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BARBARA BLOMBERG

By Georg Ebers

Volume 8.

CHAPTER V.

Everything in Barbara's residence had remained as it was when she arrived, only the second story, since the departure of the marquise, had stood empty. Two horses had been left in the stable, the steward performed his duties as before, the cook presided in the kitchen, and Frau Lamperi attended to Barbara's rooms.

Nevertheless, at Wolf's first visit he was obliged to exert all his powers of persuasion to induce his miserable friend to give up her resolution of moving into her former home. Besides, after the conversation with Charles's messenger, she had felt so ill that no visitor except himself had been received.

When, a few days later, she learned that the Emperor had set out for Landshut, she entreated Wolf to seek out Pyramus Kogel, for she had just learned that during her illness her father's travelling companion had asked to see her, but, like every one else, had been refused. She grieved because they had forgotten to tell her this; but when she discovered that the same stately officer had called again soon after the relapse, she angrily upbraided, for the first time, Frau Lamperi, who was to blame for the neglect, and her grief increased when, on the same day, a messenger brought from the man who had twice been denied admittance a letter which inclosed one from her father, and briefly informed her that he should set out at once for Landshut. As she would not receive him, he must send her the captain's messages in this way.

It appeared from the old man's letter that, while leaving the ship at Antwerp, he had met with an

accident, and perhaps might long be prevented from undertaking the toilsome journey home. But he was well cared for, and if she was still his clear daughter, she must treat Herr Pyramus Kogel kindly this time, for he had proved a faithful son and good Samaritan to him.

A stranger's hand had written this letter, which contained nothing more about the old soldier's health, but reminded her of a tin tankard which he had forgotten to deliver, and urged her to care for the ever-burning lamp in the chapel. It closed with the request to offer his profound reverence at the feet of his Majesty, the most gracious, most glorious, and most powerful Emperor, and the remark that there was much to say about the country of Spain, but the best was certainly when one thought of it after turning the back upon it.

As a postscript, he had written with his own hand, as the crooked letters showed: "Mind what I told you about Sir Pyramus, without whom you would now be a deserted orphan. Can you believe that in all Spain there is no fresh butter to be had, either for bread or in the kitchen for roast meat, but instead rancid oil, which we should think just fit for burning?"

With deep shame Barbara realized through this letter how rarely she remembered her father. Only since she knew positively what joy and what anxiety awaited her had she again thought frequently of him, but always with great fear of the old man whose head had grown gray in an honourable life. Now the hour was approaching when she would be obliged to confess to him what she still strove to deem a peerless favour of Fate, for which future generations would envy her. Perhaps he who looked up to the Emperor Charles with such enthusiastic devotion would agree with her; perhaps what she must disclose to him would spoil the remainder of his life. The image of the aged sufferer, lying in pain and sorrow far from her old home, in a stranger's house, constantly forced itself upon her, and she often dwelt upon it, imagining it with ingenious self-torture.

Love for another had estranged her from him who possessed the first claim to every feeling of tenderness and gratitude in her heart. The thought that she could do nothing for him and give him no token of her love pierced deep into her soul. Every impulse of her being urged her to learn further details of him and his condition. As Pyramus Kogel was staying in Landshut, she wrote a note entreating him, if possible, to come to Ratisbon to tell her about her father, or, if this could not be, to inform her by letter how he fared.

There was no lack of messengers going to Landshut, and the answer was not delayed. During these war times, Pyramus answered, he was not his own master even for a moment; therefore he must deny himself a visit to her, and he also lacked time for a detailed account by letter. If, however, she could resolve to do him the honour of a visit, he would promise her a more cordial reception than he had experienced on her side. For the rest, her father was being carefully nursed, and his life was no longer in danger.

At first Barbara took this letter for an ungenerous attempt of the insulted man to repay the humiliation which he had received from her; but the news from the throngs of troops pouring into the city made the officer's request appear in a milder light, and the longing to ascertain her father's condition daily increased.

At the end of the first week in August her strength would have sufficed for the short drive to Landshut. True, she was as hoarse as when she gave the physician a disinclination to return, but she had regained her physical vigour, and had taken walks, without special fatigue, sometimes with Wolf, sometimes with Gombert. The latter, as well as Appenzelder, still frequently called upon her, and tried to diminish her grief over the injury to her voice by telling her of hundreds of similar cases which had resulted favourably.

The musicians were to return to Brussels the next day. Appenzelder would not leave his boy choir, but Gombert had accepted an invitation from the Duke of Bavaria, at whose court in Munich the best music was eagerly fostered. His road would lead him through Landshut, and how more than gladly Barbara would have accompanied him there!

She must now bid farewell to Appenzelder and Massi, and it was evident that the parting was hard for them also. The eyes of the former even grew dim with tears as he pressed a farewell kiss upon Barbara's brow. The little Maltese, Hannibal Melas, would have preferred to stay with her—nay, he did not cease entreating her to keep him, though only as a page; but how could he have been useful to her?

Finally, she was obliged to bid Wolf, too, farewell, perhaps for many years.

During the last few days he had again proved his old friendship in the most loyal manner. Through Quijada he had learned everything which concerned her and the Emperor Charles, and this had transformed his former love for Barbara, which was by no means dead, into tender compassion.

Not to serve the monarch or the husband of his new mistress in Villagarcia, but merely to lighten her own hard fate, he had not ceased to represent what consequences it might entail upon her if she should continue to defy the Emperor's command so obstinately.

He, too, saw in the convent the fitting place for her future life, now bereft of its best possessions; but although she succeeded in retaining her composure during his entreaties and warnings, she still most positively refused to obey the Emperor's order.

Her strong desire to visit Landshut was by no means solely from the necessity of hearing the particulars about her father, and the wish to see so brilliant an assemblage of troops from all countries, but especially the consuming longing to gaze once more into the face of the lover who was now making her so miserable, yet to whom she owed the greatest joy of her life.

And more!

She thought it would restore her peace of mind forever if she could succeed in speaking to him for even one brief moment and telling him what a transformation his guilt had wrought in her ardent love and her whole nature.

Wolf's representations and imploring entreaties remained as futile as those of Sister Hyacinthe and the abbesses of the Clare Sisters and the Convent of the Holy Cross, who had sought her by the confessor's wish. None of these pious women, except her nurse, knew the hope she cherished. They saw in her only the Emperor's discarded love; yet as such it seemed to them that Barbara was bidden to turn her back upon the world, which had nothing similar to offer her, in order, as the Saviour's bride, to seek a new and loftier happiness.

But Barbara's vivacious temperament shrank from their summons as from the tomb or the dungeon and, with all due reverence, she said so to the kindly nuns.

She desired no new happiness, nay, she could not imagine that she would ever again find joy in anything save the heavenly gift which she expected with increasing fear, and yet glad hope. Yet they wished to deprive her of this exquisite treasure, this peerless comfort for the soul! But she had learned how to defend herself, and they should never succeed in accomplishing this shameful purpose. She would keep her child, though it increased the Emperor's resentment to the highest pitch, and deprived her of every expectation of his care.

Eagerly as Wolf praised Quijada's noble nature, she commanded him to assure the Castilian, whose messenger he honestly confessed himself to be, that she would die rather than yield to the Emperor's demands.

When the time at last came to part from Wolf also, and he pressed his lips to her hand, she felt that she could rely upon him, no matter how sad her future life might be. He added many another kind and friendly word; then, in an outburst of painful emotion, cried: "If only you had been contented with my faithful love, Wawerl, how very different, how much better everything would have been, how happy I might be! and, if loyal love possesses the power of bestowing happiness, you, too——"

Here Barbara pointed mournfully to her poor aching throat and, while he earnestly protested that, deeply as he lamented the injury to her voice, this cruel misfortune would by no means have lessened his love, her eyes suddenly flashed, and there was a strange quiver around the corners of her mouth as she thought: "Keep that opinion. But I would not exchange for a long life, overflowing with the happiness which you, dear, good fellow, could offer me, the brief May weeks that placed me among the few who are permitted to taste the highest measure of happiness."

Yet she listened with sincere sympathy to what he had heard of Villagarcia and Magdalena de Ulloa, Quijada's wife, and what he expected to find there and in Valladolid.

It pleased her most to know that he would be permitted to return sometimes to the Netherlands. When once there, he must seek her out wherever her uncertain destiny had cast her.

When, in saying this, her hoarse voice failed and tears of pain and sorrow filled her eyes, emotion overpowered him also and, after he had again urged her to submit to the will of their imperial master, he tore himself away with a last farewell.

The ardent, long-cherished passion which had brought the young knight full of hope to Ratisbon had changed to compassion. With drooping head, disappointed, and heavily burdened with anxiety for the future of the woman who had exerted so powerful an influence upon his fate, he left the home of his childhood; but Barbara saw him go with the sorrowful fear that, in the rural solitude which awaited him in Spain, her talented friend would lose his art and every loftier aspiration; yet both felt sure that,

whatever might be the course of their lives, each would hold a firm place in the other's memory.

A few hours after this farewell Barbara received a letter from the Council, in which Wolf Hartschwert secured to her and her father during their lives the free use of the house which he had inherited in Red Cock Street, with the sole condition of allowing his faithful Ursula to occupy the second story until her death.

The astonished girl at once went to express her thanks for so much kindness; but Wolf had left Ratisbon a short time before, and when Barbara entered the house she found old Ursula at the window with her tear-stained face resting on her clasped hands. When she heard her name called, she raised her little head framed in the big cap, and as soon as she recognised the unexpected visitor she cast so malevolent a glance at her that a shiver ran through the girl's frame.

After a few brief words of greeting, Barbara left the old woman, resolving not to enter the house soon again.

In passing the chapel she could and would not resist its strong power of attraction. With bowed head she entered the quiet little sanctuary, repeated a paternoster, and prayed fervently to the Mother of God to restore the clearness of her voice once more. While doing so, she imagined that the gracious intercessor gazed down upon her sometimes compassionately, sometimes reproachfully, and, in the consciousness of her guilt, she raised her hands, imploring forgiveness, to the friendly, familiar figure.

How tenderly the Christ-child nestled to the pure, exalted mother! Heaven intended to bestow a similar exquisite gift upon her also, and already insolent hands were outstretched to tear it from her. True, she was determined to defend herself bravely, yet her best friend advised her to yield without resistance to this unprecedented demand.

What should she do?

With her brow pressed against the priedieu, she strove to attain calm reflection in the presence of the powerful and gracious Queen of Heaven. If she yielded the child to its cruel father, she would thereby surrender to him the only happiness to which she still possessed a claim; if she succeeded in keeping it for herself, she would deprive it of the favour of the mighty sovereign, who possessed the power to bestow upon it everything which the human heart craves. Should she persist in resistance or yield to the person to whom she had already sacrificed so much the great blessing which had the ability to console her for every other loss, even the most cruel?

