and how often do I think of him, with the deepest emotions of gratitude and love!

Over the table at which I am writing these words, hangs his portrait, painted by a beloved hand. It is a most perfect likeness. It would recall to my memory every feature, every line, were it possible that I could forget them. And now, did I close my eyes, he would stand before me again as he stood on that evening, in the rosy sunset light, and not less clearly would I hear his voice, whose soft, deep tone I then heard for the first time, and whose first word was one of pity and sympathy.

"Poor youth!"

How deeply must the prison air have poisoned my heart, that these words and the tone in which they were spoken did not move me! Alas, it is one of my most painful recollections that this was so; that I rudely repulsed the hand of the noblest of men, and deliberately wounded the kindest heart on earth. But the narrative of my life would have no worth, if my faults were not honestly set down. And I have often thought that I might not have learned to love him so well had

I been less obdurate at first, had I not given him the occasion to heap upon me all the wealth of his benevolence and love. And yet I err in this. Jewels of the costliest price, of the purest water, need no dark foil.

"Poor youth!" he said again, and held out his white and almost transparent hand; but let it fall again, when, instead of taking it and pressing it with reverence to my lips, as I should have done had I known him, I folded my arms and stepped back.

"Yes," he said, and his voice sounded, if possible, still gentler than before, "it is very hard, very cruel, the fate which has befallen you for a crime which, whatever it may be in the eyes of the judge who must follow the stern letter of the law, in the eyes of others merits a milder name, for at least it does in mine. I am the brother of the man for whose fault you are suffering."

He seemed to expect an answer from me, or at least some word of acknowledgement, which I would not give. I would not do my jailor the favor to help him in his attempt to show himself in another light than that in which I saw him.

"It is a strange caprice of fortune," he continued, after a short pause, always in the same gentle manner, "that one brother should to a certain extent be the instrument of punishing you for the injury which another has done you--a chance for which I am thankful, and which I think I shall rightly employ by--but of this another time. To-day the gloomy shadow of the first dreary impression a place like this must make upon a spirit like yours, lies too heavily upon you; though I could speak with the tongues of angels, I could find no entrance to your heart, which is closed by anger and hatred. I have merely come to perform a duty which my office and I may say my heart prescribes. And this also is my duty, so that you may freely answer me without feeling that your pride is making concessions. Have you any wish that it is in my power to grant?"

"No," I answered, "for you could hardly give me a day's shooting over the heaths of Zehrendorf."

A sad smile played around the superintendent's delicate lips.

"I have heard," he said, "that you used to hunt much with my brother, and that you are yourself a skilful hunter. The hunter's nature is a peculiar one. I think I understand it, for I was born with the hunter's instincts; but there is no room for its exercise in these court-yards and gardens. I seldom have a holiday, and still more rarely avail myself of it; and in this respect I enjoy, and indeed desire, but little advantage over my prisoners. So it would be a hard trial for me, if with the old passion I still possessed my former vigor; and thus I may almost count it a piece of good fortune that at the Battle of Leipzig I was shot through the lungs, so that it would avail me nothing though I had the range of the boundless hunting-grounds of America. I have since learned to confine my activity within narrower limits. My favorite recreation is the turning-lathe. It is light work, and yet often proves too heavy for an invalid like myself I shall probably soon give it up, and must choose some still lighter work. But I should not like to find myself condemned to absolute inactivity. You do not now know, but you will soon learn, how great a blessing to a prisoner is a mechanical occupation which fixes his wandering thoughts upon some near and easily obtainable result which shapes itself under his hand. And now I will leave you. I have still two visits to make, besides my evening round through the building. One thing more: the old man who will wait upon you, is, despite his rough ways, a thoroughly good man, whom I have known for many years, and who has rendered me in my life the most important services. You can trust him absolutely. Now, good-night, and good sleep to you, and dream of the freedom which I hope you will sooner regain than you now think."

He gave me a friendly nod, and left the room with the slow, light step with which he had entered. I looked after him with fixed eyes, and passed my hand over my brow; the silent cell seemed to have become suddenly darker.

CHAPTER II.

I was still standing on the same spot, endeavoring to collect my thoughts, when the door again opened, and the old turnkey who had first received me, entered with a lighted candle, which he placed upon the table. Then returning to the door, he took from some female whose form was barely perceptible, a waiter upon which was a collation, and even a bottle of wine. He laid a snow-white napkin over one corner of the great oak table, placed everything neatly and orderly, took a step back and cast a satisfied look at his work, then an angry one at me, and said with a voice which strikingly resembled the growl of a great mastiff: "There!"

"It seems this is for me," I remarked, indifferently.

"Don't see who else it could be for," growled the old man.

The roast meat on the dish had a very appetizing odor; for half a year I had not tasted a drop of wine; and what was more, I did not feel towards the surly turnkey the aversion that I felt towards the gently-speaking, courteous superintendent; but I was resolved to accept no favors from my jailor.

"I owe this to the kindness of the Herr Superintendent?" I asked, taking my seat at the table.

"This and more," said the old man.

"For instance?"

"For instance, that one has our best cell, with a look-out into the garden, and not one looking into the prison-yard, where neither sunlight nor moonlight ever comes."

"Thanks," said I, "anything else?"

"That one can wear his handsome town-clothes, instead of unbleached drilling; which is not such a bad rig, though, after all."

"Thanks," said I; "anything else?"

"And that one has Sergeant Süssmilch for warden."

"With whom I have the honor?"

"With whom one has the honor."

"Much obliged."

"Well you may be."

I looked up to get a better view of the man whose relation to me was so fraught with honor and advantage. He appeared to be above fifty years of age, of short, compact build, who seemed to stand remarkably firmly for his age upon his short bowed legs. From his broad shoulders hung a pair of quite disproportionately long arms, with great brown hairy hands, which evidently had not lost their strength of grasp. From his furrowed and wrinkled face, which might once have been good-looking, twinkled under gray bushy eyebrows a pair of clear, good-humored eyes, which in vain tried to look fierce and cruel. His smooth, close-cropped gray hair lay thick above his bronzed forehead; and beneath his great hooked nose, like an eagle's beak, a heavy moustache drooped on either side far below his firm chin. Sergeant Süssmilch was, in later years, long my true friend; in hours of trial he rendered me priceless services; he taught my eldest boys to ride; and when, five years ago, we carried him to his last resting-place, we all heartily sorrowed over him; but at this moment I was considering what amount of resistance he would be likely to offer in a contingency which I deemed very probable, and thought that I should be sorry to have to take the life of the old fellow who was so delightfully surly.

"If one has looked at Sergeant Süssmilch long enough, one will do well to fall to the supper, which is getting no better by standing," he said.

"It may stand there for me," I answered. "I have no appetite for the Herr Superintendent's roast meat and wine."

"Might as well have said so at once," growled Herr Süssmilch, commencing to replace the things on the waiter.

"Who the deuce was to know what your custom here is," I said in a sulky tone.

"The custom here is that one has to work when he wants to eat."

"That is not true," I said. "I am not condemned to labor; I was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment, and should by rights have been sent to the fortress, where decent people go."

"Meaning one's self?" asked Herr Süssmilch.

"Meaning one's self."

"One is altogether mistaken," he replied, having by this time cleared away the things. "In the prison one is compelled to work, unless one has a father or some one who will pay for his keep. In this case one has a father, and gets from him ten *silbergroschen* daily."

"Herr Süssmilch," I cried, stepping up to the old man, "I take for granted that you are telling me the truth; and now I give you my word that I will rather starve in the dungeon like a rat, than take a penny from my father."

"One will be of another way of thinking to-morrow."

"Never."

"Then one will have to work."

"We shall see about that."

"Yes, we shall see."

Süssmilch went, but stopped at the door, and remarked over his shoulder:

"One wants, then, the ordinary diet, such as every one receives when he comes here?"

"One wants nothing at all," I said, turning my back upon him.

"No light, then, for that is extra too."

I made him no answer. I heard the old man go to the table, take the light, place it on the waiter, and move to the door. There he paused, apparently to see if I would change my mind. I did not move. He coughed; I took no notice. The next moment I was alone in the dark.

"To the devil all of you, with your smooth ways and your rough ways!" I muttered to myself "I want the one as little as the other, and I will be under obligations to no one--no one!"

I laughed aloud, seized the grating of the window and shook it, and then ran up and down the dark room like some wild animal. At last I threw myself in my clothes upon the bed, and lay there in gloomy desperation brooding over my fate, which had never before seemed to me so intolerable. I wrought myself up to a pitch of wild hatred against all who had had any share in my ruin, against my judge, my counsel, my father, the whole world; strengthening myself in my resolution not to abate my obduracy, not to ask the slightest thing of any one, not to be grateful to any one, and above all to win my liberty, cost what it might.

Thus I lay for long hours. At last I slept and dreamed of a flowery meadow over which were fluttering gay butterflies which I tried to catch but could not, for whenever I touched them they turned to red roses. And the red roses, when I attempted to pluck them, began to flash with light and ring with music, and flashing and ringing they floated up to heaven, whence they looked smiling down upon me as the faces of blooming maidens. It was all so strange and sweet and fair, that I lay upon the grass, laughing with bliss. But when I awaked I did not laugh. When I awaked Süssmilch stood at my bed-side and said: "Now one will have to work."

CHAPTER III.

For a fortnight I had been doing the very hardest work which at the time was to be had in the establishment, which combined in itself the features of a work-house, jail, and penitentiary. I was not compelled to do this either by the letter of the law which prescribed that prisoners should be employed in accordance with their capabilities, nor by order of the superintendent, who on the contrary had allowed me to choose whatever work I preferred. Indeed he proposed to me to draw up certain lists, and make out certain accounts which happened to be needed in the office, and for which the materials should be sent to my cell. For exercise I might find pleasant and healthful work in the large garden, which was about to be extended.

I replied--and in this I spoke the exact truth--that I was but a poor hand at accounts, and that I understood nothing of gardening. I should prefer, if I were allowed any choice in the matter, the very hardest work that could be found. The Herr Superintendent had himself remarked that work of this sort was the most suitable to a man of my constitution. I had at first denied this; but had more maturely considered the matter and found that the superintendent was right. Indeed I must confess that I felt an irresistible desire to split wood, to break stone, or to handle great weights.

In this, too, I spoke but the truth. My powerful frame was really suffering from the compulsory inactivity. But there were other reasons besides this which really prompted my request. Though I scarcely knew it myself, most of my decisive steps were taken with reference to my father. It was in a spirit of defiance to him that I had left his house; it was in defiance to him that I had given myself up to justice; and it was in defiance that I rejected his provision for my support and demanded the hardest work. He should not have it in his power to say that I ever, even in prison, was a burden to him; he should know that his son was treated no better than a common criminal, which indeed he was in his eyes.

And as little should the soft-speaking superintendent be able to say that he had dealt out to

the young man who came of such respectable parents, mercy instead of justice.

And finally, heavy work which would have to be done in the open air must offer better chances for the execution of the plan over which I was brooding day and night, the plan either by cunning or force, or both combined, to obtain my liberty.

Now it is true that the work in the garden which was proposed to me perhaps offered still greater facilities for my purpose. The watch that would be kept there would hardly be very strict, especially for me, whom for some reason or other the superintendent seemed so particularly disposed to favor; but here a feeling arose within me which would probably appear singular to most men in my position, and yet of which I have no cause to feel ashamed.

I was not willing to abuse any confidence that might be placed in me. I had never done this in my life before; and I would not learn it now, not even though a prisoner, not even to win the liberty for which I so wildly longed. If they set me to work with the common criminals condemned to hard labor, they would probably treat me and watch me as one of them; and if they neglected this, so much the worse for them who made the distinction at their own risk, and so much the better for me who did not ask to be spared, and consequently was under no obligations to spare any one.

These thoughts passed through my mind as I appeared before the superintendent on the following day--this time in his office--and presented my request to him.

He looked searchingly at me with his large gentle eyes, and answered:

"Whoever enters this place as a prisoner, is an unhappy man, who as such alone is entitled to my compassion. If your fate touches me more nearly than the rest, the reason is so clear as to need no explanation. You have rejected the sympathy which I proffered you, but have not offended me. From what I know of you, from your attitude during your trial, this was what I had to expect. Whether you do well to reject the provision which your father is willing to make for you, I greatly doubt, as by so doing you but widen the breach between you; and in any circumstances one owes a father so much, that one can, without shame, accept even a humiliation at his hands. But this matter I must leave to your own feelings. If you wish to be treated as a common pauper criminal, who has to work for his maintenance, I had planned, as you know, work for you better suited to your capacities and your education. You say that what you desire is hard, laborious work. It may be so: you are a man of very unusual bodily strength, and the confined air of a prison is poison to both your mind and body. You have been deeply embittered by the long term of your preliminary detention, which appears to have been unprecedentedly rigorous. You will again, I am convinced, become the generous, good-natured, noble fellow which you are by nature, and which in my eyes you still are, when you have expanded this deep chest with pure fresh air, and your torpid circulation has been quickened by active work. You need, moreover, a strong counterpoise to the passions that are raging within you. So, all things considered, I am willing to grant your request. Süssmilch shall show you your duties. But I tell you beforehand, it is convicts' work, and you will find yourself in very bad company; so much the earlier will you remember the difference between you and them."

He gave me a friendly look and wave of the hand, and dismissed me. A feeling which I could not explain brought tears to my eyes as I turned from him to the door, but I forced them back and said to myself: That is all very fine; but I do not wish to be good, I wish to be free.

At the extreme corner of the prison wall, upon a slight elevation, there was a new infirmary to be built. Design, plans, specifications, had all been prepared by the superintendent himself, who was an excellent architect, and the work was to be done by the convicts. They were now digging the foundations. It was a heavy piece of work. An old tower, forming part of the city wall, had once stood upon the spot the ruins of which in the lapse of centuries had first crumbled to rubbish, and then become consolidated into a compact mass which had to be broken up with the pick until the old foundation-wall was reached, which was to serve in part for the new building.

About twenty men were employed on this work. Sergeant Süssmilch had the general supervision of it, and indeed, I being the only prisoner under his immediate charge, had nothing else to do, the convicts from the penitentiary being under the charge of two overseers. The most of these convicts, of whom the majority were young men, and all strong and well fitted for such work, looked as any men would look dressed in coarse drilling, working under the eyes of a pair of stalwart overseers, and forbidden to smoke, to whistle, to sing, or to speak in a low tone. This latter prohibition first struck me upon hearing Süssmilch give to one who had attempted to open a private conversation with his neighbor, in a very emphatic tone the warning: "One has no secrets here; one can talk loud or hold his tongue."

This warning was most frequently given to one particular convict, with the additional remark that he had every reason to be careful.

This was a fellow of Herculean frame, the only one that had what might be called a thorough gallows-face, and who owed his precious life only to the circumstance that a murder of which he was most vehemently suspected, could not quite be brought home to him in the eyes of the judges. He was named Kaspar, and his fellow-convicts called him Cat-Kaspar, because he was believed to possess the mysterious faculty of seeing in the dark as well as in broad daylight, and,

notwithstanding the gigantic breadth of his shoulders, of creeping through holes only large enough to allow the passage of a cat.

From the very first day I had made a conquest of this richly-gifted man. While the others watched me with suspicious side-glances, never spoke a word to me, and visibly avoided me, Cat-Kaspar sought every opportunity to be near me; made furtive signals with his eyes, first looking at me and then at the overseers, and gave me in every way to understand that he wished to enter into more intimate relations, and especially that he wished to speak with me.

I confess that I felt the strongest abhorrence for the man, whose nature was plainly enough indicated by a low forehead almost covered by his hair, a pair of evil, poisonous eyes, and a great brutal mouth; and any one would have felt the impulse to shun him even without the knowledge that his hands were stained with blood. But I mastered this instinctive aversion, for I said to myself that this man would have decision enough for any venture, and dexterity and strength enough to carry out any plan. So I also sought an opportunity to get near him, but did not succeed until we had been working together for a fortnight. I had hardly effected this, when I made the discovery that Cat-Kaspar, in addition to the accomplishments of which I had heard, possessed another, which I afterwards found out to be easily acquired. This art consisted in a most perfect imitation of a yawn, and while holding the hand to the open mouth, forming by means of the tongue and teeth certain sounds which, when closely listened to, could be detected to be words. Thus for the first time I heard, to my no small astonishment, from the midst of the most natural yawn in the world, the words: "The great stone--help me."

What he meant I learned a few minutes later.

They had recently been hauling stone for the foundations, and a particularly large one, through the clumsiness of the wagoners, had rolled into the foundation at a place where it was not needed. It seemed a matter of impossibility to get it out again without erecting apparatus for the purpose. Sergeant Süssmilch swore at their cursed stupidity, which would now cause an hour or more of unnecessary work. Cat-Kaspar, after he had given me the mysterious hint, suddenly raised his voice and said:

"What is the great difficulty, Herr Süssmilch? I will undertake it, single-handed."

"Yes, if a big mouth could do it," growled Herr Süssmilch.

The rest laughed. Cat-Kaspar called them a pack of toadies, and said that it was an easy thing to crack jokes and laugh at an honest fellow who was not allowed to show what he could do.

Cat-Kaspar knew his man. The honest sergeant turned red in the face; he pulled his long moustache, and said:

"In the first place, no arguments; in the second place, one may show now what he can do."

In an instant Cat-Kaspar had seized an immense crowbar and sprung into the foundation.

The stone lay upon the incline covered with planks by which the rubbish and earth were hauled away, and a giant, by means of a lever, might perhaps have rolled it up. Cat-Kaspar certainly exhibited very surprising strength. Thrusting his bar under the stone, he raised it so far that it required but little more to turn it over. The exertion of strength was really so astonishing, that the men hurrahed, and the attention of even Sergeant Süssmilch and the two overseers was riveted on the performance. Suddenly Cat-Kaspar's strength seemed to fail him; he looked as if in peril every instant to be crushed between the stone and the bank of earth.

"Help me, some one!" he cried.

I did not imagine that all this was a mere stratagem of the cunning rascal. Snatching a second crowbar, and without waiting for the sergeant's permission, I leapt down, thrust the bar under the stone, clapped my shoulder to it and heaved with all my strength, and the stone rolled over.

"Hurrah!" shouted the men.

"Slowly, comrade," said Cat-Kaspar, as I was exerting myself further to help him with the stone, "slowly, or we will get up too soon."

He had no need to yawn now; the excitement of both convicts and overseers was such that the regulations were for the time forgotten; and then we were at least fifteen feet below them, and only our backs were visible. Cat-Kaspar took advantage of his opportunity. While we were heaving at the stone, shoulder to shoulder, he kept bandying coarse jokes with those above, and in the intervals addressed me in rapid, broken sentences.

"Will you join us.--never have such another chance--two fellows at least, such as you and I, must take it in hand--there are ten more of them--but two must begin--no one has the courage but myself--and you too, I hope--to-morrow is the last day--through the gate across the bridge over the rampart to the outer harbor at the strand--only follow me--I'll bring you through--if any one offers to stop us, kill him--the scoundrel Süssmilch first of all. If you betray us----"

"Work, and stop gabbling!" called out the sergeant.

"I can do no more!" said Cat-Kaspar, throwing down his crowbar.

He had gained his object, and had no desire to expend his strength further, at no advantage to himself.

"Come out!" ordered the sergeant, well pleased to have been right, and indeed doubly right, since the two strongest men of the gang had not been able to accomplish what Cat-Kaspar had undertaken to do single-handed.

Order was restored, and the work proceeded as usual. I did the work of two, to conceal the excitement into which the assassin's words had thrown me. His plan at once seemed tolerably plain, and I comprehended it thoroughly when I found an opportunity to take a look around from the highest point of the site from which one could see over the wall. Immediately adjoining the place where we were working was a gate in the wall, which during the progress of the work was frequently used, and the key to which the sergeant carried in his pocket. A short bridge, which had in the centre a gateway defended by *chevaux-de-frise*, led from the gate over a wide moat which in former times had been the town-fosse, as our prison-wall had once been part of the town-wall. Beyond the moat was a high bastion, with a walk shaded with walnut-trees at its foot, and on it stood two cannon, but I had never observed any sentry near them. To the right of the bastion was a much lower rampart, over which from my position it was easy to see; and beyond this I caught sight of the pennons of ships, which must be in the outer harbor of which Cat-Kaspar had spoken. Between the pennons glittered a bit of blue sea; indeed I could catch a glance of the island beyond, whose low chalk-cliffs shone bright in the sunset.

I had seen enough, and hastened to descend in order to awake no suspicion. The evening-bell rang, our work was over for the day; with the sergeant at my side I retraced the now familiar way by the garden, past the house to my cell.

This night no sleep visited my eyes. All night long I revolved in my mind the possibilities of flight. That Cat-Kaspar's plan was feasible, I was now convinced; and equally so that this cunning, bold fellow was the very man to carry it out. The place could not have been better chosen; a high bastion, an outer harbor with ships and boats, a deserted strand beyond, and over there the island, which I could reach in any event by swimming. Once there, I knew now how to get away, and how easily it could be done. My clothes were still in the old woman's keeping, and there also were my gun and my game-bag. Then farewell preliminary detention and imprisonment; farewell judges and counsel, superintendents and turnkeys! I should be a free man and could mock you all--and you too, worthy citizens of my native town, who had dealt so generously with me, and my father--well, my father might look to it how he reconciled to his conscience his treatment of a son whom his severity had driven from his house, whom he and he alone had made a criminal.

I had not been a criminal yet, but I knew that I should soon be one; indeed I felt myself one already. I even now felt the taint of my associations with Cat-Kaspar. It was plain enough that without real and deep crime--without *murder*--our plan could not be executed. The sergeant kept the keys of the gates in his pocket, and he was not a man to yield, especially in such a case. Then the other two overseers were there, who were clearly no chicken-hearts. The three would resist as long as life was in their bodies. They must be despatched at the very first attack, in order that terror should be added to confusion, if our flight was to succeed.

I sprang up from my bed with a wildly-beating heart. Cat-Kaspar counted on my assistance first of all, and he was right; unless we two began the attack simultaneously, there was no chance of success; one man alone would have none to second him; so one of the guards, probably the sergeant, must fall by my hand.

By my hand--how easy it was to think and to say this; but would not my courage fail me at the moment? True, I had fired at the officer in the moor, but then not only my own liberty, but that of my protector, benefactor, and friend was at stake, and thankful had I been that my bullet went astray. Now my associate was not the man I so loved and admired, but Cat-Kaspar; the thing to be done now was not to fire a pistol at a dark figure that suddenly springs up threatening in the way, but to perpetrate a deliberate murder; it was to kill a comparatively unarmed man with a spade, a pick, or a crowbar, or the first tool that came to the murderer's hand. And I had done everything in my power to hate the man, and could not do it. Through all his roughness there shone so much genuine kindness, that it often seemed to me that he had put on this prickly garb because he knew how soft he was by nature. If my relations to him were none of the best, whose fault was it but mine who had so rudely repulsed all his advances? He had not retaliated; he had never wavered in his rough but sincere good-will; if I overlooked his surly fashion of speech, he had treated me, not as a keeper his prisoner, but as an old faithful servant, who can take many liberties, might treat a young master who has behaved badly, and who has been entrusted to him to bring back to reason. Often during the work I found his clear blue eyes looking at me with a strange expression as if he were saying constantly to himself: "Poor youth! poor youth!" and as if he would like to throw down his measuring-rod, seize my pick, and do the work in my place. Once or twice he had said, as we were returning from work, "Well, hasn't one had enough of it yet?" and again, "One shouldn't be too obstinate and grieve the captain so." (The sergeant never called his former officer the "superintendent," except where it was absolutely necessary.) "How grieve

the captain?" I asked. "One will not understand it," the old man replied, and looked quite sad and dejected.

I would not understand it--he was right in that.

But does any one understand less because he pretends unconsciousness? Whatever the reason might be that drew the superintendent's sympathy to me and my fate, I could not close my eyes to the fact that this sympathy existed, and that it was expressed in the sincerest, in the most winning manner, I still heard his words and the tone in which they were spoken, a tone which so vividly brought back to my memory the voice of the man who had been and still was my hero. The oftener I saw the superintendent--and I saw him nearly every day--the more I was struck by his resemblance to his unfortunate brother. It was the same tall form, but toil and sickness, and probably grief and care, had broken down the proud strength; it was the same noble face, but nobler and gentler; the same great dark eyes, but their looks were more earnest and sad. Even when his lips were silent, these eyes greeted me with kindness; and in this frightful night, while I was struggling with the tempter, I saw them still, and their soft sad looks seemed to ask: "Have you a heart to plan such a deed?--a hand to execute it?"

But I will, I must be free! my spirit cried out. What care I for your laws? If you have brought me to despair, you can only expect from me the actions of a desperate man. From my school here--from one prison to another! I shook off one tyranny because I found it intolerable; should I patiently bear this which oppresses me so much more heavily? Shall I not meet force with force? What would the Wild Zehren do were he alive and knew that his dearest friend was here in a dungeon? He would strive to set me free, though he had to burn down the prison or even the town, as those faithful fellows did, who delivered his ancestor! What he would do and dare, that would I. At the worst it could but cost my life; and that life should be thrown away when it was no longer worth having--the Wild Zehren had taught me that.

Thoughts like these agitated me as if a hell had been let loose in my breast. Even now, after so many years, now when with a joyous and innocent heart I feel grateful for every sun that rises bringing me another day of earnest work and calm happiness--even now my heart palpitates and my hand trembles as I write these lines, which bring so vividly before me the terrors of that night, and of the time when I sought for any means of escape from the labyrinth in which I wandered in despair.

Let no one cast a stone at me that I strayed so far from the right path. Well for thee, be thou who thou mayst, whose brow falls into severe judicial folds upon reading this--well for thee if the happy temper of thy blood has preserved thee from the blind fury of raging passions, if a judicious education has early given thee a clear view of life, and kindly smoothed thy path before thee. Then thank thy beneficent stars that have granted thee all this, and perhaps kept thee from going widely astray. For when is this not possible? It is a peril to which all are exposed. Then devoutly pray that thou mayst not be led into temptation, that no such night may come to thee as that through which I suffered; a night in which it is not only dark without, but within; a night which, when thirty years have passed, you will still shudder to think of.

When the dawning light entered my cell, it found me with burning temples, and shivering with chill. I probably looked pale and haggard, for the sergeant's first word when he saw me was, "Sick: no work to-day."

I was sick; I felt it but too plainly. I had never felt thus in my life before. Was this the hand of fate, I thought, which forbade our designs? If I did not go to work to day, the attempt would not be made. Cat-Kaspar reckoned on my strength, courage, and decision. My example--the example of one who was to a certain extent a volunteer, and whom they all felt to be their superior--must exert an irresistible influence upon them. Cat-Kaspar fully calculated upon this, and he neither could nor would venture without me.

"No work to-day," said the sergeant. "Look as miserable as a cat. Overdid it yesterday. Not got seven senses like a bear."

This last mysterious phrase--a favorite one with the sergeant--was beyond my comprehension; but its meaning could only be a friendly one, for his blue eyes rested upon me as he spoke with an expression of sincere solicitude.

"Not at all," I said. "I think I shall feel better out of doors: the prison air does not suit me."

"Doesn't suit anybody that I know of," growled the sergeant.

"And me first of all," I said; "so badly that I have a strong inclination to go away pretty soon."

I looked the old man fixedly in the eye. I wanted him to read my intention in my looks. But he only smiled and replied:

"Not many would stay if all went that wanted to--Would go away myself."

"Why do you not?"

"Been with the captain now five-and-twenty years. Stay with him till I die."

"That may happen any day."

Again I looked at him steadily in the face. This time the expression of my look struck him.

"Look like a bear with seven senses. Got a robber-murderous-gallows look,"^[5] said he.

"What I am not, I may be yet," I said; "what if I were to throttle you this moment? I am thrice as strong as you."

"No stupid jokes," said the sergeant. "Not a bear; and an old soldier is no toothpick."

In this way the worthy Herr Süssmilch disposed of the matter. As I would neither remain in my cell nor see the prison-doctor, we started for the work-place.

On the way I had to stop more than once, for everything grew dark before my eyes, and I thought that I was about to die. The same sensations returned several times during the day, which was unusually hot. A fierce fever was raging in my veins, a terrible malady was swiftly coming on me, or indeed had already come.

Dr. Snellius said to me afterwards, and indeed repeated the remark to me but a few days ago, over our wine at table, that he cannot to this day understand how a man in the condition in which I must have been, could not only remain upon his feet all day long, but do hard work. He said it was the strongest proof he had ever met, of how far an intense will could prevail *contra naturam*, against the course of nature. "To be sure," he added, clapping me on the shoulder, "only blacksmiths can do it; tailors die in the attempt."

How dreadfully I suffered! When the dream-god has a mind to play me a malicious trick, he places me in a deep excavation into which pour the rays of a pitiless sun; he claps a pick into my hand, with which I smite furious blows upon a soil hard as rock, but the soil is my own head, and every blow pierces to my brain; and then he fills the excavation with fiends in the shape of men, who are all working like myself with picks or with spades, shovels and barrows, and these fiends have all flat, brutal faces and evil eyes that they keep fixed upon me, giving me signs of intelligence and readiness for the devilish work I am to do. And among them rises from time to time a head that has eyes more evil than all the rest, and the head opens its horrible mouth to yawn, and from the distended jaws come the words: "Sunset soon--ready, comrade--I take Rollmann, you sergeant--smash skulls!"

But the most dreadful part is to come.

It is half an hour before sunset. In half an hour the bell will ring to stop work. This is the last day; the excavation is done and the foundation-stones are brought. Tomorrow regular masons will take the work in hand. Some of the convicts will help them, but others will be employed elsewhere; it is the last evening on which the eleven of whom I am to be the twelfth will be together. Now or never is to be the time, and the signal has been already given.

Cat-Kaspar commences a dispute with his neighbor, in which the others join, one by one. The quarrel gets hot; the men appear to grow furious; while the overseers, with the sergeant at their head, endeavor to separate them, and threaten them with solitary confinement on bread and water for such unheard-of insubordination. The rioters pay no attention; from words they come to blows, and pushing and striking, they get into a confused *mêlée*, into which they endeavor to involve the overseers.

This prelude has lasted but a few moments, and it can be continued no longer, lest the unusual noise should bring other officers upon the spot, and so the whole plan be defeated.

Whether I was drawn into the *mêlée*, or whether I sprang into it voluntarily, I cannot say--I find myself in the midst. I do not know if I am helping the overseers to drag the men apart, or if I am trying to increase the confusion; but I shout, I rave, I seize two by their necks and hurl them to the ground as if they were puppets; I behave like a madman--I am really mad, though neither I nor the rest know it; even Cat-Kaspar does not perceive it, but rushes up to my side and shouts: "Now, comrade!"

At this instant I see a man of tall stature emerge from the garden-gate and hasten towards us. It is the superintendent. A maiden of about fifteen, of whose slender figure I have more than once caught a glimpse through the garden-gate, holds him by the hand, and seems to endeavor to detain him, or else to share the danger. Two boys appear at the gate, and hurrah loudly; they have no idea of the terrible seriousness of the affair.

The tall superintendent confronts us. He draws his left hand gently from the hand of the maiden and presses it upon his weak chest, which is laboring with the exertion of his rapid walk. The other hand he has raised to command silence, as he is not yet able to speak. His usually pale cheeks are suffused with a feverish glow; his large eyes flash, as if they must speak, since his lips cannot.

And the raging, furious crew understand their language. They have all learned to look up in reverence to the pale man who is always grave and always kind, even when he must punish, and whom no one has yet known to punish unjustly. They are prepared for everything except this,

that at the last moment this man should confront them. They feel that their plan has failed: indeed they abandon it.

One does not. One is resolved to win the game or lose all. In truth, is not the chance now better than ever? Let yonder man once lie prostrate, who or what could restrain him and the rest?

Giving a yell more horrible than ever issued from the throat of the fiercest beast of prey, he swings high his pick and rushes upon the superintendent. The maiden throws herself before her father. But a better defender is still swifter than she. With one bound he springs between them and seizes the miscreant's arm. The pick, in descending, grazes his head, but what is that to the torments that have been raging in it for hours?

"Cursed hound!" roars Cat-Kaspar, "have you betrayed us?" and swings his pick again, but has hardly raised it when he is lying upon the ground, and on his breast is kneeling one to whom the delirium of fever has now given the strength of a giant, and whom in this moment no living man could resist.

In a moment it is all over. For an instant he sees the horribly distorted face of Cat-Kaspar--he feels hands striving to wrench his hands from the man's throat, and then a black night swallows up all.

CHAPTER IV.

A black night which is but a long, long continuation of the dreadful dream, until at last it is broken by rare gleams of soft, dim light, at which the forms of fear grow faint and give way to more friendly shapes. These also melt into deep night, but it is not the old terrible gloom, but rather a blissful sinking into happy annihilation; and whenever I emerge from it the figures are clearer, so that I sometimes now succeed in distinguishing them from each other, whereas at first they melted indistinguishably into one another. Now I know that when the long gray moustache nods up and down before my face, there is always an honest, good-natured old mastiff there, who growls out of his deep chest; only I never get sight of the mastiff, and sometimes think that it is the long gray moustache itself that growls so. When the moustache is dark, I hear a soft voice, the sound of which is inexpressibly soothing to me, so that I cannot refrain from happy smiles, while when I hear the mastiff I would laugh aloud, only I have no body, but am a soap-bubble which floats out of the garret-window in my father's house, into the sunny air, until two spectacle-glasses which have no moustache, are reflected in it. These spectacle-glasses perplex me; for although they never have a moustache, they are sometimes blue, and then they are a woman; but when they are white they are a man and have a creaking voice, while the blue glasses have the softest voice--softer even than that of the dark moustache.

I cannot make out how all this is, and puzzle myself over it until I fall asleep, and when I awake some one is leaning over me who has a dark moustache and brown eyes, and exactly resembles some one that I know, although I cannot recall where and when I have seen him. But I feel both glad and sad at the sight of this unknown acquaintance, for it seems to me that I owe him boundless gratitude for something--I know not what. And this feeling of gratitude is so strong that I draw his hand, which he has laid upon mine, very slowly and softly, for I have little or no strength, to my lips, and close my eyes, from which happy tears are streaming. I have something to say, but cannot recall it, and fall to thinking it over, and when I again open my eyes the form is gone, and the room vacant and filled with a dim light, and I look around in surprise.

It is a moderately-large, two-windowed room; the white window-curtains are pulled down, and on them I can see the shadows of vine-branches waving to and fro. I watch the motion with delight; it is an image of my thoughts that float and waver thus without being able to fix themselves on any point. I look again into the room, and my eyes find an object on which they rest. It is a picture which hangs directly opposite to me on a plain light-gray wall; it represents a young and beautiful woman with a child in her arms. The eyes of the young mother, who is calm and almost sad, as though she were pondering over some wondrous mystery, are mild and gentle; while those of the boy, under his full brow, have a dignity beyond his years, and look out into the far distance with an air of majesty as if their glances comprehended the world.

I can scarcely turn my eyes from the picture. My admiration is pure and artless; I have no knowledge of the original; I do not know that it is an exquisite copy in crayons of the most celebrated painting of the Master of masters; I only know that never in my life have I seen anything so beautiful.

Under this picture hangs a little *étagère* with two rows of neatly-bound books. Under the *étagère* stands a bureau of antique form with brass handles, and on it lie drawing-materials, and, between two terra-cotta vases, a little work-basket with ends of red worsted hanging over its edge.

Between the windows and the bureau, evidently set on one side, is an easel, upon which is a drawing-board with the face inwards; and on the other side of the door a cottage piano, the upper part of which has a peculiar, lyre-shaped figure.

I do not know what it is that suddenly brings to my mind Constance von Zehren. Perhaps it is that the lyre-shaped instrument reminds me of a guitar; and indeed this must be the reason, for in nothing else does the room bear any resemblance to Constance's. As there all was neglect and confusion, here all is orderly and cheerful; no torn threadbare carpet covers the white floor upon which the windows throw squares of sunlight, and the shadows of the vine-branches play, but fainter than upon the curtains. No, I am not at Castle Zehren. In all that castle there was no apartment like this, so bright, so cheerful, so clean; and now I remember Castle Zehren is burnt down--to the very ground, some one told me--so I cannot be at Castle Zehren; but where am I, then?

I turn my eyes to the beautiful young mother of the picture, as if she could answer me; but looking at her, I forget what it was that I had intended to ask. I have only the feeling that one can sleep peacefully when such eyes are watching him; and I wonder that the fair boy does not rest his head upon the shoulder or the bosom of his mother, close his great thoughtful eyes, and sleep sweetly--oh! so sweetly!

The long sweet sleep wonderfully strengthens me. When I awake, I at once raise my head, rest myself upon my elbow, and stare with surprise at the brown furrowed face, the blue eyes, the great hooked nose, and the long gray moustache of Sergeant Süssmilch, who sits at my bed-side.

The old man, on his part, looks at me with no less surprise. Then a pleasant smile shoots from the moustache through a pair of the deepest furrows up to the blue eyes, where it stays and blinks and twinkles joyously. He brings three fingers of his right hand to his forehead, and says, "*Serviteur!*"

This comes so drolly from him that I have to laugh, for I can laugh now, and the old fellow laughs too, and says, "Had a good nap?"

"Splendid," I answer. "Have I been sleeping long?"

"Pretty well. To-morrow it will be eight weeks," he replies cheerily.

"Eight weeks," I repeated, mechanically; "that is a long time;" and thinking of this, I pass my hand over my head. My head was naturally covered with very thick, curly, soft auburn hair, inclining to red; but I now feel nothing but short bristles, as of a brush, a brush too in which time has made considerable ravages.

"This is very strange," I said.

"Soon grow," said the sergeant, encouragingly. "Shaved me bald as a turnip after this"--he pointed to a deep scar on his right temple, running up into his thick gray hair, and which I now noticed for the first time--"and yet I had a crop afterwards like a bear----"

"With seven senses," I added, and had to laugh at my own wit. It seems that I have a child's head on my broad shoulders.

The old man laughed heartily, then suddenly grew serious and said:

"Now keep still, and go to sleep again like a----"

He did not finish his favorite simile, apparently in fear lest he should set me to laughing again; but I laughed in spite of his precautions, and while doing so pulled up the sleeve of my shirt, which struck me as singularly loose. But it was not that the sleeve was wider, but my arm thinner; so thin that I could scarcely believe it to be mine.

"Soon get strong again," said the sergeant.

"I have been very sick, then?"

"Well," said he, "it was very near tattoo; but I always said: weeds won't die," and he rubbed his hands with satisfaction. "Talk enough now," he added, in a tone of authority. "Strict orders, when awake, to allow no discussion, and report fact; which shall be done forthwith."

The sergeant is about rising, but I take one of his brown hands and beg him to stay. I feel myself quite strong, I say; speaking does not fatigue me at all, and of course hearing does not; and I should like to hear how I came into this condition, who the persons are that have been about me, and whose faces I have seen floating through the mist of my dreams; and if there has not been a great good-natured mastiff that guarded me, and had a way of growling deeply.

The old man looks at me attentively, as if he thought all was not yet quite right under my bristly, half-bald skull, and that it was high time he made his report. He placed my hand upon the coverlid, and said, "So! so!" smooths the pillow, and again says, "So! so!" so to please him I shut my eyes and hear how he rises softly and goes away on tiptoe; but the door has hardly closed behind him when I open my eyes again, and apply myself resolutely to the task of solving the questions which I had addressed to the old man.

As when we look down from a high mountain upon a sea of mist, we note bright points emerging, one by one--a sunlit corn-field, a cottage, a bit of road, a little lake with grassy shores, until at last the whole landscape lies plain before us, except a few spots over which gray wreaths of vapor still float, which more slowly than the rest roll up the ravines--just so before my mental vision dissolved the night of oblivion which during my illness had covered the recent events of my life. Now I again remembered that I was in prison and how I came there; that the old man with the gray moustache was not my friend and nurse, but my keeper; that I had had thoughts of killing him, if necessary, to gain my liberty; and so everything that had happened, up to that last frightful day; but that was confused and obscure--as confused and obscure as it has ever since remained in my memory to this hour. Dark and painful; but strange to say, this painful feeling was turned exclusively against myself. The hate, the bitterness, the rancor, the desperation, the frenzy--all the demons which had dwelt in my soul, were gone, as though an angel with flaming sword--perhaps the Angel of Death, who had hovered over me--had driven them away. Even the remains of pain melted away in thankfulness that the most fearful of all had been spared me--that I could look upon my white, wasted hands without a shudder.

As I lay here, pondering these things, and my eyes rested upon that fair young mother, who bore her boy so securely upon her strong, faithful arm, my hands involuntarily folded, and I thought of my own mother so early lost--far too early for me--and how all would have happened differently if she had ever encircled me with her protecting arms; if in my young sorrows and doubts I could have sought refuge, counsel, and consolation upon her faithful breast. And I thought too of my father, who was so lonely now, whose hopes I had so cruelly blighted, whose pride I had so deeply wounded; and I thought of him for the first time without animosity, with only a feeling of deepest pity for the poor old forsaken man.

"But he will live," I said to myself, "and I am not dead; and all shall be well again. No, not all. The lost past cannot be recalled; but the future still is mine, even in a prison."

In a prison. But was this a prison in which I was?--this pleasant room with windows barred only by nodding vine-branches; a room in which everything spoke of the peacefully cheerful life of its fair inhabitant.

How I came to this idea I do not know, but I could not rid myself of it; and there were the ends of red worsted hanging from the little work-basket. What had a workbasket to do in the room of a man?

I thought and thought, but could arrive at no conclusion; the streak of mist would not move. Indeed it rather widened and spread to a thin veil, which threatened gradually to envelope the whole prospect. I did not care; I had seen it once and knew that I should see it again; knew that I should hear the voices again which now fell faintly on my ear as if from a vast distance, among which I could distinguish the muttered growl of my faithful mastiff, and the soft voice that accompanied the eyes whose gentle light had shone through my darkness.

When I again awaked, it was really night, or at least so late that the little astral lamp by my bedside was already lighted, and by its feeble glimmer I saw some one sitting by my bed whom I did not recognize, as his head was hidden in his hand. But when I moved, and he raised his head and asked, "How are you now?" I knew him at once. The low gentle voice I would have recognized among a thousand. And now, strangely enough, without having to give a moment's thought to the matter, but just as if some one had told me everything in my sleep, I knew that the house in which I had been for the last eight weeks, and in which I had all this time been tended as carefully as if I had been one of the family, was the house of the superintendent, of the man who certainly not to-day for the first time was watching by my bed, and who spoke to me in a tone of affection, as might a kind father to his son.

Leaning over me, he had taken my hand while he went on speaking; but I could only half hear his words for another voice that cried out within me, loud and ever louder, in the words of Scripture: "I am not worthy!"

I could not silence this voice. "I am not worthy!" it continually cried, until at last I exclaimed aloud: "I am not worthy!"

"You are, my friend," said the soft voice; "I know that you are, even though you know it not yourself."

"No, no, I am not," I said, in great agitation. "You do not know whom you are caring for; you do not know whose hand you are holding in yours."

And now, following that irresistible impulse which urges every nature that is upright at heart to refuse at all hazards gratitude which it is conscious of not deserving, I confessed my grievous

fault; how I had been resolved to run every risk to gain my liberty; that I had not, it is true, invited the overtures of the ruffian, but nevertheless had permitted them; how I had known of the plot and of the hour when it was to be carried out, and that I did not know why in the last moment the courage to do my part in it had failed me so that I turned my hand against the man whom I had voluntarily admitted as my comrade, and whose accomplice I must necessarily consider myself.

The superintendent allowed me to speak to an end, only retaining with a gentle pressure my hand, whenever I attempted to withdraw it. When I ceased speaking, he said--and even now, after so many years, on awaking in the night, I fancy I hear his voice:

"My dear young friend, it is not what our fancies, intentions, desires, represent to us as possible or even necessary, not what we believe we can do or ought to do, not what we have resolved to do, but it is what at any given moment we really do, that makes us what we are. The coward believes himself a hero until the moment of trial convicts him of cowardice; the brave man fancies that he will prudently avoid all perils, and plunges headlong into danger as soon as a cry for help reaches his ear. You believed yourself capable of lifting your hand against a defenceless man, and when you saw him attacked by a murderer, you sprang to his assistance. And do not say that you did not know what you were doing; or if you really did not know, you were following the irresistible promptings of your nature, and were just at that moment your real self. I and mine will evermore see in you the man who saved my life at the peril of his own."

"You would make me out better than I really am," I murmured.

"Even were that so," he answered, "few have my opportunity for knowing that the surest, often the only way to make a man better, is to take him for better than he is. Would to heaven that this secret of my craft were always as easy of employment as with you. And if I can help, as I joyfully trust I can, in refining the noble metal of your nature from the dross with which it may yet be mingled; if I can help to enlighten you in regard to yourself, to light up the path of your life which lies but dark before you, and from which you believe you have--and perhaps really have--wandered; in a word, to make you what you can be, and therefore ought to be--that would be but dealing you out justice in return for the sharp injustice which has brought you here; and I might thus repay the debt of gratitude which I owed you before you set foot in this house, let alone before you preserved for my children their father's life."

The soft light of the lamp fell upon his beautiful pale face, which seemed to beam upon me with mild radiance like a star out of the surrounding gloom; and his gentle voice came to my ear like the voice of some good spirit that in the stillness of the night speaks to some needy and stricken soul. I lay there without moving, without turning my eyes from him, and softly begged him to speak on.

"It is perhaps selfish in me to do so," he said, "if I now seize the moment when your soul awakes to fresh life, and is disposed to look with trusting child-like eyes upon the world it has regained, to teach you to know me, and, if possible, to love me, as I know and love you--I repeat it, not now for the first time. I knew you before you came here. You look at me with surprise, and yet nothing could be more simple. I always deeply loved my eldest brother, although in reality we only passed our childhood and boyhood together, and were then separated, never again to associate, nor indeed even to see each other, for the last fourteen years. For, whatever the world and his passions may have made of him, his was originally the fairest, noblest, bravest soul that ever was bestowed upon man. You can imagine what a blow to me was the news of his death; with what painful care I strove to learn everything connected with his death and its cause; how eagerly I seized an opportunity that offered to read the reports of the trial in which the name and actions of my unfortunate brother figured so conspicuously, and in which you were yourself so unhappily involved. From these reports I first learned to know you, I have long been accustomed to inspect reports of this kind, and know how to read between the lines of the text. Never was this skill more necessary to me than in this case; for never has the juristic understanding--or rather imbecility--divested of all psychological insight, committed grosser wrong than in your case; never did the hand of a dauber produce from an easily-outlined, sun-clear, youthful face, a more hideous caricature in black upon black. In almost every feature with which the accusation furnished it, I thought I could perceive and prove exactly the contrary. And had it not been my dearly-loved brother whose fault you were to expiate--if the whole trial had been foreign to me, instead of touching me nearly, and in a thousand painful ways, I would have made your cause my own, and tried to save you, if in my power. But I could do nothing for you; I could only exert all my influence to have you brought here instead of to N., where it was originally intended to send you.

"You came, I saw you as I had pictured you to myself; I found you just as I had thought. There may have been some apparent difference, but that was not the youth who, to rescue my brother, had rushed upon ruin; who had given himself up to justice that men might not say his father was his accomplice; who during the trial had knowingly damaged his own cause by obstinately refusing all information implicating others; whose manly candor in all other points would have touched any heart but the shriveled heart of a man of acts and processes. This was a man who had been wronged under the forms of law, whose clear soul had been darkened by the gloom of a dungeon.

"It was worthy of you that you attempted no concealment of your feeling of hatred, that you

proudly rejected what was offered you here, which others would have greedily seized. Let me be brief. The malady that had been so long incubating, which nothing but your unusually strong constitution was able to withstand so long, at last declared itself. In the frenzy of your disturbed mind you wished to show: 'This is what you have made out of me!' and the result showed that you had remained what you always were. You were carried away for dead from the place; a physician hastily called in gave some hope, but said that only the most unremitting care could save you. Where could you receive that care but here? Who could more faithfully watch over your life than he who owed you his own? What, in such a case, were to me the rules of the house, or the talk of men? We carried you into the first room, which happened to be the best for our purpose. We--that is, my wife, my daughter, who is older than her years, the faithful old Süssmilch, the physician, whom you will learn to love as he deserves, and myself--we have fought faithfully and bravely with the death that threatened you; and the women wept, and the men shook each other by the hand when your strong nature triumphed over its enemy, and the physician said to us--a week ago--'He is saved.' And now enough; perhaps too much for to-day. If from our conversation you have received the impression, and will bear it with you into your sleep, that you are among friends that love you, that is all I wish. I hear Süssmilch coming; I wanted to relieve him to-night, but he says he cannot leave his prisoner. And now good night and good rest."

He passed his hand softly over my brow and eyes, and left the room. My soul was filled with his words. No man had ever spoken to me like this. Was it really myself? Had my gloomy soul departed during my long sickness, and given place to a purer, brighter spirit? Be it as it might, it was sweet--almost too sweet to last. But I would keep it as long as I could, as one holds fast the refrain of some lovely melody. I did not move, I did not open my eyes, when I heard by a slight rustling in the room that my faithful guardian was making his preparations for the night.

How could I do otherwise than rest sweetly, so richly blessed; than rest calmly, so faithfully guarded?

CHAPTER V.

In the shady garden, especially reserved for the use of the superintendent and his family, there was at the farthest corner a little garden-house, which stood upon the old city-wall, and in the family rejoiced in the pompous name of *Belvedere*, because from it a charming view might have been had, over the ramparts, of a large part of the strait and a still larger part of the island, if one could only have opened the windows. But the window-frames were very old, and rotten and warped with age; the sashes were narrow, and the regular pattern they once presented could scarcely now be discerned in the small, lead-set panes of stained glass which had once belonged to an adjacent chapel, now in ruins. The house was to a certain extent a ruin, as the wood of which it was built had not entirely resisted for so many years the influences of the sun, the rain, and the sea-breeze; and it was in consequence but seldom used, far more rarely than the space immediately in front of it, which was, in reality, the summer residence of the family, where they passed the best part of the time in fine weather.

This spot fully deserved their preference. On a level with the garden-house and the crest of the wall, and thus considerably higher than the rest of the garden, it was reached by a refreshing breeze from the near sea, while but rarely did a ray of the noon sun pierce the thick foliage of the old plane-trees that surrounded it. The spaces between the trunks of these trees were filled up with the green wall of a living hedge, which added to the cosy, secluded character of the spot, and threw into bold relief the figures of six *hermæ* of sandstone. Two round pine tables, painted green, stood on either side, with the needful chairs, and invited to work or to reverie.

Of the two persons who were sitting here one fine afternoon in August, about a fortnight after I had been able to leave my room, the one was occupied--if day-dreaming may be called an occupation with the other; while the other was really diligently at work. The dreamer was myself; and a light covering, which, despite the warmth of the day, was thrown across my lap, seemed meant to indicate that I was still a convalescent, to whom dreaming is allowed and work forbidden; while the other was a young maiden of about fourteen years, and her work consisted in drawing a life-size head *à deux crayons* upon a sketching-board. During her work she frequently raised her eyes from her sketching-board to me, and if I must name the subject of my dreams, I must confess that it was these eyes of hers.

And indeed one did not need to be twenty years old, and a convalescent, and in addition precisely the one upon whom these eyes were so often fixed with that peculiar look at once decisive and doubtful, piercing and superficial, which the painter casts upon his model--I say one did not need to be either of these, let alone all three at once, to be fettered by these eyes. They were large and blue, with that depth in them which has a surface on which play every emotion of

feeling, every glancing light and passing shadow, and which yet remains in itself something unfathomable. Once already, and that not so long before, I had looked into eyes that were unfathomable, at least for me, but how different were these! I felt the difference, and yet was not able precisely to define it. I only knew that these eyes did not confuse and disquiet me, did not kindle me into a flame to-day to chill me as with ice to-morrow; but that I could gaze into them again and again as one gazes into the clear sky, full of blissful calm, and no wish, no desire awakens within us, unless it be the longing to have wings.

What possibly may have caused these large deep eyes of the maiden to appear larger and deeper, was the circumstance that they were by far the chief beauty of her face. Some said the only beauty; but I could not at that time agree with this opinion. Her features were indeed not perfectly regular, and certainly not at all what is called striking, but there was nothing ignoble about them; on the contrary, all was refined and full of character, at once bright and thoughtful, designed in soft yet well-marked lines. Especially did this apply to the mouth, which seemed to speak even when the lips were shut. And this bright, intelligent, rather pale face was inclosed by two thick plaits of the richest blond hair, which, as was then the fashion, commenced at the temples and were carried under the ears to the back of the head--almost too heavy a frame, one would have said, for the delicate head, which was usually inclined a little forward or to one side. This attitude, combined with her usual seriousness of expression, gave the maiden an appearance of being several years older than she really was. But work and care soon brush away the first lustre of youth; and she, though hardly more than a child, knew what work was but too well, and over her young life care had already cast its gloomy shadow.

CHAPTER VI.

At this moment, however, a smile played over her serious face. She looked over her sketching-board at me and said: "You can get up, if you wish."

"Have you finished?" I asked, availing myself of the permission, and going behind her chair. "Why, you are still at work on the eyes. How can you have so much patience?"

"And you so much impatience?" she asked in return, quietly going on with her drawing. "You are just like our little Oscar. When he has planted a bean, five minutes afterwards he digs it up again to see if it has grown at all."

"But he is only seven years old."

"Old enough to know that beans do not grow so fast as that."

"You always find fault with Oscar, and after all he is your pet."

"Who says so?"

"Benno told me so yesterday, in strictest confidence. I was not to tell you."

"Then you ought not to have told me."

"But he is right."

"No, he is not right. Oscar is the smallest, and therefore I must look after him the most. Benno and Kurt can get along without me."

"Except their exercises, which you correct for them."

"Now take your seat again."

"I may speak, may I not?"

"Certainly."

I had taken my seat, but several minutes passed while I sat silently watching her work. A ray of the evening sun, which pierced the thick foliage of the great plane, fell upon her head and surrounded it with an aureole.

"Fräulein Paula," I said.

"Paula," she answered, without looking up.

"Paula, then."

"Well?"

"I wish I had a sister like you."

"You have a sister."

"But she is so much older than I, and never cared much for me; and now she of course will have nothing more to do with me."

"Where did you say that she lives?"

"On the Polish frontier. She has been married, these ten years, to an officer in the customs. She has a number of children."

"Then she has enough to do with them; you must not be angry with her."

"I am not angry with her; I hardly know her; I believe I should pass her by if I met her on the street."

"That is not well; brothers and sisters should hold together. If I thought that ten or twenty years hence I should meet Benno or Kurt or my little Oscar on the street and they would not know me, I should be very unhappy."

"They would know you, even if fifty years had passed."

"I should be an old woman then; but I shall never be so old."

"Why not?"

"By that time the boys will have long been men, and will have wives and children, and my father and my mother will long have been buried, and what should I then do in the world?"

"But you will marry too."

"Never," she replied.

Her voice was so serious, and her great blue eyes that looked over the board at my forehead, which she was then drawing, had so grave an expression, that I could not laugh, as I at first felt disposed to do.

"Why?" I inquired.

"When the boys can do without me, I will be too old."

"But you cannot always go on correcting their exercises."

"I do not know; it seems to me as if I should always do it."

"Even when they are learning Latin and Greek?"

"I learn Latin with them now; why should I not learn Greek too?"

"Greek is so desperately hard; I tell you, Paula, the irregular verbs--no human creature can learn them unless it be gymnasium professors, and I never can believe that they are exactly men."

"That is one of your jokes, which you must not let Benno hear: he wants to be a teacher."

"I think I will get that notion out of his head."

"Do not do so. Why should he not be a teacher if he has a liking for it, and talent enough? I do not know anything more delightful than to teach any one something which I believe to be good and useful to him. And then it is a good position for one in Benno's circumstances. I have heard it said that when one makes no great pretensions, he can soon secure a modest sufficiency. My father, it is true, has other views: he would like Benno to be a physician or naturalist. But these are expensive professions to learn; and although my father always takes a hopeful view--but I am not sure that he always does."

Paula bent her head over her sketching-board, and went on with her drawing more assiduously than ever; but I saw that once or twice she raised her handkerchief to her eyes. It gave me pain to see it. I knew what anxiety, and that too well-founded, Paula felt for her father's health, whom she loved devotedly.

"Fräulein Paula," I said.

She did not correct me this time--perhaps did not hear me.

"Fräulein Paula," I said again, "you must not cherish such gloomy thoughts. Your father is not so ill: and then you would not believe what a race the Zehrens are. Herr von Zehren used to call the steuerrath a weakling, and yet he might take an undisputed place among those who account themselves robust men; but Herr von Zehren himself was a man of steel, and yet he once told me that his youngest brother was a match for two like him. And you see a strong constitution is everything, Doctor Snellius says, and so I say too."

"To be sure, if *you* say so----"

Paula looked up, and a melancholy smile played about her beautiful lips.

"You mean that a miserable scarecrow, such as I sit here, has no business to be talking about strength?"

"O no; I know how strong you were before you were ill; and how soon you would be strong again, if you would take proper care of yourself, which you do not always do. For example, you ought never to be sitting here without some wrappings, and you have let the coverlid fall off your lap; but----"

"But----?" said I, obediently drawing up the coverlid over my knees.

"I mean that it is not quite right to say that a strong constitution is everything. Kurt there is certainly the strongest of the boys, and yet Oscar can read, write, and cipher as well as he, though Kurt is nine years old, and Oscar only seven."

"But you see Oscar is your favorite."

"That is not kind of you," Paula said.

She said it gently and pleasantly, without a trace of offence, and yet I felt the blood rush to my cheeks. I felt as though I had struck a defenceless child.

"No, it was not at all kind," I said, with warmth; "it was a very unfeeling speech; I do not know how I could say it. But clever boys have always been held up to me as models, and the comparison always carried with it so many disagreeable allusions to myself, that the blood always rises to my head when I hear them talked about. It always makes me think how stupid I am."

"You ought not to call yourself stupid."

"Well then, that I know so little; that I have learned so very little."

"But that is nobody's fault but yours--that is, supposing it to be really the case."

"It is the case," I answered. "It is frightful how little I know. To say nothing at all about Greek, which I maintain to be too hard, and only invented by teachers on purpose to torment us, my Latin does not amount to much, and that is certainly my fault, for I have seen how Arthur, who I don't believe is a bit cleverer than I am, could get along with it very well when he tried. Your English books, in which you read so much, might all be Greek for me; and as for French--perhaps I can still conjugate *avoir* and *être*, but I doubt it. And yesterday, when Benno could not get his exercises right, and asked me, and I told him he must get them right himself--I don't mind telling you that I had not the slightest notion how to begin them--and when he afterwards got them right by himself, I felt shamed by a boy eleven years old; just as I have felt ashamed before Dr. Busch, our professor of mathematics, whenever, as he always did, he wrote under my work, 'Thoroughly bad,' or 'Quite remarkably bad,' or 'Very well copied,' or some such maliciousness."

While I thus remorsefully confessed my shortcomings, Paula looked steadily at me with her great eyes, from time to time shaking her head, as if she could not believe her ears.

"If this is really so----"

"Why do you always say 'if,' Paula? Little as I have learned, I have at least learned to tell the truth, and I would never attempt a falsehood with you."

The maiden blushed to her blond tresses.

"Forgive me," she said; "I did not mean to wound you; although I can scarcely believe that you--that you spent so ill your time at school. I only meant to say that you must make it good again; you must make up for that lost time."

"Easily said, Paula! How am I to begin? Benno knows more French, geography, and mathematics than I, and he is only eleven years old, and next month I am twenty."

Paula pushed the drawing-board away from her upon the table, and leaned her head upon her hand, apparently in order better to ponder over so desperate a case. Suddenly she raised her head and said:

"You must speak to my father."

"What shall I tell him?"

"All that you have told me."

"He will not be able to help me either."

"He will, be sure. You do not know how much my father knows. He knows everything--understands everything."

"That I well believe, Paula; but how can that help me? He can give me no part of his knowledge, even if he were so kind as to wish it."

"True, he cannot do that; you must work yourself; but how to work the best, and how to succeed the soonest, he knows, and will tell you if you ask him. Will you?"

"Yes, I will; but----"

"No--no 'buts.' I am not to say 'if,' so you must not say 'but.' Will you?"

"Yes."

As to utter this "yes" required some determination on my part, I spoke it in a firm loud voice. Paula folded her hands and bent her head, as if she were inwardly praying that my resolution might be blessed. Everything was calm around; only a bird twittered, and the red sunset-rays glanced through the twigs. It may have been a remnant of weakness which still clung to me, but a strange and solemn feeling possessed me. It was as though I were in a temple, and had just pronounced a solemn vow by which I broke away from my entire past, and devoted myself to a new life and to new obligations. And while thus thinking I gazed with fixed eyes at the dear maiden, who sat still, her hands folded, her thoughtful head bent--gazed until the tears came into my eyes, and trees, sunlight, and maiden were lost behind a misty veil.

At this moment clear voices came ringing from the garden; it was Paula's brothers, who had finished their task in the house, and now were joyously hurrying to their favorite spot where they were certain of finding their sister. Paula gathered up her drawing materials, and was spreading a sheet of tissue-paper over her drawing, when the boys came bounding up the hill at full speed to us.

"I am first!" cried little Oscar, springing into his sister's arms.

"Because we let you," said Kurt, jumping upon my knee.

"Let's see, Paula," said Benno, laying his hand upon his sister's arm.

Paula threw back the tissue-paper. Benno looked attentively at the drawing, and then carefully compared it with the original. Kurt jumped down from my knee to examine his sister's work too. Even Oscar stuck his curly head from under her arm to see what was going on. It was a charming group, the three boys clustered around the sister, now turning their bright eyes upon me, and then fixing them on the picture.

"That is Uncle Doctor!" said Oscar.

Paula smiled and gently stroked the pretty boy's blond curls.

"You are silly," said Kurt; "he wears spectacles."

"It is well done, Paula," said Benno, with the air of a connoisseur.

"Do you think so?" she asked.

"Yes; only he is not so good-looking."

"Now you have all seen it," said Paula, in a tone of decision. "Benno, carry it into the Belvedere."

"I will carry it!" said Kurt.

"No, I!" cried Oscar.

"Have you not heard that I am to carry it?" said Benno. "You are too little."

"O yes, you are the big one!" said Kurt, scornfully.

"Hush, hush!" said Paula. "No disputes about it. He who is older is bigger, and cannot help it; and he who is younger is smaller, and cannot help it either."

"No, Paula," said Kurt, "that is not so, George is younger than father, and bigger too."

"Here comes father," said Paula, "and mother with him; and now be quiet."

The superintendent came up the path; his wife held his arm, and he was leading her slowly. Her eyes were covered with a broad green shade. Behind them, now on the left and now on the right side of the path, turning his uncovered head first in one way and then in another, with a hat and stick that he kept changing from hand to hand, came a short compact figure with a disproportionately large head, whose perfectly bald surface shone in the light of the evening sun.

This was Dr. Willibrod Snellius, resident physician and friend of the family.

I had arisen, and advanced a few paces to meet them.

"How are you now?" asked the superintendent, giving me his hand; "has your first long stay in the open air done you good?"

"We will ask about that early to-morrow morning--hm, hm, hm!" said the doctor.

Doctor Snellius had a habit of accompanying his remarks with a peculiar nasal sound which was half a grunt and half a snort, and always just an octave below his ordinary voice, which was very thin and of an unusually high pitch. This shrill voice was the trial of his life to the doctor, who was a man of great taste; and by the deep, growling sound he emitted from time to time, he strove, according to his own explanation, to convince himself that he was really a man and not a cock, as his voice would indicate.

"But you ordered it yourself, doctor," said the superintendent.

"Can I know from that that it will do him good?--hm, hm, hm!" said Dr. Snellius. "It was a medicine like another. If I always knew what effect my prescriptions would have, I would die Baron Willibrod Snellius of Snelliusburg--hm, hm, hm!"

"Any one to hear you would think that all your science was mere illusion," said Frau von Zehren, taking her seat upon a chair which Paula had placed for her.

"You have certainly but slight reason to consider us wizards, *gnädige Frau!*"

"Just because I do not so consider you, I do not expect from you what is probably impossible."

Frau von Zehren removed the disfiguring shade and raised her eyes with a look of thankfulness to the foliage of the trees which kindly softened the daylight for them. How lovely must those eyes have been while they were yet radiant with youth and happiness! How fair this face before sickness had wasted its beauteous features, and far too soon--for Frau von Zehren was hardly forty years of age--whitened the luxuriant hair! Pale and wasted as she was, she was still beautiful--at least to me, who, short a time as I had been near her, had already learned her angelic goodness, and how with the inexpressible devotion with which she clung to her husband and her children, her heart was full of sympathy for all who suffered or sorrowed.

"We shall soon have a visit from your friend Arthur," said the superintendent to me, drawing me a little to one side; "but I think you said he had not dealt with you in the most friendly manner."

"He has not," I answered. "I should speak falsely to say otherwise. But what brings him here?"

"He passed his examination at Easter, and is ordered to the battalion stationed here, with the rank of ensign. We shall probably see his parents also; and it may be the commerzienrath, if he condescends to manage his affairs in person. The matter in question is the inheritance of my brother, or so much of it as has thus far escaped the hands of justice and of his creditors, among whom, as you know, the commerzienrath holds the first place. The affair is rendered more difficult from the fact that all his papers were destroyed when the castle was burned. Constance has sent from Naples a formal renunciation of the inheritance, and so there remain really only my brother and the commerzienrath, as I for my part prefer to have nothing to do with the whole affair; indeed I will add that if it were not a duty to meet with dignity what is inevitable, I should look forward to the meeting with great repugnance. What will not be brought up at such a conference? What do you want, my child?"

Oscar must needs show his father an unlucky beetle that had run across his path. I remained sitting in the garden-house, sunk in painful reflection such as had not entered my mind since I had risen from my bed of sickness. Arthur! Constance! Arthur, who had so cruelly turned against me; Constance, who had so shamefully deceived me! The steuerrath, whom I knew to have been the cowardly accomplice of his brave brother; and the commerzienrath, who had traded in the recklessness of the Wild Zehren, and, in all likelihood, had hastened, if not brought about his ruin. What a tumult of emotions did not these names arouse within me! How hateful appeared to me all my past, into which these names and these persons were forever interwoven!--hateful as the island even now appeared through a dingy sulphur-yellow pane of the window at which I was standing. And now, as I turned away with a sigh, my glance fell through the open door upon the space under the plane-trees, filled with the pure bright evening light, and upon the persons that were moving in it. The superintendent and the doctor were walking, the latter first on the right and then on the left, and both in animated conversation; the two eldest boys were playing about the knees of their mother, who, sitting in her easy-chair, laughed and sported with them; Paula had taken the tea-things from the maid, and was setting the table, as they were about to take tea

in the open air, as was their custom in fine weather. How deftly she did it all; how silently, that the gentlemen might not be disturbed in their conversation, and that no clatter of plates should annoy her mother's sensitive nerves! And how with it all she had time to chat with the little Oscar, who kept close at her side, and to look if I was not exposing myself too much to the wind! Yes, the bright peaceful present was fairer than my dark stormy past; and yet it seemed as though a shadow was cast across this also. If Arthur came here; if, as was to be expected, he was received into the family as a kinsman; if, with his plausible address, he wormed his way into the confidence of these unsuspecting people, and won their favor with his insinuating manners--if he, who as a mere boy had practised the wiles of the rake, should dare--and his insolence would dare anything--to pay his insidious court to Paula, his cousin! I must still have been very weak, for I trembled at this thought from head to foot, and started violently as I perceived some one coming up the garden path towards the plane-trees. I thought for a moment it must be he whom I had once loved so dearly, and now so hated.

But it was no dandy ensign glittering in his new uniform, but a lean man dressed in black, wearing an extremely narrow white cravat, and a low-crowned hat with very broad brim, and whose sleek dark hair, unfashionably long, was seen, when he took off his hat in a polite salutation, to be parted in the middle, and combed back behind his ears. I knew the gentleman well; I had seen him often enough crossing the prison-yard with slow pace and bowed head, entering this or that cell, and after a while coming out again, always in the same attitude of humility. Indeed I already enjoyed the happiness of a personal acquaintance, as he had one day unexpectedly entered my sick-room, and begun to talk about the welfare of my soul; and I should more frequently have enjoyed this felicity, had not Dr. Snellius, who came in, put a stop to it by giving him to understand that at the time the question was not that of the welfare of my soul, but that of my body, which was not likely to be benefited by such exciting topics. Indeed this difference of opinion led to a rather lively dispute at the door of my room, and, as it seemed, they came to pretty hard words; so that it was clearly a proof of the placable disposition of the Deacon and Prison-Chaplain Ewald von Krossow, that he now, after bidding the family good evening, politely saluted the doctor, and even offered me his hand.

"How are you, my friend?" he asked, in his soft voice. "But how can it be other than well with you, since I find you still in the open air, though it is already growing somewhat chilly. This is no impeachment of your better knowledge, doctor. I well know that *præsente medico nihil nocet*."

The doctor gave a scrape with his right foot, like a cock who is preparing for battle, and crowed in his sharpest tones:

"It was unfortunate, then, that when Adam ate that unlucky apple, there was no doctor by. The poor fellow would probably be living now. Hm, hm!"

He glared wrathfully through his spectacles at the chaplain to see if his shot had told, but the chaplain only smiled.

"Still sitting in the seat of the scorner, doctor?"

"I must stay where I am; I do not belong to those who are never squeamish about pushing for a good place."

"But to those who are never at a loss for a sharp answer."

"Sharp only for souls as soft as butter."

"You know that I am a minister of peace."

"But you may change your service."

"And that it is my office to forgive."

"If you hold your office from above, probably the necessary understanding for it has not been forgotten."

"Doctor!"

"Herr von Krossow."

This conversation was hardly meant for my ears, at least on the chaplain's side, who spoke throughout, even to his last exclamation, in the gentle, deprecatory tone of wounded innocence, and now, with a pitying shrug of the shoulders, turned away and joined the others.

That game-cock, the doctor, whose antagonist had so unexpectedly quitted the field, wore an air of blank surprise for a moment, then burst into a hoarse crowing laugh, shook his arms like a pair of wings, and turned suddenly to me, as if he felt the greatest desire to turn his baffled pugnacity upon me.

"You would be acting more sensibly to go to your room."

"I have only been waiting for your orders."

"And now you have them; and I will see to their prompt execution myself."

He took my arm and hurried me so rapidly away, that I had hardly time to bid the company good-night. His ire had not evaporated: he snorted, he grunted, he clicked with his tongue, and growled at intervals: "The scamp--the scamp--the scamp!"

"You seem to have no very high opinion of our chaplain," I said.

"Don't you grow ironical, young man!" said the doctor, looking up at me. "High opinion! high fiddlesticks! How can there be but one opinion of such a fellow?"

"Yet the superintendent is always friendly to him."

"Because he is friendly to every one; and besides it does not occur to him that this is not a man but a snake. Yes, that is easy enough to do, when other honest folks are left to do the rudeness."

"That is no great trouble for you, doctor."

"Young man, I say, do not exasperate me. I tell you the thing is no trifling matter; for if I cannot drive the fellow away, he will sooner or later oust us all, and his kind friend the superintendent, the very first. He has done you an ill turn already."

"Me?"

"Yes, you, the superintendent, myself. He would like well to kill three birds with one stone."

"Tell me about it, doctor, I beg you."

"I would tell you without your asking. Sit down in your easy-chair and make yourself comfortable: it is likely to be the last time you will sit in it."

We had reached my room; the doctor pushed me into the easy-chair, while he stood before me--sometimes on one leg, sometimes on the other, but rarely on both at once--and spoke as follows:

"The case is simple, and therefore plain. To this pietistic, aristocratic, beggarly mawworm, who has had himself appointed prison-chaplain to let the light of his Christian humility shine before men, the humanitarian superintendent and the materialist doctor are an abomination. To a fellow like that, humanity is a democratic weakness, and matter he does not respect, unless it is eatable. With the deceased pastor Michaelis, a man of the good old rationalistic school, we lived as if we were in paradise; he and Herr von Zehren, or rather Herr von Zehren and he, in the twenty years that they worked together, made the establishment what it is; that is, a model, in every sense of the word; and during the five years that I have been here I have done all in my power to imbue myself with the spirit of these men, and I believe that I have indifferently well succeeded. Now for this half year, since Michaelis is dead, and this pietistic snake has wormed himself into our paradise, our peace has gone to the deuce; the snake crawls into every corner, and leaves the track of his slimy nature wherever he goes. The officers are demoralized, the prisoners mutinous. Such a plot as that which Cat-Kaspar hatched--thank heaven we are rid of the rascal; he is transferred to-day to N., where he ought to have been sent at first--would formerly have been impossible. Cat-Kaspar was a pet of Mr. Chaplain, who saw in him a precious, though not over-cleanly vessel, whose purification was his allotted task; and he begged the scoundrel out of the solitary confinement in which the superintendent had judiciously placed him. So it goes on; divine worship *publice*, prayers *privatim*, soul-saving exhortations *privatissime*. The Judas intrigues against us wherever and whenever he can, flatters the superintendent to his face, swallows down my rudeness, and thinks, 'I shall have you both soon,' like the owl when he heard the two bulfinches singing round the corner. And he thinks he has us by the wings already. You know, the president of the council, who is just such another mawworm, is his uncle, and uncle and nephew are hand and glove. The president, who is the superintendent's immediate superior, would have removed him long ago, if Minister von Altenberg, one of the last pillars left standing from the good old times, and Herr von Zehren's friend and patron, did not support him, though with but a feeble arm, it is true; for Altenberg is advanced in years, in ill health, and may die any day. In the meantime they work as they can, and collect materials to be water to the mill of the next excellency. And now listen: Assessor Lerch, my good friend, was with the president yesterday. 'My dear Lerch,' said the president, 'you perhaps can give me some information. There is another complaint against Superintendent von Zehren.' 'Another, Herr President?' asked Lerch. 'Unhappily, another. I have hitherto taken no action in these matters, though I have not disregarded them; but this case is so flagrant that I must take it in hand and report it to his excellency. Only think, my dear Lerch, Von Zehren has been guilty of the--folly, I will call it, of allowing the young man who gained such an unhappy notoriety in connection with the smuggling case in Uselin----' and now it all comes out that the superintendent, immediately after the catastrophe--out of which the denouncer had spun a pretty story, you may suppose--did not send you to the mouldy old infirmary, where you would infallibly have died, but took you into his own house, kept you here, and still keeps you, though you have been a convalescent for three weeks now; that he associates with you as with his equal; that he has brought you into his family, and indeed made you a member of it, so to speak. Why need I go into all the particulars? hm, hm, hm!"

The doctor had crowed up to the very highest note of his upper register, and had to grunt at

least two octaves lower to obtain his usual satisfactory reassurance.

"And you really hold that man as the denouncer?" I cried, angrily springing from my chair.

"I know it. Would I otherwise have been so rude today?"

I could not help laughing. As if growler needed any special provocation before he made free with the calves of an intrusive clodhopper! But the affair had a serious side. The thought that Herr von Zehren, to whom I owed such limitless gratitude, whom I so revered, should through me be brought into so unpleasant a position, was intolerable.

"Advise me, help me, doctor!" I besought him earnestly.

"Yes, advise, help--when I always told you that this state of things could not go on. However, you are so far right: the thing must be helped. And in truth there is but one expedient. We must be beforehand with the viper, and so for this time we shall draw his fangs. I know the superintendent. If he had an idea that they wished to take you from him, he would let his hand be hewn off before he would give you up. Now this evening do you complain of headache, and again to-morrow evening at the same time. Your room is on the ground-floor; at this moment there is not another vacant. Intermittent--quinine--a higher, more airy apartment--day after to-morrow you will be back in your old cell. Let me manage it."

So I let Doctor Willibrod Snellius manage it; and two days later I was sleeping, if not under lock and bolt, at least behind the iron gratings of my old cell.

CHAPTER VI.

I stood behind these iron gratings on the following morning, and looked sadly out of the window. Strangely enough, I had not thought the evening before that these gratings could produce any unpleasant sensations in me now, and yet such was the case. They served as a grave reminder to me of what lately I had almost forgotten, that I was, after all, a prisoner. "It makes no difference," the superintendent said, when I took leave of him, and all had vied to make a family festival of the last day that I was to spend under their roof; but be that as it might, there *was* a difference. My breakfast was not now as appetizing as it had been when I sat at it under the high trees of the quiet garden with Frau von Zehren and Paula; and even though I could go, if I chose, into the garden, which seemed to give me a friendly greeting, I must after a certain time return here again.

I looked around the cell, and now first remarked what pains they had taken to make me forget where I was. There was the picture of the Sistine Madonna with the child, which I had grown to love so during my illness, and which was hung opposite my bed, just as it had hung in Paula's room. There stood upon the bureau the same two terra-cotta vases, and in each a couple of fresh roses. There was the easy-chair in which Dr. Snellius had falsely predicted that I had sat for the last time, and over the back hung a cover of crotchet-work on which I had seen Paula engaged the previous evening. There hung the same *étagère* with the same neatly-bound books; Goethe's *Faust*, Schiller's and Lessing's works, which Paula had so often urgently recommended me to read, and into which I had as yet hardly looked. They had done all they could to make my prison as endurable, as pleasant as possible; but did not the very pains they took show that it was a prison, and that the episode of my apparent freedom was at an end. Yes, they had been kind, inexpressibly kind to me, under the friendly smiling mask of Samaritan compassion to one sick unto death--a mask that must be laid aside, as soon as a Pharisee passed that way and looked askance upon the moving sight. No, no; I was and remained a prisoner, whether my chains were decked with roses or not.

Why had I not been able to break these chains? True, as I had begun, it was impossible; but why did I begin so clumsily? Why did I not keep to myself, calmly trusting in my own strength and my own craft, and in some lucky chance that must have offered sooner or later? Now, as things had happened, after I had incurred such a debt of gratitude to these people, after I had grown so attached to them, I was twice and thrice a prisoner. For the tempting pottage of friendship and love, I had bartered the first inalienable birthright of man, which is the very breath of his soul--the right of liberty. Seven years! Seven long, long years!

I strode up and down my cell. For the first time since my sickness I felt something of my former strength; it was but a remnant, but enough to bring back a part of my old roving humor, of my old restlessness. How would it be then when I felt myself all that I had ever been? Would it not, combined with the knowledge that nothing held me but my own will, drive me to frenzy?

Would it not have been better if they had left me in my old slavery, with the dream that some day I should be able to break their bonds, even if this dream was never verified?

"Here is a young man who wants to speak with us," announced the sergeant. Since my sickness when "we" had come through so much together, he frequently used in speaking to me the same plural which he employed with all who, in his opinion, had acquired an entire claim on his honest heart; for example, the superintendent and all his family, including the doctor, and now myself.

"What sort of a man!" I asked, while a joyous shiver ran through me. As long as I had been in confinement this was the first time that any one had come to see me; and somehow I connected the extraordinary event of a visitor with the thoughts that had been passing through my mind.

"Looks like a sailor," answered the sergeant. "Says he has news of our dead brother."

This sounded extremely improbable. My brother Fritz had been dead for five years; he had fallen from the foreyard overboard one stormy night, and was drowned. The ship had returned in safety; there was no mystery of any sort connected with his death; and if any one now brought me intelligence of his end, there must be some other purpose involved with it.

"Can I speak with him, Süssmilch?" I asked, in the most indifferent tone I could assume, while my heart seemed to rise in my throat.

"We can speak to whom we like."

"Then let him in; and, Süssmilch, if he is a sailor he would like a glass of something; perhaps you could get me something of the kind?"

What superfluous trouble a man with an evil conscience gives himself and others! I must needs lie, always a trial to me, to get the old man out of the way; and the honest Süssmilch, who had not a thought of being present at my interview with the stranger, had to go down two flights of stairs into the cellar.

"But we mustn't touch a drop ourselves," said the old man, warningly.

"Have no fear."

He went, after first introducing the visitor--a broad-shouldered deeply-bronzed man in sailor dress who was an entire stranger to me.

CHAPTER VII.

I gazed in mute astonishment at the stranger, whose looks and manner were, to use the mildest expression, very singular; but was really frightened when he, so soon as the door had closed behind the sergeant, without a word and with the haste of a man completely out of his senses, but still with the dexterity of a clown in a circus, began to tear off his clothes, and to my utter amazement appeared in precisely the same dress as that which now lay in its various elements at his feet, while a triumphant smile disclosed two rows of the whitest teeth in the world.

"Klaus!" I exclaimed, in joyous amazement.

The white teeth were now visible to the very last grinder. He seized both my extended hands, but remembered at once that such friendly manifestations did not belong to his part, and hurriedly whispered:

"Into them, quick! They will fit--folds will open out of themselves--only quick before he comes back!"

"And you, Klaus?"

"I stay here."

"In my place?"

"Yes."

"But they will find it out in five minutes."

"Still you have time to get out; and getting out and getting off is one and the same thing to you."

"And do you suppose that you can do such a thing without being punished?"

"At the worst, they can but shut me up in your place, and that will not be for long. With the locks I can easily deal, and here"--he showed me a watch-spring-saw, which he drew out of his thick hair--"with this I will cut that grating through in a quarter of an hour."

"Klaus, all that cannot have come out of your own head."

"No, out of Christel's; but I beg you make haste."

I kicked the sailor-dress, which still lay upon the floor, under the bed, for I heard the sergeant coming along the corridor. He knocked at the door, and when I opened it, handed me a bottle of brandy and a glass.

"But we are no bear, and won't drink a drop ourselves, will we?"

Klaus stared in astonishment when he saw the dreaded keeper turned into so obliging an attendant.

I closed the door again, and then fell on the good fellow's neck. The tears stood in my eyes.

"Dear, good Klaus," I cried, "you and Christel are the kindest hearts in the world, but I cannot accept your generous offer. I would not have accepted it under any circumstances; and as it is, it is not to be thought of. I could go away from here at an moment, but I will not, Klaus, I will not."

Here I embraced Klaus again, and gave free course to the tears which I had been repressing. I felt as if now for the first time I knew what a prisoner was, since I had declared that I wished to be one, and thus made myself one of my own choice. Klaus, who naturally had no conception of what was passing within me, constantly endeavored, while casting uneasy glances at the door, to persuade me to let him take my place; he would wager his head that he would be out in twenty-four hours.

"Klaus, Klaus!" I cried, clapping him on the plump cheeks, "you want to deceive me. Confess now, you have no expectation of getting out so soon."

"Well, anyhow," he answered, very shame-facedly, "my wife thought----"

"Your wife, Klaus! your wife!"

"We have been married these two months."

I thrust Klaus into the easy-chair, sat down before him, and begged him to tell me everything. It would be the greatest kindness he could do me, I said, if he could tell me that all was going well with him; that I was by no means in so evil a straight as he imagined in his true heart of friendship; and I gave him in brief words a sketch of my adventures in the prison, my attempt to escape, my illness, and my friendly relations with the superintendent and his family.

"You see," I concluded, "that in every sense I am well taken care of; and now I must know how things have gone with you and Christel, and how you managed so soon to become man and wife. Only twenty-two, Klaus, and married already! How do you expect to get on? And your Christel has let you come away? Klaus, Klaus, I don't like the look of that."

I laughed at him, and Klaus, who now at last perceived that nothing could come of his plan to rescue me, laughed also, but not very heartily.

"There it is," said he. "How will she look when I come back without you."

"Without *thee*,^[6] I said, Klaus. I am not going to put up with any breach of our old brotherhood now, or I shall think you too proud to be on terms of *thee* and *thou* with a prisoner. And how will she look when you come back without me?"

"There it is," said Klaus, "how will she, indeed! We are so happy; but one or the other of us was always saying, 'and he is shut up there!' and then there was an end of all our happiness, especially because in a manner it is Christel's fault that you are here; for that morning at Zanowitz----"

"Klaus," I interrupted him, "do you know then that for a while I believed that Christel herself gave the information to get rid of your father?"

"No," said Klaus, "she did not do that, thank God; though more than once she was quite desperate and thought of killing herself."

He wiped his forehead with his hand; I had touched a painful subject. We sat awhile without speaking, when Klaus commenced again:

"One good result it has had: 'he'"--Klaus had already adopted Christel's habit of never calling 'him' by his name--"he' of course had to give up the guardianship of Christel, and as a person of damaged reputation, could not interfere much with me. Aunt Julchen in Zanolwitz, with whom Christel stayed after that day, fitted Christel out, and we might have lived like angels, if--" and Klaus, with a melancholy look at me, shook his big head.

"And you are still in Berlin, in the commerzienrath's machine-shops?" I asked, to give his thoughts another direction.

"Of course," he said, "I have been promoted already; I am now foreman in my shop."

"And you earn plenty of money?"

"So much that we don't know what to do with it."

"Your Christel is an excellent housekeeper----"

"And washes and irons to that extent that our whole house smells of nothing but soap and flat-irons."

Klaus showed his teeth; I pressed his hand in token of sympathy with his happiness, though I had never been especially ravished by the perfumes he so highly prized; but now more urgently than ever I desired to know how this happy young pair ever made up their minds so cruelly to risk their good fortune.

"I told you already," answered Klaus, "that we never were quite happy. Wherever we went or stood, and above all when we were in real good humor about anything, the thought always came up: if he could only be here! And four weeks ago yesterday, when we had some *Bierkaltschale*^[71]--no, no, we could stand it no longer."

"Some *Bierkaltschale*?" I asked, in some surprise.

"Yes; don't you know how you always used to have some made for you at the forge, in the summer-time, when you wanted to give yourself a treat? Christel often made it for you. Well, then, just four weeks ago we were drinking some--they have an excellent beer for it in Berlin, much better than ours, that was always a little bitter--and I was enjoying it, when Christel on a sudden let the ladle fall and began to howl, and I knew at once what she was thinking of, and then I began, and we kept on drinking and howling, and when we had finished, we both said together: It can't go on this way! So then we put our heads together----"

"As you did that evening when I met you on the heath?"

"And contrived a plan at last," continued Klaus, who would have turned red at my indiscreet remark, had the color of his complexion allowed it, "that is to say, Christel contrived it. She had read just such a story, only the prisoner was a king's son, and his deliverer was a knight, who disguised himself as a priest--of course that wouldn't do, but a sailor would do, Christel said, for here in the workhouse there was sure to be many a tarpaulin, and of course there would be some coming to see them. And anyhow, Christel said, a sailor's dress was the best disguise in a seaport. So we practised the whole thing----"

"You practised it?"

"To be sure; it wasn't so easy; we went through it every night for a week when I came home from work, until Christel said at last she thought it would do at a pinch."

"It went capitally, Klaus!"

"Yes, but what good has it done?" asked Klaus, with a regretful look at the bed under which the disguise was lying, "when I had my ears bored to put these rings in? and when Christel every morning rubbed my face with bacon----"

"With bacon?"

"I must look like a sailor from the other side, Christel said, and for that there is nothing so good as to rub your face with bacon and then scorch it at a furnace."

"You look like a mulatto, Klaus."

"So Christel said; but what good would it do if I looked like a negro, when you won't come out?"

"It does this good, Klaus," I cried, catching the faithful fellow round the neck, "that you two have given me one of the happiest moments of my life, and which I should not have had had I taken your generous offer. God bless you both for your love to me; and when I am free again and am a rich man, I will repay it with interest. And now, my dear good fellow, you must go; I have to go and see the superintendent. And do you hear, Klaus, you go right back without wasting a minute. And one thing more: if your eldest is a boy----"

"He is to be named George; we settled that some time ago," said Klaus, showing his very farthest grinders.

I put Klaus out of the door, and was pacing up and down the room, somewhat agitated by what had just passed, when I bethought me of the disguise which I had pushed under the bed, and which, in our excitement, we had quite forgotten. I now drew it out, and could not resist the temptation to try on the jacket of rough cloth. It was as Klaus had said. In the sleeves, the back, and the skirts, there were folds so dexterously made and caught with stitches, that I had only to give a smart pull and they came out; and although I was a head taller and six inches wider across the shoulders than Klaus, the garment fitted me as if it had been made for me. So was it with the waistcoat and the trousers: all were so accurately made that--now that my illness had left me much thinner than I had been--I could very conveniently put them on over the clothes I was wearing.

Just as I had finished doing so, some one knocked at the door. It could only be the sergeant or the superintendent, who usually came at this hour. I seated myself at the table with my back to the door and called, "Come in!"

It was the sergeant.

He thrust in his head and began: "We are to go to the captain at eleven o'clock to-day, because----" here he checked himself, as it looked odd that the strange sailor sat there so still and I was nowhere to be seen. He came into the room and asked: "Where are we, then?"

"Gone to the devil!" I answered without turning round, imitating as well as I could the broad *Plattdeutsch* which Klaus had used as a part of his stratagem.

"No stupid jokes!" said the old man.

"And now it is my turn!" I cried, rushing past the astonished sergeant out at the door, which I flung to, and turned the key.

There lay the long corridor before me: not a soul was to be seen. It was an easy thing to run down the steps and into the house-yard, and from this by a side-gate which I knew was never closed at this hour, to get into the adjoining alley. To find out Klaus's lodging would be an easy matter; probably I should reach it before him--in ten minutes we could be out of the town, and---

"Good morning, Herr Süßmilch, how are we?" I asked, opening the door again.

The sergeant was standing just where I had left him; and to judge from the confounded look of his honest face, had not been able to comprehend what it all meant. I pulled off the broad-brimmed hat, made him a low bow with a scrape of the right foot, and said: "Have the honor to place myself again under your worshipful charge."

"After that, one can take a toothpick for a barn door!" exclaimed the old man, who began now to get a glimmering of the real state of the case. "That codfish of a smoke-dried flounder! Isn't it enough to turn a body into a bear with seven senses?"

"Hush!" I cried, "I hear the doctor coming. Not a word, my good Süßmilch!" and I pushed the old man out of the door, by which Doctor Snellius entered in his usual hasty fashion, with his hat in his hand. He started when he saw me, gave a glance round the room, looked at me again, and went out without saying a word.

I pulled off my sailor-dress in a moment, thrust it under the bed, and called after him in my natural voice:

"Why do you go away, doctor?"

He turned back instantly, came into the room, sat down upon a chair in front of me, and stared steadily at me through his round spectacles. I fancied he looked paler; and feared that perhaps I had carried the jest too far, and offended my irascible friend.

"Doctor----" I began.

"Something very singular has just happened to me," he interrupted me, always with the same fixed look.

"What is the matter, doctor?" I inquired, startled at his looks and the unaccustomed gentleness of his tone.

"Nothing at this moment; but I have just been the subject of a most remarkable hallucination."

"Of what, did you say?"

"A hallucination. A complete and perfect hallucination. When I first entered your chamber, my friend, I saw, standing before me, a sailor of just your height, or possibly an inch or an inch and a half shorter, but of your breadth across the shoulders, in a rough sailor jacket, gray trousers, wide straw-hat like the traders to the West Indies wear; with exactly no, not exactly, but very

nearly your features. I saw the figure as plainly as I see you at this moment--it could not have been more distinct. The illusion was so perfect that I supposed they had put you in another room, and went to ask Süssmilch what he meant by giving our healthiest room to the first comer. Do not smile, my friend; it is no laughing matter--at least for me. It is the first time that anything of the kind has happened to me, though my frequent congestions of the head might have prepared me to expect it, I know that I shall die of apoplexy; and even if I had not known it before, I should know it now."

He took out his watch and examined his pulse.

"Strange to say, my pulse is perfectly normal; and all this morning I have felt unusually well and cheerful."

"My dear doctor," I said, "who knows what you saw? You learned men have such singular notions, and out of the merest gnat you will make a scientific elephant."

"Scientific elephant is good," said the doctor; "nobody would have expected such an expression from an unscientific mammoth like you--very good! but you are mistaken. That may apply to others, but not to me. I observe too coolly to commit gross blunders. I have told you already that my pulse is normal, exactly normal, and all my functions in perfect order; therefore the thing must have a deeper psychological cause, which just now escapes my perceptions; for the psychological cause----"

"Then at all events you have a psychological cause," said I, who was mischievous enough to be delighted at the serious scruples of my learned friend.

"I have; and I will tell it to you, even at the risk of more of your malicious grins. I was dreaming all night long of you, you mammoth, and always the same dream, though in different forms, namely, that you either were escaping, or had escaped, or were about to escape from here. Sometimes you were lowering yourself by a rope from the window, or clambering over the roofs, or leaping down from the wall, or any other neck-breaking trick that one might expect from a fellow of your physical and moral peculiarities; and you were every time in a different dress, now a chimney-sweep, now a mason, a rope-dancer, and so forth. As soon as I awaked, I asked myself what this dream could mean, and I said to myself--True, George Hartwig is now again in his prison, but the exceptional position in which he stands still continues, and so does the danger for our valued friend the superintendent, which lies in an arrangement which we must acknowledge to be not merely irregular, but contrary to the rules. For every creature is only content in the element to which it is born. The frog would spring from a golden chair into his native swamp; and the bird escapes when he can, though you cram his cage with sugar. Will it not be so with this youth, who of all men must most long for liberty? May he not in a moment of weakness forget what consideration he owes to Herr von Zehren, that the latter to a certain extent risks his position on his account, and in this moment of weakness and forgetfulness make his escape? And do you know, young mammoth, I determined that, as I also had some claim upon you, I would privately and in all friendship ask you to give me your word that if such a temptation seizes you, you will only think of your own honor. This was what I had in my mind when I came up the corridor, and I was in some degree undecided, for I thought he will have taken this resolution already, and to give his word to me will be superfluous. But now, after this singular projection of my dream into reality--a *memento mori* to me, moreover--I beg you earnestly to give me your word. Hm, hm, hm!"

I had ceased to laugh, long before he had reached this conclusion; and now, while the worthy doctor tuned down his voice, extended him my hand, and said with emotion:

"With all my heart I give you my word, although it is true that I have given it to myself, and that not ten minutes ago. And as for the hallucination, you may make your mind easy, doctor; here lies your *memento mori*."

With these words I pulled out the sailor's dress from under the bed, slipped on the jacket, and put on the hat, to make the proof more convincing.

"So you did really think of escaping, then?" said the doctor, adroitly dropping the hallucination, in order at least to preserve the dream.

"No," I answered, "but others tempted me, and I strove with them, and they fled leaving this garment behind them."

"Which you may hang as a votive offering on the temple-wall," replied Doctor Snellius, thoughtfully; "for though I do not know how it happened, I see this much, that you have escaped a great danger; and now--now for the first time you belong to us."

There was a saying in the prison that one could tell a lie to any one, but not to the superintendent.

Superintendent von Zehren had a way of looking at the person with whom he was speaking, to which none but a front of brass could have been callous. Not that one could read in his glance the endeavor to be as comprehensive and as penetrating as possible; his eye had in it nothing of the spy or the inquisitor; on the contrary, it was large and limpid as the eye of a child, and just in this

lay the power which few men could resist. As he sincerely wished well to every one with whom he spoke, and on his own part had nothing to conceal, this large, clear, dark eye rested steadily upon one, with the gaze of the sun-bright gods, who do not wink like weak mortals living in twilight and concealment.

When, with this look fixed upon me, he asked me about the man whom he had sent to me that morning, I told him at once who the man was, and what was his object in coming. And I further told him in what frame of mind he had found me, and how strong the temptation had been, but that, even without the assistance of the good doctor, I had conquered it, I might venture to say, at once and for ever.

The superintendent listened to my narrative with all the signs of the most lively interest. When I ceased, he pressed my hand, and then turning to his writing-table, handed me a paper, which he said he had just received, and which he desired me to read.

The paper was an inquiry from the president, couched in polite but very decided phraseology, as to the facts referred to in a certain anonymous charge which had reached him, and the superintendent was called upon at once to put an end to an arrangement which compromised his position and character, and to treat the young man in question with the severity which the dignity of the law, of the judges, and his own, alike demanded.

"You wish to know," said the superintendent, as I laid down the paper with an inquiring look, "what I intend to do. Exactly as if I had never received this. I do not desire to know whether Doctor Snellius, whose friendship for me often gives him a sharper insight in matters that concern me, than I have myself, was playing a little comedy when he hurried you off so abruptly yesterday, but I am very glad it so happened. For it would have wounded my pride to be compelled to sacrifice you, to whom I am so much attached, to a pitiful bit of chicanery. According to the letter of the law, they are right in insisting that a prisoner cannot be a guest in the superintendent's family; and this point I should have had to yield; but beyond this I am fully determined not to yield a single step. To decide in what kind of work a prisoner shall be engaged, and how he shall employ his hours of recreation, is my incontestable right, which I will not suffer to be curtailed by a hair's breadth, and which I will maintain through all the tribunals, even though it should be brought before the king. And I am not sorry that this has happened, since it gives us an occasion to speak of our mutual relations, and to have a clear understanding of the way we shall pursue in future. If you are disposed to hear what I think on the subject, we will go into the garden. My lungs suffer to-day from the confined air of a room."

We stepped from his office into the garden. I offered him my arm, as my strength was now sufficient for this service, and we walked in silence between the flower-beds, from which the warm south wind wafted us the perfume of wallflowers and mignonnette, to the grateful shade of the plane-trees. The superintendent took his seat upon one of the benches, motioned to me to place myself at his side, and after a silent glance of gratitude at the leafy crowns of the noble trees that afforded the refreshing coolness, he said:

"If we are to believe the jurists, by whose words the students everywhere swear, Punishment is the right of Wrong. This definition, by its simplicity, recommends itself to the logicians at their desks, but I doubt extremely whether the Founder of the Faith would have been content with it. He did not declare that to be stoned was the right of the guilty woman; on the contrary, by summoning him who was without sin to cast the first stone, he showed that under the smooth logical surface of the legal code there lay a deeper principle, which only reveals itself to the eye that can see and the heart that can feel. To such an eye and such a heart it soon is clear that every wrong which is to be punished in order that it may have its right, is, if not always, almost always, a wrong at second, third, or hundredth hand; and thus the punishment rarely reaches the one who may have deserved it. So the justest judge, whether he will or not, resembles the sanguinary general who orders every tenth man to be led off to execution, not because he is guiltier than the other nine, but because he is the tenth.

