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FROM
FOREIGN
LANDS

MARIA FELICIA

BY

CAROLINE SVĚTLA

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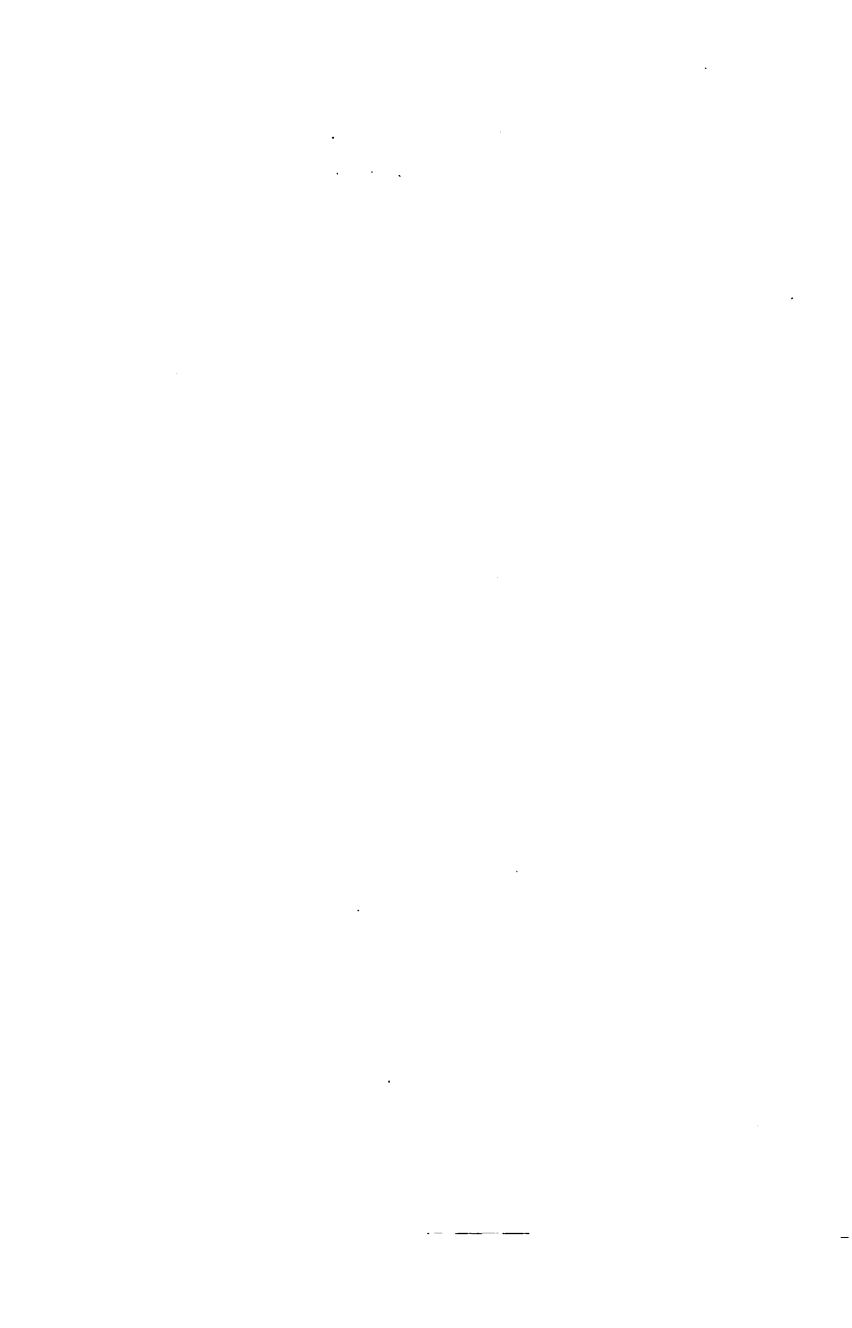
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MARIA FELICIA



MARIA FELICIA

("THE LAST MISTRESS OF HLOHOV")

A STORY OF BOHEMIAN LOVE

TRANSLATED FROM THE BOHEMIAN

OF

CAROLINE SVĚTLÁ

BY

ANTONIE KREJSA

CHICAGO

A. C. McCLURG AND COMPANY

1898

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

JOHANNA ROTTOV, better known by her pen name "Caroline Světlá," was born at Prague in 1830. At that time the Bohemian people were groaning under Austrian tyranny, but their hopes were reviving. The national self-respect had been sorely wounded by a decree of the Emperor Joseph II., issued in 1774, ordaining that the German language should be employed by all teachers and lecturers in the upper schools; but within the first quarter of the present century valuable remains of old literature were discovered, and thereafter edicts favorable to the use of Bohemian were published. Since that time the language has advanced rapidly as a vehicle of literature and science.

Johanna's father, whose ancestors had be-

longed to the persecuted religious sect known as the Bohemian Brethren, was very proud of his lively, prattling, black-eyed little girl, and, being a true Bohemian, he often walked with her through the streets of Old Prague, telling her of deeds that were done there in the glorious days of old when Bohemia was free, and instilling into her young heart that undying love for her native land which has been her leading motive in her life's work. Her grandmother fed her imagination with fairy-tales, folk-lore and songs; and thus the young dreamer was inspired to compose many a romantic tale before she was able to write it down.

Notwithstanding the revival of Bohemian literature, the nation was becoming Germanized; to speak Bohemian was considered almost ill-bred; to express patriotic sentiments was dangerous. Johanna's grandmother informed her that she must learn to speak German as soon as possible. When the precocious little creature wrote a paper on the suppression of the Bohemian language, her

teacher (who hated everything that was Bohemian) discovered the manuscript and angrily forbade her to utter "such dangerous things;" and even her father was almost afraid to continue his teachings. Poor Johanna durst not openly rebel, but she wept and dreamed and hoped. Many a solitary hour she spent in a lumber-room, where, with a clothes-basket for her writing-stand, she forgot her misery in childish literary efforts. When she was about thirteen years of age, her teacher discovered these manuscripts also, which made him angrier than before. Sharing in the horror with which the majority of respectable people at that time regarded George Sand, he said that Johanna was in danger of "falling into the same pit;" and this so alarmed her mother that she permitted her to study only French and music, and to read no higher literature than children's books. When she had attained the age of sixteen, her irrepressible patriotism again tried to find expression. She began the careful study of Bohemian, and when some aristocratic young men at a ball

threatened that they would not dance with her unless she would renounce her "dangerous opinions," she retired from the room with a defiant smile. The dignified rebuke which Johanna thus administered to those unpatriotic youths made her a heroine in the eyes of her music teacher, Professor Mužák. In the winter of 1852 she was married to the professor, and the union was one of perfect harmony. Madame Mužák's happiness was complete until the death of her only child. This bereavement brought on a settled melancholy, which threatened to develop into insanity. By her physician's advice she entered on a systematic course of study. The effect was magical. Rejoicing in her new strength, Madame Mužák began her brilliant career as a novelist; and before she was sixty she had written a hundred and thirteen stories, besides biographies, histories and essays. She is known throughout her own land as a powerful advocate of democracy; she has spent the earnings from her books lavishly on benevolent institutions; and she is equally revered

by her nation as a woman, a literary artist, and a patriot.

The most notable feature of her works is her masterly portrayal of woman craving for light and liberty. Her peasants also are portrayed to the life, for she studied them most carefully. And this suggests the origin of her pseudonym. In the village of Světlá, her husband's early home, Madame Mužák so studied the peasants and the folk-lore that the spirit of the place has been embodied in her stories, and she so loved the place that she adopted its name. She now begins to experience the weariness and exhaustion of old age, but her spirit is cheered by the oft-expressed gratitude and admiration of her fellow-patriots.

CHICAGO, October, 1898.





MARIA FELICIA

CHAPTER I

LIKE a gigantic torch the Felsenburk Palace, brightly illuminated, rose to the dark heavens, above the sea of houses constituting the Little Side, a suburb of Prague. As many lights beamed from its massive dark walls as there were windows in it. The approach from the street which was dominated by this mansion was brightly lighted and magnificently decorated. Moving through the entrance was a double row of gallooned servants, carrying lanterns, and behind them, like two dark moving walls, were collected the inquisitive folk, greeting the

nobility with loud cheers of happy surprise as they gathered in large numbers and in great splendor for a ball at the palace of Count Francis Václav Felsenburk, lord of Mokřín, Hlohov, Lužan, Dobřic, Černá Skála, and other most beautiful and productive domains of Bohemia and Moravia.

The nobility of Prague had had their last reception for the winter at Prince Wildenšwert's castle, and were now, as usual, preparing to return to their estates or to travel, when unexpectedly Count Felsenburk sent out invitations to a ball, wishing, as he said, to bid his honored friends farewell in his own home. With his invitation he not only created great excitement among the maids and chamberlains who had to unlock the chests already packed and take out and prepare the beautiful costumes and family jewels, but also surprised the nobility themselves.

The Count's invitation and expression of warm friendship, so suddenly aroused, was a complete surprise. Among his acquaintances he was not supposed to be of an affectionate

nature; and his smiling smoothness and dignified courtesy were distrusted. Privately much was being said about his ambition, his passion, and his vengeance on those who either thoughtlessly or purposely dared to vex him in any of his schemes; but publicly the greatest respect was displayed for the Count, who occupied the foremost place among the Prague nobles, not merely in wealth, but above all in being the most favored at the Emperor's court.

Each of the gilded carriages, ornamented with a great escutcheon on its door, was preceded either by two running footmen in livery or by two mounted hunters with flaring torches. The torches, however, were not for mere show. In the year 1772 only the main streets of Prague were lighted and paved; the rest, especially in spring, looked more like rural roads full of mud-pools and stony ponds than like the public streets of the most famous city of a kingdom renowned in history, and in which, only a few decades previously, foreign princes had bought homes in order

to be named its citizens and to witness for a part of each year its glory and fame.

On the back steps and driver's seats were hosts of footmen, swinging with the motion of the carriages, and through the carriage windows, which gleamed with the lights held by the attendants, were seen those for whom the Almighty did not make the stern law that in this world man shall earn bread with his own hands and wet it with his tears. On silk cushions, cavaliers, and ladies glittering with gold and silver embroidery, were carelessly rocking. The cosmetics on their faces had to conceal only the traces of glowing passions, for those faces showed not the marks of daily care which were visible on the foreheads of those who were so good-naturedly admiring their splendor. At that time only a few dreamed about equal rights for all, discussed the pride of position and birth, complained about the unjust privileges, and compared the fate of the oppressed with the fate of those occupying higher places in life. These thoughts were not yet spreading their dis-

quieting wings very widely; they were fretting under the heavy burdens which followed a long revolutionary struggle.

To the nobility entering the proud palace over which hundreds of wax candles poured streams of mellow light, it was not long a secret why Count Francis Václav had invited them, and what cause had so suddenly aroused his friendly feeling. Greeting his guests, he introduced to them Count Fridštejnský, a nobleman about thirty years of age, of a graceful figure, with a face full of animation, simple in dress and manners—indeed, a great contrast to the rest of the guests, so stiff and jeweled. But each one of the mighty, arrogant nobles, who turned his eyes to the count bowed deeply, and respectfully retired to the rear.

Count Fridštejnský was evidently not surprised at these respectful retirements. He himself walked to the gentlemen and began to question them, while the younger guests started to dance. He engaged them in lively and apparently important conversation, for

those addressed by him quickly blushed and wiped their foreheads with batiste handkerchiefs.

These interviews were indeed trying, for the guests found the noble introduced as Count Fridštejnský to be the eldest son of Maria Theresa, Joseph II., joint-ruler of Austria.

It was not the first time that Joseph II. had come to Prague unexpectedly and incognito, strictly forbidding any recognition of his rank and wishing to be treated as the one whom he assumed to be. On such visits, planning some important change in the empire, he first examined the state of affairs, discussed the question with those who understood it, listened to the various sides of public opinion, and then—did according to his own best judgment and his conscience, disregarding all objections, even those of his mother, the Empress of Austria. The most serious thing about it was that no one guessed his aims. He carefully concealed them that they might not be thwarted at their very inception by those

whom they unpleasantly touched. It was not strange, then, that the gentlemen who were honored with Count Fridštejnský's conversation were puzzled instead of being flattered, and that they tremblingly asked their souls, "Why does the Emperor ask about this, and why about that? What does he intend to do, or what does he intend to undo?" And those who valued themselves because of their elevated position in the public estimation thoughtfully asked themselves: "How shall I answer without touching the important point and without falling in the opinion of our future despotic ruler? What shall I say to express some advanced opinion in conformity with his views?"

It was but a short time since the Emperor, against his mother's wish and the desire of the nobility, had diminished the number of monks, and also the rights and privileges of the monastic order. It was reported that the Emperor would continue such changes and that, as he found the Jesuits to be the strongest opponents of all attempts to promote the

nation's progress, he intended to make this order powerless. Rumors were also circulated that Joseph II. considered monastic life idleness, and that he had been planning for the destruction of these societies in his empire, and that the Pope was inclined to favor his design. What, then, if his present inquiries were in some way connected with this unhappy affair? What if his questions, though seemingly touching other subjects, were in some mysterious way leading up to this step? Might not a person by a most innocent answer, on which the Emperor might choose to found his decision, plunge himself into everlasting confusion? It was also said that the Jesuits knew all about the scheme, that not a word was spoken secretly enough to escape their ears, and that they were using their knowledge with great effect. If they did not see through the walls or hear through the doors, they must have had in each house at least one clever, reliable confidant. There were doubtless many present that evening who noted everything that was said, but particularly

there were persons whom the Emperor noted.

Most of the guests would have refused Count Felsenburk's invitation for that evening, excusing themselves either on account of sickness or some family affair, or would have left Prague on any pretext whatever, had they anticipated his design to surprise them. How the Count laughed in his sleeve and delighted in their confusion! He knew well how to preserve a placid appearance at other times, but that evening malice poured from every line of his face. His countenance had once been rarely beautiful, but now was deeply red and bloated, proving that the Count was a stronger lover of sweet wines and rich diet than was profitable to his health. What malignity to collect, under the cloak of friendship, into such a dangerous trap, people suspecting no evil! Which of them could do something to frustrate his designs and so punish him? But such questions were banished as quickly as they had sprung up. How could they take revenge on a man who was not only a favorite of the Empress, but, as became evi-

dent that evening, also a trusted friend of her son?

But by what charm had the Count retained the favor of the Empress and at the same time gained that of her son? The mother and her son formed two antagonistic forces which were always, both secretly and publicly, opposing each other. It was a struggle between antiquated conservatism and modern liberalism. The charm with which Felsenburk pleased both sides did not arise from his courtier-like manners, but simply from his knowing nothing about the questions on which they differed. He was not interested in religious and social questions; he was worldly, and above all he was a soldier—an Austrian soldier. He had formerly filled one of the highest positions in the army, which he gave up only during time of peace, and which at the first shout of war he intended to resume. The triumph of the Austrian army, the glory of his ruler's court, and under its protection, the progress of his own family and the increase of his own wealth and might—these

were the centers around which his thoughts circled, the forces that actuated him, and to achieve these objects he was ready to make sacrifices. Everything else he viewed with indifference, ridicule or scorn.

But just because the progress of the imperial family concerned him as much as his own glory, he admitted that things could not remain as they were, that everywhere in public life a spirit of discontent was manifesting itself, that changes were absolutely necessary; and in all this he agreed with Joseph. He did nothing, however, to further the designs of the son; on his own estates he left everything according to the old ways; and in that he pleased the mother. Joseph II. saw that the deeds of the Count were not always in harmony with his words, but Francis Václav gave him to understand that he remained inactive only through respect for the Empress, that he wished not to displease her who had always favored him so greatly. And to the Empress he explained his inclination to her son's ideas as a result of his undying devotion

to her, which caused him to favor her son even in matters on which they differed. He said that he could not, as her old servant, but love Joseph as much as he worshiped Maria Theresa.

Count Fridštejnský gave no chance for rest or recreation to those with whom he chose to converse. He ate sparingly of the midnight refreshments, which, for his special convenience, were served for the gentlemen in one of the side halls. The rest of the nobles had to conform their behavior to his; and dainties which Count Felsenburk, as if purposely, had piled up higher that day than ever before, were left with longing eyes before they had been well tasted.

By this arrangement the gentlemen were dissatisfied, and the ladies were offended because the Emperor was kept away from them. He had, during the whole evening, favored none of them with the least attention. Joseph II. proved to the Prague beauties that the rumor about his indifference to women was not groundless; but he did not succeed dur-

ing the whole night in defying their charms. For he was, with all his stern principles and his experience of two marriages—by no means happy ones—only thirty years of age. He was not yet the grave Cato that he considered himself.

Coming out of the dining-hall, the Emperor stood in the midst of a row of pillars supporting a beautiful arch of the ball-room; and while the whole company, with Count Felsenburk and Princess Wildenšwert at the head, were gayly circling in a polonaise, he was talking with some fat, curly-wigged councilman, who, under the sovereign's perplexing questions, was sweating even more than his predecessors. Wishing to penetrate more deeply into the subject he had just taken for discussion, and being annoyed by the whirling figures before him, the Emperor, in the course of the discussion, had moved back into an alcove which he thought was entirely vacant.

Not far away in the arch the Emperor saw a lady standing alone and leaning against one of the pillars wreathed with flowers. It was

evident that she was not there by chance, for she was leaning against the wreathed support as comfortably as if she had selected the place a long time before. With arms folded she was gazing at him serenely and gravely with her clear blue eyes.

The Emperor was startled. He was accustomed to regard others in that way, but it was a novel experience to be thus studied himself. He knew that she was not looking at him with admiration, confusion, enthusiasm or with any other feeling that a ruler generally awakens, but that she was judging him calmly and without prejudice, just as he judged others when he wished to form a just opinion of them.

Seeing that the Emperor caught her in the look so inquiringly centered upon him, she showed no confusion, but turned, perfectly calm, on the heel of her satin silver-embroidered slipper and disappeared.

The Emperor continued his discussion with the fat councilman, but could not regain his interest in the subject. The scene at the pil-

lar disturbed him. Who was that lady, the only one that did not dance, the only one in the noisy hall who sought solitude, and while others were gliding about, laughing and trying to bring their beauty into the most favorable light for the conquest of men's hearts, turned aside from the noisy whirl, quietly observing and thinking? This question gravely spoken within, caused the Emperor to forget his former one, spoken out loud to the councilman. He felt again the inquisitive eyes resting on his face as though they would penetrate to the core of his soul and without hesitation tell him if they found anything there that displeased them. He was not able to catch the thread of his important discussion; it had gotten away and become tangled.

The Emperor, though renowned for his liberal principles, was after all strangely moved because some one had dared coolly to watch him without the reverential homage due to a sovereign. He continually looked about him to see if the brave lady would emerge from the moving wave of dancers, and thus became

more and more perplexed. The last measure of the polonaise had just ceased, the guests were walking around, the arch was filled again. Charming dancers moved about him; he was now carefully watching the dangerous lines of beauty and grace, but the lady of his thoughts was nowhere to be seen. Was she in one of the side halls, seeking an atmosphere more in keeping with her nature?

The Emperor was at last convinced that for the time being his investigation of state affairs was at an end, and that for the remainder of the night it would be more interesting to find the proud, questioning eyes, and discover, if possible, by what power they penetrated to the depths of human hearts. So, very graciously dismissing the fat councilman, who heaved a sigh of relief, he motioned to his host. The Count quickly came to see what service he could render his illustrious master.

“I have had enough of those investigations, dear Felsenburk,” he said, “they tired me out, and now I must rest. Your ball is near-

ing its close; for me you are giving it, and as yet I have seen almost nothing of it. You have gratified me, indeed, by inviting the nobility of Prague when you heard of my intention to come here to inquire into certain affairs. You have saved me much time. I have met all the personages here with whom it was necessary for me to speak, and I can be on my way to Vienna at eight in the morning. I have surprised the nobles completely; willing or not, they had to express their opinions. They had no time to reflect, concoct schemes, or evade my questions. I discovered here, by the help of music and dancing, more than if I had invited them to my palace for official council— but not another word about that matter. I have just noticed how artistically your halls are decorated. Lead me through the apartments which you consecrated to pleasure, that I may thoroughly appreciate your taste.”

Although the Count was accustomed to bask in the sunshine of the royal family, yet when in obedience to the Emperor’s request he

walked before him, his heart swelled with pride at the thought that the whole nobility of Prague were beholding his intimate footing with the sovereign.

The Hapsburgs had long conferred favors on the Felsenburk family for its faithfulness and devotion, but they had bestowed on none of the nobles as high honors as they now heaped upon Francis Václav. Undoubtedly he deserved the distinction, for he had proved most faithful in the conflict following the death of Charles VI., the father of Maria Theresa, when nearly all the rulers of Europe denied her the right to the Bohemian throne. The young Felsenburk at that time was so enthusiastic a partisan of the twenty-three-year-old Empress that he persuaded the Bohemian nobles who had deserted her to renew their allegiance; he sacrificed so much for the cause, he decided by his strategy and valor so many battles in favor of her armies, he contributed so wonderfully to the final triumph of the Austrian army, that when peace was declared titles and ranks were showered upon

him. The Count did not sacrifice blood and estates in vain; the name of Felsenburk became more powerful and glorious than ever before. But the grateful Empress, even after having covered him with stars and crosses, was not satisfied; she was thinking of another reward—a more beautiful reward.

The Empress was the guardian of a young lady, an orphan, wealthy, and of an illustrious family, who was in St. Ann's convent in the Old Town of Prague for her education. This ward she chose for his bride. At the request of the Empress, the young lady sent her photograph to Vienna; the Count, favorably impressed by the portrait of the young beauty, willingly accepted her majesty's offer. The young lady was brought in great splendor from Prague to Vienna, where the Empress had made such magnificent preparations for the marriage festivities that for some time they were the talk of the whole city. The Empress and her whole court graced with their presence not only the religious ceremonies at St. Stephen's Church, but also the

banquet which the young husband gave a week after the wedding.

The Empress was confident that she had well provided for the happiness of her favorite noble and her ward. But alas! she was mistaken. Maria Theresa was certainly justified in thinking that the young Countess, who had been taught obedience from earliest childhood, would yield to the Count her warm admiration and respectful love. Felsenburk was at that time one of the handsomest and most renowned of men, secret and known lover of all the court belles, any one of whom would have considered herself fortunate to become his wife. The Empress hoped that the young wife, with her modesty and loveliness, would prove attractive to her husband and turn him from the irregularities to which he had become accustomed during his loose soldier life, and that she would soon bring him to repentance. The worldliness of the Count greatly worried the religious Empress. She wanted to have him faultless. Very few men were such decided lovers of feminine beauty,

whether it were found among the aristocracy or not; very few were such decided lovers of midnight revelry and gay company as was Count Felsenburk. Also few were they who acknowledged so freely as he that pleasure was their religion, luxury the only divinity which they sincerely believed and faithfully worshiped. Who could have been better fitted to turn him away from such self-indulgence and lead him into a better, holier life than the pupil of pious nuns, a beautiful, refined young lady, unyielding in principles and yet affectionate in words and deeds? Beyond the desire to reward him, she had another good purpose; the virtuous Empress wished not only to please the Count, but also to improve him.

But the ward was not what the Empress thought her to be. She was quiet and reserved, not through modesty and humility, but through pride and haughtiness. The nuns of St. Ann's convent had not educated her wisely; they had petted and fondled her. They had aimed at getting the rich heiress to grow fond

of their convent and remain with them always. The young lady readily conformed to their wishes; quiet convent life, passive meditation and religious idleness pleased her nature. Besides, the sisters promised her the abbess's position, which her proud mind greatly desired. The command of the Empress to prepare for marriage aroused her very unpleasantly from her dreams; she tried to revolt, but there was no help; she was compelled to obey. She left her beloved convent with a thousand tears, and in the same regretful spirit was dismissed by her teachers, who pitied her because, for a sinful man, she was forced to give up the heavenly crown. What wonder, then, that full of inward grief and bitterness, she began to hate the man before she knew him. She did not conceal before him the reluctance with which she gave him her hand, which long before had been given to the heavenly Bridegroom, whose wreath already decorated her head.

At first the Count considered the cold, repulsive behavior of his young wife as con-

vent shyness and girlish bashfulness, which she thought it her duty to assume; and on that account he endured her obstinacy quite patiently. It was something new and often even amusing for the Count, who had been petted by all the ladies, to see his young wife hasten away from him to her prayers for consolation. But seeing at length from what source the supposed shyness came, the Count ceased to smile. The Countess, after some time, felt it her duty to return to the rigorous ways of the convent and reproach her husband for his faults; and this she did with the inconsiderate stiffness and arrogance of conscious virtue which marks both the old and the young bigot. She showed no respect for him, either before strangers or servants, and regarded him more and more as a lost sheep. Such conduct a man of even less violent temper than Count Felsenburk certainly would not have endured. His attachment to his wife was no more than a mere liking, and that disappeared as quickly as he took a deeper view of her inward self. She

soon became unbearable to him, and he never forgot to reveal his feelings toward her with the same openness that she did to him. Between this couple, equally unyielding, equally overbearing, hating each other with equal intensity, there was naturally a continual strife. In vain the Empress talked, warned and reprimanded when she heard of the trouble between them; in vain she begged them to become reconciled; in vain she urged that people so distinguished should not disgrace themselves by a public separation—she accomplished nothing. Both alike remained obstinate. In two years the young Countess Felsenburk returned to her dear convent, for which she had not ceased to yearn; not, however, with all her wealth, only with a small portion. The greater part of her wealth she had to leave to her husband, who was made the guardian of their only child, Maria Felicia, to whom the Empress was a godmother. After his wife's departure, the Count obtained for his daughter a son's privilege—to hold after his death the right to all his estates, to

keep her family name, and in case of marriage to transmit it to her children. The Empress had granted him this privilege because of his family misfortune and against the wishes of the younger branch of the Felsenburks, who tried to move heaven and earth against it.

