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THE ADVENTURER

THE ADVENTURER

BY

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AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION BY

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New York

Desmond FitzGerald, Inc.

THE

A DAY IN THE LIFE

OF A MAN

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THE ADVENTURER

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CHAPTER I

THE children, tired of play, sat on the retaining-wall at the Deutz end of the bridge-of-ships, pressed their hot faces against the iron pickets, and looked across the river at Cologne, long stretched and crescent shaped. A few tardy rays of the winter sun still gleamed upon the water, tried in vain to reach one another, quivered in the current, and were lost as tiny glowing dots. . . . A silvery tone remained in the air. Then followed that wonderful clearness, which fills the souls of men as well as the soul of nature, and makes all things seem to take on sharper contours before the settling of gloom. Gabled and quaint, the spires of the Cathedral and the churches rising like pointing fingers toward the sky, the ancient, gray silhouette of Cologne was outlined along the Rhine.

It was quiet upon the broad waterway. Unwieldy freight boats, long tows, and passenger steamers with high freeboards lay close together in the harbor like a tired herd, resting during the winter and awaiting better water conditions. Only the small boats for local traffic, now sole masters of the great river, darted quickly from shore to shore, letting the smoke rise more dense and black than usual from their funnels, and

sounding their steam whistles and ship's bell more loudly and more defiantly. When they made fast to take aboard new passengers, silence spread over the river and hovered at the feet of the mighty old city of the Rhine.

"Once, it was sunk and lost." The little girl, who sat between the two boys upon the river wall of Deutz, raised her shoulders as if she felt a chill of fear, and looked straight ahead with shining eyes.

"Silly!" sneered her neighbor to the left, pushing back the bright-colored cap that showed him to be a Gymnasium pupil.

"But old Klaus told me," replied the little one. "Two peasants had cursed Cologne, because they had been cheated by Cologne merchants, and the city disappeared before their eyes."

"That is too silly," insisted the knowing youngster. "How would it have come back?"

"The peasants prayed for its return, because they could not sell their vegetables without it."

"Oh, my! how smart! If that were true, the Cologners would have hung those stupid peasants without much ado the very next time they came to town. They would stand no such nonsense from hayseeds."

"But I'm sure I know," said the little one, piqued, and turned her back upon him.

Dusk was touching the city. Alleys and streets were receding as if behind a veil. Only the steeples stood fast and remained, seen from afar, the signs of the city, flanking the imposing bulk of the Cathedral like guardians of its majesty.

The little one sighed. Her second companion, who had not shaken off his reverie, now turned hastily.

“Are you cold?”

She shook her dark curly head. A crimson ribbon was drawn through her hair.

“Oh, it is so beautiful——” And, after a pause, “I can count all the steeples, and each steeple has a story. I’d like to know them all.”

“Ask me,” begged the other, and brushed his reddish hair underneath the edge of his hat.

The boy with the cap, a young patrician, measured him with a look of contempt.

“You are best informed about your synagogue.”

“Did I ask you, or Moritz?” snapped the girl angrily.

“Just ask me,” said the elder boy. He had turned pale, and looked nervously at the girl. “Laurenz can go home, if he does not like it here.”

“Go yourself. You always force your company upon us. They probably don’t want you in Sekunda?”

“Untertertianer,” said the other with quivering lips.

“Jew!”

“That is no insult.” He turned to the girl, who listened expectantly. “I am not going to spoil this beautiful evening with a fight.”

“Oh——” said the little one, disappointed. “I should like to have seen Laurenz get a beating.” And then she returned to her former theme with the rapid change of a child’s mood. “Look at the Cathedral. Is it true that the devil took its first architect?”

“That is a legend,” said Moritz Lachner. “As the building was never finished, the people told one another that Master Gerhard von Ryle, the master builder, while high up on the Cathedral roof, had proposed a

bet to the devil that he would finish the Cathedral before the devil could dig a canal from Trier to Cologne. But, through the gossip of his wife, Master Gerhard lost the bet and threw himself from the scaffolding of the steeple. That was said to be the reason why no more stones would hold after that."

"Because the bet was sinful," triumphed Laurenz Terbroich. "All artists are sinners."

Moritz Lachner threw a quick, anxious glance at his little playmate, who was just in the act of blowing on her reddened hands.

"Go on, Moritz. And the great Saint Martin alongside? I could be afraid of that."

"It was built up so defiantly because it formerly stood upon an island, and had to defend itself against the water."

"And were there really no robbers in it?"

"It is said that Scotch monks built the church like a Scottish castle, in order to feel at home in it. The truth of that I intend to investigate."

Laurenz Terbroich slapped his thighs and sneered, "Moritz! Moritz Lachner will investigate it! Tomorrow I'll tell that to the Archbishop!"

"To the right of the Cathedral there is Saint Gereon. Tell me, Moritz, what you know about that."

"On the spot where that church stands, Captain Gereon and his pious soldiers were butchered because they would not abjure their Christian faith."

"Oh, my! the church does look very gloomy."

"Lachner likes that story best," exclaimed Laurenz. "A whole legion of Christians killed!"

"If you look to the left from Saint Martin's," said Lachner, his nostrils quivering, "you will see the tower

of the Rathaus. That is the most beautiful tower in Cologne, yes, in all Germany. Only ask your class teacher. And that was built to honor you patricians. —In your honor, because the people had taken all of you prisoners and had locked you up. And from the fines you had to pay, the guilds built this beautiful Rathaus tower.”

“Oh, yes,” echoed Terbroich, “and close to this beautiful Rathaus is the Judengasse, and as that tower was so beautiful when finished, your people were no longer tolerated in this neighborhood. So they cleaned up the section and swept you Jews out through the gates, where you had to stay until the time of the French Revolution! Oh, yes!”

“You—you—suddenly disclose surprising knowledge of local history,” stammered Lachner.

“I have acquired that especially for your benefit, and in your honor, because you seek our society so much.”

“Your—society?”

“Do your scrapping later,” shouted the little girl, jumping upon a big stone in the retaining wall. “What is that story of the eleven thousand maidens?”

And readily Moritz Lachner informed her. “They are lying in Saint Ursula’s, in the north of the city. You can’t see the little ancient church from here. There was a heathen prince who wanted to marry the daughter of the king of Britain, and threatened to make war upon the land if he did not get her. Then the pious Ursula promised to marry him, on condition that he would become a Christian, and that she be allowed to make a pilgrimage to Rome, accompanied by eleven thousand maidens of her country. But when

they returned from their visit to the Pope, and were about to land at Cologne, which was then beleaguered by the Huns, they were all killed by the brutal heathen warriors."

"Surely because they would not marry the ugly soldiers."

"If she had not had a prince for a suitor, Ursula would probably not have changed her mind, either," skeptically remarked Laurenz Terbroich. "In that respect all the girls are alike."

"Yes, a prince," drawled the little one, and her eyes rested on the good-looking patrician.

"Shall I tell more?" Moritz Lachner asked hastily. "Over there, at the Neumarkt, is Sankt Aposteln. The wife of a poor knight had given birth to twelve children——"

"He lies!" said Laurenz Terbroich. "Only rabbits have such litters."

"Twelve boys," Lachner continued anxiously, as if he feared to lose his position as narrator. "And as she could not feed them, she wanted to drown them. But the Archbishop found the children near the water, took them with him, and raised them to become priests. He built for them the Church of the Apostles, because they had also been twelve.—And, further to the south, you see Saint Mary in the Capitol. It was erected on the spot where the old Romans had their government building, when they were living in Cologne. There the wife of King Pepin was buried, the one who kept her stepson, Karl Martell, a prisoner in Cologne. And in the Church of Saint Alban a host is kept that turned into flesh in the mouth of an infidel.—But Albertus Chapel, in Saint Andreas, is more interesting. It contains the

remains of the great Dominican scientist, Albertus Magnus. He was a magician and a master of witchcraft, and yet a saint, and the teacher of St. Thomas Aquinas, who found a dangerous opponent in the smooth Franciscan Duns Scotus. Duns Scotus was buried not far away in the Minoriten Kirche, and——”

“Now put an end to this at last!” Laurenz Terbroich interrupted him angrily. “You can’t tell us that the priest teaches you catechism.”

Lachner was silent.

The lanterns were being raised upon the bridge. The city had gradually disappeared in the darkness. Only the bulk of the Cathedral rose weirdly, like an incomprehensible, supernatural apparition visible against the evening sky. And, as if the lanterns on the bridge had given the signal, the lights flashed up on the opposite shore, running along the harbor streets up to the defiant old castle, the Bayernthurm. They appeared in the Rheinstrasse and further toward the heart of the city in all the alleys of the older section, and in all the fashionable streets of the Neustadt. And again the silhouette of Cologne appeared in the midst of reddish ether, gabled and quaint, with pointing steeples and looming basilicas; filled with the deep breath of the past and the warm pulse of the living—the eternal city of Rhenish lore and legend. . . .

The little girl, while running along the fence following the lights, called out: “Oh, if I could have it, I would want all there is of Cologne.”

“I will present it to you,” said Lachner, breathless, and tried to grasp her hand.

“You——? What are you going to be?”

“An historian.”

“What is that, an historian?”

“A writer of history.”

“Of fairy tales and the like?”

“Of the stories of people and their cities.”

“I’m going to have my father’s factories,” said Laurenz Terbroich, throwing his head far back. “Rug factories. One bale of rugs brings in more money than a hundred bales of history books.”

“Really?” asked the girl in surprise.

“If they are Lachner’s stories, more than a thousand bales.”

“Well, Laurenz, then I’ll marry you.”

“I don’t know if my parents would allow that.”

“You don’t say! The proud Laurenz! My father is greater than yours!”

“That’s very doubtful.”

“It is not doubtful at all! My father is a doctor, and, and——”

“An artist,” said Moritz Lachner, “a great artist.”

“That is the reason why you have such a funny name,” said Laurenz, with a queer look. “You haven’t even a real Christian name.”

“My name is Carmen! That means a song;—if you have not yet learned that in school. Because I am his most beautiful song, father says. That is the reason.”

“Are you sure Dr. Otten is your father?” sneered the boy.

“What do you say?”

“Well, because he is never with you in Cologne.”

“What——?”

“And, anyway, artists never have real wives, and, therefore, they haven’t any real children.”

Then the little girl was upon him.

“Ouch, ouch, you cat! You scratched me!”

Quick as the wind she dashed back. Furious, the boy ran after her. She caught Moritz Lachner by the sleeve and dragged her clumsy ally to and fro between herself and her pursuer. “Take me up,” she panted. Lachner stooped, and she climbed upon his back. “Now at him!” she cried, and Moritz Lachner forgot his Sekunda dignity and went at the enemy like a war elephant, carrying an Amazon queen.

Now she grasped Laurenz Terbroich’s cap and, screaming with delight, threw it far out into the street. Then the bareheaded one attacked Lachner, who could not free his hands, as they were serving Carmen as stirrups, and kicked him on the shins. Moritz pressed his lips together, and not a sound told of his pain.

Quickly the girl bent over and grasped the soft black hair of their antagonist with both hands.

“Ouch! Ouch! Carmen, let go!”

“Will I be your wife? Yes or no?”

“Let go! Mary and Joseph!”

“Will I be your wife?”

“Yes! Yes!”

The little girl slid down from Lachner’s back, ran out to the street, picked up the cap, dusted it carefully, and came back with short swagger strides, her arm extended. “Here it is,” she said, looking at her friend, now restored to favor. “It really has not been soiled.”

“Give it here,” growled Laurenz, making a wry face, as he tore the cap from her hand and put it on.

“Did I hurt you much, Laurenz?”

“I am bleeding,” whined the boy, touching his temple with his forefinger. “You scratched me.”

“Show me!” She rose on her tiptoes and carefully looked at the tiny wound.

“Have you any court-plaster?”

“I have none.”

“And you, Moritz? Oh, hurry up!”

Moritz Lachner laboriously produced a big pocket-book from his trousers pocket and took from it a leaflet of English plaster. Before he could present it, the little one had taken it from his hand and had moistened it with her tongue. He stood aside and looked on.

“Stoop, Laurenz! So——” She pasted the strip of plaster on his temple. “Now you are a knight, Laurenz, and you carry a scar in honor of your lady. And for that, your lady rewards you with a kiss.”

She placed her hands on his ears and kissed him with unconscious child lips.

“Come,” said the boy, “we’ll run to the city. There it is most amusing.”

He took the little girl’s hand, ran with her to the bridge, paid her toll as well as his, as a cavalier should, and then they raced over the groaning, shaking planks.

Moritz Lachner still stood in the same spot. Slowly his blood rose from his cheeks to his temples. He doffed his little round felt hat and mechanically stroked his reddish hair. He was ashamed. . . . He, the fourteen-year-old student, had run hither with that conceited twelve-year-old, and with little ten-year-old Carmen, instead of sitting behind his beloved books. Only because the other boy was a patrician’s son and the girl an artist’s child, and—oh, well, yes—because, she was beautiful, and the daughter of Dr. Joseph Otten, the famous singer and modern elocutionist! And he had told her stories all afternoon, and had ransacked

his store of knowledge for her. Had played horse with her, and had let the furious Laurenz ruin his trousers on her account. And, finally, he had sacrificed his English plaster, and had looked on while his rival had been kissed. And then—his eyes grew moist. Then he had been left standing there. In their joy, they had forgotten him.

In the distance he saw them running over the bridge-of-ships. They chased one another, and ran against a couple of bridge-tenders, who scolded as the children ran away. Another moment he struggled with himself. Then he tramped after them.

“She does not know yet that her father will sing at the Guerzenich to-night.” Thus he tried to overcome his sense of shame. “I must tell her that.”

“To-day I can stay out until eight o’clock,” the little girl confided to her friend Laurenz as they left the bridge. “Mother did not answer when I asked her. She was so silent all day. And silence means consent.”

They slipped past the Rheingasse. There stood the house of the Ottens, narrow and high, gabled with heavy beams, which showed the rich carvings, typical of old Cologne. In spite of the wintry evening, a stockily built man, with a stubby gray beard, wearing a knitted woolen jacket, closely buttoned, and a boatman’s cap, stood leaning against the doorpost. He was smoking a thin-stemmed Holland clay pipe, and blew smoke rings across the narrow street.

“Old Klaus,” whispered the little one. “Come quickly.” They disappeared in the shadow and fled to the Heumarkt.

The boatman carefully took his pipe from his mouth and looked after them. “Holy Mother, sure that was

our Carmche? And with that good-for-nothing young Terbroich!" And he shook his old head disapprovingly.

Just then another figure appeared around the corner, looked searchingly about, and tried to disappear unseen.

"Lachner's Moritz," grumbled the old man, now satisfied. "Hey, there, you Moritz. They've gone up to the Heumarkt. Be sure and look out well for our Carmche!"

Moritz Lachner, discovered, turned on him angrily. "What is that to me?" he asked stubbornly. "I am not her nurse-maid."

"And I only tell you the one thing, look out well." With that Klaus quietly replaced the pipe between his pointed lips.

"I am going home," said the boy to himself, and yet he walked in the direction of the Heumarkt. "I am going home, straight home." Now he had reached the equestrian statue of Friedrich Wilhelm III., the first Prussian king to rule over the Rhineland. Stooping, he crawled around the iron fence and looked out in every direction. Disappointed, he arose. "They probably have gone to the Altenmarkt," he thought. "But now, I am going home." And then he, too, walked to the Altenmarkt.

There he discovered them, as they slowly crossed the square, holding hands.

"I will not force myself upon them," he mumbled. "I will not."

At the Jan van Werth fountain he had reached them and heard the girl say:

"That is Jan and Griet?"

Laurenz laughed.

“Why do you laugh?”

“When Jan had become a general of cavalry, he forgot all about Griet.”

“Is that so? And when Jan was a hired man at the Knempes estate in Cologne, Griet, the peasant’s daughter, would not have him. That was the way!”

“And then Griet became a shriveled old apple woman, and Jan proudly entered Cologne, riding through the Severins Gate as a general, and there sat Griet before her apple stand and roasted chestnuts for a living.”

“Well—and then?”

“Jan van Werth enjoyed her misery.”

“That is not so!”

“But he stopped his horse and said, ‘Oh, Griet, who would have thought this?’”

“And Griet did not allow him to ridicule her, for she answered, ‘Oh, Jan, who would have thought this!’”

Then they both laughed.

“If I forget you, you’ll be another Griet!”

“But you’ll not be Jan by a good deal!”

He galloped toward her with stiffened legs, saluted, and said, “Griet, who would have thought it!”

She wiped her little nose, and piped back, “Jan, who would have known it!”

“I’ll catch you!”

“Griet, who would have thought it!” he cried, and tried to catch her.

“Jan, who would have thought it!” she screamed in return and escaped around the monument.

Breathless, laughing and shouting, they ran to and fro. Now he stretched out his hand toward her wav-

ing locks, and she fell into his arms. With their last leap they collided with Moritz Lachner.

“What do you want?” fumed Laurenz Terbroich, clinching his fist. “Are you so thick-skinned as not to notice that we don’t want you? Go home to your store! There you can help your old man, selling rabbit skins.”

“Yes, go home!” echoed the girl angrily.

Moritz Lachner’s eyes wandered restlessly from one to the other. For the first time, he realized the brutal carelessness of others’ feelings of which children alone are capable. He was unspeakably miserable.

“Why are you standing there?” demanded the patrician boy.

“Yes, why do you stand there?” chimed in the little one.

“Klaus,” stammered Moritz. “Old Klaus has sent me here. So that nothing will happen to you, Carmen.”

“Tell Klaus,” said Laurenz, “to look after his own nose, so it don’t grow crooked.”

“Yes, tell him that,” echoed the girl.

Moritz Lachner breathed hard. His eyes were restlessly searching the ground. He fought with a decision, and could not find the words. Then he stepped forward and took little Carmen’s hand.

“Carmen, I have to tell you something.”

“Tell it to me to-morrow.”

“No, to-day. Your father is coming to Cologne. Maybe he has already arrived. He sings at the Guerzenich to-night.”

She stared at him doubtingly, anxiously. “Father? My father?”

“You can depend upon it.”

She shook her head. "I don't believe it. Mother would have told me."

"Maybe he could not announce his arrival in time."

Behind them somebody laughed derisively. It was Laurenz Terbroich.

With flashing eyes she turned upon him.

"You shall not laugh!" and she stamped her feet like a wild thing. His laughter stopped.

"At half-past seven the concert begins. Now it is seven," Moritz said with a joyful face. "Will we run to the Guerzenich? We'll see him as he leaves his carriage."

"Oh, you are joking."

"If you don't believe me—there on the post is a placard."

Reverently they read: "An Evening of Song, by Dr. Joseph Otten. In the Hall of The Guerzenich." Twice and thrice they read. The little girl shivered and looked with glowing eyes at the paper. "My father——" and silently they ran toward that wonder-work of Mediæval Gothic art, once the "Gentry's Dance House,"—the Guerzenich.

A crowd of onlookers surrounded the entrance: women in shawls with children on their arms; small tradesmen going for their evening drink; workingmen in boatmen's caps and plush slippers. Joseph Otten was going to sing! They were proud of their Jupp. He was "ene Koell'sche Jung," a son of Cologne.

The children had forced their way into the foremost line. The little slim Carmen held on to Moritz Lachner's hand. Carriage after carriage stopped. Gentlemen of proud bearing, in evening clothes, and ladies in beautiful gowns, stepped from them and hurried into

the entrance. For the onlookers passed criticisms both sharp and loud. "My, but that one has fixed herself up swell!" "She looks as if it were July. Madame, you will catch cold in your bare neck!" "Look out, Mister, you'll crush your head or your stovepipe!"

"That was my father," said Laurenz Terbroich, as the gentleman for whose special benefit the last gibe had been given disappeared in the portal, walking very erect.

The clock struck half-past seven. A fine pair of bays, drawing a carriage at a smart gait, came to a stop. A tall gentleman of some forty years emerged with elastic step, gave some instructions to the driver, and turned toward the entrance of the Guerzenich.

"Good-evening, Herr Doktor Otten," sounded from every side. He turned with a laughing face, doffed his soft, wide-brimmed hat, and waved his hand. About to step into the doorway, he again looked back over his shoulder, as if something had attracted his attention before. His steel-blue eyes lit upon the children. Remembrance came into his glance, and recognition. A flash of joy and a nod on both sides. Then he disappeared in the building.

"That was *my* father," said the little one, triumphantly, to Laurenz Terbroich. And the two ran after the crowd, to hear what was being said.

Moritz Lachner alone remained in front of the Guerzenich. His soul had entered the hall with the admired man, and he was waiting until the artist should bring it back to him.

CHAPTER II

IN the first story of the Ottens' house the blinds had been drawn since beginning of dusk, and the lights had been lit early. Now and then the shadow of a woman appeared behind the curtains, remaining a moment, and again disappearing.

Old Klaus had finished smoking his pipe in the doorway. While he broke off a piece of the thin clay stem, to obtain a fresh mouthpiece, he stepped into the street and looked up at the windows above. Shaking his head, he filled his pipe, pressed the contents with his thumb, and carefully replaced in his trousers pocket the tobacco he had left. Then he bent a leg, scratched a match on the tightened covering of his thigh, smacked his lips as he drew and blew out the first mouthful of smoke from the clay, expectorated, and went into the house again, shaking his head. As he closed the door, the woman's shadow appeared for a moment behind the illuminated curtain, remained motionless for a second, and disappeared.

From the steeples of the city came the sounds of the clocks striking half-past seven. Simultaneously the tall timepiece in the dining-room of the house struck once, deep and musical. The woman, leaning against the pillar of the wide Flemish buffet, raised her head for a moment as if something must follow. And already there came the high note of the bell of a rococo clock in the adjoining room.

“Everything goes on in its regular way,” she thought, and placed her hands like a ring around her forehead, as if she wished to force rebellious thoughts to rest. Then she let her arms sink wearily.

“He is not coming,” she said aloud. “I might as well put out the lights now.”

Her dress rustled, as she stepped across the room. Her glance ran down along its folds. It was a white brocade that clung closely to the strong, well-built figure. Without being décolleté, it left the throat bare. A chain of large pink corals hung around her neck and fell upon her bosom. It was the only ornament she wore.

Her hand stroked the brocade.

“How long is it,” ran through her mind, “since I wore this dress for the first time? He would not see me in any other. I should wear it every time when he came home, always look like a bride.—The dress has remained as good as new. I have not had to wear it often.

“Oh, not so!” she reproached herself. “I know him, and I am really glad it is as it is.”

With quiet, even steps she walked through the room. Her eyes had recovered the look of the “Hausfrau,” of the woman of the home, and her hands sought occupation. They moved the crystal vases filled with flowers, and the beautiful table china about, until a new harmony appeared in the festive arrangement. From the beamed ceiling hung a chandelier with six lights, and all were burning. The whole room breathed expectation.

As the woman looked up, a smile passed over her features. On the wall hung the picture of a man wear-

ing a wide cloak and a broad-brimmed soft hat. He looked into the world with laughing eyes.

She stepped closer to it. She studied it, as if it were new to her.

“One cannot look at the picture without growing glad . . .”

“Dearest——”

Then she turned again to the table and turned off the gaslights. At the last one she hesitated, and her arm remained raised. The silk on her body rustled softly.

“Perhaps he will still come. Then it shall at least not be entirely dark in his house.”

And with another glance at the table, she quietly walked into the adjoining room, sat down beside her little sewing-table, and took up a child's dress that needed mending. From the towers sounded eight o'clock, and the clocks in the house, in voices low and high, made efforts not to be behind their official comrades.

“Now he has rendered the first song,” said the woman, and dropped her work. “Now they are applauding, praising him. My God in Heaven,” she interrupted herself, “eight o'clock! And Carmen is not home yet. How could I forget the child on account of the father?”

She opened the window and leaned out. The Rheingasse lay in silence. She listened intently, but only the murmur of the river, breaking against the shore, could be heard.

“She has never stayed out as late as this,” she thought. “And just to-day—— Oh, if only the child were here.”

She remained there a few minutes. Then she closed

the window. She shivered and did not know whether it was because of the wintry air or a sense of fear. "Just to-day. . . . I should have kept her at home. If only he had come!" Then she remembered Klaus, and she heaved a sigh of relief. "He probably has the child with him. But now it is time for me to go after her."

Old Klaus Guelich sat in the little room on the ground floor, that had been assigned to him as his quarters, speared a last fragment of cheese with the point of his pocket-knife, and gazed with dreamy eyes at his "Schoppen" of wine. He searched his memory for something, and, being well up in the seventies, he had a long life to review, and it took a good while.

"Yes," he nodded to himself, "that one should have become my wife. She was a fine-looking girl. And she liked me as no one else ever did. If, the devil, I only could think of her name!"

There came a hasty knock, and then a second one.

"Come in!" he called out aggressively, and stuck out his chin.

"Good-evening, Klaus. Is the child with you?"

"Our Carmche?"

"Not here, either? And it is past eight. I hope nothing has happened to her. What do you think, Klaus?"

"I think Carmche is more alive than her mother just now."

"Are you sure of that?" She placed her hand upon the old man's shoulder, and he felt through the knit jacket how the long, slender hand of the woman trembled.

"Well, well, well," he tried to reassure her, and

arose as quickly as his tired old feet permitted. "What sort of things are these? young woman, young woman! Sure that was not our way before! Nerves! You sit down in the easy-chair. Like that, real comfortably."

She permitted it, as he forced her into the seat. As she sat there, in her white robe, her appearance contrasted remarkably with the simple surroundings.

"Now tell me where you have seen Carmen?"

"She ran with Laurenz Terbroich up to the Heu-markt, and may be at the Guerzenich. And because I don't like that impudent youngster, Terbroich's Laurenz, I sent Lachner's Moritz after them. He'll watch out." And with fatherly solicitude he added: "You mustn't worry, Frau Otten. Nothing will happen."

"I am ashamed of myself," she said suddenly. "I must not lose my self-control."

The old man looked at her respectfully.

"And there is many a one who thinks that this life is nothing but eating candy, dancing, and kirmess."

"It is much more than that, Klaus."

"You have not too much to laugh about."

"Oh, yes—only, you others do not know it."

"Young woman," said the old man quietly, "if I could go to Holy Communion upon it, you would not sit in old Klaus's little room just now, if you had your wish."

For a moment there was silence between them. Then the woman said, with an attempt at a merry smile, "You seem to have listened to me a while ago? Klaus, that was the joy of anticipation."

"But Herr Joseph did not come," insisted the old man.

“He could not, Klaus. Yesterday he sang in Frankfurt, and a few days ago at Munich. I received a letter in which he told me all about it.”

“The Herr Doktor has been away from Cologne for two years. Then a letter is not enough.”

“Oh, Klaus, he intended to come here before the concert if he could have caught the right train. But everybody hangs on to him so, and they wish to show him their appreciation. I understand that.”

“I don’t. So help me God. I don’t. He surely could have taken off an hour, at least.”

“He would not disturb the household for so short a time.”

“And the housewife? He would disturb her less that way.”

“Oh, Klaus, the *housewife*——”

The old man started. Then he looked into the corner of the room.

“I am his cousin,” she added. “The fact that my name, too, is Otten, does not change matters.”

“You are his *wife*. Joseph Otten does not recognize cousins.”

“No,” said she, and a radiance leaped into her eyes. “He does not recognize them.”

The old man looked up in surprise. Then he scratched himself behind the ears. “I must have said something silly.”

“No, no. It was right. I *am* his wife, and I have him and Carmen. That is a happy feeling, Klaus, and I have that happiness always, always, even if he is away for years. Just because of that. He is a migratory bird, Klaus; he must go out into the world and sing and go farther. Then I have his cares, too,

for I could not exist without responsibilities. But when he comes home, he brings the happiness of the whole wide world with him into the house. What woman could say as much? ”

“ You love Jupp very much,” said old Klaus.

She leaned back, so that he could not see her face. The silk tightened. There was strength in this woman’s body.

“ And you, Klaus? ”

“ Didn’t I carry him to the nuns, when he was a little tot and had to learn how to sit still? ”

“ He has never learned it, Klaus.”

“ No. And in his prayers he never got past the Pater-noster.”

“ That does not hurt some people, Klaus. There are people who can do what they like, and it is as if they carried a silent prayer with them. Then that which in others would look ill becomes beautiful in them.”

“ They call it a guardian angel. But *you* are that guardian angel.”

She only shook her head.

“ That is a matter of the individual. That is the secret of our God. We must not ask the reason, but just believe. Belief makes happiness. I am happy.”

“ No, no,” said the old man doubtingly. “ I would sooner give Jupp a good talking to. He has always been a runaway.”

“ And yet you have loved him.”

“ Well, yes. And he wasn’t a common runaway. He was a fine runaway. Without tommyrot. He never lied, even when he was a boy. When he was caught, he would say straightforwardly: ‘ Yes, it was

this way.' And then he would laugh, and there was no use, everybody else had to laugh, too."

The eyes of the woman in the chair shone strangely. She saw a reckless, willful boy before her.

"When he came to us at Koblenz, Klaus, he was even then the famous Dr. Otten, of whom all the newspapers wrote—not always well. But he didn't care about that. Blockheads must be told a thing a hundred times before they understand it. Blessings must be forced upon some of them.—He did not have to force me. What he said once, I believed."

"Such a fine chap," the old man praised his young friend. "No one could refuse him anything."

"You were with him throughout his youth, Klaus."

"At first I was employed by old Otten on a coal-boat. Later on I was made skipper for the firm. Oh, young woman, and when I was in port with my ship lying at the Bayernthurm, there were great doings. Then Jupp would come with his friends, and I had to play the mouth-organ for them, and spin all sorts of funny yarns, and, at last, they would turn everything topsy-turvy. And if I would get after them, Jupp would jump right overboard, dressed as he was—I'd think sometimes I'd have a fit—and his best comrade, 'Drickes, Koch's Heinrich, who is now a priest and a professor, would jump after him—with him in life and death! Then, before one could think, both of them would climb into the dinghy that was tied to the ship, they'd cut the rope, grasp the oars, and away they'd go, rowing and singing for dear life that old robber's song, "Ein freies Leben führen wir!" Only the third one of the bunch, Metardus Terbroich, the fine gentleman of the Ringstrasse, who is so very religious, and

squeezes so many millions out of his workingmen—he was a mean little scamp. It was usually he who started the boys in some devilment, if it was to play a trick on me, and then, when trouble would come, and Jupp and 'Drickes were in the water, where he wouldn't follow them, because he always was a little coward,—he'd see me come, bent on giving him a good thrashing. Then Metardus would look so very innocent, and would say as quietly as possible: 'See, Klaus, there flees troubled conscience! I didn't do it. I'm going away.' And with that he'd be gone."

The woman in the seat smiled. She had heard but half of the story. She saw the wild boy before her, and heard his voice.

"And didn't you ever spank Joseph, Klaus?"

The old man laughed to himself. "Oh, madam, Jupp knew my weak spot. My name is Klaus Guelich. And the Guelichs have been in Cologne these many hundreds of years. First they were small tradesmen. And it was a long, long time ago, that a Nikolaus Guelich, a dealer in dry-goods, started a rebellion in Cologne, and the rebels plundered the houses of the weathy and arrested aldermen and cut their heads off; until the tables were turned and Nikolaus Guelich allowed himself to be caught. In an open square, which from that date has been called the Guelichsplatz, the great criminal himself was beheaded. But because he had been such a celebrity, the Cologners raised a column in his memory on the Guelichsplatz, and placed the head that had been cut off, done in bronze, atop o' the column. And I still have an old book, that is as sacred to me as the Bible, and in that you can read: 'A column to the everlasting shame of the criminal,

with a history of all his dark deeds and crimes, erected there.' That book I fell heir to, and that was lucky, for when the Frenchmen came to Cologne, after they had cut their own king's head off, they didn't want that column there. So they threw it down, and that nice bronze head, that by right should have remained in the family, was taken to Paris. And I was mighty proud of the old Nikolaus Guelich,—and Jupp, he knew that. And, after each trick, he'd come to me and take me by the hand and say: 'Now, Klaus, we'll go to the Guelichsplatz. There you must tell me about your ancestor. I am so anxious to hear it, I can't wait.'—The little scamp!"

"And then he studied in Bonn and Leipzig," the lady took up the conversation after a pause. "History and German literature, and he became Dr. Joseph Otten."

"Yes, yes—he had ideas."

"And everywhere in Germany he held lectures, and everywhere they attracted attention, because he would try to enliven the souls of the verses through the form of their presentation."

"I don't understand that."

"From reciting poetry he went to singing of songs. He wanted to reform the old sing-song methods. Then he studied anew under the great masters in Frankfort and Milan, for he had to know all that was to be learned, and he did not stop until he knew all. He worked ten times as hard as the others, and then, when he had made his great success, the lazy ones and the thoughtless called it—luck!"

"And if it were so! He didn't grow proud. Not Jupp! He has remained a real son of Cologne, with his

heart in the right place. When old Otten died, and the firm was dissolved, he thought of me first. 'So, Klaus,' said the Herr Doktor, 'now you are to be caretaker of my house. And when you have nothing to do, you can row strangers about on the Rhine.' No, no, you can't beat my Jupp."

The woman in the chair leaned forward. She counted the strokes of the clock. "Nine o'clock, Klaus! Now I can stand it no longer."

The old man took his boatman's cap from the hook. "All right. I'll go to Lachner's and look for her."

There was a violent pull at the doorbell. Old Klaus again hung his cap on the hook. The woman was already in the hall.

"Child—— Child——" was all she could say, as she took the little one by the hand and ran with her up the stairway.

"Mother! Just listen! I have seen father!"

"Come, come——!"

Upstairs in the room, she knelt before the child and took off her little cloak. "To give me such a fright. To stay out, without permission——"

"But I have seen father!"

"You could not have known that when you ran away. I had not told you anything about it."

"Yes, but why hadn't you told me?"

"Because father wished to surprise you. Because he wanted to see how good you are. Your hands are almost frozen, and your cheeks hot as fire. Where in the world have you been?"

"At the Guerzenich, seeing father," she insisted.

"But not until now, child. That was a long while ago."

“Then Laurenz Terbroich and I went to the Hohestrasse. Laurenz wanted to show me the beautiful stores with their Christmas displays.”

“My God! In those crowds!” And, suddenly, the woman entwined her arms about the tender child-body. “And didn’t you think of your mother at all, Carmen; not once of your mother?”

“Well, you hadn’t had any time for me all day long.”

“That is my punishment,” murmured the woman, passed her hands over her eyes, and arose.

“Carmen,” she said quietly, “you will never do that again. Never cause me worry. Are you not my big sensible girl, who knows that mother is alone? I will not punish you this time; but never do anything again of which mother does not know. I would have to suffer for it doubly. And now your cocoa quickly, and then to bed.”

When the mother returned from the kitchen after a while, carrying a steaming cup, the little one sat, resting her arms on the table and dangling her legs.

“Oh, mother, I was standing away in front, when father drove up to the Guerzenich. He recognized me.”

The cup shook and rattled a little as it was being placed upon the table.

“How do you know that he did?”

“He nodded at me and laughed.”

“And—laughed——?”

“Because he was so glad to see me.”

“And—and, he didn’t speak to you?”

“No, mother, he came late as it was. All the people were in the hall ahead of him. A hundred car-

riages drove up. The people were dressed as fine as if they were going to a wedding."

"He came too late," repeated the woman and drew a deep breath. "I knew that he could not have had time."

"And there were so many people standing in front of the Guerzenich, mother, only to see father. And when he went in, they all called out: 'Good-evening, Herr Doktor Otten!' And then he laughed again."

"He laughed again? Was father so jolly? 'Good-evening, Herr Doktor Otten,' they all called out. Then you probably were proud?"

"But he was the handsomest of them all, too," said the little one, eating the last piece of zwieback.

"You foolish little thing," said the woman, and her hand stroked the child's dark curls. Her eyes looked far-away, and again they were shining so strangely. . . .

"Mother," the little one started anew, "but that is not true, is it?"

"What is not true, child?"

"What Laurenz said."

"And what did Laurenz say?"

"He said, and Moritz was there, too: 'Is Herr Doktor Otten really your father?'"

The woman started. Her features became tense. She tried to master the awful shock. "What—is that?—What sort of—conversation do you carry on?"

"Laurenz said artists never have real wives, and, therefore, no real children."

"And then—and then you still played with that bad boy—and ran with him to the Hohestrasse?"

"But that was later. First I scratched him and pulled his hair."

“ And Moritz? ”

“ He helped me.”

“ There you see,” said the woman, mastering herself. “ There you see. Moritz is older and more sensible. He loves his father. And those who love their fathers never know anything different. He would be ashamed to talk about his father even in a jest. And especially about your father. . . . ”

“ Mother,” the little one cried, frightened, “ I didn’t do that at all! And Laurenz was only mad because I had said that my father was better than his. Isn’t that true, mother? ”

“ Oh, you dear——! ” the woman exclaimed, grasped the little girl’s head with both hands, and pressed it against her bosom.

The little one lay quiet. She felt contented, resting against that heaving mother’s breast, which was beating and hammering so strangely. And the cool silk felt fine against her cheek.

“ How beautiful you are, mother. Why have you made yourself so beautiful? ”

“ Because father is coming.”

“ But then you must make me beautiful, too.”

“ Oh, you dear, vain little thing; I’ll put you to bed now.”

“ But will father come to my bed? ”

“ Surely, surely, he will come to your bed.”

“ Then you must let me put on a clean nightgown. And put the red bow in my hair.”

“ Will you go to sleep then? ”

“ If I can——”

“ I’ll bring it down for you. Run into the kitchen and undress. It is warmer there. I’ll wash you

quickly, very quickly, so that father won't surprise us.

"I must do what she wants to-day," she quieted herself, as she got the new little nightgown in the linen-room, and a slight blush came and went in her face; "I am no different myself."

Carmen, undressed, stood before a little bath-tub, which she had filled with water. She was splashing the water on her slender limbs. "You don't need to help me, mother; I am done already."

"I'll rub you down. You are a reckless little girl!"

She covered the shivering little body with a bath towel, raised her gown as she knelt upon a rug, and rubbed the little one dry. Through the cloth she soon felt the warmth of the limbs. Then she threw the towel aside, drew the wriggling child close to her, and covered her with kisses.

"I wonder what it is," shot through her mind, "that makes one love one's child so much? Is it the child itself? Or is it the father——?"

"Now, face about and forward march!" she said, fastening the last button of the nightie.

"But the red bow, mother!"

"Oh, all right, you shall have the bow."

"Klaus must carry me upstairs."

"Child, now you give us a rest. You must not ask too much this evening."

"But if Klaus carries me up, I go to sleep much quicker."

"Do you promise me that?"

"Yes—but I want him to tell me a story, just one."

She went to the door. "Only, that Joseph may find everything in order," she confessed to herself. And

then she called down into the hall: "Klaus, Klaus, are you still up?"

"What is it, young madam?" came the answer.

"Klaus, Carmen will let no one but you take her to bed."

"I'm coming."

The old man came up the stairs stiffly. "Where is the little lady?"

"Here!" called out the little one, and stood at attention like a soldier.

"My, oh my!" exclaimed the old man, clapping his hands in admiration, "that can't be our Carmche, that surely is a little angel!"

"See, Klaus! Am I beautiful?"

"She is a naughty little angel, Klaus, and bothers her mother. Take her away quickly."

"Well, then, come on!"

"On your back!" ordered the little one. And the old man bent his stiff back with a chuckle, and let her mount. Suddenly, however, the little girl turned about, and the old man had to move as quickly as he could to grasp her legs and prevent her falling. "Mother! Good-night, mother!" She embraced her and kissed her rapidly upon the eyes, the mouth, and the silk that was tensely drawn over the mother's bosom. "You dear, dear mother!" And with a shout of delight she allowed herself to be carried upstairs.

"Now tell me a story," she ordered, as she stretched herself in her little bed.

Old Klaus obediently sat down upon the edge of the bed and began:

"Once upon a time there was a naked little angel——"

“Oh, that is a regular baby story. Shame on you, Klaus!”

“——and the little naked angel said to an old man: He should be ashamed. And when the good God heard that, God said: ‘Oh, the devil.’”

“That is not true. The good God does not mention the name of the devil.”

“That may be true ordinarily, but when the good God grows angry on account of the naughty things that people say and do, then he says the worst that there is, and that is the devil.”

The little one had not waited for the close of the pedagogic discourse. She had fallen asleep.

And downstairs, in her room, stood the lady of the house, still excited from the violent caresses of the child, but more disturbed by what Carmen had said.

“She will have forgotten it to-morrow,” she thought. “At her age, impressions quickly disappear. But she is growing up——”

Through the open door she looked into the dining-room, with its festive decoration, and at the picture of the man, so free from care.

The white bridal silk upon her body rustled, as she raised her head. “Come soon, Joseph——”

CHAPTER III

THE doorbell tinkled softly, as if it had scarcely been touched. The sound could not have reached Klaus in the room upstairs, and so as not to awaken the child by calling the old man, Frau Maria Otten went herself to open the door. With his cap in his hand, Moritz Lachner waited outside.

“ Well, Moritz, so late? ”

“ The Herr Doktor sends me—— ”

“ We will go upstairs, ” she said. “ It is cold at the front door. ” And she led the way. A message from Joseph she would not receive carelessly at the door.

Moritz Lachner followed her respectfully. He felt the warmest of admiration for the mother of Carmen, as he walked behind the stately woman, to whom the white brocade gave a holiday appearance. Thus he had adored his own mother, who, while she lived, had sat day in and day out, in the only bright room in their house that had not been taken up by the goods of his father's business, working away at some embroidery, and only looking up quickly and joyfully when her son appeared in the door. Since she had died, like a trembling house-plant, his passionate adoration for womanhood had grown out toward the quiet, self-reliant woman in Joseph Otten's house. All the more because it was Joseph Otten's house, for all that was positive, free, and brave, appealed to his tender, timid soul.

“The Herr Doktor has given you a message?” asked Frau Maria, and sat down in her working-chair. “Did you hear the concert, Moritz?”

“I waited outside until it was over.”

“Two hours in the cold! You are an enthusiast, Moritz!”

The boy was pleased by her friendly tone. He blushed and twisted his cap.

“The Herr Doktor came a few minutes after the others. Herr Terbroich was with him, and Herr Professor Koch. When he saw me, he called me. ‘Surely, there is Lachner’s Moritz,’ he said, and then he asked me if I would do him a favor, and run over here and tell you that he would be here in about an hour. That he had to go to the Domhotel for a moment. And if I would bring him the key to the house.”

Frau Maria had listened quietly. She took the bunch of keys from the table and loosened the house key from the ring.

“It was nice of you, Moritz, to do all this. Wait, you shall have a glass of port wine; that will warm you again.”

“Really, it was no trouble,” stammered the boy; “really, no.”

He grew hot as fire as he drank the wine. But he knew that it was not from the drink. He bowed, thanked her, and walked to the door, carrying the key and feeling as if the key to the hearts of these people had been given into his keeping.

She held her hand out to the boy, and said pleasantly: “Give my regards to the Herr Doktor.”

“Well, well!” said Frau Maria, as she heard the

slamming of the outer door. "And now he permits them to lead him astray. An hour . . . and he'll keep his promise. But . . ." She shook her head. "But they will not let go of him in an hour, they will simply come home with him. I know that from of old." She frowned, but it was only for a second. Then she shook off the momentary feeling of annoyance, "It is only the joy of seeing him again. The others want their share, too. Joseph belongs to many."

"Many——?"

Now she laughed silently to herself.

"Let them all come."

The housewife stirred within her. She went into the dining-room and inspected the table. Two covers were laid. "I will give up my own place and lay another cover. Joseph, Terbroich—and Professor Koch." She made the arrangements and was glad to see that there were enough of the delicacies.

"These Cologners are epicures."

In the kitchen she placed a few more bottles on the ice. Then she listened. Old Klaus was coming down the stairs.

"Did it take so long?" she asked sympathizingly.

"Oh, she slept in a minute," reported the old man, yawning, and covering his mouth with the back of his hand, "but sleep is contagious, and I nodded a bit, too."

"Go to bed quickly, Klaus. The master has sent for the housekey."

"That was a sensible thing," praised Klaus, with the egotism of advanced age. "Two years—or two years and one day—it makes no difference, when you see each other again. Good-night, and sleep well, madam."

And he stepped heavily down the stairs and sought his couch, satisfied with the world.

“Now everybody is asleep,” Frau Maria thought, when she sat again at her little working-table. “I alone am awake in the house. And thus he will find me as he left me, the guardian of his home.”

Now and then she heard the steps of a late passer-by from the Rheingasse, then all became silent. But the woman at the worktable did not permit the silence to lure her into reveries. She had spread the school-dress of the little girl upon her lap and sewed on the loosened bows.

Now she listened. . . . Steps approached from the Heumarkt. Men’s voices sounded in the air. A laugh came from the distance. Then she folded up the child’s dress and rose. And all at once a strange timidity overcame her, that made her look aimlessly about, with big, timid eyes, so that, for a moment, there was a suggestion of tears in her smile and she felt as if she were choking. Downstairs a key turned in a lock. Steps on the stairs. One ahead of the others in long bounds. The door of her room opened and closed at once.

“Joseph——” she cried out.

He held her tightly. The large soft hat had fallen from his head, the cloak had slipped from his shoulders. The recklessness of victory disappeared. A strong emotion had taken hold of the man. And she pressed her head against his arm, and felt it as a deliverance that the tears and smiles had both been released by that one cry: “Joseph!”

“Are you very angry?” he asked. “Did you blame me?”

She raised her head to speak.

“Oh, God!” he mumbled, and pressed his lips upon hers.

There was a knock on the door. They did not hear it. It was repeated, louder.

“Shall I throw them out, Maria?”

“Oh, you——!” she shook her head.

“Well, yes——! I have brought them along. You can come in!” he called out and drew his watch, “for half an hour. Then I demand rest.”

“That is not enough,” replied Metardus Terbroich, standing at the threshold. “You can spare us an hour.”

Joseph Otten looked at Maria. She nodded.

“Well, then, an hour! But then I’ll assert my domestic rights, you sticking-plaster——”

“I beg your pardon, Frau Otten,” said the second gentleman, and shook the hand that was held out to him. “I would not have been so impolite as to bring unrest into your home at so late an hour, but as Metardus would not be denied, I thought—go along and practice Christian duty in getting him home at a given time.”

“Good-evening, your reverence.”

“Really, Frau Otten, that should be superfluous between us.”

“Well, then, good-evening, Herr Professor. And good-evening, Herr Terbroich.”

“Good-evening, Frau Otten. And as to what Heinrich Koch was saying there about Christian duty, and about bringing one home—yes, if I were not absolutely convinced that a reverend gentleman could not tell an untruth——”

Joseph Otten ran his hands through his hair, and

Frau Maria opened the door leading to the dining-room.

“Won’t you step in, gentlemen? You see, I counted upon your coming.”

Metardus Terbroich stroked his fashionable mustache and pointed beard. “Well, well! Counted upon our coming? Too much kindness, Frau Otten.” And he bowed.

“You really seem to take that as a compliment, that the esteemed lady of the house has figured upon your coming, my dear Metardus,” Koch laughed merrily. “Shouldn’t she, instead, have ignored you?”

“Do you think so?—The church, of course, has free entrance at every board.”

“At every board?—I will, then, invite myself to dinner with you to-morrow.—Do you see how he changes color?”

Joseph Otten had walked through the rooms. He felt at home at once, and he thanked Maria for it. A pleasant sensation ran through him, a feeling of being in a safe port. With her! Once again with her! No—at last again with her—— He turned around. “Come to the table!” he called out. “The hour passes, and I will not send you home without bread and salt. What! There are only three covers——”

“I have already eaten with the child,” she whispered.

“And wish to leave us alone now?” He understood her.

“It will not be for long,” his look told her. “Forgive me, I was stupid!” And this silent confession pleased her.

“Good-evening, gentlemen.”

“What, are you going to leave us?”

“I’ll return when you have eaten. I should like to inspect Carmen’s school work.”

“I can’t blame you, Frau Otten. It requires a stout heart to see our good Metardus at work with knife and fork.”

Joseph Otten had filled the glasses. He raised his glass to Maria without a word, and emptied it in one thirsty draught.—The gentlemen were alone.

“Reverend Heinrich,” said Terbroich pointedly, “you could spare your jokes before a lady.” He held a goose-liver patty close before his eyes and took half.

“My dear Metardus,” the priest said mildly, “you overlook that you are the author of the poorest joke of them all.”

“I—how so?”

“Simply through your presence here.”

Terbroich wanted to answer heatedly, changed his mind, however, and found the patty delicious. “Without hurting the feelings of the reverend Professor, I beg of you a glass of Rauenthaler. Ah! That is a wine that has bouquet and flavor. Worthy to be drunk to Cologne’s victorious son. To our sacred boyhood friendship, that shall remain true forever! To the joy of having him, our best one, amongst us again, to bask in his glory. Prosit!”

“Man,” Koch said admiringly, “you do understand that. If only your visits were as short as your toasts.”

“Did I ever once trouble you?”

“Once? Oh, you dear innocence from the country. Only twice you came to me in Rome.”

“Yes, your moorings are fast,” laughed Otten. “But *I* may sing in Paris, or in London, in Berlin, Brussels, or Milan—it is all the same; if Metardus

comes there on a business trip, he invariably lodges with me. 'What do you want with two hotel rooms?' he will say; and his train always leaves an hour ahead of mine."

"But, on the other hand, he employs the cheapest traveling salesmen," Koch said approvingly. "Once one of his young men—well, I am no longer a father-confessor—told me all about it privately. 'We may be ever so saving, Herr Terbroich has still fewer expenses than we when he travels.' 'My son,' I said, 'I will reveal the secret to you. Secure for yourself in each city a hospitable friend, never allow yourself to be invited, but always invite yourself; hear only the "How-do-you-do," and never the "Good-by," and—in return, keep your thumb tightly upon your pocket-book. Then you will become a rich merchant, a second Metardus.'"

"My dear Heinrich," said Terbroich, reaching out for the caviare, "I will not tread on any of your corns, but you display the envy of a reverend gentleman who lacks good acquaintances."

"I have no good acquaintances," said Koch. "I have friends. Prost, Joseph, old brother in arms! To-day you have sung—no, you have awakened songs to life in such a way that my heart is still astir, and that even now I pardon Metardus' way of living."

"Prost, Heinrich, that makes me proud."

"Well, a few of them criticised, too," Terbroich reported. "They said that it was not singing, but recitation. But I told them, 'That is modern art, ladies and gentlemen, the art that is being recognized in the great world. And even the ladies of the highest aristoc-

racy are on their knees before my friend, Joseph Otten.’”

“That, probably, impressed you more than my singing.”

“To tell the truth, yes. It must be a great feeling of satisfaction to know, ‘I have only to cast the glove.’ Prost, Joseph! Let me fence in your shadow.”

Heinrich Koch turned his broad back on Terbroich. He stroked his smooth-shaven chin and looked thoughtful.

“When you sang ‘The Grenadiers’ it seemed to me as if I could see them, marching before me with bandaged wounds and bleeding hearts. And with them an entire epoch. It grew and grew and became real. And how you sang ‘The Pilgrimage to Kevelaer’! In spite of my ordination, I am not as pious as Metardus. But when you sang that ‘Pilgrimage,’ I walked in the midst of the procession, and piously I, too, sang, ‘Praised be thou, Maria.’”

Otten grasped the hand of the priest. “We still understand each other.”

“And always will, Joseph.”

Terbroich had become a little tipsy. “Tell us, Joseph, some of your experiences. How many times have you sung that ‘Praised be thou, Maria’?—in a worldly sense, of course. Everything at its proper time, and here we are alone.”

With shining eyes Otten looked across the table. “Oh, yes, life is beautiful. Wonderful the flight into the world and blessed the homecoming. What lies between is no concern of yours.”

“Then tell us of your blessed homecoming.”

“I even begrudge you that last drink.”

“Yes, so that you may sing again, ‘Praised be thou, Maria.’ In every city, in every city, even in Cologne. Joseph, you have good taste.”

Joseph Otten arose. “The only thing about you that always interests me in your low-mindedness.”

Frau Maria had entered the room. “Frau Otten,” Terbroich called out, “you two are well off. Separation and honeymoon, honeymoon and separation! That keeps one young and new!”

“The gentlemen wish to say good-night, Maria,” said Otten without a quiver in his face. “Metardus is already in the farewell mood. Heinrich, will you be kind enough to take him home? I thank you, and know how to appreciate it. I am as happily tired as I used to be when I was a boy.”

He had escorted his guests to the door and returned. Slowly, step after step, as if to collect his thoughts for the real “Wiedersehen” with the woman who had waited up there for him for two years, as if he must now bring home to her—and to her alone—the one she had been waiting for.

She stood in the room and looked toward him. He, too, stood and took in the picture with a glance. Each looked into the features of the other, searching for memories and their promises.

Joseph Otten’s chest expanded. He raised his hands and took a step forward. Then she had reached him and placed her hands into his. With their brows almost meeting, they looked into each other’s eyes, and each saw that the other’s lips were quivering.

“You kiss me first,” he whispered; “that is like a pardoning of all sins.”

Then she took her hands from his and, placing them

on his head, kissed him long and tenderly on the mouth.

“Now you are at home, Joseph.”

“I thank you,” he said, deeply touched. “You again make it so easy for me.”

“I only recognize you, Joseph.”

“But this recognition grows painful to you with repetition.”

“Whoever has greater happiness than others, must be able to bear greater pain than they.”

“Is it really great happiness for you? Such a worthless man as I?”

“Yes!” she answered emphatically. “Yes! yes! Do not doubt it. And now you are here——”

He took a step backward.

He held her at arm's length and looked at her in astonishment. Her tall, full figure, the white neck, and the dark head; the serious forehead and the happy smile and eyes.

“Have you grown taller, Maria?”

“No, no.”

“But more beautiful, even more beautiful.”

She shook her head. “It only seems that way to you, it is the gown.”

“The gown—— Oh, see!—the gown. You remember everything, even trifles, if they give me joy.”

“Your joy is no small matter to me.”

“How fine it makes one feel to look at you——”

“Not like that——”

“Yes, like that!”

She could scarcely breathe, so tightly he had drawn her to his bosom. But she did not stir. She lay still, as if she had lain there like that every evening. She closed her eyes as he caressed her.

“Are you tired?” he asked.

She smilingly shook her head. “But you must be tired. The long trip, the concert, the joy——”

“I will tell you all about it.”

“To-morrow. Some other time; you are tired now.”

“Oh, dear! Such a happy tired feeling!”

With his arm about her waist he walked with her through the room and into the adjoining one.

“Here you sat and waited for me,” he said, standing before her easy-chair. “How often I have seen you sitting there, when I thought of home. I always wanted to pause, to take a vacation, and spend it here with you. But the rebellious blood drove me into the current, the eddies again—— Sit down,” he begged, drawing the chair close, “as you have sat all these days. You shall feel that it is different to-day. No, no, I will lie down upon the rug and rest my head in your dear lap. Why do I have this joy so rarely——? I myself am my own worst enemy.”

She bent down to him and laid her cool hand upon his eyes.

“Joseph, listen to me. If you accuse yourself to comfort me—it is really not necessary. I have been yours now these twelve years. Can you think that during all that time I have remained so small that I could not see the difference between you and other men? I went with seeing eyes into my—yes, into my happiness. For if I consider everything, it is my happiness, indeed. I could never have loved any man but you. Well, all right, if you must hear it; other men may have more virtues than you—what they call virtues. But, then, they are not—Joseph Otten. You see, I un-

derstand. And because you are Joseph Otten, I must love—your faults as well.”

“I am afraid but little remains if you count out the faults, Maria.”

“Let that be my care. People who have a mission cannot be everyday people, and to that I hold when the faults seem to loom up big. You belong to the world.”

“With my art! But not with my being. But that is just it.”

“As if you could separate those.”

“I cannot, Maria. And those who are about me outside, they do not want it at all.”

“For all that, I remain what I am, Joseph.”

“What do you remain? The port for the storm-tossed vessel. The sickroom for the worn-out soldier.”

“If there are to be soldiers, there must be nurses, too.”

“Soldiers and artists should bind no women to themselves.”

“Yes, they should, Joseph. They must know of a port where their wounds can heal, to—gather new strength for new voyages.”

“Then you don’t believe that I will stay here!”

“No, Joseph,” she said, looking with a brave smile into his darkened features. “Now, while you are tired, I believe you have the honest desire to stay. But some day—yes, some day I shall have to send you away myself in order to—keep you.”

“Am I like that?” Otten said, with bitter sarcasm.