"But this is not apparent to the logician, who smiles with satisfaction if he does not come into conflict with his principle of Identity and his principle of Contradiction; nor to the judge who has before him but an isolated fact, torn from its connections, and who has to give judgment when he has not all the parts in his hand, not to mention the visible and invisible threads upon which these parts are necessarily strung. They both are like the crowd which judges a picture by its effect alone; while the connoisseur knows how it came into existence, what colors the painter had upon his palette, how he blended them, how he handled his brush, what difficulties he encountered, and how he overcame them, or why it was that he failed of his aim. And as the only true criticism is creative, which takes the secrets of art as the starting-point of its judgment, so that none but an artist can be a real critic, even so men's actions can only be judged by those to whom the old wise word applies, that nothing human is alien to them, because they have experienced in themselves and in their brethren the whole misery of humanity. But for this are necessary, as I said before, the feeling heart and the seeing eye, and an ample opportunity for training and using both.

"Who has a better opportunity for this purpose than the superintendent of a prison? He and the physician, when their views coincide and they strive together towards the same ends, alone can know what the most conscientious judge has no means of learning, how the man whom mankind have thrust out from among them for a time or forever, became what he now is; how,

born thus, and of such parents, brought up in such associations, he acted thus and not otherwise at such a critical moment. Then when the superintendent, who is of necessity the confessor of the criminal, has learned his life in all its details, and the physician has discovered the defects with which he has suffered for years, when they consult upon his case, the question only is if he can be helped and how; and in the so-called prison they see, respectively, but a reformatory and an infirmary. For--and this is a point of infinite importance, which physiology will yet compel jurisprudence to acknowledge--nearly all who come here are diseased in the ordinary acceptation of the word; nearly all suffer from organic defects, and in almost every case the brain lacks the proper volume which a normal man needs for normal activity, for a life which shall not bring him into conflict with the law.

"And how could it be otherwise? Almost without exception they are children of want, of wretchedness, of moral and physical malformation, the Pariahs of Society which in its brutal egotism sweeps by with garments gathered up for fear of defilement, or thrusts them away with cruel violence from its path. The right of wrong! Insolence of Phariseism! A time will come when this invention of the philosophers will be placed on a level with that other of the theologians, that death is the atonement for sin, and men will thank God that at last they have awaked from the night of ignorance which gave birth to such monsters.

"That day will come, but not so soon.

"We are still deeply sunk in the mire of the Middle Ages, and no man can yet see when this flood of blood and tears will have passed away. However far the glances of a few brighter intellects may reach into the coming ages, the progress of humanity is unspeakably slow. Wherever we look abroad into our own time, we behold the unbeautiful relics of a past that we had believed to be overthrown long ago. Our systems of government, our nobility, our religious institutions, our official arrangements, the organization of our armies, the condition of the laboring classes--everywhere the scarcely hidden relation between masters and slaves; everywhere the critical choice whether we will be hammer or anvil. All our experience, all our observation seems to prove that there is no third alternative. And yet no greater misconception of the real state of the case is possible. Not hammer *or* anvil, hammer *and* anvil is the true word, for every man is both, and both at once, in every moment of his life. With the same force with which the hammer strikes the anvil, the anvil strikes the hammer; the ball is thrown off from the wall at the same angle under which it impinges upon it; the elements which the plant has appropriated in its growth, it must exactly restore in its decomposition--and so throughout all nature. But if nature unconsciously obeys this great law of action and reaction, and is thereby a cosmos and not a chaos, then should man, whose existence is subordinated to precisely the same law, acquire an intelligent knowledge of it, and endeavor intelligently to shape his life in conformity with it; and his worth increases or diminishes exactly in proportion as he does this or neglects it. For though the law remains the same, whether the man knows it or knows it not, yet for himself it is not the same. Where it is known, where the inseparableness, the unity of human interests, the inevitableness of action and reaction, are recognized, there bloom freedom, equity, justice, which are all but varying expressions for the same law. Where it is not known, and he fancies in his blindness that he can with impunity make a tool of his fellow-man, there flourish rankly slavery and tyranny, superstition and priestcraft, hatred and contempt, in all their poisonous luxuriance. What man would not naturally wish rather to be hammer than anvil, so long as he believes that the choice lies open to him? But what reasonable man will not cheerfully renounce the part of hammer, when he has learned that the part of anvil will not and cannot be spared him, and that every blow that he gives smites also his own cheek; that the serf corrupts the master as well as the master the serf, and that in politics the guardian and the ward are rendered equally stupid. Would that the consciousness of this might at last penetrate to the mind of the German peoples, who stand so sorely in need of it!

"So sorely in need! For I must say it that at this moment, hardly twenty years after our war of freedom, that fundamental principle of human existence is probably by no enlightened nation so thoroughly and universally ignored as by us Germans, fond though we are of calling ourselves the intellectual flower of the nations, the people of thinkers. Where is the young plant of humanity subjected with more intolerable schoolmasterly pedantry to a too early, too strict, and incredibly narrow training? Where is its free, beautiful development more systematically hindered and maimed than it is with us? The shameful wrongs that we perpetrated by aid of school-benches and church-benches, the drill-sergeant's stick, the Procrustes-bed of examination, the many-rounded ladder of official hierarchy--to think of them sends the blush of shame to the cheeks and the glow of indignation to the brow of those who can perceive it; it is justly the inexhaustible theme of derision for our neighbors. The frenzy of ruling, the slavish desire of being ruled, these are the two serpents that have coiled around the German Hercules, and are crushing him; they it is that are everywhere impeding the free circulation, and producing here a condition of hypertrophy, and there of atrophy, that cruelly injure the body of the nation; they it is that, injecting their venom into the veins of the people, poison its blood and marrow, and degrade the race itself; they it is, finally, that we have to thank for the fact that our penitentiaries and jails can no longer contain the multitude of the prisoners. For it is not an exaggeration if I say that nine out of ten that come here would never have come had they not been made anvils by force, in order that the lords of the hammer might have something to vent their courage on. And as the natural right of every man to maintain himself in the way most suitable to his powers and capabilities has been impeded in them as much as possible by hindering them systematically from becoming sound strong members of the commonwealth, they have finally been brought here

to the workhouse. The workhouse is at bottom nothing but the last consequence of our conditions, the problem of our life reduced to its simplest terms. Here they must accomplish a strictly prescribed task in a strictly prescribed manner; but when were they ever allowed freely to choose their work? Here they must be silent; but when were they ever allowed to speak freely? Here they must pay implicit obedience to the lowest overseer; but without having read Shakspeare, do they not know that a dog in office is obeyed? Here they must walk, stand, lie down, sleep, wake, pray, work, idle, at the word of command; but are they not admirably trained for it?--are they not all born workhouse men? My heart aches when I think of it; yet how can I help thinking of it especially at this moment when I see you before me, and ask myself: how comes this youth with the frame of a strong man, and the frank blue eyes of a child, in this abode of vice and crime?

"My dear young friend, I would that the answer were more difficult. Would that it were not the same formula by which I can calculate the equation of your life also. Would that I did not know that the unnaturalness of our relations is like a poisonous simoon that withers the grass and even strips the leaves from the oak.

"I have endeavored from what I before knew of you, and from what you so frankly have confided to me of your earlier life, of your family affairs, of the life and customs of the citizens of your native town, to form a background upon which I might design your portrait. And how cheerless it is, lying in the dim light in which all things now seem to lie with us! Everywhere littleness, narrow-mindedness, restrictions, blind adhesion to old formulas, pedantic ceremoniousness, everywhere the free outlook into life shut out by high walls of prejudice. You have told me that you besought your father to let you go to sea, and that he steadfastly insisted that you should be a man of learning, or at least follow an official career. It was certainly not, as you accused yourself, a mere inclination to idleness or a hankering after adventures that again and again prompted this wish; and assuredly your father, whatever his reasons, did not do well so obstinately to reject it. He had lost one son at sea--very well; there is another sea, the sea of happy, active, energetic life, in which all faculties have their free play. This he should not have forbidden you; and this was really the sea for which you longed, of which the ocean with its storms was but the image, though you took it for the reality.

"Your father did not do well; yet we cannot reckon with him, rendered gloomy by domestic misfortune, too soon left alone in the world, and irritated by his son's resistance. But what can we say of your pedantic teachers, not one of whom could comprehend a youth whose character is openness itself? What of your worthy friends who raised a hue and cry over the profligate who was leading their sons into mischief, and who held it a devout work to widen the breach between father and son? Many an honest German youth has been in your case, my friend; brought up under such desperately stringent social restrictions, that he thanks heaven, when, in the far west of America, under the trees of the primeval forest, he hears no more about social order. True, in your flight from the oppressive narrowness of your father's house, you did not get so far as the American forests, but unhappily, only as far as the woods of the Zehrenburg, and this filled up the measure of your misfortunes.

"For there you met with one towards whom you must have felt yourself drawn by an irresistible attraction, as his nature in many points had a wonderful resemblance to your own; one whose ruin had been mainly due to the wretchedness of our social relations, and who had made a wilderness around; him in which he could move in accordance with his unfettered will, which he called liberty. A wilderness in the moral as well as the literal sense; for as I learn from what you have told me of his discourses, and as the result has shown, in throwing away prejudice he also cast overboard judgment, with precaution, discretion, with scrupulousness, consideration, with the faults of the German character the virtues of all; and all that at last remained to him were his adventurous spirit and a kind of fantastic magnanimity which at times, as you have yourself experienced, could be more fantastic than magnanimous.

"But be that as it may, he was a man with whom you were at once struck, because he was the exact opposite of all men whom you had hitherto met, and who still possessed chivalrous qualities enough for a youth so inexperienced to see in him his ideal. And then the free life upon the broad heaths, the lofty cliffs, the far-reaching shore--how could this do other than intoxicate and confuse a brain yet clouded with the dust of the school-room?

"But this freedom, this independence, this energetic life, were all but a glittering reflection, the Fata-Morgana of a Hesperian shore, which was destined to vanish, leaving behind a guard-house and a penitentiary.

"To make this prison a Hesperian garden to you, is not in my power, my friend; nor would I do it if it were. But one thing I hope to effect, and that is, that here, where the errors that warped your early training can no longer reach you, you may come to yourself, learn to know yourself, your aims, and the measure of your powers--that in a workhouse you may learn how to work."

CHAPTER VIII.

I will not maintain that the excellent man said all that I have put into his mouth in the last chapter, in these identical words, or upon this particular morning. It is probable that I have thrown into connection his remarks upon more than a single occasion, and perhaps have added a phrase or a figure of my own. But hardly more than this; for I too deeply absorbed his philosophy, which descended upon my thirsting soul like the fruitful shower upon a parched field; and while I attempt to repeat his thoughts, his image stands so lively in my memory, that I fancy I hear the words issuing from his lips.

And at this time I enjoyed the happiness of his converse every day and often for hours at a time. It was not in my power to keep the promise I had made to Paula, for her father did not wait for me to put the question to him. I had told him our conversation, however, at which he smiled.

"She wants to make a learned man of you," he said. "I wish to make nothing of you; I wish you to become what you are capable of becoming; and to find out your capabilities we must experiment a little. One thing is certain: you can become a first-rate hand-worker. You have shown that already; and I am well satisfied that you have gone through this brief course, for the first touches of the artist follow the last of the craftsman, and it is well that he should understand the handiwork upon which his art rests; not only because only thus is he able to see rightly and help with counsel and hand wherever help is needed, but only then is it truly his work, and belongs to him as a child to a parent not only spirit of his spirit, but also flesh of his flesh. Then how much more sharply does the eye see where the hand has been busy? Here is the ground-plan of the new infirmary; this is the foundation which you yourself helped to clear out, and for which you yourself helped to bring the stones. This wall will be built upon that foundation; it is of this height and this thickness; without a calculation you are satisfied that such a foundation can support such a wall. Do you not feel a pleasure in the neat, firm drawing in which a single line represents the work of an hour, or perhaps of many days? Paula has told me that you have an accurate eye and a sure hand. I need copies of these plans: would you like to make them for me? It is work suited to a convalescent; and the use of compass, ruler, and drawing-pen, I can show you in five minutes."

From this day I worked in the superintendent's office, copying simple outlines or the design of a front, or engrossing specifications, with a pleasure which I had never imagined could accompany work. But who then ever had such a teacher--so kind, so wise, so patient, who so well knew how to lead the pupil to confidence in himself? How grateful to me was his praise; and how I stood in need of it. I who at school had always been blamed and scolded, who looked on it as a matter of course that my work was worse than that of any of the others, and who had come to consider myself as destitute of all capacity. My new teacher taught me that my capacities were only dormant, and that I could perfectly well understand anything that I thought worth understanding. Thus I had resigned myself in mathematics to make no progress beyond the first rudiments, and now to my astonishment I discovered that these uncouth symbols and crabbed formulas were composed of simple ideas and figures, and constructed with a logical consequence which I had no difficulty in perceiving, and in which I felt inexpressible delight.

"It is singular," I said on one occasion, "that when I was with Herr von Zehren I thought there could be nothing on earth more delightful than shooting over a wide heath on a sunny autumn morning; but I now find that to correctly employ a difficult formula gives more pleasure than a good shot that brings down an unlucky pheasant."

"The whole secret," replied my teacher, "lies in giving free play to our powers and our talents in a direction which is agreeable to our own nature. For in this manner we feel that we *are*; and every creature at every moment seeks for nothing further. But if we can so contrive it that our activity, besides giving us the proof of our existence, turns to the advantage of others--and happily that is almost always in our power--so much the better for us. Would to heaven my unfortunate brother had caught a sight of this truth."

Of course, especially in the earlier period of my imprisonment, our conversation frequently turned upon "the Wild Zehren."

"As a boy he bore that name," said the superintendent; "everybody called him 'the Wild One,' and it was hardly possible to give him another name. In his fiery nature lay an impulse that he could not resist, to put forth his exuberant strength even to excess, to venture whatever was most hazardous, and to attempt even the impossible. You can judge the field that our paternal estate offered to such a boy. To dash on the wildest horses down the steep heights, to put out to sea in a crazy boat during a raging storm, to roam over the perilous moors by night, to climb the giant beeches of the park to bring down a bird's nest, to dive into the tarn in search of the treasure which they say was thrown into it in the time of the Swedish invasion--these were his favorite sports. I have no idea how often he found himself in danger of death; but in truth it might be said to be every moment, for at any moment the impulse might seize him to do something which put his life in peril. Once we were standing at an upper window and saw an infuriated bull chasing

one of the laborers around the court. Malte said, 'I must take that fellow in hand,' sprang down twenty feet into the court as another might arise from a chair, and ran to meet the bull, whose rage had however spent itself, so that he allowed the daring boy to drive him back to the cattle-yard. It was a mere chance here that he did not break his bones and was not gored; but as chance always stood his friend, he grew more and more reckless and daring.

"Chance, however, is a capricious deity, and unexpectedly leaves its greatest favorites in the lurch. A far worse enemy to my brother were the circumstances in which he grew up. The only thing he had been taught, was that the Zehrens were the oldest race on the island, and that he was the first-born. From these two articles of faith he constructed a sort of religion and mystical cultus which was all the more fantastic that his pompous fancies contrasted so glaringly with the threadbare reality.

"Our father was a nobleman of the old lawless school, and of the wild ways of his class in the eighteenth century: a man of all men least fitted to form the character of a haughty, audacious boy like my brother. Our mother had lived at courts, and in this unwholesome sphere frittered away her really remarkable gifts. She yearned for the vanished splendors of her former life; the solitude of a country life wearied, and the rudeness with which she was surrounded, shocked her. Their life was not a happy one: as she knew she was no longer beloved by her husband, she soon ceased to love her children, in whom she fancied--whether rightly or wrongly is of no consequence--that she perceived only the traits of their father. Our father's regard was confined to his first-born alone; and when a wealthy, childless aunt asked to be allowed to take charge of the second son, Arthur, he willingly consented. Indeed I believe he would have been glad to be rid of me also, the youngest son, only no one was willing to take me. Thus I grew up as I best could; sometimes I had a tutor and sometimes I had none; no one cared for me; I should have been left entirely alone, had not my eldest brother, after his fashion, taken me under his charge.

"He loved me, who was ten years his junior, with passionate devotion, with a wild, and, as it now appears to me, a touching tenderness. Strong as I afterwards grew, I was a frail and sickly child. He, the dauntless, shielded me from every shadow of danger; he watched and guarded me as the apple of his eye; played with me, when I was well, for half-days at a time; watched, when I was sick, night after night by my bed. I was the only one who could control 'the Wild One' with a word, a look; but what could such influence avail? It was a thread that snapped, when the youth of twenty, after a scene of unusual violence with our father, left suddenly the paternal house, to enter it no more for ten years.

"He was sent to travel, as the customary phrase then ran; but the always insufficient remittances which he received from our father, whose means were daily diminishing, soon ceased altogether. He had to live as he could; and as he could not live at his own expense, he lived at the expense of others, like many a noble adventurer, to-day a beggar, to-morrow rolling in gold; to-day the comrade of the lowest rabble, tomorrow the companion of princes; with his irresistible power of fascination, conquering all hearts wherever he came, yet himself fixed nowhere, and roaming restlessly from one end of Europe to the other. He was in England, Italy, Spain, and longest in France; in the wild life of Paris he found his natural element, and he revelled in the arms of French ladies, whose brothers and husbands were devastating his native land with fire and sword.

"For five or six years we had heard nothing of him; our mother had died, and we had not known where to send him the news of her death; our father, broken before his time, was tottering to his grave; the devastation of our estates by the enemy, who had penetrated even to us, did not move his apathy--he drank the last bottle of wine in his cellar in a carouse with French officers. I could not endure all this with patience. I challenged the French colonel, a Gascon, who, seated at my father's table, with a guitar in his hands, was singing ribald songs insulting to the Germans. He laughed, and made his men take the sword from the boy of seventeen--it was a dress-sword which hung on the wall by a blue scarf as an ornament, and which I had snatched in my fury--to punish his presumption by having him shot the next morning.

"In the night appeared a deliverer whom I had least reason to expect. At the rumors of an uprising in Germany--at that time the first *Frei corps* was organizing--the Wild One had hurried back from the arms of his paramours and the *salons* of the Faubourg St. Germain, and his way had led him to our native place, where just then the flames of war were most fiercely burning. He could not reach the *Frei corps*, which was in the citadel, so he turned to the island with the plan of stirring up a guerrilla warfare against the invaders. He came just at the right moment to snatch his brother from certain death. With a few trusty followers hastily collected, he broke into the prison under circumstances of the most daring audacity, and carried me away.

"From this time we were together for five years, and first as simple volunteers, then as officers of the line, shared perils and hardships like brothers. I was a good soldier, but my brother's name was known throughout the whole army, and again he was called 'the Wild Zehren,' as if to such a man that was the only fitting epithet. Innumerable were the stories told of his courage and foolhardiness. The general opinion was that he was seeking death; but he was not thinking of death--he only despised life. He laughed when he heard others talking enthusiastically of the regeneration of Germany; how we would rid our native soil both of foreign and native tyrants, in order to establish a kingdom of fraternity and equality in the liberated land. At that time he often had the old phrase of 'hammer and anvil' on his lips, which, as he said, expressed his philosophy in the simplest terms. 'Fraternity! equality!' he scoffed--'away with such empty phrases! This is a

world of the strong and the weak; of masters and serfs. You have so long been the anvil under that giant hammer Napoleon, that now you want to play hammer yourselves. See how far you will bring it. Not far, I fear. You have only talents for the part of anvil.'

"'Why did you come to help us fight Napoleon?' I asked.

"'Because I was bored in Paris,' was his reply.

"But he did himself injustice. He was something more than the *blasé* cavalier of fortune which he pretended to be; he had squandered in a life of wild adventures the treasures of a heart dearer than Plutus' mine; but a fragment of this heart was yet left him, and in this fragment lived--if not genuine patriotism and philanthropy, at least the generous impulse to side with the oppressed and resist the oppressor, whether he be a brilliant conqueror or a stupid native prince ruling by the grace of God.

"And now that the conquerer was chained to the rock of St. Helena, and he saw the heroes of so many battles taking their old accustomed yoke once more upon their patient necks; when he saw that the whole proud torrent of liberty was wasting in the sand of loyal obedience, then he broke his sword, which he had gloriously carried through twenty battles, bestowed a curse upon both despots and slaves, and said that now, as before the war, the world was his home; the only home for a free-born man in a slavish age.

"I know well that his reasoning was strained and unsound; but there was a kernel of truth in it. The result has proven this; the incredibly vapid, idealess time in which we live, a time barren of thought and of deeds, a real age of the Epigoni, has completely confirmed his prediction. And now again he wandered, a homeless adventurer, through the land, only with the difference that before with insolent power he had sported with men, whom he now coldly preyed upon because he despised them. 'I endeavored to purchase with my blood a letter of indulgence for my past: it has been refused me. What now is the present or the future to me?' How often have I thought upon this expression of his to me at the moment of our parting. It has always remained with me a key to his enigmatical character.

"Again for years I heard nothing more of him. Our father was dead; our estate sequestered; my second brother, Arthur, whom his aunt had deceived in his expectations, was toiling in thankless public service; I, who had set my heart upon the regeneration of the public, and thought that I could see that the work must be begun at the very beginning, that is, at the bottom, had managed to obtain this place through my patron, Altenburg; had been here, a crippled man, for four years, and was still studying the rudiments of my vocation; Malte was nowhere heard of. Suddenly he reappeared, and with a wife who had followed the adventurer to his home. He declared his intention to take the paternal estate in hand. I afforded him every facility; Arthur sold his rights for a sum of money, the receipt of which, by the way, he still denies. The creditors were glad to get at all events something, and one of them at least consoled himself with the thought that 'omittance was no quittance,' and the hope--which has not deceived him--that the Zehren estates were as secure to him under the new master as under the old.

"We did not meet at his return; just at that time I could not well leave this place, and he, on his part, felt no desire to renew the old friendship. When we parted, I was about to contract a marriage, in which the first-born of an ancient line saw a criminal *mésalliance*; now for some years I had been holding an official post; and to hold any post, but especially such a post as this, was in his eyes throwing one's self away, trampling under foot the inborn right of a knight of the hammer, and making one's self a plebeian anvil. That I refused the compensation he had offered me for my interest in the estate, wounded him deeply. By so doing, in his eyes, I renounced my obedience and subordination to the first-born, the chief of the family. He could not forgive me that I had no more need of him; that I had no debts which he must plunge himself into debt to pay; in a word, that I was not like my brother Arthur, who was much more compliant in this point--too compliant, I fear.

"On the other side, what I heard of him--and he took care never to let men's tongues rest about him--confirmed me in the sad conviction that between him and me a gulf had opened, not to be crossed by even the sincere love I still felt for him. I heard of the wild life he was living with the noblemen of his neighborhood, now impoverished by the war; of the drinking and gaming bouts, of mad exploits of which he was the originator. At this time a dark rumor got abroad that he was conducting the smuggling traffic, which during the war had flourished greatly, being then encouraged by the government, but now was strongly repressed. But the worst rumors were those that spoke of the wretched life he led with his unhappy wife. He ill-treated her, it was said; he had imprisoned her in a cellar; it was unaccountable that the authorities did not interfere.

"I could not bear to hear these things, of which I did not believe a word, for the charges were in too glaringly contradiction to the naturally noble and generous nature of my brother. But I felt a natural hesitation to mix myself up in these affairs, until a letter which I received brought me to a decision. The letter was written in bad French, and the very first words informed me that the unhappy woman who wrote it must be out of her right mind. 'I hear you know the road to Spain,' it began, and ended with the words, 'I entreat you to tell me the road to Spain.' In an hour after receiving it I set out, and, after so many years, saw my father's house and my brother again. It was a painful meeting.

"My father's house a ruin, my brother a shadow--worse, a caricature--of his former self. Ah, my friend, the hammer-theory had shown itself cruel to its staunchest maintainer. How had the clumsy anvil beaten out the delicate hammer! How ignoble he had grown in the common world which he so deeply despised! 'Only despise reason and knowledge,' Goethe makes the Spirit of Lies say, 'and I have you then safe.' And I say, 'only despise men, and you will see how soon you grow despicable to others and to yourself.

"I told him why I had come; he led me in silence into the park, and pointed to a woman, who, in a fantastic dress, flowers and weeds in her glossy-black, half-dishevelled hair, in her hands a guitar with half its chords broken, was wandering under the trees and among the shrubbery, sometimes raising her dark eyes, as if in ecstasy, to heaven, and again dropping them, as in despair, to the earth.

"'You see,' he said, 'it is a lie that I have imprisoned her. Many another would do it, for it is not a pleasant thing to afford the public such an exhibition.'

"Take her to her native place," I said.

"'Try it,' he answered. 'She would leap out of the carriage; she would throw herself into the sea. And if you took her there in fetters and by force, what would be her fate? She would be thrown into the dungeon of a convent, where they would try with hunger and blows to exorcize the devil who tempted her to give her heart to a heretic. Though I love her no longer, I once loved her, or at least she has been mine; and no priest's ungentle hand shall touch what has once belonged to me.'

"I said how terrible it was to hear him speak thus of his wife, the mother of his child.

"'Who says that she is my wife?' was his reply.

"I looked at him amazed and shocked; he shrugged his shoulders.

"'That does not suit your citizen virtue,' he said. 'I would have made her Frau von Zehren, notwithstanding her father is a hidalgo of very doubtful lineage, had the child been a boy. What do I want with a girl? She cannot continue our race; let it then end with me.'

"It was indifferent to him whether these words wounded me or not; he had no desire to wound me; he really looked upon the superintendent of a prison, who had married a poor painter's daughter, as not a Zehren.

"I besought him to give me the child, if, as he said, she was nothing to him. I would bring her up with my Paula, who was then just born. Here she must perish both morally and physically; and there might be a time when he would long for a child, whether son or daughter, legitimate or illegitimate.

"'Then my last hour must have come,' he answered, turning away from me with a contemptuous gesture.

"What was here to be done? I was not here to hunt with my brother, or to join him in his carouses and gaming parties, to which he invited me, with ironical politeness. I spoke with the poor lunatic, who did not understand me, and had no idea that she had written to me, as to many others whose names she had learned by chance. I shook hands with old Christian, who had always been fond of me, and was now the only one who remembered me, and begged him to watch over the poor forsaken creature. I wandered once more through the park and greeted the scenes of my boyish sports; once more saw the sun set behind the house where my cradle had stood, and came sorrowing away. Thus might a tree feel that is torn from the earth with all its roots. But, thank heaven, if man is driven from his home, he can win himself a new one; and when the gates of our childhood's paradise are closed behind us, another world opens to us which we must conquer and possess in the sweat of our brows, but which for this reason alone is truly ours."

CHAPTER IX.

It was certainly not with the intention of stimulating me--for that was no longer needed--that my teacher in his discourses ever returned to the same theme, that free, voluntary labor, consecrated by love, the labor of all for all, was the completion of wisdom, the proper aim and highest happiness of mankind. This was the last result of his practical philosophy, to which of necessity all his reflections tended, whether their subject was the destiny of the individual or the

race. And as these discourses were almost always carried on in intervals of repose from work, from which we came and to which we were about to return, they might be called significant arabesques to the earnest, and--as it now looks to me--moving pictures presented by the unresting, thoughtful master, and the industrious, eager student, in their combined occupation.

This occupation was strictly regulated. It so happened that during my convalescence, an old clerk of the office, who had long been ailing, died. As it was a fixed principle with the superintendent that all work should be done by inmates of the establishment, so far as that was practicable, he had, in spite of the opposition of President von Krossow, by means of an immediate application to the king, supported by his friend, Minister von Altenburg, obtained liberty to leave the clerk's place unfilled, and to give his work, as a special favor, to me, for which I also received certain emoluments, reduced to the proportion of other sums paid for prison-work. Deacon von Krossow congratulated me, with anything but cordiality, on my "promotion," but Dr. Snellius crowed loudly with joy, and in the family the great event was celebrated as a festival. As for me, this arrangement had lifted a load from my breast. I had now no longer to fear that the generous man who had already done so much for me, would be involved in serious inconveniences by his kindness. In the president's circle they had even talked of investigations, removal from office, of pensioning off at the very least. Now, as my relation to him bore an official character, this danger was disposed of, and I could look with a light heart through the open window by which my work-table stood, into the leafy garden, where the bees were humming around the flowers, where the birds sang in the trees, and among the flowers and under the trees Frau von Zehren took her morning walk, leaning on her daughter's arm, or in the afternoon, after school-hours, the boys played or worked in their flower-beds.

For each one, even Oscar, had his bed, which he had to keep in order; and it was always a fresh pleasure to me to see the little men with their watering-pots and other implements, which they handled with the skill of practiced gardeners. And yet the pleasure which this sight gave me, was not without a touch of sadness. It always brought to my mind my own youth, and how joyless and fruitless it had been in comparison with this, which unfolded itself before me in such fullness of beauty. Who had ever taught me to employ thus usefully my youthful strength? Who, to bring a significance even into my sports? Alas, large and strong as I was, I might have been nourished by the crumbs that fell from this bounteous table. For I had scarcely known my mother, and the deeply melancholy disposition of my father, who was naturally grave, and had been rendered still more gloomy by the loss of his deeply-loved wife, was to a vivacious high-spirited boy at once mysterious and terrible. Later I well understood what then I had but imperfect glimpses of--how deeply and sincerely he desired my welfare, and strove, according to his conscience and knowledge, to be a good father to me; but like Moses, my excellent father was slow of speech, and there was no obliging Aaron at hand to explain to me the reasons of his stern commands. My brother and sister were considerably older than myself. I was eight years old when my brother Fritz, then sixteen, went to sea, and only ten when my sister, who was twenty, was married. My brother was a lively, gay young fellow, and troubled himself about me as little as he did about anybody or anything else in the world; my sister had my father's sternness, but without his feeling. After she was called to take the place of a mother to me, she treated me always with pedantic strictness, and often with petty cruelty. So I took refuge with the old serving-woman who lived in a state of hostility with her, and who, to reward me for my partisanship, told me stories of robbers and ghosts; and when Sarah married, and with her parting kiss proceeded to give me a farewell lecture, I told her in the presence of my father, her husband, and all the wedding-company, that I wanted neither her teaching nor her kiss, and that I was glad that in future I should see and hear of her no more. This was held up as an instance of the most frightful ingratitude on my part; and Justizrath Heckepfennig, who was also present on this occasion, pronounced for the first time his deliberate conviction, which subsequent experience was only too strongly to confirm, that I "would die in my shoes."

No one can blame me, if while I looked through the window at my little friends, the wish arose in my mind that I had also been so fortunate, that I had had a father at once so wise and so kind, so gentle and tender a mother, such merry companions in work and play, and above all such a sister.

At first she always brought to my mind some old child's story, but I could not remember precisely what it was. It was not little Snow-white, for little Snow-white was a thousand times fairer than the fairest queen, and Paula was not really beautiful; it could not be little Red Riding-hood, for she, when you came to look at it, was a little stupid thing who could not tell the wicked wolf from her good old grandmother, and Paula was tall and slender, and so very wise! Cinderella? Paula was so neat that no cinders could ever be seen about her, and she had no doves at her command to help her gather the peas; on the contrary, she had to do everything for herself. I could not make it out, and concluded at last that it was no special personage of whom she reminded me, but rather that she was like one of the good fairies whom one does not see either coming or going, and only know that she has been here by the gift she has left behind; or like the friendly little goblins who, while the maids sleep, clean up parlor and kitchen, garret and cellar; and when the sleepers awake, they see that all their work is done already, and far better than they could have done it themselves.

Yes, she must be a fairy, who, out of the abundance of her kindness to those whom she befriended, had taken the form of a slender blue-eyed, blonde maiden. How otherwise could it be that from early morning to late evening she was always busy and yet never weary; that she was

always at hand when wanted; that she had ready attention for every one, and that never the shadow of ill-humor passed across her sweet face, much less an unkind word from her lips? True, her look was serious, and she rarely spoke more than just what was needful, but her seriousness had no admixture of gloom, and once or twice I even heard her playfully chatting with a half-loud gentle voice, such as the fairies have when they speak the language of mortals.

I confided my discovery to my friend, Dr. Snellius.

"Keep away from me with such nonsense!" cried he. "A fairy, indeed! It is Lessing's old fable of the iron pot that must needs be taken off the fire with a pair of silver tongs. What does she do, then, that is so extraordinary? She is the housekeeper, the teacher of the children, her father's friend, her mother's companion, and the nurse of both. All good girls are all this: there is nothing so unusual in it; it all lies in system and order. But a fantastic head of twenty years naturally cannot see men and things as they really are. Do you marry her. That is the best means of discovering that the angels with the longest azure wings are but women after all."

I passed my hand through my hair, which was now perceptibly regaining its former luxuriance, and said thoughtfully:

"I marry Paula? Never! I cannot imagine the man who would be worthy to marry her; but this I know certainly, that I am not he. What am I?"

"For the present you are condemned to seven years' imprisonment, and have therefore fully that amount of time for considering what you will be when you are released. I trust that you will then be a worthy man, and I do not know what girl, nor what seraph is too good for a worthy man."

"But I know another reason, doctor, why I shall not be able to marry her then."

"What is that?"

"Because by that time you will have married her yourself."

"What a grinning, gnashing mammoth! Do you suppose a girl like that will marry an apoplectic billiard-ball?"

Whether the doctor was provoked at the contradiction into which he had fallen in scouting, as regarded himself, the possibility which he had just maintained in reference to me--or whatever the cause may have been, the blood rushed so violently to his bald head, that he really bore a striking resemblance to the remarkable object to which he had just compared himself, and his brow rose to such an extraordinary height of pitch, that he did not even make the attempt to tune himself down.

These sayings of the doctor haunted my memory for several days. I was struck with the thought that a worthy man was good enough for any girl, and therefore that in this respect there was no reason why I should not, sooner or later, marry Paula. But then again, I knew not how, my old notions returned, and when I saw her arranging and ordering all things with her heavenly patience, I said to myself--It is not true that all girls, even the so-called good ones, are like Paula; and it is an absurd idea of the doctor that I can ever be worthy of her.

The clear atmosphere, the splendid sunsets, the dry leaves that here and there fluttered down from the trees, announced the approach of another autumn. It was the season that I had spent the year before at Castle Zehrendorf; these were the same signs that I had then so closely observed, and they awakened in my soul a crowd of memories. I had believed that these memories were deeply buried, and I now found that only a thin covering had been spread over them, which every light sighing of the melancholy autumn breeze sufficed to lift. Indeed it often seemed to me that the wounds which had been inflicted on me a year before were about to open once more. I again lived over all that time, but it was as when a waking man, in full consciousness, calls back a vivid dream. What in a dream, with the incomplete activity of our intellectual faculties, seemed to us natural and reasonable, appears to us, when awake, as a strange phantasm; and what then tormented us as incomprehensible, we can now clearly understand, because we can supply the vacant steps which our dreaming fancy has leaped lightly over. I had only to compare my position at that time with the present, to see how wild a caricature my fancy had drawn. Then I imagined myself free, and was really involved in a net of the most unhappy, the most repulsive circumstances, as a fly in the web of a spider; now I slept every night behind bars of iron, and felt as calm and safe as when one steps from a swaying boat upon the steady land. Then I believed that I had found my proper career, and now I saw that that life was only a continuation, and to a certain extent the consequence of a youth spent without plan or aim. And in what light now did the persons in whose destinies I had taken such a passionate interest, now appear to me, when I compared them with those whom I had learned to love so cordially--when I compared, for instance, the Wild Zehren with his wise and gentle brother? And, as I had begun to draw comparisons, that dejected, sleepy giant, Hans von Trantow--where now was the good Hans, if he was not dead? and there were those who insisted that he was safe enough, and they knew very well where he was--had to take his place by the side of the little, intelligent Doctor Snellius, always full of life and motion; and even poor old Christian was compared with the vigorous old Sergeant Süssmilch. But most vividly was the comparison

forced upon me between the beautiful, romantic Constance, and the pure, refined Paula.

A sharper contrast could scarcely be imagined; and for this reason perhaps the image of the one always called up that of the other. I felt for Paula, notwithstanding her youth, a greater respect than I had ever felt for Constance, who was several years older, and far more beautiful. True, with the latter at first I had had a certain bashfulness to overcome in myself, but this bashfulness was of a very different nature, and I had so completely overcome it, that when I left the castle that morning, I was resolved to marry her, in spite of my nineteen years. And what surprised me was the fact that I could not think of Constance, who had so cruelly betrayed me, and whom I believed myself to hate, without the wish that I might see her once more, and tell her how much I had loved her, and how deeply she had wounded me. Where was she now? When last heard of, she was in Paris.

Was she still there, and how was she living? That she had been abandoned by her lover, I knew already; I had laughed aloud when I first heard of it. Now I laughed no longer; I could not think, without a feeling of the deepest pity, of her who had been so atrociously wronged, who now perhaps--yes, beyond a doubt--was wandering homeless and friendless about the world; an adventuress, as her father had been an adventurer. And yet she could not be altogether vile; had she not with pride and scorn renounced every claim upon her father's inheritance? Did she not know that her father had never deigned to make her mother his wife? Had she perhaps known it before? And if so, did not this fact suffice to explain the hostile position she maintained towards her father? Could she love the man who had plunged her mother into such unbounded wretchedness--who had never been to her what a father should be, and who, if the reports of his gaming companions were to be believed, had only used her as a bait to allure the stupid fish to his net? Could one judge her so severely--her who had sprung from such parents, grown up in isolation and amid such associations, exposed from childhood to the clumsy attentions or the impertinent familiarities of rude country squires--if she had violated duties whose sacredness she had never comprehended?--if she had been sacrificed by a profligate who approached her with all the temptations of wealth and his exalted rank, and with the whole magic of youth? Unfortunate Constance! Your song of the "falsest-hearted, only chosen" was cruelly prophetic. Your chosen one had indeed proved false-hearted to you. And the other, your faithful George, who was to kill all the dragons lurking in your path, you scorned his service; and the mistrust which you felt in the strength and wisdom of the squire who had devoted himself to you, was but too well justified. Would he ever see you again?

I know that she had refused to be present at the family conference which was soon to be held. And yet, as the day drew nearer, the thought more frequently recurred to me, that she might still change her mind, uncertain and impulsive as she was, and suddenly stand before me, just as my friend Arthur one evening, as I was returning with Paula from the Belvedere, appeared before me in all the splendor of his new ensign's uniform.

CHAPTER X.

The day had been rainy and disagreeable, and my frame of mind was as dull and gloomy as the weather. In the morning the superintendent had had an attack of hemorrhage. I was for the first time alone in the office, and often looked over from my work to the place that was vacant to-day, and again listened, when a light swift step came along the corridor from the room where the superintendent was, to the nursery, where the little Oscar had been lying for a week with some infantile ailment. I was always hoping that the light swift step would stop at my door; but the fairy had today too much to do, and with all, I thought, had probably forgotten me.

But she had not forgotten me.

It was towards evening. As I could no longer see, I had put by my work, and was still seated upon the office stool, with my head resting on my hand, when there came a light tap at the door. I hurried to open it--it was Paula.

"You have not been out of the room the whole day," she said; "the rain is over; I have half an hour to spare; shall we walk in the garden a little?"

"How are they?"

"Better, much better."

She answered promptly, and yet her voice did not have a reassuring sound; and she was singularly silent as side by side we ascended the path to the Belvedere. I concealed my solicitude,

as well as I could, by encouraging words. The little one, I said, was now out of all danger; and it was not the first attack of the kind which the superintendent had had, and from which he always soon recovered his usual strength. This was Dr. Snellius's opinion too, I added.

While I thus spoke, Paula had not once looked at me, and as we now reached the summer-house, she entered it hastily. I remained behind a moment to look at the clouds which the sunset was coloring with hues of marvellous beauty, and called Paula that she might not miss the splendid sight. She did not answer; I stepped to the door. She was sitting at the table, her face buried in her hands, weeping.

"Paula, dear Paula!" I exclaimed.

She raised her head and strove to smile, but it was in vain; again she covered her face with her hands and wept aloud.

I had never seen her before in this state, and the unusual and unexpected sight distressed me inexpressibly. In my deep emotion I ventured for the first time gently to smooth down her blond hair with my hand, speaking to her as to a child whom I was trying to soothe and comfort. And what was this maiden of fifteen but a helpless child to me, who stood by her now in the plenitude of my fully restored strength?

"You are very kind," she sobbed, "very kind! I do not know why just to-day I see everything in so gloomy a light. Perhaps it is because I have borne it so long in silence; or possibly it may be this gray, cheerless day; but I cannot keep my mind clear of dreadful thoughts. And what will become of my mother and the boys?"

She shook her head mournfully, and looked straight before her with eyes dim with tears.

It had begun to rain again; the bright tints of the clouds had changed to a dull gray; the evening wind rustled in the trees and the dry leaves came eddying down. I felt unutterably sad--sad and vexed at heart. Here again was I in the most wretched of positions; compelled to witness the distress of those I loved, while powerless to relieve it. It might be that Constance and her father had not deserved the sympathy I had felt for them; but I still had endured the grief and the pain; and this family--this--I knew well were worthy that a man should shed his heart's blood in their service. Alas, again I had nothing but my blood that I could give! To give one's blood is perhaps the greatest, and assuredly the last sacrifice that one man can bring to another; but how often does it prove a coinage that is not current in the market of life. A handful of money would bring rescue--a piece of bread--a blanket--a mere nothing--and yet with all our blood we cannot provide this.

And as I stood, leaning in the door of the summer-house, now glancing at the gentle, weeping girl, and now at the dripping trees, my heart swelling with sorrow and helpless indignation, I vowed to myself that in spite of all, I would yet raise myself to a position where, in addition to my good will, I should also have the power to help those whom I loved.

How oft in my after life have I recurred in memory to this vow! It seemed so utterly impossible; the object I proposed to attain seemed so far away; and yet that I now stand where I do I chiefly owe to the conviction that filled my soul at that moment. So the shipwrecked mariner, battling with the waves in a frail and leaky skiff, sees but for a moment the shore where there is safety; but that moment suffices to show him the course he must steer to escape destruction.

"I must go in," said Paula.

We walked side by side along the path leading down from the Belvedere. My heart was so full that I could not speak; Paula also was silent. A twig hung across the path, so low that it would have brushed her head; I raised it as she passed, and a shower of drops fell upon her. She gave a little cry, and then laughed when she saw me confused at my awkwardness.

"That was refreshing," she said.

It sounded as if she were thanking me, though I had really startled her. I could not help seizing the dear maiden's hand.

"How good you are, Paula," I said.

"And how bad you are," she replied, looking up in my face with a radiant smile.

"Good-evening!" a clear voice exclaimed close at hand.

The speaker had stepped out of a hedged path that opened at right-angles to the one in which we were walking, and now stood facing us in a gay uniform, his left hand on the hilt of his sword, three white-gloved fingers raised in a foppish salute to the peak of his cap, gazing curiously at us from his brown eyes, and a half-mocking, half-vexed smile upon his face, which in the pallid evening light looked paler and more worn than ever.

"Allow me to present myself," he said--his three fingers still raised to his cap--"Arthur von Zehren, ensign in the 120th. Have been at the house already; learned to my regret that my uncle

is not perfectly well; my aunt is not visible; would at least not neglect to pay my *devoirs* to my charming cousin."

He said all this in a drawling, affected tone, without looking at me (who had released Paula's hand at once) or taking the slightest notice of my presence.

"I am sorry that it has happened so unfortunately, Cousin Arthur," said Paula. "We did not look for you before next week."

"That was my original plan," replied Arthur; "but my colonel, who is so good as to take a special interest in me, hastened the issue of my commission, so that I was able to leave yesterday, and present myself here to-day. Papa and mamma send kind remembrances to my uncle and my aunt; they will be here the beginning of next week; hope uncle will be quite restored by that time. Am curious to see him; they say he is very like my grandfather Malte, whose picture hangs in the parlor at home. Would not have known you, dear cousin; you have not the family face; brown hair and eyes is the Zehren style."

The path was not wide enough for three to walk abreast; so the two went on before, and I followed at a little distance, but near enough to hear every word. I had lately been thinking of my former friend with very mixed feelings; but now as he strutted along before me at the side of that dear child, pouring his insipid chatter into her ear, calling her *thou* and *cousin*, and just now, either accidentally or intentionally, touching her with his elbow--my feelings were very unmixed indeed. I could have wrung Master Ensign's dainty little brown head round in his red collar with extreme satisfaction.

We reached the house.

"I will see if you cannot speak with my mother for a few minutes at least," said Paula; "please wait an instant here; you have not spoken to your old friend yet."

Paula ran up the steps; Arthur saluted her--three fingers to his cap--as she went, and then remained standing with his back to me. Suddenly he turned upon his heel so as to face me, and said in his most insolent tone:

"I will now bid you good-day; but I request you to observe that before third parties we have no acquaintance--I presume I need not enter into details why this is so."

Arthur was a head shorter than I, and he had to look up in my face while he pronounced these severe words. This circumstance was not in his favor; rudenesses are much best said from above; and it struck me so ludicrously that this little fellow, whom I could have tumbled over with a light push, should puff himself up to this extent before me, that I laughed aloud.

An angry flush crimsoned Arthur's pale cheek.

"It seems you mean to insult me," he said; "happily in my position I cannot be insulted by a person like you. I have already heard on what footing you stand here; my uncle will have the choice between me and you. I do not imagine that it will be a difficult one."

I no longer laughed. I had loved this youth with more than brotherly affection; I had, so to speak, knelt and worshipped him; I had rendered him a vassal's faithful service; had good-naturedly accompanied him in all his follies, and taken--how often!--their punishment upon myself. I had guarded and protected him in every danger; had shared with him all that I possessed, only his share was always by far the larger--and now, now, when I was in misfortune and he luxuriating in the sunshine of prosperity, now he could speak to me thus! I could scarcely understand it; but what I did understand was inexpressibly odious to me. I gazed at him with a look before which any other would have lowered his eyes, turned my back upon him and went. A peal of derisive laughter resounded behind me.

"Laugh away!" I said to myself; "he laughs best who laughs last."

But when I thought of Paula's behavior during this interview, I felt that it might well have been different. I thought she might have taken my side more openly. She well knew how Arthur had abandoned me as soon as I fell into misfortune; how he had had no single cheering word for his old companion when in prison; yes, had even openly renounced me, and blackened my name with calumny like the rest.

"That was not right--that was very ill done of Arthur," she had said to me more than once; and now--I was very dissatisfied with Paula.

I was now to have opportunities enough for dissatisfaction; for in truth, all things taken together, the time which followed was an unhappy time for me. Arthur presented himself on the following day, and was received by the superintendent in his sick-room, and by all the family, in the most friendly manner. I, who had always stood so much alone, possessed in but slight degree the family feeling, the respect for the claims of kindred, and could not comprehend that the mere accident of the identity of name and origin could in itself have such importance as was manifestly conceded to it here. "Dear nephew," said the superintendent and Frau von Zehren; "Cousin Arthur," said Paula; and "Cousin Arthur," shouted the boys. And in truth, Nephew Arthur and

Cousin Arthur was amiability itself. He was respectful to his uncle, attentive to his aunt, full of chivalrous politeness to Paula, and hand-and-glove with the boys. I observed all from a distance. The superintendent still had to keep his room; and I took that for a pretext for working more diligently than ever in the office, which I quitted as seldom as possible, and where I buried myself in my lists and drawings, in order to see and hear nothing of what was going forward.

Unhappily, I still heard and saw too much. The weather had cleared up again, and a lovely latter-autumn, peculiar to this region, followed the stormy weather. The boys had holiday, the family scarcely left the garden, and Cousin Arthur was always of the company. Cousin Arthur must have had precious little to do; the colonel deserved arrest for letting his ensigns run wild in this fashion!

Alas, imprisonment had not changed me for the better, as I sometimes flattered myself. When before had even a feeling of envy or of grudging arisen in my soul? When had I ever disavowed my motto, "Live and let live?" And now my heart beat with indignation whenever, raising my eyes, I saw Arthur in the garden stroking the little moustache that began to darken his lip, or heard his clear voice. I grudged him his little dark moustache; as a prisoner I could wear no beard, and mine would anyhow have been of a very pronounced red. I grudged him his clear voice; my own was deep, and had grown very rough since I had left off singing. I grudged him his freedom, which, in my eyes, he so shamefully abused. I almost grudged him his life. Had he not wretchedly darkened my own life, which of late had been so pleasantly lightened, and was he not joyously basking in the sunshine from which he had expelled me?

And yet I had no real ground to complain. The superintendent, who recovered from his attack less rapidly than we had hoped, but occasionally came into the office, was as sympathizing and kind as ever; and after I had persistently, for one or two weeks, declined under various pretexts the invitations to join them in the garden, I had no right to be surprised if Frau von Zehren and Paula at last grew weary of troubling themselves about me, and the boys preferred their lively cousin Arthur, who taught them their drill, to the melancholy George, who no longer played with them. In my eyes, however, they had simply abandoned me; and I should have fallen into mere despair, had I not possessed two friends who held fast to me, and secretly or openly espoused my cause.

These two friends were Doctor Snellius and Sergeant Süssmilch.

As for the sergeant, Master Ensign had got into his black book on the second day. In his familiar fashion, he had clapped him on the shoulder, and called him "Old fellow." "One is not an old fellow for such youngsters as that," said the honest sergeant, as, his face still red with anger, he told me of the affront he had just received. "One might have a major's epaulettes on the shoulders to-day, if one had chosen--will let the youngster see that one is not a bear with seven senses."

The doctor too had his complaint of the insolence of the new-comer. He was walking in the garden one evening, his hat in his hand as usual, when Arthur must show his wit in various allusions to the baldness of the worthy man, and finally asked him in the politest manner, if he had never tried Rowland's Oil of Macassar, whose extraordinary virtues he had frequently heard celebrated.

"What do you think of that?" asked the doctor. "I replied to him that I made all the jests upon my bald head myself, and desired no competition. You will say that was rude--or you will not say it, for you like this glib-tongued, insinuating, slippery specimen of his charming species as little as I do. And the Jack-Pudding will not be at the end of his part so soon, either. Our humane friend holds it his duty to practise a truly Arabian hospitality to a kinsman, especially if he be poor; and the steuerrath, I hear, is in a miserable strait. My only consolation is that this pitcher too will go to the well until it breaks."

"How about the family conference?" I asked.

"Will be solemnly opened to-morrow. *Humanus* has invited them all to take up lodgings with him. Our half-pay friend has accepted, naturally; but what I am surprised at is, that so has the other, the Cræsus, and not only for himself, but for his golden daughterkin and her governess. There are one--two--five persons, who will shortly enliven our solitude in the most charming manner. My notion is that one or two deserve to remain here forever."

Thus crowed Doctor Snellius, then hopped on another leg and tuned himself down. I, for my part, was not a little excited at the report of the speedy arrival of the long-expected guests. Already had Arthur's presence placed a restraint upon me; what would it be when all these came? How should I meet the steuerrath?--how the commerzienrath? The one that had so shamefully abused the generosity of his nobler brother, and the other that had traded so skilfully in the embarrassments in which his incautious nature had involved him. My aversion to the pair was of ancient date, and but too well founded. But why should I in any way come in contact with them? If I did not come to them, they would hardly hunt me up. To be sure, there was the little Hermine! Had she still the same corn-flower blue eyes as on that morning on the deck of the *Penguin*? And the sententious governess, did she still wear those yellow locks? It was a bright sunny day when I last saw them both; but the sun had set too soon, and the evening closed in rain--inrain and dark mist, through which the face of my father, pale with anger, looked

threateningly at me.

"Why do you sigh?" asked Doctor Snellius, who in the meantime had been examining a ground-plan on which I had been working for the last few days. "Your progress is perfectly fabulous; I should never have believed that so neat and charming a piece of work could come from the hands of a mammoth. Good-by, mammoth!"

The good doctor shook my hand cordially and hopped out of the room. I gazed sadly after him, as sadly as if I had really been a mammoth, and knew that I was doomed to lie for thirty thousand years under snow and ice, and to be afterwards exhibited, stuffed, in a museum.

CHAPTER XI.

My wish and my hope to be allowed to keep out of sight during the family conference, were to be frustrated in the most singular manner. I was appointed to play a part, and no insignificant one, in the family drama.

The guests had arrived, and were comfortably accommodated in the superintendent's not very roomy house. In the evening all had met at the table. Doctor Snellius also being present. Early the next morning he came to me, to disburden his full heart.

The worthy doctor was under considerable excitement. I perceived that at his first word, which was pitched a full third higher than usual.

"I knew it," he said. "It was perfect idiotcy to invite this swarm of locusts; they will utterly devour my poor *Humanus*, who has not so many green leaves left. What sort of a company is this? You have not told me a hundredth part of the evil that even a lamb-like disposition such as mine can, and must, and will say of these people. People! It is scandalous how we misuse that word. Why people? Because they go upon two legs? Then the revolting creatures that Gulliver saw in the land of the noble horses, were people too. But the English skeptic knew better, and called them Yahoos. And such are our dear guests, or there is no such thing as natural history. The commerzienrath with his great paunch, and his cunning, blinking eyes, is one. I could but look at his short clumsy fingers; I believe the fellow has worn them off handling his gold. And the steuerrath is another, though he makes desperate efforts to appear a human being. He has long fingers, very long; but does a human being ever twist such long fingers about in that fashion, curve his back with such a cat-like pliancy, and wear such a white, smooth, smiling, false thief's face? As for the gracious born Baroness Kippenreiter, any one will believe at her first word that she has held a high place in the republic of those fascinating creatures, and only came to Europe by the last ship. She cannot deny her nature; her Yahoo origin grins unmistakably from her long yellow teeth. Hm, hm, hm!"

"And Fräulein Duff?" I asked.

"Duff?" cried he--"Who is Fräulein Duff?"

"The governess of the little Hermine."

"Of the little beauty whom I was called to attend? Her name is Fräulein Duff? A very good name! Might be *Duft* [perfume], and would then be still more suitable. Mignonnette blooming in pots, and dried between flannel-jackets in a bureau-drawer; faded ribbons, tarnished leaves of albums, and a little ring of gold which did not even snap when the faithless lover deserted his Elvira. Is not her name Elvira? It must be. Amalie, you say? Certainly an error of the press; nothing about her to remind one of *The Robbers*--unless it be her long, languishing ringlets, which assuredly are stolen."

"Why were you called into the little girl?"

"She had eaten too many apple-tarts on the road. As if such a thing could hurt a little millionairess! Oh, if it had been black bread, now! I said so to the sorrowing father. 'In all her life she never tasted a crumb of black bread,' the monster replied, patting his protuberant paunch. 'Who never ate his bread with weeping,' sighed the governess, and added, 'that is an eternal truth.' The deuce only knows what she meant."

The doctor went to visit his patients; I started for the office, keeping close to the wall, and slipped into the house through the back-door, for fear of being noticed by some one of the guests. But no one saw me.

However, in the course of the day I caught sight of them from my window. First, the commerzienrath, taking his morning promenade through the garden, a long pipe in his mouth. He seemed to be pondering over important things. From time to time he stopped, and gazed long into vacancy. Doubtless, he was calculating. I observed how with his stumpy fingers he was multiplying, and then wrote the product in the air with the end of his pipe-stem. Once his face puckered into a grin of delight; what could he have reckoned out?

The next was the steuerrath. He went an hour later, with his brother, through the garden. The steuerrath was speaking very animatedly; he several times laid his right hand upon his breast, as if in asseveration. The superintendent's eyes were dropped; the subject of the conversation seemed to distress him. When they came near my window, he looked across with apparent uneasiness, and drew his brother behind a hedge. Apparently he did not wish me to witness his brother's gesticulations.

I had bent over my work again with the painful feeling that I was a superfluity and in the way, when suddenly the door leading from the office into the garden was opened, and the steuerrath hastily entered. I was startled, as even a man of courage is startled when unexpectedly a serpent glides across his path. The steuerrath smiled very benignantly, and held out to me his white well-kept hand, which he again withdrew with a graceful wave, as I showed no disposition to take it.

"My dear young friend," he said, "must we meet again *thus*?"

I made him no answer; what could I answer to a phrase in which every word and every tone was a lie?

"How would I deplore your fate," he proceeded, "had not fortune brought you here to my brother, who without doubt is one of the noblest and best of men alive, and who even now, while we were walking there, has said so many kind and affectionate things of you. I was impelled to offer you my hand, although I had a presentiment that you, like your father, would turn from one whom in truth fortune has bitterly enough persecuted."

And the victim of fortune threw himself into an arm-chair, and covered his eyes with his long white hand, the ring-finger of which was adorned with an enormous signet.

"I do not reproach him for it: Heaven forbid! I have known him for so many years. He is one of those strict men, whose horror of dereliction to duty is so great, and at the same time so blind, that in their eyes an accused person always appears a guilty one."

The last observation was too just for me not to admit it inwardly; and probably my look expressed as much, for the steuerrath said with a melancholy smile:

"Yes, you can sing a sad song to that tune! Well, well, I will not chafe the wound which pains you more than all the rest; but in truth you have only early learned what sooner or later we must all learn, that we can least expect a correct construction of our views and intentions, and even of our position, from those who stand in the closest relation to us."

In this too there was truth; and I could not refrain from looking in a more friendly manner at the man.

"I have just now had proof of this. My brother Ernest is, as I have already said, one of the best of men; and yet what trouble does it not give him to place himself in my situation. To be sure, he has always lived with so much regularity that he does not know what it is in one night to lose the half of one's receipts, which are anyhow dealt out in such stinted measure; he does not know what it is to have to compromise with one's creditors--to risk one's own subsistence and that of others, alas! and what is bitterest of all, to be dependent on the good-will of a hard-hearted man of money!"

Here the white hand wiped a tear which seemed to have accumulated in the inner corner of his right eye, and then resignedly glided to his lap, while a mild smile stole over his aristocratic features.

He rose and said:

"Forgive me; but an unfortunate one feels himself irresistibly attracted to the unhappy, and you have always been a friend of my house, and the best companion of my Arthur. You must not take it ill of the poor youth, if pride in his new sword has turned his head a little. You know him; hardly once in ten times does his heart know what his tongue is saying; and he has already owned to me that in the notion that he owed it to his dignity as an ensign, he behaved very foolishly to you. You really must forgive him."

He smiled again, nodded to me, was about to offer his hand again, but remembered that I had refused it before, and withdrew it, smiled again, but very sadly, and went to the garden door, which he opened softly and softly closed behind him.

I looked after him with a mingled feeling of astonishment and contempt. Was this soft-speaking man, who in my presence could weep over his position, the same to whom as a boy I had looked up as to a superior being? And if his case was so desperate--and as far as I could learn

it might very well be so--I might have behaved in a more friendly manner to him, might have afforded him a word of sympathy, above all, need not have repulsed his offered hand.

My face burned; it was the first time I had ever rudely repelled a supplicant. I asked myself again whether imprisonment had not corrupted me; and I was glad that I had kept so silent in regard to the relations between the steuerrath and his deceased brother, and especially that I had faithfully guarded the secret of that letter, even from the superintendent, in whom, in all other respects, I place unbounded confidence. Had the steuerrath a suspicion that I could have revealed something had I chosen? and had he come this morning to thank me for my silence?

The steuerrath appeared at once to me in an entirely different and much more favorable light. We feel a certain inclination towards persons whom we have laid under obligation, if they are acute enough to let us perceive that they are penetrated by the feeling of that obligation.

I would also let Arthur see that I had forgiven his folly.

The steuerrath is right, I thought; not once in ten times does he know where his tongue is running to.

As I formed this magnanimous resolution, there came another knock--this time at the door that led into the hall, and I came very near laughing aloud when upon my calling "Come in!" the commerzienrath presented himself on the threshold; not this time in dressing-gown and slippers, with his long pipe in his hand as before, but in a blue frock-coat with gold buttons, a wide black neckcloth, out of which projected fiercely, at least four inches, the long points of his high-standing collar, a flowered waistcoat loose enough not to incommode his prominent paunch, nor interfere with the display of his neatly-ironed frill, black trousers which were not so long but that one might see how firmly his two flat feet stood in the shining boots. In this very costume did this man pervade all the recollections of my earliest youth; and perhaps it was because then, in my childish innocence, I had laughed at his grotesque appearance, that now, when to say the least such behavior was far more unbecoming, I was again seized with an impulse to laughter.

"How are you now, my dear young friend?" said the commerzienrath, in the tone with which one inquires into the state of some one on his death-bed.

"I thank you for your kind inquiry, Herr Commerzienrath; I am quite well, as you see."

"You are a tremendous fellow," cried the commerzienrath, taking his tone from me at once. "But that is right; we can live but once; one must take things as they come. I said as much to your father only yesterday, when I met him upon the street. 'Good heavens!' I said, 'why do you make such a terrible matter of it? We have all been young once; and young men will be young men. Why have you stopped his allowance?' I asked. 'He is not condemned to hard labor; he has not forfeited the right to wear the national cockade; he is only imprisoned. That might happen to any one; and you,' I said, 'are such an honorable man that it would be an honor to us all to play Boston with you, even if you had four sons in the penitentiary.'"

The commerzienrath's head sank again upon one side; it is possible that at his last words my face assumed a grave expression.

"To be sure," said he, "there are many that take it more easily. There is my brother-in-law. I would not be in his shoes although his father was a nobleman of the empire and mine only an ordinary needleman. The investigation let him off, but it was with a black eye. Any one would suppose he had had enough of intriguing for his life-time; but he cannot keep out of it. Great heavens, it is a shame, the amount that his family has cost me already. Would you believe it, that I had to pay for my wife's trousseau out of my own pocket? Then the one at Zehrendorf and his drafts! By the way, did he ever tell you that he had assigned all Zehrendorf to me, years ago? Try to think; he must have mentioned it to you on some occasion or other. He was not one of those that keep their mouths close shut. And there's the steuerrath! What have I not already done for the man; and now these pretensions of his! Indemnification! A man must live; and if one has not a son, who naturally could not be set to earn his own living, still one has a daughter that one does not want to let starve. You must try to get out of here, my boy. The girl asks after you ten times a day. You have bewitched her, you rascal you!"

And the commerzienrath, who had arisen and was standing by me with his hat and stick in his hand, gave me a little poke in the ribs.

"The Fräulein is very kind," I said.

"Look there now, how you blush!" said the commerzienrath; "quite right; I like that. Respect for the ladies; don't be an idle coxcomb; a fellow of that sort is worth nothing all his life. But you must not call my Hermann Fräulein; Fräulein Duff will never allow that; she must be called Fräulein herself, though she would give her two little fingers if she did not need to be called Mamsell or Fräulein any longer."

The commerzienrath winked as he said this, puffed out his cheeks, and gave me another little poke.

"I shall hardly have the opportunity," I said.

"Pooh!" said the commerzienrath, "don't be tragic. We are to ourselves here. I spoke with my brother-in-law to-day about it; you must take supper with us this evening. Hermann--you know I call her Hermann--wants particularly to see you. Adieu!"

And he kissed the tips of his clumsy fingers and left the room, giving me another wink as he passed out at the door.

What was the meaning of these visits? What did the ceremonious steuerrath and the purse-proud commerzienrath want with me, a prisoner? I might have racked my brain in vain for a solution of the enigma, had not the superintendent, who came into the office that afternoon, let fall a word which gave me the key to the mystery.

"I wish the next three days were over," said he. "You would not believe, my dear George, how repulsive to me are all these transactions, which have no material interest for me. They really only want me to act as umpire, and flatter me in the hope of influencing my decision beforehand. And if I could only decide--but how is that possible in this case where the parties themselves do all they can to obscure the matter? They count upon you, my dear George, as you are the only one who was near my unhappy brother in the latter part of his life, and thus may possibly be able to give information on some points that need to be cleared up. And now come with me into the garden. Snellius and you must help me to entertain the company. My poor wife and I will really not be able to go through with it."

Smiling as he said these words, he took my arm and let me assist him down the steps into the garden and up the path to the Belvedere, from which even at a distance there reached us the joyous clamor of children. It was the first time since my misfortunes that I had gone into society. I had learned while in prison many things of which I was proud, but also one of which I was ashamed, namely, the agitation that overcame me as I heard nearer and nearer the voices of the speakers, and saw the dresses of the ladies glancing through the hedge, already thinned by the autumn winds.

I had cause to be content with my reception: the boys rushed at me, and Kurt cried that I must play with them, for Cousin Arthur kept with Hermine and Paula, and that was tiresome; and Hermine anyhow was only ten years old, and did not need to be so proud.

"Hermine is not proud, but you are too wild," said Paula, who was holding Hermine's hand, while Arthur kept a little in the background and twirled his little sprout of a moustache with visible embarrassment.

I caught up the boys and tossed each in succession high in the air, to conceal my confusion as well as I could, while I kept my eyes fixed upon Hermine. It was really not possible to find anything more dainty and charming than this beautiful creature, in her white dress, which again was trimmed with cornflower blue ribbons, as when I saw her on the steamer. And her great blue eyes looked as eagerly at me, and her red lips were half parted, as if she had suddenly caught sight of the prince of a fairy-tale.

"Is that he?" I heard her whisper to Paula, "and can he really conquer lions?"

I did not catch Paula's answer to this singular question, for I had now to turn to Frau von Zehren, who sat between her sister-in-law and Fräulein Duff on the bench. Frau von Zehren looked paler than usual, and her poor blind eyes turned with an appealing look towards me, while a painfully-confused smile played about her lips.

She offered me her hand at once, and half arose from the bench, but remembered that she must remain sitting, and smiled yet more sadly.

I wished the born Baroness Kippenreiter, with her long yellow teeth, and the governess, with her long yellow ringlets, who were both staring at me through their eye-glasses, a thousand miles away.

The superintendent had now joined us, and said: "Will you not take my arm awhile, Elise? You will be chilled; the ladies will certainly excuse you."

"Oh, allow me to walk with our dear friend," cried the born Kippenreiter, springing up with decision. The superintendent slightly shrugged his shoulders.

"You are not one of the most robust yourself, dear sister-in-law," he said.

"I am strong whenever duty calls," cried the born Kippenreiter, drawing Frau von Zehren away with her.

"That is a grand expression!" sighed Fräulein Duff. "Happy he who can say that of himself!" and the pale governess shook her yellow locks in a dejected way, then turned her dim eyes on me, and lisped:

"Richard--ah, just as in the old story! Alas that the Blondel is wanting! But do not despair; faithfully seek, and thou shalt find at last; that is an immortal truth."

"How are you, Fräulein Duff?" I asked, merely to say something.

"And still this charming quality of taking an interest in the welfare of others, with all his own misfortunes! That is beautiful! that is great!" whispered the governess. "I must, indeed I must, make an attempt to creep into your heart----"

She laid the tips of three fingers upon my arm and pointed shyly with her parasol in the direction which the company, who had now left the place under the plane-trees, had taken.

"And how do you live here?" she again whispered, as we descended into the garden. "But why need I ask--calm and free from care as William Tell. Life here is an idyll. Do not talk to me of a prison! The whole world is a prison; no one knows that better than I."

"I should have thought, Fräulein Duff, that the education of so charming a creature----"

"Yes, she is charming," replied the pale lady, with a flush of real emotion, "lovely as a May morning, but you can understand--the undisturbed happiness of life--that this child should have such a----"

She looked cautiously around, and then continued in a hollow voice:

"Only think! he calls her Hermann, and asks three times a day why she is not a-- *Fi donc!* I cannot utter it. Oh, it lacerates my heart that such rough hands should clutch the delicate chords of this virgin soul! The world loves to blacken whatever is bright and fair; who knows not that? but at least her own father--but I am the last who should complain of him. He has--you are a noble soul, Carlos; I cast myself upon your breast--he has awakened hopes in me which would render giddy a soul less strong than mine. To acquire a million is great; to throw it away is godlike--and to be the mother of this child, I often think, must be heavenly; but what will you say to my always talking of myself? what will you say to your satirical friend?"

"My satirical friend?"

Fräulein Duff stepped a pace backward, shaded her eyes from the rays of the evening sun with her transparent hand, and said with a coquettish smile:

"Carlos, you are playing false. Confess now you want to escape me by this serpentine turning. There is but one here to whom this description applies, but he is a giant--in intellect! It is immense--sublime! it really overcame me! And you call such a giant your friend, and yet complain that you are in a prison! Oh, my dear friend, who would not willingly exchange his freedom for your imprisonment, to win such a friend as this!"

Fräulein Duff pressed her handkerchief to her eyelids, and then gave a loud shriek as she felt herself seized fast from behind, and turning saw Hermine's little spaniel, who had fastened his sharp teeth in the skirt of her dress, and looked at her with a malevolent expression in his great black eyes. At the same moment the whole company came up, so that the governess had suddenly quite a concourse of spectators to her combat with the little long-haired monster. I endeavored to release her, and only made matters worse; Zerlina would not let go, and shook and tore with all her strength; the boys pretended to help me, and secretly urged her on; no one could keep from laughing, and the commerzienrath literally roared. Nothing remained for Fräulein Duff, under these circumstances, but to swoon away, and fall into the arms of Doctor Snellius, who just then came up, attracted by the noise.

"Do not be alarmed, ladies and gentlemen," said the commerzienrath, "this happens three times every day."

"Barbarian!" murmured the fainting damsel, with pale lips, and raised herself from the arms of the doctor, who, despite the sublimity attributed to him, wore at this moment a very sheepish look. Fräulein Duff strove to cast, through the tears that dimmed her water-blue eyes, an annihilating look at the mocker, declined the doctor's proffered arm with the words, "I thank you, but I need no assistance to the house," and hastened away, holding her handkerchief to her face, while Zerlina capered around her little mistress with joyous barkings and triumphant flourishings of her bushy tail.

"I think she will lose her wits one of these days," said the commerzienrath, as a sort of explanation of the scene which had just occurred.

"So much the more should you spare her, especially in the presence of others," said the superintendent.

I had seized this opportunity to make my escape from the company, and was wandering about in the farther walks of the garden, when I saw Paula and Hermine approaching at a little distance. Paula had laid her hand on the little maid's shoulder, who, in her turn, had wound one arm round her cousin's waist. Hermine was looking up in Paula's face, and speaking with great animation, while Paula smiled in a friendly manner, and said from time to time something which seemed to call forth vehement opposition from the little maid.

The lovely child of ten years, with her glossy brown hair, and her great sparkling blue eyes,

her bright little face beaming with animation, and the slender maiden of fifteen, with the gentle smile on her delicate lips--both these beautiful figures illuminated by the ruddy glow of an autumn sunset--how often has this picture recurred to my memory in later years!

And now they caught sight of me. I heard Paula say: "Ask him then yourself," and Hermine answered, "And so I will!"

She let Paula go, came springing up to me, stood before me looking fearlessly at me with her great eyes, and asked:

"Can you conquer lions, or can you not?"

"I think not," I answered; "but why?"

"Yes or no?" she asked, giving the least possible stamp of her little foot.

"Well then, no!"

"But you ought to," she replied, with an indignant look. "I wish it."

"If you wish it, I will do my very best, the first chance that offers."

"Do you see, Paula," said the little maid, turning to her with a triumphant look. "I told you so! I told you so!" and she clapped her hands and sprang about like a little Bacchante, and then ran scampering over the flower-beds, Zerlina following her with loud barkings.

"What did the child mean with her curious question?" I asked Paula.

"It seems that Fräulein Duff keeps comparing you to Richard the Lion-heart," replied Paula, with a smile.

"With Richard the Lion-heart--me?"

"Yes, because you are blond, and so tall and strong, and a prisoner; so Hermine has taken it into her head that you must be able to conquer lions. Whether she is in earnest or in jest, I doubt whether she knows herself. But I wanted to thank you for joining us in the garden to-day. It was kind of you; for I could see that you were not at ease in the company."

"And you, yourself?"

"I must not ask the question. They are our relations."

"Of course that excuses everything."

I said this not without some bitterness, with a reference to her friendship to Arthur; but I felt ashamed of myself when she raised her sweet, gentle eyes to my face and innocently asked:

"What do you mean?"

Happily I was spared the necessity of an answer, for Doctor Snellius came up at the moment, calling "Fräulein Paula! Fräulein Paula!" while he was yet at a distance.

"I must go in," said Paula; "there are many things to see to; and I beg you do not look so angry. You have been of late not so friendly as usual; are you displeased with me?"

I had not the courage to answer "Yes!" when I looked into the earnest gaze that was lifted to mine.

"Who could be that?" I said. "You are a thousand times better than all of us."

"That she is, God bless her!" said Doctor Snellius, who had caught the last words.

He looked after her as she hastened away, and a deep and sorrowful shade passed over his grotesque face. Then with both hands he draped his hat over his bald skull down to his very ears, and said in a tone of irritation:

"The devil take it! She is far too good; she is so good that she can only meet with trouble. The time is past--if; there ever was such a time--when all things worked together for good to the good man. One must be bad--thoroughly bad; one must flatter, lie, cheat, trip up his neighbor, regard the whole world as his private inheritance which by neglect has fallen into alien hands, and which is to be won back again. But to do this one must be brought up to it, and how are we brought up? As if life were one of Gessner's idylls. Modesty, love of our neighbors, love of truth! Let any one try it with this outfit! Is the commerzienrath modest? Does he love his neighbor? Does he love the truth? Not one whit And the man is a millionaire, and his neighbors pull off caps when they meet him, and fame proclaims him one of the noblest of human-kind, because from time to time he tosses a *thaler* that will not go into his crammed purse, into a poor man's hat. But you will say he has his punishment in his own breast. Much of it! He considers himself a thoroughly good man, a splendid fellow, full of humor, and when at night he lies down in his bed to snore his eight hours, he says, 'This you have honestly earned.' Away with your starving, hectic honesty!"

"I did not say a word in its favor, doctor."

"But while I was declaiming you kept on smiling, as if you would have said: 'But you are dishonest.' Do you see, that is just my vexation. With this wretched bringing-up of ours, one is filled so with honest notions that one cannot be a scoundrel, however good his intentions, but has to keep honest, in spite of his better insight. And if we cannot get over this, how can women?"

The doctor looked fixedly in the direction in which Paula had disappeared, and then took off his great, round spectacles, the glasses of which seemed to have become dim.

"You must not abuse the women, doctor," I said. "Fräulein Duff----"

"Has made me a formal proposal," said Doctor Snellius, hastily putting on his spectacles, "and here comes somebody who will make you one. Beware of this Greek in uniform."

The doctor clapped his hat upon his head and hurried away, without returning the very friendly salute with which Arthur approached us from a side path.

"I am glad that he is gone," said Arthur, coming to my side and taking my arm just as in old times; "I have something to say to you, or rather I have something to beg of you; my father has already done it, it is true; but it can do no harm if I repeat it. You know what I mean."

"Yes," I answered.

"I behaved like a fool, I know," the ensign continued; "but you must really not think too hardly of me. I thought it was due to this thing here----" and he gave his sword a kind of toss with his left leg.

"Arthur," I said, stopping and withdrawing my arm, "I am not quite so clever as you, but you must not consider me an absolute fool. You separated yourself from me, long before you had that toasting-iron at your side. You did it because you had no further use for me, because it suited your purpose to join the hue and cry against me, because--"

"Well, yes," interrupted Arthur, "I don't deny it. I was in such an infernally dependent position that I had to howl with the wolves. If I had spoken out my real feelings, Lederer would have surely plucked me at the Easter Examination, and my uncle would never have paid for my ensign's outfit."

"And now," I said, "it seems the wind blows from another quarter, and we must trim our sails accordingly."

"Oh, hang it!" said Arthur, laughing, "you must not bring a fellow to book in that way. I often say things that I cannot maintain. You always knew that was a weakness of mine, and yet you used to like me. I have not changed, and why are you angry with me all at once? You may believe that I am still the same, notwithstanding my new caparison, which, by the way, I am not likely to wear so very much longer. It cost no end of trouble to get me the appointment; the colonel told me himself that he only did it out of regard for my uncle, who was his comrade in the war for freedom, and that on this account he would shut his eyes a little to his duty, and take no notice of the reports that were afloat about my father. But even as it is I am not out of the woods yet. Papa's affairs are in such a frightful condition that no creditor is willing to give him the least delay; and unless things now take a favorable turn, he is ruined, and I of course with him; my name will be struck off the list of candidates for promotion."

"What is this favorable turn to consist in?" I asked.

"Well, I don't precisely know myself," Arthur replied, decapitating some weeds with the scabbard of his sword. "Uncle Commerzienrath has to pay over to papa his share of the inheritance, left by my grandfather, which papa has never received; and also what is coming to us from Uncle Malte's estate. But the old Judas will pay nothing; he says papa has been paid already five and ten times over. As I said, I don't understand it; I only know that I never received a *groschen* of cash from my uncle, and I even envy my servant-fellow, who at least has enough to eat."

I took a side look at my old friend; he did look extremely pale and thin. My own appetite had long since recovered its vigor, and not to have enough to eat, struck me as a most serious misfortune.

"Poor fellow!" I said, and took his arm again, which I had previously let go.

"But that is the least," continued Arthur, in a querulous tone. "'Your father is always running in debt,' the colonel said; 'as soon as I see that you are following in his footsteps, we shall have to part.' But I ask you now, how with a couple of groschen a day can one avoid running into debt? To-morrow I have to meet a little note which a villain of a Jew swindled me out of. I spoke of it to papa and to mamma, and they both say they have not money enough to take them home, not to speak of giving me any. I must get out of the scrape as best I can. Very well; I will get out of it, but in another way."

And the ensign whistled softly, and assumed a look of gloomy desperation.

"How much do you need, Arthur!" I asked.

"A mere trifle--twenty-five *thalers*."

"I will give it to you."

"You?"

"I have about so much in the cashier's hands here; and if it falls a little short, he will give me credit."

"Will you really do that, you dear good old George?" cried Arthur, seizing both my hands and shaking them again and again.

"But don't make such a fuss about it," I said, trying with very mixed feelings to escape the ensign's rather too exuberant gratitude.

CHAPTER XII.

The two brothers Von Zehren, with the *commerzienrath*, were occupied for an hour the next morning in a conference which was the object of this family gathering. The session must have been a lively one. The room in which they were was just above the office, and although the house was solidly built, I had more than once heard the shrill voice of the *commerzienrath*. I felt a sort of disquiet, as if my own fortunes were the matter at stake. Had I not been, by the strangest combination of circumstances, held as it were perforce in connection with this family? I had taken an active part, as a friend and confidant, in the most important events connected with it; and my own fate had been entirely determined by these events and my relation to various members of the family. If Arthur had not wanted to have me with him at the oyster-feast on board the *Penguin* that morning--if I had not met the Wild Zehren at Pinnow's that evening after the scene with my father--if---

"The gentlemen upstairs would like to see us," said Sergeant Süssmilch, thrusting his gray head in at the door.

"Well!" said I, laying the pen from my hand, not without a little quickening of my pulse.

"Well, what?" asked the sergeant, coming in and latching the door after him.

"Well, I had hoped that they would not want me," I said, getting down from my stool with a sigh.

"Want you for what?" asked the veteran, stroking his long moustache and looking at me half angrily.

"It is a long story," I answered, adjusting my necktie at the great inkstand on the table, which offered me a very distorted reflection of myself.

"Which one need not tell an old bear with seven senses, as he would not be able to understand it," answered the sergeant, with a little irritation in his tone.

"I will tell you another time," I said.

At this moment, in the upper room, two voices were raised so high, and two chairs were simultaneously pushed back with so much violence, that the sergeant and I gave each other an expressive look. The sergeant came close to me and said in a confidential hollow tone:

"Fling both those fellows down the steps, and when they get down to me, I will pitch them out of the house."

"We'll see about it," I answered, shaking the hand of the old Cerberus, who had growled these last words apparently from the pit of his stomach.

When I opened the door of the room upstairs, a peculiar spectacle was presented to my gaze. The superintendent alone, of the three gentlemen, sat at the round table, covered with papers of all sorts. The *commerzienrath* stood with one hand resting upon the back of his chair, and with the other gesticulating vehemently at the *steuerrath*, who, like one who is eager to speak, and

whose adversary will not let him get in a word, stamped about the room, stood still, raised his hand, tried to speak, then shrugged his shoulders and stamped about the room again. No one appeared to notice my entrance but the superintendent, who beckoned me to him, and then called the commerzienrath's attention to my presence, but it did not interrupt his harangue.

"And so," he went on, "I am to lie out of my money for eighteen years, not receiving a *groschen* of interest, to have such chicanery played on me at last! You are a man of honor, Herr Superintendent; a man of honor, I say; and in the whole matter, from the beginning until now, have behaved as nobly as possible, but that gentleman there----" and he pointed his clumsy finger at the steuerrath with an energetic gesture, as if there had been any possibility of mistaking the person meant--"that gentleman, your brother and my brother-in-law, seems to have a very peculiar way of looking at money-transactions. Oh yes, it would suit me exactly to have my goods paid for two or three times over, only there happen to stand certain passages in the law of the country----"

"Brother-in-law!" exclaimed the steuerrath, taking a stride towards the speaker, and raising his hand in a threatening manner.

The commerzienrath sprang with great agility behind a chair, and cried: "Do you expect to intimidate me? I stand under the protection of the law----"

"Don't scream so, Herr Commerzienrath," I said, laying my hand upon his right shoulder, and forcing him down into his chair.

I had noticed that the superintendent's pale cheeks were growing redder and redder at every word of the furious man, and the marks of pain under his eyes were becoming more and more apparent.

The commerzienrath rubbed his shoulder, looked at me with an expression of astonishment, and was silent, just as a screaming child suddenly stops its crying when something very extraordinary happens to it.

The superintendent smiled, and availing himself of the sudden pause, said:

"I invited our young friend to come up, because I really did not know how the question which is the matter of immediate dispute could be better or more promptly decided; for no one can give us surer information on this point than he. We want to know, George, what there was in the house at Zehrendorf: the furniture, the plate, and so forth; and we should like some account of the condition of the farm buildings, and as correct an inventory as possible of the live stock and other property, if you can inform us on this point. Do you think you can do so?"

"I will try," I said, and gave them as full an account as I could.

While I spoke, the little gray eyes of the commerzienrath were fixed immovably upon me, and I remarked that as I proceeded with the description, his puckered face cleared up more and more, while the steuerrath's grew longer and more confused in the same proportion.

"You see, brother-in-law, that I was right," cried the commerzienrath, "that----"

"You agreed to leave the management of the matter to me," said the superintendent; and then turning to the steuerrath: "It appears, Arthur, that George's account agrees with the inventory which the commerzienrath had taken three years before, except such trifling differences as the lapse of time amply explains----"

"And so," cried the commerzienrath, "the money which I lent your deceased brother upon it, could scarcely have been too little. As my brother-in-law has not yet given us the proof that the sum which the deceased paid him, in the year 1818, through my hands, was not an indemnification for his interest in the estate, he must consent to admit that even during the life of his brother, I was the legal proprietor of Zehrendorf, and that his pretensions are illusory, entirely illusory----"

And the commerzienrath threw himself back in his chair, puckered up his eyes, and rubbed his hands as if with satisfaction.

"I should have thought," began the steuerrath, with an appearance of annoyance, "that these things were not precisely suitable to be discussed in the presence of a third person----"

I arose, with a look at the superintendent.

"Excuse me, my dear Arthur," said the latter, "you not only were willing but even desirous that we should call in our young friend here; of course it was to be expected that in his presence many things----"

"----would be spoken of, which would not be particularly agreeable to the Herr Steuerrath," said the commerzienrath, turning over his papers with a malicious smile.

"I must entreat you, brother-in-law--" said the superintendent.

"And I must further request," cried the steuerrath, "that these matters be handled in a more becoming tone. If I pledge my word as a nobleman that my deceased brother more than once assured me that he had parted with only a small, the very smallest part of the Zehrendorf forest--"

"So!" cried the commerzienrath; "is that your scheme? First it was the house, then the inventory, now it is the forest--here is the bill of sale."

"I beg you," said the steuerrath, pushing away with the back of his hand the paper which the commerzienrath extended to him across the table; "I have already taken note of it. This bill, moreover, is not indisputable."

"It is the handwriting of our brother," said the superintendent, in a reproachful tone.

"But expressed in such general terms," replied the steuerrath, shrugging his shoulders.

"Was I to have every tree separately described?" cried the commerzienrath. "It is unheard of, the way I am treated here. I do not speak of you, Herr Superintendent. You are a man of honor, every inch of you; but when I am told here every moment that I must respect the word of a nobleman, and a paper like this is not of more validity, which is a nobleman's word too, and written with his own hand----"

The commerzienrath had fallen into a querulous tone.

"Perhaps our young friend here can give us information on this point too," said the superintendent. "Do you remember, George, to have heard anything from the mouth of our deceased brother bearing upon the point at issue?"

The steuerrath cast a quick, anxious look first at me; the commerzienrath stealthily watched me, and then the steuerrath, as if to detect the signs of any secret collusion between us; the superintendent fixed his large, clear blue eyes upon me with a look of inquiry.

"Certainly I can," I answered.

"Well then?" cried the commerzienrath.

I told the gentlemen the expression which the Wild Zehren had used when he came to my room the morning before his death, that of the whole majestic forest no part belonged to him, not even enough to make him a coffin.

My voice faltered as I told this. That morning when I beheld for the last time the lovely park glittering in the glorious sunshine, the portrait of the strange man who knew himself utterly ruined, and gave so passionate an expression to his knowledge--his attitude, his words, the tone of his voice--all came back to me with irresistible force; I had to turn away to hide the tears which sprang to my eyes.

"The question is decided for me now, if it were not so before," said the superintendent, rising and coming to me.

"And for me too," cried the commerzienrath, with a triumphant look at his adversary.

"But not for me," said the steuerrath. "However disposed I am to place the fullest confidence in the veracity, or, more accurately, in the good memory of our young friend here, his recollections differ too widely from what I have heard from my brother's lips for me to abandon the ground I have taken. I am sorry to have to be so obstinate, but I cannot help it. I owe it to myself and to my family. The last eighteen years of my life are a series of sacrifices made to our eldest brother. But a few days before his tragical end he appealed to me in the most moving terms to advance him a considerable sum of money; I ran about the whole town to get it for him; I came to you also, brother-in-law, as you doubtless remember. You refused me--and, by the way, not in the most delicate manner. I wrote to my unfortunate brother that I would assist him, but he must wait. I adjured him to take no desperate resolution. He did not regard my entreaties. Had that letter only not been lost!"

"You have no further occasion for me, Herr Superintendent?" I said, and, without awaiting his answer, left the room, and hastened to the office in a state of agitation, at which now I can but smile. What had happened of so much consequence? A man, speaking of matters of importance, had been guilty of an audacious lie. Later I discovered that this is not of such rare occurrence, and in matters of business lying has a sort of charter; but I was then very young, very inexperienced, and, I may add, innocent, or my emotion at this moment could not have been so violent. I stood in the presence of a thing to me at once horrible and incomprehensible. I could not grasp it. I felt as if the world was being lifted from its pivots. Once before something like this had happened to me--when I heard of Constance's flight, and learned that she had deceived me and lied to me; but there was then still a kind of palliation for her in my eyes; the passion of love, which I could understand. But this I did not understand. I could not conceive how, for a few wretched hundred or thousand dollars, one could calumniate the dead, defraud the living, and roll one's self in the mire. But one thing became clear to me at that moment, and all my life since I have held to the conviction that truth is not a mere form, by the side of which another might

have place, but that it is like nature, the foundation and the essential condition of human existence; and that every lie shakes and upheaves this foundation, as far as its influence reaches.

Since then I have discovered that this influence is not so extremely wide; that as water naturally seeks its level, so the moral world continually strives to keep truth erect, and to cancel the injurious effect of falsehood.

But on this morning this consolatory thought did not present itself to calm the agitation in my heart. "Liar, hateful, disgusting liar!" I murmured over and over to myself, "you deserve that I should have you placed in the pillory; that I should reveal the real contents of the last letter you wrote to your brother."

I think that if this state of things had continued, I should not have been able to resist the impulse to revenge Truth on her betrayer, however foreign to my nature was the part of informer. But I now heard the gentlemen coming down the stairs, and the next moment the superintendent entered the office. His cheeks were now as pale as they had before been flushed; his eyes were glassy, as those of one who has just undergone an agonizing operation; he tottered to a chair, and sank into it as I hastened to support him.

After a minute he pressed my hand, assumed an erect position, and said, smiling:

"Thank you; it is over now. Excuse this weakness, but it has affected me more powerfully than I had thought. Such a dispute about *yours* and *mine* is always the most disagreeable thing in the world, even when one looks upon it as a mere spectator; how much more then when the dust raised is thrown directly into one's face! Well, the matter is ended. I had proposed a compromise before, and they have agreed to sign it. My brother, for a very moderate indemnification, gives up all his claims, which your last words deprived, with me, of all remains of credit. He calls himself a beggar; but alas! he is not one of those beggars who might take their place by kings."

The pale man smiled bitterly, and continued in a low tone, as if talking to himself:

"Thus the last remnant of the inheritance of our ancestors passes out of our hands. The old time is past--it has lasted too long! I regret the forest; one does not like to see the trees fall through whose foliage the earliest morning-ray greeted our childish eyes, and under whose branches we played our childish sports. And now they will fall; to their new possessor they are but wood, which he will convert into money. Money! True, it rules the world, and he knows it; he knows that the turn has come for him and those like him, and they are now the knights of the hammer. It is the old game in a somewhat different form. How long will they play it? Not long, I trust. Then----"

He raised his eyes to me with a long loving look----"then will come our turn, ours, who have comprehended that there is such a thing as justice, that this justice cannot be trifled with, and that we must cleave to and desire with all our souls this justice, which is equity. Is it not so, George?"

CHAPTER XIII.

Doctor Willibrod and I had hoped that, now that their business was at an end, the burdensome guests who had so long made the superintendent's house their home, would take their leave; but our hope was to be only partially fulfilled.

"I do not wish to travel in the company of a man who has made me a beggar," said the steuerrath.

"Fudge!" said the commerzienrath, coming into the office that afternoon, in travelling dress, to bid me good-by; "he has been a beggar all his life. Would you believe it? five minutes ago he was begging from me again; he has not the money to take him home, I must advance him a hundred *thalers*. I gave them to him; I shall never see them again. By the way, I must see *you* again. Really I like you better every time I see you; you are a capital fellow."

"You will make but little capital out of me, Herr Commerzienrath."

"Make capital? Very good!" said the jovial old fellow, and poked me in the ribs. "We shall see, we shall see. Your very first movement when you leave this place must be to my house. Will soon find something for you; am planning all sorts of improvements on the estate--here the commerzienrath shut his eyes--distillery, brick-yard, turf-cutting, saw-mill--will find a place for you at once. How long have you still to be here?"

"Six years longer."

The commerzienrath puffed out his cheeks. "Whew! that is an awful time. Can I do nothing for you? Could I help you up there? A little cash in hand, eh?"

"I am greatly obliged to you, but cannot expect any advantage from your exertions."

"Pity, pity! Would have been so glad to prove my gratitude to you. You have really done me a great service. The man would have given me much trouble. Would a little money be of service to you? Speak freely. I am a man of business, and a hundred *thalers* or so are a trifle to me."

"If we are to part as friends, not another word of that," I said, with decision.

The commerzienrath hastily thrust back the thick pocketbook which he had half drawn out of his pocket, and for the greater security buttoned over it one button of his blue frockcoat.

"A man's free-will is his heaven. Come anyhow and bid my Hermine good-by. I believe the girl would refuse to start if you do not come to the carriage. Perhaps you will not do this either."

"Assuredly I will," I answered, and followed the commerzienrath to the space in front of the house, where already the whole family was assembled around the great travelling-carriage of the millionaire. While in his ostentatious way he was boasting of the convenience of the carriage and the beauty of the two powerful brown horses, who were lazily switching their long tails about, and at intervals bidding farewell to the company with clumsy bows and awkward phrases, Hermine was flitting from one to another, laughing, teasing, romping in rivalry with her Zerlina, that seemed to be continually in the air, and kept up the most outrageous barking. In this way she passed me two or three times, without taking the least notice of me. Suddenly some one touched my arm from behind. It was Fräulein Duff. She beckoned me, by a look, a little to one side, and said hurriedly and mysteriously:

"She loves you!"

Fräulein Duff seemed so agitated; her locks, usually so artistically arranged, fluttered to-day in such disorder about her narrow face; her water-blue eyes rolled so strangely in their large sockets--I really believed for a moment that "the good lady had quite lost her modicum of wits.

"Don't put on such a desperate look, Richard," she said.

"From the clouds must fortune fall,
From the lap of the Immortals.'

"That is an eternal truth, which here once more is proven. She confessed it to me this morning with such passionate tears; it rent my heart; I wept with her; I might well do it, for I felt with her.

"And I, I too was born in Arcady,
But the short spring-time brought me only tears."

Fräulein Duff wiped her water-blue eyes, and cast a languishing look at Doctor Snellius, who with a very mixed expression of countenance was receiving the thanks of the commerzienrath.

"Both youth and man!" she whispered:

"The rind may have a bitter taste,
But surely not the fruit.'

"Good heavens! what have I said! You are in possession of the secret of a virgin heart. You will not profane it. And now, let us now part, Richard. One last word: Seek truly and thou shalt find! I come, I come!"

She turned away, and waving the company a farewell with her parasol, hurried to the carriage, in which the commerzienrath had already fixed himself comfortably, while Hermine held her spaniel out at the door and let it bark. Startled at Fräulein Duff's extraordinary communication, I had kept in the background; the wild little creature had not a single look for him whom, according to Fräulein Duff's report, she loved. She laughed and jested, but at the moment when the horses started, a painful spasm contracted her charming face, and she threw herself passionately into her governess's arms to hide the tears that burst from her eyes.

"Rid of these," said Doctor Snellius; "hope to-morrow we shall send the others after them."

But the doctor's hope was not fulfilled on the morrow, nor yet on the next day. Fourteen days passed, and the steuerrath and the born Baroness Kippenreiter were still the guests of the superintendent.

"I shall poison them if they don't leave soon," crowed the doctor.

"One could turn to a bear with seven senses on the spot," growled the sergeant.

It was in truth a genuine calamity that had befallen the house of the excellent man; and we three allies bemoaned it, each in his own way, but none louder and more passionately than the doctor.

"You will see," he said, "these people will take up their winter-quarters here. The house is not large, but the hedgehog knows how to make himself comfortable with the marmot; they are well cared for, and as for the friendliness of intercourse--though they care less for that--there is no lack of it. How can *Humanus* have the patience? He must have a Potosi at his disposal. For he suffers, very seriously suffers, under the hypocritical spaniel-like humility of this brotherly parasite, as does his angelic wife under the sharp claws and yellow teeth of the born Kippenreiter. Good heavens! that we should breathe the same air with such creatures--that we must eat from the same dish with them! What crime have we committed?"

"The born Kippenreiters would say the same thing of us."

"You want to provoke me, but you are right. Doubly right; for the born Kippenreiters not only say it but act accordingly, and forbid us, whenever they can, the air that they breathe and the dishes out of which they eat, without in the least caring whether we suffocate or starve; indeed most likely with the wish that these events may come to pass."

"A contribution to the superintendent's hammer and anvil theory," I said.

The doctor's bald crown glowed a lively red.

"Don't talk to me of this good-natured folly," he cried, in his shrillest tones. "Whoever is weak or good-natured, or both--and he most likely will be both--has been hammered by the strong and evil-disposed, as long as the world stands; and he will continue to be hammered until water runs up-hill and the lamb eats the wolf. Hammer and anvil! Old Goethe knew the world, and knew better."

"And what would you do, doctor, if some poor relations took up quarters with you, and became burdensome to you in time?"

"I? I would--that is a stupid question. I don't know what I would do. But that proves nothing--nothing at all; or at the most only that I, spite of all my rhodomontades, am only a wretched piece of anvil. And finally--yes, now I have it! We are neither relations nor connections of theirs; we have no consideration to observe, and we must drive them off."

"A happy thought, doctor!"

"That is it!" said the doctor, and hopped from one leg to other. "I am ready for anything--for anything! We must spoil their life here, embitter it, drench it with gall: in a word, make it impossible."

"But how?"

"How? You lazy mammoth! Devise your own scheme. The born Kippenreiter I take upon myself. She thinks that she has a diseased heart, because she has a bad one. She is as afraid of death as if she had tried a week's experiment in the lower regions. She shall believe me."

On the very same day, Doctor Willibrod Snellius commenced his diabolical plan. Whenever he was within hearing of the born Kippenreiter he began talking of the circulation of the blood, of veins, of arteries, of valvular defects, inflammation of the pericardium, spasm of the heart. He knew, he said, that such conversation must be wearisome to her ladyship, but he was writing a monograph on the subject, and out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaks. Indeed he could not deny that it was not entirely without a motive that he had drawn her attention precisely to this point. He could not and would not positively assert, without a previous and thorough examination, that the valves of her ladyship's heart were not performing their functions regularly; but there were certain symptoms of which probably she might have experienced one or another, and prudence was not merely the mother of wisdom, but often the bestower of, if not a long life, at least one lengthened by several years.

The *gnädige* was by no means a person to whom I felt an especial inclination, and yet I sometimes felt a kind of pity when I saw how the unhappy victim twisted and writhed under the knife of her tormentor. How could she escape him? As a lady who piqued herself upon her culture, she could not well avoid a scientific conversation; as a guest of the house she owed consideration to a friend of the family; and in reality this topic, which she dreaded as a child dreads goblins, had for her a frightful fascination. She turned pale as often as Doctor Willibrod entered the room, and yet fixed her small round eyes upon him with the agonizing look of the bird that sees a serpent gazing into its nest; she could not resist the attraction, and in a minute she had beckoned the fearful man to her and asked him how far he had progressed with his essay.

"It is enough to drive one mad," said Doctor Willibroed; "soon she will not be able to live without me and my tales of horror. I told her to-day of the case of a lady, exactly of her age, her mode of life, habit of body, and so forth, who, while conversing with her physician about congestions of the heart, was struck with one; she smiles upon me with pale lips, and is on the verge of fainting--I suppose she is going to ring for her carriage--and what is the result? 'You must tell me more about it to-morrow,' she says, and dismisses me with a gracious wave of her hand."

"She is sword-and-bullet-proof, doctor," I said. "You will not be rid of her so easily."

"But we *must* be rid of her, rid of the whole pack," cried the doctor. "I am resolved upon it as man, as friend, as physician."