Then her refractory heart again rebelled. This was too much; Heaven itself could not require it of her, the divine Mother who, before her eyes, was pressing her child so tenderly to her bosom, least of all. Hers, too, would be a gift of God, and, while repeating this to herself, it seemed as though a voice cried out: "It is the Lord himself who intends to confide this child to you, and if you give it up you deprive it of its mother and rob it—you have learned that yourself—of its best possession. What was given to you to cherish tenderly, you can not confide to another without angering him who bestowed the guerdon upon you."

Just at that moment she thought of the star, her lover's first memento, with which she had parted from weakness, though with a good intention.

The misfortune which she was now enduring had grown out of this lamentable yielding. No! She would not, ought not to allow herself to be robbed of her precious hope. One glance at the Mother and Child put an end to any further consideration.

Comforted and strengthened, she went her way homeward, scarcely noticing that Peter Schlumperger and his sister, whom she met, looked away from her with evident purpose.

CHAPTER VI.

That night Barbara dreamed of her father. Birds of prey were attacking his body as it lay upon the ground, and she could not drive them off. The terror with which this spectacle had disturbed her sleep could not be banished during the morning. Now, whatever it cost, she must go to Landshut and hear some tidings of him.

Maestro Gombert would set out for Munich the next day, and in doing so must pass the neighbouring

city. If he would carry her with him, she would be safe. He came at twilight to take leave of her, and with genuine pleasure gave her the second seat in his travelling carriage.

Early the following morning the vehicle, drawn by post horses, stopped before the little Prebrunn castle, and Barbara was soon driving with the musician through the pleasant country in the warm August day.

Sister Hyacinthe and Fran Lamperi had tried to prevent her departure by entreaties and remonstrances, for both feared that the long ride might injure her; and, moreover, the latter had been charged by Quijada, in the Emperor's name, to keep her in the castle and, if she left it, to inform him at once by a mounted messenger.

As Barbara could not be detained, Frau Lamperi, though reluctantly, obeyed this command.

Before leaving Prebrunn Barbara had warned Gombert that he would find her a very uninteresting companion, since it was still impossible to talk much; but Gombert would not admit this. To a true friend, the mere presence of the other gives pleasure, even though he should not open his lips.

The girl had become very dear to him, and her presence made time pass swiftly, for the great musician liked to talk and conversed bewitchingly, and he had long since discovered that Barbara was a good listener.

Besides, the motley life on the road attracted his attention as well as his travelling companion's, for the war had begun, and already would have resulted in a great victory for the Smalcalds, at the foot of the Bavarian Alps, had not the Augsburg Military Council prevented the able commander in chief Schartlin von Burtenbach and his gallant lieutenant Schenkwitz from profiting by the advantage won. The way to Italy and Trent, where the Council was in session, was already open to the allied Protestants, but they were forbidden from the green table to follow it. It would have led them through Bavarian territory, and thereby perhaps afforded Duke William, the ruler of the country, occasion to abjure his neutrality and turn openly against the Smalcalds.

The shortsightedness with which the Protestants permitted the Emperor to remain so long in Ratisbon unmolested, and gather troops and munitions of war, Gombert had heard termed actually incomprehensible.

The travellers might expect to find a large force in Landshut, among the rest ten thousand Italians and eight thousand Spaniards. This, the musician explained to his companion, was contrary to the condition of his Majesty's election, which prohibited his bringing foreign soldiers into Germany; but war was a mighty enterprise, which broke even Firmer contracts.

A bitter remark about the man who, even in peace, scorned fidelity and faith, rose to Barbara's lips; but as she knew the warm enthusiasm which Gombert cherished for his imperial master, she controlled herself, and continued to listen while he spoke of the large re-enforcements which Count Buren was leading from the Netherlands.

A long and cruel war might be expected, for, though his Majesty assumed that religion had nothing to do with it, the saying went—here Catholics, here Protestants. The Pope gave his blessing to those who joined Charles's banner, and wherever people had deserted the Church they said that they were taking the field for the pure religion against the unchristian Council and the Romish antichrist.

"But it really can not be a war in behalf of our holy faith," Barbara here eagerly interposed, "for the Duke of Saxony is our ally, and Oh, just look! we must pass there directly."

She pointed as she spoke to a peasant cart just in front of them, whose occupants had been hidden until now by the dust of the road. They were two Protestant clergymen in the easily recognised official costume of their faith—a long, black robe and a white ruff around the neck.

Gombert, too, now looked in surprise at the ecclesiastical gentlemen, and called the commander of the four members of the city guard who escorted his carriage.

The troops marching beside them were the soldiers of the Protestant Margrave Hans von Kustrin who, in spite of his faith, had joined the Emperor, his secular lord, who asserted that he was waging no religious war. The clergymen were the field chaplains of the Protestant bands.

When the travellers had passed the long baggage train, in which women and children filled peasant carts or trudged on foot, and reached the soldiers themselves, they found them well-armed men of sturdy figure.

The Neapolitan regiment, which preceded the Kustrin one, presented an entirely different appearance with its shorter, brown-skinned, light-footed soldiers. Here, too, there was no lack of soldiers' wives and children, and from two of the carts gaily bedizened soldiers' sweethearts waved their hands to the travellers. In front of the regiment were two wagons with racks, filled with priests and monks bearing crosses and church banners, and before them, to escape the dust, a priest of higher rank with his vicar rode on mules decked with gay trappings.

On the way to Eggmuhl the carriage passed other bodies of troops. Here the horses were changed, and now Gombert walked with Barbara in front of the vehicle to "stretch their legs."

A regiment from the Upper Palatinate was encamped outside of the village. The prince to whom it belonged had given it a free ration of wine at the noonday rest, and the soldiers were now lying on the grass with loosened helmets and armour, feeling very comfortable, and singing in their deep voices a song newly composed in honour of the Emperor Charles to the air, "Cheer up, ye gallant soldiers all!"

The couple so skilled in music stopped, and Barbara's heart beat quicker as she listened to the words which the fair-haired young trooper close beside her was singing in an especially clear voice:

"Cheer up, ye gallant soldiers all!
Be blithe and bold of mind
With faith on God we'll loudly call,
Then on our ruler kind.
His name is worthy of our praise,
Since to the throne God doth him raise;
So we will glorify him, too,
And render the obedience due.
Of an imperial race he came,
To this broad empire heir;
Carolus is his noble name,
God-sent its crown to wear.
Mehrer is his just title grand,
The sovereign of many a land
Which God hath given to his care
His name rings on the air!"

[Mehrer—The increaser, an ancient title of the German emperors]

How much pleasure this song afforded Barbara, although it praised the man whom she thought she hated; and when the third verse began with the words,

"So goodly is the life he leads
Within this earthly vale,"

oh, how gladly she would have joined in!

That could not be, but she sang with them in her heart, for she had long since caught the tune, and how intently the soldiers would have listened if it had been possible for her to raise her voice as usual! Amid the singing of all these men her clear, bell-like tones would have risen like the lark soaring from the grain field, and what a storm of applause would have greeted her from these rough throats!

Grief for the lost happiness of pouring forth her feelings in melody seized upon her more deeply than for a long time. She would fain have glided quietly away to escape the cause of this fresh sorrow. But Gombert was listening to the young soldier's song with interest, so Barbara continued to hear the young warrior as, with evident enthusiasm, he sang the verse:

"Patient and tolerant is he,
Nor vengeance seeks, nor blood;
E'en though he errs, as well may be,
His heart is ever good."

She, too, had deemed this heart so, but now she knew better. Yet it pleased her that the fair-haired soldier so readily believed the poet and, obeying a hasty impulse, she put her hand into the pouch at her belt to give him a gold piece; but Gombert nudged her, and in his broken Netherland German repeated the verse which he had just heard:

"'Tis stern necessity that forced
The sword into his hand;

'Tis not for questions of the faith
That he doth make his stand."

So the soldiers believed that their commander had only grasped the sword when compelled to do so, and that religion had nothing to do with the war, but the leader of the orchestra knew better. The conversations of the Spaniards at the court, and the words which De Soto had uttered lauding the Emperor, "Since God placed my foes in my hands, I must wage war upon his enemies," were plain enough.

Gombert repeated this remark in a low tone but, ere Barbara could answer him, the carriage, with its fresh relay of horses, stopped in the road.

It was time to get in again, but Barbara dreaded the ride over the rough, crowded highway, and begged her companion to pursue their journey a little farther on foot. He consented and, as the girl now flung a gold gulden to the blond leader of the voices, cheers from the soldiers followed them.

Leaning on Gombert's arm, Barbara now moved on more cheerfully until they were stopped by the vivandiere's counter.

The portly woman stood comfortably at ease behind her eatables and drinkables, rested her fists on her hips, and glanced toward her assistant, who stared boldly into the musician's face, and asked him to take some refreshment for himself and his sweetheart.

She was a young creature, with features prematurely haggard, cheeks scarlet with rouge, and eyebrows and lashes dyed black. The infant which a pale little girl nine years old was tending belonged to her. She had had her hair cut close, and her voice was so discordantly hoarse that it hurt Barbara's ears.

As the bold young woman tapped Gombert lightly on the arm and, with fresh words of invitation, pointed toward the counter, a shiver ran through Barbara's limbs. Even her worst enemy would not have ventured to compare her with this outcast, but she did herself as she thought of her own cropped hair and injured voice. Perhaps the child in the arms of the pale nine-year-old nurse was disowned by its father, and did not the greatest of sovereigns intend to do the same to his, if the mother refused to obey him?

These disagreeable thoughts fell upon her soul like mildew upon growing grain, and after Gombert had helped her into the carriage again she begged him to let her rest in silence for a while. The Netherlander, it is true, had no suspicion of her condition, but he knew that she had not yet wholly recovered, and carefully pushed his own knapsack under her feet.

Barbara now closed her eyes and pretended to be asleep, yet she tortured her mind with the same question which she had vainly tried to decide in the chapel of Wolf's house. Besides, she was troubled about the information which the recruiting officer might give her concerning her father. And suppose she should meet the Emperor Charles in Landshut, and be permitted to speak to him?

The blare of trumpets and a loud shout of command roused her from this joyless reverie. The carriage was passing some squads of Hungarian cavalry moving at a walk toward Landshut.

Their gay, brilliant appearance scattered the self-torturing thoughts. Why should she spoil the delightful drive with her friend, which, besides, was nearly over? Even if the worst happened, it would come only too soon.

So drawing a long breath, she again turned to her companion, and Gombert rejoiced in the refreshing influence which, as he supposed, her sleep had exerted upon her. In an hour he must part from the artist to whom he owed so much pleasure, whose beauty warmed his aging heart, and who he frequently wished might regain the wonderful gift now so cruelly lost. Her fiery vivacity, her thoroughly natural, self-reliant unconcern, her fresh enthusiasm, the joyousness and industry with which she toiled at her own cultivation, and the gratitude with which any musical instruction had been received, had endeared her to him. It would be a pleasure to see her again, and a veritable banquet of the soul to hear her sing in the old way.

He told her this with frank affection, and represented to her how much better suited she was to Brussels than to her stately but dull and quiet Ratisbon.

