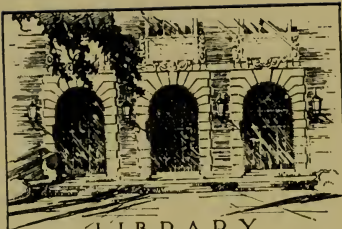


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LISABEE'S LOVE STORY.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“JOHN AND I,” “DOCTOR JACOB,”

&c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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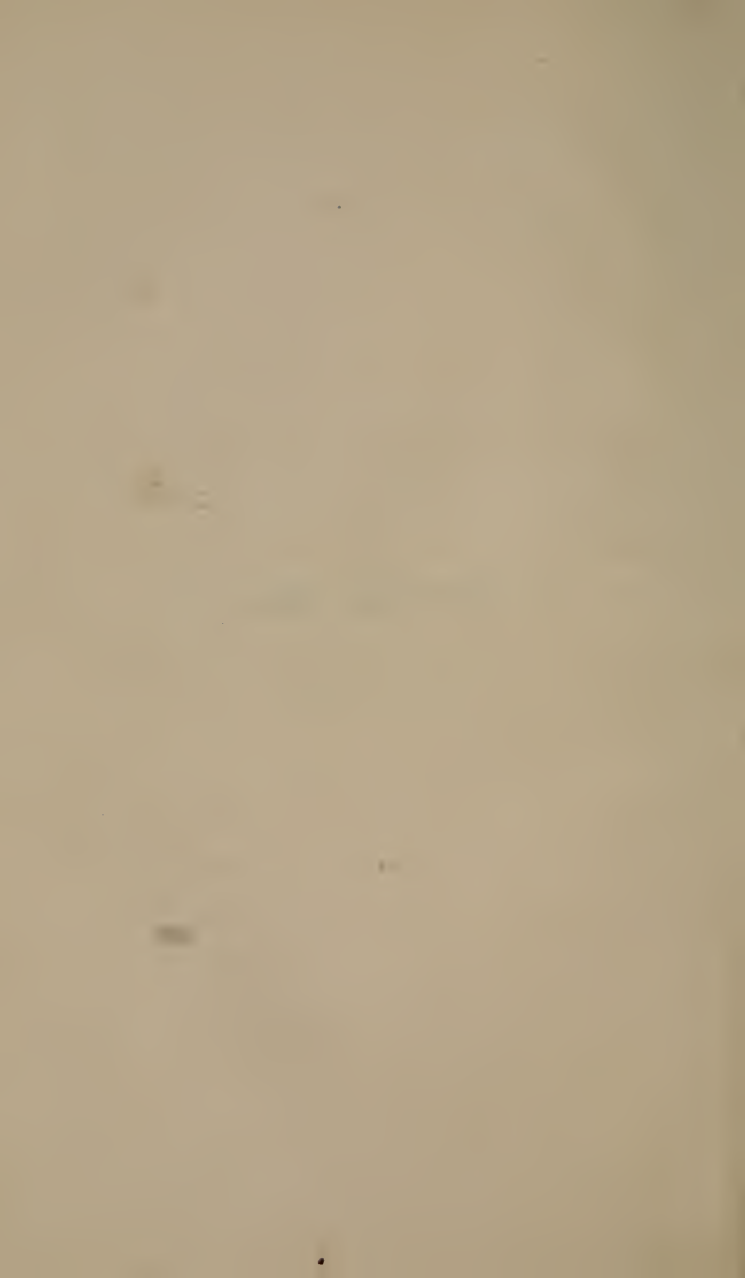
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B O O K III.

(Continued.)



CHAPTER III.

THE news of Lisabee's approaching marriage created no ordinary sensation in the Plumtree circle. Aunt Mercy and Uncle Richard looked upon the settlement of a daughter much as complacently as heads of African families who receive so much barter in exchange. In their eyes Lisabee and her sisters were still sore burdens on their father, sorer even than the burden of Bunyan's Christian, and, alas! not easier to be rid of. Had she married a steady, slow-going farmer, they would not perhaps have cavilled at the marriage, though they would equally have found fault with the preparations for

it, have turned to mourning the joy of it. On any and on every occasion, it was the Plumtree custom figuratively to toll the bell; they tolled it at a birth, they tolled it at a wedding, they tolled it at a sudden change of circumstances, for better, for worse; they tolled it a funeral perhaps less sadly, because a funeral implied some happy release or other, perhaps a riddance of some helpless and expensive drone in the family hive, perhaps a legacy—certainly no increase of outlay except the purchase of mourning.

Of course William Plumtree and his daughters took a Pierrepont view of the case, felt very proud in a gentle alliance, made the best show whenever Arthur visited them, invited Uncle Mark and some other Pierrepont relatives to be present at

the wedding, displayed to Arthur the Pierrepont pedigree, brought out wine after dinner, and dispensed with beer for tea, were never satisfied with their efforts to please, or their praise of Lisabee's lover. Somehow this engagement seemed to raise them in the world, to fill their pockets, to warm their hearts, to do everything towards making them happy. William grew bold and cheerful even in the presence of his brother and sister; the girls were not afraid of owing to the purchase of new dresses; Lisabee took malicious pleasure in arraying herself in a silk dress, Arthur's present, without relieving their suspense as to the donor of it.

That silk dress! How happy and proud it made William Plumtree! How it dazed the eyes of the dairy-maids! How it brought

out the poetic inspirations of Liddy Maple! How it enraged and embittered the hearts of the female cousins! Yet it was no great splendour, merely a hyacinth-coloured dress that rustled and shone when in motion, and rested the eyes pleasantly when still, a dress that London ladies would call Quakerish, and Parisian ladies *triste*. Lisabee naively confessed to Arthur that she had never possessed such a dress before, and he had smiled fondly and magnificently, as young lovers do, promising silks without end, and love without end, and happiness without end; and making her wear the dress always, because she prized it for his sake.

But Arthur could not conceal his impatience of the Plumtree connexion, and hurried the wedding as much as

possible. He was very stern and proud to the cousins, very cold and un-nephew-like to Mercy and Richard, who called him "sir," very unwilling to accept any invitations to tea with them, very unlike himself when in their company. He saw how matters stood between Lisabee's father and his brother and sister, and tried in every way to incite the farmer to insubordination against his old authorities—for no matter what authorities they were, Arthur hated all but his own. He despised people for subjecting their opinions to those of another, at the same time, was very tenacious of such subjection himself, loving to be looked up to, supported, admired. At Sycamore Farm, he was as much of an oracle as he could possibly be, and he wished to do away with all other oracles.

“Lisabee,” he said, one evening when the two were alone together; “why does your father have his brother and sister here so much? He married a lady, he brought up his children as ladies; surely, he might stand a little aloof from such plodding, penny-wise, plebeian people.”

“Aunt Mercy lends Papa money when things go badly,” replied Ellen, hesitatingly; “they are fond of him, and of us too—in their way.”

“But I will tell you what would be better. Suppose that *I* lend your father money when he wants it?”

“Are you, then, so rich, Arthur?”

“I am not rich, but I hope and intend to be so one day; and I am not poor now—far from it. I think that I could take the place of your aunt and uncle

without much impoverishing myself—ourselves.”

“How generous, how good of you! But, Arthur, Papa would hesitate. Things might go badly, you know, and——”

“My darling, if things *did* go badly, who so fit to stand by him as his son-in-law? You don't quite understand how I feel about this, but it is right you should. From the day that I marry you, I become one of your family, for better, for worse, for weal or woe. Should your sisters need a home, mine is theirs; should your father need help, he has all the help I can give. But, Lisabee, much as I love your sisters, much as I respect your father, I cannot help confessing to a hearty dislike of his family, and with his family I will have nothing to do.

Moreover, I wish that you have nothing further to do——”

“Arthur, I must; they are of our name, you know, and of our blood. If they are miserly, and common, and interfering, I may think what I choose about them, but I must own the relationship.”

“Pardon me, my Lisabee, you are bound by no such duty. In former days, there might have been wisdom and prudence in brother standing by brother and cousin by cousin, because the community enjoyed less personal freedom, and less liberty of thought. Things are altered now; no one is so strong as he who stands alone; no one so weak as he who regards himself only as one link of a family chain. Why do women so rarely attract the world's notice by a really great

action? Simply because they are all their lives long, hemmed and fettered by domestic laws; not that I care to see women attempt extraordinary heroisms—no man does. I simply instance a case in point. Women are so seldom great because they are so seldom free; and of all tyrannies, the tyranny of family caste is the strongest and most objectionable. Again, I tell you, darling, as soon as you marry me, you cease wholly to be a Plumtree.”

“Are *you* not also a bit tyrannical?” asked Lisabee, saucily, though a little vexed.

“I will never prove a tyrant to you at any rate; for other tyrannies, I cannot answer. You would not have me without a will of my own, would you?”

“Oh no.”

“Of course not; and I mean to show my

will most stringently on this subject. Understand, Lisabee, that I hope to return to England before many years—to return to it for ever, I mean—and I should like to have my wife's family respected, a little off the common, and less herded with the Plumtree lot. Forgive me a thousand times, but I want you fully to understand how I feel about your father and sisters; and, moreover, I want you to mediate with them."

"And why, Arthur?"

He hesitated, kissed her by way of deprecating displeasure, and replied—

"You must pay your aunt with my money, and make my father-in-law independent of the Plumtrees."

Lisabee burst into tears.

"Oh, my love," she cried, clasping her

hands about his arms, and laying her cheek upon his shoulder, "will you really do this? Will you really be the fairy prince we used to wish for as children to fill our laps with money and frighten Aunt Mercy away? Oh, Arthur, how can I ever love you enough? How can my sisters thank you enough?"

"Hush, you must not say that; I am your husband remember, and their brother; no thanks are needed. You can please me and reward me by quite other means. Shall I tell you what they are?"

"I will do anything you like," she whispered.

"Call me again as you called me just now."

"My love—my love."

And then he folded her in his arms.

Little Lisabee had never before loved Arthur so much, and she spoke the wished-for words passionately, proudly, recklessly, as if she gloried in his love, in him, in everything that was his. She was utterly untutored in conventional uses, thought little harm of confessing the real, unalloyed feeling of her heart, and took no pains to conceal the joy such feeling brought her. She had read none of those latter-day romances the charm of which consists in two people leading a quarrelling courtship, and at the last chapter making peace to the tune of marriage bells. She was a true woman, and nothing could so strongly have evolved her womanliness as her passion for Arthur; he seemed veritably to her a fairy-tale prince, and all homage, all heart, all will, all confidences were sur-

rendered to him without a demur. Why should she demur at being made happy beyond hope—happy beyond dreams? Why should she cavil at her good gift, and try to make it other than it was? She had yielded herself to Arthur, heart and soul, and she confessed to such a yielding. Whatever he might do, he would still be Arthur in her eyes, therefore dear, therefore to be honoured, therefore to be adored.

As, in time of war, a fair and graceful bark surrenders its colours to the strong man-of-war, fearing under such convoy, no onset of enemy,—so she, in surrendering herself to him, the stronger, had no longer fear of evil in any shape. Her love for him was as the mystic snake in Scandinavian mythology, circling life

and all that was in it, the world and all its fairness, destiny and all its sorrows. Beyond was vastness, emptiness, nothing. Well it is for us that there are still Lisabee Plumtrees in the world, who can love thus, who are at no pains to hide their love as the Sibyl's golden branch was hid in the deepest depths of the forest of Avernus; who rather set it up in the sight of all, a pearl of great price.

“My love, my love,” she repeated, as her lover's kisses fell thick and fast on her bright hair; “my love, my love!”

Without doubt Arthur had reason to be happy. Few men, love they ever so ardently, are loved as he was loved by William Plumtree's daughter.

CHAPTER IV.

ON the afternoon preceding Lisabee's wedding, William Plumtree might be seen riding his shaggy cob towards Clayfield Farm, the residence of his brother and sister. He rode slowly and rested one hand on the saddle in deep thought, even the aspects of fields and meadows failing to attract a cursory attention. He was about to do the boldest deed of his life, always excepting the deed of his wedding-day; and the prospect of it flushed his cheek, fired his eye, and sent an occasional little thrill through his frame. We cannot enter thoroughly into the farmer's feelings with-

out understanding his past life, and its sworn allegiance to Mercy and Richard—an allegiance not only of blood, but of principle, of opinion, and of personal advantage. Now, however, this reign was at an end, and the triumphant occupier of their throne was Arthur Leebridge. It was this young man's weakness to be strong, or speaking less paradoxically, to make himself a moral fortress in whatever sphere of life he might be placed. He liked to become a power and a patron; he liked to have honour and glory of the best kind within reach. Had his lot fallen among gipsies he would have out-Lee-ed Gipsy Lee; had his lot fallen among Abolitionists, he would have out-Browned John Brown; for good or for evil, he must be first or nothing.

He was simply an engineer, and the son-in-law of Farmer Plumtree; but in his eyes, engineering was the most noble of professions, and he was determined to expel the proletarian element and foster the patrician in his wife's family. What belonged to him was himself, and he loved himself. He hated vulgar people, vulgar prejudices, vulgar manners; he had a standard of refinement in his own mind to which everyone and everything that came in his way must be raised. Such iconoclasm was worthy of a great cause; but nothing seemed small to him that interfered with the enjoyment or development of rational life.

So, William Plumtree was riding through green lanes and cleared corn-fields, his head full of Arthur's pride and prejudices, his pocket full of Arthur's money.

He anticipated the legitimate consequences of his visit, dreaded them to the utmost, and yet went on. The last four days had seemed wonderfully revolutionary to him: not an hour, not a minute, but some time-honoured Plumtree precept had been utterly blotted out by Arthur's unsparing finger, some time-honoured Penates hurled down by Arthur's sacrilegious blow. Was it right, was it wise to follow his son-in-law so far? The farmer went on, now siding with Arthur and his girls, now with the aggrieved Richard and Mercy. They had kept his head above water so many, many years, ever since the establishment of free-trade in fact; could he, ought he to turn his back on them now? True that Arthur promised him another loan if needed; true that Arthur was well off,

and seemed in a fair way to be rich. He was young, things at best had a good deal of uncertainty about them, and perhaps it would hardly be expedient to affront his brother and sister. He felt sure of affronting them. Certainly they could hardly blame him for accepting Arthur's loan at two and a half per cent. and rejecting Mercy's at five! But they were his oldest friends, had felt for him in hard times, had helped him in bad years, had come every other Sunday to tea and talked over business matters. Was all this to end? Could it all end and the world still go round on its axis?

He felt that his daughters would be much happier under the change, and that Arthur had behaved most generously throughout; that Mercy had showed herself a little hard as to interest for her loan of a thousand

pounds, and that Richard had worried him a good deal lately about the girls not taking situations as governesses; but the old love and the old dynasty were too strongly rooted to be uprooted without a few drops of blood, and the uprooting approached consummation.

He reached Clayfield just as Mercy was preparing tea, and feeling hot and cold, determined to put off his communication till after the meal.

The Plumtree brothers and sisters were not given to demonstrations of any affection they felt for each other. Mercy merely looked up from her tea-caddy and nodded by way of greeting, saying—

“Anything the matter, William?”

“No, nothing is the matter. I only rode across to speak to you and Richard.”

“Oh! I suppose you want money; if you do, I can only say that it's no use your coming to me.”

“I didn't come for money,” replied William, meekly.

“You ain't going to have carriages at this grand weddin', William; if you are, I shall say you're worse than crazy.”

“The carriages ain't my business, Mercy. Arthur—Mr. Leebridge—must do as he likes about them; he'll bear the expense.”

“Oh yes, the expense, but the coachmen always expect wine and cake and nobody knows what, and for a poor tenant farmer's daughter to have a carriage to church is enough to make landlords call out! Why didn't poor Elgitha want a carriage when you married her?”

“Mr. Pierrepont borrowed a covered car; and besides, times have altered.”

“Ah! that they have, and altered a great deal too much. I don't dream good measure of this fine weddin' myself, William. I never did from the first, and so I tell you. Young Leebridge is a proud puppy, and a Papist or heathen at heart, I'm sure, for he mimics the parson, never goes to the table, and wears everyday clothes on Sunday. He's just for all the world like a foreigner too, and I daresay, if the truth could be known, is some foreign scamp in disguise. If Lisabee comes to harm, don't say I gave you no warning.”

“I can't think Lisabee will come to harm, Mercy. The Pattersons know Mr. Leebridge so well, and he speaks of himself so fair and downright like, and has

told me about his affairs from beginning to end."

"Of course he makes out a pretty story; that's like the Pope and Jesuits. I'm bound to say, Richard could buy him over and over again, though he's had a hard pull and bad times, and would have been in the workhouse long ago without me to keep him up. But then Richard is such a manager, and as to taking a sleep after dinner, *he* never thinks of such a thing."

This latter speech was Mercy's Wouralian arrow. If anything embittered William's gentle heart, it was to be compared disparagingly with his brother, or twitted about his only ewe-lamb of a self-indulgence, namely, half an hour's sleep at noon-time. He possessed however a talismanic charm against vexation in his waistcoat pocket.

Carefully he wheeled back to the subject of Arthur's property.

“I don't think Richard could buy Mr. Leebridge, Mercy, because Richard couldn't lend anyone a thousand pounds, and he can.”

“So he makes believe. Just ask him, that's all; I can tell you, William, that only yesterday a lady was speaking to me of a mortgage she had got on land, six per cent., and as safe as the funds. There isn't one person in a hundred who would lend money on personal security as I do, and——”

The entrance of Richard interrupted her. He had been quietly napping in the wood-house for the last hour, but dared not make his appearance till the clock struck five. Mercy looked at his boots, and as

they were carefully wiped, gave him an approving salute.

“Will the wheat be carted up to-night, Richard? I'm sure it is time it was, for you've toiled and moiled long enough about it.”

“I don't work harder than William,” answered Richard, sitting down to table. “Well, William, I'm coming to the weddin' to-morrow.”

Richard loved company, loved wine-drinking, above all loved to stand up and make what he called a speech. Lisabee's wedding was to him as a whole harvest of enjoyment.

“I'm not,” put in Mercy. “No fine weddins' for me, thank you.”

“I'd hoped you would have come, Mercy,” urged William. “You know you

and I mayn't ever see poor dear little Lisabee again ; we're getting into years."

"The youngest sometimes go first, William, and though I know that I should be worth more to you dead than alive, I hope to live a little longer."

"I didn't mean that, Mercy ; of course no one is hungering after your money. You've earned it hardly enough, and have a right to enjoy it. I'm sure my little ladies would be the last to wish you gone."

"Oh yes ; that's like the Pierreponts ! Too proud to eat pork, and own what good friends they have got. What is it that enables you to keep house and home over their heads ? I can tell you, farming goes so badly that if you weren't of our own I should call in my money at once. Many a night I lie awake thinking what would be-

come of me if anything happened or you were unfortunate."

"Mercy," said William, swallowing a great sob of agitation, "you've been very good to me for years, and I know it's a risk to lend money on personal security, and five per cent. is little enough for you, but much for me, so, Mercy, Mr. Leebridge has offered me a thousand pounds at two and a half per cent., and—and—I've—I've paid it into the bank to your account, and here's the receipt."

Mercy was accustomed to sting herself skin-deep with the nettles of small annoyances, but the turbid waters of her nature had never yet been stirred into real, honest rage. To her, William's declaration brought pique, affronted personal dignity, envy, mortification, little of the displeasure that

arouses respect and sympathy. Her real motives of offence were not such as she could unblushingly express in words, and she therefore veiled them as best she could.

“Are you demented?” she cried, forgetting herself so far as to put a third lump of sugar to her tea. “You surely are, William, to think of taking that young man’s money, and perhaps he’s but borrowed it himself to appear grand! How do you know but that he’ll call it in at the end of the year, perhaps just at rent-paying time, and where would you be then? Of course, I’ll take my money and glad, and put it out to best advantage, but then I couldn’t help you with a penny if you wanted, and you must go to the workhouse. I’ve already locked up every hundred besides what you’ve had, and Richard has enough to do to make ends

meet, and the Pierreponts haven't enough money to buy a bullock between 'em. Dear, dear; I thought you had known better, William."

"Ah!" put in Richard, "don't have nothing to do with strangers' money, William, or you'll find yourself in a pretty hunt. As Mercy says, it might be called in at rent time, and of course you'd have to go to the workhouse."

This view of the case was an unexpected one. William had foreseen the displeasure of his brother and sister, but had not foreseen such an objectionable construction put upon Arthur's offer. He turned pale, and began to wonder if he could look back from the plough. All the pretty air-castles, all the pleasantness, and independence, and novelty that seemed a new world to him a moment

before, fell with a crash now. He saw himself deluded, abject, demented. He woke from his dream like the barber's brother in the Eastern story, without money, rank, or the vizier's daughter.

“Mr. Leebridge's money isn't like strangers' money,” he said, with a faint show of courage; “and Robert Patterson himself told me Arthur was doing well. I don't think he would call in his thousand pounds, Mercy; and it will make a great difference to me having to pay two and a half instead of five per centage.”

“That's the way of the world,” broke in Mercy, fairly provoked beyond the stage of dissimulation—“the real way of the world. Here I've been lending you money all these bad years, and at a risk of losing every penny, what with poor Elgitha's ill-

ness, and the expenses of a family and their education; and now, just because this young man, who's a Jesuit or a Papist, or nobody knows what, comes out with his money, and offers it at nothing per cent., you throw mine into my lap like dirt, and I'm to do just as I can with it. Only last market-day, Mr. Ware told me money was so plentiful that he could only give two and a half at the bank, and though it may be all very well for you to pay such an interest it isn't very well for me to lose half mine."

We must forgive William for feeling ten years younger than he had done a minute ago. He now divined the real cause of his sister's onslaught, and Arthur regained in consequence much of the authority just lost. Mercy had dealt hard blows at the god, but he maintained his seat on the pedestal.

With a touch of pardonable malice, he said—

“I must think of the little ones, you know, Mercy, and twenty-five pounds a year is a good deal for me to save. Of course, I had rather have kept your money, but I'm sure you'd wish me to better myself if possible, and Arthur is——”

“Oh, don't talk any more about him. He'll prove as good as he's painted himself; that's all I hope. If he doesn't, I shan't be surprised.”

William went on with his tea. Richard, feeling in dread lest his promised treat should be denied him, and being really well inclined towards Arthur, tried a conciliatory way.

“Come, Mercy; of course William is right to think well of the young man, and it

is a good match for the little 'un anyhow, and may turn out well. Leastways so I hope, and you might as well go to the weddin' with me, and think no more about it."

"Weddin' indeed! I'm no weddiner. If you go, Richard, I shall be the more surprised."

"I want to poor Elgitha's funeral, and I think it's my bounden duty to go to her little 'un's weddin', Mercy. Relations are relations all the world over, and the young man has behaved like a gentleman to *me*."

"Farmers are a sight deal better at home mindin' their work than going to weddin's; but if you wish to go, Richard, go; far be it from me to prevent anyone's enjoying himself."

Tea ended slowly and silently. When Mercy rose to put away the cake and

cheese, Richard proposed a walk round the farm.

“Has young Leebridge really lent you a thousand pounds?” asked Richard, with wide-open eyes, mouth, and ears. “If so, he’s behaved handsome, that he has, and you’re lucky to have found such a son-in-law.”

