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# TWO LIFE-PATHS.

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A ROMANCE.

Mundt, Frau Clara (Möller)

BY

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# TWO LIFE-PATHS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### DEATH.

It was a fine, bright winter day. The sun, reflected by the snow in thousands of sparkling brilliants, gave a festive appearance to the streets and squares, surrounding the tops of the tall trees with a dazzling halo.

Sleighs, with smiling dames and gay cavaliers, were rushing in every direction, and under the harmonious tinkling of silver bells the spirited horses yet more proudly curved their noble necks. Lusty boys were hastening toward the city gates for the enjoyment of skating in the open country, while smaller ones were noisily snowballing each other in the streets.

Everywhere joyousness, pleasure, exultation; all cheeks were reddened by either joy or cold; everywhere the sun had thawed the ice-flowers from the windows, in order to send into the dwellings the first though faint greetings of approaching spring.

But through the windows of yonder stately house its rays cannot pass; for those windows are heavily curtained, and they who are within are awaiting, not spring with its new life, but death with its everlasting rest.

The curtains are closely drawn, and in a still dark room is being played the

last act of a tragedy which we call life, rich in the deepest woe, of which man is constantly the struggling and succumbing hero, destiny the port.

In that still chamber penetrates no sound from the outer world, and, if the sad silence is momentarily interrupted, it is by the low groans of a young woman who there, upon silken cushions and a bed of down, feels the hard pressure of life heavy upon a breast which is soon to be covered with lighter earth.

Perhaps life has been less light to her, and she has bowed her head under the burden of the world—bowed, until it was crushed.

Not physical illness alone hath blanched that youthful brow—not approaching death hath kissed the smile from those pale lips. Life had long since prepared the way for sickness and death, had stolen the smile from the lips and the freshness from the cheeks, and death had sent his brother, grief, in advance, to strip the leaves from this flower, that it might be the more easily plucked. Slowly, slowly, had grief plucked off leaf after leaf until nothing remained but a broken heart, prepared for the cold embrace of death as that of its last and only friend.

How many tears have been shed by those eyes which now calmly look death in the face—how wearied of life is that

fair reclining head that in its twentieth warm summer is soon to be consigned to the cold, dark grave!

Her unloosed long black hair floats like a mourning veil over the purple pillows of her couch, and shades the brow of the infant quietly sleeping in the cradle beside the bed of the suffering martyr.

Singular as sad is the spectacle. Two mysteries side by side, the mysteries of life and of death: here a smiling child at the door of life, and there a groaning young woman at the gates of death!

Which of the two is the winner?

Is it the mother who is soon to sink into the embrace of death, or is it the child that, slumbering, stretches forth its arms to lay hold on life?

Death only can solve this mystery, and not until we die can we know whether or not it was worth the pains to live.

As, however, the slumbering child stretched forth its arms, its hands became entangled in the dark hair of its dying mother; it opened its eyes, and smilingly played with the fine raven locks floating around it.

Upon the other side of the bed sat a slumbering maiden, her head reclining upon the arm of the chair; and the night-lamp, which they had forgotten to extinguish, threw its feeble rays upon the youthful brow of one who had watched many nights at the bedside of her friend, and had now for a moment succumbed to excessive fatigue.

Instantly, however, as the invalid murmured the name "Gisela!" the sleeper arose, and with an anxiously affectionate glance bent over her sick friend.

"I am here, Emma," said she, in a sweetly gentle tone, and, opening her eyes, the invalid pored long and with a singular expression upon the features of her friend.

"Gisela," she then almost inaudibly said, "at length, I am dying!"

Oh, what a deep lament, what a despairing woe, lay in the tone with which she pronounced the words "at length;" how much of life-weariness and death-longing in those little words!

Gisela made no answer, but her eyes filled with tears, which, soon trickling down, moistened the face of her friend.

"Ah, you weep, Gisela," said she, with an attempt to smile; "do you weep because I am dying?"

"No, Emma," she softly answered, "I weep because I am to lose you."

"But you will be reconciled to my death, because you love me," whispered Emma, "and you will not be so cruel as to wish me back in life. Oh, my God, life! For three months I have been dying daily, hourly, and yet death came not to set me free! Now, Gisela, now he is here. Now will he withdraw the dark curtain, and let me see him whose name my lips are not permitted to pronounce! At length, I may again call, 'Edgar! Edgar!' and no one will be there to reprove me, for God pardons the sin of love, and He enters not into judgment with a heart broken by affliction."

Emma was silenced by a mortal exhaustion, and her breath came with a rattle from her breast.

Gisela bent over her, wept in silence, thinking that death was coming to draw the last breath of life from that troubled breast—and to impress the seal of eternal silence upon those tremulously-complaining lips.

But Emma once more opened her eyes, which now seemed radiant and bright, and a smile expressive of sweet satisfaction hovered upon her lips. It seemed as if she was already dead, and her liberated spirit had once more returned, in this earthly envelope, to bring peace and blessing.

"Life," said she, with a strong, full voice, "life is a wild, disordered dream, and not until we awaken from its nar-



cotic intoxication, do we really begin to live. But what sorrows and sufferings are caused by this dream! what pains does it not awaken in the breast! Here all is decay and death, all exhales an odor of corruption; but there, above—there, beyond this life—there I see sunny hills and sheltered vales, where no complaint, no cry of anguish, is ever heard. Eternal smiles rest upon the fields, and the spirits of the blessed sweep along with immortal life, beckoning me; and Edgar is there with his arms outspread! Oh, Edgar!—”

And she seemed about to soar up to the realms of light, which were already visible to her internal eye, as she spread out her arms and raised herself up in her bed.

But life still held her bound in its chains, and drew her spirit, which had already spread its wings, back to worldly thoughts and cares. Before Emma could follow her beloved on high, she must first remember that she left her child here below, and with a cry of sorrow she exclaimed: “My child! my poor child!” Then, with calm resolution, she asked: “Gisela, dost thou hear me?”

“I hear!”

“Gisela, come, reach me thy hand, thou, my last, my only friend, and now swear in my hand that thou wilt never desert or forget my child, nor fail to protect her with thy love when danger may threaten her; that thou wilt watch by her cradle when she is sick, and tell her of her mother when she is well! Swear that thou wilt love this child of my sorrows, and make life light to her as far as is in thy power; swear to me that thou wilt ever hereafter be a mother to my daughter!”

And Gisela, more closely pressing the stiffening hand of her friend, said in a firm tone: “I swear it, Emma!”

“Now can I die,” whispered Emma, with a satisfied smile, and long did she

lie without further speech or motion.

She seemed not to hear the opening of the door of the adjoining room, and the cautious entrance of a young man who hesitatingly advanced to her bedside. His visage was pale, and his features labored with deep emotion as his glance fell upon his young dying wife, and he remembered how very much he had once loved her, and that not death but life had divided them.

Gisela looked anxiously and searchingly into his agitated face, and then in a low tone said: “Now, only now, let charity soften your heart, and remember the time when you loved Emma. Let there now be nothing in your heart but pardon and mildness!”

“So is it with me,” answered he, and Emma, opening her eyes, calmly said: “Farewell, Conrad! thou hast forgiven me, and I thank thee. Love my daughter, and be a father to her, for I tell thee she is thy child!”

She sank back and groaned aloud.

A deep stillness followed. Gisela and Conrad stood by the death-bed, listening with suppressed breaths to the constantly fainter sighings of the dying one; the expiring lamp occasionally flashed up, and then threw long dark shadows; while the sun, penetrating through a slight opening in the window curtain, threw a ray across the room and over the bed of the invalid, casting a bright light upon her poor reclining head.

How awful was this unbroken stillness, this long pause of silence, interrupted only by the sputtering of the expiring lamp! But soon simultaneous and mingled sounds were heard. The child, which had been playing with the dying mother's hair, growing more vivacious, now laughed and screamed out with joy, while at the same time were heard the louder groans and death-rattle in the mother's throat, and thus

did the latter expire amid the joyous shouts of the child.

Gisela stood long at the bed of death; she meditated upon that young and prematurely broken life; she recalled to mind all the precious hours she had passed with this her dearest friend; she thought of all the sorrows Emma had experienced, and of the loneliness which was to be her own future lot, and she said to herself: "Has life nothing to give me but death? Am I only to see the successive withering of all the flowers of my existence, and the shattering of all my hopes and wishes against the crags and in the abysses of the world?"

A hand lightly laid upon her shoulder aroused her from her sad meditations.

It was Conrad von Serming, the husband of her deceased friend, who met her first glance with a look of affectionate anxiety. "You look pale and suffering, dearest Gisela," said he, with an appearance of sympathy—"you need rest. Three successive nights have you watched by this death-bed; now must you think no more of the dead, but of the living; you must spare yourself for your friends. My carriage has been in readiness for an hour, that I might, as soon as the death occurred, announce the event to the court: will you allow me first to set you down at your own door?"

"You go yourself to the court?" asked Gisela in a reproachful tone. "How cold must be the heart when the head can be occupied by these trifling affairs of etiquette!"

Then bent she over the deceased, kissed her lips, and with a light, careful hand, as if fearing to disturb their slumber, closed the great eyes whose fire was forever extinguished, while her own were streaming.

"Farewell, Emma; farewell," murmured she, "until we meet again in another world!"

Then, arising and drying her tears, with the exercise of a strong will she controlled her emotion.

"Let us go, Herr von Serming," she calmly said, wrapping her shawl around her fair form; "let us go, we are superfluous here, where death has assumed his reign!"

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE SISTERS.

"ONE request," said Gisela, earnestly, as the carriage stopped at her door, and Conrad was hastening to assist her in alighting; "one request! Send Emma's daughter every day to me. Let me be instantly informed of any accident that may happen to her. I have promised to watch over the child as a mother."

"Ah, you would, then, be the mother of my child!" whispered Conrad, regarding her with an imploring expression of the eyes.

Gisela met his glance with a proud, calm, and almost scornful coldness; but, making no answer, she silently bowed and entered the house.

Thoughtfully she ascended the rich stairs, and passed through the ante-room on her way to her own chamber, where a door was opened and presented a tall feminine form to her view.

"Are you at length here, Gisela?" said she, in a vehement and unfriendly tone. "Are you pleased again to return, after an absence of three days and nights?"

"Emma is dead," said Gisela, earnestly, "and therefore I am enabled to return; and, moreover, I have no fear that you have missed me, sister!"

"So, Emma is dead," fretfully answered the dame; "and this alone is the reason why at last you do what decency and propriety long since required—why you return to the house of your sister; were Emma yet living, you

would, perhaps, have remained with her three more nights!"

"Certainly," calmly replied Gisela, "certainly I should, Judith; for not only my heart but my duty would have required it."

"Your first and only duty is, to strictly conform yourself to the laws of propriety," answered Judith, "and not so adventurously challenge and brave public opinion."

"Oh, the opinion of the world!" said Gisela, contemptuously; "I fear not the world, and shall never bow to its tyrannical laws."

She had followed her sister into the parlor, and sunk exhausted upon a seat, while Judith hastily paced up and down the room.

"Oh, this contempt for the world will be your ruin, Gisela," said she, with vehemence, "for the world never pardons those who disdain it, and upon those who deem its weight light, it hangs so heavily that they are eventually crushed by the burden. The opinion of the world is the Atlas that our whole being bears upon its shoulders, and which causes us to rise or fall."

"And this gigantic Atlas is no shrewder than his elder brother," said Gisela, with a smile; "both suffer themselves to be deceived by flattering speeches."

"You think so?" asked the sister, with a slight blush, examining her sister with searching glances, as if she would read her inmost thoughts in the expression of her face; "and where, Gisela, comes to you this singular wisdom—to you, who have lived scarcely a year in this world?"

"Perhaps it is precisely therefore," said Gisela, with vivacity, "perhaps it is precisely because I have grown up far from the world, in silent solitude, that I view this world with impartial and undazzled eyes, and become con-

scious of its faults and deficiencies. You, who have always lived and maintained your position in it, you cannot see the defects of your great world, for custom has dulled your glance, and you deem great and beautiful that which appears to me trifling and insignificant. Perhaps I am in the wrong, perhaps you. All must follow their own convictions—I mine, you yours."

"That shall you not," violently exclaimed Judith; "what I precisely demand of you is, that you subordinate your own will, and submit yourself to habits and modes of action established by custom and sanctioned by the general notions of propriety; that you conform to the laws of society, of the world!"

"Never!" cried Gisela, with glowing cheeks; "I tell you, sister, that this can never be. I cannot bow to that which I despise!"

"My God! and what, then, do you respect, if you despise the world?" scornfully demanded Judith.

"Myself, sister," emphatically responded Gisela. "I will do only that which seems to me to be right, and I will follow only the counsels or warnings of the internal voice of my own breast."

"And are you so sure that that voice will always guide you aright?" petulantly demanded the sister; "do you consider your own convictions so infallible that you will be certain of choosing the right?"

"It is, indeed, easier and less troublesome, my sister," calmly replied Gisela, "easier and less troublesome to follow the convictions of others than to choose and act for one's self, but the easiest and most convenient is not always the best. And how much dissimulation, how much falsehood, is required for the utilizing of this horror, which you call the opinion of the world! How often must you smile when you would frown,

frown when you would smile! How often must you cover your heart with a veil, because it is not allowable to show that a heart beats in your bosom! How often envelop your soul in an inexpressive smile, and conceal your thoughts under fine-sounding, meaningless words, that no one may divine them! Oh, my God, how much art does it not require to remain sacred and unassailed in this your world! I, however, Judith, can never learn this art. A child of Nature, as I am, I cannot comprehend your forms and artifices, nor can I draw such a veil over my face as that it shall cease to mirror forth my soul. I must be left free, for the fetters of your so-called decency and propriety would crush my whole being, as confinement kills the lark. I must have the liberty and power to be true; my thoughts must be legible upon my features, and I shall never attempt to conceal them, as truth is the first law of my nature, and nothing is more hateful to me than hypocrisy."

"Very well," impatiently interposed Judith, "whatever may be your convictions, as your elder sister, who stands to you in the place of a mother, who have received you under my roof, I am justified in demanding that you at least, out of gratitude to me, comply with my just requirements, and avoid all that is by the world considered scandalous. Is it not, indeed, scandalous to remain whole days and nights in the house of a man whom all the world knows to be paying court to you?"

"I thought not of being in his house, but only by the death-bed of my friend."

"But the world will think of it," exclaimed Judith, with emphasis.

"So may it," calmly replied Gisela, "and may at the same time remember that they only fear not the world who have nothing to conceal, and that one is seldom guilty who dis-

dains to make a shield of appearances."

Judith seemed for the moment to be somewhat confused, and again her eyes rested searchingly upon the features of her sister. Gisela, without remarking it, unconstrainedly proceeded: "And then, Judith, if I am censured by the world, are you not there to defend me—you, who are called a pattern of all the virtues?"

"But people will become perplexed and even doubt me," said Judith, angrily, "if you thus continue compromising both yourself and me. Promise me, at least, Gisela, in future to be more considerate and watchful over yourself."

"I can promise nothing," said she, with a slight shake of her head; "I can make no promise which I am not sure I can keep. Could Emma again open her weary eyes and call for me, I would hasten to her bedside, though the whole world should arise to hold me back!"

"Horrible!" exclaimed the enraged Judith.

"Emma was my friend," calmly continued Gisela, "and true friends are so rare, that every minute passed by the side of one may be considered a gain for life. Oh, my poor friend, by whom was her heart prematurely broken but by the world—this hard, suspicious, cruel world, which I from the bottom of my heart abhor!"

"Go, then, into a nunnery," responded Judith.

"No, I will live and enjoy life, but in my own way," said Gisela.

A visitor was now announced, and Gisela gladly retired to her own room.

"Well for me; here it is solitary and still," said she, sinking down exhausted; "into this room, at least, they cannot follow me with their miserable fears and anxieties."



## CHAPTER III.

## BARONESS JUDITH.

BARONESS JUDITH was Gisela's only sister; and more, she was her only relation. Fate had here bound together two feminine beings, whose ways had in other respects taken entirely opposite directions, and whose inclinations were different and conflicting.

Different in age, different in character and mental organization, different in all their thoughts and wishes, there was nothing to bind these dissimilar beings to each other, nothing but this outward connecting link of accidental relationship, which seldom, and only in the happiest cases, is any thing more than a strait-jacket, which, forcibly suppressing the cry of indignation, anger, hatred, or indifference, compels us to make a mask of our faces, so that they may express nothing but love and kindness. For the world pronounces it a crime not to love the brother or sister whom a blind destiny has placed at one's side.

It was the tyranny of relationship which bound Judith and Gisela together, constraining them to love. The children of one father, one mother, and one love, yet this was the only thing they possessed in common.

Not far from the small capital city (capital of a small German principality) in which they now dwelt, at the charming country-seat of their parents, had both children passed the first days of their childhood, but not together—the one after the other, as Judith was about ten years old when Gisela was born, and consequently they had no joint remembrances of joyful childish days and happy childhood's plays.

A few years after Gisela's birth, her father, the Baron von Waidman, had died, leaving his pecuniary affairs in a state of embarrassment, which was the

more terrible to his widow, as she had never had the least fear or suspicion of such a misfortune. The richly and most tastefully furnished villa must be sold and quitted, as well as the charming and splendid park attached to it.

The equipages, the servants, the rich liveries, all disappeared; and, accompanied by her two children, Baroness Waidman retired to a small, solitary hunting-seat in the forest, which was all that remained to her, with the exception of a small capital, barely sufficient for a very modest support.

This change was the first life-sorrow of the then twelve-years-old Judith. She had not wept at her father's death, for, though she had feared, she had never loved him; her heart had remained unaffected at taking leave of the beautiful garden, of places that had witnessed her childish plays and joys, of the servants who left with tears the house in which she, thanks to the mild and affectionate rule of the baroness, had known nothing but happiness. But when the stately equipages were taken away, when the costly furniture was sold, then the inconsolable Judith threw herself, weeping, into her mother's arms.

"Oh," said she, sobbing and trembling with grief, "from this time must we also, like the commonest peasant girls, go on foot through the streets, and like them humbly step aside whenever an equipage approaches."

In vain were all the mother's kind words of consolation; Judith's heart remained insensible to the evidences of maternal love and sympathy; and if she afterward attained to sufficient self-control not to break out in loud complaints, it was less from a desire to spare her unhappy mother, than from an innate pride which forbade complaining where complaints were fruitless.

Judith learned to be silent, but her

trouble, denied egress, worked inwardly, and like a raging fire destroyed there the last blossoms of her childhood and youthful freshness. Judith had suddenly grown and ripened; despite her twelve years, she fled all childish plays and pleasures, and the cheerful laugh of the two-years-old Gisela roused in her a secret aversion to the child whose clear eyes looked so cheerfully and happily into the world, comprehending nothing of what it had lost.

Judith, on the contrary, comprehended this loss better and better, and every passing day increased the bitterness in her heart.

Thus these years passed slowly over her head; she had ceased to be a child; she had ripened into the young maiden, but her cheeks lacked the rosy hue of youth, her lips the young maiden's winning gentle smile; they were often closely pressed together, as if she would forcibly repress some cry of anger or repugnance; her cheeks were of a transparent paleness, and upon her high forehead dwelt only ill-humor and pride.

She had learned to utter no words on the subject of her cares, but her pallid brow spoke for her, and, at every new deprivation, which Judith resented as a "humiliation," on every occasion that reminded her of her poverty and necessities, her eyes flashed with rage and wounded pride.

Did her gentle and devoted mother occasionally seek to soothe the sorrows of her young daughter, and soften her heart to milder feelings, those attempts only caused Judith to withdraw more and more her affection from her suffering mother, whom she accused of inability to comprehend her daughter's noble regrets, and of having a proper sense of her deep and unjust mortification.

Wealth and consequence was what

Judith called honor, and she comprehended neither the noble resignation of her mother nor the childish laugh of her sister. Oh, how often was her heart wounded by the jubilant laughter of the child, and how often did she flee from her innocent gayety to the silence of her little chamber, or to the solitude of the forest, throwing herself down under the tall trees, and, amid their rustling, finally giving words to her repressed rage, breaking out into bitter curses and complaints of her destiny!

But, in moments of less excitement, there were other feelings that enticed Judith into the stillness and silence of the forest. How delightful it was to dream in this forest privacy, and accompany the rustling and whispering of the trees with the secret song of her heart!

Judith, also, had her youthful dreams, but these all referred to the great world, and if, with a beating heart and flashing eye, she thought of the husband whom the future was to bring to her, she never painted him in those dazzling colors of light and beauty with which young maidens are accustomed to clothe their "ideal;" she dreamed not of the noble qualities, of the high virtues, of the youth and beauty, he must possess; she blushed not in youthful longing and desire for love, but she said with a proud smile: "Let him be as he may, let him be deformed and hateful—if only he be rich and respectable! If he be old, so much the better; he will not expect me to love him, and I shall be spared the necessity for hypocrisy; he may be as old and hateful as he will, if he has but rank and wealth, and can introduce me into the brilliant and beautiful world!"

And at the thought of this beautiful world—by which Judith meant only the great world of fashion—at this thought a joyful trembling thrilled the young maiden's stately form, and flushed her



pale cheeks; her lips smiled, as splendid visions of the future warmed her soul. She saw herself in her own elegant saloon, in a brilliant toilet, surrounded by humble adorers of the highest rank; she saw the eyes of the gentlemen resting admiringly upon her, saw the ill-concealed envy and rage of her rivals. The present, with its deprivations, was forgotten, and not until she was startled by the loud cry of joy from her own lips, did she awake from her blessed dream, and shudder at the reflection that it was not reality.

To make these dreams a reality was what now incessantly occupied Judith's thoughts, what deprived her youth of gayety and her lips of smiles. That the future would shape itself according to her wishes, seemed to her indubitably certain, and she glowed with the desire to convert this future into the present. Every day she asked herself, "When, at length, will come the man who is to bring me wealth and splendor?" That he would finally come, she never doubted.

It was perhaps her strong will that compelled Fate to obey and serve her, as the firm glance of man subdues the lion, so that he crouches at the feet of his *dompneur*.

She had not yet attained her eighteenth year, when an accident made her acquainted with the rich old court-marshal of the neighboring capital. The cool freshness of the forest had enticed the old gentleman to leave his carriage for the purpose of wandering through the wood on foot. Judith lay under an oak, absorbed in her dreams of the future, as she saw the old gentleman, his breast covered with stars and crosses, slowly approaching her. Instantly she exclaimed: "That is he—that is my destined husband!" Seeming, however, not to notice the court-marshal, she remained reclining upon the grass, dreamily gazing into the

clouds above. How often had she studied this attitude when fantastically imagining that her future husband might thus see her for the first time! His coming could never take her by surprise; she was always prepared, always in armor, always ready to wound her adversary with her fatal glances.

Like the bold and terrible warrior of the olden times, she never laid aside her harness or her weapons, that she might never be caught unprepared by an enemy.

Now that he was finally there, her future husband, she had so long expected him, she had felt so sure of his coming, that was the reason why she could remain so tranquil; she glanced upward to the heavens without one single nervous movement of the eyelids, upon her lips played the exact smile she had practised for the occasion, and the regularity of her respiration was undisturbed.

And a few steps from her, half concealed by the foliage, that he might not disturb the fair dreamer, stood the old court-marshal, examining the reclining fair one through his golden lorgnette, enraptured at the splendor of her beauty.

Moreover, the trees rustled, and there was a whispering of the branches in which gay birds were twittering, and through which the sun was here and there peering, strewing points of light that deepened the surrounding shades.

Forest and silence encompassed them, and as the huntsman concealed behind a tree observes every motion of his unsuspecting prey, so stood the old marshal, while Judith, slender and graceful as a roe, seemed wholly unconscious of the intruder's presence.

But this scene continuing too long, she hastened to end it. Her eyes changed their direction, and she seemed now, for the first time, to perceive the lurker.

She was startled, and a slight cry of alarm escaped her lips. Then sprang she up as if to flee.

But the enraptured old man intercepted her with the most humble apologies for his intrusion. He gave his name, and pleaded his age as a guaranty for Judith's safety.

"I shall be looked upon as your great-grandfather," he smilingly said, and Judith shook her head in denial of the proposition. That flattered the old courtier; and as the maiden, in spite of his age, seemed to fear and flee him, he grew proud at the thought that he might yet be dangerous, notwithstanding his white hairs.

He begged the favor of at least being allowed to accompany Judith to her dwelling, and, as it was granted, they both slowly walked forward. But it lay not in Judith's plan to end this *tête-à-tête* so suddenly. While giving herself the appearance of anxiously hastening toward the house, she led him through the wood by circuitous paths, endeavoring by lively and spirited conversation to make him forget his fatigue and exhaustion.

The acquaintance was thus commenced, and the shrewd Judith soon drew the threads of her web constantly thicker and closer around the old gentleman: she flattered his vanity, she excited him by her speaking glances, she sighed when he went, she trembled when he took her hand, and cast down her eyes when he ventured to express his evident admiration of her.

Thanks to all these cunningly-employed means, Judith in the course of a few short weeks became the promised bride of the noble court-marshal, who thought with pride of the conquest he had made, while he himself was the conquered party.

Judith exulted with pride and joy, and although she abhorred her old dotting betrothed, this cast not the least

shadow upon her sun-bright future, and gave her no uneasiness.

Her end was attained—what cared she by what means?

After a few months she became the wife of the court-marshal, the Baron von Wimprecht, and, as she left the church at the side of her husband and beheld the elegant travelling-carriage with four splendid horses, and the arms of the noble baron emblazoned on the panels, then trembled the hand which had not shaken when laid in that of the graybeard at the altar.

She tearlessly took leave of her mother and sister; her heart beat with joy, as now at length the chains of poverty had fallen off, and the world was to unfold before her in all its splendor.

In conformity to custom, the married pair were to make an extensive tour before taking up their permanent residence in the little capital of W—, and the prince had, in the most friendly manner, granted to his marshal a three-years' leave of absence. Not before that time did Judith wish to be presented to the court circle, as her sharp understanding told her that she yet failed in knowledge of the world, and in the many accomplishments necessary to her taking that place in fashionable society to which she aspired.

This thought replaced with her all higher interest for scientific effort; she desired to learn, solely that she might at a later period shine among the learned. Paris and Rome, London and Vienna, were visited by the newly-married pair, and everywhere did Judith zealously strive to give to her mind a clearer conception of art and science. She learned of the pictures and statues she admired in the libraries and museums; she occupied herself with the modern languages, and when these were acquired, she turned to the ancient; it was soon her pride to be

able to read Horace and Virgil in the original, and she felt herself recompensed for all her pains when some celebrated scholar admired and praised her deep erudition—an erudition most painfully acquired.

In Rome, where she protracted her stay, she soon attained the triumph of seeing the most noted men collected, of hearing herself designated by them as “the learned lady,” by the painters as “the female artist,” and by all her admirers as “the finest woman in the world.”

The court-marshal pardoned the first two classes for their admiration of his wife, but the third he hated from the bottom of his soul, and often with jealous vehemence demanded of his wife that she should banish them from her saloon. But with this demand, Judith was not in the least disposed to comply; and when her husband made her severe reproaches, and accused her of an intrigue with the handsome Count Oscar, she coolly asked him if he did not find it natural that her heart should at length awake to love!

“Then you love not me?” asked the husband, trembling with mortification and anger; “you have, then, never loved me, not even in the moment when you tremblingly and blushingly owned your love?”

“And how could you have believed, my dear baron,” calmly replied Judith, “how could you have believed that I was in earnest? How could you have supposed such an unnatural thing possible? An innocent young maiden of eighteen love an old, decrepit gray-beard! Think better of me, baron, and agree with me that my heart is at least too sound thus to outrage the laws of Nature.”

“My God! and you dare say all this to me?” asked the baron, in a whining tone.

“Why should I not dare it?” asked

Judith, with a contemptuous smile at his impotent anger. “Why should I not to you, my nearest friend, most intimately connected with me—why should I not to you, unveil my most secret thoughts, and every movement of my heart? Ah, we must in this world use so much hypocrisy and dissimulation, that we should be duly thankful when once allowed to speak and hear the truth.”

At the same time she assumed such a sad and complaining mien, that the baron, agitated by the effrontery and irony of his wife, could find no words for the expression of his rage, and remained clinging convulsively to the arm-chair in which his gout held him a prisoner.

Judith laughed heartily at his strange and almost ludicrous movements, and asked with apparent sympathy: “But you suffer, my dear baron. My God, you make me anxious, as at your advanced age the least excitement is dangerous, and may become mortal.”

“Torment me no longer, Judith,” cried the baron, beside himself; “you know my horror of death, and you would kill me, Judith. Do you desire my death?”

“Why should I desire it?” said she, with icy coldness. “On the contrary, it is quite convenient to have an infirm old husband, who is a sort of virtue-loak to a handsome young wife. You must know, my dear friend, I thought of that when I gave you my hand, and for that reason I overcame the repugnance I naturally felt at becoming your wife.”

“It is well!” cried the baron; “you shall no longer be compelled to struggle against this repugnance. I will gladly aid you to obtain a separation; yes, I will institute the necessary proceedings this very day.”

“You will do that?” said Judith, approaching and regarding him with flashing eyes. “You will dare to seek a

separation from me? You will expose yourself to the laughter of the court and the mockery of the whole world? you will betray to the world that you were an old fool of a coxcomb, who thought it possible to obtain the love of a young maiden, and has now come to the knowledge that she hates and despises him? You would die alone and unwept, surrounded by mercenary servants, who would slowly poison, yea, even perhaps murder you, after having stolen all you possessed?"

Judith had here with cruel cunning conjured up against the baron his greatest cares and fears and she now smiled at seeing him writhing with frightful torments and groaning in horrible anguish.

"You would repudiate the only heart honestly disposed toward you?" she continued, in a milder tone and with a trembling voice. You would separate from the only being on earth who feels any sympathy for you, who would stand by your death-bed and close your eyes with tears of real feeling?"

The baron groaned aloud and imploringly stretched forth his hands, as if begging of Judith to have mercy and spare him.

She, however, mercilessly continued: "Well, then, be it so! I will leave you. I will no longer burden you with my presence. I will, poor as I was, return to the solitude and peace of my mother's house, and you shall never again hear of the poor repudiated Judith!"

Here her voice seemed to be stifled by her tears, and with a deep sigh she turned toward the door.

Judith knew her husband; she knew the omnipotent power his foolish passion gave her over him; she knew that she could and must dare all, in order to carry her point; and she had to-day, with evident intention, brought about this scene, that she might place her re-

lations with her husband on the footing she desired. She was, in fact, tired of hypocritically playing the tender and loving wife, which she knew so well how to carry out before the world, and which she was obliged to continue in the privacy of the domestic fireside, in order to convince the baron himself of her affection.

As she now turned to the door, the baron, with terror and anguish, exclaimed:

"Judith, you would leave me?" and, finding the power to rise from his chair, he dragged himself to her feet. "Judith," he repeated, clasping her hand and attempting to withdraw her from the door, "Judith, you must not, shall not go. You are my wife, and I as husband command you not to leave me!"

"Must I not go, when you have repudiated me?" she sobbingly asked.

"Stay, stay, my Judith," he implored. "I was distracted when I said that. Ah! you well know that I cannot part with you; you well know that a separation from you would be my death; for you know, Judith, that I adore you, that every glance from you transports me with joy, that I would rather be ill-treated by you than not see you at all. Judith, Judith, you know that I cannot live without you!"

And the baron, forgetting his age and his gout, sank upon his knees before his wife, who looked down upon him with a cruel smile.

He then began to whimper and sob from excess of physical pain, and he writhed in horrible torment at his wife's feet. Judith regarded his sufferings with a derisive smile, and waited for him to beg, in every tone of agony, before she offered him her hand to assist him in rising and regaining his arm-chair.

"You now know," said she, with a calm earnestness, "to what it leads when you seek a quarrel with me; and



I advise you in future to avoid it, as every such agitation brings you some steps nearer your death."

"Oh, speak not of death," whimpered the baron; "say, only, that you will remain, that you will not leave me!"

"Well, then, I will remain, but only on conditions," said Judith, arranging and smoothing his pillow, by way of showing him how necessary she was to him.

"Make what conditions you please—I will agree to them all," cried the baron.

"Well, then, let our unnatural relations cease in reality, not in appearance, before the world. But in our domestic life, in the seclusion of our own home, you will no longer claim of me the tenderness of a wife, and I shall no longer have the torment of feigning sentiments it is impossible for me to feel. We shall both be the gainers by this; for you, who will lose an unloving wife, will gain an affectionate daughter, who will reverence and cherish you as such, and whose warmest wish will be to prolong your days by her cares and attentions; and I, instead of a hated husband, shall gain a father, to whom I can unreservedly confide every thought, every emotion, who will advise and protect me in cases where a jealous husband would only storm and rage. And, to give you a proof of my confidence, I freely acknowledge to you that I really love Count Oscar, and am loved by him in return."

The old baron writhed in his chair as if an adder had stung him. Judith continued: "I place this my love under your protection, my friend and father; you will advise me how I can best conceal from the evil, calumnious world this delicate affair, which is much too sacred to be defiled by the slanderous tongues of men. You will allow me to receive his letters under your address,

and to send him mine in your name. You will, further, allow me to receive him here in your room, and you will have the kindness to remain in the adjoining cabinet when he is with me, until I request your presence."

"Too much—that is carrying the matter too far!" groaned the baron.

"Nothing is too much, to keep my reputation pure and unspotted in the eyes of the world, and you will aid me to preserve the name of a virtuous woman. For it is my highest pride to be considered that great rarity, a virtuous though beautiful woman, and the chaste wife of an old, gouty, gray-haired man. This, I am determined, shall be believed of me; and that which shall excite the impotent rage of all the women who envy me for my personal beauty and mental superiority, is, that they find my reputation pure and unsullied, and that their poisoned whisperings of detraction rebound from my virtue like an arrow from an impenetrable panoply. I will not be simply loved and admired, I will also be envied. You see, my father, I am as open-hearted as it is possible for a daughter to be toward a father whom she loves and trusts. And I beg of you never to withhold from me your counsels, and that you will not neglect to warn me whenever my passion for Oscar may render me careless of appearances. And I, in return," she continued, without noticing her husband's heavy sighs—"and I, in return, will always, before the world, remain your most affectionate wife; on my arm shall you enter all social circles, and my hand shall always be ready to lead and sustain you, my lips always have a smile and a kind word for you.—But, baron, you sigh so deeply! Do you feel pain? Shall I place this cushion under your afflicted foot?"

From this day forward, Judith's matrimonial relations took the form she

wished. The weak old man, conquered by a passion that rendered him deaf to all the requirements of honor, and constantly fearing that, on the slightest occasion, Judith would leave him forever, dared not to speak or act against her wishes or commands, and became the submissive slave of his handsome wife—the complaisant abettor of her intrigue with Count Oscar.

No one dreamed that the beautiful and virtuous Baroness Judith daily received her lover in the apartments of her husband, and her reputation for virtuous pride remained unassailable.

However great the delight of the count, at having conquered this chaste virtue; moved this cold, pure heart to love, and constrained this proud soul to yield against her will, he took all possible pains to reward the baroness for the sacrifice she had made for him, by the most prudent foresight and the greatest reverence before the world.

With what veneration did he speak of her, with what diffident and devotional respect did he meet her in society, in return for one of those rapturous and intoxicating hours with which his discretion was rewarded! Judith, the beautiful, the celebrated, the virtuous Judith, had, with tears, with trembling, with blushes, confessed that she loved him, that for him the ice of her heart had for the first time melted, and the overjoyed Count Oscar believed in the sweet fable of a first love. For, with Judith, it was nothing but a fable, a charming fairy-dream, which occupied and entertained her for a time, which afforded her the pleasure of mystifying the world, and constrained her to constant mental exertion for the invention of new means for deceiving society and preserving her secret.—Judith was incapable of love; her heart remained cold and unruffled as her soul; she was free from that sweet and rapturous feeling, from that enthusiastic

self-sacrificing and glow that usually bind even the most abandoned woman to the man she loves.

Judith could be taken unawares by nothing, not even by a passion; distrustful and inclined to intrigue as she was, she could not believe in the sincerity of another. With searching, distrustful eyes, step by step, did she follow the count's love for her, weighing his words, watching his glances, comparing them with those of previous days, and, long before Count Oscar suspected the possibility of a change in his feelings, Judith discovered, by isolated little unmistakable signs, that his love for her was on the wane.

Judith had never believed in the fable of an eternal, unconquerable love, and therefore was not surprised at her lover's fickleness, and much less did it cause her pain.

She also had found this long-enduring connection a burden and oppression, and the protestations of the handsome count tedious and wearisome. If, however, she continued the rôle of a glowing, enthusiastic lover, it was because Judith feared a disruption originating with herself: a dismissed lover might easily become her enemy, and, as such, betray secrets hazardous to her reputation.

Judith was too prudent to incur such risk. As soon as she saw with pleasure that Oscar's love was on the decline, she seemed to double her passion for him; never had she been so full of fiery adoration, of self-sacrificing tenderness.

But what Count Oscar had once deemed a blessedness, now seemed a burden; and not without a sneering smile did Judith perceive the pains he took to conceal the *ennui* caused him by her dithyrambic demonstrations of tenderness. Her watchful eye had long since discovered the object of the count's new inclination, and she took active measures to bring him into her



presence: she made friends with the lady, invited her to her house, often left them alone together, and, while seeming to redouble her love for the count, he was sighing over her artless confidence.

Affairs, meanwhile, took their usual course. Count Oscar had sighed long enough before the fair Adelaide to venture to declare his love, and to hear from her lips the blissful confession of its return. She was not only young and fair, but also rich and unmarried; so that there was nothing to oppose the count's wish to make her his wife, but his relations with Judith.

Count Oscar came to a bold, despairing determination—he would tell the truth to his mistress. She met him more than half-way—without reproaches, but with an expression of the deepest sorrow, she said to him that he no longer loved her, that he had given his heart to another; with streaming tears she intimated her willingness to make a sacrifice of her own happiness to her lover; and the count, deeply moved by the noble generosity of this sublime woman, swore to her eternal gratitude and never-wavering friendship.

Judith had gained her ends: she had lost a lover, but found in him a friend who not only would never betray her earlier relations with him, but would honor and respect her, and ever be ready to defend her in case she was assailed. She felt proud and happy at her success, and soon announced to her feeble husband the secret of a second love.

Meanwhile the court-marshal's already once prolonged leave of absence had run out; he had looked with impatient longing for this event; it seemed to him that a return to his accustomed duties and occupations would bring him a new happiness—that Judith, in the small, quiet city would again love him, if only because no other

nourishment would there be offered to her heart.

But Judith shuddered at the thought of that small city, whose monotony and lifelessness awed her in advance; she employed her whole influence, she teased, implored, and complained, until he yielded to her wishes and consented to resign his place at court.

The court-marshal was inconsolable; the court service, the petty cares of court etiquette, had always occupied his time, had given him material for thought, had lent him a great importance, at least in his own eyes, and now his wife demanded of him the renunciation of all this.

It was terrible, but not to be avoided, and, with a mortal sorrow, trembling and weeping, the court-marshal wrote his resignation to the prince.

Yet he secretly hoped his resignation would not be accepted, and that the prince, unable to fill his place acceptably, would command his immediate return. But, when a gracious dismissal from his service soon came, the ex-court-marshal felt his heart break, and he actually swooned.

Judith triumphed, but her joy was to be of short duration. The vital spirit of her husband was destroyed; the hope of a return to his home, to the duties of his office, had hitherto upheld him. With the extinguishment of that hope disappeared also his courage and strength, and Judith soon heard from his medical attendants that his days were numbered.

She received this intelligence with an appearance of great grief, and remained at the bedside of her suffering husband, exciting respect and admiration by her devotion and untiring care. And, in fact, she derived no pleasure from the immediate prospect of her husband's death; he had been to her, according to her own acknowledgment, so convenient and impenetrable a virtue-man-

tle, under which she had been enabled to conceal all her amorous intrigues. But, on the other hand, this mortal illness of her husband would bring her great advantages. She had long desired a riddance from her latest and, alas, too devoted lover, and now the means offered. She swore to him eternal love, and, at the same time, an eternal separation. With streaming tears she told him that, at the bedside of her dying husband, her conscience had awakened her to a conviction of her guiltiness.

This separation from "her first and only love" must be the propitiatory sacrifice to the dying husband. Her leave-taking from her lover was sublimely affecting, and he parted from her with unbounded reverence and admiration.

Judith was now satisfied, and she looked forward to the decease of her husband with the more indifference, as his testament, in which she was named as the sole inheritor of his vast estates, had been for a long time made.

For her husband she was all love, all attention, never leaving his side; for might he not, by way of revenge, change his will and deprive her of a greater or less portion of his property? So long as he was under the control of her eye he would not dare it; this she well knew, and therefore left she not his side; therefore she sought to keep his thoughts as far as possible from the subject of death, and to persuade him that his illness was neither mortal nor dangerous.

But it seemed that the baron now confided less than formerly in her words; he smiled incredulously at her assurances of his speedy convalescence, and he had become, especially since his resignation of office at her instigation, less obedient and less anxious to please her; he often cast at her dark, moody glances, and even sometimes ventured to make her some slight reproaches.

"Had we but returned home, in the fair and friendly city of W—," said he, reproachfully, "I should now be well and strong, in the discharge of my official duties!"

Tired of these continual complainings, Judith impatiently answered: "How can one be so silly as to wish to live in so small a city, and at such an insignificant court? Such a residence is as bad as a condemnation to the galleys!"

"Really, seems' it so to you?" thoughtfully responded her husband, who then relapsed into a long silence.

Then he called for his notary, and demanded the casket, in which was a duplicate of his will, deposited in the archives of the judicial authorities. He ordered this in the presence of his physician and the servant; Judith could not oppose it, and the notary was sent for. When he came, the baron demanded to be left alone with him, and when, after a short consultation with the notary, he again called Judith to his side, a self-satisfied smile lighted the features of the dying man.

"The end is approaching, Judith," said he, "and soon you will be delivered from the fear of being buried with me in a dull, small city; I alone shall be coffined and buried, and you will lead a happy life in the most splendid cities of Europe. You hate our small cities, Judith, do you not, and you would consider it like a condemnation to the galleys to be obliged to live in one?"

"His mental powers are evidently declining," said Judith, without answering her husband, to the doctor: "he already speaks as in delirium."

The doctor felt his pulse, and observed the rattle in his breast.

"She hates all small cities," murmured the dying man, "it is like a condemnation to the galleys to be obliged to live in one!"

His face was then distorted by a ma-

licious laugh, and in this grimace his features stiffened. His little gray eyes, fixed upon Judith with an expression of mocking joy, gradually lost their lustre, his pulses stopped, he ceased to breathe. The baron was dead, and Judith a widow, but an anxious, trembling one, fearing the opening of the testament, and yet hastening the act, that she might at least be relieved from uncertainty.

She was left the sole inheritor of her husband's wealth, but to this legacy the baron had added the condition that Judith was immediately to proceed to the small capital city of W—, and never to leave it for any other place of residence. On this condition she was constituted his sole heir, but should she hesitate to fulfil the condition, or if she ever absented herself from W—, for more than eight days, at any one time, the whole property, except a trifling annuity to Judith, was to go to a near relative of the testator.

A duplicate of the testamentary clause was immediately sent by the notary to this relative—Baron Walther—as the testator made it the duty of this nobleman to watch over the fulfilment of the condition, and, on the first violation of the same, to take possession of the heritage.

Judith was beside herself with grief and rage. She cursed her scarcely-buried husband, whose petty revenge seemed monstrous tyranny to her, and which had in a manner made her either a beggar or a prisoner for life. Which of these two misfortunes to choose, she was not for a moment in doubt; with Caesar, she thought it better to be the first in a small city, than the third in a great one, and, permitting the notary to administer the required oath, she swore never to leave the capital city of W—, except once in a year, and then only for a few days.

An occasional visit to the baron's

country-seat, was, besides, allowed her, but only on the condition that she should never receive a stranger there. No one, except her nearest relative, was to be allowed to pass a night there. A breach of this clause, also, was to involve the loss of the heritage, and again was Baron Walther appointed to watch over its fulfilment.

As Judith was to be in W—, in the course of a few weeks, she commenced the hated journey with rage and fury in her heart.

"One must take life as it comes," said she, by way of consolation; "there are people everywhere, and wherever there are people, it is worth the pains to control them. So came she to W—, and there first it occurred to her that she had not for years heard from her mother and sister.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

##### GISELA.

In the stillness and peace of the little forest residence, Gisela's childhood years had passed like a light morning dream. Watched, guided, and protected by maternal tenderness, she quietly and cheerfully communed with Nature. Singing gayly as the lark, she strolled through the forest, chasing the nimble lizards through the bushes, running after the butterflies, who led her farther and farther into the thickets of the woods, or collecting flowers with which to twine a garland for her mother. The forest was her world; it furnished all her pleasures, it comprehended all her joys; but all her love was given to her mother, who was her friend, sister, teacher; and this angel guardian of her existence Gisela was destined soon to lose.

A few months after Judith's mar-

riage, the baroness was suddenly taken ill, and in a short time all hope of her recovery was gone.

The baroness herself felt that her end was near; and when the physician, in answer to her pressing solicitation, confirmed her fears, she requested the presence of the clergyman whose ministrations she had usually attended. Many strange stories had been told of this clergyman; it was pretended that he had been a youthful friend of the baroness, and as richly and nobly descended; that, when the baroness was compelled by her parents to marry against her will, he had fallen into a state bordering on despair, and finally, disdaining his wealth and rank, he had taken holy orders, which made celibacy his imperative duty. As a minister, he had been stationed on the baron's estate, and thus had frequent opportunities of seeing the fair lady of the manor; it was further said, that the baron had at length discovered the preacher's passion for his wife, and, from that day, forbidden him the house.

Whether the baroness shared this passion of the parson, no one could say; perhaps she had never ventured to confess so much to herself. But now, in the hour of death, she thought of him, and as he, pale and trembling, approached her bedside, she opened her arms, and he pressed to his bosom for the first and last time one whom he was never to possess.

They were left alone; no one but God heard their low-spoken words, no one saw the blessed smile that lighted the face of the dying woman, no one saw the kiss that with a last effort she impressed upon the trembling lips of her friend.

Then she called her daughter, and, as the weeping Gisela, who knew nothing of death and the pain of parting, approached the bed, the mother with an

ineffable glance laid the hand of her daughter in that of her friend.

"My legacy, Bernhard," she murmured, as she sank back upon her pillow, never again to rise from it. Her eyes, resting upon her friend, gradually lost their lustre, and when Bernhard bent down to her he perceived that life was gone.

Pressing Gisela to his heart, he wept aloud; but, suppressing his emotions when he saw the great grief of the child, he sought to soothe her with the divine consolation of love, for he already felt a paternal affection for the child bequeathed to him by his friend.

After the accomplishment of the burial services, Bernhard took the child with him to the parsonage, which was in a lovely valley, surrounded by beautiful gardens, and thenceforward devoted all his time and thoughts to the education of his daughter Gisela.

Had she formerly strolled alone through the forest in her pursuit of birds and flowers, she had now found a faithful and indefatigable companion, who for her made himself again a child, constantly inventing for her new plays and new enjoyments, and, while playing and jesting, was constantly teaching and forming her. Learning was to be for her no compulsory, burdensome labor. Bernhard understood how to awaken in the child a desire for knowledge, and how, by nurturing that desire, to keep it always fresh and lively. While playing, he taught her, until the growing child became more earnest, and found her pleasure in more serious occupations. Under the shady trees, which had previously witnessed her childish plays, they now together read the great poems of the ancients, or Gisela shared her thoughts, questions, and doubts with her friend, and always found a willing ear, always instruction and encouragement.

With paternal joy Bernhard saw the



unfolding form of Gisela becoming daily stronger and more beautiful, and her mind awakening to constantly greater power and activity. His constant care was to give her a character of masculine firmness, and to that end he devoted all his efforts. The sad and bitter experience of his youth had taught him that even a woman has need of strength and firmness.

"Had the baroness possessed more firmness," said he to himself, "had she had the courage to resist the commands of her parents, she would never have become the wife of the hated baron, but have married him to whom she had sworn eternal love; but now she had been sacrificed to the will of others, and tearfully submitted to a life of misery! Gisela shall never act upon compulsion, but only in accordance with her own will," said he; "she shall have a free will, and the courage to act upon it."

Faithful to this principle, he never sought to persuade her to any thing, never to lay commands upon her, never to require obedience and subjection, but to leave all to the convictions of her ripening understanding.

Not that he thus made himself the slave of her will and caprices; not that he allowed her will to degenerate into obstinacy; he sought only so to lead and form her mind that she herself would recognize and choose the right and the best; and if she, nevertheless, sometimes erred in her choice, he let her bear the consequences, and through her very errors come to a better knowledge of the right.

"*Do right, and fear no one!*" was the device he daily repeated to her, until he had impressed it upon her mind in indelible characters, until it had become her guide and regulating principle, until she learned from it to disdain the judgments of the world, and to follow only what she herself recognized to be the right.

But Bernhard did more; he taught her not only to disregard the *judgments* of the world, he taught her to hate the world itself. He infused into her his own hatred of a world which he had flown, and, though Gisela's gentle, youthful heart was yet incapable of hatred, she could still underestimate it; and thus, before she knew the world, she had learned to disdain and distrust it.

Bernhard now congratulated himself upon his work, as it seemed to him that Gisela was armed against the world with an impenetrable panoply; that the world could do her no harm as long as she held it in disrespect.

"But take care, Gisela," he would often say, "not to confound the world with life. Life is beautiful and precious, and you must and shall enjoy it in all its fulness and excellence. It is truly enjoyed, however, by those only who do not suffer its enjoyment to be disturbed by the world, and who constantly strive for what is in itself right and good. The world which you should disregard is the general mass, with its prejudices and errors, its customs and sanctioned immoralities; to liberate yourself from these is the triumph of your being, and especially to hold yourself inwardly free, Gisela, should be your greatest pride!"

Gisela's eyes would flash brighter when he so spoke, and with a confident smile she would repeat his own motto, "Do right, and fear no one!"

Thus she had reached her fourteenth year, when her home-returned sister, suddenly remembering her, called her to herself. Bernhard had long expected this call, and had feared it, as robbing him of his dearest jewel, and perhaps alienating her affection from him.

But, could he have prevented Gisela's compliance with this call of her sister, he would not have done it; for Gisela must go out into life. Her youth,

beauty, and lively spirits, must not be buried in the solitary parsonage, nor was she destined to dream away her days in the peaceful shades of her native woods.

"Go, Gisela," said Bernhard, painfully suppressing his tears, "go, and learn to live, to lose, to suffer, to struggle, and to overcome. You must neither flee nor faint; you must strive for victory, and you must disregard the wounds the world may inflict upon you, for you are there to conquer the world and to secure the full enjoyment of life. You are to be a missionary of the Free Will, and you are to teach the world to bow before a virtue which is so chaste as not to need the tawdry covering of outward appearances! Go, my child, and show the world that woman is born for freedom and not for slavery."

Gisela tossed her youthful head with pride. She comprehended the high mission for which Bernhard destined her, and her young heart glowed with the resolution to do honor to that mission.

"I will go, my father; I will go to the conquest of my happiness," said she, "and with the world will I struggle for the world!"

Judith had sent her own travelling-carriage for her sister, and, Gisela's preparations being soon made, nothing stood in the way of her departure.

With inexpressible sorrow did she take leave of garden and house, of mount and vale, of all the places on which rested the precious reminiscences of happier hours, and finally she sobbed a last farewell to him who had *been* to her as a father.

As Bernhard pressed her to his heart, a foreboding came over him that in the world Gisela would never find the happiness she sought; it seemed as though he must hold her fast, never let her go

from him—as if he must call to her, "Remain here!"

Had he spoken the words, Gisela would never have gone; perhaps she awaited only this call, but Bernhard suppressed the rising words, and Gisela's fate was decided.

As she turned toward the door, Bernhard, tortured by inward doubts and fears, drew her once more to his heart.

