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Author: Claire von Glümer
Translator: A. L. Wister

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A NOBLE NAME

OR

DÖNNINGHAUSEN

BY CLAIRE VON GLÜMER

TRANSLATED BY
MRS. A. L. WISTER

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A NOBLE NAME;

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CHAPTER I.

"ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE."

At the window of a luxuriously-furnished dressing-room a young girl was seated sewing, murmuring verses the while to herself with an absorbed air. All around her lay various stuffs, ribbons, and laces, while standing upon a footstool at a toilet-table immediately behind her a strikingly beautiful child, five or six years old, was twisting gay ribbons about her head and arms, finally throwing around her shoulders a blue satin sash and looking at herself in the glass with immense satisfaction.

"Lisbeth, what are you doing?" a sharp voice suddenly asked, and from between the curtains of the portière of the door of the adjoining sleeping-room came a fair, pretty woman in an evident ill humour.

"Mamma!" the child exclaimed, and jumping hastily down from the footstool, she entangled herself in her draperies and fell. Her mother hurried towards her with a scream, but the young girl had already flown to the little one's assistance.

"I haven't hurt myself," the child immediately declared, looking up beseechingly at her mother, who, nevertheless, seized her impatiently by the arm and tore off the sash from her shoulders. "All this beautiful ribbon crushed and spoiled!" she said, crossly. "If you can take no better care of Lisbeth, my dear Johanna, the child must stay with Lina. Go, go to the nursery, and don't disturb me again to-day," she added, turning to the little girl; and then, sitting down before the dressing-table, she began to arrange her abundant fair hair.

Lisbeth went to Johanna and seized her hand. "Don't be vexed with Lisbeth, mamma," the young girl entreated. "She is not to blame. I was not attending to her; I was going over my part."

"If you do not know it perfectly by this time you had better give it up," the other said, with a slight shrug of her shoulders. "Make up your mind to do so, and I will give it to Fräulein Dornbach. She can easily learn those few words before to-morrow evening."

"Oh, no! let me try," the young girl exclaimed. "I have just said them without stumbling. And my dress is nearly finished. I wanted to ask you——"

"Well?" the other asked, when Johanna hesitated.

"To let me go to the theatre to-night," she replied, without looking up.

"What! again? You went only a couple of days ago."

"Yes, but I should so like to see papa as Egmont, and——" She hesitated again and blushed. "And you as Clärchen," was what she meant to add, knowing that this addition would have secured her the desired enjoyment; but her innate integrity triumphed; her step-mother's acting was distasteful to her, and she suppressed the end of her sentence.

With a degree of artistic instinct the lady divined her step-daughter's thoughts. "You had better study your part," she said, rising. "And, besides, I want you to trim my lace overdress with fresh ribbons; you will have too much to do to-morrow to attend to it."

"There comes papa!" exclaimed Lisbeth, who had gone to the window and was looking out. "He is just crossing the street." And she was hurrying out of the room, when her mother called her back.

"Stay where you are!" she said. "You must not disturb papa now; we are just going to the theatre. My hat and wrap, Johanna, and my gloves; be quick, be quick!" And beginning to sing 'Joyous and sorrowing,' with a languishing expression she took from her step-daughter the articles brought to her and left the room.

Johanna sat down and went on with her sewing. She heard her father's step in the anteroom, heard his sonorous voice. How many would be delighted, enthralled, inspired by that voice this evening! She alone, his most enthusiastic, rapt admirer, could not enjoy it. Tears rose to her eyes and dropped unheeded upon her busy hands.

"Tell me a story," Lisbeth begged, standing beside her sister at the window. "Oh, you are crying!" she added distressed as she looked round. "What is the matter?"

"Nothing, darling," Johanna replied, hastily wiping her eyes. "What shall I tell you? Cinderella, or Snowdrop and the Dwarfs?"

"No, no! nothing about bad step-mothers," the little girl exclaimed; and then, with her eyes opened to their widest extent, she went on: "Only think, Lina says that mamma is a step-mother,—so stupid of her,—my dear pretty mamma. Friedrich laughed at her, and told her it was not true; but then he is just as stupid himself, for he told her you were not my sister, only an adopted child, and I won't have it; you shall be my sister!"

She stamped her little foot. Johanna took her in her arms. "Hush, darling; I am really your sister," she said, stroking the little curly head.

"Then why were you not always with me?" Lisbeth went on, pettishly. "All the sisters I know are always together."

"I was far away from here, at boarding-school," Johanna replied. "Papa sent me there when my poor dear mother died, and he did not know what to do with me. He travelled about from one town to another; and then he married your mamma, and then you were born, and he has grown very famous. I think he had almost forgotten me——"

Here old Lina, Lisbeth's former nurse, entered.

"Fräulein, a gentleman wishes to see you," she said, handing Johanna a card.

"Dr. Ludwig Werner," the girl read, and started up with a joyous exclamation. "Uncle, dear uncle!" she cried, and hurried into the antechamber, where, however, instead of the old gentleman whom she had expected to see, she was met by a young man.

"Johanna!" he exclaimed, with evident emotion, and he would have clasped her in his arms, but she retreated and only gave him her hand. He laughed, half confusedly, half derisively.

"It is you!" she said, and her voice, too, trembled. "I thought it was your father. Pray come in."

She led the way to the drawing-room. Lina, who was standing holding Lisbeth by the hand at the dressing-room door, looked after her in surprise. How could Fräulein Johanna receive so familiarly a young man who paid visits in a shooting-jacket and shabby crush hat?

He himself became conscious of the contrast that he presented to his surroundings as soon as he entered the drawing-room. As he looked about him in the luxurious apartment, now lit up by the last rays of the September sun, all trace of tenderness vanished from his face, leaving there only the cynical expression which Johanna knew so well.

"And this is now your home," he said. "I begin to understand,—I have not been able to do so hitherto. And you yourself,—are you as changed as your surroundings?"

He had stepped out upon the balcony with her, and as he spoke looked at her fixedly. There was no change in the grave unembarrassed expression of the girl's large gray eyes as she returned his gaze.

"What have you been unable to understand?" she asked.

"How you could leave us and come hither—to this house——"

"To my father's house?" she interrupted him, and her eyes flashed. "Let me tell you how it happened," she went on more gently, "and you will easily comprehend."

They stood leaning against the balustrade of the balcony. The shady little garden beneath them, the golden light of evening streaming from the western sky awakened the same memory in each, but Johanna alone gave it utterance. "Do you remember," she asked, "how we stood at your garden wicket the evening before you left Lindenbad and watched the setting sun? It was not quite two years ago, and yet how much has happened since then! you have made a home both in Paris and in London."

"A home!" he interrupted her; "no, Johanna, not for a moment. I worked hard in London and Paris, I studied day and night, looking neither to the right nor to the left, for I had but one aim, one desire,—to return to my home well skilled in my profession. I may have become a skilful physician, but my home is desolate,—my mother dead,—you here."

"Your dear mother!" Johanna whispered, and her eyes filled with tears. He did not see them.

"If I had been at home you should not have gone," he went on; "but my father has grown to be a weak old man, and my mother was enfeebled by illness before her death, or she would have kept her promise better."

"Do you mean the promise that she made to my dying mother?" Johanna asked. "She kept that perfectly."

"She let you come here to this step-mother!" Ludwig exclaimed, and his lips quivered, as they always did when he controlled his indignation.

"She could not but let me; I wanted to come, and my father wanted me again."

"So suddenly?" Ludwig interposed. "Since your mother's death he had not apparently given you a thought. My father's house was your home, your holidays were spent with us, you came to us when you left boarding-school; you belong to us, and to us only! Your father has his fame, his luxury, his wife, the woman who was your mother's death——"

"Ludwig!" Johanna interrupted him reprovingly.

He coloured. "It is the truth, and you are old enough to know it," he said, sullenly. "You do know it, but would not for worlds acknowledge it! Deceit—falsehood—hypocrisy everywhere. In your case I suppose it would be called filial piety."

He threw himself into the nearest chair and frowned darkly.

"Hard and unjust as ever," Johanna exclaimed, and her voice trembled.

"As ever?" he repeated. "You forget: formerly you trusted to my judgment, you saw with my eyes and followed willingly where I led."

"Possibly," said Johanna; "but since then I have learned to see with my own eyes, and to walk alone. It was high time: I am no longer a child."

She was right; Ludwig reflected that she must be nearly twenty years old, although she looked scarcely sixteen, so immature was her slender figure, so youthful the pale face that looked dreamily into the world from beneath a luxuriance of brown braids.

"Well, let bygones be bygones," he rejoined with bitterness. "I may surely be allowed to ask what snatched you from us so suddenly. You were going to tell me."

Johanna seated herself opposite him. "If I only knew how to tell you, how to convince you that I could not do otherwise," she said. "From the expressions you have let fall you seem to me to think that I was influenced by vanity, love of pleasure, and a desire for luxury. Your sister accused me of the same motives."

"Let that go; what is Mathilde to us? Go on!" Ludwig interposed, impatiently.

Johanna obeyed; the dictatorial tone to which she had submitted for so long exercised its old influence upon her.

"You went away in the autumn," she began; "the winter passed as peacefully as usual, and summer brought the usual throng of guests to the baths. Suddenly we heard that my father was starring in Weimar. One of our friends took me to the first performance. When we arrived it was too late to see my father before the play, and so I sat in the corner of our box in trembling expectation of beholding him after nearly eight years——"

"Eight years!—a tender parent!" Ludwig interrupted; she paid him no heed.

"But it was not my father whom I saw," she went on with increasing agitation: "it was Hamlet. I thought I knew the play, but what heights and depths were disclosed to me by this representation! This was no acting, it was actual life: suffering—doubt—despair. I sat trembling as if from a fever-fit, and after the performance I hastened to him. I do not know what I said to him, but my enthusiasm touched and delighted him. He kept me with him at first only during his stay in Weimar, afterwards for always. He went with me to Lindenbad to demand me of my foster-parents, and they thought it but natural that he should do so."

"Yes, so my mother wrote me," said Ludwig, "in the last letter I had from her before she was taken ill."

"I had no idea how ill she was," the young girl whispered, "or I should not have left her."

He made no rejoinder; his expression, as he gazed moodily upon the ground, grew darker still.

After a pause, Johanna said, "I wrote to you then; why did you not answer me?"

"I could not," he replied. "Amid all your grief at my mother's death there was a tone of relief in your letter."

"There was," said Johanna. "It is not in vain that I am the child of a great artist. The revelations he makes to me of the world of art are like my native air to me. Unconsciously I missed them and longed for them before I ever knew them."

"The intoxication has lasted, then?" Ludwig asked, with his bitterest smile.

"Intoxication!" she repeated. "You may call it so; but it is something better and nobler. I cannot define it, but its effect upon me is the same, only intensified, if possible. Everything within me that is dim and confused becomes clear and distinct when my father interprets for me——"

"Johanna!" Ludwig exclaimed, "you would not—you cannot go upon the stage!"

"If I only could!" she cried, with sparkling eyes; "if I only could!"

"You must not!" he said angrily, and seized her hands. "Bethink yourself; a man can assert himself, isolate himself upon the stage as elsewhere, a woman never; she loses her identity, degrades herself——"

"There is no reason why she should do so," Johanna exclaimed, clasping tightly the hands which she had withdrawn from his grasp. "The inspiration which animates and strengthens a man can exalt a woman also above all petty, low considerations. I have been here more than a year, and have kept my eyes open. I have seen what has been mean and paltry, nay, disgusting, but never in my father, never! He is not only great in his art, he is a man great and complete as only an artist can be."

Ludwig changed colour. "Do you really mean this, Johanna?" he asked. "Is it only in an artist that you can find a 'complete' man? Think what you are saying."

"Yes, yes; I mean it!" she cried passionately, and her cheeks glowed. She seemed transformed.

"Then I have nothing more to say," said Ludwig, as he arose.

Then first Johanna was conscious of what she had done.

"Oh, do not go!" she cried, confronting him. "I cannot let you go so. You did not understand me; I only meant——"

"I not understand you, child?" said Ludwig, controlling himself. "I might deceive myself while I was absent from you; but now that we are together, I see into your heart just as I always did."

"No, no; you do not see clearly. You do not understand me. You are offended——"

"Hush, hush!" Ludwig interrupted her, leading her to her seat again. "Come, sit down, and listen to me. Why should I be offended? We all embody for ourselves an ideal of beauty and dignity. I have done the same. Shall I tell you how?"

She only nodded an assent. There was something in his manner that confused her.

"My ideal," he began, taking a seat opposite her,—"a woman, of course,—was a gay, simple-hearted creature, looking out upon life with clear, truthful eyes; not exacting much, but always ready to do her best, interested in all that was good, beautiful, and great, but with a keen sympathy for the poor and unfortunate, never neglectful of the daily tasks of life, but consecrating, as it were, the meanest among them by her performance of it, and surrounded as by a purer ether, diffusing harmony and content wherever she might be."

"Your mother!" Johanna said, when he paused.

"My mother," he repeated, with a sudden smile that wonderfully transfigured his set, determined face. And the earnest look that he turned upon Johanna was a strange mixture of gentleness, entreaty, and menace.

"My mother," he repeated. "Yes, and one other who was like her; one who I believed for years would exactly resemble her. It was an illusion; it is past."

Johanna looked down with a blush. She could not but perceive that he meant herself. But could this be love? Impossible! One does not so quickly and causelessly resign what one loves. What had she done? Left his father's house to go to her own father's house. And the thoughtless words she had just spoken? If he loved her he would know that they had been uttered too hastily. Anger and obstinacy conquered every gentler emotion, and after a short pause she rejoined coldly, without looking up, "It is not given to every one to achieve content as did your mother."

"Content!" Ludwig exclaimed; "she was a happy woman."

"Do you think so?" said Johanna, raising her eyes to his. "Had she hoped and longed for nothing more in life than the companionship of a good man, but one who wore himself out in the discharge of the duties of his profession? Do you imagine that the letting of lodgings to visitors to the baths was the true vocation for your mother's sensitive, refined nature? And could the society of two silly girls like your sister and myself indemnify her for the tedious solitude of the long winter?"

"And yet this life satisfied her," said Ludwig. "So spiritual a nature is always satisfied with love and a round of duties."

Johanna shook her head. "It is comfortable to suppose so," she said; "but let me recall one expression of your mother's which, child as I was, made a deep impression upon me. My mother was already ill; yours sat beside her bed, while I was busied with a book at the window. Mamma must have been speaking of her past life. I had been paying no attention, when suddenly I heard

her say, 'Ah, dear Louise, you pity me!' Your mother dried her tears, and said, in a tone which I never can forget, 'No, Agnes, I envy you! It is sad to be driven forth from Paradise, but infinitely sadder never to have entered it.'"

Ludwig gazed gloomily into space. "There are various Paradises," he said, at last, "and they are found in various ways. My mother, I am convinced, found hers later. But you are right; hers was not for every one. You could hardly find it as she did."

"I should never seek it in that direction," she replied, quite conscious that she was paining him; it grieved her to do so, but she could not help it.

Ludwig arose once more; his face was pale and set. "I must take leave of you," he said; "I have an appointment with a couple of college friends."

"When shall I see you,—to-morrow? When will you come?" asked Johanna. "Of course I shall be at home for you all day long."

"I take the first train to-morrow for the north," he replied.

"Oh, you must not!" she exclaimed. "You must be here to-morrow evening. It is my father's birthday, and you must be present at its celebration."

"Impossible; I cannot postpone my departure," he made answer. "And even if I could, where could I find a place among your friends? I am—you remember how often my father said so—a faithful, cross, ugly dog. In a *tête-à-tête* the old playfellow is all very well, but he does not belong in the drawing-room."

Johanna took his hand. "I will not let you go," she said, "until you promise to come to-morrow evening. We have a little play,—I make my first histrionic essay. You must be present."

"No, my dear Johanna, I cannot see you act," he said, in a calm voice, but with lips that quivered in spite of himself. "And independently of that, I really must go. I must get to my work. I have just come from a six-weeks' tour through Switzerland and the Tyrol, and my holiday is over."

"But you have told me absolutely nothing of your work, of your plans. I do not know where to picture you in my thoughts!" she exclaimed.

"I will write to you," he said. "Good-by, and try to think kindly of me." He shook hands with her and left her.

"A faithful, cross, ugly dog," Johanna repeated to herself, as the door closed behind him and his step died away in the antechamber. Suddenly a rush of emotion overcame her; she sank into a chair and burst into tears.

CHAPTER II.

DISAPPOINTED ASPIRATIONS.

The festival was over. The last guests had taken their departure, and as they issued shivering into the cold air of the autumn night, criticism, and that not of a very genial kind, replaced the flattering expressions they had just used in characterizing to their hostess 'the delightful evening' they had passed.

"Wanton extravagance!" "It is worse than folly, and so out of taste for an actor to attempt to vie with a banker." "Everything borrowed, girls,—rely upon Frau Helena for that." "Yes, and she does understand how to dress herself. How beautiful she looked in that pale blue silk with the rich lace overskirt!" "And her pearl necklace and ear-rings,—where did she get those, do you think?" "'*Honi soit qui mal y pense*,' madame; a love-token from her husband, when he was another woman's husband." "Roderich always gives us excellent cigars, and the Johannisberg was delicious!" "Well, we needed it to carry down the play." "For heaven's sake, hush! Hofrath Leuchtenberg arranged the thing." "Oh, the thing itself was well enough, but the performance! Such nonsense to entertain us with an amateur performance!" "And that tall, pale, awkward girl was Roderich's daughter? 'Tis inconceivable that she should have no talent." "Roderich looked as if he were upon the rack when she stood so like a stick and 'spoke her piece.'" "But Frau Helena was all the more pleased; she could hardly conceal her exultation. Her step-daughter is a thorn in the flesh to her."

Such was the talk among young and old, men and women, as they walked along the silent streets, through which the north wind howled as in indignant scorn.

While her parents were bidding farewell to the last of their guests, Johanna slipped into the sleeping-room where Lisbeth's little bed stood beside her mother's. She noiselessly drew near it, and bent over the rosy little face dimly revealed with its closed eyelids in the light of the night-lamp. Suddenly two soft arms encircled her neck, and the blue childish eyes laughed into her own.

"Darling, did I wake you?" Johanna asked.

"Oh, no; I have not been asleep; I cannot go to sleep. Stay with me, and let us tell each other stories."

"Dear, you must go to sleep," her sister said, trying to disengage herself, but the child clung to her.

"No, no, you must stay with me; it frightens me to be alone," she cried in a peevish tone, which would hardly have prevailed with Johanna had it not been for the little one's burning cheeks and feverishly brilliant eyes.

"Well, I will stay if you will promise to be perfectly still," she said, seating herself at the head of the bed, and putting her arm beneath Lisbeth's fair curly head.

"That is delightful," said the child. "But I came near crying when I heard them all talking and laughing so. Ah, it was such a lovely evening, was it not, Hanna dear?"

"Yes, Lisbeth; but now shut your eyes. Perhaps you may dream of it."

"I do not need to do that; I remember all about it. How lovely it was when I said my little verse and gave papa the wreath, and everybody clapped their hands and cried Brava! Oh, I wish I were grown up and could act every evening, like mamma!"

She had raised herself in the bed; Johanna laid her back upon the pillow.

"Be quiet," she said, gravely.

"Yes, yes, I am quiet now," Lisbeth assured her. "But tell me," she went on, with eyes wide open, "why did no one call out 'Brava' and clap their hands for you?"

"Probably because I did not do as well as you did," Johanna answered, and the mortification with which she had been struggling brought a crimson blush to her face. "No, it was wretched, it was miserable," she went on in a trembling voice. "My throat seemed closed; my limbs were heavy as lead; the eyes of all seemed to pierce me through and through. Oh, Lisbeth, I shall never be able to act!"

She laid her head upon the pillow beside the child, who pressed her flushed little face against her sister's cheek. "Oh, you will learn," Lisbeth whispered. "Papa says you are very clever, and you are so kind, and I love you so very much."

The words came more and more slowly; Johanna remained motionless, that she might not prevent the child from sleeping. After a while she heard the rustle of silk: her step-mother had entered the adjoining dressing-room. Directly afterwards her father also entered. "I should like to speak with you a moment, Helena," he said.

"I am listening," she made reply, without looking round, and continuing to take off her ornaments and her sash.

He began to pace the room to and fro. Johanna's heart beat fast; she knew how Helena irritated him by this assumption of indifference.

"You have placed me in a strange position," he began, after a pause, in a low, stern tone. "I certainly ought to be grateful to you for my birthday fête; but I must at the same time reiterate, and that most decidedly, that we cannot give such extravagant entertainments. We are so much in debt——"

"Dear Roderich," she interrupted him, "one benefit and it will all be paid."

"But, Helena, I cannot reckon upon the future," he rejoined. "You know I could not make any engagements last summer,—I am not yet well. It seems to me very undesirable to burden ourselves with unnecessary care."

"And it seems to me undesirable, sordid, degrading, to be always counting the cost," exclaimed Helena. "Without freedom of action the artist cannot exist."

"It is that very freedom which I wish to secure," Roderich said gravely. "At your urgent entreaty, and by Commerzienrath Schmidt's advice, I speculated with our entire fortune, as you know, and lost it. Therefore we must begin afresh, and economize. Therefore, dear Helena, no more of these costly entertainments."

She shrugged her shoulders impatiently. "Dear Roderich," she said, "to-night's festival is my affair; it is my birthday present to you——"

"Child, you cannot count the cost," he interrupted her; "your salary scarcely suffices to provide your wardrobe."

"'Tis little enough!" said Helena. "You might long ago have used your influence to procure me a better position. Instead of which, you always take sides with the Kronberg against me."

"No, I do not," he replied. "I wrote to the manager only yesterday that I would renew my present engagement with him only upon condition that the Kronberg were not allowed to usurp any of your parts."

Helena threw her arms around him. "Oh, you darling, did you really?" she cried in glee. "You do

not know how you delight me. They wanted to persuade me that you cared for the Kronberg."

"Helena!" he said reproachfully. "Since I have known you there has been but one woman for me in the world."

His words hurt Johanna; she tried to release herself, that she might leave the room, but Lisbeth in her sleep held her fast.

Helena had taken her husband's arm and paced the room to and fro with him. She had doffed her lace overdress, and looked wonderfully lovely in the close-fitting blue silk with bare neck and arms. "Why do you always find fault with me, you bad fellow?" she said, looking up at him with an exultant smile. "I live only for you—to fulfil your wishes. I have economized; I have even dismissed my own maid, contenting myself with Johanna's services."

"She really seems fit for little else," he replied. "How miserably she acquitted herself in her small part! You ought not to have allowed her to take it."

"What could I do?" Helena asked. "She insisted upon making the attempt, and I as her step-mother——"

"Poor Johanna!" Roderich interrupted her; "as devoid of talent as her mother, and as ugly as myself!"

"Oh, Roderich, you! The most glorious Egmont,—the most enchanting Leicester!"

"But a very ugly man!" he said, with the brilliant smile that was all his own, and that really made his plain face handsome. "What you admire comes from within; there seems to be some kind of a flame there that flickers interestingly. But this is denied to poor Johanna. And then—you must see that the Graces have denied her their gifts; the greatest misfortune for a woman. You have managed that they should bestow them all upon your little daughter."

He kissed her hand. Johanna could endure it no longer; by a hasty effort she released herself from her sleeping sister's arm, and stepped noiselessly out of the room into the corridor, at the end of which was her own chamber.

She groped her way to the arm-chair beside the window, sank into it, and gazed into the darkness without. How gay and hopeful she had been while dressing in this room a few short hours before, and how forlorn and discouraged she had now returned to it! 'As devoid of talent as her mother, and as ugly as myself,' had been the words spoken by a voice whose utterances she believed implicitly; and then again, 'the Graces have denied her their gifts; the greatest misfortune for a woman.' Bitterness, such as she had never before known, possessed her. What had she done to be thus disinherited from the beginning, deprived of all claim to love and happiness?

Suddenly a joyous thrill drove the blood to her heart. It was not so, she was not disinherited. Little more than twenty-four hours had passed since the most truthful of men had said to her in effect, 'You were my ideal; ugly and awkward as you are, I saw in you the embodiment of all loveliness.' If he saw it in her no longer, it was because of a mistake,—a misunderstanding. She would prove to him that she had lost nothing of value, that she was still worthy the love of former days.

Why should she do this? She did not love Ludwig. No, no, she did not love him. Only in contrast with her father's cruel verdict did she find pleasure in his words of yesterday, and the impetuous throbbing of her heart was but the result of the various emotions that had besieged it during the past few hours.

If she only had not undergone that one experience! To stand there and not be mistress of her motions; to will to speak, and not be able to give to her words the meaning she desired; to be stared at by all those unsympathetic eyes, to be conscious of exciting contemptuous pity. 'Devoid of talent as her mother, and ugly as myself,' rang in her ears again.

She would rid herself of this torment. And she arose, lit a candle, and then first perceived a letter lying upon her table.

"From Ludwig," she thought; and she was right; his large clear handwriting stared at her from the envelope, and covered three sides of a sheet of paper which enclosed several others. Johanna seated herself at the table and read:

> "Dear Johanna,—The enclosed letter, which my mother found among the papers left her by your mother, was sent to me by the former in her last illness. She wrote to me telling me to do with it what seemed best to me; she had never been able to bring herself to disturb your happiness in your reunion with your father after so many years.
>
> "I might assert that the same consideration has hitherto prevented me from imparting to you the wishes of your dying mother, but I will be as frank with you as I am with myself. I withheld the letter because I hoped even without its aid to be able to withdraw you from surroundings unworthy of you. I thought that a word from me would suffice to restore you to the home that was your own so long. I hesitated—made cowardly and selfish as we always are by the desires of our hearts—to erect any barrier between you, a grandchild of the Dönninghausens, and your old friends.
>
> "But now I have convinced myself that the old friends are of no avail to counteract new

and unworthy influences; therefore let a voice from the grave speak to you.

"If you should heed it, and have any need either of my pen or of my personal aid, pray command me. I shall be at my father's, where I have certain scientific work to do, throughout the coming winter.

"Twice to-day I have been to your door, but each time I turned away. What could it avail me to see you again where you are? Farewell, and let me hear from you soon.

"L. W."

To Johanna the tone of this letter seemed icy cold. Experience is needed to detect intensity of emotion beneath exterior and perhaps hardly-won composure. With a trembling hand she opened her mother's letter. What could she, gentle and loving as she had always been, require of her daughter so hard that her foster-mother had been unwilling to impart it to her? Johanna gazed at the delicate handwriting, its uncertain characters betraying the mortal weariness that had possessed the writer. The touching figure of her dying mother rose vividly in her memory, and with increasing emotion she read what follows,—in all of which she distinctly felt the quickened feverish throb of the poor invalid's heart.

"LINDENBAD, August 19, 1864.

"MY DEAR LOUISE,—A few hours ago you left me, and in a few hours you will come again, faithful friend that you are, to ask how I have passed the night. Ah, Louise! it begins so distressingly, with such throbbing pulses and wandering thoughts, that I would flee from myself to you as to some shrine of the Madonna.

"If I was at first inclined to regard as a piece of good luck the chance which brought me an old school-mate in the wife of the physician of this place, I soon learned to bless the Providence which conducted me hither. Dear, kind friend! How you have cheered and encouraged me through these weary days of sickness and suffering! They would have been cheerless without you.

"Cheerless in every respect, dear Louise; for I hardly need to tell you that my soul suffers more than my failing body, because it does not share the weary longing of the latter for death. My poor soul clings to life, thirsting for the love and happiness of former days,—vanished now forever.

"Would Roderich feel some pity if he knew how vital within me is still the memory of every word of his,—the very tone in which each word was uttered? Ah, Louise! those words, those tones, possessed the power to create thrones and altars, and transformed the fortunate creature for whom they were spoken into a queen, a goddess: *he* constituted her such.

"I was his from the first moment that I saw him. I was with my parents in Berlin, where he was playing. I saw him first in 'Torquato Tasso,' and then at a ball at the French ambassador's. He asked to be presented to me. I stood before him trembling, and when he held out his hand to me I was his slave for life. There was no longer any question of will or choice, nothing but a blessed necessity. I could not but resign everything for him,—home, parents, brothers, family, rank, and wealth. He was still only a beginner in his art. My enthusiasm, my devotion, flattered him; my intelligence fired his genius; my beauty intoxicated his senses. Yes, there were years when I made him happy, in which I filled his heart and his imagination.

'Though 'tis torture, yet that time
Can never be forgot.'

"In the first year of our marriage Johanna was born. I announced her birth to my parents, and hoped, from my mother at least, for a kind word. Instead of this I saw the notice of her death in the papers. Two years later God sent me a son, but he lived only a few hours, and my life was in danger for months, while I was confined for years to my room. That was the beginning of my unhappiness. Roderich was still so young,—he had married when only twenty-three. He needed change and excitement to counterbalance his close application to the duties of his profession. Often, when in the flush of some fresh triumph he would come to my room to make me a partaker in his delight, both doctor and nurse would caution him not to fatigue me. He was obliged to walk on tiptoe, to sit in semi-darkness, to speak in a whisper. All this he could not endure. He went, and I was left alone,—more and more alone, of course, as time passed on.

"August 22.

"I could not write more. This pain in my heart has debarred me from all exertion for the last few days, during which you, dear Louise, have been, as always, my stay and comfort. Let these lines thank you for your kindness when my lips can do so no longer.

"I know how near the end is now, and the consciousness fills me with a despair beyond words. To vanish—to be forgotten—to leave to others what was once my own——

"But I did not mean to speak of myself. My last thought and care are for my poor

Johanna, who will so soon be orphaned. If it is possible, Louise, let my child stay with you. I will write to Roderich and entreat him to send the child to some school here in your neighbourhood. Then give her that home in your heart which she loses in mine. Her father hardly knows her, and will hardly miss her, as she on her part will scarcely miss him. On the other hand, she is warmly attached to you and to your children, and in your house she will find the pure domestic atmosphere which can never be hers in her father's. Hard though it be to say it, it must be said: the thought of leaving my child in the hands of the woman who has robbed me of Roderich's love poisons my last hours, and will leave me no rest in the grave. Johanna must not love that woman, must not owe her anything. I am sure you understand this feeling, even although you do not approve of it.

"Later.

"More bad days and nights,—how many I do not know; and through them all this terrible anxiety about Johanna's future. If you cannot grant my request and keep her yourself, then, I entreat you, see that she takes refuge with my people. They will receive her kindly. Three years ago, when Roderich's passion for this actress became notorious, my father wrote to me asking me to come to him with my child. His only condition was my legal separation from Roderich and the dropping of the name which he so hated. I could not bring myself to consent to this; but twice since then, when my two brothers died, I wrote to my father, now quite desolate, and each time he answered me and made me the same proposal. He will certainly receive my orphan child kindly.

"Understand me aright, dear Louise. I would rather know Johanna at home with you than anywhere else. In your home-circle her youth would be gayer and simpler. Only if you cannot adopt her, send her to my father, to the Freiherr Johann von Dönninghausen, Dönninghausen on the Harz, or write to him and commend my child to her grandfather's heart.

"The morning dawns. Perhaps when the phantoms of the night flee I can sleep—

'To die—to sleep!
To sleep! perchance to dream, ay, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come.'

"Did you ever hear Roderich utter those words? They ring in my ears now as if I had just heard him say them. I *must* hear him say them once more. No, no,—I cannot die."

Here the letter ended. Death had come suddenly and painlessly. Johanna remembered the peaceful smile upon her mother's beautiful face as she lay in her coffin. She kissed the last lines written by her dear hand, and her heart overflowed with tenderness.

The impression made upon her by the letter, however, was far other than Ludwig seemed to expect it would produce. Not for a moment did it alter Johanna's love for her father. On the contrary, its passionate pain seemed to justify her feeling for him. Weary unto death, and tortured with jealousy, her mother had turned to him in love and longing, and her last words were the utterance of a desire to see him once more.

"This is love," Johanna said to herself,—"the only true love,—that of which it stands written, 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth.' Whoever can merely say as Ludwig does, 'I loved you so long as you thought and felt thus and so,' has never really loved."

Even her mother's desire that she should go to her grandfather did not disturb Johanna. The letter said expressly, 'Her father hardly knows her, and will hardly miss her.' Now that he knew her and loved her, her mother would not, Johanna was convinced, wish her to leave him. Only if her father should come to consider her a burden, or if her lack of talent should estrange him from her, or if her step-mother's dislike of her should lead to misunderstandings, could it be her duty to leave her father's roof.

But it was useless to pursue such reflections as these. If her step-mother did not like her, her father's love and her little sister's devotion more than indemnified her. To attach to herself the lovely little creature who before her sister's arrival had spent all her time with the servants, to make good the deficiencies in the little girl's training, these were tasks after Johanna's own heart, and in them she could find abundant content; if she applied herself to these and restrained her thoughts and desires from wandering in other realms, she could surely be once more for Ludwig what she had been formerly.

She sat with clasped hands gazing into the flame of the candle. The little watering-place in the Thüringian forest, so long her home, rose vividly in her memory. There stood the vine-wreathed cottage of the resident physician, where Ludwig would dwell as his father's successor; the garden, with its dwarf fruit-trees, vegetable patch, and flower-beds; the hawthorn arbour by the hedge, with the vista of the chestnut avenue, along which the guests at the baths used to saunter; the little stream with its grassy banks; and, enclosing all, the wooded heights, a fitting frame for the lovely peaceful picture.

"But it would be no life for me," Johanna said to herself. "Why not? Why cannot I be content with

what has satisfied thousands? Why am I possessed by this desire for—I know not what—for giving shape and expression to something? Is it not vanity, or ambition, or self-conceit?"

She was more than ever conscious of the loneliness in which she had lived since the death of her foster-mother, who had been her refuge in all doubt and distress, while her husband, Uncle Werner, as Johanna called him, had ministered only to the physical ailments of his family. She had found but little sympathy from Mathilde, Ludwig's sister, whose nature was cold and narrow; even Ludwig, sensitive as he was, had not understood her. But her father,—he must have known such times of doubt and uncertainty,—he might help her.

"I will pluck up courage and tell him everything to-morrow," she said to herself. Then, calmed and quieted by this resolve, she betook herself to bed and to sleep.

CHAPTER III.

A CRISIS.

Johanna could not carry her resolve into execution. The following morning she was busy until late in replacing by order the disarray produced by the birthday fête, and when her father, who had gone out meanwhile, returned, he hurried past her with so gloomy an expression that she did not venture to follow him to his room.

At dinner she learned the cause of his troubled mood. He had quarrelled with the manager because the latter would persist in giving various of Helena's youthful parts to her rival, Fräulein Kronberg.

"Of course I cannot withdraw my stipulations," Roderich added, "and therefore cannot renew my contract, favourable as its conditions were for me."

"You can get another anywhere else quite as favourable, and even more so," said Helena.

"But not the accessories which I have here," Roderich declared. "Not the intelligent public, nor the charming *mise-en-scène* which makes each separate performance a work of art."

"That is no affair of yours," said Helena. "Each for himself, and God for us all. And as for the public, I can't see that it is especially intelligent. Wherever else you go you receive more applause than you get here, and so do I."

"Applause!" he repeated, with an impatient shrug. "Dear Helena, there is a kind of applause that makes me blush with mortification; but from your point of view you can hardly understand this."

How gladly would Johanna have assured him that she understood him perfectly! But while she was struggling with her natural shyness, Helena exclaimed, "If you think so meanly of me, pray do not proclaim it before other people; it is more than I can bear."

Roderich changed colour. "To accuse me of unkindness just when I am sacrificing all my plans for your sake is rather hard!" he said. And, rising from table, he left the room suddenly, slamming the door noisily behind him.

Lisbeth, terrified, began to cry, the others were amazed. Never before had he allowed himself to be so carried away by temper.

"He must be ill," said Johanna.

"Nonsense! he is out of temper," said Helena, "and he shall not hear a kind word from me until he begs my pardon."

Johanna was right. In half an hour Friedrich announced that the Herr had one of his attacks of headache, and could see no one.

On such days there seemed to be a spell upon the entire household. Every voice was lowered, every footfall was as light as possible, and Friedrich muffled the bell upon the landing.

This time, Johanna learned from Friedrich, the pain was not so intense as usual, but it did not pass away at the end of twenty-four hours. When, in spite of it, Roderich went to rehearsal the next day, he returned more ill than ever. The third day fever set in, and the physician ordered him to bed.

Helena had not forgiven the scene at table.

"It surely is not very bad, doctor," she said, as she accompanied the physician from the room. "I am just ordering a magnificent costume for Desdemona. Othello comes out next week; you must have him well by that time."

"We will hope for the best," the old man said, as he took his leave. Johanna, who overheard his words, was startled. She knew from Dr. Werner what these words signified in a physician's mouth. Whilst Helena carelessly returned to her costume, Johanna waited with a throbbing heart at her father's door until the servant made his appearance.

"Pray ask papa, Friedrich, whether I may not come in," she said.

The sick man heard her. "Come!" he called. His voice, usually so full and sonorous, sounded muffled, and his face was still more changed: it was colourless, and looked pinched and wan upon the pillow.

Johanna went to his bedside, with difficulty suppressing all signs of emotion. "Papa," she entreated, "let me stay with you. You have Friedrich, it is true, but I know better than he how to nurse an invalid."

For a while he gazed at her as if he scarcely understood her words. "Yes, stay with me," he said; "I think I am really very ill, and you are more careful, quieter, stronger——"

He did not finish the sentence, but she understood what he meant.

"Ah, thank you!" she said, kissing his burning hand.

He drew his daughter closer to him. "My dear, good child!" he said, pressing his feverish lips to her forehead. She did not dream that it was a farewell caress.

The disease progressed rapidly, and was pronounced by the physician the next day to be a nervous fever. He was quite content with Johanna's calm, careful treatment of his patient, but he begged Helena, who could not control her agitation, to spare her own delicate health for the sake of her child, and to be as little as possible in the sick-room. She sighed and submitted.

But, indeed, neither she nor any one else could have disturbed the sick man after a few days had passed; he lay in a state of entire unconsciousness.

The whole city was interested in the artist's condition; the inquiries after his health were countless; the door was besieged by friends and acquaintances. He had always been a kind, ungrudging comrade to his fellow-actors, and now when he could no longer excite their envy, they remembered his own freedom from it, and did all in their power to testify their esteem and friendship for him.

For Helena it was a kind of consolation to receive their visits; her nature was of those for which distraction is possible. After she had with many tears given an account of the sick man's state, she would listen with interest to theatrical gossip, and forget for a while her own sorrow. It overcame her, indeed, with redoubled violence when she was once more alone. Often, when she had been laughing with a visitor at some jest, Johanna would find her in a state of most pitiable distress.

"He is going to die, I know he is; such happiness as ours was too great for this world of misery," she would declare, sobbing as if her heart would break; or she would cry out as if bereft of her senses, "O God, you cannot take him from me! He must be spared for me and for his art."

She was most helpless and hopeless in the sick-room, where she would throw herself on her knees by Roderich's bedside, cover his hand with kisses, and exhaust every passionate term of endearment, nearly fainting when there was no response from her unconscious husband. But if one of the physicians or a friend wished to speak to her, she would arise, and, with a look of anguish as she left the room, involuntarily adjust artistically the soft folds of her white cachemire peignoir.

Johanna was too young and unsophisticated to appreciate her step-mother. She did her injustice when she accused her of heartlessness, and she added to her own burden by a daily increasing dislike for Helena.

But she could not help it. The sleep of exhaustion, which now and then overcame her, was all the rest and forgetfulness that she had. If she forced herself to talk with little Lisbeth, she had to struggle continually with rising tears, and when she heard others speaking of the events of the day, she could hardly comprehend how the affairs of the world could pursue their usual course outside of the sick-room. That was her realm, and her father's death seemed to her the end of all things.

Week after week passed. The physician gave Johanna no hope. She had herself watched from day to day, and from hour to hour, the inexorable approach of the Destroyer, and when the last moment came, she had lived it over in thought a hundred times.

It was the gray dawn of a morning in November. She was sitting alone at her father's bedside. Helena was asleep upon a lounge in the next room, when Roderich once more opened his eyes, in which there was a last ray of consciousness; his lips moved, and when Johanna leaned over him, she heard him whisper, 'Helena.' His features were convulsed for an instant, and when Helena rushed into the room in answer to her low cry, it was too late. Her husband had breathed his last. His heart had ceased to beat.

Johanna closed his eyes and took her usual place beside him. She seemed paralyzed; she could not weep, she could not even think. Helena's noisy grief distressed her, but it seemed to reach her ear from some great distance, and soon died away altogether. Only two images remained in her memory from this terrible time,—the ideal beauty of her beloved dead as he lay in the coffin crowned with laurel, and the dreary aspect of the funeral cortége as it moved endlessly along the streets in the pouring rain, while the wind tore away from the hearse and whirled in air some of the flowers and wreaths with which it was bedecked.

It was Lisbeth who at last aroused Johanna from her lethargy. To spare the imaginative child the sad impression of her father's dying moments, she had been intrusted to the care of an actress friend, returning to her home only when the funeral was over. Helena rushed to her, clasped her in her arms, loaded her with caresses, declaring that she was all that was left her in life, all that she had to live for, and then turned away to receive a couple of her friends who had called to see her. They were all soon absorbed in an animated discussion of mourning gowns and Helena's broken heart, the impossibility of recovering from Roderich's loss, his widow's plans for the future, the intrigues of the Kronberg, and the inconceivable partiality of the manager for one so utterly without talent. The child felt herself forgotten, and left the room to look for her sister.

Johanna was not in her usual place at the work-table in Helena's dressing-room, nor was she in her own sleeping apartment. But when Lisbeth timidly entered her father's study, she found Johanna, looking pale and white in her black gown, still sitting by the window whence she had seen the funeral procession disappear. She sat in an arm-chair, her head leaning back, her arms hanging idly down, gazing into space with such an expression of dull anguish that the little girl was frightened.

"Johanna, dear Johanna, please do not be ill, do not die!" she cried, throwing her arms around her sister's neck; and these first tender words, the nestling close to her of the little one, dissolved the spell that had bound the poor girl, and she burst into tears.

Afterwards, when longing for sympathy, she went to her step-mother, Helena said in her coldest tone,—

"Has it really occurred to you to remember my existence? I think it was high time. Everything comes upon me,—it will kill me."

Not a word was said of all that Johanna had done during the long weeks of illness, and the gulf between Helena and herself widened.

The next morning Johanna was handed the card of Lieutenant Otto von Dönninghausen. She would gladly have refused to see him, but written in pencil upon the card was 'Commissioned by our grandfather,' and she could not deny herself to one so accredited.

In the drawing-room she found a tall, fair man, about thirty years old, whose military carriage betrayed the soldier in spite of his civilian's dress.

"Cousin Johanna?" he said, advancing towards her, while his bright, resolute blue eyes scanned her keenly. Then he held out his hand. "Forgive me for intruding at such a time," he continued. "Let me plead the right of kinship, and believe in the sincerity of my sympathy."

Johanna's eyes filled with tears. She mutely returned the pressure of his hand, and motioned him to a seat.

"Our grandfather has requested me to put this letter into your own hands," he began again when both were seated. "The commission was a welcome one to me; I take a sad satisfaction in assuring you personally of my sympathy. I have had the pleasure of seeing your father repeatedly upon the stage, and I never can forget him."

"I thank you," said Johanna, and for an instant her pale face glowed with the same fire which had distinguished her father. Her cousin's simple cordiality of tone did her good, inspired her with confidence, and yet she felt a timidity in his presence quite foreign to her.

"It is the result of the distressing consciousness of knowing nothing of my nearest relatives," she thought.

"Grandpapa requests you to come to him," the young man said, handing Johanna a sealed letter. "Do not be led astray by his manner of expression, which is probably as blunt and cold in this letter as it is in daily personal intercourse. There is much kindliness beneath his rough exterior. Our grandfather is a nobleman in the full sense of the word, with all the prejudice and narrowness of his class. You will soon understand and value him, and I hope soon to see you in Dönninghausen."

"Are you going back there again?" asked Johanna, trying to find something to say.

"Not now," he replied. "My regiment is stationed on the Rhine, and I am returning to it after having assisted last week in the celebration of my grandfather's birthday, on which occasion we are all wont to assemble at Dönninghausen."

"Who are all?" asked Johanna. "I know little, almost nothing, of my mother's family; she had become estranged from her kindred."

"Unfortunately," her cousin interposed, "I have but a faint remembrance of my aunt Agnes. I am the eldest son of her second brother, who was attached to our embassy in London."

"Was he not called Waldemar?" asked Johanna.

"You are right," the young man replied. "Grandpapa's eldest son, Johann Georg, was already dead when Aunt Agnes left her home. He left only one child, a son, Johann Leopold, who has been brought up in Dönninghausen, and lives there now. He has pursued various studies, and is the heir. I have a younger brother, named for our father, Waldemar; he has entered upon a diplomatic career. My two sisters, Hedwig and Hildegard, are married to two distant cousins

belonging to the Wildenhayn-Oderbuchs. Finally, grandpapa's youngest son, Major Karl Anton, also dead, left one child, a daughter, young and beautiful and a widow of two years' standing. Her name is Magelone; her husband, Lieutenant von der Aue, who lived only eighteen months after their marriage, contrived in that time to run through all her property, and she now lives at Dönninghausen, under the chaperonage of our grand-aunt Thekla, grandpapa's unmarried sister. Let me add that Magelone is as clever as she is beautiful, as accomplished as she is amiable, and that she is especially desirous of welcoming Cousin Johanna to Dönninghausen."

"Me?" Johanna asked, blushing. "I cannot understand——"

"I will read the riddle for you," Otto interposed. "Do you not remember meeting two years ago, among the guests at Lindenbad, a certain Frau von Werth? She visits at Dönninghausen, and has told wonderful tales of you. I will spare your modesty further details."

He bowed with a smile, and again his sparkling eyes scanned her. Johanna coloured: she felt cheered and comforted. None among her father's friends had ever accorded her any degree of attention.

"I should like to know something of my grandfather," she began, after a pause; but, before she could go on, the door opened and Lisbeth came in.

"Johanna!" she exclaimed, startled, and stood still; but Johanna held out her hand, and the child flew to her side.

"My sister," she said, tenderly stroking the little one's fair curls.

"Sister?" Otto repeated, in a tone of surprise. "Oh, yes, I remember. Come, my little beauty, give me your hand," he said, with his winning smile.

But the child held Johanna's arm tight and looked at him with a little air of defiance. "No, I do not know you, and I do not want to know you," she said in a wayward tone.

"Darling, don't be naughty," Johanna whispered.

"Never mind," said her cousin; "the child is shy, and, besides, I must go." And he glanced at the clock as he arose.

Johanna also arose. "I am sorry," she said; "I had so much to ask——"

"And I, too, seem to have a thousand things to say," the young man rejoined. "I thought I should have seen much more of you, but when I arrived yesterday I found that the funeral had not yet taken place, and the hours were wasted which I hoped to have spent with you. I wish that I could at least have followed to the grave the man whom I so admired, but I was detained by pressing business."

How cordial was the tone in which he spoke! Johanna's eyes filled; how could she know that his 'pressing business' was a breakfast with some gay companions? Much moved, she held out her hand to her cousin. Otto pressed it to his lips.

"*Au revoir* in Dönninghausen!" he said, and went.

"*Au revoir*," she rejoined, half involuntarily; and, as the door closed behind his tall figure, she all but asked herself whether the events of the last half-hour had not been a dream. How could she feel thus nearly related to a man of whose existence she had been so short a time before unconscious? 'Strange force of kinship!' she said to herself.

Meanwhile, Lisbeth had seized upon the large envelope lying upon the table, and was trying to spell out the address.

"What a funny letter! Is it to you? Why is there no 'Fräulein' on it?" she asked, handing the letter to her sister, who observed for the first time that the envelope was addressed 'To my grand-daughter Johanna.'

She now remembered that letters from Dönninghausen to her mother had always been sent in an enclosure, and the address only of the envelope within had been written by her grandfather, and had always been 'To my daughter Agnes.' The Freiherr could not bring himself to write the hated name of the actor.

With a sigh, Johanna broke the seal and read:

> "My dear Child,—Now that you are, as I learn, an orphan indeed, it seems to me a matter of course that you should come as soon as possible to your natural home,—that is, to my house. Write to me when you intend to start, that I may send you a suitable escort.
>
> "Your affectionate grandfather,
>
> "Johann Heinrich v. Dönninghausen."

Johanna's hands fell by her sides. Not one word of pity for her loss, of sympathy for the death of the famous artist, or of welcome for the unknown grandchild. No, she could never find a home in a house where her father's name was despised!

But then she recalled what her cousin Otto had said of her grandfather's noble nature, which his harsh exterior continually gainsaid. Perhaps it might be given to her to reconcile the old nobleman with her father's memory; and Magelone was there, witty and talented, and Cousin Otto made frequent visits to Dönninghausen. He would always pay to the dead the tribute of admiration which she coveted. Should she go? Her glance fell upon Lisbeth, sitting opposite her, her eyes fixed upon the ground, her little face sad with that look of misery which is so indescribably pathetic in a child. "No, I cannot leave my darling. What is Dönninghausen to me?" she said to herself, and clasped her sister in her arms.

Meanwhile, Otto had returned to his hotel, whence before leaving town he wrote to Magelone:

> "GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,—Your commands are obeyed. When I delivered our grandfather's letter I exercised in your behalf all the power of observation with which I am gifted, and can state, so far as can be learned in the limits of a brief interview, that the reality coincides with excellent Frau Werth's description. Our cousin is rather plain than pretty, but looks clever and distinguished, has quiet, pleasing manners,—in a word, she seems to me entirely presentable, and eminently adapted to indemnify you for the fatiguing society of your Knight of the Rueful Countenance.
>
> "I seize this favourable opportunity for prostrating myself—only metaphorically, alas!—at the smallest feet in the world, and am, as ever, O fairest Magelone,
>
> "Your cousin and slave,
>
> "OTTO."

CHAPTER IV.

FUTURE PLANS DECIDED.

Immediately after her father's death, Johanna had received an affectionate letter from Ludwig, and her grandfather's note was scarcely read before a second budget from Lindenbad brought her letters from each member of the Werner family.

Old Dr. Werner, after his own simple and cordial manner, begged Johanna to return to them. Mathilde assured her in choice phraseology that she should rejoice to welcome her dear foster-sister, who, she trusted, would not feel too deeply the change from the luxury and freedom from restraint which belonged to an artist's world, to a quiet, monotonous existence spent in devotion to duty. Ludwig, writing in his turn, feared lest he might have wounded her by his bluntness in their last interview, and offered, if for any reason she would avoid living beneath the same roof with him, to spend the winter in Weimar, where he could easily complete his work.

The advantage that the public library in Weimar would be to him would be an abundant motive to assign for this step, and he added: "What I shall do with myself afterwards I do not know. At all events, all idea of the Lindenbad idyl is relinquished. I pray you to acquaint me unreservedly with your wishes, and I assure you that you will delight us all by coming to us, and most of all your brother LUDWIG."

"How good and kind he is!" Johanna said to herself. "It is a great pity that, with all his goodness and kindness, he should be so unattractive."

Otto's image rose in her memory in strong contrast,—the elegant ease of his bearing, his courtesy, which occasionally seemed more than mere courtesy, his fine figure and handsome face. Was her grandfather like him? And the beautiful Magelone,—did she really possess everything that he ascribed to her,—beauty, wit, talent, amiability? Perhaps he loved her.

"All are loved save myself," Johanna thought. "I have been here a whole year, and have won no single heart except that of my little sister, who would soon, after the fashion of a child, forget me were I to leave her. Ludwig's love I lost before I knew that I possessed it, and even the father whom I idolized had not a single thought for me in his last moments."

Her own sentiments, however, she vowed to herself, never should be influenced by this knowledge. As in a sanctuary, she would guard and cherish in her heart the memory of her father and of the lofty service he had rendered to art, and where could she better do this than here, where everything reminded her of him, where she inhaled, as it were, the aroma of his personality? The longer she reflected, the clearer was her conviction that she must stay where she was.

Nevertheless, she postponed answering her letter from day to day. She had but little time of her own. Since Helena was occupied from morning till night with friends of both sexes, Lisbeth was left to the care of her sister, whose busy hands were, moreover, occupied all day long in completing her step-mother's mourning wardrobe. In the evening, when the child had gone to bed and Helena's visitors had left her, it was Johanna's hard task to listen to the wailing and woe of this undisciplined, unregulated nature. After hours of such labour, she would go to her room thoroughly exhausted, and long after Helena was sleeping quietly the poor girl would toss to and fro in her bed, unable, from over-fatigue, to find any repose.

But one evening Helena made her appearance in her dressing-room with dry eyes and an air of important business. Johanna had just put Lisbeth to bed, and was again sitting at her sewing. Her step-mother went hither and thither, restlessly picked up this and that only to lay them down again, and said at last, with averted face, "Johanna, my friends say it is my duty—that is, that I owe it to you to speak seriously with you."

The young girl looked at her inquiringly.

"We—that is, I must arrange some plan for the future; and you—you told mo that your grandfather and Dr. Werner have both asked you to come to them. To which of them have you decided to go?"

Johanna's heart seemed to stand still. "Must I go away from here?" she gasped at last.

Helena turned sharply round towards her. "Dear Johanna, I had not supposed you could be so unreasonable," she said harshly. "Roderich left nothing but debts; and as for my supporting a step-daughter——"

"Not another word, please, mamma," Johanna interposed. "In my grief I have forgotten all else. The instant that I know that I am a burden to you my resolution is taken."

"How haughtily you speak!" Helena complained. "You must know how terribly hard it is for me to have to calculate thus. I had even deliberated whether, in view of your diligence and your care of Lisbeth, I might not as well keep you with me instead of paying Lina and a waiting-maid. But Hofrath Leuchtenberg said—and that decided me—that it would be of the greatest disadvantage to me in my career as an actress to be accompanied by a grown-up daughter."

She paused. Johanna replied by a mute inclination of her head.

"There might be a way found out of the difficulty," Helena continued. "If you would call me 'Helena,' Lisbeth could call you aunt, and the world would take you for Roderich's sister. You know I am only going to stay here where we are known until New Year. What do you think?"

"I thank you!" Johanna made answer. "We had all better be spared this farce; besides, you know I have no talent as an actress. The part of my father's sister and your waiting-maid would be too difficult for me to undertake."

With these words she arose and left the room. Helena cast a tearful look towards heaven. "Leuchtenberg is right," she thought; "Johanna is haughty, obstinate, and heartless. I shall be spared a thousand annoyances by her leaving me. I am only sorry for Lisbeth's sake. The dear little creature really loves her sister, and Johanna seemed to care for her. But it is plain now how much her affection was worth!"

Johanna passed a sleepless night, but when morning came her mind was made up; she arose and wrote immediately to Dönninghausen and to Lindenbad. Her last letter was to Ludwig, and was as follows:

> "I have just thanked your father and Mathilde for the help they offered me, and have told them that I cannot accept it. Little as my father seemed to care for me, he always provided for me with a lavish hand; but he has left nothing, and it seems very unjust to burden your father with my maintenance when my grandfather offers me a home beneath his roof.
>
> "This reason, however, excellent as it is, is not my only one. You offer to leave your father's house if I come to it. That alone would deter me. Finally,—you know I am given to selfishness—I dread living with Mathilde. No one knows better than I how excellent she is, how dutiful, self-sacrificing, and unpretending. But she is strict and literal to a degree that paralyzes and irritates me. Your mother, from whom Mathilde inherits all her good qualities, was, besides, kind and imaginative. Hers was the heart of a child so long as she lived. Your home without her—and, let me add, without you—could never be mine; and, since I resign it, I may as well go among entire strangers.
>
> "If you would lighten my task, my dear Ludwig, remain the connecting link between my past and present. Let me inform you as to my life, and let me hear from you of your work, your plans for the future. However dissatisfied you may be with what I am now, it cannot affect the past,—I mean our childhood. Do you not remember how I always from the first sought and found protection with you from Mathilde's tyranny? It must always be so; a kind of instinct will always lead me to you whenever I need counsel and help, and I know that you will open to me when I knock.
>
> "I have told my grandfather, who wrote to me a few days ago, that I am ready to go to him, and that I only wait for his directions with regard to my journey. To part from what is dear to me here—my father's grave and my little sister—will be hard; and, besides, I liked the atmosphere in which I lived. Not for the sake of society here; I knew no one intimately but my father and Lisbeth. But all this activity and effort in the interest of art, inartistic as its results sometimes might be, interested me, and gave me the sensation of being in my element.
>
> "But no,—this is self-conceit,—it was not my element. The histrionic attempt to which I so confidently invited you proved that I do not belong to the elect. 'Devoid of talent as

her mother' was my father's verdict with regard to me; and when I recall the terrible moment when I stood there, utterly incapable of giving expression to what I felt so vividly in my imagination,—oh, Ludwig, the anguish of that moment cannot be described in words!

"I would that this bitter, mortifying experience had really cured me; that is, had stifled my desire for the Paradise then closed upon me. But this is not so. During the long days and nights passed beside my dying father, I constantly struggled with the old longing.

"If I could make you comprehend all that this last year with my father has brought to me, you might, perhaps, understand me. In all his artistic performances I was beside him in spirit. The strongest chord that he struck, the gentlest harmony that he awakened, found an answering echo in my heart. When Desdemona, Ophelia, Klärchen seemed like puppets beside his Othello, Hamlet, Egmont, I knew just what they ought to be; every look, every motion of theirs as it should be, was as clear to my mind as was his own exquisite conception of his part.

"Was this an inborn gift of mine, inherited from my father? If so, diligent perseverance could have made my clumsy limbs and speech obedient to my will; but my father's expression, 'Devoid of talent as her mother,' paralyzes my courage, and filial affection bids me to try no further where he can no longer criticise my efforts. Perhaps the creative force which I thought I possessed was but the momentary impression of his genius. I might then have had some measure of success at his side, inspired by his spirit,—no great amount, it may be,—but we love the moon with its borrowed light, and my sun might have permitted me to reflect its brilliancy.

"But this career is ended, and there is nothing for me but to submit. Perhaps my new surroundings will lighten my task; perhaps I shall find at my grandfather's something to do which will give healthy occupation to my thoughts. And I shall be in the country again, in quiet seclusion. In a sketch-book of my mother's there is a pencil-drawing of Dönninghausen, which I used as a child to contemplate with secret longing. The castle, a huge, plain, two-storied pile, with a lofty roof and low bell-tower, stands half-way up the side of a mountain which is crowned with forests and overlooked by loftier ranges of mountains. Down in the valley is the village, with its little old church; a mountain stream winds through the meadows, and the road beside it ascends the mountain along its course and is lost in the forest. This road always bewitched me; it was the pathway to all kinds of adventures and wonders,—the entrance to a fairy world. So closely is this landscape interwoven with all my childish dreams, that I could go to Dönninghausen as to a home, if I could hope to learn to understand or to be understood by its inmates. Assuredly the best intentions, the most sincere effort, shall not be wanting on my part. I certainly do possess a certain talent, my only one, for adapting myself to the habits and social life of those with whom I am thrown. May it now stand me in stead!

"Farewell for the present. I hope you will read between the lines of this long letter the earnest desire to be understood by you of

"Yours,

"J."

CHAPTER V.

AT DÖNNINGHAUSEN.

In the large three-windowed morning-room of Castle Dönninghausen the old Freiherr was walking to and fro, smoking his long pipe, as was his custom always after breakfast, his huge, tawny dog Leo following, as ever, close at his master's heels. The sister of the lord of the castle sat prim and stately in her usual place by the window, knitting, while at a small table near the chimney-place Magelone and Johann Leopold were playing chess. The fire crackled, the old tall clock ticked, the needles in Aunt Thekla's busy hands clicked, and the Freiherr's footsteps fell regularly upon the rug that covered the floor. The morning was precisely like every one of its predecessors.

Suddenly the old man went up to the middle one of the three tall windows and gazed out into the flurry of snow that veiled the distant landscape. Leo, amazed at this transgression of traditionary custom, stood still and pricked his ears.

"Ten," said the Freiherr, as the clock began to strike. "In half an hour Johanna may be here; at twelve, when I have returned from my ride, I wish to speak with her in my room. She shall receive all the consideration due to my grandchild, but there shall be no interruption of the rules of the house upon her account, nor"—his deep voice grew louder, and there was something in it like the mutter of a coming tempest—"nor shall her father's name be mentioned in my hearing."

With these words the Freiherr turned about and left the room, accompanied by Leo.

So soon as the door closed behind him, Johann Leopold arose. "Allow me, dear Magelone, to postpone the end of our game. I have a headache," he said, passing his hand wearily over his eyes.

"Just as you please, dear Johann Leopold," Magelone replied, with a gentle smile. He kissed her hand and left the room. She lifted her arms towards heaven. "Thank God, he has gone!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Aunt Thekla, Aunt Thekla, this life is intolerable!"

The old lady shook her head so that the gray curls beneath her lace cap trembled.

"My dear child, you ought not to speak so," she said, in a tone of gentle reproof; "you are going to marry him——"

"Because I choose to, or because I must?" Magelone interposed, going across the room to her great-aunt. "But never mind that; when we are married it will be better,—then I will not stay any longer in Dönninghausen."

"You will not leave your old grandfather alone!" said Aunt Thekla.

"I am nothing to grandpapa," Magelone answered, with a shrug of her shoulders; "and as for any entertainment that he gets from Johann Leopold——But don't be troubled about that; who knows what the new cousin may turn out? I am very curious. From all that I hear, she will be far too solemn for me,—all the better adapted, however, for our croaking household and for Dönninghausen."

With these words Magelone hurried to the other end of the room, seated herself at the grand piano, and began to play a polka; then suddenly ceasing, she ran back again to her aunt and sat down opposite her. "Can you possibly understand, Aunt Thekla," she asked, "why grandpapa has sent for this Johanna? Do not misunderstand me. I have no objection to her coming. We can yawn together, even if she is good for nothing else. But why grandpapa, who cannot endure the sound of her family name, did not rather board her somewhere——"

"I asked myself the same question," her aunt replied; "and the only answer I can find to it, knowing him as I do, is that he yearns to see his Agnes's child. Believe me, dear, he is not so hard-hearted as he chooses to appear."

"But he banished his daughter!" Magelone exclaimed.