“Thank God you are like that, Joseph.”

“And it is all the same to you, that you give so much more than I? That I spend the wealth that you give me, to take along, out there in the world, that I

waste it in hilarity—— Oh, I don't want to think with whom!"

"Only, come home often. So that I can prove to you that I have much more wealth."

Joseph Otten did not stir. He only pressed his head deeper into her lap. "Homecoming!" he thought. "Now, this is, indeed, homecoming!" And then he began to give voice to his thoughts. "Yes, really the port. So long as the ship floats upon the waves, one dreams of the laughing distance and beckoning adventures; forgetting what is astern, welcoming what is ahead. And the vessel floats merrily about in all climes, in all waters, always joyous, driven by every breeze, until, one day, its speed grows less, and in a calm it is found that during those jolly travels throughout the world, all sorts of rank marine growths have befouled the ship's bottom, and are lessening its speed and usefulness. 'Oho!' says the captain, 'where is the best harbor? The vessel must be docked.' And again he thinks of the home port. If that is not good for any other purpose, it is the best of all for making the repairs the old tub needs, for scraping and cleaning and patching. For home is like a mother, and mothers have the proper feeling for cleanliness. So here I am, Maria."

She stroked his hair this way and that. He was with her again.

"It is growing gray, Maria."

"It is as blond and self-willed as ever."

"No, no, the gray hairs are multiplying lately. And that reminds me that I am tired."

She raised his head from her lap. Like a child the big man allowed her to do it. "Come, Joseph!"

“Maria, that I should have brought those two to the house! I will not speak of Heinrich Koch. He came to help me, because I could not shake off Terbroich. He had fastened to the ship’s bottom just before it made the port. And that I should not have seen you before the concert! In Frankfort they would not let go of me, and once again I enjoyed being held back. Thus, you see, I have grown more undisciplined. And then I was glad in the anticipation that on my return you should behold me first upon the platform. But that—that you must pardon especially. It was humiliating to think that I would have to win you anew. Humiliating for you.”

“Did you recognize the little one, Joseph?”

“Carmen?” He jumped up. “You—you had sent her?”

“She had run there without permission. I have probably been too much woman and not enough mother to-day. So she was not looked after.”

“She stood in front, in the first row. As I ran past—I had to hurry—it seemed to me as if I had caught a ray of sunshine. Something so warm shot through my blood and forced me to look around again, and there stood my child!”

“Will we go to her?”

He drew a deep breath. “Yes,” he said softly, and laughed to himself. “She grows more beautiful all the time.”

Carefully they tiptoed up the stairs. Frau Maria had put out the lights, and carried only the hall lamp. He had placed his arm about her waist, and thus they stepped up to the bed of the sleeping child.

“She has almost become a young lady,” he said after a while.

“She is not easy to bring up,” she replied, “but she has blood and spirit.”

“Strange how closely she resembles you. The hair, the features. That pleases me most.”

“She resembles me only when she is resting. When she becomes lively and begins to talk, she resembles you in a way that has sometimes startled me.”

“Shocked you?”

“Pst——! She moves. The light strikes her eyes.” She placed the lamp upon the table and returned. To the right the father stood, stooping over the child’s bed, to the left the mother. Their breath came and went in unison.

“Do you want to see how tall she has grown?” Frau Maria whispered.

He nodded. She drew the covering aside. The little one folded her arms behind her head, moved a little, groped with her feet, and slept on. The nightgown had rolled up, and long and slender the white limbs lay extended.

Joseph Otten’s lips moved. “Is there anything more touching?”

“I will pray every day that she will remain so touching,” Frau Maria answered softly.

“Do you fear on her account? I asked you a while ago.”

“Not yet, and yet—I do. She is ahead of her years, and has a liking for the extraordinary.”

“My daughter——” said Joseph Otten, and there was a peculiar sound of emotion in his voice. Then he stooped quickly and pressed a kiss on each of the

little legs. Frau Maria softly covered up the little sleeper.

“Maria,” Otten began, and stopped short.

“Speak, Joseph.”

“The longer you are mine, Maria, the more I have to thank you. The account grows from year to year. You do not wish me to speak of it. Because we were already adults when we began life’s walk together, and each of us knew what the other would bring. Therefore, I will not speak of it. But if you wish to earn a gratitude that surpasses all, Maria, then watch over her, Maria. And should I ever be shipwrecked, save none but the child.”

“As far as I am concerned, nothing shall remain undone, Joseph. I promise you that.”

“Have you any desire? I would like to do something especially kind and loving for you, at this hour, more than ever. Have you a wish?”

She looked at him, shook her head, and embraced him.

“You weep——?”

She raised her face and showed him her eyes.

“Those dear, longing woman’s eyes,” he said. “I’ll learn again to read in them.”

“Do that, Joseph.” She took the light and waited.

“Is our bedroom still up here?”

“Everything has remained in its accustomed place. Even old Klaus.”

“Old—Klaus? He is still faithful? And I?”

“Just remain true to yourself, Joseph. And we here—we will remain so to you.”

“Oh, how beautiful it is to be at home!”

She silently took his hand and, as if in a dream, they walked together to their common room.

CHAPTER IV

“CARMEN——! Carmen!”

Frau Maria, in a soft morning-robe, laughingly shook the child.

“Sleepyhead, don’t you want to get up at all to-day? Not in a hurry to get to school? And father? Don’t you want to say good-morning to father? He will have a nice opinion of his daughter.”

The little girl sat up in bed. “Father?” Surprisedly she rubbed her eyes, thought for a second, threw back the covering, and leaped from the bed. “Father is here?” she shouted joyfully. “Quickly, mother, take me to him!”

“First the sleep must be washed out of your eyes, your hair must be combed, and you must be dressed completely. Don’t you want father to see how much of a young lady his daughter has grown to be?”

“Oh, mother, that takes so long. Will you help me to hurry?”

And then there was a duet of whispering and laughter in the gable room, as if Frau Maria had become a child again overnight. A quarter of an hour later, they stood in the door of the living-room, both scarcely able to suppress their excitement. Joseph Otten sat in the corner of the sofa with the morning paper in his hand. The breakfast table was set, and the flowers in the center added a cheerful touch of color.

“Father,” said the little one timidly. And then, with a shout of joy, “Father!”

She raced to the sofa. With a bound she was in his lap, crumpling his paper, showering kisses on his face, shouting into his ears, and springing out of one of his arms into the other, and back again. And he lifted her up high, and swung her about, until the child's long legs waved wildly in a semicircle. "You wild little thing! Yes, you are alive, I can feel that!" Frau Maria had remained standing in the doorway, and was calling out into the uproar words which no one understood. Then he handed the child to her and fell back into the sofa corner with a sigh of satisfaction. "Now, come, all of you. Now to breakfast."

The little girl demanded to sit beside her father. "That is mother's place," the father defended the right of the housewife. But Frau Maria took her daughter's part. "To-day is Carmen's turn." And she retired quickly to bring in the coffee from the kitchen.

"Why didn't you come yesterday morning, father? To-day I have to be in school all day."

"I beg your pardon most humbly, miss, for such neglect. But on that account, I am going to stay a long while with you this time. If mother will allow me."

"Oh, mother!" the little girl prattled, casting a rapid glance at Frau Maria. "You couldn't please her better. Then she won't have to be alone all the time when I am in school."

"Why doesn't she go out walking?"

"Without one's husband, a lady can't go out walking."

"But now you drink your coffee, Carmen," Frau Maria admonished. "Within five minutes you must

be on your way to school. You can talk more at noon."

The little girl looked sideways at her father, secretly stroked his sleeve, and quickly finished her breakfast. In coat and fur cap, swinging her schoolbag on her arm, she once more stormily hugged and kissed her parents. Frau Maria mildly rebuked her: "Quiet, Carmen, do be quiet!"

"Goodness!" said the little one. "I have you together so seldom." Then she ran away.

Otten had stepped to the window, opened it, and leaned out. His looks followed the child until she disappeared in the side streets. When he closed the window and returned to his seat, the seriousness of thought rested on his brow.

For a time he sat quietly in his sofa corner, folding and smoothing the newspaper, his brows drawn up. He was humming.

"The little one has grown up," he said suddenly.

Frau Maria nodded.

"And she does not seem to be dull, either," he continued. "She now reaches the age of investigation, in which children discuss the existence or the non-existence of the stork. Who knows, perhaps she is even further than that." He waited. "Maria." She looked at him. "What do you think about it, Maria?"

"It is as you say, Joseph."

"Hm. Well, it is so . . . and some day she will come with questions which her mother would like to answer and will not be able to. And that will cause mother some sad hours, as I know her, and for the child it will mean unhealthy thoughts. And one does not permit people whom one loves to suffer."

Through the silence of the room there came and went the breath of the woman.

“Yes, Maria, I have now reached the Swabian age, when one should have his right sense, if that is ever to be. I cannot disown my forty-five years, though I may succeed in hiding them from the world.” He played with the fringe of the table-cover. “What do you think about it?”

“About—what?” she asked forcedly. Her heart beat in her throat. He pulled at the fringes. A pause of but seconds, yet they seemed an eternity. “In reality I ought to have a guardian.” He attempted to jest. “But before it comes to that I had better consign myself into safe hands. You would not let me feel the guardianship, Maria.”

He was still tracing the pattern of the tablecloth, and did not notice that her hands trembled in her lap.

“A child has a right to protection. It must not feel any difference between itself and others, or it receives a wound for life. When one is young, and one’s passion leaps over church and steeple, one does not realize that. One is glad that one has executed the leap over conventionality and Philistinism with grace. But such elasticity is denied to children. They have to pay the costs some day. If I could imagine that anybody would dare to look at Carmen slightly—Oh, well, never! That will never happen. Shall we arrange our affairs formally?”

Now he looked up, and the furtive shyness turned suddenly to surprise. “Maria!”

She sat erect beside him upon the sofa. The hands in her lap had become quiet. Silently she looked at him. But that tearful look in the woman’s eyes spoke.

“You see, Joseph, I have always been proud of you, even if at times it has meant struggles in my heart. But to-day I know that my pride in you was justified. That is happiness——!”

“You—weep?”

But she could not yet find words.

Then realization gripped the man. A realization of all that a woman's love can give. And that it is the greatest of love that gives amidst silent pains, and that gives and gives again. “I have never seen the halo of the Madonna about a woman,” he said softly, and laid his hand upon her hair. “But it exists. My wife has it. Then even a man like me can look bravely at the past and the future.”

“Joseph——” It was all she said. But the sound of it touched his heart. With tenderest hands he stroked her face, drew it toward him, and kissed the tears from her cheeks.

“Now let us drop sentiment, and talk business. My talent gravitates more toward the anacreontic side. Look up! Are your papers in order? Yes or no?”

“Yes.”

“And your heart?”

“That also.”

“Then wrap both of them up in the *Cologne Gazette*, so that I can carry them to the Marriage Court. The official will rejoice! Yes, yes, the morals of the bourgeois——!”

Now life came back to her. The blood rushed to her cheeks, the words tumbled over one another in her joy. Past and present came to her in joyful confusion.

“That you could feel that with me! Last night——”

do you remember?—you asked me, if I had any desire. I did have a wish. But I could not have expressed it. There are thoughts that one can have, but the other must speak them, else they lose their blessing. Do you understand that, Joseph? Else I should have always had the feeling: ‘I forced him to do it.’ And it was urgent, Joseph, I can tell you now. The child’s attention had been attracted, and she has more imagination than I like at times. The child! Our Carmen! It is twelve years since you came to Koblenz. I know the date and the hour. My parents had been dead a year, and I did not know which way to turn. After we had discussed matters for a few days—— Oh, no, we did not discuss matters at all, we talked of art and of life, of sun, moon, and stars—then you took me with you to travel, with you into the blossoming spring world. By your side! How I thank you for that to this day! Then I gathered more joy than I can consume in all my life. And, two years later, when our Carmen came, you brought me here into the old family house of the Ottens, of which my parents had told me stories when I was but a child. Of everything I could speak with you, with everything I could speak of you. Everything told me of you. And I have looked after everything and cared for everything, so that it remained as it was, and where it was, when you were a boy, so that you could praise the keeper of your house. And now comes the crowning!”

With smiling surprise Otten had followed the excited flow of words of her whose equanimity and even temper he had so often admired.

“Dearest, dearest, you are acting as if I placed you upon a royal throne.”

“You are doing it.”

“With this written and sealed declaration? Oh, you modern woman. For more than a decade she does not breathe a syllable upon the subject, and I imagine I have in her the very essence of the New Woman, and for more than a decade—I am now sure that it has not been a day less—she carries about with her in her innermost heart the real old-fashioned desire to be——”

“As every one, even the most modern woman, carries that desire about with her. No woman can tear herself away from that entirely. Even the most free-thinking and broadest-minded, the most emancipated, silently hope, even if it be after years and years. And if we do without, then we do so, in order not to lose.”

“One might grow old as Methuselah, and study woman in the four quarters of the globe, and you would still give him riddles to solve.”

“Because you men always seek to solve riddles.”

“Have you any more for me to solve?”

“No, Joseph, that was the only one.”

“Well, then, you dear open soul, go and get the papers. You probably will not have to search for them long.”

She came back blushing. Otten looked at her and shook his head. “Such a stately woman, and still such a dear little child!”

Then she put her arms around his neck and kissed him.

An hour later Otten left the house. At the front door he met old Klaus, in his knit jacket, squinting at the winter sun, and accompanying this activity by smoking his long-stemmed clay pipe.

“Did you really come home, you world-roamer?” he greeted the master of the house and shook his hand. “I wanted to have a Mass read for your soul, but the Herr Pastor said: ‘This soul does not seem to me to be quite clean.’”

“The Herr Pastor meant your own soul, you old scamp. Well, and apart from that? Still well and active?”

“I can’t go to the inn any more.”

“Is it as bad as all that? Do the feet refuse?”

“The feet are all right, but I have no money.”

“That is a serious case. I’d go and see the doctor.”

“I am just seeing the doctor.”

“Oh, I see!” Otten laughed. “And you would like to take the prescription at once to the drugstore yourself?”

“Sure, Herr Doktor. And I bring the best wishes from the Herr Doktor, who will renew the prescription whenever it is necessary. Did I understand correctly?”

Otten took something from his pocket. “Here, Klaus, on account. I have something to attend to, and I am superstitious. Therefore you shall drink to my health the entire morning through. And another thing. In confidence, and shake hands on it. Do you happen to know the way to the Marriage Court?”

“Jupp,” said old Klaus seriously, “I go with you. You’d never find it alone in all your life.”

It was noon when Joseph Otten returned home. He was in the best of humor, but quiet. At the table Carmen looked inquiringly from her father to her mother. But when she saw the pleasant faces, she was satisfied to do all the talking herself. Proudly she told of her

manual training lesson, and how her new teacher had told them that she, the previous night, had had the privilege to spend a never-to-be-forgotten evening at the concert given by Doktor Otten. And it had been a "revelation"—in telling it, the little one mimicked the teacher, rolling her eyes heavenward—and teacher had asked her if she was related to Doktor Otten. And she had answered: not related, but he was her father. Then teacher had walked over to her, with such funny, important strides, that all the girls in the classroom had bit into their handkerchiefs, so as not to laugh aloud, and teacher had laid her hand upon Carmen's head, and had said: "Oh, thou blessed child!" And the little one laughed again, as if the very remembrance of it would make her burst with merriment.

"Yes!" said Frau Maria, brushing back the elf-locks from the little one's face, "and the teacher was right. Only you must behave accordingly."

"Oh, let her be!" Otten begged, secretly amused at the exuberance of Carmen's spirit, and he winked at Frau Maria.

"Moritz Lachner passed the school. He asked me if I would go with him to the Cathedral this afternoon after school hours."

"Moritz? How does Saul join the prophets?"

"He wants to become an historian," Frau Maria said. "And he tells stories to the child. He is very much attached to Carmen, although he is already in Sekunda."

"He forces his attentions," the little one remarked slightly.

"Carmen!"

"Well, may I go with him? Afterwards he wants

to show me their store. An entire shipment of masquerade costumes has arrived there."

"That seems to me a pretty strong contrast. But as it is for educational purposes, you may go. Art is as serious as the Cathedral, and as merry as a masquerade. But the main thing is: This is a holiday."

"A holiday?" the little one doubted.

"An entirely new one: Mary and Joseph! But you mustn't tell anybody else."

Carmen Otten was inattentive in school that afternoon. She listened quietly for the ringing of the clock's bell that sounded over the roofs of the city, and she was the first to leave school at a run. At the corner of the Hohestrasse she met Moritz Lachner. Without stopping they went on their way. They had scarcely walked a few steps when they were hailed by Laurenz Terbroich.

"Where are you going?"

"To the Cathedral."

"Moritz, too? If they will allow him in."

"Come along," the little girl said timidly, and he was willing.

"Everybody who behaves decently is allowed to enter the Cathedral." Moritz Lachner warded him off with a scowl on his brow. "I don't need you."

"I go to the Cathedral to pray; you don't."

"What do you know of my prayers?"

The Hohestrasse was crowded, but the crowd was good-natured. The mass of people pushing along this thoroughfare, in spite of its narrowness the most crowded of Cologne, were out sight-seeing. They stopped in front of the show-windows and made room

for other crowds without losing their temper. An old woman was pulling a hand-organ along the street. A disabled veteran turned the crank, and the organ gave forth the beautiful strains of the "Lorelei" in its own peculiar, inimitable way. The people on the sidewalk whistled the tune. A country town idyll, in the center of the big city's traffic.

The little girl wanted to run along with the organ, but Moritz Lachner pulled her hurriedly away.

"That is not suitable for you, because your father is such a well-known man."

Passing the Wallrafsplatz, they reached the Cathedral. They looked up, as they always did, inspired with awe at the enormous height.

"Those are thoughts turned to stone," said Moritz Lachner.

"They are groups of pillars," declared Laurenz Terbroich.

"Do you know where the Cathedral comes from?" Moritz asked the little girl. "From the Seven Mountains, from the Dragon's Rock. The stones were quarried out of the bowels of the mountain." And they entered the mighty edifice. They tiptoed along the Stations of the Cross. The holiness of the place made them tremble. "When the French came to Cologne at the time of the great Revolution, they made a barn out of this," Moritz told Carmen. "And they stole the lead from the roofs," Laurenz remarked indignantly. The little girl did not hear him. She pointed to the beautiful paintings of the innumerable windows of the Cathedral. "They show scenes from the Bible and the legends of the saints," Moritz whispered to her.

“You don’t need to tell us that,” Laurenz interrupted him angrily. “You are not even christened.”

With frightened eyes Carmen stared at her unchristened friend. She was afraid to go farther with him. The pictures of the saints seemed to look at them so peculiarly. “Who is that?” she asked, pointing at a big statue.

Moritz waited for Laurenz to answer, until the latter had to admit his ignorance. Then Moritz said: “That is St. Christopher, the patron saint of all journeymen.” Laurenz turned up his nose. “I thought as much. A saint for common people. We have entirely different ones.” They looked at the statues of the Twelve Apostles, and came to an iron grating, shutting them off. “We can’t go in there. That costs too much money,” remarked Laurenz and walked on. “What may be behind there?”

“The treasure chamber,” he reported mysteriously. “The golden shrine of the Three Kings. That contains the remains of the Oriental kings who came to Bethlehem. Empress Helena brought their bones to Constantinople, and from there they were taken to Milan. After the destruction of Milan, Emperor Frederick the First presented them to the Archbishop of Cologne.”

“Goodness, how smart you are!” said the little one, and silently grasped his hand. Then Moritz Lachner was proud of his Christian and Catholic knowledge.

Two little old nuns tripped past. They stopped in front of everything, bent a knee, and looked smilingly at each other. A red-coated attendant made his rounds and looked out sharply for loving couples, seeking shelter behind pillars in pretended piety,

brushed past the children, and mumbled something. At the altar a mass was being read.

“Come,” said Moritz Lachner, depressed, “now we must pray or go out.” And they sneaked to the portal and left the Cathedral. Laurenz Terbroich had already disappeared. He had felt a longing for his afternoon coffee.

“Are we going to your house now, Moritz?”

The boy joyfully said, “Yes.” He did not let go her hand until they had reached the crooked old house on Obermannspforten, that seemed to bend under the weight of its immense top story.

A little gray-bearded Jew, in a greasy coat, with a silk skull-cap on his head, came hurriedly into the store when the doorbell rang. “Ah!” he said beamingly, “our Moritz. And little Miss Otten. No, but she has become a big Miss!”

The little girl gave him her hand, a little shyly, looking at her friend the while.

“We have been in the Cathedral, father, and now I want to show Carmen the new costumes.”

“In the Cathedral?” Simon Lachner said, surprised. “Isn’t Moritz a smart young man, missie? He knows everything. The stones talk to him, and the past, in the temple and in the Cathedral. He is the smartest in school, and he wants to study. He’ll succeed. He’ll succeed. No, no, missie, not even the child of Doktor Joseph Otten need be ashamed of her association with Moritz.”

“She isn’t, either, father.”

He patted the boy on the cheek. “Go ahead, Moritz, amuse yourselves. I’ll bring something for your visitor.”

"Your father is so peculiar," the little one said, laughing nervously, when they were standing in the costume magazine.

"He works for me alone," Moritz replied, "and he thinks of me only."

"I believe my father never thinks of me when he is away."

"Oh, yes. Only in a different way. Our fathers never forget us. That is proven in every case some time or other."

They romped about in the room, dimly lit up by a tiny oil-lamp. Carmen pressed a glittering crown upon her head, let Moritz place a scarlet cloak, interwoven with gold, about her shoulders, and held court like a queen. She compelled Moritz to put on a page's suit, and then a tin suit of armor, and, while he sat on a heap of old clothes, he recited sentimental poetry and ballads by Uhland. The children's voices penetrated to old Simon, listening at the door, nodding energetically at the romantic recitations of his son, and finally shuffling out to the kitchen, there to heap figs, dates, and oranges upon a plate, which he carried with benevolent mien to the children.

"Whoever comes to my Moritz, finds whatever he needs," he explained to the staring little girl.

Moritz Lachner escorted his little friend home. He was as happy as in a dream, because his guest had enjoyed her visit so much, and he squeezed her slender fingers.

"Here we are," he said. "Good-night, Carmen."

"Good-night, Moritz." She hesitated. "I would like to give you a kiss, but Laurenz might hear of it——" She ran into the house. And Moritz Lach-

ner was content that she at least had expressed the wish, and sauntered home.

Christmas came and went. Daily old Klaus growled, and swept the snow from the sidewalk, so as not to be fined by the police. And one day he put on his old-fashioned frock-coat. Without it becoming public, he was to go along to the Marriage Court. He and Professor Koch acted as witnesses.

It was on the evening of this day. Joseph Otten sat in his wife's room. She had placed her arm about him.

“Well? Satisfied, Maria?”

“Now I have no desire left.”

“Dear old girl! Who can call himself happy before death?”

“I, Joseph. Life has given to me all that is beautiful.”

“And that?”

“Oh, you! Don't ridicule now——”

“Carmen!” called out Otten. “The holy family belongs together.” And he lifted the little girl on his lap and let her ride on his knee. But in spite of his apparent frivolity, he felt warm and content. And daily, when it grew dusk, and he closed the books in which he had studied; when he sat at the piano and played fantasies, while outside the northeaster shook the shutters; when he was called to the table, and, later, when he sat on the sofa with Frau Maria in his arms, after telling stories of the adventurous world outside, he would repeat to himself, and to the grateful woman: “The best thing of all is to fly home to one's nest——”

He spent some time in the company of Heinrich

Koch, who again obtained a long leave of absence, to continue writing his history of the Catholic Church amidst the records of the Vatican in Rome. "When one is a church historian," he used to say, "one absorbs a bit of merry heathendom. That makes one unfit for the regular church service. History recognizes no dogma."

He rarely met Terbroich. He detested the latter's Jesuitical hypocrisy.

Frau Maria continued to attend to her household duties. She enjoyed the hours and days, which gave her the presence of the man she loved, like holidays, that come to bless later through the memory of them.

The spring flood was raising the waters of the Rhine, and the children would run to the river-front to see the drifting ice. A few warm days followed a period of rainy weather. Then the river became quiet, and shipping started anew. Their white sails filled with wind, stately ships sped down the river, passing the walls and towers of Cologne, so old and so gray. Under full steam, small, swift steamers towed long rows of boats upstream, and greeted the city with shrill blasts from their whistles.

Joseph Otten often stood at the quay and followed them with his eyes. When sail and smoke disappeared in the distance, he would start up, as if he had been dreaming and had been awakened. Then he would go home, chat with Maria, and practice for hours at the piano with his little daughter after school hours.

But his walks to the river-front increased in frequency, his looks following the ships lingered longer, and, when he finally tore himself away, his steps were tired and his eyes without luster.

In the evening, during the cozy hours in Maria's company, he would suddenly begin to talk nervously. "Now it is spring in the south. *Ætna* has put on a girdle of emeralds. The sea is like a turquoise, and the sea breeze carries the odors of roses blooming on Capri. Yes—of that Cologne knows nothing——"

Maria had noticed the change in its first elusive signs. She had expected it, and, therefore, it caused her no pain. If she was pained, it was only because she saw her husband suffering, trying to master his blood. And she saw that he was being defeated, but still struggled.

He read to her a letter which he had received from Heinrich Koch, now in Rome. "Days of sunshine in the Campagna. Everything blooms and glories, as if the world had never been so beautiful before."

"As if the world had never been so beautiful before——" he repeated, and his look went past the letter, away into the beyond.

Frau Maria suddenly felt her heart beat violently. Now it would have to be done. And she forced herself with all her strength to seem calm.

"You must not miss that, Joseph."

It was out, and she was able to smile, while he looked at her as if he could not comprehend.

"You are mocking me," it came slowly, forcedly.

"But there is really no important work detaining you. The concert obligations for the remainder of the season have been canceled. I really don't know what could prevent you."

"Really—I don't know it myself."

"Write to Koch to expect you in a few days."

"He will be astonished!"

“Or would you rather surprise him?”

“Oh, if I had my choice—Rome is Rome at all times, but wandering about in Sicily now would be great.”

“But, then, I also would prefer Sicily, at least for the present.”

“And jump from Palermo over to Tunis, to sit like Scipio upon the ruins of Carthage.”

“Then I will look after your trunks at once. I suppose you will take the night train to-morrow. It has sleeping-cars.”

“But, Maria——” and he sat at the table with reddened face. “This is just as if you were sending me away.”

“I am, Joseph.”

“You—send me away of your own accord? And why? Surely I have not said anything?”

“I send you away, so that you will not run away from me, Joseph.” It cost her an effort to appear cheerful. “You have a sensible wife.”

“But I am not thinking of running away from you.”

“Unconsciously, Joseph. And if you don't go of your own accord, something will pull you along. The advance agents of spring, the old love of wandering, the longing for the romantic in life——”

“Say, the spirit of adventure, too. Good God, what a vagabond am I!”

“You can't change your nature. Perhaps I love you all the more for it. The children of sorrow one loves most. And you are not hiding your blood. You have the courage—to be yourself.”

“The courage of a tramp,” he said, but he was already laughing.

“How long is it since I saw you laugh like that? If only for the joy of that!”

“The worst husbands have the best wives. It must be to even up matters, for the world is a world of harmony.” He arose, and so did she. “Really, Maria, you advise me yourself—to again risk a little trip?”

“Big or little, I advise you.”

“Woman, woman! What a wondrous creature have I caught in you!”

He pressed her in his arms, and she held herself, grasping his shoulders. “Only one thing——”

“What is it?”

“Well, Joseph—it was at any rate a beautiful winter at home?”

“Beautiful? Beautiful? What a poor, poor word. I have been in Paradise, Maria! And when I think of it—no, not yet, to-morrow, I’ll wait a few days.”

She freed herself from his embrace. “No, to-morrow. That is settled. Surely, we do not wish to torture each other——” She ran out of the room. Her strength was at an end.

Before leaving, Otten went down to old Klaus. “I am going away to-night, Klaus.”

“You are telling me no news.”

“Did you know it?”

“Since the first swallow has been back, I knew it.”

“Good-by, Klaus. And if I should stay longer—look well after the lady.”

“You need not tell me that. Good-by, Jupp. And come home with more sense——”

Frau Maria returned from the railroad station. Old Klaus was sitting with Carmen at the table, and

made little ships from walnut shells. When the lady arrived, he wished her good-night, and left the room.

"Father is gone by now," Frau Maria said, and quietly sat down beside the child, in hat and coat.

"Mother!"

"What is it, Carmen?"

"Laurenz Terbroich said father could not stand it in Cologne, because he could have no adventures here."

"No, child; but Cologne is too narrow for him. He must have the wide world about him because he is so great."

"And Laurenz said, because out there, there were so many beautiful women."

Frau Maria took the child into her arms. "Listen to me, Carmen. You are getting bigger and more sensible. I can already talk over many things with you. Your father—you see, your father is a man the like of whom is not easily found. I, your mother, tell you that. And if someone tries to tell you something different, don't believe it. The man of whom they talk differently is not your father. That is only his double."

"His double?"

"That is a man who looks just like him, just as sunny and big, and who—once in a while—makes mistakes at the expense of the other."

"And does not father know that other man?"

"No," she replied with a faint smile; "he does not know him yet. But when once he finds that other one—then it will be over with the other—forever." And suddenly she drew the child to her bosom and kissed her fervently, as if she would continue the farewell caresses she had lavished upon the man.

“Come, child, we will go to bed. I am tired to-day.”

And when she had put the child to bed, she went to her own room. She looked about. Alone——

“It was a fairy-tale,” she thought, “but at least I have lived through it.”

And she extinguished the light.

CHAPTER V

“How melancholy the waters of the Trevi sound to-day.”

Joseph Otten took glass and bottle from fat Peppe, the patriarch of the Osteria, rinsed the glass with a few drops of the golden Frascati, tossing them into the narrow room, whose atmosphere was laden with the odor of wine, filled the glasses, and drank to the health of Heinrich Koch. Again the day was a harbinger of spring, a morning in February, as warm as summer. The rays of the sun poured in through the wide-open door of the Osteria, stirring the dust upon tables and floor, making it dance and flicker in fine pillars in a silent reproof for the host, who overlooked them with a good-natured smile. They carried on a merry color-play with the spilled wine that remained on the tables without annoying any of the guests.

Heinrich Koch, wearing a long, well-worn frock-coat, slowly sipped the wine. “I hear the Fontana as I have heard it for years. It runs and runs away, runs and runs away—only that I hear the running away more distinctly now.”

“Oho! There is plenty of time yet for that.”

“It was not I who brought the note of melancholy into the conversation.”

“Nor I.”

“Well, then, it was the rushing of the Trevi. Drink, Joseph. The Frascati clears the dissatisfied mind. You were made too much of at the Embassy last night.”

“Too much? That is no compliment for my art.”

“No,” said Koch, filling his glass; “I did not speak of your art. It stands above this morning drink; to me it is too holy for that. If there was any height left for you to climb, you have reached it. Your art has mellowed like a noble wine. Full and fiery—Strange—has it not often struck you, too, that the best wine is drunk—in the most unconventional resorts.”

“Your health, reverend sir. I scent it. Now it comes.”

“Very well. If you will listen. The artist ‘hors concours.’ The man does not please me so well.”

“Hm—— With that you wish to say, the man was made too much of at yesterday’s soirée.”

“In itself it is not so bad. Only—Herr Doktor Otten seems to like it too well.”

“Dear Heinrich, all honor to your friendship and deep knowledge. But whether a celibate is able to decide properly in these matters——”

“I don’t even think of deciding. As you have just said, I am only a sort of wallflower, so to speak, when the main banquet begins. Possibly, too, envy sharpens my vision. For I do not flee for nothing from my barren rooms and sit behind the bottle long into the night with the righteous Peppe at the Fontana Trevi, or with the no less righteous Uncle Pasquale at the Via San Giuseppe to fool myself into forgetting my loneliness. Let that be. As far as you are concerned, I am without envy. You know that, and if the Sultan himself should give you a passport to everything as payment. But just on that account I am—in a sense—your conscience.”

“Did the little Eccellenza displease you so much? She is young, elegant, unusual. The sun of Rome has heated her blood. Shall I close my eyes when she gives the sign to fire? It tempts me to learn what sort of precious metal glows in this fire.”

“Incurable optimist! You will find ashes.”

“And if so! From time to time I must test my youth, for—I am no longer as young as I was. I must from time to time renew the certainty that I still hold the power in my hands, the power over women’s hearts. That keeps me going. And success tells me that I am right. I wander through a garden of flowers and the flowers throw themselves into my hand.”

“And you still believe that that is meant for the man in you?”

“For what else?”

Heinrich Koch was silent for a while. He played with his glass, pushed it away, and looked frankly at the friend of his youth.

“It is the odor of the laurels that brings the women to you, Joseph. And with that, all is said.”

Joseph Otten’s fingers beat heavily upon the table. “That means, in plain words, when my star sinks——”

“A new constellation of stars rises.”

Joseph Otten laughed. “For some time to come I shall have something to say as to the constellations. I have my signs. Calm yourself.”

The sound of the rushing waters of the Trevi was heard. They sat and listened to the drowsy melody.

“How long is it, Joseph, since you have been in Cologne?”

“Three years,” he answered curtly.

“And in three years you have not seen Maria or Carmen? How can you stand that!”

“It has been the longest separation thus far. One engagement followed the other. That was strenuous. I sought recreation in Italy.”

“I cannot understand these reasons.”

“Reasons? Yes, if I had reasons I would get rid of them. For I know of no people whom I love so dearly as those two in Cologne. But—it is an embarrassment—I—— Oh, Heinrich, why should I not be frank with you? I am no home body. I must have changing scenery about me. My blood must remain astir. I must have the consciousness that I may do as I please if I am to remain what I am. Matrimony does not allow that. I was inconsistent when I bound myself. I did it to reward one love with another. But to assume the consequences of this union in the sober bourgeois manner, that would mean for me the greatest inconsistency of my life. I must live my life to a finish as I have begun it. All else would be charlatantry, posing of the worst kind, a lie to myself and to others, who would have the right to demand a different being in me, a being I could not become, though I had the best of intentions.”

“I took you for a greater artist of life. To follow one’s own inclination without restraint does not require a Joseph Otten. For that, a good ordinary equipment of lightmindedness is enough.”

“Oh, no, old fellow. It requires more than that if the winnings shall compensate for the risk.”

“The winnings? Look yours over. You can put them into an empty bag, and it will remain empty. Do not get angry. You could mention names, I know, if

your chivalry did not forbid, names of wives and of women without that title, who have played parts in the life of our time. What does that prove? At best, that they, too, avoid the consequences, and only wish to cash the winnings. One cheats the other. Do you not feel that?"

"No. I only feel that your understanding does not suffice for these matters."

"You could easily assist there," Heinrich Koch replied. "But you will take care not to do so. For it would have to be done at the expense of your feelings as a victor."

"It is your pleasure to speak in riddles."

"Is that so incomprehensible? Or do you think that the women do not experience the same sense of conquest over you?"

"Pshaw!"

"With that you do not blow the dust from beautiful pictures. It sticks too close."

"You have your sentimental day to-day, Heinrich. It is the fault of this unseasonable spring weather. The warmth of the sun stirs me up to new adventures, but you it depresses because you have no old ones to look back to. That is it. At bottom you feel the warmth of the sun as longingly as I."

Heinrich Koch looked down his long black coat that showed no tender care. His lips were pressed together. "I have no wife," he then said. "But if I had, I would know how to draw the line between wife and women."

"The women of to-day are not what our mothers were, Heinrich. And we, too, have changed."

"We—that I'll subscribe to. The struggle for gain has become intensified, and with it greed. They always

go together. But that the women could become different from our mothers? Oh, well, you mean in their exterior, their dress and manners, also in education, in their movement of emancipation? But certainly not in motherhood."

"In that, too. Why not?"

"Because in love one side must be passive, and because nature has assigned the passive side to the woman. One may err against the laws of nature, but one cannot dispose of them with arguments. For they are everlasting."

"Why should not woman be allowed activity in love?"

"When you are content to wear petticoats they will. Else the joke is absurd."

"My dear Heinrich, there are women in the lead who are more brilliant than we two."

"Brilliant. But are they charming? So young, so beautiful, so sweet, and so admired and courted, that they might have their choice among real men? That is where they are found lacking. Old or dried wood burns easiest, my dear Joseph, and there's a reason. Instead of your female agitators, put girls and women in the lead who have virtues of body and soul such as I describe, and who then offer themselves from pure enthusiasm for the cause, and I will become a convert at once."

"Offer themselves? You do not seem to know whereof you speak. Every woman has the right to experience that happiness which her more fortunate sister experiences."

"Nicely spoken. But in that case the rule would also have to be applicable to all men. Or else the

equality would be illusory. I doubt very much if the women would accept."

"And as far as youth, beauty, and nobility of thought are concerned," Otten continued, undisturbed, "these are not lacking among women who have freed themselves from conventionality, I can assure you."

"And—their fidelity?"

"They are as true as we are!"

"That means, not at all."

"Can we not be true, too? Besides, if you believe fidelity non-existent among us——"

"Among us? Oh, no! Among you! There is a difference. Only among you people of 'changing pictures,' of the hot blood, among the people with the perverted conceptions with regard to what constitutes self-cultivation."

"We are of age. Every one has a right to choose his own destiny."

"Let your daughters do so," Heinrich Koch said dryly.

Otten looked up. A flush rose to his forehead. "Why that? You wish to spoil my good humor."

"Let your daughters do it," the other repeated. "And if you can imagine your daughters living the same lives that you do, with the same expansive right to choose their own destiny—if you are able to think that without suddenly seeing black, then you may at once place me in the Museum of the Vatican as a living mummy."

Otten arose. "You are going too far. I will not follow you upon the field of sophistry."

"That is no answer. For I am not the kind of

sophist who sticks his head into the sand in order not to see realities.”

“Peppe, my bill.”

Heinrich Koch pulled his ruffled friend back into his seat. “I’ll not let you go like that, Joseph. Show me that you are an exception, and I am content. But do not place yourself amidst the crowd. That dwarfs you, and I cannot see my only friend small. Live as you like, but do not put a cloak about things, as the small and puny beings must do, to give relief to their instincts that have run amuck. You do not need that. For you give more than you receive. Therefore, give with the visor open. If these women throw themselves at you, only because they notice the odor of laurels, and would like to adorn themselves with you, do not let them be undeceived. Show them that you judge them correctly as a ‘*quantité négligeable*.’ And then we will have again our splendid Joseph Otten, whose merry laughter is worth as much in this world as a trip to church on the part of virtuous youth. Prosit, Joseph!”

“Heinrich,” Otten laughed, “I don’t know now whether you have preached morality or immorality. But the arrow has hit the mark. And with this glass of Frascati I wash down the last trace of the nonsense that was there a moment ago. Oh, you dear, ‘*sear dun!*’”

“You pay for that bottle,” Koch decided. “I have had to talk myself dry.”

“Peppe! Another bottle—— But one thing, Heinrich——”

And Otten’s laughing eyes became serious. “That subject—of our daughters—must not be mentioned be-

tween us again. For my sake and for—Maria's sake." He grasped at his collar. "There is your proof—Maria. Well!"

Heinrich Koch looked feelingly at the comrade of his youth.

"Joseph," he said, placing his hand upon that of his friend, "I would take a run over to Cologne again."

"Later—— I have a longing to sneak into the Rheingasse and look in at the windows. To see if they are well, the tall Maria and the little Carmen. Only one long, all-seeing look, and then on! For, as I told you, Heinrich, I cannot rid myself of that feeling of embarrassment, of the embarrassment of being correctly married, like a genuine bourgeois, who ought by rights to promenade with wife and child in the Botanical or Zoölogical Gardens; at all events, to be in duty bound to stay at home until a concert relieves and saves me! When I think of it, I begin to perspire and feel like a fool. And that is the very last thing to suit my inclinations."

"Still, I would take a run over to Cologne again."

"Yes, yes, perhaps in passing through. But first a breathing spell."

"Just think of the joy of those two at home. And there is no greater joy than to give joy to those one loves."

"You would have been a splendid family-man, Heinrich."

"That is possible. The gifts of fate are unequally divided."

"Could you not——" Otten stopped.

"No," said Koch. "And if I could free myself, I could not desert my history of the church. The rec-

ords of the Vatican must remain open to me. And, after that—it will be too late.”

“There you are, ruining your life amidst old books and documents.”

“And you?” A fine smile of ridicule played about the lips of Koch. “Let it be. We are all adventurers.” He clinked his glass against that of his friend. “Well, then—here is to the one who lasts the longest at it. He shall pity the other. *Prosit!*”

“Or envy him. *Prosit!*”

A small crowd appeared at the door of the Osteria. There was whispering and suppressed laughter. Then a little group of men pushed their way in, and the foremost, slapping the philosophizing Otten on both shoulders, recited with assumed pathos:

*“When the father and the son
On the barrel of a gun
Sit and fence, and seconds lack,
Then it's time we all go back
And take another drink.”*

“Peppe, bring wine!”

“Peppe, a box of rolled sardines. And wine for me to suit that dark-brown taste in my mouth.”

“Children, if this is not real spring! There will be a glorious carnival!”

“Doktor, your health! Yesterday, at the Embassy, you stood the Romans on their heads—at least the ladies.”

“The Council has gathered in the Vatican. They are about to canonize you, in order to keep your mortal part from the crush.”

“And to thoroughly direct the eyes of the fair to the soul within.”

“Your health, Professor Koch! We suspect you of having been sent out to enter into negotiations with the ‘*corpus delicti*.’”

The last place at the table of the friends had been taken.

Two German-Roman journalists let loose their pyrotechnics. They caught the leads which they threw to one another with a cleverness that could only be the product of years of practice at Father Pasquale's or Peppe's. And a number of young painters and sculptors furnished a noisy responsive chorus. The wine ran in glittering streamlets over the table. Now and then one would rinse his glass and toss the drops on the floor. The sharp odor of Roman cigarettes permeated the atmosphere. And outside the Fontana Trevi lisped and murmured, gurgled and splashed, and the Roman sun smiled.

“What is your intention?” Joseph Otten called into the bedlam of voices. “Do you wish to advance the date of springtime six weeks? Do you wish to coax spring up from the Campagna? I am with you!”

“Meister!” exclaimed the young painter in wonderment. “You are a reader of thoughts. Two stately carriages will stop in front of this door within a quarter of an hour, to entice us away.”

“Into the Campagna?”

“Whatever deserves to be called ‘Rome’ will be out there this afternoon.”

“Where do we dine? In front of the Porta San Giovanni? In the Faccia Fresca? It is Sunday, and a sunny day to boot.”

Otten's suggestion was accepted joyously.

"In the Faccia Fresca! Open your eyes! Open your hearts! And don't forget the tummy. Coming along, Professor? The 'history of the church' will breathe freely in the interval. Live and let live!"

Koch declined. He intended to make some researches.

"I'll bet, we'll find him this evening researching at Pasquale's."

"Here come the landaus. Wide-bellied, properly curved. One can see that they were made with a view to transporting fathers of the church, who did not believe in the fullness of thought alone. May their embonpoint be blessed! We will benefit by it."

The two drivers, typical Romans, cracked their whips. Otten stepped into the foremost carriage. The young painter, who had carried on the conversation with him, sat beside him. The others scattered as chance and mood led them. Heinrich Koch stood, glass in hand, on the street, and saw them drive away. "A light-hearted reckless crowd," he mused, returning to his seat. "But mighty happy."

The big brown horses trotted proudly through the sunshine. They crossed the city; San Giovanni's imposing composition in Laterano appeared, and the young painter at Otten's side greeted it with the old sentence of dedication: "Holiest Church of the Lateran, Mother and head of all the churches of the city and of the earth!"

"Does not the crowd of saints on top of the beautiful building give it the appearance of a frigate with the sailors standing in the rigging?" one of the journal-

ists called over. And the Porta San Giovanni lay behind them.

Otten sat silent. Before him, crossed majestically by the Via Appia Nuova, lay stretched the panorama of all panoramas—the Roman Campagna. The slight effect of the wine had disappeared. His eyes became reverent in the presence of these traces of a world-empire of the past, which here had the summer palaces of its great, and—their tombs. Like a frame, fashioned by the hand of a master, the curved line of the Albanese Mountains encompassed the picture.

“Look,” he said softly, touching the knee of the young painter beside him. “Before such a creation of God, one cannot have petty thoughts. One should bring the sectarians of art here and let them see.”

“And there you have the people, Herr Doktor, unchanged throughout the passing centuries!”

The carriages stopped before an Osteria, the Faccia Fresca, whose vineclad arbors were occupied by people dining and drinking, by merry citizens with their sweethearts, by browned inhabitants of the Campagna, by disciples of art in the mood for adventures. Wandering singers let their arias rise above the babel of voices, musicians played upon guitars and mandolines, dark-eyed girls in the dress of the people, who, on week-days, would wait on the Spanish stairway for the coming of their painters, shook and rattled their tambourines, trimmed with tiny bells. Now and then the scream of a pretty girl, who was being courted too strenuously, a violent clash of words, a starting and listening on all sides, then again the babel of voices, the clinking of glasses and of plates, snatches from arias, the sighing of mandolines, and the sound of the tambourines.

The newcomers had captured a table. The meal was ordered, and was served in a very few minutes. Platters with steaming spaghetti, broiled chickens, plates of salads, fruit, and cheese. And with it the blessed white wine of the Castelli Romani. Toasts flew to and fro, from table to table, and dark-eyed tambourine girls were grasped about the waist. The joy of life flared up. Otten sent a wild Juchzer into the air: "Youth! Oh, my youth, let me hold on to thee!"

"Farther! Still farther! Away into bliss! We live not for naught on the soil of old Rome!"

The landaus drove up. The musicians escorted the gentleman, and the fat old horses trotted on, ill pleased that they no longer could display the speed and pride of their youth. But the passage becomes more narrow. In a long line, the equipages of Roman society roll along. Between them the hired wagons of the city people. The Via Appia has become a corso, full of life and elegance. Fans indicate recognition here and there; slender, jeweled hands greet openly, silently, timidly, or with animation. The Albanese Mountains come nearer. The bright February sun is reflected by the windows of Frascati, of Ottberno. For an hour they drive on. Surprisedly the grand world of ruins about looks down upon the strange people, that seemingly now have eyes and ears only for one another. A white building, the Osteria Antica, looks inviting. Upon the flat roof, in its wide halls, upon the steps of the stairways, Roman citizens sit close together. A wall of carriages surrounds the inn. Newly arriving ones line up on the edge of the road, or drive into the meadow. Waiters in shirtsleeves run about with bottles and glasses, into which they stick their fingers. Impatient

guests play waiter themselves, buy the wide-bellied bottles covered with straw, and filled with Chianti; loaves of bread, slices of juicy ham, and enormous bologna sausages whose odor suggests the Orient. Men drink, and women. Nurses let babies drink as a matter of course; the drivers enjoy their goblets of wine as well as do their masters. And there is no end of shouting and gesticulating. In the distance rises a cloud of dust, growing larger and larger. Wheels are seen, turning at a furious rate, in front of them four horses' legs, drawing themselves together and springing apart so fast that the eye cannot follow them. Now it whizzes up—is past! The applause of the onlookers follows.

“That was the *Eccellenza*,” says the young painter. “She drives herself.”

It seemed to Otten as if a burning look had touched him. He laughed. Then he looked toward his companions, who were mixing with the other guests, blind to everything that was not Roman and not female. “*Donna é mobile*——” he hummed to himself, found the exit, and sauntered along the road.

He had wandered along for a quarter of an hour, when he saw the carriage come back. The gray in his silver-trimmed harness stretched his legs in a slow trot. The lady driving held the whip carelessly. Now she noticed the pedestrian. She straightened up, so that her bust stretched the gray dress, drew in the reins, and stopped. Hurriedly the boyish groom leaped from the seat behind, and grasped the horse's head.

“See, there, the *maestro*!”

Otten stepped up to the driver's seat, doffed his hat, and shook the hand she held out to him. “I am searching for the spring, *Eccellenza*.”

“ And will find it? ”

“ And will find it.”

“ It is but February——”

“ Why? If we christen the month May, it is May.”

“ It requires witchcraft for that.”

“ As if a woman has ever feared to use that.”

“ How do you make that out? ” And from under the heavy lashes her look took in the man.

“ I like surprises, Eccellenza.”

She opened her eyes wide. In their depths he saw a smouldering fire. But he stood the look, apparently unmoved.

“ I still have a place free for you in the carriage.”

“ In your heart another? ”

“ I am no fortune-teller.”

“ And I am looking for spring. Must I saunter on? ”

“ Step up.” And she made room for him beside her. “ Perhaps it will let you coax it forth.”

He placed his finger on his mouth. “ It is all around us. Do you feel it? Don't scare it away.”

The horse bounded to one side as the whip came down. Then it sprang forward. The groom leaped up behind and crossed his arms. To the right and left the fields of the Campagna flitted past. Soon the Osteria Antica lay behind them. Ruins appeared and disappeared; tombs and monuments of the dead; in the distance the melancholy arches of the ancient water-works; a lonely castle, and the miles of plateau.

The horse fell into a walk. The woman felt the looks of the man at her side. And Otten drew a deep breath. His blood was rushing through his veins. He placed his hand upon her wrist. There it remained.

As they came near the Porta San Giovanni, the sudden dark of the February evening came. Otten turned about. "The home of spring."

Behind them the Campagna seemed bathed in fire. But a fleeting moment, then it sank away in the gathering gloom. "That is what one longs for, when one is again in Germany."

"It is well that we have left the noise behind us," she said quickly.

"The noise one forgets. One only remembers the colors."

"What remains to us of the most beautiful day?"

"The secret of longing. The colors remain."

"I love color," she replied. "And here, we are at our destination. Will you take a glass of tea with me? I am shivering, since the sunset is gone."

"We open the gates of the soul, and we let out what we have saved for festive hours."

The carriage drove into the garden of the villa. Otten leaped from the driver's seat and lifted the lady down. The groom opened the portal, and they walked over the marble tiles into a small room in delicate color tints. Otten looked smilingly about.

"You must excuse me for a moment, dottore."

"No change of dress, please," he begged. "There must be no difference. That would be a barrier of formality."

"I will get the tea myself for such an honored guest."

He sat in an easy-chair, and heard her steps as she returned. She placed the silver tray upon the table, poured out the tea, and cast a quick glance at him.

"My husband will be in in a minute——"

"That's good," was all he would reply.

“That’s good? He claims that the cradle of his ancestors stood in Trastevere. Don’t you know? Where jealousy came to the world.”

“That must be very interesting, for your husband.”

“Such a tête-à-tête. Do you not fear?”

“I fear only one thing. That your husband may enter before I have kissed you.”

She set the teapot down, suddenly stooped over him, and kissed his hair. He threw his arm about her flexible waist and looked searchingly into her dark, shining eyes.

“We have known each other for thousands of years.”

“Since yesterday, when you sang at the Embassy. Impatient barbarian!”

“For thousands of years. Since the creation of the world. I am the first man and you are the first woman. Nothing else exists. Nothing but paradise and joy.”

She went back. “It is well that we are alone. I lied.”

“So did the first woman, and it did not injure her beauty.”

“When I saw you yesterday, I wanted to capture you. I have succeeded.”

“You have forgotten how to be captured. But I will not be denied my right.”

“Oh—not so proud. Woman’s time has come.”

“Oh—not so proud. You will come to grief through desertion of your colors. But you will enjoy it. Read Aristophanes.”

“Even men to-day take up the cause of women.”

“They are of a kind to suit the purpose—having natures like Herostratus’, but, being unable to attract attention in any other way, go fishing in troubled waters.”

“Oh,” she sighed. “I thought we had to appear imposing to you great men. How can I do that?”

“Thus!” he said, arising, spreading out his arms and looking laughingly at her.

She took a step backward, to take in the picture. He heard the rustling of silk. Then he folded her in his arms. She was his captive. . . .

“Now I’ll revenge Thusnelda, beautiful Roman.”

“Barbarian——” she replied, closing her eyes. . . .

It was almost midnight when Otten walked along the Via San Giovanni. He was thirsty.

“They are all alike, when the senses speak. Another doll stuffed with sawdust. And every time I expect the great revelation. Bajazzo, play!”

From out of the winerom of Zi Pasquale came the sound of jolly song. German student songs, songs of the Rhine.

Otten stopped. “Anything but that—now. Nothing German now. And nothing recalling the Rhine. There are people there who believe in me.”

He turned about, and sought the winerom of Peppe at the Fontana Trevi. From afar he heard the rushing of the waters. And, suddenly, he gave up the thought of wine and company.

“If I would at last—take a run over to Cologne again——

“I almost believe my vessel already carries, though invisibly, the home pennant. It needs docking.”

He looked into the swirling eddies. A cool shiver ran over him.

“But no dismantling. To remain young. To return.”

He cast a coin over his shoulder into the flowing

water. "It is an old superstition," he thought. "Whoever drinks of the water, is drawn hither again by the Nymph of the Trevi. It certainly is beautiful at home, and one can grow old and gray there in peace—— But I think I will take a draught, at any rate."

He bent over the edge of the basin and drank a few drops of the descending water.

"I'll return."

CHAPTER VI

JOSEPH OTTEN had left Rome without farewell except the laconic note he sent to Heinrich Koch, which contained nothing but the words: "I'll take a run over to Cologne again." When he stretched himself in his sleeping-car berth at nine o'clock in the evening, he did so with the feeling of a man who wishes nothing more fervently than to sleep soundly like a good citizen for ten hours without interruption. His wish was fulfilled. Dreamless he slept, as in his boyhood days after a good, long tramp. When he awoke, he was bewildered for a moment. Then he dressed, went into the open space in the car, and opened the window. The train was passing through a station. Otten caught the name. He was getting close to Milan. And, suddenly, the man experienced something akin to a boyish pleasure at getting home, while those remaining behind were left wondering.

The joyful mood still lasted as the train left Milan, and as it passed the Lakes Como and Lugano. Then the express train entered the region of the Alps. Suddenly, spring had been replaced by winter.

Restlessly, Otten looked out of the window. Before his eyes the mighty dividing wall of the Saint Gothard arose. The mountain tops lay covered with snow, and the icefields glittered in uncanny fashion. And steadily the train entered deeper and deeper into the wintry world, as silent as death itself. An icy chill entered the blood of the watcher at the train-window, and yet

it was warm in the dining-car, where he had sat down to eat his noonday meal, and the red wine of Neuf Chatelle, that reflected the light before his eyes, was of a fiery sort. And he was oppressed by an inexplicable feeling of dread, which he could not shake off. "What the devil," he thought, "drives you away from spring-time back into the gray German winter? Was it not ever the other way heretofore? When one is forty-eight, one doesn't change one's habits without punishment."

When the train stopped in Airolo, he thought for a moment of leaving it. The mountain-giants seemed to rise threateningly in front of him, and the entrance to the tunnel seemed like an entrance to Hades, while from the iceclad stone wall a witches' Sabbath of fiery letters danced before his eyes. He tried vainly to arrange them properly until he thought he saw the frightful sentence from Dante's Divine Comedy: "All hope abandon, ye who enter here. . . ."

"I should not have gone," Otten soliloquized. "One does not leave Rome for a whim, when he does not know when and how he is going to see it again."

Slowly the train traveled through the bowels of the mountain, that divides, yet joins, two worlds. And again light came. Göschenen rested peacefully in its wintry dress.

"Well," said Otten to himself, rubbing his eyes. "There are people living behind the mountain, too. And the trip from Göschenen to Airolo is just as comfortable as from Airolo to Göschenen. Did not Till Eulenspiegel experience the greatest of joy in climbing a steep mountain, because afterwards he would have the intense satisfaction of the descent, which was so

easy? Till to-day I feel that we are related in spirit. In this spirit I take the chance!"

And yet in Basle he talked himself into an interruption of the trip. "Two nights in a sleeping-car are not absolutely necessary, if you are not bound by time. I'll travel more comfortably with the early morning train to-morrow."

The frontier had again exercised a sobering influence upon him.

"I am coming as husband and father," he soliloquized ironically, awaiting the coming of morning in the bed of the hotel. "And as the father of a daughter to boot, who, being almost fourteen, has a right to demand something from the example of that father in an educational sense. Have I really reached the point where one period of my life—and that not the most unpleasant by any means—must be considered as closed? While one would like to continue it endlessly? While one still feels blood and marrow entirely different from the days of green and unknowing youth? While one only now—really only now—has learnt to understand what it means: 'If you don't risk the life that seems so dear, you never will know life, I sadly fear!'—Joseph, you are at the parting of the ways. Unprepared, as ever, and as you liked it in days gone by. Ye good gods, help. The worst and the most stupid, I carry secretly within my breast!"