“And he makes such a fuss with poor little Lisabee! You should just see the most beautiful bonnet he’s given her, fit for a carriage; besides a diamond ring and a mother-of-pearl comb, and knick-knacks wholly wonderful. Poor little Lisabee! to think that she should marry a gentleman!”

“Ah! to think, indeed!” said Richard, who was really proud of his niece’s alliance. “He’s proud, and carries himself high, but is a gentleman all over, and has behaved so well to *me*—so extraordinarily

well! He likes my company, William—that's it—he likes my company."

Richard always imagined his company to be very attractive.

"You will come to the wedding, won't you?" asked William, coaxingly. "It's no more than what is right."

"Say that to Mercy; I'm sure she'll be for my staying away; and, after all, it's no more than what is right, as you say. I'm the little 'un's uncle, and Captain Mark is no more."

"Captain Mark is coming straight to us from Sir William Morton's," said William; "he gets into very high company now."

"Of course, of course—he's a real gentleman, and a fine man, quite different to such as us."

And Richard sighed, for there were

times when he envied his brother William, envied his gentle connexion, envied his well-bred relatives, envied his clever, pretty daughters. It seemed to him that a man could not be married, no matter whether prosperously or otherwise, without thereby gaining importance, breadth, standing. Here was William—poor, bemoaned William—connecting himself by the closest ties with a man not only of position but of wealth, entertaining Sir William Morton's visitors, having wedding parties, borrowing money at almost nothing per cent.—his very burdens, his helpless little ladies, appearing suddenly in a new and desirable light. Who could tell how Mabel might marry? Who could tell what Cissy might do? And Greta, though plain, was smart and clever.

The brothers walked on silently side by side. They extended their stroll to the utmost possible limits, for though they felt sure that hot whisky-and-water awaited them in the keeping-room, they felt equally sure of Mercy's ungracious greeting. When at last, the threshold was crossed and the greeting was given, William fumbled for his pocket-book, looking very red and guilty. So dear-bought are our triumphs!

He lingered over the business of pocket-book finding and pocket-book opening. Mercy studiously avoided the slightest recognition of his act—indeed, went so far as to ask him if he had lost anything, and when he answered "No," made no allusion to the cheque. The cheque, however, came forth, lay folded on the table, rustled

in William's fingers, finally was held towards her.

She lost heart then, and began to reprove her brother in that mildly lachrymose way so effectual against masculine injustice. The very sight of her pocket-handkerchief sent a conscious pang of self-reproach through William's gentle heart, and the first tear it wiped away drew tears to his own eyes. Utterly unable to meet so many contending passions with a manly spirit, he ordered his cob, and rode home to Lisabee, to Arthur, to peace and wedding festivities.

Mercy and Richard went to bed at the usual hour of nine, and both lay awake till past midnight, the former thinking of her thousand pounds and the new

responsibilities incumbent upon William's rejection of the same; the latter wondering whether he should be able to go to the little one's wedding and make his little speech.

CHAPTER V.

WE may safely affirm that no man ever yet found his wedding-day an agreeable one. Women enjoy the triumphs of toilette, of admiration, of being observed by ever so few observers; but to men such things are inimical as toothache, or a sprained ankle. It would be difficult to analyze these opposite states of feeling; perhaps women accept the small homages of society whenever offered, because their lives admit of but one truer homage, which to some never comes; perhaps men despise the same, because they are too selfish and too vain to care for flattery in the abstract.

It is certain that whereas from the bride to the housemaid, every feminine heart expands and warms at the family wedding, not a man present, from the bridegroom to the parish clerk, but puts on an uneasy look, is unlike himself, in fact, till the day is over.

Arthur Leebridge dressed himself on his wedding morning with no little ill-temper. He hated the idea of a dozen Sunday school children throwing pinks and geraniums in Lisabee's path; he hated still more the idea of being kissed by Lisabee's aunts and vulgar country cousins. As he drove in the Patterson carriage through Nettlested, he was disgusted to see the toll-gate keeper, and the toll-gate keeper's family stare at him as if he had been a Red Indian; the villagers agape here and there, and the crowd of ex-

pectant people at the churchyard gate annoyed him still more. Worse things were in store for him. On passing Jordan Villa, Smy trotted forward, motioned the driver to stop, and putting up his head to the carriage window, said, breathlessly and sentimentally—

“My best wishes to you, Mr. Leebridge, and may you and Miss Lisabee as is your wife to be, live a happy and godly life. Missus and Master would partikerler like to see you for five minutes, if so bein' you can spare the time; with their duty to you, and hopin'——”

Arthur had heard from Lisabee's lips of the many little kindnesses shown to her and her sisters by the good Baptist minister and his wife, and though utterly impatient and unsociable just then, could not find it

in his heart to disappoint them. He sprang up the front steps with a martyr's face.

Mrs. Raven met him in the hall, agitated and tearful. She pressed his hand as if he had been a son of her own, and motioned him towards the parlour without the capability of speaking a word. The minister came forward, looking less alert after his soul's enemy than usual, and whirled further away on the waters of the world.

"Dear friend," he said, clasping both Arthur's hands cordially, "this is a trying day for you, but we trust, under blessing, a happy one, and the precursor of a happy and Christian pilgrimage to another world. Susan, my love, present our humble souvenir to our young friend."

Mrs. Raven opened a large paper parcel

lying on the table, and displayed to Arthur's astonished eyes, a very handsomely bound yearly volume of a methodist serial, on the fly-leaf of which was written—

To Arthur Leebridge and Elizabeth Pierrepoint Plumtree, from their fellow-pilgrims Adolphus and Susan Raven.

Sept. 18, 185—.

The gift was undeniably a costly one, and quite deserving of the lingering looks of love and admiration bestowed upon it by Mr. and Mrs. Raven. But such expression of good feeling came at the wrong moment. Arthur had been roused to just that mood when sympathy, especially sentimental or solemn sympathy, appeared in bad taste, nay, coarse to him.

He turned over a leaf or two with careless fingers, muttered something about being much obliged, and in great haste shook hands, and returned hastily. He little thought how much he had hurt two kind hearts by such conduct, or how much he had disappointed the anticipation of a long-cherished and darling project. This book was the result of no little self-sacrifice, of no few conjugal jars; of more than ordinary mental exercise on the part of Mr. and Mrs. Raven. To purchase it, they had willingly given up the luxury of Marsala for a month; to choose it, they had driven to the market-town so often that their pony was attenuated in consequence; to present it becomingly had formed the subject of many an argument.

And all their endeavours had come

to a climax as ineffectually as wetted gun-powder!

“I’m afraid, Susan,” said Mr. Raven, very gently—he was always lamb-like when angry—“I’m afraid, Susan, that you would have done well to follow my first counsel, and purchase a plain Tract Society Bible at four and sevenpence.”

“It’s very hard that *I* should be blamed,” answered his wife, wiping her left eye, “when I told you more than once that two guineas for Miss Lisabee’s gift exceeded our small income.”

“But you finally decided without me, my love.”

“I’m sure I’d no idea the young man would prove so proud, and after all, it’s his wedding day, and—and you ought to have

more consideration for my condition, Adolphus."

This silenced the minister. He could never be reminded of his Susan's condition without growing humble on the spot; though he had been reminded of it for fifteen years, and the world was not a bit the wiser. Whether Mrs. Raven really deceived herself as well as her husband, we can't determine; but he, poor man, delighted in nothing so much as the anticipation of such a condition coming to a climax—which it never could do, for the best possible reason.

And now the wedding ran smoothly to its goal. What with the grand Patterson carriage in which he went to church, the crowd of gaping villagers who saw him alight therefrom, the churchwarden, Farmer Smith, who

met him at the porch and doffed his hat as if to the parson, the grand figure that Arthur made in his shining cloth, the grand figure, above all, that his girls made, Lisabee in white, her sisters in light-coloured gauze, it was quite a little triumph to William Plumtree, from beginning to end. Then to see the clerk arrange the wedding party round the altar, bowing and clutching his forelock whenever he passed a lady; to see Captain Mark enter with the parson, and shake hands with the parson's wife; to see his own labourers looking on dressed in Sunday velveteen with flowers in their button-holes; to hear the Sunday-school children sing a bridal hymn, led by Moyse the village ratcatcher, to the music of a barrel organ; lastly, to watch the effect of all this splendour upon his

homely nieces and nephews, brother Samuel's children—who so proud and happy as William Plumtree on his little lady's wedding-day?

The breakfast, too, began and ended magnificently in his eyes. True, that the jellies and pastries were manufactured at home; true, that they were served on simple dishes of old-fashioned china; true, that there was neither bottled champagne, nor sparkling Moselle, nor meats of costly flavour. He believed to his dying day that never was such a wedding feast as that of his darling. He could not for the life of him help praising the beautiful appearance of the table to his right-hand neighbour, Mrs. Samuel; and once or twice beckoned Lyddy Maple (who of course was in attendance), to whisper in her ear—

“Leave the door ajar, so that Ebenezer can peep in; and give him a bit of cake and a custard before he goes.”

The most uncomfortable persons present were Mrs. Samuel's daughters. They partook of that heavy, angular nature which looks well in the dairy and cheese-room, but shows to very bad advantage in a parlour. They wore silk gowns of an antique cut, kid gloves of a glaring yellow, and bonnets that looked as if they had been fixed to their heads by gimlet and hammer. They sat on the edge of their chairs, blundered in the handling of a silver fork, dropped their h's to be fine, and called all the gentlemen who addressed them “Sir.” In the secret chambers of their hearts they cherished a most ardent dislike of Elgitha's daughters, regarding

them as fine ladies and upstarts; but a wedding was—a wedding, and a field of observation not to be neglected. Captain Mark did not represent his sister's family alone. It had ever been an idiosyncrasy of the male Pierreponts, from the time of their prosperity downwards, to marry women with pretty little fortunes and large ugly features. Elgitha's brothers formed no exception to this rule. Of the nine handsome fellows, almost every one became the husband of the ugliest woman he could find; and what is more extraordinary still—of the richest. Then, though the married life ran on with tolerable smoothness, for the Pierrepont Brothers understood how to coax the most austere into geniality, it came to a quick end. Money flowed into all sorts of wide-

branching channels, life was enjoyed for a year or two, and at the end of that time there remained nothing of the fortune ; and a widow to the family. They died in the prime of life, these Pierreponts ; and died as they had lived, recklessly and gaily. Who could help loving them ? Their widows could not, though left penniless.

So at Lisabee's wedding no less than three Misses Pierrepont were present. The first, a gaunt, broad-checked North-country-woman, who had hunted, played chess, drunk port with her husband, and turned crabbed since the loss of him ; the second, a little, sharp-faced, wiry body, who prided herself upon intellectual culture and a very remote relationship to Lord Nelson ; the third, a tall, imposing Irish lady, of aristocratic breeding and imperious temper

—a person, in fact, whom one is proud to show to one's friends in the country, but unwilling to entertain long there. These three ladies took the greatest delight possible in pecking at each other as un-neighbourly hens peck when cooped together. They were outwardly the most decorous and affectionate of sisters-in-law, but at heart entertained little of sisterly feeling. What was odd enough, each looked upon her own late lamented husband as the flower of the Pierreponts, and each quarrelled with every living member the family.

Meanwhile, where was Richard? We are sorry to answer—among his turnips and oxen at Clayfield. Perhaps no one regretted him—perhaps no one indeed missed him; but is it not just those un-

needed ones who best enjoy a festival? The handsome, the young, the witty, the famous, make a favour of their company, and endure rather than enjoy the festivals given in their honour; the poor relation, the uninteresting maiden-aunt, the thread-bare governess-cousin, the familiar uncle who has lost all in railway speculations—these come to us as readily as flies in summer, are never offended if the board be less laden than usual, drink our cheap wines with praise, eat the cold mutton with favour, and go away satisfied always.

Poor Richard imagined that little Lisabee's wedding would lose as much by his absence as he lost by the inability of attending it. He wandered from field to field, from bullock-shed to bullock-shed, in the

disconsolate mood which only a great disappointment engenders ; nothing found grace in his eyes—not even the abundant turnip-crop, not even the thriving steers, not even the plump pigs. He rested on a stile, and recalled every feature of the wedding as described to him by his brother. There would be carriages to take every one to church, wine in abundance, toasts, jests with the ladies ; lastly, speeches. He raised his right hand, and repeated the little speech made days and days ago for the nonce. How well it sounded ! what an effect it would have had upon Mr. and Mrs. Samuel ! Then again, his blue satin waistcoat : how well it had looked yesterday, when he laid it out on his bed for the first time these five years ! How well it had matched with his Sunday stock, black

specked with pink! and with his orange-coloured silk pocket-handkerchief!

He took out his watch, and found it was just a quarter past twelve. The wedding party would be sitting down to breakfast, knives and forks would be at work among nice roast meats; spoons would be dipping into syllabubs and custards—things he liked so much; the cake was perhaps already cut, and sly jokes passing round. It did seem hard to return home and dine off boiled beef and dumplings to-day. The broad, rosy face of the farmer contracted into hard, angry lines; his mild blue eyes gleamed fiercely in the direction of Mercy's window, and setting his lips together after the manner of very small dogs and spoiled children, muttered—

“*Damn it!*”

CHAPTER VI.

ARTHUR and Lisabee spent five days at a retired sea-side spot, and then returned to Sycamore Farm for the final leave-taking. The short honeymoon had worked no change in the young husband and wife, except to make each more devoted to the other, and the former more interested than ever in his Lisabee's family. It was astonishing with what vigour he commenced upon a system of reforms, and how many innovations he organized in the short space of a day. Now that he had become in a measure a Plumtree, the Plumtrees were to be raised as far as he

could raise them. Now that Lisabee had become a Leebridge, she must throw off everything that was not Leebridge. He was too self-confident, this young man, and too self-contained. What he handled became good in his eyes—what he looked upon, beautiful. Such self-confidence led him into many errors, perhaps as many as too much diffidence would have done.

The last evening was a happy one, though the precursor of a sad parting. The three girls felt very proud of their new brother, William very proud of his new son-in-law. His handsome, delicate face, his fashionable dress, his talents, his money, but, most of all, his decided, energetic manners, delighted them—made them look up to him as to a fortress of strength—a new, inexpressibly-

needed treasure never to be made too much of. Indeed, it was hard to say who was most in love with him of the little family—Lisabee, her sisters, or their father. Each was an adorer, and from a different point of view. Lisabee adored him as a lover, for she had hardly yet realized his position of husband; Mabel and Cissy as a strong, enviable arm, on which it must be very sweet to lean—on which they did lean as far as possible. Greta admired Arthur equally, perhaps, with her sisters, but in a different way; they were at issue twenty times in the day, and though good friends, always quarelling; she was strong herself, and did not care to yield her individuality to him; the more he battled for victory the more obstinate she became. Greta was, we must avow it openly, a

strong-minded woman; and Arthur opposed strong-minded women on principle.

William found something divine about Arthur's most trifling words, habits, and looks. Though almost of peasant-birth and education, the farmer had always sacrificed largely to good looks and good breeding. Next to Plutus indeed, Venus held the highest place on his Olympus. If you were handsome, he gave you credit for all the virtues and graces under the sun; if you were dignified of speech and carriage, he paid homage to you as to a prince of the blood royal. Arthur was neither a tall nor an imposing-looking man, but his claims upon attention were far more uncommon than those of lofty stature or faultlessly-shaped limbs. His face had as much refinement of outline, as much transparency of

complexion, almost as much firmly-knit and nervous sensibility as the portraits of the first Napoleon. He had also that calm way of defeating people's arguments, and of satirizing people's faults, that is sure to win favour with the half-educated or uneducated. Nothing was safe from him, little was sacred to him, and of course he passed off as the wisest of men.

Again, and herein lay the key to much of William Plumtree's spontaneous hero-worship—Arthur was rich. Why does not somebody write an epic about Mammon and all Mammon's doings in the world? What power can compare in these days with the power of the yellow metal that chemists designate as *aurum*, and that the world designates as money? Greater by far than genius, greater by far than wit, greater

even than beauty and fine character, is money. Go back to your native place after years of wandering, give out that you are a renowned naturalist or author, so long as you live in a cottage, and walk on foot, little enough will the world care to recognise you. Go back as a millionaire, purchase farms, keep staghounds, and if your manners be coarse as those of your groom, not a parson, not a squire, not a bishop in the county but will hold out his hand and call you his friend.

Or, to make a readier experiment, put yourself to-day in the position of a borrower of a hundred pounds, to-morrow in that of a lender. To-day you cover yourself with the dust and ashes of humiliation, you force yourself into flatteries of the person you hate, you subscribe to his phylacteries,

you bow to his false gods, you, morally, shrive yourself to the Romanist, shave yourself for the Mussulman—and all for a hundred pounds!

To-morrow, or whenever the time comes for you to lend, how everything will be changed! You feel so benevolent, so self-satisfied, so at ease with the world, that the inner light of conscious superiority illumines your face. Your heart expands, your eyes run over with smiles, your lips utter kindly little speeches, half admonitory, half self-glorifying. No matter if your creditor stand immeasurably above you in position, in culture, in talents; you are the bestower of bounty, and the recipient becomes subservient.

But William Plumtree felt nothing of this humiliation. Arthur had behaved

throughout so delicately, so generously, and so thoughtfully, that his father-in-law could but feel knitted closer to him by means of the obligation; whereas Mercy had made her favours so sore a burden that the release from them was as the rolling off of Sinbad's old man.

The simple mind of the farmer could entertain no higher ideal of human perfection than such as he formed of Arthur Lee-bridge: he was a gentleman, he was handsome, could speak several languages, was rich, full of liberality, of sweet manners—and the lover of Lisabee. Nothing could have added one iota to such an estimation of his son-in-law; nothing but the most incontestable evidence of evil could take one iota away.

So when the morrow's parting came,

there were many considerations to lessen its painfulness; and though Sycamore Farm seemed a dreary place at first to those left behind, time lessened the dreariness from day to day, and Lisabee and Arthur grew still dearer because so distant.



BOOK IV.

THE HOME IN VIENNA.

“Die Geschichte des Menschen ist sein Charakter.”

GOETHE.

“Oblitus Fatorum.”

VIRGIL.



CHAPTER I.

ON the Danube! What visions of picturesqueness, of pleasant faces, of varied, beautiful nature, of vivid, happy life, are called up by these words! Skies of burning blue, fiercely-frowning rocks seamed with black and grey; ridge after ridge of pine forest, velvety hills of vineyard and turf; here a ruined stronghold of the dark ages, massive and grim, and still too strong to crumble; there a modern Schloss, square and white and cheerful to look upon; imposing-looking convents covering acres of lofty ground, villages beneath their wings, with quaint

wooden churches painted red. Sometimes a sunbeam lights up some rude crucifix or Virgin nailed to the rock, hinting of dark legend; sometimes you are whirled through a rapid fierce as the fabled Charybdis. Every moment brings its picture and its story; every hour seems quicker than the last. You cannot be unsociable amid such scenery and such fellow-travellers; for, of all rivers, the Danube is most beautiful; of all companions to make you appreciate it the most sociable are the Austrians. Traveling is little understood even in these days. Thought to be more than an education to the young and an experience to the old, it is rather the refined essence of both. For travel is indeed an art of somewhat subtle kind, requiring firstly, good temper, secondly, good sense, thirdly, good manners.

Why do we travel? To rush through as many churches and museums a day as Goethe's young Englishman in Rome boasted of doing? Or to see how far we can subserve comfort to confusion, pleasure to toil? Or to impress home-keeping neighbours with our cosmopolitan experiences? It were hard to say how many of the tens of thousands who travel yearly, make the study of men and manners any consideration whatever. Yet surely this is as important as the study of art and antiquities, after which we all rush in such frantic haste, whether we care for them or not. To the happy few whose travelling experiences embrace living, acting humanity, as well as the deeds and life of a dead Past, nothing can be so pleasant and profitable as a vacation tour. They make friends not

only with monuments, cathedrals, ruins of mediæval robber-nests, but with original human idiosyncrasy, national traits and modes of thought, touches of humour warm with life, of pathos unread of in books, of new genial sociabilities, and of untried fields of speculation.

It is undoubtedly true that to appreciate a nation we must live among the people forming it. Read Jean Paul, and you will understand German intellect; spend a year at Weimar, and you will understand Jean Paul. More is to be learned in one day's intercourse with the Germans than in lengthened periods of study or reflection to that end.

Lisabee and Arthur are travelling from Lintz to Vienna in the steamer *Kaiserin Maria Theresia*. The day is so perfect that

one might fancy no other could ever be like it—so intense in colouring, so full of rich sunlight and grand shadow, so delicious in its warmth, so ineffable in its coolness, so silent at times, so joyful if but a bird's wing breaks the silence!

By and by, Lisabee grew almost frightened by the first sight of such wild, untamed nature. The mountains of purple-black or iron-grey rising in countless ridges, as if fain to shut in the river and smother the tiny villages clustered by its banks; the gloomy ravines leading to the secret, solitary hearts of pine-forests, from which eagles rose and flew towards the sun; the square towers of robber-castles with narrow loopholes and hanging portcullis, recalling the hungry, horrid face of Cyclopean giant; the swift rapids through which the steamer was

borne like a feather, the granite rocks seeming to threaten destruction at every moment: all these made her feel worlds away from Nettlested, and the cornfields, and her sisters—made her cling to Arthur as if fearing to lose sight of him for a moment—made her wish Austria were more like England, and the Danube more like her native Orwell.

The feeling was a transitory one however. Arthur had so much to tell her, so many pleasant pictures of the future to draw, such a way of finding amusement in trifles, that she soon fell into his gay mood. She brought out her little sketch-book, and attempted one or two drawings for her father; she soon tried to speak German to a pretty little Hungarian lady who made friendly advances.

Everyone indeed made friendly advances to the handsome young Englishman and his pretty wife; in the first place, because Arthur had determined on liking the Germans so long as he lived among them; and in the second, because Lisabee liked everybody and everything that smiled upon her. So the two became petted and admired by all, from the old Austrian general whose face bore as many scars as his breast carried stars, to the bare-legged Slavonian peasant-women in the steerage.

There was a mixed, but, for the most part, mirthful company, for the Germans are never so happy as when travelling. A knot of jovial country priests, with shiny top-boots, broad-brimmed hats, and long coats; an interesting Hungarian family, consisting of three fancifully-dressed chil-

dren, their pretty young mamma wearing the national black-lace head-dress and braided cloak, their handsome military-looking papa, and his equally handsome brother, both of whom paid excessive deference to the lady; a party of gay young Austrian officers given to card-playing, coffee-drinking, and cigar-smoking; a reserved and widely-experienced professor from Munich, with apple-cheeks and dreamy blue eyes; a pleasant, chatty, country doctor and his family, bound to the imperial city on a visit; a particularly intelligent and gentlemanlike captain, a humorous and worldly-wise waiter—from all these Arthur contrived to learn something, and from all to win golden opinions.

Now the bell rings and the steamer stops to take in fuel and passengers at a quaint

village, with pepper-box church towers painted red, large crucifixes here and there, and lounging peasants ; the women wearing black silk handkerchiefs tied round their heads, and short blue skirts, the men with flapping straw hats and cotton vests.

As Arthur and Lisabee lean forward to gaze, a hand is laid familiarly on the former's shoulder, and a cheery voice exclaims—

“Grüss Gott (God greet thee), friend Arthur! Hast thou forgotten Carl Zillner, Heidelberg, and your partner in money-making?”