I laughed, but in my heart I was entirely of the doctor's opinion. The presence of these people was a too intolerable burden for the family of the superintendent. How could I avoid seeing it, when I had so attached myself to these noble and good souls, that I had for everything that concerned them the piercing eyes of the deepest and most reverent affection? I saw how the superintendent's face wore every day a graver look; how he forced himself to answer the everlasting "Is it not so, dear brother?" or, "Is not that your opinion, dear brother?" I saw the painful contraction which passed over the beautiful pale face of the blind lady, when the harsh voice of her talkative sister-in-law smote upon her sensitive ear; I saw how Paula bore these, in addition to her other burdens, with silence and patience; but I also saw how heavy a task it was.

I was sitting one day in the office, pondering all this in my indignant heart, as I cut up a quill under pretence of making a pen, when through the window which I had left half open to admit one of the rare sunbeams, my ear caught the hateful metallic voice of the born Kippenreiter.

"I am sure you will do me this kindness, dear Paula; I certainly would not ask you, for I know how young girls are attached to their own rooms, but mine is really too *triste* with its perpetual outlook upon the prison-walls; and then I am afraid it is damp, especially at the present season of the year, and with my heart-complaint the least rheumatism would be the death of me. I can count upon it, dear Paula, can I not? Perhaps even to-day? That would be delightful!"

"I can hardly arrange it to-day, dear aunt; I have to-day to----"

"Well, then, dear child, to-morrow. You see I am content with anything. And then there is another thing I want to mention, and that is the wine we have at dinner. Between ourselves, it is not particularly good, and does not agree with my husband at all. He is a little spoiled in this. I know you have better in the cellar; we had some of it when we first came; did we not now?"

"Yes, aunt; but unfortunately there are only two or three bottles left, which I am keeping for my father----"

"Even if there are only two or three bottles, they are better than none. Good heavens! there's that man at the window again! One cannot take three steps here without coming across him."

These last words were probably not intended for my ear, but my sense of hearing was acute, and the voice of the *gnädige* very distinct in its metallic ring. That they referred to none other than myself was unquestionable; for beside the fact that I was a man, and standing just then at the window, the *gnädige* had stared at me with her fixed round eyes, in a very ungracious manner, and then turned sharply upon her heel.

But it made little difference to me that I displeased the *gnädige*, or how much I displeased her; I thought only of the poor dear girl who wiped the tears from her cheeks as she walked up the garden path alone, after her aunt had left her. In a moment I was down from my office-stool, out of the room, and had hurried to her side.

"You must not give up your room to her, Paula," I said.

"You heard, then?"

"Yes; and you must not do it. It is the only one that has a good light, and----"

"I will not be able to paint much this winter; there is too much to do."

"Do you really take it for granted that they are going to remain here all winter?"

"I know nothing to the contrary. My aunt spoke of it just now."

Paula tried to smile; but great as usually was her self-control, this time she could not succeed. Her mouth twitched painfully, and her eyes filled again with tears.

"It is only on my parents' account," she said, excusing herself. "My father just now needs rest so extremely, and you know how my mother suffers when she has to entertain them for hours at a time. But you must not give any hint of it, George; not even the least."

And she laid her finger impressively on her lips, and her great blue eyes looked up anxiously at me.

I murmured something which she probably took for acquiescence, for she gave me a friendly smile, and hastened into the house, from which resounded the shrill voice of the *gnädige*, who with the whole power of her lungs--which were evidently in a healthy state--was calling out of the window to the steuerrath, who was standing in the rear of the garden among the yellowing leaves on the sunny espalier, and eating one of the few peaches which the superintendent's unwearying care had won from the ungenial climate.

With long strides, betokening no good to the steuerrath, I walked up the path directly to him.

"Ah!" said he, without desisting from his occupation, "my wife has sent you, I suppose. But see for yourself if there is another decent peach on the whole espalier. And the trash is anyhow as sour as vinegar."

"Then you should not have eaten it."

"Well, at all events it is better than nothing; an official on a pension learns that lesson."

"Really!"

I accompanied this explanation with a contemptuous laugh, which rudely startled the steuerrath from the delusion that he was delighting me with his genial conversation. He looked at me with the expression of a dog who is undecided whether to fly from his enemy or seize him by the leg.

"Herr Steuerrath," I said, "I have a request to make of you."

His indecision was at an end in a moment.

"At any other time I will listen to you with pleasure," said he; "but at this moment I am rather hurried----"

And he tried to pass me, but I barred his way.

"I can tell you in three words what I have to say: you must leave this place."

"I must--what?"

"Leave this place," I repeated, and I felt the angry blood mounting to my cheeks--"and that at once; in three days at the furthest."

"Young man, I believe you have lost your senses," replied the steuerrath, making an effort to assume a dignified look, which his lips, pale with apprehension, woefully belied. "Do you know to whom you are speaking?"

"Give yourself no trouble," I said, contemptuously. "The times in which you appeared to me I don't know what awe-inspiring wonder, are long past. I have no further respect for you, not the slightest; and I will not have you stay here any longer; do you hear? I will not have it!"

"But this is unheard-of!" cried the steuerrath. "I will tell my brother what insults I am exposed to here."

"If you did that, I would----"

I could not bring myself to pronounce it, I had so long kept it sealed up in my breast. I had two more years of imprisonment for keeping it secret; it was a poisoned weapon which I was about to use against the miserable man; but I thought of the weeping face of the dear maiden, and then I looked into the face of the evil man before me, distorted with hate and rage, and I dragged out the words through my clenched teeth--"I would mention the letter which you wrote him"--I pointed in the direction of the island--"upon which he undertook his last expedition--of the letter which proves you an accomplice, yes, the chief criminal; and which would have ruined you had I not kept the secret."

The man, while I spoke, seemed to shrink into himself, as if he had trodden upon a poisonous serpent; with straining eyes he watched every movement of my hands, expecting every instant that I would carry them to my breast-pocket and produce the fatal letter. "The letter you speak of and which you have possessed yourself of by unlawful means, proves nothing," he stammered--"proves nothing at all. It is indifferent to me whether you show it to my brother, or to any one else--any one else----"

"I cannot show it to any one, for I have burned it."

The steuerrath almost bounded into the air. His fright had never given room for the thought that the letter might have been lost or destroyed. How differently the affair stood now!

A smile of defiance passed over his face, which once more began to assume its natural color.

"What are you talking of, and what do you want?" he cried, with a hoarse voice that singularly contrasted with his usual oily speech. "The devil only knows what kind of a letter it was that you

saw--that you pretend to have seen. The whole affair looks exceedingly like a lie--and a very bungling one at that. Stand off, sir! don't dare to touch me, or I call for help!--and you will have to your seven years, seven years more. Do not dare to touch me, I say!"

My looks were probably threatening enough, for he had retreated before them to the wall, and squeezed himself, trembling, against the espalier. I stepped up close to him' and said in a low tone:

"I shall do you no harm, for--miserable wretch as you are--I still respect in you your two brothers; the one whom you hounded on to his death, and the other whose precious life you shall not embitter another hour. If no one else believes my word that I read and burned that letter, he will believe it--you know he will believe it. And if the morning of the third day finds you here, he shall learn whom he has so long been entertaining under his roof. You know him. He can pardon much, and does pardon much; but to be the victim of such a shameless lie as that which you have imposed upon him, upon the commerzienrath, and all the world--that he will never pardon."

The man knew that I was right; I saw it in his face, which grew absolutely sharp and thin with alarm at being thus helplessly in my hands.

And it was high time; one minute later and my victory would at least have been doubtful. For from the garden came help for the crushed one. It was the born Kippenreiter, who came calling out to us from a distance to save her two or three peaches.

A prudent general undertakes no new battle which may jeopard an already hard-won victory. I had not quailed before the wrathful looks of the steuerrath; but at sight of the yellow teeth of the born, I felt something which I should call fear, if the respect we owe to the sex could ever allow such a feeling to enter the breast of a man.

But be that as it might; when I heard the light-brown silk dress of the *gnädige* rustling close at hand, I considered the moment especially suitable for hastening, as rapidly as I could with politeness, along the paths strewn with dead leaves to my office, after first casting a last impressive look upon my adversary, and saluting with a silent bow his rustling reinforcement.

Would my threat prove effective?

I had given him two days respite, so the decision under all circumstances must speedily be made.

Strange enough! I was convinced that I had acted only from the most disinterested motives, and yet my soul was filled with disquiet, and my eye and ear were on the alert for any sign that might tell me what I had to hope or to fear. The next day passed--as far as I could see, all things remained as they were; Paula's room, the same in which I had lain sick, was emptied of its furniture; I saw her easel and her portfolios of sketches carried across the hall, and gnashed my teeth to see it.

But on the following morning the superintendent came into the office with an unusually grave face, and after giving me some papers, with his hand already upon the latch, turned and said:

"Tell me, George--you are quite disinterested in the matter--have you noticed anything in my behavior, or in that of any member of my family, that could give my brother or his wife reason to suppose that they are not welcome here?"

I was drawing at the time, and had just then a very delicate bit of pen-shading to do, so I could not raise my head from the drawing-board as I answered the superintendent:

"I have perceived nothing of the sort."

"I should trust not," he said, and his voice had a grieved tone. "It would give me pain, great pain, if I thought that if I thought that my brother could say, or even think, 'He cared nothing for my misfortune; he drove me away when his house was my only asylum.' For this, or very near it, is the case. His pension is very small for a man accustomed to his style of living; the compromise-money, even with our contribution, is little enough; and, besides, he has debts and must work for his living, and how was he to learn that in the wretched routine of official life? They have certainly not brightened our home--truth compels me to admit it--but he is my brother and my guest, and I would rather he were not going."

Perhaps his noble nature looked for some reassuring answer from me, but the fine lines of my bit of shading happened just then to be closer than ever, and I had to bend my head still lower over the drawing-board. He sighed deeply and left the room.

I drew a long breath as the door closed behind him, and the next moment I saw, in the black mirror of the corpulent inkstand on the office-table, my tall figure reflected in grotesque distortion, and performing, with arms and legs, movements which apparently represented a joyous dance of victory.

"You are monstrously pleased at something, it seems," said a voice behind me.

In my fright I forgot one leg which I had elevated in the air, and upon the other I made a pirouette which, had it been performed in public before connoisseurs, would have brought down the house.

Arthur afterwards became a connoisseur in these things, but he could not have been one at this time, for his face, as he threw himself into a chair, was by no means radiant with delight, and the tone of his voice was as dolorous as possible as he went on, resting his curly head upon his hand:

"To be sure, you have every reason; you have gained your point; from to-morrow you are again sole master here."

I had by this time brought my other foot down to the floor, and took occasion to plant myself firmly before my antagonist, for such I considered Arthur. But I was mistaken. Arthur had not come to pick a quarrel with me.

"I have my own reasons," he said, "for preferring that the old people should be away from here. The old man, you know, has become really disreputable since his misfortune; he sponges upon the first man he meets. By the way, I can pay you now the twenty-five you lent me the other day. Last night I had a fabulous run of luck--we had a little play at Lieutenant von Serring's quarters. Sorry I haven't the money about me, but you shall certainly have it to-morrow. What I was going to say is this: The old man carries it too far; sooner or later he would have compromised me hopelessly. The colonel watches me frightfully close. So no hostility, George! You have driven him away--don't deny it; I have it from mamma. She is furious with you; but I told her she might congratulate herself that you were so discreet and said nothing more about that business of the letter. So I did not come on this account, but merely to ask you how I stand with you."

"What do you mean?" I asked, not without some confusion.

"Let us have no quibbles about it, old fellow," said the ensign, tapping the sole of his left boot with the point of his sword, which lay across his right knee: "I have estimated you far too low. I see now that you are cock of the walk here, and I wish to be on good terms with you, not to quarrel. If uncle did not help me a little I should either have to starve or quit the service, and my colonel, moreover, would know why I can no longer visit here. You are a good fellow, and will not ruin me."

"That I certainly will not," I said.

"And I am not such a bad fellow, after all," the ensign went on. "I am a little wild, I know; but we are all so at our years, and so would you be if you had the chance, which you certainly have not in this cursed hole. But people can always get along with me, and they are all fond of me here: my uncle, my aunt, the boys, and----"

Arthur took his left foot from his right knee, and said:

"Look here, George; I would not tell you if I did not have the fullest confidence in your honor, notwithstanding--in short, I ask your word of honor that you will say nothing about it. I fancy that--but, as I said, you must keep it a secret--I fancy that I am not quite indifferent to my pretty cousin: she said as much to me yesterday, and even if she had not----"

And the ensign twisted the blackish down on his lip, and looked around the room apparently for a looking-glass, but there was none there. His only substitute would have been the great inkstand, which at this moment I would most joyfully have dashed to ten thousand pieces against his pretty head.

"Arthur!" cried Paula's voice in the garden; "Arthur!"

The ensign gave me a look that seemed to say: Do you see now what a lucky dog I am? and ran out of the door, which he neglected to shut after him.

I remained quite stupefied, and stared through the open garden-door at the long walk which they were pacing up and down, she walking in her usual composed manner, and he fluttering about her. Once they stood still; she looked at him, and he apparently in protestation, laid his hand upon his breast.

An indescribable sense of pain entered my bosom. I knew this feeling well; I had once before experienced it, at the moment when I heard that Constance belonged to another; but it was not then so poignant as now. I could have buried my face in my hands and wept like a child. I did not for a moment think that Arthur very probably lied to me or to himself, and perhaps both. His confidence, Paula's call, the walk in the garden, always empty at this hour--all came in such rapid succession, and agreed so well, that it was but too probable. And Arthur was such a desperately handsome fellow, and could be so amiable when he chose--I ought to know that best, I who had so dearly loved him! And had not Paula been changed towards me ever since he had been in the house? Was she not more reserved--less communicative? I had noticed it for some time; it had pained me before I knew what had produced this change--now I knew it!

Vanity of vanities! What claims had I? To what could I pretend, an outcast, condemned to long years of imprisonment?

My head sank upon my breast. I humbled myself deep in the dust before the fair and dear maiden, who ever floated before me like a heavenly being.

Then I sprang up indignant. Could she be all that I worshipped her for, if she loved this man?

Here was a terrible contradiction which apparently was easy to solve, and which I infallibly would have solved, or rather would have altogether escaped, had I been a grain wiser or more vain; but in which, as I was neither wise nor vain, I involved myself for years.

"Signs and wonders are coming to pass," said Doctor Willibrod, rushing breathlessly into my cell one evening, where I sat in dejected meditation before the stove, and watched the sparks that ran up and down the glowing plates. "Signs and wonders! They are about to strike their tents and shake off the dust from their feet. Hosanna!"

The doctor threw himself into a chair and wiped his bald scalp, upon which the drops of perspiration were standing.

"Heaven is mighty in the weak," he went on in a tone in which his internal excitement was perceptible. "Who would have believed that a little David like myself would be able to pierce the brazen skull of this Goliath of shamelessness; and yet such is the fact! The *gnädige* can endure the air here no longer; she made the last trial when she moved into Paula's chamber. The trial did not succeed, and she must go. Hosanna in the highest!"

"Did she tell you so herself?"

"She did indeed; and her spouse confirmed it, and spoke of hypochondriacal notions to which even the most sensible women are subject, and to which a gallant husband must make some concessions. Finally he drew me on one side, and on the score of temporary deficiency of funds, borrowed a hundred *thalers* from me to enable him to start at once."

"You will never see them again."

"The hundred, or the distinguished travellers?"

"Neither."

"Pleasant journey to them, and may they never cross our path again!"

The doctor sank into a devout silence; I think that something like a hymn of praise arose from his heart.

"Do you know, they are going!" resounded a deep voice behind us. It was the sergeant, who came in with a lighted lamp.

"Carriage to be ordered at Hopp's livery-stable to-morrow morning at the stroke of nine," continued the veteran. "Eight would not be too soon, one would think."

And he joyously rubbed his hands, and declared that he felt like a bear that itched in all his seven senses. But suddenly the laughter vanished from the thousand wrinkles of his face, and leaning over the back of the doctor's chair he said in a suppressed voice:

"Now we must drive away the young one, doctor; clean away! the brood is worse than the old ones, in my opinion."

"In my opinion too," said Doctor Snellius, springing up. "I have given the old ones their dismissal; you must do it for the youngster, mammoth; by heaven must you!"

I made no answer; my gaze was fixed on the glowing plate, but I saw it as through a veil which had somehow fallen over my eyes.

CHAPTER XIV.

And as if through a veil I see the years as they come and go, the following years of my imprisonment. Though a veil which time has woven with invisible spirit-hands, but not so thick but what every form and every hue is more or less distinguishable as I gaze backward.

Clearer of all is the fixed background in this long act of my life-drama. Even now, after so many years, I can almost always, by closing my eyes, recall the scene to its minutest details. Especially are there two lights under which I see it most clearly.

The one is a clear spring morning. A blue sky spreads above, the pointed gables of the old buildings soar as high into the free air as if the idea of a prison only existed in the dull brain of a hypochondriac who had not yet quite had his sleep out; about the projections of the gables and upon the high roofs twitter the sparrows; and even now, I cannot tell why, but the twittering of sparrows in the early morning makes the world for me a couple of thousand years younger; I fancy the scamps could not have been more joyously and impudently noisy about the hut of Adam and Eve in Paradise. The sun ascends higher; his beams glide down the old ivy-covered walls into the silent court; and the gatekeeper, who is just crossing it with a great bunch of keys, and is a crabbed old fellow usually, whistles quite cheerily, as if even he, who best knew, in this fresh morning-world could not believe in locks and bolts.

The other light is an evening in late autumn. Over in the west, behind the level chalk-coast of the island, the sun has set; the heavy clouds hanging over the horizon still glow with a thousand tints of sombre purple. Cooler blows the wind from the sea, and louder comes the noise of the waves, although looking from the Belvedere, out over the rampart, one cannot see the surf. Now the wind begins to rustle in the tall trees of the garden, and companies of dry leaves flutter down to those which rustle under my feet as I walk back to the house. I would be, on this as on every evening, welcome in the family circle; but I could not bear to have so many eyes looking kindly into mine. My eyes have been gazing gloomily--yes, with despair--at the evening clouds, and the old demon has awakened in me and whispered: Two more years, two long years; when one leap would take you down there, and the first skiff carry you into the wide world. And you will go back to your prison, to the narrow walls where nothing detains you but your own free will. Your free will! That has long since ceased to be free! You have sold it--go! go! pass the house--back to your cell; away out of this fading world of vapor, and get behind lock and bolt!

Sunshine of spring mornings, mist of autumn evenings; but far more morning sun than evening mist! Yes, when I think well upon it, I must admit that altogether morning sun was the rule, and evening mist only the exception. For how any portion of our life--or, indeed, how the background upon which this portion is defined--shall appear in our memory, really depends upon the fact of its having been bright or gloomy in our souls at that time. And in my soul at this time it was growing gradually brighter and brighter, like the increasing light of dawn; one knows not how it is, but what was lying before us confused and indistinguishable, now stands in the fairest order.

The wish of my fatherly friend has long been accomplished: in the workhouse I have learned to work. Work has become a necessity for me; I count that day as lost on the evening of which I cannot look back upon a vigorously prosecuted or a completed work. And I have acquired the workman's faculty in every craft; the quick comprehension of what is to be done, the accurate eye, the light forming hand. In the establishment nearly all handicrafts are exercised; and I have tried them nearly all, one by one, and for the most part soon surpassed the old gray-bearded adepts. The superintendent likes to repeat that I am the best workman in the establishment, which makes me at once both proud and humble: proud, for praise from his lips is to me the highest honor I can attain upon earth; humble, for I know that I owe it all to him. He has guided into fixed paths the rude strength that knew neither aim nor limit, and wished to spend its fury in the mastery of rough masses of stone; he has, above all, taught me to regard the share of sound understanding which nature has bestowed upon me, and which they did not know how to deal with at the school, as a precious possession which may even take the place of a bit of genius; or, as he often expressed it with a smile, is perhaps a bit of genius itself. He has never tormented me with things which he soon found out would not suit my brain; he soon discovered that I could never express myself with clearness and fluency in any other than my native German speech, and spared me the learning of foreign languages, except so far as was absolutely necessary. He knows that a sublime passage in the Psalms produces in me the deepest emotion; that I can never satiate myself with reading Goethe, and Schiller, and Lessing; but he never urges me to go beyond this, and discuss the literature of the day with him and Paula. But in recompense he allows me to drink full draughts from the inexhaustible well of his mathematical and physical knowledge; and his favorite recreation is to have me model a machine, or portion of a machine, which his inventive genius has devised, under his eye and guidance, in the little workshop which he fitted up for himself many years ago.

Under his eyes, for his hands are and must be idle the while. Already any physical exertion, however light, covers his body with a cold sweat, and might even seriously endanger his life.

"I do not know what I should do without you," he says, looking at me from his chair, with a sad smile on his face. "I live upon the superflux of your strength: your arm is my arm, your hand is my hand, your deep full respiration is my own. In the course of a year you will leave me; so I have but one year to live; for a man without arm, hand or breath is dead."

It is the first time that so hopeless an expression has fallen from his noble, pallid lips, and it gives me a painful shock. I have always seen him so full of courage, so entirely occupied with the duties of the day and the hour, living his life so completely, I look at him with alarm, and for the first time I really see the devastations which these six years have wrought in his form and in his face.

Six years! I have to think to convince myself that they are really six years, so little has changed in all this long time! So little? When I consider it, perhaps not so little either. The grapevines, which only nodded over the window when I lay sick in Paula's chamber six years ago, have now climbed over almost the whole building; the great honeysuckle-arbor behind, where the peaches were trained against the wall, which I had at that time built and planted with the boys, has grown to a dense luxuriance, and is a favorite resort of Paula's, who from here can see the house, which cannot be done from the Belvedere.

The summer-house at the Belvedere has got rather a bad name, which would not have happened had not Benno by this time grown six years older, and read *Faust*, and so of necessity must have "a high-vaulted, narrow, Gothic room," which he can "cram full of boxes, instruments, and ancestral chattels;" for which purpose the ruinous summer-house with its pointed windows of stained glass seems to him by far the most suitable locality. Benno is now convinced that his father, who preferred to see in him the future physician or naturalist, is quite right; and Paula, who wished to make a philologist out of him, altogether wrong; and Benno must know, for he is at the glorious age of seventeen, in which there are but few whom we do not overtop by a head at least, in an intellectual point of view.

By so much he overtops his younger brother Kurt, in a literal sense; and Kurt has definitively abandoned the idea of rivalling his senior, who has in so marked a degree the high slender stature of the Zehrens, and will evidently be even taller than his tall father. But Kurt has no cause to complain: he has the deep chest, the long powerful arms, and, under thick curly hair, the broad brow, of the workman. He is very modest and unpretending; but his look is singularly fixed and piercing, and his lips firmly compressed when he is pondering over a mathematical problem, or trying to learn some dexterous manipulation at the lathe, in which he always speedily succeeds.

Kurt and I are great friends, and as nearly inseparable as possible; and yet to tell the honest truth, the twelve-year-old Oscar is my darling. He has the large luminous brown eyes of the Zehrens, which I used so to admire in my friend Arthur when he was a boy; he has Arthur's slender figure and graceful manners--I often seem to see in him Arthur again, as he looked fourteen years before. That ought not, really, to be any recommendation to me; but when he comes bounding to me, throwing back his long locks, and with joy and life sparkling in his great eyes, I cannot help spreading my arms to him. Often I ask myself if it really is this likeness which makes Oscar still keep his place as his sister's favorite. Paula, it is true, still says, as she used to say, that there is nothing of the sort; that Oscar is the youngest, and therefore needs her most, and the fact that he happens to have so decided a talent for painting and drawing, and so is peculiarly her pupil, is a mere chance, for which she is not responsible.

Just so Paula spoke six years ago: I distinctly remember that summer afternoon when she made that large chalk-drawing of me under the plane-trees--as distinctly as if it had been but yesterday. And when I look at Paula, I cannot believe that I have known her for six years, and that she will be twenty next month. Then she looked older than she really was, while now she looks just as much younger. She is perhaps a very little taller, and her figure is fuller and more womanly, but in her sweet face is so much childlike innocence, and even her movements have still the bashfulness, sometimes almost awkwardness, of a very young girl. But when any one looks into her eyes, he cannot venture to take her for any other than she really is. These eyes do not blaze with bold fire; their glances are not shy or languishing like those of a boarding-school girl fresh from a secret reading of her favorite gilt-edged poet--they are luminous with a calm, steady, vestal fire, unmindful of the world, and yet compassing the world, as the artist's eye must beam.

And Paula has become an artist in these six years. She has had no teacher, except a decayed genius who was in the workhouse for a short time, and afterwards was supported by the superintendent's charity to the time of his death, which happened long ago. She has attended no academy, has hardly seen a work of art, except two or three fine old family-portraits, and a magnificent engraving of the Sistine Madonna, which adorn the walls of the superintendent's house. What she is, she has become of herself, by means of her wondrous eye, which looks into the heart, not merely of men, but of all things; by means of her hand, which could not be so delicate and slender if her soul did not flow to its very finger-tip, and render it a plastic instrument; and by means of her diligence, whose energy and unweariedness appear absolutely incomprehensible when one reflects what a weight of labor, besides, rests upon these tender shoulders. But she devotes every leisure moment to her beloved art; and she knows how to find leisure at times when others would solemnly declare that they did not know whether they were on their heads or their feet. The wealth of her collection of studies of all kinds, sketches, designs, copies, is wonderful. There is not an interesting head among the prisoners or convicts that has escaped her. To sit to the young lady is an honor and favor much sought after and much envied throughout the whole establishment, and proud is the man who can boast of it. But her chief model is the old Süssmilch, whose grand head with its short gray locks, and furrowed energetic face, is really a treasure to an artist's eye. The old fellow figures under all possible characters: as Nestor, Merlin, Trusty Eckart, Belisarius, Götz von Berlichingen--even as Schweizer out of *The Robbers*; mere studies all for great historical pictures of which the brave girl is dreaming in the future. In the meantime but one of these has appeared upon canvas: Richard the Lion-heart, sick in his tent and visited by an Arab physician. The scene is from Scott's *Talisman*. In the background is an English yeoman, who looks sorrowfully at his sick lord, and a young Norman

noble, who, with hand on his sword, fixes a keen and suspicious look upon the physician. Richard the Lion-heart is myself, as she sketched me, when a convalescent, at the Belvedere; in the Arab physician, a singular, fantastic, gnome-like figure--Dr. Willibrod declares he discovers his own likeness, though the Arab wears no spectacles, and his head, though bald without doubt, is wound about with the green turban of the Hadji; the yeoman is Sergeant Süssmilch, drawn to the life, though he has accommodated himself to another costume; the knight, with short brown hair and bright brown eyes--a handsome, graceful, youthfully elastic figure--is Arthur.

Is it an accident that just this figure is most fully elaborated, almost to completeness, and that it is made so lovely?

I have no means of answering this question, except what I draw from my own foreboding soul. Arthur, who has long been a lieutenant, and has been stationed this spring at the military school in the capital, has often visited the house, it is true, but the frequency of his visits diminished with every year, and I could not say that he had sought to draw any nearer to Paula. But there must have been some reason that towards me, who had done him no injury, who always treated him in a friendly manner, however little heart I had sometimes for it, he became constantly more and more reserved, and at last avoided me as far as possible. The money which he owed me, and which in the course of years had increased to a sum by no means insignificant for my circumstances, could not be the cause, for I had given it to him willingly and cheerfully--he is always in difficulties, and resolved to blow out his brains--never asked for repayment, but always assured him that I was in no hurry for it; no, it cannot be the money. Does he fear a rival in me? Good heavens! I can hardly be a dangerous rival. Who could fear a prisoner, whose future is a book with seven seals, and scarcely containing one pleasant chapter? Can he never forgive me that Paula is always as kind and friendly to me as ever? Have I not deserved that, who do all I can for her, and read her lightest wish in her eyes?

I do not know; as little do I know if it is chance that Paula, from the hour that Arthur went to Berlin, painted no more on the picture. And yet for this purpose she needs him least of all, for his knightly copy only lacks a few touches. I ponder the reason over and over. And as I venture once to ask Paula about it, she answers, not without some hesitation, which is a rare thing with her:

"I have lost all pleasure in the picture."

This leads to a question which seems even worse than the first, and which I had better leave unmeddled with, if I were prudent.

But I am not prudent, and cannot get it out of my head; and as my head can make nothing of it, I lay it before Doctor Willibrod in a quite casual manner, as if nothing really depended upon the answer:

"Tell me, doctor, why has Fräulein Paula lost all pleasure in her picture?"

"Who says that?" asked the doctor.

"She herself."

"Then ask herself."

"If I wished to do or could do that, I would not need your opinion."

"Why should I have any opinion in the matter?" cries the doctor. "What does it concern me why Paula does not choose to work on the thing any longer? Since nature herself has not thought fit to finish me, I do not care whether I am finished in the picture or not."

I see that I make no progress in this way, so I venture to hint that perhaps Arthur's absence has had an influence upon Paula's feelings in the matter.

"Does the cat come to the porridge at last?" crows Doctor Willibrod. "Oh, he thinks that we have not long seen how he licks his paws! And the porridge is so sweet--so sweet! just like the thought that such a girl can give her heart to such a fellow. 'It is impossible,' says Master Tom, and his whiskers bristle with distress. Why, impossible? What is impossible? Is the life of her father anything but a protracted sacrifice? Is she not her father's daughter? When one is once well under way, a little more or less makes no difference; and the lamb offers itself up to save the wolf. Oh, it is a merry business, that of saving wolves! But still merrier is it to stand by and look patiently on--not to seize a club and rush in--oh by no means! but merely to ask from time to time: 'Don't you think, respected sir, that the wolf will eat the lamb at last?' Get away from me all of you that wear human faces!"

Doctor Willibrod crows so high, and looks so exactly like the apoplectic billiard-ball we have heard of, that I am sorry to have begun the conversation, and that too so unskillfully. I now recollect that lately the doctor has always seemed curiously excited whenever in any way Paula's name happened to be mentioned. Often he speaks of her in such a way that one would think he hated her, if one did not know that he worships her. If any one reproaches him with it, he lays the blame on the heat of the weather. The fiend himself, who is used to a warm climate, might perhaps keep cool in such a temperature, he says, but no one can blame mere men if they now and then lose their wits a little at eighty degrees in the shade.

And really during the latter part of the summer the heat has grown absolutely intolerable. Day after day the sun traverses a cloudless steel-blue sky, and its beams prostrate everything they touch. The grass has long been burnt up; the bastion and ramparts are yellow-brown; the flowers have prematurely withered; the foliage rustles from the trees before the time. All living things creep about with heavy gaze fixed upon the earth, and the air quivers as above a heated oven. The health of the town has been seriously affected, and we are glad that the boys who now have holiday, are on a visit to some friends of the family at a neighboring country-place. The state of things in the prison is by no means satisfactory to the superintendent and the doctor, who vie with each other in attention to the sick, though the doctor steadily maintains that it is the height of folly to risk one's skin for the sake of other people.

"And then beside, when, like *Humanus*, one has but half a lung, and a blind wife and four children, and not a shilling of capital--what will come of that?"

I remember that the doctor put this question to me in this very same conversation, and that I repeated it to myself an hour later as I stood alone before the Belvedere, and, without either seeing or hearing, stared out at the evening sky, which I could see from over the rampart extending down to the sea. I did not see that over the sky, which for weeks together had shown not the slightest haze, a vapor had now spread itself through which the evening light had a ghastly, pallid look; I did not hear that strange wailing sounds were passing through the air; I did not even turn round when a deep voice close at my ear growled out the very question which I was occupied in trying to solve:

"What will come of that?"

It was the old Süssmilch, who coming to my side pointed with his right hand to the sulphurous glare in the west.

"A storm, what else?" I replied, scarcely noticing what I said.

I felt that the oppressive sultriness, which was weighing down my soul as well as all nature, must expend itself in a storm.

CHAPTER XV.

And there came a storm such as had not raged along this coast--which yet throughout the year heard many a fierce gale sweep over its low beach of sand and chalk--within the memory of man.

It was about midnight, when I was awakened by a crashing as of thunder, making the old house quiver to its foundations, and followed by a rattling and clattering of falling tiles, and of slamming doors and shutters, like the crackle of musketry following the heavy discharge of a battery.

This was the storm that had so long been announcing its coming. My first thought was of those in the house in the garden. With a single bound I was out of my bed and dressed, as the sergeant thrust his gray head in at my door.

"Already up?" said he; "but this is enough to rouse a bear with seven senses. *He* will be awake, too."

The old man did not say who would be awake; between us two it was not necessary.

"I was just going to him," I said.

"Right," said the old man. "I will stay here the while. Somebody will be needed here who has his head on his shoulders. It is a most diabolical state of things; worse than eight years ago; and then the men would not be kept in their dormitories. A little more and we should have had murder done."

During this brief conversation, the tremendous shocks had been twice repeated, and, if possible, with still greater violence. Add to this a howling and an uproar--we had to speak almost in a shout to make ourselves heard. This was in the room--what must it then be outside?

This I learned a minute later, as I crossed the prison court. A pitchy darkness lay like a thick black pall over the earth; not a star, not the faintest gleam of light. The hurricane raged between the high walls like a beast of prey that finds himself for the first time in a cage. Despite my strength and the momentum of my heavy frame, I had to struggle with the monster that flung me

this way and that. Thus I fought my way through the thick darkness, among the tiles that came clattering from the roofs, to the superintendent's house, out of the windows of which here and there a light was visible.

In the lower hall I met Paula. She was carrying a lighted taper in her hand, and its light fell upon her pale face and large eyes, which filled with tears as she saw me.

"I knew you would come," she said. "It is a fearful night. He insists on going over to the prison; and he has been so very unwell lately. I dare not ask him to stay. Indeed, he must go if his duty commands. It is very kind of you to come."

The tears that had glistened in her eyes now slowly rolled down her pale cheeks.

"Do not laugh at me," she said, "but for several days I have felt as if some misfortune were about to happen."

"We have all felt so, dear Paula. It is merely a bit of egotism to fancy that a thunder-storm which is now hanging over thousands and thousands is to smite precisely us."

I meant to say this very courageously; but my voice quivered, and at the last words I was forced to turn away my eyes.

"I will go to your father, Paula," I said.

"Here he comes now," said Paula.

The superintendent stepped out of his room. Before he had gently closed the door, I caught a glimpse of a white figure which he seemed by gentle words and gestures to be urging to remain in the room. It was Frau von Zehren. Had she also the feeling that some calamity was impending? Perhaps even more strongly than we. Who among us who see, hears the faint spirit-voices that whisper and murmur through the night of the blind?

A deep melancholy lay upon his features; but it instantly gave place to a surprised smile as he saw us both standing there. It was as when one walks through a dark rocky ravine whose sombre shadows spread a gloom over his face, and suddenly, at a sharp turn of the dusky path, he sees the open valley at his feet, and a wide flood of golden sunlight streams all about him.

"See there, both my dears ones!" he said.

He extended both hands to us.

"Both my dear ones," he repeated.

Did he really see us? Did he, out of the rocky gorge, catch a gleam of sunny vales in the future? I have often asked this question of myself, when thinking of the happy spirit-like look with which at this moment the father saw his beloved daughter at the side of the man who was dear to him as a son.

But this was but for a moment, and the present then resumed its rights.

"You will go with me, George," he said; "I must go through the prison. It cannot be but that the excitement which has been growing on us all lately has also seized the poor prisoners. And with them excitement means howls, and shrieks, and gnashing of teeth. Do you remember that September night, eight years ago, Paula? It was not so terrible as this, and the men were like maniacs."

Paula nodded assent. "I remember it well, father," she said. "How could I help it? You suffered so much from the consequences afterwards. Here comes Doris with the lantern," she hastily added, while a flush of shame suffused her cheeks at having for a moment attempted to dissuade her father from his duty.

She took the great lantern with its two lighted candles from the hands of the frightened girl, and gave it to me. The superintendent gave her a kind look from his large grave eyes, buttoned up his coat, fixed his hat firmly on his head, and turning to me said: "Come, George."

We stepped out into the raging, thundering night. In my left hand I carried the lantern; my right arm I gave the superintendent. I had thought that I should have to carry or almost to carry him, as he had been completely prostrated by the heat of the last few weeks; and indeed his first steps were heavy and tottering as those of a man who has for the first time risen from his bed after a long illness. All at once he let go my arm and stood firm and erect:

"Do you hear, George? I said so!"

We were just passing under the windows of one of the great dormitories, in which fully a hundred prisoners were shut up at this hour. The light-colored wall was faintly defined against the darkness; from the windows came a feeble light; the storm raged against the wall and whistled shrilly through the gratings; but louder than the howling and whistling of the storm were the horrible noises that came from the interior of the building. Such sounds might come

from lost souls in the night of Tartarus.

"Light! light!" was the cry. "We want light!"

"Quick, George!" said the superintendent, hastening on before me with such rapid strides that I had difficulty in keeping up with him. We passed through the open door into the wide hall, where we found the sergeant in lively dispute with the inspector and half-a-dozen overseers.

"He will tell you that I am right," I heard the brave old man cry. "One must be a bear with seven senses; not able to tell a tooth-pick from a barn-door! In the name of three million devils, light all the lanterns!"

"Yes; light all the lanterns," said the superintendent, coming up.

The men stepped respectfully back, only the Inspector said sullenly: "There is no reason for breaking the regular rule of the house, Herr Superintendent; and the men know that there is no reason; but they take advantage of the chance--that is all."

"Perhaps not quite all, Herr Müller," said the superintendent. "We two, you and I, have not been sitting with a hundred others in a locked room in the dark--or as good as in the dark--and in a night like this when it is as if the end of the world had come. Fear, like courage, is contagious. Follow me, you and Süssmilch, and two others to light the lanterns."

He did not name me: he may have thought it a matter of course that I would follow him. We turned into the corridor and reached the door which led to the great ward, the windows of which we had passed. "Light! light!" they were still shrieking inside, and heavy blows fell upon the oaken door, which cracked at intervals as if they were trying to burst it open.

"Open!" said the superintendent to the turnkey.

The man cast a stealthy look at the inspector, who looked sullenly at the ground.

"Open!" repeated the superintendent.

With hesitation the man placed the key in the lock, and drew the heavy iron bar from the staples. With hesitation he threw back the first and then the second bolt. As he laid his hand upon the third, he gave a furtive glance at the superintendent, upon whose lips played a smile.

"Why, your heart is usually in the right place, Martin," he said.

In an instant Martin had thrown back the bolt; the doors were opened. The frightful spectacle that was then presented to my eyes I shall never forget, though I should attain the age of the most patriarchal raven.

Three or four feet behind the door was another, a grating of iron, reaching as high as the ceiling; and behind this grating was a frightful entanglement of men piled upon one another, conglomerated together--here a pair of arms thrust out, there a pair of legs, as out of a heap of corpses, flung together into a promiscuous grave upon a field of battle; with the difference that this mass moved, writhed internally, and out of it, here and there and everywhere, glared living eyes, terrible, fierce, desperate, maniac eyes.

"Men!" cried the superintendent, and his usually soft voice rose with a power that overbore the tumult, "are you not ashamed of yourselves? Would you rush upon destruction to avoid a danger which nowhere exists but in your own heads, and in the darkness around you?"

Was it the courageous voice? Was it the look of the man? Was it the effect of the strong light which was thrown upon the mass from the lanterns of the turnkeys? the coil disentangled itself, arms found their way to bodies, legs stood again upon their feet, even the eyes lost their frenzied glare, and here and there a man, either dazzled or ashamed, cast them down.

"Make room for the door to be opened, men!" said the superintendent.

They fell back: the grating was opened; the superintendent entered, and we followed.

"Now see, children, how foolish you are," he continued, in a friendly tone. "There you stand in you shirts, freezing, shivering--you really ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Get to bed again, or else dress yourselves and sit up; I will have your lanterns lighted, so that each one of you can see what a chicken-heart his neighbor is, and what a bold fellow he is himself."

The men looked at one another, and over more than one face that had been distorted with terror there came a smile. In the rear two laughed out loud.

"That is right," said the superintendent, "laugh away; no devil can hold his own against an honest laugh. And now good-night, children, I must look after the others."

By this time the overseers had let down and lighted the four great lanterns that were drawn up to the ceiling. A cheerful brightness filled the large room. Outside, the storm was raging and howling as before; but a kindly word falling into these dark spirits had appeased the storm

within.

"Let us see after the others," said the superintendent.

And we traversed the echoing corridors, in which this night the noise from without overpowered the sound of our steps. Wherever we came we found the prisoners in a state of the most fearful excitement--excitement beyond all proportion to the causes which produced it; everywhere the same; sometimes vented in wild curses, and sometimes in the most piteous supplications; but everywhere the cry of the poor wretches for light, only more light in the fearful night. But everywhere the superintendent succeeded in quieting the wild creatures with his calm words, except the occupants of one ward, who either would not or could not be quieted. This ward lay in a wing of the building which was more exposed to the violence of the blast than any other, and here, in consequence, the storm burst with all its fury. The terrific detonations, like peals of thunder, with which the tempest burst against the ancient walls, the furious howling with which it whirled around the angles, after striving frantically for minutes together to sweep the obstruction out of its path; the wailing, lamenting, gasping, sobbing tones that came, no one knew how or whence--all was frightful enough to fill the soul of even a free man with secret horror. And even while the superintendent was speaking to them, a chimney on one of the higher buildings adjacent was blown down, and in falling broke through the roof of this wing, sending clattering down hundreds of tiles, increasing the uproar, if not the danger. The men demanded to be let out; they *would* come out at every cost; they were resolved not to be buried alive.

"But, children," said the superintendent, "you are safer here than anywhere else; there is not another part of the building so strong as this."

"Very well for him," muttered a square-built, curly-headed fellow; "he can go home and sleep in his soft bed."

"Give me your mattress, friend," said the superintendent.

The fellow looked at him in amazement.

"Your mattress, friend," he repeated. "Lend it to me for to-night: I will see if it is so hard, and if it is such dreadful sleeping here."

A deep silence suddenly succeeded the wild tumult. The men looked at each other in confusion; they did not know whether this was jest or earnest. But the superintendent did not move from the place. He stood there silent, thoughtful, with head depressed; no one, not even I, ventured to speak to him. All eyes were turned to the audacious fellow, who looked as if he had been condemned to death, and was about to be led to execution. His mutinous spirit was broken; silently he went and took up his mattress and brought it to the superintendent.

"Lay it there, my friend," said the latter. "I am tired; I thank you for providing me a resting-place."

The man spread out the mattress upon the floor; the superintendent laid himself upon it and said:

"Now lie down, all of you. You, Herr Müller, go to the infirmary and see if I am needed there. You remain with me, George."

The inspector went, with the turnkeys; the door was closed and locked; we were alone.

Alone among about eighty convicts, for the most part the worst and fiercest criminals in the whole prison.

The lanterns that hung from the ceilings cast a dim light over the rows of beds which were arranged along the walls, and in three long lines, extending the length of the ward. The men had either lain down, or were crouching upon their beds. The man who had given his mattress to the superintendent might have done the same, for there were some half-dozen of vacant beds in the ward; but he seemed afraid to occupy any one of them, and crouched upon the bare floor in a dark corner. I stood with folded arms against the stone pillar which supported the centre of the roof, looked at the strange spectacle before me, and listened to the storm which raged without with unabated fury. The superintendent lay quite still, his head supported by his hand. He slept, or seemed to sleep; and yet I fancied that from time to time a shiver shook his frame. The room was warm, but we had been thoroughly drenched by the rain in crossing the court; he had no covering, and had just risen from a sick bed. What will be the end? I sighed in the depth of my heart.

Suddenly a man near me, who had several times turned his head towards the superintendent, arose from his bed, walked softly with bare feet to me, and whispered:

"He must not lie there in that way; it will be his death."

I shrugged my shoulders: "What can we do?"

And then another came up, and another rough voice whispered:

"He must go home. Why should he lie here freezing for the sake of that shock-headed rascal? It shall not be our fault."

"No, it shall not be our fault," murmured other voices. In a moment a crowd has collected around me, and increases every moment. Not one of these men was sleeping, any more than myself. All had the same thought in their rude hearts. They want to repair their misbehavior, and do not know how to go about it. One finds a way at last:

"He shall go himself and beg him."

"Yes; that shall he!"

"Where is he?"

"Back yonder."

"Bring him along!"

They rush to the corner where the fellow is crouching, a dozen strong hands lift him to his feet; they drag him to the superintendent, who raises himself from his hard couch as they approach. The light of the nearest lantern falls full in his pale face, shadowed by his dark hair and beard. A happy smile plays about his mouth, and his large eyes beam with strange light.

"I thank you," he said, "I thank you. The hours which your kindness bestows upon me shall be devoted to you. But one thing more, children! This man here is myself: what you do to him, you do to me."

The man had sunk upon his knees before him; he laid his hand, as in blessing, upon his bushy head; and then we turned to the door. I cast a look back: not one of the men had moved from his place. All eyes are fixed upon the superintendent, who is leaving the ward, supported by my arm. But I doubt whether all see him; for in many eyes are glistening tears.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was two o'clock when we re-entered the house. At the first touch of the bell Paula appeared in the hall; but the superintendent only gave her an affectionate smile and a pat on the cheek, and kept on to his chamber, whither I followed him. He did not speak to his daughter, because he could not speak. His face was of a corpse-like paleness, and deep red spots burned in the hollows of his cheeks. With a motion of his hand he asked my assistance, and I helped him to undress. As soon as he was in bed he turned his eyes upon me with a look of gratitude, and then closed them in death-like exhaustion.

I took my seat by his bedside, and could not avert my eyes from the pale, noble face. A sublime calm lay upon it; even the red spots had vanished from the cheeks; no movement betrayed that in this breast, that scarcely moved, a heart was beating, that under this lofty brow dwelt a spirit; I felt as though I was watching by a corpse.

Thus solemnly and slowly passed the hours of that night. In all my life I have never met with a stronger contrast than that of the calm face of that sleeping man with the wild fury of the storm that raged without with unabated violence. Well might he sleep; the mightiest pinion of an earthly storm could not soar to the blessed heights where his spirit was floating.

Involuntarily my thoughts recurred to the night when the smuggler, who had just become a murderer, lay wounded in my arms in that hollow in the ruin, writhing, cursing God, himself, and all the world. And that man was the brother of this? It seemed incredible that one mother could have brought forth two such different beings; that the same sun could shine on two men so unlike; and then again it seemed to me that both, the wild one and the gentle, the hater and the friend of men, were one and the same person; as if I had once already seen the pale face before me; as if it were the same face upon whose brow, pallid in death, the morning sun shone, as it rose ruddy out of the sea after that night of horror in the ruin on the cliff.

But these thoughts were but the wild fancies of one overcome by weariness. I must indeed have really slept for a while, for as I raised my head again the gray twilight was glimmering through the lowered curtains. The superintendent was still lying there as he had lain all night, his eyes closed and his white hands folded over his breast. I softly arose and crept out of the room. I had to breathe fresh air; I felt that I must try to shake off the weight that pressed upon my heart.

As I crossed the silent hall I was surprised to see that the hand of the great clock at the foot of the stairs pointed to eight. I had supposed, from the dim light, that it was not more than five or six. But as soon as I stepped out of doors, I saw why it was no lighter. The black pall which had lain over the earth in the night was now changed to a gray one--a pallid twilight, that was neither night nor day. And the fury of the storm was still unabated. As I turned the sheltering corner of the house, I had to plant myself firmly on my feet in order not to be dashed to the earth. Thus, crouching down, I made my way through the garden, now a scene of devastation. There lay trees torn up by the roots, and others broken off but a few feet from the ground. The path was strewn with branches and twigs, and the air filled with whirling leaves. Only the old plane-trees at the Belvedere still resisted the storm, and their majestic boughs were lashed wildly about by the blast. I made my way to the Belvedere, the only spot from which one could obtain a view, though but a limited one, of the stormy quarter. I feared that the old summer-house would not have been able to resist the tempest; but there it still stood--doubtless the high bastion had protected it. I hurried into it for shelter; and as I hastily threw open the door I saw Paula standing at one of the narrow windows, on the side facing the sea.

"You here, Paula?" I cried in alarm. "You here in this weather, when the house may come down at any moment!"

"How is my father?" asked Paula.

"He is sleeping," I said. "You have not slept."

I saw that by her pale cheeks and the dark circles round her eyes. She looked away from me, and pointed out of the window at which we were standing, which now was but a window-space, for the storm had blown in all the stained panes except one in one corner.

"Is that not terrible?" she said.

And it was terrible indeed. Sky and sea of a leaden gray, and between sea and sky whirling white specks like snowflakes driven by a November wind. These white specks were gulls, and their dismal cries reached us at intervals. Upon the high bastion, opposite us, the storm had beaten down the tall grass which used to nod so lightly in the wind, as flat as if heavy rollers had passed over it; and over the long, low rampart from time to time appeared streaks which at first I could not account for. Could they be the crests of waves? The thing seemed impossible. The rampart, as I knew, was more than twelve feet high, and in front of it was a wide sandy beach, on which a popular bathing-establishment had been erected. Over the rampart a glimpse of the sea might always be caught, but it was at a considerable distance; but these streaks, if they were waves, were not dancing out at sea; I saw plainly how they rose, fell, tumbled over, and beaten to foam and spray flew over the rampart. It was the surf, and the surf had risen to the crest of the rampart!

"What will come of it?" asked Paula.

It was the very question which I had asked myself yesterday evening at this identical place, though in another and very different sense. I was then only thinking of her who now stood before me, and looked up to me with large, terrified eyes; but in my spirit, confused by the sleepless night I had passed, nature and human destiny mingled inextricably together:

"Paula," I said.

She glanced up to me again.

"Paula," I repeated, and my voice trembled and my hand sought hers, "if the storm of life ever rages around you as that is raging--will you turn to me for help and protection? Will you, Paula? say!"

A bright flush reddened her pale cheeks; she drew her hand, which I did not venture to detain, out of mine.

"You are one of those good men, George, who desire to help all, and upon whom, therefore, all think they have claims."

"That is not an answer, Paula," I said.

She opened her lips to speak; but I was not to learn if the unfavorable construction I had given her words was the right one or not, for at this moment a blast smote the summer-house, tearing off the roof, and driving in the remaining sashes, that fell in shivers around us. I caught Paula around the waist and sprang with her out of the house, which fell with a crash the instant we had quitted it. Paula gave a shriek of terror, and clasped me convulsively. My heart bounded with joy when I thus held the dear maiden in my arms; but she released her hold immediately.

"What weaklings we women are, after all!" she said. "You men must think that we exist for no other purpose than to be protected by you."

As she said this there was an indignant expression in her large eyes and her brow; but her lips twitched with hardly-repressed weeping.

What was passing in her thoughts at that moment?

I did not learn this until years later.

We went--or rather, struggled--back to the house. No further word was spoken between us, nor did she take my arm, which I, for my part, did not venture to offer her. Would she have rejected the arm of another as well? I asked myself.

With a sadness that I had never felt before, I was sitting an hour later in the office. How could I work with this disquiet in my heart, with this weight upon my brain, and on such a day as this? But "first do your work, everything else will come in in its place," was the word of the superintendent, and in accordance with this word I seated myself at my work, and copied lists and examined accounts without making a single error in my figures. I had well spent my long apprenticeship: I could now say that I had learned to work.

It was noon when I went to the superintendent to place the papers I had prepared before him for his signature. When I reached the ante-room of his cabinet I stopped, for through the half-opened door I heard some one speaking within.

"It is a grand opportunity," said an unctious voice, which of late years had been less frequently heard in the superintendent's house--"a glorious time, a time of the Lord, who reveals himself in storm and tempest, to awaken the heart of sinful man from its obduracy. Let us rightly understand this time, Herr Superintendent, and not let the Lord appeal to us in vain."

"You will excuse me if I do not share your view, Herr von Krossow. I have this night had an example of the frenzy to which superstitious terror drives these wild souls. If you wish to explain to the men these phenomena of nature, I am most willing to aid you in the undertaking; but I see no advantage in a general prayer-meeting, and must therefore, I regret to say, decline to permit it."

The superintendent said this in his calm, convincing manner, but it did not seem to convince his antagonist. A brief pause succeeded, and the soft voice began again:

"I forgot to mention that the president, from whom I have just come, and to whom I imparted my intention, entirely agreed with my views, and even expressed the wish that the bells might be rung in all the churches, and the congregations assembled for prayer. He cannot fail to feel it very sensibly if here--just here--his authority is--what shall I say?--disregarded."

"I am afraid," replied the superintendent, "that many more will find themselves to-day compelled to refuse the customary respect to the authority of the president; I fear that the bells will be rung, not to call the people to the churches, but to summon them to work. Unless the storm soon abates there will be much work and hard work to do before night."

At this moment, through the roar of the storm, was audible a lamentable tone as if coming from the clouds, followed by other dismal sounds of wailing and crying, and suddenly the door leading into the hall was thrown open, and the doctor rushed breathlessly in.

"It is as we expected," he panted, hurrying past me into the superintendent's room, into which I followed him in excitement which had something better in it than mere curiosity.

"It is as we expected," he repeated, taking off his spectacles and wiping from his face the wet sand and other drift with which he was covered from head to foot. "In an hour, or two hours at most, the water will be over the rampart, unless a breach first happens, which is to be feared, in more than one place."

"What precautions are being taken?"

"They are sitting with hands in their laps--is not that enough? I hurried to the chief of police and to the president to entreat them to send every man that could use his arms to the rampart, and to order back the battalion, which marched out to parade two hours ago, because no countermand arrived--can you conceive such madness!--and is now struggling and buffeted upon the road, unless the storm has blown them all into the ditches long ago, which is more probable. Under all the circumstances they cannot be far, and would soon be back if a couple of mounted couriers were sent after them. They are more wanted here than in the ditches. All this I laid before the gentlemen. What do you suppose the chief of police answered me? He had been a soldier himself, and knew that an officer must obey his orders. It was not to be supposed that the battalion would be recalled at his request. And the president--that pretended saint--what is it? O, Herr von Krossow, you here? I am sorry that you have had to hear the opinion I have of your uncle; but it is out now, and I can neither help myself nor him. I cannot see that the sanctity is anything but a pretence, which in such a calamity talks of the judgments of God, and that it is vain to kick against the pricks."

"I shall not fail, as in duty bound, to notify my uncle of the friendly opinions which are so frankly expressed of him here," said Herr von Krossow, seizing his broad-rimmed hat with hands that trembled with rage, and hastening out of the door.

"A pleasant journey to you!" cried the pugnacious doctor, running a few steps after him, like a

cock whose adversary has left him master of the arena. "A pleasant journey!" he called once more through the open door, which he then, snorting wrath and scorn, flung furiously to.

"You have lost your place here," said the superintendent, seriously.

"At all events, the fellow will know my opinion of him," crowed the doctor.

"What does that matter?" asked the superintendent. "But that you should be physician here matters much, and to me most of all. We must try to repair this in some way."

The superintendent walked up and down the room with slow steps, his hands clasped behind his back, as was his custom; the doctor stood first upon one foot and then upon the other, looking greatly ashamed and confused.

"What is it?" asked the superintendent of a turnkey, who entered at that moment with an agitated face.

"There is a crowd of people here, Herr Superintendent."

"Where?"

"At the gate."

"What kind of people?"

"Mostly from the Bridge-street, Herr Superintendent. They say they will all be drowned. And since the prison stands so much higher----"

Without a word the superintendent left the room and crossed the court. We followed. He had on a short silk coat he usually wore in the house, and was without hat or cap. As he strode on before us, the storm, which was furious in the court, dishevelled his thin, dark hair, and the ends of his long moustache fluttered like pennons in the wind.

We reached the gate which the growling porter was ordered to open. The previous evening the opening of a prison door had exhibited to me a frightful spectacle, and I now had to behold a most moving and pitiable one, which has remained no less indelibly impressed on my memory.

There were outside probably fifty persons, mostly women, some men, both old and young, and children, some even in the arms of their mothers. Nearly all were carrying in their hands, or had placed upon the ground, some of their little possessions, and these apparently the first that came to hand, caught up in haste and alarm. I saw a woman with a great wash-tub on her shoulders, which she clutched as firmly as if it would fall to pieces if let go; and a man carrying an empty bird-cage, which the wind was whirling about. The gate was no sooner open than they all rushed into the yard as if pursued by furies. The turnkey wished to oppose their entrance, but the superintendent took him by the arm.

"Let them in," he said.

We had stepped on one side, and let the mad torrent pour by us, and it now spread over the court, and in part rushed up to the door of the building.

"Halt!" cried the superintendent.

They all stopped.

"Let the women and children enter," he said, to his subordinates, "also the old and the sick. You men may go in to warm yourselves, but in ten minutes you must all be here again. This is no time for men to be sitting behind the stove."

Here came new guests through the open gate.

"Let them in--let all in!" said the superintendent.

A young woman with a child in her arms, who had rushed in after the others, went up to the superintendent and said:

"I want my husband! Why do you keep him locked up? I can't carry all the brats at once! If I don't find the rest, you may drown this one too!"

She was just going to lay the child on the ground, when she suddenly turned upon the doctor, who was standing by, pushed the child into his arms, and sprang out of the gate. The woman had wonderfully long blond hair, which had fallen loose, and as she rushed off in frantic haste it fluttered behind her in a thousand strings.

"Get rid of your little burden," said the superintendent, smiling, to the doctor. "You must take command here in my place. Look after the women and children, my friend, and see that the men are through with their dinner in a quarter of an hour; then let them come out here, all of them, without exception, but the sick."

The doctor cast an inquiring look at his chief. Suddenly a light seemed to flash across his grotesque physiognomy, and holding the wailing child close to his breast, he ran with his queer tripping steps into the house to carry out the orders he had just received.

"Stay here, George," said the superintendent to me, "and talk to the people, as thou knowest how. I shall be back in ten minutes."

He went: I remained staring after him. What was the meaning of this? For the first time he had called me *thou*. His eye had been steadily fixed upon me; it was not a trip of the tongue, and yet he had not spoken it intentionally; I felt this instinctively; I felt, indeed I knew, that it was because at this solemn moment the little barriers which conventional life had thrown up between us, in this man's eyes, shrivelled up into nothing. And I knew what was in his mind: I knew that he was preparing himself for a battle of life and death, and that he had gone to take farewell of his family. A shudder ran through me; my breast swelled high; I raised my head proudly.

"Good people," I said, "take courage: he will help you if a man can."

They crowded around me, bewailing their great peril; how the water had been rising since yesterday midnight at the rate of nearly a foot an hour; that had now been going on for twelve hours, and the rampart in the lowest part was only twelve or thirteen feet high; that the Bridge-street and Sweed-street next to it were but very little above the ordinary level of the sea, and if the rampart gave way, all were lost. Master-Pilot Walter, who understood these things well, had always said something would happen; but there was no money for anything of the sort--that was all spent on the bastions and casemates on the land-side.

"And they have clapped my two boys into uniform," said an old man, "and now they are out on the road and cannot help us."

"But *he* will," I said.

The old man looked at me incredulously.

"He is a good gentleman," he said; "every child knows that; but what can he do?"

Here the superintendent came again out of the house, and at the same time out of three several doors which opened from the different wings of the main-building streamed forth the convicts, and work-house men, about four hundred in number, all more or less stalwart men, in their gray working-jackets, the most already provided with spades, picks, axes, ropes, and whatever else likely to be of service, that they had been able to find in the establishment. The men were headed by their overseers.

Thus they came on in military order and step. "Halt! Front face!" commanded the overseers, and the men halted in three companies, steady as a battalion under arms.

"This way, men!" cried the superintendent, in a sonorous voice. The men obeyed. All eyes were fixed upon him, who stood with his head bent down as if reflecting. Suddenly he looked up, his eye flashed around the circle, and with a voice that rose strong and clear above the storm, he cried:

"Men! Each one of us has had some one hour in his life which he would give much to be able to recall. To-day a great good fortune is granted you: every one of you, whoever he may be and whatever he has done--every one of you may now buy back that hour, and become again what he once was, before God, himself, and all good men. You have been told what you are wanted for. It is to risk your lives for the lives of others--for the lives of helpless women and children! I make you no vain promises; I do not say what you are about to do will make free men of you; on the contrary, I tell you that you will return here just as you left. Neither freedom nor any other reward awaits you when the gate closes behind you this evening after your work is over--nothing but the thanks of your superintendent, a glass of stiff grog, and a comfortable rest upon your beds, such as an honest fellow deserves. Will you stand by me on these conditions? Whoever will, let him raise his right hand and give a hearty Aye!"

Four hundred right hands flew up, and from four hundred throats came the shout AYE!

At once the crowd, which had been joined by the fugitives from the town, was divided into three companies, of which Süssmilch was to command the first, I the second, and a convict named Mathes, formerly a ship-builder, and a very active, intelligent man, the third. The overseers had fallen into the ranks with the rest.

"Every man is his own overseer to-day!" said the superintendent.

Thus we marched out of the gate.

The short street upon which the principal prison-gate opened was soon traversed, but at the old and rather narrow gate at the end of the street we met with a singular resistance, which, more than anything hitherto, exhibited the might of the storm. The old gate was in fact only an open arch in the wall, and yet it took us longer to get through it than if we had had to burst heavy doors of oak plated with iron, so violently did the blast press through the narrow opening. Like a

giant with hundred arms it stood without and thrust back like a helpless child each one that endeavored to force his way; only our combined exertions, holding each other's hands and clinging to the rugged surface of the arch, enabled us to force the pass. Then we hastened along the way, between the high bastion on one side and the town-fosse with the prison-buildings on the other side, until we reached the place where our help was needed.

It was that low rampart which immediately joined the bastion, over the crest of which I had so often cast a longing eye from the Belvedere towards the sea and the island. Its length was perhaps five hundred paces, and then came the harbor with its high stone breakwaters reaching far out into the sea. At the first sight I perceived why this place was exposed to such terrible peril in a storm like this. The sea, driven in by the force of the storm, was caught between the high bastion, that rested upon immense foundations of solid masonry, and the long breakwater, as in a *cul-de-sac*, and as it could escape on neither side, it spent all its force upon the barrier that here barred its way. If the rampart gave way, the whole lower part of the town was gone. No one could avoid seeing this who looked from the rampart into the narrow streets on the water-side, where the ridges of the roofs for the most part scarcely reached the height of the rampart, so that one could see over them into the inner harbor which lay on the opposite side of the harbor-suburb, where now the masts of the ships were swaying like reeds in the wind.

I think that I did not take more than a quarter of a minute to have a distinct comprehension of the situation as I have just described it, and indeed no more time was allowed me. My senses and feelings were too powerfully seized by the sight of the danger we had come to contend with. I, who had passed my whole life upon the coast, who had been tossed for days together by the waves in small or large craft, who had watched, from the shore at least, many a fierce storm with unwearied attention and sympathetic terror--I thought that I knew the sea; and now saw that I no more knew it than any one knows a bomb, who has not seen one explode and scatter death and destruction around. Not even in my wildest fancies had I ever approached the reality. This was not the sea which was an expanse of water forming greater and smaller waves; this was a monster, a world of monsters rushing upon us with wide-open jaws, roaring, howling, ravening for prey; it was no longer anything definite or distinguishable--the destruction of all form, of all color--chaos that had broken loose to engulf the world.

I believe there was not one of the whole company who was not similarly affected by the sight. I can see them now standing there--the four hundred as they had rushed to the crest of the rampart, with pale faces, their terrified eyes now turned upon the howling chaos, then upon their neighbors, and then upon the man who had led them here, and who alone was able to say what was to be done, what could be done.

And never had a hesitating crowd a better leader.

With the true eye of love that thoughtfully gazes into the past, I see him in so many situations, and always do I behold him noble and good; but at no moment better and nobler than in this, as he stood upon the highest point of the rampart, one arm wound round the strong flag-staff which he had hastily erected, as firm upon his weakened limbs as the bronze statue of an ancient hero! And hero-like was the look of his eye which in one glance took in the danger and the remedy; hero-like was the gesture as he raised his hand, and hero-like was the voice which in clear incisive tones gave the needful orders.

One detachment was ordered into the low streets to bring up all the empty casks, boxes and chests they could find; another to go with spades, baskets and wheelbarrows upon the bastion, where there was earth in abundance; another into the adjoining glacis with ropes and axes to fell the trees which for years had been awaiting the enemy which--though in an unlooked-for form--had now come; another into the neighboring dock-yards to summon the ship-builders to help us, and to procure, either by persuasion or force, twenty or thirty large beams which we absolutely needed. Before half an hour had elapsed, the work, so well directed, was in full activity. At one place, baskets of earth were lowered into the rents which the sea had made in the rampart; at another, posts were driven in and wattled with boughs; at another, a wall of timbers was built up. And all worked, and hurried, and dug, and shovelled, and hammered, and wheeled, and dragged great loads, with a diligence, with an energy, with a cheerful, dauntless courage, that even now the tears start to my eyes as I think of it; when I think that these were the men whom society had spurned out; the men who, perhaps for the sake of a few *groschen* or a childish craving, had become common thieves; the men whom I had so often, with disgust, seen sulkily slouching across the prison court to their work; the men whom the storm of yesterday, beating against the walls of their prison, had driven to a frenzy of terror. There lay the town at their feet; they might rush into it, rob, burn, and murder to their heart's content--who was to hinder them? There lay the wide world open before them; they had only to escape into it; who could restrain them? Here was a work more difficult and more toilsome than any they had ever done; who was it that compelled them to it? This was the storm before which they had yesterday trembled in its most appalling form; why did they not tremble now? Why did they go, jesting, laughing, into the very jaws of death, when they had to secure and bring in a great mast which had been drifted in from the harbor, and which the waves were driving like a battering-ram against the rampart? Why? I believe if all men answered this why as I answer it, there would no longer be masters and serfs; no longer would men sing the sad old song of the hammer that would not be an anvil, for--but wherefore answer a *why* that only the world's history can answer? Wherefore lay the secrets of our hearts before a world which passes by indifferent, unnoticing, or only noticing to mock!

Whoever looked on at this work--how these men let the skin be torn from their flesh and the flesh from their bones in their terrible work--did not laugh; and those who looked on were the poor people of the water-streets--women and children for the most part, for the men had to help in the work--who stood below sheltered by the rampart, and with frightened and astonished faces looked at the gray-jackets, whom they had usually only watched with timid, suspicious glances as they passed through the streets in small parties led by overseers from out-door work. To-day they were not afraid of the gray-jackets; to-day they prayed that heaven's blessing might go with the food and drink that they brought to strengthen and refresh those who were exhausted with the toil. No, they were not afraid of the four hundred; gladly would they have seen their numbers doubled and tripled.

But there were men living far out of the reach of the danger, whose lives or property were nowise at stake, and who thus were in a position acutely to feel the irregularity and illegality of these proceedings.

I remember that, one after the other, the Chief of Police von Raubach, President von Krossow, the Lieutenant General and Commandant of the Fort, his excellency Count Dankenheim, came storming our leader with entreaties, commands, threats, to place his dreaded brigade under locks and bolts again. I remember that they came together in the evening to make a combined attack, and I have still to smile when I recall the cheerful calm with which the good, brave man repelled the assault.

"What would you have, gentlemen?" he said. "Would you really prefer that hundreds should lose their lives and thousands their property, rather than that a dozen or a couple of dozen of these poor rascals should decamp and gain the liberty which they have honestly earned to-day? But I shall bring them back when the danger is over. Before that time no man shall move me from here, unless he does it by force; and happily no one of you is able to do that, gentlemen! And now, gentlemen, this interview must terminate; night is coming on; we have at most only a half hour to make our preparations for the night. I have the honor to wish you good day!"

With these words he waved his hand towards the three high functionaries, who made an extremely poor figure as they stole off, and then turned all his attention where he was needed.

Where he was needed at this moment more than ever; for just now, at the approach of night, it seemed as if the storm had rallied all its force for a last and decisive assault.

I feared that we should have to succumb; that our desperate toil of six hours was all in vain. The giant-waves no longer were hurled back; their crests were torn off and flew far over the rampart into the streets. Shrieking with terror, the crowd below fled in all directions; scarcely one among us workmen could hold his place on the summit: I saw desperate fellows, who had played with the danger hitherto, now turn pale and shake their heads, and heard them say: "It is impossible: nothing more can be done."

And now came the most terrible act in this awful drama.

A small Dutch ship which had been moored in the roadstead broke loose from her anchors and was hurled about in the frightful surf like a nutshell, now tossed aloft, now engulfed in the trough of the sea, but driven with every wave nearer the rampart we were defending. We saw the despairing gestures of the crew, who were clinging to the spars and rigging: we almost fancied that we heard their cries for help.

"Can we do nothing--nothing?" I cried, turning to the superintendent with tears of anguish in my eyes.

He shook his head sadly. "This one thing, perhaps," he said, "that when she is thrown up thus high we may try if we can grapple her so that the surf may not sweep her back. If it does not succeed they are lost, and we with them, for she will make a breach in the rampart which we cannot possibly fill. Let them drive in strong posts, George, and make fast one end of our thickest rope to them. It is but a feeble possibility; but there is still a chance. Come!"

We hastened to the spot on which the ship, now but a few hundred feet distant, was driving. The men had left the crest of the rampart, and were sheltering themselves as well as they could; but now, when they saw their leader himself take an axe in his hand, they all came up and worked with a sort of fury, compared with which all that they had hitherto done was child's play.

The posts were planted, and the rope fastened. Four of the strongest men, of whom I was one, stood upon the rampart watching the right moment.

And what we thought scarcely possible, succeeded! An enormous wave came rolling up bearing the vessel with it. The wave breaks--a deluge bursts over us, but we stand firm, clutching the posts with the grip of desperation; and as soon as we can see again, there lay the ship like a stranded whale, high upon the rampart. We spring to it; a hundred hands are busy at once making fast the ropes to the masts; a hundred others in releasing the pale men--five of them from the yards. All is done before the next wave breaks. Will it carry off our prize? It comes, and after it another, and another; but the ropes hold; each wave is weaker than the last; the fourth does not reach the crest; the fifth falls far behind. In the fearful incessant thunder, which for so many hours has been deafening our ears, there comes a sudden pause; the pennons on the rocking

masts of the ships in the inner harbor, which have been flying towards the east, now droop, and then fly out to the west; the wind hauls, the storm is over, the victory is ours!

The victory is ours. Every one knows it in a moment. A cheer, that seemed as if it would never end, bursts from the throats of these rude men. They grasp each other's hands; embrace each other--Hurrah! and Hurrah! again and again!

The victory is ours; but it is dearly purchased.

When I looked for him--him whom all had to thank for all--he was no longer standing on the spot where I had seen him last. But I see the men running to the place, and I run with them; I outstrip them all, driven by a fear which gives me wings. I force my way through the assembled crowd, and find all with bowed heads gazing at a man who lies upon the ground, his head upon the knees of the old sergeant. The man is pale as death, and his lips are covered with bloody froth, and all around him the earth is drenched with fresh blood--his blood--the heart's blood of that noblest of living men.

"Is he dead?" I hear one of the men ask.

But the hero could not die yet: he has one duty more to perform. He summons me with a look, and I bend over him as he moves his lips, from which no sound now issues. But I understand him. I clasp both arms around him and raise him up. Thus he stands erect, leaning upon me, the lofty kingly form. They can all see him--the men whom he has led here and whom he is going to lead back. He glances at his hand, which hangs helpless, white as wax, at his side; I raise it, and it points in the direction of the way that we had come at noon. There is not one who dares disobey this dumb, solemn command. They assemble, fall into rank and file; the sergeant and I bear their dying leader; and thus we return in long, slow, sad procession.

Night has come on; and but a few occasional gusts rush by to remind us of the frightful day we have all passed through. The convicts are sleeping upon the pillow of a good conscience, which the superintendent had promised them. Their superintendent sleeps too, and his pillow is as soft as death in a good and great cause can make it.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was a year after these events that a solitary traveller was ascending the slope of one of the hills of the heath which surrounded the town of Uselin on the land side. He journeyed slowly, like one who is wearied with a long march, and laboriously dragged his feet through that coarse sand with which the sea loves to bestrew its threshold. But the traveller was not by any means weary; he had journeyed but few miles that day, and for him twice the exertion had been but child's play. The little bundle which was slung from a stick over his shoulder could not overburden him; and yet he went slower and slower as he approached the three pines which crowned the summit of the hill; indeed he stopped from time to time and pressed his hand upon his heart, as though his breath failed him for the few steps that were yet to be taken. And now he stood on the summit under the pines; the stick with the bundle slipped from his grasp, and he stretched out his arms toward the little town which from the strand glittered in a light blended with the glitter of the sea. Then he threw himself--tall and powerful man as he was--upon the heather under the pines, weeping and sobbing like a child, but presently half raised himself, and lay for a long time, propped by his elbow, steadily gazing at the little sea-port at his feet, with its peaked gables and steep roofs reddened by the sunset.

What thoughts were passing through the mind of this solitary man? What emotions were filling his heaving breast?

Many a poet who has carelessly brought his hero into a similar situation probably finds the answer to this question no such easy task; but fortunately for me I myself am the wanderer lying under the pines, and since that time not so many years have flown that the place, the hour, and what they brought me, could have escaped my memory.

What did they bring?

A host of memories from the years when the man was a light-hearted boy, and all that he saw around him now but the scenes of his wild sports: the town, from the depth of the half-filled-up fosse to the tops of the spires; the gardens, fields, meadows and heaths that surrounded it as far as these very hills; the harbor with its ships, and the glistening sea on which he loved to row in a frail boat when the towers, as now, glowed ruddy in the evening light.

Hither and thither strayed my looks, and everywhere they encountered objects that greeted me as old acquaintances; but they did not dwell long upon any one; just as when we search a well-known book for some especial passage, turning leaf after leaf, and every line that meets the eye is familiar, and yet we can not light upon the place we are looking for.

But in truth it was so small and lowly, the old one-storied house with the painted gable on the narrow harbor-street, and the street lay so low, covered by the larger houses of the higher part of the town,—how could I expect from this spot to distinguish the little house with the narrow gable?

And yet for what other purpose had I made the journey hither, the sixteen miles from the prison—my first journey after regaining my freedom—but to see that house, and, if fortune would permit, perhaps through a crack in the shutter to catch a glimpse of its occupant? For to go to him, to gaze into his eyes, to throw my arms about his neck, as my heart yearned to do—this, after what had happened, I dared not hope. In the short notes with which he had answered my letters, there had never been, during all the seven years of my imprisonment, one single word of love, of comfort, of forgiveness.

And my last letter, written a week before, in which I congratulated him in advance on his sixty-seventh birth-day, told him that this would be the day of my liberation, and asked if I—now another, and, I hoped, a better man—might venture to come to him on that day—this letter, which I had written with wet eyes and a trembling hand, had never been answered.

The red glow had at last vanished from the high roofs and peaked gables, from the fluttering pennons of the ships in the outer harbor, and from the two church-towers; a light mist arose from the meadows and fields which stretched from the hills upon the heath to the city. The mail-coach came along the road lined with stunted fruit trees; and I watched it as it slowly passed tree after tree, until it disappeared behind the first houses of the suburb. Here and there upon the narrow foot-path between the fields were seen the figures of laborers moving toward the town, and these also disappeared. The twilight faded away; denser grew the mists in the hollows; nothing living was to be seen except a brace of hares sitting up on their haunches in a stubble-field, and a great flock of crows, which came croaking from the pine-forest where I used to play "Robbers and Soldiers" with my comrades, their black bodies flapping distinct against the lighter sky, as they bent their course to the old church-towers.

The hour had now come.

I arose, hung my bundle once more over my stick, slowly descended the hill and took my way through the misty fields to the town. In an obscure spot in the suburbs I stopped again for awhile—it was not dark enough for me yet. I neither feared nor had reason to fear any one. Even before my great enemy, Justizrath Heckepfennig, or those redoubtable public servants Luz and Bolljahn, had I met them, I need not have cast down my eyes, or stepped aside; and yet it was not dark enough.

Now the night breeze rustled louder in the half-stripped boughs of the maple against which I was leaning, and looking up I saw a star twinkling through the sprays—now it would do.

How hollow sounded my footsteps in the empty streets, and how heavily beat my heart in my anxious breast! As I passed the *Rathhaus*, Father Rüterbusch, the night-watchman, was standing, bare-headed and without his weapons, at his post, and looking pensively at the empty table and barrel-chair of Mother Möller's cake stand, while above us the clock in the tower of St. Nicholas's church struck eight. Was Mother Möller dead, that Father Rüterbusch thus gazed at the empty barrel, and had not even a glance for his old acquaintance from the guard-house?

Dead? Why not? She was an old woman when I last saw her—just the age of my father, as she told me once when I was spending my pocket money at her stall. As old as my father! A chill wind blew through the hall; I shivered from head to foot, and with a rapid stride, almost a run, I hurried over the little market-place down the sloping streets leading to the harbor.

Here was the Harbor-street, and here was the house! Thank heaven! A light was glimmering through the shutters of both windows on the left. Thank heaven once more!

And now would I do and must do what on that other evening I wished to do and should have done, and yet did not: go in and say to him "forgive me!"

I grasped the brass knob of the door—again it felt cold as ice to my hot hand. The door-bell gave a sharp clang, and at its summons appeared at the door of the right-hand chamber—just as on that evening—the faithful Friederike. No, not just as on that evening; her little figure, bent with age, was dressed in black, and a black ribbon fastened the snow-white cap with its broad ruffle, which formed a ring of points around her wrinkled face. And out of the wrinkled face two eyes, red with weeping, stared at the strange visitor.

"Rike," I said—it was all that I could utter.

"George! good heaven!" the old woman cried, tottering towards me with uplifted hands.

She grasped both my hands, and gazed at me, sobbing and speechless, with quivering lips, while the tears streamed down her furrowed cheeks. She had no need to speak: I did not ask

what had happened: I only asked "When?"

"A week ago to-day," sobbed the old woman. "He did not even live to see his birth-day."

"What did he die of?"

"I do not know. Nobody knows. Doctor Balthasar says he cannot understand it. He has never been quite well since you have been away; and kept growing worse and worse, though he would never own it; and two weeks ago he took to his bed, and kept perfectly still, looking always just before him, only that sometimes he would write in his house-book, and that on the very evening before; and when I came in the morning he was dead, and the book was lying on the bed, and I took it myself and showed it to nobody when they came and sealed up everything. I thought I ought to keep it for you: he used so often to say your name to himself when he was writing. What he wrote I don't know; I cannot read; but I will get it for you."

She opened the door into my father's room. It was neat as ever--painfully neat, but even more uninhabitable. The white slips of parchment, fastened with seals over the keyholes of the secretary and the old brown press in the corner, had a spectral look to me.

"Why is the lamp burning on the table?" I asked.

"They are coming this evening."

"Who are coming?"

"Sarah and her husband, and the children, I believe. Did you not know?"

"I know of nothing--nothing whatever. And there still lies my letter--unbroken! He never read it!"

I sank into the chair that stood by the writing table. I had never sat in this chair, had scarcely dared to touch it. A king's throne had seemed less venerable to me. This thought at once struck me, and was followed by many, many other painful thoughts: my head sank into my hands: gladly would I have wept, but I could not weep.

The old woman returned with the book of which she had spoken. I knew it well; it was a thick quarto volume, bound in leather, with clasps, and I had often seen it in my father's hands of an evening when he had done his work; but never had I ventured to cast a look into it, even had I had the opportunity, which but rarely happened, as my father always kept it carefully locked up. Now it lay open before me: one after another I turned the thick leaves of the rough coarse paper, their pages covered with the neat, pedantically straight hand-writing of my father, which I knew so well. The hand had not changed, although the entries extended over more than forty years, and the ink on the first pages was entirely faded. Only upon the last did this steady strength seem to fail. The traces of the pen grew ever more angular, feebler; they were but the ruin of what had formerly been; the last word was just legible and no more. It was my name.

And everywhere upon the first leaves, those of some twenty-seven years back, stood my name.

"To-day a son has been born to me--a sturdy little fellow. The nurse says she never saw in her life so stout a babe, and that he is like St. George. So he shall be called George, and shall be the joy of my life and the staff of my old age. May God grant it!"

"George comes on finely," was on another page. "He is already larger than the Herr Steuerrath's Arthur, who is not small either. He seems to have a good head of his own. Though only three years old, it is wonderful what ideas he has. He must soon go to school."

And again on another:

"Clerk Volland is full of praise of my George. 'He might get on better with his learning,' the old man says; 'but his heart is in the right place; he will be a fine man some day. I shall not live to see it, but you will, and then do you remember that I said so.'"

And so it went on, page after page--"George that splendid fellow! My noble boy, George!"

Then came other times. George's name was not now in almost every line, and George was no longer the splendid fellow and noble boy. George would not do right, neither in school, nor at home, nor on the street, nor anywhere. George was a good-for-nothing! No, no; that was too much to say; only he could do better if he would, and he certainly would do better--he certainly would!

Then came many pages and George's name was not mentioned at all. Many a family event was noted; my mother's death; the terrible news of my brother's loss; that his daughter Sarah had again--for the third--for the fourth time--presented him with a grandson or a grand-daughter; that he had been promoted to an accountant's place; that his salary had been raised; but George's name appeared no more.

Not even upon the last leaves, which again had references to "him;" that "he" was so well liked by all in the prison, and that the Herr Superintendent von Zehren had asked today again if "he"

was not yet found worthy of his father's forgiveness.

"I have tried to-day to write to him what the feelings of my heart are; but I cannot bring myself to it. I will tell him all when he comes back, if he cares for the love of an old broken man; but write it I cannot."

And upon the last page were the words:

"It is not true! It certainly is not true. Six years and a half he has behaved well, yes, exemplarily, and in the second half of the seventh to become worthless at once! I hear little good of the new superintendent. The one that is gone was a noble-spirited man, and he was always full of praise of him--no, no, whatever they may say of him, my boy is not worthless, not worthless!"

And last of all:

"In a week he will be free; he will find me upon a sick bed if he finds me at all. For his sake I wish it; for it would be a great sorrow to him to see me no more. I have thought all these years that my boy did not love me, or he would never have given me so much pain; but I had just now a dream that he was here and I held him in my arms. I said to him, George----"

I stared with burning eyes at the blank which followed, as if there must appear upon it the words which my father had said to me in his dream; but gaze as I might, the words appeared not, and at last I saw nothing more for the flood of tears that burst from my eyes.

"You must not cry so, George," said the good old woman. "I know he always loved you more than the rest--very much more. And if he died of grief and heart-break on your account, why he was an old man, and now he is dead and with our Heavenly Father, and he is well there, much better than here, though the good Lord knows that I have had no other thought these twenty years than to make it all right with him."

"I know it, I know it, and I thank you a thousand times," I cried, seizing her brown withered bands. "And now tell me, what are you going to do, and what can I do for you?"

She looked at me and shook her head; it probably seemed strange to her that George, just out of the prison, should offer to do anything for her.

I repeated my question.

"Poor boy," she said, "you will have enough to do to provide for yourself, for what he has left does not amount to much; he was too good; he would help everywhere that he could, and he bought a place in the Beguines for me, for the year or two I may still be spared. This will come out of it, and Sarah made fuss enough when she heard it. They thought they would get it all; but it is to be divided equally between you both. I have that from his own mouth, and I can swear it, and will swear it, if they raise any dispute, because he left no will."

At this moment there was a loud ring at the front door.

"Good heavens!" cried the old woman, clapping her hands together, "there they are already!"

She hurried out of the room, leaving the door open after her. I remembered that I had never loved my sister--that I had parted from her with unfriendly feelings long years before, and that in the interval I had by no means learned to love her--but what difference did that make now? Now, when she and I had lost our father, when we might lean and take each other's hand across his grave?

I went into the little hall, which was nearly filled by the newcomers--a tall, lean, pale woman in black; a short, fat, red-faced man, in the uniform of an officer of the customs; and so far as I could make out at a glance, a half-dozen children, from ten or twelve years old to an infant, which the tall, pale woman clutched more firmly as I appeared at the door, and looked at me with a hostile rather than a startled look in her large cold eyes. The short, fat man in uniform stepped between me and the group of mother and children with a confused expression in his face, and, rubbing his plump hands in an embarrassed manner, said:

"We were not expecting you--ahem!--brother-in-law ahem! but we are very glad to meet you here--ahem! My dear wife will only put herself to rights a little--ahem! In the meantime, suppose we go into our late father's room, where we can talk over matters undisturbed. Don't you think so, my dear?"

The little man turned upon his heel to face his dear wife, who, instead of answering, pushed the children before her into old Friederike's little room. He turned back to me, rubbed his hands with still more embarrassment than before, and said again "Ahem!"

We entered my father's room. I took my seat in his chair, but my brother-in-law was too disturbed in spirit to be able to sit down. He paced up and down the room with short quick steps, stopping for a moment every time he passed the door, with his head thrust forward a little on one side, listening if his dear wife had called him, and every time, to fill up the pause with propriety, he said "Ahem?"

It was a long detail that the little man went into during his restless wandering from door to stove and from stove to door, and what he said was as clumsy and awkward as himself. It seemed that he and his dear wife had cherished a half hope that I would never be discharged from prison, especially since I had been detained half a year over my time for alleged breaches of discipline. He rejoiced exceedingly, he said, that his fears and those of his dear wife had not been justified; but that I must admit that it was a hard thing for a public officer to have a brother-in-law who had been in the House of Correction. Did I think, now, that an officer with such kindred was likely to gain promotion? It was frightful, unpardonable, so to speak, and if he could have foreseen it---

The little man suddenly gave me a furtive look. I was standing perfectly still, looking steadily at him, was a giant in comparison with him, and had just come out of prison. It seemed to strike him that it was not altogether prudent to take this tone with me, so now there came a long litany of the dolorous life that a petty subaltern with a large family has to lead on the Polish frontier. True, in conformity with the wishes of his dear wife, who wanted to nurse her old father, he had procured his removal to this place; but now the old gentleman, who no doubt would have taken it kindly of them, must needs die, and living here was so much more expensive, and then the journey had cost so much with all these children, and the baby was only sixteen weeks old, and though the inheritance was left, still *two* was a heavy divisor when the dividend was not large, and---

I had heard enough, and more than enough.

"Do you know this book?" I asked, laying my hand on the cover of my father's diary.

"No," replied the little man.

"Give me this book, and I make no other claim upon my father's estate. It is his diary, which has no interest for you. Do you consent?"

"Certainly--that is, ahem! I don't know whether my dear wife--we must first see about it--," answered my brother-in-law, rubbing his hands in an undecided way, and looking askance at the book out of his little puffy eyes.

"Then see about it"

I now commenced on my side pacing up and down the room, while the husband of his dear wife seated himself at the table, to submit this mysterious book to a closer inspection.

It seemed to excite no especial interest in him by the ordinary process of reading; so he tried another plan with it, taking it by the two covers and letting the leaves hang down, which he shook vigorously for half a minute. As this proceeding also led to no result, he gave up the matter as hopeless, laid down the book again, and said "Ahem!"

"Are you agreed!" I asked.

"Yes, certainly--to be sure--so to speak--of course; that is, we must put it down in writing--only a couple of lines--just by way of a memorandum--we might have it afterwards drawn up by a notary----"

"Whatever you wish, whatever you wish," I said. "Here then!"

The little man glanced at the paper and glanced at me, while I tied up the book in my bundle, and took bundle and stick in my hand. Either he did not know what to make of me, or--as from the expression of his countenance was more probable--considered me simply insane; in either case he was beyond measure glad to be rid of me.

"Off so soon?" he said. "There's my dear wife, won't you----"

He checked his invitation to see his dear wife. I muttered something that might pass for an excuse, left the room, pressed old Friederike's hand as I passed through the hall, and stood in the street.

I have but a dim recollection of the hour that followed. It is not a dream, and yet it seems like a dream, that I went to the grave-yard in the mill-suburb, roused up the old sexton, who was just going to bed; that I kneeled by a recent grave, and afterwards gave the old man, who stood by me with a lantern, money to cover the hillock next morning with fresh sods; that I went back again, and near the gate passed the villa of the *commerzienrath*, where all the windows were illuminated, and I could see couples gliding past them in the dance to a music which I could not hear, and that I thought the little *Hermine* might be among the dancers, and then remembered that the pretty child would now be seventeen years old, if she were still alive.

I felt an irrepressible sadness; it seemed as if all the world had died, and I was the only living being left, and the shades of the dead were dancing round me to inaudible music.

Thus I went back with unsteady steps to the town, and passed along the empty silent streets towards the harbor, mechanically following the way which I had always taken when a boy.

The sea-breeze blew in my face, and cooled my fevered brow, and I inhaled deep draughts of the invigorating air. No, the world was not dead, nor was I the only living being left; and there was a music, a delicious music, sweeter to me than any other: the music of the wind whistling through spars and cordage, and the waves plashing upon the harbor-bar and before the prow of the ship. Yes, there were still those who loved me, and whom I with all my soul could love again.

Upon the wharf, where the steamboat for St. --- was now lying at her moorings, there was standing a crowd of people. It struck me that I could best commence my journey to the capital by this steamer.

Considering this, I was standing at the head of the pier, when a litter, such as is used to transport the sick, was carried past me towards the crowd. The litter was without the usual cover, which had probably been forgotten in their haste, or, as it was night, not considered necessary.

"What is the matter?" I asked the men.

"The fireman of the *Elizabeth* has broken his leg." growled one in reply, in whom I now recognized my old friend, officer Luz.

"And we are to take him to the hospital," said the other, who was no other than the redoubtable Bolljahn.

"Poor fellow!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," said Luz, "and his wife has just been brought to bed."

"And they had eight already," growled Bolljahn.

"No, seven," said Luz.

"No, eight," said Bolljahn.

The group upon the pier began to move.

"There he lies now," said Luz.

"No, eight," said Bolljahn, who was not the man to drop a disputed point so soon.

They had brought the man out of the ship to the pier. He was a remarkably large and powerful man, whom six found it no easy task to carry, and who, strong as he was, groaned and cried with pain. The two men put down the litter; the bearers set about lifting the man into it, very awkwardly as it seemed, for he screamed with anguish. I thrust a couple of gapers aside and came up. They had laid him upon the ground again; I asked him how he wanted to be placed, and took hold myself with the others, showing them what to do.

"Thank God!" murmured the poor fellow, "here is one man with some sense."

They carried him off, and I went a little distance with them to see how they got on. Was he warm enough? Yes he was. Did they carry him well? Well, they might shake him a little less.

"Here is something for you too," I said, putting a piece of money into the hand of each of my old acquaintances, "and now carry him as if he were your brother or your child;" and then I bent over the injured man and whispered something in his ear that it was not necessary for Luz and Bolljahn to hear, and gave him something which it was equally unnecessary for them to see; and then I turned again to the group which was standing by the gang-plank of the steamer, discussing the remarkable accident.

At this moment the captain came out upon the gang-plank, and called to the group:

"Will any one of you take Karl Riekmann's place for this trip? I will pay him good wages."

The men looked at each other. "I can't, Karl," said one, "can't you?" "No, Karl," said the one addressed, "but can't you, Karl?" "Neither can I," said the third Karl.

"I will," said I, stepping up to the captain.

The captain, a short, square-built man, looked up at me.

"Oh, you will do," he said.

"I think so."

"Can you go on board at once?"

"There is nothing to detain me here."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A gray foggy morning succeeded to the cold windy night. It was six o'clock when the *Elizabeth* left the wharf, and I had been busy with the fires since three. I soon fell into the work, and scarcely needed the instructions of the lumpish, growling engineer. I had to laugh once or twice involuntarily when the man, seeing me attend to this or the other matter about the engine without directions, stared at me with a look half of surprise and half of vexation. I had told him that I was an entire novice at this work, and this was the literal truth; but I had not told him, nor was there any necessity that I should, that I had thoroughly studied marine steam-engines with the best of teachers, and had familiarized myself with even the minutest parts on an excellent model. And if in a few hours I had mastered the work of a regular fireman, in even a less time I had acquired the appearance of one. To save my own clothes I had laid them in part aside, and put on a working blouse of my unlucky predecessor, which fitted me perfectly; and what with handling the coal and the effects of a stream of smoke which drove into my face for quite ten minutes from the refractory furnace while I was making up the fires, even my friend Doctor Snellius, who piqued himself so greatly upon his physiognomical memory, would not have recognized me. But I cared little for this, for happily I had other things to occupy my attention.

I say happily, for it was ill with me in both head and heart. The death of my father, who had died without my being able even once to press his stern honorable hand, the meeting with my sister who put her children out of my way as if they were endangered by my presence, the prospect of the future which looked all the darker the more I thought over it--all this would have completely overwhelmed me had not the honest furnace been there in which the coals glowed so splendidly and the flames danced so merrily, while the sturdy engine worked on manfully and unrelenting. Only free work can make us free, my teacher had said to me. I had believed him at his word, but to-day for the first time I comprehended it, as I felt how the hard work which I had here to perform lightened more and more the load upon my heart, and the clouds passed away from my brow.

A kind of joyful pride took hold of me as I felt myself at home here; and I thought of that day eight years' before when I took that fateful trip on the *Penguin* and visited my friend Klaus in the engine-room, and to my wine-heated brain the engine appeared a machine only fit to crush the life out of me. The good Klaus! He had trouble enough with me that day, and care enough about me; and I should give him both trouble and care now if I should go to him to learn with his help to be a good workman. Some care I should give him, not much; I had found out this morning that I could stand more firmly on my own feet than I had supposed.

Far more firmly than my present superior, the bearded engineer, stood upon his. He stood by no means firmly, the honest fellow, and his watery eyes as well as the sleepy expression of his far from handsome face, and the vulgar perfume of alcohol which he diffused about him, made it obvious that his unsteady gait was not altogether due to the rolling of the boat. The worthy man was not exactly drunk--a regular engineer is never drunk, even though he sits up to two or three in the morning in a tavern drinking Swedish punch with his colleagues from the Swedish mailboat--but neither was he sober; so far from it that I on my side began to look at my superior with suspicious looks when, standing by his lever, he sank into deep meditation, which often bore a striking resemblance to a peaceful slumber.

"A warming-plate wanted on the forward deck; quick, Herr Weiergang!" called the steward down to the engine-room. Herr Weiergang nodded at me: it was a matter that concerned me especially. I knew what was wanted. I had been often enough on steamboats in rough weather when the motion of the boat rendered it impossible for those ladies who readily suffered from sea-sickness to remain in the cabin, and the sharp north-east wind and the spray made the exposure upon deck disagreeable and sometimes intolerable. Intolerable, if the honest fireman were not at hand with plates of iron cast especially for this purpose, which he has heated on the boiler and obligingly places under their half-frozen feet.

To-day I was the honest fireman. It struck me rather oddly; in all my life I had never done this service; had never dreamed that I should ever have to perform it. Had I to do it then? Certainly: I had undertaken the duty of the injured man, and this was part of his duty. So in five minutes I was on deck, holding a well-heated iron in my hands, which I had protected by a bunch of oakum.

It was now about noon, and the first time I had been on deck. The atmosphere was gray and dense with mist; one could scarcely see a hundred paces ahead. The wind was contrary, so that, though it was not violent, the boat pitched heavily, and a cold fine spray from the waves that broke against the bow swept continually over the deck.

The deck was nearly deserted, or at least seemed so, as the ten or twenty passengers were crouching in every corner, behind the paddle-boxes, the deck-cabin, and wherever any projection

offered a little shelter.

"Here, my friend, here!" cried a voice that had a familiar sound to me, and turning suddenly around, I gave so violent a start that I had nearly dropped the plate. There stood a man, who, though he had now a gray old-fashioned overcoat with wide sleeves over his blue frock-coat with gold buttons, and wore his cap not pushed back from his forehead, as usual, but pulled down over his eyes--could be no other than my old friend Commerzienrath Streber.

"Here, my friend!" he cried again, and pointed with his right hand, while with his left he held fast to the capstan, to a lady crouching with her back towards me upon a low chair behind a great coil of cable at the bow of the vessel. The lady drew a large plaid cloak, lined with some soft and fine material, close around her slender figure, and turned her face, which was framed in a swan's-down hood, towards me.

It was a sweet lovely girlish face, upon whose cheeks the sea-breeze had kissed the delicate pink to a bright glow, and whose deep-blue brilliant eyes contrasted singularly with the gray water and the gray air. It had been seven years since I saw this face last. The child had become a maiden; but the maiden had still the face, or at least the mouth and eyes of the child, and by this mouth and these eyes I knew her. I started involuntarily and had to grasp the plate firmly to save it from falling on the wet deck, while I felt the blood rushing to my cheeks. It was certainly a severe trial to appear before the maiden who had been my little friend in other days, in such a costume, and with a face embrowned with soot.

But this dress and this sooty covering were what saved me; she looked up at me with a little surprise but without recognizing me.

"Lay it here, my friend," she said, leaning back a little in her chair, and raising the edge of her skirt a little, so that I had a glimpse of the daintiest little feet in the world, resting on their heels to keep them from the wet deck.

I kneeled, and did what was required, no more and no less; perhaps rather less than more, for she said:

"You can bring me another by and by, if you have time; you do not seem to have time just now."

"Yes; and bring one for me at once!" cried the commerzienrath.

"And for me, if I may venture to ask," cried a thin voice from a corner between the deck-house and the mast, where out of some half-dozen shawls and wrappings peeped out a red nose, and in the wind fluttered a yellow curl which could belong to no one but Fräulein Amalie Duff.

"And for me!" "And for me!" cried a half-dozen other voices from as many other piles of mufflings, whose owners, with the promptness of desperation, had comprehended the advantage of a hot iron plate on a wet deck.

"But for me first!" screamed the commerzienrath, getting alarmed at the competition. "You know who I am, don't you?"

I did not deem it necessary to assure the Herr Commerzienrath that I knew him more than well enough, and hastened away from the deck, which was getting hotter to me than my furnace. I went below in a very unenviable frame of mind, and the thought that presently I must go on deck again brought great beads of perspiration to my forehead; but when I thought the matter over I found that my agitation was merely occasioned by very ordinary vanity. I hated to appear before the pretty girl as a sooty monster--this it was and nothing more; and while I was thus thinking as I stood by the boiler, the plates upon it had long reached the needful temperature, and the steward had called down three times to know if I was not ready with those confounded irons.

"Be ashamed of yourself!" I said to myself; "the poor things up there are freezing because you happen to have on a ragged blouse, and a patch or two of soot on your face. Shame upon you!"

