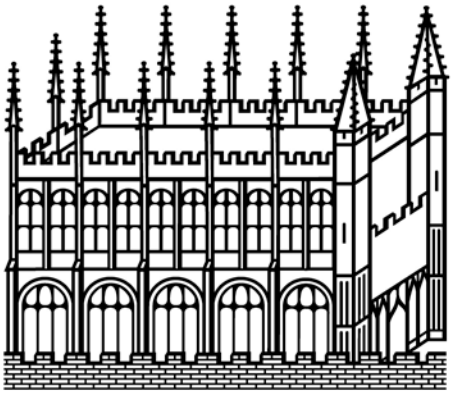

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The Second Wife

TRANSLATED BY

ANNIE WOOD

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THE SECOND WIFE.

From the German of E. Marlitt.

BY

ANNIE WOOD,

TRANSLATOR OF

"ELVIRA, LADY CASTERTON," "LOVE OR PRIDE," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE SECOND WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

"LIANE, look here! Raoul's wedding present, worth, I have no doubt, six thousand thalers!" cried the Countess Trachenberg, as she entered the room.

This apartment was on the ground-floor, and formed a portion of the wing of the fine old castle of Rudisdorf. The entire length on one side overlooked a broad sweeping terrace and a beautiful green

lawn, interspersed with gravel paths, and ornamented here and there with statues and groups of fine marble of elegant design. Beyond, lay a thicket or rather copse apparently as dense as a forest, from which an avenue of overhanging trees led straight to the French windows opening on to the terrace. In the distance could be seen, sparkling in the May sunshine, the bright falling waters of a fountain. The whole building, with its beautiful grounds and surroundings, was a masterpiece of old French architecture; but alas! how terribly neglected and fallen into decay.

The grand terrace was covered with weeds, and the broad lawn in front a mass of overgrown grass, while the paths were fast becoming as green as the grass itself. Everything had an air of years of neglect and seasons of want of care. In-

side and outside the castle, and in the stables, covered with dirt and cobwebs and every other abomination, were to be found some of the beautiful bas-reliefs and figures which had once ornamented the walls of the reception salons, but which were dragged first here and then there, till they finally found a hiding-place in the stalls and mangers of these dilapidated old out-houses.

The beautiful old furniture had been scattered to the four winds. Rich damask curtains, costly pictures, exquisite bijouterie and rare rococo ornaments had all fallen under the hammer long ago, and only the stately building itself had been left standing because it was entailed in the family, and could not be sold when the sequestration of all the Count Trachenberg's goods and chattels became necessary

This had happened four years ago now, and was, as the Countess always in her anger observed, a "disgraceful sign of our extravagant times, and a proof of degenerate taste which a just Heaven ought not to have allowed."

In the centre of the room was a large oak table at which sat a remarkably plain lady. Her head was large, and thatched with quantities of staring red hair; her features were ugly; even the soft white complexion was spoilt by a mass of large and deep set freckles.

Her solitary beauty was her hands—and as she moved them nimbly and gracefully, one could see their lovely shape and exquisite colouring. In her fingers she held a sprig of syringa, so beautifully fresh and dewy in appearance that one fancied the air of the room must be filled with its

sweetness and intoxicating perfume; but around the stem she was deftly twisting a fine bit of green tissue paper, and thus putting the finishing touches to a hand-made but exquisite little flower.

As the Countess entered the room the lady at the table started, and with a hasty half frightened air threw a white gauze handkerchief over the work and its materials, and tried to appear as if doing nothing.

"Oh, mamma, *you* here!" muttered to herself half aloud a girl at the other end of the room, with her back turned to the table. She had unbound her hair and let it hang in its rich glory, loose and unconfined down her back, and the beautiful golden mass hung heavy in rich shining clusters almost to the hem of her muslin dress. The Countess frowned as she caught sight of her daughter's flowing

locks, and standing still a moment she said, sternly pointing to the offending head,—

"What's the meaning of such untidiness?"

"I brought home a bad headache, mamma, and Ulrike undid my plaits for me," answered the young lady somewhat anxiously—adding, as she threw back her head wearily and shook the golden glory of her hair, "ah, it is indeed a heavy quantity!"

"Have you been out again in the heat of the sun, gathering weeds?" asked the Countess, with a severe and scornful expression. "When will this nonsense cease, I wonder!" she added, shrugging her shoulders and casting a reproachful look over the table.

On it lay a mass of plants, some blot-

ting paper, and a little flower press, for the young lady had just been arranging a few orchids, laying them between the sheets of paper delicately and carefully.

This great lady, the Countess Trachenberg, née Princess Latowiska, knew very well indeed that her eldest daughter, the Countess Ulrike, was in the habit of making beautiful flowers, and sending them to Berlin to be sold for a high price. The business was conducted by an old servant of the family, and no one had any idea that a Countess's crown surmounted the forehead of the much sought after and renowned flower artist.

The Countess knew also that her only son, the heir of Trachenberg, arranged these "weeds" with the help of his sister Juliane, and sent them to Russia where they were sold as a collection of rare

native plants; but a Princess of the house of Latowiska ought not to know such things, though the hand that so deftly shaped the flowers was caught in the act, or now and then a word was dropped which threw light on so much "weed" gathering. It was all nonsense, a mere fancy and fad which must be winked at and endured!

The Countess laid a hand on the girl's "heavy quantity" of golden hair, and with a gleam of motherly pride lighting her handsome but sharp-featured countenance—

"Raoul must see this," she said. "You silly girl, you have hidden your greatest beauty from him. I will never forgive you for being so awkward as to appear before him with that thick silk net covering your head. With such hair—"

"But it's red, mamma."

"Hold your tongue, that is red!" she answered quickly, inclining her head towards her daughter Ulrike. "God preserve me! *Two* red heads indeed! Why so much punishment?"

Countess Ulrike, who had drawn from her pocket some wool-work, and was busy over it, sat as still as a statue and said nothing; but she sighed. She knew her beautiful mother was right, yet it pained her to hear her plainness alluded to in such a tone.

Juliane glanced at her sister, and in a moment had the "red head" on her bosom, and began softly kissing the much offending pyramid of twists and plaits.

"Sentimental nonsense!" murmured the Countess, evidently displeased, and putting the packet she had brought in her hand down on the table, she took up a pair

of scissors, and snapping the fastening asunder, she soon unfolded from their wrappings a jewel-case and a piece of white silk inwoven with silver. With great eagerness the Countess opened the case, and when she saw the contents, drew her head back with a cry of involuntary admiration.

"Look! look! my simple little maiden will go to the altar for once attired as the daughter of the Princess Latowiska ought to have been," she said, slowly and distinctly, holding up a superb necklace of brilliants and emeralds to the light, and watching its dazzling sparks of colour playing in the sun. "Ah, yes! the Mainaus know how to do things properly. Your father was then a poor enough fellow. I ought to have thought of it, but——"

Ulrike started as if she had been shot,

and from the deep sunken, but clear blue eyes, there darted forth fiery glances of indignation, but she did not speak at once. She mechanically drew her wool again through the canvas before she said, quietly but firmly—

"The Trachenbergs possessed at the time you speak of an unfettered fortune of about half a million. They were always moderate in their tastes, and a homely, loving family, and my dear father was true to the virtues of his race till his fortieth year, when he married. . . . I have gone over the papers with the lawyers, in order to find out and understand how things have come to this pass, and I *know* that papa became poor from weakness and excessive generosity."

"Impertinent girl!" exclaimed the Countess, raising her hand as if to strike her

daughter, but evidently thinking better of her intention, she let fall her hand, and continued angrily: "You are always praising the Trachenbergs, and you are a true one too. *I* brought you into the world, and that is all you have from me. You can see that for yourself, if you will just walk into the portrait gallery and notice the likeness you bear to your ancestors—red-haired and monkey-faced from beginning to end. I have never ceased to weep over and—and curse the day, nearly thirty years ago now, when my first-born baby, a little monster, but a true Trachenberg, was laid in my arms."

"Mamma!" cried Liane, shocked.

"Hush! hush, child," softly and half smiling, interrupted the elder sister, as folding up her work she rose from her seat, but her lips trembled, and her cheeks were pale.

Both sisters were of the same height, a little taller, perhaps, than the ordinary height, but with round, elegant, and beautifully developed figures and exquisitely formed hands and feet.

The Countess laid the jewels on the table and pushed the case far from her, as Ulrike stooped for a moment to examine the costly silk destined for the bridal dress of her younger sister. It was a rare and rich fabric of the old brocade style that our grandmothers wore, and so heavy and stiff, that, as Ulrike lifted the parcel from the table, the silk slipped from the paper and fell crackling and rustling to the ground.

With a horrified glance at the rumpled silver material, Liane turned to the window and stood so earnestly gazing out into the garden, one would think she must be

counting the glittering drops which fell from the far distant fountain.

"What a stately bride you will make, my sweet sister. How I wish papa could see you!" exclaimed Ulrike, presently.

"Raoul insults us!" murmured Liane proudly.

"He insults us?" repeated the Countess, whose sharp ears had caught the angry half loud whisper. "Are you daft? and will you be good enough to enlighten me as to how it is he has managed to insult the Trachenbergs?"

Liane pointed to the faded, worn, old arm-chair, near which the rich, pompous-looking material had fallen, and said, trying to hide her fear of her angry mother—

"Can you imagine a greater contrast, mamma? Don't you think that—that—it

shows want of tact, with our poverty; and besides, it seems like condescension?"

The Countess folded her hands in despair.

"How is it that I—*I* can have two daughters who measure the nobility of their birth by a draper's yard measure? Condescension! and you, a Trachenberg, say it! Why," she continued, growing excited, and raising her voice, "why, you stoop in marrying a Mainau—know that. Must I really relate to you again that your mother is descended in direct line from the old Polish kings, and that your father's ancestors were masters of the soil long before the crusades? And if Raoul were to lay at your feet all the treasures of the world, he could not barter from you the higher rank of your birth. He has not a dozen generations to boast of compared with yours. I can assure you it—it is half a

mésalliance that you are going to make; and if it were not for the humiliating thought of having two unmarried daughters in the house, I should have refused his proposals. He knows it, too, or he would not take you as he is doing, only having seen you once."

The young girl stood still during this tirade, with her hands hanging listless by her side, and with part of her beautiful hair falling over her cheek. But the elder sister, though she said nothing, walked quickly and uneasily up and down the long room.

At this moment the door leading to the corridor was opened, and the old nurse, who was now the cook, put her head inside the room and said apologetically,—

"I beg pardon, but the post boy is outside, and he says he can wait no longer."

"Ah, yes! I had quite forgotten him; tell him to wait till I come, and give him a cup of coffee in the kitchen, Lena."

The old woman withdrew, and the Countess, taking a bill from her pocket said,

"The man must have his beer money, and this is a bill sent through the post for forty thalers which we must pay. The wine merchant is impertinent enough to desire his bill for the champagne I ordered for the wedding, to be attended to at once; so pay it," she added sharply, handing the bill to Ulrike.

A sudden flush dyed the plain face of her daughter, as she hastily and in an anxious tone cried, "Ordered champagne, mamma! good heavens! and for such a sum too!"

The Countess Trachenberg showed her

glittering but false white teeth, and replied scornfully,—

"Did you intend offering the gentlemen at the wedding breakfast your home-made currant wine? Besides, I had no idea, to confess the truth, that we should be obliged to pay through the post so quickly." She shrugged her shoulders and added, "we must make the best of it now, and pay."

Silently Ulrike opened her secretaire and drew from it two rolls of notes.

"Here is the whole money for house-keeping," she said shortly and firmly. "It is only thirty-five thalers. On it we have to live. It is not only in Rheims that we are refused credit, but the neighbourhood around here will not sell us a pound of meat unless we pay ready money for it. Of that you cannot be in ignorance."

"No, unfortunately I cannot, for my

amiable daughter, Ulrike, is everlastingly harping on the subject."

"I am obliged to do so, mamma, simply because you so often forget—and I wonder at it too—that our rent roll has dwindled down from nearly four thousand pounds a year to barely one hundred."