And Carl seized Arthur by both hands, shook them heartily, and after the German fashion, kissed him on either cheek, in token of good-fellowship.

“Why, Carl, I fear our money-making

will go on but slowly if this is the way you attend to it," Arthur said, smilingly; "but I shall soon be able to relieve your responsibility;—meantime this is my wife. Lisabee, give your hand to my good friend, Carl Zillner, of whom you have heard me speak so often."

The young Austrian stood bareheaded for some minutes, making voluble little speeches of welcome and congratulation to his friend's bride. When he had eased his mind on that score, he turned to Arthur.

"You do not seem very pleased to see me, mein Lieber," he said, with a forced look of affronted dignity; "and I came all the way from Vienna yesterday, and stopped at the filthiest little inn you ever saw, and supped off the sourest wine and saltiest ham you ever tasted, and all for the

pleasure of escorting you and your lady to Vienna! This is the way you appreciate my cordiality."

"Oh! of course, I'm delighted to see you, my good Carl. I only wondered who might be taking care of our virgin factory."

"Our factory must learn to take care of itself. We must live the life of rational beings, you know, though we have become the proprietors of a *Fabrik*, at least I must; and out of a proper regard for your *moral man*, as the philosophers have it, I feel in duty bound to remind you of the great world beyond the little one, the cosmos holding our cosmicula, if I may coin such a word."

"But how does the factory promise?"

"Promise! Can it promise anything else

but the making millionaires, nay, billionaires, of us? Seriously speaking though, with the stimulus infused into it by your capital and by my genius, it bids fair to outdo its rivals in the whole city. I have been calculating, organizing, inventing till my brains required a little relaxation. I thought how pleasant it would be to surprise you in your honeymoon—and here I am !”

“And how are the good people in the Schottenhof; your parents, brother Albin, and the Fräulein Adelheid?”

“All well, and in the country. No one is in Vienna just now; Brazil is nothing to it, I assure you.”

“And otherwise you have no news for me?”

“Yes, a great deal, but it can wait. You and I are sworn slaves of the lady; we must

make ourselves agreeable to her in the best way we can, and talk on uninteresting matters afterwards."

"No," interrupted Lisabee, eagerly; "I don't want either you or Arthur to be my slave, Herr Zillner; and anything concerning his affairs will interest me."

"You see, Carl," said Arthur, "my wife is a true-born Briton, and asserts her rights incontestably. She wishes and intends me to have no secrets from her."

Carl bowed apologetically to Lisabee.

"*Meine Dame*," he said, half seriously, half in jest, "it is well you have an English husband. In my country, ladies don't care for *all* their husband's secrets, or if they did—but I won't be impolite to the great Fatherland that reared me. What a day! What a sky! What a river! Tell

me, is not Austria a country to be proud of? And now we are coming to the whirlpool, the great whirlpool, I mean. Shut your eyes for five minutes, for five little minutes to oblige me, and then you will be out of yourself, as we Germans say, from very wonder and delight."

Lisabee obliged laughingly. When the stated interval had elapsed and she opened her eyes, it was with a cry of almost child-like bewilderment.

Picture to yourself a disk of purple and gold sky framed in by granite-mountains, each sharply cut and majestic as *Ætna*, the famed grave of Enceladus; picture to yourself this burning sky, these grand mountains narrowing till you fear lest the struggling river be choked and stayed altogether, and that the little vessel bearing you along shall

be crushed like a fly in the struggle. High overhead the mountains are sterile, and bristle with ruined robber-nests, dark, massive, and ghostly-looking, but below all is lavish, wild, superb nature; forest after forest feathers the water's edge, the black pine, the copper beech, the silver poplar, the sea-green birch, making a pageantry to be remembered, a pageantry beyond that of popes or kings or church processions. Soon the surface of the waters changes in appearance, and every sailor holds his breath or says a Paternoster. We are passing the Strudel. The river writhes and foams like a mad spirit amid the projecting pinnacles of rock that impede its flow; here and there is a spot, dark, purple, and calm as a lake, but on every side are interspersed wild bits of sea that

toil and seethe and make an unearthly sound.

Again the rocks close in upon us, and the waters are calm. But only for a moment; we are borne swiftly and fearfully into the very heart of the Wirbel, the terrible brother of a terrible sister. Here all is vast and single as the Charybdis of mythic story. The waves eddy and foam in endless circles, the river seems to have not one but a hundred streams; each current, each eddy, each wave wages fearful war with its fellow, till it reaches the broad calm hollow of the whirlpool, where all is still and deathlike.

Arthur looked on in the unmoved, unalterable way of the Englishman. Lisabee clasped her hands and stood transfixed with amazement, thinking—oh, how fondly!—of her dear sisters at Nettlested, and how

they would have enjoyed it! Carl smiled at the whirlpool as if it had been an old friend, and fell into a day-dream.

“One might well become a Greek Pantheist here,” he said, “and imagine that Neptune and his people are celebrating some wild orgies in the depths below. What is the silver light that crisps the waters yonder but joyfully-tossed locks of glorious old fisherman Glaucus and his band? What is the flashing of gold and purple-black but tresses of the beautiful Panope, daughter of Nereus, of Amphitrite her queen, of all the nymphs of ocean? The yawning chasm of the whirlpool is but a malicious trick of Neptune to swallow us mortal mariners, and only awaits sacrifices to close for ever.”

“That is German imaginativeness—*phan-*

tasie they call it," Arthur said to his wife, smilingly. "I used to treat Carl for the disease at Heidelberg—equal quantities of quinine and tea twice a day."

Carl went on without heeding him—

"But where is the priest, with olive-wreath, and golden patera of unmixed wine and salted meal, to appease the raging deity? Where is the black sheep for the sacrifice? Where is the pictured altar at the prow, the gilded *aplustra* above? Gone—gone. We cannot be Pantheists, if we would. Venus comes no more to intercede for her son; the wing-footed, purple-winged herald bears no messages from Olympus. We must forego Panope and her golden hair; we must forego Amphitrite and her coral caves."

"And remember that Neptune's watery

trap for mortals is but caused by the contraction of the river channel and the rocks blocking it. You should have lived fifty years ago, Carl; the present age is too practical to rear poets."

"I'm fain to take refuge in a cigar and the mermaids, friend Arthur," said Carl, "since you are so unsympathetic. Talk the practical to your wife."

And he walked to the other side of the steamer, singing gaily Heine's mermaid song—

“Die schönste Jungfrau sitzt
Dort oben wunderbar
Ihr goldenes Geschmeide blitzet,
Sie kämmt ihr goldenes Haar.”*

* “Oh! wonder. I see before me
A maiden heavenly fair,
Whose golden garments glitter
As she combs her golden hair.”

“I wonder,” he thought, “why only a lucky fellow here and there finds such a wife as Leebridge’s! Heavens! what eyes, what lips, what a smile she has! and yet he behaves to her as coldly and calmly as if they had seen a silver, nay a golden wedding-day. He’s fond of her, no doubt—in his way; Englishmen always are fond of their wives, and faithful to them, it is said; but what a fondness—what a faithfulness! I believe Arthur would as soon think of admiring her, or allowing people to imagine he admired her, as I should think of passing an hour without smoking. Well, English is English, and Austrian is Austrian—*voilà tout!*”

CHAPTER II.

HAVING found his wife an interesting book, Arthur lighted a cigar and joined Carl. The two friends puffed away in silence for some moments, and neither seemed anxious to begin a conversation. At length Arthur said, sharply—

“You came to meet me for other reasons than mere congratulation—I see it by your face.”

“How beautiful your wife is!” Carl answered, with an affectation of distrait.

Arthur frowned. He did not care for Lisabee to appear beautiful in any man’s eye but his own.

“Pshaw! you know I did not want you to tell me black is black, or white is white. What made you meet me?”

“I think it is a pity you should trouble yourself about anything but enjoyment just now. This is your honeymoon—your *Flitter-monat*, spangled month, as we Germans call it, and not a time for vexatious thoughts or inquiries. Leave the *Versettes* till by and by.”

“The *Versettes*!”

“I should rather say all that belongs to *Versette* the elder, and *Versette* the younger,” said Carl, with a little embarrassment; “but you were always so critically accurate.”

“Be serious with me, Carl, and tell the truth. I wished and intended to wash my hands of the whole miserable affair, to insure for myself a life-long immunity from

claims, importunities, and reproaches. Have I not succeeded?"

Carl tossed his cigar into the river, whistled a gay air of Schubert's, shrugged his shoulders, and said—

“I fear not.”

“What would the old man have?” cried Arthur, impatiently. “I gave him money, I promised him more, I even, as you know, told him the truth——”

“Oh! it isn't the old man you need fear. I am thinking and speaking of Konrad, the nephew; you remember him, don't you—a sailor, and the wildest, most ungovernable devil to be found in all the seaports of Europe. Well, this choice youth was in Vienna ten days ago; I passed him by chance on the Josef Platz, and he must needs recognise me.”

“What did he say?”

“That he would give you a remembrance of his good opinion, if ever he chanced to meet you.”

“I hope you knocked him down.”

“Not I; I took off my hat and wished him good day, and a pleasant voyage from Trieste to Algeria (whither his ship was bound); but Herr Konrad, or Kurt, as he is called, followed me, having somewhat to say, which was——”

He bent his head within an inch of Arthur's, and whispered—

“Which was, that you have been deceived.”

“Deceived—in what way?”

“Can't you guess, my dear fellow? I'm very sorry if such is really the case. I'd rather anyone should have had to tell you of it but myself.”

Arthur turned a shade paler, and laid one hand eagerly on Carl's arm.

"Speak out—what did he say? Truth or falsehood, I must hear it."

"He said that his uncle's story to you was a fabricated one—that Bertha did not die at Heidelberg—that she is still alive."

"It is a lie!" muttered Arthur between his set teeth. "A devilish malicious lie, and he shall pay dearly for it!"

"Hist, Leebridge! I daresay it is a lie, I hope it is, but its ugliness becomes none the less apparent. Where are your proofs to the contrary?"

"Was not her father's word a proof? Were not the death-certificate and the words of her confessing priest proofs? Was not the witness of the old woman Bäbele a proof?"

“It is on the records that even priests and certificates have lied,” said Carl, with deep underlying seriousness; “old women lie always, and so honest a man as Paul Versette may have lied for his own ends.”

“Carl, you will drive me mad. What ends could such a lie have answered to Versette? And, fond and faithful as poor Bertha was,—but I can't talk of that—she would never have been induced to conspire against me; she would never have kept silence all these years.”

“Fear of Kurt might have weighed much.”

“Nothing has power over such love as hers. I tell you, Carl, it is a gross falsehood, a conspiracy, a scandal!”

“That is just why you must take heed,”

said Carl, gently. "Look at your wife. If such a rumour once came to her ears, it would then be too late for caution."

"Yes, it would then be too late;" and Arthur smiled a dreary smile. Carl's last words had opened, as it were, a chasm at his feet. All the colour, and life, and vividness went out from the scene around him; he could not look at his wife's fair face as she watched him in the distance; he turned cold and sick, and trembled like an old man. The voices of careless loungers near him jarred his brain as if he were in high fever; even the fear lest Carl should speak became agony.

With a wave of the hand he motioned him away.

"Go and talk to her," he said, almost inarticulately. "Leave me."

Carl's gay, boyish face changed in a moment. He uttered a hundred counsels and consolations, clasped his friend's hand whilst assuring him of the most devoted attachment to his interests; swore to kill Kurt Versette or anyone who should disturb Lisabee's happiness; swore to do numberless kind offices, possible and impossible. He could not understand Arthur's repugnance to sympathy at all, could not believe in it, till he was fairly driven away by a reiterated and almost harsh—

“For God's sake, leave me!”

So poor Carl betook himself to Lisabee, and did his best to amuse her. That task was an easy one. Arthur Leebridge's wife had received no other homage in life but that of her father, sisters, and lover, and to find herself sought after and petted by

strangers was alike a revelation and a delight. Does not every woman love homage?—the meekest as well as the haughtiest—Juno as well as Minerva—Rosamond as well as Cleopatra? Of course and—pardon me, O followers of Corinne, pardon me, O Penthesileas, warring against the prejudices of the world—the strong of intellect like it too!

Meantime, Arthur was striving, Orestes-like, to drive away a hundred apprehensions, dire Eumenides full of evil prophecy. Carl's communication had aroused him from a calm, sunny enjoyment of life, had forced him from love, from all sweet and unsullied thoughts, to dark self-reproach, self-questioning, and impatient repining against Fate. He dared to face the future. He dared to calculate the ultimate evil

which seemed hanging over him; but such daring cost more than we can well express. It was as if a skilled physician should probe a self-inflicted and mortal wound. He did not say, "I will hope this and trust that;" but he said, "This will cost so much; that will weigh so heavily, and only so heavily." Some proud men give Fate credit for being a time-server, a hero-worshipper, and think she could not, would not play a certain scurvy trick upon them. Having so much self-confidence, they flatter themselves with the consciousness of deserving it. Having been usually favoured by circumstances, they require and expect a circumstantial infallibility.

But Arthur was neither a sanguine, nor a self-deceiving, nor a merciful man. He never raised hope in others except on

good grounds: he never deceived his friends by telling them better things than he thought; he showed himself merciless to others and equally merciless to himself. He scorned the idea of being a coward; he despised those who bore pain ill, whether mental or bodily; he took pride in a certain holding aloof from weakness, which others might set down to want of feeling; he thought pity, and tears, and softness were for women only, but also from them he expected strength.

He leaned over the side of the vessel in a mood that was neither wholly passion nor wholly calmness, but a mixture of both. He appeared indeed calmness itself. Is it not just the outwardly composed who know the sensation of momentary madness, momentary states of utter self-abnegation,

utter hostility against the world and all that is of the world? Arthur had gone through two phases of feeling, the first of bitter remorse, the second of unsparing calculation, and now he went through a third, namely, that of reckless defiance. What if he had been deceived so basely? Could he not, ought he not to deceive also in a better cause? Anything and everything must be sacrificed to Lisabee's peace of mind, to Lisabee's entire confidence in him, to Lisabee's love.

He wiped the cold drops from his forehead, and breathed more freely. After all, these Versettes were poor, ignoble people, perhaps to be easily silenced, certainly to be little feared. Let the worst come to the worst, he would shield Lisabee from sorrow and himself from shame. At any cost, he

would do this. He looked at her as she sat smiling by Carl's side, and thought that for so sweet a face and so pure a nature, one might well brave and bear much. Had Lisabee been less lovely and less worthy of love, so long as she but worshipped him, lived for him, made him her world, he would have loved her almost as well.

When Arthur joined his wife and friend, he looked little like a man who had just passed through so fiery an ordeal. He laughed, jested, sang; he discussed literary subjects with Carl till Lisabee thought him still more of a critic than she had done before; he made everything new, interesting, and beautiful by his fancies and suggestions.

So the bright autumn day passed. And by and by twilight stole like a mediating

angel between day and night, with stars about its quiet brows and uplifted finger, as if signifying "Hush!" And the steamer glided gently by the lofty Kahlenberg, famous for John Sobiesky's standard once planted there—by the woods and ruins of the Rhine-like Wiener Wald—by the low-lying, closely-piled wood-yards of Nussdorf—lastly, beneath the grand shadow of old St. Stefan's, which, in the form of a giant eagle with outspread wings, seemed set, alike a symbol and a sentinel over the imperial city.

CHAPTER III.

IT was late when Arthur and Lisabee alighted in the Schottenhof. Leaving Carl and Arthur to discharge the driver, the young wife sprang lightly upstairs, curious to catch a glimpse of her new home, hers and Arthur's, the *optata arena* of so many happy fancies and so much castle-building. Whilst standing, door-handle in hand, seeking her husband's name on the panel, her eyes rested on two figures sitting in the outer landing. One was dark, wretchedly clad, decrepit; the other bud-like and full of gay, young life.

They were the violinist and Minchen.

The child's radiant face and fanciful, costly dress contrasted so strongly with her companion's whole appearance that Lisabee could but start and feel a wondering curiosity and bewilderment. She looked almost suspiciously at Versette, as one might look at a wearer of stolen jewellery, or sordid inmate of a luxurious apartment. Surely this lovely child in silks and laces did not belong to so ragged, so cadaverous, so utterly forlorn an object!

She determined to solve her doubts.

"Are you waiting for anyone here?" she asked.

"Yes," answered the child, with the pert promptitude of six years, "we are waiting for my papa."

Versette blushed shyly, and echoed the words.

“We are waiting for her papa.”

Lisabee would fain have asked more, but something in the old man's manner repelled and reassured her. Whatever he might be, she felt sure that the child rightly belonged to him, and, with a lingering look of interest, turned away. Hardly had the door closed upon her, when Arthur sprang up the stairs, light-hearted, almost unconscious of evil, full of the happy present.

But when the figures of Versette and Minchen became clear to him; when he saw the features of his first love reflected in the child's, plainly as lily-leaves in running streams; when she advanced with the pretty dramatic way which was as much inherited nature as art, kissing his hand, and saying, just as her mother might have said, “*Ich bin dein Kindchen,*” “I am thy

child ;" he read the whole unhappy story at a glance, and staggered like a man under a sun-stroke.

The violinist had advanced with the child, and not dreaming of any feeling but unmitigated joy on Arthur's part, now clasped his hands, repeating her words—

“She is your child, Herr Leebridge. Oh! forgive me for deceiving you; she is your child.”

Arthur pushed the old man away from him with a vehemence that set Minchen crying and hiding her face. There was a momentary pause, during which the violinist murmured to himself, “She is your child,” and Arthur tried to calm the terrible storm of passion convulsing him. When he spoke, his voice had an icy bitterness and impenetrability in it, that

made every word like a blow dealt in the dark.

“Wretched man,” he said, “this is some horrible conspiracy of your nephew’s, and by heaven you shall both repent it, if you have deceived me further. Where is Bertha, where is Bertha, I say?”

“She is dead, she is dead;” wailed Ver-sette, brokenly; “I did not deceive you in that, Herr Leebridge; but I loved the child, and I thought you had ill-treated its mother, and hid her from you. Oh, forgive me.”

“Forgive you!” laughed Arthur. “Forgive you! But go, never let me see your face again. I will send you money—you shall want for nothing—go.”

The old man clasped his hands with pitiful entreaty.

“Herr Leebridge,” he wailed forth, “I shall soon be dead, and then the child will have no one to care for her. If you take her now, I will never trouble you again, will never come near your house in the day-time, will only ask to see her once a year—only once a year—or never, if I shall shame you too much. She is not ignorant, like peasant children, she can play and dance a little, and you may put her with little ladies and never fear that she will behave rudely. And she is so pretty too, so like her mother, so winsome with her mother’s ways—oh! take her, Herr Arthur.”

Arthur turned away, cold and unmoved.

“You shall have money——” he began.

“Money, Herr Leebridge! It isn’t money she wants, but her father; you told me Bertha was your wife, you will not surely

be ashamed of Bertha's little one. Do but take her, and I won't come in your way, won't want to see my Minchen once even"—he broke down sobbing—"though she is so fond of me."

"Hush!" whispered Arthur. "It is impossible, Versette. Your own deception has made it impossible. I will fulfil my duty to this poor little girl, will have her cared for as long as she lives; but she can never now be as my own child."

Then he thrust some money into the old man's trembling hand, and entered his apartment quickly, having no more looked at Bertha's child. We must try to forgive him. Had he been less shocked, less moved, and less overwhelmed by the consciousness of her presence, he would doubtless have taken her to his heart, or at least pressed a

kiss on her lips. But because he had never reproached himself so severely regarding Bertha as now; because he felt, and felt acutely, that the wrong inflicted upon her was also a wrong inflicted upon Lisabee; because he hid beneath a calm exterior a hundred times more self-convicting, self-questioning, self-revenging passion than the outwardly impulsive; he turned away from his child with the well-concealed albeit bitter remorse of a proud nature.

Minchen's face was to him as the face of his dead love. Her eye, her brow, her lips, must henceforth reproach him, whether present or absent; her loneliness, her motherlessness, her, in almost every sense, fatherlessness, must soon be shadows darkening his path, obscuring his sunshine, standing between him and his young inno-

cent wife. When *her* children came, this innocent, loving Lisabee's, their baby ways, their prattle, and laughter, and joyousness, would recall another child—his equally, but not hers, and therefore an exile and an alien.

He entered his luxurious apartment in the utmost perturbation of spirits and temper. Everything seemed suddenly dark, seen through the medium of this unhappy occurrence. Whichever way he looked, he saw potential evils. Lisabee did not appear safe from them. Nothing appeared safe from them. Strive after, court secrecy as he might, there was always the chance of Minchen's existence coming to light—and what a revelation for his wife!

Bitterly did he curse the wild, lawless period of his life which had made Bertha

its god; bitterly did he curse the cowardice that had driven him to conceal the story of his first marriage. He had deceived the world, his family, and his wife; he could not undeceive them now. Minchen must be the victim of double deception and of unhallowed love. He dared not look upon her face. He dared not think of it.

Lisabee was not in the habit of too much questioning her husband's thoughtful moods; but on this occasion she could not resist a little start of painful conviction.

"Arthur," she said, gently, and yet with a certain touch of childish imperiousness. "Arthur, why are you so grave and pale?"

"So grave and pale! That is your fancy, Lisabee; one of the many fancies you have

in the course of a day. Was I ever very merry and very rubicund?"

And he fell to toying with her bright chestnut hair in the old lover-like way.

"No, Arthur, be serious. You have a reason for your grave looks, and—and—I think I ought to know it."

"But if it is something that would hurt you, something that you could not heal, something that no one and nothing could heal—why talk of it, Lisabee? Better let such subjects drop like stones into a well, never, never for the sun to shine on them again."

"Still," she said, softly, "you should have no secrets from your wife."

He took her hands in his, and having kissed each little finger as reverently as a devotee kisses his beads, answered, in a sorrowful, persuasive voice—

“Love, every man has a secret from his wife: that secret is his youth. The youth of a woman is pure, the mere blossoming of a bud in the atmosphere of home; but the youth of a man is part good and part evil, a turbid river that is only purified by contact with water still impurer than itself. We are no worse for this intercourse with the world—better, perhaps; but as there can never be a wholly great woman, so there can never be a wholly good man. Would you have me pick up follies and errors from the past, like last year’s leaves from the mud? No, Lisabee, you love me, you are contented with me; trust me always. If my youth was not worthy of you, my manhood shall at least aspire to be so, and begins by making you its pride, its darling, its crown. Will that satisfy my little wife?”

There was something in Arthur's voice and manner that would have made the veriest sophisms satisfactory; but Lisabee saw no sophistry in this. A confession of error from a meek man doubles his meekness; a confession of error from a proud man heightens his crest of pride. The former should conceal even the patch on his coat; the latter should show it boldly as a star of honour.

Goethe would hardly be human enough to love, were it not for his youthful indiscretion of the Werther period; but no one can forgive Bürger for his lawless love of Süschen.

And Lisabee, wifelike and womanlike, loved her husband ten times better that he had made her love so good and his life so little beside it.

CHAPTER IV.

ARTHUR and Carl, having left Lisabee to the ladies of the family, lighted their cigars and strolled up and down the solitary pavement of the Schottenhof till past midnight. Carl, after hearing what had passed, dashed gaily into a hundred cheerful topics, praised affairs in general, especially business affairs, talked much of the future, and forced Arthur away from the shadow of evil that had lately arisen on his horizon. The two young men, though, or rather because, they were so unlike each other, had ever been the best of friends—not friends as we mean the word in England, but

friends as they mean the word in Germany. With us the conjugal tie is the strongest, almost the only strong one that links one human being to another.