And I was ashamed of myself, and went up the ladder and boldly marched direct to the place where the poor half-frozen governess was crouching in her wet wrappings.

Raising her water-blue eyes to me with the expression of helpless misery, she said, while her teeth chattered with cold, "You good man, you are my preserver!"

"Why do you not stay in the cabin?" I asked. I had no need to speak in *Platt-Deutsch*, or to disguise my voice, which either the sharp north-easter, or my embarrassment, or both together, made unnaturally deep and rough.

"I should die down there!" moaned the poor creature.

"Then sit over there by the paddle-box, where you have some shelter. You have here the worst place on the whole deck."

"O you good man!" said the governess. "It is indeed an eternal truth that there are good men

in every clime."

I had to bite my lips.

"Can I assist you?" I said. "If you do not mind my working-dress----"

"Among monsters the only feeling breast," murmured the governess, hanging on my arm.

"Where are you going, dear Duff?" cried a joyous voice behind us, and Hermine, who had sprung from her seat, came running up, apparently to help her friend, but if this was her intention, she could not carry it out for laughing. She clapped her hands and laughed until her white teeth glittered between her red lips. "Pluto and Proserpine!" she cried. "Düffchen, Düffchen, I always said they would carry you off from me some day!"

And she danced about the wet deck in wild glee, just as she had danced with her little spaniel about the deck of the *Penguin* eight years before.

"Are you ever coming to me, you fellow?" cried the commerzienrath, who, squeezed into a corner, had watched my attentions to the governess with very ill-pleased looks.

"There are two ladies here yet," I said.

"But I called you first," he cried, stamping with impatience.

"Ladies must always be served first, Herr Commerzienrath," smilingly remarked the captain, who was coming aft from the forward deck.

"O, you can talk: you are used to this abominable cold," growled the commerzienrath.

I went below again, but not to stay long. The cry for warm plates had grown general, and a hard job I had of it to satisfy the impatient clamors from all quarters. The weather had in the mean time grown rougher, and the fog increased in density. I observed that the captain's jovial face grew graver and graver, and once I heard him say to a passenger who had the appearance of a seafaring man:

"If we were only well out of the cursed channel once. With this wind the largest ships can come in; and we can not see a hundred paces ahead."

I knew enough of seamanship fully to comprehend the captain's uneasiness; and I had another anxiety of my own besides.

My superior, namely, the engineer Weiergang, had visibly with every hour sunk deeper and deeper into meditation upon the felicities attending the copious indulgence in Swedish punch; and though he still mechanically stood at his post and performed his duties about the engine, where now, as the vessel was going steadily ahead, there was but little to do, I still did not leave the engine-room without considerable uneasiness. How easily might it happen that the narrowness of the channel should render a complicated manœuvre necessary, and was the nodding figure there in a condition to carry it out?

I had gone on deck with another plate, intended for no other than the blue-eyed, vivacious beauty. She had resumed her old place at the bow, and gave me a friendly nod as I approached.

"I give you a great deal of trouble," she said.

"No trouble at all," I answered, with a bow.

"Are you from Uselin?" she asked, while I arranged the plate.

"No," I muttered, about to take a hasty departure.

"But you speak our *Platt*," she said quickly, and looked sharply at me with a surprised expression.

I felt that the coating of soot on my cheeks must be very thick indeed to hide the flush which I felt burning in my cheeks.

"Ship in sight!" suddenly shouted the man at the foretop.

An immense dark mass loomed out of the gray fog. A feeling of terror, not for myself, seized me. I, too, shouted with my whole strength, "Ship in sight!" and following an impulse which flashed upon me like lightning, I bounded across the deck to the hatch leading to the engine-room, while the captain upon the paddle-box was shouting through his trumpet like mad--"Stop her! Back her!" an order which evidently was not obeyed, for the boat rushed through the water with undiminished speed.

How I got down the steep ladder I do not know. I only know that I flung the drunken engineer out of the way, pushed the lever to the other side, and simultaneously threw open the throttle-valve and let on the full head of steam.

A mighty shock followed, making the whole boat quiver as it struggled in the waves, produced by the reversed wheels. The push I had given him, and, perhaps still more the violent jar of the boat, had awakened the drunken engineer. In his confusion he rushed upon me like a madman to force me from my post, so that I defended myself against him with difficulty.

It was a terrible moment. Every instant I expected to feel the crash of the collision.

But a minute passed, and with it passed the danger, for I knew that by this time the collision must have taken place, if we had not escaped it: and now resounded through the speaking-trumpet the order, "Stop her!"

I placed the lever in the middle and closed the throttle-valve. My prompt execution of an order which he had plainly heard brought the engineer at once to his senses. Now for the first time he seemed to understand what I had kept shouting to him while we were struggling together; a deathly pallor overspread his bearded face, as some one came rapidly down the ladder.

"Don't ruin me," he murmured.

It was the captain, who wanted to see what upon earth was the matter below. Upon his good-natured honest face was still the trace of terror at the peril we had just escaped.

"What is the meaning of this, Weiergang?" he cried to the engineer.

"I was--I had--" he stammered.

"Seeing to the fire," I put in.

"And so--" he began again--

"We will look into this another time," said the captain, looking fixedly at the unfortunate man.

The captain knew his man. He saw that the man, whatever might have been his previous condition, was now thoroughly sober and fit for duty.

"We will look into it later," he repeated, and then turning to me, said:

"Come on deck with me."

I followed the captain, but not without first casting a glance at the engineer, whose meditations upon the effects of Swedish punch were now at an end, and who, in desperation at the frightful results of his indulgence, cast a supplicating look at me.

"What was the matter?" the captain asked me.

I held it my duty to tell him the whole truth, accompanying it with an entreaty that the man might be forgiven.

"He has always been the soberest fellow in the world," said the captain. "This is the first time he has ever behaved so."

"Then I trust it is the last time," I replied.

"I cannot comprehend it," said the captain. He spoke with me as if I was his equal.

"You have done me a great service," he continued. "Who are you? It seems to me I must have seen you before; and the ladies on deck have the same fancy."

"Never mind about that, captain," I said.

This brief dialogue took place while we were going up the ladder. The captain could not any further indulge the curiosity that had visibly seized him; he had too much to do.

My first glance, as I reached the deck, was involuntarily directed towards the ship which had so nearly been our destruction, and which now was disappearing in the fog astern of us; my next sought Hermine, who, with her maid, was busy recovering the governess, who had fainted. A sense of satisfaction, almost exultation, filled my breast. Thus might a general feel who has won a battle that he might have lost without disgrace.

The poor governess was not the only victim of the terror with which the frightfully imminent peril had filled the passengers of the *Elizabeth*. Here and there sat a lady with a face as white as that of a corpse; even the men looked pale and agitated, and were just beginning to talk over the occurrence. And, in fact, the situation must have been in the highest degree alarming. The approaching ship--a merchantman of the largest size--had been so negligently steered that the *Elizabeth*, though her engines were reversed and the full head of steam turned on, only escaped the collision by a few feet. Then the shock that shook the boat, the cracking and creaking of the planks, the crash of some half-dozen of the paddles that snapped at once--one did not need Fräulein Amalie Duff's susceptibility of nerves to be overwhelmed at such a moment.

Even now the state of things was not agreeable. The large steamer rolled in the heavy sea all

the more violently now the engine had been stopped, on account of the injury to the wheels. Happily the wind was favorable, and sail was quickly made, so that we were able to control her with the helm. All the spare hands were busy repairing the paddles as far as possible, and I had learned enough of the carpenter's craft to lend a hand at once. I was not sorry in this way to avoid the inquisitive eyes of Hermine, and of Fräulein Duff, who possessed the talent of recovering from a swoon as promptly as she had fallen into it, and was now engaged in a conversation with her pupil and friend, which it could scarcely be doubted had some reference to me.

"Look as much as you please," I said to myself "I am, in spite of all, no worse than many another upon whom you have cast or will cast your beautiful eyes."

And yet I was glad, as she seemed about to come over to the place where I was standing, that I could creep into the open paddle-box, where things looked queer enough. As there was a heavy sea running we were obliged to confine our repairs to the merest make-shift.

In an hour the work was done, and we were ordered to the forward deck, where the bowsprit of the passing ship had carried away a part of the bulwarks.

I congratulated myself, when I crept out of the paddle-box, that the deck was nearly deserted, and especially that Hermine was nowhere to be seen; but as I passed the fore-castle she suddenly appeared before me with her governess. The meeting was not accidental, for the duenna at once stepped back, but the young lady remained standing, and, looking up with her great blue eyes into mine, asked boldly:

"Are you George Hartwig, or are you not?"

"I am," I replied.

"How came you here? What are you doing here? Are you a sailor, or fireman, or what? And why? Can you do nothing better? Is this a fit place for you?"

These questions followed each other so rapidly that I contented myself with answering the last.

"Why not? It is no disgrace to be a fireman."

"But you look so--so black--so sooty--so frightful. I cannot bear such black men. You used to look much, very much better."

I did not know what to answer to this, so I merely shrugged my shoulders.

"You must come away from here!" said the young beauty, vivaciously. "This is no place for you."

"And yet it was very well that I was here to-day," I said with a touch of pride, of which I felt ashamed as soon as I had said it.

"I know it," she answered. "The captain told us. It is like you; but for that very reason you should not stay here. You are destined to something better than this."

"I thank you, Fräulein Hermine, for your kind interest," I answered gravely; "but what I am destined to, the result must show. In the mean time I must pursue my way, wherever it leads me."

She looked at me partly in displeasure, and partly, as it seemed to me, with compassion, and added quickly:

"You are poor: perhaps that is the reason you are here and look so--so--not nice. My father must help you: he is very rich."

"I know it, my dear young lady," I replied: "but just for that reason I do not desire his help."

A bright glow suffused her cheeks; her blue eyes flashed, and her red lips quivered.

"Then I will detain you no further."

She turned quickly from me and hastened away.

I was still standing in the same place, when Fräulein Duff came suddenly from behind the corner of the fore-castle, where she had been an attentive if an invisible witness of our interview. Her watery eyes, in which sympathetic tears were now standing, were raised to mine, and she whispered in her softest tones, "Seek faithfully, and you will find!" Then prudently avoiding a reply on my part, she hurried after her young lady.

An hour later we touched at the wharf of St. ----.

I was below in the engine-room, where there was now enough to do, to my great satisfaction. I

heard the noises upon deck, as the passengers hastened to leave the ship on board which they had passed so unpleasant a time. She also was leaving it--perhaps at this moment. It was very improbable that I should ever see her again. Why should I, indeed?

The question seemed a matter of course, and yet I sighed as I asked it of myself.

My leave-taking of the engineer was brief, but not unfriendly. He had already told me that he had "made it all right with the captain." He seemed at bottom a worthy man, and I parted from him with a mind at ease.

I had hoped to slip away from the boat unperceived, but the captain called to me as I was crossing the deck with my bundle. He told me that he had learned that I was the son of the late Customs-Accountant Hartwig in Uselin, whom he had known well. He had also heard of my misfortunes, but they were no affair of his. I had this day done the owners, and himself personally, an important service, and it was his duty to thank me for it, and to ask me if his owners and himself could not in some way testify their gratitude.

I said, "Yes; you can if you will take something more than common care of the man whose place I have filled today, and who would have done what I did had he been here."

The captain saw that it was no use to press me further; so he promised faithfully to comply with my request, and shook my hand heartily, saying that it would give him the greatest pleasure to meet me again.

This had occupied some time, and yet a carriage and horses, which I had noticed on the arrival of the steamer, were still standing on the wharf. Just as I approached them, however, they started off; but I caught a glimpse of a youthful face in a swan's-down hood vanishing from the window, from which it had been looking at something or some one on the wharf.

The luxurious carriage rolled away, and I gazed after it with a sigh. Not that I coveted the carriage with the two high-mettled bays. The distance from St. --- to the capital was more than eighty miles, it was true, and I was obliged to economize the little sum I had saved up in the prison: but I knew that I could walk without much fatigue twenty-five or thirty miles a day, and I felt fresher and stronger than ever. It was therefore scarcely the carriage with the mettled bays for which my sighing heart was yearning.

CHAPTER XIX.

I had travelled during the day a long distance upon an interminable turnpike-road where the rows of poplars on each side stretched away until they met at the horizon in an acute angle which never widened, never came nearer, and whose unattainability was enough to drive the most patient traveller to desperation. The autumn rains had made the roads heavy and slippery to the feet. All the morning the wind had rustled with a melancholy sound in the half-leafless poplars, and about noon it had commenced to rain, and wet and dreary looked the sandy heaths and desolate fields on either side the road, while every human creature and every animal that I met wore a cheerless and dejected aspect. I had already given up the expectation of reaching the city that evening, so I felt it as an un hoped-for piece of good fortune when I saw a reddish-yellow glare of misty light rising above the horizon, which a solitary wanderer whom I had overtaken explained to be the reflection of the city-lights. And now indeed my enemies, the poplars, began to give place to suburban houses. The suburb was long enough, it is true, but houses can not hold out as long as poplars; and--"There is the gate," said at last my companion, and bade me good evening.

There was the gate. It was by no means imposing, and did not attract much attention from me. This, however, was excited by an accumulation of buildings immediately, to the left of the gate, which by their size, and the ruddy light shining through colossal windows, I inferred to belong to a large manufactory. A high iron railing divided the courtyard from the street, and in this railing was a wide gate, one side of which was standing open for the egress of the workmen, who were coming out, first one by one, then in groups, and finally in a compact throng. Outside the gate, they scattered in various directions, while some remained in groups about the gate, talking with animation. I heard the words "day's wages," "piece work," "quitting service," "notification," frequently repeated; but I could not catch the connection, and did not feel at liberty to ask any questions. Nearer to the railing, with her back toward me, was standing a young woman holding in front of her a little boy, who stood upon the stone foundation of the railing and held fast to the bars, gazing eagerly into the yard, down which dark figures were still coming, though in fewer numbers.

"What factory is this?" I asked, stepping up to the young woman.

She turned her head and answered, "The machine-works of Commerzienrath Streber. Keep still, George; your father will be along directly."

The feeble light of a street-lamp fell upon her pretty round face. The commerzienrath's machine-works--George, whose father was coming directly--the good-natured bright eyes--the full, red lips--I could not be mistaken.

"Christel Möwe!" I said; "Christel Pinnow! is this really you?"

"Bless my heart alive!" exclaimed the young woman, hastily putting down the child from the railing; "is it you, Herr George? See, George, this is your godfather;" and she held up the boy as high as she could, that he might have a better view of so important a personage, "How glad Klaus will be!"

She put the boy down again, who no sooner felt himself at liberty than he began to try his best to climb up to the railing again. I took him in my arms. "Are you a giant?" asked the little man, patting my head with his hands.

At this moment a square-built, grimy figure came up, apparently rather surprised to see his wife in such familiar conversation with a strange man, who had moreover his George in his arms; but before either Christel or I could say a word he tore his black felt cap from his head, waved it in the air like a conquering banner, and shouted, "Hurrah! here he is! George has come!"

It was long since any human lungs had emitted a cry of joy on my account, and it was probably owing to this novelty that at the good Klaus's exuberant greeting my eyes filled with tears, so that the whole scene--the factory, the houses, the street-lamps, the passing carriages, the black workmen, and even the little group of friends at my side--swam for a moment in a misty veil.

This emotion passed in a few moments, and we went on together, Klaus holding the little George on one arm, and clinging to the great George with the other, while Christel walked before, every instant looking over her shoulder at us with a smiling face.

Happily the distance through the crowded street was not long, and we soon reached a large and, to my eyes, stately house, the inside of which corresponded but poorly to its exterior. The hall was dimly lighted, and the floors black with dirt from innumerable footsteps that seemed to have traversed it the same day. The yard into which we passed was surrounded by lofty buildings, behind whose windows, feebly lighted here and there, there did not prevail that peace which a lover of quiet would have preferred. The stone staircase which we ascended to one of these rear-buildings was very steep, and, if possible, worse lighted and dirtier than the hall we had just entered. Persons passed us at every moment, who seemed far more reckless of the rules of politeness than was pleasant. I felt rather uncomfortable as we climbed from one landing to another, following Klaus, who gave no signs of halting, and at last in desperation I asked if we would not soon be there.

"Here we are!" said Klaus, knocking at a door, which was immediately opened from within, and from which, as it was opened, issued that penetrating odor which arises in an apartment where all day long the process of ironing freshly-starched linen is kept up. Any illusion as to the origin of this odor was the less possible, as the irons were at this moment in operation in the hands of two young women, who, as well as the third who had opened the door for us, cast glances of curiosity at the new arrival.

"So it goes on the whole day," said Klaus, with a glance of profoundest admiration at his wife, who had joined the ironers; "the whole day--only in the evening she allows herself a quarter of an hour to fetch me home from the works."

"You are a lucky fellow, Klaus," said I, in vain trying to draw a full breath in this atmosphere.

"Am I not?" replied Klaus, showing all his teeth, which had lost nothing of their glittering whiteness; "but that is not much yet. You must first see her babies!"

"And yours, Klaus?"

"And mine, of course," Klaus answered, in a tone which implied that it really was not worth while to allude to so unimportant a particular. "You must first see them!"

"I know one already."

"Yes; but the others! Her very image, every one! It is really ridiculous--really ridiculous," he repeated, with another glance of admiration at his little plump wife.

"You don't know what you are talking about, you stupid fellow," said the latter, turning sharply around, and laying a hand that bore traces of hard work, and yet was both white and small, on the mouth of her Klaus. "Let us go into the sitting-room. You must excuse me for keeping you here so long."

We went into the room, but Klaus did not rest until his wife had taken us into the chamber,

where, beside two large beds, stood four little cribs, in which were sleeping four charming children, for my little namesake had by this time been put to bed by one of the young women.

"Isn't that too lovely!" said Klaus, drawing me from one blond head to another; "and all boys--all boys; but that just suits me: a girl I should expect to be exactly like *her*, and that is a simple impossibility--a simple impossibility."

Here Christel pushed me out of the bedroom, as she had before pushed me out of the kitchen.

"You stay here," she said to her husband, "and wash yourself, and fix yourself up decent, you great bear, as you ought when we have such a visitor."

Klaus showed his teeth with delight at his Christel's jest.

"Whatever I do, pleases him," said Christel, shutting the door with mock-disgust at his black face.

"Better that than if it were the other way," I said.

"Yes: but sometimes he carries it too far. I often am ashamed, and wonder what people think of it. And he gets worse every year; I really don't know what I shall do when the children are older; I often think they will lose all respect for their father."

While Christel thus unbosomed her secret woe, she was neatly and deftly setting the table, while I, standing before the stove, in which a cheerful fire was burning, thought of by-gone times: of that evening when I met the Wild Zehren first at Pinnow's forge, and how Christel had set the table and waited, and how she afterwards besought me not to go with him. Had I then followed her counsel! All would have been different. Perhaps better, perhaps not. But so it had happened, and---

"You must put up with what we have," said Christel.

"That I will, Christel, that I will!" I said, seizing both her hands and pressing them with a warmth which seemed a little to startle her.

"How wild you are still," she said, looking up at me with her blue eyes in surprise, but with no mixture of displeasure. "Exactly as you used to be."

"You don't like me any the less on that account, Christel, do you?"

She shook her head smiling: "Those used to be lively times."

"In winter, over the mulled wine," I said.

"And in summer, over the *kaltschale*," she replied.

"Especially when the old man was not at home," I added.

"Yes, indeed," she said; but her countenance took a serious expression, and she continued, looking at me gravely, "you know it then?"

"Know what, Christel?"

"That he----"

She laid her finger upon her lips and drew me, with an uneasy look at the chamber-door, further back into the room.

"He must not hear it--he has not got over it yet, though it is now more than three months ago."

"What was three months ago, Christel?" I asked in some alarm, for the young woman had turned quite pale, and cast uneasy glances first at me and then at the bed-room door.

"I hardly know how to tell you," she said. "He lived at last entirely alone, for no one would have anything to do with him, and even the deaf and dumb Jacob left him. Nobody knew exactly how he lived; and for a week no one had seen him, until one day the collector came for the house-tax, and--and found him hanging in the forge, over the hearth, where he must have been hanging nobody knows how long."

"Poor Klaus!" I said. "He must have felt it deeply, in spite of all."

"Indeed he did," said Christel. "And no one knows how he came to his death; whether he did it himself, or whether it was done by others; for they swore--at that time, you know--that they would settle with him one day."

"Very likely, very likely," I said.

"Here I am again," said Klaus, coming in in his best coat, and with a face as red as cold water, black soap, and a coarse towel, all applied in haste, could make it.

The supper, at which Christel's young assistants joined us, was soon over, and after the cloth had been removed, the girls dismissed, and Christel had mixed us a glass of grog, for which she had not forgotten her old recipe, Klaus and I fell into such discourse as naturally arises between old friends who have not seen each other for many years, and have gone through many experiences in the interval. I had to narrate to Klaus the story of my imprisonment from that time in the first year when he paid me that memorable visit, which was within a hair of bringing him into contact with the criminal law. Not that I could tell him, or even desired to tell him, everything, good fellow as he was. We do not admit our friends, even the most intimate, behind the inmost of the seven walls with which we prudently surround the citadel of our soul; but enough came to discourse to arouse the interest of the good Klaus to the highest pitch, and quite passionate was his sympathy when I came to speak of the last period of my imprisonment, when I fell into the hands of the new superintendent and his accomplice, the pious Deacon Von Krossow, and in seven worse than lean months had to expiate the seven years of fatness which I had hitherto enjoyed.

"The wretches! The villains! Is it possible? Are such things allowed?" the good Klaus kept muttering.

"Whether it is allowed or not, my dear Klaus, I cannot say; but that it is possible is only too certain. Under the most frivolous pretexts in the world I was deprived of my place as secretary, and treated as an unusually ill-disposed and contumacious prisoner; and as all that did not satisfy their vengeance, I was ordered seven months of disciplinary punishment beside."

"And what did the good old overseer whom I saw with you that day say to that?"

"Sergeant Süssmilch? He would have sworn terribly, I promise you, if he had seen it. Fortunately, he went away with the family of Herr von Zehren a week after the death of the latter."

"I would never have done that," said Klaus with emphasis; "I would never have left you alone in their robber-den."

"But he had other claims upon him, of longer standing, Klaus."

"All the same: I would not have left you."

Then I told how I had been discharged at last, how my first visit had been to my native town, and the reception I met with there.

"Poor George! poor George!" said Klaus, over and over again, shaking his big head in sympathy.

"But you have had a harder trial still, poor fellow," I said.

"Who told you that?" asked Klaus, quickly.

"She did," I answered, pointing to the room in which Christel had been for the last five minutes busied in a vain attempt to quiet the wails of her youngest.

"Hush," said Klaus, "we must not speak of it so that she can hear; it is different with us men, but a little woman like that--it always has a dreadful effect upon her, poor thing: I am frightened whenever any legal paper comes in about the adjustment of the estate--you understand."

"Your father left a very respectable sum, did he not?"

"God forbid," said Klaus. "They must have robbed him, or else he buried it; and either is very possible, for at last he did not trust in any human creature, and had little reason to, God knows. And he always had a secret way in everything. Just think; we believed that Christel had floated to land, as naked and destitute as a fish flung up by the tide, without the least possibility of discovering the name of the ship in which she was wrecked, much less her own. And what does she find in the great cupboard, opposite the door, you know, but a bundle of papers in a tin case, which evidently belonged to the same ship; these papers were the captain's, and his name is written in them, with the name of the ship, and how he was married, and that his young wife had given birth to a child at sea; and there was a slip of paper besides, saying that the ship could not now be saved, and that it was impossible to save their lives, so he would fasten the child and the papers, which he had put in a tin case, to a piece of cork, and trust them to the sea and to God's mercy. So there is no doubt that my Christel is this child of the Dutch captain, whose name was Tromp--Peter Tromp, and his ship *The Prince of Orange*, and he was on his way home from Java. But I am not the least surprised at it all," Klaus concluded; "I should not be surprised if I she had turned out to be the daughter of the Emperor of Morocco---"

"And had come down from the sky in a chariot drawn by twelve peacocks," I said.

"No; not even then," replied Klaus, with immense emphasis, after a moment's reflection.

"And what have you done with the papers?" I inquired, with a smile.

"I have had them translated; nothing else."

"But that is not right," I said. "The papers might possibly lead to the discovery of a rich uncle, or something of the sort. Such things have happened before, Klaus."

"That is just what Doctor Snellius says."

"Who says?" I asked in astonishment.

"Doctor Snellius," Klaus repeated. "Your old friend in the prison. He is now the physician to the factory: did he never write to tell you?"

"No; or else the letter was intercepted, which is very possible. So he is your doctor, eh?--the doctor of the factory, I mean."

"Well, yes; I call him so, because he is always sent for when anything happens; but in truth he is, I believe, the doctor of all the poor in this part of the city."

"He must have a heavy practice, then."

"Heaven knows he has; but he will never grow rich with it, for he never takes a penny unless they can well spare it, which is not often the case, and frequently he gives them medicine besides. Ah, he has a noble soul; though he always seems as if he were going to eat you up, and the children scream whenever he comes in the door."

"And he is your doctor too, then?"

"Oh yes, of course: that is, we have really only called him in once--the last time--very much against Christel's will, who insisted that---but that you will not understand; a married man's cares, you know; and she was quite right, as it happened----"

"As always, Klaus."

"As always."

"And why do you not make some investigations about those papers?"

Klaus scratched his ear.

"Well, I don't know," he said. "We feel somehow--we are living so happily now, and I always think things can not be better; more likely worse. If she really had a rich aunt--we always suppose it is an aunt--and she should leave her property to Christel, what in the world should we do with all the money? I can't think, for my part."

"Suppose, for example, you lent it to me: I should know what to do with it."

"Yes, that is true," cried Klaus, "I never thought of that. That would be something for you, sure enough. To-morrow morning I will advertise in all the papers: I'll bring the aunt if she lives a hundred thousand miles off."

"But suppose it is an uncle?"

"No, no, it is an aunt," said Klaus, with an air of assurance.

"So be it!" said I, arising. "And now let us take a little walk. I must take a look at my new home."

There is probably no time in the twenty-four hours better fitted to impress a provincial with the greatness of a large city than the twilight of a gloomy autumn evening. In men of any liveliness of imagination the reality usually falls short of the fancy, but in an hour like this the reality and the fancy--what we perceive and what we imagine--blend indistinguishably together, and the barriers of the actual world seem broken down.

Such an evening was it when I strolled with Klaus through the streets of the city, which seemed enormous and gigantic in my eyes. Even now I can sometimes in the evening, and for a moment, behold it in the same light and with the same feelings as then. Coming from a region inhabited by workmen, we crossed in our walk one of the most brilliant quarters to reach the city proper, and returned through large squares, surrounded by magnificent palaces, to our own gloomy region again. And everywhere was the throng of hurrying crowds on the narrow sidewalks, and the rattle and thunder of vehicles, and the endless rows of lamps up and down the interminable streets, and the blaze of light from the shops illuminating the streets so that the figures of men, wagons and horses were strangely reflected from the wet pavement. Then the imposing masses of tall buildings, rising above one another like mountains; the sight here of a bronze equestrian statue upon a pedestal, high as a house, riding aloft through the night, and then of a giant figure pointing down at us with a drawn sword; wide bridges with balustrades peopled with white marble forms, and under whose arches rolled a black flood upon which quivered the reflections of a thousand lights; a glance into the shops where to uninitiated eyes the treasures of Arabia and the Indies seemed heaped up by fairy hands; dark yards, where, late as it was, mighty casks and chests were being piled by leather-aproned men--I walked, and stopped to gaze, and went on, and stopped again, staring, astonished, but not confounded, and

altogether strangely happy. Was this the sea of ever-rolling life, engulfing itself and ever producing itself anew, towards which my teacher's prophecy had directed me--the sea whose mighty billows, if he had foreseen truly, where to be my home? Yes: this it was: this it must be. I felt it in the courageous beatings of my heart, in the power with which I clove this surge of men, in the delight with which I listened to the roar of this surf.

PART THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

In the machine-works of the commerzienrath a great boiler was being riveted. Three sooty workmen, with shirt-sleeves rolled above the elbows, and hammers in their strong hands, were waiting for the red-hot bolt which a fourth was bringing in the jaws of a pair of pincers from an adjacent forge. The bolt vanished into the boiler, and appeared in a few seconds through the rivet-hole; the cyclops grasped their hammers firmly, and, striking in measured cadence, finished the rivet-head. This hammering produced a tremendous noise.

And if any one had told a spectator, uninitiated to the craft, that in the hollow of the boiler upon which the heavy hammers fell with such deafening clangor, there lay a man upon his back who received the rivet in a pair of pincers, and with these exerted all his strength in resistance, while the hammers were ringing on the rivet-head, the uninitiated spectator would scarce have believed it, and he could not fail to consider the man in the hollow of the boiler as one of the most miserable and most to be pitied of mortals.

The riveting was finished, the hammers at rest; the man with the pincers crawled out of the belly of the monster. I need scarcely tell the reader who this man with the pincers was. Nor am I ashamed thus to appear before him, for he has very likely seen me in similar costume, though it is true that at this moment I present a rather frightful appearance. The lower part of my face, my neck and breast, are covered with blood, which during the last hour has been running from my nose and mouth. But the three with the hammers only laugh; and one, the foreman, says:

"Next time remember to keep your mouth open, comrade, no roast pigeons will fly into it."

Rather a poor joke, it must be owned; but the rest laugh, and I laugh too: for as the prudent proverb advises us to "howl with the wolves," so I have rarely been able to refrain from joining in any laughter, even when, as at present, it was at my own expense.

But despite the ardent zeal with which I entered into my new calling, I was not sorry that this work inside the boiler was but a temporary task, for which the foreman of my shop had lent me because another shop happened to be shorthanded, very unwillingly, and only at the order of the foreman of the works. To say that he did it very unwillingly sounds like a brag from one who like myself had only been a fortnight in the shop, and whose only work yet had been of the roughest sort, such as handling the sledge. Nor was it any merit of mine that the heavy sledge which others handled with difficulty was as light in my hands as an ordinary fore-hammer, and that my blow could easily be distinguished among the four or five that followed in regular cadence the foreman's stroke upon the glowing iron. It was no merit of mine; and yet in this place, where bodily strength played so important a part, it counted as a high one, even the highest. My foreman was proud of me; my fellow-workmen, in the most literal sense, looked up to me with admiration; and Klaus, whenever my name happened to be mentioned, showed all his white teeth, then shut his lips tight, held up his forefinger, and nodded mysteriously. I had strictly forbidden Klaus to indulge in these mysterious gestures, and Klaus had solemnly promised to avoid them, but in spite of all it was not his fault if all the two hundred hands in the establishment did not have the same exalted opinion of me with which his honest soul was overflowing.

"I declare," said Klaus--whenever I imparted to him some bit of information from my

theoretical knowledge of machinery, or from my mathematical acquirements--"you know more about these things than any man in the works, the head-foreman and the engineers not excepted, and you deserve to be at least Chief of the Technical Bureau."

"You are a simpleton, Klaus," I said.

"But it is true, for all," answered he doggedly.

"No, Klaus, it is not true. In the first place, you far over-estimate my knowledge, and in the second place, one can be a very good theorist and at the same time a wretched bungler in practice. But I want to be both a good theorist and a skilful workman, and I must give many a stroke of hammer and of file before I get to be that. Just remember, Klaus, what a time it took you to rise from the common job-workman, who was glad if he could dress his round pliers decently, to the skilful machinist who can fit the straps on a connecting-rod as well as the best--"

"Yes," said Klaus, "but then you and I----"

"Forging is done everywhere at a fire, Klaus, and every piece must be hammered until it is finished; and so must a good machinist until he is finished; and there is much to be done before I can say that of myself, if I ever can."

"I am of a different opinion, then," answered the obstinate Klaus.

"Then be so good as to keep that opinion to yourself," I said, very earnestly.

I had good reasons for enjoining the honest Klaus to a silence which was so burdensome to him; for, beside the fact that he really had a ridiculously exaggerated opinion of me, his imprudence might be of serious inconvenience to me, and indeed might close against me the way which I was firmly resolved to tread. I wished to work my way up from the ranks in the calling to which I had devoted my life, remembering the saying of my never-to-be-forgotten teacher, that the true artist must understand the hand-work of his art. So for the present I was what I desired to be--a hand-worker, a laborer in the roughest work--and every one took me for just that, which was precisely what I wished.

My past history I had veiled under a simple story, which found ready belief with the simple fellows around me. I was the son of a seafaring man in Klaus Pinnow's native town. We had known each other from our boyhood; I had made up my mind to be a smith like him, and had worked awhile as an apprentice with his father. But ten years ago I had gone to sea, and had voyaged about the whole world as sailor, as ship's-carpenter, and, as ship's-blacksmith, and only returned home a short time before with the determination of quitting the sea for the future, and earning an honest living on land, for which purpose I was now learning the smith's craft regularly, which I had practiced as an apprentice.

I was seldom under the necessity of corroborating this story by accounts of my past adventures; and if now and then, when we were off work, some one more curious than the rest spoke of my travels, I understood enough of navigation and voyages, and had mixed too much with captains and mates, and read too many tales of the sea, not to be able to play the part of Sindbad for half an hour. One of my principal stories, the scene of which was laid somewhere in the Malay Archipelago, in which there was plenty of hot work and plenty of pirates knocked in the head, had procured me in the shop the nickname of "The Malay," which I bore until--but I must not anticipate.

I was all the more readily believed to be what I gave myself out for, as I conformed my habits exactly to those of the common workman. I was dressed neither better nor worse than the rest; I ate my breakfast from my hand, as did the others; I dined at a cheap cook-shop, in which some fifty other workmen took their dinners. The only luxury which I allowed myself out of the little money which I had brought from the prison was a better lodging than workmen of my class were accustomed to or could afford; and this deviation from the rule was due as much to necessity as to any consideration of comfort or taste. I could not, if I wished to prosecute my theoretical studies, live in a quarter where the streets were noisy until deep in the night with the rattling of vehicles, and too often with the uproar of drunken workmen in conflict with the police, and where, in the overcrowded houses, the ticking, pulsating, clattering clock of human life never stood still a moment.

For several days, during which I was Klaus's guest, I had looked about for a suitable lodging; and at last I found one.

Adjoining the factory was a large lot of ground, which was covered in the most singular way with buildings, some half-finished and others only commenced. According to the account of the old man who, in a half-finished porter's lodge, exercised a sort of guardianship over the place, the whole had been intended as an establishment to compete with Streber's. But the projector of the scheme had failed, the property was put up at auction and bought in by a wealthy creditor, who thought the best thing he could do with it for the present was to leave all things as they were.

"You see," said the old man, "he hopes that in two or three years the ground will be worth three times as much as it now is; and perhaps also that the commerzienrath must of necessity take the thing off his hands at any price, since it is of the utmost importance to him to keep a

rival from starting up, so to speak, under his very nose. And then the commerzienrath has to put up new buildings, for they are so crowded they can hardly work, and where is he to build if not just on these lots? But he thinks it over, and my employer thinks it over, and now they have both been thinking it over for these two years. Recently he has been here again and looked over the place for the twentieth or fiftieth time, I believe; but it did not seem that he had come to any determination. Well, it is all one to me; and if you, sir, would like one of the rooms in the garden-house, your beard may be grown two inches longer before you have to move out."

The satirical old porter pleased me well, and the garden-house still better. True it was a mere boast when the man spoke of "one of the rooms," while in reality it had but one in which a human being could possibly live, while the others, without doors or windows, seemed rather to be a caravanserai for homeless cats: an appearance which I found afterwards to be fully borne out by the facts. The little house, which was probably originally intended for the residence of the owner or manager, was planned in a very pleasing Italian style. An easy flight of stairs led to the rooms referred to, in which, to judge from the spots of ink on the unscrubbed floors, and several three-legged drawing-tables, and other similar bits of ruinous furniture, the architect of the building must have had his office; on the other side was a balcony. In front of the stairs a grass-plot had been designed, but at present it was only a plot without the grass; and similarly a great free-stone basin in the centre lacked the Triton and the water; and the trellis, which ran up between the windows, as high up as the projecting eaves, lacked its Venetian ivy. But I cared nothing for these deficiencies; on the contrary I regarded them as pointing to a better future, and they harmonized thus with my own frame of mind, which also looked from a barren present to richer and fairer days to come. Then this ruinous lodging had the real practical advantage of suitable cheapness, and also that of securing me the quiet which was so necessary to my studies; and, to tell the whole, the old man had told me that the young lady who had accompanied the commerzienrath, and must have been the old gentleman's daughter, had clapped her hands when she saw the garden-house, and said it was charming, and she would like to live in it.

"She'd soon get out of that notion," said the old growler. "She did not look as if the owl was her house-builder, and Skinflint her cook; but for one of our--I mean of your--sort, it will suit very well."

"It suits me exactly," I said; "and now, when can I move in?"

"When you please; no one has been before you, so you will not have to wait for the tenant to move out."

So on the same evening I took possession of my new lodging, with the assistance of the good Klaus, whose head scarcely stopped shaking the whole time.

What did I want with such a tumble-down old ruin, where I might be murdered and not a dog bark? And how could I fancy such furniture: two worm-eaten high-backed chairs, an arm-chair about a hundred years old, a table with clumsy twisted legs, and a looking-glass with tarnished gilt frame? To be sure, I had bought the rubbish cheap enough of a dealer in second-hand furniture, but for very little more he would have given me things of a very different sort; but somehow I had always had a strange sort of taste in those matters, and he remembered that I used to have a lot of just such useless rubbish in my own room in my father's house in Uselin.

So the good Klaus grumbled and scolded, and even Christel was seriously out of humor with me for some days. She had discovered a room in her own house, on the courtside, up two pair of stairs, beautifully furnished, and having only the inconvenience that to get to it one had to go through the kitchen and the landlady's room. And the landlady was a particularly respectable tailor's widow of eighty-two, with an excellent unmarried daughter of sixty, who would certainly have taken the very best care of me.

The honest Klaus and the good Christel! I could not help them; I could not for their sakes change my nature, to which this striving for freedom and independence was an absolute necessity. In my garret in my father's house, in my room at Castle Zehrendorf, even in my prison cell, I had ever felt too deeply the luxury and poetry of solitude to be able to dispense with it now that I was a man.

And now again I was alone in my room in the half-finished garden-house, among the ruins of buildings, large and small, that never would be completed. In the evening, when I looked up from my books, no sound reached me but the hollow unceasing rumble of vehicles, like the distant roll of the sea, or the bark of the shaggy poodle that by day kept the old man company in the porter's lodge, and in the evening and all night long traversed the spaces between the ruins and the ruins themselves, in, as it seemed to me, an interminable hunt after cats.

And when occasionally, to cool my heated head, I stepped out upon the balcony, all again was deserted, vacant, and dark around, only here and there the light of a solitary lamp, and sometimes a red pillar of flame which rose from one of the furnace-chimneys of our works into the night sky, and reddened the edges of the dark clouds which a sharp November wind drove before it. Then, when I returned to my room, how cheerful looked my modest lamp, before which lay open my book with figures and formulas; how cosily the old carved oak furniture, which had so moved the spleen of the good Klaus; and above all, with what pleasure I contemplated the two small antique vases of terracotta upon the mantel-piece, and the beautiful copy of the Sistine

Madonna, which hung on the wall facing my worktable. The picture and the vases had been taken from my cell when the new superintendent came, but upon my release I had demanded them with so fixed a determination that they did not venture to withhold them: so I had packed them carefully in a box and placed them in the hands of a person whom I could trust, to be forwarded to me whenever I should have fixed myself somewhere. This very day they had arrived, and to-night, for the first time, again I enjoyed the pleasure of gazing at them.

And while I contemplated these precious relics I reproached myself earnestly that I had never prevailed upon myself to visit or give any token of my existence to the dearest friend I had in the world, in the same city with whom I had now been living a fortnight. It seemed so entirely contrary to my nature not at once to obey the impulse of my heart, and that so urgent an impulse--not to hasten without delay to her with whom I had lived in closest friendship so many years of my life, and whose heart I was convinced beat as warmly for me as ever. We had not kept up a very lively correspondence during the year of our separation, but we had agreed when we parted that we would not write except upon some especial emergency, as anything like a correspondence carried on under the eyes of the new superintendent and Herr von Krossow seemed an impossibility. An emergency of this kind occurred, when the baseness of this well-matched pair procured me a seven months' addition to my term of incarceration: I wrote to her, simply acquainting her with the fact, and she answered with but a word: "Endure."

No, this was not the cause of my reluctance; and indeed it had but one, which I was unwilling to admit, even to myself I knew how the dearest, noblest girl had to work and to care for herself and for those dear to her. For a year it had been my dearest wish--indeed it often seemed to me the single aim and object of my life--to attain a position that would enable me to lift this load from her frail shoulders. And now, when she perhaps more than ever needed a friend, a supporter, I must appear before her in a condition in which, even if I needed no assistance myself, I was utterly unable to afford it to others. That might have been foreseen; as things were, it was inevitable, and yet---

But will she, then, will she ever accept my assistance? I interrupted the course of my thoughts as I paced up and down my room with my hands behind me, a habit I had caught from my father. Has she not given me a hundred proofs how jealous she is of her independence? And has she not given me especially to understand, even at our parting, that if she should require a support it should not be my arm?

I called to mind the last days that I had spent with Paula and her family. There were not many of them, for they had urged Frau von Zehren to make room for her husband's successor with an insistence that was really indecent. This successor, a major on half-pay, and a special pet of the pietistic president, had long waited for the place, and, so to speak, had been standing at the door. The brutality with which he took possession at once of the superintendent's house, without the least consideration for the bereaved family, was really unexampled. He had given the afflicted lady the alternative of removing with her family to one of the prison cells, which he magnanimously offered to have cleared out for their occupation, or of taking refuge in one of the wretched taverns of the town. Frau von Zehren, of course, had not hesitated a moment as to what was to be done; and thus within three days after the death of my benefactor all the old familiar faces had vanished from the house in which he had lived so long. All had gone. Doctor Snellius, in the very first hour in which he had the questionable honor of being presented to the new superintendent, spoke his mind to him in full; and when Doctor Snellius spoke his mind to any one whom he had reason to despise and abhor, you might rest assured that the individual addressed would not have the slightest ground to complain of any obscurity in the doctor's expressions.

Immediately upon his heel followed old Sergeant Süssmilch; and although the register of the old man's voice lay fully two octaves lower than the doctor's, yet the melody which both sang must have been the same; at all events the result in both cases was identical, namely, Major D. foamed with rage, then stamped with his feet, and ordered the insolent fellow to be put in the dungeon immediately. Happily, the old man had been prudent enough to ask for and to obtain his discharge before he thoroughly eased his heart to his new chief, who therefore, rage as he might, had no authority over the old man, and on Sergeant Süssmilch threats were thrown away.

How gladly would I have followed these enticing examples, and spoken my mind also to the new superintendent. Probably in my whole life I have never exercised such constraint over myself as in those days, when I saw this miserable creature occupying the place which that noble man had left; and in all likelihood I should not have succeeded, and should have plunged myself into far worse misfortune, had not a voice perpetually sounded in my ear which was more potent with me than the impulse of my heart. And this voice said: "You have already endured much, poor George; bear this also, though it be the hardest of all, and if you cannot control yourself, call to mind him who loved you as his own son."

I sat down to my book again and turned the leaves; but this night I could not fix my attention on even the simplest things. Old well-known algebraic formulas wore a quite strange appearance, and seemed to form themselves into the words: If he loved me as his son, and she was the best beloved of his children, should she and I not also love each other?

"Are you going to keep your light burning all night?" called the voice of the old watchman from below. "It is now one o'clock, and I am to wake you at five, and a nice job I will have of it!"

CHAPTER II.

In another shop of our establishment several men had been wounded, more or less dangerously, by the slipping of a belt. In our shop we had heard the news of the accident just before dinner, and the men were standing about the yard inquiring the particulars and talking it over. I had joined one of the groups, and was listening attentively, when I saw a little man pushing through the crowd, with his hat in his hand, and whose great bald skull emerging here and there between these dark figures resembled the full moon sailing through black clouds. This skull could only belong to one man. I hastened in pursuit, and overtook it by the gate at the moment when it was covered with a felt hat, which had not improved in appearance since I last saw it. I followed the felt hat a few steps in the street, and then with a stride placed myself beside its wearer.

"Permit me, doctor," I said.

Doctor Snellius brought his round spectacles to bear on me, and stared at me with a look of the profoundest astonishment.

"It is no hallucination, doctor," I said; "this is really myself."

"George, mammoth, man, how come you here, and in this questionable shape?" cried the doctor, holding out both his hands.

"Hush, doctor," I said, "I am here incognito, and must deny myself the pleasure of embracing you."

"Don't tell me you have run away, and that too after I expressly forbade you," said the doctor, in a low, anxious tone.

I set his mind at rest on this point.

"Heaven be thanked!" he said; "not forgetting also to thank me, or rather her. How did you find her?"

"I have not yet seen her, doctor."

"And you have been here two weeks? Shameful! incredible! Where is my lantern, that I may dash it to pieces, for now I give up forever the hope of finding a man. Go! I will never see you again."

"When shall I come to see you, doctor?"

"Whenever you will, or can: shall we say this evening? eh? A glass of grog in the old fashion, half-and-half, eh?"

And over a glass of grog, half-and-half in the old fashion. Doctor Snellius and I faced each other that very evening, in his more roomy lodging, and talked of by-gone times, of what we had gone through together, as two old friends talk who meet for the first time after long separation.

The doctor gave me a drastic description of his great scene with Major D., and how Herr von Krossow had come in, and how he had said that it was true that three made a college, but for the whole world he would not make a college with those two, and that he begged to take leave of them at once and forever. I answered, laughing, that I now could understand the vindictiveness with which I was persecuted by Herr von Krossow, whom I had never offended.

"You are mistaken, my dear fellow," said the doctor. "The reptile had other and better reasons for turning his fangs upon you. I can tell you now that there is no danger of your wringing the miscreant's neck. So now listen; but mix yourself a glass first--you will not get it down without a good swig. This it was: he had once before paid his court to her--to Paula von Zehren; and as he received one mitten, he thought he might venture to apply for the other. For this purpose he selected as the fittest time those days of grief and distraction immediately after her father's death, nor did he forget to remind her that the new superintendent was his good friend, and the president his cousin, and that through these two he held the fortunes of Paula and her family, so to speak, in his hands; for her mother's claim to a pension was, as she knew herself, open to dispute; but the thing could be managed; and although he had no property of his own, he had good connections, and by no means bad prospects, especially under the new king, who was in truth an anointed of the Lord. What do you think of that?" crowed Doctor Snellius, springing up and performing a grotesque dance through the room.

The doctor's statement filled me with astonishment and indignation. I had had no idea that the sanctimonious deacon had dared to raise his hypocritical eyes to Paula; and this suggested the thought that I might probably have been equally dim of sight in another quarter. I sank into a gloomy silence; but the doctor must have read my thoughts in my face through his great round spectacles.

"You are thinking that it cost her no great effort to dismiss the priest when her heart was already in the possession of the knight? I know we often spoke of it and made each other uneasy, but it was all nonsense, I assure you, all nonsense. Paula no more thinks of marrying the young Adonis than an old satyr like me."

The doctor gave me a side-glance at these words, and smiled sardonically as I involuntarily murmured a heart-felt "Thank heaven!"

"Don't rejoice too soon, though," he went on, and his smile grew ever more diabolic; "we must not praise the day before the evening, and you know my doctrine, that with men anything is possible. Arthur is really a most fascinating youth, and now he has worked himself into the diplomatic career, he may well die our Minister to London. It is the same trade, and that they understand--ah! don't they understand it? especially the old man, who really is a genius in the noble art. From his tailor, whom he cajoles until the man gives him credit again, up to the king, whom he without hesitation petitions for a subsidy that will enable him to pay his debts and push his Arthur in his new career, no man is safe from him--no man. I warn you button up your pockets when you meet the gentleman on the street."

"He lives here, then?"

"Of course, he lives here. The soil here is not so soon exhausted, and a great man like the Herr Steuerrath needs a wide field everywhere. Oh these brows, these brows of brass!"

"Why do we talk so much of such a crew?" I asked. "Rather tell me something about *her*. How does she live? How does she get on with her painting? Has she made great progress? And has she found sale for her pictures?"

"Made progress? Find sale?" cried the doctor. "Pretty questions, indeed! I tell you she is in a fair way to make her fortune. They fairly fight over her pictures."

"Doctor," I said, "I do not think this is a proper subject for jesting."

The doctor, who had spoken in his shrillest tones, tuned down his voice a couple of octaves by an energetic "ahem!" and said:

"You are right; but it is no jest--merely a lie. As I see, however, that I have not made any progress in the art of lying, it is probably best for me to tell you, or rather show you, the truth. Come with me."

He lighted two candles that stood under the looking-glass, and led me into an adjoining room, which he had first to unlock.

"I have put them here," he said, pointing to the wall, which was hung with large and small pictures, "because they are not safe from the boys anywhere else. Now what do you think of them?"

Taking the candles from the doctor, and letting the light fall upon the pictures, I saw at once that they were all by Paula's hand. I had too long watched her studies, and too deeply entered into her way of seeing and of reproducing what she saw, to be liable to any error.

There were three or four heads, all idealized, the originals of which I fancied that I recognized; two or three genre-pieces--scenes from the prison, which I had already seen in the first draught; and finally a landscape--a great reach of coast with stormy sea--the sketch of which I remembered perfectly. At this time I understood but little of painting, and least of all did I know how to justify my opinion when formed. Now I can say that I really perceived a decisive improvement in these pictures--an improvement both in the technical execution and in the freer and broader style of treatment: especially did the heads strike me as exhibiting remarkable power, and I enthusiastically expressed my opinion to the doctor in the best words I could find.

"Yes," said he, leaning his head first on one side and then on the other, and contemplating the pictures with melancholy pride, "you are right; perfectly right. She is a genius; but of what use is genius when it has no name? The world is stupid, my friend; incredibly stupid: it can discover anything grand or beautiful soon enough when the one or two enlightened heads that a century produces have given their testimony to it, one after the other; then the thing is an article of faith that the boys recite from their benches and the sparrows chatter upon the roofs. But when the gentlemen have to pass judgment upon the work of an author whose name they have never before heard, or the picture of an artist who comes before them for the first time, then they are at the end of their lesson and do not know what to think. How long would these pictures have travelled from one exhibition to another, or hung in the dealers' shops, if I had allowed them to hang there? So they have all travelled into my possession, and not to America, England, and Russia, as the good Paula believes. But do not look so seriously at me. My part of Mæcenas did

not last long; her last picture at the Artists' Exposition--you know it, and are in it yourself--Richard the Lion-heart sick in his tent, visited by an Arab physician: well, that picture, as I hear, has been bought by the commerzienrath--your commerzienrath--strange to say, for the man knows just as much about paintings as I do about making money, and Paula, by my advice, fixed its price at a considerable sum. You see I am now superfluous. *Sic tansit gloria!*"

The doctor sighed deeply, and then preceded me with the two candles in his hands, casting flickering lights upon his broad skull.

We took our seats again behind the glasses of grog. The doctor seemed disposed to drown the deep melancholy that had possessed him by doubting the strength of his potations, while I sat in deep meditation. The fact that the commerzienrath had bought Paula's picture set me to pondering. I knew of old how absolutely indifferent the man was to everything connected with art, and that the relationship had in any way moved him to the purchase was the unlikeliest thing in the world. It was therefore no very chimerical conclusion that the daughter had more to do in the affair than the father; and I confess that as I reckoned up the probabilities of this supposition the blood rushed to my cheeks. In fact the hypothesis stood or fell on a certain point, which was yet uncertain. I drew a long breath, took a deep draught from my glass, and asked:

"Has King Richard still any likeness----"

"To you, my most esteemed friend; to you? Do not vex yourself with any doubts on that score," answered Doctor Snellius with a promptness that seemed to indicate that our thoughts had met in the same point. "The only fault I have to find with it is just this, that Paula seems to have fancied that she had only to take you as you were, and there was a king ready made. Have the goodness not to take credit to yourself for what is merely her poverty of invention."

"I think I have not yet given you any reason to hold me exceptionally vain," I said.

"No; heaven knows you have not; you deserve rather to descend to posterity in the character of St. Simon Stylites than as Richard Cœur de Lion."

"You say that as bitterly as if you were seriously dissatisfied with me."

"And so I am, my good sir," cried the doctor. "What kind of a crochet is it to live by the labor of your hands, when you can live by your head? Do you know, sir, that our departed friend said to me, not long before his death, that you had the most remarkable talent for mathematics he had ever known, and that you could at any time take charge of the highest class in a public school? Do you suppose that your head grows acuter just in proportion as your hands grow coarser? You will say, like the tailor to Talleyrand, *il faut vivre*; and a journeyman blacksmith will make a living easier than a teacher of mathematics. Well, have you no friends that could help you? Why did you not come to me at once? Why did you leave it for chance to decide whether we should meet or not?"

I endeavored to calm his irritation, showing him that I had taken my present course, not from necessity but conviction; but he would not yield the point.

"Why did you take the trouble to make a virtue of necessity? Necessity was your adviser, necessity and your confounded pride to boot. You would have set out in quite another way, if you had had any capital to back you."

"But you see I have none, doctor."

"Don't you contradict me, you brainless mammoth! A friend who has capital that he places at our disposal is a capital of our own. I am your friend, I have capital, and I place it at your disposal. Who knows if in this I do not accomplish a work more pleasing to heaven than if I followed my old father's wishes and employed it in assisting orphan asylums and other such childish undertakings. You are an orphan; so in helping you I follow the words if not the intention of that pious man, and shall be perfectly easy in conscience on that score."

"But I shall not," I replied, laughing.

"Don't laugh, you monster!" cried the doctor. "You don't seem to comprehend that my proposition is perfectly serious. Take my money--there are fifty thousand *thalers*, or thereabouts--go into partnership with the commerzienrath; or better, found a rival establishment, and hoist him out of his saddle: in a few years you will be the first manufacturer and machinist of Germany, and----"

While the doctor thus spoke in feverish excitement the blood had rushed to his head in a really alarming manner. He suddenly checked himself, and it was not until long after that I learned what it was that required such an effort to suppress. It may be that my head, in consequence of my long sitting behind the grog, was by no means perfectly clear; at all events only thus can I explain the obstinacy with which I still contradicted the doctor and maintained that my sense of independence would never allow me to use the capital and assistance of another as the foundation of my fortune.

"Do you know what you are proclaiming in this?" cried the doctor in his shrillest tones, and

wrathfully smiting the table--"that you will remain a beggar, a miserable beggarly fellow, as every one has done who was fool enough to try to drag himself out of the swamp by his own hair? No, no, my good sir; the art is to let others work for you. Whoever does not understand this, is and remains a beggar."

"What would our best friend have said if he had heard you talk thus?"

"Has he not in life and death proven the truth of it?" crowed the pugnacious doctor. "Do you call it living as a reasonable man, to leave the dearest we have on earth in poverty at our death? And what are the great results of all his long, self-sacrificing, heroic labor for the general good? He fancied, this high-priest of humanity, that his example would suffice to bring about an entire reform of the prison system. And now an old pedant of a king has but to shut his sleepy eyes, and the foundation of his edifice gives way; and as soon as he himself commits the folly of dying, it falls to ruin like a house of cards. If that be not folly I do not know how loud the bells must jingle."

"I know somebody whose cap is quite as well furnished," I said, looking the doctor full in the eyes. "What do you call a man who--as the only son of a rich old father who loves the son and lets him follow his own course, even though he does not comprehend it, with the certain prospect of a considerable inheritance--performs for years the laborious work of a prison-surgeon for the most trivial pay; who, after he has come into the possession of this estate, continues to labor as the physician of the poorest of the poor, and finally, because the weight of his wealth is too burdensome, throws it into the lap of the first man he meets, to die the same irreclaimable beggarly fellow that he has lived?"

"Did I ever pretend to be anything else?" asked my antagonist, not without some mark of confusion. "Oh yes, as if it were only the simplest thing in the world to be a child of prudence. To produce that result requires generations, for shrewdness must be bred in families, like the long legs of race-horses. Take the *Commerzienrath*, who is a classic example how shrewdness grows and thrives when it is once properly grafted on a family stock: the man's grandfather was a needleman, who kept a little shop by the harbor-gate in S.; my own grandfather knew him well. He was a disreputable old fellow, who sold nails and needles in his front shop, and lent money on pawns in the back room. Then came his son, who was at least a head above his father, and could read and write, and calculate much better than the old man. He settled in your town and bought shares of ships, and finally whole ships, and paved the way for his son, who is the biggest of the lot. His flourishing period came in Napoleon's time. Napoleon and the blockade and the smuggling business made a rich man of him. Yes, smuggling--the same smuggling that cost your friend his life. When the Herr *Commerzienrath* was a smuggler, smuggling was a kind of patriotic work, and the poor devils who risked and lost their lives at it were martyrs of the good cause. God only knows how many men's lives he has on his conscience. And when afterwards the people who had got into the way of the business would not quit it, and indeed could not, or they would have starved, he was safe enough; he had brought his sheep out of the rain and could laugh in his sleeve. Then came the time of army-contracts, and that again was a good time for him; and thus this leech kept sucking and gorging himself with the blood of his fellow-creatures. Everything that he undertook succeeded; the needleman's grandson and broker's son has become a millionaire, has married a woman of noble birth, has titles, orders--all that the heart can desire. Look you, there is a child of prudence, whom I recommend to you as an example."

"That I may lose your and every worthy man's friendship?"

"What good is my friendship to you? My friendship at best is worth but fifty thousand *thalers*. You are quite right not to put yourself out of your way for such a trifle. Marry *Hermine Streber*--then you will know why you were a beggarly fellow."

"It seems that one falls into this category by having either a great deal of money or none at all," I said, hiding under a loud laugh my embarrassment at his brusque suggestion.

"Certainly," said the doctor, still heated. "Extremes meet, and for this reason I consider your destiny inevitable. The question only is, how to deal with the old man; with the daughter the business is half done, or more than half. Your meeting on the steamer was capital; and now this *Richard the Lion-heart* in effigy, as long as she has him not in *propria personæ*----

"Doctor," I said, rising, "I think it must be time to say good-night."

"As you please," replied the doctor. "You know with such remarkable exactitude what is good for you that most likely you know this too."

The doctor had also arisen and was now walking up and down the room making frightful faces.

"Doctor," said I, stepping before him.

"Go!" he cried, passing round me in a curve.

"I am going," I said, and I went.

But I halted at the door and looked back once more at the singular man, who had thrown himself again into his chair and was watching me angrily through his round spectacles.

"Doctor, you said to me once that you could not well carry more than four glasses, and this evening you have drunk six. So I will ascribe the unfriendly way in which you dismiss me--for what other reason I cannot imagine--to the fifth and sixth glass; and now good-by."

I left the room without his making any attempt to detain me, and as I closed the door behind me I heard him burst into a peal of shrill laughter.

"This comes from a man's not keeping within his measure," I said to myself, excusing him.

But as I reached the street below, and the frosty night air blew upon my heated face, I began to perceive that I had not exactly kept within my own measure. My gait as I traversed the empty, badly-lighted streets, now swept by a sharp December wind, was less steady than usual, and strange thoughts passed through my head, and I had curious fancies, whose origin could only be traced to the glasses I had emptied. And once I had to laugh aloud, for I imagined I heard the voice of the short, fat commerzienrath saying quite distinctly: "My dear son, we must mind what we are about or we shall not get home at all, and our Hermine will be alarmed."

CHAPTER III.

As the next day was Sunday, I had leisure to reflect upon the singular behavior of the doctor the evening before; but either the affair was in itself too complicated, or else my memory had suffered from the effects of my strong potations, and I could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion. That the strange man loved me much, after his fashion, I had innumerable proofs, and his anger on the previous evening had been rather that of an elder brother, who sees that the younger, whom he loves, is straying from the right way.

But what upon earth had I done amiss, then? It could not be possible that the doctor could seriously reproach me with my determination to make my own way in the world. He himself had trusted to his own resources very early in life, and with the toughest perseverance carried out his own plans.

Assuredly the fact that I had chosen the lot of a workman could be no crime in the eyes of a man whose heart beat so warmly for the poor, and who devoted his whole life to the relief of poverty and misery. The cause of his wrath must lie elsewhere; and after long pondering I came around to the point, that the picture of Paula's, upon which I figured as Richard the Lion-heart, had been the starting-point of our dispute. Had he taken it amiss that Paula held fast to her model? Did he grudge me the honor of being painted by her? Was he vexed that this picture was not in his possession, but in the hands of a man whom he so hated and despised as the commerzienrath? These were all questions worth considering. I concluded at last that my supposition must be correct, and resolved that this very day, before I called on Paula, I would have a look at the cause of our quarrel.

So about noon I set out for the academy, in the halls of which the great exhibition of paintings had been open now for some weeks. It was my first visit to an exhibition of the sort. My knowledge of pictures up to this time was restricted to a few old discolored saints in the churches of my native town, the engravings and family portraits in the superintendent's house, and the pictures which I had seen growing under Paula's hand. Still, as I had over and over contemplated and studied these few with never-ceasing delight, and had for years been witness of the development of a genuine artist nature, I had, perhaps, if no more, at least no less enthusiasm for beauty than the hundreds that flooded the exhibition-rooms. I cannot describe the feeling with which I, now following the throng, and now separated from it, wandered through the lofty rooms. I had never seen anything like this. I could not have conceived it possible. Were there then so many men who knew how to handle pencils and colors that the walls of this labyrinth of rooms were hung from ceiling to floor with the works of their skill? And was the world so gloriously rich? Was the sky that bent above the sunny bays of the South in truth of so marvellous a blue? Did snow-clad mountains really tower so majestically into the luminous ether? Was the twilight thus mysterious in the pine-fringed gorges of our own mountains? Did such infinite multitudes of birds indeed hover over the enormous rivers of Africa? Did the palaces of Italian cities rise thus gorgeously above the narrow canals along which black gondolas were noiselessly gliding? Were there halls in princely mansions whose marble floors thus clearly reflected the luxurious furniture and the forms of the guests? Yes; all these things that I here saw depicted really existed, and much more which my eager fancy added, half in dreaming. For the more I looked, examined, and admired, the stronger came over me a sense of having seen all this before; yes, seen so clearly that I could tell the artist what he had done well, and where he had fallen far short of the lovely reality. Often I felt really angry with a stupid painter who had seen so dimly, and so poorly represented what little he saw. In a word, in the briefest space of time I had become a finished

connoisseur of the noble art of the painter, with the solitary drawback that I could in no case have told how the artist should go to work to make his picture better; but perhaps this was a special qualification for the office of critic.

I had probably wandered thus for an hour through the rooms, when stepping into one of the last, which was remarkably brightly lighted by a skylight, I started with sudden and extreme surprise. Looking over the heads of the crowd that filled the hall I seemed to see myself. And it was myself, or at least my counterfeit in Paula's picture, the picture which I had come on purpose to see, and which I looked for so far in vain. A particularly large group was collected before it, looking with eager and admiring eyes at Paula's work, while from many fair lips came the words, "Charming!" "how beautiful!" "what depth of feeling!" It was a queer sensation to me to see myself thus lying upon a bed, in a rich robe of fine linen, and scarcely concealed by a light drapery. The blood suffused my cheeks; I expected every instant to see the crowd turn from the picture to me to compare the copy with the original. But it was probably no easy thing to discover in the tall, healthy young man, in plain citizen's dress, standing back in a window niche, the original of the lion-hearted king, glorified by legend, in a picture on public exhibition. At all events no one made the discovery, and I was left to contemplate the painting at my leisure.

Now I observed for the first time that the picture was of far larger dimensions than the study which I knew. It was, in fact, a new picture, which had been completed since I last had seen Paula. So much the more wonderful, as it seemed to me, was the striking likeness to the original. Here were my curled reddish locks, my rather broad than high forehead, my large blue eyes, which found it so difficult to take an expression of anger. Even the feverish flush which lay upon the sunken cheeks of the royal Richard might at this moment have been seen upon those of the man in the window. In other respects the design remained the same, only the young knight who had the lineaments of Arthur had perhaps withdrawn a little more into the background, so that the broad-shouldered yeoman with the features of Sergeant Süssmilch came better into view. An admirable figure was the Arab physician, *alias* Doctor Willibrod Snellius, the most singular personage that could be imagined, in the garb of a dervish, and one whom one could not help liking, notwithstanding his ugliness, so that the generous confidence of the king became at once intelligible.

This then was the picture which Paula had painted and Hermine bought. Was there not here a two-fold reason for a little pride and even vanity? Must not the original be very firmly implanted in the artist's heart when she could make from recollection alone so true a likeness? Must not the original be somewhat interesting to the purchaser, when she was willing to pay such a price for the copy? These were foolish thoughts, and I can affirm that they vanished as soon as they arose, and the next moment I was heartily ashamed of them. Vexed with myself I aroused myself from my foolish dreaming and turned my gaze once more upon the picture, in front of which the eager crowd of gazers had increased.

Among the new spectators I noticed a lady in a rich and becoming toilette, leaning on the arm of a slender and rather foppishly dressed gentleman. The lady attracted my attention by her elegant figure and the vivacious manner in which she gesticulated with her little hand in its dainty kid glove, and spoke with great animation to her companion, who was evidently more interested by the spectators than by the picture itself. As her back was towards me I could only from time to time catch a glimpse of her face when she glanced over her shoulder at her companion. But the glimpse that I caught affected me powerfully, without my being able to explain the cause: a dark eye-brow, a fleeting glance from the corner of the eye, the contours of a brunette's cheek and of a rounded chin. Yet I could not turn my gaze from the lady. I even made one or two attempts to catch sight of her face, but she always turned it to the other side. The gentleman then seemed to propose that they should go: they were about leaving the room, when in the moment that they crossed the threshold the lady turned her head once more towards the picture, and I came very near uttering an exclamation of surprise? Was it not Constance?

"Did you see the Bellini?" a young officer near me asked an acquaintance who approached and accosted him.

"That lady with the gray-silk dress. Cashmere shawl, and jaunty hat? Is she the Bellini?"

"Yes, indeed. Is she not a charming creature?"

"Superb! And who was the gentleman with her? Baron Sandstrom, of the Swedish embassy?"

"Do you suppose he would let himself be seen here with the Bellini? What are you thinking of, baron? It was Lenz, the tenor of the Albert Theatre."

"The man that brought her on the stage?"

"The same. She has a wonderful talent, they say. Well, we shall see what there is in it."

"See? You would not go to the Albert Theatre, baron?"

"Why not, when a Bellini is in question?"

"You are a gay fellow, baron."

"I can return the compliment, if it is one."

And the two young men separated, laughing.

I breathed deeply. "Thank heaven!" I murmured. "Thank heaven that it was an actress and not Constance von Zehren. I would not meet her on the arm of such a fop and hear a pair of such fellows speak of her thus."

It did not, in the first moments of my surprise, occur to me that I had only to follow the lady in order to catch another look at her; and now, as I hastily traversed the rooms she was no longer to be seen. Again I breathed deeply, with a sensation of relief, when I had convinced myself of the inutility of further search, and said to myself: "It is better that I should not see this Fräulein Bellini again." And while I said this I felt my heart beat violently, and my eyes still wandered searching through the crowd. They were strange recollections which the face, at once known and unknown, of this lady, had awakened within me; recollections from a time in which the impressions once received remained forever.

These memories did not leave me until I traversed the long streets of the city, many of them new to me, on my way to Paula's residence, which I had the doctor carefully describe to me the previous day. Being Sunday, the shops and stores were closed, but the streets were still full of life. It was a clear, cold forenoon in the beginning of December. A little snow had fallen in the night, just enough to give a silvery glitter to the roofs and bring into handsome relief the projections and ornaments of the façades. Numerous pedestrians hastened along the streets; showy horses in handsome carriages pawed vigorously upon the frosty pavement, and even the wretched jades in the rickety *droschkies* trotted rather better than usual. The sight of this cheerful life scattered the evil dreams that had tried to master my soul, I felt myself so young and strong in the midst of a vast, powerful stream which drove me along but did not overpower me. All was new, fair, and rich; who could know to what glorious shores the current would bear me? And even now I saw a fair harbor and a beloved form beckoning to me, and I hastened my steps until I arrived, out of breath, at a large, handsome house in one of the most fashionable suburbs, and, on asking the porter if Frau von Zehren was at home, was shown up two flights of stairs.

"But the ladies are not at home," said the man.

"No one?"

"One of the young gentlemen may be."

"I will see."

"Can I take any message?"

"No; I wish to see them."

The porter closed his window, not without a sort of suspicious look at the tall stranger, who did not appear to be a gentleman of fashion, and I hurried up the two carpeted flights of stairs, and drawing a deep breath I pulled the bell over which was a brass plate with the name "Frau von Zehren," and under it "Paula von Zehren."

"Which of the boys shall I see?" I asked myself, and in fancy I saw the friendly faces of Benno, Kurt, and Oscar, at the door; but a step approached which could belong to neither of the boys. The door was opened and the old furrowed brown face of the sergeant looked at me inquisitively out of its clear blue eyes.

"Good day, sergeant."

The sergeant in his surprise very nearly let fall the bunch of brushes he had in his hand.

"Thunder and lightning, are we here at last? Won't the *gnädige Frau* and the young gentlemen be glad!--and the young lady too! Come in!"

And he pulled me in and closed the door behind us, and then led me into a room in which the furniture greeted me as old acquaintances.

The old man pressed my hands, exclaiming over and over:

"How splendid we are looking! I believe we are bigger than ever. And how we must have been working to make our hands so hard! We have had hard times, eh? But we have held up bravely, that is the main thing. How long since we got out of that cursed hole?"

Thus the sergeant questioned me, and pushed me into an easy-chair; and he was quite indignant when I told him that I had already been over two weeks in the city.

"It is not possible!" he cried. "Two weeks without coming to us, and we have been expecting you every day! It is not possible! It is enough to turn a man into a bear with seven senses!"

"Every one for himself first, old friend," I said. "Suppose I had come here first of all, and Fräulein Paula had asked what the tall George was going to do?"

The sergeant scratched his curly gray head. "To be sure, to be sure!" he said. "Self is the man. With a woman or a girl, of course, it is quite different; and so one had to bring them away at once that they might have some one to rely on on the way, and here, upon first moving in, some one to look after things; for women are women and men are men. Am I not right?"

"Doubtless, Süssmilch, doubtless. So you have been here, of course, ever since?"

"Of course," said the old man, who had taken a seat opposite to me, but sat upon the extreme edge of the chair, as if to show that he knew how to keep within the bounds himself had fixed. "And apart from other things, can they ever get on without my head?"

"And without your hands?"

"Not of so much consequence, though they come into play sometimes too," the old man replied, arranging the brushes between his fingers, "but the head" and he thoughtfully shook this interesting and important part of his person.

"I have just seen it at the exhibition," I said, a light suddenly flashing upon me in regard to the part the old man's head really played in the family arrangements.

"Does pretty well, don't it?" said the sergeant; "but the monk is better still."

"Who?"

"The monk. To be sure nobody knows what we are painting. But you must see it."

The old man sprang up with youthful alacrity and led me into a large and high apartment adjoining, which was Paula's studio. Sketches and designs of all kinds were hanging and leaning upon the walls, with heads, arms, and legs in plaster, a couple of sets of ancient armor, a lay figure draped with a long white mantle, and near the window, which reached to the ceiling, an easel with a picture from which the sergeant removed the covering.

"Here's the place to stand," he said. "Is not that splendid?"

"Splendid indeed!" I exclaimed.

"Was I not right that my head is quite another thing here?" said the old man, pointing proudly to the work. The scene was from *Nathan the Wise*, and represented the monk about to sound the intentions of the templar. Both figures stood out clear and plastic, with such animation in their looks that one might almost catch the words from their lips; the grand simplicity in the good weather-beaten face of the pious brother who had once been a squire, and had many a valiant lord and accomplished many a hard service, none of which had ever been so hard to him as this commission of the patriarch. On the other side the templar, young and slender, his head thrown defiantly back, his lips compressed with an expression of discontent, and his blue eyes bent upon the poor monk. In the middle distance a portion of Nathan's house, and the palms that surround the Holy Tomb; behind these the domes and slender minarets of Jerusalem, with the haughty crescent sharply defined against the southern sky, where the eye lost itself with delight in the immeasurable distance.

"The young gentleman has something from us; here, for instance, and here," said the sergeant, pointing with his finger at the eyes and mouth of the templar, and then looking again at me; "but I said at once that it is not so good as King Richard; by far not so good," and the old man shook his head gravely.

"But the Fräulein cannot paint me always," I said; "that would at last become too monotonous. With you it is different: such a head as yours is not to be met with again."

"Yes," said the sergeant. "It is curious: one never believed it; in fact one hardly knew he had a head; but that's the way they all talk that come here, and they want me in all their studios; and Fräulein Paula did lend me once or twice, but in the other pictures one looks like a bear with seven senses, and don't know himself again."

"And how is she?" I asked.

"Oh, well enough, if we did not have to work so much; but from morning, as soon as it is light enough, until evening when it is too dark to tell one color from another, working here in the studio, or copying in the museum--no bear could stand it, let alone such a good young lady who has not yet got over her father's death, and secretly weeps for it every day. It is a real pity."

The old man turned away, laid the brushes in the box, and passed the back of his hand quickly over his eyes.

I stood with folded arms before the picture, which no longer pleased me when I thought that she worked on it unrelaxing from morning till night, while grief for the loss of her beloved father still dimmed her eyes. It would be a great thing to have fifty thousand *thalers* and be able to say: "You shall not have so hard a life of it; you shall not lose your beautiful eyes like your poor mother."

"How is Frau von Zehren?" I asked.

"Well enough in health," answered the sergeant, moving back the easel; "but she has scarcely a glimpse of light; and the doctor, who ought to know best, told her, when she asked him, that there was no hope that she would ever see again."

"And Benno and the others?"

A bright gleam passed over the old man's brown face,

"Ah," said he, "there we have our pleasure, and with each one more than the other, Benno has been a student now for a month, and Kurt will soon enter. Yes, we are happy in these. And our youngster too! He is going to be a painter, and has begun of course upon my head, and not done so badly for his fifteen years. Look for yourself, if it is not----"

At this moment there was a ring at the door. The old man stepped to the window and looked out.

"I thought it was they. You see we all went out walking, because the day is so fine; but it is too soon yet for them to be back; it must be some one else; I will see;" and the old man put back the drawing-board on which Oscar had sketched his first head from the life, and left me alone in the studio.

I heard a voice in the passage which I thought I recognized as Paula's, and then the door opened, and Paula entered.

At first she did not observe me, and I saw at a glance that the sergeant had said nothing of my arrival. Advancing quickly she looked eagerly at the covered picture on the easel. The fresh air of the winter day had reddened her cheeks, her lips were slightly parted. I had never seen her so fair, nor could I have believed it possible. Suddenly she perceived me; she stopped, gazed at me with fixed eyes and a frightened look. "Paula," I said, hastily coming forward, "dear Paula, it is really I."

"Dear George!"

She stood before me, and I took both her hands, while she looked at me, smiling and blushing.

"Thank heaven, George, that you are here at last. I have had no quiet hour since I knew that you were free again, and on the way here: I could not imagine where you were staying; I even feared something had happened to you. What have you been doing, and what adventures have you had, you bad boy? I know of one already, and that from the fairest mouth in the world."

Paula had seated herself upon a low chair near the picture, and looked up to me with smiling eyes.

"You need not be so confused," she said, mischievously.

"With a sister, you know, it makes no matter. I am in the exclusive possession of all Benno's tender secrets, and lately Kurt has honored me with his confidence. He is smitten with the twelve-year-old daughter of the geheimrath who has recently moved into the rooms below, and vows that Raphael never painted such a head. Why should I not be your confidante also, especially since you are my eldest brother--or are you not?"

I was surprised to hear Paula, who usually weighed every word, chattering after this fashion. A great change must have taken place in her since we had parted. It was no longer the Paula who in the shade of the high prison walls had developed under my eyes from a child to a maiden, and whom I thought I knew as I knew myself. What had loosened her tongue in this way? And whence had she the free carriage which I so much admired in her, as she now sat in a graceful posture in the low chair, while a beam of sunlight touched her head which seemed surrounded with an aureola?

"But you don't answer me," she resumed; "and really you have no cause to be ashamed of what you have done. Hermine says that without you the boat would have been lost, and probably the ship also. You may judge how proud I was when I heard it. And what do you think was my first thought?--that my father could have heard it too."

Paula's large eyes filled with tears, but she quickly suppressed her emotion and said:

"Yes, I was proud of you, and happy in the thought that you should commence life with such a noble deed, a deed worthy of yourself. And now you must tell me what you have been doing all this time, and you must expect to pay the penalty if I am not entirely satisfied with you. Sit here in this chair. We have a quarter of an hour yet before my mother and the boys come back. An idea about the picture there had come into my mind, but it is better so."

I gave the dear girl an exact account of all that had happened to me since my discharge. She listened with the closest attention, and only once smiled when I took pains to prove that I should have entered the machine-works in any event, and that the fact that the commerzienrath was my employer was far from agreeable to me.

"But neither the commerzienrath nor Hermine know anything about it."

"No," I answered; "and that is one comfort."

"Which will not last long, for they will soon learn it."

"From whom will they learn it?"

"From me, for one. Hermine has adjured me by sun, moon, and stars, to give her notice of the runaway as soon as he is found; and the tears were standing in her beautiful eyes, and Fräulein Duff laid her hand upon her shoulder and said, 'Seek faithfully, and thou wilt find!' I can assure you, George, it was a moving scene."

Paula smiled, but so kindly that her banter, if she was bantering me, did not wound me. On the contrary I was thankful to her, very thankful. I had considered over and over how I should tell her of my strange meeting with Hermine without embarrassment, and now under her kindly hands all was smooth and straight, which my clumsy fingers would have hopelessly entangled. I was grateful to her--very grateful.

And now Paula told me of Hermine, and how amiable and good she had been to her, and had spent the three days she had stayed in Berlin almost exclusively in her company, and had at once fallen in love with the picture at the exhibition--here Paula smiled again very slightly--and could not reconcile herself to leaving it, after she had bought it, for a whole month at the exhibition. She further related how the notice which *Richard the Lion-heart* had excited had already brought her new commissions, and that her *Monk and Templar* was already sold for a handsome sum to a Jewish banker; and how her studio had since been visited by very distinguished persons, indeed more frequently than was agreeable, and she had had to lock up her portfolios of sketches because they began unaccountably to disappear.

"You can judge," she went on, "how inexpressibly happy all this makes me. Not that I think myself entitled to be proud--I think that I well know my defects and how great they are--but it is a sweet consolation to me to be at ease about the future of my mother and brothers, and that the boys can now go boldly forward in the paths they have chosen, without being compelled anxiously to consider every step--all the boys, from the youngest to the oldest, is it not so, George?--from the youngest to the oldest."

She looked full into my eyes, and I very well understood what she meant.

"I do not anxiously consider every step, Paula," I said. "I know that I am in the right path; why should I then be anxious?"

"I have boundless confidence in you," replied Paula; "both in your clear-sightedness and your energy. I know that you will make your way; but one can make his way with greater or with less labor, and in longer or in shorter time; and your sister desires that her brother, who has been so cruelly cheated of so many years of his life, may lose no moment, and may encounter no obstacle which his sister can remove from his path."

"I thank you, Paula," I said; "from the whole depth of my soul I thank you; but you will not be angry with me for trusting that the hour may never come when you will have to work for me; for that I may ever be able to care for you and yours--this, my clearest hope and most cherished desire, I see that I must now renounce."

"How can you speak so?" said Paula, gently shaking her beautiful head. "True, I deserve it for my own wilfulness. You must consider me a foolish girl who allows herself to be dazzled by the false glitter of success. But believe me, it is not so. I know very well that I may be let fall just as quickly as I have been lifted, far above my desert. And then I may fall sick, or my invention may fail me: I cannot go on forever painting you and old Süßmilch; and a girl has so little opportunity to make well-grounded studies, and to extend the narrow circle of her experience. And then what would become of the boys, of me, of all of us, if we had not our eldest to look to?"

"You are jesting with me now, Paula."

"Indeed I am not," she said, earnestly. "I have only too often felt how my powers are no longer sufficient for my brothers, and that young men need to be guided by a man, and not by a woman, who does not know where the limit lies to which a youth may go, nay, must go, if he is to become anything. Good friend as the doctor is, I cannot rely on him in this point, for he is an eccentric, and an eccentric is no fitting model for a young man. For this reason I have been all the time wishing for you. You know the boys so well, and they are so fond of you. I know no one to whom I would so willingly intrust them."

"But, Paula, a workman in a machine-shop, a mere common journeyman blacksmith, is no pattern for students and young artists."

"You will not--yes, you will always be a workman, but not always a journeyman: you will become a master, a great master in your craft. And the day is no longer distant; at least it is much nearer than you think. You do not know your own worth."

Paula said this with a slightly elevated voice, and with flashing eyes. I was so in the habit of giving full confidence to her words, and it had so prophetic a sound, that I did not venture to express the slight doubt that arose in my mind as to its fulfilment.

At this moment came a ring at the bell. "It is my mother and the boys," Paula said hurriedly and softly.

"They do not know that you have been two weeks at liberty; my mother could not comprehend how you could let so long a time elapse without coming to see us, after you had once reached the city. You must not let her know that it has been so long."

At this they came rushing in at the door: Oscar, my favorite, Kurt, my second favorite, and Benno, who had always been my third favorite, who came with his mother on his arm; and there was rejoicing, and shaking hands, and kisses, and exultations, and perhaps some tears, though I am not sure. Of course I must spend the day with them. And in the evening nothing could keep them from seeing me home, that they might bring their sister word where and how I was living: and then I went back with them a piece of the way until they were out of the workmen's quarter, and in a part of the town which they knew better; and when I returned it was very late, and I fell asleep at once and had a long dream about the picture which Paula had painted, and Hermine had bought, and the fair Bellini, who resembled Constance von Zehren, had so much admired.

CHAPTER IV.

To be sure, if I had any fancy at this time for indulging in dreaming, I had to do it at night, for by day I had no leisure for such vagaries. By day I was taken possession of by work--hard jealous work, that kept me busy from the early morning to late at night--now thrusting the heavy hammer into my hand and giving me a mass of iron to conquer, and then placing in my fingers the pen with which I covered page after page with long rows of figures and complicated formulas. Altogether it was a pleasant time, and even now I think of it with pleasure tempered with sadness. In our memory the brightest light always lies upon those periods of our lives in which we have striven forward most eagerly, and I was now, in all senses, a striver, and there was no day in which I did not mount at least one round of the steep ladder. Now it was some bit of technical dexterity that I caught from my fellow-workmen; now a new formula which I had calculated myself; and at all times the delightful sensation of rising, of progressing, of increasing powers, the joyous consciousness that a far heavier burden might lie upon my shoulders without danger of my sinking under it. It was a happy, a delightful time; and whenever I think of it, it is as if the perfume of violets and roses were floating around me, and as if then the days must all have been days of spring.

And yet it was not spring, but a rough severe winter, in which the icy sky lay gray and heavy above the snow-piled roofs and the filthy factory-yards, while the sparrows fluttered about all day, seeking in vain for food, and at night the famishing crows expressed their sufferings in incessant cawing; and day by day we saw pale, hollowed-eyed, ragged figures, in ever-increasing numbers, wandering in the stormy streets, or crouching at night in the dim light of the lamps upon the steps of the houses, or where any projecting masonry offered them a little shelter.

I now walked the streets more frequently, for, notwithstanding the distance at which my friends lived, no week passed in which I did not spend at least one evening with them. Then Benno, who was now studying chemistry and physics, and had occasion to repair some deficiencies in his mathematics, came twice a week to my room to work with me, and I then accompanied him back half the way, and sometimes the whole distance. It had been discussed whether I had not better take another lodging, nearer to them; but Paula decided that it was best for me to live where my work was; and one Sunday forenoon she came with her brothers to pay me a visit, and convince me that I by no means lived entirely out of her reach, as I had maintained. She pronounced my inhabiting the lonely ruinous court of the machine-works, which her hope looked to in the future, perfectly absurd; and the fitting-up of my room with the old worm-eaten rococo furniture of the previous century a crackbrained fancy; but she observed it all with the warmest interest, and did not conceal that she was touched by the sight of the terracotta vases on the mantel-piece, and the copy of the Sistine Madonna on the wall.

"Stay here," she finally said; "not because this lodging is convenient for you, and is really original enough; nor because the fitting-up does honor to your taste, wanting only a set of curtains, which I will make for you, and a piece of carpet by your writing-table, which I undertake to provide; for these are trifles. What determines my opinion is the feeling that you belong here; that this place belongs to you already, as if like a conqueror you had taken possession of this desolate province, and planted your standard first of all. The rest will surely follow. I fancy that I

see these heaps of stone already growing up into stately buildings, the fire leaping from the tall chimneys, and these vacant courts alive with busy workmen; this house changed to a handsome villa, and you ruling and directing the whole as master and owner. Stay here, George; the place will bring you good fortune."

Words like these, from Paula's lips, had for me the force of irresistible conviction, as the words of a consecrated priestess might have for her trusting worshippers. Not that I always cheerfully and willingly acquiesced in her views; it would have been, for example, far more pleasant to me if Paula had said: "Your lodging is very well situated for your purposes, it is true; but I would rather have you nearer to me; I see you now once a week, and I could then see you twice, or perhaps every day." And then I upbraided myself that I did not value Paula's desire to advise me always for the best, higher than all else; but still I could not help wishing that this advice, however good, had not seemed quite so easy for her to give.

When I was thus brought to reflect upon my relations with Paula it could not escape even my inexperience that these relations were different from what they used to be. One circumstance especially proved this fact. The boys and I had from the first used to each other the familiar "thou;" but between Paula and myself the formal "you" had never been laid aside, not even in those trying days after the death of her father, when we had hand-in-hand to face the storm which had burst over us all. Even then, when our hearts were moved to their lowest depths, and our tears were mingled, the brotherly "thou" had never risen to our lips. And now she used it to me from the very moment of our meeting. The evening before I would have deemed it impossible; now, that it was really so, I could scarcely believe it. Did I feel that the very thing which made our intercourse easy and unrestrained was at the same time a strong fetter with which Paula bound my hands? Was it with that intention or, not? I did not know nor hope ever to know.

Of course I did not go about tormenting myself with this enigma. Guessing riddles was a kind of work in which I had no skill, so for the most part I enjoyed unalloyed the happiness which the friendship of this noble-hearted girl, and of her amiable family afforded me. Every moment spent in their society was precious to me, nor could I anywhere have found more purifying and ennobling influences.

I do not recall a single instance of the slightest misunderstanding occurring between the members of this family, or even of one raising the voice in momentary irritation. In affectionate devotion to their mother, in chivalrously tender love for their sister, the brothers were literally one heart and one soul; and if even a shadow of misunderstanding threatened to fall between them, one word of Paula's, yes, often a mere glance from her loving eyes, sufficed to banish it. Now as ever was Paula the good genius of the family, the honored priestess to whose keeping was committed the sacred flame of the hearth, the helper, the comforter, the adviser to whom each turned when he needed aid, consolation or counsel. And with what maidenly grace she wore this priestly crown! Who that did not know her could have divined that this delicate creature was not only the moral support of the whole family, but that this small, slender, diligent hand also provided their daily bread? Yet this was the fact: indeed it could hardly now be doubted that she would soon be able to raise her family to a comparatively brilliant position. Her *Monk and Templar* had been purchased by one of the wealthiest bankers at an unusually high price, and there was already another picture upon her easel which had been bought at an even higher price before it was begun.

A picture-dealer--not the one who used to buy at a trifling price those pictures of Paula's which he afterwards sold to Doctor Snellius for handsome sums, but one of the first in the city, came to Paula and asked if she could paint a hunting piece. Just at that time there was a run on hunting-pieces: Prince Philip Francis had brought them into fashion, and the nobility had run mad about them, so the Jewish bankers naturally began to take an interest in hares and foxes. Paula answered that she had not yet painted a picture of this kind, and did not feel warranted to undertake the commission; but the dealer was so importunate, and the price he offered so high--"what do you think of it?" Paula asked me. "Do you think I can do it?"

"How can you doubt it?" I replied. "The landscape and the figures will give you no trouble, and as for the technical part, I can help you, if you have any difficulty with it."

"You have told me so many things about your hunter's life with Uncle Malte," said Paula, "and one scene has especially fixed itself in my memory. It was in the earlier time of your stay at Zehrendorf, and you were sitting at breakfast with my uncle on the heath, in the shadow of a tree which grew on the edge of a hollow; my uncle was enjoying the repose of the bivouac, when suddenly a hare came in sight on the edge of the mound. Flinging bottle and glass away, you seized your gun, when the hare turned out to be a lean old wether grazing on the heath. Would not that make a picture!"

"You might try it at all events," I said.

She tried it, and the attempt, as I had never doubted, succeeded capitally. Even one who took no interest in the somewhat humorous character of the incident must at least have been captivated by the beauty of the landscape. The autumnal sunlight on the brown heath, to the left the white dunes between which here and there glistened the blue sea,--all this was painted with a delicious freshness that one felt invigorated even by looking at it. And the little scene which comprised the action of the picture was so clearly rendered that no one could fail to understand

it--the elder hunter, lying in the grassy bank with his hand under his head, only taking the short pipe from his mouth to laugh at his companion, who with flashing eyes and in the greatest excitement has half-risen to his knee, and a few paces off the silly sheep's face looking over the heath, and saluting his over-hasty friend with a bleat of insulting confidence;--it was enough to bring a smile upon the face of the gloomiest hypochondriac. Naturally the elder hunter gradually assumed the features of the Wild Zehren, and the young novice day by day grew into a likeness of me.

"I ought not, really, to have introduced you again into one of my pictures," said Paula, "for two reasons: first, that you may not grow vain, and secondly that people may not think me barren of all invention. But in fact I cannot picture the scene to myself without you, any more than I can without my poor uncle; and I fear if I were to leave you both out the picture would be a poor one. You must give me one or two of your Sunday mornings. Of course I know your face well enough, and could paint it, I think, with any expression; but the action of a person throwing down a glass with his left hand, and reaching for his gun with his right, half-raised on his right knee while the left is still extended, is too complicated for me to paint without a model."

Thus it came that for several successive Sunday mornings I spent delightful hours in Paula's studio. The time never seemed long to us. I had so frequently gone over the ground of Paula's landscape that I could describe to her every bush, every tuft of grass, every peculiarity of the surface, and every effect of light upon the sandy dunes or the bushy heath. And while I was able thus to be really of use to the dear girl, it was a sweet reward to me to hear from her own lips that, if the picture turned out a good one, as she almost believed it would, it was in great measure owing to me. Then we had so many things to talk about: my progress in my trade, my increasing knowledge of the steam-engine, were topics of which Paula could never hear enough. Or else the question was discussed whether Kurt, who was now in his sixteenth year, ought to remain longer at school, or commence learning his trade, and if Streber's works were the right place, and Klaus, who was now a master-workman, the right master for this richly-gifted pupil. This led us again to speak of Klaus, what a good-natured and excellent fellow he was, and of Christel, whether any one would respond to her inquiry in the Dutch newspapers, and if so, whether this some one would be a Javanese aunt, as Klaus and Christel firmly maintained, or a Sumatran uncle.

So we were chatting together one morning, Paula at her easel, while I was pacing backwards and forwards at the farther end of the room, with my hands behind my back. The winter sun shown so brightly that the light had to be lessened at the high window near which the easel stood, while at the others it streamed brilliantly in, in clustering beams in which the motes were dancing. Frau von Zehren was out walking with her sons. A Sabbath stillness pervaded the house, and when Paula ceased speaking I felt like Uhland's shepherd, who "alone upon a wide plain hears the morning bell, and then all is silent, near and far."

Suddenly the hall-bell rang.

"I had hoped we should not be troubled with any visitors to-day," I said with some annoyance.

"Eminence must pay its penalty," said Paula, jestingly. "Let us only hope they will not stay too long."

At this moment the girl opened the door. I stopped my walk, and stood, stark with amazement, in the background, as I saw two gentlemen enter, one of whom was Arthur von Zehren, while the other, whom with a polite bow he had motioned to precede him, awakened in me some faint recollection which I could not precisely define.

"I have the honor," said Arthur, after apologizing to his cousin, with that grace of manner that always belonged to him, for not having called upon her immediately after his return--"I have the honor to present to you Count Ralow, whose acquaintance I was so fortunate as to make in London, and who is a great connoisseur, and an equally great admirer of your talents."

"My friend has not described me quite correctly," said the count, bowing respectfully to Paula. "I am by no means a great connoisseur; but he is quite right in calling me a great admirer of your talents. I have seen your picture at the exhibition, and been charmed with it, like all the world; and as your cousin was presumptuous enough to offer to present me to you, I could not forego a piece of such singular good fortune."

The young man, whose glance now fell for the first time upon the picture, suddenly started back, but rather with the gesture of one who is unpleasantly startled than of one who is agreeably surprised. And well might he be startled, when he suddenly recognized in the hunter by the willow-tree the Wild Zehren, the man who had only needed an opportunity to bathe his hands in the blood that flowed in the veins of Prince Karl of Prora-Wiek.

It had been now eight years since I had seen him, and in my whole life I had only seen him twice: once in the dim light of an autumn afternoon as he flew by me at a rapid gallop, and the second time in the dark forest by the glimmering moonlight; but the slender figure and the pale, refined face had impressed themselves indelibly upon my memory.

"Beautiful!" said the prince. "Admirable! superb! This sunlight, this heath--I know all this--"

know it perfectly. I tell you, Zehren, even to the minutest details it is nature itself! Is it not?"

Arthur did not answer, for if the confusion of the prince at the first sight of the picture had surprised him, he entirely lost his presence of mind when he caught sight of me in the background, where I had been standing motionless the whole time. I think there were few men whom Arthur von Zehren would not have preferred to meet in his cousin's studio just then.

"Is it not so, Zehren?" the prince repeated, rather impatiently.

"Certainly; it is perfectly superb: I said so before," replied Arthur, evidently in doubt whether it would not be best to overlook me altogether.

But as his hesitation did not prevent him from casting uneasy glances at me, which caused the eyes of the prince to turn in the same direction, the result was that the latter perceived, at the end of the studio, a tall, broad-shouldered, plainly-dressed young man, with curly blond beard and hair, whom he had already seen in the character of King Richard in the picture at the exhibition, and now again saw in the hunting-piece on the easel. Whom could he suppose that he had before him but one of those persons who go from studio to studio, now as a model for Joseph, and now for Pharaoh? And though it is probable that the prince was by no means addicted to minute observation of models in artists' studios, at this moment any opportunity of diverting attention from the unlucky picture was too welcome not to be seized at once.

"Ah! here is our original for King What's-his-name! A splendid fellow, whom I should like to see in the regiment of my cousin, Count Schlachtensee; don't you say so, Zehren?"

The unlucky Arthur's part of second-fiddle was a hard one to play to-day. But it was impossible for him, now that I had been brought directly into the conversation, to pretend, not to know his old schoolmate, apart from the fact that Paula would hardly have forgiven such a piece of insolence; and he perceived, moreover, by my looks that I was malicious enough to enjoy his confusion. Indeed I fear that I even indulged in a smile whose significance could not escape him, so he had no alternative--it was highly exasperating, but he really had no other--but to turn to me with as pleasant a smile as he could force to his whitened lips, and while toying with his eyeglass, so as to have no hand free to offer me, to accost me in an affectedly condescending tone:

"Ah! see there! are we at last out of the--ahem--again? Congratulate you--congratulate you with all my heart--upon my honor--ahem!"

The young prince's looks grew by no means brighter during this singular salutation of his second. The expression of my face, which he now observed more closely, and Arthur's evident embarrassment, showed that there was something wrong here; and at this moment he happened to catch a glance exchanged between Paula and myself, which probably seemed another mesh in the net which was here being drawn over his princely head. But now it seemed to Paula high time to interpose and put an end to this singular scene.

"You would have sooner had the pleasure," she said, turning to Arthur, "of meeting your old schoolmate, if you had found your way to our house earlier during the fortnight that you have been here; George has been in the city three months. This gentleman"--she went on, turning to the prince--"is my oldest and dearest friend, who stood faithfully by me at a time of great trial, and who now devotes a few hours of his valuable time to aid my imperfect invention with his advice. I esteem it an honor to introduce to you Herr George Hartwig."

At hearing my name the prince changed color and bit his lip, though he made a great effort to accost the lady's oldest and dearest friend with a polite phrase. Doubtless he had heard my name too often from Constance and others, and the associations connected with it were of too peculiar a character for more amusing and more agreeable experiences to obliterate it entirely, even from the defective memory of the young prince. A dim recollection of a tall figure before which he had once crouched in a dark forest--and then the circumstance that this man with the broad shoulders and the memorable name stood by the side of the Wild Zehren in the picture by the hand of Paula von Zehren--all this suddenly fitted into one combination. The prince had to find the meaning of it all, however pleasant it might have been to have been spared the whole riddle.

Just at this disagreeable moment, that is to say just at the right time, the Prince of Prora-Wiek remembered what he owed to himself. The signs of embarrassment vanished from his face and his manner; he looked calmly at the picture and at me, comparing the copy with the original, and said a number of pretty things to Paula, which, if not quite well considered, and possibly not even well meant, sounded as if they were both. He hastily glanced at the drawings on the walls, and turned over the sketches in an open portfolio, declared that the light in the studio was admirable, and the whole arrangement exquisitely original and poetic, then remembered that he had been summoned to an audience of the princess, for which he would be too late if he did not take his leave at once, and went off with his companion.

In half a minute we heard the prince's coupé, which had been standing at the door, drive off, and we looked at each other and laughed, laughed with great apparent enjoyment, and then suddenly became grave.

"This is the great annoyance of our calling," said Paula. "Inquisitive visitors cannot be refused admission; indeed we are expected to be highly gratified if they come, and then chatter

everywhere about our skill and the subject of our last picture. But, as I said, it is an annoyance at best; and Arthur might have been more considerate than to present himself in this fashion after staying away so long. His only apology is that he meant kindly, and thought he was bringing me a distinguished and wealthy patron. Certainly, if one may judge by the exterior, this Count Ralow must be both very distinguished and very rich."

