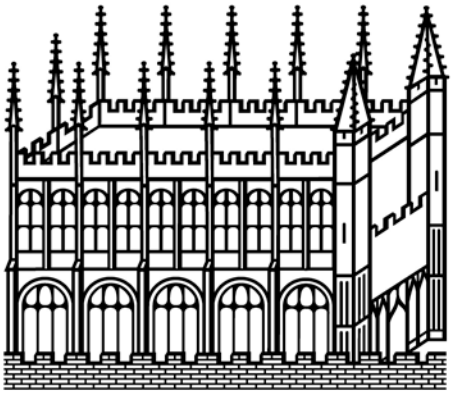

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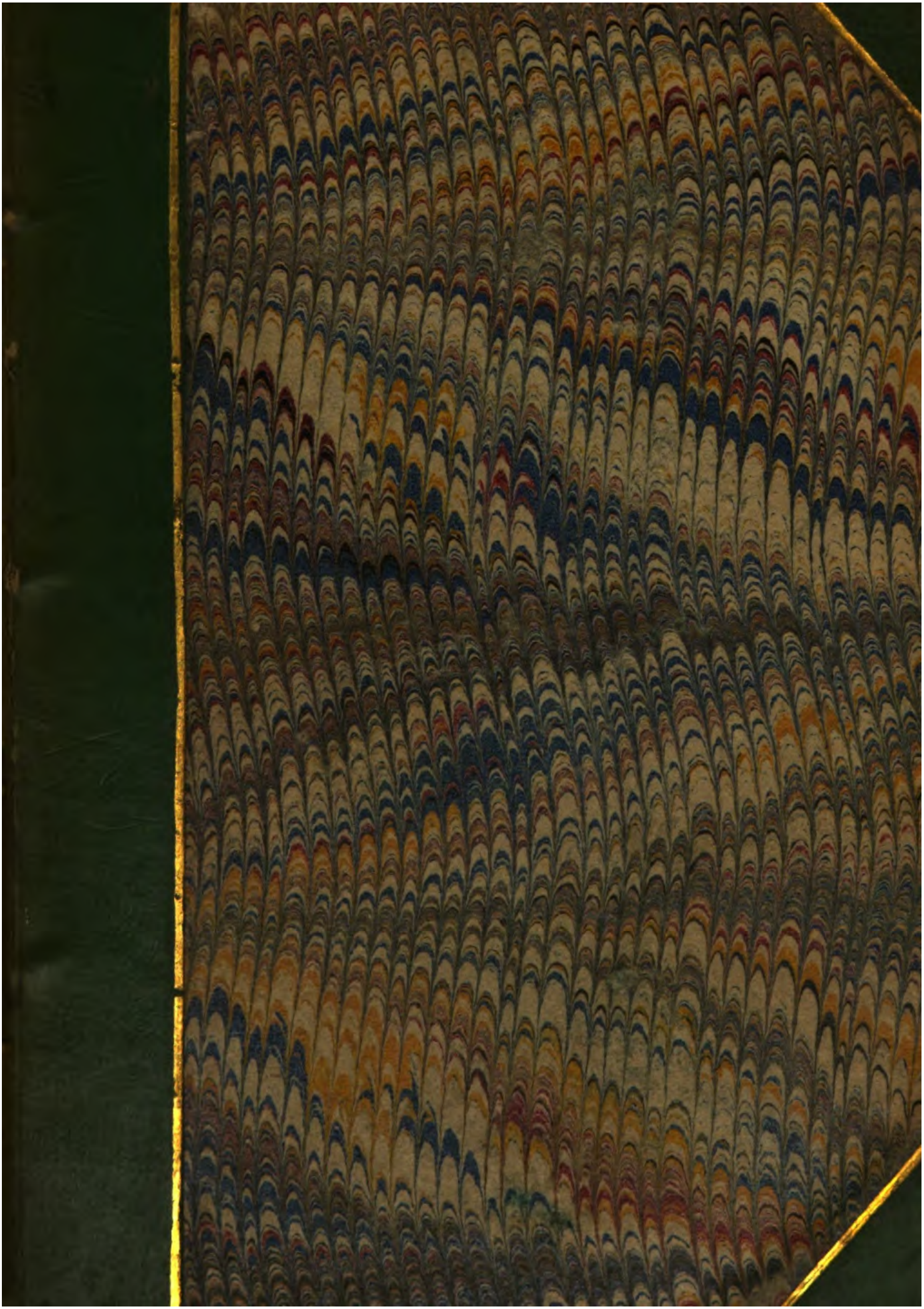

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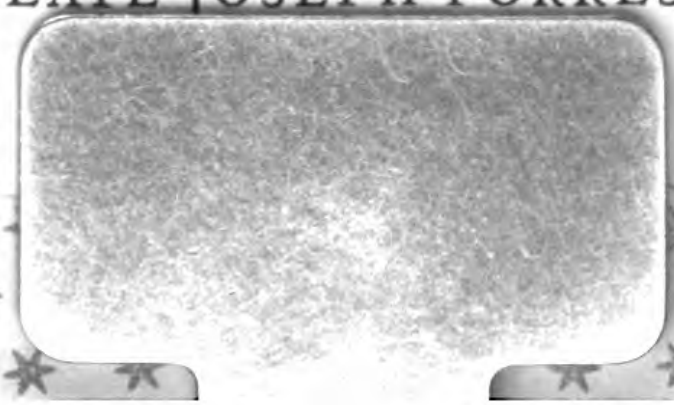

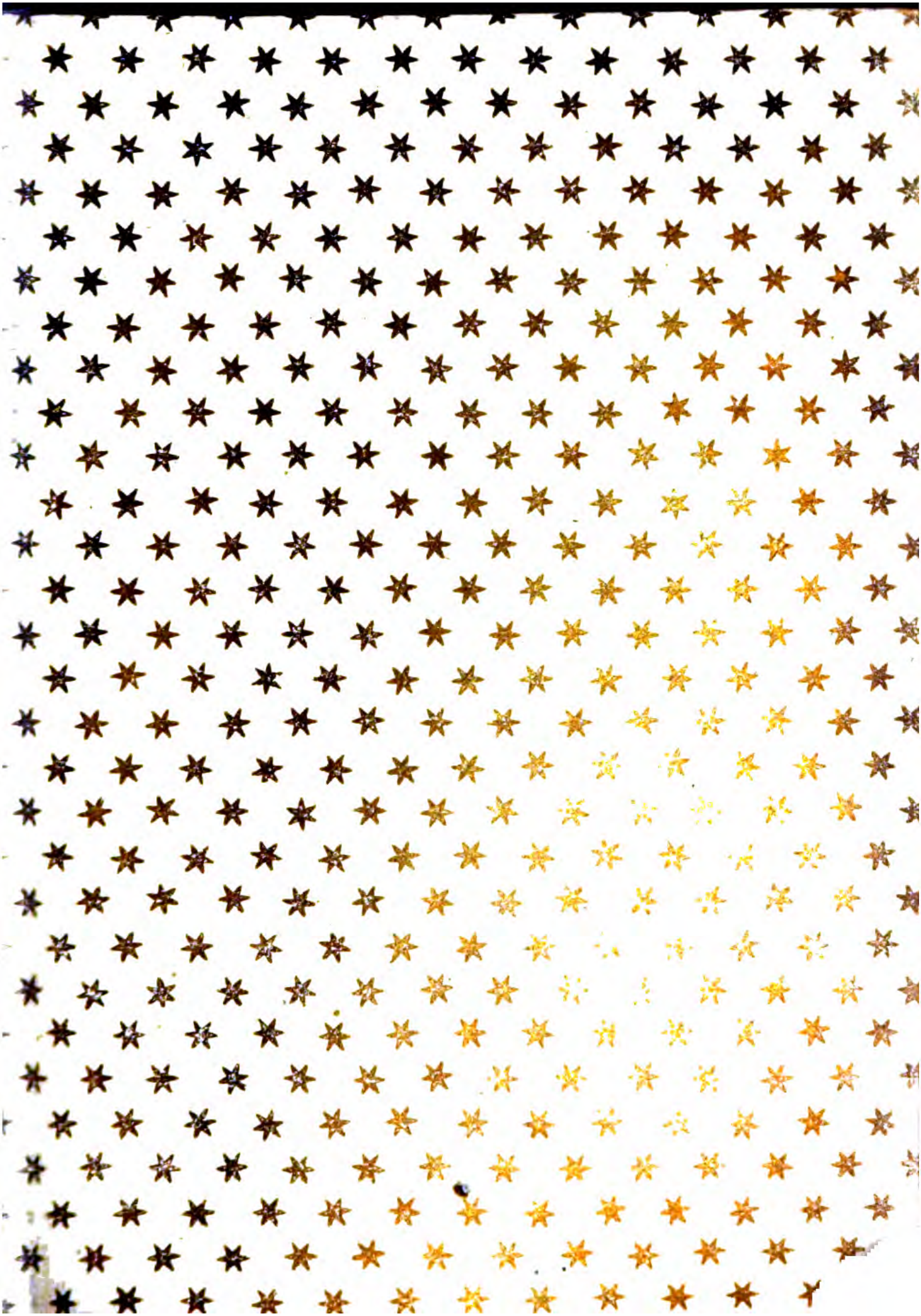

THE

NOVELS

OF

FREDERIKA BREMER.

VOL. V.

THE NEIGHBOURS,

VOL. 2.

LONDON:
H. G. CLARKE AND CO., 66, OLD BAILEY.

1844.

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THE

NEIGHBOURS.

BY

FREDERIKA BREMER,

AUTHORESS OF "STRIFE AND PEACE," "THE H—— FAMILY," "THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTERS," ETC., ETC., ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE SWEDISH,

BY

E. A. FREIDLÆNDER,

(LATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN,)

PROFESSOR OF LANGUAGES TO THE KINGSTON COLLEGE, &C. HULL, AUTHOR OF A GERMAN GRAMMAR, IMPROVED AND SIMPLIFIED, IN FIVE SYNOPTICAL TABLES, ETC., ETC.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

H. G. CLARKE AND CO., 66, OLD BAILEY.

—

1844.

THE NEIGHBOURS.

I.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM BRUNO M. TO ANTONIO DE R.

.... I drew near to her without any intention. I only wished to behold the beauty of her countenance, the innocence which shone on it, fair as the brightness of a serene sky. I only wished to listen to her voice, to her words—to all her peculiar loveliness. What the freshness of the waves, what the sounds of song, what the caresses of my mother have ever been for me, that was now her presence. I felt happy within the sound of her voice; at a look from her every painful feeling, every unholy thought subsided,—I felt myself a better man.

Not she, not I, but the power which filled my soul's depths with the fire of a volcano,—that power caused this feeling suddenly to grow up into a consuming flame.

But I do not love her as I have formerly loved. No Serena then stood in my nightly path. She is my first, pure love.

Just because she is so unlike those women which I

have hitherto sought and won, just for this very reason is Serena so enchanting to me; it is her gentle young maiden dignity which stamps her whole being with such moral beauty, and binds me to her, as it were, with magic force. Just because she is so free from the desire of pleasing, do I love to bend the knee before her and worship her. My eyes repose with indescribable delight upon those lips which no wanton kiss has desecrated, no word of anger and falsehood has polluted. Purity—a word, the meaning of which, I have learned too late. Purity is the heaven beaming upon her forehead, the spirit which is breathing from her lips, and for her purity do I worship her, I who..... Yes, I can worship, and in this is my salvation. What is there beautiful, what divine, that is not also pure? Light, virtue, heaven, eternal brightness! dark was my life, but in her do I now adore you!

Serena appears, and with her the angel of life, her whom I have profaned and despised! Tranquil virtues, peace, domestic life, sacred ties, which I have ignorantly mistaken and injured, how enrapturingly inviting do they become to me through her.

Do not say that it is too late. I have wrestled with the wild spirits of life; like Faust, I have danced with the witches of Blocksberg, the body of one which I embraced was ashes; and from the lips of another which I kissed, sprung a disgusting monster; the third changed itself into a serpent in my arms, and thus I stood at the brink of a precipice and looked around me, and behind me, and everything was terrible and dark. I felt yet the same restless fire, the same thirst but it sought other springs to quench it. I was con-

strained to lead a life of toil and strife. In the battle field, in contending against the raging elements, I felt a higher power, a mightier life, but then—all was blank, blank! I had no belief that the fullness of life could be found in the human breast. A human heart expansive, loving as heaven, faithful, gentle, and pure—oh, such a heart is a world of fullness, beauty, and eternity! There the fire is purified, but not extinguished; disquietude is hushed to repose; power is elevated and strengthened.

Were a wife with a soul so noble and loving to walk through the path of life by my side, were her heavenly spirit to pass over my soul every hour of the day like a breeze of spring, were every object that surrounds me to be imbued with her pure harmonious life, when I could rest on her as—Oh, God! I cannot say, as on a maternal bosom, for mine repelled me; but if I could press a wife in firm indissoluble embraces to my heart, and say, "thou art an angel, and thou art mine!" would you not believe that those former sins might be expiated, bitter recollections forgotten, and the wavering heart firmly established in entire love? Would you not then believe it possible for a paradise to blossom upon the devastated soil? I look at Serena, and I must deem it possible I have said to myself, "she must become *mine*, then shall I find peace upon earth!" But she—the pure, the kind, the lovely, can she love me? will she unite her destiny with mine? and those who have the guardianship over her, those who value purity of character, civil and domestic virtues above all else, will they be willing to give the loveliest and dearest which they possess, to a man whose reputation is stig-

matized from his youth up, whose life is wrapt in obscurity?

This question seems to come from you, and this is my reply. There is in me—call me presumptuous, proud, or what you like—but I know that there is a something in me which is not easily to be withstood; a power, a will, capable of breaking iron, of fire which can consume everything, which is able to blaze in the air which it seeks. I have often tried it; no one has been able to withstand it except my mother, for my blood also fills her veins. But our struggle is not yet finished, mother!

I have seen my mother. She did not know me, and I scarcely recognized her. She was once a handsome woman. She is greatly altered, and it seems to me not alone by age. I longed to try to see her; I felt constrained to see her; but when I stood there as a stranger, when I heard the well-known voice, it was more than I could bear. I do not yet know when I shall discover myself to her. She is not in any way yet prepared for it, nor I either. My soul swells up violently and painfully in her presence, therefore I shun her till some future time. I love and fear her. I pant after her, and flee. Thus I remained in painful conflict, when Serena appeared; I flew to her side; from that instant I grew calmer: a hope, a ray of light, glimmered forth. Should even my mother ..... my mother not pardon me ..... Cain committed a greater crime than I; on him rested too the curse of his mother, and notwithstanding—into the desart, whither he wandered, his wife followed him! An angel of comfort accompanied him.

Serena, Serena! did I not love you so ardently, I should have lamented over you, for I feel that my looks of love have found their way to your heart. But I will love you as no woman has yet been loved. With all the charms of life will I surround you. Every day you shall contribute to the happiness of some fellow-creature, and your noble heart shall breathe and live in the atmosphere of benevolence. Hagar must reconcile herself to her destiny. She has already long since left off making demands upon me, and this, indeed, she must, if we are to live together. She will and must make herself happy with another without murmuring. She knows me; she will not venture ..... Curse upon her, if she should breathe poison upon her whom..... But I get desperate when I think of this woman; and that I would not be, I would rather be kind, loving as Serena could wish me. There is a fount of goodness and tenderness within me, yet the spring is not yet irretrievably dried up; it will only be purified, but an angel must, must touch the water.

But can an angel approach him whom the curse..... My mother! if she should not pardon!—

Thought of destruction! Vulture, which gnaws at my heart, away—away!

Soon everything will be made known and decided, for my soul longs for certainty. It would, perhaps, be more prudent to defer, to abide the time; but I neither can nor will. I have always taken my fortune by storm: so let it be now!.....

II.

TENTH LETTER.

FRANCISKA W. TO MARIA L.

Rosenvik, August 17th.

Yesterday was a wondrous—an eventful—a joyful, and yet disagreeable day. We spent it at Ramm. We were invited thither a few days ago, together with several of the neighbours. *Ma chère mère* also received an invitation, but declined, on the plea that she had not visited for many years past, and was unable at present to think of making any exception to her rule. Serena had spent the day previous with her grand-parents, and was to accompany them to Ramm, where they had been urgently invited by Bruno, who on account of the new school, and other business, has established a close connection with the old Dahl.

On our arrival at Ramm, we found every thing according to outward appearance unaltered; the trees grew as formerly, wild and thick round the dark walls. Bruno came out on the staircase, and received us with sincere cordiality. There is occasionally something so winning in his countenance! Björn was agitated and pale, when he shook his brother's hand. Not one of us spoke, and Bruno silently conducted us into the upper rooms, where I was suprised by a luxurious

display of furniture. But my beloved Serena soon engrossed my whole attention. Never had I thought her so beautiful. The pale blue muslin dress, the lace scarf, which was thrown round her snow-white neck, every thing was so becoming, and her innocent countenance beamed with health and cheerfulness. "I and Rosenvik have some share in these roses," thought I in self-congratulation. The patriarchs also said the kindest things to me about it.

The guests were assembling. Counsellor Hök and Miss Hellevi Hausgiebel came together in a *Desoblegeant* Just when we were on the point of sitting down to table, the bustle of a fresh arrival was heard in the yard, and to my astonishment I observed a cabriolet with one Œlandish horse, driven by a young girl, who made a dashing evolution with her little equipage round the court, cracked with her whip, and drew up before the door. "Ha, ha, ha! This is Mally, my little Mally!" laughed the Major, who stood with me at the window. "Yes, yes, she makes a figure in the world. She is fond of horses. . . . One ought to let children follow their inclinations, Madam Werner; it gives them vigour and energy. It won't do to exercise compulsion over them. They will grow wise early enough, I know that from my own experience." Mally with her hair all in confusion, now entered the room, her gait was both bold and awkward. Madam v. P., cast a look first at her and then on her daughter, which seemed to say, "thank goodness! my daughters have at any rate received a polite and finished education!"

My good-natured Brita Kaijsa, although very warm

in leaving nature unconstrained, blushed at the entrance of her daughter, and looked vexed. "What a sight you are to be sure!" said she, trying to regulate her hair and dress.

"Oh! oh! mother you hurt me!" cried Mally petulantly.

Bruno conducted Madam Dahl to the dinner table. The others followed in pairs. The dinner was splendid. Bruno will spoil the simplicity of our country manners by introducing an example of such luxury, I shall tell him so. Bruno was an agreeable host. His attention to the old Dahls seemed paid in a reverential and almost filial spirit, which became him well. Serena seemed to notice it with delight.

From the dinner-table Bruno led us to the garden, where two large tents had been erected. The greatest care seemed to have been taken for the convenience and comfort of the patriarchs. In one tent two easy chairs were placed for their reception, the floor was covered with costly matting. A fountain cast up its fresh splashing glistening jet, in front of the tent. Orange trees, full of blossoms and fruits stood around, and every little breeze wafted its balsamic odours to us. I was enraptured with the whole of these arrangements, which the unusual heat of the day rendered still more delicious. My phantasy transported me into an ideal world; I imagined a picture of nomadic life in such a scene, and shepherdesses like Serena, and Patriarchs, and tents, and orange trees, and... But just at that instant came Madam v. P. running up to me exclaiming: Oh, how charming all this is my dear Madam Werner! It was exactly such tents that we had when we were with

Count L. at Gustafsberg. One day they were at our house, the next we were at theirs *tout familièrement.* It was delightful, the L's. and we did not mix with the rest of the society. We were sufficient of ourselves. Ah, I should like to know how our mutual friend the dear Baroness H. is. A charming person! She and I were so happy in each other's company, of course we have both of us been so much in the world, and have so many mutual friends."

"It is very warm here," said I. (It was agreeably cool in the tent, but Madam v. P's. speeches made it oppressive.) I rose, and so did my persecutor, just before the tent we met Bruno, and Madam v. P. attacked him, "*Ah mon cher Monsieur Ramilly, c'est charmant, c'est charmant!* Your park is a paradise! What tints upon those trees! What grouping! What vistas! Look, my dear Madam Werner, yonder through the arch of the bridge, what effect! No, you must stoop a little more, a little lower yet. . . . . below that branch. . . . is it not heavenly? (I was very near breaking my neck,) what a *coup dæil,* what an effect!" Bruno gravely bowed to Madam v. P., and betook himself to the tent. I thought: Oh, how does the artificial part in the character of man spoil the enjoyment of nature even to others! Madam v. P's. "tints and effects" had spoiled all the beautiful prospect to me. At this moment I heard a loud shriek, and hastening towards the spot whence it proceeded, I saw the Adamites, who had plucked flowers and fruits from the orange trees, and were skirmishing with some young gentlemen who had evidently interposed to save the blossms.

"There we have unsophisticated nature!" thought I, sighing, Briti Kaijsa came up, dispensed shoves

and cuffs among the boys, and peace was restored for a time, so that we were able to enjoy our coffee and confectionary in quiet.

A little later, two open carriages were driven up, Bruno proposed to the company to take a turn into the park. The carriages were intended for the seniors, the juniors were to walk; Bruno offered his arm to Serena; the old Dahls, Björn and I, stepped into one of the carriages, the Major's lady, who was sitting with Madam v. P., got in the other, and wished to have her children with her; but the young Adamites screamed and refused to go, and were at last left in the charge of their sister Mally, during the time of the excursion.

We set off, the weather was fine, and the trip would have afforded me pleasure, could I have calmed my anxious thoughts about Bruno and Serena. "Will he address her?" thought I, "and what will he say?" The patriarchs took their little dinner-nap in the easy vehicle. Björn sat silent and reflecting, and thus we proceeded for the lapse of about an hour and a half.

When we returned, we saw the walkers also returning in various groups. As Serena, accompanied by Bruno, entered the drawing-room, I became uneasy, for I saw at once that something had passed between them. Serena was pale and agitated. Bruno's countenance, on the other hand, was radiant with rejoicing life. After he had saluted us, and inquired of the old people whether the drive had been agreeable, the carriage easy enough, etc., he seated himself at his organ, and the powerful instrument swelled under his hand. It was the same power, the same fire, the same pro-

found inspiration, which enraptured me that evening on the lake, and which now affected my inmost feelings as at that time. The Misses v. P. walked arm-in-arm into the next room, chattered and laughed incessantly with several gentlemen, and were obviously occupied solely with themselves. Madam v. P. had begun a lon and earnest gossip with Jane Maria, and I could not conceive how Jane Maria, who certainly has musical feeling, could sit and chatter through such music. It was natural that Miss Hellevi Hausgiebel, who has no taste for the art of sound, should remain with Counsellor Hök, engrossed in the study of some beautiful paintings. Bruno was, however, by no means without devoted auditors; among these were Björn, the patriarchs, and Serena, who was now seated between them. I was so placed that I could see Bruno's face. It was at this instant strange, full of courage, passion, and love. What was there depicted, he poured out in an impromptu, wherein all aspirations, powers, sufferings, and enjoyments appeared to contend with vehemence, and the conflict rose to desperation;—then Bruno made a wonderful and bold transition, and through modulations which brought to mind the words, "Let there be light!" Bruno introduced the splendid air in Haydn's Creation, in which the words, as well as the music express how the elements arrange themselves in order under the eye of the creator. I looked at Serena. Deepest emotion, but at the same time a tranquil illumination, were depicted on her sweet face. Oh! it is in such hours that we know the fulness of life, when the sky seems to open upon us, our souls mount up upon the wings of sound, embrace every angel of life, com-

prehend the highth and depths of the love of God, all the beauty of creation, and are ready to faint in bliss.

Bruno's voice is not, strictly speaking, beautiful; but it is strong, manly, and expressive. It indicates a powerful mind. "Oh, Bruno!" thought I, "hast thou been endowed with such noble gifts only to abuse them? Canst thou sing of life's pure glory, and not be able to realize it in thy soul, in thy life?"

The music ceased. Bruno's auditors sat silent and tearful; Miss Adele v. P. also stood by the door astonished, and as if rivetted to the spot by magic. Then came the unhappy Madam v. P. and overpowered Bruno with remarks respecting his skill, and ancient and modern composers. "Weber," said she, "is fanciful; Rossini, poor in melody; Mayerbeer excels both, he is so to speak, *le prince de la musique.*"

Old Madam Dahl manifested her satisfaction in another way. She pressed Bruno's hand and said feelingly: "You have made the old woman young again! It is long since I have felt such enjoyment; I thank you most sincerely."

"You make me sincerely happy!" said Bruno, kissing respectfully her hand, and seating himself by her side.

A great noise was now heard in the hall outside, proceeding from the Adamites, who were just arriving from the wood, with dirty and torn dresses, but full of life and spirits. They had started some deer, killed a serpent, and caught a little squirrel, which they now brought home in triumph. Brita Kaijsa tried to suppress this exhilaration of the Adamites, but she only

succeeded partially with Mally. The two younger children jumped about screaming and shouting, climbing with their dirty feet on chairs and sofas—I wished *ma chère mère* had seen it!—whilst they enjoyed the sport of first letting the little unfortunate squirrel loose and then catching it again. Their parents at last took no notice of their wild conduct, but Serena and I gave each other a look, and ventured to interfere. The result was, that I liberated the little squirrel, whilst Serena, partly in earnest, and partly in jest, drew the children to her and succeeded in keeping them quiet, by cutting out a number of little equipages, and ladies and gentlemen in paper for them. Art here also asserted its power of taming the wildness of nature.

The cheerful Miss Hellevi, who likes to keep people in motion, proposed a sociable game, and we commenced a game of forfeits, which soon became lively and amusing. A number of pledges were collected, and on the occasion of their being reedeemed, Miss Hellevi shone by her humourous ingenuity. It was indiscribable entertainment to see Björn obliged to dance. I have never laughed so heartily. You should have seen his comical gravity and his grimaces!

"What is to be done by him to whom this pledge belongs?"—"He is to relate a short story," replied Miss Hellevi. The pledge belonged to me, and without consideration I began whatever came into my mind first. It was the following legend:

"Two little boys went down, one holiday-evening, to the river, not far from their father's abode. There they heard some beautiful music, and saw the Neck,* who

* Neck is the Swedish name of a spirit of the waters.

sat upon the blue waves in the shades of the alder-trees, and played upon the harp and sang with all his heart. After the boys had been for some time listening to the music, they exclaimed: 'Of what use is your fine playing, Neck! you can never be happy!' When the Neck heard these words, he threw away the harp, and sunk into the depth of the water."

Here I stopped, for I had accidentally looked towards Bruno, and a look from him so penetrating, dark, and sorrowful met mine, that I became speechless as it were before it. In this state I continued for several minutes before I could proceed:

"When the boys came home, they related the occurrence to their father. The latter reproached them with having spoken so harshly to the Neck, and told them they had been wrong, for that the Neck might also one day become happy.

"On the evening of the next day the boys walked down again to the river. They heard no longer the sound of sweet music, but they saw the Neck who sat on the waves in the shades of the alder-trees and wept. And they said to him: 'Weep not, Neck, our father says, that you shall be happy too some day!' Then the Neck cried no more, but took up his harp again and played and sang enchantingly till late in the night."

I looked again at Bruno. He was pale; his wonderful eyes were raised on me as before. But now they were filled with tears.

"Madam Werner shall have her pledge again, with our compliments and thanks for the pretty legend," said Miss Hellevi. Many pledges followed, and were

redeemed by various jokes. The owner of one was sentenced to declaim something in verse or prose. It was a silk pocket-handkerchief, and Miss Hellevi, who perceived it, inquired: "Does not this belong to our host?"

"Yes," cried Mally Stallmark with a loud voice, "but I took it to give it as a pledge, because I had nothing myself to give."

"Mally makes a figure in the world," thought I.

"The law of the game must be observed!" said Miss Hausgiebel, the owner of the pledge must redeem it! "Mr. Romilly, you have heard the sentence."

"But I was not in the game," answered the latter evasively.

"But you are so now," cried Miss Hellevi, and when Madam Dahl also, uniting with her, entreated Bruno to fulfil the conditions, he consented, good naturedly. He rose, made no hesitation, but seemed nevertheless transmuted in a moment, as he stood dignified and immovably sunk as it were in deep reflection. On his first motion to speak, a cold shuddering ran through me. The scene was truth itself. It was from himself, from the depths of his own cloud-enveloped spirit, that Bruno spoke Hamlet's famous soliloquy:—

"To be or not to be, that is the question!"

In truth, Bruno is no ordinary man, and has no ordinary gifts, but still—how much higher does not my Björn stand as a man. There was a long silent pause in the room, after Bruno had ceased to speak, and it seemed difficult to return to the recreations of life after this display into its gloomy depths.

Meanwhile it had grown late, and the old Dahls who would not stay to supper, took leave of their host,

whom they thanked most cordially for the agreeable entertainment of the day, they also took Serena with them, and promised to leave her at Rosenvik. Bruno accompanied them to the carriage. When they were gone, every thing seemed flat to me, and in order to escape from the game of forfeits, I asked Adela v. P. who was sitting next to me, if she felt disposed to take a walk with me in the park. She eagerly consented; I took her arm and we went. The evening was fine; the twilight, the stillness, everything that surrounded us seemed to invite to those serious, soothing reflections which light and social life so easily dissipate.

"How beautiful it is here!" said I.

"Yes," replied Adela, "for here is seriousness and truth."

I was struck by the expression with which these words were uttered, and looked at my companion.

Adela v. P. proceeded with emotion: "Madam Werner! you have hitherto, I dare say, considered me weak and superficial; and I now feel that such I have been; but to-day a wonderful feeling has been awakened within me; I feel myself humbled, and yet elevated... I wish to be able to return to nature and truth!"

"You would like to leave what is artificial, for true nature,—is it not so?" said I. "You would like to comprehend nature, and restore to life its deep interest?"

"Yes... I believe so. I have sometimes had misgivings that my education was but empty show—but now—that clearer views open to me, now that so much time is already lost.... Heaven knows, whether I shall ever now attain to light and truth."

"Do not doubt it!" said I, warmly.—"Only cherish the impressions and the longings which have been to-day awakened in you."

An anxious, hurried voice was now heard in the park, calling Adela, Adela! Adela answered, and Madam v. P. came running up to us, she exclaiming with visible anxiety: "Adela, my little angel! You out here without shawl and with a cough? and the dew and the night-air! My dear child, why do you do so? Come in, I entreat you—you must not go so lightly clothed, you must take my shawl, I can dispense with it better than you!" And in spite of the daughter's hesitation she threw her shawl around her, and drew it carefully about her chest; mother and daughter kissed each other affectionately, and hastened together into the house.

Did I ever find Madam v. P. ridiculous? At this moment I quite forgot it; I only saw the tender, amiable mother, and I thought: this is water for Björn's mill! If Madam v. P. but knew, how truly poetic and interesting she now appeared, she would despise the affectation of being so in any other way.

Meantime I had remained behind in the park alone, and whilst I walked slowly back, I met with young Robert Stalmark, who was walking up and down soliloquizing. He went with me, and said after a short time, with discontent depicted on his countenance:—

"What a stupid thing it is to have no talents, to comprehend nothing, to know nothing, nothing which belongs to . . ."

"To what is called high refinement?" said I by way of interrogation. (I found myself appointed this

evening to assist people into the right road.)

"Well yes," replied young Robert. I hear so much talk about nature,—but it would be well to assist it with a little art, a little cultivation!" . . .

"Yes, we must draw a distinction between nature, barbarous and ungifted nature in her enlightened state."

Robert stared at me with one of those lively intelligent looks, which depicts the brightening of a new idea; but immediately afterwards he said with an expression of sadness.

"Yes, were I not so old already..... however, the best thing to be done now is, to banish all these thoughts from my mind!"

"What thoughts," asked I, warmly, "of accomplishments or of a more cultivated mind? My dear Mr. Robert! to possess a talent for any particular art is comparatively but a light thing, but to be capable of loving and appreciating what is beautiful, to be able to hold intercourse with men of high acquirement, to invest life with noble interests, this is no trifling matter, and you are young enough to be able to attain to it. Reject not on account of the requisite exertion one of the most abundant sources of the happiness of life." We were now on the top of the stairs, and I heard Robert say to himself: "no, no, I will not do that! I will devote myself to it in good earnest! I will be very different yet!"

These two little scenes afforded me much pleasure. The precious seed which lies dormant in the human mind is sometimes suddenly and singularly vivified. Bruno's powerful spirit had now as if by magical in-

fluence roused two beings to a more exalted self-consciousness. So is the revelation of every noble power a cry of "awake ye!" to the soul of man.

But let us go back to Ramm and to the supper-table. I was glad when it was over, and I can vouch that Bruno was no less so. He was no more like the same person that he had been earlier in the day, than November resembles May. His eyebrows had contracted themselves, and Bruno seemed to find it hard to sustain the part of the polite host to the end of the piece. How sweet was it, when the cabriolet again rolled along to Rosenvik, and when I could with Björn's confidence, disburden my mind of all the histories which I have here written down.

In the bright moonshine we arrived at home. I met Serena in the anti-chamber. She stood at the open window with her face turned to Ramm, I walked softly up to her, and threw my arm round her. She leaned her head against mine. The evening breeze wafted by cool but mild, bearing along with it melodious sounds. They came from Ramm. I felt a tear drop in my bosom. Serena's lips bedewed my cheeks, whilst she whispered, "My sweet, dear Franciska! I must leave you, I have been too long absent from my paternal home Let me return to-morrow to my old parents!"

"Serena, my angel?" I exclaimed in consternation. "What has happened! why?"

"Do not ask! entreated Serena, laying her delicate and feverish hand on mine. Do not inquire at present. I shall tell you all some day; at present I cannot! Let me go to-morrow morning with the doctor!"

"And what will your grand-parents say if . . ."

"I shall explain to them; I shall satisfy them. Be not uneasy, sweet Franciska! they will be satisfied, they ..."

"Yes, they! of that I have no doubt whatever," interrupted I, in an unamiable mood, "they, who are to be told every thing; but I shall have to lose you, and am yet to know nothing—I? "You have no confidence in me, Serena,—you do not love me!....."

Serena threw her arms round my neck and said, "Oh, Franciska, you hurt me! You know I have had no friend whom I have loved so sincerely as you. What I now keep secret from you, I shall not disclose to any other creature. But one day I shall have no secret to conceal from those who are dear to me."

"It is right, my dear Serena! I was cross just now. Forgive me. But you see, Serena..... You have become dear to me as a sister; your happiness lies near to my heart as if it were my own, and .... and ..." I began to cry like a child, and Serena did the same. In this state we were found by Björn, who scolded us because we had the window open. After he had shut it, he took Serena's hand and mine, and inquired with a cheerful sympathising look, what made us so very sad.

"Ah, she wishes to leave us, Björn. Serena wishes to go home to-morrow morning."

Björn now looked so shocked that I became somewhat alarmed, and thought, "Well, well, it certainly is not such a national calamity as to strike one with apoplexy."

But Björn's face changed again, and with his accustomed good-natured calmness, he said:

"Well, if she should go away, I suppose she would come again."

I had almost overlooked this possibility in my anxiety, and partly consoled again, I exclaimed:

"Oh, yes, Serena, you will soon, soon come again, won't you? You will not stay away long?"

But I will not fill my paper with a description of the remarks and replies on the subject, and how (in spite of all the consolatory reasons which had been represented to me), I was heartily concerned to part with Serena, for I clearly foresaw that she would not return to me this year to make any lengthy visit. This morning at seven o'clock she drove off with a large flower-bouquet in her hand, sitting by the side of Björn, who was softly pronouncing anathemas on a basket of fruit, which had been put between his feet.

Every thing is so vacant now after Serena's departure. I endeavour to forget it whilst occupying myself with writing, but I am not able. It is indescribable, what a charm, what a feeling of Spring such a being diffuses around her. She was always so kind, so fresh in feeling, so good. I grew better by living in her society. She had taught me to be observant of much good existing in all around me. At present we shall correspond daily. At all events it is something. Björn will be the post-courier. I am glad that I shall receive a note to-day by him; but I shall still not get to know the secret. It troubles and distresses me!

III.

TO THE READER FROM A STRANGER LADY.

DEAR AND CURIOUS READER,

Availing myself of my former apology, and pitying the anxiety which you, dear reader, probably share with Madam Werner, I will—happening, strangely enough, accidentally to know more of the state of affairs than that excellent lady—tell you quite *entre nous*, a word or two of the secret.

In the park of Ramm, Madam Werner is riding, as she has already related. We—the reader and I—follow silently the walkers on their path. We notice during this interval how the Misses v. P., notwithstanding their affected gentility, condescend to sport with the brothers Stallmark in a way, which indicate neither propriety nor gentle feeling. From this we conclude, that excessive refinement and rudeness, often go hand in hand. But we shall not dwell long on this picture, destitute as it is of grace or keeping. We will rather follow Bruno, who conducts Serena with a deferential attention, which will to your glance, clear-sighted reader, most distinctly betray the nature of his feelings. After these follow the Adamites amidst laughing and screaming.

"Lean more on my arm," entreated Bruno, with a soft melodious voice. "Let me support you, let me believe for a moment, at least, that I can be some way of use to you."

They walked silently. The wood rustled gently around them, and its arched foliage above them. In Bruno's soul now reigned—and he has often said, that it was this feeling which made him so happy in Serena's presence —a peace which he but rarely enjoyed. Something of her gentle and bright spirit seemed to pass over into his; he had a feeling as if his good genius was near him, and those beneficent impulses, those feelings of enjoyment, those pure sentiments, those vague but strong hopes of a better future, those fair spring anticipations which are entire strangers to no human breast, all came like angels and hailed his soul. A voice then arose within him—it was that of remorse, it cried: "Weep for the past, the lost!" But another, lovely and strong like eternal mercy, cried stronger: "Despair not for she is near thee!" He then looked in her countenance—all there was so sweet and bright —and he saw only her.

All at once the Adamites raised a shrilling shout of joy, and sprang into the wood. Sister Malley called them back, herself at the same time pursuing them. A deer ran timidly before them. All vanished; Bruno was now alone with Serena. The latter stood irresolutely still. They were standing near a high oak, a bank of fresh grass was round its stem, and flowers were planted all about; the spot seemed to have been carefully tended.

"Will you not rest a moment?" asked Bruno. "We

can await our little friends here, who will no doubt come again."

Serena consented, and seated herself. Bruno stood before her, and watched her looks attentively; they were contemplating the spot, and betrayed awaking recollections.

"I believe I know this place, this tree again," said she at length. "Yes, I am quite certain here it was, that many years ago I was threatened by a terrible danger. I was then but a little child; a serpent had entwined itself round my neck. It would most likely have strangled me, had not the intrepidity and presence of mind of a little boy, saved me at the risk of his own life."

"Do you remember that event?" inquired Bruno, deeply affected.

"He remembers it likewise."

"He?—what?—when? How do you know....." inquired Serena, astonished and hurriedly.

"He is a friend of mine. He has often talked to me about the child, which he carried about in his arms in the woods of Ramm."

"Oh, is he still alive?....Where is he? What do you know of him?" inquired Serena with lively emotion.

"He is alive! perhaps, it were better were he no longer so. His life has been no source of joy to any one. However, his anxious heart can find no peace until it has found another and a better, to which it may attach itself. He has early been brought to know misfortune—even crime! He was rejected by his mother; he then wandered through the world for years, and

fought with life, with men, and with himself; he sought he knew not what, he had early become an outcast. He who reposes on the breast of a mother or a wife, he who holds a dear sister by the hand, he knows, he understands not the vacuum, the gloom, which that man feels who in all the wide world has not one single being to love him, to receive his love, not one who will say—"return!" not one who would press the penitent to his breast, and say, "I forgive!" Thus rejected .....Can it be wondered at if shipwrecked in heart, the sport of every wind, he should drift about and be lost? ..... Serena, would you condemn him?"

"I condemn? Alas! I should weep over him."

"Weep over him, Serena. He blesses these tears, and he—is not unworthy of you. Bruno has staggered on the deep, but has not sunk. An invisible hand has sustained him. Was it that angel, who once secretly whispered to him of a brighter and better world? I must believe it. Certain it is, that he never forgot her. In his sweetest recollection, in his best feelings, in the depth of his soul, she stood in the splendour of her innocence. Oh, Serena! were he now to stand before you and say: This childish affection has ripened into love, true, eternal love; these recollections are changed into reality. They are dear to me, Serena, dear as the reconciliation with my mother, as the hope in the mercy of God; dear, a thousand times dearer than life itself! —Serena, it is Bruno, the friend of your childhood, who here kneels before you! (and in endless love Bruno sank before the adored one.) It is Bruno who craves from you his peace, his bliss, his life! Serena, do you reject me?!"

'Good God!!—Bruno!" exclaimed Serena, with indescribable emotion, and extended to him her hand. He pressed it vehemently between his, and inquired, with a look and voice which seemed to have power to conjure up the deepest secrets of the soul, "Is it compassion—which this hand extends to me?"

"It is—not compassion—ah, rise!"

Voices were heard, steps drawing nearer.

Bruno pressed Serena's hand to his heart whilst rising, and saying: "Keep my secret! The hour has not yet come—" He could say no more. Miss Hellevi Hausgiebel, at the head of a gay band of walkers, joined them, and they were not again left alone.

In the evening, when Bruno escorted Serena to the carriage, he held her back for a moment, and whispered in her hearing only: "One word — one word! not compassion—it was a nobler feeling? Serena, one word, one look!—"

But Serena said not one word, gave not one answering look. She withdrew her hand from Bruno's, and timidly as the bird flying to its nest, she hastened to join her aged grand-parents. Bruno cast a dark look after the carriage as it rolled away.

And I, my reader, now take my friendly leave of you.

IV.

ELEVENTH LETTER.

FRANCISKA W. TO MARIA L.

Rosenvik, August 22nd.

The cloud which suspends over us, has darkened. A storm is quite certain. May heaven only turn it into a blessing and not into destruction!

Serena was gone, and with her we lost much enjoyment. No one felt this more deeply than Bruno. He came in the evening as usual, but he was not like himself. He entered, greeted me dispiritedly, and kept silent; then he walked up and down in a restless state of mind, or took his seat near the place where Serena was accustomed to sit, and leaned his head upon his hand. Thus he sat long without uttering a word, and the vein which swelled high upon his forehead, gave indication of the conflict in his mind.

Björn often turned towards him with the quiet observing look of the physician, which seems to trace the course of the inward struggle, and to watch the momet of the crisis. I was kind, yes sisterly kind, towards Bruno, for I saw that he was suffering, and unhappy. At times he seemed desirous to speak. I fancied he had something to request, or some confession to make,

which weighed heavy upon his heart. But not one word gave us light on the subject, and to all observations which we addressed to him, he returned only brief replies, or maintained a perfect silence. I must, however, say that no bad temper—that demon wherewith little minds often tyrannize over those around them, manifested itself in Bruno's deportment. It was apparent that it was a profound distress, which rendered him insensible to all that passed around him. We at length resolved to leave him to himself, and spend our evening as we generally do when we are alone,—Björn occupied with carpentering, and I reading to him. Bruno could then listen if he chose.

Yesterday he came again, and was more gentle than usual. He took Björn's hand and mine, pressed them, and said: "I am no agreeable guest to you, my friends; but bear with me!—" He turned away, left us quickly, and seated himself at the piano, where he played a lively and noisy piece.

The tea came. I prepared it, and filled the large cup for Björn—he always has a particular tea-cup for himself, with ugly, little, blue cupids, which he likes very much. When now I handed this to him, and he kissed my hand delightedly—I don't know how it happened, but he does so sometimes—I thought him so winning, so kind, so excellent, that I set aside the tea-cup and bread-basket, encircled his great head with my arm, and pressed it with ardent affection to my breast. Björn threw one arm round my waist, but, oh dear! he stretched the other towards the bread-basket. I felt so affectionate towards him, that, tenderly jesting, I reproached him with his divided love. Björn replied

in the same tone, when a sigh, deep, painful, almost resembling a suppressed groan, made us shrink with terror. We looked up, and our gaze fell on Bruno, who, pale, and with an indescribable expression, surveyed us. "Oh, good God! good God!" said he, slowly, whilst pressing his hand against his forehead, as if in inexpressible anguish, and now tears gushed with vehemence from his eyes, which at once amazed and affected me. Björn rose, and by a mutual impulse, we both approached Bruno. Now that his heart was opened, he stretched out his arms to us, and cried, with a voice which was suddenly stifled with most violent agitation: "My mother! . . . . Let me be reconciled with my mother!"

Björn and I went to him; we opened our arms to him and embraced him. Bruno was almost beside himself; he pressed us with wild vehemence to his breast, and in broken sentences, which rushed as it were from his agitated soul, he exclaimed: "Act, act for me! . . . .I cannot! I am cursed . . . . speak, prepare my way . . . . whether I may come . . . . help, help that when I approach her she may not reject me. Tell her that I have suffered much . . . . much . . . let me repose on her breast. There is no rest till then for me . . . . My mother, my mother! . . . ."

Our tears flowed in torrents; we spoke words of tenderness to Bruno; we tried to compose, to comfort him; we promised to act for him; we told him that all should be well. But the storm which had at length burst forth was not to be so easily allayed. Bruno was in the most powerful agitation of mind, and after he had violently paced the room for a few moments, he said:

"I must now leave you; forgive this scene! Think of me and for me. Let me know what you purpose doing, and let that which is to be done, be done quickly! Suspense is hell." The next moment Bruno was upon his horse, and vanished with the rapidity of lightning.

Björn and I now stood looking at each other as if the last judgment-day had broken in upon us. Björn forgot his tea. I never before saw him so disturbed. This almost surprised me, for I believed that this cause, though somewhat difficult to manage, was nevertheless sure of a happy issue, and that the lost son must inevitably be again received into the house of his mother. "Is it to be imagined," said I, "that a mother should not receive with open arms her penitent returning son?"