"Gisela, my child," murmured he, "forgive me if, perhaps, I have been too weak to point out to you the right path. Blame me not if, failing to secure happiness, you succumb in your struggle with the world!"

Gisela kissed him, but found not strength to answer. Impetuously leaving the room, she hastened to the waiting carriage.

Now one last look at the dear house, at her weeping friend, at the quiet vale—away go the spirited horses; she yet sees the house, yet the white handkerchief with which Bernhard waves to her his last adieu, then all disappear in the misty distance, and Gisela is forever separated from the paradise of her innocent happiness. Never shall she enter it again as she left it—the horses are fleet, and their every step removes her farther and farther from her childhood and her youth—brings her nearer to the joys and sorrows of life.

Judith received her sister with the greatest apparent delight, but was surprised to find Gisela less hearty and cordial.

"And do you not love me right well?" asked she.

"I hope I shall love you," said Gisela, looking deeply into her eyes—"but how should we be able to love each other now? The long estrangement yet stands in our way."

Judith felt herself embarrassed in the presence of this cold, quiet being. She had expected a child overflowing with joy and gratitude for a deliverance



from poverty and oppression; she was fully prepared to receive professions of gratitude and affection. But to her astonishment she found a fair and tranquil maiden, whose intelligent and searching glance betrayed an intellect riper than her years. This troubled her, and she would gladly have sent Gisela directly back to the parsonage. At least, she immediately reflected upon the means of removing her sister from her presence, and these were soon found.

With words of the most cordial, sisterly love, she said to Gisela that she saw with the deepest regret her entire lack of fashionable accomplishments; that her slumbering talents must be awakened, her capabilities excited; in short, that she must be formed and polished, and for this purpose a long residence at a fashionable boarding-school in the capital was necessary.

Gisela joyfully assented to this proposition. She herself felt the necessity for supplying what was wanting in her education.

Bernhard had given her a character, he had opened to her an understanding of the Greek and Latin classics, which she read without difficulty in the original; he had taught her the course of the stars, and the laws of mathematics and physics; he had given her mind a thoroughly masculine training, but she lacked the light, delicate, feminine accomplishments, the flowers and garlands—she lacked the polish required for the social circles in which she would be required to move. Gisela could speak neither French nor English, nor did she know any thing of music. When Judith reproached her with this, she answered with a quiet smile: "These things may be easily acquired."

So, in a few days after her arrival, she again took her departure.

To her paternal friend Bernhard she wrote: "They wish to make a bee of me, to suck honey and sweetness from

all the flowers of science. Well, I will fly, for my soul is already soaring upon strong wings. I will be a bee my whole life long, and enjoy the sweet honey of life, for a bee has nothing to fear; has she not a sting with which to defend herself against every aggression and all oppression? What her sting is to the bee, my firm will and unfaltering courage shall be to me—for both of which I have to thank you—and may my soul be raised to the freest, highest flight! but should it ever, feeble and discouraged, droop its wings, may those wings yet always bear the inscription you have engraved upon them: 'Do right, and fear no one.'"

Gisela remained two years at the boarding-school; and if, on the one hand, she, with an iron industry and perseverance, availed herself of all the nourishment there offered for her mind, so also, on the other hand, did her heart make there its most delightful acquisition.

The playmate of her earliest childhood, Emma von Bernstedt, was in the school, and soon their warm, young hearts were bound together in a friendship so deep and ardent that it gave them a foretaste of the rapture and enthusiasm of a first love.

Sweet and precious were the months they passed together, and so much the more bitter was their separation when, a year before Gisela was to leave, Emma's parents took her home for the purpose of marrying her to a man unknown and unloved.

They mutually swore eternal friendship, and we have seen that it was interrupted only by death.

With her completed sixteenth year Gisela returned to her sister, richer in knowledge and accomplishments, but in mind and character the same.

Not without some slight terror did Judith contemplate the presence of her beautiful and radiant young sister, and,

notwithstanding her confidence in her own peerless charms, she could not but feel that Gisela might prove dangerous to her hitherto undisputed reign in W—.

It was with a sort of pleasure that Judith made this discovery, for she saw in it the blossom of a new cause for effort, a new occupation for her days, and she felt an awakening of the energy and elasticity of her being.

Her triumphs at this small court had long been without obstacle or effort, and these victories without an opponent had begun to be tiresome. She was, therefore, well satisfied to find at length an enemy to oppose, even though that enemy was her own sister.

It was still a woman, whose youth and beauty, whose grace and intelligence, challenged her to the combat, and against whom was needed the aid of cabals and intrigues, concealed feuds and secret strategy, which gave occasion for thought and action to one whose *specialty* it was to injure and annihilate, while, as in this case, Judith could hypocritically weep for the sufferer. With the first kiss she gave her newly-returned sister, she coupled the vow of unceasing enmity and warfare, and commenced tying the threads of the net in which she was determined to involve the unsuspecting Gisela.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SMALL CAPITAL CITY OF W—.

GISELA had now, for one year since her return from the boarding-school, resided with her sister in W—, the capital of the little principality of R—.

But do you know what a small capital city is? Know you, moreover, what it is *to live* in a small city? Know you a small-city inhabitant in the full-blessed consciousness of his worth? If not,

learn to know him, that you may envy him, for, in fact, no one is so much to be envied as the small-city man. No man in any of your great capitals can ever be so fully conscious of his individual importance, as he can never be confounded with the mass and named collectively; there, every man is the only one of his sort. The court baker knows that he is the best baker, and so of the court tailor, the court *frisieur*, etc., and all the other inhabitants know these facts as well as the individuals themselves, and respect them accordingly. The minister knows that, after the prince, no man is his equal; he proudly calls himself, like the great King of Prussia, "the only one," and his wife never has occasion to fear losing her place on the sofa, for no one is there to contest it. From the minister to the court shoemaker, every man is the sole one, in his own estimation, and each knows the good and bad qualities of the others, disparaging the first and sneering at the last, that he may elevate himself. It is a large family in which nothing can happen that does not interest all the citizen cousins.

And what happens to excite their interest? Is it some great question of the day, of peace or war in our own or foreign lands? What cares the small-city man for such questions?

His own little city is his world; what occurs beyond its limits is to him trifling and unimportant, and he smiles compassionately upon those who bestow a thought upon it, or who regret that the news reaching the city from abroad is already old when it comes. The proceedings of the Frankfort Assembly come not at all in competition with what the minister said yesterday at the club, or the burgomaster at the city hall; their words are borne from house to house, and in a few hours are known to the whole city.

What, however, the minister or bur-

gomaster, or the rector, or even one of the small nobility, may say, is to the small-city man important and decisive; no one presumes to have a contrary opinion, however celebrated as a scholar, poet, or artist, he may be.

In the full, secure feeling of his importance, nothing is imposing to the small-city man; for him there is no authority outside his city, and the greatest man will have no importance in his eyes until he has been recognized by the burgomaster. Of the poets, he usually esteems only the dead; only those whose monuments have long since been erected, and who are recognized by the whole country—the growing, the living, he can never believe to be meritorious—Goethe, Schiller, Jean Paul, and Wieland he accepts, but the writers of the present day are to him indifferent, if not, indeed, contemptible; for the writers of the present day speak of progress, for movement; they wish to change, displace, and improve many things; this seems to the small-city man a criminal seeking for innovations.

All as it is, being so excellent and beautiful, why should it be changed? He suffers not; wherefore, then, this cry of the people?

He has never felt the want of a constitution; why, then, should the people call for one?

Nothing seems to him more despicable than when a brother small-city man, unable to bear the pressure of these circumstances, flees from it to the asylum of a large city, or breaks silence and utters his complaints and remonstrances to the world. The small-city men despise the great genius who has gone forth from their midst, and, like the joiner, who, on the passing of a procession, refused to bow to the wooden crucifix, saying: "Why should I bow before a Saviour who, eight days ago, stood in my garden as a pear-tree?"—like him they say: "Why should I

respect this writer, whom I have seen running about here as a little boy, whose parents I know, and who was just as stupid and ignorant as all the other boys?"

The great questions of the day are, for them, no questions at all, and they scornfully laugh at your struggles, your sorrows, your sighs, and tears. On the contrary, they take a serious interest in every thing that happens in their city, and know every thing concerning each and all of their friends; their incomes and expenditures are severely criticised, and woe even to the burgomaster's wife if she has a silk robe too many—the whole city will condemn her!

And, above all, woe to those who may venture to disregard the social laws and customs of the place! woe to those who may venture to live in conformity with their own tastes and judgments, and care not to ask what their neighbors call "respectable and proper!" They are lost and undone, for they have the whole city against them.

The burgomaster is offended if you venture to dine at three, when he goes to the table at one o'clock. The parson's wife is wounded if you come to her evening party at seven, when the other guests come at five o'clock; and every young maiden shrinks from you with horror if a young man speaks to you in the street, or in any other public place, and no betrothal cards are sent on the following day. But now, indeed, if this small city is the residence and capital of a prince!—then is the court the axis upon which every thing turns, which sets all tongues in motion; then the smile of the prince or princess decides upon your worth, and their frown draws upon you the general contempt. "The prince says, the princess says," these are the oracles, and what the prince or princess says is immediately known to the whole city; and on whom the prince smiles or the

princess frowns, that runs like wildfire through the whole community, causing to the object either admiration or contempt!

Into this diminutive but dangerous world of a small capital city came Gisela—Gisela, with her warm, fearless heart, her brave, masculine mind, and her motto: "Do right, and fear no one!"

She came with her great, free soul, with the consciousness of her innocence, nothing doubting, nothing concealing, with no prejudices, acting only according to her views of right, and never asking whether that "right" militated against the rules of deportment and social laws of the city or court. For the court held strictly to outward propriety and etiquette; the princess never pardoned one who sinned against the laws of custom; she was inexorably severe toward every smile, every expression of her court ladies; she sharply criticised the deportment of all the ladies of her circle, and often found something equivocal and improper, even in the most innocent things. This was, indeed, natural, as the Princess Clotilde best knew how easy and usual it was for a person to conceal criminality under the appearance of innocence, and how significant and important a smile might be rendered. It was her knowledge of crime that rendered her so ready to suspect innocence; she knew that one might fall at every step upon the smooth, slippery ground of the court, and therefore she looked upon every one as having fallen, or about to fall. Princess Clotilde had been young, and had understood how to enjoy her youth. She had even understood how to prolong the pleasures of youth beyond the period of youth itself, and to win a second husband at the age of forty, who was more than twenty years younger than herself, and who was an ideal for

beauty, intelligence, and goodness. Prince Lothaire, indeed, knew her not when, at the wish of his father, he consented to marry the rich, princely widow who brought to his house the neighboring principality as a marriage portion. His father had announced to him at Rome, where he was then residing, that he had asked the hand of the Princess Clotilde for him, and that she was his betrothed bride. Prince Lothaire had silently acquiesced, and sacrificed his heart to political interests. Soon after his betrothal his father was taken sick. Couriers flew to the hereditary prince at Rome; they called the son to the bedside of his father, and to the throne, and the son obeyed the call. Travelling day and night he arrived at W—— just in time to receive his father's blessing, and promise him immediately to make Princess Clotilde his wife.

And the reigning prince performed what the expectant prince had promised. The sound of the funeral tolling bells had hardly died away, when the wedding ceremonies were arranged, and the young prince hastened to the residence of his never-yet-seen bride. From his earliest youth Lothaire had been kept abroad by his father, that he might be educated far from his native city, in order that he might better know the world, and at foreign courts the better prepare himself for his own princely court and throne. "My heir," said the wise father, "shall enjoy life and the world, that he may one day, as prince, know life and the world, and be enabled the better to discharge the duties of a ruler of the people. The freer the scope given his youth, the wiser will he afterward show himself as prince."

Prince Lothaire, therefore, had never seen his bride, and was not a little shocked when he now first glanced at her somewhat wrinkled brow and



wasted form. But he was sufficiently master of himself to be able to conceal this disagreeable surprise under an affable smile, and, with the courage and calmness of a hero, he pronounced, while standing before the altar, with his richly dowered and adorned bride, the solemn "Yes" that bound him forever to the twenty-years-older Clotilde.

On the next day the newly-married pair made their pompous entry into the capital of the principality, W—, and the official authorities of the territory of Princess Clotilde took the oath of allegiance to their new sovereigns. The virtuous, pious Clotilde, was now at the head of two principalities, and, with her advent, virtue was made the fashion at court and in the city of W—. If sin and passion still lingered there, it was wrapped in a thick and impenetrable veil, and all hands were piously folded in prayer.

And all the world, with one exception, believed in the virtue of the Princess Clotilde; that exception was Prince Lothaire, her husband, who believed neither in her virtue nor her piety. If he treated her with respectful complaisance in public, honoring her as his wife, yet the princess knew but too well how slight was her claim to the possession of her husband's heart, and foresaw that she had in him a constantly-observant and keenly-watchful enemy, whom neither her pretended virtue nor her pious grimaces could deceive.

The princess, who had never yet trembled before any one, now trembled before her husband, before his dark, flashing eye, before his bold brow, before his piercing glance and ironic smile. Strange rumors had reached her ears—rumors of a once glowing love between Prince Lothaire and a fair woman of Rome, and of a fearful vengeance wreaked by him on finding her unfaithful.

Were these rumors truths or inventions? That was what the princess desired to know, and she therefore jestingly related to her husband the story, which she called a "romantic legend."

But what was her terror on perceiving the sudden paleness and trembling of her husband as he violently seized her arm, and, with a glance she could never forget, said: "Take care, princess, never to learn by experience that such a legend may become reality."

"My God!" she tremblingly exclaimed, "you cannot suppose, my husband, that I—"

"Am a very virtuous lady?" he interposed, with a scornful smile. "Certainly I believe that, and I counsel you to keep me in this belief. We will let the past rest under the veil your pious hands have spread over it; but the future, princess—let the future be clear and bright, and woe to you if I ever discover a dark spot in it! Every thing changes here below, but honor; and a man's sullied honor, can be washed pure only with blood. Remember that, my virtuous princess!"

After these words he suddenly left her, and the princess remained for a long time buried in deep reflection; then she rang for a servant and ordered him to call her confessor, the young and handsome prebendary, who had for some weeks resided at the princely court. On his arrival the princess had a long, secret conference with him.

An hour afterward, and the young priest had left the castle and the city, never to make his appearance there again. The whole court was astonished at missing the pious, handsome, and intellectual man; the prince alone seemed not to notice his absence, and never asked about him. But when the news, some time after, arrived that he had become a monk of the order of Trappists, and the princess, in an affectedly careless tone, mentioned the fact



to her husband, the latter, with a significant smile, said: "It is well for him that he has taken the vow of eternal silence."

To-day there was a great festival at court; for it was the princess's birthday, and all whose rank entitled them to the distinguished honor, were assembled in the saloons of the palace. With condescending kindness the princely pair wandered through the lines of their guests, with friendly greetings to each, and receiving professions of devotion and good wishes in return.

"I miss the Baroness Judith and her fair sister," said the princess to the wife of the lord high-steward, Von Zarche.

"Perhaps they fear a rebuke from your highness," answered the lady, with a mysterious smile, calculated to excite the curiosity of the princess.

"And have they cause to fear a rebuke?" eagerly asked her highness.

The high-stewardess shrugged her shoulders. "Miss Gisela, as you know, disregards all forms and customs," said she, "and hence she finds it quite in order to pass three nights at the bedside of the late Baroness von Serming, where she watched in company with the invalid's husband."

"That is shocking, countess," cried the princess; "with the Baron von Serming, who so openly pays court to her?"

"She pretends having done it from no other motive than love for her dying friend Emma," said the high-stewardess, with another shrug of her shoulders.

The ladies smiled and whispered together: "Such friendship is well understood! My God, can she think we are so simple as to believe in a friendship that shrinks not from night-watching?"

"The excuse is as inapt as incredible!"

"And does the Baroness Judith suffer such reckless conduct?" asked the princess.

"She has conjured her sister to dis-

continue it," said the high-stewardess; "your highness knows the strict principles of the baroness, and can therefore imagine the pain it gives her to see her beautiful but headstrong sister evidently rushing upon her own destruction!"

"Oh, no one can possibly be more reckless than this Gisela," said a hateful old maid, whose bitterness was increased by the fact that now no one any longer asked her to dance.

"She is as supercilious as haughty," said another, "and disdains every one who thinks differently from herself."

"Oh," remarked a third, "some days ago I heard her say that she was indifferent to the opinion of the world; she feared it not, and would never stoop to conciliate it."

"That is unheard-of audaciousness," exclaimed a fourth, who really had reason to fear public opinion.

The prince, standing in a window recess, had listened to this conversation with a smile.

"What say you to the conduct of this young lady?" he was now asked by the princess. "She will, by such recklessness oblige me to exclude her from the court."

"You will not, surely, be so cruel," answered the prince; "you surely will not be so cruel as to deprive the poor girl of the advantage of beholding and admiring in your highness the pattern of all virtue and propriety! Miss Gisela may be blameworthy, but certainly she is not guilty, for guilt avoids appearances!—Ah, see, there come the two ladies," he continued, pointing to the door through which the sisters were just then entering the room.

The prince advanced to meet them, greeting them most courteously; and never had he, whom they were accustomed to call "the cold and insensible," been seen to pay to any lady such

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marked attention as he now paid to Gisela.

Nor had the latter ever appeared to him more beautiful or lovely than now, when she stood unembarrassed and smiling among the ladies who had just been abusing, and were now so kindly greeting her.

He admired her tall, proud form; her pure, noble forehead; her charmingly transparent face, through which glowed every thought and emotion of the soul, and he almost felt compassion for those clear eyes so brightly flashing with inward youthful fire.

Seating himself by her and laying his arm upon the back of her chair, he said: "You are too bold, Gisela; you must learn fear!"

"And do you advise that?" she smilingly answered, "you, who fear neither danger nor death?"

"You are right; I fear not death, but life!"

"And I love it!" said she, with warmth. "Oh, my God, what have I not to hope from life! how much happiness, how much enjoyment, shall it not bring to me!"

"And unhappiness? You forget that even the happiest life is rich in sorrow, and care, and need. And deceptions? You forget that life is full of falsehood and deception."

"But also of truth and love," quickly answered Gisela.

"You believe that? How young you yet are, Gisela! You yet believe in that fable? You do not yet know that love is nothing more than a charming dream, from which we very soon awaken with terror? And truth? oh, you make me laugh, young girl, with the romantic word *truth* on those rosy lips."

"No," exclaimed Gisela, "not upon my lips, but in my heart, do I bear that word, and I know that it is reality."

"There is no truth here below," replied the prince; "all is false, I tell you,

all! Learn distrust, young maiden, and then you can at least hope to attain to peace. Learn doubt; in doubt lies the only truth, the great truth of nihilism. You believe in love? you will one day curse it! You believe in truth? you will one day seek it in vain in your own heart!"

"You, then, believe in nothing?" asked Gisela, with a compassionate glance at the noble face of the prince, over which was spread an expression of dark hatred.

"Not so, young lady," said he, with bitterness; "I believe in something; I believe in falsehood, and this belief is an eternal truth."

"You hate, then, all mankind?"

"At least I do not love them, and it will be the same with you when you have often become a martyr to your nobility of soul; when you shall have often suffered for your very virtues; when you shall have often bravely defied the world, and suffered reviling and abuse for it. The commencement is already made; and, believe me, those nights through which you watched by the bedside of your deceased friend, will yet cause you many a sleepless hour!"

"Oh, no one will dare to misinterpret that," said Gisela; "no one will dare to bring into suspicion my love for my friend."

"They have already dared it, my innocent young maiden, and all these fair ladies who now greet you with such friendly smiles, have already pronounced your condemnation."

"You are cruel, my prince," sighed Gisela, painfully; "why would you instil distrust into my heart?"

"Because," said he, in a low tone, "you are the only being at this court, Gisela, the only one who has not yet laden her soul with sin and guilt, and because your unsuspecting innocence moves my compassion. I would arm

you for the conflict, I would furnish you with a panoply before you are mortally wounded."

"But the arms themselves you now offer already wound me painfully."

"It is better to suffer from self-inflicted wounds than from those coming from others. No hero would wish to die upon the scaffold. The world, however, erects a scaffold for every hero-soul, upon which they martyrize it with a cruel pleasure. With the first step in life we mount the first step of that scaffold, and all after-life is a continued struggle against the world—a struggle which decides whether we shall be compelled to mount the scaffold, or whether as victors we shall walk beneath it."

"And what then, what then, when we are successful?" asked the almost breathless Gisela.

"Then, perhaps, will remain to us the strength now and then to lend a saving hand to other struggling souls."

"And would our whole existence be for this alone?"

"It would be so. And, therefore, Gisela, do I now extend to you a helping hand. Believe me, you have already mounted more than one step. Turn about. Why furnish a spectacle for the crowd? Die internally and alone; expose not your death-pangs to the world. My God, why be publicly broken upon the wheel, when one can tranquilly die of unseen sorrows upon one's bed! Believe me, Gisela, the world is not overcome by him who disdains and defies it, but only by him who distrusts it, and sees in every smile a trap in which to catch our happiness. Never will you succeed in a struggle against the world; for guilt is more cunning than innocence, and knows the rocks against which it has been wounded and wrecked. To dominate the world, one must incur the guilt of the world, and to convert poi-

son into a healing medicine, one must know by experience the peculiar qualities of the poison. Whoever gives himself to the world as he is, is considered a dissembler, and dissemblers only can gain its confidence, as they only will know how to dupe it by flattering its weaknesses."

"Oh," said Gisela, "blacken not this fair world; it is so full of sunshine and love! It so cordially invites to pleasure and enjoyment! Let me rejoice in the happiness it offers. I yet believe that we were created for happiness."

"Fair, charming enthusiast," said the prince, "you are not, then, to be convinced? You will, then, defy the world? And are my words, to-day, as always, to be useless to you?"

"No," said she, with a friendly smile, "not useless, for in the dark colors in which you paint the world, I for the first time realize how beautiful and precious it is."

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SICK CHILD.

EMMA'S young daughter had been attacked by a dangerous illness soon after the mother's death, and Conrad von Serming, true to his promise, immediately informed Gisela of the fact. The latter hesitated not a moment as to what her duty required in the case.

"I must go and bestow a maternal care upon the child of my deceased friend," said she to Judith.

"That is impossible," angrily replied the latter, "that you cannot, must not do. It would be setting at defiance all the laws of custom and propriety."

"And nevertheless I shall do it," quietly responded Gisela, "for I have solemnly sworn to my dying friend to be a mother to her child, and it shall

not be said that I have broken a promise that I freely gave. I well know that my course will make me for some days the talk of the city and court, but I fear not that; as my intentions are pure, I feel that I may disregard the opinions of the world in the discharge of what is unmistakably my duty. The noble and good will approve of my conduct, and, Judith, should I fear the ignoble?"

With a sweet smile she nodded adieu to her sister, and rapidly hastened to the bedside of the sick child.

Judith looked after her in silence, and, as the sound of her footsteps died away, a malicious smile of triumph flitted over her features. "Go, then," she murmured, "hasten to meet your destruction; it will quickly reach you! Disdain the judgment of the ignoble, and you will soon enough seek in vain the support of the noble. Confide only in your purity and innocence; that is a crime which the world never pardons. How I hate this Gisela, with her proud, courageous virtue, before which I often feel shamed and debased! She must, she shall fall! This haughtiness must be conquered, and this proud child shall at my feet plead in vain for sympathy and consolation. She is my natural enemy, and it will be sweet to trail her in the dust and set my foot upon her neck."

A visitor was announced, and Judith's countenance immediately took a different expression; before cold and scornful, it was now gentle and friendly, and with a sad smile she advanced to meet Madame von Zarcho.

"Oh, you come to me as an angel of consolation, dearest friend," said Judith, embracing the lady.

"My God, dearest, has any misfortune happened to you?"

"Oh, Gisela!" sighed the baroness, with a failing voice and already starting tears.

"She has not again given you cause for anxiety?"

"She is running to her ruin, and my hand is too weak to stay her course. I can only beg and implore, and her passion-stopped ear is deaf to my sisterly warnings. Only think," continued she, in a lower tone, as if fearing to disclose the horrible fact—"only think it, dearest, Gisela has again gone to the house of the Baron von Serming, for the pretended purpose of nursing his sick child!"

"What shameless audacity!" cried Madame von Zarcho.

"Her passion has rendered her perfectly insensible to propriety and morals."

"She really, then, loves the baron passionately?"

"Passionately, and, as I fear, her passion is unreturned. Oh, dearest, how painful this is! Gisela will be condemned, and I with her, and our reputation, the holiest possession of a woman, will be stained and destroyed!"

"Oh, fear not that, dearest," responded Madame von Zarcho; "your high virtue is unassailable, and cannot be made to suffer. We all know you as a pattern of virtue and morality. But this Gisela, you really must remove her from your house."

"That I must not, cannot do. I am her sister, she has no one in the world but me to protect her. Who will have pity on her when her own sister casts her off? No, no, rather let us fall together—I cannot cast her off."

"What an angel you are!" exclaimed Madame von Zarcho, with tears of real emotion, and pressing Judith to her heart. "How much you deserve to be loved and honored by all the world! But, have no anxiety; no one shall misinterpret your sacrifice and sisterly love. This very day will I tell all to our worthy princess."



"But will not that still further injure my poor sister? Do it not; rather may the princess hold me criminal, than, pitying me, become doubly angry with Gisela."

"My God, what a noble heart, how generous and sublime! What a pattern has Gisela in you, and little sensible of it she seems to be!"

Judith modestly cast down her eyes, and Madame von Zarcho soon took her leave, that she might hasten to relate to the scandal-loving princess the new fault of Gisela, and the generosity of Judith. In a few hours, the affair became the principal topic of conversation in court and city, and while Gisela was universally condemned, her noble, generous, and virtuous sister was as generally praised.

Meanwhile, Gisela was seated at the bedside of the suffering child, anxiously watching its every movement, and at short intervals administering the medicines and renewing the applications of ice prescribed by the physician. The night wore on, and no sleep came to her eyes; to no other person would she confide the care of the little sufferer, as the physician had said, "If her life can yet possibly be saved, it can be so only by following my directions with the utmost exactness," and Gisela, therefore, wished to see for herself to the following of those directions. In vain did Conrad implore her to yield to him the care of the little one, while she could take a rest of a few hours. Gisela said: "I have sworn to my Emma to become a mother to her child, and no mother will leave the sick-bed of her offspring. This night, as the physician assures us, will witness the crisis of the disease, and can you ask me to sleep at the moment when the child may, perhaps, die or awaken to new life? Leave me, therefore, to watch undisturbed, and betake yourself to your rest."

"By no means," exclaimed the baron, tenderly clasping her hand, "I will watch with you. How can you expect the father to sleep while Gisela, like a tender mother, is watching by this cradle?"

With a proud and tranquil glance she withdrew her hand. "Bring not, I pray you, my care for this child into connection with your relationship to it," she said, with earnestness. "It is a matter of indifference to me whether you watch or sleep; I only require that you leave this room."

"Gisela, you require that, and wherefore?"

"Because it is my will!" said she, with the calmness of a queen, and the baron ventured not to approach her. Silently kissing her hand, he departed. Gisela, however, seated herself by the cradle as an indefatigable watcher, and in the deep stillness of the night changing pictures of the past and future presented themselves to her mental eye.

"And what form," thought she, "will my future take? Shall I find the happiness I have meditated, and which I seek with all the powers of my soul? Or shall I be dashed to pieces against the rocks and crags of life, like the unhappy mother of this poor child? And was not Emma, although unfortunate, nevertheless blessed in the feeling of her love? Oh, my God, she wept many tears, but she was yet blessed in her sorrow; she wept a great, a sublime misfortune. And if we, then, as Prince Lothaire says, are really in the world only to suffer, I can but wish for myself a right great, surpassing sorrow, which, like a rushing avalanche, may at once annihilate my whole happiness. Only not to die of the little *misères* of existence which slowly wear away the heart, instead of breaking it at one blow! But, after all, I yet hope for happiness, my pulses all beat for it; my hands stretch forth to seize hold of life,

and my soul cries out for its blessings! When a child at the maternal breast, I thirsted for life, happiness, freedom!—Freedom! where shall I find it?—uncontested, unmolested freedom to will and act, of deed and thought? My God, they are killing me with their belittling circumspections and fears!”

The child in the cradle now became restless and uttered loud groans. Gisela rose, renewed the ice, and administered the prescribed medicine. Then, bending over the cradle, she remained observing the little sufferer; it seemed to her that a slight flush appeared upon the child's cheeks and that it breathed easier.

As the child again slumbered, Gisela noiselessly seated herself beside the cradle.

The morning dawn was beginning to appear, and the hour was approaching when the physician expected the crisis. Gisela awaited it with the deepest anxiety, and this hour, which was to decide the question of life or death, filled her heart with a mysterious awe. Great and powerful thoughts arose in her soul, and in her heart she offered up sanctified prayers for life. Her thoughts were with God, and therefore she did not hear the cautious opening of the door behind her and the entrance of Conrad. Not until he touched her arm did she start up with alarm.

“What want you here?” she asked, with sternness.

“Your pardon, Gisela,” begged he in a soft, imploring tone. “I could find no rest, no peace. My heart beat in inexpressible longing toward you. I felt an irresistible impulsion in this hour to open to you my whole heart, and tell you that I love you unspeakably!”

“This hour is ill chosen for such a communication,” said Gisela, with severity.

“Every hour is sanctified by the love

I bear you; yes, Gisela, so ardent, so all-powerful is this love, that it overcomes every other feeling in me, even my anxiety for my suffering child.”

“You have been a bad husband and are a worse father,” answered Gisela. “You knew not how to deserve the love of the noblest of women, and you now make love to another while the badge of mourning for your first murdered wife is yet upon your arm.”

“I could not win Emma's heart, for I never loved her,” impetuously cried Conrad; “but you, Gisela, I love you, and may therefore hope to win you!”

“Never, never! no emotion of my soul speaks for you, and my heart turns from you with a shudder.”

“Oh, such cruel words come only from your lips,” said he, with the boldness of confidence. “Your heart, Gisela, is less cruel, less hard. I know it, I feel it; a joyful presentiment has announced it; and that presentiment has not deceived me—for Gisela, the young and beautiful Gisela, fearless of the world and its scandal, has come into my house to nurse my child. Therefore, Gisela, no longer conceal your heart from me; let it freely open in this hour and confess what I have indeed long known—its glowing love!”

“The wretch thinks I love him!” cried she, turning pale and shuddering with rage and indignation. “My God, he thinks I love him!” she again repeated in a contemptuous tone, measuring the baron with a glance of scorn. “How could you dare to think so?” she then hurriedly asked; “how could you suppose I would pass the threshold of your door, if I had loved you? Oh, my God, is then the world so evil that it no longer believes in feminine delicacy? But how degenerate must that woman be who would shamelessly enter the house of him she loved; who would, unsought, throw herself in his way!

Go! you are a fool, a vain idiot, not worth my anger."

"Gisela, be careful how you irritate me," threateningly responded the baron, driven to the wildest rage by Gisela's contemptuous language. "Be careful how you irritate me, or you shall, at least, repent of the senseless boldness with which you have come to my house!"

"Ha, you would threaten me?" asked she, rising from her seat with flashing eyes. "You would frighten me? Go! you are a fool, and I fear you not!"

"You shall repent of this," he cried, with desperation, approaching and violently clasping her person. "Gisela, proud and beautiful Gisela," said he, glowing and trembling, "Gisela, I love you, and you must be mine; for, do you hear, I love and will possess you. I fear nothing, not even your scornful eyes, Gisela, nor your contemptuous words! Those lips, those precious lips will I kiss—yes, by the immortal gods, I will!"

She had vainly sought to extricate herself from his clasping arms; but his lips now approaching hers gave her a giant's strength, and she tore herself from him with a force that sent him breathlessly tumbling backward.

"Leave this room instantly, or I will call for help," said she, with a voice half suffocated with indignant rage.

But Conrad fell upon his knees. "Oh, pardon, pardon, Gisela, I was out of my senses to threaten you, but passion and mortification drove me to it! Commiserate my feelings, my sorrow, my pain!"

During this vehement speech the entrance-door was lightly opened by the physician. With a mocking and contemptuous smile he glanced at the unexpected group, and then retreated, closing again the door.

But Gisela heard the slight creak of

the door, and saw the last mocking glance of the physician; springing to the door, she hastened after him, who was just on the point of descending the stairs.

"Why do you not enter?" she angrily asked, grasping his arm and drawing him back to the sick-room. "Why would you retire without seeing the patient you came to see?"

The physician took offence at the hard, angry tone of her question; he was prepared to see her imploring for silence and forgetfulness, when, perhaps, he would have been generous enough to promise it; but he resented her questioning him in that manner and the pride of her insulted maidenhood he mistook for shameless boldness.

"I drew back," he roughly answered, "because it seemed to me that I had failed to find the right door. I was seeking the death-chamber, and came to interrupt the cooings of a tender pair."

One sole cry of amazement escaped Gisela's lips, and then she convulsively drew the physician with her into the room.

"Tell this miserable being," cried she to the baron, "tell him he has no right to insult me. Rescue my innocence in his eyes, and I will pardon all!"

"Do not trouble yourself, my lord baron," coldly interposed the medical man; "I shall give greater credence to my own eyes than to your words, and to the noble young lady it must be quite a matter of indifference what a miserable being like myself may think of her. Besides, I have not come here to observe celestial love, but, if possible, to bring aid to the suffering child."

He now bent over the cradle and felt the infant's pulse. "The child is dead!" said he, resuming an erect posture; "it is already cold; you, my tender nurse, in your loving transports, probably failed to hear its death-sigh!"

With another angry glance at Gisela, he proudly stalked out of the room, that he might avenge himself for Gisela's haughty words by relating the morning's scene to his other patients.

Gisela, however, was annihilated, struck with mortal terror; she wept not, she sighed not, she seemed wholly tranquil and self-possessed, but her firmly-compressed lips, her heaving bosom, betrayed the internal storm, and her unnaturally brilliant eyes were fixed upon the baron with an expression of concentrated indignation. The latter felt the glance he dared not meet. He stood before her with his head bent down, undecided what he should say or do.

"Gisela, hear me," he finally ventured to murmur.

She hastily interrupted him: "Silence, utter not my name!"

Then, stepping to the cradle, a tear from her eyes fell upon the child as she kissed its cold forehead. "Farewell, thou last relic of my friend," she murmured; "I kiss thee in love, although I must suffer much for thy sake! Bear my greetings to thy mother! Farewell!"

Then, wrapping herself in her shawl, she strode proudly from the room, without bestowing a glance upon Conrad.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE WOOING.

A DULL sadness followed this stormy excitement in Gisela's breast. She felt solitary and wretched, and all her joy was gone. What experience had she not had in that night! how had one dared to address her, the proud, the highly susceptible! My God, and she was compelled to suffer all these mortifications and injuries! she had no arms

with which to punish such outrages, no means for purifying herself from such shame! Conrad's injurious addresses, and the physician's bitter derision, continually resounded in her ears, and the purple blush of shame alternated with the ghastly pallor of rage upon her cheeks. She feared not the odious tongues of the world: she thought only of the outrage to which she had been subjected, and she wept with anger and grief. "My God, does crime, then, bear the lineaments of innocence," she tremblingly said, "and are people so shortsighted that they cannot distinguish the one from the other? Is, then, vice or crime not of such a nature that it can be read in the countenance? Why do these people so readily believe in my guilt? Why is it so difficult for them to believe in innocence?"

Judith disturbed her melancholy meditations—Judith, who, with triumphant smiles and flashing eyes, with virtuous apothegms and joyously-beating heart, came to overwhelm her with all the anger of a virtuous and injured sister, and with cruel pleasure to repeat to her all the rumors, opinions, and suppositions then occupying court and city, making Gisela the sport and derision of the world.

Gisela sought not to defend herself; she was dumb to all these accusations, and Judith, at least, had not the gratification of knowing whether she had increased her sister's affliction; whether the dart she had so cruelly hurled against her heart had hit the mark at which it was aimed. Gisela smiled contemptuously when Judith told her that all the world was convinced she had gone to the baron's house from love for Conrad, and not for the sake of Emma's child; and only when Judith, exasperated by such impassibility, added that the physician had declared that the child had died through Gisela's neglect, while she, instead of punctually exe-



cuting his directions, was occupied in listening to Conrad's professions of love—only then had Judith the triumph of observing a painful contraction of her sister's brow, and, satisfied with this success, she left her, to weep in the arms of her friends bitter tears over her poor sister's "imprudent passion."

She was hardly gone, when Conrad von Serming was announced.

Gisela shuddered as the servant pronounced his name; she would have declined seeing him, but the baron, perhaps anticipating this answer, following upon the footsteps of the servant, stood before her. Gisela silently motioned the servant to withdraw, and she was now alone with the baron.

A long pause ensued, and as Gisela, so proud and serious, so pale and fair, stood before him, he felt his assumed courage leaving him, and his heart beating with endless love.

"What leads you to me?" she finally asked, in a hard and severe tone.

"Love!" said he, collecting himself, and this time he ventured to meet her glance. "Yes, Gisela, my love for you leads me here, and at your feet would implore pardon for my fault."

Kneeling down, he kissed the hem of her robe.

"Rise," said she, taking a step backward, "rise, and remind me no more of that horrible night. Every allusion to it is a new injury."

"Then you will not pardon me?" he asked, obediently rising from his knees. "Oh, Gisela, not that severe glance! It annihilates my hope, my love. Look kindly upon me, Gisela, for a full, boundless confidence deserves at least no anger; and of such a nature is my confidence in you. I come to beg my future happiness of you, and as that happiness consists in being allowed to consecrate my whole life

to you, I implore you for that purpose to give me your hand and become mine!"

"Never!" said she, with solemn earnestness, "never can I give my hand to a man who has killed my only friend, twice killed her in her lover! For Emma is dead through you; it was your generosity that murdered her—your generosity, your rough and cruel generosity, is what destroyed Emma's beautiful, warm heart! Or think you not that it was for her a constantly-recurring pain, a never-ending torment, to be obliged to be thankful to a man whom she detested, and to hear his praises from all lips? Better would it have been to have banished her to a desert, as there she could have wept for her lost lover; there she would have dared to shriek his name, and, if he could never respond to her call, never leave his cold grave to hasten to her, yet she could have had the solace of hearing her own voice as it syllabled the much-loved name. But you desired a harder punishment, and you clothed your vengeance with the mantle of generosity. You crushed the poor woman under your indulgent glances and pardoning smiles, and with the forgetting of her fault you have tortured Emma to death."

"You are cruel, Gisela," interposed Conrad. "What else could I do than forget after having punished? Had not the lover fallen in combat with me, was not the fault expiated? And was not Emma my wife, bore she not my name? Never should the world despise her who bore my name, and it would have contemned her had she been repudiated by me!"

"The world, the world," exclaimed Gisela, contemptuously,—"oh, how many have already been sacrificed to this world, how many bleeding hearts have been shattered against this rock! Go, then, you who have sacrificed the

loveliest of women to this world, go, and demand of it your reward!"

"I will, and know of no other reward than your hand, which—"

"Never will be yours," she rashly interposed.

"Gisela, is this your last word?"

"It is my last!"

A pause ensued; Conrad stood staring at vacancy, and seemed to be struggling with some resolve, while Gisela walked up and down the room, impatiently awaiting his departure.

"Gisela," he then began, in a tone of decision, "Gisela, I conjure you, decide not so rashly. For your own sake reject not my hand, but lay your own in it, and thus give me the right to defend you against the calumnies of the world. On your own account, and for your reputation in the world, repel me not. Yes, it is necessary for the preservation of your character that you should become my wife. You know not—"

"I know all," she interposed, with a sad smile. "I know what the world says of me, for I have a faithful, tender sister who most amiably takes it upon herself to inform me. But this does not alarm me; never shall the fear of the world move me to a marriage not sanctified by the affections! You shall not find me cowardly and pusillanimous. I defy danger, for I know my own will, and the ends I would attain. Boldly to strive for the right, and not to fear the world, is my motto, and it shall not be said that in the midst of the combat I basely fled the field of strife, to ensconce myself among the spectators. I see that your intentions toward me are good, in your way of thinking, but your way is not mine, and we can never walk in the same paths. Let, then, each pursue his own way, and should we accidentally meet at some cross-road, let it be only for a momentary greeting as we pass on!"

"Oh may you always be able to meet

me with this undaunted courage and this undiminished strength!"

"I hope to be so," she smilingly responded. "The world shall never curb my spirit nor clip the wings of my soul. Free and unobstructed will I wing my flight upward, and if in the end I succeed in reposing on mountain-peaks and airy heights, the opinions of the world will be a matter of indifference, as its contumely cannot reach me."

"May it be so!" sadly remarked Conrad; "may you never have occasion to repent your confidence! With this wish I go, only to think of you at a greater distance. In this very hour I take what will probably be my last leave of W—— and of Germany."

"You do well," said Gisela, "and I almost envy you the happiness of being able to enter so freely and unobstructed into life, and to conquer unbounded expanse through your will! Farewell!"

She gave him her hand, and a tear fell upon it as he pressed it to his lips. Stammering yet some words of adieu, he hastily departed.

On that same day he left the city.

"Do you know, dearest baroness," Madame von Zarcho asked Judith, "do you know that Baron von Serming yesterday started on a foreign tour?"

Judith gave an affirmative answer, with a compassionate shrug.

"And have you no suspicion why he has gone? They say that he was with your sister shortly before his departure; indeed, they pretend to say that he offered her his hand; his grief at being refused has driven him away."

"Would to God it were as you say!" sighed Judith, with tearful eyes cast up to heaven. "Would to God that not Gisela, but Serming, had the pain of disdained love to bear, and that he had fled, not to avoid her love, but her indifference!"

"How! you think, then, that he flees

before Gisela's tenderness, and to escape a compulsory marriage?"

"Alas, alas! so it is!" sighed Judith, putting her handkerchief to her eyes and weeping bitterly. "My poor sister, alas! has to bear the grief of despised love, and of beholding the flight of the possessor of her heart! But, dearest friend, only the deepest sorrow forces from me this secret. It is to be hoped that you will faithfully keep it."

"Can you doubt it?" exclaimed Madame von Zarcho, rising, in haste, to carry this news to the princess. "Can you, my dearest friend, doubt of my silence?"

Thanks to Madame von Zarcho's silence, in a few hours both court and city were duly informed of Gisela's unheard-of passion, and of the baron's cruel coldness; of her sorrow and his flight, and, in mockery, the young ladies called Gisela "the fair Dido deserted by her Æneas." Judith triumphed, and, with apparent friendly sympathy, repeated to Gisela all these injurious and insulting rumors. But she was, to the last degree, enraged when Gisela, with a calm smile, said: "Well, they at length have something to entertain them at court and in the city!"

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SURPRISE.

The spring began to exert anew its creative power in unfolding the buds and blossoms, and this season it was the custom of Judith to pass at her beautiful country-seat.

According to her deceased husband's testament, Judith could there receive none but her nearest relations. But this seemed to her only an assurance of an opportunity for conducting to a con-

clusion a little romance she was playing with the young Herr von Bender. How much must the passionate young man suppose himself to be loved by her when she exposed herself to the danger of losing her whole fortune for the sake of seeing him!

With sisterly kindness she represented to Gisela this change as a means of withdrawing herself from the scandal and mockery of the world, and the latter, grateful for so much sympathy and tender consideration, joyfully consented to the little journey.

The two ladies departed for a residence of some weeks at the country-seat. Herr von Bender, having obtained leave of absence for a long journey, left W—— at the same time; not, however, as his parents supposed, for the purpose of hastening to the south, but that he might, by a circuitous route, likewise repair to the country-seat of the Baroness Judith.

Having happily arrived there in the disguise of an amateur sportsman, the Baroness Judith was now observed daily to take long walks, without any one to accompany her but her yager, who followed his fair mistress at a most respectful distance, until the densest thickets of the wood concealed her from his sight.

This romantic love-adventure gave the baroness great pleasure, and certainly she had never been so charmingly indulgent to any of her previous lovers as to the disguised young count, who, at her feet, swore to remain forever her servant and slave. Judith believed him not, but she knew that he believed himself, and she good-naturedly smiled at this delusion of an inexperienced child.

Thus passed many days of love and its pleasures, and, in the sweet peace of awakening nature, Gisela, also, soon felt herself refreshed and internally healed.

She no longer had any hesitation,

doubts, or fears; she again felt contentedly tranquil, and her soul again rejoiced in delightful aspirations for life and happiness. She smiled at Judith's admonitory discourses; she smiled at all the scandalous rumors which the latter officiously and unsparingly repeated to her in relation to Conrad von Serming and herself, and the origin of which no one knew better than the repeater herself. It was on the evening of a day during which Judith had been incessantly preaching modesty and virtue to her sister, and warning her against thoughtlessly giving the world any new occasion for scandal, that Gisela, who had long since retired to her chamber, was attacked with a severe toothache.

She remembered having seen in the saloon a highly-recommended remedy for this pain; she knew where it was to be found, and, in the torment of her suffering, she determined to go for it. With a step light and cautious, that she might not disturb her sister, whom she supposed asleep in her own room, Gisela proceeded to the saloon, opened the door, and—found Herr von Bender upon his knees before Judith, who was sitting upon the divan!

For a moment Gisela stood speechless with amazement, and then burst from her so loud and joyous a laugh that Judith started up from her seat and stared at her laughing sister as one overcome with terror and confusion.

But this was only for a moment, and then she had recovered her presence of mind and tranquillity of deportment. Extinguishing the light with a sudden movement of her hand, she led her lover to the door, through which he hastily escaped; she then threw herself again upon the divan, and rang the bell with violence.

"What would you do, Judith?" asked Gisela; "why call your people? Shall they also see how you—"

"How I," interposed Judith, "can never enjoy a moment's repose free from your intrusion—how you disturb my solitary and silent contemplations."

"I disturb your solitude?" asked Gisela, amazed at such bold effrontery. "Judith, recollect yourself; you were not alone, you—"

"I was!" vehemently exclaimed Judith, as her waiting-maid entered with a light.

Gisela answered nothing; she inquiringly fixed her large glowing eyes upon her sister's face, and inwardly shuddered at the expression of perfect tranquillity legible there. Her sister avoided not her gaze, and, as their glances met, no tremulousness of the eyelids betrayed her internal commotion.

Gisela, shuddering and trembling, leaned against the wall, and it darkened before her eyes. It seemed to her as if she had in this moment lost a dear possession, as if she was suddenly isolated and deserted. And did she not in that hour love her last remaining relative, her only sister, in whom she trusted, in whom she believed, even if she had not loved? Not the scene previously presented, not that, was it which separated her from her sister, but the passing moment. That Judith loved, that she saw her lover in secret, Gisela could have pardoned; but the shamelessness, the unheard-of hypocrisy of her sister—that was what amazed and shocked her.

She quickly and shudderingly glanced into an abyss of falsehood and deception, and clearly saw that Judith's whole nature was nothing but one huge lie!

"Light the young lady to her chamber, Caroline," commanded Judith, with a firm voice; "she has been taken ill, and therefore hastened to me for aid and advice."

Gisela, motioning the servant back, slowly left the room, her glance con-



stantly and firmly resting upon Judith.

In a state of fearful excitement she continued to walk up and down her own room; no sleep visited her eyelids, and, under the painful strugglings of her soul, she then and there buried her forever-lost sister. She buried her sisterly affections under the reminiscences of her youth, but she wept them not. Her heart was suddenly chilled and benumbed, for scorn had consumed all sadness in her bosom. But she now felt that it would be impossible for her to continue to share the familiarity of daily life with this dead sister—that every day would bring her new pains, new torments. For Gisela's ardent nature was incapable of indifference—she knew, perhaps, to her own misfortune, nothing of that *juste milieu* of feeling by which some people make themselves so comfortable and in some sort happy. Where she had loved, she could not dilute that love into friendly indifference—she could not cover the coldness of her heart with a friendly smile.

Gisela was circumspect and cold, before loving or hating; but when either of these feelings had gained possession of her heart, it then became a lava-stream, which must bear on its surface the most magnificent flowers, or bring on its rushing torrent destruction and death. Gisela felt that henceforth the daily seeing of Judith would be to hate Judith; and she, who had never yet felt the power of love, now shrank with fear from the power of hate, which she suddenly recognized in herself.

But it was not without a feeling of pride and satisfaction that Gisela became conscious of that power; her heart had hitherto resembled a calm, unruddled sea, and with a sort of holy awe Gisela now, on the occasion of the first storm, saw it rise in mountain-waves and sink in fathomless abysses,

with its own inherent and irresistible force.

"Oh," said she, thrilling with an entirely new sensation, "I can hate with my whole undivided being, therefore shall I be able to love with equal fervor—so warmly as to absorb my whole existence. Oh, my God, where, then, lingers the love that is to bring me transports and torments, raptures and tears? My soul languishes for its congenial second soul, to which it can give itself, in which it can lose itself, with which it can identify itself through all eternity! Oh, where, then, lingers the love which is to bring me happiness?"

And the glowing child spread out her arms, while her swimming, flashing eyes glanced upward to the heavens, as if she expected the desired one to descend from thence.

While she was thus standing, a flashing star shot from its sphere and fell rapidly to the earth, describing a brilliant path, and then suddenly becoming entirely extinct.

Gisela, sighing, asked herself: "Will it be thus with my happiness? will it be nothing but a shining meteor which, when it vanishes, only leaves the night so much the darker?"

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE SEPARATION.

NOT untremblingly did Gisela look forward to the meeting with her sister on the following morning. She ventured not, as usual, to descend to the saloon, but quietly awaited in her chamber Judith's plans and determinations.

The latter was no moment in doubt as to the rôle she here had to play. She knew that the last night's scene would rob her of wealth and reputation as soon

as it became known; but she also knew that Gisela would never betray her, that she was generous enough in no case to unfold the dark secret of the preceding night. This conclusion once arrived at, Judith resolved to approach Gisela with neither prayers nor promises, but to shield herself against all humiliation by unmitigated lying.

But that humiliation which she wished outwardly to conceal, she could not help feeling within. There was now one being who could not be deceived by her virtuous words, nor by the pious folding of her hands—a being who saw through all her disguises, and discovered beneath them all her artfully-concealed passions and intrigues.

That this being was her sister, came not into view; Judith vowed eternal vengeance against her—vowed to destroy, cost what it might, the maiden who inimically hemmed her way.

Her eyes flashed with the wildest hatred, and her breath came stormily from her breast, as she with clinched fist uttered this dark vow of eternal hatred of her sister.

But Judith was a mistress in dissimulation. When she soon afterward entered Gisela's chamber, her face was clear and cheerful as ever, and with an affectionate smile she offered to her sister her hand.

"Now, tell me," she asked, in a light, bantering tone, "tell me, Gisela, what sort of a terrible dream frightened you so last night that you immediately sought refuge with me?"

"Yes, it was indeed a dark dream," said Gisela, with a proud and earnest glance, "a dream in which I saw you as a dissembling actress, a glittering lie—a dream in which all the tinsel of virtue with which you have hitherto enveloped yourself fell from you, and left you standing before me in all the hatefulness of revealed vice."

"In fact, that must have been really

amusing," said Judith, with a quiet smile. "It was right in you, Gisela, that you immediately hastened to me, to convince yourself by my countenance that that horrible appearance was only a dream."

"Judith!" cried Gisela, with an expression of amazement.

"Sister!" said Judith, calmly glancing at her.

Their eyes met, and long remained fixed upon each other. But Gisela was finally no longer able to bear the glance of those great, dissembling eyes; she felt ashamed, humiliated, by such consummate impudence, and, sighing, she cast down her own.

A triumphant smile fitted across Judith's features. She had conquered, with her cold imperturbability; she had prevailed against the just anger of her sister; she, the guilty one, enjoyed a triumph over an innocent one who had positive proof of her guilt.

But only for a moment did her features speak out the thoughts of her soul, and then her brow resumed its calm and cheerful expression, and, laying her hand upon Gisela's shoulder, she sympathetically said: "You are ill, Gisela—your face is flushed, and your eyes flash with a fever-glow."