The feeling of depression which had taken hold of him had not disappeared when he arose. "When I see the Rhine, it will be better," he comforted himself. And again he looked out of the train window, hour after hour, and again his thoughts rushed backwards instead of ahead. Then he compelled himself to think of Maria,

of her silent eyes gleaming with happiness, of the wild joy of the child. Something hot rose within him. He must bring home to them a different mood. Resignation had been stored sufficiently at home. Laughter should sound through the house, the laughter of three people, young and forever young. Even the deep basso of old Klaus should ring out joyfully. That must be the way, that way it should be. A jolly hour in Cologne—and the ban would be broken. Yes, that was it. After a free and merry evening of preparation, he would be acclimatized. And then—to the old house of his forbears, in the Rheingasse.

From the railroad station in Mainz he sent a telegram: “Metardus Terbroich, Cologne, Ringstrasse. Arrive seven, Basle Express. Meet me at depot, Joseph Otten.”

And all at once the unpleasant thoughts had vanished. Now he would not enter Cologne as an invalid of life, after all.

The train pulled up at Deutz. With his old elasticity, Otten leaped from his compartment, called a porter, gave him instructions to hold his luggage in the baggageroom, and turned toward Terbroich, who had followed these first movements with an expressive smile.

“Incognito, Joseph?”

“Only to-night. I don’t feel quite prepared yet, after so long an absence.”

“I understand. I and what follows are to be, so to speak, the first stations of the trip to Calvary. Now, what is the wish of the great maestro; what shall be done first of all?”

“Then lead on to any spot where we will find the

unadulterated atmosphere of Cologne. I cannot get there too quickly."

"Unfortunately the Kölner Hännischen Theater is closed."

"Take me to an inn of old Cologne, stupid! I can still taste the wine of the Roman Campagna on my tongue. Give me some Kölner Biersäuerling. That cools the thoughts."

"Have you left such hot ones behind?"

"You will have to master your curiosity. But, thank God, you at least have not changed."

"I had already decided to come to you. Especially when I read a dispatch in yesterday's *Cologne Gazette*, saying that at an affair given by the ambassador you had been the object of great ovations. That must be glorious. Your ovations are matters of the heart. And such a Roman heart—my hand upon it, Joseph—the next time I will come!"

"You are a dandy," Otten said with a laugh. "Clear up your own territory."

"I have to take so many things into consideration. I hold so many little honorary offices. Then one must not expose oneself too much. But even in the shade one can dine. Somebody must play the screen. Well, Joseph, these shall be glorious days, and carnival is coming to the door."

"It is announcing its arrival even now!"

Perched upon a blue mail-box hanging on the side of the house, a little boy sat, beating a rat-tat-tat with his wooden shoes, and singing lustily. A few others, scarcely at home in their first wooden shoes, danced and jumped about and joined the chorus with high-pitched voices:

“Fastelowend kütt eran” (Ere the Lenten time begins).

“In two weeks,” said Metardus Terbroich, stroking mustache and beard. “Come. We’ll walk over the bridge-of-ships.”

The bridge was crowded. Factories and offices had closed, and the people came across the bridge-of-ships in a long procession. At the toll-gate there was a stoppage. Those in the rear pushed. In the distance a steamer had sounded her whistle, and the central portion of the bridge was about to be taken out to allow the steamer’s passage. Those already on the bridge hurried to get across before the interruption, in spite of the scolding of the bridge-tenders. At the toll-gate a clerk complained importantly about the slowness with which the bridge money was taken. “Don’t lose your temper,” said the girl selling the bridge tickets, very quietly; “it will injure your beauty.” A smile passed through the long line. “You I could love,” said the next one at the window. And promptly came the answer: “Well, I believe that myself.”

In a side street opening upon the Domplatz the friends halted. “Shall we enter here?” Terbroich asked, and Otten said, “Yes.” It was an old, plain house. Barrels were being rolled along the floor, the empty ones piled on the one side, the full ones placed on benches and tapped. There was no excess of politeness. The innkeeper and his assistants depended upon the irresistible attractions of their goods.

The long, tunnel-like place was crowded. In the rear the habitués occupied their usual places, of whose occupancy they could give an annual account without a day lacking. They were solid citizens of Cologne, of-

ficials of every grade. In the front part of the place sat the casual guests, or the passers-by, who only came to drink a Schoppen or two, and at the same time to eat some Dutch cheese and a little roll of ryebread. Differences in station of life were not observed to any great extent. The public porter unceremoniously moved his chair beside that of the magistrate, the guest in blouse and workman's cap drank his wine sitting beside the man with shining silk-hat and fashionable frock-coat. Dense tobacco smoke floated in cloudy layers overhead. The waiters, in knit jackets, aprons, and leather belts, squeezed themselves through the narrow aisles between the rows of seats, quickly replacing the empty Schoppen, and permitting no stoppage of business. And behind a little buffet upon a raised daïs sat the stout wife of the innkeeper, with a quiet and self-reliant superiority, as if she was dispensing royal honors from her height. "The gentleman wants to pay, Pitter."

Otten and Terbroich found places at one of the small side-tables. With one thirsty draught Otten emptied his glass, shook himself, and called for another. "I believe that refreshes even my clothing."

"Do you remember?" said Terbroich, "when we drank our first beer as paying guests? We were in Sekunda, and we had captured a couple of girls on the ice, who were quite impressed by our school-caps. And, to appear as true cavaliers to them, we invited the ladies to have a bite with us, as if we were in the habit of taking our Schoppen daily at this hour. And our hearts were in our throats as we hunted up the meanest little inn in the Altstadt. I led the way."

"And disappeared through the court-yard gate,

while we three poor souls tremblingly awaited the coming of the innkeeper. Oh, Metardus, you did not cover yourself with glory in that affair."

"You know I only wanted to get some money at home," Terbroich defended his first adventure.

"There certainly was none to be found at the spot to which you valiantly retreated."

"I climbed over the fence."

"And then grinned through the window. And the day after I collected your debt with a good beating, as you declined to give other satisfaction."

"I know nothing of that," and, to give the conversation another turn, Terbroich politely drank to the health of his boyhood friend.

The two gentlemen had attracted the attention of the guests at the next table. Respectful glances were cast at them, and there was some whispering. The conversation of the chief table stopped for a moment.

Terbroich noticed it, and felt flattered. He assumed a position of dignified ease. "We are being recognized," he said softly.

Otten looked around. His laughing glance took in the round table, and several of the guests appeared about to greet him, but he was quicker than they.

"Good-evening, gentlemen!"

"Good-evening, Herr Doktor," came the friendly reply.

One of the others raised his glass. "Ihr Wohlsein, Herr Doktor!"

"Is it permitted?" Otten asked.

"Great honor and pleasure both, Herr Doktor. We'll move our chairs together. There is room for us all on this earth."

Otten turned his chair around and moved into the circle. "That is what I call a cozy corner. You live well."

"Yes, yes, such a good glass of real Cologne even the Holy Father cannot offer you."

"But to make up for it, the drink there is free."

"If that is all—Pitter, a round!"

Loud laughter rewarded the giver. "You'll pardon, Herr Doktor, but I am so glad to see Herr Doktor Otten among us, that I don't care if my bill is a thaler more."

By now Terbroich had also pushed his chair into the circle. "The Herr Doktor has come here especially from Rome, just to give you that pleasure."

"Did he have to go there to pray for your redemption? In that case, the next round is for Herr Terbroich!"

Terbroich protested, but the order had already been given.

"Now I'm feeling at home again," said Otten. "How can one forget all this out there!"

"But we have not forgotten Doktor Otten at home."

"Usually the prophet does not count for much at home. Those who have known you as a mischievous youngster consider it in most cases as beneath their dignity in after-life to alter their mental picture. For that reason, so many artists carry a clouded memory of their home with them throughout the world."

"That may be the case elsewhere, Herr Doktor. But we Cologners have always been proud of our artists. And in order to prove this to you, I call upon the gentlemen present here to raise their glasses with me, and join me in the call: Our Jupp—Herr Doktor Joseph

Otten—shall live. Hoch! Hoch! And once more hoch!”

The triple cheer sounded lustily across the table, was taken up, and continued at the other tables, and for a few seconds even the phlegmatic Wirthin arose from her throne in surprise.

“Now we’ll sing,” shouted an enthusiast.

But the rotund mistress of the place quietly and authoritatively vetoed the suggestion.

“We must go on,” Terbroich whispered to Otten, who seemed inclined to make an evening of it there.

“Why? We’re only beginning.”

“I have something else up my sleeve for you.”

“Something worth while?”

“More than worth while. You will be surprised how insignificant you will feel.”

“Your insulting confidence could tempt me. I am in proper mood, Terbroich.”

“I’ll bet my soul against yours!”

“What a joy for the devils!”

“Well, then, arise. Good-evening, gentlemen! You must excuse me for depriving you now of the presence of Herr Doktor Otten. We have some important business engagements to attend to.”

“You’re fibbing like the very devil! Good-evening, Herr Doktor. Come again soon!”

“Where to?” Otten asked when they were in the street, as he pushed his slouch-hat back from his forehead. “Man, that felt good. Such a spontaneous ovation goes right through a fellow’s blood, like the best of new wine. Take me wherever you please. But let there be joy at the feast.”

“Do you remember Lüttgen? Karl Lüttgen? Who

went to school with us? Big rolling mills. A baron of industry. He often speaks of you."

"Lüttgen? Certainly! A fine fellow. If I remember rightly, his wife died."

"He has married again. A girl from Berlin. Very distinguished person, so wise that a chap feels as if he must hide from her eyes. And small, elegant, flexible, sarcastic, and——"

"Do not excite yourself."

"I cannot help it, whenever I look at her I am compelled to think of the temptation of Saint Anthony."

"But your name is Metardus, my son. Do not forget that."

"We will see whose head remains up the longest."

"Is she young?"

"La femme de trente ans. The dangerous age."

"Spring chickens have never been to my taste. Women under thirty are not women. Are we going there?"

"We're on the way."

"Unannounced?"

"They receive to-night. I have sent them word through Laurenz."

"Through your boy? Is he wearing long trousers so soon?"

"He? You will be surprised to see how he has developed. He is sixteen. For a year past apprentice in my counting-room—a handsome chap, and turns the heads of all the girls."

"He is your son," Otten smiled.

They took a carriage, and drove to the Hohenzollernring. Otten smoked his cigar to a finish. "By the way—have you seen—my Carmen?"

“Last Sunday in the Zoölogical Garden. Laurenz had called for her. I went there, too, on account of the pleasant weather. And I saw them promenade together.”

“The two probably are very good friends?”

“And each proud of the other. I tell you, everybody turns to look at them when they go walking together.”

“A little early,” Otten muttered. He had the name of Maria on his tongue, but the carriage stopped.

In the hall, a man-servant relieved the gentlemen of hats and coats. Otten glanced into a big mirror on the wall. “Will this do? Not in evening-dress? Oh, well, *qui vivra, verra.*”

In the big salon and the adjoining music-room sat the guests and listened to the playing of the piano. A woman sat at the grand piano. Her heavy brown hair was arranged in a low knot, the girlish figure dressed in an evening-gown of white with gold trimmings, whose wide sleeves disclosed well-shaped arms. She played a variation with considerable skill, and did not allow the arrival of the newcomers to disturb her in the least. Only when a slight stir in the assemblage told her that her guests were no longer listening, she ran her fingers over the keys, ending in a high chord. Her hands still on the keys, she remained seated, and slowly turned her head.

“My dear Amely,” she heard the voice of her husband over her shoulder. “I have a surprise for you. It is only a schoolmate of mine, but, aside from that, he is also Doktor Joseph Otten.”

The stout gentleman, whose reddened face told clearly the pleasure he felt at the unexpected visit, slapped his

guest upon the shoulder. There was a little quiver in the lady's face. And the husband shamefacedly desisted from his show of friendship. "My wife," he introduced her.

Joseph Otten bowed low. When he raised his head, he noted a surprised and searching look in the eyes of the lady of the house. Her glance ran down along his figure.

"I have to ask your pardon, gracious madam. I know this is not visiting-dress."

"The gracious madam will not be angry with me, for bringing Doktor Otten directly here from the railway station," Terbroich chimed in. "To famous men, the law of exception applies."

"You come directly from the depot?"

"Not exactly. On the way I greeted my Cologners."

"My Cologners? Oh, I forgot. 'It is the singer who with the king shall go.'"

"Madam," Terbroich declared, "it was an ovation. Hardly had we entered the place——"

"Why make your friend seem small?" she replied with playful irony. "I presume he knows how to value an ovation in an inn."

"I know how to value each true expression of feeling, madam."

"You live little in Cologne?"

"I live in the world."

"Oh—and Cologne counts for you as one of the outposts."

"I come from time to time to study."

"Music?"

"People, gracious madam. Cologne is the center for types of every sort."

For a moment she looked aside. "She has gray eyes," Otten thought. "She wants to play with me. A gray eye—a clever eye——"

"My husband," the mistress of the house began, after a brief pause, "is already getting restless because I deprive him of your society so long. Your friendship must be a tried one, that you hurry to him so quickly. In such matters my husband is touchingly old-fashioned. Friendship, love, Freilichrath, and Ruedesheimer. You have earned the right to all of it. I give you leave of absence for the time, Herr Doktor."

"My dear Joseph," Lüttgen said, pressing his friend's arm heartily. He led him across the hall into the smoking-room, to escape from the crowd of guests. "You still permit my old-time familiarity, Joseph? In spite of my wife's irony. I cannot talk smoothly. I am a manufacturer, and that is all. But that does not prevent me from saying that I am awfully glad to have a sensible being in my house once more. Say quickly what you will drink. Rhine? Mosel? Bordeaux? Rhine wine—that is well. Mosel is a thing of fashion, but Rhine wine—well, we two do not need to tell each other anything about that. Prost, Joseph! Here's to our old friendship, as new as ever!"

"Prost, Lüttgen's Karl. You impress me!"

"Oh!" The manufacturer jabbed Otten in the side. "Are you going to make fun of me, too? But if you knew how even in school I was attracted to you! Only I was too heavy and slow to be your real chum. And then—at my age a fellow is already old and useless."

“Oho! Preat! Thus talks a newly wedded husband?”

“No, my dear Joseph! So says a young wife.”

“You jest. A man like you—a baron of industry. Certainly not old and useless.”

“I cannot get accustomed to those new-fangled things. Drink, Jupp! That drop is not bad? Well, what I was going to say: Often I ask myself, am I suffering from softening of the brain since my second marriage? Am I really a dunce? We read a novel together. My wife is feverish from excitement. And I am almost ill from ennui, am bored to death. I consider the chap who wrote the thing an idiot, an effeminate fool. My wife considers him a demigod, a man of the highest culture, a man with the finest nerves and sentiments. Have I suddenly lost my power of judgment? Again, we listen to music—all Cogners are musical—well, am I telling that to you, you master soul? And then something sweeps our way, throws itself at my head, ducks again, and turns my brain upside down, and leaves me with a blow on the stomach; and my wife sobs in ecstasy: That is music! Those are thoughts transmuted into tones, that is concentrated genius! I am surely a modern man. Look at my factory. Lüttgen to the front! You can safely go to Communion on that. I have the most modern establishment. But modern certainly does not mean hysterical! Prost, Joseph! To drink a bottle of wine and appreciate it—even that is common now.”

“You do not understand each other?”

“My thousand workmen understand every word I say. To my wife my language is Chinese.”

“That will adjust itself with time.”

“You think I complain? As you make your bed you must lie in it. And now I’m glad that I have you here. You must come often. We understand each other.”

A number of gentlemen entered the room. “Well! Well! We were feasting our ears in there, and here they are feasting on wine. Such duplicity!”

“If you will be art critics, you must sacrifice to art. Hurry up! There is going to be a violin concert.”

“Lüttgen, be charitable! A glass of wine and a cigar. Frau Amely is not looking.”

A young, handsome chap stood in front of Otten. His dark, soft hair fell over his forehead, and his large, dark eyes showed consciousness of their beauty. “Herr Doktor,” he said appealingly, “you surely don’t recall me.”

“I surely don’t.”

“Laurenz Terbroich.”

“Oh—sprout of my friend Metardus? That is very nice. When one looks at you, one notices how the time passes, and that one is steering toward grandfatherhood.”

“If I could change with you, I would give twenty years! Your successes in art and in life!”

“That is the voice of my Metardus. You are a flatterer, my young friend.”

“Only an enthusiast. May I sit down with you? I should like to drink to your health!”

“Wohl bekomms! You are now in your father’s counting-room?”

“For two years more, and then as volunteer to Paris and London. You were in Italy last, I hear? Are the Roman ladies really as beautiful as they say?”

“My boy, women are most beautiful, wherever they

appeal to our senses. They have boundless home-rights. And in that lies their beauty and their danger. Do you understand?"

"I have the best of teachers," the young chap answered daringly.

"Then let me tell you: It is an insult to women to discuss their charms. Either one loves them, or does not. And that is the end of it."

"And if one loves them?"

"Then it still makes a difference who the lover is. Do not forget that. Good-evening, Herr Terbroich!"

The lady of the house peeped in through the portières. "Do you give lessons, too, in the knowledge of humanity, Herr Doktor?"

"I am not so assuming as to be more than a student, beautiful 'Hausfrau'!"

"Ah—beautiful——? From that one must conclude, consistent with your method——"

"You have been listening, madam?"

"I have other bad manners, too, Herr Doktor! Please despise me."

"I admire your frankness so much, that——"

"That——?"

"That I suspect a purpose behind it."

"What purpose could that be? To flirt with you? To have the famous gentleman pay a little court to me? I, like so many others, should be pleased."

"I am accustomed to advance independently in such matters, madam!"

"I believe that, Herr Doktor, and victory has become your second nature."

"It must interest you very much to see such a victory."

“All daughters of Eve are anxious to see and learn. Be charitable. We are the inferior sex.”

Otten bit his lip. “You desire?” he asked curtly.

She laughed aloud. “Proud manhood so soon insulted?”

“Gracious madam,” Otten said with a bow, “I well know that in social circles everyone must add to the entertainment according to his gifts. If this conversation is enough for you, I am at your service. Whether my talents will be sufficient—that depends upon what you are accustomed to.”

“I fear to offend your taste too much,” and with a fine sarcastic smile and a deep obeisance, the lady withdrew through the portières into the salon.

Otten’s blood rushed to his temples. What did that mean? Had he given this woman any cause, and how? With his unconventional dress? Or did she play the woman of cleverness and spirit, who enjoys seeing men grow weak? “And with those tender shoulders! This sensitive, nervous face! Really, this infamous contrast annoys me most of all.”

“Joseph,” said the master of the house, stepping up with a full goblet, “I am going to ask a great favor of you.”

“He’ll not do it,” Terbroich called out. “The bet is won. He never sings where he is invited.”

Otten shook off his feeling of anger. To allow that little mocking person to make a negligible quantity of him? That would be the first time. Now to sing or to drink! Very well, then, he would sing!

Without an answer, without looking about, he walked through the salon and into the empty music-room. He

opened the Bechstein Grand. His fingers struck the keys. Dead silence reigned. Joseph Otten sang.

“ Nach Frankreich zogen zwei Grenadier’ . . . ”

He did not sing them, those grenadiers, he lived them. The complaints of the tired soldiers were overpowered by the unbroken rousing outbreak of the old campaigner. The torn and tattered figure in uniform was transformed into the man thirsty for the deed.

*“ Was schert mich Weib, was schert mich Kind,
Lass sie betteln gehn, wenn sie hungrig sind! ”*

Like derisive, scornful laughter, it spread over the listeners, in their claw-hammer coats and silk gowns.

He had finished. The cover of the piano clapped down. And slowly Otten turned. Ere the spell under which the audience was held had been broken, Otten had stepped through the side-door into the hall, to ask for his hat and coat.

The lady of the house stood beside him.

“ You will come again.” It sounded like an order.

“ Good-night, madam. You have too much spirit for an adventurer of my stamp.”

“ Do not talk.”

“ And too—tender shoulders.”

“ That I admit.” And her laughter sounded in his ears.

“ Good-night.”

He walked down the stairs, tipped the servant, and wandered through the dark streets. “ I am in Cologne,” he said. Then he laughed harshly, to walk on with furrowed brow. “ A fool awaits the answer.”

CHAPTER VII

OLD Klaus had the wakefulness of old age. The time of year made no difference to him. When the clocks in the steeples struck four, the old boatman's instinct would stir within him, holding even now to the division of hours he had become accustomed to. He lit a light, saw that his watch kept time correctly, growlingly pulled on his trousers, and started the fire in the little stove. While the water for his coffee was being heated, he smoked his first morning pipe, and mused.

This morning the water did not seem in a hurry to come to the boiling point. But the old man was in no hurry. He took a well-thumbed little volume from a shelf, where it occupied a convenient spot between pots and tobacco-box, fastened his glasses behind his ears, licked his broad thumb, and turned the pages of the book. And then he read, letter by letter, the history of his great ancestor, Nikolaus Guelich, dealer in ribbons and drygoods in Cologne, of his heroic deeds, his wrong-doings, and his glorious end at the hands of the executioner in the public square, called in his honor the Guelichsplatz. With a smile of satisfaction on his withered old face, the old man thus held his morning service.

Suddenly he pushed the glasses up on his forehead. Had not someone knocked on the window from without? And now the knock came again, softly but unmistakably.

The old man arose, carefully placed the book upon

his seat, and slouched to the window. He opened it, and looked searchingly into the dark without. A man stood outside, his hat shading his face.

“Who is there?”

“A poor traveling journeyman begs shelter.”

“I believe you are drunk. This is no lodging-house.”

“By Saint Christopher, the patron saint of all wanderers, let me in, Klaus.”

“By the Blessed Virgin, our Jupp! But now quick!”

Quietly, so as not to disturb the sleepers above, he went to the front door, opened carefully, and let the master enter. And softly he also closed the door of his room, when both were in there. Joseph Otten threw cloak and hat upon the bed, stepped to the stove, and rubbed his hands. The old man looked on.

“Morning, master.”

“Morning, Klaus.”

“Have we really the pleasure again?”

“You have the pleasure again.” Joseph Otten turned about, looked into the old man’s face, jerked his head toward the ceiling, and asked, “All well above?”

“Everything in the best of order.”

“Am glad to hear it.”

“You could not say less than that. But I could have given you that assurance by writing, Herr Doktor.”

“Probably you are all very angry with me?”

“I can’t say that. People get used to everything.”

“Then there might be no reason for me to disturb?”

“If you only come to disturb, that is not necessary.”

Joseph Otten again silently turned toward the stove. The water in the kettle bubbled, and filled the room with its sing-song. And silently old Klaus took his coffee urn from the shelf, raised the kettle with his horny hands, and brewed the morning drink. He placed two large earthen cups upon the table, cut some slices from a loaf of rye bread, pushed a chair and his low seat over to the table, and turned to his guest. "Take a seat, Herr Doktor."

Joseph Otten looked up. The odor of the coffee was tempting after the long walk in the night. Then his glance fell upon the old man. "Klaus," he said, grasping him by the shoulders, "don't be so cross, or you send me to the devil."

"This is your house."

"It doesn't seem much like it, from the reception I get."

"My back is too stiff to risk a bow. But if I had known that the Herr Doktor was coming, I might have trained."

"Next time I'll telegraph to you, Klaus."

"That would do no harm. Otherwise one never knows, is it the master or is it a thief."

Joseph Otten sat down on Klaus's seat, and warmed his hands at the wide-bellied cup. "Donnerwetter, Klaus, that coffee is not strained."

"No, sir, it is as black as the ace of spades."

"That brings me to other thoughts." He bent over, and took the little volume from under him. "What have we here?"

Klaus chuckled. "Have you forgotten that? You have been sitting on my history."

"The book of your forbear, Nikolaus Guelich."

“The selfsame, Jupp. And I see that you are still the same fine old boy. And that is a joy for me.”

“Tell me the story of that forbear, Klaus. Is he still doing stunts at the Guelichsplatz?”

“He has left home and now graces Paris, since the Frenchmen were mean enough to steal the bronze head from his statue. And so Cologne is the poorer by its greatest and most famous landmark.”

“When we march on Paris again, we will fetch that head back.”

“That is a go, master. The Guelichsplatz shall come to honor again.”

“You are entitled to that, Klaus.”

“The world has lost all its respect for things,” grumbled the old man, and drank his coffee.

Otten sat with his hands between his knees and waited. Several minutes passed. There was a quiver in his face when he spoke.

“It seems to me that now, having talked over your family affairs, we can come to mine. You say my wife and child are well——”

“The lady is as ever. Upright and at her task. One need not remind her of anything.”

“And Carmen?”

“She has had her first Holy Communion. A girlie as straight as a pine. She is hard to understand. Correct and proud, and a young lady every inch of her; and yet again a child, with her head full of queer ideas and stubbornness, when it suits her; and then again as mild as a lamb. Her father exactly.”

“Her father exactly? Then she probably is not so very bad.”

“I don’t know about that.”

“Klaus,” said Joseph Otten, “now tell the truth. Do you really think me so very bad?”

“Jupp,” the old man answered, “yes and no. You see, a fellow don’t need to be really bad, but he may appear so. And there are people who feel sorry when a person whom they would like to admire as a sort of archangel, is considered nothing but a merry Prince Carnival. And that is a pain they feel to the very bottom of their heart. Yes, it is just like that. And it is harder still for those who have the sorrow, because they know it is not so, and that they cannot spread their knowledge broadcast—simply, well—simply because Jupp will not have it that way.”

“I will not have it?”

“No, not for anything in the world! He can’t understand that the love of the woman is her anxiety for the man. And why can’t he understand it? Because if he did, he would at once take the sorrow and care away from the wife. But care—that is nothing for Jupp. That word his vocabulary of life does not contain. One can’t roam about the world with it. And he thinks it is more knightly not to ask things beforehand.”

Joseph Otten sat bent forward. His hands were stroking his knee mechanically.

“You do not understand it, Klaus.”

“No, no, I am an old dunce.”

“I did not say anything of the sort. On the contrary, you are more than right in what you say. You have given me a lecture; and no weak attempt at it, either. All the world is lecturing me now. And everybody seems to think that my head is just like his. But that is the mistake.”

“Heads are heads. Only, one man combs his hair differently from another.”

“I think the individual cannot help it. God makes his hair grow this way or that.”

“Or the devil.”

For a while silence reigned between the two men. The steps of a few people going to early Mass passed the house. An apprentice ran past, whistling. From the distance came the rumbling of moving wagons. Then it was silent again.

“I am as God made me,” Otten finally said. “You cannot change things.” His look met that of the old man. “Don’t look at me so pityingly. A fellow has a right to live as he will, if it causes him no remorse.”

The old man gathered up the tableware.

“My brother at Zons will not live much longer,” he remarked casually.

“Your brother? Who owns the little house in Zons?”

“He’s past eighty.”

“Then you’ll be a houseowner?”

“Somebody must take hold of the property. You can’t rent anything in Zons. There are not enough people in the little town.”

“Then you think of moving over there?”

“I want a quiet evening of life.”

“Much water will run down the Rhine till then. The Guelichs are a hearty lot. Your brother will keep agoing a few years longer. And until then you remain here, chained, and barking at the burglars.”

“I only wanted to tell you about it. Things like that happen overnight.”

“And at the same time, you would like to put the chain gently on me?”

“Those are no concerns of mine. Whoever owns a house must know what to do.”

“Well, let’s wait,” Otten said, rising. “It is past five. I should like to hunt up a bed.”

“Shall I announce you to the mistress? So she will not be frightened?”

“I’ll go to the hotel. I’ll be back before noon. Now, since I know that all is well.”

“You know that, but the lady does not know it, as far as you are concerned.”

Joseph Otten took his coat and pressed his hat into his forehead. “I’ll come in daylight, Klaus. When the sun is shining, all things look friendly.”

“That need not worry you, as far as your wife is concerned. It is her due not to be kept waiting. Not for a minute. I am going to call her.”

“You will not. I’ll upset the house enough, as it is.”

“You don’t say! And what do you call it when the husband passes the wife’s chamber? That means no disturbance? Oh, no! That is kindness and consideration. It never is consideration of the comfort of the lady. It is consideration of one’s own dear self. Hotel! Not one step!”

Otten’s face was flushed. He grasped the latch and opened it. “Morning, Klaus,” he said haughtily.

“Then unlock the door yourself.”

“Do not raise a disturbance.”

Angrily Otten released the latch. The sound went through the old house. Otten stood in the dark hall and listened. Upstairs a door opened softly. Careful

steps came to the stairs. "Klaus——?" a voice called.

Old Klaus came out of his room. "Yes, Frau Otten?"

"Is there anyone with you? It has seemed so to me for some time."

"Maria——," Otten said softly, and his voice trembled.

Breathless silence filled the house to the gable. Old Klaus quietly disappeared in his room. And, after a lengthy pause, Otten asked, "Are you there still?"

"Wait, I am coming." And the soft steps left the stair end.

"No," said Otten, "I am coming." And slowly he walked up the stairs to the gable room. The door was ajar, and through the narrow opening fell the light of the lamp. And within the room, bathed in the light, stood Maria, fastening with trembling fingers the morning-gown she had thrown on. Then he entered.

She dropped her hands, raised her head, and looked at him. Her face was as white as snow.

And he stood there, and felt her look, and felt that his face was burning.

"Like a thief in the night, Maria."

"You have come."

"We will not kill a fatted calf. The part of the prodigal son is unbecoming to me. I have come."

Now he noticed her intense paleness. "I have surprised and frightened you."

She placed her hands in his. Her looks still clung to his face. "Are you well?"

"You dear motherly creature," he said, drawing her

nearer to him. "Do I have to be ill in order to come home?"

"I had almost—hoped it——"

"Maria!—And if I were?"

"Lie down, Joseph. We will talk more by day."

"Won't you kiss me?"

"I thought—you would——"

"Come——" That was all he said. . . .

He felt her lips tremble. Then he kissed her eyelids very gently. They also were quivering. "Don't you trust yourself, Maria? Have I grown so strange to you?"

She shook her head. "It is probably the joy. I don't grasp it yet."

"The joy? I have not spoiled you through over-attention. It is a reproach, and I deserve it."

"No, no!" And suddenly she pulled his head down to her and kissed him long and tenderly upon the mouth.

"Welcome home, Joseph!"

"Will you keep me here?"

"You shall promise nothing."

"All right, I will not. I will but wish. For your sake and for Carmen's."

"She has not remained a child."

"I will be needed all the more."

"The father is needed, Joseph."

"Yes, I suppose I'll have to think of that now. I believe I have to make up for lost time here. And not only in the rôle of the father. If I could only make these eyes shine again!"

"They don't always look thus. Let daylight come."

"They do when they have wept. And that you reserve for the night. When you are lying alone, Maria,

and thinking of a man who is unworthy of it. I see it. And you have wept this night, too."

"I felt as if you were so near that I could grasp you. That must have been because you were coming."

"I arrived last evening, Maria."

A shiver as if from frost went through her. "Last—evening."

He quickly placed his arm about her. "I should not have told you."

"You cannot lie." She passed her hands across her eyes. "I always liked that about you."

"Sit down, Maria. I will try to explain it to you."

"No," she said, "that would be against the agreement. You are your own master. That I pledged when I went with you of my own free will. And the fact that I have now carried your name lawfully for three years ought not to have made me smaller. Bigger, Joseph, bigger. To carry your name means duties."

"Which I leave you alone to bear."

"You can safely leave them to my care. I will never let you feel that you have bound yourself."

"But I will make you feel it."

Now she had to smile, after all. "You big boy," she said, stroking his hair. "Always those good intentions, the best of resolutions. I must love you if for that alone."

"Only for that?"

She closed her eyes. "Do not ask me. Am I not glad?"

Then he embraced her tenderly and looked away over her head, so that she gave way to her emotions. . . .

“Shall we visit Carmen now?”

“She sleeps late,” she said, furtively drying her eyes. “Really one ought not to visit such big young ladies while they’re in bed.”

“It seems that I must make myself respected anew in that quarter!”

“Step softly. We’ll go to her room.”

She took the lamp and walked ahead. And while he followed, he wondered at her self-control, and it flashed through him like pride that this woman was his alone. He touched her shoulder and she looked back at him. For a second her foot remained where it was. And he bent forward with begging eyes, braced her arms that held the lamp, and waited. Then she leaned her head against his bosom. Thus they kissed.

They stepped softly into the chamber, and he looked about with questioning eyes. He hardly recognized his child. Beauty and selfwill were there, and self-assurance reigned supreme. The man at the bedside thought of the words of old Klaus.

“She will be very self-reliant,” Frau Maria said, when they were again outside. “One would like to keep children small.”

“Be glad that she is growing up so healthy. The breed cannot be downed.”

“I am not mourning that,” said Frau Maria. “It is something else. Something for which I can hardly find words. The mother feels that the child is growing more and more out of her care.”

“Yes,” Otten replied thoughtfully. “It must be a tragedy for parents to look on while a part of themselves becomes an entity of its own.”

“If both parents live, it is not so very hard. They

only draw a little closer together and cover up the gap. Well, well, years will go by before that comes to pass."

"Until we draw closer together?"

"Before the parents' tragedy, as you call it, will come to us." Frau Maria placed the light upon the table in her chamber. "You look tired, Joseph. I will leave you alone now."

"You surely do not believe that I could go to sleep now?"

"Do it to please me. When you awaken you will really be at home, and the old dream pictures will be banished into the corners. Try it."

"The old dream pictures? Old or new, they shall not follow me under my own roof."

"Do it, to please me," she begged again.

"If you wish it so much—— But I'll only lie down on the old couch over there. And afterwards I'll take a bath."

"I will awaken you, Joseph."

"No," he said. "There is another condition connected with it. You will have to sit beside me. I can't go to sleep at once. I want to feel your hand in mine."

"That is just as if you needed a silent absolution." A slight motherly smile passed over her features. "Now lie down."

He took off his coat and stretched himself upon the old leather sofa. "Ah," he yawned, "how good this is!" And she covered him up, took a chair, and sat down beside him.

"Silent absolution——" he took up her words, softly taking her hand. "You have hit it, Maria. There

will be little occasion to announce it publicly and proudly, for it will be a very silent confession."

"Sleep," she said. "You have nothing to confess. When you open your eyes later, you will laugh at yourself."

"It is always the same. You never take into consideration how you are placed. You only seek to make things easy for me."

"Who knows the motive? Perhaps I am a bigger egotist than you imagine. Perhaps I only make things so easy for you in order not to make them harder for myself."

"If you keep on, you'll convince me yet that you are the sinner and I am the saint."

"No, Joseph, I will not talk you into that. Your saintliness"—she smiled as she spoke—"I certainly am not aware of. And mine—in the many years that I have sat alone, I have learned to look after myself, so that my emotions do not run wild at every chance. That is my saintliness."

"You are ten times as strong as I."

"Ten times as weak—or else I would not need such a safeguard."

"And if you did not have it? What would have happened then?"

Her eyebrows drew together. Her bosom rose, as if she tried to shake off a load.

"Let that be, Joseph."

"Tell me," he said, stroking her hand.

"What would have happened then, if you had come home, as you did just now—and I had admitted you to my chamber? I would have thrown myself at you, on your neck, without shame, without pride! Like one

starving, I would have thrown myself on the neck of my husband. O God!"

Excitement shook her. She arose and walked to the corner of the room. "Be still," she said. "Do not answer. What would become of me if I should lose my self-control? What would become of all of us? And, one thing I want to have apart from the others—that crowd around you—myself!"

She had regained her even temper and returned. "You see, Joseph, how I keep myself—and keep house."

"It is like Christmas," Otten said, "when I was a child. I had been in mischief all the year round. Before the holidays I'd look pious, would experience real remorse for my misdoings, and for that slight effort my lap would be filled with beautiful presents."

"And then, like a real boy, you loved to play with the toys that did not belong to you."

"Yes, I did, and the habit has stuck to me."

"It is the fault of the people," she defended him. "They have spoiled you, with or without your will."

"The scamps!" Otten said. "They will not have the artist different. They make a fellow what he is by their confounded slavery. Stay with me, Maria. One's own Christmas table is the best, after all. Self-sacrificing love floats over it."

"Now you must sleep, Joseph."

"O Maria, it feels so good to haul others over the coals, when one does not feel quite clean oneself."

Then he looked at her stealthily while he lay there, breathing regularly. The years had touched her gently. Around the eyes a few scarcely visible wrinkles, at the corners of the mouth the furrows slightly deep-

ened—but the erect bearing of the body and the serious poise of her whole self drew the glance from the details to the entire picture, and it was a pleasing one. He pressed her hand tenderly, obeying a warm impulse.

“You, too, have had battles to fight, Maria. And they were harder than mine, because you fought them alone.”

“I have reported to you regularly, Joseph.”

“Yes, when you could write. That matter is now arranged, or—it is not worth while to talk about it.”

“It certainly is fortunate that I have something to do.”

“That is your way of getting out of saying, ‘something to worry about.’ I will not speak about myself. But Carmen? Has she caused you much trouble?”

“She is at the age that makes the greatest demands upon all mothers. Why should I be excepted?”

“Did she look pretty when she went to her first communion?”

Frau Maria smiled. “You are a vain being.”

“And there were no obstacles placed in your path?”

“On account of the confirmation? No.”

“Not for the child. But for the mother?”

“O Joseph,” Frau Maria said, looking away. “What of that? That cannot change matters. Surely I do not allow outside influences to unbalance the life which I once considered beautiful, and later on worth living. Be undisturbed. I do not call that black today which I called white yesterday.”

“Did the church go hard with you?”

“The parish priest came to the house frequently. Then, now and again. Finally he staid away. When he found he could alter nothing, it did not pay.”

“It did not pay,” Otten said. “And all that lies between is disposed of. How big that must seem to you which you consider worth while.”

She did not answer. She felt that her tears would start with the first word. And then—the night was past. The day meant other demands upon her. And especially this day. She would have doubled mother-duties—toward the child, growing into womanhood, and toward the man who would not and could not outgrow his youth.

She bent over him. He had fallen asleep. He lay there so quietly, as if there was no storm that held danger for him—as if he was sure of his guardian. Boyish peace was mingled with the daring character of his features. And Frau Maria thought: This is one of the hours in which he belongs entirely to me—he and his restless soul. Now I hold him within my hands. . . .

Daylight peeped in between the curtains. Frau Maria had dreamt. She saw the man to whom she had given herself without recall, fifteen years younger. The reviver of German song, he went out into the world, and she, intoxicated with happiness, was by his side. Spring had entered the countries through which they traveled, and spring had entered her heart. No mortal had lived through such blooming, such sprouting, such blossoming as she. As she! As she! That could not be wiped from the slate of life without destroying the very life itself. And the woman read in the features of the sleeper there, and read, and read again, the story of the springtime of her life, dreaming in the remembrance, filled with thanks that she had such a treasure-store.

As the interpreter of German song he had gone out—as artist he had returned.

No. That was not the fulfillment of all her hopes. And yet of the best of them. He found his way home to her. Aside from that, let him be what he was. “I only know that I must love him forever.”

There was a stir in Carmen’s room. The woman heard the door open. And gently she took her hand out of that of the sleeper, arose, and walked out of the room.

“Good-morning, mother. It has grown late.”

“Good-morning, child. Drink a glass of hot milk. Just think, I have forgotten the coffee.”

“But, mother! And how you look! Like a young girl!”

“Like an old, dreaming woman.”

“Are they happy, too?”

“To be able to rest, child, is always beautiful, when one has something worth while to look back to.”

She remained with her daughter till Carmen started on her way to school. A girlish blush mounted her cheeks as she softly returned to her own room. “She shall see her father only fresh and radiant,” she confessed to herself. “That may be vanity. Still, I wish it so. It requires the eyes of the woman to retain always the same picture of the man. The eyes of the woman whose life-history is blended with that of the man.”

Silently she resumed her former seat, took the sleeper’s hand in hers, and listened to his deep regular breathing. She sat there like a nurse, wishing and seeking nothing but the convalescence of the patient. “For I love him only,” she whispered to herself.

CHAPTER VIII

FOR two days Joseph Otten had not left his house in the Rheingasse. A pleasant feeling of weariness had come over him, had taken hold of body and spirit alike, and had produced that condition of the most complete enjoyment of everything, which the convalescent experiences, when, during momentary weakness, he feels the influx of new strength, the gathering of new power. The first meeting with Carmen after his return had been somewhat of a surprise to him. He was reluctant to concede that it had also been a disappointment. The burst of joy at the first moment that had delighted him, had all too quickly been lost in her interest for current topics of every kind. To her, the father seemed merely a visitor, upon whom there was no counting. The daughter nodded cordially to him, but had little inclination to come to him with her wishes, and it was plain that she had ceased to consider whether her actions would please him or not.

“You wild creature,” Otten thought, “I’ll win you again.” And for the time being he contented himself with watching the grace of the girl and the rapid changes of her temper; both pleased him. “I have christened her correctly,” he soliloquized with silent joy. “Carmen! A song! In every phase the name fits. Now a naïve song of the people, a Volkslied; then a wild and glorious song of triumph; soon—who knows how soon—a passionate song of love—— Well, the

master will come who will tune her thought to the right harmony. Only he must have much patience, for the material there is as brittle as it is valuable."

On the evening of the second day, Otten sat alone in the dusk-filled room, when Carmen, returning from a walk, entered.

"Hello, little one!"

"Goodness, how you frightened me. Is it you, father?"

"Have you a bad conscience? Come a little closer?"

"You cannot see me, anyway. It is quite dark."

"Oh, you are figuring on that? But I will do as did the old king who had taken a young wife, and who pursued the lovesick page whom he found in front of her door."

"That is jolly."

"No, it is very sad, but I will tell it to you at any rate, so that you will see that things cannot be hidden. When the lovelorn boy had fled into the dormitory and pretended to be asleep amidst the other pages, the wise old king walked from one to the other, and placed his hand on the heart of each one. And when he came to the culprit he found a heart that was beating very violently. 'Have I found you?' said the wise old king, and took the page by the ear."

"Ouch, father!"

"Ouch, my dear, let that be a lesson to you. The old, wise kings still live."

She grasped his hand that held her ear-lobe. "The old king was so wise just because he, too, had once been a page."

"Look here! Look here! No such logic, if you please."

“And you, too, were once a page. Else you would not know all that.”

“But by and by one becomes ashamed of one’s tricks during the page period. And that I regret I do not see in you.”

“Father,” she laughed softly, pressing her head against his sleeve. “I, too, would like to place my hand on your heart for once!”

“Will you be still! It certainly is lucky that it is dark—— Girlie, I almost think it would have been better if you had been a boy.”

“Then I could have been your comrade.”

He grasped her tighter in his arms. “Would you have enjoyed that? To roam through the world with your father?”

“You with the mandolin, father, and I with the tambourine. And not a soul that could boss us!”

*“In the evenings when I’m thirsty,
To the jolly inn I go!”*

Otten hummed. “The stars studding the sky call us to new unknown regions, and we whisper still dreaming—to-morrow we will come to you!”

“Oh, father——”

“Do you love me, daughter dear?”

“I do again, now. Now you are not treating me as a little girl. Is that really very proper?”

“And why not?” he asked in surprise.

“Well, you have never been home. I can be real confidential with mother. I can hardly explain to you just what I mean. But, somehow, I have always felt that we two belong together. Do you understand me?”

"You little silly child," he said, raising her chin and kissing her. "I belong to you, too."

She did not answer. But she twined her arms around his neck, and jumped on his knee.

"Well, such a big baby, after all? And such a tall young lady, too?"

"Nobody can see it! I am so glad that you are here."

"All at once? I had already lost hope."

"Oh, you! You never lose hope. You are such a famous man, you have a magic wand."

"I suppose you would like to have one, too?"

"I am terribly proud of you. I always listen when the people talk about you. And they always talk so interestingly about you."

"Now, now," he said doubtingly.

"Oh, you can believe me. And I know that all the girls are jealous of me, on your account."

"Flatterer," Otten growled. "You only flatter so nicely, because you want to please me."

"Did you meet princesses, too? Or don't they take any interest in us?"

"My dear child," Otten said. "Everybody seeks in his simplicity that which is not for him. When we frame a fairy-tale, it must be of a princess, and when a princess dreams a fairy-tale, it must be about a gooseherd. But when we have the princess before us, we are disillusioned."

"When is that to be?"

"When that beautiful simplicity vanishes. When we begin to see, and when the envious day takes the toy out of our hands. Whoever has not got his senses, then, keeps on running after fairy-tales. There are

ever so many princesses and ever so many gooseherds."

"Tell me some of it!"

"Child, those things are not talked about. Little girls must be content with Lenten food."

"I am not a little girl."

"Beg pardon, miss! But I was not aware that I should have to treat you differently as a young lady."

Suddenly she laughed to herself.

"And what is the matter now, mademoiselle?"

"Oh, a story just occurred to me when you were talking of Lenten food. Old Klaus told it to me."

"So, so. One of old Klaus's stories. Is it a pious one?"

"It is about a monk in a monastery in the Seven Mountains. I can't think of his name just now."

"Cæsarius von Heisterbach?"

"That is it. Shall I tell you the story?"

"You seem very anxious to. And it is very pious? Well, I'll see."

"Just listen, father. Once upon a fastday, there came to the dean of Sankt Andreas some monks, whom he invited to dinner. But as there happened to be no fish in the house, he said to his cook, 'We have no fish to-day, but as they are plain brothers, and as they are hungry, meat will do. But you must take out the bones carefully, and beat it and knead it, so that it will look like halibut. Then you put a lot of pepper on it, and, when you serve it, you say: May God bless this 'but for all of you.'"

"Carmen, Carmen——!"

"The cook did exactly as he had been bidden, and the food tasted very good to the brothers. The pious

deceit remained undiscovered, for although the fish had a peculiar taste, it was anything but disagreeable. They did not wish to ask if it happened to be a salt-water fish, brought here from the ocean, for none of them wished to accuse their host of an untruth. But, when the bottom of the dish was reached, one of the monks gathered up with his spoon the ear and another the snout of a pig. Smilingly they looked at one another, showing their find, but the dean said, apparently angered, 'Eat on, in the name of God. Monks should not be inquisitive. Some fishes have ears and snouts, too!'"

"Well, and?" Otten laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Then they ate both the ears and the snout without anguish of mind," the girl closed her narrative, and her silvery laughter mingled with that of her father.

"And the application in my case? For that is what you were aiming at, I am sure!"

"Monks and little girls should not be inquisitive."

"That's correct! Surely, that's correct!"

"And, therefore, you can safely tell me all the stories you wish to. I shall think——"

"Well, what will you think?"

"I will think it's—fish!"

"You wild little monkey!" And Otten grasped her by the head. "You are a little too clever! Is that your daughter, Joseph Otten?"

He rocked her on his knee, and hummed as if it were a cradle-song:

"Once I had a comrade, a better you'll not find!"

Frau Maria brought in the lamp and fixed the shade. She looked in surprise upon the strange scene, herself enveloped in a glow of reddish light.

“And what in the world are you two doing there in the dark?”

“We’re teaching each other, Maria. You can come and take part, too.”

“Take part in the lessons of you two hot-heads? I have to keep sober for the three of us.”

“That is thoroughly appreciated here, House-angel. But surely I must do something, too, toward the education of my daughter!”

She looked about the room for her sewing. In passing, her hand stroked his hair, with a silent, loving touch, like the hand of a mother.

On the next day, quite unexpectedly, Moritz Lachner appeared. He was excited, and his eyes shone.

“I was so anxious to bid the Herr Doktor welcome.”

“Did you hear of my arrival so soon?” Otten said in surprise.

“Last night, through Herr Guelich.”

“Through Herr Guelich? Let me see. . . . Oh, yes, you mean Klaus, of course. Take a seat, my boy. It is very nice of you to think of me so soon. But don’t you have to attend school this afternoon?”

“This morning I passed my Abiturium. The verbal part was dispensed with.”

“Well! Well! That is great! Your hand! My hearty congratulations! This morning! And then you came here at once? You thought of us at such a time? Sit down, and be welcome!”

Frau Maria, too, added her hearty congratulations. "And where do you intend to go now, Moritz?"

"To Bonn, Frau Doktor."

"To Bonn——" Otten repeated. And then again, more softly, "To Bonn—— Boy, boy, how musical those words are! The entire room is as if it were filled of a sudden with the odors of May. I see the old toll, and I, myself, am leaning again on the old wall, a dozen bright-colored caps about me, and we are singing to the old Father Rhine, to the Seven Mountains, with their sunken romance of the past, and no one knows whether we are full of sweet youth or full of sweet wine. But, then, that is all one and the same thing! It is far more important that the linden trees are giving forth their beautiful odor as of yore, 'beim Aennchen' at Godesberg. Lindenwirthin, ever young. Moritz, this has never happened to me before. To-day I envy a human being!"

"I intend to study history, Herr Doktor."

"It is well that you have made up your mind. But whatever you are studying is immaterial just now. That you are studying! And that you are studying at Bonn!"

"Now I am doubly glad, Herr Doktor. I should like to have studied with you at Bonn."

"Do not wish that, my boy. Only the yet-to-be is of value. At best you would be, as I am to-day—more foolish by a lifetime."

"No, Herr Doktor. Instead of the yet-to-be, I would have the days of the past in their wealth. You possess them."

"Come, let's have a good morning tramp. It is

too early yet to drink, but somewhere we will find an opportunity to wet the mulus."

"Will you remember me to Carmen, Frau Doktor?"

"Gladly, Moritz. Auf Wiedersehen!"

The life in the streets diverted Otten's thoughts. "A great old town, after all, this old Cologne of ours. I love it, when the contrasts meet. That keeps the blood in circulation. This glorious joy of life, and yet this everlasting preparation for heaven. There, again, a bunch of people are going to church. They could not do without that."

"But there is no Mass now," Moritz Lachner said, looking at his watch.

"No Mass? Oh, yes. By the way—since when are you interested in Catholicism?"

"I am interested in every religious belief. For I must live with all sorts."

"Listen, Moritz, that was sensibly said. Whoever wishes to live beside his neighbor as his brother, should learn to know the God of his neighbor. When he has learnt that, he has found the thread leading to the other's soul. But in this respect, our modern, much praised times are still in the darkness of the Middle Ages, and the schools are shrouding these questions in the densest of silence. Is that not a sad, regrettable fact? The pupils of our higher schools learn of the cults of Isis and Osiris, and they memorize the descriptions of the usages of Moloch until they can recite them like the Lord's prayer while they are asleep. But at the same time the Catholic knows of the Protestant only that the Protestant is an unbeliever, and for the young Protestant the customs and the teachings of the Catholic Church remain unhallowed

mysteries. And in the course of years this narrow-mindedness increases. I'll not speak of the Jewish religion at all. If one-tenth of the things that are told about your poor Talmud were true, you would be thrown into the Rhine like superfluous kittens. Holy mysticism! People are kept a-shivering from fear and awe, so that they will remain docile, and stick to their creed. And yet our Greek heaven is full of gods!"

Moritz Lachner walked with shining eyes beside the idol of his childhood. That it would remain the idol of his more advanced youth he felt at this hour. To be so free, and yet in freedom so warm of heart! How he admired and loved this man!

"What are you dreaming about, Moritz? Your thoughts probably are floating about Bonn?"

Hastily the young man warded off the insinuation: "I was but thinking if that which you had just disclosed to me could not be made the foundation of a retrospective history of cults and development."

"It really seems to me," Otten replied, "that a Jew would be the most fit to write a European history of culture objectively and fairly. He has taken the least part in the struggles of the ruling parties; to him, it would be immaterial if the teachings of Martin Luther, or those of Dr. Eck, be accepted and become prevalent. To him—of course, taking his own nobility of mind and thought for granted—it would only remain to find which problems have been solved and which solutions had failed, and the result would show the way."

"Then spiritual persecution would have to be eliminated, as being detrimental to evolution."

"Persecution in matters of religion always engenders lack of freedom, low instincts. A belief which fanat-

ically excludes all others must fall into errors itself, exactly as intermarriage causes degeneracy.”

“I will not forget that at my work, Herr Doktor.”

“Look at Cologne as it was a hundred years ago, towards the close of the eighteenth century. That is an example. Through the narrowness of its spiritual authorities, it had degenerated into an unclean, gloomy town, inhabited by scarcely forty thousand people. And what sort of people! That is the important point. One-half, almost twenty thousand, a mob, the militia of the Orders. And as the guards among these, five thousand beggars, five thousand idlers, a menace to every spark of intelligence, recognized as a guild, only bound to be idle, to prey upon the decent citizens, whose houses they entered for their noonday meal, ‘For the sake of God!’ And this brutish gang was even permitted to occupy permanent places at the church doors, and to leave these as their property to their offspring, or to give them as a dowry to their marrying daughters! Not until the French Revolution swept the dull superstitions out of the streets and alleys; not until intelligence and common sense were recognized as gifts of God again, and were accorded their due respect, did the sun shine upon Cologne again; and then there came an awakening, a wondrous spring-like sprouting and growing all over the city, so that, within a short time, it reached a size, a beauty, and an importance the like of which it had not even known in the days of its historical glory. Citizen shook the hand of citizen, animated by the same spirit for the good of the commonwealth, by a common interest in culture. And this sort of religion is always the one that pleases God the most. We can see that by His blessings.”

“I thank you, Herr Doktor.”

“No cause for it. But we will talk of something else.”

“I could go on listening for a long while.”

“My dear Moritz, I will not deprive your professor of his privilege. He is being paid for his work.”

“Then I will enter you as my creditor, Herr Doktor.”

They had left the city behind them, and were walking through the Bayernthal along the Rhine. The greenish-gray waters flowed past them almost without a sound.

“Do you know why they are so silent, Moritz? Because they are coming from Bonn.”

“Oh, no, Herr Doktor!”

“You may depend upon it. Bonn is the last stage of their unadulterated youthful liveliness. From there, downstream, they only serve the purposes of every-day life, and in Holland they are lost amidst the sand.”

“But the lower Rhine, too, Herr Doktor, has spring-time every year. And one feels spring here more intensely than in more blessed climes.”

“I am here to await it. If only it will not turn out to be an Indian summer!”

“Look up that way,” said Moritz Lachner. “That is the way to Bonn!”

Otten patted his young companion's back. “You are right. There is Bonn for you. But the waters that have once begun flowing do not run back and uphill. And it is a damned nasty feeling, to think that they are running to the Netherlands, and will be lost amid the sands.”

“But the channel remains through which they have flowed, and all the way-stations.”

Joseph Otten stood still. "A kind spirit has made you say that. In this gray home-country of mine, where the dense fogs of Holland begin to be noticed, I always grow strangely melancholy. But it is nothing save the longing for color. And yet I only need to turn about, to see the track of my days on earth in rainbow hues. That is very instructive. For there must be days of rain, too, to make the rainbow visible, and to show how much sun there is behind its glorious color-play. It may seem ungrateful on my part, but I should be glad to miss all this retrospective splendor, all this recognition and understanding, if I could again stand up there where the sun shines straight down, even taking the chance of remaining unknowing forever. Well, let's be sensible!"

"There comes a rowboat."

"And there are young people in it. To be young means to play ball with the world. Come, Moritz. After this philosophical afternoon, it is high time that we play the game again. At any rate, you are entirely too old for your years, and I feel, to my horror, that it is contagious. Come, let us drink in honor of Bonn!"

He linked his arm with that of his young friend: "To the nearest inn!"

"Herr Doktor, I believe——"

"Now leave me in peace with your confessions of faith. When I am going to wine and dine, my earthly part demands its rights. Play ball, Moritz!"

"Surely it is Carmen, Herr Doktor!"

"Who——?"

"Carmen and Laurenz Terbroich. There, they are landing."

“Really.—Wish to take a walk here in the wilderness. The young lady with her schoolbooks, and young master apprentice with his sleeve-protectors still on. Far away from the envious world. That is touching.”

The two arrivals had now fastened their boat, and turned toward the road.

“Hello, Carmen! Just a word!”

The girl started. But in a moment she shrugged her shoulders and motioned to her father:

“Ah, there you are, father!”

“Please come up. Herr Terbroich may join us. So, so, . . . good-day. As I gather from your call, you surely must have been looking for me.”

“Laurenz met me as I was coming from school. He had just been to the post-office. And at the harbor——”

“Is that near the way home?”

“No, but near the harbor we met old Klaus, and he said that you had gone for a walk with Moritz.”

