ABOVE HER STATION.

ABOVE HER STATION:

The Story of a Young Woman's Life.

BY

MRS. HERMAN PHILIP,

FROM THE ORIGINAL OF MARIA NATHUSIUS.

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PREFATORY.

"ABOVE HER STATION" is a chapter from the actual life of the present day: the incidents do not occur in this country; but it requires no words to prove that they are, at least, as characteristic of English as of Continental life. We have heard too much lately of what is termed "Women's questions"—extravagance in dress, outside display, love of finery, and all attendant consequences—to entertain any doubt on the subject.

There is no attempt to adorn this *Life Story*. In its simplicity and natural truthfulness it is thought to be more representative of every-day experience, and more likely to prove useful, than any narrative of more tragic details, or fearful results.

D. M. P.

2 GAYFIELD SQUARE,
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ABOVE HER STATION.

CHAPTER I.

"I'VE made up my mind: I will go to service," said Clara to her mother. "A seamstress leads a sorry life: one day passes over as dull and monotonous as another; one can never see a sensible person, but must sit stitching, from morning till night, and remain sitting, till an old maid is the end of the song."

"You do not know what you want," said her mother. "Do you remember what you said last Martins' day, when your aunt Rieka was giving you the advice about going to service? Then you raved about slavery, and turned up your nose at servitude, and I did not oppose you. It

would be a sin and a shame to let an old woman live quite alone, without any one to help or care for her. But I still say, you do not know yourself what you want. Can you ever be better off than you are now? You are your own mistress, and can do whatever you like, and do not need to be ordered about by strangers. Oh! when I think over the days of my youth,——"

"Yes! yes! I know all about your youthful days," interrupted Clara, pertly; "I shall not be so stupid as you were: you ought to have held the young lawyer fast. Aunt Rieka said yesterday, with so much unction, that your beauty had been your misfortune; she ought more properly to have said, your want of cleverness. But I tell you that *my* beauty shall be more fortunate." Then laughing, she skipped over to the mirror, and most needlessly re-arranged her Sunday attire.

"So godless as *you* have I never spoken," replied her mother; "and yet misfortunes have pursued me, I do not know how."

"That's it exactly," again interrupted Clara; "you do not know how. Just the not knowing is the mistake; I, however, will know. And now, for any sake in the world, stop grumbling —to-day is Sunday. You have no cause to murmur, and I do not see why I should listen to it. The whole world stands open to me, and the world is so beautiful! so wondrous beautiful! Whether I go to service or not, it will still go on. In the mean time, I shall go to the old lady, the widow of the general: there I shall be well off, and have money in abundance."

"And I shall starve!" said her mother in a whining tone.

"Aunt Rieka must look to that; she has stores of money in her chest. It is shameful that she has left me so long to cut out and stitch, in order to support her only sister. There is an end to that now; I must look out for the future; my wages must be saved; for, when one gets money in a large sum, one can take better care of it—single shillings and sixpences slip through the fingers.

Aunt Rieka, who has always got Christian charity in her mouth, may sometimes extend it with her hand; and the short and the long of it is, when no one else is with you, she is your nearest relation. And then, mother," added Clara, slyly, "you will have this advantage, that, when you have pressed all you can out of my aunt, I will care for you also, so then, it will come to you from two sources. Make a fine lament and soften her heart; but, as far as I am concerned, you may leave all that alone," added she, laughing. "I know all your tricks too well: they will not avail any more with me."

With these words she drew a black silk mantilla out of a drawer, and a few small coins jingled out along with it. She tossed a three-penny-piece into her mother's lap, and said, laughing, "Here, buy a cake for yourself, and keep Sunday with it; but mind, send Kleist's Dorothy; then the baker will think it is for the gentleman student: you understand me."

"Little Thousandtricks!" said the weak moth-

er to her. The daughter had quite satisfied her —the last was a particularly convincing proof: the clever remarks about Aunt Rieka were very right; her sister must give her more assistance if Clara were not at home to provide for the house; and she could easily do it; she was a rich widow, and had only an adopted daughter to support; and if Clara secretly helped her, as a good daughter ought, then she would indeed be much better off.

Mrs. Krauter was the widow of a gingham weaver. She had been pretty and light-minded in her youth, and had, after many adventures, married this man, who, even then, was almost worn out from drinking. He became worse from year to year, and died after having kept his wife for nearly ten years in continued want and misery. Fortunately Clara was the only child left, and the widow had a rich sister, who, in her need, was a great help to her. Want and misery had wrought no change on Mrs. Krauter: she was, and she remained, light-minded, lazy, and

greedy; and even though she could shed abundant tears over her miserable position, the tears did not come from any deep feeling; for an idle chat with a neighbor over a cup of coffee was sufficient to make her forget all her woes. Clara was an exact copy of her mother, only that she was more beautiful, and, at the same time, much more cunning, and therefore still more given up to the world and its soul-destroying pleasures.

Her sister, Mrs. Rieka, was also a widow—even the very rich widow of the late soap-boiler, Bendler. She was in every respect the opposite of her sister. She was a God-fearing, industrious, worthy woman, and had long tried her influence for good with mother and daughter, but in vain; all she gained was, that they both avoided her as much as possible, and only allowed her to see their best side; which was much worse than if they had laid bare the naked deformity of their faults.

After Clara had ended the above-mentioned

dialogue with her mother, she prepared herself for her Sunday's pleasuring, singing to herself all the while. The silk mantilla was put on, and the money that was shaken out of it put into her pocket. Then out of a wilderness of other things, she drew forth an embroidered pocket-handkerchief, which was quickly cast aside, as a long end of torn lace was hanging to it; she then pulled out another—this was torn up the center.

"These infamous cotton handkerchiefs are worth nothing!" exclaimed she, much irritated.

"Give it here, child," said her mother; "I'll soon stitch it up for you;" and, threading her needle, the hole was quickly drawn together with long stitches. In the mean time, Clara was seeking the most tolerable pair out of a bundle of light-colored kid-gloves.

"Where, in all the world, are the right hand gloves?" lamented Clara, again. "For the left hand I have six, seven, and for the right hand only three; and, stupid that I am, I have for-

gotten to send them to be cleaned; they all look as black as a negro. What matter!" added she, with determination; "I'll buy a new pair. What's ninepence, more or less? With my sky-blue muslin dress I must have clean gloves."

"Aunt Rieka said last Sunday, that you ought rather to wear wash-leather gloves, like Gretta," remarked her mother. "Only think: she has her confirmation-gloves still!"

"Really!" exclaimed Clara. "No! that wonder I must relate to my friends; it is so like Gretta Bendler. Only to go to church, and, at the most, to a very particular promenade in the fields, does she ever draw on her gloves; but Gretta has a hand in the wash-leather gloves like the paw of a Polar bear. Well, well, 'Let every one look how he drives: every one look where he stops,' says Gœthe—All are not gifted alike."

While quoting these words, she had tied on her sky-blue bonnet, laid the embroidered handkerchief cleverly over the dirty gloves, and then with a light adieu, was leaving the door.

"Stop, Clara!" cried her mother; "there is your chemise appearing above the shoulder, and with a great rent in it besides."

"Only tuck it down deep enough," said Clara, with indifference; which being done, she went out on her way.

Mantua-makers are proverbially untidy; it is, they say, because they are always busy with their needle for others, and can never find time for the needful repairs of their own wardrobe. Clara was not only untidy as a mantua-maker, but still more so as the disorderly daughter of a very disorderly mother, and, withal, a conceited young woman, with ideas far beyond her station. It was of the utmost importance to her that her dress should be six yards wide, and, if possible, be long enough to sweep the dust off the streets; neither could she do without her embroidered cuffs, collar, handkerchief, bordered petticoat, or silk mantilla. If her chemise were in rags, that did not matter; indeed, it was altogether indifferent to her — nobody could see that. To have

a hole in her shoe or stocking was more disagreeable; even that did not much distress her; the defect was cleverly concealed; here the long skirt came into use. She had a serious dispute lately with her cousin Gretta: though the latter had not been very finely brought up, yet she had good common sense, and was no friend to extravagance. Seeing the petticoat with the broad flounces, she told Clara it was quite nonsense to waste so much unnecessary finery on an under garment. Clara replied, that every properly-dressed female — At these words, Gretta, taking her hand, raised her arm, and pointing to the sleeve of her dress, showed her that it was half unsewed. Clara continued, after a hasty excuse, in a tone of irritation, to explain to the rustic Gretta, that a decently-dressed female could not possibly do without a flounced petticoat, in order properly to keep out her dresses. "It suits especially," added she pertly, "for slight people; for a beer-barrel figure, however, it is not necessary." Gretta replied, "You ought to be

ashamed of your rudeness; and if you take my advice, you will mend up your torn garments, and try to purchase good strong useful clothes, instead of wasting your hard-earned money on useless finery; 'with your ribbons and your flounces you will never entice a dog out of the oven.'* You will bitterly repent, some time or other, having been such an improvident fool. You think so much of the world; but I tell you the world will make small account of you: you think the world is a paradise, but I tell you heaven is elsewhere." Ah! thought Clara in much alarm, now Gretta will certainly begin about her Lord and Savior, for she can speak about him as if she was quite sure of her salvation. Gretta was so much behind her time in education that she was ignorant of all novels; she knew nothing about Eugene Sue, George Sand; had never read any of the *muses*, nor the Lovers' Almanac; she knew only by

* A German proverb, which means that fine clothes never attracted a sensible man for a husband.

name some of the classics, and even these were despised and ridiculed by Aunt Rieka as unprofitable. Mother and daughter read only in the Bible, and a few devotional books recommended to them by the pastor of St. Stephen's Church. This pastor was an arch-pietist,* who preached Christ only and Him crucified, and made heaven attractive and hell horrible to the people. Clara, however, as soon as she observed the drift of her cousin, cut short the discussion, by appearing to agree with her. She did not wish to fall out with Gretta, for fear of injuring herself with her aunt; for these two agreed together completely, both in word and action. Clara proudly thought, "Let each one see to himself; and, what's good for one is not good for all." Gretta is quite a home-bred lassie, therefore it is very good for her to spin her own yarn, mend her clothes, knit her dark-blue stockings, wear high leather shoes, and wash-leather gloves; she makes no pretensions

* A word signifying *methodist*, and is applied to all who try to serve God, or are seemingly more religious than their neighbors.

for the future, and suits so well to the laboring classes; she would make a capital tradesman's wife. While Clara, on the contrary — she sighed — her heart beat quickly: what shall her lot be? At all events, something very superior. Oh! sweet future: gay clothes, smiling faces, love, pleasure, and delights! Now she was engaged as a lady's-maid by the general's lady; she would get into a refined circle; people of the highest rank visit there; so many things come to pass in the world, it may happen that she also would be so lucky as to raise herself by marriage. It may. No; it must and shall; she has in her heart a secret presentiment of her good fortune. The first things to be provided by some means or other are, a silk dress, a brooch, a fine shawl, and a velvet bonnet; then surely she cannot fail; then the wonderful adventures must take place! and with such splendid prospects before her, shall she give up her time to patching and darning! Every one can see the reasonableness of her argument, except the

home-bred Gretta. But Gretta is not only home-bred, she is also uncultivated and old-fashioned in her ideas; she believes on her Savior, and says that without him she could not exist an hour. Poor Gretta! Clara does not need the Savior, and she does not know in all the world wherefore she should need him. 'Tis true, Aunt Ricka says He must redeem us from our sins; and that without Him we are going on in a wilderness of night and ignorance, and so forth; but this Clara could not comprehend, she knew nothing about sin, darkness, or ignorance. She considered herself a Christian; she had had the necessary instruction in religion, but wherefore, that she could not tell, as hitherto she had not found any opportunity to put it in practice. Take for example the simplest and most rational—the ten commandments. What use is the eighth to her? Thou shalt not steal! It never entered her head to steal; or, thou shalt have none other gods but me! She was no heathen who believed in Jupiter or Mars; or, thou shalt honor thy father

and thy mother! Ah, in that she did more than her duty: for day and night, so to speak, she had plagued herself in order to support her mother. No, she had nothing to accuse herself of; all around her was light and clear, and she needed no Savior. She certainly believed on God; but it was like the devils, believe and tremble. She did not cast herself upon Him as an Omnipotent Providence, who could guide and direct her destiny — that she did not desire; she wished to guide and direct herself alone; she was pretty, young, clever, and cultivated — her good fortune was a matter of course. However, she was not always free from terrors. Not long ago the small-pox was raging in her street: she trembled before the dire disease; but getting herself quickly vaccinated, she was able again to enjoy tranquillity. Shortly after the cholera broke out in her neighborhood, young and old were carried off, no precautions seemed to help here; then her fears recommenced — Thou also must die: thou also mayst be taken now, that

she felt, and to die was a dreadful thought! What will then become of her! Yes! what! Aunt Ricka did not fail at that time to speak of future punishment and everlasting destruction reserved for the ungodly. Clara did not like to hear such words; she was more and more frightened, and yet could not help listening. She could not understand how her aunt and Gretta were so calm and fearless, and how they could talk of death and another world, as if it was nothing dreadful; for when she awoke in the night and felt herself alone with her thoughts, such a terror came over her that she trembled in every limb. If thou were to die! thought she, what then? But, God be praised, the time of terror passed over; life was again rosy red. Clara thought no more upon death or of judgment; and if her aunt mentioned such things now, they were not listened to with attentive ears; she bent her head over her work, and occupied her mind with the most absurd fancies.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Clara left her mother's little room today, she went a few doors off to call for a friend. She tapped at a low window on the ground-floor: Vogler, the letter-carrier, was drinking his coffee, and reading the newspaper. On seeing Clara, he opened the window. "Now, lassies—gadding again?" said he, joking.

"Oh yes! this is Sunday, you know; and one is only young once," replied Clara, laughing.

"Yes, you rogue!" said Vogler, "and I wish I was young also."

"Oh, you are a man in your best years," said Clara, in a flattering tone.

"I think so, too, sometimes; but when I look at my old woman over there, a mist comes before my eyes," said Vogler, with a laugh, look-

ing at his wife, who, pale and suffering, sat opposite to him in an arm-chair.

"When I am dead, then you can marry again," said the wife with bitterness, and then with difficulty drew her breath.

"And as long as you live, you must submit to be teased," added Vogler, laughing.

How coarse these people are, thought Clara: how can a man treat his wife so roughly. My father, however, acted in the same way toward my mother; but with me it shall be otherwise: I will choose a man of rank and refinement for my husband. And now, away out to the delightful coffee-garden!

Agusta Vogler had, in the meantime, prepared herself for the promenade, and now trudged along rather heavily by the side of her graceful light-footed friend. Agusta was neither good looking, clever, nor refined; she had a plump red face like her father, coarse manners, and a most stupidly-senseless prattle. She was, however, just the friend to suit Clara; she was pliable

and obedient; did not see through her intrigues —was quite satisfied to play her subordinate part in all their excursions together, and, as the spoiled child of her father, had her purse always well filled.

The two girls left the town, and walked along the high road toward the coffee, or rather *beer*-garden. Clara soon remarked that she was an object of admiration to the promenaders; but these were not the right lads; they were either tradesmen, soldiers, or, at the most, shop-boys— her ambition soared beyond all these. Soon after a party of students came toward them, and among the others one with an orange-colored cap. This was the right one, and she returned his bow with marked pleasure. Agusta soon discovered that the students had turned, and that they were following them. Clara never doubted that it was for her sake that they had turned; and Agusta did not grudge her friend the triumph: she was contented to be able to share in the passing pleasure—fine plans for the

future were strangers to her brain. After a few minutes, they were met by a fine-looking young man, who also saluted them, but very modestly and respectfully. "Who was that, now?" asked Clara.

"Oh! that was Fritz Buchstein, who has just returned from his travels; you ought to know him, for he lived next door to your aunt Rieka."

"That he was a tradesman, I saw on his great red hands," laughed Clara; "otherwise he is a very handsome fellow. But he goes with the pietists to St. Stephen's Church; I saw him myself this morning coming out with them all.

"Now, Aunt Rieka, rejoice!" cried Clara; "that suits like butter upon bread! That young fellow will marry Gretta: that is all cut and dried. My poor aunt was always so anxious lest he should become unfaithful to his religion in his wanderings; and when he wrote a letter full of unction, old Buchstein would come over with his huge spectacles, and devour it amidst sighs and tears with my aunt and Gretta. Now

I grant her the lad with all my heart, though he is really much too handsome for Gretta; she ought to have had a short, thick, strong fellow; for she considers beauty more a misfortune than a blessing—*note well*, because she herself has but little beauty to boast of."

The girls now entered the beer-garden, and soon discovered an acquaintance sitting at a table—one of those modest little milliners who are employed in different houses to arrange caps and bonnets for the ladies; they sat down beside her. The students took a table quite near to them, and soon became very loud over their Bavarian beer, and began to nod and wink over to the girls; but orange-colored cap did not stop there; he made himself more at home, and slipped quite over to them. Clara was by no means astonished at it, for she had for a long time carried on a passing flirtation with him in the streets, and was also aware that he lived in the same house with her future mistress — and that was in fact the secret spring which moved

her to go to service. He was a medical student —even one of some standing. He was rich, kept a large Newfoundland dog, rode out on horseback, or drove his friends in a carriage with a pair of horses. He was the leader of his party, and ever to be found where there was merriment or noise. His figure was large and rough; his yellow hair hung long and straight round his red face, which, broad and flat, had a particularly coarse expression. His actions and manner of speaking were in accordance with his appearance. He now sat opposite to the girls; his two elbows resting upon the table, blowing the blue clouds out of his cigar, and making the most unmannerly fun. Clara did not think that rude —no, because he was rich, and belonged to a family of rank—she thought it witty, and did not consider herself too good to amuse him. She became every moment more lively and more agreeable, and it was quite plain that her beauty had made an impression on him, and that she was rising in his estimation; for he removed his

elbows from the table, and took more pains to restrain his words and manners. That was a new triumph for Clara; and her two friends observed it with astonishment. The milliner had long known the student; she had been in the habit of working for the general's lady, and that was opportunity enough to make the acquaintance of a student. She would have gladly laid her frivolous heart at his feet, and now envied her companion this valuable conquest: and Clara grew prouder and more pleased.

One circumstance alone troubled her. Exactly opposite to her, in a solitary arbor, sat Fritz Buchstein. Yes! wonderful to relate, he also had turned and followed them into the coffee-garden: could that be for her sake? She recalled to her memory the days of her childhood —then, if she and Gretta went together into his workshop, in order to get some toy repaired, he was sure to mend hers the first, very much to Gretta's displeasure. It was evident at that time that he preferred her; to-day he was sur-

prised at her beauty—so she calculated—and had followed her here. Though her vanity was flattered by these thoughts and recollections, yet, at this juncture, the conquest was disagreeable to her. First, he was not worth remarking, and *her* heart would never let itself down to such a common-place working-man as him; and then she feared that when he had once followed her steps, he might do so again, act the spy, and relate all her doings to Aunt Rieka. She had seated herself so as to escape as much as possible being seen by him; but whenever she raised her eyes she was sure to meet his looks, which expressed so much sympathy and anxiety on her account, that it was every time as if a dagger had pierced her heart.

"It is unbearable!" cried she at last, and turned herself passionately to the other side. The student and her two friends looked at her with astonishment, and she explained the reason of her annoyance to them.

The young medico laughed, and found it quite

natural in the lad to wish to look into the face of a pretty girl; and placed his burly figure in such a manner before Clara, that she was at once relieved of the disagreeable looks. Shortly after, Agusta remarked that Fritz was gone. Now Clara felt herself more at liberty, and her enjoyment was proportionably high. The music enticed, and all went into the dancing-saloon in order to heat and intoxicate themselves still more in the mazy whirl of the waltz or polka.

When Fritz Buchstein met the pretty girl on the road, he at once recognized in her the little Clara Krauter; and the finest and sweetest of his youthful recollections passed through his mind. Even now he remembered, with inward emotion, how she used to come into his workshop with some little toy to be mended, and how he, a lad of eighteen, felt such strange emotions in his heart when he looked into the dark-blue eyes of the little maiden of twelve. He would not acknowledge it to himself, but it was his first youthful love. Her face was ever present with

him—it followed him in all his wanderings—he remembered her in his morning and evening devotions: he prayed God to keep his flow'ret chaste and beautiful, and preserve her from the defilement of the world. Whether this flower was to bloom for him or not—that remained in the hand of God. His heart was whole; he had not read any romances, and did not hang with a sickly longing upon his love; fresh and lively he traveled through the beautiful world — saw mountains and valleys, rivers and plains—many a great town, and many a pleasant village—grand churches, castles, and fortresses — fine paintings, and other works of art—and examined all with interest and delight. Those were glorious, pleasant wanderings, which were not saddened by sickness or a bad conscience, or by poverty and want. He had made a vow never to drink a drop of spirits, and, through God's grace, he had been enabled to keep it. That preserved him from many a misery, many an evil of the wanderer's life. He was never led

into wild clubs or brawls, neither did he seek his friends among such companions; so, in body and soul, he remained healthy, and always had money in his purse; for, being a good steady workman, he always found good masters, and not unfrequently found friends who were traveling the same narrow way with himself, who with him also loved their Lord and Savior. He seldom left a town that he did not look back upon with regret, because there he had won friends for his heart and his intercessions: full well he knew the value of prayer, both for himself and others. And if he came to people who did not understand him—who laughed at him, and tried to lead him aside from the right way, those days were also of use to him—days of distress and trial—in which he felt more clearly the nearness of his Comforter, His love, and His grace. So his soul grew stronger, his experience richer, and his hands more skillful.