Maria Felicia Felsenburk was worshiped in her childhood, by all who saw her, as a child of angelic beauty, and now as a maiden she was known to be the most beautiful among the Prague nobility. But more than all others her father admired her. The Count fell so deeply in love with his daughter while she was yet in the cradle that he never regretted her having been born a girl instead of a boy. For whole days he would stay by her side, blindly humoring all her whims. Why, was she not a Felsenburk? Then, who could indulge their fancies, if not she? At the table his daughter always sat by his right side as his dearest guest, and he never drank his wine until she had tasted of it with her rosy lips. When he went out with her, followed by a retinue of attendants, the Prague people

rushed out to see the beautiful daughter riding on a horse beside her valiant father. She was not only his love, but the love of the street youngsters. They knew from afar the tramping of her horse, and greeted her with deafening cheers before they saw her. The Countess always generously scattered change and sweets among them. She never went out without such a supply, and never failed to thank the children for their happy greeting with a gay swing of her gold whip and her most pleasant smiles. When her jealous rivals privately set down a list of the faults of the proud and bold Miss Felsenburk, who dared to outshine them with the luster of her beauty and wealth, they did not neglect to include the fact that she never smiled so pleasantly on the guests at entertainments in her father's palace as she did on the street youngsters, and that no person of her own rank interested her in so great a measure as the bare-footed urchins.

But of late a cloud had come over the friendship of the father and the daughter; the

Count did not laugh so gayly at his daughter's willfulness as he formerly had done, nor was she as lively and happy in his company as she used to be. The brightness had faded from their brows, and they could not look each other pleasantly in the face.





CHAPTER II

THE Emperor, accompanied by the Count, walked through a long suite of brilliantly decorated rooms, passing amidst the throng of guests, who humbly stepped aside at their approach. He admired the pictures on the tapestries, specially prepared for that evening, the costly statues artistically arranged; and the stately furniture. He expressed his admiration with detail unusual for him, and the Count was unable to comprehend how a liking for things in which at other times the Emperor took little or no interest was so suddenly developed in him. Even the apparently aimless walk was contrary to the custom of the ruler, who at other times very unwillingly and very seldom allowed a half-hour to pass by unoccupied with state affairs. The

Count was delighted to think that it happened because the Emperor was enraptured with the gorgeous furnishings of the palace. He did not notice that the sovereign's eyes turned to every nook and corner, and if he did see it once or twice he thought the Emperor was looking back at the things he had most admired.

But the Emperor glanced in vain over the sofas and settees occupied by ladies, who, in spite of his incognito, rose and bowed whenever he passed them; in vain he explored all the corners and looked behind all the curtains; from no chair arose the form of the unknown; from no place sparkled the two clear blue eyes for whose sake alone he had started on the journey.

Not finding in the last room the one he was seeking, he decided, as a last resort, to do something which at other times he gladly omitted.

"Do you not intend to introduce me to your daughter?" he asked his pleased escort, as they turned back to the dancing hall,

where the rest of the company were starting a minuet.

At that question, over the Count's face, until then so clear, there flitted a shadow.

"I did not dare to speak of her to your majesty," he answered evasively.

"I fear that I have failed in courtesy to you," the Emperor kindly replied. "It might have easily happened that being taken up with state affairs, I should have left without thinking of the Prague beauties. The Countess must introduce all her friends to me, that I may see for myself whether she is, as the rumor goes, the most beautiful among them. But why are you looking so downcast?"

"I am worried," said the Count, "lest Maria Felicia may fail to meet with grace from her noble Emperor."

"What an idea!" said the Emperor, surprised. "Why should I dislike your daughter, a lady renowned for beauty and brought up by you?"

"I have proved that a loving father is not the person to bring up his daughter," the Count

said, with such a sad accent that the Emperor suddenly stopped, forgetting, in view of the sadness of the Count, the lady that he was seeking.

“I see that something really worries you,” he said with sympathy. “Trust it to me, dear Count; you see that I am as devoted to you and your family as you are to me. Speak frankly; do not think that you will tire me. We are left alone, where no one can overhear us. Have you really cause to complain of your daughter’s behavior?”

The Count struggled with his overwrought feelings.

“Oh, who would have foretold to me that the moment when I should stand with my only child before my gracious master, commending her to his sublime friendship, would not be the happiest of my life—that I should tremble and do all I could to postpone it? It would have grieved me to death,” he passionately added. “Yes, I linger, I tremble to introduce my daughter lest she awaken your dislike, not by her personal appearance, but by

her behavior. She conducts herself in society according to rules of her own making, caring little whether or not they are approved by the world. She does not resemble the rest of the young ladies in anything. Her behavior is entirely peculiar, and I do not know what to do to prevent it. If she were not a great lover of music (on the harp she by far excels her teacher, an excellent artist, whom I sent to Italy for training) I could not say that she possesses one feminine quality. She can ride, shoot and fence much more skillfully than she can handle a needle or a brush. She acts less gracefully at a ball than at a hunt. She endures hardships on such expeditions more bravely than a man; she never complains of hunger, fatigue or lack of comfort, and she bravely sits in her saddle when others are drooping with exhaustion. She knows no fear, no danger; bodily pain has not yet caused her to shed a tear. I have often thought that if war should come upon us, she would follow me in disguise to the field, and she would return crowned with laurels."

The Count's eye unconsciously sparkled. He had complained to the Emperor about his daughter being an Amazon, and yet her man-like qualities flattered the old soldier. He had given them a chance to develop freely through all her youth, and not until now, when they came out too boldly, did they frighten him. He considered it impossible to introduce her to the Emperor, and for the first time really felt hard toward her.

The Emperor, noticing the hesitation, smiled.

"The Countess has inherited your blood; it is boiling over, and that is her whole offense. You are unjust in turning against her on that account," he said, soothing the excited father. "But if you feel that your hand is really too weak to keep your daughter's youthful spirit within proper limits, put her in hands as kind as yours, but less yielding. Marry your daughter, if she is willful."

"She will not listen to marriage," the Count sighed again.

"That is the way all girls talk. It is a

mere pretense. I am surprised that you can be deceived by such a protestation."

"But Maria Felicia does nothing for a pretense, illustrious master; she has not the modest and pleasant qualities of her sex—but she also lacks its faults. She never dissembles, never lies, she is often hopelessly truthful. She has already given many proofs that she does not intend to marry. No man has ever yet interested her. The flower of our noblemen lie at her feet; when she is not in their company she does not think about them, and if they pay her attentions, she only amuses herself with them."

"Be patient; she will soon change her mind."

"How happy I should be if your prophecy should prove true! She treats her admirers just now worse than she has ever done before. At our last reception her willfulness really reached a serious height. Disappearing shortly before the close of the ball, she sent me a message by one of her servants that she had gone to say good-bye to one of the ladies who had

become ill during the entertainment. Impatiently I waited for her in the dressing-hall, where the servants were assisting the guests about to start for home. The most sprightly among them was a maid whose dark-pitted face was so peculiarly shaded by a stiff white bonnet that her comical appearance continually tickled the young men into a spirit of wag-gery. They wondered that wine which she touched did not sour; they were certain that no ghosts were to be found in the palace, because she must have frightened them away. Continuing her work, she quietly listened to all their remarks; but who could describe the amazement of the gigglers when the supposed servant suddenly jerked off her bonnet, wiped her face, and Countess Felsenburk smiled at them? 'There, gentlemen,' she exclaimed, with her most willful laugh, 'that is the way it goes with your hearts! It is just half an hour since I heard you say that if you were passing the house that entertained me you would know my presence by the pulsations of your hearts and the dizziness of your heads. How did it

come that now, when I was so close to you, your hearts did not tell you of my presence by thumping loudly in your bosoms? Was my mask in the way? You have not once, but a thousand times sworn that you would worship me just as much if you found me in a petticoat as if I were dressed in a royal robe. How often you have declared that you were not devoted to me on account of my beauty, fame, or wealth, but because of the purity of my mind and heart! How offended you were when I considered such talk vain flattery! I have proved now that it is really no more than that, and at the same time I have given you an answer to your vows. No, my gentlemen. For affection that depends upon the unblemished fairness of my complexion, or the symmetry of my form; for devotion that a few dark marks on my face, a few wrinkles on my forehead are capable of changing into indifference, contempt, dislike, disgust—for such love Maria Felicia Felsenburk will not be a slave to any man.' "

The Emperor laughed heartily, and went forward more quickly.

“As the Countess has fared with her admirers, so should I fare if I should attempt to see how true are the vows of certain people who declare that they are devoted to me, not attracted by the glory of my crowns, but for my principles,” the Emperor quickly added. “I should really like to imitate for once the example of Maria Felicia, in order to get rid of awkward and intruding flatterers. At first I wanted to know Miss Felsenburk because she was your daughter; but now she herself interests me, and I insist on your introducing her, even though she may not succeed in making the three bows that etiquette now prescribes for such occasions, since I have forbidden kneeling before my mother and myself. Continue, dear Count; your narration interested me very much. I can see the long faces of the embarrassed admirers.”

“I should abuse your patience if I were to describe all the extremes in which she de-

lights. She is decidedly an enemy to all the customary rules which keep a girl within the narrow limits of home and family duties. The whole world is too small and narrow for her; her philosophy soars as high as heaven and again descends and delves into the earth; nothing is too high for her to reach, nothing too deep to penetrate. Lately, to my horror, she has been revolting against the existing order of things to which every man willingly submits, knowing that it is vain to struggle against the current. But, unaided, she swims against it carelessly and bravely. Of all the ladies of her rank she is the only one that does not wear hooped skirts, and she would not for any sum of money have her hair powdered and stylishly dressed."

The Emperor became thoughtful; it seemed to him that he had seen the blue eyes shaded by black locks, that the form lightly leaning against the pillar was marked by attractive gracefulness, that she looked strikingly different from the other ladies, who resembled walking bells. But noticing that the Count

was watching him inquiringly and seemed to wonder at his sudden silence, he said: "The Countess is of a very independent mind if she dares to defy fashion. I work in vain against it at the court, and that is because we have not one lady there of sufficiently independent mind to defy it and thus set a good example to the rest. My dear Count, if you have nothing else to complain of than that your daughter will not powder and will not wear hooped skirts, that she wishes to arouse in the heart of her future husband a more permanent affection than a mere liking, I pity not you, but her."

Seeing with surprise the way in which the Emperor estimated his daughter's nature, the Count recovered his composure.

"She does not deserve these good words from your majesty," he said, bowing to the Emperor with a grateful smile; "she is a bad and saucy child. She not only repels her admirers, but she is discourteous to everybody whom she does not like, and she is not only out of harmony with the fashion, but dis-

agrees with every one and opposes everything. She delights in everlasting moral discussions, in which she does not spare herself or any one else. She strictly reproves faults in herself which she does not have, but those that I see in her she will not correct——”

He did not finish. The Emperor suddenly laid his hand on the Count's shoulder and said:

“What lady is that, just leaving the ball-room with the young cavaliers?”

The Count was so angered by the sudden interruption of the confession for which the Emperor himself had asked him that he turned away. But the Emperor thought that he had turned quickly to answer his question. A few moments passed before the Count was able, with proper calmness for the occasion, to say:

“It is the one, illustrious master, whose sins I am just confessing.”

The situation suddenly dawned upon the experienced courtier. The lady whose name the Emperor, so indifferent to women, desired

to know interested him,—interested him so much that he forgot to conceal his interest. It was evident that this was not the first time that evening that he had seen her. Most likely she had disappeared from his sight, and it was to look for her, and not to examine his paintings, that he had invited the Count to take the walk just finished. It was for her he had searched in every corner, and not for his pictures and statues. He had insisted on an introduction to Maria Felicia and all her friends that he might see his daughter again; he cared nothing for her friends.

“That your daughter? That is Countess Maria Felicia? Strange I did not suspect it when you began to tell me about her; and yet I began to think so.”

The Count was now convinced. If the light that flashed from his eyes at this assurance was a reflection of his thoughts, then they were very proud, very brave, very brilliant.

Just then the young Countess, little suspecting that she was the object of the Emperor's

attention, quickly neared the main entrance to the hall, followed by a host of cavaliers with whom she was evidently carrying on a teasing conversation, for her blooming cheeks and expressive eyes overflowed with willfulness.

Maria Felicia Felsenburk was really a remarkable beauty. She was the only lady in the ball-room that was not painted and laced, and yet her complexion was the most beautiful, her form the most graceful and the bearing of her body the most dignified. A thin white dress, interwoven richly with silver, hung loosely down to her feet, and her black hair, smoothed back from her face, waved far down over her waist. Everything about her was easy, firm, resolute, determined, and yet pretty, artistic and natural. Her head was not decorated with ribbons, feathers, flowers, such as overloaded the steeped hair of the other ladies; only one diamond star glittered above her forehead. To the Emperor, watching her with animation, the star seemed to be her ensign.

At the young lady's command the chamberlains standing at the door pushed aside the draperies, and she disappeared with her attendants as suddenly as she had done before among the pillars. A lackey came to the Count and announced that the Countess was about to start with the young nobles to take a morning ride.

"To take a morning ride!" said the astonished Count, pushing aside a curtain on the window near which he was standing. A wide stream of light, from which the frightened ladies drew back lest it might touch their pale faces and crushed dresses, poured in upon the company. At the same time the horseshoes tinkled on the pavement; the young lady and her attendants were setting out for their trip on horseback.

"Is it really daylight?" said the Emperor with surprise, and looking at his watch, quickly added: "I have just enough time left to strengthen and refresh myself also with some kind of outing. What do you say, Count—suppose we follow the Countess?"

The heavy stone rolled off the Count's breast. He had thought he would choke with anger when, at this very decisive moment, he saw his daughter again overtaken by one of her eccentric fancies and thus defeating the ambitious plans with which his proud mind was teeming. With that anger something terrible had suddenly formed in his heart; he felt that he could never forgive Maria Felicia if Joseph II. left Prague without meeting her. He jumped up like a youth when he heard the Emperor's proposal, and instantly gave orders to have his horses saddled.

If the guests a few moments ago looked on with ridicule and impatience when the Countess with the young nobles unconcernedly left her father's guests, and whispered that it was really unbearable to see her trample on all the rules of etiquette, they did not know what to say when they saw that the Emperor considered the young lady's conduct perfectly proper and that he intended to follow her.

Joseph II. left, taking with him the Count, without any ceremony whatever. The

haughty nobility, astonished and angry, were left alone for the discussion of a very important question—How would it be at the court after the death of the vigilant Maria Theresa, when Joseph II. should rule alone?





CHAPTER III

MARIA FELICIA, galloping ahead of her chivalrous attendants, dashed up the precipitous "Deep Road" and out of the city through the Imperial Gate. She did not look around to see if the rest were following or were satisfied with the direction she was taking; it seemed that she either had forgotten them entirely or that she did not care whether they were pleased or not. Leaving her escorts to entertain themselves, she rode forward, regardless of all that was going on around her, even of the beautiful morning just awakening. The little skylark soaring above her head and pouring forth his melody, the budding bushes and flowers sparkling with dew, the gold-tinted cloud in the pale blue

sky—all the charms of a spring morning had not the power to arouse her. Quietly, with downcast eyes, she sat in the saddle, and her face, which had beamed with happy blushes in the ball-room, was now veiled with thoughtful pallor.

Probably the Countess, lost in her reverie, would have gone on and returned to Prague without favoring her attendants with one word or look, had not her horse, frightened by a dog whose master was herding sheep in the distance, suddenly reared up. Aroused from her dreams, she looked up, and while the cavaliers anxiously surrounded her to see if she was hurt, she looked about as though she had yet to recollect where she was, how she came to be there, and who was talking to her. Her eyes wandered to the horizon, girded by a mountain belt, and with that scene her life and usual sprightliness suddenly returned. Her eyes beamed, the blood tingled in her veins, a strong desire pulsed within her to fly over those green meadows, budding forests, clear rivers glittering in the trans-

parent atmosphere, to rise to the peaks of those lofty mountains, and from there still higher until she penetrated the clouds surrounding them. Unconsciously she stretched out her hand toward the clouds, and to give some relief to her feelings, she exclaimed in a voice louder than the song of the finch in a bush near by:

“Gentlemen, let us race here a while, if you please,” and at the same time she answered their anxious questions as to whether or not she was hurt, or at least severely frightened. Before she had finished speaking, she turned from the “Deep Road” to a fallow over which a flock of sheep with their curly guard and his master were running away affrighted before her.

Just as the young nobles started to race with the Countess, the Emperor and the Count overtook the company. Joseph II. stopped his horse and hid behind a bush, so as not to disturb the racers, as it seemed, but instead of that, it was to gaze upon the Countess. She was in that moment really

dazzling. Her father confessed to himself in a fever of hope and fear that he had never seen her so beautiful before.

Maria Felicia left the racers far behind. In the airy gallop the cap slipped off her head, and the diamond star above her forehead glittered in all the colors of the rainbow. In the fearful speed she bowed over the neck of her black horse, and her hair flowed with his long mane in one waving, silky mass. The wind blowing in the folds of her dark blue velvet gown, puffed them out until they shone like the wings of a swallow. The noble horse and its beautiful rider looked like one being, a winged mythical being, bravely flying in the air over the dewy grass.

One racer after another, tired out, abandoned the race. Maria Felicia was left alone. Noticing this, she laughed gayly, and leaping down from the breathless horse, twisted the reins over her shoulder, threw over him a cover that was brought by the equerry, and carefully led the horse around to cool.

The Emperor at the same time sprang from

his horse and looked at his hands, but they were destitute of rings; he felt in his lace vest, but there was no clasp in it. He sorrowfully exclaimed:

“I should like to bestow a gift on the Countess, but lo! I have no suitable jewelry at hand.” The Count turned to a servant who held a basket of bottles filled with wines, and taking from it a goblet intended for the Emperor’s use, silently handed it to his royal friend. His hand trembled as much as his eyes glowed with excitement. Joseph anxiously reached for the gold cup, and quickly went to the Countess.

“To the victor,” he exclaimed, handing the cup to her with a pleasant dignity, yet the dignity of a sovereign.

Maria Felicia, surprised by his sudden appearance, thanked him with a silent bow. It was not so profound as it should have been; neither did she repeat it three times; but it was so graceful and respectful that it satisfied even the Count, who watched her with the greatest anxiety. She took the cup from the

Emperor, and her eyes, with the same questioning clearness that he had noted before, sought his eyes, then dropped on the gold cup and remained there with a sad and peculiar expression.

“Why do you look so gravely at the token from my hand?” the Emperor asked with surprise.

“Because it seems to be the emblem of my life,” she pensively replied.

“How can I understand that?”

“The cup is gold, but—empty.”

“That your life is empty?” said the Emperor astonished. “That is what you say, so beautiful, so honored, so admired by all who come near you?”

“That is the gold of the empty cup.”

“Only on you depends the filling of it with sweetly flowing love.”

“Would my Emperor advise the same to my brother?”

The Emperor hesitated.

“If your brother complained of the emptiness of life, I should advise him to become

useful to his country, to bind himself to some office and honorably attend to it."

"Office?" she quietly repeated. "Is that something more than collecting taxes, dues, settling the quarrels of people over estates or a handful of money, condemning the guilty to prison or to death?"

"Well, if he did not like the life of a civil officer," he continued, "I should ask him to go to the army, gain merit and honors as a soldier."

"Soldier?" the young lady repeated more quietly and slowly. "Is that something more than to shoot men and to command others to do the same?"

The Emperor looked up.

"Strange, really strange, are your ideas of life. I am amazed to think how they could have originated in your mind."

"Is it really strange if some one tries to look at the world without prejudice, and call everything in it by its proper name? Then, my father must be right. I am getting to be unpleasantly peculiar, because I scorn lies and

try to get at the truth everywhere, be it ever so bitter."

"Felicia," the Count exclaimed, "in your childish confidence in our sovereign's benignity you forget the respect due him."

"In what, father? Because I do not hide my thoughts before him? You yourself have told me that he declares war against all dissimulation; why, then, should I fear to speak frankly? You have also told me that he knows no higher duty than to promote the welfare of his subjects, and for that reason I believed you that he was the greatest of monarchs. Why, then, do you not let him make me happy by leading me out of the labyrinth of doubt into which I have come, not even knowing how, and out of which you cannot lead me? He alone will be able to do so, being the most enlightened—that is, the most righteous and the best of men."

The Emperor's face flushed. Nothing had ever flattered him so much as these words spoken with the fervor of deep conviction.

"Let the young lady have her way," he said

to the Count, "and when you talk to her about me in the future tell her that above all virtues I respect the truth, and request her in my name never to exchange it for any other quality more pleasing and agreeable to people."

The Countess thanked the Emperor with a smile.

"I regret," warmly added the Emperor, "really regret, that without having had time to become fully acquainted with Miss Felsenburk, I must say adieu. My time just now is very closely measured; in half an hour I must be on my way to Vienna. I confess that to-day for the first time it is hard for me to do what I have laid out as my duty."

"Shall I, then, carry away the cup empty?" the young lady sadly replied.

"Just for to-day, Miss Felsenburk; we are not talking together for the last time. I hope we shall soon meet again; meet we must. Till then I shall think about your words, and will try to answer to your satisfaction all your questions. In return for that, you shall again

tell me openly your opinions about what I may ask you. You need to learn of me, and I of you. Oh, do not shake your head so doubtfully, as if it were impossible; my words are not mere words of courtesy. You, of course, do not and cannot know how invaluable to a ruler are two clear, unprejudiced human eyes which earnestly want to serve him."

And Joseph II. parted with the Countess as with a princess of the blood.

The Count escorted the Emperor back to his palace, where the Emperor's traveling carriage was waiting. On their way Joseph did not say a word, and yet the Count, because of what he read in his master's clear face, was not displeased or dissatisfied.

Count Felsenburk felt that he had never loved his daughter so much as he did just now. Had he prepared her in the most careful way for her meeting with the Emperor she could not have made a more favorable impression upon him; she could not have played her part more successfully than she had done unconsciously and on the inspiration of the mo-

ment. Strange that he did not anticipate that Maria Felicia would interest Joseph. But it was well that he did not, for he would then not have prepared him so well for her eccentricities. Some peculiar good luck ruled even in that, for just because he so much feared their meeting and frankly confessed it to the Emperor, he awakened in Joseph a greater interest in his daughter. Yes, everything favored the Count. He said to himself that little had he suspected that what a few hours ago he so bitterly reproached in his daughter might become the source of unequalled glory for her and her family.

“I do not know a more unjust father than you,” the Emperor said to him as they were parting. “You have wronged your daughter in every respect. It is impossible to think of anything more delightful than her childlike frankness, or more noble than her courageous ways. Only in one thing you were right, and that is, that her nature is more that of a young man than of a young lady, but even that is to her credit.”

“Your majesty again speaks with your customary kindness to my family,” objected the Count, with a profound bow, that the Emperor might not see how he flushed with high expectations for the future.

“Expressing my opinion of your daughter according to her merit, I am not thinking of you or your faithfulness; I have nothing on my mind but her rare personality. When will you introduce her at the court?”

“Can I hope ever to think of such a thing as introducing a daughter who has such a nature?” the Count sighed with much hypocrisy, for he had thought of it several times, but his daughter had always decidedly objected. She did not wish to follow him where she knew the trammels of conventionality threatened her independent ways. In Prague it was different; her family enjoyed so many rights, so many privileges and such high esteem that much was overlooked and forgiven.

“Just because of her rare nature you must introduce her as soon as possible,” said the Emperor, kindly reproving the Count. “Let

the rest of the ladies see her and imitate her precious qualities. Your daughter is a jewel whose value you refuse to acknowledge."

"Your majesty is forgetting what the illustrious Empress would say to such a teacher of the court ladies."

The Emperor laughed.

"That, of course, I do not know," he said, shrugging his shoulders; "but let us hope that the Empress will be more patient with her than you think. But if she should be strict with her, I will be near—I will become the young lady's knight and bravely take her part, that for once healthful breezes may blow at the court and spread from there over the rest of Europe. It will be a natural thing if I become her ally, for I share the same lot with her. My mother and I agree about as well as you and the Countess. The Empress continually complains about me, misjudges me, disapproves of my ambition, and reprimands me for my world-conquering plans about as often as you do your daughter for her independent ways."

And the Emperor, glancing once more to the windows of the proud Felsenburk Palace, rode away in his very best mood.

In the afternoon the Countess, reclining in an armchair, was resting in her chamber. The room looked more like an art gallery than the private apartment of a young lady. Its walls were covered with paintings representing all the castles, mansions, estates and cities which at that time the Felsenburk family had in their possession, and whose mistress she was to become after her father's death. The Count had the paintings hung there that his daughter, as she rose and retired, might have her enormous wealth before her and take delight in looking at it. On a table by the Countess stood the goblet which the Emperor had given her. Thoughtfully she looked at it.

Quite unexpectedly her father came in; he never came to see her at that hour. His step and manner were prouder than ever. Quietly he seated himself before his daughter, first taking a long, significant look at her and then at the cup.

“What is the matter with you, father?” the young lady asked, fearing that something unusual had happened, and that he was ill, for his face was flaming.

“Do you love me?” he asked, instead of answering her question.

The young Countess sprang up, and clasping her arms closely around his neck heartily kissed him. The daughter did not suspect that she was giving her father the last kiss; the father did not know that he was enjoying with his daughter the last moments of mutual love.

“If you really love your father you surely will do something to please him, though you have not overjoyed him in that respect lately.”

She looked at him penitently; well she knew that her father was often dissatisfied with her.

“I am very sorry that I do not please you as I used to,” she sadly replied. “Your dissatisfaction often grieves me. But tell me how to avoid thoughts that rise in my mind involuntarily; what to do that their echo may never

tremble in my words, and their reflection never appear on my face. Oh, believe that it is impossible for me to keep away from them! I know that in my mind terrible chasms open, on whose edge my soul trembles and whose depth I must measure with horrified eyes, but it is impossible for me to avoid them. There are times when it seems to me that everything I do and see lacks reality, that there is no truth in anything, that we are all wrong, that things should be entirely different—and yet I should not know how to change them or whether it would be best to change them, for people are satisfied with what the world bestows. I comprehend your ill-feeling toward me for my sighing and turning my eyes in all directions to investigate something that perhaps is not, was not, and never will be. I wanted to ask the Emperor about it, for in him is said to be centered the wisdom of our age; he probably feels a similar dissatisfaction, for he is constantly changing, destroying and reversing. He would at least have told me whether I was

justified in thinking and feeling as I do, or whether I was overloaded with wealth and luxury, as you say, willful or over-sensitive, as I so often think, or worn out by that never-ceasing storm within me where boisterous joy and painful longing so quickly alternate. But I did not succeed in having a confidential conversation with him. Oh, papa, will you ever come to me again with something besides a reprimand for my ungratefulness?"

"I am beginning to-day."

"Really?"

"I have said that I wish to convince myself whether you love me as well as you sometimes assure me—as a daughter should love her father."

"How can I prove it to you? Speak!"

"By getting ready, without the usual opposition, for a trip."

"Where do you intend to take me so suddenly?"

"I will take you to your godmother."

"Papa, you are forgetting that I have begged you many times not to take me there."