“Iron logic. All right, let it be. And then your child-like anxiety urged you to beg old Klaus to lend you his boat, and then to row to this lonely spot because you surely expected to find me here.”

“Yes, Herr Doktor.”

“Herr Terbroich, in your place I would have awaited a better time for my answer. To lie well is an art. I admit that. But to lie clumsily is an insult.”

“Laurenz never lies, father.”

“So much the worse, if he leaves it to you. Silence! Bravery is praiseworthy. But foolhardiness is for dunces. And only yesterday I thought you were rather a bright girl.”

“Oh, father,” she coaxed, “wasn’t that nice last night?”

“Well, if that doesn’t take the cake! You would probably be in favor of a repetition here.”

“Oh, father, don’t be angry. For such a little thing you surely don’t need to play the part of the old king who puts his hand on a person’s heart! Surely there are much more serious things.”

“This is getting better and better! May I ask most humbly what sort of things they are?”

“Yes,” said the girl, throwing her head back and winking at her father. “But how am I to know? Monks and little girls should not be inquisitive.”

Joseph Otten passed his hand over his face to keep up his dignity. “It seems to me that a halibut with ears and snout is being served here.”

“Only a ’but, only a ’but,” Carmen called out laughingly and linked her arm with her father’s. With difficulty he prevented her from hugging and kissing him. But the seriousness of his face was hopelessly lost. “I did not show much talent as an educator of children in this affair,” Otten thought, and sighed.

“Will you take me along, father? Where are you going?”

“Herr Doktor,” Moritz Lachner begged.

“Have you a suggestion to make? I am all ears.”

“My father would be very glad if you—on account of my graduation——” He stopped.

“A glass of wine at your house? That is a go. You have earned it.”

“And Laurenz?” the girl asked quickly.

“I will forego the hospitality of Simon Lachner,” the young patrician said loftily.

Joseph Otten frowned. But he passed by the nasty insult to Lachner. "Young Herr Terbroich," he said coolly, "unfortunately cannot take part in our celebration, as he must fulfill his very honorable obligation of rowing back with the boat. Inasmuch as he obeyed only a beautiful impulse when he started out with the daughter to aid her in finding her father, we must allow his unselfishness to have its full triumph. Good-day, Herr Terbroich."

"Run," Carmen called out, and merrily slapped him on the shoulder. "You have succeeded in making a fool of yourself." Again turning to her father, she took his arm. "Do we take a carriage at the Severins Gate?"

"I will arrange an entry with a brass band for you. Don't you also desire public recognition and acclaim?"

She grasped his arm more tightly, kept step with him, and hummed to herself. Otten watched her furtively. And at the Severins Gate he hailed an open carriage. "Obenmarspforte; Lachner."

"To Simon the Jew. I understand, Herr!"

Carmen warbled softly, and Moritz climbed into the carriage. In many streets Doktor Otten met recognition and greetings. Often carriages crossed their path. Then Carmen would look at her father,—at her handsome, proud father, who replied to every greeting with the same chivalrous politeness, and she leaned back even more gracefully in her corner, with heated cheeks and shining eyes. And again Otten secretly watched his child. In spite of all, she pleased him.

Moritz Lachner sat opposite them on the little seat. He felt as if he had sneaked in to share another's honors,

and as he did not wish to make that impression at all, he looked intently at his knees.

“Well, Moritz? Young son of the Muses! Up with your head! The world is yours!”

Then he looked up with big thankful eyes, and thenceforward he let his glance wander about, answered the greetings meant for Otten by quietly doffing his hat, feeling as if he belonged to the family. Thus they reached Obenmarspforte.

Little gray-bearded Simon Lachner wiped his hand again and again on his greasy coat, before he extended it to greet his guests. “A great honor, Herr Doktor! A great honor! I know it is meant for my son. But pardon a father’s pleasure.”

“My dear Herr Lachner, your son is a splendid fellow. I felt that I must tell you that. Hence I came.”

“Even if the Herr Doktor had not taken the trouble to come here, Moritz would still be a splendid son to me. But that the Herr Doktor says it with such emphasis, does me so much good. And now the Fräulein has grown to be a real lady, and she is still the friend of my Moritz. Please come up these stairs. They are narrow, but happiness does not depend upon the width of a staircase. To-day it enters my house. The door to the right, please. There we are. You are welcome in my house.”

They sat opposite each other at the table. The old man had removed his silk skull-cap, and was turning it in his hands as he looked radiantly from one to the other.

“Herr Lachner, I’d like to make you a proposition.”

“The suggestions of the Herr Doktor are always good.”

“How would it be, if, in honor of the glorious graduate, we would sacrifice——”

“Are you serious? You would share a glass of our unpretentious wine with us?”

“Let us say a bottle. And I’m not so particular about the unpretentiousness.”

“I have an Italian wine—a festival wine, Herr Doktor. Got it through a business friend at Toscana. Especially intended for this day, when Moritz was to make me so happy by graduating with such honors. And the Herr Doktor is a connoisseur, too! No, I’ll get it, Moritz. You are the celebrity to-day, with your kind permission, Herr Doktor, and with the permission of Fräulein Carmen.”

And hurriedly he went to the cellar, returning with a large bottle cased in straw. Out of an antique cupboard he produced glasses. “They are rare crystal. Venetian work. But the day, too, is rare, that brings such guests, and rare——” He poured out the wine, and the rest of his words were lost in his beard.

“You can say it aloud, Herr Lachner! And rare is so fine a son. But the fathers set the example. And, therefore, we will drink the first glass to the health of the father of our friend Moritz. Herr Simon Lachner shall live—Hoch! Hoch! Hoch!”

“O God, Herr Doktor. God, Herr Doktor——”

“And now I will pour the wine. Hand me the crystal from Venice. In the clear crystal goblets flows the noble blood of the grape. Let that be the symbol of truth to him who goes out into the world to be a man. The brightness of soiled goblets can be restored, but

the divine fire of a wine that has once become cloudy—never. And when hailstones are falling all about you, never let them dilute the wine of your enthusiasm, my boy. Enthusiasm is half of life, and the other half is the strength that keeps it up. I wish you both. Keep them as your inalienable property and youth will never end for you. Prost, Student!”

Moritz Lachner stood breathing heavily. He emptied his glass to the very last drop.

The old man sipped his wine. He seemed to have difficulty in swallowing.

Carmen stood close to her father. “You dear!” she said, and squeezed his arm.

“Wild one!” and he laughed with a father’s pride into the eyes of the impulsive girl. “Look for a different pattern and example!”

“Never!”

“There is Italian blood in the Cologners, young historian,” Otten said. “We must make the best of it.”

Outside, the shadows of evening were falling. Moist fogbanks coming from the Netherlands rolled over the city. The fathers and their children did not notice it. To the four merry beings who clinked glasses, it seemed as if it were the approach of one of those mild, starlit, Hesperian nights which make one so young because their stars are so joy-inspiring.

CHAPTER IX

THE joy of the approaching carnival reigned supreme in the streets of old Cologne. It emanated from houses where women and girls were fashioning in secret their masquerade costumes, which were to transform them into gypsies and harem-beauties. Householders were intently bent over their working-tables, evolving, behind carefully locked doors, those jests and jokes at the expense of city government, of good friends, and of the world at large, that they were to spring when they entered the Butt or chancel at the next fool's session of their society. Bedecked with paper foolscaps, the children played upon stairways and pavements, often wandering through the streets in long rows with arms linked.

The entire city rang with the sound of carnival song. The children sang aloud, and their elders hummed the airs, to get into practice for the weeks of fast and furious fun that were ahead. But they did not sing aloud as yet, for they knew that their voices would be required to work overtime later on. The advertisement columns of the newspapers contained many tender proposals, to be understood only by the one for whose eyes they were meant. The mail clerk at the General Delivery window worked twice as hard as usual. Good humor, wit, and satire were cropping up everywhere; jests and jibes flew to and fro, and were parried with alacrity. And in the evening, when the shutters

were put up, the girls would stand longer at the corners than usual, exchanging confidences in a whisper.

“What are you going to be?”

“I’ll be a Donna Elvira.”

“And I’ll go as a sailor.”

“Pooh, why, you’ll have to wear pants!”

“Don’t you wear any?”

“Will you be still, you naughty thing!”

“What of it? Afterwards you will get the same sort of ashen cross on your forehead as I will.”

In the rear rooms of the inns men sat close together, summoned by the Little Council of Eleven to arrange stag-sessions and gala evenings to which the ladies would be invited. In the preliminary meetings, the newest carnival songs were tried and discarded or approved, according to their effect on the gathering, and a joke would find acceptance no matter if it were full of spice and fire. The houses of the wealthy showed electric window-illumination. The private masquerade balls were in full fling, and ladies and gentlemen in strange and gorgeous costumes would hurry from their carriages to the protecting portals, to escape the admiring remarks and droll courtesies of the street gamins. Waltz music sounded from the festive houses. Passers-by would stop and look at the windows, behind the curtains of which shadows of dancers were flitting past in rhythmic motion. Jolly fellows would attempt grotesque imitations of the ghostlike shadow-dancers, and mothers joined the fracas by letting babes-in-arms hop up and down.

Cologne was getting ready to be foolish.

Joseph Otten was out a great deal during these days. He walked leisurely through the streets, mingled with

the people, and allowed the spirit of the time to influence him. He loved the Fasching, and he claimed he loved it as a humanitarian. "It is the only time in the year," he laughingly said to Maria, "in which the people are acting sanely, that is, according to their innermost inclination. If they shout, they don't do it because they are allowed to in these days, but because they are not allowed to at other times. And if their morality begins to get shaky, it only shows upon what weak legs it has stood the rest of the year. Aside from that, the whole thing is a sort of personal consolation to me."

"Joseph!" Frau Maria answered.

He folded her in his arms. "And it should be a consolation to you also. If I take part to a greater or less extent all the year around in the merry masquerade of life, then my lady here ought to say, if she is wise: The difference between the rest of the people and Joseph lies simply in the fact that Joseph is not a hypocrite."

"I am a wise woman."

"I know it," said he, stroking her hair and kissing her eyes.

The letter-carrier brought mail. Frau Maria withdrew. The concert-agent wrote concerning a tour through Great Britain. "I'll think that over." Then he took the second letter. The cancellation of the stamp showed it came from the city. "Well, what's this? An unknown hand." He turned the small billet several times in his hand. Then he drew from the envelope a lithographed card.

"Herr and Frau Lüttgen request the pleasure of Herr Doktor Otten's presence at a small private dance

to be given Wednesday evening next. Costume, please.”

He looked over the card into the distance. There was a quiver about the corners of his mouth for a second. “Well, well—the gracious Frau Lüttgen. . . . Trying to domineer so soon. . . . Sorry.”

He took a visiting-card and filled it out with a line: “Dr. Joseph Otten regrets not to be able to accept the kind invitation for Wednesday evening.”

He put it into an envelope and addressed it. As he dropped the missive into the mailbox, he mused: “In the first place, my invitation was written on a left-over printed card, as if I were to jump at it. Secondly: A beautiful woman who has nothing to give but malice—— That is a method of dry distillation. Simply rotten——”

In the evening a Dienstmann brought a note. “I am to await an answer, Herr Doktor.” Otten looked at the signature: “Karl Lüttgen.” He drew up his shoulders. “Such persistence!” Then he read:

“Dear Joseph! You would give me a great pleasure, if you would permit me to spend the evening in your company. Will we meet in the ‘Ewige Lampe’ in the Komödienstrasse? I suggest this, because the place is handy for you. From there we can go elsewhere. Don’t fear an attempt at assassination on account of your refusal to come Wednesday. To the contrary! Your Karl Lüttgen.”

Otten shook his head. “This ‘to the contrary’ is so funny, that it deserves a reward.” And he sat down and wrote: “Will be there in an hour. With great pleasure. Your Otten.”

He handed the note to the messenger, who hid it within his cap.

“I smell something burning, Herr Doktor.”

Otten took out his cigar-case. “Try one!”

The Dienstmann grinned and bowed awkwardly.

“Thanks, Herr Doktor.”

An hour later Otten entered the inn of the “Perpetual Light.” The rotund figure of his former schoolmate arose, and the latter greeted him merrily.

“It was nice of you, Joseph, not to refuse my request. Take a seat. Will you have a glass of this brand?”

“Do you thank me for declining your joint invitation?” Otten handed his hat and cloak to the waiter, and took a chair beside Lüttgen.

“Really, Joseph, I do.”

“Strange host.”

“I’ll tell you, Joseph. This noon when your letter came we were just at dinner. I read it and gave the card to my wife. “Aha,” she said, “the great artist——” “Declines,” said I. She grew pale from anger. “This great gentleman has high notions. Regrets not to be able to accept. That’s all. Just as if he were invited to dinner at the governor’s, or at the Archbishop’s that night.”—“He probably is.”—“Nonsense.”—“You see, Amely, that man does not need to wait for us.”—“You even seem to enjoy it! You Rhinelanders have manners!”

The manufacturer took a drink. “Really, Joseph, in that she was right. I not only seemed to enjoy it. I did enjoy it immensely. I felt a regular diabolical joy at her discomfiture.”

"Then I don't appear to be a very popular guest at your house."

"More than that. Much more . . . only—you know I have always had a strong liking for you, but you were intellectually beyond my level. And I lacked the courage to push my friendship for you. And when, a few days ago, you suddenly appeared in our house, and were such a splendid, fine fellow, I said to myself: That friend I will keep. Him I will not give up to the 'society' crowd. A fellow must have at least one friend. Prost, Joseph!"

"You began your sentence a while ago with 'Only——' Well?"

"I meant, I don't want her to have your friendship. Not in her sense of the word. For her to order about and for you to obey. Or to condescend, that the others are not to be considered! And now it happened for the first time that she was not considered. She takes that devilish personal. And that was what tickled me."

Joseph Otten silently emptied his glass. The waiter brought another bottle.

"Yours does not seem to be an ideal union, Lüttgen."

"Oh, yes! A regular pattern—outwardly. That seems to be the very latest thing nowadays. And my wife is a modern woman. You may depend upon that."

"Look here, Lüttgen. Are you not confessing rather too much to me?"

The manufacturer slowly turned his red, fleshy face toward the speaker. "No, Joseph."

"That is categorical. But is there none among your old friends who stands close to you?"

"They have all gone over into the camp of my wife."

“Man, then why in the world don't you follow suit?”

Lüttgen's brows drew together. For a while he played with his glass.

“Do you think that I have not tried? Or why did I marry her three years ago, after my first happy and congenial union? The answer? Because I was in love. Because I still felt young enough to offer something to the heart. Because I was so vain, that I wanted something different from the others, and did not need to take wealth into consideration. For she had not a penny—but that is beside the question.”

“And your attempts to bring about an understanding were not successful?”

“My dear Joseph,” Lüttgen said, “you express yourself very considerately. Bring about an understanding? That meant, to submit. You may rest assured that I have tried. Daily and hourly. For I really loved this woman. And, to be truthful, her changing moods were to me, who knew practically nothing about complicated women's natures, an added charm. One moment a vain, overbearing woman, glorying to torture me to the quick with clever deviltries, she would be in the very next hour a helpless girl, glad to let me carry her through our rooms in my arms. This constant changeability kept me a-going. I forgot to have thoughts of my own. And that was the secret of it. This woman needed for every phase a good, docile Saint Bernard. And she trained me.”

“Even a Saint Bernard may play the part of a hero, my friend.”

“Only a trained one. And when he is ordered to.”

“In matrimony one party must be the ruler.”

“Granted. You see, I am not narrow. But I soon

questioned myself: Where is the union in this case? There was absolutely nothing in common. Not even a thought. I had to work in the daytime in my factory. The business of the last few years has required a real man. Damn it, I kept on and pushed ahead. And when I came home in the evenings, I'd look for a pleasant chat as a needed recreation. And then my intellect would be weighed and found wanting. I know I am not a shining light in literature. But there are other matters for conversation. I know, I am not a 'causeur.' But is it necessary to constantly give forth pearls? I should think that a few kind, sweet words are not worthless, either. Joseph, until then I had been a proud man, and—when in my factory—not without cause. This pride was necessary in my work, just as necessary as pleasure and recreation after hours. You know the English saying, 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' But I was taught differently now. My pride was a manufacturer's uppishness, the merriment a thick application of grease-paint to cover up the mental deficiency. I learned that I lacked not only the easy grace of proper expression, but also depth of thought; I learned that I—my knowledge of my steelworks was not worth consideration—that I was a mental plebeian. And my friends, swearing by the beautiful eyes of my better half, learned it, too—learned to believe it——”

Otten looked at the table. Now he raised his head. “She is very beautiful, your wife—— A peculiar style of beauty. And intellectual—quite spirited. And she knows all that.”

“Of my mentality I have already spoken. And my personality——? I know, I am a fat, full-blooded

fellow. But she saw that before we were married. Now I was inelegant, lacked manners. Every pet habit of mine was passed in critical review and ridiculed, until I felt positively miserable. Other ambitions could not be awakened. I was declared too stubborn for that, too. Friends surrounded my wife, insisting that her whims were heavenly, so as not to appear dunces themselves. I became the porter. A nice job that. But I am sick of it. Thank God that you have come."

"I have listened to you in silence," Otten said after a pause, "and I can well conceive, that even the strongest and most conservative may be grasped by a mood in which he discloses things which one usually keeps secret. At present you and your wife are warring. You are angry, and you see things blacker than they are. You exaggerate quite naturally. And, perhaps, in a very short while you will wish unspoken what you have said to-day. That is a subtle, uncomfortable feeling, but that will be all, for I will have forgotten it all. At the bottom of your heart you are proud of your wife, and you love her beyond measure."

The manufacturer pushed the glass aside, and laid his hand upon the hand of his friend.

"I consider it as a matter of course that what is spoken here remains between us two. It is the first time that I have laid aside entirely the mask of the light-hearted husband and master of the house. And I will resume it when we leave this place. But I want one person for myself. A human being to whom I can go and anchor once in a while, so that I will not grow ridiculous to myself. And now look at me coolly. I am in absolutely normal condition mentally. And now

I will tell you my relation to my wife in three words, that need no elaboration: I—hate—her.”

“Lüttgen!” exclaimed Otten, shocked by this cold-blooded speech.

“I hate her. That is the remnant to which my self-respect clings.”

A minute passed. The silence became oppressive.

“We have grown damned serious, Lüttgen,” Otten finally said.

“Pardon me. That was not my intention at all. And I hope that now things will grow more pleasant in my house. I count on you.”

“You surely don’t think that I would become a visitor in your house? Only a while ago you were glad I had declined.”

“I was, and I am, my dear Joseph. It will teach her that people must come to you. She is not used to that. And when you come at another time, and then again and again, we two will walk through the salon arm in arm, and her vanity will grow less.”

“My dear Lüttgen, that is no part for me. I must pay my respects to the lady of the house which I enter.”

“You may. You may even pay her court. You may even become her friend, for she has qualities which would make that possible. I am not blind. Only, she must know that, in the first place, you are my friend.”

“And from that you hope so much?”

“Not for the time being, but for my old age.”

Otten almost gasped and thought: “And a person can grow to be so resigned that he only hopes for rest in the years to come!”

“What do you say?” Lüttgen asked, pulling out his watch. “Let’s go over to the Domhotel. We need a

change of surroundings, if we are to get into a different mood. The air here is now pregnant with mournful music. Away with it!"

"Yes, let's go."

When they were walking in the street, Otten with springy stride, the manufacturer heavily and clumsily, Lüttgen pushed his arm through that of his friend. "Alongside of you, I recognize myself to be an old man. Yes—days that are gone, not to return."

"Don't drink such heavy brands," Otten replied. "They make one sentimental."

The next day was a Sunday. Otten had come to breakfast with a dull headache, and soon after had gone for a long walk to freshen up. Thoughts were whirling in his brain. He wished to adjust them.

The morning advanced. Carmen had gone to eleven o'clock Mass in the Cathedral, and Frau Maria sat idling in her easy-chair. It was her hour of repose. She loved the bright Sunday mornings, that seem brighter than the mornings of other days. She gathered quite a fund of brightness from them for the week-days to come.

Downstairs the bell tinkled. Old Klaus, who had also been taking his siesta, opened the front door. Light steps came up the stairs, and now the bell in the upper hall rang. Frau Maria arose to see.

"Herr Doktor at home?"

"My husband has gone out. I am Frau Otten. Won't you step in?"

"Thank you."

When she had entered, Frau Maria pointed to a chair. "Do you wish to leave a message for my husband, madam?"

“I am Frau Lüttgen. You probably know the name as that of a friend of your husband’s.”

“I heard it yesterday. The gentlemen had an appointment.”

“That’s right. I, too, heard of you but yesterday. Else, I surely would not have made the mistake of not inviting you, too, to our little fête.”

“I did not even know that my husband had accepted an invitation. But I go out so little, that it really requires no excuse on your part.”

“Accepted the invitation? No, you err. He has declined it rather curtly. And hence you see me here in person. I had planned such a pretty surprise. I intended to appear with Herr Doktor Otten as a wandering singer, he as harper, and I as Mignon. It is a small costume affair, and now your angry husband spoils my nice scheme.”

“No,” said Frau Maria, “how should my husband be angry with you. He returned scarcely a week ago from a tour of several years, and probably feels a little tired still.”

“Of tiredness I noticed nothing the first evening. You speak as the anxious ‘Hausfrau.’”

“Has he been at your house already?” Frau Maria asked pleasantly.

“On the evening of his arrival. And he said nothing about it? That is a man for you.”

“I am not inquisitive,” Frau Maria said smilingly.

Frau Amely Lüttgen started. Her clever gray eyes fastened upon the quiet features of the woman who could appear so calm.

“I cannot understand that,” she said. “Or else—

we should be allowed to demand the same virtue of the man."

"Not to be inquisitive? We should not gain anything by that."

"Nothing——?"

"At most, one might arouse the husband's jealousy for nothing. Is that what you mean?" Frau Maria laughed.

"It would not always be 'for nothing.'"

"You jest, madam."

"Listen. This theme is very interesting to me. But you are much more so."

"In order that you may not be disappointed, I suggest that we stick to the theme."

"Seriously, Frau Otten, you surely do not demand that we women shall be human beings of second class?"

"On the contrary. Human beings of the first class. So that the husband always retains a standard."

"The husband! Always the husband! Is his person really so valuable that it must be treated with such tender consideration?"

"As the father of our child. I should think so."

"Of the child!"

"You see, our ambition stops at the mere word. At the bottom it is a very simple problem, if we only have the will to solve it."

The equanimity of the woman tempted the visitor not to drop the subject yet. "You say the child. In that, I agree with you. That is sacred. But for that very reason we ought to be accorded freedom in the selection of its father."

"I don't believe," Frau Maria answered, "that the child is sacred by reason of its birth. But I do believe

that the mother can sanctify it through her example. So far as that suffices. The rearing develops the being."

"Then it must appear to you incomprehensible that a woman unites with a man—how shall I say—without formality?"

A fine blush came over Frau Maria's forehead, growing deeper and deeper.

"Why should that seem incomprehensible to me? But one would have to love that man sufficiently to— to marry him, too, at any moment."

"Would that suffice?" Frau Amely asked sarcastically.

"I said 'too.' That means, one must know that there is a union—one way or the other. One must feel that one has been driven to one's act by the force of a strong wonderful longing, and not by lack of resistance against one's self or the other, nor by cool calculation and reasoning. Our children need blood. And blood comes from the heart."

"Even a heart like that may bleed to death."

"Bleed to death, yes. But such blood will never weaken and turn to water, by being diverted into many channels. The other way, ours would become a miserable race eventually."

"And of yourself, of your own rights you don't think at all?"

"Pardon me," Frau Maria said, rising. The doorbell had sounded below. Carmen returned merrily from Mass.

"My daughter Carmen," Frau Maria presented her. And Carmen courtesied and gave the lady her hand.

“What an intelligent little head,” the visitor said admiringly. “I’ll have to come with my carriage and take you for a drive some time.”

“Yes?—Please.”

“Child, watch for father. He’ll probably return by the street along the Rhine.”

Carmen stormed away.

“And such a sparkling being is to be suppressed and conventionalized, only because that is the accepted way?”

“You think me farther behind than I really am, madam. I am an absolute believer in the new era that demands of us women a renewal and further educational development in all the sciences, of course, according to one’s talents. When Carmen has finished her present school studies, and if her gifts warrant, she will take the recently arranged preparatory course. We are not standing still, madam.”

“And study the new ethics?”

Frau Maria smiled. “How persistently you stick to that!—To the word ‘new.’ In spite of all, it remains the same old question of what we consider good and beautiful, and of what others deem so. That will never be changed. Only, heretofore, people did not make much fuss about it, when one considered one’s own views especially beautiful. That may be poetry. But when you carry poetry to the market-place, it naturally becomes loud and vulgar noise. Therefore one should not announce the new ethics so noisily.”

Frau Amely drew up her brows. “Let that be as it may. Success will decide the question. But, at any rate,” and she rose quickly, “we have at least not talked about the servant problem, and bargain-sales.

At a first call! So we are really more fit for evolution than the men, who have not yet gotten beyond the discussion of the wine prices."

"The poor men," Frau Maria laughed amusedly.

"Really, they are poor devils. And they ought to know it."

"Except my husband."

"You really make me anxious to know him better. He must carry virtues like medals upon his chest."

"Don't you know the vigorous maxim of the English, madam? Right or wrong, my country! That is the way I think of my husband!"

"I had almost forgotten the purpose of my call. Will you help me to make him change his mind? And will you, also, accord me the pleasure?"

"It is very kind of you to think of me. But, really, I cannot well leave my child in the evening. We live in such a retired fashion that Carmen depends entirely upon me during the evening."

"Then send your husband alone. Tell him that I count upon him not to spoil my idea of the Harper and Mignon. As Mignon, I would make myself as charming as possible. Only for his sake. Perhaps that might help."

"It would at least be the strongest inducement."

"Adieu, madam. I have had a delightful hour with you."

"Adieu, madam."

"You will hear from me frequently hereafter. That is what you get for it."

"I shall gladly become accustomed to it."

Frau Amely walked down the street, and at the shore

of the Rhine she turned, to walk along the river. Frau Maria looked after her from the window.

“That is not mere elegance of dress,” she said. “That is inherited culture.” And she admired the fine lines of the figure and the manner of walking. “Physical culture. And her mind is dependent on that. There is the secret.”

She slowly turned about to go to the kitchen. It was time to look after the serving of the noonday meal. She glanced at the mirror.

“You belong to Joseph Otten, and to no one else,” and she nodded at the tall, stately figure the mirror reflected. “That is better than freedom. To no one else——”

Half an hour later Otten returned. Carmen hung on his arm. The walk had refreshed him. He was bright and ready of speech.

“You have had a visitor, Maria? Carmen told me of a lady from whose shoulders ever so many furry tails were dangling. The girlie wants a fur like that at any cost.”

“Did you not meet her?”

“What, did she come looking for me?”

“She walked from here, along the shore of the Rhine. If that was meant for the Rhine?”

“Clever one, are you trying to make me vain? Who was it, anyway?”

“Do you know a certain Mignon?”

“Only the one of whom one never really knows whether it is a boy or a girl.”

“And you know the Harper, too?”

“The Harper, too.”

“What are his relations to Mignon?”

“That probably is hidden behind a veil even to himself. Is he her father, her business manager, or her lover?”

“Would that not be a suitable rôle for you?”

“Listen here,” said Otten, and caught her by the chin. “Even if a few gray hairs are showing on my head, I beg you very much not to dispose of me as a mysterious old man with rattling bones as yet. Or shall I teach you respect?”

“Then only Mignon remains,” she laughed under his grasp.

“A being of whose womanhood I am not even convinced. O Maria, have I lived with you for nothing.”

She closed his mouth with her hand.

“The wife of your friend Lüttgen was here.”

He looked at her in surprise. “Frau Amely——? Here?”

“On account of her costume-fête.”

“But I had declined her invitation in no uncertain way,” he grumbled, letting go her chin.

“She insisted that you destroyed her plans. She needed you as a partner.”

“I am interested to know what for?”

“As harper. And she would, for your sake, become a most charming Mignon.”

Otten walked to the window and drummed on the panes. “A very good idea,” he finally said. “Too bad that that part is not in my repertoire.”

“Won’t you go, Joseph?”

“To make myself ridiculous? The whole thing is satire.” He came back, placed his arm about Frau Maria, and walked with her through the room. “Let’s talk of something else. That matter is disposed of.”

In the meanwhile Carmen had set the table. Frau Maria served the meal herself. A merry atmosphere prevailed in the room. In the midst of the conversation he asked, "At any rate, how did she impress you?"

Frau Maria looked at him smilingly. "The wife of your friend? What was it you called her? Frau Amely? Well, Joseph, I think just as she impressed you. Very fetching, but—a person cannot size her up exactly."

"Yes, yes, yes. One does not know exactly, boy or girl."

In the afternoon there was some music. Otten sang a few ballads and some folksongs, and he allowed his art to lead him on further. "Now I will recite a few verses. Now see if I have spoiled in a single instance the spirit of the poetry for the sake of musical phraseology. One does not sing mere tunes, one sings a song of words and meaning!" And he recited the verses in a manner that showed their innermost feeling. Frau Maria sat as if in a trance.

"Has she really any spirit?"

"Who, Joseph?"

"Oh, I just thought of it. You had quite a conversation. But let's leave her in peace."

The evening passed like a gorgeous sunset. And when night came, it permeated the room where these three beings sat together like a blessed verse of a beautiful song, dying out away in the distance. . . .

"Good-night, Carmen. Good-night, daughter dear."

Then Joseph Otten and Maria went to rest, too.

"Say—Maria!"

"Joseph?"

“At any rate, she is not one of the common herd. There is something of the sphinx about her. Alluring and cruel. Poor victims——”

“Big boy,” Frau Maria laughed softly. . . . Within her soul and about her it was still Sunday.

CHAPTER X

ROSE MONDAY— Harlequins, to your work of joy and merriment! The liberty of masquerade! A whole city in ecstasy.

In the crowded streets and alleys of the old city hilarity was let loose. Folly reigned supreme and trampled sober sense to the dust. It spoke its own language, sang and shrieked without regard for the ear-drums of those about; it made its own music, trying to do justice to the joy of Cologne with rattles, whistles of fearful sound, with mouth-organs, and other implements of musical torture; it sang its own songs, wore its own particular garb, and wherever beauty was wanting, enthusiasm made up for it.

Rose Monday. . . .

The Hohestrasse was the vortex of this human whirlpool. Whoever looked out of the windows, saw a turbulent sea of blue, red, yellow, and green, whose waves were now flowing this way, now that. Dominos, peasants in blue blouses, Princes of Hades, witches and ballet girls, clowns, harlequins, and fairies, alleged Englishmen in checked suits of the loudest patterns, tramps, masks of great politicians, and other famous men, men and women in fanciful costumes were in the merry throng. Where two people with anything in the nature of musical instruments met, they formed a band, and gave awful concerts for the benefit of the others, that were fearful to hear, but irresistibly funny. There

were many chases after shy beauties, and once in a while a scream would prove that a kiss had been snatched.

A bunch of checkered fools stormed into the crowd and dealt blows with their very deadly weapons—inflated bladders—and cracked their whips over the heads of the crowd. “The parade! The parade! Make room for the parade! Oh, you tempting girl, I’ll eat you alive!”

Then the carnival parade appeared. In the lead, according to old custom, farmers and maidens of Cologne; the spark company next, a caricature of the city soldiery of bygone days; and then float after float, reviewing the year’s events in humorous pictures. The City Council came in for its share of criticism and recognition; weighty questions were solved in true jester’s fashion; and each stunt tried to outdo the one preceding. Printed copies of songs were thrown among the crowd, and one band after the other passed, enlivening the parade with suitable music. Costumed horsemen tickled beauties in the crowd with long peacock feathers, “Go on, ye villains!”—“What’s the matter, sweet, why so angry? Surely a peacock’s eye never grows blind to beauty!” Then came Prince Carnival himself, the Prince of Folly, with his lady, in gorgeous robes, both high above the crowd, reclining in their gilded chariot, and calling out the gracious proclamation of cheer: “To all my fellow fools! Alaaf Kölle! Cologne, make merry!”

Joseph Otten had dined in a restaurant in the Hohestrasse. With him at the table, which had been moved close to one of the windows, overlooking the gay street scene, sat Carmen and Moritz Lachner. Frau Maria had remained at home. “I get more pleasure out of

it," she had said, "if I let you tell me about it later. Then I will be the audience, and you will have the pleasure twice."

With amused glances Otten watched his daughter. She carried her slender figure like a lady, and tried to act as if she were in the habit of dining daily in the very best of restaurants, enjoying the fun of the people in the street just the same as if she were in Nice or Rome. "She outruns her years in mind and in growth," Otten thought. "A person might think she were sixteen, and she is fully aware of it." In contrast to the self-possessed little girl, Moritz Lachner always remained so conscious of his awkwardness and lack of polish, that he only dared at times to look hastily about. Then Carmen would ask in astonishment: "Do you wish anything, Moritz? Don't you like it?"—"No, no,—Oh, yes!"

When the masquerade approached, Otten lifted the girl upon the table with a graceful swing, and then placed his arm about her waist. And she placed her hand caressingly on his head, thinking: "Now the people will believe that he is my fiancé." This fancy made her proud, and gave to her fine features an expression of condescension. Moritz Lachner never took his eyes from her. Rose Monday had no secrets to reveal to him.

"Oh, father, look there!"

"The handsome color-bearer of the mediæval warriors?"

"Oh, that is our beer dealer. No, that red devil there, who is walking as if on air. Do you see him? Don't you recognize him? Now he has discovered us. Hurrah!" And she waved her hand.

"That is Laurenz Terbroich," said Moritz Lachner.

"I don't like him very much, Carmen," Otten remarked. "His devil is affected, and so is he."

"Oh, well, father, but it is carnival time now. Allow him to join us."

"Well, my child, if I am to see your friend only on carnival days, I'll be content. He is loose and impertinent. To-day he may have the liberty the masquerade accords. The devil's greeting, Herr Terbroich."

"The devil, Herr Doktor!" The red silken Mephisto had crossed the restaurant with grotesque bounds, and seemed intent on grasping the laughing girl. "Is that all you wish?" said Otten, catching and stopping the devil.

"My grandmother sends her regards, Herr Doktor. She requests you to pay her a call some day."

"I will send you to her to announce me, if you do not behave. Now sit down. Here is a glass of champagne. Now we will sing and be merry, until the crowd out there has dispersed." He lifted the girl from the table. The waves of the merry throng overflowed into the restaurant.

"Carmen——" Laurenz Terbroich whispered. He sat beside her, and caught her hand, that was swinging idly.

"Well?"

"Get your father to take you to the Gürzenich Ball to-night."

"I am not allowed yet. Surely not."

"Oh, ask him. Half of the dancing-school will be there."

"Father," Carmen coaxed, "where are we going from here?"

“Home, Miss Gad-about.”

“Are you going to stay home, too? Tell me. Or are you going to the Gürzenich? Oh, do tell me.”

“I suppose you would like to go there, too? Child, it is out of the question.”

“If I wear a domino, I’ll look like a full-grown person. Say—then you and I will be the handsomest couple. No, really. And you know it yourself, too. Oh, father, do me the favor. It would please me so much. I have never asked you for such a favor before.”

He patted her heated cheek. “Well, well, well! I would not mind, but mother will not permit it.”

“Oh, if you’ll only tell her in the right way. Laurenz is going, too.”

“Am I to consider that as an inducement?”

“Moritz, too,” she said quickly, and her look flashed a command to the graduate.

“What? Moritz, too? You intend to go to the Gürzenich ball, Moritz?”

Moritz sat there with burning face. He felt the surprised look of Otten. But he also felt the request in the glance of the girl. “Yes, Herr Doktor,” he said. “I intended to go. And I should not leave Carmen out of my sight there.”

Laurenz Terbroich looked unsteadily into his glass. Otten looked slowly from one to the other. “This looks to me like a conspiracy. But if the thing is considered so important that even Moritz lies——”

“Herr Doktor, I am really going to the Gürzenich ball. And I can easily get dominos for all of us from my father’s shop. It will give him pleasure.”

“You need carry your explanation no further. Why,

you are a hopeless lot. Am I to go to the Gürzenich as a kindergartener?"

"Father, be nice! You shall pay us no attention at all."

"Just the other way, my hearty. I should want to notice you very much."

"Surely, I'll behave like a real lady."

"You probably imagine yourself one already, baby?"

"Just look at me," she said with a display of vanity, and hugged him amidst the noise of the place. Then he relented.

"Now, finish your drinks, gentlemen. We'll make a beeline for the Rheingasse. The red silk devil will clear the way for us, and Moritz and I, with Carmen between us, will stick to his heels. Here, waiter! The bill—— So, that is disposed of. And now, forward, march!"

"Alaaf Kölle!" the red devil yelled, jumping out of the restaurant into the throng, breaking a path. Otten and Lachner pushed after him. The girl hung between them. They reached a side street, and entered it. Here they found breathing-room, and, without interference, they reached the Rheingasse within ten minutes. Moritz Lachner left them. "I'll be back in half an hour with the dominos." Carmen turned about on the stairs and waved her hand after him.

"Maria," Otten said to his wife, when he was upstairs, "I have made a foolish promise."

"You know it is carnival time, Joseph."

"I thought of that, too. Then one eye must be closed. But now, I suppose, I have to tell you about it."

“You want to attend the Gürzenich ball. Have I guessed it?”

“Half of it. And the other half is this: I have promised the young folks to take them along.”

“No, Joseph, that won’t do. Carmen was fourteen only the other day. And then, Laurenz. He impresses her too much as it is through his father’s money.”

“We will have Moritz Lachner along, to balance the scales. And then: Won’t I be there with them?”

“As far as the entrance.” She closed his mouth with her hand. “Are you ready to make more rash promises? As soon as Moritz comes, I will talk with him. He shall look after all of you.”

“In other words: You consent. Oh, Maria, you encourage your husband’s frivolity. But, really, I could not help myself. Carmen gave me too nice a hug.”

“Let’s hope she’ll be the only girl who will hug you to-night,” she joked.

“With my hair getting gray?”

“Your hair is always growing gray, when it suits you. And I fear—only with me!”

“Carmen!” Otten called through the door. “Mother has given her consent! Come, give her a kiss, for now she is saying carnivalistic things. Oh, children,” and he folded Maria and Carmen into one embrace, “it is a merry world, after all! And here comes Moritz.”

Moritz Lachner came up the stairs. He carried a black bundle on his arm like a tailor. Carmen pulled him into the room and began hurriedly to undo the package. Two black dominos and a fine red silk one fell out. “That is for me,” Carmen called out hap-

pily. "That you should have thought of the color, Moritz."

"The red will look well with your black hair, Carmen."

"No, now we have costumes to match, Laurenz and I. That is fine."

Moritz Lachner had not thought of that. Silently he helped her to get into the elegant covering, that reached down to her feet, and made her appear tall and slender. And silently he fastened the silk mask before her eyes. She stood in front of the mirror and looked in astonishment at herself. A deep breath made the silk tremble over her bosom.

Frau Maria called Moritz to her with a motion of her hand. "Moritz, I will confide her to you. I will not spoil the child's fun. But I permit her to go only because you are going along." She gave him her hand.

"I will not let myself be forced from her side, Frau Doktor." He raised his head. In the presence of this lady he felt free and at ease. And she nodded to him like a kind mother.

Carmen had slipped into the adjoining room to her friend Laurenz. With her hands behind her, she stood there, balancing herself upon tiptoes.

"Donnerwetter, Carmen——"

"How do you like me this way?"

"I just told you."

"You said: Donnerwetter. That means nothing at all."

"I'd like to give you a kiss, Carmen——"

"If you promise never to kiss another——"

"Carmen, I swear it to you!"

"Later——!"

Frau Maria called them into the dining-room. "First, you all take a bite. And a good big one, for afterwards I cannot watch you. And with it you will drink a glass of Cologne beer. Klaus has brought a fresh pitcherful from across the street. You will still reach the Gürzenich ball much too early."

Moritz Lachner remained standing behind his chair. "Pardon me," he stammered. And then he took the glass of beer, and said quietly, without hesitation: "I would like to drink to the health of the lady who always thinks only of us, who wishes nothing but our good—to the health of the lady of this house, the ideal for all of us. Frau Doktor Otten—she shall live—hoch, hoch, hoch!"

Joseph Otten arose, clinked glasses with him, caught him by his vest. Their shining eyes met. Then he released him.

"Mother," Carmen called out, "Moritz is in love with you."

"He is in love with everything that bears the name of 'Otten,'" young Terbroich said. "It has always been that way. My, what a heart!"

Moritz Lachner sat down. He looked smilingly at his plate.

When Joseph Otten and his little troop entered the festive hall, he pulled the hood of his domino farther over his eyes. A thrill ran through his veins, a feeling of unbounded joy, at being permitted to be young once more, a willful desire to make the most of this opportunity. The music of the violins sounded in his ears, making his very thoughts dance. Graceful figures of women flitted about. Provocative glances flashed from behind masks met other glances, and quickened the re-

sponsive blood. The joyous clinking of wine-glasses came like the sound of tiny silver bells from the tables in the background. Otten thought of giving a few instructions to the youngsters, when something flitted past him like a red flame, a red devil and a red domino amidst waltz music, laughter, and the babel of voices.

“Twelve o’clock sharp, at this entrance, Moritz. If we miss one another, straight home!”

The black domino at his side silently slipped away.

“This music is intoxicating,” Otten thought. “These colors, these graceful motions, and this quivering life all about.”

A troop of girls surrounded him. Tyroleans, gypsies, schoolgirls in short skirts and long stockings, with slate, slate-pencil boxes, and sponges at their sides. They sang an old song, that he had often sung in childhood days, danced about him, and he was transported back to his schooldays. The years between no longer existed for him. He played like a happy child with the crowd. At the end of the song, a schoolgirl was pushed into his arms, and the crowd dispersed. For a moment he held the young girl tightly, and then, with a wide sweep, he waltzed with his captive into the crowd of dancers.

“For a domino, your voice is quite developed,” she joked.

“And you are quite tall for a schoolgirl.”

“I only look that way,” she tittered.

“But I can feel it, too,” Otten replied, drawing her closer. She rested her head against his shoulder, while they danced and hummed the tune of the waltz. . . .

“Halt, mask!”

He released his dancing-partner and turned to the

one who had hailed him. "Ah! My respects, beautiful duchess."

"Do you know me?"

"I know you, for you are in every woman. You are Eve, and to-day it pleases you to dance as the Duchess von Berg."

"And if it should please me to dance with you?"

"Duchesses are usually rather forgetful afterwards. But I, too, have royal blood. Remember that."

"Will you?"

"The hour wills it."

He placed his arm about her waist, that appeared even more slender, as the skirt puffed above the hips was caught beneath his arm.

"You have an iron grasp," she said, bending backward while she danced. "With what sort of creatures have you danced in life?"

"With girls who love men," he sang into her ear.

"Men? Where are they? I am anxious to know a man."

"Marry, beautiful duchess."

"I did. And I became more anxious than ever."

"Poor duke!"

"Do you think him poorer than I?"

"Him! Whom else, but him! For he has a white wife with red blood, and knows it not."

The violins shrieked joyously, and the crowd shrieked with them. The intoxication of joy was in the very air. It filled hearts and heads.

"You men are egotists. Because you feel the same deficiency is in all of you, you unite against us. You talk so much and so loudly of love to make us believe that you understand it. And you don't."

“Teach me better, and you have your first pupil.”

“With frivolity you will not reach the basis of things. When you attack, we surrender. But when we command, we give. Do you feel the difference?”

“No, gracious lady. For, when you surrender, the second part devolves upon the real knight of the joust. Through his own nobility to change the captive into a willing giver. To coax modest, sprouting springtime from the winter’s grasp; to change spring into summery heat, and summer to the ripening of fall. Only development makes us happy and keeps us full of life worth living. A gift. It is old to-morrow.”

They promenaded between rows of couples, brought together by chance, design, or merry intrigue.

“Be honest, domino. You say it yourself. Change makes happy. The search and the progress. And you are satisfied with the surface. But we.”

“You drink the blood.”

“We drink the blood——”

They took seats at a small table, and Otten filled two champagne glasses. She looked at his hand. “Have I frightened you?”

“You carry strange thoughts about in that pretty little head of yours. Let me look into your heart. I only see the white skin on the surface.”

“That expresses more than the confession of faith we carry about in our mouths. Among people of spirit. But, where are we?”

“The one drinks to the health of the other, even though it is not blood.”

She raised her glass and drank beneath the silken mask. “No blood—— The word has frightened

you at any rate, or made you start at least. Why, pray, if we both confess to belong to the same breed? If I love this glass of wine, I drink it to the dregs. And if I love a human being, should I only sip at the surface? To keep a glass of wine, for to-morrow and for the day after? So that the wine may grow sour, or that some other fellow may drink it in my stead? Don't let us lie to one another with pretty words. People like us do not love every Tom, Dick, or Harry. They love in others something they do not possess themselves, something they wish for. And when we give, we know that we exchange, and that we are gainers by the exchange. The blood of the other strengthens us, it is his best and innermost. In that sense we drink blood—when we love.”

“And when the one is drained dry?”

“Then it is the end. No finer death in the world.”

Otten bent forward. Out of the eye-holes of the mask a flashing glance met his.

Again the violins shrieked joyously, and Otten sarcastically said to the silk mask:

“That may be a pretty play, daring lady, but it is not love.”

“Not the love of a schoolgirl of twenty, with fluttering skirts. Was your former dancer worth an examination? Or the love of the time when grandfather and grandmother met? No, our love.”

Otten emptied his glass to the last drop. “Let us not quarrel about the word. If you claim it for yourself, it shall be called love. But your accounting of love contains an error.”

“Which is?”

"They both might remain dead on the field. He and she. Finis Poloniæ."

"Oh," she laughed. "I know myself."

"But you don't know man. Not yet. That was our starting-point!"

"And you, proud domino, always speak of him only, but do not reveal him. That is the way of men, and with you—pardon me—complicated by the singer."

"You—know—me?"

"It seems to me," said the Duchess, leaning back in her chair, "that I know the secret better than you yourself. Shall I disclose it to you? If you had been born as a woman, you would be I. But, since you were born a man——"

Otten, too, had leaned back far in his chair. "I have not forgotten the word of Goethe: Women are dishes of silver, into which we lay apples of gold. Leave me that belief, charming unknown. You gain by it."

She raised her head, as if she were listening. Then she arose languidly. "I find that saying full of sense. But, this is carnival, and I would like to enjoy the nonsense of life. Let us go."

"Is the unknown duchess of women angry with me?"

"She is not angry. Only she finds things tedious."

"That is a death warrant. And as I must die in your eyes at any rate, I should like to enjoy the hour."

"Women have no logic, and men have less. Therefore do not kiss me. You'll gain by it."

"Ah—do you turn the weapons about? One can also kiss to injure."

She placed her hand on his with a firm "Attention. The duke is coming. We'll continue talking."

A clumsy domino pushed his way through the crowd. Now he had reached the table. In high spirits he slapped Otten heartily on the shoulder. "Jupp, Jupp! How ill you look!"

"Does everybody know me here, in spite of the mask?"

"In the first place, your figure. And, secondly, that my wife has captured you and held you prisoner. Oh—Donnerwetter—I should not have blurted out secrets? Well, it is done. Had a good time?"

"Frau Amely Lüttgen——" Otten said slowly, bowed, and kissed her hand.

"I am engaged in admonishing your friend to be a bit more polite to women."

"Does he not permit you to twist him about your finger? That is very wrong of him. Perhaps you'll succeed with other means."

For a moment she lifted the silken mask. The eyes glowed in her pale face. "To see these angry eyes grow soft——" Otten thought, and could not take his looks away from the nervous little face. . . .

"Now the charm of the intrigue is gone," she said and fanned herself. "And it is too late for new adventures. In a quarter of an hour the unmasking begins. And I would not care to be here then. Let us drive home."

"Us——?" Otten repeated.

"If you consider yourself to belong to our community." The sentence had a hidden meaning, and she knew that he understood it.

"Otten drives along," the manufacturer decided. "Joseph, my friend, do it for my sake. A bottle of Rauenthaler and a good men's talk at home."

“And I?” Frau Amely asked, lowering her mask.

“A men’s talk,” Otten replied, “can be a good one only when a woman leads it.”

When they sat in the carriage, Otten clapped his hand to his forehead.

“What is the trouble, Herr Doktor? Forgotten a rendezvous? That pretty schoolgirl? The maturing of spring to summer heat? Goodness, we’re not envious. We’ll drive you back.”

“I have left my daughter at the ball.”

“Do you suddenly wish to play the old man? The so-called father? Fear nothing. We drink Rauenthaler and carry on a good men’s talk. Everything properly tempered.”

“Duchess, your ridicule could make men out of youths, and out of men——”

“Well?”

“The man.”

Had he been mistaken? It had seemed to him as if her cool fingers had touched his hand in passing quite accidentally. He felt it by the sudden stopping of his heartbeat. No—it had been a mistake. She looked out of the window of the rapidly moving vehicle, lost in thought. Hence he must have been mistaken. But the thought that it could have been remained, and he felt that his hot heart still beat irregularly. Foolishness! This woman! “I hate her,” her husband had said. And he? He did not hate her. Neither did he love her. But she was unusual. She interested him—as a challenge to his strength.

“Young Lachner will bring Carmen home in proper time,” he reassured himself. “Perhaps they are already at home and are joking with Frau Maria about

the runaway father.”—Maria—Carmen—father—the words flashed through his thoughts and were lost. “She has touched my hand at any rate——”

“At what time shall the driver await you, Herr Doktor?” Frau Amely asked, as the carriage stopped. “You see how soberly the hour of midnight has passed.”

“At one, gracious lady. Then the hour of spooks and spirits is at an end.”

“For to-day. Or for those whose spirit suffices for only an hour. Step in, gentlemen. The driver has his orders, Herr Doktor.”

In the hall the gentlemen removed their dominos. When they entered the salon, they heard the sound of music come from the adjoining room. Frau Amely, still in the costume of the Bergish duchess, the auburn curls falling upon her bare neck, sat in the music-room at the concert-grand and played a wild, masterful fantasy, through which, at times, the sounds of violins and flutes seemed to come. Too unholy for wedding-march, and for ordinary dancing too wild and capricious.—True carnival music.

“Come,” said Lüttgen, pulling his friend by the sleeve; “we have heard nothing. That may last a long while. We’ll start on a pilgrimage toward Rauenthal.” The spirit of wine swayed his mood.

Mechanically Otten removed the other’s hand. He stepped over to the piano. “What am I playing?” Her eyes asked the question. And he answered aloud: “With that only one poem could be recited, and you have thought of that.” She nodded, but kept on, looking at him, and continued playing. And he continued: “The Duchess of Berg is in good spirits, when she

grants an audience to memories—or does it mean more?” She looked at him, played, and smiled.

“This is getting to be too mystic for me,” said the master of the house. “I’ll bring the wine here, or it will remain untasted.” And he disappeared into his workroom. And, accompanied by the wild melody, Otten began to recite the ballad of the Schelm zu Bergen, and to live it while reciting.

They were alone, and yet the room was filled with figures gay and fanciful, engendered by the sound of his voice. Figures of mummery in the merry castle at Düsseldorf. And they were in the midst of the throng. A curl fell into her face. He stepped closer and stroked it back. His hand rested upon her cool smooth shoulder. And as he finished the ballad, the woman at the piano bent her head back until she could look up into his eyes, and repeated the last line of the poem: “The duchess laughed: I’ll not let you go, until I have seen your face.”

The mummery was at an end. The figures conjured forth fled away and vanished in the corners. They were alone again amidst reality.

“Let us stop now,” said Otten and stepped back. With bottles and glasses clinking, the master of the house returned through the adjoining room. Frau Amely closed the instrument and swung about on the piano-stool to face the gentlemen. “Is this the proper place?”

“If you desire, I’ll retreat quickly.”

“No,” she decided. “That would spoil the atmosphere and the mood. To-day everything is permitted. The duchess—is satisfied——”

“Let’s drink and talk, with never a sigh,” Lüttgen

replied, laughing, and filled the glasses. "You belong to us, Joseph. To me, I mean. Here's to you! To the spring at Godesberg. My country house shall see days of which it has never dreamt." He was getting sentimental and blurted forth assurances of friendship.

A carriage drove up outside. The coachman cracked his whip. "The hour is past," Otten said, arising. "Remain seated. I'll just take the domino over my arm. Good-night, Lüttgen."

"Don't forget Godesberg," the master of the house called after him. The lady escorted Otten into the hall. "Do you know why I ordered the carriage for you?"

"Surely not so I would not catch cold."

"Because I wished you to drive directly home from here."

"The reason?"

"You shall not come into contact with anyone else to-night. The atmosphere you take with you from my room shall linger about you. That is—my gift as hostess."

"Good-night, gracious madam."

He sat in the carriage and hummed the tune that was in his mind. From the Gürzenich, from Frau Amely's music-room. He stroked his mustache. What was that? Frau Amely?—Was her image so vivid in his mind that he could still perceive the fine perfume of her presence even here?—He smiled. The odor came from his hand. And his hand had rested upon her shoulder. . . .

"She knows all the tricks of the witches," he thought, and from time to time he stroked his mustache. . . .

At home he saw Carmen's red domino on a chair. "She is at home." Thoughtfully he looked at the domino. "How tall the girl has grown! A few more years and I——" He dropped the garment. "Well, I must not think. Only of to-day. And now I have the power to prolong that."

CHAPTER XI

THERE was silence between husband and wife. Ot-
ten sat at the table, opened his mail, and looked
through the letters. When he had laid away a letter,
he grasped it a second time. He had read the lines,
without retaining their meaning. Frau Maria looked
at him for a while. Then she went to him, and placed
her hand upon his arm. "Joseph."

He looked up. "Listen. Here my agent
writes——"

"You don't know yet yourself what, Joseph. I
have been watching you, and have seen that, while you
read, you were not at your task. Read later, when you
are quiet."

"When I am quiet?"

"Yes. Surely, I did not wish to criticise you. I
alone deserve reproach. As a mother, I should have
known that a fourteen-year-old daughter ought not to
be permitted to visit a masquerade ball alone."

"Alone?"

"One child alone, or two children together. It is
the same thing. I ought to have known my two chil-
dren, my big boy and my little girl, and that both of
them would play tricks and do stunts on their own
account."

"But Carmen did not do that. The situation is
much more simple than you think. Only, you must
get things properly focused. She remained an hour

beyond the permitted time. That shows that she is still child enough to thoroughly enjoy the fun of the mummery. And, then, Moritz Lachner was at her side, which must seem more important to you, than if I had held her hand in mine all evening long, inasmuch as you don't seem to consider me a very good guardian."

"That was an accident, Joseph. A happy, fortunate accident. For else, Carmen would in all probability not have returned home until morning. That is what worries me. She has your blood, and I don't regret that, for I love it in you. But I have the double duty of keeping this spirit within proper bounds. It makes a difference, whether a man or a woman does a certain thing. Modern equality movements have no connection with that. It is a matter of sex and of conditions. There are things a man may do with grace, that a woman may not, if she does not wish to lose her worth to herself and to others. And as yet I miss in Carmen the proper understanding of that."

"How seriously you say that. And, really, on account of a small matter."

"No, on account of a sign. You have not the eye for it, Joseph. And you could not have it, because you see your daughter only at times and in mutual Sunday mood. But I see her on weekdays as well. And from all my care in rearing her, I wish nothing as fervently as to preserve and create for her that happy Sunday mood for every day in the year. And that is only possible if I take care that Sundays and holidays do not leave a bitter after-taste behind. When she came home—do you think that she was more than happy over the unusual treat? She was angry. So angry that she cried, and instead of thanks, she was full of re-

proaches. Moritz, she said, had spoiled her entire evening. He had not brought the red domino because it had the same color as Laurenz's costume, but because it enabled him, Moritz, to always recognize her in the turmoil, and to remain near her. And Moritz had not permitted her to drink champagne at strange tables, like the others. And Moritz had started to quarrel when she wanted to go with all the other pupils of the dancing school to a café. And all that she said without realizing that Moritz had prevented her with proper tact from doing things she should not do. And I, the mother, who ought to have known all this in advance, had quietly remained at home. That is very humiliating for me."

