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Author: Ossip Schubin

Translator: Elise Lathrop

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1. Page scan source: http://books.google.com/books?id=ZQoZAAAAYAAJ

2. Lacunae in English version were compared to the German edition (Ehre). Corrections to English version are shown in bold.

Page 72, 3rd para., end of last sentence: wird ZUR GEWIßHEIT. Linda's Mutter hat ihn betrogen? Linda WEIß nichts!

BECOMES CERTAIN that Linda's mother has deceived him; Linda KNOWS nothing!

Page 72, 4th para, first sentence: Da fordert der PRIESTER sein "Ja!"

Then the PRIEST demands his "Yes!"

Page 73, para. 1: --reine FARBENPATZEN.--Sind von einer Schlamperei diese Franzosen!--Daß sich wirklich NOCH JEMAND von ihnen prellen läßt!" So schließt Papa HARFINK, der Kunstkritiker.

--regular DAUBS OF COLORS. These Frenchmen are tricky. REALLY, PEOPLE are cheated by them. Thus concludes Papa HARFINK, the art critic.

Page 244, para. 2: Sie aß ohne Ziererei und ohne Gier, nippte nur an dem Champagner, lächelte gutwillig über DIE frechsten Scherze, ob SIE SELBE VERSTAND ODER auch nicht verstand, mit der Resignation eines Geschöpfes, DAS ES GEWOHNT IST, sich auf diese Weise sein Brot zu verdienen.

She ate without affectation and without greediness--only sipped the champagne, smiled good-naturedly at THE boldest jokes, whether she understood THEM OR not, with the resignation of a being WHO WAS ACCUSTOMED to earn her bread in this manner.

Page 244, para. 3: DIE ALTE MANUELA schnarchte längst. Einige der OFFIZIERE waren melancholisch geworden, ...

THE OLD MANUELA had long been snoring. Some the OFFICERS had grown melancholy, ...

Page 245, para. 4: Er pflegte sie, wie ein Bräutigam die ROSENKNOSPE, die ihm seine liebe Braut geschenkt hat--ja, so PFLEGTE FELIX die welke gelbe Blume, die DER COULISSENSTAUB beschmutzt--auf die EIN AKROBAT GETRETEN HABEN MOCHTE!

He cherished it like a lover the ROSE-BUD which his dear one had given him; yes, thus WOULD FELIX cherish the faded yellow flower which THE DUST [IN THE WINGS] OF the stage had soiled--upon which AN ACROBAT MIGHT HAVE trodden.

Elsa springs up--she listens breathlessly.

FELIX LANZBERG'S EXPIATION

BY

OSSIP SCHUBIN

TRANSLATED BY

ÉLISE L. LATHROP

ILLUSTRATED

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FELIX LANZBERG'S EXPIATION.

I.

"My dear Falk, do not tear past me so unheedingly, I beg you! Do you, then, not recognize me?"

Thus a stout old lady cries in a deep rough voice to a gentleman whose arm she has energetically grasped with both hands.

The gentleman--his carriage betokens a retired officer; his wrinkles betray him to be a contemporary of the lady--starts back.

"Oh! it is you, Baroness!" cries he, and half recalls that forty years or so ago he was an admirer of hers, and remembers very distinctly that last winter he had quarrelled with her at whist on account of a revoke.

"I am indescribably pleased," he adds, with well-bred resignation, and at the same time glances after a passing blonde chignon whose coquettish curls float to and fro as if they said "catch me!"

"Ah, ah! age does not protect you from folly!" laughs the old woman. "She interests you, the person with the yellow hair, eh? Dyed, my dear man, dyed, I assure you. It is not worth the trouble to run after her. Her back is pretty, *mais pour le reste!* Hm! Sit down and talk to me for a little!"

The yellow chignon has vanished round a corner and the energetic old woman has drawn her ex-adorer down on a bench in the meagre shade of a watering-place promenade, upon a grass-green bench under gray-brown trees.

It is in Franzensbad in July; afternoon; around them the sleepy stillness of a place where there is nothing to do and one cannot amuse one's self.

Some ladies, pale, sickly, dressed with the grotesque elegance which is permissible in a watering-place, pass, some with arms bare to the elbow, others with pearls round their necks, still others with floating hair.

"How glad I am, my dear Colonel!" cries the old Baroness to her captive, for at least the tenth time. "But how are you, pray tell me? No! Where do you get your elixir of life? You remain so fabulously young!"

In fact the Colonel, closely shaven and dressed in the latest fashion, slender and active as he is, at a hundred paces looks like a young dandy; at twenty paces, at least like the mummy of one. Still he parries the old lady's compliments, while he shakes his head and shrugs his shoulders disparagingly.

"Positively--positively!" croaks the old woman. "And now tell me what is the news with you people in Marienbad? It is not in vain that they call you 'Le Figaro de Marienbad.'"

Marienbad, a few hours distant from Franzensbad, is the present stopping place of the Colonel.

"News? News?" grumbles the Colonel. "A mill burned down yesterday, three head of cattle and two men with it."

"Oh, cease such ordinary, horrible stories. What does society?"

"Rejoices that it has opportunity of diversion through a fair for charity."

"So? Ah!--and what else?"

"Last night Princess Barenburg's groom hung himself. Perhaps that interests you?"

"Ah, very agreeable that! Poor Clémence is unfortunate!" says the Baroness, compassionately.

"Yes, the Pancini also!" remarks the Colonel, and looks down indifferently at the flower in his buttonhole.

"Why she?"

"What? you do not know!" cries the Colonel in astonishment. "Her last admirer, the Polish prince with the unpronounceable name, has turned out to be a circus rider."

"The handsome blond with the mysterious political past."

"It seems to have been merely a politic silence," jokes the Colonel.

"*Tiens, tiens!*--how delightful--how delightful! But do you know it positively?" she asks with

anxious excitement.

"Positively! Nicki Arenhain, two years ago in Madrid, saw him dressed in a green satin jacket and white tights springing through hoops--she identified him at once. Famous story, quite famous." The Colonel rubs his hands with satisfaction--the old Baroness knocks enthusiastically on the ground with her umbrella, like an animated amateur who applauds her favorite virtuoso.

"Excellent!" croaks she. "It serves her right, that Pancini, who permits herself to be as arrogant as a born lady. It serves her right, the soap-boiler's daughter."

"Pardon! her father was a pawn-broker--or was in some banking business--I really do not remember----"

"It is all the same--she will have to step down now. Bravo! Bravo!"

"I know something else, Baroness," says the Colonel proudly, and smiling slyly. "A decided bit of news, *pour la bonne bouche*!"

"Well?"

"Felix Lanzberg is to be married."

The Baroness is speechless; she opens her mouth, stares at the Colonel, clutches his arm, and only after several seconds she stammers softly: "The--the--certain--Lanzberg?"

"Yes--it is considered certain."

"Whom?"

"Look around."

The Baroness looks around. In the back seat of a carriage just rolling past them sit two ladies, one of whom, a woman in the fifties, tastelessly dressed, loaded with cameos and Florentine mosaics, has the piercing eyes, the excessive thinness as well as the aimless, twitching movements of a very uneasy temperament, while her neighbor at the left, beautiful and young, lazily crumpling her striking toilet, leans back among the cushions, the embodiment of dissatisfied indolence. A student with a bright red cap occupies the small seat opposite. On the box, usurping the coachman's raised seat, is a short individual with a crimson cravat between a blue shirt and purple face, a short, bright yellow foulard coat and large Panama hat. He smacks his lips incessantly at the horses, in driving holds his elbows far out from his sides so that one could easily place a travelling bag under each arm, and groans and puffs from exertion and attention. Near him, faultlessly erect, arms solemnly crossed on his chest, sits a majestic coachman, every feature expressing the despair of a distinguished servant who, in a weak hour, had let himself be persuaded to enter the service of an ordinary millionnaire.

"Who is this elegant gentleman?" asked the Baroness, raising her lorgnon, still wholly absorbed in contemplating the interesting foulard back.

"Felix Lanzberg's future father-in-law, Mr. Harfink."

"He?" sighs the Baroness, emphatically. "Poor Felix! He does not deserve such punishment."

The Colonel shrugs his shoulders. "What punishment? He is not marrying the father, and the daughter is charming--a refined beauty, a truly aristocratic girl, and I do not believe that she will ever worry Lanzberg by especial clinging to her parental house. Now I must part from you, *nolens volens*, Baroness--regret it deeply--I have a letter to deliver to the Countess Dey."

"I will go with you, I will go with you," cries the old lady, animatedly. "Give me your arm and imagine it was forty years ago."

And he, in his quality of man of the world condemned to perpetual politeness, gives her his arm and walks on laughing and chatting, at the side of the colossally stout woman with the servile, nodding little head--a martyr of *bon ton*.

The Colonel and his friend were both fond of gossip--with the difference that the Colonel, an independent man, related scandal for his own pleasure, while the Baroness very often did so to please others. Her name was Baroness Klettenstein, but usually she was simply called *Klette* (burr) because she could never be shaken off. She also had a second equally pretty nickname. In consequence of her indestructible life at the cost of others--she was remarkably robust for her sixty-six years--she had been christened the "immortal Cantharide." Hungrily she crept from one house to another, gained admission by a budget of malicious news, which, as we have seen, she collected indefatigably, at times even invented. She always rendered homage to the rising, never remembered even to have known the setting sun. And when, weary of her tiring parasitism, she rested in her tiny room at Prague, which was the only home she possessed, she swore that she would have been just as unselfish, just as truth-loving and discreet as others, if only her income had sufficed for her needs.

Out of breath and panting, she entered the park on the arm of the Colonel. The bandmaster, a Pole with an interesting, revolutionist face, swings the baton with graceful languor. The ladies, leaning back in their white chairs on either side of the broad gravel walk, look weary, limp, and melancholy in their gay gowns, like flowers which a too hot sunbeam has withered and faded. They are worn, thin, and colorless, but for their toilets; but the transparent paleness of their faces, the excessive thinness of their forms lends them a certain charm, something fairylike and distinguished, refinedly aristocratic and Undine-like. Invalidism is less becoming to the men at the cure; many of them resemble corpses which an enterprising physiologist has exhumed to experiment upon.

The first row of tables are already occupied, but an attendant, understanding the Klette's glance, brings forward another from the rear and places it where she is told. Hereupon the Baroness calls for coffee for two, and invites the Colonel in the most polite manner to sit beside her, and as he cannot deny that from this spot, purposely chosen by the Klette for a fine view of all present, he can soonest espy Countess Dey whom he has sought in vain, he resolves to await her here.

Slowly the guests stroll along the promenade: most noticeable of all, admired or at least stared at by all, Linda Harfink. Her large, dark hat with its scarlet feather throws a mysterious shadow on her pale face; a black lace scarf is twisted round her throat and tied in a careless knot behind. Her pale green dress clings tightly, and yet in folds around her figure. Near her walks a young man, blond and handsome; in spite of his handsome figure and Nero-profile, too foppish and dandified, too strikingly dressed in the latest fashion, to be taken for any one but an elegant *parvenu*.

"Who is he?" asks Klette, her mouth full of bread, a coffee cup in her hand.

"A young Baron Rhœden, born Grau. The family was ennobled five years ago, and since then only call themselves by the predicate," replies the Colonel. "A cousin of Linda--very nice fellow--*garçon coiffeur*, but very nice for his sphere--seems to be uncommonly smitten with his cousin."

Through the evening air floats a sentimental potpourri from the "Flying Dutchman." The Harfinks, who wish to return the same evening to Marienbad, where they are staying, have left the park. Gazing down in coquettish silence at a rose in her hand, Linda has vanished through the gateway of the park, on the arm of her cousin, in the golden light of the setting sun.

"Colonel!" now cries a gay voice.

"Ah, Countess!" Intently gazing after Linda's seductive apparition, the Colonel had not noticed the approach of the so-long-awaited Countess Dey. Now he springs up, "falls at her feet, kisses her hands," naturally only with words, and searches all his pockets for the letter for her.

The Countess meanwhile, with lorgnon at her eyes, indifferently gazes at her surroundings.

"I just met a little person who is considered a great beauty--Hopfing or Harpfink is her name, I believe. They say that Lanzberg is engaged to her--that cannot be true?"

"I have heard so too," says the Colonel. "Curious match--what do you say to it, Countess?"

"Felix Lanzberg is as unfortunate as ever," murmurs the Countess.

But Klette shrugs her fat shoulders and hisses: "What does it matter if a certain Lanzberg makes a mésalliance?"

II.

A tall form, slender, perhaps too narrow-shouldered, with too long arms, a small head with bushy, light brown hair fastened in a thick knot low on her neck, a golden furze at neck and temples, a pale, almost sallow, little face with large blue eyes, which love to look up and away from the earth like those of a devout cherub, a short, small nose, a little mouth which, with the corners slightly curving up, seems destined by nature for continual laughter, but later evidently disturbed by fate in this gay calling, in every movement the dreamy grace of a woman who, when scarcely grown, had experienced a great misfortune or a severe illness, all this pervaded by a breath of fanciful earnestness, melancholy tenderness, and united into an harmonious whole--Elsa--the sister of the "certain Felix Lanzberg," and since five years the wife of the Freiherr von Garzin.

She is like a flower, but not like one of those proud, luxuriant roses which pass their life amid sunbeams and butterflies, but rather one of those delicate, white blossoms which have grown in deep shadow during a cold spring, and which close their petals from the sun.

"Mamma, the letters dance again to-day," complains a little voice, the voice of Felicie, Elsa's four-year-old daughter, who with bare legs, her little form encased in a red embroidered gray linen frock, her towzled yellow curls fastened with a red ribbon, stands before her mamma.

Elsa sits in a deep arm-chair, an alphabet on her knees. "Look very hard at the naughty letters and they will be quiet," says she with a smile. She finds that Felicie makes that excuse of dancing letters too often.

The child tries to look hard at the letters.

"M--a," spells she. "Mamma," she cries in great triumph at having spelled out a word which she knows so well.

"Bravo, Litzi!"

Litzi leans closely, closely against her mother's knees. "Mamma, the letters are tired," whispers she, "they want to go to sleep." And Elsa this time thinks that one cannot expect too much industry from such a tiny little bit of humanity, so she kisses the child and says, "Well, put them to bed, then." Whereupon, Litzi, with much pretext of business, puts the alphabet away in the drawer, while Elsa, leaning back comfortably in her arm-chair, her feet crossed, her arms clasped around her knees, gives herself up to that lazy thinking which with happy people is called reverie, with unhappy ones brooding. The room in which she sits, half boudoir, half library, furnished with tall book-cases, étagères, old faience and Japanese lacquer work, and filled with the perfume of the sweetest flowers, is an ideal nest for a young woman of good taste and serious habits.

"Mamma, why must I learn to read?" asks Litzi after a while.

"So as to be a wise girl," replies Elsa, absently.

"Mamma, can the dear God read too?"

"The dear God can do everything that He wishes," says Elsa, with difficulty restraining her laughter.

"Everything?" asks the little one, with great, surprised eyes. "Could He make Fido into a cow?"

Fido, a white bull-dog with pointed black ears and a black spot on his shoulder, raises his upper lip and shows his teeth pleasantly as a sign that he, clever dog that he is, notices when he is spoken of.

"The dear God does not wish to do foolish things," says Elsa, very seriously.

"But if He wanted to?"

The door opens. Fido rises from the streak of sunlight in which he has been lying. "Papa!" cries Litzi, and a young man, blond, with unusually attractive dark eyes, seizes her under the shoulders, and raising her to him he says: "Litzi, Litzi, you are a dear little mouse, but a great big goose. Accustom yourself to the conditional."

"What is conditional?"

"A form of expression which leads one to much useless conjecture."

"But, Erwin!" laughingly admonishes Elsa.

"Perhaps you did not wholly understand me, Litzi?" he asks, drolly staring at the child.

She shakes her head, and says somewhat vexedly, "You are laughing at me, papa."

"Only a very little bit, so that you may get used to it, you pretty little scamp, you," says he, tenderly pinching her cheeks, "and now you may go to Mlle. Angelique, and ask her to put a clean dress and a pretty sash on you, for Uncle Felix is coming to dinner. Can you find the way?"

He has placed her on the ground, and led her to the door, then looks after her until, calling "Angelique! Angelique!" she is met by a pretty French *bonne*.

"And how is your Highness?" he now turns to his wife, who holds out both hands to him.

"How long it is since one has seen you to-day," says she.

"Has 'one' missed me a little?"

"Do not ask such foolish questions!"

"Thanks! I was very busy or else I should have burdened you with my presence sooner," says he, gayly. "And now give me your keys, so that I can put away your money."

"Oh, my quarterly allowance. How much is it?"

He hands her a little bundle of bank-notes.

"Count!"

"I do not understand, it is different every time. You always give me more than is due me," replies she, shaking her head.

"Leave me this innocent pleasure. You are always in debt," says he, while he locks the notes in a drawer of her writing-desk.

Erwin never would acknowledge the equal rights of woman with regard to the cares of life. He was pleased that Elsa, who read the most abstract treatises on political economy, did not understand an iota of business. He had purposely left her in this darkness, and she did not fight against it. He paid her the interest of her property, insisted that she should spend it exclusively upon her poor and her own fancies, and she never asked what he did with the capital.

"May I write here?" he asks over his shoulder, sitting down at her writing-desk then, without waiting for an answer. "A lady's writing-desk without invitations and charitable circulars. The inspector has become confused about that farm business of your little *protégé* in Johannesthal." He writes quickly.

"The inspector is good for nothing," grumbles Elsa. "That is to say, he is newly married."

Erwin defends his bailiff.

"There, that is done. You can tell your little friend that it is all arranged. Hm! Elsa! Do you think that I would have been much more practical during our honeymoon than my inspector?"

"Ah, you," says Elsa, who evidently does not understand how her husband can compare himself to his overseer, Cibulka. He has laid aside his pen and now pushes his chair lazily up to hers.

"You will make marks in my carpet, you careless man," says she.

"Do not cry," he says, consolingly. "I will buy you a new one, as the banker said to his daughter when her husband died."

"I congratulate you on your fine comparison," says she, kissing his hair lightly. "Now I must dress for dinner."

"Already? Am I to be sentenced to read the paper?"

It was a little more than five years ago that Erwin Garzin had come to his estate of Steinbach adjoining the beautiful Lanzberg Traunberg in order to arrange his business after the death of his father. Elsa, with whom he had as boy played many a trick, he had found a grown girl. At that time nineteen years old, her mind, matured by pain, was far in advance of her years, her body far behind. She had the slender, undeveloped form of a child too quickly grown, and carried her head always bent forward, like a young tree over which a cold storm has passed, and was always sad and depressed. At times, to be sure, she smiled suddenly like a true child, but only for a moment, and her eyes were almost always moist. She spoke little and had a hollow, almost too deep voice. And yet the first time that Erwin heard this hollow voice his heart beat strangely, and that night he lay awake and was angry at the sweet song of a nightingale which disturbed him in his efforts to remember that hollow voice.

It was spring-time then, a mixture of showers and rainbows, flowers heavy with dew, bright foliage and mild air. Erwin fell hopelessly in love with the pale daughter of old Mr. Lanzberg. She, however, avoided him, not with that pretty maidenly reserve behind which the coquetry of the future woman usually lurks, but with the shy despondency of a sick owl dreading the light. When he had at length accustomed her to his society he was still miles from his aim. She did not think of what most young girls do. She was wholly absorbed in consoling her bowed father, in pitying her unfortunate brother, at that time dwelling in a far distant land. Her heart was full, longed for no other feeling, suspected none, and yet slowly her whole being warmed; something like a cure was effected in her, and the day came when she laid her small hand firmly and confidingly in Erwin's and for the first time he whisperingly called her his betrothed.

But he had not yet won. Soon she expressed her scruples at dragging the shadow which made her so sad under his roof, then at leaving her father. When they proved to her that nothing could so help the bowed man as the consolation of seeing at least one of his children happy, the wedding day was at length appointed. A strange turn suddenly seized her when Erwin one day asked her in what part of Vienna she would prefer to live.

"In Vienna?" cried she. "We are to live in the city?" Whereupon he replied: "My treasure, you know that I am not a rich man, and the rents of Steinbach only just suffice for the support of a

very economical couple. Therefore I, and you with me are dependent upon my career. But I like to work. I have fine connections, and the times are favorable to ambitious people. You will yet be the wife of an Excellency, Elsa!"

From her pale face it could be read that she did not see the slightest pleasure in being the wife of a governor, ambassador, or minister. Her hand grew limp and cold in his, she evaded his caresses, and every time that evening that his glance met hers, her eyes were filled with tears. Her exaggerated aversion to the world disquieted him, without seeming to him other than a symptom of diseased nerves; he thought that his loving patience must vanquish it, and when the next morning his servant brought him a letter from Elsa, he admired the strange, energetic, large letters of the address, and played with it, firmly convinced that it could not contain anything important. It contained the following:

"Above all things, many, many thanks for the sympathizing friendship which you have always showed to us, my father and me. Never should I have allowed myself to be persuaded into an engagement with you. I should be a lamentable wife for you. I will not hinder you in your career, and I cannot live in the world even for your sake. Therefore I give you back your word. I wish you all joy and happiness in the world, and as to me, when you have become a great man, keep a little friendly remembrance of the spring of '70. Elsa."

What could he do but rush over to Traunberg, overwhelm her with tender reproaches, represent to her subtly and incontrovertibly that her shyness was morbid, her yielding to this mood fairly wrong.

"Am I then nothing to you?" he finally cried, vexedly.

Then she raised her large eyes, eyes such as Raphael has painted in the sweet face of the little John, as he kneels near the sleeping child Jesus, his God and his King.

"I believe you love a quite different person from me--you do not know me!" she whispered, shaking her head.

And Erwin flushed crimson and was ashamed of his brutal egoism. He kissed her hands, he would torment her no longer--but he could not give her up.

He gave her eight days to consider it--all that remained of his vacation.

But he did not gain a step during these eight days.

With a heavy heart and hoarse voice he took leave. She smiled.

And yet he never felt more plainly that she loved him. Her love was that emotion which is above earthly considerations, which is capable of the most painful sacrifices, the most complete renunciation, although, or perhaps because she scarcely thought of marriage; in a word, it was the love of a very young girl.

It did not resemble his in the slightest. How shallow his life in Vienna and his career now seemed to him; how unattractive, how far away and vague his aim, and even if he did attain all for which he strove.

The justifications of a true, warm, longing love are always quite incontrovertible for him whom it guides.

Elsa stood before the park, under one of the black lindens. It was summer, the lindens bloomed, and a dreamy hum of bees pervaded their gnarled branches. Elsa looked through the clear summer air in the direction in which Castle Steinbach shone white above the wooded valley. Then she heard a step--she looked around. It was Erwin, thin, in spite of the flush of heat, looking very badly, but with sparkling eyes.

"Where do you come from?" cried she, trembling with surprise, with happiness.

"From the castle, where I sought you in vain. Your father did not know where you were."

"He was asleep--did you wake him?"

"Very possibly, but I had no time to reproach myself! Oh, Elsa, are you not in the least glad to see me? I have resigned--I cannot live without you!"

She stood there with loudly beating heart, and embarrassed smile, like a surprised child before a Christmas tree.

"You pay a high price for a miserable little thing," murmured she, and fairly wept.

"Happiness desires to be paid dearly for--it seems to me a small one!" whispered he.

Thereupon she was silent for a moment, looked at him anxiously, solemnly; was it possible that he clung to her, such a weak, insignificant creature? Then suddenly, with her lovely look of embarrassment, she threw both arms around him. "Oh you----" she cried, and paused because she found no word that in her opinion was great and splendid enough for him. "How I will love you!"

It was a risky experiment, to tear himself away from his customary occupation and society, and wish to pass the rest of his life at the side of a nervous misanthropical wife.

How did it succeed?

He had feared having too little to do, had provided himself with books, quite like a diplomat sent to Japan. To his astonished delight, he soon found not only how much there was to occupy him but how much he could accomplish with the income from Steinbach, which he had been accustomed to estimate at two or three per cent., and which now daily increased; for the many lives around him whose weal and woe he held in his hands, from the overseer and farmers to the day-laborers, and then Elsa!

How beautiful she grew after he had slowly kissed away the deep sadness from her face--and how lovely! The frivolous love of pleasure and gayety which is considered normal in young women never developed in her; she always remained quiet, but a dreamy happiness shone continually in her eyes, she was so blissfully happy.

What a charming companion! She rode with the endurance and indifferent courage of a man, read everything, was interested in everything, noticed everything, spoke of the most forgotten historical characters as if she had met them yesterday. She rather spurred him on than dragged him down.

Instead of, as he had feared, growing rusty in the country, he had time for making good much that he had neglected. She went on long journeys with him, but at home associated as little as possible with her neighbors. In these years Elsa was apparently one of the happiest women in the world.

She was only sad when she thought of Felix.

Her father, shortly after her marriage, blessing her a thousandfold, had died in her arms. Felix had returned to his home.

III.

The two brothers-in-law sit alone in the circle of light which a garden lamp throws in a corner of the garden shaded by elder trees. Dinner is long over, they have ceased laughing at Litzi's childish pranks and remarks; she has become sleepy, and Elsa has taken her away to lay her in her pretty little white bed. The two men, meanwhile, are smoking their cigars in the open air.

"Erwin, do you happen to know these Harfinks?" Felix asks his brother-in-law quite suddenly, in the embarrassed tone of a humiliated, bored man, and with the slightly husky voice which distinguishes all generations of indulgent and effeminate races.

The "certain Lanzberg" is indisputably of an attractive appearance--the beauty of his sister in a man--and yet softer. All the lines of his face are rounder, less decided; the features of a faultless regularity, the eyes still bluer, and yet the whole face lacks Elsa's lovely, evident peace; the eyes are always weary and half closed; his full lips wear a suffering, tormented expression, and the light brown color of his complexion, in its natural color like Elsa's, is nevertheless ashy in comparison to her healthy pallor, and furrowed with little wrinkles.

"Do you know these Harfinks?" he asks, softly.

"Harfink fitted up my sugar factory," replies Erwin, and glances closely at his brother-in-law. "In consequence I have met him several times. Recently, in Marienbad, he reminded me of our acquaintance, and introduced me to his wife and daughter."

"Strange man!" says Felix, shaking his head.

"Yes, strange, silly! His wife is repulsive, both are very ordinary."

"Yes, both," repeats Felix, and with the toe of his boot draws figures in the sand. "But the daughter?"

"Well, the daughter?" Erwin glances still more attentively at his brother-in-law's face.

"She is very well educated," murmurs the latter, indistinctly.

"Her education was probably acquired in a very noble boarding-school," remarks Erwin, dryly. "During the ten minutes of our acquaintance, she used the word 'aristocratic' three times, and twice complained that society in the Kursaal was so mixed. Besides that, she found the country monotonous, the weather dull, the music '*agacante*,' and concluded by saying, one rails at Marienbad and yet it was tiresome everywhere, for her friend Laure de Lonsigny wrote her quite desperate letters from Luchon."

Felix has flushed more and more deeply during this pitiless account. "Poor girl, how embarrassed she must have been," says he, excusingly.

"Embarrassed?" Erwin shrugged his shoulders. "She had a great deal of self-possession."

"Is not a certain kind of self-possession only a form of embarrassment?" asked Felix, shyly.

But Erwin evidently has no inclination to be lenient to Linda's faults. He suspects the approach of something which must shatter Felix's undermined existence, and seeks a means of meeting it.

"You, perhaps, do not even think her pretty," says Felix, vexedly, hesitating.

"Pretty, no; but dazzlingly beautiful. It is a pity that she has parents who, with all their perversity, are yet so respectable," says Erwin with unmistakable emphasis.

Then Felix bursts out: "It is not only horrible, but absolutely indecent to speak of a girl with whom, by your own account, you have spoken for scarcely ten minutes, in such a repulsive manner." And as his brother-in-law, astonished at such an unusual outbreak from Felix, yet looks at him without the slightest harshness or coldness, the "certain Lanzberg" grows red and murmurs, "Pardon that I ventured to reprove you."

Erwin clenches his fist and opens it again with the gesture of a man who has conquered a painful excitement.

Such feelings often came over him in intercourse with his brother-in-law, although he felt great pity and much sympathy for the good, shy fellow; but his association with him was never wholly free, open, but always contained a tinge of sympathetic politeness, and there was never that warm abruptness which is a healthy symptom of manly friendship. Sad yielding on one side; on the other good-natured advances. This, after a half year's acquaintance, was the relation of the two brothers-in-law. One must--alas! it could not be otherwise--treat Felix as a precious but broken and only artificially mended cup of Sèvres porcelain.

"Why does my opinion of the Harfinks interest you?" asks Erwin, now going straight to his object.

For a while there is perfect silence, only animated by the soft voices of the night, and the fluttering of a moth which has wandered behind the tall shade of the garden lamp and has been singed.

"Erwin!" cries Felix, his hands convulsively clasped, in his large feverish eyes a look such as Erwin had only once before seen, and then in a dying man's who suddenly longed to live. "Do you think that a man like me has a right to marry?"

"Do you think a man like me has a right to marry?"

"No!" sounded harshly and firmly.

It was not Erwin who answered. In the circle of light which the garden lamp shed amid the gray moonlight, a tall white form had placed itself opposite Felix, behind Erwin's chair.

"No!"

Erwin himself shudders; his wife seems uncanny. So beautiful, so pale, with such deathly tenderness, must have looked the angel when he drove the beings whom he loved out of Paradise.

Felix lets his head sink in his hands. Elsa bends over him and caresses him like a sick child. Erwin wishes to withdraw, but Felix calls him back. "Stay, there are no secrets between us. I should have never dared take the hand which you held out to me, had I not been convinced that you know---- Yes, Elsa," he continued, very bitterly, "you despise me, it was cowardly, it was unconscionable to even think of it, but if you knew what it is to be weary and alone, with no one on whom to lean for support! To have no one to whom one can be anything, for whom one can sacrifice oneself, to be perpetually condemned to think of oneself when thought is torment and loathing--to be sometimes permitted by pitying people to look on at happiness which awakes all the furies in one--yes, at first it was a comfort to me to flee to you, to breathe the same air with two happy people--but then--your beaming eyes, the little tendernesses of your child, even the alms of love which you gave me, all made my blood hot and me giddy. My God! I have injured no one but myself! Must I be condemned for life? Ten years is usually considered enough for a heavy crime, and I would gladly exchange these last ten years with any galley slave."

Since his return to his fatherland no one had heard him say so much; the gentle, quiet man is not to be recognized.

Elsa stands near him, white and sad, tears are in her eyes, but the severe expression of her mouth has not softened. Erwin is more moved than she. "Felix," says he, "you go too far. You must not marry the young Harfink; she is worldly and selfish, and would seek in a marriage with you only the satisfaction of her social vanity."

Felix laughs bitterly.

"But the world is large. You must find a girl who loves you for yourself, who will raise you above yourself, who----"

Felix's eyes rest on his brother-in-law, then they turn to Elsa.

"It is all of no use, Erwin;" he suddenly interrupts him and rises. "And even if I found what is not to be found, and even if an angel came down from heaven to console me, I must repulse her. I have no right to marry for the sake of the children who would bear my name. Ask Elsa for her opinion."

Elsa bows her head and is silent. He gives Erwin his hand, seizes his hat and, without having bid Elsa good-night, with the bearing of an offended man, takes a few hasty steps--then he turns, and as he sees Elsa still standing motionless, her face drawn with deepest misery, near the chair which he has left, he hurries back to her and takes her in his arms. "I was wrong to be angry, Elsa," murmurs he. "I know you must love me to have forgiven me. It may well be indifferent to him," with a half nod to Erwin. "I was not myself to-day; have patience with me."

The tears of the brother and sister mingle. Then Felix tears himself away.

"Will you come back to-morrow?" asks Elsa.

"Yes, to say farewell."

"My God! what are you going to do?"

"I am going away--it is better for me elsewhere--and you, you are very good to me, but----you do not need me."

With that he goes. Erwin accompanies him. Then he returns to his wife, whom he finds where he had left her. She is not one of those who for long yield themselves to the weak enjoyment of tears. Her eyes are dry again, but so indescribably sad and staring that Erwin would rather see them wet. He draws her on his knees and whispers a thousand calming words of tenderness to her, but she remains absent.

"So the young Harfink has robbed him of his senses?" she murmurs interrogatively.

"So it seems!"

"Poor Felix!--I was very hard to him--I dared not be otherwise. I fear, I fear it is all in vain--he will yield. You have the same thought!"

"To dissuade any obstinate man is hard, but sometimes at least successful--to dissuade a weak man is quite easy, but always unsuccessful," replies Erwin. "Nevertheless let us hope."

"Concerning Felix, hope fails," said Elsa. "O Erwin, Erwin, often it seems to me that father had no right to persuade him to live at that time!"

IV.

Felix rode home.

It was a moonlight night, but none of those which remind one of theatre scenery and silver-flecked green paint, such, as painted in oil, endanger all German art societies; the objects did not float in that universal green-black indistinctness; on the contrary, they stood out in sharp relief.

The tall poplars and the short bushy grass at the edge of the road, the yellow fields of grain with their dark piles of sheaves, the pale flowers in the ditches, the red and black roofs of a distant village sleeping between green lindens, a round church cupola and a cemetery with its low, white wall, and the dark rows of crosses and monuments--all could be seen plainly, only with somewhat faded colors, and over all was a misty veil like thin smoke, and a white light shone on the poplar leaves, rustling and turning in the night wind. The reapers were still working. Through the mild air sounded their song, hollow and monotonous, with the quiet sadness which characterizes Slavonian folk-songs. Their scythes sparkle in the moonlight; occasionally the pleasant face of a young woman, nodding to a youth, rises before Felix's eyes from the crowd of workers, irradiated by the mystic half light.

Felix watched them as he slowly rode on. He would gladly have been one of them, and would have taken upon himself all their burdens in exchange for the one he bore. He could have wished that the night had been less beautiful, that a dead, winter stillness had prevailed around him instead of this strange charm of the mild July moonlight.

The night wind, warm and gentle, caressed his face and his hands, and awakened the strangest longing in his heart. His head grew heated; the allurements with which his imagination tormented his despondent heart grew more and more intense.

The monotonous pace of his horse, the melancholy reaper's song lulled him not to sleep, but to that half slumber which produces dreams. He did not wholly lose the consciousness of motion; the open road, the trees, the wheat-fields, with everything, was mingled a light form; two large eyes sparkled half in sadness, half defiantly, and two full red lips smiled at him. An indescribable breath of youth and fresh life met him.

The yellow fields and the reapers have sunken into the earth--folk-song and the swing of the scythes have long sounded only like a vague murmur of waters to his distracted ear. His horse stumbles, a twig strikes him in the face, he starts.

The white dream-form has vanished, all is dark around him, a solemn, far-distant murmur breaks the stillness, and gigantic trees meet over the head of the solitary rider.

The horse trembles under him, then rears suddenly, and as he checks it he sees in the distance something low and black hurrying away in great leaps, sees there--there, close before him, a light figure which slowly rises from the ground.

He breathes heavily--for Heaven's sake is he still dreaming? That is surely she--Linda!

"Ah! Baron Lanzberg, you here? Thank God," cries she.

"You seem to have met with an unpleasant adventure," says Felix confusedly, coughs and springs from his horse without thinking what he is doing.

"A very unpleasant one," says she in her high, fresh, girlish voice. "That is what comes of insisting upon riding a donkey. We set out on foot, my brother and I, to the burned mill, to have the great enjoyment of seeing charred beams and skeletons of hens, and devouring black bread and sour milk, we---- Have you a weakness for sour milk, Baron?" looking up at him with a childish glance and smile.

"No, not exactly."

"I was not at all satisfied with my expedition," she continued, with the self-satisfied fluency of all young girls who are accustomed to have their chatter listened to for the sake of their pretty faces. "Not at all. Then I discovered two donkeys, one of them had a saddle like an arm-chair. Raimund must hire them. I left him no peace! His donkey goes splendidly, but mine! I cannot move him from the spot. I call to my brother, but he does not hear, he is singing college songs, thunders like a whole chorus and has ears for his own voice only. I do not love Raimund's singing, but as it gradually sounded further and further away, and finally ceased entirely, I had quite a curious sensation. Then my donkey threw back his ears, opened his mouth, and--here I lay. I am so glad that I met you."

The moonlight breaks through the green net-work of the woods, shines between the rushes,

flowers and brambles of the ditch along the road, lights up Linda's face, the beautiful white face with the large dark eyes. Her hair is tumbled, she has lost her hat, her gown is torn, the affectation which usually conceals her inborn grace completely vanished.

"I do not know the way," says she, "and what will mamma think when Raimund comes home without me?"

After he has overcome his first fright, Felix tells himself that his dread of her charm must not prevent him from helping her. "If you will trust yourself to my guidance and will take this path across the fields, you can reach Marienbad in a half hour," he remarks, and tries to fasten his horse by the bridle to the low branch of an oak.

"Ah, it will inconvenience you so; if you will only point out the way----"

"You surely do not imagine that I could let you go alone, in the pitch-dark night? No." He smiles at her encouragingly. "What a child you still are, Miss Linda. Come."

He goes ahead, carefully pushing aside all branches for her. The air becomes more and more sultry, an enervating damp odor rises from the ground, in the tree-tops rustle wonderful melodies.

An intoxicating shudder runs over him at the thought of being alone with her in the great, silent, lonely woods. Then he becomes alarmed, quickens his steps, in order to run away from his thoughts and shorten the way.

Then a voice behind him calls laughingly and complainingly: "How you hurry--do not make fun of me, I am tired--one moment, only one moment!"