The Countess Trachenberg placed her hands over her ears, and ran to the glass door, away from her daughter's words, as if she had been a scolded spoilt child. She turned the handle quickly and angrily to leave the room, but hesitated, and slamming it to again, she said quietly but maliciously—

"Barely a hundred a year, and I ask once for all what is done with it? Our food is mere peasant's food. Lena gives us day after day rice and eggs, and such like things only. You put a mere homœopathic

dose of tea into the teapot, and I am obliged to wear this dress," (and she touched the black silk she had on)—"this dress you were good enough to present me as a Christmas present, day after day. Everything that in my dead-alive life, I have been accustomed to look upon as necessaries—French books—perfumes—bonbons—have all long ago disappeared, and I say now, what I have often thought, that you *must* have more money than you choose to tell me of."

"Ulrike never tells a falsehood, mamma," exclaimed Liane warmly.

"Well, I can't send the bill back to the post unpaid," continued the Countess unmoved. "So you may as well make an end of this comedy, and bring out the necessary sum."

"Can I coin money out of the earth?—

The wine *must* go back," uttered Ulrike, beside herself.

Her mother uttered a loud cry, and throwing herself on the sofa went off into hysterics.

Silently, and with a bitter expression of pain on her face, Ulrike stood near her mother, and watched her spasms of temper.

"Poor Magnus!" whispered Liane, going to the door which led into the next room, and then drawing closer to her sister. "He is in there, and will be horrified at this noise. Mamma, please try to be quiet. Magnus *ought* not to see you like this. What will he think?" she said entreatingly, and bending over her mother.

This distressing climax which the daughters had feared for some time past was not to be ended by a few coaxing words; but the younger girl feared no longer. Al-

though her voice was entreating, as she begged her mother to calm herself, there was a certain amount of involuntary superiority, almost contempt, in her manner, as she took the hand nearest to her, and began chafing it. But she spoke to deaf ears; the cries broke forth louder than before.

At this moment a door opened at the far end of the salon. Liane rushed across the room, and trying to prevent the outsider from entering, earnestly said,

"Don't come in, Magnus—stay away."

But her arms were put gently aside, and the efforts she made to bar his entrance had very little effect on the tall boyish-looking young man standing on the sill.

"Let me come, dear Famulus," he said kindly, as his face lit up with a smile. "I have heard it all, and I bring a remedy for the evil."

But for a moment he stood still in the doorway, and gazed at the lady lying on the sofa sobbing; then going over to her, his voice trembled as he said, "You can have the wine. Look; here is the money, dear mother, five hundred thalers;" and he showed her the bank notes in his hand.

Ulrike looked up anxiously and questioningly in his face—as the deep colour flew into her own—but he did not notice either her look or heightened colour.

He flung the notes on the sofa by his mother, and taking a book from under his arm he said in a thick voice, as he handed it to Liane,—

"There, darling, there it is!"

The Countess began to get calmer. She pressed her hands over her eyes, and after a little she darted a sharp, quick, somewhat

haughty glance at the book in her son's hand.

"Don't be too proud, you dear little Famulus," he continued; "our manuscript has returned to us in pomp and splendour. It has survived the glance of all powerful science, has come victorious through the fiery ordeal of the critics. Ah, Liane! see, read what the publishers——"

"Hush, Magnus, hush!" interrupted Liane, hurriedly and imperiously.

The Countess sat up.

"What is that about a book?" she asked, not a trace of suffering or weakness in the sharp, commanding voice, or in the movement of the outstretched hand. With a sudden unexpected movement Ulrike snatched the book from her brother's grasp, and holding it tight to her bosom, answered her mother's question with—

"It is a work on fossil plants; Magnus wrote it, and Liane illustrated it."

"Give it to me; I want to see it."

With a hesitating look at her brother, Ulrike handed her the volume, but Liane, turning pale to the lips, clenched her tapering fingers, and hid her face in her hands, for from a child she had always dreaded the fierce, calm expression now settled on her mother's face.

"'Fossil Plants, by Magnus von Trachenberg,'" read the Countess aloud. She opened the fly leaf, and casting a glance at it, she looked up at her son with a cold, ironical smile playing around her inward drawn lips as she asked, "And where is the name of the illustrator?"

"Liane refused to be known," he answered calmly.

"Ah! so there is in one of your heads a

slight glimmering of reason, a small notion of decency!" and with a scornful sound in her throat, meant for laughter, she whirled the heavy book out of her hand with such violence, that it flew through the window of the glass door, and fell on the stone pavement of the terrace.

"That's the place for such rubbish," she cried, pointing to the book with its crumpled leaves and the beautiful coloured plates all torn and disfigured. "Oh, what a miserable mother I am to have given birth to such a son! Too cowardly to be a soldier, too senseless to be a diplomat, the descendant of the noble Prince Latowiska, the last Count of Trachenberg, prefers being under the orders of a publisher, and accepts—wages."

Liane threw her arms round her brother's neck to help him keep in check the

indignation that was fast welling up at these bitter words.

"Mamma, how can you have the heart to speak in such a way to Magnus?" cried the girl, passionately. "You call him a coward! You know that seven years ago he risked his own life to save me when I fell into the lake. You know why he would not be a soldier—simply because he does not think bloodshed is right; and you say that he is not clever enough for a diplomat—he who has the deepest and profoundest thoughts, and who never wearies of work. You know he hates the finesse and double-dealing necessary for diplomacy, and will not steep his noble soul in the littleness unavoidable in such a career. I am as proud as you of our own noble birth, our grand old ancestors, but I cannot understand why the nobleman *only* with the sword or with

the diplomat's portfolio, can honourably fulfil his——"

"And I ask," broke in Ulrike, who had picked up the destroyed book, and was tenderly folding and smoothing the torn and crumpled leaves, "I ask, which is the more honourable for the name of Trachenberg, to take a high stand among literary men, or to be found in the ranks of those who never pay their debts?"

"Oh! you—you, the bane of my existence!" hissed the Countess from between her teeth, as she paced up and down the room with impatient and angry steps; then, suddenly stopping in front of her daughter, she cried, "one blessing is, I need not have you to live with me any longer; you are long ago of age, and long passed the time when a child is obliged by law to remain in her mother's home. I have

borne with you long enough, and now I freely give you leave—nay, I wish it—that you take yourself off. Pay visits, do as you will, go through the whole world, only free me of your presence and leave my house in peace."

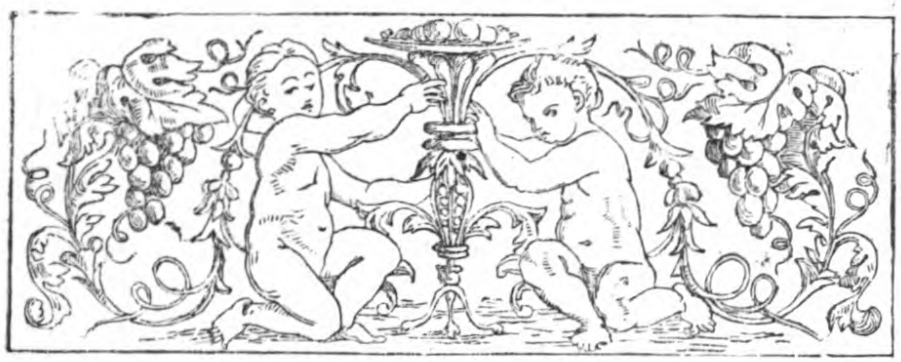
Count Magnus seized the hand that was raised, he feared, to strike his sister, and drawing near both the girls—

"Mother," he said quietly and firmly, but with the agitation of his heart visible in his trembling voice and heightened colour, "mother, you oblige me to assert my right and authority in this castle for the first time. *I* am master here—for it belongs to me, as you know—and *I*, I alone, have the right to say who shall live here and who shall not. You cannot take Ulrike's home from her, for she remains with *me*."

The Countess turned her back on her son as he uttered these manly words, and walked to the door by which she had entered. Her son was so indisputably in the right, that even she had not a word to say in opposition to his declared intention. She laid her hand on the creaking door-handle, and then turning towards her children, again said, in a menacing and commanding manner to her eldest daughter, pointing to the notes on the sofa—

"You dare to use a farthing of that Judas money for housekeeping purposes! I will die of hunger rather than touch the food bought with it. As to the wine, I will arrange that. Thank God I have still a few bits of silver left from the general wreck; and if I am obliged to melt the last silver goblet from which my forefathers drank, the pain for its loss will be

fully compensated in the knowledge that I feasted my guests in a regal fashion, and not from the proceeds of a workman's wages. But you will be punished," she added, looking full at Liane in the face, "you will be punished, my dear, that you, too, choose to oppose your mother. Once in your husband's place, once in Schönwerth, and Raoul, to say nothing of his heartless old uncle, will soon knock all that sentimental learned stuff out of your head." And opening the door, she went out and slammed it with such force that every window shook, and the sound reverberated all throughout the castle to the furthermost corridor.



CHAPTER II.

ON the left bank of a large spreading lake stood a little fishing village, composed of a few straggling cottages, so lowly built, that the straw roofs were no higher than the lowest branches of the forest of linden trees, which half buried the little hamlet under it wide leafy foliage. But we must not expect to see robust strong figures of fishermen moving about, for there were

none, and but for the beautiful park through which a glimpse of a large town was visible, one might be tempted to dream of pure country life and peace in this spot, till one of the doors opened and showed a peep of its costly interior.

Perhaps if the German Prince had known that the exquisite Petit Trianon would have eventually cost the Queen of France her head, he would not have built this little village; but he was no prophet, and so for nearly a hundred years this charming imitation of the French Trianon had stood a perfectly simple Idyl from without, but inside replete with every luxury money could buy. As the foot left the pebbly shore of the lake, it stepped at once on thick costly carpet; rich silk and damask stuffs covered the furniture and walls, which latter were partly hidden be-

hind massive gilded mirrors. Even outside, this luxury coquetted with the poor and simple appearance of the cottages, for no one could eat rare and dainty fruits on white deal tables, nor rest from some amusing game on a hard wooden bank or chair.

Near by was the palace of the reigning family, and it was a time-honoured custom for the heir to the ducal throne on his eighth birthday to plant a fresh young linden tree in the grove, which had now become an historical wonder, and for generations had been called the "royal lindens."

It was the month of May, and to-day the young hereditary prince Frederic was to perform the ceremony, as his forefathers had done before him, and place a young plant in the ground with his own hands,

and thus add one more to the number of those far-famed royal lindens.

Of course it was a grand affair, and all the children of the nobles in the neighbourhood had been invited to attend the ceremony, and watch how a little prince of eight years old could handle a spade.

The capital town was far too loyal not to turn out in a body to witness this time-honoured act, and by their presence do honour to their prince and sovereign. The forest was crowded with young and old, every available spot from whence the ceremony could be seen was occupied, and all the pathways were filled to overflowing, whilst the air resounded with the laughter of childhood and the hum of many voices.

This special day there was a larger crowd than usual; for it was the first time since

the death of her husband, the sovereign of the land, that the young duchess was to lay aside her deep mourning, and appear again in public.

There she stands, very close to the spot where the little tree has been planted by her son, the hereditary prince. Not for a moment would any one doubt that she is the highest born lady present.

She is dressed in pure white, her only ornament a beautiful wild rose fastened at her waist. On her head she has no hat; but the red silk lining of her open parasol throws a rosy tint over a face many call beautiful, with its fine straight nose, and well-turned, short, but rather colourless upper lip. Her features are not quite regular, and the thick, lustrous black hair, and slight shadows under the eyes, contrasted with the beautifully clear but pale

complexion, make one involuntarily think of a Spanish Creole, although it is known she has not a drop of the blood of the dark race running in her veins.

There she stands, watching the upward flight of a heron, with as much earnestness as the children, who break out into a glad yell of delight as the bird disappears in the air.

"Why don't you hurrah, Gabriel?" angrily inquired a little fellow of a bigger one near him, whose simple white linen suit seemed rather out of place amongst the more elegantly dressed company.

The big boy did not reply; instead, he cast his eyes downwards, and looked at the grass.

This was more than the little one could bear, and he continued excitedly—

"Are you not ashamed of yourself, you

stupid? Shout hurrah this minute! We will cheer too," commanded the little fellow, imperiously.