"Yes, you do not know *ma chère mère* yet," said Björn, grimacing and spitting—"this last only now happens on any rare occasion.—In some adopted notions she is, as it were, hardened as a stone; and then her disease of mind!.... I trust that she will recognise and receive her son again, when she sees him, and ascertains his temper of mind. I hope so. But how to bring it about? how to prepare her, when the mere mention of his name affects her brain? I will not vouch for the return of her mental disease. Minds like her's and her son's always border on the abyss of frenzy, through the violence of their passions. One blow may plunge them into it."

"Heaven keep us!" exclaimed I.

"At all events," continued Björn, more composed, "the trial to effect a reconciliation must be made. Better would it be that mother and son should die in

frenzy than in enmity. But we must go cautiously to work. *Ma chère mère* must first be sounded—must have her pulse felt; she is no easy patient to treat."

We now considered *pro* and *con* how the matter was to be arranged. We proposed and rejected a number of plans. At length we settled upon the following:

It has now been a custom, for some time past, at Karlsfors, when we were assembled together in the evening, occasionally to read novels, or any light and entertaining works. I was generally appointed reader, and *ma chère mère*, who does not care much for books, except her Bible and cookery-book, appears however sometimes to listen with pleasure. Björn and I now determined the very next evening we should spend at Karlsfors to propose a subject for reading, and then have a tale in readiness, calculated to rouse the feelings of the mother, and to give us some clue to trace her disposition towards her son. Should this prove favourable, a further step might soon be taken; but as to the nature of this, we could not agree. My wish was that Bruno should himself write to his mother. Björn however, rejected this, as being a too direct and hazardous mode of proceeding. Björn seemed more inclined to install me into the office of mediator between mother and son. "It is a peculiarity in her," said he, "that that which she reads on paper makes no impression on her feelings. She must read them in the eye, she must hear the voice, if words are to reach her heart. You, my Fanny...."

"Thanks, my dear Björn, a thousand thanks for your high opinion! But spare me, if possible, this

commission! I feel that I have not courage enough to interpose between these two violent beings. I might be crushed to atoms. Have you forgotten the fable of the earthen-pot?"

"Well, well, we shall see! There is time enough yet to think of the second step, when the first is made."

"And for this I will make immediate preparation. Whilst you are in the town, I will find a suitable tale; or perhaps compose one myself."

"Very well. We shall thus be prepared with arms for the hour of battle. But mark you, my little Fanny, the allusion must not be too obvious. If *ma chère mère* should perceive a hidden object, she would immediately set herself against it."

During the night (one often receives bright ideas in the dark) it became clear to my mind what should be the text which was to serve my purpose, and when Björn had departed in the morning, I took down from my book-case, which Björn had carefully furnished, "Fryrell's Narratives from the History of Sweden," and began to read and think over the story of Eric Stenbock, and Malin Sture. The more I thought about it, the more satisfied I became, and scarcely had I read it through the second time, when an invitation arrived from *ma chère mère* to spend the evening at Karlsfors, providing we had not a better engagement. I returned my thanks and said, that we would come. Since that moment I have been nearly in a state of fever, and I have endeavoured to divert my uneasiness by writing this. Before Björn left this morning he wrote a few lines to Bruno, acquainting him with our plan. The answer

which the messenger brought back, I broke open during Björn's absence. It only contained these words: "Do what you please!—Bruno."

In the afternoon.

Björn has read the narrative and is satisfied with it. We shall go. Ah, Maria! this evening! I am heavy-hearted and disquieted. I am going to sound the depths of a heart, and on this much depends. This thought shakes both body and soul. Adieu! Adieu!

The 23rd.

We have been at Karlsfors. The evening had closed in. Lighted candles stood upon the green table in the reception-room. We sat round it. The important and decisive hour had arrived, I felt wonderful courage and all the rest were unusually still and dull. Björn had a pen-knife in his hand and was chipping the table for the want of something else. *Ma chère mère* tapped his fingers and gave him a bundle of pens to cut. She then sat down to net a fishing-net, which was her usual evening employment; for her eyes are not strong, and cannot bear finer work.

She said to me, "Now little woman, read us your tale; but let it be a cheerful one. There is enough to mourn over in this world, without wasting tears over things which are written in books!"

"I cannot promise that it will be of a gay story," replied I, "but I think it very interesting, and it is moreover historically true throughout."

"That certainly is a point of recommendation," said *ma chère mère*, "and one ought of course to hold one's mouth to the dish."

I began to read:

OF ERIC STENBOCK AND MALIN STURE.

From Malin's Family-chronicle, written by himself.

In the parish of Mörkö in the province of Södermanland, near a deeply extending bay of the Baltic, lies a small, triangular island. Upon it rises a clift ninety feet high, from which the view reaches over fields, Schere's,* and a wide expanse of waters. This island became at an early period the residence of Wikingers, and deep caverns are still pointed out in the mountain, which are believed to have been used by them as habitations and prisons. Some believe that this was the place, where in the time of Ingiald Illrada the Fylkesking of Södermanland, Granmar, received the Sea-king Hjorvard Ylfing, and Granmar's daughter, the fair Hildegund drank to the health of Rolf Krake, with Hjerward. The place is called Sjimonsö (Sjimon's-island,) which some interpret to mean Seaman's-island. At a later period it received from the form of the island the name of Hörningsholm, and by being repeatedly dammed up has gradually become changed into a peninsula. It was successively in the possession of the races of the Folkungers, Oernefoters, Ulfvers and the younger Sturies, was strongly fortified, and often besieged, taken, and was destroyed, for the last time during the period of Christian the tyrant.

Svante Sture, son of Sten Sture the younger, and married to Martha Lejonhufvud, caused afterwards a citadel to be erected upon the old ground, which was

* Small ships on the Swedish coasts.

equally as splendid in architecture as it was strong by its situation and fortification. Upon the foundation wall of many fathoms high, rests the castle of four stories high, furnished at the angles with strong towers. One may form some conception of the riches of Sture, and of the nobility of that time, when one reads that at the wedding of Sigrid Sture with Thure Persson Bjelke in the year 1562, 50 awmes* of wine, 4 barrels of mead,† 1½ barrels of must,‡ 8 casks of cherry-water,§ 20 lasts of beer, 45 oxen, 200 sheep, 21 pigs, 17 calves, 453 cans** of honey, &c., were consumed. By the confiscation of the church's property, a great number of estates fell to the nobility, and especially to Sture, the only offspring of so many families once so powerful. By these riches, by the untarnished splendour of the name of Sture, his affinity (by marriage of brothers and sisters) with Gusta Wasa, and the distinguished qualities of the many children, the house of Hörningholm was, for a long period, next to the regal, the most conspicuous in the kingdom, and the seat of honour, pride and joy. Joy vanished after the dreadful murder of Sture in the year 1567, but Lady Martha retained her pride, for the family had received the honour. Two remaining sons and five daughters also promised to restore their joy. Whilst they were growing up, Lady Martha ruled over the house of Hörningholm, and all the

* A Swedish and Dutch measure answering to what in England is called a *tierce*, or one seventh of an English ton.

† A kind of drink made of water and honey.

‡ New wine not fermented, or the juice of fruit, cider, &c.

§ A cordial made of pressed cherries.

** A measure of one or two quarts.

estates subject thereunto with a circumspection and power which acquired for her the by-name of King Martha. She, at the same time, distinguished herself by her noble-mindedness. Eric XIV. had murdered her husband and two of her sons. When, after the change of the throne, his wife and children wandered about in the country without protection and defence, Lady Martha took Sigrid Wasa, then four years of age, to herself and educated him with maternal tenderness and care.

"This story I like," interrupted *ma chère mère*, when I stopped reading for a moment, "it is an excellent one!" *Ma chère mère* raised herself up, and looked as proud, as if she herself had been King Martha. I am convinced that she felt herself closely allied to her. I proceeded:

Eric Stenbock, son of the old Gustav Olsson of Torpa and of Brita Lejonhufvud, often made long stays at Hörningsholm, as a near relative and there formed a strong attachment to Lady Malin, the second in the line of daughters. The latter returned his disposition; but Lady Martha would hear nothing of it on account of the near relationship. They were, namely—first cousins. Stenbock tried the usual expediencies. He loaded the mother, sisters and servants, with presents, but all in vain. Many were moved, but not the old Countess. She had written to the Archbishop Laurentius, in Upsala, asking his advice. The latter remained firm to his views, which he had expressed on the occasion of the third marriage of Gustav Wasa, and advised against it; after this it was in vain to speak to the Countess any more about it. Thus, many years rolled

by. The two lovers saw their youth fleeting along; Lord Eric had finished his thirty-fourth, and Miss Malin her thirty-third year. Notwithstanding their mutual inclination was still as lively as ever. When all means of persuading the mother had failed, they determined at length upon eloping. Stenbock entrusted his intention to Charles, Duke of Södermanland, twenty years of age, and received from him for his support, two hundred horsemen. In the month of March 1573, he travelled with his sister Cecilia (wife of Gustav Roos), to Hörningholm, concealed his horsemen at some distance from it, and issued orders to them for their execution. He came to an agreement with Lady Malin on the same evening, that they would fly the following day. She spent a night of the most dreadful anxiety. When in the morning she was alone in her room, she threw herself near the window upon her knees, and prayed amidst showers of tears. In the same instant the elder sister, Lady Sigrid, entered.

"God bless you! you are well engaged," said she.

"God grant that it may be well," answered Lady Malin.

"It is always well," said Lady Sigrid, "to pray to God with tears!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Lady Malin, "if all my friends should cast me out, you will assuredly not close your heart against me?"

"Why do you speak thus?" said Lady Sigrid. "No one of the family of Sture has done aught for which account we need to turn away our hearts in displeasure."

At that moment the old Countess sent for Lady Sigrid to come to her, but Malin went into another

room. Immediately Lord Eric entered there, saluted the persons present, and then said to Lady Malin:

"Dear sister, do you wish to see the horse which I have presented you with? It stands in the castle-yard below?"

She consented, and he drew her arm in his to conduct her down stairs. On going through the hall, Nilsi and Anna Sture's nurse, Lucia, was sitting there. Lady Malin requested her to follow, which she also did. Below in the arched-gate stood the horse harnessed to a sledge, in which the young lady was placed with her waiting-maid. Stenbock got up behind, and drove away in the sight of many of the servants, who fancied that it was only a hunting excursion; but when the waiting-maid perceived that Lord Eric took the road towards the sea and drove so fast, she forsaw mischief, and began to call out:

"What are you doing, dear young lady? Consider how angry your mother will be with you to travel so alone and unprotected."

But Lord Eric pulled out a pistol, and held it to the breast of the maid with these words:

"Be still, or else you shall never speak again!"

Down on the shore the horsemen issued from both sides, and surrounded the sledge; they then proceeded, as fast as the horses would carry them, as far as Svardsbro. There they found tailors and sempstresses with costly materials of every kind, who took the young lady's measure, and began to prepare clothes for her; meanwhile the horsemen kept watch round the house that no one could come in or go out. Just when Lord Eric was driving towards the sea, Margaret Sture went

accidentally to the window, saw and comprehended the object of their journey. She began immediately to cry: "Lord Eric, I am sure, is carrying off my sister Malin!" At these words the old Countess and Lady Sigrid sprang first to the window, and then down into the court. But on the stairs the mother lost all consciousness and sank down. Having somewhat recovered herself, she ordered Lady Sigrid to set out immediately after the fugitive, and try to bring her back. Meanwhile Lady Martha sat upon the stairs, mourning and lamenting, and could not thoroughly recover herself. Then Lord Eric's sister, the Countess Cecilia, hastily ran to her, and lamented that Lord Eric should have acted in such direct opposition to Lady Martha; declared that she knew nothing of it herself; but she could not have believed that Lady Martha would have felt so much indignation. The latter turned her head violently and answered:

"May God punish you and your brother, who has robbed me of my child! Follow her, at least, now, and remain with her, that no injury may be done to her."

Lady Cecilia departed in silence. When Lady Sigrid, (whom the old mother sent after the fugitives,) came to Svarsbro, she obtained with difficulty permission to enter the house She then began to represent to the sister the displeasure and distress of the mother and to exhort her to return, in which case her mother had promised to forgive her. Lady Malin made no reply. Sigrid, then again, more and more urgently tried to exhort and persuade Malin, and told her, she would otherwise be the cause of her mother's death.

Malin said:

"If you can insure to me my mother's consent that we should be united, I will gladly return."

"I cannot do that," replied Lady Sigrid.

"Then," said Malin, "the first error is as good as the last," and began to weep bitterly.

When Lady Sigrid found that she could not persuade the sister, she returned to Hörningsholm, where the mother had now taken to her bed amidst mourning and woeful lamenting. Her grief increased when Sigrid returned alone. Her house had before been visited by misfortune, but now it suffered disgrace. She saw no ray of consolation, nor redress, not even hope of revenge. She was a lonely widow with many daughters; the sons were yet almost in their infancy. The seducer of her daughter, on the other hand, was himself a man of power, besides being the brother of the widowed Queen Catherine, supported by the Duke, and in favour with the king. Notwithstanding, Lady Martha determined not to yield.

Lady Malin meanwhile departed with the Countess Cecilia Roos and Lord Eric to his brother-in-law, Pehr Brahe, of Sundholm, in the province of Westgothland. There Eric left her and hastened to Stockholm. But Lady Martha's letter of complaint had reached that place before him. On his arrival, he was deprived from his fiefs and offices and kept in arrest. Perpetual contentions and strifes ensued between the families of Sture and Stenbock. The latter, however, prevailed so far, that Lord Eric received his liberty again. He then did all in his power to conciliate Malin's relatives, and succeeded with them all except

the mother. He wrote to a Lutheran college in Rostock, and received from thence and forwarded to her the favourable opinion of the theologians, that marriage between cousins were lawful; but she took no notice of it. Then Eric and Malin despaired of the possibility of ever softening her; three months had now elapsed after their elopement. They took their jonrney across the Dutch territory, had themselves married there by a Danish priest, and returned the same day to Torpa, where the nuptials were celebrated. At the same time it was arranged that King John, the widowed queen, Duke Charles, the Princesses, the Counsellors of the Empire, and all the relatives of Stenbock should write to Lady Martha and make entreaties for Eric and his wife. But the grief and anger of the mother were still more irritated by the news of the marriage, which was celebrated without her knowledge. In spite of all the intercessions, she would vouchsafe no notice either to her daughter or son-in-law.

Here I paused a moment in order to sound *ma chère mère's* heart. "Is it possible," said I, "that any person could be so obdurate? How could any one be so implacable, so unforgiving?"

"It is not reasonable!" said Jean Jacques.

"It is not reasonable!" said Jane Maria.

"It is unnatural!" growled Bear, with a horrible grimace.

"It is right!" exclaimed *ma chère mère*, with a thundering voice. "It is nothing but right. I should have acted in the very same way."

"Oh no! you surely would not have done so!" said

I, whilst I looked deprecatingly at her.

"May God punish me! if I would not have acted so!" said she still more violently, and struck with her fist on the table, so as to make the candles shake again; "yes, that I would, if thou thyself even, Franciska, were that sinner, and I thine own mother. Yes, thus I should punish thee. Thou shouldst never dare to come into my presence again, not were the king himself to fall at my feet and entreat for thee. Weak mothers, weak conduct. Severe mothers, pure morals."

My heart swelled within me. I felt that *ma chère mère's* views were immoderate, but her words: "Wert thou that sinner, and I thine own mother," had made a singular impression upon me. They changed me as it were into the unfortunate Malin, and placed me in her situation. I suffered, I repented with her; I felt acutely that the anger of a mother was terrible, and with difficulty could I read what follows:

"The mother's anger, however, oppressed the heart of the daughter most heavily. Since the time of her elopement from Hörningsholm, Malin had never worn any other dress but black. She had received from her husband a number of precious stones, but never wore them. She wrote continually to her nearest kinsmen letters of deep distress, entreating for their intercession. The incessant entreaties of the sons and sons-in-law, and the sight of all her daughters lying prostrate at her feet, at length softened Lady Martha, and she gave her permission for both the rejected to return."

Here *ma chère mère* dropped her netting, leaned back, crossed her arms, and bowed down her head to her breast, apparantly in deep reflection. I saw all this

with a quick glance, and proceeded:

"A year and a half had now elapsed since their marriage, and almost three after their elopement. They were not permitted, however, to come at once into the castle, but were obliged to live several weeks in the little Bath-house. At length, in consequence of the intercession of the brothers and sisters, the approach of winter, and Malin's state of indisposition, they were permitted to remove into the castle. Malin was then conducted up into the great saloon, where Lady Martha was placed upon an elevated seat, with all the family ranged round about her. When Malin made her appearance at the door, the mother burst forth: 'Alas, you unhappy child!' Then Malin fell upon her knees and thus crawled to her mother with tears to supplicate her forgiveness, while she pressed her head against her knees."

I stopped, for my voice was unsteady and tears were at hand. My heart was with Malin. At this moment *ma chère mère* pushed the table from her, rose, with a pale face, and without casting a look at any one of us, she walked out of the room with majestic steps and banged the door to after her.

We all sat in mute consternation. We knew not what we should think. Was *ma chère mère* angry, or was she affected? Did she surmise any intention, or .... Björn and I gave each other a look of inquiry. I was vexed with myself and with my agitation, which obliged me to pause in the reading at such an important crisis. *Ma chère mère* had thereby gained time for reflection, and now she could not hear the best of the story, the fair conclusion. Ah, if *ma chère mère* had

only heard that, it would have made her feel the beauty of forgiveness, and King Martha's example would probably have had its influence upon her heart. I had an indescribable longing for her return. But one quarter of an hour after another passed away, and *ma chère mère* did not appear. I was indeed distressed when supper was announced, and it was stated at the same time that the mistress would not come to table. She was troubled with head-ache, had gone to bed, and wished us good appetite and pleasant repose. I was melancholy and uneasy; Björn no less so. We could not guess how we stood. Immediately after supper we took our leave of Jean Jacques and Jane Maria. On our way home we were less dejected about the occurrence of the evening. Our attempt had not altogether been without effect. The piece which was read had made a strong impression, and *ma chère mère's* excitement could with greater probability be construed as good than as evil.

We resolved that Björn should ride the next day to Karlsfors, under the pretext of some business with Jean Jacques, and then more minutely ascertain the disposition of *ma chère mère*.

We spoke of the severity of principle which she had approved. I deprecated the system, and said: "Not implacable severity, but rather wisdom and love are the means by which virtue, purity of morals, and family concord are established."

"This is the fine doctrine of our time, Fanny," replied Björn, "but *ma chère mère* still clings to an age in which those of purer morals endeavored to set a barrier against the prevailing laxity by excessive ri-

gidity. She was brougbt up in rigid principles. Nature and circumstances have contributed to confirm her in them. This basis is pure; it is but the partial comprehension and too close appli—— Heavens! have we got home already? !"

Björn was in Karlsfors to-day as had been agreed upon. *Ma chère mère* was not to be seen, had kept her rooms, and left a message with Elsa that she would not see any body. What is to be the end of this? Bruno will most certainly come here this evening. Oh, that we could but give him more gladdening intelligence.

Aug. 28th.

I have not written to you for several days past. I am so unhappy. No change with *ma chère mère* since my last letter. Jean Jacques, who with Bruno's approbation is made acquainted with every thing concerning him, sends us daily reports. *Ma chère mère* will see no one, remains shut up in her own apartments, and all within is as still as the grave. Elsa alone goes in and out as a shadow, and to all inquiries replies only with a shake of her head.

Bruno, in a most desperate state of mind, has been here every day. He comes generally at twilight, makes the same inquiry, receives the same answer, and goes away with his eye-brows deeply drawn together, and his gloomy look fixed on the ground. Sometimes at night when the wind blows from Ramm, I hear the wildly pathetic, but exquisite sounds, which once so enraptured me at Svanö. They rise, they die, like invisible sighs. I then fancy as if an unhappy spirit hovered above the water, and sought to inform me of its tor-

ments. I should not like, under any circumstances, for Serena to hear those sounds; they are cutting to the very heart. To avoid crying over them I draw the curtain over my ears.

Serena! alas, she has no doubt already heard more than is good for her peace. But what, I know not. It is strange that I should not know it! And Serena is for all that not of a reserved character.

She came here yesterday evening with her grandparents; the good old folks came—as they said—"to express their thanks for her." I returned mine for having had her. Goldhead was with her, but the naughty little thing was not so devoted as usual to his mistress, but flew restlessly in and out of the window; at length it took its course across the lake to Svanö, and we lost him out of sight. We waited for his return but he did not come. It grew late, and Serena concerned about her little favourite, repaired herself to Svanö to fetch it back. But she lingered long—much too long; we all became uneasy, and I more than any, for I know not what foreboding told me that Bruno had part in this delay. I could not endure the protracted uncertainty about this, but whispered a word into Björn's ear, left to him the care of our venerable guests, ran to the bank, took a little boat, and went to seek up Serena. I came to Svanö just in proper time to receive Serena, half-dead, in my arms, and to see Bruno standing there, more like a statue than a living man. I took Serena home. On the way she recovered herself, and the death-like calm dissolved in a flood of tears. She wept so violently and so painfully that I was beside myself. "Has this man offended you, Serena? if so,

I will detest him, I will have nothing more to do with him!"

"Oh, no, no!" replied Serena, "but—he is so unhappy!"

More I could not ascertain from her, the deeply agitated Goldhead flew twittering over our heads. I was cross with the little creature.

I purposely rowed very slowly that Serena might gradually compose herself. It began to grow dark already. When we came back, the old people, contented at having their darling again, were not curious about the cause of her long delay; Serena had recovered from her agitation, and the twilight concealed the tears which still moistened her eyes.

To-day I received a little note from her by Björn, which informed me that she was tranquil again, begged me not to be uneasy about her, and to ask no questions at present; by and bye I should know every thing. She wrote so kindly, so affectionately, I could not be angry with her. But strange it is that we should both have secrets, one from the other, and in fact both secrets, which relate to Bruno.

Later.

Bruno was here just now, more gloomy than ever. He went away with a wild look, whilst he said, "I shall come no more. Should any change occur, let me know." He left us without taking leave.

Six days have now elapsed since that evening when I read the story of Eric Steinbock and Malin Sture, and *ma chère mère* remains the same. Ah! what is to be the end of all this? God help us!

V.

A STRANGER LADY TO THE READER, BUT ESPECIALLY TO THE YOUNG LADY READER.

You, young lady, whose researches into the state of society and characters of mankind, have hitherto been made merely in the land of romance, and who on your entrance into the world, expect with shuddering joy, that men will hover about you, either as the butterfly about the rose, or as the spider about the fly,—a word to you.

Be at ease! The world is not so dangerous! Men have too much to do with themselves. You will be obliged to experience that they care no more for you than for the moon, and sometimes still less. You, young lady of seventeen, you are preparing to withstand the storms of life; ah! you will probably have more to do with the calms of it. But let not your courage sink; life and love are in abundance on the earth, only not often in such a form as romance generally exhibits them: romance distils life: it makes one day out of ten years; one drop of spirits out of a hundred grains of corn. In reality, it proceeds otherwise: grand events, agitating scenes of love are rarely there. They are not the rule, but the exception, in every-day life.

Therefore, my good girl, do not sit down and wait for them, for if you do, you will be tired. Do not seek the riches of life from without; create them in your own breast! Do you seek love? Love heaven, nature wisdom, all the good which surrounds you, and your life will become rich; its sails will swell with fresh breezes, and thus be gradually wafted towards the home of light and love.

Why do I say all this? It is that in order to assist Madam Werner with her story of every-day life (she wished indeed to make a romance of it, but that was not to be her lot). I may now record one of those scenes which is one of those exceptions more often to be found in books than in life.

It was evening, and one of those evenings in which a lovely peace breathed through nature, and fills the mind with involuntary impressions of those days when all yet was good upon earth. The vaulted sky spread pure and glowing over the earth; and the latter stood like a myrtle-crowned and happy bride under the bridal roof, smiling and tranquil, in her beauty. The sun gleamed upon the yellow ears of corn and blushing fruits. The trees, with thick foliage, disturbed by no breeze, were reflected in the clear lake. Light mists veiled the heights. Here was heard the twitter of a bird, there the song of a happy voice. All appeared full of enjoyment.

On such an evening it was, that Serena's light bark glided along upon the calm water, like a fairy flower resting on a leaf. It was there also, where, from the gray-tinted Ramm, an eye, assisted by a telescope, was directed towards quiet Rosenvik.

Bruno sees the small boat put off the shore, guesses whom it bears, and an unexpressible longing, a powerful desire fills his soul.

The storming heart, which has long beat in wild disturbance—the wearied mind, which has consumed itself in days and nights of torment, longs for refreshment and repose. There is a Samoom more searching than that of Africa; there is a spring more refreshing, more panted after than that in the Oasis of the desert. Bruno is that pilgrim consumed by torturing feelings; Svanö is the Oasis, which contains the fresh spring of life within its bosom.

For she is there, she with her pure heart with the bright heavenly look, and in her presence, in the presence of the gentle woman, in Serena's presence Bruno longs after rest, after life—longs—and rushes forward.

"Hast thou entered into the treasures of snow, or hast thou seen by what way light is parted?"

"Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in search of the depths?"

Well might he ask thus, the unfathomable creator of nature and of the heart of man, and well might the earthly-like inquirer Job, "lay his hand upon his mouth and be silent." It is into the depths of the human heart above all, that the Eternal's eye alone can penetrate and see how the light rises, whence the night and the storms proceed.

Bruno resembled the climate of the burning tropics. A blaze of fire ran through his soul and wasted his feelings. Hence this death-like tranquillity, this violent storm with its devastating power, thence also this excess of feeling, life and love, which sometimes broke forth

so powerfully, like the luxuriant vegetation upon a bed of lava, and like love itself, covered all trespasses.

And thus it was, that on that beautiful evening floating on the calm water by the little island, the abode of kindness and peace, Bruno felt the gathering of a storm within him, and feelings like flashes of lightning darted through his soul. Indignation against something, infinite longing after something, fever and anguish boiled within his breast. There are words which can extinguish such flames, which can bring happiness—with the spirit of a vulcan, he stands on the shore of the little Island.

Serena leaned against the oak-tree which spread its thick foliaged branches over the beautiful bright seraphic-head. A cloud of sadness rested on her innocent face, and she gave a melancholy smile to goldhead, who, attracted by her voice, had been flying about from branch to branch, and resting upon her hand. But suddenly he flew away from her in alarm, and Bruno's tall dark figure stood before Serena. She blushed, trembled, but remained still, and looked up to him with the clear look of a Madona. Bruno looked into her fair face, and his soul became more composed; then the unutterable bliss opened upon him which he never felt but in her presence. But this feeling now withered like a rose upon glowing coals, for one instant the fire within him cooled, but the next it was fed into fresh intensity.

"Do you wish to shun me too? Will you also reject me?" inquired he, darting his dark flaming look upon her. And when she still maintained a look of inquiry and distress, he said, "Serena, say something

kind to me. My soul needs it."

"Friend of my childhood!" Serena answered with her angelic voice, and extended to him her hand.

"Oh, Serena," said he, whilst pressing her hand to his lips, hear me! I wish to speak to you. Sit down by me! You will not? Will you not grant a moment to the friend of your childhood?"

There was such earnest intreaty, such anguish conveyed in his look and voice, that Serena could not resist. She seated herself upon a mossy stone. He kneeled before her. There was something child-like, something tender and mild in his whole demeanour. He gazed at her, and the fire in his eye melted away into feelings of inexpressible tenderness, and gave place to tears; he uttered not a word, but his fine lips displayed an expression of ardour and sweetness. At last he spoke:—

"Say *thou* to me, Serena! oh, say *thou* as thou was wont in the days of our childhood—when we were children, happy children; bridegroom and bride!"

Tears bedewed Serena's down-cast eye-lids, but she hesitated.

"Say *thou!*" intreated Bruno more cordially, more ardently. "Serena, dearest, loveliest Serena, call me *thou!*"

Serena still hesitated. She felt deeply at that moment the value of that word.

"You will not?" exclaimed Bruno. "Serena, then you feel indifferent towards me."

"Oh no, no," rejoined Serena deeply affected.

"Not indifferent?" returned Bruno ardently, and seized her hand. "Oh, Serena, torture me no longer!

Do not leave me in this heart-rending uncertainty, oh, speak! will, can Serena love me?"

Serena looked at him with tearful eyes and said: "Yes!" Her whole soul spoke in this reply.

"Oh, then must you become mine, heavenly being! exclaimed Bruno, embracing her knees with passionate joy; Serena, you will, you must be mine! Tremble not! Cast me not from you, glorious, adored angel! Let your heart prevail, listen to my love, and happiness shall be your lot on earth. Why do you tremble? When I was a child and carried you about in my arms in the woods of Ramm, and leaped with you over many a precipice, you did not tremble then. Oh! as in the days of my childhood I will support you on my arm through life, and press you to my breast. Let every uncertainty, every doubt vanish at this moment: our love shall bind our fate. Serena plight me now your faith, promise to be mine, swear that henceforth nothing shall separate us!"

"Bruno, Bruno!" said Serena, alarmed at his vehemence, "have you forgotten your mother .... Your mother—my parents!"

"Forgotten? No Serena, I have not forgotten them, nor those conventional ideas which fetter the affections, I have not forgotten them. But they do not bind me; I acknowledge a higher power; I know of a wider world than that which they rule and enchain. But I comprehend your fears. Like the flower upon this island, you have grown up and have believed that the world extends not beyond its limits. But the world is large, Serena? And for two hearts, which beat in unison, paradise opens in a hundred spots. There are other

climes than that, under which you were borne; other religions, other manners; but sunshine and love are every where. I have beheld this fair world, I have seen life there free from constraints, millions of beings live in that atmosphere of liberty, and obey none but the dictates of the heart. . . ."

"And where they happy Bruno, where they contented, these beings who set at naught the ties of duty, the commands of heaven? Where you yourself happy in that world, which you praise so highly?"

"Happy?—no, I was not, for I had not yet found a Serena. But now—oh! hear me, Serena, and consider that my life depends upon your answer; will you, should even all oppose our union, still become mine? Oh, speak, what can life offer you more than boundless love? Life, Serena, is poor, is wretched, if not relieved by love. That Almighty Being, who gave us the craving for happiness, has not commanded us to renounce it. He who has set love in our hearts as a leading-star of life, cannot wish that we should disdain its guidance. Serena I love you! I will lay down my soul before you and say: do with it what you please, but be mine for ever. Oh, let me lead you from this narrow corner of the world, where your life will vanish and fade away: let me lead you forth into a life of liberty and joy. Give me your hand, as you have given me your heart; become my wife in another country, under a fairer sky. Your path shall be strewed with roses; riches shall be at your command, at your wish, you shall be able to open your hand and make your fellow-creatures happy, and I will bless you for everything, for every body with an affection, as yet unknown in the

world; out of all that is beautiful in nature, all that is good and sweet in life, I will form a paradise for you. Serena—what shall you miss then?"

"Peace!" answered Serena, rising, while her breast heaved violently, "Peace with myself, peace with heaven!"

"Indeed!" said Bruno slowly, whilst he also rose and his flaming looks fixed on Serena, in scornful reproach. "Serena, you are then also like the rest of your sex. Your love is but a feeble flame, which can burn only in a close retired atmosphere. You do not wish to make me happy, you will not follow the dictates of your heart; for you have fears for your eternal happiness! You will not make the least sacrifice for him, who wishes to give up all to you. And this is called virtue? Oh, weak, miserable egotism! But, listen—(and he approached her with wild defiance) I will teach you what love is, what true love is!—But perhaps you do not understand me, pious girl! Do you know what he who truly loves sacrifices without regret for the object of his love? Yes, his own eternal happiness! oh, that you were doomed to the deep, glowing hell, that I might plunge into it, to share your condemnation, and there with you, with you in that abyss, would I despise the thunder and the bliss of heaven! But you do not understand me—you know not what love means."

Serena supported her noble forehead on her hand; a violent shock passed through her soul. Blackness and lightnings interchanged there. Ah! Serena knew what love was, and Bruno's words fanned an echo in her soul. For a moment her mind became obscured

and she lost the clear perception only in the struggle between the sacrifice and love. In a feeling of inexpressible anguish she lifted up her eyes and her clasped hands towards heaven, and spoke as to herself: "They would be miserable, they would rise in the morning and not find me, they would lie down in their beds and weep over their child!"

Bruno saw what was passing within her, a demoniac power took possession of his soul and exulted, when he saw her wavering, and in his looks were flames, and in his voice sounds, flattering, bold,—sounds such as by which angels have fallen:

"Oh, Serena, let no childish weakness mislead you to belie your own heart. Be strong, be true to your love, and trust to me. Become mine, and I will recompence every pang, I will change every sound which disquiets you, into bliss. Away with narrow-minded fear! My Serena, conquer the usual weakness of your sex! give me that promise, that vow, which will raise me above all the vicissitudes of life above the threats of fate; which will give a home to the exile, a blessing to the cursed, peace to the wounded heart. Oh, my Serena, why pause, why waver? Are you not mine already? Have not our souls been united since the days of our childhood? Are they not now warmed by the same flame of affection. Serena, we are one already, one before Him, who poured his love into our hearts. Do you believe, that they could be separated? the thought is vain! Serena, most beloved, you are mine, my own!" He had seized her hand, with loving and powerful force he drew her nearer to his breast.

There are sudden, wonderful inspirations by which

the tempted, but pure spirit maintains its power to renounce even the dearest object. Such it was, which rose in Serena's soul, filled at the same time by despair and by light from above. In order to resist Bruno's power over her, she was obliged to tear herself away, and on Bruno's words, "You are mine, my own!" she replied shuddering: "No I do not love you!"

"You wish to believe so," Bruno broke forth with a demoniac smile; "but you deceive yourself." He embraced her, pressed his hand on her heart, and proceeded, with vehement exultation: "You love me just as much as I do. By the throbbings of this heart I swear; if you resist me, your cheek will grow pale through your love, and my misfortune shall become yours. In vain do you resist, in vain do you deceive yourself. As true as your heart beats under my hand, so truly has a higher power interwoven our fate. Resist it not. It is in vain, Serena. You are mine!"

Serena stood immovable; her dark eyelids sank on her pale cheeks; her heart beat fainter and fainter under Bruno's burning hand; but, like the whispering of a spirit, clearly, softly, awfully, and wonderfully penetrating these words passed from her lips: "No, I do not love you."

An ice-like chillness ran through Bruno's veins. A voice like this, words so expressed, he had never yet heard, and Serena stood like a marble-statue against his breast, as cold, as still, as—death. He left her; he contemplated her with frantic amazement.

"I do not love you!" repeated Serena, and retreated a step; her cheek grew paler and paler, her heart beat fainter and fainter.

"Serena!" exclaimed Bruno, with a voice as to awaken the dead from their eternal sleep.

Serena sighed deeply. "No, I do not love you!" said she once more, with a still firmer, still clearer voice. Her knees tottered; she would have sunk to the ground, if Franciska had not come at this moment and caught her up in her arms.

VI.

BRUNO TO SERENA.

"Once more these words!.... Repeat them once more and no sigh of love and pain on my part shall again disturb your peace. But, Serena! if you deceive me, if you deceive yourself at this moment, if your heart abjures these words when your lips uttered them, then — hear me once more. My vehemence has wounded you. Forgive me this, Serena; it is now over. I am calm—and nevertheless—this restless, this thirsting heart longs to believe, that it does not beat alone; and, though unworthy, I will still believe that I am loved. I stand at the verge of my existence. Love alone can save me. I have a mother; I have trespessed against her, and she has cursed me. I have no hope of reconciliation with her, although I seek it. If it be denied me, shall I then despair, Serena? Will no dear hand hold me fast in life? Will no angel follow me in the wilderness? Oh, Serena, do you love me, and yet have you not courage to share my fate?

Behold, I will not decorate our future; I will not invite you to share fortune and joy with me; I invite you to partake my pain and tears. Perhaps our future may be dark; perhaps your heart may never find peace on my breast; perhaps your cheeks may grow pale under my kisses; but notwithstanding—still I ask you, Serena, have you not courage, not love enough, to suffer with me, for me? Serena! there are sorrows, sorrows unto death, which are not bitter, which bear with them their great, their wonderful enjoyments. Great is the power of love in creating happiness even in the night of pain. But how? If the abandoned should breathe more calmly by your side; if his eye should follow yours towards heaven, the abode of mercy and of love; and if this eye were then to rest on you with infinite gratitude and blessings—Serena! could you then be unhappy? And if now your cheeks were growing pale in death, were you to pillow your head upon a breast, filled entirely by your image, were your look to meet in death, a gaze of inexpressible love, which, living only in you, would expire with yourself, and at the resurrection again seek you only—Oh, Serena! was it a dream, which I believed to be the truth of my existence, to be the solution of its hitherto incomprehensible enigma? Serena! answer me with that truth, which once dwelt so sweetly on your child-like lips—once more I ask: Was it a dream? Say no! and become mine. Or—repeat your last words!"

VII.

SERENA TO BRUNO.

"No, Bruno! I will not say again those words. They were not spoken in truth; called forth only by the dread of my own weakness. If it can do you good, Bruno; if it can afford comfort to your heart, then receive this assurance: 'I love you!' To share sorrow and life with you would be happiness to me. But hear also these my last words, Bruno! I am writing to you in the chamber of my grand-parents. They are slumbering quietly; my voice has lulled them to rest. The light of the lamp falls on their revered heads, and irradiates their grey hair.—Bruno! this is my post of duty. I shall not move from it, though the anguish of my heart be intolerable. To comfort and gladden the life of my two aged parents, those tender gardians and benefactors of my childhood, my kind supporters to the present hour; this is my calling, my precious duty. Providence has placed in my hand the lamp, which illuminates the evening of their life. I will watch over them faithfully until my last breath. Oh, Bruno, if you wish to win *me*, you must first win *them*. Not unless *they* will lay my hand in yours can I be yours with joy and comfort.

"And if this must be my parting salutation to you —then farewell, Bruno! God bless you! Wheresoever you may go, remember that a faithful heart follows you with sympathy, with blessings, and with prayers.

"Bruno! .... Friend of my childhood! .... Oh that I could say a word to you, which might convey peace. I fear that you think me indifferent, cold; ... this pains me But I know there is another, a better world. There you will more truly read my heart. There you will forgive your

SERENA."

VIII.

TWELFTH LETTER.

FRANCISKA W. TO MARIA L.

Rosenvik, August 31st.

Two more days, since I last wrote, we waited with great anxiety, but as still there was no manifestation of the least change in *ma chère mère's* condition, Björn rode to Karlsfors, and frightened Elsa into telling him the truth. The latter then stated: "that her mistress was almost in the same state as she was once fifteen years before. She has no sleep at night, does not speak, and scarcely eats or drinks any thing. She has had her rooms darkened, sits perpetually with her face supported on her hands, and groans sometimes as if her heart was ready to break." She had prohibited Elsa's speaking a word about her to any body.

"This will do no longer," Björn exclaimed, after having told me this. "It might prove a relapse of her former disease. We must break this charm in some way or other, and this must be done—through you, Franciska!"

"Through me?" exclaimed I, startled. I am convinced that I turned quite pale.

"Yes, through you! You know very well, you little

monkey, that no one is in such good favour with *ma chère mère* as you. No one has so much influence on her heart. Employ it on this occasion. You must intrude into her room and into her breast. Yes, you must, and you must be as cautious and bold in doing it as a thief in the night."

"But the pick-locks, Björn, the pick-locks?! How am I to get through her barred door and how into her locked heart?"

"Through her door! Elsa will leave it open. I have spoken to her about it.—And how into her heart? Let your own grow warm, and your tongue will not be at a loss for words, which shall penetrate through marrow and bone."

"Ah, Björn."

"And you must not suffer yourself to be daunted by a few violent expressions, by a few angry looks. Take courage, be firm, strong and tender. Think of Bruno, think of being the means of a reconciliation between mother and son! Yes, arm yourself with these thoughts and feelings, and you will either bring about this good work Franciska, or at least dispel this deep melancholy, which, if it should continue, as hitherto, will some day lead to madness."

Sweet is the voice of flattery, especially if it proceeds from one's own dear husband. I yield to the persuasion to venture on a trial. But as to courage, I had none. To force myself contrary to *ma chère mère's* express injunction into her room, and to appear before her. . . . . Oh dear!

We further determined that Bruno, during my conversation with *ma chère mère*, should stay in Jean

Jacques' room, in order that if the matter should take a favourable turn, he could throw himself at her feet immediately.

Björn wrote respecting this proposal to Bruno, who simply replied in these words: "I coincide with you and will be there." The day following was fixed for the dreaded interview. I never closed my eyes that night, and I was almost on the point of rousing my sleeping Bear, to tell him that I had not the courage to interpose in the matter. But then I heard again the wonderful mournful sounds of the unhappy hermit of Ramm. The echo seemed to supplicate, I remembered Bruno's tears and his entreaty, "reconcile me with my mother!" and I firmly resolved within myself to comply with Björn's desire. But I was, nevertheless, in a thousand anxious fears, how to accomplish the object. I was to say "whatever my heart might dictate," said Björn. My head wanted to be engaged in the work as well, and play the part of guardian to the heart, it rejected from it some undecided plans, and advised forms of address, which the heart in its turn would not acknowledge. Thus they disputed until the time when we were to take our departure. My situation was most unenviable. But I said nothing to Björn. I did not wish to annoy him with my uneasiness.

We departed. It was Sunday, the bells sounded so sweetly, so solemly in the still air. Country people in their holiday clothes, with hymn-books in their hands, met us on our way. They appeared so quiet, so full of peace as they went into the temple of the Lord. I envied them, and the nearer we came to Karlsfors, the further I wished myself away from it. When Björn

took hold of my hand to assist me out of the carriage, I trembled in all my limbs; my wise Björn said nothing, and asked nothing, but only pressed my hand.

Bruno was already with Jean Jacques. I felt alarmed at his paleness, and at his altered appearance. However I said nothing. He likewise was silent. Jane Maria was, I believe, somewhat offended on account of the greater confidence which was placed in me, and said something about "being too confident." Heaven knows how far this was from being the case with me at present! I would rather have been in Mesopotamia tending sheep, than have to appear thus as mediator before *ma chère mère.* After some unmeaning conversation broken by long pauses, Björn fixed his quiet serious look upon me. It was to be plainly read, "Now is the time!" I rose, I felt myself like the lamb for sacrifice. I took a few trembling steps towards the door, suddenly I found myself in Bruno's arms, who with his deep powerful expression said: "blessed be thy going! blessed be the words of peace from thy lips! My life hangs on them."

And the singular being pressed me vehemently to his breast, and his tears dropped upon my forehead.

I stood surprised and affected when Bruno drew me to him, kissed me, and said softly but ardently, "God bless thee!" I was blessed from this instant, all fear, all faint-heartedness left me. I was, as it were, transformed. My heart grew strong, and with steady and light steps, I entered the room where *ma cherè mère* sat in darkness. I projected no further plans, as to what I wished to say and do. I resigned all to the inspiration of the moment. Elsa stood before the dressing-room

floor immovable and silent like a statue. She motioned to me that she understood my intention and wished me success. She had left the door open, and I stole into the room. It was empty and dark. The curtains were drawn down. I unlocked the door to her bed-chamber softly, but when I entered the large dark room, I became terrified at seeing *ma chère mère* lying bent up together upon the floor. At my entrance, she partially raised herself and gave me a look so wild and bewildered, as to make me shudder. Notwithstanding, I drew a few paces nearer, and said with tender disquietude "Is *ma chère mère* ill?"

She raised herself entirely, and her cap appeared to erect itself upon her head. She walked up to me with a pale pointed nose, labouring breath, and in an attitude so threatening, that it would have alarmed any one who felt less valiant than I did at that moment.

"How did you venture to intrude into my room? How have you dared to disturb me?" inquired she with a wild and severe look, approaching nearer to me.

"I did not find *ma chère mère* in the saloon, therefore I came hither," said I, as composedly as possible, and without retreating a single step. She looked at me for a moment, while she appeared to collect herself, and then more calmly and in an easy manner said: "I suppose I had forgotten to lock the door . . . . stupid!" She retreated from me, opened the closet, and appeared to be anxious to put something away which she held in her hand; she dropped it on the floor and it rolled towards me, I stooped and picked it up. *Ma chère mère* reproached me with the look of a hyena, and wished, I

believe, to snatch it out of my hand; but I looked at the little locket on which a pretty little child's head was painted, and said with composure which seems at present scarcely conceivable, " what a pretty child !"

Ma chère mère stood still. She appeared violently agitated, but more softened. She took the locket gently out of my hand, held it however in such a position that I could contemplate it with her. " Yes," said she, "yes, indeed a fair child ! ah ! prince of boys ! do you know the child's name, Franciska,—do you know his name? do you know whose child it was? say do you know, do you know it ?"

She looked into my face with eager curiosity. I was obliged to cast down my eyes before her penetrating look. " No !" replied I, according to truth, although I guessed it.

" His name was Bruno !" began *ma chère mère* again. " He was my only son ! my, my, . . ." And *ma chère mère* at the same time pressed my shoulders between her hands so that I believed she would have crushed them.

" He was my only son," continued she, whilst she let go her hands and raised them towards heaven, " to-day is the day on which I gave him birth !"

She was silent, and afterwards began again speaking as it were to herself, and with an expression, which rent my very soul : " this day three-and-thirty years I gave birth to him. In pangs of death I gave him life. Oh, that I had died at that moment, I or he ! oh, . . , but he was my pride, my joy, my exultation, my hope my all. . . . . he was more than God to me ! Oh . . . . the Lord has smitten my pride. . . . . no, not he, but

the devil! the devil smote my strength and took my child! . . . Oh! . . . Children rend the heart in life and death. Mine was worse to me than death." Here she crossed her arms on her breast, and her head fell as if destroyed by grief.