Linda stands there out of breath, heated, with half-closed eyes and half-opened mouth, her hair loosened by the rough caresses of the thicket, hanging over her shoulders.

How beautiful she is. Shall he offer her his arm? No, no, no!

He is one of those warm and weak natures in whom passion in one moment drowns everything, annihilates, crushes everything, intellect, honor and duty.

He has more conscience than others, but not that prudent, warning conscience, which withholds one from a wrong deed, but only that malicious, accusing one which points the finger, grins and hurls sly insults in the face after the deed is done.

"If you wish to spare your mother a fright, we must hurry," says Felix, with the last remnant of prudence which is left in him.

They go on. Before their feet opens an abyss, barely ten feet broad; in its depths filters a small thread of water which the moonlight colors a bluish silver. At the edge of the abyss, curiously looking down into it, bending deeply down to it, grows a bush of wild roses, covered thickly with white blossoms, trembling slightly, like a living being; with outstretched wings it vibrates over the depths, as if it hesitated between the longing to fly up to the sacred mystery of heaven, and the desire to plunge down into the alluring enigma of the abyss.

A small plank leads over it, slippery and tottering. Felix strides across it quickly and then looks around for Linda.

There, in the middle of the board, trembling, her teeth set in her lip, stands Linda, and cannot advance. "I am giddy!" she gasps.

There are few more attractive things in the world than a pretty, frightened woman.

Felix rushes up to her, takes her in his arms and carries her over. All is forgotten, he holds her closely to him, his lips lose themselves in her loosened hair, burn on her forehead, seek her mouth, but then he suddenly pauses. The enormity of his deed occurs to him.

"For Heaven's sake pardon me!" cries he. Whereupon she replies with a naïve smile and tender glance:

"Pardon? Ah, I knew that you loved me."

"That indeed a blind man could have seen," murmurs he bitterly. "But, Linda, could you resolve to be my wife?"

"Could I resolve?" she murmurs with tender roguishness. "And why not?"

"In spite of my past?"

Past! The word has a romantic charm for her. It wakes in her an idea of baccaret and mabille, of a brilliantly squandered fortune, of ballet-dancers and duels. A "past" in her mind belongs to every true nobleman of a certain age.

"If your heart is now wholly mine, what does your past matter to me?" says she softly.

Then he kisses her hand. "Linda you are an angel," whispers he, and silent and happy, they finish their walk.

Ten minutes later, before the ambitious singer, Raimund, reaches home, Linda was in the house.

She stood on the balcony of the "Emperor of China," between dead-looking oleander trees which exhale a tiresome odor of bitter almonds: she stands there, her arms resting on the balustrade when Raimund and his donkey emerge from the shadows of the street. His red cap pushed back, his face shining as if freshly shaven, with glance directed upward in terror he comes along, the picture of bankrupt responsibility on a donkey.

A gay laugh greets him.

"Linda, where are you?"

"Here."

"Here! I have been looking for you for an hour," says he, scarcely believing his eyes.

"Where? In the sky apparently--I have not been there, and have no wish to go. Do not stare at me so, please, as if I were my own ghost. Come up here, I have such a lovely secret."

With that she withdraws from the balcony, but the secret with which she has enticed him she does not tell him when he comes up.

"To-morrow, to-morrow," says she, clapping her hands, leaning far back in an old-fashioned arm-chair.

Raimund cannot get a word from his pretty, capricious sister.

"Who brought you home then?" he asks finally.

"Ah! That is just it, ha-ha-ha!" answered she.

"Linda! You have met Lanzberg--he has declared himself!" cries Raimund, excitedly.

"Will you be silent?" replies she, laughing--triumphant.

Meanwhile her parents, who have been to the farewell performance of a famous Vienna artiste at the theatre, enter.

"Hush!" cries she with a decided gesture to her brother. "Good evening, papa and mamma!" without leaving her arm-chair. "I am frightfully fond of you, for, if you only knew of it, I am to-day, for the first time, glad to be in the world."

Papa Harfink smiles delightedly, Mamma Harfink asks, "What is it?" and all her cameos and mosaic bracelets rattle with excitement.

"She----" begins Raimund.

"Hush, I tell you!" cries Linda, then laying her arms on the old-fashioned arms of the easy-chair, her head thrown teasingly back, she asks: "Is Baron Lanzberg a good *partie*?"

"His affairs are very well arranged. I saw in the country register. He has scarcely any debts," says Papa Harfink.

"And he is of the good old nobility, is he not?" asks Linda.

"Did not his father receive a tip in the form of an iron crown from some tottering ministry?"

"The Lanzbergs descend from the twelfth century," says mamma. "They are the younger line of the Counts Lanzberg, who are now known as the Counts Dey."

"Oh! and what was his mother's maiden name?" Linda continues her examination.

"She was a Countess Böhl."

"Why does he associate so little with people, and is so sad?--because of his past?"

Linda's eyes sparkle and shine, and capricious little dimples play about the corners of her mouth.

"What do you know of his past?" bursts out mamma.

"Oh, nothing; but I should so like to know something about it--it is not proper, eh?"

"He had at one time a *liaison*, hm--hm--was deceived"--murmurs Mrs. Harfink--"never got over it."

"Ah!--but it seems so--for--in a word, if all does not deceive me, he will come to-morrow to ask for my hand."

Without leaving her arm-chair, her little feet dance a merry polka of triumph on the floor.

"And do you love him?"

"I?"--Linda opens her eyes wide--"naturally; he is the first man with a faultless profile and good manners whom I have met--since Laure de Lonsigny's father!"

Old Harfink, wholly absorbed in gazing at his tongue in a hand-glass, has not heard the bold malice of his daughter. Raimund, on the contrary, says emphatically, "I find your delight at marrying a nobleman highly repulsive," and leaves the room.

And Felix? He does not undress that night. Motionless his face buried in the pillows, he lies on his bed and still fights a long-lost battle.

The air is heavy with the fragrance of linden blossoms and the approaching thunder-storm. A massive wall of clouds towers above the horizon like a barrier between heaven and earth.

V.

Susanna Blecheisen, now Mrs. Harfink, usually called Madame von Harfink, was a famous blue-stocking. As a young girl she was interested in natural sciences, studied medicine, complained of the oppression of the female sex, and wrote articles on the emancipation of woman, in which with great boldness she described marriage as an antiquated and immoral institution.

In spite of the energetic independence of her character, in her twenty-eighth year she succumbed to the magnetic attraction of a red-cheeked clerk in her father's office, and generously sacrificed for him her scorn of manly prejudice and ecclesiastical sacraments--she married him.

Hereupon she moved with her husband to Vienna, and soon enjoyed a certain fame there on account of her fine German, and because she subscribed to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and had once sat beside Humboldt at a dinner, perhaps also because her husband was a very wealthy manufacturer.

Soon convinced of the inferior intellect of this man, she did not give herself up to cowardly despair at this discovery, but did her best to educate him. She patiently read to him works on capital, during which he incessantly rattled the money in his pockets, as if he would say, How does the theoretical analysis of capital concern a practical man, as long as he relies solely upon the actual substance? This rubbish furnished occupation for poor wretches, he thought to himself, which opinion he finally announced to his wife. But when she told him that Carl Marx and Lassalle were both very wealthy men, he listened to her dissertations with considerably heightened respect. From political economy, which she treated as a light recreation, fitted to his case, she led him into the gloomy regions of German metaphysics, and plunged him confusedly into the most dangerous abysses of misused logic.

He listened calmly, without astonishment, without complaining, with the lofty conviction that to cultivate one's self, as every kind of tasty idleness, was a very noble occupation, and, like many more clever people, he made a rule of despising everything which he did not understand. Instead of any other comment, during his wife's readings he merely rubbed his hands pleasantly, and murmured as long as he was not asleep, titteringly, "This confusion, this confusion."

Yet, however Mrs. Susanna strove, his mental wings did not strengthen, and his digestion remained the most absorbing interest of his life. He always fell back again into his insignificant commonness, like a dog whom one wishes to train to walk upon two legs, but who always falls back upon four again. At an æsthetic tea, for which his wife had most conscientiously prepared him, most generously lent him her intelligence, she heard him, in the midst of a conversation upon Schopenhauer and Leopardi, say to his neighbor: "Have you a weakness for pickles, ma'am? I have a great weakness for pickles, but--he-he-he!--I--it is really very unusual--I always feel such a disagreeable prickling in my nose when I eat anything sour."

With years, Susanna somewhat neglected the difficult education of this hopeless specimen, and transferred her pedagogic capabilities to the bringing up of her son, of whom she tried to make a genius.

She designed him for jurisprudence. He, however, devoted himself to song. Instead of poring over law books in consideration of his examination, he passed two-thirds of his time at the piano, diligently trying to attain the summit of his ambition, high C, while he did not fail to twist himself into the original contortions which on such occasions all particularly ambitious but faulty voices find so effectual.

With Linda, mamma Harfink from the first could do nothing, and in consequence she sent her to a Swiss pension. There she learned, besides a little French and piano thumping, to carry her head very high, learned to go into nervous spasms over creaking boots--in a word, she acquired the refined delicacy of feeling of the "princess with the pea."

What torture when upon her return home she lay upon not a single pea, alleviated by comfortable mattresses, but upon a whole sack of undisguised peas! Her home was frightful to her. The unrestrained, coarse admiration which the young men of her circle offered her seemed unbearable to her. Discontented, weary of life, without an aim that was not bound up in vanity, she vegetated from one day to another; in desperate moments thought of going on the stage, or perpetrating some outrageous act to make herself notorious.

The only consolation of this desolate time was the intercourse with her cousin, Eugene von Rhoeden, who had been educated in the Theresanium, had learned to turn up his nose more frequently and with more fine distinction than she herself, but to her misery, had his brand new title of Freiherr, and a couple of intimate friends of very old family beside. A passionate enemy of his relatives, he had greeted her enthusiastically with the words, "*Sapperment*, you are wholly different from your family, Linda!"

"Do not call me Linda, that sounds so operatic," she had answered him. "My friends always called me Linn!"

Eugene Rhoeden immediately perceived that Linda had a knowledge of *bon ton*--evidently knew that all Austrian countesses are called Piffi, Pantschi, Nina, like *grisettes* or little dogs. Her romantic name was odious to her, but in a circle where the women called each other Theresa and Rosalie, she must rejoice at being named Linda and not Rosalinda.

A superficial confidence arose between her and her noble cousin.

So stood matters when Felix "accidentally" made the acquaintance of the Harfinks while walking. This was the family into which fate and his weakness had thrown him.

VI.

Is Marienbad cheaper than Franzensbad because it is not so select, or is it less select because it is cheaper? I do not know. But certain it is that Marienbad does not possess the same stamp of distinction as Franzensbad, which latter, together with all the guests, seems about to slowly perish of its excessive distinction. The guests at Marienbad also lack that transparent thinness of the Franzensbad invalids, which so claims sympathy: they all look "not ill but only too healthy."

As the Marienbad invalids do not look like invalids, so Marienbad does not look like a water cure. It wholly lacks that fairylike appearance of a cure where invalidism is an elegant pastime. It is so severely commonplace, so ordinary that one is forced to believe in its reality. Fortunately there is some compensation in the country round about, and when the guests look from the windows of the miserable hotel rooms, beyond the plainness of the dusty streets to the green beautiful woods, the most pretentious are satisfied. The Marienbad woods are so charming, not those barbaric gloomy woods like the Bohemian forests for example, which with their black branches grumblingly bar the way to the sunbeams, and groan so continually that the song birds from pure terror have all died or gone away.

In the woods near Marienbad, the trees sing the whole day in competition with the birds, and the sunbeams fall between gay, dancing, quivering shadows, and the blue sky laughs through a thousand breaks in the lofty, floating leafy roof.

The Harfink family live in the Mühle strasse, and have a view directly into the woods.

It is half past eight in the morning. Papa Harfink, who is taking the cure, and every morning at

six o'clock stands beside the spring, has drunk his seven glasses, taken the prescribed walk, and afterwards breakfasted; now he has gone to be weighed. The student, his son, is amusing himself by following a young lady who travels with many diamonds but without a chaperon, and who is entered in the register as a "singer." Linda is still at her toilet. Mamma Harfink is busy in the drawing-room with a medical pamphlet. Then the maid brings her a note. "A messenger from Traunberg brought it; he is waiting for an answer," declared the maid.

Before Mrs. Harfink had opened the letter Linda enters and asks: "We need expect no visitor before twelve o'clock, mamma? If the Baron chances to come, you know where I am--in the Kursaal. At twelve o'clock I take my Turkish bath. Adieu! I shall be back at one o'clock." With that she vanished.

Mrs. Harfink had concealed the letter from her daughter. She secretly suspects that it contains matters of which Linda need know nothing. Scarcely has her daughter vanished when she hastily opens it. In an uncharacteristic handwriting, occupying a great deal of paper:

"My Dear Madam: You have surely already learned from your daughter what has occurred between us. That I ventured, under the circumstances which you, madam, certainly know, to offer her my hand, seems to me now, upon calm consideration, incomprehensible and unpardonable."

Mamma Harfink starts. Will the Baron take back his word? What can he mean by "under the circumstances"? Linda's unprotectedness in the great lonely woods? Or does he, perhaps, refer to his fatal past? She resolves to read further.

"Your daughter's manner proves to me plainly that she has no suspicion of the stain upon my honor. I have not the courage to make my confession to her myself; do it for me, my dear madam, and kindly write me whether Miss Linda, after she has learned all, will yet hear anything of me, or will turn away from me. In the latter case I will go away for some time.

"With the deepest respect, your submissive

"Lanzberg."

"Absurd, eccentric man! He will yet spoil everything with his foolish scruples!" cries she, then, looking at the letter once more: "Horribly blunt, awkward style; no practised pen, but undeniably the sentiments of a refined gentleman."

Mrs. Harfink folded her hands and thought. Should she read this letter to Linda? She had been so pleased at the prospect of Linda's advantageous match. But the strange girl was capable of giving up this brilliant *parti* for the sake of a trifle like this spot in Lanzberg's past.

Mrs. Harfink, in intercourse with the world very sensitive and wholly implacable, possessed theoretically that far-reaching consideration for any individuals attacked by scandal which has become so fashionable among the philanthropists of the present time. She always treated all city officials as calumniators and all accused as martyrs.

"Oh, if I were only in Linda's place, I would be angry that I had so little to pardon in him," cried she dramatically; "but Linda is so narrow, so petty. Her intellect does not reach to the comprehension of the eternal divine morality; she understands merely the narrow prejudiced morality of good society, which divides sins as well as men into 'admissible and not admissible;' to-day calmly overlooks a crime, to-morrow screams itself hoarse over a fault which offends against its customs."

While the Harfink satisfied her philanthropic heart with this subtle, humane eloquence, the girl stood waiting at the door. "The messenger begs an answer," she remarked shyly. Mrs. Harfink bit her lips impatiently. She was not capable of a decided deception, she must twist and turn it before her conscience until it took on a quite different aspect from the original one. Must, in a word, carry it out in such a highly virtuous manner that she could later deny it to her conscience.

"The messenger begs an answer!"

Mrs. Harfink seated herself at her writing-table and wrote:

"My Dear Lanzberg: Come, if possible, at once--in any case before twelve. Linda expects you.

"With cordial greeting, yours sincerely,

"S. Harfink."

Two, almost three hours passed. Susanna's excitement became painful. What should she tell Felix? The best would be to tell him that Linda knew all. And did she not indeed know all? She had conscientiously told her daughter of a *liaison* which had formerly been the unhappiness of the Baron. The *liaison* was, on the whole, the principal thing, everything else only a detail. Only chance, which did not in the slightest accord with the whole life of the Baron before and since, and of which respectable people hesitate to speak, and which one should not exhume from the past in which it lay buried.

She was in duty bound to conceal the affair from Linda, as one must conceal certain things in themselves wholly innocent from children, because their intellect, not yet matured by experience, is not capable of rightly comprehending them.

In all her circle of acquaintances, Mrs. Harfink was the only one who knew anything definite of Lanzberg's disgrace. By chance, and through the acquaintance of a high official of the law, she had learned the sad facts. She thought of the envious glances with which all her friends had followed Lanzberg's attentions to Linda. Linda had somewhat forced the acquaintance with him. The good friends were horrified at her boldness--at her triumph. Mrs. Harfink remembered her sister, Rhoeden; what had she not done to marry her daughter to a coughing, bald-headed, Wurtemburg count, a gambler, whose debts they had been forced to pay before the marriage.

Quarter of twelve struck--was Lanzberg not coming, then? In a short time Linda would be back.

Then a carriage stopped before the "Emperor of China."

A minute later there was a knock at the door, and Felix Lanzberg entered the room, pale, worn, with great uneasy, shy eyes.

Mamma Harfink reached him both hands, and merely said, "My dear Lanzberg!" then she let him sit down.

He was silent. Many times he tried to speak, but the words would not come, and he lowered his eyes helplessly to his hat, which he held on his knees.

At last Mamma Harfink took his hat from his hand and put it away.

"You will stay to dinner with us?"

"If you will permit me, madam," said he, scarcely audibly.

"Oh, you over-sensitive man!" cried she, with her loud, indelicate sympathy. How she pained him!

"Does Linda think that I am an over-sensitive man?" said he, almost bitterly, and without looking at his future mother-in-law.

Mamma Harfink pondered for a last time. "I do not understand how you could doubt Linda for a moment," replied she.

He scarcely heard her, and only cried hastily "Was she surprised?"

"My dear Lanzberg!" Mrs. Harfink called the Baron as often as possible "her dear Lanzberg," in order to show him that she already included him in her family--"a man who can oppose to his fault a counter-balance such as your whole subsequent life is, has not only expiated his fault but he has obliterated it." Madame Harfink very often spoke of her husband's views, and liked to allow him to participate before the world in her wealth of thought. If she herself could no longer cherish any illusions about him, she nevertheless carefully concealed his nullity from friends as well as she could in a sacred obscurity.

"That may all be true," cried Felix, almost violently, "but nevertheless I cannot expect this philosophical consideration from a young girl. Oh, my dear madam, do you not deceive yourself?"

From without sounded the gay click of high heels. Linda had returned sooner than her mamma had expected. The blood rushed to her face, she trembled so with excitement that, thanks to her cameos, she rattled like a rickety weather-vane in a storm. "Linda pardons you everything," cried she, hastily. "Linda loves you, she only begs you one thing, that you will never speak to her of your past. That would be too painful for her!"

The door opened. Linda entered, her hair in charming disorder, and her large straw hat carelessly pushed back from her forehead. When she perceived Felix she started slightly and joyously, then she rested her large eyes, radiant with happiness, upon him.

"*A tantôt*, you dear people," cried Mrs. Harfink, and, gracefully waving her hand, this courageous and philanthropic liar left the room.

For a few seconds there was utter silence. Linda gazed in astonishment at Felix, who stood

there deathly pale and motionless, his hand resting on the corner of the table. That the charm of her person so confused him flattered her, it seemed to her interesting and romantic to cause such deep heart wounds, still his manner remained enigmatical to her. She tapped her foot in pretty impatience and coughed slightly.

Then he looked up, his eyes full of pleading tenderness and dread. "Linda, will you really consecrate your young, blooming life to me?--me--a broken man who----" He paused.

The situation became more dramatic, and pleased her better and better. She came close up to him.

"If you ever permit yourself, in the presence of your betrothed, to remember your past, and look so sad, I will run away, do you hear, and will never know anything more of you." Her voice sounded so gentle, so sweet, her warm little hand lay so coaxingly and confidingly on his arm.

"Poor Felix!" murmured she, looking up at him tenderly. He closed his eyes, blinded with tears and happiness, then he took her violently in his arms, and kissed her. Her hat slipped from her head and fell to the floor. She laughed at it very charmingly. He released her in order to look at her better. He was happy--he had forgotten. He drew a ring from his finger. "It was my mother's engagement ring," he whispered, and placed it on her finger. Then it proved that the ring was almost too small for her. "What slender fingers you must have!" cried she, and gazed with pride at his slender, aristocratic hand.

Then there was a knock at the door. "Ah!" cried Linda, with a displeasure which her *fiancé* found bewitching.

Eugene von Rhoeden entered, a bouquet of white flowers in his hand. "Gardenias, Lin! Gardenias!" he cried, triumphantly. "What do you say to this progress of Marienbad civilization? Ah, Baron--excuse me--I really had not----" He glances from one to the other, sees the diamond ring sparkling on Linda's hand. "What a magnificent ring you have, Lin!"

"A present," replies Linda, with a pretty gesture toward Felix. "May one accept gardenias from a relative?" she asks him, coaxingly--and takes one from the bouquet to place in his buttonhole.

"Ah!" cries Eugene, suddenly changing an acid expression into a polite smile. "May I congratulate you, or will my congratulations not be received?"

Felix gives him his hand with emotion. "Congratulate me, congratulate me," he murmurs.

"I do not know which of you is more to be congratulated," says Eugene, with tact and feeling.

In the adjoining room is heard a selection from the Huguenots, which breaks off in the middle, then a great, terrible howl, whereupon the improvised Rarol, red as his cravat, bursts in and cries, "Did you hear, Linda? That was C."

"Unfortunately," says she, laughing.

Raimund starts back. As he notices guests, he cries, "I will not disturb----" and vanishes.

"And I also will not disturb you," says Rhoeden, with indescribably loving accent. "Adieu!" and kissing Linda's hand, whereupon he says to Felix, "Your betrothed, my cousin," he disappears.

VII.

The music-stand in Franzensbad is torn down, the whining potpourries have ceased, the park is deserted, legions of dry leaves whirl on the sand, and exchange cutting remarks with the autumn wind upon the perpetual change of every earthly thing, which short-sighted humanity calls transitoriness.

It is the 18th of October, the "certain Baron Lanzberg's" wedding-day. The week of torture in which he could not resolve to tell the severe Elsa of his betrothal is past, and when he at length resolved upon it, he received only a sad glance and a silent shrug of the shoulders as answer from her--past are the happy hours of the betrothal time--almost past.

If the intoxication, the confusion which never becomes consciousness is happiness, then Felix was very happy in this time. Passion had numbed everything in him which did not refer to the present or to the 18th of October. He existed only in a feeling of longing and expectation. He had

no time to tell himself that Linda's happy coquetries proved a very flippant conception of the serious situation--he himself had forgotten the gravity of the situation. He did not think, he only felt and saw a white, ever-changing face, a face which can smile in at least two hundred ways--felt a perpetual warm excitement, felt something like an electric shock when two soft lips touched his temples and left them quickly like butterflies which will not be caught, when two soft hands played round his neck.

Yes, ft is the 18th of October, Felix Lanzberg's wedding-day.

The wedding was to be solemnized at Castle Rineck, the Harfinks' new possession, and in a white circular chapel, with small windows shaded by ivy, and an altar-piece which was dark as the Catholic religion.

The castle is crowded with guests, mostly honest manufacturers, who are proud of their fortunes acquired by their own ability, and others also less honest, who, after they have retired from business, wish to know nothing more of their money-making past.

Needless to say, the wedding preparations were unpleasant to the infatuated Felix. The bride had joined in his request for a quiet wedding, for the contact with so much industry of which a considerable part had not yet become "finance," little pleased her; but the parents could not let the opportunity pass without displaying their wealth to the astonished throng.

The afternoon is gray and moist. Mrs. von Harfink--for the past week, no longer through the obligingness of her acquaintances, but through the obligingness of a democratic ministry thus titled--Mrs. von Harfink, then, composes a toast for her husband to deliver at the wedding dinner. Raimund stands beside the piano--to sing while sitting might injure his voice--and strives to render the cry of the Valkyrs in Wagner's worthy accents; a sympathetic poodle seconds him in this melodious occupation.

Outside in the park Linda wanders alone through the damp October air. The dead foliage lies thick on the lawn, and between the leaves shines the grass, bright and fresh as hope which lies under all the load of shattered joys of broken life, undisturbed.

The bushes, glowing in autumnal splendor, look like huge moulting birds who shiveringly lose their feathers. Many flower-beds are already empty, only a couple of stiff georginias and chrysanthemums still raise their heads proudly and solitary in the universal desolation.

Linda is quite alone; her friends, none of whom are very dear to her, are too zealously busied with cares of the toilet to disturb her solitude; they are also afraid to expose their complexions to the morning air. Linda feels no anxiety about her complexion, it is too beautiful for that. With her loosened hair which, brown as the dead leaves, falls over her back, and with the red cloak, in which she has wrapped herself, she is a bright spot in the park.

She is a shy bride and not at all melancholy.

She is not a shy bride, and not at all melancholy. Her eyes shine, her lips quiver with excitement--distinguished acquaintances, foreign entertainments of which she will be queen. In mind, she already sees herself on the arm of one and another prince of the blood royal. She could clap her hands with joy that to-day at six o'clock she will no longer be called Harfink.

She remains standing beside a pond where near the bank four swans, shivering and melancholy, swim round a yellow bath-house. Then a hand is laid lightly on her shoulder. "Felix!" whispers she with the charming smile which she always has in readiness for her betrothed.

"No, not Felix--only Eugene," replies a gay voice, and blond, handsome, with clothes a trifle too modern, and a too pronounced perfume of Ylang-ylang, her cousin and former admirer stands near her.

"Ah, have you really come?" says she, joyously.

"Why naturally," replies he. "You do not think that for the sake of a few forlorn chamois I would stay away from your wedding?" Rhoeden has come from Steinmark, to be the cavalier of

his cousin's second bridesmaid.

"We had already begun to fear--that is, Emma was afraid," said Linda, coquettishly. "Naturally it was indifferent to me."

"Wholly indifferent? I do not believe it," said he. His arm has slipped down from her shoulder, he has seated himself upon a low iron garden chair, from which, with elbows on his knees, his face between his hands, with the boldness which she likes so well in him, he can look at her as much as he pleases.

"Wholly indifferent!" she repeats, and throws a pebble between the swans, who dip their black bills greedily in the green water.

"O Lin! You naughty Lin! And nothing that concerns you is indifferent to me!" he groans. "The Trauns did not wish to let me go from them--but rather than not see you to-day I would have fought a duel with all the Trauns in the world!"

Linda has slowly approached him; flattered vanity speaks from her shining eyes and glowing lips. He seizes her hand and draws her to him. "Do you know, Lin, that I was once absurdly in love with you?"

She nods. "Yes, I know it."

"And you?"

"And I? Do not ask indiscreet questions, Eugene!"

"But this question interests me so much," he excuses himself.

"Tell me, Lin, if Lanzberg had not come between us--yes, if I only, most unfortunately, had not been born a Grau," he continues sighing, "could I have cherished a little, very little hope?"

"It is quite possible," says she, shrugging her shoulders, and coquetting with him over her shoulder. "But it is better so for us both."

"For you, certainly," says he, "but I shall feel quite peculiarly to-day when I see you with your bridal wreath, Lin! You will drive people mad with your beauty. You are the most beautiful person whom I have ever met in my life. Where the devil did you get your look of high breeding?"

Eugene Rhoeden, with his gay boldness and graceful impudence, his unconscionable aplomb, and his denial from principle of all personal dignity, is what is called in the Vienna slang a *gamin*.

Gamin as he is, no one knows how to bewitch Linda's small nature, how to feed her excessive vanity with such delicate bits as Eugene von Rhoeden. He understands her, she understands him; they are fairly made for each other, and for one moment, one very brief moment, Linda thinks almost with repugnance of the black raven in the red field which greets her from the Lanzberg coat-of-arms. "Eugene!" murmurs she. "Ah!" With that she suddenly turns to an elderly maid, who comes out from among the bushes.

"Are you looking for me, Fanny?"

"Yes, miss."

"I am probably to try my train for the twenty-ninth time. Ah, Eugene! There is something tiresome about a wedding-day!" then she breaks a red chrysanthemum as she passes, throws it to him, and vanishes.

About seven hours later the wedding takes place in the castle chapel, adorned with greenhouse flowers. The blossoms tremble as if they were cold or afraid. Their sweet, exhilarating fragrance mingles with the odor of wax candles, and that of perfumery and cosmetics, which is always noticeable in select assemblies. The wind creeps curiously through the window cracks, creeps up to the altar, makes the flames of the candles flicker, and blows cold upon the bare shoulders of the bride and bridesmaids.

The bride, loaded with the richest jewels, resembles a proud narcissus in the morning dew. Elsa is deathly pale, even her lips are colorless. Erwin displays the inexpressive gravity which the occasion demands of a well-bred man. Mrs. von Harfink looks continually at the decorations, and starts when a white rose falls from the wall. Mr. von Harfink looks as if his collar were too tight for him. Eugene von Rhoeden, his bridesmaid's wrap on his arm, a sceptical smile on his lips, his hand at his mustache, his glance resting now on his uncle, now on the priest, now on the bride, stands there, the image of a little society philosopher of the nineteenth century, who laughs at all vanity and cannot himself give up his own. Raimund looks like a radical who is paying an immense tribute to prejudice, and tries to look more distinguished than his brother-in-law.

And Felix? Felix is as if paralyzed. The moment is here; his feverish longing nears its aim--happiness.

Then the ivy taps on the window, the wind seizes him with ice-cold hands. Felix shudders and

glances at his bride. How beautiful she is, and--how proud. Proud? Felix Lanzberg's bride proud? It is impossible--it cannot be. A suspicion which, however he may deny it to his conscience, has occurred to him again and again during their whole engagement, strikes him for the last time and becomes certain that Linda's mother has deceived him; Linda knows nothing!

Then the priest demands his "Yes!" He hesitates; hesitates so long that Linda looks at him in surprise; two large, greenish eyes shine at him through the filmy, white bridal veil. "Yes!" says he firmly and shortly.

A long dinner follows, a long, complicated dinner, which no one enjoys except Papa Harfink, who studies the menu with the tenderest pleasure, and with a small pencil marks the numbers for love of which he thinks to extend considerably his elastic appetite.

He sits between Elsa and the wife of his nephew, the Freiherr, the elder Rhoeden, and, as he gulps down his *potage à la reine*, tells both ladies of his new Achenbach, which cost him 4,000 gulden, which does not seem at all dear to him; as, besides a great deal of sunset, there are thirty-four figures in the picture--he has counted them--and in the background something else, he does not know whether it is a buffalo or ruins. "They almost persuaded me to buy a Daubigny, a Frenchman, I think--a green sauce--what a sauce! I said no, thank you. I like spinach and eggs, I said; but spinach and cows--but--and such cows! without tails or horns--regular daubs of colors. These Frenchmen are tricky. Really, people are cheated by them." Thus concludes Papa Harfink, the art critic.

Elsa only half listens to him. Her eyes wander wearily over the table with its stiff floral decorations and its heavy silverware, "real silver, and not plate," assures Papa Harfink.

Of the men, the last generation are broad-shouldered, red-faced; a sparse beard curls around their full cheeks, a sharp glance, on the lookout for profit, shoots from their small eyes. The past generation breathe loudly, pick their teeth continually, wear too tight rings on too fat fingers, and without exception, a thick gold chain with a diamond medallion over their stomachs.

The present generation are sickly, dissipated, and have something of the jockey and something of the valet who copies his master.

The pride of the whole family is centred in Eugene von Rhoeden, the blond good-for-nothing, who has as many debts as a cavalier, who was educated in the Theresanium, and once had a quarrel with a watchman.

Of the women, some are pretty, none are pleasing; they have all good dressmakers; none are well dressed.

The usually pale face of a "certain Baron Lanzberg" begins to flush feverishly; without eating a mouthful he hastily swallows one glass of wine after another.

"Try this delicious salmon; permit me to help you," the charming host turns to Elsa. She makes a desperate attempt to do justice to the salmon. "Strange," remarks Von Harfink, "my mother used to say that when she was young salmon was cheaper than beef, now it is very dear."

Elsa has laid down her fork in despair. "I am behind the times," says she. "I still am frightened by a telegram, and always feel nervous at a wedding." She smiles sadly, and two charming dimples appear in her cheeks.

Papa Harfink continues to urge her to eat. "You must taste this salmi, Baroness," he entreats. "Monsieur Galatin, my cook, would be unhappy if he learned that every one had not eaten some of his salmi. *Pâte à la Kotschubey*, he calls it. Only to-day, this Galatin said to me: '*Ah, Monsieur le Chevalier*, when I think how often Prince Kotschubey got his stomach out of order with my salmi. The physicians said he died of gastrosis, ah! he died of my salmi.'"

"You have a dangerous cook," says Elsa.

"But I understand this Kotschubey, do you know," continues Papa Harfink. "Since I have had this cook, I really have to go to Marienbad twice every year. And besides, he is a splendid fellow, talks politics like a deputy. He formerly served only with the highest nobility. I took him with the castle from Count Sylvani. A peculiar fellow--this Galatin; will not stay away from the swans and the park. A poetic creature; do you know, Baroness, he reads Victor Hugo and the Medisations of Lamartine."

"Ah really, the Medisations of Lamartine," says Elsa, smiling. Susanna Harfink rushes to the assistance of her distressed husband. "Ha! ha! ha!" says she, with her shrill laugh. "My husband always calls meditations medisations--very malicious, do you not think so, but a good joke."

Papa Harfink, sadly conscious that it always means a curtain lecture when his wife before people laughs so energetically at one of his "jokes," of which he feels innocent, with much grace and melancholia licks his knife on both sides.

His wife looks as if she were weary of pulling the lion-skin again and again over the long ears.

The moment has arrived when he is to speak his toast. He rises hesitatingly, the glass trembles in his hand. Fear and champagne have made him lose the last recollection of the few words prepared by his wife.

"This is a great day for me--a day of pride and pain--no, that is not it!" thoughtfully raising his hand to his upper lip. "I hope that my brother-in-law, no, my son-in-law--Su--su--sanna!" he murmurs, helplessly. His cheeks seem to inflate, his eyes grow smaller and more shining, he has set down his glass, and twists his napkin like a conscientious washerwoman. Susanna rises, she is fairly Roman. "As my husband, overcome with emotion, cannot speak," she begins. "I will say, this is for----" for a moment she hesitates, then for the first time in her life, she resolutely denies her husband, emancipates herself from the "us" with which for long years she has protected him, and says: "This is for me a day of pain and of joy. I lose a daughter, gain a son; may my children always find the highest happiness in each other, and a safe retreat in their parental home."

"He is getting a dreadful mother-in-law, this Lanzberg," whispers Eugene Rhoeden to his neighbor, a gay, more than audacious brunette. "Something between a Roman matron and a quarrelsome landlady from a bachelor boarding-house."

The tasteful Raimund contributes a toast to the fusion of nobleman and citizen. The older Rhoeden hopes that his beautiful cousin will lend a new charm to the noble name of Lanzberg.

Much similar follows.

Eugene, for whom this rosary of *parvenu* platitudes becomes too long, murmurs: "Shall we not soon have paid sufficient thanks for the honor of being allied with Baron Lanzberg?"

This mocking remark was only meant for his neighbor, its bitterness was only meant for the fawning of the Harfinks.

But Felix heard it; ashy pale, with glowing eyes, half rising from his chair, he stares at the impertinent young man. The latter says good-naturedly and thoughtlessly: "Yes, Lanzberg, I will jeer at myself. *Parole d'honneur*, I am a little ashamed to be quite so delighted at receiving an honest man into the family!"

Thereupon the "certain Baron Lanzberg" lowers his eyes to the table-cloth, and remains silent.

VIII.

Three years have passed since Linda left her father's house, and was no longer condemned to be called Harfink--three years and seven months.

The trees have only recently lost their snowy blossoms; all are wrapped in soft young green, the whole earth seems bathed in new hope. It is a day in which death and misfortune seem like ghost stories, invented by old women--no one believes them. The birds twitter joyously, and without all is fragrance, sunshine and flowers. Fragrance and sunshine fill the room where Elsa sits, her youngest child in her lap.

Elsa looks youthful and girlish, quite as much so as at the time when we first made her acquaintance. The same heavy brown hair, as if sprinkled with gold, clusters at her temples, and her eyes still shine with the old dreamy light of happiness, but her cheeks are thinner, her figure frail and thin.

The existence of the little creature in her lap has deprived her of so much health. She has not yet recovered since baby's birth, and has not had time to think of her health, for baby was a sickly child, and great skill was required to bind the little soul, which seemed so anxious to fly back to heaven, to this earth. Day and night, in spite of her own delicateness, Elsa has nursed and cared for the child, holding her tender mother-hand protectingly before the little light which every breath of air threatened to extinguish.

Erwin, who usually had such influence with her, this time could not induce her to spare her weakened strength.

Now the little girl is a year old, and laughs and smiles at her mother gayly, and the physician said recently, "You may be proud of the child, Baroness. How you have raised her, God only knows. All doctors can learn from a mother. But now think of yourself a little."

And the physician shook his head as he looked at the young woman.

Yes, the air is full of perfume and sunshine, but, in the midst of the charming spring life, Elsa looks like a frail white flower.

She has bathed baby, put on her little embroidered shirt, and wrapped her in a flannel slumber-robe, and now, with a fine towel, wipes the last drops from the tender pink little feet, and the little neck on which the water drops down from the small golden head. The nurse is meanwhile busy removing the bathing utensils, while Litzi, who is now a big girl, wearing long stockings, stands near her little sister and holding perfectly still, allows her long hair to be pulled.

"Fie, you wild little thing, you will hurt her!" cries Elsa at last, as baby pulls harder and harder, and winds her tiny fist in Litzi's hair.

Then baby throws her head back, shows her four teeth, laughs with all her little body, and finally leans her cheek sleepily against mamma's shoulder.

"Go down-stairs, my Litzi, go to Miss Sidney; baby wishes to go to sleep," whispers Elsa to her big daughter, whereupon Litzi goes away on tip-toes.