The boy in the white linen suit turned his face sadly away, and did not answer, and was about to leave his place, when the little one suddenly raised a switch in his hand, and struck him across the cheek.

At this unexpected scene the other children rushed off. Even the young hereditary prince and his brother left him, not knowing what to say, and for a few moments the passionate, angry child stood quite alone, a handsome, lovely boy, richly clad in a dark green velvet suit—a picture of strength, and health, and determination.

This sudden outburst of temper terrified his governess, who, pale and trembling, hurried towards him; but ere she reached

the spot where he stood, the duchess had taken the naughty little hand in hers, and said—

"That was very wrong, Leo;" but her voice was soft and gentle, and no reproof rung in its accents.

The boy snatched his hand away from the soft grasp of the white fingers, and, with an angry glare at the retreating figure of the big lad he had just struck, he said, hastily—

"It served him right! Papa can't bear him; he says he is a coward, and afraid of his own voice."

"Why, what a strong-headed little one you are! Tell me, what is the reason that Gabriel *must* obey you?" asked the duchess, laughing.

"Because—because I choose he shall!" and he threw back his curls with a defiant

air, and turning his back on the company, as coolly as if no royalty were present, he ran forward, and disappeared behind one of the cottages. Darting here and there under the old trees, and peeping round several trunks, he at last espied the lad he had so thoughtlessly struck, leaning against a heavy branch, with his face turned away from sight.

He was in pain, for every now and then he dipped his handkerchief in the cool water, and laid it against his left cheek, while his lips quivered and his whole frame trembled, evidently not so much with the physical suffering—though that was severe enough—as with the wound to his spirit from the humiliation he had just undergone.

He was a handsome, well-grown lad of thirteen, rather delicate in appearance, and

with a melancholy expression over his refined features that gave the impression that, young as he was, he had known sorrow. Leo passed and re-passed him several times, cracking his switch through the air as loud as he could.

"Does it hurt very much?" he asked at last, stopping for a moment the noise he was making, and stamping his foot in some impatience.

Gabriel had just removed the handkerchief to dip it in the water, thus leaving his cheek exposed, and an ugly fiery red mark was very distinctly seen as the result of the blow.

"Not very much, but it burns a little."

The voice was gentle and kind, and without a tinge of anger; and in a second the impetuous Leo had flung the switch on the grass, and with both his arms

tight round Gabriel's neck, he sobbed out—

"I am a bad, wicked boy; take my cane, Gabriel, and beat me now."

"Never mind; there, it's well now," whispered the big boy consolingly to the younger one, as he gently unfastened the hands clasped round his neck. "There, it's over, and we'll think no more about it."

As little Leo moved away, the Duchess, who had followed and witnessed the scene, caught the child in her arms, and covered his beautiful face with kisses.

"Raoul!" she murmured under her breath, hugging the little fellow closer to her bosom, and kissing him again and again.

"How stupid!" said the youngster, struggling to free himself from her embrace. "Raoul is my papa's name."

The clear pale cheeks of the royal lady flushed scarlet; she started, and letting the boy go, she gave a hasty, frightened glance around to assure herself that the ladies of her court were not within earshot; then, resuming her wonted haughty demeanour as the colour faded from her face, and left it whiter than usual, she strolled back and joined her guests.

CHAPTER III.

ON the high road between the little fishing village and the town, one of the court carriages came dashing along, containing a gentleman on the back seat, with a box of croquet implements in front of him. Just as the horses turned into the forest, a pedestrian appeared from under the shadow of the thickly-hanging trees.

"Halloa, Mainau, there you are at last!"

called out the gentleman in the carriage, as he caught sight of him. Then, ordering the coachman to stop, he continued—

"It's too bad of you; there have I been waiting anxiously for you, and you are coolly and quietly going the longest way! The linden must be planted long ago. Do you remember the proud tradition of your family, that it was a Mainau who held the tree once long ago while Friedrich XXI. shovelled in the earth?"

"Then henceforth my picture will have to be covered with a mourning veil."

The gentleman seated in the carriage lightly opened the door, and motioned his companion to enter.

"Invite the devil there, Rüdiger—inside?" answered the other in pretended indignation. "No. Thank God! I have no gout. Drive on in proud consciousness

of your mission. Have you been to fetch the forgotten croquet mallets? Enviable honour!"

The gentleman sprang to the ground, closed the door of the carriage, told the coachman to drive on, and then turned with his friend into the little footpath, which was a shorter cut through the brushwood up to the village.

There was a great contrast between these two men as they walked side by side. The one called Rüdiger was short and stout, whilst his companion was so very tall that he was constantly obliged to stoop his head out of the way of the overhanging branches. He was a striking-looking man, every movement and gesture betokening an intense passionate nature, which—although it could be as soft and tender as a woman—could, when

provoked, be a very demon of anger and fiery wrath. The little fellow who had just now given way to such a fit of passion over there by the lake, resembled him feature by feature almost to an absurd point.

"Let us walk then," said Herr von Rüdiger; "unfortunately we can't arrive too late for dinner to-day! H-m—puddings and sweets of all kinds! But I shall escape reproof, and have nothing to fear, as I bring *you* with me; *à propos* you have been away for a couple of days, your boy Leo was telling the Duchess?"

"I was away—yes."

This laconic reply was too provoking for the little stout man, who had it on his tongue to inquire "Where?" But just at that moment the two reached an open space, and could see before them a por-

tion of the lake and the whole of the tiny village. Under the trees several tables were laid, and in one of the little houses the palace cook, in white cap, was standing before the fire intent on his duty, while hither and thither hurried the royal servants preparing the dinner, and evidently anxious to have it ready soon.

The excitement Leo's burst of childish passion had created was past and forgotten. All were amusing themselves and playing with the children—graceful maids of honour, elegant young officers, old gentlemen with stiff legs and stiffer backs, joined in the romp; and even the stout asthmatical old governor of the town, with a string of titles attached to his name too long for daily use, managed to waddle through the game, and clap his hands as well as the children.

The young Duchess was standing so near to the lake that it appeared as if the water touched her feet. Her graceful figure was reflected in the clear shining water, and two or three of the young ladies had crowned her with a garland of the wild vine and flowers, the tendrils of which hung in light wavy beauty over her lovely throat and bosom.

"Ophelia!" cried Baron Mainau, half aloud, with a gesture of pathetic devotion, and with an indescribable sarcasm inflected in his voice.

"Now really, Mainau, that's too much; you are only acting," said Herr von Rüdiger, turning round quickly. "That's all very well before the ladies who worship your every look; but to me—bah!" and putting his hands in the pockets of his light overcoat he shrugged his shoulders,

and began laughingly, "There was once a very beautiful but very poor princess, who loved a handsome dashing young officer, and was loved in return by him. The princess had promised to put aside her illustrious title, and accept the simpler one of Baroness." He paused a moment and glanced at his companion, but he did not notice that the handsome tall fellow by his side had turned pale, and was biting his lips so hard that it was a wonder the blood did not spring forth. "But," he continued carelessly, "one day the cousin of this lovely princess, the reigning Duke, came and begged the honour of her lily white hand. The beautiful black eyes shed torrents of tears, but pride won the victory over love, and the poor beautiful princess allowed the ducal crown to surmount her dark and wondrously thick hair. Put your

hand on your heart, Mainau," he interrupted himself with lightly, "who would believe it? At least only sentimental folk."

Mainau did not lay his hand on his heart; but instead, with a quick sudden movement he jerked a straggling twig from its branch, which had been audacious enough to brush his cheek, and flung it angrily away.

"How your heart must beat to-day," continued Rüdiger, after a somewhat lengthy pause, and evidently not inclined to quit the interesting topic he had started. "Indeed it must; the widow's mourning is laid aside, the high-born lady's pride is surely satisfied, for she is now and will remain, the mother of the reigning Duke. Then too *you* are a free man again. Really everything chimes in well, and if you fol-

low my advice—now who would believe it —we know that to-day——"

"Ah! you seem to know everything, you rogue!" said Baron Mainau, with pretended admiration.

As he spoke, they reached the place where the carriage was waiting, not very far from the gay throng in the village, and near to the water-side.

The two walked on in silence for a while, when presently Mainau darted forward and, seizing by the collar of his coat a venturesome young scapegrace who had climbed one of the overhanging branches, and was in a most dangerous position, he shook him several times like a wet poodle dog, and then placing him on his feet and clapping the dust off his gloved hand, he said with a laugh,

"It wouldn't be amiss, my boy, if you

were to have a washing, but I very much doubt if you can swim."

"Pfui! how dirty the fellow is," said Rüdiger shuddering.

"Indeed he is, but I may as well assure you that I don't mind a thing of that kind; it's done in a moment, almost before one knows it one's self. But as you were saying, my dear fellow, we have only a few yards to go, and then we shall have arrived at the supremely happy moment when our aristocratic manners will cause such a slip or mistake not to be thought of. Don't you agree?"

Rüdiger turned angrily away, but after a moment he hastened his steps, saying quickly,

"Your courageous deed has been seen from the place of honour. Look, Mainau! go on, the Duchess is moving; and—there too comes your wild youngster."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before Leo, who had caught sight of the fresh arrivals walking towards the group of merrymakers, scampered up, and noisily and affectionately welcomed his father. Baron Mainau stooped his tall head and caressed his little son for a moment, then taking him by the hand, he walked on to the "Maienfest," as the spot was called where the party were assembled.

The Duchess had just risen from her seat as the gentlemen appeared in sight, and was slowly wending her way in their direction, followed by several of the ladies and gentlemen of her Court.

She had also the easy gait and inimitably graceful movements of the Creole; and the white flowing drapery she had put on to-day, in contrast to the heavy widow's mourning she had been wearing for eighteen

months, enhanced her beauty and transformed her appearance as strikingly and completely as the change of the chrysalis into a light airy butterfly. Besides, her season of mourning was over, every claim and outward form of respect to her late husband had been duly recognized and adhered to, and now, at last, happiness might come to her, and the sorrows of her past could be shut away for ever, and joy as she felt at this moment surely be hers henceforth through life.

Her voice was a little tremulous as she said softly, when the gentlemen were close to her,—

"You startled me, Baron Mainau, just now by that brave act of yours, and—besides—you come rather late."

He held his hat in his right hand, and bowed low at her kindly words, still keep-

ing fast hold of his little son's hand as he answered,

"I would say with my friend, Rüdiger, that I am very unhappy; but your Highness will not believe it, when I have explained *why* I come so late."

The Duchess raised her eyes, and looked questioningly at the face before her. It was perhaps a trifle paler than usual, but the glance which met hers made it quail, it seemed so full of repressed triumph and quiet assurance. Unwittingly she laid her hand on her heart, and the white little wild rose, snapped from off its fastening, fell to the ground, unnoticed, at the feet of the handsome man.

He waited, bareheaded, for her to speak, with the sun shining full on his curly hair and on the face whose "every look" the ladies worshipped; but the royal lady was

silent and apparently too anxious to hear what was to follow to speak. As she did not answer, respectfully inclining his head he continued, after a moment:

"I was in Rudisdorf, at my Aunt Trachenberg's, and allow me to inform Your Highness that I have engaged myself to her daughter Juliane, Countess of Trachenberg."

Those standing around were struck dumb at this bold announcement. Who would dare break the silence which followed by so much as a breath or a glance at the young duchess, who was trying to press her deadly pale lips together?

At last her niece, the young Princess Helene, laughed carelessly and merrily, and holding up her pretty finger, said—

"What an idea, Baron Mainau, to have a wife whose name is Juliane!—Juliane!

Bah! A great grandmother in her spectacles! Juliane!"

He laughed with her; and then the Duchess also smiled with her ashy pale lips, and said a few words of congratulation, with the dignity and calmness of a sovereign who is interested in the happiness of one of her subjects. Then turning to a group of girls, two or three of whom had woven the garland on her head, she said, quietly—

"I am sorry, young ladies, to lay aside the tasteful ornament you made me; but the crown presses my forehead. I will retire for a while to remove the flowers. We will meet at dinner."

And waving back by her hand the ladies who would have followed her, she entered one of the little houses, and closed the door behind her.