On raising herself again, she turned to me with a sharp penetrating look, whilst she said:

"You know what has transpired, Franciska;—you know every thing about him. Do not deny it! Your husband knows it, and husband and wife are one. You know it . . . . I can read it in your soul."

I did not deny it. My look said enough. I drew nearer to *ma chère mère*. My heart glowed for her; she laid her hand upon my shoulder and said:

"The Lord keep you, Franciska, from ever suffering what I have, from ever feeling what I have felt, what I still feel; may He preserve you from it!"

"Child, child! It is an evil thing, when the heart of a mother is turned to hatred towards that which once laid under it; when the breast is obliged to thrust away what once was nourished by it. I tell you—it is an evil thing. What does the happy mother desire for her children? That they may live long upon earth; that they may settle and live near her; that they may catch her last breath and close her eyes, when the hour of her dissolution has arrived. Yes, this is her desire. But what do I wish for my only son? Yes, that"—and here her countenance assumed a most frightful expression—"that he may be dead! that he may lie deeply buried in the earth or in the bottom of the sea; that these eyes may never see him more; these ears may never again hear his voice! Oh, that he were dead, dead, dead!"

A shuddering seized me on hearing these wild words of desperation, and in the highest excitement of mind the unhappy mother proceeded:

"When the son goes from his paternal home into the wide world, what does the mother give him to take with on his long voyage? She gives him her blessing; the best her house affords she gives him for the way, and she herself follows him to the door with tears, kisses, and endearing names. Yes, this is what she does. But to my only son I gave my curse. This was all which, besides his life, he received from me, which he took with him into the wide wild world. My only child I cursed! Look you,"—continued she with increasing fierceness—"I had centred all my love on his head, my honour, my pride; and he brought infamy on mine. Look"—and she tore her cap from her head and threw it violently on the ground; her grey, almost white hair, fell waving down from her shoulders,—"look, grief then strewed ashes upon my head. My hair was once black—but in one night a snow fell upon it—it became white. The son has whitened the hair of his mother; he has caused her to be pointed at with the finger of scorn, while people said, that she was the mother of a thief. Ought she not to curse him?!"

"Ah, he was so young, yet... he"—I faltered out. I could scarcely speak. *Ma chère mère* did not hear me, but continued talking more to herself than to me: "Yes, my hair turned grey, and what was there, that did not fade? My complexion, my soul, the whole world! When the curse was uttered and the accursed was gone, and no one knew whither.... then came a strange time. Darkness sprang up within me, and I sat in dark-

ness, and days, months, years, rolled on, and I only knew that all was black—black as the crime and the curse. I thought that the spark of life would become extinct in darkness, but it was stronger than the darkness, than the grief .... and I stepped forth from the darkness and beheld the light again. I learned at least to endure it. I endeavoured to forget it; I thought; he is dead!"

My tears flowed, my whole soul was in agitation, and I exclaimed: "Oh the unfortunate one! He wandered about an outcast, found perhaps no bread and no home! He died perhaps on a foreign soil, and thought of his mother, and longed to be permitted to press her hand to his lips and to obtain forgiveness .... and behold! .... Oh, wretched one!"

Ma chère mère was pale as death, and trembled violently; she gasped for breath. "Franciska!" said she at length, with a strong voice, "Franciska! desist from this useless lamentation! Bread,—he had no need to want. He could work; he was a man, and in youthful years strong as a lion. Home—he did not seek. His mind was bent on the wide world, and of this he will have had enough. But the curse"—here she approached nearer to me with tears, which quivered in her large eyes, and laid her hand on my head,—the curse is no longer in my heart. When it was uttered, I thirsted to retract it, and I should have done so, Franciska, I should have done so then, had he borne the punishment, and submitted to the penance which his crime demanded. I therefore sought him in the night —but he was gone. He fled from forgiveness—he did not wish to merit it—but I have laid it on his grave;

there it rests with the sun, with the flowers, imparting peace to him. At times yet, when remembrance of the past, and grief seize me, so that my breast is ready to burst, and my brain reels with dizziness, what do I ... then I sometimes still pronounce the curse—but afterwards the blessing! Or what think you, did I, when lying in the dust writhing like a worm before the Lord, I pressed the picture of my son to my breast? Think you, that I cursed him? Peace, peace to his ashes!"

"And if he still breathed," .... said I, with a feeling which I cannot describe—"were he alive still, and should he have atoned for the crimes of his youth by a long course of sufferings; if, in preference to all the honours of the world, he should long for the forgiveness of his mother, for the joy of pressing her once more to his heart?"

"Were this the case, Franciska! ....have you heard that he is alive?"—and her voice faltered,—"if you know his wish and desire, then should you tell him, that he must never come to that country, which would be ashamed of him; that he must not bear the name which he has dishonoured; that he must not venture to appear in the presence of that mother, whom he has covered with shame. But .... but tell him .... that I have retracted the curse .... half of my property will I send him into a foreign land; he may write to me and desire from me what he will, and I will send him what he demands, but—not a foot shall he set across the threshold of my door!"

I bent my knees and embraced hers. "Mother, mother!" exclaimed I, almost beside myself, "is this christian-like? Is this right?"

"Rise!" said she vehemently. "Not a word more. No one can judge me in this matter! What I have said, I have said. I forbid you to speak any more to me on the subject. Speak not of him, if you do not wish .... Think you that it is a child's play? I tell you it is a contest between reason and frenzy. Do not stir up the evil demons within me! Away with these recollections, these thoughts, away, away!"

I rose. My heart was tossed amidst contending feelings. *Ma chère mère's* wild-like appearance and her gestures, however, evinced to me that the present was not the crisis to give vent to them. Still I would not give up all hope. I looked at her with entreaties, with folded hands, but she turned away from me.

"Go!" said she harshly. "Our conversation is finished. I wish to be alone. Go, I desire it!"

I went—with my soul full of bitter anguish. *Ma chère mère* locked the door after me. On coming out into the dressing-room, I saw a man standing there with his forehead pressed against the wall. It was Bruno. Terrified, I walked up to him, and laid my hand upon his arm. "For heaven's sake, Bruno," said I, softly, "what are you doing here? So near" .... Bruno turned his face slowly towards me. It was pale as death; cold sweat stood upon his brow; his look was bewildered; he gazed at me with gloom and indifference. But suddenly he collected himself, and rushed, with his hand before his forehead, out of the room. I followed him, and thanked heaven when I saw Björn meet him, seize him by the arm, and prevail on him to compose himself, so as to avoid the suspicions of the servants. With apparent calmness they left the house together.

I meanwhile went to Jean Jacques. I did not wish to tell him and his wife all that had transpired. I only told them, that I had not accomplished any thing; that I did not venture to let *ma chère mère* suspect how near her son was, because she was ready to go out of her mind at the thoughts of it. Jean Jacques put his hands into his coat pocket, paced up and down the room, and said: "This is dreadful, this is dreadful! How can any one be so unreasonable? And then Bruno! I begged him to keep quiet; but when he heard the voice of his mother—whose sound for a moment reached us here—he grew as one possessed. He tore away from Lars Anders, who wished to hold him back, and rushed out. It was well that he did not go into *ma chère mère's* presence. A dreadful explosion would have followed."

Jane Maria also could not conceive how any one could be so little master of his own reason; but she said that she had anticipated how the matter would end, and had never expected any good result from this trial.

Neither husband nor wife spoke in accordance with my feelings. I longed to be with Björn. From him alone I looked for comfort and assistance. At length he came. He was heated and agitated. I threw myself on his neck and wept. I could do nothing else. He pressed me to his bosom and merely said: "We will not let our courage sink, not give up all as lost! No tree falls at a single blow."

"Ah, what shall we do?" inquired I with a deep sigh.

"At present we must go home," replied he, "we will then talk more about it. The cabriolet is wait-

ing for us below. Adieu, Jean Jacques! Adieu, sister! Come, Fanny!"

In the cabriolet I related every thing to Björn which had transpired between *ma chère mère* and me. He merely said: "Hm!....hm!...." We then sat mute. But I knew that he thought as I did, and more wisely than I. I felt soothed, sitting silently by his side as we drove through the roaring forest. The weather suited my temper of mind. It had grown dark, and the branches of the pine and fir trees moved in a kind of melancholy disquietude.

"However," said Björn, consolingly, "when we arrived at home, "one thing, however, is still gained. This dangerous state of apathy is broken, and will probably not return. This one advantage may prepare the way for a second. We will not despair. I shall see Bruno to-morrow."

However, I am straightened in heart and soul, and know not what more to say.

IX.

FRAGMENT OF A LETTER FROM BRUNO TO ANTONIO.

The 3rd September.

What is living? Is it to drag on meaningless days without interest or pleasure, and gradually to fail and sink, like a building that is rotten within? No, rather to press forward to the future, at least for a morrow; this is living!" A morrow!—For me probably no morrow will ever rise again. The stream of life is turned away from me. Why should I remain in the desert and thirst? Mother, mother! from whom I am an outcast, thou hast dried up my world, my heart. But this very night yet will I liberate myself, will taste revenge. My mother! Is it love, is it hatred towards her, by which I am propelled? I do not know but this very night yet will I stand before her and melt the ice-bands of her heart or blow out my own brains and cover her with my blood. I will awaken in her breast—remorse. I will call a tear into her eye which never shall dry up!....She will not forgive....Well, then, she shall weep! Why should I live? For whom? For what? I have drunk of the wild joys of life; I am sick of them. To the better, the purer, the way is barred against me;—barred by my mother. Bitter

curse-bearing, feeling! My mother's heart is closed—closed against me; so then is heaven also—the bosom of God; yes, it must be so, for all the bitterness of the world is collected in my heart. I will be revenged on my mother! And notwithstanding....in this dark moment a mild, refreshing feeling steals into my soul. Serena! Her dear remembrance awakens it. She rejected me, but I cannot blame her. She sacrificed my love in the cause of her duty; she left me alone; but my soul feels tenderly for her. This feeling is good. I will not injure her. But when I saw her so firm, so strong, she withdrew further from me. Like as the star in brighter light grows pale, thus she faded in my sight when she approached nearer to the angels. She can not hold me back,—the distance between us is too wide. And should my death even pain her—she will enwrap herself in her robe of innocence, in her holy garb of virtue, and will remain firm and still. God is with her Pure angel. Peace be with thee! I was not permitted to press thee to my glowing bosom; but like the heaven which is thine inheritance, and from which I am an outcast, thou wilt perhaps look down upon me and refresh my heart; for none has the power like thee. Farewell! Now our ways part for ever: mine goes downwards into the abyss of darkness, thine upwards to the excess of light. Farewell!

Farewell, my dreams!....ye precious dreams of a more glorious life, of reconciliation and love.....Fare-ye-well, too, ye gentle, loving feelings within my soul, which I have loved and cherished, as the better part of myself! And ye sounds, which I have awaked for so many a night, to answer to the questions of my soul, to

allay their torture, slumber, slumber! I shall hearken to you no more. When I called you forth, I had still hope. Now I have none.

No, Antonio, I have no hope. Desperation lies in the depth of that trial, which I will once put to destiny, Antonio, farewell! Thanks for your friendship! Thanks for your love, given in spite of all my errors! Forgive my faults, be at peace with me, as I am with you.

But thou, my mother! With thee no peace yet. This very night yet will I press a kiss upon thy lips, that of life or of death. In vain dost thou endeavour to escape from it. Thou shalt not escape it! Higher powers are with me....this night!....

X.

THIRTEENTH LETTER.

FRANCISKA W. TO MARIA L.

The 4th and 5th September.

Oh, Maria! my dear Maria! what events, what scenes, what a change. How one night can transform every thing——but I will tell you all from the beginning. I have seen death near at hand, Maria; death wild and terrific. Ah, indeed he is still near! However, I must try to reduce to order my mind and my composition.

During the two days after my last interview with *ma chère mère* we heard nothing of her. On the third Björn rode to Karlsfors, in order to ascertain the state of affairs there. He heard that *ma chère mère* had been in a highly excited and uneasy state of mind. During the nights, she had been heard walking about in her apartments almost incessantly; in the day time she often cried violently. At present, however, she was much more composed; she received Björn kindly, inquired after his wife, came into the drawing-room to tea, and appeared gradually to re-assume her wonted deportment.

The description of *ma chère mère's* sufferings affected me. I longed to see her again, and to hear a friendly word from her, and I felt a real joy, when early the next morning (it was on the 3rd September) I received a small kind note from her, in which she stated, that she intended to drive to town in the forenoon to purchase various articles, and proposed to me to bear her company. If I consented, she would fetch me and bring me home again in the evening.

I just had occasion to buy some household wares, and most heartily argeed to the proposal, after I had spoken a few words to Björn, and promised him a good dinner at home, although I should not be there to help him to demolish it. Björn did not by any means look desperate, embraced me, and drove in the cabriolet to the town were we were to meet.

My thoughts were not without some disquietude and embarrassment in anticipating my meeting with *ma chère mère.* How should we feel towards each other after the recent violent scenes? What was I to say? What sort of a countenance was I to put on? I was freed from this suspense by the arrival of *ma chère mère.* She did not get out of the carriage, but on stepping up to her, she extended her hand to me with a grave but friendly countenance, helped me up to her, threw back my hood and kissed me on my forehead and lips with great cordiality. This had a salutary effect upon me, and from that instant I felt all restraint vanish. But I felt melancholy. *Ma chère mère* was silent, the sky dark, the air heavy. By the spot where the road leads to Ramm, *ma chère mère* turned her head towards the other side. My heart moved within me at this indica-

tion of irreconcilable feelings; but when *ma chère mère* after a while turned to me with some indifferent remark, I was struck with her awful paleness, and could not be angry with her, though I was so grieved that I was ready to cry. Thus we arrived in the town.

"In Madam Rhen, the provost's lady, you will become acquainted with a real manager," said *ma chère mère* to me, on our arrival within the city-gate.

We alighted at the house of Madam Rhen, which *ma chère mère*, every time come to town, makes her sort of head quarters. It is impossible to look at Madam Rhen, without at once making the conclusion that she is pleasantness, hospitality, and loquacity itself; nor can one look upon her daughter Renetta without thinking, "the apple does not fall far from the tree!" One cannot see the preparations for *ma chère mère* without perceiving that the latter is a great "*puissance*" to them, and that they love and fear her at the same time. On her account I was likewise treated with warm cordiality; and kind Renetta almost choked me whilst pulling off my cloak with all her might, the cords of which I had clumsily drawn into a knot.

Madam Rhen had been a sort of housekeeper with *ma chère mère*, who had betrothed and married her to pastor Rhen, who in this was resigned to the guidance of *ma chère mère* and to his fate. Whether he had to repent of it, I do not know. Madam Rhen was now a widow in affluence, whose honour and pleasure it was to be able to entertain now and then the honourable general's lady, by whom she was plainly called "Rhen."

Rhen's and Renetta's pleasant behaviour, the neat,

clean apartments, and two pretty little pictures, representing children playing with animals, made an agreeable impression upon me. The fine Smaland cheese and a glass of Malaga, which were immediately served on a snow-white table-cloth, were excellent. After luncheon, *ma chère mère* and I went out on our shopping excursion. The weather had cleared up, the air was pleasant, and I felt in myself also that it grew brighter and brighter.

Gladdening hopes, I can hardly say of what, arose within my soul, and when the sun broke through the clouds, I fancied as if no irremediable misfortune and no irreconcilable hearts could be upon earth; I believed that all would end well. I am naturally—kind Maria—a musical instrument, perhaps of too easy a touch. Love me as I am! I love Byron, because he speaks to the heart "*a pendulum betwixt a smile and a tear.*"

In the town every thing was full of life and bustle. It was market-day, and the great market was filled with people, carriers and carts. I was heartily delighted to see the gay crowds, I was glad to meet Björn in the town. I thought of gaining a moment's time to pay Serena a visit. Every thing appeared to me comfortable and animating. The smell of fresh hay breathed from the farmer-waggons. Here a countryman held up his smoked ham to the nose of one inclined to purchase, there a young female peasant commended her fresh butter, here a bundle of carrots was separated from the beetroots, whose companion it had been in the vegetable-basket, there pears were sold at

a heller* each. There was a buzzing of cheerful voices, of talking and laughing, and between men horses and carts a merry company of sparrows was flocking along, twittering down here and there in the market, pecking at the spilled manna and flying away in an instant, when any troublesome person stepped amongst their light flock, then cheerfully descending again. Healthy-looking women were sitting in regular rows along the houses in the market with their flour-tubs, their large loaves, their baskets with pears and pastry, and scolding famously at the street-boys, who, on passing, tried to make up for their lack of money by impertinent language. A spirit of wantonness came over me. Before me stood a ragged little boy, with a good-tempered face, who, whistling, philosophically surveyed the riches of the market. Behind him, upon a step, stood his empty basket, over which a net had been thrown. The basket was quickly filled with sweet-pears, and the old woman who sold them carefully lifted up the net, and gave me a wink that she enjoyed the joke. The little lad will wonder long how the pears came there. Further off stood a horse, tied to a window-post, and stretched out its half-starved head for a few straws, but could not reach them. I took a good large bundle of hay out of the cart, and gave it to the horse, whilst I looked round, somewhat alarmed, for the owner. *Ma chère mère* laughed, and also gave it a bundle, which the horse eat.

"My good woman! why do you tempt me with your fine plums? I must have half a measure. Pour them

* A small copper coin worth about half a farthing.

into my handkerchief here. But the money? Ah, that wo'nt do!"

The good woman was obliged to go into a shop to get change. "But who will sell your pears and plums in the mean time? I?" The old woman went, and I seated myself upon her stool and sold fruit and took the money. My most difficult customer to treat with was *ma chère mère*, who would have a great deal for her money and bartered unmercifully and abused me and my fruit. I answered as well and as roughly as I could. At length my good woman came back with the change, and was so satisfied with my administration of her property, that I obtained a quarter of a measure full of plums into the bargain.

You are surprised, I suppose, at *ma chère mère's* patience at all this. But things of this kind highly delight her; and one of those qualities which renders her so agreeable to me is her kind and sportive way of entering into every innocent joke.

However the time had expired. The clock of the church-steeple struck twelve. We were obliged to make haste, if we wished to finish our markets before dinner. I looked into all the doors and street-corners, to discover any trace of Björn; but in vain. We went into several shops, inspected various things, but bought nothing. *Ma chère mère* scolded the shopmen, on account of their bad goods; and when they tried to speak in their defence she out-talked them all. Meantime the clock struck one. *Ma chère mère* said: "We must not let Rhen's soup get cold!" We returned: I quite vexed in not having met Björn; but on walking through the R— street, what did I behold at the corner of the

street? a sight to me a thousand times more welcome than enchanted castles and kind fairies? yes—a broad, grey back, indubitably belonging to Björn. I sprang softly up to him, held him fast, and said, "You dare not get loose, you Bear! Now I have you fast. You come with me!"

"And dine with us at Madam Rhens, and not leave town this afternoon," added *ma chère mère.*

Björn was not difficult to persuade; he took his little woman's arm and walked with her to Madam Rhen's, amidst serious lectures respecting her presumption in playing the part of the police. But although he joked, I saw, notwithstanding, that he was not cheerful at heart.

Rhen and Renetta were fully occupied when we entered in the arrangement of the dinner-table. When they got sight of Björn, they rushed upon him in raptures, and the joy of the good people was complete. We sat down to table. The dinner was excellent; my appetite no less so; and the hostesses were very talkative. I had had some pleasure in the morning, and should now gladly have been cheerful, but Björn sat there with a countenance so grave as to make me quite uneasy. I saw that Bruno was in his head, and lay heavy at his heart. He now filled my thoughts too, and my cheerful mood was gone; yes, I even reproached myself for having indulged in it at all. Björn often looked at *ma chère mère* attentively and penetratingly, and I noticed that she tried to avoid his gaze. I was pleased with this influence of Björn over her. But all at once she stared at him with her large dark eyes, so piercingly that his little grey ones were

cast down, and I felt myself compelled to smile silently at this skirmish of looks.

Immediately after the coffee Björn left us, in order to attend some more of his patients; he would then set off for Rosenvik. I went with him as far as the passage, for in the room there was no peace from Rhen and Renetta to be found. "Björn, you are dejected, uneasy," said I troubled, and seized his hand. "I have seen Bruno to-day," said he, "and am very much afraid that the affair will end *badly*."

"Good God!" exclaimed I.—"Yes, may He be our help!" said Björn, "for here the help of man is vain. Bruno appears to meditate a desperate trial. What was his plan, I could not discover; nor did I wish now to prevent him from taking his own cause in hand. What cannot be bent must sometimes be broken. But now go in, Franciska, go in!—More of this this evening; this evening I shall see you again."

Björn's words had quite excited me, and my feelings were no doubt visible in my countenance, for *ma chère mère* asked me vivaciously, "whether I was ill," and my hostesses exclaimed that I looked so pale. I complained of a little dizziness, and in truth every thing went round and round with me.

Madam Rhen knocked at the window, then opened it and cried: "Madam, Madam." Two gentlemen looked up, and a boy came to the window. "Madam!" cried Madam R., still louder, "Madam Ahl!—oh I see it is Madam Follin—pray, my dear woman, oblige me; here is a two-dollar bank-note, take it, and run to Bergström's and ask for a bottle of their best Eau de Cologne for Madam Rhen, and bring the change.

Thank you kindly, dear woman!"

My hostesses now loaded me with attentions, liqueurs, and scents, begged me to sit near the window, and to divert myself by looking out into the street. I thanked them for their kind intention, but said, that the open air would probably restore me soonest. *Ma chère mère* rose up immediately, and we walked out.

We spent more than two hours in making purchases, and walking in and out of shops. *Ma chère mère* made me a present, much too splendid for me, but her expressions and her whole manner rendered it precious to me. I bought several trifling things for Björn, which he needed, but which he always forgot to get for himself. We had promised to take tea with Madam Rhen. *Ma chère mère* did not wish that I should neglect it, and I saw, to my vexation, that I should not have time to see Serena. On our way back to Madam R's. we walked across the market-place, which in the forenoon had been so full of bustle. It was now deserted, and covered with the rubbish of the market and the birds. *Ma chère mère* was angry at it, and promised to speak to the burgomaster about it.

One solitary hay-cart stood there yet at one end of the market, and a number of people had collected around it. *Ma chère mère* stopped and inquired of some one who was coming along, what was the matter. "A great wolf, which has been shot to-day," was the reply. "We must see it," said *ma chère mère*, and went forward and pushed her way through the crowd of people, who, on recognising her, immediately made way. I followed her, like a little boat, which follows the tracks left behind by a frigate. When we came up

to the cart, we there observed an uncommonly great and fine wolf. There was strong crowding around us, but *ma chère mère* laid, by way of protection, her strong arm around me, and sometimes turned towards the people, saying, "Do not press so!" which was immediately repeated by many other voices, and procured more room for us. The countryman to whom the cart belonged, related on *ma chère mère's* inquiry, how he had gone out with his gun early in the morning, and seen at the edge of the forest two young wolves, lying upon a lair, against a fir-tree. He went nearer, and aimed at them. At that instant their mother jumped with a great howl out of the wood, and placed herself before them. The shot went off, she fell, and her young ones ran into the wood. The huntsman ran up to the wolf, she struggled with death, a second shot ended her struggle, and he dragged home his prey delighted. I saw, that the tongue of the animal hung far out on one side, and when I mentioned something about it, the countryman shewed me that the tongue was almost entirely bitten off. "She has done it, I suppose, in her death-struggle," he added. For the first time I felt pity for a wolf. I could not refrain from stroking the head of the fine animal caressingly, whilst I said softly: "Kind mother!"—"Let us go Franciska," said *ma chère mère*, briefly, and we made our way back in the same manner as we had got in *Ma chère mère* looked gloomy, and whilst we walked across the market, I could not omit saying, from a full heart: "What fine feelings dwell in animals, which, according to the opinion of man, nevertheless stand so far beneath him! A mother-wolf dies for her young ones! . . . ."

"The young ones of the mother-wolf," said *ma chère mère*, in a tone of bitterness, "had not grieved their mother. She died in her pride in them. Better to die with a bitten tongue, than to live with a rent heart."

We were both silent after this. Further on we came to a little green plot of ground, on which fine poplar-trees raised their quivering tops. The sun gilding them on his decline, and a number of little birds filled them with their songs. Benches were set against them for pedestrians to enjoy the shade. On one of the benches sat two persons, who attracted our attention. One of these was an elderly lady of good-natured appearance, not well dressed, but with peculiar neatness. Next to her sat a man, dressed neat likewise, with an oval, pale face, hanging lips, and with the air of an imbecile. *Ma chère mère*, who possesses a good portion of curiosity, approached the couple. On drawing nearer we saw that the man was blind. "Is that your brother, good woman?" inquired *ma chère mère*. "My son," replied the woman, sighing. "Son? How old is he?" —"Five-and-twenty years." (He looked as if he were fifty.) "He is blind, and, I think, deaf too?" continued *ma chère mère*.—"Blind, deaf, and dumb," replied the mother.—"How long has he been in this state?"—"From his birth."—"Has ne any ideas at all whatever?"—"That is a difficult matter to find out; he is obliged to be led, fed, nursed, and guarded, like a little child. But he cries and laughs sometimes." —"What is it that makes him laugh?"—"When he comes out into the open air, he grows cheerful, and laughs; also when I caress him for any length of time.

Heaven be praised! he knows me!" Hereupon she began to stroke her son's cheeks kindly, and to pat him on the shoulders. He smiled at it more and more and showed increased pleasure, and his countenance assumed an almost rational expression.—"Is he ever angry?" inquired I.—"Yes, often; and then he becomes quite raving. But still he has a kind heart. He seldom sleeps at nights, and then he is accustomed to grope and feel the beds of his nephews and nieces, to find whether they are well wrapped up. If they have thrown off their covering, he spreads it carefully over them again. He is particularly concerned about his little niece, and when he hears her cry, he gets quite beside himself."

"I suppose you notice him more than all the other children?"

"Yes, of course. They have reason; he has only me. I can seldom go from him."

At this moment the deaf and dumb made a sound of impatience. It was a sort of howling, but the howling of wild beasts is certainly music, compared with this. Tears gushed from his blind eyes, and copiously bedewed his face, which in other respects expressed no trouble. The poor man dried them with his hands.

"And this has lasted for five-and-twenty years, and may last still longer," said *ma chère mère*, with a voice which indicated how deeply her soul was affected by it —"do you not grow tired, dear woman?"

"No! With God's help, I shall never be tired of my child, but wait patiently for the hour, in which it may please the Lord to deliver us. Oh that I may not die before him!"

"What is your name, good woman?"

"Margareth Beck, widow of Beck the carpenter."

"Good evening, Mrs. Beck. God bless you! We shall meet again." *ma chère mère* went, whilst she said, half audibly to herself: "Five-and-twenty years!"

I said nothing, but hoped within myself, that this event would not be without fruit in her heart. We walked for a time silently and slowly, when *ma chère mère* hastily looked up, seemingly dispelled something from her mind, and partly reproachfully, partly cheerfully, she said: "You walk like a tortoise, Franciska. We must now make haste to Madam Rhen's, and take our tea quickly, that we may not have to go home in the dark. But to get away from Madam Rhen and her tea quickly, was a matter of impossibility. There was no end to her offers and pressings of biscuits, cracknels, tea-cakes and gingerbread; and how she began to talk of supper, and that she had for this especial occasion procured a fat turkey, and hoped that the General's lady would put up with it, and not cause her the grievous disappointment of having her preparation despised. I expected that *ma chère mère* would have declined it at once, but, to my great astonishment, she replied neither yes, nor no; and when Madam Rhen, in her warmth, spoke of the bright evening, of the moon-light, and I positively believe, of sun-light, and nothern-light too, *ma chère mère* at length said carelessly: "Well, well, we shall see!" Madam Rhen took this for consent, gave Renetta a nod, and walked out with her to the kitchen. I was just on the point of turning to *ma chère mère*, with my fear of the dark, and our journey home, when I perceived that

she had rested her elbows on the table, and was covering her face with her hands in one of those attacks of melancholy, which I had heard so often talked of, but had never yet witnessed. I then neither wished nor ventured to disturb her, and we both sat still and silent till Madam Rhen entered with lights, accompanied by Renetta, who brought in the roasted turkey and currant-jelly. *Ma chère mère* now changed her position, but remained gloomy and silent. I also was less talkative, but cheerful Madam Rhen did not trouble herself about that. She and her daughter were continually talking, relating, and interrupting each other. All the chit-chat, all the little intrigues of the town were dished and served up in long stories. I could not help being amused by several of them, and more than once I was obliged to laugh at the narration, as well as the narrators, who were incited by this to further gossip. I cannot say whether *ma chère mère* heard any of all this. Her thoughts appeared to be concentrated. I was surprised that she could play her part so well at the turkey, and at last by a few forcible remarks even commend Madam Rhen's preparation.

I was tired of all the eating and gossip, and I longed to be at home with my Björn, and said "thank goodness," when we got into the carriage. Meanwhile it had grown very dark, and the sky, instead of affording us any of the light and reflection which Madam Rhen had promised us, had become obscured by a gray mantle of cloud around it, which did not admit of the least glimmer of the stars to be visible. But in the western horizon it lightened vividly and frequently, although unaccompanied by thunder, it was sheet-

lightning. *Ma chère mère* took the reins out of the hands of her little page, who took his seat behind the carriage when we soon heard him snoring.

The evening was warm and still, and this ride by the reflection of the lightning would not have been disagreeable to me, had I not felt anxious, and besides rather timid, for the darkness was sometimes so profound, as to render it impossible to discern the road, and *ma chère mère* was not absent as usual; she seemed agitated, and often held her handkerchief before her face. I was glad to perceive this emotion, but it inspired me with uneasiness respecting our drive. We proceeded nevertheless safely, although very slowly, and in spite of my fear, in spite of all disquiet and anxious thoughts, I at length grew sleepy by the slow pace and gentle motion of the carriage. I nodded and dreamed I know not how long, but was suddenly roused by a violent jerk, which the carriage received from some obstacle in the road. I looked round, we were in a dark and thick forest. I felt awe-stricken, it seemed to me that we had been driving long enough to be at our journey's end.

"I suppose we are on the right road?" said I somewhat doubting. "I think we have been driving such a length of time. I only hope we have not lost our way!"

At these words *ma chère mère* appeared as if waking out of a dream, and said quickly and as if somewhat offended: "Never be uneasy, dear child, when I drive, should not I and my horses find the road on which we have so often worked ourselves weary? We have ridden together I dare say these fifteen years, but never

yet out of our way."

She let the horses feel the whip, and they went faster. I was timid, and fancied I observed by the light of the sky, which had brightened up a little, that every thing around us looked strange and surprising.

"I cannot conceive, where we can be," said I, at length, incapable of concealing my uneasiness. "I don't see my way again at all. Such a lofty and thick wood is no where to be met with in the vicinity of Karlsfors."

"Don't be silly, Franciska!" said *ma chère mère* exasperated, "and don't fancy ghosts, where there are none! At night the wood appears doubly as lofty and thick as in the day. I cannot distinctly see where we are, but I notice that my animals smell home and the stable. They only run in this way, when they are near Karlsfors, and hark how they snort! Look, are we not in the long avenue! Yes, to be sure, we shall soon be there. I fancy I saw a glimmering of the house yonder."

We were now in reality in an avenue; *ma chère mère* hastened the horses' course, and they flew forward more rapidly every minute. Now came a violent flash of lightning, which continued for several seconds, and by its light a large dark-looking house stood forth like a gigantic ghost out of the darkness, not Karlsfors, but —Ramm. Ramm with its dark facade, its large wings, lay before us in the reflection of the lightning. Threatening arms stretched themselves out as it were against us, and every moment were we drawn nearer and nearer.

I looked with terror at *ma chère mère*. She sat as if

petrified. Her look was fixed and staring; her hand which held the reins dropped. Now all was night again, but only for a few seconds. Again a flash came so vivid, so long, that trees, bushes, and buildings seemed in flames. At this moment there suddenly stood a tall dark figure before us. The horses frightened and no longer restrained by a guiding hand, plunged about right and left over grass and shrubs, they flew down to the lake, which by the reflection of the lightning glimmered brightly between the trees.

With convulsive violence *ma chère mère* endeavoured to snatch the reins, which had dropped out of her hand. "Help! Help!" cried I with all the might of desperation. At that instant some one rushed before the horses and seized the reins, I saw them rear up, saw a man struggling with them,—by the light of incessant flashes I recognized Bruno. I saw him knocked down by the horses, I fancied I saw them passing over his body. I saw no more,—I became insensible.

On re-awaking I found myself in *ma chère mère's* arms, I beheld over me her pale countenance, it wore an expression of anguish and tenderness, which I never shall forget.

"God be praised, she is recovering!" said *ma chère mère*, and pressed a maternal kiss on my forehead Above was a lofty dome lighted from the centre by a lamp. A tall and very dark female, whom I had never seen before, was near me, and held a strong smelling bottle to me. My senses were not clear, and I could not recall to my recollection what had just happened, but in this bewilderment of thought I sought for Bruno. In the darkest part of the chamber stood .... was it a

bloody ghost, which my terrified imagination called up? was it a real human form? My eyes stared inquiringly at it. It stepped forward—it was Bruno—but, good heavens! how did he appear? Blood streamed down from his forehead and fell upon his bare bosom; his clothes were torn, his cheek pale as death, wild disquietude flamed in his eyes, lightning seemed to hide under his contracted eyebrows and his lips were compressed in firm determination. He approached us, at a motion from him the strange female withdrew, and we three were left together. I disengaged myself from *ma chère mère's* arms, and raised myself on the sofa. My perfect consciousness had returned, my soul was in the most violent suspense, and with an indescribable anguish I contemplated mother and son who were standing opposite each other face to face. For a moment they were both silent. Their looks seemed as if they would pierce each other. *Ma chère mère* appeared to have been struck with wild amazement, she retreated a little. Bruno advanced a step and spoke slowly as if his tongue were paralysed. "You are saved, God be praised! and for me there remains but the alternative, to die or to gain forgiveness—my mother, my mother!" he exclaimed suddenly with a voice, as if an angel had unloosed his feelings and utterance, whilst with a heart-rending expression he sank down and embraced her knees. "Mother, wilt thou not forgive? Wilt thou not bless thy son? Remove the curse from my brow! Mother I have suffered much, I have wandered about far from peace, without peace am I still, without peace for ever if still an outcast from thy breast. I have suf-

fered, I have repented . . . . I can, I will humble myself. But then must thou forgive, then must thou bless me my mother. Mother remove the curse from me! Lay a blessing on my head! Mother wilt thou not stop the blood which flows on thine account? See mother!" and Bruno lifted up his bloody locks, beneath which deep wounds streaming with blood were to be seen— "See, mother! if thou wilt not lay thine hand here in blessing, then I swear by heaven that stream of blood shall never be stanched till it has ceased running with my life, and laid me in the grave, the grave where alone thou wouldst lay thy forgiveness. There, there only shall I find peace. Oh, mother! is a crime committed in the wild years of youth so unpardonable? Cannot a life spent in virtue and love effect a reconciliation? Mother, reject me not! Let thy son's voice penetrate into thine heart! Grant him pardon, free full pardon!"

Overwhelmed by my feelings I threw myself by Bruno on my knees, and cried: "Pardon, pardon!"

What during this time passed within *ma chère mère* I know not. It looked like a struggle between life and death. She did not stir; with a fixed immovable gaze she looked down on the kneeling suppliants, and convulsions crossed her pale lips. But when his voice was silent, she lifted up his hand, and pressed it vehemently against her heart. "My son? Oh!" ..... said she in a low voice; she sighed deeply, her face turned ashy pale, her eyes closed, she tottered, and would have sunk to the ground had not Bruno quickly caught her in his arms.

He stood still for a moment, pressing his mother to

his breast, and looked at her countenance, over which death had poured its awful calmness.

"So, then, it has come to pass," said he with concentrated emotion;—"it has at last come to pass that we are re-united, mother;—that thou reclinest on the breast of thy son, and he presses against thine! Thou art pale, my mother, but thou lookest tranquil and kind—kind as God's forgiveness. Such was not thy look when last I saw thee. But the hour of wrath is passed,—is it not so, my mother? The grave has opened, and we will go down to it in peace, and heart to heart; one in our last hour, as we were one at my first sigh!" and he kissed her pale lips and cheeks with ardent tenderness.

"Bruno! Bruno!" said I entreatingly, and caught hold of his arm, weeping. "Bruno, you will destroy your mother and yourself if you go on thus. Come, we must lay her on a bed; we must try to recall her to recollection, and then bind up your wounds."

Bruno made no reply, but took his mother in his arms and carried her into another room, where he laid her down gently upon a bed. "Hagar!" he cried, and the tall dark female immediately entered. She threw herself at his feet, kissed his hands weeping, and spoke vehemently and entreatingly to him in a language which I did not understand. He repelled her with harshness; and it seemed to me that he charged her to attend to *ma chère mère*. She obeyed sobbing. I saw that Bruno staggered, and supported himself against the wall. I went to him.

"Bruno!" said I, "for your mother's sake think of yourself. You must lie down, you must have your wounds dressed."

He laid hold of a light couch and pulled it forward, so that it stood directly opposite the bed on which his mother lay, and threw himself on it. His head lay towards her, and his look was directed on her. Hagar and I stood between them. In broken Swedish, and in a violent agitation of mind, Hagar said to me:

"Dress his wounds, dress him, or else he will die!"

I folded an handkerchief together, moistened it with cold water, and said to Bruno:

"For your mother's sake let me bind up your wounds as well as I am able, or else you will bleed to death." I was going to do so, but he held back my hand, and said with a harsh tone, which reminded one of the mother:

"It dare not be done; *she* has not yet forgiven, not yet blessed me. My blood shall not be stanched till then, I have sworn it."

To persuade Bruno was hopeless, I, therefore, turned all my care and attention to *ma chère mère*, but for a long time all my exertions to recall her to consciousness were fruitless. A moment of indescribable anxiety passed over. I now dreaded, indeed, that mother and son would sink together into the grave.

"If we could have bled her!" said I.

"That can be done," replied Hagar, and ran out. Almost at the same instant *ma chère mère* lifted up her eyes, and fixed them anxiously on me.

"Where is he?" inquired she vehemently, "I have not been dreaming!"

"He is here," replied I, "he is near, he is bleeding to death whilst waiting for his mother's blessing."

"Where is he?" inquired she once more. I stood

by her pillow, I stood between mother and son, instead of answering to the question I drew back, and their looks met each other; a ray of divine light, of inexpressible love broke that instant forth,—their souls were melted in it.

She rose up quickly and stretched out her hand: whilst with the full force of a mother's feeling she said,

"My son, come hither, I will bless thee!"

He rose. The tall, majestic man tottered like a child, and sank down upon his knees before his mother's bed; she laid her hands upon his bloody head, and spoke with a strong voice and profound solemnity:

"I take away the curse which I once laid upon the head of my son. I grant him my perfect forgiveness. May the man expiate the crime of the youth. May the past be as had it never been. I acknowledge, that to my son I now owe my life. I pray to God the Almighty to bless thee, my son, Bruno Mansfelt, as I now bless thee. Amen!" And now she opened out her arms to him, he threw his round her, breast pressed against breast, lip against lip; they held each other in a long, firm embrace. Every breath appeared to be full of reconciliation, full of love, full of bliss! fifteen years of bitter anguish were forgotten and recompensed in that moment. I stood near them, and wept for joy and thankfulness!

Hagar's return interrupted this moment of pure rapture. Bruno once more kissed his mother's hands with profound love, he then rose up, and cheerfully called out: "Now dress my wounds—stop the blood! I have my mother's blessing!"

He sat down, suffered us to do what we liked with

him, and was docile and still like a happy child. Hagar assisted him with great skill, and she succeeded in checking the blood in a great degree.

In the meantime I procured writing materials, and hastened to write a note to Björn to inform him of what had happened. The whole house was now in motion, and I found it no difficult task to find a messenger, who immediately crossed the water to Rosenvik.

I then went again to the reconciled. Bruno's wounds were bandaged. He was very pale but quiet, and his face had an expression of serenity and happiness which I never saw in him before. *Ma chère mère*, on the other hand, appeared to me violently agitated, although she endeavoured to lie composed. Her entire body trembled as if in a violent ague, but her eyes were gentle and tender. She scarcely ever turned them from her son.

"Now hear what I have to request of you," said I to them both. "If you wish to live for each other, you must be separated for a short time, and each must enjoy a little quiet. Bruno, will you not let us accompany you into the next room! Will *ma chère mère* not comply with the entreaty of her Franciska?"

But *ma chère mère* replied:

"Who knows how long mother and son may have to live yet; it may soon be over. Do not separate us!"

"Do not separate us!" repeated Bruno with a faint voice.

"You must at least take something soothing. Do you not wish to live for each other?"

Hagar put a bottle of opium into my hands. *Ma chère mère* refused to take any, but Bruno took the

bottle himself out of my hand, placed it to his lips and drank. He must be accustomed to this stupifying remedy.

"I like to be alone with my son," said *ma chère mère*. "When he falls asleep I will watch over him; I have done it formerly, and in this selfsame room. You, Franciska, require rest. Go, my child, and try to get to sleep. But..... first give orders that my horses are well attended to. A greater service than this have they not done me during these fifteen years. Do so, Franciska. Good night, my dear child!"

I went out and executed *ma chère mère's* commission. The horses were eating corn in the stable, the little *Lasse** was sitting in the kitchen with a great piece of bread and butter in his hand. From him I heard a long disastrous story; how the carriage had been very near being precipitated into the lake, how the stranger gentleman was knocked down so roughly with the horses, but had after all got the better of them, how *ma chère mère* had carried me into the house, etc. After I had heard all this, I ordered them to give me a cup of coffee, and also to take one up to *ma chère mère*, who was fond of coffee.

Refreshed by the warm, stimulating beverage, I went —not to bed, no—I was too excited, too restless for this; I felt an indescribable desire to breathe the fresh air, to behold the firmament of the Creator.

I saw it. I believed it never to have been so beautiful. Ah! it extended now its canopy over two reconciled and felicitous hearts. The weather was unsettled,

* A tributary subject or *vassal* of a lordly family.

but through the shining clouds, the pleasant blue, and the atmosphere were indescribably pure and mild. I seated myself upon one of the steps of the large stone flight and saw the morning dawn, and thought of the reconciled pair. Red flames darted up from the horizon and tinted the grey clouds; the latter were reflected blushing in the lake, and one window after another of the gloomy house was illumined as if with blood-stained light in the brightness of the morning dawn. A gentle zephyr passed rustling through the tall oak trees and waved their tops, all besides was still. I sat thus for a considerable time. I enjoyed much, I thought of much, ran through many years of experience during these moments. Never yet had life appeared to me so lovely, so full of import, never yet had I loved more ardently, believed with greater assurance in the reality of divine power and in life, never had I felt more exalted than in this hour. I shall never forget these feelings. I thought of Björn with tenderness and pride. I felt happy to live for him. I thought of the future, and strange feelings—forebodings full of joy and sorrow rose within my soul . . . . . by-and-bye I shall, perhaps, speak more of it.

Sounds of steps of some one approaching were to be heard upon the stairs behind me; I turned round and perceived Hagar, who, with an expression of great anxiety, her hands crossed on her breast, approached me, and in her broken Swedish asked:

"What is your opinion? do you think he will survive?—Say, oh, say, that he will live!"

"I believe, I hope so," replied I. "My husband is a physician, will soon be here, and will devote all

his skill and attention to restore him."

Hagar left me, threw her bare arms round one of the granite pillars of the portico, and pressed her forehead against it. After she had thus stood for a moment, she lifted up her head and looked towards the East, where the dawn now glowed in all its splendour. I had not regarded Hagar before attentively. I did so now, and was surprised by her beauty. She was no longer young, and her features were too large, but they were of the purest cast; her voluptuous full lips reminded me strikingly of that characteristic feature of the Hebrew physiognomy. Her dark complexion was now radiated by the glow of the early morn; her black uncovered hair hung down carelessly upon her shoulders. I forgot for a moment every thing in the contemplation of this figure, which appeared as if become a part of the stone column against which she leaned. Her expression of countenance was full of passion and grief.

After a few moments Hagar moved and approached me.

" Do you believe," inquired she, whilst stretching out her arm towards the East, " do you believe that He who causes the light to rise hears also the prayers of men ?"

" Yes, I believe it," replied I, with quiet assurance.

" And fulfils them ?"

" When they proceed from a pure heart, and He in His wisdom finds it meet to do so."

Hagar was silent for a moment, bowed down her head and said:

" If your heart is pure then pray for him who bleeds there within—pray, that he may live !"

" You cherish warm sympathy towards him"—said I,

not without curiosity. "You are, perhaps, closely related to him, or ....."

She cast a penetrating look at me, and then said with an expression full of pride and pain:

"Hagar was a servant. For a time she was loved by her master, and for his sake she left all and went with him into foreign, cold lands;—he then rejected her for some other woman, but her heart remained true to him, and in the desert into which she was cast out she prays for him to the Lord of Heaven!"

"Hagar," began I again, "was not left alone in the desert. When she turned to God in her distress, He caused a spring of pure water to gush forth for her."

Hagar shook her head with sorrowful doubting, laid her finger on her lips, whilst pointing with her other hand to the house, and left me quickly.

I was on the point of following her, for I felt that the air was now beginning to grow cooler; but I stood still—for, for—what do you suppose I now got sight of in the avenue whipping and hastening upon a panting pony, fluttering through the wood like a great leather sack? No other personage than my dear, kind, longed for Björn! I hardly ventured to believe my own eyes, for the messengers could not possibly have arrived already; besides why did he come riding in that wretched state, and not cross the lake comfortably in a boat? I was ready to mistrust my own eyes, but he kept gradually approaching, I could possibly doubt no longer; he dismounted from his horse, and I flew towards him, as he did to me.