Dreamily humming a lullaby, Elsa cradles the child in her arms, and then lays it down in its pretty white bed. But when she thinks it asleep, it opens its blue eyes, and stretching out its arms, murmurs something which, with a vivid imagination, one can declare to be "Papa."

"Did you hear him come sooner than I, baby?" says Elsa, while Garzin, sitting on the edge of the bed, strokes the child's head until she closes her eyes. There she lies, her hair full of golden lights, the unusually long, black lashes resting on the round cheeks, lengthened by their own shadow, the full little mouth half open, like the calyx of a red flower, one fat little arm thrown up over its head.

"She is pretty, my little one, is she not?" says Elsa proudly, as she sees the quiet smile with which her husband watches the child. "And the doctor thinks I need have no more anxiety about her."

"Yes, the little rogue is healthy enough," says Erwin, sighing, as he softly leaves the nursery with Elsa. "I wish I could say the same of her mamma. Poor Elsa, how thin you are."

"Do I not please you any longer?" she replies, half laughing.

"You are not very sensible!"

"Probably not," replies she seriously. "With such old married people as we are, there can be no more talk of 'pleasing.'"

"Do you think so?"

"And if I should have small-pox, would it make any difference to you?" she asks him, looking at him curiously; the noblest woman is not ashamed to be loved a little because of her beauty.

"Certainly," he replies, "I should love you just as much as before, but I would be bitterly sorry for your pretty face." Jestingly he passes his finger over her cheeks.

They go into the garden; all is gay as if for a feast, the whole earth with her blooming mixture of white, blue and violet elder, golden rain and red acacias--a gay, shimmering picture under an endless blue sky. Everything lives and breathes. The birds twitter, the insects hum, every blade of grass seems to have a voice, and join in the great triumphal chorus of the newly-risen nature.

There is a rustling, a murmuring, a whispering, a nodding, a quiver of life and pleasure, and in the enchanting music suddenly mingles a soft crackling, the crackling of dead leaves, which play at the foot of the trees.

Garzin has led his wife to a bench, over which an elder tree bends its branches of bushy white blossoms. Elsa gazes before her at the lovely nature, the mixture of luxuriant green and gay blossoms, of short black shadows amid dazzling light.

"How young the earth looks," says she dreamily.

Erwin draws her to him. I do not know whether he loves her even more now when she is pale and ill; at any rate he is more conscious of his feeling for her, and treats her more tenderly, is more thoughtful of her, and she leans on him like a sick child. Her whole being has become softer, less independent.

"I received a letter from Felix to-day," says Garzin after a pause.

"Ah!" murmurs Elsa somewhat bitterly. "Does he write for money again?"

"Yes, I am to raise some money for him," says Erwin looking troubled.

"Ah!"

"He has a fine property, but that cannot last," he remarks thoughtfully.

"If it makes him happy," Elsa shrugs her shoulders, and her voice sounds harsh.

"Hm! To ruin one's self is at the time a very pleasant occupation, but to be ruined--a very unpleasant condition, especially with a wife like Linda. I do not believe that Felix will be willing to live on the income of his wealthy wife."

During this remark Elsa continues silent.

"Do you believe that Felix is happy?" Erwin continues; "his letters give a desperately depressed impression. Did you ever hear a really happy man assure one in every letter: 'I am very happy'--'Everything goes well with us'--'I am very contented.' Happy people are silent about their happiness."

Elsa lowers her head, and remembers that in the first years of her marriage she had never written anything to her brother but: "I cannot express how I feel!"

"As I know him," continues Erwin, "his present frequent contact with the world must be a continual torment."'

Elsa frowns and grows very pale. "I do not understand Linda!" she cries. "How can she under--under the circumstances rush into society? I no longer try to understand Felix. Hm!--he is weak--could never refuse a woman anything; if one had asked him for his hand, he would have let it be cut off for her. As far as I am concerned he can give her his hand--but--but----"

A strange fire glows in Elsa's eyes, her face takes on a rigid expression and she grows stiff and clutches both elbows convulsively.

"Poor devil!" murmurs Erwin.

"You pity him for my sake!" cries Elsa, bitterly. "It is not necessary. I know that you think his conduct unanswerable--that you must think so. He has forfeited all the sympathy which his blameless conduct for years had won. I will never forget the tone in which Marie Dey said to me last spring, when she returned from Rome: 'I have often met your sister-in-law; she goes a great deal into society--one sees her everywhere. Your brother does not seem to find as much pleasure in society as his wife!' And Marie was always a friend to Felix. I know that in Parisian society Felix is called '*le revenant*,' for which name he has naturally to thank some kind Austrian. Evidently the whole story, which was forgotten, has been warmed up again."

"The world is very malicious," says Erwin, evasively.

"Certainly! But after one has passed sixteen years, one knows it, and guards one's self!" cries Elsa, and adds with a bitter smile: "I suppose he is a great philosopher and thinks nothing of it."

"Elsa! Elsa!" admonished Erwin.

She shook her head. "See!" said she, dully, "to spare Felix a humiliation, I would give my life, but now I cannot think of him without anger. Heavens, when I think of his return I tremble! I know he will be very badly received, and as his wife's whole existence turns upon being received----"

Erwin bites his lips. "Felix writes me that his wife plans to return in the latter part of June or the first of July. He will come to Traunberg with his little son somewhat sooner."

"He will return?" murmurs Elsa, slowly.

"Well, he must sooner or later."

"Certainly!" cries Elsa, with a shudder. "Erwin, what will strangers think of his return, if I myself am not able to rejoice?"

"Strangers do not take the situation so tragically," says Erwin, hastily and precipitately, looking away.

"Well, to be sure!" sighs Elsa. "It is of no consequence to strangers whether he has acted without any tact, yes, unresponsibly. To think evil of one who is far from one is a pleasure to malicious people, and to the best is simply indifferent. But to be forced to think evil of one whom one loves is the most painful thing in the world."

For a moment she is silent. "If Felix insists upon coming," she then continues, "I will do my utmost to make life endurable for him and his wife. I cannot persuade him to return."

IX.

About a week after the conversation between Erwin and Elsa, recorded in the last chapter, a bowed man appeared in Steinbach whom at first Elsa did not recognize, but into whose arms she fell with a cry when he stretched out two trembling hands to her with a sad smile. She had forgotten his unsuitable behavior; every bitter word which she had pronounced against him fell heavily on her heart; she no longer felt anything for him but boundless, compassionate love. The sight of him shocked her, his hair had grown gray, his voice hoarse. An anxious habit of raising his shoulders, and pressing his elbows against his ribs, that shy manner of poor tutors and other despised individuals, who seem to strive to make themselves as small as possible, to deprive others of as little room as they can--lent his figure a sickly, narrow-chested look. He spoke a great deal, with forced fluency, often repeating himself. He whom for so long Elsa had at most only heard laugh fondly at Litzi's little wise sayings, now laughed continually, loudly and harshly at the slightest provocation, whereupon the wrinkles grew deeper in his face, the shadows under his eyes darker. Often after such an outburst of nervous hilarity, his face suddenly grew flabby, as if wearied by too great exertion, and for a moment displayed the stony features, the rigid pain of one who has died a hard death.

He had travelled in advance of his wife, who was staying with friends at the Italian lakes, in order to prepare everything for her reception. He talked a great deal about his son, whom he could not bring to Elsa because the day was cold, and the little fellow was somewhat hoarse. All the little habits of the child, his manner of pronouncing words, he told his patiently listening sister.

His voice sounded sadder than ever when he spoke of the child, and from time to time he sighed, "Poor boy, poor boy!"

"What he must have suffered!" sobbed Elsa, when she was alone again with Erwin. "What he must have suffered!"

Yes, what he had suffered! Not even those who saw the evident traces of suffering in this thin, gray, feverish man, could imagine the greatness of his misery, could judge the darkness of his soul which his intercourse with the world had caused.

Immediately after the intoxication of the honeymoon, even during the wedding trip, which at Linda's wish they had made to Egypt, when he began to learn to know his wife, he came to the sad conviction that the most trivial acquaintance would have offered him as much distraction as this marriage. Pretty, coquettish, graceful, seductive. Linda was all these, but she had absolutely no mind. Like all narrow women without intelligence she became, after continued acquaintance, tiresome.

Incessantly occupied with the ambition to appear a true aristocrat, in whom one could not perceive the *parvenue*, she had no room for other thoughts. Her joy at being now a "Lanzberg" was fairly naïve. He really could not be angry with her when she displayed her little vanities to him. She wished to flatter him. He looked at her compassionately at such times and turned away his head.

From Cairo she had dragged him to Paris. There, at first, they had led an irregular, stranger life, with half-packed trunks in the Grand Hotel, went to the theatre and drove in the Bois de Boulogne. Linda for a while was satisfied with the acquaintances which she made in the hotel reading-room, at the skating-rink, etc. Felix always avoided a *table a'hôte*, which Linda, even if the *tête-à-tête* meals were at times a bore to her, never opposed, as an elegant custom.

Then she was one day accidentally asked by one of her friends whether she should attend the last *soirée* of the Austrian ambassador. A pang went through Linda's heart. She enveloped her denial of the simple question in a confusion of excuses and explanations--she had only recently married, she had not yet thought of paying visits. Scarcely was she alone with Felix when she asked him if he knew the ambassador.

Yes, Felix knew him, but had not seen him for years. Naturally Linda ascribed his evident objection to visiting His Excellency to the shyness which his *mésalliance* caused in him. A scene followed, tears, cutting remarks--headache.

The next morning, Felix stood mournfully before one of Froment-Meurice's windows and asked himself whether he should not buy his wife a diamond cluster of wheat to calm her anger, when some one seized his arm and cried, "Why, how are you, Felix?"

Felix turned, discovered an old friend, who, many years younger, had served a degree lower in the same regiment with him at that time.

Now the friend was attaché at the embassy, and a favorite with the Parisian ladies, a gay, hot-blooded comrade for whom some one had found the nickname, "Scirocco." "How are you, Felix?"

he cried a second time, offering his former comrade his hand.

Felix started. No one in all Austria knew his story better than this very Scirocco, and Scirocco offered him his hand.

"Thank you, Rudi," he murmured softly. "It is very good in you to still remember me."

Poor Scirocco grew very hot and uncomfortable. Lovable and impulsive, he had spoken to Felix without thinking for a moment how hard it is to associate with "such a man." Felix looked so miserable, so depressed that Scirocco would have told all the lies which might occur to him to talk him out of his sadness.

"I was going to run after you in the Bois the other day," he went on, "but you were walking with your wife, and I did not wish to intrude. *Sapristi!* How long have you been married? Here in foreign parts one loses all Austrian news. Your wife is a sensational beauty. Do not take it amiss that I do not even know who she is. I absolutely do not remember to have seen any one who could remind me of this fairy-like apparition a few years ago in short clothes."

"You certainly never knew her," replied Felix. "She is the daughter of a Viennese manufacturer--Harfink."

"Ah!" Somewhat robbed of his self-possession Scirocco, hastily leading the conversation from an unpleasant subject, stumbles upon yet more dangerous topics. "Do you live in jealous honeymoon solitude, do you not go out at all?"

Felix looks pleadingly at him. "You know that I cannot go out," he murmurs.

And Scirocco hurries over that--he will not understand. "Nonsense!" he cries. "People are wiser here than with us at home. Mind and beauty count for as much as nobility." Poor Scirocco, he was never guilty of a more trivial platitude. "You must take your wife to the X's," he continued.

X was the ambassador at that time. "Never!" said Felix, violently. They had reached the Grand Hotel now.

"When may I call upon your wife?" asked Scirocco.

Felix had averted his face from his former friend. "When you wish, Rudi," he murmured, then, suddenly turning towards him, "God reward you for your kindness, but do not force yourself."

Scirocco saw that tears rolled over the cheeks of the "certain Lanzberg."

Scirocco did not philosophize over the weakness of his former comrade, he was far too deeply shocked. The result of his great cordiality to Felix was an uneasy conscience, the feeling that with the best intentions he had acted with a want of tact, and the need of inflicting punishment upon some one for Felix's tears. "Poor Felix! such a splendid fellow!" he murmured to himself.

Scirocco, whom we must introduce to our readers by his name Count Sempaly, was noted for his good-natured precipitation and thoughtless generosity, by which he was often subsequently forced pitilessly to harshness which would be spared a less lovable but more prudent man.

For instance, at one time there was the American Smythe, who had been guilty of a breach of etiquette in a Parisian circle at cards, and whom society had avoided, without harshness, with the assurance that he had assuredly been only stupid. They bowed to him on the street, they invited him to large entertainments, but they hoped that he would not accept the invitations; they cut him dead when he accepted them.

Then there was the Marquis de Coup de Foudre, who was accused of cheating on the race-track, and who, from indignation--hm!--retired from the track. He was not wholly given up, but every one would only see him as far off as his neighbor did, in the beautiful bond of mutual responsibility which holds society together.

Then finally there was Lady Jane Nevermore, who had permitted herself several little irregularities with her husband, and who now, divorced, with a grown daughter, rendered Paris and Nice uneasy.

How he had defended these people, with what deep respect, with what sympathy he had spoken of them--showed himself with them on public occasions, made good all their lack of tact (people in an uncertain social position always develop a particular genius for this). He lent them more of his shadow than the devoted Bendel lent his master, Peter Schemil, procured the widest social credit for them.

He made a legion of enemies, but the clouds which rested on Lady Jane, Coup de Foudre and Smythe--their names here stand for many--rested on him. People said at last that he must have his reasons for defending these people. Weary, angry, he then suddenly withdrew from his *protégés*, whom by this he injured much more than he had benefited, and who now could, without opposition, proclaim their social bankruptcy.

Like many foolhardy heroes, at the last moment he was forced to beat a shameful retreat,

when a perfectly respectable withdrawal would have been possible before.

But with however a wounded heart he might return from his campaign against public opinion, he always ventured into battle again.

After this philosophical interlude, we would perhaps do better to return to Scirocco, who is meanwhile breakfasting in the "Café Riche."

He was not hungry--he pondered. Lanzberg's fall did not in the least remind one of Smythe's, Coup de Foudre's, or Lady Jane's. In regard to these people, to a certain extent, prejudice had been justified, as if prejudice is not always to a certain extent justified!

Scirocco's pondering ended in the resolution to launch Lanzberg in Parisian society as one launches an unpopular *débutante* of the theatre.

The next day he called upon Linda, and the day after Count X---- paid his visit.

How high she held her head among her acquaintances of the reading-room and skating-rink: "X----, an old friend of my husband," etc., etc.

She took an apartment in the Avenue de l'Imperatrice, an apartment with a large cold *salon* which was distinguished by gilded mouldings and white walls, pink doors, conventional chairs, and sky-blue satin upholstering. Linda very soon understood that this dazzling elegance, which at first had blinded her inexperienced eyes, was intolerably "*dentiste*," as they say on the Boulevard.

She surrounded herself with old brocades, with modern bronzes, with Smyrna rugs--an irregular confusion of picturesque treasures whose unsuitableness justified the temporary look of the whole establishment.

Scirocco helped her in everything. He found out auction sales in the Hôtel Drouot for her, stood for half the afternoon on an old Flemish chair, to drive a nail with his own hands in the wall for her to hang a Diaz or a Corot upon--procured all the invitations for her which she wished--in short, was unweariedly obliging, and, *nota bene*, he only paid her enough attention to make her the fashion.

She was clever enough to take with him the good-natured, brusque tone of a woman who may permit herself little liberties because she is sure of her heart and of the respect of the man with whom she associates.

She lived in the seventh heaven. To drive every day, leave orders with Worth and Fanet, not to dine at home a single day, to attend two balls and three routs in one night, never to have a moment for reflection, to be always out of breath with pleasure, and besides this, to be surrounded by a crowd of young men with distinguished attractions and fine names, animated by the consciousness that for her sake an attaché, in despair over her virtuous harshness, had had himself transferred to Persia--oh! in her romantic boarding-school dreams she had never suspected such a lovely life.

And Felix.

Scirocco had proposed him in the most exclusive club. Felix had not resisted this, and came seldom to the club. He could not avoid playing little games of *écarté*. He won. His opponent doubled, increased tenfold the stakes--Felix continued to win. The sweat stood on his brow; he was deathly pale. "Do not play with me--I always win--it is a curse!" he cried suddenly, throwing down the cards and completely losing his self-control.

Scirocco grew embarrassed and nervously bit his nails. "If he had anything to reproach himself with!" he thought to himself. "But that is absolutely not the case, absolutely not!"

The others who did not know Baron Lanzberg's history only laughingly called him "*un drôle de corps!*"

The story went that Felix Lanzberg had once lost his mind from an unfortunate love-affair, and had spent two years in an insane asylum. Scirocco had probably invented this rumor and set it in motion to take away room for other rumors.

Except Scirocco and Count X, none of the Austrians in Paris at that time knew the true state of affairs. A single one had a suspicion, wrote to Vienna to inform himself, and received for answer--this and that. But this one was a *parvenu*, and when he wished to spread his news the others listened to him with mocking smiles, shrugged their shoulders arrogantly, and condemned the communication so harshly that he never again referred to it. He noticed that it was considered the thing to believe in Lanzberg.

Felix grew daily more unsociable, and liked to go to places only where he was sure of meeting no one whom he knew, no people of society. He took long trips on the steamboats, passed the afternoon in the quiet peace of the gardens, sometimes stood for a quarter of an hour gloomily before a half-decomposed corpse in the morgue, or wandered through the quiet rooms of the Louvre, which are so persistently avoided by certain Parisians.

Formerly knowing as little of art as any other Austrian Uhlan officer, he now daily found greater pleasure in the pictures.

His natural taste for glaring coloring, *décolleté* cigarette beauties, humorous or sentimental *genre* pictures disappeared. The soft harmonies of the old masterpieces had a strangely soothing effect upon his sick nerves.

With slow, dragging steps, his eyes dreamily wandering from one picture to another, he sauntered through the long rooms.

The gallery officials soon knew him, and with French talkativeness often spoke to him of the weather or politics.

He never became a critic, but he had his favorites. For instance, he felt a quite inexplicable preference for Greuze, the Guido Reni of the eighteenth century, of whom one might think that he had mixed his colors of tears, moonbeams, and the dust of withered flowers, and instead of Beatrice Cenci had painted a "Cruche Cassé." Every day he stood for a while before the "Cruche Cassé" and murmured "Poor child!"

In one of the galleries there was the gloomy portrait of a woman from the hand of the Jansenist, Philippe von Champaigne, pale with dark, mournful eyes; in the carriage of the emaciated frame the weary rigidity of vanquished pain. Everything in the appearance was so dead and ethereal that one almost fancied one could see the flesh dying around the soul. Felix stood before this picture every day.

He loved the Samaritan and the Christ on the road to Emmaus--masterpieces in which the sublime mystery of the Rembrandt colors glorifies the harsh reality. He could not gaze often enough at the mysterious eyes of the Christ, the eyes in which compassion is as large as the world, the eyes which pardon all, and yet ever sad, despairing, seek the means of salvation for sinful creation.

But the picture which beyond all attracted and repelled him, which he loved and which yet terrified him, was Watteau's Pierot, pale, ghost-like, with glassy eyes in a rigid face; it looks down from the wall of the Salle Lacaze. To-day he has gone to a mask-ball to distract himself, and his weary eyes ask in disappointment, "Is that all?" To-morrow he lies perhaps in the morgue, and his glassy eyes gaze with the same look at the solved riddle of eternity, as yesterday, at the hollow show--the same gaze which asks, "Is that all?"

Felix almost daily passed a couple of hours in the Louvre. "*Bonjour!*" a diligent little artist cried to him here and there, some little person whom perhaps he had given some small assistance, and who greeted him as an habitué. Except for this all was silence. No one speaks in the Louvre; one only whispers.

A hollow mutter and murmur woven of a thousand soft echoes pervade the old rooms in their vast monotony like the faint echo of the great tumult of the world, or like the murmur of the eternal stream of time.

A year later, in a pretty country-house in Ville d'Avray, where they had passed the summer, a little son was laid in Felix's arms. The tiny creature, wrapped in white lawn, grew indistinct before his eyes; he scarcely saw it, only felt something warm, living, between his hands, something the touch of which caused him a wholly new, tender sensation, and lightly and carefully he kissed his son's little rosy face.

Then remembrance smote his heart, a convulsive sob overcame him, and in a broken voice he murmured, "Poor child! poor child!"

From Ville d'Avray Linda dragged Felix to Biarritz, then to Rome, where they passed three winters. These were still worse than the winter in Paris. Rome is the city of social consideration, a kind of free city for dubious characters. Felix's martyr nimbus had vanished through his intercourse with society in Paris. Scirocco who had been removed to Rome, was vexed with Linda for following him. Her manner of chaining herself to his protection irritated him, but he still assisted her social advancement where he could.

The other Austrians were not exactly unfriendly to Felix, but cold and distant. On their faces could be read, "We are surprised that you show yourself," or even, "We will not turn our backs upon you--we are in Rome."

With the certain feeling of kinship which characterizes the Austrian nobility, they, to be sure, never spoke of his affairs with a stranger, but so much the more among each other.

At last Rome was tired of, and even London, where Linda spent a season and enjoyed her greatest triumph. But one place remained to try--Traunberg.

It was a cool, unpleasant evening when Felix returned to Traunberg from his short visit in Steinbach. Gray and white strangely scattered clouds rose along the horizon, the lindens shivered, and threw long pale shadows over the smoothly-shaven lawn and the yellow gravel. The sun hung on the horizon almost without light, behind a pale mist like a half-faded spot of blood.

Life had never been as hard to bear for a "certain Baron Lanzberg" as on this evening. Slowly he wandered through the large, gloomy rooms of the castle, in which the cold air was as close and mouldy as in a cloister, and where every step seemed to charm a remembrance from the floor.

He saw Elsa, tall, somewhat pale, with the charming awkwardness of her fourteen years, hurry to meet him, shy before her handsome, brilliant brother who, a week before, had won a race--her brother of whom she was so proud. He saw his father, as he smiled joyfully at him, and pulling his ear, cried: "Do you amuse yourself, my boy? Do you amuse yourself? Have you debts? Out with it--not many? Always tell me what you need; I no longer know what circumstances require. You are my golden boy, you are your old father's joy!" He remembered the expression with which the Freiherr had surveyed him, a glance in which a kind of exaggerated paternal pride was glorified by the deepest love, and the gesture with which he had merrily cried to the old family portraits, "Are you satisfied with my boy?"

His memory did not spare poor Felix a word.

He had passed through one after another of the large rooms. In some of them stood great piles of furniture which Linda had sent here.

Suddenly he found himself before a picture which hung in a dark corner, concealed by a curtain, in his father's former room. Hastily he drew back the curtain, then he clutched his temples and turned away from the painting with the short, dull groan of a dying animal. What had he seen? The portrait of an unusually handsome, merry, good-tempered young officer, who smiled at him through the twilight. Felix hurried away.

In the lofty, arched corridor, the echo doubled the sound of his footsteps. It seemed to him as if that gay comrade had stepped down from the frame, and now, relating old stories, wandered at his side. The sweat of terror was on his brow. He met a servant, and hastily commanded him to remove the picture from the green corner room. His voice was always sharp when he spoke to servants, and yet he was the best, most generous master in the world.

He entered his child's room. The French *bonne* laid her finger on her lips to signify to him that the child slept. He bent over the little creature, who, with one little arm under his cheek, with the other clasping a gay gilded doll to him, lay in the embroidered pillows.

Without, the lindens, sighing compassionately, shook their great black heads, the tower clock, indifferent as time which it serves, played its old piece in a flat tone, hesitating and pausing--a minuet to which the grandparents had courtesied and bowed.

Felix listened, listened, like an old man who suddenly hears once more the cradle song with which he used to be lulled to sleep.

It overcame him. He bent down deeper over his little son, and murmured softly, "Poor child, poor child!" And the words woke the child, he opened his large eyes and lisped, unabashed, "Why, poor child? Is Gery sick?"

X.

"Elsa, dear Elsa, this is lovely in you! What an surprise! I only know you from my husband's accounts, and from my wedding-day, but I shall love you frightfully, that I feel already."

Crying out these words, Linda had jumped out of the carriage with which Felix had met her at the railway station, and greeted Elsa, who, at her brother's wish, had come to Traunberg to welcome the young wife to her new home. Then leaving Elsa, Linda let her eyes wander over the façade of the castle. "*Charmant! magnifique!*" she cried. "A portal like a church, gray walls, cracked window-sills, balconies and volutings, small-paned old cloister windows! I am charmed, Felix--charmed! *C'est tout a fait seigneurial!* If you knew, Elsa, how tired I am of modern villas, stucco and plate glass. Ah, you poor, little creature! I had half forgotten you;" with this Linda bends down to her son, who had first stamped his little feet with joy and excitement at his mother's arrival, but then, ever more and more abashed by the flow of words which had carelessly been uttered over his head, with his finger in his mouth, now seemed to take a mournful pleasure in crying.

"Have all children a habit of sticking their fingers in their mouths, or is it an invention of my young hopeful?" asks Linda, after she has hastily kissed and caressed the child. "He will be

pretty, the little brat. It is a pity that his hair will not grow. When he had typhoid fever or measles--what was it, Felix?"

"Scarlet fever," he replied, tenderly raising the tiny man in his arms.

"Oh, yes, scarlet fever; we had to cut his hair, and since then it has never grown long."

"I think you can be satisfied with him as he is," says Elsa, looking approvingly at the handsome child.

"Yes, he is a nice little thing," admits Linda; "he has splendid eyes, the true Lanzberg eyes. Oh, I am so glad that he resembles Felix."

"Well, his beauty would not have suffered if he had resembled you," replies Elsa, with an admiring glance at her sister-in-law.

Linda's physique has developed splendidly. The discontented expression which formerly disfigured her face has vanished, has given place to a bewitching smile and brilliant glance. Negligence and grace are united in her carriage. She displays the gayety and cordiality of a person who is satisfied with herself. Laying her arm caressingly around Elsa's waist, she whispers: "So you really do not find me too homely for a Lanzberg; one would not guess from my looks where I come from, eh?"

"Where you come from?--from the world of society--that certainly," says Elsa.

"Bah! From an iron foundry!" cries Linda, laughing.

Elsa glances once more at the picturesque distinction of the slender figure near her.

"No," says she, decidedly.

Indeed Linda does not look like the daughter of a self-made manufacturer; rather like a Parisian actress with a talent for aristocratic rôles.

"And now you must show me everything in my new domain, Elsa, everything," cries the young woman, and Elsa says, "Are you not tired, will you not first have a cup of tea?" Then Linda says animatedly, "No, no, I must first see everything, everything!"

Felix has disappeared with his little darling. Elsa leads her sister-in-law through the rooms of the ground floor and first story, shows her the elegantly furnished rooms which Elsa has herself helped arrange for her.

"Oh, you poor Elsa, how you have tormented yourself for me!" cries Linda, and finds everything splendid and charming, with the affability of a newly married queen who, entering her kingdom, wishes to make herself popular.

"There! I will reserve the attic rooms. I begin to feel the dust of travel. It is now much too late to take tea; as soon as I have changed my clothes, I will join you in the drawing-room. I do not yet know the way to my room--oh, yes--that is the room for my maid---*parfait, parfait--au revoir*, my dear heart!" And before she leaves her, Linda presses another kiss upon Elsa's cheek.

On her way to the drawing-room, Elsa heard a little voice prattling and laughing behind one of the tall doors which open on the corridor. "May I come in?" she asked, and without waiting for an answer, she entered the room where Felix, his child on his knee, sat in an arm-chair and held a sugar-plum high in the air, while the child climbed up on him, half laughing, half vexed at his vain attempt to overcome his father's teasing resistance. Both were so absorbed in their occupation that they did not notice Elsa's entrance. She gazed at the pretty group with emotion--the gray-haired man, the blond child, until finally Felix surrendered the sugar-plum, and the child ate it with a very important air, smacking his lips, and with contortions of the face by which he seemed to show the ambitious desire of resembling as much as possible his little friend the monkey in the London Zoo.

Then Elsa laid her hand lovingly on her brother's shoulder. "Oh, how you play with the child," said she.

He raised his face to her, the pale face with the sunken eyes and hollow cheeks, in which everything was old but pain, which appeared fresh and young every morning, and said hastily: "I must love him doubly now. Who knows whether later he will have anything to do with me?"

XI.

"I could not resolve to dress; to appear at dinner in a *peignoir* is a fault which is pardoned in convalescents, and after twenty-four hours of railway travel, I feel at least like a convalescent. Ah, how pretty it is here!"

So cried Linda, entering the drawing-room where Felix and Elsa awaited her, a half hour later.

What she called a *peignoir* was a confusion of yellowish lace and India muslin with elbow sleeves and the unavoidable Watteau plait in the back.

Her soft hair hung loose over her shoulders.

"I have a headache, and cannot bear a comb, and as we are *entre nous*----" she excused herself smilingly at Elsa's astonished glance, as she pushed back the heavy waves from temples and neck. Her gestures were full of seductive grace, and her whole form was pervaded with a moist, sweet perfume which reminded one of a summer morning after a storm, and which exhales from a woman who has just taken a perfumed bath. In her whole appearance lay something which excited Elsa's nerves without her being able to explain it--which wounded her feelings of delicacy.

Linda suspected nothing of the impression which she made. "It is pretty here," she repeated, with a lazy glance of satisfaction around the room--"I thank you so much, Elsa! One sees everywhere that a woman's tact has superintended the furnishing--a workman never produces such an impression. Everything looks so cosey, so irregular. How happy I am to be home at last!" and Linda took her sister-in-law's slender, sallow hand in her white, rosy-tipped one, and kissed it with childish exaggeration.

"Who is already here besides the Deys?" she asked then. "Before next week I must really think of paying calls."

Elsa was spared an answer by the quick rolling of a carriage. Springing up she cried--whether her emotion betrayed merely a severe feeling of propriety, and did not also display an unconscious premonition of jealousy I cannot say--"Linda, it is Erwin who has come for me. Put up your hair; it would be unpleasant for you to meet a strange man so!"

With a peculiar expression in glance and smile, Linda fulfilled her sister-in-law's wish. Elsa quickly helped her to twist up her hair, and thereby breathed the peculiar perfume which Baroness Lanzberg used.

She will think of this perfume in many terrible hours which fate has in store for her.

With both hands at her neck, her beautiful figure clearly outlined, her white arms exposed to the elbow by the falling back sleeves, Linda is just fastening a pin in her improvised *coiffure*, when Erwin enters the drawing-room.

"I did not think that you would take the trouble to come over here," stammers Linda, childishly, shyly offering him her hand, "or else you should have found me in more correct toilet."

Elsa starts. Instead of answering, Erwin has kissed the warm white hand of his sister-in-law.

The Garzins remained to dinner in Traunberg. Linda would not hear of their return to Steinbach, she was so happy at last to have an opportunity of learning to know her relations better. She asked advice and indulgence so childishly, was so gay, so amusing, so charming, that Elsa's antipathy to her increased and Erwin's rapidly lessened. Soon he fell into the tone of indifferent gallantry with her which in society almost every man takes with every woman who does not inspire a direct repugnance in him.

But Elsa, inexperienced as she was, did not know this tone, did not know that one can listen with an expression of the most intense interest to a woman without having the slightest idea half an hour later of what she had said; that one pays her the little flatteries for which she hungers as one picks up her handkerchief--from polite habit; that for the time which one devotes to her, one is obliged, if not absolutely to forget the charms of all other women, still in no case to remind her of them.

Linda behaved very cleverly with her brother-in-law, displayed a naïve wish to please him--no forward coquetry. She knew that naturalness, lack of reserve in a really pretty woman is always the most dangerous charm--she was refinedly natural. She told the drollest Parisian stories, made the drollest faces without the slightest regard for her symmetrical features; she made use of a momentary absence of the servants to throw a bread-ball in Felix's face with all the skill of a full-blooded street-boy, and as Felix frowned and Erwin could not conceal a slight astonishment, she excused herself so penitently, told with so much emphasis of how Marie Antoinette in her time had bombarded Louis XVI. with bread balls in Trianon, that Erwin was the first to console her, while there was something in his conventional courtesy of the encouraging consideration which a mature man shows to a spoiled child.

After dinner Linda offered to sing something. "She had to be sure no voice, not even so much as a raven or Mlle. X----" she remarked smilingly, "but she relied upon her dramatic accent and----" as she remorsefully admitted--"she had taken such expensive lessons. Would not Elsa accompany her?"

Elsa refused gently, almost with embarrassment. She could scarcely read the notes, and Erwin? He could read notes and could play enough to strum his favorite operatic airs by ear in weak moments. He would try to accompany Linda if she would promise to be very patient.

"The worse you play, so much the more excuse will there be for my faulty singing," cried Linda gayly, and opened that charming, foolish cuckoo song from "Marbolaine."

A pretty confusion followed, a laughing, correcting, her little hands playing between his. "Can we begin?" she cried finally, and still half leaning over him with one finger pointing to the notes, she began to sing "Cuckoo!"

Her voice, in truth, did not remind one in the least of the gloomy organ of a raven, or the passionate hoarseness of the X----, rather of a child's laugh, it was so clear and boldly gay, even if somewhat thin and shrill.

Felix, who had meanwhile been telling Elsa of Gery's scarlet fever with most interesting explicitness, grew silent, not, perhaps, because the cuckoo song was even half as interesting to him as Gery's parched lips and little hands--no! But because he noticed that the usually so patient and sympathetic Elsa no longer listened to him. Her eyes were fixed on Linda; that thin, flippant voice pained *her*, could it please Erwin?

Then the last note ceased. "I am so sorry that I have hindered you by my miserable playing," he excused himself. "You sing so very charmingly! Another one, I beg you."

For the first time in her life Elsa was vexed that she was not musical.

XII.

"Cuckoo," hummed Erwin absently to himself as he drove back with his wife to Steinbach through the capricious, flickering evening shadows.

A filmy confusion of pink and white, a tumbled knot of pale brown hair, two large, cold eyes, mysterious greenish riddles in a flattering, open child-face, a seductive, rococo figure which leaned over the stone balustrade of the terrace, and threw gay kisses after the departing carriage, this is the last impression which Erwin takes away with him from Traunberg, in the landau in which he now sits beside his pale wife.

"She has changed greatly for the better. It is a pity that she has such bad manners," he breaks the silence after a while.

"Do you really think that she has such bad manners?" replies Elsa, without looking at him.

"There can scarcely be any doubt as to that," says he. "Some people may certainly think that it is becoming to her. Nevertheless I should wish that she gave them up. You must undertake her neglected education, child!"

"Oh, I will leave that to you," she replies, coldly, almost irritably. "Linda is not a person who will learn anything from women."

"Do not be harsh," he whispers, reproachfully, perhaps with a trace of impatience.

The gloomy Traunberg lindens are far behind them, only show as a dark spot on the horizon. The carriage rolls on between gigantic poplars; the sun has set and the shadows have vanished with it. Over the earth is that dull gray light which might be called dead light. The new moon floats in the heavens, small and white, like a tiny cloud; pale yellow and reddish tints are on the horizon, above the violet distant mountains. At the left, only separated by a blooming clover-field, is the forest.

"Elsa, do you feel strong enough to walk home through the woods?" whispers Erwin to his wife, coaxingly, and as she nods assent he stops the carriage, and they take a path through the clover to the shady woods.

"Now, was not that a good idea of mine, is it not pretty here?" he asks, gayly and proudly, as if he had made the wood, surveying all its beauties.

"Lovely," whispers she, but her voice sounds sad.

At her feet the ground is blue with forget-me-nots; under the wild rose-bushes already lie many white petals. A sob and a sigh pass through the gloomy trees as if spring mourned that the first roses were dead. All is grave and solemn, the air spiced with the odor of withered generations of leaves, with the perfume of fading or still blooming flowers.

Erwin teasingly waits for Elsa to speak to him--he waits in vain. With head thrown back and earnest eyes she wanders near him, and does not rest her little hands tenderly on his arm as usual.

What is the matter with her? That she can be jealous does not occur to him.

They have almost crossed the forest; the meadow which separates it from Steinbach park shines between the sparse trees, then Erwin discovers a striking trace of game; he bends down to observe it more closely. "A roebuck," he murmurs. "Strange--in this region."

"Is there no other way across?" asks Elsa, who has meanwhile crawled close to the edge of the meadow, and casting a somewhat anxious glance over the knee-high, dewy grass.

"No, wait a moment," he replies, still absorbed in contemplating the strange trace.

"It will cost me a pair of shoes," she murmurs somewhat vexedly, raises her gown, and resolutely prepares for a very cold foot-bath.

"Elsa, what are you doing?" cries he, perceiving her intention, and, leaving his hunter's problem, he hurries quickly up to her. "With your genius for taking cold."

Before she has time to answer he has taken her in his arms and carries her through the dew. He has wholly forgotten Linda Lanzberg, and also that he had been vexed with his poor nervous wife's unjust, childish antipathy for Linda. He looks down tenderly upon the dear head, which rests with half-closed eyes on his shoulder.

"How light you are," he remarks softly and anxiously; "you do not weigh much more than Litzi now, my mouse."

Elsa does not answer, but her slender arms twine round his neck, and as his lips seek her pale face, he feels that she is crying.

"What is the matter, my darling?" he asks.

"I do not know myself," she murmurs with a slight shiver. "I am afraid."

XIII.

"We really must invite her," says, in a mournful tone, Countess Mimi Dey, a large stately woman, with a too high forehead, a feature which has the proud advantage of being a family inheritance in the Sempaly family, an aristocratic, small, turn-up nose, a benevolent smile, and a near-sighted glance.