With enthusiastic love for his native land, he described the bustling life in his beautiful, wealthy home. There music and every art flourished; there, besides the Emperor and his august sister, were great nobles who with cheerful lavishness patronized everything that was beautiful and worthy of esteem; thither flocked strangers from the whole world; there festivals were celebrated with a

magnificence and joyousness witnessed nowhere else on earth. There was the abode of freedom, joy, and mirth.

Barbara had often wished to see the Netherlands, which the Emperor Charles also remembered with special affection, but no one had ever thus transported her to the midst of these flourishing provinces and this blithesome people.

During the maestro's description her large eyes rested upon his lips as if spellbound. She, too, must see this Brabant, and, like every newly awakened longing, this also quickly took possession of her whole nature. Only in the Netherlands, she thought, could she regain her lost happiness. But what elevated this idea to a certainty in her mind was not only the fostering of music, the spectacles and festivals, the magnificent velvet, the rustling silk, and the gay, varied life, not only the worthy Appenzelder and the friend at her side, but, far above all other things, the circumstance that Brussels was the home of the Emperor Charles, that there, there alone, she might be permitted to see again and again, at least from a distance, the man whom she hated.

Absorbed in the Netherlands, she forgot to notice the nearest things which presented themselves to her gaze.

The last hour of the drive had passed with the speed of an arrow, both to her and her travelling companion, and just as they were close to the left bank of the Isar, which was flowing toward them, Gombert's old servant turned and, pointing before him with his outstretched hand, exclaimed, "Here we are in Landshut!" she perceived that the goal of their journey was gained.

Barbara was familiar with this flourishing place, above which proudly towered the Trausnitzburg, for here lived her uncle Wolfgang Lorberer, who had married her mother's sister, and was a member of the city Council. Two years before she had spent a whole month as a guest in his wealthy household, and she intended now to seek shelter there again. Fran Martha had invited her more than once to come soon, and meanwhile her two young cousins had grown up.

Two arms of the Isar lay before her, and between them the island of Zweibrucken.

Before the coach rolled across the first, Barbara gathered her luggage together and told the postboy where he was to drive. He knew the handsome Lorberer house, and touched his cap when he heard its owner's name. Barbara was glad to be brought to her relatives by the famous musician; she did not wish to appear as though she had dropped from the clouds in the house of the aunt who was the opposite of her dead mother, a somewhat narrow-minded, prudish woman, of whom she secretly stood in awe.

CHAPTER VII.

Progress was very slow, for many peasants and hogs were coming toward them from the Schweinemarkt at their right.

The gate was on the second bridge, and here the carriage was compelled to stop on account of paying the toll. But it could not have advanced in any case; a considerable number of vehicles and human beings choked the space before and beyond the gate. Horsemen of all sorts, wagons of regiments marching in and out, freight vans and country carts, soldiers, male and female citizens, peasants and peasant women, monks, travelling journeymen, and vagrants impeded their progress, and it required a long time ere the travelling carriage could finally pass the gate and reach the end of the bridge.

There the crowd between it, the Hospital of the Holy Ghost, and the church belonging to it seemed absolutely impenetrable. The vehicle was forced to stop, and Gombert stood up and overlooked the motley throng surrounding it.

Barbara had also risen from her seat, pointed out to her companion one noteworthy object after another, and finally a handsome sedan chair which rested on the ground beside the hospital.

"His Majesty's property," she said eagerly; "I know it well."

Here she hesitated and turned pale, for she had just noticed what Gombert now called to her attention.

Don Luis Quijada, with the haughty precision of the Castilian grandee, was passing through the humble folk around him and advancing directly toward her.

All who separated him from the carriage submissively made way for the commander of the Lombard regiment; but Barbara looked toward the right and the left, and longed to spring from the vehicle and hide herself amid the throng.

But it was too late for that.

She could do nothing except wait to learn what he desired, and yet she knew perfectly well that Don Luis was not coming to the musician, but to her, and that he was bringing some startling, nay, probably some terrible news.

She had not met him since she had poured forth the indignation of her heart. Now he was standing close beside the carriage, but his grave face looked less stern than it did at that time.

After he had bent his head slightly to her and held out his hand to Gombert with friendly condescension, he thanked him for the kindness with which he had made room for his travelling companion, and then, with quiet courtesy, informed Barbara that he had come on behalf of his Majesty, who feared that she might not find suitable lodgings in overcrowded Landshut. The sedan chair stood ready over there by the hospital.

The longing to escape this fresh outrage from the mighty despot seized upon Barbara more fiercely than ever, but flight in this crowd was impossible, and as she met Quijada's grave glance she forced herself to keep silence. She could not endure to make the Netherland maestro, who was kindly disposed toward her, and whom she honoured, a witness of her humiliation. So she was compelled to reserve what she wished to say to the Spaniard until later, and therefore only bade her friend farewell and, scarcely able to control her voice, expressed her regret that she could not take him to the Lorberers, since his Majesty was making other arrangements for her.

Another clasp of the Netherlander's hand, a questioning glance into the Castilian's calm face, and she was forced to consider herself the Emperor Charles's prisoner.

True, her captor studiously showed her every attention; he helped her out of the carriage with the utmost care, and then led her through the moving throng of people to the sedan chair, behind which a mounted groom was holding Quijada's noble steed by the bridle.

While Don Luis was helping Barbara into the chair, she asked in a low tone what she was to think of this act of violence, and where she was being taken.

"His Majesty's command," was the reply. "I think you will be satisfied with your lodgings here." The girl shrugged her shoulders indignantly, and asked if she might only know how it had been discovered that she was on her way to Landshut; but Don Luis, in a gayer manner than his usual one, answered, "A little bird sang it to us, and I waited for you just here because, at the end of the bridge, we are most certain to meet whoever is obliged to cross either branch of the river." Then, in a tone so grave as to exclude any idea of mockery, he added, "You see how kindly his Majesty has provided for your welfare."

Closing the sedan chair as he spoke, he rode on before her.

Meanwhile contradictory emotions were seething and surging in Barbara's breast.

Where were they taking her?

Did the Emperor intend to make her a prisoner? He certainly possessed the power. Who would dare to resist him?

She could attain no clearness of thought, for, while giving free course to the indignation of her soul, she was gazing out at the open sides of the sedan chair.

Every house, every paving stone here was familiar and awakened some memory. A crowd of people surrounded her, and among them appeared many a foreign soldier on foot and on horseback, who would have been well worthy of an attentive glance. But what did she care for the Italians in helmets and coats of mail who filled the Altstadt—the main business street of Landshut—through which she was being carried? She doubtless cast a glance toward the Town Hall, where her uncle was now devising means to provide shelter for this legion of soldiers and steeds, doubtless put her head a little out of the window as she approached the houses and arcades in the lower stories, and the Lorberer mansion, with the blunt gable, where she had spent such happy days, appeared. But she quickly drew it back again; if any of her relatives should see her, what answer could she make to questions?

But no one perceived her, and who knows whether they would not have supposed the delicate, troubled face, short locks of hair, and unnaturally large eyes to be those of another girl who only resembled the blooming, healthful Barbara of former days?

She also glanced toward the richly decorated portal of St. Martin's Church, standing diagonally opposite to the sedan chair, and tried to look up to the steeple, which was higher than almost any other in the world.

Even in Ratisbon there was not a handsomer, wider street than this Altstadt, with its stately gable-roofed houses, and certainly not in Munich, where her uncle had once taken her, and the Bavarian dukes now resided.

But where, in Heaven's name, would she be borne?

The sedan chair was now swaying past the place where the "short cut" for pedestrians led up to the Trausnitzburg, the proud citadel of the dukes of Bavarian Landshut. She leaned forward again to look up at it as it towered far above her head on the opposite side of the way; the powerful ruler whose captive she was probably lodged there.

But now!

What did this mean?

The sedan chair was set down, and it was just at the place where the road at her left, leading to the citadel, climbed the height where rose the proud Trausnitz fortress.

Perhaps she might now find an opportunity to escape.

Barbara hastily opened the door, but one of her attendants closed it again, and in doing so pressed her gently back into the chair. At the same time he shook his head, and, while his little black eyes twinkled slyly at her, his broad, smiling mouth, over which hung a long black mustache, uttered a good-natured "No, no."

Now the ascent of the mountain began. A wall bordered the greater portion of the road, which often led through a ravine overgrown with brushwood and past bastions and other solid masonry.

The bearers had already mounted to a considerable height, yet there was no view of the city and the neighbouring country. But even the loveliest prospect would not have induced Barbara to open her eyes, for the indignation which overpowered her had increased to fierce rage, blended with a fear usually alien to her courageous soul.

In the one tower of the citadel there were prisons of tolerably pleasant aspect, but she had heard whispers of terrible subterranean dungeons connected with the secret tribunal.

Suppose the Emperor Charles intended to lock her in one of these dungeons and withdraw her from the eyes of the world? Who could guard her from this horrible fate? who could prevent him from keeping her buried alive during her life?

Shuddering, she looked out again. If she was not mistaken, they were nearing the end of the road, and she would soon learn what was before her. Perhaps the Emperor Charles himself was awaiting her up there. But if he asked her whether she intended always to defy him, she would show him that Barbara Blomberg was not to be intimidated; that she knew how to defend herself and, if necessary, to suffer; that she would be ready to risk everything to baffle his design and carry out her own resolve. Then he should see that nations and kings, nay, even the Holy Father in Rome— as Charles had once sacrilegiously done—may be vanquished and humbled; that the hard, precious stone may be crushed and solid metal melted, but the steadfast will of a woman battling for what she holds dearest can not be broken.

The sedan chair had already passed through half a dozen citadel gates and left one solid wall behind it, but now a second rose, with a lofty door set in its strong masonry.

When Barbara had formerly ascended the Trausnitz, with what pleasure she had gazed at the deep moat at her left, the pheasants, the stately peacocks, and other feathered creatures, as well as a whole troop of lively monkeys; but this time she saw nothing except that the heavy iron-bound portals of the entrance opened before her, that the drawbridge, though the sun was close to the western horizon, was still lowered, and that Quijada stood at the end, motioning to the bearers to set the sedan chair on the ground.

Now the major-domo opened the door, and this time he was not alone; Barbara saw behind him a woman whose appearance, spite of her angry excitement, inspired confidence.

The questions which, without heeding his companion, she now with crimson cheeks poured upon Don Luis as if fairly frantic, he answered in brief, businesslike words.

The Emperor Charles wished to place her in safe quarters up here, while he himself had taken lodgings in the modest house of a Schwaiger—a small farmer who tilled his own garden and land in the valley below.

For the present, some of the most distinguished officers were here in the citadel as guests of the Duke of Bavaria. Barbara was to live in the ladies' apartments of the fortress, under the care of the worthy woman at his side.

"His Majesty could not have provided for you more kindly," he concluded.