"Are you really my own dear Björn, and no——?" exclaimed I, whilst I embraced him with raptures.

"Are you really my own dear wife, and no half-mad moon-stricken princess sitting there . . . . ?"

"Ah, Björn we have no time for joking, tell me how came you here! Do you know what has happened? Have you received my note? But why do you come on horseback? How warm you are! Ah, come in, Björn, and I will tell you all and hear all!"

"My sweet child—you sometimes have such a dreadful *flux de bouche*—, well, God be praised, that you live and have a tongue in your mouth!" and with tears in his honest eyes, the kind creature held me long pressed to his bosom.

Whilst we were walking up, I briefly related how matters stood, and learned from Björn how he came to be here.

He had become uneasy about my long absence, feared that some accident had happened, and as the cabriolet was broken, he repaired on horseback to the town, like a Don Quixote, to seek out his Dulcinea. On the road he met a servant from Ramm who had also business in the town, and from him he learned, that *ma chère mère* was here and alive. "More I did not hear," such was the close of Björn's account—"I laid the whip on the horse and—here I am!" We embraced each other again in our joy over the double reunion, and Björn went in to the patient.

I did not follow him, but went to make myself at home in the kitchen, and to order a comforting breakfast for my Björn. These good people found pleasure in obeying me, and in half an hour I had a table laid out in the saloon with hot coffee, bread and butter, as well as a plate of excellent, smoking beef-steak. My mouth

watered for Björn's sake.

Whilst I was occupied at the table, the good man came in with a pale, serious, but yet contented mien.

"Well, how is it?" inquired I breathless, running up to him; "but no!—say nothing; first sit down and eat;—one word only—good or bad?"

"Bruno is doing well, I hope. The loss of blood is considerable, his wounds deep, but as far as I can see at present, not dangerous. *Ma chère mère* is not doing well, at least not at present. But it may turn out favourably. I believe you may go in Francisca. I will in the meantime, dispatch a messenger to the town, to send for various things."

"And the coffee? and the beef-steak," cried I, quite concerned.

"I must not think of it at present," cried Björn, and hastened out of the room with a glance at the beef-steak, as if the devil himself in him had taken upon himself flesh and blood in order to tempt him. I covered a plate over the poor beef-steak sighing, and walked out to *ma chère mère*. When I came in, I saw with astonishment, how Björn had prospered. What I had vainly endeavoured to effect with tears, Björn had now accomplished arbitrarily. Bruno had been removed into the apartment adjoining that of *ma chère mère*. Hagar was with him. The door between the rooms stood open, *ma chère mère* laid alone. On my coming in she held out her hand to me, drew me to her, and embraced me with a tenderness, which deeply affected me. "Franciska," said she, "the Lord has changed my heart. Before it was so dark, so wayward,

now I feel it so light and happy. The ways of God are marvellous! Who can fathom them, who can climb up into the secret chamber of the councils of the Lord? I possess a son again, Franciska! I am not childless, Bruno will make amends for his crime. He will be an honour to his mother and to his country. The Bible is true, a man may fall full seven times and rise again. Franciska! and he has been so long near me and I knew it not! My senses were blind, and my heart closed, but the hand of the Lord has opened the flood-gates—your husband, Franciska, has been tyrannizing me, and I have let him do as he liked, because he said, that he could not otherwise vouch for Bruno's life. But this very day will I yet see my son; let no one think of hindering me. I am determined to see him. Who knows how long I may be permitted to see him here on earth!"

"For a long time, very long time I trust, if *ma chère mère* will do all that Björn prescribes."

"Did you ever see! How the good wife praises her husband, and looks upon him as omnipotent! The Lord does, however, as it seemeth good in his sight, Franciska!"

"Do you feel ill, mother?" inquired I, with anxious tenderness.

"No—not ill; but I feel so strange. I have no strength in my limbs—I cannot get up. There is a struggle, an agitation within me;—I fancy as if I were going to die. The Lord's will be done! I have still been permitted to bless my son, and he will close my eyes. I can die in peace."

"Mother, you will not die, no, no!" exclaimed I

warmly," only follow Björn's directions in everything !"

Ma chère mère made a sort of impatient motion with her hand, smiled, and now lay still with her eyes upon the door leading to Bruno's chamber.

Glad as I was at *ma chère mère's* state of mind, yet I was uneasy respecting her state of health. She seemed to me very feverish, and there was something singularly staring and strange in her looks. The flood of tears which with her usually follows any violent shock, did not this time come to her relief. The storm had taken an inward direction.

"Go and see, whether he is asleep," said *ma chère mère* pointing to Bruno's room.

I went. Bruno lay in quiet slumber. He was very pale, but appeared to me handsomer than ever. The eyebrows which had so often contracted themselves had relaxed, and formed a graceful curve over the large eyelid. A tear glittered brightly upon his colourless cheek. Opposite to him stood Hagar leaning against the bed, with her head upon her hand, her looks fixed on his countenance. Her rich black tresses hung down upon her arm, and allowed the profile of her face only to be seen. Again I was obliged to admire the oriental and regular beauty of her outline. Hagar did not see me, and I returned softly to *ma chère mère.*

"He sleeps," said I.

"Heaven bless his sleep!" rejoined she.

Shortly afterwards I heard something move in the hall, and thinking of Björn, I begged *ma chère merè* to allow me to leave her for a moment.

So it was ; I found my Björn in the saloon, who had applied himself to his breakfast, but still was not so

extremely occupied with it as not to perceive me and to hold out his hand to me affectionately. I sat down near my good husband, saw him demolish his breakfast, and rejoiced to see him have such a famous appetite. As soon as the first cravings were satisfied, I began to relate somewhat more minutely the occurrencies of the night. It appeared to me, candidly speaking, as if during this night I had conducted myself in many respects like a semi-heroine, and I wished that Björn might properly appreciate this; for I felt the want of hearing myself praised a little by him. He was, however, dumb to desperation, and only made occasionally horrible grimaces, which I supposed were to serve as a defence against intruding tears. At the recital of the reconciliation, however, they burst forth, two large drops fell down and thinned the beef-steak-sauce. I made many pauses to give my good man an opportunity of falling into ecstacies with his wife. I heard, however, nothing; but when I came to my administrating opium, he suddenly broke loose.

"Well, that was the most foolish trick of the whole! The idea of giving opium to anybody who is dying of exhaustion!"

I felt like one dropped from the clouds. I sat with my mouth wide open and could not speak.

"No, certainly not, the most foolish," continued Bear growling; the maddest trick of all is, that a married woman thirty years of age, from whom one would have expected more reason, should sit herself down in the middle of the night upon a stone step in the open air, like a maniac. . . . ."

"Oh, you most abominable of all Bears!" I inter-

rupted him at length, and found my tongue again, "every word you utter, is a fib; in the first place, I am not a woman of thirty years of age, in the second . . . . ."

"In the second, third, and last place," cried Björn embracing me, "you are my dearest wife, and I promise you, if you should ever be so unreasonable again that I shall be very seriously angry with you."

Did you ever hear anything like it in your life, Maria? I for my part was so taken by surprise by such an overthrow of all my hopes of being praised, that I was quite disconcerted, and stood dumb as a lamb. This naturally pleased my lord and Bear exceedingly, and now he tyrannised over me more and more, and compelled me to betake myself to rest; he would in the interim look after his patients, and attend to everything. What was I to do? I was obliged to obey, and I confess that I was better for it. In a pretty little cabinet hung with red and white damask curtains situated at the other end of the saloon, I enjoyed a few hours of refreshing sleep.

On my awaking I saw Hagar's head peeping in through the door. Her countenance beamed with joy, apparently bordering on frenzy. "He will live! He will live!" cried she. She leaned over me, kissed my hands in ecstacy several times, raised herself again, ran about in the room, clapped her hands together and laughed almost convulsively, whilst she exclaimed: "He will live! he will live!"

She made a singular impression upon me. The wild and passionate part of her character in conjunction with my conclusions respecting her relation to Bruno,

displeased me, whilst her love and beauty involuntarily attracted me to her.

On coming out into the hall, I found it full of people. There was Elsa with a whole cargo of things for her mistress; there was Tutten; there were Jean Jacques, and Jane Maria, Björn stood like a Bashaw, (if so be that a Bashaw ever stands) in the centre of the hall, answering here, commanding there, sending first this way, then that way.

To my astonishment and joy I heard that *ma chère mère* had been bled. She had willingly consented to this prescription of Björn's, singular enough, she has confidence in surgical operations, but the greatest distrust in physics, and will take no medicine for any consideration. After being bled, she had more rest, although no sleep yet.

Jane Maria, and Jean Jacques now made me tell them all that had happened. The manner in which they received the intelligence sincerely delighted me. They were both affected and really glad of the reconciliation, although this will assuredly change their own prospects very materially.

Elsa interrupted our conversation, by calling me in to *ma chère mère.* I found Björn with her.

"He wants me to sleep," said *ma chère mère*, not without some irritation, "it is his desire that I should close my eyes in repose, and I have not yet seen my only son by the light of day, him who has just risked his life to save mine! But I tell you, till I have seen him, I shall have no rest either in body or mind, and had I but strength in my legs, the deuce take me if I would ask any body's permission."

"Björn!" said I to him aside, "do not hinder her now, let her have her will! Man's will is his heaven."

"Dear child, dear child, with your heavens!" said Björn with a furious grimace, and rubbing his head. "Such heavens may lead to hell, and at least to death, when enjoyed at an improper time."

"But you see yourself that there will be no heaven here, if *ma chère mère* does not get her will. And a very natural one too. I should not have been no better had I been in her situation. Let her see her son, Bruno; I should think he might come in to her."

"No, deuce take it! he must not stir this day. If they must needs see and excite each other, then it is better that she should be taken to him. How inconsiderate that people will not...."

"Don't stand talking there!" said *ma chère mère* vehemently, but come hither, and if you possess any reason and feeling assist me in to my son. I give you my promise, that the visit shall be a short one, and that we will not exchange a word."

Björn no longer opposed. He supported her on one side, Elsa and I on the other, and thus she was conducted to Bruno, and placed in an arm chair by the side of his bed. There was a mute but touching scene, mother and son embraced each other silently. She then sat for a considerable time, holding his hand and looking at him. It was apparent in both, how heartfelt the reconciliation was. When *ma chère mère* had been sitting there for the space of about ten minutes, she laid her hand as it were in the act of blessing on Bruno's forehead and breast. He wished to say something, but she laid her hand forbiddingly upon his lips.

A tear bedewed his cheek; oh, how did I long to behold one such in the eyes of the mother; but they remained dry; though full of love. She motioned that she wished to withdraw. And it was time, for she was violently agitated and pale as death.

When she was in her bed again, she laid quite still for a moment with her hands folded, she appeared to pray. She then beckoned to me and said with proud joy: "How tall he has grown! A handsome man, Franciska! How strong the resemblance to my departed husband. A real Hercules! Indeed! he comes of no weak or ugly race, either from the father's or the mother's side—but all this after all is vanity," added she with a sigh of intended humility, "and in this lies not the worth of man."

Ma chère mère then ordered Jane Maria and Jean Jacques to come in and was very kind towards them. When Jane Maria ascertained that I should remain in Ramm as long as *ma chère mère* should stay there, she had little to say to me, and took leave quite coolly. I am sorry for this.

As to myself, I have been obliged to make arrangements for my stay here as long as *ma chère mère* should be ill. She and Björn wish it, and I no less. I could not leave them, as long as her state is so precarious. "If she could only sleep," said Björn, "all danger would be over," but sleep deserts her eyes, and an inward agitation desturbs her. I have written this during two days, which I have spent here. For these two days, no sleep has visited her, and she continues in her wilful refusal to take anything. Bruno's entreaties also are unavailing on this point. She says,

that medicines have always proved poison to her. I have my writing-desk in her room. She likes the gentle sound of my pen. It soothes her, as she says, Bruno is better, but is not allowed to get up, and hardly to speak. Björn, upon my word, is a strict doctor, that I can see. I don't think that I should have him for mine, I told him so. He merely made a jesting grimace and said: "we shall see about that!" I don't know how it is, that I can write so gaily, *ma chère mère's* condition distresses me greatly—but I have so many diversions, besides *ma chère mère* herself is in such a gay and happy temper, that I cannot be otherwise than glad about it. Heaven only grant, that the matter may not have a sorrowful end! Would that I could say in my next letter, that all here is as happy as it is well at present.

XI.

FOURTEENTH LETTER.

FRANCISKA WERNER TO MARIA L.

Ramm, September 6th.

I am quite inundated by inquiries, notes, and visitors. The report of what had happened flies about and changes the whole place into a committee of inquiry! All flock hither. They inquire, they wonder, they hope, they congratulate. *Ma chère mère* appears to be held in the highest estimation in this part of the country. Even the Burgomasters and counsellors of the city have made inquiries respecting her state. *Ma chère mère* has gradually come to be considered as a half magisterial sort of personage on account of her especial zeal against all kinds of disorder in the city, and her good dinners, given sometimes to the Burgomaster and council.

Ma chère mère's state is, I am sorry to say, still the same. This is now the third day that she has had no sleep. Björn is very anxious, which I guess more from his look, however, than from what he says.

I have just received a note from Serena, of which the following is a copy:

"Sweet Franciska! write me word, and if possible one of comfort. There are such strange reports current here. They say that General Mansfelt's lady has been

in imminent danger; that Mr.— you know whom I mean—had saved her from it, that she had recognised her son again in him, that they were reconciled, but both are on the point of dying. They say that he endangered his own life too to save her; they tell so much and so confusedly. I sought you yesterday at Rosenvik, but you were not there. Sissa said you were at Ramm. Your flowers looked drooping; I tried to revive them with fresh water, and succeeded. But I also, Franciska, am faint, and since yesterday every thing I have been reading to my grandfather is latin to me. My sweet, dear Franciska, give a word of encouragement to your

"SERENA."

Yes, Serena, not one word only, but many shalt thou have. I upbraid myself for not having anticipated thy wishes. Kind heart, who would not comfort thee? I must leave you for a moment, my Maria, and write to Serena.

The 8th.

Still always the same! No sleep, no repose. A constant state of wakefulness, an incessant inward disquietude, which to those around her is a source of indescribable pain. She herself is now convinced that she shall die, and has had her will made to-day. I was present on the occasion, and obliged indeed to admire her inflexible sense of justice, as well as the conscious faithfulness wherewith she considered every thing which in any way stood under her protection. Her correct knowledge of even the most trifling things is remarkable, and the precision and distinct manner

with which she disposes of them. There is an iron-like order which enters into all her concerns. But on her departure from earthly things this is worthy of notice. *Ma chère mère* showed herself here just as she had been during the whole course of her life, strictly equitable and fond of order, benevolent without any display, firm and grateful in friendship.

I cannot, however, bring my mind to think that she must die. Björn seems to have greater fear for her intellect. He speculates on preparing a sleeping draught for her; but how any one is to bring her to take it is another matter.

Ma chère mère will not have a word said about her likelihood of living; she has, as she says, now made up her mind, and given herself up to death in earnest, and only thinks of preparing herself for it.

The 9th.

A strange scene! What singular ideas come into men's heads to be sure.

Ma chère mère has ordered a joiner to come here this morning,—no one could conceive why. When he came, she gave orders for him to come into her room and to take her measure for—a coffin!

After this she gave very particular instructions respecting the decoration of the coffin, and made me write down what she desired to have written upon the plate. (N.B.—The door to Bruno's room was closed during this scene.)

"Well, Mr. Svensson," said she, when all this was settled, "what is to be the cost of my coffin?"

Confounded and astonished at this, the joiner reflected a moment, and at length said, "Fifty dollars

banco, your ladyship!"

"Are you crazy, Mr. Svensson?" said *ma chère mère* violently, "Fifty dollars banco? Five-and-twenty rix dollars more than you took for the coffin of my late husband. Consider what you say. I can show you the account of the General's coffin, master!"

"Oak timber, your ladyship, has risen very considerably in price since."

"And who the deuce tells you to make it of oak? For my part yon may take birch, or elm, or pine, or whatever kind of wood you like. The miserable body turns to dust still, methinks, whether it lies in a coffin of oak or pine. Rich and poor are alike in death. I am, it is true, of ancient noble descent, and such was my husband also, the late General Mansfelt. But what then, Mr. Svensson?

When Adam delved, and Eve span,
Where was then the gentleman?

And where is he, when the body lies in the grave?—Take pine, or birch-wood to my coffin, dear Svensson, and let me have it for fifty rix-dollars."

"Sixty rix-dollars, your ladyship."

"Fifty rix-dollars, Mr. Svensson! More I shall not give, and you may make it accordingly. Fifty rix-dollars current, I say, not a shilling more. But I invite you to the feast, which my people shall have at my funeral. Recollect, Franciska, that Mr. Svensson is to be present on the occasion, or—— I shall think of it myself, when I make the arrangements for the funeral. Adieu, my dear sir, our agreement stands good. Many thanks! Adieu!"

Much as I have seen of *ma chère mère's* peculiarities, I nevertheless confess that this scene very much astonished me. I saw however clearly, that no desire for, but solely an invincible love of arrangements, led her to order and bargain for her own coffin. *Ma chère mère* seemed to do it quite as a matter of business, and said to me when the joiner was gone, "These mechanics are rapacious beasts. One must keep a strict balance of accounts with them. But their fox shall not bite my goose."

After this *ma chère mère* made arrangements for her funeral ceremony. She dictated, and I wrote down, how it was to be conducted; how many pounds of confectionary were to be bought, etc. She ordered a messenger to be dispatched to the minister of her church, with the request that he would come to Ramm the following day.

"I will," said she, "die as becometh a Christian!" When all this was settled she manifested great satisfaction, and begged me to give her something to drink. "I am heartily tired of this everlasting soup," said she, "I should like to have something different, but know not what."

A happy thought rushed into my mind, and I hastened to say, "I have a recipe for making a kind of lemonade, a sort of toast and water—in short, a very refreshing and salutary drink. I should feel great pleasure in preparing it for *ma chère mère*."

"Do so, Franciska! You are never at a loss. You are sure to contrive something; and that is a useful talent. 'Better comfortless than helpless.'"

I hastened immediately to Björn, and communicated

my proposal to him. He was very well satisfied with my "inventive faculty," and immediately began to brew his narcotic-potion and my toast-water, for these were one and the same.

Bruno in the meantime is in an uneasy and low state of mind, and not free from fever. He really loves his mother most dearly, and is most anxious for her not to die. Björn tries to compose him with kind words and hopes. Hagar is a great deal about him, but this seems to pain him. He treats her with harshness, but she endures every thing with slavish submission. *That* woman must in some way be sunk deep, indeed, who submits to such treatment, and like the dog, fawns on the foot which spurns it. How unlike this slavish adoration, is that free submission with which an honoured and cherished woman devotes herself to the object of her pure attachment. Poor Hagar!

Ma chère mère cannot bear Hagar, and the latter shuns her sharp penetrating look. "She must be his Dulcinea!" said *ma chère mère* yesterday to me. "I shall speak to Bruno about it. I don't like any thing of this kind!" The sleeping draught is now ready, and I am to present it. God help me! I fancy as if I were playing a deceitful part towards *ma chère mère*, and this is painful to me

Later.

It is done—it succeeded, but all was nearly lost! On my receiving the cup with the anodyne draught from Björn's hand, I said with some fear,

"Björn, are you sure—do you think that this will not lull her into the sleep of death?"

"Do you think I am a quack, Franciska?"

"Nothing of the kind; you are Esculapius himself, but ..... but ..... Ah, Björn! I find it a hard task to deceive her."

"Would you rather that she should lose her senses or be struck with apoplexy? My little Franciska, it won't do to tarry any longer. The quicker you do it the better it will be done. By God's help this draught will save her."

I went in to *ma chère mère* and presented the cup to her, whilst with as much confidence as possible I said:

"Here, *ma chère mère*, is my refreshing drink."

"Well, that is excellent," said she, raised herself, tasted the draught, started, and made wry faces. "What sort of a cursed potion is this which you have brewed together, Franciska?" exclaimed she, "it tastes quite poisonous!" she fixed at the same time one of her sharpest looks on me.

Had I held a cup of poison in my innocent hand, she could not have trembled more, nor I looked more like a condemned criminal. "You unlucky Björn!" thought I, almost ready to cry, "now I must empty the cup myself to prove my innocence, if I should even have to sleep to the day of judgment after it."

"God help you!" proceeded *ma chère mère* with the same look, "if you are confederated with your husband to deceive me."

"And if it were so," said I, whilst I threw the one arm which was at liberty round her neck and kissed her, and bedewed her cheeks with my tears; "if even it were so, would you not, mother, wish to be kind towards your children, and for their sakes take the draught, and believe them, that though it may taste somewhat amiss it will still only do good?"

Ma chère mère looked at me for a moment earnestly, but pleasantly, and then said:

"You are a cunning creature, Franciska, and a good child, and understand the old woman well, and for the sake of these your virtues, she loves you, and will now yield to your wish, let come what will of it. Your health, my child!" and at one draught she emptied the cup.

I embraced her, thanked her, and wept in my joy. She patted me affectionately on the cheek, and seemed to be pleased in seeing herself so loved.

I ran triumphantly to Björn, and shewed him the cup emptied of its contents.

"Yes, yes," said he, "I imagined that it might be taken and not taste so much amiss; it was, upon my word, no easy matter to prepare it so well."

"You conceited Bear!" interrupted I, "leave off praising your abominable draught in this way!" And now I related to him what had taken place, and I must do him the justice to say, that he changed the praise of the draught into eulogies upon me.

I hope that the draught begins to operate already. *Ma chère mère* does not sleep it is true, but she is quiet. The clock is nine. I shall be up attending on *ma chère mère* to-night.

At Eleven o'Clock.

Now she is asleep. Thank goodness, she is sure enough in a quiet sound sleep. It is a pleasure to see her sleep! Björn has sent every soul in the house to bed. No one is allowed to stir. All is as still as the grave. How did this word escape my pen. I cross it out. I sit watching in *ma chère mère's* room, by the side of Elsa, whose indefatigable zeal is admirable.

Björn sits in the other room with Bruno, in order to keep him as quiet as possible, whilst they await the issue of this sleep. He has the best hope. In order to the maintenance of the profoundest stillness, we agreed, that in case of the least change in *ma chère mère's* state, I shall give a signal of it to Björn, by a little written strip of paper, which I shall stick into the key-hole. To keep myself awake in the interim, I shall take Elsa's profile, which I now perceive reflected upon the etherial back-ground by the lamp-light; it is dark, strong, and as if carved in stone, and her look is fixed upon her sleeping mistress.

At Two o'Clock.

Ma chère mère is still asleep, and sleeps profoundly and perspires profusely. I have telegraphed it to Björn. "Good symptoms!" he telegraphed back. Thank Heaven, now I hope that all is going on well.

Elsa's profile is like her. The original still sits in the same place, and looks unmoved in the same direction.

At Four o'Clock.

Just now Elsa came to me, and with scarcely audible voice she whispered into my ear;

"Do you think that her life will be saved? Do you believe that she will awake?"

"Yes, I believe it to a certainty."

"If she dies, I wish to die also."

"Why so, dear Elsa?"

"What should I do here on earth without her? And then—her ladyship I suppose will want her to wait upon her in heaven, who has been about her day and night."

"She will be with the angels of God then, Elsa."

"Yes, dear madam, but they won't know so well how to accommodate themselves to her fancies as I do. They have not lived forty years together with her, as I have!"

Elsa returned to her post, and re-occupied her former position. I saw again the dark profile upon the light background. Elsa's faithful and rock-firm devotion affected me deeply, and I thought of Goethe's words:

"Not merit only, fidelity too guards our person."

At 6 o'clock.

Ma chère mère is still asleep, sleeps profoundly, and by the dawning of day her face looks so awfully pale. Only think, if she should sleep her last sleep! Björn and I have carried on an active correspondence through the key-hole upon this sleep. Would you like to have a specimen of it? For I would not trouble the post with the whole collection.

1 Strip. "She sleeps, sleeps, sleeps. I begin to fear that she will not wake."

2 —— "She is awaking."

3 —— "Oracles have been deceived before now."

4 —— "But not now."

5 —— "Man of wisdom! Prophet! Bear!
Use your cunning, and declare
Who in the shadows of the night
Calls you her comfort and her light?"

6 —— "No one is it, that is clear,
But my little wife so dear."

7 —— "Prophet! Bear! and cunning man,
Tell me truly if you can,
Who is it in the quiet night
Quizzes your would-be second sight?"

But enough of this foolery.

9 o'clock.

Away with the coffin, confectionary, and funeral! *Ma chère mère* has awakened, she is composed, is in possession of her mental faculties, feels well, and is only still extremely weak. Björn now vouches for her recovery. We have embraced each other right and left in our joy. And Bruno! I was obliged to cry when I saw him embrace Björn's knees. I shall love Bruno for he is capable of loving. *Ma chère mère* appears herself to be somewhat amazed, but is contented and calm. I have just given her some tea. When she took the cup out of my hand she gave me a kind sly look, and a light pat on the cheek. She has again fallen into a calm sleep. And now I will also betake myself to a little repose.

The 11th.

All is going on prosperously, and we shall all soon be well again, if I do not get ill for home-ache after my little Rosenvik. *Ma chère mère* regains strength rapidly she can already sit up a little; but will not leave this place till Bruno is well enough to follow her to Karsfors, nor am I allowed to go home any sooner. "Patience!" said Björn. An abominable word! I always get out of patience when I hear it mentioned. Meantime I dispatch this letter, embrace you, my Maria, and thank God for all that is past.

XII.

FIFTEENTH LETTER.

FRANCISKA WERNER TO MARIA M.

Ramm, September the 16th.

Has it ever occurred to you, Maria, that you have regarded a man—just as Robinson Crusoe did his island—as an unfruitful soil; and all of a sudden an accident, a little voyage of discovery, you—just as the aforesaid Robinson—opens to your view a beautiful country abounding in refreshing fruits. Voyages of discovery in that world called "Man," are performed sometimes as elsewhere, in evil regions, and one remains too often there, fast wedged in the ice like Capt. Ross; but they have oftener conducted me to fair regions. Such was the case to day. Will you follow me on a voyage of discovery? My island is called—Counsellor Hök.

Behold him seated in a chair—planted like a fir-tree upon its rock—in *ma chère mère's* room at Ramm. Behold there also, dropped down in a large easy chair—like a bird in its nest, the cheerful Miss Hellevi Hausgiebel. Behold *ma chère mère* stately, and like nothing but herself, leaning back on one end of the sofa; behold Bruno—like a beautiful night—darken and grace

the other end of the sofa; see further a pair of every-day figures, sitting faithfully near each other like a pair of doves, a Bear with his partner; see benevolence in the room and peace on the faces of all, and hear the conversation which flowed easily in the twilight, from heart to tongue, and now reaches your ear:

Miss Hausgiebel. "Uncle Hök! you look so precise and perfect this evening, that I feel quite distressed about it. It would revive me, if now in the twilight you would confess to us some little failing, any little weakness. I am, for example, convinced, that you feel a little covetous about something or other. Every man has some such failing, if he will sincerely examine himself.

Ma chère mère. "Sweep first before your own door, before you sweep before others, says the adage. Begin with yourself, cousin Hausgiebel, and confess your own sins."

Miss H. "I, poor sinner, confess with all my heart that I have a weakness for pins and waste-paper, which borders on avarice."

Counsellor Hök, (gravely.) "And I know nothing upon earth that would be dearer to me than bottles, be they empty or full, and I find it a difficult matter to keep my hand from giving my servant a box on the ear, when he has broken an empty bottle."

Miss H. "Ha, charming, charming! my dear excellent uncle! Hear, ye good folks there! don't pretend to be better or worse than we. Now confess your sins becomingly. Your covetousness, good Doctor? medicaments perhaps?

Björn, (laconically.) "Paper!"

Miss Hausgiebel. "Good; so much the fewer recipes. But we can't live without them. Your covetousness, Madam Werner?"

Franciska. "Needles and thread."

Miss H. "You, Lady Mansfeldt, won't you give your contribution to our small collection?"

Ma chère mère. "Why not? But I fear there would be a great preponderance were I to lay all my covetousness into the scale. Be contented with—what I otherwise do not give away very readily—with pieces of ribbon and old linen. But remember, my friends, 'He who does not save a penny will never have two;' 'He who wastes more than he earns, will soon have an empty larder;' 'He possesses who saves.'"

A short pause ensued. It was Bruno's turn to confess his little sins; but be it that he had none such—that sounds ill—or that he did not pay attention to our conversation, he showed no inclination whatever to make a confession, and no one of us felt any desire to request it from him. He sat with downcast eyes, sank quietly within himself, and supported his bound-up head with his hand. Counsellor H. interrupted the rather embarrassing silence, and replied to *ma chère mère's* words: "Lady Mansfeldt is quite right, and we must, each in our own way, be collectors."

Miss H. "Take care, uncle Hök, that you do not make virtues of our sins. You know it stands written, that we are to lay up for ourselves treasures, where no thief breaks through and steals."

Couns. Hök. "Much there, but a little here also. It seems reasonable enough if we consider the matter rightly."

Ma chère mère. "I think so too."

FRANCISKA. "What else is the whole race of mankind but a great tribe of seekers and collectors? But ah, how many are there, who find nothing and get nothing."

COUNS. H. "And this chiefly because they have not sought and found themselves. In fact every man seeks first harmony with himself;—but you must understand in what sense I mean it."

FRANC. "Give us an instance, Counsellor Hök, a living one, if possible; then we shall uuderstand it without any circumlocution."

MISS H. "You, for instance, worthy uncle, have assuredly found yourself; for never yet have I seen any person so tranquil, so confident, and indeed I may also say, so wise and well disposed. Tell us how you have sought and found yourself."

FRANC. "Oh, yes, dear Counsellor, tell us."

COUNS. H. "Do you think you know what you ask, ladies? Nothing less than the principal part of my biography!"

MISS H. and FRANC. "Oh, yes, yes, do tell us the history of your life."

COUNS. H. "To two such amiable ladies I can refuse nothing. I shall, therefore, begin at once with a most melancholy confession, for you are probably not aware, that he who now addresses you, is an unfortunate author! It is lucky that it is so dark just now. Well, after the first hard step is taken the others will go easier. My father was a literary character of merit, and educated his son for the same pursuits. My talents appeared to favour his wishes. I wrote at an early

age poems and dramatic pieces for anniversaries and birth-days; I received confectionary and praise, and got already a distant glimpse of the laurel wreath. I was brought up surrounded by works of the poets on every side. I read them over and over again until I could repeat them by heart, and made their thoughts my own. My parents were ambitious, and spurred on my already burning eagerness for distinction. Several poetical attempts gained applause with the public, and were eulogized in the newspapers; intoxicated by this, as well as encouraged by my parents, and the encomiums of my young friends, (among whom, one sanguine young man of the name of Lerche, especially distinguished himself), I resolved like Byron to transport myself with one bound to reach the heights of Parnassus. I wrote a tragedy in five acts, and—stop a little, I must dwell for a moment on this period of apparent happiness! Truly great poets possesss, I believe, a sort of prudent tranquillity even in their very moments of transport; they are devoted to their subject and embody themselves to it in sacred earnest. When they look upon the work of their creation they are, perhaps, more inclined to be dissatisfied than satisfied with their productions. This arises from their deeper comprehension of the fullness of life. It is this very feeling which renders them great. Little geniuses, authors, who are very much enraptured with themselves and their works, ought to fear and remember Boilleau's words:

"Le sot a chaque vers soi-meme s'admire."

I feared nothing when I wrote my tragedy. I was enraptured, and imagined that the public must share my

enthusiasm. I walked about my room with dignified strides declaiming my verses. When I came to effective passages—I mean those which seemed so to me to be such—I stood still, and heard the thunders of the general applause. They elated me; I leaped up high—came down again—but to no rational level. The partiality of my parents and friends increased my intoxication. "You will rise high!" said Lerche. I believed it, and saw only the forthcoming of my piece between me and immortal fame.

It was represented. My hopes were wound up to a high pitch: my tragedy was damned! Not a sound of applause, silence, coldness, some hissing, even laughter. A few days afterwards criticisms in the public journals, which did not grant one iota of merit to my "Christiern II.," and tried to strip me of all hope of ever being able to merit the smallest laurel leaf. I knew, however, well, that this has been the lot of many a man, who, in spite of all, has become a great and celebrated author, and I resolved not to be daunted by it. But in vain I tried to comfort myself with the thought of the ignorance of the critics, and of the example of great authors; my annihilating critic was the whole public, and what was worse than all—I myself. (Self after all remains the best judge, from whom there is no appeal.) In the first moment after my Christiern failure, I was far from confessing the justice of it. Humbled, but still more provoked than humbled, I wished to make war with my critics—yes, even with the public; wished to punish the former with bitter retorts, the latter with another tragedy. But then my friend, whom I cannot sufficiently respect, and who is now present, the lady of the late

General Mansfelt, interfered, and restrained me with that powerful and sound reason which distinguished her already at an early age.

"My friend," said she, "it is better to retreat than to fight badly; it is needless to carry wood into the forest. Why throw oil into the fire which burns you? Let the people cry, and examine well whether they are not right. I am not much of a judge of your piece and of such matters, but I tell you, that it does not please me, it seems unnatural. However, if I am wrong and the people are wrong, well then, your piece will have justice done it some day or other, never fear! This, I think, has been the case of many books before as well as men; but if on deliberate examination you find that the people are right, well, then give up your piece: it's of no use to fight for it. And if you have written a bad piece, well then, all you have to do is to write a better; and if you cannot do that, then you won't do for an author,—and what of that? Are you on that account a worse man? Are there not many ways open for you of becoming excellent and happy? Dear Hök! only see that you open your eyes in proper time. It is just as well to suffer at first as at last, and to receive the bitter lesson at once with thankfulness."

I took the words of my esteemed friend to heart, went home, and reflected in all quietness on my unfortunate tragedy. There fell, as it were, a veil from my eyes. I had not been wise enough to preserve myself from being intoxicated, but I was so frantic but that I wished to become sober again. I saw clearly that my tragedy resembled Schiller's muse about as much as the ape does man, and I threw it into the fire. It was,

however, not so easy for me to make up my mind in this case. I had prepared myself for the career of a *literati*, and was now obliged to confess more and more my want of creative power and poetic soul; but I had no inclination for any other profession, I did not know what to undertake, what to become; I had lost my helm, my bark became a sport to the waves. To this may be added, the discontent and vexation of my parents, the long faces of my friends—their "poor Hök!" This was intolerable!

Then that excellent friend of my youth came again to my assistance, and prevailed upon my parents to permit me to make a tour on the continent, in order, as she said, to drive the matter out of my head.

I travelled—often on foot, for I was not in easy circumstances—through a great part of Europe, travelled two years, saw life in manifold forms, reflected and compared. My misfortune in the world of imagination had strengthened my sense and judgment, and th sufferings which I had experienced inspired me with an urgent desire to attain to that true cultivation which every where, and under all circumstances, gives peace and independence to man. Among many observations which I made, I will only allude to one (trivial as it may appear), because it greatly influenced my subsequent life: the world abounds in all things excellent and beautiful. Rightly to comprehend, to appreciate, and to admire the beautiful, is a great means of ennobling the character, and of finding peace and happiness. Should that imaginary pleasure of exercising talent, with which many a young and active mind is filled, subside into a desire to comprehend thoroughly

into a wish to be capable of fully appreciating the beautiful and excellent, then restlessness would change into enjoyment, the world would contain fewer unsuccessful, discontented men, and there would be less of poor, weak attempts at art; great genius would have many more competent judges and admirers, and would thus rise to higher excellence. Artists and connoisseurs have need of one another, and advance each other mutually. I found the best and happiest men among those, who, with a useful and well directed activity in affairs of business, combined an exalted feeling for the beautiful, and the capability of enjoying the noblest productions of art.

After two years travelling and observations I returned in full health of body and mind, and commenced a new career. I did not, however, give up literature; on the contrary, the more settled my position in life became, with the more heartfelt love did I attach myself to that life-giving stream. I had, however, now learned to know myself. I strove no longer for an author's fame, laurels and crown of thorns, but I endeavoured to form myself into an enlightened amateur and connoisseur. I was anxious that if I were not capable of producing the beautiful, no one, at least, should excel me in the art of heartily appreciating and enjoying it. And I may say, that I have not been altogether unsuccessful in these my endeavours. Since the time when I renounced vain efforts, and learned to know the limits of my powers, I have become tranquil and happy. I am now old, and every year removes me further from the world, but not from that eternal beauty which is renewed in varying form ever. I cling to it firmly with affection;

it renews my heart; it prevents my thoughts from getting grey with my hair, and teaches me to hope one day to become a not unworthy adorer of it in the proper home of the beautiful."

So spake the old man, and serene peace beamed forth from his placid blue eyes. We thanked him heartily, and I—somewhat inadvertently exclaimed, "oh! I wish that all men, those who have found, as well as those who have not found peace, would before quitting this stage of life, make their confession. I am certain, that no book would be more interesting and useful, than a collection of such autobiographies. It would prove an excellent guide for the searchers in life. Dearest Miss Hausgiebel! would you not at once contribute your part to it? I will undertake to record it. You are, I am sure, one of those, who have sought and found it."

"I cannot altogether say no to this," replied Miss H., "although there is much to be done yet, before I can have perfect peace with myself. Nevertheless I have already found far more in the world than I have anticipated in my youth, and should you kind friends, be willing to listen to a tedious history, I shall have great pleasure in relating it to you."

"I have not experienced any signal disasters, have not to complain of any great misfortunes; I have passed through my world quietly enough, but I have found my time hang heavy on my hands, it has been weary and tedious, and so far I can claim to have borne the heaviest burden in the world. My father was a man of honour, integrity, truth; all the Hausgiebel's in a direct line have borne this character, just even to inflexibility, upright in stature, and firm in principle, yield-

ing neither to right nor to the left, and I know not, how it happened that I should be such an unworthy scion of my most venerated ancestors. My father had, as I have said an excellent moral character, but very rigid, very old-fashion principles with regard to female education. He believed for instance, that it was a good thing for young girls to be wearied, or, as he called it, to learn patience. He was an avowed enemy to all that he called vanity, but on this list stood a great number of innocent pleasures. He likewise abominated pedantic learning in females; but under this ban a great deal of useful knowledge and tending to happiness was also included. He valued beyond every thing else domestic duties, but these were restricted to a narrow compass. We were to weave, spin, sew, look after the kitchen and household affairs, study Kaisa Warg's cookery-book, (he had a great dislike to see us with any other book in our hands,) and thus to prepare ourselves to become good wives and clever housekeepers. He himself maintained a strict superintendance over me and my five sisters. My sisters wove, I spun, each one had her turn of attending to the kitchen for a week. Well, the days passed over, though not very agreeably. I in particular found them often intolerably long, especially as I advanced in years. My spinning seemed to me quite useless, as I knew that we were wealthy."

"Years rolled on; strangers, excepting a few old relatives, were never seen in our house. My sisters still were weaving and I spinning—and I confess, with a more and more weary hand. The vacuity of my soul and of my life oppressed me. I often had the vapours and gave way to tears without knowing why. My kind aunt Anna Stina, who acted a mother's part towards

us, was a genuine Hausgiebel; she was obedient to the will of her brother in all things, but in other respects was very kind towards us. She had "Advice to my daughter,*" perpetually on her tongue, and often preached those words:—

"Our household is our republic,
Our politics relate to the toilet, etc."

"We lived on a retired estate. Rural life may be one of the richest upon earth; but also one of the poorest. If the great book of nature is opened to the view of man, and illuminated by heavenly light, he may from his little spot of earth behold and enjoy all the glory of the world; if in nature he merely sees the potatoe-field, which affords him food, then the golden treasure of nature is closed to him, and he himself is rooted to the ground like the potatoe-plant. Our family lived something like potatoe-plants. I must, however, consider myself as an exception. My admiration to be seen in nature was early excited by the order, and my desire for knowledge was awakened by every object. I was at an early age, although quite secretly, a collector of herbs, stones, and shells. During the long wanderings which my father sometimes took, in order to look after the state of the crops, we were generally obliged to accompany him. It must have been edifying to see how we moved along in a line like a bevy of woodcocks, sometimes in the heat of the sun, sometimes in the wet. I kept however, mostly behind the rest, lost in the contemplation of some plant, or some little insect. On account of this, as well as my reveries, I was after-

* Advice to my daughter, a poem by Anna Lenngren.

wards often teased in a way, which gentle as it was, nevertheless deeply wounded my excitable ambition. My father namely, often took a delight in sketching out a little family-picture of the future appearance in our house. Then it was said, viz:—"Anna Maria is winding Charlotte weaving, Louisa gives out sugar and spices for dinner, Josepha spins, Greta feeds the poultry," and then at the end of the family-picture always came, "and Hellevi sits and peeps at the sun," (or some such useless occupation), which conclusion always vexed me so much that I burst into tears. To be the only useless member of the family, no! that was too intolerable, much too humiliating. When my week of duty came, therefore, I rattled famously with my keys, to let my father hear how zealously I filled my important office. But oh, this availed nothing! in the next family picture, it was still the same, "and Hellevi sits and stares at the sun." In our family the saying continued to be persevered: Hellevi will never be a clever housewife (and what else is she fit for?) In this belief my father and my aunt died; in this belief my two sisters still continue to live.

"I have mentioned, how we spent our days; I must yet say a word about the evenings. At seven o'clock we assembled every evening in my father's room, we sat occupied with embroidery and needlework, at a large round-table with two lights, about which we always had a little dispute.—My father sat at some distance from us at a little table, with a shade before him, and read aloud to us. This ought to have afforded us pleasure, but the French history, the reading of which lasted I know not how long, of a very

ancient production, and my father's delivery was most particularly slow and monotonous, when during the autumn and winter evenings rain and snow beat against the windows, and the storm without howled its mournful song in accompaniment to the dull, long-drawn out words, which sounded within, no one could be surprised that the spirit of slumber came somewhat powerfully over us, and that we nodded in mutual emulation over our sowing. If one of us however resigned himself unresistingly to Morpheus, then aunt Anna Stina winked and beckoned roguishly to the rest, as if she meant to say, "now your sister is off."

At nine o'clock the sleepers as well as nodders were roused by the moving of my father's chair, and we then marched one after another—the rank of age has always been maintained sacred in the family of the Hausgiebel —into the dining-room, to take our supper. This was of a very temperate kind, and lasted not above ten minutes, at the conclusion of which we again moved into my father's room, where we were obliged to stay till the clock struck ten. During this time we were not to work but devote ourselves exclusively to conversation. Each one of us had his fixed place in the room. Mine was near the stove, where the warmth indemnified me in some measure for the chilliness in the conversation, for all the subjects, which might have imparted any lively interest to it, were strictly prohibited, and when I ventured now and then upon forbidden ground, I was soon rebuked with the objection that females must not meddle with such things. Our conversation was not allowed to treat of any other subject, those of petty daily occurrences, the most approved

of which were those appertaining to the house, of acquaintances, family-pedigrees, inquiries respecting domestic economy, etc. This afforded to my taste but meagre fare, and I would gladly have abstained from it, but we were not allowed to be silent during this hour of conversation, but each one was obliged to say something. When one of us had not opened her lips for sometime, she was pleasantly called upon to say something. By way of varying our amusements, my father sometimes took out a box, containing many curiosities, which had been opened out probably twenty times successively, turned over and over again and inspected. That daughter was not in his best favour, who did not immediately stand like the rest round the table and gape at the contents of the box. It was an unfortunate thing that my father never would cease to consider us as little children. But the little ornaments and rings, the silhouettes of grandfather and grandmother, the little box with the canary-bird-feathers in it, which delighted the little girl of nine years, the magic lantern, which excited all her curiosity, could not possibly interest the woman of twenty-five, who was now compelled to stand there and regard the valuables of the box with weary and indifferent looks.

"I said, that we were always obliged during the hours of conversation after supper to say something, whether we wished it or not. This sometimes gave rise to strange absurdities. One example may give some idea of it. My sisters and I had one day been looking from the window at a litter of vagrant sucking-pigs coming swarming into the yard, which were chaced about by the three yard-dogs. This precious

occurrence from real life we kept stored up during the day in our faithful memories, in order to season the entertainment of the evening. By chance we came that evening not altogether, but at intervals, one after the other into our father's room. Anna Maria, the first, who occupied her seat, related the story of the pigs and dogs; Charlotte, who came after her, did the same: Louisa, who came after her, likewise; just so, Josepha, who came after her; so also Greta, who came after her. When I came last and took my seat near the stove and began to relate the story of the pigs and dogs, my father interrupted me somewhat vexed: 'why I hear this story now for the sixth time.'

"I confess that this made a strong impression upon me, and caused me to see more than ever the limits of our potatoe-ground. When my father died two years afterwards, and my kind aunt considered it as a matter of course that we should still continue to live in the same way as hitherto, then Hellevi really looked up to the sun and said: 'No, thou fair, all-animating sun, the world, which thou illuminatest, cannot be so confined; the life, which thou enlivenest, so poor. The springs of life and of virtue do not rise from the kitchen and the cellar. No, I will away to thee, into thy freedom, into thy beauty, charming world.'

"I knew exactly my wishes, I knew my talent and my place, and eternal thanks to the honest man, the kind and wise guardian, who extended to me his hand and assisted me to attain it in spite of the resistance, which my independent undertaking called forth in the family of Hausgiebel. I was twenty-seven years old, I passed myself off for thirty, rented the Bird's-nest,

and arranged my affairs so that I could purchase it in a few years. How I have settled there, you are aware, my friends. For the last ten years I look up every day to the sun, even when obscured by clouds, and praise it and the glorious world, which he enlightens—thanks to you for it, my guardian and excellent uncle!"