The Countess is the best woman in the world, of proverbial good nature and unfeigned condescension in association with music-teachers, governesses, companions, maids, tutors and officials, and such poor devils who are paid and supported by the aristocracy, and politely courtesy to them; but she is unapproachably stiff to the upper middle classes, those persons who demand a place in society.

She belongs to that exclusive coterie which considers itself the sole patented extract of humanity, and looks upon all the rest of the world as only a common herd, a mob which, under certain circumstances, permits itself to pay its servants better, and to give more to charitable aims than princely houses, a mob which speaks French, wears Swedish gloves, and lives in palaces. She has a vague idea that it speaks incorrect French, that under the gloves coarse hands are concealed, that the palaces are always furnished with the taste of first-class waiting-rooms, but knows nothing definite about it, does not know "these people" at all, does not see them, although they are everywhere--they do not exist for her.

They tell an amusing anecdote of her: that once at the opera on a Patti evening, her cousin Pistasch Kamenz entered her box, and asked her, "Is any one in the theatre to-night?" She, after she had glanced around the crowded building, answered mournfully, "Not a soul!"

What particularly amuses the Countess is that, as she hears, this great class of *bourgeoise*, "which one does not know," is, on its side, divided by various differences in education and condition into classes which do not "know" each other.

"I really must invite her," she repeats, mournfully.

She leans back in a deep arm-chair in a large drawing-room with brown wainscoting and numerous family portraits, and smokes a cigarette.

"Pardon me that I really cannot so deeply pity you as you seem to expect," replies Scirocco Sempaly, who, now on leave, occupies a second armchair opposite his sister.

"Hm! I do not care about the positive fact; last week I dined with my bailiff's wife, but--it is a matter of principle."

"*Cent a'as*," says, with indifferent gravity, an old acquaintance of ours, Eugene von Rhoeden, who sits by an open window before a mediæval inlaid table and plays bézique with the above-mentioned cousin of the hostess, Count Pistasch Kamenz.

"*Cent d'as*," he says, apparently wholly absorbed in his cards, and moves an ivory counter.

A mild gentle rain is falling, the perfume of half-drowned roses and fresh foliage floats into the room. In one corner sits the only daughter of the widowed hostess, Countess Elli, a dark little girl in a white muslin frock, and near her, in a black silk gown, the governess.

The obligatory half hour which Elli must spend in the drawing-room so as to become accustomed to society, is over. Elli is rejoiced, sixteen-year-old girl that she is. She takes no particular pleasure in the society of grown people, who can no longer pet her as a child, and who must not yet treat her as a young lady.

A rustle of silk and muslin, a shy "*Bon soir!*" and Mademoiselle retreats with her charge.

Scirocco rises to open the door for the governess, makes her a deep bow as she disappears. Rhoeden also rises, only Pistasch indolently remains seated.

"Pistasch, you might trouble yourself to say good evening to Mademoiselle," says the Countess half jokingly.

"Pardon," replies Pistasch, "pure absent-mindedness, Mimi, and then she is so homely."

"That simplifies matters ten-fold," replies Scirocco, hastily. "One can never be too polite to homely governesses--it is only the pretty ones that are troublesome."

"I do not understand that," says Pistasch, and marks double bézique.

"One never knows how one can be attentive enough to them so as not to vex them, and yet reserved enough not to impress them," says Scirocco, dryly.

"Hm! You have very virtuous principles, Rudi; for some time you have moved wholly in the icy regions of lofty feelings of duty, where the tender flowers of the affections never bloom," laughs Pistasch. "I admire you, upon my word, but--hm--I do not trace the slightest desire to follow you into this rare atmosphere," and he rubbed his hands with satisfaction. He considered his cousin's conscientiousness either feigned or morbid. How could one be conscientious with women? Conscientious in regard to debts of honor, that is something quite different, that is self-understood; but regarding governesses--bah!

"Count Pistasch Kamenz is a charming man." So at least say all the ladies and also all the men who have not yet come in conflict with him. He has the handsomest blond cinque-cento face, speaks the Viennese jargon with the most aristocratic accent, and possesses the most enviable talents. He rides like Renz, dances like Frappart, and more than that, in private theatricals he is like Blasel, Matras and Knaak in one person. In all Austria, no man has a greater talent for representing Polish Jews, poverty-stricken Czechs, drunken valets, provincials of all kinds. But his greatest triumph is the "Vienna shoemaker's boy." What accuracy of costume and grimaces! The ladies say he has a pug nose when he plays the shoemaker's boy, and a way of sticking out his tongue--ah!

He has played for benevolent objects a hundred times, and in Vienna is a universally known and boundlessly popular individual, because he is intimate with actresses, occasionally from a freak rides in an omnibus, or another time is seen in the standing place of the opera house (for a half act), because one sometimes meets him in sausage houses, because in rainy weather he walks with an umbrella and upturned trousers, because once even--the gods and a pretty girl alone know why--he travelled from Salzburg to Vienna second class.

The public see in him a pleasant, affable man without pride, and feel drawn to him like a

brother. Poor public! I would not advise you to stretch out your hardened hand to him, for between ourselves Count Pistasch is one of the most arrogant of Austrian cavaliers.

The actors with whom he one evening drinks friendship, and the next greets with "Hm!--ah--You, Mr.---- what do you call him," can tell this. One of them once challenged him. This was a great joke to the Count; he laughed until he cried, could not control himself, and finally settled it thus: "You are a fine fellow, am very sorry, etc., deserve an order for personal bravery--ah--if I can be of any service to you," etc.

He has never been outside of Austria, possesses the vaguest ideas of history. The French Revolution is a kind of accidental calamity for him, something between the earthquakes of Lisbon and the pest in Florence. He is a strict Catholic from aristocratic tradition, has very good manners when he wishes, speaks French well, and we can assure our readers, that just as he is, without a suspicion of the "principles of '89," he would be received with open arms in the most republican *salons* of Paris, and would be admired by the ladies for his "*pureté de race*" and "*grand air*."

Now we need only add that he naturally was not christened Pistasch--that this is a humorous nickname which was given him as a boy, by reason of his idealistic "greenness," but which now, when this greenness has long withered, is preserved for the sake of contrast.

"Well, have you decided upon the day when you will invite the Lanzberg?" asks Scirocco of his sister, who, after long pondering, gold pencil in hand over a little velvet-bound book in which she enters her social obligations, now closes it.

"It is very hard," complains the Countess.

"When did this unfortunate Madame Lanzberg call upon you? Oh, yes. Wednesday. Have you returned her call yet?"

"No; I must show her from the first that I am in no hurry to associate with her," says the Countess.

"Hm!" says Scirocco, his hands in his pockets, his eyes fixed upon the ceiling. "Do you not think, Mimi, that as quite a near relation of Lanzberg it would be the thing for you to smooth the way a little for his wife? It would be an act of Christian charity."

"The matter is very complicated, Rudi," replied Mimi Dey. "I was always very sorry for Felix--you know I decidedly took his part. I have nothing against his wife; her manner is indeed deplorable, but on the whole, if some little poverty-stricken Sempaly or Dey had married her, I should have been the last to withdraw my protection from her. In Felix's unfortunate circumstances, he has proved by his marriage that he no longer belongs to his caste; he has abdicated, *voilà*."

Rhoeden and Pistasch have finished their game of bézique, and now devote themselves to the building of interesting card-houses. They spice this intelligent occupation by considerable wagers, which he shall win whose card-house remains standing the longest. Up to now Rhoeden has had the advantage. But the Countess's words seem to have excited him a very little--his card-houses no longer stand.

Scirocco bites his lips, every finger quivers--how can he counsel his sister to silence or at least consideration? In vain he turns his back to Rhoeden, so as to make an impression upon her by energetic scowling. Soon he notices, like many subtle diplomats, that he has naïvely exposed himself to the enemy. His energetic play of expression beams at him from a mirror in which the attentively watching Rhoeden could certainly solve the interesting riddle--but it wholly escapes his short-sighted sister.

"As she, nevertheless, must be invited, it would perhaps be better to fix the day," cries Scirocco, somewhat impatiently.

"It cannot be this week," answers the Countess, counting over the days. "Thursday, Friday and Saturday are the days of the fair for the flooded people in Marienbad; Sunday, the ladies of the committee dine at the M----'s, Monday there are private theatricals at the M----'s, Thursday, the L----'s dine with me----"

"Well, invite them for Thursday," cries Scirocco. "She is really very nice, sings chansonettes like Judic; she will amuse you greatly."

"Do you think so?" cries the Countess. "Before Felix was married, L---- would hardly bow to him, how will it be now? No, Wednesday. Wednesday will be the best, but still I cannot exactly invite her *en famille*."

"Hardly," says Scirocco, dryly.

"And whom can I ask to meet her? One has an antipathy to Felix, others to her----" the Countess laughs lightly and kindles a fresh cigarette. "One must be so careful--it would be very disagreeable for me if toward evening some one should accidentally come over from Marienbad,

and should meet her here."

"Have a warning fastened over the door as when one has small-pox in the house," laughs Pistasch.

"Invite the Garzins," proposes Scirocco.

"Yes, that is something, but a strange element is still desirable," remarks the Countess. "What do you say to the Klette?"

Scirocco frowns. "I do not understand how respectable people can tolerate this poisonous old gossiping viper under their roofs," he answers, angrily.

"Neither do I," replies Mimi Dey, obligingly, "but still every one does."

"I make you another proposition, Mimi," cries Pistasch: "Invite old Harfink by telegram; I think he will come by special train."

The Countess smiled. "I should certainly do it," remarks she, "but I believe the Lanzberg would look upon it as a mortal insult. Besides, when did you make his acquaintance?"

"I met him once on the train, and thereupon he invited me to dinner," explains Pistasch.

"And you accepted?" asks the Countess, raising her eyebrows.

"Why of course--I thought I should amuse myself as well as at the Carl Theatre. Yes--that was what I fancied. What a disappointment! The dinner was not bad, perfectly correct, alas! The wife spoke of nothing but the evils of the social question. I did not know where to look, and the husband spoke of nothing but the evils of his stomach. Except for that, they were both very charming, on my word. Paid me compliments to my face with a *sans gêne*. Bah! I was never very kindly disposed to Felix, but I pity him on account of this match. For my part I should rather marry into a Hottentot family than such people."

I do not believe that during this speech Eugene Rhoeden felt exactly upon roses.

There are *parvenus* who listen in society to such speeches with self-satisfied indifference; yes, even laugh at them, and applying the English proverb, "Present company always excepted," to their own case, fancy themselves unreferred to. But Rhoeden does not belong to these enviable ones.

He smiles slightly to himself, and after the conversation had continued for some time in a similar manner he begins:

"There was once a French poet named Voltaire, and once when he went to London the street boys laughed at him, and sang mocking songs about Frenchmen. Then the poet turned round and said: 'You good people, is it not hard enough not to have been born among you? Really, you should pity us, not despise us!'"

After this little anecdote a universal silence followed, then Scirocco cried, "Bravo, Rhoeden!"

The good-natured Countess Dey blushed and said:

"We had entirely forgotten that you are related to these people," which sounds like a *betise*, but is balm for Eugene's vanity. Pistasch, however, puts on an irritated expression, and cries with his colossal impertinence, "I pity you uncommonly!"

Half an hour later the Countess is conferring in her dressing-room with her maid concerning her costume for to-morrow, and Pistasch has seated himself in a bad temper at the piano, where with his handsome, unpractised hands he thumps out the march from Norma, the only achievement of a ten years' study of music.

Scirocco and Rhoeden stand below on the rain-wet terrace. "Your cigar bores me," cries Scirocco, "throw it away and fill your lungs with pure air," and he draws a deep breath so as to enjoy the fragrance of the summer evening after the rain.

Eugene does as he is invited, and then asks, "Do you not admire my compliance?"

"You are a good fellow; one can get along with you," answers Scirocco in his abrupt manner.

"Thanks for the acknowledgment," says Rhoeden, not without bitterness. "Sometimes I ask myself whether it would not be better and more sensible for me to pack my trunk."

"Don't see the necessity," growls Scirocco.

"I am really not sure," says Rhoeden; "for between ourselves it is pleasanter to hear Pistasch make fun of my uncle than to hear my uncle rave over Pistasch when the latter has accidentally met him and said: 'Ah! good day, Mr.---- what is your name--Mr. Harfink?'"

"Curious world!" murmurs Scirocco, smiling to himself.

Rhoeden, seeing him in a particularly good temper, makes use of the opportunity to ask him:

"Say, what is the story about Lanzberg?"

Scirocco is silent for a while; looks apparently absently before him, and then suddenly cries brusquely, "What did you ask?"

"Whether you think we will have fine weather to-morrow," replies Rhoeden.

Scirocco glances at him peculiarly with a half smile, behind which the words "Clever dog" may be read.

That evening Eugene writes in the diary in which, instead of sentimental impressions, he notes down all freshly-acquired worldly wisdom:

"Never ask society, except concerning things which you already know."

XIV.

Klette was invited after all, or rather invited herself. At the fair in Marienbad she met Mimi Dey, and upon the latter remarking carelessly: "How are you, Caroline; when are we to see you in Iwanow?" assured her generously, "I am at your service as soon as you send the horses for me. I have been intending to spend a few days with you."

And she stays a few days; the first of these, the eventful Wednesday, has already dawned, is in fact nearly over.

Klette and the Countess are chatting in the drawing-room. The three gentlemen are firing at sparrows in the park, quite a bloodless occupation, which the sparrows seem to consider a good joke, and they laugh at the shooting with their ironical black eyes. They flutter about like will-o'-the-wisps. In vain does Pistasch, who seems particularly bent upon this sport, approach softly the trees where they crouch--krrm--and they are gone.

For probably the tenth time Pistasch has cried, "The infamous sparrows are cleverer than I," has at last fixed his eye upon a comfortable old grandfather sparrow, who sleepily philosophizes on the thick branch of a nut-tree, but before he has aimed he hears from the open windows of the drawing-room loud laughter, the gay ripple of the Countess, and the deep, rough ha! ha! ha! of Klette.

"How amused the ladies seem to be," he says, turning to his companions, forgetting the sparrow patriarch.

"I do not understand how any one can laugh at that Cantharis," grumbles Scirocco.

"Oh, she is surely relating something piquant about us," says Pistasch. "It is incredible how greatly interested the ladies are in our doings, that is to say, in our evil doings."

Now the shadows have become much longer. Klette has withdrawn to don a wonderful cap of yellow lace and red ribbons, and the men have returned from their bloodless hunt, to exchange their gay shirts and light summer suits for solemn black and dazzling white.

"Rudi," cries the Countess, as she hears a light and yet somewhat dragging step--Scirocco limps a little--passing her dressing-room door.

"Have you any commission, Mimi?" asks Scirocco, with his good-natured obligingness, as he enters the room. The Countess has dismissed her maid, is already in dinner toilet, suppressed laughter sparkles in her bright brown eyes, the corners of her mouth twitch merrily. "No!" she replies to his question. "What commission should I have for you!--Ah! You came from the greenhouse?" pointing to a couple of flowers in his hand.

"Yes. I wished to give the gardener some directions in regard to the flowers for your guests. I remember that Elsa cannot bear gardenias, and Linda--hm--the Lanzberg raves over stephanotis."

"You really might have omitted the bouquets today," says Mimi, vexedly. "My greenhouses without this--thanks to the fair and those stupid theatricals--are pretty well stripped."

"Elsa has never dined here without finding her favorite flowers beside her plate," remarked

Scirocco, calmly. "I can neither pass over Linda, nor will I punish Elsa for the misfortune of having a Miss Harfink for sister-in-law. Why are you laughing so, Mimi, what seems so amusing to you?"

"My own simplicity," cries the Countess. "I was so very stupid."

"Mimi, I do not understand you in the least," says he in astonishment.

"Oh, I took your protection of this pretty Lanzberg for unselfish philanthropy!" The Countess interrupts herself to laugh.

"Unselfish philanthropy! Say rather ordinary justice," cries he, becoming somewhat violent. "What are you thinking of? What are you driving at?"

"Your discretion is admirable! You understand no hints."

"Ah, indeed!" cried Scirocco, pale with rage. "Ah, indeed! and the Cantharis told you that--that was what you were laughing over so immoderately?"

"But Rudi, never mind. I do not take it amiss in you," cries the Countess good-naturedly, restraining her levity.

"But I take it amiss in myself to have given rise by my thoughtless inconsiderateness to such infamous inventions!" cried Scirocco, "for, once for all, Mimi, Mrs. Lanzberg is horribly calumniated by such."

"There are cases where perjury is permissible," says the Countess, indifferently. "Do not trouble yourself, I will never speak of the matter."

Then Scirocco steps close up to his sister. "Mimi!" cries he, hoarsely, "do you know that I am wounded, seriously wounded by your suspicion? Pray consider the meanness which you ascribe to me! I have worked for Felix's rehabilitation so as to be able to carry on a convenient love affair with his wife, on the risk that the world, bad as it is, discredited as he is, should say that he voluntarily paid this price for my assistance. His wife was indifferent to me, but even if she had charmed me I would have avoided her like the plague rather than throw another shadow on Felix's compromised existence. Poor Felix! And I imagined that I had been of some use to him."

Impossible not to believe in his honest excitement. "Pardon, Rudi," whispers the Countess, "I had not thought."

"Never mind that, Mimi," he murmured, "besides it is better that I know what people say. I can at least act accordingly--to-day. This venomous serpent will surely watch my every glance. However, I must hurry--*à tantôt*, Mimi!"

With that he rushed out, had only just time to change his clothes when he heard a carriage approach.

"Poor Felix!" he murmured thoughtfully and sadly, "I can do nothing more for you; they have tied my hands."

Thus the last shadow of pleasure which Linda might have had at the dinner has vanished.

The Lanzbergs arrived a few minutes before the Garzins. Scirocco received them at the foot of the terrace, offered Linda his arm, with somewhat formal politeness, and escorted her to his sister in the drawing-room, not in the cosey, brown wainscoted one, but in a ceremonious chamber hung with Gobelins. The Countess rose at her entrance and took two steps to meet her, then introduced her to those present with her usual absent-mindedness, naturally to Rhoeden also, at which Linda began to laugh; but as no one joined in her merriment, her pretty, attractive face suited itself to the universal gravity.

Poor Linda, she so petted, so spoiled, to-day sees not a welcoming face, even among the men.

The Countess exchanges polite commonplaces with her, while she addresses remarks to Klette in between. The chair near the sofa on which Linda sits remains empty. Pistasch, whose humorous talents are to-day wholly imperceptible, presents the appearance of a distinguished statue, and exchanges a few words with Eugene, while Scirocco with unnatural liveliness has entered into a conversation with Felix.

At last the Garzins appear--every one thaws. The Countess does not walk, no, she runs to meet Elsa, kisses her on both cheeks, scolds Garzin for permitting his wife to look so pale, accidentally steps on Linda's train, turns round and says, "Ah, pardon me, Baroness!" a perfectly polite little phrase which makes Linda feel as if cold water had been thrown over her.

The dinner is announced. Scirocco takes Linda in with the same strange formality which she perceives in him to-day for the first time. At the table a charming surprise does indeed await her--a bouquet of stephanotis and gardenias.

"Oh, Scirocco!" cries she, perhaps a very little too loudly, "that is too lovely! It reminds me of

Rome," she adds softly.

She is already so nervous that she would like to burst into tears at the pretty attention. Her eyes sparkle, and a fleeting blush crimsons her cheeks. Scirocco is sorry for her. "I am glad that you appreciate my good memory," says he, bending slightly towards her. Then he notices how suddenly no less than three pairs of eyes watch him closely, those of Klette, Pistasch, and Rhoeden; he feels that Linda's excited manner is most suited to strengthen this distrustful trio in their suspicion, and immediately turns to Elsa.

"I could not conjure up any white elder, unfortunately, Snowdrop," says he, shaking his handsome head vexedly.

"Even with the assistance of all the seasons, you could hardly have found anything more beautiful than these white roses," she replies.

She sits at Scirocco's left.

Linda cannot eat, and finds no opportunity to speak, and relate the gay little stories which are her specialty. Pistasch, who sits at her right, contents himself by from time to time dutifully making some remark to her concerning the weather, the country, and such perfectly neutral subjects, excluding all intimate conversation, and Scirocco, her old friend, on whose homage she had relied so surely, to-day has nothing but etiquette for her. She listens to his conversation with Elsa. Elsa and he were playmates together. She calls him by his given name, he calls her Snowdrop, which pretty nick-name he had discovered for her years before. Both laugh lightly over old reminiscences which they share, and ask each other about old, half-forgotten friends. Pleasant confidence on her part, smiling courtesy on his, marks their manner to each other.

Linda feels more and more depressed.

Felix, more gloomy and embarrassed than usual, scarcely raises his eyes from his plate. Except Scirocco, who absolutely cannot help her, nor dares, only one notices and pities her misery--Erwin.

"What has become of your wild gypsy, Snowdrop?" asks Scirocco, among other things.

"My wild gypsy has become a very tame gypsy, who lets my little daughter ride her very good-naturedly," replies Elsa.

"Ah, Litzi rides already; then I must accompany her some day soon," says Scirocco.

"Do not break her heart. She likes you better than any one else now," says Elsa.

"That is quite mutual," he assures her. "I hope you will bring Litzi up for me."

"Since we have been at Traunberg I have not yet been able to find a suitable saddle-horse." Linda turns to Scirocco.

"If you are not a grandfather before Litzi thinks of marriage," Elsa laughingly answers his last remark. "Do you know that you are beginning to grow gray?"

Whereupon be, turning to his right, says: "You will find the country very pleasant for riding, Baroness--many meadows," and to the left: "You always were accustomed to discover the mote in my eye, Snowdrop!"

"Why did you never mention your wish to me, Linda?" asks Erwin across the table. "I can place a horse at your disposal which might suit you."

"Riding is a very pleasant pastime--will be a great resource for you, Baroness," remarks Pistasch.

"Ah! Do you think that I will need many resources in Traunberg?" asks Linda, bitterly.

"Well, life in the country is always monotonous," he says politely but somewhat hesitatingly.

"These *pâtis* are excellent, Mika," now says the bass voice of Klette, at his right. She has known him all his life, has dandled him on her knees when he wore short dresses, still calls him by his Christian name, and is one of the few people who remember that he was really baptised Michael.

He gives a servant a sign. "Shall I help you?" he asks with droll gallantry.

"I have nothing against it--two, please," she replies.

"How is Marienbad looking? Any new beauties?" he asks.

"Don't be so lazy, and come over and see for yourself," says she with her mouth very full.

"I was there Saturday at the fair. Ruined myself buying cigar-cases. I place six at your disposal, Caroline. But on my word, it is astonishing what trash they had at the fair."

"You distinguished yourself," cries the hostess, laughingly.

"Yes, unfortunately I took a Ring Street beauty for the F---- from the Carl Theatre, and asked her how much a kiss cost. Her ladyship entered into the joke, and answered that she only sold cuffs, and as I persisted--*pour la bonne cause*, she replied in perfectly good French, '*La bonne cause s'en effaroucherait*,' then I grew urgent. 'Count Kamenz!' cried a warning voice near me. I look up, and behold beside me, the picture of offended dignity, the husband."

"And how did you get out of the scrape? What did you say?" asks Klette.

"I?--What could I say?--'Ah, pardon'--and decamped!"

"Cool! Very!" remarks Rhoeden, who has been reconciled to Pistasch again, laughing.

"I only wondered that he knew my name so well," says Pistasch, meditatively, with feigned simplicity. "I do not know to this day what his name is. His wife was a magnificent creature, on my word--what a pity!"

"I think she was sadder at the interruption than you," says Rhoeden.

"Possibly," replies Pistasch, calmly.

The trivial little story has seemed diverting enough to all present except Linda. Is that the way in which young people of society speak of pretty women out of their sphere, to whom they pay attentions? she asks herself.

XV.

Now the dinner is over. They have left the drawing-room to wander through the park. There are thunder-clouds in the sky, the air is close and breathless, sultry, but at times a sharp gust of wind rises. The birds fly close to the ground, as if the black sky frightened them, and the flowers smell strangely sweet.

In vain has Linda sent inviting glances at Scirocco; he clings to Elsa as a sinner might cling to a saint through whose protection he hoped to gain admission to Paradise.

Rhoeden who, whether from policy or convenience, plays the rôle of an injured man and is very reserved, polite and attentive as he is, has undertaken to be the young Elli's partner at lawn-tennis, by which game he can meet her in the park.

Erwin has good-naturedly joined his pretty sister-in-law; chatting gayly, he tries to drive away her bitter mood. There is something in the shape of his eyes which makes them look sentimental, one might almost say loving. His temperament is such that he can be with no one, especially no woman, without trying to make her existence agreeable.

Elsa who, walking with Scirocco, meets her husband, Linda on his arm, remembers neither the one thing nor the other; the smile with which, with head slightly lowered, he listens to her chat, the glance which he rests on her, are in Elsa's eyes half crimes. After a few superficial words the two couples separate again. Erwin as he goes turns round and calls to Scirocco, "See that you do not take my wife into a draught, Sempaly. She is strangely imprudent."

"What admirable thoughtfulness," says Elsa, half aloud, and draws down the corners of her mouth so deeply that Scirocco, as an old friend, permits himself to remark laughingly, "I did not know that you could look so gloomy, Snowdrop!" whereupon Elsa blushes.

Linda and Erwin join the lawn-tennis players. Linda has studied this modern pastime thoroughly in England, and likes to play; besides that, she knows very well that nothing is more becoming to her slender yet voluptuous figure than the quick litheness required in lawn-tennis. Her voice reaches Elsa from a distance, gay, shrill, then the soft half-laughing voice of Erwin.

"You look so tired, Snowdrop," says Sempaly, sympathetically, "will you not rest a little?" With that he points to a bench in a niche of thick elder-bushes.

"Yes, I am tired," says Elsa, dully, and sits down.

"Tired after a two-hour drive and a little stroll through the park, Snowdrop," remarks Scirocco, anxiously. "I do not recognize you any more. You used to endure so much. Do you know

that your health makes me anxious?"

"Nonsense! My health interests you about as much as that of the Emperor of Brazil. If you receive notice of my death some day you will shrug your shoulders and sigh sympathetically, 'Poor Garzin!'"

"You are intolerable, Snowdrop," says Scirocco, laughing. "Besides, the wind is rising and you are beginning to shiver. Let us go to the house."

"No, I like it here," she cries with a pretty childishness. "I should like to see the sun set from here, and am curious as to whether the Flora there"--pointing to a statue--"will become flushed pink. Prove your friendship and get me a wrap."

He goes away, but remains longer than the nearness of the castle seems to justify. Elsa does not notice his long absence. She prefers to be alone in this spot. The bench reminds her of old times, and is therefore dear to her. Whether the Flora becomes pink or not is perfectly indifferent to her--she does not look outward, she gazes inward. She thinks of the day when she sat there with Erwin, her betrothed. (Count Dey was still alive then.) She remembers--oh, something foolish--the little beetle which had fallen in her hair and which Erwin had brushed away with light hand; his caressing touch; how he looked lovingly at the beetle because it had touched his love's hair; how, instead of throwing the insect away, he had carried it with him when they left the bench, and had placed it carefully in the heart of the most beautiful rose which they passed.

How he loved her then! How passionately and at the same time how tenderly! "Ah! those were such lovely times," she sighs with the old song.

The voices of the lawn-tennis players are still heard. How can they play in such a gale? Suddenly she hears her name spoken near by.

"How this poor Mrs. Garzin has gone off!" cries the Klette's bass voice. "I scarcely recognized her."

"She looks badly," replies Count Pistasch's distinguished husky voice.

"She has grown old, fearfully old; she looks as if she were forty," asserts the Klette.

"Ah, bah! She looks rather like a consumptive pensioner," replies Pistasch. "What can be the matter with her? I hope no trouble is worrying her."

"Don't you think that this good Garzin is a little too fond of his pretty sister-in-law?"

"Nonsense, Caroline!" says Pistasch, reprovingly. "You are always imagining something. Recently you asked me whether poor Rudi----"

"Well, that is evidently over;" the Klette heaves a sigh of disappointment; "but she must coquet, poor Mrs. Lanzberg, to amuse herself, there is not much else for her to do; and say yourself--I do not assert that the good Garzin has already knelt to her, but would it not be natural? It would really serve this arrogant Elsa right. To force Garzin, a man of such a gay, sociable nature, to absolute solitude; to take away from him his career, his occupation, in short, everything."

Elsa springs up; she listens breathlessly. What does she care that it is ill-bred to listen? But the voices die away. Pistasch and the Klette turn into another path without noticing the white form in the dark elder niche.

Scirocco at length comes back.

"I could not find either your things or Mimi's maid all this time," he excuses himself for his long delay. "I hope this belongs to you," offering her a white crêpe shawl.

She takes it, but immediately starts back with a violent gesture. "That belongs to my sister-in-law," she cries; "my things are never so strongly perfumed. Only smell it, how strange!"

"Yes, truly," says he, holding the shawl to his face; "that is a harem perfume which some one brought her from Constantinople. But what is the matter, Snowdrop?"

"I feel the storm approach," she murmurs, tonelessly. "Let us go to the house."

They go. The swallows fly yet lower, the clouds hang heavier, almost touch the black tree-tops. There is a whistling and hissing in the leaves.

Elsa hears nothing. With dragging, and yet overhasty, steps she walks near Sempaly. "Who knows whether he would even say 'poor Garzin' if I should die?" she thinks to herself.

The lawn-tennis party, which Pistasch and the Klette have now also joined, growing more and more animated, has lasted until the first drops of rain have driven them away.

Somewhat dishevelled and heated, her morbid self-consciousness healed by the admiration

which Pistasch, escaped from his cousin's control, had unreservedly displayed for her, Linda enters the drawing-room where the Countess, Felix, Elsa and Scirocco are assembled.

"How did your lawn-tennis come on?" asks Scirocco, as the Countess, vexed at Linda's triumphant look, does not condescend to address her.

"Oh, excellently," cries Linda. "Count Kamenz and my brother-in-law display the greatest talent for this noble occupation."

"To whom do you give the palm?" cries Kamenz.

"I cannot decide that to-day," says she with as much gravity as if she were deciding upon the fortieth *fauteuil* of the Paris Academy. "One judges talent not from what it first offers, but according to its subsequent development."

This pedantic phrase from her fresh lips is so irresistibly droll that Pistasch and Erwin laugh heartily, and even Scirocco cannot suppress a slight smile.

"We have come to the conclusion that the ground here is not favorable," continues Linda, turning to Scirocco, "and the gentlemen are coming over to Traunberg to-morrow to practise. Will you be one of the party, Count Sempaly?"

"If you will permit me, I will have the pleasure, Baroness," he replies with a bow.

"You are as full of phrases as an old copy-setter to-day," cries she, shrugs her shoulders, laughs lightly, and sinks into the arm-chair which Pistasch pushes forward for her.

Pistasch seats himself opposite her. His light laugh as he leans forward, her satisfied leaning back, the continuous conversation wholly incomprehensible to the others, indicated a dawning flirtation. What did it matter to Pistasch whether Linda's father's name was Harfink or Schmuckbuckling? A man never troubles himself about such a thing when he is paying court to a pretty woman.

Poor Mimi! for years she has treated Pistasch as her exclusive property, she grows nervous, glances discontentedly in the direction of the two.

"Rudi, will you order the carriage?" asks Felix, uneasily.

Scirocco stretches out his hand to the bell, but asks politely, "Will you not wait until the rain has ceased?"

"I have no desire to get wet in our open carriage," interposes Linda.

"I could place a close carriage at your disposal," remarks the nervous Countess, irritated even more by Pistasch's manner than by Linda's victorious expression, and adds constrainedly, "However, I really see no reason for haste."

Hardly can permission to remain be given in a colder tone. But Linda replies with astonishing aplomb, "Neither do I," and has a sweet, naïve smile for the Countess, and for Pistasch, on the contrary, a comical, expressive glance which delights him. He finds it quite in order that she should refresh herself with a little impertinence. "She is piquant as an actress," he thinks.

Then the door opens; unannounced, like very old friends, a lady and gentleman enter. She, small, fat, lively, cries out, hurrying up to the Countess, "We flee to thee, Mimi, the rain has surprised us. Ah, you have guests--how are you, Elsa? do I really see you at last?"

He, tall, thin, with a Velasquez nose, Don Quixote manner, and arrogant eyes, looking out through glasses, has meanwhile chivalrously kissed the hand of the Countess. Now he looks round, recognizes Erwin, greets him heartily, comes up to Felix, starts slightly, goes past him to Rhoeden, as if he had never seen Felix in his life before.

Felix stands motionless, ashy, rigid, with bluish lips and half-closed eyes. Scirocco has lived through many unpleasant moments, but never a more painful one. Still he rapidly collects himself, takes the new guest by both shoulders and turns him toward Felix.

"That is Lanzberg. Did you not recognize him, Max?" he cries.

After that nothing remains for Count L---- but to murmur in apology, so as not to insult the guests of the house in which he is, "I am so near-sighted," and to stretch out two arrogant fingers to Felix.

"Order the carriage, Rudi," begs Felix, very hoarsely.

Linda, who has not noticed the little scene, gives Pistasch a glance at the interruption of their *tête-à-tête*, which flatters his vanity.

XVI.

"You have slept badly, mouse; look at your poor eyes. You worry me, you pale person."

With these words Erwin greets his wife the next morning at breakfast, kisses her lightly on the forehead, then reads his letters, swallows a cup of coffee in great haste, greets Miss Sidney, who enters with her little pupil, absently though pleasantly, lets himself, still pleasantly but somewhat passively, be embraced by his little daughter, puts his letters in his pocket and hurries away, but turns at the door and cries: "Do not expect me to lunch, Elsa; I have a great deal to do in Radewitz."

Now he has gone, Elsa's eyes have grown sad. For a few minutes after Miss Sidney has led Litzi away Elsa remains at the deserted breakfast table and crumbling a roll, murmurs, "He has forgotten."

To-day is their wedding-day, a day which Erwin has always made much of, which has always been a day of sweetest recollections. She had remained in her room this morning longer than usual, because she had hoped that he would seek her. In vain! Then she, poor Elsa, had expected a little surprise at the breakfast table--in vain!

So now she sits there and hopes that perhaps he will return.

Yes, he returns--his steps rapidly approach, her heart beats fast, the door opens, Erwin bursts in with hat on his head, and cries: "Elsa, don't forget to send the White Duchess to Traunberg. I have not time to give the order," and disappears.

"He has forgotten--decidedly forgotten!" cries Elsa, "for the first time!" Then she leaves the breakfast room.

Time passes slowly and sadly for her. "It is a trifle not worth speaking about," she tells herself again and again. "I should have reminded him," but then she feels herself grow hot.

"He did not forget Linda's horse," she murmurs bitterly, and adds still more bitterly: "He is bored. Every diversion is welcome to him. Poor Erwin!"

The day passes--the dinner hour draws near, several minutes before five Erwin at length returns. Heated and irritable he seeks her in her room. "How vexed I have been!" he cries as he enters.

She smiles, a little excitement overcomes her. But soon it turns out that he has not been vexed at his forgetfulness--oh, no!--only at the cheating and roguery of his sugar factory director.

"It serves you right," remarks Elsa, coldly. She cannot deny herself the satisfaction of making some sharp remark to him. "When he introduced himself to you, you told me 'the man is repulsive to me!' and when he came back again you engaged him. You always do so. At the first glance you judge men according to your instincts, and very justly; at the second glance you judge them by the universal statutes of lofty philanthropy, and always falsely. I know no one for whom it is more unpleasant to believe ill of his neighbor than you."

"God be praised and thanked that the counterbalance of a desperately distrustful wife is given me, then," cried Erwin, somewhat irritably. Then a pair of large eyes meet his gloomily. "My distrust is a disease, and you know the cause," says she, earnestly.

The shrill dinner-bell at this point interrupts the conversation.

After dinner--Miss Sidney has gone into the garden with Litzi to play grace hoops--the husband and wife sit vexedly silent in the drawing-room, when a servant presents a letter to Erwin from Traunberg. Elsa has at once perceived that it is in Linda's, not in Felix's handwriting. Erwin has opened it, apparently indifferently, then suddenly the blood rushes to his cheeks, almost violently he throws the letter away, kneels before Elsa and takes both her hands in his. "How could I forget the 27th? Elsa, are you very angry with me?" he cries.

It would be hard to remain angry with him, if he had not been reminded of his duty by just Linda. But this vexes Elsa so much that she answers his warm glance and pleasant smile only with a cool "Why should I be angry?" as indifferently and calmly as if the 27th no more concerned her than the date of the battle of Leipzig.

"Had you forgotten, also?" he asks, wounded.

"Forgotten?--what?" asks she, dully.

"That to-day is my lucky day--the loveliest day of all the year for me? Oh, Elsa! Has it become indifferent to you?"

His voice goes deep to her heart, but she is ashamed to be so moved by his first warm words--is ashamed to show him how his forgetfulness has pained her. In proud fear of having shown too much feeling, she hardens her heart, and with the peculiar histrionic talent which is at the disposal of most women in critical moments, and which they love to display, so as to thereby ruin the happiness of their life, she says calmly, pleasantly, half laughingly: "Ah, indeed!--I should tease you for your lack of memory!"

"Elsa!" confused and surprised he looks in her eyes. "Do you not remember how we have always valued the day; do you not remember the first year? You had forgotten it, then?--and when I put the ring on your finger--perhaps you do not wear it any longer?"

"Oh, yes;" and Elsa looks down at the large diamond which sparkles like a dewdrop or a tear near her wedding-ring.