“The Emperor at his departure asked me most courteously and decidedly to do so; it will be an insult to him if we do not come. A wish so urgently spoken by a sovereign is equal to a command. And besides that, only a little while ago you expressed a desire to speak to him; you could then do so at will.”

“I should provoke both you and myself at the court.”

“That shall not happen. If the honor of our family is concerned, then I understand no jesting, and will not allow any. I should not like to doubt that in that respect Miss Felsenburk is of the same opinion as her father.”

The Count emphasized the words with more severity than his daughter had ever before heard him use. Trembling all over, she sank into the chair from which, only a moment before, she had sprung joyfully to embrace him.

The Count, seeing that he had frightened his daughter, now tried to console her.

“Mind your father, Felicia, quietly and sensibly,” he said; “do not interrupt his words with nonsense, and do not provoke him with childish objections. You, being young and inexperienced, do not anticipate how important a period has begun in your life; that in your hand lies the power of adding to the Felsenburk name a new luster and undying glory. For that reason I speak to you urgently. I shall not try to persuade you by cajolery to do what duty requires. You know that I did not enjoy much pleasure as a husband; it is your duty to make up for the wrong which your mother inflicted upon me with her stubbornness and nearsightedness, and not sin against our family honor as she did.”

The young Countess, wide-awake, listened attentively. “I felt certain that with your behavior and appearance you would make an unfavorable impression on the Emperor, but I was mistaken. Joseph II. found in your character traits in harmony with his, qualities like his own, opinions and thoughts with

which he agrees. He said that if you would come to the court he would become your knight, and with your help and example undertake many reforms. As you see, he has assigned you a duty, important and honorable."

The Count paused. He had expected his daughter to assent, but she, steadily gazing at him with her clear blue eyes, uttered not one sound. That silence and that rigid look the father did not like, and he continued more sternly: "That, of course, is not all—the most important part is this: Joseph II. is not happy in love, either family or matrimonial; very little sincere love has he yet enjoyed. His mother favors his younger brother Leopold, and Leopold and his sisters do not love Joseph because he is the oldest and the heir to the crown. His first wife, Isabel, to whom he was devoted with the fervor of first love, had no affection for him; she felt unhappy by his side. His sister, noticing how he grieved over her death, revealed the fact to him with good intentions, and thus wounded

him deeply. He would not listen to love and marriage after that. Only for political reasons, and to satisfy his mother, he married the second time. Josephine of Bavaria did not satisfy him in any respect; he never tried to conceal his indifference to her. He coldly turns away from the foremost beauties gracing his court. You are the first one since Isabel that has surprised him, impressed him, won him. Yes, you have won the Emperor; there is no doubt about it; he went away charmed by you. His complete surrender and your elevation now depend only on your own efforts and tact. If you become not only his sweetheart, but also his friend; if you show yourself worthy not only of his love, but also of his confidence; if you convince him that you can comprehend all his plans and inspire new ones, become helpful and indispensable to him, then I am sure you can easily persuade him to marry you secretly—yes, I am sure that he himself will offer you his hand.”

Maria Felicia turned pale as death. The

Count went on, as though he did not notice her emotion.

“In four weeks you can be ready for the journey. It is unnecessary for me to tell you not to spare expense, to get the most beautiful and costly outfit possible to procure. I will look around for material and jewelry myself, that you may be the first at the court, not only in beauty, but in dress and jewelry,” the Count added, rising as if everything were settled and it were unnecessary to prolong the interview.

“I am not going a step,” finally escaped the lips of the struggling Countess.

The veins on the Count's forehead swelled.

“I have said—you are going!”

“I am not going!”

“You must!”

“I hope you will not force me to go?”

“Yes, I decidedly will.”

“Such, then, is your pride, Count Felsenburk,” exclaimed Maria Felicia. “That is why you appealed to your daughter's love, tested her heart, talked about family honor—

that she might let you quietly take her to the man into whose heart you command her to sneak; and for it you would have him favor her, make of her his unacknowledged wife, disliked and persecuted by his family, scorned by queens who would never recognize her as their peer, ridiculed by the nobility from whose circle she had haughtily elevated herself, unrecognized by nations which would not know what to call her, for she would give up the right to her family name and gain no other from the position of her husband. She would be something that hangs between heaven and earth, claimed by neither, repelled by both; something that can spread its roots nowhere, belongs to no one, something that is neither truth nor lie. Oh, how could I have ever dreamed that you were preparing such a lot for me? Hypocrisy, selfishness, malice—such are then the virtues of the nobility; such qualities would please you; through them I should bestow new and undying glory upon our family! Oh, indeed, they are worthy of

the position that you think so desirable for your only child!"

"Hush!" the Count exclaimed, and now he became as pale as death; "hush, not another word! With shame I realize that you do not see an inch before you, that I have over-estimated your sense and your qualifications—that you are nothing but a foolish, over-bearing, headstrong girl, a real daughter of your mother. Remember where she drove me with her folly and obstinacy, and do not provoke me to deal with the undutiful child as I dealt with the insolent mother!"

Maria Felicia coldly straightened herself before her father.

"Oh, allow me not to interfere in the manifestation of your fatherly love," proudly she said to him. "I suspect it closely resembles your family pride."

"You will have the pleasure of convincing yourself of that fact," the Count answered in the same way. "You shall not leave your chamber, nor shall any one come to see you,

until you let me know by your maid that you are ready for the journey."

"Then as long as I live, I shall never leave these rooms."

"And yet, young lady," said the Count, maliciously, "you shall leave these rooms when I have you taken to the convent to your mother, that you may not be in the way of your uncle, Hypolit of Felsenburk, who from this day is my son, and to whom I shall give all legal rights and titles to my estates and my rank. I have said four weeks—that is long enough for you to decide your fate."

And the Count, leaving his daughter's boudoir, turned the key in the last door. Giving it to the horrified maid, he told her to watch the Countess closely, not to let her go anywhere, not to admit any one to her, and not to dare deliver any letters from her to any one except to himself, and he warned her that if she did otherwise she would sadly repent of it.

Maria Felicia, as if struck by lightning, stood long on the spot where her father had

left her. She thought it was a dream deluding her, that what had happened was not real, that she had fallen into a fever and some illusion was mocking her. Was it possible that she had fallen from such a height into an abyss, and lost everything, even hope? Could it be that there was no choice left her but a low, mean act or a convent? Overcome by the thought, she fell on the rug like a birch tree suddenly cut down.

“Oh, the cup of my life is being filled with wormwood, and in its golden shell an extremely bitter kernel is forming itself,” she exclaimed, and wept. “Do not think, father, that your severity will subdue me, or that you will incline me to your aims. A hundred times rather will I rot in my living grave than simulate love to any man, vilely beg for the paltry glitter of earthly power, sneak into his heart, and through his sincere affection for me gratify your ambition. What you call glory I call shame. We have comprehended each other, and we part forever; peace is not possible between us. No, no; what my father

wishes I will not do for myself nor against you, my Emperor, who have never been treated by your friends with candor, and who were the first to praise it in me as a virtue."

Day after day passed, and the Count did not receive the desired answer from his daughter, nor did he receive a supplication or one repentant word. And Maria Felicia expected no sign of relenting from her father. She knew him, and was convinced that her fate was sealed, that he would not alter one word of his sentence. Either to Vienna she must go and act according to his desire, or to her mother, to that mother who left her without any regard or feeling.

The Countess felt that there was no one in the whole world so forsaken and unhappy as she.

Several times she thought she would write to the Emperor. She knew of one trustworthy friend who would deliver the message to him. This friend was the only one who dared to defy her father's command and constantly show his devotion to her. She heard

him every day in the ante-chamber asking the maid about her and begging to be allowed to see her. The devoted maid would certainly have admitted him had the Countess directed her to do so. This friend was her music teacher, the son of her old nurse, who was only a little older than herself and who had grown up in the palace with her. In public he was known as her servant, in private he was her companion; the hours that she spent with him at the harp she counted among the most beautiful moments of her life. She knew that he would undertake the trip to Vienna for her, even though he were thus to lose the favor of the Count and endanger his own life. But what was she to write to the Emperor? Tell him everything, beg for his protection, make a complaint against her father, and thus lower him in the estimation of the Emperor, whose friendship he so highly valued? Would it not be to him a fatal blow? Would she not by such a confession lower not only him, but also herself? She must be patient and bear the burden that was laid upon her. She had

hoped that Joseph would become her benefactor, that he would make clear to her the problems of life, and alas—he had become the innocent cause of her ruin. How, thought she, will the Count justify himself when the Emperor asks him why he banished me to the convent? Well she knew that he would ask about her, that he would not forget her very soon, for she also had noticed what her father noticed—she knew how deeply she had impressed him. To justify himself her father would undoubtedly tell him that she had committed something terrible, for which even the Emperor would dislike her and cease to think kindly of her. How often her father had reproached her for thinking that something was faulty or wrong! The whole world was faulty and wrong. It was not the skillful work of a kind Creator; it was the imperfect production of some malicious being, who now mocked her misery and pain. Father's love, mother's care, truth, honor, sincerity, all were fables, lies. * * * She had always suspected it, but did not know that she would

so soon convince herself of the fact. Her mind tossed about with terrible thoughts, her head bowed down, her hands crossed on her heaving breast, for whole days and nights Maria Felicia paced the floor. Before this fatal interview with her father, when her mind was over-burdened, she had been accustomed to go to her harp for consolation. She pressed it to her bosom as her dearest friend, and life in its most beautiful aspect opened before her. At her magical touch every sound revealed a charming picture from some mysterious depth, and these floated around her head like fairies. But now she never touched the harp.

Maria Felicia feared the convent bars, the life awaiting her behind them, that terrible living death, that giving up of will, activity, conviction, that dull devotion and blind obedience — and yet not for one moment did she falter or succumb. For her, just for her, such a lot was meted out—for her, whose blood ran so rapidly, in whom was such an abundance of strength, such a strong instinct and

love of liberty. At some moments her heart beat as strongly as if ten lives instead of one circled within her body, and every drop of that mighty stream revolted when she thought that she would have to stagnate and rot in idleness. But with a deep and strong determination she constantly repeated:

“Rather a gradual death of a hundred years in the convent than a life of luxury and splendor against my conviction of duty.”

And when bodily weakness abated the struggle, she sadly gazed about the room in which she had been born and brought up, and whose walls lied about her glorious future. Her eyes, wandering from one picture to another, were not bidding farewell to her enormous wealth, but to liberty and nature; and then Maria Felicia wept bitterly. She wept not because she was not to dwell in those castles and cities as their mighty mistress, but because she never more would see the spring on the meadows, hear the grove rustle, the rivers murmur, see the golden harvest on the

fields, and because autumn, beautiful autumn, would nevermore see her ride through the purple and golden woods.

Before this she had never examined the pictures on the walls; she had only glanced at them casually; but now they began to interest her. One especially attracted her attention. It was the smallest and most insignificant of them all, hung in the gloomiest corner of the room. She stood before it for hours, silently buried in thought.

The picture represented an old castle surrounded by a lonely forest. Flocks of daws flitted around its battlements, and in the crevices overgrown with ivy, wild pigeons nested. She dreamed about the moonlight in its ancient chambers and dark corridors; she imagined the rising sun reproducing on the floor the colors of the glass in the stately windows; she galloped through the forest on her fiery black steed, breathed freely the fresh, sweet-scented air, greeted the weeping flowers in the moss, fondled the pet deer, and

listened to the bubbling springs below the rocks. Oh, if she only could be there to cool her feverish brow!

In the frame below the picture was engraved:



HLOHOV CASTLE.

Old Hlohov Castle, proud and gloomy, stood on a high, steep cliff. Hills covered with dense forests surrounded it, and on the north side peaks of lofty mountains, covered even in summer with snow, rose above them like hoary giants.

Like a never-ceasing storm roared the hungry mountain torrent around the rocky cliff. Every storm aroused it to new fury. Its water, transparent and cold as ice, then overflowed its rocky bed and thence poured down over the woody slopes, here madly destroying and undermining; there raising with deposits taken from other places. A one-arch stone bridge, ancient and covered with lichen—for it was under the water oftener than above it—connected the two lower parts of the cliff on which the castle was built. Be-

ginning at it and leading up to the first castle gate was a steep winding path. The arch of this gate served as a support to a great high tower, which was supplied with many loopholes. From that gate, over a deep moat, another bridge stretched to a second tower, a twin to the first, and a walk led from it into the bastion. Formerly it was a drawbridge; the bulwarks surrounding the castle were impregnable, and the moat was filled with water. But now the posts and the chains were rusty, the moat was dry to the bottom, the bulwarks were partly caved in, and the towers from which the wardens formerly announced the nightly hours, now echoed with the hooting of owls and the croaking of jackdaws dwelling with bats in the loopholes.

The castle in the midst of the slowly waving trees, resembled a dying hermit with a scarred face and tattered garments, crippled with the burden of age and bowed by the adversity of fate, meditating on the latter end of his life and the changes and inconsistency of the world.

It was once a young hero, strong, wealthy, powerful, and famous over all Bohemia for chivalry and valor. It was the strongest defender of justice and of the nation; to it as to a fearless avenger fled all who were oppressed or persecuted as heretics. Formerly every child in the vicinity knew its name, but now only woodmen and wanderers overtaken by storms sought the road leading to it. Formerly all the main roads centered there. Royal guests, knights, and merchants met there. During the sessions of the state legislature Hlohov was especially lively. The whole nobility occasionally met there to discuss whether war should be declared or peace preserved, and how large an allowance from the state treasury the king should receive. More than once the fate of the nation and of the neighboring countries was decided in such meetings. In magnificence of construction Hlohov ranked next to Hradchin, the royal palace in Prague. Formerly all over the surrounding forests there were clearings, which were afterwards changed into

rich estates and populous villages. In course of time trees and shrubs again covered the cleared places, and now there was nothing left of the lively villages except here and there a collection of miserable huts in which only the poorest classes of people corroded, managing in some way to exist upon the products of goat-rearing and coal-digging.

The castle fell in the storms of the Thirty Years' War, and at the same time the ancient, famous family of the Hlohovskys, its founders and lords, disappeared. For valuable services Ferdinand II. presented the castle to the knight of Skalnicky, conferring upon him at the same time the title of Count Felsenburk.

The appearance of Hlohov Castle was now so sad that even winds sweeping through it seemed to moan with sympathy, and the forests answered the mournful wail. Even the hard rock on whose bosom it was slowly falling to ruin, grieved, and poured from its bosom, like streams of sympathy, a luxuriant green, with which it wreathed the ancient walls. The banks of the moat were emerald

green, and from them grew luxuriously all kinds of wild plants, branching in all directions, straying over the bastion to the inside of the castle, and there covering the cracks and crevices. Vines, running through the garden, covered the chapel, under which was the family crypt of the Felsenburks, twined over wild beds and rough trees and transformed the sad deserted corner into a beautiful thicket resembling an immense bouquet. During the summer months there was not a scar in the wall over which did not hang a thick drapery of ivy; not a pillar around which it did not twine in dark rings; not a stone without a mossy cushion, nor a roof without a mossy fleece. A thousand buds were scattered over the dark ruins, a thousand leaves glistened in the morning dew, and a thousand red and white blossoms draped the wall in beauty. A beam of youth smiled on the hermit's face.

The old ruin not only bloomed all summer long, but also rang more loudly and sweetly with music than all the surrounding forests. Whole flocks of birds nestled there, and as

many little throats poured forth their melodies as there were budding twigs. Among the blossoms there was constant warbling, chirping, twittering and cooing. The nightingale had hardly finished her night psalm when the lark began his morning lay. But in the frosty nights of winter different sounds were heard around the castle, and different was its appearance. Like the skeleton of a giant in a snowy pall it stood out in bold relief against the dark heavens; fierce winds raged in its recesses, and the howlings of wild animals were echoed through the gloom.

The castle had formerly been one undivided structure, but after the bastion partly caved in it was divided into two parts. The grander portion was left in its original condition to fall gradually into ruin. This part was called "Hlohov Castle." The other part, called the "Palace," was separated from the Castle by a garden.

Count Felsenburk's grandfather, in order to be near his wife, who was buried there, had the Palace comfortably, though in a limited

and modest way, rebuilt and furnished, and he spent there many years of prayer and penitence over the ashes of his beloved wife. After his death a handful of old servants were left there as guards over the crypt of the Felsenburks; they lived in the Palace, eating the bread of charity, and paying no attention to the Castle.

The Castle extended to the edge of a rock which projected over a stream. For a whole century it had been uninhabited, and now a hundred dangers, such as plaster falling from the ceilings, loose floors, sinking stairways and falling chimneys threatened whoever might venture to go inside. To an observer it still appeared in the form designed by its founders. The rooms were large and high, the ceilings were arched, the winding stairways were made of marble, the walls were decorated with sculptures, and the windows were of many-colored glass. A great battlement adorned it like a crown on the head of a monarch, and over the ruin waved a tall fir tree, like a mourning banner.

The Palace was a real contrast to the Castle. In its renewed and modernized form everything was incommensurable, narrow and contracted. The rooms were well furnished, but they were small; the stairways were narrow, and the windows nearly square. A great unshapely roof with many gables burdened the building.

In the upper stories of the Palace were chambers prepared for guests; on the first floor all the servants had their little rooms, except the porter, who lived in the tower by the bridge. The center of the social life of the servants was the kitchen, a large room, always comfortably warmed, and lighted by a strong flame on the hearth, where the stewardess, in accordance with the good old ways, cooked for all the servants.

Sometimes whole weeks passed by, and in winter even months, during which the Hlohov people never saw a strange face, unless they themselves started out on a journey. A hilly road of many miles led to a village which was their official center, and two hours' walk over

mountains and valleys and through dense forests led to a hamlet which contained a chapel and a parsonage. To the priest of that place, who was called the Hlohov chaplain, was assigned the duty of serving holy mass in the chapel of the Palace on the first Sunday of each month, for the peace and rest of the ancestors of Count Francis Václav, and also the duty of teaching the gospel to the servants' children.

Only a few were they who knew that in the center of those black woods stretching from the boundary line far into the interior, there was concealed an old ruin, and it seemed that even its owners had forgotten it. Count Francis Václav had been at Hlohov for the last time when his father was placed in the crypt, and after that no member of the Count's family had been seen there. The lonely situation of the Castle touched the worldly Count so deeply that he shuddered at the thought of awaiting resurrection in that wilderness. He therefore built another vault on one of his estates near Prague, in the

midst of a beautiful park; and thus did he deprive Hlohov of its last distinction. Since his last visit to Hlohov nothing had been repaired or changed at the Palace, and when any of the servants died or became incapable of doing their work they were no longer replaced by their children, as was the custom in other castles. The places remained vacant, and the children of the deceased were placed elsewhere. The porter, who was a cripple, was the only exception. His son became his successor, but not on account of the father's decrepitude, as many believed. Behind the apparent kindness there was concealed real injustice.

The porter's son, Andrew, had shown in his earliest childhood great strength of mind and desire for learning, which the Hlohov chaplain, an old philanthropist, soon noticed during his monthly visits at the Palace. He liked the boy so much that he often took him to the parsonage, and for many weeks taught him there. He was surprised at the boy's progress, brightness and industry, and when he

had prepared him for a Latin school in Prague, he sent a humble request to the Count, describing the boy's uncommon ability, pleading that he might be allowed to enter the higher school, and urging that the Count would never regret having spent money for his education, for the boy would become a faithful priest or a teacher.

But the supplication was very ungraciously received. Count Felsenburk impatiently made known to the chaplain that he needed his servants for himself, that he did not intend to part with them in the interests of religion or education. At the same time he asked the chaplain to be more careful in the future, that the minds of the people in his service, who were made for work and obedience, might not be infected with harmful ideas, and not to cultivate foolish ambition in them. The porter's son, then, remained at the Palace, where he had been born and brought up. He had to learn to sweep well in all the corners and take care of his father; no other duty was imposed on him.

The porter had long been ill; he mourned over the death of his wife and the loss of his grown-up children, and other misfortunes troubled him. The news of how the chaplain's petition had been received and how their master had decided the future of his only child, condemning him for life to the lowest kind of work, inflicted on him the last wound. He became dangerously sick, and when after many months he arose, his body was partially paralyzed and his mind even more. This thoughtful man who, for sound reason and judgment, had been named "the prophet," now dragged himself along, with a childish smile on his face, an object of ridicule and pity. Every one teased him, provoked him, and was glad to see him thrown into a passion. No one cared how the son suffered when mean jokes were played on his father, how his eyes filled with tears of shame and grief, how melancholy and quiet he became. No one noticed how it grieved him to see his father reduced to imbecility, and even if some had noticed it, they perhaps would have

teased the old man, and thus grieved the son all the more. What regard should they have for people who fell into disgrace with the nobility on account of their presumption? Surely the Count would have been pleased to see his servants teaching humbleness and modesty to the porter's son, who proudly tried to elevate himself above his fellow-servants, and from his childhood had had something eccentric and aristocratic about him. He had never played with the rest of the children, but had sat alone, dreaming in the shadiest places of the orchard, or reading old books in some corner of the Palace. Andrew, now doing his work so faithfully and conscientiously that his bitterest enemy could find nothing for which to reproach him, never allowing himself to be seen with a book, behaving as the least among the last, doing for others all the coarse and difficult work when he saw that they lacked either the inclination or the ability to do it, yet failed to overcome the hatred of his companions.

By tormenting the father and degrading the

son, the Hlohov servants gave vent to their inveterate spite against the porter's family. No one could with justice say anything against the family; its members had always been modest and industrious, but they were retiring, avoided merry-makings, and were always sad. It was just because of their high moral tone, though they were never ostentatious in it, that they were disliked; their virtue became a reproach to those in whom it was conspicuously absent. It was, then, no small delight for the enemies of the porter to see him so mentally enfeebled that he did, when provoked by them, many foolish things and talked all kinds of nonsense. They laughed at him most when, on his beginning to declare the near approach of the judgment day for sins committed in this world, which God could endure no longer, he recited in a very confused way the Psalms of David or the Revelation of St. John; or when he confided to them in whispers and with mysterious gestures that the Felsenburks were not the real owners of Hlohov Castle, but that it belonged

to his family; that he was the descendant of those Hlohovskys who founded the castle; that Andrew, and not Countess Felsenburk, was the lawful heir.

After supper it was customary for the people of the Palace to sit around the fireplace; the women spun and the men smoked. The butler plunged into the cellar by the kitchen and reappeared with two pewter pitchers full of foaming black beer, which he and the stewardess had made. The beverage went around, and, warming the heads of the group, untied their tongues. In the flushed brains recollections then awoke. One thought of this, another of that; so the long winter evenings passed by almost in a twinkling. Only Andrew, sitting somewhere in a remote corner, never knew anything with which to amuse others, and besides he was never asked to do so. In that way the Hlohov people showed their indifference to his wisdom. If the fire on the hearth blazed up brightly, and the light strayed to his corner, it illuminated a face always melancholy, always deathly pale.

Buried in his thoughts, he sat, giving almost no sign of life; he moved only when some trick of more than usual harshness was played on his father.

Among the talkers of the evening, the steward occupied the foremost place, being considered not only as the highest dignitary at the Palace, but also as a man of superior knowledge. He had been for many years a hostler in the Felsenburk Palace at Prague, and remembered many public events that occurred when he was a young man. These he loved to relate as fully as possible, but during his narrations his audience sometimes took a nap.

The steward remembered well the coronation of Charles VI., which took place in Prague amid general rejoicing. It was just sixty-seven years since an Emperor of Austria had been crowned in Prague as King of Bohemia. The Bohemian nobility, the steward said, already had much anxiety lest Charles should do as had been done by his brother, Joseph I., who reigned without being

crowned as King of Bohemia. The nobility thought that he intended in many things to curtail their rights and privileges, and for that reason would refuse to be crowned as their king. The steward asserted that the Bohemian nobles, for that cause, had instigated some one, most likely the Emperor's confessor, to relate to Charles the old Bohemian tradition, that the Emperor who ruled Bohemia without being anointed at St. Vitus's Cathedral as the king of that country, would never have any male heirs. Some said that Charles really believed the tradition, and for that reason, after the death of his infant son Leopold, decided to be crowned there. Others asserted that he did so on account of his daughters, Maria Theresa and Maria Anna, for whom he thus confirmed the right to the throne after his death. And a few said he did so on account of his wife, that she might not, should he die suddenly, be deprived of part of her domains. Chrudim, Trutnov and other prominent cities belonged to the crown, and these might easily have been denied her had she not been anointed

as the Queen of Bohemia. The coronation of the Empress, the steward said, was even more magnificent than that of the Emperor. It took place three days after his, and was attended by Charles himself in the robe of a Roman Emperor. But the Bohemian noblewomen contributed to the celebration even more magnificence than the Emperor with his suite. The steward had counted one thousand carriages in which the women, glittering with pearls, gold and diamonds, came with their husbands, fathers and brothers. The Bohemian nobles at that time were immensely wealthy, and were famed for their wealth over all Europe.

The steward also told his listeners how, after the death of Charles VI., who was the last male descendant of the House of Hapsburg, great storms swept over Bohemia, what course they took and how they ended. The Emperor died in October, 1740, and in December of the same year, Frederick the Great of Prussia invaded the Austrian countries and denied Maria Theresa the right to the Bohe-

mian crown. Nor was he the only invader; the Elector of Saxony and the Kings of Sardinia, Spain and France combined their forces with those of the Elector of Bavaria, whom these rulers wanted to have on the Bohemian throne. They maintained that he had more right to the throne than Maria Theresa, because he was a descendant of Anna Jagelonka, the wife of Ferdinand I., who was the last daughter of the Bohemian kings, and that the Hapsburg dynasty ended with the death of Charles VI.

The armies of these allies besieged Prague, and took it in one night. The regiments which Francis of Lorraine, Maria Theresa's husband, led against them were defeated near Čáslavi. But the Prague people could not complain against the victorious armies, for they were not allowed to plunder. They were ordered to deal kindly with the people and to demand only what was necessary for immediate use. The very first day a frightful warning was given. A soldier who had stolen a woman's dress and sold it, was immediately hanged.