"No," said Otten. "It is humiliating for me. I had taken the responsibility of watching over her. But I recognize more and more my inability to bring up human beings differently from myself. And to bring them up in my fashion would not be advantageous for beings that are not yet hardened, for they only imitate the superficial part. I realize it. Therefore I am, through love of myself, on the very best road to upset my girlie's thoughts, and, at best, to strengthen her in her stubbornness. Maria, in order that Carmen may some day cause less care to those who love her than I do to those who love me, I desist humbly from my attempt to aid in her bringing-up. I hope that my example has not yet caused too much harm."

"Are we two good friends again?" she asked.

"It seems more important to me, whether you are my good friend again."

"Your best friend, Joseph. Nothing will ever be able to alter that."

He drew her hand to his eyes. "Sit down with me. We'll read together, what the agent writes. Of course, he has the entire tour laid out. Everything cut and dried. London, Manchester, Glasgow. And for the 'butter-week' Russia—Moscow and St. Petersburg. A guaranteed amount for every city. That is good. Asks for an answer by telegram, in order to close the contract. First concert in London next week. So I'd be back early in May."

"I am glad of it, Joseph."

"That I am going away, or that I am coming back?"

"Glad of what it means for you."

"Yes—I must feel the movement of the air. I believe my lungs need twice as much oxygen as other lungs. Things must be astir. Or I would go to pieces in the most beautiful sunshine. Maria, is this exaggerated need of life really enviable?"

"Yes," she said, pressing his hand; "if those who have it are people who can do justice to it."

"Do justice to it?"

"Who do everything with the same spirit of joy. One must hear their merry laughter. I hear yours at all times."

He drew her to him. His head rested upon her breast. "Good mother——"

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Joseph Otten had gone. From England he sent jolly letters and postal-cards. "My agent, who is traveling with me, is so happy that he sings. As I sing better than he, I must be happier." And another time: "That we never grow sensible is undoubtedly a provision God made in His kindness, so that we should have

something left for our later years. Or, in order that we are not too disorderly at the beginning. Later on the toothache regulates the appetite. These English-women, Maria! When I was young and foolish, I thought them remnants of the glacial period. Now, since they are beginning to have confidence in my more matured and sedate personality—please not to read ‘art’—I perceive that ice may burn one’s tongue. May? Might! The toothache rebels against too much sweetness, and I am saved.”

Frau Maria read it and shook her head. “I don’t believe it. His teeth are his pride.”

From Moscow Otten wrote to Frau Amely:

“My dear madam! It is so bitterly cold here that the women wrap even their souls up in fur. That may suffice for the one standing outside to warm his hands. No more. Not to be opened! Or the moths will fly and you will smell camphor. That may be of no consequence in a city where they eat tallow candles like frankfurter sausages, but I was not born in that valley. I come from a country—be it Germany or elsewhere—where the flowers vie with each other in their fragrance. When you touch their blossoms, their scent remains. And there is one sort of rose there, neither La France, nor Dijon, nor tea-rose, nor American Beauty; only one specimen of the kind, christened by a connoisseur of flowers Duchess of Berg. What is her color? She has not shown it yet. No, no, certainly not. The color has not developed as yet, there being still too many thorns on her slender stem. Not for protection. Whoever seeks shelter behind a hedge of thorns does not receive the light of the passing day.

And yet, she has a fragrance that might some day be more than remembrance. Once I touched a leaf of a flower. That was like a cool, smooth shoulder. And the odor remained captive in my hand, and it beckons me from icy Moscow to the Spring on the Rhine, that will soon come over the Seven Mountains to adorn Godesberg. I hold the odor in my hand, and I no longer reach out with that hand, lest the fragrance be brushed off in the struggle of every-day existence. May the rose think likewise. Single specimens have the greatest responsibilities: to bless the people and to love the throne. That sounds like practical politics, but it is idealism. I ask you to share part of these greetings I send to my dear friend, the master of the house, and I shall welcome every warmed-over thought you may personally send to me in this desert of snow. Your devoted Joseph Otten."

At St. Petersburg he received the answer:

"Most honored Herr Doktor! I do not find your missive extraordinarily weighty. It is an old axiom, that people who are in a very cold place are longing for warmth, and that they wish for the roses of Spring-time, when Jack Frost has painted flowers upon the window-panes. Even if only for a specimen so much in need of development as the Duchess of Berg. In such cases people are not very particular. Aside from that: I have taken the liberty not to cut up the greetings into different parts, and to deliver some to another. Aside from the fact that I would be at somewhat of a loss concerning the address of the 'master of the house,' who is entirely unknown to me as such,

and will remain so, I have, as you know, a very strong dislike for halves and fractions. If you have greetings to send to Manufacturer Carl Lüttgen at Cologne on the Rhine, there probably can be obtained a postal-card for such purpose in the Empire of the Czar. I hope it will not rest too heavily upon your soul that I have appropriated all of those you have sent, for myself. There is one thing we agree in, viz., the thought of the arrival of Springtime on the Godesberg. Seek no riddles behind this sentence. For persons who bless the people and love the thrones, none exist. If you will accept that as a warmed-over thought, this sign of highly cultivated intelligence will fill with especial regard yours, no less among the barbarians, Amely L."

"Ah," Otten thought, smoothing the note; "that is a daring move. Without asking me, she stamps our correspondence as secret. Now it is a case of fleeing, or fighting. Neutral territory is not respected. Such scruple our methods of warfare have laid aside with old-time morals. They sound the signal, 'Advance!' without declaration of war and—hang it—I don't wish any war with that ferret."

He paced to and fro in his room in the hotel. "That poor devil Lüttgen," he thought. "Why in the world did that good, clumsy fellow have to find this mistress of the fencer's art, who is apparently made up of steel springs! God knows, I can understand him now. That is no love for life and for death. Instead of a heart, she demands nerves. And in his good old-fashioned way, Carl Lüttgen has a heart. And it was returned to him in damaged condition."

He took the letter again and read it a second time. He was laughing now. "She is plucky, this reincarnation of Eve. She knows what she wants, but her logic is faulty. A fellow may play from mere love of the game. Like a child, trying to grasp the rays of the sun. Every memory be blessed. But one does not play through calculation. Then play becomes a business, and there remains only a person, who swears because he has been cheated. And that is ugly. And yet beauty is to be the only consideration. One way or the other. Well—you are mistaken in your calculations, Frau Amely——"

In St. Petersburg Otten had to add two song recitals to his programme. He wrote about it to Maria. "The people of St. Petersburg are Frenchmen. They do not hide their feelings. When they applaud, they grow delirious. Neither does my agent hide his feelings. He has ceased to sing. He dances. And when an agent does not hesitate to dance, it is a sure sign that he has skinned his client. But I demanded an extra waltz for the two extra recitals. He suddenly grew shy, and said he was not so very sure on his feet. Then I grasped him about the waist, until it cracked, and—he could dance!—Now, I am asking myself: shall I go directly from the pleasant Neva to our gloomy Cologne, or shall I be careful and have some stop-overs at climatic way-stations? What does the solicitous mother of the house think about it? I submit blindly to her better judgment. And Carmen? I hope that your art of rearing has entirely dissipated the ill effects of her association with her big brother, which part I can't help playing. I love you two very much. When my heart speaks, the golden dream of every

wanderer in far regions, whose heart loves home more longingly than he who never walks far from the city's gate, then I see the silent, wonder-working picture of Maria Otten in the Rheingasse at Cologne. Ave Maria. . . . Your Joseph."

Frau Maria read. Her eyes were moist. From the wall opposite her, his picture looked at her. The picture of a man in cloak and soft felt-hat, looking into the world with laughing eyes. And, as she had done so often from love and in order to excuse him, she said again: "One cannot look at the picture without growing glad."

"My dear, big boy," she answered his letter, "I am happy over the good opinions you express. I am happy, and Carmen is proud. That is the little window through which you can look into our home. Should you see more, keep it to yourself. But let me put my arms about your neck. Oh, you restless heart! And the more restless it is, the more I must love it. Thus, with an indescribable, natural feeling, mothers love the children of their sorrow most. I only wish one thing: That all the world could know you and your doings as I know them and understand them. That probably is a very womanlike thought, and I ought really to be ashamed, to wish to measure you with the standards of the world in general, which never realizes that the densest shadows are caused by the brightest sunshine. But in the bottom of her heart every woman is—just you smile at me—a very vain being, who only desires to be envied.—Carmen is in good health and industrious. She is preparing for her studies in the gymnasium

classes. Her fancy already sees the doctor's cap. Just now, however, you occupy her mind even more, and she wants to hear me talk of you incessantly. I had intended to advise you anyway to stop at a climatic way-station—a good wife thinks of herself last——Old Klaus is preparing us carefully for his intended removal to Zons. He expects that to occur next fall, for he insists that his relative's time on earth will be up then. And a real householder, he says, has no business to be a burden to others, when there are other poorer devils deserving of promotion. We shall miss the honest old man very much. . . . Farewell, Joseph. Carmen kisses you. And I? I love you always. Remember that of your Maria."

"I love you always," Otten repeated. "With her, that is not a mere conventional phrase."

During the following days Otten gave the additional recitals he had granted. Returning from the last concert to the hotel, he found a telegram awaiting him. He weighed the paper for a while in his hand. "Where does Fate call me now?" He opened hesitatingly.

"The precursors of spring have arrived at Godesberg. Do you understand their language?"

No signature. And why? Freemasonry knows no names. How girlishly joyful was that dispatch! And—the words exhaled the warm balmy scents and odors of spring. He saw sprouting park-trees, girlish figures in light-colored garments, singing, jumping, calling, retreating—— Springtime, youth! And his heart was still with them. He felt this by its pulsation, and with

a strange smile Otten gazed dreamily into the distance. He felt the call of Spring and of Youth. And Spring and Youth call none but their own. His breath went like a sigh. And he said aloud, dwelling on each word:

“I am still so young——!”

The next morning he went. The dispatch was stamped Godesberg. Hence Frau Amely was there already. Was she there with her husband?

That thought was in his mind during the trip. Had the manufacturer remained in Cologne? If that was the case, he, Otten, could not remain at Godesberg. He was going to the joust, ride who may, to capture a wreath here or there, because Spring held her court. But he was not going to take part in some well-planned act of scoundrelism.

When, after a ride in the train of two days' duration, he arrived at the depot of Cologne, there to change cars to ride up along the Rhine, he was suddenly seized by a feeling of melancholy, that could not be shaken off, and that dispelled his joyous mood. Down there, through one of those narrow streets, Maria was walking and telling a spirited girl of a victorious hero, as of a real Sigurd, a killer of dragons. And at the same time—the hero was going out to meet adventures. He wanted to rise, to leave the train. And then only he became aware that the train was in motion. He breathed a sigh of relief when the houses disappeared. And when Bonn loomed up, bathed in golden sunshine, his heaviness of spirit had entirely disappeared. When the legendary tops of the Seven Mountains were to be seen, and the old castle ruin of the Godesberg, separated from them by the flowing Rhine, expectation

again buoyed up his soul. The same expectation that had always given new impulse and vigor to his life. His glances took in the rich landscape, and another, a great traveler, full of sunshine and power, came into his mind—Lord Byron, who had given to this district the name of the paradise.

Paradise——

What was it that another wanderer, rich in adventure, had said, of this very word? And the stanza of Seume ran through his mind: “Paradise and Hell on earth, thy name is woman.”

The train came to a stop. He sprang from the compartment. Godesberg.

At the depot he made inquiries about Lüttgen’s villa. It was situated in a very secluded spot in the midst of a great park. “The owners have moved in already,” the station-master informed him. The owners? That meant both. Humming a jolly song, he walked along the road. He felt young and happy.

“Joseph! Joseph! The first lark has arisen! Come in, come in!”

“Who is there?” Frau Amely asked, sitting in a rocker on the sunny veranda.

“Joseph Otten! So there you are, old man! True to your word, as a knight of old. No, this surprise! This surprise! Awfully glad to see you!”

Excitedly the master of the house was patting Otten on the back, as if he must convince himself that it was really true that his friend was there. He shook him by the shoulders, and finally shoved him onto the veranda.

“Ah, Herr Doktor!—You have not forgotten us in the great world outside?”

“A little bird sang to me of the merry month of May at Godesberg.”

“Aha? You stand in communication with Godesberg? Oh, yes, the minnesingers were conversant with the language of the birds. But now you are here, be it surprising or not. And you are to us a most welcome guest.”

“I am glad of it,” he said, struggling between anger and sarcasm.

The manufacturer forced him into a garden seat. “I cannot yet find words. Only the one thing. Here you anchor. The only road to liberty from here leads over my dead body. Birdie, thou art caught!” And again he slapped his friend’s back, thought for a moment, asked about the luggage, and ran out to send a servant to the station for it.

Joseph Otten leaned back in his seat and his eyes swept the beautiful garden, that was in the midst of the park. Beside him, the rocker kept up a regular motion. Now it stopped. A slender body leaned forward. A slender hand grasped his. “So—— I want my welcome to myself, alone. Now I bid you welcome. I have counted the hours, and I knew that you would come in this hour.”

“Only you knew it?”

“Yes.”

Her gray eyes smiled at him. They were searching his after the fashion of children. “Angry?”—And she sank back into the rocker, which at once resumed its motion. The master was coming through the hall, quite out of breath.

“What is the pleasure of my distinguished guest? In half an hour we dine. We are punctual here in

the country. But a half hour suffices for two hearty fellows——”

“Three,” a voice from the rocker interrupted.

Lüttgen stopped. “You, too? Great honor. Well, then, suffices for three hearty fellows to raise their credit with the gods by bringing them a sacrifice of wine. Didn’t that strike you as being both poetical and commercial at the same time? Well, then, let’s drink to the firm of Otten, Lüttgen and Company. Will we remain true to our old colors? With the wine of the Rhine, our goblets be filled? No hesitation, valiant vanquisher of the Russians. Only one glass—a drink of welcome.”

Frau Amely stopped rocking. “This time I’ll get the wine. You shall find here a ‘Hausfrau,’ you spoiled world-traveler. In my house I am the hostess.”

The gentlemen looked after her. “When she wishes to, she has charm,” the manufacturer said sarcastically. “And she wishes to.”

“No compromise yet, Lüttgen?”

“Long ago. A truce. There remains nothing to fight about. Each goes his own road alone, and, inasmuch as in this manner neither disturbs the other, we are quite up to date, and live in what the world calls ideal marital relations.”

“But I find you quite comfortably together here?”

“For years I have spent my early vacations here. When springtime arrives I am so fagged out from work and social obligations throughout the winter, that I have a longing to stretch, and rest, and take things easy for a while. This time my wife shared the longing. In little things we are very attentive to each other.”

“Perhaps I disturb.”

“Are you crazy? Disturb? I guess not. On the contrary, it was an absolutely unnatural condition in which we found ourselves here. Two people, who have absolutely nothing to say to each other, are sitting on a lonely island. For decorative purposes. Very effective, but stiff. Between you and me, I have been bored to death by this oppressive silence. You have broken the ban. Now, there will be some life here.”

“Lüttgen—I’ll not be able to play the ‘cavaliere servente’ during my stay here. Every lady has a right to demand that from a guest. Or the guest should silently close the door from without.”

Lüttgen laughed aloud. “Is that your only trouble? I saw at once that there was something bothering you. You just go ahead and play the ‘cavaliere servente.’ It will not hurt her ladyship to learn to know for once a man who is my friend. My friend, Joseph! Plein pouvoir! And, by God, I shall be glad, if you will cure her of her folly, and teach her that men are not to be judged according to the beauty of their eyelashes. Jealous? Of something that I do not own? I only refuse to let anything be taken that is mine. You, for instance.”

“I’ll stay only a few days,” Otten replied. “I went through Cologne without stopping, and without seeing wife and child. But I wanted to get some air first. That benefits those at home afterward. One’s blood is more calm.”

“Why not let them come here?” the manufacturer suggested. “Say, that is a good idea! We’ll telegraph to your wife, and she will be here with the next train.”

Frau Amely came, carrying a tray with a bottle and glasses. Her gray eyes rested upon Otten, as he replied:

“I thank you, but my wife cannot be spared from home on account of the child’s studies. And aside from that”—he looked at the lady of the house—“one restless guest is enough.”

“You are placing a heavy burden on my back, indeed,” Frau Amely said with a smile, bending over the table and placing the glasses. “Where shall I find the art to repay you for your sacrifice? I will certainly attempt to employ all my talents, my wit, and my amiability, if that will seem enough.”

“It is far too much, gracious madam. I shall be satisfied with a third, and I would select amiability.”

The manufacturer looked at his wife with ill-concealed satisfaction. Frau Amely quietly played hostess and poured out the wine. Then she raised her glass, touched with it that of the guest, and quoted the old greeting: “Grüss Gott, tritt ein, bring Glück heiren!—God greet you, enter, and let happiness enter with you.”

“That is selfishness,” the manufacturer insisted. “There ought to be something in it for him, too. My friendship? You have that as it is, but let us drink to it at any rate.”

“Perhaps there will be a little remnant left for me, Herr Doktor. I shall try hard.”

“So easily satisfied, gracious madam? That is a sign of approaching storm.”

“Why, you men don’t even guess how easily we women can be satisfied in friendship.”

He caught the double meaning in her words and

bowed. Shortly after, the servant called them to dinner, and Otten led the lady of the house to the table. It was a merry meal. Lüttgen would not let Otten stop telling, in his humorous way, of his concert tours. From time to time the lady of the house filled the champagne glasses, and Otten enjoyed her graceful movements. "Too bad, that you are not a boy, and that I am not Jupiter. The position of Ganymede would be yours."

"Rather let us remain on earth. Her beauties are not yet known sufficiently, anyway," she replied.

Lüttgen's face was flushed. "Really," he assented, "life in the country has charms, if one enjoys them in good company. But our friend is spoiled. The daughters of Albion and the semi-Asiatic Russian ladies have scattered too much incense at his feet. He must have men about him, sturdy, Rhenish men, so he will not be spoiled. There now! I have it! This day must have a festive ending. Please excuse me for two minutes."

Silence reigned between the two remaining at the table. Then Frau Amely said, folding her hands behind her head: "Now he is telephoning to his friends in Cologne. That is meant for me. By parading here a man like you, he hopes to exclude me as a factor."

"Gracious madam, you have no reason to grow bitter. One can't help liking that man as he is."

"As a friend, certainly. But as his wife——?"

Otten was silent. He compared the lithe woman's figure with the bulky figure of the man, her unlimited wit and spirit with his stolid persistence. "That seems largely placed within your hand," he finally said.

"How simple that sounds. One sacrifices the best

years of life, and can step aside again. To become a governess or something of the sort. At all events, to live from hand to mouth. Do you think that my illusions don't suffice for that? I need the setting which I have here just as every sensible person needs it. Or can you imagine the woman sitting before you, wearing a threadbare old house-dress, eating beef and beans? No, I do not deceive myself. And Herr Doktor Joseph Otten would never have had an eye for me."

"Have I that——?"

"With what pleasure have I looked forward to this evening. At last a being that would make up for the everyday dozen. With whom a person could fly unseen into another world, to laugh at this obtuse crowd. And now these philistines are coming with their ridiculous mannerisms of men of the world. What do they know of our world——?"

"Do you really suffer among these people?"

Silently Frau Amely looked at the ceiling. Then she said suddenly:

"Have you thought of me often? I don't want a compliment from you."

"Very often, gracious madam."

"Of the gracious madam, or of me?"

"That I decline to answer."

"Why?"

"It is not my custom to speak of things that have not become deeds. And, much less—when they have."

Her wide-open eyes were still looking at the ceiling. "Just one thing. The question would be absurd, if others than we would ask it directly. We do it in our world. Have you ever—kissed me—in thought?"

"The woman I kiss belongs to me."

“Ah——” She leaned forward. “There, one being speaks my language.”

“Beg pardon, mine.”

“Oh, don’t build up old border-line palisades. It does not suit you. What you may do, that may I also.”

He closed his eyes. Then he grasped his glass and drank its contents. “Play, but pretty.”

She arose and filled his glass. He felt her lips. “Silence!” she whispered. “So that you may know to whom you belong.”

Unwittingly his hand had grasped at her shoulder. Now he dropped it. With flashing eyes he looked at her: “Take care!”

“No!” she said, and they both felt and heard their hearts beating violently.

Then she sat in her chair, her feet crossed as before. Only they were different themselves. As if a curtain of fog had been torn asunder between them, and as if they had not really seen each other until now, they looked at each other.

“I will be your friend, Amely.”

“Don’t be too strict——”

“I must lead. Only that way! There are three in the carriage.”

The manufacturer’s head appeared at the door. “They are coming,” he called out. “Only Terbroich I have not reached yet. He is at some church meeting. I have to call him up again, and will be back in a minute.” And he was gone again.

Joseph Otten smilingly raised his glass: “Agreed?”

He drank, and she laid her hand on his arm. “Will you be satisfied?”

She only nodded, took the glass from his hand, and drank it to the last drop. Silently she handed it back to him. For a few seconds he retained her fingers in his hand. "That was a real brotherhood drink——?"

With the evening train the guests arrived. A half a dozen manufacturers from Cologne. Escaped from the confines of their offices, they brought with them a spirit of hilarity that made the hall resound with their powerful voices.

"A merry evening, all among ourselves," Terbroich called out, winking his eyes. "We'll make Joseph confess, for everybody's benefit."

Frau Amely remained only for the meal. Her glances, filled with sarcasm, traveled about the table. Otten sat next to her. "What amuses you?"

"That they want to make you confess, my dear friend. I can see you getting up and recounting in a voluminous speech your conquests and your great deeds to these puny fellows. Don't you do it. You would only waste your breath on seven numskulls. But if you lie to them, as if you were in reality just as they are, and pretend that you only make yourself appear different at times from mere love of adventure—oh, they will see in you a god and will applaud you as a true Cologner."

"Now, the meal is over. You had better retire now, gracious madam, or else I will be too self-conscious to—tell stories."

She turned her head toward him and looked at him. Then she arose to go.

Lüttgen immediately disappeared in the kitchen, to prepare the May-wine in person. The gentlemen went

to the veranda, and lit their cigars. Otten escorted the lady of the house to the foot of the stairs.

“Good-night,” she said and waited.

He shook his head and drew her close to him in his arm, as one does with a child. For a second his hand rested upon her heart. But he did not kiss her.

“Bring that eager little heart to rest,” he said, and she flitted up the stairs.

Not until he returned to the other guests did he feel how the blood was rushing through his veins. He drew the mild spring air with full breaths into his lungs, and, while his heart beat violently, he looked into the distance with a faint smile.

CHAPTER XII

DAY was breaking when the guests left the villa at Godesberg, to board the early train for Cologne. And the glorious sun sent golden rays through the window-curtains when Otten awoke. His head was clear. The session of the night before had not affected him. The events of the previous day stood clearly before him.

“She is experienced in this game,” he thought of Frau Amely. “First she contrived the little letter writing secret, and at the same time tied my hands. And, as was to be expected, the little secret led to a bigger one. Women are the born representatives of the snow-ball system. A mere nothing in their hands grows to an avalanche. And through our very chivalry we, also, become guilty. Now I’ll wash the sleep out of my eyes, and take the reins. Get up, Joseph!”

On the terrace he was greeted with banter. Frau Amely was sitting at the breakfast-table in an airy *batiste matinée*. “We are here in the country, Herr Doktor, where country customs prevail. And, besides, I consider you as belonging to the family. Will you have tea?”

“I’d advise you to have a little brandy first,” Lüttgen suggested, rubbing his forehead. “My grandmother used to say: The dog that has bitten you during the night, ought to bite you again the first thing in the morning.”

"Did your grandmother drink, too?" Frau Amely said quietly.

"Oh, excuse me. That is only a saying."

Otten took a glass of tea. "A fellow can only be bitten if he has really drank. But that was only a shy sort of sipping last night."

"Then shyness does not agree with my constitution."

"On the contrary, your nature is so sensitive that it rebels at the slightest offense against the æsthetic."

"Oh, my sensitive constitution," Lüttgen complained and smote his broad and solid chest.

Frau Amely looked searchingly through drooping eyelashes from one to the other. "I'll suggest a compromise," she said, stretching herself. "We'll take the sailboat, cross the Rhine to Nonnenwerth, afterwards land at Königswinter, and climb up to the Dragon's Rock. Whoever is in need of fresh air will get his share, and whoever would like to reawaken old dreams and fairy-tales of the Rhine, ought to find opportunity for that. I ask for a vote."

"Accepted with pleasure," Otten called out, and she nodded to him.

"The sail on the Rhine, I grant, will be splendid," said the master of the house. "Also the landing at Königswinter. But the climb——? We could ride or drive up."

"You romantic soul," Otten laughed.

"Well, let us compromise the compromise. When you have done justice to your romantic feelings, you call for me at Königswinter. I'll have time there to plan the programme for the evening in the shade of the arbor. For the heat with which this May has set in must be combated."

"I'll be ready in a quarter of an hour," Frau Amely decided, arose, and extended her hand to Otten.

"I should like to take you along, just as you are," he said. "Then the boatmen on the river would tell the shores that we had caught a mermaid."

"But you are still on land, Herr Doktor," she called out, already in the doorway. "Only, in the water one does not see the fish-tail."

He looked at her slender feet and the springy ankle. "Really, Lüttgen, this May is bewitched. It is hot enough for July."

"And I carry a little stove in my head to boot. It's a good thing, that I am not 'cavaliere servente.'"

A quarter of an hour later they met on the terrace. Frau Amely, in a sailor-suit, the cap fastened in her hair; Otten in a light summer-suit and Calabreser hat. Only Lüttgen appeared without a change of dress.

"You did not change your suit?" the lady of the house asked in surprise.

"Hard luck!" the manufacturer exclaimed. "That is, it may be good luck, too. It is on account of a big transaction. The factory just called me up. I have to go there at once."

"Oh——" Otten said regretfully; "then there will be no sail."

"Can't you put off going until evening?" she asked quickly.

"Impossible. It is a big English contract, and our London representative can't handle the matter alone."

"In the evening, the Herr Doktor could go with you to Cologne." It sounded so matter-of-course that Otten looked up in surprise.

"Of course, I'll go along, even if you go at once," he

said quickly. "If I can arrange it, and it is agreeable to the honored lady of the house, I can return with you to-morrow or the next day."

"Fiddlesticks," the manufacturer blurted out. "Surely we are not babies. You just go on with your excursion, and within a couple of days I'll rejoin the party."

"If Herr Doktor Otten is satisfied with being exiled that way? You are disposing of him without asking him."

"If I let go of him now, I won't see him again in years to come. It is settled, Joseph. You stay here. Out here in this seclusion nobody bothers about anybody else. And I will deliver all your messages to your wife. I must go. You will have to take out the boat yourselves. Johann has gone ahead to the depot with my grip, and will get my ticket. So long, then. If that business matter with our British cousins is brought to a successful conclusion, we will have a little celebration worthy of the name." He gave his hand to his wife, and shook Otten's hand like a pump-handle.

"Jupp, if you could only see your own face! Adieu. Auf Wiedersehen!" He pushed his hat back jauntily and walked with heavy strides through the garden gate. His powerful frame disappeared at the next bend of the road.

"Come," Frau Amely said, and ran ahead of the guest to the shore of the Rhine. Otten followed her slowly. When he arrived there, she had cast off the fastening of the boat and stood in the vessel, with the sailing-line in her hand. Without saying a word, Otten stepped in, took the sailing-line from her hand,

and let her take the tiller. The boat slid easily through the whispering waves. A charming landscape surrounded the river, its fresh, young green, dotted with the white bloom of the cherry-trees and the delicate pink of the apple-blossoms. Near and far not a sound to be heard but the murmuring of the water, as the sharp bow of the tiny craft plowed through its surface. A sharp bend in the river brought Nonnenwerth, a pretty, tree-clad isle in the midst of the green water, into view.

“Say——” The sound came softly from the steersman’s seat.

Otten fastened the sailing-line in a ring. Only a soft breeze was blowing. Then he turned to his companion.

“Beg pardon?”

“Have I suddenly grown so detestable?”

“Will you permit me to ask why you told your husband an untruth?”

“I did not do that.”

“Indirectly. When, by telling him to take me along to Cologne, you caused him to think you did not care for my presence here.”

“Well, do I, really?”

“A jest does not dispose of my question.”

“Very well, then. Did I commit such an awful crime? Or should I take especial care to make it known to him, that I looked forward with joy to the time when you and I would be alone? He certainly would have taken you with him, and I would have had to listen to Johann and the cook telling the gossip of Godesberg, instead of hearing a voice from my own world.”

“Frau Amely, we enter deeper and deeper into

secrecy, and without there being any reason whatsoever for it."

"Don't philosophize, and don't moralize. The boat is too light, the Rhine too green, the sky too blue, and the sun—oh, this glorious sun! I cannot get enough of it. I should like to bathe in its rays! And it is no different with you."

They had circled about Nonnenwerth, and the boat, its sails filled with a freshening breeze, slid down-stream, pointing its bow toward Königswinter. Amely fastened the tiller, stepped over the seat, and sat beside him. Her shoulder snuggled up against his, until she had found a restful position. With her hands in her lap, she remained quiet and looked at the shore.

A slight odor of tar was exhaled by the water, but it was not strong enough to spoil the delicate odor of lilacs. Otten turned his head and slowly looked down her figure. Not a line escaped him. From the fine nervous face to the feet, playfully crossed, appearing below the hem of her short dress.

"Nymph!" he said. "The mermaids must be as graceful. Too bad that you are so clever."

"No, no. In this solitude there is neither cleverness nor simplicity——"

Leaning against his shoulder, she looked at him with her quiet gray eyes. But her lashes trembled. . . .

"A pirate's right," he said, caught her by the chin, and kissed her.

She raised her arms, wound them around his neck, and remained, leaning against his breast with closed eyes. He felt the light weight of her body, and it was as if the same blood was running through them both. With his fingertips he stroked her pale cheeks.

“ My dear friend——”

“ Oh—that you have come! If you had not, I would have gone to you.”

“ So untamed? ”

“ Yes.”

“ You will give me much to do.”

“ Battle keeps young! Never to grow old! Not even in angels' wedlock!”

“ Oh, goodness!”

“ Pooh! Verdigris, mildew, and moths. And to make up for it, an embroidered blessing above the bed. In the morning: How—have—you—slept—my—dear—Jo—seph? ”

“ You — ought — to — take—your—drops—my—dear.”

“ How—at—ten—tive—Dar—ling.”

Suddenly she grasped his head, and drew it down to press her lips against his. “ These are my drops,” she murmured.

“ Attention—Königswinter.”

She leaped up from her seat like a young girl, shouted “ Hurrah!” and waved her cap. And Otten stood beside her, with his arm about her waist, waving his Calabreser cap, and shouting with her. People of steel and nerves.

They made the boat fast, and, after a brief rest, they started up-hill through the vineyards, that forest of ruins called the Dragon's Rock, their goal. They walked on with such rapid strides, that conversation was almost suspended, one exclamation often serving in place of a sentence. Their bodies would straighten up, their hands slip apart, and with shining eyes they sped on. On top of the mountain they found several

parties of sight-seers. The white-bearded bard of the Dragon's Rock sat on one of the tables, picked at the strings of his guitar, and sang with a tremulous voice the warnings of the Rhine: "My son, my son, go not to the Rhine, my son, I advise thee well——"

From a lofty vantage point, Otten and Frau Amely looked about. There all lay at their feet, the cities and villages of names old and renowned, blessed by the lore of the people, or by the poetry of singers and bards glad of the Rhine, and glad of its wine; blessed names, that are spoken with a feeling of awe. The silver ribbon of the Rhine shone at their feet, with the islands in the distance. And in the north, far away, their sharp contours plainly visible with the sky as background, arose, like three fingers raised in solemn oath, the spires of the Cathedral of Cologne.

Otten's glances lingered long upon these. "Cologne——" he said.

Frau Amely's eyes followed his. "Its ban does not reach this far. Yonder is darkness. Here is liberty."

But even when they sat at the dinner-table, they still saw those fingers raised in the distance.

"I know a better place for us, my friend. A place which will echo our thoughts. So silent and lost to the world."

"The monastery of Heisterbach."

"Yes, the monastery of Heisterbach. You know the legend of the Heisterbachian monk, to whom a thousand years were as but one day. I, too, would like for once to enjoy a thousand years in one single day."

The whispering forest surrounded them. A scarcely perceptible breeze played with the tender young green

leaves. And it went through the solitude like a winged sigh.

Frau Amely placed her hand on Otten's arm. "I wish," she said, "that I could be afraid, and claim your protection. But it is too nice for that."

"Then let us act in accordance with the situation. Let us enjoy it."

"Oh,—I have been doing that all the while."

"Somewhere in this neighborhood young Siegfried played armorer in making the sword with which he killed the Lindwurm on the Dragon's Rock."

"And it seems to me as if another Siegfried was walking through the forest here, to continue his work of salvation."

"Young Siegfried?"

"Siegfried cannot grow old. A thousand years are to him as a day."

"And when that day is passed?"

"We are richer in beauty that raises us above our contemporaries. High above them. For there are not many wandering upon earth, whose brains can grasp the new revelation: To live a thousand years as one day. And those few are grasping at eternity."

"Thus, I will be the first to borrow something from eternity——"

She permitted it. "And I want to be indebted to the same creditor." And she returned his kiss.

"You are like a mischievous boy."

"I don't know what to do with my strength. And we live at the expense of eternity."

"We! We!"

"Yes, we, Joseph! One must sink with the other, and rise——"

“Sink!” he laughed and bent over her.

“I will—rise——”

The wind ceased. The rays of the sun gilded the ground. Near the cloister-ruin they sat down to rest in a tiny wooded valley. About them the birds of the forest were singing and chirping in their own kingdom, and took no cognisance of the human strangers in their midst. Flowers of spring, surrounded by moss, were bathed in sunshine. Warm waves of air kissed among the treetops.

“How sweet you are. . . . Now your blood flows quietly. And yet within this delicate frame it can rush and swirl and break in a very deluge.”

“Because I want happiness.”

“We all want that. To make another happy, means happiness for oneself. Try that.”

“With you.”

“When we create an especial happiness for ourselves, we must first satisfy all proper claims against us. If we don’t do that, we are not exceptional natures, but merely runaways. Do you understand what I mean?”

She sat up straight, pulled up her knees, put her arms around them, and looked straight ahead into the sunny forest. Her brows were drawn together.

“Will my friend not answer?”

“Oh, yes, she will. Especially inasmuch as this form of address displeases her, since it would also be ‘my friend,’ if in my stead Karl Lüttgen were sitting here.”

“That it would be, and it would be the truth.”

“You have a peculiar way of proving your logic.”

“Frau Amely,” he said, “no leaping to and fro.

Even if I should take you in my arms and close these angry lips in the peculiar style of my logic, you would be in better care than in the care of your own thoughts. You have recognized that to such an extent that these lips curled up in anger.”

“Male conceit.”

“No,” he continued, “do not employ this tone of superiority, which poorly masks your annoyance with me. What do you really think? Do you believe that I, Joseph Otten, would lie here, looking longingly at the sky of spring, while spring itself sits beside me, scarce an arm’s length away? That I would not with one grasp draw this personification of spring to me, and not let go of it, until its secret of life had become mine? Do you think, that I have no eyes in my head, to see this capricious human wonder? And no wild heart-beat in my breast that longs to beat itself into weariness? I am doing to-day what I have never done before. I respect the man who stands behind. Because he is my friend, certainly. But much more, because he is a poor human being, who, from the beginning, saw himself cheated in his hopes. Therefore I could not deprive him of hopes of you. But if I kissed you, as I would like to, I would have to—drop him. And that he has not deserved. One does not steal the pennies of a beggar.”

Frau Amely sat immovable and looked into the forest. Then she said slowly: “And yet—it would depend upon ascertaining who is the one most in need.”

“He is. Undoubtedly.”

“Listen—— You claim he suffers through me, because I make no secret of it, that I take none but the most necessary notice of him. I make no effort to ap-

proach him. What is more, I wish no advances on his part. But I claim I suffer through him! I married him because he was a rich merchant. I am much too proud to deny the motive. I desired to reach the care-free height to which I am entitled. But that is the only thing for which I could be reproached. I did not want to wait any longer, and I made this mistake in my haste. What did I gain by it? Let us not speak of it. You know him. But I assure you, that at first I did what was within my power to remodel his spirit and his hobbies, to shape them according to my own, to which I was entitled, for, without self-conceit, I am the stronger individuality of us two. One of us had to give in. He regretted he was too old to change. And I regretted I was too young. Love could have bridged the matter over. But it had never existed. No, no, not even on his side. It was a matter of Rhenish vainglory with him. The joy of having something different from the others. Something that would make them open their eyes in wonderment. That would make them say: 'Yes, Lüttgen—that is a fellow. He can afford it. A great fellow!' I should have been a different creature, not a woman who considers female slavery a ridiculous farce; not a woman who will not allow her soul to be killed for the sake of a dozen rings and necklaces. Killed by a merchant, who considers the soul a luxury, and sees in it a disturbance of his materialism. But to let someone play with me—only play—I demand a partner who is my equal. If that is not the case, we are not among our own, and shame remains and humiliation begins. He was only able to humiliate me. He, he! I could never humiliate him! And if I finally made myself free, as free as I am to-day, I have only

taken back my old right, my inalienable right of being human."

"Is all that—true?" Otten asked, stretching the words.

As a flash, she turned to him. "If it were not, would I be able to—voice such feelings—before—a third party?"

"She frames her words according to the mood of a moment," Otten thought. Aloud he said: "It requires a great loneliness, or a great—hatred."

"Does he not hate me?"

"It is true," Otten thought. "He hates her no less. There is a fire somewhere, and somewhere else there is a reflection of it."

She read his thoughts. "I know that he goes about and tries to create a prejudice against me in people with whom I might otherwise get into closer sympathy. He probably has made no exception in your case. Now tell me: who gives tangible form to hatred? Who is the suffering party? Who is in need of one person's friendship exclusively for himself, in order to obtain new vigor, to gain something new, to make life worth living? You know me sufficiently by this time to judge yourself. Am I so repulsive?"

"You are a witch."

"Please be serious. You are much too chivalrous not to decide which side is right. And you will stand by the side of justice. There your friendship will be undivided."

"And yet you were offended, when I addressed you as friend."

"Not then. For then the word will have the scale of the sounds and I only seek the note."

“Poor, dear friend,” he said tenderly.

“No—rich!” . . . She placed her hands over his eyes and pressed her lips upon his mouth. And there was magic in the forest, the magic of centuries gone by, when the monk of Heisterbach walked through the woods, meditating to discover the meaning of the word, a thousand years as one day. . . .

Hand in hand they wandered silently through the forest road, and the wonder of the forest remained behind them. Frau Amely's eyes were shining strangely, and her head was raised high. Otten's daring face reflected the sunshine of spring which he carried with him from the forest. It was growing dusk as they reached Königswinter. They unfastened the boat and crossed the Rhine towards Godesberg. But they did not care to land. The silence upon the water became more and more intense, and the silence upon the shores seemed to increase likewise. The moon rose above the Dragon's Rock, and its pale light gave a mystic sheen to sky, river, and shore. The trail of the small craft was like liquid silver. When they dipped their hands into the water, where they quickly met, a silver coating remained for a time. And when they bent over, one to the other, they saw the silvery reflex in the depths of each other's eyes. Presently Frau Amely began to shiver beneath the chilly evening air. Then he turned the rudder, dropped the sails, and they landed at the edge of the villa's park.

She leaped from the boat, stood for a moment, as if she were meditating, then she stretched herself with a motion as if she wished to embrace the sky. “Ah——” she said, “beautiful——!” And her voice seemed to vibrate strangely.

“Come into the house. The chilly evening is not good for you.”

“Not for either of us.” They walked through the park and the garden to the terrace. The hall was lit up. The servant came and asked for instructions.

“We have supped. It is well. No letters?”

“A telegram, gracious madam.”

She took the telegram, waited until the servant had left, opened it, read, and extended it to Otten. Her big gray eyes hung on his features. He let his hand with the paper sink. “What now?”

“What now?” she repeated. “The text says plainly enough: ‘Will remain a few days longer. Am only taking a run across the Channel and back again. The business demands it. Await me at Godesberg. Lüttgen.’—Hence, we will await him.”

“That is impossible.”

“Are you afraid?”

“Yes, I fear—myself.”

“Of course, we carry the responsibility, if we fail to act our parts well.” She raised her eyebrows and walked past him. “How warm it is here——” And she opened wide the door leading to the terrace and leaned against the carved post. This has been a short day.”

“There are days one does not measure with the yardstick, but with fathoms and sinker.”

“Have you found bottom so soon? If I am so shallow, it really is not worth while, and you are right.”

He looked at her and smiled. And as he smiled, and while he smiled, he saw how beautiful she was. “Your melancholy is a snare, and your anger another. Now you will also appeal to my chivalry.”

“ I don’t appeal.”

He walked through the room and took a mandolin from the piano. Softly his fingers touched the chords. He listened, then tuned the instrument. There was no other sound.

“ I would like to hear a voice, even if it were my own.”

From the door there came no answer.

“ So that we may know that we are still alive.”

She did not stir.

He drew a chair and sat down upon it astride, with his arm resting upon the back of the chair: “ It was in Naples. I sat at the seashore, in front of a hotel of the Via Partenope. My heart was beating and asking a thousand questions a man cannot answer alone. Then a young woman came and sang a little song——”

He played a prelude and sang softly and pleadingly:

*“ Tre volte voi ho visto sono perduto,
E mille volte a voi ho pensato.
Tre volte vostra mano ho stretto.
E mille volte la mia ho vasato. . . .
Signora dite: Sì,
A voi non costa niente,
Una occhiata solamente
Capisco io che voi dire.”*

Step by step she had come into the room and approached him. Now she leaned against the chair. “ What is the meaning of the little song? ”

“ What does the singer say? He says and complains: Thrice I have seen you and am lost, and a thousand times I have thought of you. Thrice I have pressed your hand, and a thousand times blessed my

own. Signora, do say yes! It costs you nothing. One look only—and I understand what it shall say.”

Through the open door were wafted the evening odors of the German spring.

“I’d love to learn Italian from you,” she said softly. “Italy is the only home for such as we.”

He struck the chords and they gave forth silvery sounds: “Signora, dite: Si.”

She took his head between her hands. “Don’t go away.”

He repeated the refrain with closed eyes and a happy smile about his mouth.

His soul was floating at the shores of the blue Mediterranean, and dreams were reawakened.

“Don’t go away——”

He shook his head laughingly, sang and played. In the distance the murmur of the Rhine was lost, from the garden the odors of the flowers drifted in, and the night was soft like the veiled glance of woman.

“Now we are all alone in the world,” said Frau Amely. . . .

CHAPTER XIII

FOUR days later Lüttgen returned to Godesberg. He expressed his joy over the successful conclusion of his business-trip in a rather loud manner. "Well, we have caught the Englishman. It was a hard piece of work. It cost half a day's session at the conference-table, like two cool players matching each other move for move. But, finally, I had my way. Business is business."

The woman and the guest did not show intense interest in his story of success. When, in the afternoon, Otten declined an invitation to a sail on the Rhine for the three, Lüttgen noticed his reserve. His merriment gave way to a questioning surprise. Finally they parted with assumed politeness.

After a sleepless night, followed by a short, restless slumber in the morning, the manufacturer came to the veranda and found the breakfast-table deserted. The napkins, crumpled and carelessly thrown upon it, told him that Frau Amely and Otten had not waited for him. He ordered the servant to bring the tea, and did not ask about them.

The tea grew cold. He still sat thoughtfully bent forward and tried to resume the thread of his thoughts, where he had dropped it upon falling asleep. His wife's figure he dismissed with a quiver about the corners of his mouth. There still remained his friend——! How much of an explanation between them was demanded——?

“None whatever,” flashed through his mind. “How does this woman concern me? She has her ways, and I have mine: that has become a matter of course for years. Hence I would play a ridiculous part if I were to take up the matter now. Hitherto it has been a matter of admirers about whom I cared as little, or who were just as repulsive to me as she. That balanced the scales, and I lost nothing by it. But now——”

He took out his handkerchief and slowly wiped his forehead.

“And now? Well, what now? Am I really losing anything? Joseph Otten might as well play with air, so little does this woman exist for me. She happens to be in my house, that is all. And he goes away within a few days, at any rate. Shall I, then, for the sake of mere air—she is no more than that to me—banish the friend out of my life, the friend, who will have forgotten the intermezzo within twenty-four hours of his departure? That would be simply adding to the joy of the victor—to her joy.

“Which he will have forgotten? And if he does not forget it so soon?

“No fear!” And again there was the quiver about the corners of his mouth. “She will teach him to forget her quickly. She is not in favor of long-distance friendships, and soon Otten will have ceased to be a youth. That is decisive for her.”

He almost felt a sort of pity. The pity of a newly sobered man for one who is still intoxicated. “I am lying on a sand bar, but, at least, I am safe. And there he is struggling, and swallowing salt water, where he expected to find treasures. Poor fellow, there are

no depths. There are only shallows. I would like to have spared you the disappointment!"

Mechanically he wiped his forehead. Then he smiled contemptuously. "Of course, I would have spared him that. An affair cannot insult me, that is so far removed from me as the capricious moods of this woman. Surely her lap-dog could not compel me to take part in an affair of honor. How ridiculous it would be if I, as a man, should expose myself for the sake of this woman, who has long ago ceased to be anything to me. On the contrary, that would be quixotism and—dishonor. Really, it would be that.—Only one thing—only—one——"

His face was clouded. He stared at the table-cover where the sunshine lay.

"If I remain silent, since I have lost nothing, I remain who and what I am, and my honor rests within myself. Only if it goes beyond that, if I am to pay the bill the gracious madam has run up, if she, through her wiles, should win the friend away from me, if he should turn from me, as from something—unclean——"

His hand fell heavily upon the table.

"Then——!"

He looked up, and he saw between the trees of the park Frau Amely's white dress and Otten's light suit. Hastily he drank his cold tea. "How his laughter sounds," he mumbled. "I will not be outdone."

He arose, and waved his hand towards them. Carelessly they answered his greeting.

"Have you been sailing so early, you restless ones?"

"We have been bathing and lying in the sunshine."

"And you let me sleep the while?"

“I did not know,” Otten said, “that you still indulged in such physical exercise.”

“Well, well! Don’t make me out so lazy. Or have I assumed such Falstaffian dimensions?”

“What do you intend to do to-day?” Frau Amely asked. “Can we include you in our arrangements, or do you prefer the siesta?”

“If you want me?”

“Oh, please——”

“That does not sound very encouraging. But I’ll attribute it to the exertions of the bath. This is a dangerous river-bend, and it requires a good swimmer to remain within landing distance. By the way—how would it be if we should take dinner in Königswinter to-day to replace the one I had to deny myself on account of my trip? You can depend upon it, I will not be stingy.”

“Does it have to be Königswinter?” Otten said.

“I don’t insist upon it. But do you object to that charming little town?”

“No, not at all. Let us go there, then.”

The weather was beautiful. The warm days and nights had coaxed forth the shyest blossoms, and the shores were almost concealed in the bloom of the fruit-trees. The trio in the boat had no eyes for the beauty of nature just then. Now and then a word was spoken. Finally even Lüttgen became quiet.

They dined at the shore of the Rhine, and the wine made them more lively. But the conversation was carried on almost solely by Otten and Frau Amely. And on their homeward trip it was no different.

Lüttgen went to his room immediately, to change his clothes and to avoid the evening chill. “You prob-

ably will be able to get along without me for ten minutes."

Otten and Frau Amely remained on the veranda and avoided looking at each other.

"The whole thing was nasty," the man finally said.

She slowly turned her head towards him. "And in such an atmosphere I have been living for years. You notice it within a few days."

"It is not his fault. It is his nature that bars the way."

"And my nature? Shall it succumb without a struggle? Surely, if it is necessary that one be pushed to the background, it is not necessary that it should be the more valuable human being."

"Are you so sure——"

"That he is not the more valuable one? Yes! Of that I am positive. And if you have not learned that yet, it is the result of the fact that his everyday mannerisms, his deteriorating influence, have had too much power over me as it is. Joseph! Why did you not come sooner? At the time when the difference between him and me was still more apparent than it is to-day. At a time when you would have been able to decide in a minute. At a time when you would simply have lifted me up in your arms and carried me away out of all the degradation I have to suffer at the hands of this man, whose nature is his law. Shall I drink with him? Shall I joke with him? Shall I hang upon his neck when he grows clumsy and tender? Shall I do all that—even now?"

Otten breathed heavily. An anxious, oppressive silence followed. Then he spoke.

"If all that you have told me to-day and during the

last few days about him and about yourself, if you can take an oath upon it—then you should not.”

“I swear it.”

“Very well. You will find me at your side when I am needed. Besides—he must be aware of it even now.”

“It will not matter to him, and he will not waste a word about it. There you have his character.”

“That would place him beneath consideration. I believe you.”

From this day on, Lüttgen ceased to accompany them in their walks and their sails. Only once he stopped his friend in the garden. It was but for a few minutes.

“Things have not turned out exactly as I thought. Your union of souls goes far.”

“If that is to be an accusation against your wife, it is a boomerang.”

“That would be interesting to me. You may safely preach a sermon to me.”

“I do not feel that it is called for. If you don't feel yourself what you have missed and what you have left undone in her case, it would be useless for another to attempt to show you. A being so richly gifted, so full of possibilities for development under proper care. But one's own education and desires must remain in keeping with that aim.”

“In other words, I am a stupid brute.”

“Possibly you are—to your own despite.”

“God forbid that you may grow thus against your own self, through over-appreciation of educational possibilities. There are feline natures that may be trained, but never educated. In every such case there comes a

day when they will show their fangs and claws, when their vicious instincts will break out."

"Please, let us drop the subject."

"With pleasure. Only I should feel sorry for the friend, who might have been spared the experience."

Otten told Frau Amely some of this conversation. She laid her hand on his arm and looked at him. And within him arose the contempt of the strong for the weakling.

Lüttgen noticed quickly how his friend withdrew from him. And he felt the contempt through it all. His hatred against the woman grew more and more intense. The guilt was hers. Hers alone. She had succeeded in winning the chivalrous support of the man through misrepresentations. Had won him for a bad cause. She had given him up, and had compelled his friend to give him up, contemptuously. And that could go no farther.

He walked about, and his hatred was busily at work in his mind: "What shall I do? What shall I do, to make up for this loss? I am as strongly attached to him as I abhor her. I punish myself in striking him. For she alone is responsible. She has cheated and deceived him even now, as well as lied to him. And now he feels that he must be chivalrous. Would I have acted differently in his place? No. Or—possibly no. But that is neither here nor there, for I am permitting him to burn his fingers, if he absolutely insists upon it. But—contempt—that is another matter. Contempt for me—— For Me! After all I have suffered with this woman, to be, through her doings, considered contemptuously by the only person in the world to whom I am attached?" Multi-colored lights seemed to

dance before his eyes. "I must defend myself," he muttered. "I must defend myself."

And from this hour on his hatred sought the means to be revenged.

Wherever he happened to be, he seemed to feel the triumph of the woman. Everywhere he felt as if she said: "Now I am taking your friend. Now I am taking your last friend. Who is the richer of us two now, you beggar?"

It was maddening. Yet he must preserve his self-control.

And he saw them on the shore of the Rhine. There they stood, hand in hand, laughing merrily, as if no one else existed in the wide world. His breathing was forced. He felt a pain in his chest. He longed to hear his own voice, but he could not speak. And, suddenly, it loomed up before him—the picture he had been searching for. His chest heaved. And sounds came from his lips, which only he could understand. "I have it—I have it. I must take him away from her—take—him—away. Out of the center of her triumph! Because she has taken him away from me. My only friend.—And, therefore—I—will—take—him—from—her. Not on his own account! But on hers!"

With a slow motion his hand passed over his eyes. The multi-colored lights were dancing no longer. He saw the clear day. And slowly he turned, and, with steady strides, he walked to the villa, where he locked himself in his room.

"It is a long time since I have had weapons in my hands," he said, looking at the polished barrels of a brace of pistols. "Not since my last drill as officer of the reserve among the cuirassiers of Deutz. And

that is so long ago it might never have been. Steady, my boy. It is not essential that *one* shall drop, but it is essential that *he* shall fall. I am the judgment of God. I must not forget that. That is the only sensible way. As the affair has lasted so long, a few days more will not matter. I need some practice, for I must hit the mark. Not you, Jupp. Her!"

When the sailboat swam on the Rhine, he walked into the park, put up the target, and began to shoot at it. His heavy hand trembled when he raised it for the first time. The first few bullets barked the tree against which his target rested. But he remained at his task. When the first bullet penetrated the edge of the target, a smile flashed over his red face. Now his bullets no longer missed. He had whole days to himself. And he utilized them. No one disturbed him. Nobody asked for him. And then came the hour when bullet after bullet struck the bull's-eye. That was the happiest moment of his life.

The breeze had almost died out. The boat slowly crept towards the landing. Those it bore were glad that they did not have to land yet. Every evening they landed a little later than on the evening before.

"You must not go yet," Frau Amely said, and laid her head against his breast. "You are only just now bound to me."

"Be sensible, Amely. We must not think as 'Chacun and Chacune.' That is too cheap."

"Don't let us think at all. Be still. Only let me kiss you. So—now I am comfortable."

The boat floated near the park. Suddenly Frau Amely started: "Did you hear anything?"

"A shot."

They both listened. The shots fell in regular succession.

“There is somebody practicing shooting at a target,” Otten said, and Frau Amely leaned back in his arms. Their eyes kissed before their lips met. And while they reclined in the boat, their bodies close together, forgetting the world, there on the shore the bullets were whistling in regular succession, truly aimed—the bullets meant for their hearts.

“I intend to go home to-morrow,” Otten told the master of the house in the evening.

“I can’t permit that in such an off-hand manner.”

“You must be joking. I have remained longer than I ought, and I realize it. So let it be to-morrow.”

“And if I should ask you? You have not done me a favor for some time. I should like to see—your good will.”

“Lüttgen, I can’t.”

“Well—a man’s wish is his heaven. Then you will leave to-morrow. But not before the evening train. I had promised you to give a feast, if that English business was carried through successfully. A feast the like of which we had not had before. For our most intimate acquaintances only. Just as on the day of your arrival. You remember? The gentlemen have been invited for to-morrow, noon.”

“You are disposing of me rather unceremoniously there, but——”

“Among friends a fellow can’t be so particular.”

“Well, if it pleases you——”

“Without you my entire arrangement would be spoiled. During the last few days my head was still full of business cares. Well, life itself is a big job,

and it means cares. But now the calculations which I had to make are finished, and I can devote myself to you during the last hour. And I am as jolly as in my palmiest days."

"Then I will advise your wife of the change in the programme."

"There she is just coming to say good-night. Listen, our friend will stay to-morrow for a small stag dinner in our house. The invitations have been accepted. A caterer in Bonn will furnish the dinner and send the chef with it, to prepare things. You have no objections, as by this we will keep Otten here until evening?"

"Ah——!" she said in astonishment. "That is a pleasant surprise."

"And, now, we'll all go to bed. Good-night, Otten. It will be a full day to-morrow."

They shook hands and went to their rooms. Somewhere a nightingale was singing merrily. . . .

The guests sat around the table in the hall. The linen blinds of the veranda had been lowered, to give protection from the flood of sunshine, and created an artificial dusk. The champagne glasses had been removed and Rhine-wine goblets brought, and then the champagne glasses had supplanted the goblets again. The gentlemen had stuck flowers into the button-holes of their claw-hammer coats. They were growing over-merry, and were drinking to the health of the lady of the house, who sat dreamily at the side of Otten, her flowing, low-cut gown exposing her dainty neck and shoulders.

"Don't ever forget me," she said softly, and Otten pressed her hand in silent understanding.

Lüttgen drank hastily. His florid face showed a deeper red than usual, and he was so talkative that it attracted attention.

“No wonder!” Terbroich said. “He can afford it. Gets rid of his entire old stock in one deal.”

“Now it must be done,” Lüttgen said to himself and arose. The servant, who had been gathering the fruit-dishes, discreetly withdrew at a motion from his master.

“A festive speech! Silence! The master of the house has the floor.”

“Yes—a festive speech,” Lüttgen said, playing with his glass and straightening up his powerful frame. Now he had himself well in hand. His glances quietly wandered from one to the other. “A festive speech. And, strange as it may seem, the master of the house has the floor. Our friend Terbroich, who is such a good business man, just remarked that I was very happy in having gotten rid of all my old stock at one deal. Well, he errs. There is some stock left.”

He raised his glass and emptied it. There was no interjection of remarks.