"Well, you were ashamed, then, not to have thought of me," he continued, "and then--then you repeated to me, half crying, half laughing, very tenderly a little childish wish: 'Had I an empire I would lay it at thy feet, alas, I can offer you nothing but a kiss,' do you not remember, Elsa?"

But Elsa only replies coldly, almost mockingly: "It is very long ago--hm! What does Linda write to you besides that to-day is the 27th?"

"I have not read all of her letter, read it yourself if you wish," and with that he hands his wife the letter.

Elsa at first struggles with herself, but then she reads it, and half aloud:

DEAR ERWIN:--It is really too charming in you to so kindly gratify my thoughtless wish. Many, many thanks for the beautiful White Duchess.

Felix just tells me that to-day is the 27th, a day on which you will have no pleasure in playing lawn-tennis with me. You might perhaps force yourself to come so as not to vex me, solitary as I am now. Therefore I release you from your promise. Kiss Elsa for me, and, with most cordial greetings, Sincerely yours,

LINDA LANZBERG.

"How well she writes," says Elsa, who is sorry that she can find nothing to complain of in the letter, and with the firm resolve not to let her jealousy be perceived in the slightest, she continues: "I should be sorry if our foolish lovers' traditions should prevent you from amusing yourself a little, my poor Erwin." She had taken up some fancy work and seemed to ponder over a difficulty in it. "Pray go over to Traunberg and invite Linda to dinner Sunday."

Erwin gazes angrily before him. "You send me away, Elsa--you--to-day--on our wedding-day?" says he then, slowly.

She laughs lightly and threads a fresh needle. "Ah! do not be childish, Erwin," cries she. "It is not suited to our age now."

He pulls the bell rope violently. "Elsa," he whispers once more before the servant enters, but with such intolerable cordiality she says, "Well, Erwin?" that he turns away his head and calls to the servant, who just then appears, "Tell Franz to saddle my horse."

XVII.

A small room with large windows opening on the park, innumerable flowers in vases of different forms standing about the room, a perfume as intoxicating and painfully sweet as poison which gives one death in a last rapture; on the walls, hung with silver-worked rococo damask, a few rare pictures, only five or six; two Greuze heads with red-kissed lips and tear-reddened eyes, eyes which look up to heaven because earth has deceived them; then a Corot, a spring landscape, where dishevelled nymphs dance a wild round with dry leaves which winter has left; a Watteau, in which women, in the bouffant paniers of the time of the regents, with bared bosoms and hair

drawn high up on their heads, touch glasses of champagne with gallant cavaliers, a picture in which everything smiles, and which yet makes one deeply mournful; a picture in which men and women, especially women, seem to have no heart, no soul, no enjoyment on earth, no belief in heaven; but in deepest *ennui* float about like butterflies, tormented by the curse of the consciousness that their life lasts only from sunrise to sunset; a Rembrandt, a negress, brutally healthy, bestially stupid, with dull glance, broad, hungry lips, huge, homely, and wholly satisfied with herself and creation; about the room soft, inviting furniture; no dazzling light, pale reddish reflections; draperies in Roman style, artistic knick-knacks and soft rugs--this is what Erwin finds as, pushing aside the drawn portières, he enters Linda's boudoir without announcement.

Amid these surroundings she sits at an upright piano, and softly and dreamily sings an Italian love-song.

Erwin comes close up to the piano. "Ah!" cries she, springing up. It would be impossible not to see what unusual pleasure his visit gives her. Her eyes shine, and a faint blush passes over her cheeks. "Erwin, did you not receive my letter?" she cries almost shyly, and gives him a soft hand which trembles and grows warm in his.

"Certainly," he replies. "It was very nice in you to consider our foo----" in spite of all the bitterness which for the moment he feels toward Elsa, he cannot use the byword foolish, and rather says--"little traditions. I only came for a moment, I----" he hesitates. "Elsa hopes that you will do us the pleasure of dining with us Sunday."

"Sunday?" repeats Linda, letting her fingers wander absently in dreamy preluding over the keys.

"Have you planned anything else?" asked Erwin, who had meanwhile taken a very comfortable chair.

"What should I have planned?" asked she, shrugging her pretty shoulders. "No, no, I will come gladly. You are very good to me, Erwin, and I am inexpressibly thankful to you."

A strangely exaggerated feeling was in her accent, in her moist glance, and the quick gesture with which she stretched out both hands to him.

"Where is Felix?" he asked, turning the conversation.

"Felix is, I believe, over in Lanzberg," she answered. "He has 'something to attend to.' He always has 'something to attend to' when I expect people," she added, bitterly. "It makes my position so uncommonly easy, Erwin! Can you account for his behavior? Would you, if you had once resolved to choose a wife of unequal birth, afterward be so passionately ashamed of her as Felix is?"

"How can you talk so foolishly, Linda?" Erwin interrupted the young wife, uneasily.

"Foolishly!" Linda shook her head with discouragement. "If you only saw him! Lately he made a scene before I could be permitted to accept the Deys' invitation; then, at the last moment, he had a headache, and expressed the wish that I should join Elsa and go without him."

"Strange idea to hang this monster in your pretty rococo nest!" cried Erwin, growing more and more embarrassed, and abruptly changing the conversation from Felix to the Rembrandt negress.

"The monster pleases me, I like contrasts--but to return to Felix----"

"You expect Pistasch and Sempaly, do you not?"

"They wished to come this evening--alas--I could renounce their society; to-day I should like greatly to confide in you, Erwin. You are the only person who is sorry for me."

There was a pause in the conversation of the two. Without, a murmur like a sigh of love sounds through the trees, and a few withered rose-leaves are blown into the room. Erwin's glance rests dreamily upon the young woman. She pleases him in somewhat the same manner as the Greuze head on the wall; no, differently--there is always something dead about a picture. A picture is either a recollection preserved in colors or a dream, and has the charm of a recollection, of a dream; while Linda has the charm of a foreboding, of a riddle, and above all things, the charm of life, of full young life.

Then a carriage approaches. "Pistasch and Sempaly," cries Erwin, looking out of the window and seizing his hat. "On Sunday, eh, Linda?" says he in a tone of farewell.

"Now you run away from me just like Felix," cries she, pouting. "Please stay; it is so unpleasant for me to receive young people without a protector."

And he stays.

"You have come late; we have scarcely three-quarters of an hour of daylight left."

With these words, spoken in a very indifferent tone, Linda receives the young men. "Shall we set about it at once?" she continues.

The lawn-tennis court is in a broad flat meadow in the park. The ground is not yet dry from yesterday's rain, still the players are unwearied, Erwin, after a short time, as animated as the others. He competes vigorously with Pistasch, whose skill he soon surpasses, and enjoys the society of the two agreeable and to-day good-tempered young men, who are both old acquaintances of his.

Pistasch in old times he has pulled by the ear, paid his youthful debts, and on holidays taken him away from the Theresanium; with Scirocco, who is but little younger than Erwin himself, he has taken an Oriental trip, they were both overturned in the same drag, both raved over the same dancer, etc.

Merry reminiscences pass between the players almost as quickly as the tennis balls, and Linda encourages all these reminiscences most charmingly; her smile lends a new spice to the play and the conversation.

Erwin is of a much too lovable nature, is far too much occupied with the happiness of others and too little with his own, to think of what might have been if he had not, for love of Elsa, renounced the world.

He possesses a decided disinclination for the "if," always looks straight before him, never behind him. It does not even occur to him to-day, when he is vexed with Elsa, to complain of the serious monotony of his life, to philosophize, but he feels well, likes to amuse himself again, laughs frequently, and is not unsusceptible to the evident wish to please him which Linda shows. No objection can be found to her behavior to-day--it is animated without being loud, cordial without being coquettish.

The three-quarters of an hour are over, the daylight has become first pale, then gray, the balls have flown aimlessly, like plump night birds through the air; they have laughed, ridiculed the opposite side for their faults, finally lost several balls, and come to the conclusion that for the present nothing more can be done.

The players have now assembled for a light supper in the somewhat gloomy dining-room, from whose walls a few old portraits, gentlemen with huge wigs and large flowered brocade vests, ladies with wasp waists and immoderately high powdered coiffures, look down upon them. The light of the lamps is reflected in the crystal decanters, in which red and white wine sparkles; the flowers, a mixture of transparent ribbon-grass and wild roses, move softly in their vases in the middle of the table, trembling in the night air which streams in through the open windows. Beautiful fruit shines fresh and inviting, in silver dishes, and Linda presides, somewhat flushed, cordial and wonderfully pretty. No annoying servants disturb the pleasant little repast.

Pistasch behaves like the perfect gentleman which he is when he does not consider it his duty to be a perfect boor, or does not take pleasure in representing a perfect street Arab. He entertains the little circle by gay anecdotes, is attentive without impertinence to the hostess.

Scirocco, more serious in manner, nevertheless laughs at his cousin's jokes, and often interposes a witty little remark.

Erwin is as gay as the two others, but from time to time, however, his conscience reminds him that this is not the place for him, and that it is time for him to return home. "But can I leave my young sister-in-law alone with the two men?" he calms his inconvenient conscience. "Impossible!" He must wait for Felix to return.

That Kamenz and Sempaly, well-bred as both are, and with no cause for importunity, would both leave as soon as he should start, he does not tell himself.

Then a carriage rolls up to the castle. Linda rises to go to the window. "Felix!" she cries in her clear, childish voice. No answer follows. Her eyes become gloomy, she listens, evidently listens to see whether he will go to his room without appearing to his guests. Then a dragging, stumbling step is heard in the corridor. "Felix!" cries Linda, excitedly and imperiously.

The door opens, Felix enters, he stumbles into the dining-room, his face is red and swollen, his eyes have a watery look, his knees bend at every step, and a repulsive flabbiness is betrayed in his whole form.

"You have guests?" he says, thickly.

"Sit down, you are not well," cries Erwin, seizing the staggering man by the arm, and forcing him into a chair.

"No--but--the----" begins Felix, and breaks off, not able to finish the sentence.

A pause ensues. The little company seem paralyzed with alarm and disgust. Then Sempaly rises. "We thank you for a very pleasant evening, Baroness," he turns politely to Linda, and he and his cousin withdraw.

Linda is as white as the table-cloth. "Come, Felix, lie down," says Erwin to his brother-in-law, whose condition he does not wish to expose to the impertinent curiosity of servile lackeys.

"A cigar," murmurs Felix, excusing himself like all drunkards.

"Come;" Erwin urges him more sharply. Felix is about to make some reply, when he discovers his wife, turns his head away, and trembling throughout his entire frame, lets himself be taken to his room without resistance.

When Erwin returns to the dining-room to bid farewell to Linda, he finds her still deathly pale, with gloomy eyes, sitting in the same place.

"Linda, you are wrong to take this so seriously," says he, softly and consolingly; "it is really often an accident, a glass of poor wine----"

At his first kind word she has burst into tears. "It is not the first time," she replies, with difficulty restraining her tears. "Ah! if it--if it was only because the wine went to his head or--but no--a year ago he was the most temperate man in the world--it began in London. It cannot all be my fault. What is the matter with him? My God! What is concealed from me?"

A new light dawns upon Erwin's mind; Linda's lack of tact is excused; a boundless pity overcomes him.

At a violent motion of her pretty head her hair has become loosened and now hangs in silken splendor over her shoulders.

"Calm yourself, fasten up your hair, be prudent, my poor little sister-in-law!" says Erwin. Softly and involuntarily, as one would do to a child, he strokes the hair back from her temples.

She tries to fasten it up, but suddenly she lets her arms sink, and looking directly at Erwin out of moist but not disfigured eyes, she whispers, "I cannot reach so high, and do not wish to be seen thus by my maid--it would be strange."

"Can I help you?"

She nods. Simply, but without undue haste or uneasiness, he twists the beautiful hair, fastens it firmly as one who is accustomed to perform such services. She keeps her head covered, breathes regularly, deeply, audibly--accidentally he touches her little glowing ear, then she starts. A clock strikes. "Half past ten!" cries Erwin, startled. "Good night, Baroness; poor Elsa will not know how to explain my absence," and he rushes out.

"Your horse must be saddled," says Linda, but he does not return--a few minutes later she hears him galloping rapidly away. "When he thinks of his wife he always calls me Baroness," she murmurs to herself with a peculiar smile.

An hour later Erwin knocks at his wife's door. "Who is it?" an indifferent, sleepy voice asks from within.

"I."

"Ah, you, Erwin!" Elsa unlocks the door, and comes out in the corridor, where only a single lamp breaks the darkness.

"Have you anything particular to ask me?" says she, and her feverish sparkling eyes contradict the indifferent voice.

"Nothing," he whispers, softly. "I merely could not resolve to retire without having bid you good night; I felt that you must be still awake. Do you insist upon receiving me in the corridor?" he asks, smilingly, as she has closed the door behind her.

"The baby is asleep," replies Elsa, coldly, rubbing her eyes with ostentation.

"My voice will not wake her," he says, softly, taking Elsa's hand. "Elsa, my dear pouting Elsa, forgive me," he whispers. "I had no right to be angry and run away, merely because you were intolerable. It has been a horrid day, let it at least have a good ending!"

He sees how she trembles, how she blushes, and tenderly he takes her thin little face between both hands. Then, then she changes color, her eyes open in wild horror, and she starts back from him with a gesture of decided aversion, but quickly collecting herself, and forcing herself to smile, she gives him her hand and says, "Good night!"

How she has pained him! Is her love dead? He cannot understand her manner. How could he? He does not notice that on his hands, in his clothes has remained the peculiar perfume which a gallant diplomat had brought Linda from Constantinople.

XVIII.

"One cannot please people," sighs Pistasch, several days after the lawn-tennis party, while, cigar between his teeth, a hat adorned with a cock's plume on the back of his head, his smoking jacket open over his broad chest, he tries to solve a difficult problem in billiards. "One cannot please people."

"Hm! I think this sentence belonged to Solomon's *répertoire* of phrases," grumbles Sempaly, who, stretched out in a deep arm-chair, is looking over an old *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

"Solomon! Solomon!" says Pistasch, clutching his soft golden hair. "Was not that the Jew in the Leopoldstadt, whose money rate was so cheap, only three per cent, *per mese*?"

Count Kamenz considers it "chic" to have forgotten his Bible history.

"Do not make yourself out stupider than you are," Scirocco admonishes him. "We can be quite satisfied without that."

"Thanks, you see one can never please people," repeats Pistasch, shrugging his shoulders in droll despair. "After the sacrificial meal, Mimi rejoices me with a remark upon my stiffness to the Lanzberg. I show the latter much-calumniated beauty some slight attention and accept an invitation to lawn-tennis at her house. Mimi reproaches me concerning my morals. In order to satisfy her demands I yesterday paid court to a sixteen-year-old dove; she reproaches me for my inconsequence, says with feeling, 'One does not trifle with love!'--there, it sounds as if it were a bit from a play." Pistasch turns to Sempaly.

"Yes, it is the title of a play in which at the end some one is stabbed," says Scirocco, looking up from his reading.

"Thank you, Rudi; one can always learn from you," assures Pistasch.

"You are the first who has discovered that--I pity you," replies Sempaly, sarcastically.

"Surely not because I am weak in history and literature," says Pistasch, phlegmatically. "Bah! if one of us only knows who he is, he knows what he needs."

"Yes, everything else would only confuse him," says Scirocco, seriously.

"Precisely," answers Pistasch, coolly. He now sits on the corner of the billiard table, both hands in his pockets, in the large room with its faded leather furniture. "But confess that your sister maltreats me, after I have tried so hard to please her."

"Too hard, perhaps," says Scirocco, and looks gloomily at his cousin. Is the latter the only one who does not perceive that the Countess would prefer to preserve him in a cage, secure from the attacks of audacious women and mothers? "'*Ce sont toujour les concessions qui ont perdu les grands hommes*,' Philippe Egalité remarked on his way to execution," he continues, and takes his cousin's ostentatious *naïveté* for what it is really worth.

"That might be called forcing history," cries Rhoeden, entering at this moment, and hearing the last phrase.

"Who was Philippe Egalité?" asks Pistasch, with unembarrassed--yes, boasted ignorance.

"A man who, in order to make himself loved by the masses, voted for the death of his cousin, the king, made himself riding trousers of the *ancien régime*, and was beheaded by the masses by way of thanks."

"Ah! my historical knowledge is extensively widened--but if I only knew to whom to make love!"

"*Il y avait une fois un séducteur qui cherchait de l'ouvrage*," remarks Eugene.

"*Je crois Men qu'il cherchait!*" yawns Pistasch. "Really, it is not only on Mimi's and morality's account that I do not dare try it with the Lanzberg--but she is so magnificently prudish! Now I do not object to a little prudishness, that is piquant, but quite so much! Recently she, for really nothing at all----"

"Ah, really, for nothing at all?" repeats Scirocco, looking sharply at his cousin.

"Well, not exactly for nothing at all," the latter admits, grumblingly, "but on my word, for a

very slight cause, she gave me a dissertation upon her dignity, and that she felt bound to keep the honorable name which she bears spotless."

"She is quite right," declares Sempaly, sharply.

Pistasch laughs rudely. "Well, Rudi, between ourselves, it is nevertheless a little droll to think so much of this name, to boast of its spotlessness--hm!"

Rhoeden displays the indifference of a man who knows that the conversation is upon delicate subjects, and retires to a window recess, where he unfolds a letter. A servant enters and reports that "The Countess begs the Baron to come to the music-room," whereupon Rhoeden vanishes.

Scarcely has the door closed behind him when Scirocco bursts out violently: "You are a muttonhead, Pistasch; the little banker is a hundred times cleverer than you."

"He needs it," says Pistasch, coolly.

"Can you not be silent before him?" Scirocco attacks him.

"No," replies Pistasch, lazily; "I have never accustomed myself to keeping secrets; respectable people have no secrets. Besides, Lanzberg begins to be fairly unbearable, his manner has become so unsteady, so nervous; he no longer finishes a single sentence correctly, has not an opinion of his own, and crouches like a whipped dog. He makes me nervous."

"Are you of stone, have you no heart?" cries Scirocco.

"I am under no obligations to Lanzberg," grumbles Pistasch, very defiantly. "I----"

"Yes, you would be ashamed to protect him a little," says Scirocco, cuttingly. "Recently when L---- remarked to you that you seemed to associate with Lanzberg a great deal, you replied, 'Yes, he has a pretty wife!' Really, Pistasch, at that moment, in my eyes, you stood morally lower than poor Felix."

"Really," Pistasch imitates his cousin's tragic tone, "I think I have blundered into an educational institution! Lectures and nothing but lectures! First you, then Mimi. How you can permit yourself to compare me with a man like a 'certain Lanzberg.'"

"Do not talk yourself into useless heat, my dear fellow," says Scirocco, laying his hand on his shoulder. "At present I feel just as inclined to fight a duel with you as I should to cut my own brother's throat. Consider a little and you will come to the conclusion that you are in the wrong."

Scirocco leaves the billiard-room. For a while Pistasch pushes the ivory balls over the green table with furious zeal, then he throws himself irritably into an arm-chair.

Yes, he feels plainly that he is in the wrong, but he cannot resolve to change his behavior to Felix. He might at least avoid him, but just now, because and in defiance of Linda's prudishness, he does not wish to. His prejudice against Linda was nothing but arrogant affectation, but his antipathy to Felix is sincere; it almost resembles that aversion which many egoistic men feel for one mortally ill.

Rhoeden spends an hour in teaching the Countess--a totally unmusical woman who does not know a note, has no feeling for rhythm, but possesses a good voice and a great desire to shine in that direction--twelve bars of a new Italian romance of Tosti.

He goes his little way, pursues his little aim, and will attain it. Only two years ago young aristocrats invited him exclusively to stag parties, hunts, etc.; then Count F---- wrote a little operetta for a society tenor. The tenor, a young diplomat, after the first rehearsal of the operetta was transferred to Constantinople--universal consternation. They had about resolved to surrender the operetta, which was to be performed for a charitable object, to a professional when Pistasch proposed his old Theresanium comrade, Eugene. Eugene, with his unusually beautiful voice, sang the little rôle charmingly; all were delighted with his singing, his graceful acting. At one stroke he became the fashion.

His passion for Linda, Eugene had long buried under his worldly egoism; he was glad that he had been prevented from the foolishness of a marriage with her. He planned quite a different match, made use of his opportunities, and meanwhile was in no hurry. He knew very well on what footing he stood with society, knew that they wished to fasten upon him Countess Fifi R----, who was red-haired and somewhat hump-backed, or even Countess Clarisse, who was scrofulous and had been much gossiped about, knew it and laughed at it. He was still young and could wait.

Social vanity was his religion, the world his god, to whom, however, he did not pay such passionate, credulous homage as Linda, for example, but always with an ironical smile on his lips.

After he had gone through the romance with the Countess for perhaps a hundred times, had finally taught her text, melody, and even a sentimental mordent, and is now dismissed from duty, Eugene looks into the billiard-room again before he goes to his own room, and finds Pistasch, between thick clouds of smoke, occupied with a tschibouk.

"Do I disturb you?" he asks, gayly.

"Oh, heavens, no! I have long been weary of my own society," sighs Pistasch with feeling.

"I have an amusing bit of news for you, Pistasch," continues Rhoeden, approaching him. "My uncle Harfink"--Eugene always speaks of his relations in a mocking tone, somewhat as one kind of cripples speak of their humps--"my uncle Harfink--you remember his first wife, whom you knew, is dead--well, he has married again!"

"Wish him much happiness," replies Pistasch, who does not see why that should interest him particularly.

"He has married, and none other than the famous Juanita," says Rhoeden, with the calmness of a virtuoso who is sure of his effect.

Pistasch drops his pipe, springs up from his armchair. "Harfink--married--Juanita, the----" he interrupts himself.

"Yes," says Rhoeden, calmly, "the same Juanita who in her day ruined poor Lanzberg."

"Hm! So you know the story?" asks Pistasch, breathing freely in the consciousness that now all discretion is unnecessary.

"It will go no further through me," Rhoeden assures him solemnly. "But is not that delightful? My uncle writes me that he has married the aforesaid celebrity, and as his digestion is still not as good as it might be, they have gone to Marienbad for their wedding trip. He begs me to reconcile his daughter to his step, and to find out what kind of a reception his wife may expect in Traunberg. Piquant, eh? Very piquant!"

A shrill bell announces lunch.

"Rudi! Mimi!" cries Pistasch, rushing into the dining-room, where both these, together with Elli and Mademoiselle, are assembled, "old Harfink has married the Juanita, and has gone to Marienbad for his wedding trip. Is not that magnificent, is not that famous?"

XIX.

"A Modern Donna Elvira!" This sarcastic nickname originated at the time when the charming Privy Councellor Dey, whose wife we are acquainted with, was still alive. Count Dey was a red-haired gnome, who was continually mistaken for his own tutor which, as the facetious Pistasch maintained with conviction to this day, was very annoying to the tutor. Besides, Count Dey was eighteen years older than his wife, who, if not beautiful, was still uncommonly attractive, and still the poor woman embittered her young life with the most painful jealousy, followed her husband about distrustfully, accompanied him on the briefest visits of inspection to his estates, shivering and heroic, shared with him the cold inconveniences of his grouse hunt in the Tyrol. The world maliciously delighted in the industry with which she defended her rights, and also in the fact that, in spite of her astonishing and extensive precautions, she was continually deceived by her red-haired spouse.

Mimi Dey now served as a warning example for Elsa. She, Elsa, had not the slightest wish to undertake the rôle of the "modern Donna Elvira," and expose herself to universal mockery. Therefore she concealed her jealousy from Erwin with Spartan self-control, and smiled with the most charming loftiness, while the poisonous mistrust tore her bosom as pitilessly as the young fox tore the brave little Lacedæmonian.

When, the day after the lawn-tennis party, Erwin remorsefully sought the cause of her changed manner in his own behavior, and after he had tried to drive away her displeasure by a thousand loving attentions, put his arm around her and whispered to her softly: "Elsa, confess why you were so angry with me yesterday--only because I stayed away so long?" Frightened that he had so nearly touched upon her secret, she displayed the most arrogant indifference.

"You surely do not think that I am vexed if you amuse yourself with Linda a little?" she replied, with an irritating smile. "I am glad that you have found a little amusement, my poor Erwin," she continued.

He looked at her in some surprise. "Yes, but then I do not understand----" he murmured. "What is the real matter with you?--does anything worry you?---tell me--two can bear it more easily."

"No, no, I have nothing to tell," she replied, hastily. "Nothing at all--I am tired, not very well."

"Yes, that you decidedly are not," he admitted, and anxiously scrutinized her thin cheeks and the dark shadows under her eyes. "We must consult a physician."

"We consulted him four weeks ago," she answered, "and he advised me to drink Louisen-Quelle, and I drink Louisen-Quelle." She folded her hands resignedly over her breast, with an expression as if to say how little faith she had in Louisen-Quelle, and how indifferent her health was to her.

"Perhaps a trip to the sea-shore would do you good," proposed Erwin.

"Could you go away now?" she asked, apparently calmly, but with her heart full of distrust.

"Now? Hardly! But you could take Miss Sidney and Litzi with you, or, as far as I am concerned, both children."

"With the necessary servants that would cost a good deal," replies Elsa, discouragingly.

"Well, we are not quite such beggars that we need think of that when it is a question of your health," he cries, almost angry. "We have saved long enough and can now spend something. Decide upon Cowes; perhaps I can join you there later."

For a while she gazes silently and gloomily before her, then a slight shudder runs over her.

"Elsa! You seriously alarm me!" cries Erwin: "something must be done!"

"Yes, certainly; I will go to Cowes," she decides, as if it was a decision to let herself be bound upon the wheel, then she turns her head to look at an approaching carriage. "Oh, Linda," she cries, and her voice betrays absolutely nothing, not even antipathy to her sister-in-law, and Erwin begs, "Be a little good to her--for Felix's sake. She needs women friends and has none but you."

These naïve words may give the impression that Erwin is very obtuse. But he certainly was not, only his knowledge of human nature was always bounded by a great good-will, his keen sight blinded by good-nature. He possessed a true passion for making every one who came near him happy, and also the impractical habit of never thinking evil of his fellow-men, except when he absolutely could not otherwise.

Therefore he saw to-day in Linda's visit nothing but a praiseworthy wish of coming nearer to Elsa.

Linda wore a very simple gown, which was very becoming to her; she had brought a work-basket, and sewed almost the whole time of her visit upon a little collar for Gery which had a very exemplary appearance. She made the most modest and tender attempts to be friends with Elsa, and without the slightest touch of familiarity, took a tone of comradeship towards Erwin which pleased him greatly--perhaps so much the more as a charming, childlike smile accompanied this tone, and the merriest little stories.

When evening had already become night, and Felix had still not appeared, as Linda seemed to have expected, to fetch her, and she confessed that she was afraid to return alone with her groom only, in the low pony carriage, Erwin good-naturedly escorted her on horseback to Traunberg.

This was really unwelcome to him, but Elsa suspected the contrary, and as he had not the common habit of afterwards complaining of his obligingness, she remained of the same opinion. She herself had behaved perfectly charmingly to Linda. No one could have suspected that jealousy could smile so! No one--but Linda.

And how she triumphed! how flattered vanity quivered in her every fibre, and how the drive home with Erwin amused her!

She drove herself, and really she did not overdrive the ponies.

Around them was the sultry, gloomy charm of the summer night. Long-drawn sighs and sweetly monotonous murmurs passed through the trees, the short grass trembled as if caressed by invisible hands. From time to time a glow-worm shot through the gray air like a falling star.

"How beautiful!" said Linda to herself.

"Yes, charming!" Erwin admitted, and secretly looked at his watch.

In spite of the fact that he galloped home at a very sharp pace, it was midnight before he arrived there, which confirmed Elsa's strange idea.

Almost every evening after tea Erwin was accustomed to read aloud to his wife, and this had originated in their honeymoon, when Erwin, very young, very much in love, still shyly coquetted with his little talents.

He read well, and liked to read, and Elsa had until now always looked forward to the confidential chat, the happy fact of being alone together, which was a part of the reading hour, and both did not know which they really preferred: the wild, stormy winter evenings, in which Elsa sat as near the fireplace as possible, and contrary to his sensible prohibition, held one foot at a time over the glowing coals, until he stopped reading, and crouching on a stool, took the little feet from their light house slippers, and rubbed them warm between his hands; or the mild, fragrant summer evenings, when Elsa, gazing through the window at the sky, often interrupted the bitter earnestness of St. Simon, or the graceful bitterness of Voltaire, and with childish joy signalled a shooting star, and as Erwin laughingly asked her whether she had availed herself of the opportunity to wish something very beautiful, softly, with lips close to his ear, whispered, "Oh, yes, that it may always be so."

Usually he read serious books aloud, but sometimes he brought the old Musset which had accompanied him on his wedding journey, and then they vied with each other in gay recollections of their honeymoon, and laughed when they came to verses the meaning of which had been dark to her, and had made her ask the most remarkable questions. They contradicted each other animatedly as to who had the most faithful memory for every foolish, tender jest, and Elsa, whose remembrance exceeded his, faintly whispered softly, "Do you see I have not let a single joy be lost out of my life. I have laid-them all away for my old days."

The day after Linda's visit, Elsa made no move to leave the drawing-room when Erwin asked her softly, "How about our Mahon?" (they were just then reading this knightly pedant's English history), but replied discouragingly, "I am going to retire early this evening," and engaged Miss Sidney in a conversation upon English philanthropy.

Erwin smoked a cigarette, glanced over a paper, finally, looking out of the window, remarked that it was a beautiful moonlight night and he was going shooting, kissed Elsa's forehead, bowed to Miss Sidney, and was about to leave the room when from Elsa's lips came anxiously:

"But----!"

"Do you want anything?"

"Are you going to take any one with you?"

"Why?" asked he, and raised his eyebrows; then suddenly laughing aloud he added, "Would you perhaps like to accompany me, mouse? The night is mild, I will find you an easy path; we need not go far."

She hesitated, only for a moment she hesitated. She had formerly often gone with him; he had bought her a small rifle, and with anxious carefulness taught her to shoot, and as long as her health was good enough they had often hunted gayly together like good comrades. Why must just now Mimi Dey and the grouse hunt in the Tyrol come to her mind?

"Thank you, I dare not venture out in the dew;" thus politely, but without a trace of warmth she refused his good-natured offer, and he shrugged his shoulders slightly and vanished.

English philanthropy suddenly lost all interest for Elsa. She took leave of Miss Sidney quite absently, and went to her room which, since baby's existence, she had shared with the delicate little creature. She passed two tormenting hours; she was tortured by the most nonsensical fancies; she thought only of poachers and assassins; she did not close her eyes until she heard Erwin's step creep thoughtfully, softly past her door, but at least she had not been like Mimi Dey.

Sempaly and Pistasch had accepted the invitation to dine in Steinbach on the Sunday for which Linda was invited. Elsa had been able to secure no ladies. Never had Linda been more beautiful than on this Sunday. She wore a dazzling toilet; "from Worth," she replied, in explanation to some polite remark which Elsa had made upon her dress. "From Worth, but I had to change it entirely. I cannot bear Worth any longer; he is too American. And how do you like my gown, Erwin?" she turned to him.

"Linda, you surely are not trying to make me think that you care anything about the taste of such a rusty hayseed as I am!" cried he, laughingly.

"Ah, you know very well that you are the only one, yes, the only one on God's earth from whom I will accept fault-finding," answered Linda, and putting her arm around Elsa's neck, she whispered in the latter's ear, "Your husband has bewitched me, Elsa. If I did not wish you the best of everything, I really could envy you him."

Oh, the serpent! She feels very well that Elsa shivers in her arms, and she is happy.

During the dinner Elsa suffered fearful torments. Monosyllabic she sat between Scirocco, who, more quiet and melancholy than usual, did not help her to talk, and Pistasch who, gazing at Linda, forgot to talk. Linda, on the contrary, chatted unweariedly, entertained the whole table with her odd little stories, and knew how to absorb Erwin so deeply by her artfully naïve flatteries and carefully veiled coquetries that he, the most polite man in the world, scarcely found time to address a few pleasant phrases to the Englishwoman who, for the sake of symmetry, sat at his left.

After dinner Linda sang. Erwin accompanied her, and Pistasch lost his tongue with enthusiasm, except for the three words, "Superb! magnificent! delicious!" which he burst forth with again and again, gasping for breath.

Elsa, who took no interest in French chansonnettes, and Sempaly, who did not care to hear them rendered by respectable women, or those who at least should be so, stood together in a window recess half chatting, half silent, like people who know and understand each other well. But suddenly Scirocco was silent, his glance wandered to Felix, who sat in the darkest corner of the drawing-room, and in order to give himself countenance, stroked Erwin's great hunting-dog. A little rattle of glasses had attracted Sempaly's notice. He went up to Felix, and after he had spoken a few words to him returned with him to Elsa. Elsa was frightened at sight of her brother. His cheeks were flushed to his forehead, the features swollen, the eyes shining as in one who has a severe fever.

When everything had become quiet again in Steinbach, and Elsa was alone with Erwin in the drawing-room, she went to the table from which Sempaly had brought Felix away, and discovered there the *corpus delicti* in the shape of a half-emptied flask of Chartreuse.

"Ah!" cried she shuddering, and turned to Erwin. "Do you know the latest?--Felix drinks!"

Erwin lowered his head. "Drinks--drinks!" he murmured with embarrassment but excusingly. "You must not call it that exactly; it is not yet so bad!"

"You--you seem to have known it," cried Elsa, staring at him. He looked away.

Elsa paces twice through the room, her arms crossed on her breast. Her short, unequal breaths can be heard. Then she stops before Erwin; the blood has rushed to her cheeks, and causes there two uneven red spots under her eyes. Her hatred for Linda suddenly bursts forth. "Oh, this repulsive, ordinary, tactless person! How deeply she has dragged him down!" she says, with set teeth.

Erwin, to whom the cause of this unlovely and immoderate anger is wholly inexplicable, is displeasedly silent. This irritates Elsa still more, and in an even more unpleasant tone she continues, "Well, do you, perhaps, doubt that she and only she has ruined Felix by her incredible lack of tact?"

For the first time since Erwin has known his wife he lost patience with her, and shrugging his shoulders, replied, "I find it hard to expect tact from a person who does not suspect the complicated difficulties of her position."

"Erwin!--Erwin!--you--you surely do not believe that Felix would have married Linda without telling her of his circumstances?" She was now quite pale again, she trembled, her voice sounded weak and hoarse. He was terribly sorry for her, at this moment he would have given everything to be silent. He took refuge in vague phrases. "A mere suspicion--I spoke without thinking."

But Elsa shook her head; an indescribable pain curved her lips. "No, Erwin," cried she, "you may not be the demi-god whom for nine years I have worshiped in you, but you are not capable of saying anything so degrading about my brother upon a mere suspicion. From whom do you know that?"

She stood before him, drawn up to her full height, and looked him in the eyes with an expression which one could not lie to.

"I judge so from questions which she has asked me," he stammers, and immediately adds, hastily, "Certainly Felix would not purposely have concealed the affair from her; he may have told her mother----"

"That is all the same," interrupts Elsa. "His action remains unanswerable, for the first as well as the second time. Erwin, you poor man, into what a family have you married! Why would you have me? I did not wish it--I knew that it would be for no good." She is almost beside herself.

"No good! Think of the nine years which we leave behind us," he replies, gently.

"Think of the twenty, thirty years which we have before us," cries she. "The sacrifice which you made for me was too great."

"I know of no sacrifice," he replies, warmly. "It is pure childishness which makes you bring that up again. Once for all, Elsa, I would not exchange a life at your side for the most brilliant career--to which, besides, I could scarcely have been called." With these words he goes up to her, and lays his hand gently under her chin to raise her face to his, but she breaks loose from him.

"I thank you," says she, with hateful mockery. She thought of the thousand pretty speeches and charming attentions with which he had satisfied Linda's greedy vanity to-day. She was sick with suppressed jealousy. The bright light which Erwin's communication threw upon Linda's whole manner, and which so excused Linda, and on the other hand, so lowered Felix, mingled a new pain in all her morbid feelings. She literally no longer knew what she said, her voice became more and more cutting: "I thank you," she repeated. "You are very polite, you have a particular

talent for politeness, you are the most charming man I know, but--but, I am sorry you had your way at that time."

"Sorry, Elsa? For God's sake take that back," cried he. The pain which she had caused him was too deep for him to consider how much of her words were to be ascribed to true conviction, and what to her over-excited nerves.

She shook her head obstinately. "Yes, I am sorry," she continued in her insensate speech. "At that time you could not live without me"--she spoke very bitterly--"yes, you would have been unhappy without me--a month, perhaps a year--who knows?--but then you would have consoled yourself, and it would have been better for you and for me. Good night!" and with head held high, with rigid face and trembling limbs she tottered out of the room.

X.

Marienbad at six o'clock in the morning.

The air is still fresh and fragrant, the long, slanting sunbeams fall between the damp coolness of the woody shadows. The guests crowd along the narrow spring walk, their glasses in their hands. They form a line before the spring after they have emptied their goblets, considerately turn and conscientiously take exercise.

The sand beneath their feet, moist with the night dew, is of a dark reddish color. On the leaves of the graceful trees sparkle little drops of dew like finest enamel. In the turf which borders the sand walk great drops shine like diamonds. A white mist, too transparent to be called a fog, fills the distance. Thicker and thicker the guests crowd around the spring.