Putting out of the question such close intercourse and affection as exists between parents and young children, between husband and wife, we have to seek far and wide for other deep, lasting and sympathetic attachments. In nine cases out of ten, brothers and sisters become mere ordinary acquaintances soon after their final settlement in life; in nine cases out of ten, children grow up to think the ways of their parents old-fashioned, sordid, or common, and, in improving their plan of life, distance their father and mother with every year. But in Germany life is simple, and less ambitious; and the tie of friend and friend, sister and brother, father

and grandfather, is as strong as that of husband and wife, sometimes stronger. When Englishmen feel inclined to blame two bearded professors or fellow-soldiers for falling into each other's arms with a kiss after absence, they should remember that the affection prompting such a greeting is sincere. Indeed, simple-hearted affectionateness is as German as downrightness is English; and the truest, warmest friendships crop up in evidence as thickly as clover in May. Only spend a year, nay a month, in the Fatherland, and you will agree with us.

Carl and Arthur talked of their inmost hopes, ambitions, and disappointments as they had done years and years ago in student-days.

At ten o'clock in Vienna all squares and

suburban streets are closed by gates which porters open on payment of ten kreutzers. Clerks on small incomes, large family parties who spend every evening at the theatre or Prater, young officers in trouble with the Jews, avoid this mulct if possible; and accordingly, few people are moving in quiet neighbourhoods after the tabooed hour. The Schottenhof, however, owes its name to a large and ancient monastery of Scotch Benedictines established there; and you will see priests and monks moving about at all hours bent on charity, or mass, or absolution of the sick. Several of these dark figures passed the young men, and one having jostled against Arthur, raised his broad-brimmed hat in apology.

The light of a neighbouring lamp fell on his face as he did so, and something in its

expression made Arthur start almost with recognition. When the priest was out of hearing, he turned to Carl.

“Carl,” he whispered, “what strange fancies take possession of me! I could almost take an oath that I have just seen Father Bernardus, the priest who married us—poor Bertha and me——”

Carl doubled his speed.

“What if you have?” he said, eagerly. “That would be little wonder, seeing that these priests are so often moving from one place to another. Let us follow him. He may be able to ease our minds about one or two things.”

They hastened forward. The priest entered the open door of the monastery, and passing swiftly through two or three long dark corridors, disappeared. Presently,

they heard a low, monotonous voice chanting mass beneath them.

“He has gone into the church,” said Carl, “and is saying mass; the priests take it by turns, and wake up at five again for matins. Shall we wait?”

“Oh no; I may have made a mistake after all.”

Carl listened for a minute, and then added, condolingly—

“Poor wretch! How ghostlike and deserted the church must be at this time of night! If you would like a peep at him I can lead the way; it will at least show you how much patience goes to make a priest.”

Arthur assented, and they groped their way down an irregular staircase, which ended by a thick baize door. Holding their

breaths, they pushed it gently forward and looked in.

The church of the Schottenhof looks gloomy when blazing with waxlights and banners; but it looked rather more than gloomy then. A solitary taper lit the side chapel at which the priest was kneeling; all the rest of the building lay in dark, heavy shadow, only a blur of light here and there betraying some gilded Virgin or saint. Alike picture and statue and tomb were blotted out by the night, and no sound reached their ears but the dreary, expressionless voice of the priest as he mumbled forth his prayers.

“It is the same—Bernardus,” whispered Arthur.

Carl drew back quickly.

“Let us go,” he said. “You can see

him any time at his college, and I can't endure churches at night-time."

They returned as silently as they had come. Once in the open air, Carl breathed a sigh of relief.

"What a strange creature a priest must be!" he soliloquized. "Now, neither you nor I could willingly wake up at any time to say a Pater-noster; and yet they do it all their lives long without much self-credit! Say what you like of our priesthood, you must admit its virtue of self-denial."

"Oh yes! but to what good?"

"Well, I do think asceticism is getting out of date, and I can't help pitying the poor priests for their half-lives; but you Protestants are too cold. Your lives, your religions, everything about you is virtuous

and lukewarm. We are southerners, and must have a religion of sense before we can understand religion of soul."

"And how often one sees the first without the last! But it is late. Good night."

"Good night."

They exchanged the kindly German greeting, "Sleep well," and separated; Carl, full of vague speculation concerning priests and priesthood in general, Arthur, of Father Bernardus and the strange phase of his life with which he was linked.

The coldest and calmest of us have impulsive moments—moments when we feel too pleased with ourselves, and the world in general, to help impulsive generousities—moments when we commit the only virtuous follies of our lives. A right-minded man does good on principle; a warm-hearted

man does good for the pleasure of seeing happy tears; a man who is neither actuated to benevolence by duty or liberal feeling, is benevolent because the sun shines on him, and he can but shed his golden fruits. For men who are in the prime of life and fortune's favours may not inaptly be likened to full-fruited trees; one will drop bounteous treasures if but a sigh pass that way, whereas all the tears and sobs of sorrow can hardly shake kindness out of another; and a third needs only the brightness of bright summer days to be more generous than any.

When Arthur Leebridge had made that fateful revelation to Versette, he was so happy at finding himself free, and so in love with Lisabee, that such an atonement seemed the least he could make. Now he

reproached himself for having done so much. To him it appeared a supererogation of generous virtue, an heroic folly—only equalled by the folly of his youthful marriage. For the sake of Versette's tears he had done all this—all this; and must bear, perhaps no imagination could compass, and no foresight could arrest how much.

He lay down to rest, bitterly at war with fate, with his youth, most of all with the one crowning weakness of his nature. Long ago he could not resist Bertha's supplications—and married her. Versette's miserable face haunted him, and he had made it, for one day, happy.

But at what cost?

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Versette saw Arthur's door and heart alike shut against him, he took the child's hand, and walked away, sighing heavily. This blow had come so unexpectedly and so summarily that he could hardly realize it yet; could hardly look upon Minchen's bright-hued clothes, and think she was his still, and his only—the ragged violinist's child instead of the rich Englishman's. As much of gall and bitterness as his gentle nature contained, expressed themselves in the few words he uttered during his homeward journey.

“ My poor Minchen, my fatherless Min-

chen; the world is heartless," he said, many times over, and said little else.

But the child was not so cast down. No sooner had she left the Schottenhof than her cheeks burned with passion, her eyes grew bright and vindictive, her mouth gave utterance to a hundred exclamations of anger and disappointment.

"I will go to the police," she said, stamping vehemently; "I will tell them that my papa is a bad man, and won't have me; I will tell the Emperor and everybody, till he won't be able to walk the streets without people crying after him—'There is the man who wouldn't take care of his little girl!' Grandfather, what will be done to him? Will he be put to death as the murderer was Bäbele told me about? Will he have to give you all his money? Will

he have to eat black bread whilst we dine off goose and chocolate pudding?"

"Hush, Minchen."

"But, grandfather, he is a naughty, naughty man; and, oh! he never gave me bonbons and dolls, as you said he would do; and not even ten kreutzers to buy cakes with! Were he to cry for me now I would never, never go to him—not if he gave me a speaking doll or a silk parasol, grandfather."

Thus the little one prattled all the way home, Versette having no heart to check or console her. If she grew loud in her demonstrations of resentment, he merely pressed her arm or uttered an admonition of the gentlest kind. His heart was well-nigh broken. The flush of joy occasioned by Arthur's confession, the glad prepara-

tion for Minchen's meeting with her father, the anticipation of his surprise, his pride, the ambitious future laid out for her, the revulsion of feeling in favour of Bertha's betrayer—all these conflicting passions, so many triumphant sun-crested waves, on which the bark of his mind rode gaily an hour ago, were now silenced and stilled to a dead calm—the calm of despair.

He had come from Döbling the day before, and now conducted Minchen to the wretched little suburban lodging hired of Bäbele. He had not enough courage to meet that worthy soul's questions and good-natured taunts yet; so bade the child run in, adding that he should return by and by. Minchen bounded forward, quite glad of a long story to tell; feeling no

shame, but only indignation, in Arthur's rejection of her.

"I'm to stay with grandfather after all!" she cried, embracing Bäbele excitedly. "My papa doesn't want a little girl, and was, oh! so angry with grandfather!"

Bäbele put her arms akimbo, and eyed Minchen with whimsical concern, not unmixed with triumph.

"Maria-Josef! So the Herr Violinist reckoned on his eggs afore the hen had laid 'em! That's so like men. And you've come back to Bäbele, have you, my heart? and won't ride in a carriage yet, nor wear silks and satins neither. What sort of gentleman was he? Did he give you anything?"

"Give us anything!" cried Minchen. "Not he! At least, nothing worth taking.

He gave grandfather some money, but me no bonbons or dolls or cakes, though I had been promised them ever since I was ill at Döbling. Papas are bad people, ain't they, Bäbele? Never praying to the Virgin, or going to mass or confession."

"Was he handsome?" asked Bäbele.
"Tell me that, now."

"Oh yes! Very handsome."

"Like anyone you know?"

"Not anyone."

"Had he a little black moustache, and a long, thin face and black eyes, and a small waist?"

"No, he hadn't a bit of moustache, and a great waist—oh! such a great waist!"

"Then you know nothing about it, and he's a fright," said Bäbele; "as bad in looks as in everything else."

Minchen burst out crying.

“He isn't bad-looking, Bäbele, and he is my papa; and if you talk so about him I'll beat you——”

“Hoity-toity! That's just like us women—we hate to have our own run down. But now, my heart, I've my bit of news for you. Uncle Kurt is come home again.”

“Uncle Kurt!” and the child dried her eyes at once. “Uncle Kurt! Will he take me to the Prater to see the races as he did before? Oh, Bäbele! I'm so glad! and I don't mind now if my papa is a fright, and has a great waist.”

They both entered the kitchen where Versette's nephew sat smoking gloomily—a slim, handsome, evil-looking young fellow about twenty-two. He brightened a little on seeing Minchen, but the bright look

passed almost instantaneously ; and though he took her to his knees, praised her improved appearance and pretty frock, it was all in a weary, abstracted way, as if spoken in a dream. The child's story hardly roused him. He heard it with many a bitter imprecation, and many a coarse comment ; but no new acumen seemed thereby added to his hatred of Arthur. Nothing indeed could have added to that. He smoked away with a dark face, and only uttered an occasional word of mysterious meaning. He caressed and frightened Minchen by turns, now telling her she should have toys and cakes without limit, now inventing frightful stories of Arthur's wickedness.

“ You are not to hate him because he refused to take care of you, Minchen, mind

that; you are to hate him because he killed your mother."

"Killed her mother, forsooth!" put in Bäbele. "You might as well say that of the Herr Hauptmann Schwab, who made love to me when I was a girl, and led me into trouble—twins, too! Girls are girls, Herr Konrad, and students are students. If the Herr Violinist's daughter preferred the handsome Englishman, was he to blame? I'm fond of Englishmen myself."

"Hold your tongue, Bäbele, and listen, Minchen, or I'll beat you. This Englishman's name is Arthur Leebridge, and he stole your mother and killed her—think of that; what ought to be done to him?"

"Killed!" said the child. "Killed right out, as Bäbele killed the cat, a stone round his neck, and plump into the river!"

“Yes, he shall be killed so,” answered the sailor, gravely; “and as no one will say mass for him, he’ll never get out of purgatory, never.”

“Never!” echoed Minchen. “Oh, that will serve him right.”

Here Bäbele again interfered.

“What judgment won’t happen to you, Konrad Versette, for filling the child’s head with such immoral things! Here I’ve been acting a mother’s part to her all these years, telling her things to do her good, setting before her murderers’ bad ends by way of example, and now you come home to spoil all. I tell you, if no one else says a mass for the Englishman when he dies, I will; ay, and it won’t be my fault, or the Virgin’s, or St. Barbara’s either, if he stays in purgatory longer than others. For shame, Min-

chen! If you see hobgoblins running over your bed all night, who is to wonder after such sayings?"

Minchen looked grave, and Versette changed the subject. He asked her a hundred impatient questions concerning Arthur's residence, and the late interviews that had taken place there. Was she sure of being able to find the place? Was she sure of having rightly repeated the Englishman's words? When the ground seemed thoroughly mapped out, he put on his hat and left the house.

Where was the violinist?

Leaving Minchen within sight of home, he wandered listlessly onwards, having no object in view but a temporary escape from Bäbele's tongue and Minchen's questions. He hardly understood it all yet. Arthur's

severe reproach, unmitigated coldness, and blank refusal. It seemed impossible that Bertha's husband would forsake Bertha's child. It seemed impossible that this generous Englishman could forget his generosity in a day. Had he not declared her to be his legitimate offspring? Had he not showed tenderness whilst speaking of her mother? Had he not pressed money upon him without stint or spare?

His pretty, pretty Minchen! As he recalled her, dressed in silk and lace, a perfect little princess in outward appearance, and beautiful beyond most princesses, a deep, sharp pain gnawed his heart. She must remain in Bäbele's humble home then, she must play with Bäbele's children, she must wear cotton and serge with them. The beautiful vision had faded. Minchen was fatherless.

He walked wearily towards the country, feeling a solace in its solitude, and a sympathy in its stillness. The road was wide, white, and dusty, shaded by apple and lime-trees whose leaves and fruit looked cut out of delicate wax; a flush of opal sky showed where the sun had set, a streak of silver where the rising moon rent the dark curtain of evening. Far away lay the dusk city, amid coils of the gleaming Danube, like a sleeping Eastern beauty decked with pearls. There was no sound but the tinkling of a cloister bell in the distance, and sky, wood, city, even the capricious moon, seemed hushed to hear it.

The old man crossed himself when he heard the signal for vespers and walked on. By and by the road diverged, leading by one way to the village, by the other to the cemetery; he paused for a moment's reflec-

tion, and then chose the latter. Solitude was what he needed. Solitude without an eye to mock or a finger to point derisively at him; in the strangely nervous and excited mood which this disappointment had engendered, he felt as criminals feel, jealous of every look and trivial notice. It seemed impossible that anyone should be ignorant of his crowning folly, his crowning fall.

The quiet cemetery with its dark green leafage and white monuments looked like a twilight sea bestudded with sails. One or two gardeners were clearing away dead leaves, and a group of mourners stood by a new-made grave, otherwise the violinist was alone. Slowly and sorrowfully he passed up a shadowy alley, stopping in listless curiosity to decipher a name here and there,

or to note some brilliant immortelle freshly offered by the hands of love. He thought of Bertha and her lonely grave in the little Suabian God's Acre far away, wondering if a daisy had bloomed on it, if strangers sometimes threw flowers on it, if bright children like Minchen checked their mirth in its precincts. It was a great joy to him in the midst of so much humiliation to think that Minchen's mother was not wholly of the fallen and castaway.

"Oh!" he thought, "why was I not content with the Englishman's reparation so far? Minchen and I might have been happy together, and now——"

He could not think of the child without mixed feelings of hurt, pride, and moral shrinking. He dared not meet her questions, her regrets, her reproaches. Above

all, he dared not meet Bäbele's quiet sarcasms.

As he paused wearily, a sudden flash of moonlight showed him a plain square slab, on which were engraved a harp and the simple name

Beethoven.

What indeed needs the poet beyond this, whether his rhymes have been of thought, or melody, or deed? So little, yet so much is a name! So little yet so much is life; sometimes leaving a grand resonance long after the final chord is struck!

The violinist sat down beside the tomb of the master, and fanciful thoughts took possession of his mind. He forgot for a moment the dread and the despair that had led him thither, he lost himself in the recollections

of a far distant past. He had always loved music for its own sake; he had enlisted under its banners hopefully, enthusiastically, thinking to achieve honour, wealth, and many things held dear by the young. He had worshipped a floating, radiant vision of excellence, and had only been recalled to the renunciation of such worship by the sober teachings of experience. He had loved his violin from first to last.

But now he seemed nearer to this great Beethoven, this crowned monarch of the mighty kingdom of sound. Their lives had both been unhappy, and Beethoven might be Beethoven, but he could not do more than love music and live for it as he, Paul Versette, had done. After all, they were brothers.

The simple soul of the violinist enlarged

and calmed under the influence of these sentiments. He pleased himself with the thought of such companionship; he wondered if his own talent had been so wholly despicable, if, though trodden under foot and harrowed by the world, he had possessed a genius.

And night came, with its thousand eyes to weep or smile on human weakness or joy. Was there a more tender sight for God and the angels than this, of a poor, bowed, simple musician who, doubting the consolations of human justice, home, and love, sought those of a purer, more durable gospel still, the gospel of genius?

CHAPTER VI.

THE midnight worshipper of the Schottenkirche proved to be no other than Father Bernardus. From him Arthur received additional and conclusive corroboration of the violinist's story. The love of his youth—the delicate wild-flower he had plucked from the outlawed land of Bohemia—was in reality broken, withered, of the dust. No ghost of Bertha could rise up against him.

He reproached himself a little for feeling no love to Bertha's child, and reasoned thus—"My boyish passion was much, but

the love of my life is more; if I erred in that, I cannot suffer in this. Bertha was my love, but Lisabee is my wife. Bertha had my youth—Lisabee has my all.”

His honeymoon was not over yet, and he put off the arrangements for Minchen's future till he should finally return to Vienna. He knew that Versette's purse could not be empty for some time, and he dreaded, with that exquisite susceptibility of painful impressions which was natural to him, any further handling in the matter. He would fain never have seen Versette or the child again; he would fain have secured to himself a life-long immunity from remembrance of them.

It is easy to say. Till to-morrow, till after to-morrow, perhaps, the blow will not fall, and in the interval something may happen

to avert it; meantime the sun is shining overhead, the birds chirp songs of love and joy. I will be happy.

And he said this and was happy.

The weather was too warm still for Vienna, and in company with the Zilners the young husband and wife set out for a holiday trip to the Austrian Tyrol. Leaving their fellow-travellers at Ischl, Arthur and Lisabee took a lover-like, dilatory way through the beautiful Salz-kammergut, travelling slowly and circuitously by all kinds of old-fashioned post-carriages, stopping at wayside inns, having large painted Virgins by way of sign-post, and seeing odd indications of superstition at every step. Wonderful was it to Lisabee to see the peasant-women, with high-crowned hats, short scarlet petticoats, and black-

laced bodices amid the vineyards; wonderful, the crucifixes stuck over a baker's shop, and no house without its holy symbol, of Virgin, of saint, or of martyr. "What good could all this image-making do?" she thought. "What would her father say to hear the story of her travels?"

The region through which they passed was bounteous of beauty. Blue lakes, shut in by mountains of dark grey or golden verdure, lovely little waterfalls trickling down rosy marble, pine-ridges, and glowing autumn forest of beech, birch, and oak; sunlight superb with colour, shadow gloomy and awful; here a landscape for sunny Cuyp or joyous Ruysdale; there a glimpse of majestic nature for Salvator Rosa or Poussin. Where, indeed, is the painter who would not be satisfied and inspired

in the never-to-be-forgotten Salz-kammer-gut?

Arthur and his wife reached Salzburg as travellers always do, when it was raining, and had therefore to wait till the morrow for the Mönchsberg and Castle. They could see, however, what interested them quite as much—namely, the house in which Mozart was born, and that in which a less person to the world, but hardly lesser in Lisabee's — namely, Arthur — had passed many years. She could never hear enough of this same person and his mode of living during that time ; and when the kind people of the house permitted her to roam freely from room to room, she grew more enthusiastic than she had ever been over ruins and works of art. For the true woman has but one hero—the hero of her heart.

Arthur then took her to see old friends of his—homely, country people, quite unlike the polished Zillners, who made them welcome, brought out home-made apricot-cakes, and home-made jokes, invited them to supper, and offered all kinds of hospitable offices. With a little social intercourse, and much tourist's work, time passed quickly, and brought the last day of their stay all too soon. For Arthur Lisabee felt that this trip must end this first and sweetest period of married life—namely, the honeymoon. Henceforth the love-story of youth was to merge into the prosaic history of life.

That last day was spent at Berchtesgaden. How glorious it was! The road winding between mountain-gorges, the Alpine valleys and villages lying tenderly where the

sun fell, the cattle-bell tinkling from an unseen height, the glancing flight of chamois amid inaccessible pinnacles of rock, the whirr of eagles' wings through the deep reposing sky. Then the wonderful lake of the König's-see—what a wild, complete, masterful Nature was manifested there! What a Titanic solitariness, and passion, and power! What a poetry of colour, and life, and combination!

Arthur helped Lisabee into the first boat that stood in readiness. A minute after they were gliding over the clear green waters of the König's-see, gazing on the lofty amphitheatre of mountains shutting them in on every side, talking, as lovers do, of the most widely irrelevant subjects all the time.

All at once Lisabee grew silent, and an

uneasy look stole over her face. On being questioned by Arthur, she tried to laugh away his concern, to excuse herself by a hundred womanly pretexts. She felt timid always in small boats; the waters looked so deep; it was so solitary. By and by, finding such devices fail in effect, she whispered—

“It may be, must be a foolish fancy, Arthur; but when our boatman turned round to glance at you just now, there was a dreadful look in his face—an evil, revengeful look, as if he hated you, and would harm you. Did you offend him—did you refuse the sum he demanded?”

“Why, I have not even spoken to him, or looked at him, Lisabee. What strange things for my little one to think of! I'll just speak to this monster, and convince you of his harmlessness.”

Accordingly he raised his voice a little, and cried—

“Ho! boatman, can't you sing us a song that will echo?”

The man never turned his head; he was certainly either deaf or sullen. Arthur repeated the words. Again no answer.

“Confound you! Then I must try means more persuasive,” said Arthur, laughing, whilst he aimed a cigar at the other's arm. What was his surprise to see it tossed into the lake with a low-muttered oath!

Then something like a suspicion of the truth flashed across Arthur's mind. Could this dark-looking, morose boatman be Konrad Versette—Bertha's former betrothed, and his enemy? He did not turn white or change a muscle or utter an exclamation, but watched every move-

ment of the intent figure before him. Presently, the manipulation of his oars required a sideway movement on the boatman's part, and then Arthur caught sight of his profile. It was unmistakably he, Kurt Versette.

"Well!" whispered Lisabee, breathlessly.

"Oh, my child, why indulge in groundless suspicions? If the fellow has an ugly temper, what is that to you or to me? We are here to see the lake, not to trouble ourselves about the looks of our boatman."

But Lisabee still kept hold of his hand.

"I can't help wishing that he had a pleasant face," she said "In places so wild and solitary, one doesn't like to be glamoured by an evil eye."

"You shall be glamoured by something more welcome presently. We are now

cutting our way into the very heart of the lake; the clouds are breaking; in five minutes the sight becomes glorious. Let me blind you till then."

"Not for the world, Arthur. I *must* have my eyesight here."

He took out his handkerchief nevertheless, and playfully wound it on her bright protesting eyes.

"You shall receive ample reward for such a sacrifice," he added, kissing her as he did so. "Now sit still patiently and await it."

Happily for Lisabee, she was in no wise aware of Arthur's motive for this proceeding, neither had she noticed the accelerated motion of the boat during the last quarter of an hour, and the sideway course in which it had been driven. But from the

moment of recognition, Arthur's mind was ready to notice the slightest evidence of Versette's purpose, and in this swift and irregular oarage he read nothing but devilry and thirst after vengeance: Versette meant to run his boat against a rock and overturn them.