And how was it with his heart? That would sometimes dare to move. When on a fine sum-

mer eve he sat on some woodland height, the landscape gilded by the sinking sun; fragrance diffusing itself over town and village; the evening breeze gently fanning the branches and flowers around him, the shepherd slowly preceding his flock across the pasture in the distance, and the birds high up in the light-blue sky—then he would feel such a wonderful longing: and through the golden rays of evening—the fragrance, the beauty, and the peace of nature, those dark-blue eyes of the little maid would shine upon him from his home!

Thus had he sat, only a short time before, on an eminence in the Theuringen Forest. Now he was so near to his home—now the youth had grown into a man, and could think of establishing himself. His father was old, and since the last winter, had been afflicted with weakness of the chest, which prevented him getting his orders executed as formerly: every thing went wrong, and Fritz was obliged to obey the earnest entreaties of his father and return home. He

was glad to do so; for he was now twenty-five years old; and after the long wandering homeless life he had led, the idea of home was very sweet. He was now to be master, and alone take the direction of the house, the land, and the customers. To all this a house-wife was absolutely necessary, and that thought chiefly occupied his mind; and whenever he pictured this wife to himself, she was slight, with light-brown hair, and dark-blue eyes.

With such sweet expectations he quitted the Forest of Theuringen, and arrived a few days later at the gates of his native city. It was late on Saturday evening: his father sat weak and ill in his arm-chair, but tears of thankfulness and joy glistened in his eyes, as his son, after such a long absence, entered the house; and Fritz had the same evening to read the book of Job, and the 136th Psalm to him.

The old father was very conversible, notwithstanding his delicacy of chest; and could not avoid speaking to his son, of his and Mrs.

Bendler's heart's desire, namely, that Gretta should become *Mrs. Fritz.* Mrs. Bendler had completely adopted Gretta, and, excepting a few legacies, she was to be her sole heiress.

Fritz felt very much distressed when he heard this; and if he had very little courage before to ask after Clara Krauter, he had none at all now.

On Sunday, he was to call and renew his acquaintance with his neighbor, Mrs. Bendler; but he begged his father not to say a word about the matter of marriage, as he did not know, as yet, how he would please Gretta.

His father smiled, thought there was not much danger of her not liking him, as she had wept so profusely when his letters were read to her.

Fritz did not smile, his heart was heavy; for though Gretta was a good girl, she had not blue-eyes; she was not the love of his youth; her image had not been ever present with him in all his wanderings.

When coming out of church on Sunday morning, he recognized Mrs. Bendler, accompained by

a young girl; but he could not resolve then to speak to them, so slipped aside with the crowd: he had only promised his father, *toward* evening, to call on them.

In the afternoon, however, his uneasiness and anxiety drove him past Clara's house. He could not discover her; only her mother sat at the window; and, fortunately, she did not look out, or she would have read his thoughts in his countenance. He walked out of the city-gate, and after having gone a little way along the road, turned back again. Then, in reality, the long-desired one appeared before him! It was still the same youthful face, her figure only had sprung up, and become developed into womanhood.

He bowed to her: his heart beat for joy; but it was only for a moment. He saw the band of students behind her—he heard their coarse wit—saw them following the girls. It would never have entered his head to turn and follow them; but rage and anxiety drove him to it. In

case of need he would protect the girls, never dreaming that by the following of the students, they were more pleased than frightened. However, he was soon convinced of his error, as he sat opposite to the girls, and observed their light-minded behavior, in which Clara played the principal part, till at length she drove him away by her scornful and angry looks.

With what conflicting feelings he now returned to his home! What had just occurred, had too suddenly and too violently overturned the plans of his heart. The joyful anticipations of home, of being master of house and property, were all crushed; he would have chosen rather to take again his pilgrim's staff in his hand, and wander alone in the wide world. In this humor he could not possibly visit Mrs. Bendler —he could not even present himself to his father; but softly passing the servant girl, who was sitting in Sunday state on the door-step, he went into the garden, and sat down in the vine arbor which stood next the barn. The neighbor's

garden, which was only separated by a hedge, was empty. That just suited him: he could follow the train of his own sad thoughts without interruption.

How different the world appeared to him from yesterday! The roses and violets were then so cordial and confidential: he thought when once a woman's hand is here to train and prune, then you will all flourish better. The somber vine arbor did not appear to him gloomy at all; for he thought, soon I will not sit quite alone in here. To-day it was all an empty desert; and he did not care to have it otherwise. He looked up to heaven through the dark vine branches. "Oh heavenly Father! I know that better days will come; but now the cross seems heavy to my heart; and now, O Lord! I pray Thee, over and over again, deliver her from evil; even though I must resign her for myself. Do Thou, O Lord! never leave her nor forsake her." Give up! Yes; that is indeed hard; and that it was so hard, was also a comfort to him; for if to his

weak, human heart it was so hard, he knew well that it would be still harder to his Savior above to give up a beloved soul; and the more he gazed up into the blue sky, the stronger his faith became, and his grief was relieved by tears.

Then suddenly he heard a voice singing in his neighbor's garden; clear and sweet, and yet soft and sad were the tones; as were also the words of the hymn which came quite distinctly to his ear.

Fritz peeped through the vine leaves, and saw Gretta sitting upon the crooked old pear-tree. It seemed as if he had only dreamed of traveling and being away; as if he was again eighteen years old, and Gretta a child. At that time, nearly the whole summer long, the old pear-tree was her favorite seat. In the afternoons she was in the habit of taking her stocking up there; and every time she had knitted a round, she called out to old Benjamin. Benjamin was a cobbler, who had lived for nearly thirty years in the little dwelling over Buchstein's

workshop. He was the friend of all the children in the neighborhood, and of Gretta in particular; for her no trouble was too great; and every time she called out "one round more," he chalked a white stroke upon a black board, and always counted how many were wanting still to make up the number of her task; and when it was accomplished he called out, "Now Gretta, be quick!" She would then draw up, by means of a cord, a little basket containing her evening meal; for she fancied she could knit and eat better up in the pear-tree than on the seat underneath. Benjamin also laid by his lasts for a season—looked out of the window; his starling cried out, "Gretta, so right! so right!" and the bulfinch caroled forth, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" Then when Gretta's childish voice chimed in, Benjamin said, "Gretta, so right;" and the starling echoed, "Gretta, so right!"

Even now Benjamin's white head was at the window; the starling, however, called out "Miss

Gretta;" and this reminded Fritz that the times were indeed changed.

"Ah, Gretta!" said Benjamin, "your singing to-day makes one's heart sad; what is the matter with you?"

"If I had known that you were at home, I would not have sung," said Gretta. "I thought I was here quite alone in the world. But do you come over now, and bring the large picture-Bible with you, for I do not know rightly what to begin; all alone the long Sunday afternoon."

Gretta had to return home alone from afternoon service, because her mother wished to call upon some sick people. She had hoped, indeed, to have been taken to see some relations, gardeners, who lived a little outside the town, therefore, being obliged to go home did not exactly suit her; in the house she felt lonely, she took different things in hand — a book — a bit of work,— nothing came right. Old Time would not move on; she could not understand why she felt so impatient. Was it because Fritz Buchstein had

promised to look in on them in the evening? She blushed at the very thought. But why should she not be glad to see him again? She was at least curious to find out what change absence had made on him, and if he looked at all like the man, that from his letters she judged him to be. In order to pass the time she went into the garden. All was still in Buchstein's, and quite undisturbed; she paced up and down the straight gooseberry walk. As a child, she had played at sheep and wolf with Louisa Buchstein, and other friends, under the bushes. Louisa was dead, and the other friends all scattered, and she had to walk here all alone the blessed Sunday afternoon. She had often sat and enjoyed herself on the seat under the old pear-tree, but oftener she preferred getting up into the tree. Then she could see a little farther out into the world: into the neighbors' gardens, a cooper in the court, old Benjamin in his room. On the other side, however, the garden was surrounded by a high wall, but yet she could see the flowers of the elder-tree,

and also the yellow blossoms of the laburnum, and sometimes the white lace cap of the town-councilor's wife, and the gay bonnets of the young ladies. Gretta could not resist it; she climbed the tree. But to-day there was nothing to be seen; dry seeds hung upon the laburnum, the elder-tree had a somber and gloomy appearance, neither cap nor bonnets were there. The lady was at a bathing-place, and her daughters were long since married; neither was there any stir in the other neighbors' gardens, and even Benjamin was not at his window. Gretta felt more and more lonely, and gazed at the sky with a more heart-felt desire. So it is. When the Lord makes the world more solitary and empty to us, then He draws us with stronger cords toward heaven. The sky was clear, and the evening clouds gilded by the setting sun: Gretta saw how they were gliding over the dark roofs, and whilst moving, how they changed their forms and colors. Now she saw a swan, then a rose, a castle, sometimes the wings of an

angel, and sometimes an angel's face. She thought of her parents, her little brother, of whom she had a faint recollection from early childhood; and with the most longing desire to be with them, she sung the verses which had enticed Benjamin to the window.

Benjamin came down with the great picture-Bible, swung himself under the shed and the old elder-tree, and quite nimbly over the hedge, and was in Bendler's garden. At that moment Fritz came forward from the arbor; for he would not knowingly play the listener. Gretta started; for he must have seen her up in the tree, and had certainly heard her singing: he, however, stretched out his hand in a friendly manner, over the hedge, and shook hands with her, without any observation. There, now, he had before him the same old Gretta, with flaxen hair, freckled face, round brown eyes, and round red mouth. She was neither tall nor short; neither slight nor thick; but stood before him, in her brown cotton dress and white collar—a very neat-looking

girl. He spoke a few confused words of welcome to her. She did not observe his confusion —she hardly heard what he said—so violently did her heart beat; but the world no longer appeared empty and lonely to her; and, when he asked permission to come over to her premises, she nodded a friendly "Yes!"

"But not by the same way that I came over," said Benjamin, laughing; "one must not teach young fellows such tricks. You must go round respectfully to the hall-door, as you ought."

Fritz did not even think of doing so; for though he was quite smart in the black-silk vest and Sunday coat, yet he had neither hat nor gloves; and, on the first visit, he must use a little ceremony. He, however, did not come over so soon as Gretta had hoped: she had looked through the greater part of the large picture-Bible with Benjamin, when at length she heard his knock at the door; and, going to open it, she found her mother standing there also. This was a great relief to both the young folks; for Gretta

felt uneasy about acting the hostess with Fritz, and he had no desire, with his heavy heart, to be alone with Gretta. Mrs. Bendler took upon herself the responsibility of sustaining the conversation; but, as she had many questions to ask, Fritz was obliged to talk, whether he would or not. That the task was hard for him, was not perceived by Mrs. Bendler. Gretta, however, quickly observed the look of deep melancholy that, quite unconsciously, at times passed over his face. What can be the matter with him? thought she: can he be sorry to be at home again? can any thing be alluring him from home? Oh, I do hope he is not unhappy! But how could that possibly be the case, when his last letter was so joyful, so hopeful?

Late in the evening, when alone in her little chamber, she looked up to the starry heaven with folded hands, Fritz's melancholy face mixed itself in her evening prayer, and she recommended it to Him who afflicts not willingly the sons of men, and who alone can comfort the sad heart.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. VON TRAUTSTEIN, the general's widow, sat in deep conversation with a younger lady.

"I assure you," said the latter, "the girl will suit you exactly, and I can conscientiously recommend her to you. For the last two years she has sewed every thing for my children, and she is quite the pet of the house: always friendly and obliging, very clever and industrious, and belongs to a very respectable family. Her aunt is Mrs. Bendler, who is at the head of the 'Society for Sick Poor Women:' a person most highly respected. It was she who brought up Clara, and had her taught dressmaking, for Clara's mother is a sickly body."

"What has put it into her head to go to service?" asked the old lady.

"In order to be for sometime amongst strangers," was the answer; "and I think it very sensible of her. While she is at home her mother takes every penny out of her purse. She told me with tears lately, that she was very ill provided with under-clothing, as the little money she could earn was barely sufficient for their daily wants, and a few outside necessaries, in the way of dress, without which no one would let her into their houses to sew."

"That is exactly what I fear," replied the general's lady. "The mother must be a disorderly person, who swallows up all her daughter's earnings in eating and drinking: the daughter is too young, and, very probably, too pretty for me." The younger lady laughed.

"That is just the reason why I wished you to have her, because she is so very attractive. Whenever you would be suffering, she would be the most agreeable companion; she can read to

you, for she speaks very prettily; but, my dear lady, before making any decision, you must first see her."

The speaker was the young wife of Lieutenant von Reisen, a lady who had taken Clara particularly under her protection. She was anxious to gratify her protegèe by obtaining the situation for her; and for that reason she exerted herself to the utmost to excite an interest in the old lady for Clara before she saw her. A short time after, Clara was ushered in. Very neatly dressed, but, at the same time modest and unassuming, she stood before the ladies. The general's widow was really astonished at the beauty of the girl; but the charm of her words and manner silenced every doubt, and she was engaged at once at a salary of six pounds a-year, with a pound at Christmas, besides other presents. It seemed quite a fortune to Clara. But that was not all—the luxury and grandeur displayed in the dwelling of Madame von Trautstein, so dazzled and delighted her that she actually, for the

moment, forgot all her plans about the medical student: such spacious rooms, splendid carpets, fine furniture, equipage, and number of servants, were seldom found in one establishment. In this house she was engaged as lady's-maid, that is to say, under the title of lady's-maid; for, properly speaking, she said to herself, I shall be the lady's companion, as I am to read to her in the evenings, and when there are no visitors, to pour out tea: and she did not fail to represent her new situation as such to her acquaintances.

When she went to inform her aunt Rieka, the latter received her very seriously. "You have now fulfilled my wishes by going to service: may the Lord give you strength and grace for all the duties of your new calling, which you must by no means consider a light one." Clara, who was full of hope, and in a very good humor, promised every thing possible, and her aunt was too good-natured to doubt her intentions or her promises. To the question, as to the state of her under-garments, she had a suitable answer

ready. She could not possibly have told the truth: indeed, for a long time, her great fear had been lest her aunt should herself examine her linen, and discover its deficiency.

"I am already provided with the most necessary articles," she said, and rejoiced in the idea of procuring herself a fine stock of linen from the good wages she was to get. "My mother must learn to economize," she added; "you know that when I had money, as a daughter, I could not refuse her; but when I have not got any, I cannot give any; and when I receive my wages, if I give her a portion, I can, with the remainder, replenish my stock of linen." That sounded sensible, and the aunt was quite contented. Gretta went to her drawers, and brought out six linen pocket-handkerchiefs, and two pairs of stockings: "These I may offer to you," said she, "for you have had no time for knitting, and the handkerchiefs were hemmed and marked for you. When you come to see us, be sure to take

one of the linen ones," said she laughing, "for you know we cannot bear those of cotton."

Clara was quite affected by this goodness. "You really mean well with me," said she, affectionately.

"That you may always believe," answered Gretta, warmly: and the two cousins had at that moment very kindly feelings toward each other.

Clara entered her new situation on St. Michael's day. In her chamber she found a wardrobe and a chest of drawers, wherein she distributed her scanty supply of clothes as widely as possible, in order to make the greatest display. One or two muslin, and a few thin woolen dresses, mantilla, mantillettes, and the flounced petticoat, in the wardrobe: in the drawers, beside the few chemises, etc., ribbons, boas, collars, gloves, pocket-handkerchiefs: the two pairs of stockings from Gretta, formed the solid parts of this light society. Then she placed a few flower-pots in the window, hung a porcelain picture on one of the panes, another picture under the

looking-glass, and a vase of flowers upon the drawers. The butler had looked into her room *en passant*, and remarked to the cook, that the young girl was evidently well-reared and well-educated, for she displayed much taste in the arrangement of her room; "but it is a pity," added he, "that the window of the next house is so near hers, that the medical student can see exactly into her apartment." The cook, however, took Clara's part: her kitchen was just opposite, on the other side of the house, and she had observed that Clara had let down her blind when the student came over to his window with his long pipe. Clara had seen the cook looking over, and thought, "Now, I must be cautious, in order to gain respect: and a little coyness toward the student cannot do me any harm."

These were now pleasant days for Clara. The house of Madame von Trautstein became very lively, as her married daughter with her children came on a visit of four weeks; and this gave opportunity for many a little socialness. Beside

that, Clara was often sent to the grand shops in the town to make purchases, and this was particularly agreeable to her. She was soon on a friendly footing with the clerks, and enriched herself with many a piece of finery. 'Tis true, the few pence she brought into service with her were soon spent; but the sum was so small it was not worth saving. In addition to all this, the game with the student was pushed on steadily and cleverly. Her mistress's visitors were chiefly ladies; from these she could not hope to gain any thing toward her future establishment. She soon observed that the student was in full glow, and a very humble lover—if she kept her blind down for a single day, her ears were regaled with the most melancholy songs—if she acted prudishly toward him, his great rough face assumed quite a soft, tender expression. She teased him expressly—for she was well aware, that until his passions were fully excited, he would never think seriously of her; and her whole ambition was to make a great marriage.

She forgot to calculate that she herself would in time warm to him; and a heart in love is a weak heart. The student, on his side, was not so inexperienced as not to know and observe all this.

It was now Christmas. Madame von Trautstein's visitors had all left: the gay noisy days were followed by peaceful ones; but Clara continued equally attentive and cheerful; and the general's widow assured her friends that she had quite a treasure of a lady's-maid; which was readily believed: for Clara was attentive and good-natured to every one; only for some time past she had shown at times an absence of manner, and her countenance had a less ingenious expression. However, the old lady comforted herself by imputing her fears to her over-anxiety about love affairs, and did not let Clara see that she was observing her; and at Christmas she made her some very valuable presents, which were most acceptable; for she had many wants. She saw many things with the grand ladies that pleased her fancy, and that she could not think

of denying to herself. She discovered, with astonishment, that when she had paid all her debts from her wages and her Christmas-box, very little remained for her mother, or the fine stock of under-clothing she proposed buying for herself; but she was soon consoled. "Every beginning is difficult," thought she; "the linen must be bought at some other time:" she had, however, procured the much-desired shawl, the brooch, and the velvet bonnet.

But notwithstanding all this, she was not to pass into the new year quite free from care. On Sylvester evening, as she was returning in the twilight, after having been on an errand somewhere, she saw a person waiting at the hall door; and soon recognized the medical student. She had often talked with him here, but latterly he could never meet her alone; and even now steps were heard upon the stairs. He came hastily toward her, pressed a letter into her hand, then ran quickly up stairs before.

Clara could hardly light her lamp fast enough,

in order to read this precious document—a document written, like a thousand others, in order to deceive foolish girls, and make them still more foolish. Nothing in the world is so ridiculously stupid as these love-letters; they are almost always the same—one is an exact copy of another. The writer finds in every girl a goddess, an angel, a superior being; the receiver, however, believes that the fulsome stuff suits for her alone: her heart beats with pride, for she is happier than a thousand others. Further, she sees in her letter words of burning love, unbearable suffering, and everlasting fidelity. All this is worthy of credence; for is she not well worthy of being loved? and must she not have a heart of stone if she left the poor fellow to suffer all these torments alone? No; she must respond to his affection. Anguish or misfortune can never approach her; for his feelings are to be everlasting, and her happiness must also be everlasting. The poor deluded girl never dreams that the eternity mentioned in her letter very rarely extends to the

end of the year; she has often heard him utter the same sentiments, but now this assurance, this written description of his feelings must be true.

So also did Clara believe, when she had read her letter. Her heart beat for joy; by her own skillful management she had brought him this length to think seriously of her; now she would not let him pine any longer, but would let him see that she loved him. Willingly would she have written an immediate answer, but she had been invited to spend this evening at her Aunt Rieka's, and had promised to call for her mother at six o'clock. The answer to such a letter was not a small matter: it must be written with thought and care. Thus she went to her aunt's with disquiet and uneasiness at her heart. The letter, of course, she carried in her bosom.