Lily white her face was at all times, and often her beautiful eyes darted those fiery glances which made one think of the passionate nature of the south. She had even just now smiled and nodded, and retired, like a fairy, from the gaze of those around her.

But now she was alone—alone for half an hour. No one could see how she flung herself down in wild agony, and for a brief moment gave way to the intensity of a passion as strong and ungovernable as the waves of a raging sea. No one could see her tear the drooping flowers from her hair, and clench her slender fingers in the silken curtains till the nails met in the palm of her hand.

Ah, yes! For one despairing moment, the deep agony of her crushed, ruined hopes *must* have its sway--the bitterness

of disappointment must be sobbed out; then—then she will gather herself up, force her lips to smile, hide away her anguish in the depth of her proud heart, and go forth with a serene face to meet again outside the men and women, whom she will compel to believe that the boiling blood now surging within her flows as calmly and undisturbed as it did before the cruel unexpected announcement made a short half-hour ago.

When the Duchess disappeared to lay aside her floral crown, Baron Mainau, still holding his little boy by the hand, stood by the water's side, and amused himself by watching the games going on under the lindens.

Here and there one and another of the lordly company came up to him and offered a few words of congratulation; but

no one stayed by him longer than was necessary.

Presently up came Herr von Rüdiger, and going close to his side, whispered, as if he had not yet recovered the shock the whole court had received—

"What a revenge! And such a public one too! Why, my dear fellow, I could say with Marguerite, 'Heinrich, you make me shiver!' God bless me! Did ever any one see another, for the sake of his wounded pride, slay his victim in such a refined, cruel, and unforgiving way as you have just done? You are rash—foolhardy——"

"Because I didn't in a formal manner at a proper time declare, 'Now *I* will not?' Do you believe that I would marry her now?"

The little man gave his friend a glance of horrified astonishment. How was it that

this Mainau, usually so refined and perfect in manner, could be thus harsh, even, one might say, brutal?

"My one comfort is," he said, after a pause, somewhat reproachfully, "that you will suffer as much yourself for thus giving way to your ungovernable pride."

"I suppose you will allow that of that I am my own judge?"

"Of course—by Jove! of course. But —but now—what next?"

"What next?" and Mainau laughed. "Why, the wedding, Rüdiger!"

"Do you mean it? You have never stayed at Rudisdorf that I know of. Is uspect the name of the bride was suddenly improvised from the 'Almanach de Gotha?'"

"Guess, my friend."

"H'm! She must be of good old family;

but—but Rudisdorf is, as all the world knows, not inhabited now. What is she like?"

"My good fellow, she is a may-pole, about twenty years of age, has red hair and downcast eyes—more I don't know myself; her mirror could tell you better. Bah! what does it matter? I don't want a beautiful or a rich wife; she must be virtuous and simple-minded—just—just because I won't have my name associated with anything else. You know of old my ideas of marriage."

The same cruelly-proud smile that had made the Duchess's cheeks turn pale not an hour ago, again crept round the corners of his mouth. Perhaps it was the remembrance of his "public revenge."

"There is nothing else for me to do," he went on, after a short pause, with apparent

carelessness. "My uncle has discharged Leo's tutor on the spot, because he read in bed and wore creaky boots; and his nurse has the unfortunate habit of squinting, and can never pass a dish without picking at it—so I can't bear her. I want to be off to the East—ergo, I require a wife at home. In six weeks I am going to marry. Will you be best man?"

Herr von Rüdiger stood first on one foot and then on the other, before he blurted out, half-laughing, half-angrily—

"I suppose I must, for none of those there"—and he inclined his head towards a group of young fellows standing some distance off—"will help you in the matter; of that you may be quite sure."

"Gabriel," said Leo, shortly after, leaving his father's side, and joining the lad in the white linen suit; "Gabriel, the new

mamma is a may-pole, papa says, and has red hair, just like the scullery maid. I tell you I—I will hit her with my switch if she really comes."

CHAPTER IV.

SINCE the scene in the long room at Castle Rudisdorf, five weeks had slipped by, and the preparations for the wedding were fast progressing towards completion.

Six short years ago the occurrence of such an event would have transformed the ancient castle into a veritable beehive, in every corner of which workmen would have been busy ornamenting and arranging the grand

old rooms and grounds for the great and happy occasion. Six years ago the bridegroom would have found his bride surrounded by pompous servants, fairy-like scenes, and illumined halls. Now he would have to fetch her from a deserted palace, a garden overgrown with weeds, broken statues, cobwebbed terraces, and rooms in which the sun shone on empty niches, bare walls, and uncovered floors.

It was well that the fine gentlemen in helmet or armour, or whose red hair was surmounted by plumes, and half hidden between the marble slabs, were obliged to remain on the walls of the grand old picture gallery; it was well that the ladies in formal Stuart caps and starched frills could not cast their proud glances downstairs into the garden salon, for had they done so, the clasped sword or

the stiff little rose would most certainly have dropped out of their lily-white hands in horror at what they saw, for there knelt Ulrike, "a true Trachenberg," as her mother was always saying, the descendant of all these noble knights and ladies, covering the torn old chairs and couches with bright-coloured chintz, and driving in the nails with her own pretty little hands. The old servant Lena was rubbing away as hard as her strength would permit to give a polish to the oaken table.

Thanks to the much-needed literary "wages" a few elegant chairs were scattered here and there, baskets of fresh lovely flowers brightened the windows, the long bare white walls were tastefully ornamented with creeping ivy and clematis, and the carpetless floor was partly covered with groups of plants and evergreens.

A breath of life and happiness seemed to have wafted itself into the desolate room, and it was well, for here it was that the wedding breakfast would be eaten on the morrow.

And where was the bride, and what part was she taking in all these arrangements prepared in her honour? By the side of her much-loved brother she was out in the woods and fields hunting for rare plants, and with trowel in hand, and book under arm, chatting with him as if she were the last one in the world who could possibly be interested in the affairs at home. And her brother forgot, in the wonders of the vegetable creation around him, that his dear little Famulus, with whom he had divided his every thought for so many years, was soon to part from him. Hard Latin names, rich observa-

tions, and critical remarks on the work they both loved so well, fell constantly from her lips; but not once did she mention the name of her far distant lover. It was truly a strange and loveless marriage.

Liane had often heard the Mainaus mentioned during her childhood and girlhood; she knew that a Latowiska had once taken to his hearth a bride from the house of Mainau; but she had never personally had any intercourse with this distant connection of her family.

From time to time she knew vaguely that letters had come from Schönwerth, the family castle of the Mainaus, and that her mother had formally answered them. And then one day she had been called into her mother's room, and been informed in a few cold words by the Countess that her

hand had been promised in marriage to her distant cousin, and all unuttered objections and opposition were cut short by the remark that her mother had been engaged in the same formal way before her, and that no other declaration was necessary.

Then shortly after, without any notice, the lover appeared one day, and Liane had hardly time to bathe her face and twist her hair into a net to hide the havoc the wind had caused, before she was ordered into her mother's presence to receive her future husband.

What happened there she hardly knew herself. A tall, handsome man came forward to meet her, with the sun streaming in at the window behind him, so that she was obliged to lower her eyes.

He spoke gravely but kindly, and took the hand—which, not so much at the com-

mand of her mother as at Ulrike's earnest entreaty—she carelessly laid in his.

And then he drove away again, and the engagement was duly and formally announced to the world.

All necessary correspondence had been carried on between the bridegroom-elect and the Countess, and only once had Liane received a few lines from her lover—lines so cold, and polite, and formal, that they did not make her even blush with the unusual excitement of receiving a letter, and, once read, had remained unnoticed by the side of the costly wedding gift in her drawer.

It was all such a "cold stiff affair," and Liane appeared so utterly indifferent as to how it was arranged, and was so docile to all the commands of her mother, that the Countess was pleased, and a few days

after the stormy scene in the salon, again sat at table with her children, and even now and then gave her youngest daughter a friendly word. She little knew that the girl was half breaking her heart at the thought of the parting before her—not even the brother and sister had an idea that she felt so deeply leaving her home.

At last the bridal day arrived—a cool, rather cloudy July morning. After days of tropical heat, a soft rain dripped through the thick overhanging foliage of the trees, and out on the thirsty greensward it fell in refreshing showers. It pattered against the windows, it washed the dust from the silent statues, and gathered itself together in the pathways, and rolled in little streams down the untrodden walks.

From every bush and branch in the garden the birds sang merrily and joy-

ously, and old Lena in her kitchen was glad that the rain would descend on the crown of the bride.

One single carriage rolled into the court-yard, and that was the hired coach from the station.

Two gentlemen alighted, and slowly mounted the castle steps.

One of them, Baron Mainau, was punctual to the moment, and had arrived with his friend Rüdiger the conventional half hour before the ceremony.

"Well, this is a wedding!" murmured old Lena to herself with a sigh, as she turned from the window, after watching the arrival of the gentlemen.

The house-door opened wide, and the Countess came forward to greet her guests. The rain-drops fell on her violet velvet train, and glittered on the ornament she

wore in her hair. With a smile and an amiable softness of voice, she stretched out her hands from under the exquisite lace of her cuffs, and welcomed the bridegroom in a few well-chosen words. Who would have thought to see her now that she could be at times a perfect fury in temper! She led him into her own little boudoir, where he presented to her his friend and groomsman, Herr von Rüdiger.

But for the garland old Lena had hung over the door, and for the costly toilette of the Countess, no one would have imagined, from the unconcerned chatter of the lady and the indifferent, quiet manner of the handsome fellow in plain black standing looking out of the window at the pouring rain, that such an important act as the marriage of a daughter of the house was about to be solemnized.

Every sound in the castle seemed hushed; not a merry voice nor merrier laugh was to be heard on staircase or along corridor; none of the excitement and movement and flitting to and fro which are generally attendant on the last moments before the bride leaves her home for the altar, disturbed the stillness here; all was silent and quiet as the grave, save for the dull, monotonous pattering of the falling rain against the windows and on the stone terrace beneath. Herr von Rüdiger knew that this marriage was a mere contract of convenience; that no love, not even friendship, had caused its consummation, and he was too much a man of the world to be astonished at the peculiar and cold reception the bridegroom and he had received; but the silence and stillness of the ruined old place, the emptiness of the hall and room

in which he sat of all furniture, the non-appearance of any other guests, all seemed to him "too much of a good thing," and he involuntarily drew in his breath and felt a shiver creep over him as at last the curtain was drawn back and the huge door at the end of the room was slowly opened. Followed by Ulrike, and leaning on the arm of her brother, the bride entered.

She was dressed in a simple white muslin robe, with a veil thrown over her head, which hung to the bottom of her dress behind, and covered her face to the bosom in front. It was closed to the throat, and not a sign of ornament of any kind was to be seen but a simple sprig of myrtle fastened here and there in the skirt and at the waistband, and a wreath of the same on her head. Not a glimpse of the rich fabric, the costly silver brocade, was visible,

and no village maiden could have appeared before her husband in a simpler or more modest attire.

She came forward with her eyes downcast, and noticed neither the cold, formal greeting with which Baron Mainau met her, nor the satirical yet compassionate expression which crept into his face, but she started and trembled as her mother uttered an exclamation—

"What's the meaning of this? How dare you come dressed so? Are you mad?" were the first words the angry mother had to say to her child as she caught sight of her on entering the room, and she so far forgot the presence of her guests as to raise her hand to push her daughter out of the room. "Go back to your room at once, and dress yourself properly," she stammered out; but Baron Mainau took the

raised hand, and without any words made her understand that she had better let the matter rest as it was.

Old Lena had slipped behind the curtain to see the tall, handsome gentleman take her darling, beautiful little Countess in his arms and kiss her. But the "stick," the "heartless wretch," did nothing of the kind. With a few kindly words he took the hand of the bride, touched it for a second with his lips, and then presented her with a bouquet.

"It's very beautiful, but we have flowers ourselves," grumbled old Lena to herself, as she cast her eyes over the quantity of flowers she had scattered along the corridor, and went back to her own quarters.