"He did what he thought was his duty, and no one knew how he suffered in doing so," the old lady rejoined. "Agnes was his darling. How enraptured he was when, after his three boys,—the youngest, your father, was eleven years old,—a daughter was born to him! Although he was thought a strict father, he could deny his Agnes nothing. Everybody in the house did as she pleased, and did it gladly, for she was a gentle, tender-hearted creature. But she grew too dreamy and imaginative in this solitude, and when my sister-in-law at last had her way and sent her for a year to boarding-school, where she had companions of her own age, it was too late. At her very first entrance into society she fell in love with that man, that actor, and there was no help for it."

"How inconceivable it is, this falling so desperately in love!" said Magelone.

Aunt Thekla dropped her knitting and gazed at her niece through her eye-glasses. "Are you in earnest?" she asked. "Can you really not understand it?"

Magelone's eyes sparkled strangely, reminding one of sunshine upon rippling water.

"Oh, Aunt Thekla, you think I mean it!" she exclaimed, and laughed like a child.

"No, not exactly," said the old lady; "but I cannot deny that I am sometimes anxious. 'Tis all the better for you if you are only flirting, but I pity the poor lad."

"The poor lad!" Magelone repeated. "Does that mean Otto? Aunt, you are perfectly heavenly; I must give you a kiss!" And she sprang up and threw her arms around Aunt Thekla's neck. "Let me assure you that it is a question which of us is flirting the most. When men attempt anything in that line their achievements are wonderful——Hark! there comes a carriage. It is Johanna!" she interrupted herself, and, beginning to sing, 'For her I sigh,' in a rather weak but melodious voice, she ran out of the room.

In the corridor she walked more deliberately. "Remember your dignity, Magelone," she said to herself,—"no farther than the head of the staircase." But when she reached the head of the staircase, and Johanna's pale face—shrouded in black crape, her large eyes dimmed with weeping—looked up at her, dignity was entirely forgotten. Holding out both hands, she hurried to meet the guest, exclaiming, "Johanna! Cousin Johanna! I am Magelone!" And she clasped her in her arms.

Johanna was mute with amazement. Otto's expressions had led her to imagine Magelone's beauty to be of a dazzling superb kind, instead of which here was a fairy-like creature, with child-like eyes and a winning grace of manner.

"Poor Johanna, how tired you look!" Magelone continued. "And how you shiver! you are chilled through and through——"

"Yes; I have been travelling all night," said Johanna. And her teeth chattered as she spoke.

"Poor child, I suppose I ought to take you directly to Aunt Thekla, but you must first rest and get warm. Here,"—and Magelone opened the door of a spacious, well-warmed apartment,—"here is a quiet room; and now tell me what you would like. Shall I send you a maid, or will you have breakfast?"

"Thank you; I should like to sleep," was Johanna's reply.

Magelone helped her take off her hat and wraps. "Then lie down here,"—and she led her to a huge lounge,—"and I will see that you are not disturbed until it is time to dress for dinner."

She turned to go. Johanna took both her hands. "Thanks!" she said, with emotion; "your reception of me has done me so much good——"

"But you have not yet called me Magelone!" was the laughing interruption. "But don't force yourself to it,—it will come of itself." With these words she kissed the young girl's forehead and left her alone.

"She is charming," thought Johanna, as her weary head sank back among the cushions. "If every one here is as kind, I have been very silly to have any dread of Dönninghausen." And she fell asleep with a lightened heart, the rumble and rush of the railroad train still buzzing in her ears.

Suddenly she started. "Ten minutes for refreshments!" had just rung through her dream. She awoke to find herself, to her surprise, in the spacious dim room. The door opened, and an old gentleman entered, with a large dog beside him.

"Grandfather!" she cried, and would have risen.

He approached her quickly. "Sit still! sit still!" he said, with a commanding gesture, as he took a seat beside her couch. "My old Christian tells me that you are exhausted with your journey, and therefore I came here to see you, and to release you, if you like, from coming to dinner to-day."

Whilst the Freiherr spoke, his cold blue eyes rested searchingly upon the girl. She bore the look bravely.

"Thank you, that is not necessary; my sleep has greatly refreshed me," she replied.

"So much the better," said the old man. "You still look pale and tired, but that will pass away. You do not look like your mother," he went on, after a pause, in a gentler tone, "but you have her low gentle voice, and there is something in your smile——"

He broke off and turned away his head. At this moment the dog, who had been sniffing about Johanna, reared himself and put his large forepaws upon her shoulders. "Down, Leo, down!" the Freiherr called. The animal obeyed, but Johanna stroked its huge head caressingly, and it fawned at her feet.

"Why, look! Leo, usually so slow to make acquaintance, has accepted you upon the spot," the old man said, with a gratified air. "That, too, you get from your mother,—all animals liked her. Now I will leave you alone. After dinner you shall be presented to your grand-aunt, my sister Thekla. Until then, my child, adieu."

He arose and held out his hand; suddenly he drew her to him and kissed her. "God bless your home-coming!" he murmured; then he walked towards the door, turning round, however, before he reached it, and saying, in his usual imperious way, "From this time, Johanna, you belong entirely to us. We shall all call you by your first name, and you will be one of the family, to the rules of which you must conform. Come to me if any occasion should arise for your wanting advice."

With these words he departed.

"I hope we shall be fond of each other," Johanna thought. "He is kinder than his letter led me to imagine him. And how handsome he is, with his white hair, his proud stern air, his bright eyes beneath their bushy eyebrows, and his erect martial figure! In his coarse shooting-jacket, leather breeches, and riding-boots, he is the most distinguished-looking man I have ever seen."

Grand-aunt Thekla, too, to whom Johanna was presented before dinner by Magelone, received her kindly, although after a prim fashion of her own, and Cousin Johann Leopold, upon his introduction to her in the dining-room, offered the tips of his cold fingers, and expressed a hope that she would be pleased with Dönninghausen.

Altogether, it had the effect upon Johanna of the scene of a fairy-tale: the spacious dining-hall, its wainscoting and ceiling of dark oak; a huge green porcelain stove at one end, at the other a buffet, whence shot mysterious gleams from glass and silver in the light of the chandelier; the assembled family, contrasting so strongly with one another,—Johann Leopold in evening dress; Aunt Thekla in gray satin and black lace; Magelone in a faultless toilette of rose-coloured silk, flounced and furbelowed; Johanna in her deep mourning, and the Freiherr in his riding-dress.

There was no conversation. Sometimes the Freiherr asked a question briefly and in a gruff voice, receiving as brief and satisfactory an answer as possible from whomsoever he addressed, and then for a space of time no sound would be audible save the rattle of knives and forks and the hushed footsteps of the two men-servants. Besides these last, old Christian, Johanna's escort, stood behind his master's chair, his only office, apparently, being to fill the Freiherr's glass and to pick up the napkin which the old gentleman continually let fall.

It was a protracted meal: the Freiherr had a good appetite and ate slowly. He grew more talkative at dessert, discussed affairs of the estate with Johann Leopold, asked Aunt Thekla about some sick people in the village, inquired of Johanna how long she had been in reaching Dönninghausen, and made a contemptuous remark about Magelone's 'ball-dress.'

At last he arose, and every one seemed to breathe more freely. He gave his arm to his sister: Johann Leopold offered his to Magelone.

"You must take us both," she said. "Come, Johanna."

"I should like to go to my room," the girl whispered. Magelone shook her head.

"You must not; we are all on duty now. Come," she said, in a low voice, as she followed the brother and sister into the drawing-room.

Here the lamps were lit, and the coffee-equipage was set out upon a table before a lounge. There was another table near the fireplace, provided with candles and newspapers, and so soon as the Freiherr had taken his arm-chair beside it old Christian made his appearance with a pipe and box of matches, followed by Leo, who pushed his head affectionately into his master's hand and then lay down at his feet. Aunt Thekla sat down opposite her brother with her knitting; Johann Leopold withdrew to a dark corner on the other side of the chimney-piece.

"Are you in pain again?" the Freiherr asked him, in a tone which expressed more irritation than sympathy.

"Yes, sir; I have another of my old headaches," Johann Leopold replied, and the ghastly pallor of his handsome but emaciated face, and the look of suffering in his eyes, were confirmation of his words.

The Freiherr picked up the paper with a growl, and pushed his chair nearer the light.

"Come," said Magelone, taking possession of Johanna, "I will initiate you into the mysteries of my coffee-brewing; you can relieve me sometimes in future." And while she was clattering among her cups and saucers she went on in an undertone, "This goes on every day the same. Now we shall all take coffee; if grandpapa finds anything interesting in the paper he reads it aloud; when Johann Leopold condescends to be well he reads the paper, after which grandpapa and Aunt Thekla play backgammon, and *I* give you a little music. Are you musical?" she asked in a louder tone.

"Unfortunately, no," Johanna replied.

"Perhaps you draw?" Magelone asked further.

"No, I do not. I have no talent at all," Johanna declared, with some mortification.

"None at all?" the Freiherr said, and his eyes gleamed brightly over his newspaper. "Actually none? So much the better, child, so much the better!"

Johanna understood the meaning of such words from her grandfather. This was the gulf that separated them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FREIHERR'S PRINCIPLES.

When the next morning Johanna went to her window, she could not repress an exclamation of delight. Her room looked from a gable of the castle out into the park. In front of it an aged oak stretched its gnarled limbs above a little clearing; around it stood magnificent hemlocks, their boughs drooping to the ground beneath a weight of snow; while on the right the only vista through the trees afforded a view of the snowy roofs and the little church of the village in the valley, of a row of stunted willows, probably marking the course of a stream, and of the wooded mountain-sides crowned by curiously-jagged rocks.

It was a peaceful landscape, such as she loved, and had the added charm of the brilliant sunlight shining upon the glittering snow in the clear wintry atmosphere. It attracted her irresistibly to go out into the open air. The breakfast-hour was nine o'clock: she had half an hour to spare; and she wrapped herself up and hurried out into the park.

She soon found a pathway, but walking on the dry snow was hard work, and she had to return long before the limits of the park had been reached.

As she ascended the terrace steps in front of the castle, she saw her grandfather standing at a window of the lower story. She called up a 'good-morning!' to him; he acknowledged her greeting, but his look and air were so gloomy that she feared she had transgressed some rule of the house, and betook herself to the dining-room with a certain timidity.

Her fears were groundless, however. When the customary morning salutations had been exchanged and all had taken their seats at table, the Freiherr said, "I am glad to see, Johanna,

that you are not one of these silly, new-fangled girls. Out in the open air before breakfast,—that's right, child! But 'tis hard walking over the soft snow. Can you ride?"

Johanna replied in the negative.

"Should you like to learn?" her grandfather asked, and when she said 'yes,' with sparkling eyes, he added, "Very well; be ready by half-past twelve, and we will make our first trial. Christian will give orders to have Elinor saddled for you; she's the gentlest creature in the world."

"She threw me," Magelone remarked.

"Your own fault!" the Freiherr exclaimed. "A horse is a noble creature; those who would control it must keep a tight rein upon themselves. It rebels against alternations between childish foolhardiness and childish timidity. By the way, Magelone, when do you wish to begin riding again?"

"Not at all, grandpapa," Magelone replied, with gentle decision.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Freiherr. "A Dönninghausen and not ride on horseback! Why, your cousins Hildegard and Hedwig are perfect Amazons."

"You will have to reconcile yourself to leaving me out of the family in this respect as in several others," Magelone replied, as gently as before, but with a flash in her eyes that betrayed her irritation. "Probably you will find Johanna more truly of the race."

Aunt Thekla and Johann Leopold looked up startled; the Freiherr tossed his head, and his eyes darted fire at Magelone, but his glance fell upon Johanna, who, paler than usual, cast down her eyes, and he controlled his displeasure. Magelone went on eating as if nothing had occurred; the Freiherr turned with some question to Johann Leopold. The meal concluded as monosyllabically as usual, and the members of the household continued as silent after it was finished; and while the Freiherr smoked his morning pipe, Johann Leopold and Magelone played chess, and Aunt Thekla and Johanna busied themselves with some needlework.

Johanna was puzzled by Magelone; the more she reflected upon her words the more she was convinced that they could not have been thoughtlessly uttered, and yet was it possible that that careless air, that gentle smile, those clear eyes, could conceal petty spite?

Her ride with her grandfather put an end to her reflections. Martin, the groom, who, before her grandfather appeared, tried to initiate her somewhat into the rudiments of his art, declared with a grin that the "gracious Fräulein was sure to be a good rider." The Freiherr, when he saw her sitting gayly and confidently in her saddle, said, "Now hold yourself upright, and don't be afraid." And away they went in the clear winter morning, with Leo at their heels.

Johanna returned warmed and refreshed. Her grandfather had not talked much, but the little that he had said, the few questions he had put, had brought them nearer together.

Under the influence of this impression she sat down at her writing-table to tell Ludwig, as she had promised, of her arrival; but she had scarcely written two lines when there was a knock at her door, and Magelone entered. "I am disturbing you," she said, with her sunniest smile, "but I cannot help it. I must beg your pardon,—I said such a horrid thing at the breakfast-table."

She approached Johanna and offered her her hand.

"Never mind," Johanna replied, clasping the delicate hand in both her own. "I thought you spoke hastily."

Magelone shook her head. "No, it was not exactly that." And she seated herself at the writing-table. "You have no idea how childish I am. It vexed me to have grandpapa praise you at my expense, and I had to say that,—*c'était plus fort que moi*."

"'Confessions of a fair soul,'" said Johanna.

"You are laughing. Oh, you are good and kind!" Magelone declared. "I never will be cross to you again. I will love you so dearly. Believe me, Johanna, I have always wanted some one like you."

"You hardly know me," said Johanna.

"But I know that you have everything which I lack. The repose of your manner,—how I envy and admire you for it! You can sit perfectly quiet all the while grandpapa is reading the papers. It drives me about like a will-o'-the-wisp."

"That is your nature," Johanna rejoined. "There is always something about you, not like a will-o'-the-wisp, but like a rippling wave."

Magelone shook her head. "Far more like a will-o'-the-wisp. The wave has its goal, flows in a destined course; I go I know not whither."

"But you are gay and happy; what more would you have?" exclaimed Johanna.

Magelone replied, "Not always. Latterly I have been rather gloomy than gay. What do you think of Johann Leopold?" she added, after a pause.

"I cannot judge yet," Johanna replied. "I have hardly talked with him."

"He does not talk," Magelone interrupted her. "He is just what you have seen him day out and day in. It is the same with every one. Grandpapa is always dictatorial, Aunt Thekla always good and tiresome, Johann Leopold always odd. Doesn't he look like the marble guest?"

"He looks melancholy and ill."

"And yet he has no positive complaint that I know of," said Magelone. "His hobby is chemistry. Whenever he is not on duty with grandpapa he is shut up in his laboratory in the garden, with all sorts of sounds and smells. It is a perfect witch's kitchen there. Can you imagine an odder match than he and myself?"

"Magelone!" cried Johanna. "You do not mean to say——"

"Yes, yes; we wish—or rather we ought to marry," Magelone interposed. "Grandpapa devised the match, and of course it must be. I am a widow; Johann Leopold's betrothed died; I have lost my property; he is the heir. We are equals in rank; he is thirty years old, I am twenty-one. In short, the match is the most suitable that can be imagined."

"But you will not consent?"

"What am I to do?" Magelone asked, shrugging her shoulders. "I am spoiled. Poor Willfried ran through all my money to the last farthing. I have no chance of making conquests in this wilderness; and, besides, who would marry a widow with no money?"

"Whoever loved her."

"Do you believe in love?" asked Magelone. "I don't. All I have seen of what is called love was mere play. People flirt, and try to befool one another, to outdo a rival, but love, which might induce one to contract a disadvantageous marriage, never. Marriage is a business transaction."

"Yours does not seem to have been such," Johanna said.

"Do you suppose I was enamoured of my stout captain?" asked Magelone. "Not in the least! It suited me to marry before I was quite eighteen an officer of the Garde du Corps; it suited me to go to Berlin, and to court; but I never imagined for a moment that Willfried would forego his ballet-girls and his cards for longer than the honeymoon. My folly lay in never reflecting upon how quickly a fortune may be gambled away. My good father ought to have thought of that; but he was ill, and wanted to see me established, as they say, before his death, and so it all happened."

"Poor child!" said Johanna, taking her hand. "It was the fault of circumstances. You will learn to look upon life differently. Only have courage, and hope."

"If I could!" Magelone said, her melancholy smile contrasting oddly with her sparkling eyes. "Do you know I sometimes fancy that I have no heart? It has something to do with my name. The water-witch Magelone, after whom I am called, bequeathed to me her own uncanny nature."

"No, no; you will learn to love," Johanna interrupted. She thought of Otto, and of the way in which he had spoken of Magelone. "You are not actually betrothed yet?" she added.

"Not yet," Magelone replied. "Thus far grandpapa has only informed us both, Johann Leopold and myself, of his desire. He called us into his study and addressed us very solemnly."

"And you?" Johanna asked.

"Johann Leopold bowed, as he always does, like an automaton,—*cela n'engage à rien*,—and I suppose I smiled. But what does it matter what we say? You may be sure that if we employed all the eloquence in the world to combat grandpapa's arrangements it would avail nothing. At Christmas, when all the noble family are assembled here, the betrothal will take place, and at the hour that grandpapa shall appoint we shall stand before the altar and exchange rings whether we will or not."

"That I cannot understand," said Johanna.

"You will understand it when you have once seen how terrible grandpapa's anger is," Magelone rejoined,—"when he frowns, and his eyes flash from beneath his bushy white eyebrows, and his voice thunders and roars. It occurs but rarely, but the terror of it is in our very blood, or has been taught us from childhood, I cannot tell which."

"Did you ever see grandpapa so?" asked Johanna.

"Only once, when Otto, who is very hasty, had boxed the forester's ears. Grandpapa roared out that so to treat an honest man, who could not demand satisfaction for the insult, was the act of a blackguard; Otto was not worthy to bear the name of Dönninghausen. As I tell it it seems nothing, but when grandpapa flew out at the poor boy I really thought he would have felled him to the earth, and every one present—it happened during the charmingly social hour after breakfast—was petrified with horror."

"But grandpapa was right!" exclaimed Johanna. "Cousin Otto must have acknowledged that, for he speaks of him with the greatest reverence, and calls him a nobleman in the fullest sense of the word."

Magelone shrugged her shoulders. "My dear child, that is the Dönninghausen craze. They all

imagine that because they bear this name they are superior to all other human beings; and since they are not so,—I mean the younger generation,—they fall down and worship the old gentleman, in whom the family craze has become flesh and blood. But what have we to do with that?" she went on, jumping up and throwing her arms around Johanna. "You are not weighted with the sacred name. I have, for a while at least, thrown it aside, and I only wish we could really and truly enjoy life. There it goes again!" she added, with an expression of comic despair,—"that dreadful bell, for the second breakfast, and then four vacant hours before it rings again to call us to dinner. Poor Johanna! Day after day passes here, each the exact counterpart of these last twenty-four hours, year out, year in, and there is nothing for it but to lament with Heine's Proserpine,—

> ''Mid corpses pale,
> While Lemurs wail,
> To grieve away my youthful days.'"

Whilst Magelone was revealing this melancholy prospect to the new inmate of the castle, the Freiherr had gone to his sister in the morning-room, where, as he paced to and fro after his wonted fashion, with his hands clasped behind him, he said, "I am surprised and delighted to find how well Johanna suits us. Although she has been here so short a time, I seem nearer to her than to Magelone."

"Yes, because she has more soul," said the old lady.

The Freiherr shrugged his shoulders. "My dear Thekla, what is her soul to me? She is clever and —strange as it sounds, and much as the word irritated me, coming from Magelone—she has race. More than any other of my grandchildren is she flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone."

Aunt Thekla nodded assent, and the Freiherr went on:

"It makes me anxious, too. What is to become of the child? She does not belong in our circle. She is too good to be married to one of these new-fangled noblemen, who, in spite of their descent, are quite ready to throw themselves away upon any peasant's or tradesman's daughter provided she has money; and to allow her to fall back into a rank which would separate her from us entirely,—a great pity, a great pity!"

"But must she of necessity be married?" asked Aunt Thekla.

"Of course!" said the Freiherr.

"I have not been——" the old lady began.

Her brother interrupted her. "But you were betrothed to one your equal in rank. Since you vowed fidelity to your lover before his death, I respected your vow, much as it went against the grain with me."

"Dear Johann, will you not likewise respect the desire of Johann Leopold's heart?" asked Aunt Thekla.

The Freiherr turned short and stood before her. "Has the lad complained,—taken refuge behind a petticoat——?"

"Not at all," his sister interposed. "He has not said a word; I heard it from Magelone. And I know Johann Leopold's heart; I know that he has not yet recovered Albertine's loss."

"Nonsense!" cried the Freiherr. "It is his duty, as the heir, to marry. He knows it perfectly, and when a suitable *partie* is offered him without his looking for her or courting her, I promise you he'll say yes and amen without a word."

Aunt Thekla shook her head dubiously.

"Do you call it a suitable *partie*?" she said. "I fear that Magelone, with her love of amusement and her superficiality, will make Johann Leopold unhappy, or that he will make her so."

"I do not think so," said the Freiherr. "On the contrary, she will spirit him up, and he will tone her down; a very good thing for both. The stronger will get the upper hand, I don't care which it is. My duty is to look out for the continuance of the family intrusted to my care."

"Dear Johann, do not take it amiss, but it strikes me that you look out for it rather too much," the old lady said, timidly.

"Too much!" the Freiherr repeated, pausing again before his sister, and his eyes flashed. "Do you really think that too much can be done in this age of indifference and degeneracy? I can understand such a thought in the younger generation, which is for the most part senseless and objectless, and finds it easiest to swim with the current. But I—I hoped you knew this without needing my assertion—I have sworn to stand fast as long as I can, and to hold fast as much as I may. We have been taught, and we have believed, that, like everything else on earth, the differences of rank are instituted and decreed by the Almighty. Since when has this not been so?"

He paused, and seemed to expect a reply, but the increasing violence of his tone and manner had intimidated his sister. She sat mute, with downcast eyes; and after a pause he went on:

"I do not wish to find fault with those who think otherwise. 1848 thinned our ranks. But for those

who believe as I do it is all the more an imperative duty to assert themselves. I have done so. I have made great sacrifices to my convictions, and I feel that I have thereby purchased the right, so long as my eyes are open to the light, to provide for Dönninghausen according to the dictates of my reason and my conscience. If you think I do too much—well, I must endure that reproach."

The old lady went up to her brother. "Dear Johann," she said, laying her hand upon his arm, "how can you suppose that any one of us would reproach you? We know that you always do what is best, and we thank you from our hearts."

"That I don't believe, neither is it necessary," the Freiherr interrupted her. "I do my confounded duty, fulfil my obligations,—*basta!* Has not the lad, Johann Leopold, had his own way hitherto in everything? He has studied what he chose, where he chose; he has travelled for years; has been betrothed to the girl whom he loved, and what is the result? He has come to be a mollycoddle and a bookworm. My successor, the Lord of Dönninghausen, must be none of that. At all events, an attempt must be made to spirit him up by a marriage with Magelone, and so the betrothal is fixed for Christmas, the marriage for Easter. But come, Thekla, the bell rang some time ago."

CHAPTER VII.

JOHANNA TO LUDWIG.

"DÖNNINGHAUSEN, Dec. 19, 1873.

"... I have been here just a fortnight to-day, and feel entirely at home. You cannot fancy how, after the sorrow and agitation through which I so lately passed, I am soothed and rested by the quiet life here, with its regular methodical occupations. I accompany my grandfather every morning in his rides to inspect his saw-mill, his wood-cutting, and his farms, and in the evening I read aloud to him the newspapers and magazines, an office silently transferred to me by Johann Leopold. In the course of the day I go with Aunt Thekla to see her poor people and the sick in the village, or we sew, or knit Christmas-presents for her protégées. Aunt Thekla is a gentle kindly soul. When Magelone awhile ago laughed at us for taking such pains to manufacture what could so easily be bought in any town, she said, 'You cannot imagine how I enjoy the thought that the work of my hands, which would else have nothing to do, may keep certain little feet warm as they run to school on some cold morning, or may help to make the winter less intolerable for the aged and bedridden.' Magelone could not understand this, or perhaps she did not choose to understand it. She is a puzzle to me; I cannot discover whether she is really superficial by nature, or whether she tries to become so. She wants to be entertained, amused, but every serious book tires her, all really fine music gives her the headache, although she is not frightened by technical difficulties, and in conversation she insists upon changing the subject if it turns upon anything save dress and society. Nevertheless, she is admirably endowed intellectually as well as physically, and the charm that she had for me when I first saw her has grown with time. There is something odd and striking about her that rivets one's interest. She is really short in stature, and yet her graceful lithe figure in her long trains seems that of a tall, slender woman; her hair is light brown or golden, according as the light falls on it; her eyes one would call blue, another gray, and a third green, and they would all be right; her smile is that of a child, but in an instant there will be something arch, mocking, even sneering, in it. One moment she will call me awkward, pedantic, the next I am her comfort, her stay, the friend for whom she has been longing. For a moment her whim will be enthusiasm, and on a sudden she will turn herself and everybody else into ridicule. Whether she enjoys doing this or not I cannot say; I suspect she hardly knows herself.

"Johann Leopold's seeming indifference to her is very extraordinary. Although she tells me that she thinks him 'awfully tiresome,' she sometimes makes a brilliant display of coquetry in his honour, on which occasions he gazes at her with lack-lustre eyes, not smiling at all, and even, if possible, making no reply to her sallies. And these two are to marry each other. Can you understand it?

"This morning I had a little adventure that gave me some insight into Johann Leopold's character; until then I really had not discovered in him one human emotion. Grandpapa had an attack of gout, consequently could not ride out, and was annoyed that his absence would delay some operations going on in the new clearing. I offered to ride thither with Martin; so I received my instructions and set forth.

"Beyond the village, in the valley, we met a labourer's wife, who told me with tears that she was obliged to run to the drug-shop, at least a mile and a half distant, for some medicine for her sick husband, who must thus be left alone with a little girl only six years old. Of course I sent the woman back to her patient's bedside, despatching Martin upon her errand, and struck into my beloved forest-path up the mountain alone, or rather under Leo's protection.

"I had never ridden in this direction except in grandpapa's company, when I had

enjoyed immensely the grand old beeches at the beginning of the way, the views of the village of Dönninghausen, and of the opposite hills, which open out as the path ascends the mountain-side, leading to the most magnificent hemlocks that I have ever seen. Of the realm of magic and enchantment of which I dreamed as I looked at my mother's sketch of Dönninghausen I found no trace.

"To-day, however, the forest-sprites seemed determined to lead me astray. Although, as far as I knew, I turned into the forest at the right point, the hemlocks would not appear. The path seemed uncommonly steep; on the left, crags which I did not recognize thrust themselves forth from the shrubbery, but yet I could not make up my mind to turn back. Perhaps this way also might lead to my destination. At all events, fresh footprints in the snow were evidence that both men and horses had preceded me shortly before; and I rode on and on, although forced to believe that my goal lay more to the right. The desire to explore had taken possession of me. I could not but go on! The air was exhilarating in its freshness, the sun shone, the snow glittered upon the trees and bushes; the rocks on my left grew more huge; gnarled roots twisted out from crevice and fissure; a flock of screaming crows flew overhead, making the only sound to be heard, save the rustling among the trees and the snorting of my horse.

"At last—I had been riding perhaps an hour—I reached a small plateau shaded by oaks; across my way ran a rude fence, the gate in which my clever Leo opened, and soon after a peaked roof, with a smoking chimney, appeared among some hemlocks. As I approached, the horns nailed above the door told that it was a forester's lodge, and I was greeted by the loud barking of five or six dogs,—the only living creatures to be seen.

"I alighted, fastened Elinor's bridle to a tree, and, opening the door, entered—followed by the noisy pack, which Leo haughtily disdained to notice—a hall, around which were several doors. I knocked at the right-hand one of these,—no answer; at the left, where I heard voices, and instantly the door was opened. An elderly woman, with an air of distress, appeared, and in the background of the long, dim apartment there stood, by a curtained bed, a figure which seemed familiar to me. 'Johann Leopold!' I exclaimed involuntarily; and I was not mistaken: he whom I addressed turned and came quickly towards me.

"'Johanna, what brings you here?' he cried, with a certain confusion of manner; and when I replied that I had lost my way, he begged the woman to take me to her sitting-room, promising to join me in a few moments.

"She conducted me to the opposite room; hurriedly offered me some refreshment; begged pardon for leaving me alone, since she must assist the gentleman with his patient, and vanished.

"I could not but see that my arrival here had been inopportune, and I was just pondering whether I had not better make good my retreat without waiting for Johann Leopold, when there arose a loud barking again, and a forester whom I had now and then met when with my grandfather passed the window.

"'Wife!' he called out, as he entered the house, and then I heard him ask what the deuce was the meaning of the Dönninghausen horse with the side-saddle, and whether the old lady had come. I could not hear the woman's reply, but the man declared in a harsh tone that he had had enough of secrets; the fellow must leave the house to-day, for no one could expect him to risk his daily bread for the sake of such a good-for-nothing. He must leave immediately.

"'Fritz! Fritz! it may be his death, and he is my brother!' the woman wailed. The man cut short her words with an oath; but Johann Leopold's voice was now heard telling him to be quiet, and all three came into the room together,—the woman with her apron at her eyes, the man with gloomy looks, and Johann Leopold with an air of energy that surprised me.

"'Dear Johanna,' he said, as the forester bowed sullenly, 'chance has here made you acquainted with circumstances which must be withheld from our grandfather. You surely will promise me and these worthy people to say nothing of what you have seen, will you not?'

"'With all my heart,' I replied.

"The forester shrugged his shoulders. 'A young lady's promise——' he began.

"'Kruger, remember to whom you are speaking,' Johann Leopold interrupted him authoritatively. 'My cousin's promise is as my own. I am going now to saddle my horse, and meanwhile you will explain the matter to her.'

"With these words he left the room, and the woman followed him. The forester gave him an angry look and then turned to me.

"'There's not much to explain,' he said, crossly. 'Red Jakob, my wife's brother, is a good-for-nothing fellow, a brawler and a poacher, whom our old master—Jakob used to be a servant at the castle—dismissed from his service. But he is always coming back here

from Brunswick, where he had work in a saw-mill. Early last Sunday I caught him in the very act of aiming at a fine doe. I shouted to him. He made a leap over the rocks to get off; fell, his gun went off, and a bullet pierced his arm. What was I to do? I had to get him up here; but if the master should hear of it the fellow would be sent to jail, and I never could outlive the disgrace.'

"The man's blunt manner pleased me.

"'Grandpapa certainly shall not hear of it from me, forester,' I said, and offered him my hand. He looked at me in surprise, reddened, and took my hand, grasping it so tightly that I could hardly help crying out. 'Thanks, Fräulein,' he said, simply, and, as Johann Leopold now made his appearance with his horse, we left the lodge.

"While the forester helped me mount my horse, Johann Leopold addressed him again in an arrogant tone: 'Remember, Kruger, that I positively forbid the man to be moved. Until he is recovered he stays here as my patient. Everything that he needs is to be charged to me.'

"The forester's wife broke out into protestations of gratitude, her husband muttered some unintelligible words, and we rode off.

"When Johann Leopold learned my errand, he offered to guide me by a road over the mountain to the clearing, and we agreed to tell grandpapa that we had met, but to say nothing further. Johann Leopold told me that 'Red Jakob' had been his most cherished playmate when they were boys. No one could approach him in the knowledge of the woods and fields. He knew every plant, every stone, and every animal of the country; the habits of the game, the holes of the foxes, and the nests of the birds.

"'He was a born Nimrod,' he added, 'and would have made a far better lord of Dönninghausen than I shall ever be; but in the sphere of life to which he belongs his tastes and talents are a stumbling block to him.'

"I asked him whether he did not think that a place could be found in the world for every kind of talent. He shook his head. 'There may be a place,' he replied, 'but occupied by some one who does not feel himself authorized to resign it. Take me for an example. No one knows better than I how unfit I am to be the heir of Dönninghausen. My capabilities and my inclination lead me to the study, or to the bedside of the sick. Nevertheless I cannot decide to resign my position, and when an inferior opposes me, as the forester did awhile ago, my hot blood, or my acquired arrogance, asserts the mastery, and I should like to put the fellow in irons. And yet I am theoretically convinced of the equal rights of mankind.'

"This conversation gave me food for reflection. I wonder whether Johann Leopold acquiesces in a marriage with Magelone, from an idea of the requirements of his rank, or whether, under apparent indifference, he does not really feel an interest in the enchanting siren. As I have been mistaken with respect to his outward life, I may also be in appreciation of his mind and heart. For example, during our ride I learned that instead of leading the owlish existence which Magelone ascribes to him, he is the physician of the poor for miles around the country, providing them himself with all the needed medicaments. My grandfather must know nothing of this; he would call it all quackery, and would consider it an insult offered to worthy old Dr. Francke, who has been the physician at Dönninghausen for the last thirty years.

"As for myself, I get on very well with grandpapa. I was rather uncertain as to how he would receive the intelligence that I had sent off Martin and undertaken the forest ride alone, but he was pleased and praised me. 'That's right, child; never delay where help is needed, is my maxim.' Nevertheless, he is usually, as he says himself, apt to be cross. To be tied to his room and to his arm-chair by gout at Christmas-time, when all the family assemble here, is a hard trial for an impatient temperament. Aunt Thekla says we must look for stormy times."

"December 23.

"I have not been able to write for the last few days, but this letter must go to-day, that you may have it for a Christmas-greeting. Day before yesterday the cousins arrived with husbands and belongings,—Hildegard, with two children; Hedwig, with three, beside nurses and lady's-maids. Both mothers look like Aunt Thekla,—tall, slender, fair, and rather stately. They have rosy cheeks, abundant hair, and bright light-blue eyes, are vain of their looks, of their husbands and children, of their name and social position, and mutually endeavour to outshine each other in the splendour of their attire. With Magelone they wage a very amusing petty warfare. Their husbands, twin-brothers, are strikingly alike,—fair and stately like their wives, but better-natured, gayer, more at their ease. Eduard, Hedwig's husband, distinguished himself in the Schleswig-Holstein war, whence come his stiffened arm and several orders,—a *crève-cœur*, as Magelone maintains, for Hildegard, whose Karl has only won peaceful laurels as an orator at agricultural meetings. To-morrow afternoon the brothers of the sisters are coming. The festival takes place in the evening.

"Grandpapa is unfortunately still obliged to be pushed from one room to another in his

wheeled chair. His great-grand-children must be with him as much as possible, and when the three boys, respectively six, five, and four years old,—the little girls are still in arms,—are romping about the spacious drawing-room, his face clears up. His grand-daughters do not seem very near to him, and it must pain him at these family gatherings that he has no children to link him with the younger generation.

"I had one distressing moment with him yesterday. Before the second breakfast he sends off the post-boy. Every inmate of the household brings or sends the letters, which grandpapa himself locks into the bag. I had a Christmas-gift to send to Lisbeth, and took the package to his room myself. How his eyes flashed at me as he read the address!

"'A Christmas-gift for my little sister,' I replied to their mute inquiry.

"'You have no sister, and no friendly correspondence with those people shall be carried on from my house!' grandpapa fairly roared. This was the voice of which Magelone had told me. But I took courage, and said, in a trembling voice indeed, and without looking up, 'Dear grandfather, I might have sent my package secretly——'

"He stared at me, and his brow cleared. 'Do you love the child?' he asked.

"'Yes, grandpapa!' I cried; 'and if you could see the dear little creature——'

"'Enough, enough!' he interrupted me; and, laying the package aside, he added, 'It shall go, Johanna, and you have done well.'

"Since then he has been kinder than ever to me, perhaps on account of my cousins, who tried to treat me coldly. The old man has so emphatic a way of saying 'My grand-daughter Johanna,' that they changed their tactics, and are now almost amiable to me. Nevertheless, I like Dönninghausen better without them, and am looking forward with pleasure to our quiet days when they shall have departed."

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTMAS AT DÖNNINGHAUSEN.

Christmas-eve had arrived. As was the custom, the festival for old and young at Dönninghausen took place in the late afternoon, before the principal meal of the day, and even with Johanna's help Aunt Thekla had much ado to be ready with the arrangement of the presents at the appointed time. The gifts for the members of the family were laid out on long tables to the right and left of the brilliantly-decorated fir-tree in the centre of the ball-room, while smaller Christmas-trees sparkled and shone upon tables ranged against the wall, where were the presents for the servants and the castle pensioners. When the bells of the village rang in the Holy Christmas-tide, Aunt Thekla's silver bell was also rung, the doors into the corridors were opened, and as the flood of light streamed out upon the expectant group outside, there arose, sung by old and young, the strains of the Freiherr's favorite hymn,—

> "He comes, He comes, the Holy One,
> Filled with His might divine."

Involuntarily, Johanna, standing beside Aunt Thekla beneath the Christmas-tree, folded her hands: memories of vanished years crowded upon her heart; but, as she turned aside to wipe away her starting tears, her look encountered her cousin Otto's eyes fixed upon her. He had arrived in the course of the afternoon. She had not seen him before, and he now nodded to her by way of greeting. She courtesied, and was aware of the same mingled sensation of timidity and confidence that had possessed her at their first interview.

Beside Otto stood Magelone, more elfin-like than ever, in a long, closely-fitting pale-green silk, with her sweet smile and strangely-gleaming eyes.

"Is it Otto's presence that makes her thus brilliantly beautiful? It is strange that grandpapa has never destined these two for each other," thought Johanna.

The hymn was ended, the Freiherr was wheeled into the room, the rest crowded in after him, and soon the delight of the children made itself heard, and the poor stammered their grateful acknowledgments, while Hildegard and Hedwig cast inquisitive, unfriendly glances away from their own rich gifts towards a morocco case which the Freiherr handed to Johanna.

"Open it, child!" he said. She obeyed. A rococo *parure* of rubies and diamonds lay gleaming upon the yellowish-white satin inside the case.

"Your grandmother's bridal jewels, your mother's inheritance," said the Freiherr.

The sisters exchanged looks of indignation. Johanna kissed her grandfather's hand.

"I thank you; the double memory makes it very precious," she said, and closed the case. As she did so, Otto approached her.

"At last, Fräulein Johanna," he said, and held out his hand. "How glad I am to see you again!"

"Fräulein!" cried the Freiherr. "Boy, what do you mean? You should call the daughter of your father's sister 'Johanna.'"

"Most gladly if I may. Will you allow it, dear Johanna?" said Otto, bestowing upon her a cousinly kiss. Blushing, she released herself from him, as he looked into her eyes with a glance of momentary triumph. "To our friendship," he said, gravely, and then the children came rushing up and separated them.

A telegram was handed to the Freiherr; he read it with a lowering brow.

"How unfortunate!" he cried. "Waldemar tells me that important business will not allow of his being with us before New Year's day. This Christmas it vexes me particularly."

"I am delighted," Magelone whispered to Johanna. "It is a respite, at least for me. The betrothal of the future head of the family cannot possibly be announced unless all its august members are present."

Johanna looked at her and shook her head. "That betrothal will never take place," she said; "Otto will not allow it."

"Otto! What do you mean?" asked Magelone. "You have hardly seen us together."

"Long enough to see how he adores you."

"Mere gallantry, child; nothing more," said Magelone. "Remember, pray, he has debts, I have nothing, and we are sensible people."

And she fluttered away to her presents, where the next instant Otto joined her. "May I take you in to dinner?" he asked.

"That is at present Johann Leopold's privilege, or task. As which do you think he regards it?"

"Can you ask?" said Otto. "He is pursuing you with the glare of a veritable Othello!"

"How romantic! I see only his usually melancholy sheep's-eyes," said Magelone. "He stares at me, but it is a question whether he sees me. Others, on the contrary, see too much; discover that we, that is, you and I, are flirting with each other."

"Flirting!" he interrupted her. "How can my serious devotion——"

"Oh, hush!" she cried. "You know grandpapa's plans. Johann Leopold's future betrothed must listen to nothing of that kind. You ought to court Johanna."

"It pleases my sovereign to jest," said Otto, bending over her with a smile.

"Not at all," she rejoined. "I am rather laying my commands upon my slave to turn his talent to account."

He bowed again. "The command shall be obeyed," he said. "Moreover, obedience will not be difficult. Cousin Johanna has improved wonderfully in appearance."

Magelone glanced hastily towards Johanna. "You are right: she has gained life and colour;" and she added, mentally, "Is he trying to make me jealous? He shall not succeed."

In spite of this resolution, she could not away with a slightly disagreeable sensation when, sitting beside Johann Leopold at table, she noticed the assiduity with which Otto, who was Johanna's neighbour, obeyed her command, and how Johanna's eyes sparkled as she talked with her cousin. If Magelone could only have revenged herself upon him! But words, looks, and smiles were lavished in vain upon Johann Leopold, who was as monosyllabic as ever.

After dinner, in the drawing-room, Otto came to Magelone just as she was going to join Aunt Thekla and her cousins around the fire. "Not there," he entreated; "come to the piano; it is so long since I heard you play."

"Lost pains," was her laughing reply, as she followed him to the other end of the room. "You never will convince me that you care for music. Did you ever really know what I was playing?"

"And if I did not, it was your fault. How can I think of aught else but your beauty, which has so bewitched me, you enchanting siren?"

"Ah, you're wrong. Sirens enchant chiefly by their song," she rejoined in a teasing tone, as she sat down at the piano and struck a few chords. "Well, Sir Enthusiast for music, what will you have?"

"Play anything; never mind what."

"Last autumn you had a passion for Chopin,—have you forgotten? Do you no longer recognize your favourite?"

She began to play. Otto sat beside her and turned over the leaves of her music when she signed to him to do so. As often as he leaned forward she felt, with a thrill, his breath upon her neck, and sometimes he whispered, so low as to be almost inaudible, a word or two in jest in which there seemed a tone of suppressed passion.

"Does he conduct himself thus towards Johanna?" she asked herself. "Impossible!" her vanity made reply, and the *berceuse* which she was playing assumed the character of a triumphal march.

The moods of the group around the fire were less harmonious. The Freiherr had retired immediately after dinner; the brothers Wildenhayn and Johann Leopold, engaged in a political discussion, had withdrawn to such a distance that they could not overhear the ladies' conversation, and Hildegard soothed her injured feelings by animadverting upon Johanna's position in the family.

It was certainly a matter of course that grandpapa should take charge of the destitute orphan, since in a certain sense she was one of the family; but was there any need to treat her as an equal? It was not only an insult to the other members of the family, it was an injury to Johanna herself. It would end in her forgetting her true position; she would learn to form expectations which could not be fulfilled hereafter, and she would lose by her arrogance the regard of the relatives upon whom, after grandpapa's death, she must needs be dependent.

"I do not think you are right there," Aunt Thekla at last interposed, having long tried in vain to oppose her gentle remonstrances to the torrent of Hildegard's speech. "My brother is sure to provide for Johanna."

"I think so too," cried Hedwig; "and I wonder, Hildegard, that you do not see it yourself. After grandpapa's giving her that valuable *parure*——"

"Yes, that *parure*!" Hildegard interposed. "With all your prejudice in the girl's favour, you must admit, dear aunt, that grandmamma's bridal *parure* does not belong of right to her. She can do nothing with it; she never can wear it. She does not belong in society; even grandpapa could hardly succeed in introducing an actor's daughter."

Hildegard spoke these last words in a voice intentionally raised; for Johanna, who had been preparing the coffee as usual at the table before the sofa, was just passing with the first cup for Aunt Thekla. The trembling of her hand betrayed that she had heard the malicious remark, and Hildegard looked after her exultantly as she returned to the coffee-table.

But Johann Leopold had also heard and seen, and he came to Johanna's assistance.

"Dear Magelone," he said, going to the piano,—the *berceuse* was just ended, and Otto was expressing his admiration for the music and for the performer,—"dear Magelone, will you preside at the coffee-table to-day? Johanna has exhausted herself with Christmas-eve preparations; she looks terribly pale and weary."

Magelone was ready on the instant to comply. "Johann Leopold jealous,—charming!" she said to herself; adding aloud, "Indeed, Johanna dear, you do look wretched. Sit there in the corner of the sofa, and I will pour out coffee for you."

"I would rather go to bed," Johanna replied. And, bidding good-night to Magelone and to Johann Leopold, whose kindness she had perfectly understood, she slipped out of the room, unperceived, she thought, by its other inmates. But in the corridor Otto joined her. "Dear Johanna," he said, "here is a little Christmas-token that had no place in the joyous confusion of the evening. Do not look at it until you are in your own room; but, before you go, tell me how you really are." And he gazed into her eyes with the expression that always confused her.

"It is nothing; I shall be quite well to-morrow," she stammered, mechanically, taking the little packet he handed her, and then hastening up-stairs to her apartment, while he returned to the drawing-room.

Why should her heart beat so fast? Her trembling hands could scarcely steady themselves sufficiently to light her candle; but when they had done so, and she had unwrapped Otto's Christmas-gift, she said to herself that it was the suspicion of what it was that had so moved her. Otto had given her a small miniature of her father, taken from a well-known life-size bust. She gazed at it lost in thought. What would she not have given to be able to pour out her gratitude to Otto on the instant, to speak with him of the departed one whom he had known and revered! Otto had been the first at the close of her old life to bid her welcome on the threshold of the new existence, and he was the only one in all this new existence who appreciated her love and veneration for her father.

When she met him the next morning at breakfast, he learned from her eyes and voice even more than from her words how great had been the pleasure his little gift had given her.

"I knew you would like it," he said, simply, as he conducted her to the breakfast-table; and, although no further allusion could be made then to the picture, their intercourse seemed more cordial than ever before.

Hildegard contemplated the pair with an unfriendly mien. They did not appear to notice it, and therefore the careful sister judged it best at last to signify to Otto that he was bestowing his attentions upon a most unsuitable object. The Freiherr's question as to whether the clear winter's day might not be made available for a sleigh-ride afforded her an opportunity to carry out her intention.

"Yes, dear grandpapa, a sleigh-ride would be glorious," she said; "I would merely propose that we

should also pay a visit. Do you not think," she went on, looking around the circle at the table, "that it would be well to call at Klausenburg? When church is over the sleighs can take us there, and we can be back in time for the second breakfast."

"Will there be room for all of us?" asked Hedwig.

"Certainly," Hildegard replied. "Magelone and Johann Leopold can go in the small sleigh, and Eduard can drive, and the large sleigh will easily hold Aunt Thekla, us two, and Otto, with Karl to drive us."

"I will resign my place to Johanna," said Aunt Thekla.

Johanna was about to declare that she would rather stay at home, but Hildegard gave her no time. "Johanna at Klausenburg?" she exclaimed. "That will never do. I, at least, have not the courage to take her there."

"Make your mind easy; that is my affair," the Freiherr interposed, and his eyes flashed at the speaker. "On New Year's day we give our customary dinner, at which I shall present my granddaughter to the neighbourhood, and I promise you that she will meet with the reception I desire her to have. Christian, take me to my room."

The servant wheeled the old man away, and every one rose from table. Johann Leopold began to converse with Johanna upon indifferent subjects, and involuntarily she became interested. Hedwig whispered to her discomfited sister, "Rather awkward of you, my dear." Otto asked his brother-in-law, Karl, how he could allow Hildegard to display such want of tact, and was answered by a shrug of the shoulders, whilst Aunt Thekla tried to dispel every one's embarrassment by reminding them that it was time to make ready for church.

"Come, let us go together!" said Magelone, putting her arm through Johanna's and leaving the room with her. "Let me entreat you not to look so grieved," she went on. "Don't let that stupid woman vex you; you know how the others love you."

Johanna pressed Magelone's arm, and went up-stairs with her in silence. At the door of her room she said, "You must go to church without me to-day; I cannot feel devotional after what has happened."

"Oh, Johanna, we ought not to bear malice! Be kind, and come," Magelone entreated; but with a decided "I cannot!" Johanna left her and shut herself up in her own room. She could not say to Magelone that she was far less annoyed by Hildegard's hostility than by the prospect of being thrust into a society where she was not welcome.

"If I could but get away!" she thought, as she looked from the window out over the wintry landscape. "Yes, away, away, if but for an hour!" she said, aloud. And putting on her wraps, and accompanied by Leo, barking joyously, she hurried out into the park, and thence to the path that led up the mountain from the village into the forest.

Her heart grew lighter in the fresh winter air. She walked on quickly, upwards beneath the snow-laden boughs, upon which the sunlight played in thousands of prisms, and from which the glittering dust came powdering down upon her. At length the sight of the forester's lodge, its windows sparkling in the sunshine, warned her to return.

Since she had come thus far, she would inquire after Johann Leopold's protégé. Greeted and accompanied by the barking dogs, she was going towards the door, when close by the house a girl, very poorly clad, with a shawl about her head and shoulders, came out of the thicket. The slender figure stooped low as it passed the windows, softly lifted the latch of the house-door, and went in.

Johanna followed her. She turned to the door of the room opposite the sitting-room, and laid a little, blue, half-frozen hand upon the latch. "Jakob!" she whispered, as she tried to open it gently. But on the instant the door of the sitting room opened, and the forester's wife in a black gown and a cap with white ribbons made her appearance, the hymn-book in which she had been reading in her hand.

"Christine!" she exclaimed, angrily, in an undertone, and without noticing Johanna she rushed at the girl. "Christine, how dare you? Go away this moment!" And she tried to push the girl away from the door, but her hand held fast the latch. "For God's sake," a poor little pleading voice cried, "let me only say one word to Jakob!"

"Not one," Frau Kruger interposed. "Go this instant, I tell you!" And she raised the book as if to strike the girl.

"Frau Kruger!" Johanna exclaimed, approaching the pair. They turned. The girl's shawl had fallen back from her head, and a pale youthful face, the large dark eyes swollen with weeping, met Johanna's look, while the violence of the forester's wife was instantly replaced by extreme courtesy.

"Oh, Fräulein!" she said, with a curtsey, "do not take it amiss. I never like to harm a living creature, but Christine is a shameless girl, who will persist in worrying Jakob."

"I worry him?" the girl said, quickly. "Why, since his accident I have never even been allowed to see him. Have pity; let me bid him good-by. I am going to Oberroda to-day, but I cannot go so."

And she burst into tears.

"Frau Kruger, be persuaded," Johanna entreated. "The poor girl——"

"Oh, Fräulein, do not waste your compassion," the forester's wife interrupted her, with an angry glance at the girl. "Christine has always been a bad, wilful creature. She has had a child, and wants to force Jakob to marry her, but he will have nothing to do with her."

"Jakob have nothing to do with me? That is not true," cried the girl. "He will not forsake me, and I will not forsake him. And he loved the little child dearly, and now he does not even know that it is dead. I must tell him." She hid her face and sobbed aloud.

"How can you be so hard-hearted?" said Johanna. "You must let the girl speak with the sick man."

"That she may make him worse with her whining," said Frau Kruger. "If she loves him as much as she says she does, she might spare him her blubbering. And what of it? It is lucky that the Lord took the brat from her."

"Frau Kruger!" Johanna exclaimed, indignantly; and Christine, who had grown deadly pale, drew the shawl over her head and silently left the house.

"Oh, Fräulein, if you but knew! Have the kindness to come in here and let me tell you," the forester's wife begged, all smiles and servility again; but Johanna left her and followed Christine.

The girl ran down the forest-path like a hunted creature. Suddenly her strength seemed to fail her, and she leaned against a tree.

Johanna hurried to her. "Where is your home? I will take you there," she said kindly.

"Home? I have none!" the girl replied, with a wild look. "My brother has turned me out of doors, and they will not let me go to Jakob. His sister says I am too bad for Jakob; my brother says Jakob is too bad for me. Ah, good heavens! if we are both such wretches, we are well suited to each other."

The depth of bitterness in her words contrasted so oddly with her gentle child-like face that Johanna's sympathy was still more strongly enlisted. She put her arm round her to support the slender, trembling figure, and walked with her slowly down the mountain. After a while Christine said, "You are so kind, Fräulein. Herr Forester Kruger told me about you. He is far kinder to me than his wife."

"What is Frau Kruger's grudge against you?" asked Johanna.

"At first it could only have been that I am poor and low-born," the girl replied. "My father was only a cowherd, it is true, and Jakob is a farmer's son. But for all that, he wanted to marry me, and if the others had consented all would have been different with me now."

"Who are the others?" Johanna asked again.

"The forester's wife opposed it most. She worked upon my guardian and my brother, and they forbade me to go with Jakob. So we had to see each other in secret, for he would not give me up, nor would I him. And then that happened that ought not to have been."

She was silent. For a while they walked along without speaking, and then Christine said, timidly, "Please, kind Fräulein, do not think hardly of us. Ah, how hard Jakob tried to have us married! and when the child came he loved it so dearly,—so dearly! And now it has been lying under the snow for a week, and Jakob is up there with his cruel sister, and I must go away. I have taken service at Oberroda, and oh, it is too, too hard to go without seeing Jakob, or letting him know anything about me and my trouble!"

Johanna spoke soothingly to her, promised to give her news of Jakob,—she depended upon Johann Leopold's help,—and when they reached the cross-road leading to the village, the girl took leave of her with a lighter heart and grateful words. Johanna looked thoughtfully after her. The sound of the Christmas bells struck clearly upon her ear in the crisp, frosty air. Where was the "Peace on earth" that it should have heralded to mankind?

CHAPTER IX.

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

The sleighing-party did not return to the second breakfast. The dinner-hour first assembled the various members of the family.

"Was grandpapa angry?" Magelone whispered to Johanna. Just then the Freiherr was wheeled into the room, and his frowning brow answered her question only too clearly.

Hildegard was not to be intimidated.

"Do not be angry, dear grandpapa," she said, with an air of arrogant ease quite her own. "It was my fault that we stayed so long; I had not seen the Klausenburgs for an age, and they begged us

so to stay that it was impossible to say no."

"But you found it quite possible to keep us waiting here," the Freiherr rejoined. "Another time please to remember that such want of consideration has never been the rule of my household, and never shall be. Be seated!"

"I told you so," Karl Wildenhayn whispered to his wife as she passed him.

"You are all cowards!" she rejoined, and then seated herself with head erect and knitted brows on the left of the Freiherr, for whom she seemed no longer to have any existence.

The meal was very monosyllabic. Now and then Otto would whisper something to Johanna, and she would listen with a smile. Then Johann Leopold, who looked paler and more weary than usual, would look up from his plate, gaze at her, and then sink again into his usual apathy, from which Magelone to-day did not try to rouse him.

When they went to the drawing-room she left Johann Leopold, and, approaching Otto, said, "Pray suggest some folly to me,—I am dying of ennui."

"'Ah! fly with me, and be my love,'"

he began to sing in an undertone, and his eyes expressed the passion which was suppressed in his half-teasing voice. Magelone shrugged her shoulders.

"Nonsense! even the poet himself called that tragedy," she replied. "I want something merry to do. But you are afflicted with the Dönninghausen stupidity."

"How unjust!" cried Otto. "Was it not a merry thing to whisk you away from Klausenburg—right from under Johann Leopold's long nose—into the sleigh with me, and drive off with you?"

Magelone laughed. Otto continued passionately: "I should have liked to carry you off to the end of the world. The thought of seeing you in Johann Leopold's arms makes me frantic. Why do you look at me so disdainfully, and what does that smile mean?"

"Perhaps it means what did you whisper to Johanna at table with just the same look you wear at present?"

"I thought I was to obey orders and pay court to her," said Otto. "Do you command the contrary?"

"Indeed I do not."

"It really would be better to continue the farce," Otto went on in a graver tone. "Johann Leopold's jealousy is evident; it would be better to lead him upon a false scent——"

"And beguile two female hearts at the same time," Magelone interposed, laughing. "Oh, Don Juan, Don Juan!"

"Play the 'Don Giovanni' overture," Otto begged her. "You play it magnificently."

"Not to-day. There must be nothing but chorales to-day," she said. And with a coquettish glance she turned away towards the fire, where were her cousins and Aunt Thekla.

During this conversation Johann Leopold had approached Johanna at her coffee-table.

"How do you like your new cousin?" he asked; "but I need hardly ask, for you seem to have become excellent friends with him since last evening."

"Not quite since last evening," Johanna replied, blushing slightly. "He came to see me just after my father's death, and was so kind——"

"I can easily imagine it," Johann Leopold interrupted her. "He knows how to strike the right chord everywhere, modern Piper of Hamelin that he is. Have a care of him."

She looked up at him inquiringly, but the telltale blush would return; involuntarily she turned away to conceal it, and suddenly, she did not know why, she remembered the lovers whom she had promised to befriend. "I have a favour to ask of you," she said, gravely. "It concerns Red Jakob."

"What is it?" he asked, taking a chair by her side; and, encouraged by his sympathy, she told him of the scene in the forest lodge and of poor Christine's sorrows. Johann Leopold readily promised his help to the girl, and together they discussed what should be done.

"Let me beg you, Magelone, to look towards the coffee-table," said Hildegard, after she had watched the pair for a while. "They have been engaged in that interesting conversation for a quarter of an hour. Are you not jealous?"

Magelone laughed. "Jealous of Johanna? Oh, no," she declared, confidently.

"Don't be so sure, my dear child," was Hildegard's sneering reply. "In spite of your irresistible charms, you have never succeeded since I have been here in making Johann Leopold talk as he is now talking to Johanna."

"Yes, he actually seems transformed," said Hedwig. "He certainly is talking and listening now, while beside you he sits like a wooden doll."

"Of course, ''tis love, 'tis love that makes men mute,'" Magelone said, with a smile; but her eyes gleamed, and a sensation of mistrust of Johanna stirred in her heart,—faint and fleeting, it is true, but it was the beginning, nevertheless, of a change in the relations between the cousins.

The next morning Johann Leopold rode to the forest lodge. When he returned, meeting Johanna in the corridor, he told her that the rough fellow had wept bitterly when told of the death of his child, and had entreated that he might see Christine.

"It would be best for you to go up to the lodge with her to-morrow morning early," he added; "it would lighten the weary way for her, and I will be there to take her to the invalid."

"I will certainly have her there," Johanna replied, "punctually at eleven o'clock. Oh, Johann Leopold, how kind you are!"

They had just reached the drawing-room door. Magelone, gliding noiselessly down-stairs, heard Johanna's last words.

"What has he been doing that is so kind?" she asked. "Tell me, that I may admire it too."

Johanna was embarrassed. Her cousin came to her assistance. "Never mind, my dear Magelone," he said, in his usual cold, deliberate tone. "You would consider it the mere dilettantism of philanthropy, upon which you but lately expended your ridicule."

As he spoke he opened the drawing-room door. Magelone passed him with an angry blush. How silly to take her words so seriously! Of course Johanna never said such things. The girl was growing positively disagreeable.

According to agreement, Johanna presented herself with her protégée at the forester's the next morning. Christine could not yet believe that she should see Red Jakob. "His sister will certainly prevent it," she kept saying.

But Johann Leopold's authority had successfully opposed the forester's wife. As soon as she saw Johanna and Christine approaching she sullenly withdrew, and contented herself with watching them through the chink of the door.

She did not see much. Johann Leopold went to meet the visitors. "Come, my child, Jakob is expecting you," he said, with a gentle kindness that aggravated Frau Kruger's ill humour. He had never spoken so to either her husband or herself. "Do not be afraid," he went on; "no one shall molest you. If any should try to do so, let me know." And he opened the door of the sick-room.

"Christine, have you come at last?" Jakob's voice called from the bed. With a cry the girl rushed to him, and Johann Leopold closed the door upon them. "Come, Johanna, we have nothing further to do here," he said, and together they left the house.

When the forester's wife looked from the window, they were walking down the forest-path. She smiled scornfully. "No one could persuade me," she thought, "that those two came up here for the sake of Jakob and Christine; but I'll see to it, they may depend upon it. If I could only hear what they are talking about! She looks up at him as if he were the Herr Pastor in the pulpit."

Their talk was strange enough,—it was rather a monologue of Johann Leopold's to which Johanna listened.

"Happy unfortunates!" he began, looking sadly abroad into space. "Even yesterday, when Jakob was weeping for his boy and crying out after Christine, I envied him. How such emotion must enlarge and strengthen the soul! Happiness or misery is of no moment, but an absorbing passion, that possesses and rules the entire man——Yet who experiences such? Only some half-savage like my poor Jakob. We superior beings, as we are called, with our boasted culture, pay for our position with doubt, hesitation, half-heartedness."

Johanna listened to him with pained surprise. How could he thus forget or ignore his own past, his love for his dead betrothed, which Aunt Thekla maintained he still cherished in his heart? She could not venture to remind him of it, however, and she said, after a pause, "I think you are mistaken; love is not influenced by rank or culture. Remember my mother."

He did not seem to hear her, but went on: "And naturally we are drawn on from year to year by half-desires, half-resolves; our goal seems to us not worthy of exertion to attain it. And if some caprice places what we desire within our reach, we scarcely know whether to grasp it and hold it fast, for to grasp it gives trouble, and to hold it fast calls for exertion."

Was he speaking with reference to himself? Was Magelone what he desired? Johanna would have liked to help him to unburden his mind, but any mention of Magelone seemed to her to be indiscreet, so she merely remarked, "I cannot imagine any one's being too indolent to grasp an offered happiness."

"Happiness!" he repeated, with a melancholy smile. "Happiness! Who believes in it? You do not know how much strength is required for belief; much more than for passionate desire. Therefore the man who rushes blindly, head first, into the maddest, unworthiest passion, regardless of the harm that may result from it, seems to me not only more enviable, but more estimable even, than the prudent doubter, who is cold to-day and warm to-morrow, unable either to grasp or to relinquish. There stands the lovely being before you; your heart throbs at the sight of her; you long to call her your own, to belong to her, to lose yourself in her. But in the midst of your

intoxication you know that she is but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, that she does not understand you, or wish to understand you, and that if your longing were fulfilled your desire would become satiety and disgust. You tell yourself that you never would be able to excuse to yourself the illusion of the past, and there are moments in which you even despise your desire."

He drew a long breath, paused, and stroked back the hair from his pale forehead. "Do I startle you?" he then said, in a quiet tone. "Forgive me, and forget what I have said. When you have known me longer you will understand that I am apt to be lost in illusions, and that I readily take phantoms for creatures of flesh and blood."