Under ordinary circumstances she preferred going to her aunt's on Sylvester evening to any other in the year, for then there were punch and cakes; and, besides, though much was said and sung on the last night of the year that was

serious, yet the party was generally very agreeable, and many a frolic made for the young folks; for her aunt was, in spite of her methodism, very lively, and could be very witty, and never restrained the innocent gaiety of youth. This evening, however, Clara felt quite indifferent to every thing; and when her friends jested her about her unusual taciturnity, she appeared startled, and a sort of forced conscious smile made it clear to all present that she had some secret cause of uneasiness. Fritz Buchstein, who was also among the guests, gazed earnestly at her when the others quizzed; and that made her look still more confused. However, the festivities soon made every one more lively, and they no longer remarked Clara's silence. Even Fritz was communicative, and related many a droll anecdote, or described some of the interesting things he had seen on his travels. Gretta hung upon his words, and Clara herself was forced to acknowledge that, for a mere carpenter, he was a capital fellow. The words flowed from his lips—his eyes

sparkled—his cheeks glowed with animation. She could not account for it herself, but when she looked at him, he seemed to her the personification of those hero knights she had read so much about in novels, so soft and mild, and withal so noble and manly. She almost began to envy him to Gretta, though she did feel herself so very far above him: he was but an uncultivated artisan; and such a letter as she carried next her heart he would not be competent to write. In that she was perfectly right; for the composition of such an epistle would indeed be far above the capacity of his simple mind: he was not so utterly devoid of principle; he would never have dared to attribute so much stupidity to any girl, as to suppose her to be capable of taking for earnest a string of senseless phrases, like what are to be found in the first low romance she may lay her hands on.

Some hours had slipped by in friendly and instructive conversation, when father Buchstein reminded Mrs. Bendler of her promise.

"Yes, indeed! This evening we must float our little navy," said the aunt, laughing. "I am myself most anxious to know how it stands with the affections of my own good friends; and as I am the most curious on the subject, I shall be the first to try my fortune."

The young people quite approved of the proposal. Gretta went to fetch a basin of water, walnuts, and small wax-tapers. Fritz divided the walnuts carefully, took out the kernel, and stuck a wax-light in each shell. The floating lights danced and burned upon the water quite prettily. Aunt Rieka's little boat took the lead; the others were to represent the father and son Buchstein, Mrs. M——, the organist, Gretta, Clara, etc., etc. The chief sport now was to see how the fleet would behave toward the admiral: if they kept aloof, then the friendship was cold and doubtful; and if they came near, or sailed in company, then the affection was to be depended on. They all seemed to stand off from Mrs. Bendler's boat; upon which she commenced

quizzing them for their coldness and want of politeness; when suddenly Fritz's boat, wafted by a slight motion of the water, shot over to Mrs. Bendler's, and, notwithstanding all the splashing and shaking of the water, would not again leave her. The shaking had the effect of driving the other four boats together, so that both parties stood opposite to each other, like two hostile fleets.

"As Fritz is so friendly disposed toward me," said Mrs. Bendler, "he shall be the first to try the hearts of his friends." Fritz was by no means curious about the matter, and wished rather to let the others take the lead; but there was no help for him—the old aunt named the boats, and the game must go forward. Gretta's heart beat quickly, and already she began to think what she would say, and how she would look, if her tiny boat should betray the secret of her heart. Two other young girls quizzed Fritz, and agreed that it was not at all seemly that he should stand like a Sultan in the midst, and all

the young girls around paying court to him. Clara was far above this child's-play: her thoughts were absent; the more the hours advanced, the more her uneasiness and desire to answer her precious letter increased; but, strangely enough, her little boat was the first to approach that of Fritz, which it joined, and they then sailed together around the little sea.

This, of course, gave rise to much laughing and quizzing; but Clara screwed up her mouth, and cast a look of supreme contempt upon the young tradesman, so that every eye could see the state of her heart respecting him. Gretta became quite red with anger, and had a sharp word ready for utterance, which the presence of Fritz alone restrained. The other two girls touched each other, and smiled; for Clara had seemed as if acting the great lady over them all the evening; and Mrs. M., the organist, said tartly, "Oh, Miss Clara, you need not twist your mouth, and turn up your nose, for you are in most respectable society here."

But Aunt Rieka would not have a serious matter made out of mere play, and said, jokingly, "On such occasions, every young girl must appear proud and coy, otherwise the lads would become too vain."

Then the names of the boats were changed, and the game went on as before; Fritz, however, kept the thorn in his heart. Although he had long given up all idea of possessing Clara, yet he could not sit opposite to her all this long evening without an inward agitation—she seemed to him to be actuated by both a good and a bad spirit—how gladly he would have expelled the bad, and bound her fast to the good angel. The dark-blue eyes looked at times so childish, just as his memory had pictured them to him in his wanderings. He knew much more about her life and actions than any one present—the eye of love is penetrating—he knew that the student lived in the same house as her mistress; that he had to ascend the same stair, in order to reach his apartment; and yet Fritz could not bring himself to

give up hope for her; his sympathizing and sorrowing heart was deeply wounded by her scornful manner.

Thus the hours wore on—the clock struck ten; they began to be more serious. The old folks related anecdotes and incidents of their youth; the young ones listened respectfully. This was very agreeable to Fritz, for he was by no means in a humor for gayety; and a little later he proposed reading a few verses in the Bible. He turned up the 90th Psalm: his reading was slow and solemn, his voice increased in power, and the words seemed to flow from his heart. As he read the passage, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom," he glanced at Clara. No one observed it; but Clara could not support the look which recalled her absent thoughts to the meaning of the words. After the Psalm they all united in prayer; then they sung a hymn suitable to the new year.

Clara tried hard not to listen, and to occupy her mind with other thoughts; but she could not

succeed. Fritz's voice sounded in her ears like the knell of a passing bell—so powerful, so serious. She was obliged to listen; and the longer he read the more her attention was aroused. He read of death—the grave—and decay: she was alarmed, and her superstitious heart fancied the fear was a presentiment of evil. "Only, not death!" thought she. "I cannot die yet! The Savior of whom they speak cannot help me; His kingdom, with the everlasting mansions, has no charm for me: no; after death there is no more hope for me. Such horrid thoughts embitter the delights of life; and just this evening to have them stirred up—it is really too bad! The others all look as peaceful and happy, as if they had every thing sure; Fritz seems so full of the truth, his countenance so bright; and how humbly Gretta looks up to him—surely such looks must penetrate his heart!"

The clock struck twelve; all rose up to pray: thus the first action in the new year was one of devotion and dependence upon the goodness and

care of their God and Savior. Clara was obliged to do as the others did, but her heart was dark as midnight; the devil held her fast. "Oh, that I was only out of this!" sighed she; and her love-letter dragged her away from all that was peaceful and serious into the lusts and turmoil of the world.

Mrs. Krauter's way home lay in the same direction with that of others of the party; but Clara had to go quite alone, and to a distant part of the town; so it was settled that she should be conducted to her home by Fritz—an arrangement which she strongly opposed—for she was most unwilling to trust herself on a lonely walk with this strangely good young man. But there was no help for her. On Sylvester night, when the streets were full of drunken people, no young girl could go out alone, she was told; and she had to give in. Fritz was not in the least confused; the late devotional exercises had so completely elevated his thoughts, that he felt for the time quite indifferent to all

earthly things. He looked Clara calmly in the face, and conversed quite easily with her; but when they got outside, the wind blew so fiercely, the rain poured in such torrents, and Clara walked so quickly, that he was obliged to be silent.

At length they reached Madame von Trautstein's hall-door. Clara took the key and opened it. The moon just then burst through the clouds, and shed her silvery brightness over Fritz and Clara. She looked at him involuntarily, and met the melancholy gaze of his dark eye resting upon her fresh young face. He stretched forth his hand, and she reluctantly placed hers within it.

"Clara," said he, with emotion, "we are now at the beginning of a new year; may the Lord watch over and bless us with His guidance, so that, if we live to see the end of it, we may be able to look back with a peaceful conscience and an unspotted reputation. God bless and preserve you!"

He turned quickly from her: she stepped into the house, but was obliged to stand still for a few moments to recover from the feeling of faintness occasioned by the solemn words of Fritz.

"What does he mean?" thought she. "My reputation! of that I shall myself take good care. And my conscience! I am not going to commit any crime, I hope." She tried, with an effort, to shake off the impression which Fritz's words had left upon her mind; which was, unfortunately, too easily done.

She had ascended to the first floor, and was just going to open the door of her mistress's dwelling, when she heard steps descending from the second flat; she hesitated—yes, it was the medical student. He had ushered in the new year in a louder and wilder manner than Clara had done: his face glowed from the effects of wine, and, for some time, he had been awaiting Clara's return with impatience. Now the words flowed like a fiery stream from his lips. These assurances of love and fidelity—these expressions

of deep feeling! Clara could not withstand him any longer. She returned sweet-whispered love-phrases, endured his kisses, and, when she at length tore herself away from him, it was with many promises to arrange for a speedy meeting, where he could enjoy her society undisturbed. That was not at all difficult: at her mother's she could easily meet him, for she would never put any thing in the way of her daughter's happiness. "And," added Clara, "it will be necessary to consult about our betrothal; there will be many things to arrange."

"Little fool!" interrupted the student, "who would think of such nonsense? We live in the present; the gods will provide for the rest." Then he added a few tender expressions, and went up to his own apartment.

These last words fell with a freezing influence over the green fields of Clara's happiness; but yet she would not allow any suspicion to prey upon her mind, and went to bed to dream of future grandeur.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning Clara awoke later than usual. Her good mistress would not have her roused at the customary hour, in order that she might recover the sleep lost while watching in the new year; but, even then, she did not feel herself quite right. She felt her head so empty, and her heart so weak; she tried to make it clear to herself that she was very happy: but, in spite of all her reasoning, she remained uneasy. Will he really think seriously of me? Will he openly betroth himself to me? Will he acquaint his parents? Such questions she was fool enough to put to herself. She felt it would still require great prudence on her part to discover all she wished to know. So stupid as her mother

had been, who let the young lawyer slip through her fingers, I shall never become, thought Clara: and so think all foolish girls who begin silly love affairs with men above their own station in life. True, they see around them examples enough of the miserable end of all similar intrigues; but they are so clever, they think their chance is much better than that of all who have preceded them; they will be certain to act differently—until the pure heart, honor, and a good conscience, together with the lover, have all slipped away from them.

When Clara went as usual to her mistress, in order to help her with her toilet, she found her already dressed and at breakfast; and beside her sat a handsome, slight young man, in military uniform. Clara excused herself for being so late; her mistress, however, was very friendly toward her, and added, "Yesterday evening I had a very pleasant surprise—my son came home quite unexpectedly."

The young man stood up as Clara entered.

Her beauty and nice manner led him to salute her with more ceremony than he would have used had he been aware that his mother's maid stood before him. Now he felt a little coufused, which Clara quickly observed—a coquettish girl has very fine feelings in such matters—and her whole manner was studied to attract the young man. She moved about arranging all in the breakfast-room, put the bed-chamber in order, and then went to dress herself. Unconsciously she began to make comparisons between the student and the young guardsman: the former lost much in her estimation—he was really coarse and ugly, and vulgar, both in speech and manner. "After all," said she to herself, "he is but a student; and most probably when he is at home with his mother, the President's lady, he will act otherwise. But he must learn to restrain himself also when with me: I will have him to be fine and noble, like the young lieutenant."

The house was so full of bustle and gayety,

from the succession of new-year's visitors, that it was quite impossible for the student to see Clara. Even in the evening there was a large party, with the hall lighted up, and constant movement upon the stairs. He was most impatient, and hardly knew how to pass the time. With Clara it was quite otherwise: she had been so busy and so much amused all day, that she had had no time to think of her love affair. Hitherto she had only served old ladies with tea; this day, however, there were young gentlemen of the party, friends of the young lieutenant. Clara, in a blue muslin dress, with her white neck and arms uncovered, stood before the hissing tea-urn, or glided about in the well-lighted and perfumed saloons. Such a triumph had never before fallen to her lot: the young men gazed after her wherever she moved; until at length the attention of the old lady was aroused, and looking very serious, she said graciously to Clara, not to fatigue herself any longer, as the man-servant could now attend to the company alone.

Overheated and excited, she retired to her own room. Hardly had the student seen her light than he gently clapped his hands. Clara had no great desire to talk with him just then; but, catching a glimpse of her figure in the glass, she found herself so very attractive, that she quickly decided the student should see her, and convince himself that she was really fit to be presented in the drawing-room of a President. Yes; her pride and vanity had risen to such a pitch this day, that she thought he must consider himself most fortunate to win her. Indeed, she was not quite sure—a much higher lot might be before her. The young Count, who was of the party this evening, had never taken his eyes off her; and then she had also a chance with her mistress's son, who, besides his pay, possessed a fine estate in Silesia, and was of noble birth. Clara had read many romances; she knew that, not unseldom, poor girls made splendid marriages, and she had a distinct presentiment of something very great for the future.

With such exalted notions about herself, she stepped down to the hall: the student was already there before her. When he saw the ladylike, condescending manner of Clara, coupled with her great beauty, he swallowed the coarse lover complaints that stuck in his throat, and merely lamented his misfortune in not being able to see her for a whole day. Clara replied, "That this was not a suitable place for a chat; and told him to come the next evening to meet her at her mother's." She did not refuse his affectionate advances—pride and vanity are no safeguard against wicked desires; on the contrary, they are very good sisters, and mutually assist each other.

The next day Clara sat as usual in the anteroom, sewing. The lieutenant stepped in, and begged her to put a few stitches in his purse. While she mended the hole with her fine clever fingers, he stood silently before her. Clara also was silent, but her whole manner spoke. How she held her head, moved her fingers; how she looked up as she returned him the purse—all

that must storm the heart of the young man. Clara remarked that he would gladly have commenced a conversation with her; but the sound of her mistress's footsteps was heard in the next room, and he left her with a short respectful, "I thank you."

The day passed over with plans for the evening: and when the fine form of the lieutenant did force itself into her thoughts, she tried to drive it away. "The student must solemnly betroth himself to me this evening, and, if possible, we must make a bridal visit to Aunt Rieka. What will she say? and Gretta? they will have respect for the daughter-in-law of a President. The student must come to-morrow morning to my mistress to ask her to permit me to resign my situation, or at least to give me another position in the house. He must immediately give me the half of his money, in order to procure a suitable wardrobe." Thus her thoughts ran on: she was now above all want; she might buy her chemises by the dozen, and let them be made—and so on

with every thing else. Preoccupied in this manner, it was not at all agreeable to her to be obliged to read to her mistress from six till seven. Madame von Trautstein was quite alone: she did not expect her son till late in the evening, and one of Clara's duties was to amuse her in a lonely hour, by reading aloud. This evening she read very badly, and the old lady was on the point of reproving her for the unusual carelessness, when the door opened, and her son entered. Nodding to his mother, he set himself in a dark corner until the chapter was finished. A new power seemed suddenly to spring up in Clara: she now read with taste and emphasis. The lieutenant never took his eyes off her: his mother observed him with anxiety. When Clara had left the room she turned to her son, saying, with a laugh, "My dear Alfred, I think I must send my pretty maid away, during the time that you gay young fellows are dangling about the house."

"Well, mother, and suppose I should get a little in love with her, you do not fear."

"No, I am not in the least afraid that you would be wicked enough to make a poor silly girl more foolish than she is already; but I have not the same confidence in your friends."

Alfred laughed. "They are all mad about this beauty; and Count Bründel, I think, would not take time to consider whether he was adding folly to foolishness or not, provided he could gratify his own pleasures."

"Then I entreat of you, try as much as possible to hinder him seeing her," said his mother; "and you will be careful yourself," added she, with a little hesitation.

"Certainly," said Alfred, with candor, taking his mother's hand; "and should you, dear mother, see any danger for either of us, then just drive me off at once," said he, laughing.

This conversation was all overheard by Clara through the key-hole, for listening was not forbidden in the ten commandments. "They are all in love with me," said she to herself; "and Alfred is the handsomest and noblest of all.

He will never make a sport of me; if he display any affection, it will be in earnest!" She sighed —Oh, if she had never begun with the student! It was not too late—she might still break off with him; but she had allowed him to kiss her; she had carried on a love affair with him on the stairs; she could never become Madame von Trautstein. "So now bravely forward to hold the student fast; he also is a man of standing, and is so very much in love, I can do what I like with him."

With such thoughts as these she hurried to her mother's to make the preparations for her betrothal. Two candles were burning beside the little lamp: cups and cakes stood upon the table; the tea-pot in the oven; the mother sat in an arm-chair near the fire; Clara, with her guitar on her arm, reclined upon the sofa. The student came, the door was shut, then commenced the chatting, and fun, and love-making. The mother was perfectly happy. The student had already handed over a purse full of money, which was to

be laid out for Clara. She must confess that Clara had gone much more skillfully to work than she had in her young days. Clara was much more coy and lady-like, and commanded more respect. Poor foolish old woman: she did not remember that the end of a cunning sinner is the same as that of the soft, silly one. Clara now thought it time to make her proposals for a public betrothal this very evening, and suggested that they should go and make a bridal visit to Aunt Rieka. The student, at first, looked confounded, then burst into a loud laugh. He had already had many love affairs, but such a wild proposal had never yet been made to him.

"You little fool!" said he, "how can you be such a Philistine! with us love is now our business, not betrothal. When the world knows all about it, then the pleasure of love is over."

Clara stood up—she trembled in all her limbs. "If such are your intentions, then we separate at once, and forever," she exclaimed, quite enraged.

The student was again confounded, but he did not laugh this time. He discovered that he would need to pursue a very different course with this girl to that which had been his habit with others; and as he was very much in love with her, he began to capitulate. That, however, did not help him; the girl was clever enough to see through his smooth words; and she actually began to dislike him. She thought of the young Lieutenant, the Count, etc.—she required but to nod, and she could have them all at her feet; yes, it seemed as if the student alone stood in the way of her future elevation; she must get rid of him; and this it was which gave her courage to play the virtuous heroine. She made the finest speeches; even though he assured her that he would speak to his parents at Easter, but until then the affair must remain a secret. She stood her ground firmly, and when he tried to storm her with his love and his misery, she locked herself up in her bed-room. The mother played a sad rôle in this piece; her heart was

softer than the daughter's; she would willingly have seen the *miserable* lover made happy, to which the fine full purse, lying on the table, helped to move her: she tried hard to console him: promised to talk over her daughter, and so kept up his hopes. Clara, however, stoutly withstood all appeals, stood aloof, firm, and proud as a queen. "Now, you see," said she to her mother, when they were alone, "this is the way to act: no one shall make a fool of me!" And because inwardly she felt humbled at having allowed the student to slip through her fingers, as her mother had the lawyer, she spoke the grander, and let a slight glimmering appear of her future prospects with the young nobleman; then, in order to fully reconcile her mother to the first adventure, she handed over the full purse, left by the student, to her care.

But when she got into the privacy of her own chamber, she relieved her pent-up feelings by a violent burst of tears: not tears of repentance for her levity and folly—no; she wept on ac-

count of her stupidity for having allowed herself to be carried away with this rough fellow. If her mistress were to hear of it—if the lieutenant knew it? But, fortunately, they knew nothing at all about it, nor would they ever know it —that at least was some consolation to her: "I shall take better care for the future, and not make any acquaintance with rough, rude fellows." And in order to comfort herself completely, she recalled the conversation between her mistress and her son, which she had listened to at the key-hole. She could not fail; some of her projects must succeed; thus wrapped up with ideas of future greatness, to be gained by her own intrigue and cleverness, she fell asleep quite comforted.

Her window-blind was now never pulled up; and the cook, who had begun to have suspicions about her conduct with the student, was fully at rest.

Her mistress, however, was not easy: she saw the eyes of her son constantly fixed upon Clara,

who looked particularly soft and beautiful. The Count had said, "That girl is uncommonly proud and prudish:" and Alfred had related this in triumph to his mother, remarking, at the same time, that her education must be far superior to that of an ordinary servant girl. Clara had again overheard the conversation; for when the mother and son were alone together, she seldom left her post at the key-hole. Those were halcyon days; and her mind was constantly filled with the wildest plans and dreams of the future grandeur which awaited her.

But fourteen days soon come to an end—the time of parting was at hand; yes; the lieutenant was off one morning, without giving Clara the slightest intimation of his intention. She became suddenly quite another person,—absent and pettish in her manner; the serious looks of her mistress first brought her to her senses.

Some days after, Madame von Trautstein sat for an entire morning at her writing-table; now and then walking up and down the room in

deep thought. Clara guessed rightly: she was writing a very important letter to her son. "I would give all in the world," thought Clara, "to read that letter; and if it is not sent to the post to-day, it is still possible. Chance favored her —the afternoon was taken up by a succession of visitors: in the evening the old lady had an engagement with a few friends, so that she had no time to finish her letter.

With a beating heart Clara heard the carriage drive off with her mistress, and as the man-servant had gone with her, it was just the time for her to gratify her wicked desire of reading *the* letter. She quickly brought all the small keys she could find: tried with trembling fingers to open the lock; but in vain. Ten times she ran to the door to listen if any one was coming: for the first time in her life she felt strong warnings of conscience, but for the first time in her life she had descended from the steps of levity and folly, to commit actual crime. Like a thief she stood

before the locked writing-table, and was she not actually going to steal?

The lock would not move, the carriage came back: Clara quickly left the apartment.