"Then may the Virgin preserve every one from such kindness!" she impetuously exclaimed. "I am dragged to this citadel against my will—"

"And that irritates your strong feeling of independence, which we know," replied the Spaniard quietly. "But when you listen to reason, fairest lady, you will soon be reconciled to this wise regulation of his Majesty. If not, it will be your own loss. But," he added in a lowered tone, "this is no fitting place for a conversation which might easily degenerate into a quarrel. It can be completed better in your own apartments."

While speaking he led the way, and Barbara followed without another word of remonstrance, for soldiers of all ages and other gentlemen were walking in the large, beautiful courtyard which she overlooked; a group of lovers of horseflesh were examining some specially fine steeds, and from several of the broad windows which surrounded the Trausnitz courtyard on all sides men's faces were looking down at her.

This courtyard had always seemed to her a stage specially suitable for the display of royal magnificence, and yet, in spite of its stately size, it would be difficult to imagine anything more pleasant, more thoroughly secluded.

It had formerly witnessed many brilliant knightly games and festal scenes, but even now it was the favourite gathering place for the inhabitants of the citadel and the guests of the ducal owner, though the latter, it is true, had ceased to live here since Landshut had become the heritage of the Munich branch of the Wittelsbach family, and the Bavarian dukes resided in Munich, the upper city on the Isar.

Just as Barbara entered the castle the vesper bell rang, and Quijada paused with bared head, his companions with clasped hands.

The girl prisoner felt little inclination to pray; she was probably thinking of a dance given here by torchlight, in which, as her uncle's guest, she had taken part until morning began to dawn.

While they were walking on again, she also remembered the riding at the ring in the Trausnitz courtyard, which she had been permitted to witness.

The varied, magnificent spectacle had made her almost wild with delight. The dance in this square had been one of her fairest memories. And with what feelings she looked down into this courtyard again! What could such an amusement be to her now? Yet it roused a bitter feeling that, in spite of her youth, such scenes should be closed to her forever.

She silently followed the others into an airy room in the third story, whose windows afforded a beautiful view extending to the Bohemian forests.

But Barbara was too weary to bestow more than a fleeting glance upon it.

Paying no heed to the others, she sank down upon the bench near one of the walls of the room, and while she was still talking with Don Luis her new companion, of whose name she was still ignorant, brought several cushions and silently placed them behind her back.

This chamber, Quijada explained, he had selected for her by his Majesty's permission. The adjoining room would be occupied by this good lady—he motioned to his companion—the wife of Herr Adrian Dubois, his Majesty's valet. Being a native of Cologne, she understood German, and had offered to bear her company. If Barbara desired, she could also summon the garde-robriere Lamperi from Ratisbon to the Trausnitz.

Here she interrupted him with the question how long the Emperor intended to detain her here.

"As long as it suits his imperial pleasure and the physician deems advisable," was the reply. Barbara merely shrugged her shoulders again; she felt utterly exhausted. But when Quijada, who perceived that she needed rest, was about to leave her, she remembered the cause of her drive to Landshut, and asked whether she might speak to her father's travelling companion, who could give her information about the health of the old man who, after the Emperor had sent him out into the world, had fallen ill in Antwerp.

This was willingly granted, and Don Luis even undertook to send Sir Pyramus Kogel, whom he knew by sight, to her. Then commending her to the care of Fran Dubois, who was directed to gratify every reasonable wish, he left the room. Meanwhile Barbara desired nothing except rest, but she studiously refrained from addressing even a word to her new companion. Besides, there was little time to do so, she was soon sound asleep.

When at the end of two hours she awoke, she found herself lying at full length upon the bench, while a careful hand had removed her shoes, and the pillows which had supported her weary back were now under her head.

During her slumber it had grown dark, and a small lamp, whose rays a handkerchief shielded from her eyes, was standing on the stove in one corner of the room.

Yet she was alone; but she had scarcely stirred when Frau Dubois appeared with a maid-servant bearing a candelabrum with lighted candles. The careful nurse asked in brief but pleasant words whether she felt stronger, if it would be agreeable to her to have supper served in fifteen minutes, and if she would allow her to help her.

"Willingly," replied Barbara, very pleasantly surprised. Her companion, as it were, anticipated her strongest wishes—to satisfy her hunger and to change her dress.

She must be capable and, moreover, a woman of kindly, delicate feelings, and it certainly was no fault of hers that she was intrusted with her guardianship and that she belonged to no higher station in life. She was only punishing herself by persisting in her silence and, as Frau Dubois tended her like a watchful mother, though without addressing a single word to her unasked, Barbara's grateful heart and the satisfaction which the valet's wife inspired silenced her arrogance.

When an attendant laid the table for only one person, the girl kindly invited Frau Dubois to dine with her; the former, however, had already had her meal, but she said that she would be very glad to bear the young lady company if she desired.

The first long conversation between the two took place at the table.

The pretty face of the native of the Rhine country, with its little snub nose, which in youth must have lent a touch of gay pertness to the well-formed features, was still unwrinkled, though Frau Dubois was nearer fifty than forty. Her gray, nearly white hair, though ill-suited to her almost youthful features, lent them a peculiar charm, and how brightly her round, brown eyes still sparkled! The plain gown of fine Brabant stuff fitted as if moulded to her figure, and it was difficult to imagine anything neater than her whole appearance.

Adrian had certainly attained an exceptional position among his class, yet Barbara wondered how he had won this woman, who apparently belonged to a far higher station. And then what had brought her to this place and her companionship?

She was to learn during the meal, for Frau Dubois not only answered her questions kindly, but in a manner which showed Barbara sincere sympathy for her position.

She was the daughter of a captain who had fallen in the Emperor Charles's service before Padua. The pension granted to his widow had not been paid, and when, with her daughter, she sought an audience with the commander in chief, the influential valet had seen the blooming girl, and did not seek her hand in vain. Maternal joys had been denied her; besides, Frau Dubois thought it hard that her husband was obliged to accompany the Emperor, who could not spare him for a single day, on his long and numerous journeys. Even the very comfortable life secured to her by the distinguished valet, who was respected by men of the highest rank, by no means consoled her for it.

The Emperor Charles knew this, and had given Adrian a pretty house in the park of the Brussels palace, besides favouring him in other ways. Now he had allowed him, before setting out for the war, to send for his wife. On reaching Landshut, she had shared during a few hours the little house which the monarch and general had chosen for his lodgings. The imperial commander had not gone up to the

citadel because he wished to remain among his troops.

True, the little farmhouse on the "hohen Gred" which he occupied was anything but a suitable abode for a powerful sovereign, for above the ground floor it had only a single story with five small windows and an unusually high roof. But, on the other hand, the regiments lying encamped near it could be quickly reached. Another reason for making the choice was that he could obtain rest here better than on the Trausnitz, for his health was as bad as his appearance and his mood. He intended to break up the headquarters on the day after to-morrow, so another separation awaited the valet and his wife.

When the mounted messenger sent by Frau Lamperi reached Landshut, and it was necessary to find a suitable companion for Barbara, the Emperor himself had thought of Fran Dubois.

There had been no opposition to his wish. Besides, she said, his Majesty meant kindly by Barbara and, so far as her power extended, everything should be done to soften her hard destiny.

She knew the whole history of the girl intrusted to her care, yet she would scarcely have undertaken the task committed to her had she not been aware that every determination of the Emperor was immovable. Besides, she could also strive to render the hard fate imposed upon the poor girl more endurable.

Barbara had listened eagerly to the story without interrupting her; then she desired to learn further particulars concerning the health of the man from whom even now her soul could not be sundered and, finally, she urged her to talk about herself.

So time passed with the speed of the wind. The candles in the candelabrum were already half burned down when Fran Dubois at last urged going to rest.

Barbara felt that she was fortunate to have found so kind and sensible a companion and, while the Rhinelander was helping her undress, she begged her in future to call her by her Christian name "Gertrud," or, as people liked to address her, "Frau Traut."

CHAPTER VIII.

When Barbara rose from her couch the next morning it was no longer early in the day. She had slept soundly and dreamlessly for several hours, then she had been kept awake by the same thoughts which had pressed upon her so constantly of late.

She would defy Charles's cruel demand. The infuriating compulsion inflicted upon her could only strengthen her resolve. If she was dragged to a convent by force, she would refuse, at the ceremony of profession, to become a nun.

She thought of a pilgrimage to induce Heaven to restore the lost melody of her voice. But meanwhile the longing to see the Emperor Charles's face once more again and again overpowered her. On the other hand, the desire to speak to him and upbraid him to his face for the wrong he had done her was soon silenced; it could only spoil his memory of her if he should hear the discordant tones which inflicted pain on her own ear.

Another train of thoughts had also kept her awake. How was her father faring? Had he learned what she feared to confess to him? What had befallen him, and what had the recruiting officer to tell of his fate?

She was to know soon enough, for she had scarcely risen from breakfast when a ducal servant announced Sir Pyramus.

Barbara with anxious heart awaited his entrance, and as she stood there, her cheeks slightly flushed and her large, questioning eyes fixed upon the door, she seemed to Frau Traut, in spite of her short hair and the loss of the rounded oval of her face, so marvellously beautiful that she perfectly understood how she had succeeded in kindling so fierce a flame in the Emperor's heart, difficult as it was to fire.

Frau Traut did not venture to determine what made the blood mount into Pyramus's cheeks when Barbara at his entrance held out her slender white hand, for she had left the room immediately after his arrival. But she did not need to remain absent long; the interview ended much sooner than she

expected.

This young officer was certainly a man of splendid physique, with handsome, manly features, yet she thought she perceived in his manner an air of constraint which repelled her and, in fact, this gigantic soldier was conscious that if, for a single moment, he relinquished the control he imposed upon himself his foolish heart would play him a trick.

Barbara had seemed more beautiful than ever as she greeted him with almost humble friendliness, instead of her former defiance. The hoarse tone of her voice, once so musical, caused him so much pain that he was on the verge of losing his power to keep his resolve to conceal the feelings which, in spite of the insults she had heaped upon him, he still cherished for her. While he allowed himself to look into her face, he realized for the first time how difficult a task he had undertaken, and therefore tried to assume an expression of indifference as he began the conversation with the remark that the ride to the citadel was detaining him from his duties longer than he could answer for in such a stress of military business and, moreover, under the eyes of his Majesty. Therefore it would only be possible to talk a very short time.

He had hurled forth this statement rather than spoken it; but Barbara, smiling mournfully, replied that she could easily understand his reluctance to lose so much time merely on her account.

"For your sake, my dear lady," he replied with an acerbity which sounded sufficiently genuine, "it might scarcely have seemed feasible to go so far from the camp; but for the brave old comrade who was intrusted to my care I would have made even more difficult things possible—and you are his daughter."

The girl nodded silently to show that she understood the meaning of his words, and then asked how the journey had passed and what was the cause of her father's illness.

Everything had gone as well as possible, he replied, until they reached Spain; but there the captain was tortured by homesickness. Nothing had pleased him except the piety of the people. The fiery wine did not suit him, the fare seemed unbearable, and the inability to talk with any one except himself had irritated him to actual outbursts of rage. On the neat Netherland ship which bore him homeward matters were better; nay, while running into the harbour of Antwerp he had jested almost in his old reckless manner. But when trying to descend the rope-ladder from the high ship into the skiff in which sailors had rowed from the land, he made a misstep with his stiff leg and fell into the boat.