"The inference is correct this time, at all events," I said; "and if you want the proof--it was the young Prince Prora."

"Impossible!" said Paula.

"I am sure of it," I replied. "I have seen in the papers that the prince has lately visited England, where Arthur says he made the acquaintance of this Count Ralow. But I should have recognized him without that; and besides, I now remember that the Princes of Prora are also Counts von Ralow."

"I am glad to hear it," said Paula, "though I should have preferred to make the acquaintance of the prince under his proper title."

"I consider this incognito a piece of rudeness. Why can he not call upon you as he does upon the princess? But the real impertinence lies in his coming here at all. The former lover of Constance had no business to present himself to Constance's cousin. I felt all this strongly enough at the time, Paula; but I also felt that your house and your apartment were not the place to discuss these matters."

"I thank you for your considerateness," said Paula, taking my hand in hers. "I saw in your eyes that you were placing a restraint upon yourself about something. Men best prove their respect for women when they do not suffer any storms of this kind to break loose in their presence; and as to this matter, I beg of you to dismiss it from your thoughts. You have suffered far too much from it already; it is time you had rid yourself of it once for all."

"Yes, if that were only possible," I said; and then I told Paula, what I had never mentioned to her before, about my meeting at the exhibition with the beautiful Bellini, who had so striking a resemblance to Constance. "I have certainly no reason to cherish any love for Constance," I said; "on the contrary, I can meet her seducer without the slightest feeling of hatred or revenge; and yet the image of that beautiful woman follows me everywhere, and it could not be otherwise had I seen Constance herself. Now why is this?"

"Constance was your first love," Paula answered, "and that makes a difference with men."

"With men, Paula? Do you mean that with women it is otherwise?"

"I do mean that," she replied. "A woman's first love differs from a man's, and exceeds it. Exceeds it in proportion as a man is more to a woman than a woman to a man."

"What kind of new philosophy do you call that?"

"It is no new philosophy: at least it is as old as my thoughts upon these matters, which is no very great age, it is true."

A faint flush tinged her usually pale cheeks, but it seemed that altogether she was not displeased that we had fallen upon this theme, and she continued with some animation:

"A man's life is more full of change, richer in deeds and events, than a woman's; and for this reason individual impressions, even the strongest, do not remain so long with them. They have so many new and more important things to record on the tablet of their life that they are obliged from time to time to efface the old writing with the sponge of forgetfulness. With us women it is altogether different: we do not willingly efface a word which sounds sweetly to our ears, much less a line, much less a whole page of our poor life. And then even when a man has an unusually tenacious memory, he can not act and choose as he will: the stronger and manlier his nature, the more does he act and choose as he must. And he must choose suitably to his age and circumstances--to use another phrase, suitably to his development. The man of twenty-five differs from the youth of nineteen far otherwise than the woman of twenty-five differs from the girl of nineteen; and the man of thirty-five again is another man. If the man of twenty-five or thirty-five should make the same choice as the youth of nineteen--I mean such a choice as youth makes, romantically unselfish and inconsiderate--he would commit a folly, in my eyes at least."

"How did you come to be so selfish and practical, Paula?" I inquired, in laughing astonishment.

"One grows so, I suppose," she said, taking up palette and brushes, and beginning to work.

"It may be as you say," I said, "when one, as has been your case, passes through a marked process of development; so that the laws which you have just laid down as governing us men are very possibly applicable to yourself. I knew you when you were but fifteen, and you were then a beginner in your art; now, at two-and-twenty, you are an artist, and at five-and-twenty you will be a distinguished one. In your case it is intelligible enough that the Paula of to-day has no longer those romantic illusions--to the future Paula, alas, I cannot venture to raise my thoughts."

"You are jesting, and cruelly too," she said; "and your good face has not the expression that I could wish it to wear at this moment."

"I do not jest at all," I answered emphatically. "I perfectly understand that your claims upon life must rise higher with every year--I might say with every picture you produce."

"Are you really speaking in earnest?"

"Perfectly so; do you not wish to become a great artist?"

"Assuredly," she replied; "but is that within a woman's power? How many out of the hundreds and thousands of inspired girls and women who have turned to the easel or the desk have become great artists? Upon the stage they may; but I have often questioned whether the dramatic art be a true art, or rather a half-art, in which half-talents can reach the highest eminence. And those who are called actors of genius, what are they in comparison with men of true genius in art, in literature, in music? As far beneath them as I am beneath Raphael. And what have I produced so far? Two or three passable heads; a striking scene or so, which I took directly from the life; recollections from books; Richard Cœur de Lion, the Monk--where in these is an original invention, a single trace of real genius? And what is this picture here? What have I done towards it? Little more than mix the colors; the rest is all of your invention. You told me how the sunlight falls in the sandy dunes, how the wind waves the heads of the heath-flowers; you----"

"But Paula, Paula, you talk as if I were painting your picture, and as if you could paint no picture without me."

"And I have painted none without you: there you see my miserable poverty."

I could not see with what expression she pronounced these words, for she had bent her face down to her easel.

CHAPTER V.

Since her success at the exhibition Paula had been overwhelmed with invitations, and she had accepted one for this day from the banker Solomon, the purchaser of the *Monk and Templar*. So I was left with Frau von Zehren and her sons. Yet Paula was present with us all, and with none more than her poor mother who was bereft of the pleasure of seeing her daughter's works.

"But all that she has she has from you, mother," said Benno; "and she knows that herself better than any of us."

"Then she has it from her grandfather," said Frau von Zehren. "He was really a great artist: what I might have done I cannot say. Unfortunately it was never granted me to develop the talent that I had; but how can I say unfortunately? If it is true, as you say, that Paula's talent is mine, then her success is my success, and thus I perform the miracle of becoming a great painter with blind eyes."

A gentle smile played about the refined lips of the still beautiful woman, and as shortly afterwards I retraced my steps homewards through the dark streets her face continually recurred to my memory. She must in her youth have been even more beautiful than Paula, though Paula's beauty had wonderfully increased. How superbly indignation and shame contended in her features as that coxcomb of a prince strutted about her studio without the slightest idea of how impertinent he was, and probably fancying all the time that he was making himself unspeakably agreeable.

This meeting with the prince who had been my favored rival with Constance, and with Arthur, whom I had so long believed to be the favored lover of Paula, gave me much matter for reflection, more indeed than was advantageous for the progress of my work, to which I had applied myself on my arrival home. As I recalled the refined and handsome but sadly worn face of the young prince, his eyes now vacant, now burning with unnatural fire, the twitchings of his brow and cheeks, his manner, at once insinuating and supercilious, I felt more and more indignant that Arthur should have dared to introduce such a man into Paula's house. What, at best, could be his motive for seeking the introduction? The gratification of ordinary curiosity. And at worst? I ground my teeth to think of the horrible possibility. My only consolation was that my fear that Arthur might have won, or yet win, Paula's affections, now appeared in all its absurdity. Clearly such a fop as he could never be dangerous to such a girl as Paula; though fop as he was, he was wonderfully handsome, the perfect model of an elegant gentleman in irreproachable kid gloves

and varnished boots; a little vacant, perhaps, about the mouth, adorned with a slight black beard, and a little hollow under the large dark eyes that had lost all their brilliancy. It is possible that for certain women this rendered him all the more dangerous; but what had Paula in common with such?

Then my thoughts wandered from the prince, whom I had seen again so unexpectedly, to the fair Bellini who so singularly resembled Constance; and I pushed back my chair, stepped to the window, which Paula's kindness had furnished with dark curtains, and leaning my heated brow against the glass looked out, in dreary musing, into the yard, across which I observed a figure coming through the freshly-fallen snow, directly to the house. My thoughts involuntarily recurred to the figure I had once seen stealing by moonlight across the lawn to Constance's window. Was it the prince? What brought him to me? The figure came to the stair that led up from the yard, and began to ascend the steps. I took the lamp from the table to give light to the visitor, whoever he might be. As I opened the door of my room he was just entering the house, and the light of my lamp fell brightly on the face of Arthur von Zehren.

"Thank heaven that I have found you at last, and without breaking my legs or my neck!" he cried upon seeing me. "How can any man in his senses live in such a place? But you always were an original. And really you seem comfortably fixed for a machinist, or whatever it was that the fellow at the gate called you,"--and Arthur, who had entered the room as he spoke, threw himself into the arm-chair which I had pushed near the fireplace, and held his gloved hands over the coals.

I remained standing by the fire, and said: "What procures me the pleasure of seeing you for the second time today?"

"The pleasure does not seem to be overwhelming, to judge from your tone; and in fact I should scarcely have come had not the prince--I mean to say, had not I--what was I going to say? oh, yes--had a bit of business to settle with you. While you were--you know where--you were several times so obliging as to help me out of some small difficulties. I took exact note of it all, for a man who owes as many people as I do must be particular in these matters to keep his creditors from swindling him. Of course I had nothing of the sort to fear from you; but out of mere habit I took a note of it, and this is the amount, without the interest, which I cannot calculate, and therefore would rather leave off--a hundred and sixty *thalers*. I happen to be in funds just now, and it is a pleasure to me to acquit myself of my debt to you."

And rising from his chair he counted down a pile of treasury-notes on the table.

"Will you count them over?" he continued; "I have just come from a dinner where we had famous champagne, and a charming little game afterwards; and it is quite possible that I may have miscounted them."

He looked at me with a smile that was meant to be sly, and balanced himself unsteadily on his toes and heels: it was too evident that he had come from a dinner at which the champagne had not been spared.

"What I was going to say," he went on--"your lamp burns so dim that one can hardly collect his ideas--going to say, was this: it was with the very best motive that he sent me here. He is the noblest fellow living--heart and purse--all genuine gold, as long as he has any. So you need not have any scruple, old fellow. And I was going to say--oh, in what relation did you ever stand to the prince? He told me himself that he was under an obligation to you; but what it can be is a mysterious enigma to me--a mysterious enigma," he repeated, leaning back in the arm-chair into which he had thrown himself again, and warming his feet alternately at the fire.

"You do not seem to be in a condition to solve enigmas," I said.

"Because I have had a little wine, you mean? Oh, that is nothing at all; on the contrary, but for that I should never have found my way here, notwithstanding I took the precaution this morning to get your address from Paula's porter. Was not that a happy idea? But one must always be ready in matters of that kind when one wishes to be intimate with men of high rank; and he takes an interest in you, too--a most astonishing interest."

I had by this time enough of his tipsy talk, and said: "I do not know, Arthur, if you are in a condition to understand me. If you are, let me tell you once for all, that I am fortunately in a position not to care a single farthing whether Prince Prora takes an interest in me or not; and you yourself, as far as I can see, would be doing yourself a service by mixing yourself as little as possible in the prince's concerns, in this direction at least."

"Thank you," said Arthur, "but that I foresaw. You are a lucky fellow; you need no one, and are sufficient for yourself. Always sober, always prudent, always clear-headed, and always in funds; while a fellow like me is forever in some devilish embroilment. But so it always has been and always will be. I have often wished I had been the son of a carter, had been beaten and knocked about, and forced to work for my bread, instead of this glittering misery, in which I starve one day and live in luxury the next. It is a misery, old fellow, a misery; but the best thing is that one can blow his brains out whenever he chooses."

I knew this declamation of old. It was the same, with but a slight alteration of the words,

which Arthur used to deliver in our school-days when he had drunk too much of the bad punch at a boyish carouse, and got to talking of his unpaid glove bills and his little dealings with Moses in the Water-street. And it was the same Arthur, too, the same frivolous, selfish, cold-hearted voluptuary, with the soft voice and the insinuating manners; and I-I was just the same good-natured fellow, whom a light word carelessly spoken could move as if it came direct from the heart. And I had loved him in my young days, when I wore a linen blouse and he a velvet jacket; we had played so many merry pranks together, and so often basked in the afternoon sunshine in field and wood, and in the boat at sea; and things like these cannot be forgotten--at least I never could forget them.

"Arthur," I said, "*must* you then always be in trouble and distress? Could it not be otherwise if you chose? A man like you, with so much talent, so much tact, such engaging manners----"

"And such a father!" cried Arthur, with a laugh that went to my heart. "Do you suppose that one can do anything with such a father, who compromises me every moment--every moment places me in the pillory, or at least keeps me in perpetual fear that he will do it?"

"I would never speak thus of my father, Arthur," I said.

"I suppose not," he answered. "You never had reason to: if I had had such a father as yours I would be a different man. But my father! Here he runs from this man to that, and begs for me a sort of position in our legation at London, and a few weeks later he goes round to the very same men and begs for himself; and the result is that they don't want in the London legation the son of a man whom they have to shut their door upon at home; and if I had not in London made the acquaintance of Prince Prora, who most kindly took an interest in me, I should not know how to pay for my cup of coffee to-morrow morning."

"Arthur," I said, "I believe you need the money more than I do. Suppose you take it back to the prince, for it comes from the prince, as you might as well confess--and say to him from me that I neither need it nor desire it, and request that it may be given to you. As for our little account, that we can settle when you really are in funds."

"You dear old George!" cried Arthur, springing up and seizing my hand. "You are the same dear fellow you always were; I intended it for you, but if you don't need it--" and he hastily clutched up the notes which he had so carefully counted, and thrust them into his breast pocket.

"Cannot the prince open some definite career to you?" I asked.

"The prince!" he replied. "Bah! you remind me of the game the young girls used to play when we were children--Emilie Heckepfennig, Elise Kohl, and whatever their names were--the game of the meal-pile, into which a ring was stuck, and each one of the girls cut away in turn a part of the pile, and then more, and then a little more, until down fell the meal-pile, and the little snub-noses went to rooting in it for the ring. That is the very image of the man: everyday one charming hand or another cuts away a portion of the meal-pile that is called Prince Karl of Prora-Wiek, and before long down the pile will tumble; it leans over now, I can tell you," and Arthur buttoned up his overcoat, and drew on again his right glove, which he had pulled off to count the money.

"I should be sorry to know that, if I were, as you are, a friend of the young man."

"Friend?" said he, lighting a cigar at the lamp. "Friend? pah! I am as little his friend as he is mine. He needs me, because--well, he needs me, and I need him; and whoever first ceases to need the other will give him a friendly kick; only I imagine I shall need him longer than he me, or than his lungs will hold out, which I suspect are more than half gone already."

Arthur had put on his hat, and as he stood before me, and the light fell upon his handsome, pale, smiling face, I felt a sharp pang of sorrow for him, which he probably perceived in my looks, for he began to laugh heartily, and said:

"What a doleful face you are making, as if I were on my way direct to the gallows, and not to the Albert Theatre to see the fair Bellini who makes her *début* to-night. And afterwards a supper at Tavolini's with her, if we can manage it. You see my life has its bright sides, for all. Good-by, old raven!"

And he nodded familiarly to me, and lounged out of the door, which he forgot to close behind him.

I closed it, and put fresh coals on the half-extinguished fire, trimmed the light, and sat down at my table, and said as I opened my books: "It is very singular that a young prince should take such an interest in a poor blacksmith. Bah! I should be a fool to let such people move me from my path."

But though I strove to be wise, and to banish from my thoughts the folly of the world, it kept drawing as by some magnetic power my thoughts away from the dry formulas to bright life, of which I had caught, as it were, a glimpse in the opening and closing of the door. Gay enough was the scene; a table covered with half-emptied bottles and the dainties of a dessert, and around the table a half-dozen jovial faces ruddy with the wine, and mine among them, glowing with wine and pleasure brighter than all the rest, since I was so much stronger than they that I could have

drunk them all under the table, and I sang abacchanalian song, and they all clapped and stamped, with cries of *Bravo! Encore!*

I passed my hand across my brow. What insane dream was this? What had the solitary workman to do with things which had been invented only for rich idlers? Here was the work to which I had devoted myself; it was a jealous mistress, and I could, not divide my affection between it and the fair Bellini.

I sprang up, and I believe I struck my forehead with my clenched fist without producing any perceptible result. There she stood in my imagination just as she looked when, going out of the door, she turned round to take another look at the picture--the woman who so resembled Constance--the actress who made her first appearance to-night. And in a box close to the stage would be sitting the young prince with his boon-companions, staring through their opera-glasses at the fair Bellini, while I sat here by the comfortless light of a lamp, in a chilly room, with burning head and freezing hands, putting down upon paper long rows of figures which would lead to no result.

I do not know by what steps the evil thought that had arisen in my soul suddenly mastered my will; I only know that a few minutes later I was hastening through the dark snow-covered streets, and soon arrived, breathless, at the ticket-office of the Albert Theatre. Every place was taken the box-keeper assured me, but in the lowest proscenium-box on the right there was a standing-place.

"Give me that, then."

The man looked at me with surprise; he had mentioned the fact as a mere piece of information without the slightest intention of offering it to me, whose place was evidently in the pit or gallery. He looked doubtfully at me; but he had shown me the ticket and could not now deny it, so he put the best face on it he could, and let the plebeian pass to the aristocratic box.

The box was entirely full with the exception of the place I had taken, which was in the furthest corner, on the side that looked toward the stage, so that I could see but a small portion of the latter, but could look into the depth of one of the wings, and had a view of the opposite proscenium-box, and of so much of the audience as occupied the extreme places in the various tiers.

When I took possession of this enviable place a couple of elegantly-curved heads looked around to see the disturber, and then exchanged remarks of a nature apparently not flattering to me; but as I had not the look of one who could be unceremoniously shown the door they left me unmolested, and I was allowed to give myself up to that delight which a feeling heart can find in the contemplation of an empty proscenium-box, and a side-scene in which a dozen painted ladies and gentlemen in Spanish costume were apparently only waiting the prompter's signal to step upon the stage. The signal was given. The Spanish ladies and gentlemen marched in couples out of the wing, and I observed one or two in the extreme foreground taking their places upon chairs. Then I heard a tumult upon the stage, as if from a throng crowding in, and the chorus broke forth--

"Hail, Preciosa, maiden most fair;
Twine ye fresh flowers to garland her hair!"

During this chorus castanets clicked and tambourines resounded: there was applause upon the stage, all crying "Hail to Preciosa!" and as if the cry had found an echo, the whole house, from pit to gallery, burst into a shout of "Brava! Brava!" and I saw the men applauding like mad, and the ladies straining forward to see better, and it seemed as if their rapture would have no end. At last they were quieted a little, and one of the Spanish gentlemen upon the chairs in the foreground, who was called--I think, Don Fernando--said to another: "By heaven, a lovely girl!" and the other--Don Francisco--answered: "An enchanting little beauty, indeed!" and at this the shouts and the bravas and the applause burst forth again, as if the house were coming down, so that the old gypsy mother could scarcely make herself heard when she asked if it was the gentlemen's pleasure to hear a song from her grand-daughter Preciosa.

Don Fernando asked for "something describing the happiness of a child in the arms of its loving parents." The voice of Don Alonzo, whom I could not see--a voice vibrating as if with passion--pronounced it "a cruel thoughtlessness to ask an orphan to sing of joys which heaven had denied her." Don Fernando expressed his regret that he had hit upon so ill-chosen a theme; but Don Francisco interrupted him with the words: "Hush, she is about to sing; she begins--" Then a momentary pause, and then---

I had followed all these preliminaries with an intense expectation which could have been shared by none in the house. I knew nothing of the piece, had never even heard of it, that I know, but a sort of instinct revealed to me everything that, invisible to me, was going on upon the stage; and I knew that the moment had now come in which she who took the part of Preciosa would speak for the first time. But a few seconds elapsed between the last words of the old Don Francisco and the first words of Preciosa, and yet they seemed to me an age. A wondrous intuition seized me that it was certainly *she*, and my heart beat wildly at the thought, when the

first sound of her voice reached my ear, and my head sank against the side of the box as I involuntarily gasped, "It is she!"

The ear has a faithful memory, more faithful perhaps than that of any other sense; and the ear it was that had drawn me into my passion for Constance von Zehren when in the evening I stood at the open window and listened to catch the sound of her voice when I might no longer see her, though it were but a word to her old servant. And sometimes I caught the notes of those songs which her deep, rich voice poured forth with such matchless melody. Yes; it was herself, Constance von Zehren, the daughter of the proudest of the proud, the kinswoman of Paula, an actress here upon the stage of a suburb-theatre!

How strangely the times had changed! A sadness seized me, and I could have wept; I wished to be away, for it seemed to me a crime against the memory of my unhappy friend that I should listen here to what would have been so horrible to him; but I could not go; I stood as if spellbound, my head leaned against the partition, without motion and almost without breathing; I stood thus during Preciosa's improvisation, and scarcely moved when the curtain fell and the storm of applause broke forth more furious than ever.

There was a movement in my box. A young lady, who found the high temperature of the box more than her nerves could endure, had fainted, or was about to faint, and was conducted out by two elder ladies, followed by several young gentlemen of the party. In this way some half-dozen seats were left vacant, which were at once taken by those who remained. And thus it happened that when the curtain again rose, besides the left wing I could now also see a part of the gypsy camp under the Spanish cork-trees, and one or two members of the respectable gypsy family, who were reclining about the great kettle under which a fire was flickering. The captain and Viarda have determined to go to Valencia. They are only waiting for Preciosa, who is wandering alone in the woods. The gypsies scatter in various directions; for a moment the stage is empty, and then I saw her as I had seen her before.

As I had seen her on that autumn morning under the beeches of Zehrendorf, through whose lightly-waving branches the golden sunlight fell upon her; a slender, deep brunette, in a strangely fantastic dress of green velvet with golden braidings, her beloved guitar by her side. Just as she was then--as if the years that had flown had left no trace upon her, nor been able to steal one of the dark roses from her cheeks, or quench the lustre of her radiant eyes. And just as then my heart palpitated, and I could scarcely breathe as she began to descend the rocks under the lofty trees as she before came down the mossy bank to the tarn where I was standing, and sitting upon a mossy bank at the foot of the rocks, and raising her voice--that soft rich voice of which my heart remembered every tone--she sang:

"Lone I am, but am not lonely;
When the moonbeams round me glide,
One loved presence hovers near me,
One dear form is at my side."

Just so I had heard her voice in those balmy moonlight nights, floating to me from the glimmering park, and the memory of those happy days completely overcame me. My throat seemed compressed, my heart beat violently, hot tears burst from my eyes and hid her and everything from my sight.

The thunder of applause with which the public greeted the close of the *romanza* recalled me to myself. I saw that she bowed, and prepared to obey their repeated calls; I saw the leader raise his baton, and heard the first notes of the charming melody,

"Lone I am, but am not lonely----"

when suddenly a tumult occurred in the theatre. All eyes were turned upon the lower proscenium-box on the left, directly opposite to me, into which at this moment a party of young gentlemen, elegantly dressed, and with heated faces, as if they had just been dining, entered noisily, and seated themselves upon the two front rows of chairs. In the left-hand corner a young man took his place, who seemed, by the attentions the rest paid him, to be the most distinguished among them. His right hand, in a yellow glove, hung indolently over the front of the box, and his face was turned to one of his companions. The threatening hisses of the audience did not disturb him as he conversed half aloud, and he only turned his head when the singer suddenly paused. At this moment I recognized Prince Prora, and plainly saw him change color as he caught sight of Preciosa. She had recognized him at the first glance, and the blood forsook her cheeks and her voice failed her. Suddenly she arose from her seat, as if intending to hasten off the stage; then stopped, as if about to faint, and pressed her hand upon her heart. The audience imagined that their favorite--for this the beautiful girl had at once become--was so deeply hurt by the rude behavior of these aristocratic young gentlemen that she could not sing, and they began to hiss more loudly--to cry "Silence!" and even "Turn out the aristocrats! turn out the yellow gloves!"

The young prince looked around with the expression of one whom the matter did not concern in the least, but his companions felt called upon to do more: they laughed loudly, bowed with

ironical politeness, and openly scorned the audience, who now seemed disposed to carry their threats into execution. Several Hotspurs were clambering over the backs of the seats towards the box, when suddenly the singer, who had been standing with her eyes riveted upon it, gave a cry, dropped her guitar, and would have fallen had not Don Fernando, in whom I recognized her companion at the exhibition, rushed out of the wing and caught her in his arms. At the same moment the curtain fell. I hastened out of the box, not knowing what I was doing nor where I was going, and only recovered myself when the icy-cold air of the winter night blew in my burning face.

CHAPTER VI.

I do not know how many hours I passed in wandering thus through the streets: I have only a dim remembrance of great blocks of houses rising dark into the gray of the night; of flakes of snow fluttering down from this gray into the yellow light; of vehicles rolling past me almost without sound, over the fresh-fallen snow; and figures that glided by me with heads down, sheltering themselves as they best could from the snow-storm.

There were not many of these latter, for every one sought a shelter from the bad weather. Those who were out in it were those who had no choice, such as the unhappy creatures who with pale lips murmured to the passers-by words intended to sound warm and inviting.

One of these unfortunates I thought I saw before me, as wandering through a wide street in the most distinguished quarter I reached one of the small palaces, before the door of which just then drove up at a sharp trot a carriage drawn by two fiery horses, and throwing around a bright light from both its lamps. In the light of these lamps stood the girl, crouching close to the wall, and I saw that at the moment when the equerry sprang from the box and helped his master out of the carriage she advanced a step and extended her arm from her cloak, as if she wished to stop the latter as he descended. But he had pulled the fur collar of his cloak up around his face, and as he rapidly hurried up the steps did not see the girl. The door, which had given a sight of a brilliantly-lighted hall, closed behind master and servant; the coachman touched his spirited animals lightly with the whip, the carriage rolled away and vanished into the open gate of an adjoining building.

No one remained without but myself, the poor girl, and the snow-flakes still fluttering down from the darkness into the yellow light of the lamps. The girl came towards me and passed me by. It was plain that she did not see me, but I saw her as the light of one of the lamps struck upon a face distorted by mental anguish.

"Constance!" I exclaimed.

She suddenly stopped and stared at me with her glowing black eyes.

"Constance!" I repeated, "do you not know me? It is I--George----"

"My dragon-slayer, who was to kill all the dragons in my path! Why have you not killed that one--that one!" and she laughed a frightful laugh, and pointed to the door which had closed on Prince Prora.

Her cloak was loose and fluttering in the icy wind, and I saw she was still in the costume of Preciosa. She must have rushed off the stage into the street. The snow-flakes were driving into her fevered face.

"Poor Constance!" I murmured, and wrapped the cloak closer around her shoulders, drew her arm in mine, anxious first of all to lead her from this place. She willingly followed me, and we walked thus through the long, wind-swept streets, I looking down from time to time at the poor girl, who clung even closer to me, and asking her in a compassionate tone how she was, and whither I should take her.

I had several times repeated these questions without receiving an answer, when she suddenly stopped, and murmured with pale lips--"I can go no further!" It seemed to me that she was on the point of fainting. I was in the greatest embarrassment. There was not a public conveyance to be seen anywhere in the street, and in our objectless flight we had wandered far from the fashionable quarter where, upon my repeated inquiries, she informed me that she lodged. But it so happened, I know not how, that we had strayed into the neighborhood of my own lodging, and I thought it the best, indeed the only thing I could do, to take her there. "You can at least remain there long enough to warm yourself, while I get a carriage to take you home." Without answering

a word she followed me. I had the key of the outer door, so that I did not need to disturb the old watchman; and his dog, that came growling up to us, as soon as he recognized me, leaped about me, wagging his tail.

I congratulated myself that I had hit upon this expedient, for Constance hung heavily upon my arm, and I had almost to carry her across the yard and up the steps to my room. And when we had reached the room, and by the dim light of the fire I had led her to the arm-chair, and lighted my lamp, I saw that her eyes were vacant of expression and half-closed, while a deep pallor overspread her whole face.

My confusion in a situation so new for me was less than I should have supposed. I had no other thought than as promptly as possible to assist one who was in such urgent need of assistance. I stirred the fire until it blazed brightly; I took off her cloak, now saturated with the melted snow, and wrapped her in a plaid; I folded a coverlid around her feet, and warmed her cold hands in my own. Then it occurred to me that probably a cup of tea, which I could prepare in a moment, would be of service; so I got out the tea-things from my cupboard, boiled the water in a tin kettle over my fire, and poured her out a cup of the refreshing beverage, not forgetting first to add a little good cognac. She drank it eagerly; I offered her a second cup, which she also drank.

The warm drink seemed to have greatly revived her: she looked at the pictures on the walls, at the furniture, and last at me, and said, reaching out to me her small hand, in which the warm life began to pulsate again, "How good you are! how good! You are the best creature I have ever known. How much happier might my life have been had you come to our house a few months earlier: you good, good George!"

It was again the Constance of those old times: the same fascinating prattle in the same soft melodious voice: and I, who knew so well what confidence to place in all this kindness and gentleness, stood like the great oaf that I was, my whole soul thrilled by the sweet, unforgotten tones, and trembling from head to foot at the touch of her soft hand. But my reason made an effort to obtain the supremacy once for all. I drew my hand from hers, stepped back to the fireplace, and said, while with great apparent calmness I was warming my hands behind my back:

"You are very kind; but your kindness must not make me forget that I have undertaken to see you safely home. If you are so disposed, and feel sufficiently recovered, I will now go for a carriage."

"You are still angry with me," she said, leaning back in the chair and looking up to me under her long lashes. "Why are you angry? What have I done to you? What have I done that another in my place would not have done? For my love I gave reputation, home, myself: was I to bear so tender a solicitude for the feelings of a youth, who scarcely knew himself what those feelings were? Did you love me? Did you ever love me?" she repeated, springing up and looking into my eyes. "You never loved me. You could not else stand so calmly there, and you are not worth the regret it cost me to play off that little deception on you. Do you know that I was so childish as never entirely to get over it? That your friendly face with its honest eyes looked continually in upon my dreams, and drew from me tears of remorse? You, of all men, have least right to be angry with me."

And she threw herself back in the chair, and defiantly folded her arms over her breast.

"Who said that I was angry with you?" I replied.

"You must be angry," she returned with a sort of violence. "I will have you angry: should I wish you to despise me? There is no third case possible. The third would be indifference; and I am not indifferent to you, am I, George? Not indifferent, though you are now making an amazing effort to appear so. When two persons have once stood as near to each other as we two, and are connected by such recollections as ours, they can never entirely lose each other in the desert of indifference. Do you know that some weeks ago, when I saw a likeness of you in the exhibition, I was startled as if I had seen a ghost, and could not bring myself away from it, and afterwards I returned to it again and again, and wept many tears at the thought of you? Then I saw by the catalogue that it was painted by my cousin, and I made a pair of you both, a happy pair, and blessed you in my inmost heart. Now indeed I see that it is otherwise. What are you? What are you doing! How did you come to this strange place?" and she looked again around the room.

"I am a simple workman," I answered; "a blacksmith in a neighboring machine-shop."

"Blacksmith!--machine-shop!--what do you say? Who would have said this that afternoon when I saw you setting out for the hunt with the others, in high hunting-boots and a short velvet coat, with your gun and game-pouch, so tall and stately, the tallest and stateliest of all! What would my father have said? You always sided with him--perhaps you do so still; but believe me, he did not deal well with me; and if I am to blame, and am an outcast and accursed, it all, all falls upon his head. Do you know that the old Prince Prora, when my father grew indignant at his refusal, flung in his face the taunt: 'My son cannot marry your bastard, nor can I fight with a smuggler!' My father sprang at him and would have strangled him--as if that could restore his honor or mine! And you see, George, of all this I knew nothing: I first learned it from Kar--from *him* when he proposed to abandon me in a foreign country. Can a man know what it is to a girl, when she has

loved a man, be he worthy or unworthy--given herself to him wholly, staked her all upon him, like a desperate gamester upon a single card--to be thrust out by him into wretchedness, with mockery and shame? Not into common wretchedness, such as seeks a subsistence by the light of a poor working-lamp, or in the glare of the street-lanterns--I was always surrounded by splendor and luxury, and the Marchese of Serra di Falco was as much richer than he as sunny Sicily is fairer than our foggy native island. And yet it was wretchedness--boundless, glittering wretchedness--which no woman escapes who is deceived in her love, whatever the compensation that may be offered her. I tried hate; but hate is the twin brother of love, and they can not deny their common parentage. There is but one remedy for love, and that is revenge. Avenge me on him! You can do it; you are so strong; you have already once had him in your power--that night when you met him in the woods. He told me about it and asked who the giant was. Why did you let him escape? Why did you not strangle him--brain him?--and then come to me and say, 'I am your lover, for I am stronger than the other,' and take me in your arms and carry me off? But you men never show us that you are men, and you wonder then that we play with you! As if we could do anything else with a creature that we do not see to be stronger than ourselves, and often so much weaker! Show what you can be--what you are! Crush the head of this serpent, and I will fall at your feet and worship you!"

While thus speaking she had let fall the plaid in which I had wrapped her and had risen from the chair, and with her last words she sank upon her knees, holding out her arms to me. The flickering light of the fire played upon her fantastic gypsy dress, gleamed upon her dark hair which hung in dishevelled locks over her cheeks and shoulders, and glowed upon the face which had so fatal a beauty for me. The nameless charm with which she had at first fascinated me overcame me with all the old might: my heart beat as if it would burst from my bosom, and feverish shudders ran over my whole body, but with a vehement effort I collected myself, stretched out my ice-cold hand and raised her, and said:

"You apply to the wrong person. Entrust your vengeance upon the prince to one who has a nearer interest in it: to the young man, for instance, upon whose arm you were leaning when I saw you in the gallery, and who, this very evening, if I am not mistaken, was the personage in the play whom Preciosa made happy with her favor."

Constance had risen slowly, her eyes ever fixed upon mine, and began to pace the room with hasty steps, pausing at intervals before me, and speaking as she walked:

"How base you men are; how horribly base and unfeeling! Was it for this reason--to heap these cruel reproaches upon me--that you enticed me here? Is this your hospitality? Do you think your fire has warmed me too much, that you now drench me with ice-water? But your heart is so cold only because your brain is so dull; because, for instance, you cannot comprehend how a woman who, from childhood up, has been lapped in visions of future splendor, and has seen her life's dream almost realized, when this dream at once scatters like light mist, and she, with her high-wrought feelings and pampered taste, with her cherished pretensions to beauty and luxury, is about to be given over to a coarse, commonplace existence--that such a woman of necessity must catch at the wretched reflection of the brilliant reality that is irrecoverably gone; that the beloved of princes can afterwards be nothing else than a stage princess. And not even this pitiful reflection does he leave me undisturbed! Again he forces himself upon me, and embitters my poor triumph. But why do I speak of all this to a man who understands it not, and can never understand it--who has chosen the happy lot of a modest existence full of labor, and toil, and quiet sleep?"

I had thrown myself into the chair from which she had arisen, and she stood before me, and went on in a strange, soft, trembling voice:

"If I could only sleep! If I could only sleep! Could I but drink from the fountain that daily flows for you, and will flow for that happy woman whom some day you will bring to this peaceful hearth! Could I banish the fever that here burns me, and here allows me no rest"--she pointed with these words to her breast and her head--"no rest--none! Oh to sleep thus, amid the perfumes of rosemary and violets--a sweet sleep upon a strong, true heart!"

And as I sat with bowed head, and heart filled with pain, I felt a pair of soft arms wind about my neck, a swelling bosom pressed to mine, and a pair of glowing lips that sought my own. Had the dream which the enamored, passionate boy had dreamed become reality, or was I really dreaming? And was it only as one who strives to arouse himself from a dream that I pressed her to me, then sprang to my feet and let her glide from my arms, and again caught her to my heart?

The light which had been burning dimly now sank into the socket and expired, but in the flickering glimmer of the fire I saw the outlines of the lovely form that clung and pressed down to my breast, and as if in a dream I heard a voice murmur at my ear: "to sleep sweetly upon a strong, true heart!"

CHAPTER VII.

"Are you sick, my dear George?" said Doctor Snellius, entering my room one evening.

I had not seen the doctor since we last parted so unpleasantly, and the visit of the man with the keen spectacles and the keen eyes behind them was doubly disagreeable to one who wished to avoid the gaze of every one. He must have noticed my embarrassment, for the tone of his voice was unusually soft and gentle when he spoke again, after taking his place by the fire.

"I knew it from Klaus Pinnow, who perceived that something was amiss with you, and from Paula, who has perceived nothing because you have not been near her, and who sends me to you for this reason. What is it, my friend? Your hand is hot, you look wretchedly, and you have decided fever. What is amiss?"

"I feel quite well," I answered--drawing my large hand out of the doctor's, which was small and delicate as a woman's, and with it screening my brow and eyes from the sharp spectacles--"perfectly well."

"You must then have some mental trouble, some great distress, which affects natures like yours more powerfully than severe sickness does others. Is it so?"

"You may be right there," I answered.

"And can you not tell me what it is?" asked the doctor, drawing nearer to me, and laying his small hand upon my other hand which rested on my knee.

"It is not worth talking about," I answered. "A curious story--something like one which I have read somewhere or other--about a young man who loved a beautiful woman who was a witch, and one night as he stretched out his hand to take hers she had vanished--out of the chimney--to the Blocksberg--to the devil, I suppose!"

And I sprang up, paced the room for a few minutes in great agitation, and then threw myself again into my chair.

"The story is rather too mystical to build a diagnosis upon," the doctor remarked, in a kind voice, drawing still nearer, and, as he could not take my hand, laying his own familiarly upon my knee.

"Then listen to this: A youth of nineteen loved a beautiful girl of about the same age--loved her passionately, as one loves at those years, especially, when solitude and romantic associations heighten the charm. He was deceived by the girl, and finally shamefully betrayed; and yet he never could forget her, and in the eight or nine years that follows his heart palpitated in his breast whenever he thought of her. And then an accident brought her to him again--just as he had expected to find her--a lost girl, who had been the mistress of I know not how many men. He cannot doubt it--indeed she tells him so herself--and yet while she tells him his heart throbs violently, and in his soul he longs to join the long train of his predecessors. And when she opens her arms he hastened to sink upon her breast in which there beats no heart. He plainly feels that no heart beats there; but a childish, an insane pity seizes him: he will warm this chilled heart again with the glow of his burning kisses, with his own heart's blood. And the phantom drinks his heart's blood--one, two, three nights; and when he wakes in the third, she has vanished as witches vanish, and the next night he sees her at the theatre coquetting with a young dandy, who drives home with her, while outside----"

"Stands the poor man, and beats his head with his fist, and tears out his hair by handfuls; we know all about that!" said Doctor Snellius, and softly patted my knee. "We know all about that," he repeated, touching me still more softly; "it is painful; but when a jaw-tooth with three long roots is pulled out, that is painful too, and so is the setting a broken arm. And I think the poor man whom I have just left is not in a frame of mind to be envied. It is a poor workman in your establishment; you doubtless know him; his name is Jacob Kraft, and he works, if I am not mistaken, in your shop. Well, his wife, a dear good woman, whom the young fellow had courted for many a long day, nine days ago bore a dead child, and now she lies dead herself, and by her bedside kneels poor Jacob and wishes that he had never been born. I do not think the poor fellow's feelings are to be envied. And young Frau Müller is not particularly happy either. Her husband left home this morning, well and cheerful, to go to his work on the new tramway, had his breast crushed in between two wagons, and will die to-night. Besides, my friend, we must all die, and 'after nine it will all be over,' as the manager of the theatre said when the pit hissed."

"Dying is not so much," I said; "I have more than once in my life wished to die, and thought it rather a greater thing that I did not, but kept on living this cursed life."

"And you did right, my friend," said the doctor.

"I am not sure," I replied, "if those Romans of whom I heard at school did not act both nobler and wiselier when they fell upon their swords so soon as the game was lost."

"Every one to his taste," said the doctor. "When a horse breaks his leg we shoot him; but with a man, we set it again; or, if it cannot be saved, cut it off and buckle on a leg of wood or cork, with which he hobbles on the remainder of his earthly pilgrimage. You have no idea, my friend, how little is really necessary to life: hardly more than head and heart. Yes, scarcely even that. You have, no doubt, yourself observed how many a man goes through life without a head; and that one can live with half a heart, or a quarter, I can testify from personal experience."

The doctor said this in a low, dejected tone of voice, as if talking to himself. And he went on still, as if talking to himself, softly stroking my knee, and looking into the fire.

"Yes! with half a heart. It is not very easy or very pleasant living; one sometimes feels as if the breast would be crushed, or as if we must lie down just where we happen to be, and never rise up again. But we do get up again, and do some good, if not to ourselves to another whose shoe pinches him somewhere, and whom with our experience and our cobbler's skill we may possibly help. For, my friend, there are very few who are able to pull off their shoes, which in truth is not merely the best but the only way to be rid of all pain. So these people must be helped; and my life for many years has been but a pondering and study how this may be done on a large scale; for in a smaller sphere, as far as very limited private means can reach, I very well know what is to be done, and do all I can. *Au revoir*, my dear George: I still have a pair of old shoes to patch and a corn or two to trim."

Doctor Snellius gave me a friendly slap on the knee, clapped his worn hat on his bald head, turned in the door to give me an amicable nod, and left me alone.

A man not naturally ignoble is perhaps never more disposed or better fitted to sympathize in other's misfortunes than when he himself has a heavy sorrow. Thus the horrible treachery which Constance had practiced upon me opened my eyes and my heart to the doctor's trouble. That the singular man loved Paula I had never doubted; but as he always draped his love in a humorous cloak, I, in my simplicity, had never seen how strong and deep this love was. It seemed to me so evident that this dwarfish figure, with the misshapen bald head and the grotesquely ugly face, could never be loved by a beautiful slender maiden, as one looks upon it as a matter of course that a man who goes on crutches cannot dance upon the tight-rope. Now for the first time I saw what this man must have suffered through all these years--the man who, not without reason, and assuredly not without a reference to himself, said that a man to live scarcely required more than a head and a heart. And then I compared him, the stoical sufferer, with myself, and asked myself if he, the pure, the good, the noble, did not better deserve Paula's love than I, for this good fortune had always seemed to me a kind of miracle, of which I had ever felt myself unworthy, but never so unworthy as now.

Perhaps more than one youth of eighteen, who may read these lines, will smile compassionately, in the consciousness of his maturer experience, at the man of twenty-eight, who took such a trifle so deeply to heart. But he should consider that I had grown up among the simplest associations, had been eight years in prison, and now since I had lived in the city had employed all my time in carrying out my determination to be a good machinist. How could I have accumulated the experience of my wise censor? How could I know that love-troubles of this kind are to a man of the world what scars are to a brigand--not only honorable in his own eyes and those of his companions, but also in the eyes of the fair whose grace and favor he counts upon winning? I was but a great boy with all my twenty-eight years; I confess it with contrition, and beg my wise friend of eighteen to have patience with me.

Perhaps he will find this a difficult task, when he learns that I carried my folly so far as to feel convinced that I had given myself to the fair sinner, body and soul, forever, and that it was my duty henceforth to live for her; to save her if I could, to perish with her if I must; and that I felt myself nowise released from this obligation and free once more, when she wrote me a delicate little perfumed billet, saying that I was still as ever her good George, whom she loved dearly, but that she could not live with me, and had no wish to be saved by me, far less to perish with me.

But in my own eyes I was and remained a condemned criminal, severed from the companionship of the good and pure. Never for me should the flame glow on the domestic hearth, never a pure woman make me happy with her hand, never laughing children play around my knees. The curse with which unkind Nature had smitten the good doctor--the curse of never being loved as his heart yearned to be--I had in my folly invoked upon myself; and thus nothing remained for me but, like him, to renounce individual love, and, like him, to draw comfort and solace from the overflowing fountain of love for suffering humanity.

I was able to see, later, that the doctor, as wise as he was skilful, judged pretty accurately of my condition, and took a far less tragical view of it than I did. But the state of my thoughts and feelings at the moment fitted very well with his purposes. For years he had looked upon me as his pupil, and he might do so in more than one light. He had a great scheme in view in which he counted on his pupil's assistance, and this, in his opinion, was one step necessary to success.

I had always known that the worthy man, although he constantly maintained that while it was true that stupidity was a misfortune, it was none the less true that misfortune was in most cases

mere stupidity--cherished a great love for the unfortunate stupid and the stupid unfortunates. How great this love was, I was now to know. He made me theoretically and practically acquainted with those social questions with which the whole world is now occupied, but then were only seen in their full importance by a few enlightened minds. He showed me the state of things in England, in France, and at home, and what might also be done in Germany upon the pattern of what had been done in England and France. Then he spoke of benefit-societies, of co-operative associations, and workmen's unions, of play-schools for children and trade-schools for adults, and all the means that have been devised to fight the universal enemy upon his own ground. At this time there had been next to nothing of this sort done among us: which was all the more unfortunate, as just at this time, with the springing up of the first railroads, manufactures received a quite unlooked-for expansion, the increased demand for labor brought an enormous influx of workmen, and with this an enormous increase of those evils which even under the old patriarchal relations it had not been possible entirely to prevent.

In my frame of mind at the time I was soon brought to enter into his views with passionate ardor. An ordinary workman, as I was, in brotherly intercourse with my fellow-workmen, I heard and saw everything that went on among them. Where my knowledge was at fault, Klaus, from his fuller experience, could supply the defect, and further than either reached the keen vision of the doctor, who saw into the darkest recesses which poverty and misery hide from the eyes of all but the physician. So we three interchanged experiences, and many an evening, after the heavy work of the day, sat around the doctor's table in consultation over the projects which the doctor had so long been nursing.

Alas! it was little, very little that we could do. On the one side, we had to contend with the stupidity of those who would rather go to ruin than abandon their old routine; and on the other side, with the dull selfishness of those who could not see why they might not prosper, even if the others were ruined.

"It is the old story of Hammer and Anvil," I said one evening to my two friends. "The workmen have so accustomed themselves to the dull passive part of the anvil that they can set nothing in motion, even when their own interest manifestly requires it. The manufacturers, on the other hand, think that as they are now the gentlemen of the hammer, they have only to pound away upon the anvil which, heaven be thanked, has remained patient so far."

"Have I not always told you that it has been so as long as the world has stood?" replied the doctor. "Now you see it for yourself."

"But there must be some remedy discoverable!" I cried. "I cannot let go the precious faith of our beloved friend."

"Not in the way in which he sought it," returned the doctor, shaking his big head. "He imagined that he could make men free by teaching them the dignity and sanctity of labor. They were not willing to work when they should have been; now they must whether they will or not; and my task is to bring them to *will* that which they *must*. They were not free when they were at liberty; I would make them truly free while they are in captivity, that from bondage they may come forth as free men"--such speeches as these, how often have we heard from his lips? And he firmly believed it all, noble enthusiast that he was, because he did not know the world, did not know that labor is a commodity in the market of the world, which, like every other, is subject to the great laws of supply and demand; and that these may stand so adjusted that the free diligent workman may find himself in a pass where neither his freedom, his diligence, nor his work is worth a farthing. So the cause of Anvil *versus* Hammer is appealed to a higher court, where it will be decided according to the great laws of history and political economy, with a verdict--as our friend had correctly discovered--, that both parties were guilty and liable for the costs of the suit."

"That may quiet our anxiety as to the final result," I said; "but if I rightly understood our friend, the better man might in himself compose this difference, as he is conscious that at every moment he at once acts and suffers, gives and receives, bears and is borne--in a word, is both Hammer and Anvil."

"Very fine and honorable for him who so penetrates himself with this truth that it influences all his actions," replied the doctor. "But the common good is less dependent upon this than it seems; and lucky that it is so, for so soon as the individual has power, for instance riches, he is seized with a damnable itching to abuse it. What then is to become of poor humanity?"

"And yet you abused me that I did not clutch with both hands at your offer to intrust all your fortune to me, which I should have cheated you out of forthwith, as a good start on my way to a million."

"That is a very different matter," said the doctor, in some confusion.

"I do not see why," I answered. "What security have you that I can resist temptation better than another? Or do I, with my broad shoulders, look as if I would go through the needle's eye easier than our worthy commerzienrath?"

"Do not compare yourself with that monster," cried the doctor in a rage. "Did I never show you

the letter in which he answered my request that he would take an interest in our projects? Here, you can skip that part--a coarse joke about people who count their chickens before they are hatched--but here: 'Co-operative associations? Stuff and nonsense! There is a shop at every corner. Beneficial societies for the sick?--burial societies? I want healthy workmen, and have always had as many as I wanted, and more too. The sick are your affair, not mine, respected Herr Doctor; and as for dying, it is not likely that either of us can hinder that?'"

"He is a fool!" cried the doctor, tearing the letter in fragments and stamping upon it; "a fellow with no bowels; no better than a caterpillar in human form!"

"But so is every one who has a million, doctor."

"Oh, you always have an apology for him," crowed Doctor Snellius.

In this he was not altogether wrong: I could never feel as indignant with the man as I should have felt with another. For, after all, the man in the blue frock-coat with gold buttons, and the yellow nankeen trousers, was a figure that belonged to the days of my childhood, upon whom, be he what he might, there ever lay a light from the sun that had shone upon those days. And what this is, is known to every one who has had a childhood; which, unhappily, is more than many can say of themselves. Let this sun but once shine upon any one, nay, upon any lifeless thing, and they are invested with a charter that at all times we willingly respect. And then there was another reason or two for my looking upon the rich commerzienrath in another light than did my good but bitter friend. To be sure, when I thought of it, I could not comprehend--nor have I comprehended to this day--how this man could be the father of the lovely, blue-eyed Hermine; but so he was, like an uncouth, rough, prickly, and not over-clean shell, in which lay this precious pearl, and which had to be grasped if one wished to enjoy the sight of the pearl's beauty. This was easier for me, as I had always seen shell and pearl together; that is, I had always seen the best side of the shell, the smoothest and most agreeable side, which it turned towards the daughter pearl within. Another reason was, the old cynic seemed to me a kind of original in his way, and I had always had a liking for that class of men.

I had not seen him since our meeting on board the steamer, although he had been once or twice in the city and had visited the works. The winter he had spent, according to his custom, in Uselin, but with the opening of spring had taken up his residence at Zehrendorf, where his various new arrangements urgently required his presence. Hermine was with him, who for years had spent her summers in the country, having an intense delight in country life and pleasures. As a matter of course, Fräulein Amalie Duff accompanied her young lady.

All this I learned from Paula, who indeed was the only person who kept me informed of what went on in the Streber family, as she kept up a pretty active correspondence with Hermine. Whether or not I was honored with a passing mention in their letters I could never rightly learn. Sometimes I thought so, and again I thought not; and I did not like to ask Paula directly. I had wished indeed to ask her not to mention to Hermine that I was employed in her father's establishment, but I had never done so, because it seemed to me like a bit of childish vanity to request that I should not be spoken of to a girl who, very possibly, never asked about me. But I almost believed that Paula had divined and complied with my unspoken wish, and that they knew nothing of me. Even if I were entirely indifferent to Hermine, I was well assured that I occupied no small place in the kind heart of her duenna, and that she certainly would never cease seeking faithfully for her "Richard" until she found him. But over all these things there hung a mist, which was only to be lifted for me later, perhaps too late. Once or twice, it is true, I was struck by the warmth with which Paula, especially lately, spoke of Hermine. "She is a charming creature," she once said, "with the happiest advantages; and she will develop into a noble woman if she finds the right kind of a husband." And again: "Happy the man who wins this treasure! But he must be a man worthy the name, for I fancy the keeping will be a harder task than the winning."

Did Paula know that after that memorable meeting on the steamer, as the wanderer plodded his lonely way towards the great city, the blue eyes of Hermine were his lodestars? When she thus praised the fair girl to me--and she knew what weight her praises bore--did she wish to show me clearly the folly of certain fancies which might have arisen in my mind? But what ground had I given her for believing me capable of this folly? Just here there was a secret, like a dark cloud, between Paula and myself; and it was not the only one, nor, unfortunately, the darkest. I had dropped no hint--how could I?--of my unhappy meeting with Constance: it was the only wound which her pure hand might not touch; a wound which must secretly bleed until it closed of itself. But such a secret wound, which one carefully hides, pains us thrice as much, and is thrice as long in healing; and the worst is, that with it we have an evil conscience, and shrink from the touch of the hand that is dearest to us, always dreading that at some time, unwares, it will make the cruel discovery.

Thus it was now between Paula and myself. I had never visited her so rarely, never been so cautious in my speech with her--indeed there were times when the unwavering kindness of this lovely and amiable girl was really painful to me. I trembled lest the conversation should turn upon Constance, or lest Paula should learn that Constance and the Bellini were one and the same person. Certainly, if no one else did, the young Prince Prora knew the secret; and so, probably, did Arthur.

But my uneasiness seemed groundless; neither the prince nor Arthur repeated their visit, and

I only learned from rumor that the prince, after throwing the whole residence into uproar by his extravagances and caprices, had been sent into the country by his father, and that Arthur had accompanied him. About the same time the newspapers, which then occupied themselves much more with matters of this sort than in our agitated times, reported that the manager of the Theatre Royal had at once engaged the young artist who had excited so much admiration at the Albert Theatre, but that in high circles it was thought unfit that a star, however brilliant, should be transferred from a comparatively humble sphere to the lofty heights of a royal stage without a becoming process of transition, and that on this account they had given Fräulein Bellini leave of absence of several months, to be applied to filling certain deficiencies in her *repertoire*, and to careful cultivation of her eminent talent, for which purpose she had at once undertaken a journey to Paris. Others added: In the company of the *premier amoureux* of the Albert Theatre, Herr Lenz, who also had been engaged for the Theatre Royal; or, as others again said, had to be engaged because the Bellini, as self-willed as she was beautiful, made that gentleman's engagement a condition of her own. In this connection the papers gave the interesting information that Herr Lenz's real name was Herr von Sommer, and that he was the son of a high functionary--of the minister, according to some--of a small neighboring state. The origin of the fair Bellini was also surmised to be traceable to high-quarters, but they were not at present able--others phrased it that it was not altogether discreet--to lift the mysterious veil.

When I heard this I drew a long breath, like a man frightened by a ghost, when he hears the clock strike one. The spectre may come again the next night, but for twenty-three hours at least he will be undisturbed. I might be sure of not meeting her for several months; in the evening, when I returned from Paula's house, I could pass through the street in which she lived without seeing her range of windows lighted, or carriages with lighted lamps and footmen in livery standing at the door. Yes, the cold, cruel, ghostly winter night was at an end: once more it was morning, once more it was spring.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was spring once more; the first spring for nine years that I had greeted as a free man. True that fair season had not debarred me the sight of her loveliness in the prison: I recalled with pleasure the bright mornings which I had spent in the superintendent's large garden, and how I had stood at the Belvedere and looked over the high bastion to the reach of sea which flashed a greeting to me under the bright sky. But this pleasure was never without a dash of sadness, like the greeting of a dear friend, who from the deck of an outward bound steamer waves a farewell to us who are standing on the shore--"God be with you!"--"And with you!" A parting word, a regret that we cannot go with him, and then silent and earnest we return to our silent, earnest work.

All was different now; different and far fairer, though I missed the great garden with its trees and flowers, and the sea I loved so well. But, on the other hand, there were no walls here nor bolted doors; and it was no passing greeting that I exchanged with the spring at a distance, but a clasp of the hand and a kindly embrace. We met in the evening, when, after my work was done, I rambled for an hour in the remotest parts of the great city park, regions to which seldom any one extended his wanderings, and where the nightingale sang undisturbed her sweet song in the budding bushes. And we met again when I stood on my balcony before sunrise and looked eastwards, where over the crowd of roofs and chimneys the eastern sky was bordered with purple clouds; and an hour later, as I went to work, when the first rays fell upon the pointed gables of the smoky old factory buildings, and the sparrows twittered so merrily on the eaves and in the crannies of the walls, and the earliest swallows darted over the yard, alert and busy as if the thick black laver of coal-dust that covered it was a sheet of the clearest water.

Yes; spring is here once more. I feel her warm breath playing around my cheeks and in my hair, and her kiss upon my brow, and I said to myself: "All must come right yet! All the snow which was piled up in the long winter nights is melted away, and the ice which then froze is melted; should not the frost which fell upon my heart in those winter nights also vanish away? Kind, gentle spring, and stern, earnest labor, what could resist you both when you go hand in hand? and what heart not beat more courageously that you two have filled?"

So I threw myself into the expanded arms of spring, and I caught the hard, honest hand of labor, and felt almost all my old strength and confidence once more. Almost all--assuredly, I thought, it could not be long before all were restored.

There was work enough in our establishment, and there would have been much more if the commerzienrath could have resolved to undertake the building of locomotives. The matter was one of extreme importance; indeed in my opinion it involved the question of the very existence,

or, at least, of the prosperity of the works. If our establishment in this branch of industry did not comply with the requirements of the time, its well-earned reputation was at an end. Rival establishments, that were perhaps less favorably situated than ours, would throw themselves with all their energy into the new movement, and outstrip us, possibly for ever; for in the great departments of industry, if anywhere, not to progress is to retrograde irretrievably. Strangely enough, the man usually so intelligent and enterprising shrank from a resolution which to be sure was not to be carried out without great exertions, great alterations, and some temporary sacrifices. New machinery would have to be procured, the steam-power increased, the staff of the office and the force of workmen enlarged; new buildings would have to be erected, and this could not be done without bringing to a decision that long-pending question of the purchase of the ground on which my lodging stood. All this demanded ample funds, clear insight, and prompt decision.

Now with the *commerzienrath* there was, at least according to general opinion, no lack of money; but he seemed by no means so well furnished with the two other necessary qualities. All who understood anything of the matter--the manager of the works, a plain but intelligent man, with whom I had several times been brought into contact in matters concerning the workmen, and always found him friendly, the young chief of the Technical Bureau, the head-foreman, even Klaus himself--all were impatient and dissatisfied with their employer, who still held back from saying a decisive word, though every month of delay was an irreparable loss. But probably no one was more impatient and dissatisfied than I. I had carefully studied the recent brilliant history of railways in England and Belgium, and was convinced that the system would expand with us into colossal proportions, with an immense demand for locomotives. Then the locomotive had always been a favorite study of my beloved teacher, whose genius had already invented, even with the limited means at his command, and introduced in his models, the most important improvements which would be demanded by the growth and development of this branch of industry. It had been my good fortune to be allowed to help him in his theoretical studies and in the construction of his models, and my brain glowed as I saw that what had been planned and devised in the quiet closet of the thinker would now become a reality. So must a racer feel when he sees before him the course which he is to run, and yet is held back from the start, however he may champ the bit and paw the ground. I pondered and pondered how it might be possible to overcome this fatal resistance. At last I hit upon this plan: I would draw up a memorial, in which I would set forth in detail the reasons which rendered an enlargement of the establishment an absolute necessity, and at the same time a plan for carrying out this extension. This paper was to be sent to the *commerzienrath*, and it was to be hoped that it would not be without its effect upon him. The doctor, to whom I communicated my plan, did not exactly disapprove it, but by no means entered into it with the warmth that I had hoped. To be sure he was not qualified to comprehend the theoretical necessity of the case, nor did he share my passion for the locomotive; but it was impossible that he could be blind to the fact that I would open a way to give bread to hundreds and hundreds of workmen, and this was really the chief object with him. Instead, he again pressed me to accept his offer, and even to set up an establishment with his money, and we had very nearly had another quarrel when, for the second time, I felt myself obliged to decline his generous offer.

But how could I rob him, whose whole life was a sacrifice for the poor and miserable, of the means which he so generously and judiciously employed, if my enterprise failed, as well might happen? No! my plans were to be realized, if at all, with other money than the doctor's. But where was I to get it without stealing it, or waiting for the coming of the Javanese aunt, whose speedy arrival was an unconditional article of faith with Klaus and Christel? So my thoughts were compelled to revert to the *commerzienrath*, and one evening I began to write my memorial, which I completed in a few nights.

But no sooner was it finished than a new and weighty consideration presented itself. If I signed the paper with my name, my incognito was at an end; and, even if I did not sign it, it came to about the same thing, for it could only be the production of some one thoroughly acquainted with the establishment, and the *commerzienrath* would of course inquire for the author, and after creating much talk it would sooner or later be traced to me, when I should probably find that by a useless secrecy I had injured the cause I was advocating.

It was a perplexing dilemma, and I went about as in a dream, ever pondering over the unlucky memorial which lay finished upon my table, and might just as well have been left unwritten.

"But you must come to some decision," said Paula, "and here there can really be no question what that decision should be."

From a very intelligible feeling of shyness I had refrained from telling Paula what it was that lay so heavy on my mind; but Kurt, who worked in the establishment under Klaus's direction, and almost every evening, when he came from work, spent an hour with me, could not be kept ignorant of what I had in hand, and he had told all to his sister.

"You must not be angry with Kurt for it," said Paula; "he cannot imagine that you would wish to keep anything secret from your sister."

"Have you then no secrets from me?" I said.

"What do you mean?" she asked, with a look in which I thought I detected traces of confusion.

I did not wish to press my question, for this would have brought me to the ticklish point which I had so carefully avoided--whether there was any mention of me in the correspondence between Paula and Hermine; so I muttered something unintelligible in reply, and brought the conversation back to my plans, my hopes, and wishes in reference to the works.

"You have lately kept me so uninformed as to what is going on in your world that I am quite in the dark. Let me read your memorial; give it to Kurt this evening to bring home."

This was on a Sunday, and the next week there was much work to do in the factory, for me especially. A large machine of peculiar construction had been built, intended to operate in a chalk-quarry, which the commerzienrath had opened at Zehrendorf among his other industrial undertakings there. I was employed in mounting the machine. All went smoothly on: the bed-plate had been laid exactly level, and some little unevenness left in planing corrected; the fly-wheel was hung, the journals adjusted, and the bolt-holes drilled; the machine was at last so far finished that all that remained to be done was the arrangement of the guiding-apparatus, and the regulation of the piston-rod. This was also set right; but when the foreman took hold of the flywheel to set the machine in motion to try it, it became evident that the driving-rod did not work with a true motion. The foreman and I looked at each other anxiously; we most carefully compared the dimensions of the various parts by scale with those of the plan, but there was no error discoverable.

"This is a confounded piece of business!" said the foreman.

"What is the matter?" asked the head-foreman, Roland, who came up at the moment.

Head-foreman Roland was a man of Cyclopean stature, whose left leg had once been broken in some machinery, giving him a limping gait, of which he was rather proud after once hearing that the god Vulcan, the patron of his craft, had the same infirmity. Head-foreman Roland had moreover so good an opinion of himself that under the projecting thatch of his thick moustache, around the left corner of his mouth, there was usually playing a consequential smile, which from time to time glided into the dense forest of his bushy beard and whiskers, where it continued its course unseen.

When the matter was explained to him he looked first at the foreman and then at the two workmen, each in turn, let the consequential smile play under the thatch, and said: "There must be some mistake in the execution; give me the plans."

These were handed him, and he began to compare measurements, just as we had done before he came up; but the longer this comparison lasted, and brought no lurking error to light, the feebler grew the smile, and it had vanished entirely in the forest depths when a quarter of an hour later he went with the plans in his hands to the Technical Bureau, muttering in a surly tone that there must be some blunder in the cursed plans.

This had been my own idea at first, but I had changed my opinion. A suspicion began to dawn upon me that the drawings might be all correct, and the measurements exactly followed, and that the cause of the trouble lay deeper.

So I stood with my arms crossed upon my breast while the foreman, with the other workmen, and some few more who had come up to look on, as work was now over for the evening, exchanged opinions on the subject. Some thought that the thread of a screw on one of the shafts had been cut to an erroneous angle, and others had other suggestions to make.

"The thing must be simple enough," said Herr Windfang, of the Technical Bureau, who now entered with the troubled head-foreman.

There was nothing Cyclopean about Herr Windfang; on the contrary, he was an elegant young gentleman, with a touch of dandyism about him.

"It must be simple enough," he repeated; "try it again."

I cannot tell how many times they tried it, but the abominable driving-rod persisted in its false movement.

"Give me the drawings," said Herr Windfang. "Ah, here they are. The error must be in the work."

While they were once more making the comparisons and measurements, which the foreman and myself and then Herr Roland had made in vain, I had studied the matter further, and was so convinced of my view that when Herr Windfang, very much out of countenance, looked at Herr Roland, and Herr Roland, with a faint gleam of a smile playing in the left corner of his mouth, looked at Herr Windfang, I could no longer keep silent, and said:

"It is no use to compare measurements: the dimensions all agree: we shall not get at the error in this way, for it is an error of construction, and lies in the guiding movement."

So bold a speech could not fail to turn the eyes of all present upon me. Young Herr Windfang measured me with his eyes from head to foot, a process which, as he was of rather small stature,

occupied some time; the familiar smile came out of the forest of Roland's whiskers, and played quite gaily under the thatch of his moustache; for, if the matter was as I said, the fault fell neither upon him nor any one of his subordinates, but went back to the Technical Bureau--a very gratifying thing, under the circumstances, for the worthy head-foreman. The foreman, who had a high opinion of me, nodded, as if to say: There you have it. The workmen looked at each other and smiled.

"Why do you say that, sir?" asked Herr Windfang, coming up to me, and taking another hasty measurement of me.

"Because I am convinced of the fact," I answered.

"That is a piece of arrogance on your part, sir!" cried the engineer.

"You and the other gentlemen are not infallible, like the pope!" I retorted.

Here the men laughed loudly.

"We will speak of this matter again," said Herr Windfang.

"We will indeed," was my reply.

The irascible young man hurried out of the building in a rage, but the head-foreman shook me by the hand and said: "Thank you, Hartwig; you took him down handsomely;" and the men accompanied me across the yard, loudly taking my part, and giving me to understand that my cause was their own. Klaus and Kurt, who had come out of another shop, now joined me. They had heard of the little skirmish I had had with the Technical Bureau, and wanted to know the facts. I did not go into details, for I was eager to get home to maintain the gauntlet I had thrown. I had all the designs of the machine, in the construction of which I had helped throughout; the necessary works of reference were in my possession; my lamp was trimmed, and a little fire burning on my hearth, as the nights were still chilly.

So I spent all the cool spring night measuring, calculating, comparing, constructing, and when the first rosy morning clouds rose over the throng of roofs and chimneys I had found what I was seeking, and fixed it in irrefragable formulae and figures. There it lay upon my table in a careful drawing, with the measurements all noted, and there it stood fast in my head, and from my head a sense of triumph hurried to my heart, which began to beat violently. But I checked my rising pride by remembering that I owed it all to *him*, and I fancied I saw the face of my beloved teacher smiling upon me, and tears sprang to my eyes. Then I went back to my room and slept an hour or so, as deeply and sweetly as I ever slept in my life.

"How is it, Malay?" asked my comrades when I appeared among them.

"How is it, Hartwig?" asked the head-foreman, who was again standing before the unlucky machine, without a smile this time.

"How is it, George?" asked Klaus and Kurt, coming over from their shop.

"I will show you," I said. I went up to the machine and gave a sort of little lecture, in which I set forth the result of my night's work in a way, as I think, both clear and connected, for they all listened with the most eager attention; and their faces grew brighter and brighter as I proceeded, until, when my demonstration was finished, Kurt clapped his hands, Klaus looked around with inexpressible pride, the men nodded to each other with expressive looks, and head-foreman Roland, with a really sunny smile under the thatch, shook my hand as he said:

"Go ahead, my son, go ahead; we will give it to them."

"Malay, you must come to the manager," said the office-messenger, coming up.

My audience exchanged expressive looks.

"Go ahead, my son!" said Herr Roland; "give it to them!"

The Manager, Herr Berg, a worthy, modest man, but of no great breadth of views, was alone in his office, which adjoined the Technical Bureau.

"I have heard, Hartwig," he said, "that you think you have discovered the error in the new machine. Although this appears rather more than doubtful to me, still men in your place now and then hit upon things which others search after in vain for days. I worked up from the ranks myself, and know that. What do you believe to be the difficulty?"

"I do not now *believe* it, Herr Manager; I now *know* it," I answered.

I said this firmly, but quite modestly, and took my calculation and drawing from my pocket and began to explain them to the manager. The matter was a tolerably complicated one, and so were the calculations, while the formulæ that I had employed were by no means simple. In my eagerness I never thought that while I was displaying my knowledge so lavishly I was dropping the incognito I had maintained so long and so strictly, and was first made aware of it by the

singular manner in which the manager was looking at me. He stood there, looking as much amazed as did Menelaus when before his eyes and in his hands the wondrous "Old Man of the Sea" changed into a tawny mountain lion.

"How in the name of heaven did you learn all that?" he cried at last.

"You have yourself just told me, Herr Manager, that you rose from the ranks, and you then must know what can be done with industry and attention."

Herr Berg looked at me with an expression in which it was plainly visible that he did not know precisely what to make of me, but like a sensible man he repressed his surprise, and asked me to leave the drawing and the demonstration with him awhile, upon his pledge that no one should have sight of them but himself. If my views were correct I should have the full credit for them, and in the meantime the gentlemen of the Technical Bureau would hand in their statement.

One, two, three days passed before they did this, however, and by this time the whole establishment was in a fever of expectation. From the head-foreman down to the last hand who wielded the heavy sledge, all knew that "the Malay" had found the defect in the new machine, and that the gentlemen of the Technical Bureau had been working over it for three days and had not found it yet, and that Klaus Pinnow had said he would bet his head that Malay would win, and that young Herr von Zehren, in Klaus Pinnow's shop, had said to Herr Windfang, who was a great friend of his, that it was a piece of extreme folly for Klaus to wager his head against the Technical Bureau, as the latter, though it consisted of six heads, had none to stake against it.

Saturday came. The unlucky machine stood there untouched, an obstinate sphinx that had yielded her riddle to no one but myself. We had taken in hand another job, but the men did not work with their usual spirit. It is an inborn peculiarity of man that he does not willingly undertake anything new until the old has been completed.

"You will have the goodness to come to the manager, Herr Hartwig," said the office-messenger, coming in.

The men looked up from their work, surprised to find that the "Malay" had suddenly become a "Herr Hartwig." They exchanged looks; each one felt that now the decision had arrived, and head-foreman Roland, who happened to be crossing the yard, limped solemnly up to me, offered me his Cyclops-hand, and said: "Go ahead, my son; give it to them; give it to them well!"

Equipped with this benediction I entered the manager's room, who rose from his desk at my entrance, came forward and shook me by the hand. He seemed a little nervous, and his honest face expressed considerable confusion.

"I congratulate you, Herr Hartwig," he said. "You were right. For these three days I have had no doubt of it; but, to be sure, when one has made the egg stand upright, another knows how it is done. And then I was not quite certain that I would have found it out myself, so it was but fair that I should let the gentlemen of the Technical Bureau first try their hands. They have been long getting at it, and your calculation is just three times as simple as theirs. I have already combed their heads for them a little, and there they sit with them hanging down."

The modest man let his own head hang a little also as he finished.

"Well, Herr Manager," I said, "the error has been discovered, and that was the main question; *who* discovered it is a matter of little consequence."

"Excuse me, Herr Hartwig," he answered, "but I disagree with you here. To the manager of such an establishment as this it cannot be a matter of indifference whether the work of the Technical Bureau is done by its staff, or in the machine-shop, for the main thing is that every man shall stand in the place where he belongs, and after this example"--here he laid his hand upon my drawing, which was on the table--"no other proof is needed that you are altogether in a false position."

"But, Herr Manager," I replied, "that is entirely my own fault, and as a man makes his bed so must he lie."

"Yes," said the manager, "that is my comfort; but I had much rather that you had been candid with me from the first. I might then be able to send back with a protest the snub which the commerzienrath has sent me to-day. There--read for yourself."

I took the paper which the manager offered me, and glanced over a letter four pages long, in which all possible reproaches were heaped upon poor Herr Berg because he had had so long in the works a man like myself, whose mathematical and technical genius had long been known to him, the commerzienrath, and had not reported the fact at once--"and even granting that you considered yourself bound to conceal matters of the highest importance, it was, at the very least, your duty and obligation to give my young friend a position corresponding to his talents and abilities; or did you fear that perhaps this position would, in that event, be no other than your own place, Herr Manager?"

"But that is shameful!" I cried, throwing down the letter.

The worthy man shook his head. "His meaning is not so bad as his words," he said, "and if it were, we are used to it. Read further."

"I do not wish to read any more."

"But you must: the most important is to come: see here----"

"Under these circumstances there is but one reparation to my young friend possible. This consists, first, in placing him at once in the Technical Bureau; secondly, in asking him, in my name, to oversee on the spot the erection of the machine at the chalk-quarry at Zehrendorf. I have also written him to this effect myself."

"Now," said the manager, with a good-humored smile, "as for the first point, you have already, by your work, won yourself a place in the Technical Bureau; and as for the second, you will do me a special favor, which perhaps you owe me on account of that snub--you understand me--to undertake the business at Zehrendorf. I had intended to send Herr Windfang. The alterations in the machine will occupy a week at least, and, as I know the commerzienrath, I shall risk my position by this delay, unless there is a friend who will speak a good word for me. And now go home; you will have much to attend to, and you must be off by the last train; but I will come round to see you first."

The manager shook hands with me heartily, and I went home in a rather singular frame of mind.

CHAPTER IX.

And my perplexity was still further heightened when on reaching home I found a letter from the commerzienrath lying on my table:

"MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND:

"Oh, these women, these women! I just now learn for the first time what you have kept from my knowledge half a year--that you have so long been working, like Samson among the Philistines, in my establishment. Did I not, when I last saw you in the house of our never-to-be-forgotten friend, entreat you again and again to let me know as soon as you recovered your liberty? Why have you not done so? why have you hidden your light so long under a bushel? You always had a great inclination that way, but so much the more is it now time that you should let it shine before men--and, just now, before me. Therefore come here as soon as possible; I have a multitude of things to talk over with you about matters here, as well as at the works, which last--as I now, unfortunately, know for the first time--you thoroughly understand. [These words were underscored.] You will here pass some pleasant days among none but good old acquaintances, of whom none is older nor a better friend of yours than your obedient servant,

"PHILIP AUGUST STREBER."

I laid the letter, which was written in a large, round business-hand, somewhat tremulous in places, upon the table, and paced my room in extreme astonishment. How upon earth did the man know that I was here? that I understood these things? Who could have told him? There was but one explanation possible. But why---

"But why torment myself about the matter?" I cried, took my hat, and set out for Paula's house.

"We are a little nervous this morning," my old friend whispered to me at the door of Paula's studio.

"Don't you know what it is?" I asked in the same tone.

The worthy man shook his head, the head which in his opinion was playing so important a part in the history of modern art, and said:

"One would have to have seven senses, like a bear, to know what is in the hearts of the dear creatures."

With these words he opened the door.

Paula was alone, as Süssmilch had told me. She hastily laid pencils and palette aside, and

came to me with her hand extended. I saw at the first glance that she had been weeping, and, although her cheeks were flushed at this moment, she looked to me pale and unwell.

"You were expecting me, Paula?" I asked, holding her hand in my own.

"Yes," she answered; "and as you come at an unusual time, I suppose you know why I was expecting you."

"It was your doing, Paula, was it not?" I said.

"Yes," she replied.

She looked me full in the eyes. Her look had that strange, half-sad, half-indignant expression which I had only observed once, on the morning of that fatal day when she disengaged herself from my arms in which I had clasped her to save her from the falling Belvedere. It was a recollection which filled me with an indefinite fear, and so confused me that my glances fell before the maiden's large luminous eyes.

At this moment I heard her draw a long breath, and as I looked up the strange expression had vanished from her eyes, and her voice was soft as ever, as, taking my hand and leading me to a small sofa, she said:

"Come, let us sit down and consult what is to be done right calmly and wisely, as brother and sister should do."

"Did they know then all the time that I was here?" I asked.

"Yes," she answered; "and I would have told you all if you had asked me; but you did not ask; it was a little secret which you, quite unnecessarily, seemed to think yourself bound to keep; a harmless game of hide-and-peek, such as every one plays now and then. She played the same game: I was on no account to let you know that she was resolved, at any price, to have *Richard the Lion-heart*, and that she inquired after you in every letter, I told her that I would say nothing about it so long as you did not ask. But the commerzienrath, I believe, really did not know, although we cannot altogether trust him. For that he now writes for you so eagerly as you tell me, is no proof: he needs you just now."

"Did you send him my memorial?" I asked.

"That was dreadful, was it not?" said Paula, smiling with pale lips; "but I had to do what you hesitated at doing, and perhaps could not do yourself: I had to do it, even at the risk of your displeasure, for it was a matter in which, as it seemed to me, your whole future was at stake."

"My whole future?"

"Scarcely less. Indeed rather more; for you must know that I am proud of you, George, and convinced that you only need the means to accomplish really important things in your profession. The commerzienrath has these means. You must teach him to employ them; you are the only one who can, for I have long known that he has taken the exact measure of your talents with that acuteness of insight which is peculiar to men of his stamp. And now he has in his hands the proof of what you can do. Then you have the advantage that he is personally well-disposed toward you, so far as such an egotist may be said to be capable of unselfish, genuinely human interest in any one. In a word: the opportunity is a more propitious one than you are likely ever to have again."

"You send me away, Paula," I said, "out of these dear old associations into others altogether new and strange, from which it is scarce possible that I can return as I departed, while it is quite as improbable that I shall find again what I leave. Have you well considered all this? And if, as I must suppose, you have considered it, then---Paula, I wish it were less easy for you to send me away."

"Who says that it is easy for me?" asked Paula, quickly rising and taking a few steps across the room. These steps, by chance apparently, brought her to her easel, and she remained standing before it with her face averted from me.

"I mean," I said, "that I wish you found it harder to do without me, if not on your own account for the sake of your mother and your brothers; that, in a word, I were to them what you are now. But, Paula, you have always been so proud; and in truth you have now more reason than ever."

Paula had found something to do at her easel, and some little time passed before she answered:

"You men are strange creatures: everywhere you wish your influence to be felt; even what you approve does not come to pass satisfactorily unless it is your doing. But this is only a transient feeling of yours, which I can well understand---"

"I do not know whether you quite understand it," I said in a low tone.

"Perfectly, perfectly," she said, bending lower over her easel; "when any one is as much attached to another as you are to us, he desires to be always giving, and feels it a heavy loss if

this comes to be out of his power. But I really do not see why we sadden ourselves so unnecessarily. You are not going to be carried away from us forever. You are only moving out of a narrow, wretched channel, unfit for so proud a ship, into the broad ocean. Of course you will of necessity often forget us a little, or perhaps entirely; for the man who wishes to do anything great and complete must have his arms free: he cannot and must not drag the toys of his childhood or the idols of his youth with him through life. I wish that you would see that clearly, George; bring yourself to see it clearly in this moment, of which I repeat that I consider it a decisive one; since now, for the first time in your life, after long years of apprenticeship, you enter on the rights of a master--can for the first time show yourself as you are. At a decision like this, all subordinate interests must stand back: all, George; even we--our mother, your brothers, your sister."

I could not see her face, which she still held down, but there were tears in her voice.

I approached her, but she turned her face away.

"Paula!" I said.

I wished to say more; to tell her all; to tell her that if I were to lose her by my decision, whatever else I might win by it seemed inexpressibly worthless to me; that---

"Paula!" I said once more, but I said it at her feet, with hot tears streaming from my eyes. I strove for words, but they would not come.

A soft hand passed gently over my hair, and it seemed to me--I was not sure then, nor am I now--but it seemed to me that she lightly touched my brow with her lips. Then I heard her voice, and its tone was calm, sweet and clear:

"George, my brother, you must not thus distress your poor sister. Now go and bid our mother farewell. She has long foreseen the approach of this moment, and has impatiently longed for it. In her lives, far more than in us, George, the spirit of the war for freedom. She knows, from her own experience, that a man must give up home and goods and wife and children, and all that is dear to him, to devote his life to a great and good cause. Come, George!"

CHAPTER X.

A lively breeze was blowing in my face as the carriage in which I was jolted along the road from Fährdorf to Zehrendorf, a bad one in the best of times, but now, in the spring, at its worst. The driver on the box had wrapped himself close in a horse-blanket and sat huddled together, while the strong horses had as much as they could do to drag the light vehicle through the deep miry ruts. It was about eight in the evening, and the moon was an hour high, but only from time to time did a glimpse of her disc peer out through the heavy clouds, throwing a deceitful light, quickly succeeded by darkness, over drenched fields and meadows, with pools of water glistening here and there over the wide expanse of barren heath.

And as lights and shadows chased each other over the wide expanse, so alternated in my soul the memories of joy and grief that I had experienced here. The days that I had spent here came all back, and passed by me with faces beaming with smiles, clouded by grief, or distorted with pain. And there were far fewer of the smiling days than of those with sad and gloomy looks; and at last--for during the whole journey it had seemed to me almost a wickedness that I should dare to return to this spot--this feeling overcame me so strongly that I could scarcely refrain from calling to the driver to stop, that I could go no further to-night.

"We shall reach the top directly," said the man, giving his tired horses a cut with the whip.

I do not know why he thought it necessary to offer me this consolation; perhaps he had thought that the groan which escaped me was extorted by the badness of the road.

But he was right. I knew that as well as he did. The light below us, which seemed to shine out of the earth, came from a little house leaning against the foot of the hill, and those broad white patches, which contrasted so singularly with the black hills, were the great chalk-quarries belonging to Prince Prora, to which the house belonged; and not far from us, on the ridge which we were slowly climbing, was a piece of woods--part of the same woods in which I fled from my pursuers for four days.

The sturdy horses stretched to their work, and now we were on the ridge. Down the other side we went, over a hard sandy road, and the wind came sweeping on its mighty pinions from over the sea, making the driver wrap himself still closer in his blanket. But I drew long deep breaths,

and drew in full draughts of deliciousness that I had wanted so long.

Heartily I greeted the loved sea-breeze, that friend of my childhood. Long had I pined for it in the narrow streets of the city, where only a mockery of it blew in fitful puffs and with malicious pranks, and whistled shrill and spitefully around the corners. How often had this mighty sea-wind filled my young heart with inexpressible gladness; and now it chased the dark memories from my soul as it swept away the black clouds from the sky, so that the whole broad expanse of the plateau reaching back from the promontory lay in clear moonlight before my eyes. That great cluster of buildings, with a garden like a park, and short white church-steeple, is Herr von Granow's estate; and that lower down, only distinguishable as a dark patch, is Trantowitz; and beyond Trantowitz, in the direction of the wind, lies Zanowitz among the white dunes at whose feet chafes the everlasting sea. Melchow, Trantowitz, Zanowitz--what memories were attached to these names and these places! But the glad mighty wind would not suffer them. It comes rushing on in vast, regular impulses like the strokes of an eagle's wings, and amidst its rush I fancy I can hear a rough honest voice saying: All that could happen, and you thought you could never endure it, yet you have not been crushed, but stand firm upon your feet, and still carry your head erect between your broad shoulders; and all this is so because I have blown around you from your childhood, and you have drawn me into your blood until your heart beats strong and dauntless within your breast, even though you know that those lights shining on that height to the left come from the windows of the new castle which the new master of Zehrendorf has built in the place of the old which you saw sinking in flames on that terrible night.

Not quite in the place of the old one: the old castle had been built upon the higher ground, so that it looked proudly out over the whole land. The new possessor did not wish a haughty site, but one sheltered from the north and east winds, so he did well to fix his habitation somewhat lower.

"And where are the magnificent old trees of the park, which reached to the old house, and here joined the forest?" I asked.

"They are cut down," said the driver; "the whole park is cleared away; there is hardly enough left to make a coffin of."

I do not know what suggested this melancholy expression to the taciturn man, but it struck me strangely. Did not the Wild Zehren once, when we were standing at the window and looking out into the park, say that not enough of it belonged to him to make him a coffin, and that it all stood only to be cut down and turned into money by his successors? And now it had all come to pass, and that light was shining from the new home which the new master had built on the ruins of the old.

Away, gloomy thoughts! Blow harder, thou glad, strong sea-wind! Gallop, you stout horses, down the hard, smooth road! And now, rattling through the gate, we enter the court before the great, stately house, and as we stop at the door servants come out with lights.

They come rather incited by curiosity than obsequiousness, which last, had it been present, would have suddenly cooled at the unpretending garb of the visitor and the limited amount of his luggage. Indeed, as I crossed the lower hall I caught sight, in a tall mirror, of the face of the servant who preceded me carrying my portmanteau, and who, by dint of thrusting his tongue into his right cheek, was making a frightful grimace, undoubtedly intended to express his disgust at having to carry such a disgraceful old mangy sealskin portmanteau--I had borrowed it from Klaus--up the brilliantly lighted staircase of the great house of Zehrendorf. The honest fellow's feelings were apparently much hurt by the incongruity of the visitor's appearance with the service he had to render, and he found a neat way of exhibiting the fact by tossing the question to me over his shoulder, as he rather flung down my portmanteau than set it down: "I suppose you are a countryman of our Mamselle?"

"Who is your Mamselle?" I asked in a tone of perfect good humor, for I confess to my shame that the contemptuous manner of the man, far from offending me, afforded me considerable amusement.

"Why, the old scarecrow with the----" and he made an undulatory wave of his hand down from his shoulder, a bit of pantomime in which a lively imagination could see the fluttering of long tresses.

"You mean Fräulein Duff, I suppose, friend--what is your name?" I asked.

"William Kluckhuhn," answered he. "You can call me William, for short."

"Thank you. And why do you suppose me to be a countryman of Fräulein Duff, friend William?"

"Well, the old girl made a great fuss about you to me. I was to show you every attention, and you were to have this room which looks on the garden, and is really our young lady's room, and which she, heaven knows why, took a notion three days ago to make a guest-room. It seemed a little queer to us, for you are, after all, a workman in the master's factory in Berlin, as the master himself said at the table today. I am from Berlin myself, you must know, and we know there that a hand in a machine-shop is not exactly the Great Mogul. But what are we to do? After all, we have to dance to the old girl's piping, or she will abuse us to our young lady, and she reports it to

the master, and then there is the deuce to pay, of course."

"So that is the way it goes, eh?" I said, laughing; "from Fräulein Duff to your young lady, and from her to the Herr Commerzienrath."

"Well, sometimes it goes the other way," said the philosophic William; "but this is not so bad, for we can hold our own with the old scarecrow; that is an eternal truth."

As I heard the pet phrase of my good friend from the impudent lips of this ironical rascal I had to look another way to avoid laughing.

"Well, and I was to ask you if you wanted any supper. Tea will be served down-stairs in half an hour. But you will get nothing with it but stale biscuit and thin sandwiches, and she thought you would be hungry."

"So I am, my friend," I replied, "and you will oblige me if you will bring me a bit of cold chicken, with a glass of wine, or whatever you happen to have handy. And one thing more, friend William. I am not a countryman of Fräulein Duff, but you will particularly oblige me if in future you never mention that lady in my presence in other than a respectful manner. Now you can go; and you will have the goodness to ask the Herr Commerzienrath if I shall wait upon him before tea."

I said these words in an impressive manner, not with the intention of humbling my friend in livery, but simple because, as a guest of the house, I considered it my duty. The facetious William gave me a look in which astonishment was blended with suspicion, and in his heart, I fancy, he thought that the old proverb, "Do not trust appearances," might also be a scrap of an eternal truth.

While he went to do what I had told him I cast a look of some curiosity round the room which three days before had been that of the beautiful capricious girl. I could hardly believe it, and yet it did not look like a guest-room--certainly not like one intended for so unpretending a guest as myself. A thick soft carpet of a Persian pattern covered the whole floor. The curtains of the windows and lambrequins of the doors were of heavy damask, also of a bright fantastic pattern, and looped with rich cords and tassels. The whole decoration and furniture were in harmony with this, to my eyes, oriental magnificence. A very low broad divan occupied nearly three sides of the room, while on the fourth, where the windows were, low chairs were standing in the recesses, and between the windows stood a costly cabinet of rosewood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl. From the ceiling hung by gilt chains a lamp in a red globe, diffusing, with the two wax candles that were burning upon the table, a soft rosy light throughout the apartment.

On drawing a curtain, behind which I thought there was a door, I discovered a deep alcove, with a wide low bed, with silken pillows and coverlids. I dropped the curtain again.

Again I examined the room, in ever increasing surprise at the singular reception which had been provided for me here. Upon the rosewood cabinet stood a vase with fresh flowers--hyacinths and crocuses. As I bent over the vase to inhale their perfume my eye was caught by a blue ribbon entwined among them which had letters embroidered upon it in gold thread, and upon examining it more closely I read the words "Seek faithfully and thou shalt find."

A sudden change came over my feelings at this discovery, and I broke into a fit of laughter, but checked myself suddenly and dropped the mysterious ribbon again into its fragrant hiding-place, as William Kluckhuhn entered with a large salver, from the contents of which he arranged an excellent collation upon one of the small tables standing before the divan.

"Well, when does the Herr Commerzienrath wish to see me?" I asked, as William, his napkin under his arm, stood before me at the respectful distance of three paces.

"The Herr Commerzienrath will have the honor to meet the Herr Engineer at tea," replied William Kluckhuhn.

I took a closer look at the man, his style of expression and even the tone of his voice had undergone such a change. Was I then suddenly promoted to the rank of engineer? Something must have happened to him that had wrought a revolution in his views of the new guest.

I pondered on what it might be, but it was a superfluous trouble. William Kluckhuhn was not one of those who can keep a secret hidden in the depths of their souls.

He cleared his throat in an emphatic significant manner, and observed:

"The *gnädige Fräulein* will not be down to tea."

"Ah," I said in an indifferent tone, which was belied by the sudden beating of my heart.

"Yes," went on my communicative friend, "I was just now in the parlor to ask the Herr Commerzienrath when he wished to see the Herr Engineer--" William Kluckhuhn laid a strong accent upon the last word. "'At tea, of course,' said the commerzienrath. 'I wish to receive him quite familiarly.' 'Do you not wish first to have some private conversation with him?' said the

gnädige Fräulein. The *gnädige Fräulein* had risen quite suddenly from the piano-forte at which she had just been playing and singing, and turned to the door where I was--standing. 'Good heavens, no,' said the *commerzienrath*. 'Where are you going?' 'To my room,' said the *gnädige Fräulein*; 'I have been suffering with headache all day.' 'Then you will not be down again, I suppose,' said the *Herr Commerzienrath*. The *gnädige Fräulein* said nothing, for she had already gone past me out of the door; and I can tell you, *Herr Engineer*, she had a pair of cheeks like my shoulder-knots here," and he pointed with his finger to the dark-crimson knot on his left sleeve.

"This is all very remarkable," I said.

"It is, indeed," said William, elevating his eye-brows as high as his long forehead would allow, and drawing down the corners of his mouth into a horse-shoe curve, "very remarkable. And so it seemed to the others, for they looked at one another, so----" and William Kluckhuhn stretched his little eyes as wide open as he could get them, and stared at me so that I thought for a moment he was going out of his senses.

"Who are the others?" I asked.

"Well, the master himself, and Mamselle--I mean Fräulein Duff, and the *Herr Steuerrath* and his lady----"

"They here too?" I asked, not very agreeably surprised.

"They have been here for three weeks," answered William; "but the day is yet to come when any one of us has seen this from them--" and he made a gesture with the right forefinger and thumb over the palm of his left hand. "And they all looked queer, and the *Herr Commerzienrath* looked very angry, but restrained himself, which is not his usual way, and said: 'That is unfortunate: but it is not to be helped. I must invite the *Herr Engineer* to tea.' *Apropos!*--excuse me, but it is a word we use in Berlin--why did not the *Herr Engineer* tell me at first that he was the *Herr Engineer*?"

"Very well, William," I said. "You can take away now, and when it is time, come and call me."

When the talkative William had left me I sprang up from the divan and paced the room in an excitement which I had carefully concealed from the servant. The information which he had just given me afforded me more matter for reflection than I could deal with at the moment. A singular scene must have occurred, or it would never have made so deep an impression upon the by no means susceptible William Kluckhuhn. And why had *Hermine's* headache grown so intolerable all at once? And why had my old friends, the *Steuerrath* and the born *Kippenreiter*, seemed so much disturbed!

To all this I could give but one explanation; for a second, that might also have been possible, my modesty rejected at once. The pretty girl had been angry with me ever since our meeting on the steamer. But if this were so, why all those inquiries about me of Paula? Whence came the interest which she manifestly took in my fate? I saw her again before me as I had seen her on the steamboat, her red lips closely compressed, and her blue eyes darting indignant flashes at me. She had told me that I must let her father help me, since her father was rich; and I had replied that for that very reason I did not wish to be helped by him. Was not that the exact state of the case? Did I want anything from him? Had I not rather come to give the rich man some advice of which he seemed to be greatly in want? advice which, if he followed it, was to make him richer than he had ever been? No, I did not come into this house as an asker of favors. I could hold my head proudly erect, as beseems a free man; and if it was meant as an irony upon my humble position that I was here assigned this splendid apartment, I had only to consider myself worthy of the attention, and the solecism vanished.

"Will you please to come now?" said William Kluckhuhn, appearing at the door. I had intended to put on my best suit of clothes, which, with the necessary supply of linen, and a few papers and drawings, formed the entire contents of my portmanteau, but the radical state of mind into which I had happily wrought myself scorned such trivialities, and it was a gratification to me to follow my guide just as I was down the wide staircase to the lower hall, and to a door which he obsequiously threw open for me, and through which, without the least confusion, I entered a large parlor, richly furnished and brilliantly lighted by lamps standing on various tables.

At one of these tables, at the further end of the room, sat the company, consisting of the *commerzienrath*, his brother-in-law the *Steuerrath*, the *Steuerrath's* lady, and Fräulein Duff. The *commerzienrath* came to meet me with outstretched hand, crying in his loud voice that he was unspeakably delighted to welcome his dear young friend to his house.

"To be sure I have had you in my house a long time already," he went on, after he had grasped my hand--"a half year already, and I never knew it! It is outrageous; but these girls never will learn reason. For the merest nothing they will make a secret of things that we would cheerfully pay a thousand *thalers* to know."

He said this with so much warmth that if I had ever doubted whether he had really known that I was in his establishment, that doubt now entirely disappeared. He had known it all along, but had no interest in appearing to know it until I could be of real profitable use to him.

Perhaps it was this observation that made me receive so coolly the friendly protestations of the rich man; but I had to smile, and I felt real pleasure when now the kind-hearted Fräulein Duff put down the tea-pot, at which she had been officiating, and came gliding towards me with a coy smile upon her thin lips, and her eyes lifted to express the emotions of her soul. She held out her hand with the fingers bent and drooping, in precisely the style of a tragedy-queen who expects it kissed by a loyal vassal. But the good lady was thinking of nothing of the sort; it was merely her way of offering her hand; and I took the thin pale hand and pressed it cordially, though cautiously. The sensitive nature of the excellent Fräulein felt at once the sincere good-feeling that my pressure implied, and she returned it with nervous force, her pale eyes filled with tears, and she whispered up to reach my ear: "Do not be annoyed, and do not be angry with her; it is not hate, it is maidenly coyness; do not despair--wait and trust--seek faithfully----"

Fräulein Duff had not time to complete her favorite phrase, for the commerzienrath turned again to me and drew me to the table, by which the steuerrath and his lady had been standing straight as candlesticks from the moment I entered the room without moving from their places, like a pair of wax-figures in a cabinet.

"You have no idea how glad my brother and sister-in-law are to see you again!" said the commerzienrath, malicious joy sparkling in his small glittering eyes.

"Delighted!" said the steuerrath, offering me two fingers of his long white hand, which I did not take.

"Delighted!" said his lady, with a fixed look at the lamp on the table.

I was not especially glad myself, so I did not say so, but I looked closely at the amiable pair, whom time had certainly not passed by without leaving marks upon them. The steuerrath's high forehead was now bald to the crown, and deep ugly furrows were ploughed in his long smooth aristocratic face. His eyes seemed to me smaller and more expressionless, and his mouth larger.

Still more rudely had the ungallant years dealt with the born Kippenreiter. Her hair indeed was thicker and more lustrous than of old, but the unkind suspicion that she owed this gratifying luxuriance to the beneficent skill of the *perruquier* was confirmed at a second glance. Nor had her face been deprived of the ingenious resources of art: her hollow cheeks were flushed with a bloom too delicate to be altogether natural, and her thin pale lips disclosed two rows of teeth of irreproachable whiteness. In a word, the Born had made herself younger by twice the number of years that had passed since I last saw her, only the expression of her small piercing eyes, which could not possibly be worse, had remained the same, and the wide red ribbon of her cap, which she tied in a large bow under her chin, apparently to hide her hollow cheeks, nodded at every word she spoke in the old exasperating way.

They had taken their seats again at the tea-table. The commerzienrath led the conversation in a style less adapted to the gratification of his brother-in-law than to his own entertainment and my instruction. So I learned in five minutes that the young Prince of Prora was residing at Rossow again, and that Arthur was keeping him company in his exile.

"For it is an exile," cried the commerzienrath to his brother-in-law, "you may say what you please; I know it from Justizrath Heckepfennig, whom, as his *Justitarius*, the old prince had to summon to the family council, in which the question was handled in all its length and breadth, whether his son should or should not be declared a spendthrift. The old prince at last yielded so far as to grant his son a probation of half a year more, which he is to pass in the country, while they make some arrangement with his creditors. A nice position for a prince, is it not?"

"Crowned heads are seldom happy," said with a sigh Fräulein Duff, who had taken her seat by us with some work in her hands.

"I thought that princes only wore hats," remarked the commerzienrath with a sardonic grin, "though of such matters a poor plebeian like myself is incompetent to judge: you understand those things better, brother-in-law."

"Doubtless, doubtless," replied the latter absently.

"No doubt you are thinking of your amiable son," continued the commerzienrath, "and whether, for a young man of his stamp, a better companion could not be found than a young prince who is in a fair way to ruin himself. I can easily understand that the thought causes you to make a face like a tanner who sees his hides floating down the stream."

"Excuse me, brother-in-law, but I was not thinking of Arthur at that moment," replied the steuerrath, "but whether the negotiations for the sale of Zehrendorf, which you have recently opened with his highness--and which, by the way, would seem to indicate that you give his highness credit for more acuteness and business knowledge than your words imply--will come to any result."