In her own room she thought over the affair more quietly, even blamed herself for her foolish fears: reasoned with herself, that it was not such a very great thing to read another person's letter, and would gladly have tried again; but she was obliged to wait until the coachman should take out the carriage to go for his mistress. Now she went more cautiously to work, practice soon makes all things easy; therefore, we are warned "To beware of the first step in vice, for the others soon follow, and lead to a great fall." But even now the lock would not open, though attempted with much greater care, and Clara was obliged to go to bed with her highly-excited curiosity unsatisfied.

The next morning she went, according to custom, at an early hour, to light the fire in her mistress's room; and, as usual, the bunch of keys

lay on the little table beside the night lamp. What a chance to open the writing-table! Hitherto Clara had never thought of disturbing them, but this morning the temptation was too great. Taking them up softly, she quickly left the room, locked the door after her, and also that of the ante-room, though the man-servant had nothing whatever to do there at that hour of the morning; "but the wicked flee when no man pursueth." Now she easily opened the writing-table: there stood a little box full of money, beside it lay the letter; the money had no attractions for her, but the letter had many. She skimmed it over hastily, but discovered enough to set her thinking for days. The mother warned her son against his own heart; she desired to preserve him from a love that would certainly render him unhappy, if not for years, at least for days. Then she described Clara's conduct, her motives and actions, with such truthfulness, that the very reading of it caused her to blush deeply. Yes, the sensible,

clever old lady had completely seen through all the coquettish intrigues, and silly ambition of the girl. "She is faithful and honest, clever and industrious;" so ended the old lady's portrait of her maid, "therefore I shall not send her away, but shall make it my duty to watch over her more closely, which, in the quiet routine of my life, will not be very difficult."

Clara was dreadfully excited. She carefully replaced the letter, locked the writing-table, and put the keys where she found them. She had succeeded admirably; and although there were many things in the letter which vexed her, yet there were others of an agreeable nature—the lieutenant loved her, his mother feared it.

Her grand desire now was to read the answer to this letter. With the utmost assiduity did she watch the arrival of the postman; at length, after eight days waiting, she discovered the Berlin postmark and the family arms upon the seal of a letter. The old lady took this letter with very great eagerness from Clara, and opening it

quickly, began to read. Clara dallied about the room, dusted here, arranged there, in order to gain time to observe the countenance of her mistress, which at first expressed great seriousness, cleared up gradually, however, and finally was illuminated by a friendly contented smile. This smile pierced like a dagger into the heart of Clara. Never had any day seemed so tedious to her as this one; for she could not possibly renew her clever trick at the writing-table before the next morning, and satisfy her burning curiosity by reading the letter from the lieutenant to his mother.

Morning came at last: Clara was in her mistress's apartment half an hour earlier than usual. Madame von Trautstein still lay peacefully sleeping. Clara took the keys, found the letter at the top of the papers, and opening it, quickly read as follows:

"If I have caused you a moment's anxiety, my dearest mother, I am sincerely sorry; but with all honesty I can assure you that it was

wholly needless. I shall not deny that, at first, the pretty girl interested me, and I was curious to discover if any thing really desirable lay beneath the beautiful surface. I am quite of your opinion respecting her character; for during the last few days of my visit to you, I observed several little things in her which convinced me she was a low-minded coquette; and I much doubt if you will not find it a more difficult matter than you think to watch over her. Count Bründel is seriously taken with her, and he will spare neither money nor trouble in order to form a connection with her."

A slight movement was heard in the next room: Clara started—she listened—all seemed again quiet; but her fear was great, and she only looked toward the end of the letter.

"Yes, beloved mother, my heart was already occupied before I saw you last; the noble purity of my Adelaide has completely conquered me, and I hope soon to be able to present you with a worthy daughter-in-law."

Again, there were unmistakable sounds in her mistress's chamber, so Clara put back the letter, and quickly locked the writing-table. What a discovery was that for her!

Rage and disappointment distracted Clara's heart. Here, then, she could do nothing; the young man was not poetical, not romantic enough to act in any way contrary to the usages of society! All the pangs of unfortunate love, which she had ever seen described in novels, came over her—happily not for a very long time.

CHAPTER V.

THE winter had been unusually severe: even in the middle of February there was snow and hard frost. The sky was clear, the sun shone upon the white roofs, the people stumbled against one another in the slippery streets, and could by no precautions guard against red noses and blue ears; and the fantastic ice-flowers upon the window-panes were scarcely thawed by mid-day.

Gretta passed many tranquil hours behind these ice-flowers. She sat opposite to her mother, and spun, and thought: and sometimes she thawed a little window for herself with her breath. Then she saw the blue sky, the golden sun, which gave her joyful anticipations of the

pleasant spring, with its flowers, and birds singing in the fresh green trees, and many other agreeable things; and her heart beat warmly behind the cold ice-flowers on the window. Sometimes she discovered, through her peep-hole, the red face of some poor journeyman out of work, who looked entreatingly toward her—then she gave him a trifle to help him on his way; or she watched with affection the little birds hopping upon the window-sill to pick the crumbs. Every day, after breakfast and dinner, she went into the garden and scattered crumbs for the birds, and whenever she appeared, Benjamin would open his window, and call out a friendly good-day to her.

For some days, however, the little window had not been opened, and the ice-flowers never moved from the panes. Gretta told this to her mother, and they consulted together about it. Benjamin must surely be ill: inquiries must be made about him. There had been very little intercourse between the neighbors' houses this winter. Mrs.

Bendler remarked with pain that Fritz Buchstein would not approach Gretta at all. Her feelings of propriety prevented her making any advances of friendship, and this fear on her part, of being too forward, almost put a stop to all visiting. Old Buchstein, who had formerly carried on the friendly intercourse with such spirit, was now quite restrained: Fritz refused to have any thing to do with Gretta; and the kind old man did not like to force the inclinations of his son. He did not know now what to say to Mrs. Bendler, with whom, formerly, he had had so many conversations on the subject, and with whom he had made so many plans with regard to Fritz and Gretta. This day, however, all these considerations must be laid aside: Benjamin must be visited and cared for. Gretta went very willingly to see her old friend; but she could not help feeling a little shy, for the way to his little dwelling lay through Fritz's workshop. During the time she was making a warm soup for him, she looked at least ten times out upon the street to see if she

could discover any of the neighbors from whom she could make inquiries about the old man; at length she was fortunate enough to see the old serving woman, and obtained from her the desired information.

"Benjamin is very ill," muttered the old woman; "but he does not require any thing; he wishes to carry off his illness by perspiring in bed."

That assurance did not deter Gretta from making her preparations: with her little cup of soup under her cloak, she went over to the old shoemaker. The sun shone so clearly into the workshop, the ice-flowers were somewhat thawed from the windows. Fritz, in his white shirt sleeves and black cloth vest, was working hard with the journeymen and apprentices. He started on seeing Gretta's fresh face under the black hood, but nevertheless he came forward in a friendly manner and shook hands with her.

"I wish to go up to see poor old Benjamin, who is ill," said Gretta, shyly.

"To poor old Benjamin!" repeated Fritz, an sighed: "yes, he is very ill, and I have been s unkind as to forget him! Shall I carry the sou up to him?" added he softly.

Gretta gave it to him; then followed up th narrow stair. Out of the warm workshop the entered an icy-cold room: Benjamin was com pletely buried under the feather covering; th starling stood upon the table near him lookin very sad; the bulfinch tried in vain to pick ope the frozen water in his cage. "Poor shoemaker! called out the starling, as the door opened— "Poor shoemaker!"

Benjamin's night-cap now moved, and hi friendly face appeared above the mountain o feathers with which he was covered.

"I thought you would come," said he to Gret ta; "and now, first of all, feed my poor birds— Dolly is sulking, and has not come near me sinc yesterday evening."

Gretta looked for water, but in vain—all wa solid ice. Fritz saw what she wanted, and lef

the room in search of it; and soon returned with a pan full of hot water, and a shovel full of fire to light the stove. Silently he gave her the water—silently he made the fire, and then watched how she melted the ice in the bird-trough—how she fed the birds—and how she arranged Benjamin's pillows, and covered the table before his bed, and placed the soup upon it. Fritz looked on softly and sadly; and as Benjamin raised his eyes to ask a blessing, Gretta and Fritz folded their hands and prayed with him. When Benjamin ended, Fritz went over to him, and taking his hand, said, "Forgive me, Benjamin, that I could thus have forgotten you; I am very, very sorry for my neglect."

Benjamin took his hand in both of his, and pressed it warmly. Then Fritz, turning to Gretta, said, "And you, too, Gretta, must forgive me. I feel ashamed before you, and before God, that I could be so very cold-hearted, as not even to ask after poor old Benjamin."

Just then a stream of sunshine broke through

the thawing window, and a stream of light burs in upon Fritz's heart. "Lord, thy will be done!" —Gretta stood before him with her forgiving glance, so fresh, so friendly, and so pure! Frit felt his future decided—he felt what the Lor would have him to do, and where the Lord will ed that he should seek peace: the wild desire of his heart must be rooted out. He now regret ted the time he had lost, in allowing them t grow and increase!

Gretta bid her old friend good-by, but h made her promise to come soon again to see him

"Yes, I too beg of you to come," said Fritz "not only to see and nurse old Benjamin: no you must come to convince yourself that I hav by extra care and attention made up for my sin ful neglect."

Benjamin made light of the young man's for getfulness, considering it very pardonable; Gret ta agreed with him, and they went down th stairs together. Below, in the workshop, in or der to ingratiate himself, Fritz turned to Gretta

and said, "I have long had the intention of calling in to see you—but the bad weather—one is quite snowed up.

"We have the snow swept away from our door every day," answered Gretta.

"Yes, I know it is all my own fault, continued Fritz; and as Gretta, in passing, touched a half-dried geranium with her finger, he became still more confused. "The poor flower has been forgotten among the rest; but it also shall be attended to." Gretta drew in her hand quite startled, for she had no desire to disturb him again. In this feeling, she unwillingly passed by a beer-glass, which was standing on the corner of the stove, though her fingers itched to push it back only a very little from the edge—for the slightest touch would knock it down.

When they were passing the parlor door, Fritz insisted on Gretta going in to speak to his father: the old man was reposing in an arm-chair, with closed eyes. A bright sunbeam rested on the peaceful face: he opened his eyes, and seeing

Fritz and Gretta standing before him, he fancied that the favorite dream of his life was about to be accomplished. His eyes brightened. "Ah, Gretta!" he exclaimed, and stretched out both hands to meet her. Fritz turned to the window. His father might have been so happy—who can tell how many days he has to count? But he shall be happy. Gretta's hands shall soothe and minister to the evening of his life. "Yes! yes!" said his heart, and his eye followed the sunbeam to the blue sky, and all feelings of suffering and disappointment disappeared from his mind.

Fritz had been particularly uneasy, absent, and melancholy during the last few days, but he had had good reason for it. One afternoon he had been to one of the principal streets to bring home some new furniture. In the same house, down stairs, there was a bookseller's shop, and when Fritz had finished his business, he called in to look over the books, which the proprietor saw gladly: for, after reading over many passages here and there, he often made a purchase. This

day he had dallied so long that twilight at length warned him to return home. His way led past the theater, which, in spite of frost and snow, was well lighted, and seemed to have many visitors. Among these, to his horror, he recognized Clara leaning on the arm of a gentleman. He could not resist trying to find out who was her conductor. After a little going up and down, he succeeded in seeing the gentleman's face: he was a very handsome young man, with light-brown hair, and a large moustache. Chatting cosily together, the pair entered the house. Fritz followed them. He felt ashamed to be seen there, but could not restrain his inclination to watch Clara. From the pit he discovered them in a half-lighted box. Oh, how confidential they seemed together! He did not stop long; he had soon seen enough. Going out, he asked the box-keeper who was the young man with the moustache? "Count Bründel," was the answer. "Count Bründel!" repeated Fritz. That name he had often heard: he was the gayest and wild-

est young officer of the garrison. Clara, the beloved of this man! This thought had occupied him day and night ever since Benjamin's illness; thinking of her horrid fate had driven every thing else out of his mind. But his heart-sore was soon to be healed; and he now turned his whole attention to considering what was best to be done, to comfort and restore the poor old man to health again.

Clara, however, did not consider herself poor. No; rich beyond measure, she loved and was beloved—yes, loved by a man of rank and property! How handsome, how fine, and gallant in his manners was her Count! He hung upon her very looks—she could actually govern him! When her mistress's son gave her up so suddenly, she was, as already intimated, very miserable, but she did not give herself up to despair. She soon looked round for comfort—her heart had become accustomed to these foolish fancies, and she was no longer happy without an intrigue on hand. In this disposition she received the first

letter from Count Bründel. With real delight did she respond to his advances; her excited feelings were no longer governed by the same prudent calculation, as in the case of the medical student; she believed that this time she must try another plan, and had the firm conviction that she must succeed.

Four weeks had passed over in this sweet intoxication. Mrs. Krauter had no pangs of conscience about encouraging the intercourse of the young people. The Count usually had a well-filled purse: she wanted for nothing, and led a delightful life; and, besides, he had promised to marry Clara,—and both mother and daughter were fools enough to believe him. Yes; Clara had even laid aside all her cleverness and cunning in this benumbing of her senses! She thought not of the future—she would not remember the past—the present was so very sweet. She had often been in the theater with her Count, and he had promised to bring her to a fancy-ball that was to be given in that locality.

That to her seemed the very summit of earthly pleasures. For fourteen days before, she had studied all the books of fashions, rummaged all the shops where masquerade dresses were to be hired. At last she decided on going as Diana; but for this costume a green velvet scarf or mantle was absolutely necessary, and it would be so suitable to her slight figure. But where was the money to come from to purchase it? Their purses were all at low ebb: the mother had given sundry hints to the Count, to which, however, he had paid no attention—for the best of all reasons, because his funds did not happen just then to be in a very flourishing condition. Clara could not borrow from any one, and the shops would no longer give her credit; for she had petty debts in most of them, besides owing two dollars to Agusta Vogler. These debts did not trouble her much; she could have paid them long ago, and would soon have plenty of money again: it was but a temporary embarrassment. She had long given up the idea of a real velvet

scarf; a mock one would serve the purpose equally well, and that would cost but a few dollars.

Whilst making plans to obtain this scarf, the evil one led her constantly to think of the little box full of money in her mistress's writing-table. Steal? no! The very thought of it horrified her. 'Tis true her mistress would never miss so small a sum; for she had often thought over her household expenses with Clara, when she had failed to note down some item or other, and if the account could not be settled to her mind, she easily satisfied herself that it was an oversight. The idea of borrowing the trifling sum from her mistress's money-box, recurred to her mind more and more frequently as the time for the fancy-ball approached. "For a few days at least, you might take the money: then put it back again," suggested the evil one; and she did not withstand him. What power had she within her, to withstand temptation? Her cleverness; and it was the only weapon she would use to shield

herself from sin and destruction — this very cleverness it was which prompted her to the step. You are only borrowing — you do not mean to steal the money, said cleverness; no one will know of it; and the green velvet scarf is absolutely necessary to secure you admiration.

The next morning she put in practice the cunning trick with regard to the writing-table. Her hand trembled as she grasped the money from the box, and her heart palpitated fearfully. But when she displayed the scarf to advantage over her shoulders before her mother's looking-glass in the evening, her heart beat no longer from fear, but from pride and adoration of her own grace and beauty. Yes! and a few evenings after, as she flew through the giddy mazes of the ball-room, leaning on the arm of the young Count, hearing exclamations of admiration at every step, and the Count congratulated as a lucky fellow, at being the cavalier of a pearl so fair, her conscience became altogether silent. The Count gave her a little money in

the evening, for she confessed to him that she had debts, as Agusta Vogler was becoming impatient to be paid. But first of all, she would put back again that which she had taken from her mistress: that was her firm intention.

However, as she rose later than usual the next morning, she could not execute her intention, and was obliged to put off taking the keys until the morning after—fatal delay. During the day she considered the matter over again. Her mistress had not observed any thing: she was as kind and friendly toward her as ever; from her Clara had nothing to fear. She determined, therefore, first, to pay off her small debts in the shops, in order to obtain credit more easily when she needed it. As she stood in the last shop with the remains of her money, she discovered, with alarm, that the sum was not sufficient to cover the debt. And yet she had just been boasting of her power to pay all she owed. The foreman having made out her account, handed it to her with the polite, but serious remark,

that it was quite against the rules of the house to give such large credit to ladies of her rank. Clara's pride rose powerfully—the sum must be paid at all hazards; she, the future wife of a Count, could not brook such an insult. She took the account, and promised to be back in a few moments. She went straight to Agusta Vogler. Agusta must help her. She promised faithfully to return it the next morning at ten o'clock. Agusta was good-natured—gave her the money, but told her, at the same time, that if she were not paid punctually at the time appointed, she would go and make a formal complaint to her mistress. Clara went off in triumph to pay her bill, and remarked pertly, that there were other shops where ladies of her rank were served most willingly.

Then she went to her mother's, and wrote a letter to the Count, which the old woman was to deliver into his own hands as quickly as possible. It was the first time that Clara had demanded money: but necessity has no law; and this, her

first request, he surely could not refuse. With a beating heart she awaited the return of her mother. She, however, brought bad news:—the Count was not at home. Her mother promised to continue going to his house until she should see him, and, if possible, to procure the money before ten o'clock the next day. The evening and morning passed over, but her mother did not come. At last she brought the news that the Count had come home late at night, and had gone off again somewhere very early in the morning.

Clara was in despair. Agusta came for her money, but was obliged to be contented with many sacred promises of payment at ten o'clock the next day. "Need breaks iron," thought Clara. "To-morrow morning early I will take the money out of the writing-table; if she has not remarked it once, I may venture still another time: it will not be observed." The same evening her mother went again to the Count. He had not yet returned; and Clara went to

her work the next morning in a very bad humor. This time she was bolder. She had taken nearly three dollars, and was in the act of locking the writing-table, as the door opened behind her, and her mistress stepped in. Clara screamed aloud. "So!" said the old lady. Clara held both her hands before her face — her senses seemed to leave her.

"Clara!" said the old lady, "it is now eight days since I observed that some one had been at my money-box; but as I was not quite sure of it, I said nothing about it, and *you* are the very last person I would have suspected of being the thief."

"Thief!" sobbed Clara; "I never intended to steal. I would have put all the money back again."

"Foolish reasoning that!" replied her mistress, angrily. "You have stolen, and in the most abominable manner taken advantage of the confidence which I placed in you; and nothing can now save you from a public trial, unless

you confess the whole truth to me, and your reasons for the crime. And, above all, I must now make strict inquiries about your conduct and manner of living; for very strange reports have been going abroad about you for the last few weeks."

Clara was in a most awful predicament! All pride and self-conceit had disappeared. Sin makes one cowardly—fear was treading upon her heels. It was fear that so completely cut up Clara's whole being. She thought of her love for the Count; it was her foolish love for him that had made a thief of her—she thought of her friends, of her Aunt Rieka. Yes; she confessed, she described her exalted love for the Count. "If he had not been on a journey, I would not have taken the money: indeed, on the contrary, I would have put back the sum which I had already taken. His love is so great for me: all that belongs to him is mine; yes, he has even promised to marry me!"

Her mistress replied that she was a poor de-

ceived girl; but that such was the fate of all the light-minded and frivolous. "And even were the Count fool enough to marry you, how would he be considered by the officers of his regiment? How would a girl like *you* be received in society?"

At these words, Clara stared at the speaker. "A girl like *me?*" asked she softly.

"Yes, like *you?*" repeated the old lady. "You have been seen walking in the streets after dark—you are talked of in the town as a giddy coquette, and the young Count is not your first love."

Clara reddened. Did her mistress then know about the medical student? or was she only trying to find out the whole truth? At any other time she would have stoutly denied all the charges—now, however, fear ruled her; therefore to this charge she preserved silence, and to beganbeg Madame von Trautstein's forgiveness for the fault, as she called the taking of the money.

Madame von Trautstein gave her a long lec-

ture: represented to her the misery she was bringing upon herself by her present mode of life; and drew a picture of the future, very different from that painted by Clara's imagination for herself. But, at the same time, the kind considerate lady promised not to say a word of the affair to any one, and also to keep Clara quietly in her service till Easter. And as she would, perhaps, be too weak of herself to break off the connection with the Count, it shall come from his side, "for," said the old lady, "I shall take care that he shall know to what a pitch of folly and crime his levity has brought a poor unfortunate girl. He shall learn that, in order to adorn herself to please him, she has stooped to steal!"

These last words brought Clara almost to the verge of distraction! She entreated—she begged—but in vain; her mistress remained firm to her determination, and Clara was obliged to leave the room in despair. The first thing, however, which she did, was to sit down and write to the Count herself. She described to him her misery,

her love, her despair, if he should desert her. She bathed the letter with tears, so that the writing was scarcely legible, and just as she had sealed it, her mother came in.

"You are like an angel from heaven!" said Clara; "you must go and carry this letter to the Count!"