A tear started into Miss Hellevi's speaking eye, whilst she reached her hand to Counsellor Hök, who pressed it and kissed it heartily.

"And the sum and substance of all this," said *ma chère mère*, "is, that there is nothing bad, from which some good does not arise, if one only takes it in a right way."

FRANCISKA. "Yes, but why do so few men hit upon the right way. All certainly are anxious to find it."

COUNS. HÖK. Upon the cause of this much might be said. But chiefly men may ascribe their misfortunes to themselves, to their own want of courage, their want of heroism in the signification, in which the ancients used the word. He has no conception of the degree of power and elasticity which the Creator has implanted in the nature of man. He has not courage manfully to resign, nor the courage firmly to lay hold; he will not capitulate, he will not fight, and in the mean time the garrison starves to death, or death, the enemy, comes and captures the whole garrison."

"Deucedly well said!" muttered Björn.

Here Bruno rose up silently; all got up, the stranger-guests prepared for departure.

Miss H. stood at the window. I went up to her and expressed my surprise at Counsellor Hök. "What an

excellent and interesting man that is!" said I.

"What would you say then," replied Miss H., vivaciously, "if you knew him as I do, if you knew how active he is in promoting the welfare of mankind, how he assists in private many needy among talented and scientific men, and helps to bring their labours to light and notice! He is, I am sure, one of the noblest and best of men."

"He may make a will in favour of one of my ten daughters," thought I. I had not thought of my ten daughters for some time past, but after the conversation of this evening I thought much about them.

The 18th.

Thank goodness! I have some prospect of getting home again. They talk of to-morrow and the day after. I long with all my heart to be at my little Rosenvik. This residence is spacious and splendid, but I don't feel comfortable here. It is too gloomy and innumerable jack-daws are perpetually making a noise in the old tower. I feel quite awe-stricken, and I believe I am growing into a likeness of an ancient family-portrait, which hangs in my room. Bruno and *ma chère mère* are much in each other's company; they speak little, but they appear to be happy if they only see each other and sit in the same room. Bruno seems to have hushed *ma chère mère's* scruples with regard to Hagar, and Hagar is little to be seen since Bruno's convalescence. Bruno wins my whole heart by his great tenderness for his mother.

XIII.

SIXTEENTH LETTER.

FRANCISKA WERNER TO MARIA M.

Rosenvik, Sept. 20th, 18—

Yesterday evening I returned to this place. I cannot describe to you my feelings of delight, again to find myself here; with what rapture I survey my rooms and my furniture! with what pleasure, did I, this morning, salute the rent in the window-curtain, and see the beams of day peeping in through it! I breathe in free respiration the air around my dwelling, for the atmosphere of a dear home, has a peculiar, and at the same time, an invigorating and stirring charm. I am driven about, like a flickering flame, to the attics, the cellar, to the farm-yard, and to the garden. I have found fault; I have praised, I am well satisfied with Sissa, and every thing which she has had under her care. But the housemaid has become untidy, and she must hear of it. Andumbla has had a calf, which I, very appropriately I think, have christened bear; a little spirited animal. I have visited my flowers, and am surprised to see them looking so fresh, and apparently tended with so much care. I was struck when I heard that Serena had been here twice a week, and had looked

after them. Excellent, amiable Serena. I caressed my flowers, I kissed them, they were so pretty. I have cut a cauliflower for supper. It had rained a little during the day, and every thing in the garden stood fresh and fragrant, although the frost had here and there yellowed a leaf. It is now evening, and I am sitting at my little desk, and I have seen the swans tracking their course through the calm lake whilst they moved away towards their nest in Svanö. I have contemplated the dark walls of Ramm, behind which I have lately spent so much of my time, I am happy and thankful. I am expecting my Björn from the town where he has spent the whole day, and have prepared a little feast for him. A duck, from Helga, will make a show on our little table, fat and full-grown as she is, and accompanied by a cauliflower, and the freshest salad. Pancakes with preserved raspberries will follow nicely. As it is rather cold, I have had a fire lighted in the room, and Björn's lined coat and slippers placed there to warm. I will pet him. Whilst I am waiting for "my good man," I will give you some account of the occurrences of yesterday.

Counsellor Hök came to Ramm in order to accompany *ma chère mère* to Karlsfors. We partook of our breakfast *en famille*, after which the carriages drove away. The weather was fine, and we were all in high spirits. Hagar, while packing up, concealed herself behind the crowd, when *ma chère mère* with erect and dignified gait, marched down the steps. Bruno assisted his mother into the carriage. She had scarcely got up when the horses took fright at a heavily laden wagon covered with black cloth, which was slowly en-

tering the court. Bruno cried out loudly that it might stop. The wagon was halted, and the man who drove it came up to *ma chère mère*. It was Mr. Svensson's, the wagon contained the coffin which my mother had ordered, and which singular enough, had been entirely forgotten to be countermanded.

This strange incident disconcerted us all a little. *Ma chère mère* was the first to recover herself, and said with a loud voice to the undertaker:

"My dear sir, I have, as you see this time, reckoned without my host. I thought I should die, but it pleased merciful God to spare my life. His will be praised. But postponed is not abandoned. The coffin will come into use some day or other. At any rate the agreement remains as to price, and as to the feast, I invite you to a merry feast on Sunday at Karlsfors, Mr. Svensson. But you will now be so good as to convey this nice coffin comfortably to the place whither I myself am just going!"

Mr. Svensson was greatly embarrassed. His horse was tired, and besides this, he had some business to transact at other places. "Well then," said *ma chère mère*, "let the coffin be carried into the loft here for the present, and I will have it removed from there some day."

Bruno called Hagar, said a few words to her, and at a sign from him some men came, who lifted up the coffin from the wagon, and under Hagar's direction, carried it into the house. "Mark my words!" said Hagar as she passed by me, "a misfortune will soon happen in this house. This coffin will not be carried out hence empty."

I would willingly have said a friendly word to her

on our departure, for she was unhappy and had shewed herself kindly disposed towards us, but this scene and Hagar's words had confused me, and when I had collected my thoughts, she was gone, and *ma chère mère* was calling me impatiently to come to her.

Counseller Hök took the lead in his carriage, in order to clear the way; *ma chère mère* and Bruno, together with Elsa, followed in her great family carriage, and I and Björn, in our cabriolet, closed the procession.

We arrived in safety. It was an agreeable sight to behold Jean Jacques, and Jane Maria, dressed in holiday clothes, stepping out at the gate, adorned with festive wreaths in order to meet us on our arrival; it was pleasant to see a crowd of servants, and retainers, with demonstrations of joy and attachment in their countenances collected around *ma chère mère*, as she stepped out of the carriage. Feelings of deep emotion and joy appeared to modify her usual pride, as leaning on the arm of her son, she ascended the steps amid the crowd, who raised their voices in good wishes and blessings. As soon as *ma chère mère* had ascended the steps, she remained standing, turned herself round and made a motion with her hand, as if to command silence.

After she had coughed a few times in order to clear her voice, and to control her emotion, she delivered the following speech :—

" My dear friends, followers, and servants! It is with great joy that I now see you collected around me, for be it known to you, that it has pleased the Almighty to restore to me my dear son, Bruno Mansfeldt, who has long been distant from his home, but is now returned, you see him now at my left hand, and he has

lately saved my life at the peril of his own, for it pleased God to frighten my old horses with lightning, by which my life was in jeopardy, and it was saved by my son, at the expense of severe injuries done to himself, by the horses, it is on this account that he yet wears the bandage about his head, as you now see, my friends. My friends, followers, and servants! I tell you that I have really acknowledged and recognised this man as my only son Bruno, and desire and request you, friends and servants, from this time forth, to consider and treat him in all points, as my son and rightful heir, and to testify to him at all times, and on all occasions, the same respect and the same obedience which you have ever rendered to me, and I also hope and believe that my son will shew himself worthy of it, and be to you a just and good master. And I now beg of you dear friends, to unite with me in imploring the divine blessing on his head."

A hearty "Long live Bruno Mansfeldt!" followed this speech, and they pressed around *ma chère mère* and Bruno, to shake them by the hand; but *ma chère mère* brought this far too exciting scene adroitly to a close, by saying, " many thanks to you, dear friends, but you must now excuse my son from staying any longer with you, for he is yet much weakened by his wounds, and needs repose. But on Sunday we will talk longer together. On Sunday, I invite all you who are assembled here to a dinner at Karlsfors, that you may enjoy yourselves with me. Ale and wine shall flow in abundance, and every one who will participate in my joy, and drink the health of my son, is heartily welcome. Adieu! adieu! my dear children." And with these words she

took Bruno's arm and entered the house.

Bruno was in reality faint and weak, and my dear mother was unwearied in her affectionate tenderness and care for him. She appeared as she arranged Bruno's room and herself made his bed, to have become young again, and seemed pleased in doing it like a happy and youthful mother.

Bruno spent many hours entirely alone in his room, and when he came down to us, he looked very pale, yet he brightened up under the influence of the increasing happiness of his mother. And this had an enlivening effect upon us all. *Ma chère mère* had so earnestly entreated Björn and myself to remain till evening, that we were obliged to comply, but I was not perfectly happy till we drove in the bright moonlight to our dear Rosenvik. When I at last found myself in my own room, I skipped about for joy, and embraced, and kissed my little Sissa, who returned my caresses eagerly and affectionately. Björn looked on and laughed.

This morning Björn went to Karlsfors, before he proceeded to town, and my good husband sent a messenger to me from thence with the following lines:

"Two words are certainly better than none, and I wish that my Franciska would rejoice with me that all here is going on so well. Bruno is much better to-day. *Ma chère mère* has not been for many years so cheerful and so happy; I am also joyful, pleased with the reconciled parties, pleased with the sun, pleased with my wife: and am, for time and eternity, yours

BJORN."

"P.S.—Do not go out this evening, dear Franciska.

Ma chère mère has determined to send for you, but do not let that call you away; I should like to spend one more evening quietly with you, at Rosenvik"

Go out? No, my dear Björn, not if the king himself——hush, here comes a carriage. It is *my* king, my Björn.

September 22nd.

Do you remember, Maria, a little song which begins, "Trust not in life, trust not in joy?" This I might sing to day, had I the least desire to sing, but that I have not. The day before yesterday I threw by my pen with so much joy, and flew to meet my Björn. But when I saw him I stood checked and silent. He was pale and looked excited, although he extended his dear hand to me as affectionately as ever.

"What is the matter, Björn? Are you ill?"

"No!"

"Has anything unpleasant happened to you? Ah, tell me what it is?"

"I will tell you by and bye!"

That "by and bye" came soon, for Björn saw my anxiety, and as we were alone in the ante-chamber, he sat down on the sofa, drew me towards him, threw one of his arms around my neck, and said quietly and tenderly:

"It is but a worldly care, my Franciska, which you, as I am convinced, will bear as well, if not better than I myself. Look here! read it yourself!" And so saying, Björn placed a letter in my hand. It came from Peter, and was written in evident haste, and bore traces of strong mental excitement. It contained the communication that the house of L. and C. in which

Björn, on Peter's advice, had placed the whole of his property, had been made bankrupts, and were involved to such an extent as to leave no hope to the creditors of recovering the least part of their property. Peter's little savings were also by the same means lost, and that which Björn had accumulated by the dint of twenty years patient exertions was at the same time irretrievably gone.

"Brother," so Peter concluded his letter, "what I have lost is trifling, and the misfortune is the just reward of my want of prudence; but you are injured through my folly, and that plunges me into despair. It is the bitterest feeling which I have experienced during my whole life. If I were not detained here by the lawsuit in the W. case, I should now, instead of writing, have been with you, have thrown myself into your arms, and have implored your forgiveness!"—some following lines were written unintelligibly. A spot upon the paper, evidently proceeding from a tear, made the last word unintelligible. On this spot Björn's eyes fixed.

"My poor Peter," said he, and great tears now began to roll down his pale cheeks. He leant his head upon my breast and for some time wept violently, I said nothing, but kissed his forehead, and made him feel that I understood him, and sympathized with him. He became more composed, and after a little while we began to talk calmly of what had happened, and of our present circumstances.

"I now stand," said Björn, "in precisely the same position, in which I was twenty years ago. The prospect of an old age free from care has vanished. For myself only, I should not have cared, were I alone."

"Björn," I replied, "would you live without me?"

"Not for the whole world," he answered, "but I wished you to share my prosperity, not my want."

"Prosperity and adversity too, Björn! Did we not vow at our marriage to share with one another pleasure and pain? Believe then, that it is joy to me to share your grief, and that I can suffer no real sorrow, so long as you entertain the same feelings of affection for me as I cherish for you."

I will not communicate to you any more of this conversation. You, Maria, will be able to imagine what followed. Ah it is so natural, so easy, and so sweet, for a wife to afford consolation, and pour out her love on such occasions. Shame be on those who consider this as a merit; it is an enjoyment, such moments abound in riches; never is the love for each other more deeply felt than then. Björn appeared also to feel this, he understood my resignation, and saw that courage and resignation would never be wanting on my part. He was more affectionate towards me than usual; indeed he appeared thankful for my tenderness, but his countenance did not brighten up, his brow was clouded with care as he walked up and down with his arm folded on his breast; he did not spit; he has now laid aside that habit. "Poor Peter!" he at length ejaculated, with a deep sigh, "I can understand what he feels. I wish that I could—"

"Go to him?" I quickly interrupted him, anticipating the cause of Björn's depression of spirits. "But how can you go away from your patients?"

"I have not many just now, and at this moment no dangerous cases. My friend, Doctor O., could attend

them in my absence. I could conveniently leave these, but—at such a moment, not—my wife !"

"Oh, then go, my Björn, your wife is not foolish. Go, and restore repose to Peter, and relieve your heart. Your wife will be mindful of you and regulate every thing in domestic affairs. Be not concerned about her, Björn ; she will neither be uneas ynor impatient, but be a credit to her husband."

Björn extended his hand to me, and his countenance now, for the first time, brightened up. Oh, that noble man ! His brother's affliction had depressed his spirits more than his own loss. After the journey was determined upon, he became calm, and we conversed till late at night on our circumstances, and how we were to arrange them for the future. That the joy of my little feast had vanished you will easily perceive. For the first time since we were married, Björn could not be prevailed upon to take a morsel, and I could not even think of eating.

The duck remained untouched, but was privately put away into the pantry till the next day.

Before we went to sleep, all was as well and as joyful with us as though no misfortunes had befallen our family, and so we closed the day as we had done so many others, by giving thanks to the Almighty for our happiness.

Yesterday Björn went first to the town, where he wished to spend the day, yet he wished to travel further that evening. He has remained away already about a fortnight. That is a long time to stay. I now sit here as a widow, and feel that my spirits are not so elastic as they were in the first moments of our misfortunes, but

they shall not entirely sink, that I have determined upon.

The change in our circumstances which affects the most is this; that we must leave our little Rosenvik, and for ever confine ourselves to the town. Our finances no longer permit us to keep a country seat for the mere purpose of pleasure.

I am seriously turning over in my mind the necessity of again giving lessons in music. Oh, fie on the tear which has here fallen on the paper; no more must fall. I know well that all will go on and prosper, too, if we only keep courage in our minds, and peace in our hearts and home. How unworthy would it be in me to torment myself about the future, while I yet possess one of the greatest blessings of life, my good and inestimable husband.

Björn wishes that our misfortune may remain as long as possible unknown in the neighbourhood, and I will take care that from me no one shall discover it. I will keep my promise to Björn, will be calm, and devote my thoughts to my work. I have much to do in the garden; I have a number of rose-bushes to plant; and if I may not myself inhale the fragrance of the rose, well then some others may enjoy their sweetness.

September 23rd. Evening.

I am quite enlivened by my labours in the garden. Serena has spent the day here, and has lent me a helping hand; we have made a strawberry bed, and planted raspberries, and Provence rose-bushes. I hope they will thrive well. How refreshing is such a labour! But what has done me more good than anything is,

that Serena has opened her heart to me—that kind, pure, affectionate heart. All is as I thought. Serena loves Bruno, and Bruno loves Serena; yet theconnexion between them appears now to be broken off. I do not believe that it will remain so; but, ought I to wish for their union? Ah! I do not know. Serena is pale to-day; it is easy to see that she has suffered much. She is now making our tea, and stands at the table pensively and gracefully, with traces of melancholy on her countenance. I related to her at full length all that I had lately witnessed at Ramm, and observed her grow pale, blush, weep, and her countenance clear up in radiant raptures. "The tea is ready!" "I am coming, my angel!" Good evening, dear Maria! "I hope to sleep well to-night!" I shall be with *ma chère mère* to-morrow. I have been writing daily to Björn. It has become a large packet of important nonsense.

Later

I have been alarmed, and am still quite full of anxiety. As Serena wished to go home, I accompanied her up the court. The air was unusually mild for this season of the year, and Nature in her autumnal and half melancholy beauty, stood calmly illumined by the warm glow of evening. Serena appeared to feel the moment replete with enjoyment, and she said, as we went a few steps towards the garden, "Do you not think, Franciska, that there is now and then in the atmosphere something resembling what one calls kindness, which, like it, finds its way to the heart? One feels kind by it."

"You speak exactly my own sentiments, Serena; but I must ask besides, whether you do not feel an in-

clination in gloomy autumn weather to give way to gloomy thoughts?"

"Ah, yes!" answered Serena, smiling, "but we must then seek the breezes of a higher spring."

"But this is not always so easy; and, perhaps, it is impossible for those who do not love."

"Yes, happy those who have something to love in heaven or earth; but who," added she, whilst her countenance beamed as if it were irradiated, "who, indeed, can avoid it? Is not the world full of objects worthy of love? and does it not rest with ourselves to open our souls to them? And are we not, also, just now," and she looked at the same time upon the beautiful landscape around us," surrounded by living beings worthy of our love? Ah! it appears to me that voices speak from trees and flowers, from creatures, and from the stars; they tell me of the great and merciful Creator, and of the life which He has bestowed upon them. Every where a soul meets mine which resembles my own, which I can understand and love; and where or in what state of life, do not voices sound from the beings and things which surround us? All that is required of us is, to lend to them a pure and open ear."

"And a pure heart," added I, embracing her; "yes, then would the whole human life be a continued converse with God, and we should experience neither affliction, nor weariness, but—"

"But, I forget everything while I am conversing with you." Serena interrupted me. "The carriage has already been waiting some time. I must away. Adieu! dearest Franciska, adieu!

Serena departed, and scarcely had she vanished from

my sight than it fell upon a pair of eyes, whose expression was in great contrast to those of Serena. They glowed like two flaming coals from among the Syringa bushes, behind which their possessor was concealed. I started, thought of Lucifer, and stared at the two glowing fires. They were now fixed upon me, and Hagar sprang forth from the bushes before me. With a look, to which her violently excited feelings gave a wild expression of terror, she came to me and asked me vehemently, "Was it she? she whom he loves?—say, was that she? I endeavoured calmly to prove to her my ignorance of the subject of her inquiry, but at this instant some one approached, and Hagar stamped violently with her foot, and wrung her hands as if she were insane, whilst she muttered between her teeth, "Woe! woe to her and me!" with these words she rushed off.

Unnerved and astonished I went into the house, whilst saying to myself, "there is a difference between love and love, there is no difference between whom, how, and what."

This occurrence has disturbed and disquieted me. Would to Heaven that Björn were at home safe again.

XIV.

SEVENTEENTH LETTER.

FRANCISKA WERNER TO MARIA M.

Rosenvik, Sept. 28th.

Things go on somewhat strangely with *ma chère mère* since the day on which she returned to Karlsfors. She is not exactly like herself; she is so wonderfully still, and as if sunk in a dream. Her step and her voice sound no longer through the large rooms at Karlsfors. One hears now no domestic storms, no reproachful words, but also no more proverbs, and no more of her cheerful domestic jokes. Every day she appears to be less occupied with what goes on about her. If the inspector and the steward come to inquire about the affairs of the estate, she refers them to Jean Jacques; if the servant maids come to speak about their occupation, she sends them to Miss Tutten. Tutten comes to hand in her accounts and to receive her commands; sometimes waits, speaks and makes many proposals without receiving an answer. *Ma chère mère* appears at length to forget that she is in the room, and Tutten, after she has coughed and wondered, and asked, and waited, goes away concerned, but still inwardly rejoiced at the prospect of becoming the only governor and ruler in

the house, but suddenly falls into the way of Jane Maria, who has gradually obtained the supreme authority over her. *Ma chère mère* is altered even in her conduct towards Bruno; and when he is in the room she regards him silently, and with a fixed look. Yesterday I saw as she sat with her eyes steadily fixed upon him, two great tears roll down her cheeks. They were the first I had seen *ma chère mère* shed since she had recovered her son. What can it be that disturbs *ma chère mère?* What means this silence, this unwonted stillness? May it not threaten an attack of hypochondriasis, or something worse? I am much disquieted. Bruno, also, has forebodings of some evil. Yesterday he took me aside, and inquired anxiously into his mother's state; to this I could give him no reply, and besides this, Björn is not here. What shall we do without him? I have written to him as to the state of affairs, in order that if practicable, he may hasten his return.

October 3rd.

Yesterday I received a letter from Björn. He is still less free in his epistolary than in his verbal communications, but his words always carry with them matter and force. I could see from his letter, (although it did not appear in words) that Peter had derived new life from his arrival, and that his journey had been of use in more than one respect. About Ebba, Björn wrote, "she looks like a little bird, which when it grows dark, hides its head under its wings." It is well that Peter is now the wing; upon the whole, Björn's letter was wonderfully good and consolatory. He thinks that on the sixth of December, he will be able to return. May

he come soon! His presence is most necessary, I am becoming more and more uneasy about *ma chère mère.* A great change is certainly impending over her, and now as I have serious fears about her, I feel more and more how highly I value her. She has been for the last few days more quiet and more reserved than ever, and appears to enjoy a sort of inward repose; but in her actions, in all that she does and undertakes. there prevails an uncertainty, a confusion, and helplessness which is a great contrast to her former active and bustling manner. She is also at present so unusually mild and kind that the domestics are both astonished and delighted at it. They look at one another and at us, and appear to ask, "What is coming?" And I say the same to myself.

October 7th.

Ah Maria! now I know all, and you shall know all too. Björn came home yesterday evening. I received him as though he were the only person in the world,—N.B., myself excepted. What he told to me of his journey, of our affairs, of Peter and Ebba, I will communicate to you at another opportunity. I will merely relate to you what occurred yesterday.

It was Sunday, and by noon, we were at Karlsfors. Björn's eyes were fixed inquiringly on *ma chère mère*, and his grimaces indicated nothing good, *i. e.* there was an entire absence of them, which is a mark that Björn is serious and melancholy. At table *ma chère mère* had Björn at her right hand, and Bruno at her left. She was silent and reserved as usual for some time, but very pale. Her carriage was also not so dignified, nor her toilette so well arranged as they were wont to be. He

cap sat crooked on her head, and a few locks of silvery hair fell from under it on her pale cheeks. It grieved me to look at her.

After we had partaken of soup, *ma chère mère* poured out some wine for Bruno. The wine ran in a stream on the table-cloth, and she did not perceive it. Bruno wished to take the decanter out of her hand whilst he said, " Mother you are pouring wine on the cloth."

" Am I?" she said, with a melancholy tone. " Now then I see that it is all over with me. Pour out the wine yourself my son, your mother will never do it more;" with these words, she placed the decanter on the table, pushed the chair back, and rose. We all stood up at the same time—" Sit still!" said *ma chère mère* with a loud imperative tone, "sit still, no one shall follow me." She motioned with her hand, and walked slowly and majestically through the midst of the astonished domestics, but hit against the door, on which Björn and Bruno sprang up hastily. She turned herself quickly round and exclaimed; " Whoever follows me, is not my friend. All of you remain here quietly," she added somewhat milder, " I will send for you in a short time." We knew *ma chère mère's* character too well to contradict her expressed wishes. But you can scarcely picture to yourself in what a situation we all were. We spent about an hour in the most painful suspense. I felt for Bruno's sorrow. With knitted and gloomy eyebrows he paced up and down the room, and now and then dried the cold sweat from his pale forehead. At length Elsa came, the quiet servant-maid was not like herself. With a bewildered look and hesitating voice, she told us we might come in to her mistress. Bruno rushed

out, we hastened after him, and with an inward trembling I expected to behold some terrible scene. But no! nothing terrible met our eyes in *ma chère mère's* room. She was sitting upright and composedly in a great arm-chair, in the further part of the room, but without her commanding mien, and traces of violent but suppressed emotion showed themselves on her pale cheeks and swollen eyelids.

"Are you all here?" asked *ma chère mère* with a firm voice, to which we replied in the affirmative, while we collected round her.

"My children," began *ma chère mère* with a strange mixture of boldness and meekness, "I have wished to be alone for a few moments, in order to prepare myself as becometh a christian, to appear before you and disclose my misfortune; grief has had its sway, it is time that reason should likewise have hers. My dear children, the hand of the Lord lays heavy upon me, he has struck my eyes with darkness."

A painful groan was audible, and the echo of it was heard around. I took Björn's hand, and saw that he had anticipated the misfortune.

"My dear children," again began *ma chère mère*, "you shall not grieve for me, for even I grieve no more. At the commencement, it was a severe affliction I acknowledge it, and for a long time I would not believe that my situation was such as really is the case. No, I would not assent to it, I refused to acknowledge it to myself; I murmured; I was like the horned fish against the stream, but it became darker and darker, the misfortune became more plainly known to me, to day the fact became certain, and I am now submissive. Ah, my children, let us first remember that it is impossible

to contend against the Almighty. If we throw small stones at him, he throws larger ones back to us. In the second place we are all short-sighted mortals, and know little of what is good for ourselves, and for others. And therefore my children, in the third place it is well for us to humble ourselves under the hand of the Lord, and to submit to Him, for He knows well what He does."

I could no longer restrain myself, I threw myself weeping on *ma chère mère's* neck, whilst I exclaimed; "Björn will assist you, *ma chère mère*, he will restore to you your eyesight."

"I hope to be able to do so," said Björn, as he stepped nearer, took her hand and closely examined her eyes. "It is a cataract; it can be cured. In one, or in two years it will be mature, and an operation can then be performed."

"Lars Anders," said *ma chère mère*, as she pressed his hand, "I will trust to you, and in this belief I will live happily. I will wait patiently until the day arrives on which I shall see again the fair light of the sun. And should it even never re-appear to me here upon earth, yet will I still sitp atiently in darkness. I have at an earlier period of my existence, lived in yet greater darkness; now I am proportionately happy. My eyes have been allowed to feast themselves on a great joy, and although I can no more see my son, still I can hear him, him and you all," she added, as if fearing to commit an act of injustice to any one of us.

Bruno stood leaning over his mother, his head was bent over hers, and she felt his breath on her forehead. "Is it you, my son?" said she tenderly, and raised her darkened eyes.

"Yes, my mother," answered he in a pathetic and melodious voice.

"Then, give me your arm, my son, and lead me into the ante-chamber!" said *ma chère mère*, "and all you, my children, accompany us. Bruno shall play to us, and we will all be as before. It is my wish, my children, that you should not allow this misfortune of mine to trouble you, and do not imagine that you must condole with me. No one shall have more trouble than before in taking care of me, in waiting upon me, and in supporting me. I will be my own helper; and if I stand in need of the hand or of the eye of another, I will ask for it, and I am convinced that this assistance will not be wanting to me. As to the rest, we will make as little as possible of this affair. It is an old woman's comfort to complain and lament, said our great king Gustavus Adolphus, and I add that it is proper for every reasonable being to have God in his heart, and patiently to bear the cross which He has laid upon him."

With these words, *ma chère mère* rose and extended her arm to Bruno, but he placed his around her, and whilst he, with infinite tenderness, raised her hand to his lips, he led her out of the room. A light flush glowed at this moment on *ma chère mère's* pale cheeks, and with a smile, which seemed to tell of happiness, she reclined her head on his shoulder. Thus they went out, and we followed them. Bruno played at the command of his mother, and played divinely. I have never heard any one produce such sounds from an instrument.

"He does not play as an angel, but like an archangel," said *ma chère mère*, but as he passed over into

some melancholy tones, she said: "Play something cheerful, my dear, that is too sorrowful!" For, like the renowned Queen Elizabeth, *ma chère mère* liked only cheerful and noisy music.

After the music was over, general conversation began. We formed a circle round *ma chère mère*, and in spite of her injunction, every one took his part in entertaining her; for never was conversation so lively and interesting, and *ma chère mère* was on that account merrier than I have ever seen her. Bruno shone in entertaining, and lively-told narratives. *Ma chère mère* uttered exclamations, sometimes from terror, sometimes from surprise and pleasure, and I own that I did the same. Wonderful, incomprehensible, interesting Bruno!

With such conversation the afternoon and evening passed away, one knew not how. We all of us wondered, when supper was announced. *Ma chère mère* said, as she rose: "My dear children, you are to-night so interesting, so charming, that I could sit up the whole night listening to you. But he who eats out of the kettle has nothing in the dish, and we must be moderate with pleasure, as with any thing else. I have not found myself quite well to-day, and the best thing I can do, is to go to bed. I thank you all, my children, for this happy evening, and wish you a pleasant repast and a good night."

Bruno led his mother into her chamber, and remained there a long time with her. When he returned he was reserved and sorrowful, but composed. After supper, he talked a long time with Björn about the cataract, and made inquiries about the kind of disease, its

developments, and the operation, etc., all of which the good doctor described to him *con amore*.

Björn considers it as highly probable that *ma chère mère's* blindness has proceeded from her violent agitation when she recognised her son,—but Bruno must not suspect anything of this.—Singular! that this mother and son seem as if destined by fate to be the cause of each other's misfortune; but now as darkness has fallen upon her, contention must cease, and the angel of reconciliation who has decended into their souls, must spread his wings over their future lives.

But how will it be henceforward in other respects with *ma chère mère*. Will her unbending character be able still to maintain its firmness? Will not her powers fail? What will she do by and bye? What will she employ herself with? Will not she, who was once so active and stirring, be oppressed by inactivity, become hypochondriacal, irritable and complaining, a burden alike to herself and others? "Tell me, Björn, what is your opinion on the subject?"

"Hem! we shall see."

October 9th.

We are busy arranging our affairs. This is a more difficult task than we at first calculated upon. Debts to a large amount will weigh heavily upon us. Björn's generosity to his poor relations by the mother's side now falls back as a heavy burden upon him. Many retrenchments will be made in our domestic economy, in spite of which I see very plainly that in the winter we shall be placed in great pecuniary embarrassments. But Björn is strong and in good health, and as soon as I arrive in town I shall commence giving music lessons.

We shall soon proceed thither. Björn has rented a little house with three rooms and a kitchen.

It gives me pain to part at present with *ma chère mère*, who has been taken ill since our last meeting. I have the toothache, my heart is heavy. There are times when every thing appears adverse to us; but we should not then forget that we have enjoyed much, and that we have been happy; I will not do so, I will not embitter my existence by impatience. I hate dulness, just as much as Miss Hellevi Hausgiebel ever did. There are (as I now feel) burdens and trouble which cannot and will not be thrown off; we must, therefore, be careful to bear them as lightly as we can.

October 14th.

Long live *ma chère mère!* No one could support a misfortune better or more sensible than she does; it is impossible to submit with more propriety to the chastening hand of the Lord. She has entrusted the entire management of the out of door affairs to Jean Jacques, and that of the interior to Jane Maria, and has reserved only to herself the privilege of being consulted in certain cases. On this occasion she has delivered to her servants and retainers a long and dignified oration. (Tutten has given warning to leave in spring, she and Jane Maria are not the best friends with one another.) *Ma chère mère* has written to request the attendance of a person from the blind institution, who, during the winter will teach her several things, as writing, playing at cards, and so forth. In the meanwhile she is working assiduously at her great net, and practises diligently on the violin. She is calm, good-tempered, and even cheerful. I must also say that Jane Maria now be-

haves extremely well towards her, and in the evening, with praiseworthy self-denial, plays old sonnets from Steibelt and Pleyel *avec accompaynement du violon*, which *ma chère mère* knows from memory; she is now also more affectionate in her behaviour towards Jane Maria, which seems to be gratifying to the latter. Bruno goes every day to Karlfors. *Ma chère mère* already distinguishes his horse's gallop in the distance, her face then becomes flushed, and she exclaims: "Now he is coming!" When he is with her, her manners are milder and more feminine. Bruno is about purchasing Ramm, and means to take up his residence there.

October 15th.

We have to day made many payments, which has exhausted all the money which we had. I did not believe that we had a penny remaining, when I discovered that we had yet possessed a twelve-shilling piece. I was so delighted with this, that I laughed at myself; then I wept, and at length I laughed again, and embraced my Björn.

The day after to-morrow we remove to town. I am reflecting with joy that we shall there see Serena, and the excellent old Dahls. In other respects we shall make no acquaintances, but live quietly to ourselves. The winter will pass over tolerably well, but the spring —ah! in the spring, when every thing in the country is so beautiful; when the air and the flowers, when the butterflies, and the song of birds—but I will not make myself melancholy on that account. No, I will not; I will have flowers in my room, and be a singing bird and a butterfly myself for them and my Björn.

XV.

EIGHTEENTH LETTER.

FRANCISKA WERNER TO MARIA M.

W—— 20th Oct. 18—

We have now been three days in town. On Monday morning we left Rosenvik, not without tears on my part—that I confess,—but I took good care that Björn should not see them. Ah! I am no more to call that lovely little dwelling my home. The morning was dull and cold, snow whirled in the air, and the road was rendered rough by the previous night's frost. Poor little Pollo had to pull and to draw Bear and his little wife. We breakfasted at the Birds'-nest whither Miss Hellevi Hausgiebel had given us a pressing invitation. Her good coffee, together with the accompanying dainties, her pretty museum, as also her cheerful conversation, re-animated me, and I was again in good spirits, by the time I reached town.

Our three little rooms are neat and comfortable, but the sun does not shine on them, which I am sorry for. Farewell, my flowers! Well, one can live even without them. I have for the last few days, been putting things to rights; yesterday I put up the curtains in our rooms myself. Serena was here and assisted me. How interesting the conversation was then you may imagine.

"My angel, give me that piece of muslin!"—"Have you the scissors?" — "Where is the needle-case?" "Here!"—"The hammer?"—"There!"—"Are the plaits crooked?"—"A little—to the left."—"The nail is blunt."—"Here is another." And then again a little joking and laughter. In Serena's company my employments become a source of pleasure to me; she makes every thing easy and delightful. By noon we had every thing in order, and when Björn came home I led him with some pride into his room, which he had never before seen so neat.

"Ha, the deuce!" he exclaimed, staring and making grimaces, with all his might.

Serena dined with us. She was in good spirits, and jested with Björn: our dinner was nice, and it was a pleasant repast. When Serena left us in the afternoon, Bjorn fell into a kind of transport about her, and exclaimed:

"She is a complete angel!"

"Yes, Björn, and therefore she would certainly not make a proper wife for you."

"Decidedly not; just as little as I a fit husband for her. Only one suits me, and that is—my wife."

"Come, that is indeed excellent."

Every thing in my little dwelling is now in good order. If I had only the sun! But, thanks be to God! I possess home's brightest sun—peace.

November 1st.

Our misfortune is now generally known. Do you know the way in which we first became acquainted with this? It was thus: Bruno came to Björn one morning, with great eagerness, and placed one half of

his property at the disposal of my husband. It gave him pain, when Björn would only accept of a loan, and that only sufficient to liquidate a pressing debt. The good old Dahl came in person to offer his services. All our acquaintances have shewn us much friendship and sympathy; many families where Björn attends have embraced this opportunity to give him their annual payment. By all these means our present distress is for the most part alleviated, and I am quite enraptured with the kindness of the people.

But, no visit, no kindness has affected me so much as that of *ma chère mère*. She came yesterday afternoon with so much kindness and cordiality. She made me lead her all over the rooms, kitchen, and store-room; made me explain all my arrangements to her, and only lamented that she could not see my curtains, which, according to report, were particularly well arranged. She mentioned nothing about our loss, but after tea she said suddenly,

"Hear me, Lars Anders! what nonsense is this gossip which I hear of; they say you think of leaving Rosenvik? No, that I must protest against; I will not hear of it. And if you cannot pay the rent for a few years, you shall have it, the deuce take me, without rent. Yes, that you shall. I will hear no contradiction. It is said and decided."

Björn, with his terrible independence, would have said much against this proposal, but I was so enraptured with *ma chère mère's* words, that I immediately kissed her cheeks, hands, and clothes. This softened Björn's opposition. He muttered something to himself about "Too much—we cannot accept—what we cannot

pay for." But *ma chère mère* interrupted him warmly, and said, as she kept me upon her lap:

"Dear Lars Anders! don't stand there and growl like a beetle in a barrel. Too much and too little spoils every thing. For a man to be independent and to help himself is a good thing; but not to receive a service from a friend, pride and folly. You have sustained losses; you were not to blame. Very well, then you have no occasion to be ashamed on that account. Take the spoon in the right hand, Lars Anders, and accommodate yourself to circumstances. Every one must do this sooner or later. To-day is my turn, to-morrow yours. That which is offered by a kind heart ought not to be rejected. Besides, children! I do myself a service while I do you one, for I like to have you for neighbours; there are none whom I like so much. It must be as I have said. Possess Rosenvik for five years without payment of the rent; then you can pay it as before. Better times are in store for you, my children; for you are industrious and prudent, and after the tempest, God sends sunshine. Do not be self-willed, Lars Anders! be a good man! Look at your wife; she is much more sensible than you. So! come here and kiss my hand, and let us agree." With these words she extended her hand to Björn, which he, half sulkily, half thankfully, and tenderly, kissed and shook. The affair was now settled, nothing further was said about it, and *ma chère mère* went away, kind and happy, as she had come.

I was so much gratified at recovering Rosenvik, and again being able to enjoy the spring, with its flowers

and birds, that Björn did not persist in his obstinate notions of independence, but became happy with me. Now I can again inhale the fragrance of my roses, pluck my raspberries, and cut my cauliflower, and besides this cultivate my garden, and make it profitable. All this is charming!

November 18th.

For the last week and a half I have been giving music-lessons. Serena, in whom I have confided, has procured me four pupils; these come in the morning when Björn is absent. He knows nothing of my undertaking, and will wonder at the cause of our domestic affairs going on so well, and of the money in the purse diminishing so little. To do anything for so good and contented a man is an enjoyment. Otherwise it would be a torment. The music-lessons go on very well (what does not go on well with application? Pleasant, I cannot call them. Three of my pupils are very idle, and have been badly taught. I am doing my best to encourage them. We drum through the "*bataille de Prague*" with much toil and trouble. My fourth pupil is a clever girl, and I am pleased with her.

I am becoming more and more intimate with the old Dahls. They meet me as if I were one of the family. In Serena I possess the best and most amiable of friends. Björn is so kind,—ah! I have so many good things to be thankful for—and notwithstanding—notwithstanding, my heart is heavy, and a cloud hangs over me, which will not disperse. Besides I am not quite well; and then it is so dark here in the town, and for the last week there has been a continual mist, with rain,—then I have certain thoughts, which . . . .

I am curious to know what *ma chère mère* would say to these complaints; perhaps, "One who wishes to sing, always finds a song!" *Ma chère mère* plays on the violin, and is cheerful under her affliction. If I were only half as sensible as she!

XVI.

NINETEENTH LETTER.

FRANCISKA WERNER TO MARIA M.

W—— November 17th, 18—

We have now resided a month in the town. This mist and gloomy weather oppress my spirits; and then this everlasting drizzling rain. There is no enjoying the fresh air; besides, every body has colds and fevers. Björn is so much employed that I can only see him at noon and late in the evening. Old Dahl has had an attack of the gout in his feet, and Serena dare not leave him. I am not yet well enough to go out much, and so I cannot get to see her. I am endeavouring to employ myself at home, but nothing will succeed. Just now I wished to cheer myself with the beautiful "Ode to the Sun," but I had no voice. Then I wished to compose a little poem, but could find no other word to rhyme with "heart" except "smart," and this very nearly made me weep. Then I would try some sewing, good or bad, but the work would not do good or bad. At length I seated myself at the window in order to correct my bad temper, by the noise of carts and water dropping from the houses. My little pupils are, also, a

burden to me. We have not yet got through the "Battle of Prague;" we must make a trial of something else. Tell me. Do you know anything more wearisome than this perpetual dropping from the roof?

November 18th.

I wished yesterday to visit Serena. I stood in need of her friendly looks and conversation. I was discontented with everything, and especially with myself. My pupils had tormented me so much in the forenoon that I cried when I was alone. At noon the soup was smoked. Björn was obliged to leave me immediately after dinner. Every thing became insupportable to me, and in order to remove my bad temper from the house, I walked to the Dahl's, through the dirt, under my umbrella. I found her alone. The little family were assembled in the old gentleman's sick room. He was sitting in his great arm chair with his feet wrapped up in flannel. Serena's looks and kindness would have cheered me had not her paleness terrified me, and occasioned forebodings that here, too, all was not well. M. and Madame Dahl were, also, unusually silent and serious. I saw plain enough that the affection between the old gentleman and his darling was just as strong as ever.

After tea Madame Dahl went into her room, and requested me to accompany her whilst Serena should read something to her grandfather, who this evening was not able to converse. When we were alone no conversation began between us; the good old lady was thoughtful and sighed deeply. I inquired tenderly into the cause, and learned that Bruno had for several days been soliciting Serena's hand from her parents.

"His proposal," proceeded Madame Dahl, "pained me, and the more so by his affection and manly way of making it, for I have always esteemed Bruno, and yet we could not for many reasons, just now even think of giving Serena to him for a wife, as we know so little of him. There were many strange reports in circulation about his youth, and the reason of his flight from his mother's house. We have for many years heard nothing of him; and now they speak ambiguously of him, especially about a lady whom he has in the house. My husband is severe in his requirements as to the honour and good reputation of a husband; and if any one has a right to that he has. He may like Bruno just as I do, and he inwardly rejoices at the good which Bruno purposes and performs; but he does not wish to call him his son. Serena is the apple of his eye, his joy, and his pride; it is, therefore, no wonder that he does not wish to give her to a man whose life and character are shrouded in obscurity. He received Bruno's offer coldly, and without directly refusing him, he told him to think no more about it for the present, spoke of the future when he might be more acquainted with him; and, added jestingly, in order to close this not very agreeable conversation with friendly feelings, "With regard to the rest, if, as the Bible affirms, Jacob served Rebecca seven years, and yet seven years more, you ought not to find it unreasonable to wait a few years, and endeavour to earn a maiden, who is certainly, much better and more beautiful than the shepherdess in the land of Mesopotamia. But this jest of Jacob and Rebecca was far from appearing to please Bruno. With a gloomy look he took his hat, bowed, and left us without saying a word.

After he had gone, we felt ourselves completely unnerved, and determined to tell Serena all that had just happened, and to hear what she would say to it.—We did this, and her deep and powerful emotion confirmed what I had suspected, and what she herself has confessed to our inquiries. Serena loves Bruno; even as a child, she entertained towards him a peculiar affection, and this has now grown into love. But when my husband communicated to Serena the reason which induced him to give to Bruno an answer so discouraging, she said, though with tears, that he was quite right. And when he added, much moved, that his grey head would go down with sorrow to the grave, if she were united to a man who was any way unworthy of her, and that he would besides have no repose were she so much attached to Bruno, that she would be unhappy were their union not to take place: Serena threw her arms around his neck, entreated him to be calm, and assured him that she loved us more than Bruno, that she did not wish to give her hand without our full consent, that she would remain with us, and she said such sweet things to us: how contented she is with her position, and how happy our tenderness made her, that our hearts became easier.

From that time we have said no more of the affair, but God knows how it will turn out; we are all somewhat unnerved. I see that Serena's heart is heavy, although she appears as kind as ever. My husband excited himself a good deal with the conversation, and his gout has since become worse. We have heard no more of Bruno, of him who was formerly so often here. Perhaps he takes the refusal so ill, that he intends returning to the West Indies.

"Then he may travel," said I; "then he is not worthy of Serena. In truth, I must say with M. Dahl, she is a maiden who deserves that a man should wait for her and serve for her. It appears to me, however, that seven years, and seven years to that, is in the present age a little too much, as men do not now live half so long as the patriarchs."

Madame Dahl laughed, and said: "You are always ready with some cheerful remark or other, my dear little Franciska! I have thought and spoken just as you do; but my husband, who is so sensible and excellent in all other matters, is somewhat obstinate in those regarding matrimony; besides, he does not like that any one should court Serena. Ah! Franciska, I have sometimes believed and suspected, that in our tender concern for Serena there might be some admixture of selfishness, and that probably the fear of losing her attention and company influences us as much as our concern for her happiness in marriage. I find it a difficult point," she added sighing, "to settle this clearly in my own mind. Ah! life is a struggle, even to the grave. Old age has to combat temptations no less than youth, and perhaps more difficult ones than the latter. Our old blood becomes so sluggish, our feelings so benumbed, the coldness which steals upon the body penetrates into the soul. We feel ourselves very helpless and expect much. We have many little paroxysms, and under these we easily forget to participate in the joy, and to sympathise with the sorrows of others. Truly they are heavy trials; and had we not the gospel to cling to, and be warmed by it, I certainly believe that we should sink. And after all we suffer ourselves

perhaps to be more fettered than we ourselves are aware of."