The Freiherr was able to leave his wheeled chair on this same day; he declared that nothing any longer stood in the way of the contemplated New Year's dinner, and preparations were begun for it. Johanna and Otto wrote the invitations; Aunt Thekla passed cellar and pantries in review, and had conferences with the housekeeper; old Christian polished up the 'ancestral plate,' as Hildegard reverently called it, and from spacious cupboards were produced treasures of antique glass and porcelain. Magelone was more whimsical than usual, beginning one thing after another only to lay it aside, and ridiculing the 'ceremonial state' in progress, but with a forced gayety that troubled Johanna. Hildegard strutted like a peacock in hopes of outshining in a new velvet gown all the ladies of the surrounding county, while Hedwig ascribed still more dazzling properties to her old Venetian lace. The Freiherr anticipated the New Year's dinner with the satisfaction with which an architect contemplates the laying of the corner-stone of a structure that has been long planned. Even the Herr Pastor was busy with the dinner. He was composing a toast to be given at it in honour of the betrothal.

What Johann Leopold's sensations were upon this occasion it would be difficult to say. By no hint did he betray his knowledge of the significance of the festival. His conduct towards Magelone was as cool and deliberate as ever. As long as the Freiherr remained amid the family circle, Johann Leopold was there also. So soon as the old gentleman withdrew, he also vanished. Johanna, in whom the impression of his talk in the forest was still vivid, watched him narrowly, but she looked in vain for any echo of that hour, and began to believe that not only Johann Leopold but also she herself had seen phantoms.

Thus the day before the first of the new year arrived. The clear Christmas weather had given place to thick gray clouds that, lashed by the winds, sailed above the mountains. The Freiherr, too, whose mood had been more cheerful since the gout had left him, looked as gloomy within-doors as did the skies without. "I do not know what to think of Waldemar," he said, as he paced the room to and fro, smoking his morning pipe. "It is a little too much to have no word from him since the telegram on Christmas-eve."

"Since that announced his arrival here to-day, he probably thought nothing further necessary," said Aunt Thekla.

"Indeed! And do you agree with him?" the Freiherr said, turning upon her. "Then see what this new-fangled want of consideration comes to. What is to be done about sending for him? I cannot have the carriage go to every train."

"Waldemar always comes by the express-train, which is due at five o'clock in Thalrode," said Hildegard, who sat opposite Aunt Thekla engaged on some embroidery.

"Nonsense! He comes sometimes at noon, and sometimes at eight in the evening," the Freiherr rejoined. "But that's of no consequence. Let him come when he chooses, he must send word when he will be here, and if he does not he will not be sent for. *Basta!*"

His tone was such as to admit of no reply. All were silent, while the old Herr continued to pace to and fro, puffing out thick clouds of smoke. Magelone alone ventured, when he was at the other end of the room, to whisper to Aunt Thekla, "A great fuss about nothing! You will see we shall have a letter or a telegram from Waldemar saying he cannot come. I wouldn't come either, if I could amuse myself in Vienna as he can."

But the hours passed, and neither letter nor telegram made its appearance. The early twilight came on, made still more dim by the snow-storm which had begun at noon, and which was increasing in violence. The wind howled and shrieked around the castle.

A bright fire was burning in the drawing-room, where stood the Christmas-tree, which was, according to custom, to be relighted, then thoroughly stripped, chopped up, and burned on New Year's eve. Magelone and Johanna were busy replacing upon it candles which had burned down. Aunt Thekla and Hildegard sat beside the fire; Hedwig stood at the window, looking out into the driving snow. "If our husbands were only back again!" she said. "Inconceivable to wish to ride out in such a storm."

"It looks worse than it is," said Johanna. "I came back only half an hour ago from the village; it was glorious to breast the wind."

"A strange predilection!" Hildegard exclaimed. "But you did not go alone?"

Before Johanna could reply, the door was noisily opened, and the Freiherr entered. It was so unusual for him to join the family at this hour that Aunt Thekla, startled, arose and went towards him.

"Do not disturb yourself!" he said, beginning to pace the room to and fro. "Detestable weather!"

he exclaimed, as a blast of wind shook the windows. "I ought to have sent the carriage. There's no knowing whether or not Waldemar can get a conveyance in Thalrode now; it is too late."

"The carriage is at Thalrode, grandpapa," said Johanna. "Johann Leopold drove over."

"Without my knowledge?" cried the Freiherr, standing still in the middle of the room. His eyes gleamed in the firelight.

"You were asleep, grandpapa, and Johann Leopold had to hurry to catch the two-o'clock train. He had something to attend to in town, he said, but would return to Thalrode in the four-o'clock train. If my cousin Waldemar comes, they will surely meet."

"Indeed they will. We may rely upon that. From their very infancy they always stood by each other in every silly prank," the Freiherr said, but in a tone so kindly that Aunt Thekla breathed afresh.

"How did you know all this, my dear Johanna?" Magelone asked, as the Freiherr resumed his walk.

"As I was starting for the village, Johann Leopold was just driving off," she replied, "and he took me and my bundles as far as the parsonage——"

"It was odd not to bid us good-by!" said Magelone.

Hildegard approached her. "Why, child, he probably feared your tender remonstrances," she said, scornfully, "or it may perhaps have occurred to him at the twelfth hour to purchase you a betrothal-gift."

Magelone shrugged her shoulders impatiently. At this moment old Christian entered with the lamp, followed by Otto, who handed a letter to the Freiherr. "From Waldemar," he said. "It has just been brought by an express from Thalrode."

"He's not coming; I knew it," whispered Magelone.

The Freiherr went to the light and began to read, his face brightening at every word. Before he had finished the sheet he cried out, "This is a surprise! The boy could not have pleased me more. He is betrothed!"

"Waldemar! Betrothed? To whom?" several voices exclaimed together.

"Hear what he says," said the Freiherr. "The letter is from Vienna. We now know what the urgent business was that kept him away at Christmas. But listen. I will spare you the beginning. Here: 'Since yesterday the happiest of men——' Of course. 'My betrothed, Maria Therese Antoinette Walburg, is the second daughter of Count Anton, the chief of the elder—that is, of the Protestant —branch. Her mother was a Rothkirch; her grandmother, Theodora Klausenburg, you used to know, my dear grandfather. Antoinette is said to resemble her. She is eighteen years old, with light-brown hair, blue eyes, a lovely colour, and is tall and stately, like all the Klausenburg women,—only, between ourselves, more graceful and elegant. Her loveliness, her modesty, her childish gayety, make all hearts her captives——' and so forth, and so on! He continues in that strain a long while, which is of small account, for the lad is in love. But the family is good, and this child probably takes after them. God bless them both!"

Aunt Thekla wiped her eyes; the Freiherr rose, and again paced the room to and fro. "To-morrow we will celebrate a double betrothal, and as soon as possible a double marriage!" he began again after a while. "This joy is quite unexpected. All my Dönninghausens shall rejoice with me. I will give an entertainment that shall be the talk of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. As for you, Thekla, tell my steward to give you whatever you need for your infant-school."

"Thank you, dear Johann, a thousand times!" she said, blushing with pleasure, as she went to her brother and embraced him.

"That will do, sister, that will do!" he said, extricating himself from her embrace. "Come, be quick! Light the tree and send for the children. I want merry faces about me!"

In a few moments the room was illumined by the magic light of the Christmas-tree, and rang with merry childish voices, while little hands were eagerly lifted to receive the last of the tree's sweet fruits, which the great-grandfather detached and put into them. Hildegard and Hedwig, much excited, exchanged with Magelone and Otto information with regard to the Walburgs and Rothkirchs, while Aunt Thekla listened to the raging of the storm.

"Where can the Wildenhayns be, and Johann Leopold?" she said. "The carriage ought to have been back from Thalrode as soon as the express."

"Perhaps it is waiting for the eight-o'clock train," said Johanna.

"If I knew that it was waiting in Thalrode, a messenger might be sent," said Aunt Thekla. "But if Johann Leopold has remained in town——"

She did not finish the sentence. Old Christian entered, and begged Johanna to come into the corridor for a moment.

"What is the matter?" asked Aunt Thekla.

"Some one wishes to speak to the Fräulein Johanna," the old man said, in evident agitation.

Johanna, thinking of Christine, went out hastily, to cut short further explanations; but instead of her whom she expected to see, she was confronted by a man, tall and broad-shouldered. "Dear Johanna!" he said, advancing and holding out his hand.

"Ludwig!" she exclaimed, delighted. But she was instantly struck by his pale, distressed look. "For God's sake, what has happened?" she asked, keeping his hand tightly clasped in both her own. "What brings you here?"

"I come from Hanover, from the death-bed of a friend. But that is not what is the matter. I must consult you."

They whispered together for a few moments, then Ludwig followed Christian up-stairs, and Johanna returned to the drawing-room.

With some hesitation she approached the Freiherr, who was now sitting before the fire, surrounded by the children. "Dear grandfather," she said, standing behind his chair, so that he could not see her face, "my foster-brother, Dr. Ludwig Werner, has come."

"Dr. Ludwig Werner?" the Freiherr repeated. "Yes, yes, I recollect. Well, where is he?"

Johanna used all her self-control. "He has not come for a visit," she said. "He has been in Hanover, and was going directly back to Lindenbad, but when the train stopped at Thalrode, Johann Leopold fell in leaving it, and——"

"Dead!" cried the Freiherr, sitting erect in his chair. "Say the word at once, without the torture of preparation," he added, as his sister came to him and took his hand.

"No, he lives; be assured of that," said Johanna. "He is only stunned by the fall, and that is why Ludwig has come with him. They have carried him to his room."

For a moment the Freiherr seemed utterly crushed, but with a mighty effort he rose and stood erect. "Come, Thekla," he said, in a monotone. "So long as he breathes let us hope!"

CHAPTER X.

"THAT BLASÉ LIEUTENANT."

It was a sad New Year's day for Dönninghausen. Instead of the double celebration, with its gay anticipations for the future, there were weary anxious hours beside a sick-bed. Johann Leopold had not yet recovered consciousness. The old family physician shrugged his shoulders and admitted that he was powerless, and the physician summoned from town pronounced that in his opinion the patient's condition would end either in death or insanity. Ludwig alone did not relinquish hope, and the calmness in his face and bearing inspired those about him with courage.

Therefore the Freiherr would not hear of his leaving them. "I beg you, stay with us! If you can do but little for my grandson at present, I still must consider your mere presence as a benefit," he said, when Ludwig requested to be driven to Thalrode.

"Yes, if you possibly can, stay with us," Aunt Thekla added; and Ludwig could not feel himself justified in refusing the entreaty of the old brother and sister.

On New Year's evening some of the younger members of the family were assembled in the drawing-room. Hedwig, the last to join them, went shivering to the fire, and stretched out her hands before the blaze.

"I am cold to my very bones," she said. "As I passed the ball-room just now, the door was open, and by the light of the hall-lamp, I saw the long white-covered table, and thought how soon it might be replaced by black trestles. Oh, I wish we were away! but Eduard says we mast stay it out."

"Of course we must!" Hildegard exclaimed. "What would grandpapa think of our leaving him alone now? At such times the family must hold together."

"I don't see what good our holding together can do," said Magelone. "With the exception of Johanna, who sees that grandpapa and Aunt Thekla do not starve beside the sick-bed——"

"They would be taken care of without her," Hildegard interposed. "However, if she chooses to play Martha, let her; our task will be different, and much more difficult, at the death-bed and the funeral."

"How can you think of death and a funeral all because of a fall on the head!" exclaimed Magelone, rising and going to a window-recess.

Hildegard smiled disdainfully. "The fable of the ostrich," she said. "But what is to be will be, however we may close our eyes to it."

"Do you really think, then, that he will die?" asked Hedwig.

"The physician from town has given him up," Hildegard replied.

Hedwig gazed into the fire. After a pause she said, scarce audibly, "If he were to die, Otto would be the heir."

"And the wayward Magelone would be *vis-à-vis de rien*," Hildegard added.

"I do not think so; it would only be the exchange of a lover for her. Look there!" said Hedwig. She had observed in the mirror that Otto had arisen from the table, where he had been reading the papers, and had joined Magelone.

Hildegard smiled with an air of superiority. "Never fear," she said, with conviction. "Magelone was very well suited for Johann Leopold, unamiable and misanthropic as he was; but if Otto is ever the heir, he may fairly look to make a brilliant match, which he will do. I know our brother."

She might not have been so very sure if she had heard the conversation in the window-recess.

"Are you sad, Magelone?" asked Otto, as he took her hand. "Are you grieving for Johann Leopold?"

"Grieving? No; your sisters irritated me," she replied. "I detest to have mountains made out of mole-hills. Imagine their talking of death and a funeral!"

"You are right; there is no necessity for giving up all hope so soon," said Otto. "But, on the other side, is it not natural that every possibility should present itself to the imagination? I, too, Magelone, with all my trying not to look upon the dark side, have not been able to refrain, since the accident, from asking myself how you would feel, Magelone, if—if we were to lose Johann Leopold." And he bent over her so that his moustache nearly touched her cheek as he added, "Would you grieve?"

"I should be very sorry, as we should all be," she said.

"Not as for the loss of a lover?" he asked again.

She cast one quick glance up at him, and then her eyelids drooped. "I cannot feign," she whispered. "But why do you tease me so? What does it matter to you?"

She tried to withdraw her hand from his, but he held it fast. "Magelone," he whispered,—and there was a passionate tremor in his voice,—"have you never remembered that if Johann Leopold dies I am his heir? Understand all that this means: you, too, would then be mine!"

"Hush!" she interrupted him, half in anger, half in terror. "For God's sake, hush! I will not listen to another word!" And she turned from him and joined his sisters again.

But his words had fallen upon fruitful soil. Magelone could not but reflect upon the possibility at which he had hinted, and her fancy painted a future based upon this possibility. There was an actual change in her sentiments. Otto's words on this New Year's evening could not have been uttered in mere dalliance, and her heart responded in louder throbs than hitherto. There came now and then a fleeting consciousness of wrong, when she would weep and consider herself miserably unhappy; but she sought consolation in further imaginings, and when she encountered Otto there was a degree of suppressed emotion in her words and looks which lent a new charm to a creature usually so cool and self-possessed. Otto was, as he confessed to himself, 'awfully in love with her.'

Days passed without bringing any essential change in Johann Leopold's condition. "About the same," was the comfortless answer which the Freiherr made every morning to the anxious inquirers of the family, and he sat more silent and gloomy than ever at the head of the table. The only person with whom he sometimes conversed was Ludwig.

"If I could only understand what grandpapa can find in that pretentious creature," said Hildegard. "He comes and goes, and gives his opinion quite as if he belonged to us. But where should such people learn to behave themselves?"

Magelone said, "So this is the famous foster-brother, Johanna's ideal. The head of a bull-dog on the body of an elephant."

Eduard and Karl, after Ludwig had smoked a cigar with them, pronounced him a 'first-rate fellow.' Otto found him tedious, and Aunt Thekla called him the 'gentlest and kindest of men,' while Johanna was constantly hurt and offended by his cynical tone.

The second day after his arrival she asked him to take a walk with her. As they walked along under the gray wintry skies, the crows flying cawing overhead and the snow crackling beneath their feet, Johanna said, "This is like the good old times when you used to come home at Christmas for the holidays. Do you remember how we used to make expeditions to see how our summer resorts looked in their winter dress?"

"Yes," he replied; "but our walk to-day does not remind me of them. Then your walks with me were not merely occasional; my home was yours. Remember that since then you have rejected that home and chosen Dönninghausen."

"I hoped you understood my choice and approved it."

"Understood,—yes; approved,—no," he replied, and changed the subject.

A few days later, after the family had all been together in the drawing-room, he said, "I really believe, my dear Johanna, that you have a talent for the stage, you play your part of fine lady so admirably. You even receive the attentions of that blasé lieutenant, who must be intolerable to you, so graciously that any one who did not know you so well as I do would be deceived by your manner."

Johanna blushed. "You are mistaken. I think my cousin Otto very agreeable, and I like to talk with him," she rejoined.

Ludwig laughed bitterly. "Then I am forced to admire you still more. Not only to seem, but actually to be, what every station in life may require, to suit one's desires and opinions to one's surroundings, requires a rare degree of talent."

"You misunderstand me," she said, offended.

"I always did," was his reply.

At the moment Johanna was hurt by such speeches from Ludwig, but she never resented them for long. Perhaps she had an involuntary suspicion that his mistrust and misconception sprang from disappointed affection, or perhaps her heart was full of other things. The explanation she gave herself was that for the sake of the help and comfort he gave to Johann Leopold, to her grandfather, and to Aunt Thekla, she must forgive her childhood's playmate any harshness of demeanour.

For a series of years it had been the custom for all the family to stay over Twelfth-Night at Dönninghausen, and to leave on the seventh of January. On the morning of the sixth the Wildenhayns were consulting with Otto and Magelone as to whether they should depart as usual, or, without any announcement of their intentions, stay until there was some change in Johann Leopold, or, lastly, ask their grandfather what his wishes were in the matter.

"I must go to-morrow; my leave is at an end," said Otto; and he added, in a tone intended for Magelone alone, "I will come back for the funeral."

"You should not talk so," she replied, reproachfully. She had been thinking the same thing herself.

At this moment the Freiherr entered. "Children!" he cried, approaching the group, "thank God with me. Johann Leopold is out of danger."

There were loud exclamations of delight. Otto's silence was unnoticed. Magelone grew pale, tottered, and would have fallen if Eduard, who stood next her, had not caught her in his arms.

"It is nothing,—nothing," she said, recovering herself. The Freiherr looked keenly at her. "Dear Magelone, compose yourself," he said kindly; but she could not endure his gaze. She bent down and kissed his hand, bursting into tears as she did so.

"Nonsense, child! All is well now. Come, come, command yourself!" And as he conducted her to a seat he said to himself, "She is a warm-hearted little thing after all, and loves the lad better than I thought."

To reward her, the Freiherr addressed his account of the invalid especially to her. She was obliged to listen to a detailed account of Johann Leopold's return to consciousness, and recognition of his grandfather and Aunt Thekla.

"He is sleeping now," the old Herr concluded. "Christian and Thekla are watching him like dragons guarding a treasure, but as soon as he wakes you shall see him, my dear child."

Ludwig entering overheard the last words. "I beg pardon, Herr von Dönninghausen," he said in his decided way, "but there I must interpose my veto. The sick man needs entire rest, and I must entreat that no one except those who have hitherto been with him may enter his room without my permission."

Hildegard stared in haughty surprise at the venturous mortal who dared thus bluntly to contradict the Freiherr. "Dear grandfather," she said, with the intention of provoking the old Herr still further, "if we must all submit to the doctor's orders we are quite useless here, and had better depart to-morrow."

She fully expected to hear a grim authoritative, "You will stay, and see Johann Leopold as soon as possible!" Instead of which the Freiherr replied, "Yes, children, go. You will come again for the celebration of his recovery and betrothal." And, without noticing his grand-daughter's mortification, he joined the Wildenhayns, who were discussing the patient with Ludwig.

Hildegard drew her sister aside to the window. Otto went up to Magelone, who was sitting in an arm-chair by the table, meditatively toying with her bracelets.

"What now?" he asked in a low voice.

She looked up at him, but he could not tell whether the gleam in her eyes meant pain, anger, or derision.

"What now?" he asked once more, and tried to take her hand, but the slender fingers eluded his clasp.

"Take care!" she said, composedly. His face flushed. "That means, in other words, that you are once more Johann Leopold's faithful, submissive true-love," he said, bitterly. "You are like the cat; she clings to the house, caring nothing about who its possessor may be."

"For shame! How can you talk to me thus?" Magelone whispered, as she arose and looked at him with flashing eyes.

Hedwig's attention was roused. "Is it possible that you two are quarrelling?" she said, approaching them.

Magelone instantly recovered her composure. "No, indeed; we are the best of friends," she said, smiling, offering her hand to Otto, who, however, did not kiss it as usual, but, after a slight pressure, relinquished it and left the room. Magelone vowed inwardly that he should not escape punishment.

But she had no opportunity for revenge. At meal-times the Freiherr, elated by Johann Leopold's improved condition, was more talkative than usual, and Otto took a lively part in the general conversation. Immediately after breakfast he joined Karl and Eduard for a last ride in the forest, and after dinner he never left Johanna's side.

She seemed to him more sympathetic than ever to-day. "This is genuine truth, simplicity, kindness of heart," he said to himself, as he gazed into her sparkling eyes. What power of expressing love lay in those eyes! Perhaps if he had chosen they might have spoken love to him. Perhaps if he took some pains they might still do so. If he were obliged to depart on the morrow he could return, and in the mean time memory should plead for him.

The longer he talked with Johanna, the warmer grew his tone, and even his jesting words took a graver significance. Gradually the words themselves grew grave.

He had been telling her of his garrison life, of his intercourse with his comrades, and of the society to be found in the houses of the married officers. "Pleasant and social as it all looks, and really is," he continued, "I find it very hard to leave Dönninghausen,—this time especially: why, you surely know?"

"I can easily imagine," she replied, with a glance towards Magelone.

Did she not understand, or would she not understand? "I do not know whether you are right," said Otto. "It is a new experience for me; I am not yet used to it. Will you help me?"

"I do not understand you," she made answer, blushing beneath his gaze.

"What I desire is presumptuous!" he continued. "How can you help me? What I have wasted, I have wasted——I must wait for new and better days."

"What have you wasted?" Johanna asked.

"Opportunities to gain excellence, happiness,—and you!" he replied. "From the first moment of our acquaintance I knew what you could be to me, but, instead of testifying this to you, I have squandered my days, from folly, from habit——" Here he glanced towards Magelone.

Johanna was pained. "Why will you deny——" she began.

Otto interrupted her:

"I deny nothing. I am only trying to explain to you—and, as for that, to myself also—what is going on within me. You have often heard the vanity of men bewailed, but not nearly enough, believe me. Against our better selves, against the demands of our hearts, it gives us over hopelessly into the power of every coquette who knows how to flatter this same vanity. Coquetry itself is a flattery that we are powerless to withstand. Yet how often, while we lie spell-bound, does our soul thirst, and thirsting perish, unless true love comes to succor it!"

Johanna's heart beat tumultuously, but she tried to appear at her ease, and said with a smile, and without looking up from her work,—

"Poor true love! How is it to manage if it does not know how to coquette?"

"No need of that!" Otto rejoined, passionately. "It only needs to show itself simply and seriously for what it is, to bring to shame all the spells of sorcery. Believe me, Johanna, if I could ever find it,—and a single look, a single tone, would reveal it to me,—I should be liberated forever."

He had taken hold of the end of her embroidery, thus obliging her to drop her hands in her lap, but she did not venture to speak or to look up at him.

"Johanna!" he began again, after a pause, in a suppressed tone.

Just then the Freiherr called out, "Come, Otto; I want to take a hand on this last evening with the Wildenhayns and you."

The young man arose. "*Du sublime au ridicule*," he said, with his customary smile of gay mockery, as he went to the whist-table, and the evening passed without any further opportunity for confidential words with Johanna.

The next morning Aunt Thekla appeared for the first time since the accident at the breakfast-

table, in honor of the departing guests, who were all going in the ten-o'clock train from Thalrode. She, too, was full of hope for the invalid, and nodded an assent when the Freiherr insisted that all the family should reassemble in Dönninghausen to celebrate Johann Leopold's recovery.

"The Walburgs, of course; if they come, Waldemar will surely not stay away, and the postponed festival will be all the gayer," the old Herr concluded.

Magelone looked at Otto; he was calmly sipping his coffee, and she asked herself, with some anxiety, whether he could really bring himself to depart without a word of explanation with her.

"Let him—for all I care!" she said to herself, in a burst of offended feeling, and after breakfast she devoted herself to the children, who were brought in to say good-by. At the same time—involuntarily, perhaps—she watched Otto. He spoke with his grandfather and with Aunt Thekla, and then approached Johanna. Resolved to know what they were saying to each other, she playfully chased little Johann Eduard around the room until she came near to the pair, and then, kneeling down to tie on the child's hat more securely, she heard Otto lament that he should hear no tidings of Johann Leopold.

"Aunt Thekla never writes," he added, "and grandpapa, only when he wants to read me a homily. Pray, dear Johanna, write to me sometimes, and tell me how the invalid's recovery progresses."

In what a tone he spoke! Involuntarily Magelone sprang up to interrupt their conversation, but Eduard called out at this moment, "Come, hurry; it is time." Otto kissed Johanna's hand in farewell, and then turned to Magelone. "*Au revoir*" he said, coldly. Magelone smiled and said as calmly, "*Au revoir*."

But when embraces and farewells were over and the three carriages drove out of the court-yard, gazed after by herself and Johanna, she could no longer control herself, but burst into tears, and hurried into the house.

The next instant Johanna was at her side. "Dear Magelone," she began, gently, and would have taken her hand, but her cousin turned hastily away. "Leave me!" she cried. And, rushing up-stairs to her room, she closed the door and shot the bolt behind her.

"Oh, this hypocrite!" she exclaimed, and raised her clasped hands to heaven. "She thrusts herself forward everywhere. I cannot endure it any longer,—no, I cannot!"

She sank into an arm-chair, and wept in all the *abandon* of a child. Suddenly she sat erect, and wiped away her tears. "What folly!" she said to herself. "Am I helpless and unarmed? I am more beautiful than my rival; ought I not also to be more skilled,—cleverer? It is worth the trial. Otto must and shall return to me."

CHAPTER XI.

RECOVERY.

Again the days passed calmly and quietly at Dönninghausen, but they wore a different aspect from those which had preceded Christmas. Then the Freiherr had been the centre around which everything revolved, now it was Johann Leopold. Ludwig had pronounced all exciting causes dangerous for his patient, and begged that all his wishes might, as far as possible, be fulfilled. Therefore every one whose presence he requested was relieved from all other claim; even the meals, from which at other times only serious indisposition could excuse any member of the family, might be disregarded for Johann Leopold's sake.

With the egotism of an invalid, he required that either Ludwig or Aunt Thekla should be beside him all day, even when he was sleeping.

He took pleasure also in his grandfather's visits, so long as the old Herr could sit still; but as soon as he began, according to his habit, to pace the room to and fro, the sick man grew so restless as to oblige Ludwig courteously to dismiss the Freiherr.

"The lad is like a nervous girl," the latter would then say, with an irritated knitting of his brows; but the next moment he would add, "Well, we must be satisfied with seeing him as well as he is; by and by he will be perfectly reasonable again."

Perfect recovery, however, came but slowly. Only gradually did his memory of people and events begin to revive. One morning when his grandfather was sitting beside him he suddenly said, "Johanna!" and after a while he added, "I want to see her; let her come to me."

"Yes, my dear boy, I will send her to you," the Freiherr replied; "but send for Magelone too, or she will be hurt."

"Magelone!" he repeated, and his eyes expressed distress. "Magelone! No, no, she must not come! I will not see her. It is all her fault."

The Freiherr was startled. Johann Leopold was more seriously ill than he had supposed. "I will send Johanna," he said, rising; but the patient refused now to see even her. "No; send Dr.

Werner," he said, fretfully. "I want him; he is the only one who knows what is good for me."

The next morning he insisted upon seeing Johanna, and she went to him.

"Sit down; I have much to say to you," he said, after her first greeting. "Pray, Aunt Thekla, leave us alone."

The old lady withdrew with an air of surprise. Johann Leopold lay still, staring before him, while Johanna contemplated him with compassion. His sunken temples, his neglected beard, his haggard eyes, made him still look very ill.

"Red Jakob,—what do you know of him?" he asked at last.

"I asked Ludwig—Dr. Werner, I mean—to take your place there," she replied. "You can depend upon him——"

"I know that," he interrupted her. "Well, what does he think?—how is Jakob?"

"Not well; Ludwig thinks his arm will always be useless."

"I thought so," said the sick man. "Does Christine know it?"

"Yes; I wrote her about it," Johanna made answer. "She was with him yesterday, and came to me afterwards. She was very sad——"

"And has given the poor fellow up, of course," the invalid interposed.

"You do not really believe that," said Johanna. "Do you not remember calling them the 'happy unfortunates'? Christine considers it a matter of course that she is now to take care of the helpless man. 'God has taken from me my little Jakob, and so I am better able to work for the big one,' she said; adding that she would do it joyfully if he would only be content, but that it would almost break his heart not to be able to earn his own living."

"Perhaps he may do so yet. I may be able to help him in that," said Johann Leopold. And after a pause he went on, in a hard tone, "Suppose I were no longer the heir, but ill and a cripple for my lifetime, how would my future betrothed behave to me? Do not reply. I know that our opinions upon this point agree, and that I cannot lay any claim to affection."

He looked so unhappy as he spoke that Johanna felt compelled to contradict him, but he cut her words short impatiently.

"Let us consult about Red Jakob," he said. "With whole limbs he would have had to go, for the sake of grandpapa's game; but crippled he may stay. About a mile and a half from here, among the mountains, I have a small estate, inherited from my mother. It is called Forest Hermitage, and the house is little more than an observatory. The grounds about it I have laid out as a forester's garden. The man who has had the care of it wishes to move down among his children in the valley. What do you think? Would Jakob and Christine like to live in that solitude?"

"They would be enraptured——" Johanna began.

The invalid interrupted her. "Then Dr. Werner shall propose it to Jakob," he said, and, covering his eyes with his hand, he sighed heavily. "It would enrapture no one to live in a solitude with me," he said, as if to himself, as Johanna, filled with solicitude lest the conversation should have been too much for him, called Aunt Thekla from the next room.

But the exertion seemed to have enabled Johann Leopold completely to conquer his disease. From this time he made rapid strides in convalescence; he was soon able to leave his bed, and at the end of January Aunt Thekla announced one morning with tears of joy, "He is coming down at noon to-day."

Just after this news, as Johanna and Magelone were left alone in the room, the latter said, "Have you written to Otto?"

"No, not yet." And Johanna bent over her work.

"He begged you so earnestly to do so. Why should you be so cruel to your friend?" Magelone continued. "You really must do it; I ask you for my own sake. Otto must have carried off with him my little ivory tablets which he took from me to tease me. Write to him to send them back to me."

"Why not do so yourself?" Johanna asked. "Then you could inform him concerning Johann Leopold."

"I? What are you thinking of?" exclaimed Magelone. "I think he showed great tact in asking you to write."

"Tact?" Johanna repeated. "I do not understand you."

"Why, yes; of course it would have been painful for me to destroy Otto's hopes. You are unconcerned, and can do so much better. How you look at me!" she went on. "Did you never think that if Johann Leopold were to die, Otto would be the heir?"

"Magelone! You cannot believe that Otto reckoned upon that?" cried Johanna.

"I do not believe it: I know it. He has talked with me of it more than once," Magelone replied. And

after a pause she added, with a mocking smile, "How you look, my dear Johanna! Is it possible that you can have been at all mistaken in our cousin Otto? His is no ideal character. He is a thorough man of the world, selfish and grasping in the extreme."

Johanna made no reply, and was glad when Magelone soon after left the room. How could it be that this woman, who had known Otto from childhood, should judge him so falsely? A man of the world, yes; but far too gay and warm-hearted to be capable of the calculation with which Magelone accredited him. Johanna told herself that she had been wrong to delay sending him the letter for which he had begged her, and she resolved to write to him to-day.

But as she sat pen in hand with the paper before her, she discovered that Magelone's remarks had produced an effect. The ease with which, before hearing them, she could have expressed her delight in Johann Leopold's recovery was gone. What she wrote seemed to her first like a protest against Magelone's declaration, and then to be too warmly expressed. When she had destroyed several beginnings she confined herself to a mere announcement of Johann Leopold's rapid improvement, with a request for the return of Magelone's memorandum-tablets. When the letter had gone, she would fain have recalled it.

Ludwig had requested that there should be no demonstrations of pleasure at Johann Leopold's reappearance in the family circle; and when the convalescent joined them, the Freiherr, Aunt Thekla, and Johanna greeted him quietly as if he had not been absent. Leo, however, would not be repressed; he leaped up upon the friend whom he had so long missed, barking loudly, and nearly knocked him down. At this moment Magelone entered the room.

"Johann Leopold!" she cried joyously, and, hastening to him, she took his hand in both her own and looked up at him with sparkling eyes. He grew paler than before.

"Do not trouble yourself,—I know all you would say. I know my friends," he said, in a tone audible only to herself, as he withdrew his hand.

She changed color, but the next moment she smiled again, and, with a slight shrug, took her usual seat at the window. Aunt Thekla, who had heard nothing, but had observed the manner of the two, looked anxiously at her brother, who, however, was talking with Ludwig, pacing the room to and fro the while, and seemed to have noticed nothing of the meeting.

"Leave us! No, my dear doctor, you must not think of it," he said now, pausing in his walk. "After all the sad days which you have passed with us, you must learn something of the cheerful side of Dönninghausen."

"Cheerful side!" Magelone repeated to herself, casting an expressive look upwards, while the Freiherr added, "You said lately that you were about to write a book; do it here."

"Thank you, Herr von Dönninghausen," Ludwig replied; "but I could find no leisure here for writing. Good work must be done among those who work too."

The Freiherr tossed his head. "There we have the arrogance of the scholar," he said, and his eyes flashed beneath his bent brows. "Do you mean to imply that I do not work?"

Ludwig smiled. "Let us make a distinction. You work at your good pleasure as the whim seizes you, while the work to which I allude must be the result of a certain outward or inward pressure. Moreover, the projected book will not be written at present. I am going to India."

"And you tell us this only when you are just going away?" Johanna cried, reproachfully; and Aunt Thekla asked, dropping her work in her lap, "For heaven's sake, my dear doctor, what can you want in India?"

Ludwig came to the window where they were sitting. "Study, madame," he said. "An expedition, half scientific, half mercantile, is about to start for Gujerat and the Vindhya Mountains. I join it as physician. Moreover, my final decision was made only to-day."

"What does your father say to it?" asked Johanna.

"Of course he made all sorts of objections at first, but gradually he relinquished his opposition, and now he admits that the journey will be of great advantage to me."

The Freiherr again interrupted his walk. "Advantage!" he growled. "What advantage can India bring to a German physician? But science and trade are the idols of the present age, to which men sacrifice not only human beings but sound sense into the bargain!"

With these words he left the room, closing the door behind him with a crash.

Aunt Thekla grew pale and red by turns. "Pray do not be offended with my brother," she began.

Johann Leopold interposed: "What is there to be offended about?" and he smiled faintly. "You ought to feel flattered, my dear doctor. Grandpapa wishes to keep you here, and is angry to think that you can prefer India to our Dönninghausen. Dönninghausen, you must know, is in the eyes of every member of the family the very ideal of perfection, a paradise on earth."

"Not in my eyes," Magelone called out from the other window: it was insufferable to have no one taking any notice of her.

"My child, how can you say so?" Aunt Thekla admonished her.

"And why not?" Magelone replied. "You all of you have such a passion for the truth, why should I not say that I like Berlin a thousand, nay, a million times better than Dönninghausen,—that I have been better entertained in papa's meanest garrison-town than here?" She yawned. "Every morning when I wake I wonder why the slumber of the Sleeping Beauty does not overtake us."

As she said this, she glanced from beneath her drooping eyelids towards Johann Leopold. She wanted to vex him: he had been too disagreeable. But he rose with an air of indifference,—the bell for the second breakfast had just rung,—approached her, and offered her his arm.

"With your views I should have you on my side if I were to imitate the doctor and take a flight into the world," he said. "But no more at present; our grandfather must know nothing of it as yet."

Again they sat at table side by side as before the accident, and Magelone forced herself to discuss indifferent topics indifferently, but all the while the question would obtrude itself, "What did her cousin's 'into the world' mean?" Was he only jesting, or was it a concealed menace, or the mere whim of a sick man?

"He is too indolent to go away,"—it was thus she consoled herself,—"and grandpapa would not allow it, nor would I." So long as she could consider Johann Leopold as securely her own he was more than indifferent to her, but now when it looked as if he were freeing himself, withdrawing from her sway, she wanted at all hazards to hold him fast, and this not from calculation alone. He had repulsed her advances to-day, but ice does not melt beneath the first sunbeam, and her amiability must conquer, like the sunshine, through persistency. If the doctor were only gone! His keen, observing glance made her uncomfortable.

Her wish was shortly to be fulfilled; Ludwig departed on the following morning. Very early, while he was busy packing, Johann Leopold came to his room. "I do not mean to disturb you," he said, throwing himself down on a sofa, "but I cannot spare one moment of you. You have spoiled me; I shall be doubly lonely now."

Ludwig frowned. "Do not be so weak," he said; "it is not fitting. You look badly,—you have not slept well."

"I have not slept at all," Johann Leopold replied. "After our conversation of last evening, after your answer to my questions——"

"You wanted the truth," Ludwig interrupted him, "and I thought I owed it to you."

"You did, and I thank you for it; but it is hard to bear."

Ludwig's lips quivered, as they always did when he was moved, and for a while he went on stuffing some things into his portmanteau; then he said, "Finish it all quickly; there should be no half measures where the knife is necessary."

Johann Leopold passed his hand wearily across his forehead and eyes. "You are right; it is time I should do what must be done."

"If you see that, do it instantly,—to-day,—within an hour! Can I help you? Perhaps it would be easier for you if I spoke with the Freiherr——"

Johann Leopold started up and changed colour. "No, no, I must do it myself; I must first be clear in my own mind. But I thank you," he added more quietly, "and later I may entreat your help in another way. I may reckon upon it, may I not?"

"Upon my best efforts, assuredly," Ludwig answered, pressing the delicate white hand extended to him. "But what do you mean? I am not fond of vague promises."

"You shall know more as soon as possible. Your ship sails on the 14th of March,—time enough to arrange everything," said the other, sinking back among the sofa-cushions.

"Time enough to fall back into the old indolence," thought Ludwig, but he did not utter his thought, and hurriedly finished locking his trunk and portmanteau.

The servant came to say that the carriage was waiting.

"Stay here!" Ludwig said, decidedly, as Johann Leopold rose. "The morning is bitterly cold; it is another kind of hardening process to which I would have you subject yourself. Good-by."

They shook hands, and before Johann Leopold could add a word of gratitude to his 'Farewell,' Ludwig had left the room and closed the door after him.

Leave-taking was so painful to him that he had suppressed all mention to the family of the time of his departure, and had only late on the preceding evening requested of Johann Leopold to order his conveyance in the morning; but he was not to escape thus. In the lower story old Christian requested him to step into the drawing-room for a moment, and there, to his surprise, he found the entire family, with the exception of Johann Leopold; even Magelone had not ventured to absent herself.

The Freiherr came towards him with outstretched hands. "My dear doctor, you wanted to steal away," he said, "but we could not allow it. It is not my fashion to talk of gratitude, but I hope you know what obligations we are all under to you. You have grown dear to us, and I beg and hope

that you will in future consider Dönninghausen as another home in the full sense of the word. So soon as you return from your travels we shall expect you." And he kissed the young man's forehead, as he was wont to do in taking leave of all belonging to him. Aunt Thekla with tears in her eyes wished him a happy journey, and hoped he had breakfasted well. Magelone offered him her finger-tips with a smile, and Johanna, who had on her hat and cloak, declared that she was going to drive to Thalrode with him.

With sparkling eyes he followed her into the corridor, but at the head of the stairs he paused and took her hand. "Dear Johanna, I thank you; but let me drive off alone," he said. "It is only prolonging a farewell if you accompany me. Stay here for my sake. Good-by! good-by!"

His last words were scarcely audible. He took her in his arms, and for the first time in his life kissed her on the lips,—a long, ardent kiss, that thrilled her to the heart. Then, while she stood as in a dream, he ran down the stairs. The next moment the door of the carriage was shut, and the wheels rattled over the pavement of the court-yard.

CHAPTER XII.

CELA N'ENGAGE À RIEN.

The first days of March had come. The Freiherr wished to ride to the saw-mill, and asked Johanna to go with him; but, just as they had mounted their horses, a farmer arrived to speak with the Freiherr, who never allowed a working-man to wait. So he gave Johanna directions, and she started off for the saw-mill in the clear morning, escorted by Leo.

The long frost had been followed by a rain, and now the sun was shining. An east wind blew fresh over hill and dale, here and there only on the edges of the meadows narrow strips of snow still lingered, while the fields at the foot of the mountains showed the tender green of the winter wheat. The brook, freed from its icy fetters, foamed along between high banks, and from every bush by the roadside finches, thrushes, and redbreasts proclaimed that winter no longer held sway.

Johanna, too, felt the happy influence of the 'blind motions of the spring.' Latterly she had been greatly depressed,—anxiety on Ludwig's account, she said to herself. He had written that his principal object in going to India was to study climatic fevers; but what really troubled her, although she did not acknowledge it to herself, was Otto's silence. More than five weeks had passed since she had written to him, and she had received no reply. Magelone asked nearly every day, "No letter from Otto yet? I call it very discourteous." And Johanna could not bring herself to confess that the cold tone of her letter was probably the cause of his silence. She could not herself understand how, after their last conversation, she could have brought herself to write so. She repeatedly told herself that Otto could not possibly reply, and yet she looked for some word from him, eagerly and anxiously, as each post came in.

To-day she had felt especially melancholy, but the airs of spring swept away all trouble from her mind. As she looked around her she forgot herself, and felt only the refreshing renewal of life everywhere abroad.

She had followed the travelled road upwards,—the saw-mill was at the upper end of the valley,—through the village, over the bridge, and across the meadows on the right bank of the stream. But whilst stopping at the mill to deliver her grandfather's message, she looked longingly over to the steep left bank. In spite of the miller's remonstrances, she rode her horse over the wooden bridge; he clambered up the rocky ascent, and away went steed and rider along the narrow path on the edge of the forest. She felt as though she had wings.

Suddenly at a turn of the valley she perceived two horse-men coming up the stream on the right bank, and, recognizing her grandfather and old Martin, the groom, she remembered that the Freiherr had called after her, "If I can, I will come to meet you."

He, too, saw her now. He stopped, beckoned, shouted to her something that she could not understand, and then turned his horse. But she had already turned hers. She gave the spirited creature a slight cut with her whip, and as she shook her bridle-rein it leaped from the high bank directly across the foaming stream. For an instant Johanna felt stunned as she found herself on the right bank. Leo ran to and fro on the other side, barking in great distress.

The Freiherr rode towards her. "Are you mad, child?" he called out to her from afar, whilst old Martin observed, with a grin, "There's no denyin' that our Fräulein rides equal to any dragoon."

And her grandfather, too, made but a poor feint of displeasure. When he found both horse and rider unharmed, he added, "Thunder and lightning! that was a leap that I should have been proud of myself when I was a young fellow. How did you come to take it, my girl?"

She laughed. "I hardly know myself," she said. "I did not take time to think; I had to do it."

"Just like me!" exclaimed the Freiherr. "Yes, yes, you are my own flesh and blood, a genuine Dönninghausen, and a rare one." He frowned, and for a while they rode along in silence. Then he said, "It is nonsense to leave you out of the family, and a stop must be put to it. I had intended to

surprise you at the New Year's dinner with the intelligence that I am going to adopt you and give you my name, that there may be no longer any disagreeable memory between us. Johann Leopold's accident prevented it. I tell you to-day as a reward for your feat of horsemanship."

Johanna was startled. At another time she might not have ventured any remonstrance; now the exhilarating effect of her 'feat of horsemanship' had not yet passed off, and she replied, in a low, firm voice, "Thank you, my dear grandfather; I know how kindly you mean this, but I cannot accept your offer."

"Johanna!" he growled, interrupting her; but she was not to be intimidated.

"No, I cannot!" she repeated. "You pride yourself upon your forbears, and I am as proud of my father and the distinguished name he bequeathed to me. Grandpapa, I thank you from my very soul, but to repudiate this name would be a transgression of the fifth commandment."

At first her grandfather's eyes had flashed angrily, but the longer she spoke the gentler became his looks and his air. Johanna never had pleased him so well as at this moment, with her glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes. However she might cling in her childish delusion to the plebeian name, she showed race, Dönninghausen race, and, moreover, her bold, fearless opposition did him good. To every despotic nature there come moments of weariness of a rule over slaves. And the allusion to the fifth commandment had its effect.

"If this is the way you take it, I must give up my plan," he said. "I enjoin upon no one any transgression of duty, any sin against God's commands. But you take a wrong view of it. When you marry——" He broke off suddenly, and his face grew dark again. Who in his own sphere would marry the actor's daughter, since she spurned in foolish arrogance the bridge which kind hands would have built for her? But ingratitude was always the reward of kindness. Otto, too, was deaf to his grandfather's well-meant admonitions, and Johann Leopold looked upon all his plans for his future with indifference, if not with aversion. This must not be!

The Freiherr returned to the castle in gloomy mood, and had scarcely reached his room when Johann Leopold made his appearance with his letters for the post.

"Stay here; I have something to say to you," the Freiherr ordered, as he turned to leave the room. Johann Leopold changed colour; the Freiherr noticed it, and the veins in his forehead began to swell. "Why do you turn so pale?" he asked, angrily. "Do me the favour to sit down, or I shall have you fainting away shortly. You are ill, nervous, and must be treated cautiously, Thekla says. Deuce take it! Brace yourself, my lad, and cheer up! The heir of Dönninghausen must not go lagging about like an hysterical girl!"

The old Herr folded his arms across his broad chest and went to the window. Johann Leopold, who, in obedience to his grandfather, had taken a seat at the table in the centre of the room, said, with an evident effort, "You are right; the present condition of affairs is intolerable; nevertheless, I hope to be able to prove to you that I have worked hard to alter it. If I have been silent hitherto, it has been, in great part at least, out of regard for you."

The Freiherr turned round. "Worked hard—been silent—regard for me!" he growled. "What does all this mean? Collect yourself. Nothing extraordinary is required of you. Only some little sympathy with my task, the administration of the property which will, heaven only knows how soon, be your own; and your betrothal with Magelone."

Johann Leopold clutched the arms of his chair, his pale face grew ashen, and without looking up he said, almost with a gasp, "Dear grandfather, I can neither be the heir nor marry Magelone. I have inherited my mother's disease, and have resolved not to bequeath it further."

"Johann Leopold!" the Freiherr almost shouted, and in two strides he stood beside him. "Diseases can be cured," he added, after a pause.

The young man shook his head. "Not this one," he said, sadly. "When my father wooed the heiress of Moorgarten, her parents informed him that the terrible curse had been inherited in their family for generations; but he said, as you do, 'Diseases can be cured.' He loved the pale, grave girl, and in spite of her illness they were very happy during their brief married life,—so happy that my poor mother did not long survive her husband's death. Long enough, however, to know that the curse of her race had been bequeathed to me."

The Freiherr stopped pacing to and fro and stood still before the young man. "Impossible!" he said,—"impossible! You imagine all this; you are a hypochondriac. We, Thekla and I, would have known of it."

"Old Christian knows it," the other rejoined. "My mother delivered me into his care, and like a mother he has guarded me and my sad secret. The attacks are rare, but very sudden. My fall on the Thalrode railway platform was in consequence of one of them."

Again the Freiherr began his walk; but his step, usually so firm, was now uncertain, and his head, usually so proudly carried, was bowed. After a while he went up to Johann Leopold, who sat buried in thought. "It is a trial,—a terrible trial," he said, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder; "but I think it will be easier for you, my poor boy, if we all help you to bear it. Magelone, too, will help,—she loves you——"

"No, sir," Johann Leopold interrupted him. "Magelone consented only to marry the heir; but to

love him——!" He smiled bitterly. "And, even if she did, I never would consent to bind her fresh young life to mine. I love her too well for that. Apart, indeed, from all personal considerations, how could I consent to taint the pure blood of the Dönninghausens with the poison of epilepsy?"

"The pure blood of the Dönninghausens." The most powerful chord in the old Freiherr's soul vibrated to these words; at the same time they made the grandson, whose thoughts were so after his own heart, doubly dear to him and the desire to help him all the more fervent. He sat down beside him and took his hand.

"Diseases can be cured," he said again. "What is the lauded advance of science, if it can be of no service here? Did you speak of this to Dr. Werner?"

"Yes; his verdict is 'incurable,'" the other replied.

The Freiherr sprang to his feet. "Nonsense! How can he know that?" he cried, angrily. "Dr. Werner is young, inexperienced. We must consult distinguished authorities. I will go with you to Paris, to London, to Vienna,—wherever you choose."

"I thank you," the young man rejoined. "Your sympathy and kindness do me good; but I entreat you to spare yourself and me the pain of any such consultations. Quiet—ease of mind, as Werner says—is the only preservative against the attacks, and this I can find, not in any medical advice, but in absence,—in separation from Magelone."

The Freiherr was silent for a while, and then said, "Have you any plan of travel?"

"Yes; I should like to join Werner and go to India with him."

The Freiherr turned short upon him again: "To India? In your condition the fatigue of the journey, the influence of the climate——"

"All better for me than staying here," Johann Leopold interrupted him, and his pale face flushed for an instant. After a pause he went on more calmly: "I have been corresponding with Dr. Werner about it. He made at first the same objections that you make; but he finally acknowledged that my morbid desire for just this journey is perhaps a true instinct,—a suggestion of nature."

The Freiherr breathed more freely. "There, you see,—a suggestion of nature. Then Dr. Werner thinks your recovery possible. And it is so; you *must* be well. Yes, my lad, go,—go as soon as you choose; and if I can be of any service to you, rely upon me."

"If you would have an eye upon Moorgarten and Elgerode I should be greatly obliged to you."

"Certainly I will; refer your people to me," said the Freiherr. "But I have one condition to make: we will explain that you are ill, and are to travel in search of health. What your illness is must remain our secret. If you come back well, it need never be known."

Johann Leopold passed his hand across his brow and eyes with his own peculiar gesture of weariness. "Magelone must be told."

"Least of all Magelone!" cried his grandfather. "If she cannot be spared it always—well, then she must endure it; but let her hope as long as she can. She deserves it at your hands. She loves you. I saw that plainly while you were ill."

The young man smiled bitterly again, arose, and went to the window. Before him lay the park, with its lindens of a hundred years, which had shaded his childish games; beyond it soared the mountain-peaks,—Eichberg, Klettberg, and Elbenhöhe,—with their magnificent forests and hunting-grounds, which he had been taught from infancy to regard as his inheritance, and for the care of which he felt himself responsible, as well as for the villagers nestling in the valley under the protection of the ancient castle of Dönninghausen.

To resign it all voluntarily was hard; and yet how much harder was it to resign his claim—superficial although it were—upon Magelone! He had long been convinced that it must be done, but he had always shrank and hesitated. Ludwig's words—'Never delay where the knife is necessary'—occurred to him. He would not any longer keep himself and others in useless suspense.

"Grandfather," he said, in a tone of forced composure, "it would be best to put a speedy end to it all,—to give me up as a forlorn hope. Let the heirship devolve upon Otto; and Magelone——"

"The heirship to Otto!" the Freiherr interposed, in a voice of thunder. "Never, so long as I have a voice in the matter! That would be certain ruin for Dönninghausen. Remember. Scarcely two years ago Otto made away with everything he had inherited from his mother, and think of the debts I have paid for him since!"

"That is over, sir," said Johann Leopold. "Since Otto promised you he would never play again, he has never—my information comes from a trustworthy source—touched a card."

The Freiherr, who was again pacing to and fro, waved his hand in sign of disapproval. "I do not trust the fellow," he murmured; and then went on aloud, "Why discuss matters which are quite out of the question? You are the heir, and the heir you will remain, even although"—he hesitated a moment—"even although you should decide not to marry. I can transfer to you the work of my life in full confidence that you will continue it after my own fashion. I rely upon you to do so,

difficult as you may find it, and even although the task requires you to resign one or another of your own inclinations. A lofty position in this world entails upon us certain duties. Men of our rank, my dear boy, cannot choose a sphere of action. We are born into it, and it is our duty—we owe it to ourselves—to shape ourselves to it to the best of our ability."

Johann Leopold looked down; he breathed heavily, and his lips were tightly compressed. He had laboured hard for months to form a resolution, and when it was formed to carry it out, and now he perceived, with a kind of terror, that his grandfather's words had shaken his decision. Was it not as the Freiherr said? Was it not a cowardly desertion of the post which fate had accorded him to resign the inheritance of his ancestors, and to break with the duties and traditions of his rank and family? But besides his grandfather's voice others were speaking aloud within him, requiring as urgently that he should abide by what he thought right. When the Freiherr paused before him, saying, "I trust, Johann Leopold, that I may rely upon you," he looked up; he was not yet clear in his mind, and in every way strength failed him for a final decision. "I will try to get well," he replied, although he did not believe in the possibility of recovery.

His grandfather grasped his hand. "That's right, my boy! Only try, and you will do it!" he exclaimed, with a joyous hopefulness that, old as he was, always lent him a certain youthful freshness. "Let us have no hypochondriacal complaints,—no morbid self-examinations. It is well for you to go away for a while; it will give you something else to think of. Now for your preparations for your journey, that you may go as soon as possible."

The young man then confessed that, relying upon his grandfather's consent, he had already empowered Dr. Werner to arrange for his journey as far as possible; all that remained to be done he would himself attend to in Vienna, where he wanted to pass a few days.

"It would be best to follow Dr. Werner on the day after to-morrow," he added. "The vessel sails from Trieste on the 14th of this month. Everything here is arranged and attended to."

The Freiherr was surprised; he had not looked for so speedy a departure, but he was ashamed to seem averse to it.

"Well, then, the day after to-morrow," he said; "only bear up, my boy, against the women's tears."

"No one will grieve," Johann Leopold replied, with a melancholy smile.

Indeed, what with bustle and excitement, there was scarcely time for grief; but Aunt Thekla supplied tears and lamentations enough as she superintended the packing of the trunks.

It was bad enough that such a dear good creature as Dr. Werner would insist upon undertaking such a foolish expedition; and then, too, he did it for the love of science. But what a Dönninghausen could find to do in India the old lady could not for the life of her conceive; and still less did she understand how her brother could let the lad, hardly recovered as he was, leave Dönninghausen. But the Freiherr seemed better friends than ever with Johann Leopold. His voice and look when he addressed him were most kind, and sometimes when he thought himself unperceived he would gaze at his grandson with an expression of such anxiety as went to Aunt Thekla's very heart.

To Johanna Johann Leopold had much to say; he commissioned her to install Red Jakob and Christine in the Forest Hermitage; told her where to address her letters to him, and promised to write to her in return. He was as taciturn as ever with Magelone, but his eyes spoke a different language from any she had read in them before. What was the meaning in those deep, grave, melancholy eyes?

The last morning he handed his grandfather a letter. "For Magelone," he said. "Let her give you her answer, and you will write me what it is. Do not urge her, do not influence her; and if she thinks she can find her happiness elsewhere, let no consideration for me prevent her from grasping it."

The letter ran thus:

> "Dear Magelone,—You know that considerations of health have determined me to this journey, which will keep me absent for an uncertain period from you and from my home. Only my grandfather and yourself must know that I am very ill, perhaps hopelessly so, and it is with great pain that I add that under these circumstances it seems to me dishonourable to hold you bound by the half betrothal at present existing between us. If I should one day return well, and find you still free, and ready anew to bestow upon me your heart and hand, my most ardent desire will be fulfilled; and perhaps, dear Magelone, I might then be better qualified to win you than now, when illness depresses and embitters me. But your future must not depend upon this *perhaps*; you must not, upon my account, reject or turn away from what might make you happy. *You are free, perfectly free.* Show our grandfather this letter, that he may know how we stand with regard to each other. If you can give him a kind word of comfort for me—no promise; I cannot accept any such from you now—I shall be heartily grateful to you. Once more, dear Magelone, you are free, whilst I am now and forever yours,
>
> "Johann Leopold."

As soon as the carriage bearing away the traveller had vanished from the eyes that were

watching its departure, the Freiherr handed this letter to Magelone. He pitied 'the warm-hearted little thing,' as he had called her ever since Johann Leopold's accident, all the more since she bore her grief with astonishing fortitude. Not a tear, not a sob, not a fainting-fit,—nothing of all that he so detested. She had extricated herself from Johann Leopold's last embrace like a little heroine, merely pressing her handkerchief once to her eyes. Not one of the women among his vaunted ancestry could have conducted herself better upon the departure of a Dönninghausen for the Holy Land.

"God willing, she shall be the lad's wife yet, and the mistress of this old cradle of our race!" the Freiherr thought, and handed her the letter.

And then the 'little heroine' went to her own room, where she read and reread the strange farewell lines. Oddly enough, although they contained none of the flattering words of love which she had often heard from others, there breathed from them a deep, ardent affection, and while the writer's words declared her free, she felt more than ever how he longed to bind her fast. Had the suspicions she had felt of him and of Johanna been groundless, then? or was he tired of straying and returning to her repentantly? However it might be, she determined to forgive him, since he lay at her feet once more. It was a pity that she must do so from such a distance! It made her laugh to think of it.

After a short period of reflection, she took the letter to her grandfather.

"Well, what am I to write to Johann Leopold?" he asked, when he had read it through, and he looked fixedly at her; but ah! his frank, honest gaze could not sound the depths of those flashing, glimmering, elfish eyes.

"I send him a thousand greetings, and wish and hope for his speedy return well and strong," Magelone replied, with a sweet smile.

"Right, child; those are the kind words which the silly fellow asks of you," said the Freiherr. "He has, as I see, forbidden you to give him any promise; but that is no affair of mine. Tell me frankly,—I had better know the truth,—do you, as well as he, in spite of this letter, hold yourself bound?"

He held out his broad hand to her, and she laid her rosy fingers in it. "Certainly, grandpapa dear," she said, without hesitation.

The Freiherr clasped her in his arms.

"That's right, that's right, my child; I expected no less of you," he said.

Only when she had left him did she feel a slight doubt whether she had been wise. "It was foolish," she said to herself, as she walked along the corridor. "I ought to have played a sensible part and accepted my freedom." But instantly afterwards she shrugged her shoulders and said, with a smile, "But what matter?—*Cela n'engage à rien.*"

CHAPTER XIII.

JOHANNA TO LUDWIG.

"Dönninghausen, May 10, 1874.

"I must confess, my dear Ludwig, that I laughed heartily over your last letter,—that is, over the lecture at the end of it. Nevertheless, you are right, and I will pay it all heed.

"So you do not want me to send you 'philosophic observations,'—'thot we doa wer awnselves,' our peasants say,—but a minute description of my daily life. Listen, then, you dear snappy old friend, to the record of my days.

"Whilst you were writing the letters from Suez and Aden, which only arrived the day before yesterday, in the midst of the tropical verdure and sunshine which they describe, our northern spring was announcing its approach, as usual, with wind and rain. But now it is here in all its beauty, and I enjoy it as much as possible in the open air.

"Before our first breakfast, which is really the only time I have entirely at my own disposal, I walk or ride; after it I always ride with my grandfather; and when, as is frequently the case, Aunt Thekla and Magelone either pay visits or receive them, I sit with the old Herr in the balcony of his study, which projects directly into the tops of the lindens. We follow your wanderings on the map, or I read aloud to him in some book of travels, which brings us near you in spirit. But late in the evening, when we have all said 'good-night' to one another, I slip out once more into the park, to listen to the rustle of the trees and to the 'songstress of the night,' the nightingale, trilling among the shrubbery on the shores of the little lake.

"You see, grandpapa and the spring are almost my only society, and it is very pleasant. After Johann Leopold left us, by grandpapa's desire I made several visits among the neighbours. They received me courteously, returned my visit, and invited me again, but—perhaps it is my own fault—I do not feel quite comfortable among them. Grandpapa's

dictatorial, almost menacing tone in which he introduced me as 'my grand-daughter Johanna' seems to ring in my ears, and I ask myself how I should have been received if I had presented myself without this 'open sesame,'—only bearing my father's name, of which I am so proud. I may possibly be doing some of these people injustice, but not all of them. At any rate, my mistrust of them serves to alienate me from them mentally, and therefore it is best to mingle with them as little as possible. I do not know whether grandpapa is aware of this feeling on my part, but, at all events, he lets me do as I please.

"May 18.

"According to Aunt Thekla, society about here is unusually gay this year. A Herr von Rothkirch is visiting at Klausenburg, who enlivens young and old; and one day there is a picnic, and the next a *bal champêtre*, and the next an excursion to some point of interest in the neighbourhood. Magelone is in her element,—she dresses and flirts, and has a 'divine time.' Aunt Thekla shakes her head sometimes, but grandpapa says, 'Let her do as she chooses, we are not all alike. I cannot take it ill of the little thing that she does not mope and sigh like a girl forsaken of her lover; and if she finds Dönninghausen dull without Johann Leopold, it is well that she can find amusement elsewhere.' How grandpapa can believe that Magelone loves Johann Leopold is more than I can comprehend. She herself tells every one who will listen that she is only contracting a *mariage de raison*. At times I have felt sure that she loves another; or is she right when she maintains that she cannot love?

"And, after all, what is love? Is it a spell to which we accidentally succumb, or does it result from certain requirements of our being which bestow us helplessly upon another? How, for example, was it possible for Christine to fall in love with Red Jakob? He is almost repulsive to me, but she is in bliss.

"They married in April, and went to live at the Forest Hermitage. Of course grandpapa had to know: I chose my time, and told him the story as pathetically as I could. Johann Leopold was right,—I did not succeed in softening his heart. 'A fine reformation, truly,' he said, 'with the fellow tied fast by the arm. Johann Leopold can, of course, employ whomsoever he pleases, but I'll have nothing to do with the rascal, and so long as my eyes are open he must not show himself on Dönninghausen land; on that condition I'll not interfere with him.'

"So on one of our first fine mornings I rode up to the Forest Hermitage alone. The bridle-path winds up the Klettberg through a magnificent hemlock forest, and then along the summit for some distance. The light comes brighter and brighter through the trunks, glimpses are caught here and there of distant views, bathed in a magic blue mist, which vanish the next moment. Then the path turns about a rock, and with a long breath you find yourself on a plateau that emerges from the forest like an island in the ocean. Around you, below you, far as the eye can reach, lie the wooded peaks, gleaming in the golden morning light, while far and near yawn a myriad dark chasms, tempting to the eye and to the imagination.

"Christine's joyful welcome roused me from my rapt delight in gazing. When I turned towards her I saw the Forest Hermitage,—the Observatory, as Johann Leopold called it,—a two-storied pavilion, with a high, pointed roof. Red Jakob was just coming out of his door. Even without his lame arm, I should have recognized him by his thick tawny curls, although his rather low stature and delicate frame were a disappointment to me. After all that I had heard of him, I had expected a giant. As he approached me and uttered a few words of gratitude, I had a disagreeable sensation; there was something in his eyes reminding me of a beast of prey lurking for a victim,—did you notice this?—and when he laughed and showed his dazzlingly white, pointed teeth, I was almost afraid of him.