A low cry of terror here escaped the lips of the deeply agitated daughter, and Pyramus joined in her expressions of grief, declaring that a chill still ran down his back whenever he thought of that fall. The captain had been saved as if by a miracle. Yet the consequences were by no means light, for when he, Pyramus, left him, he was barely able to totter from one chair to another. A journey on horseback, the physician said, would kill him, and a ride in a carriage over the rough roads would also endanger his life. Several months must pass ere he could think of returning home.

In reply to Barbara's anxious question how the impatient man bore the inactivity imposed upon him, her visitor answered, "Rebelliously enough, but he has already grown quieter, and my sister is fond of him and takes the best care of him."

"Your sister?" asked Barbara abashed, holding out her hand again; but he pretended not to notice it, and merely explained curtly that she had come to the Netherlands with her husband. This enterprising man, like himself, was a native of the principality of Grubenhagen in the Hartz Mountains. At sixteen the wild fellow went out into the world to seek his fortune, and had found it as a daring sailor. He returned a rich man to seek a wife in his old home. Now he had gone on a voyage to the Indies, and while his wife awaited his return she had gladly received her brother's old comrade. Nursing him would afford her a welcome occupation during her loneliness. Her house lacked nothing, and Barbara might comfort herself with the knowledge that the captain would have the best possible care.

With these words he seemed about to leave her; but she stopped him with the question, "And when the service summoned you away from him, had he heard what his daughter——"

Here, flushing deeply, she paused with downcast eyes. Pyramus feasted a short time on the spectacle of her humbled pride, but soon he could no longer bear to see her endure such bitter suffering, and therefore answered hastily, "If you mean what is said about you and his Majesty the Emperor, he was told of it by an old comrade from this neighbourhood."

"And he?" she asked anxiously.

"He wrathfully ordered him out of the door," replied the officer, and he saw how her eyes filled with tears.

Then feeling how soft his own heart was also growing, he hurriedly said farewell. Again she gratefully extended her hand, and he clasped it and allowed himself the pleasure of holding it in his a short time. Then bowing hastily, he left her.

She had been the Emperor's toy, her voice had lost its melting melody, and yet he thought there was no woman more to be desired, far as his profession of recruiting had led him through all lands. This iron no longer needed bending; but how fiercely the flames of suffering which melted her obstinate nature must have burned! Surely he had not seen her for the last time, and perhaps Fate would now help him to perform the vow that he had made before her door in the dark entry of the house in Ratisbon.

While Sir Pyramus was leaving her Barbara had heard a man's voice in Frau Traut's room, but she scarcely noticed it. What she had learned weighed heavily upon her soul.

Her father would not believe what was, nevertheless, the full, undeniable truth. How would he deal with the certainty that he had showed his old comrade the door unjustly when he at last came home and she confessed all, all that she had sinned and suffered? She was sure of one thing only—he, too, would not permit her child to be taken from her; and she cherished a single hope—the blow which Fate had dealt by destroying her tuneful voice would force him to pity, and perhaps induce him to forgive her. Oh, if she could only have conjured him here, opened her heart fully, freely to him, and learned from his own lips that he approved of her resistance!

During this period of quiet reflection many sounds and shouts which she had not heard before reached her room.

As they grew louder and more frequent, Barbara rose to approach the open window, but ere she reached it Frau Taut returned.

The visitor whom she had received was Adrian, her husband. He had come up the Trausnitz to make all sorts of arrangements, for something unusual was to happen which would bring even his Majesty the Emperor here.

These tidings startled Barbara.

Suppose that Charles was now coming to influence her by the heavy weight of his personality; suppose he——

But Frau Traut gave her no time to yield to these and other fears and hopes; she added, in a quiet tone, that his Majesty merely intended to invest his son-in-law, Ottavio Farnese, Duke of Parma, with the Order of the Golden Fleece in the Trausnitz courtyard. It would be a magnificent spectacle, and Barbara could witness it if she desired. One of the rooms in the second story of the ladies' wing where she lodged was still untenanted, and her husband would be responsible if she occupied it, only Barbara must promise not to attract attention to herself by any sound or gesture.

She yielded to this demand with eager zeal, and when Frau Traut perceived the girl's pale cheeks again flushed she wondered at the rapid excitability of this singular creature, and willingly answered the long series of questions with which she assailed her.

Barbara especially desired to hear particulars about the mother of Margaret of Parma, the wife of Ottavio Farnese, that Johanna Van der Gheynst who gave this daughter to the Emperor.

Then Barbara learned that she was a Netherland girl of respectable family, but of scarcely higher rank than her own; only she had been adopted by Count Bon Haagestraaten before the Emperor made her acquaintance.

"Was Johanna beautiful?" Barbara eagerly interrupted.

"I think you are far handsomer," was the reply, "though she, too, was a lovely creature."

Then Barbara wished to learn whether she was fair or dark, lively or quiet, and, finally, whether she had consented to give up her child; and Frau Traut answered that Johanna had done this without resistance, and her daughter was afterward reared first by the Duchess of Savoy, and later by Queen Mary, the regent of the Netherlands.

"How wisely the young lady acted," Frau Dubois concluded, "you yourself know. A crown now adorns her child's head for the second time, and you will soon see how the Emperor Charles bestows honours upon her husband. His Majesty understood how to provide for his daughter, who is his first child. Her former marriage, it is true, was short. Alessandro de' Medici, to whom she was wedded at almost too

early an age, was murdered scarcely a year after their nuptials. Her present husband, the Duke of Parma, whom you will see, is, on the contrary, younger than she, but since the unfortunate campaign against Algiers, in which he participated, and after his recovery from the severe illness he endured after his return home, they enjoy a beautiful conjugal happiness. His Majesty is warmly attached to his daughter, and the great distinction which he will bestow upon her husband to-day is given by no means least to please his own beloved child, though her mother was only a Jollanna van der Gheynst."

Barbara had listened to these communications with dilated eyes, but the speaker was now interrupted; the leech, Dr. Matthys, was announced, and immediately entered the room.

Barbara's outburst of rage had not lessened his sympathy for her, and in the interest of science he desired to learn what effect his remedies had had. Unfortunately, in spite of their use, no improvement was visible.

The strange absence of mind with which the girl, who usually answered questions so promptly and decidedly, now seemed scarcely to hear them, he attributed to the painful remembrance of her unseemly behaviour at their last meeting, and therefore soon left her, by no means satisfied with his visit. On the way, however, he told himself that it was unfair to blame the bird which had just been captured for fluttering.

When the leech had retired, Barbara regretted that she had answered him so indifferently. But the anticipation of seeing her imperial lover again dominated every thought and feeling. Besides, she again and again saw before her the figure of the young duke, whom she had never beheld, but whom Charles had married to the daughter of that Johanna who was said to have been neither more beautiful nor more aristocratic than she herself.

Frau Traut saw compassionately that she could not remain long quietly in any place, and that when the noon meal was served she scarcely tasted food.

As soon as the first blast of the horns rose from the gate of the citadel she urged departure like an impatient child, and her indulgent companion yielded, though she knew that the stately ceremonial would not begin for a long time.

The window which Adrian had assigned to the two women in a room which was to be occupied by them alone afforded a view of the entire courtyard, and from the arm-chair which Frau Traut had had brought for her Barbara gazed down into it with strained attention.

The first sound of the horns had saluted Ottavio Farnese.

Mounted on a spirited charger, he held aloft, as gonfaloniere of the Church, the proud banner to be whose bearer was deemed by the Dukes of Parma one of their loftiest titles of honour.

He was greeted by the nobles present with loud acclamations, but was still booted and attired as beseemed a horseman. The cavaliers, officers, and pages who attended him entered the citadel in no regular order. But as Ottavio swung himself from his magnificently formed, cream-coloured steed, and issued orders to his train, Barbara could look him directly in the face and, though she thought him neither handsome nor possessed of manly vigour, she could not help admitting that she had rarely seen a young man of equally distinguished bearing. His every movement bore the impress of royal self-confidence, yet at the same time was unconstrained and graceful.

Now he disappeared in the wing of the building that united the ladies' rooms with the main structure opposite.

The Emperor Charles could not be here yet. His arrival would not have been passed by so quietly, and the imperial banner did not float either from the many-sided turret at the left end of the main building nor from the lofty roof of the ancient Wittelsbach tower. Great nobles, mounted on splendid chargers, constantly rode into the citadel, sometimes in groups, and were saluted by the blast of horns; nimble squires led the horses away, while ducal councillors, nobles, chamberlains, and ushers received the distinguished guests of the citadel and conducted them to the Turnitz, the huge banquet hall in the lower story of the main building, where the best of everything undoubtedly stood ready for them.

But every arrangement had already been made for the approaching ceremony—a broad wooden estrade was erected in the centre of the courtyard, and richly decorated with garlands of flowers, blossoming branches, flags, and streamers. At the back stood the Emperor's throne, covered with purple damask, and beside it numerous velvet cushions lay piled one upon another, waiting to be used.

Barbara's vivid imagination already showed her the course of this rare spectacle, and she gladly and

confidently expected that the Emperor must turn his face toward her during the principal portion of the ceremony.

Now the carpet on the stage was drawn tighter by lackeys in magnificent liveries, and the final touches were given to its decorations; now priests entered the smaller building at the left of the courtyard. The balcony on one of these buildings was adorned with flowers, and the singers of St. Martin's Church in Landshut gradually filled it. Now— but here Barbara's quiet observation suddenly ended; the air was shaken by the roar of cannon from the bastions of the citadel, and the signals of the warders' horns blended with the thunder of the artillery. At the same time the banners and streamers on every flagpole, stirred by a light breeze from the east, began to wave in the sunny August air. Then the blare of trumpets echoed, and a few minutes later from the Turnitz and the covered staircase between the main building and the right wing of the citadel the most brilliant body of men that Barbara had ever seen poured into the courtyard. They were the Knights of the Golden Fleece and the princes, counts, barons and knights, generals and colonels whom the Emperor Charles had invited to the Trausnitz citadel to attend the approaching solemn ceremonial.

What did she care for these dignitaries in gold, silver, and steel, velvet and silk, gems and plumes, when the enthusiastic cheers of this illustrious assemblage, the blare of trumpets, the thunder of cannon, and the ringing of bells loudly proclaimed the approach of him who, as their lord and master, stood far above them all? Would he appear on horseback, or had he dismounted at the gate and was advancing on foot? Neither. He was borne in a sedan chair. It was covered with gilding, and the top of the arched roof and each of the four corners were adorned with bunches of red and gold plumes, the colours of Philip of Burgundy, who more than a hundred years before had founded the order of the Golden Fleece.