"It is not necessary," said the mother, smiling, "I have the money already."

"Oh!" stammered Clara; "then it was not necessary!" She covered her face with her hands, and wept bitterly. If she had waited but one hour, then all this misfortune would not have happened to her!

The mother was at her wit's end about the distress of her daughter: she inquired, she comforted, she related how that, late yesterday evening, she had gone to the Count, and not finding him at home, had gone back to him early this morning and found him in bed, and made him hand out the money. He grumbled a little (added the

mother), and said that their demands were more than he could afford.

"Did he say that?" answered Clara, with passion. "O take him back his money, and my letter along with it; and tell him that I desire nothing more than his love, and that he shall answer me immediately. But go quickly, mother, and come quickly back again."

Her mother could not understand a word of all this: she shook her head, for she knew that Agusta Vogler would come back to look for her money, and that she would make a fine noise if she got none. She tried to talk over her daughter. "You lovers," said she, "you quarrel and make needless misery for yourselves. Do you quietly take the money, pay your debt, and I will invite him to come in the evening, and you can again be friends together. Clara, do not let love blind you! The gay young Count will slip away from you some day, just as the young lawyer did from me."

Clara would have made an angry unbelieving

reply, but some one tapped at the door. "Agusta!" said she faintly, and glanced unwillingly at the money in her mother's hand.

"Shall I pay her?" said the latter.

"Yes," replied Clara, sighing, "pay her! pay her! but go outside the door, and tell her I am ill."

The mother did as she was asked, and the affair was soon settled. Now the only thing to be done was to take Clara's letter to the Count. She promised not to come back without an answer, but was obliged to do so, notwithstanding Clara's anxiety; for the Count was on duty, and Mrs. Krauter was requested to return in the afternoon. Clara passed some hours of misery: she had lain down upon her bed, in order to avoid seeing any one. Here she listened to every footstep upon the stairs. She imagined the most extraordinary things to herself. When he would read her letter, his heart would melt—he would not be able to think of her misfortune—he would come himself to her—he would brave the world—her

mistress—and would himself comfort her, and help her out of this confusion. But how did she feel when her mother came to her in the twilight with the cold answer! The Count was very angry; he had spoken of a second letter, of very great want of foresight, and of almost insufferable annoyances: he must think over the affair, and the next day he would send his answer. That was a death-blow to Clara! She felt in such a night of misfortune, that she could not even think—she could only feel that her happiness with the Count was at an end. She remained in bed the next morning; for she could do nothing but weep, and could not endure witnesses to her grief. Sometimes she had a faint glimmering of hope; her mother might still bring a letter of comfort—she looked back a few days when his love was so sincere, his promises of eternal fidelity so sacred; but she did not consider that these endearments are but temptations of the evil one, which, like soap-bubbles, are blown away and forgotten. She belonged to

the thousands of foolish young women who put faith in such promises.

However, she was not left long in uncertainty. Her mother came with the letter, and it was written like a thousand others on similar occasions. It still contained assurances of the warmest affection, but one must succumb to necessity, duty, and honor, even should one's heart be lacerated in the struggle. Clara read and wept; and wept and read again; and remained the entire day in bed. She had sufficient sense remaining to keep for herself the largest half of the gold-pieces sent by the Count, and only gave the smaller portion to her mother.

CHAPTER VI.

MARCH had come, the snow was melted, and the warm spring sun shone upon the busy streets. Clara had not been out of the house for fourteen days: she made the excuse of being ill, but, in reality, she feared to meet any of her acquaintances, especially her Aunt Rieka. In the mean time, her mother was obliged to acquaint her aunt with the intention of leaving her situation, and to give as a reason that so much sitting over her sewing did not agree with her health; and, therefore, she had been looking for another service where she would have more exercise.

One day Clara was out on an errand for her mistress. It was a fine sunny day, the children

were playing merrily in the streets, and she heard the sound of a military band from the parade-ground. But she felt sad and exasperated—the very happiness and gayety of all around was disagreeable to her; and it was still more disagreeable to her to see her Aunt Rieka approaching: she could not avoid her, therefore she had to prepare herself for a serious conversation. Her aunt, however, was not so bad as she feared.

"You look very pale," said she to her, with sympathy; "you must have been very ill."

Clara explained as well as she was able, and added, "that the new service in the Hotel Reinhard would be more suitable for her."

"But a hotel!" said her aunt.

"I shall have nothing to do with the serving in the hotel," replied Clara. "I am to be the housekeeper—have the care of the coffee, sugar, and house-linen, and send the breakfast to the rooms; and for this I shall receive nine pounds,

and many presents besides." She found no difficulty in tranquilizing her aunt.

Thus conversing together they reached Mrs. Bendler's house, and Clara was obliged to go in. Gretta stood in the room winding yarn from her spinning-wheel. "What a tiresome job is this, when the sun is shining so brightly, and all nature seems to invite one into the fresh air!" said she; "but this is the last one, and we shall make an end of spinning." Saying these words she bent over a flower-pot of blooming snow-drops, as if the very sight of them gave her new strength to work.

"From whom have you received those beautiful flowers?" asked Clara.

"From Benjamin," replied Gretta, and blushed; for she knew that Fritz Buchstein had planted them: and it was that which enhanced their value in her eyes.

"Benjamin is now well again: he reared them in his room; and, when they flowered, he was kind enough to present them to me. Only look

at the white blossoms—how pure and tender they are, and how modestly they bend their heads. I know of no flower that I prefer to the snow-drop; and Benjamin could not have given me a greater pleasure."

Clara agreed with her, as far as words went; but her heart was sad—she could not take pleasure in flowers.

"Now I have finished!" said Gretta, joyfully: "Come, Clara, and help me to sow peas and salad. It is such a pleasure to have every thing early in the season." She put on her garden-bonnet, took the seeds, and preceded her mother and Clara. The sky was light-blue — white spring clouds passed over it; the earth was fresh and brown; the violets began to open their silken leaves; the gooseberry bushes had a green shade; the birds were singing, the sparrows twittering, and the doves cooing, on the house-tops; and in the neighbors' gardens they were working and singing: all nature seemed alive. Benjamin also looked out of his window, with

the starling upon his shoulder, which kept crying, "Miss Gretta so right!" Gretta answered, "That he should keep silent; for his ugly voice did not suit the spring." Benjamin, however, whispered something to the bird, and it immediately commenced screaming, "Rascal! rogue!" at such a rate that even Fritz Buchstein opened his workshop-window, and begged for quietness. He also came into the garden, and looked over the paling at Gretta sowing her seed. Clara being there was also an attraction to him; he was no longer bashful before her. No; the Lord had heard his prayer, and given him peace in his heart: he only felt a pitying sympathy now for the poor unfortunate girl. Her love affair with the Count was pretty well known to him. If her misfortunes would only have the effect of making her repent! thought he: her paleness and quietness gave him hopes for her.

But Gretta did not leave him long to these thoughts: she was so fresh and so lively, his

heart rejoiced over her. As Benjamin was laughing at the crooked furrows she was digging to sow her peas in, Fritz jumped over the paling, and took upon himself the office of marking the lines for the pea-furrows. Mrs. Bendler stood by, quite happy; and old Buchstein, who stood leaning on his staff, enjoying the warm spring sunshine, seemed to warm himself still more, looking at his happy son by the side of the good Gretta.

Clara was utterly miserable between this happy pair. Fritz Buchstein loves Gretta — that is all right: Gretta looks almost pretty today. And Fritz! she had long ago thought him too good for Gretta. In this disposition she almost repented having treated Fritz so scornfully. That he had first loved her, she felt too certain; and now, that the good fortune which she had planned for herself with the great world had failed, she could have accepted a Fritz, with his comfortable little freehold, and money-making trade. Of course, in order to

possess such a husband, she must become a pious, industrious, orderly girl, like Gretta, whispered an inward voice to her: conscience was roused; tears flowed over her pale cheeks.

CHAPTER VII.

A FEW months more had passed over; the summer was splendid. Gretta took great delight in her trees, her flowers, particularly her roses. Fritz had also planted, and sowed flowers, that all looked gay together. Old Benjamin took great pleasure in quizzing the young people in many ways; but after a fine warm summer rain, they were very much surprised to see an F and a G entwined together, growing up in fresh green cress. He taught his starling a new sentence, and his bullfinch sang more beautifully than ever: "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

Clara's tears were also dried up; the bloom had returned to her cheeks. The hotel-life pleased her mightily. She was admired and

flattered by the strangers who came and went. She knew well that this would have no influence on her future life — for they were only strangers, who, after a few days, would be away again, and merely wished to amuse themselves. She was, therefore, very retiring in her manner, and, above all things, would not have any thing whatever to do with men of rank. Her fancy had descended from the heights of romance to the realities of life. Now, her desires were limited to a small dwelling, provided the man, whom she would select for a husband, had an affectionate heart, and a little education. And such a man she soon found. He was the head-waiter of the hotel. His education was blameless — he spoke English and French — always went dressed in a black coat and white cravat; and he had something particularly fine and gentleman-like in his manners. It happened very well for Mr. Edward that she had already suffered shipwreck in her love affairs, for he was not long kept in suspense. Naturally, he had

fully explained his position to her before she committed herself. They might marry at once, as he had saved a considerable sum, and his wages were very high; but he was striving after a hotel of his own. His experience, and the number of friends he had, would make it an easy matter for him to conduct such an establishment; indeed, he had been making inquiries already for a suitable locality. He depicted a glorious future to Clara. She, as mistress of the hotel, would lead the life of a princess; could rule and regulate just as she pleased. Poor Clara had completely forgotten the past, and stepped forward again most courageously and self-contented, in her plans for the future. The tenth of August, Clara's birthday, was the one fixed on for the public betrothal. The bridegroom had presented her with a rose-colored satin bonnet, and black satin mantilla for the occasion. Both lay upon the sofa in her room, beside a real cambric handkerchief and lemon-colored kid-gloves. It was the evening before the

eventful day that was to seal her fate for life; she was sitting thinking over various matters in the dark, for it was already late, when through the chink of her half-opened door, she heard voices whispering in the corridor. "So he will have tea: make it then! He is drunk; but has still that much sense left to know what is the matter with him, and what will do him good."

"He is a well-seasoned cask!" answered the other voice; "any other decent man would be drunk the entire day, if he took as much liquor as that man contrives to swallow."

"And he is an arch rogue besides," said the first voice: "he pockets at least a hundred dollars every month, and the old ass does not observe it, but confides in him as if he were his most faithful friend."

The voices died away in the distance. Clara was quite excited. Whom could they mean? Who was the rogue and drunkard? A horrible presentiment took possession of her mind. Could it be her Edward? Several times already had

she found the smell of wine or spirits on him; and when she rebuked him about it, he merely laughed, and said, he would be a bad hotel-waiter if he did not taste the wine now and then, adding, that with the heavy duties he had upon his shoulders, it was absolutely necessary at times for him to take a drop to strengthen him. But Clara had never observed the slightest approach to drunkenness; therefore, she began to console herself that the speakers could not possibly mean him. And the accusation of roguery! that, of course, could not be meant for her bridegroom, for he both spoke and acted so nobly. Sometimes, indeed, there was a mixture of levity in his conversation; and of his former life, or his moral state, she knew and inquired nothing. Thereupon her conscience reminded her that her own conduct with regard to morality and honesty had not been too strict; even though it was hidden from the world. This, that people knew of it that two waiters

could talk about it, was the most disagreeable part of the whole affair.

Determined to learn the grounds of this conversation, and remove all doubts from her mind, she left the room.

In passing, she turned the handle of her bridegroom's chamber: that was locked. She went into the saloon: he was not there. Then she went into the kitchen, and inquired for whom the tea was making? "For Mr. Edward," replied the cook, quite frankly. The waiter, who was standing with the cup and tray, winked most expressively to the cook, at these words.

Clara was obliged to put very great restraint upon her feelings, in order to hide her emotion: she could find no rest that night. How dreadful if he is a drunkard! She remembered how very miserable her own father had made her mother, through drink; and there were living examples enough on all sides to deter the stoutest heart. Even old Vogler, who usually

let the women do as they liked in the house, when he came home drunk, thought very little of beating his sick wife and beloved daughter. Drink is a horrible curse—it reduces a human being below the level of the brutes. And how shall it be with the hotel? Are his promises and protestations true? All these thoughts and fears tormented Clara during the wakeful hours of that long night, and, strange to say, when she did drop asleep, Fritz Buchstein and her Aunt Rieka stood beside her, with their serious faces and reproving words; so that her very dreams were uneasy. If the great and just God, of whom they talk so much, should be about to punish her for her levity and wickedness—if her aunt's proverb should at last turn out to be true—"As you sow, you shall reap?" But what was she to do now? Withdraw from her engagement! that would be impossible: she would lose her good name, and all hope of establishing herself for the future. And besides, Edward would not give her up: he loves her so

well, and she loves him too much. Yes! that is her consolation. This love must improve him, even should he have grave faults. Oh, how elevating is the thought! He is so soft—so yielding; she can turn him round her finger: his affection is so strong; he will do every thing for her—she will make quite a pattern husband of him! This thought has already made many an unfortunate wife. She will improve him—she will change him! she trusts far too much to her own strength. Such love has never yet changed any man; and the more feebly he gives himself up now to the government of his passion for her, so much the more feebly will he return to his former sins when the novelty will be worn off. In order to change a man, another power is needed; even the power from on high.

Clara, however, had consoled herself with these thoughts; and as Edward appeared before her the next morning with his usual grace and activity, she again took courage. But she was determined to acquaint him with the whispered

conversation she had heard—it would be a good warning to him for the future; and besides, she obtained a sort of power over him, by knowing his faults. She related it, however, in such a manner as if she believed it utterly impossible for him to be guilty of the like; but she took care to relate every word which she had overheard. Edward was very much confused, and as red as fire; but he covered his confusion by a torrent of angry words; he would make a complaint of the fellow—he would find means to stop his envious tongue, etc., etc. But he was really very glad that Clara could not name the speakers, because a serious examination just then would have been most disagreeable to him for many reasons. The accusation of drunkenness he explained away, by telling Clara, that he had been drawing off wine, and that the cold air of the cellar, after the close air of the crowded saloon, had affected him so much that he had become light-headed and faint. Oh, how well he acted the enraged man, who was

falsely accused—so well, that Clara had to use the sweetest words in order to pacify him; but he allowed himself to be pacified, and both parties crushed their mutual feelings of fear and anxiety with affectionate words.

Toward noon, they walked to her Aunt Rieka's, and Clara had the pleasure of seeing every one staring after her—truly a handsome pair! He looked at least like a baronet, and she not less fine.

What will the home-bred Gretta say? Fritz Buchstein? Gretta will be stupidly embarrassed before the grand gentleman, and Aunt Rieka will make a very low courtesy.

But she deceived herself greatly. Aunt Rieka was certainly very much astonished to see Clara hanging on the arm of a strange man; and, when she introduced him as her bridegroom, looked very serious indeed. Gretta examined him earnestly, and then looked at him very angrily. He appeared very much put out of countenance at these looks, and turned away.

Clara observed all this, and could not understand what it meant. Her aunt was the first to break this painful silence.

"Clara, I did think you would have placed more confidence in us on such an important occasion," said she, with a slight tone of reproach.

Clara excused herself by saying, "The whole affair came on so quickly, that I was myself surprised." The bridegroom had by this time recovered himself, and now acted the offended guest.

"I hope that you have nothing to say against me," said he, angrily; "and that I shall be a welcome nephew to you? My position is such, that I feel no hesitation in offering myself to your niece."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Günther," replied the aunt, quietly; "I merely wished that Clara had placed more confidence in me, her near relative. I can have nothing at all against you personally, for you are altogether unknown to

me; as neither myself nor my daughter have ever heard your name."

"I know the gentleman well," answered Gretta, softly, but with a slight accent upon her words.

"I was not aware of the acquaintance," stammered Edward: "perhaps in passing—perhaps in the theater, or a coffee-garden!"

Gretta shook her head, and remained silent. Edward passed this over lightly, and began a sort of lively conversation, which, however, he had to sustain for the most part himself, as Aunt Ricka and the two girls were rather silent. At length, to the great relief of all parties, the visit drew to an end.

Once upon the street, Edward could no longer contain his rage. "You must promise me this," said he angrily to Clara, "to have nothing more to do with those people! I cannot allow you to associate with such low vulgar relations, whose manners are so rough. They have treated me shamefully; and what that goose Gretta means,

or what she has against me, I cannot understand!"

Clara was confounded: she scarcely knew where she stood. Where was the grand triumph which she had expected! She plainly felt that she was rather pitied and envied by Gretta—for which there must be some hidden reason; and it was actually horrible to her, that her aunt had shown so very little pleasure or admiration for her *fine gentleman* bridegroom. She felt ready to weep, and yet was obliged to restrain her own feelings, in order to pacify her enraged bridegroom.

That happened to be a very busy day in the hotel, so that the bridal pair had found little or no time for explanations, which pleased Clara very much. She only waited a suitable time to go to her aunt's, and inquire what it was they had against Edward; and when he was occupied in attendance on the crowded dinner-tables, she executed her intention. Her aunt and Gretta were sitting quietly in the little parlor. She

hardly knew how to begin her interrogations; but at last summoned courage, and asked them if they knew any thing to the discredit of her bridegroom? Gretta hung her head, and seemed unwilling to answer.

"Clara," began her aunt, "first of all, you must fully understand that we have nothing but your good at heart;" and taking Clara's hand, she looked most affectionately into her face.

Clara was a light-minded girl, but she had still some feeling left for the voice of truth; and returning the pressure of her aunt's hand, she replied, "I do believe you."

Aunt Rieka inquired: "Are you intimately acquainted with your bridegroom?"

"I know him since I have been in the hotel," answered Clara. "I know, also, that he is the master of the house, and that he is the support of the entire business, for the old man leaves all in his hands; and he intends very shortly to open a hotel of his own. He has connections, property, and is besides well educated — has

most polished manners, and is universally liked by all who come in and out of the hotel."

"That is all very well," replied her aunt; "but these are after all mere outward attractions, and he might, in spite of them all, render you most unhappy. Do you know whether he is a brave upright man: one who will fear God more than men?"

"Of course, I hope he is an upright man, and I have no reason to believe otherwise; and if you or Gretta know any thing bad of him, it is your duty to acquaint me at once."

These words pleased her aunt; she thought Clara was most anxious about the probity and uprightness of her bridegroom; but it was only burning curiosity to hear what it was they had against him. Her pride was humbled: she felt angry with herself, and with all the world beside.

"I will now relate to you what we know about your bridegroom," said her aunt, "and then you can consider what your best course of

action will be under the circumstances. The winter before last, when I was lying ill of fever, Gretta had to take my turn and visit many sick poor women. The most hopeless and miserable of our patients was a poor girl, who had had a baby about three months previously, and, at the time I speak of, was lying ill of consumption. So very poor and forsaken was she, that our society, with its other burthens, could scarcely afford to provide the poor creature the actual necessaries of which she was destitute. But she had not only poverty to contend with, she had a gnawing inward grief: she spoke much about the father of her child, what he had promised to do for her, and how that he left her now to die of hunger and want. Gretta had often to listen to her complaints about that man, and her opinion and description of him were certainly not very high. As the poor girl grew worse, and saw death approaching with rapid strides, her most ardent desire was to see her beloved, as sometimes she still called him, once more before she closed

her eyes on this world forever. A woman, who had formerly acted as messenger between the lovers, was sent again and again to ask him to come to see the poor girl once more: but in vain. One day Gretta went to see her, and found her particularly low and weak. She tried to encourage her with a few comforting words, but she would not be comforted: her only answer was, 'I must see Günther once more!' Gretta had never heard the man's name, and had always avoided as much as possible talking about the affair. And while Gretta was talking to her of the folly of clinging to a person who had so shamefully deserted and cast her off: how she ought rather to turn her desires and affections to her Savior, who would never leave her nor forsake her: the woman who had always been sent for Günther came in, exclaiming, 'He is coming! he is coming!' Gretta turned quickly, in order to go away; but the man stood in the door-way before she was aware of it. He stood by the bedside of the sick girl, who turned toward him, and

said, 'I am dying now!' and wept bitterly. 'That is not my fault,' answered he, harshly; 'and I have come to-day in order that the constant running after me may cease. What is it you want? I have no time to stand here.' 'You have left me to perish so miserably!' sobbed the poor sick girl, again. 'I!' cried he; and then recalled to her mind all he had ever given her: it was no fault of his that she fell sick; she had relations who were richer than he was—why would she not turn to them for support now in her need?' The dying girl could not speak for weeping: she tried to take his hand, but he drew back. Gretta could stand that no longer; but stepping over to them, she placed his hand in that of the invalid and said: 'All these mutual reproaches are idle talk; the poor girl cannot live long now, and wished only to hear a few words of affection and comfort from you, and not the hard cold language you have been using.' He was quite startled; for in his haste to be done with his unfortunate victim,

he had not observed Gretta's presence. He now changed his manner of speaking to her, and, on going away, left a little money: two days after the girl died."