The second day after Prague was taken the Bavarian Elector came to the city, assuming the office of King of Bohemia, and ordering the people to prepare for his coronation. At his command a herald was sent out to proclaim his accession to the throne. Richly dressed and magnificently decorated, this herald rode through Prague with the Bohemian lion hoisted on a pole, and shouted before every public hall that from that day the Elector of Bavaria was King of Bohemia. Once the lion fell into a mud-pool, and the people considered it a bad omen and prophesied that the reign would not last long. The nobility and the upper middle class had at once to pay homage to the new King or leave Prague. Those who left were Counts Kinský, Šafgačov, Šlikov, Vrbnov, Kokořov and Galasov. Count Felsenburk was in Vienna long before the command was given. He went to offer his services as soon as he heard that enemies were approaching the Bohemian boundary. About four hundred of the noblemen remained in Prague, among whom were the Chotkovs,

Černins, Bouquois, Šternberks, and at their head Archbishop Prince Arnošt Mandršeid. These acknowledged the Elector as their king, and granted him at a Diet, called directly after his coronation, a subsidy of six million florins that he might go to Frankfort and there work for his election to the German throne.

At the same time Charles of Lorraine, the Empress's brother-in-law, advanced with his army toward Prague, and guarded the city so closely that no provisions could be brought to the market. To ward off hunger from the garrison, its commander gave orders to kill the horses, and the French soldiers had thus to be content with horseflesh. But even then, said the steward, such exemplary discipline was maintained among the soldiers that the Prague people might have left their doors open all night and nothing would have been stolen. But the unaccustomed diet caused sickness, and they died in great numbers. On that account the commander, Count Bellisle, received orders to give up the city. He left

with his remaining troops secretly in the night of December 17, 1742, and went to Eger.

The steward had to laugh heartily every time he thought of the alarm that prevailed after the departure of the French troops, among those who had done homage to the Bavarian Elector. Those who could do so packed up and followed him to Bavaria. But all went unexpectedly well with them; the Empress did not intend to enforce her right to the throne by any harsh measures. She made, however, a very emphatic proclamation to the fugitives to return within six weeks and present themselves at the court. Privately it was known that she did not intend to punish them severely for their disloyalty, but that the guilty would be punished only by fines. The majority of them returned, and their punishment really was very light.

When everything was settled, Maria Theresa came to Prague to be crowned. She behaved as pleasantly as if nothing had happened. The Bishop of Olmutz, Count Lichtenstejn, placed the crown on her head, because the

Archbishop of Prague, on account of his allegiance to the Bavarian Elector, had received orders to stay away from the court.

But after the departure of the Empress some punishment had to be inflicted on those who were found to be most guilty. Among them was a citizen who, at the French invasion, said that he would submit to be whipped if Maria Theresa ever sat upon the Bohemian throne. Being asked about it at the court, he confessed that he never could have expected such a miracle as was her success. He really was whipped—whipped out of the city for the rest of his days. Of the upper class, only Charles, a district commissioner from Davids, was arrested. Being a man of uncommon abilities, he had been chosen to go among the country people to persuade them to do homage to the new king, and as a reward for his services he had been made a district captain and knighted by the Elector. He was the only one sentenced to death. The steward went with the procession that accompanied him to the scaffold where he was to be be-

headed as a traitor. Dressed in a beautiful gold-trimmed suit and silk stockings, he walked proudly to meet his death. He would not let any one bandage his eyes; he did it himself. But when he kneeled down and the headsman raised the sword, one of the judges exclaimed, "Mercy!" and his life was spared.

Frederick of Prussia, as the steward assured his listeners, could not become reconciled to the fact that the army of the Empress everywhere defeated the Elector's regiments. He promised to win Bohemia back for him if in return the Elector would give him the portion between Silesia and the Elbe. On the first day of September, 1744, he was again before Prague, and stormed it so desperately that the commander of the garrison, General Hars, rather than see the city devastated, at once surrendered. But the Prussians, notwithstanding the promise they had given to Hars, ravaged unmercifully, and the damage done was estimated at millions. The people of Prague often thought of the French who had treated them so mildly. For ten weeks the

Prussians sacked the city, till at last hearing from their spies that Charles of Lorraine was approaching, they gathered in wild confusion and rushed out of the city through Jesuit street. But in spite of their great haste, their last lines were overtaken by the Emperor's hussars, whom the people joined, and the whole body pursued the enemy, hurling volleys of stones at them, till they were far out of the city. On their way back the pursuers fell on the Jewish settlement, and ravaged and plundered there fully thirty hours, wreaking vengeance on the Jews for the trials they themselves had just endured, feeling convinced that they were the main cause of the conflict. The steward firmly believed the suspicion, and as a proof, explained that during the siege, when cannon-balls rained over the city, not one fell into the Jewish quarter, although shooting was done from a hill opposite that part of the city; and when every one had to work on the fortifications, the Jews were exempted from the duty. It was rumored that the Jews had offered the Prus-

sian King fifteen thousand florins that their settlement might be spared. But it was not only then that the people had reason to complain; it had long vexed them that the Jews enjoyed privileges which were not granted to the Christians. The Jews had always enjoyed the protection of the upper classes; if they ever got into trouble the nobility interposed and helped them out, because they willingly submitted to be the instruments of all their intrigues.

Even the Empress, the steward assured the Hlohov people, knew that the Jews were planning some intrigues with the Prussians, for she issued a decree in which she strictly ordered the Jews to move out of Prague and not to settle in any of her dominions. This was no small treat for the Prague people, who at once expressed their feelings in anti-Jewish songs. The songs, however, did not live very long; their composers were captured, and many of them were punished. The steward still knew many of these songs, and when he spoke of the event he always sang them. The Jews,

with great lamentations and sobs, moved out of Prague, but for the time being settled in the surrounding villages. They excused themselves on the ground that it was impossible for them to leave the country so suddenly without causing great loss to themselves or to the societies to which they belonged. But this was a mere pretext, made in strong hopes that their intercessors, as usual, might help them out of their difficulties. And they were not disappointed. Their friends interceded with the Empress so earnestly that she passed a second decree, allowing them to remain in Bohemia till her further commands. The people, now seeing that they would not get rid of the hated race, lost all patience. In the night bills were posted throughout the city inciting the citizens of Prague to do on their own responsibility what the Empress had intended to do—that is, to drive the Jews away from their homes. But against this legal measures were passed; and the Empress, after considering the loss that her country would sustain by a complete removal of the

race, decided to allow them to return, and everything remained as of old.

In 1757 Frederick of Prussia once more invaded the country, and gave rise to the Seven Years' War. Again he laid siege to Prague; for three whole months he kept up a bombardment. The shooting from Žižkov was so severe that a large part of the city, including some of the finest buildings, was destroyed. The Cathedral of St. Vitus took fire thirty times. Great was the narration of these events by the steward. Finally a powerful army was collected and marched against Frederick. A decisive battle was fought at Kolin, in which the Prussians were defeated; Frederick with his army fled in the wildest confusion, and Prague was free.

One evening a heavy pounding on the iron gate disturbed the steward in the most interesting part of his story. The whole company were startled; if a visit in the daytime was an uncommon occurrence, a visit in the night was an unheard-of thing. While Andrew lighted a piece of pine and hurried out to see who so

loudly demanded admittance, the rest agreed that it was some benighted traveler, who had turned from the public highway into the woods to shorten his route and gotten deeper into the forest until by a lucky chance he arrived at Hlohov.

But it was no belated traveler with whom Andrew returned; it was an official messenger from the city. Without greeting any one, he stepped to the center of the room, pulled off his hat, folded his hands, and solemnly announced:

“Three days ago our gracious master, the mighty and great Count Francis Václav Felsenburk, while sitting at the table, was struck with paralysis. He was carried to bed unconscious, and in half an hour died, in the name of the Lord.”

All jumped up with affright.

“The funeral will take place next Sunday, in Prague; all whose duties do not prevent them are to be present,” the messenger added. “Every servant will be entertained at the

Count's palace, and the expenses of his journey will be paid."

The stewardess was the first to regain self-possession. At her signal all kneeled down by her side, reverently clasped their hands, and repeated the Lord's Prayer three times, for peace and rest to the deceased. Only the porter and his son did not pray for the Count, but because of the general excitement no one noticed this. The porter, somewhat agitated, remained in his chair; the son drew back into the darkest corner of the kitchen. When praying was over, they surrounded the messenger. He had to sit in their midst and tell all that he knew about the sudden death of the Count, what was being said about it at the court, what consequences were likely to follow, and whether servitude under new rule might not be worse than it had been during his life.

The messenger did not know much more than he had already told, but he confirmed the news which the chaplain brought to the Pal-

ace, that on account of serious disputes between the father and the daughter the Count had imprisoned Maria Felicia in her chamber and threatened, if she would not submit to his desires, to take her to a convent, disinherit her, and bequeath her inheritance to his cousin's son.

"So it is not yet decided who the real master of Hlohov is?" the stewardess said.

At these words the porter, still stupidly gazing, fiercely broke out:

"How dare you talk so before me? The master of this castle is my Andrew, and you all, as you stand here, are his dependents and his servants. You should have long been obeying him, and not he you; he should have long been commanding you, and not you him."

Notwithstanding the solemnity of the moment, unstifled laughter broke out. The old man had been for some time more irritable and cross than usual, and so, according to their views, more amusing.

But their laughter for once provoked and infuriated him. He screamed, waved his hands,

stamped his feet—and finally did something which he had never done before. He swore and cursed the Felsenburks, declared that they were descendants of thieves, traitors and murderers who lived and fattened by the crimes of hangmen; that through him they had obtained estates and wealth, and that their greatness sprang from the blood of the Hlohovskys, whom they had murdered.

Andrew, pale as wax, with trembling lips in vain begged his father to go to the tower with him, urging that it was late, and necessary for him to go to rest; the old man, who had always worshiped his son, now obstinately resisted, continued his terrible cursing, and finally hit Andrew in the face.

Those who had thoughtlessly provoked his passion now stopped laughing and began to soothe him, but in vain. The old man was too excited to control himself; his confused mind had wholly deserted him. His veins swelled, his eyes became bloodshot, and his mouth foamed. In wild exclamations he called down God's judgments upon the false,

revengeful, murderous race of the Felsenburks, till the blood almost froze in the veins of the Hlohov people. With both hands threateningly raised to heaven, he suddenly sank down into his chair. Instead of words, only harsh rattling sounds struggled from his lips, his body writhed with pain, his eyes stood still.

Andrew, wildly lamenting, leaned over his father, called him tender names, smoothed his face, and kissed his forehead, which was covered with cold perspiration. The stewardess quickly brought some anodyne drops, the steward began to rub his body, the rest frightened and excited, ran back and forth for this and that; all were anxious to comfort him, all wanted to help him now, but the poor old man was dead. Almost at the same time and in the same way, the mighty master and his humblest servant passed to eternity.

The whole of Prague witnessed the Count's funeral procession as it proceeded through the streets in royal splendor, and, indeed, almost the whole of Prague followed his body to its resting place. All grades of citizens, all the

lodges, guilds and societies marched with their badges, flags and banners, and even the convents and monasteries were represented.

The steward, as a delegate from Hlohov, marched in a crowd of several hundred servants in front of the coffin. They all carried wax candles, to which was fastened the escutcheon of the Felsenburks. Following them were the Count's officials, bearing torches. The foremost land-owners held the tassels of the pall, which was sprinkled with tears of pearl, and in its center glittered a costly silver-embroidered cross, the mourning gift of his wife, whom death had reconciled to her husband and moved to present him with a cross—her first gift. Six pages, arrayed in ancient costumes, carried, on black velvet cushions trimmed with silver fringe, laurel wreaths, in the centers of which were numerous ensigns of the official dignities of the deceased. Behind them the equerries led the Count's riding horses, covered with mourning; and according to the ancient custom, veins in their legs were opened, that streams

of blood might increase the mournful effect. The Empress sent out her highest courtier, and the Emperor his first chamberlain to represent them at the funeral. The courtier led the old Countess, and Maria Felicia, refusing an escort, walked by her mother's side.

Both the ladies were covered from head to foot with veils so thick that it was impossible to see their faces. This, undoubtedly, was done to save the people the painful sight that their faces presented. For the same reason the men related to the deceased Count had their faces covered with black silk masks. Behind the Felsenburk family marched the whole nobility of Prague. The procession was ended by a knight in black armor, who scattered, from two leather bags fastened to the saddle, coins which had been struck for the occasion with the Count's portrait.

Maria Felicia interested the Prague people almost more than the magnificence of the procession. Rumor of the disagreement between the father and the daughter, until then famed over the city for mutual love, had been

quickly spread by the servants. It was known that the Count had threatened his daughter with imprisonment in a convent and with disinheritance. What had the father, always so indulgent, demanded thus sternly of his daughter? What had his only child, always clinging to him with deep affection, refused so obstinately? What terrible secret was it that separated them? Would he have fulfilled his threat had not death so suddenly overtaken him? Did the daughter mourn over his death, had she intended to submit, or was she glad that his death had liberated her? Did it concern some marriage to which she would not consent, or some love which she refused to give up? Much was said about the young harper, her teacher, with whom she was more friendly than with any one else. Was he the cause of the trouble? Much was also conjectured about the Emperor—that ardent love for him had seized her during the evening when he moved incognito among her father's guests. Had she insulted the proud father by recklessly confessing her love?

No one found out the truth, not even the stewardess of Hlohov, when with her bone "specks" on her nose, a few days after her husband's return from Prague, while mending his homely jacket in the little room behind the kitchen, she contemplated the mysteries of the Felsenburk family and wondered how things were likely to be settled. She claimed in this case even more right to express her weighty opinions than in other matters where she was used to having the last word. She had served in the Felsenburk Palace at Prague as a cook before she retired with her husband to Hlohov, and for that reason she thought she was nearer to the Felsenburks than others who had filled less important positions.

The old servant, her assistant in the kitchen, appearing angry and breathless on the doorstep, suddenly disturbed her in her important work and meditation. She came to tell the stewardess that a harper had just come into the servants' hall, and at her kind offer of a seat at the fireplace until she would warm up the leavings from dinner for him, he had

proudly commanded her to bring the steward, and if he was not at home, his wife. When she, astonished at such conduct, hesitated to obey him, he repeated his command as haughtily as if he were accustomed to grant favors instead of receiving them; and so she had to obey him, whether she wanted to or not.

Hearing the news, the stewardess got as angry as her servant. Such a person as a traveling musician to dare behave so haughtily was really an unheard-of thing! Whenever a trafficker, a cymbalist, or any other wanderer had strayed to the lonely Palace he had always behaved decently and modestly, gratefully accepting the hospitality offered him.

“Why did not Andrew stop the rude man right at the gate?” she angrily said, laying aside her work. “But he probably did not see him, and does not know that a stranger is here. He is undoubtedly sitting in his closet with his head lying on the table, unconscious of himself and the world about him. A whole

tribe of robbers might break in now, and he would not notice them. Truly, he sins against the Lord in grieving so over his father's death; he should thank the Almighty for calling the old man without long illness; he was a burden to all of us, and most of all to him."

With this reasoning the stewardess marched with an important air into the servants' hall to tell the wandering musician just what he deserved. But she had hardly stepped inside the hall and cast a glance at the newcomer, when the flow of words not flattering to him disappeared from her lips and the sharp question on her ready tongue turned into a quiet, polite address.

Instead of the shabby, bold-faced fellow she had expected to see, she beheld a young man of as grave and earnest a countenance as if he had the experience of a long lifetime behind him. And at the same time his appearance was so aristocratic that she was no longer surprised at her servant's obedience to him. A harp hung on his shoulder more as an ornament than as the instrument with which he earned

his daily bread. He wore a coat of black velvet, dusty but not at all shabby; in his hand he held a gray felt hat. Dark hair circled in curls around his face, which was handsome, but from long illness or mental suffering somewhat thin and yellow. His eyes evinced scorn for his surroundings; his lips were compressed in apparent effort to stifle pain.

Glancing at the stewardess and answering her with a quiet nod, he reached into his vest pocket for a thin, white paper, handed it to her indifferently, and again looked out of the window from which he had partially turned at her appearance. Through the window, latticed with vines, he gazed on the mighty, dark ruin of the old Castle behind the garden.

The stewardess cautiously opened the letter, and, glancing at the signature, uttered an exclamation of surprise, and bowed profoundly, for she saw the signature of Countess Maria Felicia Felsenburk. It was a long time before she succeeded in spelling out the hastily written note and in comprehending its contents. As she had long been relieved of

the duty of writing and examining kitchen bills, the stewardess of Hlohov was now weak in the art of reading and writing.

The Countess briefly announced in her letter that she had become, as her gracious father had ordained, the mistress of all his estates, and as the present owner of Hlohov she requested that the harper who presented the letter be received and entertained in the Palace with the same regard as would be paid to herself. He was her former teacher of music, she said, who wished to recover from illness in the forest air.

The face of the stewardess, while reading the letter, changed its expression several times. It pleased her to know that she was the first person in Hlohov to find out who was the owner of the castle; it flattered her to think that the Countess had thought of Hlohov, and sent there a man in whom she was so greatly interested; she rejoiced in the thought of the profits which he might bring her; but above all it tickled her that the Countess should have commended the hand-

some young man to her and her husband's care as warmly as she would her own person. There was no doubt that the interesting harper had caused the disagreement between the Countess and her father; for her, at least, the mystery concerning the young lady's love and the father's anger was now solved.

With a second bow and a hypocritical glance at the thoughtful harper, she folded the letter and respectfully laid it on a table.

"May God grant our gracious mistress constant health and a long rule over us," she sighed, reverently folding her hands, and turning her eyes to heaven. "How pleased my husband will be when he hears what a kind and beautiful mistress we now have, and how graciously she surprised us by sending such a precious guest to our Palace. I wonder where he is staying so long; perhaps he went to the woods to get a roast for Sunday. But first I must beg pardon if the young gentleman does not find things here as he is used to having them in Prague. Of all forgotten and forsaken places, ours is the last; if we

send any one to town, he does not come back till the next day, and what he brings is seldom fit to use. I fear that our guest cannot endure our hospitality very long."

"Give yourself no trouble in that respect," indifferently replied the harper, still gazing at the old ruin. "I shall ask for nothing uncommon. I shall be satisfied with the simplest kind of food, and will need no care. I wish nothing more than peace and rest; do you understand? Peace and rest! Do not notice me, do not spy when I take a walk or a ride, do not come to me with any news, and ask none of me—in short, act as if I were not here. In that way you will please me most. Do not mention my name in the presence of strangers, and admit no one to me under any pretext whatever."

To the stewardess it seemed that even Count Felsenburk could not have expressed his wish more precisely and briefly than the harper had done.

"It would have been just as the young gentleman wishes even if he had not asked it,"

she sensitively replied. "We are mostly old people here; our minds are no longer turned to worldly things, and we no longer crave for earthly news. No one here would have troubled you in that way."

"If you please, first of all, give me something to eat and then a room. I am very tired," replied the harper, caring little that he had offended the stewardess. "I've come to your mountains from Prague on horseback, without stopping on the way; valise behind me, harp before me. A delightful trip it was," he added, more to himself than to her, and for the first time something trembled on his face that resembled a smile. "Only the sun or the stars above me, the wide, wide world before me, and unlimited space all around."

"Where did the young gentleman leave his horse? I must see that it gets into good hands."

"I left him at the parsonage, where I had my dinner; he will be brought here to-morrow. The horse was tired, even more tired

than his rider. I had to finish the journey accompanied only by my harp."

And the harper, turning to his instrument, ran lightly over its strings. A sweet trilling sound poured forth as if the harp were repaying the compliment.

"Did the young gentleman come alone from the parsonage?" said the astonished stewardess, turning from the fireplace, where she had just thrown a few eggs into a pot of boiling water, to the table, which she started to cover with a coarse cloth. "How could our chaplain let you travel without an escort? What if you had lost your way in this dense forest? To-day, for the first time, I don't know what to think of him. At other times he is so particular and careful."

"I refused the escort he offered me. They showed me the direction of the Palace, and I started out alone. As you see, I have found the way," the harper shortly answered, evidently not being anxious for any conversation.

"Straying off is not the only thing to fear,

but also meeting with bad company," continued the old woman. "Last year's poor crop caused so much hunger that tribes of beggars now rove through the neighborhood."

"Not a shadow of a person did I meet," the young man impatiently replied, shrugging his shoulders. "And yet I did, but the meeting was in no way unpleasant. In a forest meadow, under an old larch tree, sat an aged man. Gray hair hung from his temples, like the whitish moss hanging over his head from the branches of the tree. On his lap he held an old book, from which he was carefully reading. Unconsciously I stopped. Looking at the group, it seemed to me that time for once had neglected to sweep away some things into his rapacious current—that trio, the man, the tree, the book. The old man looked up, saw me, and thinking, I suppose, that I was afraid to pass, he kindly said: 'Pass on, pass on, young man. He who travels with a harp is safe in the promised land.' "

The stewardess, just bringing the cooked

eggs, quickly set the plate with them and the salt cup on the table, and signed herself with the cross.

“Take care, young man; great is the misfortune if we unexpectedly meet a heretic—and if that old man was not a heretic, I will at once have my little finger cut off. The book in which you caught him reading was a Bible. Those people are always digging into it. I can tell a heretic by his greeting. Their sleeves are full of proverbs, with which they mix the Holy Scriptures in a sinful way, constantly perverting and degrading them.”

“Heretic?” the harper carefully repeated. “What do you mean by that word?”

“What else than a heretic in religion?” The stewardess laughed at the ignorance of her guest. “Why, has not the young man heard about people who turn away from our religion and blindly fall into the infernal abyss? To be sure, gentlemen like you have other things on their minds than to care that our Holy Religion might not be corrupted by weak-minded and ignorant people. But such indif-

ference is hardly to be wondered at since a shameful example is given in the very court. Our future sovereign has no more regard for a priest than for any other man; limits his privileges in every way, lightens the respect for him among the people, and calls religious convent life indolence. Why, then, should not malicious persons, mockers of the Holy Word of God, stick out their horns once more and think of the times when they were allowed to confess their shameful faith openly, forgetting the well-deserved punishment which was inflicted upon them in Bydžov, with the approval of our religious Empress, to whom the infidel son gives no happiness? Let me see; how long ago was it? I believe I had been married a few years when it happened. It is a pity that my husband is not here; he knows it exactly, and knows how everything ended. He can tell a story; it is a pleasure to listen to him. Oh, he is a living chronicle! The den of the heretics was accidentally discovered, and as a frightful warning a whole crowd of them were burned, and

the rest were sentenced to life imprisonment, or some other punishments were inflicted upon them. Before the execution they all recanted and expressed their penitence, except one woman—Ludmila Boura; she would not recall her heresies; she died obstinately adhering to her faith. She was beheaded and thrown into a funeral pile.”

“Enough!” exclaimed the harper, pushing aside the plate of victuals untouched, and jumping up flushed with excitement. “Do not continue; I cannot hear such terrible things. What heretics they must have been, if people who themselves are filled with heresies felt it their duty to punish them so cruelly! But who knows whether the condemned were not less guilty than their judges!”

The young man’s passion and excitement frightened the stewardess.

“I’ll say no more about it,” she said, in a soothing tone. “I did not think that you were as excitable as a woman. But this I must tell you yet: That Ludmila Boura was born in Hlohov. She was the daughter of a

heretic who at that time was the porter of Hlohov, and so an aunt to the present porter. Of course, the porter's family did not tell me; they never talk about it, but when I came here with my husband the gardener's wife, who is now dead, confided the secret to me. She saw the beheading, and told me all about it. As far as I am concerned, I don't much believe in that family, anyhow—and you really will not eat? Had I known that I should spoil your appetite, of course I would have kept quiet."

"Show me my room," the harper shortly broke off her apology, and his eyes again turned to the old Castle. He was now so stern and determined that she dared not say another word, but quietly proceeded to obey him.

Inwardly thanking God that she always kept the spare chambers in good order, and that she could now take her guest to one of them without hesitation, she lighted the earthen lamp, and requesting the harper to follow, started with him to the first story.

The harper, seeing where she was leading him, stopped on the doorstep.

“Where to? I hope you do not intend to lodge me here in this close box? Is this Hlohov? There, beyond the garden, that majestic building rising to the heavens, that is Hlohov — not this miserable hut. There stands the hero with whom I want to make friends; him I wish to ask for hospitality. This is only a dwarf, in whose crippled arms I could not rest. I should choke in his embrace.”

The stewardess almost signed herself with the cross.

“What are you thinking about?” she asked, trembling from head to foot. “Do you not know that everything in the old Castle is ready to tumble, that no one has slept there for ages? It is impossible to start a fire there on account of smoking chimneys; the walls are sinking, the windows are broken, the furniture is old and shaky.”

“In the short time that I shall stay here the Castle will not tumble down,” impatiently

objected the harper; "and, further, you need not fear that the wind will carry me off through broken windows or falling chimneys."

"I tell you that in other respects the place is not in order and prepared for occupancy."

"For to-night my coat will serve for a pillow, and to-morrow you can prepare a bed for me there."

"You will not close your eyes there."

"I am not squeamish; lack of comfort does not frighten me."

"It is not only for the lack of comfort. Strange things appear in the old Castle, which it is best not to see and know of."

"I am not cowardly——"

The stewardess wrung her hands at the harper's obstinacy.

"A white woman with a lute in her arms promenades through the halls. She is a descendant of the family that ruled here before our gracious master, and whoever catches the sound of her mournful song dies within a year," sadly she added. "What will our

gracious mistress say if you come to some harm here?"

"Oh, is it possible to think of a more suitable couple than a lutanist and a harper? Give me the keys to her residence; I thirst to meet her."

"The Castle has not been locked for ages."

"Good-night, then!"

And the harper, taking the lamp from the horrified stewardess, quickly proceeded to the Castle, through a dusky garden, over which the evening star was twinkling.





CHAPTER IV.

FANNED by a gust of cold wind, the lamp crackled as the harper passed over the doorstep of Hlohov. Cautiously he protected the flame with his hand, and stopping, raised the light over his head. His eyes measured the height of the arch under which he found himself. His sight could not reach the ceilings, which were lost in darkness, but he dimly discerned a wide double stairway in the back of the hall winding upward.

“Ah, yes, this is Hlohov—at last!” the young man exclaimed with enthusiasm, proceeding through the cold, dark space like a spirit in the lower regions. “Different the breeze that cools my forehead here, different the echo which my footsteps make. All is entirely different from there below; all is

strong, mighty, proud, reaching to heights—oh, how I love it! These pillars are as if reaching to the heavens, that ceiling hastening to become a support of the cupola. Who was it that built thee, proud Hlohov? Art thou a reflection of the mind and nature of thy builder? If so, surely then the men born half a thousand years ago were very different from those of to-day.”

Walking up to the second story, the harper found himself in a long, winding corridor, in which heavy doors, sheathed with iron, formed two black rows. He thoughtfully examined one after another, and remained standing before the last.