A few minutes later and the simple white muslin was gracefully moving over monthly roses and bright-coloured geraniums, fol-

lowed by the Countess, whose heavy velvet train swept old Lena's work of love and affection into one single mass.

The disfigured stony apostles who surrounded the altar and chancel of Rudisdorf Church had often looked down on a pale, joyless bride, had now and then heard the terrible "yes" uttered by bearded lips in a passionless, indifferent voice, for it had never been the habit in the family to consult the daughters of the house as to the disposal of their own hand, or to allow any "sentimental love" to guide them in the choice of a husband; but never before had they silently witnessed such a cold, heartless ceremony as that of to-day. Not once did the tall, elegant man care to look at the bride by his side as he led her to her place at the altar; only when the binding words had been said, as the girl

knelt for a moment after he had risen, he glanced his eyes half wonderingly at the long tresses of her beautiful golden hair which had slipped from off her shoulder, and lay heavy and shining at his feet on the stone floor of the chancel.

Then after the ceremony was ended, what a hurry he seemed in to get away!

The pastor had had so much to say, and the next train would be due very soon. The rain, which had been the only music heard in the church, had suddenly ceased; the sun was peeping forth and shining on the thousands of drops on branch and bush, making them all glitter like diamonds.

The breakfast was taken standing; but the two sisters and brother did not touch a morsel. They stood aside by themselves, whispering their last wishes and thoughts;

and it seemed to Magnus, as he held his dear Famulus by the hand, that it was only now, at the moment of parting, that he fully realized the loss she would be to him.

"Juliane, may I beg you to get ready? It is time!" said Baron Mainau, breaking in upon them as they talked, and holding his jewelled watch before the bride's face.

She started and looked up for a second, as if hardly able to understand his words.

It was the first time she had heard her name from his mouth. His voice was not familiar to her; and although the words were friendly, yet how cold, and strange, and unnatural her name sounded in full. Not even her severe, uncaressing mother had ever called her Juliane.

Silently she slightly inclined her head,

then quitting her brother's hand, she left the room, accompanied by Ulrike.

The two hurried along the corridor, and said nothing till they reached their own apartment.

"Liane, he is a horror!" cried Ulrike, as she slammed the door behind them, and throwing herself on the sofa, the usually self-contained elder sister burst into a torrent of tears.

"Oh, hush, hush, darling! Don't break my heart! Did you expect him different? Not I," answered Liane, with a bitter smile flitting over her white face.

As she spoke, she carefully untwisted the myrtle-wreath from her hair, and laid it in the little cabinet, in which she had always kept all her treasures from a child upwards.

In a very few moments the simple bridal

toilette was laid aside, and exchanged for the grey travelling dress; her bonnet was put on, a veil tied over her face, and her gloves fastened.

"And now for my last visit to papa," she said, in a half-choked voice, as she took up her parasol.

"A little longer——" began Ulrike.

"Don't keep me, dearest. I dare not make Baron Mainau wait," earnestly answered Liane, as, putting her arms around her sister's waist, she led her out of the room.

The portrait gallery was a long room just over the garden salon, and looked out on the terrace.

The windows were rarely opened; so that when the sisters entered, it was dark, and the air heavy for want of ventilation. They hurried along the whole length of

the gallery, not stopping to look at anything till they reached the other end, where the daylight just glimmered on the dusty marble floor, and made the deserted place look more weird-like and ghostly than if it had been in total darkness.

Ulrike moved back one of the cumbersome shutters, and opened the window opposite the portrait of a noble-looking elderly man. All the rest of the portraits of the mailed men, with their fiery red beards and determined faces, remained in obscurity, but through this open window the sun shone full on the face of a man in which the fiery red hair and beard of the Trachenberg family had changed into white, and lay thick and shining on head and lip.

"Dear, dear papa!" whispered Liane, lifting her hands towards him, and her face

softening as she gazed long and lovingly at the picture.

She had been his darling, his pet, his "little one," whose head had often rested on his breast, and even in the death agony of his last moments he had been able to move his hand in a loving caress for her.

By his side hung Liane's grandmother, a stately, hard-hearted lady, who looked down at her grandchild—the girl who had done as her mother had bidden her, and married the man chosen for her without her consent, who was breaking her heart silently and uncomplainingly at leaving the old castle—with cold blue eyes, and held out her hand as if to say—

"A conventional marriage is best; no need for love, but obey your lord and master to all eternity."

And it seemed as if a whisper ran

through the gallery—as if every ear had caught the words along the vista of portraits, and that every lip were replying, "Amen, amen;" but it was only the wind sighing through the dim room, nothing else.

The sisters went to the open window, and stood for a little, looking out over the distant wood and forest. They had still much to say to each other, still many words of farewell to utter; but both were silent, because each thought it best and kindest to spare the other as much sorrow as possible.

As they stood there, saying nothing, the sound of voices smote their ears, and the girls peeped out cautiously to see who was below.

On the terrace just beneath the window, carelessly gazing at the scenery before him, Baron Mainau was lounging against one of

the pillars, looking, too, in his rough tweed travelling costume, quite a different being to the formal, proud, and ceremonious bridegroom of half an hour ago. He had lit a cigar, and was lightly blowing the smoke upwards, so that it entered the picture gallery by the open window, and filled the air with its fragrant scent.

"I didn't say beauty; besides, what a thousand different ideas there are on that point!" Herr von Rüdiger's clear voice was saying; and although they could not see him, they could hear every word he uttered distinctly. "This little girl has neither a Roman nor a Greek nose. But, bah! that's nothing; it's a dear, sweet face, and indescribably loving."

Baron Mainau shrugged his shoulders.

"H'm! perhaps so," he said, indifferently. "A quiet, modest girl, very shy,

and with violet blue eyes, à la Lavallière—but what do I know about it?" he broke off suddenly, and pointing to the landscape before him, added, "Just look here, Rüdiger: the fellow who arranged this park must have been an artist! Could anything be more perfect than the view of that bit down there through those wonderful trees?"

"Bother! You know I have no taste for such things. Now a beautiful pair of eyes, or beautiful hair—but, good heavens! Mainau, what a glorious tress of hair that was which fell at your feet just now at the altar! By Jove! it was exquisite!"

"A somewhat paler tint of the Trachenberg family colour," lightly answered Mainau. "What nonsense! As if I cared! It's all the rage just now, this Titian-coloured hair; all the heroines in the novels who are so deeply loved have this

hair. Mere matter of taste, my dear fellow. I shouldn't care for it in a mistress, but in my wife it will do!"

He quietly knocked the ashes from his cigar, and went on smoking.

Instinctively Liane drew her veil over her face as the words were uttered, not daring to show, even to her elder sister, who was frowning down angrily at the young man by the pillar, the hot colour which shame and indignation had called to her cheek.

Countess Trachenberg came forward at this moment, and leaving the arm of the pastor, with whom she had been conversing, said, insinuatingly, to Baron Mainau—

"Dear Raoul, a word with you," and laying her hand on his arm, she walked up and down for several minutes, earnestly talking; then suddenly stopping in her promenade, said—

"Apropos, you will pardon a mother's interest in her child, and not judge me indiscreet if I touch on painful ground, and ask you how much pin-money you intend allowing Liane?"

The sisters upstairs at their window could see the amused expression on his face at this "mother's interest" as he answered—

"Exactly the same as my first wife had, four hundred and fifty pounds a-year."

The Countess looked pleased.

"She may be content with that. I, as a young wife, had not as much," with a sigh, which made the young man smile again sarcastically.

"And Raoul, you will be kind to her, won't you?" she added, with affected feeling.

"What do you mean by that, aunt?" he asked, in a quick, sharp voice, looking at her suspiciously. "Do you think I have so little tact, and am such a heartless fellow, as not to be kind to the one who bears my name? But if you ask for more—ah! then that is not the bargain. I want a mother for my child, and a mistress in my house during my absence—and I shall be away a great deal. All this you knew, and you promised me that Juliane was a soft, womanly girl, well fitted for the post. *Love* I cannot give her, and I am not so stupid as to expect one ray of it from her."

With a bitter cry Ulrike clasped her sister to her heart and held her tight, as if she would try and give her the love thus heartlessly denied her from the man who

had just sworn at the altar to be a true husband to her.

"Good gracious, Raoul, don't get warm over it," replied the Countess, quickly. "You have quite misunderstood what I meant. Who was thinking of such sentimental nonsense as love? Not I. You ought to know me better than to imagine such a thing. I was simply begging you to be indulgent with her—a little patient, that was all. You saw to-day for yourself how far she can carry her 'soft womanliness,' by the turn she played us with her toilette."

"Never mind that, aunt. On that head Juliane can do as she likes, and when she wants help she——"

"Then here am I. Good Heavens! it's dreadful to have to say it, but Magnus is such a muff; a man so entirely without

energy, a mere cipher; and what I dislike in him his sisters uphold and admire; but when Liane is away from the influence of Ulrike, the plague of my life, you will see you will be able to twist her round your little finger."

"Mamma is very rash in her judgment," said Liane, bitterly, as the steps of the talkers carried them away beyond hearing. "She never gave herself any trouble to find out what my disposition is—we were always left to strangers. And *I* have no right to fling a stone at such selfishness as that we heard down there just now," she went on quickly, drawing in her breath as if it hurt her to speak. "Did I consult my heart when I put my hand in his that first time I saw him? I only said 'yes' out of fear of mamma."

"And from love to me and Magnus,"

interrupted Ulrike, sadly, as if all joy and gladness had departed from her for ever. "We did all we could to persuade you to the step. We wanted to get you away from the wretchedness of our home, and we didn't doubt for a moment but that love would be given you wherever you went, and now—now—you are coldly denied it. It is fearful, and you so young."

"So young? Why, Ulrike, next month I shall be twenty-one. We have had much bitterness and sorrow together, dear, for that reason I am not such a child in the experience of life as our mother has just made believe I am. Let me go away to-day without breaking your heart over it, darling. I don't want Baron Mainau's love—I *will not* have it; and I am quite proud enough never to give him a doubt on the subject. My school experience taught me

courage, and the *Baroness* Mainau enters Schönwerth to-day in reality as the governess of Leo, so I have a noble work before me, and may, perhaps, do some good; more I don't want for the future, so let us say good-bye here, Ulrike, and you stay by papa whilst I leave the house."

She threw her arms round her sister's neck, passionately kissed her, then without once turning, she flew through the long picture-gallery and opened a door at the other end. There she found, as she hoped she would, her brother Magnus, who was standing at the window staring at the carriage drawn up at the door beneath, and at his mother and the three gentlemen talking below. It was well that the Countess could not see how her son, the "muff," "the man with no energy," pressed his loved sister to his heart, and wept bitterly

at the parting; how she would have complained at such a "senseless display of feeling," and lamented that her children should have so little "self-control." Leaving her brother, Liane drew her veil down over her face, and then slowly descended the staircase, and joined the group on the doorstep.

"God and my blessing go with you, my dear child," said the Countess, with a theatrical gesture, laying her hand for a moment over her daughter's bent head, then raising her veil, she touched the girl's forehead with her lips. A few moments and the carriage was rolling along the high road to the next railway station.

CHAPTER V.

FOUR hours' journey brought the travellers to the little capital where the new life in its richness and grandeur was to begin for the young wife.

A beautiful carriage, exquisitely mounted, and lined with cream-coloured satin, just fitted for a young pretty bride, awaited them at the station ; and as Liane stepped in and ensconced herself in the corner, her

soft grey dress looked like a veil thrown over her to hide the beauty the young fairy prince had stolen to carry off to his far-away castle.

Herr von Rüdiger jumped in after her, whilst Baron Mainau took his seat on the box, and seizing the reins dashed off at a great pace.

Schönwerth lay about an hour's drive from the little town. Part of the road skirted the park, and here and there a peep of the lake was seen from under the trees and the little fishing village; in the distance a flock of wild pigeons was the only live thing visible for many miles around. Presently the road wound into the forest, and for some time they drove along under the thick overhanging branches of the birch trees; but they had not gone very far, when from out of a side pathway, not

fifty yards before them, a lady on horseback suddenly appeared.