"I fear that last night's dream has made me ill," said Gisela, "and I also fear the return of that dream, which within these walls is not improbable, and therefore I shall leave them to-day!"

"I came even now to propose to you to return with me to the city," said Judith.

"Well, I agree to the proposal, and may this ride be the last we ever take together!"

"How! you would—"

"Separate myself from you, that I may never again have such bad dreams, and that I may live according to my inclinations and wishes, untroubled by your virtuous and pious exhortations."

"And who, think you, will afford you protection, and at the same time allow you to follow your strange and scandalous inclinations?"

"The Countess Benno is a benevolent, virtuous lady; she was the friend of our dear mother; with her will I seek a refuge."

"She will not receive you!"

"Well, then, I will live alone in the villa I lately inherited from our uncle."

"How! you would dare so to bid defiance to all propriety and virtuous customs; you, a young girl of seventeen, would so tread under foot all decency, as—"

"I beg of you, sister," interposed Gisela, "leave all this preaching about virtue and decency; from your lips it sounds like mockery. I tell you I shall have the courage to carry out my intention."

"Well, do it, then," said Judith, with vehemence. "Grasp with childish presumption the spokes of the wheel of your future; you will thereby only mangle your hands, and be compelled to expiate your wicked presumption with your blood."

"Better to fall in honorable combat than to conquer with cunning and deceit."

"The world is no tilting-arena where victory is achieved with honorable arms; the combat is successfully carried on with only poisoned weapons, and they only conquer who deceive."

"Then I greet you as conqueror," frigidly responded Gisela.

Judith now felt that her hatred was overcoming her assumed calmness, and its fury too great for her forced equanimity.

Add to which, so far as concerned Gisela, the veil was torn from her brow, and, as no disguising or concealment was longer possible, she grew tired of useless dissimulation. She was accustomed to this conduct only so long

as dissimulation was useful for the attainment of her ends; when it ceased to be so, she then unveiled her internal nature with an unexampled boldness, and astonished her hearer by an exhibition of brutal violence which had before been so carefully concealed under an amiable exterior.

She now, therefore, threw off the mask of gracious friendliness, and her features took the unmistakable expression of the wildest rage and the darkest revenge. With bloodshot eyes, with burning cheeks, with nervously contracted lips, stood she now before Gisela, who regarded her angry face with a quiet and disdainful smile.

"Ah, I see at length your real features," said Gisela; "at length you condescend to show yourself as you are."

"Yes, and you shall now learn what are my feelings toward you," responded Judith, with an almost inhuman laugh. "In this hour, at least, you shall have no cause to complain of a want of sincerity in me; in this hour you shall see my whole soul, and, at the bottom of it, read all the hatred and contempt with which I regard you. Yes, I hate you, and have hated you from the moment when I first saw you; my hatred dates from the moment when I impressed my first sisterly kiss upon your lips!"

"A Judas kiss!" disdainfully responded Gisela.

"Stupid child, to believe that any other kisses are given and received in this world! Stupid child, to believe in my protestations of sisterly love! Look at me, Gisela: with such a glance of hatred has my soul always rested upon you, and, when I took you to my arms, I, at the same time, sought to find out the place where I could most fatally wound you! Every woman is the natural enemy of all others of her sex, and not to believe in this enmity, is to brave and outrage women and the world.

You have braved and insulted me by the bold spirit with which you have defied the world, and your determination to triumph through truth and sincerity, when others are obliged to purchase every triumph with consummate art and incessant effort. With a smile, with inactive tranquillity, would you wrench from my head a diadem to conquer which I have sacrificed my sleep by night and my peace by day—for which I have torn every root of nature from my heart, and made it an artistic garden in which no other blossoms than those willed by me can ever bloom.”

“Poisonous plants always bear the most beautiful blossoms,” contemptuously interposed Gisela.

“Only let your heart once become right sick, and then you will welcome such poisonous plants for their medicinal virtues! Nothing, here below, can be accomplished by truth and innocence; and, while you would conquer the world with these simple weapons, I have staked my youth and peace on its conquest by cunning and deception; and because you brave me with your open visor, under which every one can recognize your features, therefore do I hate you, and shall always hate you! Oh, believe me, I could have loved you, could have shared with you my joys and my sorrows. Arm in arm could we have reposed upon the battle-field from our outward combats; I could have confided in you, had you come to me with a closed visor and an impenetrable mask, to whisper in my ear the watchword by which the confederated but scattered bands of those who seek their happiness here on earth know each other—the watchword, *Dissimulation and Intrigue*. I should, with all confidence, have given you my hand, shared with you my experiences, made you my pupil, and taught you the difficult art of conquering the world. But you preferred war to peace. You came to me

not with a concealed dagger, but with flaunting banner and lance in rest. See to it that your arms be not turned against yourself, and that you bleed not from the very sword with which you hope to conquer!”

“I fear neither the world nor your poisoned arms,” firmly and boldly exclaimed Gisela. “Happiness is not obtained by conquest; it sinks with God’s peace into the soul, and gives itself only to him who believably prays for it.”

“So say children and fools; wise people know better. Go your way with this foolish delusion; it will soon lead you to an abyss in which, with wringing hands and flying hair, you will implore in vain for help.”

“I shall not implore help, but with confidence throw a bridge across the abyss, over which I shall be safely conducted by hope!”

“But remember,” cried Judith, with a savage laugh, “remember that I shall be behind you, ready to cast you into the gulf. Remember that in me you have an enemy who will never rest until she sees you bleeding and suppliant at her feet! Reflect that you dared to see me in a dream the memory of which I will rend from your heart, or rend your heart from your breast. Reflect that I will never consent to being obliged to tremble before you; to share with me a dangerous secret is to have already taken the first step to destruction. Remember this, and that I can never pardon that dream. You have wished the combat, and you shall have it. Henceforth you will find me in your every path; wherever you might possibly pluck a flower of happiness, there will I be to prevent you; wherever you would seek repose, there will I be to disturb you; for our enmity is one for life and death, and think not that I shall forget this in any one hour of my life! Rely upon your innocence, hasten boldly into the world, and try



your trusted arms—they will be found powerless against the scorpion of calumny that I will send after you, and with which I will everywhere follow you! And now," said she, with a scornful laugh, "I hope you are satisfied with my sincerity. I have openly declared war against you, see to the means and manner of defending yourself!"

"I accept the combat," said Gisela, with sparkling eyes, "fearing neither the world nor your threats. If life be such that only deceit and lying can triumph, ah, who would then struggle for such a miserable boon? But I do not believe it; I have confidence in life, in the future, in the world, and I will go into the world to fulfil the mission with which I have been sent."

"A feminine messiah of innocence and happiness," said Judith, mockingly; "the Messiah was crucified!"

"So may it be, if only the doctrine triumphs—the doctrine that truth and innocence can alone give peace, cheerfulness, happiness! In this doctrine I believe, and in this faith will I go on with an unveiled heart, and my bosom open to all the enjoyments of life. To will the right, and not to fear the world—to strive for success, with truth and sincerity for my weapons—that is my object."

"With which it will be with you as with Moses on Mount Sinai. When he looked down into the promised land, he died; and, like him, no one has entered the promised land of innocence and happiness; a glimpse of it is fatal!"

Gisela hung down her head, and made no answer.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE KIND COUNTESS.

ON the morning after that unpleasant conversation of the two sisters, Judith ordered her travelling-equipage.

"The struggle is commenced," said she, with a scornful laugh. "Gisela shall at least learn that she has to do with a proficient. I must now, first of all, bring the matter to an explosion. Every one must know that I break with her, and renounce her forever. And who will then receive her when I, her own sister, give her up? She hopes in the Countess Benno? I must take measures to blast that hope!"

Judith then sat down and wrote: "With an anxious and broken heart I turn to you, dearest countess! You were the faithful friend of my mother; you will sympathize with me in my sorrow! Gisela's reckless and immoral conduct renders it impossible for me to suffer her longer in my house; and, however much my unquenchable sisterly affection urges me not to thrust from me the child of my mother, I dare not listen to the whisperings of my too feeling heart to retain at my side a maiden whom I cannot improve, but who would involve me in her own destruction! Oh, could I flee to a desert with her, then would I cover Gisela's erring heart with the mantle of all-forgiving love, and never leave her. But in the world, myself weak and erring, myself yet young and exposed to a thousand dangers, I cannot, I dare not put at stake my reputation, my honor, by retaining Gisela in my house, to be requited, perhaps, by ingratitude and open shame. But it shall not be said that my heart has become cold and inaccessible to my sister. She will come to implore your protection. Oh, have compassion for her. And though I can-

not ask of your strong and penetrating mind a belief in the eloquent words about fearless virtue and contempt of the world, with which she will strive to win you, yet I hope from your nobly generous spirit that you will have the courage and the strength, disregarding the judgment of the world and the displeasure of our virtuous princess, to receive the erring child into your house and home. You may venture to do what I dare not; your reputation is not to be shaken, and nothing can rob you of the favor of our beloved princess. I pray you, therefore, have compassion for her."

"This letter cannot fail to work," said Judith, folding the billet. "I know the Countess Benno well enough to be convinced that she has not the courage either to brave the displeasure of the princess, or to receive into her family a maiden whom I repudiate.—A similar billet to Madame von Zarcho will soon make this affair public, and it will serve as a welcome piece of news for the princess."

After finishing the second billet, she said to herself, with flashing eyes: "This for your pride, Gisela; oh, we shall well enough know how to humble it!"

She then entered her carriage, commanding a second one to be in readiness for Gisela, and hastened to the city, where her footman immediately started for the delivery of the billets to the two ladies.

In a few hours, thanks to the activity of Judith's two friends, the quarrel of the sisters was made known to the whole city; and, as the sympathizing and curious friends of the baroness hastened to condole with Judith, they found her dissolved in tears, and overcome by grief.

"Oh, ask me not what separates us, what the cause of my tears," said she, with a trembling voice; "never, no,

never shall the dark secret escape my lips. Spare my sisterly heart! Ask me not to relate the tale of my sister's shame. You would, indeed, despise me if I could do it!"

But this shrewd, mysterious reticence could only give rise to the most singular and horrible suppositions, and soon the most fabulous and terrible rumors were circulating, readily believed by ladies who envied Gisela's beauty, and by gentlemen who knew her coldness.

And with no suspicion of all this, Gisela came back to the city with a tranquil mind and blooming countenance. In her heart she thanked her sister for her tender consideration, after yesterday's scene, in not taking her back to the city in the same carriage with herself.

Oh, she little thought how well Judith knew how to utilize the time she had thus gained; every intrigue was unknown to her open and proud mind, and, when she took up the glove her sister had thrown down, she only thought of meeting Judith face to face in an open field.

On arriving in W——, Gisela hastened to the Countess Benno.

This lady, known for her Christian piety and her benevolence to the poor, rich, respectable, and independent, had been the chosen friend of Gisela's mother, and had hitherto continued to be the most deferential and complaisant friend of the daughters.

She had read Judith's letter just before the entrance of Gisela, whom she accordingly received with repulsive coolness.

Gisela said: "Dearest countess, you have often complained of having no daughter, no near relative. I have reason to complain that I have no mother to require my obedience, to regulate my steps, to whom I can devote my days, my life! Will you, countess, be to me

that mother? Will you accept me as your daughter?"

An expression of the purest affection beamed from her eyes as she, with a heart-winning smile, offered her hand to the countess.

The countess, however, took not the offered hand; starting back a step, she coolly said: "You have a very warm heart, my young lady; but I fear no room is left in it for filial love, and I doubt whether I can find in mine a maternal love for you."

"Oh, I will love you with all my soul and all my strength," said Gisela, submissively; "I have no longer any one here to love!"

"And your sister, the noble and virtuous Baroness Judith?" asked the countess, with severity.

"We are forever separated!" sadly responded Gisela. "Ask me not, countess, what has separated us! There is so much in this world that should be buried in the shadow of our souls,—and this sorrow, also, must bleed in silence. Therefore come I to you—therefore do I languishingly open my arms for you! I am alone in the world, a poor, friendless, homeless orphan,—give me a mother, countess, give me a home! It is the orphan daughter of your dearest friend who implores you! Protect me from the calumnies of the world. Who will dare to slander me when you call me daughter, when you allow me to walk at your side?"

"But should they so dare? If—"

"No one will dare it," interposed Gisela; "and should they so dare, yet I know that you, the noble, beneficent woman, will not be restrained from a good action by a fear of the world!"

"You err, miss," said the countess, with cutting coldness; "my disregard of the world goes not so far. We can love God and strive for virtue, without carrying our Christian love and humility so far as to expose ourselves to the

scorn of the world for the sins of others. To aid the poor and suffering is demanded by Christian love, but we are not commanded to share with them a home which their errors or crimes may render miserable."

"This, then," cried Gisela, proudly rising and regarding the countess with flashing eyes, "this, then, is Christian love! this pious folding of the hands, this humble praying and mortification of the flesh, is nothing but a painted mask that one holds before the face for the concealment of the fear of men and the world! You love God, only to make sure of His protection! You fold your hands in prayer, that you may not be compelled to open them for a deed of humanity and love! You coldly repel a soul which cries to you in deepest need, and if you then give of your superfluity for the relief of physical suffering, you think you have done all that is required by Christian love! Go, countess, I no longer beg for your heart, for you have no heart and no love; you fear man more than you fear God! You cannot open your arms to misfortune, you can only open your hands to give what you have to give, and that is nothing but gold!"

"You dare thus to speak to me!" cried the pious countess, glowing with anger. "What gives you the right so to speak?"

"My misfortunes and my innocence," proudly responded Gisela. "You have dared to doubt my innocence; you have not the courage to believe in that innocence; and, while you unfeelingly tax me with crime, you demand that I should spare you. Go your own way, countess; I came to you because I have always respected you. I supposed you to be elevated high above the littleness of the vulgar crowd, and therefore I desired to honor you with my confidence, with the demand of a favor. For, when misfortune begs for aid and protection,

it does not abase itself, it only exalts and honors those to whom the prayer is addressed, and who are supposed to be capable of granting it."

"I owe you thanks for this honor," said the countess, with a scornful laugh. "But as mine is not a house of correction or reformation, I cannot receive you!"

"Countess!" exclaimed Gisela, in a threatening tone, advancing a step toward the lady, and regarding her with a glance of fire,—“countess, venture not to insult me; your injuries recoil upon your own head! But no, no,” she then continued, after a pause, “you are a pious lady, a pattern of virtue, no one will dare to insult you! What matters it that you close your heart to mercy, that you have no room in your heart for generosity or kindness—you are yet a pious lady, a pattern of virtue! What matters it that you lack humanity, if you possess the so-called ‘Christian love;’ what matters it that you repel a living soul, if you do but open your door to the common beggar!”

“It is enough, leave me!” cried the countess.

At this moment the bell of a neighboring church began to ring for mass. Gisela said: “It is indeed enough, and I will leave you, that you may be able to hasten to the divine service! Do you hear? the bell is already ringing for prayer. Fare you well, countess, and omit not to pray. But I do not wish you to include me in your prayers, and know very well you will not, as the pious countess is henceforth my implacable enemy!”

With a proud step she left the room, and, without noticing the waiting carriage, wandered slowly down the street toward her sister’s dwelling.

It was wonderful to see this fair, slender maiden, with her interesting pale face, as she slowly and seriously as a queen walked along with proud

dignity. She seemed not at all to notice that curious eyes were peeping from all the houses, that windows were everywhere opened to enable people the better to indulge a malicious curiosity.

She was neither timid nor embarrassed; she clearly saw their curious glances, she heard the windows open, but she sought not to brave the matter out with an affected boldness, nor yet timidly to shrink from observation. She was only ingenuously and modestly earnest.

On entering her room, exhausted by this internal commotion, she dropped into a chair. She was confused, benumbed, but she made no complaint, and felt no sorrow, only a deep disdain, an infinite hatred of the world, and increased courage.

She was aroused by the entrance of a servant, who came to announce the Prince Lothaire.

The latter came in, and, as she was then alone, he for a long time silently contemplated the pale but noble maiden, who struck him as resembling a lily wavering in the storm.

“Was I not right, Gisela,” said he, with deep emotion, “in warning you against the world? But you are like the child that laughingly plays with fire until its waving locks are caught in the flames. Gisela, you are playing with a fire that may at any moment consume the blossoms of your whole existence, and convert the bright locks of your waving hair into a heap of ashes! This is not courage, it is folly! Was I not, therefore, right in warning you?”

“No, no,” vehemently exclaimed Gisela, with overflowing eyes, “you were not, therefore, right! Falsehood and deception can neither create nor protect happiness; no, no, truth and sincerity always triumph in the end!”

“Look around you, young maiden,



and see for yourself that it is not so! Why not have the courage to open your eyes, when you have the courage to defy the world? Why go with closed eyes to meet the dangers to which you so courageously offer your unprotected breast? Look up, bold and defiant child, cast a glance around you, and in every direction you will see only envious and malicious faces, mocking, curious, and unsympathizing! You are virtuous, and yet people dare to represent your virtue suspicious; you are innocent, and yet pronounced guilty; you have striven for the good, and yet attained but the bad, the common, and the ignoble!"

"Wait, wait, until the end; the combat is but just commenced, and, though I now seem to succumb, I may yet conquer. I am yet unwounded, and my feet are not yet turned for flight!"

"And precisely this courageous defiance the world will never pardon! But, Gisela, you may yet conciliate it. Despise the world if you will, but show not your contempt for it; envelop your pride in the mantle of humility, your superiority in the appearance of subjection. Give yourself the appearance of flight, and your courage will be pardoned, and with the appearance of surrendering you will conquer! Suspect all, but give yourself the appearance of artlessness; in all your conduct follow only your own convictions, but listen to the counsels of your seeming friends, and seem desirous of following them."

"No," firmly responded Gisela, "I prefer misfortune to such successful perfidy. My God, I could be so easily contented, I require so little to make me happy! A little freedom, a little air, and much love in my own breast—I desire no other happiness! And this may be so easily accorded!"

"You think so? Ah, charming, foolish child, while one loves he is a pris-

oner to his own folly, and he only is free who strips all chains of love from his heart and teaches it to see things as they are! Hope not for freedom, so long as you yet have hope in love!"

"Well, then," said Gisela, with a fascinating smile, "slavery shall then be welcome to me!"

"You are incorrigible. I see that I can neither aid nor counsel you. But the time for aid and counsel will come, and the hour will strike. I cannot preserve you from sorrow, but I may teach you how to bear and triumph over it."

"But why this gloomy faith? why these sad forebodings? Oh, is it then impossible for happiness to smile upon me?"

"It will smile, as the serpent upon the bird it would swallow. You would attain happiness by sincerity, while it is the price only of falsehood and hypocrisy! You would combat for it with the weapon of love, when it can be conquered only by hate! But this now appears to you obscure and enigmatical. The day will come, Gisela, when you will understand me. You disdain guarding against sorrow. I would, therefore, prepare you for it, and offer you a medicinal remedy for it when it comes. At least, accept my warning. Pay no attention to the hortatory discourses of your sister; she is your enemy, your cruel, irreconcilable enemy—for you are innocent, and Judith sees in you what she has forever lost."

"Oh, you know, then—"

"That Judith is an excellent actress? yes, I know that," said the prince, with a scornful smile. "Does this astonish you? I see that also with you Judith has preserved her character as a shrewd actress. Of that, another time. Tomorrow is my wife's fête-day. Shall you appear at court?"

"I think, no! It is better to with-

draw voluntarily than by compulsion."

"Ah, Gisela, that is beautiful. I see that you are already beginning to learn worldly wisdom—perhaps you may make rapid progress in the art of being happy. You are right, go not to the court. It was to give you this advice that I came."

"I thank you," said Gisela, holding out her hand, which the prince pressed to his lips. She then imparted to him her determination to remain no longer with her sister, but to reside at her villa in the suburbs of the city.

"This would be considered natural," said the prince, "were you a young widow; but as you are a young maiden, it will never be pardoned in you."

"Be it so," impatiently responded Gisela; "why should I heed the opinions of a world which approves or condemns only according to appearances?"

"Appearances," exclaimed the prince, "are the idols worshipped by the world, the golden calf before which it kneels in adoration! Every thing here below is but appearance, and you would be so foolish, young maiden, as to disregard appearances?"

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## CHAPTER XI.

### FREEDOM.

GISELA was free, was alone with God and Nature!

With what enjoyments did she not supply the solitude of her villa! How sweet to her was its prevailing stillness; how healing was the peace of its solitary rooms! At length she was alone, with nothing to disturb the equanimity of her soul, no thought of the world, no repenting or lamenting, no sorrow and no torment.

Singing and rejoicing, she went from room to room, so that Hedwig, an old servant of her mother, and now the faithful companion of her young and beloved mistress, could hardly follow her, and was obliged to watch at a distance the movements of her tall and slender form.

"Hedwig, my good Hedwig," cried Gisela, turning back and clasping her hand, "I am at length in my own house. See, all this is mine, these divans, these chairs, these tables, all, all are mine! All may be old-fashioned and simple, but, to me, it looks beautiful; for it is mine, and I can do with it as I please. It is better to live in the humblest cottage of one's own building than in a palace belonging to another."

"But you may perhaps yet regret, my dear young lady, the loss of the splendid palace of the lady baroness, where all your surroundings were so fine and costly. I fear you will feel the want of many conveniences here."

"What, Hedwig! I miss nothing. What shall we feel the want of, aunty?"

"In the first place, you have no equipage."

"But a pair of sound feet that will carry me through field and wood, over meadow and brook. And then, Hedwig, you forget my pony, my dear gentle Henno. Oh, he will feel much better here than in the city, where I was obliged to ride so slowly and gravely, so seriously and timidly, through the streets, at my sister's side, with servants following. All that is unnecessary here. Here I am alone with my Henno, and we go quick or slow, according to our humor. Oh, how charming it will be!"

"But, when you return fatigued and exhausted, you have no soft sofa on which to repose your weary limbs. All these things are stuffed so hard."

"Bah! what care I for the stuffing? But for you, Hedwig, we will have a good, softly-cushioned chair. You shall be enabled to stretch your old limbs upon the softest down, and have no cause to complain of being incommoded. You shall buy you the most costly and comfortable arm-chair in W——."

"Oh, it was not for myself, not for myself that I complained. I thought only of you!"

"And I of you, good aunty! You are old, and need fostering care; and as you cared for me when I was a child and needed nursing, so will I now care for you, you good old child."

Old Hedwig, weeping with emotion, kissed the hand of her beloved young mistress. But Gisela clasped her in her arms, and smilingly said: "You weep; was I not right in calling you an old child?"

Then nodding, smiling, and humming an old song, she trotted into the adjoining room and closed the door.

She wished to be alone, entirely alone, that she might undisturbedly give herself up to her internal joyful emotions. Opening the window, she eagerly inhaled the refreshing evening air which played with her locks and fanned her glowing cheeks.

With infinite satisfaction did she realize the stillness and the peace of happy, undisturbed freedom, and, leaning out of the window in the warm night, she glanced with an ecstasy of delight over the lovely moonlighted landscape spread out at her feet.

The garden in which her villa lay sparkled in all the freshness of early spring; the fragrance of the anemones and violets was wafted up to her; in the transparent water of the little lake, where she could clearly distinguish the movements of the graceful swans, reposed the moon in a long stripe of gold, and, through the trembling foliage of

the tall trees, stirred the wind in low prattling whispers, which were occasionally drowned by the joyous song of the lark or the delightful hum of the locust. And, in this peaceful scene, Gisela was alone, free and happy. A thousand voices whispered in her of coming happiness, of awaiting joys, and nothing was there to disturb those delightful secret whisperings of her young heart, nothing to sadden the smile of those fresh lips.

From this time forward began for Gisela precious days of undisturbed enjoyment. No longer held in bonds by Judith's officious care, her active mind freely and boldly unfolded itself; her soul expanded wings which bore her to the lofty heights of enthusiasm, or sunk her in the abysses of despair. For pleasure is so nearly allied to pain, that Gisela, listening to the mysterious dithyramb in which her inward delight overflowed, would burst into tears, hardly knowing whether she wept for joy or sorrow. To escape these internal dissonances, she would then hasten into the wood or meadow, and there pass whole days, collecting flowers and plants for earnest botanical studies, or she would mount her horse, her faithful Henno, and, in a rushing gallop, give vent to feelings not clear even to herself. And when thus flying, with sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks, her white robe fluttering in the wind, the chance pedestrians would stop to follow, with a glance of wonder and admiration, her rapidly-vanishing form, scarcely knowing whether it was an airy image of the imagination or a reality.

But the poor of the neighboring hamlets, the children, and the aged, these found no difficulty in recognizing this rapidly-passing form, and, whenever they saw it coming, they saluted her appearance with smiles and blessings, asking themselves, "To what poor or

sick sufferer may our dear young lady now be hastening to afford him aid and consolation?"

Gisela knew how to bestow her bounty in the spirit of love, to afford consolation not merely with pious words and empty prayers, but also with the living word of a liberal and sympathizing heart; and the gentle, melting tones of her voice, the charming smile of her fresh lips, her pitying attention to every complaint, and the compassionate tears she often shed for others, not unfrequently sufficed to ameliorate the sorrow and awaken the hopes of the sufferers. With a delicate and unerring tact she knew how to offer the right consolation for every affliction, and, where she could render no material aid, she could still give her sympathy and her tears.

She was soon known throughout the whole neighborhood as "the handsome young lady," "the tutelary genius of the unfortunate," and, wherever there was suffering, wherever aid and consolation were required, people hastened to inform Gisela, and to implore her presence. But Gisela's active spirit demanded a greater, a more enlarged sphere of usefulness. She was not satisfied with thinking and learning for herself alone, with devoting herself to painting, music, and more serious studies for her own exclusive benefit; she desired to awaken mental life in others, to open to others the precious sources of science and art. Her discriminating eye soon discerned in the neighborhood some talented young girls with fresh voices, whose instruction and musical training she undertook. And whenever she had spent several hours in a day in the society of these young people, who soon loved and revered her, she would return to her solitude with an infinitely blissful feeling, which sought expression in exulting songs,

which she often intoned in the stillness of night.

So passed many weeks in her peaceful and happy retirement. Prince Lothaire came only rarely to interrupt but not to disturb this solitude. Did he then begin to express his contempt of the world, she would challenge him to the love of Nature, to glance upon the bright landscape surrounding them, to go with her through wood and field, to gather flowers, and to examine her beautiful drawings. Spoke he of his disdain for men, she would relate to him the charming traits of love and heroism she had often witnessed in the humble cottages of poverty and misery, or she would sing to him his favorite songs to the accompaniment of her harp, soothing his inward griefs by the sweet tones drawn from the depths of her soul.

But Prince Lothaire was the only one who came from W—— to visit her; Princess Clotilde, in her moral indignation, had launched the thunders of interdiction against the calumniated maiden, and no one ventured to brave an anger which seemed to be so well justified by Judith's sorrow and mourning for her lost sister. Gisela neither missed nor regretted any one, and, in writing to her second father of her manner of life, she said:

"In deep draughts I drink the golden freedom of this uncircumscribed and untroubled life, and the presence of even polished and educated people could only disturb me in this enjoyment. I would, indeed, have nothing to do with civilization and culture, and I never feel better than when the storm beats against my window, and the trees in the park nod and bend like light flower-stalks. Before such free and untamed power I feel a deep adoration, and the squirrels that gayly leap from tree to tree seem to me more to be envied than a princess in her palace.



Blame me not, therefore, my dear anxious friend, nor must you think this indwelling thirst for freedom is the highest or most powerful feeling of my soul. Listen, rather, my kind father, to the confession of your daughter, that she languishes for slavery and subjection. See, so foolish am I, that, calling myself happy, I nevertheless sigh for a more distant happiness; and, satisfied with the present, nevertheless cherish golden dreams of the future, in comparison with which the present seems pale and colorless. My heart yet lives in its winter sleep, and, under its icy covering, I seem to discover the mysterious stirrings of a coming vernal season and blossom-life. Oh, when—when will some sunbeam melt this ice-covering, and permit my heart to thaw into the full spring of love? When, at length, will a beloved and commanding hand draw me down from my free and solitary elevation, and compel me to subjection, to humility, and to adoration? Oh, when will love finally come to convert me into a servant and a slave? I languish for it, as a king longs for the coronation which is to make him really a king. Shall I never be really a woman until crowned and enchained by love? How I long for love, as the blind for rays of the sun! Am I not also blind, and must not love come to open my eyes and give me sight? Oh, Bernhard, if you did but know how often I call for the warmly-desired, unknown friend; how often my arms are outspread in empty space, hoping, yearning, sighing, languishing; how often I seek his name in the depths of my heart, and inquire after him of the stars; how often, with trembling hands and glowing cheeks, I draw his image, and then destroy it for shame! My whole existence lies trembling, awaiting its new birth through love—through that second nobler existence in which it may be melted, mingled, lost.

Oh, my heart, when will this beloved come?"

She was interrupted by the noise of a galloping horse in the court-yard. She rose and ran to the window, where she saw an unknown man leap from his steed and throw the reins to a servant. Gisela thought she had never seen a finer or prouder form; and as he now, glancing up, raised his hat to her, she was astonished to observe the extreme beauty of his face. The entering servant announced Baron Walther.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### BARON WALTHER.

BARON WALTHER, the near relative of the deceased court-marshal, and, by the latter, selected in a certain manner as Judith's adversary, belonged to one of the oldest and richest families of the land, and, in the forefathers' hall of the ancestral castle, Walthersburg, shone the princely escutcheon of the family over a long line of barons and baronesses of that race.

Also, the present baron's mother was the daughter of some small German prince, and never would have consented to that *mésalliance*, had she not been poor and somewhat faded, while the baron was, at the same time, rich and handsome.

She, therefore, with a sigh, consented to exchange the princely title for that of simple baroness; but, having once made this sacrifice, she rendered her husband daily sensible of the extent of her condescension, and was constantly lamenting her lost greatness.

The baron, weary of her ever-recurring complainings, finally often left her to mourn in solitude, and hence she heartily rejoiced when her son Walther, the only fruit of this mar-

riage, became of an age to understand and share her regrets and lamentations.

It is sweet to open to a sympathetic soul the sources of a hidden sorrow, and hence precious to the princely baroness were those hours in which she could relate to her listening son the vanished magnificence of her splendid paternal palace—in which she incited him to do honor to his origin, and, by a noble, proud deportment, to show himself worthy of his princely descent.

For her, the proud and happy mother, the son was a legitimate prince, and she was not long in teaching him to entertain the same views, and to yield himself to this ambitious conviction.

The education of this princely son was conducted in conformity with these views, his pride and vanity being constantly awakened and encouraged, his mental capabilities neglected, and his fine convivial talents nurtured and perfected.

The young baron was as proud, arrogant, and vain as his mother, to whom he only too willingly listened when she, wondering at his beauty, assured him that no one could resist him; that he must conquer wherever he might be pleased to show himself; that he was not only the handsomest, but also the wisest, wittiest, shrewdest man of all his compeers. The poison of weak maternal love sank constantly deeper and deeper into the young man's heart, until it had destroyed every other movement there, and left nothing but measureless self-adoration.

He had not yet known love, as his heart had already become incapable of it, having room in it for no other love than that of self. Hence his father's death occasioned him no sorrow, as that parent had never paid him the tribute of admiring affection which his doting mother had taught him to con-

sider his due. But he wept when his mother soon afterward died, for she had raised her love for him to a sort of worship, and he missed the princess consecrated to his service. But his mother had told him that every woman would gladly become to him a worshipping priestess, and, as he longed for adoration, he now eagerly sought the world. By favor of the reigning prince, he was declared of age in his eighteenth year, and set out on his travels.

Had he made his appearance in the world as a poor and humble man, it would have cruelly and unsparingly undeceived him as to the justifiableness of his self-love, and quickly convinced him of the insignificance of his person and the ridiculousness of his claims to learning; but this young baron, entering the world with all the glitter of wealth, with a splendid equipage, surrounded by richly-gallooned servants, came with all the pride of an incognito travelling prince. On account of his wealth and splendor, all his proud haughtiness was pardoned. His cold indifference excited the vanity of the ladies; his calm, imposing silence the curiosity of the gentlemen. His politic mother had taught her son the great art of being *silent* at the right time, as the most useful rule of life, and Baron Walther soon learned to appreciate the wisdom of her instruction. The proud tranquillity usually spread over his fair and noble countenance, never failed of its effect, as Baron Walther had early learned the difficult art of rendering his taciturnity imposing, and of making what little he did say appear the more significant and important from the long preceding silence. He cunningly covered his lack of scientific attainments with the mantle of his reticence, and, when any company became excited in a learned controversy, and he alone sat dumb and smiling by, he could be sure

that all eyes would be interrogatingly turned to him with eager curiosity to learn also his opinion and the result of his lengthy silent cogitation. And when, in a circle of ladies, every tongue was eloquent in praise of the fair songstress at the piano, and Walther alone was silent, he well knew that the fair musician thirsted for nothing so much as precisely to hear praise from his lips. A proud calm, a noble reserve, constantly accompanied his appearance, repressing all confidence while apparently rendering it desirable. To be spoken to by Walther, to be led to the dance by him, seemed a distinction for which all struggled; and what a triumph it was when his proud, tranquil glance became animated, when his tall and erect form graciously bent forward, and it seemed as if admiration of the beautiful woman with whom he was conversing, had humbled his pride and changed the master into a slave! I say when it seemed, for, with Walther, nothing was involuntary, nothing uncalculated; he knew exactly every expression of his face; he was conscious of every air he assumed; he was always exactly what he willed to be, and all the excitements and feelings that seemed to light up his brow, were nothing but puppets with which he dexterously played, and which he always knew how to place in the right light. He had sought the world that he might shine and be worshipped in it, and the object for which he strove sharpened his faculty of perception, and taught him the means of attaining his end.

Cold and egoistic, silent and observing, he always maintained a sort of ascendancy over those who surrounded him, quickly learned to recognize and profit by their weaknesses, and soon became a perfected male coquette, striving for general favor with all the means at his command.

So endowed with beauty, wealth, and rank, with brilliant social talents, shrewd and sly, knowing and utilizing the weaknesses of the world, it could not be otherwise than that Baron Walther obtained a brilliant and undisputed success wherever he appeared; and this, indeed, could serve only to increase his admiration of himself and the high idea he cherished of his own importance. Baron Walther was an unmitigated *roué*—without, however, ever once allowing himself to be carried away by the intoxication of pleasure, without ever for one moment forgetting his princely descent or his high dignity. Amid all the enjoyments of life he remained with temperate senses, with a cold, colorless imagination, and he soon wearied of his triumphs. A profound languor took possession of him, and he sought in vain for distraction and excitement.

In vain did life present to him its most luxurious and seductive colors and images; every thing seemed to him enveloped in the uniform and stifling gray of *ennui*, and, at the richly-covered table of pleasure and enjoyment, he vainly hungered for distraction.

About this time a very important lawsuit required his presence in W—, and he brought his long absence to a close. He now first made the acquaintance of Judith, who had been placed in such an inimical position toward him by the strange testament of her husband, and no sooner had rumor spoken to him of Judith's fair and eccentric sister, than, seeking distraction and amusement in the desert of a small city, he hastened to make her acquaintance also.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## FIRST LOVE.

BARON WALTHER soon came daily to the villa of Gisela, who, trembling, blushing, and with a throbbing heart, stood watching him at the window in the concealment of its white-muslin curtains, and when, at length, she saw his approach upon his proud, mettlesome horse, she would hastily retire from the window, that he might not suspect she was anxiously awaiting him. Oh, how ineffably sweet and sadly beautiful was the new feeling awakened in Gisela's bosom; with what reverential and ecstatic fervency did she listen to this mysterious revelation, folding her hands over her heart in enthusiastic prayer and exulting songs of thanksgiving!

How long since had Gisela erected in her inmost soul an altar to the unknown god of her life; how long had she awaited this unknown god; how long had she been prepared to consecrate herself to him as priestess and slave! What wonder that her heart now flew to meet him; that she welcomed him with transports of joy; that she saw, with astonished adoration, the veil withdrawn from his countenance, and its glowing beauty displayed!

Not gradually had this love sprung up in her; it had not, like a flower, grown from day to day, until its blossoms had finally unfolded; no, it had pierced her heart like a flash of lightning, and kindled there a flame which seemed a miracle to Gisela herself. And this love rested not upon particulars; it was not nurtured by the sight of a handsome face, by listening to a melodious voice, by words, by deportment; its tendrils clung around herself in unconscious self-forgetfulness, and Gisela loved because love had at length become so powerful in her, and its swell-

ing flood was under the necessity of seeking an outlet; she loved Baron Walther because her heart was ripe for love, and because the full fruit of this love had accidentally fallen at his feet.

She loved him because her whole being was prepared for love, and because she, with the lavish generosity of a noble, high-hearted woman, embellished him with all that was great and good in herself. She lent him the glowing fulness of her own mind, she clothed him with the strength and greatness of her own nature, and was then overjoyed at the harmony and similarity of their two natures.

In the full glow and resignation of her own heart she did not remark that she was always the giver and he the receiver, and that what he seemed to give was only a return of what had been her own. Nude and cold, poor and unfeeling, had his heart stood before her; she enveloped it in the purple robe and golden fairy veil of her own heart, and was then astonished at the undreamed-of splendor and infinite richness of this second heart, without knowing that all its splendor and richness was but an emanation from her own. How beautifully, how sublimely was developed in her this feeling of love, this fabulously-intoxicating fragrance of this suddenly-unfolded lotusblossom of her bosom, and yet how much sorrow and suffering for herself were concealed in the deep calyx of this flower!

As yet, however, Gisela knew nothing of sorrow or suffering, nothing of tears or torments. Her life yet resembled a bright, sunny day, and a wonder-world of happiness appeared in perspective before her—a world in which all sang only of love.

Oh, it was no longer the same nature that surrounded her, it was no longer the same place in which she dwelt!



The trees rustled and whispered songs of love; the brooks prattled and the birds sang of love; the flowers exhaled the fragrance of love, and the winds sighed it; love shone in the brilliancy of the stars!

And how delightful to her were the mysterious whisperings of the moon, when, forgetting all around her, she stood at her window in the stillness of night, or, slowly wandering in her garden, she glanced to the silent and secret friend of all lovers!

And what a heavenly light pervaded her room when *he* was at her side, and lingered on the place where he had stood; how beautiful was every object he had hallowed by his touch!

And, though bitter and tormentingly-fearful hours followed this short fairy-dream of happiness, yet Gisela could never forget its sublime and overwhelming power. The memory of it ever continued to light the night of her bitter grief and pain; and, of whatever nature might be the sorrow prepared for her by Walther, she always had the consciousness of having enjoyed with him the highest earthly happiness.

And her love must, indeed, have been strong and powerful, since it succeeded in lending to Walther's cold and unexcitable heart a fleeting shimmer, and, for a moment, at least, warming it with a never-before-dreamt-of feeling of happiness. The warm flood of her nature so overstreamed and overthrew his heart, that he could not escape the contagion of the strange fire, nor avoid being carried away by this strange animation.

Certainly it was sweet and refreshing to be so loved, and certainly it well rewarded the pains of setting in motion every means for retaining the enjoyment of such strong affection.

Baron Walther, therefore, readily resolved to be the sublime character for which Gisela mistook him; she had

placed him upon the altar, and he possessed at least sufficient cleverness to maintain the position with dignity and grace; she sang to him, as a pious priestess, her enthusiastic hymns of praise; she surrounded him with incense and sacrificial odors, and he had the ability so to conceal his real nature, that she did not discover her error and find in her adored divinity the smallest of men and vainest of coxcombs.

When he was unable to follow the dithyrambs of her love with words, he wisely remained silent and let her read his answer in his countenance; and, as he always had perfect command of his features, they never contradicted what she chose to read in them.

This kind of love was also too new and surprising for him not to employ every possible means for its retention. Baron Walther had never been willing to believe in pure and innocent love, and yet he was now compelled to this belief, and was obliged to acknowledge that innocence possessed the power of banishing all impure thoughts and desires, and repelling all unseemly familiarity. It was this power, this resplendency of innocence, everywhere Gisela's faithful companion, which followed her in her solitary walks with Walther, which ever watched over her when he was at her side, which enveloped her in a veil that Walther had neither the courage nor the strength to rend.

With beaming eyes and sweetest smiles Gisela to-day reposed near her beloved in the soft twilight of a leafy bower. Silence and peace surrounded her; only now and then some vagrant bird glided through the branches, peered anxiously into the bower, and then flew farther, as if fearing to disturb the sweet converse of the lovers; now and then, also, a low rustling of the foliage would accompany the sighing of the wind, as if Nature shared the

tender sadness felt by Gisela in happiness as in sorrow. The noise of the world died away in the far distance, no reminiscence of which disturbed the peace of Gisela's breast.

But she felt oppressed by the strength of her feelings, tears filled her eyes, her swelling bosom heaved tumultuously, and, gently gliding from her seat to Walther's feet, she said, "Oh, how can I survive the happiness of such an hour?"

Walther answered nothing, but his beautiful brow seemed to beam with an inspired animation, his brilliant eyes were directed upward, while his fingers mechanically played with the dark locks of her hair.

"Oh, I well understand this eloquent silence of thy lips," whispered Gisela, looking up to him with ecstasy, "the most secret thoughts of thy soul fly to meet me from thine expressive countenance. Callest thou Heaven to witness our happiness? No, glance not above; heaven is no longer there, Walther! It has come down to us; it is here with its suns and moons; it is with me when I glance into thy starry eyes, and my heart swells with hymns of devotion! When I look upon thy brow, I feel that the heavens have opened to me. Dost thou kiss my locks, Walther? Oh, I feel this light kiss thrilling through my whole being, and the outward heaven sinks into my heart, expanding it to infinity! How could I have existed before I saw you; how could I have traversed this desert-world, solitary and alone, until you came to my side! But, let me tell you, dearest, that my whole life was only a seeking for you, an eternal struggling toward you, and, in the desert-waste that surrounded me, the eyes of my soul dimly perceived, in the dusky distance, a blooming, fragrant oasis, and I felt that love and happiness awaited me there; I knew that my

voice, which had hitherto been lost in the desert, would there find an echo for its joys and its sorrows!"

"Why sorrows, Gisela?" asked Walther, bending down to kiss her clear forehead. "Why speak you of sorrow? Love is happiness, bliss, rapture—it knows no sorrow."

"Oh, indeed, it knows no sorrow! What, then, in the fulness of my felicity, makes me so unspeakably sad? Why, in the overflow of my happiness, do I often feel this dreadful longing for death? Why do my eyes fill with tears, which are not merely tears of joy, but rather of an inexplicable, enigmatical apprehension? Why, in thinking of thee, do I often feel impelled to cry out by an internal depression and despair of happiness? Ah, see, you smile! Oh, now I recognize you, you provoking lover! Your lips spoke what was not in your heart. You would prove me, to ascertain whether I have penetrated into the inner sanctuary of the mysterious temple of love, in which two springs are welling, in close proximity, the one tears of happiness, the other those of grief. Sometimes these two springs approach each other and unite in one all-powerful stream, and then a song of mingled lamentation and rejoicing resounds through the temple, extorting sighs of anguish from the priests at the altar, who are unable to decide whether they suffer or rejoice. Is it not true I have understood you, and your searching eye smiles satisfaction? You, also, know these trials, these torments of happiness, this overmeasure of bliss which is too poor to express itself, and is obliged to borrow the tears of sorrow! But tell me, dearest, know you, also, this indefinite longing and seeking? Missed you me before I was with you? In your dreams did you behold my countenance; did you call for me in the solitude of your breast?"

"Can you doubt it, Gisela? How long I knew before seeing you; how long did I call after you in the desert of my soul; how long did I seek you in every land and under every sky!"

"And finally found me buried and hidden in this little corner of the earth."

"My good genius led the way here, and bade me follow; yes, surely, an inexplicable something hurried me here; it seemed to me that my feet were winged, that they might make the greater speed while bringing me to you."

"But now you must rest; I have taken the wings from your feet, and I would forever hold you enchained as now. Forever! Oh, how I once shuddered at this word! With what disconsolate coldness did it then seem fraught! But now I understand it. Eternity is love, and love is eternity. Ascending and descending angels establish a bridge between heaven and earth, so that two, indissolubly connected, become one, and, in the infinity of heaven, they can no longer discern and recognize the finiteness of earth; this interminable connection between heaven and earth is eternity; and, since I know this, there is for me no longer any death! They who love can never die, for eternity intervenes, and the ceasing to live is as when the nightingale ceases to sing, and wings its way from the lowly dell to higher spheres. Ah, I feel in myself the moving wings, the singing and jubilation of the immortal nightingale, and here as there will sing nothing but hymns to thee, my life's most precious good, my future, my angel!"

"Say not so, Gisela; you make me ashamed of myself. You are an angel. But, what can I be to you?"

"Thou art my all, my soul, my spirit, my understanding, my life! When thou speakest, thy tones resound in my

breast; thy smile seems to me a sunbeam; and, when I think of thee, of thy proud and commanding bearing, then I feel that thou art my king and lord of my life, and I thy slave, thy poor slave, devoted to thy service!"

"And what if thou deceivest thyself, Gisela; if I, whom thou, in the greatness of thy soul, greetest as a god, should prove to be nothing more than a poor, sinful man?"

"Blaspheme not thyself," interposed she, with flashing eyes, and not perceiving that Walther evidently spoke with such apparent modesty only to excite anew her ecstasies and her praises—"blaspheme not thyself, and outrage not thine own sublime soul! Hear how the wind rustles in the branches, and learn that Nature herself resents the insulting words of her favorite. For thou art the favorite of Nature, my Walther! Since thy foot pressed the soil of this garden, it seems as if the flowers sent forth a more fragrant odor, as if the foliage of the trees was greener, and the heavens deeper and more radiant. Hear how the nightingale sings in her bower. Oh, that my heart were a nightingale, that it might pour out its love for thee in inspired tones! Oh, how bright and beautiful is yet this world! Art thou silent? Yes, thou art right; let us be silent—speech is too poor for such a happiness!"

She threw herself into his arms; he pressed her to his heart, and, perhaps, at least for the moment, shared her ecstasies; for he heard not the slight rustling of approaching steps, or the crackling of parted branches; nor did he see two curious eyes peeping into the bower through the foliage, and watching the embrace with a scornful smile. But this lasted only for a moment, and then the foliage was carefully reclosed, and Gisela's chambermaid noiselessly glided away, murmuring to

herself, "So they love each other! I am glad of it, as now, at length, I have great news for the Baroness Judith, who will doubtless pay me well for it."

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### COQUETRY.

WITH suppressed rage did Judith receive the important news brought to her by Gisela's treacherous Abigail, and long did she pace her chamber in a state of violent excitement.

"Again she crosses my path," murmured Judith to herself; "again comes she to rend from me that for which I strive; again stretches she forth her hands for that which I would appropriate to myself. Now shall she learn with whom she has to do! It is not alone that I would avenge myself; she has now attacked me, and I must look to my defence."

Judith must, indeed, have found it bitter that one she hated now threatened to withdraw from her the husband she had chosen. For Judith had resolved to marry Baron Walther, to give up the freedom of widowhood for him, and devote herself to him for life.

Not that the baroness, in coming to this resolution, had loved Walther—not that she was fascinated with his beauty or his grace. Such trifling weaknesses had never, for a moment, troubled the clearness of her mind. But Judith was tired of living in that small city, of passing her days in listless repose, of knowing in advance precisely what she had to expect from each passing hour. She was tired of constantly seeing only the same faces, the same society, in which there was no one she did not see through, no one who had not been a plaything in her hands.

She languished for a more extended sphere of action, for the development

of her art, for the display of her coquetry and dexterity in intrigue; she languished for action, for entanglements, for the excitement and occupation of her senses.

To live in a great capital, to see herself again surrounded by a host of admirers, to stand in the most brilliant society as its acknowledged queen—the queen of beauty and virtue—that was what her thirsting ambition desired, and, to attain this end, she resolved to avail herself of every means and set every wheel in motion.

But how could she attain it, so long as her husband's testament chained her to this small city, made her dependent, limited the freedom of her will, and held all her wishes in bands?

How could she attain it otherwise than by winning Baron Walther, whom her late husband had chosen for her opponent, in whose hands her fortune and her whole future lay, and converting him from an enemy into a devoted friend?

This was what prompted her determination to make Baron Walther her husband, and she now doubly hated Gisela for her unconscious interference with this project.

But such obstacles were not of a nature to frighten or discourage Judith, and she would not hesitate at the employment of any means for removing the intruder from her pathway.

She had already long since seen through Baron Walther. With the sharpened glance of her own coquetry, she well understood the coquetry of Walther: his silence was not imposing to her; his smiles and his speaking countenance neither fascinated nor deceived her. With her cold and tranquil glance she had looked into the depths of his nature, and discovered there all his vain self-adoration, all his hollow inflation and artistic dignity. Under any other circumstances, she



would have been delighted to see Gisela fall in love with so cold and vain a man, whose coldness and inflexibility would certainly incapacitate him for rendering a wife happy, but, on this occasion, she was by her interests prevented from giving way to this malicious satisfaction. *She* must and would be the baron's wife; that is, if no other means remained of nullifying the testament of her deceased husband. No sooner had she come to this resolution, than she also arrived at a clear comprehension of the task before her.

She accordingly sought to irritate the baron's vanity, to impose upon him by her coldness and indifference, and to attract him by an apparent non-appreciation of his person. She knew that apparent indifference would be much more effectual in attracting him than a smiling and affectionate manner; to the latter he was accustomed, and, therefore, it could have no charm for him; he could be excited only by difficulties and obstacles, and Judith perfectly understood the coquetry of apparent coldness.

For her, Baron Walther seemed not to exist, never to be present; she neither invited him to her house, nor seemed to notice his presence at the houses of others. She was never seen to glance toward him or listen to his conversation, never to join in the expressions of approbation elicited from others by his beauty, his agreeableness, or his dignified deportment. She alone was silent when others praised his gracefulness in the dance, or the sweetness and fulness of his tones when he sang; and this striking coldness naturally soon excited the attention of the whole court as well as of the city.

But this brought her a double advantage, as it irritated and excited the baron while it increased the fame of her virtue and the general respect for her modesty and proud tranquillity.

"How firm and sure must she stand," said her female friends, "when she disdains showing to Baron Walther even the least friendliness! How proud and sublime must be that virtue which scorns every favor, and stoops not to flatter even a dangerous enemy!"

"What a noble pride is that," said others, "not to trouble herself about the good-will of a man who, in a certain sense, holds her destiny in his hands, and can perhaps make her a beggar! For, irritated by her contemptuous coldness, how easily might he intrigue against her; how easily, by the aid of a little trickery, make her whole fortune his own!"

"How would that be possible?" asked others of the company in which this conversation took place, and in which all the families belonging to the court circle had been assembled by the Baroness von Zareho—"how would that be possible?"

"Well, very simply. The testament declares that the Baroness Judith shall never harbor any one, except her nearest relations, in her country-house over night. If she does this, and Baron Walther can convict her of it, the whole property goes directly to him. Now how easy it would be for him to manage so that she should ignorantly harbor a guest who might afterward testify against her, and thus furnish to Baron Walther the means for destroying her!"

"That is true," said Baron von Bender, musingly, remembering, with wonder and astonishment, the danger to which Judith had once been led by her love for him to expose herself.

"Yes, Baroness Judith is the crown of all women," exclaimed the chamberlain, Von Kranz, who had long languished in vain for Judith.

"Oh, how different, how sublime does she stand in comparison with her sister Gisela!" cried another, whose

troublesome gallantry Gisela had once scornfully repelled.

"Oh, that Gisela," cried all; "what grief and anxiety has she not prepared for her sister!"

"Have you heard the newest story about her?"

"No, no; let us have it."