Whilst we were talking, the clock had struck nine. Madame Dahl and I partook of a light supper. Serena remained in the other room with her grandfather. Shortly after supper we joined them, in order to attend family worship; a practice which had been kept up in the house regularly every evening for the last fifty years. On coming to the door, I heard Serena reading aloud. "Good heavens!" thought I, "she surely cannot have been reading all the time I have been absent from her!" We entered, the reading ceased. The domestics assembled in the room, and the old Dahl himself performed the short but beautiful evening-service with great devotion. This being ended, the family and servants shook hands with each other in mutual wishes of a "Good Night!" The whole was a delightful scene which did one's heart good.

When we were alone again, I perceived that Serena was fatigued; she coughed several times; I did not like that cough. But when I looked at her with inquiring anxiety, she smiled at me pleasantly and cheerfully, as if she were anxious to chase away this impression.

On my taking leave, and wishing the old Dahl "pleasant repose," he said: "Sleep and I have not been friends for some time past, but I am so happy in having a little Scheherezade near my bed, who shortens part of the night to me by her sweet stories, and this she has probably done more than 'a thousand and one nights,'* but perhaps you are tired this evening, my

* Alluding to "the Arabian Nights," which in Swedish bears that title.

good girl!" added he, looking at Serena.

"I can read a little while yet very well!" replied she willingly.

I was on the point of opposing this by remarking on her fatigued looks, but on my first "but" Serena laid her hand to interdict me, so urgently on mine, that I again closed my already opened lips.

Serena accompanied me into the hall. "Serena!" said I, reproachfully, "why do you not tell your grandfather the truth? You *are* tired, I see it; do you think that he would be pleased with your reading yourself to death, to entertain him? This is wrong, unwise."

"Be silent, silent! you sensible creature!" said Serena, smiling and caressing, whilst a tear sparkled in her eyes. "Let me use my own sense this evening; another time I will follow yours. My grandfather is unwell and not happy to day. Were he to believe, that I was not very well, he would be most uneasy. I do not find myself at all indisposed, I am only a little tired. I shall soon be bright as a winter's new moon again."

"Well then you must come to see me soon, for sometime I also have not been in a very happy mood."

"I have guessed as much, what is it, Franciska? what oppresses you so, sweet Franciska? Sit down a minute! Let me take off your cloak! May I not know it now, just now!"

"No, no! not now! But come to me soon, Serena!"

"As soon, as I possibly can!"

The Dahl's valet escorted me home with a lantern.

It rained, and my thoughts were heavy as the drops. "Is Serena" such was their language, "to fade away in her youth, because she has become so endeared to the old people, and has rendered herself so indispensable to them? I wish some one would run away with her— for else will she be charmed into a statute by this reading. Bruno would be the very man to accomplish such an act. But Bruno?—will this restless and not yet purified spirit be able to make her happy? Would this not be from the ashes into the fire? My poor, sweet Serena! Like the water-lily thou seemest destined to be driven now by calm, now by stormy waves, and to exist only to adorn or be a prey to them!"

The 22nd.

The water-lily has its own roots, although concealed in the deep waters, and although the flower yields to the rocking of the waves, it has still its own fixed point to gaze at, and that is—heaven, from thence it derives strength and light. But now from the flower of the waves to that of the dale, to—Serena.

To-day, this cold, dull morning, she surprised me, and in fact—I must confess it—in tears, I was ashamed of them, and I could only reply to her tender inquiries and caresses:

"Ah, do not be concerned about me, Serena! I am rather weak to-day; you ought to have come another day; to-day I am stupid, silly...."

"No, to-day was just the time for me to come!" said Serena with earnest kindness, "I rejoice to be here on this very day, I have had no rest since last I saw you, and you spoke so sadly, so unlike yourself, and I am

here now, and will not go away until you tell me what it is that so distresses you."

"Beware of reprisals, Serena!"

"Oh, you are inclined to quarrel, I find. Well, then I shall soon be more easy. See, now you laugh! Well, thank goodness, all will be well yet; but tell me now, dear Fanny! tell me——"

We reclined on the sofa, we talked, cried, and laughed together, and Serena's tender, sensible observations considerably lightened my heart. But when I grew more comfortable, I suddenly began to revert to her, and said:

"Now it is your turn, Serena. Now you must confess to me. No, no! you shall not get off, you shall not get away until you have solved this problem to me. To-day you come to me, speak to me, about me, as if there was nothing else in the world to talk about. There is a something in your looks which seems to tell that eternal peace dwells within your soul. Tell me, whence comes it, how can this be? Serena! I know that Bruno has sued for your hand. I further know, that if not plainly denied, it has still been placed to him in so doubtful, so distant a perspective, that it is most improbable, that he will ever obtain it. I likewise know, that this has wounded him—can all this be a matter of indifference to you?"

"No—not of indifference!" It seemed to cost Serena much self-command to speak on this subject.

"Dearest Serena!" cried I, "forgive me! I see that I am torturing you; but this once you must let me look into your heart. I know that Bruno loves you exceedingly. You yourself have confessed to me, what

your feelings are towards him. Can you now give him up without pain?"

"Not without pain—but yet without much suffering."

"Do you not deceive yourself? You now say, 'I do not suffer!' and yet you are so pale. Some fine day you will die with those words: I am not dying."

Serena smiled wofully, whilst she blushed, and said:

"No, Franciska! I shall not die of this grief. I have proved myself, and know that I can endure it. I shall soon be no longer pale, soon perfectly tranquil and strong again. My grandparents have communicated to me the reasons which have induced them not to consent to Bruno's wishes. I find that they are right, and cannot possibly think and act otherwise. I have therefore hushed my feelings, yes, I have abandoned all thoughts of being united to Bruno. I will live solely for my aged grandparents. As long as they love me, and are happy by my fostering care, I shall not feel unhappy!"

"Is then your sense of duty so strong, does your tenderness for them fill your heart so entirely as to be able to exclude all those wishes, all those bitter longings, which you must be acquainted with if you love?"

"Yes, though not always, yet generally it is so. See, Franciska, if during the day, a little impatience, a little longing, an 'ah!'—as you call it—awakens in my heart; yet when the day is over, and I retire to rest, if I can then say to myself that those, who so tenderly fostered my childhood have found comfort and joy through my means during the day, I know that

they then rest contented and bless their child—yes, then, Franciska, I feel so happy, such serenity of heart; then every 'ah!' is hushed and I am thankful and contented with my lot."

"And if your grandparents should live ten or twenty years yet? With each advancing year they will have the more need of your attention—and this reading—Serena, you will fade prematurely; you will grow old in the prime of your life."

"And when even the cheek fades, and the eye grows dim, what matters this, Franciska, if peace of heart is gained? I have reflected on the future of which you speak, and do not fear it. If parents were not perfectly kind and excellent, it might be difficult, an arduous task to live thus exclusively for them, and it might justly be called a *self-sacrifice.* But how far different is the case here, and how many charms attend my life, which no one can guess. Do I express a wish which my parents do not try to gratify? Have they not a purse perpetually at my command? How many a happiness does not their kindness and liberality afford me? Indeed, to live for such good and venerable parents as mine are is a bright, an exalted lot!"

"All you say is very well and very fine, Serena," said I, ill-humouredly," and no one can admire your parents more than I; but I do not at all like their conduct in driving away your suitors, and continually opposing your marriage; and I should almost like to ask, if at the bottom of this there is not a considerable portion of selfishness. They grudge to bestow you on another, because they wish to keep you for themselves, that you may attend on them; read and sing to them till—"

"Franciska!" interrupted Serena, with a kind of amazement, "do not speak so. Is it not such thoughts as these which awaken bitter feelings in the heart, and cripple all power of doing good? Dear Franciska, these thoughts must be banished with all our might as wicked tempters. Besides, if parents wish to have a return for all they have sacrificed, if as hoary-headed people they fear to remain forsaken in the world, and wish to keep that child to themselves whom they have reared and fostered in love, is this to be wondered at? Is this more than reasonable? Ah! I should like to say to all in similar situations to mine: "Let us ponder over this and cherish our filial duty."

"And when these duties cease, when your grandparents are no more, and the fairest half of your life is likewise vanished, will not life then appear empty to you? For their sakes you have separated yourself from the companions of your youth and all their interests; you have banished yourself off from gay, active life, to attend and cheer the dying; now you all at once remain alone in the world,—has your soul then taken the veil, that she sees a desert in the world, and retreats in silence into her cold cell?"

"I do not think so!" said Serena, looking up; a tear sparkled in her eye, and her bosom heaved, as if anxious to throw off from it a weight, and she proceeded: "Life is rich and beautiful; the goodness of God towards us abounds continually; why should our hearts refuse to accept it? Why should they fade, as long as rich springs of enjoyment are still flowing? It can be so only through our own fault. We narrow our sympathies; we will not open our hearts to rejoice

with the joy of others, to admire the beautiful in the world. Ah, that is the poverty of the soul! My sweet Fanny, mine shall not be poor, I will keep it open. Spring, friendship, and song, you know, live for ever upon earth! Trying and dull moments may come, but they will also pass away again. And even whilst they last, should we not rather enjoy those sunbeams which fall upon our path, than sigh after those which are turned away from it? And for this very reason, Fanny, let us talk no more of that which oppresses me! Let me enjoy the sun, which again salutes us after so many cloudy days. See, how beautifully it shines upon the green table cover! (and Serena laid her white hand in the sunshine, as if to caress it.) Let me be happy with you, happy that you love me, as I do you!"

And with silent tears upon her beaming countenance, Serena embraced me, and laid her head on my shoulder.

"But Bruno, Serena! but Bruno? (I was like a demon, I would let her have no peace.) Whilst you are comforting yourself and enjoying life, will not he, who does not possess your strength of mind, be lonely and wretched?"

Scarcely had I uttered these cruel words, than I repented of them. The cheerful ray which enlivened Serena's countenance, suddenly forsook it. A cloud, a pain moved over it, but quickly she collected herself and said, with calm earnestness:

"No, Fanny, no! Bruno will not be unhappy; no, he also will find peace!"

"And how so?—and whence this conviction?" said I, with surprise.

"Ah! I know how it will be—I have a foreboding; a belief, which will not deceive me. Yes, a period will pass over—not one of gladness, but still it will pass over—and then Bruno will return. Then it will be again as in my childhood, and in his earlier years; we shall be like brother and sister. And this bond will render us both happy. I see it as surely and clearly as if it were present, and this belief makes me happy. Bruno will choose another wife, but I shall ever remain his friend—his sister. You shall see that it will be so. To love my grandparents, Bruno, and you, to live for you all—oh, Fanny, how good is our God!"

The bears upon Spitzbergen did not attack the "hut of the four sailors," more violently than my Björn now did the room-door. It was dinner-time, and Serena was obliged to leave me quickly in order to hasten home I was somewhat absent at table, and was teased about it by Björn; to conciliate him I ordered something unusually good at Coffee, and whilst he partook of it, I sat down and played an air to the little song which I had composed in the morning, I send it you:

THE WATER-LILY.

On the lake's clear mirror floateth
A fair and new-born flower;
To the sun she straight devoteth
Her service from that hour.

To the throne of light above
She lifts her gentle eye,
And in worship and in love,
Her incense riseth high.

Calm on the deep she lieth,
Pure as an angel's prayer,
For no dearer bliss she sigheth,
Her love maketh all things fair.

Now the storm in its might ariseth,
And darkening rain-clouds lower,
But the lovely flower despiseth
Alike both blast and shower.

Nor from the kind shore moveth,
Where first her cradle lay,
She looks on the heaven she loveth,
And trusts in a brighter day.

Now the storm its fury husheth,
Pearly rain-drops glisten fair,
The purple evening blusheth,
Hark! music fills the air.

To the lily a soft lay mounteth
From the silver-grotto'd deep,
The Necken's harp recounteth
Of the love that can never sleep.

Come and behold the treasures,
In our crystal-halls that be
In our plains of rosy pleasures
My song shall be, aye, of thee!

Down to our forests' coolness,
O thou sun-illumined come,
Love awaits thee in sweetest fulness,
In the house with the pear-shell dome.

But the flower her love devoteth,
Looking upward to heaven again,

While still in its beams she floateth,
Answereth thus to the tempter's strain:

Oh, would'st thou my love possess,
Mount up to the light to me!
'T is alone where the sun-beams bless,
I can ever belong to thee.

Come minstrel! from darkness stealing,
See, 't is fair in holy light!
Let thy harp new joys revealing,
Sing of love and sunshine bright!

The dream from the Necken flyeth,
Low on the sea-weed floor,
In darkness and gloom he lyeth
Hope tuneth his harp no more.

The 26th.

Always the same. "Perpetual monotony sours our life," especially when monotony is an everlasting fog and rain. In this temperature nothing prospers but sickness. I see Björn scarcely an hour in the day, (and his kind looks are, at present, more to me than the sun.) He is very much concerned for one of his patients, a most respected father of a family, and will be up with him all the night. How differently truly life appears at different times; now so gay, so bright, and....just then a poor woman fell down here in the street, and her cloak was spoiled, there the wind turned a gentleman's umbrella inside out; further off a girl was splashed with dirt by a passing post-chaise! All three looked unhappy. The little sparrows were chirping. I should like to be a sparrow!

The 28th.

Björn is melancholy. The patient is dead. He was a man in the prime of life, and leaves a widow with seven children, most of them are in infancy; their sole means of existence depended on the father's earnings. They have only recently moved to this place, and have no relatives and acquaintances who could render them any assistance. Poor little things! It cuts me to the quick to think of them.

"Have you any thing black, that would do for mourning for the little things?"

"The Lord help us, Björn! Every thing seems black to me,—even this red dress. You said that Serena was there. How did she look?"

"Pleasantly and sweet, like an angel of consolation."

"Sweet Serena!"

Nothing is heard of Bruno. Perhaps his miserable pride has really been so wounded, that he gives up further thought of Serena. I should despise him for that.

And Serena? Is she really so strong as she wishes to appear? Will not love and anxiety eat like a hidden canker-worm into her life? All seems dreary to me. I see Serena growing paler, and Bruno gloomy; I think of the fatherless orphans, who are in want of bread and of comfort. *Ma chère mère* sits in darkness, Björn in anxiety, and I—

Ah! so much in life is seen in prospect, but no nearer; so much dawns, but does not light; so much is begun, but gets not finished, so that in the contemplation of it one feels disposed to hang down one's hands in discouragement, were it not for the consolatory thought, "This is the beginning!"

XVII.

TWENTIETH LETTER.

FRANCISKA WERNER TO MARIA M.

W—— Dec. 4th, 18—

You say, Maria, that I am no longer like myself. You find something low, something melancholy in my expressions. You inquire into the cause. I can not resist your gentle, kind inquiries, and I will tell you all, should you even in so doing think me childish and singular.

It is true, for some time past I have looked rather despairingly on life. I have not felt either mentally or physically well, nor have I had any pleasure in existence. Ah, Maria! I feel, that I—am a mother, and this feeling distresses me. It has at the same time awakened in me strange and anxious thoughts. I have as it were new views of the world, and I there discover a thousand dangers and sufferings, of which I never thought of before, and all of which now seem to threaten my child. To learn to walk, to read, to think, help himself, how troublesome, how arduous. And then all the troubles from the first toothache to the last struggle of death, all the dangers of body and

soul, falling down stairs, falling into love, falling into sin. How have not these nightly images crossed and depressed my mind, and I could not say to them, "Depart, ye deluding phantoms!" For I looked around me in life and saw that they were real, daily guests in every dwelling. And seeing this, and the sky looking down so gloomy and dull upon me; then, Maria, I laid my arms over my child, and wanted to save it from suffering from the world. I feared that it should behold the light of earth.

I have partly succeeded in subduing these sickly, painful feelings. But the worst of all, which torments me incessantly, is, that I fear the child will not be welcome to my husband. I fancy I see in it many indications. He never speaks of children, never expresses the wish to have any; and when once we were talking of some person, who had a large family, he cast a rapid glance towards me, as much as to say: "you surely won't trouble me with anything of this kind!" Ah, Maria! I am, notwithstanding, about to trouble him with something of the sort, Björn does not know it yet. And still I fancy he must suspect something; but the very reason of his not speaking about it, deprives me of all courage to disclose it to him. Ah, I must also confess that my peevish temper at this time has rendered me less agreeable towards him. I have gone out of his way, I have drawn back, when his arm wanted to encircle me in his kind embraces, I have seen that this has pained him, and still I have not altered my conduct; I myself, however, have suffered most under it. Björn is no longer a young man; he loves his undisturbed quiet home. It is not to be wondered

at that the crying and noise of children, and all the petty annoyances, and all the turmoils of a nursery should appear repugnant to him. And then—after the loss of his property, it must be depressing to him to have fresh expenses, fresh cares, which are continually increasing instead of diminishing, and suppose I were to bring two girls into the world at once, and then add eight more to these (the ten which Stellan prophesied), what would he think, how would this appear to him? You cannot imagine, Maria, how these thoughts depress me!

My poor little girl! it is not enough, that many a sorrow, many a hard privation will be thy portion in this world, perhaps thy father will not even smile at the first opening of thine eyes into life; perhaps he will press thee to his bosom with a secret sigh. And what if early in life, perhaps even at thy birth, (for how many women cease to live, whilst giving life, and I am not one of the strongest), thou shouldest lose thy mother, who will then, my dear little girl, sit faithfully by thy cradle? who will lull thy restlessness into repose? who will later in life comfort thee to under adversities? who will teach thee to love and endure? where wilt thou always find opened arms? My tears flow and I must close.

The 5th.

But now I dry up my tears and proceed. Yesterday evening I was sitting alone and was sewing a little baby's cap. My heart was troubled, and my tears ready to flow. Björn had not yet returned. The wind raged and the storm was very disagreeable to me; this was also the cause of my not hearing Björn's return

home sooner, than when with his usual blustering he opened the door of the sitting-room, in which I was, I quickly hid my work under a shawl, blushed, and could scarcely say "good evening" to him. Björn looked unusually cheerful, and cried out loudly: "Good evening, my dear little wife! How are you?"

"Very well," was my reply, and in order to avoid being interrogated any further, I myself inquired: "what have you there in your hand?"

"Only a nasty paper box" replied Björn, "an old woman plagued me to buy it See if you can make use of it for your combs, hair-pins, etc."

He now placed the great pretended box upon the table, untied with horrible grimaces the handkerchief, in which it was tied up, and before my sight lay a picture in a splendid gold frame. Two figures rose as it were alive from it: the most beautiful virgin with her child Jesus upon her arms seated in the clouds. It was a copy of Raphael's Madonna Sixtina, in black chalk, executed by the skilful Miss Röhl. I saw that heavenly peace in the countenance of Mary, I saw that divine, all glorified look of the child, and I felt so happy, so heavenly happy. I was unable to speak, and unconsciously to myself, gentle, blissful tears streamed upon the glass. I had forgotten all around me, and I knew not whether I was in heaven or on earth, when I suddenly felt myself encircled by Björn's arm, and heard him say with a tender, affected but reproachful voice: "Franciska, why am I not to know that I am a father?"

At this moment a violent agitation seized me; I felt as if the child moved within my bosom and stretched

itself out towards its father. I laid my head on his shoulder and could only falteringly say: "Oh, Björn, I fear that you would not be pleased at it!"

My dear Maria! what were my feelings when I beheld Björn falling down before me upon both his knees, when he kissed my hands, my clothes, whilst, with great tears in his eyes and broken voice, he said:

"I not pleased? I not happy? I am blissfully happy! my Franciska, my wife! my child!"

I had never seen him so before, and my heart dissolved in unspeakable tenderness and bliss.

These moments were lovely, yes, heavenly. One such in life upon earth, and one may be contented—One has had a foretaste of heaven.

After our first violent emotions had subsided, Björn seated himself by me, and partly affectionately jesting, partly in earnest, he chid me on account of my conduct, of my mysterious manner. My heart was opened, I let him read it, and see in it everything that had passed lately within. At first he smiled, then he grew more serious, and at length he said almost displeased.

"But that is extremely foolish, Franciska, where is your confidence in the supreme Being? does this grovelling fear become those who believe in Him and in His goodness?"

"Ah," sighed I, "I am sure I believe in Him, but still little children will fall down the stairs, or out of the window, and become deformed, or idiots all their lives."

"Well, and what then?" inquired Björn, and stared me full in the face with a firm and bright look, (I never believed that his eyes could have been so large) I looked

down, and said softly:

"Our child may happen to be so unfortunate!"

"Well, and what then?" cried Björn, and looked at me as before.

"And then and then!"—cried I impatiently, and was on the point of growing warm, but then his gaze met me again, and penetrated into the very recesses of my heart. I now comprehended him, comprehended his manly strength of mind, his love, and his piety. "Björn!" said I regretfully, "I will share your confidence, and let come what will, I shall neither murmur nor repine, but trust firmly in the Almighty."

Björn pressed me to his bosom. I was half fearful, after this of expressing my yet unmooted fears in reference to himself. But Björn had now kept to the interrogating side, and did not pause until he had got all out of me. When I expressed my doubts respecting him, he grew almost angry and said: "How could you, Franciska, have such a bad opinion of me? How could you think me such a wretch, such an unnatural man? I can only excuse you on the ground of your indisposition."

"But Björn—now, that we are poor, it certainly will be troublesome to provide for and educate children, especially if we should have many, if we really should have ten daughters." I laughed whilst saying this, although with tears in my eyes.

"We shall manage still!" said Björn cheerfully, "we shall find means never fear, children given in love, bring God's blessing along with them. The more children the more *paternoster's.*"

"But their education, their education!" sighed I,

"what difficulties do we not stumble at then, in reference to the demands of the present age."

"I would send the demands of the present age, for many reasons, to the deuce," grumbled Björn, and added with earnestness and inmost kindness, "we will love our children, Franciska, we will instruct them well, and bring them up in the fear of God, and teach them industry and order. As for talents and a more polished education, they shall have it when our means will allow; but if we have not the means, we will not trouble ourselves about it. The principal thing is, for them to become good and useful men in society; they will then find their way, never fear. You, Franciska, will teach them betimes what stands in that favourite song of yours:

"He who can read his Lord's prayer right,
Need fear neither devil nor wicked sprite."

Björn's words, and manly, kind expressions, affected and elevated my heart. "No," exclaimed I, "I will cherish no more anxious fears and cares. I cannot do so with you, Björn. Away with those dark phantoms! And you little exiled prophet (I took up the little cap) come forth to the light and reveal the mystery."

How enraptured was Björn at the little cap. He had never seen anything "so little, so sweet." I now finished sewing the little lace on all round. Björn afterwards set it upon his thick, clenched fist, and smiled at it as if he saw it already adorning the head of his child.

The whole evening was a series of the most charming scenes and happy feelings. It would have been

too much for me if Björn had not shewn so much consideration. He constrained me to take some cups of tea, and wished to support me also with bread and butter; he himself partook scarcely of any thing, but looked at me and upon the little cap, at the sight of which tears often started into his eyes. We were happy!

The 9th.

Where is my melancholy, Maria? Where is my indisposition? Where are my anxious forebodings? I feel as if all had taken its flight in a moment never to return. The pretty picture hangs in my sleeping-room. I often look at it during the day, and perform my morning and evening devotion before it; and it speaks to me, it says to me every thing consolatory, beautiful, divine. Even now I am writing before it, and the Madonna, and the child Jesus, appear to look down upon me with blessings.

Oh, my child! thou art still sleeping under my heart; thy mother will no more be anxious for thee; she knows that it is not she alone who watches over thee. A divine protector, who, once like thee, slumbered in the lap of an earthly mother, is with me and with thee. His look rests on thee like the sunbeam over the yet closed flower bud. Eternal as he is, thou art immortal also; as he went into God, so wilt thou also (led by him) go to the eternal Father. Come, therefore, my child, come thou to light. Whatever may be your lot upon earth we will not doubt, not lose our faith, my child! We will believe, that he who has called thy spirit into existence will sooner or later perfect it, and take it to himself. Oh, come, my child! Thy earthly

father will press thee joyfully to his breast; thy mother will live to make thee happy! She will encompass thy path with song and rejoicing. From her breast thou shalt derive thy first nourishment; and there, also, learn the first lesson of love, my child; there shalt thou first be taught to feel and comprehend how God loves, Oh! I will press thee to me so warmly, so ardently, that no rude storms of life shall chill thee; that even if the ice of age should chill thy blood, thou shalt remain warm at the recollection of thy mother's love. Grow, modest flower from heaven, grow on in the quiet hot-house, grow in the quiet night, and be, when the time comes, in which thou shalt open thine eyes to the light, welcome—welcome even in pangs, my child—God's child!

XVIII.

TWENTY-FIRST LETTER.

FRANCISKA WERNER TO MARIA M.

W—— December 13th, 18—

Positively without knowing what I am abo ut, I shall some day fall in love with Bruno. Yes, he may shoot horses, and dogs, too, who is so kind to men. Do you remember yet what I told you about the distressed family, the widow with the many children? Very well. They have been comforted and assisted. Bruno has lent the widow a sum of money, by which she is enabled to commence a business, and two of the boys he has taken to himself to have them educated. How happy are the rich who are able to assist the poor so effectually. Bruno has done every thing with the utmost privacy, and charged the widow to keep it secret; but in her joy she has communicated every thing to Serena; and Serena, who visited me yesterday morning, told me the whole story. A noble joy animated her sweet countenance whilst she informed me of what Bruno had done.

Although I myself was enraptured about it, yet I could not help making the remark, that the action was

not so very great, but something quite natural in a rich man.

"True," replied Serena; "and actions like that which Bruno has now performed, my grandfather has often done when he was in better circumstances than he is at present. But I could not see Mrs. E.'s joy without blessing with her, him who was the author of it.

Some one stepping in just at this moment, our conversation was interrupted. Serena went away. Old Dahl is better. Thank heaven every thing is getting better; the weather is improving, the sick are improving; Björn is more lively; even my pupils are improving. In the families they are making sausages for Christmas. I am also preparing sausages, and sing songs to it with Sissa and Bengta.

Ma chère mère is taking lessons in writing and playing at cards, and is happy about Bruno, who behaves beautifully towards her; he is said otherwise, according to Jean Jacques' report, to look gloomy and ill.

Why does he pine away? Why does he go from her who can and will give peace to his heart?

The 19th.

Yesterday forenoon I went to Dahl's. Serena was in the entrance room with two young ladies, whom she instructed in the pretty art of making flowers. Her cheeks had a more healthy tint than they have had for some time past, and this delighted me, She embraced me, and said softly:

"Oblige me and go in for a moment to my grandmother, whilst I stay a little while here. Try to cheer her, good Franciska; say something kind to her, she is so dejected to-day."

I found Madame Dahl in her sleeping apartment, she sat there alone in her great arm chair, and sighed profoundly. She received me with maternal kindness, spoke to me on matters concerning myself, gave me kind and wise counsels, and then relapsed again into a melancholy silence, which she interrupted me with the following words:

"Tell me candidly, dear Franciska, whether it does not appear to you that Serena has been falling off for some time past? Do you not think that she is growing thinner and paler every day?"

I replied: "It seemed to me as if she was looking better to-day than when I last visited her."

"But do you not find her very much altered since last summer? Has she not fallen off particularly since the last few months?"

I could not deny that such seemed to me the case I added, however, that she would soon recover again and that this was her own opinion.

"Ah, dearest!" said Madam Dahl, "that is no consolation to me. Serena is just like her mother, my dear, precious Benjamine. She just began to look in the same way a few months before her death, just such pale cheeks, the very same celestial expression in her countenance; just in the same way she smiled and said to us: 'I am very well!' or, 'I shall soon be better!' She never complained, and never wished that any one should be uneasy about her. Such was her manner until her last moment. Ah, alas! Serena will soon follow her mother to the grave, if no relief comes,"

Madam Dahl dried up her tears, and I did the same. Then said I:

"Serena is not physically ill, her mind and her heart only have suffered, and why should she not have strength enough to overcome these sufferings, and regain perfect tranquillity?"

"Yes, strength to suffer without repining, to be perfectly resigned, but not strength enough to live. Ah, my dear child, there is a something in this love since her infancy which is deeply rooted in the heart. Already from a child she attached her whole young soul to this wild boy; when he came, she laughed and stretched out her little arms to him; when he went, she was dull and languid, and I have observed, that she feels for him now just in the same way as she did then. I begin to fear that this love is grown up with her life, and this I have told my husband to-day, who will not, however, listen to it. It pains me to have vexed him, but I had no rest, after what I had seen yesterday evening."

"What did you see then, my dear Madam Dahl?"

"We had just taken tea. Serena was with us; that dear child saw probably that I had fixed my eyes anxiously on her, for she suddenly grew more talkative and cheerful than usual. She related to us all manner of trifles, at which we laughed merrily, and I almost forgot my disquietude, and was ready to fancy that we were all happy. After we had thus talked and laughed, Serena went out, and immediately afterwards I fancied as if I heard a voice saying, 'Go and look after her!'

"I now went softly to her room and found her there, her forehead leaning against the window. I put my hands on her head, and compelled her to turn her sweet face to me. Ah, Franciska, it was bathed in tears.

She wished at first to conceal them from me, and not being able, she cast the blame upon a book which she had read, and which had wrought upon her feelings. I pretended to believe her, but I now knew what the truth was, and went away from her with a heart, heavier than it could be in the hour of death. In the evening I did not wish to say anything to my old man that might prevent his night's rest; besides Serena soon came in again, and began, with reddened eyes, to read to him, as if nothing had happened. But this morning I have told him my fears; he believed, however, that I had suffered myself to be carried away by my alarmed imagination. Ah! his eyes are dim, and cannot see what mine saw."

"But if Bruno shews himself worthy of Serena, surely her kind grandparents will not long defer what is capable of making both him and her happy?"

"Yes, 'if'—this is a difficult 'if,' my dear child! It seems very strange to me from him, that, from the day he sued for Serena, he has not been here even once. And my husband indeed was so right in his reply to him; this Bruno ought to have understood, if he really loves Serena with all his heart, this denial ought not to have kept him from our house. His action towards E—'s family was a noble one—every person one meets with speaks of him with infinite respect,—I have always found him agreeable, and exceedingly interesting. But as matters now stand, we neither can nor dare do anything to call him back to us. All must now depend upon himself and his conduct."

At this moment M. Dahl entered. He saluted me kindly, although not with the same cheerfulness as

usual. He went to his wife and tapped her on her shoulders. I thought I perceived that he had some good intelligence to communicate to her, and that they were desirous to be alone. I therefore said, I wished to seek Serena, and left them.

I did not, however, wish to disturb the flower makers in the ante-room, and went another way to Serena's room, where I thought to await her. Serena's room is pretty and cheerful. One may see that the tender parents wished their beloved child to have every comfort, and I know not what an atmosphere of peace, order, and pure taste, fills the agreeable retreat, and causes one to feel happy in it. Several paintings ornamented the room. These were distinguished by the simplicity of their subjects, and the faithfulness and care of their execution. After having inspected these, my curiosity was excited by a green curtain. I lifted it up, and on well-arranged book-shelves, appeared the names of the classical authors of Sweden and Denmark, (of Denmark, poor in population, but rich in talent; small in extent, but great in intellectual power.) They were all old acquaintances of mine, and, enraptured at this agreeable meeting, I touched caressingly those precious volumes, whilst I said with emotion:

"Receive my thanks! thanks for all the heavenly pleasure, which you have afforded to me and to many."

Upon the table lay an open book. It was Reonell's Sketches, a pencil lay on it, and I saw that one leaf of the book was marked, and read:

"Life must become light, if it is not to pass into lethargic stupor, into a real death. In this gloomy

frame of mind man cannot prepare himself for eternity, for he does not comprehend it, and does not strive to become worthy of it. Departed moments of joy are clearer in the memory than passed hours of sorrow. This is a hint that life must be loved. Death must not be looked upon as a liberation from prison; it is but a step upward, a step from the valley to the hill, where our prospects expand, and we breathe more freely; from the valley into which the light and warmth of the sun also penetrated, where God's love equally reached us. Learn to love and understand life properly, if thou wouldst rightly love and understand eternity. A true christian must begin to be happy here upon earth. This is indeed the problem of life, which every one, each in his place, has to solve; that difficult problem, the solution of which so few have accomplished, but which so many have striven for. Nevertheless, greater the difficulties, the more glorious the victory. *We may be deceived in the dearest hope of life, without being in consequence unhappy.* I have long thought, and am becoming more and more convinced of it, by the course of the world and my own private experience, that there is but one real misfortune, namely: *to be without God's friendship in the world.*"

I likewise underlined those beautiful and comforting words; I could have framed them in gold. Upon a little slip of paper which was lying in this place in the book some words were written in Serena's own handwriting. I could not resist the desire of reading them. They were as follows:

"Yes, every thing may be endured, all things may be made bright, all things turn to good by prayer and

diligence in heart and life."

A grand truth, Serena, thought I, and about which I must have some further conversation with you.

But Serena stayed too long away; I became impatient and went to seek for her. I did not find her in the entrance-room, but in the dressing-room I heard voices; the door was left upon the latch, and I witnessed the following scene: Serena was kneeling upon a stool at the feet of her grandmother, and had one arm round her neck: old M. Dahl held her other hand, and looked at her with an indescribable expression of grief in his venerable features, whilst with silent animation in tone and gesture she said to them: "Be not uneasy, be not troubled about me, my kind, kind parents! Believe me, I am peaceful, am contented, am a happy, grateful child. I have been a sufferer for a time, it is true, and this could not be otherwise; but I feel myself already better, and I shall soon be strong again, only make yourselves easy!"

I stole softly away again. I did not wish to listen, did not wish to disturb these loving souls. I went back to Serena's room, and made my reflections there, took up the while the leaf again, and was holding it still in my hands, when she came in. Serena blushed, called me inquisitive, but embraced me with silent cordiality.

"Do not be angry with me, Serena," said I. "On the contrary, you must now be very good and submissive; for I stand here with the determination of scolding you."

"Scolding me," repeated Serena, smiling, "Well, let us hear!"

"Pray do not look so cheerful, and so full of self-confidence, Serena, I am very seriously angry with you;" and now I told her what Madam Dahl had related to me of the scene of the preceding evening, as well as what I myself had been a witness to, and added, warmly: "This is not acting candidly, Serena. This is needless, unreasonable self-sacrifice. Why do you wish to appear in the sight of your grandparents otherwise than what you are? Why instil into them a false security, whilst sorrow consumes you, and this so much the more while you shut it up within yourself?"

"And what then ought I in your opinion to do, kind Fanny?" said Serena, whilst tears started into her eyes. "Ought I to let my aged, kind grandparents know of sorrows, which they cannot remedy? Ought I to embitter their days with my weakness? Would this be of any avail to me, would it do me any good? Oh, no, Fanny! You cannot wish this; you cannot believe this. I am convinced that they are acting properly and tenderly for me, convinced that on our part nothing can nor dare be done at present. It has pained me that Bruno could have stayed away so long from us. I felt it unkind, yes, cruel of him—but I have now accustomed myself to it, and will by-and-bye wait more patiently. For at some future time he will return; and this I feel, this I know. But, Fanny, let us not speak about it now, let us think no more now of me, we will rather turn to other matters. There will now be much to do in preparing for the golden nuptials;* that will be a beautiful, a glorious

* See Note, Vol. 1, page 171.

festival, Fanny! Only think, a life of half a century spent in a virtuous and happy union! Christmas is also near at hand; you and your good husband will partake of our yule-groats with us. Madam E.'s children will also be here. I have begged my grand-parents to allow me to make them a small Christmas feast. You will be present on the occasion? Oh, I am glad of that! Shall we go now immediately and purchase our Christmas-boxes? The weather is fine! I shall be your cash-keeper."

We went. It was amusing to see the people in the market, and the curiosity and joy of the children, how they skipped along upon the fresh-fallen snow by the side of their parents. Serena was delighted with the sight: we were making our observations to each other. We were making our purchases. I bought a foot-trap for Björn. We spent two agreeable hours. Serena, in her interest and activity for others, appeared to have forgotten, that she herself was so far from being happy.

XIX.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

The happy Christmas-eve at Dahl's, the joy of the children with their Christmas-trees, with the lights, the presents, and the confectionary, Serena's motherly conduct towards them, my delight in it, the yule-groats, Christmas-night, all this I skip in haste to arrive at the place, where Serena and I purposed going with Björn, and thither you must now follow me, dear Maria, namely, to the

Christmas Matins.

We are in the church. Its spacious, noble vault shines with the brilliancy of a thousand lights. The altar, pillars, choir, all glitter and beam with splendour and sacred joy. The organ does not yet pour forth its sounds, a solemn stillness prevails in the temple, which is rather heightened than disturbed by the murmuring of the crowding multitude.

We seated ourselves in the choir. A row of lamps opposite to us, casts a bright reflection upon us.

"You look quite illuminated," said Björn, as I sat down I thought the same of Serena. My soul was full of joyful devotion.

Not far from us with his back leaning against a pillar, by which it was shaded, stood a tall dark figure apparently lost in profound reflection. It was Bruno. His profile was handsome, but appeared to me unusually pale. He did not see us; his head sunk on his breast. The world without had no existence for him, but at the first sound of the powerful organ, he started and looked up. His eyes met Serena's. He saluted her, she did not return it; they appeared altogether lost in mutual contemplation, and I watched them. Like spirits, who after a long period of sufferings meet each other and are re-united in the regions of the blessed, just so did they appear to me. Their countenances were pale, but both were lighted up by an indescribable expression of love. It was a look of deep, mutual recognition. Serena's eyelids closed bedewed with tears, Bruno was quickly at her side, and bending down over her seat, he said in a low but not whispering voice: "Let me join with you in prayer!" Serena held her prayer-book so that he could see it. When their voices rose and united in deep harmonious sound. I was filled with the presentiment that the two were destined for each other, that their union was fixed in heaven, since it was founded upon that sympathy of souls, which is the chief requisite, and the sure bond of an undying matrimonial happiness. Just at the moment when this thought rose within me, the question suddenly followed it, whether Björn and I possessed this sympathy. I felt a desire to ask him what he thought of it. But when I looked up to him, as he stood next to me, without looking round either to the one side or to the other, without suspecting what was passing near

him, and with his deep voice, and heart and soul sounding forth his hymn of praise, I was ashamed at the vanity of my thoughts, and joined in the hymn, inwardly feeling that I esteemed and loved him with all my heart.

Between Bruno and Serena, no further words nor looks were exchanged; but when she bowed her head in prayer, he bowed his likewise, when her finger pointed to him the verse to be sung, he followed. It appeared to be happiness to him to pray with her. When we walked out of church, he was at her side, and cleared the way for us through the crowd. He escorted us to the carriage, and when it stopped before the house of the Dahls, he stood at the door and offered us his hand to alight. His face was irradiated by the moon, and wore a beautiful elevated and benign expression. "I shall soon see you again," said he to Serena, kissing her hand. He then shook my hand and Björn's, and disappeared. I have never seen him so happy, and kind.

We took our second coffee with the old Dahls. Serena told her grandparents with unconcealed joy, of her meeting with Bruno, and his promise of visiting her. This intelligence appeared to give the old people great pleasure.

"What a morning!" said Serena to me, when we were alone for a moment. "Oh, Franciska, life has fair, wonderfully glorious moments! When I there beheld him in the bright light—when he sang with me—ah! I only fear that my devotion ceased to be pure from that moment. All my prayers were for him."

May no one have greater sins to repent of!

I must now leave you, Maria, for the carriage has come, which is to take us to dinner at *ma chère mère's.*

January 2nd.

We have had a little quarrel, I and my Björn. You will remember my secret abont the music-lessons. It all came to light. Björn entered one day in the midst of the *bataille de Prague.* He was beaten. After the battle there was a skirmish. Would that all matrimonial wars might begin and end thus, for then *Te Deum* would oftener be chanted in domestic life.

The 5th.

Yesterday evening a small select circle were assembled, and joined in great enjoyment. And who of, do you think, did this chosen company consist? Who else than I myself, (success to modesty!) my other self, Bruno, Serena, and the patriarchs, in whose house we were assembled. There was a seventh guest there (to complete the constellation,) one who raised all the others to her own heavenly sphere, it was poetry. Bruno read aloud Tegner's "Axel," and this splendid poem, which cannot be read too often, appeared to me, when recited by Bruno's soul-filled voice, more enchanting than ever. Serena's needle lay unheeded in her hand; she seemed to be all ear; and we all, young and old, were touched to the heart. We grew tender, warm, and loving. Exalted and glorious is the lot of a great poet. His lyre is the world, and the chords upon which he plays are the souls of men; they sound at his touch, and melt in heavenly harmony.

So it was in our little circle! as soft, unutterable happy feelings diffused themselves through it. We all

composed as it were, one sole happy and living family. Bruno's looks, sometimes so gloomy, and at others so glowing, now beamed in softer radiance, and rested with an expression of inmost, but melancholy love on Serena. Serena was so happy, so glad, so beautiful, that it appeared, as if all the gloom in the world must necessarily brighten up wherever she appeared. She looked as if she wished to embrace and bless in her heart all things living.

Before I went, I embraced her with tears of joy, and said: "You see now that he returns? Do you not see, that all will come to pass, just as I told you? We shall be one family, united, peaceful and happy!"

"Yes!" thought I, "if the sacred spirit of poesy were always with us and in us; but—alas!"

XX.

TWENTY-SECOND LETTER.

FRANCISKA WERNER TO MARIA M.

W——, January 12th, 18—.

Heaven keep us! What a stir without and within! Preparations are making here for the golden nuptials. (I do not know whether I have told you that this important day is on the 20th of January.) The whole town and neighbourhood are interested in it. One would fancy as if all the people of this place were related to the venerable Dahls. Their eight children and their families are expected to be here. I also am busy for the festival; I assist Serena as far as I am able. I am studying a choral song with Bruno, which is to be performed at the festival. Bruno has composed the music. He is a perfect master, and it is a pleasure to be directed by him. The singing choir assemble twice a week at my house, and we practise under the strict master, whom we all fear. Serena has so much to do in making arrangements for the festival, and for all the uncles, aunts, and cousins, that she is seldom seen at our house. Once she came and mingled her voice in the chorus, but then all spirit fled from the singing-

lessons. Bruno sat at the instrument, but his soul was with Serena.

Bruno is often in the evening at the Dahls. He tries to win over the old people and talks with them and reads to them. Serena takes a rest; she believes to have gained a brother, and is happy.

The 16th.

The young people flock in from east and west. Dahls here and Dahls there. Charming people, fine children, how some families prosper to be sure! A swarm of cousins of all ages are now collecting here. Intimate companionships and friendships are being formed. All the town is in agitation. A number of balls and feasts are given in consequence of the golden nuptials. *Ma chère mère* also purposes giving a large party. I suppose I shall not get to see much of this gaiety, for I am to keep myself quiet; however I shall celebrate this happy festival in my heart.

Bruno is again in a changeable and gloomy mood, and joy has faded away from Serena's countenance.

Miss Hellevi Hausgiebel is on this occasion invaluable to the house of Dahls, as a helper and adviser; she has undertaken the arrangements of the tableaux, by which the old Dahls are to be surprised. She takes counsel with counsellor Hök, and she settles draperies and lights, discusses, disputes most probably a little now and then, arranges, etc. I am convinced that we shall have a grand display. A great number of people will assemble on the eve of the grand day at Dahls' house. It ought to be so. This feast should be celebrated as publicly and festively as the first marriage

ceremony should, be performed quietly and privately. In the first nuptials, one does but set sail on a sea, where winds and waves are often stormy; but in the second the voyage is accomplished, and the bark has run into the haven and may hoist the flag of victory in peace.

Ma chère mère is coming in to the feast, and I have the pleasure of having her to stay with me the previous night. I myself will roast the coffee, that the beverage, which she prefers before all others may be good.

I have a variety of things to tell you about the younger members of the Dahl family, but reserve them till after the nuptials, when I shall have more time. I would only mention *en passant* that I have selected a favourite among them. Her name is Mattea; she is a tall girl twenty years of age, preciously ugly, but a darling good girl, and has captivated my heart, by her gladsome open manners, her artless love to Serena, and her fine performance on the pianoforte.

The 21st January.

Whatever you may have in hand, Maria, be it the last row of a stocking, or the first word of a compliment, or contemplating a portrait, or reading a novel by Bulwer, or conversing on eternity with B., or preparing a lemon-cream, or answering to a proposal of marriage, or whatever it may be, put it all aside immediately, and sit down devotedly, and read the chapter which I am now about to write, and which is called :—

XXI.

THE GOLDEN NUPTIALS.

If you wish to become acquainted with the beauty and worth of matrimony, and if you wish to see what this union can prove to two human hearts and to life, then do not contemplate the married pair in the honey-moon, not at the cradle of their first-born, not in a time, in which novelty and hope shed a morning-lustre over the young, new-born world of domestic happiness. Observe them rather later in maturer years, when they have mutually proved the world and themselves, when they have conquered many an error, and surmounted many a temptation, to attach themselves more heartily to each other; when hardship and troubles have visited them, when under the burden of the day as well as in their moments of rest, they have reposed against each other and found mutual support. Or view them still further down the vale of life, at a time, in which they step aside from the busy and changeful world when all objects around them grow dimmer to their sight, when their house is quiet, when they sit in retirement, but still hand in hand, still reading tender affection in each other's eyes, and when with the same

recollections, and the same hope, they stand on the confines of another life, which they are ready to enter together, cherishing of all their earthly wishes that only one: of dying on the same day;—yes, observe them then! And therefore now to the patriarchs, to the golden nuptials!

"There is something to celebrate here, indeed!" thought I in the morning, on awaking. The sun seemed to be of the same opinion, for it shone brightly over the snow-covered roof of the house of the aged couple. I improved the time, threw my fur cloak round me, kissed my Björn, and tripped away to congratulate the old pair, and to see if I could be of any use to Serena.

The two old people were sitting in their festive dresses in the reception room, each in his arm-chair. Two snuff boxes, a hymn book, and a large bouquet of flowers were on the table. The sun shone through snow-white curtains into the apartment; it was cheerful and peaceful in the room, and the patriarchs looked quite irradiated in the sunshine. Deeply affected I paid my congratulation, and was embraced by the old people as by a father and mother.