Her aunt ceased speaking. Clara was to the highest degree excited. She could not speak; but pressing her aunt's hand warmly, rushed out of the house. Her aunt called after, but she heard her not: she ran home with hasty steps and locked herself in her own room. Here she burst into tears. What an abominable man, to have had such an adventure! She would break off all connection with him at once; she would only have a man who was respected and honored by every one—the man she would marry must be greatly superior to Aunt Rieka and Gretta in every thing. Such were her first thoughts and intentions. However, when, after half an hour's violent weeping, she had overcome her tears, she became more tranquil. "And even should the entire story be true," thought she, "where was the crime? I might

easily have guessed that I was not his first love. And besides," answered conscience, "he is not your first love, and you have never confessed your former adventures to him." That is just the curse of sin: in order to cover her own faults, she was obliged to overlook his, and thus to bear the punishment of both. "That the girl was silly enough to allow herself to be misled, was her own fault; it was very sad for her—and it was most shameful of him to leave her to perish so miserably of want and hunger; but she must have been a very ordinary sort of girl that could not fix his affections. Such a thing could never have happened to me." The greatest misfortune about the matter was, that it was not a secret, and that her relations of all other people should know so much about it. The affair could by no means affect her fortune now, as both mother and child were dead. When she would once be mistress of a grand hotel, with every comfort around her like any princess, honored and adored by her husband, as she

never doubted would be the case, what would be wanting to her happiness? She must consider well before she decided on giving up her betrothed; and besides, who could tell whether the whole affair was so black as her aunt represented it to her? "My aunt sees every thing with such jaundiced eyes, that I must not weigh too heavily upon this story. But Edward shall confess all to me—he shall know that I am aware of all his faults and follies, which will make him more humble and more devoted to me."

When he came, according to custom, after his duties were over, to see her, he found her pretty nearly consoled, although the sight of him made her tears flow afresh. He was, with his bad conscience, particularly tender-hearted, and upon asking the reason of her weeping, was informed of the whole history. Then his rage seemed to exceed all bounds: He said it was all abominable slander: and that Gretta and Aunt Rieka were a malicious pair, who had turned

and twisted the whole affair in order to make Clara hate him! "Who knows in what corner they would wish to put you; they are so jealous that you are handsomer and more polished in your manners than they are themselves." About the sick girl he told her: that she had been house-maid in the hotel, and that he had had a trifling love affair with her; that a little later she had left the house, become loose in her conduct, and thus sunk down to poverty and misery. In her need she had turned to him, and he had often given her assistance; yes! his good nature had so far got the better of his good sense that he did actually go once to see the girl, because she let him have no rest. And that is the wonderful history that your amiable cousin has distorted in the manner you describe! added he, with an angry voice. "You must solemnly promise me to break off all intercourse with these abominable people, for they are not only envious and wicked, but rough and uncultivated in their manners, and are by no

means suitable companions for us. I am very well pleased that the cause for this rupture proceeds from them. Now we are quite free. After the manner in which they have treated me, they surely could never expect me to cross their threshold again."

Then he began to relate his plans for the future; which he painted in such vivid colors, that Clara felt herself fully satisfied, and agreed willingly to all his proposals. In order to avoid all intrigues, they were to have their marriage celebrated before winter, and not to wait for the establishment of the hotel; that could be fully arranged when they would be together. Günther had seen a nice little dwelling just opposite the hotel, which would suit them nicely, and he would purchase fine mahogany furniture; and every possible luxury that money could produce was to be laid at Clara's feet. She was to receive four hundred dollars yearly, without reckoning the numerous trifles here and there, which fall naturally from the hotel. When Clara in-

formed him that her aunt had promised her a complete outfit in case she would marry, his rage flamed up anew.

"We do not need any thing from your aunt! I shall write to her, and thank her both for her slander and her wedding-presents! I can stand quite well, and give you every luxury without any help from her. I shall never trouble her again; nor can I ever allow my wife to enter a house where my honor has been so shamefully attacked behind my back."

Clara made some opposition to this: for though she had always more feared than loved her aunt, she did not like to see her insulted in this manner, as she had never reproved her but with kindness, and a real desire to do her good. Günther promised not to make the letter too severe; "but," added he, "if we do not take this opportunity of breaking loose from her, she will plague us all our lives." In this way Clara allowed herself to be talked over, and the affair seemed all settled.

The next evening Mrs. Krauter came with a very serious countenance. Aunt Rieka had sent for her, and told her the entire history, at the same time giving her the letter to read which Günther had written to her in the morning. Clara became hot and cold by the reading of this letter, which was couched in terms as rude and coarse as Günther had determined upon using when talking with Clara the last evening. Mrs. Krauter had two faces: when she was with her sister in the morning she lamented about the levity and misfortunes of the world; but with her daughter she pursued a different language, because she was desirous to see her married to this man. Already had she received many a tasty morsel from the hotel where her daughter was servant; and what a grand life might she not expect to lead, when her daughter would be mistress of her own hotel! And when Clara seemed disposed to be angry at her bridegroom for his extreme rudeness to her aunt, her mother took his part, saying, "Every man has his

faults; and she did not think Aunt Rieka wholly free from blame. If you had taken any other man, it would have been the same; she would have still found faults in him: her taste is not the same as yours, and you must now hold with your bridegroom." Clara sighed: it must now be either for! or against! and as she did not altogether like to give up her bridegroom, she was obliged to go against her aunt. She made her mother promise, however, to go to her, and say how very unhappy she was about the rudeness of her bridegroom's letter; but she was so very much attached to him, and hoped so much good for him for the future, that she must for the present agree to his wishes, and break off all connection with her friends — it could not be for long, however, as he must very soon become sensible of his error, and go of himself to ask her aunt's pardon.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was the 25th of September; Clara stood before the glass, and putting on a pink apron, with her white muslin morning-dress, and a litle rose-colored head-dress, she was now ready to receive her guests to chocolate-breakfast (luncheon). She had been married the day before; had gone in a carriage to church, in all the pride and splendor of a white-satin dress, and had been admired as a beautiful bride. Mr. Reinhard had given his head-waiter a splendid dinner on his marriage-day; and after this dinner there was an evening party at the house of the new married pair. The guests were: a private secretary, with his wife, a shop-keeper and his wife, a gentleman living on his rents,

Agusta Vogler, a few shopmen, and Clara's mother. Clara confessed to herself that these people did not seem at all to suit her fine apartments and elegant furniture; and even Günther was a changed person in this society. He laughed and spoke otherwise than she had been accustomed to see him do in the presence of the fine folks who came to the hotel; indeed, his whole air and manner became disagreeable to her. Of course, she must make some allowance for him, as he had taken an unusual quantity of wine that day, which was not unfrequently the case on such festal occasions: with this thought she consoled herself. The same society had been invited to luncheon this morning. Clara had already prepared her fine china-cups; cakes and pasties were served up on painted plates, and she herself reclined upon her sofa, like any duchess awaiting the arrival of her guests.

The mother was the first who came. She glanced smilingly at the cakes and chocolate;

seated herself cosily at the opposite corner of the sofa, and said: "I never could have believed that you would have so fully succeeded in all your plans, you little giddypate. When I thought over it, the chance of settling you seemed so very far off, and then your hot blood and your scruples would come in and spoil all. God be praised that you have safely run into a good harbor!"

Clara smiled. She had at least her mother to offer incense and rejoice at her lot, though she could not altogether reconcile herself to her wondrous good fortune.

Günther came in a little paler than usual, but in a good humor. The other guests soon followed—the chocolate was served—Mrs. Krauter seemed to enjoy every thing; her son-in-law, on the contrary, refused all these sweet things. He said, jokingly, "I feel more inclined for wine today than this sweet chocolate:" and leaving the room, speedily returned with an armful of glasses and bottles. The gentlemen smirked at this

agreeable change, and the women made coarse jests. Clara looked anxiously at her husband, who had come over from the hotel in a slightly elevated condition: for she had observed his hands trembling when handing a cup of chocolate. She would glady have put a stop to this new drinking bout, but she felt ashamed to speak: first, because she, as hostess, did not like to seem to grudge her friends any good cheer in the house, and then she knew well that Günther would not listen to any reasoning upon such subjects.

The gentlemen became every moment more noisy: the women looked on anxiously. Clara observed that her husband had been for some days very unwell, and that the wine would be very bad for him. He became every moment paler, his hands trembled, and he talked all sorts of nonsense; yet he was not the worst of the company. One slept in the corner of the sofa, while another of the young shopmen had already left. The women tried to break up the

party, which, with the drunken men, was not easily effected; but at length they succeeded, and Clara was left alone with her husband and her mother.

Günther had not quite drank his senses away, because he could bear much more than most men: he knew now that a sleep would do him more good than any thing else, so he laid himself upon the bed. Mrs. Krauter went home, because she had no inclination to wash up cups and glasses, and Clara was left alone in her elegant apartment; neither had she much desire just then to wash up the cups and arrange the room—she wished first to recover from the noise and tumult of the last few hours; and, seating herself in the window, gazed into the street. The blue sky and clear sunshine invited promenaders into the open air, and the coming and going of carriages before the hotel made the prospect quite lively to look at. Yes, gay and lively, but not for Clara. Her heart was heavy, and she scarcely knew what it was she wished for. She

was now at the very summit of her desires; she could live well, and act the grand lady. The fine mahogany furniture, the sofa, the carpet, the embroidered table-cloth, the flower-pots, the handsomely-framed pictures—she had never imagined a finer dwelling for herself—and yet she was not happy: this feeling vexed her so much, she could have wept. Thus dissatisfied with herself—with the whole world—she took up a novel which was lying in her way to amuse herself and pass the time.

When Günther appeared again, after having enjoyed a few hours' repose, he grumbled a little at finding every thing in disorder; and in his diligence of waiter, he soon cleared away bottles and glasses. Clara declared that she was quite worn out, and his guilty conscience made him keep silence; thus the honeymoon had not begun with music and sunshine.

CHAPTER IX.

FRITZ BUCHSTEIN was walking up and down the garden. The last rays of sunshine were resting upon the slated-roof of the church-tower, and a glorious autumn sunset gilded the entire horizon. There were bright flowers amongst the green leaves; the plums and apples hung heavily upon the branches; in his neighbor's garden a band of happy children danced round a fire they had made of withered stalks: all spoke of peace and plenty. Fritz gazed upon the scene, and joy and contentment filled his heart. Here was his sweet home; here he was to build his hearth; here he hoped, in the love and honor of God, to begin his course as citizen and house-father.

Yesterday he had seen Clara married. Clara in a white satin-dress, and green garland on her head, with the beautiful blue childlike eyes, had once more moved his heart to sympathy and affectionate remembrances. The dark pale man who stood beside her, seemed to him to be the evil one, to whom she was about to give herself; and, as he saw her there, he prayed again and again to the Almighty: "Lord, even now forsake her not: lead her, hold her; Thou alone art the way, and Thou alone hast the power to preserve this poor wandering sheep from perdition."

On his way home he met Mrs. Bendler and Gretta. At the sight of Gretta, happiness and peace again entered his heart. Gretta looked up at him so confidingly; his eyes also expressed the feelings of his heart. Marriages are made in heaven. Gretta, he felt, was the wife intended by Providence for him. With her he would tread the narrow path; his love should lead and support her in all the temptations and difficul-

ties of the way; and her faithful stout heart would bear him up with all his failings. Yes; he would confide to her affectionate heart the sorrows and desires of his youth, now that he had overcome them all, and could cast himself with his whole heart on Gretta's affection: for his love to her was founded upon esteem, and their mutual love of God; and such love is the only sure foundation for married happiness. If a girl has nothing more solid than a pretty face, fine figure, or lively manners, the fit of admiration soon wears off, and, as is too often the case with hastily-got-up marriages, she begins to feel herself a neglected wife. Fritz looked with a longing heart over his neighbor's paling, and Gretta soon after came out of the house: she shook a plumb-tree, and commenced gathering the fruit. Fritz jumped over the paling, and asked leave to help her; which being granted, they had soon collected the scattered fruit, and filled Gretta's apron. Fritz then took Gretta's hand, and looking earnestly at her, said: "Gret-

ta, you must have observed long ago the state of my heart with regard to you?"

Gretta nodded.

"I love you with all my heart," continued he, "and the Lord will give me strength to make you as happy as you deserve to be."

Gretta bent her head and thought: "I am indeed unworthy of such happiness."

"Now we shall go to your mother," continued he, and putting Gretta's arm in his, they passed through the garden. Then a little window was opened, and the starling hopped out and cried aloud: "Miss is a bride!" Yes, you old Benjamin, you must be the first to put your finger in the pie. This time Gretta did not scold him for his ugly voice; but, smiling kindly at him, stood still till the white night-cap with the friendly face appeared at the window. "God bless you both!" said he fervently, then bending his head to the bullfinch, the latter struck up his favorite melody: "Praise the Lord, O my soul!" and even Fritz and Gretta could not restrain them-

selves, but with full clear voices, chimed in with the words of a German hymn, the sense of which is conveyed by those beautiful words of the 103d Psalm: "Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me, bless His holy name!" etc.

Mrs. Bendler came out just in time to join the last line, and her tender affectionate heart could not forbear shedding tears of joy on this happy occasion. And when father Buchstein appeared at his house-door, it was immediately settled to open a gate in the paling between the two gardens. Benjamin came quickly down, and brought Fritz the necessary tools for cutting down the paling, and with many lively speeches they all helped at the work. During the time that old Buchstein came slowly around leaning on his staff, the opening was already made, and Fritz led his bride and her mother to meet his old father.

CHAPTER X.

CLARA passed the remainder of her honey-moon in unclouded pleasure. Günther tried to make her forget the first two days: He brought her to coffee-gardens, concerts, the theater, etc. She had nothing whatever to do in the house, coffee and tea were the only things she had to cook, and even these her mother was glad to make for her, because she could then take part in the feast. Mr. Reinhard allowed Günther to send Clara's dinner over to her, because one person, more or less, from the well-covered table, made no difference to him; and Günther appeared to be the more attentive and obliging in the hotel. Clara now had plenty of time for patching and mending; but, unfor-

tunately, she wanted the inclination. She considered it useless trouble to mend up her old things, and the small stock of new articles which she provided for herself were all bought ready-made. Günther said he would make out the inventory of articles needful to stock a grand hotel as soon as he could spare time, but for the present she could help herself with a few things as their family was small.

Toward Christmas, she was not astonished to observe that her husband stopped away oftener than usual from home, because there were more visitors at the hotel, and Günther was very busy; and that his eyes looked hollow, and his hands trembled, were indications of the hard work he had to go through, and the hard life he had to lead—up early and late. And besides all this, Günther had such power over himself! when he thought any one was observing him, he could assume such a steady gait, and such liveliness of manner, that Clara was deceived and satisfied.

One evening toward ten o'clock, she was re-

turning from her mother's, who had been ill for some days. In passing, she wished to get a little money from him, for she could scarcely expect to see him this evening; there was so much life and bustle about the hotel. In the hall she met the young waiter who had made the tea for her husband in the summer, and who had held that famous whispered conversation which had then startled Clara.

"Where is my husband?" asked Clara.

"In his room; and I must again make tea for him," said the lad, mockingly.

Quite terrified, Clara ran to Günther's room, and found him in a worse condition than she had ever before witnessed. He sat at a table, which he thumped with his two fists, and shouted out: "Ten thousand dollars — five thousand dollars — that ought to suffice — that must suffice!" Clara shut the door quickly after her. "For mercy's sake, Günther!" cried she; "you are quite drunk!"

"Drunk!" repeated Günther, startled at the

sight of her. He tried to compose himself as usual, but it would not do: he sank down again upon his chair and babbled nonsense. Some one knocked at the door. Clara inquired who it was?

"I bring the tea which I have made," answered the waiter; "and Mr. Reinhard wishes to speak to Mr. Edward."

Clara took the tea from the lad, then went immediately to Mr. Reinhard, with whom she exchanged a few words; and he, seeming to believe the fable about Günther's sudden attack of illness, went away. Clara threw a cloak over her husband's shoulders, put a hat on his head, and when she found no one hanging about the stairs, or the hall-door, led him to his home.

In her own dwelling, however, she tried to overcome her fears and her rage by pouring a torrent of abuse upon her husband. He stared at her without answering a word. She became more and more enraged, and insisted on his getting into bed, and taking him by the arm

tried to force him to listen to her; but he suddenly broke loose from her, and giving her a severe blow, said roughly: "Be quiet with your noise! Who gave you liberty to preach to me? Here, pull off my boots!" Clara stood stock still; she could not possibly stoop to such a mean service! "Are you going to be quick!" cried he, still more roughly, "or shall I teach you to obey?" Then stepping close up to her, he shook her chin violently with his rough hand. Clara screamed out. "Come!" said he; and throwing himself upon a chair, stretched out his foot again for her to pull off the boot. Clara saw that it was no child's play with the drunken man, and, bitterly weeping, she pulled off his boots, in order to avoid further ill treatment. He, bestowing a kick by way of thanks, turned to the table and began again to thump with his fists, and shout "Ten thousand dollars!—ten thousand dollars!"—till sleep put an end to his nonsense.

Clara lay down in her clothes. She feared to

go to sleep, for she dreaded being alone with her husband. In her helplessness, weeping was her only comfort: and she wept and wept, until sleep at last overpowered her weary eyelids.

Toward morning she awoke, and heard her husband groping about in the dark in the parlor, where he had passed the night in the cold. She lighted a lamp: Günther looked ashamed of himself, but at the same time so ill and miserable, that she would have felt pity for him, had not rage and grief restrained her feelings—and, besides, she felt weary and sick at heart after the dreadful night she had passed. He will certainly, thought Clara, come and ask pardon, and make excuses with sweet words; but such conduct I will neither forget nor forgive—I will tell him that if any thing of the kind occurs again, I shall leave him. As she went silently to the stove to light the fire, he commenced speaking.

"Why did you leave me sitting here in the cold room all night?"

Clara gazed at him with astonishment. "Do

you know what happened yesterday evening?" asked she, with a trembling voice.

"Of course, I know it! and bad enough it was of a wife, when her husband came home sick and weary, to attack him like a Zantippe. You scolded and made a noise, instead of trying to soothe and comfort him, as any other kind wife would."

"Do you know that I brought you over?" asked Clara, with trembling voice: "That Mr. Reinhard wished to speak to you? that the waiters despise you, because of your drunkenness? and that it was I who brought you quietly away from them all?"

"I know all that!" answered Günther, coldly: "and it was very sensible of you; but you ought to have continued your kindness here."

Clara could not speak further: her voice was choked with grief. Then he was not even sorry for his bad deeds—he even complained of her conduct! This was the first time that he had spoken unkindly to her when he was in his sens-

es; now she must give up every hope of seeing him change for the better. He went to bed—she attended him, and answered the messengers sent about him from the hotel; but when her mother came she had to hide her head—for she would have been ashamed to expose her misfortunes. In spite of all her wisdom, cleverness, and pride, she had just now fallen to the same condition as her mother: the miserable, persecuted wife of a drunken man!

When the young couple had passed eight days in almost perfect silence, Günther appeared to give in: he brought Clara more money, began to flatter her, and expressed some sorrow for his conduct; and she thought it best not to appear too unforgiving. So that the intercourse between them seemed outwardly to approach its original footing; but the thorn remained in Clara's heart: she could not possibly think lightly of her lot now—the reality was too speakingly plain before her eyes.

Christmas arrived, and Günther laid himself

out to win again for himself the entire of Clara's easily moved heart. The Christmas table actually glittered with fine things: a silk mantle, and a velvet bonnet, which would do for the finest lady in the land, lay upon it, and, beside other trifles, a bill for twenty dollars, to purchase a baby's *trousseau.* For Clara's mother Gunther had also bought many fine things: so there were only joyful faces to be seen on this happy occasion.

Clara was determined to go to church on Christmas morning, in order to display her new finery. This triumph was quite a revival to her, after the sad weary days she had passed; but she was particularly anxious to show herself to her Aunt Rieka and Gretta, as they had more than once expressed their fears to her mother, that she was not altogether so happy and comfortable as they could wish her to be: she would now set their minds at rest about her. Of course, she would be obliged to go to St. Stephen's Church, among the *pietists;* but that did

not much signify, as, at all events, she was not going to hear God's word. Yes; latterly she avoided thinking of God more than ever; although the thought would force itself sometimes upon her mind, that perhaps her aunt's words might come true, and that God would punish her for her unbelief. But this day all was joy and happiness; so she had no time for such serious thoughts.

At first she had intended to seat herself in a conspicuous part of the church, that every one might see her; but on entering God's house, her better feelings conquered, and with a conscious blush of shame she seated herself in a retired corner. When the voices of the congregation, mingled with the swelling tones of the organ, were lifted up in one harmonious strain of praise to that Redeemer, whose birth they had that day assembled to commemorate, her heart was moved with sensations till then unknown to her: she forgot cloak and bonnet, and could not resist reading and singing with great attention

the words: "He is Christ the Lord our God, who from us all distress delivers," etc., etc.