Opening it with no small difficulty, he entered a large hall, where he could see by the dusky light of his lamp bloody helmets, spears, coats of mail, and shields, hanging on the walls and piled up in the corners. Large, worn-out flags and banners shaded the old weapons, and in the cold breeze from the door they waved as if the hands of spirits had touched them.

The harper looked about him in the ancient armory of the Castle.

“Do you wave me a greeting, or a menace?” he asked. “Do you greet, or threaten the disturber of your peace? I wonder what mottoes were written on you when you waved over thousands of beating hearts? Did lust command then? Did slaves unfurl you? Did a slave carry you in front of a crowd of slaves, who were driven like a flock of sheep to the shambles, who fought to gain one more gold ring for him who was already exercising despotic power? Oh, people, have you never bowed to anything else than material strength and brutal aggressiveness? Will you bow to nothing else? Is it only for these that you are capable of subduing your selfishness and willing to shed your blood? When Frederick of Prussia, craving the Bohemian crown, led his army into this country, and they perished here by thousands, not a voice was raised against him; and for that exploit his nation calls him great. But now when Joseph wants to deliver the nation from superstition, liber-

ate the minds of his subjects, educate and elevate them, a blind opposition meets him everywhere. Even here in this forgotten old nest an ugly owl flutters her feathers against him."

Just then a noise reverberated through the hall. The open door had slammed, and a weapon had fallen from the wall.

The harper looked around. "Did you aim at my head for my blasphemy?" he said, lifting the old mace from the floor and examining it? "Did you want to see how hard it was? Oh believe, old fellow, it would be a task to break it; it is well forged. But I see I should not rest well here among you, old weapons; it is not best to accept hospitality where a man is thus greeted. I will move on to see where I can make my headquarters for to-night."

And the harper stepped to the next door.

Opening it, he saw before him a great hall which, judging from the furniture there arranged, had formerly served for dining and reception hall. Hanging on iron hooks that were fastened in the walls were broad boards,

which, when supported by the legs that were hinged to their other ends, were formerly used as tables; and after meals, or when room for other things was needed, they were quickly and easily removed by being hung on these hooks. A large fireplace filled with ashes occupied the center of the main wall. Three-legged chairs were arranged around the room in several rows, proving that in the olden time the assemblages in this hall were very large.

The harper scornfully glanced around the room. "Did the ancient masters of this Castle and their friends rival one another here in drinking? Was it then, as now, considered heroic to be the first to drown the intellect in wine? Does this unpleasant odor arise from wine spilled by the trembling hands of drunkards? Do echoes of drunkards' songs and sayings, babbled with heavy tongues, still tremble here? Oh, away, away even from here; there, close by, is the smell of blood, and here—of dirt."

And the harper violently pushing open the opposite door, stopped on the doorstep and

uttered an unconscious exclamation of surprise and joy.

He saw before him a circular room which the moon, rising over the opposite forest, lighted up. The room was wainscoted with dark wood, and in the rear a curtain of delicate red skin, now faded and striped with gold somewhat tarnished, concealed an alcove from whose ceiling hung a many-branched chandelier over a wide bed. On the sides of the bed were carvings illustrating events from the life of Joseph in Egypt. At the head hung a cross without Christ, and beneath it were evident traces of the chalice. The chalice was probably gold, and had attracted some avaricious servant, or perhaps, for some other reason than avarice, it had been snatched from its place so roughly that the wood was badly damaged. Curtains similar to those at the alcove hung from the windows, whose sills were so wide that each one formed a little alcove by itself, and in the recesses stood chests covered with leather cushions.

Walking to the wall, the harper again gave

an exclamation of joy, for he saw that it was a bay-window projecting over water. As in some charming yacht he stood there between the peaceful, starry heavens and the misty, rumbling gulf. The moon lighted at the window of the castle a hundred fluttering sparks, and they poured into the room like a shower of brilliants, strayed over the opposite forest like fairies hastening to meet their elves, and glimmered through the mist to the surface of the water. Higher up the hill the stream dashed wildly over the dumb, immovable rocks, rose between the black cliffs, and passionately strove to widen its narrow banks by gnawing at the solid walls. In despair at the fruitless task, it showered over them great foaming tears of anger and pain.

“Oh, my beloved Hlohov, praised be the shade of your forests, the coolness of your nights, the freedom of your breezes!” exclaimed the young man, with enthusiasm, bending far out of the window and eagerly drinking in the scene. “Blessings on you, Maria Felicia, for discovering this place of

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refuge. Here my mind will become composed, my heart comforted, my thoughts clear, my blood will circulate once more; here I shall recover. Do you know, O river, that the longer I watch you the more distinctly do I see my own trouble mirrored in you; the longer I listen to your passionate weeping, the more loudly do I hear the pulsations of my own heart? Yes, you are the emblem of my life; just as you gnaw your stone fetters, so the harper gnawed his chains; just as you struggle within bonds arbitrarily imposed on you, so he struggled against barriers standing in the way of his liberty. But you are happier than he. You know whither so resistlessly you speed; the ocean is waiting for you, the sunny ocean, adorned with islands of coral and pearl, waiting to take you into its lulling arms. You will become a part of the vast azure sea, in which the vault of heaven will be reflected. And what will be my fate? Whither do I speed so passionately, so hurriedly? Dark and doubtful is my way. The current belief about this life and the

hereafter seems to me a fable, invented to satisfy the minds of large children who are afraid to walk alone over dizzy paths of thought. Were you right, Count Felsenburk, in teaching your daughter, both by precept and example, that position and wealth are the end and aim of life? Were you right in calling every other end and aim only folly? Were you right in teaching that the earth is nothing more than a combination of matter and force, moving and changing in space where the two law-makers, chance and necessity, continually struggle for supremacy, while under their despotic rule human souls rise and fall like bubbles? Every one who has troubled his head to discover something more hopeful and better you have called a lunatic. Is all beyond this life mere emptiness, absolute nothingness? Has mind no other dwelling-place than the human head? If such is the case, how deceptive is this gift that nature has bestowed upon man, for he has not a moment in this life when he may escape the feeling of his misery and insignificance!"

And the harper suddenly straightening himself before the window, looked up with a questioning and reproachful eye, as if he wanted to penetrate the depths of heaven and see what they concealed. In that movement he touched an object near by which gave out a sound something like a human sigh. He looked around. An ancient lute, with broken strings, hung in the window by his side. Thinking of the warning of the old stewardess, he anxiously reached for it, but quickly dropped his hand.

“Art thou the lute on which the Hlohov lady plays her death songs? But whether thou art or not, thou needst not fear me; I will not disturb thy repose. Thou shalt remain hanging by that faded cord as thou wast placed by a hand of which I know nothing more than that it has been mouldering perhaps a century. I will only give thee a companion. My own harp I will hang by thy side.”

And the young man walked toward the door for his harp, where, under the excite-

ment of the moment, he had left it. Taking the instrument in his hands, he unconsciously pressed it to his breast, as if it were a friend whom he had not embraced for a long time. With a dreamy fondness he began to run his hand along its strings and listen to the sweet sounds as they rose and fell in the vaulted room. Soon the single tones, under the trained fingers, joined into soft chords, and the song, sweet and sad, flowed forth like a gentle stream.

The harper, dreaming over his beloved instrument, would probably have thus accompanied the surging of the river and his own thoughts, which he found so closely related, through the whole night, had not footsteps in the hall aroused him. Before he had turned to the door it opened wide, and suddenly the form of a man appeared. Wildly glancing about the room, the man fell at the harper's feet and said excitedly:

“What does your song proclaim to-night, dear father? Oh! blessings on you if you are calling me from the sufferings of this world!”

The harper, seeing the unknown fainting away by his side, was startled, but not with fear. He was not boasting when he assured the stewardess that he was not cowardly. He gave a good proof of it now. He did not shrink from the unexpected visitor who had surprised him at such an hour, and in a place where he was far away from human help. Leaning toward him, he looked into his face.

No; this was not a rogue, as for a moment he had suspected. It was no villain that had sneaked up to him under some false pretense to frighten him away and get hold of his satchel, believing it to be filled with money. The light of the moon, mingling with the dim light of the lamp which the harper had left near the door, fell on a youthful face, pale and sad with care and suffering; and the harper watched that face with interest. It seemed to him that he never had seen features so perfect, so beautiful, a forehead so proud and noble, or a contrast more striking than that between the stranger and his clothes. A coarse jacket thrown over an unbleached

muslin shirt indicated that he belonged to the lowest class of servants.

At last the stranger opened his tearful eyes and, mute with astonishment, gazed at the harper as if he could not believe his eyes. But as the form leaning over him remained motionless, mistrust and anger appeared on his face. Suddenly a light flashed upon the harper, who had begun to connect the story of the stewardess with the stranger's question. Smiling, he said:

"Ah, you came to see your lady, the lutanist, and you are disappointed because instead of her you found only a harper?"

The young man jumped up as if wounded.

"Who are you? How came you here? What are you saying?" he exclaimed, looking confusedly about the room. He placed his trembling hand on his perspiring forehead, and tried to collect his scattered thoughts, while with the other hand he felt around for a support.

"I am only a poor harper, formerly a teacher of the present mistress of Hlohov,

who allowed me to come here to recover my health. I came to this castle only a few hours ago."

"When and where, then, did you hear about the lutanist?"

"The stewardess threatened me with her visit when I told her I wouldn't live in that smothery box which they call the Palace, and started to come here."

"And you came here in spite of that warning?"

"Yes. But you are asking me many questions without telling me who you are. By what right came you here? And is not your behavior since you entered this room rather strange?"

Again the young man wiped his forehead and felt around for a support before he answered.

"Not long ago my loving father died. Since his death I have not slept; this evening, overcome by weakness, for the first time I fell into a feverish sleep, most likely just before you stepped in, for I did not see you

coming. In that restless slumber, feeling my loss more bitterly than when awake and thinking about it, suddenly some heavenly sounds touched my sad soul. Then these sounds were transformed into a beautiful rainbow, and I dreamed that my father was descending over it and calling me to him. Under the influence of that feverish dream I jumped out of my bed, followed the sounds and came here. Pardon me, if in that vision, startled by seeing a person where no one has ventured for whole decades, I addressed you somewhat strangely. An intruder, as you suspect, I am not. It is only my duty to listen to every sound in this Castle. I am the son of the deceased porter. Andrew is my name."

The harper listening with surprise to the young man's fluency of speech, which was another incongruity with his position, unconsciously drew back, and shyly asked:

"You come from the family of the Hlohov porter whose relative was burned?"

Andrew's face flushed. He straightened himself in pride and scorn before the harper.

“O noble protégé of the new mistress, how quickly you have picked up gossip in the servants’ hall! How will you impart your stories to the lady? Will you measure them out by the bushel or count them by the score?”

Now the harper blushed.

“If you yourself had not confessed only a little while ago that you were not the master of your thoughts, I should answer you differently,” he exclaimed, looking at Andrew as proudly and scornfully as Andrew had looked at him. “Little, indeed, do I care for people’s stories, here or elsewhere hatched. It was to escape idle gossip that I came to this lonely place.”

“Such things are not discussed among strangers who have just met,” Andrew sternly replied.

“The stewardess asked me if I had not met with any suspicious characters on my way through the woods, whereupon I mentioned an aged man whom I saw under an old larch tree, reading an old book. The story frightened her; she recognized in the old man a

heretic, a descendant of those heretics on whom, as a warning to others, a severe punishment was inflicted in Bydžov. She began to tell the horrible story, but I would not hear it all. Stopping her, I said that the condemned were perhaps more innocent than their judges."

"O young man, you have spoken the truth! In their innocence they passed into the other world—victims to human prejudice and malignity, martyrs to their holy faith," exclaimed Andrew, and suspicion again flashed from his eyes at the harper. "Go!" he added; "go quickly and report what I have said; you need not go far; tell it to the stewardess, and she will see that investigation is made; and if the nephew is found to have adopted his aunt's heresies, you may have the pleasure of adding a stick to his funeral-pyre."

"It would not be surprising if I should wish to punish you," the harper replied; "you are adding insult to insult."

"Yes; I insult you, I pain you, and I will hurt you still more, because I do not trust

you," Andrew frankly admitted. "Your sudden appearance in this forgotten castle, your choice of its most desolate corner, where no one can behold your secret doings, and, most of all, your conversation with the stewardess—all are witnesses against you. Oh, confess frankly, as I acknowledge my suspicion against you, that you have come here to see what sort of spirit prevails among the Bohemian peasants. And why not? If the nobility thought it necessary at other times to send out spies for that purpose, why should they not think it necessary now, when repeated failures in crops drive people to despair, and when services and taxes increase every year? Hunger has long been a dweller among our mountains; and his equally terrible brother, the plague, has now joined him. They both faithfully help the nobility. Oh, tell Miss Felsenburk to rejoice; tell all her friends to rejoice. Soon will their wish be realized; only a little while longer, and if a miracle do not come from above, the hated Bohemian race, which they say for ages has been filled

with heresy and revolt, will perish. Crowds of people are dying of hunger while their masters' granaries are overflowing. That longed-for moment when the nobility can fill our land with strangers is quickly coming. They will be less hated than we, for in them will not be that undying love for truth and liberty, that insuppressible desire for justice for which the Bohemians have for ages been universally hated."

Andrew had now regained control of his mind, and he looked with flashing eyes on the harper, who listened with unfeigned surprise.

"You are again mistaken in suspecting the Countess and the nobility of such cruel designs."

"Alas! I am not mistaken," Andrew repeated, with profound grief. "The nobles greatly desire to exterminate our people, that strangers may be brought here, who will be satisfied with any kind of government and willingly lay their necks under any yoke so long as their bodies are cared for. This consummation has long been desired, and

to its realization every generation comes a step nearer. Through oppression reduce the race to beggary, through beggary to despair, and through despair to death; such, and no other, is the motto of our nobility. To the most cruel ends they carry out their aims. You demand an example? And yet you know as well as I do that when crops are light, as they have been for several years in succession, the peasants are under obligation to take their whole year's harvest to the nobility. The peasant is not allowed to sell his crop in the market, but is obliged to give it to his lord at his own price. What the lord thus buys for a little sum from his vassal, he takes to his storehouse, and when food becomes scarce he sells it back—again at his own price—to the poor man from whom he bought it. Oh, do not try to make me believe you do not know that during years of plenty just the opposite takes place—that the peasant must buy the grain that his master has left over and sell it with as little loss as he can. How could it be unknown to you that it is compul-

sory for a vassal to give his grown-up sons and daughters into his master's service, although he may sorely need them at home, and that he himself must serve his lord personally, and leave his own farming to chance; that he is not safe under his own roof, that if he incur the dislike of any of his lord's officials, even though it were the lowest clerk, without any ceremony whatever he is ordered to move out? He then must try to buy a part of some other estate, and move out without his grown-up children. He is allowed to take children under nine years of age; the rest he must leave to his lord. You will perhaps tell me that the peasants had one protector; that Leopold I. passed a law in which he forbade the nobles to deal severely with peasants who rebelled on account of oppression. To that I can only say that Leopold took the peasants under his protection only because under such oppression they were unable to pay the imperial taxes. But little cared the nobles for the Emperor's command. They continued their oppression, and aimed in every possible way

to get the peasants entirely under their control. They finally succeeded. They urged the father of Maria Theresa to annul all the contracts between the nobles and the peasants. The court announced that the contracts were to be sent up for examination; the peasants unsuspectingly sent them to the court. But when they afterwards asked for them, they were simply told that the contracts would not be returned; that they gave rise to continual disagreements, which must be stopped. Thus, the peasants, having lost the last vestige of independence, were thrown without mercy into the hands of the nobility."

"That is not possible!" said the harper passionately, interrupting Andrew's flood of bitter accusations. "That is not the way things are; it can't be; justice could never have fallen so low in this world. Your charges are nothing more than the old jealousy of the poor against the rich."

"Just ask your patroness about it. If you are her bosom friend, she will certainly con-

vide to you that her grandfather increased his wealth through such schemes."

"She does not know about that; she never heard about such things; she never cared to know them. I can swear to that."

"If she has not cared to know them in the past, you may be certain that now, as a mistress and land-owner, she will study them all the more. Be sure that she will tax her brain to find out how to increase her estates. Nobly she will continue the work nobly begun by her forefathers."

The harper turned pale as death.

"What do you deserve for this, the basest of all your accusations?" he hissed, trembling from head to foot.

Andrew watched his excitement with contempt, and replied:

"As I see, you are more hurt when I aim at the Countess than when I accuse you."

"How could your remarks but hurt me, when I know how unjust they are? I have known Maria Felicia from her infancy, for I was brought up in her father's palace. As

her teacher, I have looked deeper into her heart than any one else," replied the harper. "The Countess undoubtedly has her faults; but selfish and rapacious she is not. You have probably heard even here how the Count, shortly before his death, turned against her, threatened to put her in a convent, to disinherit her, and heartlessly imprisoned her in a chamber. He would have carried out his design, and instead of Maria Felicia, his nephew Hypolit would have been the master of this castle, had he not died so suddenly and unexpectedly. I may confide to you the fact that he became angry at his daughter because under no consideration would she yield to his ambitious and avaricious plans. But with your slanders you have so stirred my blood that for the first time to-day I feel what the bliss of revenge must be. Oh that I could punish you for your shameful words! If I thought that you could manage arms as skillfully as you do your tongue, we should have a duel at once."

"Quietly leave your sword in its sheath, if

you have one," Andrew coldly replied. "Since you have such kind feelings toward me, you may know to your satisfaction that Maria Felicia is avenged on me already, and that through her father. The Count wounded me more deeply and painfully than you could with the sharpest weapon. It is a wound so deep that it can never heal; to my dying day it will fester in my bosom."

"What offense did he commit against you?"

"My mind hoped to soar; my ability entitled me to believe that sometime I should be a benefactor to my people; ambition woke within me. I wanted to become a fearless proclaimer and defender of truth, not human, but God's truth; but Count Felsenburk, taking advantage of his power over me as my master, condemned me to sweep his yards until my death. With that sentence he crushed my heart, deprived me of all the hope and happiness of life. More wretched than I am I could not be, unless I should burden my conscience with some crime."

“God’s truth?” the harper repeated, with such emphasis that it was evident that the two words had drowned all the rest in his mind. “You wanted to become a proclaimer of God’s truth, and not of human truth? You talk as if God had made you the guardian of His truth and trusted the keys to it to you alone.”

“He trusted the keys to His truth not only to me, but to every one who seeks His truth with a pious soul, a pure heart, and an intelligent mind,” replied Andrew, firmly, while the harper watched him curiously.

“Where I come from they deny His existence, and you hold conversations with Him. I am really beginning to value our acquaintance; I see it will enrich me with rare knowledge. You are probably able to describe His appearance to me.”

The sneer behind which his agitation was poorly concealed did not disturb Andrew.

“First explain to me the appearance of your soul, and then I can probably explain to you His appearance.”

The harper bent far over his harp, and remained silent and thoughtful.

“You do not see your soul,” Andrew continued, “and yet you never doubt its existence; you feel that it is stronger than your hands and feet, that it controls your body, that without it your body would be a stiff, lifeless carcass. You know that your mental eyesight is nobler than your bodily eyesight; that with your thoughts you behold a hundred times more than with your eyes; that their invisible wings can take you to the dawn of the past and the darkness of the future; that in a few moments you can fly around the whole world, and even to the stars, and scan their mysterious faces. Now, what the mind is in the human body, God is in nature.”

Andrew's face, until then so gloomy and so furrowed with grief, began to brighten, and the longer he spoke the more noble was its expression. To the harper, watching him with feverish eyes, it seemed that a brilliant light was beaming on his forehead.

“Count Felsenburk has really sinned in

preventing you from becoming a priest," he muttered, with an effort to smile. The smile, however, was not successful, for it failed to conceal his agitation as he had intended it should. Andrew did not hear; he had turned his eyes to that infinite space into whose depths the harper only a few moments before had been sending such mournful, longing sighs. He was burying himself in his thoughts and clothing them with words as he had always done in his solitude.

"Before time began to be measured in this world, a spirit, as has been recorded, hovered over the dark waters. To him the darkness was pitiful and sad, and he said: 'Be light, as I am.' The words fell into the bosom of the inanimate deep like a drop of life, a germ of will, a spark of knowledge; the lifeless matter began to move, the elements to divide; and again they sought each other, combined, coalesced, formed bodies; and then, consolidated, they began to travel through boundless space in the forms of sun, moon and stars; each in its orbit, according to its pur-

pose, moved and worked to scatter chaos and diffuse light. Among them our earth began her mysterious formation and revolution; for thousands of years she has been revolving and developing, constantly producing more noble and beautiful forms. A beautiful stage she has thus prepared for her last child, that he might consciously complete what was begun in unconsciousness. Man is to learn and advance in this world; he is to subdue all the earthly forces, become their master. Man is to grow and improve spiritually; he is to diffuse light and sweetness, and elevate this world to perfection. Light, light, everywhere! That will lead to the salvation prophesied by the Son of God, that will lead to the heavenly kingdom; based on justice and love it will conquer Satan, who is nothing more than sin; sin is no more than untruth, and untruth no more than darkness in the human mind. Such is the task of man in this world; for such victory immortality is promised to the diffuser of light."

Grief and bitterness flitted across the harper's face as he said:

"O glorious immortal, born of the dust, and soon to turn again to dust!"

"What he has done endures forever," Andrew continued. "Yes, his deeds live and continue to bear fruit; and he, either in their good or their evil, lives forever in this world."

"What is such immortality to us if we are not conscious of it in our graves?" again the harper sadly asked.

"Do you know what is taking place at this moment in Prague, or in this castle? You do not, and yet you do not complain; indeed, you do not want to know. Only a little while ago you assured me that on account of stories and gossip you fled to this solitude. Now, what more is death than a similar flight of a soul weary of life's activity? Oh, believe me, death will be sweeter to you than your evening dream here at this window—sweeter than the song of your harp; then the cares and the turmoil of this life will seem to you more

trifling than the buzzing of a fly seems now. By death you will escape this tumult, and beyond this life you certainly will not long to participate in it. Do you now long for the playthings which in your childhood you loved so much that you would have wept had they been taken away from you?"

"But after childhood comes youth."

"We know not what was our condition before this life; we know not what we shall be hereafter—it is a secret, because man should not look backward or forward, but perform his duty well while he is here. So far as we can investigate, we find that the laws governing man in this world are the same as those governing every drop of water, every leaf, every particle of matter. What often seems to us caprice or cruelty in nature is only that which destroys our hobby or interferes with our comfort. And this dissatisfaction with life's experiences is felt even by the lower animals. Does not a worm struggle if you shake him off a rosebud into the grass? Does he not become angry because you did

not leave him on his soft-scented cushion? Nature is equally kind to all her creatures; she has no special favors for the large, the rich, the great. Every task is of equal importance to her, whether performed by the butterfly or the sun; she has justice for all. She leads everything by the same laws to decay and death; but only to decompose, change and combine it with other matter and again awaken it to new life in a grander, nobler form."

The harper, deeply moved, watched with unfeigned wonder the porter's son, whose eyes were again turned to heaven. Andrew was serene; he did not question, doubt, fluctuate as the harper did; he was blessed with that full assurance of faith which gives strength and dignity. By his side the harper felt more immature and insignificant than he had ever felt before. At last, with trembling voice, he said:

"My meeting with the heretic is to me a sign, I believe, that I shall be delivered from my own heresies."

That confession was undoubtedly a great blow to his pride.

Andrew was troubled. For a while he hesitated, watched the harper, but seeing deep earnestness in his face he gave his thoughts free expression.

"You do not suspect and perhaps will not believe," he said, "that what I have just told you is a part of the teachings of those hated heretics who were persecuted and burned for their pernicious religion. Their religion, first of all, taught that by continual upward progress they got nearer to God. And one of their foremost principles was toleration of other religions. They were not allowed to censure people of different faith; but all that others believed was to be conscientiously examined, and if some parts of it were found useful, these were adopted by the whole community."

"A more just and prudent rule was never made," exclaimed the harper, his eyes beaming with enthusiasm. "Why should man be gifted with reason if not that he might use it?"

Why should he believe blindly what others choose to propagate as truth? Andrew, can it be that the heretics, and the people of whom you speak and of whom the stewardess told me, are the same? Is it possible that men of such pure and liberal faith have been so heartlessly treated? It seems to me, judging from their practice, that every one might have seen that their aims were of the very best kind."

"What was Miss Felsenburk guilty of that her own father imprisoned her?" Andrew asked, unconsciously gaining more confidence in the stranger, who was moving nearer to him. They were now sitting close together in the bay-window, watching with interest each other's beautiful face; no longer as enemies, but as dear friends. "Those who do not know their family affairs as you do will condemn her, believing that the loving father would not have turned against her for a small offense or a difference of opinion; they will believe that some impropriety on her part changed him. Who will believe that

he dealt so with her because she opposed his selfish, ambitious plans? Who will think that she deserved praise for her behavior rather than punishment? As with her, so it was with a little band of people who, disgusted with the avarice and corruption of this world, turned away from the rest of the people and established a settlement by themselves, where they served God according to their belief. 'The Bohemian-Moravian Union of Brethren and Sisters,' they called their society. Like a sacred ark it floated above the filth and immorality of those times. In it were saved and preserved for us stores of invaluable principles, which otherwise would have been drowned in the filthy, bloody waves of immorality. The Brethren watched over them like heroic guardians, being ever ready to lay down their lives rather than to give up their sacred doctrines. And for that very noble devotion, for that intense virtue, and not because they had transgressed, they were hated, persecuted and burned. By their humbleness they excited the proud against themselves, by

their temperance the extravagant, by their philanthropy the avaricious. Had their teachings spread as rapidly until now as they did in the beginning when people from the whole country flocked to them; had the Brethren not been exterminated by sword and fire, there would perhaps have been perfect equality among us; there would have been no poor, no forsaken, no wretched; we should have all been brothers and sisters."

"If your former words were lightning that at once rent asunder a cloud beyond which a harmonious, ideal scene dawned upon me, your words now resemble the aurora which is to me an omen of everlasting light. I have never begged for anything yet, but I beg you now not to stop until you have told me all about the Brethren. Some other time, in return, I will tell you what I suffered, what distressed me, what drove me to this wilderness. Because you have led me to the sacred gates of an ideal world which I had never imagined, and yet the lack of which, I know now, made me grieve, I forgive you the false suspicions

and accusations you cast at me, and offer you true, undying friendship. The longer I listen to you, the more clearly I see that I cannot become a heretic—for a heretic I was born.”