He could not help a momentary feeling of helplessness and horror. Lisabee was utterly helpless; for himself he was but a poor swimmer, though the best swimmer could stand little chance in waters so enclosed by perpendicular rocks. Moreover, who could tell what mischief might not happen in the act of capsizing? Who could tell the sharpness and irregularity of the shore—the coldness and heaviness of the chalybeate waters?

But quickness as well as courage “mount-

eth with the occasion." Quick as lightning, a hundred thoughts flashed through Arthur's mind, all having for their object the frustration of Versette's diabolical plan. He knew the young man's wild, roving habits, his reckless, devil-may-care nature, his wholly uncivilized and childlike mind. He knew that with himself lay all the great and incontestable advantages of calmness and self-control; whilst with the other lay every favour and power of chance. Still, he felt sure of victory in the end, for Arthur Leebridge was a true patrician; and though proud of his own physical strength, upheld mental superiority over every other. It seemed absurd to be daunted by a low-bred, coarse-speaking boatman.

He possessed but two means of defence, and both were despicable enough except for

the self-command and self-assurance with which he should use them. One was a small razor-like clasp-knife which he had carried with him from boyhood, as the fashion is in England (German boys we have never known to possess one); the second, a small and exceedingly ornamented pocket-pistol that had been purchased as a curiosity and toy at the Industrial Exhibition of London. This pistol was not loaded to a very alarming extent, Lisabee having persuaded her liege lord to discard the balls some time before; but Versette did not know it, and Arthur deceived him well.

Slipping quietly over the benches dividing them, he was close behind the boatman in a second. Clicking the pistol in his ear, he whispered—

“Only show me your foul play, and

you're a dead man. Do you think I'm going to be drowned like a cat?"

Had Arthur openly accused him—had he made any violent attempt to pinion his arms or otherwise thwart his treachery, it is ten chances to one that Versette would not have tilted his boat, or endeavoured to do so. But the sudden and stealthy step behind him, the presentation of a cocked pistol to his ear, the calm, almost indifferent voice with which the threat had been uttered—all these circumstances took the edge off the young man's fierce courage. He hardly seemed able to encounter the steadfast eyes of his conqueror, quailed at the first glance, flushed guiltily at the second, and lost speech utterly.

In Austria the lower orders have an insurmountable, almost servile reverence

for their betters, at least in outward behaviour; and perhaps this in some measure helped to overawe Versette. Anyhow he began, silently and sullenly, to regain the central course from which he had deviated.

Arthur did not change from his threatening attitude.

“You coward—you more than villain!” he whispered between his set teeth. “Don’t think you’ll get off without punishment. You shall remember this treachery to the last day of your life.”

Then he pocketed his pistol, returned to Lisabee’s side, and freed her eyes.

“You moved away—I heard you say something to the boatman—what was it?” she asked inquisitively and still with a touch of nervousness.

“I but told him to keep in a straight course and to mend his manners. Now forget about everything else excepting the grand lake of Upper Austria——”

“Ah! if my sisters and father could see it!”

“It will make them just as happy to be told about it. Look, love, what a picture to paint in words at Nettlested! Why, it is as grand as Faust, and as mysterious as a sonata of Beethoven's. If you are not enthusiastic, I shall call you a cold little Northerner.”

To anyone else but a young simple-minded woman, full of domestic hopes, joys, and aspirations, enthusiasm would have been easy. There are some scenes, as some faces, best described in a line, and this was one. Every feature of it looked as if cut out of pure gem. The lake of deep trans-

parent green, the Titanic mountains with snow-capped summits and flanks of bristling pine-forests, the gleam of golden pasture here, the sparkle of silvery glacier there, the sky that seemed to rest upon all in soft purple opaqueness—these are but feebly described in words. They must be compared to the sharp, distinct gorgeousness of mosaic jewellery before fairly suggested; and then how faintly!

By and by, the sun went behind a cloud. Then the wild, dark majesty of the scene was unequalled. But for a tinkling cattle-bell from the ridges above, and the cry of an eagle hovering over its eyry, one might have deemed oneself on the awful Avernus fabled by the poets.

A pleasure-boat just then came in sight, full of merry students and laughing girls

who were singing glees for the sake of the echo. Again and again, they threw a spray of mirthful music to the grave old rocks; again and again, it was thrown back with mocking scorn. It was as if these gay young spirits tempted back the dead giants of the past to life, and they rejected their temptations with scorn. The two boats put to shore simultaneously, and with that exquisite geniality which is part and parcel of German nature, the larger party joined the lesser one, for the better enjoyment of the waterfall and miniature lake. Lisabee found herself talking English to a pretty, lively young bride, and Arthur was glad to chat over student days with an ardent young Leipziger. The morning passed delightfully, and the encounter with Versette was forgotten for a while. One circumstance

recalled him later. When a general proposal to return was agreed upon, only one boat lay in readiness.

Versette had gone back without his patrons.

CHAPTER VII.

ISCHL lies amid verdant hills like a pearl dropped softly on a green velvet cushion. No one should go to Ischl who does not understand the art of pleasure. Least of all should anyone go there who does not understand the art of sociability. Combine German geniality with French politeness, and you will obtain, chemically speaking, the deposit of Austrian urbanity, which has the good qualities and refined essence of both.

At Ischl you make friends in a day. There is no *table-d'hôte*, but people join their acquaintances from one to three

o'clock, and dine *à la carte*, to separate no more during the rest of the day. Here you see the Viennese beauty even to better advantage than in the Prater, since country costume and country enjoyments add brightness to shelly pink complexions, dark, story-telling eyes, and red piquant lips. Here the proverbial national haughtiness melts like a snow-wreath in the sun; you are to-day dining opposite a royal duke, and find him the pleasantest of companions; to-morrow, his place is taken by a Jew millionaire, and he is equally urbane; the day after to-morrow, the salt may be handed to you by an Imperial prince—who knows?

All places have their *genius loci*. You cannot name a country town in England which is not entirely represented by one

individual character—maybe, a mayor of High Church notions, maybe, a rich butcher who overrides the poor gentry, maybe, a popular Nonconformist preacher, becomes the focus of radiation and attraction.

In Ischl the presiding deity is a barber. You cannot stay there a day without carrying away an impression of him, you cannot recall Ischl without recalling him; you forget lakes, and Alpine valleys, and romantic glens—you never forget the barber.

And why? Because he was one of those men who are determined never to be forgotten. Therein lies the secret of his greatness and of many another greatness. He possessed the peculiar faculty of making everyone believe himself the object of his own special interest and admiration. His barber-ship became a kind of spontaneous mes-

merism of your affections. You might try not to be impressed by his courteous smile and bewitching bow, you might try to believe in his coxcombical vanity, you might say—the man's a fool—you might say it a dozen times, you would nevertheless go and be shampooed.

For there was an amicability, a soft enthusiasm, a mild energy about him that proved irresistible to all. His very look showed him to be your devoted servant, your humble admirer, your earnest well-wisher. When he cut your hair, or prepared his cosmetics, you felt sure he had never in his life cropped or shampooed so well or with so much pleasure before; when you bade him good morning, his earnest, nay, sentimental response convinced you that your departure was a matter of regret

to him, that he regarded you, in fine, as the most distinguished and excellent person on whose poll he had ever operated.

Arthur and Lisabee followed the example of the world, and were frizzed by the barber. They had warm welcomes from the Zillners, who were staying in Ischl, and every day had its morning pic-nic, its noon-tide lounge, its evening concert or play. When Carl came from Vienna there arose loud lamentations, as it was now Arthur's turn to superintend their manufactory; accordingly, he and Lisabee prepared to return home. On the eve of departure, he tossed a letter into his wife's lap with a smile.

“Such a surprise for you!” he said.
“Only fancy, Lisabee, one of your sisters is coming to Vienna!”

“Oh! Arthur, you are joking.”

“No, Lisabee, it is the veriest truth. I wrote to your father about it a fortnight ago, and here is his reply.”

And Lisabee read the following lines, which, after much labour, William Plumtree had written in the little parlour of Sycamore Farm:—

“DEAR MR. ARTHUR,

“I hope you and dear little Lisabee are well, and, thank God, we are well, and thinking a good deal about you, and wishing you were here now, and I take it very kind of you to wish Lisabee to have one of her sisters with her, which will be a great pleasure to them, and a great kindness to me. But twenty pounds was too much to send for the journey; and, besides, I owe you for interest over that, which I will send

per daughter, and many thanks. Give my best love to Lisabee, and tell her I have had the garden path gravelled, and the gate painted new against she comes.

“ Good bye and God bless you both,

“ Your affectionate

“ WILLIAM PLUMTREE.”

Lisabee's eyes filled with tears.

“ Dear, dear Father! I was always teasing him about the gravel and paint and smartening up of everything, and oh, how it plagued Aunt Mercy! But, Arthur,”— hereupon she put her arms around his neck, and hid her face on his shoulder— “ how good, how generous you are, my love, my darling!”

“ Generous?”

“ Was it not generous to send poor Papa

that money for the journey and to say nothing about it to me?"

"My Lisabee, *I* didn't think it at all generous. If I had given up the pleasure of coming here with you in order to do so, if I had even deprived myself of cigars and cabs for a year, you might call me generous. But to send a paltry twenty pound note, for one of your sisters' journey to Vienna—why, that seems to me a very natural and by no means an unselfish proceeding. The presence of one of your sisters will be worth double and treble that to me, and to you too, wont it?"

"Yes, but——"

"But what, you proud little woman? I believe you hardly like their acceptance of this same twenty pounds, which I am in no want of and which——"

“No, it is not that, Arthur,” said the young wife with a little tremble in her voice. “If Father became destitute, and my sisters wanted a home, I know you would take them all in, and never think you had done enough; and I cannot help calling you generous, and thinking you so. I don’t understand much about money, but I have always seen poor people despised, and till you came we were despised, Father, Cissy, Mabel, Greta, and I.”

“Because your father’s family are a somewhat unlettered, commonplace sort of people. Others don’t think so much of money, and I tell you again and again that I am not generous, indeed, quite otherwise.”

“Oh, Arthur, whatever you say, I must think you generous.”

He took her in his arms and kissed her fondly.

“Think me as generous as you can, dear, but don't talk about it. You may have reason to alter your opinion one day, you know, and such a recantation would be very humiliating to a proud little person like Lisabee Leebridge.”

Their thoughts now naturally flowed into the far-off, monotonous, yet ever dear channel of home. Lisabee spun a hundred golden dreams out of the woof of her sister's visit. Arthur smiled and encouraged her childish eagerness.

Under happy auspices the adieux were made and the young husband and wife returned to Vienna. If the thought of Konrad Versette rose to Arthur's mind now and then, he rejected it as wholly unworthy

of concern. He had proved the young man's cowardice, and, what was far more valuable knowledge, he had proved his treachery.

Worldly affairs prospered well. Nothing promised fairer than his enterprise; nothing stood in the way of competency. His manufacture was gaining steadily upon public favour and his weekly returns doubled. Even the monetary crisis of the nation favoured him, since, being a capitalist, he could afford to speculate, whilst other merchants were forced to be cautious and wait. Carl, too, had more than fulfilled expectation, showing himself volatile, perhaps, and flighty at times, but a good partner, happy in expedient and of admirable tact.

And Minchen! *Venit summa dies!* Arthur felt more dread of Minchen's golden

hair and rare eyes than of any avenging demons in the world. The day neared for a final reckoning between them, and he cowered before its approach. Nothing remained but to avert and forget whilst forgetfulness was possible.

They made the homeward journey by way of the Virgin-bedecked town of Gmünden, its picturesque, melancholy lake, and the dashing, laughing, joyous falls of the Traun. Taking the railway at Linz, Vienna was reached by night-fall.

CHAPTER VIII.

ABOUT a mile from Vienna stands the summer palace of the princely family of M——, one of those airy, diaphanous-looking places that are only possible in the south, and even there make one feel as if corporeity were a crime or at least an impoliteness, and ought to be left at the entrance with one's hat and horse.

Nothing can entice the senses more than this same M—— palace, which is neither a pavilion, nor a summer-house, nor a conservatory, but made up of the choicest elements of each. Without the slightest show of profusion, each apartment contains all

that it ought to contain of statuary, of exotics, of pictures. Nowhere does one taste predominate over the other, nowhere does the severest art yield an inch to the simplest pleasure of the senses, the intellectual and sensuous needs being both weighed in the delicate scale of courtesy. And herein you may discover an infallible clue to national character. The Austrian is an artist, but at the same time an Epicurean. He cannot forego the pleasures of taste, far less can he forego the pleasures of daily life.

You leave the dusty suburban streets with a sense of relief, and cool alike eyes and brain by the first glimpse of what is so summerlike, crystalline, and environed with bloomy pleasaunce. On either side you hear rippling of fountains and lispings of rose-

leaves. You may enter the pavilion north, south, east, or west, each window being a door, and each door a window. There is so little marble about the building, and all of the whitest, purest kind, and so much glass and green verandah, that you feel as if nothing within could possibly compare with the coolness, and purity, and loveliness without. But enter the hall, gaze on its panels blushing and panting with unfading springs, on its mosaic pavement of rich stained wood and coral-coloured marble, on the calm-faced statuary around, and such a delusion vanishes. It is as if you passed from Watteau to Raphael.

And everything harmonizes as in old pictures. There is the same refinement and subdued air about the dark-liveried servants as about the furniture, or rather the embel-

lishments of the apartments. The flowers have a tall and stately look, the old favourite dog lying on the purple rug returns your caress with haughty complaisance; the very breeze modulates its roystering eagerness, and passes through the palace with formal and obsequious intonation.

Where indeed is the house which does not bear such a relation to its owner? There are some dwellings where everything has a perturbed, impatient look, where chairs and tables stand at cross-angles with each other, where the light jerks in obliquely and brings no warmth or cheerfulness, where the carpet has a pinched, frowning surface, where the chairs seem to do their service to humanity by compulsion.

There are dwellings, again, whose very door smiles a welcome, whose bell is as plea-

sant to hear as the chirp of a pet bird, whose atmosphere is ever light and sunny. You put your hand on the banisters as kindly as if you were patting the childrens' heads, you miss ever so worn a chair or ever so poor a picture if removed. You have your favourite corner but are happy to sit anywhere; you would not lose the well-known rooms and doors and garden for all the world. When such a loss comes, your daily life seems different.

There are again dwellings to think of and dwell upon as works of art. The merest accessory to the whole is finished in perfect taste, and lays hold of your imagination; the whole recurs to you as a picture of Cuyp. You feel a longing to flee from the grosser surroundings of everyday existence, and live as you once lived

there. This summer palace was such a place.

Prince M—— was attached to Dr. Zillner for two reasons: firstly, because the latter had been his father's private physician and confidential friend; secondly, because he knew him to be a man of uncommon character and taste. Accordingly, whenever the Prince visited Vienna Dr. Zillner received an invitation to dine with him, and on the present occasion his sons and Arthur Leebridge were invited also. The five men amused themselves before dinner with cigars in the garden and such political talk as comes within the focus of society-conversation in the empire of the Hapsburgs. Arthur could have been eloquent elsewhere on the interesting crisis then pending in European diplomacy, but good taste for-

bade him. It was novel for him to see thoughtful, well-read men of the world spend hours without more than passing allusions to matters of public interest and throwing heart and soul into musical, literary, and dramatic discussion. At first, he felt as if there must be some radical effeminacy in a Prince and a citizen who suffered himself to be wheeled in the smooth, gliding go-cart of despotic government, instead of mounting the mettlesome steed of political liberty. But this feeling soon wore off. Prince M—— was a patriot—as far as circumstances allowed—and a gentleman of refined, almost nervous taste, of fascinating manners, and of widely experienced travels and study.

At three o'clock, they were summoned to dinner—one of the choicest little repasts

ever partaken of by mortals, and set off by every imaginable accessory of taste and wealth. The table gleamed with gold and blushed with delicate peachy-tinted Bohemian glass, whilst the meats and drinks were gathered from rippling tributaries of the Danube, from bosky dells of the Wiener forests, from sunny upland vineyards, from ice-cooled dairies, from cosy fowl-cotes and glistening orchards of the M—— estate.

When ices, cigars, and coffee were brought the servants retired, and conversation flowed freely. The drama, art, literature, and many another subject was played with in turn, and discussed in battle-door and shuttle-cock fashion.

On a sudden, sounds of a violin and a thin voice accompanying it rose from the

garden shrubberies. Prince M—— touched a silver bell, and desired his servant to give the man money and permission to retire.

“When I am alone, I let the poor fellow sing a song or two, which act of courtesy he likes better than money—being half mad. I cannot however inflict him upon my friends.”

Arthur took up his glass of Johannisberg with a grateful smile.

“You are very good,” he said. “I assure you the sound of that violin took away the flavour even from such wine as yours—which is saying much. But why not bestow your charity and save your nerves? For my part, were I legislator, I would put down bad music by law. I hold that all our luxuries should be gems of the first water or non-existent.”

“You say, Mr. Leebridge,” said the Prince, “that the law ought to put down bad music; but reflect on the ultimatum of such an act. It would just starve hundreds and tens of hundreds of wretched fiddlers who are paid a few kreutzers per hour for fiddling.”

“They would be better paid at picking out stones on the ramparts.”

“True, but they may prefer the fiddle. A petition that was presented to me to-day throws some light on your proposition. The petition in question is on behalf of the orphan niece or grandchild of such a fiddler, and it seems that the child's mother was formerly a singer and dancer, and took the fancy of a handsome and rich foreigner, who made her first his mistress and then his wife. He was very young, I believe,

but now that she is dead he refuses to support the child. What is more melancholy still, the refusal preyed so much on the old man's mind that he lost all self-control, wandered about the whole night like a lunatic, and was found dead in the suburbs."

"Who presented the petition?" asked Arthur calmly.

"As handsome a young fellow, though a bit of a blackguard, as I have seen for many a day. He told me that he was the child's only relative, and could not support her, gaining but a precarious livelihood as a boatman in the Tyrol. What a page from Bohemian life! The old man dying of a broken heart, the little child left destitute, the handsome bandit-looking cousin coming forward to help her, and the indifferent

lover and father in the background—a second series of ‘*Les Misérables!*’”

“What did you do in the matter?” asked Dr. Zillner, with the privilege of an old friend.

The Prince shrugged his shoulders.

“I could only give him a couple of florins and a recommendatory ticket to the Anna Infant Asylum, my friend, and moralize upon the story now. Ah! these kind of stories are pretty subjects for moralizing!”

“Yes,” answered Arthur, quickly; “and the moral helps out my argument. The young gentleman who was the prime mover of the evil will be sure in some way to rue his folly as long as he lives, ay, and be reminded of it too; and this because he committed perhaps the only generous folly of his life. Strive against it as we may, a

certain amount of meanness and vulgarity clings to the lot assigned us, and to the lot of the morally as well as the intellectually refined. I would therefore have all that lies within reach, yet at a distance from that common lot, as refined, as free, and as transcendental as were possible—the poem, the statue, the picture, should be alike of a world that is past and can never come again, of a world that exists in the creator's mind only.”

“ You agree, then, with Schiller that—

“ What in song shall live immortal
In life must set to dawn no more.”

For my part, I wholly differ both from yourself and the Wirtemberg poet. I would fain have life and poetry bound closer and closer by every aspiration and creation of the artists. I would especially have the moral and intellectual existence

depend upon each other, and reflect each other, like double stars. How indeed can it be otherwise? The real Laura makes us read Petrarch and never tire; who understands and appreciates the 'Roman Elegies' without having already learned to know Christien, the flower-maker? Who cares for 'Werther' who is unacquainted with Charlotte and Jerusalem? Believe me, the poet or artist who gives us his heart gives us all that we need."

Arthur smiled and shook his head.

"You would then willingly exchange the 'Prometheus Chained,' 'Lear,' and the 'Iphigenie,' for Horace's love-songs to Lalage, a Bohemian novel of Murger's, or the 'Elective Affinities?'"

"Oh, I did not say that. We are talking of theories, you know; and though I

openly confess my preference of such writers as give us real, simple human nature of one and all time, I can still enjoy a grand abstraction. For instance, I went to hear Goethe's 'Iphigenie' last night instead of the 'Tartuffe'."

"I have never yet succeeded in enjoying a grand abstraction on the stage. There is sure to be a let or hindrance somewhere."

"A miserable little danseuse who sees her lover flirting in the pit opposite, or a half-starved drummer who eats black bread between the acts," said Carl, slyly.

"Yes. I can never look upon people from without and rest satisfied, even if the impression be a satisfactory one," continued Arthur. "When I see the part of *Margaret* well acted by a pretty little thing of per-

haps twenty years, I wonder whether her heart is really breaking for some living *Faust*; if I take a Sunday trip to Brel, I wonder whether the civil omnibus conductors ever put flowers in their button-holes, and take holiday with their sweet-hearts; every time I see a face that interests me I puzzle out the secret of its grave or happy looks. Very few men, I should say, are not at some time or other conscious of the same feeling."

"God forbid!" said Dr. Albin. "Life is not too happy that we should sadden it by such morbid tendencies. Excuse me, Lee-bridge; I cannot but call them so."

"Why, we should soon arrive at the state of sensibility that awakens compassion over the slain deer!" added his father. "What is more pretty and poetical than

the life of a fawn in the Prince's forest! What more practical and barbarous than that we should sacrifice it—and dine!"

There was a general smile, and Arthur answered—

"You all force my conclusions too far. I contend that the best poetry, like the best art, is higher than life by the difference that exists between the soul and the body, time and eternity, man and Deity. Therefore the best poet is half divine."

"Then give me divinities in their mortal moments, or Molières and Bérangers only; nay, Mr. Leebridge, I will even exchange all that was ever written about Troy for poor Murger's 'Manchon de Francine,' and such life-stories."

Arthur shrugged his shoulders.

"I can't forget that they are real. And

then the Bohemia of the Quartier Latin was such a dirty country! I remember climbing seven storeys for the sake of the little room in which the 'Scènes de Bohème' were written, and, would you believe it, there wasn't a hand-basin in it—no, nor ever had been!"

Just then a servant entered bearing a letter on a massive gold salver. Prince M—— motioned him back with a wave of the hand; but the man bowed deprecatingly, and still advanced.

"The letter for Herr Leebridge was brought by a messenger on horseback, who begged its immediate delivery," he said; and with many apologies he handed Arthur a folded paper, and withdrew.

Arthur was not the man to spoil an after-dinner conversation for a trifle.

Quietly placing the letter in his pocket, he made no attempt to peruse it till coffee and cigars came to an end. Then, finding an opportunity, he broke the seal of the mis-sive, and read its contents with flashing eyes and whitening lips.

“Villain—devil!” he muttered as he rejoined the others. “Little did I imagine to what lengths his malice could go!”

He mastered himself, chatted for a few minutes with his host, made a graceful excuse, and hastened away.

CHAPTER IX.

MEANTIME, Lisabee and Adelheid were making happy holiday in the country. By three o'clock they found themselves in the heart of the Kahlenberg forest—not a forest of gloom, of awfulness, of majesty—but a forest of fairyland, of tingling green leaves, of slanting golden shadows, of indistinct sea-green distances, of beauty and brightness, and bird-singing. Over all, the purple sky seemed to beat and palpitate with a million joyful pulses, whilst every breeze sang gleeful tunes in echo of each other.