"Well, Baroness Judith, still always mindful of her sisterly duties, has written to Gisela, calling her attention to the new and unprecedented scandal to which she has given rise by granting to her present lover, Baron Walther, the free entrance of her villa at all times of day. She has, at the same time, conjured her to say whether the rumor that Baron Walther is her lover is well founded; and, in case he is, she has invited Gisela's return to her sister's house until her marriage, that decency may no longer be outraged."

"How generous!"

"How sublime!"

"And what responded Gisela to this noble offer?"

"She briefly wrote, in reply, that Baron Walther was certainly her lover, but that she declined accepting her sister's invitation, as she felt herself strong enough for the protection of her own virtue."

"Her virtue! Ha, ha, ha!"

"How shameless to acknowledge that he is her lover!"

"But what will you say, gentlemen," whispered the chamberlain, Von Krantz, in a cautious manner; "what will you say when I inform you that his serene highness, our gracious prince, takes this maiden under his protection? Only think,—as Baroness Judith yesterday, by command, read Gisela's answer aloud to her highness our princess, and the princess commented upon it in language of just displeasure—only think, the prince there took upon himself the defence of Gisela against his wife! Yes, he pronounced her confession of the

state of affairs between herself and the baron to be high-minded, and he suggested that innocence only would dare to speak so proudly and boldly!"

"Yes, yes, he has reasons for that," said Baron Bender, with a meaning smile. "If I now rightly remember some accidental involuntary expressions of baroness Judith, I perfectly comprehend this great clemency of his serene highness. Believe me, he himself is not entirely insensible to Gisela's beauty."

"And she—the maiden?"

"Well, you all know that she is no pride."

"Yes, by heavens, you are right. I can now perfectly unriddle the conduct of his serene highness. Previous to the arrival of Baron Walther, the prince almost every day rode out to the lady's villa, accompanied by only a single servant; but since the handsome baron has been there, he keeps himself aloof. Naturally, he would not stand in the way of her good fortune! He would not by his presence render the baron fearful and distrustful."

While they were thus entertaining themselves in one room, a conversation of quite another nature was going on in an adjoining saloon. There the ladies had formed a circle around the piano, standing in the middle of the room, where sat the handsome baron, about to yield to the general request to sing an aria.

An anxious, breathless silence prevailed in this saloon, and all eyes were bent upon the lips of the handsome singer, who now sang an Italian air with consummate artistic skill.

Never was heard a finer or more flexible voice than Walther's, nor ever had the air been executed with more feeling.

All the ladies were enthusiastic in their admiration, excepting Judith, who sat with an appearance of uninterested indifference opposite the singer, ab-

stractedly playing with her fan, and evidently annoyed at the length of the aria. A flood of praise and flattery poured from fair lips, as soon as the song was ended, but Judith alone said nothing, and turned with a loud question, on some indifferent subject, to a gentleman standing near her.

Baron Walther, who had long observed her, bit his lips with vexation, and his fine brow was darkened. By a strange coincidence, the arms of coquetry with which he had been accustomed to fight, were now turned against him, and he was obliged to suffer by the same tactics with which he had caused suffering to others.

He replied to all questions and observations, with an absent mind, and sought to approach the Baroness Judith. None of his looks or movements escaped her; she saw how he gradually made his way through the crowd to reach her, and as he now succeeded in coming to her side, she only doubled the liveliness of her conversation with a gentleman who was totally indifferent to her.

Walther sought several times in vain to mingle in the conversation, but Judith seemed to neither see nor hear him.

"Baron Walther!" said at length Judith's cavalier, stepping back to make room for him.

"Ah, Baron Walther!" said she, in a tone of the most perfect indifference, and scarcely bowing. Then she resumed the interrupted conversation. Walther blushed with mortification, and swore to conquer the proud beauty, at whatever cost. Therefore, suppressing his internal rage, he turned to Judith with the insignificant question whether she would not rejoice the company with the sound of her voice in song.

"I never sing!" was the short and cold reply.

"You are, then, not fond of music?" asked Walther.

"No, certainly not! that is, not of this saloon music, this glossy, glaring, sickly music. But a simple, artless ballad, sung with gracefulness and feeling, that gives me pleasure, though, alas, I never but once heard such singing!"

"And who was it that so sang?" hastily asked Walther, under the conviction that she would name himself.

"A poor shepherd-boy in the Pyrenees," she quietly said, "and never shall I forget his sweet and touching song. It made me sadly sigh, and brought tears into my eyes. Ah, it was an interesting sight, that muscular, bronzed boy, clothed in rags, and sitting upon a fallen tree, with his guitar on his arm, amid a most magnificent landscape, together with the melancholy and simple air, and sad and lamenting words of his song."

"With what fire you still remember and describe that boy, my lady!" said Walter with a forced smile, as nothing troubled him so much as hearing the praise of another. "I am sure he must have been handsome as an angel, was he not?"

"Handsome? I no longer remember about his personal beauty, as that is a matter that could very little interest me. Beauty pleases only for the moment; its grand enemy is familiarity, which is the greatest friend of homeliness. By often looking into a handsome face one gets so accustomed to it as to become insensible to its beauty, while, on the other hand, long habitude will at last convert homeliness into beauty."

Walther bit his lips until they bled, and from this hour he certainly would have hated Judith, had not her imposing unfriendliness excited and attracted him. It was as if an unseen magic, a magnetic power, drew him, independently of his will, in her train, and from this time forward he was Judith's slave. To conquer, to win her, was

the object that occupied the baron by night and by day, and finally grew into the most glowing and passionate desire. Wounded vanity increased to a height that in its symptoms resembled the sufferings of passion, though not partaking of its joys and happiness.

In vain did Walther often resolve to avoid Judith in the future, and to manifest indifference to her coldness; in vain did he seek in Gisela's warm affection a compensation for Judith's slights.

The image of this fair proud woman was always swimming before him in the most enticing colors, though she met his love-sighs with only a smiling scorn, and his asseverations with malicious unbelief, and ever resounded in his ears the pure melody of that voice which had never trembled with love for him.

And Judith very well understood how to keep this passion always awake, how to excite and increase it. Had she shown herself cruel, she would reconcile him again by an apparently involuntary friendliness; had she repelled him with coldness, she recalled him again with a seductive smile; had she for long hours seemed not to observe him, she would suddenly surprise him with a stolen glance which seemed to be resting upon him with an expression of the deepest interest, but which was averted the moment their eyes met. Once even had she, after having treated him with cruel mockery and coldness, and almost driven him to despair, given him her hand, and that hand had perceptibly trembled in his. Baron Walther took these calculated arts of finished coquetry for involuntary expressions of feeling, and hoped anew.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE COMLOT.

"WHAT is it you desire of me?" proudly and coldly asked Judith of Baron Walther, who had to-day requested a private conversation with her.

"You well know what I desire, to what my aspirations tend," said he, pressing her hand to his lips.

"Perhaps it is my fortune. Oh, have patience, baron. You will obtain it. How easily it may happen to me to be taken sick in my villa, and be obliged to send for a physician in the night, and then, baron, your end would be gained; then the poor Judith would have nothing more to grant, and you would have nothing more to implore of her."

"All, Judith, all have I to implore—your pity, your compassion, your sympathy—oh, and your love!"

"Love! Bah! utter not the word; You only desecrate it, for you know not what love is!"

"Oh, you have yourself taught it me! I suffer, I sigh. I am languishing and in despair; I pass the day in sad lamentations, and the night without rest upon my uneasy bed. My soul calls out for you with feverish longing, and all my pulses beat for you. And you say I know not love? But you, Judith, you know it not—you are a stranger to the blessed but consuming feeling. Your heart is cold and insensible, you are incapable of love!"

"Incapable of love!" she repeated, with an expression of sadness, and raising her humid eyes to heaven. "I incapable of love! Oh, my God, only show me the man of my dreams, the ideal of my holiest solitary hours. Show me the man for whom my soul cries in the sorrow and bliss of ardent desire. Show him to me in his divine beauty, with his commanding glance and high,



thoughtful forehead; show me this man, and I will fall down in adoration before him, will clasp his knees, and proclaim him my lord and master."

While pronouncing this, she was very beautiful. Her cheeks burned with the darkest crimson, her eyes flashed; there was something at the same time proud and enticing in her whole being.

"And my love, then, cannot move you," said the glowing and trembling Walther; "it is, then, beyond my power to represent even the least of the pretensions of your fancied ideal?"

"You? Yes, certainly, it is beyond your power!" she responded, coldly, and as if suddenly awaking from a sweet dream.

"You therefore reject me forever?"

"And how," said she, walking up and down the room, "how can you dare to speak to me of love? You, upon whose lips my sister's kisses are still glowing; you, who perhaps have but just now sworn to her eternal love, and received her warm vows in return. You are a perjurer, and you wish me to respect you! Go!"

She turned from him and seemed about to leave the room. Walther held her back.

"Say to me only one word, Judith, one word of consolation. Tell me that you do not despise me, that possibly I may move your heart to love; command me to leave Gisela, and promise me that I shall be rewarded with a smile, and I swear to fulfil every one of your wishes with the faithfulness and subjection of a slave!"

"To love a Gisela!" said Judith, in a contemptuous tone, "a maiden who, covered with ignominy, I was obliged to expel from my house! A woman who in double-tongued breach of faith swore to you eternal love, and at the same time is the prince's mistress!"

"That is impossible!" vehemently exclaimed Walther.

"Who dares say that, when I, her unhappy sister, with a thousand tears, know and admit the horrible fact?" proudly asked Judith.

"Then woe unto her!" cried Walther, trembling with rage at the thought of having been deceived and played upon. "But give me proofs, Judith, proofs!"

"And what then!" asked Judith, sharply observing him. "What will you do if I really give you these proofs?"

"Then shall she expiate her crime by the torment of a whole life!"

"I am glad to see you thus," said Judith, offering him her hand; "to-day, for the first time, you compel my respect, baron. But no, you deceive me! You are, like all men, great in words, cowardly in deeds—murderous in your threats, but fainting at the moment of their execution."

"I say to you," cried Walther, his vanity doubly irritated by Gisela's supposed deception and Judith's eulogium, "I say to you, give me proofs, and I will know how to avenge myself. Will you then, Judith, listen to my prayer? will you then give me your hand and become forever mine?"

"You ask too much," responded Judith, with a bewitching smile, and casting down her eyes. "You ask that I should confide my whole life to you, and yet you are not willing, for once, to believe and confide in my word. My assurance does not satisfy you. You demand proofs! Will you be satisfied if I furnish you with one of Gisela's love-letters to the prince?"

"Perfectly. But no, Judith, it needs no proof. Your word is enough. Now manifest some confidence in me. Decide to give me your hand. Yield at length to my prayers and my love! Become mine!"

"Well, so be it," responded Judith, with flashing eyes. "But I demand a proof of your love. Judith is too proud to bear a rival, and I will not lay my hand in yours until I am avenged, until I have trodden this rival in the dust. Tell me not that she is my sister. She has deceived me as she has you, and for this I demand and will have my revenge. I am called cold; I am believed to be incapable of passion, but *one* passion glows in my breast which can be appeased only by vengeance for suffered wrong! Help me to satisfy this passion, and perhaps I may then be able to find a place in my bosom for a softer feeling; perhaps I may then learn to love you; and oh, believe not that it is any common love that I promise you! I feel in myself the power to give a love such as no other woman on earth can; you shall be made to believe in the golden fables of your childhood, in the blissful dreams of your youthful years, when Judith loves you; as in a sea of glowing passion will I bury you in my heart."

"Great, divine woman!" exclaimed the intoxicated Walther, clasping her hand.

She checked his ardor, and, observing him with a cold and almost contemptuous glance, said: "Softly! we are not yet so far. First show me that you are worthy of my love."

"Command me," cried Walther, falling upon his knees and pressing the hem of her robe to his lips.

"Well, then, listen to me! This very day will I send you one of Gisela's billets to the prince. Then—yes, then may you commence your vengeance! No trait, no mien, must betray to Gisela that you have discovered her falsehood. Show yourself devoted, tender, and make her love you above all besides. Sink her love to you constantly deeper and deeper in her heart, that she may feel it the more painfully

when she is obliged to rend this love from it—that her heart may long and slowly bleed from this sorrow. Speak to her of approaching marriage; provide yourself with a dispensation from the church, that you may arrange for the wedding ceremony when you please. And now, baron, farewell! I feel exhausted, and need repose."

No sooner had Baron Walther left her, than she ran to her writing-table and hastily began to write; then, reading over what she had written, she said with a cruel smile: "I think this billet is tender enough, and contains sufficient derision of the baron, to set the vain fool beside himself. And how well I have imitated Gisela's handwriting! Truly, I must take some credit to myself, and if I have devoted several weeks to the acquirement of this chirography, my efforts are now amply repaid by the success with which they are crowned."

To the completed billet she added a note in her own usual handwriting, which contained nothing but these words: "Here, my poor baron, you have the proof. I have nothing further to say. I am almost frightened at such an abyss of depravity and wickedness!"

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE LAST SUNBEAM.

THE doors leading into the garden are open, and the evening sun is sending its last rays into the saloon where Gisela is sitting at Walther's side upon a divan.

The rays yet linger there, but the evening is already beginning to cast its twilight shades, and the gray veil of night will soon envelop all the clear and sparkling joys of day. Gisela, fear-

est not thou that veil; fearest thou not this night, which is ready to envelop and destroy all the bright and glowing colors of thy day? Hast thou no foreboding that happiness is sending thee its last sunbeam, that the darkness of thy night is swiftly approaching?

Thy night will come, poor Gisela; thy sun will set, and soon wilt thou strain thine eyes in vain to catch the least ray of its former splendor.

Tears will dim thy now brilliant eyes. Over thee already growls the thunder of the approaching storm, and thou hearest it not. Thou hearest only charming words from beloved lips. Thou seest but the sweet face from which happiness and love seem to smile.

"To-morrow, then," said Walther, pressing her to his bosom, "to-morrow wilt thou be eternally mine!"

"Yes, to-morrow," repeated Gisela, with the full tone of the soul. "Oh, if you knew, dearest, what an immensity of happiness is contained in that little word 'to-morrow!' Then shall I be forever thine, then may I lay my whole existence at thy feet. My maiden dreams, my hopes, my innocence, my future, all, all, will then be thine, and thenceforth shall I receive from thy hand all happiness and blessedness!"

"And if I should also give you unhappiness, Gisela?" asked Walther, with a peculiarly searching glance.

"Unhappiness also shall be welcome when offered me by thy hand, Walther," cried she, with enthusiasm. "But no unhappiness can come to me from thee. As, under the hand of King Midas, all that he touched turned to gold, so will every thing coming from thy hand take the form of happiness. And consequently I have no fear that I cannot make you happy—I know I shall. Love is so almighty, that where it gives all, happiness must follow. And I have given myself wholly to thee, Walther;

with my whole soul I am thine! I have no thought, no wish, no breath, that does not belong to thee; and if the future lies before me like a golden carpet of flowers, I know that I shall pluck these flowers only to weave them into a garland for thy noble head! Oh, how I tremble before this overfulness of happiness, and I am almost anxious lest it crumble and fall like a building too high for its strength!"

"Enthusiast!" said Walther, and Gisela remarked not the scornful smile that played about his lips.

"But then again," she continued, "I feel myself safe; for this building of our happiness, however high it may be, rests upon sure supports, and confidence is its foundation. Dost thou know, dearest, that it is to me the surest guarantee of thy love that thou confidest unreservedly in me; that thou hast not listened to the rumors with which the world occupies itself about me; that thou hast believed in me! Oh, I was indeed right. I have conquered, and the evil world that condemned me can do me no harm, for I have overcome it. My mission is accomplished. And if, on my first entrance into the world, I swore not to fear it, but boldly to resist its injustice, and to follow only the voice in my own breast — if I, true to this vow, regardless of the world and its vain and empty customs, strove only for the truth, and not for appearances, all my efforts are now crowned with the most heavenly happiness. Oh, let me tell thee, Walther, they wished to shake my resolution; even our prince warned me against it; and when I pronounced myself a missionary of the free will, he thought I would gain nothing from this mission but a crown of thorns whose pressure would cause my brow to bleed. Oh, how mistaken he was! A myrtle crown is what I have gained, and if in my silent maiden dreams I vowed never to love a man who did

not trust me unconditionally, who regarded no rumors and no scandals, who believed in me and me alone—oh, so have I attained the ideal of my dreams, for thou, thou art mine! Thou hast confidently offered me thy hand, and wilt make the disdained of the world thy honored wife. Oh, thanks, thanks!”

Sinking down before him, she laid her hand upon his knee. Walther looked down upon her with a coldly cruel glance, and his hand involuntarily grasped the mysterious letter which Judith had sent him as the incontrovertible proof of Gisela's faithlessness, and which he constantly kept about him, perhaps as a shield to be used whenever his confidence in Gisela might threaten to gain the ascendancy.

“The prince warned you?” asked Walther; “you saw him often, then?”

“Formerly he came almost daily,” artlessly responded Gisela; “since you began to come here I have seen less of him.”

A dark crimson overspread Walther's face, and his brow was contracted and darkened by anger. — Gisela's words seemed to him to establish her guilt, and with a terrible tranquillity he now rejoiced in his sure plans of vengeance.

“I will rend her heart,” thought he, “and, to do it the more effectually, I will first make her perfectly blest.”

And never had Walther been more amiable, more glowing, than in this hour. Throwing aside his usual repose and dignity, his whole being seemed to take a higher flight, his soul to kindle with a warmer and more eloquent fire. Words of inspiration, of love, dropped from his lips and poured like a lavastream into Gisela's ear, so that she trembled with the sweet thrill of rapture.

The sun had long since sunk to rest, the evening zephyr fanned the trees of the garden, their slight rustling came

like mild sighs to the ears of the lovers, the evening bells resounded in the distance, and the long-drawn notes of the nightingale's plaintive song were heard in the foliage.

Peace, stillness, and a delicious repose, pervaded all nature, finding an echo in Gisela's breast, which rose and fell with sighs of happiness.

“To-morrow,” she murmured, “to-morrow I shall be thine! To-morrow shall I, as thy pure and innocent wife, recline in thine arms!”

Unwinding herself from his embrace, she rang for a light, which was brought. As its rays fell upon Walther's countenance, Gisela, clasping him again, said: “Oh, what a foolish girl I am!”

“And why do you call yourself so?” harshly asked Walther.

“It seemed to me, for a moment, that your eyes glanced at me with an expression of hatred. Am I not a foolish child? But come, let me see your eyes again, those charming, brilliant stars!”

Kissing his eyes, she whispered to him sweet words of endearment. “Oh, how I once shuddered at the idea of marriage!” said she; “it seemed to me nothing but the dullest prose, in which all the dreams and deceptions of youth were submerged. Now I know it is not so; that only in it does the real poetry of love first awaken; in it is first heard the ripple of the mysterious stream of happiness; that there is nothing more tender, more holy, more sublime, than this melting and fusion of two souls into one, which is a revelation of heaven!”

Walther, cold and absent-minded, had hardly listened to her words, and now hastened to take his leave.

“And when shall I see you again?”

“I shall await you at the court-chapel, to lead you to the altar.”

“How my soul exults in the contemplation of that hour, and how tenderly you anticipate my most cherished



wishes! You are right—publicly, in the midst of the city, and amid the crowd from which I fled, should this bond be sealed; in that hour will I celebrate a magnificent triumph over my detractors, and pardon them for all the evil they wished me; until then, farewell my lover, and soon my husband!”

She accompanied him to the door, and then hastened to the balcony to see him mount his horse, and there to bid him another adieu.

Away rushed steed and rider, Gisela waving her white handkerchief as a last greeting. The tramp of the horse gradually died away in the distance; he is gone; and while Gisela now directed her ravished glance toward the heavens, she observed the slow descent of a falling-star, marking its course by a brilliant trace, and then vanishing in the darkness of the horizon.

Gisela immediately recalled to mind the night when, sighing for a then nameless and unknown lover, she had conjured the heavens to send to her this desired sign.

At that time she had asked the falling-star if her life was to resemble that brilliant but quickly-vanishing meteor. Now, full of faith and confidence, she asked nothing, but with a seraphic smile she said: “Not like this fleeting meteor is my happiness! No, it has risen over me like an inextinguishable sun, and like that sun it shall glow in my heart through all time!”

Poor Gisela! Thou bodest not that thou hast already enjoyed the last sunbeam of thy love!

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### WOMAN'S CRAFT.

“JUDITH, your commands have all been executed. To-morrow will avenge

us for the wrongs of Gisela, and oh, to-morrow will elevate me to your side as your wedded husband!”

“And degrade me to the condition of a slave!” said she, in a harsh tone.

“How cold and cruel you are!” sighed Baron Walther. “You consent to become my wife, and yet I have no assurance that you love me. You say you make this sacrifice to vengeance, and suspect not how such a declaration rends my heart!”

“You are a fool and an enthusiast,” she coldly replied. “Have you, in your flower-crowned life, not yet wearied of the vain raptures of love? Have you not yet had enough of sighing and complaining, of jubilation and jealousy?”

“All these I have often found without desiring; but now, that they are missing, I languish for them. Judith, tell me only once that you feel kindly toward me, and that not vengeance alone, but also love, conducts you to my arms! Judith, this word once spoken, and I will bury it in my heart as a priceless treasure, and never demand of your pride its repetition. Only once, Judith, let me once hear it! Behold me here at your feet! I kneel to you as I kneel to God, and pray to you for one word of grace!”

“Oh, do you not know, then, that you yourself have bound my tongue, and rendered it impossible for me to speak that word? Will the tyrant believe in the professions of his slave, when one word from him can deliver that slave over to shame and death? And would not that poor, chained, dependent slave rather die than confess her love, when that confession is liable to be attributed to interested motives, and its sincerity doubted? Oh, you would have me think you love me, and yet suspect not the wound you inflict upon my suffering heart; you seem not to know that love can confer happiness only when it is freely given.”

"Speak on, speak on," said Walther, as Judith stopped,—"speak on, that I may understand, may comprehend you!"

After a long, swimming, dreamy glance to heaven, Judith, in a soft, tremulous voice, said: "I once heard of a Sultan who loved his slave, a beautiful young Circassian with a warm heart. He had taken her from her native land, her friends, her home; he had robbed the feeble woman of her liberty, and made her his slave. She made no complaint, nor was ever seen to weep; but her brow paled, the fire of her eye was extinguished, and, if a smile sometimes played about her lips, it was only the painful one of patient suffering. Perhaps it was this silent, uncomplaining sorrow that touched the Sultan's heart; perhaps her very coldness incited him—enough, he loved her; and the proud Sultan implored the love, the kindness, the mercy of the poor enchained slave. She, however, trembled, and was silent, her eyes at the same time filling with tears—the first tears she had shed since being a prisoner. They were the tears of wounded feminine pride; she supposed the rich, free, all-powerful Sultan was mocking the poor, weak, imprisoned slave. 'Speak but one word of love!' he implored. Could she speak it? would her virgin lips so desecrate love as to speak a word which might be attributed to the base promptings of self-interest? And again implored the Sultan, 'Speak but one word of love, and I will give you back your freedom and make you the first Sultana of my harem; you shall share with me my golden throne, my wealth, and my power.'"

"And what replied the slave?" asked Walther, with a passionate glance at his beautiful bride.

"She bowed her head in silence," continued Judith; "the much-desired word passed not her lips. The Sultan

then became wild with rage, and in his anger he cried: 'Speak this word, or your head falls to-day by the hands of the executioner!'"

"And the slave?" asked the breathless Walther.

"She bowed her head in silence. The enraged Sultan then made a sign to his servants, who seized the proud and beautiful woman; and with a calm smile of resignation she held forth her arms for the chains. On seeing this, the Sultan's heart was softened; he was ashamed of his anger, and again he implored, 'Speak but one word of love!' She, however, looking him calmly and proudly in the face, still remained silent. Love was to her too high and too holy to have a confession of it torn from her by fear."

"Ah, I now comprehend you!" exclaimed Walther, suddenly springing up with triumphantly flashing eyes. "Oh, how stupid I was not to have understood you earlier, you magnificent woman—you proud, enchained slave! Be not angry that I interrupt you, Judith—I must away on the instant. When I return, you shall finish your story."

Kissing her hand, he hastened away. Judith remained, pacing her room with proud but agitated steps. Now and then a malicious, scornful smile distorted her features, and she muttered to herself: "It will succeed; I shall triumph! I shall not be obliged to bind myself to this vain fool; I shall be liberated without again binding myself in the chains of matrimony!"

Then, stepping to the glass, she critically examined her face and dress. "My eyes might flash and glow with yet greater brilliancy," she whispered low; "the brighter they flash, the more do they confound his understanding. I must fan his passion into a consuming flame."

She went to her toilet-table, and

from a secret drawer took a fine pencil and a small Chinese color-box. With a sure hand she drew a fine streak near the under eyelash, and instantly her eyes seemed to glow with a fiery, passionate, and voluptuous enamel. "That will do," she murmured; "he will not be able to withstand me; and even should the free outward air have somewhat cooled him, and given him back a modicum of reflection, I shall nevertheless conquer him."

An hour had passed, when the rattle of an approaching carriage announced Walther's return.

"Where in the world can you have been?" cried Judith, advancing to meet him, and for the first time voluntarily offering him her hand.

"I have been with my notary, my man of business," smilingly responded Walther, pressing her hand to his lips. When he looked up, their eyes met, and what he read in Judith's glance must have been something surprisingly agreeable, for a low "Ah!" escaped his lips, and, tremblingly sinking down before her, he laid his head upon her knees.

"Walther, what are you doing?" asked she, as if aggrieved, and bending down over him, as if yielding to an inward emotion. She seemed involuntarily to throw her arm around his neck, involuntarily to draw him up to her; his lips were approaching hers, when suddenly, with a seeming shudder, she started back, exclaiming, "Never! never!"

Walther led her to the divan, and, seating himself at her feet, said: "Now relate to me the rest of your story."

"Ah, the story!" said she, as if awaking from a dream. "Where were we, baron?"

"The fear of death could not force a word from the slave."

"No," dreamily resumed Judith, "she was prepared for death! But the

Sultan's eyes filled with tears; he made a sign to his servants to release the obstinate slave, and himself took the chains from her arms; trembling with sadness he motioned her forth, and whispered: "Go! you are free! Return to your home, to your kindred and friends, and tell them of a Sultan who loved you, and whose heart you have broken!"

"And the slave?"

"She went not. A heavenly joy beamed from her face, and, with a voice tremulous with transport, she asked: 'You give me liberty? I am no longer a prisoner, a slave?' The Sultan answered low: 'No, you are free! Since nothing but freedom can satisfy you, take it. You love me not; therefore, go!' He covered his face, that he might not see her leave him. Then felt he his knees gently clasped, his hand bedewed with warm tears, and a sweet voice murmured in his ear: 'I love thee! Dost thou hear, I love thee!' What the imprisoned slave hesitated to say, the free woman aloud proclaimed, 'I love thee!' 'Is it true, is it possible?' cried the Sultan, drawing the mantle from his face. There lay she before him, with beaming eyes, and with a charming smile, repeating: 'I love you! What could the love of a slave give you? Oh, could you have confided in the professions of one who was trembling with fear? could you ever have believed and trusted her? Love suffers no constraint. It will be free to give itself, and be freely received. You gave me my freedom, you broke my chains; now take it back, this freedom; I want it not, for I love you. Freely will I call myself your slave, and you my lord, for it is love that subjects me. You will I serve, you obey; my lord and master shall you be, before you will I kneel; set your foot upon my neck, do what you will, without let or hinderance, for

I love you, and, being free, I may now declare it!' This is my story, baron," said Judith, drawing a deep breath.

"I have comprehended it," cried Walther, drawing a folded paper from his bosom. "I also called thee cruel and hard-hearted, and did not reflect that a cruel and tyrannical will held thee in bondage; that thou wert the slave of a barbarous testament, of which I had been made the executor; that I had been selected for a spy upon thy actions; that every thing had been done to make me hated by thee. Here, Judith, is the testament, and thus I rend it in pieces."

The tearing and crumpling of the testament sounded to Judith's ears as the song of triumph for her own again-won freedom, and at this moment she almost felt grateful to Walther for this show of magnanimity. With beaming eyes she held out to him her hand: "I thank you, Walther. To-morrow will the liberated slave, as a free woman, give you her answer. To-morrow," she said low to herself, "to-morrow shall he repay me for all the pains it has cost me to procure this liberation."

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE WARNING.

THE day had dawned, the day from which Gisela expected to date the happiness of her whole future life. She had early risen from her couch and descended into the garden, to thank God in the stillness and quiet of nature for her present and anticipated blessings. Gisela was devout, in her way; she loved not to frequent the so-called houses of God to assist in the shrill, screeching singing of a miscellaneous multitude, or to listen to the hypocritically sanctimonious sermon of a so-

called servant of the Lord; but so much the oftener did she love to repair to the great temple of God's creation. There, the rustling of the trees was to her as the solemn hymn of a holy community, and all things preached to her of the presence of the primeval, elementary Spirit.

The flowers standing in her path, the dew-drops in their calyxes, the bright chafers at her feet, the butterfly balancing itself upon the waving twig, the bird singing in the branches—all announced to her the sublime presence of God, and from this great altar of Nature arose her warm and heart-felt prayers to Him. To enjoy Nature, to greet the budding flower and the tuneful bird, to feel cheerful and happy, tranquil, and at peace, was by Gisela considered a prayer acceptable to God, and she said: "This is more pleasing to Him than lugubrious folding of the hands, than weepings and wailings, or ineffective mournful supplications."

But, to-day, she could not attain to this blessed, internal tranquillity, and peace would not make its home in her breast. Yet she felt happy, and these involuntary fears were enigmatical to herself. Perhaps her solitude weighed upon her, perhaps she felt depressed by her destitution of near relatives.

This was her day of honor, her wedding-day, and alas! no one was there to greet her with kind wishes, no tender maternal hand to place the bridal garland upon her brow, no loving eye to bless her on her way to the matrimonial altar.

When Gisela thought of all this, her eyes filled with tears, which overflowed her fair face.

"There is no one here who loves me," murmured she to herself, "and when I to-day stand in the crowded church, there will be no eye to greet me with kindly sympathy. Oh, my God, what then have I done, that



there is no one to love me? Did not my heart beat for the whole world, for all mankind? Felt I not in my own bosom the echo of every joy and every sorrow? What, then, have I done that people reject and repel my heart, flee from and condemn me?"

"Alas," she continued, after a pause, "how ungrateful I am! If the whole world hates and shuns me, still *he* loves me, and turns not away from me. Therefore I will love all mankind in him, and when he is at my side it will seem to me that I am loved by all mankind."

Straightening herself up, she strengthened and consoled herself with these thoughts, and, though tears yet filled her eyes, they were tears of joy.

She was no longer alone, no longer solitary—the flowers seemed to smile upon her, the birds sang bridal hymns to her, and the low rustling winds brought to her the whispered blessing of her departed mother.

The sudden rattle of an approaching carriage awakened her from these musings.

Gisela hastened into the house. Who could her visitor be? Had, perhaps, one of her former acquaintances thought of her, and come to congratulate her on her marriage? Was it—oh, was it her sister, who had come to seek a reconciliation? In this uncertainty Gisela hastened her steps. On this day she had in her heart room only for love, for forgiveness; she felt in her bosom the warmest sisterly kindness, and said: "Surely it is Judith! She has received my letter, announcing my marriage to-day, and she comes to accompany me to the altar."

On the threshold of her door she unexpectedly encountered Prince Lothaire, and was shocked by the sad and earnest expression of his countenance.

"You, my prince, and at this hour!" she quickly exclaimed.

He silently gave her his arm and accompanied her into the saloon.

"Gisela," said he, "I come to warn you! Turn back, poor, deceived child; turn back, there is yet time! Trust not his deceptive professions, his hypocritical vows of love! You are deceived and betrayed."

"Then you know not, my prince, that this is my wedding-day?" said Gisela, in a triumphant tone. "You know not that the next hour is to make me the wife of one I love and trust?"

"Oh, I know—I know, unhappy maiden, I know that this has been promised you, but you are deceived. Dark and mysterious rumors have, for the first time, alas, to-day reached my ears, informing me of an intended double breach of faith. It is said that Judith, your sister, and not you, will this day become Walther's wife."

"A very pardonable mistake," said Gisela, with a calm smile. "Rumors are always erroneous. Walther wished our approaching union to be kept secret, and the attempted discovery of this secret gives occasion for all sorts of conjectures."

"Gisela, give up this mistaken confidence," said the prince, almost imploringly, "and listen to the words of a true friend. Become distrustful, poor girl! I tell you it is Judith who is this day to become Baron Walther's wife. I, the prince, pledge you my word of honor for it."

"And, were you an angel from the skies, I nevertheless would not believe you!" vehemently responded Gisela. "And, moreover, what gives you the right to distrust him? what has he done, that any one should dare to accuse him of such treason? Yes, my prince, that any one should *dare* it! Walther is a nobleman as well as yourself, and you asperse his honor when you accuse

him of such perfidy! You also dishonor me, by attempting to degrade him in my eyes. I ask you, what gives you the right to do this? How will you prove to me the truth of this calumny? I would not believe it, even had you received it from his own lips—even had you read his marriage-contract with another; I would say it was a mistake, an error!”

“Poor, foolish girl! You will have it so. Well, then, I must tell you the whole truth. Know, then, I have read this marriage-contract; it was brought to me not an hour ago for my signature!”

A mortal pallor spread over Gisela's face, and she fell back, her heart seeming to stand still in the convulsion of terror.

She soon, however, rose erect, and a charming smile brightened her features.

“It must be a mistake,” she calmly said, “perhaps an error of the transcriber of the contract. It is also possible that he may have done it to try me. Yes, he must have known that people would come to warn me, and he wanted to see if my confidence was to be shaken—if I would believe any one but him alone. Yes, yes, therefore has he suffered me to be tempted! That is it! Oh, how will I mock him for this poor experiment,” said she, with increasing vehemence, forcing herself to an affectation of gayety; “how I will laugh at him for this clumsily-contrived jest! To think I would believe such a tale, that I would yet distrust him within an hour of my marriage! It is really comic. Laugh, if you please, my prince, laugh with me! You see that I am perfectly calm, perfectly—I laugh!”

And she did; but it was a sad, heart-rending laugh, that made the prince tremble for her safety.

“And then,” continued she, sudden-

ly resuming the thread of her reflections, “our intended marriage was to be kept secret. Ha! that is it! Judith must have allowed her name to be inserted instead of mine, that the secret might be the better kept. Yes, I see it all now, so it is! You must therefore be convinced, my prince, that you erred, but you also see that I do not share your error. You have calumniated my husband, but I pardon it on account of your sympathy for me. Now, however, it is time for the wedding, time for me to don my wedding-dress, and place the bridal wreath upon my head. Adieu, therefore, my prince!”

“Gisela, is it possible that you are in earnest? Will you not be warned? Will you not listen to me, unhappy maiden? Will you not hear the voice of your friend? and will you expose your unprotected bosom to your enemies? Oh, what would I not do to convince this artless child! Gisela, believe me, and do not go. Rather yourself open the veins of your heart, than have it lacerated by others. Why give a spectacle to the world, when you may bleed your life away in seclusion? Believe me, the world knows neither compassion nor sympathy, and, though it may seem to weep with us, it mocks our sorrows. Take my advice, Gisela, and do not go; turn back while there is yet time!”

The prince's deep, penetrating tone, the anguish of soul painted on his features, chilled Gisela's heart with a presentiment of woe. But it was only for a moment that she wavered, and then she calmly and firmly said: “Be it error or truth, I must nevertheless go. I gave my word to espouse him, and that word must be redeemed. It shall not be said of me that I distrusted one who, by no word, no action, has given me any justification for it; that I have lost my faith in the world and in mankind! Love is an eternal truth; who

will dare to accuse it of falsehood? My mission must be accomplished; I was sent into the world to preach the true love and true confidence, and shall I shun to do the right? I promised this man my love and confidence, and I must keep my promise. He called me to the altar, and I must obey the call. And if it really be as you say, yet must I go—must drain the chalice presented to me by one to whom I have sworn eternal love. Therefore, farewell, my prince!”

“No, not so,” said the latter, when he saw Gisela so firmly resolved, “not so, Gisela; if you cannot be dissuaded from taking this step—well, I will accompany you. At least you will then not be alone in the hour of danger, and my arm will be ready to sustain and defend you.”

Thanking him with a languid smile, Gisela went to dress herself for the ceremony. Soon she reappeared, her slender form enveloped in a white satin robe, the long, waving veil attached to her dark hair; pale and fair, a sublime expression in her features, she excited still deeper sympathy in the prince.

“You are in this hour perhaps my only friend in the whole world,” said she, with solemnity; “therefore must you now render me the service of love. Here is my bridal wreath, set it upon my head.”

With trembling hands she reached him the wreath, and their glances met.

The prince read in her eyes the firm determination of her soul, and therefore no longer sought to influence her.

Silently taking the wreath, and bedewing it with tears, he placed it upon her head.

“Thus do I consecrate thee, thou bride of sorrow,” he solemnly said, laying his hand upon her head as in blessing. “In this hour thou partest from thy youth, thy happiness, thy

love! I consecrate thee to the torments of life! The crown of thorns already rests upon thy locks, and the next hour will crucify thy heart! Be steadfast, and if thou canst no longer love the world, learn to compassionate it. Hate it not, however much thou mayst despise it!”

Gisela shuddered. “This, then, is my blessing in this momentous hour!” she murmured low, and for an instant she seemed to sink under the weight of her depression. A loud cry of anguish escaped from her breast, but she soon collected herself; her wandering eyes now rested upon the portrait of her mother, which seemed to smile upon her from the wall. Sinking down before the picture, and raising her arms toward it, she cried, “Mother!—my mother!”

All was now still, for Gisela prayed! She offered up the first prayer of an anguished and despairing heart.

The prince comprehended the solemnity of this moment, in which a soul was consecrated to the painful path, and, as he glanced upon the kneeling, veiled form, it seemed to him the incarnation of his own youth and hope.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE WEDDING.

THE impatient steeds stamp the earth, the servant stands at the carriage door, the house-steps are covered with a carpet and strewed with flowers. In the hall wait the servants, weeping with emotion. “See, there comes Gisela at the hand of the prince! See how pale and fair she is!”

“Long live our fair mistress!” cry the servants; “long live the happy bride!”

As Gisela bowed her thanks, the

bridal wreath fell from her head, over the balustrade of the steps, to the ground. The cheerful faces of the servants became serious, and the good old Hedwig wept.

"That is a bad omen," said the servants; "the wreath falling from the head of the bride!"

And Hedwig's tears also fell upon the wreath as she raised it up.

"Hedwig, Hedwig, weep not. It is a bad sign when tears fall upon the bridal wreath!"

Gisela took the wreath from Hedwig and handed it to the prince.

"Turn back, Gisela, it is not yet too late."

"No, no, my prince, I must go on!"

The wreath is again attached, and Gisela nods to her servants a smiling adieu. She enters the carriage. The veil is caught and torn by some hook.

And again the servants whisper to each other: "That is a bad sign, the bridal veil is torn!"

The prince, while disengaging the veil, repeats: "Turn back, Gisela, it is not yet too late!"

"No, no, my prince, I must go on!"

Away rattles the carriage; the servants watch its departure in sad silence; they weep no more, they exult no more; they are full of anxiety and fear. Farther, farther rolls the carriage in its rapid course. Ha, what is that? Why does the carriage stop? One of the horses has fallen. Coachman and footmen have much trouble in raising him, and repairing the broken reins.

"Turn back, Gisela, it is not yet too late!" implores the prince, this time more anxiously and pressingly, for they are about entering the city.

"No, my prince, I must not!" responded Gisela, but her cheek is pale as death, and she trembles.

There! the carriage stops before the church door.

She alights; the prince gives her his hand and leads her into the church.

It is crowded with people. Oh, what glances they cast at Gisela—how they whisper and laugh!

There, there is the altar! The candles blaze, incense fills the air. Ah, the priest has not yet mounted the steps of the altar. They seem to be yet waiting.

For whom do they wait, since there in that seat sits a splendidly-adorned bride—adorned like Gisela, the second bride?

Two brides! Where, then, are the two happy bridegrooms of these two brides?

Now Walther approaches Gisela, who is trembling on the prince's arm. His eye flashes with a malicious joy; that the prince is at her side, is to him a new confirmation of her criminality.

Gisela met his approach with a smile; now that she sees him she fears nothing more. Poor Gisela!

"I thank you for coming," said Walther in a loud, harsh tone. "I thank you, Gisela, for coming to witness my marriage with Judith, your sister!"

One sole, loud shriek escaped Gisela, as she stared wildly upon the cold, mocking visage of the baron.

Then tore she the wreath and veil from her head and threw them down at his feet.

No word, no one single word escaped her lips, but her eyes flashed with anger and scorn, and a proud, contemptuous smile played upon her death-like, pale features.

The prince, turning to Walther with suppressed rage, said: "This is not the place for further explanation, but I shall call you to account for your conduct; you are a vile deceiver, who have shamefully played with the heart of an innocent maiden!"

"Your highness will please pardon me for not comprehending your language," coldly responded Walther. "Your high-



ness may be better informed than myself as to the innocence or guilt of Fraulein Gisela; I know only that your highness has yourself signed my marriage-contract with the Baroness Judith!—But the priest has now taken his place at the altar. Is it agreeable to you, my fair sister-in-law, to take this seat and be a witness of my marriage?”

Gisela glanced calmly and coldly at him; no tear came into her eye; she would have died of mortification had her courage or strength failed her in this hour. She was able even to smile, but, at the sight of that smile, Walther himself trembled and turned away.

The organ began to play, and, to the music of its tones, Judith and Baron Walther stepped to the altar.

Now an impressive silence, and then the priest's address to the bridal pair. Walther had already answered with a loud “Yes” to the question of the priest if he would take, love, and cherish the Baroness Judith as his wife. And when the same question was now put to Judith, she at first seemed to hesitate, and then in a loud and firm tone answered, “No!”

A general consternation was manifested, and a murmur of wonder and amazement was heard.

The priest left the altar, crossing himself and muttering a prayer; the ladies surrounded Judith, and even the Princess Clotilda approached her, and demanded her reasons for this unexpected refusal.

Walther, as if crushed, had sunk down upon a seat, and, with loud groans, had covered his face with his hands.

Gisela sat tranquilly there, glancing with a proud, cold expression upon the confused scene before her, and betraying herself by no sign of joy or surprise.

“No,” said again Judith in a tone so

loud that her voice reëchoed through the whole church; “no, I cannot give my hand to a man who has deceived and betrayed my sister with the same vows he made to me! I knew it not. I was warned, I was told that he loved Gisela, but he swore it was a calumny. Princess, a woman who loves is slow to distrust, and therefore I believed him. But when I saw my sister Gisela enter the church adorned with the bridal wreath—when I saw her cast that wreath at Walther's feet, I then became convinced of the dreadful truth. How, then, can I lay my hand in that of this perjurer, who has deceived both my sister and myself? Oh, my sister, my poor, unhappy sister,” she continued, approaching Gisela and grasping her hand; “oh, Gisela, thou child of my mother, for thy sake I willingly renounce my expected happiness. To thee as to me he has sworn eternal love. Take him, then—he is thine! Thou lovest him, and therefore will pardon him. Love is so great in pardoning! Take him! Thou shalt neither hear my complaints nor see my tears. In this very hour I leave the city forever! Farewell!”

She threw her arms around Gisela's neck and whispered in her ear: “Said I not that in me you would find an irreconcilable enemy?—an enemy for life and death? I induced Walther to offer you this public outrage! Go—now, I am avenged!”

When the princess saw this long and apparently cordial embrace of the two long-separated sisters, she wept hot tears of real emotion, and murmured: “What a noble soul is the Baroness Judith! See her tenderness for her misguided, erring sister!”

“Oh, a great, a sublime soul!” whispered the court ladies and gentlemen.

Gisela, however, forcibly repulsed her sister, and observed her with a glance of ineffable contempt.

"You still hate me, then?" asked Judith, as if in deepest sorrow. "Oh, Gisela, I have not deserved *that* of you!"

But the princess drew Judith to her heart and kissed her.

Baron Walther, availing himself of this general excitement and confusion, had escaped from the church. Quickly ensconcing himself in the travelling-carriage which stood there in readiness to convey himself and Judith on their wedding-tour, and, upon a wave of his hand, the coachman touched the high-spirited horses, and the rattle of the carriage was soon lost in the distance.

With the blessings and good wishes of the princess and her ladies, Judith now also left the church, at another door of which she had ordered her own travelling-carriage.

The church was gradually emptied; only Gisela still sat, proud and earnest, in a death-like rigidity.

The prince, who had handed the princess to her carriage, now returned to Gisela. Slightly touching her arm, he compassionately said: "Would it not have been better, Gisela, if you had heeded my warning?"

"No," she calmly responded; "this hour has forever killed sorrow in me, and wrenched love from my heart! Should I not despise myself if I could now shed a tear? I am calm and self-possessed—perfectly calm!"

Rising, she gave her hand to the prince. Then, suddenly, she uttered a wild shriek and sank without consciousness to the floor.

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## CHAPTER XX.

GISELA TO PARSON HERRMANN.

"HAST thou not lately, often in the evening twilight hour, my father, heard a voice calling to thee in tones of an-

guish? Have not thy peaceful dreams been disturbed by a pale form, with a troubled eye, dishevelled hair, shrieking to thee for consolation and support, and occasionally stammering curses in impotent grief? That form was mine, Herrmann, the voice that invoked thee was mine! In my sufferings and despair, as I am told, the name of Herrmann was continually upon my lips. There was, therefore, yet a place in my heart into which the malady had not yet penetrated, and where consciousness and memory were not yet annihilated. Thy name, my father, was therefore living and unimpaired in my bosom. Trodden down, undone, my soul cried out for thee!

"Why camest thou not? Why didst thou not hear thy daughter's despairing call? I am told that the prince twice sent messengers to thee.

"Father, why camest thou not? Or, art thou angry with thy all-too-weak daughter, because she shrunk and fainted instead of calmly offering her bosom to the shafts of misfortune? My God, thou knowest not, thou innocent and noble man, how much I had already smilingly suffered and borne.

"Thou, far from the world, unsuspecting its malice, dreamest not the cruel pleasure with which it breaks and rends a human heart. Not suddenly, not all at once, not like some great and overwhelming natural phenomenon, no, slowly, day by day, hour by hour, does the world gnaw and tug at a human breast, until at length the whole beautiful structure of youthful dreams and hopes crumbles, falls, and lies scattered around us in fragments of miserable ruins. My father, it is such ruins that now surround me—a whole Jerusalem for me is destroyed—the Saviour is crucified—and shall I not weep and complain, like Jeremiah the prophet, over the ruins? A submerged city, a submerged happiness, are both terrible

objects. They are, the one as the other, like a large churchyard, in which the soul wanders about at midnight in search of some remembrance-flower of the past, and finds nothing but dust and ashes—Herrmann, dust and ashes!

“Dost still remember the hour when thou didst bless me for the world and life; when thou didst send me out to suffer, to fight, and to conquer; when thou didst name me ‘a missionary of the free will, who was to show to the world that woman is not a slave, but a freeborn being?’

“Ah, my father, I have inscribed these words upon the standard I held aloft on the day of battle! I have fought and struggled, and that standard was my shield, under which I often concealed my bleeding breast, that it might pour out its life-stream unseen. Then came a day—a dreadful day—in which a dearly-loved enemy, with devilish cunning, wounded my inmost life; in the pain of that hour the protecting banner escaped from my hands, and, bleeding and disarmed, I fell, wounded unto death.

“Would to God, father, that I had died on that day! Thou then mightst have buried me with military honors, for my wounds were all received in my head and my breast. I had stood firm in the combat; I had neither fainted nor fled; and thou mightst have buried me in the flag for which I fought.

“Why did I not die, Herrmann? Why have my youth and its vital powers so closed those gaping wounds that they are at least outwardly healed?

“Am I to renew the struggle—again to suffer, again to weep?

“Oh, my father, let me whisper a dreadful secret in thine ear! I have no longer courage; I am cowardly. I long for a place of refuge in which I may find repose and recover health. I am crippled, and incapable of further service.

“Where, then, is this place of refuge where the invalided in life’s conflicts may find aid and consolation—the place over whose door is inscribed *Læso et invicto militi*, and where the disabled but unconquered warriors of life and the world can repose their weary limbs?

“Where is it for me, but with thee, my father? With dusty feet and crushed breast, faint and exhausted by my earthly pilgrimage, do I return to thee. Lend me the support of thy arm, let me hear words of consolation, dry my tears, teach me to be strong and patient in suffering.

“No, nothing more of the world! Thou knowest not what I have suffered.

“Thou knowest not the ineffable sorrow of seeing torn down the ideal for which one has erected an altar in his heart, and of being then obliged to recognize in it but a miserable lifeless idol, animated only by the overfulness of his fantasy. The ideal crushed to a horrible deformity—under the royal mantle the tattered garment of a thieving beggar! That is worse than death, for it is an eternal loss. It is the most insufferable pain, because these wounds cannot be healed, because one cannot have the consolation of calling in the alleviating physician, because one must cover the crushed breast with a cold smile of contempt, and dares not acknowledge that he suffers.

“Oh, it would have been better for me to have loved a robber or a murderer! Crime has its greatness and its heroes whom one may admire and love, for whom one can sin. But to have loved a miserable, characterless, worthless weakling, who is even unworthy of hatred, who deserves only to be spurned with the foot, that is a degradation, a shame!

“Still, let me keep silence. I have neither cursed him, nor wept a tear for

him. He is not worth cursing. Oh, heavens, and to be to such a one indebted for the noblest joys, the highest ecstasies!

"For I was very happy, Herrmann; canst thou comprehend that? Happy, while loving a worthless man!

"Condole with me, father, for this aberration; let me rest at thy feet, and ask thee how it could happen that I should mistake pitifulness for sublimity. Oh, let me come to thee!

"Tell me not, father, that I must remain in the world. Behold, I look around me, and see nothing but ruins and tombstones; and canst thou wish me to build a house over new-made graves for my dwelling?

"Oh, teach me to forget the world—I have no longer courage to struggle against it—let me flee from it before a new conflict begins! For I fear, my father, that life in the world is nothing but an eternal struggle against the world. I, at least, am told by a sad foreboding that I shall never find happiness in it.

"Let me seek it in solitude, with thee, my father! Oh, my heart beats with joy and youthful freshness at the thought! I shall return to thee; I shall again behold the dear spot beautified and animated by thy disposing mind. I shall behold thy mild, paternal brow, and derive peace and consolation from thy friendly countenance. On my entrance into thy house, the world I leave behind me will sink in the sea of forgetfulness; only sometimes, in still twilight hours, will the sounds of mysterious bells come up to us from that sea, and I will tell thee strange tales of the sunken city in which I once dwelt—tales which will make thee shudderingly cross thyself, my innocent father—tales which will make the solitude of thy silent parsonage seem as the very highest of earthly blessings, and isolation

as the only possible earthly happiness.

"Oh, how beautiful it will be to wander through wood and field at thy side—to accompany thee to the hovels of the poor, carrying there consolation and aid—with thee to float in the light canoe over the bright waters of the lake, and draw up its finny inhabitants in our nets! Let me indulge myself in the contemplation of this idyl of happiness, for which my soul longs as for a refreshing draught which will be a soothing balsam to my over-excited senses.

"Come, let us, at the stagnant pool, entice the gabbling ducks to us with crumbs of bread, and please ourselves with viewing the varying colors of their necks; and now give me thine arm, my father, that we may wander farther to the little green thicket in the wood; and farther, to the majestic oak whose rustling foliage has overheard the secrets of past centuries.

"Do you yet, my father, remember the old oak under which we once read Horace and Homer? Come, draw it forth again, the little, much-thumbed, leather-bound volume of Horace; read to me his beautiful odes; I listen to thee with my whole soul."

"Now evening comes on, and, rising, we turn our steps homeward. The last beams of the setting sun gild the small windows of the cottages of the village through which we slowly walk. The peasants stand before their doors, and, when with thy mild smile thou salutest them, their answering salutations come like blessings upon thee, and their eyes follow thee with an expression of reverential love.