A deliverer from all distress! shall I also need such a Savior, thought Clara. "Oh, how happy I was before I married! every succeeding day clearer and more amusing than the last—the world so smiling. Why! oh, why! did I run myself into such misfortunes? And who knows what miseries are still in store for me? I have no deliverer for my hour of need! The Savior whom Aunt Rieka and Gretta trust in is no Savior for me! I neither know Him, nor do I wish to know Him!" added she, despairingly. The voice of the minister now drew her out of her own thoughts.

"This is the day the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it," was the text. The gospel followed, and then how warmly the preacher described the love of Jesus, who came down from heaven with gifts from God for sinful man, and what he requires from us. How great and unspeakable is the grace of God for us poor

sinners, who, naked and miserable, sit in darkness and death, awaiting the righteous judgment of an offended Deity for our manifold sins. Our consciences tell us that we have broken the law, that death is our due reward. Then a light shines forth in the darkness, a comfort in our trouble; the kind and loving Savior comes, and declares forgiveness of sins, release from death and hell, and gives us hope for everlasting happiness! Blessed Jesus! thou camest into our miserable world, and took upon Thyself our deserved punishment! Thou hast died the bitter death upon the cross for us! Thou camest, Thou hast sought me out—me a poor miserable sinner Thou wilt take to Thy bosom! O then, take me; hold me fast from the world and from sin, and I shall be Thine for ever!

Clara was much moved: such words she had never before heard; or was was it that she would not hear? Had her heart been hard, and had the Lord now softened it? Yes, the Lord can give grace as He pleases, and by grace shall we

be saved. But this day ardent prayers had been offered up especially for her, at the throne of grace: Fritz Buchstein, Aunt Rieka, and Gretta, had all seen her come into church, and had besieged the Lamb of God for a blessing on this forlorn sheep.

In going out of the church, Clara approached her aunt: she felt almost ashamed of her fine clothes; and with a humble, soft expression of countenance quite unusual to her, she wished them a merry and happy festival. Her aunt and Gretta took her hand most kindly, and they walked together as far as Mrs. Bendler's house. While bidding adieu, Clara said, "I have long intended to come and see you, and if you will permit me, I will come soon." With the last words the tears started to her eyes, and she hurried away.

CHAPTER XI.

ON Sylvester evening, Mrs. Bendler, as usual, had her little walnut-shell boats floating in the basin; but Gretta had no anxiety this year about *her* boat. All was gayety and enjoyment: Fritz read the Bible, and they sang hymns, until the clock struck twelve, when they all knelt down to pray to God to help and guide them in the coming year.

There was another scene at Gunther's. Ever since Christmas he had been in a particularly good temper; and on Sylvester morning he said to Clara: "To-day we must have a grand party. It will be the last Sylvester that we shall ever spend here; and who can tell where we shall spend the next new-year's eve! In some far dis-

tant country very likely, where you will not require to fetch cakes and sugar yourself. But to-day you must go for them!" And putting five dollars upon the table, he said, "Buy every thing that is necessary for a good cold supper, and then be a sensible wife. I do not see why —when I must toil from morning till night—I may not take my pleasure now and then. Is it, then, so very dreadful, if one gets a little elevated at times? Look at the wife of the rent-proprietor: she only laughs when her husband gets tipsy, lets him sleep off the drunken fit, and they get on together as well as before. One need not be a confirmed drunkard; but, on particular occasions, a glass or two more may certainly be allowed."

Clara saw plainly that if she would avoid all scolding or strife, she must agree to these theories—and she was determined to try how fair means would act upon her husband. He might, by degrees, learn to see the crime of drunkenness with her eyes. Besides, her mother was

present at the conversation, and was entirely of the same opinion as her son-in-law. "Clara," she said, "has read too many novels, and has strange notions with regard to life: she thinks that all men ought to be perfect angels, and she herself is very far removed from an angel." Gunther agreed jokingly to this, and they were all in high good humor with each other.

The guests arrived. At first all went on very decently and quietly, but by degrees both men and women became more and more lively, and the new year was ushered in with the most outrageous noise.

Clara alone was silent—all the jests of the others were powerless to rouse her from her melancholy. She told them she did not feel quite well; which excuse was taken, instead of the real one—*disgust* at their coarse vulgarity. She was by nature too refined to be free or comfortable in the midst of this low drinking society. Her mind was still giddy enough for her to enjoy pleasures, but then it must be something more re-

fined than the *bottle:* and, beside all this, the service in St. Stephen's Church, on Christmas-day, had left a serious impression upon her mind. She did not understand it herself—she felt wretched and miserable, and found no happiness in eating and drinking, or in fine clothes. When the rent-proprietor had taken his full allowance of liquor, his wife proposed going away; the others followed their example, and Gunther went to bed to sleep off the effects of his drink. The next morning he arose pale and weak, his hand trembling so much that he could scarcely lift the coffee-cup to his mouth; and yet he tried to persuade his wife of the innocence of such pleasures, and that it depended solely on the women to keep the men to a harmless degree of moderation! Clara was silent: the horrors of the past evening, and the pale, trembling man before her, were dreadful objects of contemplation; and more and more clearly the last Sylvester evening arose to her memory: the lively, innocent conversation — the hymn-singing — Fritz

Buchstein — Bible-reading. What a different sort of a man he is—he whom I then judged *coarse*—to the low, rude fellows who now surround my paths! How comfortable and happily Gretta can live with him—"the home-spun Gretta"—whilst I, in spite of silk cloak, velvet bonnet, etc., must live in continual disgust and fear of my husband. She dreaded the future, for she felt that there was no hope of improvement; and the bitterness of her cup was increased by the feeling, that she alone was to blame for all her misery. How to extricate herself from the net into which she had cast herself, she knew not: she had neither faith nor courage to cast herself upon Him who alone could help her in her trouble. No; she had made her own bed, and all she could do now was to lie down in it.

January passed over very quickly for Clara, in sewing and making preparations for her baby. She had learned one lesson by her work that was entirely new to her, viz., that of quiet industry. She had always loved excitement; now

her thoughts were constantly with the baby she hoped to see dressed in the little garments; and a sweet, quiet joy filled her whole heart.

But she was not to enjoy this peaceful pleasure long; for Günther, in the joyful mood into which he had fallen for some weeks past, drank a bottle of good wine oftener than usual; and in order to be able to get over his fit of drunkenness unobserved, he carried it over to his own house. Sometimes he took his potation quietly, but more frequently with singing and shouting; and Clara had some trouble to quiet him. In this manner the beginning of February passed over; but for eight days Clara had been constantly unwell; her mother had been with her day and night, in order to do the necessary house-work, and at the same time to attend to the drunken man—for which she was much better fitted than her daughter, having had good practice with her own drunken husband; and her feelings had been completely blunted, so that she was always ready to take Günther's

part against her daughter—for which he showed her much gratitude.

On Shrove Tuesday, although Clara was only a little better after her severe illness, Günther had determined to have his boon-companions for a grand carouse. Clara was happy that the women were not invited, as she could shut herself up in her bed-room with her mother, and thus be spared at least the disgusting sight of the drunken men.

And well it was for her not to be present, for the orgies were wild indeed that evening; but her mother had some trouble to quiet her fears, when she heard the loud and angry voices of the men, added to the smashing of plates and glasses: the shouting was no longer that of wild folly, but of ungovernable rage. The two women rushed out of their chamber: two men were going out of the other door: the house-proprietor lay on the floor, and Günther was beating him with his two fists. Clara tried to hold her husband's arm, for the blood was al-

ready flowing over the forehead of the prostrate man; her mother was ready to lend her assistance, and, with the joint aid of the two women, he got out of the door. Now, however, Günther turned his rage upon his wife and mother-in-law; and it was as much as they could do to save themselves in their bed-room. He was not strong enough to burst the lock, and amused himself with breaking all he could lay his hands upon in the sitting-room.

Clara sat weeping, with a bloody nose. Günther's wild blow had just lighted on her face. Her mother silently bathed it for her; this last piece of wickedness she dared not try to extenuate. Yes; she was obliged patiently to listen to her daughter's just reproaches for the manner in which she had always palliated, and in some sort encouraged her husband's faults. In her rage, Clara made many plans for the future. At all events, she would separate from this man, from whose ill-treatment she could never feel secure. She would resume her old trade of

dress-making; she would rather eat bread and salt, etc., etc. At length she allowed herself to be persuaded by her mother, and lay down to rest; for as they heard Günther snoring in the next room, they might count upon a few hours of repose.

The next morning Clara would not even see her husband; but as her mother was determined to remain neutral, she went out, lighted the fire, and made coffee. Günther looked at her with an evil conscience: he had a good idea of the violence he had been guilty of, but would not confess his fault—he found it much easier to shift it on to the shoulders of the two women. For the future, Clara must take care and not put her nose into things which did not concern her, and then she would not come in for any blows: the house-proprietor had treated him most shamefully, and well merited his beating. The mother could not forbear reminding him of Clara's recent illness, and that she had never been accustomed to such treatment. Günther,

however, would not listen to any thing, but persisted that he had acted perfectly right.

Clara heard every word through the open door, and she felt as if her heart would break. With this man she could not possibly live! But how could she break loose from him? She had not a soul in the world to advise or help her! She thought of Aunt Rieka; but had *she* not faithfully warned her before she had taken the fatal step! No; she dared not go to her. Besides, from dread of her husband's anger, she had put off from week to week going to pay the promised visit to her aunt: and now she felt it was too late.

It was a sad time for Clara now. That Günther kept quite out of her sight, was just what she wished; but since Shrove Tuesday, even the few women of her acquaintance had not come back to see her, and she felt herself quite forsaken. And often lately she had been in want of money; but fortunately her mother was always ready to go begging to Günther, so that

they were not in actual want of food. This last blessing Clara's mother took care not to let her forget: "Your husband is rich, therefore, he has his humors, which you must put up with. Your father treated me much worse, and I had often to suffer hunger as well as his hard usage. You, on the contrary, can live well, without any care or anxiety, and need not soil your fingers." Clara replied, "I would rather eat dry bread; yes, even starve, than submit to such treatment, and, above all, lead such a wretched life!" "You alone!" said the mother, "but your child? I know your feelings; I also spoke as you do now; but when you were born and I felt ill and weak—then I had other thoughts." "Yes; the child!" sighed Clara: and that thought alone gave her patience. Where should she go, with the poor little creature? She had hardly been able to support *herself*—how could she nurse the baby, and still sew for it and herself! She swallowed many an insult, and even tried to appear friendly; because she discovered that nothing

was to be done with Günther, except by fair means. And when he came home drunk, beating and scolding every one, she made no change in her manner toward him.

She had been once more at St. Stephen's Church, immediately after the sad affair of Shrove Tuesday; the extraordinary feelings she had had at the Christmas sermon came back with full force to her mind.

But the minister was particularly serious in his discourse this time: he described the awful sufferings endured by our Lord and Savior, in order to save us miserable, wretched sinners, from everlasting death. He then proceeded to describe the condition of an unconverted soul—the constant fears and disquietude in this present life, and the inevitable punishment from the justice of God in the next world. Clara felt so much emotion on hearing these solemn words of warning that many days elapsed before she could calm down her feelings; and she felt so glad, when time and occupation seemed to efface

the remembrance of them, that she had not again visited the church.

Winter passed by, and spring came on with its buds and flowers; but poor Clara did not see much of the revival of nature, for she had never gone to walk in order to enjoy flowers and green fields; and Günther no longer brought her to the fine coffee-gardens—he preferred rushing off alone to his so-called pleasures. All this was different to the life Clara had planned for herself in the days of her romance. But how could it be otherwise? The honeymoon love must soon evaporate if there be no sure foundation of mutual esteem, and respect, for it to rest and expand upon. Real conjugal love must grow up in such a soil; the passion of admiration is mere froth, which the first wind of adversity blows away.

One evening, in the beginning of May, Clara sat by her open window watching the gambols of the children in the street. One of her neighbors was returning from a pleasant walk in the

fields—her two children quite laden with flowers, primroses, tulips, etc., etc. Clara was so much moved at the pretty sight, that she also put on her bonnet and shawl and wandered out of the town.

She wended her way direct to a gardener's, a distant relation of her mother's, whom she had often visited with her Aunt Ricka and Gretta, before she had begun to find her pleasure and satisfaction in concerts and coffee-gardens. She felt a sensation of well-being and happiness at sight of the sweet-smelling flowers and shrubs, which had long been a stranger to her: the little birds hopped and sung in the bushes, and a nightingale poured forth his delicious strains from a neighboring chestnut-tree. "Oh! how lovely is this beautiful world of God's creating!" sighed Clara. "If he could only be *thy* God," said she to herself!

She was just turning into a retired side-path, but was startled out of her way by seeing Fritz Buchstein, with Gretta by his side, sitting quite

confidentially in an arbor. Fritz had his arm round her waist, and she had a wreath of white blossoms in her hair: she looked exactly like a bride.

Then, for the first time, Clara remembered that they were to be married the next day. That moved her beyond measure. She sought a quiet corner in the thicket, and there gave free course to her tears. She did not weep from envy; no, she wept tears of regret and grief over her own sad lot. How happy must Gretta be by the side of an honest, upright man! "Yes; uprightness is superior to the very finest manners," thought she now. "If I could become upright and pious in all my ways, perhaps I should be happier! But how shall I begin? Who will advise me? When I think over that last sermon I feel terrified, wretched and miserable, and yet I cannot forget it; I cannot help myself." She slipped quietly out of the garden; took a branch of hawthorn from the hedge, and returned to her comfortless home in the twilight.

The next day she went early to St. Stephen's Church. This time the minister preached a sermon adapted to the spring, in which he illustrated the beauty of the spring—time of grace in the soul of the believer. Clara was very much comforted and strengthened by this sermon. "The Lord is good and gracious toward all men; perhaps he will have mercy on me, and turn away the misery of my life. He invites all sinners; surely he will not cast me off utterly! But how shall I begin to come to Him? And how shall he help me?" When Clara thought of help, she considered only the outward troubles: she felt that Günther was standing upon the brink of a precipice, and that he would drag her down with himself. Uneasiness about the present, fear for the future, drove her to seek for help; and as she was well aware that she could obtain nothing from men, she was desirous to try what she might gain from heaven. The sermon of to-day gave her new courage; the preacher who had spoken such sweet loving

words, had completely gained her; and her very highest wish now was to go and open her whole soul to him. She knew of no one to whom she could unburthen her mind unless to him; for she had always received the serious speeches and exhortations of her Aunt Rieka with indifference or scorn; and she felt herself quite unable to disclose her sorrows, or confess her faults to this aunt who had foreseen, and faithfully warned her of all.

While the last verse was singing, the congregation had gradually dispersed: a few only had assembled in the choir to see Fritz and Gretta married. Clara also stepped forward: real upright sympathy in Gretta's happiness induced her to assume the part of spectator in the ceremony. Strange thoughts came over her as she stood there. "Where Gretta now stands, I might have stood; and what a husband he will make!" Yes; Clara had already admired him, and thought him too good for Gretta, but in her folly and blindness she had despised him, and

cast back the warm language of his heart with scorn. Now he stood there, looking so handsome, so manly, and so mild! The tears started to Clara's eyes, her heart was moved, and when the minister requested the congregation to pray for the young couple, she folded her hands, and, for the first time in her life, offered up an earnest prayer to God. When Fritz met her friendly sympathizing gaze, a joyful surprise filled his bosom, for though he had devoted his entire heart to Gretta, he felt as if Clara's soul must be united to his:—all the ardent prayers of his youth would not surely be lost: she must be saved—and they would yet praise God together to all eternity, where there would be "neither marrying nor giving in marriage."

Clara was turning in her mind the possibility of making the acquaintance of the minister, and how she would set about it. Her baby was born about the end of June, and she thought the baptism of her little daughter would be a

good opportunity to talk to the minister about the state of her soul.

Günther seemed quite changed in his manner to his wife; she was as beautiful as ever, and the little girl had got her mother's large blue eyes and fine features. He was proud of both, and brought home splendid presents to them, and when they were alone together, he even asked pardon for his past bad conduct, and promised her a golden future; giving her, at the same time, to understand that she would have soon to change her dwelling; and inquired how old the baby must be before it would be able to take a long journey.

Clara might again have indulged in fine dreams for the future, but she had become wise by dear-bought experience; and Günther's eyes were at times so unsteady, his words so mysterious, that she actually felt afraid when he was near.

When baby was five weeks old, it was baptized in St. Stephen's Church. Günther had no-

thing against the proposal; indeed, he scarcely heard what was said when the question was put to him. But he firmly refused to allow Gretta to be godmother—he would not allow Clara to have any thing to do with those people: however, Clara persisted in having her own way with regard to the name, so she called her little daughter Gretta.

On Clara's birthday the little one slept peacefully in his cradle beside the mother. The birthday-table stood before the sofa: Günther had adorned it with flowers and cakes in the morning; and besides that, he had given her thirty dollars, with the injunction to keep them safely, as she would need them soon. Clara had heard this injunction so often, that she paid no further attention to it than putting the money away in her work-box. The twilight was approaching: she sat by the open window; the air was heavy in the room, as it had been a very close day. Her thoughts were very serious: she had become suddenly so much happier than for-

merly—Günther was so much changed—had God indeed heard her prayers? Her heart was turned to thankfulness, and she made the vow, that if God would continue her happiness, she would become religious and steady. Involuntarily, she placed her happiness solely upon outward circumstances.

With much astonishment, she saw Mr. Reinhard and two men come quickly across the street toward her dwelling. Wondering what was to come next, she went to meet them.

"Where is your husband?" asked Mr. Reinhard, hastily.

"I thought he was at the hotel," said Clara, embarrassed, "and have been expecting him every moment. To-day is my birthday," added she, pointing to the gaily-adorned table; "and he intended to take a walk with me."

"The rascal!" grumbled Reinhard; and Clara sank back upon her seat, quite startled. "You must permit me to open the *escritoire*," continued

Reinhard; and commenced trying the keys in the lock.

Clara begged Mr. Reinhard, with tears, to explain to her what had happened; and Mr. Reinhard told her, not very politely, that Günther had swindled him out of at least ten thousand dollars—that he had taken a most shameful advantage of the confidence reposed in him—that he had forged his handwriting, used his seal, passed false notes, and was most probably now on his road to America. Clara, quite overcome with this news, wept aloud. Mrs. Krauter arrived just then, and increased the noise and confusion by her wailing.

They found nothing in the *escritoire*. Clara told them that Günther had burned a number of what he called useless papers very lately.

Whilst many more persons assembled to witness the proceedings of the above-mentioned persons, and the little Gretta had been rudely roused from her slumbers by the noise and con-

fusion, the letter-carrier came with a letter for Clara. Hastily she broke the seal, and read:—

"Dear Clara! I write in great haste. When you receive these lines I shall be very near Hamburg, from whence I start immediately by the steamer for London, and then to America. Pack up your things quickly—no one can dispute your dowry—and come to Hamburg with our little Gretta. In the Suburbs, St. Paul, No. 10, you will meet with a friendly reception upon giving your name—at the same time, learn all particulars; and a comfortable passage to America will be provided for you. I entreat you not to forsake me. I cannot live without you and our child. I shall receive you with open arms, and introduce you into our hotel. There you will live like a princess, and soon forget the beggary which now presses so hard upon you.

"You will come! I doubt not: and remain for ever, your

"Edward Günther."

Clara involuntarily allowed the letter to be

read by Mr. Reinhard. He became more furious when he learned that the deceiver had escaped him, and asked Clara, with bitter words, her opinion of the proposal. She declared that she would rather starve with her child than follow this man. When Mr. Reinhard discovered that Clara was altogether ignorant of the matter, when he saw how much she suffered, he assumed a milder tone toward her; but she was obliged to quit her dwelling, and leave all the furniture behind, because she could not deny that Günther had bought it all. She was only allowed to take away the little bed for her child, her own clothes, and a few small articles.

CHAPTER XII.

CLARA again sat in her mother's little room. The two years she had been absent from it appeared to her like a dream—a dream which had begun in levity and vain-glory, and ended in want and misery. The sultry days were followed by storms, which were now changed to gentle rain; but notwithstanding the rain, the mother had gone out to make some purchases, because her house was altogether empty—for she was in excellent spirits ever since Clara had let her see the thirty dollars in her work-box. She lived only in the present, and said the Lord will provide for the future.

She often had the name of the Lord in her mouth, even though she may not have had Him in her heart.

Clara was in very low spirits. She sat at the window, looking upon the gray wet houses and the falling drops of rain: "What will the neighbors say, when they see you here again, a victim of want and shame?" said she, to herself. "What will Agusta Vogler say, who has often visited me in my nice home, and envied me its splendor and riches? What will Aunt Rieka say, who long ago predicted all these misfortunes? But surely she will be sorry for me? She told my mother she was gratified at my calling the baby Gretta, and pleased to see me in the church."