"This impression was strengthened by the bitterness which fairly saturates his rude humour. Christine, fortunately, takes it all in jest, and only laughs. When, after I had admired every nook and corner of her small domain, she conducted me to her sitting-room, and with fresh exclamations of delight made me sit down upon a hard old leathern sofa, her husband said, with a scornful laugh, 'Don't make so much of your belongings, or the gracious Fräulein will think you took such a miserable cripple as myself only for the sake of what you got with him.'

"She looked at her red-haired monster with a blissful smile. 'There now, Fräulein, he is always joking like that,' she made reply. 'Because he thinks I might grieve for coming to him, poor as I was, he makes believe that he cares nothing for all that we have; but he really likes it as well as I do.'

"With these words she left the room, and I heard her bustling about in the kitchen. Red Jakob took a seat opposite me. 'Yes, yes, it is a great thing to set up as superintendent,' he said, and laughed so that all his pointed teeth showed between his red lips. 'And if I now and then lay hold on a fellow using his shooting-iron where he ought not, I can show myself as honest as an old thief turned detective.'

"'You should not say such bitter things,' I said to him. 'My cousin, Johann Leopold, likes you, and you know it.'

"He shook his head. 'No, gracious Fruleen! they don't like a fellow like me. They keep him, and the Squire always did that,—but why? Because he is the master, and I am like his horse or dog; he will feed it while it can walk,—no longer. Do not contradict me; I know it all from experience. So long as the Squire and I were playmates, the old Herr was well pleased that I knew more about hunting than even the gamekeeper himself, and that nothing that could run or fly escaped my rifle. 'You must get Jakob to teach you. You must do as Jakob does,' was the cry; so that at last I really thought I was a fine fellow and could not go astray. Not exactly that, I thank you! When the Squire cared no longer for trapping game and shooting birds, there was no place for me; and all that I had been praised for I was obliged to do in secret, as though it were a sin. It might be,—but I don't think it! No, I don't think it. Why did I have keen sight and a sure hand——Ah, indeed, I have the last no longer!'

"He arose and looked out of the window, that I might not see his face.

"'You ought to have been gamekeeper,' I said.

"'True, and the Squire meant I should be, and the old Herr wanted it, and I tried it; but I can't write well enough for the head place, and I cannot submit to be ordered about by the gamekeeper, and the gamekeeper's wife and assistants. I preferred to earn my bread as a woodcutter, and nothing went wrong until the accident.'

"Christine here made her appearance with coffee, and gave another turn to the conversation; but as I was going Red Jakob said, 'Gracious Fruleen, I have observed that you think me an ungrateful man. I am not that. I never in my life forgot a benefit that came from a kind heart without pride or arrogance. I never shall cease to be grateful for what you did for Christine; and if you ever need me, I'll go through fire and water to serve you.' And his cruel eyes flashed so that I was frightened. God save me from such a helper!

"I am sorry the man is so antipathetic to me, for Christine's sake. Her devotion to me is really a pleasure, and I take great delight in seeing the fresh young creature busy about her little house. I have been two or three times since to visit her, and Jakob was always 'away in the grounds,' as Christine says proudly. The rough fellow really seems to have a sincere love of nature. He has discovered a charming lookout about a hundred steps from the Hermitage, and has cleared away all branches and bushes that could obstruct the view, and made a grassy mound there upon which I could lie and dream for hours. Christine regretted that Jakob was not at home to do the honours of the surrounding landscape; but what do I care to know how the mountain-peaks, piled up in all directions, are named; or whither leads the road that winds over this or that eminence; or the name of the factory smoking in the forest depths? The unknown distance allures and occupies my thoughts. I never weary of asking, Do you hold concealed aught for me? while I gaze with indifference across the familiar valley at my feet. Nestling against the rocks on the summit of which I sit lies Klausenburg, with its towers and turrets. 'The same foolish old Johanna!' I hear you say. Dear Ludwig, it is easy for you men, roaming abroad in the world whither you will, to exalt the virtues of content and domesticity. Permit us, who must sit quietly at home, to indulge in what dreams we will.

"And this reminds me of my step-mother, who has not yet found an abiding-place. A little while ago I had a letter from her, the first since I left her. She has been unable to procure an engagement—a failure which she ascribes to the machinations of her rivals, who would, if they could, prevent her from any advantageous employment of her talents; and she assures me that were it not for the assistance of a friend, whose name she does not mention, she must long since have succumbed to their persecutions. She writes that my little sister grows prettier and more like herself every day; that the child has also inherited her talent, and has lately appeared with great success in a juvenile ballet. Strange to say,—although I myself always desired nothing more eagerly than a career upon the stage, and although the majority of great actresses have made their *débût* very early,—I cannot endure the thought of my little Lisbeth making her appearance now before the public, and I vainly try to answer the question as to what would have been my father's wish in the matter. But why write this to you, who despise and condemn the actor's profession? It comes from my old habit of talking to you of everything that is occupying my mind. Kind and really paternal as my grandfather is, I could not speak of this to him. I did not even venture to tell him that I had received the letter, and Aunt Thekla, with all her sympathy for me, would be helpless here.

"As usual, my letter has grown to a volume. When will it reach you? When will you read it? Answer me soon, and tell me of your grand, great world, as I do you of my circumscribed existence. Wherever you go I follow you in heart and thoughts."

Early in June there came surprising news from Waldemar. He had obtained a position in the suite of the ambassador to St. Petersburg, wished to take his bride thither, and had persuaded her parents to consent to a hasty marriage. Now he wrote to invite his family to be present at it on the 15th of the month. An old-fashioned celebration, after his grandfather's taste, was out of the question, since the Walburgs were in deep mourning for the death of an uncle.

The Freiherr, as the head of the family, felt that his presence, even at this quiet marriage, could not be dispensed with. Aunt Thekla, on the contrary, shrank from taking so long a journey. "It is

seventeen years since I have been more than a few miles away from the Dönninghausen domain," she said. "The thought of meeting all those strangers frightens me. I think I could scarcely make a respectable curtsey to them. Please, dear Johann, let me stay at home." And the Freiherr, after he had laughed at her and tried to persuade her, acceded to her wishes.

He was all the more inexorable towards Magelone. She longed to accompany him to Vienna. In imagination she revelled in delicious toilettes, saw herself with crowds of admirers, completing conquest after conquest, and returning laden with who could tell what spoils of victory, when her grandfather's 'no' cut short all her dreams and aspirations.

"If you were free as you appear to be, or bound outwardly as you are in spirit, I should not object," he said; "but, as you are, misunderstandings might arise that had better be avoided. And I think, too, that you ought to remain here, out of regard for Johann Leopold."

Magelone knew that when her grandfather spoke thus he was not to be contradicted; but she was vexed enough at having placed herself in an ambiguous position, and when she went to bed she cried herself to sleep, like a child who has lost its Christmas-gift by its own fault.

On the same evening Aunt Thekla, when she was alone with her brother, ventured timidly to propose that he should take Johanna to Vienna with him.

"I have already thought of it," he replied. "I should like to give the child a pleasure, and, moreover, she is the truest Dönninghausen of them all,—she would have done me credit. But to introduce her by that name which she clings to so nonsensically—I cannot bring myself to do it."

Thus it was that the Freiherr started on his journey accompanied only by old Christian. Aunt Thekla's preparations for it were sufficient for a voyage around the world. Now and then she reproached herself for saving herself all the inconveniences and fatigue of travel while thus sending her old brother into the world alone; but he would not listen to her.

"Don't behave as if I were too infirm to bear a railway journey," he said at last, rather impatiently. "Our Emperor is just my age, and he travels from one end of his kingdom to the other."

This example silenced the old lady's anxiety and helped her to undergo her brother's departure with dignity. But when, having accompanied him as far as Thalrode, she returned without him, and reflected that each flying minute bore him farther and farther from her, and that days and perhaps even weeks must pass before she should hear his step or see his dear handsome face again, it was all over with her, and she atoned by floods of tears for her previous fortitude.

"Dear aunt, do not cry any more," Magelone said to her in the course of the afternoon. "You behave as if grandpapa were going to his own funeral. Come, let us drive out, to Klausenburg, to Remmingen,—wherever you will,—it will divert your mind."

"I don't wish to have it diverted," sighed Aunt Thekla. "To think of my dear good Johann, or to do something for him, is the only consolation I can have. Come, Johanna, let us dust the archive-room thoroughly. You know grandpapa cannot endure to have a servant enter it."

Johanna declared her willingness for the task. Magelone took up her embroidery with a yawn; really this eternal stitching in all the heat was insufferable!

She seated herself at the piano and began a nocturne of Chopin's; but the idea of playing when there was no admiring audience! Her hands dropped wearily upon the keys, which sent forth an echoing chord, and the elfish eyes were veiled.

"Oh, to have to stay here when they are so happy in Vienna" sighed Magelone. "And all for the sake of Johann Leopold, who cares as little for me as I do for him! And, of all places, in this horrid Dönninghausen, where there never is the slightest diversion!"

Her thoughts were interrupted by a slight noise; the door was cautiously opened, and a tall figure appeared on the threshold. "Otto!" she exclaimed. And the next moment he clasped her in his arms and kissed her.

"But, Otto," she said, reproachfully, as she extricated herself from his embrace, "what is the matter with you? what brings you here? It must be something very extraordinary," she added, startled by the dark fire in his eyes and the strange rigid look about his mouth.

He laughed bitterly. "You would ridicule me if I told you that a desire for a reconciliation with you brought me hither, and more still when you hear that I have other reasons to give other people. But all the same it is a fact that the breach between us grows more intolerable to me every day."

"Why did you not write?" asked Magelone.

"Because you made Johanna your go-between. She wrote me so cold and stiff a note. The wind at Dönninghausen seems to blow from a quarter strangely unfavourable to me."

Magelone knew only too well what had influenced the tone of Johanna's letter; she blushed slightly and turned away her eyes, but before she could reply Aunt Thekla and Johanna entered the room.

"You came to escort your grandfather?" the old lady said, after salutations had been exchanged. "Unfortunately, he left this morning."

"So they told me in Thalrode," the young man replied. "But I am not going to Vienna. I have come to you, dear Aunt Thekla. You must help me. Come, sit down, and let me make my confession. Please stay; you must hear it too," he added, as Johanna and Magelone were about to leave the room.

Aunt Thekla sat up stiffly. "Confession?" she repeated, in a troubled tone. "Otto, you have not been——" she hesitated.

"Playing again?" He completed her sentence, as he took a chair opposite her. "Yes, dear aunt; unfortunately, I have broken my promise and played, and have lost. Do not reproach me, I entreat; I do that myself. Rather let us consult how I can be extricated from my embarrassments; nay, even more than that,—how I can be relieved in my extremity."

"Otto, how could you?" Magelone exclaimed, reproachfully. Aunt Thekla stared at him in dismay, and Johanna was mute with terror.

Otto shrugged his shoulders. "It is easy to ask and to condemn. Try being mewed up in a wretched garrison, where you have lost interest in what amuses others, because you have learned to wish for something better and higher. Find yourself disappointed in your wish,"—here both Johanna and Magelone were convicted by his reproachful glance,—"and then in your desolation and distress see others enjoying the intoxicating, all-engrossing delights of play. I wonder whether your lofty virtue would hold out?"

Aunt Thekla was weeping. "Poor boy!" she whispered to herself. Johanna's heart beat fast. Magelone smiled, half in scorn, half flattered. After a pause Otto went on, turning to Aunt Thekla: "Gambling debts must, as you know, be paid within four-and-twenty hours. I had nothing, and only knew of one way out of the difficulty; that is, I gave a note. If it is not paid in a week——" He broke off and looked gloomily on the ground; then added, "When the invitation to Vienna came, I instantly concluded that grandpapa would accept it, and I determined in his absence to apply to you, dear aunt. You will not leave me in the lurch."

The old lady sighed. "Certainly not, if my few hundreds can help you——"

"I need nearly three thousand thalers," Otto interrupted her.

"Three thousand!" cried Aunt Thekla. "Wretched boy! Never in my life have I had so much at once."

"The bailiff would give you the money at any time," said the young man; "and if grandpapa were angry at first——"

"Otto, what are you thinking of?" his aunt interposed, hastily. "It would be actual robbery! I will not listen to such a thing. Moreover, the bailiff never would do it."

Otto changed colour. "Then there is nothing for it but to send a bullet through my brains," he said in an undertone, as if to himself.

Aunt Thekla again burst into tears. "If I could only help you!" she said. "But if I stake everything that I have, my money, my few trinkets, my laces——" Suddenly a thought occurred to her. "Magelone, you can help!" she cried. "Your beautiful pearl necklace,—Löbel Wolf will certainly advance you the needed sum upon it, and when Johann Leopold comes back he will redeem it."

For a moment Magelone was speechless with terror. Her pearl necklace, the only thing she had been able to save from the wreck of her fortune, must it, too, go? She could not let it if she would, for had she not vowed, when money, plate, trinkets, everything, in short, had been swallowed up in paying poor Willfried's debts, never, never again, even for the dearest being on earth, to offer up such a sacrifice? But of course she could not explain this now, when Otto, Aunt Thekla, and Johanna were all looking at her so expectantly. A happy thought came to her aid. "Gladly—gladly would I give it up," she stammered, and the tone of her voice, the tears in her eyes, must convince her hearers how sincere was her regret that she could not do so, "if I only had the necklace; but I was anxious about its safety, and I gave it to grandpapa, who locked it in his safe."

"But how would my Christmas-gift do?" cried Johanna. "If it is worth so much——"

"Oh, child, how could I forget it?" Aunt Thekla interrupted her. "Of course it can help us. But you have no Johann Leopold who will redeem it," she added, less hopefully. And Otto rising, said, "No, thank you, Johanna; I cannot accept such a sacrifice from you."

Johanna, too, rose. "You must!" she cried, and her eyes sparkled. "Tell him, Aunt Thekla, that he must. If I am not a near enough relative to help him, he must reflect that it is the right of all of us to help to avert a family misfortune——" She paused, and hurried from the room.

"How good she is!" said Aunt Thekla.

"More than good,—magnanimous!" murmured Otto, who was pacing the room with folded arms, and Magelone once more marvelled at 'this girl's extraordinary luck; everything redounded to her honour and glory.'

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNEXPECTED RETURN.

Johanna brought the *parure* to her aunt. "He will not refuse to accept aid from you," she said. Then they sat at table conversing upon indifferent subjects, and the same talk went on in the drawing-room while they were drinking coffee. When at last Magelone sat down at the piano, and Aunt Thekla, wearied with the exertions of the day, dropped asleep in the corner of her sofa, Johanna slipped out into the park.

Her heart was heavy. Otto's words, 'I cannot accept such a sacrifice from you,' had wounded her, in proving to her that she was not as near to him as she had thought. "I wish grandpapa were at home again; he is the only one who really cares for me," she said to herself. And, as she leaned against the wall of the park at the end of the linden avenue and listlessly plucked some monthly roses from the marble vase beside her, she thought that the tears that filled her eyes were shed for her grandfather's absence.

A quick, firm step upon the gravel startled her from her revery. She hastily wiped her eyes, but did not look around until Otto's voice said close beside her, "Forgive me, dear Johanna. I hear, it is true, that you do not like to be interrupted in your evening strolls; nevertheless you must allow me to thank you before I leave here again to-morrow morning."

"Are you going so soon?" she asked in faltering tones.

"Would you like to have me stay?" he replied. "Do not be conventional, Johanna; I want to know your real feeling."

"We should all be glad to keep you here," she said.

He looked at her sadly, and rejoined, in a melancholy tone, "I asked how *you* felt; I care little about the others. But you,—what fault do you find with me, Johanna? I ought not, indeed, to ask such a question to-day. You all blame me, and you are apparently right in doing so. But before—I mean when you wrote me that letter—we parted more than friends; and then came that cold, stiff note!"

"It was not meant to be so; I meant it should be kind," she replied, without looking up at him.

"So much the worse!" he cried. "You meant to and could not. But I have no right to reproach you when you have just done me so friendly a service."

"Which you did not wish to accept from me," she answered him, reproachfully.

"Johanna, I trust you understand why it was so much harder for me to accept this kind of help from you than from the others?"

"Because you do not know me so well; I am not so near to you," she said.

"You do not, you cannot believe that," he hastily interposed. "To me you seem far nearer to me, and therefore it humiliates me all the more to——"

"Where are you?" Magelone's voice called from a side-path at this moment.

"Here!" called Johanna, who hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry for the interruption.

"Oh, dear! I had so much to say," whispered Otto, as he took Johanna's hand and pressed it to his lips. "One word more while we are alone,—would you like to have me stay here a few days?"

"Most certainly. Did I not tell you so?" Johanna replied, vainly endeavouring to withdraw her hand from his.

"And your letter was not the expression of your displeasure with me?" he went on, still in a whisper, as he leaned towards her; but, before she could answer, Magelone's light gown appeared from among the trees.

"Beg pardon if I intrude," she said, in a tone which was meant to be teasing, but which only succeeded in sounding cross.

"Not at all," Otto replied, divining her jealous emotion. "Come take part in our consultation; we were discussing the question of my either remaining here for a few days or returning directly to my garrison."

Magelone joined them. "Return directly? 'Nonsense!' as grandpapa would say, and as I say too. It is your duty, my noble knight, to stay here and entertain us and coax Aunt Thekla out of her melancholy mood. Not in vain have you called me your sovereign. I command,—you obey. Come now to Aunt Thekla on the veranda; it is intolerably sultry here under the trees."

So saying, she put her hand within Otto's arm and drew him away.

"Are you coming, Johanna?" he said, holding out his hand to her.

"In a moment; I only want to pluck a few roses," she made reply. But she stood motionless for a while, looking after the pair as they vanished in the dim depths of the linden avenue. Yes, she

was leading him away, his sovereign, who, as he had confessed on that January evening, had ruled him by coquetry, and who would still so rule him, for the love which he had summoned to his rescue did not appear to have discovered the magic word that could break the spell. Or was it that he himself had not meant to summon it? What would he have said had Magelone not made her appearance? Idle questions upon which it were folly to ponder. Johanna walked towards the castle. Magelone was right; it was intolerably sultry beneath these trees, the air was heavy with the fragrance of the lindens. She wished she could have Elinor saddled and gallop off through the dewy meadows in the valley, or along the edge of the forest, but she dreaded Aunt Thekla's amazement, Magelone's ridicule, and Otto's companionship, so she gave up the idea.

The next morning early Otto took the jewels to town to procure a loan of Löbel Wolf, but returned in high displeasure by the next train. The old broker and curiosity-dealer would not loan money on the jewels unless with the permission of the Freiherr or his sister. When the young man had asked him angrily whether his own name were not enough to give as security, Löbel Wolf had declared that he wanted no security, he was but acting in accordance with his rule as a business-man. All that he would consent to do was to give Otto a written acknowledgment to be signed by Fräulein Thekla. At first the old lady looked grave, and made objections, since the jewels were not hers but Johanna's, but when the latter entreated her not to complicate matters by refusing to sign the paper, she complied, and Otto went back to town by the noon train.

There was no further difficulty. Otto received the necessary sum with his ticket of deposit, and returned to Dönninghausen, in spite of a tremendous thunder-storm, light of heart, and in entire unconsciousness that a far more terrible tempest was gathering above his head.

Löbel Wolf, so soon as the young man left him, betook himself to the examination of the *parure*. In his little office behind his shop, stuffed from floor to ceiling with all sorts of curiosities, he sat at his desk, and held the jewels beneath the light of the gas-jet perpetually burning there. They were clumsily set, but he was enough of a connoisseur to see plainly what they would be if set by an artist, and the wish was aroused in the soul of the old man, whose hobby was precious stones, to become the possessor of these.

But would the Freiherr sell them? The Dönninghausens were among the richest of the neighbouring nobility. Löbel Wolf wagged his gray head: a period of embarrassment might come for even the wealthiest, and it seemed more and more probable to Löbel Wolf that it had come for the Dönninghausens. One of the Freiherr's grandsons was making an expensive tour, another was marrying more rank than money, and the third was involved in debt and dissipation. Resolving to propose to the Freiherr the purchase of the *parure* so soon as he should return from Vienna, Löbel Wolf locked up the seductive stones in his safe.

But the spell of their sparkle, under which he had fallen, left him no rest, and even before Otto had reached Dönninghausen Löbel Wolf had decided to write to the Freiherr in Vienna.

For Otto, life and the world had taken on a new aspect since he had received the money which was to be his salvation. Aunt Thekla, when she handed him the jewels, had obtained from him a promise that he would confess the whole affair to his grandfather as soon as he possibly could.

"It will be an evil hour for us," she said, "but it would be worse still if my brother should discover the absence of the jewels before we had made our confession. If your plan of procuring the money from the bailiff had been practicable, you would have had to speak with your grandfather without delay."

Otto had assented, and had promised to await at Dönninghausen his grandfather's return, but as he rode back he changed his mind. He reflected that it would be cruel to trouble his grandfather with anything so disagreeable immediately upon his return home, and that it would be far easier for the old Herr, as well as for all concerned, if Aunt Thekla or Johanna would select some favourable moment for the confession and tell him all, and that it would be very desirable for the chief culprit to avoid the first outbreak of displeasure. He therefore determined to take his departure at an early date; it would not be impossible to convince Aunt Thekla of the advisability of this. Thus everything was arranged delightfully, and he could enjoy himself to the full during the rest of his stay at Dönninghausen.

The thunder-shower changed to a steady rain, which made walks or rides in the open air impossible for a time.

"'Tis a pity; we were just going to have such a pleasant day in the woods, instead of which we must drive to Klausenburg," Magelone said, the first morning. "For Otto's sake," she added in an undertone; and Aunt Thekla, who would rather have stayed at home, consented to go, since 'the poor boy must have some amusement.'

The one visit brought on others. At Klausenburg they received an invitation to Remmingen; at Remmingen a breakfast was arranged at Grünroda; on the fourth day there was the celebration of the Countess Elfrida's birthday at Klausenburg, and on the fifth all were to assemble at Dönninghausen for a dance.

"To celebrate Waldemar's marriage. I assure you grandpapa would be delighted," said Magelone, when Aunt Thekla looked rather dubious, and again the old lady gave way.

The Freiherr had written only once, on the day after his arrival in Vienna. The journey had been made very comfortably, he was very well, and expressed himself pleased with Waldemar's

betrothed as well as with the entire Walburg family. The time of his return was undecided. The young couple were to leave for St. Petersburg immediately after the marriage, but he might pass a few days with his new connections, and would announce the day of his return in his next.

Until this letter arrived, then, Otto decided to remain in Dönninghausen, and Magelone to amuse herself as much as possible. So upon the evening of the 18th of June the castle windows shone brilliantly through the rain, a merry party assembled in the rooms, which were decked with flowers, and the dancing soon began to the sound of the piano played by the village schoolmaster. Magelone, in airy, floating white, with white roses in her gold-gleaming curls, was, as Otto never wearied of whispering to her, the queen of the evening; and even Aunt Thekla, who had felt strangely depressed all day long, was aroused from her melancholy as she watched the pretty creature, with her rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes, flying through the ball-room.

Otto, too, was, or seemed to be, the gayest of the gay this evening. Aunt Thekla could not tell whether to blame or to admire him. Once as he passed Johanna, who, being still in mourning, did not dance, he said, "I would rather have one quiet hour with you than all this bustle;" but was this more than a cousinly expression? and which was his true self,—the laughing, careless creature which he seemed usually, or the grave, quiet man who talked so seriously to her when they were alone together? He was just passing now with the Countess Elfrida. He must have been especially charming, for she tapped him upon the arm with her fan, after her own hail-fellow-well-met style, and laughed so loudly that the hall re-echoed.

The sight was distasteful to Johanna; she withdrew to the nearest window-recess, leaned her burning forehead against the pane, and looked out into the dripping rain. A carriage drove into the court-yard; had not the guests all arrived yet? She recognized the Thalrode hack, and when the servant, wrapped in a water-proof, who was sitting beside the driver, looked up, she thought she recognized him, and her heart seemed to stand still.

"It is not possible," she thought. At that instant Leo rushed out of the house, barking loudly, leaped down the steps, and had nearly thrown himself under the wheels of the coach. The door was opened, and Johanna saw that she had not been mistaken. The Freiherr, assisted by Christian, got out of it.

How she contrived to leave the ball-room she could not tell. She first collected her wits when she heard her grandfather's voice on the stairs, and she hurried to meet him.

"Here is Johanna," he said, coldly. At his departure he had embraced her; now he only held out his hand, which she kissed, not knowing what to say.

"I come at an inconvenient time. You have a party,—a dance, I hear. Go, go; don't let me interrupt it," he growled. "Stop!" he added, as she was retreating timidly; "I do not wish you to proclaim my arrival with that ghastly face. It shall not be said that the return of the master of the house scared away the guests from Dönninghausen. You may tell my sister that I am here, but no one else, and I will not see even Thekla until the fiddling is over; then I wish to speak to you all. All,—do you hear?—to Monsieur Otto especially." With these words he passed on, accompanied by Leo, who went on barking, whining, and wagging his tail in a rapture of welcome.

Johanna stood dismayed. From the tone in which the Freiherr spoke, she saw only too clearly that he knew all. The many sounds from the ball-room pained her, and when she returned to it she seemed to be surrounded by the confused images of a dream. She withdrew more persistently than before into corners and window-recesses, and avoided Aunt Thekla. In spite of the commission she had received, she could not make up her mind to mention to her her brother's return. She feared lest the old lady should be unable to conceal her agitation.

Nevertheless, the intelligence was not long suppressed. Perhaps some one of the guests had seen the Freiherr arrive, or one of the servants in spite of his prohibition had mentioned it. Groups were shortly seen whispering together here and there, Countess Klausenburg gave the signal for departure unusually early, and half an hour afterward the last carriage drove out of the court-yard.

When Magelone and Otto, who had been taking leave of the guests, came up the stairs chatting gayly, they were confronted by Aunt Thekla and Johanna.

"Do you not know," the old lady asked, "that your grandfather is here?"

"The deuce he is! Then I'm off!" cried Otto.

"It would be just like you!" the Freiherr called out in tones of thunder from the threshold of the drawing-room door, where his tall figure appeared at this moment. "Falsehood and cowardice belong together. But come in; I wish to speak with you all." With these words he stood aside and let them pass him into the drawing-room, which he then entered, closing the door after him.

Aunt Thekla collected herself by a mighty effort. "Dear Johann!" she stammered, "I am delighted to see you here again."

"Delighted? You look so," he growled in reply. "But never mind: the present is no time for sentiment. Sit down and listen to what I have to say."

The ladies obeyed. Otto stood leaning against the chimney-piece. The Freiherr paced the room heavily to and fro. After a pause he said,—

"First, Thekla, let me say that it seems to me rather unbecoming to give entertainments in my house while I am away. No discussion, I entreat!" he added, waving his hand forbiddingly. "I know it was not your idea. Magelone, silly child that she is, probably arranged the nonsense. But we old people are here to be a check upon the young ones. Instead of which you aid and abet—not Magelone alone——" He broke off, as was his custom when he dreaded his own violence, then took a letter from his pocket with a trembling hand and threw it into his sister's lap. "There, read that," he said, with difficulty commanding his voice. "Löbel Wolf offers to buy the jewels you have pawned. It has come to this with the Dönninghausens; you have brought it to this! And you, Johanna,"—his tone grew louder and sharper,—"you have proved to me that you do not possess a spark of filial piety. Family jewels like your grandmother's bridal *parure* are not to be thrown away for the sake of such a scoundrel."

Otto started forward. "Sir," he cried, "pray control yourself. I am an officer——"

"You have been an officer," the Freiherr corrected him. "To-morrow morning you will hand in your resignation. The man who forfeits his word as you have done can no longer wear the king's uniform; or do you dare deny that you have been gambling again?"

Otto had grown pale. He seemed to wish to speak, but only breathed heavily and hung his head.

Aunt Thekla felt impelled to interfere. "Dear Johann, I entreat you——" she began in a trembling voice.

The Freiherr interrupted her. "Hush, Thekla; you understand nothing about it," he said, harshly.

But she was not to be intimidated. "What will become of the poor boy?" she asked, softly.

"You are right,—the poor boy!" the Freiherr exclaimed, with a scornful laugh. "It is strange that such fellows can always wheedle you women. But make yourself easy, the 'poor boy' will be treated better than he deserves. He is my grandson, unfortunately; is a Dönninghausen,—I cannot turn him out into the streets. I will at least give him one more trial. He shall return to agriculture,—I ought to have insisted upon it after the war. If he does well, I will, perhaps, give him one of my estates to farm; if not——" The Freiherr made a backward wave of his hand as a finish to his sentence, and then went on pacing to and fro, while no one ventured to speak.

The minutes passed: the ticking of the tall clock had a weird sound in the stillness; at last the Freiherr stood still. "Let the disgraceful affair be disposed of as decently as possible," he said. "It must be announced that Otto leaves the army of his own free choice. To-morrow morning at eight the fine fellow must come to my room for further orders. As for the jewels, of course they must be redeemed and restored to Johanna, but they must be given to me to keep for her until you have all acquired some sense."

After these words the old Herr strode angrily from the room. Aunt Thekla, whose bedroom was just underneath her brother's, heard him pacing to and fro in it until dawn.

CHAPTER XV.

A BIRTHDAY FÊTE.

Otto obeyed his grandfather's commands, handed in his resignation, and was shortly established as a volunteer assistant in the administration of Count Klausenburg's model estates, a step which naturally gave rise to the most contradictory reports. According to some, Otto had run in debt again, and the Freiherr had now 'taken him in hand;' others stated from a trustworthy source that the young man had broken away from all his associations on account of an unfortunate love-affair; others, again, had heard that quarrels with his comrades had caused him to leave his regiment. His fellow-officers were convinced that he never would 'stick to agriculture,' but would soon return to the army; and the youthful fair bewailed his resignation, declaring that he was not half so handsome in civilian's dress.

Elfrida Klausenburg, the shining light of the family, put by all these reports and explanations with a meaning smile. The dress of an heir was even more becoming than a uniform, she declared, and it seemed to her only just and fitting that in view of Johann Leopold's continued ill health the Freiherr should contemplate the possibility of another grandson's proving his heir, and that he should wish to educate this grandson in a way to enable him to administer such extensive estates with judgment and skill.

Countess Elfrida repeated this so often and so decidedly, old Count Klausenburg smiled so diplomatically when he declared that he knew really nothing of Otto's circumstances and prospects, and Otto was so continually at Dönninghausen, that all reports to his disadvantage gradually died away, and he came to be looked upon more and more as the future heir. It did no good for him to contradict this view of the matter whenever it was brought to his knowledge. The Dönninghausens had always been rather reserved with regard to their family arrangements, and out of consideration for Johann Leopold they were of course especially inclined to secrecy in the present case. That Otto never ceased to pay this consideration to his cousin, even in intercourse with his most intimate friends, spoke well for his delicacy, his prudence, and his trustworthiness.

It was remarkable how many excellent qualities, hitherto concealed in him, now came to light.

Otto knew that the many attentions which he received were paid, for the most part, to the future heir; but he was rather vain than proud, and vanity delights in the homage paid to appearances. So he allowed himself to be borne along in contemptuous ease upon the current of universal favour without asking whither, and helped Elfrida Klausenburg to build castles in the air, the rule of which she was resolved, in spite of all rivals, to share with him.

The most dangerous of these rivals seemed to her to be Magelone. "It is disgraceful the way she flirts with Otto Dönninghausen," the young lady said to her sisters; "but I hope he is too clever to allow himself to be caught. Any one can see that it is the heir she is after."

Amelie, whose years forbade her joining in this contest, replied with some asperity, "The same thing might just as well be said of others who until now never seemed to think much of the young man." And Helena, who had for some time played the part of a man-hater, declared, sharply, that for her part she thought it doubtful whether Magelone were flirting with Otto or he with her. Elfrida replied to her sisters' remarks only by an indifferent shrug. She was sure that Otto had fallen a victim to her flaxen hair and blue eyes, and knew from his own lips that he only rode over to Dönninghausen to please his grandfather.

It was true that these visits formed part of the programme laid down by the Freiherr, but if Otto had not found them agreeable he would soon have devised a way to curtail them. His intercourse with his family had proved pleasant beyond his anticipations. His grandfather, immediately after meals,—during which, it is true, he paid less attention to Otto than formerly,—retired to his study, where Johanna read aloud to him; and then Aunt Thekla would try, by redoubled kindness, to indemnify the 'poor boy' for the old Herr's coldness, and Magelone was so enchanted to have the monotony of her days relieved by her cousin's visits, that her coquetry wore at times the disguise of sincere affection. Even the diminution of his intercourse with Johanna, caused by the Freiherr's claims upon her time, was rather a relief than a disappointment to the young man, for, although she never had referred to the help she had been so ready to give him, he could not but feel a sense of obligation and embarrassment when with her. Nevertheless, at times she exercised the old influence upon him, and then if he could speak with her alone, which was rarely the case, he would complain that they saw so little of each other, accusing her of intentionally avoiding him, and assuring her that only the prospect of her society had induced him to comply with his grandfather's arrangements.

"You influence me for the best; you arouse and bring to the surface all that there is in me worth anything. With you I am cleverer, stronger, better than at any other time," he said, and he was really sincere so long as he could gaze into her eyes. But when she had left him he seemed to breathe more freely, and Magelone's graceful folly appeared to him more graceful than ever.

Thus the last half of August was reached, and his birthday drew near. The morning before, Aunt Thekla had summoned up all her courage and reminded her brother of it. "As to-morrow is Saturday, he will come to dinner as usual," she added, "and I wanted to ask you, dear Johann, if you would not like to have a few friends invited. No party, only from eight to ten people, perhaps ——"

"What for?" the Freiherr burst out, and she lowered her eyes before his, which flashed angrily. "Not, I hope, to celebrate that fellow's birthday. He will be thirty years old, and he conducts himself like a boy of twenty."

Aunt Thekla took courage again. "Dear Johann, there is more joy over one sinner that repenteth ——"

"Repenteth?" the Freiherr again interrupted her. "There's no question of that here. Monsieur accommodates himself to circumstances for the present, but he is ready for a fresh escapade at any moment. No, Thekla, there's no occasion for slaughtering the fatted calf. If you wish to bake the boy a cake, I've no objection; I'll put the customary bit of money underneath it and wish him joy decently; but no further festivities, I beg."

It was impossible to transgress these orders; and although Aunt Thekla took care that the cake and its customary wreath were provided, and even increased the Freiherr's 'bit of money' to the extent that her resources would permit, and although Magelone and Johanna presented their gifts duly, Otto felt the depression which weighed upon the family generally, and it did not need the Freiherr's homily, in which he was reminded that now he was thirty years of age and must put away boyish follies, to put him thoroughly out of humour.

The crosser he felt, however, the more he resolved not to show it. In defiance of the old Herr, who, he said to himself, was always doing his best to crush out all independent thought and action, he persisted, undeterred by Aunt Thekla's warning glances, in provoking conversation at the dinner-table, and, failing in this attempt, he proposed as soon as the meal was over, in direct opposition to the custom of the family, to take coffee under the three oaks in the forest,—a spot dedicated by all the gentry in the country round to parties of pleasure in the open air.

The Freiherr, who had just reached the door of the dining-hall, paused. "Well, child, you are not going to absent yourself from the party?" he said, looking over his shoulder at Johanna, who was following him. "I will do without you to-day."

She cast one longing glance towards the group at the window, and then looked into her

grandfather's gloomy face. "Thank you," she made reply, stepping up to his side; "I would rather stay at home with you."

The next moment the door closed behind them. Otto bit his lip impatiently, Magelone laughed derisively. "Oh, this Johanna!" she exclaimed, irritated by Otto's evident vexation, "how clever she is! She has added in a twinkling another ray to the saintly halo around her brow."

"But, my child," Aunt Thekla interposed, reproachfully, "you cannot mean—Johanna is really so good,—so simple,—so modest."

"There is just where she shows her art, my dear aunt, in preventing almost every one from observing the pains she takes to make herself of importance," Magelone rejoined. "A simple creature like myself would have said, 'Thanks, my dear Otto; it is rather too warm for your scheme.' But she sacrifices herself for grandpapa,—stays in a cool room entirely for his sake."

"You are unjust," Otto said, with unusual emphasis.

"And you are partial," Magelone declared. "But wait; your eyes will be opened. At present it would be pleasant to close them," she added, changing her tone, "in this intolerable heat." And, fluttering her fan diligently, she followed Aunt Thekla into the drawing-room, where the old lady took her accustomed seat in the corner of the sofa for a short nap, and her niece seated herself near her in a rocking-chair, and from beneath her drooping eyelids watched Otto, who had withdrawn to the centre window in an ill humour and was turning over the leaves of a periodical.

Magelone's fan fluttered faster. How strange that Otto should not avail himself of this rare opportunity for an undisturbed *tête-à-tête*! Had he been really provoked by her attack upon Johanna? If this were the case, he must be duly punished. A minute or two passed in impatient expectation, and then, when Aunt Thekla's regular breathing betrayed her unconsciousness, Magelone called, in an undertone, "Otto!" He looked up, and she signed with her fan towards an ottoman near her.

He obeyed, drew the ottoman close beside her, put both hands upon the arm of the rocking-chair, and looked into Magelone's mocking, glimmering eyes.

"Well?" she asked, after a short pause.

"Well?" he repeated. "I thought you had something to say to me."

"Yes, all sorts of things," she replied, and leaned back her head without ceasing to look at him. "First of all, I want to know why you are so cross on your birthday?"

"Cross?" he repeated, bitterly. "Have I not cause to be seriously out of humour? Thirty years old, and what am I?—what do I possess? Not even a prospect! But it is no easy matter to put one's self in another's place. You settle the affair by calling a man cross when he is sad, then shrug your shoulders and let him go. Ill humour deserves neither sympathy nor consolation."

Magelone's laugh sounded forced: the serious turn the conversation was taking was not at all to her mind. "Oh, we are positive monsters," she said, mockingly. "Nevertheless, it is not worth while to call black white. Honour bright, fair sir; did not your ill humour come on first when Johanna refused to go to the woods with us?"

And as she spoke the elfish eyes gleamed strangely into his own. Scorn, anger, jealousy, flickered and danced in their depths. He could not resist the spell they wove around him to-day, and, adopting Magelone's tone, he replied, "Honour bright, fair lady; I was greatly depressed when I came here, and have been so for a long time."

"Elfrida Klausenburg maintains the contrary; the dear girl is charmed with your constant cheerfulness; she raves of the 'perpetual sunshine of your soul.' Oh, dear Otto, when that grenadier in petticoats grows sentimental——" She laughed, and her eyes seconded her laughter. "Oh, oh, is that the 'perpetual sunshine?'" she added, when Otto frowned darkly; "what would Elfrida say——"

"For heaven's sake spare me!" Otto exclaimed, crossly. "What does the Countess Klausenburg know of me?—what do we care for her?"

Again the elfish eyes glimmered strangely, but before Magelone could reply the drawing-room door opened.

"The Countesses Klausenburg and Herr von Rothkirch!" the servant announced.

Aunt Thekla started up from her nap, and the guests made their appearance,—Elfrida first, in a short white gown with blue ribbons, her hair floating over her shoulders, her face red with the heat, and her eyes beaming. Whilst Amelie and Herr von Rothkirch paid their respects to the ladies of the house, she hurried up to Otto.

"'Blest be the day that gave thee *bi-i-rth*,'" she chanted, attempting to toss a wreath upon his head; a misfortune which he averted by catching it in his hands. "Oh, you are a naughty man to run away from our congratulations," she went on in the midst of his confused thanks; "you wanted to pass your birthday incognito, but we are not to be cheated of our fête. Dear Fräulein Dönninghausen, dearest Magelone, we are here on behalf of our parents, to carry you off by force if needs must. 'And art thou not willing——'"

"Elfrida!" Amelie interrupted her, reprovingly, and, turning to Aunt Thekla, she continued: "Papa and mamma have arranged a little picnic in honour of the day, to which they send you a cordial invitation. The Remmingens and the Grünroda people are coming, with, of course, the usual amount of pastors, doctors, and bailiffs. Papa and mamma drove on before with Helena, and we are come in the *char-à-banc* to take our dear guests with us."

"The rendezvous is at the three oaks," put in Herr von Rothkirch, as he clapped his heels together and made a low bow.

"At the three oaks? Oh, now I understand your little game!" Magelone said in a low voice to Otto.

"You are mistaken," he whispered; "all this is a surprise to me——" but Elfrida did not permit him to proceed. "No whispering, no plotting," she cried. "Get your hats and gloves, and come immediately."

"But my dress," said Magelone, looking down at her blue muslin gown.

"Ah, madame, you look charming, as you always do," Herr von Rothkirch assured her. "This blue drapery seems woven by fairy hands to deck the fairy queen."

Magelone smiled graciously; coarse as the compliment was, it was better than none at all.

"Aunt Thekla, what do you say? Shall we go?" she asked, and her tone betrayed her wish to hear a 'yes' in reply.

"My child, I do not know," the old lady answered. "To celebrate a birthday outside of one's family circle,—I don't know what my brother would think——"

"The Freiherr must come too," Elfrida interposed. "Hurry, Magelone; we will go bring him. I will tell him that we Klausenburgs as good as belong to the family——"

"Elfrida!" Amelie admonished her sister in a whisper, and tried to detain her by her gown; but with a twitch she extricated herself,—rather sacrifice a flounce than a whim,—drew Magelone away with her, and sang as she hurried to the Freiherr's room, in her thin shrill soprano, 'Give me your hand, my darling.' Herr von Rothkirch expressed his belief that the Freiherr could not possibly resist twin stars of such beauty and wit.

But he did. He consented 'gruffly,' as Elfrida expressed it, that his family should take part in the festival, and even insisted that Johanna should join the rest. He himself, he said, was an old man, and not fit for such merry-makings. He made no allusion to the Klausenburgs' having arranged the party in his grandson's honour, and intimidated the overconfident young lady who had gone to him to such a degree—how, she could not herself tell—that she declared to Magelone that no power on earth should induce her ever again to cross the threshold of her grandfather's study. "How strange it is," she added, "that the most amiable of men should be the grandson of that ogre!"

'The most amiable of men' soon succeeded in dispersing Elfrida's annoyance. Her customary high spirits returned during the drive, and when they reached the forest her loud laugh echoed in shrill discord with the peaceful woodland sounds.

It was still noisier beneath the three oaks; there was the rattle of cups and plates, and the talking and laughter of the various groups seated at their ease in the shade. On one side the deep bass of the Forstmeister von Grünroda resounded, and on the other the cackling laugh of Colonel von Remmingen arose amid the droning monotone of Countess Klausenburg, and the commanding tones of the stout wife of the bailiff, to whom the arrangement of the feast was intrusted, and who was assisted by her nephew and niece, and by the Remmingen nursery, as Elfrida called the colonel's three fair rosy daughters, aged respectively sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen, while loud shouts from another group greeted the anecdotes of the jovial doctor of the village.

Then came the welcome of the new arrivals, with question and reply as to the Freiherr's absence. Suddenly, at a sign from Count Klausenburg, a horn sounded from the neighbouring shrubbery, and the younger portion of the assembly hastily grouped themselves together, and sang a birthday carol to the air of 'Ye shining stars above us,' with an obligato on the horn.

Under the disguise of intentional exaggeration the song paid to the hero of the hour every compliment which he could possibly accept, and which Otto certainly seemed to accept as he listened with sparkling eyes and a self-satisfied smile. When the last tones had died away, and singers and audience thronged around him to shake hands with him and wish him joy, he expressed his pleasure in the charming surprise, and declared that he never could forget this most delightful birthday fête.

"Is he speaking truth, or playing a part?" Johanna asked herself. She had listened with downcast eyes in painful confusion while she heard Otto's chanted praise for having in early youth supplemented the glory of the soldier with the pursuit of serious labour, for which field and grove offered him their best gifts, and the grateful soil promised to bind him in imperishable fetters of fairest flowers.

"A charming poem, is it not? What a delightful talent is that of the poet!" Herr von Rothkirch repeated again and again, as he passed from group to group.

"Indescribably stupid and out of taste,—actually insufferable!" Magelone whispered to Aunt

Thekla.

The old lady drew her aside in terror. "Pray, pray, child, take care!" she said. "Countess Klausenburg has just confided to me that Elfrida composed the poem!"

"Of course; who but she?" Magelone pouted. "She personates the 'grateful soil'; the fair Elfrida is shamelessly throwing herself at his head. Just look! Just look!"

Otto was just then bowing before her; she held out both hands to him, and she looked around triumphantly as he kissed them.

"He cannot but thank her," Aunt Thekla said, by way of excuse. Magelone clinched her little fists in angry disgust. Herr Rothkirch approached her with his unlucky question, "Charming poem, is it not?"

Aunt Thekla looked anxiously at Magelone, who, however, had collected herself, and with a laugh, in which Herr Rothkirch did not notice the mockery, she took his arm and followed him to where the younger portion of the assembly were engaged in earnest consultation. Otto and Elfrida came towards them from the other side.

"At last!" Otto whispered to Magelone.

She shrugged her shoulders, scarce perceptibly. "Take care that Elfrida does not hear you," she whispered in return; and then she turned to Herr von Rothkirch with her gayest air. "Yes, with pleasure. Puss-in-the-corner is delightful," she replied to his question, and in an instant she had flitted to the nearest tree and clasped its trunk with a burst of silvery laughter.

Elfrida seized Otto's hand. "Here, here! there are two trees left," she cried, and dragged him away with her. He was her property to-day,—the captive of her bow and spear.

Somewhat apart in the deep shade, unnoticed and unmissed, Johanna sat gazing about her with veiled eyes, and feeling separated as by invisible barriers from all this merry-making.

"Am I, then, so much older than my years?" she asked herself, "or is it really so long since I enjoyed my youth and the summer-time in Lindenbad? Or does my father's grave still lie between me and life?"

She looked towards the players. Otto, who had lost his tree, was looking about for another, amid the mocking shouts and laughter of those who flitted past him exchanging places. Suddenly Elfrida came leaping along, more like a Valkyria than ever. He tried to catch her; she sprang aside, tripped and fell, and was clasped the next moment in Otto's arms. Only for an instant; in the next she extricated herself, and laughed in her careless fashion, unmindful of the looks and shrugs of the lookers-on, whilst Otto contemplated her with a triumphant smile.

"Is it possible that all this clumsy homage can gratify him?" thought Johanna, "or has he, perhaps, found the all-delivering love which he sought awhile ago from me? Elfrida's light clasp of his hand before she left him certainly looked like an understanding between them."

Involuntarily she arose, to flee from a sight that so pained her. Otto, who was hastening to the tree that Elfrida had left, saw her, and was at her side in an instant. "Where are you going, Johanna?" he asked. "Come, join our game——"

"I cannot," she whispered, withdrew the hand he would have taken, and hurried away, for Elfrida came rushing up to take possession of Otto's tree, and her peals of laughter rang in Johanna's ears as she slowly sauntered along the woodland path.

For a moment Otto looked after her, and was conscious of a sensation of annoyance; he ought to have paid her some attention before; she had a right to expect it of him. But ought she not, just because she had laid him under obligations, to be doubly careful to avoid everything that could remind him of these obligations? Ought she not, if she really liked him, to take pleasure in his cheerfulness? Instead of which she adopted a tragic, sentimental air. He did not feel at all disposed to sympathize with it at present.

With a shrug he put a stop to such reflections, and was soon, apparently, entirely appropriated by Elfrida; in fact, however, not a gesture, not a look, not a laugh, of Magelone's escaped him. Her graceful coquetry asserted its charm more than ever to-day with old and young, men and women alike; Otto alone seemed excluded from her magic circle. He was possessed by an ardent desire to force her to pay heed to him, and, finding himself alone for an instant, he hurriedly tore a leaf from his note-book, scribbled a couple of lines upon it, folded the paper tightly, and awaited an opportunity to thrust it into Magelone's hand. The childish games that were the order of the day would surely give him the occasion he sought.

He waited, however, in vain. As often as he met her, Magelone evaded him like a breeze or a wave. The game was almost over; the voices no longer sounded so merry, the movements were no longer so elastic. The summons by the horn to supper beneath the three oaks was obeyed willingly and without delay.

Magelone, who seemed the most fatigued, had taken Herr von Rothkirch's arm, and was walking slowly along behind the rest. Suddenly she remembered that she had left her parasol where they had been playing. Rothkirch went back to look for it; she stood still awaiting him.

In an instant Otto was beside her.

"Read it, pray," he entreated, thrusting his note into her hand.

She looked round startled, frowned when she recognized him, dropped his note on the ground, saying, "Don't be ridiculous!" and hastened after the others, while Otto, mortified and angry, picked up the despised note and followed her.

Beneath the oaks he found an unusual stir. The Freiherr von Dönninghausen had appeared unexpectedly, and was making his way, amid all kinds of friendly greetings, and accompanied by his inseparable escort, Leo, to where the tables were spread. As Otto appeared, his grandfather, looking around the circle, asked after Johanna.

No one could answer him; she had not been seen for an hour. Aunt Thekla had supposed that Johanna was with the younger people; Magelone thought she had stayed with the older ones; the rest seemed to be reminded of her for the first time.

The Freiherr knitted his brows; this was not the degree of consideration his grand-daughter had a right to expect.

"It is a pity that she is not here," he said, his head erect, and with a look that was almost a menace around the circle. "I bring her a letter——"

"From Dr. Werner?" Aunt Thekla asked, interrupting him. "Have you had one from Johann Leopold?"

"Yes; he sends you his love," the Freiherr replied. "I will tell you about it by and by; at present I wish particularly for Johanna."

"I will call her," said Elfrida; and to the horror of her mother and sister she yelled, "Johanna!" at the top of her voice several times.

At the first call Leo pricked his ears, and the second had not died away before he began to bark, and plunged into the thicket, whence he soon appeared, carrying his head proudly and wagging his tail, followed by Johanna.

"Aha, there she is!" said the Freiherr. "Thank you, Countess; pray don't trouble yourself any further."

As Johanna emerged from the thicket and saw her grandfather and the eyes of all present surveying her with curious, annoyed, and searching glances, she hesitated for a moment and blushed. Quickly recovering herself, however, she advanced, and begged pardon for having yielded to an old propensity and strayed so far into the forest that it had taken her a long time to find her way back.

As she spoke, the Freiherr looked at her with angry surprise. Although her brow was smooth and her eyes bright, he fancied that she had been weeping,—she whom he had always found so brave. How they must have neglected and insulted her! But he would show them that disrespect of her was disrespect of himself; he would not stay here a moment longer.

"Here, Johanna, take your letter," he said, kindly. "Feed your eyes with the sight of the sugar-plum for a while, and then call Magelone; we must go home. You are ready, my dear Thekla?"

She was always ready to do his bidding, and instantly began to take leave, for she knew but too well from her brother's erect bearing and forced smile that the entreaties and remonstrances with which he was besieged on all sides would be of no avail. With a cold "Sorry to say no, Countess! No, thank you, my dear colonel," he refused all invitations to supper, and to put an end to the tiresome entreaties, slowly set out for home. Count Klausenburg and the Forstmeister walked part of the way with him. Aunt Thekla, detained by loud regrets, waited for her niece. Everything seemed so usual and commonplace,—no one dreamed what the consequences of the next few moments would be.

Magelone was standing, bathed in the golden light of evening, in the midst of the forest meadow, talking with some of her friends, when Otto, who was contemplating her with ardent eyes, heard his grandfather's words. All the spirit of bravado of his race stirred within him,—she must not and should not escape him without having heard or read his request; and, hoping in some way to force her to listen, he joined Johanna.

Magelone saw the pair approaching; she guessed what were Otto's intentions, and a wayward smile played about her delicate lips. Just then Leo pushed between Johanna and Otto; a wild idea occurred to the young man.

"Laugh on; you *shall* heed me!" he said to himself; and restraining the dog with his left hand, he took his note in his right, and held it up for an instant. A flash in Magelone's eyes betrayed that she had seen it, and she then saw him slip the folded paper under the leather lining of Leo's brass collar. Now she would be forced to take it, and once in her possession, Otto was quite certain she would read it. Sure of his victory, he joined Amelie Klausenburg, who just then approached him.

But Magelone, too, was a Dönninghausen,—she was not to be compelled. Paying no heed to Leo, she listened to Johanna's report of her grandfather's message.

"I should like to stay," she replied, to the entreaties of her companion, "but grandpapa must not be kept waiting." And bidding a hasty farewell, she accompanied Johanna, passing Otto with a little mocking nod. Immediately afterwards Aunt Thekla joined them, and they all three followed

the Freiherr by a side-path, Leo running at some distance in front of them.

"She will take the note when I am not in sight," thought Otto, as he looked after her.

But, as he ran, a twig caught in Leo's collar. He twitched his head away: something white fell on the ground; the dog picked it up in his mouth and trotted on, wagging his tail in high glee at the opportunity for exhibiting his talent as a messenger.

Magelone paused, fairly paralyzed by terror, and even Otto's heart beat fast.

Leo went up to the Freiherr, who, engaged in conversation with his companions, did not at first notice the animal. But the dog thrust his nose into his master's hand. How clearly it all stood out against the evening sky! And finally the Freiherr took the paper, probably supposing it some message sent him by Leo, opened it, and put it in his pocket. Then he walked on, Count Klausenburg and the Forstmeister on either side of him. What would Magelone not have given for a glimpse of his face!

She could not follow him in this uncertainty. A sign brought Otto to her side, and stepping into the thicket, so as not to be seen if the Freiherr turned round, she asked, "What did you write to me?"

"Do not be worried," he made answer, but his tone betrayed that he was far from easy in his own mind; "the note was not addressed; there is no name in it. I wanted to speak to you. I asked for an interview——"

"Of me!" she interrupted him; "of me, Johann Leopold's betrothed!" She clasped her hands. "Think again," she continued, after a pause; "did you really not mention my name? You must have addressed me by some title. Tell me the truth."

"Some title, yes,—just at the end," he said, hesitating.

"What—what was it?" she cried, quivering with impatience.

"My only love!" he whispered, and tried to take her hand. She thrust him from her.

"You called me that?" she exclaimed; "me—Johann Leopold's betrothed? How can I dare to look grandpapa in the face!" Suddenly her eyes flashed like lightning. She stepped up close to Otto, laid both hands on his arm, and said, almost inaudibly, "There is only one way out of this. You wrote that note to Johanna. If grandpapa asks, it was for Johanna. You must say so,—you must!" And without waiting for his reply she hurried after the others.

CHAPTER XVI.

A BETROTHAL

The evening passed without any mention by the Freiherr of Otto's note; Johann Leopold's letter was the absorbing topic. Magelone breathed more freely; perhaps, after all, her grandfather had not recognized Otto's handwriting. The note was forgotten, and all danger was over.

She was mistaken. The Freiherr had seen at a glance that the scrawl was from Otto, and as soon as he found himself alone in his room after supper he took the note from his pocket to read it again, and decide what course to take in the matter.

It was not addressed, but the Freiherr was as sure that it was destined for Johanna as he was that it was written by Otto. It ran thus:

"You torture me, and misunderstand me. I can bear it no longer. Grant me, I conjure you, one-quarter of an hour's explanation, but not with Aunt Thekla's eyes looking on; they strike me dumb. Will you await me at half past ten in the birchen hut? I will come so soon as I have escorted the Klausenburgs back to K——. Or would you rather it should be to-morrow morning early, between five and six? Tell me, when will you hear what I have to say? My only love, you must hear me."

"'Only love,'" the Freiherr repeated, and his brow clouded. How could Johanna, with her earnest and profound nature, have given this superficial creature the right to address her thus? and why had pride and gratitude not prevented her from bringing a new *mésalliance* upon Dönninghausen? But what was Dönninghausen to her? She was the child of her mother, and Agnes, proud, pure, unselfish though she was, had outraged family honour, duty, and conscience when beguiled by that scoundrel's whisper of love.

The Freiherr arose and began to pace to and fro. The soft breath of the summer night wafted in through the open window gradually soothed him. He told himself that he must hear what Johanna had to say before he condemned her. It was plain from the note that she was displeased with Otto. Perhaps he persecuted her, in spite of her efforts to prevent it, with an affection which she regarded as unjustifiable and misplaced. At all events, Otto must be brought to reason, and an end put to this fresh nonsense.

Suddenly the Freiherr stood still; his glance was attracted by a letter lying beside the lamp on the

table,—the letter that he had received to-day from Johann Leopold,—and the scales seemed to fall from his eyes. "No, there need be no end," he murmured, continuing his walk. "If they love each other it might make all things right!"

Johann Leopold's letter had increased the Freiherr's anxiety with regard to his successor and heir. The strength and improvement which the sick man had hoped for from his travels had not yet resulted from them.

He regretted that the novelty of his daily impressions so exhausted him as to leave little room for enjoyment, adding that he had resigned all hope of ever being able to fill any important position in life, and that he begged his grandfather no longer to cherish any illusions with regard to him. If it really should happen that Johann Leopold resigned the heirship, it must devolve upon Waldemar, since Otto, the next in line of precedence, had proved only too clearly that he was utterly incapable of bearing the responsibility of so large an estate. But would he recognize this fact himself, and join with his grandfather in cutting off the entail? Endless lawsuits, family dissensions, deterioration of the property, might be the result of the change; and, moreover, the Freiherr would thus lay hands upon the right of inheritance, to defend which he had always held to be the sacred duty of the nobility. But here, in Otto's attachment to Johanna, a way presented itself out of all his perplexities. If Otto contracted a *mésalliance*, by so doing he voluntarily relinquished Dönninghausen, which would devolve of right to Waldemar and Waldemar's children; Johanna would take the position in the family which her grandfather desired for her, and—better than all—if she loved Otto she was the one woman to give him firmness and steadiness of character. The lovely legend of the redeeming power of love, which has beguiled so many a youthful heart, was here a siren song in the ears of an old man, singing his doubts and cares to sleep.

The next morning early the Freiherr sent to Klausenburg for Otto, who made his appearance without delay.

"It is terrible to be persecuted by misfortune as I am," he said to himself, as he went up-stairs. "Every stupidity I commit comes to the old man's ears, and he instantly falls foul of me. And what have I done, after all? I should like to know whether Johann Leopold and Waldemar have not had their escapades too? But everything always goes smoothly and calmly for them, while I am just like that wretched animal—I think it was a goat—which the Phœnicians, or Assyrians, or somebody, loaded with all their sins and drove into the wilderness."

Thus conscious of his martyrdom, he presented himself before his grandfather, who was seated at his study-table awaiting him.

After the first salutations the Freiherr requested him to take a chair beside him. His face was stern, but did not wear the expression of annihilating contempt which Otto had seen upon it more than once.

"This note, which an odd chance has put into my hands, was written by you," the old Herr began, holding out the unlucky scrap of paper. "I should like to know to whom?"

Otto looked down. Could he betray Magelone? Impossible! But it was just as impossible to do as she wished and mention Johanna.

"Pardon me, I cannot tell you," the young man replied.

The Freiherr knitted his brows. "In this matter your discretion is the merest make-believe. The note was written to Johanna,—that is clear. Has she seen it?"

"On my honour, she neither has seen it nor ever would have seen it——"

"Prevarication—forever!" the Freiherr interrupted, impatiently. "Whether she has seen it or not, you wrote it to her, and I ask you what right you have to entreat her for an interview and to call her what you do here?"

The Freiherr handed him the note. Otto, who remembered its contents imperfectly, saw clearly that there was no way to save Magelone except by acting upon his grandfather's unconscious hint; but the falsehood would not come glibly. He looked down mute, while the Freiherr arose and paced to and fro in increasing impatience. Suddenly he paused in front of his grandson. "Is there an understanding between you?" he asked.

"No," Otto replied, in a tone that carried conviction with it.

After a pause his grandfather asked again, "Do you think your affection is reciprocated?"

"I—I do not know," Otto stammered.

"Nonsense! You must know!" the Freiherr roared, now thoroughly indignant. "You're not so over-modest, and when it is a question of your whole future life——or, can it be?"—and his eyes flashed fire from beneath his bushy brows,—"have you dared to trifle with Johanna? In that case, my boy, you will answer it to *me*. Johanna is my daughter's child, and a Dönninghausen, even although she does not bear the name."

Otto sat as if spell-bound by his grandfather's angry eyes. "I assure you——" he began at last.

"No fine phrases!" the Freiherr interrupted him again, but far more gently. "Prove that you are in earnest. Put an end to misunderstandings, and you shall have my blessing."

Otto started up. He had prepared himself to endure violent reproaches and perhaps temporary banishment from Dönninghausen, but to be obliged to betroth himself—to Johanna! What would his former comrades, what would the Klausenburg sisters, above all, what would Magelone say?

"My dear sir," he stammered, as all this flashed through his brain like lightning, "how is this possible? My affairs——"

"Are certainly not in a condition to make you a very brilliant match," the Freiherr sarcastically completed his sentence. "But Johanna is magnanimous. If she loves you, she will not be calculating. Her maternal inheritance is not large, but it will suffice to make you modestly independent——"

"My dear sir, neither am I calculating," Otto interposed.

The Freiherr laughed contemptuously. "I scarcely need to be told that; but all these are secondary considerations. The point at issue is whether Johanna feels sufficient affection and esteem for you to allow of her intrusting to you her future, and to this question you must ask the answer yourself. You can do it immediately. I have nothing more to say to you."

Otto arose. "The affair is not so easily disposed of as you seem to think," he rejoined, with a forced smile. "I must first make my peace with Johanna——"

"What is the quarrel between you? Yesterday you thought a quarter of an hour enough——" The Freiherr broke off, and added, frowning, "Stay here. I will send for Johanna. I must see myself how matters stand between you. She shall not be sacrificed." He rang the bell, desired the servant to ask Fräulein Johanna to come to him, and then continued to pace the apartment.

Otto went to the window. He was indignant. His cheeks glowed, his pulses throbbed. "Magelone is right," he thought. "My grandfather is infatuated with regard to Johanna. Sacrificed, indeed—to me! And to have to listen and submit,—bind myself for life!" But perhaps it would not come to that. Johanna might refuse him. The actor's daughter refuse a Freiherr von Dönninghausen! He bit his lips to keep from laughing aloud in scorn and anger.