“Well, to-day I would like to complete the clearing out. What is left is shopworn, but there are customers for that, too, at times. I want to get rid of it, in order that it may not be stolen, and also that I may not be tempted to cheat somebody with it—and as either would be humiliating to a square business man—I’ll give it away. Who wants it?”

That was not a festive speech, and the man, whose threatening eyes now swept the circle of his guests, was not a merry carouser. There was a silence of painful expectancy among the audience.

“Who wants it?” Lüttgen repeated. “Nobody? Really, nobody? Not even you, Otten?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that I am about to clear out my warehouse. To eject the remnants. To clean up. Do you understand that?”

“Sit down. The wine has made you dizzy.”

“Then I am drunk. Possibly I have been—and not only to-day. But I give you my word: I would not give a red Groschen for your sober clear-sightedness this moment.”

“Are you through?”

“I will be, in a minute. You have only to say that you will take it. Why do you hesitate? You two have agreed long ago.”

“It is not true!” Frau Amely screamed. Pale as death, she sank back in her chair.

“I beg your pardon. What is not true? That you love him more than your own life?”

“It is a lie!” In a scream of terror the answer came. A desperate denial full of fear: “It is a lie.”

And between these words Otten had found his equilibrium. Even more quickly than they had passed, the merry laughing days at Godesberg sank away amidst derisive laughter, and not even a ripple told of their disappearance. An adventure. Nothing more. And the worst one of them all.

Pale, but every nerve firm as steel, Otten arose, moved his chair back, and stood offering his arm to the lady of the house.

“May I offer you my arm, madam? Things are becoming a little too wild for you down here.”

And passively she placed her hand on his arm, and

allowed him to lead her out of the hall. At the foot of the staircase he released her with a bow. Not another word was exchanged. He waited until she had gone to her room, then he went to his. "Tell the gentlemen," he said to the man servant, "that I shall stay up here."

He waited a quarter of an hour. His thoughts were so little occupied with what had just transpired, that he was surprised. Then he heard steps in the corridor. There was a knock on his door. Terbroich and a young manufacturer entered.

"Let us come to the point without much ado, gentlemen," Otten said calmly. "I presume Herr Lüttgen has entrusted you with a mission."

"To my regret, my dear Joseph," Terbroich began pompously, "you see in me his representative. You will not be angry with me, but under the circumstances I could not decline."

"Oh, please," Otten warded him off, "your commission?"

"Herr Lüttgen demands satisfaction with a weapon. He will accept no alternative."

"I am willing."

"It is desired that the affair may be brought to a conclusion as quickly as possible."

"That coincides with my desire."

"Well, then, the day after to-morrow, at five-thirty, here in the park? That is the safest and most secluded place."

"Very well. The rest can probably be arranged through my second, whom I shall seek at once."

"Would you, perhaps, accept my services?" the young manufacturer asked politely. "I am entirely at your command."

“You are very kind, and I accept with thanks. You will, then, grant me a few minutes more. Good-day, Terbroich; I should like to take the afternoon train for Cologne.”

“Adieu, Otten. I had to execute this commission.”

He nodded at Terbroich, and then remained in consultation with his second a quarter of an hour. Shortly afterwards Otten was at the railroad station, where he took a return-trip ticket for Cologne. When he, another fifteen minutes later, left the depot at Cologne, he had but one thought: to retain the mastery over his appearance! Not to give way to his feelings. Now Maria's composure was the most important thing.

He climbed up the stairs to his residence, forced a radiant smile, and rang the bell. Frau Maria opened the door herself.

“Here I am!” Otten called out, and quickly drew her to his bosom.

“Oh, you wanderer, you wanderer——!”

He held her head tightly against his breast, until he had mastered his emotions.

“Here I am, Maria——”

“Will you stay now? Well, come in, and let me have a good look at you. Since I knew that you were at Godesberg, I have not gone out of the house, for fear that I should miss you. Was I not right? You have come, here you are. Thank God that it is you.”

“Have you been worrying about me?” he asked and stroked her hair. Now they sat in the little room, and she caught his hands and held them tightly.

“Let me look at you. Don't you feel well? Your eyes seem so restless.”

“This intolerable heat. The sudden change from

the Russian climate was rather hard. Will you give me a glass of water?"

"Wait. I'll make some lemonade in a moment. That is the most cooling drink."

She went a few steps, then turned and, suddenly, embraced him tenderly. "My Joseph!" Then she quickly left the room.

"My God," Otten thought; "this is unbearable. Anything but this unchanging goodness. I am sitting here like a burglar within my own house."

She reappeared in the door, gay and excited as a young girl. He took the glass from her hand, and emptied it at one draught. "Why is it that a fellow will never realize that it is most comfortable at home——?"

"Will you stay, Joseph?"

"Well, now comes the confession. I'll have to take another run over to-morrow. Lüttgen insists upon it. There is to be a night-festival for the finish. And at a finale there must be swan-songs. Hence I wanted to look among my old notes, and to make a proper selection."

"But I could have done that for you."

"I had a longing." And he felt that he spoke the truth. "Besides, this was a day off, and I wanted that to belong to you. To you and Carmen. Is she not at home?"

"She is sitting in her room, studying ambitiously. I only wanted you for myself the first few minutes. Don't be surprised, I am an egotistical woman——"

Once more she quickly pressed her face against his. "Now, we can go to her."

Carmen was sitting in her little gable-room, industri-

ously studying Latin, with a serious expression on her handsome face. When the door opened, she did not turn. She was reading in a subdued, monotonous voice the rules of the grammar. Smilingly Frau Maria looked at her child, and a deep flush passed over Otten's face. "Carmen," he said very softly, but his voice trembled in spite of himself.

"Father!"

Grammar and vocabulary were thrown into the corner, and the tall slender girl hung upon his neck.

"Carmen, my girl—my big, big girl——"

"Oh, father! Where have you been keeping yourself? I want to go on a trip with you over Whitsunday!"

He kissed her like a little child. Kissed her again and again, as if he could not get his fill. Had she grown so tall over night? Had he not loved her so tenderly before? "Come what will," he thought, "she will live after me. And I have not lived for nothing."

"Children, get ready. Let us go out into the fresh air. Like a good, model citizen with wife and child. We'll eat at the Flora, and when we return, we'll have an hour of music and song, that shall make Spring herself sit up and listen."

"Now my Latin is at an end!" Carmen called out merrily, gathered up her scattered schoolbooks, and put on her hat. "Springtime commands it!"

Frau Maria placed her hand on her husband's arm, and walked beside him, filled with joy and pride. Carmen clung to his other arm. Her glances were constantly on the passers-by, to ascertain whether they took proper notice of the appearance of the Ottens. Her merry chatter never ceased. Thus the three people

offered a picture of assured domestic happiness. Otten felt both the cruel incongruity of the picture and a happiness in spite of all; a happiness so sweet that he would not have given up the feeling for anything in the world. His heart began to beat more regularly, and his mind worked properly again. The experiences of the last few hours were relegated to the background, and a strange feeling of well-being came over him. It was a moment to rest and recuperate mentally.

The big garden of the Flora was in full bloom and fragrance. Pretty women and girls were wandering about in fluffy spring costumes, and all of them seemed to wear the same smile of contentment, that beautiful gift of spring. Never had the garden, never had old Cologne seemed so beautiful to Otten. . . .

And the happy mood continued, while they sat at one of the small tables and ate the delicacies Carmen was permitted to select, and drank the wine from glasses of gorgeous cut, as was befitting the brand. It lasted while they sauntered home arm-in-arm as they had come, and while Otten sat at the piano and played beautiful pieces that were full of sentiment, while the woman and the girl stood at his side. It only disappeared, as if it had been suddenly frightened away, when he had gone to bed with a last friendly "Good-night, Maria."

Wild thoughts chased each other in his brain. What had happened? What had he done? He had been untrue to himself, had turned a jolly game into an affair bloody and serious. And for what? Just because he had allowed himself to be used as anvil by a little, passionate, cowardly woman. He, who until then had never known aught but his own merry hammer-

ing. And because he had dropped the friend on account of a little lying reincarnation of Eve. He had been untrue to himself. And that spelled shipwreck to him. He could live only in sunshine.

He listened to Maria's regular breathing. . . . She slept happily at his side, and yet he had wished her good-night so briefly. How did a man like him get such a wife? He who was forced to step into the arena arm-in-arm with the worst? And, suddenly, he saw again the scene of a few hours before, when that other woman, the one who believed herself so far superior to her surroundings, had cowered in fright, had denied him like a culprit, had thrown away all dignity, whining slavishly at the threat to her existence; to that existence which she owed to those surroundings she considered so inferior. Oh, to think no more. To shut out that scene! He felt as if he were choking.

How could a man with such shame as a burden live on with a Maria——? Her woman's love had made him strong. Her woman's love had extended his youth far beyond its natural limit—and he had let a female wreck his life.

It was so degrading that even Maria could not help him, must not help him. "My good, pure Maria," he muttered. And then he lay there, with wide-open eyes and tightly-closed lips, awaiting the morning.

At last it came. Otten went out early. He had taken a number of papers with him, and went to his old notary.

"I have had a bad dream, my good friend," he jested. "And you know what a superstitious lot we artists are. When we discover the first gray hair, we tear it out and imagine ourselves young again, and that others

think us young. But then a day comes when we would have to tear out every hair on our head, to become young again. Somewhere, somebody bids us adieu, and we once more execute our most graceful bow."

"But, my dear Herr Doktor, we all do the same thing, if that is any consolation to you. Even Schiller said: 'Only age is young, and only youth is old.' And an old wine—as you know—can compete thrice over with new."

"At all events, Herr Notar."

"At all events, it is well to prepare. A last will and testament?"

"No, a gift. Here is an inventory of my estate. I want to place this sum at the immediate and unrestricted disposal of Frau Maria Otten; these papers to remain deposited with you until you may have conferred with Frau Maria Otten as to investments and drawing of interest. You will do me a great favor by executing the necessary documents at once, so that I may add my signature. I have to start on a trip this afternoon."

Later Otten visited old Klaus. The old man walked nervously around his friend and benefactor. "It really is a shame that I must desert like this," he said. "But the little place in Zons can't be rented, and it is just as old and dilapidated as I. And then it is the family property. Old age makes a fellow selfish, and a person would like to have a spot of his own to die on."

"I'll visit you, Klaus."

"Jupp, let's shake hands on that!"

"Have you anyone in sight to take your place? Somebody who can be depended upon, even when the master is not at home?"

“I shan’t leave the house until I have a good man in my place. You just depend on that, Jupp.”

“Well, then, adieu, Klaus. I wish you much luck in Zons.”

Toward evening he took leave of Maria and Carmen. They escorted him to the depot, and he succeeded in deceiving them through merry conversation. He had kissed Carmen again and again, and turned to Maria. “All aboard!” the conductor shouted, and closed the coupé-doors. Then he grasped her in a quick, violent embrace. “Farewell!” he said.

She looked after him with frightened eyes, until the train disappeared in the distance. And he saw those frightened eyes until he reached Godesberg, and still later. “The woman within her—the wife within her—has—understood me.—God help her.”

At Godesberg the depot-master greeted him pleasantly.

“Frau Lüttgen took a train for Italy last evening. But Herr Lüttgen is at his villa.”

So she had simply deserted. Caring nothing about the men who would fight with deadly weapons on her account. Only careful of her own little existence. Bravo! Bravo!

He went to an inn and retired early. At five o’clock the next morning he stood in front of the hostelry. His witness awaited him. Slowly and silently they walked along the street, soon leaving the last houses behind. They entered the park at half-past five.

Two hours later they brought Joseph Otten to Bonn, and into the hospital. He was unconscious.

CHAPTER XIV

IN the life-story of Joseph Otten there was a gap. And this gap was an unbridged chasm. Two years had passed, and they had been bitterly empty ones; they had forced themselves wedgelike between yesterday and today. A new pact had to be made with the present.

The day had come when he was to leave the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, into the confines of which he had been banished a year before. It had been a dreary existence, simply a canceling of the days, as they passed. He had made no use of the liberty of the city which is accorded to such nominal prisoners as he, and the walks between the walls of the fortress had sufficed for him. Then he would lean against the wall and look down into the valley of the Rhine, or into the valley of the Lahn, only to turn his head again and follow with his eyes the line of the great river northward, searching the horizon for the three admonishing spires of the Cathedral of Cologne, which, to his fancy, kept reminding him of broken oaths. There was a sameness of the hours, and a sameness of thoughts, and neither hour, nor thought, pointed ahead. The year which had preceded this had dulled his feelings for all that was to come.

He had been lying in the hospital, and the bullet had been extracted from his chest. Merely the edge of the lung had been touched, but the most absolute rest was insisted upon, in order that the wound might heal prop-

erly, and that there might be no after-effects that would make it impossible for him to follow his calling again.

Otten had submitted silently to every instruction of the professor of medicine. He let the physician do with him as he thought best, understood and followed every hint, and, when alone, lay in bed without stirring, staring at the ceiling. One word only had been written indelibly in his mind, and that word he could not banish. His art was in danger. One night—the nurse was sleeping on a sofa in the room—the question arose monstrous and fearful in his mind. His art in danger! He had endangered everything else before, his wife, his child, his reputation, and the reputation of others. But in the practice of his art he had always found recuperation, new strength and vigor. It had enabled him to make up for other things, to even matters up, to win the hearts of people to himself. And it had been the secret of his surprisingly resilient youthfulness. To become an art-invalid meant more for him—to become an invalid in everything, an invalid in life. There remained nothing but old age.

Perspiration covered his forehead and his body. Out of the bed covering, out of the wall, and from all the corners of the room, there crawled little, crooked, gray old men, limping and tottering, with canes and with crutches, shaking their heads, grinning at him with hideous familiarity, and climbing with great difficulty upon his chest. Then he had given vent to a cry of despair—and to only one. The nurse had leaped from her couch, had hurried to his bedside, and in the middle of the night had called the physician.

And then all sorts of figures had passed his bedside, ghostlike and unreal. Several times when he had

opened his eyes, there had been above his a pair of eyes that could only belong to Maria. Then the fluttering restlessness within him had increased, and the cause had not escaped the physician.

“Everything that might cause a mental disturbance must be prevented, Frau Doktor,” the physician had said. “You are much too brave not to realize the effect of your presence here. I will have you called as soon as there is a convalescence and the patient asks for you.”

And silently as she had come, Frau Maria had returned to Cologne.

Slowly Otten had recuperated. And a day had come when he felt the longing to see someone. He desired to see the student Lachner. At the secretary’s office in the university his address was learned, and that same afternoon Moritz Lachner sat at the bedside of the ideal of his childhood and his youth, pale and with bated breath.

“Well, well, well—do I look so dreadful?”

“Only a little—thin as yet, Herr Doktor.”

Otten’s hand passed over his hollowed cheeks. Nose and cheekbones protruded markedly. “Just wait until I am up and about again. You can’t keep migratory birds in a cage. But just throw them out of the open window, and they will quickly remember how to fly. Can you spare me a little time, Moritz?”

“My time is yours, Herr Doktor.”

Otten nodded in silence. His hands played upon the covering. “Have you been in Cologne recently?” he asked suddenly.

“You mean in the Rheingasse——”

“You have a fine ear, Moritz. We will easily understand each other.”

“Frau Doktor and Carmen are well. They live very quiet and retired lives.”

“I believe it——”

“May I also speak of—your—opponent?”

“Of whom? He is no longer my opponent, my boy. But I don’t know what there would be to tell of him.”

“He will have a stiff arm for life, Herr Doktor,” and the eyes of the student glowed with satisfaction.

“You must be mistaken. It was I who paid the bill.”

“No,” Lachner said, “he was wounded before you were hit. Only he did not permit them to notice it, in order to get a shot. It is his left arm.”

“God in heaven,” Otten slowly remarked, “what a hatred that man must have felt——”

When Moritz Lachner received no further reply, he softly arose. “Until to-morrow, Herr Doktor, if I may.” And when no answer came, he left the room on tiptoes, deeply affected. There was silence in the room. Now and then a branch of the climbing rosebush outside tapped against the window. And Otten opened his eyes wide and mumbled: “How he must have hated me—— That makes me smaller still——”

On the next day he greeted Lachner with a friendly face. “Sit down, Moritz. I had a little weak spell yesterday. But that will not happen again, I assure you. And now don’t look so worried. Show me that a person may have confidence in you and have a serious talk with you. A talk of a sort that, in ordinary times, the difference of age would not very well permit. Can I do that?”

“You can, Herr Doktor.”

“All my life I have had such a wealth of joy that I did not place much value upon that multi-colored throng of acquaintances, so that to-day I can scarcely recall an honest face, that would have to tell me anything aside from *dulci júbilo*, or to which I would have anything else to say. Only the Reverend Heinrich Koch. You know the professor. But he is in Rome, and himself suffers under the burden of life, and I would not care to trouble him. Hence you will do me a favor by being twenty years older for a while. I need you.”

“Herr Doktor——” And Moritz Lachner slowly pushed his hand forward on top of the bed covering. Otten took it, patted it, and dropped it. There was a lengthy pause.

“Now listen carefully. I will be able to get up within a few days, and in a week or two will be able to leave the hospital and go to a bathing-place. Later there probably will be—the trial, and what will follow I need not tell you. You are a student, and you know. A year at Hohenbreitstein is the least. Are you listening?”

“Yes——”

“If a human being, who heretofore has never hesitated to make any sacrifice for me, wishes me to find my equilibrium again”—Otten breathed deeply—“then I ask that human being to leave me alone, to let me go my own road. You shall go and take the message. You have a good heart, and a sensitive soul, and you will find the words. Upon paper such a message would look cold and distorted. And you shall add: That the only deep and real love I have ever had, has been my love for her. And that this love has been the

best thing in my whole life, and will remain its best. And that, therefore, I could not see her again—not yet, at least. For, in order to live, I must be able to fly, and must not crawl. She will understand me. She has always understood me.”

Moritz Lachner sat, with his hands in his lap, opening and closing his hands, to hide his emotions.

“Will you do that for me, Moritz?”

“I will, Herr Doktor.”

Otten gave him his hand. His eyes looked steadier, his whole manner was more calm. “And give my love to Carmen. My blood in her is an evil inheritance, if she does not know how to ennoble it. Moritz, you will look after her, from time to time. Don’t consider everything beautiful in her, and don’t remain silent. There are real values within her.”

“I know it, Herr Doktor.”

“Come again to-morrow.”

When next he called, Lachner found Otten out of bed. He stood up straight and extended his hands to his youthful friend. “Soon I’ll be out of this. I can hardly wait for it. My chest is in such fine condition that I would like to procure—a new soul, to match it. Well—never mind. First of all: Air, Clavigo!” He chatted all afternoon, told of the travels of his youth, and the years that had followed, but he did not refer to the conversation of the day previous. He had done with it.

Six months later he had begun his imprisonment. And the days had dragged along, as if they had been weighted down with chains. The others, who, like him, had been banished for a period to this prison of chivalry and gentlemen, could not understand his reserve. They

shortened their days as best they could, once in a while brewing a bowl among themselves, and making extensive use of the permission to leave the confines of the fortress to visit the town. They considered this sort of imprisonment as a mere matter of form, not as real punishment.

Only Otten felt the shame of it. The shame of being bound to one spot, of being limited in his movements, in his desires, and doings by rules, be they ever so lax. His freedom-loving nature could not become accustomed to a life of confinement. To ask for "permissions" like a schoolboy, or a recruit—he had to laugh at the mere thought. Thus the year became in his case one of mental and physical torture, and this torture increased whenever he took a retrospective glance at the cause of it all. For that Woman! Who had known, instead of the bravery of the big sin, nothing but the cowardice of the small. And who had dragged him, as a vain dupe, into the mire of her cowardice. This he could not learn to endure.

And in this mood he wrote to Frau Maria and offered her a divorce. For the sake of her own reputation, which he wished to respect in the future.

Her answer came, without maudlin sensitiveness, clear and strong. She declined the divorce. "It is not so long ago," she wrote, "that I could have forgotten how my heart belonged to you, even without the formality of official sanction. How could the divorce change that, since the eventual union could not? You are free, as you have ever been. Whether you will remain away longer, or come home to me, Joseph, you know that we have accustomed ourselves to love—not to complain. Therefore, for the first time, I am not

able to comply with your wish. You shall retain your harbor, if it be merely for the knowledge of having it."

A few days before his discharge he had a surprise. The manufacturer, Carl Lüttgen of Cologne, asked for a few minutes of conversation. Should he decline to see him? No. In his own way, he was no coward. He took a paper and wrote, asking Lüttgen to wait two days, as he was accustomed to receive visitors only as a free man. Day after to-morrow he would be at Koblenz, at the "Hotel zum Riesen."

Now he was free. The mighty rock, the last bastion that had held him, lay behind him. And with his hands in the pockets of his jacket, he wandered slowly over the bridge-of-ships that led to Koblenz, counting every pontoon, every yoke of the bridge. He looked at every pedestrian, at every workingman. They all seemed intensely interesting to him. At the Hotel zum Riesen a room had been reserved for him. He stood at the open window, and looked at the Rhine, flowing past below, when the waiter announced Lüttgen. Slowly Otten turned about. And there stood the two men, looking quietly into each other's eyes.

"You have grown old, Joseph."

For a second something akin to humor played about Otten's lips. "And you—rather impolite."

"Pardon me. I am an old bear. But it was so marked that I was shocked. Are you ill?"

"Only sick of past surroundings. The last years have been poison for me. I need a change of air. I believe the sun of Italy will soon rejuvenate my blood and drive this deathly pallor from my features."

"You intend to go to Italy? She is there, too."

Otten stepped toward him. "Lüttgen," he said;

“please do not even mention her name. Even that exists for me no longer.”

“I had not thought that it did. There will hardly be any difference in our way of looking at this matter. Hence, let me talk about it quietly. I am not doing it on her account, but on my own.”

“On yours? Please take a seat.”

They sat opposite each other. The pause that followed, neither noted. Both had learned to wait.

“Joseph,” Lüttgen finally said, “I did not wish that you should go away and continue to consider me a bloodthirsty bully. It was not meant for you that time. Surely I knew her mastery of all the arts of Eve, and her art in denouncing and slandering, and I knew what she was at bottom. There are some women that are born as a friend to some Louis the Fourteenth, or Louis the Fifteenth. They work from earliest childhood toward that one goal, and when they happen to become mixed up with a decent chap on the road, they have to demoralize him, before they go farther. I had been caught badly. And I wanted to regain my self-respect through you. And then it had to take hold of you also. Can you see, Joseph, that a simple rupture with her would not have given me back my equilibrium? Those damned, tantalizing, scornful eyes would have pursued me night and day. I had to find something that would give me the upper hand, something that would humiliate her thoroughly. And then that miserable, unhappy thought, to challenge you out of hatred for her took hold of me. It was simply because of my hatred for her, and because I liked you too much, Joseph.”

Otten silently nodded. Lüttgen continued:

“Of course, I had not anticipated the result of my speech at the dinner-table; had not expected that she would deny you, and that now I could no longer injure her fatally through you. In reality that should have ended the whole matter. Never in her life would she have been able to rid herself in my eyes of the awful humiliation her own cowardice had meant for her, and it was a foregone conclusion that, after this scene, she would leave my house as quickly as possible. But also your superior chivalry came as a surprise to me. Now I could not turn back. I was angered anew, and I was being pushed on. Your cool chivalry towards a lady who had just denied you, I considered as an intended affront, an added insult. Blinded by my fury, I saw in you another version of her. And thus it came to pass. Only when you fell, I felt how dear you were to me. Joseph, I would like to beg your pardon. I dragged you into this thing. I should never have wounded you.”

“Through, Lüttgen?”

“I am through.”

“I don’t presume that we are sitting here merely to say nice things to each other. If you feel that you have made a mistake, I”—his eyes flared up—“feel that I have made a far greater one. And through it I probably have—who knows—missed the connection, without which life is a thing of fractures, and not whole or complete.”

He arose, and so did Lüttgen.

“Young yesterday—old to-day. That is the receipt and the acknowledgment, Lüttgen. Perhaps we’ll once more catch an end of Dame Fortune’s gown, if we exert ourselves. With an effort! Formerly we

had it and held it without effort. At all events, I will go away once more to try. You would like to shake my hand, Lüttgen, and I want to grasp yours. So——! And now, that is settled. *Vogue la galère.*”

“Farewell, Joseph.”

“Thanks, Lüttgen, and—farewell.”

On the next day Otten traveled over the St. Gotthard to Rome. “After all,” he thought, “I was right that time, when I was afraid to ride out of the Italian spring into the German winter, and when I left the train at Basle. I wish I had turned around and gone back. How will I find Rome? What will I find there of my own self? And that is my chief concern, for I am bringing along so very little——”

As he arrived in Rome, his figure straightened up. It was around Easter time, and, in order not to be crammed into one of the crowded hotels, he drove to private lodgings on the Via Frattina, near the Spanish Staircase. With hungry glances he took in the scenes. Rome remained Rome at all times. Everything depended entirely upon him.

That evening he found Heinrich Koch at Peppe’s at the Fontana Trevi. The finely modeled head of the savant was raised in surprise when Otten entered, and the eyes behind the spectacles lit up. “By all the Saints! Joseph——!”

“Good-evening, Heinrich; I have come again.”

“All day long I have had a peculiar feeling. My landlady’s cat was licking and cleaning itself, and the Signora said: ‘There is a visitor coming.’ Cats and women have the finest instincts. Joseph—Joseph—how glad I am!”

He drew a glass from the center of the table, rinsed

it with a few drops of wine, and filled it to the brim. "To your health! Drink and be welcome."

"And to your health, Heinrich. . . . How good that does taste."

"Let me look at you. A curious person, who knows no more the taste of the Genzano. Have you been in the realm of shadows with Odysseus? Where the poor devils only get cups filled with blood for refreshment? Try another."

"You have hit it, without wishing to, Heinrich. I am coming from the realm of shadows, and am trying to find sunshine again."

"The tone of your voice has grown serious. And you vanished two years ago."

"Do you think it impossible to regain two years?"

"The question is, whether one wishes to regain them."

"You are—informed?"

"Wait a minute," Koch said, reflectively moving his spectacles. "It must be a long time ago—or it only seems so to me, because with me minutes often drag as if they were eternities—when some vague report reached here of a heated encounter in which Joseph Otten's storm-pennant fluttered. But I had seen your storm-pennant flutter so frequently, that I was not surprised. It ended—ill for you?"

"Thank your Creator every day for your celibacy. And don't hold on to the bottle."

"For my celibacy? Between serail and celibacy, there is a middle road. We will not dispute that question. It does not suit our gray heads. For only now I see that your locks, too, have been compelled to pay

the tax. You have grown gray, but it is becoming to you."

Otten looked up from his glass. "Is my name still mentioned here once in a while?"

"You must not demand from Rome any more than Rome. This is the pigeon-cote of the universe. Pigeons fly in and fly out. And each likes to be the center of the crowd."

"That means: I have been forgotten——"

"Not among the old folks. But the young ones are demanding things more stormily than before. Or, does it only seem so to us, because we are growing slower? Names are now being made over-night. Artists are raised upon the shield, to be thrown down to-morrow for others. They are as quick in forgetting as they are in proclaiming. Just now a heroic tenor from Munich is holding court of all musicians. A nice-looking chap, whose voice appeals to women's nerves."

"Has he any brains?"

"I told you, he has a voice."

"And how is it among our friends? Do they ever ask for me?"

"Here people ask only about those who are being mentioned in the newspapers. Since they ceased to write about you, you were believed to have died."

"Then they forgot, and went into the camps of the new ones."

"And went into the camps of the new ones."

Otten slowly took a drink of wine. "And you, Heinrich?"

"My dear boy, I am living here as a historical curiosity; I am growing to be a Roman celebrity. There

is not a stranger, searching for information, who is not asked the question: Have you met Professor Koch, the great historian, who knows not only the history of the Popes, but also the history of their wines; that luminary of the church, who loves a drink, and who detests the shavelings?—And I am becoming acquainted with people by the thousand. They are not growing better, Joseph; only more forward. And the old saying remains true: The old friend I will still call mine; the new one may not be so fine.” He extended his hand across the table. “We two, Joseph, we’ll remain as of old. It seems strange, and I don’t know why it is, but it seems that, time eventually having dealt the cards more evenly, we understand each other better now than ever. As a churchman, I began with a loss, you, as an artist, with a big gain. How much longer, and we both will be the same—lone human beings.”

“Never!”

“I wish you another lustrum, no, a decade. And when my prophecy goes to pieces, I will sing a Te-Deum. Otten, my dear fellow, I am not saying this to frighten you, I am only telling it to you, in case there might come a time when you may despair; when you would give a kingdom for a human face like your own. Then think of me. We two together, we could defy heaven and earth. For we have the common recollection of our happy youth. I wonder how old Klaus is?”

“Is the little Eccelenza still living in Rome?”

“She has gone with her husband to Rio de Janeiro, his new post. Once she sent her duenna to me to ask about you. You had scarcely left.”

“Indeed—— She sent, to inquire about me. That was nice of her.”

On a beautiful spring afternoon Otten drove out into the Campagna. He was alone in the vehicle. The party with which he had had an appointment had not waited for the hour set for the meeting, and had driven ahead. He leaned back in the little rig, and basked in the sunshine. The horse trotted with a slow, leisurely gait.

Formerly, even two short years ago, he would have urged the driver with the promise of extra tips to hurry to the objective point of the drive, where Evvivas would have been awaiting him. To-day he was in no hurry. He would not be missed. All about him the Campagna stood in full bloom. The meadows and pastures, too extended to behold in their entirety, were covered with glowing colors. The Campagna in bloom. That was all.

As usual, the driver turned on his seat in front of the Osteria, the Faccia Fresca, to ask if he should pull up. Otten told him to stop, and started forth to see if his party had remained here somewhere beneath the vine-clad pergolas. Carrying bottle and glass, he walked through the rows of the guests. They were not here. Then he took a seat near a small table, and drank his wine in solitude among so many people.

The noisy crowd shouted and laughed the same as it always does at this place. Troubadours sang their arias, the mandolins chirped, the tambourines rattled and boomed. Otten looked up. A brown girl in multi-colored garb extended her hand toward him, begging a soldo. Her black eyes beamed upon him, as if they existed for him alone. They would beam just the same

upon his neighbor. He gave the girl a coin and looked after her, as she walked with swaying hips from table to table. Upon the neighbor—— Formerly he had never troubled whether there was a neighbor or not. But it seemed to him that, since then, his vision must have grown more acute. Her hands had been brown and dirty, and the tables were unclean, and the waiter, carrying the wine about, had thrust a finger into the neck of each liter bottle. And here he himself had shouted at one time: “Youth, oh, my youth, let me hold on to thee!”

And surely it had not been any more beautiful than it was now. In truth, was it really so beautiful, so indescribably beautiful? With a long glance he scanned the landscape, and he found a melancholy note in it, a note of a rapid decay, which he had never noticed before. If only Koch, the old Roman, were here, so that he could ask him. And he plainly heard the voice of his friend: “The landscape does not change. The eyes that see it, change.”

Again he sat in his little rig, driving along the road of all roads, the Via Appia. And he saw only the ruins, but not their majesty.

At the Osteria Antica he found those whom he had sought. They sat upon the roof of the hostelry, and the circle scarcely opened to admit Otten.

The young spoiled heroic tenor was relating his adventures. There were princesses galore in his tale, but no dragons. The time of the fairy-tales lay in the past.

Somebody introduced Otten. The young singer looked up in surprise. “What, you are still alive? Surely, I have heard your name—a long time ago?”

“Unfortunately I never heard yours till this day. I have been in the desert several years.”

“Is there really a desert where my name is not known?” the young singer laughed. And Otten’s fine ear heard the vanity amidst the intended humor.

“There are places mine was hardly known,” he replied jokingly.

“Well, yes. Now it is our turn! Old sentimentality is worked to death. Only in the theater the singer stands as he should, provided a fellow is up-to-date enough to feel the trend of the time.”

“Every time has her trend, my dear sir. Hence, every period is modern. The meaning of that word is very elastic.”

“Oh, very well. Just look at our modern composers, and at us modern singers. We are no longer roaming Bohemians, we are people of the world, and first-class people of the world at that. And with that spirit as basis, we produce.”

“It is a question whether poesy has pitched her tents among first-class people of the world? Gentlemen, I call on you as witnesses. We, frequently enough, drew her from Trastevere.”

“Don’t degrade us before the maestro, dottore.”

The youth was the maestro, he the dottore. Nothing is eternal but change. Otten smiled.

“At all events,” the young man shouted, “we have the hilt in our hand, and we intend to use it. The crop is ripe, the reaper coming. Youth has the floor.”

“Dottore, don’t forget that once upon a time you, too, were young.”

“Once upon a time—no, I am not forgetting it. But

the young forget that the day will come when they, too, will be old."

"What does that mean?"

"It simply means that some day they will be the old men. And behind them another period will be pushing onward to destroy their temples. And they will have to look on without understanding. They will have to! Gentlemen, therefore all honest artists, all honest human beings, should strive to wipe out the border between youth and age, rather than to emphasize it. The smooth skin, or the wrinkled? Often the fire burns most brightly in the old round stoves."

"You are spoiling our mood, dottore. Let us be merry, let us be jolly."

"I am in the best of moods."

When they started back towards Rome, Otten used his one-horse vehicle. Again he was alone. The big landau was crowded. Six sat in the fond, and a seventh had mounted the seat beside the driver. As he stepped into his rig, something forced him to look aside. A carriage had stopped. A tall man with a wide full beard, a well-known sculptor, stepped out, and, passing him with a bow, entered the Osteria to bring a fiasco of wine to the carriage. The woman sitting in the carriage was Frau Amely. For a moment their eyes met. Then she dropped her lorgnette, after nervously raising it. Without a change of expression, he turned away, entered his vehicle, and drove past her.

The Campagna was glowing in red and golden tints, and the sky, in glowing colors, arched above. "The evening sun," Otten mused, looking at the driver's back.

"I must go on," Otten confessed to himself a few days later. "I have not yet regained my absolute self-control. A person cannot leave accustomed ranks for a great length of time, and re-enter them suddenly, without finding that he has lost the proper and usual gait. We have to learn things anew. And Rome is not the place for that." And he said so to his friend Koch.

"I am glad that you have the courage for it, Joseph——"

"The courage to live? I intend to prove a great deal more of that."

"I wish I could look at things like that. O God, to get away from this life! My boy, when I think how we used to leap overboard, swim like ducks and dive, wherever the water was deepest. It was music when the water rushed into a fellow's ears! And that music could have been improved! And now I am wading in shallow water, decade after decade, and the river of life flows away back yonder."

"It is your calling, Heinrich."

"A man's calling is whatever his inclination and talents call for. I possess the qualities of an historian, but I should never have been a priest. And, in the course of years, my tonsure has grown larger, not smaller. Has religion such need of applying strait-jackets? Is it necessary that we priests should continue to form a gloomy class, instead of proclaiming the sunshine of life, and praising God, as we feel it and Him in our innermost? The devil resides in the flesh! What mediæval nonsense."

"Resign from your office, Heinrich."

"We are bound for life. Only now, when I am on

the downward path, I feel the enormity of the word. For life—— That is hollow now, and we battle along with the imitation. Yes, you have understood me aright. I battle with the devil and his tribe, with the punishments of Hell, with atonements, with miracles, dogmas, and stigmatizations. And I could throw all of that overboard with a happy smile, and be a religious but a free and happy man, if I could find the heart once more to have a good hearty laugh. Until then I am an adventurer—just the same as you. Through sins, and through virtues. The only difference is, that you are doing it of your own free will—and freedom, a real man's liberty, is ever a child of greatness.”

“Come with me into the world. I'll sing, and you collect.”

“And if it were a joke—I'd do it, Joseph! But I have not yet finished my history of the church. A few more volumes remain to be written. And I do not want to leave behind me a torso as the sum-total of my life's work. That would not even let me find rest in Heaven. There must be a clean finish!—Where do you intend to go?”

“My agent has long ago been wanting to arrange an extended tour through all of North America. I will telegraph him, to get to work at once. Then I can go aboard a steamer in two weeks and wave a farewell to the Pillars of Hercules. Good-by, Old World! In the land of unlimited possibilities I will find the possibility to again become—Joseph Otten.”

“Will you promise me one thing, Joseph?” Heinrich Koch said after a moment of thought. “Promise me, upon our old boyhood friendship?”

“Tell me, what?”

“To return by the way of Italy, when you come back in a few years? I will—be industrious—in the meanwhile—industrious, to finish my history of the church.”

“I promise, Heinrich!”

“You see, we both have lost. If we would put the remnants together?”

“That would be damned jolly! I only fear that we would kill ourselves laughing too much.”

“Do you place such a low estimate upon your power of resistance?”

“Old fellow, I am going to the Yankees. What will be left of me, body and soul, when they are through with me, I will gladly contribute as my share in the business.”

“That is a go, Joseph. I’ll wait. And as for the rest—we’ll cross the bridges when we get to them.”

Only Heinrich Koch came to the depot to see Joseph Otten off, when he went by train to Naples, there to go aboard a steamer. Joseph Otten carried his head erect, as in the olden days. Distance was calling, and he meant to meet it, head up. But it was his iron will that gave him the necessary elasticity, not the longing of yore. Silently the two men stood upon the railroad platform. The train was ready to leave. “Pertenza! Pronto!”

Heinrich Koch shoved his eyeglasses upon his forehead and touched with his lips the forehead of his friend.

“Farewell, Jupp.”

“Adieu, ’Drickes——”

And, as the train was pulling out of the station, the

reverend professor pulled his handkerchief out of the pocket of his long, well-worn coat, waved it frantically, and shouted as loud and lustily as he could, while Otten looked out of the car window: "Alaaf Kölle! Jupp! Alaaf Kölle!"

CHAPTER XV

ONCE more the name of Joseph Otten arose in its former glory. From the new world came reports—enthusiastic praise of the master of witchcraft, who handled songs and poems as he would living things whose souls he invoked and liberated. For two whole years the big cities of America took turn in praising him. With surprise Germany received the news of the extraordinary successes of the man whom they had idolized at one time, and then counted as among the dead or lost, and only those who thoroughly understood conditions read between the glowing accounts and criticism the trumpet calls of a clever impresario, who knew his Americans thoroughly, who knew their leaning toward the sensational, and who met it by telling of wondrous incidents in the life of the interesting maestro, things that made him appear not only as the only artist of artists, but also as the last knight without fear or favor. "America," some knowing ones said, and added, shaking their heads: "A good press agent means the game half won."

Joseph Otten had become popular in America. He knew the reason. He knew that his personality was being exploited rather than his art. And one day, when he read in a newspaper an exaggerated account of some adventures of his, under the headline, "Friend of Women, Enemy of Men," a flush of anger mounted to his cheeks.

But he took no steps to stop this thing, so repulsive to him. His anger flickered out in a smile of self-condemnation, he pushed the paper aside, and from this time on the newspapers remained untouched by him. "I must not mind. No matter what is the attraction, as long as the audience is satisfied, I must be content now, for I must not give in, be it ever so painful."

And the thought, to earn in America a new fortune, which would enable him to spend the evening of his life far away from the rush and bustle of the world, and in accordance with his own taste, took hold of his entire being. After appearing in all the big cities, he toured the smaller ones. He went through every part of the United States, through the cities of Canada and of Mexico. And finally he made a second tour through the big cities of the States. Of course, thought Otten, it was the press-agent's work which filled the houses night after night to overflowing; but the fact remained that the audiences were really pleased with what Otten considered the remnants of his art. And when, one evening in May, Otten boarded a steamer in New York, bound for Genoa, the two years he had intended to spend in America had become four. Even more silent than his going had been, was this, his return. Joseph Otten the man was all that returned. The remains of his art he considered buried in America.

Now he intended to bid a last farewell to that country which throughout his life he had loved above all others. From there he wished to take with him the last impressions, as a fund to draw from in the lonely future. Once more he would travel throughout Italy, before placing the Alps between himself and his

lost youth. . . . At Naples he left the steamer, boarding another bound for Palermo. He wanted to greet every foot of Italian earth once more. The sun was burning hot, but he needed to gather much warmth for the winter that lay ahead.

A final farewell, this. . . . The Conca d'Oro, the Golden Shell, lay between the mountains that skirt Palermo, filled with golden sunshine and with golden fruits. The radiant garden of nature, covering the mountain-sides with flowers, and with orange and lemon orchards, pained his eyes. Otten passed the ever green hill Monreale, with the Cathedral of the Norman kings; the fairy-park of the Villa Taska oppressed him with the richness of its sweet fragrance, in the Cathedral at Palermo there were too many people, and only when he came to the porphyry caskets of the emperors of the Hohenstaufen Dynasty, to the resting-place of the powerful and despotic Heinrich VI., and of that laughing victor, the second Friedrich, he leaned against the caskets and dreamt of the ancient Teuton longing for the country of Sunshine beyond the Alps. Porphyry caskets. . . . Entombed. . . .

These appeared to him the proper surroundings. To draw strength for the life to come from the fate of the dead. Not to value one's own existence too highly. There is another awaiting each of us.

He walked through underground passages, following the red glow of a light, swaying to and fro before him with the rapid movements of the guide. And Otten even urged the man to go still faster. And still he was walking through a realm where time had ceased to have significance, through the tombs of the Cappuccini Monastery. His steps echoed in the immense vaults.

On, on! That was not what he was seeking, that created no proud mental superiority. It only caused nausea. The greatness and grandeur of death which arises even from despoiled graves into the world of the living, filling it with awe and with respect, had been supplanted here by mummery. And his angry glances met mummies, clothed in the gowns and decorated with the insignia of their station in life, hanging suspended in bundles from the walls, standing together in groups, or lying in caskets of glass or rotting wood, exposed to every eye, to every profanity, to every touch, their skin and bones yellow, brown and black from the dust of the years. Women who had once been beautiful, whose beauty had been jealously guarded by husbands or brothers, now in torn and tattered rags, their limbs exposed. Matrons, dressed in the remnant of a hood or a shirt, children and babies in dusty little beds. From the corners came the dead stare of officers, of distinguished Palermitans, of dignitaries of the church. Moth-eaten hair still clung to their skulls and chins.

“Here you see, Signore,” said the guide, “a priest of the year of 1620. He still has his tongue in his mouth.” And he opened the mouth of the suspended corpse, moved the tongue within, that had become as hard as leather, and then stroked his own beard with satisfaction.

“Avanti, and may the devil take you!” Once more the guide stopped near the exit. He raised the lid of a box and held up his light. “One of Garibaldi’s Generals, who fell before Palermo.”

Joseph Otten stepped nearer. He stood, deeply touched. A brave warrior was being exhibited here for a tip. Why did you fall and die?

In the bottom of the box rested the body of a slender man in a simple shroud. Matted black hair hung about the wonderful head, a curly black beard surrounded the chin. An expression of solemnity still lingered about the face of the hero.

“Did you anticipate your fate? That they would show you like a stuffed animal? That they would even tear the simple shroud upon your chest, to show hysterical women that, after decades, your dense black hair is still curly? The gratitude of posterity for the elect. To rest in peace.—It sounds like bitter sarcasm.”

Joseph Otten stood upon a tall rock, and his eye was searching for Syracuse. Not for the rows of houses upon the old Isle of Ortygia, that bear the name today, like the sound of a bell ringing afar. He sought Syracuse, the glorious City of antiquity, the Power of two seas, and his eyes searched stones and pebbles in an empty, lonely country. Only the seas had remained throughout the thousands of years, and the waters of the African sea still mingled whisperingly with the waters of the Ionic Sea, just as they had mingled in ancient times.

And again Otten thought of fate, that swept away without pity name and fame. The traces of the queen city of the Earth had disappeared, and the stones of her ruined walls had been scattered to the winds. Far away to the horizon, the ground was sparsely covered with poor vegetation, and the great names of the past sounded hollow and meaningless in the mouth of the guide, who was standing beside Otten on a step hewn out of the rock, pointing now this way, now that, mentioning the sections of the city, now resting beneath

heavy earth, removed far from the pygmy human race: Ortygia, with the mythical spring Arethusa, Achradina, Tyche, Neapolis, Epipolä!

“Where are the temples of the gods? Where is the mighty palace of Hieron, and the lofty Acropolis of the tyrant Dionysius, of the man who put the stamp of his greatness upon his time, and who was despoiled of his glory through legends? The barren land gives forth no answer. Or will it answer? Does it but ask, that you will listen to the answer more intently?”

He descended the steps, the remains of which had been torn from the bowels of the earth. Poor remains, without the ornamentation of beautiful pillars and joyous capitals, that once had adorned the greatest theater of Greater Greece. And he descended farther into the bowels of the cliffs that thousands of years ago had given blocks of stone for the erection of that wondrous city, into the quarries, into the Latomien.

Was he removed from the world? Had he, after all, found the pathway to the garden of Eden, to the beauty that was lost? Towering, perpendicular walls of rock frowned upon him right and left, his heart was beating heavily, as if between prison walls—then, suddenly—a gateway in the rock. The towering walls receded, a valley opened before his vision, a gem protected by its rocky walls against intrusion, a paradise full of roses and myrrh, of laurels and palms, of flowers and trees of every species. The air was mild and balmy. Silence reigned absolute. And the longing that drives and forever drives the human being since he lost the garden of Eden, and cannot find again that lovely spot, despite his homesick soul,—that longing ceased to trouble the wanderer. As if he were within the confines

of a consecrated place, Otten folded his hands. A fairy-tale of flowers. . . . And beneath this fairy-tale of flowers slept something great; slept Syracuse, the queen of cities. Old Syracuse, in her sleep of death. How beautiful it was. Dead—and beneath flowers.

Another quarry, and another latomie of flowers received him and bore him away from the day, that remained behind. A walk with many strange windings led him through the heart of the rock, and a memory flashed through his mind: "You are within the 'Ear of Dionysius.'" The guide spoke. It resounded from the walls, the ends of which he could not see, like yelling and raving, like crying and sobbing, like laughter of the insane all in one. Here thousands of Athenians had perished miserably after the unfortunate battle of Syracuse, for which Demosthenes and Nikias had paid with their heads. High up in the rocky wall is a tiny cave, and legends tell that there the tyrant Dionysius stayed, to listen to the conversation of his prisoners. For here the echo of the whispered word grew in volume to the magnitude of the ocean's roar.

Silently Otten walked through. And he heard the stones speak of the decay of Athens, and of the blood of its most noble sons, and he heard them speak of victorious Syracuse, itself no less the victim of fate.

"*Sic transit gloria mundi*——" he muttered.

And he went farther and deeper into the realm of the lost city. There was something within him that urged him on, to investigate death and decay amidst the glories engendered by the warm sun of Sicily.

Ahead of him there walked a wearer of the hood, a monk of San Giovanni. He carried an antique oil-lamp, suspended by an iron chain, the wavering light

of which shone in ghostly fashion upon the tombs on either side. The inclined subterranean passage came to a sudden turn, silently the monk raised his light, and before their eyes was a maze. A city was spread out before them, with streets and alleys. "This is in reality old Syracuse," Otten thought, with a feeling of depression; "I am in the city of the dead."

Silent homes they are, indeed, that at every step are on either side of the visitor, making progress slow and breathing difficult. Vault after vault is passed. Thousands and thousands of them. Here a family of rulers in the spacious grave of their dynasty, there a single person, yonder a child.—No, they sleep there no longer. Their bones, their jewels, their ornaments, their death-money, their rags, and their sacred treasures have been taken away to Museums, to be placed in show cases, behind glass walls, and only the thousands of empty vaults tell the wanderer: "Here you have what you seek. Here is Syracuse."

The sun beating upon his head, Otten traveled through Calabria. He passed by the ruins of temples, of Saracen towers, and of Norman castles, going along the almost endless, lonely coast, and the blooming change from antique and romantic beauty told him nothing. He only saw death at work. Death and decay.

"I should not have lingered," he often thought. "The knowledge that I will never see any of this again draws a gray veil over my eyes."

He had traveled long stretches in a little vehicle. But now he boarded a train and rode to Naples, going on to Capri without delay. June had arrived. But not as usual did an overheated sun look down upon

burnt-out shrubbery and parched flower gardens. Spring had not yet released its hold. It was a coaxing, delightful late spring, loath to leave the multi-colored shores. The fragrance of blooming flowers, laurels, and myrtle was floating over Capri. Coaxingly it was being wafted over the pale-blue sea to meet the fragrance sent by the gardens of Sorrento as answer to silent courting. But the human beings who came, year after year, from the North, causing the brown Capriots to disappear amidst their fourfold greater number, let the steamers return empty to Naples, and held Monte Tiberio and Monte Solaro as their own, as well as the big and the little Marina, for the simple reason that Spring was setting them an example. A happy dolce far niente prevailed upon the island. People hardly did more than breathe. . . .

Quite out of sorts, Otten retreated from the crowds. He had hoped to find the island in summery solitude. But instead, everywhere this gossipy, inquisitive, intriguing crowd, which it seems to be the fate of Capri to shelter once each season.

Amidst the blue ether across the gulf the silhouette of Mount Vesuvius was seen. The sarcastic fiery spirit of the Mountain had grown weary of the sameness of things, of the peace in nature, and to show its disgust and contempt, spat its anger up into the air. As yet the light of day absorbed the fiery glow. Only an immense pillar of smoke forced from the mouth of the crater, was visible, arising and filling the atmosphere above with clouds. The people looked casually at the spectacle from piazzas on Capri.

Late in the afternoon, Otten again walked out to the wall that extends along the top of the hill above the

great Marina. After listening to the shallow gossip of the traveling philistines, he wanted Nature to speak to him. And Nature spoke.

What pyrotechnics were those, yonder at the coast where night had come? Had Mount Vesuvius been illuminated in honor of some world-wandering hero? The immense pyramid arose like a specter, alone visible amidst the shadows of the night. At short intervals a geyser of fire spouted forth from the summit of the mount, and on its slopes the flaming, glaring contour of a river was drawn. Nothing else to be seen for miles and miles around. Silence and darkness about, and in the distance, far away, across the sea, a riddle of fire and flame.

The next night, and the following, Otten returned to that spot, watching that great, wonderful spectacle. And when the freshening breeze of the third morning swept across the sea, a tiny vessel carried him past the gardens and grottoes of Sorrento to Vico Equense, where he hired a rig. And to the accompaniment of the cracking of the whip and the shouts of the driver, Otten was carried along the street at a rapid gait, passing through Castellamare, and away from the seashore through meadows and fields, until, from a low hillside, the ancient, resurrected city of Pompeii stared at him through dreary, empty eyeholes.

“The incline railway to Mount Vesuvius has been put out of commission by the government, on account of the threatening danger,” the hotelkeeper at the side of the road announced glibly.

What did that matter to Otten? So much the better, he would be alone in the region of the eruption. In Bosco Reale he took a horse. He had to deposit a

sum to cover the value of the animal thrice over, as security. The heat of noontime did not deter him, for was he not riding toward the heat that wondrously filled the breathing breast of Mother Earth, seeking an outlet, in order to avoid self-destruction? That was a picture which seemed familiar to him.

The gardens receded, and the evergreen hedges. After a ride of an hour and a half he reached a last, lonely habitation, the Casa Bianca. The house had disappeared long ago. He rode over the back of the mountain, over the endless stone-field of the lava rivers. No path and no road was there. No tree and no bush, only brown masses of lava, hard as steel, with edges sharp as knives, as far as the eye could see. No call of life that could reach the ear. Here death ruled supreme, in the midst of an arid burned-up desert. . . .

Shivering, the horse picked its way among the cliffs. Whenever it missed its footing, it stepped knee-deep into soft ashes. With a melancholy smile, Otten sat in the saddle.

Threateningly the ashen mound of the old crater arose before him. Another hour, and the horse neighed in clear tones. It scented within this desolation the nearness of a human habitation, the small station of the Vesuvius inclined railroad.

Otten dismounted and negotiated with the carabinieri, who were charged with guarding the danger zone. The crater guides joined them, and Otten succeeded in engaging them. A carabinieri walked beside the leading guide. Thus the march toward the mouth of the crater began. One could hear only the heavy breathing of the men. Step by step the terri-

tory had to be overcome. The pulsation of the men's hearts grew in violence, their thoughts grew more and more sluggish. The minutes seemed hours, and the approach through hot, slipping, sliding masses of ashen dust without an end. Now—now! The leader stopped. Nobody spoke. And slowly the senses resumed their activity. The summit had been reached.

Another short march brought them to the edge of the caldron. Like needle-points the sulphurous gases penetrated the lungs. The noise of Hell enveloped them. Hissing, roaring steam. From somewhere came the shout: "Halt!" A few moments of forced breathing—and there, scarce a yard away from Otten's feet, a frightful scaly snake wriggled from the crater's edge—the new river of lava. Slow and ghastly the glowing, flaming mass flowed down the hillside, an incomprehensible, heinous, derisive monster. It was visible but a brief space of time. New masses of lava flowed over it, and the hissing, sulphurous steam hindered vision and breathing. . . .

"No other stranger has seen that, Signore."

Otten only nodded. What did tame humanity know of the parent fire within the breast of earth? What of the powers that must go their own way according to their own laws? But these powers, suppressing themselves, warm and bless the earth, while they, bursting their natural fetters, destroy all within their reach. Destroy——!

"Well, my crater is burned out," Otten thought, and again that melancholy smile played about his lips. "I will do no more damage. But this picture here—this picture has been of benefit to me at least."

Evening was falling when Otten again mounted the

horse. "Now only have I taken my leave—my farewell and a gift. The recollection of that picture shall warm the evening of my life."

Through the brown desert of stone, now etched in gold by the rays of the setting sun, he rode back. His figure, which had grown thin, hung carelessly in the saddle. Strands of gray hair hung from beneath his hat and fell on his brow. Strangely horse and rider were silhouetted against the sky. As if a lonely adventurer were traveling through the silence of death. . . .

Joseph Otten had arrived in Rome, but he did not go out. He spent his time during several days in his old lodgings in the Via Frattina, reading and dreaming, awaiting the answer to a letter he had sent to the Privatdozent Moritz Lachner at Bonn on the Rhine. The answer came.

"My most esteemed Herr Doktor," Moritz Lachner wrote, "when I received your letter I did not know whether I should laugh or cry. Both from joy. You are on your way home!—My last letter, which I had sent to the address of your New York agent, remained unanswered. I told you in it how things were going on in Cologne, and that I had been admitted as Privatdozent of history at the university at Bonn. It is evident that the letter reached you, as you are using my new title in addressing yours. Hence I need not repeat.

"You are on your way home! Again and again the happy message rings in my ears, and turns my thoughts topsy-turvy. And yet, you do not wish to enter the gates of your home city, but to remain out-

side of her walls. I have not the right to ask. But I have the right to hope.

“In the Rheingasse at Cologne, things have become quiet. After passing her examinations this Easter, Carmen has entered the university at Heidelberg, and for the present is devoting herself to the study of the history of art. Where her studies will lead later can hardly be predicted to-day. She spends her vacation with her mother, whom she has asked to grant her room and liberty for the development of her powers. Thus, Frau Doktor Otten has remained alone at Cologne. During my visits I have not found that her tranquil nature has altered. She is as adorable as ever.

“Young Terbroich has returned home, after spending a few years in other countries, and is now doing office-work in his father’s place of business. In manners and outward polish he has improved, and the old friendship between him and Carmen seems to have become even stronger. An air of melancholy which he has acquired is certainly becoming to him. But I cannot help wondering how a girl of Carmen’s mentality allows herself to be misled by these artificial mannerisms. I am not writing this from hatred of Laurenz Terbroich, but because of my unchanged regard for Carmen.

“But now, let us come to the chief matter. Old Klaus has really been living at Zons several years. His house is quite nice and roomy, and an old relative of his, who was formerly a cook, is keeping house for him. I went to him immediately upon receipt of our letter, and he joyfully agreed to let you have the upper story of his house, which affords a view over the town wall

and the Rhenish landscape, including the river. He has remained remarkably lively and vigorous. Only he has grown more silent. And that is not surprising at his age, and—at Zons. Zons! Really, Herr Doktor, do you seriously intend to remain so secluded and so removed from the bustle of life? The little town lies forgotten amidst the shore-meadows, a delight for a painter's eye, with its picturesque, mediæval architecture, but surely no delight in its absolute loneliness and seclusion for such a proud, passionate soul as that of Doktor Joseph Otten. This is no idle praise. I have only remained true to my ideals."

"He is thinking of the Joseph Otten he knew, years ago," and the reader nodded sadly. "A long time has passed since he ceased to exist."