Marienbad is overfull this year. Pleased landlords rub their fat hands, and push up prices to a most unheard-of amount. Guests who have omitted to engage rooms by telegraph can find no decent accommodations, seek shelter in the most miserable private houses, offer gold mines to shoemakers, tailors and glove-makers for one room. A whole excursion trainful pass the night in the waiting-room.

The daughter of some reigning family, travelling incognito under the name "Comtesse Stip," has engaged the greatest part of the largest hotel for herself and her little prince in Scottish costume. A swarm of distinguished moths from every country has followed the princely light, and a crowd of *parvenus*, like a swarm of insects of the night, has followed the moths, who pass their time in Marienbad bandying strangely unselfish compliments.

The famous Vienna artists play every evening in the stuffy theatre; princesses and dramatic *coryphées* meet each other on the spring promenade.

To-day a new animation is displayed by the spring pilgrims. All gaze at a couple who have this morning appeared for the first time upon the promenade. The aristocratic curiosity seems even more awakened than the plebeian, and all the thirty or forty pairs of eyes of Marienbad "society" are fixed upon the same spot--upon the knight of Harfink and his young wife.

"That is the Juanita, the Carini; how badly she is dressed, how fat she has grown, how homely!" goes from mouth to mouth. "And not even an artistic temperament--a woman who could be sensible enough to marry a 'checked' iron founder. When she sees Lanzberg--how he must feel!" Thus says society. Meanwhile, not noticing the voices hissing around her, Juanita, the widowed Marchesa Carini, upright and stiff, with the consequential manner of a retired dancer, walks between the knightly Harfink and his son, beaming with pride and satisfaction.

How she looked fifteen years ago, at the time when she so fatally crossed the path of life of Felix Lanzberg, it would be difficult to determine. Today she looks like all elderly Spaniards, who to our unpractised northern eyes resemble each other almost as much as elderly negresses.

An immoderately fleshy form, not very tall, with high bust, and unnaturally compressed waist, the hands tiny, like accidental appendages to her fat arms, the feet still incomparably beautiful, but too short to support the huge figure, the gait waddling, the face yellow and fat, mouth, eyes, and nose almost hidden by a pair of enormous cheeks--that is Juanita.

She who, in her day, had worn the bandeaux of her nation coming down over her ears, now, probably because this manner of wearing the hair seems to her peasant-like, wears the hair drawn back from her withered temples, falling in black ringlets on her forehead, a hat on the back of her head, a green silk gown and diamonds. Her tiny shoes and stockings are the only

parts of her costume which are faultless. The former, charming little black satin affairs, the latter of open-work black silk. In consequence of this, she wears her gown short beyond all bound in front, which increases the width of the whole appearance.

She continually exchanges the most tender, loving glances with her husband, and a happy honeymoon smile illumines her yellow face when he addresses her.

As she uses the cure with the same conscientiousness as he, she stands beside him at the spring. Little Comtesse L----, a lively lady whom nothing escapes, asserts that every time before emptying her goblet, Juanita coquettishly hits it against that of the "retired iron founder."

The "checked iron founder" is a name given Mr. von Harfink on account of his immoderate preference for striking green and blue checked clothes. For two weeks Juanita has borne his name--for two weeks he has known how badly he really fared under Susanna's rule.

The aforesaid Susanna had died a year after Linda's marriage. Linda, who at that time had not fully recovered from Gery's birth, expressed no wish to go to Vienna for her mother's burial or her father's consolation. Mr. von Harfink had been left to bear the heavy loss alone.

At the funeral Baron von Harfink shed many tears into a black-bordered handkerchief, and displayed all the symptoms of honest emotion; after the funeral he fell into a condition of silent apathy. The flame which had given light to his mind was extinguished, all was dark within him. He felt like an actor of poor memory whose excellent prompter has died.

About a week after the catastrophe, his nearest relatives assembled at a dinner in his house, with the good-natured view of diverting him. He sat in their midst, silently bent over his plate. They had adjourned to the drawing-room for coffee, and still he had not spoken a word.

"The poor fellow! it has gone harder with him than we thought," the relatives whispered to each other. Then stretching himself comfortably in an arm-chair, and rubbing his stomach, he began, "Ah! things have not tasted so good to me as they did to-day for a long time."

The feeling of an immense relief had awakened in him. No longer to be afraid of making stupid remarks, no longer, when he had put on his favorite checked vest, to be reproved with, "Anton, your vest insults my æsthetic feeling," or, when he had given himself up to the comfortable enjoyment of a favorite dish, to be frightened with, "Anton, a day-laborer is nothing in comparison with you;" to be forced to listen to no more articles from the *Rundschau* and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*,--it was very pleasant.

Scarcely had Susanna been three weeks in her grave, when Mr. von Harfink stopped the subscriptions to the *Revue* and its German cousin, the *Rundschau*, retired to his estate, played nine-pins with his brewer and cook, and in his shirt sleeves, ordered those new checked plush vests, and ruined his stomach three times a week.

Soon he displayed the most peculiar matrimonial intentions. He made love to the former companion of his deceased wife, an elderly spinster with thin hair and a very deep feeling for a blond theology student who, at that time in Magdeberg, sued for her hand.

The improbable occurred; the companion refused the knight and his three millions, although after his death a settlement of seven hundred thousand guldens was assured her.

The family was astonished at this unexpected unselfishness, and from thankfulness, and to prevent the romantic maiden from changing her mind later, married her to her student, with a splendid dowry.

After they had met this model of prudence, the relations wrung their hands. If the charms of a forty-year-old, half bald companion had almost brought him to the altar, how should they protect him from a *mésalliance*?

Only by the sharpest oversight was Mr. von Harfink prevented from marrying his housekeeper. Fearful conflicts burst forth on his estate--the castle became an inn.

"Susie must have been cleverer than I accredited her with being," once remarked Eugene von Rhoeden, who indifferently looked on upon his relative's movements. "It certainly takes skill to govern the rhinoceros. None of you equal her!"

At length the relatives were weary, and left Baron von Harfink to the guidance of his son, that is, to his fate. Raimund was far too much engaged in cultivating his high C to watch his father. The poor young man, who had been destined by his mother to be a genius, at this time suffered from deep depression. He had failed everywhere--at the university, on the stage, finally in literature.

After long efforts, he had obtained an engagement in a Bohemian watering-place, and under the stage name of Remondo Monte-chiaro, had sung Raoul in a beautiful pale violet costume of real silk velvet.

The audience hissed and laughed; he sprained his ankle by the leap from the window, and

appeared no more.

Then he prepared a comedy which fell through in P----, an accident which he attributed to the lack of cultivation of the audience there; then he wrote essays upon the love affair of George Sand and Alfred de Musset, the murder of the ambassador at Rastadt, and the Iron Mask.

These effusions were published in a Vienna paper. The superficial public found the themes old, and did not read the articles. The intimate friends of the author read the first five sentences, had the satisfaction of discovering a grammatical error therein, and as, with the malice with which friendship meets every young striver, they sought nothing else in the articles, they laid them aside, satisfied. Raimund felt deeply wounded. The world seemed to him nothing more than an immense porcupine, which, with all its quills of prejudice, repelled his genius.

He passed his days in gloomy brooding--then a message from his humorous cousin, Eugene von Rhoeden, in Venice, waked him.

"Help what can be helped," he wrote. "He is going courting again; this time it is in earnest."

Yes, it was in earnest.

In Marienbad, the year before, he had first made her acquaintance; he had followed her to Venice. She had there, under the name Juanita, tried to obliterate the reputation of Pepita. Later she had borne the name of a Marchese Carini. She had been obliged to dance even as a Marchesa, for the Marchese did not disdain to make use of his wife's talent, and had dragged her from theatre to theatre. At one of her brilliant performances in St. Petersburg she broke her leg, and since then could dance no more. Now she became fat, sleepy, devout and irritable; the Marchese gambled away the greater part of her fortune, and died of galloping consumption. Ignorant of all business, continually deceived by her lovers, the Marchese Carini would have come to a sad end if the Knight of Harfink had not appeared as rescuer in her need.

He married her in the beginning of June.

Raimund, very depressed and deeply in debt, did not refuse to offer to kiss his new mamma's hand dutifully. She knew how so to fascinate him at the first meeting, that he was almost as slavishly submissive to her as his father. Juanita desired social position. She insisted upon being introduced to Linda. Harfink did not know that she had formerly had strange relations with Felix--she did not touch upon it; on the contrary, she reserved her power over Felix, which she had so boundlessly misused, for a favorable moment.

Mr. von Harfink told his nephew, Eugene, when he met him in Marienbad, his wife's desire. "I really do not know what to do; Linda is so curious," he said.

And Rhoeden answered with his sly smile, "Write Linda and ask her when you may bring her new mamma to see her--or, really I see no reason why you should not quietly drive over one of these days without announcing yourself."

"I do not understand what any one could have against Chuchu!" said the young husband, enthusiastically. "What a woman she is! She has diamonds from the Emperor of ---- and a gold coat of mail from the Duke of ----, and with all that, she is nevertheless all domesticity and love! She calls me Tony, and darns my socks from pure love."

XXI.

At this time life was for poor Felix only a heavy, oppressing burden.

He knew that Juanita was staying in Marienbad; knew that she had married his father-in-law. He felt neither horror nor astonishment at this step; nothing which she did would have astonished him, but he felt oppressed by the sense of her nearness; a true superstitious fear of the magic charm which her beauty had for him weighed upon him. His recollections, his imagination, had been busy with the picture of her which he still possessed--had invested it with the most refined charms. For Felix, the only excuse for his inexcusable conduct, by which he had ruined his life, lay in the demoniac fascination of the dancer.

Linda had written her father, before his marriage, an annihilating letter, to which she had received no answer. She believed her father angry, and therefore expected nothing less than a visit from him. Felix, who thought her opinion sensible, nevertheless showed from time to time a certain fear, and thereby excited the spirit of contradiction in Linda.

"One can be glad that papa has done nothing worse," she remarked once, indifferently. "It is not to be supposed that they will have children--*et pour le reste*, such a marriage with a dancer has a certain *cachet*. I shall make no advances to her, but if she comes I must receive her!"

Felix shuddered and was silent.

Bitterly ashamed of himself, for a time he had tried to restrain his thirst for liquor. But he could control himself no longer. When the old remembrance began to burn in his heart like eating poison, he at first tried hard to occupy himself. He read, but, unaccustomed to all mental activity, a book scarcely chained his attention. He took long walks, he was too uneasy to become tired; he rode, he was too good a horseman to have any trouble with his horse.

His heart grew more and more heavy, and he drank--drank privately in his room so as not to be surprised in an unreliable condition. He was always temperate at table. No one saw him now with flabby lips and tottering knees, and his friends did not notice that he was really never quite sober now. His hands shook perpetually, there was a watery look in his staring, hollow eyes. A slight bluish flush colored his nostrils, and his voice was quavering.

Meanwhile Linda, careless and indifferent, fluttered around him, bitterness in her heart, on her lips a charming smile and malicious jests. A butterfly with a wasp's sting, Scirocco had called her, and Pistasch repeated it to her. It had greatly pleased her.

At this time Pistasch came to Traunberg almost daily. Linda coquetted with him, but her coquetry was vague and cold, and was neither challenging nor encouraging. He made no progress, as he expressed himself to Scirocco. "She has no temperament and no heart," he grumbled, and once he added, "Perhaps I am not the right one----"

"What do you mean?" replied Scirocco, impatiently, remembering the suspicion which had been cast upon him. But Pistasch only answered crossly, "Garzin!"

"Impossible!" replied Scirocco, unwillingly. Pistasch only shrugged his shoulders, and when Sempaly began to consider the matter, he must admit that Garzin went oftener than was necessary to Traunberg, that Linda had quite a different glance and voice when she was with him from what she had for others, that she made concessions to him which she granted no one else, never wore again the most becoming toilets if he had once condemned them, and did not sing the most piquant couplets if he shrugged his shoulders over them, and, once on the slippery path of distrust, Scirocco told himself also that the charming sisterly confidence which Linda permitted herself with her brother-in-law was scarcely in place in such a beautiful woman with such a young man.

He was angry with Garzin.

"He really does not think of wrong, but he should be careful--for----"

Like all people of his stamp, Scirocco, in affairs of passion, did not believe in free will, but so much the more in the compelling influence of opportunity.

"You have a new bracelet, Linda," said Felix one day, after dinner, to his wife as she smoked a cigarette with him in the drawing-room.

"Do you like it?" said she, and held out her white arm to him. The bracelet consisted of a thick gold chain to which a little coin was fastened.

"Charming!" answered Felix, apparently indifferently. "Did you buy it in Marienbad?"

"No; Kamenz gave it to me to-day--he owed me a philopena," replied Linda.

"Hm!" Felix looked gloomy, but did not know exactly how to put his vexation into words. He asked himself, "Have I the right to reprove my wife?"

"Ah, the bracelet seems to please you less since you know where it comes from," said Linda, smiling maliciously. "Poor Felix! Are you, perhaps, jealous of this handsome, silly Pistasch? He is about as dangerous to me as that dandy there," and she pointed to a dainty Meissner figure in knee breeches and flowered vest, who with cocked hat under his arm, smiled down from a bracket.

"Well, I certainly do not wish to disturb your little amusement," stammered Felix, "but you do not know how much gossip arises from intercourse between a woman like you and a man like Pistasch, and if he is really so indifferent to you--why--then--perhaps you might receive him somewhat less frequently."

"Hm!" said Linda, thoughtfully. "However indifferent that porcelain dandy yonder is to me, I have not the slightest inclination to throw him out of the window." She blew a few whiffs of smoke up to the ceiling.

"But there is no question of that," replied Felix, "only see him less often----"

Linda would not let him finish.

"But do you not see, my dear Felix," said she, knocking the ashes from her cigarette, "to the house of a woman like me, who--let us speak plainly--really does not belong to his set, a man like Pistasch either comes not at all or every day. I am of a sociable nature--I must associate with some one, or else I should die of *ennui*. If no ladies will come, then I will receive men."

"I cannot understand why you do not get on better with Elsa," remarked Felix, uneasily.

"I was there recently; she has not returned my visit," said Linda. "I cannot force her to come. I believe she is vexed with me because Erwin amuses himself with me. Heaven knows our intercourse is of wholly an innocent nature!"

The young woman rocked softly back and forth in her chair and laughed to herself, striking the finger-tips of her loosely clasped hands together.

"I do not doubt that for a moment, but you should have some consideration for Elsa--she is nervous and sensitive."

"Ah! and I am to suit my behavior to her interesting nervous condition," laughed Linda. "That is to say, I am to be intolerable to Erwin. *Eh bien, non merci!* He is the only man of my present acquaintance of whom I think anything."

Felix was silent. Then without was heard a rustling and puffing as of a heavy silk gown and an asthmatic person. A foreboding distressed Felix. Linda half rose. "That is surely not----?" she murmured, but already the servant had opened the door. "Baron and Baroness Harfink!" he announced.

Very red-faced, even fatter than formerly, with confident bearing, shining with happiness and perspiration, and with the air of a youthful dandy, Linda's father approached his daughter.

Although she had thought that she remembered him very well, she is still somewhat abashed at his astonishing appearance. Nevertheless she makes the best of a bad game, and condescendingly offers him her cheek to kiss. He kisses her loudly on the mouth.

"Ah, you look splendidly--no matter, you wrote me a foolish letter, but the past shall be forgotten. Here I bring your new mamma to you. She was good-hearted enough to pay you the first visit. You have certainly heard of the Marchesa Carini."

"Also of Juanita," says Linda, giving the tips of her fingers to her step-mother. "I am indescribably pleased to make the acquaintance of such a great *coryphée*. I have never yet had the pleasure of seeing a dancer except on the stage." The colossal insolence of her words is lost upon Juanita, owing to her stupidity and deficient knowledge of German, but the depreciation in tone and glance is perceptible to the dancer. She feels helpless and irritated.

"Does Marienbad please you?" continues Linda, with the insolent condescension which she has studied from the best examples.

"Very pretty," murmurs the Spaniard, twisting her handkerchief between her hands. She speaks poor German. Linda is delighted with her pronunciation, and does not take the trouble to speak French, for which cosmopolitan language the dancer had forgotten her mother-tongue.

"If I remember rightly, I once had the pleasure of seeing you dance--it was in '67, in Vienna--my first theatre evening."

"In Vienna?" said the dancer. "Oh! that was a small performance--that was at first--later, when I travelled with my husband, the Marchese Carini, *je n'ai jamais travaillé* except in St. Petersburg, Paris, London and Baden-Baden."

"Ah!" says Linda; the conversation pauses.

Papa Harfink, leaning somewhat forward, his heels under his chair, rests in a low arm-chair, and monotonously strokes his leg from the knee upwards and back again.

And Felix? Pressed tightly into a dark corner, where the hope of being forgotten and overlooked chains him, he stands motionless. As light perspiration which does not cool, but rather burns, moistens his whole body, the blood sings in his ears, his tongue cleaves to his teeth. He has not self-possession enough to hear her, he has not the courage to look at her; she floats before his mind, the most seductive siren, the most bewitching woman that ever, trifling and playing with a man, ruined his honor. He still dreads the disturbing might of her beauty. Curiosity compels him to gaze at her; he looks and does not trust his eyes. Where is the Juanita? Near his wife he sees a yellow, bloated woman, prematurely old, tastelessly dressed, squeezed into a black *moiré antique* gown, with folds under her round eyes, little fan-shaped wrinkles on her temples, and black down about the corners of her mouth. Common, fat, awkward, she sits there, a double chin resting on her fat bosom, her hands clasped over a lace-edged handkerchief in her lap! Felix cannot believe his eyes. That must be a mistake--that cannot be Juanita! Then, beneath the hem of her gown, he sees a tiny foot in a black satin shoe, and now he knows that this is Juanita!

He notices a light brown mole on her neck--it disgusts him, but then he remembers how this mole had once pleased him, how often he had jokingly kissed it! His cheeks burn--he has lost his last illusion--the whole vulgarity of the temptress to whom he had yielded is pitilessly exposed to him. Involuntarily he makes a movement. Papa Harfink discovers him. "Ah, Felix," he cries, already somewhat out of temper, "are you hiding from me? I should think," he adds, relying upon the power of his millions, "that such a father-in-law as I is not to be despised."

Slowly Felix advances.

"My husband," says Linda to the dancer. But the latter's face has taken on a prepossessing smile, and with the confidential expression which appeals to old times, she says, "I know him already, *tout à fait un ami* from my *débutante* period; is it not so?"

She gives him her hand.

The hand, only covered by a lace mitt, is flabby, and as Juanita, half rising, presses this hand against the lips of Felix, who is bowing to her, his face changes, plainly expresses disgust, and he lets the hand fall unkissed.

Juanita trembles with rage. "Let us go," screams she--"let us go! Oh, Sir Baron, you think that I am only a dancer--and--and----"

Speech fails her, she gasps for breath. "Let us go, let us go!" she pants.

"My Chuchu! My beloved wife!" cries Mr. von Harfink, and not honoring Felix and Linda with a word, he leads the Spaniard out of the room.

The carriage rolls away with the wedded pair. Scarcely has the door closed behind the Harfinks when Linda bursts into loud, happy laughter. Her husband's stiff manner, his way of ignoring her father, which, under other circumstances, would another time have irritated her from pure capriciousness, have this time chanced to delight her. "You are unique, Felix, wholly unique!" she cries to him. "You were so deliciously arrogant! But what is the matter with you? Are you ill? *Tiens!* Juanita is your great secret! Poor boy!" She taps him on the shoulder, she laughs yet. "What a disappointment, eh! But what is the matter? No, listen; it is humiliating for me that the meeting with this comedian has so robbed you of your self-control, Felix!"

His secret still has a charm for her, surrounds his poor bent form with a romantic light. Something startling, shockingly horrible, she seeks behind this, but not something dishonorable! With a teasing tenderness, which she has never shown him since their honeymoon, she strokes his cheeks, and begs, "Tell me what distresses you."

Then Felix's conscience torments him; he feels as if he would rather die than keep his secret longer. For a moment he almost counts upon mercy from this soft childish creature who has seated herself beside him on the arm of his old-fashioned chair.

"Linda," he begins, "when I married you I did not know--that you--suspected nothing of--of this matter. Your mother assured me that she had told you of my past----" he hesitates.

"Oh, my mother spared my youth, and only made the vaguest allusions!"

He draws a deep breath. "A terrible story is connected with this Spaniard,"--he hesitates--she looks closely and curiously at him; a sudden idea occurs to her: "You shot a friend in a duel on her account?" she cries, and then, as she sees him start but shake his head, she says softly, with indistinct articulation and hollow voice, "Or--or not in a duel--from jealousy?"

He lowers his head--he cannot speak--then slowly rising he totters out of the room. She remains alone--staring before her--her heart beats loudly--then she was right! All his enigmatical behavior is explained; she now even understands her fellow men, and strangely enough, she almost pardons him.

Felix, beside himself with jealousy, thirsting for revenge, plunging a knife into the breast of his friend--the scene has something dazzling, something which compels her sympathy. She pictures the scene to herself; the luxurious apartment of the dancer--the two men, both deathly pale--she has seen something similar in the Porte St. Martin theatre. A peculiar excitement overpowers her corrupted nature, thirsting for strong stimulants. She loves Felix!

Two minutes later she knocks at his locked door. "Let me in, me, your wife, who wishes to console you!"

Felix does not open the door.

XXII.

It is already twilight. Eugene von Rhoeden sits with his cousin Raimund in the Harfinks' drawing-room. As Pistasch had ridden to Traunberg, where Rhoeden seldom accompanied him, the Countess Dey was in bed with a headache, and Scirocco had one of those fits of desperate melancholy which so often tormented him, and was wandering about the woods, Eugene had nothing to do in Iwanow. For a change he had ridden over to Marienbad. At the forest spring, where the guests were assembled around the music-stand, he had met Raimund, and had heard from him that "the old man" had driven over with his wife to see the arrogant Linda; he, Raimund, had spared them his society.

Eugene resolved to await the return of the pair; it interested him to learn something about the result of the visit.

The two cousins soon came to the conclusion that the music and the crowd around the pavilion were intolerable as well as the heat, and betook themselves to the *Mühl strasse*, where Papa Harfink, more conservative than superstitious, and besides wholly secure in his new happiness from indiscreet visits of Susanna's ghost, occupied the same apartments in which for long years he had "suffered" every summer with the deceased.

With a tinge of bitterness Eugene looked about him as he entered the bright room in which he had passed so many sweet hours with Linda. There stood the old-fashioned arm-chair yet, with the same covering, now, to be sure, worn at all the corners, the chair in which she used to lean back in the sultry summer afternoons, teasingly pulling to pieces his last gift of flowers with her delicate fingers, while Papa Harfink snored in the adjoining room; Mamma Harfink, in her maid's room, discussed the cut of her new toilet with the latter, but he, Eugene, crouching at the feet of the young girl, told her gay, trifling little stories, many times half-jokingly interspersing a tender word. Then she threw a flower in his face; her hand remained imprisoned in his, and he kissed it for punishment. Thus it went on for hours, until Papa Harfink entered the room with scarcely opened eyes and hair tumbled by sleep, and asked, "Are we going to have coffee at home to-day?"

Eugene had never seen the room since he had rushed into it, now more than five years ago, the bunch of white gardenias in his hand, and had found his cousin Lanzberg's *fiancée*. At that time he had not changed his expression, had not by one word betrayed his passion, knowing well that a man like him who wishes to rise in the world is condemned to perpetual agreeableness.

How he had felt at that time!

His was no sentimental nature, but he had a faithful memory, and remembered distinctly how he had murmured the most polite phrases of congratulation; had drawn a comparison between himself and the man of old family, and beside, Felix had seemed to himself like a handsome dry-goods clerk.

His love for Linda--it had been genuine of its kind--had long fled, but the wound which her vanity had inflicted in his still burned. The wish to repay Linda for her arrogance still animated him.

The hour was near.

Outside a carriage was heard, then loud, creaking steps on the wooden stairs; a hoarse, croaking woman's voice gasped out from time to time furious and incomprehensible words; the door opened and Juanita entered. Crimson, with swollen veins and sparkling eyes, she threw her fan, broken in the middle, upon the table.

In vain did Papa Harfink again and again stretch his short arms out to her and cry, "Lovely angel, calm yourself!" She had no time for love.

"To insult me!--me--me!" she beat her breast; "me, Juanita, the Marchesa Carini--bah!" she clenched her fist, "he, a criminal--a----"

"Who has insulted you, who is a criminal?" asks Raimund.

"He--he--this Lanzberg!" she gasps. "Oh, I will revenge myself--they shall see--I will revenge myself--Caro, Caro!" screams the Spaniard.

Caroline is the maid, who enters at her mistress's loud cry.

"Bring me the little black casket with the golden bird!" commands Juanita.

The maid disappears; soon she returns with the casket, which she places upon the table before her mistress, whereupon she withdraws.

The blood throbs in Eugene's finger-tips, but, apparently perfectly indifferent, he stoops for the lace scarf which, with a quick gesture, Juanita has thrown from her upon the floor. Papa Harfink, who took the matter very phlegmatically, rang to order a flask of spring water and a

lemon.

Juanita rummaged for a long time among old newspapers in which her triumphs were recorded. She turned them over more and more uneasily. Papa Harfink had long since ordered his spring water, when at last Juanita "found it."

"There it is!" cried she. "Will you read it?"

Eugene von Rhoeden refused. Raimund read it aloud.

It was an article in a scandalous journal which appeared in Vienna early in the sixties, but since then had failed or been suppressed. In that impertinent tone of cheap wit which seeks intellect in mockery, knowledge of human nature in cynicism, the story was told of a very arrogant young blue blood who in a weak hour had forged his father's name and who "now could further cultivate his talent for drawing in the prison of T----."

The name of the young man was given as Baron L----. Some one had written "Lanzberg" above it.

"That is not possible!" cried Raimund.

"Oh, if you please--if you please--possible!" screamed Juanita. "It is all true--perfectly true!"

"I once heard something of that," declared Harfink, senior, whom the whole story troubled very little, and who had not enlightened Susanna.

Rhoeden was silent.

"And this despicable rascal has dared to marry into our honest family!" cried Raimund, beside himself.

"Susie knew of it! He-he-he!" burst out Mr. Harfink, who now only too gladly accused the deceased.

"My mother knew it!" Raimund struck his forehead. "Linda surely does not know it!"

"Leave her in her delusion," said Eugene, sweetly. "One cannot change matters in the slightest, and all these years Felix has behaved so blamelessly, so nobly, so----"

He knew that his praise of Lanzberg would bring forth a new burst of rage from Juanita.

"Indeed!" now repeated the Spaniard, with malevolent emphasis, "nobly, blamelessly!" and seized the paper.

"No; Linda must know it; I shall write to her this very day!" cried Raimund.

"That you will not do," said Eugene, firmly.

"Why?"

"Because it would be vulgar." With that Eugene rose and took his hat.

Juanita had meanwhile added to the time-obliterated pencil-mark a new, heavier one, had wrapped up the paper with remarkable deftness, and addressed it.

"Will you put that in the post-box?" she asked.

"No, my dear madam," he replied, gravely, bowed and left. Behind him he heard the voice of the Spaniard: "Caro, Caro--to the post--but immediately!"

Through the damp evening shadows he trotted to Iwanow. He enjoyed the pleasant conviction of having behaved throughout as an eminently upright man, and also the pleasant conviction that he had attained his aim.

At a turn of the road, castle Traunberg shone gray and ghost-like between the dark old lindens. Eugene took off his hat, smiling ironically, and murmured, "Good evening, Linda!"

XXIII.

Linda knocked in vain at her husband's door. In spite of her coaxing requests she had not been admitted. More and more horrible thoughts occurred to her. In ever more interesting colors her imagination painted her husband's secret. She expected that he would appear at tea; he excused himself, and did not leave his room again that day. She grew more and more excited--she did not sleep that night, only towards morning did she close her eyes.

Felix was no longer in the house when she had risen; he had ordered a horse saddled at six o'clock that morning, and had ridden over to Lanzberg.

Linda grew impatient. "Can I find old letters anywhere?" thought she. "In any case I must look through the attic rooms some day." She ordered the keys of the upper story. Mrs. Stifler, the housekeeper, looked upon it as understood that the young wife would require a guide for her wanderings, and prepared to accompany her. But, pleasantly as she treated all the servants, and especially those who had been in the family from one generation to another, Linda declined the old woman's company.

At first she had difficulty in finding the right key for the different keyholes. As the rooms for the most part opened into each other, and only the doors into the corridor were locked, that was soon overcome.

None of the rooms were quite empty and none were fully furnished. An odor of mould and dry flowers and close, oppressive air filled them. On all objects dust lay like a gray seal of time. Some of the rooms had such thick curtains that only here and there a bluish white streak of light lay on the floor, amid the dark shadows; others, and the most, had neither curtains nor blinds, and the light in them was dazzlingly bright. There stood a gilded carved arm-chair with brocade covering of the style brought from France in those days when Maria Theresa called the Pompadour "*ma chère cousine*," and near by a whole row of spindle-legged chairs with lyre-shaped backs in the stiff style of the Empire. And the arm-chair looked handsome and arrogant, the chairs hideous and pretentiously solid--and both alike were long ago unavailable and did not know it! Alabaster and porcelain clocks with pillars for ornaments, and thin Arabian figures on large white dials, slept away the time on yellow commodes with inlaid wood arabesques. Many family portraits of long-ago generations hung on the walls, mostly oil paintings, the men all standing in very narrow coats with very large revers, their hands on their hips, their eyes contracted to that narrow exclusive gaze which overlooks all unpleasant circumstances of life and worldly affairs, characteristic of the manly *ancien régime*; the women all seated, with broad sleeves and curls arranged in the English fashion; in the eyes that charming, unabashed gaze which on their side characterizes the women of the *ancien régime*, a gaze which sees in poverty only picturesque objects at the side of their path; a gaze which, mild and loving as it is, yet pains because it is accustomed to nothing but the beautiful, expects nothing but the beautiful, and therefore humiliates misery and hideousness.

Linda felt embarrassed at so much of the past; a certain hesitation, which did not accord with her indiscreet, egotistical, pushing nature, paralyzed her hands, while she, prying into Felix's secret, opened old chests and pulled out drawers.

She found trophies of the hunt, an old brocade gown, in a wardrobe a bridal wreath and a half dozen old riding boots; she found old notes, books, albums full of copied poems, books of Latin and Greek exercises, and an ambitious plan for dramatizing Le Cid, in round, childish writing, old bills, receipts, but she found no old letters.

In one of the last rooms she discovered a newer secretary, which was ornamented with painted porcelain tablets, on which pink and sky-blue ladies walked in brilliant green landscapes. Linda opened every drawer, knew how to fathom the most secret compartments, and finally discovered a bundle of old letters tied with a black ribbon. Her heart beat rapidly; she was about to hurry away when a picture with face turned to the wall attracted her attention. The dust upon it was more recent than upon the other objects. Not without difficulty she turned it around, and uttered a little "Ah!" of admiration.

The picture was no better painted than most modern family portraits, but it represented the handsomest young man who ever wore the green uniform of the Austrian Uhlans, of '66. The carriage of the young officer, who sat there carelessly, with head slightly bent forward and sabre between his knees, was well portrayed. Linda thought that she had never seen a more fascinating man; the pleasant mouth, the shy and yet confident glance, the naïve arrogance of the whole expression--all pleased her. Who could that be? She went down stairs and commanded two servants to bring the picture to the drawing-room at once. One of the servants--it was Felix's old valet--permitted himself to remark, "The Baron did not like the picture, and in consequence had banished it to the second story."

Linda insisted that her command should be executed. "Do you know whom the picture represents?" she asked, as she passed.

The old man seemed surprised and hesitated. "The Baron, himself."

"Ah!" Linda bit her lips, and made a gesture of dismissal.

When the man had gone away with the servant to fetch the picture, Linda laughed to herself,

gayly--the joke seemed to her delicious.

Scarcely was she alone when she bent over the letters. They were written in a flippant, haughty tone which harmonized well with the portrait. The first dated from a Polish garrison; in all was evident the naïve selfishness of a good-hearted but uncommonly indulged man. The letters pleased Linda very well. From time to time she glanced at the portrait, which, in accordance with her wishes, had been brought in.

"What a pity that I did not know him at that time," said she, and then added, shrugging her shoulders, "at that time he would scarcely have wished to have anything to do with me."

When Felix returned from his ride he found in the vestibule, among other letters arrived in the morning, an old newspaper in a wrapper addressed in very poor writing to his wife.

He looked at it, read the post-mark, Marienbad--he recognized Juanita's writing. His heart throbbed violently. The idea of suppressing the paper flashed through his mind; he seized it, then a kind of fury with himself overcame him. He was weary of striving to prevent his last great humiliation, and like one in deep water who, when the waves reach up to his throat, weary of exertion, defiantly flings himself into the horrible element in order to make an end of it, so he sent the paper to his wife himself, by a servant. Then he went to his room. He seated himself at his writing-desk, and resting his head on one hand, with the other mechanically smoothing a newspaper which lay before him, he waited, half with dread, half with longing, like a criminal condemned to death, for the message which should summon him to the gallows.

Then he heard a fearful, piercing scream. "Ah!" said he, "she knows it!" Will she come to him? There is a rustle in the corridor, the door of the room is flung open, and Linda enters, or rather bursts in. Her face is distorted; a lock of loosened hair hangs over her ashy pale cheeks.

"It is a calumny, it cannot be true!" she cried, and threw the paper which Juanita had sent her before him upon the table.

He is silent. Her vanity believes in him until the last moment; has expected an explanation from him, but he is silent.

She grasps his shoulder. "For God's sake is it true that you were sentenced to two years' imprisonment for forgery?"

Then he murmurs so softly that his voice seems only an echo, "Yes!"

She staggers back, remains speechless for a moment, and then bursts into not convulsive, not hysterical, no, only indescribably mocking laughter. "And I was proud to bear the name of Lanzberg," she murmurs. "Now at last I know how I came by that honor." She feels not one iota of pity for the mortally wounded man who has quivered at each of her words as beneath the blow of a whip; she feels nothing at all but her immense humiliation. The wish to pain him as much as possible burns within her, and for a moment she pauses in her speech because she can think of nothing that is cutting and venomous enough. "And if you had even informed me of the situation, had given me the choice whether I would bear a branded name or not," she at length begins again.

Then he who had until this moment sat there perfectly silent, with anxiously raised shoulders, his hand over his eyes, raises his head wearily. "Linda, I begged your mother to tell you of my disgrace--she assured me that she had done so. On my word of----" he pauses, a horrible smile parts Linda's lips.

"Go on," cries she, "your word of honor. I will believe you--it is possible that you speak the truth. My mother suppressed your confession, good; but every glance and word of mine during our engagement must have convinced you that she had suppressed it. You cannot answer that to your conscience," she hissed.

To that he replies nothing, but sits there motionless and silent. She wishes to force him to proclaim his shame by an outcry, a gesture of supplication. "I have borne a branded name for five years--I have brought into the world a branded child," says she quickly and distinctly, her eyes resting intently upon him.

At length he shudders; he looks at her with a glance which pleases her, it shows such fearful misery--her eyes sparkle. "And all for the sake of a Juanita!" she cries again scornfully, and leaves the room.

She rushes down stairs breathlessly; there in the large drawing-room stands the picture, the package of letters lies on a table. Tears of rage rush to Linda's eyes. She pulls the bell sharply. "Take that picture away!" she commands the servant who appears.

She would like to declare to the servant that she knew nothing of the Lanzberg disgrace when she married a Lanzberg.

XXIV.

"All for the sake of a Juanita!" That was the most biting remark Linda had made, was what made Felix feel most keenly his degradation.

He had heard of people who sinned for a good object, who had forged their fathers' names from generous precipitancy to save the honor of a friend, with the ideal conviction that the father himself must declare that he was satisfied with the wrong action on account of the unfortunate complications. But he? No false idea of sacrifice, no desire for martyrdom had confused him; as the cause of his action he found nothing but egoism and search for enjoyment, a brutal passion for an unworthy woman.

The explanation of his act lay in the hot-blooded temperament of a thoroughly spoiled and indulged man, whose first ungratified wish robs him of his senses--the excuse of his act lay nowhere. He also had never sought it, and had never for one instant forgiven himself, but all these years, wherever he went, had dragged about with him the consciousness of his degradation.

It had weighed so heavily upon him that this in itself had prevented every moral elevation in him.

Had his sense of honor not been by nature and education so fanatic, so morbidly sensitive, he would perhaps have learned in time to accustom himself to his situation, and become a commonplace, anxiously respectable man who contented himself with playing first fiddle in circles which were a step lower than his own.

But however he was situated, he never learned to reckon with his detracted honor. It could not satisfy him to represent an ordinary, respectable man.

"How was it possible; oh, God, how was it possible that I, Felix Lanzberg, could so forget myself?" he groaned.

He let his head fall upon his folded arms on his writing-desk.

Then through his weary mind, like a triumphal fanfare of temptation, rang the melody of a Spanish national dance, with its exciting, sharply accented rhythm and perfidious modulations. The portion of his past in which his present grief had root rose vividly and with the most minute particulars to his memory.

It dated back--oh, that beautiful unrecallable time--twenty-three years. Very wealthy, handsome, of good family, fond of gay life and without any serious aims, he liked to amuse himself, rendered homage to his colonel's wife, as is obligatory in every young officer, supported here a factory-girl, there a glove-maker, but at that time his great passion was really four-in-hand driving. On the whole, he was of too ideal temperament to find enjoyment in light-minded passions, and had no talent for such. In association with all other beings--his superiors, comrades, subordinates, tradespeople and proletaries--full of a certain good-nature, self-satisfied. In intercourse with women he was almost shy, stiff, grave, and well-bred to the finger-tips. He was everywhere considered sentimental and solid.