Instead of lackeys, strong sergeants, chosen from the different regiments, bore the sedan chair. The gentlemen of the court—Prince Henry of Nassau, Baron Malfalconnet, and Don Luis Quijada, with Generals Furstenberg and Mannsfeld, Count Hildebrand Madrucci, the Master of the Teutonic Order, the Marchese Marignano, and others—were preceded by the stiff, grave, soldierly figure of the Duke of Alba, and, by the side of the platform, grandees and military commanders, Netherland lords, Italian, German, and Austrian princes, counts, barons, and knights had taken their places.

When the sedan chair was at last set on the ground in front of the lowest step of the platform, Barbara thought that her heart would burst; for while the singers in the balcony began the "Venite populi mundi," so familiar to her, and the cheers redoubled, Charles descended, and in what a guise she saw him again! He looked ten years older, and she felt with him the keen suffering which every step must cause.

This time it was not Quijada, but the Duke of Alba, who offered him the support of his mailed arm, and, leaning on it, he ascended the low stage.

While doing so he turned his back to Barbara, and as with bent figure and outstretched head he wearily climbed the two stairs leading to the platform, he presented a pitiable spectacle.

And have you loved this wreck of a man with all the fervour of your heart? the girl asked herself; does it still throb faster for him? could you even now expect from him a fairer happiness than from all these handsome warriors and nobles in the pride of their manly vigour? To this old man you have sacrificed happiness and honour, given up your father and the noblest, best of friends!

Fierce indignation for her own folly suddenly seized upon her with such overmastering power that she looked away from the sovereign toward the singers, who were summoning the whole world to pay homage to yonder broken-down man, as though he were a demigod.

A bitter smile hovered around her lips as she did so, but it vanished as swiftly as it had come; for when she again fixed her eyes upon the monarch, she would gladly have joined in the mighty hymn. As if by a miracle, he had become an entirely different person. Now he stood before the throne in the full loftiness and dignity of commanding majesty. A purple mantle fell from his shoulders, and the Duke of Alba was placing the crown on his head instead of the velvet cap.

Oh, no, she need not be ashamed of having loved this man, and she was not; for she loved him still, and was fully and joyously aware that whatever he suffered, whatever tortured and prematurely aged the man still in his fourth decade, no one on earth equalled him in intellect and grandeur.

And as pages then placed the velvet cushions on the carpet; as the Duke of Parma, the gonfaloniere on whose head rested the blessing of the representative of Christ, bent the knee before his imperial father-in-law, and the proud Alba and the other Knights of the Golden Fleece who were present did the same; as Charles, the grand master of the order, took from the cushion the symbol of honour which

Count Henry of Nassau handed to him, and placed the golden sheepskin with the red ribbon around Duke Ottavio's neck, while the plaudits, the ringing of bells, and the thunder of the artillery echoed more loudly than ever from the stone walls of the courtyard, tears filled Barbara's eyes and, as when the Emperor passed at the head of the bridal procession in Prebrunn, her voice again blended with the enthusiastic shouts of homage to the man standing in majestic repose before the throne, the man who was the most exalted of human beings.

She understood only a few words of the brief speech which the monarch addressed to the new Knight of the Golden Fleece. She saw for the first time the dignitaries of so many different nations upon whom she was gazing down, and most of whom she did not even know by name. But what did she care how they were called and who they were? Her eyes were fixed only on Charles and the young man in the armour artistically inlaid with gold, peach-coloured silver brocade, and white silk, who was kneeling before him.

Suppose that a son of hers should be permitted to share such an honour; suppose that Charles should some day bend down to her child and kiss his brow with the paternal affection which he had just showed to the young duke whom he had wedded to his daughter? And this daughter was the child of a mother who was her sister in sorrow, and had been her superior in nothing, neither in birth nor in beauty.

She said this to herself while she was intently watching the progress of the solemn ceremonial. How lovingly and with what enthusiastic reverence Ottavio was now gazing up into the face of his imperial father-in-law, and with what grateful fervour, as the youngest Knight of the Fleece, he kissed his hand! Not only outwardly but in heart—the warm light of their eyes revealed it—these men, so unlike in age and gifts, were united; yet Ottavio was not Charles's own son, as another would have been whom she wished to withhold from such a father, and in her selfish blindness to withdraw from the path to the summit of all earthly splendour and honour.

Who gave her the right to commit so great, so execrable a robbery?

What could she, the poor, deserted, scorned toy of a king—give to her child, and what the mightiest of the mighty yonder?

If he was ready to claim as his own the young life which she expected with hopeful yearning, it would thereby receive a benefit so vast, a gift so brilliant that all the wealth of love and care which she intended to bestow upon it vanished in darkness by comparison. Charles's resolve, which she had execrated as cruel, was harsh only against her who had angered him, and who could give him so little more; for her child it meant grandeur and splendour, and thereby, she thought in her vain folly, the highest happiness attainable for human beings.

Still she gazed as though spellbound at the decorated stage, but the ceremony was already rapidly approaching its close. The great nobles surrounded the new Knight of the Fleece to congratulate him, the Duke of Alba first; but vouchsafed a few brief, gracious words only to a few dignitaries, and then, this time assisted by Quijada, descended to the sedan chair.

Barbara had learned from Frau Traut that his Majesty knew that she was here in the ladies' apartments. Would he now raise his eyes to her, though but for a brief space?

He was already standing at the door of the sedan chair, and until now had kept his gaze bent steadily upon the ground. Meanwhile he must be experiencing severe pain; she saw it by the lines around the corners of his mouth. Now he placed his sound right foot upon the little step; now, before drawing the aching left one after it, he turned toward Quijada, whose hand was supporting him under the arm; and now—no, she was not mistaken—now he raised his eyes with the speed of lightning toward the ladies' apartments, and for one short second his glance met hers. Then his head vanished in the sedan chair.

Nevertheless, he had looked toward her, and this was a great boon. With all her strength she made it her own, and soon she felt absolutely sure that when he knew she was so near him he had been unable to resist the desire to gaze once more into her face. Perhaps it was intended for a precious farewell gift.

As soon as the sedan chair, amid cheers and the blare of trumpets, had disappeared in the direction of the drawbridge and the great main entrance, Barbara retired to her room. Frau Traut knew not whether she ought to bless or bewail having obtained permission for her to witness the bestowal of the Fleece.

At any rate, another great transformation had taken place in this extremely impressionable young creature. Barbara's impetuous nature seemed destroyed and crushed, and the bright gaiety which had pleased Frau Dubois so much the first day of their meeting had greatly diminished. Only on special occasions her former fiery vivacity burst forth, but the sudden flame expired as quickly as it had blazed

and, dreamily absorbed in her own thoughts, she obeyed her with the docility of a child.

This swift and marked change in the disposition of her charge, whom Quijada and her own husband had described as so totally different, awakened her anxiety; yet it was easy to perceive that the volcano had not burned out, but was merely quiescent for the time.

During the night the dull indifference which she showed in the day abandoned her, and her attentive companion often heard her sobbing aloud.

It did not escape Frau Tract's notice that since Barbara had seen the Emperor again in the Trausnitz courtyard a mental conflict had begun which absorbed her whole being, but the girl did not permit her any insight into her deeply troubled soul.

CHAPTER IX.

The Emperor Charles departed on the morning after the bestowal of the Golden Fleece, and two days later Barbara willingly obeyed the leech's prescription to seek healing at the springs of Abbach on the Danube, a few miles south of Ratisbon, which was almost in the way of those returning thither from Landshut. The waters there had benefited the Emperor Charles fourteen years before, and Barbara remained there with Frau Traut and Lamperi, who had returned to her, until the trees had put on their gay autumn robes and were casting them off to prepare for the rest of winter.

The hope of regaining the melody of her voice induced her conscientiously to follow the physician's prescriptions but, like the sulphur spring of Abbach,[??] they produced no considerable effect.

Barbara's conduct had also altered in many respects.

The girl who had formerly devoted great attention to her dress, now often needed to be reminded by Frau Dubois of her personal appearance when she went with her to walk or to church.

She avoided all intercourse with other visitors to the spring after Ratisbon acquaintances had intentionally shunned her.

The Wollers' country residence, where she had formerly been a welcome guest for weeks every summer, was near Abbach. Anne Mirl was betrothed, and Nandl was on the eve of accepting a young suitor. Both were still warmly attached to their cousin, although they had been told that, by an open love intrigue, she had forfeited the right to visit the respectable home of modest maidens. But the man who had honoured her with his love was no less a personage than the Emperor Charles, and this circumstance only increased the sympathy which the sisters felt for their much-admired friend.

In spite of their mother's refusal to permit them to ride to the neighbouring town and visit Barbara, they did so, that they might try to comfort her; but though their unfortunate cousin received them and listened to them a short time, she earnestly entreated them to obey their mother and not come again.

Frau Traut perceived that she not only desired to guard the inexperienced girls from trouble, but that their visit disturbed her. The thoughts which were in her mind so completely absorbed her that she now studiously sought the solitude which she had formerly shunned like a misfortune.

Even Pyramus Kogel's short letter, informing her of her father's convalescence, and the news from the seat of war which Frau Traut communicated to her to divert her thoughts, and which she had usually anticipated with impatient expectation, awakened only a fleeting interest. Toward the end of the first week in September her companion could inform her that the Emperor Charles had met the Smalcalds at Ingolstadt and, in spite of a severe attack of the gout, had ridden— with his aching foot in linen bandages instead of in the stirrup—from regiment to regiment, kindling the enthusiasm of his troops by fiery words.

Then Barbara at last listened with more interest, and asked for other details.

Frau Dubois, to whom her husband from time to time sent messengers from the camp, now said that the encounter had not come to an actual battle and a positive decision, but his Majesty had heeded the shower of bullets less than the patter of a hailstorm, and had quietly permitted Appian, the astronomer, to explain a chart of the heavens in his tent, though the enemy's artillery was tearing the earth around it.

But even this could not reanimate the extinguished ardour of Barbara's soul; she had merely said calmly: "We know that he is a hero. I had expected him to disperse the heretics as the wolf scatters the sheep and destroy them at a single blow."

Then taking her rosary and prayer book, she went to church, as she did daily at this time. She spent hours there, not only praying, but holding intercourse with the image of the Madonna, from which she did not avert her eyes, as though it was a living being. The chaplain who had been given to her associated with this devout tendency of his penitent the hope that Barbara would decide to enter a convent; but she rebuffed in the firmest manner every attempt to induce her to form this resolve.

In October the northeast wind brought cold weather, and Frau Traut feared that remaining for hours in the chilly brick church would injure her charge's health, so she entreated Barbara to desist. But when the latter, without heeding her warning, continued to visit the house of God as before, and to stay the same length of time, Frau Dubois interposed a firm prohibition, and on this occasion she learned for the first time to what boundlessly vehement rebellion her charge could allow passion to carry her. True, soon after Barbara, with winning tenderness, besought her forgiveness, and it was readily granted, but Frau Traut knew of no other expedient than to fix the first of November, which would come in a few days, for their return to Ratisbon.

Barbara was startled.

During the night her companion heard her weeping vehemently, and her kind heart led her to her bedside.