The last shadow of suspicion fled from Andrew's noble heart when the young man stretched both his hands toward him, and tears gushed from his eyes. Andrew's eyes also became dim, and his heart quivered with joyous emotion never felt before, when he firmly pressed the harper's soft, white hand and vowed friendship. He would have thought it a sin when he looked into the beautiful enthusiastic face, to think longer that the harper concealed a traitorous purpose. He now believed that the harper's soul was thirsting for the faith which alone gives heavenly peace, and gladly he proceeded to grant his wish to tell him all about the principles of the Bohemian Brethren, which he knew would fill his soul with light. The harper grew breathless as he listened. -

“Those who became members of the Union

were not allowed to take part in any earthly authority whatever, to serve in public offices, such as that of judges or councilmen. They were forbidden to inflict capital punishment, to appeal to law courts, to take oaths; a spoken promise was to be binding. They had no legal officers; for the most part in matters of importance they were only advised by a body of the oldest members, who were selected every third year. As they rejected earthly power, so they renounced the sword; they were forbidden to go to war, and they abjured the shedding of blood. They were also forbidden to sell liquors and to trade, on the ground that a man in business is liable to become dishonest or knavish; they lived only from the work of their hands and minds. As they, above all, disliked one person to have authority over another, they did not want aristocrats and nobles in their Union; and when later they were persecuted and needed protection and felt obliged to accept members of the nobility who had long wished to join them, the nobles had, at the meetings of

the Union, to renounce all their claims to titles, and place themselves on a level with the Brethren. The rich were also excluded from their Union, because, said the Brethren, wealth ruins the mind; wealth makes a man proud, lazy, avaricious; abundance makes a man willful; wealth makes a man covetous, and a desire for possessions is the cause of all evil deeds; and besides, it was considered inappropriate for a thing so transient and insignificant as earthly possessions to dominate over human intellect and soul. The Brethren held no personal property; the lands of the members were one common possession, to which from time to time were added new estates as new members joined the society and transferred their property to the Union; and the whole was divided for cultivation and use among families according to the number of heads. The more heads, the more wants, but at the same time there were more hands to work. By this arrangement the Brethren avoided servitude; the children of large, poor families were not obliged to look for

work elsewhere, and childless families had not to hire hosts of servants. Childless widows, widowers and persons who for their love of God remained single, took care of orphans and hospitals. The most enlightened and noble members were selected as Brother-assistants. Their duty was to travel once in every three months from one settlement to another, to investigate and discover if their assistance or their counsel was needed, either in material or spiritual things. If at any time a member of the Union wished to take a long journey, he had to announce it to some older member, that he might be warned of danger possibly threatening his body or soul and that his absence might be accounted for; the safety of all the members was thus provided for, and an end was put to loafing.

“Among the Brethren were many skillful painters, composers and writers, against whom even their enemies had nothing to say except that their works were too elaborately composed, as if works dealing with the loftiest subjects deserved less care than those in

which the common necessities of life were discussed. As their foremost teachers they honored John Hus, Peter Čelčický, John Milič, and Matthew of Janov. Brother Gregory they respected as the founder of their Union; Brother Lukáš and Blahoslav they classed among their greatest scholars; John August, their first bishop, they highly regarded for his inflexible and virtuous principles, and John Amos Komensky (Comenius), their last bishop, became renowned as a teacher not only among them, but among the foremost masters of the world.

“The list of their martyrs is long; the Bydžovs were the last of them. At the beginning, the world ridiculed their Union, as it ridicules all things that are noble; but as the Union grew and prospered wonderfully, it soon began to be feared. The officer feared the loss of his occupation; the soldier of promotion; the capitalist of his power—if the rules by which the Union was controlled should be generally adopted. The lewd, the lawless, the idle, and all those who encour-

aged themselves with the hope of gaining honor and distinction without effort, either through wealth or family connection, made great threats against it. Rumors were circulated that the Brethren formed intrigues against the government; that they were dangerous knaves; and on the ground of these accusations they were persecuted, tormented and martyred. But they did not give up their faith; as true martyrs they preferred "the rack for breakfast and the stake for dinner." Seeing at last that their destruction and the extinction of their religion was desired, they arose to defend their faith, and were defeated, partly because of their inefficiency as soldiers and partly because of the treason of those whom they trusted as leaders. Then followed a great religious war which lasted for centuries; and on account of this unyielding adherence of the Bohemians to their faith there was stirred up the most cruel hatred and opposition against everything Bohemian.

The meeting-houses in the settlements were destroyed; the Brethren were driven into

other churches; their books were taken and burned; their children were seized and placed in convents for their education; the ministrations of the clergy were refused to the dying; the most noted members were beheaded, the rest exiled; and on their estates were settled people that other countries had expelled as refuse.

“The Brethren were scattered over strange countries, and paid for their hospitality by sowing the golden seeds of learning, which, when fully matured, other nations claimed as their own.

“The few that remained in Bohemia resembled a flock without a shepherd. They pretended to have given up their faith, that they might remain in their mother-country, for they could not but hope that better times would come; that they should live to see the day of liberty and general rejoicing, the day when publicly and honorably they could acknowledge their religion, the day when Bohemia would resume her place among the nations of the world.”

“They did not hope in vain; the dawn of that day will soon come,” exclaimed the harper, hopefully. “Joseph II. will be just to the Bohemians; he is the warmest and the most vigilant friend of his people, and desires their progress.”

Andrew sadly shook his head.

“You look so bright, and yet you think, compare and judge so obtusely,” he said, with reproach. “You come from Prague, and yet you do not seem to know that Vienna, day by day, is gaining ground; that Vienna will soon have the entire control of our country. Joseph’s Bohemia is no longer an independent kingdom as it was when the Bohemians called to their throne his predecessors, who swore to preserve her rights and privileges; she is now only a part of the Austrian Empire. After the coronation of Maria Theresa the crown of Bohemia was taken to the treasury of Vienna, and Joseph II. has declared that it will remain there forever as a relic. It will not glitter on his head as the emblem of our national existence, for Joseph

will never stain himself with a falsehood. The Bohemian courts are already abolished; if a Bohemian wishes to appeal to justice, he must travel to Vienna to do so. The old coins, weights and measures of our country have been abolished, that in all things we should be Austrian. Some years ago only members of the old Bohemian nobility were chosen as district captains, but now Germans are placed in those positions. Joseph will permit no Bohemian legislature to convene; and he is preparing to sell, after the death of the Empress, all the costly collections and relics of the former Bohemian kings. He will even destroy the old churches, sell them or rent them for secular uses."

The harper interrupted Andrew.

"You are wronging Joseph; you are accusing him as unjustly as you were Maria Felicia a while ago. Maria Felicia——"

"Why do you drag Maria Felicia's name into our conversation again?" Andrew asked impatiently. "Her name is always on your tongue. The first time you spoke of her to

me I knew that a tenderer tie than the mere fondness of a teacher for a gifted pupil bound you to her. But take care, my friend; you remind me of a fly circling round a flame. Do not smile so carelessly and contentedly! If you feel that you are inclined to love her, I advise you as a brother to be planning how to part with her as soon as possible, even though you were sure that she would return your love."

"Why do you not want me to taste the sweet fruit?"

"Unmerciful is the Felsenburk race, even in love."

"What do you know about the loves of the Felsenburks?" the harper quickly asked. "I want to know if you have a right to warn me," he added, trying to appear calm.

"Look at the fate of the deceased Count's wife, whom he put away; think how he loved as a father. They are all alike at heart, and have always been——"

"Always?"

“Yes; always. Passion, jealousy, deceit, revenge—such is their love.”

The harper, yet mischievously smiling, now became thoughtful.

“Do you know more about the domestic affairs of that family than that the deceased Count put away his wife?”

Andrew did not answer.

“Tell me what you know,” the harper added.

“I know nothing—almost nothing—except some old rumors. Why should I speak of them? Let us spend the night in more useful and congenial conversation—the night that for the first time has brought us together and caused us to form a friendship which I hope will never be broken.”

“Such is also my sincere wish, but—tell me what you know; it is your duty to tell me as a warning. You have guessed—the Countess is not indifferant to me, and I know that I am not indifferant to her,” the young man confessed, trying again the mischievous smile;

but shy and frightened was the look that he cast at Andrew's face, which again was very gloomy. Was he to hear something more dreadful than he had already heard? Since he stepped over the threshold of Hlohov he had encountered a flood of terrible stories.

"You are right," Andrew finally said. "It is my duty to warn you; for your protection I will dive into the bloody pool of the past of Hlohov. It would be my duty to warn you if you were traveling a road full of unknown pitfalls, and I would not hesitate to make every effort to save you. In the nature of the woman about whom we have been speaking there is undoubtedly, as in her forefathers, a perfect hell of wickedness."

The harper listened breathlessly.

"What did Miss Felsenburk tell you about this Castle before she sent you here?"

"That it was a lonely place, as if it had been created for people weary of life's troubles," the harper replied, but his voice was losing its force, as his cheeks were losing their color.

"I do not mean how she described it. I mean what she told you about how it came into the possession of her family."

"The Castle was given to them about a century and a half ago by the Emperor of Austria."

"For what?"

"As a reward for military services."

Andrew laughed wildly.

The harper, deeply flushed, watched him keenly.

"Surely your hatred toward that family does not go so far that you would deny its valor."

"That, I swear before God, I could not do, if I wished a thousand times to deprive them of that honor," and Andrew laughed more wildly than before. "To see ten, twenty, thirty heads roll off a block into sand saturated with human blood, in one half day; to see ten, twenty and twice that number of bodies tortured in a thousand different ways by the headsman—and those the bodies of their own former friends, fellow-believers and

blood relations—that was valor so rare, so magnificent, so immortal, that it was rewarded, not only with one estate and castle, but with whole cities, manors and princely domains; and even yet the stars of honor and glory are showered upon that heroic family.”

The harper, stiff as a post, was not able to say a word.

“Ah, it seems that you are trembling, and I have hardly begun,” Andrew unmercifully added. “Will you regain your common sense and rid yourself of Countess Felsenburk after knowing that love, unreciprocated love, led to this bloody crime? The master of this castle, Hlohovsky, who was the foremost defender of the Brethren’s Union and also the most sincere professor of their faith, had a bosom friend with whom he shared everything, cup, bed and arms. He was of the family of the Skalnickys, and grew up as a page on the manor of Hlohovsky’s father. They spent their young days happily together, and were inseparable.

“One day, during a tournament, they met

a young lady with whom they both fell passionately in love. She was known far and wide as a charming lutanist. She favored Hlohovsky, and became his wife. Skalnicky became so angry that he swore vengeance on her and on all her descendants. He not only turned his heart against his friend and forgot the gratitude he owed him, but began to persecute and hate what had once been dear to him. Until then he had believed with the Brethren, and protected them; but now he joined the Popish party and persecuted the Brethren. He became friendly with the enemies of Bohemia; he planned a hundred intrigues against his countrymen, and all this he did to bring complete destruction on his rival. Strange to say, his burning desire for revenge was soon realized. The master of Hlohov led an army against the enemies of his country, and being wounded in the battle of White Mountain, was dragged unconscious into a prison. His wife was not admitted to see him, and so she grieved alone in Hlohov, lulling her little son to sleep with mournful

airs on her lute. One summer forenoon, burdened with terrible forebodings, for she had heard that a dangerous man was seated among her husband's judges, she leaned over her lute more sadly than ever before. Suddenly the strings trembled mournfully, and the mistress of Hlohov fell to the floor unconscious. A few days later news reached the Castle that at the same moment the master of Hlohov had been executed on the Prague market place, his escutcheon broken and buried under the gallows, his family banner suspended on the pillory; and that at the same time the hangman proclaimed that the Hlohovskys were deprived of their title and of the right of holding their estates. His wealth was transferred to his former friend, who had denounced Hlovovsky as the greatest rebel, and had insisted on his execution."

A deep sigh escaped the harper's breast; Andrew did not heed it.

"Everything now belonged to Skalnicky, who was elevated to the honor of Count Felsenburk; his rival's wife, estates and child

were all in his hands. He could have had the former mistress of Hlohov driven out of the Castle by his hounds, for she was outlawed; he, however, planned a different scheme. After the bloody crime on the market place of Prague was completed, he started for Hlohov in grand style, with the expectation that, as soon as he approached the Castle, she who had dared to scorn his love would be coming to meet him; that, barefooted, with loosely flying hair covered with ashes, dressed in a horse-hair garb, kneeling before him in the dust, with tears in her eyes, she would beg for his mercy. He intended to enjoy for a while her humiliation and then change her weeping to joy; he intended to raise the penitent from the ground, place her by his side, and make of her Countess Felsenburk, for his wild passion was not yet tamed. But as an avenger he was more fortunate than as a lover; the news of her sudden death struck him a terrible blow. The sweetest fruit of his vengeance being gone, he then raged so desperately that the loss of his mind was feared.

For many weeks his servants watched him as a lunatic. But no sooner had he recovered than a new thirst for vengeance seized him; he searched wildly for his rival's son, intending to place him in a seminary and have him educated as a Catholic, to the disgrace of his father's memory. The son, however, was not to be found; he had disappeared, and with him the chest containing all the documents which proved Hlohovsky's right to his title. He searched for the boy all his life, for afterward, by the special favor of the Emperor, he married a wealthy lady, and had sons of his own. No trace of the son was ever found, although he was being brought up in Hlohov in the family of one of his own servants, who, in the confusion, had succeeded in taking and concealing the child and later claimed him as his own. The servant, a porter, was a devoted Brother; he imbued the child with love for the truth, his father's faith and his country. Not until the porter was dying did he trust the secret of the boy's birth to him, give him the documents, and console him with

hope that the condition of our country would sometime change. But it has not changed. The descendant of the Hlohovskys bequeathed no more to his son than the right to sweep yards, which he had inherited from the supposed father."

"And—you—are the grandson of that son?" the harper faintly whispered. "Do not deny it; as soon as I saw you I could not believe that you had come from the blood of common servants."

"Does it seem more grand to you to come from the blood of robbers, traitors, murderers?"

The harper fell on his knees with a cry of despair. Andrew, trembling with sympathy, leaned over him; tried to raise him from the floor, but in vain. The harper rolled at his feet, moaning in agony.

"I did not mean to wound you; I wanted to save you. I am sorry for your tears; your grief pains me. What can I do to soothe your heart? I suspected that you loved Miss Felsenburk, but I did not think that your love

for her was so ardent that an old tradition about the evil deeds of one of her forefathers would pain you so desperately. Do not weep; that bloody deed has been drowned in the depths of forgetfulness. No one in this world but you and I knows anything about it; it will never reach the Countess. Let her enjoy her wealth and glory in peace; no one denies her the right to them; no one envies her position; no one will trouble her with these ancient stories.”

But the harper seemed to take no heed of the consoling words, abandoning himself to the wildest despair. At last, with a deep sigh, he rose to his feet, and faintly said:

“I thank you for what I have just heard more than for all the preceding; it is possible to expiate the old crime. The Countess must know this, that she may reconcile the——”

“What? And why?”

“Surely, you will not refuse to forgive, if you are asked to become reconciled?”

“I have nothing to forgive in the matter you are thinking of.”

“Do not put on a mask of deception; you cannot deceive me. Maria Felicia will not offer you charity nor a gift, for she never would accept one herself. A different reward she will have for you, a reward more worthy of her and of you—her hand.”

And again the harper despairingly covered his face.

“Would your sublime mistress humble herself so greatly?” said Andrew, with a scornful laugh.

“I know her; she will certainly offer the sacrifice for the honor of her family—a double sacrifice it will be, for she intended to live a single life.”

“She need not violate her intention on account of me.”

“Do not behave so proudly,” the harper angrily said, and his grief changed to indignation at Andrew’s refusal.

“You do not know her; you do not know how beautiful she is. No man has ever yet

resisted her beauty. Even kings long for her favors."

"What attracts kings never has attracted a Hlohovsky. If, as you think, one of their descendants still lives, you may be certain that he will not worship any qualities in a woman except a heroic mind, a generous heart, and a noble conviction of faith for which she would not hesitate to give up her life. But how strangely you are behaving, comrade. You are, I think, the first lover who ever tried to persuade another to love his beloved. To be sure, the lover to whom you are offering her is only an illusion; otherwise such generosity would be matchless."

"Your refusal is vain; your hypocrisy useless. It would be unworthy of you to refuse a reconciliation. This is possible only by marriage; marriage alone can end the feud. Bring me the documents that prove 'your origin, which, as you said, the faithful servant concealed with the child—and I will give you the engagement ring of Maria Felicia."

"Enough of that empty, insolent pretense,"

said Andrew, jumping up. "Do you not comprehend that if I were what you take me to be, her ring would inflame my finger and press on it the mark of disgrace? That touching the hand of the bride you are forcing upon me, I should continually be thinking of the hand that destroyed my race; and walking by her side, I should see a stream of blood rolling between us? That her words would recall to me those of the murdered ones and the lament of the widow; that they would turn my heart into ice? Even though it were possible, as you in your youthful inexperience believe, that the granddaughter of the assassin of my race would stoop to its last representative—then you may believe he would never, never lower himself to her, if he were to gain heaven by it!"

And Andrew left the room as suddenly as he had appeared.

The harper jumped up as if bitten by a scorpion; the look that he turned upon the porter's son was almost enough to paralyze him.

What had he heard? Did this man really

dare to disdain Countess Felsenburk—beautiful, charming Maria Felicia, to whom even the Emperor, the foremost man of his age, bowed? Did he dare to scorn a Countess to whom at court belonged the first place after the Archduchess? And who was this impudent darer? As he had said himself, the least in the lowest rank of her slaves, a descendant of executed traitors, a crazy heretic. He must be punished for his audacity; he must. The Countess must not keep him in her service, nor on her estates; she must discharge him—put him in the army for life. Even that would be a slight punishment for such a terrible, unheard-of crime; she must imprison him in one of the cellars of this castle, over which he claims to have more right than she, and leave him there five, ten years—yes, let him miserably perish and rot in the dungeon. No one can forbid her doing so; a mistress can punish her impudent servant as she pleases. She is his ruler, his judge; he is her property, with which she can do whatever she wishes, for which she is responsible to no

one. With what delight she will see the punishment executed!

But no, impossible for any one to scorn Maria Felicia! The harper did not hear distinctly; he is mistaken. For such offense imprisonment would be a light punishment. Such a man would deserve to be put to death; yes; put to death. A vision of blood floated before the harper's eyes. Oh, you first Felsenburk, the harper knows in this moment how you felt when the lutanist rejected you; how your head pulsed; how you saw blood, only blood; how everything noble within you suddenly died of that black venomous anger; how you had ears for nothing but for those thousand hissing voices in your head, your heart, and your every vein. Vengeance, vengeance, vengeance! Let those who have insulted me suffer! The harper sees how that terrible ruthlessness came to you; why you longed to be a judge, to pronounce the sentence of death. The harper sees the jailer and his terrible instruments, the gallows, the block; he sees the pool of blood; he sees a

frightful ghost soaring over the scene. Oh, Andrew, beg, beg! otherwise a fate like your ancestor's will seize you. You have thoughtlessly revealed your sympathy with the heretics. Have you forgotten the fate of your aunt? Oh, beg, beg, Andrew; humble yourself, promise devotion and gratitude to Maria Felicia, that you may be forgiven! But, first of all, promise love, proud Hlohovsky. Do you see the sword above your head? Do you see how it glitters, how heavy it is?

Oh, the Hlohovskys do not beg; and they prefer death to the hand of one whom Kings have favored, who herself was the queen of beauty and intellect, and as wealthy as those who wear crowns. Hlohovsky scorned Maria Felicia because she was of the blood of traitors and oppressors.

And the harper moaned as if the sword were on his own neck, at his own heart.

"Mercy, mercy, Maria Felicia!" he wildly exclaimed. "Do you not realize that the one you want to sacrifice to your revenge is the very one you idealized, when, being tired of

the dandies surrounding you, you bitterly asked yourself: 'Whither have those men vanished that do not worship beauty and wealth, those men that love truth, only truth?' Does Andrew not rival Joseph II., who seems to you the greatest among men? Does he not, in his proud refusal, his virtue, his sublime enthusiasm, by far excel him? Yes; he is greater than Joseph. The Emperor knows that honor rewards his every deed, but who honors the deeds of a servant? Oh, he is right in rejecting you; does not the revengeful blood of your forefather still ferment within you? And is not Andrew's mind, though burdened by misfortune, full of light? Oh, you are not worthy of your porter's son, Countess Felsenburk—just admit it." . . .

And again the harper writhed with pain, and called Andrew in accents full of hopeless yearning and despair. . . . O Love, amid what distresses you are born; how heedless of differences of rank you are; in what strange moments you overtake human hearts! . . .

The old bloody crime of the Felsenburks

against the Hlohovskys was avenged that night. A sentence as severe as the one Skalnicky had procured for his former friend was declared against the assassin's granddaughter by the grandson of the beheaded. He swore that her proud soul must bear the burden of the family crimes until death; that atonement for them was not possible; that, abounding in wealth stolen from him, she should suffer the stings of remorse until death. He declared that her beauty was nothing to him; that life by her side would be like infernal tortures.

When, the next day, after waiting long for her visitor, the stewardess, trembling in every limb with fear that she would find him slain by some night monster, ventured into the Castle in search of the harper, she found that the ancient chamber in which the lamp placed by him was still glimmering was empty; nor could any traces of the young man be found. Thinking that he had gone into the woods for a stroll she waited for him the whole day, but in vain; he had disappeared from the Castle like a shadow.



CHAPTER V.

THE sun had ceased shining into the windows of the King's Castle in Prague, which, after having been despoiled by the Prussians, had been repaired by Maria Theresa. One of the windows opened into a garden, from which sweet odors floated upward around two forms standing in a room singularly furnished. Books, maps, pamphlets, lay spread over the floor and furniture; the room was used only for work and study. The two noticed little the scent of the flowers, the peaceful view of the city spreading from the garden below them, and the beautiful fiery sunset. They were absorbed in an important discussion. Joseph II., being in Prague, had invited Countess Felsenburk for the evening to discuss state affairs. She came with her

suite, who, waiting for her in the antechambers, were secretly and significantly whispering with the Emperor's servants about the motive of her visit. The Emperor, while waiting for the Countess, had manifested much solicitude, and the young lady's attendants had noticed in their mistress the same desire to meet the Emperor.

"Do not thank me again, Miss Felsenburk," said the sovereign, without taking his eyes for a moment from the Countess, who was leaning against an armchair by his side. "You have no reason for doing so, but rather I am grateful to you. It was your letters that called me to Bohemia, informed me of the true state of affairs, the miserable condition of the peasants. I was not aware of the poverty of the people brought on by poor crops and the usury of their heartless masters; I did not know that the nobles had refused to sell grain to their subjects, even for high prices, in the expectation of getting a still higher price the coming year. I was so busy with the question concerning the

Jesuits, which is at last settled to my satisfaction, that for the time being I laid everything else aside. You turned me just in time from my one-sided activity; and I think I have spent my time here very conscientiously in making arrangements to the best of my ability for the prosperity of your peasant friends. I have given orders that the granaries of the army be opened and the grain sold at the lowest possible price; cheap bread will be baked in the public bakeries, and that will surely put an end to absolute want. Likewise, I have provided that the nobles supply their vassals with grain for seed, and I hope to succeed in getting the Empress to grant a donation of two million florins for the Bohemians. Is Countess Felsenburk satisfied with Joseph II.?"

Maria Felicia thanked the Emperor, not only with her lips, but also with her eyes, which filled with tears.

"But let us now leave these affairs," added the Emperor, moved by her emotion; "let us talk about you, Countess. Much has changed

with you since we last met; the unexpected has happened. If I am to speak to you frankly, as we have agreed to do, then I must confess that you have changed greatly. Your cheeks have lost their blushes, your smiles their heartiness, your eyes the willfulness with which, it is said, you drove men to despair."

The young lady faintly smiled, replying:

"To-day, at least, I shall not weary your majesty with complaints about the emptiness of my life; the cup of my life is filled and overflowing."

"Do not yield to grief over the death of your father, Countess. We cannot, alas! change the laws of nature; our deepest grief cannot move one blade of grass. And so pluck up your courage and try to forget. What I said about the change in you was not said to the disparagement of your beauty. Your beauty, I think, has been perfected by that pale, pensive look. The loss of your father touched me deeply also; not only because in his death I lost a true counselor, but because I have been deprived of the pleasure

of seeing you at the court. Count Felsenburk promised me, when we last met, to come to Vienna with you as soon as possible."

The face of the Countess, which seemed so pale to the Emperor, became even paler at these words, and she nervously bit her lip.

"I have been looking forward with joy to your *début* at the court, not only because I imagined that you would be its brightest star, but for more selfish reasons. In the first moment of our acquaintance I was surprised, as you yourself must have noticed, at your vivacious spirit, the depth and meaning of which I, however, did not comprehend and value according to its merit until I received your letters. I scarcely could believe they were written by a lady—especially a lady of your age. It seemed more probable that they were written by a statesman who had all his life pondered national problems. You must, Miss Felsenburk, you must lend your beautiful, bright eyes, which can see so far and so deep, to your Emperor; otherwise you would be unjust to him and the nation. Will you

grant my wish, Maria Felicia? And if you do, will it be only from the loyalty of a vassal?"

The longer the Emperor spoke the warmer became his words, and the warmer the more quiet. The last word escaped his lips in a whisper; the Countess guessed rather than heard it.

"I have decided to fulfill father's promise as soon as I lay mourning aside," calmly she answered, lifting her eyes to the Emperor. "Your gracious invitation to the court I accept."

"You will come, then, really will come? Will you at last subdue your dislike for court life?" the Emperor exclaimed, with youthful joy. "Come, come soon; there is a task waiting for you already. Since I learned the relation of the peasants to their masters, I have been thinking about making a law to lighten the tenure service. You supplied the first motive to this undertaking; it has ripened through your influence; and with your assistance I will put it in force. I cannot see what

miracle led you to learn so thoroughly the condition of those people. Who could advise me better than you? I shall not be deterred by the threats of the nobles; they will rise against me and defend their rights and privileges more determinedly than ever. But I shall gladly endure the struggle awaiting me; gladly, not only because justice will for once prevail, but because I shall please you by lightening the burdens of those whose condition so greatly grieves you."

That noble promise, so sincerely spoken, filled Maria Felicia with earnest joy, and imparted to her countenance an expression incomparably sublime. She was magnificent. The Emperor watched her in mute ecstasy. He thought he knew her, but lo! suddenly she was altogether different, a hundred times more beautiful and charming. Leaning toward her, he grasped her hand.