The last Easter he had raved over Countess Adelina L----, the sister of the same Count L---- whom he had encountered so unpleasantly at Mimi Dey's--had danced three cotillons with her, lost two philopenas to her, and passed much time at receptions, seated in a low arm-chair beside her, gazing at her with enraptured eyes, and accompanying his glances with a few anxious, very involved and equally unmeaning phrases. It only required some sharp elderly friend of the Countess to make matters plain to him--that is, to call his attention to the fact that he was really betrothed.

He seemed made to marry early, to adore his wife, and to bore his intimate friends with accounts of the wonderful peculiarities of his children. Then, on a mild, damp spring evening, after a good dinner, and not quite sober, he chanced to go with several comrades to the Orpheum, which later, owing to an American who walked a telegraph wire with much ease and grace, became a great attraction, but which then tried its fortune with Spanish dancers and a lion-tamer.

The dance production began with four Spaniards, two women, two men, all four old, homely, and so thin that they did not need castanets to rattle, danced with convulsive charm, smiled like painted death's heads, and on the whole reminded one strongly of certain repulsive pictures of Goya, which are usually voted exaggerated, so as to allay the horror which they cause.

The officers cried "Brava!" with biting irony, the audience hissed, several indignant voices grumbled at the director. Then the first bars of the madrilèna resounded through the atmosphere impregnated with tobacco smoke and the odor of eatables. A new apparition stepped upon the stage. A smile--a glance--the deepest indignation changed to the most breathless astonishment. With the voluptuous bowing and swaying of a Spanish dance, the most beautiful woman that was ever called Senorita floated over the stage. That was Juanita! The horrible background of the quartette heightened the luxuriant charm of her figure.

She was no practised dancer, none of our conventional ballerinas, whose perfect flexibility destroys all individual charm; her limbs had not been disfigured by year-long torture; they possessed neither the pitiful thinness nor the dazzling rapidity of a race-horse. She did not know how to execute with the lower extremities the most ambitious figures, while--as is considered essential--the upper body remained stiff; she did no gymnastics--she danced! And not only with her limbs--she danced with her whole body.

Oh, what an intoxicating bending and swaying! A proud drawing up of the body, and caressing sinking backward! Her dancing had nothing animated, challenging about it, but something subtly alluring, almost magically seductive. Her whole appearance suggested longing weariness, as when in a storm the flowers shudderingly bend their heads earthward. And she was beautiful! The short oval of her face, the low brow, the short, straight nose, the delicate, quivering nostrils, the high cheek-bones, the slightly sunken cheeks, the long, deep-set eyes, full of loving dreaminess and passion, the full, curved lips, turning upward with an expression of languishing weariness--all this reminded one not in the least of the ideal, gentle brunette Madonnas of Murillo. It reminded one of nothing holy, nothing classical--but it was the most seductive earthly beauty which one could imagine!

The audience raved; the officers screamed themselves hoarse with "Brava! Brava!" Some of them made poor jokes about the dancer, others hummed or whistled reminiscences of the Spanish music. Only Felix was silent. "You act like one to whom a ghost has announced death," jested Prince Hugo B----, and thereupon proposed that the officers should go upon the stage in a body and give Juanita an ovation.

How he remembers all that to-day! The large half-lighted room near the stage, the dusty old rafters, the ropes, the torn scenes, the dim gas-lights, the crowd of actors and actresses huddled together, the trapeze artist who wore a brown waterproof over his pink doublet and green tights, and in the midst of this unsavory crowd--Juanita. In a shabby gray dress, and green and blue checked shawl, she stood near an elderly very shabby woman, and smiled with her languishing lips most indifferently, while the men vied with each other in paying her the most effusive compliments in imaginary Spanish or bad French. When they withdrew Felix stumbled over something. It was the yellow flower which Juanita had worn in her hair, dusty, withered, trodden upon. Carefully he wiped the dust from it, and tried to revive the faded, crumpled petals.

"Deuce take it! We should invite her to supper," cried Prince B----, suddenly standing still.

"Why, Hugo?" stammered Felix.

The former laughed, turned on his heel, gave his invitation, and Juanita nodded perfectly contentedly. She had no objection to sup with the gentlemen. To be sure, she took her theatre mother with her.

How Felix recalled all this!

The glaring gas-light in the long narrow room of the restaurant; the sleepy, blinking waiter; Manuela--that was the name of the dancer's protecting angel--who, without removing hat or wrap, and also without saying a word, with the usual appetite of all theatre mothers, bent over her plate; the officers who, with faces flushed with wine, proposed clumsy toasts, and Juanita who, seated beside the Prince upon a red divan, again and again rubbed her large weary eyes with her little hands, like a sleepy child.

She ate without affectation and without greediness--only sipped the champagne, smiled good-naturedly at the boldest jokes, whether she understood them not, with the resignation of a being who was accustomed to earn her bread in this manner.

The old Manuela had long been snoring. Some the officers had grown melancholy, the others were noisy only by fits and starts--Juanita's eyes closed.

"Let her go, she is tired," remarked an elderly captain.

"Before we part, I beg one especial favor," cried Prince B----. "That the Senorita give us each a kiss."

The dancer made a few gestures of dissent, because that was a part of her trade, and then yielded.

Patiently she let one after the other of the young men press his mustache, smelling of wine and smoke, upon her beautiful mouth. At length Felix's turn came, but he avoided her lips, profaned by the kisses of his comrades, and only kissed her hand very softly. Misunderstanding

the tenderness of his action, she believed that he despised her kiss.

A few minutes later the two sleepy Spaniards rolled away to their home in a carriage which Prince B---- had paid for.

"A beautiful creature, but a perfect goose," remarked B---- to Felix, as he strolled back to the barracks with him. The other officers drove. "Besides, she is at least twenty-five or six years old; that is old for a Spaniard," chatted the Prince.

Felix walked silently beside him, a hot, unsatisfied feeling in his heart, a withered flower in his hand.

He cherished it like a lover the rose-bud which his dear one had given him; yes, thus would Felix cherish the faded yellow flower which the dust in the wings of the stage had soiled--upon which an acrobat might have trodden. He placed it in a glass of water, and finally pressed it in a book of poems.

Explain it who will! In the moment when Felix had avoided her lips, the narrow-minded Spaniard had taken a decided dislike for him, a dislike which more intimate acquaintance with him did not overcome, but which increased to aversion. Neither his unusual, truly somewhat effeminate, beauty, nor his reserved, chivalrous manners, pleased her. B----, with his bold, condescending ways, had more success with her, but her deepest, tenderest feelings were for the trapeze artist of the Orpheum, a young man with strongly developed muscles and bushy hair, who apparently seldom washed his face and never his hands; but, on the other hand, used the strongest-smelling pomade, and always wore the most brilliant cravats. One met him often when one visited Juanita.

At that time Juanita lived in the Rossau, in a very plain locality, which continually smelt of mutton tallow and onions, because Manuela, in spite of the warm time of year, loved to cook unappetizing national dishes upon the drawing-room stove.

Manuela was never seen without her crumpled black satin hat and her green shawl adorned with red palms. Around the old woman's waist, on a worn-out cord hung a pocket from which protruded a gay paper fan, and which beside this lodged a pack of cards, a rosary and cigarettes.

Juanita lay from morning to night upon a divan, clad in a loose white wrapper, without corsets, without stockings, a rose behind her ear, and tiny black satin slippers upon her small bare feet. But how beautiful she was thus!

The soft white clinging garment outlined her form distinctly. One could think of nothing more charming than her little feet, scarcely as long as one's palm, so narrow, beautifully arched, with pink soles and dainty dimples, and with blue veins around her ankles as they peeped out of the satin slippers.

Except for a few fairly brutal bursts of rage, Juanita was uncommonly phlegmatic. She really loved nothing but cigarettes, sweet drinks mixed with ice, and a horrible Spanish national salad of garlic and cucumbers which she called a *gaspacho*. The time which she did not devote to her dancing exercises and her lovers, she passed smoking, laying cards, and telling the beads of her rosary.

She tolerated Felix around her, like a poor actress who wishes to quarrel with no one and tolerates every one; she did not encourage him.

Her coldness excited his feeling to madness; his boundless submission increased her repugnance for him. In association with her, he had no self-respect, no pride, no will, but the low-spirited air of a shy student. He grovelled at her feet, and spent half the day pasting gold spangles on one of her old costumes which Manuela was freshening up. He had known her for weeks without daring to send her anything but bouquets and candy.

Then one evening he saw her in a box of a theatre. She wore her hair arranged in the Spanish manner, with a veil and high comb, and a black satin gown which fitted like a glove, adorned with a silver girdle. The whole audience was interested in the beautiful Spaniard. In the second act, Prince B---- appeared in her box. The people whispered, laughed. Felix was half dead with jealousy.

The next day there was a violent altercation between the Prince and him, at which the former good-naturedly declared that he would a hundred times rather break with Juanita than with Felix; he did not care anything about her, she bored him; he had only sent her to the theatre, dressed beautifully, to mystify the Viennese, etc.

Then Felix hired a charming entresol in K---- Street, and had it furnished in three days by the first upholsterer in Vienna. Juanita made no trouble about occupying it. She laughed and clapped her hands with joy over the magnificent furniture, gave up her loose wrappers, wore the clothes which Felix had made for her, and in honor of the beautiful apartment, played the great lady.

Surprise and thankfulness, or perhaps a suddenly awakened covetousness for a time killed in her every other feeling. Felix revelled in a few weeks of mad happiness.

To-day, however, his hair stood on end when he thought of this happiness.

Juanita gave herself up to mad extravagance. Her ideal of elegance and style was Mlle. X----, the *première danseuse* of the opera house. Juanita must have duplicates of everything: the toilets, the Newfoundland and the equipages. Finally she insisted upon dancing at the same theatre as the X----, and Felix succeeded in securing a performance for her.

And yet how badly she treated him in spite of everything. Often he rattled his frail chains, but lacked the strength to break them. He made scenes for Juanita almost every day--it was owing to his jealousy; he left her and swore he would never come again. For an entire week he remained away from her, but in what a condition of excitement, fever, and longing! He ate nothing, he slept no longer, he ran into passers-by in the street because he saw no one; the whole world was a dark chaos to him--the only spot of light was Juanita.

With bowed head, a bitter smile on his lips, the full consciousness of his degradation expressed by bearing and glance, he then dragged himself back to Juanita.

She did with him what she wished. All Vienna spoke about him and her; from the lips of young matrons mysterious phrases floated about the ears of innocent young girls--the pretty Countess L---- cried her blue eyes out.

And the summer passed. September arrived. The Spaniard had become more submissive--sometimes she was almost tender. The great moment of her début in the opera house approached, and made her timid. One more wish she expressed, a last one. Never before had she taken trouble to inform Felix of one of her expensive wishes with so many caressing digressions. With both arms round his neck, her lips close to his ear, she informed him that she would not appear at the opera house without a pair of diamond screws such as Mlle. X---- always wore in her ears when she danced.

When he begged her only to wait a very little while, she fell back into her old phlegmatic, yes, apathetic manner, pouting angrily.

He went to a jeweller whom he knew, of whom he had already purchased different ornaments for Juanita, but the man did not seem inclined to extend Felix's credit further. Too prudent to bluntly refuse such a distinguished customer he pretended that he had no stones of the size which the Baron required.

He could perhaps obtain them from a business friend "for cash."

Felix left the shop angrily, and now sought his old acquaintance, Ephraim Staub. But the latter shrugged his shoulders, said that he had already done a great deal for the Baron for the sake of his respectful devotion to him; he relied upon his honor, but still the notes of a minor were not legal, and all men were mortal, and if anything should happen to the young Baron who would answer to him, Ephraim Staub, that the young gentleman's papa would not throw him together with his notes, which in the eyes of the law were not legal, out of the door?

Felix chewed the knob of his riding-whip angrily. Then carefully feeling his way, the usurer ventured an infamous proposition.

"Certainly a note with your father's acceptance--that would be safe--the old gentleman would certainly redeem that--one could always apply the thumbscrews to one's papa." Ephraim could assure the Baron that young people of the best families--he must, alas, conceal the names--had given him this kind of guarantee.

For a long time the true signification of this speech was wholly dark to Felix, but at length he understood, then he did not even take the trouble to fall into a rage, only threw back his head arrogantly and raised his riding-whip to the usurer as one strikes a cur who has ventured too near.

How did it happen that three days later he returned to Ephraim Staub and made out the note in the shameful manner which the latter had desired of him? Yes; how did it happen? Felix no longer knows. If he knew, he could perhaps understand his crime to-day, but he does not understand it.

His memory is a blank concerning the three days in which he had slowly sunk to forgery; there is a dark spot, a chasm in his recollection; he can only take it up again in the moment when, exhausted as if after weeks of fever, bathed in cold sweat, and groping along the walls, he crept from Ephraim's shop to the jeweller's; how suddenly he was frightened at the gargoyle on the cornice of a house, frightened because the head laughed.

From this moment he was not happy for a second, not even with Juanita. Strangely enough, his passion for her now was completely in the background; it fled.

It seemed to him that a monster sat upon his back and buried two iron claws in his shoulders, and blew in his ears with his hot, terrible breath.

The evening on which Juanita was to show her splendid beauty and her empirical dancing to

the audience of the opera house arrived.

A warm, September evening. There had been a hard shower; there was an odor of wet stone and marble as Felix went to the theatre. By turns he shook with cold and grew feverish, he suffered with a severe cold. The theatre was still only sparsely filled. When he took his seat in one of the front rows he noticed that people pointed him out to each other and whispered his name. He was a celebrity--Juanita's lover!

And all the soft voices pierced his ears, and yet no one could know that.

The ballet had been introduced into an opera, he could not have said into which one; he heard nothing, he saw nothing which took place upon the stage.

The triumphal fanfare of the madriléna roused him from his brooding.

How beautiful she was!

A cloud of black lace and satin floated about her. On her breast was a bunch of white roses, in her ears sparkled two great drops like frozen tears.

Felix saw nothing of the whole apparition but these great sparkling drops. He would have liked to scream out, "Hold her fast, she wears my honor in her ears!"

Poor Felix; he was delirious. The triumph which Juanita had experienced at the Orpheum was nothing to her present one at the opera house. A foreign prince, who chanced to be in the house, clapped his hands in approval; the X---- saw it in her box, and grew green with envy.

Then Juanita threw her last kiss and vanished. The opera proceeded. Felix sat in his place as if petrified.

At last, at the close of the act, he rose to go behind the scenes. That uneasy hum, which in the world follows a triumph or a fiasco, prevailed there. Juanita was nowhere to be seen. He knocked at her dressing-room door, her maid alone answered him. Juanita was gone, had just driven away. "His Highness Prince Arthur"--the girl was a born Viennese--"had arranged a supper in all haste in honor of the Senorita, and--she thought the Baron knew of it----"

Felix heard nothing more; in mad haste he rushed down the narrow stairs to the stage entrance, and out across the open square before the theatre. He saw a closed carriage turn a corner. Felix did not know whom the carriage contained--probably a perfect stranger--and still he rushed after it--rushed after it like an insane man for a long distance. The earth trembled beneath him; with a hoarse, breathless gasp, he sank to the ground.

When he was picked up, he was unconscious. For weeks he lay senseless, with a severe nervous fever. His father came to Vienna to care for him. After about eight weeks the physicians declared that for the present there was no danger--he could be transported to Traunberg, as was the urgent desire of his father.

At that time Felix was still so weak that he had to be carried; he slept almost continuously, spoke indistinctly, and had forgotten the immediate past.

Ephraim Staub hated Felix because of the manner in which, without removing his cap, with one finger on the visor, he would enter Ephraim's house, yawning, and say, "You, I want money!" and because of the manner in which he carelessly crumpled the bank-notes--which Ephraim never handled except reverently--and thrust them in his pockets, and because of the cut of the whip with which Felix had answered his perfidious proposition the first time.

He discounted the note. The old Baron's lawyer learned that a note with his name upon it was in circulation, and inquired by letter whether the Baron wished it redeemed for family considerations.

The Baron knew nothing of Juanita. Naturally, Felix had never written him of his relations with her, and a stranger would never have ventured to inform the violent old Lanzberg of anything discreditable to his son. Felix had of late asked his father for no great sums of money, and the father knew him to be always scrupulously honorable.

How could he look upon the scarcely veiled insinuation of the advocate as other than an insult? Enraged at the suspicion cast upon his son, he did not even take the trouble to think the matter over, but wrote at once, in his first indignation, a brusque letter to his advocate, in which he declared that he knew nothing of the matter--it could take its course. It did not even occur to him to excite the invalid Felix with this horrid story--he told him nothing of it.

Slowly Felix recovered his health, but his happy temper did not return, he remained always gloomy and monosyllabic--not rude but deeply sad. His father often gazed anxiously into his eyes, which then every time looked away from him, and he stroked his cheeks compassionately, which then always flushed beneath his touch. And once he took the convalescent's thin hand in his, and said, "Does anything worry you, my poor boy? It is surely some heart trouble which often comes

to one of your age," and as Felix, who at the beginning of this speech had paled, now was silent, flushing more and more deeply, the Baron added, clapping him good-naturedly on the shoulder, "You need not worry about your secret. I will ask you no more about it if it annoys you; I only thought it might relieve you to unburden your heart."

Felix buried his face in his hands, and burst into tears. To this day he can hear in his ears the caressing consolation of his father, the soft, monotonous voice with which he murmured again and again, "Do not excite yourself, child; poor fellow, poor fellow!"

That Felix's melancholy could have anything in connection with the lawyer's communication, did not occur to the Baron.

The next day Felix confessed to his father. It was after breakfast; they sat alone, opposite each other, at a little round table.

For a moment the old man stared before him with fixed, dull gaze; then rising helplessly and slowly from his chair, stretching out his trembling hands, he fell upon his face, senseless.

What cut Felix most bitterly, most deeply to his heart was, that when the Baron recovered from his swoon he had not a word of reproof for his son--not a word. Oh, if he had raged, had cursed and execrated him, all this Felix could have borne more easily than the sight of the terrible, helpless sadness with which from time to time the Baron struck his hands together and murmured: "I was indiscreet; oh, furious old fool, I was indiscreet, indiscreet!"

The meaning of these words only later became clear to Felix.

The Baron telegraphed to the lawyer--he went to Vienna the same day.

It was too late!

All the steps which were taken to spare Felix the publication of his fault and the degrading punishment, were in vain.

The affair occurred in an unfavorable epoch for him, as the courts felt obliged shortly after an *éclat* to be doubly severe, as the consideration which had recently been shown in a similar case for a noble name had called forth the justest indignation from the liberal press.

Felix was sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

His father begged an audience of His Majesty. All that he attained was that the sentence should be diminished to one year.

An example must be made.

And the farewell. The last, long, trembling embrace of his father, the moment when the guards who were to conduct the convict away busied themselves with their sabres and compassionately withdrew while the father whispered imploringly to his son, "Promise me that you will do no harm to yourself!"

And the time in the prison. The fearful despair of the first weeks, when he longed for death, and the promise which he had given his father continually weighed upon and tormented him like a fetter; the brooding stupor into which this despair changed, and which in its turn gave place to a gradual reviving and accustoming himself to his circumstances. He remembered very well the day when he began to look around at his companions, began anxiously to seek manifestations of their good qualities; to search among them for young people of blameless lives who had sinned in a moment of madness. What did he find? A few convicts who by alternating imprisonment and crime had gradually become dull and stupid, others who had wholly degenerated to rough, terrible, malicious animals; besides these, two or three sons of good family, who confessed their sins with brutal cynicism, scornfully derided their relatives and procured through the jailer wine, cards and evil romances. The sight of these people caused Felix boundless misery. How he loathed them; how they astonished him; the importance which trifles had for them, and that they had the heart to rail at the poor food!

The doubt came to him whether the idea which he had of himself was not a mere illusion. He dissected his most secret impulses, criticised all his instincts--in short, tormented himself into a pitiable condition. The remnant of self-respect which he had taken into the prison shrunk away to nothing.

All who had anything to do with him showed him the warmest sympathy. He was so quiet, so obliging; he never asked for anything except more work. The degraded officers were at that time employed in the office work. Felix fulfilled the tasks allotted him with the most painful punctiliousness. At the prison he accustomed himself to that correct regular handwriting which differed so greatly from the careless writing of his gay youth.

The old baron had begged that some consideration might be shown Felix on account of his weakened health. They were perfectly willing to do so, but Felix would hear nothing of this. The money which his father sent him to procure little comforts, he gave to assistants.

At last the year was over.

Felix had received a letter from his father, in which the latter, too considerate to personally accompany his son from the prison, told him that he would meet him at this or that station, to take a long trip with him. But Felix could not resolve to meet his father immediately after this degrading imprisonment.

It was in the year 1866. War was expected. Felix enlisted in a regiment as a private soldier. He performed his duties with fanatic zeal. The soldiers, who knew nothing of his sad story, looked upon his serving in their ranks as the "whim of a great gentleman," such as is not unusual in excited times, and met him with defiant opposition. But he took such sincere trouble to win their liking, so willingly shared their whole life, that they soon became devoted to him. Their unfeigned liking was more pleasant to him than the sentimental humanity which he met with later in life. Often one of his present comrades pushed him away from some work which he considered unworthy of Felix, and murmured with good-natured embarrassment, "That you are not used to, sir." The officers, who at first had been very ill at ease with him, gradually understood how painful it was to him if any difference was made between him and his comrades, and gave up attempting to make an exception of him.

He never complained, ate the coarsest food without changing his expression in the slightest, conscientiously polished the buttons of his uniform, and always chose the worst place to bivouac.

The first cannon was fired.

Felix fought at Trautenau; fought without enthusiasm, without melodramatic heroism; he fought with the sober, unbounded bravery of a man who does not need the hurrahs to be spurred on by, whose life is wholly indifferent to him, and who hopes and wishes for no other reward for his self-sacrificing performance of his duty than--death.

The leaden rain of the Prussian vanguard--it was wholly unknown to the Austrians who did not fight in Schlesing--had a soothing effect upon his nerves. The breathless excitement of battle did him good. What pained him was the moment before the conflict, when old veterans passed each other their field-flasks, and expressed indifferent opinions about the weather; and the young soldiers, scarcely grown recruits, with shining eyes and pale cheeks, cried "Hurrah!" and inflated their chests, while the guns shook in their hands. What pained him was the moment after the battle, when the last smoke of powder, and a dull echo of the noise of battle filled the air, and the soldiers, confused and stunned, met in camp, and one or another, rousing from the stupor which followed the fearful excitement of battle, asked fearfully, "Where is F----? where is M----?" and then with a shudder remembered that he, himself, had seen F---- and M---- fall. What pained him was, when in the night the wounded cried and groaned, until their comrades' compassion changed to impatience, and they complained over the noise which prevented them from sleeping.

Then came the third of July, the day of Sadowa.

It was damp, cold weather, no sun in the heavens. On the earth trodden-down grain, soiled with dirt and blood; a confusion of blue and white soldiers, partly arranged in compact, geometrically exact figures, partly scattered in sheltered positions, partly crouching behind earthworks, so far separated that Prussians and Austrians mostly saw each other as points or masses. Hostile, without hostility, they stood opposite each other; perhaps not one among the thousands upon thousands here and yonder hated the other, and yet each one was ready to do his utmost to kill the unknown enemy.

Fog mixed with the powder-smoke. There was a wild confusion of screams, groans, rolling of wheels, rattling of sabres, and stamping of horses. In the distance chaos seemed to prevail; at the spot where Felix was stationed a kind of monotony, a kind of order ruled.

The ranks close over the fallen. "Fire!" commands the officer. There is a click of the gun hammers, the flames shine redly on the gun-barrels--sch--sch whistle the hostile balls around Felix; crashing, ear-splitting, like sharp hail, answer the riflemen.

Felix was at Swiepwald, with the regiment of riflemen of which the Austrians only speak with tears in their eyes, the Prussians with hands on their caps!

For a while the losses were slight. All went well. Then came a moment when the riflemen received the hostile balls indifferently. Many of them were weary and found time to say so, still more were hungry--few Austrian soldiers received anything to eat on that memorable day, the day of Sadowa. Felix had given his last rations to a young recruit who, as he thought, needed nourishment more than he; but Felix had overestimated his strength, an unusual faintness suddenly overcame him, he begged his neighbor for his flask, and crash!--a shell--and the neighbor lay on the ground with shattered feet.

From this moment the losses are immense. Man after man falls. Little brownish-red streams of blood trickle through the ruts of the ground, the pine-trees become bare, their needles fall unpleasantly, prickingly, upon the faces of the riflemen. With the whistling of the musket-balls mingles the groaning shots of the artillery like the deafening, reechoing thunder in a mountainous country. The atmosphere is unbearably impregnated with the peculiar odor of battle. With the smell of powder and heated iron mingles the odor of perspiration of an excited

mass of men, and the repulsive, terrible, salt smell of their blood.

The fog becomes more and more thick. The riflemen see nothing near them but dead comrades, and before, a white wall behind which death lurks. They no longer know what is taking place at the other end of the field, do not know that the Prussian Crown Prince has arrived; but all feel that they are fighting for a lost cause, and that their resistance is nothing more than a heroic demonstration.

Always in the front rank, Felix fights on. Twice have the men at his right and left fallen, but all the balls whistle past him--from second to second he expects death, but it comes not.

There are not thirty men left of his battalion; orderlies fly to and fro, the officers are hoarse, then suddenly the cry, "Retreat!"

Retreat!

Felix stands as if rooted to the ground--Retreat! What, shall he flee? No! But captivity, in which, bound as he is by his promise, he would not have the right to take his life! And he retreats with the others, who now join the great mass. Their pace becomes more and more irregular and hurried.

The evening is dark, the enemy behind them, the few riflemen are among the last. A standard-bearer sinks down, wounded in the knee by a stray shot. No one troubles himself about him or the flag.

What is the flag? Nothing but a soiled, torn rag. Nothing but--the symbol of the regiment's honor.

Honor! The word has a mysterious, alluring sound for Felix, somewhat as the word water has for one perishing in the desert.

Honor! honor! He takes the flag from the standard-bearer's hand, who pleads piteously that he may at least be pushed into a ditch and not trodden upon like a worm. Felix performs this service for him, and remains far behind his comrades. At length he raises the flag and is about to proceed with it.

But, deathly wearied as he is, he can scarcely carry it, so he tears the flag from the pole, and breaking this over his knee he wishes to bury both pieces in the slime of the ditch, but before he has accomplished this a little band of Prussian cavalry approaches. He lays his hand on his gun, but if he defends himself, defends himself so that they must kill him, the flag is forfeited. He then stretches himself in the mire of the road, flat on his face over the flag, as to-day he has seen many of his comrades, shot through the heart.

The horses trot past him; one of them starts back from him, this rider looks before him, sees what he takes for a corpse and passes on.

The horse, who takes the leap required of him with the timidity which every human body inspires in his species, strikes Felix with his hoof. When the riders are out of sight, and all is still, Felix rises, a stinging pain in his left arm. At first he thought the arm was broken, but no, only a severe contusion causes the pain. He thrusts his hand into his coat, wraps the flag around it, and creeps wearily forward.

In his ears a single word rings: "Honor!"

He totters to the Elbe, which separates him from his comrades; there is no longer a bridge there; he does not trust his strength to swim across. Ah! and even if he does drown in the bottom of the river, the Prussians cannot find the flag, and he cares nothing for his life. He flings himself into the stream, the waves plash around his ears: "Honor!" The cold water strengthens him, and for the moment prevents the pain in his arm. He reaches the opposite shore, he himself never knew how.

He staggers on in his clothes, made heavy by the water. His mind is not clear, only grasps the idea that he must go on. He stumbles along--slowly--slowly; often he sinks down and lies still for a while, then he suddenly springs up again, feels for the flag and totters on. He does not know where he is, the Austrian camp lies before him--he does not see it--then something red shines through the gray morning light. Felix gathers up his strength; breathless, gasping, he drags himself up to what he soon recognizes as an Austrian Uhlan picket.

He reaches the picket, he can no longer speak, hands the flag to an officer, and falls to the ground.

The Uhlans--there were two or three officers among them--crowd around him. When they see his lamentable condition they speak with pride of the fidelity to his flag of this common soldier, and they say it aloud, and Felix hears it and it does him good; it seems to him that the blot upon his honor is washed away.

Then one of the officers bends over him, and suddenly starting, he cries to the others, "That is

certainly Lanzberg!"

"What do you say? 'The certain Lanzberg?'" ask they, hastily. They thought Felix unconscious, but he was not.

The word, thoughtlessly spoken and not unkindly meant, goes to his heart. From that moment he knew that there was no regeneration for his honor.

He might level mountains and dam rivers, but the world in its astonishment, in its admiration, would yet find no other name for him than "the certain Lanzberg!"

He opened his large, mournful eyes. The officers were ill at ease, then they all stretched out their hands to him and cried, "We admire you; we envy you!"

But he only turned his head away from them with a groan.

His incomparable actions during the campaign had softened the harshest of his social judges toward him. The emperor, by a proclamation, had restored to him his forfeited social rights. His father awaited him longingly, and begged him by letters to telegraph his arrival in Traunberg, so that he could personally meet him at the railway station.

But Felix dreaded the idea of being received by his father, and unannounced, in civilian clothes, he one day alighted in T----, the nearest station to Traunberg, from a third-class compartment, which he had taken so as to meet none of his acquaintances. He went on foot to the castle. He felt a kind of shyness of every tree, every stone, which formerly returning home after long absence, he had greeted joyously. The quick trot of horses' hoofs smote his ear; looking up he saw Elsa coming galloping along the park driveway toward him, at the side of his old playmate, Sempaly. Anxiously he drew back among the trees, and the two rushed past, and thought no more of the man in the plain gray coat. Silently he crept up to the castle and to his father's room. No one met him. Softly he opened the door. A thin, bowed, gray-haired man sat reading in an arm-chair. Felix took a few hesitating steps forward, he trembled throughout his entire frame. "Papa!" he stammered. One moment more and the father had clasped him in his arms. Then the old man pushed him back from him to see him more plainly. "My hero!" he cried. Felix started nervously and gazed pleadingly at his father. "You have grown gray, papa," he cried, as if startled.

"People grow old, my boy," replied the Baron, hastily smoothing his whitened hair.

"Old at forty-nine?" murmured Felix.

A quarter of an hour later, as Felix sat beside his father, answering his questions, Elsa entered. She had grown tall and slender. But that was not the only change which Felix perceived in her: she had lost her light, springing girlish step, her merry smile. A reserved sadness had drawn harsh lines about her mouth, and a deep shade darkened her eyes.

At her entrance he had risen awkwardly, and she, not seeing him distinctly, and taking him for some bailiff discussing business with her father, bowed formally.

Her father glanced impatiently at her, then he cried, in irritation and anger, "It is Felix; do you not recognize him?"

Elsa grew pale with excitement. "God greet you," said she, going quickly up to him.

His trembling lips barely touched her forehead.

Now came a hard, hard time for Felix, made hardest of all by the touching kindness of his father, who overwhelmed him with tender attentions, had forgotten none of Felix's former fancies--surprised him now with a splendid horse, now with a gun of a new, improved kind, or a pointer dog with fabulous traits--in short, anticipated every wish which Felix had formerly expressed. But Felix no longer wished for anything but to hide himself, and this his father would not hear of.

He everywhere pushed his son forward; with the servants and overseer it was always, "I am growing old, go to the young master."

And poor Felix, humiliated by the striking submission of the people, confused and without an idea or opinion of his own, gave orders in a shy, weak voice as modestly and reservedly as he could.

However urgently he begged his father to leave him in the protecting shade of the background, the old man could not be induced to consent. He pressed the keys of his safe upon Felix, gave him free disposal of the largest sums of money. Painfully distrustful of all the rest of humanity, especially of his servants, since his misfortune, the Baron almost crushed his son by this ostentatious, conspicuous confidence.

One day he desired Felix to pay a visit with him in the neighborhood. But this Felix opposed. Elsa supported his opposition. The old Baron took that amiss in her. At that time Elsa was scarcely sixteen years old. She suffered with the Lanzberg arrogance, as Felix had suffered from

it; she was hurt to the heart by Felix's deed. And yet she loved her brother, and did not wish to let him feel how heavily his disgrace weighed upon her. But she could find no natural tone in intercourse with him.

He had been a kind of idol for her, who good-naturedly descended from his pedestal to tease and caress his little sister. He had called her Liesel and Mietzel, pulled her ear or kissed her hand, mystified her with the strangest tales, gave her costly presents; then again, when his friends or important pleasures came between them, for days wholly ignored her insignificant existence.

But this time the idol had not descended from his pedestal; he had fallen down, and had become a broken man. His former teasing courtesy had changed into the shyest politeness. He never pulled her ears, and never kissed her hand, never called her Liesel or Mietzel--his manners had wholly lost their playful aplomb. He was now helpless and awkward, sat at table like a poor sinner, ate little, never spoke a word, and, rendered clumsy by embarrassment, soiled the table-cloth. He was so boundlessly obliging and considerate that it made Elsa embarrassed. He broke a refractory horse for her with the greatest patience, took care of all her favorite flowers, accompanied her on her visits to the poor, and never forgot to take with him a warm wrap for her.

He had really become a much better and lovable man than before, but the world had no use for this goodness and lovability. Even Elsa did not know how to value it. She was always constrained in intercourse with him, because she was always thinking of being kind to him. The old Baron gave her endless lectures concerning her behavior. Unweariedly attentive and tender to Felix, toward his other fellow men he was almost unbearably capricious, irritable and unjust, especially to Elsa.

Once he overwhelmed her for so long with imprudent reproaches for her heartlessness and lack of tact, that at last she cried out defiantly and refractorily, "Why was Felix so?"

Then her father struck her for the first and last time, and cried, "God punish you for your hard heart!"

When the Baron had left her, and she began to almost hate Felix, angry at the injustice done her, he emerged from a dark corner, from which he had been forced to witness the scene, softly went up to her, and said, with his gentle sad smile, stretching out his hand hesitatingly to her, "Forgive him--he has not his head; he does not know any longer what he does; only think how he must feel."

Then she threw herself with passionate violence into his arms. "He was right a hundred times," cried she, "only not in thinking that I do not love you, for I do love you, but I did not know how to show it to you."

From that day the relation between brother and sister was touchingly tender. Elsa was almost as anticipating and unendingly tender in her attentions to Felix as her father himself.

The first week after Felix's arrival, Sempaly discreetly remained away from Traunberg. He also had taken part in the campaign, but a very trifling part, and described the battle of Sadowa with charming flippancy, while he added, "Pity that it turned out so badly." For the first week, then, he remained away from Traunberg. But then he appeared there again, and, in fact, with the good-natured intention of paying Felix a special visit. But scarcely had the latter heard the voice of his former comrade, when with dog and gun he crept softly out of the castle.

From then Sempaly came no more to Traunberg. Felix knew that formerly he had come two or three times a week, and asked Elsa about it. "You have surely begged him to come no longer, poor Elsa," said he, gazing deep into her eyes.

Her embarrassment answered him.

He saw that for his sake Elsa must give up all society, and also noticed that she had caught his morbid shyness. Her future was at stake. Then, carefully concealing his reasons, he begged leave of his father to go to South America. With a heavy heart, and after much opposition, the old man let him go.

Felix did not return until he received the news of Elsa's marriage. After the death of his father he left Europe a second time, and had really only returned home for a visit, when he met Linda.

Poor Felix! There he sat, his head resting on the table, all his thoughts in the past, when suddenly a little voice roused him from his dull brooding. Gery, whose little hand could not reach the doorknob, banged at the door outside, and screamed, "Papa! papa!" Felix rose and admitted him.

The child was crying, and his left cheek was red and swollen.

"Papa, mamma slapped me, and said she could not bear me," complained the little fellow.

"She struck you because you are the son of 'the certain Lanzberg,'" murmured Felix with fearful bitterness. "Perhaps others will also make you do penance for that yet!"

XXV.

The gulf which malicious fortune and Elsa's overwrought nerves had opened between the two married people had not lessened, but on the contrary had daily become deeper, colder, and broader.

Erwin found no explanation for his wife's changed manner; after some time he ceased to seek one. His was no brooding nature, and had no time to become one. That Elsa could be jealous of Linda any more than of a pretty work of art or an amusing book which unsuitably claimed a great deal of his attention, Erwin had never understood.

"Poor Elsa, she is worried about Felix," he said to himself; "she will come to her senses again," and for several days he kept away from her, to give her time to calm herself. But three, four days passed, and she still had the same pale face and stiff manner. Then he tried a different plan, and once when they chanced to be alone together--it happened very seldom--he laid his hand under her chin and began: "Well, mouse----"

But she did not lean her cheek against his hand as formerly when she was remorseful, neither did she resist his caress, as when she was refractory, but simply tolerated him as if she were a statue of stone or bronze. And she looked at him so coldly that all the loving words which he had in readiness faded from his memory and his hand sank down from her chin.

He turned away from her with impatience and irritation. It was not the first time that she had been unjust and capricious to him. Her only fault was an easily awakened irritability; but formerly her vexation had been of short duration, and her bad mood had soon dissolved into the most remorseful tenderness.

She had never begged his forgiveness after she had made a scene. Her proud obstinacy was not capable of that; she was not one of those sympathetic, dependent women who like to make little blunders so as to be able to coquet with their charming penitence. No! But an anxious, half-suppressed smile hesitated on her lips, when he returned to her several hours after the vexatious scene, and he could see by the book which she was reading, by the gown which she had put on, by the dinner which was ordered, how she had thought of him during his absence.