"Let us enter the cottages, where we find peace, content, and simplicity of heart.

"We hear their simple stories, we lend a sympathetic ear to their complaints, we answer their questions in



relation to some, to them, important domestic affairs, we condole with and counsel them.

"Then go we home, to partake of our simple rural repast, at which Hedwig and old Conrad will not fail to be present; after which, accompanied by the harp, I sing to thee thy favorite songs, until thy dear eyes require repose. And, oh, what sweet, refreshing sleep will follow a day so peacefully spent!

"This, Herrmann, is my dream, my hope, for the future. Tell me that you will bid me welcome. GISELA."

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## CHAPTER XXI.

PARSON HERRMANN TO GISELA.

"No, Gisela, my daughter, no, thou must not come. Thou must not quit the world; thy youth would complain against thee, and soon wouldst thou, blushing, seek to hide thyself in shame for thy cowardice.

"Look up, my child; listen to the thousand voices which are calling thee into life and the world! Nor must thou close thine ear to the whisperings of hope; say not that the wounds of thy heart cannot heal. Thou art young, and youth is a mysteriously-assuaging balsam, allaying all pains.

"Thou thinkest that thou hast drained the cup of life to the dregs—put it once more to thy lips, and with astonishment thou wilt find how much of joy and sweetness still remains at the bottom; for that cup is inexhaustible, continually offering new pleasure and new pain.

"Time, my child, has two wings: one wipes away our sorrows, the other dries our tears; and the soul, which has just received so deadly a blow, soon sings again its joyous hymn of happiness.

"Wait, therefore, and hope, for sorrow is as transitory as joy. Thy mission is not yet accomplished; go on to its fulfilment; shake the dust from thy feet, and heed not the thorns that destiny has strewn in thy path.

"Life hath yet claims upon thee; hasten to fulfil them, and complain not of weariness before thou hast accomplished half of the way. This would be to calumniate thine own nature, which is called to great deeds and great sorrows.

"Or, perhaps thou thinkest, child of my soul, that I hoped for happiness for thee when I sent thee out into the world?

"Perhaps thou thinkest that my love for thee had so blinded me that I believed the world would reward the nobility of thy soul with its joys?

"Alas! only paltry, humble, weak, and submissive beings, who silently and flatteringly subject themselves to the world, only these can hope for joys and happiness. Both flee from strong, noble natures, which, instead of submitting, with head erect and persevering courage, are determined to break through the barriers within which they are confined. Such a strong and noble nature is thine. Go and fulfil thy destiny.

"Suffer again, hope again, struggle again for happiness, it must at last yield to thy courage and constancy; and, when finally attained, it will be of the most precious kind.

"Believest thou not that the warrior who reposes under the olive-tree after long and bloody service, better enjoys his rest than the peaceful shepherd who has never exposed himself to the solar heats? Judge how strong must be my love for thee, when I have yet the strength to renounce thy presence, and voluntarily forego the consolation of thy society! Oh, for a moment, I yielded to this seduction; thy seductive

description of our dual life intoxicated me, and, in languishing paternal love, I opened wide my arms for thee. But soon I recalled to mind thy strong nature; God gives such mighty souls only to those whom He calls to great struggles and great sufferings!

"Then I bethought me that thou couldst not evade thy destiny, that thou couldst not throw away thine arms without despising thyself, and that self-contempt was the only pain that could subdue thy strength.

"Thou wouldst seek solitude with me? Believe me, child, that solitude would soon be peopled with the dark forms and ghosts of remembrance, to escape from, or destroy which, thou, in thy solitude, wouldst have neither strength nor weapons. The strong suffer more in solitude than in the world and in life.

"To feel in ourselves the capacity for suffering and for happiness, and to be obliged to vegetate in idle inactivity, never to be positively miserable; to spin out the days without being able to spin from them even a winding-sheet, believe me, this is the most fearful of all torments. May you never experience it!

"Put on the harness again, take the standard again in thy hand, and bear it out into the conflict, not merely to conquer happiness for thyself, but that thou mayst triumph over unhappiness. Let this be thy end and aim.

"In the solitude of my parsonage thou wouldst pine and wear away; better would it be to suffer real sorrow in the world.

"To age only, is it allowed to lay aside its arms; only to the aged does solitude offer itself as a hospital, in which to seek repose for weary limbs.

"And, ah, even to age does solitude give sorrow and woe! Believe this from thy father, who often hears the

ripple of this secret spring in the stillness of his parsonage.

"All sorrows do not cry out; there are many sufferers who go about with cheerful and serene brows—much sadness that has never wept, many hearts that drink their own tears.

Resignation is a virtue difficult of attainment; to thee, my daughter, it is impossible; thou canst be only miserable or happy, never resigned, and therefore must thou remain in the world; therefore is solitude thy most dangerous enemy, and therefore dare I not call thee to me.

"No; remain, Gisela—remain and struggle!

"Love not the world, but also despise it not; open thy heart to philanthropy; sink in this general love the particular love that deceived and betrayed thee. Then, but only then, canst thou conquer.

"And thou must conquer!

"And for that reason I again tender thee thy shield: *Aut! aut!* With this old Spartan battle-cry I bless thee anew for the fight. Do right, and fear no one!

"Give the world an example of dauntless courage, and an unswerving love of truth. Never wrap thyself in the veil of falsehood, nor conceal thy face under the mask of dissimulation. Have the courage to be true. This is thy task—go and accomplish it.

"HERMANN."

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### FRIENDLY COUNSEL.

THE letter of her paternal friend destroyed Gisela's last trust and hope. But while he closed her only place of refuge against her, rendering flight impossible, she already felt her courage awakening anew, and breathed more

freely, as after a long oppression and pain.

Thus was she found by the prince, who came, as he now did every day, to visit her at her villa.

"You are now cured, Gisela," said he, viewing her; "your eyes again sparkle with their usual brightness, and your brow bears the impress of courageous thoughts. You are no longer sick and weary of life. You are, at length, again the strong and courageous Gisela."

Handing him Herrmann's letter, she said, with a faint smile: "My means of flight are cut off. Nothing remains for me but to make a firm stand. The ship is burned that should have borne me far from the world, no way of retreat is open to me, and that I may not be murdered I must at least defend myself."

"You have more to do than that," said the prince, in a serious and even solemn tone. "You have to avenge yourself, Gisela! Are you willing to forget, young maiden, that the world has trampled on you, that it has struck you with the poisoned weapon of calumny, and inflicted irremediable wounds?"

"No, I shall never forget that," responded Gisela, with a deep blush. "Never can the memory of it be extinguished in my soul, but there is no room in my heart for the feeling of revenge!"

"You will learn to recognize the sweetness of that feeling, Gisela; only wait until you are again wounded by the world, and then, in the deep recesses of your soul, you will hear mysterious voices whispering of retaliation and vengeance; and these whisperings will be to you as cradle-hymns with which you will lull your sorrows to rest. Believe me, one suffers no longer when one knows the means of avenging suffering. The people have

annihilated your happiness—avenge yourself on all mankind!"

"How can I? What can an individual do against the many?"

"Much—all, if he meets them with the cold, clear eye of experience. While they are preparing new sorrows and sufferings for you, you will raise yourself above those sufferings, and render yourself invulnerable."

"No, no. It is better to suffer than to cause suffering to others. Oh, a thousand times better is death in one's own bosom than to hurl the poisoned arrow at the heart of another."

"How foolish, how weak! You must in the end, Gisela, learn to hate. Believe not what your pious father says in his letter. It is not enough, not to love the world, one must despise it; that is the only way to render it serviceable and to profit by it. One cannot hope for happiness until he has deadened sorrow in himself. Life is a thorny fruit, and we can never attain the sweet kernel until we have extracted the thorns from our bleeding breasts. Fools are always grasping after new fruits and wounding themselves anew—the wise leave to others the breaking of the fruit and suffering the pricks of the thorns, while they take the kernel to themselves. Nor must you believe that any one thanks you for doing, yourself, what you might do by others. Believe not that your generosity can ever be requited by the thanks of love. The world yields itself to those only who despise it, and those only who hate it can hope that it will seek their love."

"No, no," cried Gisela, "there is yet love and nobleness, there is yet loyalty and commiseration in the world. Leave me this faith, my prince; let me again confide in the world."

"That you may suffer again," the prince almost indignantly interposed. "You are, then, not to be helped. You

would, like an ignorant child, play with the sword which has already once wounded your breast!"

"No, that will I not, but I cannot direct the point of that sword against a stranger's breast, while I know by experience the pain of such wounds. Oh, my heart is not yet chilled; it beats warmly for my kind, and its confidence is not yet shaken. Deceived and betrayed as I have been, it shall not be said of me that I avenged upon mankind the wrongs heaped upon me by one individual. Such a betrayal, such deceit, is not the usual, the common, but a horrible exception!"

"Still, still this faith in humanity!" exclaimed the prince. "Oh, will you ever, then, open your eyes?"

"I will open them to seek for happiness."

"I have already told you how only you can find it. Avenge yourself of the world, hate the world collectively, but love, if occasion offers, individuals."

"Oh, my heart has become old and petrified. It can love not the individual, but only the universal; can only comprehend and embrace the All."

"Bah! a woman's heart never grows old. There is a Vesuvius in the life of every one, and it is only necessary to understand, in order to draw advantage from the lava, how to cool the glowing stream, and convert it into a soil in which new flowers and fruits may grow. This lava has flowed, hot and consuming, over your heart, and, instead of preserving the protecting covering, you would break it off with your own hands in order to expose yourself to new pains. Oh, learn wisdom and prudence! Glance around you and see how little the world deserves our love. Open your eyes, and you will see that those only conquer in this world who use the weapons of artifice, wickedness, or hate, in their combats. You, however, are above the use of artifice and

wickedness—well, then, hatred remains to you—make the most of it!"

"And *you* say this to me?" asked Gisela. "*You*, the only friend left to me in my desolation? *You*, who alone have commiserated me, who alone have tendered a helping, a protecting hand, to the betrayed and lost?"

"Precisely because your youth, your innocence, moves my pity, do I say it to you; because I feel a sympathy, a deep sympathy for you, it is precisely for this reason that I warn you. He is not a true friend, who draws a curtain before a frightful abyss, but he who warns by disclosing the danger. I commiserate your youth, fair and unhappy maiden, and when I look upon you it seems as if I obtained a retrospective glance at my own life; again rushes over me the bitter stream of past sorrows, and remembrance sings again to me a threnody of deepest woe. I was young and innocent as you; like you I confided and was deceived, my love betrayed and my heart broken; all confidence was torn by a rough, bloody hand from my soul. Like you, I sank under the weight of my misery, and prayed for death. But what would you have? The soul is not destroyed by grief, and the body again rises erect after suffering. No sorrow is eternal, and after a fearful struggle of pain and despair I awoke again. But every thing around me was changed; the prayer of my soul was heard, the fair veil of deception was withdrawn from my eyes, and at length I saw all as it really was; my sorrows had at least secured for me the knowledge of reality. My ideals had fallen from me—under the envelope of beauty I saw the skeleton that supported it; under blooming cheeks, the grinning death's-head; under floral fragrance, the putrid exhalations of mouldering decay; and under smiling, blooming life, I beheld inexorable death. All withers, all



passes away; not our globe alone swims in eternal circles—life also rolls and winds up and down, ever different and ever the same, vacillating between joy and sorrow; to-day showing us blooming fields, to-morrow a desolate waste, giving us to-day ecstacy, to-morrow despair. Since I know this, I no longer suffer, nor shall I be again deceived, for you must know that everywhere there is nothing but continual deception and change.”

“Ah, but such knowledge is of the saddest kind,” sighed Gisela, dropping her head upon her bosom. “It is better to be deceived than with such sobered senses to be incapable of deception.”

“How has the world,” asked the prince, with severity, “how has the world rewarded you for your faith? It has derided you for your confidence, mocked you for your credulity. That is your reward, Gisela; even the better sort turn from you with a scornful smile, and when you pass along the streets they point the finger at you, whisper, and laugh. And why is all this? Because you, instead of deceiving, have been the deceived; because you, instead of outwitting, have been outwitted; because, instead of duping the world, you have been duped by it; because, finally, you were innocent and artless enough to believe in innocence and truth. Let that suffice you. Disdain to be any longer the plaything of the world. Envelop yourself in your experience, and make it a shield for your protection against new deceptions. Let the past constantly watch by your side, and then you may hope that your sorrows have at least not been useless, but will bear fruit for the future. Raise up your down-trodden heart, and make of it a warning-tablet to preserve you from new sorrows; make of the crushed blossoms of your happiness a pillow upon which your wearied head may

repose and dream of vengeance!” Gisela answered nothing; she felt herself broken, annihilated.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### INTRIGUES.

WHILE the most intimate, friendly relations between Gisela and the prince became daily more and more firmly established, while it afforded them mutual consolation and pleasure to complain of their deceptions and hopes, they knew not that prying eyes were watching them, suspected not that every coming of the prince, every prolonged visit to the villa, was carefully observed and duly reported to the prince's bitterest enemy.

That enemy was no other than the Princess Clotilde, the prince's own wife.

When she resolved to yield to the proposal made by the deceased prince in behalf of his son and give her hand to Prince Lothaire, she had been influenced by the idea that, in the young son who was so obedient to the wishes of his father, she should find an equally obedient and submissive husband, and also by the idea that marriage would be a convenient cloak to cover her secret wanderings, under which she could the more freely enjoy life and snatch forbidden pleasures.

It was not without terror that Princess Clotilde saw the vanishing of this anticipated wedded freedom when she found at her side, instead of the com- plaisant husband, a severe lord and master who had even dared to threaten her, and from whom she soon learned that every injury to his honor would be instantly avenged.

Princess Clotilde would perhaps have pardoned this severity in a *loving* husband, and her feminine vanity at first

suggested that love must be the cause of that severity. But she soon became convinced that it was not so, and that Prince Lothaire, indifferent to love or her tenderness, desired not *her heart*, but the preservation of his own honor.

The princess had trembled before this tyranny of his honor on that day when, in consequence of the prince's dark and mysterious threats, she suddenly dismissed her young and handsome confessor, and to her fear of her husband soon added hatred. She had hoped to acquire liberty by marriage, and instead of it found nothing but oppressive slavery; she had sought in her husband the complaisant subaltern, and found, instead, an imperious master, before whom she trembled. She had falsely assumed the appearance of piety and virtue only as a convenient mask, and her husband compelled her to make this deceptive mask a truth and a reality.

Princess Clotilde was not the woman patiently to submit to such tyranny. She vowed to throw off these chains, to free herself from this oppression, and with a sure and skilful hand she soon arranged the threads of a web of intrigue in which she hoped to entangle her husband at some future day.

Her spies and paid creatures soon managed to find out the dissatisfied people of the land, and, thanks to the love of justice and severity of the prince, there were enough of them among his subjects.

Prince Lothaire had a perfect contempt for the world and men, but he exerted himself to improve them and heal their wounds; yet he did not always know how to do this with a soft and indulgent hand. He was just, but not mild, generously rewarding desert, and severely punishing crime; his generosity lacked graciousness, his severity compassion.

Sad and unfortunate experiences had

cooled his philanthropy; he sought not the love of men, nor was he in a condition to give love, and, if most of the governmental virtues were combined in him, still he lacked the greatest, the holiest—mercy.

Prince Lothaire never pardoned. A transgression was to him a transgression; he separated it from the persons who committed it, and punished the crime, not the man. In the same way, he knew, in the most deserving man, how to reward only the desert, without thereby benefiting the man himself.

Those whom he justly punished had never the consolation of compassion or hope; those whom he justly rewarded, never had the smile of kindness; and both the punished and rewarded felt themselves humbled and oppressed in his presence.

He weighed upon mankind like an iron divinity, placing in equal scales crime and punishment, service and recompense, with an iron arm, with an iron glance, never smiling, never angry, immovable, impenetrable.

Like the sword of Damocles, hung the remembrance of him over the heads of every one of his subjects, every one fearing the fall of the sword, every one hating the arm that held it. For Fear is the sister of Hatred, and the proud man never forgives him who has caused him to tremble. Prince Lothaire hated courtiers and flatterers; he had spurned these vile, creeping vermin from the court, not reflecting that a slighted courtier is always a dangerous, lurking enemy, a blindworm that approaches one noiselessly, under the cover of darkness, and pierces one with his poisonous sting. A courtier finds nothing more difficult to pardon than the refusal of his prince to be governed by him: than when he, insensible to flattery and hypocrisy, has the courage to pursue his own way.

All the repelled courtiers and flat-

terers sought refuge at the feet of the Princess Clotilde, who understood how to flatter and use them, to make them blindly devoted to her, while she seemed blindly to follow them.

For every whispered insinuation she had a willing ear, for every complaint a sympathetic commiseration, for every one justly punished by the prince a tear of pity. She publicly, in the face of the whole court, begged of the prince the pardon of every criminal, well knowing that he would never grant her prayers, which could only serve to place his severity and her leniency in stronger contrast; to make him hated and her the more beloved.

She visited the huts of poverty; she wept and prayed with the sick and unfortunate, and sympathized most particularly with all those whom the prince's just severity had punished.

Soon she collected around her a band of dissatisfied people, and all who hated Lothaire became the friends of the mild and noble princess, and to love the princess was equivalent to hating the prince. The princess no longer concealed from her devotees and confidants that she found in the prince a tyrannical husband, with tears in her eyes complaining to them of her great matrimonial unhappiness; representing herself as a loving, repulsed, and abandoned wife; declaring her hatred to be the natural consequence of her betrayed love; and, while cursing him and swearing vengeance against him, she affected to weep and complain of the loss of his affection.

Welcome to her, therefore, was her husband's unconcealed preference for the fair Gisela, which must pass for a confirmation of his much-lamented faithlessness to her, and render the truth of the princess, as well as the tyranny of her husband, evident to all.

Consequently she caused every step of the prince to be closely watched, and

counted all his visits to Gisela, describing them to her followers in the most hateful colors. For her, Gisela was the declared mistress of her husband; it accorded with her ambitious, egoistical plans to call her so, and little cared the pious, noble princess, if the honor of an innocent maiden was thereby destroyed. Appearances were in favor of her persecutor, and the princess was sufficiently experienced in the world to know that appearances are the greatest power on earth—that it was sufficient to make thrones totter and kings tremble; that it was sufficient to give and take away honor.

The injured princely wife cunningly seasoned her complaints of wounded female honor with extravagant stories of Gisela's arrogant pride, of her avidity and ambition; and thus, by the hateful light in which she represented his so-named mistress, she caused the prince to be the more hated and feared, and herself to be considered the more of a martyr and sufferer.

She therefore stood, with her devoted followers, as the representative of wounded feminine innocence and virtue, imploring support and protection, for which her bright glances promised the deepest gratitude and the sweetest rewards. And what was secretly debated and resolved in the stillness of her apartments was soon spread abroad among the people by faithful and skilful underlings.

A common plan was soon concocted, a common conspiracy of all the discontented, and the hereditary territory was selected as the scene of the conspiracy, its hearth, and its place of refuge.

The earlier subjects, of whom the princess was at first sole ruler, felt the contrast between the severe justice of a master and the former weak and varying policy, and longed for a return to the feminine government, under which every thing was to be gained by beg-

ging and flattering—where they had nothing to fear, but every thing to hope.

Upon this devotion of her former exclusive subjects, upon this predilection for a female government, did the Princess Clotilde construct her plan.

She wished to be again free, again independent, she would no longer tremble before a hated husband; she would again become the absolute mistress of herself and her subjects; and, finally, she would wreak vengeance upon the handsome husband who had scorned her attractions and curbed her sensual inclinations.

But it required immensely laborious efforts; it required a great command of means, to be able to realize her plans. Oh, how much flattery, how many smiles, how much affected friendliness, must be lavished to keep the number of her followers constantly upon the increase!—and yet the princess was obliged to acknowledge that the nobler and more important people were against her—that, although they loved not the prince, they were at the same time compelled to respect him, and preferred the severe and methodical government of a man to the capricious domination of a woman.

Prince Lothaire had removed the favorites of his wife from the more important official positions, supplying their places with men supposed to be just and incorruptible. If the dismissed courtiers hated him, those whom he had called to fill their places would at least not conspire against him, and thus the prince constantly had an important portion of his subjects in his favor.

But perhaps it was precisely these difficulties which doubly animated the courage of the princess, and made the attainment of her ends more desirable. She strewed gold and favors with a liberal hand, and secret messengers flew hither and thither to her scattered

adherents, who, in their different localities, must all work together for the common object.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE CONSPIRACY.

IN the streets of the princely capital there was to-day an unusual commotion, notwithstanding the late hour of the evening and the streaming rain. One everywhere met groups of people rushing through the streets, while others of better appearance were urging them to be more cautious and quiet.

Meanwhile the city seemed tranquil, and, when here and there a belated householder appeared at his gradually-darkening windows, he supposed these singing, shouting swarms to be nothing more than joyous troops of country people, such as often came in numerous bands into W— of a morning, and, after a day of revelling and enjoyment, returned, singing and shouting, to their villages in the evening.

But it must have struck the attentive observer that these masses, constantly increasing, did not on this occasion direct their course toward the city gates, but all, as if by agreement, took the way to that side where the princely residence was situated upon a moderately-rising ground before the city. Also, the singing and shouting gradually subsided, and silently, or with slight whisperings, the constantly-swelling crowd of human beings rolled on.

But in the palace all seemed alive and stirring; the windows in the apartments of the prince, as well as those of the princess, were brightly lighted, and serious consultations were being held in both.

The prince stood at a window, sharp-



ly peering in the direction from whence the dark, confused masses of people were approaching, and now, suddenly turning to two gentlemen who were standing behind him, he tranquilly said: "The moment for action, my lords, has come! You see that my dark distrust, as you were pleased to call my well-grounded suspicions, is justified by the event. The mob is already approaching to aid my virtuous wife in mounting an absolute throne from which I am first to be precipitated. Do you not hear the confused murmur that sounds like the distant roaring of the sea? You, General von Wilm, pass through the city with your band, and imprison every man who does not voluntarily and instantly repair to his own house. You, Captain von Sellhorst, double the guards at all the avenues to the palace. Let all the arms be well loaded, but avoid violence as long as possible. Away, my lords!"

The gentlemen silently withdrew, leaving the prince alone. After listening a short time longer at the window, he proceeded to pace the room with a proud step and triumphant air.

"Ah," he then murmured to himself, "I shall, then, again be free; no longer shall I have this dissembling woman at my side; no longer shall I be compelled to meet her with a forced appearance of respect and consideration. I can at length openly manifest all my hatred and contempt, and spurn her from me as I would the loathsome reptile that creeps to me with its poisonous venom. Oh, this is sweet! to let vengeance for once have its full course, to give at length a hearing to the whispering voices in my breast, to be able to pour out the full measure of my wrath upon this hated head until it drips with the lava of my anger! Bah, at length another thank-offering of my hatred! At length, hearest thou me, Cordelia? Hearest thou? Awaken

from thy death-sleep, rise from thy grave, look upon me in this hour with thy sweetly-enticing demoniac eyes, and laugh as was once thy wont. A sacrifice, a new sacrifice, I bring to thee! And thee, and always again thee, do I punish in every woman, for every woman is a hypocrite!" His eyes flashed, and with a violent hand he pulled at a curtain on the wall until it flew back as if with a sigh, disclosing a fair seductive portrait—a tranquil, slightly-draped creature—whose voluptuous form seemed to have sprung from the glowing fantasy of a Titian; her dark hair floated loosely over her snowy bosom, the head rested upon velvet pillows, and the swimming, sweetly-dreamy eyes seemed languishing for a distant glimpse of a dear one toward whom her arms were outstretched with longing. The prince gazed long and silently upon the picture. "Serpent! base, miserable serpent!" muttered he, drawing the curtain over it. "And now to the princess," he said aloud, calling for a state robe and ermine mantle decorated with orders.

Meanwhile many of the principal conspirators were assembled in the apartments of the princess. Amid them stood Clotilda in her robes of state, her head and breast flashing with costly brilliants. She was occupied in arranging her new court, and in rewarding her favorites for their devotion to her.

"Baron Hofhelm, I appoint you my lord-steward, in the place of Lord-steward von Zarbig, who goes into exile with my husband.—Count Sittenburg, you are from this day my first lord-chamberlain.—You, Counts Bardonph and Schlichting, are my ministers of state, and are to be in all things my counsellors.—You, my dear Doctor Sanft, are henceforth my first court physician. In remembrance of this great and ever-memorable day, we have decided to establish a new order of

knighthood, as grand master of which I name you, Count Wetterhorst. It shall be called *l'Ordre de la Fidélité*, and will be divided into six classes. To the sixth class will belong all those who have been distinguished for faithfulness and obedience. Please now to receive at my hands the insignia of this new order."

Count Wetterhorst, with an exclamation of delight, dropped upon one knee before his gracious sovereign, and reverently kissed the blue silk ribbon with the loop of brilliants, which she hung over his neck.

"And now, gentlemen, up for action!" cried the princess. "As soon as our friends arrive in the court-yard below, hasten, Count Wetterhorst, with a part of the band, to the apartments of the prince, and take him prisoner. Then let the people before my windows call for me, and cry that they will no longer suffer the tyrannical government of the prince, but will recognize only me as their sole and absolute ruler. I will then immediately appear upon the balcony and swear—"

The princess suddenly stopped and turned pale, as she glanced toward the door. All eyes followed her glance, and a murmur of terror ran through the assembly; anxiety and fear were painted on every countenance. In the open door stood the prince in splendid princely robes, viewing the scene with a scornful glance, while upon his lips played one of those slight, cold smiles which the courtiers all knew and feared, as it was usually seen only in his moments of greatest excitement. His tall, proud form impressed even the princess, and before his flashing, piercing glances she cast down her eyes in confusion.

She was unprepared for this appearance of her husband.

The prince's plans had succeeded; he had watched these intrigues of his

wife, step by step, with an attentive eye; nothing had escaped him, nothing had remained a secret for him; but, a master in dissimulation, he had appeared unsuspecting and unapprehensive, that he might strike the surer at the right moment.

Coming forward, the prince, with a cruel and exaggerated politeness, bowed low to the princess, and asked: "What does your highness think of swearing to your people at this unusual hour? You answer not, my gracious princess, and your collected followers cast down their eyes in confusion.—What, you also, Count Wetterhorst, whom, as I see, her princely highness has just decorated with a silken ribbon? Have a care, count, lest that ribbon should become a cord which might be dangerous.—But, why do you tremble, gentlemen? Fear you that I may be angry because you come at so late an hour on my wife's birthday to bring her your good wishes? You see that even I, though late, am yet not too late to offer her my best wishes. This day is a day of joy, and therefore let me forget for a moment that I am the prince and lord of this land, in order the better to remember that I am the happy husband of the queen of this festal day. The happy need no witnesses, and you will, gentlemen, please leave us alone! Go, you are released from duty.—"Released, I say!" thundered the prince, as the gentlemen still stood hesitating and undecided.

But there lay such power and energy, such elevation, in the voice, the glance, the whole carriage of the prince, that no one dared to brave him; silently, humbled by the flaming eyes of their ruler, they all hastily departed, and soon the spacious apartment was still and empty.

With a proud smile the prince observed their departure; hatred and contempt were legible in his face, and

then, for a moment, he silently paced the room.

The princess, who had sunk upon the divan trembling with fear, followed with her eyes every movement of her husband.

As he now, however, turned toward her, she shuddered at the deep rage expressed in his glance, and she shrieked with fear.

Approaching her, the prince grasped her hand with violence. "You tremble, your highness," said he, contemptuously flinging away her hand, and then, placing himself before her with folded arms, "You tremble now," said he, "and yet a few minutes since were so bold and heroic. Do you tremble for your adherents? fear you that I shall punish them for their fidelity to you? Tranquillize yourself. I will recognize no one of them, no one. One head alone incurs my just vengeance, and that head alone must fall!"

"And that head?" faintly murmured the almost breathless princess.

"Is the head of a miserable hypocritical woman—it is thine!" thundered the prince.

"My God, you will not—"

"Murder thee? Yes, that I will! Or do you think me fool enough not to make use of the long-desired hour of vengeance? Think you that these years of outrage and shame have destroyed the enmity of my heart? Think you that the betrayed husband will carry his forbearance so far as at this time to shut his eyes again in silence? Ah, I have not been blind, madame; I saw the spinning of all these intrigues, but I prevented them not, as I was determined to catch and strangle you in the net you yourself had spun!"

"Mercy, mercy!" stammered the princess.

Her husband gave her a glance of deadly hate. "No mercy, madame; you know my ear is closed to mercy, and

listens only to the voice of justice. And, by Heaven, justice you shall have! The head of the archtraitress against her prince and husband shall fall! The proofs of her crimes are in my hands. Here are the letters of your conspirators; here, your letter to the Pope for a dissolution of our marriage. Madame, I am too tender a husband to consent to this separation which concerns the welfare and growth of my states. Our united territories remain mine, as I am your heir, sublime princess! I will wear mourning-crape for you, and command the reading of masses for the salvation of your soul."

The princess was beside herself. She knew the inflexible nature of her husband too well to hope for pardon, but the love of life was more powerful than this conviction, and with convulsive sobs she threw herself at her husband's feet, imploring for mercy.

"Only my life, only this do I beg of you. Kill me not! Surely, it cannot be that you would murder a poor weak woman who begs her life of you as the highest mercy! You must be too noble to soil your hands with a woman's blood!"

"How miserable, how small!" said the prince, with a glance of contempt. "You have not even a criminal's pride, you are nothing but a malignant woman. The diadem has fallen from your brow, and discloses nothing but the head of a common intriguer. Go, you are not even worthy of death, for you lack the greatness of wickedness; you are low and common!"

"You spare me my life?" joyfully cried the princess.

"In one hour you will leave W—— for your new residence, the mountain-castle Hohenhaus. That residence you will never leave, and when once its doors have closed upon you they will be again opened only for your corpse."

"Therefore a prisoner for life!" murmured the princess.

"You are at liberty to change this destiny. Here is poison! One drop from this phial will make you forever free!"

"Give it me, oh give it me," cried the princess, eagerly stretching forth her hand for it.

The prince, in giving it to her, said: "Will you, at length, compel me to respect you?"

She placed the phial in her bosom. "I thank you," said she, coldly. "You have at least given me the means of gaining my freedom, which I can use when imprisonment weighs too heavily upon me."

"You would, then, live! Very well!"

The prince opened the door of the antechamber, where General Salhaus awaited his commands.

"The travelling-carriage of the princess will be brought to the door. A company of dragoons will accompany it to Hohenhaus. Is all ready?"

"All, your highness!"

"You will answer with your head for your prisoner, general!"

"Your highness may count upon me. So long as I live, the prisoner will never escape!"

"It is well! Adieu!"

"Who accompanies me?" asked the princess.

"General Salhaus is your custodian. Ah, you turn pale! The general has, indeed, never pardoned your latest infidelity, tender Clotilde, and from your lover has become your enemy. But, here let us end. I hear the rattle of the carriage, and the general is ready to hand you to it."

"But you cannot wish that I in this dress—"

"And why not? The night is mild and pleasant, and I have ordered your mantle and shawl to be placed in the

carriage. These ostentatious robes are well adapted for an entrance into your new residence, and they are very becoming to the Princess Clotilde!"

"And without the company of my ladies?"

"The waiting-woman will follow you with your confessor, the reverend Father Thomas."

"Grant me at least a moment of solitude in which to compose myself."

"Well, I grant you a quarter of an hour. And now farewell, princess! we see each other no more. Henceforth our paths are forever separate. May your end be peaceful!"

He bowed slightly, and then with a proud step left the room. The eyes of the princess followed him with an infectious glance of deadly hate.

"So sure as my name is Clotilda, you shall expiate this!" she hissed between her teeth. "Life is mine, and you have given into my hand the means of wreaking my revenge! Not for me, but for you, shall this precious poison one day serve!—Oh! let me only have patience, patience, and I will find a way to avenge myself. For the present, quiet and resignation!—But at least I can wound him now," she feverishly continued; "yes, she shall be disgraced and dishonored, this Gisela, his mistress!"

Hastily tearing a strip of paper from her portfolio, she wrote with a pencil: "To Gisela's villa! wreak vengeance upon the mistress who is the cause of my banishment!"

She had hardly finished this scrawl when the general entered, and with cold politeness offered her his arm to accompany her to the carriage.

The princess gave him her hand with a seductive smile. She seemed perfectly tranquil and self-possessed, no trait of her countenance betraying her internal commotion.

While passing through the corridor



she sought to introduce an unconstrained conversation with her conductor, while her eyes were searchingly wandering about in every direction. At length she discovered one of her trusted conspirators concealed behind a pillar. Letting the little strip of folded paper fall to the ground, she proceeded on her way.

The soldiers resumed their arms as the princess appeared at the palace door. Mounted men, bearing torches, surrounded the carriage, which the princess now entered under the rolling of drums and flourishes of trumpets.

The outer palace gate flew open, and, surrounded by the dragoons, the carriage rushed over the drawbridge.

The prince stood at a window, overlooking the train with a singular expression upon his features. As the flashing of the torches gradually paled in the distance, and the rolling of the carriage could be no longer heard, he closed the window and retreated to his cabinet, saying with a triumphant smile: "I am at length avenged! At least *one* hypocrite the less at my court!"

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE TUMULT.

GISELA was alone. She stood upon the balcony, thoughtfully glancing up to the heavens, where a thousand brilliant stars were flashing, and lighting the reposing world with a dim twilight.

The cool night-wind did her good, the stillness composed her mind, and in the peace of this solitude she felt the convalescence of her soul as a consolatory refreshment. She had struggled with the dream of past happiness until the awaking from that dream seemed no longer an evil, but a blessing; she had

torn the unwholesome flower of love from her heart with a vigorous hand, and heeded not the pain.

With a firm and resolute eye had she descended into the past, and had repeatedly recalled to mind every word, every mien, every gesture, of Walther, and finally concluded: "He is a miserable dissembler. I must never again accuse him, never again think of him! I shall forget him!"

The remembrance of Walther's perfidy was to her, as it were, a heavy stone, with which she sank the corpse of her love in the sea of the past, so that it could never afterward rise to the surface of the present.

This corpse once buried, she threw off all mourning-rape and all sorrow, resolving again to struggle and combat for happiness. She shook the dust from her feet, and determined to go on, disregarding the difficulties of the way, the pain of her wounded soul, and, by overcoming her weakness, to acquire health and tranquillity. She felt in herself the eternal, sacred desire for happiness, the blessed calling to strive for this alone, and never to tire in its pursuit. Her originally strong and full nature was not destined to be arrested by sickly regrets; she must always strive, with constantly-renewed efforts, for the full power of perfect health.

Gisela could only be completely happy or unhappy. She could not vegetate with sighings and complainings, with long, disconsolate sufferances. She must either succumb to the storm of sorrow, or rise higher and prouder, to conquer by the force of her will.

As Gisela had thrown off her sorrows, her eager eyes turned in every direction in search of happiness; her hands, still trembling with pain, were yet stretched out toward the future with desire and hope, and her warm soul yearned for new struggles in the conquest of happiness.

As she now stood upon the balcony, dreamily glancing at the heavens, she murmured to herself: "Herrmann was right! My soul is not destined to be slowly extinguished, to vanish unseen. The world calls me, life has claims upon me; it calls to me with a thousand enticing voices; it shows to me in my dreams the most splendid and beautiful colors, and causes the most charming pictures of the future to play around me. And these voices, these images cannot be false; these hopes cannot be deceptive. I cannot believe that life is a lie, a deception; the struggle for happiness must finally end in success. Oh, are not all my powers, all my senses impelled to the pursuit of happiness? do not my arms involuntarily stretch forth to meet this promised end, and sings not my soul in holy symphonies to this long-desired, long-awaited sun? And shall I despair—shall I, with my eighteen years, give up all effort and hope? Oh, no! The world is so fair, life is so precious, my heart yearns for this world, for this life, for this humanity, to which my love, my youth, my powers belong, and of which I will never doubt!—But what is that?" exclaimed she, interrupting her meditations, "I seem to hear the confused cries of voices in the distance. Ha, yonder sky seems to glow! What means this unusual light?"

As Gisela anxiously glanced in the direction whence the sounds came, she remembered that Prince Lofhaire had to-day said to her, with a mysterious smile, that she would have occasion to think of him; that this was an important, decisive day for him; that he would give no further explanation until he should be enabled to announce the success of his plans.

"Surely it is the prince," said Gisela, "and he comes to bring me news of importancē. Yes, certainly, for I now see torches distinctly, which are the

causes of this unusual light; also, the noise comes nearer and nearer, and people are evidently upon the way to my villa."

Listening again, she thought she heard the confused outcries of many voices; they sounded like the roar of ocean waves, and seemed constantly approaching.

Already could she distinctly discern the separate torches, already distinguish a great, dark, confused mass, rolling onward in one vast coil; already could she distinguish the wild cries of some individual voices; indeed, she even thought she heard her own name pronounced with the accompaniment of rough, wild laughter.

Gisela turned pale, and, yielding to a vague uneasiness, inexplicable to herself, she retreated from the balcony and closed the door opening upon it.

She then tremblingly and anxiously looked through the window.

Nearer and nearer, wilder and louder, resounded the cries and calls, constantly nearer rolled the turbulent human mass; and now her frightened servants burst into the room with the intelligence that many hundreds of shrieking, cursing men and women were streaming thither, and that they were distinctly heard to cry, "Break all her windows—all!"

Old Hedwig, weeping, clung to the feet of her beloved mistress, while the other servants stood trembling and irresolute; but, in this general anxiety and commotion, Gisela quickly recovered her calmness and self-possession.

"Quick, close the gate of the outer court," she commanded, with a loud and firm voice, "and loose the watchdogs."

The servants rushed out, and soon the court-gate was heard to fall in its groove with a loud clatter.

Gisela breathed freer, and old Hedwig stammered a hearty thanksgiving.

Without, however, the noise, the cries, the howls, and the demoniac laughter, were constantly approaching, becoming more and more distinct; they had now apparently reached the outer wall of the court, and Gisela could distinguish the different cries.

"Away with the miserable prostitute!"

"Shame upon this mistress of the prince!"

A shriek of horror escaped Gisela's lips, and she was obliged to hold upon the back of a chair to save herself from sinking to the floor. She was benumbed, as if struck by a lightning-flash, at this new indignity.

But the consciousness of her innocence, her womanly dignity, soon overcame this momentary weakness, and with a proud, contemptuous smile she rose erect.

Meanwhile they distinctly heard repeated heavy blows upon the court-gate, interspersed with wild cries, curses, and vulgar epithets, coupled with Gisela's name. Now a loud crash, with cries of triumph, the gate had given way, and the tumultuous mob were wildly rushing into the inner court.

"Is the house-door bolted?" calmly asked Gisela.

She was answered in the affirmative.

"Then let us patiently wait for help to come," continued Gisela; but the frightful tumult below made her words inaudible.

It was one unbroken wave of uproar, one sole overflowing stream of agitation, in which no single sound or cry could be any more distinguished.

The dogs barked, the people screamed and shrieked, heavy blows fell upon the house-door, stones clattered against the windows, and, added to all this, were the anxious prayers of old Hedwig and other servants.

A large stone now came clattering

through the panes, and fell at Gisela's feet.

A wild shriek of terror burst from the servants, that must have been heard below, for, after a moment's silence, it was answered by the triumphant shout:

"There she is, in the room overhead!"

"Let us smash in all the windows!"

"Yes, all—all!"

"Step here, into this corner, near the window," calmly commanded Gisela, "no stone can reach us here."

The trembling servants followed her.

Now flew stone upon stone through the clattering windows, and the barking of the dogs gradually ceased.

"They have killed the dogs!" groaned Hedwig, "and, oh, heavens, the blows on the door come thicker and heavier!"

Now came a loud, thundering crash and a terrific shout.

"The door is broken in, we are lost!" said Gisela. "Go and conceal yourselves. Hedwig, Carl, Johann—go upon the roof—no one will find you there, for they seek only me!"

The servants hesitatingly retired, all but Hedwig, who protested that she would never leave her young mistress.

Meantime the human stream was constantly rolling on. The mob was soon heard upon the stairs.

"Shall I extinguish the light?" asked Hedwig.

"No," said Gisela, "they shall see that I do not tremble."

"Oh, heavens, they come, they are already in the antechamber!" groaned Hedwig, falling on her knees.

"Then I will go and meet them," said Gisela, with a queenly pride, and she strode through the chamber to the door. But at that very moment the door was burst open, and its place was filled with savage human forms.

They were with loud cries pressing

into the room, but Gisela's calm and proud appearance silenced them and caused them involuntarily to crowd back.

"What seek you here?" asked Gisela, in a loud voice.

Meantime the momentary consternation was already overcome, and with a savage laugh one of the foremost of the rioters cried: "We seek you, fair puppet!"—"Yes, you," cried another, "the shameless mistress of our prince!"

A large crowd had now pressed into the room; there were more than a hundred of them, and only a small space separated Gisela from her excited, savage opponents. She had slowly retreated until she now leaned against the wall.

"People," cried Gisela, with deep anguish and failing courage, "what have I done to you that should induce you to defame and insult me!"

"She asks what she has done, and see how innocent she looks!"

"A shameful adulteress!" screeched a reeling, drunken woman; "she appears as if she knew not that it is a sin to become the mistress of our prince! But we will teach her!"

"Yes, that we will! She shall learn that it is shameful to slander our princess and steal her husband's heart from her!"

"She is nothing but a courtesan! Count Salm said so when he related to us how this puppet was the guilty cause of the imprisonment of our princess—our good princess, who always remembered the poor!"

"Yes, it is shameful! She has induced the prince to repudiate and banish his wife!"

"That is shameful!"

"It is vile!"

"People, men, hear me!" cried Gisela, with a powerful voice. "By the Heaven above us I swear that I am innocent! I know nothing of the mis-

fortune of the princess! God knows that I am innocent!"

"Yes, yes, light women always talk so, when they are about to be punished," cried a *kerle*, with a vulgar laugh.

"They always pretend innocence," screamed a woman with streaming hair.

"But we are not to be deceived; she is guilty; Count Salm told us so when he gave us the money with which to drink the health of our princess."

"Then has Count Salm told you a falsehood," responded Gisela, with firmness; "by the memory of my mother, I swear to you that I am innocent!"

"See, she dares to asperse the count, she calls him a liar!"

"She is a shameless person!"

"The prince's mistress!"

"She causes our great public expenses! It is thus that she gets all her fine things!"

"Well, let us destroy them all!"

"Yes, that we will!"

The mob were already preparing for the execution of this decision, the space in front of Gisela was increased, and she began again to hope.

"We will do that by and by," shrieked the woman who had first spoken, and who had assumed a sort of leadership of the mob. "First let us punish the mistress!"

"Yes, let us do that first!"

"Come, let us take her to the fountain in the court-yard. We will baptize her with water, the miserable puppet!" cried the woman.

A loud shout of laughter greeted this proposition.

"That is a splendid idea—we will execute it!"

Hands were already stretched forth to seize Gisela; she already felt her shoulder touched by a rough fist; she had already commenced recommending her soul to God, when a powerful



voice suddenly thundered: "What is going on here? Back, or it will cost you your life!"

"The prince!" shouted Gisela, in a loud voice.

"The prince!" murmured the astonished rabble, tumbling back in terror, and suddenly awakened from their intoxication to a sober consciousness.

The prince now made for himself a path through the crowd, which willingly and in alarm drew back for him as soldiers with gleaming weapons were seen through the open door. But even those soldiers excited less fear and terror than the brow of the prince, who now, standing near Gisela, and brightly lighted by the lamps of the chandelier, glanced upon the retreating mob, his eyes flashing with rage.

"By all the gods, you shall dearly pay for this!" cried he, in tones of thunder, and those who knew him saw with terror, in the high-swollen veins upon his forehead, an evidence of his fearful anger. As in a hero of the ancient times, every nerve trembled, every muscle was on the stretch; rage and contempt, hate and revenge, in all his features, he scowled contemptuously upon the mob, while laying his protecting hand as in blessing upon the head of Gisela.

It was an earnest and impressive moment, in which prevailed a profound and solemn silence.

"Whoever stirs is a dead man," now cried the prince. "Soldiers, advance! Major Wendrich, all here present are your prisoners."

And, while the major was advancing with his men, the prince bore the fainting and powerless Gisela into an adjoining room. Here he gently laid her upon a divan.

"Oh!" she faintly murmured, "you have preserved my life, but I thank you not." She then sank in a complete swoon. The prince long contemplated

her pale, fair face. "Poor, unhappy woman," he murmured low, "thou, then, art spared no pain, no sorrow, no mortification! Thy heart beat again for the world, and again it repels thee; thou hast again tendered love and hope to mankind, and again art thou rewarded with hatred and disdain. Wilt thou not now learn to curse the world and hate mankind? Will not thy heart now open to distrust, and thy soul to hatred? Woe, woe to thee if it be not so—if thy lips learn no malediction, thy heart no detestation! Oh, thou poor, abused child, let me weep over thee, for thy wretchedness is boundless!"

And, as he bent over the insensible girl, his fast-streaming tears fell upon her pale face.

Old Hedwig, who, unnoticed by the prince, had followed him there, stood listening devoutly, with folded hands, to his words. When her painfully-suppressed sobs betrayed her presence to the prince, he looked up, and every trace of emotion immediately disappeared from his face, his features recovered their usual proud and calm expression, and, with a firm and steady voice, he said: "Let my carriage be brought to the door. The young lady must not remain in this desolated house. I take her with me to the city. You will follow us, Hedwig."

The latter hastened out to see that the commands of the prince were obeyed.

"Still unconscious," murmured the prince, again bending over Gisela. "That is well; she thus escapes a struggle with her delicacy. Sweet and charming child, from this time forward shall my eye watch over and protect thee! Thou shalt find in me the kindness and protection of a friend and father!"

After lightly kissing her pale lips, he bore her away in his arms to the carriage.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## A NEW LIFE-PATH.

ON the morning after that catastrophe, Gisela, pale and exhausted, was reclining in an arm-chair. Before her stood the prince. He had informed her of the conspiracy of the princess, and of her imprisonment, and, as he had ended, Gisela feebly shook her head, and said: "But I do not yet comprehend how they could bring me into any connection with this conspiracy—how they could wish to punish me for the just punishment of the princess."

The prince silently walked a few times up and down the room, and then, stopping before Gisela, gently said: "This is not the moment for sparing you. You must, with a clear glance, review your whole life, in order to be enabled to decide upon your future. Did you, then, believe, poor child, that the world would, without punishment, pardon you for being greater and nobler than the crowd? Did you believe that the rough hands of the world could not reach up to the height upon which you stood? Oh, they have built a bridge of calumny, that has enabled them to reach you, and pull you down into the dust of the earth, where they can soil you with the smut of vile suspicion. No forbearance or mercy is shown here below, and over the greatest and noblest the constant cry of the world is: 'Stone him! stone him!' This you neither knew nor suspected when you allowed my daily visits to you."

"Ah!" sighed Gisela, "it is, then, true, what I yesterday heard from those rough voices: they consider me—"

She stopped short, and dropped her head upon her breast. A pause ensued.

"They consider you my favorite, my mistress," interposed the prince, in a tone of bitter irony. "They believe

neither in the disinterestedness of my friendship nor in the purity of your nature. What would you have? The world is so made. What people cannot comprehend, they disparage and defile, that they may feel themselves exalted above defamed eminence. Have you expected to find in mankind either belief or confidence? Have you hoped to win the world by the truthfulness, the candor of your soul? Have you expected to place yourself in safety from their attacks, when, with bare head and open breast, you confidently approached them? Poor, deceived child, how very much have you over-estimated mankind—how very much deceived yourself respecting the world! Believe me, more than half of those whom the world has covered with dishonor and shame, whose social rights and privileges it has repudiated, whom it passes with averted eyes—more than half of those poor, dishonored outcasts, more than half of these, I say, are pure and guiltless, whom the world has charged with its own sins and infamies. These martyrs are compelled to take upon themselves the sins of the world, and fall as sacrificial lambs for the general guiltiness. Oh, the world is paltry and without belief, and, in the ease and comfort of mental idleness, it stones innocence, because it sees guilt lifting stones against this innocence. Believe me, among a thousand is hardly one who exercises a free and independent judgment, and all others blindly follow him and swear by him, because it is easier and more commodious than to examine and deliberate for themselves; because, while associated with the general opinion, they are less exposed to personal attacks and struggles than when they venture to exercise a free and independent judgment of their own. We laugh at the Spanish nobleman who incurred the dangers of twenty duels, facing the loaded pistols of his oppo-

ment, who maintained the superiority of Cervantes over Calderon, and who, when he finally fell, mortally wounded, in his twentieth duel, acknowledged that he had never read either Calderon or Cervantes. We laugh over this story, but it contains a sad and pernicious truth, and thousands upon thousands judge like that Spanish nobleman, not knowing what they condemn, with only the difference that, instead of pouring out their own blood for their opinions, they shed that of those they condemn."

"And is there," anxiously exclaimed Gisela, "is there, then, no justice here below?"

"Justice! look around you! where will you find it among men? There is neither truth nor justice even in history. How many tyrants has it not crowned with the laurel of fame! how many noble men has it not buried deep in the cold grave of forgetfulness! The world judges only by appearances, and yet you would expect justice. Oh, poor, noble child, look again around you and see the world as it is, rather than as it should be. The bad must combat the good, that they may not be conquered by them, and the bad must prevail, as they have thousands of weapons with which to fight. Calumny, falsehood, hypocrisy, insolence, these are the light cavalry of the bad. But what have the good with which to oppose them? Nothing but simple truth. And you think to conquer the powerful enemy with this feeble weapon? Believe you that, Gisela? Poor thing, give up this illusion, or it will become a sword that will pierce your heart."

"Oh, what a sad world, then, it must be!"

"It *is* a sad world, Gisela, and to one of a noble mind nothing remains but to weep over it, and in the deep recesses of the heart to lead the renouncing life

of a hermit, alienated from mankind, fearing and fleeing them as did Saint Anthony the seductions of the demons. Or, better with regard to these seductions—far better, to scourge one's self than to be lacerated by them; better, deprivation under the sackcloth of renunciation than to be undeceived in the moment of enjoyment. You weep, unhappy one! Lift up your head, young girl; no, no more tears for this miserable world! Despise it, hate it, but weep not for it. It was a beautiful courage with which you left the tranquillity of your childhood; with which you brought into this perverted world your innocence and purity of soul, asking of it only the recognition of these and freedom of existence. It was a beautiful courage, I say, but it was unwise. For, here below, courage and truth do not prevail, but cowardice and falsehood; and no one believes in the unshrouded visage, but in the artificial mask. Truth is generally considered impudence and deception; and falsehood, with a painted face and hypocritical humility, is received for truth. And therefore, Gisela, is it unwise to show one's self to the world in the garb of divine truth. Falshood will cast down its eyes with shame, she will raise an outcry against pure and holy nudity, which she cannot comprehend, as the fearless unveiling of innocence, and a thousand voices will immediately join in the cry, as, in condemning that innocent boldness, they raise the standard of their own modesty and virtue to a higher grade than if they attempted to give it another name and to defend it. And this is your crime, Gisela, that you have sinned against appearances—a crime which the world never pardons!"

"Oh, is it, then, really true," cried Gisela, in a tone of sadness, "is it true that falshood alone conquers, here below?"

"It is so, Gisela!"

"And I am disdained and condemned because I had the courage to be sincere and true!" she indignantly continued. "I have brought to the world a whole heart full of confidence and love, and it disdains my love, and converts my confidence into a weapon against me! I have believed in mankind, and, while they repel me, they disdain and overwhelm me with shame. This is dreadful!—And you," she continued, with flashing eyes, turning to the prince, "you knew all this, and did not warn me?"

"I warned you, Gisela, but you would not listen."

"You knew that your visits to me were misinterpreted," she angrily exclaimed, "and nevertheless you came daily, and thus by your coming gave to these miserable suspicions and conjectures the appearance of truth."