"Mainau—the Duchess!" cried Herr von Rüdiger, starting up terrified; but ere the words were out of his mouth the accomplished charioteer had already checked his horses' pace from a quick swinging trot to a slow walk.

A second lady sprang from behind the thicket, and following the Duchess, who looked more like the angel of death flying over a battle field, than a royal lady taking a pleasure ride in the park with a young and bright companion at her side.

Her handsome face was ashy pale—so pale that not the slightest tinge of colour was visible even in her lips; her long blue-black hair hung in thick plaits down her back, and her habit was as dark as the

skin of the beautiful black thoroughbred that carried her.

"*Good* morning, Baron Mainau!" she cried, with a stately movement of the hand in answer to his deep bow. But what a mine of scorn lay in the four words uttered quickly in her deep and full-toned, but womanly voice!

Did she irritate the fiery creature under her, or did something suddenly frighten him, that he should make that wild plunge close to the side of the slowly-moving carriage?

"Sit still, Herr von Rüdiger!" she commanded, as the impetuous little man was about to open the door and spring down. But although she spoke to him, it was not at his face that her passionate earnest gaze was directed.

For a moment she looked searchingly,

almost fixedly, at the veiled face of the young wife in the carriage; the next she spurred her horse into a gallop, and was soon far away.

"This little grey nun has truly the Trachenberg red head, Your Highness," laughed the girl, as she dashed off by the side of the Duchess.

The noise of the wheels prevented Baron Mainau from hearing the reply to this remark; but he had turned his head, and could see very well the gesture which accompanied the answer, and he smiled.

Liane saw for the first time this smile of conscious triumph—of certain inward satisfaction—saw for the first time his eyes dart angry gleams of unspoken wrath. Not once had he cared to turn his head and glance at the young girl sitting in the

corner, or in any way given her a sign that he thought of her.

It seemed as if the few spoken words of the pale proud Duchess had cast a spell over the grey horses, for as she disappeared they started forward at a pace that was almost dangerous in its rapidity, and the skilled hands which held the reins made no effort to check them.

Liane watched every movement of the whip and fingers, and as much of the face as she could see, and then she knew intuitively why it was that the husband of only four hours standing could not give her the love of his heart. Presently they emerged from the forest, and entered the wood adjoining Schönwerth, through grounds which were far more beautiful than those belonging to the royal family.

Enclosing them around was a fine beauti-

ful wood paling, through which could be seen in the distance a dotting of roofs of all sizes, just visible above the green trees. Then the trellised palisading gave place to a row of thick mimosa bushes, which, broken in one spot, presented to view a bright-coloured Hindu temple with a gilded dome, on the broad marble steps of which lazily lapped the clear blue water of a large fish-pond, and on this side of the lake stood a fine powerful bull, who majestically turned his head in the direction of the carriage as soon as he heard it approach.

Under an avenue of beautiful green trees the carriage rolled on for a while—over a smooth gravel drive, and then at last pulled up at the grand entrance to Schönwerth Castle.

Several footmen in state livery were standing on the steps with the steward at

their head, who, dressed in black coat and white waistcoat, bowed low as the carriage stopped, and came forward to open the door.

Liane had once in her life been an unseen witness of the coming home of a young bride, and of how the newly-made husband had joyously lifted her from her seat, and, after folding her in his arms for a moment, had led her over the threshold of her new home with her hand in his, whilst whispering loving hopeful words in her ear. She thought of this as Baron Mainau, after throwing the reins to the groom, quietly descended from his perch, and with cool indifferent manner offered his hand to his bride to assist her to alight, and then, without a word of welcome, or a kindly glance in her face, he placed her hand under his arm, led the new mistress of

his ancestral castle across the threshold of her new home.

To Liane the hall appeared more like the dome of a church, its dimensions were so spacious and high, and the light from the broad stained window on the staircase, so soft and subdued. As she gazed around she saw this same soft light reflected in various colours—now casting a purple glow over the figure of a beautiful statue of the Virgin, and now lighting with a rosy tint a Holy Family group, and then casting a greenish shadow from some other figure on the deep red porphyry wall in the distance; even the broad staircase itself, with its soft elastic carpet, received the same purple and rosy hues that are so familiar to the eye in grand old abbeys, and which, whilst subduing the glare of day from the ancient building, was sufficiently clear and bright

to let Liane see the severe curves and stiff, straight outlines of the tasteless architecture of the Bysantine period, in which the castle was built.

Mainau had hardly entered, when he stood suddenly still, and his eyes flamed with anger, as he looked straight at the face of his house-steward. The man dared not meet his master's glance, but kept his eyes fixed on the floor, as he said, half aloud, in answer to the unspoken rebuke—

"I dared not, gracious sir. Your uncle, the Herr Baron, would not allow us to put the orange-trees here, and even the garlands we hung up he ordered us to take down, on account of the late Baroness Mainau."

The young baron's face turned scarlet. The footmen slipped one by one away from

the hall into the grounds outside, all but the unfortunate steward, who seemed to shrink into a mere nothing before the dreaded outburst of violent passion that he feared would follow.

But this time the anger he shrank from encountering was kept within bounds, and only exhibited in a withering, sarcastic curl of the mouth, as, turning to his young wife, he said shortly, though his voice shook with suppressed indignation—

"I am distressed to a degree, Juliane, at this mode of receiving you. In Rudisdorf, flowers were strewn before your path; but here you enter an unornamented house. I beg to apologise for my uncle—the late Baroness Mainau was his daughter."

He gave her no time to answer. Nodding to his friend Rüdiger, and waving to the officious house-steward to lead the way,

with a hasty, impatient step he conducted his wife up the broad staircase, and through a suite of elegantly furnished drawing-rooms, glittering with glass and countless mirrors.

Again and again as they passed along, Liane caught the reflection of herself and the tall handsome man on whose arm she leant, and she sighed as she thought of the wide gulf between them, in spite of the priestly blessing and rite which had joined them together as one!

The steward flung the door of a long corridor wide open, and bowed low as they passed in.

The air was hot and close in here; thick carpet covered the floors, the intense heat of the July sun shone through curtainless windows, and made the place so oppressive that Liane's head turned giddy, and she

felt sick and faint. At the other end of the corridor a huge fire was burning, and near it was the open door of a large salon. This also was thickly carpeted, with windows closed, and every aperture for fresh air carefully fastened over with some woollen material; and in this close atmosphere, rendered almost unbearable to an outsider by the fumes of a burning essence, sat an old man, the Hofmarschall and high-born Baron von Mainau, chilly and trembling with cold. His feet were in warm slippers, and he had drawn them as near the stove as he could; his whole condition seemed helpless, though the upper part of his body had a decidedly youthful and elegant appearance. He had on a black coat, and above the snowy neck-cloth rose a small, refined, clever face, the habitual paleness of which was deepened, and ren-

dered more sickly-looking from the unwholesome, over-heated atmosphere in which he lived.

"Allow me, my dear uncle, to present my young wife to you," said Mainau, nonchalantly, as Liane threw back her veil and gracefully courtesied to the older man.

The little brown eyes of the Hofmarschall gazed sharply in her face for a moment or two, ere he replied, slowly and deliberately, without moving his glance from the blushing countenance—

"You know very well, my dear Raoul, that it is impossible for me to acknowledge the young lady as your wife until *our* Church has solemnized the ceremony."

"By no means, uncle!" replied Mainau. "I had no idea until this moment that your bigotry had arrived at such an exceedingly fine point; otherwise I should

most certainly have not failed to respect it."

"Ta-ta, don't get angry! Such things are matters of religion, and better not discussed," answered the Hofmarschall, conciliatingly; and it was easy to see that the sickly man with the refined face was slightly nervous at the heightened tone of his nephew.

"For the nonce I will call you Countess Trachenberg—a grand old name," he added, turning to Liane, and holding out his hand to her.

But she hesitated ere touching the small, white, and rather cramped fingers thus held out to her; for an angry indignation rose within her that the Protestant ceremony she had that morning gone through should be so coolly and contemptuously counted as nothing.

She knew that, as the Mainaus were Catholics, the nuptial rites were to be repeated again that same day in the Catholic Church; but she rebelled against the utter ignoring of the vows taken in the Church of which she was a member, and to her, stranger as she was to this bigoted old man, it seemed like an open insult.

The Hofmarschall pretended not to notice her refusal of his hand, and, instead, took hold of one of the plaited tresses of her hair, which was still hanging down her neck, and said gallantly—

"Ah, this is beautiful! Your grand illustrious name need never be mentioned when such as this, its true sign, can be seen. It was famous in the Crusades. Dame Nature does not always mark families so distinctly from generation to generation as she has done in the thick

under-lip of the Hapsburgs and the red hair of the Trachenbergs!" And he laughed the quiet, good-humoured laugh of a man who knows he has intended to say a pleasant amiability.

Herr von Rüdiger coughed; but Mainau turned quickly away, and walked towards the window.

There stood little Leo, staring with wide open childish eyes at the new mamma, as he leant on the neck of a huge dog, with one hand grasping the switch and the other on the neck of the fine animal.

"Leo, come and speak to dear mamma," said his father, in a strangely-moved voice.

But Liane did not wait for the child to come to her. The boy's presence was at this trying time a relief in itself; and as she caught sight of the sweet childish face, her own softened, and she moved across to

him, and stooping down her pale cheek close to his rosy one, she kissed him warmly on the mouth.

"Will you try and love me a little, Leo?" she whispered, as her voice trembled in spite of its lowness.

The large eyes of the boy lost their staring expression, and wandered over the face of the new mother as she bent over him; then suddenly flinging away his switch, he threw two loving, childish arms tight round the neck of the young wife, as he answered, in an assuring tone—

"Yes, yes, mamma, I will love you!" and after kissing her noisily, turned his head towards his father, and said, loudly and decidedly—

"It's *not* true, papa. She is not a maypole, and her hair is by no means so bad as our——"

"Leo, you forward boy!" called out Mainau, and thus snapped the child's speech in two; for he felt no little ashamed of this unfortunate remark, and hardly knew what to say to cover his confusion.

The old man was smiling, and seemed to be enjoying the uncomfortable position every one was in.

"What is the matter there?" asked Mainau, resuming his usual manner, and pointing to a corner of the room where Gabriel was kneeling, with his hands folded on a thick book.

"Naughty Leo was disobedient, and the only way I can make the youngster behave, is by punishing Gabriel for him," answered his uncle indifferently.

"What—have you here then in Schönwerth deputy thrashing boys? is that old fashion come up again?"

"I would to God it had never gone out! It would be better for us all," replied the Hofmarschall curtly.

"Get up, Gabriel!" ordered Mainau, as he turned his back on his uncle.

The boy rose, and Mainau took the heavy book from his hands, out of which he had been obliged to read aloud many long chapters.

Just at this instant the butler entered with a tray of refreshments. Deeply annoyed as the old man was by the interference of his nephew as regards Gabriel, he was not unmindful of other things, and beckoning the man to his side, he gave a quick searching glance at the contents of the silver tray, and said angrily—

"I'll let that stupid owl in the kitchen know his business—to send up such costly things! Is he mad?"

"It was the young Baron who ordered it," said the servant, apologetically and softly.

"What is it?" asked Mainau.

He flung the heavy volume on the sofa, and walked towards his uncle with his brow contracted.

"Nothing of any consequence, mon cher," hastened to say the elder man, with glowing cheeks.

"Now, dear Countess, take off your bonnet," he said to Liane, "and taste a little of this pine-apple ice. It will refresh you after your hot journey."

Liane laid her hand caressingly on the curly head of the little boy, and kissing him as she left him, she said firmly to the Hofmarschall—

"I must refuse your kindness, Herr Baron. You have denied me the right of

being mistress here, as also that of the name of Mainau; and as the Countess Trachenberg, I dare not put aside good manners and remain alone in a strange house in the society of gentlemen. May I beg you to order me a room to which I can retire till the next ceremony begins?"

Perhaps the old gentleman with his sharp foxy face had never before been so decidedly rebuffed with his own weapons as by this simply-dressed, girlish young creature, who had displayed such quiet dignity and firm determination towards him. He looked dumbfounded and too much astonished to answer for several moments, and Mainau paced the floor in speechless wonder at the daring of this "shy little girl."