"Yes, your will shall be fulfilled, your wish shall be a command," he whispered passionately. "You shall be the mistress of the court, you shall be supreme. You shall rule

everywhere, even where no one yet has ever ruled—in my heart!”

“I take you at your word, illustrious master,” the young lady exclaimed. “But I do not wish to rule, I only ask to be allowed to speak the truth to you, to be allowed to advise, and to be heard and regarded. In return for such favor I promise the most profound and unlimited devotion.”

And the Countess pressed the Emperor's hand, which still held hers, not, however, rapturously, as he had wished and expected, but sincerely and respectfully. It was a queenly form standing before him in the purple evening light, dressed in a gown of violet velvet; and the head, from which hung a long black veil fastened here and there to her curls with pearl pins, was indeed worthy of a crown.

The Emperor's eyes were still resting on Maria Felicia's face, but she continued in the same earnestness, heeding not his feeling, and considering not the footing on which she closed the agreement with him.

“I will at once proceed according to your

majesty's promise. Time is fleeting, and the wrongs of the people appeal to heaven more pitifully day by day. Look, illustrious master, down below!"

The Countess pointed to the city, so quickly that the Emperor unconsciously turned his eyes away from her face and followed the direction of her hand.

"It is, I suppose, the Towers of Týn, that you are pointing to," he replied absently, and again turned his eyes to hers.

"Yes, your majesty, those are the Towers of Týn, reaching to the heavens, and below them is the market place veiled in the first shadows of the evening; and on it are the dark scaffold, the block, the gallows, the pillory—pools of blood and a pile of white heads. And do you remember the twenty-first day of June, 1621?"

Pale as death the Countess gazed at the towers. She had neither feeling nor hearing for anything else at that moment; it seemed that she had entirely forgotten who was near and where she was standing.

“In such a moment as this you recall that dark scene?” the Emperor said reproachfully.

“I am not recalling it; it is always present in my mind. I see it, I hear the heart-rending wails of the mothers, the wives, and the daughters of the beheaded; their despairing forms haunt my bed and frighten away my sleep and rest.”

“You weaken your health by yielding to such illusions,” the Emperor said with anxiety. She trembled by his side like an aspen leaf; he tried to lead her away from the window, but in vain; she did not yield to his wish.

“Try to control those fantasies which so dreadfully agitate you; you are strong and valiant in other things. Turn your mind away from crimes committed so many ages ago.”

“How can I forget that there, among the judges at whose command the headsman raised his sword, the jailer prepared his hot iron, sat my forefather? How can I forget that the wealth which was taken from one of those ill-fated victims was presented to him by your

grandfather; that what I have is not mine? That it is stolen—worse than stolen—saturated with innocent blood? How can I help wishing, at any sacrifice, to atone for that crime?"

And weeping, the young lady covered her face.

"Your sympathy carries you too far!" exclaimed the Emperor. "The blood flowing at that time was not innocent. The rebels of whom you speak suffered a deserved punishment for their revolt, and your ancestor was justly rewarded by my grandfather for his loyalty."

The Countess sadly shook her head.

"Of course, they were rebels, but why, illustrious master, did they rebel? That they might be allowed to worship according to their conscience and best knowledge, and pray in their own tongue, which was forbidden them, although their right to it was confirmed by the Emperor's edict."

"Be it so or not, they, nevertheless, rebelled against their sovereign, and justly they

were dealt with," the Emperor firmly answered.

"Justly, says your majesty? Oh, do not speak thus, illustrious master; do not speak so, at least to me, whom only a few moments ago you so nobly promised access to your heart. Press your hand on your heart and appeal to your sense of justice. Which side was it that first began to violate justice? And, besides, what is justice, according to the views of that generation and this? Is it anything more than that which the majority favors? Cannot one person be right against the whole world, as has happened more than once? Have people never fought against truth that was unpleasant to them; have they never mocked and purposely misunderstood it if it was in the way of their selfishness? Was not Christ misunderstood in the same way?"

"Such views would confound the whole established order of things."

"Supposing we should replace the new heresies with old reliable truths?" quickly the

young lady exclaimed, and her eyes beamed so enchantingly that the Emperor, again overcome by her beauty, forgave her for recalling the dark scene of the past and inconsiderately marring a sweet hour for him.

Placing both her hands on her heaving breast, the Countess began:

“ I have discovered a treasure for which I have paid a great price. But I shall never regret having bought it if you will accept it from my hand, illustrious master; millions you can enrich with it, millions you can make happy, and at the same time make yourself happy. Oh, accept from me this costly gift, and brighten my life with the one beam of happiness yet possible for me in this world!”

Again the Emperor seized the hand of the ardent Countess; at last she spoke as he had been wishing, and now her enthusiasm was to him loveliness itself.

“That treasure,” Maria Felicia continued, “which suddenly appeared before me is the old reliable faith, which was established by

the noblest minds; it is the old faith of the Bohemian-Moravian Brethren. You, imperial master, being always busy with other duties, have not devoted much attention to the Bohemians; you perhaps do not know that this nation was the first to become enlightened with the spirit of liberty and truth; and these are your own guiding principles. For these the Bohemians poured out their best blood; they were the first warriors of the Holy Spirit.

“Trace the history of the nation to her former greatness, and you will learn what I have learned, that the nation was your forerunner in the cause of truth and liberty; that she fought for and aimed to accomplish what you are planning; that the same enemies that worked against her are rising against you; that as you have not been comprehended, so was her aim misunderstood. But you will succeed in time, you will complete the noble work which she began. She is the root, and you will be the crown of the tree of new liberty, new virtue, new faith.”

The young lady, in her enthusiasm, did

not notice how coldly the Emperor had dropped her hand.

“When we meet again, allow me, first of all, to tell you about the principles of the Bohemian Brethren and their internal management. Then you will surely admit that everything which ennobles man is embodied in them; that if human society should build on such principles it would rise to moral heights yet unheard of. My first supplication to you is to give the nation from which sprang these humane principles an opportunity to demonstrate its true worth; and if you do this, you will see in a short time great and unexpected results. You will see that no people in your empire can comprehend you as the Bohemians can when spoken to in their own language and when invested with their old rights. That the nation does not speak to you for herself, that I am doing so without her knowledge, is because she lies chained at the feet of the nobles, who deal with her in such a way that she rightfully thinks they aim at her total destruction. Oh, deliver Bohemia from these

chains as soon as possible; give back her former liberty!"

The Emperor's face was grave.

"Look at this city, Bohemian King; look at the seat of your throne. One of the earliest and greatest universities in the world was established here by Charles IV., and only a few years later the people themselves established high schools; here education and religion were taught, not only as a special privilege to those within the walls of the schools, but proclaimed publicly in the market places and churches, where the barefooted beggar sought the truth as eagerly as the scholar. Look at this city, where your crown and scepter are deposited. It has been washed a thousand times with the tears and blood of martyrs; under its every roof was born a champion of the truth and it raised ten times as many heroes as the number of gold crosses you see sparkling on its churches. In its streets raged the storms that purified the whole world. Here men fought with sword and word for all humanity; here, for the di-

vine truth, men laid their heads on the block exultingly as princes ascending their thrones, and their mothers and sisters sacrificed their beloved ones for the sacred flame that spread light over the whole world. Here was born the motto, "Equality, Harmony and Fraternity"; here the drinking cup was first used as the emblem of universal brotherhood. Every man ought to look upon this place with reverence, for here stands the cradle of humanity."

The Emperor's face was now not only grave; it was austere, and sternly he answered the enthusiastic Countess:

"I shall not dispute with Countess Felsenburk about the fables that she has read in some chronicle, doubtless while straying, in these days of her mourning, among the dusty archives of one of her ancient castles. But I am much surprised to learn that she allowed them to affect her mind so greatly and fill it with heresy. Out of one illusion, however, as a friend I feel in duty bound to lead her, that we may avoid similar discussions when

in the near future, I hope, we shall meet again. It matters not what the past of the Bohemian nation was, great or small; its task is over; it is dead; and no human power can awaken the dead. I have neither the time nor the desire to think about things that are past; I am to turn my mind elsewhere, to that people who give promise of living strength and a great future. The historical greatness among the nations of the world is destined to belong to the Germans; the Germans have certainly been chosen by Providence to govern the world; in them are centered all the principles that justify me in this belief and make them capable of attaining this great position. I have decided that it is my duty to develop and strengthen their best traits and then teach them to know themselves. From these germs I shall raise blossoms, and from the blossoms intellectual fruit which the whole world shall enjoy. Within ten years the Germans must be well advanced on their aggressive way, which will lead them to the subjugation of the remaining nations of my empire. These can-

not resist the Germans; they must unite into one, just as the streamlets flow into a large stream, and in its sway lose their individual colors, tastes and names.”

The Countess stood before the Emperor in speechless amazement. She heard his every word, heard but did not comprehend—she could not. This from him whom she had esteemed so highly? Where, then, were justice and humanity, if even Joseph II. bade them farewell? Was the most enlightened philosopher and most noble philanthropist of his age such a man as this? Was this the emperor whose adviser and confidante she wanted to become, and to whose service she intended to consecrate her life? She was conscious that her aim was high, and determined that she would not swerve one inch from her path. She had armed herself against the temptations of luxury and love; she had wished bravely to be above regarding the prejudices and the insulting suspicions that would arise from her occupying such a position; but now

the whole sacrifice proved to be vain and unwise.

“And the oaths with which your predecessors confirmed the rights of the Bohemian nation, assured its independence, promised to protect its rights?” she said quietly.

“I have made in my heart more sacred oaths than to guard medieval prejudice, perform legislative shows, play with manners and customs, and encourage fancies about languages, which all lead to nothing,” firmly replied the sovereign. “I intend to secure the progress of my subjects in a different way. I did not tell you about the reforms in the churches, the courts and the army that I am planning. I spoke to you only about the freedom of the press and of religion. And besides, I did not promise to protect the rights that you speak of and deem so important, and I do not intend to confirm them. I repeat that first of all I shall try to unite all the nations of my empire into one powerful nation, in which the German language, German customs, German thought and German spirit shall domi-

nate. Only in that way will the Austrian Empire become the great European power before which all the nations will bow and tremble. Oh, just one more decade of patient work, and I shall see that I have not lived and planned in vain. Even you, Miss Felsenburk, who look at me so reproachfully now, even you will have to admit the greatness of my undertaking."

"I shall not be where I can congratulate your majesty on such a great victory," the young lady replied, and tears filled her eyes, as she arose to depart.

"You are weeping, Maria Felicia, and that through my fault?" the Emperor exclaimed, suddenly softened. "And you are leaving me already?"

The young lady shrugged her shoulders, as much as to say: "What can I do? There is nothing left for me to do here; I must find another way to realize my hope."

"You are turning against me because I refuse to endorse your plans, in which, I admit, you have assigned me a grateful part. But

think once more, sensibly, about what you have advised, and you will surely admit that you have planned impossible things. Compare them with my plans, and you will see that mine surprised you because of their novelty, and unfavorably impressed you because they opposed yours. I am sure that if you study my plans deeply you will like them and admit their great significance for the future. As a friend who wishes me immortality you will even become inspired with them."

The Countess waved her hand toward the Emperor, as if she wanted to banish the faintest shadow of such a suspicion.

"Still excited? I see that no understanding is possible between us to-day, and that I must dismiss you as you wish. Knowing of the disaster that grieved you, and the peculiarities of your nature, I do not reproach you for leaving me thus, although I had hoped for a different result from our interview. I shall leave this evening; so good-bye. I hope that when we meet again you will be reconciled to me, and that you will gladly help me

with my reforms, as you promised some time ago, but mainly in the great task of strengthening my empire that in intellectual power it may dominate the rest of the world."

The Countess was startled; the bitterness in her heart overmastered her. Wiping the tears from her cheeks and flushed with anger, she exclaimed:

"And that is what Joseph II., whom I have honored as a perfect ruler of men, calls a great task—to take from nations that have trusted their fate to him, their language, their dress, their customs—to dictate to them how they should speak and think; to tell them how to develop; to make a bat out of a nightingale, a wren out of a hawk? Oh, do not deceive yourself, great Emperor; by the amalgamation of your various peoples you will not form one mighty nation that will dominate the world in intellectual strength; your empire will always be a conglomeration of discordant parts. Oh, it is not liberty that you are showing me behind that glittering veil; it is force."

The Emperor turned pale; only by a great effort was he able to control himself.

“Miss Felsenburk, in speaking to her Emperor, bravely takes advantage of her privilege,” he replied, with the dignity of a monarch. “I advise her, though, not to repeat elsewhere what she has said here, and to conceal her whims carefully when she comes to the court, lest they may not meet the forbearance there with which they have been treated here. By the way, I shall remind her of the fate of Count Vrtba, who dared to talk about the same subject and in the same way to my mother, recklessly speaking of Bohemia’s past and demanding for her an impossible future. The Empress wanted to excuse him as a lunatic, but when he acted obstinately and tried to get accomplices for his schemes, she was obliged to confiscate his estates and banish him from the country. He fled to Střelin, in Prussia, where a hundred years previously a settlement had been made by the Brethren who were exiled from Bohemia. As schoolmaster Vrtba, he has been

teaching there and doubtless still teaches the children of those in behalf of whose principles Miss Felsenburk is dreaming."

"And he allowed his estates to be confiscated and himself to be banished, not being able to obtain justice for his nation?" proudly the young lady asked.

With a cutting laugh, the Emperor asked: "Would you have advised him to revolt? Ought he to have attempted what he intended to attempt—that is, to raise a rebellion, as the Directors of Bohemia, whose fate moved you so deeply, had done?"

"I think it would have been shorter and pleasanter for both sides if he had done as I shall do now," the Countess answered with cold dignity. "Knowing what your majesty intends to do, I consider it a patriotic duty to remain no longer a vassal of the throne from which sentence of death has secretly been decreed against my nation, and which in a short time will be publicly proclaimed. I am Bohemian—which, as I see, your majesty has forgotten. After your sentence of condem-

nation I cannot remain as your vassal, for I should become a traitor to my people, for whom I have sworn to live and to die, just as sacredly as you have sworn to elevate the Germans. I thank your majesty for the favors thus far bestowed upon my family, and request you to transfer them to my young uncle, Hypolit of Felsenburk, for whose behoof I give up my estates, my wealth, placing them, with all my titles, rights, privileges, into your hands that you may dispose of them as I have taken the liberty to request."

The Emperor lost his self-control.

"Why are you so obstinate?" he exclaimed. "Really I did not suspect you to be like other women, who in childish ill-temper suddenly break and destroy everything that does not go according to their way. Such action is unworthy of you, Countess. I have held you in higher estimation than that."

"Perhaps you will again place me higher than I stand in your estimation now, when you are convinced that I was performing no deceitful artifice to persuade you to adopt my

plans, but that I have spoken my words in sincerity."

And covering her face with her veil, Maria Felicia bowed and started for the door.

"Go, proud Countess, go!" the Emperor said, turning away. "But I still have hopes in your good sense. Before we meet again all the unpleasant, foolish dreams that vex you now will have disappeared and your mind will be clear once more."

The Countess did not answer. With head erect she disappeared into the row of apartments, where all the attendants arose and bowed before her, as if through the walls they had heard Joseph's words:

"You shall be the mistress of the court, you shall be supreme; you shall rule where no one yet has ever ruled—in my heart!"





CHAPTER VI.

ANDREW, as was his custom, sat alone in his little room in the tower, meditating in gloomy silence, and learned at last that what he heard was not only the gale beating the night rain against the Castle gate, but also an impatient hand. Seized with pity, he hastened to open it for the benighted traveler, thinking of the night when a messenger that brought news to Hlohov about Felsenburk's death had knockd on the gate about the same hour.

After a severe struggle with the wind, in which his lantern went out, he opened a little door in the gate, and saw before him in the dark the uncertain outlines of the man who so urgently demanded admittance. The roar of the wind and the dash of the rain drowned

every word of greeting and welcome, question and answer. There was nothing left for Andrew but to grasp the stranger's hand and take him into his room. He was not a little surprised to find the hand, which trembled with cold, very soft and delicate. Pushing a chair to the warmest place for his belated guest, that he might warm and recover as soon as possible, he tried at the same time to take off his shoulders the cape from whose heavy folds the water was pouring in streams; but when he looked into the stranger's face his hands dropped in amazement and the mantle fell to the floor.

"It is I," the harper said in a faint voice, shyly fixing his eyes on Andrew, and breathlessly sinking into the chair. "If I had not at last seen your light in the tower I should have perished, for my strength was almost gone. It was a lighthouse for me in two ways—I turned to it with my soul as well as with my eyes. I am coming back to Hlohov, coming back, for I have found that the light of truth burns here alone and that you are its

keeper. Everything down there is false and deceitful. It is as you have said; the great of this country are trying to destroy the Bohemian nation; even Joseph II. wants to erase its name from the list of living nations. Since I have learned that there is no justice among the nobility for us, and never will be, it is impossible for me to live among them. I have canceled all my obligations; broken all bonds of friendship; given up all, even Maria Felicia. To me she is dead, the whole world is dead. The path of duty lies here, and in it you shall become my leader. Do not be frightened, I shall not trouble you; with my own strength I want to proceed as your pupil, and never cease blessing you that I have been born anew in the light of your truth. I ask no more of you than to lead me on the way to salvation, to be a support in my first, inexperienced steps."

Andrew's face became radiant with joy. He was not able to answer immediately; he only grasped the harper's cold hands and began to warm them, got his own coat and wrapped

him from head to foot, started a brighter fire on the hearth, and looked around for something to eat, acting like a father whose lost son had just returned. But suddenly leaving all that he had attempted for the comfort of the harper, he came back to him and again pressed his hands, and finally embraced him. It seemed that he was trying to convince himself that it was not a vision deceiving him.

Oh, no, no! it was no illusion. It was really the harper that had revealed himself to him in the moonlight like a messenger from the other world. It was really the harper who had had so many longing questions on his lips, whose painful doubt had changed into enthusiasm when he explained to him the loftiness of human life and dived with him into the secrets of the universe.

“I did not think,” he finally said, “that there was strength enough in your young heart to rid itself so quickly of the sweet bonds of love, and resist the tempting voice of earthly luxury. Your coming back to me has dispersed all my former suspicions of you and

enriched my life with its first real joy. My opinion of you was wrong; how fortunate! It is no longer necessary to conceal from you that no human being had ever impressed me as deeply as you did, that I never was so anxious for human friendship as I was for yours, and that nothing pained me more than to think ill of you. But see how pale you have turned. Be calm; do not talk any more, or you will hurt yourself and my joy will soon turn to grief."

"I am not trembling with weakness or cold, but with joy over your warm reception, which I no more expected than you did my return. Let me continue. I shall have no rest until I have told you everything," the harper said, trying to overcome his exhaustion. "Give me proof of your confidence and friendship. Do you not belong to the United Brethren? Tell me if I have guessed correctly. Know that I also want to become a member, and if you consider me worthy of your mediation with the Brethren take this ring and give it to the older members as a contribution to the

common treasury. Tell them at the same time that I ask them to admit me as soon as possible to a share of all their privileges and duties; that having broken off all communication with the world, I have no place to lay my head, and having parted with the Felsenburks, I have no right to remain another hour in this Castle. I left everything behind me; I took only this jewel, for it is a memento from my mother, and the only thing that I can safely call my own."

Andrew once more pressed the harper's hands to his heart, but the ring he threw into the fire.

"You will not become a Brother on the basis of a piece of gold, but for the gold of your heart, the purity of which I will guarantee with my life. We shall make room for you among us without a gift, and give you shelter and bread, which you will repay with work. You have come to the Castle at a suitable time. We shall have a very important meeting to-night, perhaps the most important in the last few centuries. I will speak to the

members about you. Perhaps a long trip through the country will be assigned for me to-day, but I shall not leave until I have found a refuge for you."

The harper, frightened, looked up. "You say that I have come at a suitable time, and yet you announce your departure on a long journey? How I hoped to gain your friendship, to see you at least occasionally, to live for one ideal with you; and are we to part already? Not to see you for a long time is the same to me now as never to see you again. I will not let you go unless—you promise not to go without me."

"My journey is dangerous."

"By your side I shall not fear gorges, torrents, thieves or wolves."

"Another kind of danger awaits me."

"I tell you again that I fear nothing. Why do you hesitate to confide the danger to me? You say that you believe me, but do you not know that I would rather have my heart torn out than the secret you intrust to it?"

Andrew hesitated no longer. Leaning to the harper he quietly said:

“I know that, and because I know it I shall tell you. The condition of the Brethren, and of the whole Bohemian nation, is unendurable, and no change for the better can we expect from any source. For that reason our ranks are growing thinner; many of the weaker Brethren and others who favor earthly comforts are giving up their faith, and with it also their nationality. They claim to be Germans rather than to endure and suffer any longer as Bohemians. The faithful flock is dispersing; it is high time to do something decisive. We all know what Joseph II. intends to do with us after his mother’s death. If we are to try to save ourselves we must take measures for our defense, although it is almost hopeless. The older members of our Union have decided to go for help and protection elsewhere; encouraged by many indications and secret messages, they hope to get it. They intend to send a delegate to Frederick II. of Prussia, on whom they will place the duty of

describing to the Emperor our circumstances, and asking him, on certain conditions, to assume the sovereignty and defend us. If he will promise to save our religion and language and further in every way their progress, then we shall bind ourselves to help him faithfully when, in the near future, at the death of the Bavarian Elector, war shall be waged over his possessions."

The harper sprang up as if he had not learned that evening what exertion and weakness were.

"The proposition will be made known this evening to all the members," Andrew added, "and it will be voted upon. I think it will be passed unanimously."

"You are seeking salvation, and instead of that you will throw both your religion and your language to destruction," the harper exclaimed. "What you are planning must not happen. This evening, did you say, the meeting was to be held? It is night now—midnight, perhaps. It has begun already; you are delaying here on my account, otherwise

you would have been among the Brethren long ago; by this time they have probably agreed upon the worst. Oh, quickly, quickly, then, let us hasten there! It would take too long for me to explain to you all the objections I hold to your plan. I will explain them before the whole Union."

Overcome by the harper's earnestness and infected by his fears lest the Brethren might really decide on some fatal measure, Andrew delayed no longer. He arose as quickly as his friend, poured water over the fire, that any one who might choose to spy upon him could not see that the room was empty, quietly opened the door, and then they stole like two shadows down the steps, out of the tower. They kept close to the walls, stopping every few moments as if in fear of meeting some one or being followed. The fear, at least that evening, was unnecessary, for the darkness still reigned, the wind roared, and the rain poured in torrents. Both were wet to the skin when they reached the main building, but neither was aware of it, and the harper's

hand in Andrew's no longer trembled, but with a passionate pressure at every lengthy pause urged him onward.

Moving cautiously into the vestibule, whose height the harper at his first visit had surveyed with so much pleasure, they stopped at one of the pillars. Andrew, who moved about in the darkness with as much certainty as if the sun were shining, pushed aside a heavy stone. He then opened a door that led to a narrow space, from which a colder breeze than that outside swept over them. The cold current came from the ground, as the harper learned when Andrew carefully barred the entrance behind him and lighted a lantern, which doubtless had served many generations of his race on such expeditions. He saw before him a flight of stairs, as steep as a ladder, leading into a dark abyss.

Boldly Andrew started into the narrow shaft, and the harper followed him. Dead air as well as dead silence met them there; the echo of the mad elements outside did not penetrate those dizzy depths.

But the cave into which the youths with impatiently beating hearts were descending was not a vault concealing the dead; it was a secret hearth on which was glimmering the feeble flame of the life of a whole nation, the only refuge where the spirit of the nation dared to feel, think, weep and hope.

They soon heard hollow sounds, which, as the harper learned, were earnest words echoing through the large cave in the deepest interior of the rocky cliff on which the old residence of Andrew's ancestors was built. The cave, which was occupied by men, was dimly lighted with a pine torch that was carefully guarded, lest a faint glimmer might stray through some unsuspected crevice in the rock, and being reflected on the waves of the river, might betray their meeting-place. The number of the men was constantly increasing; they were coming in by twos, through as narrow a passage from below as the one through which the young men had come from above. A long underground passage stretched from the cave under the bed of the river to the forest on the

opposite side and ended at the foot of a cliff seemingly inaccessible. It was a secret exit from the Castle, which the Brethren ages ago had themselves made, when their persecution began and the masters of Hlohov became their protectors. Here they held their meetings; and more than once the cave was their refuge when the fires prepared for them were flaming. The cave was the meeting-place of the Union after the Brethren had been publicly suppressed; and the echoes of their psalms, too loudly poured forth in religious enthusiasm, often found their way out of the cave, and were thought by the superstitious servants to be the song of the Hlohov lutanist; and whoever heard it fled in affright, thinking it was his death song.

It was a long while before the eyes of the harper could endure the smoky flame of the pine, before he could see that he was surrounded by sturdy men with grave, expressive faces, marked by the same mournful lines as those on Andrew's countenance, and that they also were clothed in the same coarse

garb of slavery. It was a long while before he could distinguish on an elevated place, under the torch, the same old man that he had seen under the larch tree, reading an old book, when with his harp he made his first pilgrimage to Hlohov. The old man evidently was presiding over the meeting, and had just finished speaking when the young men entered, for they overheard the assemblage discussing his words. Suddenly the discussion was stopped, and they all turned their attention to the harper, for Andrew had stepped to the old man and, turning to the meeting, said:

“I am bringing you a new son, father, and to the rest of you a Brother. For his faithfulness I pledge my life.”

“Andrew’s pledge is your most brilliant praise, young man,” the president said to the harper. “He, although one of the youngest of the members, surpasses the oldest among us in enthusiastic devotion to his duties as a member of the Brotherhood. May he be a model to you in everything. But what attracts

you to us in this hopeless moment? Did not Andrew tell you that our life was full of fear, adversity and trouble; that we are continually persecuted and that the sword hangs over our heads? If a Brother, through his carelessness, gets into official hands, he is either severely and disgracefully chastised, or beheaded as one dangerous to the welfare of human society. Dangerous and difficult is the work of building our new Jerusalem. Have you tried your strength, young man? Will it not fail in the first trial?"

The harper bowed reverently before the old man, and said:

"Believe me, father, I have been led to your Union by a desire for the truth. Since childhood I have longed for it; in different ways and on various roads sought it, but in vain. With a healing hand Andrew has removed the poisonous arrow of discouragement, and dropped into the festering wound the balm of your sublime religion. Finding at last the jewel so long sought, I gave up everything for it, wishing only to be enlightened by its heavenly luster.