Then he heard the door open, and as involuntarily he looked round, Johanna entered the room. She glanced in some distress from her grandfather to Otto. It was plain that there had been a tempest here.

The Freiherr requested her to sit down, and then walked once or twice to and fro in silence. He suddenly found what had seemed before so simple difficult to put into words. At last his eye fell upon Otto's note on the table, and he gave it to her. "This note," he said, with a frown, "which was destined for you, has fallen into my hands and acquainted me with matters of which I had not the faintest suspicion,—a state of affairs that must be arranged without delay. I hope you will lighten my task for me by perfect frankness. First, read it."

She did so. He saw her astonishment turn to painful embarrassment, and as she dropped the note in her lap he felt sorry for her and wished to help her. "Do not think, my child, that I am angry with you," he said more kindly, taking a seat opposite her. "I only want a frank confession of how matters stand between Otto and yourself, and what you have done to put such nonsense into his head,—meetings at night in the garden when you might talk together all day long. What does it mean? Speak!"

His voice had grown more angry, and his eyes flashed. "Speak! speak!" he repeated, while she struggled for composure, which, however, she attained.

"My dear grandfather," she said, "I assure you that I do not myself understand——"

Otto did not allow her to proceed. Stepping forward so that he stood beside the Freiherr and confronted her, he said, quickly, "Dear Johanna, forgive the thoughtlessness that has caused you this painful scene. Your repulse of me yesterday in the forest made me frantic. I could no longer endure our alienation."

Johanna, who had been looking up at him, cast down her eyes beneath his ardent gaze. Her pulses throbbed: she trembled.

"I know," Otto went on, and the more he said the more he talked himself into a certain sincerity, —"I know that my conduct towards you has often been such as to justify misapprehension; but all my shortcomings were owing to my feeling insecure of your regard. Forgive me, Johanna. Believe in me as you did formerly; trust me again——"

The Freiherr sprang up. "Is there to be no end of all this?" he cried. "Come to the point, man, if you can; and if not, let some one else speak for you. Johanna, my child," he went on more gently, "I have already seen that Otto is not regarded by you with indifference; but the question is,—and I pray you to take serious counsel with yourself before you reply,—is your feeling for him strong enough to overcome his weakness and folly, and can you trust him to make you happy, that your marriage may be such as is commanded of God and worthy of our name? If you can say 'yes' to all this, dear child, I will give you my blessing from the very bottom of my heart."

As his grandfather spoke, Otto had stepped to Johanna's side and taken her hand. "Johanna," he whispered, bending over her when the Freiherr paused, "you cannot doubt, you cannot hesitate; be mine you must!"

The Freiherr, too, now approached her, and there was such a fulness of love and happiness in the tearful eyes that she raised to his own that he clasped her in his arms with a fervent "God bless you, my child! God bless you both!" he continued, as he put her hand into Otto's; and as the young man received his trembling betrothed in his arms, he really felt that he had gained what had long been the object of his desire.

CHAPTER XVII.

JOHANNA TO LUDWIG.

"DÖNNINGHAUSEN, August 22, 1874.

"Although this letter cannot start on its way to you for a week, I must tell you before the rest of the world of the astounding change that has taken place in my life. A few days ago I was betrothed to Otto. My grandfather has not only given us his blessing, but he continually assures me that our betrothal is the fulfilment of his favourite wish, and you can easily imagine the tears of joy that dear Aunt Thekla has shed on our behalf. And you, dear Ludwig, what do you say to my betrothal? I hardly expect you to be quite satisfied with it at first, but I hope my future happiness will reconcile you to my present joy. I hope, indeed, that the future will be even happier than the present.

"A strange expression from one so lately betrothed. I think I should not venture to use it to any one save yourself, but I have been so long used to lay bare to you my inmost heart and mind, that I cannot help doing so now. I grow clearer in my own mind when I tell you all.

"It is so in the present case. I felt a want in my happiness from the first, and now I see why. I know you will accuse me of exaggerated anticipations, and I entreat absolution in consideration of my frank confession.

"Ah, Ludwig, the foolish Johanna whom you know so well had imagined a different wooing. We each went duly through all the previous pain that must rack 'heart to heart inclined.' I in especial have been tortured of late by jealousy, mistrust of him, mistrust of myself, and instead of being released from misery by words of love from his lips, grandpapa asked whether I loved Otto and would consent to marry him. And then there were so many preliminaries to discuss,—as if a marriage were to be contracted between princes or peasants. Grandpapa explained to Otto upon the spot how much I was entitled to as the heiress of his daughter,—I an heiress!—and how the capital had been increased by interest and compound interest, and how it would be best to invest my 'property.' Once Otto ventured the unlucky remark that he cared for nothing if he only had myself, whereupon grandpapa grew very angry, and since then Otto listens patiently to long explanations and descriptions of the advantages and disadvantages of various estates that are for sale. It distresses me so to have grandpapa always reminding Otto, as he does, that he must consider himself only the steward of my property; that he has no right to dispose of it. Of course this annoys Otto, and my heart rebels against having these first days of our betrothal so spoiled.

"And it is not only Otto who has to bear what is painful on account of our love for each other. Apart from what I suffer for him, I am continually wounded, more than ever, by the contempt shown for my father. No betrothal announcements were printed, in order that his name might not appear. The event was made known to our immediate circle of acquaintance at a solemn dinner given here; all distant members of the family—and heaven only knows how long the list of cousins is—grandpapa informed by letter thus: 'My grandson Otto is betrothed to my grand-daughter Johanna, the only child of my daughter Agnes;' and although I could not tell how to prevent this, I cannot help having a sensation of wronging the dead. I need not tell you that in Otto's eyes the name of the famous artist which I bear is my best dowry. If it were not so I never could have loved him.

"Apart from these considerations, we are happy. Otto, who resigned from the army some time ago to turn his attention to agriculture, is completing his practical studies at Klausenburg. Thus we see each other daily,—sometimes in the mornings, when grandpapa arranges our rides so that we meet Otto, and always in the evenings. Then Otto comes to Dönninghausen, and, in spite of the formality which is the rule here, there are sure to be opportunities for delightful *tête-à-têtes* in the linden avenue, on the terrace, or, as yesterday, when it rained, in a window-recess of the drawing-room, while my grandfather and Aunt Thekla were playing piquet and Magelone was seated at the piano. Then we can talk freely of all that life has brought us to make us what we are, and look forward to a future which seems almost too rich in blessings! No, Ludwig, it is positively wicked to ask for more; it is not possible to be happier than I am now!"

Would Otto have said the same? At times, perhaps, but in any circumstances only at times. He was so absolutely dependent upon the impression of the moment that his nature knew only moods, no settled condition. When he clasped Johanna in his arms for the first time as his

betrothed he felt 'divinely happy' as never before, but immediately afterward, when he received Magelone's cool congratulations, and later, whenever he felt her unfathomable eyes resting upon him, he was possessed by doubt and annoyance. He would have liked to be free, to break his bonds, and yet a quiet hour with Johanna would again make him her own. The love of her strong, full heart exalted him above himself. He believed for a while in his own affection for her, and so long as no fresh impulse from a contrary direction interfered, he let himself be borne along in a kind of ecstasy by the same current to which Johanna resigned herself. If they had been married without delay, and entirely thrown upon each other's resources, Johanna's influence might perhaps have come off conqueror. But Otto had to finish his year of study at Klausenburg, Johanna had to acquire at Dönninghausen the knowledge to qualify her for the mistress of a household, and Magelone was there—and bored!

She had been startled at first by Otto's betrothal, as by a thunder-clap out of a clear sky. The idea that she herself had perhaps brought about this condition of affairs by her command to Otto was intolerable. She soon found that Otto played his part in the farce with astonishing ease, and then came the suspicion that the farce had been played with herself. Upon this point she must have certainty, and if her suspicion proved well founded he must be punished.

She waited impatiently for an opportunity to speak alone with Otto, which he, however, seemed to avoid. But one evening she was on the castle steps as Otto galloped into the court-yard. She told him that the others were in the garden, and went with him to look for them.

For a while they walked along together in silence; at last she asked in a low voice, without looking up, "Have you forgiven me?"

"Forgiven?" he repeated, surprised. "What do you mean?"

"About the note. What else could I mean?" And her eyes flashed as she asked, "Do you mean this pretence of forgetfulness for magnanimity?" Then, falling back into a sad, gentle tone, "Yes, it is magnanimous. I am guilty of this betrothal, perhaps of the unhappiness of your whole future life."

"You are mistaken. I am not unhappy," he replied, and his manner betrayed a slight embarrassment that did not escape Magelone. She paused, laid her hand upon his arm, and looked him full in the face. "Let me look at you," she said. "A happy bridegroom in his own despite. Oh, if you but knew how queer you are!"

She laughed, the old wayward child-like laugh; but the next moment her eyes were veiled, and, turning from him, she covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

"Magelone, what is the matter?" Otto cried, trying to pull her hands down from her face; but with a scarce audible "Let me alone! let me alone!" she turned and fled back towards the house.

Otto was surprised beyond expression. He had wronged her, then, when he thought her incapable of any depth of feeling. The cold calculation of which he had accused her had been forced upon her by circumstances. Now, in spite of her apparent indifference, her foolish heart had asserted itself. Poor Magelone!

When Otto saw her next in the domestic circle she seemed cool and gay as usual, and she continued to appear so, but him she could no longer deceive.

He knew now what lay concealed beneath this outward seeming; he noted and interpreted every half sigh, every absent smile, every fleeting moment of abstraction, from which she would rouse herself with a start, and the half-angry glance which she bestowed upon him now and then was quite as comprehensible to him as was her evident avoidance of him.

At first he was grateful to her for this last. What could he say to her after that scene in the garden? By and by, however, her reserve began to annoy him. His mocking intercourse with her was necessary to him as a counterpoise to his grandfather's harshness and severity, and also, although he did not acknowledge this to himself, to Johanna's earnestness. For a time it had interested him to pursue his betrothed's line of thought, more especially as he could resign himself to her guidance without any trouble, and, trusting to her, frequently made discoveries in himself which flattered his vanity. But he grew weary of her earnestness. It came to be an effort to him to follow her along the paths she trod so naturally and simply, and he began to sigh for the intellectual and mental repose which he had always sought and found in the society of women.

Where should he find it now? Magelone held herself aloof from him, and Elfrida Klausenburg seemed to have forgotten his existence. In fact, his position in society was entirely changed. He had not noticed this so long as the entertainments given in return for the grand Dönninghausen dinner lasted, but when the echo of the toasts drunk in honour of the betrothed pair had died away, he suddenly found himself of slight importance, if not entirely overlooked, and this not only by calculating mothers and daughters, as every betrothed man must expect, but universally. He had not looked for this result of his choice.

And society had still further cause for discontent with him. One day the old Countess Klausenburg begged Otto not to read the newspaper, which he was in the habit of glancing through daily. Of course he perused it with all the more attention, and found in it an announcement that Johanna's step-mother was married to the equestrian artist and circus-manager Carlo Batti. Flushed with excitement, he rode to Dönninghausen, where he found Johanna alone on the veranda.

"Have you seen what is in the paper?" he asked, scarcely taking time to greet her. "I suppose it is another of those shameless lies——"

"No; it is true," Johanna interrupted him. "Helena has written to me herself. Her letter came by the same post that brought the paper."

"Really!" Otto exclaimed. "Well, you have not much cause for pride in that connection. But then it is no affair of yours," he added, by way of consolation, seeing her change colour.

She looked up startled. Could he regard so superficially what had cut her to the very quick? "Oh, Otto!" she said, "I cannot understand how that woman, whom my father fairly adored, could forget him so quickly."

Otto shrugged his shoulders impatiently. It vexed him that such sentimental considerations should cause Johanna to overlook the real consequences of this wretched marriage; that is, the necessary lowering of her own position in society. At this instant Magelone made her appearance. "How you look!" she said, turning from one to the other. "Is anything the matter? Do you wish to be alone?"

"No, no; stay!" Otto made reply. "All the world knows about the matter we were discussing——"

"Oh, is it that newspaper story?" Magelone interposed. "These long faces for that? How can you be so stupid?"

"It's all very well for you to talk," said Otto. "Try having your friends turn up their noses at you."

"But you must not let them," Magelone exclaimed. "Of course, if you go about like chanticleer in a rain, they will do so. But hold up your head, and look every one full in the face, and no one will hint at the unlucky story; and even if any one should be so awkward as to allude to it, deny it on the spot."

"We cannot!" said Johanna. "It is true."

Magelone laughed. "That sounds precisely as if you had just been confirmed. True or false, you must deny it. You would not put Otto in the position of step-son-in-law to a circus-rider? And all the rest of us: our step-uncle or step-cousin Carlo Batti? It is too ridiculous!" With these words she departed, with the agreeable consciousness of having left Otto in no doubt as to the fresh annoyances entailed upon him by his betrothal.

The evil seed had fallen upon fruitful soil.

When Magelone had gone, Otto said, still more gloomily than before, "She takes it very easily, but I must confess to you that I am enraged. My position was hard enough before." And he went on venting his indignation against society in violent expressions, concluding with the angry words, "Of course you care nothing for all this. You feel yourself, as usual, exalted far above——"

Johanna arose, and interrupted him. "You are mistaken," she said, gently. "Everything that you say cuts me to the heart, and convinces me"—she hesitated a moment—"convinces me that I make you unhappy. This I cannot endure." She could not continue; her eyes filled with tears, and she turned hurriedly to leave him. But Otto sprang to her side and detained her.

"Forgive me! forgive me!" he cried again and again, while clasping her in his arms he kissed her hands, her lips, her eyes, and drew her down beside him, overwhelming her with protestations of affection and reproaching himself bitterly for his conduct. "Be magnanimous as ever!" he entreated; "do not condemn me. I know what a thorough egotist I am; when anything annoys me I think of no one but myself. I feel only my own discomfort. I am ungenerous, unloving,—a very petrifaction of anger and dissatisfaction. All the better part of me seems paralyzed. I think at such moments I am a perfect wretch. But do not you forsake me, I conjure you. If there is anything in this world that can save me from myself it is your love."

Otto was apparently sincere in these self-accusations, but there is no denying that he also found a certain piquant charm in thus setting forth his heartlessness, and perhaps, too, he knew that he was never more irresistible than when heaping himself with reproaches, and, with his fine eyes bent entreatingly upon his companion, begging her to forgive him. The oft-proved power again asserted its sway over Johanna. Overcoming her own pain, she thought only of his distress, and did all that she could to make him see himself in a more favourable light. Upon calm reflection, she even found it quite natural that Otto should at first apprehend only the superficial consequences of Helena's second marriage, and she accused herself of over-sensitiveness. Otto also was magnanimous,—he forgave the pain which he had caused,—and thus peace was restored.

Great was Magelone's astonishment upon beholding the harmony existing between the lovers when she saw them again. After what had occurred a few hours before, she expected something quite different; but Johanna's luck was something incredible. Otto, who had always been known to be fickle, had suddenly grown so ridiculously dutiful that he had actually fallen in love with a girl who had been forced upon him, scarcely noticed any other woman, and, in spite of the proverbial pride of the Dönninghausens, quietly acquiesced in this wretched connection. What was the spell that Johanna had woven about him? It all seemed positively too ridiculous to Magelone when she observed how Otto's eyes followed Johanna; how he would seize her hand and kiss it as she passed him; how he continually sought opportunities for a *tête-à-tête* with her,

even venturing to whisper to her when the family were all present. If there had only been a single soul in Dönninghausen with whom she could laugh over it all! But Aunt Thekla contemplated the pair with pleased emotion, the Freiherr with proud content, dubbing the lovers 'the handsomest couple seen at Dönninghausen within the memory of man.' And the days were so stormy and rainy,—the evenings were so long,—the family assemblages so inevitable. And there sat Johanna with undeniably happy eyes; and every evening Otto appeared,—oh, it was almost intolerable!

But help was at hand.

Hedwig Wildenhayn had just presented her husband with a second daughter, and she wrote begging Magelone to stand godmother to it, and adding that she must not fail to be present at the christening. Within the letter which was for the public was a closely-written sheet marked 'private,' which ran thus:

> "Dear Magelone,—You must come, not only on account of the child, but to tell Hildegard (who is coming to the christening) and me more about Otto's betrothal than can be confided to paper. The affair is still a riddle to me. Our husbands—you know how good-humoured they are—maintain, indeed, that Otto is quite right, and Johanna's 'a capital girl!' (I wish I knew why), but this is hardly enough to satisfy me, and Hildegard (who has always been more decided in her opinion than I) declares she never shall be satisfied, and that three such clever women as we must, if we can get together, find ways and means to liberate the poor boy. To speak frankly, dear Magelone, I thought I discovered, upon our last visit to Dönninghausen, that our brother Otto was desperately enamoured of a certain lady (you guess who she is, although your modesty may prevent your admitting it), and I was sorry to see it, I confess, for he could not marry her. I still believe in it (I mean his devotion in that quarter), and I fancy that Otto in pique (men are so odd, and women, too, for that matter) has betrothed himself to this girl. Hildegard, however, insists that the whole affair has been patched up by our grandfather, who chooses thus to make a Dönninghausen of his favorite niece (can you understand why she is so?), and does not care how we stand affected. You see, dear Magelone, you must come. Only when, by your help, we can clearly appreciate our poor Otto's unhappy circumstances (I do not exonerate him from blame, but I am so sorry for him) can we decide whether there is any help for him and for us. I continually ask myself wherein we have deserved this trial that has befallen us all, even my little angel-daughter; for, since her elder sister had to be named Henriette, after my mother-in-law, it would have been so natural to christen this little girl Johanna (grandpapa's godfather's tokens are always so magnificent, and he is evidently so much fonder of children who are named after him); but Hildegard says that to do so now would look like an ovation to the sister-in-law who has been forced upon us, and of course I am too proud for that, apart from the fact that Hildegard never would forgive me. But I must conclude; my dear Eduard is scolding me for writing so much, and we women submit only too gladly to love's tyranny. So adieu for the present, dear Magelone. Pray come as soon as you can. You can, perhaps, give counsel and consolation to your truly affectionate Hedwig."

"How much they must need me!" thought Magelone. "I wonder if they fancy they are deceiving me with this sudden outburst of tender affection. But never mind that; after this letter they certainly will make themselves agreeable, and at all events it will be more entertaining at Herstädt than here. If grandpapa will only let me go!"

Her anxiety upon this point was groundless. The Freiherr made no objection; on the contrary, the request to one of the family to stand god-parent was, according to his sense of duty, not one that could be refused, and he was glad that, in spite of the stormy autumn weather, Magelone was perfectly willing to undertake the journey with all its discomforts. The proof of his satisfaction which was most welcome to her was the bundle of bank-notes he handed to her 'for the outfit which every lady must have upon such an occasion;' and, enraptured to escape at last from 'that horrible Dönninghausen,' she set forth for Herstädt, wind and weather notwithstanding.

Life in Dönninghausen was now even more quiet than before, and thus there came on for Johanna the sad anniversaries of her father's illness and death. The Freiherr, who never forgot dates, could not bring himself to say one word of sympathy to her, but he took great pains to provide the wherewithal to distract her mind. He eagerly interested himself in the contemplated purchase of her future home. Offers were made of estates which must be examined into. There were letters to answer, plans to study, proposals and calculations to compare, or personal inspections to be made of estates for sale in the neighbourhood. Johanna on these occasions would gladly have appointed Otto her proxy, but the Freiherr would not hear of this. "It is your dowry," he said, "and you must be able to love the spot of earth where you are to live and die. Otto's wishes and approbation are secondary matters."

Nevertheless, the old Herr would have liked to see on Otto's part a greater display of interest in the choice about to be made. The young man avoided, when he could, any participation in the consultations that took place upon the subject. He detested the whole matter, which he regarded as an outrage upon his own rights and claims. He, a born Dönninghausen, who had lived from his childhood in his ancestral castle, was pushed aside, while the bourgeoise grand-daughter, whose mother had forcibly severed every tie that bound her to her people, was to be dowered at the expense of the family estate. It might be that this was done for Otto's own sake; but why did not his grandfather place in his hands the sum he had appropriated to Johanna, and thus give him the

position which a husband had a right to expect? It had always seemed an annoyance to him for a man to be dependent upon a wife's property, but under the present circumstances it was more than annoying,—it was degrading; for instead of receiving from his equal in rank what might be considered a gift of love, here was apparently a business transaction. Hildegard had written him that his grandfather was permitting him to pay for his 'frugal outfit' with his name, and his Dönninghausen blood was in revolt. There were moments in which he forgot entirely that the Freiherr had been induced to consent to the betrothal, not out of regard for material interests, but because he believed sincerely in Otto's love for Johanna; and at such moments he was profoundly indignant not only with his grandfather, but with his betrothed. Such emotions were very fleeting. He was ashamed of them, and was doubly amiable afterwards in the consciousness that there was somewhat for which he should make atonement. Nevertheless a faint trace of them remained, and Johanna perceived it.

One evening this was more the case than usual. She overlooked his ill humour for a while, under the impression that he would find it easier to overcome if he were not called to explain it, but at last she could remain silent no longer. When her grandfather and Aunt Thekla retired to their piquet, she went to Otto, who was standing at the centre window staring gloomily out into the rain and darkness; and as she put her hand within his arm she asked him if anything disagreeable had happened.

"Nothing more than usual," he replied, without looking at her.

"Usual," she repeated; "I do not understand you——"

"Of course not," he interrupted her, peevishly. "You never reflect what my sensations must be when you and that old man sit like the fates and consult whether this or that estate shall be purchased, while I, who am more interested than any one else, am not asked to say a word."

"Do not be unjust, Otto," Johanna entreated him. "If I have these matters talked of in your presence, it is only for the sake of hearing your opinion. Why do you not give it?"

"Because it would have no influence," he said; but when Johanna, wounded by his unkindness, would have withdrawn her hand from his arm, he drew her closer to his side. "Forgive me," he begged, in the tender tone she had not heard for a long while. "I am detestable to-night. But remember how I am tormented. To whom shall I tell it all, if not to you?"

"If you only would be frank with me always," Johanna said, in a tone of gentle reproof. "But sometimes you are so reserved with me."

"Because now and then I mistrust even you," he replied, "and have a feeling that you are leagued with my grandfather against me."

"Dear Otto——" she began.

He interrupted her. "Never mind," he said; "words avail nothing. I will put you to the test."

"Do," she said, earnestly. "What do you ask of me?"

He hesitated. Involuntarily he had said more than he meant to; but perhaps it was best so. With his own victorious smile he said, "I ask you to hurry on the purchase of this estate, that we may be married as soon as possible and sell it again."

She looked at him incredulously. "You cannot be serious."

"And why not?" And his eyes flashed.

"Consider our grandfather——"

"Consider me!" he exclaimed. "Try to understand, if you can, what it is to be snatched from a career that you love and forced year out and year in to do what gives you not the smallest pleasure. But this you cannot comprehend,—no woman can."

Unconsciously he raised his voice as he uttered the last words. The Freiherr looked round. "How ungallant!" he exclaimed. "What is he reproaching you with, my child? Let us hear what it is that you cannot understand."

Johanna was embarrassed. Otto instantly came to her aid. "I was lamenting the length of our engagement," he replied.

"Already!" said the Freiherr; but his tone and air betrayed his pleasure in Otto's impatience. And, throwing down his cards,—his hand was so poor that he had no desire to play any longer,—he continued: "We would appoint the wedding-day if a nest were only found for you."

Aunt Thekla hastened to put away her aces, for the Freiherr was cross when he lost a game. "I thought, my dear Johann," she said, to keep up the conversation, "that you were satisfied with Tannhagen."

"The estate,—yes," he replied; "and the farm-buildings, too, are all very well; but the house is a ruinous old pile, and Otto cannot wait, as you have just heard, while a new one is building."

"Why should I, sir?" Otto said. "If Tannhagen suits you in other respects, we shall do very well in the old house, shall we not, Johanna?"

The Freiherr laughed. "Indeed, my boy? 'A hovel with the one we love.' Is it come to that with you?" he said, in high good humour. "Well, we will take the matter into consideration. First of all, as soon as the weather permits, we must ride over and inspect the owl's-nest and see whether it can be made habitable for a while. I should like, children, to have you so near me."

All through the evening the Freiherr's mood was of the brightest, as was Aunt Thekla's. Otto, too, seemed gayer than he had been for a long time. Johanna alone was depressed, and could scarcely conceal her sadness. Otto was incomprehensible. She struggled against her suspicions, feared lest she was doing him injustice, and yet what he had said of his plans scarcely allowed of a misconstruction. Was it possible that he could so misuse his grandfather's assent to his wishes? After those words, 'I should like to have you so near me,' could he contemplate selling again the estate which the old Freiherr was selecting for them with such loving care? She breathed a sigh of relief when she once more found herself alone in her room, and, after taking counsel with herself, she sat down at her writing-table to write to Otto. She could not but do it, even at the risk of offending him; there must be no possibility of either's misunderstanding the other.

She told him frankly that it seemed to her unprincipled and ungrateful to allow their grandfather to provide them with a home only to sell it again immediately, and she declared herself ready at any moment to brave the old man's anger by relinquishing the estate and requesting Otto's restoration to the army.

"Our grandfather will not consent at first," she added, "but he will be persuaded in the end. And however long the strife may last, even although it should be for weary weeks and months, we must expect this, my dear Otto, and for my part I will submit gladly for the sake of restoring you to a profession which you like. I confess I had no suspicion of how dear it was to you. I misunderstood you formerly. But, now that I know it, I can understand how irksome must be the calling forced upon you, and how impossible it would be for you to devote your life to it. I am sure you do not think that this could make me doubt your love. What would my love be worth if it could exact such a sacrifice from you? Your happiness, my dearest, is and always must be the aim of all my desires, and how could you be happy if you took no pleasure in your daily occupations? You think we women cannot understand this? Let me confess to you that there was a time when I believed I had a calling,—a calling for art,—and that it gave me intense pain when I was forced to recognize my want of talent. To resign a sphere of activity because it is beyond our powers is very different from giving it up merely on account of the stress of outward circumstances. But any one who has been forced to do the former knows well what pain it must be to do the latter. And, indeed, I think that without drawing from my own experience I should always suffer out of my love for you from whatever pains and torments you."

She wrote on for some time in this strain. The frank outpouring of her very self did her good. In Otto's presence she was always restrained by a certain timidity. Never had she felt so indissolubly bound to her lover.

The next morning she sent him the letter, although seen by the light of day it seemed to her poor and cold. She consoled herself, however, by reflecting that Otto's heart would supply all that she could not express in words, and she waited eagerly for his reply.

It was contained in a few lines. Otto thanked her for her letter, and would answer it more thoroughly by word of mouth.

"Talking is better than writing," he added, "and it is idle to bother with pen, ink, and paper when, as in our case, there exists the blessed certainty of seeing each other almost every day. I shall come at noon to-day, and hope, in spite of the rain, to induce you all to drive to Tannhagen. I am very anxious, my dear little wiseacre, to prove to you that it was quite unnecessary for you to tire your beautiful eyes and snatch so much time from your night's rest. Promise me never to be guilty of such a sin again. I want no letters,—I want only yourself."

CHAPTER XVIII.

TANNHAGEN.

It was not until after several unsuccessful attempts that Otto had completed this epistle. Johanna's proposal had terrified him. The mere idea of the storm which she would so boldly have called down upon both their heads was intolerable to him. In spite of all he had said, he had not had the remotest intention of offering any opposition to his grandfather's plans. Still, he certainly might be permitted to grumble at them, especially to Johanna. Her taking everything so seriously was awkward, and she must learn to do so no longer; she must certainly give up her unlucky scheme of interference, which would only serve to anger the Freiherr afresh against his grandson. Johanna, indeed, did not know how often he had forgiven him, how often he had afforded him new openings in life; but Otto sometimes remembered this, and never without a certain annoying sense of shame.

He tried to rid himself of this to-day by registering a vow that his grandfather should never again have cause for displeasure with him. If the Freiherr liked Tannhagen, let him buy it. A life in such seclusion was not, indeed, what Otto had desired, but he must not forget that his task in the

future would be to make Johanna happy, and she really had a preference for solitude. Moreover, his garrison life had not been all sunshine, and he was uncomfortable enough at present at Klausenburg.

He concluded then that even for himself acquiescence in his grandfather's scheme was best,—at least for the present. If hereafter he should become weary of farming, why, the Freiherr could not live forever; and with regard to Johanna, whose happiness was now to be his chief duty, he was consoled by something which just now occurred to him that Red Jakob had once said.

A few weeks before, Otto had been overtaken by a shower on the mountains, and had taken shelter from it in the Forest Hermitage, where he had asked, in the kind manner which he always adopted towards his inferiors, after the welfare of the newly-married pair. Red Jakob, in his bitter way, had congratulated himself on the accident that had procured him a subsistence, while Christine, who was still tasting to the full the sweetness of her honeymoon, could not sufficiently extol the delights of her forest life. Otto had told her in jest that she would not talk so in the winter when she might be kept in-doors by storms and snow; then she would wish herself back again in the pleasant village streets, with the neighbours' houses near, and the spinning-rooms in the evening. Jakob would have too much to do to comfort her; she might even run away some fine day. The little wife eagerly contradicted him, and Jakob interrupted her with, "Never mind, Christine; Squire Otto does not understand it yet, but he'll learn by and by." And turning to Otto, he said, with his ugly smile, "When the wife is in love with the husband and he understands whistling, he can play the Piper of Hamelin with her. I mean, she must follow him wherever he chooses. However hard it may be for her, she'll always thank him for taking her with him."

Otto went to Dönninghausen very gay of mood, and at his request, immediately after the second breakfast, all drove, even Aunt Thekla, to Tannhagen.

The road led at first through Klausenburg, then turned to the left, and continued by an easy ascent up the mountain through a magnificent forest. Far up they crossed the road to the Forest Hermitage, then descended a short distance, and upon reaching the edge of the woodland, descried, through the gray veil of the falling rain, a long valley with a little village, and at the farther end a large farm.

"That is Tannhagen," said the Freiherr.

Johanna was disappointed; from the name she had expected a woodland nook. But her grandfather praised the meadows and fields through which they drove, the sheltered position of the valley, which made it possible and profitable to grow fruit even here among the mountains, and Otto seemed to agree with all he said.

The farm-buildings, too, the barns and stables, the farm-yard, with its well-built walls and green gates, made the best possible impression; but the old two-storied mansion that formed one side of the farm-yard looked, with its gray walls, its projecting tiled roof, and its small windows, like a peasant's habitation. In summer its ugliness might be partly concealed by the two tall chestnuts before the door, but now their bare boughs, dripping with rain, made the melancholy picture still more melancholy.

The carriage stopped, but not a human being appeared. The house-dog, who rattled his chain, barking loudly, a flock of chickens that had taken refuge from the rain beneath the projecting roof of a carriage-house, and the cows, lowing loudly in the stables, were apparently the only inmates of the place.

Otto opened the carriage-door, while the coachman cracked his whip impatiently. The Freiherr and Aunt Thekla slowly alighted, Johanna followed them curiously,—and still no one was to be seen.

Without more ado, the Freiherr ascended the three worn steps of the entrance-hall.

"Come, I know the custom of the country," he said. And, turning to a door on the left of the long dim hall, hung around beneath the ceiling with the faded wreaths of many a harvest-home, he opened it without knocking.

A hot current of air from a stove made itself felt, and a cat ran past them.

"Who's there?" a sharp voice asked, and from the other end of the room there approached the haggard, bent figure of a woman in the dress of a peasant, leaning upon a crutch.

The Freiherr bade her good-day, and then shouted into her ear an inquiry for the farmer.

"My son is away in town at the yearly market," she yelled back. "And he has taken his two daughters and the house-maid with him. No one is at home, and I am too old. I do not know about anything." And as she spoke she turned her deep-set evil little eyes from one to another of the strange faces.

The Freiherr stooped to shout again into her ear: "We want to see the house, but we will not trouble you; send one of the servants with us."

"Servants!" she repeated. "Do you know where to find the lazy things? When my son is away there is nothing done."

"Well, then, we'll go alone," the Freiherr interrupted her, impatiently. "You know who I am,—I

was here before."

"Yes, yes; you are the old lord from down there at Dönninghausen, who wants to buy Tannhagen," the old woman replied, and her little brown eyes twinkled more maliciously than before. "You'd better let it alone; you'll have no joy of it."

"Come, why should we stand listening to the old witch?" said the Freiherr. "We will look first at the upper rooms; they are not in as poor repair as these down here."

As he spoke, he went out into the hall; the rest followed him, with the old woman hobbling behind. "Of course you can buy Tannhagen," she went on, eagerly. "My son says that the last lord of Tannhagen is dead, and there must be some one to own it. But why do you not leave it as it has been? To turn out my son, who has always paid his rent punctually in bad years as well as in good ones, is a sin and a shame; yes, it is a sin and a shame!"

The Freiherr looked angrily round, and, without speaking, offered his sister his arm to mount the narrow wooden staircase that creaked at every step.

Otto and Johanna tried to appease the old woman, who, however, did not, or would not, understand what they said.

"Oh, let the strangers come!" she croaked. "They'll have no joy of it. We Brinkmeyers belong to Tannhagen. My husband's father and grandfather, and heaven knows how many before them, have held this farm, and they were all known for sober, industrious folks, who knew what they were about. And my son is just the same, and whoever turns him out from here,"—she raised her clinched fist and shook it at the lovers,—"whoever turns him out from here will be punished for it, and will have as little peace, living and dying, as they have left to me, poor old woman that I am."

Involuntarily Johanna recoiled. At the last words she grasped Otto's arm, and while the old woman struck her crutch upon the hall floor and sent shrill menaces after them, she hurried him up the stairs and into the first room that opened upon the corridor, closing the door after them. They heard their grandfather and Aunt Thekla talking in the next apartment; but instead of following them Johanna stood still. "What a terrible reception!" she said, and she repeated in an undertone the old woman's words, "Let the strangers come. They'll have no joy of it!"

"Johanna, surely you are not superstitious?" Otto exclaimed.

She had gone to the window, and was looking gloomily out into the dripping rain.

"No, it is not superstition," she replied; "but it impresses me painfully to hear that old woman give utterance to what I have been thinking all through our drive. I know, Otto, that you will have no joy here. Why this haste? Why not discuss other plans?"

"Because there is nothing else to be discussed, dear heart," he replied. "You really must not take my passing moods so seriously."

"But when you spoke of being forced to relinquish your calling you were not in a passing mood," Johanna persisted; "you were really unhappy."

"You are mistaken," he made reply; "remember, I spoke only of my career. I cannot aver that I have a particular fancy, or calling, as you phrase it, for parade and drill, and you cannot think that I have. I am really rather of grandpapa's opinion, that there is nothing better for a nobleman to do in times of peace than to live upon his own soil and cultivate cabbages."

Johanna's eyes grew brighter. "Are you sure? Did I misunderstand you yesterday?" she asked, when Otto had finished. "And you have no distaste for farming, but can be content to live in the country year out, year in——"

"If I always have you with me. But you I must have; I cannot live any longer without you!" he cried, clasping her in his arms and kissing her.

At this moment a faint ray of sunshine broke through the clouds which a sudden east wind was driving away from the mountains. "Oh, look; the skies bid us welcome!" exclaimed Johanna; and, looking across the large fruit-garden extending below the gable-window to the mountains, she went on: "And it is very pretty on this side, with the forest so near; and how fragrant those meadows must be in summer! And that old building down there among the willows and alders seems to be a mill. See the shady attractive nook whence the mill-stream rushes. Dear Otto, if you like it, I should not object to build our cottage here."

"Johanna!" he exclaimed, rapturously, taking her hands and pressing them to his lips. But the next moment he dropped them, and said, looking round him reflectively, "If the house were only not so miserable. How can I condemn you to such discomfort?"

Johanna cast a rapid glance around the low-ceiled room, with its whitewashed walls, small windows, gaudy carpet, and spindle-legged furniture standing stiffly in the corners. "It is certainly not all that could be desired," she said, "but it need not always look like this. Picture to yourself the outer walls wreathed with wild grape, clematis, and climbing roses, the interior of the house clean and airy, this balcony the natural colour of the wood, hangings on the walls, the windows turned into casements with round leaded panes, a tall green porcelain stove in that corner, a clock against the wall, and high-backed chairs, old carved cabinets and tables, and corner-cupboards——"

"Stop, stop, child, or you'll have it a perfect museum!" laughingly broke in the Freiherr, who had been listening for a few moments. "But I really think you have shown that you could choose the best furniture for this owl's-nest. If we buy Tannhagen, we will do our best to have it arranged according to your fancy. Now let us go seriously to work to find what the house is and what it lacks."

They did so. Her conversation with Otto had made Johanna so happy that she saw everything from garret to cellar in the rosiest light. She found a remedy for every defect which Aunt Thekla discovered; and even Otto, carried away by her cheerful gayety, was well pleased with everything.

At last they had explored every nook and corner, had bidden adieu to the old woman, who now contented herself with eying them malevolently, and were walking through the wide, dark hall to the closed front door.

"It really is uncanny here," Aunt Thekla whispered. "It seems to be raining in all these dark corners. And listen how the wind howls!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Freiherr. "Do you think it sings a special song to this old barracks? As for the corners, they will be light and commonplace enough as soon as Otto succeeds in opening the door for us."

Otto had been shaking at the old latch for a while. The door now sprang open. A blast of wind drove it back against the wall with a crash. It was answered by another crash, probably produced by the blowing to of some window. There was a rustling in the air, and a dark something fell from above and lay between Aunt Thekla and Johanna, who recoiled with a slight scream.

Otto sprang to pick it up. "It is the homage paid by the old barracks to its future mistress," he said, laughing, holding out to Johanna one of the withered harvest-wreaths.

"Or an evil omen," Aunt Thekla whispered, and then hoped that no one had heard her. The lovers looked laughing into each other's eyes, and the Freiherr, standing at the carriage-door, bade them make haste and get in.

Johanna fortunately attached no importance to the trifle. The Freiherr was so interested in the prospect of founding a new nest of Dönninghausens in the neighbourhood of the cradle of the race that all through the homeward drive he discussed the pros and cons of the purchase, and the pros came to be more and more in the ascendant. At Dönninghausen he laid before the lovers all the documents that he had been able to procure with regard to the estate, and met with an unqualified assent to his plans and wishes. Otto was even more zealous than the Freiherr; the fourteen days for consideration which his grandfather proposed seemed to him too long, and as he left he whispered to Johanna, "Darling, do what you can to have us established *soon* at Tannhagen."

It was late, and the Freiherr was about to retire. When Johanna bade him 'good-night,' he took both her hands in his. "My child," he said, drawing her towards him, "you must reflect seriously upon the purchase of Tannhagen. Do not forget that the comfort of your future life is at stake, and leave out of the question my wishes and Otto's impatience. Will you do this, and tell me frankly the conclusion at which you arrive? We might look farther and find something better."

"Not for me, dear grandpapa. I have fallen in love with the old house," she said. And, kissing his hand, she added, "If I could only tell you how your kindness touches me!"

As she spoke, there was something in the sound of her voice that reminded the old man more than ever of her mother. To ward off his own emotion, he exclaimed, "Kindness, dear child! It is obstinacy. I can hardly wait to have you bear the name of Dönninghausen." And, as if to himself, he added, "Dönninghausen-Tannhagen. God grant that name a fair fame!"

"Dönninghausen-Tannhagen!" Johanna, too, whispered to herself soon afterwards, as in her own room she stood at the window and looked out into the dark rainy night. Dönninghausen-Tannhagen! What was there in the name to move her so strangely? Was it the thought of the old house that was to be the home of her young happiness? She saw it distinctly in imagination, not only as it was, but as it should be, and as it surely one day would be. And not only the rooms did she see, but the stir of human life within them. Forms came and went, grouped themselves, vanished, and were replaced by others. They spoke, and Johanna understood them without actually hearing their words. It was all dream-like, shadowy, and Johanna felt it to be so.

"I must be dreaming already; the day has over-fatigued me," she said to herself. But, whereas she usually fell asleep with her mind dwelling upon Otto, to-night, when she extinguished her candle, she was surrounded anew by these images from Tannhagen. From room to room, up and down the stairs, through court-yard and garden, she passed, always surrounded by changing forms and faces, among them was the angry old woman upon her crutch. She was transformed, she looked young, gay, and happy, and Johanna knew that she had secretly stolen forth from her father's mill among the alders to spend a few minutes with the handsome son of the Tannhagen farmer, whom she loved and could not yet marry. Suddenly she was old again, and, striking her crutch on the floor, repeated that no one who bought Tannhagen should have any joy of it, and the faded harvest-wreaths beneath the ceiling rustled and whispered, as if to say, 'Ah, we have seen much, and could tell much!'

This swarm of creatures of her fancy was not new to Johanna, only she had grown unaccustomed

to them. As a child, and even as a young girl at Lindenbad, they had continually crowded about her; but then they came in the day-time, often in the midst of tedious lessons and tasks. Sometimes they were mere fleeting, misty phantoms; sometimes they were distinct, brightly-colored figures, playing their parts in the wildest dramas, which the girl would go on weaving for days and weeks. Not until she took occasion to tell these tales did they leave her,—sometimes before she wished them to do so. Then the fantastic swarm would vanish as at the word of a magician. Therefore she could not be depended upon by an audience. Only among the small children at her *pension* she now and then found a story-loving creature who would listen eagerly to her fragments. The 'big girls' ridiculed her, and Johanna, ashamed, put a check upon her fancy, till at last the 'stupid images' troubled her no more. Why should they now suddenly appear again? Was it to lure her to Tannhagen, or to scare her from it?

For a while Johanna let them come and go, then she tried to rid herself of them, but she could not. At last she arose, lit a candle, wrapped herself in a dressing-gown, and sat down at her writing-table. Perhaps writing would be as effective as narrating by word of mouth.

"Dear Otto," she began, and then passed her pen through the words. He would not understand her; he would laugh at her as the 'big girls' had done at the *pension*. Moreover, he did not want letters from her, and did not like to have her tire her eyes and snatch any time from her night's rest. Formerly she had gone to Ludwig with her narratives; but to tell him what she withheld from Otto would be simply impossible.

For a while she sat undecided, then she dipped her pen in the ink again. "I will try it," she whispered to herself, and began to write. To whom? Out into space. And what? She herself did not know.

CHAPTER XIX.

PROFESSIONAL ENTHUSIASM.

The Freiherr had bought Tannhagen, and had acceded to Otto's entreaty that the marriage might take place at the end of May. There was much to do before then to make the 'old barracks,' as the Freiherr called the farm-house, habitable. There was no end of consultations with builders and workmen. Hangings and carpets were ordered. Löbel Wolf, who had been taken into favour again, ransacked the country round for old furniture to suit Johanna's taste; Aunt Thekla contributed chests full of linen, and Otto was perpetually going to and fro urging the workmen at Tannhagen to greater speed and keeping his grandfather informed of all that was doing.

The Freiherr seemed to grow younger and more cheerful every day amid these constant calls upon his interest. They helped him to forego the usual Christmas gathering this year, and to bear the absence of Johann Leopold. Hedwig could not, of course, travel with her new-born baby, and Hildegard's children had the measles,—very fortunately for their mother, who was reluctant to witness the happiness of the betrothed pair. Magelone also was away. She had developed a tender affection for Hedwig's boys, and begged her grandfather to allow her to spend her Christmas with them.

It was a great pleasure, shortly before Christmas-day, to receive a letter from Johann Leopold. It was plain, however, from its contents that a previous packet, containing a letter from Ludwig Werner in answer to the announcement of Johanna's betrothal, had been lost. This time only Johann Leopold wrote. Ludwig had been absent from him for a while upon an expedition to the interior, which the writer did not feel strong enough to join. He said nothing special about his health, but from several of his expressions it seemed plain that the hopes he had entertained as to the effect of his travels had not been confirmed, and, in spite of the pleasure and interest they had afforded him, there might be read between the lines of his letter a certain desire for home, the longing of an invalid to be once more living quiet days amid familiar scenes. Still, he did not seem inclined to hasten his return. He wrote that the work of the expedition to which Ludwig Werner belonged would hardly be finished before the end of the summer, so that he could not expect to see Dönninghausen again before the autumn. He was, of course, all the more anxious for a detailed account of all that passed there, and asked particularly concerning the plans of the betrothed pair, whom he cordially begged to rely upon his brotherly aid whenever they might require it. Sympathy with their happiness, he added, should cheer his own life of renunciation.

"Poor Magelone!" thought Otto, when he heard this portion of the letter. "How can she depend for future happiness upon such a shadow of a man?" But the old Freiherr declared that it was all hypochondriacal nonsense, and that when the bustle of the outfit and the wedding were over at Tannhagen, the same thing should be begun at Dönninghausen.

"You will see, Thekla," he said to his sister, "when it comes to seriously building his nest, Johann Leopold will be just as sensible as Otto has become. I never should have believed that the lad could be so practical and industrious. It gives me the greatest pleasure to see it."

Even Johanna was surprised at Otto's unwearied zeal, but she could not help thinking that in his care for outward circumstances, the frame of life, he was overlooking the life itself, and his ardent tenderness could not indemnify her for the want of that congeniality of mind and thought

which she had hoped for from her lover, and for which she longed daily. Otto declared that there would be time enough for philosophizing when they were settled in their Tannhagen solitude; at present it seemed to him best to discuss the alterations in the house, the laying out of the garden, the carpets, and the furniture. And since Johanna's taste differed widely from his own, which was all for the modern, the elegant, and the graceful, while she would have had her furniture in artistic harmony with her house, there was no end to discussions upon household matters, which left Otto no time for what interested Johanna more deeply.

She would not admit to herself that he lacked interest in everything save what was superficial, and after he had left her in the evening she made every effort to banish the feeling of discontent that assailed her. She sought refuge more and more continually at her writing-table. The impression produced upon her imagination by Tannhagen at her first visit had not faded. She still in fancy saw the old house peopled with shapes upon whom, involuntarily, she bestowed the very life of her life, whom she caused to ask and answer, to love, to suffer, to hope, and to grieve, according to her own mood. And each of these phantoms had an individual existence, to which she felt forced—she knew not why—to give expression in words. She did it with mingled delight and pain. Form and colour would sometimes elude her, or the shape which she had thought stable would fade and vanish, while at other times, without the slightest effort on her part, her brain would be crowded with clear and lovely images, whose very being she could understand and interpret. What would come of all this she never asked herself. She believed that in writing she was but obeying an impulse to reveal herself absolutely to Otto. She called these outpourings of her very self 'apocryphal love-letters,' and she wrote herself to rest, as some sing themselves to sleep.

Thus the winter passed. It was unusually stormy and severe, even for these mountains. All the more welcome to Johanna were the first spring breezes, the coming of the first birds of passage, and the bursting of the sheaths of the first blossoms. Her rides and walks with her grandfather were not long enough. Elinor was saddled for her in the early morning, and it was sometimes hard to turn back in time for breakfast.

One morning she had started earlier than usual. The eager March air and the sunshine blended harmoniously. A lark poured his 'full heart' 'from heaven or near it.' With Leo barking about her, she turned her mare into the woodland path leading to the 'Forest Hermitage.'

It was long since she had seen her protégés. The Freiherr had not forbidden her to visit them, but it vexed him to hear them mentioned. Therefore, when she crossed the forest path upon her road home from Tannhagen with her grandfather, she did not venture to turn into it. She learned from Otto, who now and then brought her a greeting from Christine, that the couple were content and happy, and she should be glad to hear this from Christine herself.

But she found an invalid. An old woman opened the door for her, with a curtsey. The young wife lay on the sofa, propped with pillows, her face pale and wan, her eyes dim, and the hand she held out to Johanna burned with fever.

"Christine, what has been the matter?" Johanna exclaimed, in dismay. "When Herr Otto saw you a week ago he brought me such good news of you!"

Christine's eyes wore an anxious, terrified expression. "I was taken ill just afterwards," she answered, in a weak voice. "But please, Fräulein, say nothing about it now: I hear Jakob coming; he is too anxious, and I am a great deal better."

Her husband entered. Johanna was startled by his gloomy, haggard looks.

"The gracious Fruleen!" he cried, and tore off his hat.

Johanna thought she detected a shade of reproach in his tone. "I did not know that Christine was ill, or I should have come long ago," she said. "Why did you not send me word? I should have been so glad to do something for her."

"Thanks, gracious Fruleen," he replied; "she has wanted for nothing. The Klausenburg doctor has been here every day, and she has had plenty of medicine,—there, little one, is a fresh bottleful,—and she shall have whatever she wants to eat and drink, if I have to run miles for it." He laughed, and ran his fingers through his bushy red hair, so that it stood out all over his head.

Christine looked at him beseechingly. "Yes, yes, Fräulein," she said, "he has tended me as if I were a princess. He is on his feet day and night."

"That's the part you tell!" he interrupted her; "but that it is all my fault——"

"Jakob, what did you promise me?" the sick woman implored him, lifting her clasped hands.

"That I would not speak evil of any one," he answered, gloomily, "and I won't. But I may tell of what I have done myself. Yes, gracious Fruleen, it is my fault, the fault of my bad temper, that the poor little thing is lying there, disappointed of her pleasure in soon having a child again. And when I see her, as patient as a lamb——But if she dies——" He raised his sound arm and shook his clinched fist. "If she dies——God in heaven!"

With this cry he sank back into a chair, covered his face with his hands, and sobbed aloud.

Christine half arose. "Let me! let me!" she begged, trying to resist Johanna's efforts to detain her.

"See now, I always do her harm," he said, gently putting her back among the pillows. "Be good, child, and reasonable for both of us. I cannot be, for I have nothing but you; and whoever takes you from me, whether it be a man or God Almighty——"

She pressed her hand upon his lips. "Hush, hush!" she said, "do not blaspheme. I am better. We shall stay with each other for a while yet. Let us pray for it; try to, for my sake."

He turned away. "Whatever you please for your sake, but I cannot pray any more."

"He will learn how to again," Johanna interposed. "But now, Christine, you must not worry,—for Jakob's sake you must not. To lie still and be nursed is all you have to do. I am sorry I must go now, but I will come soon again, and send to you meanwhile—Jakob will let me send you something to strengthen you."

Again the terrified look appeared in Christine's eyes. "Dear Jakob, Hanna ought to make my gruel," she said. And when he had left the room to see that it was done, she seized Johanna's hand, and whispered, "Ah, it is such a pleasure to have you come, Fräulein, but please—don't take it amiss—please don't let Squire Otto bring me anything. It is best he should not come here; while I am sick, at all events. Jakob is so hasty, and I am so distressed."

Her hands trembled, and her breath came quick and short.

"He shall not come, be sure, Christine," Johanna replied.

"But please don't tell the Squire I said it. You will promise me this?" the poor child went on; and before Johanna could reply, Jakob returned, and Johanna took her leave. To-day she shook hands with Jakob. She pitied the savage fellow as much as she did the weak little wife who loved him so tremblingly. What could have occurred between Otto and himself? Otto had spoken of his visits to the Forest Hermitage with the utmost frankness. Probably he had no suspicion of having aroused Jakob's anger; the poor embittered creature was so easily offended. Perhaps it might all be made right by a word from her, but it was just as likely that she might cause a fresh outbreak, and the invalid must not be exposed to such a peril; all explanations must be deferred, at least until her recovery.

Absorbed in thoughts such as these, Johanna pursued her way home through the forest. Suddenly she heard the Klausenburg clock strike eight. She was startled. If she would not spoil her grandfather's humour for the day, she must be ready for breakfast at half-past; and that seemed scarcely possible if she should continue upon this path, which wound in and out by long detours among the rocks. But here was a path to the left which seemed to lead directly down the steep declivity into the valley. "Elinor, shall we venture?" Johanna asked, patting the mare's slender neck. The creature seemed by a proud toss of its head to answer yes, and the rider turned into the steep, slippery pathway. With the greatest caution, and perfectly sure of foot, Elinor performed her task, and at the end of ten minutes the borders of the forest in the valley were reached. "Brava, Elinor! Now for a gallop as a reward." And away flew horse and rider along the narrow road which, intersected by numerous ditches, led through the fields to the Dönninghausen park.

The park on this side was bounded by a brook, which, rushing from the mountains over its stony bed, united far below in the valley with the Dönninghausen mill-stream. The little river there made a sudden turn to the south, while the village road, which up to this point wound along beside it, crossed it by a bridge, and, keeping on in its former direction, led straight to Klausenburg.

A carriage was crossing this bridge, coming from the village of Klausenburg; its occupants saw the rider bound forth from the forest and dash along the meadow-path, followed by Leo.

"By Jove, she can ride!" exclaimed a black-haired man sitting on the back seat. "She has her horse well in rein, and the brute is not to be despised either. Aha! see her take that ditch! And, by Jove, there she goes at another! Brava, brava!"

"That must be Johanna!" the woman beside him remarked. And the little girl opposite her leaned forward and cried, "Johanna! Oh, I want to go to her!"

The man did not hear her. The black eyes in his brown, eager face sparkled. "Now the brook!" he went on. "Aha! I thought so. The horse refuses to leap! The water tumbles and foams too much. But his rider chooses to do it. Hurrah! there she goes! Brava, bravissima!" he shouted, and waved his hat in the air. The little girl, too, waved her pocket-handkerchief, and joined her childish voice to the man's loud applause. Johanna did not hear them,—the wind and the rushing water drowned their voices,—but she saw the hat and the handkerchief waved in the air, and, mortified at having made a show of herself, she rode on quietly to the castle.

She was in time for breakfast, and was doubly glad to be so, since her grandfather's mood was evidently not a cheerful one. Magelone had again put off her oft-postponed return to Dönninghausen.

"There must be an end of it!" said the Freiherr, after he had informed his sister and Johanna of Magelone's letter. "I will write to her to-day. She will get the letter to-morrow,—to-morrow evening at the latest,—and the day after to-morrow she will please to come home. I cannot

endure this modern habit of vagabondage! It's been hard enough not to be able to forbid it to the boys, but you women will please to stay where the Lord has provided still waters and green pastures for you!"

With these words he got up from table and walked to the door. At the same moment a servant brought Johanna a note. "The messenger is waiting for an answer," he said.

The Freiherr came back. "Read it, child," he said. "If Otto is going to Tannhagen to-day, we can meet him there."

Johanna mechanically obeyed, although, with a mixture of terror and delight, she had seen at a glance that the note was from her step-mother. She opened it and read:

> "Dear Johanna,—As I do not know whether we ought to come unannounced, we have stopped at the village inn, and beg you to let us know when you can see us. Do not keep us waiting too long. Lisbeth is crying with impatience. With much love, yours, Helena."

Johanna summoned up all her courage. "The note is not from Otto, grandfather," she said, in a faltering voice. "My step-mother and my little sister are here. At the village inn," she added, as she observed the Freiherr's start.

He controlled himself with an effort. "At the village inn!" he repeated, after a pause. "Well, you can go to them there if you really wish to see them." With these words he turned to go; Aunt Thekla followed him. "Dear Johann," she said, in her low, pleading voice, "it looks so unkind. Could not Johanna have the woman and the little girl in her own——"

Her brother's eyes flashed so that she paused in terror.

"Thekla!" he exclaimed, "think what you are saying. Rope-dancers and mountebanks here in my house! Never!" With these words he left the room, and the door crashed to after him.

CHAPTER XX.

AN EQUESTRIAN ARTIST.

Johanna accompanied Helena's messenger to the village. Her longing to see Lisbeth lent wings to her feet, and thrust into the background all questions as to how she should conduct herself towards her step-mother. And when, as soon as the inn garden was reached, the pretty little figure came flying towards her, and Lisbeth's arms were round her neck, while she loaded her sister with caresses, calling her by all the old childish terms of endearment, Johanna forgot to be anything save grateful to Helena for affording her such a pleasure, and she held out her hand to her with emotion.

Helena clasped her in her arms. "Dear Johanna! how glad I am!" she said. "But here is some one, too, who longs to see you. My husband. Receive him kindly, I pray you."

With these words she led Johanna into the inn parlour. "Dear Carlo, here she is," she added, with evident anxiety in her voice.

A broad-shouldered, middle-aged man, with a dark complexion, sparkling brown eyes, black hair, and a thick black moustache, arose from the window-seat. "Most happy, most happy!" he cried, in ringing tones, taking Johanna's hand and shaking it without more ado. "I have heard much that is fine about you, and have seen even more, for I think you were the horsewoman we watched this morning, eh?"

"And you were the spectator who waved his hat?" said Johanna.

"Rather say admirer," Carlo Batti interrupted her. "Admirer! By Jove! you know how to manage a horse! Where in all the world, Fräulein, did you learn to ride so famously?"

"Dear Carlo, had we not better sit down before we plunge into an artistic discussion?" Helena asked, with some asperity. "Come, Johanna, there is a sofa. Although it is a hard one——"

"Yes, yes, come!" Lisbeth exclaimed, drawing her sister towards it. "We will sit down together, as we used to do in the twilight when you told me stories."

"Do you remember them still?" Johanna said, gently. "I thought you would forget me." And, seating herself on the sofa, she took the child into her lap, and the little head was laid, as formerly, upon her shoulder.

"Forget!" Helena repeated, as she sank down in the other corner of the sofa. "Forget you! That would be inexcusable, after all that you did for her. No; she is a good, grateful little thing. She has talked of you every day."

These were strange words from the lips of this woman. Lisbeth solved the riddle. "Yes, my dear, good old darling, I talked of you all the time; I wanted to come to you, and now I am not going away again. Mamma says that she and Uncle Carlo do not need me now, and will leave me with you."

Helena looked embarrassed. "How naughty, Lisbeth!" she cried. "And why do you say 'Uncle Carlo'? He is papa."

The child sat upright in Johanna's lap. "But he is not my papa," she said, waywardly. "Is he, Johanna?"

"Be quiet, you little mouse," Carlo Batti interposed, having drawn up a chair beside Johanna and seated himself in it. "Dear Helena, do not tease her; we can be just as good friends if she calls me Uncle Carlo." And turning to Johanna, he continued: "Permit me to repeat my question, 'Of whom did you learn to ride?' Here are not only strength, security, elegance, but also, if I do not mistake, a grand method——"

"Which I owe partly to my grandfather and partly to old Martin, his groom," was Johanna's smiling reply.

"Genius, then! pure genius!" cried Carlo Batti, and his bronze face flushed and his eager brown eyes sparkled. "I'll tell you what! Come to us; put yourself in my hands, and, by Jove! I'll promise that in a year you shall be as famous as—as——"

"Don't trouble yourself, dear Carlo," said Helena. "Johanna, as you know, is about to marry a Herr von Dönninghausen."

"To be sure; I had forgotten. These infernal grand matches!" he exclaimed, with a comical expression of despair. "You might search the length and breadth of the country and not find such a talent as yours. And you think of marriage, an irksome marriage! No, no! come to us. Just try it!" And he seized Johanna's hand in a clasp from which it cost her repeated efforts to withdraw it, and went on with enthusiasm: "I need not tell you what it is to have under perfect control a horse,—a strong, proud, noble creature; but you do not yet know what it is to feel a thousand eyes riveted upon you in admiration, to hear a thousand voices shouting applause. Try it; let me adjure you, try it! and I'll be d—d if you do not say Carlo Batti is right—'the world belongs to the artist, and it shall belong to me!' It belongs even more to a woman than to one of us, especially when she looks like——" He laughed, and his glance completed his sentence. "I cannot understand, Helena, how you could tell me that Fräulein Johanna was not beautiful. A brilliant apparition for the ring,—entirely too brilliant. It would outshine all others."

Johanna laughed; the man's coarse admiration was expressed with such good-humoured simplicity that she could not resent it.

But Helena said, half irritated and half confused, "You forget entirely that Johanna has arranged her future very differently." Then, smiling sweetly, she added, in a sentimental tone, "You men never appreciate the delight with which a true woman relinquishes art, even when she has tasted its raptures and its triumphs, for the sake of her love. You, indeed, dear Carlo, ought to know this."

He shrugged his shoulders, and his mobile features betrayed mingled derision and impatience. "I had no objection to your remaining on the stage,—but the grapes were sour!" he said. And, rising, he went to the window, where he stood drumming on the pane, while Helena, who had flushed crimson, said, with a forced smile, "Men are all alike, dear Johanna, as you will learn. Carlo is one of the best of them."

Johanna made no reply. What a contrast there was between her father's noble, intellectual personality and this good-humoured boor! But Helena deferred to him, excused his lack of consideration, endured his rude conduct, hung upon his words, and followed his every motion with loving looks. The girl's heart was filled with bitterness and disgust, and involuntarily she clasped Lisbeth closer in her arms, as if she could shield the little one from such contact.

Helena stroked the child's curls caressingly. "You cannot think how good Carlo is to Lisbeth!" she went on, in an undertone. "Because she was continually begging for her Johanna, he did what I have never known him to do before—sent on the baggage-train, and we do not follow it before night by the express——"

Lisbeth sprang up. "Kind Uncle Carlo!" she cried, running to the window.

He turned round. "Come!" he said, kindly; and stooping, he stiffly held out to her his open right hand. With a jump Lisbeth stood erect upon it, and, holding by his raised left hand, was carried back thus to the sofa.

The sight gave pain to Johanna. She arose and took the child from its step-father.

"An ungrateful public,—not even one round of applause!" He said, laughing. "But never mind, you shall have a better some day." And, turning to Johanna, he added, "She has made her appearance once, with great applause and self-satisfaction. Hey, little mouse?"

"Oh, it was beautiful!" Lisbeth cried, with sparkling eyes. "Everything I had on was pink and silver,—even my stockings; and I had silver wings on my shoulders——"

Johanna closed her lips with a kiss. Her father's child in a circus!

Carlo Batti misunderstood her. "Yes, yes," he went on, with a conceited smile, "you may well be proud of your little sister, and of her advantages. Race—artist blood—and Carlo Batti to the fore, —the devil must be in it if something does not come of all that."

"If it is not too much for her," Helena interposed. "Only see, Johanna, how pale the little face is, now that the excitement of seeing you again is over! That is Carlo's fault. He never knows when to stop!"

"Stuff!" he said, laughing. "The little lady grows too fast,—that's why she is pale and tired sometimes. Say yourself, little mouse, which tires you the most, I or your leather school-books?"

"Oh, the books, the horrid books!" cried the child, taking his outstretched hand, and dancing about him like a little ballet-girl, while he slowly turned round and round.