Now and then they emerged into open

sunshine, catching gleams of lawny plains, of the far-off city, and the steel-grey Danube encircling it; or they dived yet deeper into the silent heart of the wood, startling the bright-eyed squirrel in its gambols and the deep-throated heron from its rest. A little stream played hide-and-seek among the windings of the path, ever and anon, laughing like a merry child when best hidden, or showing its wild, frolicsome face at unexpected times.

Adelheid sprang up the most difficult paths for the sake of rare wild-flowers—violet, blood-red, and deep gold—and chatted in a sentimental, lively strain without intermission. Lisabee kept in the gently-sloping central way that led to the summit of the Kahlenberg, and contented herself with gathering some melancholy blue

blossoms, thinking all the while of home, of Arthur, and of what his love had made her life.

By and by, they came to a rustic restaurant, and dined in the open air off veal cutlet, fresh salad, trout, and cherry cake, with sparkling beer in glass mugs of an extraordinary slenderness. The landlord, as well as everything about him, had a plump, patriarchal look, that inspired unusual confidence and reverence; and Lisabee felt half afraid to offer his important-looking dog a bone, and his important-looking waiter a few kreutzers as drink-money. Now nothing could be more simple than this restaurant and all its appurtenances. You dined off white earthenware, and your dishes were profuse rather than delicate, whilst your table-napkins were of coarse,

home-spun linen. But because the portly landlord, his portly waiter, and portly wife showed you an unmistakable confidence—nay, conceit—regarding the meal and its relative aspects, the most fastidious would have gone away with the impression of having dined in a king's house.

“I trust that the gracious ladies have found things to their satisfaction,” said the host as he removed the cloth. “The salad was fresh cut and the cherry-cake the best that is made in these parts. Only yesterday a Count dined under this very tree, and before leaving said, ‘I don't care whether your name is Johann, or Friedrich, or Josef; but your cherry-cake is fit for the Emperor's table, and here's my hand, Mr. Landlord.’”

“It's very nice,” said Lisabee, smiling.

“ Ah! true enough it is; and then what a prospect! Yonder are the Carpathians, and to my knowledge they're just the same as they were twenty-five years ago, when I first took the Black Eagle. 'Tis astonishing how mountains live so many years without shifting ground or changing countenance a little! Ay, 'tis enough to shame some people who are always on the lookout for change; but I'm not of that sort, not I, and twenty-five years have I been here as well as the mountains.”

When the monologue had come to an end, the two girls rose and prepared to continue their way. Lisabee gave a parting glance to the wide panorama before her, wondering, as young happy people do, if she should ever see it again and under what circumstances.

“Ah!” she thought, “what does it matter that I had a somewhat unhappy childhood? Why do we trouble ourselves as to what God will do with us? Were I a queen, I could not be happier than I am now, and there is no king in the world like my Arthur. Oh! blessed blue mountains, and green vineyards, and dear homelike old city—how I love you all for Arthur’s sake!”

Was not this a womanly commentary on beautiful scenery? The purple line of the far-off Carpathians, the dim spires of Presburg, the historical plain of Asperne, the broad bright Danube with its fir-clad islets and thousand ruins and recollections, the rampart-girt city, with its glorious St. Stefan’s and outlying suburbs and pleasure-gardens—all these suggested nothing so new, and dear, and tender to

the young wife as thoughts of her husband's love.

A quick and easy descent brought them to the vineyards and corn-fields of Döbling, where they had been invited to tea. Passing through two long uniform streets, with white villas, the upper storeys of which were smart and trim, the lower swarming with bare-legged children and geese, they came to a pretty pink cottage ornée, having no drawback but a dirty courtyard full of gutters, *gamins*, washerwomen, wood-heaps, and miscellaneous lumber. Once in the garden, all was cheerfulness, brightness, and geniality. The children of the house played here and there, the ladies sat round a deal table knitting, and one or two gentlemen chatted by.

“Is not Mamma here?” asked Adelheid,

as soon as the first greetings were over. "Carl and Mr. Leebridge promised to fetch us at eight o'clock, but Mamma was to come early."

Hardly had she spoken, when the Frau Zillner appeared, panting from the effects of five minutes' up-hill walk, and laden with her work-bag and a parcel of Nüremberg cakes for the children, who crowded round to kiss her hand, after the fashion of well-bred little men and women in Vienna.

"Ah, lieber Gott!" cried the old lady, sinking into a chair. "As if it were not already hot enough, there must be a great fire."

"A fire!" cried her hostess, a pale, pretty, but pensive-looking lady dressed after the latest Parisian fashion. "A fire!"

"And why not?" said her merry,

musical husband. "A fine sight is a fire. I must off to see it directly."

"Better keep where you are, dear Beckwill," continued the Frau Zillner, "We shall want some music after tea, and, dear Heaven, there will be people enough without you. Here, little ones, take the cakes—they are baked twice over, but none the worse, I daresay."

The cakes had but a divided interest just then. With the exception of the two elder ladies everyone rushed to the further end of the garden, full of curiosity; and, by means of mounting a gardener's ladder, a glimpse of the fire was obtained. It was by no means a grand sight from this point of view, but the lurid reflection against the twilight sky, the sparks of red light shooting swiftly upwards, and the dense clouds of smoke

rolling away, had a strange and weird effect. One might have fancied a Cyclopean forge to be at work there, or that an infant Etna was trying its powers for the first time. The children clapped their hands with delight, their French governess smiled as if gazing on a ballet, Adelheid, Herr Beckwill, and his friend watched the spectacle with intense interest; Lisabee turned away.

“If anyone should be in danger,” she thought, shudderingly—“some one who has a young wife at home!”

When the air cooled, all went indoors, where tea, *butter-brod*, and apple-cakes awaited them, the lady of the house not only attending to the comfort of her guests, but rising to serve them herself—surely a strange custom among the most polite people

in the world. Conversation flowed in a clear unbroken stream from the beginning to the end of the meal, when Herr Beckwill rose and placed himself at the piano.

After a wandering prelude, in which the spirits of the mighty masters of sound were evoked one after the other, now with courteous flattery, now with haughty defiance, now with honeyed entreaty, he threw down his wand and let the magic work as it would. And what magic! You heard no pretty melodies, no fantastic trickeries of sound, no trills and conceits, and clap-trap tragedies, no sensationalism, of operatic music-making. You were suddenly admitted into a world of which before you had known nothing; great mysterious riddles of fate were read to you; the Sibylline books of alternating passion,

despair, and calm lay open and plain to read; everything that you had hitherto desired, loved, or lamented, was no longer a memory but a voice; the deep, inexplicable passion of love, from its first wild, heart-crushing storm to its twilight peace and dusky light of stars, was revealed in its entirety; and the divine mystery of death became clear, tranquil, friendly.

By and by, the Frau Beckwill drew back the window curtain softly so as to flood the room with moonlight.

“The moonlight sonata!” cried Adelheid.

“The moonlight sonata!” echoed the others, and their good-natured musician obliged without a demur. But hardly had he crossed the threshold of that most stupendous, clearly-cut, and perfect of palaces ever erected by architect of har-

mony, when a hasty step sounded along the corridor, and Carl dashed in, flushed, breathless, and covered with dust.

“Put on your bonnets at once, ladies,” he said, with a half-gay, half-serious air. “You will have no more cavaliers to-night.”

“And why not?” asked the old lady. “Where is this little one’s husband, and my Edouard and Albin? Not so late at the Prince’s, surely?”

“No; but otherwise engaged. Will you let me take you home, Mrs. Lee-bridge?”

Lisabee smiled assent, though tears were in her eyes. Never before had Arthur left her to the care of another. The question she was too proud to ask, however, another asked for her.

“Where is the Herr Leebridge?” continued the Frau Zillner, pertinaciously. “And what did you have for dinner at Prince M——’s? Tell us everything.”

“Leebridge is safe and sound, Mütterchen, but has gone to the fire—don’t you know of the great fire now burning away in the city?”

“Whereabouts? In what street?” asked several voices at once.

Carl crossed over and sat down by Lisabee’s side, in silence. When the question was repeated, he took her hand kindly, saying—

“Arthur can’t possibly come to any harm, my child, because the military keep everyone out of danger’s reach, but he was really needed.”

He looked up at his mother as if

deprecating her anxiety also, and blurted out—

“The fire is at our factory!”

Lisabee, like a British-born maiden, sat quite still and calm, though inwardly suffering from the keenest anxiety; the other ladies wept, wrung their hands, and testified the depth of their sympathy by a hundred lively demonstrations. Even the little ones left their cakes and toys in the corner to listen. There was not much to hear.

“Arthur received an intimation of the fire before we had risen from the dining-table, but only excused his absence on a pretext of important business. When I left the palace I found a messenger awaiting me at the bottom of the street, and immediately hastened to the factory. The

engines were already in full work, the military called out, and the Emperor telegraphed for from Schönbrunn—what good could I do? Moreover, Arthur begged me to fetch you all home, and——”

“How did the fire break out?” asked Herr Beckwill. “A pretty game it will play among your cottons and gauzes.”

“And then the loss and the worry—my poor Carl!” cried the old lady, kissing her son in token of commiseration.

“Oh, Mother, we shan't worry more than we can help; but do, dear ladies, prepare to return home. I promised to rejoin Leebridge as soon as possible.”

“If you can't do any good, why not keep out of mischief's way, mein Carl? Suppose a hot cinder should fall on your head, or that your toes should be burned by an unexpected beam falling.”

“Nonsense, Mother, my toes will be as safe as Leebridge’s.”

“And mine too, for I’m determined to return with you,” added Herr Beckwill; “don’t look so pitiful about it, Otilie; if my cigar manufactory blazes to-morrow, surely Zillner would do the same.”

And the musical little manufacturer insisted on accompanying the Zillner and Lisabee to Vienna. His wife and the children walked with them as far as the omnibus bureau, and many were the parting injunctions given at the door of the cumbersome, comfortable vehicle in which the Viennese delight to travel.

Then the driver cracked his whip, the horses shook their tasselled collars, and the sobered little party drove towards Vienna, catching glimpses of the fire on their way.

CHAPTER X.

SOME men have the faculty of putting one train of thought in the background for the sake of another, that other being perhaps trivial in comparison, and of far less present moment. For Arthur Leebridge, the act of incendiarism committed on his factory was of vital importance; but the violinist's death could affect his interests in no degree whatever. He nevertheless thought much of the latter fact, and very little of the former, as he drove towards the city. Prince M——'s story affected him deeply, at least for so self-contained and self-controlled a man. Somehow, Arthur had

hitherto looked upon all compassion for Verſette as uncalled for, to be ashamed of, to conceal. His connexion with Bertha had begun by being disreputable, and had ended by a respectability far less bearable to himself. The little that he had suffered was then magnified a hundredfold; whilst Bertha's first sufferings shrank into insignificance at every contemplation of them. But Arthur's heart was tenderer now. The good influence of a lawful love and pure home had melted him by a sure but slow progress; the prospect of seeing his Lisabee's sweet face reflected in the faces of her children softened his heart at last to that other homeless, motherless little one.

She had no one now to care for her, no one even to shelter her; could he stand aloof? Could he yield her to the guardian-

ship of such a woman as Bäbele, of such a man as Kurt? Was she not his child? Had not her mother loved him?

Had not her mother loved him! Ah! poor Bertha! we make songs and stories of such love as yours; we take you in your youth as children take the first blossoms of May-day, always rushing hither and thither, crying "More, more," little dreaming that ere night, nay, ere noontide, all will be trampled into the dust.

Arthur's reverie was cut short by the sudden stoppage of his carriage. "The military hinder all further progress," said the driver; "will you please to alight, sir?" And he alighted, looking hither and thither to see how the mischief worked.

To those who can wholly divest themselves of the idea of corporal suffering and

eternal damnation, what sight is half so enthralling as that of a fire? A storm at sea is hardly so grand, because science has set us more on an equality with winds and waves than it can ever do with fire; there is, moreover, a play of colour, of passion, of reckless devilry about the latter element that the two former lack. We feel, in battling with a storm, that we have but a passive enemy—an enemy who will engulf but not of itself destroy us—who goes on its own way, merciless of our little lives, and too great to combat with us or seek us out. We cannot get in a passion with thunder and storm and hurricane: they are but natural powers, fulfilling a natural behest, in which human loss and human suffering do not enter. But fire is the Satan, the Ahriman of the elements.

Every tongue of flame seems to hiss at us, every angry spark is as a defiant, demoniacal eye; every feathery blue line a finger to drag us into the dominion of torment. We are unable to deal calmly and dispassionately with so wizardlike a power; we conquer it inch by inch and tread upon it as upon a craven slave; we never bridle it, as we bridle water and air, like mettlesome steeds, godlike, but stooping to subserve men. Arthur gazed on his burning factory with much such an expression as he might have gazed on the infernal scene in 'Der Freischütz.' Not an element of the wide, wild picture escaped his eye; for during the first few minutes it was but a picture to him. He had not yet realized the discomfort, loss, and difficulty incumbent upon fires in general, and this kind of fire in particular.

The heavens seemed divided into two distinct yet ever-varying elements—one of pitchy, pathless blackness, the other of copper-coloured, shadowless light. Wherever the two met, one was utterly annihilated by its fellow; but whilst fighting side by side, each smallest point and line remained sharp and clear. Only when nearing the surface of earth and having to deal with innumerable small obstructions, did these common foes mix and mingle in common fray. In the centre, opening its hungry red throat, and stretching forth its thousand forked fingers, battled the giant leader of the legion of soulless, bodiless, mischievous imps, now disgorging waifs and strays of human treasures, now crushing roof and beam and rafter, which seemed suddenly endowed with voices to utter their

dismay. Far across the white, scared city lay a blood-red, fiery shadow, writhing with every contortion of effort or repulsion; whilst, insignificant to the sight, the dark lines of the fire-engines might be seen here and there, stifling, strangling, laming where they could. Immediately around this circle of contest stood the close file of helmeted cuirassiers, shutting off every curious intruder, and occasionally doing duty at the engines—engines, firemen and soldiery being under the command of a light, handsome man in general's uniform—he no other than the young Emperor. Beyond all, filling up the space from suburb to city, swayed and surged a vast multitude, whose faces and garments became weird, and fiery, and un-human under the play of flame and shadow.

Arthur took in at a glance the relative

aspects of danger and safety, and declaring his name to the out-post sentinel, was permitted to enter the circle. Hastily excusing his interference, he begged for an immediate alteration of tactics, directing the prime force, not against the rear of the conflagration, but the flank.

“I am aware,” he said, “that such a proceeding opposes, at least apparently opposes, itself to prudence ; but his Imperial Majesty will see the force of it when I tell you that the fore part of the building is comparatively empty and is insured, whilst the back part was only temporarily erected by way of extra storehouse, and contains an immense quantity of raw fabric and some new machinery, neither being accounted for in the insurance.”

The superintendent of the Municipal Fire

Office smiled, shook his head, and answered loftily—

“If manufacturers are imprudent, mein Herr, that does not alter the science in which I consider myself a veteran; of course, as proprietor, your proposition commands attention and sympathy, but I must pursue my own method without deviation, nevertheless.”

Arthur smiled sarcastically.

“Then you will continue pumping away at a few hundred square feet of empty wood-work and let my storehouse take its chance?”

“I shall continue to do my duty,” replied the officer, bowing.

“But, my dear sir, there is no question of duty. The question is of several thousands of pounds to me——”

“Then Herr Leebridge should have insured.”

Arthur broke away impatiently and procured the car of the Emperor's equerry.

“I *must* have an engine,” he said. “Only consider, Herr Lieutenant, there are about a score of men at work where the fire is really doing service, since the old part of the building is as rotten as tinder, and doesn't stand a chance with such a wind blowing in its face. Nothing would be easier than to save the adjacent store-house if we only cut off the fire from behind—a far easier task, as the wind is in favour of us.”

The lieutenant consulted with a commissioner of police; the commissioner of police, who had a jealousy of the super-

intendent of the fire-office, smiled and satirized the inefficiency of the latter individual, and, at last, personal intervention and spleen prevailed over official stupidity. An engine, full-handed, was placed at Arthur's disposal, and he began his battle with that indomitable, British-born spirit which is worth all the officialism and theory in the world.

Swiftly and surely, like a serpent climbing to sting and strangle, the brown, lithe body of the destroying engine-pipe was thrown around the throat of its victim; for a long time the contest seemed doubtful; now the demon of fire raised its blazing head, and shook its blue fingers with mad triumph; now it sank subdued, though hissing curses into the face of its antagonist. At one moment both fire and water seemed endowed with

double vigour—at another, both seemed crushed and prone.

Arthur's spirits rose with the occasion. Every rebuff rendered the contest more fascinating to him; he loved power, loved to conquer, to subdue foes into slaves, whether man or brute or dumb element. Danger, and the sense of battling with it on unequal ground, warmed his heart like wine; and when, after a happy manœuvre, there arose a cry of admiration among the crowd, he waved his hat again and again in momentary enthusiasm.

Just after this, when victory seemed certain, and the fire had as yet but sniffed at the storehouse, to be lashed back like a blood-thirsty hound from the deer, a fearful and totally unlooked-for explosion took place.

The heavens seemed rent in two as if by a thousand flashes of lightning; the ground shook with a sudden convulsion of earthquake—sky, earth, and air trembled and sobbed like frightened children at the typhoon of thunder that followed. Then all was still.

The lesser features of this scene—the Vesuvian eruption of fiery sparks and ashes, the circle of instantaneous desolation made around, the rigid, cowed multitude, the shocked, startled city—all these were remembered afterwards and by degrees only. The first great illumination and war of unnatural sound, the after darkness and paralysis universal, rendered the multitude at the time passive and insensible to all else.

Arthur was saved by the simple precaution of throwing himself on the ground, a

precaution he enforced upon the person nearest to him by a violent push from behind. When all was over and the two rose, Arthur received rather a rueful return of thanks.

“You needn't have pushed quite so hard, mein Herr,” said the obese police sergeant whose life had just been saved; “I have cut my nose and forehead frightfully—not to speak of shin-bruising; but nevertheless receive my homage and life-long devotion.”

The firemen, to whom Arthur had been able to ejaculate a monosyllabic precaution only, were less fortunate. One fine young fellow was found in an almost dying state, and all had received serious injuries. By dint of much perseverance, Arthur cleared a way for the removal of the sufferers, and

contrived to speak a word of comfort to each. He whispered in the ears of the dying man—

“Your wife and children shall never want bread, I promise you, nor your mother either, if she be living.”

Then he turned back to consider the night's ruin. There was no more work to do, for the explosion had swallowed up alike fire and treasure. Nothing now could be lost or imperilled. Nothing now could be saved.

A cheery voice broke in upon this gloomy retrospect—

“God be thanked that I find thee safe and sound!” cried Carl, putting his arm around him in his boyish, loving way. Come home now, old fellow, and let us mend the mischief to-morrow.”

“It won't be so easy a mending.”

“Oh! never mind! The place was insured, you know, and my father can lend me a few florins. Let us go home and have supper with your wife; she is sitting up for you.”

“Well, perhaps you are right; and yet I can't eat till I've put the police on Ver-sette's track. It is that villain's work—gunpowder, to crown all.”

“Trust me, they'll scent him out quick enough without you. We've had enough tragedy scene for to-night; let us forget it in a schoppen of Bock beer. Never, by Jupiter, was I so thirsty; I believe I've swallowed as many ashes as my body would burn to!”

They picked their way through the gradually-dispersing crowd to the open street,

when Arthur stopped as if with a sudden thought. Taking out his pocket-book, he scribbled a line to Lisabee, and handed the torn leaf to Carl, saying—

“I'll just make out Versette's portrait at the police bureau, and then hasten home; a delay till morning might enable him to escape.”

“And a good riddance to Vienna,” cried Carl; “but do as you will, Leebridge. If your wife wont accept your excuses, I'll add mine.”

The two young men shook hands and parted. Carl hastened homewards; Arthur turned his face towards the bureau of police. He had hardly extricated himself from the crowd, when a woman's hand barred his progress, and a gay, loose voice cried out—

“You haven't forgotten me, Herr Lee-bridge, have you?”

Arthur stopped short.

“I have something to say to you, Bäbele; come under the shadow of this archway, and for Heaven's sake speak lower. Where is Versette?”

“By St. Josef and St.——”

“Never mind the saints; where is Versette?”

The woman's coarse smile and honeyed tone altered in a moment. Pale, frightened, yet ever cunning, she wrung her hands, protesting utter innocence of Versette's movements. The old man had lived with her, 'twas true, poor soul, and owed for rent; and the blessed babe was like her own child—more than her own child, in fact, for she had gone without meals of late

to buy her clothes; but Kurt, that young dare-devil—that swearing, noisy, ill-conducted young man—how could the Herr Leebridge suspect her of harbouring *him*—a very Barabbas, a very Iscariot, a very ally of the Evil One?

“Bäbele,” said Arthur, quietly, and grasping her right hand with a touch of iron—“Bäbele, you forget one thing.”

She tried to free herself, made a hundred vows of innocence, finally burst out crying.

“You forget that I know you,” Arthur added; “and if you were to talk till to-morrow you would speak only one true word in five hundred. Versette is with you and I mean to have him to-night.”

“And the blessed little lady?”

“Oh! never fear but that I’ll pay your claims; but we are wasting time. Just get

into this drosky, will you, and tell the man where to drive."

The great clock of St. Stefan's chimed two o'clock as they entered the vehicle and drove off.

"Poor little Lisabee!" thought Arthur. "I hope she is sleeping by this time. Ah! I shall have to tell her all now."

And he sighed as he thought of that all.

CHAPTER XI.

LISABEE answered Carl's knock with a low, joyful cry.

"You naughty, naughty boy! I'm so tired of sitting up for you," she said, putting up her pretty face for a kiss. "Oh, where have you been all this long while?"

Carl drew back ruefully.

"I'm not Arthur—not your husband; I wish I were," he said; "but he is safe and well, and sends you a letter by me."

"He *ought* to have come himself; what is a letter in comparison to seeing him? Why did you not stay instead, Herr ——?"

Hardly had she spoken the ungracious

words before a deep blush showed her repentance of them. Holding out a little hand deprecatingly, she added—

“Forgive me—you know what I mean. You should not have stayed away, but Arthur should have come home.”

“So I thought, dear Mrs. Leebridge, and so I tried to persuade your husband to think. He insisted on looking after the police.”

“The police!”

“Yes; our factory was set on fire, you know, by a bad fellow, but his name doesn't matter. Arthur wanted to see the police after him at once, and that is why I returned alone. But wont you read your letter?”

Lisabee took it up as though a reading were hardly deserved.

“*Dear,*” it ran, “*do not sit up for me ; above all, do not fear that anything has happened. God bless you, and good night!*”

“*Your husband, Arthur.*”

“As if I could sleep and think that nothing had happened,” cried Lisabee, with a touch of passion in her voice. “I shall not go to bed even.”

She lowered her voice, and added—

“Don’t tell them I say so. I promised dear Adelheid that I would lie down, and I tried to keep my promise, but—but——”

She burst into tears.

“I can’t help feeling anxious till Arthur returns. He was never away from me so long before.”

Carl took her hands in his and reassured her by a hundred boyish expedients.