What a sweetheart is to a lover, the truth is to me. For it I am willing to live in poverty and humility with you; for it I will gladly endure adversity and persecution; for it I will face every danger, and it will fill me with pride not only to consecrate but to sacrifice my life for the truth. Oh, happy are those who were chosen to lay the foundation for a new Jerusalem! I see the city before me in the golden luster of a new era, and I bless her in my name and yours. Love will make her laws; justice shall fulfill them; the snow-white banner of peace and brotherhood shall wave from her battlements; on her gates shall be written 'progress'; her churches shall be consecrated with spiritual perfection, and whoever will enter her walls shall enter eternal life."

All looked at the harper with admiration, and the old man, stretching out his hand, drew him closer and kissed him on the forehead. "You are ours!" exclaimed the rest, and each in turn pressed his hand.

"Do not forget that it is high time for us

to decide on something definite," the old man began. "Once more I tell you to consider well our condition, that we are without protection, without hope. The committee of the older members decided in a preliminary council that there was nothing left but to accept the secretly offered friendship of Frederick of Prussia; to send a delegate and let him know, that, under certain conditions, we are ready to become his allies."

The harper, who had modestly stepped back among the youngest members, now quickly returned to his former place before the old man.

"You have accepted me as a Brother; oh, prove your brotherhood to me; patiently allow me to say a few words."

"You are at liberty to speak," the old man replied.

"I hear that you want to go to a king. How can it be that so many wise men forget that kings have always been the greatest enemies of the Bohemian people? Who of the long list of kings called to the Bohemian

throne has been our father, our providence, as he should have been? If you will find one among them, I shall not say another word."

Such deep silence followed the young man's words that the underground moisture was heard trickling down the walls. All were pondering the truth of the sad statement, but no one arose to reproach him for his words.

"You are all silent, and I see that with me you are recalling how the Přemysls called the Germans into our country, and gave them privileges which they did not give their own children; how they were always more desirous of the German crown than for the prosperity of their own nation. Are you recalling how the Luxemburgs lavishly squandered our national property? Both John and Sigmund attempted to divide and barter away the Bohemian country. Charles IV., whom we call the father of our country, gave three times as many privileges to the foreigners in Prague as he did to the Bohemians. Are you recalling how King George, a pure-blooded Bohemian, persecuted the Brethren? You are

perhaps thinking about the Ferdinands of Austria, who never felt in duty bound to fulfill their oaths, but secretly got rid of them through their confessors. Do you think that Frederick of Prussia would deal with you otherwise, even though he were bound by the most sacred promises to help you, and even though he acknowledged your faith to be his? Oh, take warning from the examples of the past, and be cautious before a deceitful stranger! So long as you were useful to him, he would make promises and hold communications with you; he would use as well as abuse you; and after attaining his object with your assistance, he would betray you, simply saying that traitors deserve no better treatment."

The harper did not pause to take breath.

"Oh, take warning, Brethren, once more I beg of you. The king would rob you of your last, most precious treasure. And, besides, you would stain the honor of your nation by becoming allies with the greatest enemy of your country—the man who

trampled your fields so many times, destroyed your homes, captured your sons and dragged them into his country and made of them his soldiers, the man who wanted to turn our kingly Prague into ashes. Consider once more that if he were to gain the Bohemian country, he would not deal with it as with a treasure entrusted to his care, but that it would be no more to him than a prey. Is there really no other hope but to invite an enemy into our country for the sake of saving ourselves?"

The harper, expecting the decision of the Union, was not the only one that wept; the whole community wept with him.

The old man was the only one who quietly reflected. Arising at last, and taking the harper by the hand, he led him to his seat.

"To you belongs this place," he said. "You are better fitted for it than I; you have spoken more wisely to the Brethren."

But the harper did not accept the position offered him. He begged not to be shamed by being awarded honor that did not belong

to him, and urged that he had said no more than what others would have thought of in the course of the conference.

“For the last time Frederick’s name has been spoken among us. But where shall we turn and what shall we do in this hopeless moment?” the old man asked.

“Let us try depending upon our own strength,” the harper advised.

“We do not know how to use arms,” said the old man, shrugging his shoulders.

“You are mistaken, father, if you think that I would advise the Brethren to shed the blood of their fellow-creatures. I do not mean that we should take the sword to defend our rights, but that our rights should become our sword. I have heard from the most trustworthy lips that the Emperor is preparing a decree which will lighten the tenure service, and that this law is to be followed by other reforms, especially by religious toleration. As we have waited and suffered so long, let us wait a few months longer, and let him begin the work of the promised emancipa-

tion. We shall soon see whether he intends to offer us a royal gift or a mere pittance. If he do not fulfill our hopes, it will then be time to speak determinedly for justice. But we shall begin openly, we shall speak to him like honest men, and not like sly, revengeful slaves. All of us who have at heart the prosperity and the freedom of the nation will meet and march to Prague to speak personally to the authorities and help to achieve the amelioration of our laws. From there we shall go to the Emperor that he may hear from the lips of the people what they need and desire. In Prague we will say to the masters: 'Lords, keep your palaces, your estates; we do not covet earthly luxuries and wealth; we ask no more of you than to let us follow our way to God, speak to Him and to our fellow-men in our own tongue, and spend our lives in peace and industry. In return for our willingness to take all your work upon our shoulders and leave you to your pleasures, allow us to live in mental freedom, to enjoy justice and our

rights as men, and in that way to become the strongest pillars of our country.' "

Andrew embraced the harper, and the rest warmly pressed his hand. Said the old man :

"It is not necessary for me to tell you that your advice is accepted; you see it in our pleased faces. When the time comes for action you will notify and advise us further. Andrew has said that you want to live among us and support yourself with work. Our Union shall be your home, and to ennoble its spirit, your work. I name you Brother-Assistant; you have the gift of speech; hearts will easily and gladly yield to your words. Your task will be to travel from one settlement to another, to strengthen the hopeless, to soothe the impatient, and to spread your ideas; in that way you will prepare our people for the task awaiting them, to demand justice for themselves. I believe I met you in the woods a short time ago, with a harp on your shoulder. Make it again your companion. Hearts not susceptible to earnest words will unconsciously open before the sweet sounds

of music. Let the harp be not only your companion, but make it also your shield. If any meddlesome person inquire about the aim of your journeys, say that you are a traveling musician. If you like my offer, which undoubtedly expresses the sentiment of the whole community, follow me to my dwelling this evening, and accept it always as your home. I have no son, and if you will be a son to me, gladly as a father I shall bless you, and to-morrow, at the dawn of day, will prepare you for your pilgrimage."





CHAPTER VII.

AN endless army of peasants, all of lean forms, clothed in ragged garments, with walking-sticks in their hands and bags of bread on their backs, were pouring from the northeast over all the roads and paths toward Prague. It was not the pilgrimage of St. John, nor yet that of St. Václav, for it was early in the spring of 1775.

The Empress, with her son, had issued a decree that lightened the service; the rest of the promised privileges, however, were not granted, but the peasants were permitted to arrange those matters themselves with their masters. In order to do so, the peasants were now advancing toward Prague to their lords. On their way they had said that the Emperor intended to do much more for

them had it not been for the opposition of the nobles; that the nobles reproached him for not being like his predecessors, who defended their rights and tried to enrich them, some even going so far as to accuse Joseph of the intention of making beggars of the nobles in the interests of the peasants, that they might idle their time away on their ovens. The peasants, acting on the privilege granted them by the new law, decided to go to Prague, to speak humbly to their masters in behalf of their interests. They desired to prove to the nobility that they did not wish to be idle, to explain what they had to endure during years of poor crops, and how miserably whole families were dying of hunger; and then to beg the nobles to take pity and spare them at least some crumbs from their bountiful supplies.

In every village the number of the pilgrims was increasing; the peasants made known their purpose, and those who thought as they did and were burdened as they were, joined them. At the head of the band marched two

young men, both handsome, and both of refined manners. The taller and stronger of the two carried a flag. It was made of coarse cloth like the garments of those following it; the picture of a plow in its center was intended to show that, although they desired to have their work lightened, they did not desire to be idle. The other young man carried a Bible, to show that they had been led to this pilgrimage by no idle whim, but that they intended to act according to the commandments of God.

Andrew carried the flag, and the harper carried the Bible. It was the Bible of the president of the Union; it was almost as old as the Union itself, and so was not printed, but artistically written. Andrew and the harper were the speakers who addressed the villagers. The harper was known far and wide. As Brother-Assistant he had made long journeys and had won the hearts of all the peasants who had made his acquaintance. As soon as he spoke all flocked to him as to an experienced and trustworthy friend. It was

evident that he had disseminated in the hearts of the peasants the conviction that the nation must arise and openly demand its rights. Through his influence the band of pilgrims was constantly increasing, and it moved toward Prague in a spirit of perfect peace and understanding. Two whole days they journeyed on quietly and unmolested, at night sleeping under the wide heavens. As they neared some castle or manor, the officials fled terror-stricken, conscious of the injuries they had inflicted on the peasants and fearing that the day of reckoning had come. Not until the end of the third day, when they found themselves at the foot of a chain of mountains, did they see a frightful wall on the horizon, moving and quickly approaching them. It was a regiment of soldiers. The official runaways had signaled to Prague that peasants were on their way to the city to settle with their masters; and in consequence of this the city officers had sent the soldiers against them.

The peasants, though amazed, yet bravely

and confidently advanced toward the soldiers. The commander should see that they were not armed, and hearing their St. Václavian hymn he would know that they intended no harm. And, besides, the peasants were ready to acknowledge the object of their journey, feeling convinced that the commander would then let them pass. But they were mistaken in believing that they would not be opposed in traveling over the public roads to ask for justice.

“Halt!” suddenly exclaimed a thundering voice, when the peasants had come within a few hundred feet of the soldiers. “Halt, or we fire.”

All remained still, being unable to comprehend what they had heard.

“What do you demand of us, master, that you want us to stop?” Andrew asked the commander, a young man in uniform, puffed with pride.

Being thus addressed, he turned purple with anger.

“You have no right to ask me; it is your

duty to obey at once," he answered gruffly. "I command you to surrender quietly, otherwise you shall be treated with due severity." And the soldiers, hearing a command, quickly loaded their guns.

On this brutal threat a timid murmur arose. But the young leaders did not lose their presence of mind.

"Why do you want to capture us, Hypolit Felsenburk?" the harper demanded. "We are marching to Prague to speak humbly and peacefully to our masters. If you want to prevent our going, you must have misunderstood the Emperor's Patent, which gives us the privilege to do so. You are making void your Emperor's will."

The young Hypolit of Felsenburk flamed with anger.

"Utter another word, villains, and I will execute on you right here what awaits every one of you that shall behold Prague," he exclaimed, pointing significantly to two tall trees.

"Whoever opposes my orders shall not move alive from the spot."

Again the people murmured, but this time not with fear; they threatened. As an answer the soldiers aimed at the peasants.

“What a terrible example you are giving to people who are peacefully seeking their rights!” Andrew exclaimed with anger. “How are we, then, to get justice? Through force, treason, murder? Are you not setting us an example of rebellion yourselves? Must not we regret not having taken sterner measures to attain our rights? If you give orders to fire at unarmed people, you deserve to be called a murderer. But no one will be surprised if you do; you are a Felsenburk, and Felsenburks always gladly performed the headsman’s duties on the Bohemian people.”

A thundering noise interrupted his speech. A thousand hissing sounds flew over the peasants’ heads; moans, sighs and threats quickly answered them. Clouds of smoke concealed the scene of excitement and despair. Some of the peasants, in a blind instinct of self-preservation, started on a crazy run, and were followed by a part of the army; the rest in rag-

ing fury fell upon the soldiers with savage strength, and the staves in their hands became terrible weapons.

“What have we done?” again they cried. “Why do you want to kill us? Have you not been born among us; do you not know the lot we are enduring? Is this what we get for wishing to beg for what is ours by right?”

But their words were fruitless; the firing was repeated, and those who did not fall in their own blood were soon under arrest.

Andrew and the harper were in the midst of the terrible fray from the very first. Around them the wildest conflict raged. The harper, wounded in the head by a bullet, fell to the ground; and Andrew, struck with a stick by a peasant who had raised it to strike a soldier, fell on his knees beside the harper and tried to protect him with his body.

“Run,” said the harper, collecting his strength. “Run! nothing more can be done to-day.”

“I will not move from the spot without you,

and for you to get up or for me to lift you is impossible," Andrew sighed.

"Oh, let me lie and bleed! Let the blood of Maria Felicia wash away the crime committed by her ancestors against the Bohemian nation and your dislike for her," the harper gasped, and fainted away.

At these words it seemed that Andrew's strength returned. For a moment, as if stunned, he looked into the harper's face, forgetting the struggle around him; and then suddenly he arose, lifted the harper, pressed him to his bosom, made his way out through the struggling crowd, and started into the forest. Young Felsenburk, seeing that Andrew was running away and carrying his comrade in his arms, commanded his soldiers to follow him, and promised a great reward to him who should bring back the brave flag-bearer, dead or alive. They started to the forest, surrounded and searched it through and through, and not finding the runaway, they set it on fire; but no trace of the young men was found. The peasants concluded

that they had either died as heroes in some cave, or that Andrew had accomplished a miracle, running so fast that he left the forest behind him before the soldiers had reached it.

Other bands of peasants succeeded in getting to Prague; but they were repulsed by the authorities, who even refused to listen to their supplication, and treated them as rebels. Many of them were imprisoned, others sent back to their estates, where various punishments were inflicted upon them, and four were hanged on public highways to serve as a warning to the passers-by.





CHAPTER VIII.

A COLD, heavy fog was slowly dragging itself over the boundary mountains. Now and then cold rain drizzled down, and like sharp needles pierced through the thin garments of the peasants, who were followed by an army of soldiers urging them onward.

It was in the year 1781; the Emperor Joseph II. had issued his famous "Toleration Patent," in which he proclaimed liberty to all the religious denominations of the empire. The Bohemian Brethren, who had until then secretly conducted their services in great danger, now publicly professed their faith and desired to be registered as a religious body. The Brethren were about one hundred thousand in number, settled mostly along the banks of the Elbe. But soon they learned to

their great distress that the proclaimed liberty was not extended to them, for the Emperor was not aware that such a sect existed in his empire. He supposed that the burning of the Bydžovs had exterminated the hated heretics. They regretted that they had trusted in the Emperor's words, for they were dealt with very severely.

It was rumored that their faith was found full of heresies when preachers of other denominations examined it; that the Brethren were simply remnants of the ancient Adamites, and that their eccentric behavior must be suppressed to prevent the dissemination of the evil doctrines. The priests were directed to make efforts to bring the Brethren back into the bosom of the Holy Religion, and if they objected too strongly, to try to get them at least to accept the Augsburg Confession of Faith. From those who remained obstinate, their children were taken and placed in Catholic families to be brought up, and the parents, with the remaining Brethren who held to their faith, were exiled into Transylvania. The

men were to be placed in the army, and the women kept at domestic work for the army, at the small pittance of three kreutzers a day. A part of them, conducted by soldiers, were now going into exile.

As the Brethren ascended a forest mountain over a steep pathway, they sang their old psalms, but when they reached the summit and looked back to their beloved country, lighted by one narrow, pale sunbeam resembling the faint, tearful smile of a sad mother parting with her children, the psalms died away and loud weeping followed. All fell upon the ground, took handfuls of earth and put it into their pockets and knapsacks as a sacred relic from their country. Driven by the soldiers, they had to arise long before they had finished their farewell prayers, and soon they disappeared in the forest.

The last in the procession of the exiles were an old man led by a tall, handsome young man, and a woman wrapped in a coarse cape with a capoch. These were doubtless husband and wife, and the old man the father of

one of them, of which one it was impossible to guess, for both were very kind to him and very careful of him. The husband and wife must have loved each other dearly, for if they were not looking into each other's eyes their glances at least followed one direction, as if they could not but see, feel, and think the same thing.

The old man, looking back for the last time to his mother country, sobbed more painfully than the rest. He had no hope, as they had, of returning if better days should come. He wept because he had to carry his old bones to a strange country, because he could not lay them down to rest in his native land. The young man, tenderly consoling him, led him on after the rest, that the painful moment might not be prolonged. But the wife lingered for a moment; she could not turn her eyes away from her beloved country, the country of martyrs, whose number she was increasing.

A soldier, impatient with her delay, was in the act of forcing her on with his bay-

onet, when a stranger suddenly appeared from behind a rock where unnoticed he had been watching the Brethren, and stopped him.

“Can I believe my eyes?” he exclaimed. “Dare I believe it is you, Countess Felsenburk?”

It was Emperor Joseph II. Being in Prague at the time on account of the building of Fort Joseph, and urged by a spirit of curiosity, he decided to go to the frontier to see the heretics moving out of Bohemia, and to have an interview with the Brethren, unrecognized by them. As they were coming from the valley, there suddenly appeared before his eyes a face long unseen but not forgotten. At first he thought it was only the result of a momentary recollection, for, seeing the Brethren, the Emperor thought of the beautiful Maria Felicia who had been such an ardent admirer of them that for them she gave up her wealth, his friendship, and her position, and had mysteriously disappeared when he made known to her his plans of centralization. It was rumored that she had fled

to some foreign convent because of her hopeless love for the Emperor. Both his and her servants had overheard their loud conversation at the time of their meeting in his castle, and later had suspected that it was a love quarrel on account of which the young lady had retired from the world. But Joseph II. knew better; for a long time he did not believe that she had gone never to return; for many months he hoped that she would come back when tired of opposing him. "It is impossible that she will not return," he thought. Well she knew his feelings; well she knew what she was to him, and that to her was tendered the first place by his side. But in vain he waited for the only woman whose mind and nature he admired, the only heart in which he had confidence, and which he intended to reward with a kingly gift for its true devotion. Perhaps it was because of this loss which the Brethren had caused that he banished them from his empire.

Clearly, yes, very clearly, Joseph II. still recalled the beautiful, intellectual Countess

Felsenburk, and yet unforgotten were the pain and anger which he felt when he heard of her mysterious disappearance. But here was no illusive trick of his imagination; he really saw Maria Felicia among the Brethren. When he greeted her she stepped back, as much surprised as he.

"It—is—really you!" said the Emperor once more, and his old warmth suddenly returned. "But what are you doing among these people?"

"I share their fate, imperial master; at your command I go into exile," Maria Felicia answered with her old dignity.

The Emperor was startled.

"Surely, my decree does not extend to you," he said in a wavering tone.

Maria Felicia smiled bitterly. That reproachful smile moved the Emperor.

"The liberty that your majesty is pleased to offer is tendered not only to certain nations, then, but also specifies certain individuals? Some are permitted to believe what others are forbidden? I thank your majesty for

wishing to exclude me from the persecution that falls upon our Union. Believing as a Sister, I want to suffer with the rest. Allow me to follow my husband."

"To follow your husband?" the Emperor asked, with amazement. "You are married, and to whom?"

"I married the one who rejected me when I was Countess Felsenburk, to whom my wealth was nothing, because I was a descendant of traitors. I married the son of one of my porters. Andrew Hlohovsky is his name. He is the descendant of the Bohemian nobles whose wealth and title were given to my ancestor. His noble character aroused in my heart the warmest and purest love of which a woman is capable.

"Scorned as a Countess, I determined that Andrew must at least honor me as a benefactress of Bohemia unknown to him. As his patriotic soul had taught me to love my nation beyond my own life, I decided to become your adviser, and in that way to work for the advancement of Bohemia. But great was my

disappointment; I learned that you were not actuated by that justice for which I had honored you, and that my most ardent supplications could never move you. I severed all my connections with the world, and fled to the Castle of Hlohov, to Andrew, again in the disguise of a poor musician, as I had been there before, after my father's death. Andrew accepted me as a friend; through his influence I became a Brother, and joined their Union. I gained his perfect confidence; he made known to me all his thoughts, aims, and deeds, never suspecting, of course, that he was bestowing his highest esteem on the hated Countess Felsenburk. Several years ago, I was elected, with him, as a leader and speaker by the Brethren. Together we led our people to Prague to speak for our rights to the nobles, as you had given us the privilege to do. Dangerously wounded by your soldiers, sent against us unarmed people who trusted in your words as though they were sacred—and thinking that I was dying, at last I revealed my name to Andrew. My blood,

flowing for the rights of the Bohemian people, washed from his heart all the hatred against Countess Felsenburk. The love which he now bore Maria Felicia was even greater than the hatred with which he formerly regarded her. He lifted me from the ground, fled from the massacre, and in spite of his own severe wounds, saved my life. He carried me to the president of the Union, a dear old man, who, on account of old age, could not accompany us on our expedition. The president blessed our marriage, and accepted both of us as his children. Andrew cultivated his little farm, and I served them both, feeling that I had entered paradise. But one cloud hung over our happiness; no children smiled upon us. But now we praise God for not sending us children, for we should have had to move out without them, like the rest of the Brethren."

And the eyes of Maria Felicia, which had lost none of their luster since they rested upon the sovereign's face, filled with tears.

Sadly she turned away from him, and looked once more toward her native country.

“How many, oh! how many times, Almighty God,” she exclaimed, “have Thy children had to move out of Bohemia because they loved Thy truth too ardently? Oh, allow us not, even now, to carry away its last germ. May its sacred seed remain concealed here in its birthplace, where so many times it has been trampled down and yet has sprouted and grown again. Oh, it will bloom here once more, and that in a short time; this hope strengthens us now, and will help us to endure life in the cold, strange land to which we are banished.

“Your punishment, O King, shall be that against your own will you shall arouse the Bohemian nation to new life. By your injustice you will awaken within the Bohemians their slumbering love for their country; with your dislike for their language you will arouse their old love for it. Being forced to give it up, they will love it the more. But, above all, know that the time is coming with urgent

speed when you shall learn that only a Bohemian could have understood you, that he was the only one among your peoples who kept up with your progressive spirit; that he alone could have assured immortality to your deeds. In the place where you sowed so much love you will reap only ingratitude. Oh, I see already the Bohemian nation, slain by you, rising from its grave! Oppressors do not weaken the national spirit; they add to its strength."

The capoch slipped off Maria Felicia's head; her rich black hair waved loosely around her beautiful shoulders. The light of sacred prophecy illumined her face, when she lifted her hand as if to indicate to the Emperor the way in which he ought to walk.

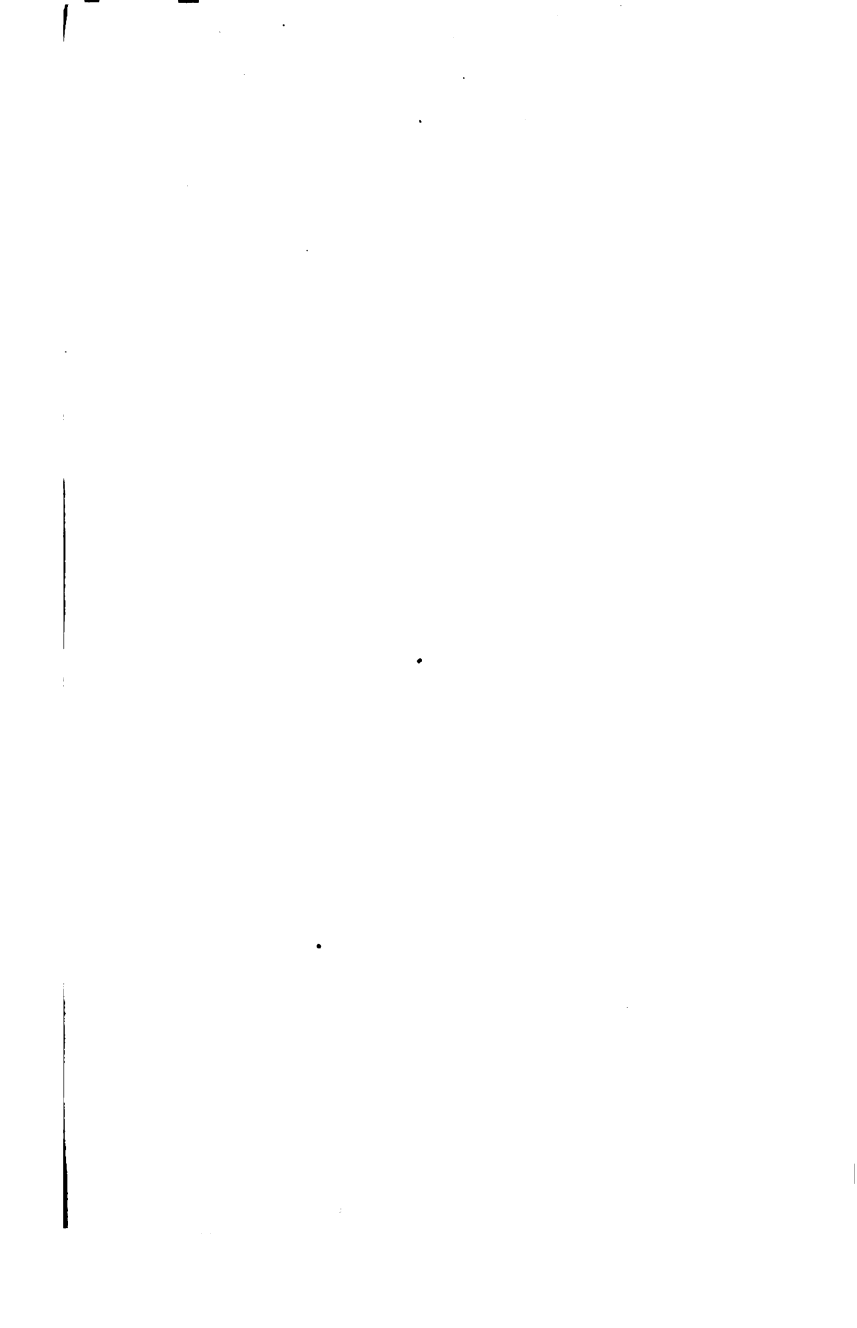
With profound emotion the sovereign watched her. It seemed to him that on the forehead of the wife of an exile, bravely moving into a strange country for her faith and gladly enduring poverty with her loving husband, a more brilliant star sparkled than the one that adorned the head of the young

Countess Felsenburk, when in the height of her beauty he met her for the first time at the ball in her father's magnificent palace.

Without a word he let her go.

When, only a few years later, Joseph II. had to recall the greater part of his reforms as he lay on his death-bed, misunderstood, his best efforts for the empire rewarded with ingratitude, did he think of Maria Felicia, the last mistress of Hlohov?





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