"Yes, St. Stephen's Church! It has been of no service to me: God has not heard my prayer. He has sent the punishment which I have so well merited; He is a just God!" Clara could not raise her eyes, but her whole life passed before her mind; the two last years seemed a long period.

It was just about this time two years ago, that Fritz Buchstein returned,—when she regarded

him with contempt, and was anxious to obtain the medical student. She knew now that coarse and godless men could act very roughly toward their wives, though their language was very soft and sweet before matrimony. She had the experience that there was no joy in fine clothes, nor an easy life, when the heart is heavy and full of grief. She recalled to mind the life she had led with Madame von Trautstein, and the crimes her levity had caused her to commit; she covered her face with both hands, she felt so full of shame. How differently she now thought about the Count—that light-minded dishonorable man, who had nearly ruined her altogether; yes, she felt as if God alone had kept her from a still deeper fall and outward scandal. She also recalled to mind with what levity she had cast herself into the power of Günther, of whose bad and heartless character she had received timely warning from her aunt. She was foolish enough then to believe that if she had but riches and outward comforts, she would be happy. But

how very miserable and comfortless she had felt herself beside him, even from the first; and had he not now destroyed her future peace and happiness here on earth? But a joyful thought came to her mind—God can still help me! Her aunt had often told her, that present trials and sorrows were no misfortune, because they are very often the means which God takes to make us value and seek true everlasting joy and happiness. She glanced at her sleeping babe, and felt a presentiment of higher joy than earthly pleasures had yet offered to her. "To live to work for that sweet child shall henceforward be my joy and comfort!" O how sweetly it stretched out its little arms, and opened its soft eyes! Clara took it in her bosom, and forgot all her cares: she determined to overcome all shame, and go the very next day to seek work in her old trade as dress-maker: the thirty dollars were to be saved, in order that her child would want for nothing.

But it was ordered otherwise. Clara's delicate

frame had received such a shock that she was unable to leave her bed the next morning; and her disorder was soon discovered to be brain-fever. For days she was insensible: she knew not that her life had been despaired of. At length the crisis was past, and she was again conscious. Aunt Rieka and Gretta cautiously approached her bed: she was too weak to speak; she smiled her thanks to them. Her baby was brought to her: she felt so happy to see it; from day to day she became stronger, and felt as if she was new-born.

And was she not? A time of convalescence is often a time of rich blessing. Aunt Rieka knew this, and took advantage of it: the heart is then tender, and the good seed can take root. Mrs. Bendler spoke words of comfort and encouragement to the invalid, and Clara heard her gladly. She did not reproach her for her former life of levity and sin—no; she was now to live in the present, and for the future. And the minister of St. Stephen's Church came to see

her, as she had told her aunt of her ardent desire to talk to him. Warm and deep were the words of grace and love which he delivered to her from the Lord: they sank deeply into her heart, and in God's own time brought forth their fruit. Clara learned to know her Savior: she felt that, in spite of all her sins and shortcomings, she could go and cast herself and her burthens at his feet: she felt that the world could never offer her any thing comparable to His great love! Sad remembrances of the past would come at times to disturb her peace and joy; but when she saw her aunt and Gretta, only weak mortals like herself, returning all her scorn and levity with love and kindness, she could not help feeling that the great and good Savior was also full of mercy, and that He would receive her: though her sins had been as scarlet, they should be as wool. Yes; she felt that His blood and righteousness were all-sufficient, even for her.

Clara sometimes felt as if she would like to

know if Fritz Buchstein despised her very much; she would have wished to let him see she was really sorry and humbled at having treated him so badly. But she could not ask after him! Gretta told her that he only awaited her permission to come and see her; she had scarcely power to say he would be welcome.

Soon after, Clara was sitting alone with her child; the door opened, and Fritz stepped in. Clara rose up, startled from her seat, but Fritz made her sit down again, and most kindly wished her a good evening. She could not stand his mild sympathizing look: her heart overflowed; she took his hand in both of hers, and wept bitterly. That was too much for Fritz; he turned quickly to the window. The hand which she had watered with her tears he placed next his heart, and prayed God to grant him strength. Then, strong in his God, he sat down beside her, spoke words of comfort, but asked her chiefly about her outward circumstances. Clara feared lest she had shown too much feeling, and with

an effort contrived to suppress all signs of emotion. The little Gretta was a fruitful source of conversation. Her Aunt Rieka and Gretta came in just then, and Clara breathed more freely. Aunt Rieka spoke with Fritz about Clara's wish to have her separation from Günther drawn out at the lawyer's as soon as possible —and this, considering the provocation she had received, could not be difficult. Then Clara talked about her plans: how she would again commence sewing, and, with God's help, provide for herself and her child. With these words she pressed her baby to her heart; but she did not observe how very sadly her aunt's looks rested upon the poor little thing, whose large blue eyes shone so pensively from the pale thin cheeks. The serious illness of the mother had naturally a very bad effect upon the child, and every one saw plainly that it was sinking. Clara alone could not believe her child was in danger.

The next Sabbath she went to St. Stephen's Church for the first time since her illness. Her

heart was full of thankfulness to God, for she could approach the throne of grace in full confidence now. Her wishes and desires were centered in the grace and love of God, not in earthly things—as was formerly the case.

Her first journey to the town was a difficult one. She told no one she was going to Madame von Trautstein; that lady against whom she had sinned most, whose goodness and friendship she had rewarded with deception and ingratitude: her forgiveness she felt she must ask. With a beating heart she ascended the stairs, and rung at the door. The old servant, who had always been friendly to her, gave her courage by the kindness of his manner. While he went to tell his mistress that Clara was there, she stood alone in the ante-room. There was the work-table at the window, with the well-remembered work-basket! As she stood there, so changed, recalling to mind all her vanity and all her idle plans for the future, a blush of shame passed over her features. How quickly had

these mad plans for future greatness been exchanged for real misery! She dreaded the serious words of her old mistress, and yet she longed to unbosom herself to her—to cast herself at her feet.

During this interval, Madame von Trautstein was reasoning with herself whether she would admit Clara or not. She had heard of Clara's misfortunes, and thought she had merited them all, and believed now that nothing but want and beggary had driven her to seek her out at that time. She felt ashamed of this hard thought, however, before the old servant, who had mentioned Clara with so much sympathy, and never seemed to doubt that she would be admitted; so she said, yes.

Clara could scarcely speak at first from fear; she took the old lady's hand and kissed it in silence. Madame von Trautstein said coldly; "I have heard of your misfortunes, and am sorry for you."

"I am not unhappy now, gracious lady," in-

terrupted Clara, modestly, "not nearly so unhappy as I was when in your service." The lady looked surprised, and Clara continued: "I have bitterly repented of my levity, and hope, with the help of God, to become a new creature; and the very first desire of my heart, with regard to my fellow-creatures, was to come and ask your forgiveness for my past conduct; and I hardly dare expect it; for, oh! I was so bad, I even stole from you!"

Clara could not speak farther: the kind old lady was so much moved by this unexpected scene, that her whole manner changed suddenly, and she assured the pale, suffering young woman of her full, heartfelt forgiveness. She conversed farther with Clara—asked her what plans she had for the future; and when she heard that she intended to sew for her support, she provided work for her herself, and offered to recommend her to new customers.

Clara was much moved with this unexpected goodness, and thanked God for it, as an answer

to her prayers; but she said: "Madame von Trautstein, you must first prove my sincerity, before you can trust me to come into your house to work for you."

This sincere repentance made the old lady more friendly, and Clara parted from her full of hope for the future. But God was going to teach her to lean on Him alone—not even to trust to the help of the good and pious: He had still a thorny path to lead her through.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Clara returned home and took her baby from her mother, she observed, for the first time, that it did not look like other children of the same age. A cold shudder passed through her frame as she saw the pale thin cheeks, the large eyes; and, grasping the little thin wasted hand, she gazed beseechingly up to heaven. "No! God will not try me thus —I could never bear this blow. Perhaps He will try my faith: I will never cease to pray for my darling!"

She asked her mother and her aunt if there was danger for the child; and felt a little comforted when they said that it sometimes happened that weak children, if they survived the first year, got on as well as the strong ones afterward.

"Ah!" said she, "I will tend it and care for it so carefully, if God will only bless the means."

But it was a hard trial to her to be obliged to leave her little one to the care of her mother, when she went out to sew. She had, however, no other resource: the thirty dollars were expended, and they had nothing but her hands to depend on for daily bread. She had soon as much work to do as she could manage, and her mother was very happy at that, though the profits only reached from hand to mouth—Mrs. Krauter having never been in the habit of looking farther.

Clara's life was now very uniform. On week-days she sewed in the houses, and went every Sabbath to St. Stephen's Church, spending the rest of the day with her child. One trouble which weighed heavily upon her mind, the legal separation from her wicked husband, God himself had rid her of. The ship in which Günther sailed was lost, and he and his ill-gotten money found one grave in the English Channel. So

she might have lived on without care in her present quiet mode of life, and become every day happier, if she had not been worn with anxiety about the health of her baby. Her faith was still young and weak: she was not able, like Abraham, to offer her heart's treasure willingly —to say, "Lord, here am I!"

It was the first Sunday of Advent. Clara had been early in the church, and had returned quite refreshed from the good and faithful sermon she had heard, to enjoy her Sabbath's repose. Her mother had gone to her Aunt Rieka's, and she sat alone with her sleeping baby upon her knee. The snow fell thickly and fast; Clara felt as if she could see into heaven through the white canopy; her whole heart was filled with a sensation and confidence in God, quite new to her. "O great God," said she; "do thou keep and preserve the present feelings of my heart! I feel that I am thine—that I can give up even my dearest earthly treasure." She looked at her fading baby, but felt a blessed

light in her soul. The little Gretta opened her heavy eyes; her mother pressed her to her heart and sighed: "Oh Lord, do thou give me strength: I am weak, very weak!" She felt that her baby must die, and her heart was ready to bow itself to the will of the most High.

But after these happy Sabbath hours followed many a weary anxious one. Praying, hoping, and various means were tried to save, if possible, the dear child. She believed that her own care and watching were needed, and therefore she did not go out to sew, which made her mother angry; for though Clara tried her best to work at home, yet the old woman soon observed on the coffee that they had no longer so much money. For hours, Clara would carry her sick child in her arms, or sink down with weakness from watching and weeping, quite unable to put in a stitch.

All went on pretty well till about fourteen days before Christmas. They had not been in want of food or any thing else, but the mild

weather suddenly changed to extreme cold, and the want of wood was bitterly felt. Clara did not dare to ask her Aunt Rieka for any help, because she had herself been the cause of her own misfortunes; neither had her mother the courage to go to beg for aid, for her sister had paid her rent for her. So they settled that, for the present, they would help themselves by selling some of Clara's finery, which she would not wear again for any money. Mrs. Krauter was quite contented with this arrangement. She thought that for a few weeks that would suffice —for longer the poor little worm could not live; and then Clara would again be industrious at her needle, and their want would be at an end. The black silk mantle and the velvet bonnet took the lead, and were speedily followed by other trifles, for which, however, they received very little; and as they had to keep up a fire both night and day, beside buying food, medicine, etc., the purse was soon as empty as before, and, the third day after Christmas, Clara stood

in despair before her empty *commode.* She found still a few trifles, which she felt almost ashamed to offer for sale; but her mother returned with a dollar, which she had got for them. The worst feature about selling this finery was, that she had nothing solid left in place of it. A woolen shawl was the only piece of muffling she possessed, and during the mild weather it was quite enough; but now, in the intense cold, she had neither a warm dress nor a mantle, and could scarcely bear to leave the warm room.

But even the room could no longer be kept warm. On Sylvester morning, Mrs. Krauter remained in bed, in order to keep herself from freezing; and Clara went into the wood-cellar to see if she could find even a few chips to make their cup of coffee, and a little food for the baby; but there was not enough to heat the stove, so as to warm the room. Clara never thought about the cold for herself, but the baby must be kept warm: she took her only flannel petticoat,

and made a covering of it for the child; then, wrapping it up still closer in her warm shawl, she walked up and down the cold room with it. In order to have something under her thin muslin dress, she put on the flounced petticoat of her girlish days, which, from washing and wear, had become so thin as to be hardly good enough for lining, and had been cast aside in a corner among rags. She argued with herself whether she would go to her aunt's or not, or rather to Buchstein's; for her aunt had been stopping there for the last eight days, attending Gretta, who had been very ill. At length she resolved to go: the poverty was great; the room became colder and colder; the mother was craving for food, and both she and her child were hungry. If she had but strength to pray! she was weak and faint; she could not raise herself; and bore all this misery as a well-merited punishment.

The north wind blew through her thin clothing, as trembling from cold and weakness, she entered Buchstein's house. Fritz was in the act

of taking from the hand of the apprentice a basket of wood and shavings, which had been gathered in the workshop. Clara looked upon the basket with longing in her eyes. Fritz, who understood every look of Clara's, knew well what she meant. He felt for her; she is in want, thought he; she looks pale and wretched; she has been forgotten.

He led her into the room. Gretta had quitted her bed for the first time, and sat in the arm-chair wrapped up in blankets. Father Buchstein and Aunt Rieka sat beside her, and rejoiced to see her so far restored; but they were not without anxiety, for her cough was very severe, and the symptoms rather alarming. Aunt Rieka was startled on seeing Clara enter the room, looking like a picture of misery and want. Fritz placed a chair near the stove for her, and she sat down, her limbs still trembling with the cold. "How are you?" asked her aunt with anxiety.

"My mother is in bed, and my baby—" Here her feelings choked her utterance.

"Why have you not put on a cloak?" continued her aunt. "How are you dressed?" lifting involuntarily her gown, and the well-known flounced petticoat. "Mercy on me! not more than that. Why have you no flannel petticoat?" said her aunt! Clara covered her face with her hands, and sobbing, said, "I have none! I have nothing! nothing!" Fritz went to the window; he could not restrain his tears. Gretta begged her aunt to get some warm clothing for Clara; but the latter said, weeping bitterly: "Oh, nothing for me; only a little wood and a morsel to eat for my mother and my child!"

Fritz ran out of the room; the basket of wood stood still in its place; all that he could find in the larder he packed into it, and hastened to Clara's house. What a scene he beheld there! empty and cold; the baby crying, the grandmother lamenting! With trembling hands he lighted a fire, put on the kettle, and when Aunt

Rieka, with the now warmly-clad Clara, entered the room, the latter had the comfort of hearing the wood crackling in the stove. She gazed upon him with humility and gratitude; he could not stand that look because his conscience reproached him for having left her in want. True, Gretta had been very ill, and much of his time had been taken up with nursing her, but he did not think of this now—his neglect of Clara and her mother was a burthen on his mind.

Fritz sat quite alone that night to watch in the new year, for his father was now very delicate, and Aunt Rieka quite exhausted with watching Gretta during her illness. The past came vividly before his mind. It was just two years since he had spoken the words of warning to Clara—how all had changed since then! He felt thankful that the Lord had heard his prayers. By the side of his faithful Gretta he had found comfort for all the sorrows of his heart; and even though remembrances of his

youthful love would sometimes return to his mind, they were wholly unaccompanied by painful emotions. Clara had become estranged to the world, and was won for heaven. Fritz prayed earnestly that God would preserve and guide them all in the straight and narrow way that leadeth unto life eternal, and in His own good time unite them in the New Jerusalem.

While Fritz was thus alone with his thoughts, Clara sat in like manner beside the cradle of her sinking child. She felt weak and ill; life was sad to her, and heaven seemed very far off. Her child was her only comfort, and she could scarcely believe that God would take it away from her; yet she felt that she deserved nothing better: her past sinful life lay heavily upon her mind. She fancied that she had been too wicked to dare to hope for a share of her Savior's love; she sank both inwardly and outwardly.

The next morning, notwithstanding the warm room, Mrs. Krauter did not rise, she was really ill. Her sister, Mrs. Bendler, sent a doctor, and

he declared her disease to be a fever. Clara had now double duty to do; for as her Aunt Rieka was obliged to stop by Gretta's sick-bed, she could not give her any assistance. Fritz came now and then, but he was always silent and serious, which Clara accepted as a well-deserved contempt for her; and she had scarcely courage to express her sense of gratitude for the many little acts of care and attention she received at his hand.

At the end of three weeks, the doctor declared Mrs. Krauter out of danger; but the expression of his face on looking at the baby conveyed no hope to Clara's heart—the more she nursed and cared for it, the more dreadful it seemed to her to be forced to separate from it. One evening it would not take the breast, and hung its little head; grief pierced Clara's heart like a sword. She did not know what to do. She ran to Aunt Rieka's—old Benjamin stood at the door—Gretta was most dangerously ill—her aunt could not leave her for a moment. Clara flew then to

Agusta Vogler's. The doctor, when he came, found the baby very ill indeed; but it was just what he had expected. Agusta stopped the night, made tea, heated flannels for the baby, and listened to Clara's complaints. The night was long, thick flakes of snow darkened the air. At last the day appeared. Clara held the dying child upon her knee weeping bitterly; the door opened, and Aunt Rieka stepped in.

"My baby is dying!" cried Clara, in despair.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; His name be praised for ever!" said her aunt, much moved.

"No, no!" exclaimed Clara; and kissed the last breath from the lips of her child.

"Yes, yes!" said her aunt. "Clara, let us pray; we are both childless now,"—tears choked her voice,—"My dear Gretta is gone!"

Clara stared at her. "Yes," continued her aunt; "let us pray to our merciful Father in heaven to give us strength and comfort in our hour of need!"

"The *merciful* God!" moaned Clara; but she refused not to pray—the remembrance of the blessed hours she had already passed at the feet of her Savior flowed like balm over her soul. Yes; she could approach her Father's throne! On the first Sunday of Advent, her baby had lain upon her knee just as pale and weak, and and yet she had then felt as if she could wholly resign her to God. "O Lord, help me!" she cried; and the Lord did help her. Yes; wonderfully, quickly, immediately! the vail was removed from her heart, her fears were passed. She could pray with her aunt, and weep bitter, natural tears, though with resignation to the will of God in her heart.

And these tears flowed frequently, but they softened her sorrow, and she discovered that it was good and merciful of God to afflict her, and thus, through much tribulation, to make her a child of heaven.

CHAPTER XIV.

CLARA'S outward life was soon the same as before the last illness of her child. She again went out to sew, because she had regained her health and strength, and having nothing to bind her to the house, she would not be dependent upon any one for her daily bread. Though her life was outwardly so quiet and uniform, yet her heart was warm and lively: her spirit ascended more and more to heaven, where she believed her baby was with Christ and the holy angels, and heaven came down in blessed peace to her heart. She neither desired, nor hoped for any thing better in this life; and when she spent a quiet Sabbath with her Aunt Rieka, who treated her with love and confidence; or when Fritz came in of an evening

and read to them from the Bible, or some other good book, and talked over what they had read; or when she met an approving sympathizing glance from him—she felt as if she had never deserved such happy days, and prayed God to preserve her in simple faith till her life's end.

The summer passed over, and Sylvester evening came again; Fritz, Clara, and Aunt Rieka sat together; there was neither jesting nor laughing, but all three felt happy in the Lord. Fritz felt all his old affection for Clara return; and though he did not express his feelings in words, he now felt he could think of Clara, as a companion, without danger to his soul. The Lord had put hindrances in his way in order to preserve him pure in the faith of Jesus, and Clara had, through much tribulation, been refined from the dross of this world. In congratulating her, and wishing the blessing of God for her in the new year, the tone of his voice betrayed the feelings of his heart. Oh! what a thrill of joy ran through her soul! She

scarcely dared to look him in the face. She had often prayed God to bless him, and had only desired for herself, that he should not feel angry with her for her former cruel heartless conduct toward him.

Mrs. Krauter had never fully recovered from the severe attack of fever she had had; and after new-year's day, took to her bed, from which she never rose. An inflammation of the lungs carried her speedily from this world of woe.

Clara was now an orphan: and yet not quite; for her aunt took her home to her heart—to her house—and became a true mother to her. When the fresh buds of spring burst forth, Clara sat in Gretta's little room sewing at the open window, with snow-drops blooming beside her. Old Benjamin had reared them for her: yes; his affection for Gretta had been wholly transferred to Clara, and the latter had learned to sing and converse joyfully with the old man. And the starling called out: "Clara, so right!" and she

could now sing with the bullfinch: "Praise the Lord, O my soul!" Fritz labored diligently in his workshop—looked sometimes out of his window—and his heart beat high when he met Clara's clear blue eyes, so bright, so child-like, just as it appeared to him in his dreams, when he was traveling. As spring advanced, Fritz declared his love for Clara.

She is now Mrs. Fritz Buchstein, a comfortable citizen's wife: she is proud and happy in her own rank; wears good strong stockings, with stout leather shoes, and a clean simple dress. She is more beautiful than ever, the joy and blessing of her husband and family. Old father Buchstein sits in his arm-chair with his youngest grandchild upon his knee; and Benjamin leads a fair little Gretta over to Aunt Ricka; while Clara sits sewing under the open workshop-window, and sings, with all the power of her fine voice:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul!"