"A fine day, Madam Werner," said the venerable old man, whilst looking at the window.

"Yes, very fine, indeed!" said I, "so fine, that the angels of God must rejoice at it. It is the feast of love and fidelity upon earth!"

The old people smiled, and held out their hands to each other. A bustle was now heard in the hall. It was the host of children and grandchildren, who in festive garb and with happy faces, flocked in to congratulate their grandparents. It was a lovely sight to see these

groups of pretty children collecting round the two old people like thriving shoots round aged stems; it was a lovely sight to see the little rosy lips reaching up for a kiss, and the little arms extending to embrace, and to hear the muttering of loving words and exulting voices.

I watched to embrace this moment to steal out, and to seek for Serena. I found her in the kitchen surrounded by people, and distributing food. (A large distribution of food and money to the poor of the place was made on this day in the house of the Dahl's.) Serena accompanied the donations with pleasant looks and words, and received blessings on her grandparents. When the distribution was ended, Serena accompanied me into her room, where I looked inquiringly into her friendly countenance, and said cheerfully: "You look happy, Serena!"

"And how could it be otherwise?" inquired she. "All around me are happy. My dear old parents seemed to have their youth renewed again to-day. And yesterday you should have seen them, my dear Franciska, when, by their fireside, they reviewed their whole life, and spoke of that which approaches; it was so interesting, so solemn—"

Miss Hellevi Hausgiebel here interrupted us, and were obliged to accompany her into the upper rooms. Here there was noise, bustle, and confusion. In one saloon, draperies were hung, and arrangements made for the ball, in another, arrangements and preparations for the tableaux. Miss Hellevi, who in imagination foresaw how all would look, flew about light as a bird among the scaffold ropes and thousand inventions whilst she said: "Look, my dear Madam Werner,

that is to be so, and that so and so. Won't this look pretty ?—won't this have a good effect ?"

"Madam Werner!" called Counsellor Hök from a ladder, on the highest step of which he was standing, with a Quixotic air, "won't this illumination have a charming effect upon the yellow drapery ?"

"Excellent! splendid!" replied I, with inward fear. 'Dearest counsellor, this chandelier, I am certain will fall. Dear Miss Hausgiebel, this scaffolding is sure to give way."

The nimble and active lady of the Bird's nest laughed at my evident fright, and, with ears stunned by the hammering around me, I hastened to escape from the disagreeable purgatory, which was to lead to paradise. But nevertheless I praised those who were at work there, although I prefer enjoying the rose without having felt its thorns.

After I had assisted Serena a little and concerted with her on various matters, I returned home, and promised to come again early in the evening.

But before I went I was witness of a solemn scene. A deputation of the elders of the place came in their name, and presented to the venerable pair a large golden salver, as a token of the esteem and gratitude of their fellow citizens. I missed *ma chère mère* in the place of the Burgomaster. What a stately address would she not have delivered!

I was glad to have all this to relate to Björn at dinner. His mouth watered for a similar celebration of his golden nuptials. To this I suppose we shall not obtain, but if not to a golden, yet we may arrive at a silver one.—Ah! I wonder if our ten girls will then

stand around us. That will be a pretty wedding garland. See, a few tears fell upon it.

At six o'clock in the afternoon Björn and I went arm-in-arm to the house of the nuptials. In the street where it was situated, flame upon flame was now lighted, one window after the other was illuminated; flambeaux were blazing against the corners of the street; soon the whole street was as in the brightest day, and a multitude of people were walking up and down with cheerful countenances in the calm, mild winter evening. The place was illuminated in honour of its patriarchs; the house of Dahl's looked dark compared with the rest; but the light there was within.

Just as we were entering the gate, in the midst of a crowd of people, which had assembled around it to see the arrivals, my gaze fell on a figure which stood among the rest. She was wrapped in a large black shawl, but the two large flaming eyes, which sparkled forth from beneath it, caused me to start, and involuntarily to think of Hagar! At this moment the figure drew back, and, doubting whether I had guessed right, but with a secret foreboding, I entered the house of festivity.

At the hall-door Serena met me with a white garland in her light-brown hair, and at the sight of her every gloomy thought vanished. Ah, how lovely was she this evening in her light white dress, with her charming blue eyes, her pure countenance, and her lips full of smiles! Would that I could have had a picture of her just at this moment? Just as every flower has its moment of perfection, so is there a moment when the life of every one blooms fairest, when he appears, what

he really is, most precious in the sight of God. It is the transient revelation (for there is nothing stable upon earth,) which the true artist endeavours to realize, and therefore it is incorrect to say of a successful portrait, especially of that of a man full of soul, that he is flattered. But where do I wander to? I was going to speak of Serena. She was so pleasant, so benign towards every body, and still—I knew it—she was not happy within, this evening. Friends and relatives were assembling; the rooms filling. *Ma chère mère* came with much parade. She was conducted by Bruno, and although blind, as high and stately as ever. She saluted the venerable couple most heartily, saying, in a loud voice: "Old friends and old roads can't very easily separate, and therefore I am here. I am here in order to congratulate you, my worthy friends, on this your honoured wedding-day. 'Every man is the smith of his own fortune', says the adage, and therefore were any one to doubt, whether you, my respected friends were happy, it would be just as if he would doubt, whether the king was a nobleman, which is as sure as the Amen in the church. God bless you." They shook each other's hands heartily.

Jane Maria was magnificent, and looked well. Bruno was gloomy; his dark eyes followed perpetually Serena's bright ones, but did not grow brighter by it. He was silent and reserved.

At eight o'clock all the guests were assembled. The company had taken tea, ices, etc. Now all at once there was perfect silence. The venerable pair occupied two arm chairs, which stood close to each other upon a richly embroidered carpet in the centre of the saloon.

Their children and grandchildren collected around them in a semicircle. A priest of noble appearance placed himself before them, and delivered an address on the beauty and sacredness of matrimony. At the close of it, he referred to the life of the venerable couple, as to a better sermon than any he could give on the value of a happy union in the life and the heart of man. What he said was beautiful and affecting; not one in the assembly was without tears in his eyes. Björn and I were leaning against each other. A gentle and solemn emotion had seized all, and for a considerable time a great stillness prevailed in the assembly; it was, however, not that of dullness.

Meanwhile preparations were being made for the second part of the feast; and, when everything was in order, the company was conducted up the carpeted stairs into the upper apartments. The living pictures were represented, the beauty and grace of which, far exceeded my expectations. The first opportunity I have I will describe them. The last was a single, but excellently arranged group of all the Dahl's family. A chorus was sung to it, and it passed off very well, especially at the repetition. The whole of this representation afforded great and general satisfaction. When the chorus had been sung the second time, and the curtain dropped at the conclusion, the door to the ball-room was opened; a dazzling reflection of light flowed down from thence, and a lively band of music inviting to the dance, animated the hearts and feet of the juveniles.

And now, Maria, take your *Eau de Cologne* bottle, and prepare yourself for an equally surprising catastrophe; reality is sometimes a little prosaic.

Old M. Dahl had gone into the dancing-room leading his granddaughter, the guests followed amidst merry chatterings, when I suddenly perceived a something giving way in the grand chandelier, (the same which in the morning excited my apprehension.) Serena, who gave her arm to her grandfather, and spoke to some bystanders, stood at this moment under it. I raised a cry: "Take care of yourselves—the chandelier is falling!" All were staring up alarmed, but with the rapidity of lightning Bruno rushed forth, and rescued Serena from danger at the very moment when the splendid chandelier, with its sixty lights and a thousand crystals, fell to the ground amidst a stunning clatter. Bruno himself received a violent blow on the head. He grew pale and staggered. "Bruno! Bruno!" cried Serena, in a rending tone, which betrayed a love not to be mistaken, and her arms embraced him as he sank. He clasped his round her, and pressed her to his breast; a happy smile played like a sunbeam on his countenance whilst he swooned away.

I must pass over the effect which this produced in the assembly. In one moment disaster, declaration of love and death, or something certainly very like it:—less than this is enough to deprive one of one's senses. I confess that I do not know exactly what followed. A little while afterwards I found myself in quiet and faintly-lighted apartments.

Bruno lay upon a sofa; he had been bled, but he had not yet become sensible. Björn inclined over him, and looked extremely grave. *Ma chère mère* held Bruno's head upon her knees. She was still, but tears gushed out of her darkened eyes and rolled gently down

her pale cheek. Not far from them sat Madam Dahl. Serena kneeled before her and hid her face against her breast. They were locked in each other's arms. Close to them stood the venerable old man, with his eyes fixed upon his child. I too stood next to them, speaking words of consolation to Serena, who was almost sleepless.

"Where is she?" said Bruno, at length awaking out of his death-like swoon, but evidently not with quite recovered senses. "Ah, where is she? I held her in my arms; she was mine; it was so sweet; let me die thus. Serena," he exclaimed more vehemently, "where art thou? my wife—shall the world separate us—the world—the people—what are they to us—we are in the choir of the temple, and God's angels chant over us the blessing of the Highest. Why hast thou fled? Oh! thou hast taken my heart with thee. Now my breast is so vacant, Serena, return. Give back to me my life, Serena!"

"Oh, what anguish, what agony!" whispered Serena, but embraced more firmly the supporter whose support she was.

Bruno had raised himself; he now saw Serena and the rest, and with vehemence, whether arising from his mind still wandering from his passionate nature, which always darted towards its aim, I know not, but he exclaimed:

"Ah! I see, I see, how it is! you wish to conceal her, you wish to keep her from me! But why would you wish it? Why do you wish to separate two hearts which have been united from childhood? Do it not! Make this day into a day of blessing. (Bruno was

now perfectly recovered to reason.) O give me Serena to-day to wife!"

"This is not the time to speak about it," said the venerable old man, partly angry, partly affected. "Another time...."

"And why not now?" interrupted Bruno, more vehemently, ardently, irresistably. "Why not bless my life this evening? Why defer making a man happy? Why not bind me to you yet this very day in infinite gratitude? Oh give me Serena to-day, to-day! I will not separate your darling from you. Let my house become yours, let me share her tender care for your old age. Kind mother!" continued he, whilst taking Madam Dahl's hand, and bedewing it with tears. "Kind, venerable mother! Fear not for your child! And if you have experienced that the ardent and faithful love of a husband makes a wife happy,—oh then, kind mother, give—give me Serena yet this very day!"

The two old people gazed at each other, and then at Serena. She stood between, white as the roses in her garland, with downcast eyes, ready to kneel, to sacrifice; but before which altar—that was the question.

A pause ensued. *Ma chère mère* now rose pale and solemn, but not proudly, and spoke thus:

"Every person is the best judge of his own affairs, and therefore I ought to refrain from saying anything in this; but as a mother I will nevertheless speak a word in behalf of my son. I have hitherto done little to make him happy: in future also I can do but little for—" *ma chère mère* laid her hand upon her eyes, whilst she was evidently struggling against her emotion. Soon

however she proceeded with a firmer but milder voice: "I do not speak to persuade you, esteemed friends and neighbours, but I only wish to tell you, that my son has abundantly compensated for his youthful crime towards me. I believe and am convinced, that he will be henceforth an honour to his country, that he deserves the best of wives, and will make her thoroughly happy. Long since has my son already intrusted to me the secret of his love, and it has received my approval and blessing. Therefore, my dear friends and neighbours, if you think proper to give your granddaughter to my son, I think you will act wisely and well towards them. And for the happiness, which will thereby be bestowed upon my son, I his mother, will always bless our Lord, and next to our Lord thank you."

Ma chère mère's speeches were never without effect, and as she now stood there blind and supplicating (for this entreaty was really expressed in that meek tone,) gave a deeper impression to her words than usual. Another circumstance must have weighed with the old Dahl's. Serena had given a public, although involuntary proof of her love to Bruno. It was easy to foresee that their affectionate embrace would be reported the next day all over the town and round the country.

Bruno had retreated a few steps. He took his mother's hand and conveyed it to his lips. The old Dahls embraced Serena, and said: "will you, do you wish to be united to him, Serena? will you now to-day give him your hand?"

"Yes," whispered Serena's lips, "oh, my parents, with your permission, yes!"

"Well, in God's name!" exclaimed the venerable old man, "Bruno Mansfelt, receive the hand of your bride!"

"Serena mine!" cried Bruno with a tone which penetrated through marrow and bone, and rushed to her.

The old people still kept her back. "Well, then, take her, make her happy," said they with voices trembling with emotion. "She is our youngest, our most beloved—the joy of our old age—she never acted contrary to our wishes,"—(tears fell upon their withered cheeks, and their trembling hands still continued to retain her in their embraces.) "Do not remove far from us; suffer her to close our eyes; love her, make her happy—!"

"Happy!" cried Bruno, whilst almost with force he tore her away from her parents and clasped her to his breast. "Happy, as sure as I hope in the mercy of God through her!" Bruno led Serena to his mother. "Give us your blessing mother!" said he. *Ma chère mère* almost forgot her usual dignified manner, and with deeply affected faltering words she blessed her children. Upon this Bruno clasped her in his arms with vehement tenderness, and rested his head awhile leaning against her breast. It was a lovely sight!

Ma chère mère and the old Dahls then extended their hands to each other, and a few cordial expressions were mutually exchanged.

"And now for the declaration!" exclaimed the venerable old man, who seemed desirous to divert his feeling. "To-day all joy must be enjoyed in common. Come my old woman! come children. Hearken good

folks, friends, relations, hearken!" He entered into the dancing room, holding Bruno and Serena by the hand.

"My friends!" cried the venerable old man, in a gladsome tone, "I wish to announce to you a betrothment, and solicit your best wishes for my granddaughter, Serena, and Bruno Mansfelt."

The sensation was as great as if another chandelier had fallen. Never, perhaps have the people in that excellent little town of W., been overwhelmed with so many surprises within the period of an hour. But a moment before a declaration of love, and a fatal accident, now a resurrection and a betrothment.

A tremendous murmur of surprise and congratulation ran through the crowd. But I saw that all faces were not wishing happiness. I saw some long and displeased, and I believe that Bruno also perceived them too. His dark eyes blazed about for a moment like two lightnings scrutinizing the assembly; the thunderbolt upon his temples advanced more prominently; his eyebrows contracted themselves together threatening and he changed colour. *Ma chère mère* made an advance of a great step, and wished I believe to deliver a speech; but I felt the necessity, to spare Bruno and Serena from it, and ran therefore before her and exclaimed rashly:

"Well, heaven be thanked! now I have the prospect of a fresh golden nuptials, and I hope to be able after fifty years, to congratulate you, Bruno and Serena, as dearly as I do now!"

My pertness succeeded. *Ma chère mère* was disconcerted, and now so many congratulations intervened,

that she could not get herself composed again for it.

In the meantime I stole away. "Heaven be thanked!" I have said—false soul that I was, I did not think so. I felt myself excited, alarmed, full of secret misgivings. I sought for Björn, he sought for me, and we met each other.

"How is it then?" inquired he, and looked at me alarmed.

"Ah, Björn! I am uneasy, weary, sick! They are now betrothed! Ah! don't make such horrible faces! his is no laughing matter!"

"Indeed, I do not laugh about that, but about—"

"About me, perhaps?" It would be better if you were to give me something to cure heart-throbbing. Björn, they are betrothed; she, the excellent, the angelic in purity, and he, the.... Ah! it is not well after all. She will not be happy. How will this prosper? Bruno is not worthy of her, his character wants the full stature of a man—will it ever grow into true humanity.

Without making any reply, Björn led me into the room where Bruno had just won Serena's hand. He sat down gravely, tore a leaf out of his pocket book, took his pencil, and I said:

"Are you going to write a poem? That will just be my finishing stroke."

"I am writing a prescription for you," said Björn, in the same phlegmatic tone.

He wrote, and then gave me the following words to read:

"Men who do not believe the word, may be won without a word by the influence of women.

"Björn," said I, embracing him, "you are the best and cleverest doctor in the world."

"The distance between the mountains is never so great that the witches should not meet," cried *ma chère mère*, within the door. "You have not congratulated me yet, and it seems to me well worth while. Another amiable daughter is given to me. I am a happy mother. Sit you down one at each side of me, and let us have a little conversation about the young pair."

We obeyed. *Ma chère mère* carried her plans far into the future, and the visions which she saw were bright. It seemed to be with her as with many other blind persons; when the light of the eye becomes dark, that of the soul grows brighter and more pleasant. Thus we sat happily together in good spirits till supper time.

This was served up on many little tables in three rooms. At the table with the patriarchs were also Bruno and Serena, *ma chère mère*, Counsellor Hök, the Provost, Björn, myself, and several others. We were tolerably quiet for some time, and I already began to believe that this feast would pass over without *ma chère mère's* honouring it with a speech; but after the roast turkey Counsellor Hök lifted up his glass, and begged to be allowed to give a toast. All became attentive, and with a soft voice, and his gentle, confident look directed on the patriarchs, he said:

"A lyre wreathed with flowers were interwoven in the carpet upon which our highly esteemed friends have this evening heard the sound of the words of the blessing. These symbols of harmony and happiness are the Penates of the house and family. That they surrounded you, dear friends, in this festal hour, cannot be looked upon as a mere chance. Their mute lan-

guage seemed eloquent to me, and I heard them say to you: 'We are at home here; you have cherished us so well during your union, that we can never leave you; let your old age be as your youth!' "

Every one drunk with joy to the health of the deeply affected and smiling patriarchs.

"No, only listen to Hök!" said *ma chère mère*, who could no longer contain herself. As if struck by an electric shock, she gave my arm a push and said: "Fill my glass!" She then pushed back her chair with a great noise, coughed, and with a loud and lively voice she spoke as follows:

"Love is more than arrow and spear; love penetrates through buckler and shield; love paves its way everywhere: it brought the first human pair together; it will also bring together the last. My friends! may it conduct us all through life; for true love is neither French, nor German, nor Swedish; it is not even earthly, it is heavenly, and offers us its hand here, in order to lead us some day to the great marriage above. That man and wife who are united here, and walk in faithful love, will dwell together there. Well, I may say to-day, with King Lemuel's mother: 'Ah, thou son of my life, to whom a virtuous wife is allotted, she is more precious than the most precious pearls she adorns all the days of his life.' My eyes have become dim, but my heart sees clearly into my son's future, and therefore it exults with great joy, now that I can drink my son's and his spouse's, and his future parents, my esteemed friends and neighbours, health."

Bruno generally looks rather annoyed when his mother begins to make speeches; now, however, this

feeling was lost in another, and he gave his mother one of those loving looks, such as I have never seen, except from his eyes.

"What will Björn say?" thought I, after we had drunk to *ma chère mère's* toast. Now it is his turn, and he is no great orator.

To my great astonishment he said: "It is my wife's turn now. I shall give the concluding toast."

"Disagreeable Bear!" thought I, quite surprised, but I collected myself in the same instant, and said:

"Love never grows old! Long live the oldest and the youngest pair amongst us!"

"Bravo, Franciska!" cried *ma chère mère.*

The toasts now followed one after the other with such rapidity and animation that I can hardly report them. I only wished that Björn's turn might come. But this never did, for the company now came in from the other tables and rooms with champagne-glasses. Speeches were made, toasts were given, even a few very pretty poems, composed for the occasion, were sung, which highly delighted the old Dahls; and with all this Björn and his concluding toast were forgotten. All left the tables with a universal hurrah. I afterwards upbraided Björn for thus escaping from giving the toast, but he assured me that he was prepared with a long and very poetical speech, which he wished to reserve to the conclusion in order to crown the conviviality; and he lamented very much that the company, and I especially, had been deprived of it. I begged him to tell me at least the beginning of it, but he replied, that he did not like to begin anything unless he could also finish it, and that there was not

time enough for it; nor did he think me devoted enough to listen worthily to him.

Immediately after supper the "Anglaise" was formed by a long row of dancers; it was danced with great spirit, and by no one so merrily and nimbly as by Miss Hellevi Hausgiebel. By Serena's wise consideration, who feared that sitting up later might fatigue her grandparents, the dance finished with the "Anglaise" exactly at midnight. The long ceremony of returning thanks and taking leave was rather tiring to them, although they were animated by the warmest feeling. Just as the saloon and ante-saloon were full of people, like a swarm of ants,—ladies wrapping themselves up in their cloaks, and gentlemen seeking their goloshes—*ma chère mère* was struck with one of her merry ideas. Already wrapped up in her *Januarius* and her wolf-skin shoes, she asked for a violin, and played quickly a merry Polska. There was universal surprise, but the next moment a kind of dancing fever seized the whole company; they were dancing in cloaks and great coats, there was turning round and round, and laughing and joking. There was dancing in the ante-room, and upon the stairs, and they could scarcely leave off even in the street.

During this merriment and confusion, I stole away to look after Bruno and Serena, they were not among the rest.

I went from room to room, and in one of the most remote, in which the noise from the dancing-room was heard only like a distant gentle murmuring, I beheld two figures, a dark one and a light one. The dark form—it was Bruno;—was kneeling before the fair one;—

it was Serena—and she bent herself gently towards him and said:—"Thou!"

"Thou!" Charming word! I felt that I now first fully understood its perfect harmony, and I was obliged to hasten to impart it immediately to Björn. So well did I copy Serena's tone and expression, that he comprehended me at once, and said to me too, "Thou!"

Ma chère mère had followed the last pair out; and called to me with a loud voice to come. Just when I was going into the entrance-hall (which was full of people), my eyes met the same black figure with the same dark glowing eyes, which had alarmed me at my entrance into the house; and again it drew back; but when in the eagerness of the moment I wanted to convince myself whether I had guessed right, I was restrained by Björn, who was as much concerned for me as the Israelites for their ark of the Covenant, and would not suffer me to come in contact with the Philistines. With a hearty sigh I followed *ma chère mère* into the carriage. The lights were still burning along the streets, and the flambeaux still blazing. *Ma chèrè mère* could perceive the reflection, and was merry and communicative. Many a spirited adage in honour of the day proceeded from her lips. She closed her panegyric on the old Dahls with the following three:

"It is no such an easy matter to jump into the Kingdom of God."

"He who wishes to pluck the rose must not be afraid of the thorns."

"He who sows virtue, reaps a good name."

XXII.

TWENTY-THIRD LETTER.

FRANCISKA W. TO MARIA M.

W—— February 8th, 18—

Yesterday there was a great ball at the town-hall; the town gave it in honour of the patriarchs. "You must go," said I to Björn. "I must not go," said he; "I shall stop at home and dance a *pas de deux* with my wife."—I made a little remonstrance at first, but was at length obliged to consent, and in the glee of our hearts we actually danced a *minuet*, to which I sang, and Bear growled the bass. Afterwards I sat down to work at my little prophets, (I expect you know the meaning of this term by this time;) Björn opened his knowledge chest, which always highly delights me, and displayed many a choice specimen out of his abundant store of experience of life and men. I have noted down several of his narrations, which I will communicate to you another time. It is a source of great happiness, Maria, to have in a kind husband, who is also an agreeable companion.

They are beginning already at the Dahls, to think about the wedding. Bruno presses and urges with his

love and his headstrong will. I hope he will forgive me this expression! It is now determined that the wedding is to take place in May, and that my little friend Mattea is to remain with the old Dahl's in the place of Serena. Serena wishes to live partly in Ramm and partly with them.

Serena is the most amiable bride, but the same kind friend, the same excellent daughter and housekeeper, as heretofore. She is the same timid girl that she was before her engagement, and will not be otherwise as a wife. Notwithstanding her conduct towards Bruno is so captivating, that he is involuntarily compelled to worship her. What shall I say of Bruno? He is kind and not kind; happy, and not happy; day and night; Sunshines and thunderclouds are continually interchanging with him. He appears to me like a man, who feels that he does not deserve his happiness, and is therefore partly dissatisfied with himself, partly in apprehension that it may yet be snatched from him. Would that I were wrong in thus thinking.

The other day he entered Serena's room when I was there, but she was absent. He said something to me, but appeared soon to forget that I was in the room. He inspected Serena's books, paintings, needlework, with a sort of painful tenderness. He looked about in the room and said softly as it were to himself: "innocence—purity—peace!" He took up a little pea-green shawl, which Serena often wears, kissed it and covered his face with it. After a while, he started up suddenly and went out. I looked at the little shawl; —it was moist with tears.

Bruno said "peace," and he sighed so deeply, so

painfully. Ah! he has no peace. He cannot rest away from Serena, nor can he rest quietly when near her.

He comes and goes away and returns two or three times a day. He manifests to her an affection, whose vehemence he only suppresses on her account; he loads her with presents, which she accepts for his sake; but his disquietude is evidently painful to her.

"This is a dreadful sort of hunting and chasing indeed! I cannot tell what end all this is to serve!" growled Bear, displeased.

"It would be far better for him to sit still and eat his sweet porridge!" said I, whilst placing a dish of smoking-hot gruel upon our supper-table.

"Yes, when it can be done by the side of one's sweet little wife!"

I was satisfied with his compliment, although it savoured somewhat of water-gruel warmth. But this warmth must be fostered and cherished. The myrtle-tree of matrimony does not prosper very well in the North here without it.

The 12th February.

A dreadful event in the house of Dahl's! One night has already since elapsed, but my hand still trembles with such nervousness, that I cannot steadily guide my pen. Oh, my forebodings!

Yesterday evening we, Björn and I, were at our friends. Björn was sitting near the two old people. Serena and Bruno were in the adjoing room. I was at the piano and playing several chaunts, which I had lately obtained. I gradually played softer and softer and many long pauses at every organ-stop, for I heard

the utterance of words, which engrossed my whole attention. Bruno had been unusually gloomy this evening, and I heard that Serena, near whom he was sitting, was asking him about the cause, in that tone of inmost tenderness, and with those sweet and tender accents, which the love of woman is capable of producing.

"I have had an evil dream last night, the remembrance of which still torments me."

"A dream, Bruno?"

"Yes, a dream! shall I tell it you?"

"Yes, by all means."

"Well then, Serena! I dreamed that you were my wife. You were my own, the partner of my life, my other half, my wife, and I—was not happy. Years rolled on, you were mine, I loved you as now, and if possible still more so; we had spent tranquil days; we had many times seen the sun rise and set over the Helga-lake; in the shades I had closed thee in my arms. I had reposed on thy breast, but—I was not happy. I dreamed it was now again evening. The stars peeped forth one after the other, and reflected their trembling rays in the calm water. The sky was clear, and the forest around us calm and still. You were my wife, you lay in my arms; but I had no peace. A smothered grief, as of festering wounds was brooding in my heart, for the soul may likewise suffer such wounds, but you do not know them; hoping to ease my pain I pressed you to my heart; ah! the pain was so much the greater; I fancy as if I still feel it; put your hand here! Serena—alas!"

Bruno was silent for a moment and then proceeded:

"A change came over my dream. I was alone in

the wood of Ramm. I was hunting a stag, and my dogs pursued it with gasping, bloodthirsty jaws. I also was thirsty; I fancied as if I were thirsting for blood. Over hill and dale, through heath and field proceeded the restless pursuit. It was a wild chase; from precipice to precipice, from hiding-place to hiding-place I pursued the fleeing stag. Hours passed on, the stag fled, I pursued him, the dogs barked in their restless course; it appeared as if the chase would never have an end. The dogs grew tired, but not I; my horse grew weary, but I spurred it; a demon pursued me and I now pursued the stag—my thirst became continually more burning.

"For a moment the chase was suspended; I had lost sight of the stag, but when I was just riding out of a forest, I saw it suddenly standing near a little flowing brook, panting for breath. He was not far from me; he saw me, but thirst and weariness outweighed his fear. He stood still and drunk. I fired, he fell. At the sound of the gun the dogs received new life; they rushed forth and their bloody jaws seized the legs of the stag, and pulled at the tender boughs of his horns. I threw myself down from the horse and ran up nearer to give the death-blow to my victim. Already I held the knife to his throat, when it turned its fine dying eyes towards me, and looked at me with a sorrowful reproachful glance. I felt a dagger thrust into my heart, and mute and gloomy I saw those eyes, which every second grew more human-like. At length—oh terrible!—I saw that they were your eyes, Serena: it was you, whom I had murdered; it was you, who stared at me thus. Almighty God! if ever thy look—"

"Bruno! Bruno!" interrupting him tenderly and agitated, "why do you speak so? It was only a dream, and an unpleasant and stupid dream, I must say. Look at me; no, do not turn away; look at me, oh, look at me, that such a look from my eyes can never, never meet you. Ah! did you but know, did you but rightly feel how impossible this is. Hear Bruno, I also have a dream to relate to you, and one indeed of truer meaning than yours. I dreamed, Bruno, that the world had grown stiff and turned to ice. There was no more sun, no more green upon earth, no more blue in the sky, in the place of which there was empty void. Splendid palaces, woods and hills were still standing, but they were transformed into ice. Wonderful and awful rays, the source of which was not seen, and which diffused no warmth, but cast long and awe-inspiring shades, wandered about among these forms of ice. All living beings were long since dead, two only were still breathing with throbbing and warm hearts in this marble world. And these two were ourselves, you and I, alone we moved together through long lines of pillars of ice; we did not cleave to the earth, but we were not able to raise ourselves above it. Our lot was gradually to freeze to death as the last of all living beings. Your heart was bitter, and your cheek pale. When the rays cast threatening shades over you, your arm rose up as if to fight, and your voice sent forth a dreadful shriek. In the midst of this frozen world, in the midst of this night of suffering and of death, I felt within my heart a warmth, which, I fancied, no ice could chill, no time could cool. There was within it as it were a rising spring of life, which

spread through my whole being, and gave me a higher power than I had possessed in the sunny spring-days of earth. I loved you more than ever, Bruno, I rejoiced to suffer with you, for you, and when your heart grew calm and warm, and your cheek less pale.

I was certain then, that I was destined to devote my life to you, to protect you with the warmth of my heart against the cold and terrific forms of darkness, I felt myself so happy at this thought that I awoke over it;—my dream was over, but I clearly felt what I had experienced in my dream, and I often feel and do so now that I would gladly have to endure some great affliction for you; for then I could evince to you better, how sincerely I loved you."

"Oh, God!" said Bruno, with a smothered voice, and with an expression of torturing pain, "oh, God! how little do I deserve this love;—how unworthy—Serena, thou lovely angel, thou, whom I shall call my wife."

"That she will never become," exclaimed a harsh and heart rending voice. Hagar, more like a fury than a human being, rushed into the apartment, a dagger glittered in her hand; in the next instant it appeared to pierce Serena's heart; but with the rapidity of lightning Bruno had seized Hagar's arm; the thrust was warded off, and the dagger only wounded Serena's shoulder. With frantic mien, Bruno wrenched the murderous weapon from Hagar's hand, pushed her violently back, seized her with one hand by the hair, and the steel glittered over her breast. "Oh, wretch!" he exclaimed with hollow voice and pale lips. "Curse of my life! thou must die!"

"Bruno! Oh, God!" exclaimed Serena, springing

up, and hanging on his arm. Bruno recovered his recollection; his wild looks became more composed, his lips murmured, "A woman!" The dagger fell from his hand. He looked at Serena, saw her blood streaming down; took her despairing in his arms, and bore her to the sofa.

"Thy will shall be accomplished," exclaimed Hagar wildly. "See here thy sacrifice, Bruno! She only wished to die at thy feet." She rushed towards him, plunged the dagger into her breast, and sank weltering in her blood at his feet. "Bruno! Bruno! for thee, for thee," she murmured, then she became mute, and her eyes closed.

All this was the work of a few seconds. It was a terrible moment, but yet more terrible were the circumstances attending it. Bruno's despair was deep and mute. Old Dahl tore his grey hair, and exclaimed: "My child! my child!"

Björn alone was calm; he alone restored order and reason. "It is in reality only a scratch. There is, the deuce take me, no more danger for her than for me," he exclaimed to the old people, whilst he prepared to bind up Serena's wound; but she pushed back his hand, and said, pointing to the motionless, recumbent Hagar, "Assist her, assist her; she stands in need of it rather than myself;" but Björn did not leave her before her wound was bound up, he then asked me to lead her and the sorrowing old Dahls into another room.

Hagar, whom we had believed dead, soon gave signs of returning animation, was put to bed, and given up to Björn's care. With great presence of mind, Serena prepared every thing that was requisite for her comfort, and appeared to have forgotten that she had herself

suffered severely. With the most tender words she endeavoured to console the old people, and when they wished to reproach Bruno, she closed their lips with kisses. "We know nothing of it yet," said she in a pacifying and entreating manner, "we cannot, we dare not condemn him. Let us stay, let us wait for the time. Bruno will explain himself. All may yet turn out well."

She then went to Bruno, who stood sunk in gloomy meditations, and said to him: "Return this evening to Ramm, and come here again to-morrow; we shall then be all more calm, and do not be concerned about to-night's occurrences. She shall have the best attendance Doctor Werner will remain with her. Go now, my friend, but come to-morrow, and console my grandfather and grandmother, and all of us, if you can."

"Serena, and you, and you," stammered Bruno, and gazed painfully at her.

Serena turned herself about in order to conceal the grief, the expression of which she was in vain endeavouring to overcome. "I trust in you," said she, mildly. "Good night, Bruno," and she covered her eyes with one hand, while she extended to him the other.

"You turn yourself away from me—you will not look on me?" said Bruno, with a melancholy tone.

Then Serena turned her face towards him, and wished to smile upon him, but her eyes were full of tears.

Perhaps Bruno saw in that look what he had seen in his dreams, for he became as one frantic; he invoked a curse upon himself; struck himself with his clenched fist on his forehead, and rushed out.

Björn and I did not go home that night. He sat in the room with Hagar, who had fallen into a violent paroxysm of fever, and uttered words sometimes full of love, sometimes of frenzy, but always equally wild, and bearing the stamp of an ill-regulated and despairing mind. I remained with Serena, whose chamber is near that of her grandfather and grandmother, and prevailed upon her to go to bed, and for her sake to seek repose. She did according to my request, and composed herself as if sleeping, but I often heard her weeping softly. I was obliged to go many times into Hagar's room, in order to bring Serena accounts of her condition. (Björn does not think that her life is in danger.) From time to time the door leading to the apartment of the old people was gently opened, and anxious enquiries as to the state of their beloved child were asked in whispers, and always received consoling replies. Björn was with every body, muttered to every body, encouraged us all, and gave the two invalids composing draughts. Bruno returned three times during the night, but would not come in, and asked for, and obtained an account of Serena's and Hagar's condition, upon which he again rushed off as one pursued by the furies.

It was a long and painful night. Serena often inquired: "Will it not soon be morning? Does not the day dawn?" Ah! she longed for morning; for she believed that light and Bruno would come with it. But when the morning dawned, Bruno did not come, but a note from him, with the following unconnected lines:

"I was to return—I was to explain—this you re-

quested of me. O that any wish of *your's* should *be* unfulfilled by me! Serena, I cannot explain, I cannot come!—*she will*, but *you* I cannot see; your look annihilates me; I cannot now explain. Honour bids me do it, but honour forbids me also. Hagar can, but she will not. Farewell, adored one, unfortunate one; yes, for you love me. I cannot come, but I will surround you unseen. Was it not the punishment of the damned, to see paradise so near, but to be driven from it by a flaming sword. Retribution, dreadful retribution! Pray for me, Serena, for hell is in my heart

After reading these lines, Serena bowed her head on her hand, and sat for a long time as one no longer in life. But surely she must have prayed silently to the eternal comforter, she must certainly have lifted up her heart to her heavenly Father, for otherwise her countenance could not, as she raised her head, even in the midst of her grief, have worn that expression of lofty and calm resignation. Her first thought was for her parents, the first words which her lips uttered after this blow, was a request that they would for her sake have patience, precipitate nothing; condemn nothing; but to wait for the moment when this mystery should clear away, and Bruno stand before them in a purer light.

She gave them Bruno's letter to read, interpreted the expressions contained in it to his advantage, glanced at the probable solution of the problem, and obtained what she sought for. The old people became calmer, and committed to her the management of the whole affair.

O, how beautiful is such confidence between old people and children!

I left Serena at breakfast, which she, with her usual care, was preparing for the old people, whilst she assured them that her wound did not give her pain, and that she should soon be entirely recovered.

I went home, in order to seek some repose. I am tired, but more disquieted and excited than tired. In order to calm myself, I have written to you, Maria; for to communicate all to the friend of one's heart is a salutary opiate for the soul. I already feel its effects, and will endeavour to sleep.

Björn and Serena have determined that Hagar shall remain in Dahl's house, until she either dies or recovers. She could not be removed without danger. As to the rest, we shall endeavour to keep the sad occurrence as secret as possible, and especially try to prevent its coming to the ears of *ma chère mère*. But when will all this be explained? I will communicate more to you, Maria, when I know more.

XXIII.

TO THE READER, FROM A STRANGER LADY.

The bare outlines alone of the following disclosure have come to the knowledge of Dr. Werner's wife. Fate has made me acquainted with the entire facts, and I will now draw the curtain from before some scenes which about this time occurred in Hagar's sick-room. I will call them SHADES, for they stand out in strong light from deepest darkness; they may be compared with

those outlines which one takes on a winter's evening by reflecting the shadows of human faces in a brilliant light. If the connoisseurs of art and men should consider these sketches too transient and too slight to deserve a closer attention, and yet perceive that they contain too many traces of truth to be thrown aside. I am satisfied, and will confidently begin with the

FIRST SHADE.

"Jealousy knocked at my heart's door, and said—kill! kill!"

In a retired apartment, the window of which opened to a little garden, lay the sick, the criminal Hagar; tended as kindly as if she were the darling child of the family. Two days had passed. Hagar raved sometimes, in the delirium of fever, but at others, while conscious of what passed. Doctor Werner sat by her bed-side, contemplating almost with astonishment the conflict of those passions, which had never disturbed his quiet mind. Except him and a girl who waited on her, Hagar saw no one; but an unseen guardian watched faithfully near her. The gentle currents of air which cooled her burning forehead, were wafted to her and the potion which mitigated the pain of her wound, were administered to her by Serena.

One evening she lay in an uneasy slumber. Serena alone was near her, and stole softly to her in order to contemplate her for a moment. "God be praised!" her lips whispered, "you rest, poor pitiable one! You have destroyed my happiness, but, O! how far more miserable are you!"

Hagar awoke. Serena withdrew quickly, but was seen. "Who is there?" enquired Hagar, vehemently. Serena, in the hope of not being recognized, was silent; but Hagar proceeded: "You give no answer, but I know you. I have seen you before scaling about my bed, pale girl, in order to drain my very heart's blood. Do not imagine that you can deceive me. I know that I am in your power, and know your wish. You would torment me and destroy my life by slow poison. As a punishment for my crime, I shall gradually be suffocated for want of vital air, and you have deprived me of it, that I may see him no more, hear his voice no more—that was my air, my existence. He has himself delivered me up to your power to torment me. Yes, he and all hate me, and rejoice in my misery, but I will evade him and you all, I will free myself!" With these words Hagar tried to tear the bandage from her wound, but Serena sprang forward, seized her hands, and held her with an almost unnatural grasp. Hagar stared at her mild face streaming with the tears of pain and compassion, and said:

"Will you preserve my life to torture me by a slower death?"

"O no, no, Hagar! Do not mistrust me! I wish that you may live!"

"I believe you not! You love him, you love him, whom I love, he belongs to me—yes, you grow pale! —you tremble!—he belongs to me! for I first received his promise; mine are older claims, more sacred—they are sealed with my blood!—Ha, you wish me well You? Away! I know what jealousy is, that burning disease, which impels to murder, and to frenzy—which,

in solitude, in the stillness of the night, whispers in hoarse and spectral tones: "Kill! kill!" Ha, fair girl, you now are dark, and you hate!—All, all around me is black—black—black—"

Hagar swooned. Serena called in her waiting-maid, and hastened away, overcome with grief, into her room. She then threw herself on her knees, and exclaimed: "O my God, he wished also to deceive me." All was dark around her, but it did not remain so long.

SECOND SHADE.

"Love is patient and gentle."

HAGAR. You do not truly then wish for my death?

SERENA. No, Hagar, may you yet live long, and again enjoy rest.

HAGAR. But if I live, I shall destroy your repose. If I live, you can never be happy!

SERENA. (In a tone of deep but mild depression.) That hope I have already abandoned.

HAGAR. You might then have been his love? You would then have become what I was, what many others have been—but his wife—never! Sarah drives Hagar from the house. Would you be his mistress?

SERENA. (Calmly.) No, Hagar.

HAGAR. You are too proud to become that?

Serena was silent.

HAGAR. You do not love him. You will make no sacrifice for him.

SERENA. Yes, indeed! My life, my earthly happiness—willingly!

HAGAR. This is little. But do you know what I have sacrificed for him? Riches, distinction, honour, country, parents, blessedness,—all, all, every thing! Yes, in my father's house I had a thousand slaves at my command. I left all, and became his slave. And therefore he ought to love me, he ought to be mine! —who succoured him in the bloody tumult of death—who braved with him the law and condemnation, if not I?—Fair maiden! white and cold as the snow upon the mountains of thy father-land, dost thou believe, that thou canst snatch him from me? No, he must return to me, my fire flows also through his veins—weak creature, fear his kiss! it is destruction—flee from him, for he is mine, here and hereafter!—Ha, my wound! Good God, what pain! Help me, help!

Serena hastened to her, with the soothing salve prepared by Dr. Werner, and with gentle and dexterous hands dressed Hagar's wound.

"I thank you," said Hagar, relieved, "I thank you, you are very kind!"

"Oh, Hagar! love him, but do not hate me!"

"No, I hate you no longer, who indeed could hate you?"

THIRD SHADE.

"If any one should compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

HAGAR, (violently).—If you wish that I should live, let him return. Better it is to lie upon the rack and

enjoy the sight of him, than to live in Paradise without him. Your influence over him, they say, is great. Use it then to induce him to return, and if possible to obtain his forgiveness towards me. Jealousy rendered me desperate, but I do not deserve his hatred, at least not——"

Hagar was silent, and was absorbed in deep reflection. For the last few days she had been better. Serena's unwearied attention and kind treatment operated like a healing balm upon the unhappy creature.

Later on the same evening, Serena was sitting with Hagar and was occupied with writing. Love and sorrow dwelt on her lips, which were gently moving, as if she were whispering the words which her pen had just written. But her fair countenance shone more brightly than usual; she resembled the triumphant repose of virtue and love. Hagar observed this and said suddenly in her bold bitter way:

"You are no doubt, well contented with yourself!"—Serena blushed, and Hagar continued:

"You are no doubt boasting of being so pure and virtuous. You no doubt feel your great superiority over such a miserable creature as I am."

"No, indeed not, Hagar!" said Serena, with a tear in her eye.

"Nor would you be right," continued the former, "for gifts are unequally distributed, and still more unequally are temptations."

"That is true!" replied Serena, meekly.

"Of what should that man boast, who has never been tempted? And were you tempted, you would perhaps

not be better than many others."

Serena was silent.

"Happy is she whose breast has never been agitated by passions, whose blood flows calmly, whose early and dearest companions are virtue and peace. If she remains immaculate, if she fall not, her merit is yet of little worth!"

"You are right!" said Serena with composure and meekness, as before. She rested her head on her white hand.

"Destiny determines and the world condemns; both are equally blind," continued the enraged creature; "therefore the course of one man is called victory and honour, that of the other, fall and reprobation."

"But God, who seeth in secret," said Serena, with a firm voice, "God, who is mightier than destiny and the world, will one day make all things equal, which have been unequal here. Then, Hagar, it will often happen, that he, who laboured only in the last hour, will receive equal wages, as he who had been called in the first."

Hagar raised herself up a little and contemplated Serena with astonishment. "What God is it that lives and moves in your soul?" inquired she. "And to what purpose those benign words to me, the hated, the abandoned?"

"Not hated, not abandoned," said Serena, whilst rising and approaching the sick-bed. "Oh, no! Hagar; a merciful Judge most certainly awaits you."

With an expression of lively suspense, Hagar's inquiring look stared at the sweet countenance, which now approached her couch, and looked down upon her

with the pity of an angel. Serena continued:

"Jealousy has driven you to the commission of a foul deed, but your love is sincere and deep. I have watched you, Hagar, when your soul revealed its inmost thought. I have watched you in twilight and in the night, when you believed yourself to be alone; and I have comprehended the manner of your love—no ignoble soul, no woman of common mind can love thus—passion, circumstances, the darkness of your mind have misled you, but in clearer moments, even now, Hagar, dive into the depths of your heart, and ask yourself: Is there anything that you would not sacrifice for the happiness of Bruno? Is not love to him your strongest, yes, the only profound feeling of your heart?"

"Yes," cried Hagar, "yes, I have loved him with a glowing heart, inexpressibly. I love him still, but this love has driven me to crime."

"And had you struck my heart, Hagar, and did I now lie dying at your side, still I should say: The sin of a moment will not condemn the heart which loves faithfully!"

Hagar struggled for breath. A refreshing feeling sank into her despairing heart, and extinguished its dreadful burning. With folded hands Hagar sank back upon her couch. "Yes," she whispered faintly, "you are right! Ah! there is one being still, who can understand me, who can give credence to my words. Listen to me, Serena, thou who cherishest angelic brightness and angelic benignity within thy soul, listen to me. It was not my wish to kill you! No! I would not hurt Bruno so severely. When I was sit-

ting alone in the dark forest, and jealousy called murderous thoughts into my soul, I repelled them from me with horror. When I heard of Bruno's betrothment, when I saw that my fate was irresistably doomed, I determined on suicide. And in order to give strength enough to it, I wished to see him, and you, his espoused bride together.—Ah, when I saw you for the first time, it ran through my heart like an icy dagger; I felt that he would love you far otherwise than he had ever loved others; I felt that he was lost to me for ever, but still I had his first love, his first promise. But to the point. I came one evening, and saw you both together. But when I saw your head leaning against his shoulder, when I heard him calling you his wife, a fury seized my heart and brain. It was jealousy. My soul grew wild and my dagger thirsted after your blood, before it should cool itself in mine. Yes, it was the work of a moment, the work of a dark, dark moment. But now a ray of light penetrates through the dark veil. But thou, thou whom I wished to destroy, and who givest life to me, say, who art thou, wondrous maid? Art thou a child of Heaven sent to comfort the earth, and hast thou nothing common with its pains and passions? Or art thou one of those phantoms, which I have heard spoken of, which allure men with silvery voices and sweet words, and then suddenly change into shades of hell, and drag down the miserable into eternal darkness."