But her manner now was of a quite different kind.

What could he think but that her love for him had become less; that with Elsa, as with all good mothers, her children had gradually won the precedence in her heart, and there was nothing to do for it. And Erwin smiled peculiarly, shrugged his shoulders, for the first few days felt painfully wounded, and finally began to accustom himself to the situation. He hunted a great deal, and also occasionally rode to Traunberg, where he was always sure of a hearty reception, often met gay society, and from whence he brought back the comfortable conviction that he had the best influence over a lovable but superficial human being.

Now, after Elsa had barricaded herself on all sides with diligence and pains and praiseworthy energy, against happiness, she was terrified at her own work, and she would gladly have annihilated it, but she now lacked the power. Erwin had become distant; formerly she would have silently slipped her hand into his and with that all would have been said, he would have understood. But now, now she no longer dared; she was as shy and embarrassed as a bride. That it was hateful, yes, fairly inexcusable to suspect a man who in all the different situations of his life had acted so severely honorably as Erwin, of such disgraceful conduct as her jealousy suggested to her, she knew, but----

"The Lanzberg shadow has fallen upon my happiness," she sometimes thought sadly; "it must come so," but in the next moment she said, "No, it must not come so. I--I myself am to blame that it has come; why did I send him away from me on our wedding-day, from silly, childish obstinacy? If I believed in danger for him, I should have tried doubly hard to chain him to me; instead of this I have done everything to make myself disagreeable to him, only because my pride did not consider a threatened happiness worth defence. If what I feared now happens, then----" but here her thoughts paused. "That cannot be," she murmured impatiently; "It is not possible." Then suddenly she thought of her brother, who in his time had stood almost as high in her respect as Erwin, and who in one instant had sunken, oh, so deeply!

"If that were possible, then everything is possible in this world," she decided, sternly.

One day after another passed--a cloud had shown itself in her sky so small and transparent that a single sunbeam would have sufficed to kiss it away; but the cloud had grown larger, and now covered the whole sky so that it could not even be seen.

An unpleasant accident contributed to embitter Elsa's feelings completely.

For a long time she had been urged by her heart to show Erwin some little attention, and she ransacked her brains to think of something which could please him, and yet would not be a too direct reminder of her love. At last it occurred to her to have a photograph taken for him of Baby, who with her childish coquetries had gradually become dearer and dearer to her father's heart.

She put the frock which Erwin liked best upon the little creature herself, one which showed off Baby's charms most advantageously. She kissed and smoothed the child's short curls, and hung a golden heart on a thin chain round her neck, of which the vain rogue was not a little proud, and tugged at it with both little fists to admire it, or put it in her mouth. Then Elsa ordered the carriage and drove over to Marienbad with Baby. Baby made the most attentive observations from the lap of her mamma; from time to time she stretched out her hand for some object which especially pleased her or was new to her, and gave a little clear joyous cry, or uttered some of those disconnected syllables which have significance for a mother's ear only.

The novelty of the situation at the photographer's impressed her; the first attempt did not succeed. The photographer remarked that if the Baroness would hold the child herself, it would perhaps be better. Elsa replied blushingly that she did not wish to appear in the picture.

But Baby would not have it otherwise. Now the trial succeeded admirably. The photographer showed the negative in which Baby's delicate face, with the solemn, staring eyes, and the shy, smiling mouth could plainly be recognized. Elsa nodded with satisfaction, but begged that he would wash out her figure. Then the old photographer--he knew Elsa from her childhood--surveyed his work with the look of an artist, and said, "Ah, Baroness, it would be a shame for the pretty picture. Has the Baroness one of the last photographs which I took of her as a bride? It is just the same face."

And Elsa let him have his way; involuntarily the delight with which he held the dim negative against his rough coat-sleeve amused her, and she even stole a glance in the mirror, the first glance for a long time, and thought that although somewhat pale and thin, she did not look so very old and faded as she had thought. She rejoiced at this discovery, and rejoiced that her richly embroidered black gown was so becoming, and rejoiced over Baby's picture, and looked forward to the moment when she should take it to Erwin.

When she now got into the carriage waiting below with Baby, and the servant closed the door, the child suddenly almost sprang out of her mother's lap, and stretched out her little arms, and cried in a clear, bell-like voice, "Papa! Papa!" As Baby's vocabulary is still very limited, and she had recently bestowed the title of Papa upon Litza's pony, Elsa glanced somewhat sceptically in the direction in which the child's arm pointed, but really saw Erwin about to enter a jeweller's shop.

Linda Lanzberg was on his arm!

Elsa grew deathly pale. When the carriage, as upon entering she had directed, stopped before a toy store, she did not alight, but ordered, "Home!"

All reconciling feelings toward Erwin changed into a condition of boundless excitement; for the moment she felt a kind of hatred for him. When at dinner he asked, "Elsa, were not you in Marienbad to-day? It seemed to me that I saw the carriage pass when I was in Stein's," she answered, coldly, "I was there. I had something to attend to. And did you buy anything of Stein?" she then asked, as if casually. "Will he mention Linda?" she thought, but he replied half laughingly, "A pink coral necklace for the little one. To-morrow is, if I am not mistaken, her christening day." In fact Baby had been named after the Countess Dey, the sensible name, Marie.

This explanation did not relieve Elsa in the slightest. The most innocent significance which she could ascribe to his presence there with Linda was that he had asked her advice in the choice of an ornament for the child. It did not occur to her that he could have met Linda in Marienbad quite accidentally. The rest of the evening she was in a hopelessly bad humor. Every word that Erwin spoke pained her, his manner of laying a pair of scissors on the table vexed her. With that, fever shone in her eyes and burned in her cheeks. The kiss which every evening he imprinted upon her forehead had long become a conventional ceremony, but to-day she wished to evade this formality. She disappeared from the drawing-room immediately after tea, upon some pretext, and did not return again.

The next day was a holiday, Baby's christening day, the day after Juanita's visit to Traunberg.

Most exceptionally, this time Erwin did not appear at breakfast, and when Elsa asked after him, the word was, "The Baron breakfasted in his own room, and had then gone away."

About half-past eleven, as Elsa sat in the nursery, weary and languid, holding Baby on her lap,

the door opened and Erwin entered. Baby stretched out her little hands joyously, but Elsa's eyes grew gloomy and she struck the child's hand reprovingly. Erwin grew deathly pale, pale as she had never seen him before.

"Later, Baby," he murmured somewhat hoarsely, and left the room. But Baby began to cry bitterly, and would not stay in her mother's lap.

After lunch, during which Erwin did not address another word to Elsa, she heard him down in the garden, talking and playing with the little one; she heard Baby's soft happy laugh; she went to the window, stretched out her head, and saw him swinging the child in the air. When Baby was finally weary of play, she laid her little arm around her father's neck, and leaned her delicate flower-like face against his sun-browned cheeks.

Elsa's head ached; she burned with fever from head to foot, every nerve quivered and her thoughts were gloomy. Slowly she dragged herself up and down, finally seated herself with hands clasping her temples, upon a divan. She was losing consciousness when suddenly she started up and listened. She heard Erwin's horse pawing the ground in front of the house. Where was he going so suddenly? She roused herself, and holding to the walls, crept slowly down-stairs. Then, hidden by the turn of the stairs, in the shadow of the hall, she heard Erwin's voice:

"If the Baroness asks for me, Martin, tell her that you do not know where I am; in no case shall she wait dinner for me," said he, quickly and softly.

With that he mounted his horse and rode away at a rapid pace.

Where? Elsa's heart stopped beating. Had anything happened?

She crossed the hall--she would force old Martin to speak; but he had gone also. Then something on the floor rattled, a gray paper which the hem of her dress had touched; she stooped for it--it lay there crumpled as if it had just fallen from a violent hand. She committed no voluntary indiscretion, she only looked at it as one scrutinizes a paper to see whether one shall pick it up or throw it away. It was not her fault that, thanks to the writing, which was as plain as print, at the first glance her eyes had comprehended the whole contents.

DEAR ERWIN:

Come soon--to-day, now--at once--I expect you.

LINDA.

She took the note, carried it to Erwin's room, and laid it conscientiously upon his writing-desk. Then her knees trembled, and she had to sit down. Not that he had received the note surprised her. What fault was it of his if Linda wrote foolish notes? But what she did not understand, what remained absolutely incomprehensible to her was the fact that he had taken his valet into his confidence, that he had not been ashamed to make him his confidant. Had she not heard wrong? Had he gone to Traunberg? Now, when the facts spoke strongest against him, she weighed most justly the probabilities for and against his fault; she had acted imprudently towards him, and since the birth of the last child, devoting herself entirely to her maternal duties, had neglected him. He had borne this with goodness and patience; then Linda had suddenly appeared, with her dazzling beauty, her picturesque elegance, her coquettish heartlessness.

For hours Elsa sat there and waited. At five o'clock she sat down to dinner; immediately after this she left the dining-room--she had no more control over herself.

"It is all possible," she cried, giving way, desperate; her breath came heavily and so feverish that it burned her lips--black clouds swam before her eyes.

She looked at the clock. What kept him away from home so long--with her? Another fifteen minutes passed--he must be with her. She could no longer endure her distrustful suspense--she would go to Traunberg.

She ordered the carriage. On the way she started at every sound, at every shadow, everywhere she saw him and her.

A fearful dread of the certainty came over her; at the last moment she clung to uncertainty.

She wished to return, but she was ashamed of displaying such inconsequence before the servants, and just then the carriage drove through the iron gate into the Traunberg park. The lackey in the vestibule announced that the Baroness was not at home.

Elsa sighed with relief; if Linda were not home, she could receive no guests, and Erwin could not be there. That she could have denied herself did not occur to her.

It was pleasant to her to enjoy Traunberg once more, without Parisian anecdotes and French

chansonnettes--without Linda.

All was as if dead; it reminded her of the old Traunberg, where she had lived in loving solitude with her father. She did not think of returning at once; the great tension of her nerves had suddenly given way to vague dreaminess--the danger was not over but postponed.

She went out into the garden; her heart grew more and more heavy, and her step slow. Her dress caught upon a branch. It seemed to her that a warning hand held her back. In mysterious dread of choosing the very gloomy path which lay before her, she took another. Her heart beat rapidly, she stood still, resolved to return. Between the trunks of the lindens, the water of the large pond which bounded one side of the Traunberg park shone in the sunset glow. With the gentle murmur of the water mingled the regular strokes of oars. Elsa stood still, she listened. Who could it be? Linda was not home. Elsa glanced at the pond. In a little boat she saw two figures, one, Linda, leaning back in the end of the little skiff, flowers in her hair and in her lap, one hand in the water, an evil light in her eyes, something luxuriantly melancholy in her whole form. Opposite her, with his back to Elsa, sat a man, slender, broad-shouldered, in a light summer suit, with close-cropped hair of that striking light blond which shines like molten gold in the sunlight.

Elsa started back--it was surely Erwin--she turned away, she would see no more--but no--it seemed to her that she must call after him--there--the little row-boat had reached the small island covered with roses which was in the middle of the lake. In the gray-white August twilight she saw the two figures turn into the overgrown thicket of the island--they disappeared behind the bushes as if immersed in shadow.

Elsa was as if paralyzed by a kind of gloomy numbness; a fearful excitement overcame her--she must go--where she did not know, only far, far away from the accursed spot.

She did not think of ordering her carriage, of driving home. She scarcely thought of anything, only moved mechanically on, and instinctively took the path to Steinbach, as an animal wounded unto death seeks its hole to die in.

She groped before her with her hands, she blinked as if blinded by a terrible light, she hit blindly against the trees as she passed, like a bat--she saw nothing but two light figures disappearing amid gloomy shadow. She hurried on and on--at first very rapidly--it seemed to her that she could fly, but she was mistaken. The unrest which raged within her was that of fever, of over-exhaustion, not of unused strength. Soon her feet felt like lead, and a heavy weight seemed resting upon her breast; she dragged herself wearily on like one in a bad dream, who wishes to flee from some monster and cannot. The more weary her body became, the more clear what had really frightened her became to her.

"He and Linda," she murmured to herself, "he and my brother's wife." And with a desperate smile, a smile which condemned faith, hope and love to death, she added, "Yes, everything is possible in this world!"

How good he had formerly been, how loving! The loveliest moments of her married life came to her mind with the sad charm of the irrevocably lost. On she tottered, in her wide-open eyes the wild look which seeks nothing more, which looks away from everything, the look of a being who has seen happiness die. "I was happy," she murmured to herself with unspeakable bitterness.

But soon the poisonous breath of doubt tainted the happiness which had been also. How did she know how false it might have been, whether she had not merely been "considerately deceived"?

Then it seems as if a frost falls upon her loveliest recollections, even upon those which until now she has treasured in the most secret corner of her heart. The past is desecrated--she has nothing more.

She does not think of her children--in this moments he has forgotten that she has children.

Slowly she drags herself through the wood, the same path which she had taken with Erwin before. Over her head the trees sing in melancholy peace their old song. Elsa can scarcely proceed; now the wood lies behind her, before her the dew on the meadow sparkles in the gray twilight, the colors are all dead--she shudders--here is the spot where he had carried her over that evening when for the first time she had been apprehensive for her happiness. Here he had put his arms round her and clasped her tightly to him and called her his treasure. She trembles in her whole body, then she gives a short gasping cry and sinks to the ground. She sobs, she has forgotten everything, she exists only in the feeling of weeping, of wishing convulsively to throw off a weight which oppresses her chest, and behind her the primeval forest still sings its melancholy peaceful song.

How long she lies there she does not know; she does not notice either that the gray evening darkens to black night, does not notice that the dew falls heavier and heavier, that its cool dampness steals through her light gown to her weakened frame.

XXVI.

While Elsa lay so despairingly at the edge of the forest, two riders came slowly towards Steinbach--Sempaly and Erwin. They returned from a farm at some distance from, but belonging to Steinbach, which together with a part of the adjacent village had been burned this afternoon.

Before them the castle of Steinbach, with its windows shining peacefully in the moonlight, between the shady trees; around them sweet fragrance and peaceful stillness; behind them a village, for the greater part in ashes, deserted ruins blackened with soot, as if clad in deepest mourning, animated by a few bent figures which could no longer speak from pain and fright, yes, could scarcely even complain more, and anxiously, with trembling hands, sought in the soaked heaps of ashes, in which fire still smouldered, for some pitiful remnant of their annihilated possessions. They rode through the park gate, their clothes were drenched and smelled of smoke and soot.

When Sempaly heard of the breaking out of the fire, he had ridden from Iwanow to Billwitz, and had then joined Erwin honestly in the wildest confusion of the fire, and now accompanied him home.

They only seldom exchanged a word. They were both weary from the help they had rendered, and saddened by the thought of how little they had been able to help. When they reached the castle, Sempaly was about to turn off towards Iwanow, but Erwin held him back. "Take tea with us, Rudi," said he.

"In these clothes?" replied Sempaly, glancing at his soiled clothes; then he added, "Well, Snowdrop will be considerate," and dismounted.

He had really from the first intended to remain at Steinbach, and looked forward to relating to Elsa, while fresh, all the little heroic deeds by which Erwin had distinguished himself during the fire. He felt a kind of indebtedness to Erwin on account of the hateful suspicion which for a moment he had cherished against him, and which to-day, when he once more thoroughly recognized Erwin's nobility, seemed to him foolish and inexcusable.

Erwin asked for his wife; the servant informed him that she was not yet back from Traunberg.

"Has a second message come from Traunberg?" asked Erwin, surprised.

The valet glanced at the servant. "No!" It was certain that no second messenger came from Traunberg.

Erwin and Sempaly went out again in the black shadows of the mild August moonlight night. "What does she seek in Traunberg?" murmured Erwin, aloud, ponderingly.

"Did she know that you were at the fire?" asked Sempaly, with sudden inspiration.

"I think not. I expressly requested the servants not to tell her where I went," replied Erwin. "What in all the world did she go to Traunberg for?"

Then Scirocco looked at him peculiarly. "You," said he.

"Me?" Erwin did not yet comprehend the situation.

But Sempaly stamped his foot impatiently. "Are you stupid, Garzin?" cried he. "Do you not see what everybody sees, that your wife is consumed with jealousy of her sister-in-law?"

"My wife jealous of my sister-in-law? Sempaly--you----" Erwin had burst out very violently at first, now he was suddenly silent. He called to mind Elsa's strange manner of late, much that was enigmatical was explained. He did not understand that he had been so obtuse.

They had walked somewhat further into the park; then a low cry of pain vibrated through the painful stillness of the night. Erwin listened with beating heart. Once more it penetrated to him, somewhat louder. A cold shudder ran over him. He hurried toward the meadow from which the sound came. With sight sharpened by excitement he surveyed the gray dewy field. There at the edge of the wood he saw something white gleaming in the twilight, a misty spot which in the gloom he had almost taken for a thick cluster of immortelles. His anxiety drove him a few steps further. "Elsa!" cried he, and stretched his arms out to her.

Then she raised her head, and rested her large, feverish, shining eyes upon him. "I forgive you," cried she with failing voice, and starting back from him. "I forgive you, but go--go--leave

me."

His eyes met hers.

"You have nothing to forgive me," said he gravely, almost sternly. "But if you promise solemnly, very solemnly, to be very much ashamed of yourself I will forgive you."

She stared at him without understanding, confused, stupefied; then he took hold of her dress; he was frightened to feel how cold and wet it was.

"For God's sake!" cried he, violently, and with efficacious inconsiderateness, "before everything else see that you take off these wet things; there is time enough to speak of your mad freak later." With that he picked her up and carried her across, as he had done on the day of Linda's arrival.

She did not resist him. At first she did not even know what had happened to her; then, when near the castle, she suddenly heard a gentle voice, kindly and reprovingly, as one speaks to an imprudent child, "Why, Snowdrop!" she looked around; this sudden exclamation recalled her to reality, which had been far from her confused mind. "How comes Sempaly here?" she asked, hastily.

"We were at the fire in Billwitz together," said Erwin, without standing still. "He returned with me."

"Fire--Billwitz----" murmured Elsa, then she trembled violently and burst into a flood of tears of relief.

A little later Elsa lay in her pretty white bed feverish and hoarse, but with a light heart, and her soul full of a sweet mixture of remorse, happiness and shame. Erwin sat near her, and tried to be angry with her, and yet was only worried. But Scirocco had found that this was not the evening to take tea in Steinbach, and had gone away.

And while Elsa with touching conscientiousness now confessed all the particulars of her hideous mistrust and her obstinate jealousy, and upon Erwin's lips, at first closed sternly, a smile had become more and more plain, Linda sat in her boudoir with scornfully curved lips and angry, staring eyes, which thirsted for spite. She wore a white gown, whose hem was slightly soiled, only as if it had perhaps brushed the dew from a flowerbed. On her breast rested a bunch of dark red roses. Some of them were withered, and others began to fade, others still to fall, and the red petals strewed her gown. To her excited gaze they seemed like drops of blood. She shuddered at sight of them; she shuddered to-day at everything, even at herself. Her whole being rose against the huge wrong which had been done her--the wrong which forced her to be wicked. That there was another outlet for her she did not acknowledge; that it was beautiful to forgive, she did not understand; that one has duties even toward those who have sinned against one, she did not believe.

She railed against the system of the world, and her affairs in particular. The only man whom she had ever loved, so at least it seemed to her in her dramatic, gloomy excitement, this man had despised her.

After she had been enlightened as to Felix's past, she had immediately written that letter to Erwin which had caused so much painful confusion in Steinbach.

She had wished to sink into his compassionate arms, and had relied upon the demoniac charm of her beauty. She fancied that after the disgrace which she had suffered from, she had a right to sin. As answer to her note, she had received the following lines:

DEAR LINDA:

I am very sorry that, on account of urgent business, I cannot come to-day. I hope it is a question of nothing important.

E. GARZIN.

She loved him, and he wrote to her in this tone! She grew crimson for perhaps the first time in her life when she read the lines--but not with shame, with anger.

Pistach came during her wildest excitement. He had won the game.

Now he had gone; she was alone again!

She buried her face in her hands; she sobbed convulsively. The roses on her breast fell one after the other, and the blood-red petals slid down to the soiled hem of her white gown.

The next day Linda and Count Kamenz had disappeared!

The whole country round about was horrified and dismayed at the affair; only one laughed in his sleeve: Eugene von Rhoeden. The last obstacle to his plans had been removed. Countess Elli blushed crimson when he took leave of Iwanow. He found opportunity to press a kiss upon her hand. A white handkerchief waved after him from one of the castle windows, as he drove in an open phaeton from Iwanow to the railway station.

XXVII.

By her fantastic walk from Traunberg to Steinbach, Elsa had brought on inflammation of the lungs. She convalesced so slowly that the physician whom Erwin consulted advised a long sojourn in the south. At first she could not resolve to leave her unhappy brother, and only went after he had promised to follow her as soon as possible to San Remo, where she would pass the winter with Erwin and the children.

She left in the middle of September. Felix did not keep his promise. "As soon as possible" was capable of such varied conceptions.

September, with its variegated foliage, and the long, tender farewell of the sunbeams vanished, and October came. The leaves withered, blood-red or pale-yellow they fell from the branches sadly and submissively, like all hopeless ones, and November followed October, and came in with an important bluster, like a lackey sent on before to make room for his master. He tore the last leaves from the branches, and sometimes tore away the branches with them, and he kissed the last roses dead and annihilated the unblossomed buds, covered the heavens with mournful clouds, blew so chill and poisonously in the face of the sun that he also sickened, and looked almost as pale as the moon.

And at length all was desolate, all ready--the earth strewn with dead leaves and withered flowers for the solemn reception of the new-comer. Coldly and gravely winter entered his kingdom, the bare trees shivered a last time, and crackled one more sigh, and all is still--dead! The angels in heaven shook their wings, thicker and thicker fell the white down.

January was long past and Felix still in Traunberg. After the last fearful blow which had fallen upon him he never rallied. Since Linda's flight he never left the park, seldom the castle, often scarcely left his room.

There were days on which he would not even allow his little son admission, and other days on which he would allow no servant to wait upon him, because it was unbearable for him to even meet the eyes of a servant. On all faces he thought he could discover mocking, criticising expressions.

When his overseers came to him to desire his signature or to ask his wishes concerning important business, with his hot, nervous hands he fumbled over the papers which were placed before him, read two or three lines, murmured something, and signed his name. The questions which were put to him he always answered with the same, "As you will," and then drummed impatiently upon the top of his writing-desk and glanced irritably at the door.

He neglected his attire, his beard grew long; he did not even care for cleanliness. Often for days he ate nothing, always very little; but, on the other hand, he was always thirsty, and--drank. But the strongest spirits had ceased to procure relief for him. He no longer forgot; never more!

He had a piano brought to his room, although he had almost never played before, and now strummed on it continually. Strange modulations sprang from beneath his stiff, unpractised fingers. He purposely sought the shrillest dissonances, which seemed to do him good. Again and again he struck the same piercing chord and never found a resolution for it.

He always began to play so as to drown the madrilèna, which rang in his ears so often and so unbearably distinctly, and every time he ended by groping over the keys for the melody of this same madrilèna. Each tone went through his heart like the stab of a dagger, his forehead was covered with sweat, and with a long sigh he closed the piano.

Intercourse with his child became of a strange nature. He indeed frequently overwhelmed the little one with passionate tenderness, but the games, the caressing teasing, which had formerly occupied them when together, and which had so delighted the boy, had ceased. Gery grew shy, pale and nervous. More and more often the fear of injuring the child by his presence crept over

Felix.

Erwin, who came from San Remo once during the winter, in order, as he said, to look after the house, was frightened at the confusion which, as he soon noticed, existed in Felix's business matters, as well as the terrible change in his whole appearance.

Compassionately and kindly he urged his brother-in-law to accompany him to Italy, in order, as he had promised, to spend some time, together with Gery, with his sister.

But Felix trembled visibly when it was a question of his leaving Traunberg, and going to a place where he must meet other people, were it only in the most passing way. Erwin promised him perfect quiet and seclusion from all intercourse with strangers--in vain.

"Leave me," Felix repeated again and again; "leave me, I must be alone."

Erwin ceased his pleadings, discouraged. Elsa's health did not permit her stay in the south to be shortened, so that her presence might alleviate her brother's painful condition.

For one moment Erwin suspected a positive mental derangement in his brother-in-law, but soon convinced himself of the falsity of this opinion.

The balance of his accounts was correct; as soon as his attention was excited he decided correctly, never made a mistake in a reckoning, and made no disconnected remarks. Only, exhausted as he was, everything concerning present affairs irritated him indescribably. The train of his thought flowed always backward. His mind rested continually upon that spot in the past where his happiness lay buried with his honor.

He passed almost the whole of his time in living over again his life from the first meeting with Juanita to the signing of the fatal note. His memory, strangely faithful, and sharpened by practice, revived again and again new particulars of the Juanita period, with the distinctness of hallucinations.

On a mild, sunny April day Elsa appeared in Traunberg, restored to health, more beautiful than ever, and with eyes radiant with happiness. She was shocked when she perceived her brother; what she saw was so much worse than what Erwin had considerately prepared her for. But Felix's misery only increased the tenderness of her sympathy. She spoke of the tender, intimate intercourse which should now exist between the two families, and said that Baby was now large enough for a playmate for her cousin; and Baby who, chubby-cheeked and gay, with great laughing eyes and tiny mouth with a drolly serious expression, sat on her mamma's knee, stretched out her fat little arms and said, "Where Gery?"

Then the nurse--Gery's French *bonne* had not been able to endure the winter solitude of Traunberg, and had long since left--brought the child. She had smoothed down his curly hair with a horrible, strong-smelling pomade, and had hidden his pretty little form in a heavy cloth costume, suitable for much older children. He looked pale, was awkward, and clung anxiously to his father. When he gradually lost his shyness through Elsa's soft voice and caressing manner, and approached her and answered her questions, she noticed that he had adopted the common broad accent of the nurse.

It did not escape Felix's morbidly sharpened glance, that behind the pleasant smile with which Elsa met the child, surprise and compassion were hidden.

"You probably find that he has changed for the worse?" he asked suddenly, gazing sharply at her. "What will you? Everything about me goes to ruin."

When Elsa, after urgently and most tenderly begging Felix and his boy to come soon to Steinbach, had driven away, Felix took his boy on his knees, and kissed him passionately, murmuring again and again, "Poor child, poor branded child!"

An unpleasant habit, common to most human beings living very much alone, he had adopted of late, that of talking to himself. The words which most frequently escaped him, which he probably repeated a dozen times, were, "The certain Lanzberg," and while he said that, his voice and his face expressed all the shades of bitterness, mockery and despair.

And one evening, three or four days after Elsa's visit, Gery crept shyly up to him, and laying his little hand anxiously upon his father's arm, he asked in his gentle, somewhat sad little voice, "What is that, 'the certain Lanzberg'?"

Felix started; he gave a long-piercing gaze into the innocent eyes of the child, then he pushed him violently away and hurried out of the room.

The same night Felix heard sobs outside his door, and as he opened it and looked out into the corridor, he discovered Gery, who stood there clad only in his little embroidered night-shirt, and barefoot.

"Papa, you did not say good-night to me. Papa, was I naughty?" sobbed the child, with the

morbid nervous excitement which proved his solitary life.

Then Felix took him in his arms. It was a fresh spring night, and the child, who had stood for a long time outside, clad only in the thin night-shirt, shivered. Felix rubbed his little hands and feet warm. Then the nurse knocked at the door, seeking the child in anxious excitement.

But Gery would not hear of returning to the nursery. He clung to his father and pleaded, "Let me stay with you, papa." Then Felix sent the nurse away, and took him into his bed. The child fell asleep nestled tenderly against him, slept soundly and unbrokenly. Felix lay awake.

The opal-colored glow of the spring morning tinged the heavens, and Felix still was awake. He thought of old times, times which lay far back of the Juanita period; some jest over which he had laughed some twenty years ago occurred to him and pained him--he groaned; the child awoke; throwing his little arms around Felix's neck, he begged, coaxingly, "Dear papa, I sleep so well with you, let me always sleep with you." Then suddenly it flashed through Felix's mind, "Ah, if I could only die while he still loves me!" and suddenly the storm within him ceased--all became quiet within his heart, quiet as the grave.

XXVIII.

They passed the day happily together, Felix and his son. Felix bathed and dressed the child himself, with a thousand jests and little teasing ways. Gery had not seen his papa so gay for a long time, and rubbed against him again and again, like a young dog or kitten.

The sky was blue, the earth white with blossoms, the first butterflies floated around the bushes. After lunch Felix drove with the child to Steinbach for the first time, in spite of Elsa's warm invitation.

How warm and bright everything was in Steinbach. It almost seemed to him that there was a different sun there from Traunberg. Litzi received a holiday, so she could play with her little cousin to her heart's delight. Baby gave the little fellow her greatest treasure, a pot of ripe strawberries, which she had to clasp with both little arms when she carried it to him.

Felix remained to dinner; they overwhelmed him with attentions, but still at heart he felt that Erwin and Elsa would have been happier and less constrained without him, which they would not, indeed, have admitted.

As they did not wish to separate Felix from his boy during the meal, as a great exception they installed Baby in her high-chair at the table also, between Erwin and Litzi, an honor of which she proved herself wholly worthy, as she watched the others eating with great seriousness without desiring anything for herself. Only toward the end a little misfortune befell her: in a moment of extravagant tenderness, she tried to embrace her mother across the table, overturned a beer-glass, and showed herself so surprised and ashamed at this accident, that Erwin had to take her on his knee and console her. Felix felt plainly that Erwin's calm, playful good-nature to the child did not in the least remind one of the stormy immoderate caresses with which he overwhelmed his own son sometimes.

After dessert, while the children played in the garden under Miss Sidney's care, and Felix sat somewhat apart with Elsa on a garden bench and watched them, Felix started suddenly.

"What is the matter, Felix?" asked his sister, anxiously.

He could not explain himself; he had heard the child laugh, and it had occurred to him how seldom the little one laughed at home--almost never.

"Elsa," he asked after a while, "the child is growing very nervous and timid with me; will you do me the kindness to keep him with you for a while?"

"Certainly, I will gladly keep the child," replied Elsa, "only you must promise me to visit him every day."

Then Felix said, with a strange gaze, lost in the distance, and which she often later remembered, "Yes, I will visit him every day if I can."

A short time after he took leave of Gery, who at first would not remain without his father, but grew quiet when Felix promised to visit him the next morning.

The next morning!

The carriage rolled away, and several minutes later Felix returned once more.

"Have you forgotten something, Felix?" asked Erwin, who stood before the portal of the castle, talking in a low voice.

"Yes, my revolver," replied Felix, uneasily and absently.

When Erwin wished to go into the castle to help his brother-in-law find it, the latter held him back. "Oh, it is of no importance," he stammered. "I will get it--to-morrow. Where are the children?"

"There," said Elsa, and in the distance, between the feathery green foliage, he saw the children at their play. They flew about and shouted like little gnomes, Gery the merriest of them all.

"I will not disturb him," murmured Felix, after he had watched the children for a long time, without approaching them.

He went.

XXIX.

Returned to Traunberg, he wandered slowly through all the rooms of the castle. Then he had tea served in his room, drank a cupful, and ate a trifle. He laid his watch upon the table. At twelve o'clock all should be finished, he decided.

The cold calm of resolution gave way to the exciting feeling of expectation.

He seated himself at his writing-table, thoughtfully he rested his head in his hand, then he dipped the pen into ink, and wrote a long letter. He read it through with a certain pedantry, added here and there a comma, or made a letter plainer, placed the letter in an envelope, and addressed it to Elsa.

His glance fell upon the watch--the hands pointed to quarter past eleven. He rose and walked up and down uneasily. He began to ask himself whether he had forgotten nothing, began to unconsciously seek reasons for postponing his act.

His brow was bathed with cold sweat. He looked for his revolver and Toledo dagger, which both had formerly lain upon his table. They were gone. Evidently his valet had removed them. The razors also were hidden.

Felix smiled bitterly. Then he drew a little English penknife from his pocket, sharpened it upon an ash-receiver, and laid it on the table beside his bed. Then, with folded hands, he crouched for a few minutes beside his bed. He thought of the promise not to kill himself which he had once given to his father. The promise could have no weight except during the life of the old man.

When he looked again, the hands of the watch pointed to quarter before twelve. His heart beat loudly. A moment of irresolution came. Then from without a little soft bird cry floated in to him. He suddenly heard again Gery's voice, "Who is 'the certain Lanzberg,' papa?"

Then he undressed himself, took the penknife, and with firm stroke cut through the veins and arteries in his left wrist and ankle.

He rose once more to extinguish the candles on the table beside his bed, then he sank back among the pillows.

He felt the warm blood flowing from him, and experienced a kind of disgust; then he murmured with a sigh, "Blood washes all things clean."

The triumphal fanfare of the madrilèna vibrated around him; the excitement which had burned within him throughout the whole time was for a moment increased tenfold.

But the madrilèna died away, and the fearful memories faded, the great painful weariness which had almost paralyzed him recently, preventing him from sleeping, vanished--he felt easier and easier.

A comfortable drowsiness overcame him, and a thousand pictures changed before his dreamy dim eyes.

He saw himself in the school-room, beside his tutor, and smiled at the expression with which the tutor drew his cuffs down over his knuckles when Elsa's French *bonne* entered the room.

The present had vanished, his thoughts wandered further and further back into the past.

He sits beside his mother in the church, small and sleepy. Through an open window the fresh spring air blows in to the atmosphere of mould and incense of the sacred edifice.

From half-closed eyes he sees a crowd of red peasant women, sees the little school-boys who crowd as near as possible to the carved *prie-dieus* of the gentry. One of them winks at him.

The priest elevates the host. Little Felix's tired eyes close, the peasants fade into a large red spot, the colored shadows of the church windows lie on the bare, gray stone pavement like a carpet. His head sinks upon his mother's arm. All is rosy vapor around him. Then his mother kisses him on the forehead and whispers, "It is over; wake up!"

XXX.

The next morning a messenger came breathlessly to Steinbach. With gloomy obstinacy he refused to gratify the domestic's urgent questions. He desired to speak personally with the Baron.

Erwin came. He was fearfully startled at the messenger's communication. Then as with distressed slowness he crossed the corridor to Elsa's room, she met him, pale as death, but calm. "A messenger has come from Traunberg. Felix has taken his life," she said in a hollow voice, with eyes fixed upon Erwin. She had guessed. With hand on her heart, her eyes closed, she remained for a moment speechless. Erwin feared a swoon, and with gentle force tried to lead her back to her room, but she resisted. "Order the carriage," she begged with almost inaudible voice; "I should like to go over there."

Erwin accompanied her.

An uneasy quiet, broken by the mysterious whispers of the domestics, pervaded Castle Traunberg. The servants all stood around in solemn idleness. Mrs. Stifler and the valet were busied with the corpse. They withdrew when Elsa entered the chamber of death.

Slowly she approached the bed. There he lay--Felix!--his corpse.

His head rested gently on the pillow; one saw that a lovely dream had helped the dying man across the threshold of eternity. The original beauty of his features, which life, with its shattering conflicts, had almost destroyed, death had restored again.

Elsa kissed the corpse; she wept quietly and bitterly; she reproached herself a thousand times with not having shown her brother love enough, with not having helped him bravely enough to bear the heavy burden of his life.

Then she noticed a letter, addressed to her, upon the table beside the bed.

A quarter of an hour later she joined Erwin, who waited for her in the adjoining room. There were still tears on her cheeks, but in her eyes shone a kind of solemn pride. She handed Erwin the open letter. He read:

DEAR ELSA:

You will be startled at what I have done. Forgive me this, as you have already forgiven me so much. I die not as a cowardly suicide, but as a man who has sentenced himself to death.

The conviction has strengthened in my mind, that my life is of use and pleasure to no one. My own child begins to be saddened by the oppressive atmosphere which surrounds me. My shadow has long darkened your existence.

After my death you will reproach yourself, dear, good heart; will fancy that you could have been better and more considerate to me than you have already been. Do not torment yourself. I remember nothing of you but unwearied love and tender compassion. May God bless you a thousand times, you and yours.

Take my poor child to your home. Erwin will bring the boy up better than I could have done. Do not show my corpse to him, and put no mourning on him. I do not wish to be the cause of a single bitter hour to his poor little heart. Tell him I have gone on a journey. He will forget me.

Never tell him, I beg you, of my disgrace, and if he learns of it through strangers, then--then tell him that I loved him beyond everything, and that I took my life so that I need never blush before him.

Lay the little lock of golden hair which I cut from his head in Rome upon my breast. You will find it in the upper left drawer of my writing-desk, and put the old soldier's coat which I wore at Sadowa upon me. (Stifler knows where it is.) It is the only article of clothing in which I dare stretch myself out beside my ancestors for eternal rest, or appear before them for eternal reconciliation; who knows!

A last kiss for my child. Farewell! and forgive

"The Certain Lanzberg."

Erwin's eyes were moist. "He was indeed a noble nature," said he gently and hoarsely, as he gave the letter back to Elsa.

"Yes," cried she, with a kind of pride. "He was really noble; therefore he tormented himself to death."

Erwin drew the convulsively sobbing woman to his breast.

Three days later the funeral took place.

All the inhabitants of the country round of his rank were present; even Count L---- came to show Felix the last honors. All were deeply shocked. Suicide, against which in general they cherished the Catholic abhorrence, seemed to them in this case justified. They saw in this act almost the repayment of an outlawed debt.

From that day the byword with which they had formerly designated Felix changed. They never again called him "the certain Lanzberg," but now always "the unfortunate Lanzberg."

He was rehabilitated!

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