"What has that to do with his wisdom or his folly?" cried the commerzienrath. "Yes, so far that the greater fool he is the dearer will I be able to sell it to him. But I am not sure that I shall have my daughter's permission to sell, for she has set her heart upon not letting it pass into other hands. To be sure she has noble blood in her veins--is that not so, sister-in-law!--and naturally

looks at the matter in a different light from a poor *roturier* like myself. I might have sold it long ago to Herr von Granow, among others, who made me a very handsome offer, who, as one of our nearest neighbors, can put it to the best advantage. But Hermine insists that Frau von Granow is too vulgar a person--of course she is not a Born Anything, sister-in-law, for the Born can never be vulgar, can they, sister-in-law?--but what I was going to say is this: Hermine insists that I shall not give her such a successor as that. But good heaven! she will find nobody she thinks worthy of it, unless it be Herr von Trantow."

"How is he?" I exclaimed.

"O, very well. He eats and drinks and sleeps: why should he not be well? He is a great favorite of my Hermine; and I believe she could find it in her heart to marry him if she could only see him sober once."

At such horrible words Fräulein Duff could only clasp her hands and cast a look at me, while the steuerrath and his wife exchanged a look of intelligence with the quickness of lightning. I observed a slight encouraging twinkle of the steuerrath's eyelashes, upon which followed a slight attack of coughing on the part of the Born, and then the following observation:

"There is an old proverb, my dear brother-in-law, which always comes to my mind when I hear sportive allusions, such as that which you have just uttered."

"You mean that 'we shouldn't paint the devil on the wall?'" exclaimed the commerzienrath; "but you need not be uneasy on that score, for even if the devil does not come, neither will your Arthur; no, not by a great way!" and the commerzienrath broke into a boisterous laugh at his own wit.

"I am conscious of my innocence of all covetous plans of that sort, brother-in-law," replied the Born, whose cheeks at the moment had no need of any supplementary carmine.

"So!" cried the commerzienrath. "Well that is a very good thing. Are *you* conscious of *your* innocence too, brother-in-law? If your son can say as much, then you are all three conscious, and no one can ask more of you than that. Besides, sister-in-law, the Trantows are so old a family, that, for this reason, if for no other, you should think twice before you compare the last descendant of their race with Old Nick."

"If family antiquity is in question," said the steuerrath, "you must know, brother-in-law, that while it is true that the Trantows trace back their pedigree to the fourteenth century, the Zehrens----"

"I know! I know! I have heard it a hundred thousand million times!" cried the commerzienrath, hastily, rising from his chair. "You are a frightfully old family; yes, sister-in-law, frightfully old! But content yourselves; old as you are, you may grow a year or two older yet. And now come with me to my room, my young friend, and let us have at least a little sensible talk."

He preceded me, through another parlor as brilliantly lighted as the first, into a smaller room, which, to judge by the comfortable horsehair-covered furniture, bookcases with docketed papers, and other tokens, was his own especial apartment, which he had fitted out exactly to his own taste.

Several eminently bad copies of celebrated old masters, with sundry still worse originals of modern date, animal-pieces and landscapes, covered the walls, and corresponded exactly in artistic merit with several busts of the reigning sovereigns and other princely personages, placed appropriately or inappropriately, just as it happened. A lamp hung from the ceiling over a round table, upon which were various papers, a lighted candle, and an open box of cigars.

"Now, my dear young friend," cried the commerzienrath, throwing himself into a chair and stretching out his legs, which time had made still leaner, in a fashion meant to express supreme comfort, "help yourself; here is something superior, just from Havana, brought me by one of my captains a week ago; duty-free as I have them, they are 'worth a hundred and twenty *thalers*, between brothers. So! Now what do you think of that ridiculous old ass of a steuerrath and his scarecrow of a wife? They have been sponging upon me now for three weeks, but I show them no quarter; was it not good fun?"

"I cannot say that I found it so, Herr Commerzienrath."

"No? Why not? You must be hard to amuse."

"On the contrary, Herr Commerzienrath, no one loves a bit of harmless fun more than I do; but I cannot find it harmless when the host--you must excuse my plain speaking--makes fools of his guests, be they who they may."

"So, so! This is something new!" said my host, and fixed an evil look upon me.

"Yet it is a very old doctrine, Herr Commerzienrath, known and practiced in the earliest times, and, as I am told, still sacredly observed at this day by even the rudest nations--unless indeed they are cannibals."

"Cannibals is good! Cannibals! very good indeed!" cried the commerzienrath, throwing himself back in his easy-chair and laughing obstreperously, as though he had not but the moment before been on the point of quarrelling with me. "Capital! How do you like the cigars? I want your honest opinion."

"By no means so superior, if you insist upon a candid expression of my opinion."

"Not--not superior? Well, young man, you must be hard to please. Such a cigar as this nothing superior! When and where did you ever smoke a better?"

And the commerzienrath, with an appearance of intense enjoyment, exhaled the smoke slowly through the nostrils.

"To tell you the candid truth, very often; but I must confess that I am a little dainty in this particular point. Probably my old stay at Zehrendorf made me fastidious."

"I dare say," said my host, with a sneer. "He could afford it: he did not have to pay duties as we do."

"I thought you said, Herr Commerzienrath, that these cigars were duty free?"

He looked at me again as if strongly moved to ring for a servant to turn me out the house. He did not ring, however, but said:

"So! If you are such a judge of the weed, what do you estimate these to be worth?"

"Twenty thalers I should consider a full price."

"They cost eighteen!" cried the commerzienrath, giving the table a thump. "Why should a man set costly cigars before his guests until he knows whether they can appreciate them or not? And now I will give you some that----"

"Are worth a hundred and twenty *thalers*, between brothers."

"Exactly so! exactly so! you ironical fellow!" cried the little old man as he sprang up and took from a cupboard a box containing cigars, of which I am bound to say that I never smoked better, even with the Wild Zehren.

My amiable host had been brought into so good a humor by this bit of comedy that he insisted on having in a bottle of Steinberg Cabinet, from which he replenished my glass with great liberality while he only sipped at his own, making pretence all the time of drinking glass for glass with me, both from this and a second bottle which he had in, in the course of the evening. I had seen the old gentleman behind a bottle in my earlier days, and also when he was a visitor at the superintendent's, and knew that he was what used to be called a three-bottle-man; so if he was so abstemious now he had some especial reason for it. Nor was this reason long concealed. It was soon evident to me that he wanted to make me talk, and to get at my sincere opinions upon a multitude of things, and the heavy wine of a noble vintage was to assist my candor if it faltered. I have in later years too often seen this man use the same stratagem, in similar cases, to leave me any doubt of the accuracy of the observation I made on this occasion.

There was also another manœuvre, which I learned now for the first time, in which this old man of business was a master. It was this: leaning far back in his chair, his eyes half shut, he talked in an apparently disconnected way of this and that, rambling from one topic to another, until he suddenly, like a flash, touched upon the point which he had still been approaching in all his gyrations without his hearer perceiving it. He hid himself in a black cloud, so to speak, as the cuttlefish eludes its pursuers--only with this difference, that this cunning old pike, in the shape of a royal counsellor of commerce, used this stratagem in order unexpectedly to snap out of his cloud at an unsuspecting gudgeon.

It was past midnight when William Kluckhuhn showed me to my room. He lighted the two wax candles on the table before the divan, asked me if he should extinguish the hanging lamp, to which I assented, and inquired at what hour I wished to be called in the morning, to which I could only answer that I had the habit of awaking at the proper time, and then left me with a most respectful bow, which stood in ludicrous contrast to the extremely free and easy way in which he had received me but a few hours before.

I had no thought of sleeping yet. My brain was swarming with thoughts which the long conversation with the master of the house had excited in me; my heart was full of tumultuous emotions, awakened by the novel position in which I found myself; and, as well might happen in such an hour, after a couple of bottles of heavy wine, and in an entirely new situation, the events of the evening arranged themselves in a sort of wild, fantastic dance, surrounding me with figures now graceful and now grotesque--figures of which I could now and then fix one for a moment: the commerzienrath, with his half-shut eyes and his sharp pikelike snap at that point in the conversation towards which he had been manœuvring all the while; good Fräulein Duff, with the sentimental quivering of her sallow eyelids; the steuerrath, with the white crafty face and the white slender hand on which sparkled his immense signet-ring; the born Kippenreiter, with the false teeth and the false smile; and, lastly, her whom I had not seen, and yet in the eye of my

mind perpetually saw--her in whose room I was, who certainly had often rested in this corner of the divan where I now was reclining--the slight elastic form of the beautiful young maiden, with the saucy twitch in the red lips, and the sunny light in the cornflower-blue eyes.

And, stranger than all this--behind this foreground of scenes and figures, changing like the forms of a kaleidoscope, and shifting like wreaths of mist, there arose a background of the circumstances with which I had to do for the moment, and which I believed that I penetrated in their most secret relations, as if an enchanter had given me that magic unguent with which if one anoint his eyes he can see all the treasures that sleep in the depths of the earth. Once before in my life had I had a similar feeling: on that day after my arrival at Zehrendorf when I strolled in the afternoon in the park and under the softly-rustling trees, in the sight of the venerable castle over which sunshine and shadow were chasing each other, I knew on a sudden that the master of this park and this castle was a desperate smuggler. And just so, or nearly so, I just now felt an intuitive conviction that this new house stood upon as treacherous a foundation, which might at any moment cave in and bury the proud and envied fortune of the man under the ruins of a gigantic bankruptcy. And yet for such an inference I had apparently no ground whatever. And even as before the thought seemed to me just as extravagant, just as insane; but I did not reproach myself as before; I rather sought in all earnestness to find the points which had possibly given rise to a suspicion so ridiculously at variance with the splendor of this room, the magnificence of the house, with everything which from childhood I had heard of the wealth of our provincial Cræsus. What could it have been? A peculiar quiver in his voice as he spoke of the immense stock of corn in his warehouses from the previous harvest, and of the unexampled fall in the price of bread-stuffs owing to the altered position of affairs in England;--this and the nervous excitability which he showed when I pointed out to him the necessity of enlarging the machine-works in the city to double their present extent, if he did not wish to be hopelessly distanced in the competition with other establishments on the introduction of the railway system into our country. A third point was his urgent wish, to which he continually recurred, to sell Zehrendorf for as high a sum as possible--he spoke of five hundred thousand *thalers*--to Prince Prora.

The strange thought had almost taken my breath, so I went to the window and looked dreamingly out upon the garden, whose gravelled walks and dark beds and shrubbery were dimly defined in the pallid moonlight.

"Why should it not be so?" I said to myself, holding with a sort of pertinacity to my unreasonable fancy. "And if it were so, would it not be a righteous Nemesis? Those old freebooter knights kept on their evil courses so long, and despised the signs of the time so thoroughly, that at last the time turned against them and flung them off, as a spirited horse hurls from the saddle the rider who has lost his stirrups. And in our time the dead ride fast, and this man here, the shop-keeper, who has mounted the knight's charger, I reckon already among the dead. Shameless rapacity and naked selfishness--have these not been the food of the one as of the other? Have they not both borne as motto on their shields: 'All for me--I for myself?' Has any one of them ever thought of the poor people, except to press hard upon it, by way of feeling that it is there? Ay, is it not more than mere chance that that criminal traffic into which the freebooter threw himself merely to gain his living, became the means by which the shopkeeper amassed his riches? Has he not just told me, with a chuckle of satisfaction, how adroitly his father and he availed themselves of the fabulously advantageous opportunities afforded by Napoleon's continental embargo, and how they had carried on the business for years and years, and made thousands and thousands, and how they slipped out of it at the very moment it began to grow hazardous? Is it not just, then, that the shopkeeper who turned freebooter should have his part in the same fate that befell the freebooter turned shopkeeper?--only that the lordship of the former will not endure so long as that of the latter, and rightly so, for 'the dead ride fast.'"

I looked up to the night sky, where a keen night wind was driving great masses of black cloud from west to east across the shining disc of the moon now near the full. Strange fantastic figures; long trailing dragons with expanded jaws, colossal fishes with greedy rows of teeth, horrible crustacean shapes with long nippers and crooked crawling legs, giants with heads towering high and bearing masses of rock in their uplifted arms, cunning hunchbacked dwarfs with protruding gluttonous paunches--monsters and deformities of all sorts, and not a single bright fair figure. In a strange freak of fancy I seemed to see in these frightful clouds the races of men who had held dominion upon earth, and borne the sceptre and the trenchant sword, who had had no pity for the oppressed multitude whose life they drained, until it was like that attenuated green-gray film timidly floating under the giants, which no sooner came into the bright neighborhood of the moon than it dispersed and dissolved away. Should it go on so in unbroken succession forever? Must race of oppressors follow race of oppressors without end: the knights of the hammer ever smite upon the wretched anvil? Would that time never come--that other time, that better time--which the eye of my glorious teacher had seen in vision, to hasten whose coming he had given his life, and to which I had devoted myself with all the might of my soul?

"It will come, be assured this time will come," I said. "Is it not come even now? Is it not already within yourself, since you have recognized that it will and must come? Is it not already in all those who think as you, and have the power to give their thoughts form and color and flesh and blood?"

"Ah, to have that power! Were it not a glorious thing to be master here, and yonder in the great works, and in all his other factories and stores? To be able to be a helper--a benefactor to thousands and thousands--and not to be it! To be a monster with vast engulfing jaws, like that

hideous spectre up yonder in the clouds, because, as Doctor Willibrod says, so soon as we attain power and wealth Fate hangs a flintstone or a gold nugget in our breast instead of a heart!"

I closed the window, lowered the curtain, and went towards my bed. But the train of thought I had been following had escaped me, and I stopped and surveyed once more all the magnificence of the luxurious room.

"And to all this she has been accustomed from her childhood," I said to myself. "Upon such soft carpets has her dainty foot always trod; her hand has always touched fabrics of this voluptuous texture; she has always breathed this perfumed atmosphere. And if shameless selfishness should meet with such a fate as brutal arrogance--this house should fall as fell that older one--it would be hard, cruelly hard for her. The other called me once her George, her dragon-slayer. But she did not wish to be rescued, and I, still half a boy, could not have rescued her. With this one it might perhaps be otherwise; perhaps she would rather be rescued than perish--and in any event, I am no longer a boy."

And here my eye fell upon the little mangy seal-skin portmanteau which William Kluckhuhn had carefully placed at the foot of the bed whose voluminous curtains he had looped back, and I had to laugh aloud. For it was ridiculous, when I possessed hardly more than was contained in this little shabby wallet, a borrowed one at that, to talk of rescuing a house like this--to worry my brains about the fate of men who lived in a house like this! So I betook myself to bed, and, as I was just falling asleep, awakened myself again by laughing at something--I did not know what.

CHAPTER XI.

But when I awoke the next morning at early dawn I knew what it was. It was the embroidered ribbon which I had discovered the evening before in the bunch of flowers, and in which my fancy, half asleep, seemed to catch a delightful solution of all the enigmas that surrounded me here: but now, with senses wide awake, I saw nothing in it but a bit of sentimental silliness on the part of good-hearted Fräulein Duff. Still a feeling of disquiet seized me that compelled me to get up and dress myself hastily. A pair of sparrows that had their nest somewhere close at hand under the eaves began an animated conversation, and then stopped suddenly, finding that it was earlier than they had supposed.

So I found it myself: when I stepped to the window, with the ribbon in my hand, I could not distinguish the gold letters of the embroidery from the blue ground of the silk. I was vexed at myself for my childish curiosity. Had I come here to puzzle at riddles?

But I held the ribbon still in my hand as the sky began to grow brighter and the first rosy morning light tinged the eastern clouds. Already I could distinguish the garden beds from the gravelled walks beneath me, and in the beds even the yellow crocuses from the blue hyacinths, and now again I looked at the magic ribbon and could plainly read the motto I so well knew.

"Anyhow," I said to myself, "whether it be meant in earnest or in joke; whether it be the silly sentimentality of the duenna or a saucy jest of the maiden, it is a good word and I will lay it to heart. I *will* seek faithfully: and as for what I shall find, I will not puzzle my brains beforehand with guessing."

I took the ribbon with me, that it might not meet the prying eyes of William Kluckhuhn, and left the room. Passing through the roomy house, where darkness and silence still reigned through all the carpeted corridors and stairs, I sought and found a door leading from the lower hall into the open air.

It was a small side-door, like that which in the old house opened into the neglected back-yard. The back-yard had disappeared, of course, and everything else was so changed that I found myself in an entirely new and strange region. But I soon discovered that it was not merely that all things were here new and different, but that they were in perfect contrast to the old. While the ruinous and obviously uninhabitable old castle had towered aloft in great masses, bare of all ornament, the new building presented itself of moderate size but judiciously proportioned, evidently planned for comfort and convenience, and in a neat if not altogether pure style of architecture. The court-yard, with kitchen and other outbuildings which formerly had adjoined the castle, was now removed to the distance of a hundred yards or so, and the house had handsome grounds all around it, adorned with trees and shrubbery, evidently of recent planting. The intention was to separate a small blooming oasis, the centre of which was the house, from the rest of the ground devoted to cultivation--a pretty device, which would only require twenty years or so for its perfect realization.

A new time had come altogether. In what brilliant newness glittered the tiled roofs between the young poplars! To the right, where formerly wide fallow lands had in vain waited for cultivation, broad fields, green with young grain, now shone in the sunlight; and further to the right--a strange and almost incredible sight in this region--further still to the right was a cluster of red brick buildings, from the midst of which sprang a gigantic chimney sending out a black cloud of smoke against the bright morning sky. This was the distillery, built about two years before, and for which we had delivered some machinery in the course of the past winter. As I judged, the park must formerly have extended to that spot; and now there was not a tree to be seen, not a tree anywhere, as I satisfied myself by walking around the house until I reached that part of the grounds which I had seen from my window. I convinced myself that this must have been the place of the great lawn; but in vain did my eye seek for the circle of magnificent beeches surrounding this expanse of waving grass. As far as the hills which one crossed to reach the promontory all the woods had been cleared away, and the stumps, which were everywhere left standing, gave the ground the look of a vast neglected graveyard. Here and there were well-cleared spaces where they had begun new plantations, but the young trees looked poorly, and by no means promised to yield such trunks as those which were still lying in some places among the stumps, but already cut into lengths.

I went on along the well-kept road which ascended the hills towards the promontory, following nearly the direction of the old path which led through the forest to the tarn. This, then, must have been its place; this circular hollow, at the bottom of which, nearly overgrown with grass, were still some small pools of black water. The story used to run that this gloomy tarn was of unfathomable depth, and now behold at the deepest place it was not over thirty feet! They had simply cut the bank on the side towards the coast and let the water off, in order to obtain the compost formed by the leaves which for centuries had fallen into it and sunk to the bottom. The manure was doubtless very serviceable to the exhausted fields; but they had made a frightfully ugly place of what used to be, in its mysterious loneliness and seclusion, the sweetest spot in all the forest. A single one of the old giants had been left standing midway up the slope. It was an immense beech, the growth of centuries, which I believed I recognized again, though it looked strangely standing there alone. And I was not mistaken: upon its bark I found in letters nearly overgrown, but still legible, my name and a date, the date of the day on which, in that sunny autumn morning, I first saw Constance von Zehren under this very tree.

It was a singular chance that of all the stately trees just this one had been left standing.

A feeling of sadness begun to arise in my breast, but I suppressed it, and looked up to the cheerful blue sky. That morning was fair, but the leaves were already falling, and the winter that was to sweep away all the beauty already stood at the door; while to-day the morning was as fair, and it was spring, and the long sunny summer days were coming, the days of work of which the harvest would not fail.

"Yes," I said to myself, as I strode actively up the hill and along the crest of the promontory, "yes, that world had to pass, with its rustling forests, its mysterious dark lakes of ancient time, its crumbling castles, its ruinous courts, and fields all lying fallow. Even you had to go, old ruin of a tower, gray with antiquity, and make way for this little pavilion, from whose windows there must be a lovely outlook over the unchangeable sea."

Here it was the tower had stood. A gay butterfly had alighted on the spot where the fierce eagle had so long had its eyrie. I walked around the pretty little building, of which the door was fastened and the silk curtains of the windows lowered. On the south side the roof projected, boldly, and under it were several tables and benches.

While I sat here, leaning my head on my hand and gazing at the landscape, the sun rose--rose out of the sea in a blaze of tremulous light; but it was not this dazzling brilliancy that compelled me to close my eyes. From this spot I had seen the sun rise once before, and here, where I was sitting, sat a corpse with glazed eyes, on which lay the everlasting night, staring sightless at all the splendor.

Once more I resisted the sadness that threatened to unman me. This was all past; it should not return to darken the day, the bright day, which I had long been in the habit of meeting and welcoming as a precious boon from heaven.

I arose and went to the ravine which I had climbed with the Wild Zehren that night by scarcely accessible paths, and where now a long flight of stairs led easily down to the sawmill of which the commerzienrath had spoken to me the evening before, and whose clatter I could now hear coming up from the depths. It was a small but admirably planned arrangement, and had done its duty so well that the whole Zehrendorf forest, except a very trifling remainder, had been cut up by its saws.

"I wish we had not gone ahead quite so fast," said the foreman, whom I found in the mill; "for in cutting down the forest we cut off the water also, so that we can only work one day out of three, and cannot begin to fill the orders that come in from all quarters. Now the commerzienrath has set the example, all are following it, and are felling timber at such a rate that soon there will not be a tree to be seen on this part of the island. I have often told the commerzienrath what would be the result; but he would not listen to me, and now he must suffer for it."

"A small steam engine would help the difficulty, would it not?" I asked.

"Yes; but you see water is cheaper than steam. But the profits never came in fast enough, so he killed the goose for the sake of the golden egg. All that understood the matter advised him not to clear off all the wood at once, but to leave enough to protect the undergrowth from the winds that blow too strong up there on the height. Now nothing will grow on the bare soil thoroughly dried by the wind, as you probably noticed if you came over the ridge from the castle. No, no; you can't treat nature as you please: she is not so patient as men."

The foreman was a small man with a shrewd thoughtful face. He was born, as he told me, on another part of the island, and knew the country and the people well, but had not long been in this region. I introduced myself to him as the person who was to set up the new machinery in the chalk-quarry, and asked him his opinion of this undertaking.

"It will not turn out much better than this," he replied, "though for another reason. The quarry has always been a tolerably productive one, but the commerzienrath took the notion that he had only to quarry deeper and it would yield more abundantly. It has yielded in great abundance--*water*, which will ruin the whole quarry if your machinery cannot get the upper hand of it."

"That is an ugly state of things," I said, seriously disturbed by what he told me.

"It is indeed," he answered.

"And the kilns," I asked again, "can you give no better report of them?"

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"There are several things to be said on that subject. The arrangements are good enough, but immensely too expensive, and the transportation is too heavy in winter upon our frightful roads. And even during the summer they sometimes come to a stand-still, because all along the coast here our communication with the sea is so bad; although the commerzienrath has had a great breakwater built with the stones of the old tower. You can see it from here--there where that line of surf is. But we might get along if the commerzienrath knew how to make himself liked among the people."

"How so?" I asked.

The man looked at me with some hesitation from under his bushy eyebrows.

"You may speak quite openly," I said. "But a few days ago I was no more than an ordinary workman in the commerzienrath's machine-shops, and have not lost my sympathy with my comrades in this short time."

"Well," said he, "to speak freely, my notion of the matter is this: the people about here, the seafaring men as well as the cotters, and those in the villages on the coast and up the country, all look upon the commerzienrath as a man who has pushed himself into a place where better men than himself have sat and should sit. As to their being better, there may be two sides to that question; but I am not speaking my own thoughts, but those of the people. Then many of them remember that the commerzienrath was not always the rich man he is now; and what is the worst, two or three know very well how he got together such a monstrous heap of money, for he worked for it himself, and risked his skin in the year '10, and thereabouts, when there were queer doings along this coast and up as high as Uselin and Woldom. Why, not so many years ago there was a grand hunt made here after smugglers, of which perhaps you may have heard something. Well, all that might have been, and nobody think anything the worse of the commerzienrath for it, if he were a man to live and let live, and who tried to make up for anything he had done amiss, and did not bear too hard on the poor men. But he is just the opposite of that. He grinds and drives them all he can, and only thinks of how much work is to be got out of them, as they have got to work. But he is mistaken. They work for him, it is true; but only such of them as can get nothing else to do; and what sort of workmen they are, and the kind of work they do, you know as well as I could tell you."

"I see," I said.

A workman came up. New logs were to be laid for sawing, and the foreman must be there. I shook his hand. He looked at me with his melancholy eyes, and said with a smile:

"You have' me now in your power if you choose to tell the commerzienrath what you have heard from me. But it is no matter: in any event I shall not stay here much longer."

"I am sorry to hear you say so," I answered. "I trust on the contrary we shall have many a friendly talk together, and hit upon more than one good plan between us. Don't throw away your musket too soon; there is a better time coming I fancy."

The man looked at me in some surprise, but answered nothing, and went into the mill, while I descended the stairs all the way down to the strand.

Here lay my sea, my dearly loved sea, which I had always greeted with tears of joy when a

dream carried me to the shore and it lay before me in all its grandeur and beauty. Rolling in they came, the great glorious waves with white breaking crests, flinging the foam of the surf to my feet; and when they rolled back there was a fierce roar from the millions of pebbles grinding together on the beach. Over the chalk-cliffs above me a pair of gulls wheeled in lazy flight, and in the offing glittered the sails of two fishing-boats which were bound home after heavy night-work. With what anticipation I had looked forward to seeing once more what I had not seen for so long, and I saw it almost with indifference.

But it was not my fault. My feelings were as strong as ever, and my heart had not grown so much older in the eight or nine years; but I could not drive away the anxious thoughts aroused by the words of the honest intelligent foreman of the mill.

How accurately his views tallied with the observation which I had made during my morning walk! With what a sharp outline he had sketched the portrait of the *commerzienrath*, just as I had always known him, and as he appeared last night. Then he was full of boasting and bragging in how short a time he had trebled and quintupled the value of the estate, and all that he was doing for the people around. He had meant to show Messieurs the noblemen, who in matters of farming were all some fifty years behind the time, what a man of business like himself could make out of a ruined estate. This was the only real interest he took in the whole business, and if the young prince had a fancy to the property he had better hasten his decision or he would come too late.

Five hundred thousand *thalers*--half a million! How was such a sum to be got out of it? The estate was of vast extent, it was true, and exhausted and ruined as it was at the Wild Zehren's death, was still worth a hundred and fifty thousand, and at this price the *commerzienrath* took it at the settlement. Now when it was in a better state of cultivation, when all the buildings were new, a handsome residence built, and the various industrial arrangements, even if not doing so well as was hoped, still enhanced the value of the property, it might be worth twice the money; but on the other hand all the valuable timber was cut down and sold--I could not raise it to that price, reckon as I might; there was always more than the half that I could not account for. If the *commerzienrath*'s statements of his affairs were all as loose as this--in just the same proportion he had over-estimated the value of his machine-works in Berlin, in our talk the previous night--if he only played the millionaire because perhaps he had once been one; if he--I paused, looking out at the sea, and drew a long breath. Again, in this clear morning, here in the fresh sea-air, the gloomy presentiment came over me, that yesterday evening in the close room I had held for the offspring of my excited fancy, heated with the fiery wine; and once more, as yesterday, my thoughts reverted to the fair girl, the wayward, envied heiress of wealth, which possibly had no existence but in her father's idle boasting.

"But, after all, what does it concern me?" I said to myself, as I waded with rapid strides through the deep sand of the beach; "it does not concern me at all; not the least."

At my feet lay a large fish which the waves must just have flung ashore. It seemed dead, but showed no marks of injury; its expanded gills were still brilliantly red; probably the surf had dashed it against a rock, or a blow from the paddle of a seal stunned it. I carried it, not without wetting my feet, over the great stones, and threw it into deeper water. It floated, turning up its white belly. "Poor creature," I said, "I would fain have helped you; now the gulls will eat you; your death furnishes them a feast."

"And how did the dead fish concern me?" I went on philosophizing, as after knocking the wet sand off my boots, I pursued my way. "Not in the least, either. A man should have in his breast the heart of one of these gulls, with sharp talons, and a strong keen beak, and hack gaily into every prey that a favoring wave casts up on the strand. George, George, be ashamed of yourself! But it all does no good; I cannot make myself other than I am. But neither can I make others different from what they are. The *commerzienrath* for instance: could I ever teach that man the doctrines of my master? The doctrine of love--of mutual help? Never. Or at least only if I could prove that his profit went with it hand in hand: that he will work his own ruin if he makes rapacity the ruling principle of his life. Did not my teacher predict all this to me? The turn of this man and those like him is now come: they are now the knights of the hammer: it is the old game in a somewhat different form. And he added--and a bright light glowed in his splendid eyes--'It will not be long before our time comes, we who have comprehended that there is a justice that cannot be mocked.'

"'That time--our time--it will never come,' Doctor Willibrod used to say, 'or only for him who can conquer it, and hold it fast by the fluttering robe.'"

A gull gave a hoarse cry overhead: I looked up and saw something white, like the skirt of a dress, fluttering above the bushes fringing the cliff which here was steep and at least fifty feet high. It was not a dress, it was a veil which floated from the hat of a horsewoman, for presently I saw the hat itself, then the head of the horse, and soon the rider herself, or at least her head and shoulders for a moment, as she leaned over to look down at the narrow strip of beach.

It gave me a beating of the heart--it looked so very dangerous, although I knew that it was not quite so dangerous as it seemed from below: and I called out to her to take care; but she hardly could have heard it. Her white veil had disappeared, and my heart beat still more strongly--it was Paula's fault if I could not look on calmly and see the fair Hermine fall fifty feet down a precipice, even though it were into my arms.

"How now," I cried, in scorn to myself, "is there anything more to rescue or to protect? Cunning old commerzienraths, stupid dead fishes, pretty capricious girls--it is all the same to you, if you can only burn your fingers or wet your feet for your trouble. How long has it been since you hastened along this beach with the Wild Zehren at your side and the coast-guard on your heels? You might still see the foot-prints if winds and waves had not effaced them; but stupid idiot that you are, you can find the old track without that!"

Thus I chided myself, and made up my mind to return at once to the house and there to tell the commerzienrath that I--no matter for what reason--had resolved to return, and nothing could induce me to stay. And while I formed this resolution, which, if carried into effect, would have changed the whole course of my life, and therefore was not to be, I was already looking with awakening interest at the arrangements at the chalk-quarry, which lay before me, in a moderately deep ravine, as I turned a sharp angle of the cliff. It would have been worse than unbecoming if I had so abruptly abandoned the work which I had been sent for and had come expressly to carry out.

So I ascended the wooden staircase which ran up the chalk-cliff until I reached a small platform, where behind the watchman's hut was the opening to the galleries which had been pushed horizontally into the chalk, and which could not now be worked further because they had come upon springs of water which they were in vain trying to master with rude temporary pumping machinery.

"And it is very doubtful whether your machines will do it," said the old weatherbeaten overseer, who showed it to me.

"But how did it happen?" I asked.

"How did it happen?" echoed he, shrugging his shoulders--"Why you see, behind the chalk, which comes just to here--" we were walking on the top of the cliff, and took hold of a stake driven into the ground as a mark--"there is a stratum of sand, old sea-sand and dune-sand, which runs alongside the chalk at about the same depth, and at the other end reaches the great morass where it sucks up the water like a sponge. We all knew that very well, but the master would not believe it, and thought we wanted to cheat him out of his profits when we advised him to go no deeper on that side, when the chalk happened just there to be especially fine. Now he has to suffer for it."

Just the same thing that the foreman in the saw-mill had said, and both seemed to be intelligent honest men, who took a sincere interest in the prosperity of the works and were really grieved at their ill success. Why had he not followed their advice while it was yet time? Why? For the same reason that he had steadily opposed all Doctor Snellius's proposition for the formation of beneficial and burial societies; for the same reason that he had scornfully rejected the suggestions of our manager to raise the wages of the workmen in proportion to the increased cost of living. It was always the same reason: boundless selfishness, which gazes on the one object of its desires with such greedy eyes that it can see neither to the right nor to the left, and is at last dazzled and blinded to its own real interests.

"Now he has to suffer for it," the old man repeated, as if in confirmation of my thoughts, then turned slowly away and descended the wooden stair which led from the edge of the cliff down to the quarry.

I remained alone, in profound thought, as if the creation of a new world had been entrusted to me. And was there not a world to create here, of which as yet only the foundation had been laid? Sawmills, chalk-quarries, lime-kilns, the draining of the great morass--what might not have been made of all these undertakings? Nay, what might not still be made of them, if they were taken up in the right spirit and with the right intention?--the intention of providing for the poor, perishing, wretched people here, new and permanent sources of subsistence. One had only to win their confidence by letting them see that while they seemed to be working for their employer, they were really working for themselves.

"If I were but master here!"

From the point where I stood, I could overlook a good part of the country; my view extending to the left up as far as the heights of Zehrendorf, and on the right descending to the great morass and along the line of coast as far as Zanowitz, whose miserable huts were visible here and there between the barren dunes. And I saw in fancy the waste land waving with golden harvests, the great moor drained and giving place to rich meadows on which grazed great herds of cattle, while handsome fishing-smacks sailed out from the wretched village, now the port of a rich and fruitful territory.

Once before I had had a similar dream, and once before my eyes had roved over this land and my fancy would have created a paradise, if such a power resided in fancies or in wishes. Since then many a year had passed; I was another man, richer in understanding and sagacity, stronger in will; must it still remain only a longing wish? Must I again, as so often before in my life, stand with empty hands before the famishing who were crying for bread?

And as I walked backwards and forwards on the cliff, thinking and thinking how I should get

away, for go away I must, suddenly the white veil that I had before seen fluttering from the summit, now fluttered over the bushes that edged the beach to my right. I heard the rapid tread of a galloping horse on the sandy road behind the bushes, and in the next moment the rider came round the corner upon a handsome black horse, with an enormous yellow mastiff galloping by his side with an almost equal length of stride. The instant the lady saw me, with a quick firm hand she swerved the well-trained horse to one side, but the dog came bounding to me with evidently hostile intentions. As I was ready for him the moment he sprang at me, I clutched him by the throat and one fore-leg, and hurled him to the ground.

"Leo! Leo!" cried Hermine, urging on her horse with whip and rein. "Here, Leo! Down, Sir!"

But Leo had prudently decided to beat a retreat after the failure of his attack. It seemed that in my haste I had handled him rather roughly, for he limped slowly towards his mistress, whining and holding up his right fore-paw.

"Served you right," said she, bending down to pat him. "How could you be so stupid as to attack that gentleman? Don't you know he can conquer lions?"

She said this in a tone through which there evidently enough pierced a certain scorn, and a trace of contempt, or vexation, or pride, or all together, lay upon her beautiful lips, as she now looked at me sharply with her large clear blue eyes, as I bowed in salutation, and said:

"You need not be surprised, sir: the dog has been trained to protect his mistress. I do not know for what he can have taken you."

These unfriendly words were also spoken in a very far from kindly tone, and I am not sure that an elegant young gentleman who should be thus treated by a beautiful girl would in all cases preserve the repose of manner that marks his caste.

But I only saw in the fair Amazon who behaved so haughtily, the pretty blue-eyed girl of nine or ten years before, when we used to tease each other; so I felt in nowise wounded by her behavior, and I fear that I very calmly remarked that at the worst the dog could only have taken me for a workman, and that I hardly supposed he had been trained to attack a class of persons as useful as they were numerous.

At this answer, which was probably not of the nature she expected, she looked at me with an embarrassed indignant glance, and said, with more temper than logic:

"I do not know why you should be taken for anything else, since you are always occupied with such useful and important matters that of course you cannot care about your external appearance, as do we small every-day people. The last time I had this pleasure, you looked, if I remember right, like a chimney-sweeper; and now--for the sake of contrast probably--you present yourself in the garb of a miller."

I glanced down at myself, involuntarily, and perceived that in creeping about in the narrow galleries of the chalk-quarry, I had rubbed my broad shoulders and other projecting angles of my person against the walls, and that with great white patches all over my clothes, I did really present a singular and ludicrous appearance. I took off my hat, and said with a profound bow, turning to the dog who was now sitting on his haunches with an air of extreme despondency, holding up his damaged fore-paw:

"I most heartily beg pardon, and I solemnly promise that if I have the happy fortune to meet you again, I shall appear as neat as it is possible for soap and brush to make me, when I trust you will have as little doubt of my friendly intentions as I have of yours."

"Come, Leo! Come along if you can; or else stay where you are."

She gave her horse, who had been impatiently tossing his head and pawing the sand, so sharp a cut across the neck that he bounded with surprise and went off at full gallop. The dog galloped after, as fast as his available legs would carry him.

I did not feel that in this odd rencontre, which almost seemed a combat, I had come off second best. I believe I even looked after her as she galloped off and her white veil quickly disappeared behind the bushes, with a kind of triumphant smile, and muttered to myself, "'The first best man'-in truth the man were not to be pitied who should be the first and best for you!"

It was time that I had returned to the house, where the commerzienrath was certainly awaiting me by this time. So I walked rapidly back from the cliffs, along a road too well known to me of old, which led between the morass on the left and the heath on the right, in the direction of Trantowitz, where quite near the house a path branched off through the fields to Zehrendorf. I do not know how it happened, but my meeting with the pretty girl who exhibited so much hostility to me, without bringing me really to believe in its sincerity, had entirely restored my good humor.

All things that had seemed to me so gloomy and fraught with evil, now appeared in a more cheerful light. Here was certainly a possibility of doing good on a large scale; and I blessed my star that, as it seemed, it had fallen to my lot to bring this possibility to a reality. The commerzienrath, if not a good, was at least a shrewd man, who would not act against the

interests of others when he was shown that these interests ran parallel with his own. And who was better prepared to give him this proof than I-I, whose disinterestedness he must be convinced of, and who, heaven knows why, rejoiced in his regard for me, so far as such a feeling could be said to exist in his cold breast. It is possible that he only liked me because he needed me, or thought he did. Be it so: I must make myself necessary to him, and I believed I could do this: and then let the fair Hermine treat me as superciliously as she pleased, I stood firmly on my feet and could hold my head as high as nature had placed it.

So I strode valiantly along the narrow path to the gap in the alder thicket which here grew between the moor and the heath; the same gap through which I had fled with the Wild Zehren on that night nine years before. Once more I battled with my sad recollections, for I had firmly resolved to meet the present as it was, and let the past be past. How, indeed, without this resolution, could I ever have brought myself to return to this place? And the sun was shining so brightly in the blue sky, and the birds singing so merrily in the branches whose buds were now beginning to open, and in the bushes that were now in full leaf; in the brown water of the ditches and pools long-legged water-beetles were gaily rowing about, and in the distance, in the Trantowitz woods apparently, resounded the call of the cuckoo. No; one could not be melancholy on so bright a day; and when I thought of the pretty angry face of the charming girl, I could not refrain from laughing so loud that a man, who had been lying asleep in the young grass on the edge of a trench under the overhanging boughs of an alder a few paces from me, raised himself slowly on his elbow and stared at me, as I came round the thicket, with great astonished blue eyes. I only needed one look at these good-natured big blue eyes--"Herr von Trantow!" I cried--"Hans, my dear Hans!" and I held out my hands to my old friend, who in the meantime had risen to his feet, and offered me his great brown knightly hand with a friendly smile.

"How are you dear friend?" I said.

"As usual," he answered.

It was the old tone, but it was no longer the old Hans. His blue eyes were more expressionless, his brown cheeks sunken, and his formerly well-shaped handsome nose was red and swollen; and when we seated ourselves side by side on the edge of the trench, and he took off his cap, I saw that his thick dark-blond hair was greatly thinned.

"I knew that you would come," he said, taking flint and steel from his hunting pouch and lighting a cigar, after first supplying me: "I was to go there to dinner to-day, but I do not know whether I should have gone; so I am all the more glad that I have met you here. I had much rather be here."

And he puffed great clouds of smoke from his cigar and gazed at the water in the trench, where the lively long-legged water-beetles were busily rowing about.

"Much rather," he repeated.

"And are you still living as lonely as ever?" I asked.

"Naturally," said Hans.

"I do not find that so natural," I replied, with some animation, for Hans's whole appearance and voice bespoke a carelessness and desolation which cut me to the heart--"by no means natural. What! a man like you, a dear, good, brave fellow like you, go mooning and wasting his life in solitude because a coquette has chosen to lead him in her string for a year or so? Yes, Herr von Trantow, a heartless coquette, who never was worth the regards of an honest man and now--no, she is hardly worth our compassion. I can tell you, I have learned that truth to my cost."

"So have I," said Hans.

"I know it."

Hans shook his head as if to say, that is not what I mean. I knew of old how to translate his gestures.

"Have you seen her since?" I asked.

He nodded.

"Where and when?"

"Eight or nine years ago, in--what do they call the hole?--Naples."

"That was the time that you disappeared from here, and no one knew what had become of you."

"Yes," said Hans.

"In Naples?"

"Yes."

It quite taxed the imagination to fancy Hans von Trantow in Naples, the northern bear among the southern jackals, and a most urgent impulse must it have been which drove him for the first and only time in his life from the Penates of his ruined home, and his native heaths and moors, out into the wide world.

It was in December nine years before--I had then been a month in detention under examination--that Hans had received a letter which caused him to lay game-bag and gun aside--he was just going out shooting--harness up his sledge and drive off to Fährdorf, where he crossed the ice to Uselin, and from Uselin travelled day and night, until after many hinderances--he at first thought he must look for Naples in Turkey, and only found the right direction after extreme difficulties and some lost time--at the end of about a month he happily reached the city he was in search of. Here, after some trouble--for the good Hans spoke and understood no language but his own honest German--he discovered the hotel mentioned in the letter, and found her whom he was looking for. But not as he expected to find her; not as the letter had represented her. She had spoken of herself as "betrayed," "forsaken," one who looked to him as her only refuge, her preserver from the direst misery and a certain death. Hans had naturally taken all this literally, and was somewhat astounded to find her in one of the grandest hotels on the Toledo, in luxuriously furnished apartments, and splendidly dressed, looking more lovely than ever, though not a little confused--indeed, even turning pale--at sight of him. She had probably not supposed that her appeal would receive so instantaneous a response, and that she would have no notice beforehand, and in consequence she was taken unprepared. So it had to be that a German princess, who was really in Naples at the time, had interested herself in her, and insisted that the daughter of so ancient and distinguished a family should accept her assistance. But the favor of the great is inconstant, and often clogged with conditions hard to be complied with by a proud spirit. The princess had demanded, as the price of her favor, that Constance should marry off-hand a certain young Baron, who, it was said, had stood a little too high in the exalted favor of the princess herself; and she, Constance, was one of those who may err, and err grievously, but will never act against the voice of their heart.

This story the fair Circe had told the true-hearted Hans, with many tears and sighs, and blushes and smiles, and convulsive sobbings, and he, who did not possess the sceptical spirit of the much-enduring man, believed every word, and had returned to his modest lodgings, pondering and racking his brain to find out what he could do to help her.

To marry her was out of the question. A Trantow could take no woman to wife who was not as chaste as he himself was brave; not though she were a hundred times fairer and he had loved her a hundred times more dearly. But to share with her what he had, to protect her and care for her and do for her what in a similar case a brother might do for an unfortunate but dearly loved sister--this Hans could do and would do; and the next morning he went to lay his plans before her. But in the night Circe had taken other counsel, and left her palace under the protection of the aforesaid young Baron, who in reality stood in no connection whatever with the high lady she had referred to, but in a very intimate one with young Prince Prora, and since the young prince had left Naples a month before, by his father's orders, in quite an intimate relation to Constance herself, who had been transferred to him as an equivalent for a considerable sum of money which the prince had lost to him at play. So at least Hans was told--and much beside which he neither asked nor wanted to know--by a German waiter at the hotel, who seemed to have taken a very active, if not very creditable part in the whole affair. As Hans had not come to Naples to lounge along the Toledo, or visit Capri, or climb Vesuvius, he shook the dust from his feet and set out on his homeward journey. But the good faithful fellow did not get far. The unusual exertion and excitement of so long a journey made in such furious haste, the change of climate and mode of living, the fiery Italian wine, which from old habits he had drunk in great quantity, and more than all else the deep grief at this second atrocious treachery, which was far worse than the first, were too much for even his strong constitution, and one day a compassionate *vetturino* brought to the gate of a monastery near Rome a traveller who had fallen sick by the way, and who really seemed to have reached the end of all his journeys.

But it was not fated that the good Hans should exhale his free brave soul in the narrow cell of a Roman monastery; despite the extremely irrational treatment of Fra Antonio, the celebrated physician to the convent, he recovered, and in six weeks could walk about the garden. The garden was a very fine one, with a magnificent view of the Eternal City, and the monks, if not particularly clean, were very kind and hospitable, and very urgently pressed the worthy Hans to consider whether it would not be for the welfare of his soul to return no more to his barbarian home, but come rather to the bosom of the true Church, to die perhaps, if it were heaven's will, some day in that very monastery in the odor of sanctity. A singular proposal to the good Hans, who in his life had never given a moment's thought to the present or future welfare of his soul; but it was quite clear to him that however salutary it might be for his immortal part, to follow the counsel of the good fathers, he would have in doing so to renounce all the comfort of his life. The convent wine was right good of its kind, but it had a peculiar flavor to which he could never get accustomed, any more than he could to seeing the trees in blossom at the end of February, as if at this time there were no keen gusty north-east wind in the world, and no pine-woods whose boughs bent with their weight of pendent icicles; and when one night a comforting dream had conveyed him to Trantowitz, and by the feeble light of the northern stars and of the snow had let him shoot six hares in his cabbages out of his bedroom window, there was no holding him any longer after he awoke; he shook the brown dirty hands of his friendly hosts, one after the other, received the Prior's benediction upon his heretical head, and returned to his old home.

All this Hans told me in his monotonous way, while we sat on the edge of the trench. And the long-legged beetles shot back and forth in the brown water, and the birds twittered in the branches, and the call of the cuckoo came from the far-off woods.

I felt very sad. I believe I should have been less affected if Hans had exhibited the least emotion in the recital of the most eventful and certainly most painful passage of his life; but of this there was not the slightest trace. He felt no hatred towards Constance, no grudge against the young prince, who was now living at Rossow in the immediate neighborhood: in all that he said there lay a perfect resignation, an utter hopelessness; and this it was that made me so sad.

There was a rustling in the coppice behind us, and an old pointer trotting up greeted first Hans and then me with a melancholy wag of his tail.

"God bless me! that is not Caro, is it?" I asked.

"Yes it is," said Hans. "I believe he knows you."

"Poor old fellow!" I said, patting the dog; "and does he still do his duty?"

"So, so," said Hans. "He has been of no use with pheasants for a long time; and with ducks, that used to be his great point, he will not go into the water any more, so that I usually have to get them myself. But that is only natural: we are neither of us so young as we once were."

Caro had seated himself on the edge of the trench, staring with pricked-up ears at the beetles in the water, and evidently thinking of nothing at all; Hans sat with his left elbow propped on his knee, blowing thick clouds from his cigar, also staring into the trench, and apparently thinking of nothing also. I felt sadder and sadder. The contrast between the active life I had just been picturing to myself, and the melancholy of this stagnant, purposeless existence, was too great.

"Suppose we go," I said, suddenly rising.

"Very well," said Hans, slowly following my example.

Not much was said between us as we crossed the heath, until we reached the point where the path to Zehrendorf branched off near Trantowitz whose buildings looked forlorn and more dilapidated than ever.

"So you are going to live here always," said Hans, as we were about to separate.

"Always?" I said. "How came you to think that?"

"I?" he said, in evident surprise that I should suspect him of originating any idea--"I did not think it: Fräulein Duff told me so."

"And did she tell you why I was to stay here always?"

"Of course; and I wish you joy with all my heart."

"Wish me joy of what?" I asked, taking with some hesitation his offered hand.

Hans blushed and stammered, "Excuse me: I had no intention of being indiscreet; but I thought it was no secret, or at least none between us."

"In the name of heaven, what *are* you talking about?" I asked, and I think I turned even redder than Hans, if that were possible.

"Why, are you not betrothed to Fräulein Hermine or about to be?" he stammered out.

I laughed loud; louder than any one who laughs honestly, and Hans, who took this for an indirect confession, again seized my hand and said:

"I wish you joy with all my heart: I do not know any one in the whole world whom I would so gladly see win her as yourself. And the people here need a good master."

He pressed my hand again, and then went on, Caro trotting after him with drooping head. I looked after them. "Indeed," I said to myself, "it would be a better lot than has fallen to your share, you good faithful fellow."

I turned. There lay before me the new mansion and grounds of Zehrendorf, and lower down, nearer to me, there crouched close to the earth the same little dilapidated, dirty cottages that I remembered of old; and in the fields, splendid in their vernal beauty, I saw working the same care-worn, poverty-stricken men, and I thought of all I had seen and heard this morning, and said to myself, "Yes, indeed, you need a good master!"

Then I walked slowly, almost hesitatingly, along the footpaths through the green corn-fields to Zehrendorf.

CHAPTER XII.

I had now been more than a week at Zehrendorf. A letter written in those days now lies before me, a letter several pages long, upon which there are spots as if tears had fallen upon the paper, and yet it is a cheerful, even a merry letter, and these are the words of it:

"Nobody knows better than you, dear Paula, that I did not come here to amuse myself; but were I to say that in all these days I have done little else than amuse myself, or at least seem to be doing it, I should tell the honest truth. It really seems as if I were making up for lost time by perpetrating all the follies I have left undone during the last nine or ten years; and as taking my earlier exploits in that line as a standard, their amount and magnitude can by no means be insignificant, so my incentives to achieve them are proportionately strong. They still tell here of my performances in choral singing in our old parties on the water; of the dancing parties where I had ever the most inventive head for new figures in the *cotillon*, of the walks and drives in the pine-wood, where I was the leader in every frolic, and where in the evening the darkness of the forest would be lighted up by the fireworks that my friend and *protégé*, Fritz Amsberg, the apothecary's hunchbacked apprentice, used to make for me as his appointed tribute. Yes indeed, there are persons who remember only too well my exploits in those days; and what is the worst, some of these live in my immediate neighborhood, and are but too ready to say at all times, fitting or unfitting, 'Don't you remember, George--excuse me for calling you by the dear old name--don't you remember what a glorious time we had at such a place, where you had arranged so and so?' Not once in ten times can I remember it, and then only vaguely; and I marvel at the extraordinary tenacity with which the female memory retains certain things, which, with us men, the rougher waves of life ruthlessly wash away.

"Poor Emilie! What can have brought her here? Quite unexpectedly to me, I can assure you, and by no means agreeably either; but her father, my great enemy of old, is *Justitarius* to Prince Prora, and the commerzienrath's solicitor; and as the prince and the commerzienrath are still in treaty about Zehrendorf, nothing of course can be done without the legal factotum of the two high contracting powers. Now wherever the legal factotum is, Fräulein Emilie is not far off, especially when in addition to business, a little innocent pleasure is to be had, as here with us in the country, where business and pleasure, whenever possible, go hand in hand. And now too, when the worthy lady, the Frau Justizräthin, has acted so unmotherly as to leave Emilie 'a helpless, unprotected orphan,' to use her own expression. And wherever Emilie is, one has not to look far for our mayor's lovely daughter, her bosom-friend, Elsie Kohl. Really I ought to be ashamed of making fun of these poor girls, for in truth it is not their fault that they have never been outside of the good town of Uselin and its three-mile circuit of estates and domains, so that their conceptions of the world and men's doings in it are not very comprehensive, but rather a little confused; and especially is it not Fräulein Emilie's fault that she did not find the person she was looking for--no, I ought not to laugh at them; and yet never could I have believed that my risible faculties could be brought into such play as happens when I look at the pair--*the two Eleonoras* somebody here has christened them--clasping each other in a girlish embrace, as they swim into the parlor through the door which William Kluckhuhn, with a malicious grin on his impudent face, has obsequiously thrown open for them. The attitude has, doubtless, been most carefully studied before the glass, or it could not always be so exact down to the very minutest detail. Here you have the group, which I recommend to you for one of your charming saloon-pieces:--Emilie, as the smaller and bolder, is naturally the second Eleonora, and is the worldly protector of the other who is a head taller and even in my time had a little romance with a poetical young schoolmaster who was a trifle out of his senses, so she has the superiority over her friend which riper experience and early sorrows bestow, especially as ten years ago she bewailed in elegiac verses her hapless fate, to fade, in the bloom of her youth, to the silent tomb.

"This sport of cruel destiny, the victim destined to an early grave, clasps her right arm around the shoulders of her friend, gazing down upon her with a loving look as if to say, Happy, guileless child! thou canst sing and sport in life's bright morning! while the guileless child looks up at her with two eyes, blue as two skies, at least, and with a provoking smile on her saucy lips. It is a touching sight, I assure you; and more than ever when one thinks that the combined ages of the two Eleonoras amount to some sixty-two or sixty-three years; for I remember quite distinctly that as a very little boy I would not play with Elise any more because she was too old for me, and as for Emilie I know certainly that she is exactly one year older than I am, for our birthdays fell on the same day, and used often to be celebrated together.

"Yes, the tenacity of Fräulein Emilie's memory is great, but there is one hour of her life of which she affirms that it is ever clouded in her recollections with a thick mist. And this very hour is so clear to me, that I can almost venture to name the exact number of curl-papers that quivered around her head when she lifted both her hands to me and supplicated me to spare her aged father, the same aged father who now nods confidentially to me across the table, with his

full glass in his hand, and after dinner calls to me '*Prosit Mahlzeit*,¹⁸¹ my young friend! I would have liked to touch glasses with you, but I sat too far off; but you must really let me take your hand, you must indeed!' upon which follows a half embrace, if not a whole one. I assure you I sometimes take hold of my head to convince myself that this is not all an extraordinary dream. For you must know, Paula, that if I am not the fool of these festivities, I am not far from being the king of them; everything being done with reference to me, every one flattering me, and every one competing for my favor--with a single exception, of course. It is really edifying. There is my old friend, the little Herr von Granow, who has grown so much fatter with time that even in his best moments he can no longer lift his head from between his shoulders. Least of all can he when his spouse is by, a stout buxom brewer's daughter from S., who brought him a couple of hundred thousand *thalers*, which he takes care to get the good of, and a pair of slippers under whose heavy strokes they say the poor little fellow weeps many a hot secret tear. But disagree as they may on other points, the pair agree on this one of paying court to me in the most ridiculous manner in the world. The little man recalls with emotion 'The bright, the precious hours' that he once spent in my society, and sighing wishes those happy days back again, and that too in the presence of his over-buxom wife, who with a mock threat lifts a warning finger and says: 'O, you bad, bad man! But indeed I can understand how for *such* a friend one could even sacrifice the peace of the domestic hearth.'

"And then the *steuerrath* and the *Born*! I wrote you how they received me. Well, since then a grand council must have been held, and the decision come to to try other plans. The result is that the *steuerrath*, so soon as he sees me, holds out his hand to me, saying 'Glad to see you, George! You do not mind my calling the son of an old and too early lost colleague and friend, by his first name!' at which words the *Born* smiles benignant, and if the opportunity permits, takes my arm, draws me on one side and holds a long consultation with me about the apple of her eye, Arthur. Alas, the apple of her eye is giving her so much pain again, and grieves her so that, if one believed her assurances, she is often on the point of plucking it out of its aristocratic socket. But one must not believe her assurances, and I never do. It is just the old litany that I have known since I was a child: how Arthur is the best, cleverest, handsomest, wittiest, charmingest youth in the world, and has but one fault, that of hiding his thousand and one lights under the bushel of his frivolity, where, as is natural, they cannot produce their proper effect. Only that verse of the litany that referred to me, has taken an altogether different form. They used to be quite certain that I was at the bottom of all the unlucky scrapes that Arthur got into: now they are perfectly assured that I and I alone can save this stray lamb from the abyss. 'One who like you has borne the inevitable with dignity, one who like you has won the hardest victory, that over yourself, one who ----' well, I do not doubt that she is really anxious about her son's future, and as far as I can see, she has every reason to be; but so much the more do I doubt her good disposition towards me. I know too well what she and the *steuerrath* want of me! I know too well what Arthur, who comes over for awhile every day from *Rosow*, wants of me, when he sets all the fountains of his amiability to playing, and sprinkles me with a heavy spray of flatteries and protestations of friendship. And the worst of all--or should I say the best?--is that I know just as well what all the rest want; the little Herr von Granow, for instance, who would like to have the great estate of *Zehrendorf*, and wants me to speak a good word for him to the *commerzienrath*: William Kluckhuhn, who has received warning from his master, and wants me to ask that he may keep his place; and so they all have their special interests in persuading poor George that, all things considered, he is a young man of singular talents and remarkable influence, whose favor is very well worth winning.

"But seriously, dear Paula, it is a very curious position in which I find myself here; and I really do not know if they would not turn my head altogether, were not--well, were not a certain person here whose especial task it seems to be to set it right for me again. Or that is possibly the wrong expression: it would be more correct to say--to turn it in the other direction:--I am by no means an important personage whom any one need to consider; I am a quite obscure insignificant person, whom her father, heaven knows by what caprice, has invited to his house, and who therefore cannot exactly be shown the door, but who must be given to understand that people of his class really belong to very different society. I must be given to understand this by any and every means, some of the queerest in the world. I will tell you more about this when I come back: I fear the faces that they make here to me would look by far less handsome on the paper than they are in reality, and the little extravagances which they let themselves be drawn into, would, on the contrary, seem almost insane. Or are they really out of their senses? Sometimes it seems so to me, and I often cannot trust myself to pass a judgment on them, and wish that I had Benno here, or were myself Benno with his nineteen years, and his bright illusions. For his brown, enthusiastic eyes, I fancy, the blue-eyed enigma would be easier of solution than for an old lumpish fellow like me, with my nearly thirty years, my rough hands, and sluggish brain. Well, they will have to take the old fellow as they find him; and if they don't, they may worry and sulk and make pretty faces or ugly ones as they choose, it does not matter to me, does it, Paula?"

So ran the letter, which I wanted to seem a right cheerful, even merry one; and how well I attained my object the traces of the tears it drew from Paula's eyes may testify.

Well had she cause to weep over this letter! Had she deserved it at my hands that I should intentionally and artfully seek to conceal from her what really caused me so much inward emotion? And was not this letter from beginning to end a clumsy unsuccessful attempt to mislead her as to the real state of my feelings? How much of all this letter was the honest truth? Scarcely anything.

The whirl of amusements into which I was drawn here, had by no means left me so sober as I pretended. It was as if with breathing the same air I had breathed as a youth here ten years before I inhaled something of the buoyancy and love of pleasure of those days. The handsome rich house, the liberal easy life, the light joyous existence from day to day, the life in the open air, the wanderings over the heaths, on the cliffs, through the woods, and with all these the glorious spring weather, with warm gales, the forerunners of summer, now and then sweeping through the blossoms all this charmed and intoxicated me. No, I was not the sober, cheerful, untroubled fellow, that I represented myself to Paula, and tried to make the company believe me. I was not sober, and far less was I cheerful and careless--quite the contrary. A restless, passionate humor, now depressed and now over-excited, had taken possession of me, to such an extent that sleep, my true comrade from childhood, now forsook me, just as it forsook me at the commencement of my imprisonment; and this perhaps was in part the cause of another feeling of that old time often coming over me: the feeling of one who knows that a decision involving his life or death, is now hanging by a hair.

What of all this had I written to Paula? But how could I write to her? Could I write to her that I believed that I knew the reason why Hermine kept playing, in ever strange and more fantastic form, the game which she had commenced with me on my arrival at Zehrendorf? And if something in me continually recoiled from giving the right explanation to Hermine's singular conduct, could I really altogether shut my eyes when all took pains to show me and make clear to me that they saw perfectly well what I was determined not to see, or at least gave myself the appearance of not seeing? Yes, it was a singular and unnatural position in which I found myself, a position in which we write that kind of merry letters to our friends over which our friends weep hot tears.

CHAPTER XIII.

I came back from the chalk-quarry, where I had been busy all the morning with setting up the new machine. The work under my direction, owing to good luck and the good will of the men, had succeeded so well, and the phlegmatic old master miner had said at last, with a kind of inspiration: "I believe we shall manage it yet!" I was in a very cheerful frame of mind. The old delight in accomplishing anything had possessed me once more, and while I strode rapidly through the fields, revolving in my thoughts various plans and the means for their accomplishment, I had again come to the conclusion that all might end well yet if but the right will were here, and again I said to myself, "what a chance for the master here!"

But I did not say it as I had said it a week before. Then it was a wish to which nothing personal was attached, and the goal appeared to me utterly unattainable. Now my heart was as much excited, but it no longer beat as freely as then, and the goal no longer seemed at an inaccessible distance--indeed it sometimes seemed so near that I might touch it with my hand. And when this thought came into my mind, and I suddenly saw in fancy the fair young face with the angry cloud on the white firm brow surrounded with its mass of clear-brown curls, and the full, red, saucily-defiant lips, I stood gazing blankly at the green wheat whose spears were nodding in the morning breeze, or at the distant sea-horizon glittering beyond the edge of the cliffs, while I saw all the time nothing but the sweet defiant face; and then I breathed deeply, and bethought myself that the commerzienrath had sent for me, and was probably expecting me with impatience.

I found him in his room in such animated conversation with the justizrath, that I could hear the voices of both talking together, before William Kluckhuhn opened the door. They were both sitting at the round table that was covered with ground plans, designs of buildings, and specifications.

"Are you here at last?" cried the commerzienrath to me in such a tone, that I felt justified in looking over my shoulder at the door, and remarking to him that William was no longer in the room.

The commerzienrath cast at me one of those evil glances which one sees in the eyes of an old tiger when he is undecided whether or not to respect the steel rod in the hand of his keeper, and then cried in the most pleasant tone:

"Yes, yes, the rascal; I sent him for you an hour ago and now he brings you at last. We cannot get along without you at all; at least I cannot, though this gentleman can do better without you than with you."

"Allow me, Herr Commerzienrath----" began the other.

"No, I allow nothing," he replied; "and least of all that you shall consider yourself my friend in this affair."

"I am also the friend of the other party, so to speak," replied the justizrath, pushing up with great dignity the stiff grizzled hair from both sides of his head towards the crown, where it stood up in a comb, something like that of a clown in a circus.

"Then you should at least be impartial!" cried the commerzienrath.

"Ask our friend here if he has ever known me otherwise," said the justizrath, with a dignified look at me.

"Oh, ay," cried the commerzienrath, "but fine words butter no parsnips, and my parsnips get poorer the longer you keep them at the fire. A week ago, that is before you came, the prince was willing to give four hundred thousand *thalers*; after you have had three conferences with him, he abated fifty thousand of his offer, making sixteen thousand six hundred and sixty-six and two-thirds *thalers* per conference. I am much obliged to you! You have always been a dear guest to me, but I never would have believed that you would be so dear as that!"

Emilie's father made a movement as if he would fain wrap himself up from the sharp arrows of his antagonist, in the old flowered dressing-gown he used to wear at home; but bethinking himself that he was in a black dress-coat, he pulled up his collar, felt to see if the comb on the top of his head was in good condition, and looked at me with a sly smile, as if to say: "Whoever expects to get the better of Justizrath Heckepfennig, has got to get up early: you have found that out, young man, eh?"

"Yes, my dear friend, this is the way I am treated here," continued the commerzienrath, turning to me, and, for a change, falling to a lachrymose tone: "it is enough to drive a man out of his senses; and none know it better than you, George, for you understand the whole thing--which is more than I can say of some people--you know well that the property is worth five hundred thousand *thalers* between brothers, now especially, when we have the certainty of draining the chalk quarries."

The commerzienrath accompanied these words with an expressive look at me, meaning, "Now George, keep up the ball!"

"And indeed that is a very reasonable price," he went on, "when we consider that in this way we have found a plan for draining the great morass, by carrying the pipes to the sand-bed which came so near ruining the chalk-quarry, and which is a drain-trench provided by nature itself for the water of the swamp."

Here the commerzienrath gave me a furious look, because I had not yet come to his assistance.

Now this last plan he had mentioned, was one I had suggested myself, and I considered it therefore my duty to remark here that it was true I had the strongest hopes of the success of the scheme referred to, but that it could only be demonstrated by trial, and even were it perfectly successful, the land thus gained would at furthest only compensate for the forest, which was apparently lost beyond recovery, and thus the original value of Zehrendorf would in this respect remain unaltered.

"What in the devil do you mean, sir!" cried the commerzienrath, springing up and storming about the room. "Did you come here for *this*? What do you mean?"

"I came, Herr Commerzienrath, at your own request," I replied calmly, while in violent excitement he paced the room with quick short steps, still darting venomous looks at me, until suddenly he threw himself back in his easy chair, crying:

"What a fellow this George Hartwig is! O what a fellow! What answers the man has! Came here at my request! What a fellow, what a fellow!"

And the old gentleman slapped me on the knee, and said, resuming a serious tone:

"But to come back to our business, the fact is that I can have five hundred thousand from Von Granow any day. Is that not so, George? Did he not say so to you yesterday evening?"

Herr von Granow had said nothing of the sort to me, but on the contrary that he was ready to negotiate on any reasonable terms, but that the commerzienrath's demands were simply unreasonable, not to say ridiculous.

As I could not do the commerzienrath the favor to tell a falsehood, and would not afford the justizrath, who seemed to be waiting for it, the pleasure an admission of the truth would afford him, I arose from my chair, saying that if I could be of no other service to them, I would, with their permission, go to my own room where I had a little work to do.

"No, no; stay here, stay here!" cried the commerzienrath eagerly; "I must speak with you on matters of importance. And as for us, my dear old friend, go now and tell his highness whatever

you choose; but if you tell him that we cannot succeed in draining the chalk-quarry, I shall send him George here, who will open his eyes on that point. And now farewell, my old friend, and come back at noon punctually. I have found a couple more bottles of '22 Hock, that you will like I know, gourmand that you are!"

And the commerzienrath poked the corpulent justizrath in the ribs with his thumb, in a jocular fashion, and in this way poked him, so to speak, out at the door, then turned shortly on his heel, came with quick steps and stood before me, and cried in a rage that sent the blood to his bald temples:

"Now will you tell me,--are you going to help me in this business, or are you not?"

"First tell me, Herr Commerzienrath,--will you take another tone with me, or will you not?" I answered.

"Bah! leave your fooleries! We are alone now. I have no notion of playing blindman's-buff with you, do you understand me, sir?"

"Not in the least," I answered; "or only so far that I have no notion of being a minute longer the guest of a man who knows so little--or rather, who is so entirely ignorant of what is due to a guest."

I said this in a very calm tone, but I was far from feeling the calmness that I assumed. On the contrary, the thought that in this moment the grand plans I had been cherishing, were probably dissolving in smoke; that this angry, foolish, selfish old man was trampling into the earth the young green crop of my fairest hopes,--this thought made my heart beat, and gave my last words a bitterness unusual to me.

The commerzienrath's sharp ears must have heard that he had driven me to the limit of my patience, for as I laid my hand on the knob of the door I felt myself held fast by my coat-tails, and turning round, saw the face of the queer old man lifted to me with such an extraordinary grimace, that, sad as I felt, I had to burst out laughing.

"Ay, that is right, laugh away, bad man, and sit down again. Yes; that was all that was wanting, that you should run away from me. A nice mess I should have had at dinner-time after that! No, no, sit down. It is necessary that I should talk with you, and I will speak as if you were my own son. Heaven has not thought fit to grant me one, so I must look to others, who, naturally enough, cannot pardon an old man's little infirmities of temper."

I had soon returned to a placable mood, and the commerzienrath need not have adopted quite so lamentable a tone. But he kept it up, while he went into a long explanation how he had taken Zehrendorf originally in the hope of selling it to advantage; that the proper time had now arrived, and he needed the money, imperatively needed it, and that it was absolutely necessary that I should help him to close the bargain with the prince. I understood the matter better than either he, the justizrath, or the young prince, and the last had written to him repeatedly, and even this morning again, that he would rather treat through me than the justizrath, who was an old ass--"and heaven help him!" the commerzienrath here cried, "an old ass he most truly is: he is indeed!"

"What has put it into the prince's head to mix me up in the matter?" I asked, in amazement.

"Because he takes an interest in you, as everybody else does, you confounded fellow! Now will you? say, will you?"

"Herr Commerzienrath," I said, after a short pause in which I had striven to concentrate upon one point the thoughts that were whirling in my brain, "I will own to you that it grieves me to think that Zehrendorf should pass into other hands, into the hands of a master of whom I know not but that he may let all that has been called into existence here with so much labor and cost, fall to neglect and ruin, so that the poor people about here may sink into a worse condition than that in which you found them. For in spite of everything, your new undertakings have drawn many here who cannot get away again so easily, but must remain here to suffer and to increase the sufferings of the rest. Now I have frankly told you, more than once, Herr Commerzienrath, that I by no means consider you the good master that I wish for Zehrendorf; and if, despite this, I had rather see you here than another, it is simply because for your own interest you will have to try to complete what has been begun, and I have not yet given up the hope of making you a convert to my views. Still, since you say that you are compelled to sell the property, and your resolution seems fixed, I will help you in the matter, but only under two conditions. The first is, that you authorize me, as your friend, but also as a man of honor, to take the negotiation into my own hands, that is to say, to aim at a good, or we will say the best price, but not to make demands which the prince can only consent to if he is a fool, and which, if he is not a fool, he will reject with contempt. One moment's patience, Herr Commerzienrath!--I said I had two conditions. The second is, that so soon as I have effected the sale of Zehrendorf, you will agree to the plan for extending our works in the city, and will place at my disposal the sums which I have calculated as necessary for that purpose."

"Are you clear out of your senses, sir!" cried the commerzienrath, smiting with his fist the arm of his chair, "to say such things to me here, in my own house, in my own room, as if you were a

Pacha of three tails, or I don't know what, instead of being----"

"Your most obedient servant," I said, rising, and making him a polite bow.

"Eh! what?" he exclaimed, "Do you want to frighten me? You are not going, I know; why all these fooleries?"

"And you will agree with me at last, so why all this noise?" I replied laughing.

"But I tell you for the hundredth time that if I sell Zehrendorf ever so well, I need the money for other things than your cursed factory!" shouted the commerzienrath.

I looked him steadily in the eye, and said, "Do you know what I have lately dreamed, Herr Commerzienrath? It is that you are really very far from being the rich man you are generally believed to be."

"You confounded fellow! you humorous dog! you funny rascal!" cried the commerzienrath. "I suppose you will tell me next that I have stolen the boots I am wearing. Couldn't you lend me five *thalers* for a day or two? you----"

And he poked me in the ribs with his thumb, and held his sides with laughter at his capital joke.

"If you are a rich man, then," I continued very seriously, and it cost me no effort to be serious now--"then say yes, and the thing is settled."

I held out my hand, and he struck his own into it, laughing still like mad.

"The thing is settled then," I said, drawing a deep breath.

"Settled," he said. "And I shall hold you to your word, Herr Commerzienrath," I said: "You may count surely upon that."

"And I count upon you," he answered, still holding my hand fast in one of his own, while with the other he gave me little raps upon the knuckles. "If you were not a man to be relied upon, would I have taken so much pains about you, do you suppose? you--Oh! murder!"

In my excitement I must have pressed the old man's hand a little too hard, for he gave a loud outcry and made a horrible grimace: I begged his pardon, and he laughed and shook his hand, and again cried "Murder! you man of iron! you confounded fellow!" and poked me out at the door, with his thumb, just as he had poked out the justizrath.

CHAPTER XIV.

I had spent the rest of the forenoon in my room, in order to finish a calculation necessary to the proper adjustment of the machine at the quarry. But I had not got beyond the statement of the problem. The new, almost certain prospect of being able to carry out my great wish to enlarge our works, almost made me dizzy. In fancy I saw the space of ground where my lodging was, covered with buildings; I saw the flames springing from the great furnaces and smoke pouring from the tall chimneys; I heard the clang of hammer on anvil, and saw the crowd of dingy workmen thronging the wide yards in the evening, and scattering in the streets of a new quarter where in cleanly houses cheerful homes awaited them, where they could rest from the toils of the day. And a change had passed over the desolate house in which I lived; fresh green sward surrounded it, a Triton spouted a jet of water high into the air from the old basin of sandstone into which it fell plashing back, where a host of goldfish played merrily, or darted back from the margin at the approach of a pair who came up hand in hand and bent over the water to see their own faces reflected. But the reflection quivered and broke, so that only now and then could be seen two bright blue eyes and two full red lips, nor was it clear whether the eyes flashed with anger or with love, or whether the lips were pouted to a scornful word or to a kiss.

"Dinner will soon be served, Herr Engineer," said William Kluckhuhn, entering. "Can I assist the Herr Engineer to dress?"

William regularly came with this polite offer of his services, although I just as regularly declined them. But to-day he would not take any dismissal, and helped me on with my best coat so actively, and brushed and touched me up with such zealous pertinacity, that I had to ask him if he had any request to make of me.

"Oh, no," he answered; "but you were so kind as to get me back into favor with the master, who was in the wrong altogether, for even if I drank champagne----"

"Very well, William," I said.

"So I only wanted to tell you," he went on in a confidential tone, "that they have had a terrible quarrel, and I very plainly heard----"

"But I do not wish to hear it, William."

"But you need not mind my telling you, for if I listened at the door a little bit, that was not your doing, and it was not my doing that the door was ajar, and I plainly heard our lady say that she would never forgive it you----"

"Well," I muttered.

"And when she said it, she looked----"

"So you could see too?"

"O, the door was pretty wide open," William answered, shrugging his shoulders, "and I made a rattling with the plates on purpose, but the Fräulein was in such a rage----"

And William here made a face, apparently intended to represent the one he had seen through the crack of the door, but so absurdly incredible that I burst out laughing.

"Very good," he said; "I wanted to give you the hint; for when she is angry---but you can laugh."

And William sighed deeply and looked at me in a supplicating manner. "Well?" I said.

"And I wanted to beg you," he went on, "that if--ahem! you know what I mean--you would be so good as to help me and my Louise too, for we have been waiting now six years, and it is easy for you, Herr Engineer. Is it not, now, Herr Engineer?"

"William, I firmly believe you have taken leave of your senses," I answered, and strode past him out of the room with a look intended to express majestic indignation.

But William's ears had served him faithfully, as I presently learned at table. The company was small; no one besides the inmates, except Arthur, who had come over in the justizrath's carriage from Rossow, and greeted me as usual with excessive friendliness. The two Eleonoras, owing to the warmth of the day, appeared in virgin white, and as a group, of course. Hermine kept us waiting awhile. The commerzienrath drew me aside and whispered to me that the prince had sent him word that he must be quite satisfied about the chalk-quarry before the negotiation went any further, and that he would send over his carriage this afternoon to bring me to Rossow.

I had no time to answer this communication, which for more than one reason was unacceptable to me, for at this moment Hermine entered and I saw plainly that she had been weeping, although she tried hard to appear as gay and careless as possible. The day was so charming--so delicious! and to-morrow it would be finer still, and the party to the Schlachtensee would be too delightful! The company was to be the very nicest that could be; all young people, not an old one among them. After dinner they would go over to Trantow to pick up Hans, who could not be dispensed with, then to Sulitz, where Herr von Zarrentin and his charming wife would join them; then arrive between five and six at the coast-village Sassitz; a stroll through the dunes and the beech forest as far as the Schlachtensee; supper, with pine-apple-punch, and moonrise there; return through the wood to the cross-roads at the Rossow pines, where their carriage and horses would be ready for them; return of the whole company without exception to Zehrendorf; and wind up all with tea and punch, and, if possible, a dance for such as were very nice.

"Bravo! bravo! That is a plan!" cried Arthur, enthusiastically clapping his hands.

"I knew it would have your approval, dear Arthur," said the fair designer, stretching her hand to him over the table, with her sweetest smile; "you understand these things, and I count upon you especially."

"I did not count upon *you*," she added, turning suddenly to me.

"I neither said, nor supposed anything of the kind, Fräulein Hermine," I replied.

"That is the very reason why one cannot count upon you in such things. You don't think about them. Of course! How can any one whose mind is occupied with matters of so much more importance?"

Hermine was never particularly amiable in her behavior to me, but her conduct to-day was so pointedly unkind, and her vehemence too void of any visible cause, not to strike the most indifferent spectator, not to mention the steuerrath and the Born, who were very far from indifferent, and now cast meaning looks at Arthur, as if urging him to strike while the iron was

hot. Arthur was evidently quite disposed to follow their counsel, but did not precisely know how to go about it; so he contented himself with giving Hermine a languishing look, and curling his little black beard. The others seemed to gather from Hermine's last words, and still more from the excited tone in which she had spoken, that there was something unusual in the air. Fräulein Duff, who had been all the time looking remarkably pale and agitated, raised her eyes, as if in despair, to the ceiling, while the justizrath riveted his gaze on a dish of salad, and drummed lightly on the table; Emilie looked at her friend Elise, and Elise at Emilie, Emilie's look inquiring "Does an innocent child like me need to understand these things?" and Elise's replying "Sport peacefully, sweet cherub! Leave this to us experienced ones!" Even William Kluckhuhn, who stood waiter in hand at the sideboard, pulled a long face, as if the turn things had taken was not altogether to his satisfaction, and the commerzienrath alone was so busy with the other waiter, who was uncorking under his eyes a bottle of the famous hock, that he had not the least idea as to the cause of the sudden silence that had fallen upon the company. He looked up in the most unconscious manner in the world, and asked innocently--"I beg your pardon, but what were you speaking about?"

The peculiar expression which I had noticed in so many different shades on the faces of the guests, grew several tints deeper. The silence was more profound; the second waiter John, who was in the act of uncorking the '22 hock, stopped with the cork half-drawn, and the plates which William was handling rattled nervously, as the steuerrath pouring out with unsteady hand a glass of wine, replied:

"Our dear Hermine was remarking that in the innocent amusements which youth loves, one could not count upon our excellent George--you will excuse me, George, for calling you by the old familiar name--because our young friend has so many other, and, we will admit, more important things on his mind."

The commerzienrath poured out with his own hands the precious wine into the large hock-glasses--only a thumb's breadth deep, as otherwise one lost the perfect bouquet--and probably took advantage of this pause to collect himself, so that he was able to reply in a peculiar drawling tone:

"More important things? Is not that a wine! More important things--the very flower of the Rhine!--on his mind? I should think so: we made a bargain this morning; he is to sell Ziehrefeld for me and I am to buy for him that piece of ground adjoining the works in Berlin. I should think it likely that such a thing as that would be on any one's mind."

I was astonished beyond measure to hear the commerzienrath, whom I knew to be a very cautious man, mention an affair which we had only agreed upon a few hours before, and which I considered a strict business secret, thus openly before all his guests, and especially in the presence of the justizrath, to whom my intervention in the matter was anything but flattering--I was so amazed, I say, at this unbusinesslike, incomprehensible proceeding of the usually so shrewd old man, that I felt a flush of confusion rising hot in my face.

Again silence fell upon the room; the peculiar expression in the countenances of the guests deepened another tone, and now it was Hermine's voice that broke the silence:

"Have I not told you, Emilie, that Herr Hartwig is a frightful aristocrat? He cannot bear to see so old an estate in any other than noble hands. That sort of thing is not for us plebeians. What does it matter that we have to leave a place that we have grown fond of in these seven years? We must take what we can get and be thankful that we are anywhere at all."

There was a quiver in the tone of her voice, and her eyelids reddened as if she restrained her tears with difficulty; the silence grew more oppressive, and there was no need for the commerzienrath's raising his voice so high as he said:

"So it is: God's service goes before lord's service, and our George has the notion that he serves God with every additional farthing that he can make those poor devils of workmen earn; and if he has but few good words for lord's service, woman's service is his downright abomination."

"That is not your device, Arthur!" said the steuerrath, in an encouraging tone.

"*Noblesse oblige*," said the Born, with emphasis.

"*Mon cœur aux dames!*" said Arthur, laying his delicate hand on his heart and bowing to his cousin.

The justizrath and his ladies said nothing, contenting themselves with exchanging significant looks to the effect that this was a family affair, and they have better avoid meddling in it.

Again ensued an embarrassing pause, which was broken, just as the situation seemed to have reached a climax, by William Kluckhuhn using his pocket-handkerchief with an energy altogether unbecoming in a decorous serving-man, even in moments of the most lively concern. Fräulein Duff, who had held her thin hands spasmodically clasped over her breast during the last words of the Commerzienrath with the pale resignation of one whose only remaining hope is in a better hereafter, broke out into a hysterical weeping, and Hermine suddenly rising and pressing her handkerchief to her cheeks and forehead, begged that the company would excuse her if her ill-

humor had annoyed them, but that her headache was so violent that she must retire to her room.

I do not believe that any one of those present believed in this headache, but this of course did not hinder the two Eleonoras from springing from their chairs, and approaching the fair sufferer on either side, in the intent to compose a touching group. But Hermine had already seized the arm of her sobbing governess, and left the room with a painful smile upon her lips, which seemed intended for all the company except myself.

Except myself, over whom her look had passed as if my chair were empty, and the rest of the company seemed to entertain the same opinion. No one had a word or look for me, and I have never forgotten it of William Kluckhuhn that at this fateful moment he had the hardihood to step behind my chair, and in a suppressed tone to ask:

"Will the Herr Engineer take another glass of hock?"

I took the glass, and sipped it slowly with the air of a connoisseur, but I cannot say that I was able to do justice to the noble vintage. With all the trouble I took to appear quite at my ease, I was greatly pained and disconcerted. It is an extremely disagreeable thing to be singled out in this way by a young lady before an entire company.

Happily my strength was not tasked too hardly. The company rose from table and hastily separated; I went out into the grounds to think it all over in the soothing companionship of a cigar.

One thing was at once perfectly intelligible: the behavior of the company at this incident. They had let me drop at the instant they thought they saw that my game was lost. I knew well that Arthur's parents had never given up the hope that he would one day marry his cousin, and that their fulsome flatteries and Arthur's deceitful show of friendship were only meant to cloak their real aim, and perhaps to obtain some influence over me, as they probably feared that open enmity would only make their chance worse.

As for the justizrath and the two Eleonoras, they merely swam with the stream. They and the others--the conduct of all was explicable enough; but the commerzienrath? Did it not look as if he had intentionally provoked this scene at table, or at least offered the opportunity? He was usually adroit enough in giving another turn to the conversation when it did not please him. And if he really needed my assistance in effecting the sale, why did he mention the matter to Hermine now when all was still unsettled? Why, when he knew how averse she was from the project, mention me to her as its originator or at all events its chief promoter? Did he simply use me to screen himself? Such a manœuvre was exactly consistent with his character; he had a way of shifting burdens that were uncomfortable for him, to the shoulders of others. Or was this not all? Had the cunning old man tried his cuttle-fish stratagem again, and hidden himself in a cloud of assumed carelessness? He had noticed nothing, not he, of all that was going on around him, and in which he was so much concerned, and thus quite innocently, accidentally indeed, he placed "his young friend" in a quite untenable position towards his pretty passionate daughter.

The blood rose hot to my brow as I came to this conclusion, and a new feeling rose within me and obtained a complete mastery of me. It had always been an easy thing for me to forgive heartily those who had injured me; so easy indeed that I often called myself a weakling, a man with neither heart nor gall; why then was that which I usually found so easy, so difficult for me now? Why did every oblique glance that had been directed at me across the table, the neglect, the indifference which had been suddenly exhibited, now all recur even in their minutest details to my memory? And why did I feel as if I should suffocate at that which I had hitherto borne with such apparent equanimity? I had suddenly struck a new vein in my own nature, a vein from which a bitter, black, poisonous stream flowed into the current of my healthy blood. I felt as an actual physical change what was really only a change in my disposition; the first violent emotion of ambition; the hot desire for personal revenge; the humiliation, the disgrace, if this were baffled; the desperate final resolution to emerge from the contest as victor, to attain my aim in spite of all and everything.

My aim! What was it then? The same which I had in view when I came here, or another? Or this and that both at once? Well might I at this moment have heard the warning voice of that stern wisdom which says that we cannot serve God and Mammon.

I had taken my seat upon a bench which stood in a thick copse of bushes. It was a quiet secret nook. The birds twittered pleasantly, a gentle breeze blowing over the garden brought sweet odors on its soft pinions, and a warm reviving sun beamed from the clear blue sky. The spot was so sweet and the hour so lovely that I had to yield to its soft solicitations, resist them as I might. My blood began to flow more calmly: I commenced to take an interest in a pair of finches that had just set up housekeeping in a knot-hole of a tree, recently transplanted here from the Rossow park, and were incessantly hurrying in and out of their little door. It was a peaceful pretty picture; the little creatures were in such a hurry, and were so unwearyingly busy, and evidently out of mere love--the world after all was not so wretched a place as it had just seemed to me.

With these thoughts flitting through my mind, I must have closed my eyes and fallen asleep; for I saw the bushes in front of me, and behind which ran a walk, bend apart, and a face appear between them; a lovely girlish face upon which the sunbeams and shadows of the leaves were

playing, and partly from this, and partly because I was dreaming, I could not see clearly enough to decide if the light in the eye was anger or love. When at last I opened my eyes fairly, I could see the place in the bushes, but the sweet face was no longer there, but at the same moment I heard ringing laughter with shouts and the cracking of a whip, and mingled with the rest, piteous cries as of some one entreating, then suddenly a loud shriek of terror, which caused me to spring from the bench and hurry to the spot.

It was a circular space surrounded with shrubbery, which was used as a race-course and which I had myself used as a riding-school several times during my stay here as I endeavored to improve my imperfect horsemanship under the guidance of the coachman, Anthony, an old cavalryman. My lessons had been taken secretly in the very early morning, because I knew that Hermine, who was passionately fond of riding, was in the habit of practising here for an hour or two in the forenoon. Recently Anthony had told me that Fräulein Duff was also taking lessons, at the request of her young lady, who had suddenly taken into her head to have in her expeditions and visits in the neighborhood, another escort beside her groom, whom she frequently dispensed with anyhow. The thing appeared to me absolutely incredible, although old Anthony, who had nothing of the quiz about him, assured me with the most serious face that it was a literal fact; now I was to have my doubts removed by the evidence of my own eyesight.

In the middle of the track stood Arthur, who kept cracking a long whip incessantly, Hermine, who was laughing in great amusement, the two Eleonoras, in virginal white, clinging to each other as usual, and Anthony, who plainly hesitated whether to obey Arthur's repeated orders to keep away, or yield to the piteous supplications of Fräulein Duff, and help that unhappy lady off the horse. It seemed that for the first time they had let go the halter-rein, and the unskilful and excessively timid rider had been seized with sudden panic. In her desperation she had clasped both arms around the neck of the horse, a small shaggy-maned animal not much larger than a pony, who on his part plunged, kicked, and did his best to throw her entirely out of the saddle, as she was already half out of it. The spectacle was certainly indescribably ludicrous, but I could not bear to see for an instant my good friend in this predicament without coming to her assistance, and in a moment I had sprung to her side, caught the horse's head, and, as she held out her arms to me, lifted her from the saddle. I wished to place her gently on the ground, but in vain did I whisper to her to control herself and not make a scene. As she had previously clung to the horse's neck, so she now clung to mine, and seemed to find the greatest pleasure in swooning in my arms and upon my breast. If a situation of this sort under some circumstances is not destitute of charms for the cavalier, it assumes another character when his fair burden has fully reached those years when she can stand alone, and becomes perfectly intolerable when the spectators instead of commiserating him and hastening to his relief, only move their hands to applaud like mad, and break into inextinguishable laughter.

At least this was what Hermine and Arthur did, while of the two Eleonoras the second only looked at the first to see if she might laugh.

"Duffy, Duffy," cried Hermine, "I have always told you to beware of him!"

"Fräulein Duff," exclaimed Arthur, "do you want to tighten the curb-chain?"

"May I?" signalled the second Eleonora more urgently, and the first replied in the same way, "Laugh, thou innocent cherub!" and herself set the example.

"Come, let us leave them alone; they must have a great deal to say to each other," said Hermine, and hurried off amid peals of laughter, and the rest followed, all laughing like mad, even to the stolid old Anthony, who led away the horse, joyously whinnying, which was probably his way of joining in the general hilarity. The next instant I was standing alone with my fair burthen in my arms, mortified, offended, furious, as I had never been before, so that if a river had chanced to be at hand, I believe I would have pitched the poor Fräulein into it without a moment's hesitation. Happily the temptation was not presented to me, and as the laughter of the departing company grew fainter in the distance, Fräulein Duff recovered consciousness, and unclasping her arms from my neck, murmured: "Richard, you are my preserver!"

Richard was very far from being in the mood to fall in with the sentimentalities of the poor governess, and indeed had at this moment nothing like a lion-heart in his breast, but rather a little, spiteful, vindictive heart; so he let his poor charge slide very unceremoniously to the ground, and stood before her with gloomy brows and probably wrathful looks, for she clasped her hands as if frightened and whispered:

"Richard, for heaven's sake grow not desperate: however clouds obscure the sky, the sun still beams above!"

"Fräulein Duff," I said, "I must confess that at this moment I am in no temper for jesting, far less becoming the jest of others. You will therefore excuse me if I bid you good day."

I sought to extricate my hand from hers, in which I succeeded with some difficulty. But I had scarcely taken three steps when I heard such a lamentable crying and sobbing behind me that I could not help turning round. And there she stood in her green riding-habit, the skirt of which was wound round her feet like a serpent, and upon her pale yellow dishevelled locks a tall hat crushed out of shape, with a green veil, the strings of which were hanging over her face instead

of behind.

"Dear, good Fräulein Duff!" I said remorsefully. "Come! I know you meant nothing but kindness." And I drew her arm in mine, and led her, still softly weeping, away from the place of terror, trying with friendly words to comfort her, until we reached the bench upon which I had been sitting, and where I compelled her to sit down, as she was completely overcome. Thus we sat awhile side by side, I staring gloomily at the sand, and she sobbing more and more faintly, until at last she lifted her tearful eyes to me and said:

"How can I requite your kindness, faithful noble friend?"

"By never alluding to it," I answered; "by never by a single word reminding me of this ridiculous scene; which, however, I swear, shall be the last in the wretched comedy which I have let them play with me here so long."

"Comedy?" said Fräulein Duff, pressing her handkerchief to her eyes with one hand, while with the other she held me fast, as I had risen to my feet--"You need calm, dear Carl--your blood is in a tumult--sit here by me--away with these black fever-phantasies!"

I had to laugh, angry as I was, and took my seat again by her side.

"O!" cried Fräulein Duff, "you are joyous and good, and still you understand human nature; and can you really be deceived in this maiden soul which lies before me as clear and transparent as yonder heaven;--yes as yonder heaven," she repeated, raising her arms poetically aloft where in all the sunny clearness of a spring afternoon, the bluest of skies peeped through the thick blossoming branches to our secluded nook.

"How can any one know that which under the best circumstances does not know itself?" I returned.

"You err, my friend," replied the governess. "You take the timid flutterings of this chaste virgin soul for attempts at flight; and yet it would only fly to you, the coy birdling, to you and you alone!"

"In the name of heaven and all the blessed saints, Fräulein Duff, hush! You drive me out of my senses, talking in that way!" I cried, now effectually springing up, and pacing up and down as if demented, which indeed I was; "I will hear nothing more of it and believe nothing more of it, not even if I hear it from her own lips!"

"You will so hear it," said Fräulein Duff.

I broke into derisive laughter.

"You will," she repeated; "only patience, Richard; only patience!"

"To the devil with patience!" I exclaimed.

"What shall be the wager, prince?" said the governess with a sly smile, lifting the thin forefinger of her transparent hand. "I summon old stories back to your heart; old stories. Don't I remember as if it were but yesterday, how she cried when she was but an eight-year-old child, and would not be comforted, when she heard that they had put in prison the handsome tall youth who always swung her so high? how she named all her dolls George, and used to put them in the parrot's cage and say that was her lover who was now in prison, and Poll was the jailor and wanted to snap off her lover's head with his crooked beak? And when I--for, my friend, a faithful educator of youth must be like the good gardener who grafts roses upon the thorny stock--when I tried to substitute for this fantastic form of childish grief, a more poetical one; when I told her of Richard, the Lion-hearted, the renowned in song and legend, and of Blondel the faithful singer, then she saw her ideal in this form alone, and wandered about, her cithern in her hand, until she found him she sought. Chance, or rather I must say the god of love so ordained it that she really saw him in prison, paler than of yore, it is true, but ever fair and stately, and thus has she carried his image in her heart for six, seven years, without being for one moment unfaithful to her Richard. You laugh incredulously, O my friend! You know not how adamantine is the soul of a true woman. Seven years! that seems to you an eternity. My friend, I know hearts that have loved--loved without hope--for five-and-thirty years!"

And the good Fräulein pressed her handkerchief to her eyes and sobbed aloud, but mastered her emotion presently and went on:

"But that is nought to the purpose now; I will not burthen your good heart, at this moment when its own destiny is pressing so heavily upon it, with the tragedy of another life which has been darkened with perpetual gloom by such a misunderstanding as now drifts over the horizon of yours like a passing cloud; nor is 'misunderstanding' the right word in your case: you understand each other as do the two birds there"--and Fräulein Duff pointed to the bush where the pair of finches were carrying on their courtship--"only you are human creatures with human sensitiveness and human pride. Alas, and she is not at all what she seems to be! How has she humbled herself to her love in her hours of solitude! How often has she kneeled before me, her face buried in my lap, and said that her beloved was high above her like a star, and that she

could never hope to be worthy of one so strong, so brave, so noble. O my friend, she is proud of you! With what enthusiasm was she not filled when dear Fräulein Paula wrote her how you had acted in that night of the storm, and again 'there is no one like him, no one!' she exclaimed, when you were our preserver on the steamer last autumn. Yes, my friend, you are her religion; and she confesses you before all men, only not before you. Was she not fixed upon having her Richard in a picture at least, whatever her heartless father might say? Has she not adored this picture as if it were the image of a saint, and even fitted up her room in oriental style, that its surroundings might harmonize with it? The same room you now occupy: no other was good enough for her Richard; and her Richard must have it, let people shake their heads as they might, or her tyrannical father bawl in his hateful way, and I myself--I confess it--mildly remonstrate. My friend, to this--to such a step which would be ludicrous were it not sublime--belong courage, inspiration, all the intensest conviction of a great ideal love. The world delights to darken all that's bright--if that be a poet's word it is an eternal truth, and believe me, she herself has had her martyrdom to bear; it is no pigmy's task to maintain one's self against such a father. I will say no evil of him; I will say nothing of him, for where should I begin and where end? And yet she has achieved the impossible: the tiger fawns at the feet of the lamb."

"I learned that to-day," I replied.

"Remind me not," cried Fräulein Duff, "of that terrible hour, which was yet only a further proof of her love. O smile not so sardonically! Has it not been long her cherished hope, here, at this place which is so dear to her, some day to realize with her Richard her dream of love? And now to hear that she shall be driven from this paradise, and that the angel with the sword is none other than the lord of the paradise himself!"

"But," I cried, "am I the one who drives her from it? How can she make me responsible for a thing that she knows to be the cherished scheme and urgent wish of her father, who probably intentionally provoked the scene at the table to-day?"

"Very possibly," replied Fräulein Duff. "Who can fathom the wiles of this labyrinthine old man? Yes, if I rightly remember, she hinted at something of the sort when we were alone in her room, and she relieved her o'erburthened heart in a flood of tears."

"From what we have just seen, the relief appears to have been pretty effectual," I said.

"My friend," replied the governess, "he jests at scars who never felt a wound. Will you be less patient than I, who for all the wayward humors of the lovesick child have only a tear of pity in a smiling eye?"

"It is not given to every one to submit so cheerfully to tyranny as you do, dear Fräulein."

"I am exhausted," said Fräulein Duff, pressing her palm against her brow. "All my evidences glide off from this serpent-smooth eccentric."

"Then let us break off this conversation; besides, it is full time I had started for Rossow."

I had arisen, and the governess also arose, swung the long train of her riding-habit boldly over her left arm, and said, leaning on my right:

"Richard, do not go to Rossow: evil will come of it: trust me; I have Cassandra's foreboding spirit."

"I am, though from other motives, little inclined to go," I replied; "but I am resolved to do my duty and keep the promise I made to the commerzienrath, whether he asked it with a good or an evil intention, and be the consequences what they may."

"I like the Spaniard proud," replied Fräulein Duff with an enthusiastic look, "but it is not always the haughty one who brings home the bride; the crafty one often reaches the goal. 'The monarch's pampered minion seeks her hand--' do you not fear Arthur?"

"To fear, in such cases, one must either hope or wish: I am not aware that I have indulged in either feeling."

Fräulein Duff in sudden terror drew her arm from mine, stopped and exclaimed:

"Great heavens, what do I hear! How am I to understand you? O Roderick, by all our hopes of bliss hereafter I adjure you--do you not love her then? Do you really love Paula, as that insidious Arthur is ever whispering in her ear?"

I was spared the necessity of answering this very ticklish question, for at this moment William appeared, calling me, and saying that the Rossow carriage had been waiting for me half an hour, and that he had been looking for me everywhere.

"Good-by, Fräulein Duff," I said.

"And no answer? None?" cried the governess with a look of agonized expectation.

"This is my answer," I said, pointing to the carriage.

Cassandra possibly found that oracular speeches are sometimes too hard even for seeresses to unriddle, for as the carriage rolled out at the gate I looked back and saw her standing where I had left her, her eyes and hands raised to heaven, in the attitude of the Praying Child.

CHAPTER XV.

But the deliverers of ambiguous oracles do not always find their avocation an exhilarating one, as I at once discovered while the light, elegant vehicle, drawn by two magnificent blood-horses, rolled over the excellent new road which led from Zehrendorf past Trantowitz to Rossow. It was a glorious afternoon; here and there in the clear blue sky stood great white clouds, whose shadows agreeably diversified the otherwise rather monotonous landscape; larks were singing gaily over the broad fields of young grain waving in the soft west-wind, plovers flew over the great heath, trenched in various parts by turf-cuttings between the beech-woods of Trantow and the pine-forest of Rossow; and from the distance came unceasingly the call of the cuckoo. The whole landscape to its minutest details has remained imprinted on my memory, perhaps because the bright laughing picture was in so marked a contrast with my own gloomy and undecided feelings. The indiscreet question of the governess had lifted the veil from a secret of my heart, which I had hitherto carefully passed with averted face. Only lifted a little, not removed. I had not the courage nor the strength to complete what I had begun, and as in such moments of confusion one usually catches at the first object that presents itself, in order to escape mere distraction, I now clutched the determination not to let my heart, though it should break in the effort, interpose a word in the affair I had undertaken.