"So it goes all day long," Helena complained. "No need to hope for the quiet ordered by the doctor when those two are together. Moreover, she ought to have country air——" She broke off and looked inquiringly at her step-daughter.

Johanna's face flushed; she felt that it was best to be frank. "How gladly I would ask you to leave the child with me!" she replied. "But, kind and generous as my grandfather is, he has not yet forgiven my mother's marriage, and detests anything that can remind him of my father."

"You see, Helena, it is just as I told you," Batti interrupted her; adding, with a burst of rude laughter, "I know it—this aristocratic rubbish, stupid, haughty, narrow-minded——"

"Carlo!" Helena whispered, with a glance towards Johanna.

He was not to be deterred, however. "What the deuce are you grimacing about?" he asked. "She"—and he indicated Johanna—"is her father's daughter, and proud of her name, is she not?"

"Indeed I am; but I prize my grandfather too, and love him dearly, dearly!" she replied, and her eyes flashed.

He made a face, then held out to her his brown hairy hand. "You're the girl for me!" he exclaimed, seizing and almost crushing her fingers in his grasp. "Out with whatever is in your heart! A great pity that you're going to marry. A God-gifted creature like yourself belongs on horseback. And—down with the world!" He swung his arm as if it held a riding-whip, by way of completing his sentence.

"Dear Johanna, you must not take amiss what he says," Helena began, with a furtive smile.

"Let us alone, we understand each other!" he interrupted her. And turning to Johanna, he continued: "Let us talk together like friends. If your father, the actor, is unpopular up there,"—pointing with his thumb over his shoulder towards the castle,—"I, the equestrian artist, must be still more so. You need not reply: I know the talk. 'Players, strollers, vagabonds,' that is the verdict passed upon us by the aristocracy and the respectable public, the devil fly away with them!"

"Carlo!" cried Helena.

His eyes flashed. "Am I to take it all quietly when such a stuck-up set turn me out of doors? Me, Carlo Batti, renowned in Paris, in Berlin, in St. Petersburg, as well as in Vienna!" he shouted, angrily. "Come, we can stay here no longer. I must go to Remmingen to look for some horses. You will drive there with me."

"You said we might stay here, Uncle Carlo!" cried the child. "I want to see the castle where my Johanna lives. Mamma promised me I should."

Carlo laughed scornfully. "The castle,—yes, you shall see it, if only the outside," he said. Taking the child to the window, he continued: "Do you see that ugly old barn up there? They call that the castle, and it is full of ugly old cats who would eat you up, poor little mouse!"

His joke seemed to restore his good humour. He turned to Johanna and said, "Drive with us to Remmingen. I am sorry I have not my Mustapha here; we might have a ride together. But we must content ourselves with the hack. 'Need drives the devil to eat flies.'"

Johanna hesitated to accept the invitation; but Lisbeth hung upon her arm and begged so hard, "Come with us, do!" that her sister could not resist her.

There was no opportunity, however, for any quiet, uninterrupted talk. While they were driving to Remmingen, Carlo Batti held forth himself; and when he left them in the inn there while he went to inspect some horses, Helena fell upon Johanna's neck, exclaiming that she had been pining for months for this moment,—for the opportunity of unburdening her heart. And then she wept for her Roderich, and adjured Johanna not to consider her speedy second marriage as disloyalty to him whom she 'had adored, and never could forget.'

"I was so helpless," she said; "I felt lost in the wide, wide world. You cannot imagine, dear Johanna, the trials and hostilities to which an unprotected woman is exposed, particularly when, like myself, she is young, beautiful, and talented.

"You can have no idea of the intrigues and cabals with which I was surrounded. The more gracious,—yes, I might as well confess,—the more enthusiastic my reception was by the public, the more virulent my rivals became. They took refuge behind the critics, and slandered me to the public and to the management. Four times I obtained an engagement, and each time they contrived to have it fail. If we had time, I could tell you stories that would make your hair stand on end——"

Thus she went on for a long while, and then began upon Carlo Batti. "He is a wonderful man, and as kind as he is clever. And how he loves me! It is a perpetual surprise to me, although I ought to be used to adoration. Nothing seems to him good enough for me; he loads me with gifts. And how devoted he is to Lisbeth! That was what first decided me to marry him. It was my duty to insure to the child a home and a father's protection. Was I not right?"

To avoid a reply, Johanna bent over the little girl who stood beside her, and her heart ached as she looked into the pale little face.

"Do you think her changed?" asked Helena.

"Very much; she has grown pale and thin. How could you allow such a frail little creature to appear in public?"

"It did her no harm," Helena declared. "It was a simple little juvenile ballet, the prettiest thing you can imagine. Ten boys and ten girls in pink and silver——"

"But I was the prettiest of all," Lisbeth interposed, and her eyes sparkled; "and I danced the best, too. Everybody clapped their hands, and Uncle Carlo said that if I would take pains I could be a great artist, and then I should always have the loveliest clothes, and the others, who were not so pretty as I, would be half dead with vexation."

Helena laughed. "You see how he turns the child's head," she said; but it was evident that she was pleased. Johanna reflected with positive horror that if the child were left with these people, her inborn vanity would destroy the germs of good in her heart. She must save the little one from such a fate. Otto would let her have the child at Tannhagen.

Batti returned in an ill humour, because nothing had come of the purchase of horses, and the bad beer and black bread of the Remmingen inn were not calculated to soothe his irritation. Helena ought to have remembered to bring with them a couple of bottles of wine and some cold meat; but unless he himself attended to everything, great and small, nothing was ever done. Helena, who could not possibly submit to reproof, replied crossly that she had not expected to breakfast at a village inn, whereupon Batti angrily observed that another time she would please to rely upon his knowledge of the world and of human nature. He had from the first been averse to the d—d drive, and it was the last time he should accede to Helena's silly schemes.

"Why the deuce do you want to force yourself upon people who will have nothing to do with you?" he shouted, striking his clinched fist upon the table so that the glasses rang again.

Helena exclaimed, in a voice trembling with anger, that she had no idea of anything of the kind; she had been admired and sought for everywhere. But Batti did not allow her to proceed; he asked her with a sneer whether any one of the aristocratic old dandies who had paid court to her had ever asked her inside his doors or presented her to the women of his family. Helena, as she always did when she had nothing to reply, burst into tears, and Lisbeth looked terrified from one to the other. "You say something, dear Johanna," she whispered to her sister; and Batti, who overheard her, seemed suddenly to recollect his guest.

"Pardon me," he said, extending his hand to her. "I am a rough fellow, but I mean no harm. It has been a great pleasure to me to know you, and I am heartily grateful to my wife for it."

Then he kissed Helena, who dried her tears. The little girl sprang with a joyous shout into Uncle Carlo's outstretched arms, and the party drove back to Dönninghausen in peace and harmony.

Here there was a trying leave-taking. When Johanna had the vehicle stopped upon the bridge, Lisbeth clung about her neck, and would not release her. Her sister's assurance that she should soon come to Tannhagen, and her step-father's promise that she should dance in a white dress with golden stars, were both needed to pacify her. And then Helena pressed her handkerchief to her tearless eyes, embraced her step-daughter, and over her shoulder breathed in plaintive accents the assurance that it was long, long since she had enjoyed anything so much as seeing her dear, dear Johanna again. Finally Batti, who had sprung out of the coach to assist her to alight, took her hand in both his. "Farewell!" he cried, with the expression of child-like good humour which well became his eager face. "You must not think that I speak words of mere formality when I say that I am really yours to command. If I can ever serve you, or assist you in any way, curse me if it will not give me the greatest pleasure. I pray you to believe me."

"I do believe you, and thank you cordially," she replied, strangely touched by his words. Had she a presentiment that she might some day stand in need of his proffered aid? No such thought occurred to her, she gave one more kiss to the child, who stretched out her arms to her, and then Batti re-entered the coach, the driver cracked his whip, the crazy vehicle rattled off, and Johanna gazed after it so long as she could distinguish the fair, curly head stretched out of the window.

CHAPTER XXI.

SHIPWRECK.

When at last she turned to go home, Otto came walking quickly towards her from the castle. He

looked annoyed, and asked, as he offered her his arm, "Where have you been so long? I have been here an hour."

"Do not be angry with me," she begged. "Since, on grandpapa's account, I could not ask my people to the castle, I drove with them to Remmingen."

"Your people?" he repeated, sharply. "Do not forget, my dear Johanna, that your people are to be found only among the Dönninghausens. Whoever does not belong to us is nothing to you."

"Otto, I have a sister!" she exclaimed, half angry, half wounded.

"The child of an equestrienne can be nothing to you."

"She is and always must be the child of my father. Moreover, my step-mother is not an equestrienne. She is Carlo Batti's wife."

"As if it were not the same thing! Do you suppose our acquaintances would have regard for any such distinctions if they were to see you with that woman? But do not let us quarrel about it; your own good sense must tell you that my betrothed—our grandfather's grandchild—cannot possibly maintain any intercourse with those people."

Johanna was silent. This was not a favourable moment for any mention of her wishes with respect to Lisbeth; but the longer she thought of to-day's meeting, the more necessary did it appear to her that the child should be removed from the evil influences of those about her, not only for a while, but permanently. How this was to be done she could not tell,—it could be possible only at Tannhagen.

Two days later Magelone returned to Dönninghausen. She was fresh and gay, had made some 'most delightful' acquaintances, had danced a great deal, and generally enjoyed herself 'hugely.' Otto teased her about her repeated use of this adverb, ascribing her love for it to the 'huge dimensions' of a certain captain, who had, according to Magelone, been one of her most ardent admirers.

Merry as his teasing sounded, Magelone thought she detected in it a certain jealous annoyance, which pleased her, and she did her best to induce Otto to continue it, by continual descriptions of her social delights,—a topic in which Otto, who was familiar with the society in which his sisters lived, was as much interested as herself. Moreover, he had a taste for aristocratic gossip in general, and for Magelone's graceful treatment of it in particular. How rude Johanna's conversation and air seemed by comparison! and what good did it do for him to try not to compare? The contrast forced itself upon him all the more since Johanna, at present anxious about her sister, and troubled, perhaps, by the sense of a slight estrangement between Otto and herself, was graver than her wont, while Magelone fairly sparkled with merriment.

And she seemed to him more beautiful than ever. The gleaming eyes, the fresh pouting lips, the lithe grace of her figure, attracted him more than ever. The consciousness that he must not yield to the attraction increased its force, and Magelone saw this, and it pleased her to torment him.

One evening, while she was playing a little thing of Chopin's, he, leaning against the grand piano, became absorbed in contemplation of her. Suddenly she looked up. Their eyes met.

"Do not look at me so," she whispered, continuing to play, while her cheek flushed crimson, as her look held fast his own, and an evil smile of triumph hovered upon her half-open lips.

On another occasion he said, suddenly dropping his jesting for a passionate tone, "What a grief it is, Magelone, that we cannot belong to each other!" She looked up at him angrily; then suddenly her eyes were veiled in sadness, and, with a sigh, she turned and left him.

On both these occasions Johanna was seated only a few steps from the pair, reading the papers aloud to her grandfather. Otto came nigh to reproaching her in his heart for her calm confidence in him.

Weeks passed by; the spring in all its pomp and loveliness had taken full possession of mountain and valley, but the workmen at Tannhagen were so far behindhand that it was necessary to postpone the marriage. The Freiherr, to whom delay was always intolerable, for a few days after this postponement went about, as Magelone expressed it, like a hungry lion, seeking to devour the poor workmen who had caused the mischief. Otto, to whom she said this, laughed, but his laughter was forced.

"Oh, the workmen are not to be the victims; he has selected me!" he replied. "That there may be no further delay, I am to take up my abode to-morrow in Tannhagen to hasten them. In that wilderness!"

"If I had only known it sooner!" Magelone exclaimed. "Elfrida invited me to Klausenburg for a few weeks; she wants me to help her to embroider your wedding-present, and I said 'yes.' I depended upon you! Now it will be stupid enough."

Otto muttered an imprecation. "Can you not excuse yourself?" he asked.

"Not possibly," she replied. "Grandpapa has given his royal consent. And do you suppose it is much more amusing here? A betrothed couple just before marriage—I could not stand it any longer!"

She laughed mockingly, then her lips quivered, and, pressing her handkerchief to her eyes, she turned to go from him.

Otto detained her. "I will not let you go!" he exclaimed, in a low, passionate tone. "I will see the tears that make me happy! We will indemnify ourselves for this last piece of good fortune of which chance tries to rob us. You will not always be embroidering or walking with Elfrida. Since I must be on service at Klausenburg for a part of every day, we can meet daily in the forest, and see each other where all these eyes are not upon us!"

He confronted her in a window-recess, and held both her hands fast in his own. She tried to extricate herself. "Let me go! let me go! What you say is odious!" she whispered.

At this moment Johanna appeared. "Are you quarrelling again?" she asked. "What is the matter now?"

"It is Otto's fault; he is so rude. Poor Johanna, you will have a hard time with him!" Magelone said; and as she passed Otto she gave him a glance compounded of forgiveness and provocation.

It had rained. The Freiherr, who dreaded the damp air, retired to try to get a nap after the second breakfast, and Johanna, taking advantage of her liberty, had Elinor saddled, and rode towards the Forest Hermitage to ask after Christine.

The lonely ride did her good. The weight that had of late oppressed her heart, the vague sensation of estrangement between Otto and herself, vanished in the bright fulness of life that encompassed her here in the forest on every hand. She thirstily drank eager draughts of the pungent air exhaled in the sunshine by the drenched earth; she listened delightedly when amid the humming, buzzing, twittering, and chirping around her she distinguished the merry song of the finch, the call of the wild dove, or the shrill, exultant note of the black thrush as it echoed through the woods. The voices of the birds awakened a thousand happy memories within her. "Otto!" she whispered, and soul and body thrilled with ecstasy. Yes, all doubt and suspicion were treachery, a sin against the Giver of such 'good and perfect gifts.'

She rode on as in a dream, and yet her soul and sense were never more alive and open to the rich life about her. Not a note in the delicious symphony of spring escaped her ear; no play of colour was lost to her eye in the million glittering drops tossed by the breeze from the branches.

Suddenly Leo began to bark, and Elinor pricked her ears. There was a rustling in the bushes on one side of the way; a man appeared from them and lifted his cap. It was Red Jakob.

Johanna reined in her horse. "Good-morning!" she said, kindly. "How is Christine? I am on my way to her."

"Thanks, gracious Fruleen; she is better," he replied in an undertone, as he came nearer. "She does not sleep well at night yet, but she gets rest during the day. She is asleep now." And with a lowering glance he added, "Shall I waken her, or will the gracious Fruleen wait awhile? I could show her a rare sight to pass the time."

Another time Johanna might have been warned by his malicious grin not to heed him, but now she did not observe it, and asked him where this wonder was to be found.

"Not far from here," he replied; "but the gracious Fruleen must dismount. I'll tie the horse, and then there is a little climb up the rocks. She must not speak, and she must step very softly, or she will spoil it all."

"'Tis a bird's-nest," Johanna said, gayly. And springing from her horse, she bade Leo stay by Elinor, and followed Jakob along a path which seemed to be but seldom used, for it was rank with weeds, and was obstructed by hanging branches of the trees. Her guide cautiously opened and bent back these to allow her to pass. Sometimes he looked round and laid his finger on his lips, then crept on, while his eyes sparkled and his sharp white teeth were buried deep in his under lip.

He reached a rocky turning, stooped to listen, and beckoned to Johanna to approach. In an instant she stood beside him; he quickly tore asunder the bushes with his sound arm and then retreated, leaving Johanna to confront, in measureless amazement, Otto and Magelone. They were sitting upon a low rock, clasped in each other's arms, and he was passionately kissing her smiling lips.

Red Jakob's burst of discordant laughter aroused them from their ecstasy.

"Johanna!" Otto cried, springing to his feet.

His voice dissolved the spell that had held her bound. With a shudder she pressed her hands to her temples, and when Otto would have grasped her arm she turned from him and tried to flee back through the thicket. Magelone, who had sat like one crushed, started up and hurried after her. "Hear me! hear me!" she cried, clutching at Johanna's riding-skirt. "I will not let you go so proudly, so—so——"

"Magelone, hush, I conjure you!" Otto entreated.

She shook her head frantically. "No, no! I will speak at last, and Johanna shall hear me. I have borne her falsehood long enough; her pride, her contemptuous airs I will not bear. She shall blush before me—me!"

And as she finished this sentence, which she uttered in desperate haste, she relinquished her hold of Johanna's skirt, stepped close to her side, and whispered in her ear, while her glittering eyes were riveted upon the pale face, "Do you know why he asked you to marry him? To save me from grandpapa's anger. The note that fell into grandpapa's hands was written for me—for me! Ask himself if this is not so."

Involuntarily Johanna's glance followed the direction of Magelone's hand. Otto, very pale, his lips tightly compressed, stood with his eyes bent on the ground. Magelone, beside herself with shame and anger, grasped his arm and shook it. "Speak!" she cried. "I require you on your honour to tell the truth. For whom was the note intended? For whom?" she repeated, as he took both her hands in his. "You are cowardly and despicable if you do not speak now. For whom was the note intended?"

"For you," he said, sternly; and then, almost flinging her hands from him, he went up to Johanna. "Do not condemn me!" he entreated. "Let me explain to you——"

But she did not or would not hear him. She hurriedly broke through the bushes, which closed behind her, and when Otto would have followed her, a scream from Magelone recalled him to where she knelt sobbing convulsively, gazing wildly about her. He could not leave her alone thus.

"Pray stand up, and do not cry," he said, impatiently, seizing her hands. She obeyed like a terrified child: she arose and dried her tears.

"What is to be done now?" he asked. And when, instead of answering, she only looked up at him with a helpless expression, he added, bitterly, "You must have had some end in view in bringing about the scene that has just occurred."

"I? End in view?" she repeated. "Was it my fault that we—that Johanna appeared?"

"Let us have no subterfuges!" he hastily interrupted her. "You know perfectly well that I do not allude to her appearance, but to the acknowledgment which, in your madness, you wrung from me. It is that which has made all reconciliation impossible. Johanna might forgive a momentary madness——"

Magelone flushed. Could he say this to her? "I did not know you wished her to forgive!" she exclaimed.

Without noticing the interruption, Otto continued: "And I believe that I could have induced her to do so. She is magnanimous and unselfish——"

"Why, then, are you still here?" Magelone interrupted him again, and her eyes flashed. "Make haste, make haste, and cast yourself into the arms of this magnanimous, unselfish being! At her feet, if need be." With a laugh, she turned and would have left him.

He barred her way. "Stay!" he said, with decision. She obeyed involuntarily. And as she stood before him with downcast eyes, and hands loosely clasped in front of her, he went on, in a hard, stern tone: "You know perfectly well that your revelations with regard to the reason for my betrothal have made my marriage impossible. But have you also reflected that I lose at the same time my means of subsistence, and that after this scandal you also will find it impossible to live on at Dönninghausen as you have done? Therefore I ask, What is to be done?"

Magelone mutely shrugged her shoulders. After a pause, Otto went on: "For us both you may be sure there remains open only one of two courses: either we must together escape immediately out into the wide world, and, unfortunately, we have no means to enable us to do so, or we must go to our grandfather like repentant sinners, throw ourselves upon his mercy, and ask his aid. The quicker we do this the better. Come, let us go instantly!"

With these words he would have taken her hand, but she recoiled from him. "No, I thank you!" she cried, in her old mocking way. "I am not yet sunk so low as to accept this sacrifice at your hands. Good heavens, what have I done? Allowed a cousin to flirt rather too desperately with me! Why, grandpapa and Johann Leopold will both easily forgive me this 'momentary madness.' Do you not think so?"

Otto changed colour. "Possibly," he replied, with forced composure. "Attempt your own rescue. Your skilful hands will be doubly skilful in the recapture of the heir——"

"And your magnanimous Johanna's heart doubly unselfish when her possession of the name of Dönninghausen is at stake," Magelone interposed. And, with an easy inclination, she gathered up her skirts and walked past Otto towards the rocky incline which led from this spot down to Castle Klausenburg. Her slender figure was poised for a second on the edge of the cliffs, then glided into the thicket; once more there was a glimpse of a fluttering blue ribbon, then it, too, vanished in the depths of green, and Otto was left alone with his shame, his indecision, his futile anger, his vague emotions.

At first it seemed intolerable to him to allow her to depart thus. He would have hurried after her; at least she should know how he loathed and despised her. But he reflected that in her vanity she would look upon his anger as an outbreak of despair at her loss, while in reality he regarded it as

a deliverance that she had rejected the aid he felt bound in honour to offer her.

Instead of following her, he turned in the opposite direction, and as he hurried back along the path which had so often led him of late to meet her, memory recalled with torturing distinctness the coquettish arts by which she had sought to enslave him. And for the sake of this vain, heartless, calculating creature he had trifled away his own and Johanna's happiness! Everything about his betrothed which had previously displeased him was forgotten by him. She now seemed the embodiment of all goodness and loveliness.

Was she really lost to him? If he went to her with a frank confession of his folly and an appeal for forgiveness, would she not forgive and forget? Would she not be all the more likely to do so, knowing that his very means of existence depended upon it? There was some satisfaction in the fact to which Magelone had so scornfully referred, that he had his name to bestow in exchange. He greatly preferred giving to receiving. The longer he reflected upon the state of affairs the more he was persuaded that Johanna would lose more than himself by breaking off their engagement. And in this conviction he felt not only that he was justified in rejecting all proposals to terminate it, but that it was his duty to do so. When he reached the cross-roads leading respectively to Tannhagen and Dönninghausen, he turned without hesitation into the latter, that the 'wretched affair' might be arranged as soon as possible. He had even gone so far as to resolve upon exercising the greatest patience and moderation should Johanna, after the fashion of womankind, attach an exaggerated importance to his desperate flirtation.

But when, penetrated by the convincing force of his contemplated entreaties and representations, he reached Dönninghausen and asked for Johanna, he learned that she had not yet returned from her morning ride. What should he do,—go to meet her? No; a rider always had a pedestrian at a disadvantage. He determined to wait for her. After giving orders that he should immediately be informed of the Fräulein's return, he went into the park, to avoid any conversation with Aunt Thekla. He had never before found waiting so difficult. He tried to smoke, but after a couple of whiffs he threw his cigar away. He paced up and down the avenue in growing impatience, and, what was worst of all, his confidence diminished with every minute that passed.

Upon leaving Magelone and Otto, Johanna, unconscious whither she was going, plunged into the forest. The birds sang as before; the quivering sunbeams played among the tree-tops; sparkling drops fell from the branches or shimmered in the white anemones that were everywhere pushing forth out of last year's dry leaves. All this Johanna perceived with a strange distinctness, but she felt aloof from it all, confronted with one terrible consciousness which she could neither appreciate nor name.

At last she reached the borders of the forest, and looked around her with sad, dull eyes. Before her lay a deep stretch of moorland; below, in the valley, were the Dönninghausen meadows in their fresh green. Among them wound the road to Klausenburg. She was familiar with it all, but it was no longer what it had been, nor was she herself, nor life, the same. Her heart was so weary and desolate, her tired feet would bear her no farther. She threw herself down on the heather with a sigh. Suddenly the bushes behind her crackled and rustled. She looked round. It was Leo, who rushed out and lay, whining for joy, at her feet. He leaped up upon her, gazing at her wistfully out of his faithful eyes,—his faithful eyes! The spell was broken; all her misery lay clearly revealed to her; the sense of it filled her heart. And, throwing her arms around the dog, who seemed to understand his mistress's woe, she leaned her forehead upon his neck and burst into bitter tears.

She was sitting weeping thus when Red Jakob and Christine, who had followed Leo, emerged from the thicket. Jakob paused, but Christine ran to Johanna and threw herself upon her knees beside her. Johanna raised her head. At sight of her pale face and fixed melancholy eyes Christine's tears also flowed.

"Oh, dear Fräulein," she cried, "please, please do not be angry! Jakob has told me all. It was very wrong; but in deed and in truth he did not mean ill——"

"Never mind, Christine," Johanna interposed, rising and wiping her eyes.

But the young wife held her fast by her skirt and begged all the more fervently: "Please do not be angry with Jakob; please do not!"

He, too, now approached. "Christine, don't go on as if I had committed a crime," he said, his tone and air betraying increasing anger. "I could not look on and see how the pair of them were deceiving our Fruleen. You know that they did not meet for the first time to-day. And did I not see, too, how the fine gentleman behaved to you? Did I not see it?" With these words he raised his clinched fist and shook it.

"Oh, Jakob, you did not mean to speak of that!" Christine said, in her gentle, soothing way. "A gentleman like that doesn't mean anything when he jokes and laughs with one of us——"

"But I mean something, curse him!" shouted Jakob—and the savage sparkle of his eyes gave him more than ever the look of some beast of prey—"I'll kill him like a dog——" He suddenly fell silent before Johanna's sad, reproachful gaze. "Just like a wounded deer when it's dying," he said to himself; and he added aloud, "Indeed, indeed I meant well, if the Fruleen could only believe it!"

Johanna collected herself. "I believe it," she made answer, after a short pause; "and it is because I

do so that I am convinced that, for my sake, neither of you will tell any one of what has passed."

"The Fruleen may rely upon us for that," said Jakob, standing erect. And Christine, weeping, pressed her lips to Johanna's hand. Johanna gently withdrew it from her clasp. "I must go now," she said. "Which way had I better take the soonest to find my horse?"

Jakob offered to bring the horse. Christine might conduct the Fruleen to the large beech-tree on the Dönninghausen road, and he would take Elinor to her. Johanna agreed, and Jakob hurried off, while she followed her guide to the appointed spot.

Jakob soon appeared with the horse. Johanna jumped into the saddle, hurriedly bade the pair farewell, and galloped away.

"As if death were behind her," Christine thought, as she gazed anxiously after her until the trees hid her from sight.

CHAPTER XXII.

DÖNNINGHAUSEN OBSTINACY.

When Johanna reached Dönninghausen, old Martin informed her that Squire Otto had been waiting for her a long while. For a moment she gazed at the old man, as if she had not understood him; then she replied, "I can see no one," and wearily went up the castle steps.

Martin shook his head as he looked after her, and as soon as he had taken Elinor to the stables betook himself to the park to inform Otto that the Fräulein had returned.

"The Fräulein looked as white as the wall," he added, with the familiarity of a man who had been a servant in the house for more than forty years. "And her eyes were twice the size they usually are. Sure she must be ill!"

Otto muttered an imprecation. He could not possibly go away without further question; to do so would give rise to all sorts of commentaries by the servants. Besides, the bell was just ringing for the second breakfast; not to obey its summons would be regarded by his grandfather as a transgression of the rules of the house, and it was more than ever incumbent upon Otto to keep the old man in good humour.

"This is another of my unlucky days. I should like to know whether other men have as much to bear as I," he said to himself as he walked towards the castle. "I wonder how Johanna will receive me? She cannot *yet* have told my grandfather anything, and she will have at least to control herself. Perhaps it is best it should be so. The necessity of preserving appearances may bring her to her senses."

But his hopes proved fallacious; Johanna did not appear. Aunt Thekla reported, with an anxious face, that hearing that Johanna was prevented by a violent headache from coming to breakfast, she had been to look after her, and had found her terribly pale.

"She was lying on the lounge," the old lady went on, "with her eyes closed, and could only say, in a faint voice, 'All I want, dear aunt, is rest!' I thought the fresh air would do her good; but when I began to draw aside the curtains she started up, begging me not to do so, but to leave her in darkness: he did not wish to see or to hear anything; and then she sank back and lay perfectly quiet."

"Have you sent for the doctor?" the Freiherr interposed.

"No; she forbade it; I can't tell why. Her indisposition is her own fault; she has been taking one of those wild rides again, and does not want to confess it. Indeed, dear Johann, you must forbid her riding so much."

"Nonsense!" cried the Freiherr. "What has riding to do with it? You women could not exist without your headaches. Johanna is following the fashion. But what the deuce is the matter with you, lad?" he blurted out, turning to Otto, half laughing, half vexed. "Letting every dish pass you untasted, and looking like——have you a headache out of pure sympathy? Don't drive me altogether wild!"

Otto tried to control himself; but Aunt Thekla's suspicions had been aroused and would not be laid to rest. After breakfast, while the Freiherr was reading the papers, she drew Otto into one of the window-recesses, and said, with decision, "Something has occurred between Johanna and you. Tell me what it is. You know how I love you both."

Otto would have refused to satisfy her anxiety; but when he looked into his aunt's kind, pleading eyes, he remembered how often he had as a boy appealed to her, and never in vain, for aid, and it struck him that he could find no better intercessor. "You are right, my dear aunt," he replied, kissing her hand. "I will make my confession to you, hard though it is. You are my last, my sole hope,—and you will help me, I know, and not reproach me. Heaven knows I do that enough myself!" And he told her, briefly, and with as much frankness as he could command, the history of his betrothal, and of to-day's wretched scene in the forest.

The old lady listened with the most painful and contradictory sensations. Her integrity, her sense of honour, were outraged by the treachery of Otto's and Magelone's conduct towards Johanna, and yet her warm, kindly heart could not forbear pitying Otto in the midst of his complaints and self-reproaches, and her stern loyalty to the Dönninghausens impressed upon her the conviction that now, as at all other times, the first consideration was the preservation of the honour of the name. She was quite ready, at Otto's request, to undertake the task of reconciliation, and went up to see Johanna.

The curtains were still closed, but Johanna was no longer lying down. With hands clasped in front of her, she was restlessly walking to and fro. When the door opened, she turned and came towards it.

"My poor, dear child," Aunt Thekla began, but paused in dismay, as, even in the dim light, she distinguished the expression of Johanna's countenance. Not a trace was to be seen of weakness or of need of sympathy: the pale face was as if carved in marble. Nothing that the old lady had prepared to say would fit this occasion.

"Are you better?" she asked at last, to put an end to the distressing silence.

"Yes, dear aunt; do not trouble yourself about me," Johanna replied, with forced composure.

Aunt Thekla sighed. It grieved her that the young girl had so little confidence in her, but it should not deter her. "Come, sit down by me; I want to talk with you," she said, taking her seat on the lounge. And when Johanna mechanically obeyed, she added, "You need put no force upon yourself; Otto has made a frank confession to me."

"Scarcely frank!" Johanna said, contemptuously.

"You do him injustice!" Aunt Thekla cried. "He said not one word to excuse himself; on the contrary, he accused himself bitterly. If you could have heard how he repents and longs for your forgiveness, you would grant it him with all your heart."

"I cannot," Johanna said, without looking up.

"Oh, do not say that! You not only can, but you must forgive. Do we not pray every day, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us'?"

"I cannot," Johanna repeated.

For a while both were silent; then Aunt Thekla looked up timidly at her niece and said, "Do not misunderstand me if I continue to plead for Otto. I sympathize with you; I can understand how his folly has offended you."

"Offended, do you call it?" Johanna interrupted her. "He has insulted me, and poisoned my life and my soul!"

"So it seems to you now," said her aunt. "But you will learn to regard it differently; you will feel otherwise and judge otherwise. Believe me, my child, Otto is worthy of your forgiveness, and he loves you so——"

Johanna sprang to her feet. "Aunt, I cannot listen to you!" she cried, pressing her hands to her throbbing temples. "You forget that a few hours ago I saw with my own eyes that Otto—that Magelone——And you talk of forgiveness, of love! Oh, everything is hateful in my sight!—life—myself——"

She sank into a chair, and, with a groan, covered her eyes with her hand.

Aunt Thekla shed tears, and, after a long pause, went on: "If you would let me talk to you, I know I could do you good. I do not want to torment you; I only want to repeat Otto's message to you. 'Tell Johanna'—these are his very words; but to appreciate them you should have seen the entreaty in his eyes and heard the tone of his voice—'tell Johanna that I love her more than ever; that I have loved her from the moment when I first knew her——'"

"Oh, aunt!" Johanna broke in upon her words, "can you tell me that? Can you suppose that can console me? If he had told me that Magelone's charms were irresistible for him, and had extinguished his love for me, I could have understood him, and without reproaching him I should have submitted as to the inevitable. But since he has deceived Magelone and lied to her as he has to me, where shall I look for truth? What can I believe? Where find a stay?"

The old lady had no fitting reply to this. "I wish you could see matters in another light," she said, after a long pause for reflection; "and I hope you will do so in time. But now what is to be done if you refuse Otto's entreaty for forgiveness? Of course my brother must learn nothing of this——"

Johanna looked at her in amazement. "Learn nothing?" she repeated. "You do not suppose that I can marry Otto? Magelone has taken my place."

"Child, I told you that Otto does not love Magelone," Aunt Thekla replied. "And she does not love him,—not enough at least to endure for his sake her grandfather's anger." And, clasping Johanna's hands in her own, the old lady added, with tearful, imploring eyes, "Think what you are doing. The happiness or misery of the whole family is in your hands. If you cannot forgive, Johann Leopold will lose his betrothed, Otto's and Magelone's lives will be ruined, whether they marry or not, and my brother, who has made the happiness and honour of his house his sole care, will see

it in his old age brought to disgrace——"

"If I could but spare him!" exclaimed Johanna. Here at last was a word spoken in kindness. Aunt Thekla took courage again. "You can if you choose," she said, and dried her eyes. "Believe me, child, those who forgive are blessed indeed when they can forgive and forget."

"Forgive and forget!" Johanna repeated. "Yes, it would be a blessing; but forgetfulness cannot be forced, and if I could forgive and overcome in myself all bitterness, the old confidence would not return——"

"Only try it!" Aunt Thekla interrupted her. "How many women have forgiven some fickleness or unfaithfulness in their lovers and have been happy wives! Remember, 'Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.'"

"And 'rejoiceth in the truth,'" Johanna said, her features taking on their former rigidity. "An error might be forgotten, but what separates Otto and myself forever is his falsehood. If you knew how degraded I feel by it; how petty, suspicious, evil-minded it makes me. To shield Magelone and himself from his grandfather's anger he betrothed himself to me; for the same reason he seeks a reconciliation with me now; and perhaps—who knows?—the possession of Tannhagen adds weight to the scale. Tell me yourself, Aunt Thekla, can I regard as my lord and master the man of whom I think thus?"

Johanna arose, went to the window, and drew aside the curtains. There it was again, the pitiless sunshine. It reached her very heart through her eyes, and revealed the lovely and yet terrible picture of the pair beneath the forest shades. If she could but be spared that sight! She would rather see nothing, nothing.

A light touch roused her. Aunt Thekla had followed her, and now laid her hand upon her arm. "What answer shall I take to Otto?" she asked. "Be kind, be sensible. Reflect; the banns are to be published for the first time the day after to-morrow——"

"It must not come to that!" Johanna interrupted her. "Tell Otto that I agree to any method by which he, without implicating Magelone or himself, can dissolve our engagement——"

"You are terrible!" cried Aunt Thekla. "Yours is the obstinacy of our race, only turned against the Dönninghausens. But this cannot be your final decision. You will be calmer; you will see that you must overcome your pride, your just indignation. Stay in your room; I will tell my brother that you need rest, and you must promise me not to be overhasty. Pray promise me this."

"Rest assured I will do nothing that can injure Otto," said Johanna. "As I told you, he himself may arrange everything. I will take the blame of the break upon myself. Now let us say no more about it, dear aunt; I really can no more."

How sad and weary was the face which had been wont to look so fresh and glad! Aunt Thekla's eyes filled with tears. "If I could only do something for you!" she said. "It is dreadful to leave you so alone; but Otto is waiting for an answer——"

"Otto, always Otto!" Johanna thought, bitterly; but the next moment she banished the thought, and replied in a gentler tone than she had used hitherto, "Do not mind me; it is best for me to be alone!"

The old lady still lingered. "I hope you have not misunderstood me. You know I have your happiness at heart."

Johanna fell upon her neck. "You are kind. You will bear with me," she whispered.

Aunt Thekla left her easier in her mind. She would have patience if only the two might be brought together again in the end. And they surely would be if Otto could only plead his own cause. He would do better, perhaps, to-day to leave Johanna to her reflections; to-morrow she would be calmer, more accessible; he could come again then.

But whilst Aunt Thekla was resigning herself to the hope of a reconciliation, and even Otto's doubts were partially overcome, Johanna's condition of mind was the same. She had been thrust forth from her paradise, and even although she should force herself to forgive, it would not affect the dissolution of her engagement.

Yes, all must be changed. To go on in the old way was impossible. What was she to do? Where should she go? To Lindenbad? And it occurred to her that upon her return from her ride a letter from Ludwig had been handed her, or had she dreamed it? No; there it lay upon her writing-table: a thick, soiled envelope, covered with stamps and addresses.

She opened it. It was an old letter,—the one written in answer to the announcement of her betrothal.

Ludwig wrote:

> "Dear Johanna,—I know that it is the fashion to reply to the announcement of a betrothal by congratulations, but I should be false to myself and to the love I bear you were I to conceal beneath any set, formal phrases my feelings and opinions upon the present occasion. I trust you have sufficient confidence in me to believe in the honesty of my intentions, even although you differ from me in sentiment.

"Then let these lines warn you, and admonish you to ask yourself more seriously than you have done hitherto whether it is really possible for this man to satisfy your demands upon life, to fill your heart, to understand and keep pace with you? I, who know you better than any one else knows you, I declare that this is not possible, and I pray you to open your eyes before you are irrevocably bound. By marriage with this man you condemn yourself to a life of loneliness and renunciation.

"You know this yourself. Does not your letter, written in the first joy of your betrothal, speak of a 'want' in your happiness? Your recalling of this word afterwards cannot weaken its significance. In your inmost soul you feel that you are about to take a wrong step, and the instinct of your heart, which is 'beyond all reason,' warns you to pause.

"I shall never forgive myself for not being beside you to aid this instinct. I could not but foresee what has happened. I knew how it would be, and I left you in anger, with my self-love grievously wounded, while it was my duty, as well as my right, to say to you, 'You belong to me, and I will not leave you.'

"I say this now, and my life will prove to you how seriously I say it. If you persist in the wretched course which threatens to separate us utterly, I vow solemnly to you, and to myself, that you never again shall hear these words from me, but you will find me whenever and however you may need me.

"It is my own fault that I have lost you. When I went to you at your father's, and found that you had outgrown the atmosphere of my father's house, I thrust you from me in wayward, boyish folly, when I ought to have taken you in my arms and sought to win you from all that estranged you from me.

"Why do I say this to you now? Because I would have you know me thoroughly, and would set you an example of absolute confidence. We human beings should lighten our trials greatly if we shrank less from confessing to ourselves and to others our errors, our defeats, our miscalculations. Let me hope that you are free from the vanity and cowardice that would lead you so to shrink. Do not close your eyes; and if you see that you have been overhasty, redeem the error before it be too late. Above all, do not fancy that you must hold to your plighted troth for your betrothed's sake. As I know him, not all your love can make him happy.

"Will you accuse me of harshness in saying this? Be it so. I cannot look on with a feigned smile, or even in silence, when I see you going to your destruction.

"But can I be mistaken? The fact that this man, amid the puppets by which he has been surrounded, has known how to find the way to you, makes me waver in my estimate of him. Certainly I will not close my mind to a better opinion of him; and should you continue to find him worthy of your love, and should he prove himself capable of appreciating you and of making you happy, I will acknowledge his right to possess you as unhesitatingly as I now challenge it.

"November 10, 1874.

"Since writing the above I have spent days and nights partly in the hospitals, partly in the poorest quarter of Bombay. I have been at home now for several hours, and, refreshed by a bath, sleep, and food, I shall return to my patients as soon as I have despatched this letter. The occupation of these last few weeks—the old, ruinous portion of the city has been attacked by an epidemic—explains the tone of my letter. All shams seem more intolerable to me than ever before. Health of body and mind seems to me a supreme good, and I am consequently forced as well to warn the thoughtless who may be exposing themselves uselessly to the peril of deadly miasma as to undertake the treatment of organizations already diseased. It is in this sense that I send you my note of warning. Harsh as it may sound in your ears, take it as from a physician, without any false sensitiveness. I expect an answer to it only in case my words have made some impression upon you. If you say nothing of this letter, I shall take it for granted that I have been mistaken, or that the truth wearies you, and shall *never*, unless you yourself desire it, allude to the subject again.

"I am still in doubt as to the time of my return. It was fixed at first for next March or April. If I can be of use to you I will come earlier,—come instantly if you write that you wish me to do so. Otherwise I shall probably remain longer away. And even should I return to Europe, I shall not see my home or yourself until the wound from which I am now suffering is scarred over, or until you need the counsel or aid of your brother LUDWIG."

"No, no aid from *him*!" Johanna said to herself, as she folded the letter again. The thought of letting him know how she suffered was intolerable to her—why she did not know, and did not ask. Not for one moment did she doubt Ludwig's affection, magnanimity, and efficiency, and yet she felt doubly humiliated since reading his verdict with regard to Otto.

"No, no aid from him!" she repeated. But this being so, she could not go to Lindenbad, and where else should she seek an asylum? Ah, how hard it was, besides, to tear herself away from this place, where, in spite of everything, she had found a home! True, it needed but a word from her

to insure her this home still, but at what a price! Aunt Thekla was right: her grandfather's last days must not be poisoned. And how could Johanna continue to dwell in the home whose peace she had destroyed, and whose children she had driven forth and made unhappy? She knew, too, that it would pain her grandfather to part from her, but he would find her leaving him 'thanklessly' easier to bear than the discovery that Otto and Magelone were unworthy of his name and his affection. She pondered and reflected, always with the same result. She must go, and upon her must rest the blame of the separation. How she should contrive this, and whither she should turn, she did not know,—but she would discover.

The day passed. Aunt Thekla sent up to inquire after her repeatedly; had food and refreshments taken to her; wanted to know whether she should come herself; but Johanna begged her to let her be alone for the day; and at last, as if crushed in body and mind, she had thrown herself upon her bed.

And then the night drew on, a night without sleep, in which the hours dragged slowly, each throb of her heart seeming to increase the dull pain beneath which her very soul writhed as if in mortal agony. And then the moonlight came, and quivered on the walls and ceiling, as in those lovely nights when each waking moment was delight and each falling asleep again brought sweet dreams. Then the cocks crowed, and the cold, gray light of dawn made all things look more than ever dreary; and then began the shrill, discordant twittering of the sparrows.

Four o'clock struck in the tower of the castle, and immediately afterward a low, shuffling step was heard on the stair, and there was a cautious knock at Johanna's door.

"Who is there?" the young girl asked.

"A telegram for Fräulein Johanna," the housekeeper's voice made reply.

Johanna threw a shawl about her shoulders, received the blue envelope, took it to the window, and read:

> "Lisbeth is dangerously ill, and is constantly calling for you. Pray come. HELENA."

For a moment the girl felt stunned; then she collected herself. She at once took her resolution. The early train for Hanover left Thalrode at six; she had time to catch it.

She dressed herself, hastily packed up the necessary clothing, and ordered the carriage. Then she wrote a hurried note to Otto: "I have just received a telegram summoning me to Hanover to the bedside of my little sister. I leave by the next train, and thus afford you a plausible excuse for the dissolution of our betrothal. You can scarcely marry a wife from beneath the roof of an 'equestrian artist.' The reconciliation which you proposed to me through Aunt Thekla is impossible. I have lost all confidence in you, and you would never forgive me for the scene in the forest. I must leave you to make the necessary explanations to my grandfather, and I bid you farewell in the fullest sense of the word."

With this letter she went to Aunt Thekla. The old lady was still in bed, but wide awake. She, too, had been unable to sleep from anxiety.

"My child, what does this mean?" she asked, when she saw Johanna appear in her travelling-dress.

Johanna handed her the telegram, told her that she was going instantly to Hanover, and begged her to take charge of the letter for Otto.

"Drive off! without my brother's consent!" Aunt Thekla said, possessed by a foreboding of evil. "How can you? You will come back again soon?"

Johanna turned away. "Do not make my heart heavier than it is," she begged.

Aunt Thekla burst into tears. "You must not go!" she cried, clasping Johanna's hands tightly. "I will not let you go!"

The young girl gently extricated herself. "I must, dear aunt; I must go to Lisbeth," she said.

"But Otto will follow you; will bring you back again."

Johanna shook her head. "He will see that we must part," she whispered. "But do not let me be exiled and quite forgotten; write to me——"

The maid appeared: "Fräulein Johanna, the carriage is waiting."

Once more aunt and niece embraced. "Bid grandpapa a thousand, thousand farewells for me. Try to persuade him to forgive me. Think kindly of me," Johanna sobbed.

Then she hurried out into the corridor, past her grandfather's door, where Leo arose in surprise, and seemed to ask if he might accompany her.

Johanna signed to him to lie down, and, with her handkerchief pressed to her lips, hurried down the stairs, and threw herself into a corner of the carriage; the door was closed, the horses started. Her dream of love and happiness was at an end.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FREIHERR ASSERTS HIS AUTHORITY.

When the Freiherr heard of Johanna's departure, he had for the moment no thought save of the insult it offered to his authority. But when his first anger had passed away, he said to himself that it might mean something more than merely anxiety for her little sister. Johanna's absence from meals on the previous day, Otto's conduct, Thekla's distressed face, all taken together suggested to the Freiherr some disagreement between the lovers. He determined to question Otto himself upon the subject, and made Tannhagen the goal of his morning ride.

When half-way there, he met Otto. Aunt Thekla had sent him Johanna's note, and he was betaking himself to consult with her as to what was to be done. He was startled when at a turn of the road he perceived the tall figure of the Freiherr upon his gray gelding. He could not avoid him, so, summoning all his courage, he rode towards him.

"Do you know that Johanna has gone off?" his grandfather asked him after their first salutations, and as he spoke his gaze seemed to pierce the young man's very soul.

"So she writes me," he replied, trying in vain to appear indifferent under the Freiherr's gaze.

"Indeed! I should like to know something more about it. Ride back with me to Dönninghausen," said the Freiherr, turning his horse that way. "And now, frankly, what has occurred between you?"

"Really, sir, I do not know. I should not like to accuse——" Otto stammered.

"Have I asked you to?" the Freiherr exclaimed, impatiently. "I only wish to know whether the silly child's flight is your fault; and if it is, you will go after her and bring your foolish lady fair back again."

Otto was startled. "Indeed, sir——" he began, hesitatingly.

The Freiherr interrupted him: "Deuce take you, lad, what kind of a face is that to wear? You look as if I were sending you after the devil's grandmother instead of in pursuit of a silly child who has wellnigh lost, on your account, the atom of woman's wit that she possessed!" Then he added, more seriously, "You can tell her that this time mercy shall wait on justice, but there must be no more escapades. Of course you must have your quarrels,—lovers cannot live without them,—but you will please to keep them to yourselves. I beg you to arrange them so that I and the peace of my household shall not be implicated."

For a while they rode along silently side by side. Otto, who had been too self-occupied to have any correct idea of Johanna's state of mind, had read her note with mingled astonishment and indignation. He did not divine the pain concealed beneath the apparent calm of her words; he only saw that she could give him up. He thought her conduct hard, cold, and selfish, and he held himself absolved by the scandal she had caused from all duties towards her, and entirely justified in exculpating himself as best he might. She had expressly required that he should give their grandfather a credible explanation of their separation. He would do so.

"My dear grandfather," he said, after he had taken time for reflection, "as matters stand, I find to my regret that I must acquaint you somewhat with the cause of the present disagreement between Johanna and myself."

"Be brief, then!" the Freiherr exclaimed. "Give me the principal facts. I cannot stand childish bickerings."

"Just as you please," Otto replied, his task thus made more easy. "The first as well as the last cause is Johanna's position with regard to her step-mother's unfortunate second marriage. I require her to break at once and forever with the family of the 'equestrian artist.' She refuses to do so, and takes the first opportunity that offers to bid defiance to my wishes and requests."

"Nonsense!" the Freiherr cried, angrily. "I ought to have been told this. But she can be brought to reason. You can go for her——"

"To the house of a circus-rider! Never!" Otto declared, with an amount of resolution that the next moment surprised himself.

His grandfather's eyes flashed, but he seemed to reflect before saying, "There is something in that." And then, after another pause, he added, "We will write. I will give her the choice between Dönninghausen and these people, and you can tell her whatever seems to you just and kind. If she should then perceive her folly, let the whole stupid affair be forgotten."

They rode the rest of the way in silence. As soon as they reached Dönninghausen, the Freiherr seated himself at his writing-table, and wrote thus:

> "Dear Johanna,—When my sister told me of your departure this morning, I thought you wanting in respect to leave us as you did, without asking my permission, especially as you were going to people with whom I do not wish to have the slightest degree of intercourse. By way of excuse for you, I reflected that anxiety for your little sister had probably caused you to disregard for the moment the duty you owe to me and to the

rules of my household. I take a different view of the matter now that I learn that your intercourse with the family of this circus-rider has been for some time the cause of serious disagreement between Otto and yourself. At first he was reluctant to explain, but upon my urgent desire to know the truth he has told me all. You know, my child, how much I love you, and how willing I am to have you act as you see fit; but here you are wrong and must submit. The honour of our family requires that you should sever all former ties. Come back, then, as soon as you can. Otto, whom I wished to send for you, declares that he cannot take you from the house of a circus-rider, which proves to me that he is more of a Dönninghausen than I thought him. In your veins also flows the blood of our race, and I expect you to show yourself worthy of it. In spite of your mother's errors we have received you into the family as one of us, and we must now require you to have no further connection with your father's former wife and her child. Only explain to Otto that you are ready to agree to this, and all will be smooth again between you. Should your step-sister be seriously ill, I do not require you to leave her immediately; but you must do so as soon as you are relieved concerning her, and in the mean time you will carefully avoid appearing in public with any member of the circus-rider's family. Answer particularly at what time you intend to return, and accept the cordial good wishes of your affectionate grandfather,

"JOHANN FREIHERR V. DÖNNINGHAUSEN."

The Freiherr gave this letter to Otto to read and to supplement, saying, "I have told the silly child what I require without circumlocution; now you can sweeten the pill of obedience to her as you please. You need not tone down what you want to say. I will not read what you write. Love-letters are interesting only to those for whom they are composed."

Would he have considered the following a love-letter?—

"Your hasty departure, dear Johanna, has unfortunately still further complicated matters. If you only would have granted me an interview, you would have forgiven me, I feel sure, and the delightful relations existing between our grandfather and yourself need not have been disturbed by any discord. But I have no idea of reproaching you. I only entreat you, as earnestly as I can, to deliver me from the false position you have forced me to take to our grandfather. One word of forgiveness and a promise to return, and all will be well. Think of the happy hours we have passed together, of the fair future that lies before us, and believe in the repentance and love of your

"OTTO."

Aunt Thekla also wrote a long letter, in which some passages were almost obliterated by her tears, repeating everything that she had said on the previous day, and then the epistles were all despatched, and the Freiherr awaited with certainty the answer he desired.

A letter from Johanna to her grandfather arrived after a week's delay, with an enclosure for Aunt Thekla, but not a line for Otto.

The Freiherr's letter ran thus:

"DEAR GRANDFATHER,—Since receiving your letter I have passed the days and nights in terrible anxiety beside my little sister's bed. Her disease is nervous fever, and she was at first dangerously ill, but the fever is gradually, I trust, subsiding, and I am apparently able to take more repose. But only apparently, for since I have been somewhat easier in mind with regard to Lisbeth I have been all the more miserable with regard to myself; and if I have at last arrived at a conclusion, it is with no sense of victory, and my heart trembles as well as my hand while I write that I cannot return to Dönninghausen. If Otto means to propose to me the alternative of severing myself either from you or from my father, whose memory I cherish in those he has left behind him, we have never understood each other, never loved each other, and I give him back his troth. That a separation from him deprives me also of you, of Aunt Thekla, and of a home which I love, is the severest trial that could befall me; but I must bear it. Farewell, dear, dear grandfather! Forgive me. Do not think me ungrateful; and, in spite of appearances, believe in the unalterable love and veneration of your grand-daughter

"JOHANNA."

The Freiherr had long finished reading the letter, when he still sat gazing at the uncertain characters in which Johanna's usual firm, clear handwriting was hardly to be recognized. *This* he had not expected,—had not thought possible. But if she could thus resign Dönninghausen, without even asking if some compromise were not possible, he, too, would hold unalterably to the justice of his course.

"Read that!" he said at last, in a harsh, hoarse tone, as he handed the sheet to his sister. "Tell Otto how the matter stands. I do not want to speak of the foolish girl again."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Johanna had thought that the worst was over when she took her departure from Dönninghausen; and, indeed, the first days and nights that she spent by her sister's bedside were occupied wholly with care and anxiety for the little one. The child lay in the delirium of fever,—raved in terror of a little black pony,—declared, screaming, that she never would dance again, never would appear in the circus; while Helena, with tears, confessed that Lisbeth's illness was the result of a fall she had while at a rehearsal.

Johanna's presence seemed to soothe the child, and, forgetting herself, she was always beside her bed; but then came the letters from the home she had left, and they recalled all the old pain and conflict.

Involuntarily she looked first for Otto's letter. Her heart had not yet forgotten to beat faster at the sight of his handwriting. But the more she read of it, the more it dulled her, and at its conclusion she laid it aside with a sensation of disgust. Did he think to lure her back thus? Did he know her so little? Had he so entirely lost all feeling of self-respect? One honest word from him, and all might have been well. Without implicating Magelone, he might have said to the Freiherr, 'I have wronged Johanna; forgive me if she forgives.' Had she hoped for this? Had she for an instant thought this solution possible? No, oh, no! Had she not written both to him and to Aunt Thekla—had she not repeated—did she not feel with every throb of her heart—that all was over between Otto and herself?

And this must be written to her grandfather. Otto had with great skill used her hint as to making her relations with these people the reason for their separation. Half the work was done; why should she delay to do the rest?

At first she found an explanation for this in her exertions as a nurse, which were unremitting. But when, at her earnest entreaty, Lisbeth was removed from the first story of the noisy hotel, where Batti had established himself, to a quiet back room in the third story, she daily grew better, and Johanna could no longer make her care the pretext for delay.

And, like all who earnestly strive after it, she, too, found 'the bitter word of liberating truth.' She pitilessly insisted to herself upon the fact that in his cool attempt at a reconciliation Otto's aim had been the preservation of friendly relations between himself and his grandfather, and that she should contribute more to his happiness by vanishing from Dönninghausen for his sake than by paving the way for her justification, and she determined to sacrifice herself. She would not—she could not love him any longer. She persuaded herself that she did not. But she might, without loss of self-respect, take upon herself the consequences of his fault. In this conviction she wrote to her grandfather.

When her letter was despatched she sank into a dull apathy. Slowly, monotonously, hour after hour, day after day passed by. Her solitude was but rarely invaded. There was little to be done at present for the child. Helena, who had talked at first about taking her share of the nursing, was soon weary, and Batti was satisfied with asking every morning what kind of a night Lisbeth had passed, and how she was at present. After receiving the usual answer, 'About the same!' and then standing for a while beside the bed looking down at the poor little figure lying motionless with half-closed eyes, he became, Helena declared, so depressed that it needed half a day's distraction to wear off the impression produced upon him by his visit to the sick-room.

"We have two patients, dear Johanna," said Helena; "and I really believe that my task as Carlo's nurse is harder than yours. Fancy the self-control it costs me to conceal from poor Carlo the anguish of my heart; to dress, to receive visits, to walk and drive, and to preside at the little suppers to which Carlo has accustomed himself as well as his friends. It is not enough to give artistic performances; the artist must maintain his position in society; and, since Batti needs my aid in this, I must not refuse it."

After talk of this kind she would kiss her 'poor little sick angel,' embrace Johanna, call her her comfort and support, and then return to her usual mode of life without a thought as to the amount of Johanna's self-denial.

Johanna had no sense of exercising any, but the confinement and the bald desolation of her surroundings added to her weight of misery. The room to which Lisbeth had been removed was low-ceiled and scarcely ten paces square, the walls were covered with a gaudy paper, the child's bed stood at one end, with an old sofa, upon which Johanna slept; against one wall stood a couple of common tables and chairs, and curtains of doubtful cleanliness were hanging before the little window, which looked out upon a narrow side-street. Helena declared that she herself could not exist four-and-twenty hours in such a 'hole;' but it never occurred to her to try to make it more comfortable. Why should she trouble herself? By foolishly breaking off her engagement Johanna had relinquished all claim to especial respect, and must be glad to find an asylum with her quasi-step-father. Unfortunately, she was quite as haughty as formerly. In vain did Helena try to discover the cause of her break with her lover. "I cannot speak of it," Johanna always repeated; and then Batti in his violent way would order his wife not to 'torment the poor thing.' "I am glad," he would say, "that it has happened as it has; now she will no longer refuse to accede to my plans. In a year she will be the queen of my circus."

Johanna never suspected this. Batti begged her kindly to accept for the present the shelter of his 'nomad-tent,' and she accepted gratefully what was cordially offered. She scarcely thought of the

future,—the present, with its dull, paralyzing pain, so weighed upon her soul.

At last she was roused by a letter from Dönninghausen. Aunt Thekla had addressed the envelope. It contained a communication from her grandfather. Johanna kissed the handwriting, as she had so often kissed the withered hand that had traced it, and then read the letter, feeling as she did so the angry glance of his large eyes, and hearing the muttered thunder of his voice. He wrote,—

> "So much time elapsed between my letter and your answer, that there can have been no inconsiderate haste on your part. You have reflected upon all that required reflection, and therefore there is scarcely any need of my express declaration that with the breaking of your troth to Otto every tie between yourself and myself and every member of my family, is severed forever. How you justify yourself in casting a doubt upon Otto's affection for you I cannot tell; at all events, you cannot doubt his honour. *A Dönninghausen keeps his word.* And Otto still feels himself bound, as he has repeatedly told me. I thought you, too, a genuine child of my house; but you are only the child of your mother, the first, the only Dönninghausen who ever deviated from the paths of duty and honour. Otto will write to you. If he succeeds in convincing and persuading you, you shall still find me inclined to forgive; but decide quickly, or this is the last word you will receive from your grandfather,
>
> "JOHANN FREIHERR VON DÖNNINGHAUSEN."

This was too much! Johanna folded the letter again with trembling hands. Her mother, the patient sufferer, and she herself, who surely had never 'sought her own,' were disgraced and exiled, while Otto was looked upon as the genuine Dönninghausen who keeps his word, and Magelone as one of the blameless ones who have never strayed from the true path. Anger and pride for a moment thrust pain into the background. She would be final also, as her grandfather had been,—would prove to herself thus that she was of his blood.

She went to the open window and looked out. On the other side of the wall that bounded the little street lay a garden with fruit-trees and beds of vegetables. It was late in the afternoon, and raining. From the low clouds came the 'sound of vernal showers' filling the air and rustling low among the tree-tops; a mingled fragrance of herbs, flowers, and wet earth ascended to the window, and under the influence of the murmuring sound and the scent-laden air her tormenting reflections faded into dreamy revery. From the misty veil of the rain came trooping, at first vaguely, but in ever-increasing distinctness, forms and pictures,—the past and the present, the real and the unreal, blending together. When the light was brought, Johanna awoke as from a deep sleep.

And as she awoke she found herself back again in the midst of the old life. Each throb of her heart brought with it a dull pain, a constant grief. She saw with pitiless distinctness what she had lost. Anxiety for Lisbeth oppressed her. And yet everything was changed! The spell that had fettered her since that unhappy morning in the forest was broken, and she looked beyond herself out into the eternal beauty of life, which is independent of all individual happiness or misery.

As formerly in Dönninghausen, she now tried to fix and confirm in writing the shadowy images that rose before her; but she did not do it as then, only from a desire to liberate her soul. An impulse towards artistic creation had awakened within her,—an inheritance from her father, as she joyfully reflected,—and she began to group and arrange as a whole that which her fancy showed her phantom-like and confused.

Hour after hour she sat at the improvised desk which she had placed at the window of the sick-room. A new home was here given her in place of the beautiful, beloved one she had lost. Or was it not rather a home-coming, a recovery of the dear old haunts of memory? Banished from Dönninghausen, she fled to Lindenbad. Amid the green valleys and hills of the Thüringian forest she laid the scene of her story, and a profusion of melodious echoes from the days of her early girlhood lent it a brightness that refreshed Johanna herself.

Weeks passed; Johanna buried herself in her task with passionate intensity. The hours of daylight often did not suffice her; and even when her lamp was extinguished, darkness brought no repose. The phantoms of her fancy crowded about her and kept her awake. And many were her struggles with an imperfect, undeveloped power of expression, with an uncertain hand, and an untrained eye.

That she should suffer physically under this constant nervous strain was but natural. Several times the physician called Helena's attention to the fact that her step-daughter needed exercise in the open air. At last, when he found his warnings unheeded, he went to Batti and informed him that unless some attention were paid to Fräulein Johanna's health they should soon have two nervous-fever patients in the house.

Batti rushed into his wife's room. "Helena, why have you so neglected Johanna?" he shouted. "She will have nervous fever, and will die, all through our fault. Curse me if I ever shall forgive myself! Come, come, we must beg her to forgive us!"

With these words he rushed away again. Helena followed him, and found him in the room up-stairs, confronting the astounded girl, clasping her hand in his, while he overwhelmed her with entreaties, proposals, and self-accusations. Helena must in future do her share of nursing. Johanna must refresh herself, distract her mind; go to the circus, make acquaintances. The end of it all was that he prevailed upon her to put on her riding-habit. He would accompany her on her

ride, and she should try his Miss Jane, a mare positively made for her.

At first she felt embarrassed. Batti was not only a well-known character in the sporting world,—there was no end of bows and nods from riders and gay occupants of carriages,—he was also a great favourite with the general populace. "There goes Batti! Batti!" the street-boys shouted after him; and he threw trifling coins among the rabble, and laughed at the scramble thus caused. But at last streets and promenades lay behind them, and away they galloped through the open country. Miss Jane, a delicate, high-bred creature, ran races with Batti's gray. After long days of rain, field and forest lay basking in the sunshine. The breeze was at once fresh and warm; to inhale the delicious air of which she had so long been deprived was like a revivifying draught for Johanna. She returned to the house refreshed and rejuvenated.

"By Jove, how well you look!" cried Batti, as he helped her to dismount. "Pray glance at your mirror and then deny that you are a born horsewoman."