Hagar's wild and heated phantasy appeared at this moment to realize the frightful transformation. With a look of bewilderment she stared at Serena, who thus spoke :

"I am only a weak woman, to whom God, however, has vouchsafed grace to conquer her passions and her grief. Read, Hagar, these lines, which will soon restore to you him whom you love; read, oh, mistrust me no more!"

Serena gave the letter, which she had just written, into Hagar's hands, and the letter read:

"You flee from me, Bruno, you shun my house. Return Bruno; not merely in my own name, and for my own sake do I entreat you—I entreat you for one, who seems able rather to dispense with light and life than with the sight of you. Come, Bruno, oh, come to her, who is so worthy of pity! Near her bed I expect you. Let us together recall her to life. Let us be together, Bruno! oh, my friend, in the darkness, which surrounds me at this present moment, I still know one thing clearly, viz., that I love you, that you are dearer to me than my life, and that nothing, nothing can sever this feeling from my heart; we can now determine nothing respecting our future. Come then! let us await the time and be in peace with each other; and should aught prevent our union in marriage, nothing shall hinder it in friendship. Hagar has spoken of claims which she has upon you, of former ties, which bind you to her. If she has spoken the truth, Bruno, my entreaty is still the same; return Bruno to me, to her!"

"Listen, Bruno, let us become children again, let us be, as in those days, those bright days, when we greeted the morning sun together in the woods of Ramm, when the shades of evening still found us together, full of peace and mutual confidence. Do you remember

one evening, when it grew dark in the wood and I said, "are you not afraid of losing your way in the dark," and you answered, "With you my way is light!" and I said, "and with you I am not afraid even in the dark!" Oh, friend of my youth! can it not be so again, as it was then? Life is the forest, and it may be dark too, oh, I have felt this deeply for some time past—let us walk the road together, Bruno; reach me your hand as a friend, as a brother. Then the road will perhaps become light to us both yet. Listen to my request! weeping I address it to you. Return again, Bruno, beloved, eternally beloved friend! Bruno, return again!

Your SERENA."

With trembling hand Hagar returned the letter. "You love him more than I," said she; a painful expression passed over her features, and she drew the cover over her head.

Serena dispatched her letter; a few hours afterwards Bruno lay at her feet. They did not speak, but involuntarily they embraced each other, involuntarily their souls dissolved again in an unutterable feeling. From this moment Bruno often sat near Hagar's sick-bed. The bold, wild Hagar was before him only a weak, lowly woman, awed into submission by a mere look from him. Bruno's forgiveness and presence, Serena's kindness and fine feeling, her faithful and tender nursing had a salutary influence upon the sufferer. Doctor Werner gave hope for her life. Franciska came sometimes in the evening to visit her friend. Between Bruno and these two lovely and cultivated

women, conversations of a high and noble interest were carried on, which Hagar's ardent soul imbibed with eagerness. The old Dahl's likewise came and joined with the rest and in that room, in that circle, where there was cause enough for all that is bitterest in life. In that room, through Serena's influence, peace, sympathy, yes even comfort prevailed at least for the time, and the very event even which appeared necessarily to have rent asunder the bonds of love and of confidence, served only to draw them the more closely together. Sweet power of goodness, which seeks only peace, of wisdom, which like God's own wisdom only opposes to dissension and divisions by a higher harmony, a more perfect order and love.

What effect these conversations and the daily intercourse with Serena had upon Hagar's character and Bruno's mind, we shall see by-and-bye.

POURTH SHADE.

"Gentle rain for ever dropping
Penetrates the hardest rock."

SCHILLER.

The storm raged without, it was one of those winter nights on which the ancient stories of witches' orgies seemed to be realized, and when the poor wanderer in the north so often loses his way. His wife, or an old mother miss him at their cottage evening fire-side. She hopes for the morrow's dawn, but then it is only said, he was found dead upon the snow in the forest.

Hagar's state of health had undergone another change. The reviving power which for a time gave

reason to believe in her recovery, suddenly vanished, and a state of great weakness ensued. It is not her wound, but her mind which preys on her life, said Doctor Werner. A great stillness now prevailed in the sick-chamber. Serena alone attended there and silently administered to the comfort of the patient's body and soul. The spirit was also now more composed, whilst resigning herself entirely to her faithful tender nurse.

The icy weather beat against the windows of the sick-chamber, and the storm shook the branches of the tree which grew before them. But a lamp was burning still and brightly within, and a tender female voice read the following words:

"I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, father I have sinned against heaven and against thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son!—and he arose and came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and he began to have compassion upon him, and ran to meet him, and fell about his neck, and kissed him."

"Blessed, blessed words!" a faint voice now uttered from the bed. "And if I went home like the prodigal son, should I be received thus, think you? Great, great is my guilt."

"But God's mercy is still greater. The prodigal son indeed had wasted all his inheritance. But when as a penitent, he returned, he was received in love."

"Well then," said the patient with her burning heart, "I also will return. To my earthly father I could not go, he would only curse me. I will arise and go to my heavenly father."

FIFTH SHADE.

"Love knows no measure, boundary, nor grave."
H. SCHULZE.

It was night, and the moon shone brightly. The earth lay so calmly and serenely in its silver light, the bonds of snow had vanished, and a reviving breeze —roused the slumbering earth to the life of spring.

We will follow the rays of the heavenly lamp in Hagar's sick chamber, and contemplate the figures radiated by them.

They fall strongly upon a profile of former beauty, whose features are now meagre and sharp, such as passion and pain are used to carve with their sharp chisels! The wonted wild rolling look was now more composed. A glorified expression now rested in the wasted face, and the hands were folded as if engaged in prayer, Hagar was sitting raised in bed. At her side, and supporting her, stands a young girl. Perhaps the rays of the moon cause that paleness in her countenance whilst she stands there like a lily in the midst of light. Perhaps it may be suffering which has chased the rosy hue from her cheeks. However it has not been able to rob her of that sweet gentleness of mien, or to change the beautiful almost child-like roundness of her figure. She is soft, soft as kindness itself, and captivating as the latter; her look is bright, gentle, one might say holy.

"Lean more on me," she whispered to Hagar. It is Serena. In the shade, and darker than the shade, stands Bruno, with his dark flaming looks immovably

fixed upon them both. His breast heaved slowly, but conflicting thought strove for mastery within. At a little distance from the bed, in a soft half-light, two aged figures are sitting, silent, pale, resembling the shades of the departed.

Six weeks are now elapsed since that evening in which Hagar had laid violent hands on her own life. Like an expiring flame, which now flickers up, now sinks again, had she thus long been suspended between life and death. But her sufferings had grown severe during the latter period, and she felt the hour of her dissolution rapidly drawing nigh. It was night, when awaking from long stupor, she anxiously desired to speak with Serena's parents. But when they came she was unable for some time to speak. Supported by Serena's faithful breast, encircled by her arms, she gradually recovered a little strength. At her request the old people drew nearer. In short, but energetic words Hagar thanked them for the tender care and attention which they had vouchsafed to her, and begged them to forgive her all the sorrow which she had caused them; now, she added, I shall never more trouble any one upon earth; now, I am going to meet my final doom! But, before I go, let me offer my sacrifice to truth; let me in some measure atone for that evil which I have committed. Hear the confession of a dying one, and give credence to my last words. I HAVE NOTHING WHEREWITH TO REPROACH BRUNO! I myself am the cause of my own fate. In my father's house we loved each other, and mutually promised marriage. It was I who broke my vow; my excesses and crimes awakened his abhorence. I wished to draw him down,

he fled from me; I then pursued him, and I was condemned, that, although despised and rejected, I should still be compelled not to be able to breathe except in the fire that consumed me. My love to him was my punishment: it has bowed, but improved my soul. Bruno tolerated me in his presence, he tolerated the stormy wind which raged around his life with never-ending fury. This afforded me strength to live, yes, to hope that I might regain the heart which I had forfeited. I therefore followed him into this land in whose earth I shall soon rest. Bruno attached himself to Serena, and now he wished to banish me from him. He offered me rich presents, and entreated me to return to my native country. It was not a wish, but a command, which was implied in his crushing words. I seemed as though I submitted to it, but resolved to die. My feelings were wild. The winter evening was cold on which I determined to make an end of my life. Bruno was with his bride, and I walked in the dark forest,—cold was the winter evening, and hence my blood may have grown so chilled, my hand so benumbed,—it would not obey. I then determined to see him and you. I hastened thither,—saw him and you,—jealousy then turned my brain. The rest you know. Once more, forgive! Once more hear those words, I have nothing wherewith to reproach Bruno! But on many accounts I have to crave his forgiveness. He deserves your grandchild; and in those unknown regions, whither my spirit is going, I shall bless him and her. If you forgive me, then tell me that you will offer no impediment to their union, which my crime threatened to dissolve. Vouchsafe to the penitent—

the dying—this last consolation!

Hagar stopped. Both the old people extended their hands to her, and addressed her in terms of reconciliation, and as Hagar appeared to be faint, they gently withdrew.

Hagar was overcome by a momentary faintness, but soon recovered, turned her expiring eyes to Serena, and said:

"And now let me thank thee, thou pure, bright spring, in which God's heaven is reflected! For my harsh words thou gavest me kind ones in return; for the pain which I have caused you, thou hast alleviated and sweetened mine. Thou hast brought refreshing draughts to my lips, and poured the oil of compassion into the wounds of my heart. Thou hast taught me sacred lessons of love; thou hast caused that gentle feelings now pervade my soul, that I can still hope at the very gate of death. Serena, Bruno, give me your hands that I, who wished to separate them, may now lay them in each other, that I may pronounce a blessing upon them before my lips close in eternal silence!"

Serena extended her hand to her, weeping in silence, but Bruno remained standing immovable.

"He will not!" cried Hagar, painfully; "he fears the blessing which my lips might pronounce; he abhors me even in death!"

"Not so, Hagar," said Bruno, softly, whilst he gently laid his hand upon her violently heaving breast; "be at peace with me, as I am with you. Thou hast been dear to me, and art so still, now in this very moment."

"Receive my infinite thanks for these words," ex-

claimed Hagar, ardently. "Oh, repeat them; say, that thou hast forgiven me."

"Who am I, that I should pardon thee?" said Bruno gloomily. "What right have I, indeed, to appear better than thou? We have both erred, both are in equal need of forgiveness and of mercy in the sight of God!"

"No, not in an equal degree," cried Hagar. "Was it not I who seduced thy ardent, thoughtless youth to deeds, of which thy heart had no share? Was it not I, like a serpent entwined itself round thy tree of life, and poured poison into its sap? It was thou, who did awaken in me a spark of humanity; it was not thy beauty, but thy boldness that chained me to thee for ever,—it was the flame of a higher life, which ever fresh and new, lightened forth from the stormy night of thy character. In vain did they want to reduce thy power to ashes; like the Phœnix didst thou rise from thy funeral pile, shaking the ashes from thy wings, and pressing upwards to the light, thus didst thou soar far from me, and I remained behind in the dust; but now —it is growing so dark—now I die contented, for I know that my death will be thy gain. Hear one request more. In the park of Ramm there is a grotto. I have often reposed there; it is cool and peaceful. There let me be buried. And listen; there is a coffin in thy house, its woods has imbibed the air of the house which thou inhabitest, lay me in it. Ah! thy hand did me good; let it rest here until my heart ceases to beat. Farewell, Bruno! I am sinking into silence, into darkness, and with me the past! Peace be with thee! Be happy with thy young wife! With me all is—finished!

Hagar grew speechless; her hands dropped those of Bruno; her breast grew still, and life's great shadow—death—drew over her countenance that veil which no mortal can lift up.—She breathed no more!

The moon's rays grew pale. The first dawn of the Easter morning shed its indistinct light into the chamber, and its warm reflection passed over the pale form. Solemn silence reigned around her.

"Dead?!" Bruno at length exclaimed, with a dull voice, whilst inclining over Hagar; he appeared to be assailed by fearful, distressed feelings; "dead, because she loved me! Who, that loved me, was ever happy? To whom have I brought joy? My mother's life I have darkened. Here lies the affianced of my youth. And ye, unhappy victims, whose life I have wasted, ye also rise to accuse me!—So it ought to be! Ye pale shadows, come and place yourselves between me and her, who was to have become my wife,—for I am not worthy of her! I will not deceive her, not steal into her heart with a lie and destroy her heaven—no woman shall love me—no one follow me—except this unfortunate spirit, which accompanies me through life. I believe that Serena would have banished it.—ah! this angelic look presses me down and plunges me still deeper—my lost heaven would be my curse—no, I will flee—flee—I will——"

A convulsive paroxysm shook Bruno, and his fixed eye testified that he was no longer conscious.

"Bruno, Bruno!" cried Serena, in tender distress, whilst she drew near to him;

"Away!" said he harshly and frantic; "away!

my love brings misfortune with it—come not too near with thy wings to the fire of hell—flee—flee!"

"Bruno!" said Serena, whilst in spite of his threatening gestures she drew nearer to him and threw her arms round his neck. "Do not speak so wildly, be kind, be calm!—You are ill, Bruno;—come, compose yourself!—sit down here near to me—rest yourself against me—look at me, Bruno,—I am indeed your Serena, yonr wife, who loves you so ardently, who will follow you in sorrow and in joy."

The intense stretch of excitement in Bruno's demeanour relaxed, his countenance grew more placid, he breathed more freely. "Speak, angelic voice, speak!" said he.

"You are exhausted by watching, you are overfatigued!" continued Serena, tenderly and caressingly, "now you must rest; I shall watch you during your sleep, and then we will walk out together and see the sun, the lovely spring sun, which dispenses life and joy to all. It will be a fine day, my Bruno!"

Serena's child-like sweet words, and the display of love exorcised the demon from Bruno's soul. He collected himself, and seemed to awake out of a tormenting dream. With a look of unspeakable love and inexpressible anguish he looked at Serena. "Oh!" said he, with his tearful eyes, "never did David's harp charm the raging spirit more sweetly. But, Serena, tell me, what have I said? What have I done?—and say, what have been your thoughts?"

"You were ill, Bruno, but, thank heaven! now you are better again, and all is well!"

"No, all is not well with me, Serena!—for know, that

frenzy of which you have just been witness, is no stranger to me. In the activity of the day, during the stillness of night it surprises me, and becomes my master, until I master it in return. See, in that moment, when my mother laid her curse upon my head,—in that moment a wound opened in my heart which has not yet been cured, wild actions and recollections have deepened it. Oh, for a length of time past, I have longed to lay myself at your feet with my frightful secret. But strength had failed me, strength perhaps for ever—but now the moment has come—turn away your pure look from me, Serena!"

Bruno now drew a rapid, but vivid sketch of his first aberrations. "My brother's manly kindness," continued he, "snatched me from my dangerous and abandoned course. For a moment I hoped to begin a new, a better life. Perhaps I should have done so, had I not been sunk by the consequences of my first error. I had been a gambler early, and I had secretly misled a young man, a companion, to the same course. I was the cause of his misfortune. To rescue him, I again resorted to unlawful means. My theft was discovered—discovered by my mother. She wished to punish me—severely—perhaps too severely—but no—I deserved it; but I would not submit; violence opposed violence—I bid defiance to my mother—and she—cursed me."

Bruno's voice trembled at these words He drew breath and proceeded:

"I went away the same night, with furies in my heart—nor have they left me since. I fled from my paternal home and from my father-land; I left the

ocean between them and me. I entered into foreign service, and there reaped wounds and some honour. After the termination of the war I fell into connections, which captivated my heart and obscured those ideas of right and goodness which still remained when I quitted my maternal home. With the curse of my mother on my head, and unrestrained passions in my breast, I endeavoured to gratify the latter, and to forget the former; I endeavoured to forget that I had a home, a fatherland, a mother; to forget that I was cursed—ah; this was the icy feeling of my life, which drove me perpetually deeper into the fire of the abyss. I had no rest; I wished to be active; to govern all who surrounded me; thirst after gain, yes, even love of the danger connected with the pursuit of it, drove me to that which I shall repent for ever. I became—a slave-trader, a seller of souls! I dragged Africa's children from their huts, violently severed husbands from wives, wives from husbands, mothers from children, and transported them as slaves to the Portuguese colonies. Men—my brethren—I sold for sordid gold. The persons who then had acquired power over my soul, had represented these unfortunate beings as altogether void of human dignity, even as lower than the brute creation. A frightful occurrence opened my blinded eyes;—let me pass over it in silence at present; —I could not relate it calmly! Enough; from thenceforth I gave up my bloody trade; again I changed my name and residence.

"To forget and to enjoy were now more than ever the leading desires of my life. I tried my luck at the Faro-table, and fortune favoured me. One evening

I won a considerable sum from a young man. Gold glitttered around me and dazzled my eyes. But the gloomy despair which depicted itself in the countenance of my adversary when he left the room, brought me back to reflection. Perhaps he had a mother, who—I ran quickly after him. I wished to restore to him all that he had lost. I ran out into the dark street, calling out the name of the unfortunate—which I got to know by chance.—A flash and a sound, quite close to me, replied to my call. Portions of the unfortunate's brains were scattered at my feet. He had shot himself. He was the only son of a poor widow.

"I gave up play. I endeavoured to make amends for the evil to which I had been instrumental. I tried to mitigate the sufferings of that class of men, against whom I had committed such injustice and violence. But what is the beneficence of a gambler? It resembles the alms of a robber—the price of it is blood. It can offer no atonement to relieve his heart. This I felt. Then I turned to love; love I thought would help me to forget, to enjoy every thing. I then abandoned myself to love—no, sacred flame, forgive—it was not to you—but into the arms of voluptuousness that I abandoned my life.—I thought I loved; I was deceived. And I deceived,—I reeled from error to error. But as the spring retreated from the lips of Tantalus, thus enjoyment and peace also fled from me. During the space of fifteen years I had moments of joyful excitement, but not one hour, to which I could say: "stay!" not a day, which I could entreat to "return!" An infinite void, which nothing seemed able to fill up, a consuming thirst after something—I knew

not what—pervaded my soul. Meanwhile, during quieter hours, yes, and even those of wildest enjoyment an apparition presented itself before my mind, whose magical and heart-rending influence I cannot describe. All that was innocent and beautiful in my years of childhood, all that my early youth possessed of glowing life and joy, all the dreams that had ever visited me of heaven and of peace, seemed at this moment to melt together into one single image—and this image bore your features. Then an unspeakable longing, dark despair arose in my soul.

"Once more I tore myself away, I disengaged myself from a weak and intoxicated life. In a wildly extended and well ordered activity, I endeavoured to employ my life, which was a burden to me. I tried my chance in speculations of trade. I succeeded well, I grew rich—alas! I was still poor, and my soul was starving in the midst of plenty. About this time my business required me to perform a voyage to England. I heard Canning before the representatives of a noble people, during a debate on the abolition of the slave-trade, advocate the cause of liberty and humanity. I saw upon his forehead the glory of his immortal beauty For the first time I comprehended human dignity, human nobility, and the hideousness of my former conduct. Oh, Serena! I then mourned over my wasted days and perverted energies.—However I was a young man yet, could yet begin to—what?—a son cursed by his mother, what good could he begin, which might be blessed by heaven? I was cursed, this was the brand-mark, which scorched my head, the stone, which lay upon my heart and condemned it to eternal

darkness. What angel could roll away this stone. Oh, for a length of time my soul struggled in gloomy despair, for my mother was the only being, whom I feared. Often since my childhood, our souls had contended against each other, but she had gained the victory, she had slain mine. Slain is the word, slain by the curse! My heart's bitterness increased, but many years rolled on, love returned and prevailed over bitterness. The thought of a reconciliation with her was the only one which occupied my soul. This reconciliation was the first condition of a new, of a better life. Without it all the world was nothing to me. Hope I had none, I was obliged to venture, if I wished to live. So powerfully had these feelings seized me, that I wasted away physically. At the very sound of the word "mother," I could cry like a child.

"I returned. I saw my paternal house again, I had a glimpse of you, Serena! my youthful paradise, my heavenly picture, the reality of my longing, the brightening up of my whole character, all this I saw in you Wonder not that I stretched out my arms full of anxious longing, to draw you to my heart, wonder not when finding the arms of my mother closed against me I tried to conquer the bliss of life and of love through you, to win an angel for my tortured soul. During these moments a judgment hung over me; it was more than a question of life or death: on it depended the salvation of my soul or the eternal curse. A thundercloud rested upon my heart, upon my brain, I saw, I felt nothing distinctly. Then I tempted you, Serena, you resisted, and I believed to love you less. I was self-deceived; you had penetrated still deeper into my

soul, you had become one with its good genius. But this I did not feel then; my soul was in darkness. A moment of wild despair passed over me, and I was reconciled to my mother. My head reposed on her breast; I heard her bless me! Almighty God, abundant in mercy! wouldst thou counterbalance that moment with a hundred years of suffering, still would I lift up my hands, as now, and bless thee for that moment. Words cannot speak its power, it saved me for time and eternity."

"What more shall I tell you, Serena? Reconciled with my mother, loving her more ardently than ever, I still felt no peace in my heart after that first moment of heavenly bliss. You, you I wished to gain; you must become my wife. I would have peace on earth. I endeavoured to gain you in the way you yourself pointed out to me. I was refused. It was not wounded pride which for a time banished me from your house, but I retired within myself, and tried to give you up. In vain! an unutterable, irresistable power attracted me towards you. There was a bond between us, which seemed to me to be tied by God himself. You became mine. Oh, moment of rapture, of beatific bliss! You were mine, and now life rose within me; forgotten was all the past, all conciliated, all made bright; but—alas! only for a moment. Soon the furies rose again, the chastising demons of recollection within my soul, and your bestowal of yourself on me, Serena, your pure look became my upbraiding tormentors. I was not worthy of you, Serena; every day I learned to perceive it more and more; and doubly unworthy, since I wished to drag you down to a life, the darkness of

which you did not know. For in vain would have I tried to deceive myself; never shall I become tranquil, never will the blessedness of a pure heart dwell in my bosom. What has been done can never be undone. There are events in my life which I shall never forget, recollections which will follow me to the grave. There are dark traces, wild feelings in my soul, which even your angelic kindness, your brightness, will not be able t extinguish; remorse for the past will haunt me by you breast. Oh, Serena, your guiltless hand ought not to be laid in one polluted by so many crimes; you, the pure, the blessed, ought not to be united to him on whom the curse of human society rests. You should not sacrifice your youth, your beauty, your female virtue to a deceiver. This I have clearly felt during this latter period. I have clearly perceived that, if I abused your confidence, if I made you unhappy—and never will the companion of my days, and of my nights, become happy—I should then, indeed, be a cast away for ever! These thoughts for a long time troubled me. Hagar's crimes and your virtue, your victory over me and over her, have brought them to maturity. I love you now as holy, as truly, as I once loved you wildly and selfishly; and, therefore, have I unveiled my soul before you as before its eternal Creator. Not yet, Serena, not yet have vows before the altar united us; you can still separate yourself from me, and retire from the face of the world pure as you are in your own soul. Now you are free. Were you even to cast me off, no word of reproach, no complaint from my lips shall hurt you. And were you to turn from me, still I will honour and adore you, and

go my solitary, desolate way as best I can. You have spoken of friendship, of brother and sister. Forgive, if I should destroy this delusion of a pure, angelic heart. Between us it cannot be so. God created souls of unequal kind. In mine, flames are burning, which you do not know. Enough! I must either possess you or flee from you. But though I should be compelled to flee, I shall still carry your image in my bosom; it will model me into a better man. I am not alone. I have a mother; for her will I live; though without pleasure, without joy. But let me add one word more. I have hoped, Serena, you the only being whom I have sincerely loved, at your hand, against your angelic heart, I have often hoped to be able to begin a new life: I believed the nobler germs within my soul would shoot up under your fostering care;—and,—who can express all which the heart anticipates? and who can measure the power of love? Who set limits to the grace of the Almighty? With you, with you the way to reconciliation with God and a better life appeared open to me;—yes, with you! —Without you!—I have said enough; you now know all, Serena. Pronounce your sentence upon me; I bow my head before you, and will kiss your adored hand whether it extends to me death or life."

When the seraph Eloah (so says the noble bard of the Messiah) descended into hell by the side of the Redeemer, and there beheld the darkness and the misery, his clear sight faded into the mist of twilight. A feeling like that of Eloah had taken possession of Serena during Bruno's confessions. An indescribable weight had settled on her heart and checked its pulsa-

tion.—But the weight was removed; it vanished, just as the fresh wind chases away the fog; as the star shines in a dark night, as the morning dawn arises and illumines and brightens every thing, thus love, infinite, strong, powerful, sweet, and triumphant, rose in Serena's heart. Her soul within became lighter, freer, more fixed than ever; no doubt, no disquietude longer prevailed, and when Bruno had left off speaking, she inclined towards him with silent tears of love, and said, "I go with you, Bruno! oh, my friend, my husband, it must be so. Let us walk together on earth; one day may we kneel together before the throne of the All-merciful!

Silently Bruno pressed her to his breast.

Light broke in, softly and solemnly, voices arose, and enclosed the united pair with waves of melody It was the hymn sung in commemoration of Him who had risen from the dead, which echoed from the temple.

The Shades are now finished, and with them my business; gladly now would I restore the pen into Madam Werner's hand, but apparently, as if she were somewhat offended at my interruption, just about this time, viz. immediately after Hagar's death, a considerable gap follows in her correspondence, the real cause of which I cannot state, and to fill up which I am unable. You must, therefore make yourself contented, dear reader, and if you please, pass over to the

XXIV.

TWENTY-FOURTH LETTER.

FRANCISKA W. TO MARIA M.

Rosenvik, Nov. 23rd, 18—

Once more here. I am sitting alone; have sent off Björn to Ramm, that he might take a good observation, and first entertain *himself* and then *me*, by an account of the festivities following the wedding. I am not well, I am heavy and dull, look at the grey walls of Ramm think of Serena, and long for Björn's return. It is drawing towards evening; he ought to be here soon. I have not been very well ever since Serena's wedding-day; I was too excited by it. Bruno's uneasiness that day,—his almost wild questions to Serena during the morning,—"Dost thou love me;—wilt thou be mine, in joy and in sorrow, in time, and in eternity?"—What do they mean?—"I will answer thee this evening, come again this evening." said Serena, in her sweet, hearty manner. This pacified him. In the evening, when they were married, and received the blessing, he was quite changed; gratitude appeared to elevate and tranquillize his general character. I saw him embrace Serena, and weep, ah! why this disqietude, his pain, even in happiness, if his conscience had peace.

But am I not wrong in being so fearful and uneasy,

as I have seen so much of true love in Bruno, as I have observed in Serena a tenderness, faithfulness, and influence, which can ennoble and improve every thing. During the ceremony, there was a something manifested in her which appeared to elevate their union beyond the power of misfortuue. Upon her pure countenance a heavenly brightness rested, and those words,—"to love thee in joy and in sorrow,"—she pronounced with firmness so lovely, so exalted, that I involuntarily repeated them to Björn, as I stood there, leaning on his shoulder, supported by his faithful arm. What scenes now passed before my mind! They then affected me powerfully, too powerfully. I have been ill lately; I only hope that my little daughter will suffer no evil consequences from it. I love her already. How long Björn lingers away. The shades of the trees are already long, and the birds begin their evening song. Heaven grant that no misfortune may have happened at Ramm. That ancient dark house certainly looks like the abode of misfortune. Why was Serena to be taken there! Heaven be praised! I now see my Björn approaching, I will go down to the Bridge to meet him.

FRAGMENT OF OUR CONVERSATION OF YESTERDAY EVENING.

The 21st.

"Well, Björn, it is delightful all that you say of Serena, and that the Patriarchs are so contented. Now tell me, how is *ma chère mère?*"

"Very well in health, but not in good spirits."

"Did she not make a speech?"

"No, she was uncommonly quiet, but she appeared satisfied and thankful."

"And how did Bruno behave towards her?"

"As the most affectionate of sons. I have never seen Bruno in a more advantageous light."

"And towards Serena? How did he address her? Did he look at her much? How did he look at her? Was he much near her? Did he speak much to her? Was he very much concerned about her, very attentive to her?"

"Dear child, it would be quite as well, if you had a little less *flux de bouche*, for then one might have some chance of replying in order. What was the first question? Whether Bruno maintained his dignity as a married man towards his wife?"

"Ah, you are too self-willed; did he lie at her feet?"

"Not so, exactly; nor would it have been very proper in so large a company; but (so it appeared) on the whole, there was a kind understanding between them."

"Kind understanding! you certainly speak too poorly."

"I should not wonder if you were to wish me to thank heaven that they have not been quarrelling."

"You can't do that, for they have been quarrelling."

"Good Heaven, what about?"

"Heaven knows why." But he said: "My sweet Serena, my wife, let it be as you have said, it is best so."

"Well, Heaven be praised! How you can alarm me! And how did Bruno look, when he said: My wife?"

"How?—well, like a man—"

"Who worships his wife?"

"Well, yes, and like one who feels that he possesses in her all that life can give."

"Now you speak nicely, my Björn. And what about the feasting, Björn? Tell me now something about the dinner; describe to me all the dishes one after the other. Don't you remember? what a misery it is with you. Oh, you surely will be able to think of something. Let us see. What, for instance, what was the top dish, which is always the best?"

"I believe of young chickens."

"Young chickens? Impossible. Serena could not have had chickens for the first course, for then she must have had ham, ham for the roast joint. It is impossible, quite impossible." Bjorn laughed at my warmth, and after a few unsuccessful attempts, to ascertain a few particulars respecting the dinner, I was obliged to desist from it altogether, but I told Björn that he had been an unworthy dinner-guest, and

that I should inform Serena of it.

In order to divert me, Björn conjured up, I don't know how, a bottle of Bishop,* and a basket of choice preserved fruit, which he had brought with him from Ramm for me, against his wishes he said, but forced upon him by Serena.

I was quite in ecstasies at this present, fetched some glasses, and we sat down to drink healths. We drank the health of the young pair, we drank the health of *ma chère mère*, we drank each other's health, we drank the health of the little invisible, we had grown quite enthusiastic with the drinking of healths. We afterwards took our seats near the window. It was a beautiful evening, and the sky was quite clear over Ramm. A ray of the declining sun illumined the dark forest, and reminded me that I had seen this once before, and it had made me think of Serena! I looked at the strand, once so gloomy, now so light; I looked at Björn, who did not turn away his full-moon face at all from me; I grew warm about my heart, tears filled my eyes, and I said, pointing towards Ramm:

"It is bright there now, Björn; now there are happy hearts there."

"Not happier ones than here," said Björn, whilst drawing me tenderly to him, and holding me upon his knees. The sun's reflection now gradually died away, a shadow fell on the bank, and with a deep sigh I said:

"Ah, who knows how long they may remain happy there? Heaven knows, whether Bruno, that restless

* A mixture of wine, oranges, and sugar.

spirit, will ever attain peace!"

A melodious quivering moved through the atmosphere, and seemed to answer to my sigh. We shrank together, and listened at the open window. The organ of Ramm sounded, but not in a melancholy tone as formerly. Sounds like those of Handel's Hallelujah now issued forth. I leaned my head against Björn's. Thus we sat for a long time, in the warm evening of May, and listened. And later in the evening the organ sounded still more beautifully, more peacefully, as it seemed to me, and I was struck with the last words of the Neck:

"Then Neck wept no more, but seized again his harp and played and sang lovely until late in the night. For now he knew that he would become happy."

The 25th.

Jane Maria was yesterday at my house, and was cheerful and happy. I learned various things from her, and among others, some which rejoiced me. *Ma chère mère* is gradually growing more tranquil and gentle, goes often to church, and her proverbs are becoming more and more of a biblical description. Her heart appears to be more desirous than ever before of making others happy; she gives much to her poor, and among other things old linen, and prepares, according to the witty expression of an amiable young lady, her "heavenly-robe." Jane Maria told me of a little scene between Elsa and *ma chère mère*, which highly delighted her. *Ma chère mère* had during the last few days thrown down and broken a couple of china cups, which were standing on the table. She was vexed about it, (she

sometimes wants to help us as if she could see) and in the heat of the moment she exclaimed, "the deuce!" and reproached Elsa, because she had placed the thing in the wrong place. *Ma chère mère* was wrong, but Elsa, who formerly had always been protesting with some strong expressions against every injustice, now very quietly said, that it was her fault. A short time afterwards *ma chère mère* was sitting at her netting, and dropped her needle, it rolled under the sofa, and Elsa (who always finds a way of being on the spot, whenever she might be wanted) knelt down picked it up and returned it to her. *Ma chère mère* then gently laid her arms round her faithful servant, whilst with tender emotion she said: "My dear Elsa, what should I do, if I had not you?" Elsa laid her head on the knees of her mistress, whilst she embraced them, and a tear of love and of joy quietly rolled down her bony cheeks. Jean Jacques is absolute lord and ruler of Karlsfors, abolishes all old abuses, and is making many useful improvements. He is an active and very intelligent man, and speaks less, since he has more to do. He and Jane Maria become more and more popular in Karlsfors, whilst *ma chère mère* appears gradually to withdraw herself more and more from worldly avocations. Music now delights her more than ever, and once she has said, that she would like to die under the sound of Bruno's melodies.

Ma chère mère will prepare a grand *fete* next week in honour of the new married pair. Miss Hellevi Hausgiebel also intends giving them a little select *soiree.*

It is reported that "nature and art," are about enter-

ing on an alliance by the young Robert Stalmark and Adele von P. They have discovered each other's excellencies of the *soirees* given during the course of last winter by Miss Hausgiebel, have fallen in love with each other, and have thereby become far more amiable.

Counsellor Hök, who during the spring suffered very much from the liver complaint, has been compelled to keep to the house a long time, and neighbours and friends have been diligently visiting him. *Ma chère mère* has been twice every week with him. I also have spent an hour, now and then, with that interesting and venerable old man. Yesterday—so Jane Maria told me—he had been out again for the first time, and gone to Karlsfors. *Ma chère mère* and he performed their *Trall*, to which she kept herself by a line drawn across the saloon.

It is said that cousin Stellan intends taking a journey in the summer to Italy for the benefit of his health. (No doubt to escape from *ennui*, but I fear that it will accompany him.)

Peter and Ebba are expected to be here in the winter. I shall be glad to see them again; and I am anxious to see how the sisters-in-law will now agree together. Jane Maria expects a visit from several of her acquaintances from Stockholm, and prepares herself for a pleasant summer.

But whilst all around me are reviving, loving, dancing, visiting, etc., I perhaps hasten with rapid steps to my last hour; but I no longer think of it with uneasiness. I have arranged all my little matters, and prepared myself for every thing. I have written a letter

to my Björn, which, in case I should die, is to tell him how much I love him, and how happy he has made me during our short union. My poor, kind Björn! He is so uneasy at present, so concerned about me, that it is lamentable to see him. I see that he won't do for my physician. I am now obliged to have courage for us both. I will follow the example which a young woman, a friend of mine, once gave me. She was in the same situation, moreover in the country and surrounded by snow-fields, but retained, however, her good spirits by means of translating some of Shakspere's finest passages. I have no Shakspere at hand, but my ten daughters are in my mind instead. I will sit down and write an epistle

TO MY DAUGHTERS.

Above all things, my daughters, consider well, that you are reasonable beings. Be good, be true! for the rest—

As much as possible be kind towards every one; humane towards every living thing; be so without conceit; without affectation. Affectation is a wretched art, my daughters; despise it, as sure as you wish to acquire human dignity.

Do not attach too great importance to whatever natural gifts or talents you may possess. Contemplate life and nature, and be humble.

Be not too depressed if you are neglected by nature, crippled, ugly, etc. You may still approach the Most High.

Expect not too much from other people, my daugh-

ters! especially not from one another! The ground of dissatisfaction with one's self and others, is, "Demanding much, giving little."

If you feel straitened on earth, look up to heaven; not like turkey hens, but like believing children. If one of you fall, let her seek to rise. There is a hand ever stretched out for the erring, as well as for the unfortunate. Lay hold of it!

Ah! my daughters.—

Fourteen days later.

What has become of my daughters? They have changed into a son! And the young gentleman was so unpolite as to break off the epistle to his sisters. There he now lies in the cradle, under a green taffeta cover, majestically, red, and fat, and the great Bear is before the little Bear upon his knees; I had a great mind to keep him company in his idotary. But Bear, the father, finds it more proper that the son should wait on his mother. I am proud of my little boy, but (such is human nature) I had as surely expected a little girl—I almost miss it. But "postponement is not abandonment," was *ma chère mère's* comforting remark to me.

"What am I to do with my epistle, Björn? It won't be suitable for our young squire there!"

"I shall save it for our daughters; write another for the boy."

"Happy the wife, my dear Maria, who, like me, can give to her son this admonition, with all her heart and all her soul."

"Be like thy father!"

"No, Björn, you shall not see what I am writing.

You shall not take away my paper, you tyrant! I promise you to close the letter soon; I have only a few words more to add."

What kind people and neighbours! From all sides they have sent me flowers, jellies, and all manner of good things. Serena has nursed me like a sister the whole of the time. She is peaceful, kind, sympathising, in short—quite herself, and appears to have an affection towards Bruno too ardent and profound to be expressed in words. Maria, I intreat you to become a good mother to my little Björn. He is to be called Lars Peter. *Ma chère mère* will herself hold the boy at the baptism. She was here on the day of his birth, and laid a pretty present into his cradle. She talked to me about my past sufferings, and said cheerfully: "Well, it is with this, as with life:—

"All's well that ends well."

"No, Björn, my paper, my pen!—Ah, you naughty Björn—"

FINIS.

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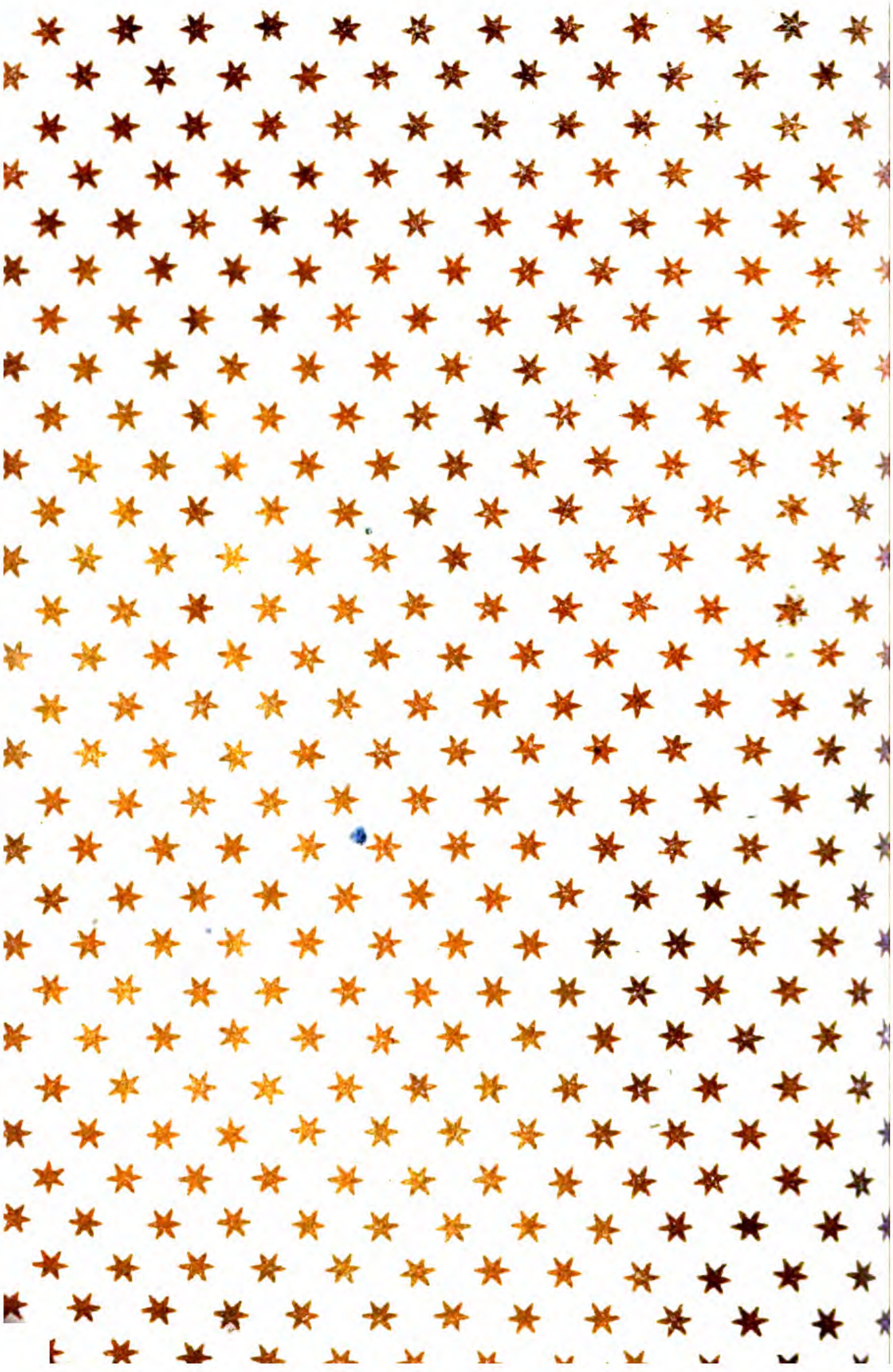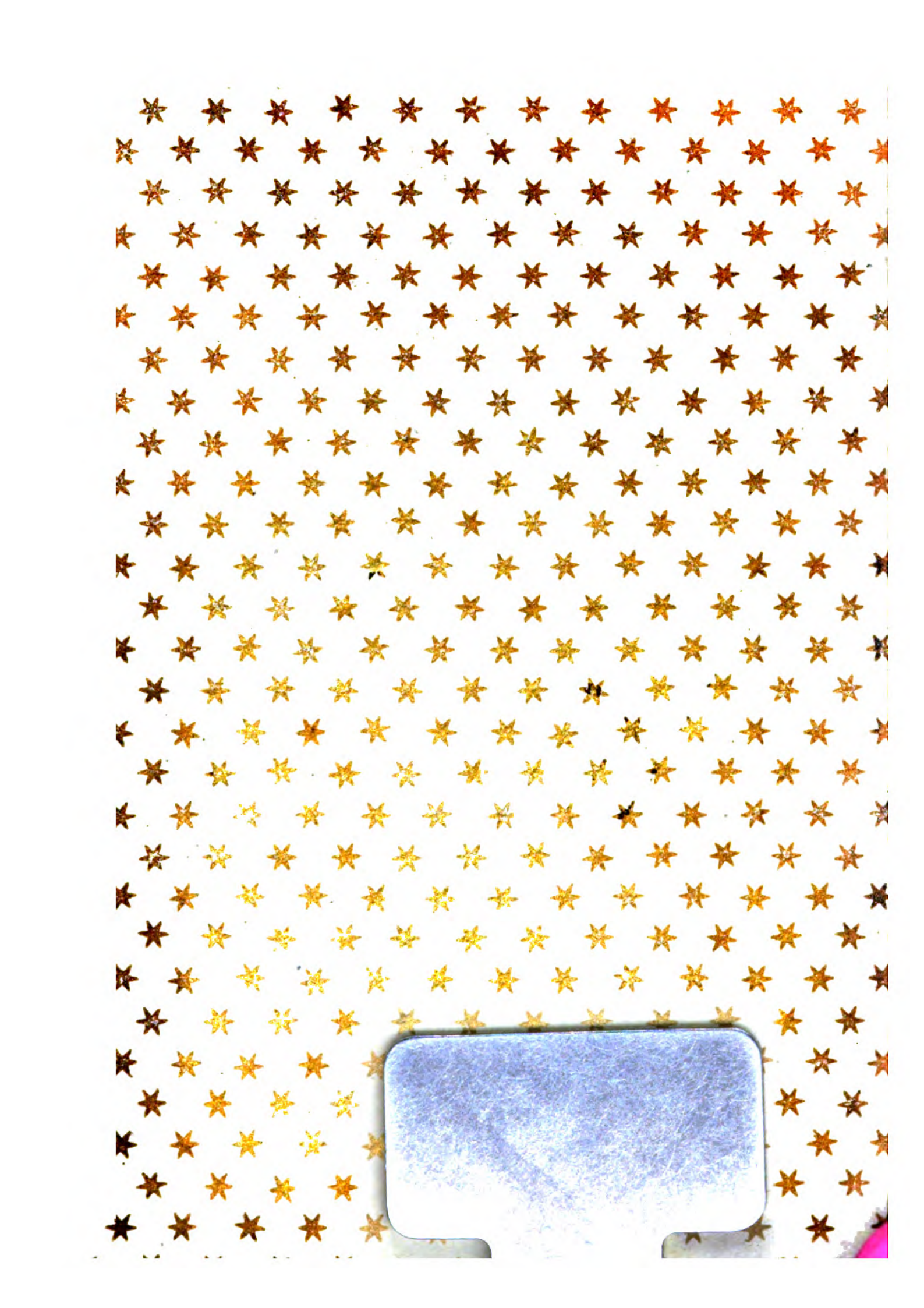
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