In this mood I looked forward to the approaching interview with a calm that would have astonished myself had I reflected where and how I last met the prince, and under what singular circumstances our previous meetings had occurred. But I scarcely thought of this at all, or, if at all, only to shake off the thought and say to myself: I have wandered here into such a labyrinth, that one strange meeting more or less makes no difference. Only forward! have done with it! for it is no longer possible to turn back.

The pines of Rossow--a beautiful piece of woods of fine stately trees--had now closed around us; the road growing sandy, compelled the driver to go at a slower pace, and I sprang from the carriage and walked beside it with long strides, so that I soon left it behind. The trees grew ever larger, the silence ever deeper, the mysterious forest-twilight dimmer, until suddenly I stepped from under the last trees and saw before me a well-proportioned small castle, gray with antiquity, with tall spires on the turrets, numerous balconies and other projections of various kinds, here and there thickly overgrown with ivy, standing in a clear space surrounded by magnificent trees. This was the hunting-lodge Rossow, the temporary residence of the young banished prince.

An old domestic with snow-white hair, who was sitting in the Gothic portal, now approached me, and after respectfully inquiring the object of my coming, and telling me that the prince had been expecting me some time, led me through a small dark hall, singularly decorated with old armor and weapons of all kinds, up several stairs to a Gothic door, artistically ornamented with iron-work, which he threw open with a bow and the whispered words, "His Highness has given orders to admit you unannounced." I stepped into the room and stood before the young prince.

He was rising from a wide sofa upon which he had probably fallen asleep while waiting for me; at least the expression of his handsome, pale, refined face indicated confusion, and it was some moments before he appeared quite to comprehend the situation.

"Ah, yes," he said, at last; "Herr--excuse me, my memory for names is so very bad--Hartig? Oh, excuse me Hartwig--so it is! Now this is very kind of you to come; very kind indeed. I beg you will be seated. Do you smoke? There are cigars; help yourself. Very kind of you indeed!"

He had thrown himself back again in the corner of the sofa, and half closed his eyes as if he wished to go to sleep again. I took advantage of the opportunity to cast a hasty glance around the apartment.

It was a large antique room, not very high, panelled in dark oak, with a ceiling of oak, divided into compartments. Portraits, brown with age, hung around the whole wall, to the solitary wide Gothic window, through the small stained panes of which fell a dim and colored light. The furniture, which was very numerous, was in a correspondingly antique and venerable style: wide-backed chairs, cabinets and tables richly inlaid with mother-of-pearl and ivory; and on the mantelpiece, between elegant pitchers of beaten silver and goblets of cut-crystal, stood a large clock, artistically inlaid, and covered with elaborate and fantastic scroll-work, a master-piece of *rococo*.

Upon a great bear-skin rug before the fire-place lay a handsome long-haired wolf-hound, who at my entrance had raised his head a little and then laid it between his fore-paws again. The clock on the mantel ticked softly in the silence, a thrush twittered outside of the window, the footsteps of the old domestic resounded on the stone hall, and presently the young prince in the sofa corner opened his large weary eyes and said: "What were we speaking of just now?"

"We?" I asked, in some surprise.

"Ah, to be sure," said the prince, "we have not yet spoken of anything. You must excuse me; but really it would be no marvel if I forgot how to speak altogether; for I have been sitting now two months already in this frightful den, like an owl that dreads the daylight. I sometimes look at my nails to see if they are not turning to talons. How wearisome it all is! But now we will proceed to business. Will you have the goodness to push the cigar-box over this way; and, if it is not too much trouble, touch the bell there to your left?"

I did as he requested, and the old servant entered with a bottle and two glasses.

"You need not wait," said the prince.

The old man placed the waiter between us on the table, and left the room.

"Will you fill your glass?" said the prince; "and mine too, if you will be so good--thank you. We shall need it in this dry business."

But despite this thorough preparation, he seemed to be in no hurry. He examined his nails as attentively as if he now really detected the first sproutings of the owl's talons, then suppressed a slight yawn and seemed to have the question as to what we had been talking about, once more on his lips, but luckily bethought himself, and said, while playing with a large signet on his finger:

"I have always wished to see you sometime at my house; you must know that I take an extraordinary interest in you."

"Indeed?" I said.

"Yes indeed, an extraordinary interest," the prince repeated. "I have retained you in my memory from the time of our first meeting, which, to tell you the truth, is but rarely the case with me. But you seemed to me, and still seem, to be an original, and I take a peculiar interest in originals."

I bowed slightly, and took advantage of the pause to remark, "If it is agreeable to you to hear from me what I think, from careful examination of the chalk-quarry----"

"You see, originals are very scarce," went on the young prince, as if I had not spoken,-- "incredibly scarce. No one knows that better than one of our class, who are chased up and down through the world from our youth up. Everlasting sameness: the same stereotyped faces, the same stereotyped manners, the same stereotyped phrases. I could scarcely name more than two or three persons who have produced upon me the impression that I was talking with real human beings and not with puppets. One of these is, as I said, yourself; another is an old decrepit dervish whom I lighted on, if my memory serves me, in Jerusalem, and who told me that after a search of a hundred and four years he had found the philosopher's stone, and that the thing was not worth finding; and the other was perhaps poor Constance von Zehren."

I moved uneasily in my chair, and began again--"The chalk-quarry, about which your Highness---"

"She it was that brought about our acquaintance," went on the prince, who again could not have heard me; "so it is but natural that my memory reverts to her at this moment when I have the pleasure of conversing with you so agreeably. She was a peculiar, a strangely organized being, whose nature has been to me, up to this moment, a perfect riddle, and probably will ever remain so. A mixture of apparently absolute contradictions: proud, without self-respect; bold, even foolhardy, and yet, if I may so express myself, of a catlike timidity; romantic, yet calculating--in a word, I have never been able to comprehend how such characteristics could exist together in one and the same soul. You, as you have yourself known her, will admit the correctness of my judgment; and perhaps will also agree with me in the opinion that one should reflect long before one holds a man who has had the fortune--or misfortune--to be drawn into too close an intimacy with a person of so strange a nature--an intimacy which I may well call perilous--one should reflect long, I say, before holding that man responsible for all the consequences which this perilous intimacy may entail."

The young man was still leaning back in the sofa-corner, playing with his ring, a picture of ennui and indifference. I was in the most painful position imaginable, and inly cursed the chance which had brought the indolent man to speak upon this theme of all others. Or was it then a chance? I fancied that I perceived in the tone with which he spoke the last words, some signs of internal emotion; but I could not be sure of it, and I was about to make a third and decisive attempt to bring the conversation to business matters, when the prince began again in a more animated tone:

"It is not my fault that all happened as it did. I have, it may be, one or two things upon my conscience which I had rather not have there when I sit here all alone, and for very weariness cannot even sleep; but in that affair I am really not the most culpable party. I was very young when I first saw her; she was far the older of the two, if not in years, at least in experience and worldly prudence. How she came by it I know not--with women anyhow we rarely know how they come by it--and she had it all, as I said, in a high degree. It was no slight achievement to blind me to the ruin which lay plainly enough before my eyes; the anger of the prince, my father, upon whom I am altogether dependent, the certainty that I was throwing away the hand of a noble and amiable lady who had been chosen for me: it was no trifling achievement, I say, and yet she succeeded in bringing me to it. And yet, upon my word as a nobleman, I would never have abandoned her, if I had not heard a circumstance connected with Fräulein von Zehren--or at least having reference to her--something of which she was altogether innocent--absolutely and entirely innocent--which I cannot further explain because it is not my secret, but which was of such a nature that from the moment I learned it all thoughts, whether of a lawful or illicit connection between us, became for me at once and forever impossible. Strange things come to pass in life: things which at first appall us like hideous spectres, but which one gradually becomes accustomed to and learns to endure. Do you not think so?"

The prince seemed to be half in slumber again as he put this question; but somehow I could not entirely believe in this half-sleep; on the contrary the impression grew stronger upon my mind that my distinguished host was playing with very laudable skill, a well concerted part. So his confidential communications only made me distrustful, and with a reserve that was otherwise foreign to my nature, I determined to wait and see whither this singular discourse was really tending. The prince probably expected to produce a different effect upon me, for he presently added, with eyelids half closed.

"You once felt an interest in the lady of whom we are speaking, did you not?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Your answer sounds as if you no longer felt that interest."

"Not to my knowledge," I replied.

"Indeed?" said the prince, opening his handsome wearied eyes wide for a moment, and looking me full in the face; "Indeed? that is precisely the opposite of what Zehren has informed me."

"I do not think that Arthur--that Herr von Zehren--can give any information concerning me, that has even the shadow of credibility," I answered.

"Very possible," replied the prince, "very possible: his veracity is by no means beyond the possibility of doubt: indeed I frequently permit myself to assume the exact opposite of what he pleases to tell me. For example, I am perfectly convinced that he was decidedly in error when he assured me that the charming young artist at whose house I had the pleasure of meeting you, would be gratified by my attentions. The reverse seems to have been the case."

The prince looked at me as if he expected an answer, but I replied only by an ambiguous gesture.

"Nor am I any more sure of the final disposal of a certain insignificant sum of money which I entrusted to him on the same day, if I remember rightly, for a special purpose. I beg you! You need not say anything--I am now satisfied. My friend Zehren is very little troubled with over-scrupulousness"--the prince made a slight gesture of contempt--"very little indeed. It is really high time that he had settled himself: such men as he, in a desperate position, are hopelessly ruined. Well, he has at present a capital opportunity for settling himself: I congratulate him upon it!"

I felt how at these words of the prince, which could only be interpreted in one way, the blood rushed to my cheeks and brow; but I controlled myself as well as I could, and only replied:

"I think your highness just remarked that you were disposed in certain cases to take for granted the precise opposite of what Arthur thinks fit to inform you."

"Indeed!" said the prince. "I should be sorry for that in this case. I mean on his account; though I could not exactly congratulate the young lady, whom I have not the honor to know, upon the match. But this time I do believe the statement, because all the circumstances seem to confirm it. I have had several interviews with the old man: he is a horrible--what shall I say?--roturier, and like all the rest of his class, greedy after respectable connections, and distinctions of every kind. This very morning he intimated to me through the justizrath that he would make more favorable propositions in the matter of the sale of Zehrendorf, provided I would obtain for him from my father the title of privy-councillor, or the order of the third class; he has contrived in some way already to get the fourth. For such people it is the height of happiness if they can marry a daughter, and especially an only daughter, into an old family; and the Zehrens are an old family--there is no disputing that fact. How the young lady views the matter, I do not know; probably not differently from other young women in her rank of life. Indeed, it would be a very serious matter if Zehren had deceived me in this affair, and I should not readily forgive him. On this representation I have paid his debts for him; and what is just now more important for me, he

has promised to use all his influence with his prospective father-in-law to bring about the sale of Zehrendorf. And on your account also, Herr Hartwig, I should regret it, for I devised a plan which I think it would interest you to hear, and to communicate which to you was the main reason for my requesting the honor of an interview this afternoon. I had the idea, namely, that it would be agreeable for you, and perhaps open you a future career, if I asked you, after the purchase of Zehrendorf has been consummated, to help me in its management, and in that of some other estates here. The prince, my father, insists upon my undertaking the administration of these estates, before he re-admits me to his favor. Now for more than one cause I am very anxious for this reconciliation; but the condition he attaches to it is less easy of accomplishment, and the acquisition of a man of whom I have heard so much that was to his honor, who has borne himself so well in many a trying situation, and--what I consider of most importance--whom I have myself learned to know as a perfect gentleman--the acquisition of such a man I should value highly, yes, inexpressibly."

For the first time during our conversation the prince had spoken with a warmth which was not without an effect upon my susceptible nature, and at his last words he bowed gracefully to me, and a kind and friendly smile brightened his pale refined face. It was a noble and most inviting offer that he made me; I felt that, and I also felt that under other circumstances I would have accepted it without hesitation; but as it was---

"You are a cautious man," said the prince, after politely waiting a little while for my answer. "You are thinking, 'Will Prince Prora keep the promise he makes me? and will he be able to keep it?' On this point I think I can satisfy you. The prince, my father, must be no less desirous of this reconciliation than I am myself; he would eagerly welcome the first advances from my side, and reward me with princely magnanimity for the first results that I was able to produce. I believe even that he would at once place all our estates in this part of the country under my charge. This at the beginning would be a field of action which I should think would be satisfactory to your ambition--you are a little ambitious are you not? As for myself, you would have every reason to be content with me. I am by nature rather indolent, and my training has not done much to eradicate that natural fault; I should give you uncontrolled authority, or, at least you would always find me inclined to agree with whatever was reasonable. Under no circumstances would I be a hard landlord; and as you are unfortunately not in the position to--how shall I express it? you understand what I mean--why should you not give me your service as freely--more freely, I flatter myself--than to that horrible plebeian over yonder? whose affairs, moreover, as I learn on good authority, are by no means in the most prosperous condition."

While the prince was speaking, I had been putting to myself the question with which he concluded, and answered myself that in reality I could see no reason why my activity could not work as effectively for good in this new field as in the old. And yet I could not bring myself to accept the offer. It is so hard for one to renounce a favorite dream.

"I see my proposition appears somewhat to embarrass you," said the prince, a little piqued, as I fancied, by my hesitation. "Well, I will not urge you: think the matter over; you have my word, and I will let it stand for a few days. I am here for the purpose of practising patience, as it seems. Then in a few days I promise myself this pleasure again."

He bowed to me from his sofa-corner as if to intimate that the conversation was at an end, when the rapid tramp of a horse was heard under the window.

"Who can that be?" said the prince, and touched the silver bell on the table. But in the same instant the old servant entered followed by an equerry with a sealed letter in his hand. The old man was very pale and the equerry very red, but both had such agitated faces that the prince exclaimed hastily, "What upon earth is the matter?"

"A letter from his high--I should say from Herr Chancellor Henzel," said the old man, taking the letter from the courier's hand and handing it to the prince without thinking to place it upon the salver which he was holding in his other hand for this purpose. He must have been informed of the contents of the letter by the messenger.

The prince broke open the large seal, and I remarked that while he hastily ran over the contents of the letter, his hands began to tremble violently. Then he looked up and said with a voice which he evidently tried to keep as steady as possible:

"His highness has had an attack of apoplexy. Saddle Lady, or better, Brownlock, he is faster. Albert can take Essex and come with me. Be quick about it!" and he stamped impatiently.

The equerry hurried out of the door, and the old servant ran through another door which I had not observed, into an adjoining room, probably to pack up such things as were necessary for his master to take.

As the prince, who was pacing the room with unsteady steps, did not seem to notice that I was still there, I was about trying to slip away unperceived, when he suddenly stopped before me, and looking at me with an attempt to smile, said:

"Now see how hard it is for one in my position to become an orderly man. I am just about making the attempt, and I am called away in another direction. Now, farewell, and let me soon

hear from you. Remember, you have my word, and I shall now probably need you more than ever. Farewell!"

He gave me his hand, which I pressed warmly.

Five minutes later, as I was going back on foot through the pine woods--I had declined the carriage which had been kept harnessed for me--I heard horses behind me. It was the young prince, with a groom following him. As he flew by me at full gallop, he waved his hand in friendly salutation, and in the next instant both riders had disappeared among the thick trunks and the trampling of their horses grew fainter and ceased to sound in the dim forest.

CHAPTER XVI.

The following day was unusually hot and close for the time of year. At sunrise gray storm-clouds had appeared in the east, and hung threatening in the horizon, while the sun in all his splendor was ascending the bright sky. I, who from childhood had always been peculiarly sensitive to atmospheric changes, felt uneasily the electric tension of the air. On my brow I had a sense of constant pressure, a singular disquiet agitated my nerves, and my blood seemed to course laboriously through my veins. To be sure these feelings of mine were not due to the weather alone.

Something else was in the air; something that gave me more uneasiness than the threatened storm, something that I could not define; the obscure feeling of the intolerable position in which I found myself here, and that in some way it must be brought to an end--if it had not come to an end already.

However that might be, I had time enough to-day to think it all over.

No one was here to disturb my reflections: Zehrendorf seemed uninhabited. The excursion to the Schlachtensee which had been arranged the day before, had been carried out at about ten o'clock, not without some trifling variations of the original programme. Whether it was because the last attempt to make a horsewoman of Fräulein Duff had failed so lamentably, or from some other reason, Hermine had given up her intention of going on horseback with her governess and Arthur, and the whole company had gone in three carriages. The steuerrath and the Born had also joined the party; which was another variation from the programme, introduced on account of the two Eleonoras, who had unanimously protested--they were always unanimous that they could not possibly share in an excursion to last the whole day, that was composed of young people only. The two dignitaries had vehemently resisted the honor proposed to them, but yielded at last, of course. How could they do otherwise? Not easily again would they find such another opportunity to forward their favorite scheme.

A third variation had also taken place, which, if I could credit Fräulein Duff, I had brought about. True, appearances seemed to confirm her statement, but only appearances.

When I returned to Zehrendorf from my visit to Rossow, as I went to my own room I had to pass through the parlor where the whole company were assembled. Hermine was sitting at the piano playing a noisy piece, which she suddenly stopped as, after silently bowing to the company, I had my hand on the knob of the door to pass out. Involuntarily I turned at the sound of the discord with which she closed, and in the next moment I saw her standing before me, with pale features and a strange light in her large blue eyes, and with quivering lips saying something which she had to repeat before I could understand it. They hoped I had taken the jest of to-day as it was meant, and not deprive their little party to-morrow of the pleasure of my company, on which they had certainly counted.

The company who had been hitherto conversing with especial animation, and had scarcely appeared to notice my presence, were suddenly silent, and this was probably the reason that I heard my own answer with startling distinctness, almost as if it was not I but another who had spoken with an altogether strange voice:

"I thank you, Fräulein: but you were perfectly right; I cannot be counted upon on these occasions."

Next I found myself outside in the hall, trembling in every limb of my strong body, with sharp pain in my heart and a burning desire to cry out aloud, and then I pressed both hands upon my breast, and said to myself, with deeply-drawn breath and trembling lips, "Thank heaven, it is all over."

To this thought I held fast all the long night while I paced sleepless up and down my carpeted room, or stood at the open window cooling my burning brow in the night air, or throwing myself upon the divan to sink into painful thought.

All over; all over! despite the note that Fräulein Duff sent about midnight to my room by the hands of my now devoted William, and in which in her queer fantastic way she assured me that Hermine had been looking forward for two weeks to this excursion only because she was to make it with me, and indeed had planned it with no other view; and she asked whether the good should give place to the evil, and whether love did not believe all things and endure all things, especially when it might be convinced that what occasioned its severest sufferings were themselves but love-torments?

Love? Was this, could this be love? Love, she said, endured all things and believed all things. True: but it also is not puffed up, does not behave unseemly, and thinks no evil. Is this love? Is it not rather selfishness, vanity, caprice, the caprice of a spoiled child which now kisses its doll and the next moment flings it on the ground, for which the whole world is only a bright soap-bubble that for its especial pleasure glitters in the sunshine of its fortune? Well, this may be love--one kind of love; but I do not fancy this kind and will not have it, and it is all over.

Had I not known another kind of love? A firm, deeply-rooted, beneficent love that brought blessings wherever it was given. If this love had never been bestowed on me, did I any the less know that it existed? And if she had never loved me as she was capable of loving, and would some day love another, had I not tasted a drop at least of this pure fountain of living water, and drunk from this single drop courage and refreshment, far more than from all this torrent which rushes so exuberantly to-day, and to-morrow will have vanished without a trace into the sand--the sand of her selfishness and caprice? No! it must all be over, and it was all over.

Thus all night long thoughts whirled and burned in my head and heart, until day broke--a bright day, but heavy with brooding storm--and found me feverish and exhausted; but I aroused myself with a strong resolution and said to myself:

"So be it! Let all be over and past! Perhaps it is well that all has happened thus, and that I am given back to myself and to my duties."

And I remained in my room until it was time to go to the chalk-quarry, where the machine was to be operated to-day for the first time. At about ten o'clock I returned to report to the commerzienrath, as he had requested, that all had succeeded beyond our expectations, and that our prospect of mastering the water had now become a certainty.

In the meantime the excursionists had started, as William, who remained behind to wait upon me, informed me, together with a multitude of details, which the rascal's hawk-eyes were quick to catch, and his indiscreet mouth eager to blab. The young lady had seemed in the very gayest humor, until Leo, her mastiff, could not be induced, either by caresses or threats, to go along with them. "He has been treated too badly of late," said William, "and we notice--I mean an animal notices anything like that." And at the last moment Herr and Frau von Granow drove up, though they had not been invited, and they could not avoid asking them to go along.

"I tell you, Herr Engineer, the whole thing looked more like a funeral than a pic-nic party. But the two young ladies--" here William Kluckhuhn grinned--"you ought to have seen them, Herr Engineer! All in white with green ribbons--real snow-drops, I tell you!"

I was little in the mood to hear William's report to the end, and interrupted it by asking for the commerzienrath.

"Gone to Uselin with the old justizrath to keep some appointment, and will hardly be back before evening."

This news somewhat surprised me. The commerzienrath had known nothing the previous evening of this appointment which would keep him all day, for he had appointed this very morning for an interview with me in which very important business was to be discussed. For the report which I had brought him of the precarious condition of the old prince had thrown our prospects of selling Zehrendorf into the dim distance, and indeed rendered them very improbable. What would the young prince, if he succeeded his father and came into full possession of all the property, care for one estate more or less?

"In reality, the old man cares very little about it," the commerzienrath always said; "but the young one is to win his spurs by the purchase, and show that he can manage business of the sort. The young man knows this very well, and for that reason he will take down the hook, however uninviting the bait may be; you may rely upon that."

Thus the commerzienrath had reckoned: very falsely as affairs now stood. My yesterday's intelligence had visibly caused him great alarm. It was extremely odd that he had to go to the city just to-day.

Or did he merely wish to get out of my way, now that he had so perfectly gained his point of bringing me into disfavor with Hermine? Did he need me no more, now that the machine was set up and the negotiation with the prince virtually fallen through?

Very possible; very possible; but perhaps I needed him still less; perhaps I was in a position to bid him farewell before he gave me a dismissal. This absence of the man, which seemed like a flight from me, came at this moment as a warning to accept the tempting offer of the young prince. What had I thus far attained from the commerzienrath in furtherance of my own aims? Abundance of promises, a flood of compliments--and that was all, and so it would evidently remain, especially if he did not sell Zehrendorf, and was thus released from his promise to me about the factory: yes, and very probably even though the sale were still effected.

For there were but few things that the commerzienrath held sacred, and I had good reason to believe that his word was not one of them. Thus he had promised me not to dismiss the foreman of the saw-mill, to whom he had already given notice; and as I passed the mill this morning it was not running, and a workman told me that the master had been there the previous evening while I was at Rossow, and after a short conversation dismissed the foreman on the spot.

There was an instance; but it was merely the most recent; I had caught him more than once in these breaches of his word. No, indeed, the man did not seem a likely proselyte to my religion of humanity!

And the prince? The more distinctly I recalled to memory the particulars of our yesterday's conversation, the more vividly his face arose before me, so much the more did I believe that I discovered the stamp of an honorable and kindly nature in his features, and felt confident that it would well repay me to attach myself to him. It is a hard matter to remain entirely unmoved when any one approaches us with marked good will, especially when our well-wisher is a person of high rank and great influence. Now I cannot say that either then or at any time I should have considered a prince's favor the height of earthly felicity; but neither can I deny that, at that time at least, the reverence for dignities in which I had been brought up, helped to place this behavior of the young prince in its most favorable light. I thought that I had now found the key to the conduct which yesterday had seemed so enigmatical; and I highly prized the delicacy with which he had cleared out of the way what he knew lay as a stumbling-block between us, before he disclosed his real object. He had made no allusion to the scene in Zehrendorf forest nine years before; but he had never forgotten that I had then spared him, and why I had done so, and had attempted in this way to cancel the obligation.

I had to admit to myself that, all things considered, the procedure was noble and chivalrous on his part. So he had explained to me the reason of his visit to Paula's studio, and to a certain extent apologized for his conduct there; and if his attempt on the same day to clear scores with me was premature and unbecoming, he had more than compensated for it in my eyes by his present magnanimous and important proposal.

For it was both. Magnanimous, when I considered the open loyal way in which he made it, with no manœuvrings, no bargaining nor chaffering; important, when I admitted to myself, as I had to do, that if it was really his wish to provide me with a wider field of operations, he was fully in a position to realize his promises. Granting that the commerzienrath was what he pretended to be--though on this point my doubts had rather increased than diminished--but granting that he was the wealthy and influential man he was generally thought, what was his wealth and influence compared with those of a Prince of Prora-Wiek? As a schoolboy I had known, like every one else in the town, and I believe every inhabitant of our province, that upon the island alone the prince owned a hundred and twenty estates; then the small town of Prora, the residence--in which there was now probably agitation enough in consequence of its lord's sudden illness--which stood entirely upon the prince's land; then the hunting-castle Wiek with its leagues of forest; the *Grafenschaft* of Ralow on the mainland near Uselin, where the townsfolk used to make excursions to the park in the summer; the magnificent palace at the residence, which I had often passed with strange emotions; the domains in Silesia with the celebrated iron-works, the value of which alone was estimated at several millions--what was the Cræsus of Uselin in comparison with this real Cræsus, whose revenues for two years probably amounted to as much as the commerzienrath's whole capital?

True, I had looked forward to a far different career. My passion for mathematical science, my advances in the machine-builder's art, my hope some day to be actively helpful in promoting the development of railroad industry, the plans I had so often devised with worthy Doctor Snellius for the good of the working classes--it was no pleasant thought to have to give up all this. But had I then to give it up? Was it not in reality the same thing whether I worked here or there, in this manner or in that, so that I only worked and strove in the noble spirit of my unforgotten teacher and of my truehearted friend? Assuredly I might in that spirit accept the prince's offer, and Paula would not be dissatisfied with me, for her thoughts and wishes, like those of her noble-hearted father, were only bent upon goodness in every form. I felt that it would not be difficult for me to show her how in this sphere I would have full opportunity to become more worthy of her than I had ever been. And then--I had always endeavored to hide it from myself, because it too rudely touched a painful spot in my heart; but now in this sleepless night it and many another thing stood in sharp conviction before my mind--she had not only let me go because a wider field of usefulness opened before me; she had even sent me away, because she had compassion with me, because she knew that my deep, devoted, reverential love found no echo in her heart; and as a kindly nature never takes away anything without offering, if possible, some indemnity, she had offered my loving heart, that yearned for a return of affection, the fulfilment of all my wishes in a lovely fascinating form, in the form of the beautiful wayward Bacchante who had played with me as she had played with tigers, leopards, and other forest-creatures which she was accustomed to

yoke to her chariot. What did Paula's innocent heart know of this dangerous sport? What did she know of the arts of caressing with one hand while the other plies the lash?--of delighting at one moment in the free gambols of the favorite, and the next moment barring it into a narrow cage? What did Paula know of all this?

Had she known it, would she not be the first to called me back and say:

"You may and must sacrifice yourself, if nothing less will avail; but you may not throw yourself away; and as for my wishes and yours, they are all past and gone."

Thus it fermented and worked in my heated brain and my swelling heart all day long, while the sun rolled on his glowing path through the sky, and behind him clomb the gray vaporous clouds which had lowered on the horizon at his rise. I had looked up instinctively at the sky from time to time, as I wandered restlessly through the fields and the heath, tormented by my thoughts, and oppressed by the threatening storm, and so possessed by the emotions within me and the ominous preparations without, that I had lost my consciousness of place and time, found myself now in the evening twilight on the road to Trantowitz, the same road along which I had driven to Rossow, and which was also the road by which the excursionists would return, without knowing how I had got there or why I had come. Certainly not to visit Hans, who was with the party. Still I pushed on, until I reached the ill-kept broken hedge which divided Hans's famous garden, with its stunted fruit-trees, its neglected grass, and its waste potato and cabbage patches, from the road. Looking over the hedge, I thought that at the further end of this melancholy croft I saw a tall figure which could be no other than the good Hans himself. I pushed through the hedge--an operation attended with no difficulty--and went towards the figure. It was Hans, as I thought.

"I thought you were with them," I said.

"Not I," he answered, returning my grasp.

"But you were invited?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And how then are you here?"

"Well, when I saw them coming this morning, I got out of that window"--he pointed to the window of his bed-room--"and stayed in the woods until the coast was clear. And you?"

"I did not care to go, either."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Hans.

We strolled for a long time silently, side by side, up and down the grass-grown paths. The twilight had now grown so dim that color could no longer be distinguished. The air was inexpressibly sultry and oppressive, heat-lightnings flickered every now and then in the east, and from the Trantowitz woods, an angle of which reached down near us, came the song of the nightingale in long-drawn wailing tones.

"It is suffocating!" I said, turning into a sort of ruinous arbor that we had reached in our walk, and throwing myself upon one of the mouldering benches in it, I pulled off my coat and waistcoat.

Hans made no reply, but silently proceeded to his bedroom window, through which I saw his gigantic figure disappear, and re-appear after the lapse of a few minutes. He rejoined me with a couple of glasses in his hand and two bottles of wine under his arm, which he set down on the old table, drew two more bottles out of his coat pockets and laid them on the sand, pulled out his hunting-knife and uncorked the first pair, and then pushing one over to me, remarked:

"Drink off the half or the whole of that and you will feel better."

That was just the old Hans exactly, with his universal specific against all slings and arrows of outrageous fortune! Alas, it had proved but a poor panacea to the good fellow, and would probably be of little service to me, but I could not help feeling how kindly he meant it, and my hand trembled as I poured the wine for both, and my voice was unsteady as I clinked glasses with him, saying:

"To your health, dear Hans, and a better future to both of us."

"Don't know where it is to come from for me," said Hans, draining his glass at a draught, and filling both again.

"Hans, my dear good fellow," I said, "please don't speak in that dismal tone: I cannot stand it this evening: I feel every moment as if my heart was about to break."

Hans was about to push the bottle to me again, but remembered that I had already declined his universal specific, so he handed his cigar-case to me across the table.

In a minute two bright points were glowing in the dark arbor, throwing a faint glimmer upon the rickety table with the bottles, and upon the faces of two men that leaned over it in a long

confidential conversation.

"It is so," said one at last.

"You will find yourself mistaken, as I was," replied the other.

"I think not. How long ago was it--yesterday, I believe--or it might have been the day before; I don't keep any reckoning of the days--I met her on the road to Rossow, and we rode together two or three miles, and the whole time she was talking of nothing but you."

"She must have been sadly in want of a topic of conversation."

"And she cried, too, poor thing! I was sorry for her, and have ever since had it on my mind to tell you that you must really bring the matter to a close."

A long silence followed. The third bottle was uncorked, the bright points still glowed, while the darkness sank ever deeper, and the noiseless sheet-lightning flickered from moment to moment.

"But you are not drinking," said Hans.

I did not answer: in fact I had scarcely heard him. I was hardly conscious that he was there or where we were. In the darkness that surrounded us I saw her eyes beaming; in the rustling of the wind in the leaves I heard her voice. And the large blue eyes gazed reproachfully upon me, and the voice seemed to tremble, and the sweet lips quivered as they had done yesterday when she asked me to accompany them.

"Where are you going?" asked Hans.

I had arisen and stood at the entrance of the arbor, gazing with burning eyes into the darkness. On the western horizon there was still a thin pale streak, but elsewhere the sky seemed to cover the earth like a black opaque pall. There was a deep silence; only from time to time strange moans and whispers seemed to pass through the air, and at intervals the nightingales in the woods sent forth a plaintive sobbing sound, as if bewailing the overthrow of a beautiful world full of light and love. Now and then an electrical flame clove the darkness, and flickered strangely along the edges of the low heavy clouds; but no thunder followed to break the oppressive stillness, and no refreshing rain came down to revive the exhausted earth.

"Where are you going?" asked Hans again.

"Where do you suppose they are now?"

"Who can tell? Certainly they have not got back, for they must pass this way."

"On the heath, between your beechwoods and the Rossow pines, the way must be hard to find in this darkness."

"It is indeed," said Hans. "I once rode around there for two hours without getting out of one place, and the night was not as dark as this. To be sure, we had been drinking pretty freely at Fritz Zarrentin's. Hallo! what are you about?"

I was on the point of rushing out; and when Hans spoke I grasped at my head, which felt as if it would burst.

"They may be at that very place now," I muttered.

"Don't go without me!" cried Hans, as I set off on a run.

I stopped: he came behind me and patted me two or three times gently on the shoulder with his great broad hand, saying: "So then, so!" as if he were quieting an excited horse. I caught his hand and said, "come along, Hans."

"Of course," he said; "but we must have two or three fellows with lanterns, or we can do nothing."

"That will keep us too long!"

"Not five minutes."

Hans strode by my side across the cabbage patch, and to avoid all detours went directly to, and through, his bed-room window and through his sitting-room, and I followed close at his heels, for I knew the way of old. Once in the yard, Hans began to pull with all his might at the cracked alarm-bell which hung there in a sort of ruinous belfry, and whose unmelodious clank used to summon the men to or from work. They came fast enough at the well-known signal from their quarters and from the stables, and before five minutes were over we had left the yard and taken the path to the Trantow beeches, followed by a squad of men with stable-lanterns.

The last bright streak had faded from the western horizon, and the darkness was so intense that in the woods it seemed no darker than it had been in the open field. The oppressive

sultriness of the atmosphere had increased, if possible, and now the thunder began to mutter, and the tops of the trees to toss about in the rising wind. The nightingales had hushed in expectation of the impending storm. Leaving the men with the lanterns far behind, I hurried through the wood, followed closely at first by Hans, who presently stopped, however, calling to me that there was no use for such frantic haste, as we could do nothing without the lanterns. I knew that very well, but I was urged on by an impulse that I could not withstand. What I meant to do, I could not precisely have told, nor did I pause to consider; I only hurried forward wildly as if life and death were at stake. How I got through the woods, by a wretched path, in the pitchy darkness, without breaking arm or leg, or dashing my skull against a tree, is more than I can explain at this hour.

Whether it was the blue gleam of the lightnings which flashed at intervals through the clear spaces in the wood, or the peculiarity of my eyes which could always distinguish objects a little, even in the deepest darkness, or the excitement, which in certain moments seems to awaken dormant faculties within us, I cannot say; I only know that in an incredibly short time I had traversed the woods, and by the cessation of the rustling, by the stronger blast of the wind in my face, by the altered sound of the thunder, and by the brighter glare of the lightning, I perceived that I was on the heath. This heath was about a mile wide, bounded on three sides by the Rossow pine woods and the Trantowitz beeches, and on the fourth side, to my left, joining the great moors on the coast, which ran up into it in various places in narrower or wider strips. No tree grew over this whole broad expanse; the single mark which arrested the eye was a hillock, overgrown with bushes and surrounded by large stones--doubtless an ancient barrow--which stood about midway of the distance, and served as a boundary to mark the commencement of the moor. One could hardly speak of a road here, for the way changed with every season of the year, even with every change of the weather; travellers rode, drove, or walked, wherever they found it most practicable. More than one accident had happened here; and even in my time a man who tried to cross the heath by night with an empty wagon had driven into one of the broad deep turfpits and been drowned with his team.

While I ran rather than walked across the heath, the details of this accident, which I had long forgotten, came all back to my recollection. I remembered the man's name, and that he was betrothed to a young woman in Trantowitz, a pretty fair-haired creature, who could not be comforted for the loss of her lover, and had been seen weeks afterwards sitting on the mound with eyes fixed on the spot where he had perished. It struck me that the poor pretty creature had had a slight likeness to Hermine.

A wild terror seized me, and I suddenly stood still, listening into the night with a wildly-beating heart. I thought I had heard a faint cry at no great distance. But from what direction? Before me? to the right? or to the left? Or was I mistaken altogether, and had my excitement deceived me and changed the wailing sounds of the wind to human calls for help? There it was again! This time I was not mistaken, and I caught the direction from which the cry came. It was exactly before me--no, it was on my right--no, on my left. Certainly now it was to the right. Then I heard it again nearer, and again from another direction, as if the ghosts of those who had perished all over the desolate heath had all arisen from their marshy graves and were calling to each other. Nor could I see a single step before me: even the lightning had ceased for some minutes: it seemed as if I could touch the darkness with my hand. I cast a desperate glance around, and saw to my unspeakable joy the lights of the lanterns approaching, though still at some distance. I called with all the power of my lungs for them to make haste; then hurried blindly forward, and started terrified back, as suddenly, in the glare of a vivid flash of lightning, I saw just before me the gigantic spectrally white figure of a rearing horse. I had come upon one of the carriages, which had been abandoned by its occupants, leaving the coachman who had bravely stood to his post, and strove in vain to unharness the horses.

"Where are the others?" I cried, hastening to help the man without rightly knowing what I was doing.

"God knows," he answered. "I have had my hands full here."

"Here come men with lanterns."

"It is high time. Stand still, you devil's imp!"

Now Hans came up with several of the lantern-bearers. The horses stood still, shivering with terror, and snorting from their distended nostrils great clouds of steam in the lantern-light.

On the back seat of the carriage lay a figure stretched at full length. The light of the lantern fell on a pale haggard face--it was Arthur.

"What has happened to him?" I asked.

Hans asked no question: he knew what had happened when a young man, who has never learned to control himself; lies stretched upon the back seat of a carriage in his return from a picnic, and not all the turmoil of the unchained elements can awaken him from his stupid sleep.

"Never mind about him," said the driver; "he is safe enough."

"One of you must stay here," I said to the men with lanterns. "Forward, the rest!"

We went on, the men, of whom there were five or six, holding up their lanterns, and shouting all together at intervals, calling all who might hear to try to get to us.

We were answered from different points; it was now plain that the whole company was widely scattered. The carriages alone had kept somewhat together; and a minute later I came upon another which had been overturned and dashed to pieces by the maddened horses, so that we had no difficulty in getting them clear of what remained of the harness. Then we found the third, which had turned a little to one side and stalled, sunk up to the axle in a marshy place, and the driver had released the horses by cutting the traces.

It was a strange and weird-looking scene. The lightning flashed so incessantly that we seemed enveloped in its awful glare. Then the shouts and cries of the frightened excursionists who came hurrying up from all sides, the swearing of the coachmen and grooms, the snorting and struggling of the scared horses, and amid all, the mutterings and long roll of thunder, the whistling and shrieking of the gusts of wind that every now and then swept with frightful fury over the heath, and seemed to hold up the rain, of which only occasional heavy drops smote me in the face; the whole company, so far as they were now collected, resembling a party about to be led to execution, the men with agitated features, and the women pale as death, and all bearing abundant traces of their wanderings about the heath and the miry ground.

But if it had been difficult to get them together, I now found that it was impossible to keep them so. All were for pushing on at once, Why waste a moment here? All were together. In an instant the rain would pour down in torrents, the lanterns be put out, and what would become of them then?

"Forward, my friends, forward!" screamed the steuerrath, and Herr von Granow also shouted "Forward! forward!" and in the next moment all had started.

Amid the indescribable confusion, the calling, shouting, hurrying up and down of so many persons, I had found it impossible to make sure whether really all, as they said, were together; but I knew that I had not seen her whom alone I was looking for, nor had I seen Fräulein Duff. I had imagined for some reason--perhaps I had heard some one say it--that both ladies were in the fourth carriage, which was behind the others, and reported to be safe; but as the company set out, with the lanterns in front, this fourth carriage came up.

It was the commerzienrath's great family carriage. I sprang to it and looked in. There was a pile of cloaks and shawls which had been left behind in the hurry, and Fräulein Duff, leaning back in the corner, and looking at me, who was half wild with anxiety, with eyes from which extreme terror had banished all expression. In vain did I try to get from her where she had left Hermine. She only muttered, as if delirious, "Seek faithfully and thou shalt find," and then broke into hysterical weeping.

Now Anthony, who had in the meantime been adjusting the traces, told me that the young lady had sprung from the carriage not ten minutes before, just as the lanterns came near. He did not know why, for the young lady had not been nearly so much frightened as the rest, and had a little before said to Fräulein Duff that she might be sure she would not forsake her. He thought she went over towards the left, but he was not sure, for he had had hard work to manage the horses, that had been quiet enough all along, but now could not be kept still.

With this he mounted his seat and started to follow the others. I called to him and ordered him to stop; but either he did not or would not hear me, or else he could not hold the horses any longer--be that as it might, the next minute I was alone, while the company with the lanterns, under Hans's guidance, kept their way across the heath towards the woods.

CHAPTER XVII.

I was about to hurry after them, and compel them to give me some assistance, when a flash of lightning of unusual vividness showed me the hillock or "giant's barrow" which lay about a hundred paces from where I stood, and which I had not perceived before. Whether I expected to get a wider range of vision from its top, or whether it was an instinctive impulse, or both, I do not know, but in the next moment I was at the foot of the hillock among the great stones. Another dazzling flash, and a shudder seized me, and my hair began to rise on my head. There, on the top, by the hazel-bushes that were bent and lashed by the storm, surrounded by a spectral light, stood with loose-flying hair the unhappy girl looking out for her lover who was drowned in the morass. In an instant the pitchy darkness closed again, and a crash of thunder drowned my sudden cry. Had I lost my senses? And instantly, while yet the thunder crashed and the thick darkness

surrounded me, it flashed upon me like a heavenly revelation, and my heart gave a great throb, and I gave a shout of joy, and in a moment I was at the top and had found her and lifted her in my arms and shouted again, and she wound her arms around me and clung to my breast, so close! so close! and I knelt before her and she leaned over me and said:

"Quick, quick, here in the dark where I do not see you; I love you! I love you!"

"And I love you!"

"None but me?"

"None but you!"

"None but me! none but me! And if the earth should open now and swallow us both--none but me?"

"None, none!"

Again came a flash illuminating everything for a moment with the brightness of day, and she laughed and rejoiced aloud and threw herself into my arms crying:

"Now I see you: now I can look at you! Oh how lovely this is! How beautiful you are! Now carry me down the hill as far as the stones. Now let me go, my strong one, my hero, everything to me!"

"Let me carry you further; I can do it easily."

"I know you can: else would I love you so much? But now let me go; you must not think me a weakling."

I let her glide from my arms upon one of the great stones: she laid her hands upon my shoulders, and I saw for a moment her sweet defiant face and her eyes that flashed as if with indignation, as she said in a firm voice:

"Never forget that I am not weak like other women; and if you had not come to look for me here--yes, if you had not found me, I would have drowned myself here in the morass; and I *will* drown myself the moment you cease to love me. And now come!"

She threw herself on my breast and glided from my arms to the ground, and we went hand in hand over the heath, the incessant lightnings showing us the pathless way, while the thunder rolled, and the rain which had been delaying so long came down first in heavy warm drops, and then in torrents. What cared we for the storm and the rain? What cared we that we were alone upon the heath?

This was, indeed, our crowning joy: for me, to know that I had both the right and power to protect her, and that I had in truth the strength, had there been need, to carry my beloved to Trantowitz and to Zehrendorf; for her, to be thus protected by him she had loved so long, who now was all her own, and all had happened just as her wayward heart and romantic fancy desired. And now all came from her lips, in broken confused phrases, in thoughts and fancies that gleamed and vanished like the lightnings around us, now awakening one memory and now another, just as the objects around us momentarily flashed out the darkness and vanished into it again; the brown heath, the glimmering moor-water, and in the forest the bushes to the right and left and the gigantic trunks of the trees whose great boughs were wildly tossed hither and thither by the blast, with a crashing and groaning and roaring as if the world were coming to an end. But the wilder the uproar about us, the more she exulted, and laughed with delight when in the noise we could no longer understand each other's words. She even grew angry when after we had nearly traversed the woods, two lanterns appeared moving rapidly in our direction.

"Let us run off," she said, seriously, and then clapped her hands, and we now heard "Hallo! Hallo!" in the good Hans's powerful voice.

"It is he!" she cried; "my good Hans, my dear Hans, my best Hans! He shall hear it first. No one has a better right."

And now came up Hans, who had hurried on ahead of the two grooms, holding his lantern high to let the light fall on her faces, and again shouting "Hallo!" with all the strength of his lungs, but this time for joy that he had found us so happily--so happily that he set his lantern on the ground and shook both Hermine's hands and then mine, and then hers again and then mine again, all the time saying "So, so! that is right! so, so!" as if we were a pair of young headstrong horses, with which he had had great trouble, but had brought to reason at last.

The two grooms had now come up. "Poor fellows," said Hermine, "they must have pleased faces too. Give me quick what you have; and you too Hans, give me all you have, both of you!"

I emptied my purse--there was not much in it--into her hands, and Hans rummaged his pockets and found some crumpled notes which she took and gave the two men who stood open-mouthed, not knowing what to think. A couple of *thalers* fell on the ground, and the men said "It would be a sin to leave the good money lying there," so commenced to look for it, while we three hastened

on, and Hans informed us that the whole company was at his house, and that he had harnessed up his farm-wagons--the only vehicles he had--to take them to Zehrendorf, whither he had sent already a messenger on horseback to have preparation made.

"We will both go, will we not, George?" said Hermine. "Everybody will open their eyes, of course. It will be a droll sight, and I am just in the humor for it. O, I am so happy, so happy!"

It was indeed a droll sight that presented itself to us as we entered the ruinous old mansion of Trantowitz. In the wide bare hall, in Hans's narrow sitting-room, even in the sanctuary of his bedroom, in the kitchen, which was entered from the hall, the unlucky excursionists were rambling and pushing about, calling, scolding, crying, laughing, according as they were more or less able to accommodate themselves to the situation. To the more able belonged without question Fritz von Zarrentin and his little wife, who were altogether the jolliest, most comfortable, and at the same time most good-natured people in the world, though in the storm they had not distinguished themselves by their courage any more than the rest. But now Fritz, who was in the kitchen brewing a bowl of punch with the assistance of the cook, boasted of the heroic deeds he had performed in the course of the evening, and his brisk little merry wife busied herself about the ladies, who were all in the very worst of humors, and to say the truth, in pitiable plight.

The Born Kippenreiter sat in Hans's high-backed chair, like a queen who had been hurled from her throne by a storm of revolution, her false hair plucked off, and the rouge all washed from her cheeks. Upon the sofa sat the two Eleonoras, locked in each other's arms and weeping freely on each other's bosom, without any one, themselves probably included, having the least idea of what it was about; unless it was for their soaked straw hats and drenched clothing, which had changed the virginal whiteness of the morning, for a color to which no name could be assigned. The stout Frau von Granow was standing before Fräulein Duff, who was crouching half insensible upon Hans's boot-box, proving to her that on such occasions it was the first duty of every one to look out for himself; and that if Fräulein Hermine was really drowned in the morass, nobody of any sense would lay the slightest blame upon her, the governess.

"No, Duffy, not the slightest blame!" cried Hermine, who, coming in with us at this moment through the door which was standing open, had caught the last word. "Duffy! dear, darling Duffy!"

And the excited girl fell on the neck of her faithful old governess, and embraced and kissed her with a flood of passionate tears.

If a sensitive nature like Fräulein Duff's had needed any further explanation of the meaning of these caresses and these tears, she found it now in the appearance of a tall form that stood in the doorway and looked at the group with flashing eyes. She reached out both arms to him, and cried out, oblivious of by-gone troubles:

"Richard, did I not tell you, 'Seek faithfully and you will find?'"

This speech, which the worthy lady had delivered in the tone of a herald announcing the result of a tournament, fell like a bombshell among the company. The two Eleonoras unclasped each other and looked in each other's face, and the second let her head fall upon the shoulder of the first, murmuring something of which I only caught the words--"the traitor!"

This was perhaps, all things considered, a moving picture, but a frightful one was offered us by the Born. The foreboding of imminent misfortune had been lying upon her low wrinkled brow, her hollow rouged cheeks, in her glassy snake-like eyes; she had seen it coming on all day. In vain had she tried with her maternal arms to protect her dear son against the shafts of ill-temper which the proud angry girl launched against him; in vain had Arthur tried to quaff from the bowl of pine-apple punch fresh courage in so sore a strait, and new fortitude to sustain him under his trials--the bolt had fallen, and the wreck was here before her eyes, before the eyes of the Born Baroness Kippenreiter, the mother of the most charming of sons, the aunt of this ungrateful creature. It was too much! The dethroned queen sprang to her feet, trembling in every limb, hurled--she was speechless with indignation--a crushing look at Hermine, who threw herself, laughing, into my arms, and tottered to the room where the bowed-down father was watching by the bed of his hopeful heir, whose wretched soul was not in a condition to comprehend what he and his house had irrevocably lost.

Away sad visions, and disturb not the bright memory of that happy evening. I will not banish you altogether--nay, I know that I cannot if I would; but crowd not upon me thus! Strive not to make me believe that it is for you that we live. You must be it is true, and well for him that comprehends it, and keeps in his firm breast a fearless laugh to mock you away when you will not be thrust aside. You must be; but it is not for the sake of the black earth that clings to its tender roots that we take up the rose of love, bear it home in our bosom, plant it in a calm sunny place, and watch and tend and treasure it as best we can. Who knows how long we can!

CHAPTER XVIII.

Who knows how long we can! Perhaps not long; perhaps but a short, far too short a time. It is a melancholy word, but unhappily the right word to open the record of this part of my life which I begin with a hesitating hand. It was not my intention, when I determined to write this narrative, to cast any further gloom upon the spirits of my readers, who have in all likelihood themselves borne their own share of life's sorrows. It was not my aim to dampen their courage in life's battles, when I related how the youth had erred by his folly, and how he suffered the penalty; I rather hoped to infuse into them the spirit of delight in active life, the faculty of enduring and forbearing; and thus we may together live over in memory the hard fortune which was yet to be the lot of the man. The reader, who has by this time perhaps grown to be my friend, may follow me without fear on my path of life.

And first into the room of the *commerzienrath*, which I entered the following morning at ten o'clock with a heart possibly not perfectly at ease, but not at all fearful. But I would not have advised any timid person to cross this man's path this morning, as he ran up and down his room like a madman, then stopped before me and surveyed me with infuriated looks, again raged about the room, and then stopped and cried:

"So! You want to marry my daughter, do you?"

"It is a wish which had nothing alarming about it ten years ago, Herr *Commerzienrath*. Do you not remember, on the deck of the *Penguin*, the day we went out to the oyster-beds?"

"Do not try any impertinence with me! I ask you once more; you--you have the audacity to aim at being my son-in-law?"

"Excuse me, Herr *Commerzienrath*; your first question was whether I wanted to marry your daughter."

"That is the same thing."

"You are quite right; and therefore you would perhaps do better Herr *Commerzienrath*, to consider me now your son-in-law--or we will say, son-in-law that is to be--and treat me accordingly."

I said this in a very grave firm tone, which I knew from experience seldom failed of its effect upon the really pusillanimous nature of the man. Instinctively he stepped back a couple of paces out of my reach, seated himself in his chair, adopted a sneering tone instead of his air of contemptuous indignation, and said in his driest business voice:

"I understand then, Herr George Hartwig, that you do me the honor to ask the hand of my daughter *Hermine*. The first points then to be considered, are the nature of your pretensions, the position you occupy in the world, and, in a word, your personal relations generally. You are, as far as I know, the son of a subaltern official, a young man who in his youth did no good, and for a horrible crime was punished with eight years----"

"Seven years, Herr *Commerzienrath*----"

"Counting the preliminary detention, and disciplinary punishment, eight years in the penitentiary----"

"Imprisonment, Herr *Commerzienrath*----"

"Who, thanks to the remissness or connivance of the authorities----"

My papers are all in order, Herr *Commerzienrath*----

"Learned the rudiments of blacksmithing for a few months in my factory, and now with the respectable capital of----"

"Fifty *thalers* cash, and a hundred and sixty *thalers* outstanding debts which I shall never collect----"

"And, I may add with future prospects corresponding; for as to what you told me day before yesterday of his highness's proposition to you, I do not attach any weight to them at all--you then, such a man as this, with such a past, such a position, such means, and such prospects, desire to marry the daughter of *Commerzienrath Streber*."

"To have your permission to address her, Herr *Commerzienrath*."

"My future father-in-law shot from under his bushy brows a searching look at my face, which probably assured him that his attempt to humiliate me availed as little as his former attempt to

intimidate. He had to open another register. He rested his bald forehead in his hand, enveloped himself in a thick black cloud of silence, from which he suddenly snapped at me with the sharply spoken question:

"But if I were really not the millionaire, not the wealthy man you and every one have hitherto considered me--how then, sir; how then?"

The commerzienrath had sprung to his feet, and was standing before me, as I had taken my seat fronting him, with his hands on his back, bending forward, and his keen eyes piercing into mine.

"The circumstances would then be, as far as I am concerned, precisely what they were before; especially as your vaunted wealth has long been a matter of serious doubt with me, Herr Commerzienrath."

His piercing glances plunged into watery and uncertain mist, as he threw himself back in his chair, smote the arms of it with his hands, broke out into a crowing laugh ending in a coughing-fit, and between laughing and coughing cried:

"That is too good!--this young fellow--matter of serious doubt with him--long been so--it is too good! really too good!"

The coughing fit became so alarming that I sprang up and began to pat the old man's back. Suddenly he seized my hands and said in a lamentable lachrymose tone:

"George, my dear boy, it is my only, child! You do not know what that is; the comfort, the joy of a feeble old man who may die to-morrow! And you will not even wait those few hours? Oh, it is cruel, cruel! Have I lived to see this!"

Cassandra hit the mark indeed when she said that "it was hard to fathom the wiles of this labyrinthine old man." He had kept his grand stroke for the last. If I could not be intimidated or humiliated, I might perhaps be melted; and I was really touched, and said, while I pressed the stumpy withered hands I was holding in my own--"I will not rob you of your child."

"You really will not? God bless you!" cried the commerzienrath, springing from his chair as if touched by a galvanic battery. "You are a man of your word: I have always known you such. I hold you to your word."

"When you have heard the whole of it, Herr Commerzienrath. I say, I will not rob you of your child, because Hermine, though my wife, will not cease to love and to honor her father as she now does, and because you will gain a good son in me, whom you will have great need of if you are no longer wealthy, and in the other case perhaps still more. I think that I have already proven to you that I know other things besides the rudiments of blacksmithing, and perhaps enough to make up for my deficiency of fortune."

The "labyrinthine old man" gave me a look in which I plainly read that he had reached the end of his windings. It is very likely that at no time had he a serious intention flatly to reject my proposal, for I think I can safely say that as he had always lacked courage to offer any determined resistance to his proud wilful daughter assuredly he would not have had it now, when she confronted him with the triumphant knowledge that she was beloved with a love equal to her own. But it was not in the nature of the man to grant anything, be it what it might, as a man of an honorable spirit would do, frankly and squarely, without chaffering and higgling. So he had chaffered and higgled, and continued doing so, and hiding his real thoughts and wishes from me, until, when I parted from him after an hour's conversation, I was more in the dark as to all that I wished to know, and as to the state of his affairs, than I had been before. But one point I had attained and made clear beyond any possibility of a doubt, that Hermine was to be my wife; and as this, as every one will admit, was the main point, I thought I was not acting very inconsiderately if I took all the other contingencies very lightly indeed.

It had never been difficult for me to do this, even in the gloomiest passages of my life, and how could it be so now when I was so happy? How could the envious, hypocritically-friendly glances of others embitter my happiness when I saw the light of love and joy in Hermine's wonderful blue eyes? And yet such glances were not wanting, nor the phrases with which they are usually accompanied.

"I always knew it, and have often enough said to your late excellent father, my dear friend and colleague, that you would win distinction some day. Yes, yes, dear George--I may still call you by that old familiar name, may I not?--my prophecy has come to pass, though otherwise than I had expected. Well, well, so it had to be; and probably, all things considered, it is well that it is as it is. You have always been a good man whose hand was ever open to the distressed. You will not withdraw this generous hand from an old man who looks to you as his last hope?" And the steuerrath applied the finger on which glittered the immense signet to the inner corner of his left eye, and passed his cambric handkerchief over his pale aristocratic face.

"I have always held you up as a pattern to my Arthur," said the Born: "Do you not remember the times when you both went to school together and the teachers were always full of your praises? Ah! I can see you now, two wild high-spirited boys, always clinging faithfully together,

and each ready to go through anything for the other. "That it might always be so!" I often sighed from the depths of a mother's heart, for I felt how greatly my good easy-natured Arthur would need his strong thoughtful friend. My presentiment has become a reality. May heaven have heard my prayer; may you, dear George, never forget what he has once been to you; may you never forget the companion of your happy youth!"

And the Born pressed convulsively both my hands, and raised her face as near as possible to mine, as if she wished to afford me an opportunity once for all to gain a thorough knowledge of her whole apparatus of false hair, teeth, colors, expression and looks.

"I heard yesterday what a lucky fellow you are, as you have always been," said Arthur. "Lucky in everything, but luckiest of all with women. You could always turn them round your finger, you scamp. Don't you remember the dancing-lessons, and Annie Lachmund, Elise Kohl, and Emilie? Ha! ha! ha! Emilie! Don't you remember the quarrel we had about her on the *Penguin*? Poor girl! There she goes, arm in arm with Elise, bewailing the shipwreck of her hopes. I shall have to take up with the poor thing myself: an ex-lieutenant, ex-secretary of legation, who is also *ex* in pretty much everything else, must naturally be content with anything."

And Arthur laughed bitterly, smote his brow with his fist, and added that though he might not be worth much, he supposed he was worth as much powder as would end his miseries.

Emilie Heckepfennig had been for departing the next morning and fleeing the sight of the traitor, but remained notwithstanding, either because the scene of her ill-fortune had more attractions for her than she was disposed to admit, or else because the justizrath, who had not yet returned from Uselin, had written to her that she must on no account leave until he returned. So in the meantime the lorn maiden went about as if she was to serve the most sentimental of artists as a model for a resignation, leaning perpetually upon the arm of her friend, so that one could not enough admire the physical strength of the latter lady, who, as well known, had been pining into the grave for twenty years. At times she looked at me with the eyes of a dying gazelle, and at others cast me a look in which was plainly written "You will repent it some day."

That I did not misinterpret the meaning of this glance, I was convinced by a conversation to which the justizrath in a mysteriously confidential way invited me a few days after his return. The worthy man shook my hand again and again, assured me that my great *coup*, as he phrased it, would make no alteration in his friendship, then rubbed up the crest of hair which stood erect upon his head like a cock's-comb, assumed an important air--I knew this air well from the time of my old examination--and said:

"Young man! Excuse me--I mean, my dear young friend! Young as you are, life has already taught you that everything has two sides; and that all is by no means gold that glitters. If you will allow an old and true friend of your family to give you a counsel which it is my most sincere belief you will do well to follow, and which in any event is honestly meant, accept the proposal that his highness has made you, under any condition! under any condition!"

He wished to leave me after saying this, but I held him back and said: "You must feel, Herr Justizrath, that I am compelled to ask you for a more definite explanation of advice which strikes me as rather singular, coming from you."

"Ask me nothing more," said the justizrath, with a deprecatory gesture.

"You have asked me in your time so many things, and so much more than was agreeable to me, that a little retaliation may be allowed me, I think," I answered smiling.

"Would you ask an old lawyer to reveal business secrets intrusted to him professionally?" said the justizrath, and the cock's-comb trembled with the conflict of his feelings.

I was resolved not to be put off in this way, and I said:

"I will meet you half-way, Herr Justizrath. I have reasons for believing that the commerzienrath's affairs are far from being so prosperous as is commonly believed; and if you are so discreet as to withhold the grounds of advice which can only have one interpretation, the prince did not exercise the same reticence when he made me the offer you allude to."

The justizrath looked as if he was himself a sacrifice to his own inquisitorial genius, and saw no escape but in making a full and free confession.

"I will tell you but a single fact," he said. "Last Friday the commerzienrath went with me into the city to raise money on his paper to the extent of about a hundred thousand *thalers*, and I ran with these from post to pillar, until at last Moses in the Water street took them at a very short date for a very high discount. *Sapienti sat*, as we Latinists say!"

And the justizrath brushed his comb with both hands to its most imposing height, and moved toward the door, but stopped when he had reached it, came back a few steps, and said with the air of a man who can not tear himself from the grave where all his hopes lie buried:

"Do not think the worse of me that I have allowed myself to be seduced into a breach of confidence which is equally foreign to my position, my age, and I may add, my character. I have

only told you what you will probably soon learn from other sources, and in any event must know before long; and George"--here the justizrath sighed, and then painfully smiled--"George, what you may not forgive to the hard-pressed man of business, you will perhaps forgive the father. I also have but one daughter, and am, heaven be thanked, a wealthy man."

The wealthy man who also had an only daughter, went out of the door at the moment that William entered it with a letter which the postman had just brought, the seal of which I broke with trembling hands.

"My dear George, my brother: Then it has at last come to pass what I have so long desired and hoped; and, since your happiness would hardly be perfect without it, let me add my wreath to the rest. I have entwined in it all the kind and loving wishes that one human soul can cherish for another, all the blessings that spring from the depths of my heart for you, for you, my friend, my brother, *our* brother, for the young ones too now come to their eldest and bow before him, now that he is crowned as he deserves. Wear it proudly, your beauteous crown, and may never a hand touch it less holy than that of her who now lays her hand on my shoulders and bends her face over the paper that her eyes can no longer see, and says softly to me--'He still remains to us what he always was.'"

This letter also bears traces of tears, but they were my eyes that wept them, and they were tears of joy. And when I raised my grateful looks towards heaven, the cloud had vanished, the one cloud that had darkened my sky, and all was as bright as the vernal heavens that stretched in splendor over land and sea.

Happy, radiant days were these, which now seem to me as if there had been no night at all and no darkness, but ever day and light and bliss. There were not too many of these days, and it was perhaps well that it was so. Which of us mortals, however great his powers, can long feast with impunity at the table of the gods?

But many or few, ye shall be held sacred in memory, ye happy hours, and sacred shall be held whatever was associated with you and enhanced your sweetness. The bright sun, the rustling woods through which I walked at the side of the beloved one, the twilight fields through which we strolled, the sky larks that singing soared into the blue ether until they were lost to sight, and the sweet nightingales that tried to persuade me that they were happier than we.

Yes, all shall be sacred and precious in memory, for the memory is all that is left to me of those happy days.

CHAPTER XIX.

Upon these happy days, whose number I cannot even give--for who counts days like these?--followed others that were as full of unrest and intervals of gloom, as those were of calm and sunlight.

We were all in Berlin: the commerzienrath, my betrothed, Fräulein Duff, and myself; the commerzienrath staying at a hotel with the ladies, I in my old den once more in the ruinous court, where my presence was now more necessary than ever. To be sure, it was not so in the eyes of Hermine, who laughingly maintained that as the rubbish had lain there so long already, it might well lie awhile longer; but I thought differently. There was really no time to be lost. I had partly persuaded and partly forced the commerzienrath, by long and urgent conversations, to agree to undertake my favorite scheme. The plan of the building had been long complete in my head, and now, with the help of a skilful architect, was complete upon paper. There was both less and more to do than I had thought; but we had arrived at the conclusion that we could get through with the main part of the work by autumn, and be able to work in the new buildings in the winter, always supposing that the necessary funds did not fail us. In reference to this last critical point, I was only half informed; by no fault of my own, however, as despite all my efforts I had not been able to bring the commerzienrath to a clear statement of his affairs. Even now I cannot think, without a feeling of pain and shame, of the interminable debates I had with him upon this point, from which I sometimes left him full of confidence and hope, and at other times weighed down with doubts and cares. Could he command the necessary funds? Of course he could, and it was ridiculous to doubt it for a moment. Had he really maturely reflected upon a determination which involved so much? Of course he had. Did I take him to be in his dotage, or suppose that he did not understand his own wishes? That was a ticklish question to which, for very intelligible reasons, I did not care to answer "yes" to his face, and yet to which, in my own breast, I could scarcely find another answer. It was plain that he was no longer the man he had been, the man he must have been to hold the threads of a hundred heavy and important undertakings at once, and draw his

profit and advantage from all. In some moments he seemed to have a consciousness of the change that had come over him, but he then did not complain of himself but of the times which had changed, so that his old theories were no longer applicable. His old theories, and he might have added his old practices and his old tricks. All his life long the man had been a partisan of fortune, a buccaneer upon the high seas of traffic and life, a free-lance upon the long caravan route to El Dorado, a gamester at the green-table of chance, who had often staked copper pence for gold pieces, and, favored by fortune and time, gathered in gold pieces for copper pence. And now the time, as he clearly felt, had changed, and his luck had left him. He did not deny that he had suffered great losses, but took care never to state how great these losses really were. He had never insured either his ships or their cargoes, and, as he said, had always found his advantage in doing so. But lately two had gone down with all on board, and though he attached no great importance to this latter feature of the calamity, he felt severely the loss of the cargoes, which were unusually valuable. Then again a sudden fall in the price of breadstuffs had reduced by one-half the value of his immense stocks in his warehouses at Uselin, and then the failure of his hope of selling Zehrendorf, as the young prince, whose father still lay very ill at Prora, seemed to have given up all thoughts of it, and for which Herr von Granow, who had before been all agog to purchase, now declined to make any offer--as I suspected, at the instigation of the justizrath, who seemed to know more of his client's affairs, and to be less scrupulous in using his knowledge, than was by any means favorable to the interests of the latter. Other things were also added. The long and tortuous channel leading between the island and the firm land to Uselin, had, in consequence of the disgraceful neglect of the authorities, silted up to such a degree that it was now only passable for vessels of very light draught, and the danger of its complete closure seemed scarcely avoidable. Thus the traffic of the town, the greater part of which had been in the hands of the commerzienrath, was as good as destroyed; the large docks which he had repaired at his own private expense in part, his immense warehouses and other buildings, had partly become entirely worthless, and the remainder greatly depreciated in value. For several years trade had turned to the much more favorably situated town of St. ---, and now, since this town had been connected with the capital and the interior by the railroad, Uselin could no longer contend with its more fortunate rival. The commerzienrath quite lost his self-control every time he came upon this topic; he declared railroads to be an invention of the devil, and asseverated that it was a sin and a shame to ask him to assist with his own funds the diabolical system that was ruining him. When I pointed out to him that the bane might be made the antidote, that he must turn the altered position of affairs to his own advantage, and that he was in a situation to do this on the largest scale if we only carried resolutely out my plan for extending our works, he caught at this idea, which had seemed so hateful a moment before, with the greatest enthusiasm, but only to go over the same ground the next day.

These were trying weeks, and the dark shadow which they threw still darkens in my memory the sunshine which, heaven be thanked, even at this time brightened so many of my hours.

With what unalloyed pleasure do I recall my return to the works, which really resembled a triumphal procession! Now I reaped the reward of having been always, whatever the changes of my fortune, on brotherly terms with my comrades of the hammer and file, that I had omitted no opportunity of promoting their welfare and being serviceable to them with head and hand. No distinction nor success in later days--and my life has not been passed without a share of both--has ever made me so proud as the certain knowledge that among all these men with the knotted callous hands and the grave faces furrowed with toil and too often with care, there was not a single one who grudged me my good fortune, and that by far the most rejoiced in it with all their hearts. I still see them before me--and often has the memory brightened my hours of dejection--their friendly eyes lighted with sincere pleasure, as they looked at the "Malay" going, escorted by the manager, through the shops, and presenting himself to them privately in friendly confidence as their new chief. I still hear the cheers they gave when a day or two later I had them officially assembled and made them a speech, in which I said in few words what filled my heart to overflowing. And when the triple cheer had died away, with what importance the head-foreman cleared his throat as he commenced a reply, in which the worthy man's favorite theme, "Go ahead!" was treated with the boldest license of speech, and the peroration of which was lost without a trace in the primitive forest of his whiskers and in the emotion he could not master. And was it not the good Klaus whose voice intoned another outburst of cheering, compared with which the first both in length and vehemence, was mere child's play? I have to laugh even now when I think of the confusion in which I was plunged when an hour later the Technical Bureau, in white cravats and gloves, waited upon me in a body, and its speaker, Herr Windfang, compared me to the Khalif of Bagdad, who for a long time had lived unknown among his faithful subjects, and at last took the lofty station which belonged to him of right.

Yes, these are bright and happy memories, all the brighter and happier that the following years, so far from belying the promises made then by sanguine hope, fulfilled them all in abundant measure. At this very day, when I look at the assembled force of workmen in the establishment, I see for the most part the dear well-known faces of that time, not grown any younger, it may be, by the lapse of years, but none the less dear to me. And those whom I no longer see--all but very few--have been drawn off by that great rival whom we name Death.

"But what sort of a bridegroom is a man who has nothing but blast furnaces, pigs of iron, and frightful things of that sort in his head?" said Hermine, "and who knits his forehead into such ugly wrinkles! Let me smooth them out"--and she passed her hand over my brow and eyes--"If I had known all this, I would never have fallen in love with you, you sooty monster!" And she threw

herself in my arms and whispered in my ear: "Tell me at once that you love your old ugly workmen more than you do me, so that I may know what I have to do."

"You have to go with me through the works to-day, and to be nice and kind to the ugly men, and to me more than all."

"And why to you?"

"That they may see how happy I am."

"What is that to them?"

"It is a great deal to them."

"But what?"

"It is the certainty that when they come to me to represent their distresses, they will find a man who is ready to help if he can."

"I never knew anybody with such odd notions. When shall we go?"

"At once."

So we went through every part of the whole establishment, Hermine opening great eyes of wonder and sometimes clinging tight to my arm, but she was very kind and friendly to the men, only a little cool and distant with the gentlemen of the Technical Bureau--so cool and distant that Herr Windfang's beautiful speech, which he had known by heart for a week, stuck fast in his throat.

"Why were you so ungracious to the poor fellows?" I asked.

"Poor fellows?" said Hermine, pettishly pouting. "They did not look that way to me; and Herr Windfang, or whatever his name is, struck me as a complete coxcomb. I did not promise to be gracious to men of his stamp."

"But they belong to us."

"Nobody belongs to us. We belong to one another, you to me and I to you: remember that once for all, if you please!"

I laughed, but afterwards had some serious reflections on a peculiarity of character in my betrothed, which struck me not for the first time this morning. She interpreted the expression that we belonged to each other, quite literally, and when she appeared to make an exception to it, it was only in appearance, and always in favor of persons who were really in need of help, and to whom she could condescend as a princess to her subjects. Towards such she could behave with proud, but perfectly irresistible kindness.

I shall never forget how, upon the occasion of a little tour that we made through the island in these first happy days, and in which we visited the lonely village on the coast which had played so memorable a part in my flight--how she sat by the old sailor's widow, patted her brown wrinkled hands, wiped the tears from her brown wrinkled face, and consoled her with the assurance that her son would yet come back in spite of all; told her stories, which she invented at the moment, of sea-faring men who had returned laden with riches after being supposed lost for ten or twenty years; and how in the meantime she must look upon us two as her children, and that we would take care of her and make her comfortable in her old age. So too when we went to Uselin she was friendly beyond all my expectation to my sister, who had recently increased her family for the seventh time. She gave presents to all the children, who were very far from being either pretty or amiable, offered to be godmother to the new-comer, and contrary to her custom did not ridicule even the blundering attempts at politeness and clumsy obsequiousness of my brother-in-law.

"Poor people," she said: "Seven children and such a little house and such a little father. How did you ever manage to grow so big in that house, George, without knocking a hole in the roof with your hard head? And your father was quite as tall as you, and had every bit as hard a head. I don't wonder that you two could not get along together in such a nutshell of a house. But we must take care of them, George; don't forget that."

And then again my good Klaus and his Christel with her four children--a fifth was expected soon--had occasion to rejoice in her kindness, though in a different fashion. She had not shrunk from climbing the three interminable flights of stairs, and getting Christel to initiate her into the more recondite mysteries of the washing and ironing arts, nor from listening to Klaus's long enumeration of his wife's virtues. "Even if I were not compelled to like Klaus for his faithfulness to you, he would have captivated me by the way he worships his pretty plump wife. There, George; here's a pattern for you to follow. For him the world began with the moment when the waves cast up his Christel, who must have been then just as fat and white and nice as she is now, on the beach; and if she should be so unfeeling as to die before him, he would lie down and die too. And so will I do, if you should die--" she added, and looked at me with compressed lips, and angrily contracted brows.

Towards the poor, towards all who were dependent or seemed so, her proud nature could be kind and condescending; but all who wished to win her favor must make no pretensions to my affections, claim no place in my heart which she desired to dwell in and occupy alone. The lightest apprehension that any one besides herself might take possession of what was hers alone, filled her with an alarm which the vivacity of her nature could seldom long conceal, and which found vent sometimes in gloomy anger, sometimes in hot passionate tears. But how could I, beloved by this proud beautiful creature, complain of what after all was but an excess of that in which others daily exhibited so lamentable a deficiency? No; no word of complaint shall my pen enter in these records of my life, as none ever passed your lips, you good and noble hearts that loved me well, but withdrew to one side lest an unguarded look might seem to accuse her or myself.

Hermine felt this and understood it; and said sometimes, when Paula or Doctor Snellius visited us so very seldom, and her cheeks flushed while she said it:

"I ought to be ashamed to come thus between you and your friends; it is ungenerous, it is mean, I know; I know it, George, but I cannot help it; I cannot spare a crumb that falls from the table of our love. If I could only live with you on some lonely island, in the farthest seas, and some day an earthquake came and the island sank in the waters, and no one even knew of the spot where we had been so happy! But here among all these people for whom you have to care, who take an interest in you or you in them, for whom you must work, and, worse still, those who have no claim of any sort upon you, and take a cruel pleasure in coming about us, and questioning us, and watching us, as if we were on the world for no other purpose. I already think with horror of Uselin, and the curious looks of all the population, no one of whom can spare himself the treat of seeing the great clever George marry the little stupid Hermine. And then the celestial weeping of the two Eleonoras, to one of whom you are a traitor, you monster! or Duffy's tears of joy when she hears from the good pastor's mouth what she has known for eight or nine years! It is frightful! Couldn't we slip into some church about twilight and be married by a pastor, who would see us both for the first, and, as far as I am concerned, for the last time, and get for witnesses two or three old men or women who might happen to be about, who would not know us the next day, if they should meet us on the street?"

I cannot say that this wish of Hermine's was very strongly opposed to my own feelings--rather the contrary. But my father-in-law declared that he felt it incumbent upon him as the first citizen of Uselin, that his daughter's marriage should take place in that town. He held to this with an obstinacy which he was not wont to display to his daughter; and so we had to yield the point.

Nor can I say that the fateful day proved by any means so terrible as we had fancied it. The discourse of the good pastor, who was the same that had officiated at my confirmation, and must even then have been an aged man, was very long and very rambling, it is true; the St. Nicholas church looked as bald and bare as ever, and the hundreds of eyes that were all fixed immovably upon us, all with the identical look as if we were presently to be executed before them, made the bleak space by no means more comfortable; the great dinner at the commerzienrath's villa was pompous and ceremonious to the last degree, and the healths and speeches a little flat and stupid--all these facts I admit; but then on the other hand it was the church among the timber-work of which I had performed so many neck-breaking gymnastic feats, and from whose belfry I had so often gazed longingly over land and sea into the blue distance; and among the indifferently-curious faces there was here and there one that I should have been sorry to miss on this day; and then the day itself, one of the brightest days of summer, was so fair, the sky so blue, with great white motionless clouds, the air so crystal-clear, that the old town looked really young in the splendid sunlight, and the threadbare uniforms of Luz and Bolljahn, those energetic guardians of the peace, who had held the youth of the streets assembled in front of the church in check in a most masterly manner, seemed absolutely new; and in the harbor, where all the ships had run up their colors, the bright pennons fluttered so gaily in the fresh east wind; and upon the wide expanse of waters the wavelets were dancing so merrily, beyond the strait the white chalk-cliffs of the island glittered so brightly, and upon the island was Zehrendorf, for which we started as the sinking sun began to tinge with red the edges of the white clouds.

CHAPTER XX.

Perhaps that isolated life which is the ideal of a young married pair, when from any causes its realisation by an abode upon a desert island is found to be impracticable, can nowhere be better realised than in a very large, populous city. It all depends upon one's possessing the secret of creating an isle here, past whose shores the restless tides of social life roll away. The thorough mastery of this art is greatly facilitated to the adept, when the great world, as often happens, has

no special motive to trouble itself about him; the heart of the mystery lies in the other and harder condition, that he shall not trouble himself about the world.

The first of these conditions had already been very satisfactorily fulfilled in my case. The world had interested itself amazingly little about the young machinist while he pursued his laborious but valuable studies in the ruinous house standing in the ruinous court. He resembled at all points Lessing's wind-mill which went to nobody and nobody came to it, and which simply ground the corn that was thrown into the hopper. But now the case was very different; that court was no longer a wilderness of rubbish. The ruins had been cleared away, or built up into stately buildings; the wall which had separated the two lots was pulled down and the old factory united with the new into a single great arena for industry and activity. This was a great change, which was much discussed, gladly welcomed by some, scornfully criticised by others, but which still made scarcely so much talk as the change in my own fortunes.

From the obscure chrysalis of an ordinary machinist, had been developed that splendid butterfly, the ruling chief of this great new establishment, and this enviable butterfly was the son-in-law of a millionaire, the husband of a young wife whose striking beauty excited the envy of women, the admiration of men, and attracted the attention of all wherever she appeared. To so notable a metamorphosis even the *blasé* public of a metropolis could not be indifferent, and when so remarkable a person, over whose past life there circulated the most various and scarcely credible legends, determines to baffle the curiosity directed to him from all sides, he must understand and practise arts undreamed of by him in his former obscure pupa-state.

I cannot say that in the practice of an art so new to me I always succeeded, or was at all times favored by fortune.

After spending a fortnight at Zehrendorf, we had returned to the city and rented a set of apartments by no means expensive, but still pleasant and roomy, the only objection I had to which was that they lay too far from the factory, but which by no means suited Hermine, who had always been accustomed to having a house of her own. Now, as I knew and shared Hermine's wish in this respect, I thought I would please her, and at the same time realize a favorite dream of my own, if with the assistance of my good friend the architect, I very quietly, but with as much expedition as possible, restored the house I had so long occupied, to its original design, and by help of the old plan, turned it into a charming little villa. I had to use an infinity of stratagems to keep the secret a month, and I felt really childlike, as after returning from a winter trip with Hermine to Zehrendorf, I found everything complete and according to my wishes. In the joy of my heart I embraced my friend the architect who had shown himself so tasteful a decorator, and blessed the day when I should bring Hermine from her hated city lodgings to this little paradise.

"You dear boy," said Hermine, as on the day after her return I showed her with triumph my new creation, "you dear boy, that is all very pretty and nice, and in the summer, for a couple of weeks or months which we have to pass in this wretched town and not in Zehrendorf, it will be a very nice place to stay; but now, in the middle of winter--no, George, it will never do! It makes me shiver to think of it. And then the great bare buildings around, and the tall chimneys that look as if they would topple over on our heads every minute--that one does lean a little--just look at it--I could not sleep here a single night in peace. And you are already too fond of the horrible noise and confusion around us here, so that the thought will come into my head that you might change into some frightful great machine yourself. No, you must mix more among men, go into society; you must begin at last to have a little pleasure of your life, you poor, overworked man! And you can do this better in our old lodgings; so I think we will spend the winter there. The rent is paid in advance, anyhow, and we must be economical, as all young beginners should. Have I not heard that out of your own distinguished mouth, sir? And now put down your distinguished mouth and give me a kiss, and that settles the matter."

Of course that settled the matter; for I had really planned the whole for Hermine's sake rather than my own. And if she really wished to make a pleasure-trip or two from our lonely island upon the sea of city life, I was certainly not the man to say no. Indeed I saw perfectly that in my present position I was in duty bound to perform certain social duties, if not for my own pleasure, at least in the interest of my business, and that I had already some derelictions in this respect to make good.

So I returned without a sigh to our city-lodgings, and while we were at dinner we drew up, with much merriment, a list of the influential persons upon whom, as Hermine said, we would make our first social experiment.

I cannot say that this experiment was crowned with very brilliant success. True we were most kindly met, and I for my part took all possible pains--and as I flattered myself, not unsuccessfully--to play the agreeable host; and Hermine had really no need to take pains to be the most charming of the company. Upon this point there seemed, so far as a young husband can judge in such a matter, to be but one opinion. The gentlemen were full of sincere admiration of her beauty, her manners, and whatever else is attractive in a young and charming woman; and if the admiration of the other sex was not altogether so sincere, they knew how to give it so enthusiastic an expression that it needed a much readier wit than I could boast of to find always a fit answer to all the handsome things that were whispered to me about my wife.

"What makes you so charming?" I used to say to her sometimes, when we came home after

one of these social experiments, and Hermine was walking up and down our sitting-room in her full evening dress, as she had a way of doing, stopping now and then to strike a few chords on the piano, while I leaned back in the rocking-chair smoking my beloved cigar.

Then she would suddenly stop, and begin to take off the company we had just left, in the most amusing and wittiest style of caricature. There was Privy-Councillor Zieler, our banker, who kept perpetually glancing down at three family-orders at his button-hole, which had been graciously bestowed on him by three small princely houses in return for his services in negotiating a loan for them; there came his lady rustling along in the heaviest of satins, her snub nose turned up to the chandeliers, in whose light the diamonds that decked her bosom glanced so splendidly; and behind the corpulent mamma floated the sylph-like daughter, all gauze and Ess. Bouquet and fond memories of the three court-balls at the three princely houses. Here was the Railroad Director Schwelle, who would not talk before supper, in order not to excite himself, had no time to talk during supper, and after supper was in no condition for talking. Here were the two Misses Bostelmann, the intellectual daughters of our host--a wealthy contractor for building-stone--between whom Hermine had sat awhile, during which time the one entertained her unremittingly with Heine, while the other, with equal persistence and enthusiasm discoursed of Lenau.

"Heine--Lenau; Lenau--Heine! It was enough to drive one wild!" cried Hermine. "And that they call pleasure! Would you venture to maintain that doctrine, Sir?"

"I made no assertion of the kind, Madam!"

"Indeed! And why then do you drag your poor little wife among these horrible people, and rob her of the happy hours that she might spend in a delightful tête-à-tête with her monster of a husband? Is that right? Is that the love that you vowed to me in the St. Nicholas church at Uselin before all the assembled population? Heine--Lenau; Lenau--Heine! Oh!"

I laughed, and then suddenly became grave, and the remark rose to my lips that it was perhaps not difficult to prove that we could find no pleasant people to live with, if we did not choose to live with those that we really liked.

And where were at this time the people who were really dear to me?

The good Fräulein Duff, Hermine's most faithful friend, was with her relations in Saxony. She had only gone on a short visit, for eight weeks at the furthest, and the eight weeks had lengthened to as many months. Where was Paula? Eight hundred miles away, under another sky, which I trusted shone as brightly on her as she deserved. It had been now five months since Paula, with her mother and her youngest brother, Oscar, and accompanied, as a matter of course, by old Süßmilch, had taken a journey to Italy.

"Had to go," said Doctor Snellius. "What would you have, sir? It was an unavoidable necessity. An artist like Paula cannot possibly develop her talents here, in this small, petty, narrow, dark land of fog. Sunshine, light, air, those were what she needed. Venice, Rome, Naples, Capri--what do I know? I was never there; shall never go there; wouldn't know what to do there; but she knows well, and we shall know it and see it at the next Exposition, when people will make pilgrimages to her pictures as if they were miracles. Her mother too, that angel of a woman, will feel the benefit of a residence in a milder climate, and as for that young fellow Oscar, a young crocodile like him cannot be put into the water too soon. It is only in the water that one learns to swim, sir! Only in the water, even when one is born a crocodile, that is, has such an incredible talent as that youngster has. It will cost a fabulous sum, to be sure; but she can afford it now, thank heaven, and after all it is golden seed which will bring forth fruit a hundred and a thousand fold. She felt some hesitation on this point, but I persuaded her into it, and she writes me in her last letter--where did I put it? I want to show you what she says; well, it is no matter; I will show it to you the next time, if you remind me--anyhow she writes me so happily, so very happily, that it even made me happy. God bless her!"

This was the way the doctor talked to me, shortly after Paula's departure, which happened early in October, when I had been married three months, during a journey which I had to make to St. --- on business, and on which Hermine accompanied me. "For you know," said the doctor, "in such cases one must take advantage of an opportunity, as Nature does, when for example she separates soul and body by a stroke of apoplexy or paralysis of the heart while the patient sleeps, or when the band connecting both has been sufficiently loosened by long sickness, so that the parting is scarcely painful, and sometimes is even longed for. It would perhaps have been a hard trial for poor Paula to leave you, had she gone from your presence direct to the railroad-car; but it happened that you were not there, and whether there are eighty or eight hundred miles between you makes very little difference."

"When she separates soul and body." This was one of the physiological illustrations which the doctor was fond of introducing into his discourse, but it struck me strangely. I looked him fixedly in the eye, and by an energetic effort he tuned down his voice a couple of octaves, and continued in a more indifferent tone:

"And then a temporary separation will not only be beneficial to them, but it will be a good thing for the boys that stay behind. It is time Benno and Kurt were cutting loose from their sister's apron-strings. Young men must learn to think and care for themselves, and to stand upon

their own feet. I know that from my own experience. Had my old father sent me to Bonn or Heidelberg, instead of shutting me up here for four years under the shadow of his church-steeple in the old worm-eaten superintendent's house, I might have spread my wings better, and would not have been the cross-patch I am now; that is, if any man who has been christened Willibrod-Willibrord it should be correctly--out of love for an ancestor who has been in his grave these two hundred years, has any chance left to be anything but a cross-patch and oddity."

The letter in which Paula wrote to the doctor how happy she felt in that far-distant land, I never succeeded in getting a sight of. The next time he had forgotten it; and after awhile I grew used to the doctor's regularly wanting to show me the letters which Paula wrote him from Venice, Rome, and Naples, and as regularly leaving them at home.

I do not know why it was that I always felt a singular confusion whenever the doctor began one of his fruitless searches for Paula's letter, and why I always tried to get him upon another subject as soon as possible. Not that I had any doubt of Paula's alleged happiness. The short and unfrequent letters which she wrote to Hermine and myself conveyed no intimation to the contrary; but I was by no means quite assured as to the source from which that happiness flowed, and the letters, whether addressed to myself or to Hermine, had all the same physiognomy, in which I could only here and there recognize a trace of the beloved features of Paula. And the longer the separation lasted, the shorter and fewer were these letters, so that they were nearly as brief and rare as the doctor's visits.

"It must be so," said the doctor, as I once assailed him with friendly reproaches on this point; "a young married pair is like a young plant, which thrives best when put under a bell-glass, and meddled with as little as possible. Men call Love a goddess,^[9] but to me it appears a god; a stern, inapproachable, jealous god, that will endure no rivals, and who puts to the sword all colleagues that he may find in his chosen realm, be they lovely Astartes or hideous Mumbo-Jumbos. And he is quite right to do so; the human heart is a stubborn, cross-grained affair, and takes a frightfully long time in learning merely to spell through the ten commandments."

The doctor always said things of this sort in a very kind tone, the same that I heard him use in speaking to his patients, and was at all times full of friendliness and attention, even more towards my wife than myself. Indeed a peculiar relation seemed to have been established between Hermine and him. She, with her usual impulsiveness, had at first made no secret of the dislike with which she regarded my old friend, and often enough ridiculed, even in his presence, his odd eccentric ways. But the man who on other occasions had the keenest arrows in his quiver ready for any aggressor, let him be who he might, and who did not lightly grant quarter to an antagonist, on no occasion used his powerful weapons against her; and this gentleness which nothing could change, and which was assuredly not always easy for the hot and caustic temper of the man, succeeded at last, however she might resist, in touching and captivating Hermine. Perhaps this happy result may have been in part owing to the fact that lately she had received the doctor not only as my friend, but as her medical adviser.

"He is really too good!" she said more than once, looking thoughtfully at the door through which the odd figure of my old friend had just vanished.

"There is not much the matter with your wife," said the doctor to me, when I expressed some uneasiness at Hermine's altered looks. "But she has been used from childhood to freer exercise and fresher air than can be had in a city like this."

"I would with pleasure take her to Zehrendorf," I said; "but now it is winter; and how can I possibly leave here?"

"Well, as it is an impossibility, we will not rack our brains any more about it," replied the doctor. "We must do the best we can. Sometimes mental activity may, to a certain point, make up for the deficiency of physical. It is a pity that your wife was so soon satiated with the bustle of society. Why do you not take her sometimes to the theatre or the opera? She is so great a lover of music."

"I do not care to go to the opera any more," said Hermine, after we had tried it a few times. "They sing badly and play worse. Now could you call that a *Zerlina*? And that *Don Juan*! You might have waited for me long enough, if you had been such a stick of a lover as that! And with such monstrous self-conceit to boot! *Masetto* was really the better man."

"Try the theatre once," said the doctor.

I looked him full in the eyes.

"The Bellini has been back a week," he added, and brought his round spectacles to bear upon me. We looked at each other awhile in silence.

"Your wife does not know that Fräulein Bellini and a certain other lady are one and the same person?" he presently asked.

"No," I answered.

"And you are not willing to tell her? Not willing to tell her what I know, who am your friend,

and what very probably others know, who are not your friends?"

"It is a peculiar sort of thing, doctor."

"There are many peculiar things, especially in a new married life."

"Which one would do more wisely to keep to himself."

"Not in all cases," replied the doctor. "Whatever can be communicated, should be, always; and there is but little, hardly anything, which a young husband should not tell his wife. In a river crawling sluggishly between sandy shores to the end of its course, every stone lies unmoved; but a stream bursting fresh and joyous from the mountain will roll and whirl along heavy masses of rock, its young strength sweeping everything before it. Think it over, my dear friend."

I had thought it over, but I could not bring myself to follow the doctor's advice. It was not cowardice that kept me silent, but rather a feeling of shame that I could not overcome, and a fear of the consequences upon a character so peculiar as Hermine's, and in her present state of health. And yet the revelation hovered more than once upon my lips, but crept back again to my heart, that beat uneasily when in almost every number of the papers I came across the ominous name, and Hermine once or twice said casually. "We ought really to see this Bellini they talk so much about."

They did indeed talk much about her. "Are you a Bellinist or an anti-Bellinist?" was the question in all *salons*: "the Bellini is a marvel," "the Bellini is nothing at all," said the papers. I did not know which party was right, nor wish to know; and right glad was I that Hermine seemed as little curious in the matter as myself, until one day, when I had replied, in answer to her question, that I was disengaged that evening, she startled me by saying:

"Then we will go this evening and see the Bellini."

"If you wish," I answered, with the determination of a man who sees that he has met a fatality that is too strong for him.

And we went to the theatre and saw Ada Bellini as Juliet in Shakespeare's tragedy. I cannot assert that I felt any inclination to join in the enthusiastic applause that was lavished upon the actress by the crowded house, nor in the hisses that were occasionally heard, but only to be overwhelmed by fresh plaudits. Nor can I say that in the course of the evening I found myself able to pass a critical judgment upon the artist. However attentively I watched the stage, I saw little more than if I had gazed at vacancy, dreaming of times long past, and wishing at intervals that this evening also belonged to past time, I remember that once arousing from this unpleasant reverie and looking at Hermine, I caught her eye fastened upon me with a mysterious expression; but she only jested at my indifference as we drove home, and declared that the question of Bellinist and anti-Bellinist was settled for her.

"With what result?" I asked, lighting my cigar from the lamp.

"And are you going to smoke now, you unfeeling man? Do you suppose that Romeo would have poisoned himself if he had had a cigar in his pocket with the fatal flask? Much good may your cigar do you, dear Romeo: Juliet will bid you good-night."

This evening for the first time I smoked my nightly cigar alone; and never did I smoke one in deeper reflection.

"The doctor was right," I said to myself, as I threw the stump into the dying coals on the hearth, and rose with a sigh from my easy-chair; "perfectly right. I must wait for a favorable opportunity."

But as it usually happens in such cases, a week passed, two weeks passed, and the opportunity did not occur. Nor did the necessity seem very urgent, as Hermine had not spoken again of going to the theatre. She still felt unwell, and the doctor's visits were more frequent than formerly.

"Have you told your wife yet who the Bellini is?" he asked me one day.

"Not yet."

"She knows it."

"Impossible!"

"She knows it; I give you my word upon that."

"Has she said so to you?"

"No."

"How then----?"

"How then? A physician, my dear fellow, has sharp ears, and a physician who is the friend of

the family, as he should always be, has them doubly sharp. He hears between the words that are spoken; and I can only repeat to you that I have heard between the words of your wife, and learned that she knows the Bellini to be Constance von Zehren, and that she knows more beside. Whether she knows all, and whether she knows the real truth, is only known to the person that told her."

"And that is----?"

"Our common friend Arthur."

"Arthur has not been in the city for eight weeks."

"Our postal system forwards with admirable fidelity all letters intrusted to it, even anonymous ones."

"But good heaven, doctor, what interest could Arthur have----?"

"Revenge is sweet," said the doctor.

"In this case it would be stupid too, for----"

"It is often stupid too."

"For the steuerrath lives almost exclusively upon my father-in-law's purse, and I bought a considerable place for Arthur only yesterday, and upon the table there lies a letter in which he asks me again for a large loan of money."

"All that makes no difference. And my dear George, don't take to moping. You are a man, and there is no occasion here for despair. We must not take things harder than they are; the really hard ones cannot be made any lighter so, and with this latter article I should think you were already sufficiently supplied."

CHAPTER XXI.

And in this the good doctor was perfectly right, in a wider sense than he had himself any idea of.

It was not merely that without sufficient experience I had to a certain extent to find my way in a vast domain of industry, at that time scarcely explored by us Germans. I shared that plight however with all my rivals, who, however great their experience in other branches, in the construction of locomotives were as much novices as I was myself. And any advantage that they might have over me in more extended knowledge, could perhaps be equalized by diligence. In this point, in truth, I had no slight confidence in myself; indeed I was conscious that notwithstanding the load which now rested upon me was far from being a light one, I could still take additional weight upon my shoulders. But a man who carries a heavy burden must at least see clearly the way that he has to follow, or all his strength and endurance cannot preserve him from stumbling and possibly falling. So was it here. I was confused in all my plans, hampered in my movements, and checked in my resolutions, because at all times I had to look around for the man who should stand at my back and upon whom I was forced to rely, and who often in the most critical moments was no more to be found.

Not to be found, in the literal sense of the words. The commerzienrath had always been a restless man, as could hardly have been otherwise with the multiplicity of business that he had in various places, and with his maxim that nothing was well done unless you do it yourself. "I am," he used to say in confidential moments over a bottle, "like Cæsar, or whatever the fellow's name was, with whom to come, to see, and to conquer, were all one. To come, to see, to conquer--that is the art of success!"

And now he came and went more frequently than ever; to-day in Uselin, to-morrow in St. ----, then here again, and the next day in hot haste to Zehrendorf, where my following letter did not reach him, because in the meantime he was at St. ---- again, or heaven knows where. This had now become a regular thing; and I made besides the unpleasant discovery that he was always hardest to find and had covered his tracks most carefully, precisely when he was most needed. Was this his old cuttle-fish manœuvre which he was so fond of using in conversation, now applied in a practical form? was it more than this?

Yes, the commerzienrath came and went enough, but the seeing and conquering by no means corresponded. His blue eyes were now too often dimmed by a watery mist, and however grand

his vauntings, his appearance was by no means that of a conqueror. The impression that had struck me when I first saw him again at Zehrendorf, that the commerzienrath had become an old man, was now most painfully confirmed, and not to me only, his old business friends were struck with the change that had taken place in him.

"Your father-in-law has grown strangely irritable of late," said the banker Zieler. "The commerzienrath ought to give himself more rest," occasionally remarked the Railroad Director Schwelle. "My honored patron, the Herr Commerzienrath, is in a very bad humor to-day," whispered to me the landlord of the hotel where he used to stop, for he never stayed at our house; and even the waiters privately shrugged their shoulders when the old man over his bottle stormed at them like a madman for some real or fancied neglect.

No; the man with the blinking watery eyes, and the petulant temper, doubly noticeable and disagreeable in a man of his years, did not look like a conqueror, nor was he one.

Long as our intimate relations had now continued, I knew of no triumph that he had won. It was assuredly no triumph for the Cræsus of Uselin that he had been compelled to close his vast grain-trade, nor was it any triumph that even after this retreat in good order, as he termed it, no order could be brought into our financial arrangements. On the contrary, we were more pressed for ready money than ever; so hardly pressed that I struggled from one embarrassment to another, and was really often brought to the verge of despair. Not only was I most seriously hampered in my business operations by the perpetual uncertainty in which my father-in-law kept me, I also was harassed by the equally painful feeling that I had not been able to introduce a single one of those improvements in the condition of my workmen over which, in by-gone hopeful times, the doctor, Klaus, and I had so often laid our heads together, and drained so many a glass of grog. A chief who does not know how he shall meet his pecuniary obligations the next day is in no position to make concessions to his workmen to which he is not pledged, to which he is not bound by the letter of any contract, only by the voice in his own heart pleading for the poor. There were even times--and I think of them now as one recalls a peculiarly frightful dream--when I felt that I would close my heart against a cry of distress, even against a timidly murmured complaint, and when the example of my rivals, who had lowered the daily wages a *groschen*, seemed one that I ought to follow. I remember that at these times it was as if a gray veil had been spread over the world, that neither food nor drink were pleasant to me, that I tossed sleepless upon my bed as if I had a murder upon my conscience, that I went to and fro by the most unfrequented streets, and if I met an acquaintance, pulled my hat over my face and crossed to the other side. Once, as the load upon my heart was almost unbearable, I hastened to my friend, as the tortured patient hastens to the physician, and poured my sorrows into his faithful breast. He listened to me with kindness, and said:

"I have seen this coming, my dear George; so it is nothing which lies outside of human calculation, and consequently need not be despaired of, for the fault may be repaired by time and endurance. He who desires to preserve the freedom of his resolutions must not attach himself to any point on which others have fastened their unclean and dishonorable webs, and where there cannot fail to be confusion and entanglement. Wealth which, like your father-in-law's, has not been acquired with perfectly clean hands, cannot be kept without some soil. He who wishes to remain impartial in the cause of Hammer *versus* Anvil--no one can keep free from participation in it--must not place himself decisively on either side; and to a certain extent you have done this. Your father-in-law is a knight of the hammer, and you--you are his son-in-law, that is, the first of his followers, revolt as much as you may against this unpleasant truth. And my friend, I see, as things now are, no escape from this labyrinth but one, and that is that the case shall be brought as soon as possible before that higher tribunal of the great laws of economy, and there be decided promptly and finally, that you may become the free man you were before. This sounds very hard, very cruel; but my dear friend, you cannot take it amiss of a disciple of Hippocrates if he holds fast to that saying of his master: *Quod medicamenta non sanant, ferrum sanat; quod ferrum non sanat, ignis.*"

The higher tribunal to which the doctor had referred me, was to decide for the Hippocratic fire-method in my case, sooner than perhaps the doctor himself expected.