"I knew it," calmly responded the prince, "and nevertheless I came, Gisela. You were lost, poor child, at all events; and was it not better, in the shipwreck of your happiness, to preserve one sole friend than to perish alone? When you had the boldness to leave your sister and occupy this villa alone, at that moment you offended the world. For the world never pardons a woman who breaks the chains with which she is bound, and aspires to rise to freedom of existence. And when you, Gisela, dared this—to break the chains of conventional propriety and female slavery, and to claim the freedom of a human, godlike being—when you, Gisela, dared do this, I bowed before you in adoration, but I knew you were lost. I looked around and saw that you had no friend to sustain you, and I then vowed to become the friend you needed."

"Noble man!" exclaimed Gisela, extending to him her hand.

"Estimate this not higher than it de-

serves, Gisela, for it was not compassion alone that impelled me to that vow; and, while I constituted myself your protector, I sought refuge for myself under your protection. In the world, which I despise and hate, amid the crowds of miserable dissemblers you appeared to me as the precious, fabulous blossom of a world of which I had long since despaired. Your charming features bore the impress of an innocence and purity in which I had long since ceased to believe; and, while I stood before you as before a saintly image, and almost adored, I at the same time trembled for you. You came to realize my youthful dreams, and I could no longer smile at those lost hopes, for they had become living realities. The pure, innocent woman, in whose existence I had long since lost my belief, stood before me, and I could no longer compassionately lament my youth; I could say to myself: 'Thou hast not believed in the impossible!' So I fled, with all my scorn of the world, with my sorrows and my lost ideals, to the protection of your innocent smile, your courageous soul, and you gave me back a part of my youth and my interrupted dreams."

"Oh," said Gisela, smiling through her tears, "then my life was not entirely useless, and I have not lived in vain. I have, then, fulfilled a small part of my mission!"

"And you are called to the accomplishment of the highest, if you have but the courage to will it. Once, Gisela, I warned you against the world, begged of you prudently to veil your nature, and give to the world only that which belonged to it, while conforming to its conditions. You have broken with the world—very well!—have the courage to wish to build no bridge over the gulf that now separates you from it. Despise the judgments of men, and listen not to their scoffing voices. Be



great, and rise above shame to a height where it can never more disturb you. Had you less strength of soul, less moral force, I would advise you to retire into a cloister. As it is, you are called to act and strive—to shake the dust from your feet, to disregard the difficulties of the way, and to go on. Lift up your head, Gisela; you can do so, for you are pure. With a sure foot stride over the smut of calumny, and, if you disregard it, no atom of it can adhere to you!”

“And where, where shall I go?” sorrowfully asked Gisela; “have you not yourself told me that happiness is nowhere to be found in the world?”

“In the world not, Gisela, but in life. There is happiness there, but it must not be sought in the tumult of the world. But rather seek, under the ashes of your own heart, for a live spark of the hope of happiness. Ah, this is a precious fruit, wrapped up and enclosed in a thousand husks and shells, a mysterious kernel, from which all the prickly envelopes of unhappiness must first be stripped before it can serve for our enjoyment. And this dangerous happiness, the attainment of which requires so much courage, is that for which you are called to strive.”

“Look at me, my prince,” said Gisela, with a melancholy smile; “my hands are already lacerated by the prickly husks and shells of unhappiness which I would have broken in order to arrive at the fruit within; see, my bosom is torn by the thorns, and my heart bleeds! How can you wish me to go farther, always seeking and never finding!”

“Look up, Gisela; let your self-consciousness strengthen and elevate you, rescuing you from the desert of the world, and transporting you to the fair green island of happiness, which arises out of it like an oasis. Here is the hand of a true friend. Let us form an

alliance against the world, and bid it defiance. You shall be my refuge and consolation, the good angel of this land. Cease to love mankind, but have compassion on humanity. For this noble work will we ally ourselves. And great, infinitely great results can you accomplish, if you but have the courage to will it. I have been young and confiding, like you; have been deceived and betrayed, like you; but differently did I come out of those struggles and deceptions. There are iron natures,” he continued, “gilded by youth and happiness with a momentary brilliancy, which the friction of the world wears off, leaving nothing but the hard material of which they were made. But there are also golden natures, which, under the friction of misfortune, attain the eternal and unalterable splendor of purity and beauty. I belong to the first of these, you to the last. Let us unite these two metals; give to my iron nature of the golden beauty of your gentler soul; let the soft gold of your nature be hardened by the iron of mine. And, thus blended, let us work together for the welfare of those whom destiny has placed under my control. The world speaks of us as in most intimate connection; and, should an angel descend to declare and establish your innocence, the people would not believe him. Well, then, let us not seek to change their opinions, or to avoid appearances. Remain with me, Gisela. I love you as a sister, as a daughter; well, then, accept me as your brother, accept fraternal friendship, and then let us wait and see whether time may not yet again kindle the ashes of our hearts, and whether the flames we thought extinguished may not again break forth; and, if this should one day be the case, oh, then may these flames unite over our heads, and the phoenix of our happiness rise from the ashes!”

“Yes, so let it be,” said Gisela, with beaming eyes and glowing cheeks. “Yes, so let it be, my friend, my brother, my life’s only dependence. The world may condemn at its leisure. I will hear it no more, and to the opinions of the crowd I am indifferent. They have stoned me when I was innocent; woe to them if they render me criminal! They have condemned me when I was without sin; woe to them if I am now tainted with it! I will remain with you, Lothaire, whatever the world may think of it. Freely and proudly will I lift up my head, and the scornful smiles of men shall find my breast invulnerable to their malicious shafts. The combat with the world is therefore begun anew, and again I enter the arena to do battle against prejudices and appearances! No, I am not yet conquered, I yet believe in the triumph of truth, and I fear not the world. ‘*Do that which is right, and fear no one,*’ is and shall be my motto; and it is right to accept the sphere of usefulness you offer me, and to labor for the good of your subjects; to act for them in unison with you. And, because it is right, I will do it; and, because I am orphaned and alone, I do right to accept the friendly fraternal hand you hold out to me. Yes, you are my brother, and to love you as a sister shall henceforth be my greatest virtue.”

“Ah,” said the prince, pressing her to his heart, “people have misunderstood the word virtue! They have made it a bugbear to frighten the color from the rosy cheek of innocence, and chase the smile from the lip of youth. But God has understood it otherwise—virtue is to be happy. Let us strive for this virtue, Gisela, my sister!”

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## LIFE-SCENES.

THENCEFORWARD, Gisela dwelt in what had been the apartments of the Princess Clotilde, in the princely palace.

This step once taken, she now also felt the courage and resolution to carry it through without fear or hesitation. Neither seeking nor avoiding publicity, she seldom appeared at the great festivities to which the prince’s position gave occasion, but was always present at the smaller social circles, to which the prince invited the most distinguished of his servants and subjects.

She soon became the central point of these select circles, winning all hearts by her gentle and agreeable kindness, the graciousness of her manners, the sparkling fire of her soul, the mildness of her judgments, and her always fresh-inspired and inspiring mind. But an especial additional charm was given to all these gifts by a serious maiden pride which pervaded her whole being, and which compelled the involuntary recognition of all who approached her.

Gisela sought not to impose, and therefore imposed the more, by her high and noble bearing; she wished not to cover her breast with pride and dignity as a panoply against the world, but her innocence, her pure conscience, the noble soul that spoke from her lineaments, unconsciously to herself became a shield which at least banished from her presence all undervaluing, disrespect, and insolence. Whether she delighted her hearers by singing with her richly-toned voice to the accompaniment of her harp, whether she with higher animation of look and voice read the solid works of the nobler authors, whether she spoke with animated earnestness in relation to the welfare of the land, or with light and agreeable jests she drove away the

furrows from the prince's brow, her being was always surrounded by an elevated dignity and grace, which won, at least for the moment, the hearts even of her enemies.

And it was a cordial, noble, and most happy relation that connected her with the prince; the purest and holiest friendship seemed destined to cure the pains and sorrows of past loves in their two souls.

Gisela's heart lay open and without reserve to the observation of her friend, and he shared with her all his cares and troubles, and listened with respectful attention to her opinions upon governmental matters, whenever, as was often the case, he had occasion to consult her.

Her clear glance swept like a good angel over the subjects of her friend, and she was often enabled to soften the severity, the just severity of Lothaire, into a placable and pardoning mildness, and, by the pleasant graciousness of her smile, to lend their true worth to acts of mercy and recognition of merit. But, alas! all these virtues and services were insufficient to conciliate public opinion, or to annul the sentence of ostracism which prejudice had pronounced against her.

She could not avoid seeing the contemptuous and mocking glances with which ladies passed her when they accidentally met in the streets; she heard the insulting whispers of the people when she approached them, and her proud, noble soul suffered in sad silence under these injuries.

How often, in the overfulness of her suffering, did this poor down-trodden heart long for the sad consolation of pouring out her sorrows into a friendly soul, and thus lessen by sharing her griefs; how often did the suppressed complaints rise to her lips during her familiar and cordial interviews with Lothaire!

But Gisela constantly repressed her complaints, concealing them in the deepest recesses of her heart. She was too well acquainted with her friend not to know that he would punish such insults to her with the utmost severity, and she therefore remained silent, soothing her wounded feelings by acts of charity to the poor and suffering, to whom she repaired with aid and angelic consolation.

Of an evening she would often go, in the disguise of a peasant costume, to the cottages of the poor, and no one suspected that the simple, friendly woman who was sitting by the cradle of the slumbering child, and listening to the complaints of the poor mother, or weeping tears of compassion for the sufferings of the sick—no one suspected that this was the fair and powerful friend of the prince.

In thus disguising herself, Gisela had a double object. She knew that the poor felt constrained and chilled by the presence of persons of rank and wealth; that their hearts opened more easily and freely to their equals, and that feeling and sympathy often afforded them more consolation than rich gifts. On the other hand, it was important to her to hear the harmless, undissembled, and simple complaints of the people in their own unstudied language of truth, that she might, by a faithful repetition of it to the prince, stir him up to compassionate action in the premises.

Some days before, her constantly exercised benevolence had opened for her a new occasion for action. On making, in her disguise, a visit to some of her poor, to aid and comfort them, and with a light step mounting the high stairs, she thought she heard loud groans and lamentations in a room she was passing.

She stopped to listen, and, when convinced that she was not mistaken,



softly opened the door and entered a small dark chamber.

Oh, what a heart-rending scene here presented itself to her view! There lay a young woman upon a miserable, naked straw bed, groaning and moaning in the anguish of a burning fever, and, at her side, two small, meagre, childish forms, whose dull, weeping eyes were imploringly raised to the face of the unconscious mother. Add to this sad picture that the chamber was desolate and empty; no chair, no table, no sign of comfort, of life, except the flickering and fast-expiring oil-lamp which threw a feeble and uncertain light upon all this misery.—“Water, water!” groaned the invalid, and Gisela hastily ran up the stairs to another poor family of her acquaintance, for a pitcher of water, which with a careful hand she held to the burning lips of the sufferer, who drank with eagerness, and then, half-opening her eyes, faintly murmured, “Oh, how I hunger!” Gisela gave her of the bread she had brought for the other family, and the little weeping, half-starved children, held out their thin, trembling hands for a share.

Gisela plainly perceived that hunger was alone the illness that had exhausted the strength of these poor creatures and brought them near to the gates of death. Hunger, gnawing, consuming hunger, had hollowed the cheeks of the mother, and destroyed the youthful forces of the children.

She wept tears of thankfulness that she had been enabled to save these poor people, and never had the prince seen Gisela's brow so radiant with joy as this evening when she returned to the palace.

From that time she went regularly every day to the wretched mother with the beautiful and again blooming children, to render them assistance, to discover their wishes, and to raise them from their silent despair; for the poor

Julia was one of those proud, reserved poor, who prefer patiently and silently dying of hunger to acknowledging their misery and imploring charity. She had evidently been accustomed to a better life, and her language betrayed the education of the higher classes. With what delicacy did Gisela commiserate this proud poverty—with what stratagems and innocent deceit did she lighten the heavy weight of obligations received, and how much devotion and tender kindness did it not require to finally open the poor woman's heart to confidence and communicativeness! And when at last she did speak of her misfortunes, her lips trembled, and the blush of humiliated pride crimsoned her else pale cheek.

She was the young wife of an official in the service of Lothaire. She had followed her beloved husband from afar, little suspecting how soon her happiness was to be troubled, and her peace destroyed. The last scion of a respected, noble house, she had brought to her husband nothing but her love and her high descent. Perhaps her husband was as proud of the latter as of the former; at any rate, he was not satisfied with enjoying that love in seclusion, he desired to do honor to his wife's ancestors, and to live in a style worthy of their rank. Luxury and splendor surrounded the haughty and beautiful Julia, who dreamed not that her vain husband possessed not the means necessary for his extravagant expenditures.

In his vanity he wished to offset her noble descent with the splendor of wealth, and embezzled property that he could not otherwise possess. But Julia confided in him; she was pleased to preside worthily over his richly-appointed house, in which new objects of luxury and art were constantly accumulating, and Bernhard was always ready and willing to give.



Thus passed some years, and Julia had the happiness to press a pair of twins to her bosom, when, one morning, her pale and disturbed husband rushed into her chamber, imploring her not to betray his presence there, but to say that he had been gone some hours. Julia, shocked and benumbed, still stood staring at the closet in which Bernhard had concealed himself, when her chamber door was violently thrown open, and officers of justice entered, roughly asking for her husband. Vainly did Julia seek to stammer the commanded falsehood; they listened not to her, believed not her words; the premises were searched, and her almost swooning husband was dragged from his hiding-place.

He had embezzled the funds confided to his keeping; the fraud was discovered, and Bernhard was pursued as a criminal. Julia beheld his departure with terror and stupefaction; and it was many days before the poor, deceived wife could realize that her beloved husband, her adored Bernhard, was nothing but a thief.

But, meanwhile, the prince had commanded the strictest investigation. It was not the first time such a thing had occurred, and he intended that a severe punishment of the culprit, in this case, should serve as a warning to other officials.

Bernhard was condemned to long years of imprisonment; his property, every thing he possessed, was forfeited to the state; and, as a beggar, Julia, with her children, left the threshold of her splendid and once happy residence. Her pride, as well as her love, was mortally wounded, but she suppressed the first, only in the last to remember that she was a mother.

Having nothing left, she repaired to the palace, to implore the mercy of Prince Lothaire.

But, as we have already said, his ear

was accessible only to justice, not to mercy; and Gisela was not then at his side to temper his severity with her merciful spirit.

In vain did the proud Julia throw herself at his feet with streaming tears and wringing hands, begging for an alleviation of the hard sentence. Prince Lothaire considered severity necessary, and poor Julia's prayers did not soften him. She rose from her knees, which she had then, for the first time, bent to mortal man, and with anger and grief in her heart left the palace.

Now followed months of deprivation and distress, which she bore with proud stoicism. None knew her here, none could commiserate her, and to none had she betrayed her misery and want.

As a sort of vengeance against Lothaire, she was willing to starve and die, and the last words stammered by her pale lips were reproaches of the cruel and merciless prince.

Falteringly, hesitatingly, and often interrupted by sighs and sobs, had Julia related this sad story to the sympathizing Gisela, the latter not venturing to defend the prince, or to attempt the mitigation of Julia's bitter rancor. But she hastened to Lothaire, imploring mercy for the delinquent officer. And her prayers were not fruitless.

The prince promised a mitigation of the sentence, and, glowing with joy, Gisela hastened on the next evening to Julia, to impart to her, as a current rumor, the probable pardon of her husband. But this sudden change in her destiny, after having confided her sorrows to her apparently humble friend, excited Julia's suspicions. When Gisela left, she hastened after her, and followed even to the gates of the palace, whence, recollecting that she had heard of the disguises of the prince's mistress, she returned home with rage and scorn in her heart.

Several days elapsed before Gisela

came again. She wished not to come with empty hands, she wished to bring the certainty of the pardon. Not till the prince had partially relieved Bernhard from the sentence that hung over him, by reducing the term of imprisonment from twenty years to two—till he had bestowed upon the young wife the rich furniture of her house that had been confiscated—not till the document with the official seal and signature was in her hand, did she hasten to Julia. In her joyful excitement it did not occur to her that Julia, in spite of her disguise, must recognize in her a different person from what she appeared. Nor did she care about it; she thought not of herself; she wished to bring joy and consolation to one who was unhappy.

So, with beaming eyes and an elastic step she flew up the stairs to Julia's room, entered it with a throbbing heart, never noticing the dark, angry manner in which she was received.

"Julia, dear Julia," said she, breathless for joy, "I bring you consolation and happiness. There, read that!"

She handed to Julia the folded document.

The latter slowly unfolded and read it. Gisela saw with astonishment that Julia's countenance did not light up, that the dark shade of anger did not disappear from her brow.

"Do you not rejoice, Julia?" she asked; "do you not thank God for this unexpected happiness?"

"No," said Julia, in a hard, rough tone, "for I have no intention of accepting it from such hands. If my husband has deserved punishment, he may bear it. It is easier to endure just punishment than to receive a benefit from shameful hands!"

"Julia!" cried Gisela, starting back in amazement.

"I forbid you thus addressing me, madame," she continued; "between a

prostitute and a virtuous wife such familiarity is out of place, and I must further beg of you no longer to dishonor this room with your presence."

Gisela stood benumbed, annihilated. "Oh, merciful Heaven!" she stammered, "is this possible, can it be?"

"Now at length I know you," continued Julia, with a contemptuous smile, "and I tell you I would rather starve with my children than receive benefits from you. The tears, the curses of the whole land, the shame of your life, rest upon such benefits, and must cleave to those who receive them. No, madame, I am not yet sunk so low as to go begging to vice. There, you may take back this paper; I will not have it!"

She tore it, and laid the fragments at Gisela's feet. The latter shuddered at the sound of the tearing paper, but found no strength for words, and mechanically took up the pieces.

"And now, I think, you have nothing more to seek in this room. That you saved my children from dying of hunger, I thank you; but I can never pardon you for forcing me by deception to accept a benefit from you. Believe me, I would give years of life to be relieved from the shame with which I remember it."

"Oh my God!" cried Gisela, in a heart-rending tone, raising her arms to heaven—"Thou knowest this dishonor which I now suffer, send Thou thine angel to bear witness to my innocence."

"Pray not to God," cried Julia, with severity, "return rather to your splendid palace, and forget in your lover's arms the little lesson you have here received. Go, madame; you see that you have this time made a mistake with your hypocritical piety and benevolence. I, at least, will not serve as a means by which an unblushing sinner would purchase heaven."

"It is enough," said Gisela, proudly rising erect; "may you never repent and lament this hour. Farewell!"

With dignity she left the chamber, and tranquilly strode away through the streets, but, when she found herself in the solitude of her own room, she sank exhausted to the earth.

Thus did the prince find her upon his unnoticed entrance by the private door, of which he had the key.

Unable to deny her tears or to dissimulate her grief, she leaned her head upon his shoulder and told him all.

"Poor, dear Gisela, so you could not be spared even this humiliation," said he, pressing her to his bosom. "So must you experience also this shame, and I could not help you. Was I not right in hating the world, when it is able to render the noblest virtues suspected, and attributes to goodness the calculating motive of selfishness? Oh, thou magnificent, thou sublime child, how would the people love, adore, and bless you, were you my wife! And now, that it is not in my power to afford your wounded spirit this satisfaction—now, that the outward form cannot be fulfilled, people dare to outrage and insult you. Oh, how small, how low, are they! how deserving of our contempt!"

"No, no, Lothaire," said Gisela, already calm and self-possessed; "no, let us pardon their weakness and short-sightedness, and constantly compassionate their failings. Whoever would exercise charity, must take no thought of the gift or of the receiver. Ah, perhaps this apparent hardness of the poor woman is nothing but a covering under which she would conceal her mortification at being obliged to accept charity. But you cannot withhold from her the blessing of your pardon, and what you have promised must be fulfilled without reference to me."

"You are right, Gisela, a paltry vengeance is unworthy of you; and if this proud woman considers it a punishment to receive benefits, well, then, let us punish her. I will confer a pension upon her children."

Gisela pressed his hand to her bosom. "Thanks, a thousand thanks, my brother!"

But from that day Gisela discontinued her evening wanderings. Her life thereby becoming the poorer by a pleasure lost, and the richer by a pain spared.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE MOUNTAIN CASTLE.

In a dense forest lay the old mountain-castle Hohenhaus, which was said to have been built hundreds of years ago by an ancestor of Prince Lothaire, that he might in the solitude of this desert preserve a fair favorite from the vengeance and snares of his jealous wife.

But the eyes of jealousy are as sharp as those of love, and neither men nor iron towers can secure safety from the dagger's point. This dagger, in the hand of his jealous wife, pierced the breast of the favorite, and destroyed the happiness of the prince.

Since that time the gloomy castle had stood there, solitary and decaying; and, if the path of a countryman led him in that direction, he piously crossed himself and turned away his eyes, that he might not be shocked by a sight of the ghosts who were believed to haunt the old deserted walls. And this dark, dismal mountain castle was now the residence of the Princess Clotilde. Within its thick walls was she to regret and weep over her proud dreams of dominion and freedom, the enjoy-



ments of the world, her hopes destroyed.

No voice from the world, the beloved, the warmly-desired world, penetrated these walls, and so much the more intensely did Clotilde listen to the internal voices eternally whispering to her of all the splendors and pleasures of which she was now deprived.

And not one single, longed-for confidant to whom she could unbosom herself, not a face that expressed sympathy, not an eye to give her a friendly glance!

At the designated hour came her chambermaid, to receive her highness's commands. This chambermaid is a decided and zealous devotee of Prince Lothaire; Clotilde had vainly sought to win her for herself by kindness, condescension, and by bribes of gold. Anna had rejected all with respectful but proud silence—she was not to be bribed.

When Clotilde's toilet is completed, the man-servant brings her breakfast. Him neither can the princess hope to win, as he is the foster-brother of her hated husband, to whom he is devoted, heart and soul. Clotilde, therefore, treats him with due rudeness and severity. After the breakfast, the general presents himself, to pay his respects.

This last she may possibly yet hope to win. His love for her was once so warm that she cannot even now believe in his hatred.

But the general is too proud and vindictive ever to forgive her for once having preferred her valet de chambre to himself.

He hates her bitterly, and seems to rejoice at her sighs and torments; therefore the princess dissembles in his presence, appearing cheerful and unembarrassed. But this constraint is insupportable from its long duration, as these artificial smiles, this forced cheerfulness, must be continued for

hours on each occasion. For the general accompanies her, not only in her promenades within the high walls of the castle, but also to the chapel where she is compelled to listen to the mass of the deaf old chaplain; he also accompanies her to the table, and only after him can she retire to her own rooms.

But in these rooms she is not alone; she is surrounded by spies. In the anteroom the sentinel paces back and forth, bitterly reminding her of her imprisonment. That door leads to the room of the general—the least noise may bring him here—and as this door cannot be fastened, Clotilde must be prepared to see him at any moment. No other way of egress is to be found in the apartments occupied by her; the one through which the princess comes, must be that where the sentinel walks.

The windows are provided with iron gratings, and patrols are stationed before them night and day. In this well-guarded cage must the Princess Clotilde pass the long hours of the afternoon and evening. How shall she occupy herself, how kill this slowly-passing time?

She is allowed to read the books which are ranged in the highly-ornamented bookcases in the library-room; but Clotilde cannot read in the present distracted state of her mind; her thoughts are constantly wandering from the subject before her.

Neither can she paint, and the commenced picture has already stood many weeks unfinished upon the easel; embroidery, and writing, are uninteresting to her; all is desolate and dead; she languishes for living beings, for the sound of a friendly human voice, and often, in the despair of this mortal *ennui*, has she already commanded the hateful company of her chambermaid, as a relief from the oppressive solitude.



Oh, how Clotilde now cursed her foolish ambition, which had led to her struggle for uncircumscribed power; with what bitter tears did she weep the past—not, however, in the way of repentance, but with constantly-renewed hate, to curse him who was the cause of this horrible imprisonment!

In such dark and gloomy hours, solitude was welcome and desired by Clotilde, that no one might read in her countenance the dark thoughts that occupied her soul and made her blood boil—that no one might suspect the black plans upon which she meditated; plans that required only a resolute, friendly hand for their execution; plans that would immediately conduct her to the undisputed, unshared, princely throne, and free her life from all opposition and all trouble.

How many hours did Clotilde sit staring at the small phial which her husband had himself given her in that decisive, that momentous hour!

Ha! within that thin glass is enclosed for her freedom, life, happiness; those few crystal-clear drops, upon the right lips, would again give her all that she now missed; would render her free, independent, rich, and powerful. Within that phial dwelt death, which alone could bring her life, and Clotilde had so accustomed herself to these meditations, that this poison signified for her life and freedom, and she feared not at all the thought that it signified also the downfall and death of her husband. She neither feared nor shrank from the accomplishment of the deed. How often had she, in disconsolate and despairing powerlessness, with streaming tears and wringing of hands, invoked the assistance of the infernal demons; how ready had she been to sell her soul to those demons for the fulfilment of her one great wish; how did she regret having no other proof of the existence of those demons than the whis-

pering and seductive voices always heard in her own breast, and which mounted up to her from the easily-lifted stopper of that fatal phial!

Surely it was a demoniac magic that dwelt within the transparent walls of that diminutive flask. Its fatal cork once drawn, and the most enticing images played about Clotilde's soul. Her gloomy prison expanded into a spacious hall of state, in which upon a golden throne she received the homage of her devoted subjects; the doors of her prison burst open, and with a splendid escort she made her entrance into the capital, amid the ringing of bells and the shouts of her people! And from all these delightful and intoxicating fancies she would be rudely aroused by the loud call of the relieving guard, or the unexpected entrance of the general, from whom she would hastily conceal her only treasure, the precious flask of poison.

Thus, this significant phial gradually became her only friend, the confidant of her long solitary hours, the soother of her stormy, despairing agitations, the consolatory distraction of her mortal *ennui*; and Clotilde had so accustomed herself to hope for freedom by means of this phial, that to her consciousness it became an established certainty. Perhaps it was no mere delusive fancy; perhaps this pressing, passionate desire was infused into her heart by dark supernatural powers! Clotilde was resolved to realize her dreams and her wishes.

She had taken her usual daily walk in the court at the general's side, and now returned more disconsolate, more helpless, and more despairing than ever, to her chamber, in which she usually remained alone until the hour of dinner.

For some days, in order to escape her torments and anxieties, she had again turned her attention to reading,

and the lubricity of the *liaisons dangereuses* was sufficiently attractive to fix her attention for at least some moments. Now, therefore, she again took up the book, which lay open upon her toilet-table, and what was her astonishment when a small scrap of paper fell from it, upon which was very distinctly written the word "*Speranza!*" How came it there? Who could have had the hardihood to place it there in her absence? Or had this insignificant strip of paper, perhaps years before, served as a book-mark? Clotilde glanced doubtfully around her, not daring to give herself up to this too delightful dream.

Her eye next fell upon the sofa; she had reposed upon it before the commencement of her walk, and upon the place where her head had rested now lay a fresh blooming rose.

Clotilde with difficulty suppressed a cry of surprise and joy. She flew to the sofa, she pressed the rose to her lips, and called it by the most loving names.

Oh, this rose was no dead, unfeeling flower—it was the smiling, blissful herald of approaching freedom, the dove with the olive-branch from a not distant coast, the budding and blossoming of a new spring. Wholly overpowered, beside herself, she sank upon the cushions of the divan, pressing every leaf of the rose to her lips, and again fell from its calyx a small, tightly-rolled paper.

Her hands trembling with impatience, Clotilde unfolded the paper, which contained these words in the Italian language: "It is well to read in the library every afternoon. Caution and patience!"

Clotilde read these words again and again; they seemed to her a revelation from Heaven, or that other place; and oh, what did she not read in these few words! She was, then, no longer alone

—a friend was near her, and if he was able to bring to her his message through all the guards and doors, so must he one day be able to carry her message to her partisans; so must he be able to release her from this horrible imprisonment. But a yet sweeter, a yet more delicious thought made Clotilde's heart throb, and every nerve within her tremble. Whoever feared not the danger connected with this attempt to reach and serve her, he who boldly risked liberty and life for her, can be no mere common friend. "That can be dared only by one who loves," murmured Clotilde, in an ecstasy of delight. "And how long have I not been obliged to forego the pleasure of seeing an humble, devoted suitor at my feet, whom by a glance or a smile I would raise to the seventh heaven, or by a contraction of my brows reduce to despair; to whose glowing protestations I could listen until, intoxicated with bliss, I would be obliged to stammer an answer! Oh, where lingerest thou, long-desired, long-implored lover? Come, that my arms may enclose thee, and my lips may press thine! And who art thou—how shall I name thee, my unknown lover? But, be he who he may, he loves me, and I am his, for he comes to set me free!"

Clotilde, again become a dreamy, enthusiastic maiden, painted in imagination this lover, in all the flattering colors of youth and beauty, and her heart soon languished quite as much for the lover as for the liberator.

But, at the proper time, the princess recollected that this lover had recommended caution and patience; that a word or perhaps a look might suffice to remove him from her forever, and condemn her to an eternal imprisonment within those walls.

Clotilde swore to herself not for one moment to forget the necessary caution and foresight; she armed herself with all the weapons of cunning and dissim-

ulation; and here she was in her element, an undisputed, unsurpassable conqueror, upon the battle-field of artifice and intrigue. Clotilde knew the danger that might arise from a written word well enough to immediately burn those dangerous little strips; and not until that was done, and the rose destroyed, did she prepare to act upon her suddenly-devised plan. She knew that the time must soon arrive in which the general would make his appearance for the purpose of handing her to the table, and therefore she now took up the book, and seemed to be deeply occupied with its contents. When he, soon afterward, really appeared, she started, and bitterly complained of being disturbed by his unannounced visit.

"I can at least demand to be treated with the respect due to my rank," she indignantly said, "and I require that you never again come here unannounced."

The general calmly responded: "One who, by sin and crime, proved unworthy of her rank, has thereby forfeited its prerogatives."

"But, indeed, it is insupportable never to have an hour of undisturbed solitude."

"Why does not your highness go sometimes into the library? There you can be alone and undisturbed."

Clotilde had expected this answer. Several times already, on similar occasions, had he given the same, and really the position of the library seemed to remove all grounds for suspicion.

It was a circular room, with only one door. The entire walls were occupied to the ceiling with glazed bookcases, which seemed to be full of beautifully-bound books. A cupola, in the centre of the ceiling, admitted sufficient light; an ancient marble table, standing in the centre of the room, surrounded with fauteuils, was the only furniture to be seen, and the whole place had always seemed to Clotilde too uninhabitable to

render a long stay in it tolerable. Moreover, the idea that the general recommended this room, because it would not be necessary to watch her so strictly there, was in itself sufficient to render it hateful to the princess.

Now, however, with apparent reluctance, she accepted the proposition, and, after complaining of the general's cruelty and the severity of her imprisonment, and apparently overcome, she faintly said: "Well, if there are no other means by which I can daily get some moments of undisturbed solitude, I must yield to the unavoidable, and look upon that uncomfortable, dark hole as my hermitage."

The general was heartily pleased with this decision; he, also, had often longed for a quiet, undisturbed hour, and, if the princess should consent to make a more frequent use of this room, he might reasonably hope to have more of his time to himself.

The princess, rightly interpreting the ill-concealed satisfaction of her overseer, subjoined to her consent the condition that she should be allowed to bolt the only door of the room on the inner side. This the general conceded, and the parties separated, mutually satisfied with the arrangement. After dinner the general accompanied the princess into the library, where he, with a sort of satisfaction, observed the high bookcases, which he considered the best watchmen of his princely prisoner, and Clotilde, reading his thoughts in his countenance, said, in a bitter, angry tone: "I perfectly well comprehend your satisfaction, general; really, a mouse would never succeed in escaping from this well-closed cage; there can, then, be no hope for me, unless some angel should descend through that high cupola to my aid."

"My soldiers, who are posted around the cupola, would not let even an angel pass," said the general, laughing.



"They are machines that believe in neither God nor the devil, but only in my orders."

At length Clotilde was alone; at length she was enabled to take this mask of indifference from her face, which now betrayed her stormy excitation, her passionate and impatient suspense.

Her heart beat audibly in her breast, and her trembling hands had hardly strength to push the bolt of the door. She now listened and waited, but all was still; an hour had already passed, and Clotilde's courage had begun to fail, her hopes to die, and, in impotent anger, she called herself a credulous fool, who had lent a willing ear to some mystification of the general.

This idea caused her to shake with anger; her eyes filled with tears, which she could no longer restrain. Covering her face with her hands, she wept with rage and discouragement. Suddenly she seemed to inhale the fragrance of a rose.

She withdrew her hands from her eyes, and, to her astonishment, beheld a full-blown rose upon the floor, near the table. On taking it up, she found a paper attached to it, containing the words: "The general is listening in the anteroom."

Clotilde breathed easier; all was now clear to her; she understood, and was gratified by, this prudence of her unknown friend, and her anger turned upon the suspecting and watchful general.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE MARQUIS OF COSENZA.

CONSOLING herself until the next day with hopeful resignation, Clotilde, after a delay of some hours, returned to her usual sitting-room.

"I feel myself quite refreshed by this undisturbed solitude," said she to the general, "although it is bitter for a princess to be obliged to accept as a punishment.—Oh," she continued, with tears in her eyes, "first in that narrow, dark room, which yet is now my only refuge—first there became I fully conscious of the misery of my condition, and, perhaps, nowhere have I suffered so much as there!"

These complaints were shrewdly calculated, for Clotilde well knew that the general hated her sufficiently not to allow her to visit the library, if those visits afforded her an undivided quiet enjoyment, and she therefore cunningly mingled wormwood in her cup of joy, to give him the satisfaction of thinking that even this pleasure was not without its bitterness.

With what impatience did she await the coming day; what vows did she not make in her silent, sleepless night to her unknown rescuer, vows which made her own heart tremble with expectant, longing joy! With what rich colors did she paint his portrait; with what impatient desire did she stretch forth her arms toward the unnamed, the unknown deliverer! Like the heathen of ancient times, she had erected in her heart an altar to the unknown god, and it did not astonish her that this unknown god should now come to take his place upon it; she prepared herself with faith and confidence to do sincere homage as a pious priestess to him.

And the morrow finally came; the slow, lingering hours at last passed away; the dinner was ended, and Clotilde repaired to the library. After bolting the door, she tremblingly waited in breathless anticipation. Now, a light grating, a slight rustling, one of the higher book-shelves moved slowly, noiselessly—it moved farther and far-



ther; the opening increased, became a convenient entrance, and through it stepped a tall, manly form. Now he stands before the princess, bends a knee, and, with a smile, looks up imploringly to her.

In this manner Clotilde thought not of a liberator; she saw only the lover whom her heart awaited, and for whom it beat with impetuous desire. She glanced with breathless suspense upon that strange and yet already dear countenance, and then smiled with delight, for that face was yet more fascinating than she had dreamed. How beautiful was the oval of that head—how fair was that high forehead—those dark, flashing eyes, whose bold, fiery glance betrayed the influence of a southern sun—that small mouth, with superciliously up-turned lips, that shining black hair!

With a charming smile she gave him her hand, which he passionately pressed to his lips.

Then said he, in Italian, "I come to set you free!"

Clotilde was familiar with that language, and she loved Italy and its people sufficiently to rejoice that her liberator was a child of the loving, glowing, passionate South.

"I am ready to follow you," whispered she, "now, immediately. I read in your features that I may confide in you. So come, then, I am ready for flight. Once outside of these walls, and it will need only my call, and my faithful people will rally about me for my defence and protection."

"Your faithful friends!" said the stranger, with an ironical laugh; "your faithful friends lie trembling with fear at the feet of the prince, and no one of them will dare to obey your call. I alone, I dare it! When all others forgot you, I did not! I saw you only once, and love took possession of my heart and senses, making me eternally your bondman, your slave. You rose

before me as an angel of light, and thenceforth there was for me but one angel and one saint, and when I prayed it was to my saint Clotilde."

The ecstasy of the princess was indescribable; she only too eagerly believed the passionate words of the stranger; she did not perceive that his words were uttered rapidly and without expression, as if he were repeating a phrase previously committed to memory; she thought not of her fifty years, her painted cheeks, her wrinkled brow; she was again the fair, glowing girl, showing herself gracious and merciful to her worshipping lovers and slaves, and with this consciousness she bent down, with a sweet smile, to the lips of the kneeling man, to reward and bless him with a kiss.

"And how," asked Clotilde, "how did you discover this way of salvation, which is now to restore me to the world and to life?"

The stranger, with a peculiar smile, responded: "Yet before this castle was sanctified by your presence, when it was guarded only by the old castleward, I had occasion to pass several days here. Every thing is interesting, important, to a traveller. The romantic site of this castle, the strange things that were related of it, attracted me. I felt a lively interest in ascertaining whether that subterranean passage of which tradition speaks, and through which the jealous princess had, without discovery, penetrated into the sleeping-room of her fair rival, really had any existence. Accident led me to discover in the forest, at some distance from the castle, a massive iron door. With much effort I was enabled to open it. On entering, I descended into a narrow passage, which I threaded until it led me here. I groped and fumbled in the dark until I touched a spring which caused a panel to open, and thus I came into this room. Knowing how

important my secret might be, I concealed my discovery from all; and even to my servants, who had seen me enter the passage, I said that I had fainted after advancing a few steps in it. I incidentally inquired of the old warden respecting the subterranean passage about which, thanks to my knowledge of the German language, I had read in some old ballads. He knew nothing of it, people had unsuccessfully searched for it. You may judge of my satisfaction when, a few days afterward, I heard of your imprisonment in this castle. It was placed in my power to save you, to hazard my life for your liberation, and this I swore to accomplish at whatever cost."

"Great, noble man!" cried the princess; "come, then, let us hasten."

The stranger shook his head. "No," he then sadly said; "as yet the wings of this royal dove are palsied, and to unchain them would be to hurl it into an abyss. The prince has more supporters than you imagine, as also has his favorite, the fair Gisela. Your friends tremble and lack courage; so long as the prince lives, nothing is to be expected from an open revolt."

"Then he must die!" said Clotilde, boldly meeting the inquiring glances of the stranger.

The latter slowly responded: "Die, fall by poison!"

"Here is poison!" whispered Clotilde, drawing the fatal phial from her bosom.

The stranger took and concealed it, with a diabolical smile. "He shall die," he then laconically said. "But what reward may be expected by him who risks all, his future, his life, his salvation, to liberate you? What reward, princess, awaits me, for I—and I alone—will accomplish this desperate deed."

"Liberate me, kill the prince, conduct me to my capital, and I will share

with you my wealth, my power, my life!" said Clotilde, firmly.

"Only for my future spouse will I hazard salvation, proudly rejoined the stranger, and I think the Marquis of Cosenza is not unworthy of such happiness. Here are my credentials; your former confessor, the young prebendary, Pater Aloysius, has given them to me, and I think his recommendation will command the confidence of my princess."

The princess took the letter, and without opening it said: "I confide in you; the holy father's recommendation is amply sufficient to secure you my respect."

"And if I liberate you, if the prince is carried off by a sudden death, if I conduct you in triumph to your capital, then—"

"Then will I fulfil your conditions," said Clotilde, in a low tone.

"Love is suspicious," continued the marquis; "it believes only in the written word, only the signature and seal. Give me, to-morrow, this written promise, and Prince Lothaire dies before the lapse of a month, and on the same day will my princess make her *entrée* into her capital."

The princess declared her readiness to give the written promise, and the marquis said: "To-morrow, then, at about this same hour, I will again come here to swear at your feet eternal adoration and devotion."

With great reluctance and many sighs Clotilde then released the handsome, mysterious marquis. Then she read the letter of her once dearly-loved friend, Pater Aloysius, who, in the warmest terms, recommended to her his young friend and scholar, a nobleman of the first rank in Sicily. What wonder that Clotilde, languishing for liberty and happiness, for love and adoration, should be ready to subscribe to all conditions, and to promise her hand to the elegant young marquis?

"Let me only once be free, a free reigning princess," thought she, "with a husband no longer near me as a scarecrow—let me once be free, and let the rest follow as it may!"

And on the following day she laid the important document in the hands of the Marquis of Cosenza. It was in these words: "When the Prince Lothaire is no more in life, and I, liberated by the Marquis of Cosenza, make my entrance into my capital, I will on that same day raise the marquis to the position of my husband by a marriage with the left hand. CLOTILDE."

The marquis kissed the document and placed it in his bosom. "And now to the work," said he, with flashing eyes; "now boldly to the work! Farewell, Princess Clotilde, my future wife. Farewell, beloved, magnificent woman. Let me have your thoughts and your prayers. I hazard my life, but it is for you. I stake my blood and my life for your possession. Farewell, and at an early day, at about this hour, expect me here. Farewell! I kiss the hem of your robe, and swear to liberate you or die! Farewell."

They now separated, and the marquis groped his way to the external door of the passage.

Here he sounded a shrill whistle, which was immediately answered, and a second man hastily descended from a tree.

The marquis had meantime mounted to the surface, and both now carefully closed the trap-door, covered it with stones, earth, and moss, and soon no trace of the concealed passage was to be seen.

"We shall now have no occasion to use this passage for several weeks," said the marquis, as they departed through the wood for the nearest village.

"And the document?" asked the other, under whose disguise Clotilde

would hardly have discovered her former lover, the Pater Aloysius.

"I have it, signed and sealed."

"You see," said the pater, with a sardonic smile, "you see, my friend, that I know the princess. Your handsome face, your high-sounding name, were all-sufficient to infatuate this vain, weak, and imperious woman. She is ours, ours with her wealth and her power, and soon she will be nothing but an instrument in our hands. See you, now, how well considered my plan was! I knew it would succeed, that it was well worth the pains of a journey from Florence to undertake it, and that the most splendid results would crown our efforts."

"I admire and honor your wit and wisdom, reverend father," smilingly responded the marquis, "but you must acknowledge that my handsome face has done the business. Bah! no woman can withstand a handsome man."

"And when is the prince to die?"

"For that I have an entirely new plan. We must not only kill the prince, but avenge Clotilde of her fair rival, Gisela; so has Clotilde commanded."

"And how does my handsome marquis intend to accomplish this?"

"Very simply. I shall become the servant of Gisela, that is, of course, in the disguise in which her chambermaid knows and loves me."

"The plan is not a bad one," laughingly responded the pater, "it deserves being carried into execution."

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## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE ALBUM.

"How earnest and solemn you seem to-day, my friend!" said Gisela, with a

charming smile, as Prince Lothaire entered her room at about the hour of noon.

"I have just completed a very serious work, Gisela," answered the prince, taking a place near her upon the divan.

"And may I ask what it is?"

"You will laugh at me, Gisela," said the prince, thoughtfully; "you will perhaps think me superstitious; I have to-day made my will, because I was, three nights ago in a dream, commanded to do it!"

"A dream?" smilingly asked Gisela, "and the wise, cold, calculating Lothaire—"

"Believes in dreams," interposed the prince, with a shrug of his shoulders. "You may ridicule me, but I cannot deny it. And why should I not, Gisela? why may not a mysterious power reveal itself to us in dreams? why may not our souls become more active and clear-sighted during this slumber of the body, better understand the whisperings of destiny, and look with a more intelligent eye into the future? Bah! when I ceased to believe in men I learned to believe in dreams, for my dreams warned me against men."

"In that you may see how false dreams can be," said Gisela, leaning her head gently upon his shoulder. "In that you may see how they deceive you, and are your particular enemies. Men are good, my friend; they are called to all that is great and noble, capacitated for the highest and best. Oh, humanity deserves that thou shouldst, upon thy knees, adore it in its divine beauty! One or two bad experiences should not cause you to waver in your faith."

"One or two!" exclaimed the prince, in a sadly-ironical tone.—"Such experiences and such deceptions grin at me from every point to which I turn my eyes, and I have

nothing to put in the opposite scale but you, Gisela; nothing to oppose all these masks but one single holy, pure, true face—only you. You, alone, have not deceived my faith, not betrayed my confidence; you, alone, have passed through the storms and seductions of the world with a proud step and head erect, unlost, and unconquered; you, alone, have taught me no longer to despise the dreams of my youth. But what would you have, Gisela? My finding you could not but increase my scorn of the world and of humanity. Oh, how lost and degraded must be a world in which one finds but one noble soul among thousands of people, only one brow that does not bear the impress of falsehood, only one heart that does not betray and deceive!"

"Do not calumniate, my brother," said Gisela, with a gentle, conciliating smile; "open your eyes and look around you, and you will find many worthy of your respect and love."

"And *you* say that?" he asked, with vehemence—"you, whose heart has been trodden under foot by the children of this world, by the cruelty of men? Child, child, when will you learn to curse those who have betrayed you; when will the first malediction resound from your lips, and hate, like a magic rod, suddenly open for you the gates of a new existence?"

"Never!" cried Gisela, with enthusiasm. "And if ever such an emotion should infect my heart, then would I glance at you, my friend, my brother; then would I remember that it was your hand that saved and sustained me, that provided a home for the abandoned, that smoothed the pillow of confidence and security for my weary head, protecting and defending me against the pursuits of every enemy. Oh, since I have known you, Lothaire, since you took pity on me, I cannot hate the world nor scorn humanity. I meet



you with my whole heart, and I must open to you the rich fountains of my love; I must spread wide for you my arms and my life, for my heart cannot lose its faith; and confidence, inexhaustible and ever young, constantly springs up in me anew. Oh, indeed, I yet believe in the world and in mankind, because I yet believe in happiness, because I yet think we are all intended for happiness, which is the highest and only religion of mankind. Leave me in the quiet enjoyment of this belief, Lothaire. Ah, not to believe in happiness is to blaspheme God!"

"God, what is he, and where is he?" said the prince with bitterness. "When hast thou called upon him and he hath heard thee? when hast thou implored him and he hath had mercy upon thee? Bah! every one is his own god, and the god of all gods is Nature! I believe in none other!"

"And the soul," asked Gisela, "the noble, beautiful soul of man, the spirit, which vivifies Nature, dost thou account it for nothing?"

"The soul, the spirit! When I was young, as you are, Gisela, I believed as you now believe! Oh, better had it been for me to have fallen down and adored the spirit that bubbles in the sparkling wine, than the spirit of humanity. For that spirit is more powerful than the spirit of man, and corporeal feeling is more powerful than that of all souls. You smile incredulously, Gisela. Bah! you have not seen what I have seen, nor heard what I have heard, else would your lips, like mine, curse that soul which, by its daily whisperings, lends us the proud feeling of our own divinity, and yet succumbs to the first pressure of physical force."

"Oh, how dreadful, if it were so!" sighed Gisela.

"I tell you, child, it is so. This sole truth is imprinted on my heart in traits

of flame, in indelible characters! What would you have? The body is more powerful than the noblest soul by which it is inhabited. Yea, mightier than love is hunger, disgusting physical hunger! You do not believe it? Come, let me withdraw for a moment the curtain from my past life; let me show you pictures and faces before which your soul will shudder!"

"You will, then, at length fulfil my wishes; will permit me to share in the sorrows of your youth, in your past griefs?"

"I will," responded the prince, with earnestness, "for who knows how long may be granted me the power to do so? But it cannot be done with words alone. Perhaps my lips would refuse to serve for the terrible expression. But my hand was firm enough to sketch images of my past without trembling. Await me, I will return directly."

The prince, after an absence of a few moments, returned with a velvet-covered portfolio.

"Oh, the mysterious album!" joyfully exclaimed Gisela,— "the album with which I have so often found you occupied, and which you always concealed from me!"

"I have elaborated it for you, and now that it is completed you can see it. It is not an album, such as fashion requires for the show-table of a lady; it does not contain a collection of celebrated autographs; it has nothing but the inscription of my sorrows, which will be intelligible to you alone! Open the book, and let us look at these sketches; I will explain them to you."

"Oh, how beautiful!" said Gisela, opening the book and glancing upon the first leaf, where stood an exquisite water-color drawing. "How charming is this landscape! It is redolent of the fragrance of the south. One seems to hear the murmur of these fountains and the whispering of these pines; to

feel the warmth of this sun which is reflected from the water, and to inhale the odors of these beautiful flowers. Oh, and how charming is this distant view of the Gletchers, which with their maidenly crowns seem to pierce the silver clouds! Ah, there upon that hill a youth seems to kneel—he seems lost in ecstasy, in adoration!”

“Yes, so it is,” said the prince, with a sad smile, “it is his first excursion into the world; it is the first time he has seen all the charms of creation united in one picture, and he kneels to praise God for this sublime Nature! Oh! what solemn vows escape from his lips, which are tremulous with emotion; with what sincere protestations does he promise to love mankind, and to consecrate to the service of his fellow-men himself, his blood, his life! Poor, confiding youth! I know thee, notwithstanding that thou, with thy enthusiasm, thy trust, hast long been a stranger to me. Poor young Lothaire! the man Lothaire knows nothing more of you. Let us proceed, Gisela, further; the remembrance of that time of believing innocence rends my heart! What see you now?”

“Here is a simple, poor chamber; it contains nothing but a straw bed, on which reposes the pale form of a youth; his eyes are closed, water is dripping from his clothes, one arm hangs lifelessly down from the bed, and against that arm is leaning the head of one who is kneeling before the bed and covering his brow with his hand, as in wild despair. Who is it kneeling there, and why does he weep, Lothaire?”

“It is this poor young Lothaire, who is kneeling at the bedside of one whom he has just rescued from the waves; he already loves him, although he knows him not, for this unknown one is unhappy. Lothaire saw, when he rushed into the water, that it was an attempt-

ed suicide. ‘Oh, and how unhappy!’ thought Lothaire; ‘how unhappy must be the man who would voluntarily flee from life—from this beautiful, delightful, magnificent life!’ And Lothaire loved the unknown youth because he was unhappy, and because he had saved him with danger to his own life; therefore do you see him kneeling there in despairing grief. It is the first time that life has shown its dark side to the prince’s son; the first time that Lothaire has seen death upon the blanched brow of a human being; he shudders at this mysterious power, and yet he could have given his own life for that of him whom he has rescued from the waves. Bah! hadst thou heard the vows he addressed to Heaven while praying for the life of his friend, vows of virtue and eternal love! But, enough; let us go on further! Turn the next leaf!”

“Ah, the poor would-be suicide is not dead. Here I see him again; he is standing in a blooming region, with fresh cheeks and full of health. His left hand rests in that of his rescuer, while his right is raised toward heaven, as if calling upon it to attest a vow.”

“Right! He swore to his savior an eternal, indestructible friendship, a never-wavering love; swore to be his brother, to share every thing with him, to give his blood for him. This vow had he received from his friend Cecil, and to seal this bond they had immediately repaired to the table of the Lord, and partaken together of the holy communion. Lothaire, with his twenty years, yet believed in the sanctity of the holy communion; he yet drank in the golden chalice the blood of the Lord, and in the wafer he ate His body, and therefore he thought a bond so sealed could never be rent. And see his youthful folly! He has exchanged clothes with his friend as a sign that all was thenceforth to be in common between them. He has put

his gold-embroidered mantle and all his other costly garments upon his friend, and himself now wears with the pride of affection the miserable clothing of the other! Smile not at this enthusiasm, Gisela. It is the transport of first friendship; it is the enthusiasm of that friendship that now glows in him. Oh, first friendship resembles first love, in all its symptoms, except that it is nobler, purer, and more disinterested than love, except that it knows no desire nor no passion; it is more ethereal. Oh, how Lothaire loved his friend Cecil; with what delight did he daily discover in him new, sublime, and hitherto unknown talents; with what devout attention did he listen to his words; he is in every hour ready to give himself, his whole existence, for him, to live for him, and die for him! When he swears, he swears by the name of Cecil; when he prays, he prays for Cecil; and when he wishes to designate beauty, greatness, virtue, he names Cecil; and when life vouchsafes to him a pleasure, when art offers him its treasures, wealth its enjoyments, he lays them all down at the feet of Cecil, only imploring the latter to consider them his own, and to bless by touching them. Poor, poor Lothaire! thou believest in an eternal friendship. Oh, this is an error over which the angels themselves must weep, for even error is beautiful. Turn over the leaf, Gisela—another sketch!”