This declaration, with a hundred variations of the same, was the theme of all Carlo Batti's conversation with Johanna, and she saw him now more frequently than formerly. Lisbeth's condition had suddenly improved: she regained her consciousness; the fever left her; she slept, and her appetite returned. She soon began to sit up for hours at a time. Batti required, with a determination that admitted of no opposition, that Johanna should indemnify herself for her long seclusion. And when Helena declared that it would be very improper for her step-daughter to appear without her at the circus, at the *table-d'hôte*, and at Batti's little suppers, he insisted that the maid should watch beside Lisbeth while her mother and sister were absent. Johanna must learn to love the life for which Batti destined her.

And she really enjoyed seeing the circus. The fine horses, the splendour of the costumes, Batti's performances in riding and training his animals, two beautiful blonde sisters, who were really fine performers in their way, the numerous well-disciplined troupe, the brilliant lights, the loud music, the enthusiastic applause of a large audience, all contributed to produce upon Johanna an agreeably exciting impression.

But she felt exceedingly uncomfortable in the circle in which she found herself soon afterwards, at one of Batti's suppers. Men only were invited,—partly members of the aristocracy, partly belonging to the literary class. The tone which they adopted towards Batti hovered between condescension and rude familiarity. When excited by wine he began to brag. They drew him on without his perceiving it. Helena was loaded by them with coarse flattery, which her insatiate vanity led her to accept, well pleased.

Johanna, who was taken to table by a young and rather silent lieutenant, looked on in silence. The place on her other side was empty. At last a young man appeared, who, when greeted by Batti with reproaches for his tardiness, excused himself on the plea of urgent work for his newspaper. Batti signed to him to take the vacant seat beside Johanna, and presented him to her as Dr. Edgar Stein.

"At last, Fräulein!" he said. "You have been invisible for so long, while our friend Batti has been unwearied in his wondrous tales of you, that I began to regard you as a mythical being 'veiled in lovely legend.'"

Johanna mutely inclined her head. The round, red face of the man, with its bold blue eyes and cynical smile, made a most disagreeable impression upon her.

Helena, who sat opposite, laughed in a constrained manner. "What has Batti been saying?" she asked. "We must certainly find out, Johanna."

"Why, he described the Fräulein half as one of the bold horsewomen,—Wodan's daughters,—half as a Saint Elizabeth,—cheering the sad, healing the sick, and so forth; then half as an aristocratic lady, half as an artiste. And from what I see I believe it all." Whereupon Dr. Stein bowed, and laughed as if in derision of his own words.

"Johanna, you ought to be proud!" cried Helena. "Dr. Stein[1] is usually quite what his name signifies towards women."

"But not towards you, fairest dame!" he replied. "You never deigned to notice me, poor, pale moon among the stars that circle about your sunlike majesty."

As he spoke, his glance seemed to ridicule all present. Helena smiled contented; Johanna felt more and more disgusted. And although the young man, strong in his armour of self-conceit, never suspected the sensation he inspired, he could not but perceive that he was far from producing upon Johanna the impression he had intended, and he was not the man to forgive this.

The talk grew louder and freer. Even in her father's house this had sometimes occurred; but Johanna had never felt disturbed by the conversation there, where the refinement of the host had always restrained the mirth and frivolity of his guests within certain limits. But who was there to do that here? At last she could bear it no longer, and, while a toast was being drunk standing, she contrived to withdraw unperceived; and the next morning she explained that she could not leave Lisbeth so late at night again. The child had discovered the absence of her beloved nurse, had cried bitterly, and had not slept until some time after Johanna's return. Henceforth Batti was obliged to content himself with the daily ride which the physician ordered for the young girl, and which she herself would have been sorry to omit.

She heard nothing further from Dönninghausen, although she had entreated Aunt Thekla to write to her. Only a couple of large trunks, containing all her belongings, had arrived. She unpacked them, shaking out every article which they contained, in the hope of finding some scrap of writing. In vain! Only a ring which Aunt Thekla had always worn had been added to Johanna's small store of trinkets. Evidently the Freiherr had, as he had warned her, forbidden all communication with her.

All the greater was her surprise, when one day a card was brought her, upon which beneath the name of 'Dr. Urban Wolf' was written in pencil, 'with a message from Dönninghausen.'

For an instant she hesitated; but the longing to have some tidings of her grandfather and aunt was victorious. As she could not at the time leave Lisbeth, she placed the screen before the bed of the sleeping child, and requested to have the stranger shown up.

"Pardon me for my intrusion," he said. "I ought to have asked an introduction from Batti, but it was necessary that I should speak with you alone."

Johanna was agreeably impressed. There was something in the stranger's deep, full voice that reminded her of some tones of her father's. There, however, the resemblance ended. Dr. Wolf's figure was short and slender, and his pale, delicate face evidently Jewish.

"Pray be seated," she said, motioning him to a chair; and her breath came short and quick as she added, "You bring me tidings of my relatives; do you come from Dönninghausen?"

"No, I do not," he said, without looking up. "My father, Löbel Wolf, the dealer in curiosities, is commissioned by the Freiherr von Dönninghausen to make you a proposition, which I am to lay before you."

He paused, as if awaiting encouragement to proceed. Johanna, however, gave him none, not knowing what to say, and he went on: "I fear I must allude to matters which it is painful to you to ——With regard to certain jewels, an heirloom in the family; an inheritance from your mother ——"

"I make no claim to them!" Johanna interrupted him, and her voice trembled. Was it possible that her grandfather could think her mercenary?

"Permit me to conclude," the young man continued, and his tone and manner showed how disagreeable he found his task. "The Freiherr wishes to retain the jewels in the Dönninghausen family; but, since they are undeniably yours, he can do so only by obtaining your consent that he should purchase them from you. My father has appraised them; here is his estimate in writing ——" And he would have handed Johanna a folded piece of paper. She declined it.

"No, no; this is out of the question!" she exclaimed. "That the jewels are a family heirloom is quite enough to establish the fact that I can have no possible claim upon them. And if I had, one does not sell family jewels,—not even I, although I have no family!"

She arose and went to the window; the stranger must not perceive her emotion.

Dr. Wolf also arose. "I have another commission to fulfil. The old Freifräulein Thekla sent for my father, begged him to come himself to Hanover to transact this affair, to give you her affectionate greetings, and then to let her know how you are. What shall I write to him?"

"That I am well," she said.

"Well!" the young man repeated. "Pardon me, Fräulein, I cannot believe it."

Johanna turned to him. "Herr Doctor," she said, with some haughtiness.

"Pardon me," he said again, looking her sadly in the face. "I have scarcely seen you, but I know that this is no fitting home for you. How long can you endure it? For the present you do so, because you feel that you are needed here, but what will you do when that need no longer exists?"

Johanna blushed crimson. "Herr Doctor," she began, "these are questions——"

"Which you think I have no right to put," he completed her sentence; and then went on, in his gentle, persistent voice, "I knew that I should have to allude to what it would be most painful to you to have mentioned, but it is best to tell you frankly how matters stand. The old Freifräulein confided to my father that the purchase of the jewels is a mere pretence. The Freiherr has parted with you; but he cannot endure to think of you, without means, exposed to the vicissitudes of life. His pride will not allow him openly to offer you a helping hand, and yet he feels it his duty to support you. Meet him half-way."

"Impossible!" Johanna declared.

He was silent for a while. "Pray do not let this be your final decision," he entreated. "Reflect; think how long and sad the life has been that has made your grandfather so hard, and be you all the gentler. The repentance is bitter that comes too late." He stroked back his hair from his forehead, and added, as if in self-reproach, "I pray you to forgive my presumption! You do not know; I may one day, perhaps, be able to explain——There is a certain community of suffering between us. I will call in a few days for your answer to the Freiherr."

And, without waiting for a reply, he took his leave.

CHAPTER XXV.

A WAGER AND AN ADVISER.

Johanna was much agitated. Again she felt bitterly her separation from Dönninghausen, and she was also suddenly assailed by anxiety with regard to her future. The young man was right. When she should be no longer of use as Lisbeth's nurse she could not remain with her step-mother; and what then?

At times, when while sitting at her writing-table, she had felt some consciousness of power,—she had hoped to be able to maintain herself by literary labour. At other times she doubted. Now, when the question seemed to her more grave than ever before, she seemed to hear her father's words of discouragement, 'as devoid of talent as her mother.' But why, then, was she so irresistibly impelled to give life to the creatures of her fancy? and how had she been able in all her misery to forget herself in so doing, if she were not called to avail herself of the talent which she possessed?

She stood at the window, with throbbing pulses, and gazed out into the twilight. Over in the garden a thrush was singing its evening song in the top of an old pear-tree. Ah, that song! Its ecstasy would always recall to the girl the most wretched hour of her existence. 'Called?' Had she not also thought herself called to be a partaker in the bliss of love? How true the words of Holy Writ, 'Many are called, but few are chosen!'

The evening and a great part of the night were passed by Johanna in a wild turmoil of thought. She began the new day with a weary head and a heavy heart. All the more cheerful was Batti during the morning ride; he shouted and laughed louder than ever. Suddenly he broke off, and, guiding his horse close to her side, he said, "I am tiring you with my nonsense, but you must excuse me to-day. I have just had a letter which puts me quite beside myself. If the devil does not put in his oar, we shall go to St. Petersburg this autumn."

Johanna was startled. How would Lisbeth bear the long journey and the severity of the Russian winter?

"Helena knows nothing about it yet. I shall not tell her until everything is ship-shape," Batti continued; "she makes such a row. But I tell you immediately, because we have no time to lose. Better go to work at once. St. Petersburg is the best place in the world for your débût."

"My débût!" Johanna exclaimed, in surprise.

"Pray let us have no fol-de-rol nonsense!" Batti quickly rejoined. "No need for us to play hide-and-seek with each other! I need you, you need me; let us confess this much at once. Your manners, rather haughty,—coolly distinguished, I might say,—will be a fine nut for the St. Petersburg gentlemen to crack. You will look like a queen beside my two laughing, coquettish blondes. Besides, you have talent, enthusiasm, energy, and look better on horseback than anywhere else. You have no family connection. Even without appearing as an equestrienne you have contrived to be exiled and repudiated. Nothing could be more admirably arranged. So be sensible; do not hesitate any longer. Mount the horse that an honest hand saddles and bridles for you, and then halloo! huzza! for the brilliant future I promise you. Why the deuce should you hesitate? You'll find no better teacher than myself, and no better chance than in my circus. I should like to know what objections you can make?"

"None," Johanna replied. "I know that your intentions are the kindest, and I thank you cordially, but it cannot be!"

Batti laughed. "'Tis odd that no lady is without affectation!" he exclaimed. "Let it alone, however; it does not become you."

"It is not affectation," Johanna replied. "Ask Helena if I am not paralyzed by a mere appearance in public——"

"That can be overcome," Batti interposed.

"Hardly! The mere thought of those myriad eyes upon me——!" And she shuddered. "But I will be honest. Even if I could overcome my timidity, I should reject your proposal out of regard for my grandfather."

"Oho!" cried Batti, and his face flushed with anger. "My art is as honourable as any——"

"I am not disputing that," Johanna interrupted him gently; "but here we have to do with the invincible prejudices of an old man. As you know, he never forgave my mother's marriage."

"And you would have regard for that old ass?" shouted Batti.

"I respect and love my grandfather," said Johanna.

Batti was silent for a while. Then he shook his head, and laughed.

"Ah, by Jove! there comes the Princess again," he said. "Keep that air; it becomes you famously. The regard you talk of is pure folly; but you shall have your way. I should have liked to see your father's name on my playbills; but then, if it must not be, we can find another; and another nationality too if you like. Mademoiselle So-and-so, Miss This-and-that,—we'll arrange all that. Is there any Carlo Batti to be found in the parish register? There I am called Heinrich Rauchspatz, after my father, who kept a grocer's shop in a little town in North Germany. Good old Rauchspatz had his prejudices too. He thought that to have one of his name appear as an equestrian artist might affect the respectability of his firm. Oh, what a row there was! On the other hand, I could not bring myself to measure out molasses and weigh out snuff to customers, so we struck a bargain. He let me off. I changed my name to Carlo Batti, and I think I have done it credit. So now choose a name you like, and it shall be yours."

"I cannot; believe me, I cannot," Johanna replied. "Thank you again, but let me beg you to say no more about it. It distresses me, and can lead to no result."

For a while they rode on in silence, and then Batti said, "One word more, Fräulein Johanna. Have you considered that if you accede to my plan you insure yourself a brilliant future and a certain income? You are now *vis-à-vis de rien*."

Johanna blushed. Twice had she heard this in the last twenty-four hours.

"I am, perhaps, not quite so helpless as you think," she said, in a voice that faltered. "I hope I possess another talent worth cultivating. I have—you are the first to whom I have mentioned it—I have been trying to write."

Carlo Batti gave a long, low whistle. "A curious taste!" he said; "that for riding on a snail when you might have a race-horse! 'But every elf must please himself.' If you should change your mind you know where to find me. I shall always be ready to repeat my offer."

"How kind you are!" said Johanna. "Thank you again; and do not be angry with me." As she spoke she held out her hand to him.

He shook it kindly. "Angry, no!" he said; "but I will not deny that it vexes me. But let us say no more about it. We have not had our gallop yet."

And away they went along the Herrenhausen Avenue.

Batti's disappointment was, however, too great to be dissipated by the ride. The longer he thought of Johanna's refusal the more it irritated him, and when at his daily breakfast at the hotel he met Dr. Stein, the latter instantly asked what ailed his 'dear friend.'

"I have been vexed; but I do not want to talk about it," Batti shouted, as if to take all present into his confidence.

"Then let us have our breakfast," said the other. "A glass of wine will wash away your ill humour."

"Ill humour! Who told you that I was ill-humoured?" Batti shouted again, as he took his seat. And even before the wine was brought Dr. Stein had learned that Batti's boasted scheme with regard to Johanna had come to nothing.

"Perhaps you did not offer her enough," he said.

"It never came to that," Batti replied. "No, the money question does not touch *her*; it is her fine relatives that stick in her crop. Although the stuck-up crowd will have nothing to do with her, the only reply she has for me is regard for them. 'Tis enough to drive one mad!"

Dr. Stein appeared to reflect. "What will you give me for taming your bird for you?" he asked, at last.

Batti shrugged his shoulders. "I could have done it myself if any one could," he replied. "I have more influence with her than you have."

"I'll lay you a wager!" cried the young man. "A dozen of champagne that I drive the haughty fair into your circus."

Batti eyed him suspiciously. "What do you mean to do?" he said.

"That's my secret," said Stein, with a malicious smile. "A dozen of champagne. Yes or no?"

"Done!" cried Batti, shaking the hand offered him. At first the business seemed to him hardly fair; but it was not his nature to torment himself with suspicions. If Dr. Stein won, Johanna would be the gainer; if he lost, all would remain as it was. And Batti's ill humour vanished. When he saw Johanna again he not only conducted himself towards her with great friendliness, he even succeeded in suppressing all reference to his plans for her. His task of self-control was made easier for him by a summer rain, which prevented the morning ride for several days.

Johanna had all the more leisure to ponder her plans for the future. There was much to arouse her anxiety. She had no idea of the value of literary labour; she knew no one who could advise and help her. She could hardly expect that Ludwig Werner, who could have done so, would sympathize with her desire; and, moreover, she was separated from him by many leagues of sea and land.

Through all her care and anxiety she persisted in writing. Her strong healthy nature rebelled

against the pressure that had been brought to bear upon it. Grief and pain seemed but to increase her ability to work, and when one day Dr. Wolf was again announced, she had just completed her first story.

The pale little man, with his quiet, melancholy eyes, was so sympathetic to her that involuntarily she held out her hand as to a friend, and suddenly it occurred to her that she could ask of him the advice which she needed. She had learned at Dönninghausen, through Löbel Wolf, the *nom de plume* of his son, and had discovered that she had read various of his essays and criticisms with much interest and pleasure. If his verdict upon her literary attempt should be favourable, she could proceed with confidence.

She told him how in her changed circumstances she had occupied herself, and she informed him also that she had begun to write some time before leaving Dönninghausen. Suddenly she paused, unable to proceed.

He came to her aid. "If you think that I can be of any service to you, pray command me," he said.

"I do wish to ask a favour of you," she said. "Will you read over my attempt, and tell me frankly what you think of it?"

"Gladly. You look as if you could bear the truth," the young man replied. And while Johanna was wrapping up her manuscript, he added, "And your answer for the Freiherr? May I say that you accept his proposal?"

With trembling hands she laid the package on the table before him. "I cannot," she said. "Do not misunderstand me. I do not act, as you think, from a want of tenderness. On the contrary, I know that my refusal will gratify my grandfather."

Dr. Wolf looked at her inquiringly.

"If the jewels are mine, I cannot—as they are a family heirloom—sell them. If they are not mine, I do not choose to lend myself to a farce," she said.

"You know what induced the Freiherr to make the proposal."

"Why does he not tell me that he cares for me, and would like to help me?" the girl cried. "If he does not consider me worthy of his sympathy, I cannot accept his aid."

Dr. Wolf arose. "You are right," he said, with a gentle smile. "You are the old Freiherr's genuine grand-daughter." With these words he took his leave, carrying with him her manuscript.

The next evening she received a note from him. He wrote: "I have just finished your story, and I cannot refrain from wishing you 'God-speed.' In spite of the deficiencies manifest in your work,—all *technique* must be learned,—it shows much decided talent, a strange mixture of grace and force. The form is not always correct, betraying the beginner; but the colours are fine, and in spite of the optimism of your views, which produces upon me the effect of a fairy-tale, the personages and situations of your story are full of undeniable truth and life. As soon as my time permits I will come to discuss details by word of mouth."

Johanna clasped her hands upon the note. "God-speed!" she said to herself, smiling through her tears.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DR. STEIN'S SCHEME.

Life at Dönninghausen since Johanna's departure, although outwardly unchanged, was no longer the same.

The Freiherr applied himself more diligently than ever to the administration of his extended estates, but the strictest attention to his work did not do away for him with the sensation of emptiness and loneliness. Whether he rode out or busied himself with accounts, at table with the family or shut up in his study, everywhere he missed his grand-daughter's watchful eyes, her comprehension of him, her vivacity, her fresh interest in life. In spite of the habit of more than seventy years, his sister hardly seemed so much his own as this young creature. He had always rather looked down upon the gentle docile Thekla, while in Johanna, in spite of the respect she always manifested towards him, he recognized an equal. And because she was so, and because she had found a home with him, her desertion of him, as he called it, was all the more irritating; and since he could not prevent his thoughts from dwelling upon her continually, he was all the more careful not to betray this weakness in words.

Magelone had long since returned to Dönninghausen, graceful and capricious as ever, and yet Aunt Thekla fancied she was hardly the same; her merriment seemed forced. The monotony of her life weighed upon her more heavily, although she did not bewail it so often and so loudly as formerly. She did not know that Otto had confessed everything to his aunt, and the old lady shrank from telling her, although she sometimes thought that Magelone's mind would be easier if she could unburden it freely. She must be unhappy, for was not all the misfortune that had

befallen Dönninghausen of late her fault? And it was because she knew this and repented it that her behaviour towards Otto was so strange: now so frigidly cold, and now so provokingly derisive.

Otto had taken up his abode in Tannhagen, and was managing the small estate. He seldom came to Dönninghausen, and when he did so he avoided being alone with any one member of the family. Aunt Thekla was more troubled about him than about Magelone. The discomfort which evidently weighed upon him at Dönninghausen seemed to her the result of his repentance, and of his longing love for Johanna. She and the Freiherr were both convinced that he had written repeatedly to Johanna; and when she would ask him if he had received an answer, and he would hurriedly reply in the negative and then change the subject, the old lady's heart would be filled with bitterness towards Johanna. She did not reflect that in concealing his fault from his grandfather Otto was constantly sinning afresh. Now and then she really blamed herself for striving, in spite of her brother's express command and of Johanna's heartless treatment of 'poor Otto,' to keep up even indirectly a kind of communication with the girl. Notwithstanding these scruples of conscience, she waited impatiently for news from Löbel Wolf; and when, one day, he made his appearance, and gave her a detailed account of his son's visit to Johanna, her grudge against her was drowned in compassion. Instead of the love she had dreamed of in her pretty woodland nest, to be confined in the close atmosphere of a sick-room! At the old lady's request, Löbel Wolf declared his readiness to treat in person with Johanna, and to tell the Freiherr, whom fortunately he had not yet seen, that he had not yet made his intended trip to Hanover, but would do so in a few days.

Scarcely had Löbel Wolf driven out of the court-yard when the Freiherr came into his sister's room and called out to her, "Good news! Johann Leopold is coming home!"

"When?" Aunt Thekla asked, half startled, half pleased.

The Freiherr shrugged his shoulders.

"The letter says shortly; whether that means in a few weeks or a few months who can say? You know the lad's ways. He never is precise."

"How is he?" she inquired.

"He says nothing about his health in his letter," said the Freiherr. "He does not, however, appear to be perfectly well. He complains generally, talks about disappointment in what he had hoped travel would do for him, and so on; but how much of it may be hypochondria it is impossible to say. Moreover, he seems to have been suddenly attacked by home-sickness. He is not even going to await Dr. Werner's return. Perhaps Werner sends him home. I was always afraid that that climate would not do for Johann Leopold. The lad begs me to answer his letter immediately; *poste restante*, Marseilles; and I want you, my dear Thekla, to do this for me. Tell him all that has taken place here, and let him know that I do not want to speak of it; and send him a cordial welcome home from me. I shall be glad to have the fellow here once more."

The old lady promised to write before night, and the Freiherr left the room. She remained behind, lost in anxious revery; she feared fresh disappointments and struggles for those whom she loved. Magelone, indeed, seemed more awake to her responsibilities than she had been; but, sensitive as Johann Leopold was, he would surely perceive that she was estranged from him; and since, according to Aunt Thekla's belief, he was not really attached to Magelone, he would be only too glad to sever the tie between them. And would not this, perhaps, be best? If Magelone were free to love Otto without conscientious scruples, might she not succeed in steadying him and consoling him for Johanna's loss? It would be difficult to persuade the Freiherr to agree to their marriage; but if he should see that Otto could be thus consoled, and Magelone thus made happy, he would finally consent, particularly if Johann Leopold lent his aid to the pair by making up his mind to declare frankly that he wished to remain true to the memory of his dead love. Aunt Thekla, whose entire life had been devoted to a dead love and to grief for his loss, never doubted that Johann Leopold had buried in the coffin of the betrothed of his youth every hope and wish of his life. He had, indeed, consented to a marriage with Magelone, in obedience to the arrangements of the head of the family, but his increasing melancholy had shown that this obedience was almost beyond his strength. So long as he was the only one to be sacrificed, Aunt Thekla had shrunk from putting forward any objection to the match; but now that she knew that Magelone's happiness, and perhaps more than that, would be imperilled by this marriage,—for she had shown how weak she was to resist temptation,—now Aunt Thekla was resolved to do all that she could to avert this fresh calamity from the children of her heart and home.

Still occupied with these thoughts, she went at the usual hour to the drawing-room. While yet in the corridor, she heard Magelone singing and playing, and as she entered there rang exultantly in her ears,—

> "I could weep for very gladness;
> I can hardly think it true——"

Magelone looked up, broke off, and hurried to meet her aunt. "Have you heard?" she cried, her face beaming with delight. "Johann Leopold is coming home at last!"

Aunt Thekla let her work-basket fall in her surprise. "Child," she said, as Magelone was picking up its contents, "are you then so glad of Johann Leopold's return? I thought——"

"What, aunt?" Magelone asked, as she handed the old lady the basket; and, although her voice

was calm, there was a certain uneasiness in her eyes.

"All that has occurred lately," Aunt Thekla stammered, as she took her seat on the sofa,—"your relations with Otto——"

"Ah, indeed!" Magelone cried, and her face flashed crimson. "Johanna accused me, then? It was just like the sly creature——"

"Magelone, how dare you utter one word against Johanna!" Aunt Thekla interrupted her. "She never gave the slightest intimation——Had she done so, she would be here now, while you and Otto——"

"Then it was Otto!" Magelone exclaimed. "How mean——"

"Child, child! it does not become you to lay the blame on others," her aunt admonished her again. "If you would atone for your fault you must humbly repent——"

"Repent—yes—that I ever wasted a thought upon the vainest and meanest of men!" cried Magelone, bursting into tears, and throwing herself down beside her aunt. "Otto loves no one save himself. He is faithless, false, cowardly. Within the space of an hour he was treacherous to me for Johanna's sake, and to Johanna for my sake. Oh, I hate him! I despise him! Since he has told you all, I will tell grandpapa——"

She sprang up. Aunt Thekla laid her hand upon her arm. "You will do no such thing. My brother must not know of your treachery, your frivolity," she said, with unwonted decision. "You have done enough mischief already."

Magelone sat down again, and continued to weep silently.

"What do you intend shall be the end of all this?" her aunt asked, after a long pause.

Magelone's only reply was a fresh burst of tears.

"Now, because you are angry with Otto, are you going to make Johann Leopold unhappy?" Aunt Thekla continued. "Remember how you talked about your marriage before he went away."

Magelone jumped up and threw her arms about her aunt's neck. "No, I will not make him unhappy!" she cried. "I know now all that he is to me. I shall be so happy if he will only love me and help me; and when one is happy one's self it is easy to make others happy. And you are right, dear aunt; grandpapa must not be told anything. He shall see how happy we are, and how I will try to be a credit to you all."

Kind old Aunt Thekla was conquered. If Magelone was conscious of the wrong she had done, and was longing to live a new life, how could any one place any obstacle in the way of her marriage with Johann Leopold? But there was still one objection in her mind. "Dear Magelone," she said, "you are right to think that only when we are happy ourselves can we make others so; but shall you be happy? Johann Leopold will be to you the most faithful and judicious of friends, but the love for which you long is not his to give. You know the touching fidelity with which he clings to the memory of his Albertine."

Magelone smiled triumphantly. "Oh, Aunt Thekla," she exclaimed, "I have nothing to fear from that dead Albertine! Before his departure, Johann Leopold wrote me a veritable, genuine love-letter. To call me his is his most fervent desire. He hopes to win my heart when he returns. And even although I give him up, he must always be devoted to me. So you see——"

Aunt Thekla saw that she had again been entirely mistaken. She saw that man's fidelity, Schiller's assertion notwithstanding, is a mere illusion; saw that there was no fitting place for her in this age of steam, when everything is whirled into the past with such lightning rapidity. And while she resigned herself to melancholy reflection, Magelone shook care and repentance, anger and love's pain, from her wings, and soared singing into her world like the lark.

When Löbel Wolf, true to his promise, went, a few days after this, to Hanover, and called upon Johanna, she had just driven out with her little convalescent. A great part of the time which he had reserved for her was thus wasted, but the short interview which he was able to obtain with her was long enough to convince him of the uselessness of further persuasion. She repeated to the father what she had already told the son,—that she either had no claim to the possession of the jewels, or that she ought not to sell them, and added, "Entreat my grandfather to have no anxiety upon my account. Heaven has endowed me with a talent by which I hope to earn my daily bread."

Löbel Wolf shook his head. He was sorry to find her so stubborn and unpractical. He had no desire to report personally the failure of this second attempt. He wrote to the Freiherr, and repeated to him faithfully Johanna's words.

The following evening Johanna and Lisbeth were alone together in Helena's little drawing-room. The weather was oppressively warm; all the windows were open, but they seemed to admit only the dust and noise of the street.

The child was sitting on the window-seat, with her sister's arm around her. She was impatiently watching the passing equipages, and wondering why her mamma never, never stayed at home. Then, bursting into tears, she added, "I do not want to be always waiting, waiting here. You must go away with me, Johanna."

Before Johanna could reply, there was a knock at the door, and in answer to her "Come in!" Dr. Wolf entered the room.

"It is my Dr. Wolf!" Lisbeth cried, in glee; for she had soon made friends with him, and now regarded him quite as her own property. Scrambling down from the window-seat, she took possession of him; but whilst he listened to her childish talk, and answered her as kindly as ever, he glanced from time to time, with an anxious expression, at Johanna. Did she really look paler and more weary than usual, or did fancy show him what he had expected to see? At last, when the child, sitting in his lap, was busy with a book of pictures which he had brought her, he handed Johanna a newspaper. It contained the first chapters of her novel.

"Will you pardon me for acting thus upon my own responsibility?" he asked.

"Pardon? I am most grateful to you," said Johanna, blushing with pleasure.

"I should have liked to go farther," said Wolf, his eyes lighting up for a moment. "I should have liked to put your name to it. Perhaps you may decide to do so at its conclusion. So good a name ——"

"Too good for my poor beginnings," Johanna interposed. "But that is not the only consideration that would prevent me from signing my work. It would annoy my grandfather to see my name in the newspaper which his people read daily. No, I cannot allow it."

Dr. Wolf stroked back his hair from his forehead—a sure sign that he was uneasy in mind. "Do they take any other newspapers at Dönninghausen?" he asked.

"The 'Augsburg Sentinel' and the 'Circular,'" Johanna replied. And, too much pleased to observe the young man's uneasiness, she went on: "How did you contrive to have my story printed so soon? You told me the other day that there were so many manuscripts on hand. Confess that you have been plotting for me!"

Again he stroked back his black hair. "Of course," he said, without looking at her, "I have done what I could. Yesterday morning there was no idea of it. It is, to some extent, a counter-check. Have you seen no other paper yesterday or to-day?"

His last words startled her. "Tell me, for heaven's sake! Is any one dead?" she cried, growing pale.

"Nothing of the kind," Dr. Wolf hurriedly interrupted her; "it concerns yourself alone. I hope you will not take it too much to heart." And after assuring himself by a glance that Lisbeth had fallen asleep, he went on: "Dr. Stein's 'Feuilleton' contains a notice which states that the daughter of a distinguished actor, who died about two years ago, is shortly to appear in Carlo Batti's famous circus."

"'Tis a mistake!" Johanna exclaimed. "Batti tried to persuade me to do so, but I told him it was not to be thought of."

"And did you allege regard for your family as one reason for your refusal?" asked the young man.

Johanna assented.

"They are trying to burn that bridge behind you," Dr. Wolf continued. "Without mentioning names, but with an exact description of places and persons that makes any such mention unnecessary, the notice goes on to say that an enthusiasm for art, and yet more a preference for the unrestricted freedom of an artistic career, have led you to break off your betrothal and forsake your relatives,—'the same noble family,' the article concludes, 'from which, years ago, the daughter eloped with the famous actor, the father of our *débutante*.'"

While he was speaking Johanna grew pale and red by turns. "You are right; this is infamous!" she said, when Dr. Wolf had finished. "I cannot understand——"

"What they have in view?" he completed her sentence when she paused. "I suspect that they intend by this notice to make the breach between you and your relatives final, and to force you to comply with Batti's schemes. No further consideration for your relatives is possible after this has been printed."

"Infamous!" Johanna repeated, and her eyes flashed. "What shall I do to counteract their plan? Advise me."

"Put your name to your novel," he replied. "You will thus prove that you have chosen another career——"

"Upon which, however, the same construction might be placed," she said, thoughtfully. "No, nothing would be gained by it. What will wound my grandfather most deeply is the assertion that I have left him from a desire for a life of unrestricted freedom. I might be supposed, also, to desire this as an authoress. You must give me some other counsel. Ah, try to help me!"

She clasped her hands and looked up at him with entreating eyes filled with tears. He had never seen her so distressed.

"Be calm!" he said. "'It is ill stirring a muddy pool.' If you say so, I will have a contradiction published in all the principal papers. But would this really do any good? The contradiction would

give circulation to the falsehood, which, perhaps, in Stein's obscure paper, may escape the notice of your kindred."

Johanna sighed. "Possibly you are right," she rejoined; "but it is hard to sit still and do nothing."

"You are not required to 'do nothing.' On the contrary, it behooves you to work steadily and continually if you would maintain your place in the 'struggle for existence,' of which we hear so much nowadays. An author's mortal career, unless he be a special favourite of fortune, is hard; doubly so if, as in your case, he rejects the advantages at his command. Pursue a literary calling as your father's daughter, and you will find your path a very different one from that which you must tread anonymously or under a *nom de plume*. Consider whether in your regard for the prejudices of your kindred you do not wrong yourself."

Johanna seemed not to hear him. Leaning against the window-seat, with her head resting on her hand, she was gazing into space, and by the light of the gas-lamps just lit in the street below, she looked so pale and weary that he feared his presence fatigued her. He rose cautiously, and laid the sleeping child upon the sofa, then took his hat and was about to withdraw. But Johanna roused herself from her abstraction, and held out her hand to him. "Are you going?" she said. "Thank you for both your pleasant and your unpleasant tidings, and answer me one more question: Was that notice inserted at Batti's instigation?"

"In a certain sense, yes," the young man replied. "I hear it is the result of a wager between Batti and Stein. The latter declared that he could conquer your aversion to the circus——"

"And I thought Batti a good man,—supposed him to be my friend!" cried Johanna.

"He probably considers himself such," rejoined Wolf. "He only wishes to force you to what he regards as your good; and if he has an eye at the same time to his own interest, why, we are all like him there."

"You have no right to say that; you are not so!" said Johanna. "What interest of yours has been served by the countless kindnesses you have shown me since we first knew each other?"

"My dear Fräulein, can we flatter our subtle selfishness more delightfully than by rendering the services of friendship?" asked the young man. "But this has not been the question between you and me. All that I have apparently done for you was in truth contrived in opposition to another; whether from hatred, from revenge, or from a desire to shield goodness and purity, I do not know."

It had grown so dark that Johanna, although she was seated opposite to him, could not distinguish the expression of his face; but a slight tremor in his voice betrayed his emotion.

"You do not understand me," he went on, after a pause. "Let me tell you a short story. A few years ago my father adopted a poor orphan, a girl sixteen years old, the daughter of a distant relative. Sara was beautiful and good. She soon occupied my heart and thoughts. I was, however, not free. We Jews, like the children of princes and of peasants, are betrothed by the mutual agreement of heads of families. My betrothed, who loved another, was bolder than I, and afterward married the man of her choice. But at this time I felt myself fettered by what I might call the bashful sense of filial piety, which causes so many of my race to cleave outwardly to traditions which they have really outlived. Only a Jew can feel and understand this. I controlled myself with all my force, and I do not think that I ever betrayed myself, that Sara ever suspected how happy and how miserable she made me. She was not only worthy of love, she craved love. One day a dashing young soldier came to visit his family, whose estates were in our neighbourhood. He constantly had money-transactions with my father. Chance brought him into contact with Sara. How shall I tell the rest? She found favour in his eyes. And why not? She was a poor Jewish girl; he might trifle with her as he chose; it involved no responsibility for him. The next time I paid a visit at my home I soon saw how matters stood. I saw that my poor Sara was lost. But I struggled against this conviction; at least I would make an attempt to rescue one so dear to me. I thrust myself into her confidence with fire and sword. I left her no illusions with regard to the man to whom she was ready to sacrifice all, perhaps had already sacrificed all. I had controlled my love; I gave my jealousy free play. Sara's despair wrung my heart, but I thought I was doing right. Then, with my consent, she had an interview with the scoundrel. On the evening of the same day she was taken drowned from the canal which runs at the foot of my father's garden. The neighbours said she must have fallen in while getting water, which she always did herself when she was watering her flowers; my father believed this, and I would gladly have believed it. But upon my writing-table I found a slip of paper, upon which she had written in scarcely-legible characters, 'You are right.' I need not tell you the man's name to explain my interest in you. And now, if you please, we will never speak of this again."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FREIHERR'S WEAKNESS IS PAST.

Not until Johanna was once more alone did she appreciate the extent of the mischief wrought by Batti. If he were capable of such conduct after offering her shelter and protection, she could trust

him no longer, could accept no further kindness from him. She must sever the only family tie she now possessed.

The longer she pondered thus, the heavier grew her heart. She dreaded solitude, her own inexperience, and the curiosity and impertinence of others. But most of all she dreaded separation from Lisbeth; and, moreover, she asked herself how she could leave the child amid surroundings that imperilled both her spiritual and her material welfare. After some reflection, however, she convinced herself that she never could shield the child by her influence alone, and the next morning when she awoke from a short but refreshing sleep, she made up her mind to do quickly what must be done.

Helena was sitting alone, in an evident ill humour, at the breakfast-table, when Johanna and Lisbeth made their appearance; and when the child, after embracing her mother, asked after Uncle Carlo, she was crossly told to be quiet, that he had gone to the circus. Turning to Johanna, Helena added, "He cannot ride out with you to-day; he has too much to do."

"Let us call things by their right names," Johanna rejoined. "It is disagreeable to him to meet me since by his permission an article concerning me has appeared in the papers."

"You are mistaken! It was not Carlo's fault!" exclaimed Helena. "On the contrary, Stein and he have had a quarrel about it——"

"My dear Helena," Johanna interrupted her, "the newspaper article was written in consequence of a wager between Batti and Dr. Stein, and who, if not Batti, could have informed the writer of the circumstances of my mother's marriage, of my betrothal, of my estrangement from my grandfather, and of my unlucky gift of horsemanship?"

"How can I help it?" Helena rejoined, in an irritated tone. "It really is more than I can bear! Carlo is rushing about like a roaring lion. Stein, who was so entertaining, will never come any more to see us, and you take me to account for things with which I have nothing to do, and of which I am as innocent as an unborn babe!" And, bursting into tears, she added, "And everything was so delightful before you came. Carlo and I were as one heart and soul."

"If I interfere with your relations to each other," Johanna replied, "you will consent, I am sure, to my leaving you as soon as possible."

Lisbeth, who had been turning from her sister to her mother, her eyes wide with anxiety, sprang up. "No, no! you must not go away!" she said, throwing her arms about her sister.

Helena wiped her eyes. "As if you would be allowed to go!" she said, crossly. "You know very well that Carlo and Lisbeth cannot live without you!"

"Not another word, Helena!" Johanna hastily interrupted her. "I must prove to you this very day that I am in earnest about leaving you. After what you have said, I should not stay, even had there been no newspaper article." With these words, she gently put Lisbeth from her and arose.

Helena detained her. "How hasty you are!" she complained. "Every one rages at me, but I must weigh every word I utter. Batti, who was going to stay here until autumn, has suddenly—of course because of this Stein affair—made up his mind to travel. He is going in two weeks to Holland, to Belgium, and heaven knows where else! In the autumn we are to go to St. Petersburg. But Lisbeth cannot travel. The doctor says she cannot possibly pass a winter in Russia. I am at my wits' end. It would kill me to let Batti go without me."

Again she burst into tears. Johanna had much ado to suppress the expression of her joy. "Be composed," she said. "I will take charge of Lisbeth."

"How can you do that if you leave us?" Helena sobbed. And, seizing Johanna's hand, she entreated, "Be kind; make it up with Batti, and stay with us——"

But to stay after all that had been said and done was simply impossible. Every kindness shown Johanna by Batti would furnish Helena with cause for jealousy. After reflecting for a few moments, Johanna replied, "I must go; indeed, it is the right thing to do. But we need not part in anger. We will tell Batti that this hotel is too noisy for me; that I need fresh air. I will find a quiet lodging at a reasonable rate in the suburbs. Whenever you drive out you can bring Lisbeth to me, and when you go away you can leave her with me altogether."

"But what will you live on?" Helena asked. "I would gladly help you, but I never have anything; my dress costs so much!"

"Don't let that trouble you," said Johanna. "I have a couple of hundred thalers." She had saved this from her pocket-money that she might have the wherewithal to bestow upon the poor of Dönninghausen and Tannhagen. "Moreover, Dr. Wolf has enabled me to dispose of a novel which I wrote awhile ago, and I shall go on working diligently."

"Wrote?" drawled Helena. "Dear Johanna, have you reflected? No one thinks much of authoresses ——Blue-stocking! it sounds odious!"

Johanna laughed: "That must be borne. My only choice lay between the circus and the pen——"

"You are right; the pen suits you and your serious style much better!" Helena exclaimed. "But it is odd to fancy you a blue-stocking. How did you happen to think of it? I wish you had married your cousin. Is not a reconciliation possible?"

Johanna's reply was to take up a newspaper and remark that she would look through the advertisements of lodgings; in which occupation she became shortly absorbed, whilst Helena felt offended at her persistent reserve, and looked forward to her departure as a relief.

Johanna started on her tour of discovery, and the mysterious something which we call chance befriended her, leading her, after several fruitless applications, to the family of a teacher, who advertised for a couple of young girls to board. She drove a short distance outside the city, and arrived at an old dark two-storied structure, with small grated windows on the ground-floor. A creaking wooden staircase led up from a dim, damp hall. Johanna's courage fell; but when on the landing she opened a door the bell of which rang clearly as she did so, and which bore the name Rupprecht upon a china plate, she entered another world,—clean, whitewashed walls, clear windows, and an open door opposite which seemed to lead out from the second story into the open air.

She had no time for further observation. At the sound of the bell of the opening door, the doors of the rooms on each side opened. The next moment Johanna was surrounded by three pretty blonde girls and two barking dogs; and as soon as she had, with some difficulty, made known her wishes, she was conducted into the little drawing-room, where an elderly, worn, lady-like woman rose from her seat at the window.

"Mother, the lady wishes to see our rooms."

The woman curtsied. "Pray be seated," she said, with a motion towards the old sofa.

Johanna's eyes followed her gesture, and with an exclamation of surprise she approached. She was not mistaken; upon the wall above the sofa hung a photograph of her foster-brother.

"Do you know Dr. Werner?" the woman asked, and her sad eyes brightened.

"He is my foster-brother," Johanna replied.

"He was my son's best friend," the other said, and her eyes filled with tears. "My poor Paul died in his arms. That is his picture beside Dr. Werner's."

Johanna recollected now that Ludwig had come to Dönninghausen on New Year's eve, two years before, from the death-bed of a friend in Hanover. She soon informed the little circle of this, and that she could tell them of Ludwig.

"What a pity that our father and the little ones are not here!" the blonde sisters said almost together. "But church must soon be over. How glad they will be!"

Johanna at last referred to the business that had brought her here, saying that she wished for lodgings for herself and a little sister, who, after a severe illness, was unable to travel, and that she should need the rooms until the return of the child's mother and step-father from Russia.

The mother and daughters all conducted her across the bright landing to a room with an adjoining bedroom. Here also the walls were only whitewashed. The ceiling was low, and the furniture was old and simple, but everything shone with neatness. The windows looked out upon a little garden, whence the fragrance of flowers floated aloft, and a quiet reigned around that was not all Sabbath stillness.

"You must see the garden!" one of the sisters exclaimed. "There is nothing like it in all Hanover."

"But, Jetta, after your description the Fräulein will be disappointed," said the mother. And, turning to Johanna, she explained: "Our house is part of the remains of an ancient monastery; in the lower story there are still the old vaulted store-rooms. Our neighbour, the florist, has rented them for coal-cellars, and what Jetta calls our garden is only a little terrace which my father-in-law, who was very fond of flowers, laid out upon a continuation of these vaults. He used to grow the rarest tulips and carnations here. We cannot, indeed, do that."

They stepped out into it. The terrace was closed in by a latticed fence covered with clematis. In front there was an extended view of fields and meadows, hedge-rows, a little stream bordered by willows, small stretches of woodland, and a couple of villages. On the right it was shaded by the aged lindens in the neighbour's garden, which must also have dated from the palmy days of the monastery. In the centre there was a large bed, which had probably once contained the father-in-law's floral treasures, but which was now devoted to salad and herbs, surrounded, however, by a thick border of lavender in full bloom. On the right there was a perfect thicket of syringas, lilacs, jessamine, and hawthorn, in which the finches were singing merrily.

"It is very pleasant here," said Johanna, after a hasty glance around. "If you will take me and my little sister——"

"We shall be so glad!" cried the girls.

Johanna reassured the mother, who feared lest the Fräulein would find it too quiet here, and their manner of life too plain, by telling her that she was searching for a quiet place in which she might work undisturbed; and the daughters promised to do everything to make their home pleasant for Dr. Werner's sister.

In the midst of these assurances there was heard a talking, laughing, and barking on the stairs, as if from part of the 'Wild Huntsman's' retinue. But it was only the three 'little ones,' sturdy, blue-eyed, fair-haired little girls, who had just come from church, and who now rushed out upon

the terrace with their four-footed pets. After them came their father, a tall, spare man, with thin gray hair, and a pair of shy, blue, child-like eyes.

"Come, father, come!" cried Jetta, evidently the spokeswoman of the family. "This is Dr. Werner's foster-sister, and she is going to rent our rooms, and to come with her little sister to live with us."

"Werner's foster-sister!" he repeated, offering Johanna his hand. "You are indeed welcome. I was afraid that your brother had forgotten us, but his sending you to us proves I was wrong."

Johanna hastened to correct his mistake. The idea of being received under false pretences could not be entertained by her for a moment. After she had informed the old man with regard to Ludwig's travels, she told him as much of her own affairs as was fitting, rather doubtful in her mind as to whether he would welcome beneath his roof the child of an actor.

But the master of the house declared that he should esteem himself happy in receiving her as a lodger. He had seen the great artist in one of his most brilliant parts, and his face brightened yet at the remembrance. The pecuniary arrangements were soon completed, and when Johanna took her leave of the family, all looked forward with pleasure to meeting again.

On the same Sunday morning, when the Freiherr opened the post-bag, the first thing he took out was a newspaper in an envelope. "What have we here?" he said, as he unfolded it. "I don't know what this means! Aha! here is something marked——"

He began to read, and his face darkened, then flushed purple; the veins in his forehead swelled, and he held the paper nearer to his eyes, as if he could not trust them. "Hell and damnation!" he suddenly shouted, read on, then hurled the paper from him with another imprecation, sprang up, and walked heavily to the window.

His sister followed him. "Dear Johann!" she said, in a trembling tone of entreaty. He did not hear her. For a moment she stood beside him uncertain, then went back to the table, picked up the paper, found the marked place, and read Dr. Stein's notice about Johanna.

What was to be done? The announcement of her death would not have been so bad. Mechanically she fumbled among the letters lying on the table, when suddenly her eyes fell upon an envelope addressed in Löbel Wolf's hand, and picking it up, she again went up to her brother. "Dear Johann," she said, laying her hand upon his arm, "it cannot be our Johanna! Here is a letter from Löbel Wolf that may explain——"

"Give it to me!" the Freiherr cried. And, tearing open the envelope, he hurriedly read the letter. His hand trembled, his breath came short and fast. "Artist-blood!" he said, at last, with a laugh that wrung his sister's heart. "She rejects my proposal with regard to the jewels, because she possesses a talent by which she hopes to make an independence!"

He folded his arms upon his breast, and began to pace the room to and fro. Aunt Thekla sank trembling into an arm-chair; the tears rolled down her withered cheek as she looked up sadly at her brother. As he had once suffered with his daughter he was now suffering with his grand-daughter. His head was sunk upon his breast; the white eyebrows were gathered in a frown; his breath came almost like a groan.

For a long while he paced thus. Suddenly he stopped in the middle of the room and stood erect with an effort, then resumed his walk, muttering in the deep, low tones which his people so dreaded, "I have been wrong, and am suffering for it! I ought to have known that between Dönninghausen and the daughter of a player there yawns a gulf which nothing can bridge over. But I am grown old, Thekla; old and weak! I loved the girl more than any other of my children's children. I thought I recognised in her my own thoughts, my own feelings, my own ideas of right and honour. All wrong, Thekla! The illusions of a weak old man, or a farce played by a girl. They say her father was a great man among the players." And again he laughed loud and scornfully.

"Johann, dear Johann, you are wrong!" sobbed Aunt Thekla.

The Freiherr paused before her. "You are right," he said, more gently. "She did not deceive me intentionally, she was not false; only given over to the curse that cleaves to her blood. It is not her fault; it is and must always be mine for bringing her here, and for all but wasting upon her the name of our race. Thank heaven!" he went on, after a pause, laying his hand heavily upon his sister's shoulder,—"thank heaven, it did not come to that. And I make a vow now to myself and to all of you that from this hour there shall be no more of such weakness. I will not waste another thought upon this unfortunate creature. All the strength and force yet left me shall be devoted to Dönninghausen, and my care shall be for the genuine children of my house who do honour to me and to my name."

Thekla pressed her brother's hand to her lips, and wept afresh.

"Be quiet!" he said, with rough cordiality. "'Close up the ranks' must be the order to obey in life as on the battle-field. The fewer the survivors, the more they must cling together. I think we Dönninghausens can stand our ground."

Thekla made no reply. The thought of Otto and Magelone closed her lips.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TERRACE-COTTAGE.

Batti made no opposition to Johanna's plans further than was demanded by courtesy; in fact, he was glad not to have opposite him at every meal her dark, serious eyes, in which he read now melancholy, and now, as it seemed to him, reproach. And Helena soon contrived to persuade him to consent to leave Lisbeth with her sister when they left Hanover, representing to him that the child would be more likely to overcome the repugnance she now felt to the circus if she were to hear and see nothing of it for a time.

So the very next morning Johanna removed to her terrace-cottage. Helena and Lisbeth accompanied her. Helena was dissatisfied; she thought the house too small, the rooms too plain. Lisbeth, on the contrary, was enraptured. The little rooms, the odd terrace, the six sisters, who were so merry and kind, took her childish heart by storm. "Rika, Fanny, Jetta, Minny, Annie, Sanna," she repeated to herself; and when her mother called her to go, she begged to be allowed to stay with Johanna. "You know, mamma dear, you are never, never at home." And Helena, who could not bear to forego an entertainment of any kind, yielded to the little one's persuasions.

And for like reasons the child was soon left entirely with her sister. Helena's time was much occupied, as she was to leave town so shortly, and then it would be well for the little girl to become accustomed to her new home. "A mother must learn to forget herself," she said, and she was content with having Lisbeth with her for a couple of hours in the hotel every day, and with now and then calling for her to drive.

But when the final separation took place she made no attempt at self-control; never heeding the physician's warning that the excitable child must not be agitated in any way. Johanna had taken Lisbeth to the hotel, and Helena, sobbing convulsively, clasped her in her arms, declaring that she would soon, soon return, never to be separated from her darling more. Her husband led her away, and his own eyes were moist. Johanna could not refuse to take the hand he offered her in farewell.

They went. Johanna let the child look out of the hotel window while 'mamma and Uncle Carlo' got into the vehicle which was to take them to the railway station. They looked up and nodded; the horses started. Helena leaned out of the carriage-window, her fair curls fanning her pretty face, her blue eyes filled with tears. She gracefully threw a kiss to the child at the window. Johanna was never to forget the picture.

After this departure, that is, now that the routine of the day was no longer disturbed by Helena's caprices, Johanna's life was duly and methodically arranged. For a while Lisbeth rebelled a little against the stupid work which took up so much of her sister's time, and to which also all the other inmates of 'Terrace-Cottage' seemed devoted. The father, a kind old man, who could tell the most delightful stories, and who every evening accompanied with his violin his daughter's performance upon the piano, taught in the public school. The two oldest daughters gave music-lessons, the third helped her mother about the house, and the three 'little ones' went off to school every day, with heavy satchels and a most important air. In a short time Lisbeth grew weary of her idleness, and as soon as the physician, who continued to look after her now and then, gave his consent, she, to her intense delight, accompanied her beloved Sanna to school.

Dr. Wolf was not satisfied with Johanna's mode of life. "Remember what Goethe says about the man 'who devotes himself to solitude,'" he said. "The author must not be alone; the full stream of being must bring him refreshment and invigoration. And it is well also, for material reasons, that he should be known personally."

Johanna did not agree with him. More than aught else, she assured him, she needed repose. She had much to overcome and to analyze in herself before she could attempt to create a position for herself. She did not confess to him how crushed she was by her experience with Batti and Dr. Stein. She dreaded the sight of a strange face. Her intercourse with Dr. Wolf and the inmates of the house sufficed her, and when she was tired of work, a walk in the quiet fields, or a rest on the terrace in the shade of the lindens, restored her courage. Even the simple musical performances in the evenings refreshed her more and more. The old teacher's exquisite taste supplied his want of *technique*. Many a brilliant performance in her father's house had failed to give Johanna such an insight into Haydn and Mozart as she now gained from this reverent, child-like nature. Or was it that she had become more impressionable? Her greatest gain, however, was in the constant companionship of her little sister, in the consciousness that, for a while at least, the child was physically, morally, and mentally breathing a healthy atmosphere. Now for the first time Lisbeth learned to laugh and play without thinking of the impression she was producing. She often spoke of her pretty mamma, but as of some image of a fairy-tale, which had no place in every-day life.

And one day—Helena had already written twice from Brussels in raptures with the charming city—there came a letter from Batti with terrible news. He and Helena had driven out with a new pair of young horses; the fiery animals had run away. Helena, needlessly terrified, had jumped out of the carriage, and in so doing had received injuries from which she had died in a few hours. "If I die, Johanna must take care of Lisbeth," she had repeatedly declared; and although Batti passionately longed for his step-daughter, he thought it his duty to fulfil his wife's last wishes.

Perhaps when Lisbeth was perfectly well Johanna might take pity upon his desolate existence and bring the child to him for a while. For the present, he went on to say, the sight of her would be more than he could bear. And he could not stay in Brussels. He should probably go immediately to St. Petersburg, or to Paris, or to London. It was all the same to him now, only he must flee from the place where he had had so terrible an experience. But wherever he might be, he should labour for Lisbeth. The hope of providing brilliantly for her future was now the only tie that bound him to life and that could console him for his lost happiness.

He hoped that Johanna would aid him in making the child happy. She must fulfil her every wish, and surround the lovely little creature with all the splendour in which Helena had so delighted.

At this moment Lisbeth, who had been playing with the 'little ones,' came running merrily into the room. "Hanna dear, what is the matter?" she cried, when she saw the tears in her sister's eyes.

Johanna clasped her in her arms. "Come, my darling," she whispered, holding her in a close embrace. "Now you have no one except your sister; now you are all my own."

CHAPTER XXIX.

CHANGES AT DÖNNINGHAUSEN.

In Dönninghausen they were looking for Johann Leopold's return. He had not informed his relatives of the precise day upon which it would take place, for he wished to avoid all demonstrations of welcome. Hence, when he arrived by an afternoon train at Thalrode, no carriage had been sent to meet him, and the innkeeper, who was wont to supply a conveyance upon such occasions, begged him, with many excuses, to wait half an hour, since, because of the harvesting, all the horses were in the fields. Johann Leopold ordered a glass of beer to be brought to him in the summer-house, and after dismissing the garrulous host, he sat in the shady nook, contemplating his native mountains with a delight of which he had not supposed himself capable.

In outward appearance he was scarcely changed. His pale face was slightly tanned, his form a shade less bent, his movements only a little more elastic than before his travels. And within? He was not yet entirely free from the mental depression caused by the disease which he had inherited, but it did not weigh upon him so heavily. The attacks of the malady had for a year been very slight, and for months there had not even been any recurrence of them. Heaven might, perhaps, yet smile upon him. And if, as his grandfather's last letter declared, Magelone was looking forward with longing to his return, if she could really love him, and would wait until with a clear conscience he could call her his own! With a sigh he passed his hand over his forehead and eyes. But to-day these fair pictures of the future would not, as usual, be banished; they beckoned to him enticingly upon his return to his home. And he had struggled so long against soul and sense, and he was so weary of the conflict.

Approaching footsteps roused him from his revery.

"Good-day, Squire! Are you back again?" called a hoarse voice, and Red Jakob held out his hand to his young master.

Johann Leopold shook it as he had done since they were boys together. "Well, Jakob," he said, "you look all right again. I hope you and Christine are getting along well in your nest in the forest."

"Thanks, Squire, as well as possible," Jakob replied; and as, without more ado, he took a seat opposite Johann Leopold, he added, "I'm right glad to see you here. With the best will in the world I've done a deal of mischief, and my only hope is that you, Squire, will settle it all again."

"I certainly will if I can," Johann Leopold replied. "In a day or two I'll come and see you, and we'll discuss the matter."

"No, Squire; you must listen now," Jakob interposed. "If you get up there"—he pointed toward Dönninghausen—"and they all tell their stories, you'll never be able to understand. But I tell you, and I'll swear to it, that the gracious Fruleen was not to blame, and was——that it was a sin and a shame to send her off like a dog with the mange——"

"Jakob, are you speaking of my cousin?" Johann Leopold interrupted him. "Recollect yourself, and don't talk nonsense. She went voluntarily to her relatives after she had voluntarily broken her engagement."

"Indeed? All for her own pleasure?" said Jakob, with a malicious grin. "Of course that's what the two say who are to blame for it all. To her relatives, you say? She has gone to the circus-riders. You can read it there with your own eyes." He laid a little leather wallet on the table, and with his sound hand took from it a cutting from a newspaper, which he handed to Johann Leopold. "Christine almost cried her eyes out over it," he went on, "and I promised her that I would tell you, that you may bring the gracious Fruleen back again, and turn out those who deserve it."

Johann Leopold ran through Dr. Stein's newspaper notice. "Nonsense!" he said, knitting his

brows. "There are just as many lies printed as uttered. But what do you mean by the two who are to blame? What business is the affair of yours? You are and always were an insolent fellow——"

"Squire!" shouted Red Jakob, and an evil light shone in his deep-set eyes; but, after a pause, he continued, more gently: "I do deserve a scolding this time, although not for what you think. It fretted me to see the gracious Fruleen so deceived. I saw them both in the forest—Squire Otto and Frau von Magelone—who was at Klausenburg on a visit. They grew bolder and bolder, and more and more loving, and meanwhile the wedding-day was coming nearer and nearer. At last I could not look on any longer, and I just brought the gracious Fruleen upon them unexpectedly, when they were clasped in each other's arms, forgetting all the world beside."

"Go on!" said Johann Leopold, who sat pale and rigid, his head leaning on his hand.

Red Jakob shrugged his shoulders: "There's not much more to tell. The gracious Fruleen was like a marble statue. She said not one word, but her eyes looked like a dying deer's. I called Christine to talk to her, but it was no use! I was afraid she'd do herself a mischief. Of course I don't know what happened at the castle; but the gracious Fruleen has gone, and Squire Otto is snug and warm in Tannhagen, and as for the gracious Frau von Magelone——"

"That's enough, Jakob!" Johann Leopold interrupted him, rising as he spoke. "Depend upon it that all that should be done shall be done. There comes the carriage. You can get up beside the driver, and he'll take you as far as the Klausenburg cross-roads."

"Thanks, Squire, I have something to do in Thalrode." The host came running to help the Herr into the carriage. Johann Leopold sank back wearily in a corner of the vehicle.

"He's no better," said Jakob, as he stood looking after his master.

"And no friendlier," muttered the innkeeper. "A stiff-necked, haughty set they all are at Dönninghausen."

Red Jakob laughed derisively to himself. "You ought to call it proud and stately!" he cried. "That kind is measured by another scale and rule from what they apply to us."

And proud and stately it certainly looked when the carriage bearing home the heir drove into the court-yard, and the servants came hurrying from all directions. Leo circled about the conveyance barking joyously, and old Christian with tears of joy opened the carriage-door, while the Freiherr in all his dignity appeared at the top of the castle steps.

"God bless you, my dear boy!" he cried in sonorous tones as he embraced his grandson, and his eager glance scanned the face and figure of the young man, who did his best to bear himself bravely.

"My dear grandfather, how glad I am to see you so unchanged!" he said cordially, and then he embraced Aunt Thekla, who advanced from the background, where stood Magelone with blushing face, sparkling eyes, and a sweet smile upon her lips. And with this same sweet, treacherous smile, as Johann Leopold called it to himself, she held out both hands to him, and in a tender whisper, such as he had never heard from her before, breathed, "Thank God for your safe and happy return!"

For a moment he was tempted, in spite of all he had heard, to snatch her to his heart; but he controlled himself, and only kissed her hand. Magelone changed colour. She had expected a warmer greeting. The next moment, however, her face was as bright as before; Johann Leopold did not yet know her sentiments with regard to him and his farewell letter. He should learn them as soon as possible; perhaps she might even find a time to explain them to him to-day.

If he would only be a little more like a lover! Instead of following Magelone into the garden when the Freiherr retired after dinner, he joined Aunt Thekla on the terrace.

For a while he freely answered all her questions. At length he said, "Aunt Thekla, I have some information to ask of you. Red Jakob, whom I encountered by chance in Thalrode to-day, told me some strange things, the nature of which I hardly need explain to you."

Aunt Thekla made no reply, but her face betrayed her dismay.

"You wrote me," Johann Leopold went on, after a pause, "that you had agreed never to speak of Johanna. I am sorry to grieve you, but I should be sorry to do any one injustice: therefore pray tell me, did Otto give Johanna cause for jealousy? I do not ask for any details; I ask but a simple yes or no."

"He knows everything," the old lady said to herself, and, incapable of a direct denial of the truth, she answered, "Yes, unfortunately!"

Johann Leopold's head sank upon his breast. "And my grandfather was told nothing of this?" he asked.

"No; my brother thinks that Otto and Johanna quarrelled on account of her paternal relatives; that Otto required her to choose between ourselves and those people——"

"And Otto allowed my grandfather to remain in this error?" cried Johann Leopold.

His aunt laid her hand on his arm in terror. "You will not explain it to him? Oh, I beg you, I

entreat you, not to do so! You can do no good. Johanna cannot live among us again. And my brother, with his sense of honour,—his devotion to duty——Oh, I pray you spare him!" And she burst into tears.

"Be easy," said Johann Leopold. "I promise you to tell my grandfather nothing that need not be told. One question more. What do you know of Johanna?"

"She is with her step-mother. The woman has married again,—the circus-rider Batti, and poor Johanna has joined his troupe."

It was true, then! Johann Leopold had put no faith in the newspaper notice which Red Jakob had given him, but he now reflected that this was the natural course of things. The artist-blood of her father, and her step-mother's unfortunate second marriage, had, when she had broken with Dönninghausen, forced Johanna into the path she had taken. Perhaps, with her intensity of nature, she had meant to erect an insuperable barrier between the past and the present. She had done so. This barrier was as insurmountable in Johann Leopold's estimation as in the eyes of the world. Every drop of blood in his body was in revolt against the rider in Carlo Batti's troupe. And Aunt Thekla's 'Johanna can never live among us again' was the expression of his own conviction.

That was past and done with; but then——? Why could not his relations with Magelone remain what they had been? And why, if he must renounce her, could he not at least retain her image in stainless beauty? Her reception of him to-day, after what had occurred between Otto and herself, was a double treachery. Was she, perhaps, endeavouring from fear of her grandfather, from remorse—from a sense of duty—to conquer her heart? This must not be. It was absolutely necessary that he should resign all illusions; he must at once and forever resist temptation, fair though it was to see.