"Ah! we are very sensitive, my little

lady," presently said the uncle, clearing his throat.

Mainau went close to his wife.

"You are very much mistaken, Juliane, if you think that your right as mistress here in Schönwerth is endangered by any such slight impediments," he said, struggling hard to keep down his anger. "For my part, the ceremony in Rudisdorf is sufficiently binding—it gave you my name—and what those within these four walls may think about it, need not trouble you. Let me conduct you to your own apartments."

And without further noticing the old man, he gave Liane his arm, and led her from the room. Back through the long corridor and the mirrored drawing-rooms he led her silently; arrived at the grand staircase, he stood still a moment, saying quietly, but earnestly—

"You have been offended, and *I* feel it as much as you do, for it touches my pride as well as yours; but when I tell you that my first wife was the only daughter of that sick man, I think you will understand how matters stand better, and that it is natural that the family should regard with some jealousy the appearance of a second wife in her place; and I must beg you will be patient until habit has rendered your position here a matter of course. I have no wish or intention of leaving Schönwerth and taking you to my other place, principally on account of Leo, whom I desire to be under your motherly care, and I *dare* not separate the grandfather from his only child, so the little one *must* remain here."

Liane was silent. It seemed to her impossible to give any answer to the cruel selfishness of this speech. She walked on

till she came to a window, near which she stood still, and pointing to the sunny landscape beyond, said—

"You may well understand that I can have no other wish than to return there, if I only dared. Were it not for the thought that by my sudden and immediate return to Rudisdorf I should *myself* be denying the legality of my church, I ——"

"It would be very difficult for you to carry out any such intention," interrupted Mainau in an icy tone. "I need hardly assure you that I am not likely to allow myself to be compromised in such a fashion. H-m—marriage and divorce both in one day! That would be something for those who find fault with my 'extravagance and peculiarities' to wag their tongues about. No, no; little as I care about their discussing me, and why shouldn't they? I

should prefer *not* giving to the world such a delicious bit of scandal for gossip."

Dropping her hand, which lay on his arm, he opened a door.

"Here are your apartments; see that you have all you require in them. Naturally every wish of yours relative to any alteration shall be fulfilled at once."

And he glanced over the elegantly furnished rooms as he spoke, and then at Liane with a mixed expression of sarcasm and scorn curling round his beautiful mouth, as he added, in the frivolous light tone he always used to the "ladies who worshipped his every look"—

"Valerie had these rooms, but don't be afraid; her soul was as light and fluttering as if it had been made of the exquisite fine lace she loved to deck her body with, and as she was very pious, she is in heaven."

He rung a bell, and introduced the lady's maid to her new mistress.

Then, reminding Liane that the second ceremony was to take place in an hour, at which time he would come and fetch her, he left the room before she had time to answer a word.

The maid busied herself in unpacking the boxes in the ante-room to prepare the toilette for the state ceremony, and thus the young wife was at last alone.

CHAPTER VI.

ALONE, and surrounded by everything strange! For the first moment she felt as if she should suffocate, as if she were imprisoned, and rushing from one to the other of the doors, she moved the locks to assure herself that she was not confined and barred in. No; the glass door leading to the garden was ajar, and putting her hand on the handle, nothing prevented her from drawing it open

and fleeing from the house. To flee? Had she not come willingly? Was it not in her full power to have said "No," in spite of the severe glance of her mother, or the entreating words of her sister? She had made a mistake—a fearful mistake—and herein her school life was to blame.

Most of the girls who were educated with her were daughters of noblemen of good family. With rare exceptions, they had each been engaged to a man of their parents' choice, and on leaving school after a very short courtship, been married without a question being raised or their feelings consulted in the smallest degree. One young lady, whom Liane specially liked—a beautiful, clever girl, who had confided to her an attachment to a young officer, had also, at her parents' expressed desire, married an elderly man of rank without

a demur, although she really and deeply loved the young fellow who had won her heart. And so it was that Liane had come to regard marriage as a mere conventional arrangement; and when her turn arrived, and a lover was proposed to her by her mother, and her sister had begged her to accept him for her sake, she had given way, and consented to their wish, without for a moment considering there was any other path open to her but submission.

Magnus and Ulrike had urged her to this marriage to free her from the wretched influence of her home life, and she had let herself be freed. She knew she had not one reproach to cast against Mainau that in any way he had deceived her. She had said "yes" that morning at the altar with a true intention and earnest desire to perform her new duties to the best of her

power, but now, alas! the veil had fallen from her eyes; she was for ever separated from those she loved, and had not the slightest hope of ever being rewarded for the sacrifice she had made. She was chained for life to the side of a man who could never love her, and who desired nothing so little in the world as to be loved by her; a whole long life by the side of the man who could not and would not even give her sympathy. And she glanced a quick, frightened glance around at the luxury of the furniture and the costliness of each article.

Here the first wife lived, and from the irony of Mainau's words, when he spoke of her, she gathered that she must have been a spoiled, wayward child, who in fits of temper could stamp her tiny foot and fling her delicate body on the soft, rich velvet

carpets, and softer reclining sofas with which the room was filled. Not one hard seat, not one wooden stool, was to be seen; all was elegance, luxury, and glittering ornament. Liane opened a window, and thought that the departed one must have revelled in jasmine perfume, for it filled the air, and clung to the balcony and wall and curtain.

What was that sound that met her ear as she moved the sash line and inhaled the intoxicating perfume? Was it the "fluttering soul, made like exquisite lace, and so pious, that it had gone to heaven?" Was it coming back again, that it should sigh and moan like that in the air just above her head? She held her breath and listened, hardly daring to move.

"What is it?" she asked aloud, as, to her inexpressible relief, the maid entered the

room just as the soft sighing murmur above grew louder and more distinct. "What is that noise?"

"Up in the trees there hangs an Eolian harp, gracious lady," replied the girl.

Liane gazed out of the window, and then shook her head.

"There is not a breath of wind."

"Perhaps it comes from over there where the lady lies ill since many years," replied the maid, pointing to a wire grating a little distance away, behind which rose an obelisk. "I don't know much; I have only been here a week. The servants don't seem to care about it; and in the kitchen they say she is here only out of charity; and think how fearful, gracious lady, she has not been baptized! I never venture behind that grating, I am afraid of the big oxen, and the trees are full of monkeys—horrid animals! Bah!"

Liane did not answer, but slowly walked into the dressing-room and put herself into the hands of her maid. This time the rich brocaded silk rustled and crackled around her every time she moved; and when, half an hour later, she joined Mainau in the blue boudoir, he started with surprise at the beautiful apparition of his young wife. The "Maypole" could wear a train with grace, and had, besides, such exquisitely moulded arms and shoulders, that surely it could only have been intense coquetry that had caused her to hide them under the simple muslin dress she had worn in the morning. A wreath of orange blossoms circled the rich masses of her wonderful golden "red hair," which shone and glistened in beautiful contrast against the deep blue colour on the walls.

"Allow me to thank you, Juliane, for

showing so much tact as to lay aside the modest toilette you love so well, and for appearing in my house as befits the position you are to hold."

She lifted her dark eyelashes and looked at him; not with pale blue eyes à la Lavallière, but with brown honest eyes, full of earnestness and courage, as she said calmly, though not in the familiar "thou and thee" that he used towards her, and which all Germans employ when addressing near relatives—

"You must not think too well of me. It was not shyness which caused me to appear at the altar at Rudisdorf in a simple white muslin dress; it was pride, haughtiness—what you like. I am quite aware that the ladies in the portrait gallery at home went to church in ermine and velvet, I also have a right to do likewise,

and know that well enough, and for that very reason I would not put on this rich material,"—she touched her dress as she spoke—"and drag it and its costliness over the corridors of my ancestral home, knowing, as I do, that not a stone of it is ours any longer. The rustling and noise of this silk would have awoke all the Trachenbergs who sleep under the chancel, and this sleep is all they have now. *Here* I represent *your* name, and that is why I now wear your present."

He bit his lip, and the angry, hard expression round his mouth crept into his eyes, as, after looking at her in astonishment for a moment or two, he said ironically—

"Ah, well, the Trachenberg may awake now consoled. Their well-known family pride is unimpaired, and knows how to

hold its own, and that will comfort them for the empty coffers which even you bemoan."

She did not answer, but walked slowly through the door he had opened as he spoke.

As he walked by her side across the wide hall, he was not the same man who had, carelessly and elegantly, as if he had been going to dine, led her to the altar at Rudisdorf; not the same either who, a few hours before, had turned his head to gaze triumphantly at the pale Duchess as she rode away in the forest.

No! he was quite different now. He was going through the same struggle with himself that the proud girl by his side had contended with when he left her alone in her own apartments, a short while ago.

He, too, wondered if the step he was

taking were a wise one; if the belief he had had in the Countess Trachenberg, that he "could twist her daughter round his little finger, were not a false one." There was still time—it was not yet too late to draw back; for *his* Church had not yet spoken the words which would bind them together for life—and——

The swishing and rustling of the long silken train suddenly ceased. Liane hesitated, and moved her hand from his arm.

He looked at her as she stood before him, and for a moment he gazed earnestly at the pale, proud face, and read in its silent, haughty expression, that she had divined his thoughts. With a smile that curled his lip, and made his face anything but agreeable, he took the hand she had dropped to her side, laid it again on his arm, held it there firmly for a moment,

and slowly moved along the hall, and under the archway that the servants had erected before the church-door.

Well, he had decided, and she went with him; not as a meek, quiet lamb fulfilling its fate. No; the proud princess, her grandmother, in the portrait gallery, had due honour paid to her in the majestic bearing of her grandchild, and in the quiet, determined face, which gave no sign of the quick inward beating of her troubled heart.

Inside, how beautiful was everything! In her quiet life at Rudisdorf, Liane had never seen such richness and splendour. Gold and silver ornaments surrounded the altar, hundreds of lights flamed in glistening candlesticks, and the orange-blossoms and orange-trees which the sick cranky old man had forbidden to appear in the hall to

welcome the bride, were here in profusion, filling the air with their perfume, and obscuring the lights in honour of the sacred ceremony; and a mass of brilliant, fresh-cut flowers covered the large altar.

Intermixed with the pale light of the candles and the golden shimmer of the ornaments, the fast-setting sun cast long heavy rays across the church; and through this misty light Liane, as she entered, saw numbers of heads raised to gaze at her—saw also, at the side of the chancel, the red silk cushion on which the white hands of the Hofmarschall were resting, and the magnificent robes of the priest standing at the altar.

High and lofty, he stood there. But as she came towards him she shuddered; for, raising her eyes for a second to his face, she met such a passionate look of genuine

admiration, that her own dropped instantly. A moment later, he raised his hands towards heaven, and over her head a rich, well-toned voice spoke of love and forbearance for ever and always.

What a mockery! The simple, plain words of the Rudisdorf pastor had left her calm; but now, here, the burning, eloquent speech of this man disturbed her, and made her feel what a black lie and bitter contradiction the reality of the bond between her and Mainau was to the spirit of the words they repeated in the ceremony. Each sentence was as a knife entering her soul, as a file tearing at her heart.

The young girl trembled as she knelt at the altar before this priest, whose flaming eyes she felt were fixed on her. Intuitively, without knowing why, she put her hand behind her, and grasping one

corner of her long-hanging veil, drew it forward, and covered her fair arms and bosom with its ample, soft, shielding folds.

At last the day came to an end—this weary, exciting day, the longest and most eventful of her young life—and at last the longed-for, delicious moment had arrived when she could shut the door of her own apartments, and be alone.

She sent her maid to bed, took off herself her bridal finery, and threw a white dressing-gown around her shoulders. She could not rest, she felt so lonely and homesick; and a great indescribable longing came over her to handle and see with her eyes some of the things which she had brought with her from home.

She rose from her seat, and with trembling hands began hastily to open a small

trunk, that, by her special desire, had been placed in the ante-chamber of her private rooms.

The first thing her eyes lighted on as she lifted the lid was a manuscript volume of notes in Latin; and as she took it up, she involuntarily glanced, with a frightened look, towards the full-length portrait hanging near where she knelt, on the wall.