When the commerzienrath complained to me again and again how hard it was just now to raise the very considerable amount of funds which I needed for the works, I had repeatedly and urgently entreated him to undertake seriously the sale of Zehrendorf. Heaven knows how hard it was for me to press this upon him. Zehrendorf had grown more dear to me than I can express. There was scarcely a clod on which my foot had not rested, no tree, no bush, that I had not become attached to. The prospect of being able to spend a day at Zehrendorf made every labor light, and bore me over many a care; the hope of passing my old days in the place where for the first and only time in my life I had been really young was dearer to me than any other. And I knew that Hermine felt the same. There she had dreamed her dream of love, and there it had become reality. Had she not been most seriously offended with me when her father intentionally gave her to believe that I was the originator of the project? Had I not breathed freely, and had she not loudly exulted when the sudden sickness of the old Prince Prora cut short the negotiations; and should I now be really the man who was to deprive her and myself of this treasure? Not I! It was the circumstances that were stronger than I; circumstances which I had not caused and was not responsible for, but which I could not allow to remain as they were, or the responsibility would really fall upon me. This I knew perfectly well; so I urged the matter upon my father-in-law again and again.

Strange to say, he now most obstinately resisted my urgency, as if the project had not been of his own devising. Did he really fear the unfavorable conjuncture of events? Did he really believe that he could retain the property? Did he fear what malicious tongues would say, remembering that when he closed his grain business he gave it out that he was tired of work and was going to retire to his countryseat for the rest of his old age? Was it simply despotic obstinacy, and an old man's waywardness? I did not know; and could not even say with certainty. At such times I consoled myself with the thought that perhaps the storm would blow over; his affairs must be in a better condition than I thought: perhaps he has grown a miser in his old days, and is holding back his hoarded treasures; for it is impossible that he can be as short of money as he pretends: what could he possibly have done with it?

"Your father-in-law has had an unlucky day to-day," said the banker Zieler to me, as coming from the Exchange one day, he met me on the street.

"How so, Herr Privy-Councillor?"

"Well, he had to pay a difference of a hundred thousand *thalers* upon a speculation he had made for a rise in alcohol: a curious miscalculation in so experienced a man of business."

A hundred thousand *thalers* at a moment when I was perplexed to raise a thousand, and in an operation of which he had never spoken to me, and which lay entirely outside of his regular business! I could not altogether keep my face from indicating the alarm that this piece of news caused me, and the councillor must have seen it, for he added with a smile:

"Well, well, your father-in-law can afford himself these little amusements. I have the honor to wish you a very good day."

I did not take this view of it: I wrote at once to Uselin and entreated him to let me know if the information, which I had received from a very good source, was really true; and I concluded with pressing him once more to give me at last a clear insight into his affairs, since as a man of honor I could no longer endure the present condition of things.

In answer came a long letter, full of complaints of my want of confidence, and of the hard fate of an old man who was deserted by his children, and crammed with wordy boastings about his fifty years' experience in business, about his well-proved good-fortune, and ending with the recommendation than in any event I should write to the prince at once, and ask him if he was still thinking of the purchase of Zehrendorf, or not.

I let the rest of the letter pass, and held to the single fixed point that it contained. I wrote at once to the young prince, who was still with his sick father in Prora, and received in reply an autograph letter to the effect that he had been intending to come to the city, and would carry out this intention at once. He would arrive on Friday at four o'clock, and would be very glad to see me an hour later at the palace, where we could talk over the matter at length.

And so it was to be then. My heart felt heavy at the thought, but I suppressed the emotion and repeated the doctor's aphorism: "what medicines and iron cannot cure, must be cured by fire."

In this half-dejected, half-resolved mood, I went at the appointed day and hour to the palace of the prince.

CHAPTER XXII.

The prince received me with politeness which I might almost call cordial. He had arrived half an hour before, and the journey through the cold winter's day seemed to have done him good; he looked fresh and youthful as I had never seen him before, and in his whole bearing there was such elasticity, such vivacity in his discourse, that I could scarcely recognize in him the wearied dreamer in the old hunting-lodge of Rossow. I could not refrain from congratulating him on this change, which I attributed to his improved health. He seemed pleased to hear it, and said it was high time for him to have outgrown childish distempers.

"I have always resolved," he said, "that when the time came, it should find me a man; and I believe that the time has come. May God long preserve the life of the prince, my father; but by all human reckoning his days are numbered. It may justly be demanded of me that an event which influences the destinies of thousands shall not find me unprepared."

The prince said these words very earnestly. He had been walking up and down the room, and

stopped before a portrait which represented a young and very handsome man in a rich and fantastic dress.

"Strange," the prince went on, "that life can play with us thus! See here; this is the portrait of the prince, my father, in his twenty-eighth year. He wore that dress at a masked ball at court, and created an immense *furore*, and the late queen insisted that he should have his portrait taken in it for her. This is a copy of the original. Do you not find----"

He suddenly checked himself threw himself into an easy chair, giving me a sign to be seated, and continued:

"But I did not come to talk with you about myself and my affairs. Your own have changed very much since we last met. Why sir, you are a great diplomatist! To let me talk and talk, and make you heaven knows what well-meant proposals, without indicating by word or look that you were, so to speak, over the mountain, at the foot of which I thought we both were standing! How you must have laughed in your sleeve! And poor Zehren! He pretended to be as much astonished as I was myself. But I believe he knew perfectly well how things stood, for though I have always considered him half fool, I have a strong suspicion that he is whole knave. I should be glad if anybody will take him off my hands; he is sometimes a real annoyance to me, and yet I do not want to send him away. I have been thinking that if I buy Zehrendorf from you, I might make him the bailiff of it, or rent the estate to him; but it has occurred to me that you might not like that arrangement. Am I right?"

"Your highness," I replied, "Arthur is certainly not the proper person for such a trust. In his hands all the excellent and most useful improvements that have been made at such heavy expense, would go to ruin. I confess that if I believed it to be your serious intention--instead of being, as I am sure, only the suggestion of your generous heart--I would even now at the twelfth hour endeavor to retain Zehrendorf in my father-in-law's possession, greatly as I desire, on other grounds, to effect a sale of it."

"You are right--it was only an idea," said the prince. "But why do you accord me this so flattering preference? You know that I have no longer the same interest in obtaining the property, that I had last spring, and that in consequence you will find me hard to deal with."

"But easier than Herr von Granow, at all events."

A pleasant smile played about the prince's refined lips.

"You may be right there," he said. "That fellow is a fox, despite his bulldog-face. He has sounded me once or twice through Zehren and the justizrath, to find out if I have still any thoughts of buying Zehrendorf. It seems that he wants to get all competitors out of the way, to be the only one upon the field, and then at the right moment, of which the justizrath will no doubt give him the sign, step in and secure the place for a song. No, sir, you shall not fall into the dirty hands of that rascal if I can help it."

"I thank your highness," I answered.

"I have to thank you," the prince replied, "that you again give me an opportunity to discharge an old debt that I owe you. Since you wrote to me I have reflected much upon your position: indeed I may say that at no time have you been entirely out of my mind, thanks to the good friends of your father-in-law. You yourself probably do not know how much is said about him, and how deeply he is sunk in general estimation. I am very sorry to say this; and I say it only because I feel it is due to you as the person nearest concerned, to let you know what others perhaps have not the courage to tell you, or conceal from you from malicious motives. The commerzienrath's credit seems to me greatly shaken; there is talk of immense losses that he has lately incurred; they say he speculates on 'Change and in all sorts of hazardous enterprises. I can assure you he is considered half insane and more than half ruined; though it is true that others maintain the old man was never clearer-headed than now, and never richer; and that if he plays the fool and the bankrupt, it is only one of his old feints, which have always been successful. What is your own opinion?"

I felt that the prince's kind advances to me deserved to be met with all sincerity, and so I stated to him in detail, as well as I could, the singular position in which I found myself placed with the commerzienrath, the subterfuges, equivocations and concealments of which he had been guilty to me; that I believed that while he was not yet the ruined man his enemies declared him to be, if he kept on in this way he would of necessity ruin himself sooner or later.

The prince listened to me attentively, here and there interposing questions which, if they indicated no great familiarity with business, showed a clear understanding and rapid comprehension. We had come back to the original point, the sale of Zehrendorf, and had already agreed upon the principal conditions, when the old white-headed servant, whom I had already seen at Rossow, entered and standing by the door gave his master a sign.

"Ah," said the prince, "is it already so late? That is unfortunate. I have to go to the theatre: her Royal Highness the Princess, my patroness, who was informed of my arrival, has sent me word that she wishes to speak with me a moment, in her box, and learn the state of the prince, my father. But perhaps we can combine the useful with the agreeable. I should like to know how

soon I can command the requisite funds, and Henzel"--this was the prince's banker--"will be at the theatre also. I know that the great Mæcenas of all singers and actors--actresses and ballet-girls not forgotten--never misses a first representation. I shall find an opportunity to speak with him. The best thing would be for you to come too: we might then arrange all the preliminaries this evening, and have a draft of the conveyance made to-morrow morning by my solicitor. Will you come?"

"I have the evening at my disposal," I said.

"A proud word for a young husband!" said the prince, laughing. "But why not bring your wife along? I have long desired the pleasure of making her acquaintance. I could not do it at Rossow, for I had pledged myself not to go more than a mile from the castle. Well, what do you say? You seem to hesitate and look confused. Sir, those old times are past: you need never more feel any hesitation in presenting Prince Prora to a virtuous lady!"

"I have not the least doubt of that, your highness," I replied; "but my wife--I really do not know---"

"Ah, indeed!" said the prince. "I understand. Well, you can see. *Au revoir*, then, and bring your lady if possible."

The prince gave me his hand as we parted. I had neither said yes or no, because I did not wish to accept his suggestion, and of course could not with any show of reason decline it off-hand.

"But what a miserable thing it is when a man does not know whether to say yes or no," I said to myself, as I went through the darkening streets to my not very distant lodging; "a thing to which I am not yet used, and must not learn to be." And while I thus spoke, I was on the point of crossing the street to a corner where I saw by the light of a streetlamp a play-bill pasted up, but I checked myself. "No, no," I muttered, "you must not give your cowardice a respite; for cowardice it is, and nothing else."

So I reached home, where Hermine was expecting me with impatience. I had told her of my appointment with the prince, but not of its object, not reflecting that this concealment of an affair which was about to be decided at once, could only increase her secret uneasiness. I perceived this as I caught her eyes bent anxiously upon me. Should I not now tell her at once all that I had hitherto so carefully concealed from her? A confusion that embarrassed my reason, and a fear that seemed to weigh down my heart, suddenly seized me, I wished to free myself from this painful embarrassment, as one strives to escape from a room in which he feels himself suffocating; and as in such a case he takes the first mode of escape that offers, though it be a leap through a window, I said, as if reciting a lesson:

"The prince wishes to see me at the theatre; he has a communication to make to me which can not well be postponed until to-morrow. He expressed the wish that you would accompany me, if you can. He has been very kind to me, and I feel myself under great obligations to him. I should be glad to show him an attention, if you have no objection."

"Ah, she plays to-night then!" said Hermine, her lips quivering and brows contracting darkly.

"What is that to me--what is that to us, Hermine?"

I opened my arms, and my wife lay upon my breast. The whole long pent-up passion burst forth at once: she sobbed, she laughed, and cried: "Yes, yes, what is that to us? what is that to us?"

Her sweet face that lately had looked so pale and often so sad, now beamed with life and happiness: I thought I had never seen her so beautiful.

"You will create a *furor*," I said, playfully.

"So I mean," she answered. "There is no art in being fair when one is so happy."

And she threw herself again into my arms, and then hastened into her dressing-room, from which she presently returned in a simple charming toilet, such as she well knew how to make.

"Do you think I can let the prince see me so?" she asked, archly.

"Yes; any king in the world!"

"Even when----?"

"Even when----!"

The distance to the theatre was short, yet in this short drive I had time to tell her everything that had passed between the prince and myself; the negotiations about Zehrendorf, and the causes which rendered the sale necessary. And the fair creature agreed contentedly to everything. Ah, the doctor was indeed right when he said: "A young husband can tell his young wife everything;" but I was also right that he must choose a fitting opportunity.

We reached the theatre. The prince had told me that there would be places in his box for us, and it was well that it was so, for the house was full. A new piece was played, the work of a young poet who had a considerable reputation at that time, a conversation-piece, in which Constance had no part, as I convinced myself by a glance at the play-bill. It was not yet late, but pit and galleries were already filled, and the boxes were filling up. The prince was not there yet, and only appeared towards the close of the overture, accompanied by an officer of high rank, whom he presented as his cousin, Count Schlachtensee. He looked exceedingly handsome and distinguished in evening dress, with a blue ribbon around his neck, to which was attached the star of some foreign order set in brilliants; and exhibited the most perfect and engaging courtesy towards Hermine, to whom he apologized for his late arrival, and then seated himself beside her, conversing very pleasantly for a few moments, until he perceived that the royal princess who had summoned his attendance, had entered her box, when he left us.

Lieutenant-colonel Count Schlachtensee, when his cousin had departed, seemed not quite to know what to do, until he hit upon the happy idea of offering me his opera-glass, which I politely declined. So he applied it to his own eyes, fixing it upon a box opposite to us so long that I involuntarily turned my own looks in the same direction. Directly fronting us was a lady who at the moment had her head turned to a gentleman sitting behind her, but in whom I at the first glance recognized Constance. I do not know what effect this discovery would have had upon me, had I not just before had that precious understanding with Hermine: even as it was my heart beat violently as I observed that my wife also turned her glass in that direction; but I breathed freely, and murmured a "thank heaven!" from the bottom of my heart, when she lowered her glass again, and looked at me with an indescribable arch smile. As the curtain rose she fixed her attention upon the stage without ever casting another glance at the woman whose form had no doubt floated lately often enough through her melancholy reveries. Constance on the other hand seemed to take less interest in what was going on upon the stage. I observed her glass fixed almost constantly upon us when she was not engaged in conversation with her companion, who had now taken his seat by her side, and in whom I recognized the actor Von Sommer, who went by the name of Lenz, or else turned to a couple of younger gentlemen, in elegant dress and of aristocratic, though foreign appearance--two Wallachian noblemen as I afterwards learned--who were behind her chair, and evidently belonged to the party. It was plain that they were talking of us, and in no friendly manner; and I thought that more than once I perceived the pale face of Herr Lenz contract with a bitter smile, while the others, who kept their glasses steadily levelled at us, sometimes laughed openly.

Whether it was the too conspicuous interest which the beautiful actress and her party took in the lady in the opposite box, or whether it was Hermine's charming appearance, the public, between the acts, followed the example set them, and their unpleasant curiosity increased still further when the prince returned and resumed his place by Hermine. Persons stood up in the pit to see better: they looked from Hermine to Constance and from Constance to Hermine, and evidently instituted very interesting comparisons between the two, both beautiful, though with beauty so widely different. No doubt the prince had observed Constance, but in vain did I secretly watch his face for any mark of the impression which this unexpected and unfortunate meeting must have made upon him. Not in vain had he moved from his early youth in circles where it is the first law to keep the features under perfect control. He laughed and jested in the most natural and easy manner with Hermine, named to her various distinguished persons in the proscenium-boxes whom he knew, turned to speak with his cousin and myself, and behaved as if altogether he was enjoying himself greatly.

This scene was repeated in the second *entr'acte*, but this time a chamberlain of the princess came to our box, charged by her to learn from the prince the name of the lady whose beauty and grace, as he said, had charmed her highness.

The prince told us this, laughing, as the stately gentleman left us, and said it was not unlikely that her highness might summon us to her box, and that I should hold myself in readiness for a councillor's title, or the order of the fourth class.

I confess that though I did not altogether believe this peril so imminent, a feeling ever more strongly impressed me that some serious disaster was close at hand, as if floating in the hot atmosphere of the place. I also thought that I perceived that the heat, animated conversation, and the fact that she was the object of general observation, had too much excited Hermine, so after exchanging a look with her, at the conclusion of the third act, I begged to take leave of the prince, especially as the banker Henzel had not arrived, and thus nothing could be done in the matter of our business. The prince rose at once and offered Hermine his arm to conduct her into the lobby, into which a great crowd was now pressing from all the box-doors, out of the intolerably hot theatre.

There was a good deal of crowding, and we were soon separated from the prince, who had taken leave of Hermine at the moment when Constance pressed by me on the arm of Herr Lenz, and followed by the two Wallachians. She saluted me in a manner that masked a stinging mockery under a show of great cordiality: but the pale face of her companion was turned towards us for a moment, and his eyes, which appeared to be looking for some one, had a fixed and ominous expression. He pushed on through the crowd as rapidly as he could with the lady, towards the place where I had last seen the prince. Other persons then came between us, and I lost sight of the party; Hermine, who was busy taking care of her dress, had luckily not seen Constance; and she now asked me to help her to get out as quickly as possible. We had

descended the stair a few steps, when suddenly there was a tumult behind us in the lobby. Hermine stood still, and leaned half-fainting upon my arm; and during this delay, the tumult became louder. There was a buzz of many voices speaking at once, and then loud words, apparently from persons in authority who were striving to restore order. A gentleman came hurrying past me, and I stopped him:

"What is the matter?"

"Prince Prora has just been most outrageously insulted by Lenz the actor!"

The gentleman hurried on.

I looked at Hermine: she had not heard it, she had fainted. I carried her down the stairs, placed her in a carriage and drove home, where she arrived in a rather weak state, but otherwise completely restored. I must not be uneasy about her, she said; and she had had a delightful evening, for which she thanked me a thousand times. And now she would go to bed, and I must positively go back to the theatre, that the prince should not think she kept me tied to her apron-string.

I pretended to yield to her wishes, and promised to go back. But in reality I had already determined to do this if possible. Suppose it were true, what the gentleman on the steps had told me! and how could I doubt it? Then the disaster which I had felt impending in the sultry atmosphere of the theatre, had come to pass. I remembered the scene in the Zehrendorf wood, so many years before, and how the boy preferred to die, to receiving a blow from my hands, of which there would have been no witness but the moon. Would the man feel differently? Would he not risk everything to avenge an insult offered him, the Prince of Prora, before the eyes of a crowd of spectators?

CHAPTER XXIII.

But I scarcely had quitted my house when I reflected that after what had happened, it was scarcely possible that the prince could still be in the theatre, and I turned my steps towards his palace. It was about nine o'clock; the evening was cold and raw, though we were at the beginning of March; the snow was blowing about in the wind and eddying around corners; pedestrians were hurrying along with pulled-up collars and bent heads; and I could not help remembering the evening a year before, when I saw the unhappy girl in the yellow light of the lamps at the door of the palace, which I now reached all out of breath. For the revenge which had then blazed in her dark eyes and breathed from her mouth, the revenge to which she had in vain endeavored to entice me, for this sweet, this terrible revenge she had found the right man at last.

I was possessed with the feeling that all this had to come so; that a destiny long-appointed, which neither I nor any one could baffle, had now reached its accomplishment. I asked myself--What brings me here? What do I mean to do? I could find no answer to this question; not even when I stood in the ante-chamber and besought the old servant, who had been called, to lead me at once to his master.

"I can admit no one," the old man replied.

He seemed greatly agitated, his voice trembled as he spoke, and his withered hand, which he raised as if to keep me off, trembled visibly.

At this moment the door leading to the room in which the prince had received me in the afternoon opened, and Count Schlachtensee came out and passed us with the same fixed look I had observed on him in the theatre. Evidently it was not pretence; he really did not see me. So what I had feared, was now rushing down. I could not restrain myself longer, and regardless of the old servant, rushed through the door through which the count had come, traversed a second large ante-chamber towards the inner room, through the open door of which I saw the prince sitting at a writing table.

"This to Herr Hartwig at once!" he said, holding out to me a letter in his left hand, while he leaned his head on his right.

"I am he," I said, taking the letter, and holding his hand firmly in mine.

His hand was cold, and the face which he now turned to me was pale as death; only on the right cheek glowed a crimson spot, as if branded there.

"You here?" he asked, in surprise. "That is very well; now I can tell you what is in the letter, which I will ask you to take care of. It is a written memorandum of our agreement to-day, with the addition of a request to the prince, my father, to carry out this agreement, whatever happens."

I still held his hand, and endeavored in vain to speak a word. If I had needed any explanation of the irresistible sympathy with which this man inspired me, I had it now in my very hands. And this man must be the sacrifice of a base piece of treachery! This man, who through all temptations had preserved so pure his native generosity and kindness of heart, must be entangled in the snare which his rash youthful foot had touched years before!

This, or something like this, was what I said to him when I found words at last, and I added that I could not endure the thought, and eagerly asked if there were no possible way--none--to escape from the toils?

"Sit down," said the prince, bringing me to the fireplace in which a comfortable fire was burning, offering me an easy chair and taking another himself "Did I not say that you were an original? For none but a man who has preserved to his thirtieth year a considerable share of the innocent philosophy of his childhood, could hit upon the idea of asking a prince of Prora if it is not still possible to carry patiently through his whole life an insult offered him before a score of witnesses."

He said this in a very friendly manner, and with an attempt to smile, but his pale lips quivered and the spot on his cheek glowed a deeper red.

"I am no child," I said; "but it may well be that a man who has lived so solitary a life as mine, is an incompetent judge of the customs and principles that rule the great world. I only know that in my heart a voice cries: this must not be! Must it be then? Are those laws which I confess I do not understand, as inflexible as fate?"

"Yes; it must be," the prince replied. "I also have considered it--not for my own sake, but for the sake of those to whom I would gladly have been something--but it must be."

"And your rank----?" I began.

"Does not excuse me," he answered, with a smile like that of a teacher who dissipates the crude and futile objections of a pupil, "I am not a sovereign prince, though my ancestors were sovereigns. I am a nobleman like other noblemen, and subject to the same laws. My antagonist is noble too: the house of Sommer-Brachenfeld, of which he comes by direct descent, is an ancient race, nearly as ancient as my own."

"But a notorious profligate, a miserable adventurer like this man--has he not dispossessed himself of the right of being challenged to the field by a prince Prora?"

"I fancy not," the prince replied, still with the same good-natured smile. "The man is an adventurer, it is true; but I saw in Ireland a fellow who descended from the legitimate kings of the green isle of Erin, and who was a keeper of hogs; and in Paris, in a *café chantant*, I saw the genuine scion of an ancient ducal house, who was singing indecent songs to the guitar before an audience of men in blouses and women of the streets. Now an actor at a Royal Theatre is quite a respectable person. And again, have I been no profligate in my time? And can I know what would have become of me if the family council had really cut me off from the succession, and thrust me out into the world with an indemnity in money? However large the sum might have been, it would not have lasted long, and then--no, no, I have no right on this ground, not even an excuse, to avoid a duel, supposing that I looked for an excuse; but I look for none."

We both remained silent. Without, the winter wind swept through the streets and howled and whistled around the palace, like a hungry wolf around the fold; and here in the room the light beamed so soft from the lamps upon the marble tables, over the splendid furniture, on the hearth the fire glowed and sparkled so cosily, and surrounded by all the splendor, and illuminated by the soft light, at the fire upon his own hearth, sat the master of this house, who did not even look for an excuse to avoid a duel with an adventurer who had nothing at risk but his own bare life.

"I look for none," said the prince again. "Indeed I believe that though there were the most indisputable justification of such a course, I should decline to avail myself of it. I will say nothing of the fact that it is impossible for me to live in the consciousness that such an insult is unavenged--as impossible as for me to live by picking pockets--but I have a feeling which I cannot shake off that this is a doom which has fallen upon me, against which all resistance is unavailing."

He raised his eyes as he said this, and his look fell upon the portrait of the young cavalier in the fantastic costume, which he had told me represented his father, and which hung at some distance from us, brilliantly illuminated by the light of a large lamp.

"Altogether unavailing," he repeated, with a deep sigh, turning his face from the portrait to the flame on the hearth, upon which his eyes remained vacantly fixed, while his pale lips moved as if uttering words which I could fancy I heard, though they were unspoken: "altogether unavailing!"

This was the same fatal presentiment that had laid its spell upon me from the first. The events that had just now taken place, had been prepared long, long ago; they had stood already written in the stars that glittered on that autumn night when the young prince stole through the park of Zehrendorf to his love. I sat there, my fevered brow resting on my hand, and thought of that night, and how I was summoned to guard her who did not wish to be guarded, who even then was planning and weaving the web of treachery, and was even then a wanton, who, if I could believe what the good Hans told me, had been in this case the betrayer and not the betrayed, and who yet like a vengeful fury pursued the man who was guilty of no wrong towards her, except that of being her first lover, if he was the first.

I must have spoken aloud some part of the thoughts that were passing through my mind while the prince was walking up and down the room, and at last stopped beside me and laid his hand upon my shoulder:

"True heart," he said, "how true you are, and how you increase the debt which I have never yet paid you, and which I would so gladly pay before it is too late. Perhaps it will be something if I do for you what I would do for none other: if I try to justify myself to you for the part I have played in this unfortunate affair. Perhaps too I owe it to her; and I would fain settle all my debts: I would wish that one man lived who will know, if Prince Carl von Prora falls, how and why it was that he died."

He checked me with a gesture as I was about to speak, and proceeded, his soft beautiful eyes fixed upon the fire which was now dying out on the hearth:

"You think that Constance never loved, neither me nor any other; that it was not in her nature to love, and that therefore no one could be a traitor to her. In this way you attempt to justify me; but you are wrong. Constance really loved me, and still I did not betray her. Whether I loved her or not is another question, which I cannot affirm--which I would not for much be able to affirm. I was very young when I first saw her at that unlucky watering-place; scarcely more than a boy; and I may have loved her as boys love, romantically, passionately, and yet not deeply. I know I behaved like a madman when my father came and said that I could never marry the daughter of a professional gamester and notorious smuggler, especially when the girl was not even the legitimate child of this dishonored father. But this you know: I told you all this; and this was all the prince then told me. But this was not all that he might and should have told me. And his telling me but half the truth while he concealed that which was of most importance, out of what I must call false shame of appearing to his son in the light of an evil example, and out of prudery to the world which had long known him as a pious man and protector of the church, this is the evil seed from which has sprung this disaster for me and for himself.

"I cannot say that the prince's warning was altogether fruitless, nor can I say that I was convinced by it. I was a boy, a wild spoiled boy, accustomed to having my own will because it was my will--my own will often against my will. So was it here. The prince, convinced of my obedience, committed the imprudence of sending me, accompanied by my tutor, to Rossow, to hunt there, to recover my injured health, and to pay court to the fair Countess Griebenow, who was allotted to me by common consent of both families. How easy it is for a youth with money enough in his pocket, to bribe his servants, I need not say. I spent the morning at Griebenow, and the evening--you know where. But you do not know, and probably would not believe upon any other authority, that my courtship was carried on in very nearly the same style and tone in both places. I repeat it, I was young, very young, and youthful modesty and a certain chivalrous sense of honor, which is perhaps native to me, always restrained me, even in the secrecy of Constance's apartment. Whether it was female modesty, or calculation--probably both; for I have rarely found women in which both were not present together--she always knew how to keep me in limits, and scarcely at rare intervals allowed me to kiss her hand. She maintained this rigor so firmly that I was more than once convinced she loved some other; and you can conceive whom I believed this other to be. Thus the play went on which had very nearly been brought to a sudden end by our meeting in the wood, and on the very day following I succeeded in realizing a long-concerted scheme, and carrying off my beloved. I had made her no promises, but she asked none, and no doubt thought all would come right if she played her part well. And she played it just as before; and while we were looked upon by all the world as a pair of unlawful lovers, and were pursued in all directions by my father's letters and couriers, I had received no favor from her beyond the privilege of kissing her hand.

"I had made my preparations so skilfully that I escaped all the prince's researches, though he moved heaven and earth to find the fugitives. He would have started in pursuit himself, no doubt, only his alarm at what had happened, brought on a violent attack of his old gout. And well had he cause to be alarmed."

The prince suddenly arose from his chair, and walked once or twice across the room, stopping again before the portrait of his father, at which he looked with a darkened countenance. He then resumed his seat, and proceeded:

"I had already got as far as Munich, when the old servant whom you have seen overtook us. He was the bearer of a letter in cipher, in which there was important information from various members of my family, and a few lines in my father's own hand, upon reading which I had laughed aloud. They ran: 'I adjure you by all that you hold sacred, to part from her at once if you do not wish to load yourself with a horrible crime: Constance von Zehren is your sister.'"

"Great heavens!" I cried.

"As I said," continued the prince, "I laughed; laughed madly at the thought, and then felt a shudder run over my whole body and seem to settle in my heart.

"The letter referred me to the old servant for further particulars, until the prince was in a condition to write me more fully. He, who from his youth had been attached to the prince's person, and had accompanied him upon all his travels, was better able than any other to explain the matter. He had been with the prince in Paris at the time when Herr von Zehren arrived there in his wild flight from Spain with his beloved. The two gentlemen had been very intimate friends, and at our court the two handsome stately young men went by the names of Orestes and Pylades. But it seems that this friendship was much shaken when the prince married my mother, whom Herr von Zehren had also courted. Whether the prince could never forgive his friend this rivalry, or whether Herr von Zehren, who was a man of fierce and uncontrolled passions, gave the prince afterwards any cause of offence--I do not know: but it appears that the prince was not only fascinated by the charms of the young Spanish lady, who tormented by her conscience, and perhaps as weak-minded as she was beautiful, bestowed upon her lover's friend a confidence which he abused, and perhaps also a love which he only did not refuse.

"Was the prince the father of the child which passed for Herr von Zehren's? It could not be certainly known; and the doubts which the prince himself had on this point might never have been removed; for when a few years later the unfortunate woman came to Rossow, where the prince was then staying, and threw herself, with dishevelled hair at his feet, crying that he was the father of her child, imploring him to protect her and her child from their pursuer, and to tell her the way to Spain--at this time she was a mere maniac. But there were other confirmatory circumstances. An old female servant--the same horrible old woman who was with Constance later, and whom you probably knew--declared that her young mistress had told her the secret from the first. She may have lied; but nature rarely deceives, and the prince found in the child, which he contrived to see privately, a likeness of which perhaps a trace may still be discovered in that picture yonder."

The prince pointed with trembling hand to the portrait of his father; but he only told me what I had discovered for myself while he was telling me this frightful story. He must have read in my looks what I did not venture to express, for he continued, fixing his beautiful melancholy eyes upon me:

"You see it too, do you not? We easily discover the truth when it is pointed out to us; and I perceived it while the old woman was making her terrible confession, and I blessed a merciful heaven that had saved me from an awful crime. But how to free myself from this wretched entanglement? Perhaps I should have disobeyed the prince's orders and told Constance the whole truth; but I cannot too often repeat that I was very young, and not in a condition to judge what might be all the consequences of my hasty resolution. So I thought I should be managing with great adroitness if I could continue to inspire Constance with hate of me, or at least aversion, for the love that I now regarded with horror. The means of attaining this end she had herself supplied me in her arts of keeping me at a distance, in which I now was disposed to see more than mere calculation. I returned her caprice with caprice, her obstinacy with obstinacy, her coldness with coldness; I played my game so well that I could not fail to win. What she suffered, I never heard her say; but I saw it in her face which grew paler day by day, in her eyes in which there often seemed to be the fire of madness.

"At last came the catastrophe. After a violent scene, which I had provoked, in Naples, whither we had come on our travels--I do not now know why or how--I parted from her, in the firm conviction that she would employ the ample means I had left at her disposal, either in returning, or in the flight with which she had often threatened me. But this would have been insufficient for the revenge which she conceived such treachery as mine deserved. She, whom I had held to be the proudest of the proud, who refused to belong to the Prince of Prora unless he made her his wife--she cast herself into the arms of the first comer, a wretched coxcomb whose acquaintance we had made by the way. I shudder when I think what this first step must have cost the unhappy girl; but I shudder still more when I think how little all subsequent steps have cost her."

He sighed deeply, and his sigh awakened a terrible echo in my own breast. I sprang up and took a stride towards the door.

"Where are you going?" asked the prince.

I grasped my temples with both hands; my brain seemed on fire.

"I do not know," I said, "I only know that this duel must not take place."

The prince smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"It is a queer business, altogether," he said.

"And is there no remedy--none?" I cried.

"Not that I know of," the prince answered with the same kindly melancholy smile. "The young man would have to declare that he was out of his senses. And that would not help; for any one

who declares his own insanity is not insane--ah, there you are, dear Edmund!"

I had not seen that Count Schlachtensee had entered the room behind me. The prince advanced to meet him, and took his hand: the count said "I come----" and then checked himself and fixed a surprised look on me whom he now observed for the first time.

"I must now take leave of you," said the prince. "I thank you heartily for your visit--heartily," and he grasped my hand firmly in his own which was small and delicate as a woman's. "Farewell!"

I was at the door when he followed me and gave me his hand again. "Farewell," he said once more, and added in a low tone, "perhaps for ever!"

I stood in the street, with the snow driving into my face. I turned back to look at the palace, and saw upon the lowered curtain the shadows of two men who were pacing up and down the room. They were the prince and his cousin; and I knew what they were conversing about, and that there was not a moment to be lost. I called a hackney-coach that was passing, and ordered the coachman to drive as quickly as possible to the lodging of the actor Von Sommer, who went by the name of Lenz.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I have often in later days tried to recall the state of mind in which I was on this miserable night: but have never been able perfectly to do so. So I am conscious than any account I can now give of it must be a most imperfect one. I can only say that I was overpowered by an emotion which was probably the intensest form of pity--a feeling always peculiarly strong with me, and which on far lighter occasions is aroused in my breast to an extent which must appear absurd and childish to shrewder and more coldblooded persons. Perhaps the extraordinary statements which I had just heard might have affected me differently, had the persons concerned been entire strangers to me; but this they were not. Constance had played an important and fateful part already in my life; the young prince had come into contact with me at eventful moments; and I had loved Constance, and the prince had inspired me with interest and sympathy such as an older brother might feel for a younger. What had happened appeared to me awful, and what was to happen, terrible. True I had again a dim consciousness that I could do nothing to hinder the march of fate, that I had started upon an idle, an insane expedition; but what was this to the voice that cried within: It must not be! it must not be!

In this intense excitement which now seems to me to have bordered on insanity, I reached the lodgings of the actor. He was greatly surprised at seeing me, but received me with politeness, and conducted me from the room in which I found him with one of his companions at the theatre, into another apartment to hear what I had to say.

But what had I to say? Good heavens, there was so much to be said, or else so little! The *much* I could not tell him, for I felt that I had no right to disclose the secret, and that if I had revealed it, he would have considered it a wretched device suggested by the prince's cowardice. And the *little*--that the duel must not take place--what good could that do? What could the man do but shrug his shoulders and look sharply into my eyes to see if I was quite in my senses? He was a young man with a face wasted by a life of dissipation, and yet handsome, and with very expressive large dark eyes, and I felt how my cheeks flushed under their steady gaze. Under their gaze, and at the words which almost forced their way through my lips, the words that if he desired vengeance on Constance's lover--one who had been her lover at a time when he claimed her as his own--he should select the right man--he should come to me rather than the prince. And though I bit my lips to restrain myself from saying this, the words forced their way through my teeth in a hoarse hissing tone, which the other probably took for the accents of rage that could scarcely be controlled.

"That is your business then," he said, rising from his chair. "A favored or a betrayed lover, I do not know which. Very well: I shall meet you, sir, you may rely upon it; and every one who has or pretends to have any claim upon the lady's favor. But each in his turn, sir, each in his turn; you have come some hours too late; and you will perceive that I can settle with my antagonists only in the order in which they present themselves. Is there any other way in which I can serve you?"

He made me a polite bow, as he finished, and added: "Through this door"--indicating by a gesture--"you can pass at once into the hall."

I had also arisen and stood facing him. I could have stricken this slender delicate man, feeble

and nerveless from a life of dissipation, to the earth with a single blow; the puny arm which he extended towards the door with a theatrical gesture as I hesitated, I could have crushed in my hand. It was the only time in my life that I was ever tempted to abuse my physical strength; but I withstood the temptation, and forced myself out of the room and out of the house.

The coach was still standing at the door.

"Where am I to drive now?" asked the man.

I directed him to Constance's lodging, and we drove off. It was bitter cold, and the glass of the coach-window was encrusted with sleet, the crystals of which sparkled and glittered in the light of the street-lamps as we passed them. I noticed it, and mechanically counted the seconds that elapsed until we passed another lamp, when I again observed the sparkling and glittering, and recalled to mind certain optical laws which seemed to bear upon this phenomenon, as if I had nothing else in the world to do on my way to see Constance von Zehren, Prince Prora's sister.

The coach stopped.

Notwithstanding the lateness of the hour--it was now probably eleven o'clock--the door was opened at once; the hall and stairway were lighted up: they seemed in this house to be accustomed to late arrivals and departures. As I rang at the door upon which stood, in great golden letters, "Ada Bellini, Actress at the Theatre Royal," I heard the rustling of a dress inside, and the next moment Constance stood before me. She had doubtless expected a different visitor, and started back with a cry. I closed the door, caught her by the hand as, with a face white with terror, she endeavored to escape, and said:

"I must speak with you, Constance."

"You want to murder me!" she said.

"No; but I intend to prevent another being murdered on your account. Come!"

I drew her, half by force, into the brightly lighted, almost gorgeous parlor which she had just left, leaving the door open after her, and led her to a chair in which she took her seat, her eyes uneasily watching all my movements.

"Have no fear," I said. "Do not be in the least alarmed. Once in long-past days you called me your faithful George, who was to kill all the dragons lurking in your path. Hitherto I have had no opportunity; or did not use it if I had. The hour is now come; but I cannot do it alone: you must help me and will help me."

"Are you assured of that?" she asked.

Her face had suddenly assumed another expression; the terror which had been previously imprinted upon it, had vanished and made way for a look of dark hatred, the same look that it wore that night when she adjured me to avenge her on the prince.

I do not know how I found the words, but I said what I had come to say.

"What does the prince pay you for it?"

This question was her reply.

It was the same reply that I had expected from the actor, and it was not to hear this that I had held my tongue before him. Here it was different: it was the sister to whom I was speaking: she *must* believe me: I must find the place in her heart: nature could not so belie herself.

And whether it was that I succeeded in touching the mysterious bond that unites two beings whose veins flow with the same blood; whether it was that Constance's clear intelligence could not reject the proof that I offered, I saw that the dark look passed away from her face, and gave way to a confusion, an astonishment, that passed into actual horror.

"It was *that*, then!" she murmured; "*that* was the reason! And that then was the reason that I hated my father--no, he was not my father--and that he hated me! That--but then *she* must have known it! no, no, it cannot be!"

She had sprung from her chair.

"Where are you going?" I asked, seizing her hand.

She tore herself loose and rushed from the room.

I remained, hesitating what to do; I feared for a moment she was going to kill herself; and then I heard her coming back, not alone.

She re-entered, dragging after her the decrepit form of an old woman, whom under other circumstances I should have taken for a housekeeper or something of the sort, and in whom I recognized, with a shudder of disgust, old Pahlen.

How this horrible creature, after her escape from prison, found her way to her mistress, I never learned; but the closer the relations that had existed, as mistress and servant, between them, the fiercer was the rupture, and more frightful the reckoning.

"Here! here!" cried Constance, dragging the woman almost to my feet, "here she is! George. I adjure you by heaven and all that is holy, kill this monster who would have plunged me into horrible crime."

Constance's words, her passion, my presence, all combined overwhelmed the wicked woman. I saw in her old wrinkled face, in the sidelong look of her evil eyes, that she knew her guilt; and Constance saw it as well as I; for as the creature with faltering words tried to frame some excuse, she cut her short with a cry of rage, almost a yell, that long after sounded in my ears; "Begone! out of my sight! wretch! monster!"

The wretch was no doubt glad of the chance of escape for which her sidelong eyes had been searching before, and rushed out of the door. I never saw her again, and know not how long afterwards she dragged out her wretched existence, nor when and how it ended.

Constance was pacing up and down the room, with a face which showed her entire conviction of the truth, and wringing her hands in anguish. Suddenly she threw herself upon her knees in a corner of the room, and seemed to pour forth her heart in agonized prayer. I observed that where she knelt a small ivory crucifix was attached to the wall, and that from time to time she separated her hands to make the sign of the Cross, and then clasped them again in fervent prayer. Later I learned, by chance, that Constance, when in Italy, had returned to the Catholic church, the faith of her mother. Whatever spiritual peace she may have afterwards found, after confession and long penance, as the abbess of a Roman convent, at this moment her prayers seemed to be unavailing. She arose from the crucifix only to fall at my feet, to clasp my knees, and to beg me to avert the frightful consequences of what she had done. I raised her, saying that I had already done all that was in my power, and that I had come to her to learn if she could do nothing.

"There is but one means," she said; "and that is to prevail if possible upon Herr Lenz to quit the field--to leave here immediately."

"How can we do that? The man is evidently your tool, the tool of your revenge; and it is no longer in your control--or do you think it is?"

"It may be, it may be," she said, in a low hurried tone. "He knows that I do not love him; he knows about Carl, and that has made him furious; but I know that he loves me, and that for the prize of my hand, which I have always refused him, he would consent to anything--to anything! Am I not fair enough, George, for a man to consent to anything for my sake?"

She threw back with trembling hands the dark lustrous masses of hair from either side of her face, and smiled upon me. I have only once in my life seen such a face, and that was when, in the Glyptothek at Munich, I saw the Rondanini Medusa, and then the world-celebrated mask seemed to me but a weak copy.

"Come!" I said. She was about to start just as she was: I wrapped her in a cloak of furs which she had probably worn from the theatre, and which was lying on the floor. We left the house and drove to the lodging of Herr von Sommer. The house was closed. Some minutes passed before our repeated knocking brought the porter to the door.

"Herr von Sommer set out half an hour ago."

"Do you know where he was going?"

"He did not say, further than that he would not be back for several days."

"Is no one in the house that can give further information?"

"Hardly: he took his own servant with him."

"You have no idea where he was going?"

"None. He went in a *droschky*."

I saw that nothing more was to be got out of the man, who stood shivering in his sheepskin cloak; and in fact he cut short the interview by shutting the door with a muttered oath.

Constance who had followed me, had heard all.

"Perhaps we can learn from *him*."

We drove to the palace of the prince. Our progress was slow; a furious gale was blowing, and the wretched horse could scarcely drag the coach through the snow-drifts. I fancied that our own slow journey was an emblem of repentance, which toils painfully after the evil deed that it can never overtake.

At last we reached the palace. As we got out, I cast an involuntary look towards the sky. From

a clear space, the blackness of which contrasted with the white clouds that were driving with arrowy speed across the sky, looked down upon us the calm eternal stars. The words of Constance's favorite song came into my mind:

"All day long the bright sun loves me,
Woos me with his glowing light;
But I better love the gentle
Stars of night."

Alas, this starry love had guided her far astray--had brought her at last *here*, in this fearful night, to the house where the sister was knocking at the door of her brother whom she had involved in the web of death.

The palace was dark; only the two lamps on either side the great entrance were burning, and their golden light, in which the snow flakes were once more fluttering down, shone dimly, as it had done a year before at the unhappy meeting between us two at this very spot.

I rang the bell: I heard its hollow clamor dully reverberating in the hall of stone, as in a great sepulchral vault. No one came. At last after minutes of agonizing expectation, the door was opened: a man in his shirt-sleeves, with a light in his hand, stood before me. The fellow's face was flushed with drinking and his eyes glassy; it was evident that in the servants' hall the master's absence had been turned to good account. He was about to close the door in my face, but I set my foot against it and pushed in. The man then recognized me, having seen me at the palace twice already to-day, and probably before at Rossow. He answered my questions with disagreeable servility. His highness had driven out half an hour before with the count; not in his own carriage, but in a hired *droschky* taken from the stand. He did not know where his highness had gone; his highness often went out in a *droschky*. He would certainly not be back until very late, if he came back at all to-night. He, for his part, had leave to go to bed.

It was evident that it was high time the fellow was making use of this permission, for he tottered with sleep while he stammered out these words. It was the same report that I had received at the other house: both parties had already left the city, to go heaven only knew where: somewhere where their meeting might be undisturbed. I said to Constance that we could do no more.

"I will go home and pray," she said.

Was it a reminiscence from the tragedy in which she had been playing? Was it really for her the close of the tragedy of her life? She spoke no word further as we went home, except that once she said:

"I have at least helped you to your happiness."

I do not know what she meant.

CHAPTER XXV.

When I reached home it was one o'clock--a fact which I could scarcely comprehend. It seemed to me as if not hours but weeks had elapsed since I parted from Hermine. I went on tip-toe to her room and bent over her bed, where she lay sleeping, one arm beneath her head, like a slumbering child. And like that of a child was the expression of her face, as though a happy dream were passing through her spirit. It seemed to me like a crime to sit watching, with a world of sorrow and anguish in my soul, by the side of this blessed peace; and yet slumber was impossible to me. So I put the shade before the night-lamp again, and went to my own bed-chamber where I had already lighted a lamp.

In the dim light of this lamp which only made a few objects in the room visible while the rest were plunged in darkness, I sat for hours before the hearth in which the last spark had long died out from the ashes, revolving in my breast thoughts indescribably painful. In vain did I endeavor to recall my old cheerful courage; it seemed to have died out, like the embers in the ashes before me, which had once glowed as brightly and sparkled as cheerfully: in vain did I try to bring to my memory all the goodness and kindness that life had brought me hitherto, and in which it still was rich; nothing would appear to me in the old light: all was empty, gray, and dead, as though the world were but a scene of devastation and decay, and I were wandering comfortless and alone, among the ruins of splendors long passed away.

A reaction from my excessive excitement must have overcome me at last. I dreamed that there was a gray twilight that was neither night nor day. I was wandering alone upon the bleak ridge of the promontory at Zehrendorf, and a bitter piercing wind was blowing from the sea. All was waste and desolate, and there was nothing to be seen but the ruin of the old Zehrenburg, which rose dumb and defiant in the twilight. But when I looked at it, it was not the old castle, but a gigantic statue of stone, which was the Wild Zehren looking with dull glazed eyes towards the west, where his sun had set forever in the eternal sea. And though no light illuminated the gray twilight, a bright glitter flashed from a golden chain which was on the neck of the stone giant who was the Wild Zehren, and spurs of gold gleamed upon his feet of stone, and brightly flashed the bare blade of the broad knight's sword which lay across his knees of stone. And as, full of inward terror, I watched the statue, a small figure came through the tall broom and drew near the stone giant, which it crept lurkingly around, and watched from all sides. And the queer small figure was the Commerzienrath, and he made the oddest faces and cut the strangest capers when he found the giant was so fast asleep. Suddenly he began to clamber up the knees, then stood upon tip-toe and took the golden chain from the giant's neck and hung it around his own, then sprang down and took the sword, and lastly the golden spurs, which he buckled on. Then with ridiculous pomposity he strode backwards and forwards in the knight's accoutrements, and tried to brandish the sword, but could not lift it, while his spurs kept catching in the high broom and tripping him, and the heavy chain upon his shoulders pressed him down, so that he suddenly became a decrepit and bowed old man who could scarcely stand upon his feet, and still tried to balance himself like a rope-dancer, upon the sharp edge of the precipice where the chalk-cliff fell perpendicularly to the sea. I strove to call to him to have a care for Hermine's sake, but I could neither speak nor move; and suddenly he fell over the cliff. I heard the heavy fall of his body upon the pebbly beach, and the giant begun to laugh, a laugh so loud, so terrible that I awakened in fright, and with wildly-beating heart looked around the room, into which, through the curtains, there fell a gray twilight which was neither night nor day, just as it had been in my dream, and I still heard the resonant peals of laughter, but they were blows with which some impatient hand was battering at the house-door. I hastened to open it myself.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"A message for Herr Hartwig, and--and--ah! you are there yourself, Herr Hartwig, I see."

It was a servant from the hotel at which for many years my father-in-law had been in the habit of stopping whenever he came to the town.

"Yes; what is the matter?"

"My master sends his respects, and--and the Herr Commerzienrath has just been found dead in his bed."

I stared aghast into the face of the man: he probably thought that I had not understood him, and stammered out his awkward message again; but I had perfectly well understood him at first; that is, I had understood the meaning of his words. The Commerzienrath has been found dead in his bed. That is very easily said, and as easily understood. The Commerzienrath had been found dead in his bed.

"I will come at once," I said.

The man hastened off; I went back to my room, put on my overcoat and hat, took a pair of dark gloves instead of the light ones I had worn the previous evening--all quite mechanically, as if I were going out about some ordinary business. "The Commerzienrath has been found dead in his bed," I repeated, as I would have repeated a report brought to the office that a belt had broken in such and such a shop.

Then suddenly a pang darted through me as if a dagger had been thrust into my breast.

"Poor child!" I muttered, "poor child, how will she bear it? But there is so much misfortune in the world; so much misfortune, and he was an old man."

Thus I left the house, in which the inmates already began to be stirring.

"You are going out early this morning," said the porter, coming out of his lodge. "Anything happened at the works?"

I did not answer: not until I had reached the street did I comprehend the meaning of the man's words. It was now near seven o'clock, and already clear daylight. The wind had hauled to westward, and was blowing hard. It was raining: streams of water poured from the roofs, and the heavy snow that had fallen in the night was mostly changed into gray slush, through which the bakers' and milkmen's carts were toiling heavily. I was shivering, and said to myself that it was a very disagreeable morning; but no other feeling awakened in me. At a corner I met a hearse with no following of carriages; the driver upon his high seat had pulled his cocked hat down over his face; the broken-down horses were going at a half-trot; the hearse slipped about in the slush, and the threadbare black pall that was hung over the hearse flapped to and fro in the wind.

"That cannot be the Commerzienrath," I said, looking after the hearse with a vacant mind.

Thus I reached the hotel.

"Number eleven: first door to the right at the top of the stairs," said the porter.

He accompanied me up the stairs, more, no doubt, from curiosity than sympathy, and told me that the Herr Commerzienrath had arrived in the last train yesterday evening, and he had been ordered to wake the commerzienrath at half-past six this morning, as he had a note to send to Herr Hartwig. He knocked at the door punctually to the minute, and the Herr Commerzienrath had called out quite plainly: "Very well; let Louis bring my coffee;" and when ten minutes later, Louis took the coffee up, the commerzienrath did not answer, and they found he was dead. Who would have expected it? Such a robust old gentleman! And they sent off at once for Doctor Snellius, because he was Herr Hartwig's family physician, and the doctor would certainly be here in a minute. "This door, Herr Hartwig, this door."

The door was ajar. The landlord, the head-waiter, and another man, if I remember rightly, were standing in the large room, into which the dim light fell through the half-drawn curtains. At the farther end of the room was a bed, before which two lights were burning on a small table.

"We left everything as we found it," said the landlord in a low tone, as he went with us to the bed. "It is a rule with me in such cases to exercise the greatest discretion. One has then no reason to reproach oneself, and avoids much inconvenience. The Herr Commerzienrath is lying precisely as Louis found him; and there lies the tray with coffee where Louis put it down."

There lay the tray with coffee where Louis had put it down, and there lay the commerzienrath as Louis had found him. The light from the two candles, their long wicks unsnuffed, fell brightly enough upon his face into which I now gazed. It was the third time in my life that I had looked closely into the face of the dead. And naturally the other two faces rose in my memory; that of the Wild Zehren, that of my dear and fatherly friend, and now here was this. In the sombre features of the Wild Zehren had lain gloomy defiance, like those of an Indian chief, who, bound fast to the death-stake, sings taunting songs at his tormentors; upon the mild face of his noble brother had lain a sublime calm, as upon the face of one who dies for the sake of others. How different was the face before me! About the large mouth hovered something like the mocking smile which he usually wore when he thought he had overreached any one; his eyes half shut, as he used to shut them when he wished to hide his real meaning: over all the old, wrinkled, yellow face was spread the deceitful cloud in which he loved to hide himself, only that the cloud was drawn now a little closer than usual, and it was not his old cuttle-fish manœuvre, but death.

"And we were so cheerful last night," whispered the host. "We sat in the dining-room until half-past one, and drank three bottles of champagne. The Railroad Director Schwelle was with us. I have warned the old gentleman often enough; at his years one should be more prudent. And such a clear head! Such a head for business! And here lies the note that was to be sent to you this morning."

It was a leaf apparently torn from his pocket-book, with half a page of writing on it; the pencil with which he had written, lay by it. I took up the paper; the characters were very legible, even firmer than his writing usually was of late:

"DEAR SON: I arrived here yesterday evening, and would like to speak with you before you go home from the works. May I ask you to wait for me? I must first go on 'Change, where I shall meet many envious faces to-day. They will see to-day how soon an old hand can grind little notches out of his blade. But more of this when we meet. If you are engaged out, please excuse yourself, as I should like to sit at your table once more. But no preparations for me, I beg. Only, if you can manage it conveniently, my favorite dish, Magdeburg cabbage, and a little----"

The bill of fare was broken off, and here lay the guest.

"Death overtook him while he was writing," said the landlord, whose discretion had not hindered him from looking over my shoulder into the paper. "How sudden it comes, sometimes!"

At this moment the doctor stood among us: I had not heard him enter. He nodded to me without speaking, and leaned over the dead man. Thus he remained sometime and then he raised himself up and said to the landlord:

"I wish you would heat for me about a wine-glassful of pure Jamaica rum. It must be perfectly pure rum, and must be brought to a boil. You would probably do better to look after it yourself."

"Certainly, certainly," said the landlord. "It is my duty in such cases to do everything that lies in my power."

"And do you go and see that I get it at once; and you, young man, tell my driver to wait for me."

"Yes sir," said both the waiters at once, and hastened after the landlord.

"Have you any hope?" I asked.

The doctor did not answer. He gave a hurried glance at the door, then stepped again to the

bed, threw back the coverlid which the dead man had drawn up over breast and arms as high as the chin, and then I saw that he took out a small phial which he had probably found under the cover in the stiffened hand of the corpse. He smelled its contents cautiously for a moment, then wrapped it in a piece of paper and put it in his waistcoat pocket.

"Unless there is some especial reason for it," he said, "your wife need not know that her father has poisoned himself."

I groaned aloud.

"Courage! courage!" said the doctor; "this is a world in which things are often desperately dark. But this cannot be helped now, and you have to think of your wife and children."

As I went home an hour later, the wind was howling as furious as ever through the rainy streets, and at the same corner I met the same hearse, now coming back in a slouching trot as before. I looked at it without the least emotion or feeling, which seemed indeed to have perished forever in my breast. Yes, yes, the doctor was right: it was often desperately dark in this world; and I do not know that it would have seemed darker to me had I known what I did not know, that in the palace of the prince, which I had to pass on my way home, behind the lowered curtains, the last of the male line of the princes of Prora-Wiek, counts of Ralow, was giving up his young life under the hands of the surgeons.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It is often desperately dark in this world; who can say: "It cannot be darker now?"

When I reached home there was a running and a calling--something had happened. An hour before she had rung for me, and I was not to be found. "She was taken in a dreadful way; but luckily what was most needed was ready at hand; for the doctor---"

"He is close behind me," I said, and hurried into the room, from which came the most heart-breaking cries.

"Courage, dearest friend, courage," said the doctor an hour or two later: "it is a little too soon, and--but there are often worse cases, I think--but stay here a few minutes and breathe a little fresh air; you are terribly excited; you cannot bear it."

"She has to bear it," I cried, wringing my hands.

"Of course," he answered. "Come with me."

The day was fine, notwithstanding the cold night and the gray rainy morning; the March sun had broken gloriously through the clouds, and shone dazzlingly from the clear-blue sky: the thawing snow was dropping from all the roofs and pouring from all the rain-spouts, and in the thick branches of the trees of the garden upon which the windows opened, birds were fluttering and twittering, proclaiming that winter was at last over and the spring had come.

But I had no ear for this proclamation: I had no faith in the blue sky and the running water; I awaited other tidings--awaited them with fervent prayers and passionate vows, such as men offer in the time of sore extremity; and the tidings came at sunset, in a tiny piping voice that seemed to go directly to my heart.

Yes, now it was spring. I saw the spring sunlight in the happy smile of the pale young mother; I saw the bright spring sky in her blue eyes that looked smilingly up to me in a soft tremulous light such as I had never before seen in them, and then were turned with beaming love upon her babe.

"It is a girl, after all," she whispered. "You will spoil her terribly, and love her a great deal more than me; but I will not be jealous, I promise you."

And the next day the sun was shining again, and the heaven still blue and the birds jubilant.

"If the weather keeps so fine, we can soon go to Zehrendorf," she said. "It is very well that you have not come to a definite settlement with the prince. He has been very kind and obliging to us, it is true, but still I think you had better reconsider the matter with my father. Why does my father not come? You have written to him, haven't you?"

"Certainly; but he had started on a journey. And you must not talk so much."

"I feel quite strong; I only wish I could give the little one some of my strength. Oh me! such a giant as you are, George, and such a tiny morsel of a babe! But it has your eyes, sir!"

"I hope it has yours, madame."

"Why so?"

"Because then it would have the loveliest in the world."

"What a flatterer! But to come back to Zehrendorf: we will have to keep it on account of the child, which will need country air, the doctor says. I can see us both sitting under the great beech which I saved because you carved your name on it--for somebody else, sir!--and now to be sitting with wife and child, a prosaic, common-place husband, where you once stood full of romantic dreams--is it not very comical?"

"Oh yes, it is inexpressibly comical; but now you really must not talk any more."

"Your commands shall be obeyed, my lord."

And her blue eyes laughed so saucily, and she was so full of life and hope and happiness, so merry, and full, of mirthful fancies; it cut me to the heart when I saw and heard her, and had to leave her, under the pretext of urgent business, to go and bury her father, who had killed himself to avoid the disgrace of a shameful bankruptcy. And this day too was a bright golden day of spring; only here and there were these drops falling from the roofs, for the bright sun and warm air had dried the moisture; in the sky, making it a still deeper blue, were standing great white clouds, and the birds in the budding trees were thinking seriously of setting up housekeeping--who could help looking cheerfully in spite of all, into the future that was to make all right? Who would not shake off his winter cares when he saw how everything was springing and budding and blooming? But--

One night in spring there came a frost;
It nipped the tender blossoms.

Let this sad refrain of the old song say for me what I cannot bring myself to narrate in words. It needs no comment; nor do the two fresh graves, one larger and one tiny hillock, close side by side; nor the flowers which loving hands have strewn above them.

One night in spring there came a frost;
It nipped the tender blossoms.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Only work can make us free!

I had opportunity enough in the two following years to test this leading aphorism of the wisdom of my teacher, in all its bearings.

Work indeed made me free.

But free from what?

First from the meshes of the dishonest web in which the association with my father-in-law had involved me, the meshes from which he for his part had torn himself swiftly loose by a self-inflicted death, and from which I gradually disengaged myself with incredible toil, which I had to disentangle, untie, straighten out, if I would not let disgrace and obloquy rest upon the name of the man who had been the father of my wife.

It came to light that, like a desperate player, he had given up the game before it was quite lost. But in truth that is not exactly the right word. It was lost for him; for what alone could have saved him, could have set him free, as it set me free who took his obligations upon myself, was conscientious, honest, manly work. But this was to him impossible: he had never accustomed himself to it, had never believed in its efficacy and its mighty results. When I spoke with

enthusiasm to him of the future that would bloom for our enterprises, and that out of the waste place of ruins that he had despised for so many years, there would arise a star of life and prosperity whose genial influences would extend far and wide, he only smiled in contemptuous incredulity, and called me an enthusiast, a dreamer, who would end by burning his fingers, or at best would only pull the sweet chestnuts out of his furnace-fires for others to feast upon.

And he had gone on and gambled on upon 'Change, in stocks, in foreign loans, in spirits, in cotton, in heaven knows what, just as he had formerly gambled in contraband goods and in uninsured ships, until at last the cards so fell that he saw no escape but to quit at once the table and his life.

I could never rid myself of the thought that the shame of having to appear so small before me, to whom he had always so vaunted himself; to have to admit that I was right with my stupid honesty; the shame of this it was, I say, drove to his death the man who had inordinate vanity, but not a trace of genuine pride. He knew that it was all over with his wisdom, his superiority; and worst of all, it was all over with his authority: and he grudged me what was to come in the future, since I had so often, both in jest and earnest, foretold him that a new time had come; an age of brotherhood, of equity, of justice, of mutual help; and that the old egotism with its narrow schemes, its little tricks and petty craft, would perish at the coming of the great new era.

Perhaps one or another of my readers may think that in thus prophesying I drew too largely on my hopes and fancies, and that the golden time of which I spoke lies still as then upon the lap of the gods.

But I am merely writing the history of my own life; and I can only say that if my temperament be sanguine and my views inclined to optimism, my own experiences in these things have not rendered turbid the free current of my blood, nor shaken my pious belief in the better qualities of human nature and beyond all, my faith in the approaching triumph of goodness and truth, even in our own day. Wherever industry and uprightness have gone hand in hand, in those provinces where I am most at home--the provinces of industry and commerce--there and only there have I seen permanent successes achieved; and if in politics it now and then appears otherwise, this is but an appearance destined soon to vanish and disclose the stern reality.

But, as I said, I am only writing the story of my own life, which has taught me this lesson first and chiefest of all, and at no time were the lessons more impressive than at the period of which I am now speaking. And had I been the worst of pessimists, the most splenetic of misanthropes, the proofs of love, of kindness, and of devotion which were offered me on all sides, would have taught me another and a better faith.

On all sides, even where I had least expected them.

For instance from the old man whom during the building of the new factory I had often seen in dressing-gown and slippers, a little black cap on his bald head, and a long pipe in his toothless mouth, standing by the paling which separated the building-place from the gardens behind it, and with whom I had occasionally exchanged a few friendly words, without knowing or asking who he was. This old man came to see me on one of the first days of my trials, while my business misfortunes and my domestic afflictions were dealing me blow after blow, and introduced himself as Herr Weber, the former owner of the ground. He had heard, he said, that my deceased father-in-law's affairs were not in the best condition, and he had come to say to me that as for the payment I need be in no hurry--(my father-in-law had assured me that the purchase had been paid for to the last farthing)--and that he saw what trouble I was in, and that I had never shunned to give my personal help wherever it was necessary. As for the old gentleman, he would never have lent him a penny; but when active young men like myself needed it, he had always a few thousands at their service, say twenty or forty as might be wanted, and if they would be of any help to me, I might come and see him when I pleased.

A day or two later came a letter in a big school-boy hand and the queerest spelling, from the good Hans, to the effect that there was a considerable portion left of his mother's fortune, which was entirely at his disposal, and that it was at my service to the last penny; but as he could not lay hands upon the cash at once, he had in the meantime instituted a very thorough search in his desk and in all his coats, with astonishingly successful results, and he expected of my friendship that I would allow him to send me this sum without delay. Moreover, I knew, he said, that he was a better manager than he seemed to be, and if I would permit him to canter over every day to Zehrendorf and look after things a little there, it would be a real kindness both to his bay horse and himself.

I scarcely need mention that the good doctor offered me his capital for the third time; but this and all the rest did not move me so much, nor exercise such an influence on my future, as the proposition made to me by a deputation of the workmen of the factory, with Herr Roland at their head as spokesman. They had heard, he said, that matters were not in the condition they should be, and that there was danger that the works would pass into other hands; that this possibility was very alarming to them, and they had unanimously resolved to avert it, if it lay at all within their power. They therefore begged to inquire if it would in any way diminish my embarrassments if they one and all agreed to a reduction of wages until the danger was over, and I was in a condition to make good the arrears; releasing me at the same time from all responsibility in case the hoped-for turn of affairs did not come to pass.

It was some time before I could so far control my emotion as to be able to answer, and then I said to the brave fellows that I could never agree to accept their generous offer; not because I was ashamed to be under an obligation to my comrades, but because, thanks to the friendly assistance I had received from other sources, I was in a position to fulfil all my engagements to them.

But I had something else, I said, in view. And here I unfolded to them a project which I had long planned with the doctor and Klaus, upon the model of similar enterprises in England, by which each of the workmen, according to the degree of his skill and merit, became a participator in the establishment. I told them that a time of uncertainty, a crisis like the present, was not suitable for putting this plan into execution, but that I was more resolved than ever to exert all my powers to bring about a fitting time, and that I hoped to be able to offer the matter to them definitely, perhaps within a year.

And before a year had passed, I was able to redeem my word.

Nor was I less fortunate in regard to the second point, which I had held to with a kind of passion while I gave up so much else so willingly: Zehrendorf still remained in my possession, and I had not been forced to abandon a single one of the useful improvements that had been commenced there. On the contrary, all was thriving and prospering; and I had even commenced a new work, the draining of the great moor, with the best results. The property was now worth, if not the price which the commerzienrath had demanded for it, still very nearly that which the generous young prince had offered at our memorable interview. I could not look without sadness at the letter which he had written to me that evening, before I went to him the second time, in which he placed his credit at my disposal to an extent far exceeding the sum mentioned. What had become of the other letter in which he called upon his father to make good this offer, in the event of his falling in the duel? Doubtless it never reached the hands for which it was intended, for the old prince, who survived his son several years, was a man of generous and noble character, and would have held sacred the last wish of his unfortunate son. And the dishonesty of those who intercepted this letter turned to my advantage. I should certainly, in those first days of trial and confusion, have parted at once with the property had the proposition been made to me; but as no one offered to buy it, and I was not disposed to throw it away for a fourth of its value to Herr von Granow, I was compelled to keep it, and I was enabled to keep it, thanks to the generous help of my good Hans, and--why should I not say it? thanks to my own untiring exertions.

But I had to thank labor for yet more than this. As she set me free from the load of indebtedness which my father-in-law had suddenly thrown upon my shoulders, so she bathed me in dragon's blood until I was invulnerable to the keen arrows of grief which at first pierced my heart at the loss of my wife and my child. It is true that under the covering of apparent insensibility remained a deep-seated sorrow; but the tears which I often wept in the evening when I came home after the toils of the day to my solitary room, or when I awaked in the night to a sense of my loneliness, had no longer the old corrosive bitterness; they flowed gently, and less for my own loss than at the thought that one so loving, so gentle, so graceful, so full of innocent mirth and lightheartedness had been so untimely summoned away. And yet here too there was something which almost seemed a consolation. As her father had never loved any creature upon earth but her, so she had loved him dearly, however often he may have wounded her pride and sensibility by his coarse and dishonorable nature. His death, the cause of which could not be altogether kept secret, would have been a fearful blow to her; and how could she have passed through this time of trouble, of comparative poverty, this almost desperate struggle, she, who from her earliest youth had found life a long festival, and who only knew struggles and poverty by hearsay? How could she have borne to know that her husband of whom she was so proud, whom her love placed so high above all other men, was a debtor to his friends? And could she have entered with her whole heart into the feast in which the chief of the establishment and his workmen celebrated the founding of their co-operative association, and I declared that from henceforth the distinction between us of master and workmen was at an end; that we were all workmen and all masters in one common cause. Could she have adapted herself to these relations? Of a truth she could! For her love for me was greater than her pride.

She would have adapted herself to it, for she could well play a part when she thought it necessary to do so; but to enter into it, to throw her heart into it, that she could never have done; and this thought remained like a faint dimness upon her lovely portrait, which all my love and endearing memories could not wipe away. I had to admit to myself that in the tasks which were dearest and most sacred to me, I must have been alone.

Alone!

I do not know whether there are men who can endure the sense of being alone; but I know certainly that I do not belong to such. And I was alone for the first time for many, many years; far more alone than in that solitary apprenticeship I passed in the little house among the ruins. There I had at least had the dreams of a golden future for my companions; now this future lay behind me as a past, as something irrevocably gone. I called myself ungrateful: there was still so much left to me, and above all, my dear, my beloved friends. There was the good Doctor Snellius, there was my brave Klaus, there, over on the island, was my faithful old Hans, and even good Fräulein Duff might have been near me, if her parents--now very aged--in Saxony, with whom she was staying, could have been prevailed upon to part with her. And before all, there were Kurt and

Benno, now grown tall stately young men, and whom I often sportively called my staff and my prop.

In earnest as well as in sport: for Kurt had now become the soul of the Technical Bureau, and the superiority of his knowledge and his talents freely acknowledged by all, even by Herr Windfang; and Benno, who, half from natural inclination and half from affection to me, had turned farmer, knew how to turn his knowledge of natural science to such account at Zehrendorf as to astonish all who understood what he was doing.

In truth I had no lack of friends, not to mention the hundreds of stalwart men in the midst of whom I lived, and who would have gone through fire and water at a sign from me, and it would have been ungrateful, shamefully ungrateful, had I spoken of being alone, so I did not speak of it; but I was alone, and I felt it, nor could all my labor banish this feeling--indeed it seemed to strengthen it.

"You have worked too hard," said the doctor. "Even such a nature as yours cannot keep this up. You must break away--take a journey--recreate yourself a little. One should study the Brunels and the Stephensons on their own ground, as one studies Raphael and Michel Angelo. Only don't stay away so long as Paula."

The doctor seemed to have startled himself by associating my name thus with Paula's; at least he tuned himself down with an especially energetic effort, looked at me rather doubtfully through his round spectacle-glasses, and said, as if in answer to a question on my part:

"She is very well, and enjoying herself extremely; she writes to me from Meran----"

And the doctor began to hunt for the letter in his old fashion.

"From Meran?" I asked; "how long has she been there?"

"About--let me see--about a week. I thought a short stay there would be beneficial to her. The prolonged stay in the Italian climate does not seem to suit her."

"But I thought you said just now, doctor, that she was very well?"

"Well, so I did--that is to say--what I mean was--of course she is well; but better is better, and she has been there now long enough. Oscar stays behind in Rome. Has not Kurt told you all about it?"

"Not a word, from which I infer that he does not know it himself. Paula corresponds with scarcely any one but you."

"Well, I believe that is so," answered the doctor, "and I know I ought to read her letters now and then to you and the boys; but somehow it always happens----"

And the doctor made another dive into his breast-pocket, then, as if in desperation, crammed his battered hat upon his large bald head, and hurried off, leaving me once more in absolute uncertainty as to what really were the contents of Paula's letters, which he was always rummaging his pockets for without ever finding.

That their contents had, directly or indirectly, some reference to me, was not to be doubted; for what other reason could the doctor have had in concealing these letters from me so carefully? But my conjectures could penetrate no further than this; and I was obliged to admit to myself, with deep grief, that I could no longer understand Paula. And I also could not avoid the thought that she was herself responsible for this, and that it was the result of her own conduct, if my dearest friend, my sister, as she had so often called herself, had become a stranger and a riddle to me. And why? I did not know, nor could I fathom the cause. Was it a fault in me that I once loved her with all the strength of my young, buoyant, confiding soul? That after she had so often, under such different circumstances, and in so many ways, rejected my love, I had become like a ship torn from its anchor and driven rudderless upon a rough sea? Was it a fault that even in my love for Hermine, I could not forget her, though I knew that she would remain forever distant from me, and that I had in future only to look up to her as to the high inaccessible stars? Must I pay so heavy a penalty for what was as natural to me as to breathe? Must she on this account exclude me from the council of her heart, in which I had before been so proud of my place; and forbid my participation in her hopes, her plans, her wishes, her triumphs, and perhaps her disappointments? Must she for this deny the cordial interest which she had once felt for me, and deny it at a time when all my friends crowded around to help me with word and deed, and when she had nothing for me but two or three lines which she wrote from Rome, containing scarcely anything but the expression of a sympathy which in such cases is felt by mere acquaintances?

I had become a stranger to her, that was plain; or I should have heard her sweet consoling voice in the dark hours that followed Hermine's death. And she had grown a stranger to me: I scarcely knew more of her than did the indifferent crowd that stood before her pictures at the exhibition. I knew as little as they why she, whose fresh venturous power had charmed and astonished every one in her first pictures, now for a long time seemed only to take pleasure in melancholy themes--in views in the most desolate parts of the Campagna, where sad-featured peasants watched their goats among the ruins of long-past splendor; in scenes upon the

Calabrian coast where a burning sun glowed pitilessly between the bare pointed rocks, and the solitude and desertion seemed to sink into the beholder's soul. How did the choice of such subjects, and the strangely serious, even gloomy coloring, agree with the cheerful frame of mind which, according to the doctor's report, she continually enjoyed?

"Only one who is deeply unhappy can paint thus," I once heard a lady dressed in mourning remark to her companion, as they stood before one of these pictures.

"Of late her pictures have shown a great falling-off," said a critic whose judgment carried great weight in the city. "Such pictures please, because they flatter a certain leaning towards pessimism which belongs to most men of our time; but all largeness of conception and treatment is wanting. I might say here is an egotistic sorrow which is forcibly imposed upon nature. The execution, too, leaves much to be desired: look here, and here"--and the critic pointed to several places which he pronounced weak. "But her younger brother is a genius indeed," he went on. "Have you seen his *aquarelles*? Heavens! what fire and what life! And he is still little more than a boy they say. He will be at the top of the tree before long, mind my words."

It seemed that the public did not altogether agree with the critic in his estimation of Paula's talents; at all events they fairly fought for her pictures, and paid the highest prices for them. I, for my part, did not trust myself to form a judgment, and in fact I had none; I only knew that if Paula enjoyed such unbroken happiness and cheerfulness as the doctor reported, she gave this cheerfulness the strangest expression in the world.

The conversation in which the doctor informed me that Paula and her mother were staying at Meran, took place in February, nearly two years after my misfortunes. In the beginning of the summer I heard again from him that she was making sketching excursions in the Salzkammergut and Tyrol, and somewhat later, that she would pass the latter part of the summer in Thüringen.

"She keeps coming nearer, nearer, all the time," said the doctor; "will you not now undertake your long-planned trip to England?"

"It seems," said I, looking straight into the doctor's spectacles, "that you think I ought to celebrate Paula's return by my own absence."

"I do not see how you arrive at this singular conclusion," said the doctor.

"Nor do I see how otherwise to interpret your suggestion that I should go away when Paula comes."

"Your wits are certainly wandering," he answered.

A few weeks later he surprised me with the news that he thought of taking a journey the next morning to J., the Thüringian town in which Paula was staying. Her health seemed to be not so good as he could wish, though it was true her letters were as cheerful as usual--here the doctor made a motion toward his breast-pocket--but he would rather see her for himself; it was but a "cat's jump," and he thought of returning the next day.

"Bring her back with you," I said; "perhaps she would like to stay awhile here again."

The doctor looked at me fixedly.

"I would very gladly do you and her the pleasure of being absent when she returns," I continued; "but I really can not now well leave the works for any length of time; and perhaps it will be sufficient if you tell her, doctor, that I have suffered much in the last twelve months, and also learned much; for example, to use your own expression, my friend, to live with half a heart. Will you tell her that?"

I had done my best to speak as firmly as possible, but could not prevent my voice from trembling a little at the last words, and my hand also trembled, which the doctor held fast between both his own small and delicate hands, while he looked steadfastly into my face through his round spectacle-glasses.

"Will you?" I repeated, a little confused.

"I certainly will not!" exclaimed the doctor, suddenly dropping my hand, pushing me back into the chair from which I had risen, and walking in an agitated manner up and down the room; then suddenly stopping before me, he crowed in his shrillest tones:

"I certainly will not! I am sick of this game of hide-and-seek, and out it must come, happen what may. Do you know, sir, or do you not know, that Paula loves you? Do you know, or do you not know, that she has loved you for ten years? that she has loved you from the hour when you saved her father from the axe of that murderous scoundrel--I can't remember his name. That with this love for you she has grown from the half child you first knew her, to womanhood? and that from that time there has been no hour of her life when she has not loved you, and certainly most of all at the times when she has seemed to love you least--for example at the time when you, you brainless mammoth, were fancying she was captivated by Arthur, who was tormenting her about you, and asking whether it was right and fair for the daughter of a prison-superintendent to make

an inexperienced young man, condemned to only seven years' imprisonment, a prisoner for life? Have you any idea what it cost the poor girl to conceal her love from you? What it cost her to play the part of a sister and only a sister towards you, that you might remain unfettered to grasp boldly at whatever was highest and fairest in the world, and be able to mount the ladder upon whose topmost round the high-spirited girl wished to see the man she loved? What it cost her to send you to Zehrendorf to win the bride she had destined for you? What it cost her to turn a smiling face upon your happiness! And finally, what, it cost her not to hasten to you in your misfortunes, not to be able to say to you: 'Here, take my life, my soul--all, all is yours?' I ask you for the last time, do you know this, sir, or do you not?" In his excitement the doctor's voice had reached a pitch from which all tuning down was impossible. He did not even make the attempt, but instead, tore off his spectacles, stared angrily at me with his sparkling brown eyes, put on his glasses again, crammed his hat upon his flushed skull until it covered his ears, turned abruptly upon his heel and made for the door.

In two strides I overtook him.

"Doctor," I said, catching him by the arm, "how would it do if you let me go to-morrow in your place?"

"Do whatever you like!" he cried, running out of the room and banging the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

There come days in our lives which we afterwards remember as some blessed dream which knows nothing of earthly sufferings or earthly restrictions, in which we soar as on the pinions of eagles, strong and high above all the little pitiful obstacles that otherwise so lamentably hamper our feet.

Of such dream-like beauty was the day on which I took the most memorable journey of my life: a wonderful summer day, whose glorious brightness was not marred by the smallest cloud, and yet palpitating in a mild balmy air that played around my cheeks and brow, while the train whirled in rattling speed through the lovely Thuringian country. It was the first journey I had made in my life, at least the first that was not a business trip, and the first also that took me from my northern home into the sunny plains of Middle Germany. The novelty of the scenery probably helped to make everything appear to me doubly graceful and lovely: I could not satiate myself with gazing at the soft undulating lines of the hills; at the sharply-defined crags whose summits were crowned with ruined fortresses and ancient keeps, and whose feet were laved by the clear water of winding rivers; at the flowing meadow-lands in which lines of trees with foliage of brightest green marked the courses of the streams; at the cities and towns that lay so peacefully in the valley, and at the little villages that nestled so cosily among the trees. It was not Sunday, but all these things wore a Sunday look, even the men who were working alone in the fields and stopped to look as the train rushed by, or those gathered in the neat stations where we stopped. It was as if everybody was travelling only for pleasure, and that even taking farewell was not painful on such a lovely day. And then the meetings of friends--the happy faces, the hand-shaking and kissing and embracing! Every one of these scenes I watched with the liveliest interest, and always with a feeling of emotion, as if I had a portion in it myself.

Thus I arrived in the afternoon at E., where I quitted the railroad and engaged a carriage from a number that were at the station to take me the remaining distance. We soon left the level land and entered a valley through which the road to "the forest" ran in many windings between hills on either side. The journey lasted several hours, and the sun was already declining as we slowly toiled up a mountain the steepest of all, "but the last," said the driver. We had both descended and were walking on either side the large and powerful horses, and keeping the flies off them with pine branches.

"Woa!" cried the driver; the horses stopped.

We had reached the summit, and stopped to let the horses blow a little.

"That is our pride," said the man, as I looked with astonishment at a primeval and gigantic oak which grew here in an open space in the heart of the pine forest, and spread its gnarled and weather-beaten boughs far up against the blue sky.

"That is a great curiosity," he went on. "People come from miles and miles to see that tree; and it has been painted I don't know how often. Not many days ago a young lady, who has been staying with us a few weeks, came here and made a picture of it. I drove her here myself; I often

drive her about."

Absorbed in my own thoughts hitherto, I had, contrary to my usual custom, spoken but little with the man, and indeed scarcely noticed him, and now it seemed as if he and I were old acquaintances, and had the most intimate interests in common. I asked him the young lady's name; not that I had any doubt that it was Paula, and yet it was a sort of shock to me when he pronounced it, and from his lips it sounded strangely. And now the man, who seemed to have been awaiting his opportunity, became very communicative, and told me, while we crossed the back of the mountain and descended in a rattling trot, a multitude of things about the charming young lady; and the old lady her mother, who was blind, but who recognized people at once by the voice; and about the old man, with the hooked nose and long gray moustache and curly white hair, who was really only their servant, but the ladies treated him as one of themselves; and yesterday a young gentleman had arrived, with a sunburnt face and bright brown eyes and long brown hair, who was the young lady's brother, and a painter too.

The carriage was clattering over the rough pavement of the little town, and the talkative fellow was still chattering about Paula and the rest. I had told him that I had come on purpose to see that lady, and that he must put me down at the inn at which he told me she was staying.

The carriage stopped. The head-waiter with two small myrmidons rushed out; two boys who saw a chance of their services being called into requisition as guides came up to have a look at the strange gentleman. Concealing my agitation, I asked the head-waiter if I could have a room, and if either of the guests was at home.

I could have a room, he said, but neither of the guests was at home: the lady and the young gentleman had gone out for a walk, and the young lady had started for the mountains with Herr Süssmilch early in the afternoon: she went into the mountains every afternoon: she painted up there, and hardly ever came back until after sundown.

"Do you know the place?"

"Certainly; perfectly well: this boy here has carried the lady's things there often enough. Say, Carl, you know where the lady goes to paint?"

"To be sure," said the boy. "Shall I take the gentleman there?"

"Yes," I said, and turned to start at once.

"You need not be in any hurry, sir," the attentive headwaiter called after me; "you will reach the place in half an hour."

My little guide ran on ahead, and I followed him along the main street of the little town, planted with lindens, with groups of travellers seated here and there before the doors, and reached the fields upon which still lay the golden evening light, and then entered the cool twilight of the woods. We pursued the wide road which ascended the mountains by a steep acclivity for the most part, but occasionally ran along small level glades, and was elsewhere inclosed on both sides by the tall forest trees. It was wonderfully quiet in the cool pines: no breeze stirred, scarcely was the silence broken at rare intervals by the chirp of a bird: the blue sky looked down from above, and I felt as if the path climbed up to heaven.

No one met us on the way; only when we were almost at the summit and had turned to the right from the main road into the wood and reached an open space where stood a sort of hunting-lodge, I saw a couple of men who were sitting upon benches with mugs of beer in their hands. Out of the wood, directly opposite the spot at which we had entered the clearing, came a man followed by a boy carrying an easel and other painter's apparatus. I recognized the sergeant at once; and my little guide said that the boy who was carrying the things was his brother Hans, and that they were coming from the place where the lady used to paint. This place was only five minutes walk distant, and we had only to follow the way by which the sergeant and Hans had just come.

My old friend, who was talking in a rather animated manner to the boy, who probably was not carrying the things carefully enough to please him, had not observed me, and I was glad of it, for I felt that I was not in a frame of mind to talk with him. So I gave my guide a sign to wait for me; and crossed the clearing towards the path he had pointed out.

It was a broad path, overgrown with short green grass upon which the foot fell noiselessly, and the pines on both sides were of such growth that their branches almost entirely roofed it in, so that only here and there the red sunset glow pierced to the green twilight. It gradually but continually ascended, and I walked on, not even conscious that I was walking or moving my limbs, as one ascends heights in a dream. A breathless expectation, a joyful fear possessed me wholly. Thus might an immortal spirit feel which is about to enter the presence of its judge, and with all its timid hesitation, knows still that this judge is mercy itself.

And now it grew lighter and more open with every step, and I passed out of the forest upon the crest of the mountain, which to my right hand rose to a mighty height, while westwardly, to the left, it sloped away to a deep valley, over which I could see far-distant mountain terraces rising slope above purple slope, against the evening sky. The sun had set, but its radiance still lay

calm upon the light clouds which floated over the mountain, and a few paces from me, bathed in the roseate light reflected from the clouds, stood a female figure by a mossy rock upon which she leaned her right arm, while her left hand with her broad straw hat hung idly by her side. She was looking fixedly at the sunset sky, and her features were clearly defined against the bright background. Thus I saw her once more.

But she neither saw me nor heard me, for the soft grass muffled my steps. I wished to call her by name, but could not; and now she slowly turned her face towards me and looked at me with wide fixed eyes and unmoving features, as though I were an apparition which she had long yearned to behold, and which the might of her longings had summoned before her. But as I spread my arms, saying, "Paula, dearest Paula!" a heavenly light flashed into her lovely face, a faint cry broke from her lips, and she lay upon my breast with a storm of passionate tears, as if all the sorrows she had borne all these long years had burst forth in one moment.

What I said, what she said, while we stood on the mountain ridge, while streak after streak of the rosy light faded out of the sky, I cannot now recall.

And then we went back hand in hand through the silent wood, by another way than that by which I had come; a way that at first led over a grassy slope directly down the mountain, so that we could still see the valley in the faint evening light, and then under high beeches where it was quite dark, so that Paula held firmly to my hand until we came upon open spaces and the valley lay before us again, now dim in gray twilight, so that I thought the descent must be longer than the ascent, and yet it was so short--so short! What did it matter? I knew that with her who was leading me down the dim mountain path I would walk henceforth hand-in-hand so long as we both lived upon earth; and an inward prayer rose in my soul that her last day might be mine also.

And now I see ourselves--that is our mother, Paula, Oscar and myself--seated at a table in one of the arbors in front of the inn, and the light of the lamp in its glass shade falls mildly on the gentle features of the blind lady who from time to time lays her soft hand upon mine, and on Paula's dear face that beams with a lovely radiance from her inward happiness, and upon the beautiful young features of Oscar, whose dark eyes glow while he tells how a young English nobleman whose acquaintance he made at Rome has given him a grand commission to paint a series of frescoes in his castle in the Highlands, and how before he sets out there, he had to come after his sister to get some advice from her; and then the youth tosses back his long hair, and lifts a full glass and drinks it off to our health, and the mother smiles gently upon us, and as our glasses clink together there appears in an opening in the trellis that head with the gray moustache and white hair which played so important a part in the history of art.

Then I am standing at the open window of my room, listening to the rustling of the west wind in the branches and the plashing of the fountain before the inn, and my gaze is fixed upon a star that beams brighter than all the rest in the nightly sky.

And the old sadness awakens once more in my heart, and my eyes fill with tears.

But when I look again, the star is beaming more brightly than ever, as if it were an eye looking lovingly down and sending me greeting from the abodes of the blest.

CHAPTER XXIX.

In this history of my life I have now reached the point at which from the first I intended to close the narrative. To be sure I said to myself then, and still must admit, that in this way I shall not give contentment to all. One will find that there is a certain regular and not unsatisfactory progress in the story, and that he would not object to read a few hundred pages further, if no better entertainment was at hand; another will maintain that according to his experience (this is a man of great experience) life begins to be truly interesting exactly at the point at which I cut short my story. Youthful adventures, he says, are like the maladies of children; every one must have them, sooner or later, and therefore there is nothing of special interest about them; only when the perfectly developed man takes his position in public life, and undertakes his share in solving the problem of the age, or when he, as a private man, has had the opportunity of proving his character in those conflicts which are never wanting in wedded life, and in the relations of parent to children, which always present trials and difficulties--then only is it worth while to follow the story of a life.

Profoundly do I feel the weighty nature of these criticisms; but I had once for all made up my mind not to be guided by the wish to please this one or that--nor, indeed, to please any, as it would now appear--and to the one I can reply that with the least possible trouble he can find a far

more amusing book to while away his leisure hours; and as to the other (the man of great experience) with the best will in the world I cannot possibly satisfy his great requirements, though I freely admit that he has a perfect right to make them. Did I wish to make my story ever so interesting, I could find nothing to tell of conflicts in wedded life, nor of domestic trials and difficulties--or nothing that would be worth the telling; and if I--as I sometimes flatter myself in moments of peculiar elation and self-satisfaction--have done an honest day's work at the great task of our time, and all things considered, have approved myself no despicable workman, I would not willingly anticipate my wages; and I think that there will in due time, perhaps, be found a good friend, who, either in an elegant epitaph, or an elaborate obituary notice in the newspapers, will award me my meed of praise in well-chosen words.

But in earnest, dear reader, who have grown to be my friend, or you would not have read on so far--you for whom alone I have written, and for whom alone I write this closing chapter--in earnest I think it will be agreeable to both of us if I break off here. I do not know whether you are a craftsman initiated into our art and mystery; and this is what I should have to know in order to narrate to you the life of a craftsman, such as I am, in such a way that in the one case it would be satisfactory to you, and in the other not too wearisome: indeed I do not even know whether you may not be a lady, who, despite your excessive amiability and general loveliness, with all your other accomplishments have no especial fondness for the discussion of technical matters, and who, for the care with which I have hitherto limited myself to merely touching the edge of these obscurities and mysteries, have given me hearty thanks--thanks which for much I would not forfeit now.

As I say, I know none of these things; but one thing I know, and that is that you--to borrow the phrase of good Professor Lederer--are a human being, to whom nothing that concerns humanity is alien; and as I have hitherto, I trust, only told you what found a ready response in your sympathies, because it concerned a man who was neither better nor worse, wiser nor more foolish, more interesting nor more common-place, than the average of his kind, and whose thoughts and feelings, whose aims and endeavors, even whose errors you could readily understand, so I think you, as a good man and my friend, must feel why I ask you to depict for yourself the rest of my life's history, in accordance with your friendly sympathy and amiable imagination, in bright and cheerful colors.

And the words "bright and cheerful" you may take literally, for--and I say this with a heart full of the deepest gratitude, and without fear of "the envy of the gods" in which I do not believe--there has fallen much, very much glorious sunlight across the path of my life. My efforts have been crowned with amplest success, far beyond my boldest expectations, and very far beyond my modest pretensions and moderate wants; and, what is of far more importance, to arrive at these results I have never had to deny the doctrines of my teacher, never had to be a hard hammer to a poor much-tormented anvil, on the contrary, I am as sure of it as of my own existence that I should not only not be the cheerful man that I am, but I should also not be the rich man that I am, had I not all my life long been a believer in the great and lovely doctrine of mutual helpfulness, brotherhood, and the community of all human interests.

This living, active, and inspiring faith has brought me blessings a hundred and a thousand fold; and with the deepest conviction I recommend it to all who aim at success, even those who are disposed to attach no especial value to the possession of a good conscience, and yet perhaps find that this little prized and contemptible thing, if one only has it, contributes no little to the happiness of life.

You will willingly, I doubt not, my friend, spare me any further exposition of these truths, since you have found them confirmed in your own life; and you are quite ready to go on with the picture of my life in the way I have indicated, and dispense with the narration of further details concerning myself and my family, the number and ages of my children, and whether the boys are strong and intelligent, and the girls bright and handsome--you are already disposed to heap all those excellences upon their young heads, when I simply say that they are, without exception, fine children; but you think that what may be sufficient for myself, my wife, and my children (although these last nowhere appear in this narrative, and consequently have really no just claims to any consideration), what may be sufficient for us, is in no wise just to the other persons who have appeared in this story, and in whose behalf you have a right to put forth decided claims; and you would like before the close to know what has become of them, to one or the other of whom you have perhaps taken a fancy.

Many a one, as you may well suppose, in the five and twenty years that have passed has been taken away by death, whom neither entreaties nor exertions can compel to relinquish his prey, however desperately the survivors try to hold fast in their hands the vanishing threads of a life so dear.

Thus you departed, dearest and best of mothers, and were changed for us into a luminous picture of gentleness, kindness and patience, and at the same time of calm, strong, self-sacrificing courage, to which we have at all times been wont to turn with devotion, as to that of your noble husband, and from whose memory we have often drawn counsel and comfort.

And you too, brave old sergeant, faithful heart of gold, you too left us, full of years, highly honored, and deeply wept, and by none more deeply than our boys whom you taught to ride and to fence, and to speak the truth, happen what might.

And you also, dear good Hans, last of an ancient race of heroes! Be not vexed with me, dear friend, if I have allowed myself now and then a sportive word at the quaint ways that clung to you as long as your massive frame threw its broad shadow upon the ground. Believe me, despite all, no one ever loved you as I loved you, perhaps because no one was ever so near to you as I, and no one had the chance of knowing how not one drop of faithless blood ever coursed through your great noble heart, and how from crown to heel you were a true knight without fear and without reproach.

You too, enthusiastic friend with the fantastic ways, with the affected speech, and with sincere love in your soft and gentle soul, kindly Fräulein Duff! I thank you for allowing us to have the care of your declining years; and though your ardent wish to see all our daughters, your pupils, married before your death, was not fulfilled, I think you still lived to find what your loving and affectionate heart had sought so faithfully.

Ah! yes; the ranks of the dear old familiar faces have been sadly thinned; but we will be thankful that so many are still left us, so many whom we never could replace.

For who could replace you, my brave Klaus, best of all foremen, and yourself head-foreman after the worthy Roland with his smile under his bushy beard had himself vanished into that primeval forest from which no one has ever yet emerged, any more than all the treasures of the archipelago which your Javanese aunt was to bring, could replace your Christel, or your eight boys, who, since as boys they cannot compare with their mother, try their best to be as like her as possible, and have all her blue Hollander's eyes and blond hair. The old Javanese aunt has not made her appearance yet, and I am afraid she never will. But I fancy you have long forgiven her this misbehavior; and only once were you really angry with her, and that was at the time when for your friend George fifty thousand *thalers* more or less were a matter of salvation or ruin, and when you besought heaven to send you the aunt quickly, even though she were an uncle.

And a few other friends are left still, and will remain, if it be heaven's will, awhile longer, though one of them at least has been expecting a stroke of apoplexy every day for the last fifty years---

"No, no, doctor; I will not finish the shameful sentence. You fly at once into your altitudes that I should mention you in my book, as if the history of my life could be anything but the history of my life, and assert that after you have worn an honorable baldness for half a century, I make a child's jest of you at last, and you can no longer show yourself upon the street. Scold as much as you like, doctor, and in the topmost notes of your highest register, if you like; I understand you, and know that you will tune yourself down again presently; and I further know that if everybody does not take off his hat to you on the street, it is because everybody does not know you."

"And I do not wish to be known," cries the doctor, "nor to be exhibited to the public as a curiosity of natural history, least of all by you who have always seen me in a false light--if indeed a mammoth like you can see anything in the right light. If I am to have my portrait taken, it shall be by your wife, who ought to be ashamed, by the way, to neglect her noble art so, out of mere idolatry of you and of her children--or else by Oscar. *Apropos*, will you not include in your book a thorough analysis of all Oscar's paintings, or at least of his chief works, and thus cover yourself with ridicule, as you really know nothing whatever about art? or will you not set forth in detail all that Kurt has accomplished in our railroad undertakings, and his inventions in various departments of machinery, and so, as he is modesty itself, cover him with a garment of confusion? Or will you not denounce Benno to the government because his agricultural school at Zehrendorf which grows and flourishes so quietly, is a formidable rival to the official country institutes?"

"Scold away, doctor: you have not an idea how admirably all you say fits into my last chapter. I should like to let you have the last word there, as everywhere else."

"That was all that was wanting!" cried the doctor in wrath, and ran out of the door, the last of our guests.

This scene happened yesterday evening, and I said to Paula, "Was it not a happy idea to leave the last word to my best, oldest, dearest friend, to whom I owed more than I could ever find words to say."

"I could never know which was to be the last touch in my pictures until I had given it," said Paula: "perhaps it will be the same way with your book."

To-day, thinking it over in the early dawn, I find that Paula was right. I feel that I must close, and yet have the feeling that I must not stop yet; that I have forgotten or omitted something, I know not what; that I owe the reader, despite my solemn disallowance erewhile, information on a multitude of points.

For example, how it happens that I am sitting at my writing table "in the early dawn," after having, as it seems, a little company of friends with me yesterday evening: have I then been writing all night until morning overtook me?

Nothing of the sort. The early dawn, that is to say, four o'clock in winter, and in midsummer, as now, often two o'clock, has for years found me in my office, reading, calculating, drawing, and

now, since I have had this book on hand, for the most part writing. I have all my life been a good sleeper, so far that my sleep is very profound and mostly dreamless: but I have long accustomed myself to do with half the sleep that others find indispensable. The Doctor says I have too large a heart, like most big good-natured fellows of rather limited intelligence and with broad shoulders, whom nature has marked out for carrying burdens and playing the part of anvil; but he smiles when he says so, and I do not know if he be speaking in earnest or in jest.

I have been just now standing at the open window, after extinguishing the lamp by which I have been writing. In the perfectly cloudless, light-green, July sky stood the sickle of the waning moon, but the stars had all faded from sight. Over my window, just under the eaves, sat a swallow, and sang, rocking her little head from side to side and looking towards the east where the sun would presently rise. I have never heard a sweeter song, and even now while I write its melody fills my whole soul. From one of the tall chimneys of the factory, whose main building turns its front towards the villa, arose a column of dense smoke springing slender and straight as a pine-shaft high into the clear air. There is a great casting to be made to-day, and Klaus has had his furnaces lighted early.

I see this picture, as I have endeavored to describe it, often and often in the early morning, and it always inspires me with cheerfulness and joy, and with a thankful heart I greet the rising sun.

There resounds a well-known sound, a welcome clangor the first blow of the hammer on the anvil; the day which the swallow announced is here. Farewell, my friend; we will both go to our work.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 1](#): "Ordinarius," the professor charged with the especial instruction of any class. "The Prima," or first form, corresponds to the sixth or highest form in an English public school.--Tr.

[Footnote 2](#): "Steuerrath," Councillor of Customs, the title of an official, as is also "Commerzienrath," Councillor of Commerce, in the next paragraph.--Tr.

[Footnote 3](#): "Gnädigste," most gracious. A form of address to ladies of rank.--Tr.

[Footnote 4](#): "Rathhaus;" Council-house, or City Hall.--Tr.

[Footnote 5](#): "Raubmördergalgenmässig."

[Footnote 6](#): From this point the conversation is continued in the familiar second person, which does not convey the same association in English, and is therefore not adopted in the translation.--Tr.

[Footnote 7](#): "Bierkaltschale," a beverage composed of beer, sweetened with fruit sliced into it.--Tr.

[Footnote 8](#): An old-fashioned table-compliment, meaning "may your dinner do you good!"--Tr.

[Footnote 9](#): "Die Liebe" is feminine in German.--Tr.

THE END.

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