Moritz Lachner's letter ran on:

"Hence, let me presume that Zons will only be the way-station on your return. If you can use me there or here for any service, you know that you need only to let me know. I am looking forward with anxiety to the moment when I shall again have the privilege of shaking your hand. With most sincere regards, always yours,
"MORITZ LACHNER."

Otten folded up the letter, and placed it in his pocket. "A good boy. But to see him again? I don't see why. How do the people of other times concern me——"

At evening he went out. He stopped at Peppe's and at Pasquale's, but at neither Osteria had Professor Heinrich Koch been seen for some time. "He must be ill or traveling," they said. "The madonna will

probably know." And Joseph Otten started out to find the friend of his youth in his lodgings at the opposite shore of the Tiber. The old housekeeper strangely evaded him when he asked for the Reverend Herr Professor.

"Have I grown to be such a scarecrow?" Otten thought, with a touch of self-ridicule. But he knew the lodgings, and went to the door. He knocked.

"Who is out there?" Koch's voice sounded within.

"A good friend."

"Of mine, or of the devil?"

"Yours, for the time being yours."

"That would be a miracle," the voice in the room mumbled, and then the bolt shot back and the door opened.

"Good-evening, Heinrich."

Heinrich Koch's head appeared in the doorway. A thousand fine lines rested like a spider's web upon his shaven face. His tall figure bending forward, he caught the visitor and pulled him into the room. "My God in heaven, Joseph——!"

"Did you fear burglars, that you bolted your door?"

"Joseph——!" Koch repeated. "Joseph——! He has returned!"

"I had promised to come to you, Heinrich."

"Now I believe again in Providence."

"Again? Such doubts in the mouth of a priest?"

"I am priest no longer, Joseph. Here, take a seat, and put your feet underneath my table."

They sat opposite each other and looked at each other. Each sought himself in the eyes of the other.

"I will first explain things," Koch said after a pause.

"So that you know in whose presence you are."

“It is not necessary, Heinrich.”

“But I would like to. There has never been any concealment between you and me. Since our childhood we have always shared each other’s thoughts and sorrows. Have you some time to spare?”

“I am here only on your account.”

Koch pushed his glasses up on his forehead, and, lying back in his easy-chair, looked up to the ceiling. “Only on my account——” A happy, boyish smile played about his finely molded mouth. “Such a thing still exists in the world, and you had to come and teach me that, Joseph. For that reason I said before, that I believe again in Providence. I had lost my bearings in this unaccustomed freedom.”

“You are free? Your work is finished?”

“The last proof has been read. And then I had a long talk with His Holiness.”

“You spoke with the Pope?”

“I had an audience, when I was permitted to present the last volume. And in that hour which the Holy Father gave me, I explained to him the reasons that prompted me to place the remainder of my life upon another foundation. I did not wish to be a common deserter. I wanted to confess openly, face to face, as becomes a man. And the Holy Father appreciated that, even though he was compelled to combat my reasons. Only when he heard that these reasons were not of to-day, that I had been compelled years ago to disregard dogmatism and what goes with it, in order to remain true to myself; when he heard that I had remained true to my vows through a feeling of duty that could not be shaken, toward the task once undertaken, and now brought to a conclusion, he ceased to

urge. 'I hope for the grace of God,' he said, and I replied: 'I, too, hope for the grace of God in life and in death.' Then I left the kind man, and left the Vatican, out of the libraries and record-rooms from which I could no longer take with me the best years of my life——"

"Has the excommunication been announced as yet?"

"Yesterday. They tried to meet me to the farthest possible extent. They thought they were bound and able to spare me on account of my life work. Possibly for reasons of policy. But I wanted no leniency. If I have erred, God will forgive me, because I have had the best of intentions: not to be a half a man. If I did not err, I will bring a *whole* man before God."

"It is not easy late in life to seek a new path, Heinrich."

"No, that is the most difficult part. The bird coming out of a cage does not trust itself to fly away. Until yesterday there was life in my lodgings. One after the other, the gentlemen of the Vatican came, to try and change my intentions. Then came the anathema. And the first day of my freedom has been as if it were a Sunday of the dead. Even my housekeeper avoids me, as she would smallpox."

Otten smiled. "Well, well. So it was meant for you. I had accepted her manner as a homage to my ghost-like appearance."

Heinrich Koch paid no attention to the words. He looked thoughtfully ahead, and a light flush of embarrassment colored his face. "No, it is not easy. A fellow finds no chum who wants only the comrade, as in the olden times, and asks not about his catechism."

Joseph Otten extended his hand across the table: "You have me, Heinrich."

Koch took the proffered hand in both of his. His eyes lit up. He wanted to speak, but could not. The two again saw their childhood on the shores of the Rhine.

"There is not much left of me, Heinrich."

"Not for those outside. But for me! You were my morning-glow, when we were boys, and now you will be my evening-glow in age. Fate has decreed that my life shall complete the circle."

"It may be more likely, Heinrich, that I shall expect the evening-glow from you. I am—played out."

"Joseph, we will not leave each other in the lurch. To-day, you help. To-morrow, I do. That will be one and the same thing now."

"Have you made any plans?"

"I only want to get back to Germany."

"To Germany—— I, too, want to go there—— To return to its soil, not to its people."

"You don't intend to go to—Cologne?"

"No. Another time of that. I have no talents to play the part of the only original freak. And in the eyes of the few people who loved me once, I do not wish to distort my picture."

"Will you take me with you?"

"I have come to ask you, old friend."

"Joseph! Anywhere. And I would like it best somewhere where the Rhine flows towards the Netherlands."

"I have rented a story in the house of our old Klaus. It is in Zons. The quarters will probably not be very

comfortable, but we can fit them out according to our taste."

"We'll paper the walls with our memories, Joseph."

"And our company will chiefly consist of old Klaus, who is no longer very seaworthy. Three shipwrecked men on a lonely isle. How do you like the picture?"

"I like the company. In all the memories of my youth, old Klaus plays the part of a great, benign protector. Joseph, when we three will be together, the old days of our youth will have reappeared. That is what I have been longing for, all these years. Once more the days of our youth."

With a slow motion, Otten pushed the strands of gray hair back from his forehead.—He was only tired. . . .

"When can we start, Heinrich?"

"Whenever you wish to. To-day, to-morrow. The sooner, the better."

"Have you said farewell?"

"Farewell? I want to celebrate a Wiedersehen, a reunion, not say farewell. Not until you put me into my casket, will I take my leave."

Otten arose. "Well, then, to-morrow. And what shall we do this evening?"

"I will tell Peppe that he is losing his best customer, and will express my thanks to his Frascati, that it has given me courage and warmth enough to await this hour." He took his hat. "Let us go."

In the doorway he paused. "Man alive!" he exclaimed, embracing Otten violently. And with embarrassed face, reddened by joy, he descended the stairs.

When Otten and Heinrich Koch separated that night, the moon was high in the heavens. Otten had escorted

his friend to his lodgings. Now he walked slowly past the Castle of Saint Angelo, over the bridge, crossing the Tiber, then entering deeper and deeper into the sleeping City, back to the point where the two had begun their walk home.

Before him were rushing the whispering waters of the Fontana di Trevi.

For a long while he stood there, and looked into the spouting, bubbling water. Then he raised his tall, lean figure to its full height.

“This time,” he muttered, “I’ll throw no coin into the rushing flood. This time I’ll drink none of the water.”

He placed his hands over his eyes, and continued with a sigh:

“For I am not coming back——”

CHAPTER XVI

WHEN the steamboats plying on the Rhine have passed the green heights of the Seven Mountains, and have landed the last of the tourists at Bonn and at Cologne, they usually carry little more than freight to the lowlands of Holland. Sometimes a few passengers remain on board; those who know that the romance of the river extends further down-stream than the vine-clad mountainsides; who know that in the lowlands of the nether Rhine romance triumphs once more, and that this particular triumph is one of the loveliest and most enjoyable of the entire river's course. Untouched by the trend of the times, removed even from the railroad tracks which unite cities and villages, there stands, amid the meadows of the Rhine between the cities of Cologne and Neuss, a small fortified town of Roman origin, like an embodied legend of the past: Zons.

Its history dates back almost two thousand years. As far back as the history of Cologne itself. A decade before the birth of Christ, Drusus built forts for the protection of the fortified camps of Cologne and Neuss. And Zons had been one of these. Here the Franks had held sway, and Saint Cunibert, the first Archbishop of Cologne, received Zons as a gift from the Frankish King. Thus it had become an outpost of Cologne. Often the center of fierce struggles, it had been transformed toward the end of the fourteenth century into

a miracle of mediæval fortification. Into a miracle that has withstood all the onslaughts of war and has remained to this day a bit of romance, which the world has passed by without noticing.

Surrounded by powerful walls, that are crowned with parapets and flanked with defying towers and strong stone gateways, the ancient little Gothic town looks surprisedly upon the Rhine, apparently even forgotten by the mighty river. It was impregnable in bygone days, and the historians called it *Virgo*. And virginal it was to remain. Neither the Rhine-steamers nor the railroad had a station here.

It is a gem amidst the meadows of the Rhine, and few know of its existence. Ramparts and towers are dusty with age, and those who happen to pass the spot on the steamboats look in surprise at the old town, that rises like an apparition from the lowlands, like a resurrected *Vineta*. . . .

Klaus Guelich's house leaned against the wall of the old stronghold. From its upper story a view of the Rhine-basin was to be had, of the meadows, where short, gnarled willow-trees stood in long rows, like a regiment of veterans assembled for inspection. And across the meadows there could be seen the broad gleaming ribbon of the slow-flowing river. The landscape seemed to breathe Dutch restfulness, as far as the eye could reach. A wreath of windmills skirted the horizon.

The house was a clean-looking structure of massive beams, with white plaster panels between, with green window shutters and a black, tiled roof. Old Klaus had made it a point to keep the old house as trim and neat as if it were a ship, like the one belonging to the

firm of Otten at Cologne, in which he had traveled to and from Holland for so many decades.

A carriage came along the road from the railroad station of Dormagen. Now it entered the quiet town, turned, proceeded along the street, running parallel with the town wall, and stopped before one of the last houses. Old Klaus stood in the doorway smoking a clay-pipe, sturdy, wearing a brown, knit jacket, his eighty-year-old weather-beaten boatman's face framed in a closely cropped beard of snowy whiteness.

"Tringche," he called out over his shoulder to the stockily-built, middle-aged housekeeper, "is the soup ready? The gentlemen are coming." Then he stuck the stem of his pipe in the corner of his mouth and offered his broad hand to the gentlemen alighting from the vehicle. "So, here you are! Good-day, boys. You look sick!"

"Good-day, Klaus. Man of life everlasting! We come to earn that, too."

"Seems to me to be getting time you would. Or else you'll have to be born a second time. Well, well. A hearty welcome to both of you, at any rate."

That day they sat together at the heavy oaken table in the roomy hall of the lower story, which was also the main living room of old Klaus' quarters, and ate together. During the next days the furniture for the two gentlemen ordered at Cologne was to arrive. Then Tringche would have to serve the meals separately for the tenants.

"Hot," old Klaus remarked, and let the others guess whether he meant the weather or the soup. There was not much conversation during the meal. The housekeeper brought the meat and the vegetables, knives

and forks rattled, and a few large flies, disturbed in their rest, flew and hummed about the window-panes. When the three men arose from the table, Otten said something in praise of the excellent cuisine.

“Well, yes,” old Klaus said shamefacedly, as if he had been the artist who had prepared the viands.

The two friends stood in their apartment at the window, with their arms on their backs, close together, and took in the view. Melancholy was written all over the countryside, and all over the town.

“I like it here,” Otten said.

“If we strain our vision, we can see the spires of the Cathedral at Cologne, Joseph.”

“Surely, we are not Toggenburgians.”

“No, but it is well to know home is within reach.”

“I have no business there any more, personally. I want rest, Heinrich.”

“Well, I was only thinking that some time *they* might need you there.”

“They never have needed me so far. I have no lucky hand in family matters. Superfluous care, Heinrich. As superfluous as I am myself. We will make ourselves as comfortable as we can here.”

Heinrich Koch placed his arm about the shoulders of his friend. And they looked out upon the Rhine, where the slack sail of a freightboat appeared, gliding past lazily and silently.

A week later their quarters were fitted up. They had divided the four rooms evenly, so that each of them had his own bedroom and his own living-room. A piano had come with the other things, and the bookshelves were crowded with volumes.

Heinrich Koch walked through the rooms, smiling happily. The student within him was re-awakening.

“What shall we do now?”

“Nothing at all.”

“Nothing——?” he repeated laughingly.

“At least not for the time being. You poor beasts of burden believe that the happiness of human existence depends solely upon visible occupation of the individual. We tackle a thousand things and remodel them. Only our own selves we leave severely alone. There is also such a thing as internal occupation. Let us till the neglected ground.”

“All right. That suits me. And when we have cultivated that?”

“Then joy but begins. And that requires time, too. Just look about you, Heinrich. Who, to-day, knows what it means to enjoy life? Enjoy it to the last dregs? The ancient Teutons knew the secret, when they, returning from strife or chase, threw themselves upon their bearskins. They enjoyed everything doubly, if not trebly and fourfold. First in reality, then in the exchange of the tales of their exploits, later in their memories, and sometimes even in the songs of the bards. But we? What you have experienced and lived through yesterday, you have forgotten to-day. You hurry on and on, live without rest or pause from one day to the next. The adventure of to-day kills the memories of yesterday absolutely, and will be devoured in turn by the events of to-morrow.”

“You speak of yourself, Joseph. Not of me. I live and have no fund to draw upon, except the memories of those few years of my youth.”

“Well, yes—of myself. Perhaps, if I would go on

a hunt for shadows, some of them might kindly consent to assume shape and color. Thus I could slowly establish a court of knights and ladies, amongst whom I could ride to the joust."

"Will I be admitted? When we were boys, I used to be a railbird, but later on I did not have the nerve to peep in through the cracks in the enclosure."

"As often as you come, you shall be welcome."

They soon knew every nook and corner of the old town. The residents considered them a pair of distinguished but odd old gentlemen, perhaps painters or architects, who had taken a liking for the peculiar charms of the old fortress in the lowlands. People soon became accustomed to them, and then they attracted little or no attention, when they walked forth with erect bearing, or inspected towers, walls, gates, and moats, to master the secrets of the fine general plan of the fortifications. The few inhabitants of Zons were taken up with affairs of their own.

"This is a splendid way to kill time," Otten said. "I feel myself growing calmer day by day."

"We look like country gentlemen."

"That is the only real calling. To sit on a fellow's own ground and to test it day by day as to its quality. That gives a person the right conception of distances. Yes, our gentry knows a good thing when they've got it."

"Soon you, too, will have found the true perspective of your life."

"I hope so. There is a chance here. Just look at the Rhine. It is an arrow-shot's distance removed, and formerly it flowed past close to the south wall of the fortress. Slowly it withdrew. The river respected the

divine quiet of this place, did not wish to be intrusive, and fled. Now the silence of the place is absolute."

At first they talked much of the history of the town. Lying beneath the silvery willows of the meadows, they looked up at the marvelous memorial of the Middle Ages arising before their eyes.

"Here, we worn-out sons of our period lie and look at the strength and the defiant spirit of our ancestors, preserved in yonder stronghold. And where we lie, there lay the Roman and looked at his fortress; there lay the Frank and gazed at the castle of his king; there lay the hosts of the Archbishops, when they were not sheltered behind their walls and ramparts, laughingly holding out against the burgher-warriors of Cologne, against the Bergish counts, troops, and robber-bands during the Truchsessian war, or against the marauding Swedes under their splendid chief, Rabenhaupt. A bully fellow that, this Rabenhaupt. No other man during the Thirty Years' War is said to have been his equal in cursing and swearing. When he had no more cannon-balls to hurl over the walls of a town, he threw his cuss-words against the people within, and his frightful cursing is said to have been more painful to the stout-hearted but pious defenders of Zons than his cannon-shot. Whom else have we to recall here? During the wars of Louis XIV.—the vicious Turenne, murdering and burning; during the War of the Spanish Succession, Marlborough chasing the Frenchmen to the devil. And, later on, the great Napoleon granted favors, while stopping on the road to Dormagen. There is a wealth of names and events, a third of which would suffice to assure everlasting regard for other cities. And from Zons they have slid off into the sea of the forgot-

ten, like the town itself. And that very fact makes the old place so charming to me, so enviable. The divine slowness and restfulness all about have succeeded in making it forget even its own history."

"Are you not growing somewhat ironical, Joseph?"

"To be able to slide into the great Nirvana with a stony face, that is—an object."

When a month had passed, they asked each other: "Have you realized it?" And smilingly they shook their heads.

On rainy days they would sit about the big oaken table in old Klaus' main hall, arguing about questions of life and death. The two tenants would then smoke their cigars, and the owner of the house his long-stemmed clay-pipe. "It is a lot of nonsense," the old man informed the others, expectorating, breaking off a little piece of the pipe-stem to fashion a new mouth-piece, and puffing on. "It is a lot of nonsense, to worry so much about dying. When a fellow has grown to be as old as I, he don't believe in dying any more. And that is nice, too. If it wasn't for that, old age would be a regular pest."

This simple wisdom silenced the two friends for a time.

"I believe," Heinrich Koch said after a while, "Klaus has hit the nail on the head."

"A matter of taste," Otten mumbled.

"Do you know of any better method than to ignore death?"

"To laugh into the face of the old skeleton with the scythe would be more to my inclination."

"I would consider that less great."

"But there is something manly about it. To die as

one has lived! When I was a boy and read the history of the French Revolution, I used to grow red in the face with anger over the rule of the mob. And I only enjoyed it again, when I read how the majority of the noblemen met their death. I am not a Byzantine. There is nothing in the world I detest more. But I love the aristocrats of thought, all men free from the taint of slavery. Heavens! Just recall how those men acted when they had to mount the guillotine, to be decapitated. One last word was granted them. And what did they do? From their scaffold they would spit into the face of the raving mob. As if they would say: I despise and defy the death you deal."

The rain was beating a tattoo against the windowpanes. And Heinrich Koch placed his hand on the arm of his friend, and said kindly: "And that you call a little pleasant chat."

"No better proof than that, that I am in need of rest."

"Old stormy heart, you."

"A kind wave has cast me ashore far away from all activity. And I wish nothing more than to be allowed to lie where I have been thrown."

"Another month has passed," Heinrich Koch said one day.

"Again? You see, for us a month passes like a minute. Now we are beginning to approach the gods in their reckoning of time. I feel like forgetting to wind up my watch."

"To be like the gods is a noble wish."

"Yes. Here, we trouble ourselves with our thoughts, great and small, imagine ourselves to be most important beings, and the earth to be almost without bounds.

And yet it is but an ant-hill in the universe, and we are infinitesimally small ants, scurrying about and proudly bearing our—conceit. It is laughable! We consider ourselves the masters, because the functions of our senses reach no farther. And with the ant it is the same thing identically. And, perhaps, without our knowledge another gigantic Race may step godlike from star to star, invisible to us pygmies in body and spirit.”

“Wish them a pleasant journey, Joseph. This bit of pilgrimage on earth creates work enough for our conscience.”

Otten laughed. “What a conscience those big fellows must have!”

Fall came. On the opposite shore of the Rhine, in the orchards of Urdenbach, the fruits were being harvested. The tow-traffic on the Rhine became more lively, and steamboats with high freeboards traveled down-stream, to cross the sea to England. Even the sleepy old ferry of Zons was kept busy. A crowd of young academicians came from the art school in the nearby city of Düsseldorf, bringing their painter's outfits from Benrath and Urdenbach. They entered the quaint old town, set up their easels in front of look-out-towers and walls, and fought their battles with brush and colors on canvas fields. In the evenings there were singing and shouting and merry carousings in the inns.

Soon the chill winds of fall drove away the jolly crowd. The last of the painters departed, promising to settle his bill from Düsseldorf, and the ferry slumbered again, without being disturbed for half-days at a time.

Joseph Otten walked out again. The little rush of life, which had entered the old fortress, had been too much for him, and he had remained in seclusion. Now he again took possession of his favorite places, and his face expressed the satisfaction he felt at being undisturbed. And his taciturnity increased.

Heinrich Koch observed him closely through his spectacles. "It is the fault of the weather," he said to old Klaus. "The 'season' is here, and he feels it in his blood. A man does not travel unpunished throughout his life."

"In winter, a person's place is behind the stove," old Klaus said.

"I am used to sitting still, Klaus, but I am looking forward to the comfortable joys of the old-fashioned German stove, as I would to a Christmas present. It requires a free man to fully appreciate that."

When the first heavy storms swept across the lowlands, sweeping the leaves from the willows and bleaching the grass, Otten became more restless. He would rise early, take long walks along the shore of the Rhine, run along the roads against the strong wind, forget his noon-day meal, and return home tired and wet in the evening. When Koch had talked him into changing his clothes and doing honor to the evening meal, he would open the piano and sit, gloomily gazing at the keys, until his fingers would twitch, and from a few slight touches melodies would grow, which he would vary indefinitely. Then Koch and Klaus would sit listening in their chairs, charmed by the power flowing from the soul of that man into the music, and through the music into their own appreciative souls. And when he wanted to stop, they begged, until he would turn his head, see

their shining eyes, and again turn to play with a strange, far-away smile flitting over his features.

Snow had fallen, and the frost, setting in, did not allow it to melt again. Cut off from traffic, the old town lay there. No wanderer passed the road, and thin crusts of ice formed at the shores of the Rhine. At the angle of the old town-wall, where Klaus Guelich's house stood, it was most lonesome. Hardly ever did an inhabitant of the town find occasion to pass there.

Fires crackled merrily in the stoves all over the house. Heinrich had sought permission to play fire-tender throughout the house, and he assumed this office like a real artist of life. Before he would tend a stove, he would go to a window, enjoy the wintry landscape, and then soliloquize: "Well, I am real nice and snug here." And then he would rub his hands and begin to work with shovel and tongs, until all of the stoves glowed like the cheeks of healthy children after a run on a cold day. And on every oven-plate he would place an apple. Throughout the house they were baking, hissing, and giving forth delightful odors to the great joy of the old bachelor.

"Now I imagine the door will open, and mother will come in."

"Or some other nice girl," old Klaus chuckled.

"And we are nice young fellows once more."

"Well, we certainly are," the master of the house said haughtily, brushing his silvery beard with his hands. Then they went to work. Old Klaus sat down in his wide armchair close to the stove, and entered deeply into the study of his great forbear, the rebel and drygoods-dealer, Nikolaus Guelich of Cologne on the

Rhine, and Koch won Otten for his plan of writing a special history of the Roman times about the nether Rhine.

“That is something for you, Joseph. And also for me. We must enter heathen times, must array men of deeds, investigate their creations, and yet be convinced that even in those times God looked in kindness upon his children.”

Otten became enthusiastic. His historical schooling, his university studies, came to his aid. Books and plans were ordered and arrived, comparisons were made, the routes of march and sites of camps of the legions and their allied Teutonic forces located, and soon they could start to draw maps of the various districts, intending to wander throughout the territory and make local investigations the following spring. And the work in hand grew. Men and events of the far distant past took shape and came to life again, and soon the ancient camps and settlements in the now silent country swarmed with Roman warriors, with Nubian hunters, dark-eyed wives of leaders, and with blond German girls. And in the midst of them all there wandered joyously, despite their gray locks, Joseph Otten and Heinrich Koch, living and thinking and feeling with the resurrected population.

During this time Otten began talking of his past. It was in the evening, when the three men sat around the oaken table in the Diele, the big petroleum-lamp, with its large green shade, was lit, the fire in the stove was burning lustily, and Tringche, the good-hearted house-keeper, had moved the kettle containing the boiling water for the grog from the hottest part of the stove and had silently gone to her room.

“There were some real women in those days,” he began. “They had marrow in their bones and hearts in the proper place. Mothers and comrades in one. And, therefore, they were holy.”

“That is not different to-day, Joseph,” Heinrich Koch remarked.

“To-day? Well, then they are hiding their lights.”

“Hardly that, but our time does not regard these talents in their proper light. They are being overshadowed by the brilliancy of their more frivolous sisters. People love sensations.”

“Yes, sensations—— America is the cause. America has become the pattern for old Europe. And, slavish as most of us are, we ape Americans in a thousand and one things, whether or not these things are suitable and becoming to us. And yet there are many things that are proper and becoming for Americans, that do not suit us at all. The American woman’s doings, her actions, her dress are always lady-like. But our women are different, and, therefore, they should originate a mental and a physical style of their own. All this mania for freedom after the American pattern is, for the time being at least, a humbug in Germany. What has become of our sweet Hausfrauen, who always found time for all of our little worries? Surely somebody must have the time.”

Heinrich Koch looked searchingly at his friend through his spectacles. Otten felt the glance and looked away. “I can divine what you wish to say. That we don’t want them any different from what they are, because—well, because it is the fashion, and because a fellow would rather be called an old ass, than be

told that he is not up to date. And yet, Heinrich, were the girls of our youth not the sweetest of creatures?"

"When I was in Prima I had a sweetheart who would not let me kiss her before I had promised to marry her. To her the kiss was so holy."

"And yet you deserted her? Heinrich, I am shocked at you."

"I said, if I marry, I'll marry you. And I did not marry——"

"And she took the veil——"

"The veil of the bride. She married a baker on the Schildergasse, and presented him with five sons. I became godfather to one of them, for I had become her favorite father-confessor, as a result of her old attachment."

"For the sake of that kiss. . . . I, too, was fully sixteen before I discovered the secret. She was a pretty, blonde girl, as old as I, and consequently more mature, and I faithfully ran along after her. Well, you know her—the daughter of the director of the mine at Ehrenfeld. We loved each other immensely, but neither would tell the other, and, therefore, we never kissed. But sometimes we would touch hands. And that was a strange, electrifying feeling. Until I was over there one Sunday, visiting with a larger party. How vividly I can remember the scene! She wore a blue and white striped dress, with a wide sailor collar. Of course, we played pawnbroker, and I had to go with her on an errand of Polish begging: For my husband a piece of bread, for my wife a kiss. For my husband a kiss, and for my wife a piece of bread. And finally the couple of Polish beggars have to kiss each other.

Hers were lips of velvety softness, and of a sweetness that I had not conceived possible. I was simply intoxicated, and the entire hilarious crowd laughed at me. Only she did not laugh. She looked at my eyes, as if she wanted to cry. Yes—— And I caused her to weep later on, when I forgot her.”

“If I only could, but the devil——” old Klaus began, and broke off, shaking his head.

“And the loves of the university time were sweet, too,” Otten continued, “and the high-spirited girl comrades at the Conservatory.”

“I know, I know. The enthusiasm in common, the laughter at the Philistines away below. Heavenly joys.”

“And then the first tours through Italy. Even now my heart opens at the remembrance.”

“Let us look into it.”

“I don’t know what she did for a living. She wore the costume they were still wearing in the Campagna in those days. I believe she gathered flowers in the Campagna and made bouquets of them, which she would bring to the houses in Rome in the morning. My father kept me pretty close, but yet I managed to subscribe for the daily morning’s greeting. I have found no reason to regret it——”

“And what came of it?”

“I had to go on.”

“Too bad.”

“Too bad—— How often did a fellow have to go on, while he thought: Oh, well, you’ll return. The world won’t run away from you. And then, one would run away from one’s self and would only notice in later years, when one looked about, that the most virginal

and the most innocent has been the most beautiful and the most enjoyable. And only an episode——”

“All these attributes, my dear Joseph, only fit in, because it was and remained only an episode.”

“But the episodes that followed were episodes just the same, and yet they do not compare.”

“Perhaps that was because you had become accustomed to episodes by that time, and you wished to increase the sensations.”

“Well, I’ll not worry to find out. To reach the truth, a person would have to be innocent once more.”

“That is it.”

“But innocence disappears more and more. It may have its advantages, to educate daughters early and to broaden their minds, but it does not help human nature, and it kills all poetry. You cannot imagine how the young girls surround any artist who happens to be famous. And the most advanced ones among them are the most forward. They imagine that their breadth meets the freedom of the true artist half-way. And out of that material eventually our modern ladies are being developed.”

“I expressed similar views to you in Rome, but in those days you were still a disbeliever.”

“I only except one class: the women who work, who really work, battling bravely with the world and trying to hold up their heads. They are admirable beings. But they have the peculiarity of not making people talk about them. They have no time for it. Those who shout have time a-plenty at their hands, and they don’t work. They are amateur workers. They put on a blouse, to be able to enjoy their laziness more comfortably, and talk of equal rights, in order to be able

to throw themselves away more easily. What have I not experienced along these lines!"

"Are the German women the worst?"

"No. Only the least graceful, because they try to imitate others."

"Will you not tell us more about women who are lovable?"

"I am done for this day. It is your turn to tell something."

Heinrich Koch removed his spectacles and wiped them. "I, personally, never got beyond the girl who became the wife of the baker," he said, as he laboriously readjusted his glasses.

"Then it is your turn, Klaus."

The old man had been mumbling for some little while. Now he said: "I only knew one girl who would have suited me. She was a dandy lass, and she loved me more than anybody else in the world."

"Who was it?"

"Hang it," old Klaus said. "If I could only remember her name——" And angrily murmuring, he arose, tried to get the stiffness out of his legs, and hobbled over to the stove, to refill his glass with grog.

At Christmas Heinrich Koch had received an ornamental clay pipe from old Klaus, and now the two stood in front of the little house, where Koch was having his first smoke out of the new pipe. The two old bachelors understood each other splendidly, despite the difference in their ages. They were satisfied with their fate, and considered each day as more beautiful than the preceding one.

"Jupp is getting well, Klaus."

“I don't know what you mean.”

“He is again able to tell stories of his past without breaking off suddenly. That is a sign that he is no longer quarreling with the fact that his hair has grown gray. Now, when he has mastered his last, great worry, he will wake up from a long stupor.”

“What is worrying him so much? Can't a fellow help him?”

“It is the thought that he has troubled himself so little about wife and child. So little that he can claim no part of them. Not in justice. Do you understand?”

“No. I don't understand it. Just let him go there, and tell her all about it. Then everything will be all right.”

Heinrich Koch coughed. The sharp tobacco smoke coming from the new pipe irritated his throat. “No, no, no, Klaus. It is not so simple as all that. They are deep people, especially Jupp.”

“Oh, tut. Deep or shallow. If they only are agreeable.”

It was growing colder and colder. Icy winds swept the unprotected country. Drifting ice fastened itself to the shores of the Rhine, forming a smooth, solid mass, which extended further and further toward the center of the river, narrowing the strip of open water, flowing sluggishly, and carrying with it many greenish cakes of drift-ice.

“No matter how cold it is out there,” Otten said, constantly drawing notes from maps and books. “We are here together with the first historic inhabitants of the Rhineland in the springtime of humanity. Have you concocted more baked apples, Heinrich? If I were

you, I would go to the big annual fairs as a waffles baker or something of the sort. You'd make a hit."

"Jupp! That is a great thought! Tringche shall bake us some waffles."

"Isn't he a big child?" Otten asked Klaus in the evening, when they were gathered around the oaken table, and Koch was enjoying his waffles with his grog. "Only I am not sure whether he has remained so, or has started all over a second time."

"What is the difference? The effect is the same: The waffles taste fine. Just you try them, Joseph. When that odor strikes my nostrils, I imagine myself a little boy again, standing with my father in front of the waffles booth. He was not rich, but he had to buy waffles for me. Those were festive days."

"The children of our days have passed beyond the stage of the booths at the Kirmess."

"Because they are being spoiled by their parents. It is much easier to spoil a child than to show proper love for it."

"Human beings, both old and young, are a lot of egotists. There is a show of love only where there is something to be gained."

"I think that the love of parents should be excepted from that arraignment. I will never forget what I once saw in Rome."

Otten looked at him. . . .

"A bandit had killed a girl. He was condemned to death. The father of the murdered girl, his brow bathed in sweat, begged a favor of the judge and the jury. They allowed the poor fellow to speak.—What do you wish?—I should like to see him die.—What do you want?—I want to be present at his execution!

—That was a hatred so hot as can be created only by the love of a parent.”

“Was the girl of age?” Otten asked after a pause.

“I should think, Joseph, that children would remain children always to their parents.”

On that evening the conversation flowed no more. Their arms resting upon the table, the three sat there, listening to the sighing of the wind outside, each thinking his own thoughts. . . .

CHAPTER XVII

ONE morning in February, Moritz Lachner came to Zons. Professor Koch met him in front of the house, as he was making inquiries of the housekeeper.

"Here reigns a feudal castle's peace, sir."

"You don't recognize me, Herr Professor. I am Moritz Lachner."

"Ah, the young Herr Doktor and valued colleague? You are coming a little early. As soon as spring comes, you might join us in our researches. We are going over the ground and resuscitating the dead. Would you like to help?"

"I would first," Moritz Lachner said with embarrassment, "like to greet Herr Doktor Otten."

Heinrich Koch played with the lapels of Lachner's coat. "Joseph Otten—— Yes. But please do not attempt any awakening of the dead with him. Signs and wonders can only affect Otten through their elementary weight and strength, not through talk. And surely we both wish that they may work, some day. You understand me."

"Herr Professor, every one according to his own gifts. Since I can neither rule nor govern the lightning and thunder, I must depend upon the honesty of my speech."

"Well, at any rate, come in with your honesty. If you will greet Klaus, I will inform Otten in the meanwhile."

Joseph Otten sat at his desk when Koch entered. He was surrounded by books and was taking notes.

“Joseph, a visitor wishes to see you.”

“Sorry. I don’t know anybody.”

“Oh, yes, Joseph. Him you do know. It is young Lachner.”

“Moritz?” Otten laid down his pen. “What does he want?”

“He wishes to make his bow to the kings in exile. He insists that he possesses the gift of honest speech.”

“Then he should exhibit himself at fairs, at court, or on the pulpit.”

Heinrich Koch smilingly stroked his lips.

“Heinrich, I beg of you, take care of the boy. He really is a fine fellow, but I find that he improves through correspondence. Really, I don’t wish to see faces yet.”

“I find that he was not at all forward. Although he has extended courtesies to you, and has done you favors, you did not invite him, and he did not come. If he comes now, without being summoned, he surely does so depending upon your proverbial chivalry.”

“Leave flattery aside. All right, let him come and steal my day. I will not remain any one’s debtor.”

Koch found the visitor conversing with old Klaus, who had grown talkative, despite his customary taciturnity. When Koch entered, the animated conversation ceased. “I suppose it was all about Frau Maria,” he thought, and sent Lachner upstairs.

Joseph Otten stood in the middle of his living-room when Moritz Lachner entered. The cold wintry brightness lit up his haggard features, and the gray strands

of hair falling down over his forehead. His skin was like parchment. Only the eyes had retained their bright, shining blue. And these eyes gazed upon Moritz Lachner, who was unable to speak a word.

“Good-day, Moritz. Why, boy, you are trembling.”

“It is the excitement of seeing you again.”

“I was beginning to think it was the excitement of seeing me like this.”

“As if you did not always remain the same! Oh, Herr Doktor, I am so glad.”

“Is that the honesty of speech of which you boast, according to Professor Koch?”

Moritz Lachner blushed. “I am also glad that you have such merry company. I was anxious about you, on account of this old town of Zons.”

Otten pointed to books and maps. “Occupation enough—— And now let a fellow take a good look at you. You have grown to be a fine-looking chap. Only this serious pallor does not belong to your youthful face. Have you anything to worry about?”

“Materially, no, Herr Doktor. I possess the best of fathers. You know him.”

“Yes, the material worries we fathers are able to dissipate. But more we cannot do. Sit down, Moritz.”

The young scientist looked thoughtfully in front of him. “Herr Doktor,” he then said slowly, “my father has not the mental fortune, but he would at least make the attempt.”

“Your father, Moritz, is a dear old Idealist, who is sitting among his costumes and dreams fairy-tales. But the world and its people have nothing in common with such fairy-tales. In the world, each and every-

one makes his own way, according to his own mind. Let them. I did no differently."

"Do you mean with that, Herr Doktor, that the people you have at home——"

"I have only myself, Moritz. Let us have it that way. It is best for all of us."

"But a man's vision is more penetrating, and a man like you has a power over hearts."

"Had—had!"

"No, you have it still. You need only to wish it."

"Oh, I don't need to."

"You will not?"

"No."

Moritz Lachner struggled with his words. "Herr Doktor, I am here without being called. But just for that very reason—you may assume—that I did not obey a mere whim in coming. You certainly were very proud of Carmen in days gone by. Please remember that."

"In former days I was proud of myself, too."

"And to-day—Carmen is about to cast herself away."

"With young Terbroich? You came on that account?"

"Herr Doktor, it is time that you take a hand in the matter."

Very plainly young Lachner had said that. Otten looked at him a long while. Then an ironical smile played about his mouth. "You love her?"

The boy looked up. His aquiline, intellectual features were working. "Yes," he said, with an effort. "I do love her. But that would be no reason for my appealing to you. One may worship only when one loves."

“And you fear that you could not do that if she became the wife of Laurenz Terbroich?”

“I fear that she will not.”

“Strange enthusiast. Why, then you ought to be happy.”

“I fear that she will not become his—*wife*.”

They were silent. Otten sat, leaning back far in his chair, staring fixedly at some distant point through the window. In expectant anxiety Lachner's gaze hung on Otten's features.

“Herr Doktor——?”

“You wish?”

“I——? What you wish, Herr Doktor. I would like to hear your wish. Some advice, or some deed.”

“That is a matter which concerns the mother.”

Gaspingly Moritz looked at Otten's stony face. “You cannot seriously mean that, Herr Doktor.”

“I—not serious——?” Slowly Otten turned his face toward Moritz. “Once, in a heavy hour, I confided a message to my wife to your care. You were then the only one I could call upon. I don't forget that. And you should not have forgotten the message.”

“How could I forget that day?” the young man murmured.

“Then, and a while later, I caused an absolute separation. From pride, my boy. To spare the good taste of my wife. Take that ‘*cum grano salis*.’ I am no recipient of alms, and my wife always was the wife of Dr. Joseph Otten. In addition, there was another reason—common sense. I was unfit to aid in the rearing of a girl of the type of Carmen. Whatever there is bad in her, looking at things through the spectacles of the critical outside world, she has inherited from me.

I have done nothing, absolutely nothing, for my daughter as long as she has lived. The mother has done everything. What right, then, would I have to appear there suddenly, to assert authority, without ever having done anything toward gaining such authority? It would be a farce."

"Herr Doktor, in this peculiar case——"

"I ought to play judge of morals? Is the mother, who has reared and protected her, dead? I, Moritz—just think of it—I as judge of morals? Have you not, in addition, some abbey to award to me, or a bishop's miter? For seven years past I have known nothing of my daughter, and she has known nothing of me. Unless she has believed all the rot that has been told about me."

"There has been much talk, Herr Doktor."

"Oh, very well. The people demand some heroes of that kind, as well as Rinaldinis. Let them have their fun."

"I would not have dared to mention it. For I think too much of you to carry the gossip of the town to you. But just because I do think so much of you, Herr Doktor, I beg of you, do not let me be disappointed."

Otten arose. He placed his hands upon the other's shoulders and nodded: "You good fellow."

"Do not let me be disappointed——"

"No," said Otten. "You shall not be disappointed in me. For it would mean to make a disappointment out of all my past life, it would mean, above all, to destroy all the happy, blessed charm of the days of love through which I have lived at the side of Maria, if I would do as you wish. That we must take as it is. I cannot insult my wife in her best memories. If I would

say only one word in this matter, it would be a degradation to my wife. Therefore, I must leave the solution of the matter entirely in her own hands."

Moritz Lachner arose. "Now, I understand you," he said softly, and, with some embarrassment, he added: "Frau Maria will find the way."

"She has never yet missed it, my dear Moritz."

"I will disturb you no longer, Herr Doktor. You are at work, I see."

Otten shook his hand. "Let Professor Koch tell you about it. Perhaps it will interest you, and then we will gain a corresponding collaborator. But surely you'll remain to dinner?"

Moritz Lachner could not stay. "My three scholars at Bonn won't miss me, but I should like to visit my father at Cologne for a couple of hours."

"Remember me to him. The evening I once spent with him and his red wine of Toscana has remained vividly in my memory. How beautiful life can be! Farewell, Moritz."

"You wish to leave so soon, my dear Herr Colleague?" inquired Koch, who had been holding a discourse with old Klaus. "Will you not let yourself be made acquainted with our researches? Old ruins are sending forth new life. You will see that the old heathens were just as sensible as they were merry."

"If you can use me, I shall always be at your disposal," Moritz replied.

"We will take you at your word. The work will need brains and hands, if it is to become a cultural factor. It is, so to speak, a reconversion to the primitive."

Old Klaus winked knowingly. "Don't forget to give my regards to the Rheingasse."

"I'll not forget." And Moritz Lachner left the little enchanted old town, and walked along the road leading to the railroad station at Dormagen. A half hour's ride in the train brought him to Cologne.

In the afternoon he called upon Frau Maria. A maid opened the door and showed him into the room.

Frau Maria raised her head as he entered. She was sitting at her little work-table, doing some embroidery. Her wealth of hair had changed its color. It lay in silvery waves about her face, the youthfulness of which had remained. Only a very close observer could see the fine wrinkles, telling the story of sleepless nights.

"It is you, Moritz?"

"Yes, Frau Doktor. And you are again alone?"

"Inasmuch as Carmen has come from Heidelberg, I am not quite as alone as at other times."

"But she is not with you."

"She is dressing in her room. She is going to a big masquerade ball, and on that account needs more time for her toilet."

"And for that she interrupted her studies at Heidelberg—— May I offer you my company for a little while, Frau Doktor?"

"If you can spare the evening for an old woman, Moritz?"

Moritz Lachner silently drew a chair near hers and bent over the hand resting in her lap. "You are like a mother to me, and mothers never grow old."

"Don't spoil me, Moritz."

"How easily satisfied you must have grown, that you

accept the homage of such a simple person as myself as a favor."

She smiled. "Not so very easily satisfied, after all. It is true, the fortune of my happy memories no longer pays interest, but the fortune itself is large enough that I may live upon the principal for the rest of my days. No, I am not so very easily satisfied."

"I can only admire you always."

"There is no reason for that. I only look at things as they are, and call them by their right names."

Then they talked about current events, of Lachner's work as sub-professor at the university, and of his scientific plans, and scarcely noticed how the hours passed. The maid had brought the lamp, and the clock struck half-past seven, when Carmen entered the room. She wore the beautiful costume of the ladies of the time of the French Revolution. Her tall, beautifully modeled figure was shown to its best advantage in the flowing gown, and the cocked hat sat dashingly poised upon her black curls. There were grace and elasticity in her youthful body.

"Isn't Laurenz here yet?"

"Laurenz isn't, but Moritz is."

"Oh, Moritz—— Hello! Are you playing hookey from your own lectures? That is jolly, but it eases my conscience, for I am playing hookey myself. Laurenz is really taking his time, mother."

"You should drink a cup of tea, and eat a few cakes, Carmen. It is cold outside, and it will be several hours before you get to the buffet."

"Will it please you, mother, if I do? But it is not a bit nice on Laurenz's part to let me wait."

"Don't forget that you are letting your professor

at Heidelberg wait just the same way," Frau Maria said with a smile as she left, to prepare the tea herself.

"Your mother is placing you upon a high level, compared with Laurenz," Moritz Lachner said.

She looked at him, surprise in her dark eyes. "Do you imagine that Laurenz does not do the same?"

He forced himself to meet her challenging look, but when he spoke he suddenly became pale.

"I know, Carmen, that you would not be able to live without that conviction, in spite of your liberal mannerisms. Laurenz, however——"

"Well? What is there about him that you have to find fault with again?"

"Everything," he said, gathering all his faculties.

"Please specialize."

Then it flowed from him: "He is an egotist, only thinking of himself, and showing off with your beauty, just as he is showing off with the beauty of the other women he courts. Yes, I am talking seriously, and not without foundation for my claims. Or do you imagine that he assumes his melancholy air only in your presence? Wherever he goes, he poses. The entire fellow is artificial. Behind his smooth flattery and coaxing, he hides the greatest brutality and lack of regard for all others. And that will break through as soon as he has the power within his grasp. To-morrow he ignores his creatures of yesterday. For the sake of having a jolly hour, and a triumph for his vanity, he cares not if he makes those who must aid him in gaining his aims unhappy for years to come—perhaps for life. He has learned his lessons at Paris, and there are more girls cursing him than you can imagine. Such parasites as he should be destroyed."

“Why did they believe him?”

“Don’t you also believe him?”

“Oh—I! Please not to place me on the same level.”

“Because you have more brains and wit than those unfortunates? He has not even realized that. He sees nothing but your exterior, and that pleases him.”

“Are you done with your informing against him?”

His paleness disappeared, and crimson came instead. “You wrong me, Carmen. I am perfectly willing to repeat every word I have said to his face, when Laurenz comes. If I did choose the other method, I did so in order to save you a disagreeable scene. I think too much of you for that.”

“Forgive me, Moritz,” she said, and hastily grasped his hand.

“Carmen——”

“I know that you love me. You see, I speak the word myself, in order to prove to you that the thought is not a bit offensive to me. But it cannot be.”

“Why can it not be, Carmen? For I do love you truly, and honestly.”

“I will tell you, Moritz, and I will cloak nothing, excuse nothing. Because I am not suited to the narrow spirit of a matrimonial union, such as ours would be; because, with all I have learned, I could not possibly just run alongside, and because my entire being, all my gifts, drive me toward the great world without. I must be able to spread my wings as far as I choose.”

“The spirit of matrimony is not so narrow as you describe it. Through the camaraderie of husband and wife a world can be opened, compared with which your longed-for World is but a miserable realm of shadows. Your longing is the fever of our time. All those who

refuse to be cured, will be invalids when they grow old. Just look about among your examples! Dissatisfied, restless women, all of them."

"Don't you see many of the same type among the average married women?"

"The union which I mean would not be an average union. The spirit would decide the form."

"Oh, my dear Moritz, you cannot rid the world of the shackles woman bears."

"Fetters of gold are fetters just the same."

"Then—rather no fetters at all."

"But when the fate of womanhood comes, intoxicating words will not suffice."

"But the man will."

"If he would remain steadfast. But you speak of exceptional natures so readily, because you are an exceptional nature yourself. Carmen, because I love you, I beg of you do not examine yourself only."

Frau Maria brought the tea. "If it is agreeable to you, Moritz, we two will wait a while. Let us first get rid of these turbulent spirits for the evening. Then we will enjoy a pleasant chat."

Carmen drank her tea, walking about. She listened to hear the door open. When the clock struck eight Laurenz Terbroich appeared. He wore a long pelerine-cloak over his close-fitting costume of the Revolution. He had not troubled himself to have his hair dressed for the part, knowing that nothing could become him better than his own thick dark hair, his smooth-shaven face, and the little English side-whiskers, after the style of Lord Byron. He greeted those present very effusively.

"You've kept me waiting," Carmen said coldly.

“Trouble at the factory. The establishment badly needs enlarging. But that is a tune which does not fit into our beautiful song. You look stunning.”

“Let us go.”

“The coupé is waiting for you. The new pair of grays, in their silver-trimmed harness. No lady in all Cologne drives like you to-night.”

“To-night,” she repeated sarcastically, said good-by to her mother and Moritz, and led the way to the coupé.

Frau Maria set the table for the evening meal. It was so cozy in the little room that Moritz Lachner scarcely dared to speak. Not until later, when they sat in the alcove at the window, did he take courage.

“Now they are at the ball,” he began hesitatingly.

“He has very pretty eyes, Moritz. Or is it just because he always drops his eyelashes so peculiarly?”

“There are shifting lights in his eyes.”

“I have noticed that, too, but Carmen will not admit it.”

“Because he knows how to shine. And everything that shines has an attraction for her. That is sad.”

“It is a temporary, transitory stage, Moritz. The fault of her years. You must not take it so much to heart.”

“Are you not taking it to heart as much?”

“When she is married, the luster will lose its fascination. And then her deep, real womanhood will come to the surface. She has more of that than she realizes.”

“Are—are they engaged, Frau Doktor?”

“Yes. You are asking me something you should have known.”

“I mean, Frau Doktor, did Laurenz Terbroich ever speak with you?”

“No. Not that. But——” Frau Maria’s eyes opened wide. “Moritz, why did you ask me that?”

“Because I have the feeling that young Terbroich has no scruples.”

“Do you mean——”

“And because I wish that you would assure and inform yourself, Frau Doktor. Your great confidence is an honor to anyone who gains it. Should be an honor to any one. People thinking differently ought not to exist for us.”

“It cannot be, Moritz.”

“Do you know that young Terbroich is lavishly extravagant?”

“He is very wealthy. You just heard him say that the factory is to be enlarged.”

“A bluff, Frau Doktor. They are seeking money on the quiet.”

“Carmen is not poor.”

“Her dowry would be sufficient to pay Laurenz’s debts. Not for an enlargement of the plant!”

“No! No! No! Don’t say that! In that case—what a part would Carmen play?”

She bent forward and stared into the features of her young friend. As if she expected that he could banish again the terror he had conjured forth.

“Frau Doktor, do not be so frightened. Are you not her mother? Carmen will believe you.”

“But what, in all the world? I am groping in the dark, myself. As a woman I cannot become a spy. What a man may do, would drag a woman down. And even, if I did it—if Terbroich is as you say, he would lie to me.”

“He would. At least for the time being.”

“My God!” Frau Maria said, closing her eyes, “where is Joseph?”

It was the first time in years that she had mentioned his name. And the sound of her voice, her sudden longing for the husband, the helper, trembling through the words, affected the very soul of her guest.

“If you would go to him, Frau Doktor.”

“He would retire from me, just as he retires from his entire past.”

“He did not retire when I went to him. I was in Zons and saw him.”

“You, Moritz? When?” Her strength had returned. She grasped the arm of Moritz.

“To-day, Frau Doktor.”

“To-day? How did he look? I don’t mean only externally. Oh, do speak.”

“He has remained the distinguished, chivalrous gentleman he always was. Only he has grown serious and silent.”

“And old?”

“And old. Except his bright blue eye.”

“Those bright blue eyes——” She said it slowly, meditatively. “Upon those I depend.”

“Do so, Frau Doktor. Do it for the sake of your and of—his Carmen. I will, then, try to have no wishes for myself.”

She heard him no longer. Since Joseph’s name had passed her lips, it filled the room more and more, took shape, and filled her head with thoughts. “Joseph——”

Moritz Lachner arose. “I know now what you will do.”

She looked up then. There was a quiver about the corners of her mouth.

“I will be on my guard. Carmen is blind, and I cannot even be angry with her, for one believes whatever one wishes. Should you be right, and should my strength be insufficient—well, good-night, Moritz. You have shown me the darkness, but you have also shown me light. Good-night, Moritz.”

Erect, her eyes clear and calm, she extended her hand to him, and he confidently left her alone.

Again the noisy joys of the carnival had taken hold of Cologne, and of its people, to such an extent that they forgot all else. In the afternoon of the last Saturday preceding Lent, Frau Maria left the train at Dormagen, and walked along the road to Zons without stopping. The intense cold had let up and it was thawing. The water of the melting snow ran from the road into the ditches alongside, and the ice was beginning to break. From the Rhine there came sounds like the booming of cannon. Spring was challenging winter to battle.

Without noticing the bleakness of the landscape, Frau Maria walked on. She looked older and very tired. But, from time to time, she raised her head, and when her eyes saw the towers and turrets of the ancient fortress, arising like a “*fata morgana*” out of the level land, her eyes would light up, as if she expected to find there reply and help. Now she entered the little town, which was not unknown to her, and sought the house of old Klaus Guelich.

Joseph Otten sat in his living-room at his desk. Since the visit of his youthful friend, he had grown even more taciturn and retired. It was getting dark, and, as always in the hours of dusk, he battled with his thoughts and insisted upon absolute solitude.

“Are you here, Joseph? I can't see you.”

“Yes, Heinrich. Do you wish anything?”

Heinrich Koch entered the room. With rapid strides he went to his friend. “Yes, Joseph. But not I alone.”

“What did you say? Don't act so secretively.”

“Joseph, someone has come.”

“I cannot see anybody.”

“And if it were—Maria?”

The chair scraped along the floor. Then there was silence.

“Joseph, your wife has come.”

He warded off the words violently. A feeling of dread choked him. His forehead was damp. Only not now, only not now! For that he was unprepared. For that he needed better control of his faculties than for a trip to church.

“May she come in? She is waiting in the hall.”

“Look after her, Heinrich. Get her a carriage, or a room at the inn. Ask her to tell you all her wishes, and fulfill them. Only one wish cannot be granted. I cannot see her. I cannot.”

“Joseph, your wife seeks you.”

“If you are my friend, Heinrich, do as I ask. Or else, I must leave Zons too——”

Then the friend went in silence.

Joseph Otten stood at the window. The early moon rose, throwing its pale light upon the meadows and the river, groaning under the breaking ice. “I am like a fish cast ashore,” he thought gloomily, gazing out of the window. And more and more he felt how every fiber and every part of him longed for the woman, who

just then left the house in silence, as if she were the better part of his own self.

His hands clutched the window sill. There she walked. . . .

He could barely recognize her figure. He strained his eyes. How despondently she walked.

And that was the only being who had believed in him always, in joy and in sorrow.

“Maria!”

He saw her disappear in the gloom.

Where had she gone? There—into the meadows of the Rhine! No, those were trembling willow-trees. And yet! But yonder, there was no road. He tore open the window and leaned out. The booming of the crashing ice-floes filled his ears.

The river!

Cold perspiration covering his forehead, he stepped back. Why did she go there? And suddenly it flashed through his mind: She will throw herself into the Rhine! She is seeking death! Just now her tired soul has received its deathblow. She can stand no more.

“Oh, God!” he shouted, and, grasping cloak and hat, he raced from the house, through the nearest opening in the town wall, over the meadows, toward the Rhine.

“Hoho—Maria!”

CHAPTER XVIII

It was blowing up from the south. The strength of the wind increased; shrill blasts shrieked through the poplars, and amidst the low crowns of the willow-trees hummed a mournful melody. The air was filled with the powerful voices of the elements. The clouds were being chased as if they were game, with a pack of hounds behind. They devoured the moon, gave her up again, devoured her again, and yet again. And in the sudden changes of the appearing and disappearing light, the shadows upon the slush-covered meadows grew and assumed horrid immense shapes, struggling with each other, mingling and disappearing, to reappear elsewhere and renew their struggle, only to disappear again.

“Maria!” Otten shouted. And the derisive laughter of the storm was the only answer.

Here, there, everywhere, he believed he saw her. The shadows fooled him. On! On! And in a straight line he went to the Rhine. “I must find a spot where I can see,” he thought.

He reached the shore. About him there was a tumult as of a mass-meeting in stormy political times. As far as he could see, the pack-ice lay in a solid mass against the river-shore, reaching far out into the Rhine. But there, in the center, a battle royal was being fought, with crashes and moans and booms, as if great armies were in conflict. When the moon appeared from be-

hind the driving clouds, throwing pale light amidst the struggle, the edges of the ice-floes bobbing up and down upon the rushing waters gleamed like giant sapphires and opals, bewildering the vision and confusing the thoughts.

Otten stood on the shore, wrapped in his cloak and with his hat pushed back. With all his might he subdued the thoughts whirling within his mind, and whatever of life there was in him he concentrated by the force of his will into his eyes. The upper part of his body bent forward, as he scanned the mass of ice.

Again the moon was asserting herself. Otten shaded his eyes with his hand. A gust of the wind tried to grasp him. And in the same moment he threw himself against the gale, hurried, slid, stumbled, and ran over the ice, with bated breath and heaving chest, concentrating his strength. On! on! fifty yards more, perhaps half of that, perhaps twice as far. In front of him a woman was walking over the ice, toward the center of the river. Toward the open water.

He could not shout, the wind was driving the sound of his voice back in his throat. And why should he shout? He needed his breath for another purpose. Now he came close to the open center of the river. The ice beneath him swayed. And a sound as of subdued laughter rippled after him from the swaying floes. "It can be no different where she is walking," flashed through his mind, and, suddenly, wild, incoherent thoughts pursued each other in his mind. Thoughts of miracles of God, of the waters of the Red Sea, receding to let the children of Israel pass, of the sun standing still at Gibeon, and of the moon doing so in the valley of Ajalon. "Why these thoughts?" he said to

himself. Before him an ice-floe rose and sank in the current, crawling along like a giant tortoise. He leaped upon it, saw the woman's figure at arm's length before him, grasped her, and tore her away.