“It is, to say the least of it, absurd to suppose any harm should come to him,” he said. “Indeed, no harm ever comes to anybody here, we are so well taken care of by the police; and, after all, he is but gone to the Bureau of Police, where *you* could go safely alone at any hour of the night; we have no dangerous cul-de-sacs in Vienna, you know. Ah! you smile now.”

“I’m ashamed to have been so foolish,” she faltered; “I ought to be wiser, having lived with Arthur so long. I think I will go to bed like a good girl, Herr Carl.”

Carl praised her for such firmness, though for him it had come too soon. Lisabee was his ideal of womanly perfection, and the task of consoling her seemed a little corner of Arthur’s paradise suddenly made over to

him. With a sigh, he traversed the narrow corridor connecting the Zillner and Leebridge apartments, and entered his mother's bedroom. There he found an anxious little conclave assembled, the Frau and Adelheid white as their dressing-gowns, Dr. Albin trying vainly to centre his faculties on the daily journal, little Felix and Sophie wakeful and unhappy. Only Dr. Zillner was absent, for the good man, hating women's tears and misfortunes in general, had betaken himself to bed.

"Oh, mein Carl," cried the old lady, "are you quite, quite ruined? Tell us all about it."

"Is the incendiary taken?" asked Dr. Albin.

"And Mr. Leebridge safe home?" added Adelheid.

“And did the cats and the gendarmes get their whiskers singed and scream out?” echoed the children.

“Above all things, don't make the worst of it to the father,” whispered Frau Zillner; “he can't bear trouble as he used to do before the terrible year '48. He will blame you, my child, and Mr. Leebridge, and to what good?”

“Trust me for not making the worst of it to anyone, especially to my father,” replied Carl, brightly, “and there may be no worst after all—for me; Leebridge, being the capitalist, will suffer all.”

“But, my Carl, you have put a thousand florins or more into this speculation, and that is something.”

“Nothing to Leebridge's capital, mother.”

“Then he can best afford to lose.”

“ Well, Mütterchen, I don't see that. It is harder to lose one's fortune than one's place. I can get employment any day, but Leebridge won't so easily get back the money he has lost.”

“ Of course the business will go on ?”

“ That depends, brother Albin; if my father could lend me a little, perhaps——”

“ Oh, Carl, don't speak of it,” entreated his mother; “ he would always be worried about it, and since the troubles of the revolutionary year very little worries him.”

Adelheid here pulled her mother's sleeve impatiently.

“ Mamma, it isn't fair for Mr. Leebridge to bear the losses alone; Papa must think of his generous behaviour to Carl all along.”

“ Yes, Heaven knows, Arthur is generous

enough," said Carl, with a sigh. "I have been treated by him as no one else will ever treat me. My paltry little capital was a mere nothing to his, and yet he always looked upon me as a partner."

"And so you were, my Carl. A thousand florins is a thousand florins."

"Mother, let Carl tell us all about the fire."

Just as Dr. Albin spoke, a tall figure enveloped in flowing cashmere appeared at the door, and Dr. Zillner entered. The tone of conversation changed immediately.

Dr. Zillner looked upon all misfortune as a sin. You disobliged him extremely by losing a relative; you disobliged him beyond the bounds of patience by losing money. An unfortunate man was a bore to him, no more, no less. Many undeserved

troubles had somewhat soured his temper and distorted his judgment. He was unlucky himself, but there existed no luck or good fortune in the world beyond the circle of his own experience. If your house caught fire, who so much in fault as yourself, for hiring careless servants? If you were in bed with a fever, you must have caught it by imprudently exposing yourself to infection. If your wife ran away with your next-door neighbour, it but testified to the want of judgment originally observed in choosing such a partner. People had no business to fall into trouble, no business to be unfortunate. This was the Alpha and Omega of his creed.

Accordingly, he heard only a smooth and pleasant account of the night's occurrence. The factory itself was insured, and

if Mr. Leebridge chose to speculate largely without insuring, the loss would be his as well as the imprudence. A skeleton building serving all necessary purposes would take little money and time in the raising, and Mr. Leebridge had money to fall back upon. Surely a fire was not wholly ruinous under such circumstances.

When the family discussion came to an end, Dr. Zillner patted Carl on the shoulder with an encouraging — “Remember, I have still a few hundred florins to lend you, my boy, if Leebridge alone isn't strong enough,” instead of the gloomy — “This is the fruits of speculation. If you had taken my advice, and joined a large business, you would not now be placed in difficulty” — which

would inevitably have followed a minute and unpromising account of affairs.

Meantime, Lisabee was trying vainly to sleep as if nothing had happened. Physiologists tell us that the brain of a sleeping person is normally colourless or but faintly tinged with the blush of life-blood, whilst in the daytime or in feverish, troubled moments, this blush will become deep and unvarying. We have here a key to the mystery of sleep, but where have we a key to the mystery of dreams? Why is it that great joys and sorrows dawn on the grey horizon of sleep before entering the palpable living world of life? Sleep indeed may be termed the twilight dividing life and death, the life that we know not from the life we know, bridging alike death, annihilation and light

eternal by infinitesimal and solemn grades of similitude.

Lisabee always dreamed of Arthur, but to-night her dreams gave strange and terrible images of him. He was crossing that wild, beautiful lake again with her—the König's-see; she saw the boatman's dark eyes flash angry meaning, then by a sudden movement the boat was upset. Sobbing and helpless, she found herself alone in the cold, cruel waters. Now Arthur stretched out his arms to her, now he was engaged in fearful encounter with the boatman, and both disappeared; the waves were dashed with blood, brighter, brighter, till the flush of it made a kind of sunrise, and in the midst rose a white lily; she tried to take hold of the lily in her despair, but at every touch it receded more and

more, till all at once it changed to the face of a laughing child—a child she had seen somewhere, who clapped its little hands as if all were only sport, and then flew away, leaving the dark, cold, blood-stained waters behind.

With a startled cry, Lisabee woke up and looked around to assure herself of Arthur's safety. He had not returned. She then recalled all the events of the evening, trying to believe that such an absence was not strange or unaccountable, trying to feel happy and easy about it, trying to think to-day would prove as free from care as yesterday. So unwilling are we, like swallows, to turn our faces from the summer!

Involuntarily, yet with half a confidence that some good assurance would arise

therefrom, she rose to the window. It was already morning. The cold steely light of the east had a glint of copper in it; the peasant women were driving their milk-waggons into the city; here and there a window had been freed from its shutter, and stared out obliquely like a sleepy eye. One cheap restaurant was crowded with carters, who dipped their black bread into their blacker coffee, making much merriment the while. Lisabee was about to draw back when a quick, decided step under her window caused her to look out again eagerly. It might be Arthur, she thought; he always walked as if every step were a command. Leaning forward on the window-cushion, she caught sight of the high-crowned English hat, the loose-made English dress, and unmistakable English walking-

stick that distinguished her husband's outward appearance from that of other men.

“Arthur!” she cried, joyfully, “Arthur!”

He seemed to hear, but did not heed her call. Never once turning to look back, he pursued his way down the Schotten-gang, passed the Schotten-gate, and crossed over the opposite street; in a minute he was out of sight and hearing. What could this mean? Lisabee felt sure that he had heard her voice, for the coffee-drinkers opposite testified to their hearing of it by a universal titter, and he was at first nearer than they. Was he so busy, so utterly absorbed in new anxieties, that he could not spare a moment, a thought, nay, so little as a look for her—his wife? It was five o'clock—four entire hours since Carl's return; surely four hours were enough for a drive to the

bureau of police four times over. The poor child returned to her bed in a state of dreary incertitude. She did not know whether to laugh or cry at all the nervous fancies that took possession of her mind, and it was as yet too early to communicate them to the ever-sympathetic Adelheid. How should she fill up the two hours that must intervene before then? But Arthur might still return any moment. How he would scold her for such childishness! how he would chide her for such apprehensions of evil!

To sleep was impossible. Dressing herself quickly and noiselessly, she threw open the windows of her bedroom, and sat looking out. Thus slowly and sorrowfully the early dawn passed. Lisabee was of an imperious, loving, exacting nature, and

could not forgive Arthur his first slight. Ought he not to have obeyed her call? Ought his lover-like chivalry ever to wane or wax cold? And underlying all these lesser vexations, was a deep and wearing anxiety. Where was her husband?

As soon as she heard pretty Ernestine, the housemaid, stirring, she unfastened her door and slipped into the passage. The Zillner servants were busy in the *Vorsaal*, clearing away beds, screens, and toilettes (for Viennese servants sleep in their masters' halls), and not heeding their surprise she tapped at the Fräulein's door.

If there is anything upon which a fair Viennese especially prides herself it is her room, which contrives a double debt to pay, by a shut-up washstand, sofa

bed, and many other ingenious devices, looking in the daytime the prettiest boudoir in the world, with its flowers, birds, tapestry, and pictures. When Lisabec knocked, Adelheid happened to be in the midst of her toilette, but, like the good-natured girl she was, gave a little sigh to the general disorder pervading her sanctum, and said—

“Come in.”

“Oh Adelheid, Arthur has not yet come home! What can be the matter?”

Adelheid threw a shawl over her blue cotton peignoir, and sat down to inquire into the matter methodically; but no sooner had Lisabec told her story than she rushed out of the room to wake her mother. The excited voices of the three ladies awoke Carl also, who looked really concerned

on learning the cause of such an outburst.

“It is very strange,” he said; “Leebridge does his business generally so quickly, and he surely would not set out in search of Versette himself.”

“Who is that?” asked Lisabee quickly.

“The supposed incendiary.”

All the healthful colour left the young wife's cheeks. She seemed to quail before the image of terror his words had called up.

“Is he a boatman?” she said. “Has he some reason for hating Arthur? When we were on the König's-see——”

Carl stopped her with a sudden gesture.

“My dear Mrs. Leebridge, don't dream of anything more terrible than Arthur's prosy interview with the detective officers.

I will go and rescue him from their hands at once."

"But I saw Arthur only two hours ago."

"Saw Arthur? Impossible!"

"Indeed I did, Herr Carl. I recognised him at once by his dress and walk, and even his gold-headed stick."

"Then he is helping the police to catch a villain; his whole heart seemed in the matter when I left him."

"And will you go?" asked Lisabee, entreatingly.

"Of course; but do all of you return to your beds or breakfasts with unperturbed spirits, dear ladies. You, mother, especially require a little adornment of the toilette to restore the beauty of your appearance."

"I had no time to think of my appearance; I was only thinking of poor little

Lisabee," replied the old lady, with hurt dignity; "and I'm sure, Carl, this dressing-gown was cut off the same stuff as the Princess Metternich's, and cost two florins a yard without making."

Carl then retreated to take his early coffee, and the three ladies separated, Adelheid promising to bring her work and sit with Lisabee as soon as she had finished the business of toilette.

"We will make coffee ready for Mr. Leebridge, you know," she said, with a cheerful smile.

And Lisabee, feeling cheerful also, sent Ernestine to the little shop opposite, the shutters of which, painted with rural landscapes of farms and dairies, indicated that fresh cream and eggs were to be had there.

“Arthur has never had an English breakfast since we left Nettlested,” she thought. “He shall have one to-day.”

But the coffee grew cold, and the time for breakfast passed, yet Arthur did not come.

CHAPTER XII.

DR. ALBIN held the important post of Professor of Surgery at the Imperial Josephinum, but never set out for that place without having fulfilled three duties. The first was to peep at his little ones as they worked away with their tutor; the second, to ask his mother if she needed his escort that evening; the third, to draw out the portrait of his dead wife and kiss it, with a deep sigh.

Strange that this energetic-minded, clear-headed, learned man, should have so yielded to a morbid pining for the past! To him this sweet young wife was as an

angel, and her love, a kind of cloister in which he passed the best, happiest moments of his life.

“ Ah,” he would muse, “ thou, my Otilie, never growest old or changed or strange, and I—I alter with every day, except in my love for thee! Thou greetest me with a smile ever; is it possible that my sorrow cannot reach thee? Does death rob thee of the power to love? Wonderful thought, too sad, too sublime for us now—we must not expect love from the dead. Yet, my Beloved, have I often felt as if thou wert near me, as if thy arms were round me, and thy lips pressed close to mine. Oh! come again, let me not lose thee utterly. Let me not be lost utterly to thee!”

Such were the frequent thoughts of the widower. He dreaded the idea of growing

cold to her he had lost; he was jealous of himself for any happiness tasted in the world; he chided every indication of a contented, satisfied mind.

On the morning after the fire, Dr. Albin dressed himself in deep mourning, and rang for his luncheon an hour earlier than usual. It was his wife's name-day, and he was about to attend a mass for her soul in the Schottenhof Kirche, close by. As he sat dreamily recalling every phase of his happy youth, the door was opened unceremoniously, and Carl entered.

"Forgive me, Albin," he said, as the sight of his brother's mourning recalled the sacredness of the day; "I ought not to interrupt you, I know, but something very strange has happened. Leebridge has——"

Dr. Albin put down his wife's portrait and looked a shade less preoccupied.

"The fact is," Carl blurted forth, "Leebridge has gone off somewhere!"

"Gone off! Wherefore and whither?"

"Ah, there's the pith of it. Nobody knows."

"I would stake my life on Leebridge's integrity," said Dr. Albin, with an incredulous smile. "Then he has a wife."

"Poor little thing, what will be done to console her I don't know, and his going off will play the very devil with me. This fire has thrown us into countless difficulties, as you may imagine, and Leebridge being by far the better business man, besides having money, is just now especially needed on the spot. Instead of that he has left me to bear all the brunt as I can."

“I feel sure he has not done any such thing, Carl; Leebridge is just the man to take pride in setting things right, and showing the world how independent he is of misfortune.”

“So he is,” said Carl, in perplexity; “and yet we must believe our senses. He is gone.”

Dr. Albin took out his watch.

“It is just eleven o'clock, not twelve hours since you parted from him. That is not much time to give for all the hundred and one things he may have had to do. He is looking after the incendiary, without doubt.”

“The police are doing that.”

“On Mr. Leebridge's intimation?”

“No, on my own. I have discovered that Leebridge never appeared at the

Bureau last night, though he left me with the expressed intention of doing so."

"Then he is instituting a private search."

"Stay," cried Carl, "something has occurred to me. This incendiary, this Ver-sette of whom I told you last night, may have left Vienna, and Arthur after him."

"The most probable thing in the world," replied Dr. Albin, taking up his hat and stick. "Whatever you do, Carl, be slow in drawing inferences. Such a suggestion as you made just now, a suggestion of Mr. Leebridge's cowardly flight, would be enough to ruin both of you, if it got wind. Of course Leebridge ought to have sent a message to his wife or to yourself; but if he chooses to rush into things precipitately, that is his affair. Take my advice, and

order your workmen to begin the immediate clearance of the factory, as if nothing had happened. The world is a well-bred world, and can tolerate anything better than hurry and agitation. And now, adieu."

"One minute, dear brother, I should be so grateful to you if—if——"

Poor Carl blushed crimson at his conscious cowardice, and toyed with his watch-chain.

"Will you tell the women?" he said, quickly.

"What is there to tell? Leebridge absents himself for a few hours on business, and that is all. Really, Carl, I think you see things in an absurdly aggravated light."

"And so will they, Albin. Then I shall

be pitied by the mother and Adelheid, whilst poor little Lisabee will break her heart; you understand women better than I do, and know the right thing to say and to avoid."

"Very well, I will go to them."

And Dr. Albin became the bearer of the news. His calm, incisive sentences removed the apprehension of his mother and Adelheid as summarily as his knife would have removed a spot of disease; but Lisabee's mind was in too unhealthy a state to be so dealt with. He had to soothe, to calm down, to temperate her over-excitation by slow and easy processes, whilst concealing such treatment by every method in his power. Lisabee still remained a child in all that concerned Arthur and Arthur's love.

“It is impossible,” she cried, passionately, “that he would have left me in such suspense for the sake of helping the police in their search! What good could he do? Why not come home and tell me of his intention? Dr. Albin, something has happened to Arthur.”

“And what should happen to him?” asked the physician, smiling gravely.

“He may have returned to the fire and got hurt.”

“In that case, who so likely to hear of it as ourselves? Numbers of Mr. Leebridge’s workmen were about.”

“Oh! take me there, dear Dr. Albin; I feel sure I should not come back without Arthur.”

“My child, you are much better at home with the mother and Adelheid. Take my

advice, and repose yourself, for your husband is sure to return in the evening. What will he say to you if you are pale and ill?"

"He should have told her where he was going, and on what errand," interrupted the old lady, testily. "Your father played me that trick once, three months before you were born, Albin, and Heavens! how I fretted! No wonder that you are an anxious man, and always ready to fret, too. But, seriously speaking, the little one is right. Herr Arthur *ought* to have come home last night."

"Well, Mamma, I do think you are very unfair to Mr. Leebridge," put in Adelheid. "Men can never satisfy you—never. Had he come back and kept at home with us all day, you would have

called him indolent and luxurious; and now, because he remains away on business, you attack him. Really, Mamma, if he were my husband I should scold you roundly."

Lisabee threw herself into Adelheid's arms and kissed her.

"Dear Adelheid," she whispered, "dear, kind Adelheid, you never let anyone find fault with Arthur."

Dr. Albin having fulfilled his mission, and really dreading women's tears, as much as Carl, now slipped quietly out of the way. Anyhow the ice was broken, and Carl's softer heart had been spared. For himself, he did not think seriously of Arthur's prolonged absence. How could harm have happened to him? How could such an absence be accounted for so easily

as on grounds of necessity? That Arthur's utter silence was singular, he admitted; but other men had done many things equally singular before.

So Dr. Albin left the ladies to their own consolations, and pursued the day's duties. When all three had cried a little, Adelheid with unmitigated sympathy for Arthur, and the old lady with mother-like insinuations against the short-comings of her Carl's partner, the two visitors retired, having given Lisabee many injunctions to rest.

But what avail injunctions to the young, passionate, sorrowing heart? No sooner did Lisabee find herself alone than she put on her bonnet to seek Arthur. She knew that the sun was burning hot, that she ought to have stayed at home; yet she went out.

Though mistrusting every one's efforts, she felt sure of her own.

She took a fiacre and drove straight to the factory, yesterday the neatest, most prosperous-looking building in the suburban city; to-day, a mere chaos of charred timber and ash heaps. Two or three dozen men were busily at work among the ruins, and policemen stood guarding the entrance, though the few loungers seemed of the quietest, most harmless kind, quite negating the necessity of such a precaution.

“There isn't much of a sight for you *now*, ma'am,” said the coachman, with a disappointed air. “The worst-looking mischief looks nothing by daylight, and as to the dead bodies, no one had a chance of seeing them last night; the military *was* so sharp and disagreeable, to be sure.”

Lisabee turned cold and faint. They had not told her of any dead bodies.

“Who was killed?” she asked.

“A fireman, for one; and two workmen, though not killed outright, are as good as dead. Ah, ma'am! who'll say a mass for the soul of him who invented gunpowder? I don't know.”

“I should like to alight and walk round. I am the wife of Mr. Leebridge, and shall have no difficulty in obtaining admission,” added Lisabee, firmly.

The coachman stared, winked, and then nudged a policeman standing by.

“I say, Mr. Policeman, just listen to this lady, will you. She belongs to the fire.”

Lisabee repeated her request to the polite official, who bowed at least six times, and then shook his head.

“You must apply to the foreman or Herr Zillner himself,” he said; “I have no power to admit you.”

“But I am Mr. Leebridge’s wife.”

“Herr Leebridge is not here—*voilà*.”

And again the official shook his head wisely.

“When will Mr. Leebridge return?” asked Lisabee, in the faint hope that her husband might have had some communication with him.

“That is best known to Herr Leebridge himself. He has not seen fit to declare his intentions, at least so far as I am aware of.”

“Oh,” cried the young wife, entreatingly; “does no one know where he is? Does no one know when he will come back?”

Just then Carl's handsome boyish face appeared above the coachman's shoulders. With a hasty word or two of explanation he dismissed both men, and almost forgot his usual courtesy to Lisabee in the excessive vexation occasioned by her imprudence.

"You do not consider how utterly unwise this conduct is, or how much harm might arise from it!" he said. "We must conceal the fact of Arthur's absence as much as possible, or people will call him a runaway bankrupt. Did you observe that policeman's look? He knows that Arthur is away, and puts his own construction on the fact."

"Then it is not true that Arthur went in search of the incendiary? Dr. Albin deceived me."

Poor Carl bit his lips with embarrassment.

“Of course *we* are easy in our minds concerning him,” he said, evasively; “because we know he would only do the right, and wise, and honest thing. But the world always suspects a bad motive when a good one is not plain.”

“Why not tell the truth openly?”

“Oh! it is not worth the trouble. Don't vex yourself, dear Mrs. Leebridge, with the hints or suspicions of those who can't employ their time better. Go home and eat your dinner with Adelheid as cosily as you did yesterday. All will come right in time, trust me.”

His affected manner of unconcern betrayed the truth. Lisabee's colour and strength forsook her. She did not realize the ultimate consequences of Arthur's absence; she only felt that it was a great dark trouble,

unforeseen yesterday, but never wholly to be forgotten; a trouble, unnatural, more cruel than death itself, a trouble which only she herself could comprehend. And no one possessed the power to help or comfort her.

“You are not well—let me take you home,” entreated Carl.

She tried to speak, but for the moment utterance wholly failed her. When at length words came, they reasserted her old childlike pride.

“I shall be better in a minute or two; don't speak to me, don't try to comfort me, Herr Carl.”

“But I must see you into your carriage,” said Carl. “You will go back to the mother and Adelheid, won't you, and rest quietly till Arthur comes

home? Why, he may be waiting for you even now! That is right — smile, dear Mrs. Leebridge; when you look so sad, I feel as if I must do something desperate.”

“ You are very kind—forgive my ingratitude—I will thank you by-and-by,” was all she could say, and then the fiacre drove off.

Carl looked after her disconsolately.

“ She is an angel,” he thought, “ and the man who would wilfully cause her sorrow must be a——”

The sentence need not come to an end.

Somehow, perhaps because the young are always Epicureans, perhaps because her trouble was of so incomprehensible and unheard-of a nature, Lisabee grew more cheerful as she entered the gay open Graben.

The coachman had driven her thither in order to see a little gaiety himself, and as he smoked, leisurely looking to the right and to the left, turned every now and then towards his patroness with a smile that said—

“This will make you forget your griefs if anything will; just see those ladies there with blue satin dresses and white hats! Just see those gentlemen, fresh from the hunt, with their greenlaced coats and long plumes! 'Tis enough to cause forgetfulness of Paradise itself!”

Lisabee would have noticed this sympathetic joviality if Arthur had been by her side, would have made him give the man an extra ten-kreutzer note for being so happy; but now she only wished that he did not look round so often or so benevolently.

Still the Graben cheered her. She felt as if Arthur's absence could but be a dream amid such lighthearted life. The brilliant bountiful blue heavens, the glitter of carriages, the shimmer of ladies' silks, the crowds of happy idlers everywhere, the dazzling shops, the buzz of careless voices, all these took her out of despondency. She said to herself again and again, "It is all a nervous fancy. As if Arthur could really have left me so! As if anyone's heart could be really broken! and mine above all, with Arthur to love me and the world so beautiful."

Then she stopped at different shops to make little purchases. The longer she remained absent, the greater her chance of finding Arthur at home. She would give him such a feast as he had never eaten with

her before—Indian preserves, quince, honey, plums, French chocolate, Viennese confectionery, liqueurs in tiny gilt bottles. “How Arthur must smile at such childishness,” she thought, “but he is always pleased to be petted.”