With the affectionate warmth natural to her, she entreated the unhappy girl to calm herself, and to open her troubled heart to one who felt as kindly toward her as a mother; and before these friendly words the defiance, doubts, and fear which had closed Barbara's heart melted.

"You may take it from me," she cried, amid her streaming tears. "What can a poor girl give it save want and shame? Its father, on the contrary—if he adopts and rears it as his child—O Frau Traut! dare I, who already love it more than my own life, rob it of the happiness to which it has a right? If the Emperor acknowledges it, whether it is a boy or a girl, merciful Heaven, to what Magnificence, what splendour, what honour my child may attain! My brain often reels when I think of it. The little daughter of Johanna Van der Gheynst a Duchess of Parma, and why should he place the girl whom I shall perhaps give him in a more humble position? Or if Heaven should grant me a son, his father will raise him to a still greater height, and I have already seen him before me a hundred times as he hangs the Fleece on the red ribbon round his neck."

Here her voice, still uncertain, failed, but she allowed Frau Traut to clasp her to her heart and, in her joy at this decision, which relieved her of a grave anxiety, to kiss her brow and cheeks. She had at last perceived, the kindly consoler assured the weeping girl, what the most sacred duty commanded, and the course that promised to render her, after so much suffering, one of the happiest of mothers. All that had hovered before her as glittering dreams would be fulfilled, and when her child, as the Emperor's, took precedence of the highest and greatest in the land, she could say to herself that it owed this to the sacrifice which she, its mother, had voluntarily made for its sake.

Barbara had told herself the same thing in many lonely hours, and most frequently in the brick church at Abbach, opposite to the image of the Mater dolorosa. She whose intercession never remained unheard had yielded up, with an aching heart, her divine son, and she must imitate her. And how much easier was her fate than that of the stainless virgin, who beheld her child, the Redeemer of the world, die upon the cross, while hers, if she resigned him, would attain the highest earthly happiness!

Frau Traut by no means overlooked the vanity of these motives. She was only too well aware that there is no greater boon for a child than the mother's loyal, anxious love, and Barbara's delusion grieved her. She would gladly have cried: "Keep your child, overwhelm it with love, be good and unselfish, so that, in spite of your disgrace, it must honour you." But the Emperor's command and her husband's wish were paramount. Besides, as Barbara was situated, it could not help being better for the child if the father provided for its education.

The soul of her charge now lay before her like an open book. The spectacle of the brilliant honour bestowed upon Duke Ottavio Farnese had sowed in her heart the seeds which had now ripened to resolution. She could not know that the vivandiere's assistant on the highway, with her abandoned child, had cast the first germ into Barbara's mind. Moreover, she was content to be able to send such welcome tidings to the camp. The disclosure of the resolve which she had reached after such severe conflicts exerted a beneficial influence upon Barbara. Her eyes again sparkled brightly, and the indifference with which she had regarded everything that happened to herself and those about her vanished.

For the first time she asked where she was to find shelter in Ratisbon; the Emperor's command closed Wolf's house against her; the Prebrunn castle was only a summer residence, unfit for winter use. So it was necessary to seek new quarters, and Barbara did not lack proposals. But the answer from camp must be awaited, and it came sooner than Frau Dubois expected. The messenger who brought it was her husband. His Majesty, he said, rejoiced at Barbara's decision, and had commissioned him to take her at once to Ratisbon and lodge her in the Golden Cross. The imperial apartments were still at the monarch's disposal, and the owner of the house, whom Barbara did not wish to meet, had gone to Italy to spend the winter.

Herr Adrian did not mention what a favour the sovereign was showing Barbara by parting with his trusted servant for several days, but she told herself so with joyful pride, for she had learned how greatly Charles needed this man.

The Emperor had dismissed Quijada from attendance on his person. He knew the Castilian's value as a soldier, and would have deemed himself forgetful of duty had he withheld so able an assistant from the great cause which he was leading.

At the end of the first week in November Barbara again entered the Golden Cross in Ratisbon. The great house seemed dead, but Adrian, in his royal master's name, provided for the comfort of the women, who had been joined by Sister Hyacinthe.

In the name of Frau Dubois, to whom his Majesty gave it up, Adrian took possession of the Golden Cross, and as such Barbara was presented to the newly engaged servants, while his wife was known by them as a Frau Traut from the Netherlands.

No inhabitant of Ratisbon was informed of the return of their young fellow-citizen, and Barbara only went out of doors with her companion early in the morning or in the twilight, and always closely veiled. But few persons had seen her after her illness, and on returning home she often mentioned the old acquaintances whom she had met without being recognised by them. The apartments she occupied were warm and comfortable. The harp and lute had been sent from Prebrunn with the rest of her property, and though she would not have ventured to sing even a single note, she resolved to touch their chords again. Playing on the harp afforded her special pleasure, and Frau Traut fancied she could understand her thoughts while doing so. The tones often sounded as gentle as lullabies, often as resonant and impetuous as battle songs. In reply to a question from her companion, Barbara confessed that while playing she sometimes imagined that she beheld a lovely girl, sometimes a young hero clad in glittering armour, with the Golden Fleece on his neck, rushing to battle against the infidels.

When the women were sitting together in the evening, Barbara urged her companion, who was familiar with the court and with Charles's former life, to tell her about the Netherlands and Spain, Brussels and Valladolid, the wars, the monarch's wisdom, the journeys of Charles, his intercourse with men and women, his former love affairs, his married life, his relatives and children, and again and again of Johanna Van der Gheynst, the mother of the Duchess Margaret of Parma. In doing so the clever native of Cologne never failed to draw brilliant pictures of the splendour of the imperial court. As a matter of course, Brussels, the favourite residence of the Dubois couple, was most honoured in the narrative, and Barbara could never hear enough of this superb city. Maestro Gombert had already aroused her longing for it, and Frau Traut made her, as it were, at home there.

So December and Christmas flew by. New Year's and Epiphany also passed, and when January was over and the month of February began, a guest arrived in Ratisbon from the household of the Emperor, who was now holding his court at Ulm. It was Dr. Mathys, the leech, who readily admitted that he had come partly by his Majesty's desire, partly from personal interest in Barbara's welfare.

The physician found her in the same mood as after the relapse. Obedient, calm, yielding, only often overpowered by melancholy and bitter thoughts and feelings, yet, on the other hand, exalted by the fact that the Emperor Charles, for her sake, was now depriving himself also of this man, whom he so greatly needed.

She awaited the fateful hour with anxious expectation. The twenty-fourth of February was the Emperor's birthday, and if it should come then, if the father and child should see the light of the world on the same day of the almanac, surely it must seem to Charles a favourable omen.

And behold!

On the day of St. Matthias—that is, the twenty-fourth of February, Charles's birthday—at noon, Frau Traut, radiant with joy, could despatch the waiting messenger to Ulm with the tidings that a son had just been born to his Majesty.

The next morning the child was baptized John by the chaplain who accompanied the women, because this apostle had been nearest to the Saviour's heart.

The young mother was not permitted to rejoice at the sight of her babe. Charles had given orders in advance what should be done hour by hour, and believed he was treating the mother kindly by refusing to allow her to enjoy the sight of the newborn child which could not remain with her.

This caused much weeping and lamenting, and such passionate excitement that the bereaved mother nearly lost her life; but Dr. Mathys devoted the utmost care to her, and did not leave Ratisbon until after three weeks, when he could commit the nursing to the experienced Sister Hyacinths.

But for the trouble in her throat, Barbara would have been physically as well as ever; her mental suffering was never greater.

She felt robbed and desolate, like the bird whose nestlings are stolen by the marten; for all that might have made her ruined life precious had been taken, and the man to whom she had surrendered her dearest treasure did not even express, by one poor word, his gratitude and joy. No, he seemed to have forgotten her as well as her future.

Frau Traut had left her with the promise that she would sometimes send her news of her boy's health, yet she, too, remained silent, and was deceiving her confidence. She could not know that the promise-breaker thought of her often enough, but that she had been most strictly forbidden by her imperial master to tell the boy's mother his abode or to hold any further intercourse with her.

How little Charles must care for her, since he now showed such deep neglect and found no return for all that she had sacrificed to him save cruel sternness! Yet the precious gift for which he was indebted to her must have afforded special pleasure to the man who attached such great value to omens, for it gave him the right to cherish the most daring hopes for the future of his boy. The fact that he was born on his father's birthday seemed to her an especial favour of heaven, and the old chaplain, who still remained with her, had discovered other singular circumstances which foreshadowed that the son would become the father's peer; for on the twenty-fourth of February Charles V had been crowned, and on the same day he had won at Pavia his greatest victory.

This had been the most brilliant day in the ruler's life, so rich in successes, and now it had also become the birthday of the boy whom she had given him and resigned that he might lead it to grandeur, splendour, and magnificence.

Nothing was more improbable than that the man whose faithful memory retained everything, and whose active mind discovered what escaped the notice of others, should have overlooked this sign from heaven. And yet she vainly waited for a token of pleasure, gratitude, remembrance. How this pierced the soul and corroded the existence of the poor deserted girl, the bereaved mother, the unfortunate one torn from her own sphere in life!

At last, toward the end of March, the message so ardently desired arrived. A special courier brought it, but how it was worded!

A brief expression of his Majesty's gratification at the birth of the healthy, well-formed boy; then, in blunt words, the grant of a small annual income and an additional gift, with the remark that his Majesty was ready, to increase both generously, and, moreover, to give her ambition every support, if Barbara would enter a convent. If she should persist in remaining in the world, what was granted must be taken from her as soon as she broke her promise to keep secret what his Majesty desired to have concealed.

The conclusion was: "And so his Majesty once more urges you to renounce the world, which has nothing more important to offer you than memories, which the convent is the best place to cherish. There you will regain the favour of Heaven, which it so visibly withdrew from you, and also the regard of his Majesty, which you forfeited, and he in his graciousness, and in consequence of many a memory which he, too, holds dear, would gladly show you again."

This letter bore the signature of Don Luis Quijada, and had been written by a poor German copyist, a wretched, cross-eyed fellow, whom Wolf had pointed out to her, and whose hand Barbara knew. From his pen also came the sentence under the major-domo's name, "The Golden Cross must be vacated during the month of April."

When Barbara had read these imperial decisions for the second and the third time, and fully realized the meaning of every word, she clinched her teeth and gazed steadily into vacancy for a while. Then she laughed in such a shrill, hoarse tone that she was startled at the sound of her own voice, and paced up and down the room with long strides.

Should she reject what the most powerful and wealthy sovereign in the world offered with contemptible parsimony? No! It was not much, but it would suffice for her support, and the additional gift was large enough to afford her father a great pleasure when he came home.

Pyramus Kogel's last letter reported that his condition was improving. Perhaps he might soon return. Then the money would enable her to weave a joy into the sorrow that awaited him. It had always been a humiliating thought that he had lost his own house and was obliged to live in a hired one, and at least she could free him from that.