“There! Here sits Lothaire at a table, pens and paper are before him; he seems to have intended to write and to have forgotten it while contemplating a picture which he holds in his hand!”

“And why should he not have forgotten, when he holds the portrait of his beloved in his hand—his beloved, to whom he has just written the first tender epistle, in which, with youthful

timidity, he makes in writing the confession of a love he is too bashful to announce verbally? Know you what the first love-letter will tell? The first raptures of a mysterious feeling not yet understood by himself, for which one has no expression and knows no name. But Lothaire has a friend, and this great, devoted, and self-sacrificing friend has discovered to him the enigma of this feeling and taught him its name. Yes, Cecil, in his friendly zeal, has never rested until he has procured for the lover the portrait of the one beloved. And how beautiful, how beaming with loveliness and grace, is this maiden of sixteen years, with her delicate blush, her sweet smile, and her modestly downcast eyes! How fair, with the budding, swelling blossoms of her beauty! And oh, how magnificent it is, as the maiden is poor, that Lothaire can adorn her with gold and diamonds; that he can lay his treasures at her feet, and make her the possessor of all that is his! But hold, we will no longer disturb the enthusiastic youth. He writes his first love-letter—he begs for a rendezvous. Oh, Armgard will grant it him, for she loves the fiery, passionate youth, loves him with all the glow of first-awakened feeling, with all the devotion of a first mighty passion!”

“And Armgard does not deceive him?” anxiously asked Gisela.

“We shall see!” said the prince, with a bitter smile.

Gisela hesitatingly turned over the leaf, and her eye filled with tears as it fell upon the next sketch, and she murmured: “Also betrayed!”

“Yes, you there see the poor, artless youth in his first despair, in his first frightful undeception, in his first terrible soul-sorrow. See, he has become old in a few hours! See how in the madness of his torment he has beaten his breast and torn out his hair! An open letter lies trampled under his feet.

Can a sheet of paper have prepared for him such misery? Ah, truly, the small circumference of a letter often bears within itself an immeasurable hell!"

"And what did that letter contain?" asked Gisela.

"Enough to craze a man, at least for the moment. It is a letter from Armgard. It was bedewed with her tears, which in many places obliterated the words, but Lothaire reads enough to destroy his peace. It is the confession of a fallen angel, a dishonored woman. Cecil had seduced her. Secretly, in the absence of his friend, had he ensnared her with his flatteries and seductive arts! They had both deceived poor Lothaire. Armgard, penetrated with repentance, acknowledges it in her letter and implores his forgiveness."

"Horrible!" cried Gisela.

"Yes, horrible," sadly repeated the prince; "the torments of that hour were equalled by none other in Lothaire's life, and what he then suffered has thrown a dark shadow over his whole subsequent existence. It may be that loud and noisy pleasures may have rent the dark veil here and there, and brought to view splendid pictures of joy, but the happiness then buried under that mourning-rape never reappeared. The love of Armgard is extinguished in his heart, and he despises her too much to avenge himself on her. But the friend who betrayed him, who deceived him, him can he hate, him can he call to account! Is it, then, possible that Cecil could have betrayed him? Cecil, his friend, his brother? Cecil, whose life he had saved, who had a thousand times sworn eternal love and friendship for him? No, no, it cannot be! It is impossible! May not Armgard be deceiving him? May not she, whom Lothaire now despises, be deceiving him anew? It is impossible that Cecil has betrayed him! Quick,

look at the next leaf! Here he looks gay, does he not?"

"As if amazed by some terrific vision leans Lothaire against the wall, staring upon the destruction everywhere visible in his room. All the closets, chests, and cases, stand open; papers are scattered about in wild disorder. What does that signify, my friend?"

"That signifies," said the prince, in an impressive tone, "that signifies that Cecil has absconded, after having broken open Lothaire's desks and trunks, and stolen his money, his jewels, and letters of credit! Stolen? Pah! the noble Cecil, who was always overflowing with high-souled feelings, who so readily comprehended every sublime emotion; Cecil, with his delicate sentiments, his precious talents, his imposing mental gifts, was a thief—nothing but a common, rascally thief! That proud and noble visage was nothing but a lie—a base, common lie! That man, before whom Lothaire had knelt in devotion, whom he had exalted as a demi-god—that man a low criminal, not worthy to be kicked with the foot! And yet, Gisela, you would have me confide in a noble human brow, you would yet have me hold human nature in respect, notwithstanding such experiences?"

Gisela made no answer; she cast down her eyes and sighed deeply.

"But let us go on with these reminiscences," said the prince, after a long pause. "In that hour Lothaire grew many years older, and on awaking from a deathlike swoon he cursed life, mankind—he cursed, for the first time, love and friendship, and in the stillness around him he himself shuddered at the imprecations stammered out by his trembling lips."

"Here, upon the next leaf," said Gisela, wishing to withdraw the attention of the prince from these sad reminiscences, "here stands Lothaire, bowed and discouraged, looking with a melan-



choly smile upon the landscape before him."

"He stands upon the spot, Gisela, where he once swore to Cecil eternal friendship, which oath he sealed by partaking with him of the holy communion. Upon that same spot do you see him now; he is alone, isolated, the blossoms of his happiness have become as mere tombstones, from which repugnant masks grin at him in mockery. Oh, indeed, he cannot even lament his past, his lost happiness. It is so very ridiculous to be betrayed and deceived, to have been made the apish fool of a cunning impostor! It is so laughable, to lament a maiden who has been seduced by another! My God, for all torments, for all despair, not even an alleviating tear! No, Lothaire wept not, but he cursed the world and mankind; he cursed Nature, which everywhere around him laughed and shouted at his sorrows; he cursed the Deity he had so often invoked in the ecstasy of his happiness, and to whom, in the solemnity of the holy communion, he had vowed eternal truth. That act was, therefore, nothing but a farce, an empty jest. The sacred, when it is misused, is no longer sacred; and the body and blood of the Lord had not lent itself to such a treason—it was nothing but mere earthly wine and bread. It is stripped of its halo, and since Lothaire has lost his faith in humanity, he no longer believes in God! What does the next sketch present?"

"Here is Lothaire in his room; his face is overflowed with tears, and yet he smilingly raises his eyes to a picture on the wall, before which he kneels in adoration."

"And he does adore, Gisela. In his sorrow and abandonment the memory of his mother suddenly arose in him like a luminous star—his noble, his dearly-loved mother; for he who now despises love and friendship, feels that

there is upon earth an eternal, an inextinguishable love; that maternal love is the balsam which can heal his wounded and bleeding heart. Oh, how dearly he loves his mother! From his earliest childhood she has been his ideal, his saint. For him she is the abstract of all virtue, all great and tender womanhood, and with a deceived and lacerated heart he flees in thought to his mother. How can he distrust, and lose his faith in, feminine innocence and purity, he whose mother is an ideal of virtue, manners, and morals, upon whose high brow dwell only noble and sublime thoughts? See, with these thoughts of his mother, he kneels before her portrait there, adoring and loving, stammering her name, and thanking God for the possession of such a treasure! And now the impatient desire that attracts him to his mother is no longer to be controlled; he must fly to her, must weep on her bosom, must pour his lamentations into her ear. And his noble mother is not far distant. In a few days he can be with her, as her medical adviser had sent her to Nizza for a milder atmosphere. Oh, what a fearfully crushing weight now oppresses the heart of the tender son! His mother is seriously ill, perhaps already dying; he may lose her! This thought wings his desire, and in an hour he is in a post-chaise, that he may travel day and night until he sees her.—And here, Gisela, let me pause for a moment, before coming to the most serious and terrible period of my life. Laugh at me, if you please, Gisela; this is the first time that these confessions have ever passed my lips, and I tremble like a child."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## NEW ALBUM-LEAVES.

LONG did the prince pace the room in silence; a silence which Gisela ventured not to disturb. She was deeply affected, and also felt that she could afford no consolation or amelioration of such bitter experiences and sorrows.

"Now let us go on," said the prince, after a long pause. "Turn to the next leaf and tell me what it contains."

"Oh heavens!" sighed Gisela, "this happiness also annihilated! A dying person lies upon the bed; the priest with the crucifix stands near her, and at the bedside kneels the pale and weeping Lothaire. Is this fair, pale, dying woman his mother?"

"Yes, his mother, Gisela. He came at the right time, the tender, affectionate son. In a dream on the preceding night he saw his mother dying, heard her trembling lips calling for him, and with a presentiment of evil he pushed his horses to their utmost speed, until they dropped down dead before his mother's hotel. Yes, he came at the right time to receive the last blessing of his mother, who breathed out her final breath in the arms of her son. Lothaire's sorrow was beneficent in its ultimate effects. It was a pure, un concealed sorrow for the dead, undesecrated, unprofaned. Oh, it is less hard to lose by death than by life, and the tears we weep for the deceased are sweet in comparison with tears shed for those whom life, not death, has severed from us! Be silent, silent, Gisela; speak no word of condolence, of sympathy; it would kill me; look not toward me, nor even weep. Turn another leaf; now come lively sketches—yes, lively."

"Here they seem to be celebrating a

festival. The hall, from which one has a view of a rich Italian landscape, this hall is adorned with wreaths and garlands. Musicians, in picturesque costumes, sit in the background; around the richly-furnished table, in the foreground, sit fair and voluptuous maidens, with flashing eyes, whose floating locks are crowned with flowers.—Among them stands a youth, around whom their arms are clinging. Every one seems striving to win, to conquer him. He, however, has lain his head upon the bosom of that beautiful maiden, who, now certain of conquering, smiles in triumph. I cannot see his face. Is that—"

"It is Lothaire," interposed the prince; "it is Lothaire, holding his first orgy. What would you? He is young, ardent, rich, and pleases the sex. He is no longer the timid, modest youth, full of enthusiasm for virtue and innocence. He now laughs at that youthful enthusiasm, as he is no longer a fantastic, sighing boy, but a pretentious, desiring, conquering man. He no longer humbly adores; he has a will to live and enjoy. He no longer seeks happiness, but stupefaction and pleasure; and where can he better find it than in the society of beautiful women, with their jests and their embraces? Turn quickly over the next leaves. They are mad scenes in the sensual life of poor, pleasure-seeking Lothaire. Look at them some other time; you will find him often kneeling to women, often embraced by them. Sometimes you will find him in tears. It is when he has again fallen into his old folly, and put faith in the protestations of some fair woman, because he really loves her, and because he finds it so sweet to believe in a longer love and faith; and then he weeps because he is only too soon compelled to acknowledge that he has again confided in a mere dream; that he has been again deceived. Upon

what sketch are you now looking so intently, Gisela?"

"Here a ship seems to be wrecked; fragments of the wreck are floating about upon the waves, and there the principal wreck is struggling with the raging sea. Oh, what mortal anguish is depicted upon the faces of these men! Imploring, shrieking, they stretch forth their arms toward heaven. There, others are jumping into a little boat, just lowered from the vessel's side. How they push and press!"

"Yes, yes, it is a shipwreck. Tired of these ever-recurring vows of love, surfeited with orgies and luxurious feasts, Lothaire seeks some other attraction. He will travel, he will see the world; the sea, with its majestic heaving and roaring, entices him; he will seek distant and unknown regions; perhaps he may somewhere again find joy and happiness; perhaps, in some uncorrupted quarter of the earth, he may yet find people who have remained true, noble, natural. But fortune favored not his voyage. The storm has already shattered the masts and extinguished the steam of the ship. Hundreds of passengers shriek, moan, and wail together, and Lothaire sees with indignation how cowardly, how small and paltry, a proud man becomes in the face of death. Anguish, inexpressible anguish, on every face, despair distorts all features, shrieks resound from lips usually opened only for sweet smiles and charming words. Here a fair young woman plucks out the fine, fragrant hair of which she was so proud a few hours before; there a young maiden beats the white, naked bosom, which heretofore she always kept so modestly veiled. All thought, all feeling, is already extinguished, and man has become an unthinking animal, struggling against inevitably-approaching death. None but degrading scenes present themselves to the shuddering

Lothaire, and, in comparison with all these horrors, death seems to him a welcome rescue from the calamity of life. Yet, no! there are two pictures which again reconcile him to humanity. See how all there are pressing to a newly-launched boat! It is destined to take the women, while the men are to remain on the wreck. But, in frantic fear of death, all rush for the boat. Wives forget that they leave behind them husbands, mothers that they leave sons, daughters that they leave fathers,—all, all, rush forward, screaming for their own rescue. Only two women remained in the background, clinging to their dear ones, and exclaiming, with heavenly devotion: 'With thee will I live or die!' They are a young wife, clinging to her husband, and a tender daughter, who throws her arms around her father, sobbing, weeping, laughing, both of them having but one thought: not to be severed from those they love. And, as Lothaire saw this sublime spectacle, he wept aloud, thanking God, and, kneeling to those two noble women, he swore to them eternal service and devotion."

"Ah, at length a noble, a reconciling sketch," said Gisela, with a long breath.

"Look further, glance at the next leaf," said the prince, with bitterness.

"They are saved; here I see them again upon a sand-bank, with the waves playing around them. And there, there in the distance, I think a sail appears. Oh, they are saved!"

"But how much will have happened before that rescuing ship can approach them! Look now at those separate groups, Gisela. See those wasted and distorted features; those dull, staring eyes; those wild, frantic glances; those meagre forms; it is hunger that martyrizes those people, that has unnerved those forms—abject animal hunger—which there annihilates every thought, every soul, leaving nothing but the bel-

lowing, screaming, howling, blaspheming, and whimpering brute. And you would still believe in the power of the mind, in the superior force of the soul, when contemplating such scenes? Bah! the soul lies in the blood, in the nerves, in the flesh; disturb the activity of the one, prepare pain and torment for the other, and it is all over with the strength and greatness of the soul. Look here, and see the effects of that almighty enemy of all human dignity, called hunger. See, there turns a miserable, emaciated form in a whirling circle. Hunger has crazed him; he believes himself a ball; he whirls in the circular dance, and sings gay songs. There, another breaks out with shouts of joy over delicious food which he supposes he is eating, because it seems to be fitting about him in enticing forms. See, there are a couple of graybeards gnawing at the last remains of a human corpse that they yesterday fished out of the sea, and which they regarded as a precious booty. And there, behind them, struggles the father with his tender daughter, who wished to follow him in life and death. Their strife is for a crust of bread which Emilie had several days previously concealed as a last means of preserving life, and which her father has now discovered. They struggle with the rage of hunger, with the violence of despair. Hunger has brutalized them; they no longer know that they are father and daughter; they only feel that they are two enemies, fighting for a precious possession, a crust of bread, to preserve life! And, during their struggle, they are unconsciously nearing the border of the sand-bank, which is licked by the waves of the voracious foaming sea. Ha! yet a step and the father tumbles headlong into the angry flood, while the daughter shouts for joy, because she is now in the undisputed possession of the crust which she voraciously

swallows. No one moves to the assistance of the drowning man; his last convulsive efforts are beheld with a stupid laugh."

"Horrible!" cried Gisela, deeply shocked. "Is it possible that such things can be?"

"It is," cried the prince. "My youthful strength succumbed later to the attacks of hunger, and it was these scenes which constantly then danced before my eyes with a terrible truth and reality. Gisela, will you yet say that the mind is immortal and of divine origin?"

Gisela hazarded no answer, and the prince, with a bitter smile, said: "Further, then. We shall soon come to the end. What follows now?"

"Here many poor people are kneeling at the door of a church; they stretch forth their hands imploringly toward Lothaire, who is standing on the steps."

"Yes, right! Lothaire, languishing for happiness, for love, for something to which he can attach himself, seeks the unhappy, whom he consoles; the poor, whom he aids; the suffering, whose sorrows he can assuage. Those terrible starvation scenes are so deeply, so indelibly engraved upon his soul, that he considers it his holiest duty to do all in his power to preserve his fellow-men from the brutalizing effects of hunger. He is rendered beneficent by his horror of starvation, and also, perhaps, by the egoistic hope of winning gratitude and love. Bah! gratitude? You have experienced it, Gisela, and you know that one can in no way render himself so disagreeable to others as by earning a claim to their gratitude. The man, whose benefactor you have become, is from that hour your irreconcilable enemy. People are not capable of gratitude. Gratitude is a galling burden which they seek to shake off at whatever price, even



though the act involve the ruin and death of the benefactor.—Pass over the next two leaves; they contain scenes where Lothaire made such bitter experiences of the ingratitude of man!”

“Here is a beautiful maiden kneeling to Lothaire, lifting up her hands to him in supplication.”

“Hearing her cry for help, Lothaire, hastening to her aid, has just delivered her from the hands of a man to whom her mother would prostitute her, although she abhors him. She implores him to have pity on her and protect her from her mother and from her persecutor. Is she not beautiful? What wonder that Lothaire yields to the prayers of his fair petitioner, that he conducts her to his hotel, that he the next day hastens to the mother and pays three times as much to satisfy her cupidity, and save the girl from the pursuits of her hated follower, as the latter was to have paid for her seduction? Oh, how fair was Cordelia when thanking Lothaire with tears of gratitude! How fair, when she swore to him eternal gratitude and eternal love! And Lothaire? In the presence of this angel-face he forgot all his experiences, his sad, painful experiences, and again became the hoping, confiding, adoring youth he had been before. He loved Cordelia, and believed her protestations. He made her his saint, his angel, knelt to and worshipped her, and she smiled upon him like one blessed, transfigured. Cordelia was the child of poor and uneducated parents, but she possessed a penetrating understanding and high mental gifts; she sang with a charming voice all the songs she had ever heard; she could sketch every face she saw with an astonishing resemblance. Lothaire, remarking these precious talents, provided for her the best and most expensive instruction, and Cordelia was soon the pride of her teachers and the joy

of her adoring Lothaire. He had loved her when she was nothing but a fair, innocent maiden—he idolized her now that, by mind, wit, and talent, she had become a fascinating woman. These were, indeed, days of a magnificent kind, and over them Lothaire forgot all the sorrows of his past. Again he believed, he hoped, he loved! His life again had a central point, an object; his existence was again filled up and significant. The most *spirituelle* and beautiful woman was his, loved him with the warmest, most self-sacrificing and passionate love. Two precious years of undisturbed happiness did Lothaire pass with Cordelia—years so magnificent and sublime, that they were not too dearly purchased by all the sorrows that followed in their train—years that he would gladly live over again, even at the expense of all the madness and despair that followed them.”

“And her you also lost?” asked Gisela.

“Turn the next leaf. What see you?”

“Oh, what a scene! Here upon the divan, Cordelia on the bosom of a young officer. In the open door, Lothaire, pale as a ghost, benumbed with horror.”

“Listen to me, Gisela; we are almost at the end. Lothaire was obliged to leave for the purpose of meeting his father, who was coming to see him. An unfortunate fall from his horse confined him for many weeks to his bed in Vienna. Finally recovering, he flew back to Florence with the utmost speed upon the wings of impatient love. Oh, how delighted will be Cordelia, how will she shout for joy when unexpectedly surprised by his arrival! Lothaire had with him the key to the small private door, by which he entered his hotel without being observed; he steps softly over the stairs and through the corridors, and stands breathless before the door of Cordelia’s room, which he

noiselessly opens, and finds her in the arms of another! You shudder. What would you have? Women are so made. They know no fidelity, no love."

"Lothaire, you are unjust," said Gisela, blushing. "Have you that contemptible opinion also of me?"

"You? Oh, in truth, you are so little like other women that I forgot that you belonged to their sex! You are no woman as other women are, and what I said of them applies not to you."

"And Cordelia?" tremblingly asked Gisela.

After a pause the prince said: "She destroyed her own life. Whether for shame and repentance I know not. Enough, she died. On seeing me standing palsied and motionless at the open door, she tore herself from the stranger's embrace, rushed to her toilet table, and, before I could interfere, a stiletto had pierced her heart."

"Well for her that she died," sighed Gisela; "that death was at least some expiation."

"Peace to her ashes!" said the prince. "Since I have known you, Gisela, since you are at my side, I have forgiven her. I curse her no longer. The dreadful years that followed that hour have been out-weathered, the gaping wounds of my soul begin to heal over, and if I cannot quite yet love mankind, still, dark hatred has melted under the sunshine of your charming smile, and I can now pity weak, stumbling, erring humanity."

"Oh, my friend, you will one day go yet further, and learn again to love mankind," said Gisela, gently nestling to him. "An unhappy destiny led you to make experiences of a dreadful nature. Let us hope that the future will offer you more peaceful and soothing scenes."

"Continue with me, and I have

nothing more to wish," said the prince, impressing a chaste kiss upon her brow.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

### DEATH.

MORE than usually agitated and excited by the long explanations made to Gisela, and by the awakened reminiscences of the sad events of his youth, the prince slowly returned to his apartments. The evening being already somewhat advanced, Lothaire dismissed the officials who were on service, and, sending away the domestics, retired to his sleeping-room.

He wished to be alone, and even shut the door opening into the ante-room, in which only the chamberlain on duty was awake, and awaiting the commands of the prince.

This solitude, this stillness about him, seemed to do him good; he drew aside the curtain from the picture of Cordelia, and slowly glided into a chair standing in front of it.

With folded arms and deeply self-absorbed, he for a long time contemplated the portrait, which presented features of a really surprising beauty. "From this moment thou art pardoned," said he, in a weak and plaintive tone; "rest softly in thy cool grave, henceforth undisturbed by my curses. I no longer find resentment in my heart! The sharp barbs of sorrow are blunted, and a dear hand is extended to draw from my breast the arrows of remembrance. My winter is gone, and a vernal season seems commencing in my soul. Oh, what a spring! Hear I not the mysterious rustling caused by its approach? Does not my throbbing heart recognize the presentiment of coming pleasure? Are not thousands and thousands of blossoms germinating in

me, and hear I not the jubilation of the morn-greeting lark? Oh, I am therefore again young; the eyes of this divine woman have stricken age from my soul, and renewed my youth. I shall live again, love again, and may perhaps be happy again!"

He sprang up and paced the room with hurried steps. "And she," he then murmured, "she suspects not that I love her. Her pure, modest soul nestles with a charming, sisterly confidence in my arms, and, when she unfolds before me all the treasures of her being, she thinks she is observed with only fraternal eyes. Gisela, beautiful, charming Gisela, at length my feelings will find utterance, and, surely, my fire will warm thy benumbed heart and awaken it to love. I know thou wilt love me, not as a sister, but as an affectionate, confiding, and devoted woman! Oh, thou poor, beautiful child, thy heart yet lies compressed by the pains and torments the world has inflicted upon thee, and thy soul ventures not to unfold its wings for a free flight to happiness; the world has lamed thy wings, and thou liest silently sighing under the bands with which thy sorrows have bound thee. But patience, patience, thou wilt yet awake and arise! The strong, the immeasurable love of a man must conquer the heart of any maiden, and therefore, Gisela, I know thou wilt love me. Gisela, thou beautiful, betrayed, and scorned woman, we truly belong to each other! With our sorrows and our mutual scorn of the world will we raise ourselves infinitely above the miserable beings who surround us, giving and receiving divine happiness in each other's arms. Farewell, Cordelia—farewell! I no longer either love or hate thee, for me thou art dead! Farewell!"

He drew the curtain again over the portrait, and stepped to the window,

which he raised, silently looking out into the clear star-lighted night.

He noticed not that the heavy silk tapestry was suddenly stirred, and that the face of a man became visible from behind it, peeping for a moment with anxious curiosity around the room, and then disappearing behind its protecting folds.

"How fair is this night," murmured the prince, "and yet I know that a dark, a fatal presentiment will soon steal upon me. Strange! it seems to me that I shall never find and experience the happiness which is yet so near to me. Bah! this thrice-returning dream which has prophesied my death, has made me a weak visionary. Nonsense! Only the unhappy believe in dreams, and I am no longer unhappy. Why should I care for these foolish dreams, caused by over-excitation?"

Closing the window, he threw off his clothes and betook himself to his couch.

Upon a marble table before that couch stood a golden goblet, and, whilst the prince stretched forth his hand toward it, the tapestry was again parted, and the same head peered into the room, and this time with an expression of the most anxious suspense and impatient expectation. But when the prince drank, the expression of the lurker changed to the wildest, maliciously triumphant joy, and he cast upon Lothaire a glance resembling that of an executioner when about to strangle his victim.

When the prince returned the empty goblet to the table, the mysterious lurker vanished, and all was still. Before an hour had elapsed the prince was writhing upon his bed with the most intense suffering, and had hardly strength to ring for his servants.

They rushed in, and were horror-struck on observing the disfigured and distorted features of their master, who

with a feeble, faltering voice ordered the calling of Gisela and the physician. Both were soon at his bedside, and when the pale, trembling, speechless Gisela knelt before him, covering his cold flaccid hands with her kisses, it seemed as if her presence gave him strength to struggle with and overcome his excessive torments.

He beckoned the physician to approach, and said to him, with a calm, clear voice: "I command you to tell me the absolute truth, without evasion or equivocation; I command this on your allegiance to your sovereign prince! What think you of my condition?"

The physician, after a short silence, hesitatingly said: "It is as inexplicable as it is dangerous! The pulse is very rapidly failing, and I almost fear that—"

"Enough, I understand you!" interposed the prince. "The end is near; in a few moments there will remain of your prince nothing but a cold, dead mass.—Come here to me, Gisela, you shall be my father confessor. Let all the rest retire! These last minutes belong to my friend alone!"

And when the tearful servants had with difficultly-suppressed sobs withdrawn into an adjoining room, the prince asked, "Are we alone?"

"Entirely alone, my friend, my brother," falteringly stammered she.

"Listen, then," said he; "my moments are numbered, I must be brief. Come, bend down to me; place your ear close to my lips. I am poisoned, Gisela; I feel it, I know it; and, when I am no more, the examining medical men will verify the fact. You shudder? Oh, how can any wickedness, any flagitiousness of man, yet surprise you? Know you not that my wife can regain her liberty only by my death? Oh, she will come to weep over my corpse, she will draw the mourning-

veil over her jubilant face, and when she is told that my life has been ended by murder, she will, without trembling or turning pale, command a strict inquisition. That is the way of the world, and why do you shudder, child, when all takes place as it must? Listen, rather, Gisela, to the warning of your dying friend. Flee, flee from this land. For Clotilde is your enemy, and a bad woman is worse than a poisonous adder. Flee, and weep for me far from here. And yet one thing, Gisela. Swear to me that you will hold my last will sacred, and that you will receive what is offered you in it. Will you swear this?"

"I swear it to you by all that is holy to me," laying her trembling hand in that of her friend.

"Then am I satisfied," said he, with a happy smile. "I now fear nothing for your future, for she cannot break this testament, and it will raise you above all the enmities of the world. For, Gisela, the world pardons every thing to wealth, to gold. The world, which has calumniated and trampled upon you, will worship and exalt you when you can strew gold with full hands. You are innocent and pure, and therefore have you the daring courage to despise the opinions of the world. That world will pardon it in you if you are rich; therefore strew about you golden presents, buy the world with your gold, and, instead of cursing, it will bless you!"

While thus speaking, his voice was constantly growing weaker and weaker, and with a light groan it now became extinct.

A deep and fearful pause ensued, and perhaps it was Gisela's warm tears, falling upon Lothaire's face, that once more recalled him to life.

"Weep not, dearest," he faintly murmured; "weep not for me. What more beautiful can happen to me than



in thine arms, amid thy tears, to leave a world I hate, and of which I have long been weary? Bah! the world is a miserable prize-ring, where only jugglers and flatterers can win the prizes. Woe to thee, poor dear child, that thou art condemned to contend against these miserables! Fear the world, and tremblingly flatter the calumniator, else thou wilt be poisoned and trampled upon! Oh, my beloved—!”

Now a slight shiver; a convulsive rattle; a last, last, long, painful sigh; a last contraction of the muscles; then a stretching of all the members, and the noble form gradually stiffened into a corpse! Of the lately yet so brave, vigorous, love-hoping Lothaire, nothing now remained but an insensible, motionless mass, from which the animating spirit had forever flown!

When the hastily-summoned ministers entered the chamber of death, they found only the corpse of their prince, with the insensible Gisela by its side.

In a small, dimly-lighted chamber, at this time Gisela's valet de chambre lay upon his knees before the reverend and pious Pater Thomas.

“I grant thee absolution for this deed, which in the sight of God is no sin, but a good work,” whispered the priest; “for this Lothaire was a freethinker, an enemy of the Church and its servants, and deserved the punishment that has overtaken him. Rise, my son; thou hast confessed. I pronounce thee free from all sin, as a sign of which I present to thee this holy crucifix. Kiss it, and be absolved.”

The valet kissed the cross, and then sprang to his feet. “I thank thee, holy father,” he gladsomely said, “for having so quickly granted me absolution, and quieted my conscience, for I acknowledge that for a moment I was filled with fear and horror.”

“But now, my young friend,” said

the priest, with an ironical smile, “let us quickly leave this palace and hasten to my hiding-place. You will there throw off this disgusting disguise, this livery, this blond wig and beard, and wash this disfiguring paint from your brow.”

“That I may then,” laughingly interposed the other, “as a conquering Adonis, fly to the arms of the incomparably fair Clotilde. Away, therefore, away to meet my good fortune!”

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### CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE KING IS DEAD—LONG LIVE THE KING!

SINCE her last interview with the handsome Marquis de Cosenza, Clotilde had seen the slow passing away of fourteen days, and to her waiting, hoping impatience they seemed a burdensome, never-ending eternity. Daily, always at the same hour, she withdrew into her library. To the general, this caprice, which relieved him of some hours of watchfulness, was very agreeable, and he took care not to disturb her in her harmless solitude.

To-day also had the discouraged and now almost despairing Clotilde repaired to the library. Hardly hoping for a favorable turn in her affairs, she leaned her head against the back of her chair and wept; she knew not whether this weeping was for the return of the marquis, or for the final attainment of her liberty.

Then the mysterious bookcase began to move, and soon her handsome, long-desired friend was kneeling before her, covering her hands with kisses and calling her by the tenderest names.

“Is it done?” she breathlessly asked.

“My divine Clotilde is a widow, and absolute sovereign of her land,” re-

sponded the marquis, kissing the hem of her robe. "But now, away from here! By hidden paths I will conduct you to your palace. Our horses wait at the outlet, and before morning dawns Clotilde will be with her friends in her capital."

"And Lothaire's mistress, that Gisela?" asked the princess.

"In her chamber will be found the remains of the poison with which she destroyed her princely lover," sneeringly replied the marquis.

Then, enveloping the princess in a mantle he had taken care to bring with him, he led her down into the subterranean passage. Clotilde followed him in silence, accepting the support of his arm.

At dawn there was an unusual movement and agitation in the city of W— Here and there stood troops of men and women, whispering among themselves, and relating, the one to the other, the sad news of the decease of the prince, connected with the most horrible circumstances.

The prince, it was said, had died of poison administered to him by some accursed hand; and, when it was tremblingly asked who could have been guilty of so horrible an act, some timidly mentioned the name of Clotilde, while others more boldly pronounced that of Gisela.

From the towers now solemnly resounded the mourning bells, and the people, constantly collecting in greater crowds, hastened to the open gates of the palace, where a free entrance was permitted to all, that they might see and weep over the remains of the prince. But among the crowds circulated the busy and active partisans of the Princess Clotilde.

It was they who wept the most, and complained the loudest of the death of the beloved prince; who the most vociferously cursed the hand which could

present the poisoned cup to his lips, and the most boldly designated Gisela as the murderess. And the masses, following this impulsion, simultaneously wept for the prince and cursed his destroyer, Gisela. Only sobs, lamentations, and curses, responded to the solemn tones of the tolling bells, when suddenly was heard the cry: "Place, there! the princess is coming!"

She came at a rapid pace, upon a foaming steed, her cheeks flushed by the exercise of the ride, her eyes flashing with proud triumph, and with a melancholy smile upon her lips.

The ride, the triumph, delight at her final liberation, seemed to have partially restored her youth, and whoever saw her thus proudly careering upon her horse, must have been astonished at her apparent youthfulness.

Clotilde's friends and supporters now sent up loud shouts of joy. The same eyes that had so recently been weeping for the deceased, now flashed with pleasure; the same lips which had just been uttering lamentations, now poured forth their shouts and vivas; and the people, with their childlike mobility, soon joined in the cry: "Vivat Clotilde, our noble mistress! The prince is dead—long live our great princess!"

Clotilde, graciously bowing her thanks, passed rapidly through their ranks to the palace. Here, throwing herself from her horse before the Marquis de Cosenza had time to hold her stirrup, she hastened into the palace and to the chamber of her husband.

With tears and loud lamentations she threw herself upon his lifeless body.

Oh, what beautiful and touching phrases resounded from her lips! how infinitely had she loved the deceased! with what a divine resignation did she pardon his severity, calling him again and again her friend, her spouse, her all!

The eyes of all spectators were filled

with tears; every one was moved at the deep sorrow of the princely widow, who was about to imprint a kiss upon the lips of the deceased when the court physician forcibly drew her away.

"Your highness, it is dangerous to approach those lips," said he, in a low tone.

"Dangerous?" repeated the princess, loud enough to be heard by every one. "What mean you? You cast down your eyes, doctor. I command you to speak the whole truth, unhesitatingly, as we have no human ear to fear."

"If all indications are not deceptive," solemnly responded the physician, "his highness the prince is poisoned!"

"Poisoned!" cried the princess, raising her arms to heaven, and in a heart-rending tone. She thus stood for a long time, as if rendered speechless by horror. "And who, who could have been guilty of the horrible deed?" she then shudderingly asked.—No one answered.—"Who was last with him? In whose company was he last before his illness?—Is there no one here to give me an answer?"

The valet de chambre on duty advanced, and stated that the prince had passed his last hours with Gisela, with whom he was usually in the habit of supping.

"Let her, then, be instantly arrested, and let her room be strictly searched," commanded the princess; and, as the servants, the ministers, and gentlemen, seemed to hesitate, she added, in a severe and commanding tone: "I, the absolute mistress and sovereign of this land, command it you!"

At this moment a side-door was opened, and Gisela, proud and erect, but deadly pale, entered the room!

A general exclamation of astonishment was heard, while Gisela, her eyes immovably fixed upon the princess, proudly passed on, and took a place beside the corpse.

"Here I am," she loudly and distinctly said; "here I am! In the adjoining room I heard the commands of your highness; and, as I am innocent, I have no fear of arrest and imprisonment. I am ready for every investigation. Woe to them who hold me guilty of the murder of my only friend and benefactor!—Oh, Lothaire, must thy words be so soon fulfilled!" sighed she, bending over the corpse; "but fear nothing, transfigured spirit! thy friend will show herself worthy of thee. She will meet these new horrors with courage, and the consciousness of innocence will sustain her under the weight of these horrible calumnies." Then, rising erect, she calmly said: "Do, your highness, what you consider to be your duty. My duty is not to seek avoidance of these new terrors."

In searching Gisela's room, as before commanded, they found, in a secret drawer of her bureau, a half-emptied phial, the contents of which the physician pronounced to be a deadly poison, and this circumstance was sufficient to subject Gisela to the most severe imprisonment.

The Princess Clotilde, who concealed her triumph and joy under her mourning-veil, swore to avenge her husband's death upon his murderers.

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### SHE IS INNOCENT.

So Gisela was now a prisoner, accused of a horrible crime; again loaded with calumnies and evil suppositions; again a welcome subject for the malevolent occupation of the world.

There were but a few who believed in Gisela's innocence, and they dared not raise their voices in opposition to

the anathemas the reigning princess had uttered against her; and, if the few silently commiserated her, the many who accused her only raised their voices so much the louder, to curse and condemn her.

Those who were better acquainted with Gisela, the servants and confidants of Prince Lothaire, ventured the less to speak in her behalf, as their relations with the prince naturally made them objects of suspicion to those now in power, and to take sides with Gisela was considered as taking part against the government of the princess.

Public opinion, guided by the powerful party of the princess; public opinion, the scaffold upon which many noble and innocent persons had already been sacrificed; public opinion had already judged Gisela, and, before being legally tried, she was already condemned and sentenced by this dangerous and inexorable tribunal.

But for this, Gisela cared little. This last proof of the paltriness and nullity of the world had finally inspired her with contempt for mankind, and extinguished all love for the race in her heart.

She heard, with cold tranquillity, all the complaints and accusations brought against her, and, when they produced the phial found in her bureau, she only cast upon the princess one single scornful glance, a glance before which Clotilde involuntarily cast down her eyes.

Gisela smiled when she saw this, and rose more erect, as if elevated by her internal consciousness. Never, during the long and painful days of her imprisonment did a complaint or a sigh of impatience escape her lips; still and resigned, with firmness, and with a smiling patience—yea, with a sort of compassion for her accusers, she bore the pains of her condition, and in her soul there seemed to be room for no

other feeling than sorrow for the loss of her friend Lothaire; and this sorrow was so profound and overpowering as often to make her forget her own unhappy position in the meditation of her irreparable loss. Wholly given up to her recollections, she would for hours remain in a state of hallucination, indulging in visions and dreams of the past, in which she lived over again all that happy portion of her life which had been passed in communion with Lothaire.

But the pure and holy sisterly affection which she cherished for Lothaire, also clothed her sorrow with a heavenly gentleness and beneficent peace. It was a pure, unsensual soul-sorrow, which, while it filled her eyes with tears, was full of sweet consolation and celestial peace.

And it was this deep but gentle sorrow that changed her once glowing, fiery nature into a touching meekness and resignation, and brightened her pale brow with an expression of divine repose, which made an indescribably deep impression upon all beholders.

Gisela had closed accounts with the world; she had ceased to expect happiness on earth, and therefore her only hope was now in death, to which she looked as her only peace-bringing friend. Convinced that the hatred of the princess could be satisfied only by her death, she prepared worthily to meet it with unshaken courage.

Ah, and what had the world, for which her heart had once so warmly beat, what had it now to offer her, after having crushed all her hopes and blighted all the blossoms of her youthful confidence? She already felt as if snatched away from earth; far, far behind her lay the pictures of happiness with which her imagination had once been pleased; far behind her were all her hopeful youthful dreams. Awakened to reality and life, she shudderingly turned away from a world



which had to offer her nothing but disgust and weariness.

But while Gisela was thus preparing herself for the great crisis, circumstances occurred that could not but have an important bearing upon her destiny. The proceedings in the court of assizes had commenced, and Gisela's attorney, the ablest and most celebrated advocate of the land, had begun her defence with the eloquence and boldness for which he was distinguished.

Once called to a high office by Gisela through her influence with the prince, he now made it his sacred duty to manifest his gratitude by the consecration of all his powers to her service. He described her relations with the prince with an eloquence that carried all hearts with him; he gave touching and penetrating descriptions of her benevolence and kindness to all, and of her nobleness, purity, and disinterestedness; and, when he had concluded his exordium, the effect was seen in the emotion exhibited by the weeping audience.

The speaker then proceeded to a critical examination of the last hours of the prince. He proved by witnesses that the prince, on that fatal day, had not supped at all; that, after a long conversation with Gisela, evidently agitated, he ordered his supper not to be served; that thereupon he had repaired to his chamber, vigorous and active as ever, and that he had afterward been heard for a long time rapidly pacing his chamber, and talking to himself.

The advocate now spoke of the prince's custom before going to sleep, of taking a quieting drink prescribed by his physician, and inferred that on that occasion he had acted in conformity with that custom. But what had become of the golden goblet from which he was in the habit of taking this nightly drink? It had been searched for in vain; where was it? On his asking

this question, the attending physician of the deceased prince came forth from the circle of spectators with the goblet in his hand.

In consideration of the awful manner of the prince's death he had taken possession of the cup, at which the dying man had several times significantly glanced, and it struck him that the bottom of it had appeared black and obscure instead of golden and clear, as usual. In this state he now laid it before the court. Chemists were called, who, after a careful analysis of the sediment remaining at the bottom of the goblet, declared it to contain the base of a metallic poison so sudden and fatal in its operation that, had he taken it in Gisela's room, he could not without evident pains have afterward reached his own, and there walked back and forth for a considerable time. It was afterward ascertained, by a further analysis, that the phial found in Gisela's bureau contained only a part of the poisonous elements that were found in the sediment of the goblet. The circumstance, therefore, that Gisela was in possession of a poison could not serve as a proof of her guilt. The question was now asked, Who had carried the goblet into the sleeping-room of the prince? The prince's valet came forward, pale and trembling, to state that he himself, on that, as on every evening, placed the goblet on the prince's table. Had no one afterward gone into the room? The valet, after a moment's reflection answered that one person, the Italian, Giuseppe, Gisela's valet de chambre, had certainly been in the room, by order of the prince, to bring from his night-table a portfolio which usually lay upon it. Indeed, the valet now recollected that while he was going about in the chamber in the performance of his duties, he had been struck by the long lingering of the Italian at the table, but the

circumstance naturally gave rise to no suspicion in his mind.

The Italian was called to take the stand, but was nowhere to be found. No one had seen him in the palace since that eventful night. The court was adjourned, and the secret enemies of the princess thought they perceived in her countenance, and those of her most intimate friends, an expression of consternation and alarm.

A strict search for the so mysteriously vanished Italian was now set on foot; advertisements with *signalements* were sent in every direction, and in this search some weeks more were consumed.

But this circumstance, also, was destined to operate in Gisela's favor.

The people, awakened from their short intoxication of joy, saw with regret how much heavier and more oppressive the soft, mild hand of the princess weighed upon them than did the strict but just hand of the prince. Wavering and caprice had taken the place of the former strict justice. The princess, taking no pains to conceal her passion for the Marquis de Cosenza, who had seemed suddenly to spring out of the earth, but, giving herself up to him with a shameful inconsiderateness, showed herself wholly dependent upon the will of this stranger and of her newly-returned confessor, Pater Thomas.

These two now domineered over the land, arbitrarily dismissing men from the public service, and filling their places with either their own creatures or those who paid for their advancement with golden bribes, for which they reimbursed themselves by new taxes laid upon the people.

The dissatisfaction and ill-humor soon became general, and this feeling against the princess could not but operate in Gisela's favor.

People already began less circum- spectly to whisper that perhaps the

Princess Clotilde herself had procured the murder; that she had instigated the Italian, and now kept him concealed and safe from all pursuit. The embittered people already received the handsome marquis and Father Thomas, whenever they appeared in the streets, with abusive language, and gave the princess dark and angry glances instead of their former friendly salutations.

Dissatisfaction and displeasure lay like heavy clouds upon all faces, and Clotilde was at least woman enough to be susceptible of fear and anxiety; and the more so, as her fascinating favorite, the marquis, trembled with cowardly despondency at the possibility of discovery, and constantly troubled her with cruel and unmanly threatenings, in the possible case of danger to himself.

Oh, what terrible hours was Clotilde now obliged to pass with the handsome marquis, and what tormenting anguish did she not feel when in travelling the streets she encountered only gloomy and threatening faces, and no more received the accustomed friendly greetings of affectionate dependence! Her lively imagination, her alarmed conscience, pictured to her all the horrors of a revolution, all the cruelty of an enraged people. She trembled by night upon her couch at the slightest noise, at every step of any approaching person.

These torments, this anguish, were not to be borne. Something decisive must be done to regain the favor of the people, and to divert from herself the suspicion of complicity in her husband's death. The threats of the marquis, in the case of danger to himself, to give her as the instigator of the deed, could only serve to strengthen her in her resolution, and thus anxiety and remorse of conscience at length triumphed in her over the desire of revenge against Gisela.

She herself hastened to Gisela, conjuring her to fly; she herself smoothed all the ways for flight, and requested it as a sort of grace.

But all her prayers were fruitless; Gisela declared that she would rather die than by her flight give new grounds for suspicion and calumny. It was in vain that the princess conjured her, with dissembled tears, to withdraw herself, by this flight, from certain and unavoidable death. Gisela declared, with a gentle smile, that she was ready to die, and would still proclaim her innocence on the scaffold. In vain did the princess offer her wealth and untold treasures—she only smiled contemptuously and answered nothing.

Gisela was inflexible, and resort must be had to some other means. Pater Thomas was ready and prompt to find them; and when the time of adjournment had passed, and the judge and jury were in their seats for the purpose of bringing the process to an end; when the tribunes were filled with spectators, and when Gisela's advocate repeated his demand for the production of the vanished valet, the Italian Giuseppe, the princess herself suddenly and unexpectedly entered the hall, followed by her ladies.

With haughty dignity she advanced through the silent crowd to the bar, and said, with a loud, firm voice: "I, the sovereign princess of this land, the widow of the deceased Prince Lothaire, declare the accused, Gisela von Waidmann, to be innocent of the crime, as it was not she who mixed the poison in that cup, but the prince himself. He fell by his own hand. This paper, here, may serve you as an attestation. It is my will that it be read to this assembly."

Handing a folded paper to the presiding judge, she took the seat placed in readiness for her.

The president unfolded the document,

and so still was it that the rattling of the unfolding sheet resounded distinctly in the farthest corner of the hall. "It is the handwriting of our beloved and lamented Prince Lothaire," said the president, attentively examining the writing, "and here, under it, is his seal." He handed the paper to his associate judges, and all declared it to be the real, unmistakable handwriting of the prince, and that no one but himself could have written the lines.

"You will please to read the contents of the paper," commanded the princess, and the president read:

"That no one may be unjustly accused of a murderous attempt upon my princely person, I hereby declare that I, Lothaire, prince of this land, am decided to effect my own death by poison. Weary of this world, weary of mankind, who, in their degradation and paltriness are unworthy of the sacrifice of the noblest powers of my soul, and the squandering of my kindly feeling; weary of a love that can no longer suffice my heart, and which yet for a short time made me happy; wearied, finally, by the reproaches of my conscience on account of my much-injured wife,—weary of all these things, the grave seems to me a welcome place of refuge. Let no one dare to blame me for seeking it. Written a few minutes before my death.

"LOTHAIRE."

A deep silence followed the reading of this document, which was at length interrupted by the princess, who said: "I found this paper in the bureau of the prince, while searching it to-day for another object. It had fallen through a crevice into a secret drawer known only to me, and there I discovered it. As now, however, according to this confession, written by the prince's own hand, no one but himself bears the guilt of his death, I hereby declare,



by virtue of my sovereign dignity, these proceedings against the fraulein Gisela to be abrogated, and command that the accused be immediately set at liberty. She is innocent."

A long and solemn pause ensued, and then the whole assembly, with one voice, cried: "Vive Clotilde, our righteous princess! Vivat, vivat!"

And when the graciously-smiling Clotilde thanked them; when she approached the motionless, deeply-veiled form of Gisela; when she, with streaming tears, embraced that unmoving form, and, with loud, touching words, asked her pardon for the injurious accusation, the general enthusiasm seemed to know no bounds. People wept, they sobbed, they called the blessing of Heaven down upon the head of their noble princess, who received all this homage with inimitable graciousness, again and again addressing Gisela with the most charming self-exculpatory phrases.

Gisela was deaf to all these touching words of the princess, and, as Clotilde now clasped her hand to press it to her bosom, she violently withdrew that hand, and turned away with a shudder.

This whole scene seemed to her a shocking mockery of all noble human emotion, and never had the world and its people appeared to her so contemptible as at that moment, in which she saw a miserable, hypocritical comedy played with the sacred memory of the dead. While the princess now stepped out among the people, strewing handfuls of gold among them; while all were shouting and huzzaing for the noble and righteous princess, Gisela hastened, unnoticed and unregarded, to a carriage, which conveyed her to her villa, where her astonished servants received her with loud cries of joy.

Gisela motioned them to silence, and withdrew into her boudoir. Here, in

her exceeding affliction, she threw herself down, and wept aloud.

She was free; she had been declared innocent. But for all this she was indebted to a miserable, degrading farce, a wicked outrage of the dead, and now, now for the first time, escaped from her trembling, quivering lips, her imprecation against the world; for the first time she cursed this hypocritical, deceiving, and deceived human race, and found in her heart a deep, inextinguishable hatred of the world and its denizens.

This feeling, however, did her good; it seemed to her a new bond, that connected her more intimately with the memory of Lothaire; like him, had she renounced hope, confidence, happiness; like him, she had only hatred and imprecations for the world, which had no more deceptions, no more illusions to offer her. The prince's prophecies had finally become truths, his promises had been fulfilled, and, with her heart weaned from the world, she felt herself isolated and disconsolate among her fellow-beings.

After hours of indescribable suffering, Gisela rose, faint, exhausted, and deadly pale. A firm resolution had ripened in her, and she hastened to put it into execution. She ordered her servants immediately to engage post-horses in the city; she wrote to her attorney, confiding to him the management of her affairs, including the great possessions made hers by the last will and testament of the prince, directing him to send a definite sum to her address in Vienna, and gave him an important amount as a present from her. She then selected the simplest and plainest of her dresses, and had them packed in her travelling-trunks. The richer dresses and costly ornaments she gave to her waiting-woman, who, weeping, implored the favor of being permitted to accompany her mistress.



Gisela denied the request, with a sad smile, saying: "I can be accompanied only by my remembrances!"

The postilion's horn was now heard in the court-yard; the servants, no one of whom had ever doubted the innocence of their beloved mistress, and had confidently awaited the day of her acquittal, wept and sobbed aloud. Old Hedwig lay upon her knees in prayer, and then, with streaming tears, begged Gisela to tell her, at least, where she was going, that she might, in thought, accompany her.

Gisela responded: "Do I myself, good Hedwig, know where I shall go? May not some prison-door open at any moment to receive me as an accused criminal? Who, here below, can know where the next hour may find him?"

Then, once more withdrawing into her boudoir, she rapidly wrote with a firm hand: "Farewell, my father; farewell, Bernhard! I am no longer in prison, and they say I am innocent. I have a horror of this world, and should have welcomed death with joy! Because I am innocent they have condemned me to live, again to mingle with mankind, again to offer my unprotected bosom to their darts and daggers, again to be trodden down, torn, and lacerated. Because I am innocent, they have drawn me from the peaceful stillness of my prison, again to thrust me out among my enemies, the people. My mission, therefore, is not yet fulfilled. I am, therefore, again to suffer, again to succumb—shall again bear witness to the capacity for suffering of my poor, trampled soul. Oh, with a bruised breast, with galled feet, and groaning under the burden of my remembrances, shall I go again through the world, feeling that the sword of Damocles is constantly suspended over my head, and always fearing its fall? With the poisoned arrow of disdain of the world in my breast, shall I incur

new torments, only that I may, by contact with the world, sink this fatal arrow still deeper into my flesh? Is this my destiny? Can this be your wish? I see you, as, with a sad sigh, but immovable firmness, you cry to me: 'Yes!' Well, then, you shall see that you have not been mistaken in your daughter. I feel in myself the courage to combat and endure, and, true to my mission, again to bear my banner into the battle—the banner upon which is inscribed, in letters of blood: '*Do right, and fear no one!*' It is my own blood with which these words are written—my blood, which the world has shed for the sealing of this motto! Oh, at least grant me time for these wounds to crust over; grant me time, far from the world, far from your cities, to repose upon soft moss until the wounds of my soul are healed. It would be cowardly and unworthy of you, voluntarily to throw myself into the arms of death. No, Bernhard, fear not that I will prove myself unworthy of your teachings. Only allow me repose. The world is so large. Allow me to seek out in it a little place where its noise, where its people, its hypocritical, dissembling people, cannot penetrate, where the peace of Nature may soothe my troubled soul. The world is large; let me seek out in it some little corner where my tears will be seen only by God and Nature; and then, when I have wept myself out, I will return to society, and in it seek matter for new tears. Farewell!"

And now, after completing this letter, and confiding it to the care of Hedwig, she wrapped herself in her mantle, and with a firm step, leaving her chamber, she descended to her waiting carriage. Her weeping servants were ranged in the great hall, and as Gisela descended the broad stairs she recollected the moment when she had descended them hand in hand with Prince

Lothaire for her marriage with Baron Walther.

Here, at this place, was it that the myrtle-wreath had fallen from her head; there, now as then, stood her weeping servants with folded hands.