She lingered over her purchases till the great clock of St. Stefan's struck four. “I ought to have made more haste,” she thought; “he is sure to be waiting for me;” and then she ordered the driver to go on quickly.

How her heart beat as she alighted at the Schottenhof! A fragment of cigar lay on the first step of the wide stone staircase, and she took it as a sign of Arthur's return; he always threw aside his cigars unfinished. Neither of the servants was sitting in the Vorsaal or landing-place, and she took that

as a sign too—they would surely be waiting upon Arthur, he required so much attendance.

She hesitated before ringing. Would Arthur recognise her ring and open the door? When cook Anna's heavy breathing and lazy steps approached instead, she chided herself for the thought; of course Arthur had gone to lie down after the fatigues of last night, and, oh! how quiet and mouselike she would be for fear of disturbing him!

Anna drew back the door as usual with a sleepy—

“Ich küss die Hand, gnädige Frau” (your servant, Madam), and retired to the kitchen, Lisabee not daring to ask the truth of her. The drawn blinds, however, and undisturbed quiet of the rooms, the empty sofa

and untumbled bed, the dreary cover laid for one, the home letters lying unopen on the table—letters which Arthur ever read as his own—ah me! the truth needed no confirmation of words. He was not there.

CHAPTER XIII.

AND evening came, with its numberless orchestras and torch-lights in the Prater, with its blaze of light and royalty at the opera, with its dash of horse and carriage on the Karl Platz, with its thousand weary omnibuses bringing home holiday people from the country, with its crowds of idlers in the palace-like cafés of Herrngasse, with brilliancy, and liveliness, and colour everywhere.

And night came, with its broad, silver moon-streaks on the pale green Glacis; with its rest, and darkness, and cool winds in the wooded islands of the Prater; with its re-

flection of stars in the smooth, yellow Danube; with its giant hand laid upon the restless city; with its giant heartbeats counted from the belfry of St. Stefan's. But evening and night came alone.

Lisabee lay sleepless and distracted upon her bed, now starting at the sound of a voice or step in the streets below, now recalling all the probable causes of Arthur's delay, weighing alike the chances of safety and harm.

She did not believe that all was right now. She had done her best to believe it throughout the day, but trusted her husband too well to do so any longer. However far his search might have taken him, however difficult communication might have proved, she felt sure he would not suffer her to remain in suspense. Some-

thing—an accident, a sudden attack of illness, a railway collision, or the loss of a letter, must account for this terrible absence and silence. Arthur had often told her—half in jest, half in earnest—that he should die of heart affection, as his father had died: was he lying ill—perhaps dying—in some out-of-the-way place? The loss of a letter seemed an equally probable and far less terrible thing; yet the loss of a letter might prevent her from going to him, might occasion much prolonged suffering on his part and suspense on hers.

Towards morning she fell into a heavy sleep. When she awoke it was past nine o'clock, the servants were bedecking themselves with finery for the mass, the streets were thronged with gaily-dressed holiday

people; the sweet smell of flowers and incense reached her open window.

“It is Sunday,” she thought; “Papa, Greta, Cis, and Mabel, will be getting ready for church, Papa in his best coat—the coat he bought for my wedding-day—my sisters, in the peach-coloured muslin dresses I helped them to make. The bells, poor cracked little bells, are ringing across the fields and green lane leading to Lyddy’s, where Arthur told me of his love. How I used to sing the tune of those bells when a little child, ding-a-dong, ding-a-dong—come in time, come in time—that is what they said, and even Aunt Mercy laughed to hear me. The parlour window is open of course, and the yellow japonica in blossom, and the air smelling with second-crop clover blowing under the walnut-trees.

How happy we were under those walnut-trees on the day of the foreigner's fête, the day on which I first saw Arthur! How Papa admired him, and how all the Plum-trees envied and grudged me my handsome husband! I was very proud of him, and proud to them, and, oh! it is all over!"

She had fallen into the German fashion of taking innocent pleasures on Sundays, but had never neglected to go to church first, and read the Bible as she read it in childhood, picking out the touching stories of Ruth and Joseph, and the sweet idyllic lessons of the Saviour. To-day she felt unequal to the long service at the Embassy, and read nothing of Ruth or of Joseph; but her eyes dwelt lovingly and lingeringly on the passionate lamentations

of Job and the poetic consolations of St. John.

About ten o'clock Adelheid came in.

"We are going to the Dominican church," she said; "there is a grand mass to-day of Mendelssohn. Will you join us?"

"I think not, dear Adelheid—I—I shall keep at home, lest Arthur come——"

Adelheid turned away her head.

"Carl is gone after him, and Albin too. They fancy he went to Salzburg," she replied, with some embarrassment.

"To Salzburg!" cried Lisabee, eagerly; "and will they soon be here?"

"This afternoon. Don't stay at home, Lisabee; don't worry yourself, but accompany us to church. The music will give you calmer thoughts, will sub-

due you to a more spiritualized frame of mind."

"Did you ask Carl to telegraph?"

"Oh yes; and Carl always remembers to do those things of himself. But I must not keep the Mamma waiting. After mass, we go to the exhibition of living artists; shall we call for you?"

Lisabee shook her head sadly.

"At least you will join us in a carriage-drive to the country after dinner?"

Again Lisabee shook her head, and Adelheid went away, sorely puzzled as to the mental condition of anyone who could thus refuse oblivion from sorrow in a grand mass, a picture-gallery, and a suburban drive.

When she was gone, Lisabee found solitude doubly hard to bear; she could not

read any more ; she could not help contrasting the quiet of the house with the animation of the streets. She said her Sunday prayers vaguely, praying that God would not forsake her, and that no harm might have come to Arthur.

By and by, she dressed herself and went out. Mass was over, but the doors of the Schottenhof church stood open, and groups of worshippers remained kneeling here and there. Soon the acolytes re-lit the tapers around the high altar, a soft strain of music sounded in the distance, and a dead body, covered with rich black velvet embroidered in silver, was stationed before the entrance.

Lisabee started and turned pale. She had always shrunk from a funeral service since witnessing that of her mother years

ago, and especially deprecated all sad impressions now. But the aisles filled quickly with mourners and spectators, and she felt retreat to be impossible.

She did not look up whilst the body was carried round the church ; priests, acolytes, choristers, and mourners following in close procession. She only heard the grand music of the requiem that swayed to and fro, like a tide that should ebb and flow from the feet of God—now sweet and touched with human sorrow as it nears the sands of earth—now passionate with sublime trust as it kisses the shores which are eternal.

When the high altar was reached, priest, mourner, and musician stood still. A silence intervened—a stop, as it were, to the mighty movements of grief; and then

eager, outflowing, and exultant, a stream of perfect melody issued forth, making one think that the angels had hitherto waited for the sentence of God, and now recorded it with joy and love and sympathy inexpressible.

Lisabee bowed her head and worshipped. Her simple, sorrowing heart, at all times prone to reverence and religious impression, became passionate with such sad enthusiasm of grief as only the young experience. She felt as if life were little and death better—as if she could yield up her Arthur, her joy, her all, to God.

Then the procession passed down the altar, the body was sprinkled with holy water, incense was shed around it, and the priests chanted the last solemn litany, ending with—

“*Requiescat in pace, in sæcula sæculorum.*
Amen.”

Unconscious that the ceremony had come to an end, only dwelling on these last words of peace, the young wife remained in her place long after the dispersing of the crowd. When, at the touch of a hand on her shoulder, she looked up, no one was with her but the sacristan and the dead.

“The doors are about to be locked,” said the sacristan, jingling his keys. “It is past noon, madame.”

“Already?” asked Lisabee, faintly.

“Time that it should be, I think; I’ve had still mass, and full mass, and a funeral since eight o’clock—it isn’t all pleasure, madame, to us sacristans, I can tell you.”

Lisabee offered the man half a florin.

When people grumbled she always gave them money.

“Madame is sad,” he said, after thanking her many times; “and I, I have enough to make me sad, too.”

“What have you to make you sad?” asked Lisabee.

“Last week I lost a florin, and yesterday my wife’s mother died, leaving us to bury her as best we could. These things come hard upon a poor man, madame.”

“But you have not lost your wife?” said Lisabee with childlike simplicity.

“*Himmel*, madame, no; but if I had ’twould have been a mercy! She is a poor cripple, and has an immense appetite.”

Then Lisabee turned away. “I wonder whether everyone has something to be sad about,” she thought; “these gay people,

the ladies in silks and feathers, the officers in bright uniforms, the smart servant-girls with their lovers, the solitary priests in black." And she went home, wondering how solitude and sorrow could exist in such a city as Vienna.

CHAPTER XIV.

DOCTOR ZILLNER grew ill-tempered, and it must be admitted with some cause. Here was his household thoroughly upset, the men flying hither and thither, the women in prayers and tears, the daily duties and comforts dragged through or omitted altogether, the cosy evening parties at an end.

And what seemed hardest of all, not one of these misfortunes had he brought upon himself. In the first instance, Carl was amply cautioned against hasty dealings with a speculator, even though an English speculator; and again and again both Carl

and Arthur had received hard-hitting little maxims as to economy, due weekly balances, etcetera. Doctor Zillner could not take the most natural course, and resort to self-pity. Was ever a man so perplexed and troubled by the difficulties and troubles of other people? He confessed to having loved Arthur and Lisabee, but his blood boiled with rage against Arthur now, and towards Lisabee his manner cooled by hardly perceptible degrees.

Perhaps the women suffered less because their sympathies were in full play. Adelheid, partly out of sentimental regard for Arthur, partly out of wholesome sisterly affection for his wife, bestirred herself bravely when the worst became known. Arthur was gone no one knew whither; Lisabee, therefore, needed more comfort

than anyone could give, and what she had she gave without stint or spare.

When Dr. Albin and Carl returned from their journey, bearing the miserable story in their faces, a final family-council was called. Something must be done, and done speedily. Lisabee lay in bed, sick with the incurable sickness of a breaking heart; the ash-heaps of the factory were blowing in the faces of his Imperial Majesty's subjects, and Carl and Arthur stood pledged to a swift clearance; money there was none, except a small balance at the banker's, and the insurance which could not be paid till Arthur's absence was cleared up. Embarrassment followed upon embarrassment. Without Arthur's capital and Arthur's capabilities, the factory, even if money were forthcoming, had no chance of re-establish-

ment; Carl could not even claim debts, because he was only Arthur's partner by grace instead of by law. Everything looked gloomy. "I think the only thing to be done is this," said Dr. Albin, who was rich and large-hearted, "since Mrs. Leebridge has no other friends here, let her come to you two, mother and Adelheid."

Adelheid clapped her hands joyfully. Carl assented with eagerness. The good old lady uttered the first syllable of an approving word, then recollected herself and looked at her husband.

Dr. Zillner answered slowly and quietly, damming up the current of impulse setting against him with scientific barriers.

"My dear children," he said, "it is all very well for you to think how comfortable

the poor girl would be, and how much satisfaction such an act of generosity must give to ourselves; but remember the one rule of my life I never break——”

He looked round at the somewhat grave faces, his eye sparkled a little with self-approving wisdom, and then he added—

“I have always found it right and meet to delay following an impulse till reflection has proved it to be a duty. Once and once only—you all remember the *Sturm and Drang* period of '48—I did not so act; and what followed? I was all but ruined. Now, though the maintenance of this poor little woman, in all probability, will ruin no one; till it be proved to me that I above every one else am bound to support her, I shall not charge myself with such a burden.”

Carl flushed. Dr. Albin said, very mildly—

“I hardly meant as much as you have taken for granted, father. Mr. Leebridge has property—surely it would be risking little to support his wife till such time as the law allows her to consider it her own? Your outlay might be paid back.”

“Mr. Leebridge is English, and has surely relatives at home,” Dr. Zillner made answer; “who so fit to protect her as brother, father, or uncle?”

“Good heavens, sir!” cried Carl, with indignation, “one would think there was nothing weightier under consideration than a little loss of money to ourselves. For once, let us seek guidance rather from our hearts than our pockets.”

“Ah! do let her come to us, the poor

broken-hearted little thing," whispered Adelheid.

The Frau looked at her husband appealingly. His face was beclouded.

"Seeking guidance in one's pocket is not a bad maxim for young men," he said, with bitter point. "I am too old to act the Don Quixote, however you young folks may be so disposed; but let the question be dropped, I am sick of it."

He flung himself out of the room angrily, and Adelheid followed with mediating intentions, congratulating herself that she had prepared a favourite soup for her father's lunch, and had invited a friend or two to tea.

A lively discussion ensued between the brothers: Carl was all fire and impetuosity,

Dr. Albin sided with his father, or at least palliated his motives. In the end, a kind but prudential course was taken, and Lisabee, though invited to stay, was counselled to go.

CHAPTER XV.

THE warm autumn sunlight falls in broad level rays upon the mellow fields of William Plumtree's corn-country as he drives home from the Bury lamb fair, his cheeks shining with health and a generous draught of wine, his best coat buttoned across his chest with quite a consequential fulness, his whole aspect that of a man doing well in the world. Lisabee's father was really doing well in the world, and why? The green apple catches the glow of the ripened one, and so our good fortune is often but the reflection of our friend's. William Plumtree had married a daughter

ambitiously. Arthur Leebridge's hundreds grew into thousands and tens of thousands in the imagination of the world long before the consummation of the marriage, and consequently William was much better off just because everyone deemed him to be so. How respectfully, nay, tenderly, his brothers and sisters treated him; no longer saying "poor William" even amongst themselves. How the ruddy-faced farmers courted his acquaintance on market days, tried to get Greta and Cissy to visit with their daughters! How all the little Nettled world bowed to him and revered him and Mister'd him!

William Plumtree drove home slowly, thinking of his pets, of Arthur, and of pretty fortunate Lisabee far away. Wonderfully had things altered with him since Arthur's

first declaration of love for his darling, and his cheeks glowed as he recalled many and many an instance of homage received. He was a little triumphant at slipping so quietly out of Aunt Mercy's leading-strings, and now pitied poor Richard in rather a grandly patronizing way. Richard too, who revered money as the Mussulman reverences Mahomet, altered his tone considerably, made a confidant of him, poured out his grievances against Mercy, his love-stories with dangerous widows, and never forbore a commendatory phrase of affection, such as, "Ah, William, you've had luck and no mistake," or "Ah, William, that young Leebridge has been the making of you, sure-ly!"

So William looked a little redder, stouter, and smarter every alternate fair-day, and on

this one in particular had created an impression of prosperity. He not only purchased a dozen score of fine lambs, but walked jauntily to and fro before the Golden Lion, telling his acquaintances of a large farm he was about to look over and hire if possible. Then when any old-fashioned farmer in top-boots and swallow-tail coat nudged him with a—"How do you manage to hire large farms in a time of peace, when everyone else is selling out wheat directly after harvest, hey, Mr. Plumtree?"—he smiled slyly, spoke of having lost one of his wife's relations, finally winked, and proposed a glass of sherry.

And what with the sherry, and the sheep-buying, and the homage received, the simple heart of the farmer expanded like

flowers in sunshine. He bought an unlimited supply of oranges and sweetmeats for his girls, thinking of the time when they were little children under Mercy's tutelage, and used to meet him beyond the garden-gate, and munch their threepenny-worth of gingerbread in secret. It seemed more astonishing to him every day that they should be so clever: Greta teaching languages in the town, Cissy singing Italian songs, and Mabel painting the most beautiful angels' heads. And Lisabee! She would come home next year with Arthur. How grandly they would all walk to church together, Arthur so handsome and gentlemanlike, Lisabee dressed in foreign silks and feathers! And the villagers would make way and touch their hats to the "Squire's" family; and the rector himself

would come forward and shake hands all round!

He wiped away a joyful tear, and drove on, smiling to himself. Whenever he came to a farmhouse, he counted the wheat-stacks, and found no stack-yard so well filled as his own. By and by, he passed the Nettlested railway-station. There was a London train just coming in, and he slackened the reins in order to take up anyone who might belong to the village. The first person to alight was a fat old lady, the Nettlested postmistress; but William Plumtree had no love for old ladies, more especially fat old ladies, and ever since falling in love with Elgitha's handsome face and stately figure, loved beauty and prized it beyond anything. He would wait for a more attractive opportunity.

The next passenger was a young lady, quietly dressed and closely veiled. He arranged the cushions comfortably for her, and framed the most befitting words of invitation.

Who could this stranger be, so dusty with travel, so apparently alone, so young, so unfit for travel and loneliness? He should have some additional news for his girls now. Perhaps it was the young foreign lady whom Sir Samuel Waring had, according to hearsay, treated so badly. Perhaps—but he must ask her to drive with him first, and puzzle out her history afterwards.

He drew close to the pathway and leaned a little forward—

“Won't you ride a little way?” he said, shyly. “My pony is as quiet as can be and I'm going a goodish bit farther.”

She did not seem to understand him, and started back in a wild, frightened way, as if suddenly awakened from a dream.

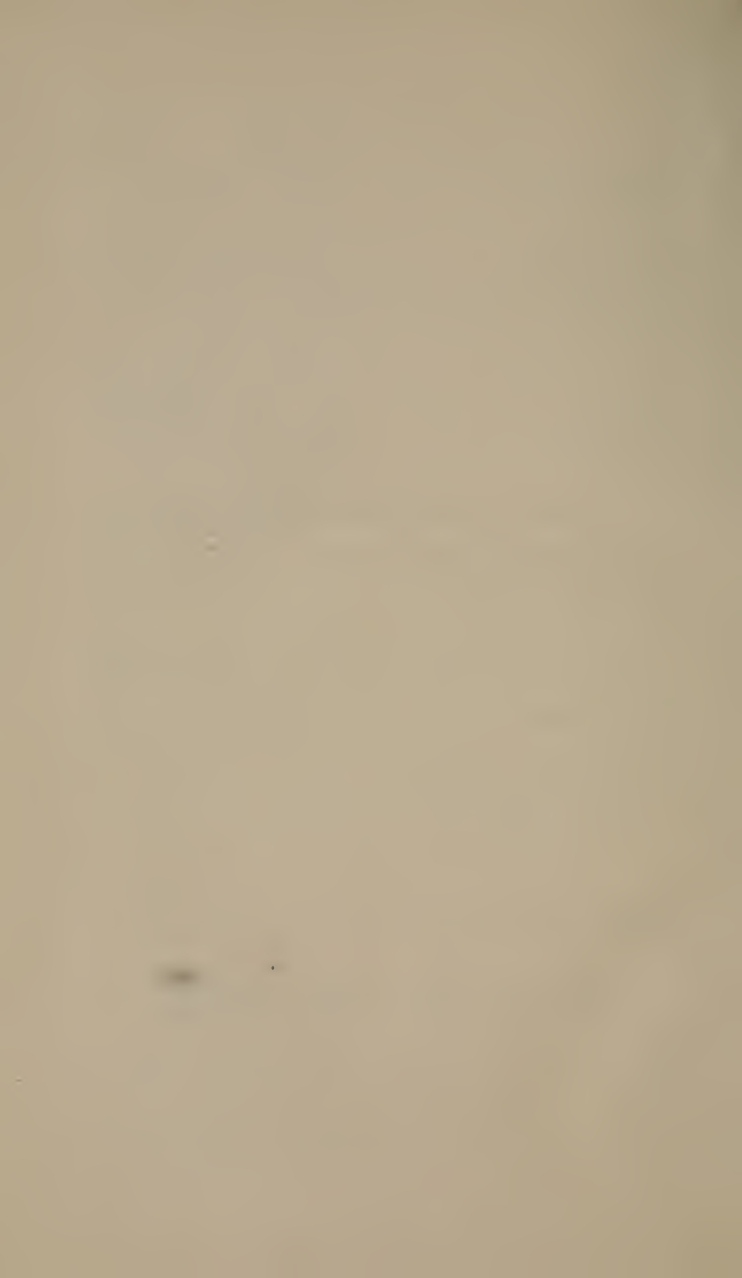
He imagined that she was some lady belonging to the Manor house now; blushing deeper for his error, he added—

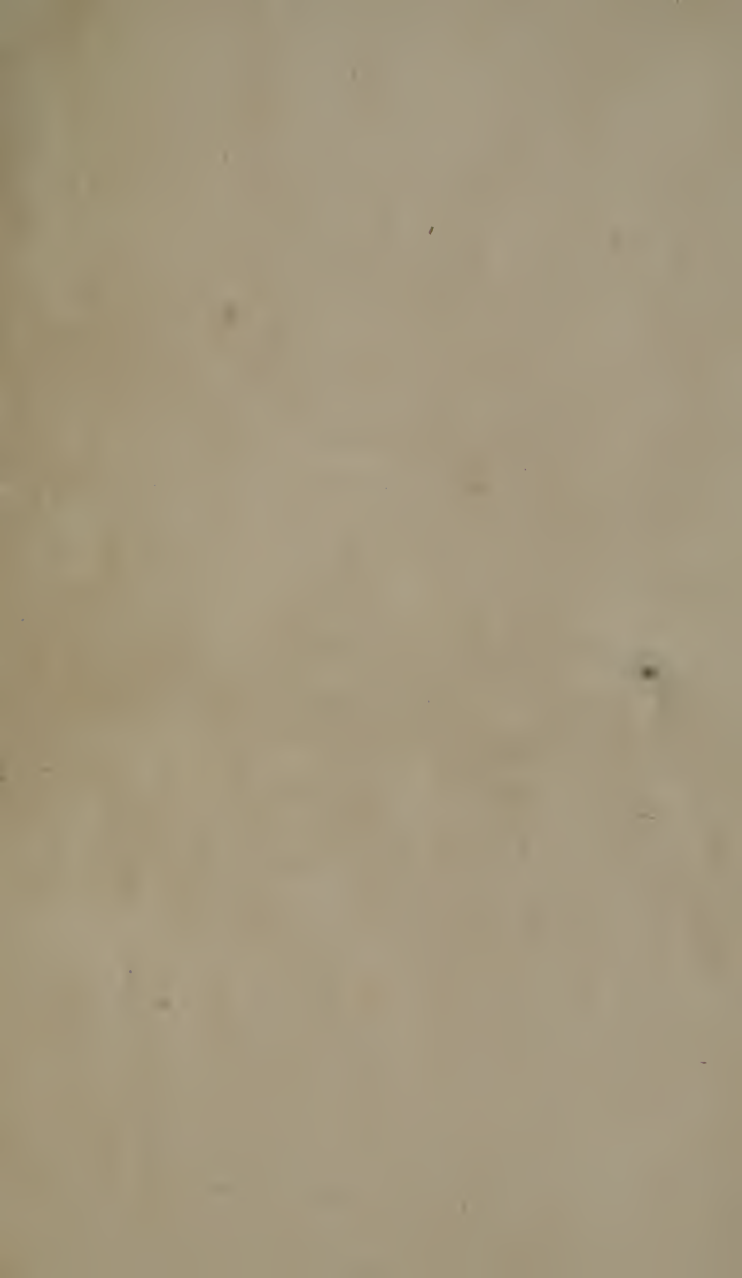
“ I hope I haven't offended you, ma'am; I only thought that as the sun is hot and the road so dusty, you might——”

But he stopped short, with a sudden scared look of conviction, and let the reins drop from his hands.

It was Lisabee!

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.









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