It was evident enough that her pitiful allowance did not proceed from the Emperor's avarice; Charles only wished to force her to obey his wish to shut her for the rest of her life in a cloister. The mother of his son must remain concealed from the world; he desired to spare him in after years the embarrassment of meeting the woman whose birth was so much more humble than his own and his father's. Want should drive her from the world, and, to hasten her flight, the shrewd adept in reading human nature showed her in the distance the abbess's cross, and tried thereby to arouse her ambition.

But in her childhood and youth Barbara had been accustomed to still plainer living than she could grant herself in future, and she would have been miserable in the most magnificent palace if she had been compelled to relinquish her independence. Rather death in the Danube than to dispense with it!

She was young, healthy, and vigorous, and it seemed like voluntary mutilation to resign her liberty at twenty-one. But even had she felt the need of the lonely cell, quiet contemplation, and more severe penance than had been imposed upon her in the confessional, she would still have remained in the world; for the more plainly the letter showed how eagerly Charles desired to force her out of it, the more firmly she resolved to remain in it. How many hopes this base epistle had destroyed; it seemed as though it had killed the last spark of love in her soul!

Too much kindness leads to false paths scarcely more surely than the contrary, and the Emperor's cruel decision destroyed and hardened many of the best feelings in Barbara's heart, and prepared a place for resentment and hatred.

The great sovereign's love, which had been the sunshine of her life, was lost; her child had been taken from her; even the home that sheltered her, and which hitherto she had regarded as a token of its father's kindly care, was now withdrawn. A new life path must be found, but she would not set out upon it from the Golden Cross, where her brief happiness had bloomed, but from the place where she had experienced the penury of her childhood and early youth.

The very next afternoon she moved into Wolf's house. Sister Hyacinthe was obliged to return to her convent, so no one accompanied her except Frau Lamperi. She had become attached to Barbara, and therefore remained in her service instead of returning to the Queen of Hungary. True, she had not determined to do so until her mistress had promised to remain only a few weeks in Ratisbon at the utmost, and then move to Brussels, where she longed to be.

Ratisbon was no home for the Emperor's former favourite. Life in her native city would have been one long chain of humiliations, now that she had nothing to offer her fellow-citizens except the satisfaction of a curiosity which was not always benevolent.

But where should she go, if not to the country where her child's father lived, where, she had reason enough to believe, the infant would be concealed, and where she might hope to see again and again at a distance the man to whom hate united her no less firmly than love?

This prospect offered her the greatest attraction, and yet she desired nothing, nothing more from him except to be permitted to watch his destiny. It promised to be no happy one, but this fact robbed the wish of no charm.

Besides, the desire for a richer life again began to stir within her soul, and what sustenance for the eye and ear Gombert, Frau Traut, and now also Lamperi promised her in Brussels!

Her means would enable her to go there with the maid and live in a quiet way. If her father forgave her and would join her in the city, she would rejoice. But he was bound to Ratisbon by so many ties, and had so many new tales to relate in its taprooms, that he would certainly return to it. So she must leave him; it was growing too hot for her here.

She found old Ursel cheerful, and was less harshly received than at her last visit. True, Barbara came when she was in a particularly happy mood, because a letter from Wolf stated that he already felt perfectly at home in Quijada's castle at Villagarcia, and that Dona Magdalena de Ulloa was a lady of rare beauty and kindness of heart. Her musical talent was considerable, and she devoted every leisure hour to playing on stringed instruments and singing. True, there were not too many, for the childless

woman had made herself the mother of the poor and sick upon her estates, and had even established a little school where he assisted her as singing-master.

So Barbara was at least relieved from self-reproach for having brought misfortune upon this faithful friend. This somewhat soothed her sorely burdened heart, and yet in her old, more than plain lodgings, with their small, bare rooms, she often felt as though the walls were falling upon her. Besides, what she saw from the open window in Red Cock Street was disagreeable and annoying.

When evening came she went to rest early, but troubled dreams disturbed her sleep.

The dawn which waked her seemed like a deliverance, and directly after mass she hurried out of the gate and into the open country.

On her return she found a letter from her father.

Pyramus Kogel was its bearer, and he had left the message that he would return the next day. This time her father had written with his own hand. The letters were irregular and crooked enough, but they were large, and there were not too many of them. He now knew what people were saying about her. It had pierced the very depths of his old heart and darkened his life. But he could not curse her, because she was his only child, and also because he told himself how much easier her execrable vanity had made the Emperor Charles's game. Nor would he give her up as lost, and his travelling companion. Pyramus, who was like a son to him, was ready to aid him, for his love was so true and steadfast that he still wished to make her his wife, and offered through him to share everything with her, even his honourable name.

If misfortune had made her modest, if it had crushed her wicked arrogance, and she was still his own dear child, who desired her father's blessing, she ought not to refuse the faithful fellow who would bring her this letter, but accept his proposal. On that, and upon that alone, his forgiveness would depend; it was for her to show how much or how little she valued it.

Barbara deciphered this epistle with varying emotions.

Was there no room for unselfish love in the breast of any man?

Her father, even he, was seeking to profit by that which united him to his only child. To keep it, and to secure his blessing, she must give her hand to the unloved soldier who had shown him kindness and won his affection.

She again glanced indignantly over the letter, and now read the postscript also. "Pyramus," it ran, "will remain only a short time in Germany, and go from there directly to Brussels, where he is on duty, and thence to me in Antwerp."

Barbara started, her large eyes sparkled brightly, and a faint flush suddenly suffused her cheeks. The "plus ultra" was forever at an end for her. Her boy was living in Brussels near his father; there she belonged, and she suddenly saw herself brought so near this unknown, brilliant city that it seemed like her real home. Where else could she hope to rid herself of the nightmares that oppressed her except where she was permitted to see the man from whom nothing could separate her, no matter how cruelly he repulsed her?

The only suitable place for her, he thought, was the cloister. No man, he believed in his boundless vanity, could satisfy the woman who had once received in his love.

He should learn the contrary! He should hear—nay, perhaps he should see—that she was still desired, in spite of the theft which he had committed, in spite of the cruelty with which Fate had destroyed the best treasure that it had generously bestowed.

The recruiting officer was certainly a handsome man and, moreover, of noble birth. Her father wished to have him for a son, and would forgive her if she gave him the hand for which he shed.

So let him be the one who should take her to Brussels, and to whom she would give the right of calling himself her husband.

Here her brow contracted in a frown, for the journey on which she was to set out with him would lead not only to the Netherlands, but through her whole life, perhaps to the grave.

Deep resentment seized upon her, but she soon succeeded in conquering it; only the question what she had to give her suitor in return for his loyal love could not be silenced. Yet was it she who summoned him? Did he not possess the knowledge of everything that might have deterred another from wooing her? Had she not showed him more than plainly how ill he had succeeded in gaining her

affection? If, nevertheless, he insisted upon winning her, he must take her as she was, though the handsome young man would have had a good right to a heart full of love. Hers, so long as the gouty traitor lived who had ruined her whole existence, could never belong entirely to another.

Once she had preferred the handsome, stately dancer to all other men. Might not this admiration of his person be revived? No—oh, no! And it was fortunate that it was so, for she no longer desired to love—neither him nor any one else. On the other hand, she resolved to make his life as pleasant as lay in her power. When what she granted him had reconciled her father to her, and she was in Brussels, perhaps she would find strength to treat Pyramus so that he would never repent his fidelity.

In the afternoon she longed to escape from the close rooms into the fresh air, and turned her steps toward Prebrunn, in order to see once more the little castle which to her was so rich in beautiful and terrible memories.

On the way she met Frau Lerch. The old woman had kept her keenness of vision and, though Barbara tried to avoid her, the little ex-maid stopped her and asked scornfully:

"Here in Ratisbon again, sweetheart? How fresh you look after your severe illness!—yet you're still on shank's mare, instead of in the gold coach drawn by white horses."

Barbara abruptly turned her back upon her and went home.

As she was passing the Town Hall Pyramus Kogel left it, and she stopped as he modestly greeted her.

Very distinguished and manly he looked in his glittering armour, with the red and yellow sash and the rapier with its large, flashing basket-hilt at his side; yet she said to herself: "Poor, handsome fellow! How many would be proud to lean on your arm! Why do you care for one who can never love you, and to whom you will appear insignificant to the end?"

Then she kindly clasped the hand which he extended, and permitted him to accompany her home. On the Haidplatz she asked him whether he had read the letter which he brought from her father.

He hesitatingly assented. Barbara lowered her eyes, and added softly:

"It is my own dear father to whom you have been kind, and my warmest gratitude is due to you for it."

The young officer's heart throbbed faster; but as they turned into Red Cock Street she asked the question:

"You are going from here to Brussels, are you not?"

"To Brussels," he repeated, scarcely able to control his voice.

She raised her large eyes to him, and, after a hard struggle, the words escaped her lips:

"I learned in Landshut, and it was confirmed by my father's letter, that you are aware of what I am accused, and that you know—I committed the sin with which they charge me."

In the very same place where, on an evening never to be forgotten, he had received the first sharp rebuff from Barbara, she now confessed her guilt to him—he doubtless noticed it. It must have seemed like a sign from heaven that it was here she voluntarily approached him, nay, as it were, offered herself to him. But he loved her, and he would have deemed it unchivalrous to let her feel now that their relation to one another had changed. So he only exclaimed with joyous confidence:

"And yet, Barbara, I trustfully place happiness and honour in your beloved hands. You have long been clear to me, but now for the first time I believe confidently and firmly that I have found in you the very wife for me. The bitter trial imposed upon you—I knew it in Landshut—bowed your unduly obstinate nature, and if you only knew how well your modest manner becomes you! So I entreat permission to accompany you home."

Barbara nodded assent, and when he had mounted the steep staircase of the house before her he stopped in front of the narrow door, and a proud sense of satisfaction came over him at the thought that the vow which he had made in this spot was now fulfilled.

Her father had failed to bend this refractory, wonderfully beautiful iron; he had hoped to try with better fortune, but Fate had anticipated him, and he was grateful.

Full of blossoming hopes, he now asked, with newly awakened confidence, whether she would permit him to cross her threshold as a suitor and become his dear and ardently worshipped wife, and the low "Yes" which he received in response made him happy.

A few days after he married her, and journeyed with her on horseback to the Netherlands.

On the way tidings of the battle of Muhlberg reached them. The Emperor Charles had utterly routed the Protestants. He himself announced his great victory in the words, "I came, I saw, and God conquered."

When Pyramus told the news to his young wife, she answered quietly, "Who could resist the mighty monarch!"

In Brussels she learned that the Emperor had taken the Elector of Saxony captive on the battlefield, but the Landgrave of Hesse had been betrayed into his power by a stratagem which the Protestants branded as base treachery, and used to fill all Germany with the bitterest hatred against him; but here Barbara's wrath flamed forth, and she upbraided the slanderous heretics. It angered her to have the great sovereign denied his due reverence in her own home; but secretly she believed in the breach of faith.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BARBARA BLOMBERG — VOLUME 08 ***

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