"Be still, Maria, be still, Maria. I am here——"

He held her pressed to him, and dared not move. His breath came and went quickly, his wide-open eyes stared vacantly into space. Is it my heart, or is it hers, that beats so violently, he thought, and fog-banks danced before his eyes. Then he drew a few deep breaths. That quieted him.

And then he looked at the woman he held in his arm.

Her head rested upon his shoulder, her body was inert. Her eyelids no longer had strength to remain open, only a narrow streak of white showed between. This increased her death-like appearance, and the man was shocked by her rigid apathy. Very gently he called to her: "Maria."

Her head moved. With an effort her eyelids were raised. But her stare was meaningless. The rigidity of her features did not relax.

Softly his palm stroked her face. "Did you really want to do it, Maria? Did you really want to?"

She closed her eyes tightly, and a shiver went through her frame.

"And do you really think that I would have let you do it alone? If there is any one on earth who is superfluous, it is I. And you were just about to show me how little use I am."

Quickly following each other, angry blasts of the gale struck the floes of ice. The one they were on was thrown against the packed ice leading to the shore.

Another floe disappeared before their eyes. "Joseph!" Frau Maria screamed, drawing him aside violently.

"Do you fear for my life?"

"Come—come away," she murmured, and she was shivering from cold and excitement.

With his arm about her, he led her upon the packed ice. When they had gone a few steps, he stopped and said: "This won't do. Your cloak is clinging to your body like a wet towel. You are scarcely able to stand upon your feet." And he took off her wet cloak and wrapped his own about her. "Do you feel better now? Are you feeling a little more warmth? Wait, we will be home soon."

He placed her arms about his neck, and carried more than led her across the ice-pack to the shore. There he stopped a moment. Slowly he turned his head toward the roaring battle of the ice-floes, and for a second the old joy of the victor flared up in his eyes.

Frau Maria, too, looked back. "Now—it would have been all over," she said drearily. And suddenly her nerves gave way and convulsive sobs shook her frame, ending in passionate weeping.

Joseph Otten stood before her and pressed her hands. Pressed them harder and harder, to make her feel his presence, himself affected to his very marrow. It was the first time that he had seen his wife in tears.

"You will never weep again, Maria. I will see to that."

Carefully he drew her away from the sight. "Now we will go home. Old Klaus is there, too. Everything as it used to be, Maria. You shall have all sorts of surprises."

From the meadows they reached the street leading

to the old town. The lights in Klaus Guelich's house showed them the way. "Now, we are both safe," Joseph Otten said, as they stepped across the threshold into the brightly lighted Diele.

"Holy Mother of God!" old Klaus exclaimed, rising straight from his seat. "Frau Doktor!"

"Good-evening, Klaus," she said softly, and tried to smile.

"Where do you come from? Surely, it isn't raining, little angel?"

"I was here before, towards evening, but I found only Professor Koch. Then I went walking along the Rhine."

"And that scamp, the Reverend Professor Koch, didn't tell me a word about it. But this is no weather to walk along the Rhine! Why, you are shivering like an aspen leaf, and not a stitch of your clothing is dry! Tringche!" he shouted at the surprised housekeeper. "Hurry up and get your Sunday stockings and your church-dress. And don't forget the thick felt slippers. And then a hot punch, a grog stiff enough to keep the spoon in it standing up."

Professor Koch had come around the table, had taken Frau Maria's hand, and raised it to his lips.

"I will take her up to my room," Otten said to him. "Will you send the housekeeper up there?"

Frau Maria gave the men her hand, and allowed herself to be led up to her husband's room. A cheery fire was burning in the stove. Heinrich Koch's tender care could be felt. The housekeeper came up immediately after them, and Otten left the two women alone for a while. When he returned to the room, Frau Maria sat in the corner of the sofa in dry clothes, her feet

and knees carefully wrapped up, taking a drink of hot punch at the urgent request of Tringche. "I am well again, Joseph."

Otten drew a chair near the sofa, sat down, and took her hand in his. The housekeeper asked if she should bring some food, but Frau Maria said, "I can't eat," and Otten, too, shook his head. Then the woman went with a kind and friendly greeting, and they were alone. Both looked down.

Without, the gale was shaking the shutters, tearing in fury around the house, enraged that its victim had been torn from its grasp. They both heard it, and heard the distant roar of the battle of the ice-floes on the Rhine.

"Why did you want to do it, Maria?"

"You needed me no longer."

"I had no longer a right to need you, dear. You always knew so well how to read my thoughts."

"But I needed you. You! Would I have come if I had known what to do? You, too, were always able to read me; I had never been a puzzle to you, and yet I was sent away."

"It was done in the excitement of the surprise. I was so unprepared that I lost my head."

"You see, Joseph, that was the first time that my belief in you was shaken. You may often have done too much or too little in life, but I have always seen only the chivalrous gentleman in you. Even then, when misfortune came, I was woman enough to understand it all, and, above all, I was your wife. I have made only one mistake. I should have forced myself upon you. Perhaps you would have recuperated more quickly, perhaps we would have grown old and silent

together before our time. We would at least have been together. But what was left in life for me then, Joseph? I would not even have had the mission to think of you."

"Have you forgotten Carmen, Maria?"

"Carmen——" she repeated slowly. "On her account I wanted to see you."

"Are you uneasy about her?"

"She would like to relieve me of my care for her also." Frau Maria stared into her lap. "She wants to have her own way, and she refuses to see whither that way leads. Joseph," it burst from her, "you must help! Give me back my belief in you! The child is at stake."

She was completely exhausted, and Otten pressed her into his arms. "Calm yourself, sweetheart," he said. "Now you are with me, and I am again as of old. Is my word still worth something to you?"

Then she twined her arms about his neck and sought his mouth. And he kissed her pale lips and her burning eyes.

For a while she lay still and breathed evenly. Then she said: "Now I would like to talk."

"Will it not excite you too much to-day?"

"What could be hard for me now, since I have your help again?"

"Is it on account of Laurenz Terbroich? You know that Lachner was here and saw me. But I thought I had no right to interfere."

"Yes—on account of Laurenz Terbroich. And Carmen has reached her majority. Her studies have advanced her even beyond her age. Of that I would not complain, if she used her rights with certainty of aim.

But she does it only when and where it suits her fancy. She fears to lose something of life, if she would let a festive hour go by, and when she sets aside too many hours as festive ones, and I attempt to reason with her, she proudly speaks of her blood and——”

“Just say it, Maria.”

“And cites the example of her father, whom she has ever considered her model.”

“She is my daughter,” Otten said and pressed his lips together.

“Then Laurenz Terbroich came home. In London and Paris he had developed into a nice-looking chap. If the young girls in general did not make so much of him, I don’t believe Carmen would have become interested in him. But as it was, it pleased her, that he seemed to have no eyes for all others, and all his attentions were for her. There are people who work like slow poison. Laurenz Terbroich belongs to that type. I, too, was duped. Until a few days ago, I considered his cold-blooded scheming to be the passing vanity of youth. His life is one continuous lie.”

“Does he love Carmen?”

“Who could help loving her? You have not seen her for too long a time.”

“And does she love him in return?”

“He builds castles in the air for her, until she is intoxicated. Then her fancy runs away with her.”

“And you believe that he does not think of marrying her?”

“He does not even think of being true to her.”

Otten arose. Several times he walked to and fro in the room with gathered brows. Then he remained

standing before her. "Not true. Much may be read out of that word. Has he made her a promise? Does he lie to her? Does he attempt things that must insult her? To be untrue means to be different from that which one pretends to be."

"That's it, Joseph. And here it is the case."

"That is bad for Carmen."

She peered anxiously into his darkened features. "You will help——"

He drew a deep breath. "I should like to if I can. But I don't know any reason as yet."

Then she continued, speaking hastily: "Perhaps I was too proud of my art in rearing her. When, through all the years during which you did not come, I could only think of you, I transferred to the child everything I should have liked to give to you. Every hour I watched over her body and her soul. In that way I may possibly have done too much. Carmen saw herself too early as the central point, as an exceptional being, and her lively imagination raised her still higher. She has inherited your artistic vein and your enthusiasm for beauty, joy, and adornment of life. Laurenz met her in that, and she accepted his shallow frivolity for artistic temperament, his greed for admiration and enthusiasm for beauty. It is the eternal mistake. And Carmen could not realize it. She saw in him only what he pretended to be—the man of the world with big ideas. And at the same time the factory was in serious financial difficulties as a result of his extravagance in London and Paris, which extravagance he continued in Cologne."

"Are you positive of that?"

"He knew so well how to throw sand into the eyes of

people, that I, too, remained blind, until Moritz Lachner shook my confidence."

"A rejected lover is not an ideal witness."

"You wrong him. He does not love Carmen alone, he loves all the Ottens with a deeply rooted sentiment. He looks up to you with the same enthusiasm with which he loves Carmen."

"Financial difficulties alone would not warrant using force in this case. And if I know old Terbroich, his eyes will open despite his blind admiration for his son, just as soon as he feels the knife at his throat."

"They have been opened. I learned it yesterday."

Otten straightened up. "What did you say?"

"I have suppressed my natural instincts and have searched wherever there was anything to discover. You need not try to imagine how hard it was for me to do it. And I found that there had been a very stormy scene between the father and the son."

"And Laurenz allowed himself to be talked into things?"

"He himself made the proposition, an engagement with the daughter of another very wealthy manufacturer."

"Ah!—And Carmen? Does she know?"

"She laughed at me. She cannot imagine that any one could forsake her."

"And you?"

"I went to Laurenz Terbroich. Pardon, Joseph, that your wife did that. But I wanted to know the truth at any price, and there was no one else who could go for me."

"You poor woman," Otten said with a deep sigh and a long look at her.

“He has his own home. You know the house on Komödienstrasse. Terbroich owns it. I found Laurenz, and I asked him: ‘What do you intend to do?’ And he evaded me with the smoothest of pleasantries. ‘You may safely leave that to us, Frau Doktor. We are still very young, why should we bind ourselves so soon and draw a “finis” beneath our youth?’ Then I asked him about the proposed engagement. He was surprised, but evaded me. ‘Perhaps a commercial move on my father’s part. The times are somewhat difficult. But Carmen and I would not let ourselves be troubled by such projects.’ I went as I had come, only more ashamed, ashamed not to be a man. I could not master him.”

Otten’s face had become crimson. “That fellow——! I recognize his father in him!”

“Joseph——”

“They are too careful and too smooth to give themselves away. Let us thank God, when Carmen will be rid of that crowd.”

“And if she should be rid of them—too late? That is the torment that is haunting me. If it is not even now—too late?”

All the color left Otten’s face. “Don’t say that, Maria. Not that.”

“I must. I can wait no longer. It is not only for the sake of Carmen. It is also on your account, Joseph. Your daughter, Joseph! Your daughter a plaything! That—that would kill you. And if other women, smarter, more up-to-date women, would find a thousand pretty words for it—here it is not a matter of other women, not of smarter and freer women, not of all the women in the world, here it is a matter of

your daughter. Joseph: Your daughter! Where is the father? I am deadly tired——”

With a violent motion Otten embraced his wife. His face had grown rigid as a mask. There was not a sound between them, but their deep breathing. And then Otten said mechanically: “Be still, Maria, be still——”

“Now I am quiet.”

They sat beside each other, embracing. Neither one spoke, because their thoughts had been united. At last a shiver ran through Frau Maria.

“I am shivering and yet I feel as if I were burning.”

“You must go to bed. You probably have caught cold.”

She tried to rise, but her limbs refused their service. With a tired smile she desisted. “Now I am putting a second burden upon you. I feel as if I had lead in my bones. If I only don’t fall ill now.”

Otten stooped over her. His hands felt her forehead and her pulse. “My God, Maria!”

“Come, I will lean upon you. Perhaps it is only the joy to be able to rest here with you. Just wait; that is it. When I awaken to-morrow, everything will be well.”

He placed his arm about her and half carried her into his bedroom. There he remained with her until she lay down. Her teeth were chattering, and yet she found words of care for him.

“Where are you going to rest during the night? I have driven you from your bed.”

“I’ll camp upon the sofa in the adjoining room. That will do very nicely. We will leave the door

open, and whenever you wish for anything, you need only to call."

"Let the housekeeper bring you up some blankets. You will be cold." Her shoulders shook.

"Don't you worry about me, dearest."

"Dearest——" she murmured.

"I'll get you some hot tea at once," he said excitedly. "We will soon defeat the cold. You have suffered enough now."

She looked after him with shining eyes as he left the room. Downstairs he met old Klaus, Heinrich, and the housekeeper. He told them in a few words what was needed, and then sat down silently beside the range, waiting for the tea. When he started upstairs again, Koch came after him. "Can I assist you in any way?"

"No, thank you. I hope she will soon fall asleep."

"Joseph, I will wait up down here."

"Hadn't you better go to bed? It is late."

"I feel as if on this night you would like to have a human being about you."

"Well, all right then." And hastily he went upstairs.

Frau Maria's eyes had been fixed on the door. And they lit up once more when he entered. He noticed her look and blushed. "Do you feel warmer?" he asked.

"You must not worry about me, Joseph. Else I must get up and look after your comfort first."

He braced her back and handed her the tea. "Drink. It is piping hot, and the housekeeper swears by it."

She slowly sipped the tea, and whenever she stopped

she rested her head against his arm. She never took her look from him.

“How nice this is. Two old people.”

“Yes, Maria. You will not be able to make much of a show with me. My vanity has succumbed to time, and my hair has paid the tribute. Gray, gray, gray.”

“And my hair is white.”

“How becoming that white is to you. I cannot imagine that you have ever looked different. It makes you look so peaceful and so motherly. In my case it is only decay.”

“You have remained the same in every feature. As one grows old his conception of the beautiful changes, and that is well.”

“Well, and now no more flattery,” he ordered, and let her head sink into the pillows. Then he tucked her snugly into the blankets. “Now, if you love me, you will go to sleep at once.”

“First I want to see that the housekeeper fixes up your sofa-bed.”

“You incorrigible. Well, I will call her, then.”

Tringche brought blankets and pillows, arranged the sofa, looked after the lady, tucked her in still better, and disappeared with many good wishes.

“Good-night, Joseph.”

“Good-night, sweetheart.”

For a moment she closed her eyes, then she opened them wide, raised her arms, and quickly drew his head to her breast. “Joseph—— Now, both of us are old people—— Good-night.”

He sat upon the edge of the bed until she had gone to sleep. “Now, we are old people,” he repeated to himself. And he shook his head. “One only needs to

draw the circle closer, and then he remains young. Old Klaus feels as if he were a youth."

Quietly he arose and left the room. In doing so, he remembered that Heinrich Koch was waiting up for him. "I'll sit down with him for a while yet," Otten thought. "We began together as boys, and now we are closing the circle as grayheaded old men. Within it lies our youth."

Heinrich Koch sat at the oaken table and dreamt. The light of the lamp fell upon his serious, wrinkled face. When he heard Otten's step, he jumped up and went to meet his friend, grasping and pressing the other's hand silently.

"What does this mean, Heinrich?"

"It means a congratulation."

"Have you become a mind-reader in your declining days?"

"It requires no art in your case. Happily, you are not a complicated nature, and your eyes are like those of a seafarer, seeing land at last after a long and arduous voyage amidst storms and hurricanes. Land, Joseph!"

"I thank you for your congratulation. You have made no mistake, Heinrich. I feel my blood circulating again."

"A human being needs a mission. You are a happy man."

They sat opposite one another as they had done so often, and they looked at each other as after a long separation. "Old Klaus has gone to bed. I think we are the only night-owls in Zons," Koch said.

"Maria was feverish. But she went to sleep easily."

“Only people free from care go to sleep easily. Doesn't that make you thoughtful, Joseph?”

“I can see the many nights she went to sleep with difficulty. She must live long, if what has been missed is to be made up to her. And yet it was a matter of seconds.”

“Yonder?” Heinrich Koch silently pointed to the window.

“Yes, over there.”

They both listened. From the distance came the sound of the crashing ice-floes, driven northward by the mild breeze from the south. Like a battle of spirits it sounded in the night.

“To-morrow,” Heinrich Koch said, “to-morrow or the next day, the river will be free from one shore to the other, and will be able again to do its duty upon the short stretch to the Netherlands.”

“The Rhine—and I, Heinrich. The short stretch to the Netherlands.”

“But to end better in your case. Not to be split up in many small channels. The entry into the sea must be free and proud.”

“That is the way we dreamt about it, when we were boys.”

“And we will say that we have no need to be ashamed of our youth. Above all, you, Joseph. The sunset shall be as beautiful as the sunrise. Only not to grow small.”

“Those are almost the identical words I said to Maria, when I spoke to her of my love the first time,” Joseph Otten replied after a pause. “And she believed me. Then! And now, it is high time that I

make good that promise and many another. Then——! In the meantime I have grown fifty-five years old. And there are many years of warfare between. And they count double. Then, I thought that they would only count half, and, really, at first it seemed as if I had guessed the truth. It remained that way for a long while, because Maria made everything so easy for me. Then," he said, and again, "then——then——" And he began to speak of the days gone by. It was like a joyous remembrance of days and of things he had never spoken about to a third party. He told of Maria's lonely youth, of their first meeting at Koblenz, of their comradeship, and of their love. He resurrected the entire springtime of his existence, its hopes and its fulfilments. He spoke of their wanderings, of Carmen's birth, of his pride as a father, of their matrimonial union, transformed by Maria's gentle hand into a port for every storm, until he had started upon his last disastrous journey.

A fine blush had mounted to the forehead of Heinrich Koch. "Now I, too, have lived through all of that," he said. "I thank you, Joseph."

"I almost feel," Joseph Otten said, "as if I had solved the mystery of my decay."

"Then the process of decay is halted."

"You think you know that?"

"I knew it long ago. But a fellow must experience that in himself, if it is to work miracles."

"Yes, Heinrich, I had always allowed Maria to take every burden from my back, and I never carried any. That was it. And I stood angrily by the wayside, and thought that my strength was exhausted, because I did not know how to use it."

Heinrich Koch pointed to the ceiling. "Maria has brought you a mission."

Joseph Otten arose. In his haggard frame every nerve was tense. "The child is in danger," he said, and it was as if a glad light leaped into his eyes, a sudden hunger for life.

"Did I not prophesy to you, that you would be a happy man?"

The two grayheaded friends stood, looking at each other with flashing eyes. The night-wind swept over the meadows without, and over the Rhine. The battle of the ice-floes was still going on. "The Rhine is furious, because I was the victor. Do you hear?" And they listened and laughed. . . .

"I must look after Maria. Just let morning come. I am still alive."

They shook hands, and Otten went upstairs, erect and vigorous. He had never felt happier in all his life than in this hour.

CHAPTER XIX

THE church bell at Zons announced Sunday morning. The entire countryside lay silent and expectant, absorbing the festive atmosphere of the Lord's day that seemed to emanate from the belfry, and spread over the meadows and tilled fields like a benediction. The wind had driven the clouds away. The sun, growing warmer with the approach of spring, arose and shone upon the landscape and the river, which had won again almost the entire width of its course, and was carrying the floes of ice upon its broad back as if they were light toys. Occasionally there was the sound of a big cake breaking away from its shoreward fastenings, to turn about abruptly and to hustle after its companions toward that treacherous freedom.

Tringche, the housekeeper, returned from early Mass, which she had never missed since the day when the strange guests had arrived at her house. The congregation was small. There was not much to see, and the simple soul used the time and the opportunity to ask the dear Saints to pray for the salvation of the members of the household, who had remained at home and were trying in their own way to bring about a direct understanding with their Creator. When she entered the kitchen, the fire was burning brightly, and Professor Koch was standing beside the range, watching the water come slowly to the boiling-point.

"Is the lady feeling better?" she asked, and immediately started to help.

“Feeling better would be saying too much. But she is awake. We will quickly prepare the tea.”

A few minutes later, Koch, carrying the tray, stood before the door of Otten’s room and knocked softly. Joseph Otten opened the door. He received the tray, thanked Koch with a nod, and stepped back into the room, carefully closing the door again. From the bedroom adjoining came the sound of short, quickly drawn breaths.

Tenderly Otten cooled the steaming beverage and carried it to the bed. “It will do you good, Maria.”

At the sound of his voice, she opened her eyes. “I feel very feverish, and I have such pains in my head and chest.”

“We’ll down those pains, Maria.”

“Joseph,” she said, grasping his hand, and then she obediently drank.

After a while she asked about the weather. “The sun is shining? Please open the shutters. I would like to see the whole room full of sunshine.”

He complied immediately. “You need not stir. I’ll push another pillow under your head, and then you can look out of the bed through the window. So—— Is that nice?”

“Beautiful——” she said, as she lay and looked with wide-open eyes into the fiery orb of day.

Toward noon she became more restless. “Joseph—— it is more than a cold, after all.—I can scarcely breathe, and—I feel a throbbing—everywhere.”

He held her pulse between his fingers and felt her forehead. “I will have a physician called at once. He shall fight the fever. And to-morrow you will be well.”

Upon the stairway he met Koch, and, after a short conference, the Professor hurriedly grasped his overcoat and hat, and started for Dormagen to hunt up the physician and the drug-store. In the meanwhile afternoon came. Otten sat at the bedside of his wife, and held her hand. He had placed a bag of cracked ice upon her chest, and renewed it after a couple of hours. Then she felt some relief.

“Don’t write to Carmen. She shall not be frightened.”

“Is she alone at home!”

“The maid is with her. She is reliable. And Moritz Lachner will look after her.”

“Do they know that you are here?”

“Moritz Lachner knows. And he will tell her.”

“If you feel better to-morrow, Maria, I’ll go to Cologne.”

She squeezed his hand, closed her eyes, and slumbered for a few minutes. An expression of pain was visible in her features. Restlessly she moved her head about and awoke. “My breathing is growing more and more difficult.”

He cracked some ice into tiny bits and placed them on her tongue. In doing so, he supported her head, as a mother with a child she wishes to aid, and she pressed her face against his arm.

“Stay here, Joseph.”

“Gladly, dearest——”

“Once, when I was a little girl, I had the fever. That is the most beautiful memory of my childhood. Doesn’t that sound foolish? And yet it is so. For then—my mother looked after me—all day long. And that was so nice. When I lay on her arm, I would

be quiet at once—and would dream. Of beautiful meadows and warm sunshine, and of a swing between two big fruit-trees, upon which I would rock to and fro, oh, so easily. Oh, that was a delightful feeling. Free—and yet protected and safe. And now, I am rocking again.”

“Because you are protected and safe.”

“Protected and safe. Yes—— How wonderful it is that it repeats itself.—Repeats itself now.—I was not allowed long—to be a little girl.—On that account—those days have remained—so vividly in my memory. And, later—at times when I was very, very tired—I have always secretly wished those days back again. Often—often—very much. But then I had—that big boy—to rock—that big boy—who was my husband.—That came first.—And now—you are doing for me—the same service—of love.”

“Don’t speak so much, dear, it is too much of an exertion for you.”

“Oh, that makes no difference.—Really—I have never spoken much—in life.—But to-day—I love to talk.—I can’t explain it to you.—But it seems—to me—as if I had to chat with you—all the while—all the while. There is so much—that I have neglected—to tell you.—I always felt ashamed—to tell it.—I did not want you to think me forward.—That I loved you so passionately.”

“You—dear——” Otten said and softly rocked her.

“Now, I am again—in the swing.—The one beautiful childhood memory—that I have retained—is taking form again—so that I can grasp it.—That is—like a resurrection.—Oh, Joseph—to be here with you is so nice——”

“I believe,” Otten said, “you even wish to thank me.”

“I have reason for it. No. No. Don’t contradict. When I am going to die—I will tell you.”

He rocked her to and fro. His gray hair lay close beside hers, white before its time.

The carriage of the physician drove up in front of the house. Heinrich Koch had been compelled to wait for him, and had brought him along after a brief explanation and after they had obtained at the drug-store everything that might possibly be needed. The physician knocked at the door, and Otten called, “Come in,” without leaving his wife out of his arms. For a moment the physician remained standing at the threshold, surprised at the strange scene. Then he quickly entered and introduced himself.

“Permit me to proceed with the examination at once,” he said, and Otten made room for him. He passed his hand over his forehead and stood at the foot of the bed, so that Frau Maria could see him. It pained him, when the physician uncovered her chest.

The examination was quite lengthy. In the meanwhile the physician asked questions about everything that had preceded the attack. Before Otten could answer, Frau Maria did so. She did not want him to make a painful confession.

“So you have been walking along the Rhine in this nasty weather. These early spring storms are very treacherous. And, at all events, you were in a condition of mental distress, which made you more susceptible for the contraction of the illness. Well, it is only an affection. The main thing, gracious madam, is that you follow instructions absolutely. Then you will soon

be able to take walks along the Rhine again. But the weather will be better then. Shall I ask a Sister of Saint Vincent to come here from the convent, and look after you?"

"If you could intrust me with the service, Herr Doktor, I would like it much better," Otten said, stepping forward. "What I may lack in experience, I would make up through reliability."

"I only thought that ladies among themselves——"

"My wife is accustomed to me only."

"Very well. Then I will give you the necessary instructions, and that would best be done in the presence of the housekeeper."

Otten politely opened the door, nodded to his wife, and followed the physician, who remained standing on the stairs. "Listen, Herr Doktor Otten, that is no slight affection, as I told your wife, in order not to disturb her. It is my duty to be frank with you, and I trust that I may."

"Without reserve, if I may ask."

"It is pneumonia, rapidly developed. Even if I do not fear the worst at once, I must point out to you the seriousness of the situation. My instructions must be carried out to the letter. There must be a night watch, to renew the compresses and packings every two hours, and to be ready at any minute to give assistance to the patient, by giving her relief through small pieces of ice, and to stimulate her heart action through drinks of champagne. I would like to ask you once more, if it would not be better to send for a Sister."

"Herr Doktor," Otten answered quietly, "if the possibility exists that with my wife it may be a matter of one or two nights, then I want these nights for myself."

“That possibility does exist. Nothing definite can be said until to-morrow. In the other case, however——”

“In the other case—and I hope with every fiber that this other case may result—there is no human being on earth able to give more aid in the speedy recovery of my wife than I—I alone will be the winner—just as I alone would be the loser.”

They descended the stairs, and met Heinrich Koch and old Klaus on the Diele. And while the physician searched among the medicines he had brought along, Otten had silently joined his friends and sat down between them. With secret wonderment the physician looked at the strange gray-headed trio——

Then he called the housekeeper and repeated his instructions. Otten had arisen immediately.

“I’ll drive home now,” the physician said to him, “but I will be here again this evening at about ten o’clock, to give the patient a few hours of sleep, in case the difficulty in her breathing should increase.”

Otten grasped his hand. His eyes searched the features of the physician for a few seconds, as if he might read more there. Then he dropped his hand. “I thank you.”

“Auf Wiedersehen.”

Otten bowed, turned about, and walked past his friends without a word. They looked after him, as he ascended the stairs, and continued listening, until they heard the door of his rooms close.

He was not able to enter the bedroom at once. In the center of his living-room he stood with staring, incredulous eyes, and the words of the physician: “There is danger—there is danger,” went through his mind

again and again. He could not realize their truth. They must have been meant for someone else. And again his brain worked until it pained him. Yes, in truth, the physician had been here and had spoken; had spoken of Maria, and what he had said could not be wiped out: Maria was in danger! That was inconceivable. Maria——? Was it possible that she would leave him alone? What? Had he not left her alone all these years, and wished that he be left alone? But that had been in the past! What connection did yesterday have with to-day? What did all those years mean to him? Only the present was to be considered. That which had happened since he had her again.

And now—it was to be all over? A last flash, lighting up his existence, and shaking it up? To show him the way?—And then—it was to be over?

“No!” he exclaimed in a low tone, setting his teeth.

His frame straightened up, his eyes glowed. With clenched fists he stood there, gathering all the self-control of which he was capable.

In the bedroom Frau Maria stirred: “Are you there, Joseph?”

He straightened up anew, forced a smile, and entered the bedroom.

“Did the physician say anything else outside? Anything that I was not to hear?”

Gently he laid her down again among the pillows. “He only repeated his instructions, so that you may feel better by to-morrow. In that you must aid us. During the evening, he will come again to look after you.”

“Joseph—don’t let any Sister come to nurse me.”

“Will you like it better, too, dear, if I nurse you?”

It is egotism on my part. I would like so much to pay back a little."

"It is egotism on my part."

For a few seconds she lay still and tried to ease her chest. Then she continued: "It may also end in another way than we hoped. If that should be the case—then I will have you till then—all to myself."

He felt a hot wave passing through his body. Those were the same thoughts he had expressed to the physician a brief moment ago. And now the chords of their souls harmonized, as they had done so often—as they had done always.

"We belong together," was all he could say.

"Do you feel that, Joseph?"

He did not answer. He laid his head close beside hers upon the pillow. Slowly evening crept into the room and enfolded them.

They had exchanged but few words. Words of tenderness, that were as a breath, and yet they filled the room. Now Otten lit the lamp, and renewed the packings with a deftness that astonished him. He gave her medicine. The thermometer showed an increase of the fever.

With the advance of evening, she felt that she was growing weaker. Her breath grew hotter and more violent, and her effort not to let it be noticed made her talk confusedly. The housekeeper brought the stimulants the physician had prescribed, and she took them without hesitancy. She, also, obediently drank the champagne Otten gave her from time to time. Then she began to talk in a low voice, in short broken sentences, which she timed to her breathing. She spoke of things near and far, and everything she said came

in the same strangely important tone. As if there had been nothing whatever in her life that was not important.

Her sentences grew in length and in excitement. Her head jerked, while Otten held it in his hands. "If I could only sleep," she murmured in exhaustion.

Intensely Otten listened. No sound coming from without escaped him. Far away some merrymakers of the Carnival shouted. That was all. And the hands of the clock pointed to ten. Every minute seemed to be an eternity. Now! The sound of rolling wheels. . . . He breathed, relieved. A carriage stopped before the house.

The physician had examined lungs and heart anew. Bravely Frau Maria stood it, though every motion caused pain. "I am bringing you sleep, gracious madam." And quickly he gave her a morphine injection. He remained sitting at her bedside until the effect was produced. In the midst of her relation of joyous things that occupied her mind, her head dropped and she fell asleep.

"A woman with a clear head and strength of will," the physician said. "Not a syllable about herself, not a complaint of her pains. Only occupied with those who are near to her. Now I understand, Herr Doktor, why you would have no other nurse."

Otten looked at him gloomily. This country physician had learned to appreciate her in a few hours. Ironical Fate sneered into Otten's face on account of his own tardy understanding. "Yes, yes," he answered.

"I have heard much of you, Herr Doktor, and in former years I have admired you greatly. You have

had much out of life. Do not forget that, when it makes demands."

"No, no——" he replied.

"To-morrow morning I will be here immediately after office-hours. I wish you both a good-night."

Then Otten was alone with the sleeper. And while he watched her, and placed his hands upon hers, as if he wished to assure himself of her presence, his thoughts were in turmoil, seeking a word he had just heard, chasing it around in a circle, and playing ball with it. "Demands. Demands. What demands could there be left?—None. None. Silence within! Brace up, Joseph."

Once she awoke. It was past midnight. He utilized the opportunity to renew the applications, and to give her a drink. She had scarcely touched the pillows when she was asleep again.

Otten thought he heard some soft sound outside of his door. When he opened the door, Heinrich Koch stood before him, and old Klaus was waiting on the stairs.

"Well, Heinrich, it is fate. *Kaum gewonnen, schon zerronnen*—scarcely won, and lost again."

Heinrich Koch shook his fine scholarly head. "Even if the worst should come, Joseph, Frau Maria is not like every other woman—something remains."

"Something."

"Enough for you, who had expected nothing at all. And, perhaps, even so much that I may have a share."

"Jupp," old Klaus said; "up with your head. Keep your neck stiff."

Then a fleeting smile passed over Otten's stony features. "I will. Good-night."

The short conversation had done him good. It had a lasting after-effect. "Only the boyhood friendships endure," he thought. "What follows after is not unselfish. Where are all the later friends? Gone with the last bottle of wine to which I invited them. *Habeant sibi.*"

He dreamt with open eyes. Of old Klaus and of his own father's vessel, and Klaus the skipper. Of Heinrich Koch, the merry little comrade, who always romped at his side. And of the little sneak—what was his name?—Oh, yes, Metardus—Metardus Terbroich. The name chased his dreaming. Metardus—Laurenz. "Hypocrites.—We'll have an accounting."

Watch in hand, he attended to his duties as a nurse. Before dawn, Frau Maria awoke. "Good-morning, dearest," he said, stooping over her. "How do you feel?"

Her glances passed over him and over the walls, and then they returned to him. "What was it? That last matter?"

"You probably have dreamt, dear. Do you recognize me now?"

"You? Why should I not know you, Joseph? You and Carmen—— Oh, please call her."

"You are in Zons, Maria. Are you still suffering pains?"

"Pains—pains?" she murmured. "Yes, I have pains. In one way, they are not pains. It's only the breathing. If I could only just once—draw a good deep breath."

Shortly after she suffered a severe attack. She fought for air until her body half arose. Her hands clutched at the bed-covers. At once Otten brought her

into a sitting position, and tenderly stroked her moist forehead. She tried to speak. Her breath came and went in short, hard gasps. "Thanks," she finally said.

After that she lay without speaking, trying in vain to gain victory over the difficulty in breathing. In this condition the physician found her.

When Otten showed him out of the rooms, the physician's face was grave. "The fever has increased. We can do nothing but continue the same treatment. I can't make any promises."

"You must."

"I cannot."

"Allow me to have a second physician in consultation."

"I was just about to ask you to do so. Have you anyone to suggest?"

"Privy-Councilor Dr. Bartels of Cologne. He was our family physician."

"I'll telephone for him at once from the station. We can both be here in the afternoon."

When he returned to his room, Otten found Koch there, to his surprise. "What do you want here?"

"See to it that you remain sensible, Joseph. Our patient is slumbering. Now, you lie down upon the sofa at once, and try to sleep, too. I'll call you in two hours, or sooner, if our patient wakes up. My word upon it. Remember that you need your remaining strength during the coming night."

Without argument Otten did as he was told.

In the afternoon the two physicians came. Life in the little town seemed to have been awakened this day. The wave of the carnival did not pass even this silent spot, without quickening its pulse-beat. Frau Maria

had heard the coming of the carriage. From afar she heard the sounds of singing and of music. "What day is this?" she asked.

"Rose-Monday."

"Rose-Monday—— It is a pretty name."

The physicians entered. The privy-councilor grasped Otten's hand and pressed it warmly. He had been one of Otten's most enthusiastic admirers. This lean man with haggard face and gray hair was Otten? He would have recognized him only by those flashing, steel-blue eyes.

"Herr Geheimrath, if you cannot help her, give her relief. She is entitled to that."

"I know. I'll do my share."

After a quarter of an hour, while the other physician remained seated before the bed, he took Otten aside. "The heart is worn out. It has no power of resistance left. Pneumonia alone could not have done it. I have given her camphor, to stimulate the heart action. That deceives for a few hours. But, as I have said—it only deceives."

"She must not suffer!"

"During the night you may give her some more of these drops. The consciousness of pain is decreased through them. She was a brave woman, Herr Doktor."

"Ah—she *was*——!"

And again he was alone with his wife. He had closed the window-shutters, so that no sound from without should disturb her, and had placed the lamp in the most unobtrusive spot.

And while the night came, and hour after hour passed, bringing nothing, but taking away, he told her whisper-

ingly of all those years of which she knew not, and which had belonged to her just the same as those others, because throughout them his longing had fluttered and hovered about her, like a shy bird.

“Now, I am making up for it all at once,” she said.

And he replied in bitter self-accusation: “What a life you have had——”

Her hand stroked the bedclothes, as if she thus could relieve his remorse. He had to stoop low over her, in order to understand her.

“No woman was more happy. For I was not only permitted to be a love, but also to be a comfort. Who else can say as much? And that I was allowed to be your comfort—that makes my life—beautiful.”

“Maria, now it is my turn.”

“You see—it has—come—to you—too. And if you—help Carmen—you’ll see—how feeling—can counter-balance—a life.—Help Carmen—Joseph.—Whatever—you do—for her—you do—for her mother.”

Her difficulties increased. He gave her the drops, and she dozed for a while. Once more she spoke, with great effort. “Is—morning—here? I—would—like to—see it.”

He opened the shutters and let the early light of day flood the room. The morning sun flickered through the window panes.

“Sun——! You—Carmen—and the sun.”

“The sun’s name has ever been Maria.”

“Joseph——” she said with great difficulty, “you——!” And she looked at the sun. . . .

Suddenly her eyes opened wide. She looked at her husband. She tried to say something more, but she

could not. She tried to bid a last farewell. But the word she tried to say became a heartrending smile.

He held her in both arms and drew her tightly to his breast. And he read in her eyes what she wished: "Kiss me, Joseph."

Then he placed his lips upon hers and kissed her, as she breathed her last.

When the physicians returned an hour later, they found him, his arm still placed about her dead body. And when they had gone again, he still sat in the same position. All morning long. Alone with his thoughts.

It was almost noon before he came down to the Diele. Heinrich Koch and old Klaus arose from their seats.

"Joseph——"

"It is all right."

"A dispatch—for Frau Maria."

He took the telegram. "For Frau Maria in Heaven."

"Joseph," Heinrich Koch said, "I loved her like no other woman on earth."

"A mourner the more."

"Two," said old Klaus, "two more, Jupp." And in his emotion the old man broke his clay pipe and walked heavily out of the house.

"Won't you open the telegram?"

"Oh, yes." He tore it open and read. First Moritz Lachner's signature. Then the text. "Terbroich and Carmen intend going South to-morrow. My explanations rejected by Carmen as incredible."

Joseph Otten read twice. And, as he read the second time, he laughed harshly. "Patience——"

"News from Carmen, Joseph?"

"She will be here to-morrow."

“Thank God.”

Otten paced up and down the hall. “We will lay her to rest the day after to-morrow.” He stopped in his wandering and looked at the ceiling. “Here, so that we will have her near us, whenever we may need her. The dead bind more securely than the living. Will you do the necessary errands for me, Heinrich?”

“Certainly. I’ll do everything that will be needed. Don’t you trouble at all. Shall I telegraph Carmen also?”

“No. I am going to the station myself. I have to take a long walk, go on some errand; I don’t know what. There is some will, some testament to execute, in order that her little treasure may not be stolen.”

“Can I not look after the matter for you?”

“No. No human being can do that errand for me.”

He took only a glass of wine. He could not be induced to take any nourishment. Then he stood before the corpse upstairs for a long while in hat and cloak. The clock in the church-tower struck an hour of the early afternoon. Then he tore himself away.

“Now I am going, Maria.”

And he went. Silently he walked around the old town, and silently he walked along the road to Dornmagen, the same road Frau Maria had traveled over three short days ago. He thought of that, as he went on his way. “She executed her mission. I must not remain behind.”

He hurried as he neared the station.

“I have a mission to fulfill. I must bear the consequences of my life. No one can get away from that. Not if he had escaped to the most lonely island. A big tidal wave hauls me down. It matters not if I have

thought the consequences of my life different, merrier, and more easy. It is no longer a question concerning me, it is a question concerning those I shall leave behind. Well, I am still good for something. Rest easy, Maria."

It being the day before Ash-Wednesday, there were not many passengers on the train. Otten took his seat in a first-class compartment and remained alone. Slowly the train proceeded from one station to the other. He did not notice it. He sat in the corner and thought.

"There is a squaring up of things. Because I could not pass a woman without finding her beautiful, I must go out, now that I am an old man, in order to protect my daughter. And protect her from such a scamp. That is the worst of it."

His tired eyes closed. As if he had caught himself doing something contrary to his duty, he started up. "Stay awake, Joseph. Afterwards there will be plenty of time to sleep."

There stood the old Cathedral of his home city, raising its three fingers as if administering an oath. And Otten straightened up, left the depot, and entered Cologne.

He had entered a madhouse. The finish of the carnival swept through the streets and the alleys. Today we still live, to-morrow we die. Hence enjoy life while it lasts! Ash-Wednesday will be here to-morrow.

A wild crowd of costumed people met him, singing a crazy carnival song, hoarse from the exertions of the weeks of hilarity. The sounds hurt his ears. He drew up the collar of his cloak and pulled his hat down over his eyes. Only not to be recognized! The air was intoxicating through the noise, and the atmosphere acted

as an intoxicant upon the people. The whole thing appeared repulsive, disgusting to him now. Well, he had come to help in the sobering-up process.

The crowd forced him from the Domplatz into the Komödienstrasse. It was the street he sought. In front of young Terbroich's house he braced himself against the throng, and he was pushed into the entry. The house lay in silence. The people living on the ground floor were enjoying the last of the Fasching. None thought of anything else this day.

Joseph Otten went up to the story above, where Laurenz Terbroich lived. He was absolutely calm as he rang the bell.

There was no sound within, and Otten made the bell ring more shrilly.

"Hey, Johann!" a voice within was heard. "Of course, gone to the devil. Everything is crazy." And then there was a sound of grumbling, half angry, half laughing. The door opened. Laurenz Terbroich, a black domino hanging over his shoulders, stood face to face with his visitor.

"Well, sir? You wish?"

"So far as I am concerned, but few words."

"You see that I am just about to go out. With whom have I the honor?"

"I am Doktor Joseph Otten. Let us step in."

CHAPTER XX

LAURENZ TERBROICH had stepped aside involuntarily. With open-mouthed wonder he looked at the apparition. Then he pressed his thin lips together and inflated his nostrils to master his surprise. "Herr Doktor Otten?" he finally asked and smiled obsequiously. "You have returned to Cologne?"

"Just on your account."

Laurenz Terbroich closed the corridor door and admitted the visitor into his parlor. "Pardon the lack of order, Herr Doktor. My servant took this afternoon off, on account of the end of the carnival. I, too, intended going to an affair. During these days a fellow scarcely gets out of his domino. But then, you, too, have been young, and were not slow in these things. But, really, things do look disgraceful here."

He sputtered out the sentences as if he did not wish to give his visitor a chance to speak, as if he tried from the beginning to lead the conversation into light channels.

Joseph Otten looked about observantly. The salon was fitted out in good taste and quite harmoniously. Old, well-framed oil-paintings hung on the walls. Upon the table there stood a bronze cast of the Venus of Milo, about a foot high. Beside the figure stood a slim, long-stemmed champagne glass of Venetian workmanship, half filled with the sparkling beverage, and in a metal cooler the empty bottle. With an ironical smile, Otten

looked from this to the owner, who played nervously with his small side-whiskers and stroked his smooth-shaven lips.

“Did you drink to gather courage, Herr Terbroich?”

“Courage? Oh, no. But in this carnival mood——”

“Seriously, has not this carnival mood been your usual mood during these last few years?”

“You jest. I am not a drinker, usually. I only wished to be in a jolly frame of mind when I started out to-night.”

“You have something especial in view, then, to-night?”

“No, nothing especial. Just the usual big Kehrausball, the finishing ball of the carnival.”

“Alone?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, whether you intended going there with my daughter?”

“With—your daughter?”

“Herr Terbroich, you act as if you were not aware of the existence of my daughter? That would really not displease me at all, if it were a fact. But let us stick to the truth, or—if you should not know the meaning of that word; upon real, solid ground.”

“Herr Doktor, your insulting insinuation——”

“Oh, please. I am to be considered only in second or third instance. You feel that yourself, don't you? And here we will not battle with syllables. The situation is not suited to that, and time is too valuable. Well, then: You know Carmen very well, Herr Terbroich?”

Uncertain lights danced in Laurenz Terbroich's eyes. His small lips trembled. "Of course," he answered shortly. "We have been friends from childhood."

"Would you be kind enough, to tell me something of the development and aims of this friendship?"

"Such a love-story ought not to be very interesting to you."

"Ah!—Love-story. A moment ago you called it—childhood friendship. I see, we are rapidly getting to understand each other better."

"I do not understand you at all, Herr Doktor."

"I would not like to disturb you in your pleasures, Herr Terbroich. Therefore let us march straight ahead, and within a quarter of an hour we can part with a friendly bow."

"What is your purpose, anyway? This is no day for serious discussion."

"For me all days have become alike. And if they were not, you would leave me no other choice. And that you expect serious discussion, is proven by your own words. Please, speak on."

"Herr Doktor, I object——"

"Speak on!" It sounded like a command.

"Really, I don't know what you want of me," Laurenz Terbroich muttered.

"In other words: You want me to ask. Very well, then. You love Carmen——?"

"We are very fond of each other."

"You are very fond of each other—— And Carmen loves you in return?"

"She returns my feelings for her."

"Very diplomatically said. But with that we make

no headway. What sort of feelings are those you mean?"

A sudden, stubborn anger flashed up in the face of Laurenz Terbroich. "That is our own affair."

"Not quite, Herr Terbroich. If I should fall into the same tone, there will be a disaster."

Laurenz Terbroich started. He looked searchingly at his strange visitor, towering before him, tall, haggard, and sinewy. "Did you not have your little secrets when you were young?"

"I had them. But not alone. Another shared them with me."

"That is the case here, too. Carmen and I understand each other fully."

"Understand what?"

"Our love, or our friendship—or whatever else you choose to call it."

"Not what I choose to call it. I want to hear what you two call it. You are silent——? Well, then, let us assume that you have made up your mind concerning this attachment. What do you intend it to lead to? For there must be some aim, some goal."

"That matter we have left to the future to decide."

"This future, however, seems to me to be very close at hand. Let us assume that this future is to be to-morrow. What ails you? To-morrow is a day like all other days. Well, then, what would you do to-morrow?"

Laurenz Terbroich fumbled nervously with the buttons of his domino. "If you wish it," he said finally, making a strenuous effort to show politeness in his manner and speech; "if you wish it, I will talk it over with Carmen this evening."

“Don’t continue to evade me.”

“I am not evading you at all. I am good-natured enough to permit this inquisition on your part, although you, least of all, have any right to act in this manner——”

“Will you stick to our topic?”

“Surely, you cannot reverse all the maxims of your own life?”

“For my child,” Otten said icily, “I could do a great deal more than to throw all of my so-called wisdom of life upon a rubbish-heap. Rest assured upon that point.” He checked himself. “But then, you don’t understand that. You cannot understand it, unless you had lived a life like mine. I do not wish to judge you too harshly.”

“I could not accept you as judge, either. There are women a-plenty I could name against you.”

“You are talking of other people, and I am speaking of my daughter, sir.”

“Well, yes, what of it——?”

“Of my daughter! There is a difference!”

“That is, if you permit, absolutely illogical.”

“It is my logic, because it is my daughter. I should be very sorry on your account, if you would close your ears to this logic.”

His eyes did not leave Terbroich for a second. A flush of angry irritation mounted to Laurenz’s face. “That logic is too much for me.”

“You intended going on a trip South with my daughter to-morrow.”

“Who says so?”

“I am not narrow-minded enough to attempt to dictate to human beings who love each other. But I must

know the grade and caliber of that love. I am certain that Carmen builds upon your honesty. Otherwise she would not have gone so far with you. For as to her pride, I presume we are of the same opinion."

"Carmen is too broad and too free a being to place such importance upon the customary thought of matrimony."

"Not the thought of matrimony. The thought of fidelity."

"We are true to each other."

"And will remain so? Then it would be a true union."

"That does not depend upon me alone."

"You lie, man."

Laurenz Terbroich started up. The two men stood facing each other angrily.

"You lie. For you are trying to make me believe that that could also depend upon my daughter. And in the same manner you lie to my daughter, when you paint for her a picture of fidelity, while, as a matter of fact, you would not like just yet to lose the pretty toy. Not yet. But you will not go one step farther, Terbroich. I warn you! She is my daughter!"

"You are insulting me in an unpardonable fashion."

"That insult can be wiped out quickly. Answer me clearly and without beating about the bush: Do you intend to marry Carmen?"

"That is out of the question just now. Although Carmen has a small fortune, it would not suffice to establish us free and clear of debt. And the factory could not at the present time support another household beside my father's, in the style I am accustomed to, and as I should have to have it if I were to marry.

Aside from that, the factory requires modernizing and enlarging, for which enormous sums are needed, which will have to be obtained."

"That was honest. Marriage being out of the question, we have to consider the other possibility: that you intend to remain single, in order to sanction your love and Carmen's. Just give me the assurance that each will see in the other a companion, helpmate, and partner for life, and I will go."

Laurenz Terbroich played with the glass he had taken from the table. "How can a human being make promises for so long a time? And for himself and another to boot?"

"You shall only promise for yourself, and for the time you can count upon according to honest judgment."

"I—can do that."

"Then you will go with me, and break your engagement to be married."

Laurenz Terbroich started again, this time so violently that the glass he held gave a sound as it struck the edge of the table. "Are you—crazy?"

"Then you admit that this engagement exists! The same engagement you denied with your glib tongue to my daughter. Not a word! . . . The devil! what a low-lived scoundrel. And with a thing like that I have to deal."

"Is the conversation ended?"

"Will you change your mind? Will you come with me, and show yourself as a decent man?"

"I give up Carmen."

"How grand! One cannot dispose of things one does not own."

“ I—*dispose*. That is my explanation.”

“ You mean——?”

“ What I have said,” replied Laurenz Terbroich, raising his glass toward the light.

“ And you dare to gain by such a swindle a gift that is for life?”

“ Oh, this serious treatment of the matter——”

Joseph Otten did not let him finish. Suddenly every drop of blood seemed to have left his face. His hand grasped the little bronze statue, and, with a short, violent swing, he struck Laurenz Terbroich's temple with the edge of the figure's base. As if he had been struck by lightning, Laurenz Terbroich dropped, half turning, against the table, and slid to the floor with a thud.

“ Vermin——” Otten said, looked at the bronze base, which had remained clean, and replaced the figure upon the table. Laurenz Terbroich lay still. His hand still clutched the Venetian glass, which had cracked, as he fell. The domino hung about his body.

Otten looked at the body with an expression of contempt. “ I have done him a friendly service. And I like to accomplish my good deeds with as little noise as possible. The name of Maria and of my daughter must not be dragged before the public. Hence, let us say no more of our good deeds.”

He took his hat, left the room, drew the door of the corridor after him until the lock snapped shut. The residents of the ground floor had not yet returned from their carnival tour through the city. And as soon as he stepped out of the house, he was swallowed up by the hilarious crowd, flowing by in a steady stream.

He succeeded in reaching the evening train for Dor-

magen. And again he sat alone with his thoughts in the compartment.

“Until now I have never done anything for my daughter. But now I have done for her the only thing I could do. I have given her a new life—— No human being knows of that which she called her youth, because she believed just as Maria believed. Only I know it. And now there remains for me but one duty, and that duty rises above all others. The duty of the father. And that commands me—to remain silent.”

And once more he said, as he had done a short while before: “Rest easy, Maria.”

At the station at Dormagen he wrote and sent a long dispatch to Moritz Lachner, telling of Frau Maria's illness and death, and asking his young friend to break the news to Carmen as gently as possible, and to bring her to Zons on the morning train. Weary but erect, he walked along the road, around the little town, and entered Klaus Guelich's house.

“I will sleep now,” he said to Heinrich Koch. “Whatever had to be attended to has been done.”

He thanked his friend for the offer to occupy his room for the night, but declined, and walked up to his own room. He sat beside the dead for a long while. He had a report to make.

Upon the narrow sofa-bed the housekeeper had fixed up for him he lay down, and he slept all night through, without dreaming. When he awoke, it was morning. Heinrich Koch knocked at the door and told him that the coffin had just been brought. He admitted only his friend and old Klaus to the rooms. The three carried the coffin upstairs and into the bedroom, and they

placed Frau Maria in it. No strange hand was to touch her. "She need not be adorned. One does not give pennies to a rich man."

Then the omnibus drove up, and Lachner and Carmen stepped out. Otten stood alone in his room, awaiting his daughter. They let her enter alone.

Without a muscle in his face twitching, he stood there, awaiting her. Now she was in the room. Now she ran toward him. Now she twined her arms about his neck and pressed her body against his, closer and closer, as if she must grow fast to him. And he enfolded her in his arms and pressed her against his breast.

A single short, wild cry filled the room for a second. And yet they both had uttered one.

Joseph Otten had gone downstairs to greet Carmen's escort. He found him in the hallway, beside Heinrich Koch. "I thank you, Moritz. Don't seek for words to express your sympathy. You are the best consolation yourself."

He sat down with them at the table, and there was silence for a while.

"Herr Doktor, Lachner has some news for you from Cologne," Heinrich Koch said finally, looking intently at his friend.

"Is it important?"

"Had I not better wait with it?" Moritz Lachner said confusedly.

"Just tell it. Some time we will have to begin living again, at any rate."

"Laurenz Terbroich is dead."

"Is that so important?"

"It is a strange coincidence."

“Really.”

“I had just received your sad telegram, and was talking over with my father in what manner I might prepare Carmen for the shock, when the door-bell of the store rang, and Carmen stood before us, as pale as a sheet. “Laurenz is dead,” she said, and we helped her into a seat. They had had an appointment for the evening, and, as an hour over the appointed time had passed, she had taken a carriage and had driven to his house. There the man-servant told her. Old Terbroich and the family physician were upstairs at the time. They admitted no one. And then she had come to our house directly. And now I had to tell her the worst. I did it as carefully and as gently as I could, because I feared a shock to her nerves. But she sat there as if she were made of stone. Only once the word ‘mother’ escaped her. But it was more than the most violent outbreak of grief. Then she asked for shelter, and I went out to make some inquiries about Laurenz’s death. He had met with a mishap. The servant told me that he had left him drinking champagne, to find him dead when he returned in the evening; in his domino, which he had scarcely shed during the Fasching time. While intoxicated, he had fallen, striking his temple against the sharp edge of the table. Death had been caused instantaneously through a cerebral hemorrhage. Old Terbroich did not want the circumstances of his son’s death to become known. Laurenz was to be placed in his coffin even last evening. The servant was given a vacation, and sent to his home.”

Joseph Otten had stood looking out of the window while Moritz Lachner spoke. Now he turned his head.

His eyes met the eyes of Heinrich Koch. Neither flinched.

"It is Ash-Wednesday to-day," Joseph Otten said. "Now the mummary is at an end."

"And life demands us again," the old scientist replied.

"Or we life."

On the afternoon of the next day, Frau Maria was laid to rest. It was a sunny day, a forerunner of the coming spring.

When they returned to the house, Carmen went to her father's room. He felt that she needed the hour for herself, and did not follow her. Moritz Lachner remained with the men.

"When the days grow longer and warmer," Professor Koch began after a while, "we can begin our researches outdoors. I would question the entire nether Rhine about the days of the past, and learn things of the people who had lived upon the river's shores. And when we have found that everything in its own way was no different from what it is to-day, our own lives will not seem so remarkable to us at all. How would it be, Herr Kollege, if you would join us in this work? We could also teach Carmen the methods."

Moritz Lachner looked at Otten. "Carmen? Otherwise, I would only have to suggest my father's house."

Otten nodded. "It is a second-hand shop."

A fine flush mounted to Lachner's brow. "It depends upon the way one looks at things," he said softly. "If a person retains the eyes of his childhood, he sees a princess, though she might be in rags."

Otten extended his hand to him across the table. "Come again. We can make use of you."

“I will tell Carmen!” And he went upstairs to place his plans before her and to direct her thoughts to the future.

The two friends were alone.

“As long as the little one is here,” Otten began, as if he were talking to himself, “I have sunshine. Even if it is stolen. I have her. But if the child were to be taken away from me, and I would be all alone, and the horrors would come——”

Heinrich Koch looked at him. There was silence. And Heinrich Koch said amidst the silence: “I am no longer a priest, and I have not the right to take confession and to give absolution. But I can give you my hand, if the horrors threaten to come. They fear old friendship.”

They both looked out upon the flat country around. A procession was going along the road. Pilgrims, going to the picture of the Mother of God at Kevelaar. Broken sounds were wafted over from there. “Ave Maria.—O Maria, hilf!” . . . And the motorboat, having resumed its duty as ferry between Zons and Urdenbach, glided over the Rhine, bringing a crowd of young artists from Düsseldorf, still under the influence of the carnival mood, and bent upon serenading the castellated old town. And they found nothing more fitting than the old song of praise for Cologne:

“*Köln am Rhein, Du schönes Staedtchen,
Köln am Rhein, Du schöne Stadt——*”

“There goes the past, to the right and to the left,” said Heinrich Koch.

Old Klaus came into the room, pulled a chair into

the corner beside the fireplace, and quietly enjoyed his pipe after the excitement of the day.

Joseph Otten arose. His steel-blue eyes shone. He walked to the window, opened it, and let the air stream in. . . .

The heavens were lit up by a beautiful sunset.

THE END

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