He looked up with a sigh. Magelone was just coming along the avenue, her airy figure, her light curls flooded with the golden evening glow. She was, in Johann Leopold's eyes, the very ideal of all beauty and grace. She lightly hurried up the terrace steps, and in another moment had thrown about Johann Leopold's shoulders a fragrant wreath of vines and flowers. "There! you shall not escape all reception festivities," she said, archly. "How will you defend yourself? Flowery chains should not be torn asunder."

"Why not? Rather a torn wreath than a withered one," he answered, bitterly, as he tossed the garland aside.

"Ugh! what a tone, and what a face!" cried Magelone. "They would do for a farewell. But when one returns, and is received as cordially as you have been——" She paused suddenly, sat down beside Aunt Thekla, and looked abroad into the park.

"A return is often sadder than a departure," said Johann Leopold. "I have found much change here, and am myself more changed than all, and this you ought to know——Stay, Aunt Thekla!" he begged, as the old lady arose. "You must hear what I have to say to Magelone."

For a moment he paused, fearful of losing his self-control, then continued, with apparent calm: "It is with regard, my dear Magelone, to our grandfather's desire for our marriage. You have tried hard to reconcile yourself to the thought of it, and I—although I saw how difficult this was for you—I persuaded myself for a while that you might succeed. This is over! When I went away I meant to be magnanimous in bestowing upon you a partial freedom; it could only be partial, since you knew me still bound. But now I relieve you of this last fetter; you owe me no further consideration. We are both entirely free."

His voice had grown clear and firm. As he said the last words he arose. "Good-night," he added, offering his hand to his aunt and to Magelone. "You will have to excuse me. I am fatigued by my journey."

Magelone gave him her finger-tips without looking at him, but he possessed himself of her hand. "You know, do you not, that I am your friend?" he asked. "If I can ever testify this to you by deed, apply to me. Will you promise me this?"

"Certainly. I know well how trustworthy you are!" she cried, derisively, as she withdrew her hand and looked up to him with a strange flickering light in her eyes. "Moreover, you can do something for me immediately. I want to go away! Beg grandpapa to let me go——"

"My child, what are you thinking of?" cried Aunt Thekla. And Johann Leopold asked,—

"Do you wish to go on my account?"

She tossed her head, and her cheek flushed. "On your account? What an idea! Why, we are the very best of friends!" she said, still more derisively than before. "No; it is the old Dönninghausen tedium that drives me away. Aunt Thekla knows how I have borne it for years."

"But, my child, you were away all last winter!" her aunt remonstrated.

"In Hedwig's and Hildegard's nurseries. Am I to regard that as a delight?" exclaimed Magelone. "I should like for once to have a little pleasure. I want to go to Vienna, to the Walburgs'; and from them, if I can find a good escort, I want to go to St. Petersburg, to Waldemar and his wife. They have invited me so often."

"Otto's brother. He is probably to be won over to approve their marriage," was Johann Leopold's

surmise, as he replied, "I will do what I can, dear Magelone. But if, in spite of all I can do, our grandfather still says no,—you know he does not like to have women travel without urgent reasons,—you will find here at hand what you look for in St. Petersburg."

He meant, an advocate of the desire of her heart. She did not understand him. "What I am looking for is deliverance from this place!" she cried, with burning cheeks. "If grandpapa says no, I shall go without his permission. I have castigated myself sufficiently out of regard for the family." She gathered up her long white dress, and hurried past Johann Leopold down into the garden.

Aunt Thekla looked beseechingly at her nephew. "Do not be angry with her; you have each misunderstood the other," she began. But he interrupted her: "I am not angry, and I have not misunderstood her. On the contrary, I know what she wishes and needs, and I mean, so far as I can, to help her and Otto. Pray tell her this in your kind, gentle way. You see I am too awkward to do so."

With these words he kissed her hand, and went into the house.

The old lady looked after him in painful perplexity. At first it seemed to her advisable to explain to him his error. But what could she say to him? Only that Magelone had been determined to marry him. If he should wish to know more, if he should ask, 'does she love me?' what could she reply? And even if he did not ask this, if he deceived himself for the time, must he not sooner or later—too late, perhaps—discover that she did not love him? And would she, who for a fleeting fancy had not hesitated to destroy Johanna's happiness, could she sacredly guard Johann Leopold's happiness and honour?

"If I only knew what was right!" sighed Aunt Thekla. And it was only after long reflection that she found consolation in the conclusion that if it was the purpose of the Almighty that Johann Leopold and Magelone should be united, they would be so in spite of all misunderstandings, and without any help from an old woman.

While she was reflecting thus, Johann Leopold was standing at the open window of his room, and as he looked abroad over the dark masses of foliage of the park, and up to the shining stars whose rising and setting he had so often watched from this very window, there came over him for the first time that mighty feeling of home which at once absorbs and expands all individuality. His grandfather was suddenly more comprehensible to him than ever before, and the task to which the old man had devoted himself for half a century—the weal and welfare of Dönninghausen—appeared to him in a new light. For years Johann Leopold had longed for loftier aims and a wider sphere of activity. Debarred from much by his state of health, he had disdained what was within his reach. This should be so no longer! He would show his grandfather that he was the heir not only of his estates, but of his views and intentions.

A knock at the door aroused him from his revery, and upon his 'Come in,' Otto entered the room.

"Is it you?" Johann Leopold exclaimed, as he went to meet his late visitor, and he offered him his hand with some hesitation. Otto scarcely touched the tips of his fingers.

"Pardon my taking you by surprise at this unseasonable hour," he said, as he threw his hat and gloves upon the table and himself into a chair. "When our grandfather's message arrived I sent word that I was not at home; for"—and he pushed back the damp curls from his forehead and turned upon Johann Leopold a face that looked strangely pale and haggard in the lamp-light—"I could not possibly sit opposite you at table and pull an amiable face when——I am in a scrape again, and if you do not help me——But what good would it do? Better a terrible end than terror without end!"

"Fudge! Speak intelligibly!" Johann Leopold interposed, taking a seat opposite Otto. And when the latter only stared into space in silence, he added, "You have been gambling?"

"Yes, I have been gambling," the other replied, lifting his head and gazing at his cousin with a dark glow in his eyes. "Drag along, as I do, from morning until night, through days that bring you nothing but one tedious occupation after another, and with nothing to look forward to except the same dull round in the same d—d tread-mill, for as long, at least, as your fate depends upon the whims of a narrow-minded, stubborn old man——"

"Otto! you forget yourself!" Johann Leopold interrupted him, sternly. "You choose the time ill for accusing others. You need help. You shall have it; but upon condition——"

"That I promise never to touch a card again!" Otto exclaimed, with an ugly laugh. "Of course I'll promise. But if the desire attacks me——" He broke off with a shrug.

"When the desire attacks you there is no help save in your own firm will," said Johann Leopold. "I know this, and in this respect I leave you entirely to yourself. All that I can do is to relieve you from embarrassing circumstances."

"Embarrassing?" Otto repeated. "Only embarrassing? Rather say desperate! What am I but the farmer of a small property? I, who detest farming; I, who am made for a soldier!"

"But you voluntarily left the army," said Johann Leopold. Otto's eyes fell beneath his cousin's look.

"No, not voluntarily; by the old man's orders," he replied. "Odd that he never wrote you how it

was. It was all the fault of my unlucky passion for play. I had made a promise, and forgotten it, and he decreed that I should no longer wear the king's uniform."

"He will reverse that decree," said Johann Leopold. "I will represent to him——"

"You needn't trouble yourself. So long as he lives I must eat dirt. But if I had the means——"

"For what?" Johann Leopold asked, when Otto paused.

"To enter the Russian Guards," Otto replied. "A great deal is to be done there by patronage. Waldemar could be of service to me——"

Johann Leopold was strangely moved. Was it mere chance, unconscious sympathy, that caused both to desire to go to Russia? At all events, he would help them as far as lay in his power.

"I will supply the means," he said. "While I was away I inherited, as you probably know, the estates of my mother's eldest brother. My income from the Bohemian coal-mines will suffice for your needs. I will make it over to you. Do not thank me!" he added, as Otto started up, with an exclamation of astonishment. "It is not a gift, but a matter of exchange."

"Exchange? I do not understand," cried Otto.

"Then listen!" said Johann Leopold. And leaning his head upon his hand, so that his eyes were shaded, he went on, composedly: "I shall never marry——"

"Johann Leopold!" Otto exclaimed.

"I shall never marry," he repeated, quietly; "but I do not wish to renounce the task, and I consider it an interesting and delightful one, of educating a Dönninghausen heir. A month ago, as you know, a son was born to your brother Waldemar. The infant's grandmother Walburg, our grandfather, and I are to stand sponsors, and it is my wish to adopt the little Johann Karl Leopold. Of course the future heir must be brought up here. Waldemar must agree to that, and our grandfather will be glad——"

"And I?" cried Otto. "There seems to be no question of me here. Please do not forget that I am the elder brother, and that, if you do not marry, the inheritance of Dönninghausen falls to me and to my heirs."

"I tell you all this simply because I do not forget," said Johann Leopold. "I detest family quarrels and lawsuits. I should not like to leave Dönninghausen encumbered with any such, and therefore I propose a friendly settlement to you."

"Friendly?" Otto repeated, with bitterness. "True! A birthright for a mess of pottage!"

Johann Leopold raised his head, and his eyes flashed. "No; it is not that," he said. "Our grandfather would, without my interference, use every means to cut you off from the inheritance. Whether he would be justified in doing so you may settle for yourself. Moreover, I remain in possession during my life; and, in spite of my ill health, I may live to be an old man. I cannot, then, in all seriousness, regard either as unfriendly or uncousinly my offer to you of real advantages in exchange for your relinquishment of a more or less imaginary right. Think it over. Do not hurry yourself. The only thing requiring haste is your gambling debt. How much do you want?"

Otto named the sum. Without a word, Johann Leopold wrote a cheque for the amount and handed it to him. When Otto was about to utter some expression of gratitude he checked him. "No need to thank me. I do it for the sake of the name we both bear." He did not wish that Otto should feel humiliated.

But he was humiliated. As the door closed behind him after a hasty 'good-night,' he struck his forehead with his clinched fist, and murmured, "To have to accept this from Johann Leopold! A bullet through my brains would be better!"

In this mood he returned to Tannhagen. The empty rooms looked more cheerless than ever,—he could not but be perpetually reminded of Johanna. Ever and anon he seemed to see against the dark background a pale face, the dark eyes dilated with horror,—the Medusa head which had appeared to Magelone and himself that morning in the forest. No, he could not go on living thus! And why should he, when the possibility of beginning a new existence was offered him? There was a high price to pay for it,—a birthright for a mess of pottage. But so much the better. It would be the ransom of his soul. How haughtily Johann Leopold had confronted him! with what maddening coldness he had rejected his thanks for the service he had rendered him! Johann Leopold the Just, to the prodigal of the family! But what if his coldness was the result of another cause? Did he know of Magelone's breach of faith? Was that why he would not marry? And—Otto laughed scornfully—was he exacting payment for his lost happiness, instead of making the guilty man a target for his pistol?

"I don't care. I will liberate myself!" Otto concluded his soliloquy. And before he went to bed he wrote to Johann Leopold that he accepted his proposal, and was ready to agree to an immediate legal settlement of the affair.

In a few weeks everything was arranged. Johann Leopold had explained to the Freiherr that he was convinced of the incurability of his inherited malady, and the Freiherr acquiesced without a murmur in what was inevitable. He thought Magelone's reluctance to living for the present

beneath the same roof with Johann Leopold very natural. It was more difficult, however, to induce him to agree to Otto's new plans. He declared indeed, with bitter decision, that Otto never should be intrusted with Dönninghausen, but he could not comprehend the young man's voluntary relinquishment of his rights. It irritated him afresh against the grandson whom he had hardly yet received again into favour, and at last he agreed that it would be well for Otto to go away, adding that it had best be as soon as possible: all pains were thrown away upon him. So Magelone went to visit the Walburgs in Vienna, and Otto went to St. Petersburg. It was lonely at Dönninghausen.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN OLD FRIEND ONCE MORE.

A year and a half had passed since Johanna first went to live in 'Terrace-Cottage,' near the Kahlenberg Thor. It was the close of a gray December day; she could not see to write any longer. She rose from the table, and went to the window to read by the fading light, in a famous South German periodical brought her by Dr. Wolf, a favourable criticism of her book, which had recently appeared. As she read, she was both pleased and grieved. Where were all those in whose hearts her own joy might have found an echo?

But the next moment she raised her head, and brushed away her tears. Had she not reason to be glad and grateful? "Indeed I have," she said to herself. And as she gazed out in the twilight upon the gleaming expanse of snow, she reviewed in spirit all that life had brought her here.

First of all there was a long series of apparently monotonous, but in reality very beneficial, days of hard work, in which the joy and pain of her creative fancy had worn away her heart-ache, until there had come an hour which she never should forget.

It was in harvest; she was walking just after sunset beside a hedge-row. White gossamers floated in the clear air; all around her there was absolute silence. Suddenly a joyous note rang out from far above her. It was a belated lark. She looked up, surprised, and in that very moment she had the sudden consciousness of relief and freedom which had so long been unknown to her. Since then she had been able to think of Otto, without bitterness, as of an entire stranger. She still had a sense of having lost something fair and sweet; but her inmost self was untouched, her true life undisturbed.

Thus restored to mental health, she had learned to rejoice in her new existence, in her work for its own sake, in her gradual improvement and success, and the result which she achieved. Many an acknowledgment, many a word of encouragement, many a kindly salutation, had reached her in her solitude, and had given her the assurance that she had not written in vain.

And how her very heart and soul had been fed by Lisbeth's love, and the child's health and progress! When the terrible news had come from Brussels, the little one had cried bitterly for her dear pretty mamma, whom she should never see again. But childhood's tears are soon dried; Lisbeth soon smiled through hers. Her new home became her world, and every one in the house petted and loved the little orphan.

Johanna, however, was the dearest confidante of her childish heart, and an evening walk with her through the silent fields, the hour of quiet talk before she went to bed, the *tête-à-tête* of the sisters at their early breakfast, were Lisbeth's cherished enjoyments.

Johanna's hope that the child would be left solely to her care had been fulfilled. Batti had written only once after his first outpouring of despair and grief. He had then sent trunks full of expensive dresses, etc., to be kept for Lisbeth; and since no word had come from him. Johanna saw in the newspaper that he had passed the winter in Paris instead of St. Petersburg, and that was all that she knew, and even more than she wished to know, concerning him. She did not conceal from herself for a moment the magnitude of the responsibility which thus devolved upon her; but she felt strong and capable. She wrote upon her blotting-book the homely old motto,—

> "Do thou but begin the weaving,
> God the yarn will aye be giving."

Thus far it had been given to her, and she would always heed Goethe's admonition, "Go to work and help yourself for the present, and hope and trust in God for the future."

And yet, in spite of all that she possessed, and most frequently when she was vividly conscious of how much this was, she was tormented by a painful sense of deprivation. Her intercourse with the members of the household was most friendly. Dr. Wolf visited her frequently, was her faithful adviser, brought her books and periodicals, intellectual food of all kinds; but with increasing hunger she longed for Aunt Thekla's maternal care, the society of her grandfather, and Ludwig's faithful, honest affection.

She never allowed herself any indulgence in this species of home-sickness; and now, as always when it attacked her, she strove to distract her thoughts; she would call Lisbeth, who was playing with the 'little ones,' and she had just opened her own door to do so, when the landing-door was

hastily flung wide.

Involuntarily she stood still. The dogs barked, the door-bell rang violently with the shock, and a man addressed a question to her from the gathering darkness. She did not understand it, but she knew the voice.

"Ludwig!" she almost screamed, and the next moment she was clasped in his arms.

And then came the 'little ones' with the dogs and a light, to see what was the matter. Their shouts brought the rest of the family. There were delight, surprise, tears, and laughter. Dear Dr. Werner was conducted to the drawing-room in triumph, and there he sat beneath the hanging-lamp, to be gazed at by all. How brown he had grown! and how much darker were his hair and beard! His eyes, on the contrary, looked lighter. Sanna asked if the Indian sun had not faded them a little.

How strange that he had been in India, and yet here he was in Hanover, sitting at their little round table just as he had sat there three years ago! Thus the 'little ones' chattered on, learning, in answer to their questions, that he had just come from London, and was going to spend his Christmas at Lindenbad, whilst the older sisters consulted as to what should be served for supper in honour of their guest, and regretted that this was their father's glee-club evening. The poor mother's thoughts were filled with her lost darling, and Lisbeth stood in the background, with her arm about Johanna's neck, eying with some suspicion this stranger who called her sister 'Johanna' and seemed so glad to see her.

She would have remained at her post when Frau Rupprecht called her children from the room to give the foster-brother and sister an opportunity for a quiet talk, but Jetta carried her off without more ado.

"At last!" cried Ludwig, holding out both hands to Johanna, and then words seemed to fail him for what he wanted to say.

After a pause, Johanna asked, "Did you come to see me or the Rupprechts? I mean, did you know that I was here?"

"Yes, I have known it for a few days," he replied; and he added, with a gloomy air, and in his old harsh tone, "Bad enough it was to have to hear it from strangers. Why did you never write to me?"

"I could not!"

"You could not!" he repeated, and his lips quivered. Neither spoke. How they had longed for this meeting, and now——What still separated them? Suddenly Ludwig laughed derisively: "A game of hide-and-seek. I sit, absorbed in my work in London, supposing you married, and asking no further questions, and Johann Leopold imagines I know everything from yourself. And did you never write to Lindenbad?"

She shook her head. "My correspondence with Mathilde had languished for a long time, and I do not like to complain," she said. He took her words as a hint, and said, evasively, "Let me tell you how I discovered you. On a visit to a patient—I do not practise usually, but I could not refuse the urgent request of a few of my countrymen—I found her full of delight in a German book which she had just read. She showed me the title-page. The odd motto reminded me of you: 'Do thou but begin the weaving, God the yarn will aye be giving.' Do you remember how we quarrelled over it once? As I was recollecting this, I turned over the leaves mechanically. I seemed to recognize your manner of speech, your way of looking at men and things. Yes, there was Lindenbad, and even the garden-gate from which we have so often watched the sunset with my blessed mother. I took the book home with me, and read it steadily until I had finished it—*I reading a woman's romance!* And as I laid it aside I said to myself, 'Either she wrote it, or there exists somewhere her twin mind.' This was interesting psychologically. You can guess the rest. Day before yesterday I received an answer from your publisher. And now it is your turn to tell what you wish to. Only what you wish to," he added, with some bitterness. "I know that the old right is no longer mine, and I do not lay claim to it."

His last sentence hurt Johanna, and closed her heart and her lips. She gave him only the outlines of all that she had passed through. Ludwig supposed that it pained her too much to dwell upon it. Thus they still played 'hide-and-seek' with each other, and when they were no longer alone, Johanna scarcely knew whether to rejoice in their meeting again.

The next morning Ludwig was to leave Hanover: he was expected in Lindenbad; but he came early to Terrace-Cottage, knocked at Johanna's door, and found her alone.

"Now it is your turn to give an account of yourself," said Johanna, after the first salutations. And he told her, in his old, familiar way, of his travels, his researches, his work and its results. More than all it seemed to delight him that he had lately been proffered a chair in a German university. Johanna asked if he should accept it.

"I do not know; it depends," he replied, with some hesitation. "But enough of myself. I think you are changed; it strikes me to-day, by daylight, for the first time. You are pale, you look weary. Have you been ill?"

She shook her head.

"Then you work too much, you take too little exercise." And, with a glance toward her writing-

table, he added, "How did you happen upon authorship? I cannot understand it."

"Recollect how I always loved to 'make up' stories," Johanna replied. "The love grew with my years. Thank God that it was so! My desire to go upon the stage was only a misconception of my task."

"Task?" he repeated. "You do not believe that anything, save the force of outward circumstances, drove you to write? Do not deceive yourself——"

"Most assuredly I do believe it!" she interrupted him, and her eyes sparkled with pleasure. "The longing for some little corner of the earth in which I could plant my flowers was there long before necessity forced me to labour; and then, when the crash came both in my outward and my inner life, the talent which I possessed supplied the place of home and friends and love, or rather, let me say, restored them to me; for all of these that I had ever possessed came back to me in the creations of my imagination."

Ludwig sat with downcast eyes, silent, his forehead contracted in a frown.

"Do not look so stern!" Johanna said. "I am my father's daughter; and if I have inherited only an atom of his grand artistic gift, I must receive it as the one talent intrusted to me, and trade with it as did the servant who was faithful in a few things."

Ludwig knew and loved the low, trembling tone in which the last words were spoken. And her eyes, too, shone as in their old youthful days. With a gentler expression he rejoined, "We'll say no more of that; it really is in your blood. Opposition is useless. Only one question: What did the Dönninghausens say to it?"

"They knew nothing about it," replied Johanna. "Sometimes, since my book has been so well received, I have thought it might have pleased them."

Ludwig did not appear to have heard the last part of her reply. "Your writing, then, was not the cause of your break with Otto?" he asked.

"No; Otto did not love me,—he never loved me,—I had proof of that," she replied. "Of course I tell this only to you. Grandpapa never would forgive Otto."

"Otto, Otto, always Otto!" thought Ludwig, as he rose. "I must go," he said; but when Johanna took the hand he held out to her, he seemed absolutely unable to leave her. "Come with me to Lindenbad," he begged. "That would be our best Christmas."

She shook her head. "Scarcely for your sister," she replied. "And what would become of Lisbeth? I cannot leave her alone, and if I could venture to take her such a journey in winter, she would feel strange and lonely at Lindenbad, and would be still less welcome than I to Mathilde, who is not fond of children."

Ludwig took up his hat. "Excuses of all kinds; I yield!" he said, in an irritated tone. "Farewell. *Au revoir!*" And, with one more cordial clasp of her hand, he was gone.

"Write to me!" Johanna begged. But the door closed quickly, and she could not be sure that he had heard the words.

He certainly was in no hurry to fulfil her request. The Holy-tide came and went, bringing her no word from him. Johanna took herself to task for continuing to watch and to hope, and for her inability to rid herself of the memories which seeing him again had aroused within her. Wherever she was—in church, in the Rupprecht family circle, at her writing-table—Lindenbad and Dönninghausen were always present to her.

And at last—Johanna could not avoid an impression that some subtile psychological influence had been at work—she received a sign of life from both places. The longed-for envelope from Lindenbad arrived, enclosing a letter to Ludwig from Johann Leopold, to which the former had only added a few lines. Johann Leopold wrote:

> "Dönninghausen, December 23, 1876.
>
> "My dear Friend,—Although it has now been for some years my custom to look to you for aid and counsel, I would spare you my present application if I knew of any one to turn to in your stead. Therefore I trust you will forgive me for alluding to painful subjects, which we have hitherto avoided mentioning to each other.
>
> "I have just seen by the paper that the 'equestrian artist,' Carlo Batti, has gone with his circus to St. Petersburg for the winter. My cousin Otto recently procured a position there as an officer in the Guards, and a fear lest a meeting between Johanna and himself might give occasion to fresh scandal, and that Johanna's connection with our family might be used anew as an advertisement for the circus, leads me to write to you. I do not wish to blame Johanna for what she did in the glow of her first indignation; although I confess I thought hers a nobler nature than it proved itself to be. She should not have entirely forgotten all regard for our family, and especially for her grandfather's personal feeling, and she must not do it a second time. Will you represent this to her, my dear doctor? You have more influence with the unfortunate girl than I have. Also pray remind her that Waldemar, Otto's brother, with his young wife, lives in St. Petersburg. I hope that it will need only this reminder to induce Johanna, now that

her first anger is past, to spare us. If—which I can scarcely suppose possible—you no longer have any intercourse with Johanna, and do not know her address, it will, I should think, be enough to direct your letter to Batti's circus, St. Petersburg.

"The post is just leaving, wherefore pray accept a hasty farewell for the present from your sincere friend,

"J. L. VON DÖNNINGHAUSEN."

With this letter came a few lines from Ludwig, written in evident agitation:

"DEAR JOHANNA,—Little as I am able from the scanty information furnished me by you to understand the contents of the enclosed letter, I gather from it that Herr O. v. D. has explained your separation from him by a tissue of vile falsehoods. You will instantly send me the requisite details, that I may acquaint your relatives with his rascality. Do not imagine that you can prevent me from doing so. I shall find means at any rate to learn the truth. It is bad enough that you, for the sake of a scoundrel, have suppressed it for so long."

This was not the salutation for which Johanna had longed, and yet in these angry lines she found once more the faithful dictatorial friend of her early girlhood, and a sensation of being protected, from which she had long been debarred, took possession of her. He must not, indeed, be allowed to interfere at Dönninghausen; but it did her good to know that he was ready to do battle for her with his old fiery zeal.

Thus cheered, she sat down to reply to his note. She could not, however, find words for just what she wished to say, and when she read over her finished letter it seemed to her cold and insufficient; nevertheless, it had to be sent immediately, lest Ludwig should be left to discover the truth after his own fashion.

She wrote: "I thank you from my heart, my dear Ludwig, for your care for me, and for all that you wish to do and would do in my interest, if you were right in your suppositions. But you have misunderstood my expressions, as well as Johann Leopold's letter. Otto is not to blame for the report that I am become a rider in the circus, but Carlo Batti himself, who hoped thus to force me to a career for which he thought I had a talent. Probably the enclosed notice, which was written by a friend of Batti's, has fallen into Johann Leopold's hands. Pray tell him the real state of the case, and that I am not responsible for the false statements of the newspaper. I pray you to forego all further explanations; not that Otto may be spared, but for my grandfather's sake, that he may be saved from fresh mortification and pain. Aunt Thekla, who knows all about it, not only agrees with me in this view of affairs, but desires that I should be silent to my grandfather as to the true reason for my break with Otto. That I concealed it from you also was the result—pray believe this—not of any regard for Otto, but of a certain sense of shame, and of repugnance to discuss the affair. In my own mind I am so entirely separated from Otto that even my memory of him seems something quite apart from myself. I had hoped that you perceived this at our last interview. Since you did not, I am glad of an opportunity to tell you that it is so, for I long to have you understand me thoroughly as in the dear old days. Were you perhaps led astray by some expression of mine of home-sickness for my grandfather or Dönninghausen? These are separations the pain of which I never shall overcome. But I know that they are irrevocable, and I pray you also to accept them as such. Write me that you do, and then tell me how you all are, and whether you have concluded to remain in Germany. How glad I shall be if you have!"

The letter was sent. Johanna reckoned up the time that must pass before the answer to it could arrive. But days went by in anxious expectation, and again she tried, in vain, to direct her thoughts into another channel.

Waking and dreaming, her mind was occupied with Ludwig. "We must study each other anew," she said to herself.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE TRUTH AT LAST.

This year also Hildegard and Hedwig found a pretext for omitting the Christmas visit to Dönninghausen. Thus on the afternoon of Christmas day only the old brother and sister, with Johann Leopold, were sitting around the fire in the drawing-room. Conversation halted more and more, for although the thoughts of all three were occupied alike, and all knew that this was so, they shrank from giving utterance to the sensation of loneliness that possessed them. At last nothing was heard save the howling of the wind, the ticking of the clock, and the crash now and then of a burning log, which would send a shower of sparks up the chimney, and be followed by a brighter blaze. And as the flickering flame revealed in strong relief now the erect head of the Freiherr, now Aunt Thekla's delicate, placid face, and now shone in Johann Leopold's dark, melancholy eyes, changing pictures of the past also appeared,—images of youth and joy, delightful tasks, dear, unforgotten forms ascended from the grave, lost happiness, love betrayed, confidence misplaced. Who does not know the phantom train, lengthening from year to year, that

glides by us upon life's landmarks? Aunt Thekla gazed after it with tearful eyes, Johann Leopold in proud resignation, and the Freiherr with a desire to bid defiance to the past and to clutch what still seemed to him worth possessing. It was he who at last broke the silence.

"This can't go on so!" he said, rising and pacing the room to and fro, after his usual fashion. "Next year, God willing, shall see childish faces around our Christmas-tree. The future heir belongs to us. Since Waldemar has just had another boy, he must give us the oldest."

"He never will do that, I am quite sure," Johann Leopold replied. "And if he would, the mother could not be persuaded to consent to it. But I hope they will all come. I have long been wanting to talk of this to you, sir. Waldemar is heartily weary of diplomacy, his wife cannot get used to the climate of St. Petersburg, and for the children it is positive poison. Moreover, there is Otto's position in society. Really, they could not do better than fold their tents and return."

"Apropos, what about Monsieur Otto?" said the Freiherr. "Klausenburg had some incredible tales from a St. Petersburg acquaintance of the brilliant figure the fellow is cutting. Elegant establishment, troops of servants, fine equipages, valuable horses, champagne suppers, immense losses at cards. Where the deuce does he get the money for it all? You promised me not to let him bleed you any further——"

"And I have kept my word," said Johann Leopold. "Moreover, he has made no demands upon me except for what I gave him. He has found some friends—lady friends, I hear——"

"What! There was truth in that scandal, then!" cried the Freiherr, pausing in his walk. "Klausenburg hinted as much, but I cut him short. How do you know anything about it?"

"Waldemar wrote me. An old princess and the wife of a former brandy-dealer were mentioned. Waldemar is intensely mortified——"

"No need of that," the Freiherr interposed. "We have been long-suffering enough. Now turn the scoundrel out of doors, and——*Basta!* There are black sheep in every family! Let him go!" An energetic flourish of his hand emphasized his words. The Freiherr walked on silently for a few moments, and then said, "We were talking of Waldemar's possible return. What could we do with him here? It is not his fashion to play the sluggard."

"No need for him to do that," Johann Leopold replied. "You know, sir, they wish to make a county magistrate of me, and my election to the next Reichstag is as good as certain. I do not wish to refuse the nomination, but to fill the position as it should be filled I must resign, in part at least, my duties here. As far as the farming interest is concerned, I know that if you will consent to supply my place there, it could not be in better hands, and I will make over to Waldemar the forests and foundries. With the improvements which I am contemplating they will keep him very busy, and he will be well satisfied. They were always his hobby. There is room in Dönninghausen for all of us, and I long, as you do, to watch the growth of the young shoots about the old trunk."

"You're right, my lad!" exclaimed the Freiherr. And, pausing beside his sister, he added, "What do you think, Thekla? Should not you and I grow young and jolly again if we had merry little feet tripping about us? Who knows, if there is the sound of laughter here once more, whether that vagabond Magelone will not come home again? Does it never occur to her that the Walburgs may tire of her in time?"

"Dear Johann, she is going to Hedwig shortly," Aunt Thekla made answer. "She does not like to be here——"

"Nonsense!" the Freiherr interrupted her. "What would be the consequence if everybody whose hopes were disappointed ran away? This tramping round among the Wildenhayns and Walburgs is positively disreputable. Write that to her; do you hear?"

The servant brought in the lamp. When he had departed, Johann Leopold said, "I have something to tell you of Magelone. An hour ago I received a letter by express. I could not make up my mind to tell you before——"

"Deuce take you, lad! Out with it!" cried the Freiherr. "What is the matter with the child? Is she sick—dead?"

"Nothing of the kind. She has only asserted her right to do as she pleases. She is married——"

"Married!" the brother and sister exclaimed, as with one voice. And the Freiherr added, angrily, "Go on! Why all this humming and hawing?"

"I only know the bare fact. I received a printed announcement," said Johann Leopold. "But with it came a note for you, Aunt Thekla."

Aunt Thekla took her note with a trembling hand.

"Read it aloud!" her brother ordered; but she could not. Eyes and voice refused to obey her.

"Will you do it?" she whispered, handing the perfumed sheet to Johann Leopold. And shading his eyes with his hand so as to shield his face from observation, he read clearly and calmly,—

> "Forgive me, dearest and best of aunts, for coming to you with a request the fulfilment of which is no trifle. But I know your kindness, and I know, too, from life-long experience, that even when you are displeased with me you are always trying to excuse

me both in thought and word. Do it now to grandpapa, and love me still. I rely upon you.

"If my confession were only made! Or if I only knew how to begin! The beginning is simply that I was quite as unable to endure life in the Walburg Dorcas-meetings as in the Wildenhayn nursery. I told you, soon after my going to the Walburgs, of my bitter disappointment in the imperial city of Vienna. But since then the philanthropic craze of the mother and the virtuous fanaticism of the daughters have increased to such a degree that they nearly drove me wild. Now please don't look angry, dear Aunt Thekla! Does not even Goethe say,—it's the only thing of his I ever remembered,—

'Rather pursue evil courses than be thus bored'?

"I wrote you of our Charity bazaar. I had a table at it. The children of darkness have the reputation of greater wisdom than the children of light, and I really did a brilliant business. Not one was left of all the abominations confided to the watchful care of my beautiful eyes. Most of them were bought by a young and elegant man, who appeared morning and afternoon of each of the three days that the fair lasted, and paid furious court to me. Chance—or let us call it Providence—so willed it that we had a common acquaintance, at whose house we met again, and I learned to know his parents. Mamma, short, stout, *decolletée*, and loaded with diamonds; papa, tall, thin, with bony hands, and a genius for money-making. His father slaughtered oxen; he slaughtered estates, then engaged in some of these new-fangled speculations, and is said to have accumulated several millions. His wife is an innkeeper's daughter. Her paternal mansion is still to be seen in K—— Street. Both were charming to me. Both shared in their son's wishes,—that is, they thirsted for my blue blood, while he coveted my entire self. The poor fellow is really head over ears in love with me, which, in contrast with his usual *blasé* condition, produces a comically pathetic effect. I knew only too well that grandpapa never would give his consent; so at last I carried out a *coup d'état* which Pepi—his baptismal name is Felix—devised. It was impossible for us to be married in Vienna with no pomp or parade. It would have been too great a blow to parental vanity. So I took leave of the Walburgs to go to Herstädt, but in fact I arrived in Paris. Felix followed me, and since the day before yesterday I have been the Baroness Erlenbusch of Erlenbusch of Veldes on the Saar.

"Thank heaven! there it is at last on paper, and off my mind! And now, dear, darling, heavenly aunt, be kind. Please! please! I fold my hands and bend my knees, and, look! there is a real genuine tear just fallen on the paper; for in spite of the frivolity which, through no fault of mine, I have inherited, I love you all, you odd, proud, honest, serious Dönninghausens; and if I do not any longer live among you, I prize my right to a home within your old walls. You then must contrive, *carissima*, to have me come to you some day with Felix. Don't be afraid. He is perfectly presentable: tall, slender, elegant,—with a little more repose he would really look distinguished. Is he so, in fact? *Qui vivra verra!* At all events, he is very much of a gentleman. A connoisseur in all branches of sport; in horses, in the ballet, and in *ballerine*. He plays, bets, owns magnificent racers, and can dissipate his father's speedily-acquired millions as speedily in a thousand ways. You would remind me of poor Wilfried, and would ask how I can stake my happiness upon the same card again? Dearest aunt, I was famished for pleasure, life, movement, splendour, beauty, love,—for all that I have foregone these many years. Now I am drinking deep of all of them. We shall spend our honeymoon here in Paris, the *paradis des femmes*, and then go back to Vienna. But before that I must hear from you,—one word of love, of forgiveness, of hope, addressed to 'Baroness Magelone of Erlenbusch, *poste restante*, Paris.'

"The name is not beautiful, neither is it ancient; but make up your mind to it, and accept it and the new grandson and great-nephew, as I must accept my father- and mother-in-law. Ye saints above! fancy them in my drawing-room! But I shall clinch my teeth and be amiable. Mother-in-law's diamonds will cover many a *faux pas*, and a man who wallows in millions, as does my father-in-law, need my new pathway in life is not without its thorns. Wherefore I fervently entreat you to obtain grandpapa's forgiveness for me, that I may at least flee to you in thought if——but, Magelone! should thoughts such as these be entertained by a young and adored wife? Oh, if I could only show you my wedding-dress, dearest aunt!

'I've glittering diamonds and jewels,
I've all that the heart could desire,
And mine are the loveliest eyes, too——'

"And if you will only forgive me, all is well, and I am forever your happy MAGELONE."

During the reading of this letter the Freiherr had been pacing deliberately to and fro, and he continued to do so in silence. Johann Leopold, having read it, said nothing, but gazed thoughtfully into the fire. Aunt Thekla took the letter and read it through again to herself. Magelone's entreaty for forgiveness touched her heart. The young creature was right; Aunt Thekla could not be angry with her long. The sins of her frivolity were atoned for by her grace. Once more it was the old lady's earnest desire to befriend her spoiled darling; and, summoning up all her courage,

she said, at last,—

"Dear brother, I must answer this. What shall I write?"

"Whatever you choose!" he cried, as he passed her. Suddenly he turned short round, and came up to the table upon which stood the lamp. His face wore a marble look of anger and determination. "No, not whatever you choose!" he said, harshly. "Who knows what concessions you may be induced to make? You will write to the Frau Baroness von Erlenbusch that the members of my family are not in the world solely to enjoy themselves, but to do their confounded duty as far as they can, and to fulfil their responsibilities. Those who prefer mere enjoyment must find it elsewhere. There is no place for them among us."

"But surely, if Magelone," Aunt Thekla began again, "were to come here to ask your forgiveness ——"

"She would find the doors closed!" the Freiherr interrupted her. "Unless, indeed, the Herr Baron Felix von Erlenbusch should fulfil his wife's expectations and run through his swindler-father's money. If she should then return to us alone, and needy, she shall have food and shelter. So long, however, as she makes merry with that clique, her foot shall never cross my threshold. Not a word, sister!" he added, raising his voice. "Remember Agnes and Johanna! I cannot at the eleventh hour be false to what has been my principle of action during my life." And after a pause, he said, more gently, "We must submit, Thekla. Solitude is the sad dowry of age. We no longer understand the young, nor do they understand us."

But the Freiherr did not find it easy to practise the submission which he enjoined upon his sister. Long as he had been deprived of Otto's and Magelone's presence, he felt really separated from them only when he could no longer hope to see them vindicate, according to his ideas, the honour of the family.

"I am only an old, decayed trunk," he said, on the morning of New Year's day, when Aunt Thekla offered him her New Year's wishes. "Not only has winter robbed me of my garniture of leaves, but my stout young branches have fallen off. All is wellnigh over with Dönninghausen!"

In this same mood he was sitting at breakfast with his sister and nephew on the morning of the 3d of January, when Dr. Werner was announced.

"What! our Indian doctor? Fellow, you must be mistaken!" he shouted to the servant. But it was Ludwig Werner, who immediately appeared, and was welcomed with as much delight as amazement.

"This is what I call a surprise," the Freiherr repeated, when Ludwig was at last seated beside him, and had been supplied by Aunt Thekla with coffee. "And now give an account of yourself. First, whence come you so early in the day?"

"From Lindenbad. I have been spending the holidays with my people, and I came by the early train, because I must go back to Hanover to-day."

"No, no!" cried the Freiherr. "Now I have you once more in my clutches, you shall not slip away in such a hurry."

"Or if you must go to-day," said Johann Leopold, in his considerate way, "promise us at least that you will come back again here from Hanover."

"Unfortunately, I cannot," Ludwig replied. "There is a scientific expedition fitting out,—this time for the West Ghauts. I have been asked to join it, and I must return to London to complete my preparations."

"What! are you going to travel again?" asked Aunt Thekla. "Johann Leopold thought you would accept a professorship in Germany. We were all so glad."

"Thank you for your kindness, Fräulein von Dönninghausen. I did think for a while of remaining at home, but I seem to be turning out an irreclaimable vagabond." Ludwig spoke in a quiet, cheerful tone, but neither Aunt Thekla nor Johann Leopold could avoid an impression that he was exercising a certain self-control, and they scrutinized him keenly.

The Freiherr frowned: "I should be sorry for that! You are made of better stuff than goes to make up these new-fangled tramps. Stay here, young man! You'll find enough to do in Germany."

"Hereafter—perhaps in a year I shall be at home again," Ludwig replied; and then his face grew dark, as, looking from one to another, he said, "I have something else to arrange before my departure, and it is for that I am come hither. I have seen Johanna——"

The Freiherr interrupted him. "We never speak of her," he said, sternly.

"Pardon me, Herr von Dönninghausen! As Johanna's brother, I have a right to demand, and to give, an explanation," Ludwig made reply, with quiet determination. "You appear to believe that Johanna belongs to the Batti circus."

"We know she does," Johann Leopold replied. "The newspapers gave a detailed account of her joining it."

"And upon such testimony you dropped Johanna, unquestioned and unheard?" Ludwig interposed,

bitterly.

"Do you suppose we could have had any effect upon her obstinacy?" cried the Freiherr. "'Tis in the blood, my young friend! An inherited predilection, for which, perhaps, she should not be blamed, but which separates her forever from us. She voluntarily left her home, her family, and her betrothed that she might exchange them for what the papers call the irresponsibility of an artistic career. She herself told me that she hoped to render herself independent by her talent. So, you see!"

"All a mistake and misunderstanding," Ludwig replied. "Even before her step-mother's death she had left Batti, and since then she has supported herself and her little sister by writing. Here is her first book."

The Freiherr stared at him. "Johanna not in the circus!" he said, mechanically holding out his hand for the book.

"And as for her desire for an irresponsible artistic career," Ludwig continued, "I can only tell you that she has repelled all the advances, which are the inevitable result of her talent, because all that she wished for was peace and repose. This I know from her sole friend and adviser, a certain Dr. Wolf. Moreover, her only associates are the family of a humble teacher where she has lodgings, and where her life is one of secluded and untiring industry."

The Freiherr started up. "Why were we not told this?" he cried. "It was unjust, unkind of Johanna. Why did she not stay with us, if stronger inducements did not lead her elsewhere?"

"That I do not know," Ludwig replied. "I only know that out of a false regard for you the reason why Johanna broke off her engagement has been concealed from you. This she hinted to me by word of mouth, and she now tells me so plainly by letter, and refuses me any further explanation, declaring that not to spare her former betrothed, but to save you, Herr von Dönninghausen, from pain, the matter must never be explained. And Fräulein Thekla, who knows everything, desired that you should never be told the real cause of the break between the betrothed pair——"

"What!" shouted the Freiherr, rising from his chair. "Am I a foolish child, that others decide what may be told me and what not? I must know everything this moment. Out with it, Thekla!"

The old lady, who had risen from table with the rest, trembled so violently that she was obliged to sit down again.

"Do not be angry, my dear brother," she began, timidly.

The Freiherr advanced towards her: "Without more ado, sister, what was the difficulty between Otto and Johanna? Answer me briefly, and to the point!"

"Johanna learned——" Aunt Thekla began hesitatingly, "Johanna learned that Otto loved Magelone, and that she loved him. The note you took from Leo was written to Magelone——"

"That is not true!" thundered the Freiherr. "No Dönninghausen could lie so! And Magelone, Johann Leopold's betrothed——"

"Had tender rendezvous with Otto for weeks," Johann Leopold interposed, while, as if to support his aunt, he advanced and laid his hand upon the back of her chair.

"Nonsense! Scandal! Who told you such stuff?" cried the Freiherr.

Johann Leopold bit his lip. He could not bring himself to mention Red Jakob, but Aunt Thekla forced herself to reply. "Otto confessed everything to me," she whispered.

For a moment the Freiherr seemed stunned. Then he laughed bitterly, and walked to the window. After a long and painful pause, Johann Leopold said, "We wished to spare you."

The Freiherr turned upon him. "Spare me!" and his eyes flashed. "Has it averted disgrace from us? Have I not still had to lose them both? Can you suppose that such worthlessness could be cast aside and leave no trace? Spare me!" he repeated, controlling himself by an effort. "And to do this you could quietly look on and see me thrust the child Johanna out into the world, after all that she had been made to suffer by one of us! Am I to thank you for this? You, my own flesh and blood! For shame! You do not belong to me. The doctor is the only one who understands me!"

Aunt Thekla shed tears. Johann Leopold stood with downcast eyes. "It was by Johanna's own desire," he said, after a pause.

"Johanna!" exclaimed the Freiherr, and a gleam as of sunshine irradiated his stern face. "I have no fault to find with her. In her affectionate folly she has undertaken the hardest task herself. She could not feign and lie; she preferred to renounce and to labour. Foolish she has been, and stubborn, but her heart is of gold,—a true, genuine Dönninghausen!"

After these words he paced the room to and fro once or twice, and then, pausing before Ludwig, asked, "Doctor, when does your train start for Hanover? I shall go with you, and bring the child home."

Aunt Thekla raised her hand in entreaty: "Dear Johann, travel at this season! You cannot be in earnest!"

And Johann Leopold begged, "Pray let me go, sir!"

But the Freiherr shook his head: "No, my lad! I owe it to her and to myself. We will go together, my dear doctor, and I will bring my brave, stout-hearted child home!"

It was a sunny winter's afternoon; Terrace-Cottage lay buried in dreamy repose; the children were at school, the Schwarzwald clock on the landing ticked monotonously, and the sparrows, searching for their daily crumbs upon the terrace, twittered continuously.

Johanna was sitting at her writing-table. She had at last come home to work, as she called it. Her pen flew over the paper, and when, now and then, she raised her eyes, they sparkled with a happy light.

Suddenly she started. The bell on the landing rang, and manly footsteps advanced across it.

"Ludwig," she thought, rising hastily. But some one else entered! For a moment Johanna stood as if chained to the spot; then the spell was broken. "Grandfather!" she cried, rapturously, and was clasped in his arms.

But the Freiherr could give no time to the display of emotion. "Let me look at you!" he said, holding his grand-daughter at arms'-length and scrutinizing her keenly. "Just the same. What does the doctor mean by going on about weary eyes and pale cheeks? But where has the man hidden himself?"

He strode to the door and looked out. "Where the devil are you, doctor?" he shouted to Ludwig, who had retired to the glass door looking out upon the terrace. And when Johanna held out both hands to him as he approached her, the Freiherr added, "You have him to thank, child. It is he who has brought me here, and explained all your folly and the rest of it. Now don't cry. We've had enough of tears and long faces."

"Mine are tears of joy," said Johanna. "But sit down and tell me. It seems like a dream!—you here, grandpapa." And again her eyes filled with tears.

The old Freiherr, too, in spite of himself, was too much moved to speak for a few moments. Whilst Ludwig, with a sensation of bitterness, for which he took himself to task, went to the window and looked out into the gathering darkness, the old Herr placed a chair in the middle of the room, seated himself in it, planted both hands upon his knees, and looked about him. "And this is the little cage where you have been hiding all this time!" he said, at last, and his tone was rather melancholy than bantering. Johanna hastened to change his mood. "Do you not like it, grandpapa?" she asked, smiling. "Look out of the window; that pretty little terrace belongs to it."

The Freiherr shook his head. "It is all too small and confined for you," he growled. "Well, it's over now. To-morrow morning early,—I promised Thekla that I would stay here overnight,—but to-morrow morning early we're going back to Dönninghausen. One thing I must, however, insist upon: there must never be any more concealments between us. You can and must tell me everything. Promise me this." He held out his hand to Johanna, and his eyes shone as she laid hers in it.

"Yes, grandpapa," she replied. "I will, and I will begin now. To go to Dönninghausen is, as you know, the dearest wish of my heart; but I cannot do it unless I may carry back with me two things,—my little sister and my work——"

The Freiherr held his grand-daughter's little, cold, trembling hand in a tight clasp. His eyes gleamed beneath their bushy eyebrows, as though he would read her very soul; but she returned his steadfast gaze, and gradually his look grew gentler.

"Your sister," he began, when suddenly the door was flung open, and Lisbeth rushed in. "Oh, Hanna dear!" she cried. Then, seeing two strangers in the twilight, she stopped short.

"And is this she?" asked the Freiherr. "Come here, little one; give me your hand."

"Come," said Johanna. "This is my dear grandfather of whom I have so often told you."

Lisbeth obeyed. Her fair curls had escaped from beneath her felt hat, and were hanging about her happy, rosy face, whence large, dark, serious eyes gazed steadily at the Freiherr.

One look sufficed. The beautiful child took the old man's heart by storm. Beauty had always been an inheritance of his race.

"Well, you fine little specimen," he cried, drawing her towards him, "will you come with your sister and live with me? You must be a good girl and learn to love me and call me grandfather, as she does?"

Johanna, kneeling at his feet, covered the dear withered hand with tears and kisses.

"Child, child, are you mad! Get up, get up!" cried the Freiherr. And, as he raised her, Ludwig approached.

"Now everything is so happily arranged," he said, with hardly-won composure, "that I can leave you without anxiety. Good-by!"

"What do you mean?" asked Johanna, more struck by his voice and manner than by his words. "Where are you going in such a hurry?"

"To London for the present," he replied, "and then to India again——"

"No!" Johanna interrupted him; and her look was like sunshine in his soul. "You will stay with us; I cannot spare you."

She had taken his hand. He drew her towards him. "Johanna," he whispered, "if I stay I must hope!"

"We will both do that," she answered, with a beaming smile; and, turning to the Freiherr, she added, "Grandpapa, Ludwig is going to Dönninghausen with us."

CHAPTER XXXII.

TWO YEARS AFTERWARD.

Nearly two years had passed; it was the 2d of November, and all Dönninghausen was astir. The Freiherr's eightieth birthday was to be celebrated, and as the sun shone bright and warm in cloudless skies, it seemed as if mountain and valley, the sparkling brook, and the forest in its autumnal splendour, were taking part in the family festival. Even the old castle itself was in a gala dress; the coat of arms over the entrance was wreathed with evergreens, as was the marble balustrade of the terrace and the arch of the entrance hall, while from the bell-tower the flag, with its silver tower upon an azure field, fluttered in the morning wind.

The first festivities were over. In the early morning the school-children had sung a hymn upon the terrace beneath the Freiherr's windows; then he had received the gifts and congratulations of his family. He had rejoiced in the numerous circle gathered around the breakfast-table, and, above all, in his blooming train of great-grandsons. Waldemar's children had been living at Dönninghausen for a year now, and all the little Wildenhayns, with their parents, were present upon this occasion. And after breakfast, in accordance with ancient custom, the inspector, the butler, the men- and maidservants, the shepherd and herdsmen, the woodmen and day-labourers, the bailiff, the miller, the forester, the pastor, and the doctor came to offer their congratulations. Even the inmates of the poor-house came to wish their benefactor a long life.

At last they had all departed, and, somewhat relieved, the Freiherr, accompanied by Leo, betook himself to the drawing-room; but, instead of the family group he had expected to see, he found only his sister, who was confined by gout to her wheeled-chair by the fireplace, in which, in spite of the sunshine, a bright fire was blazing.

"All alone, Thekla?" he asked, glancing with dissatisfaction at the handkerchief with which she had hastily dried her eyes upon his entrance. "Where are all the others?"

"I sent them away. I wanted to be alone," said the old lady. "Dear Johann, you cannot imagine how hard it has been for me to be absent for the first time when your people came with their birthday congratulations." And she burst into tears again.

"Come, come, Thekla! Next year, God willing, you will be present," her brother said, taking a seat beside her.

"Next year!" she repeated, with a melancholy smile. Then changing the subject, she added, "I had the post-bag brought to me. All those are for you."

The Freiherr hastily looked over the addresses of the letters which she handed to him. "Johanna addressed her letter to you, then, eh?" he asked, laying them aside.

"No, nothing came from her," Thekla replied. "But don't be afraid; her letter is probably delayed. Young people upon their wedding-tour——"

"Nonsense!" interposed the Freiherr. "When the wedding-tour has lasted longer than three months the bliss is a little frayed; and if not, Johanna is not one to neglect the old for the new. No, no; something is the matter. The child is ill."

"Dear Johann," Thekla began. But her brother did not allow her to proceed.

"I knew it would be so," he went on, "and I told the doctor so when he devised his confounded plan of travel. A woman belongs at home. She is a superfluity in railways and hotels, and she feels uncomfortable——"

"Johanna's letters have shown the contrary," said Thekla. "Moreover, they agreed beforehand to spend the time before Werner entered upon his duties in the University in travel."

"Of course!" cried the Freiherr. "The child is always agreed to what those whom she loves propose. All the more careful of her the doctor ought to have been. A man's first duty after taking a wife is to provide her with a home, and since it pleased monsieur not to have one until this fall, it was his confounded duty to postpone the marriage until then."

"Dear brother, do not be ungrateful," Thekla begged, in her gentle way. "Werner waited more than a year to please you, and lived alone in the greatest discomfort in that little university town that Johanna might not be taken from you. You cannot blame him for wanting to have her with him after serving for her half a lifetime. And surely it was natural that he should wish to present his friends to her at the medical convention, and show her England and Scotland——"

"That's enough," the Freiherr interrupted her. "I know that with you whatever Werner does is right. But I tell you that your paragon, in spite of his excellent qualities, his scholarship, his cleverness, and so forth, is as crass an egotist as ever wore pantaloons. What with travelling here and there, as he has done, he has lost his love for a house and home, and now he's trying to make Johanna as great a vagabond as himself. Fortunately, she's made of too noble stuff for that. Don't you remember she wrote in her last letter from London that, in spite of all that she had seen that was interesting and beautiful, she was looking forward with unutterable delight to a quiet home in Vienna? I was sure she would have been there by this time, and expected to receive my birthday letter from her there."

There was a pause. Aunt Thekla took from her pocket a letter which she had thrust there upon her brother's entrance, and, summoning courage, she said, timidly, "Dear Johann, I have received a letter from Vienna. Magelone——"

The Freiherr extended his hand forbiddingly. "Not another word!" he cried. "You know I will not hear that name, and one other beside it. Do not spoil the day for me. I am anxious enough about Johanna."

He frowned and cast down his eyes. Thekla sighed. Neither had heard a carriage drive into the court-yard; nor did they notice the restlessness of Leo, who pricked his ears, and ran to and fro between the window and the door. But now steps and voices were audible in the corridor. The door was hastily opened. The dog rushed out, barking loudly, and Lisbeth rushed in. "Grandpapa! Aunt!" the child called out. "Here they are! here they are!" The next moment Johanna's arms were around her grandfather's neck; Aunt Thekla, forgetful of her gout, was stretching out both hands to Ludwig, who entered the room with Johann Leopold; and Lisbeth was calling out, in the midst of salutations and congratulations, that she and Uncle Johann Leopold had been certain all along that the travellers would come to grandpapa's birthday, but that they had thought best to say nothing about it.

"No; the surprise is a perfect success," said the Freiherr. "But now sit down, children, and give an account of yourselves. It really looked as if you did not want to come back."

"And yet we have so longed to be here," Johanna replied, as she took a seat beside her grandfather, drew her little sister towards her, and patted and caressed Leo, who pressed up to her side. "If we could have followed our inclinations, you would have had us here weeks ago. But patients, and colleagues, and all sorts of learned people were not to be set aside. That is the night side of fame. But I must not say that," she interrupted herself. "Look how my tyrant frowns."

"He does not mean to be cross," Aunt Thekla said, consolingly. Ludwig and Johanna laughed, and Johann Leopold asked his aunt if Johanna gave her the impression of an ill-used wife. "Indeed, you both look well," he went on. "There is real summer sunshine in your eyes."

"The light of happiness!" said Ludwig. And his plain face grew almost handsome in the expression of intense satisfaction with which he looked down at his young wife, who, nestling into her arm-chair, and looking around upon them all, said, half in emotion, half in glee, "You cannot tell how happy I am to be with you again in dear old Dönninghausen, by this dear old fireplace. I should like never to stir. But must I dress? Have you guests?"

"Not until dinner," the Freiherr made answer. "Stay here now. I want to ask and to hear all sorts of things before the others come. The Wildenhayns are here, with all their train. So tell me, child, all about yourself since the last letters we had from you."

While Johanna was giving the desired account, Ludwig drew Johann Leopold aside. "Have you heard anything of Otto?" he asked.

Johann Leopold changed colour. "You have heard of his death already?" he asked, in his turn.

"Dead, then!" said Ludwig. "I only saw in the paper that he had been dangerously wounded in a duel."

"He died of the wound," Johann Leopold replied. "I had the news of his death yesterday, but I have not yet informed my grandfather of it. I did not wish to spoil his birthday. Does Johanna know?"

"Not yet. I wanted some certainty in the matter first," Ludwig made answer. And after a pause, he added, "I do not grudge her the reconciliation which death is wont to bring."

They were standing in a window-recess, looking down into the court-yard. A nurse was coming from the garden with Waldemar's children. Johann Leopold followed them with his eyes until they disappeared within the house, and then said, "How small an affair one human life is in the great sum of things! Races pass away, and not only does tradition live forever, as the poet sings, but life remains the same. The new generation thrives merrily, with no care for the leaf too early torn from the tree. It would once have been impossible for me to imagine Dönninghausen without Otto or Magelone."

"Since you have mentioned that name, I will tell you that I have lately seen its possessor," said Ludwig. "Under the pretence of consulting me as a physician she sent for me one day. She had been to Scotland with her husband. Her real reason for wanting to see me was to beg me to help her to bring about a reconciliation with the Freiherr. What do you think? Can he be persuaded to relent?"

Johann Leopold shrugged his shoulders: "Hitherto there has been but little, or rather no, prospect of it. It may be that Otto's death, which he must learn to-morrow, may make him more placable. Try your luck. But what is the matter with Magelone? She used to be the healthiest, most blooming creature in the world."

"Now she is nervous, as all women are who lead a merely fashionable existence," said Ludwig. "I hear that she is one of the most elegant and popular women in Vienna; but she declares that she is bored to death, and that nothing can make her happy save a reconciliation with her family——"

"Do not credit that, my dear doctor!" exclaimed Johann Leopold. "Magelone was never happy here. Our life is too simple, too serious for her. I cannot understand why she wants to come back."

"She simply and solely wants some kind of reality. We are not created to lead only the life of butterflies. If we delay in furnishing ourselves with some worthy interest, we shall be driven to seek it by our innate, and often unconscious, desire for it. With Magelone there is also the wayward humour of the child, who always wants most the plaything it cannot have. The Freiherr, she told me with a burst of tears, had declared that he never would receive her again unless she came alone and a beggar. And she appeared to consider the well-invested millions which her father-in-law has left as a terrible misfortune. And it was just so with her husband's devotion, without which, nevertheless, she assured me in piteous tones, she could not live; but then just as little could she forego Dönninghausen any longer. Finally, with another burst of tears, she declared that her childlessness was a punishment from heaven for marrying without the consent of her family. She appears to have entirely forgotten her far graver transgressions in another direction."

Johann Leopold smiled bitterly. "That is like her!" he said. "Moreover, in this matter the question is not of *her* sensations. How about Johanna? Could she agree to meet Magelone here?"

"I took her approval as a matter of course," said Ludwig. "In fact, I asked her to help me in the work of reconciliation. Magnanimous as she is——"

An appeal from the Freiherr interrupted him. "Come and help me, doctor." And when Ludwig approached, he went on: "I hope you will be more reasonable than Johanna, who seriously proposes to carry Lisbeth off. It is out of the question. The little thing has grown into our very hearts, the Herr Pastor is an excellent instructor for her, and in every way she is better off here than in the city with such vagabonds as you. Pronounce the word of command, my dear Werner, as a physician and a husband."

Ludwig shook his head, with a smile. "The affair must be settled by friendly agreement. Johanna is not used to words of command. As for the vagabondage, however, all that is at an end. Lectures, patients, the completion of what Johanna calls my fever-book, her own work, compel us to be domestic."

"And we are glad to be so," said Johanna. "You call us vagabonds, dear grandfather. Did you never hear the proverb, 'A vagabond has the truest love for home'?"

The Freiherr shook his head dubiously. "We shall see!" he said. "When the University holidays come you'll pack up and go off."

"Certainly we shall!" Ludwig interposed. "We shall come to Dönninghausen, if you'll have us."

"Now that is a promise!" cried the Freiherr, holding out his hands to Ludwig and Johanna, who clasped them cordially. "The bell for the second breakfast," he added, rising, and offering his arm to Johanna. "How astonished Waldemar and his wife and the Wildenhayns will be!"

Ludwig had taken Johann Leopold's place behind Aunt Thekla's wheeled-chair.

"To-day I shall push you into the dining-hall," he said. "But when I come again you will take my arm and walk there with me."

"You ought to stay here and cure Aunt Thekla," said Lisbeth. "Then Johanna would stay, and all would be well."

"There,—you hear!" said the Freiherr to Johanna. "The child feels at home here, and belongs to us as you do. Let me have her, since I must give you up. It will not be for long. Remember, I am eighty years old——"

"Dear grandfather, I should like to leave her with you for a long, long time!" exclaimed Johanna.

The Freiherr stood still. "That means you *will* leave her with me," he said. "I knew you would. You can't find it in your heart to refuse my request. I'll do something for you, too, some day."

Johanna looked up at him with a quick, inquiring glance, opened her lips as if to speak, but then cast down her eyes and was silent.

"Well, what are you thinking of?" the Freiherr asked. "Out with it!"

Johanna drew a long breath. "I should like to beg something of you, dear grandfather," she replied. "Forgive poor Magelone. Let her come to Dönninghausen. She's fairly ill with longing for you all."

The Freiherr's forehead flushed crimson. "This from you!" he growled. "Do you know what you are asking? Have you thought of how you would feel if you were obliged to meet her here?"

The eyes which Johanna raised to him were brighter than the Freiherr had ever before seen them. "Yes; I am too happy myself, my dear grandfather, to bear Magelone any ill will. If you could but forgive——"

His look grew gentler. "I'll see about it," he replied, looking full into the eyes that were gazing beseechingly into his own. "But is it true, child, are you happy,—really happy? Admirable as Ludwig is, much as I value him, I have had my anxieties about you. He seemed to me too harsh, too rough for you——"

"He is so no longer," said Johanna. "The more clearly he sees how much he is to me, the more does he become to me. So much that now I cannot understand how I ever could have parted from him. For in my earliest youth I loved him, as he loved me, and what beguiled me afterwards was but a phantom of my imagination. You see I cannot be angry with Magelone. Do not you be so either! Promise me——"

"I'll see about it! Come, now, they're waiting for us," the Freiherr interrupted her; adding, with a mixture of anger, pride, and satisfaction, "Hildegard and Hedwig call you half-blood. Nevertheless, you are the best Dönninghausen that ever lived."

THE END.

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[1] Anglicé, *stone*.

Gold Elsie. After the German of E. Marlitt.

Countess Gisela. After the German of E. Marlitt.

The Little Moorland Princess. After the German of E. Marlitt.

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