All seemed unchanged, and yet all was different! And she herself, was she not a changed—a wholly different being? What had the fair-blooming maiden of that time—who, with confiding faith and high-beating heart, with infinite love and infinite happiness in her bosom, flew to the consummation of an eternal union with the man she loved—what had that happy, charming, and artless maiden in common with this pale, proud, and earnest form that now slowly and solemnly stalked down those same stairs, with a nameless desert void, a bitter feeling of woe, an incurably wounded heart, without hope, without love, without faith, and without trust? Oh, she now went indeed for an eternal union, but sorrow was the bridegroom she was to meet at the altar, and her marriage vow was to be hatred to all the world!

These thoughts passed through Gisela's mind while standing upon the spot where she had lost her myrtle-wreath. To-day the crown of thorns rested upon her head, where it was more firmly fixed than had been the myrtle-garland.

At that time there was at least a sympathizing and warning friend at her side, but now she was deserted by all, even by hope!

Gisela, feeling that her strength was failing, that tears were invading her eyes, withdrew her hand from her female attendant, who covered it with kisses, and hastily entered the carriage, which suddenly and noisily whirled away.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### THE HERDSMAN'S COT.

"WHITHER?" Gisela often asked herself as she restlessly drove on through desert tracks and magnificently luxuriant districts, through splendid cities and insignificant villages. "Whither?" sighed she, when of an evening, fatigued and exhausted, she sought some short repose in a strange locality. "Ah, where shall I at length find a place of rest for my weary limbs, a quiet corner where I may unobservedly indulge my grief? Everywhere—ah, everywhere I still find men, and my soul yearns for solitude and silence!"

And so, sad and unsympathizing, passed she through Germany, and arrived at Salzburg. The view of this grand and magnificent country, with its majestic mountains and pleasant valleys, did her good. Her eye swept over mountains swimming in the blue of heaven, and here and there crowned with glistening ice, amid which Salzburg reposes in its loveliest of valleys; she looked up to the proudly-shining Gletcher of Watzmann; to the Untersberg, which seemed swimming in the clouds; and, with a deep-drawn breath, said, "Solitude and silence must be found up there!"

This idea, which seemed to give her new courage, was the first that occupied her mind, and inspired her with something like a desire.

Early in the next morning she left Salzburg by the charming valley through which the emerald-green Salzach tranquilly pursues its course between stately mountains, and travelled to the foot of the Untersberg.

Leaving her carriage here, she pursued her way on foot, accompanied by a guide. Over green meadows, past isolated country-houses, lay her way, and Gisela hurried on with winged

feet, as if she would as quickly as possible fly from these indications of human proximity; she turned away her head from these houses and cottages, keeping her eyes constantly fixed upon the heights rising before wanderers who, like her, made the attempt to ascend the almost fabulous Untersberg on foot.

"Let us leave this common way," said she to her guide, "let us take some solitary and untrodden path."

"There is, indeed, another way over the mountain," thoughtfully replied the guide, "but it is dangerous, and travelled only by hunters and mountaineers, who are accustomed to clambering."

"Fear you this dangerous way?" asked Gisela.

"I? oh, certainly not. I have already wandered through these mountains more than thirty years, and know every path by day and night. But a delicate young lady like you, cannot possibly ascend that steep and rugged footpath."

"I fear no danger and no labor," said Gisela; "let us take that path."

And as they now turned in another direction, as they found the path narrow, and often upon the borders of deep precipices, and as they were often compelled to scramble over rolling stones, often to slide down the steep sides of gigantic rocks, Gisela's face became again animated, her cheeks flushed, and a faint smile played upon her thin lips.

It seemed to her sweet to play with dangers; to be so near Death, so boldly to affront and jest with him. And constantly upward led the path.

She now, exhausted, reposed upon a fragrant green carpet beside a crystal spring which gushed out of the rocks, and, as she glanced around, she shuddered anew, for here there were also people who had penetrated even to this remote and secluded corner, for the

purpose of disturbing this divinely peaceful creation. There, at a small distance, on the borders of the grass-plot, stood a wooden hut, with a pretty peasant-maiden standing in the open door, observing the movements of the strangers with curiosity and astonishment.

The guide laughingly said: "That is Loserl, the prettiest shepherdess in the whole region. See how much she is astonished that a stranger should have the courage to come here! Yes, yes, this is the first strange face that has been seen here for many a long year."

"Is it really so solitary here?" quickly asked Gisela.

"Perfectly solitary, your ladyship. These are the last of the shepherds' shanties; for see, there are two of them, which shelter two shepherdesses, that the poor maiden may have the society of one of her own sex."

"I will remain here," suddenly exclaimed Gisela, and she hastily rose to go and accost the fair shepherdess and commence a conversation with her.

Gisela was delighted with the fresh, natural, and beautiful girl, with the solitude and prevailing quiet of the place, with the balsamic fragrance, the pure air, and with every thing around her.

Here would she rest, here pass some tranquil weeks, here give the wounds of her breast an opportunity to heal, here acquire strength for new struggles. The arrangements were easily and quickly made. The fair Loserl, with her sister, took possession of the larger cottage, giving up the smaller one to Gisela, together with her service in the domestic management.

With a cheerful, satisfied smile, Gisela dismissed her astonished guide, and threw herself upon the fresh, clean bed Loserl had prepared for her, and now first for a long time enjoyed a refresh-

ing sleep, undisturbed by dreams or by the burdens and torments of life.

A peculiar still life now commenced for Gisela. For days together she roamed about in the valleys, among the caverns and grottoes, and often, when the day passed without her return from these ramblings to partake of the simple meal prepared for her by Loserl, the latter would be not a little alarmed for the lovely dame, whose soft, sad smile often brought tears into the eyes of the poor, simple peasant-girl.

But Gisela always finally returned, and Loserl gradually became accustomed to the strange ways of her fair and silent guest. The other shepherds and shepherdesses of the mountain already knew her also, and sympathetically followed with their eyes when she, like a light shadow, flitted over the loose, rattling stones, or swept along on the edge of a precipice, and sometimes silently saluted them, in passing, with a melancholy smile.

With their natural delicacy of feeling and perception they had soon understood that Gisela avoided all contact with persons, that she sought solitude and quiet, and they considerably avoided coming in her way, or addressing her when she passed them.

Often, when in the morning she started for her daily ramble, Loserl would follow her at a distance, to observe the direction she took, in order to be certain not to encounter and disturb her in the path she had chosen. And when joyous morning salutations of the shepherdesses resounded from peak to peak, Loserl would often return the greetings of her friends by begging of them not to interfere with the wanderings of "the poor, dear young lady;" and did she unexpectedly appear, pale, staring at vacancy, and often murmuring unintelligible words, the considerate peasants would retire from her path and conceal themselves

from her sight behind some tree or projecting rock. Even children would turn their heads aside that Gisela might pass without apparent notice, and not until they no longer feared being remarked by her would they look after her, murmuring: "Poor lady! how unhappy she seems, how much she must have suffered!"

People often saw her light form, like, an airy vision, standing upon the highest peaks of the mountain, her arms raised to heaven as if about to take wing from earth, and the herdsmen, who shudderingly saw her danger, tremblingly repeated an Ave Maria for her unhappy, troubled soul.

But Gisela trembled before no danger and no abyss. She would for hours sit upon the points of steep rocks, constantly looking down into the depths beneath her, and then it would seem as if sweet and seductive voices began to whisper to her from those depths; sighing threnodies resounded in her ear, arms seemed stretched forth to draw her down, and Gisela listened with rapture to those charmingly melancholy songs.

"Come, come down to us," sang those enticing voices; "here is it solitary and still, here is cool and painless repose. Come, and take thy rest with us; here are no distracting dreams, no remembrances to scourge thy soul. Come, sorrowing sister; we stretch forth our arms to thee; come down to our solitude and rest; come to slumber dreamlessly with us. We, also, have loved and suffered like thee; we, also, everywhere sought rest and peace, but found none, none, except in the eddy of this deep abyss. Come, it is silent here, and against the humid rock thy burning breast will cool itself to a sweet torpidity! Raise thine arms and swing thyself down, to dwell with us in eternal peace!"

Only with effort, only by the ex-



tremest force of will, was Gisela enabled to withstand this siren-song inciting her to suicide; and when, to evade this seduction, she hastily rose from the border of the precipice where she had been sitting, it was not without a feeling of reluctance and longing that she turned her back upon those enticing places. Again and again would she return to listen to those voices, and to console herself with the idea that death and repose there always awaited her, and that by an exercise of her will she could find it at any moment.

The thought that death and release were so near afforded her consolation and encouragement, and, unknown to herself, she became more reconciled to life. The wings of her soul began gradually to move with more energy; and, as her weakened physical organization improved in that fresh, balsamic atmosphere, so also began her courage and mental powers to strengthen.

But this undisturbed stillness soon began to weary her, and this peace to seem too monotonous. Her depressed soul rose again in the freshness of youth, with a longing for new activity, for new sorrows and new joys, and, drawing a long breath, Gisela said, "Ah, it is better to suffer pain than to vegetate in feelingless and idle repose!"

But, nevertheless, she was frightened at the idea of again returning into the world, and her heart revolted against it.

"No, no," she would often tremblingly exclaim, with a parrying motion of the hands—"no, any thing rather than a return among mankind; any thing rather than again facing those lying, dissembling forms; any thing rather than feeling their bold, inquisitive eyes again resting upon me, and nowhere meeting a loving, commiserating glance. Oh, to be thus wholly

isolated, wholly orphaned! No hand held out to me in kindness, no heart into which I can pour my griefs, none to feel an interest in my sorrows; to be wholly abandoned and alone upon this great, wide world! My God, to have the world nothing to me but a desert waste!"

And Gisela, the poor, solitary Gisela, wept bitter tears. Ah, she had longed for solitude; but she shuddered at the solitude she found in her own bosom! She had once brought to the world a warm heart, full of love, and the world in its delusion and short-sightedness trampled upon that noble heart until it was completely and forever chilled and silenced.

Was it really forever silenced, this warm and ill-used heart? Gisela thought so, and wept bitter tears over the urn containing its ashes.

But her destiny was not yet fulfilled. Her pulses yet beat; the fresh blood of youth yet circulated in her veins, and her soul was elastic enough to rise above all persecuting oppression and thirst for new struggles.

Poor Gisela, is the measure of thy suffering not yet full, the wormwood cup of thine experiences not yet emptied? Will the world from which thou hast flown—the world with its prejudices and its paltrinesses, with its regard for appearances, with its revenges and inexorableness against all those who sin against its rules—will this world, I say, follow thee into these solitudes; will it also in this still and secret corner allow thee no happiness, no peace? Will it send after thee, even to this remote spot, its preconceived opinions and accepted presumptions, and let thee be dashed to pieces against the cold rocks of calumny? Poor Gisela, turn thy steps homeward! Is it thy good genius or thy demon who, listening to thy secret complainings, sends thee a being whom thou canst love?

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## THE STRANGER.

As Gisela, on her return from a long ramble, approached the herdsmen's cottages, she remarked with astonishment several men and women who were standing there, apparently in great excitement, eagerly peering into one of the huts. It seemed that some misfortune must have happened, and, her compassion prevailing over her misanthropy, she hastened forward to the scene.

The peasants respectfully made way for her approach, and Gisela unhesitatingly entered the small dwelling, which offered her a strange and deeply-affecting sight. Stretched out upon a bed lay a young man with closed eyes, his head bound up with cloths, from which the blood was flowing, and singularly contrasting with the pallor of his brow.

Several persons were occupied in the endeavor to relieve his swollen left foot of its compressing boot.

The low groans that escaped the stranger during this painful operation alone manifested that life yet remained in that pale and helpless form.

Among the people busied about the unfortunate man, Gisela recognized also the guide who had accompanied her up the mountain a few weeks before, and to him she turned for information as to the accident which had occurred.

She learned that the stranger, with Sepperl the guide, had commenced the ascent that very morning, and that he had showed himself such a robust, zealous, and intrepid climber, that Sepperl had often trembled in following him. In this way they had approached the most dangerous place of all, where a broad cleft divided the path and formed a deep abyss. Upon slight steps cut in the face of the solid rock the traveller was obliged to descend into the abyss on

one side, and then clamber up the other.

Sepperl was already preparing to precede the stranger upon this path, when the latter declared that, to save the labor of ascent and descent, he would leap the gulf. In vain did Sepperl represent to him that the cleft was much broader than it appeared to be, and that the boldest chamois-hunter would not dare make the leap; in vain, in his mortal anxiety, did he attempt to hold him back by his clothes: the stranger tore himself loose, and, pushing Sepperl aside, ventured the leap, and fell to the bottom of the abyss, where Sepperl, who had descended by the usual route, found him, bleeding and senseless, upon the ground. With the help of some herdsmen, who had hastened thither, in answer to Sepperl's cries, he was lifted up and borne to this cottage. They had sent a boy into the valley below, for the purpose of bringing old Caspar, who was known far and wide as the most skilful surgeon among the herdsmen.

"I think, however," said Sepperl, shaking his head, "that the poor gentleman would be well content if the wound should prove mortal, he seemed so very sad and depressed, and often sighed so heavily. It also appeared to me as if he voluntarily sought the most dangerous places, as if his only wish was to die. It then occurred to me, and I related to him, fair lady, how, some weeks ago, I accompanied you up here, and you sighed and moaned just like him, and that you had remained here. The stranger listened attentively to me, and then musingly said: 'The poor woman has done rightly. The unfortunate must turn their backs upon this miserable world.'"

While Sapperl was making this relation, Gisela glanced with increasing interest at the young stranger. She thought: "He also must be unhappy;

he also has fled the world; he also has sought death, and not only his body, but his soul, bleeds in bitter woe."

She approached the stranger's couch, and gazed upon his distorted features with a more lively sympathy.

"It seems to me," said she to herself, "as if we were bound together by no common tie, since I know that he, also, is unhappy. Ah, the sorrow-laden, here below, all belong to each other, and should seek to console each other with sympathy and tears. Poor sufferer, in this relationship of pain, I will watch at thy couch and care for thy wounds!"

Meanwhile old Caspar arrived, and examined the injuries of the stranger.

The hurts of the head were declared to be not dangerous, and only the great loss of blood had caused the deep swoon in which the stranger still lay.

It was worse with the injury to the foot, the small bones of which seemed to be broken. It was necessary to set the broken bones, and apply a bandage before the swelling took place, and Caspar immediately set to work, with a strong and dexterous hand. This painful operation awoke the unfortunate man to consciousness. With a cry of suffering, he opened his eyes, and glanced up to the face of Gisela, who was bending over him with an expression of tender sympathy.

"Poor unfortunate!" murmured Gisela, in a low tone.

The stranger, sighing, repeated: "Yes, truly, a poor unfortunate!" He then again closed his eyes, and a new unconsciousness rendered him insensible to the continued surgical operations.

Those operations ended, Caspar declared that, with the greatest quiet and care, the foot might probably be restored to a sound state; but that it would require many weeks, and, meantime, the stranger must not be re-

moved from the hut, or from his couch, as the least movement would be imminently dangerous to him.

Gisela was at once ready to resign the hut to him, and share the larger one with Loserl, whose sister would take up her abode in the vale below. All the necessary arrangements were soon made. A cooling decoction of simples was prepared by Caspar, and, when the night had set in, and the old accustomed stillness pervaded the hut, Gisela sat beside the invalid's couch, carefully watching his uneasy slumbers, and refreshing his feverish lips with the cooling herb-tea.

With indefatigable care and the tenderest solicitude did she thenceforth nurse the patient; she seemed to have wholly lost the consciousness of her own sorrows in order to have eyes and senses only for the sufferer, only to discover and fulfil his slightest wishes.

Her long solitary walks were postponed, and, instead of them, Gisela sat, with untiring patience and watchfulness, at the bedside of the invalid, seeming to him like a consoling angel, like a benefactress and savior from the dull torpidity of his soul.

With what deep sympathy did she listen to the despairing complaints which escaped her patient in the wild raging of his fever; how trembled her heart with compassion when he uttered curses against the world and men! Sorrow is so egoistic that it makes one forgetful of all things extraneous to self, dulls our perception of all physical suffering.

Gisela, in the overfulness of her own griefs, had often called herself the unhappiest and most-to-be-pitied being on earth; she had thought that she had experienced the utmost extent of human woe; that she alone had reason to curse and despair. And now she saw, with tremulous sympathy, that there was yet a sorrow equal to her

own; that there was yet another who, like her, had cause to hate and curse the world; that there was yet a sorrow to which she had been a stranger! And there was, also, another circumstance that increased her sympathy.

In his wild fever fantasies he had often mentioned with bitter hate and dark threatenings a name that shook her frame, that recalled to her the most fearful images of the past; a name that was imprinted in her heart in fatal characters.

It was the name of her sister Judith.

Oh, with how many modulations of hatred, of ferocious rage, of imploring love, of boundless passion, did he repeat that name; and this mysterious connection with her sister could not but excite her sympathy for, and increase her interest in, one who, like herself, had suffered by Judith; had been deceived and stricken down by her.

And when the convalescence of the stranger began; when the wild fever-dreams were gone; when he, with a consciousness of his situation, raised his large dark eyes to Gisela, with the expression of the deepest thankfulness; when he was enabled to stammer his deep-felt gratitude in the most touching words; when he, with humble reverence, listened to her remarks, and seemed to live and breathe only in her presence, must not that inspire Gisela with joy, and awaken her soul from the winter's sleep of solitude?

Oh, in truth, she had been so entirely isolated and alone, that every appearance of sympathy, of mutual understanding, could not but seem a blessing from Heaven; she could not but grasp the hand kindly stretched forth to her, as an anchor of safety from the all-engulfing desert around her.

Her heart had been so long benumbed, that the first sunbeam could not but stir it with a doubly creative

power, cause it to put forth a thousand buds and blossoms, and awaken it to a new existence.

The stranger, whom, at his request, she called by the name of Leontin, had now regained his general health, but was still chained to his bed by his yet unhealed foot, and, as old Caspar allowed him every species of occupation which he could pursue without leaving his bed, he had chosen to occupy the few hours in which Gisela was not with him in keeping a sort of diary for the subsequent perusal of a distant friend. The following are some passages extracted from that diary:

*Extracts from the Letters of Count Leontin to his Friend Oscar.*

“Not yet dead, Oscar, fear nothing! I have looked Death boldly in the face. I have expectantly held out my hand to him, but he has fled before me! Why did I seek him? Why fled I thee and the world, suddenly disappearing from jovial, delightful Vienna? Because I was a foolish boy, who put faith in a deceitful woman, who staked all upon her heart, intrusted to it the happiness of a whole life, and found himself deceived—found that her innocent smile was nothing but a deception, her oaths of eternal love nothing but a conned formula which had been recited to thousands before me, and would be pronounced with the same animation to those who would come after me. I had honestly given my whole heart to that regal beauty, Judith. I had, with all the power of my being, confided to her my whole life; she was to me more than a mistress, she had become to me a saint, a divinity! I lay before her on my knees and adored her with my first reverential and yet glowing affections, which hardly dared to touch the hem of her robe, to kiss the place trodden by her foot, which demanded nothing but liberty to behold



her, which languished for a glance, a smile, finding the greatest satisfaction in such a favor. And this queen, this divinity, this dream-image of my transports, was nothing but a miserable dissembler, a heartless woman without virtue, without love! How know I that? A friend whom she had once shamefully deceived, and who was dying of passionate grief in consequence of that deception, Baron Walther, warned me against her; he related to me the sad history of his sufferings and humiliations; he proved to me the truth of his story; he declared to me, with a solemn oath, which from the lips of a dying man was doubly sacred, that Judith was not the pure, innocent, saintly woman I had supposed. He unfolded to me the whole horrible texture of her nature and the tangled web of her intrigues, until I was obliged to acknowledge that, instead of an angel, this Judith was a devil incarnate.

“Let me say nothing of my grief, my rage, or of the dreadful torments I suffered. I was irresistibly compelled to despise the woman I loved! I was a credulous, deceived boy, tricked by an impostor. How mortifying the conviction of having been played upon, and of having my love and confidence made the object of scorn and laughter!

“Like a raging madman, like a convicted felon, did I flee from Vienna on that same night. I dreaded the morning which must behold my shame, my disgrace—I dreaded the sight of men, who might read upon my brow this brandmark of my humiliation; and oh, I dreaded her hypocritical, seductive glances, the siren-song of a coquette! I fled! Let the world condemn me and stamp me as the faithless betrayer of an affianced bride. Pah, the world! It twines laurel-wreaths for the virtuous Judith, and suffers itself to be fooled by her pious pretences. I despise the world, by whom it is better

to be considered a deceiver than one deceived.

“Know you that I have been ill, near to the gates of death? That my head has been dashed against the sharp stones of a deep and dark ravine; that my crushed feet are yet unable to bear my weight? Ah, to this accident am I indebted for reconciliation to life, and, with my flowing blood, it seems to me that I have washed the shame of the past from my brow; that I am resurrected to a new existence. A wonderful, magnificent being wanders in mysterious beauty at my side; her dark, earnest eyes, full of heavenly brilliancy, rest upon me, blessing and peace bringing; her soft hand tenderly spares my weakness, her mild and consoling words silence my complainings and lessen the pain and humiliation of my soul. By her gentle smile, and by the sight of her clear, pure, and celestially fair face, all my complainings cease, and I feel within me the dawn of a new day. You should see her as she stands in this lowly hut, proud and high as a queen; you should see the grace of her movements, the sunshine of her smile, the charming propriety that pervades and characterizes her whole being; you should behold all the harmony of her appearance, in order to comprehend the reverence and devotion with which she inspires me. No; such features cannot lie; that high and sublime tranquillity cannot deceive!”

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 “She is not happy! In her traits I read all the deep, sad sorrow of a martyred soul. In the noble and delicate lines of her charming face stands a whole history of sorrows and secret woes. Poor, fair Gisela! Sacred art thou to me with thy sorrows, sacred to me with thine air of proud and patient suffering, with thy visible scars of a sinking conqueror. For thou hast conquered, notwithstanding that thou hast

fled the world! The clearness and purity of that brow cannot lie; the peace that reigns in that eye cannot deceive; and, although I know not thy cause of grief, yet am I sure that thou art free from all sin, and I read in thy countenance the lofty innocence of thy soul. Oh, Gisela, my arms spread out protectingly toward thee! Come, lay thy bowed head upon my shoulder; let me watch over thee, shield thee from the icy frost and consuming sunbeams of the world! Come, my warm love shall be a balsam for all thy painful wounds!"

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"Boundless is my confidence in thee! There are those whose mere appearance exercises a magic power. A subdued sorrow shines around them like a halo, and one approaches them with awe and adoration, such as is paid to holy martyrs. The smile of such beings is a poem, touching and elevating—their glance is a blessed revelation, full of the precious depths of the future, and in the melody of their voice sings the past—their bitter but nobly conquered woe. Such a being is Gisela!"

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"Yesterday, for the first time, I left the hut, supported by my crutches, and led by her hand. I, a youth of four-and-twenty, upon crutches. I was, at first, sad and gloomy; but her gentle smile, her charming, cordial words, gave me consolation and trust. She was right! It will not remain so. I shall perfectly recover. I shall throw aside these crutches, and with them the sorrows of the past. I shall be altogether cured. And then! Gisela, what then?"

"It was a delightful afternoon. Under a linden she had had a soft moss-seat prepared for me, where I sat by her side. How ravishingly beautiful is this region! There, in a delightful valley, through which the emerald Salzach meanders, stands the beautiful city of Salzburg, with its towers; there, upon those

rocks, imposing fortifications; and all around, in the bluish atmosphere, the domes and peaks of the heaven-high mountains. But more beautiful than all these beamed Gisela's eyes when they cast rapturous and devout glances upon the wonderful landscape.

"At a later moment a storm arose. She stood leaning against the linden, and when the lightning flashed she shone in her white dress like a transfigured saint. I asked her if the loud-rolling thunder, the flashing lightning, did not alarm her. She smiled compassionately. 'No,' said she, thoughtfully—'no, it rejoices my heart; it is a sublime, a divine power, and in the movement of such majestic natural forces I feel myself great and sublime, as a child of Nature. Would to Heaven that one of these divine flashes might shatter me, suddenly annihilate me, and take me at once from the fulness of life to the nothingness of death—only no slow and lingering decay, no gradual languishing away! Better to be killed instantly with the sword than to be gradually martyred by the pricking of pins.'

"'You hold, then, the punishment of death by decapitation to be merciful, and yet people almost everywhere clamor for its abolition?'

"'Bah!' said she, 'the punishment of death may be abolished, but they nevertheless will not cease to torture souls to death. Over rough flint-stones they drag the heart to the abysses of life, and then mock the torments of the wounded breast.'

"Thus spake she, and her voice sounded like the plaintive song of the dying swan."

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## \* SUNSET.

HER fate was decided. Again was Gisela snatched from the desert stillness of her solitude, and new flowers sprang up under the icy covering of her feelings.

She had so long been solitary and abandoned, that with trembling haste she grasped the hand stretched forth to snatch her from that desert.

It seemed to her that a kind divinity had sent to her this friend, that she might console and restore him, and she said: "Therefore must I so sadly suffer, that I may learn to succor and console others. Ah, it is true, only the unhappy and heavy laden can afford the right consolation! And who should weep with those who weep, if not those who have themselves had cause for weeping? who should know how to lighten the burden of the heavy laden, if not those who have also felt the oppressive weight of that burden?"

And with angelic patience did Gisela constantly lend her ear anew to the complaining lamentations of her friend, and console him with her compassion, her sympathy, and soothing words, until the consolation she gave gradually sunk into her own heart, and caused her to forget her own griefs. And Gisela, in the fulness and youthful force of her elastic nature, had no sooner ceased to complain, than she had already begun again to hope; than her eye, already again looking for happiness, peered into the future; than she again with the impetus of warm life stretched forth her arms to it, and again with fresh confidence and trust lent her ear to the whisperings of hope. With her there was no half existence, no twilight of indifference, no disconsolate vegetating, no joyless and sorrowless inactivity, no spinning out of

silent, hopeless days. This warm heart knew nothing of resignation and suffering submission. She could only feel extreme happiness or extreme misery. No sooner was sorrow extinguished, than the impulsion toward happiness began to operate, and her soul unfolded its wings with renewed energy.

But it was not without a presentiment of fear that Gisela observed this newly-dawning happiness; and, as she read the awakening love in her heart, as she, in Leontin's brow, in all his words, recognized the return of that love, she seemed as much shocked as rejoiced at the recognition.

Gisela had unlearned to believe in the eternity of love, and at the happy commencement not to think of the perhaps unhappy end; she knew that the light of even the brightest day would certainly sink into gloomy night, and therefore she tremblingly asked herself at the commencement of this new love only this question, "When will it be extinguished?"

Therefore, when she received from Leontin's lips the first stammering confession of his love, when he swore to its eternal duration, she shuddered with a fearful foreboding, and the tears that came into her eyes were perhaps as much tears of sorrow as of joy.

The world had broken her courage. Gisela no longer felt in herself the force to disdain and disregard the world, and she trembled at the idea of relating to her lover the sad and painful story of her past, for she had even lost her confidence in love.

She said to herself, "I will begin a new existence, a new life, in connection with this love. My whole future belongs to Leontin, but he shall have nothing to do with the sorrows of my past; they shall be locked up in my bosom, and the grave of my sorrows will I conceal under the fresh green foliage and blooming flowers of this

new happiness. Leontin loves me, and if his love is of the right kind he must have confidence in me, must know that I am innocent; my past must be to him a sacred, unapproachable secret, known to myself alone. And so will I prove whether his love possesses this virtue of blind, devoted confidence, whether it be so blessed and certain of the future that it will make no reference to the past."

But it did not occur to Gisela that this testing of a love is already a distrust of it—that the wish to learn the strength of a love is already to doubt it. It did not occur to her that this secret of the past would stand as a separating wall between them, and that her silence was a dark presentiment of *his* weakness. Without clearly avowing it to herself, she had penetrated and studied Leontin's nature—she knew he would not have the force of character to disdain the world, and boldly disregard its calumnies; that he would not be able to bear even the undeserved disregard of his fellow-men.

This consciousness, however, made her timid and hesitating, took from her the power of complaining to him of the sorrows of her past, because she felt that Leontin was too weak to bear the weight of that confidence. And, nevertheless, she loved this enthusiastic, ardent youth; listened with smiling delight to his animated dreams for the future, and permitted herself with blushing modesty to be pleased with his adoring love. But she loved him not with the self-negation of woman's passionate devotion; she did not look up to him with trust and confidence, but with a trembling fear of the storms that might come to destroy the blossoms of that love, certain that should they come she must be the protector and not the protected.

But perhaps it was the feeling of the instability of her happiness, this

want of confidence in the future, which lent to her nature the highest flight of passion, and permitted her to exhibit the glow of happiness and fiery animation. Like one under sentence of death, who compresses into one last free, happy day all the pleasures, all the joys of his soon-closing life; who casts all his hopes and dreams into the golden cup of this one day, and thirstily swallows at one draught the enjoyments of a lifetime, because he knows that the next morn is to bring him eternal death—like that condemned person felt Gisela; she would, before the inevitable death of her happiness, grasp and enjoy the full cup of earthly felicity.

"Ah, thou lovest me," said she to him, with passionate melancholy,—"yes, Leontin, I feel, I know, that thou lovest me! Thy love is a blessing, a martyr-crown, which the world accords me. Ah, could I but die, suddenly die, before thou thyself shalt rend this martyr-crown from my bleeding brow! Often, even in thine arms, comes to me this wish to die, to die enveloped with thy love! Alas, I know not what mysterious voice in my breast is constantly telling me that these are the last beautiful days of my life, that this happiness is soon to end like all others here below. But no, thou art not like other men; thy heart is noble, thy soul is pure. Thou couldst not desert a woman who is ready to consecrate to thee her whole existence. No, Leontin, thou couldst not! Speak to me, dearest, let me hear thy voice—that dear harmonious voice which lulls me into sweet forgetfulness, and enables me to believe in an eternity of happiness!"

And Leontin knelt down to press the hem of her robe to his lips, and to call her by a thousand endearing names, which caused her to tremble with happiness and delight.

"Oh, I knew it well," said he, with



enthusiasm, "I well knew that thou wert a reality, thou dear duplicate of my soul. I knew that thou yet existest out of my dreams, thou magnificent finally-found blessing. Oh, at last, thou art there, dream of my youth, desire of my soul! At length I have found and recognize thee again! Thy image swept before me in the distance, and drew me always, always toward thee; I felt thy brow bent over me when, sleeping upon my bed, I sighed for thee; I heard thy voice in the murmur of the evening wind, which whispered of thee. It was thou, thou whom I sought everywhere, and at length thou art there, awaking me from delicious dreams to a more delicious reality, and offering me still more magnificent illusions. Yes, thou art there, thou whom I everywhere sought, and to whom I everywhere prayed. Oh, how very long have I awaited thee! And one day I thought I had found thee. I believed it and loved! But, alas, my bleared eyes were mistaken! Adoring thee, thinking but of thee, I did not perceive that it was another whom I placed upon the altar before which I prayed to thee; that it was another in whom I trusted and whom I called my divinity. Oh, pardon me this error; I have heavily expiated it, charming idol, and yet it now seems to me as if all those sorrows and deceptions had never been, as if all those sufferings were only in a dream! And thou, cruel, why didst thou let me seek and wait so long? Why camest thou not in compliance with my desires? Come, let me kiss away, upon thy lips, all the days in which thou wert not here! Come! My life now first begins, now that I see thee and rest under the sunshine of thy glance!"

At this moment the last beams of the sun fell upon Leontin's face, and Gisela sighed: "The sun is already setting!"

"There, without, but not *this* sun,"

exclaimed Leontin, kissing her eyes, and pressing her more closely to his heart. "Thou, Gisela, art mine, mine eternally! And as I hold thee now, and as I have known thee, nothing can rend thee from me! As my brightest jewel will I present thee to the world, that all, like me, may kneel to thee in adoration."

"Thou, therefore, trustest in me," murmured Gisela; "thou desirest not that I should tear open the hardly-healed wounds of my bosom and show thee my palpitating heart; thou demandest not that I relate to thee the dark story of my sorrows and deceptions, and let you share with me the torments and undeserved sufferings of the past? Thou believest in my innocence, thou fearest not to unite thy future with mine?"

"I believe in thee,\* for thy soul is in thine eyes, Gisela. Thou hast suffered, child, and endured, like me—thou shalt be happy, like me! The happy, Gisela, they are the true children of God, and where an eye glistens with beams of joy, there does God send His blessing."

"So may He bless us!" said Gisela, nestling to him.

The sun had gone down, the heavens beamed with a purple glow, lighting the peaks of the *gletchers* as in a blessed transfiguration; the distant peaks flamed as if tipped with gold, and even the rock upon which Gisela and Leontin were seated reflected back the evening glow.

All around was silence, except that here and there in the distance was heard the singing and Tyrolese trilling of the shepherdesses, or the melodious bells of the flocks and herds.

And now began, far and near, the evening bell-ringing, when the peasantry all intoned the solemn hymn of Ave Maria; the gentle breeze brought balmy odors from the pastures, and the whole earth seemed to join in the even-

ing service of God, smiling its prayers and thanks. Tremblingly Gisela bowed her head upon the shoulder of her friend, her eyes filled with tears; she felt depressed and anxious, and, with tears, she murmured: "The sun has set! Oh, Leontin, my fairest day is past and gone! Let me die before it is fully night!"

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### WANDERINGS.

In the little herdsman's cot upon the Untersberg it was a festival day. Old Caspar had given to his young patient permission to lay aside his crutches for the first time, and to depend entirely upon his restored foot. As Leontin now, free and proud, without artificial supports, walked at Gisela's side, unrestrained by the hinderance of bandages; as Gisela saw his happy smile at his perfectly successful cure; as Caspar declared that he might thenceforth fearlessly confide in the strength of his restored limb, Gisela, also, shouted for joy, and, with tears of ecstasy, threw herself upon the bosom of her friend.

To-day, as it seemed, slumbered all her dark forebodings, her melancholy suppositions; joy had made Gisela again young and unsuspecting; to-day there were for her no experiences, no sorrows, and, shouting, laughing, gay and artless as a child, she skipped and danced about with her convalescent favorite. Long walks were undertaken.

What a delight for her, to point out to her friend all her favorite localities, where she had formerly sighed and lamented; to conduct him to the borders of the abyss, and in a low tone to repeat to him all the seductively dangerous whisperings to which she had once listened there!

What pleasure, to feel herself now

anxiously drawn, from the dark, enticing precipice, by two strong and loving arms!

"No, fear nothing," said she, with a blissful smile, nestling closer to him; "no tone from those depths can any more reach up to me. My ear has become deaf to all sounds except those coming from thy lips. Come, let us go farther, and listen to the charming whisperings of each flower and bush!"

And like a gazelle she skipped away over crags and stones to the tops of the pointed and forked heights, sweetly enticing her friend to follow her flying footsteps, sometimes hiding behind a projecting rock until he, finding her, stopped her shouting with his kisses!

Oh, how did her glowing cheeks burn, how sparkled her eyes, how did her bosom rise and fall, in youthful joy, and what a ravishing smile played about her lips!

Poor Gisela, thou therefore again believest in happiness, and in the future? Thou believest again in love, believest that the world will pardon thee, will cease from persecuting and punishing thee for disdaining it?

Poor Gisela, hearest thou not the death-bell whose melancholy tones follow thy happiness to the grave? Seest thou not the sword which is ready to fall upon thy head?

She hears only the charming whisperings of her friend, she sees only his loving eyes! Poor Gisela!

The neighboring walks now no larger sufficed them; their rambling spirit required greater extension, more distant ends; and so, guided by Loserl, they descended into the valley, that they might enjoy longer walks in that beautiful region.

At the foot of the mountains, they took, for some days, leave of Loserl, who wandered back to her cottage. But the lovers went on, arm in arm, jesting and laughing, now resting under

some friendly shade, and now hastening forward with winged feet. Thus, after a delightful ramble, they arrived at Berchtesgaden, which they hastily passed through, in order to reach Koenigsee before the evening.

The sun had already gone down when they arrived at the hotel on the banks of the lake, and the passage of the lake must be postponed until the following morning. Wearied by their long walk, they early sought their beds for the refreshment of rest and sleep.

At a somewhat later hour a carriage arrived at the same hotel. Sepperl, the well-known guide, sat upon the box with the coachman, and within the carriage was a closely-veiled lady.

Leaping nimbly from the box, Sepperl turned to the lady and said: "I am then to ask if the gentleman has really come here, and whether he is already over the lake. For, that the stranger who met with the accident in the mountains is the gentleman you seek, I have not the least doubt!"

"Heaven grant it may be so!" sighed the lady. "I have followed his trace for weeks, and, had not Providence sent you in my way, all my efforts would have been fruitless. Go, go then and ask; a hundred louis d'ors are yours if he proves to be the man I seek!"

Sepperl soon returned with the intelligence that the gentleman of whom he had spoken had certainly arrived here, accompanied by a lady, and was now in the house, but that he had retired to rest with the intention of crossing the lake at early dawn.

"Until morning, then!" said the lady, with a sigh, as she alighted for the purpose of also passing the night there.

And the morning came; tranquilly rose the sun which was to-day to cast its beams on so much earthly suffering, tranquilly was it reflected by the green waters of the Koenigsee, which were so transparent as to render visible the

fishes, and the animals creeping on the bottom.

The morn was there! Already were the morning bells gayly resounding through the valley, and they of the little hotel on the banks of the lake were gradually beginning to move.

The fair Mariandel appeared in the open door, calling in a cheerful tone to Tonerl, who quickly came to receive her commands, which were that the boat-women should be called, and two boats brought to the landing, as the gentlefolks were all ready for the transit, and wished to start immediately. Tonerl, with a friendly nod of acquiescence to Mariandel, hastened away for the fulfilment of her mission.

All was still for a time—the boats were brought forward, and feminine rowers, in the picturesque costumes of the country, waited, resting on their oars.

The house-door was again opened, and in it appeared Gisela and Leontin, arm in arm. She looked cheerful, fresh, and blooming as a half-unfolded rose; a sweet smile played around her swelling lips, and her glance swept slowly over the green meadows to the mountains beyond. In this glance shone a world of happiness.

"The morning is very fine," said she, in the deep, full tone of joy; "hear how the birds twitter—all Nature seems to smile."

"And what is a smile of Nature in comparison with one of thine?" responded Leontin, kissing her hand and leading her to the shore of the lake.

Hasten, ye happy ones, hasten away! implore of the winds that they bear your boat swiftly over the curling waves—hasten away with your happiness, for behind you lurks destruction; hasten, that it may not overtake you!

They carelessly laugh and jest with each other, apprehending no danger.

Gisela timidly reclines her head upon the shoulder of her friend, as she is

made dizzy by the reflection of the sun from the bright waters, which present the appearance of deep, immeasurable abysses.

They now flit over to the island St. Johann, where the lake makes a curve, and, surrounded by high rocks, they lose sight of the place whence they started, and where, also, they can be no longer seen.

At this moment the lady who had arrived in the carriage on the preceding evening, now, as then, deeply veiled, made her appearance in the doorway of the inn.

"You have, then, forgotten me," said she, in a tone of anger to Mariandel, who submissively stood behind her. "I directed you to awaken me as soon as those strangers rose, and now they are already gone!"

Mariandel declared that she had knocked at the lady's door, but had received no answer. "And where have the strangers gone?"

"To Bartholomae, where they intended to land and take breakfast."

"Therefore, to Bartholomae!" commanded the lady, hastening to her boat, which awaited her.

"Quick, quick, forward!" she commanded to the rowing-women. The oars struck the water and the boat darted from the shore.

"I shall overtake them—I *must* overtake them!" murmured the lady. "I love him; my honor, my standing in the world, is at stake. I must tear him from his new mistress, for he is mine, and must be mine!"

Oh, how slow and lingering seemed to her the transit! Now, at length, is Bartholomae reached; now the boat shoots under the covered shed at the landing; now the lady leaps on shore, and hastens, with winged feet, to a clump of lindens, under which, upon a wooden bench, sit a loving pair with their backs toward her.

Rushing forward, in tones of tenderness, she calls the name "Leontin!"

As if struck by an electric flash, Leontin sprang up from his seat, and wildly stared at the mysterious intruder.

As Gisela also turned her head in the same direction, a shriek of astonishment burst forth from under the veil. The lady then rushed nearer to the lovers, threw aside her veil, and the astonished Gisela recognized—her sister Judith.

It was a fearful pause that now ensued—a dreadful drama—that was here silently played. Three hearts beating with anguish in three tortured bosoms! Three pale, grief-and-terror-distorted faces staring at each other with glowing, piercing eyes, with the expression of hate and astonishment!

"This, then," Judith at length exclaimed, with cold and cutting contempt; "this, then, is thy beloved. For this woman hast thou deserted me—me, who loved thee with pure, devoted affection—me, thy betrothed bride?"

Leontin, who had now recovered from his surprise, raised himself proudly erect, and calmly said: "Our relations are broken off. The former beloved of Baron Walther, who obtained possession of her deceased husband's testament by dissembling love—that low, miserable, coquettish woman can never become my wife."

Judith broke out into a loud and scornful laugh: "I see that my enemy has succeeded in calumniating me," said she. "Well, therefore, on account of this calumny you leave me to throw yourself into the arms of a woman who is branded by the whole world, at whom children point the finger and whisper to each other. 'That is she, the poisoner, the mistress of Prince Lothaire—that is she, the former mistress of Baron Walther!' Yes, that is



Gisela von Waidmann, the shame of her sex, the mistress of Prince Lothaire, and accused of poisoning him."

One sole, frightful shriek resounded from the lips of Leontin. "Thou liest, miserable, dissembling woman! thou liest!" he then exclaimed, trembling with rage. "Thou darest to slander an angel. That criminal woman, of whom the journals of the day have said so much, had nothing in common with this pure and noble soul."

"Ask the woman herself," said Judith, sneeringly pointing to Gisela. The latter stood there, calm and proud, her eyes raised to heaven as if in prayer, her cheeks of a transparent paleness, her arms crossed over her bosom as if to calm its violent undulations. Peace and tranquillity lay upon her features; now the misfortune was there, she seemed to have already overcome it.

Leontin knelt before her, and, clasping her knees, thus implored: "Speak but one word, my beloved, my angel! Annihilate these shameless, insolent lies with a word, a look. Look at me, smile upon me; shake, negatively, thy dear, proud head, and I will believe thee without a word. Oh, I believe thee without a word, without a sign. But, for the punishment of this lying woman, my love, I pray thee, speak!"

She seemed hardly to hear him; her upward-directed glance seemed to be reading in the fleeting clouds, so steadily did she gaze on them, so mechanically did her eyes follow them.

"I ask thee in the name of thy mother," said Judith, with that hypocritical solemnity which she could so readily assume, "I ask thee, art thou not that Gisela von Waidmann accused of murder by poisoning?"

Gisela's eyes fell; she had read in the clouds that her destiny was fulfilled, and now she looked at Judith with a glance of unspeakable compas-

sion; deep, sad pity.—She had overcome, the struggle was over, she no longer thought of herself.

Leontin anxiously, tremblingly, and breathlessly observed her.

Gisela gave him a long and searching glance, and saw in his countenance anxiety and doubt, care and pain, not that unshakable confidence he had so often vowed, and a bitter, melancholy smile played sadly over her features.

"Art thou not that accused Gisela von Waidmann?" Judith again asked.

Gisela rose proudly erect, and with a loud, full voice, said: "I am so, Judith, I am thy sister Gisela!"

A dull cry escaped Leontin, and then sprang he up, trembling, his eyes flashing with rage. With rough force he thrust Gisela from him, and, threateningly raising his arms, cried: "So be thou accursed, liar!—accursed, with the angelic purity of thy face, which is a shameful falsehood, thou poisoner!"

Gisela looked at him calmly and proudly. "Poor Leontin," she then compassionately said, "poor Leontin!"

But sorrow, torment, frightful agitation, overpowered his senses; he fell, fainting, to the earth, and Judith, kneeling down beside him, took his head in her lap, moistening it with her tears, and calling him by a thousand endearing names.

Gisela calmly observed the scene before her; she stood there proudly erect, with folded arms. Then she said: "Console him, Judith! Thee, however, do I challenge to meet me one day before the judgment-seat of God!"

A solemn, deeply-affecting expression lay in the tone in which she pronounced these words, and in her upward-extended arm.

Then, after a long, last glance at Leontin, she walked with apparent composure to the house.

With a calm voice she demanded a

room of the hostess at the little hunting-lodge of Bartholomae, and, when she entered it, locked the door behind her."

Did she suffer? did she weep? did she undergo a fearful struggle with her love?

We know not! She was alone with God and her own heart, and no human ear heard her lamentations; no human eye saw her affliction, her tears. Proud and great, she enveloped herself in impenetrable secrecy, and none but the angels of heaven counted her sighs.

While Gisela was struggling with her sorrows in solitude, the boat in which Judith had come was again returning over the lake to the little inn it had left. But Judith was not alone in it. The still insensible Count Leontin was beside her in the skiff, and, as Judith's eyes rested in triumph upon his slightly-convulsed, pale face, she murmured: "Now is he mine, and no earthly power shall again separate us!"

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### A FAREWELL TO LIFE.

Hour after hour had passed, the day was far spent, and the shades of evening had brought the twilight hour, when Gisela, opening her door, called the hostess.

The latter quickly came. Gisela ordered a light and writing-materials; and, when this witness of the morning scene brought the required articles, she was astonished at the holy and wonderful calm which overspread the countenance of the pale stranger.

Gisela smilingly thanked her hostess, and begged to be left again alone. Again locking her door, she sat down to write. With a firm and untrembling hand, she wrote:

*To Leontin.*

"My poor friend. Thou art suffering, and I, thy Gisela, can give thee no consolation! Or is it a consolation to hear that I am innocent of the crime of which I am accused; that I was never the mistress, but in pure inclination was the friend of Lothaire?"

"Is it to thee a consolation to know that I am innocent of all that for which I have been condemned?"

"Once, Leontin, thou cursedst the world, and yet, poor youth, thou art its slave! Once my love had the power to reconcile thee to the world, and now thou givest me up on account of the opinions of that world.

"But thou art right, and I may not blame thee.

"To but few is it given, with unshaken courage to despise the world and to follow one's own convictions of right, to build upon one's self; and those few—they are compelled to succumb! The world will rend and trample upon them.

"The world knows no mercy, and courageously to offer one's forehead to its prejudices, is to challenge it to a mortal combat.

"I, my friend, have passed through that combat. It was commanded me to go out into the world and give it an example of real freedom—an example by which they might learn that innocence is sublime over every attack, and that it feared neither calumny nor malice.

"But, alas! freedom is not of this world—my innocence was guilt, my courage a crime.

"The world has stoned me because I did not fear it; it has pursued me as a criminal, and yet my only crime was to refuse obedience to its arbitrary customs and regulations, and subject myself to its limitations.

"The world has conquered; wearied and exhausted by its persecutions, with

bleeding breast and dusty feet, I sink down, unable to go farther.

"Poor Leontin! Thou wilt overcome this sorrow; for the world yet hath charms for thee. It will stretch forth to thee a thousand loving arms; it will smile enticingly upon thee, and murmur seductive promises in thine ear. Believe in them, yield thyself to the sweet intoxication, enjoy its pleasures. There is nothing better, on earth, to be done!

"But fear the world!

"Seek not to dominate, but only to serve it; court its smiles and implore its approbation. Thus, in worshipping, thou mayst master it.

"Poor Leontin, forget me, and forgive me for that thou lovedst me! Thy remembrance of me will be as an unpleasant dream, as the snow-flake of a winter that is past and gone. May those flakes melt under the tears of compassion, which thou wilt consecrate to my memory when thy present anger shall have passed away! Farewell!"

When Gisela had finished this letter, her hand sank powerless, and a convulsive sob escaped from her breast.

Leaning back, she struggled with her grief, and soon recovered calmness and self-possession.

Again she took up the pen, and wrote:

*Gisela to the Curate Hermann.*

"Pardon, my father! I have disgraced the banner thou placedst in my hands, and am no longer worthy to bear it. Seest thou the blood that defaces it? It is mine, and now I sink down, unable to go on. Dost thou remember, father, that when, in taking leave of thee I knelt for thy blessing, thou consecratedst me for the world with the words: 'Do right, and fear no one!'

"My father, that blessing has proved a curse, which has sacrificed my life! It is a dangerous motto; and hast thou a child, whom thou lovest, and wouldst send out into the world, give him not that phrase for his device. Bless him, rather, with the words: 'Fear the world, and, only when it allows thee, do right! The world will sooner pardon thee for a crime than for having the courage to disregard it!' But if thou lovest thy child right well, shut him up in thy chamber, conceal him from men, for it will be safer for him to play with wild beasts than with the world, and wild beasts are magnanimous in comparison with the world. The lion, it is said, spares innocence, but the world rends and lacerates it. And what shall I, with this disconsolate truth, which I have purchased with my blood, what shall I do, here below?

"My courage is broken, my strength is gone.

"My father, blame not thy feeble child because she now succumbs; and hear, oh hear the prayer of thy daughter, the bequest that I leave thee.

"There is a man whom I love, the Count Leontin. Spurn him not because he lacked courage to defy the world and confide in me.

"What would you have? he is so young, so little steeled against sorrow; and then, also, I am not without fault toward him. Had I myself had the courage to impart to him the sad history of my past, perhaps he would have trusted me and left all for me.

"But I kept silent, and that silence, which I ever held from fear of the world, that silence was my error. What, however, is the worst, is, that the world conquers our truthfulness and impels us to falsehood.

"He was compelled to suppose me guilty because I had not the courage to be true. Therefore, blame him not

At present, he curses my memory; but a time will come when he will pardon me, when he will weep for me, when he will stretch forth his arms with longing, and feel that I loved him unspeakably. When that time comes, hasten to him, take him to thy heart, console him with my blessing, and tell him that I always, always loved him!

“GISELA.”

When Gisela ended this letter, the night was far advanced. Sealing and addressing both letters and leaving them on the table, she then left the room. All was still in the house; only the maid-servant sat asleep in the entrance-hall.

Light and noiseless as a shadow, Gisela passed the sleeper and left the house.

It was a dark, stormy night.

The piping wind drove such large masses of clouds across the moon that it often wholly disappeared, and, then again struggling through them, would shed a bright cold light upon the whole region.

The waves of the lake beat noisily against the shore, sometimes brightly reflecting the lunar rays, and then impetuously retreating into the darkness.

Solemn and black, like gigantic watchmen, the huge steep rocks surrounded the seething waters.

With winged steps Gisela hastened to the shore, with skilful hands she loosed one of the boats from its moorings; entering the boat, she pushed it from the shore, and gave it up to the sport of the waves.

Just then emerged the moon from a cloud, and threw its pale light upon a strangely fantastic scene: the rolling and foaming waves of the lake, and, rocking upon their crests, the little boat in which knelt Gisela, with her arms folded, her face upward turned, and encompassed by the moon's rays as with a halo.

Even the waves seemed to have compassion upon the pale, silent, unresisting maiden—even the storm seemed to lull, and the waves to bear the boat caressingly onward from the shore.

Only occasional isolated waves raised their foaming crests to the boat, as if greedy for the lovely prey it contained; only occasionally did their splashing, as in playfulness with their pale bride, reach to Gisela's feet, and then go bounding on to inform their sisters of the fair booty awaiting them.

Gisela was still upon her knees, her arms folded over her bosom, in fervent prayer.

But soon the lake, the storm, appeared to awake from their momentary sweet surprise.

The storm drove black clouds over the moon, and the earth became wrapped in night; higher leaped the waves, hissing, roaring, howling, and complaining, and in the clefts of the rocks there was a moaning, like a cry of terror, of mortal anguish.

And now again broke forth the moon, lighting the high-bounding billows of the foaming lake, which, as in sport, were tossing the little bark hither and thither, but — the boat was empty!



E. P. L. Bindery.  
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