It was a striking likeness of the handsome man by whose side she had twice bowed the knee at the altar that day; the same enigmatical face that at one moment could light into passionate wrath, and the next wither and scorch with its cold, sarcastic curl of the finely-cut lip.

She shuddered as she glanced at it, and intuitively rolled up the manuscripts, that those searching, mocking eyes might not catch a glimpse of it.

"Mainau will soon drive all that learned nonsense out of your head," her mother had declared.

And even to-day, at dinner, he had spoken, in the course of conversation, most decidedly of his horror of women who indulged in literary pursuits, and said that, to him, a blot of ink on a lady's hand was almost as bad as a blot on her character.

She went to the writing-table to destroy all sign of the "learned nonsense" she had taken so much pains with, and, for the first time, noticed the exceeding beauty of this same table, which was of very elegant workmanship, and inlaid with costly taste, but almost covered with figures and groups of very poor design and inferior make.

What ideas had the light, fluttering soul indulged in here? How could her excessive piety reconcile itself to all these

frivolous ornaments, which would naturally distract the thoughts from heavenly things?

Liane opened the middle drawer with fear and trembling, and started as she saw rolls of money laid in order for her use, and ticketed as her pin-money.

She shut the drawer again, and angrily locked the key to bury the gold from her sight, and turned to the window to breathe a little fresh air, for the atmosphere of the room was heavy with the perfume of the jasmine.

Without the moon was shining gloriously, lighting up the mountains and fields and trees around Schönwerth with soft silvery rays. Not a breath of air was stirring, and yet above, in the high trees, the low murmur of the Eolian harp came now and then softly sighing across the stillness of the silent night.

Liane stepped out under the colonnade, but almost immediately drew into the shade, as she heard the footfall of some one running.

It was Leo.

His little naked feet were covered with slippers; he held his little trousers on round his waist with his hand, and his night-shirt was open at the neck, exposing his little fat shoulders and sturdy throat to the light of the moon.

The child glanced hastily round as he reached the colonnade, and then darted off in the direction of the wooden palings.

With a few hasty steps, Liane reached him, and catching him in her arms, said—

"What are you doing here, Leo?"

The child gave a scream; then, as he recognized who it was held him, he exclaimed—

"The new mamma! You won't tell grandpa, will you?"

"If you are doing wrong, of course I——"

"No, mamma!" he answered, firmly, throwing back the curls from his forehead. "No; I only want to give these chocolate figures to Gabriel. I didn't take them—indeed I didn't, mamma! Herr von Rüdiger gave them to me at dinner; he put them on my plate, and I kept them for Gabriel; and I had to wait till Miss Berger thought I was asleep—she would eat them herself if I kept them till the morning. She eats everything, the greedy thing!"

"Where is Miss Berger?" asked Liane, who had not been favourably impressed by the little she had already seen of the boy's nurse and teacher.

"She is in the schoolroom, and I dare not go in, for she has locked the door; and I know she is drinking punch—I could smell it through the keyhole. I have not seen Gabriel since the morning, because I was *too* naughty; but I do want to say good-night to him, May I, mamma! Do let me?"

And in the tone of his voice there was beseeching entreaty, with all the confidence of a child addressing his mother, which made Liane quiver with a new feeling of delighted joy, that this little boy, the child of her husband, should thus freely, and of his own will, acknowledge her authority and motherly position over him in the first hour of their acquaintance. It softened her heart, and folding the little half-dressed figure to her bosom, she kissed him tenderly, and whispered—

"Give me the bon-bons, and I will take them to Gabriel for you. You must go back to bed, dear," she added, leading him into the house. "I will say good-night for you, if you will tell me where to find him."

Without a word of objection, the little fellow drew out the sweets from his pocket, and put them in the fine white hand of the "new mamma."

She smiled as she saw the chocolate treasures that "grandpa" must know nothing about, and involuntarily her thoughts flew back to the scene in the old man's room, where the costly pine-apple ice was being served round.

"Tell me, Leo, how am I to go to Gabriel, and where is he?"

"You must go down there by the water's side, through the palings," answered Leo,

pointing in the same direction. "But you mustn't enter the house there—grandpapa won't let any one go in—and Miss Berger says there's a witch with long teeth inside; but I'm not afraid. She doesn't hurt Gabriel, and he lives there."

Liane did not reply to this prattle; but drawing the little night-shirt closer round the exposed throat of the boy, she led him indoors back into his chamber.

A subdued light glimmered in the room, which was beautifully furnished with every luxury that even a king's son might envy; but Liane sighed as she laid the curly head of the child on the fine linen and lace of the pillow, and wondered if the soul of the mother was not struggling to come back and write a Mene Tekel on the wall where her son was so neglected by those who had charge of him.

Laughter and noise came from the adjoining school-room, and the clinking of glasses, mingled with the confusion, told her that little Leo's remark about the punch drinking was most probably correct.

"Dear mamma," said the little one, gently touching her cheek as she bent over him, "it is very nice to have you tuck me up. Will you always come? The first mamma never did it for me; she never came to my bed. But you will come again? And you promise to take Gabriel his sweets?"

"Yes, yes, darling; I will go there now. Kiss me once again, and go to sleep."

He laid his head down on the pillow after kissing her, and in five minutes was fast asleep.

Then Liane softly left the room, and closed the door, that he might not hear

the loud speaking and noise which came from the adjoining room, and through which he had escaped, unseen by his nurse, to carry the chocolate to his friend Gabriel.

CHAPTER VII.

AT struck half-past ten as Liane, for the second time, left her apartments, and went out into the fresh air. The paling lay straight before her, and although she thought it most likely that Gabriel was long since in bed, yet she determined to make her way to the house Leo had spoken of, and give him the chocolate, as she had promised.

When she reached the high trellis-work,

she turned and gazed back at the castle. It was all dark, and not a light glimmered anywhere behind any of the windows—except, as she looked, she fancied she saw a pale light move in the drawing-room leading to the colonnade, and, leaning against one of the columns, a man's form looking towards her!

But it must be a mistake, and a fancy of her own imagination; for not a sound was in the air, and the figure stood so quiet and still, it must be only a shadow.

Her heart beat fast as she opened the gate and plunged into the pathway before her.

For a few steps the road was open, but a little farther on, the broad leaves of some Indian bananas threw heavy shadows across her path, and then the road lay through thick brushwood. Here and there a broken

branch touched her shoulder as she passed, or her dress was caught in some protruding boughs, and with a shudder she saw the little monkeys peeping curiously at her, as if wondering what had brought a visitor into their neighbourhood at such a late hour of the night. She almost screamed with fright as something moved at her feet, though it was only a guinea-fowl hurrying back to its roost; and it was with a great feeling of relief that at last she saw the broad shining water of the lake glittering close by in the bright full moonlight. She felt strange and lonely and nervous, though she had no idea that her tall, elegant figure, clad in its white wrapper, with the golden crown of her beautiful hair, on which the moonlight fell in full brilliancy, was being watched from afar, and her every movement followed; and, anxious as she

was to redeem her promise and find the house where Gabriel lived, she had not thought of noticing that the shadow had moved from the colonnade, and was even now only a few feet apart from where she stood.

She breathed freely again as her eye caught sight of the white walls of a lowly-built rather small house. The pathway leading to it was covered with one mass of sweet-scented rose-leaves, fallen from the heavily-laden trees at the side, and the little building itself seemed so fragile, that one thought on looking at it that a strong wind must blow it down.

It had several large windows with wooden shutters opening on the outside, and a verandah ran down on either side of the house.

Liane trembled as she stepped on the

cool, soft matting laid in front of the door, and drew near a window to see what was inside before entering the house. A lamp was burning in the middle of the room, and in one corner stood a cane bedstead. On the snow-white sheets lay a small delicate head with the face hidden in the pillows. Was it child or woman? Soft white muslin enveloped the figure from the head to the feet, which were bare and beautifully small, but colourless and very still. One arm was bare, so slender and thin, that it might have belonged to a girl of twelve or thirteen, and the broad gold band which encircled it seemed almost too heavy for the tender flesh it rested on.

Liane recognized the stout, robust-looking woman who was standing by the bedside with a silver spoon in her hand, and gently speaking to the figure lying so still,

as a Mrs. Löhn, whom Baron Mainau had introduced to her, after the ceremony in the Catholic chapel, as the housekeeper.

The spoon which the woman was holding away from her clean, broad apron, was full of medicine, and evidently a source of dislike and disgust to the invalid on the bed. No persuading, no coaxing, had any effect, and the head remained half hidden in the pillows.

"I can't help it, Gabriel," said Frau Löhn, at last turning to the corner which Liane could not see; "you must hold her head for me. She *must* sleep at any cost, she must."

The boy came forward into the light—the same pale lad who had been punished for Leo's fault in the morning.

Carefully and tenderly he endeavoured to pass his hand between the pillow and

the delicate head which lay on it, and turn the face upwards. The movement seemed to startle the invalid, for she suddenly raised her head and showed a small, emaciated but very beautiful face, with wonderfully large eyes, that looked so reproachful and sad at being disturbed, that Liane's heart ached at the evident suffering their mournful expression revealed.

"No, no, I can't do it; I won't worry you," Gabriel said, softly and soothingly; then turning away to Frau Löhn, he burst into tears, and muttered, "I can't do it to-night, Frau Löhn, it hurts her. I will sing her to sleep."

"Then you will have to sing till morning, child," she answered; "singing is of no use when she has had such a bad day, that you know," and she shrugged her shoulders and sighed, not having the

courage to insist on the boy's trying against his will to have the medicine taken. What a soft, loving heart seemed enshrined in that stout, ungainly form, and how gentle and sympathising the face could become, that in the morning, when introduced to her new mistress, had been so hard and severe.

Liane quietly lifted the latch of the door, and entered the room.

At her unexpected appearance the nurse uttered a cry of surprise, and very nearly spilled the contents of the spoon she still held in her hand on the floor.

"You prop up the sick lady," said Liane, gently, but firmly, "and I will give her the medicine."

The sudden entrance of the tall, white figure, the quiet words, and the sweet face bending over her of the young wife seemed

to magnetize the poor invalid, for she did not move, but stared with her large eyes at the unknown visitor, and then, without any resistance, she swallowed the obnoxious sleeping draught as soon as it was put to her lips.

"There, my lad, she has taken it," said Liane, putting the spoon down; "it has not hurt her, and now she will sleep." Then, caressing his hair, she added, "You love her very much?"

"She is my mother," he answered, with a world of tenderness in his tone.

"They are poor people, madam; poor and lowly," said the nurse, hastily, in a hard, dry voice. Not a shadow of the sympathy and softness which had been so conspicuous in her face when she spoke to the invalid to be seen now.

"Poor!" unwillingly exclaimed Liane,

glancing at the brilliant bracelet on the arm of the suffering lady, and at the thick gold chain which encircled her throat and lay on her bosom.

The look seemed to arouse the invalid, who had her eyes still fixed on Liane, for she moaned, and with her left hand tried to grasp a little silver ornament that hung suspended to the chain on her neck.

"No, no; the lady won't take it—don't fear," Frau Löhn hastened to assure her.

"Yes, they are very poor," she added, in her rough voice, turning again to Liane. "That ornament there"—pointing to the trinket—"can't be eaten, and in reality the poor lady has nothing else. The old Hofmarschall could take it away from her if he liked; for she has nothing—in God's wide world nothing—and that she and her boy have their daily bread and live in this

cottage, is out of pure charity—pure charity of the master."

This explanation was given in an unsympathetic, dry manner, which made Liane feel as if she had no business to listen to it; all the more so, as she noticed that Gabriel was caressing his mother while the nurse spoke, as if he would fain make her try and forget the pain such words must inflict on a sensitive nature. For himself he seemed not to mind; his lip quivered, and Liane saw a hopeless, enduring expression settle on his pale face, as if for years, boy as he still was, he had been accustomed to humiliation and suffering.

She longed to ask—Who is this stranger? and how is it that she and her child are living in this degrading state of bondage to the master of Schönwerth? But she dared

not. The hard, cold face of the nurse repelled her, and she was silent.

Presently she drew from her pocket the chocolate bon-bons, and putting them on the table, said cheerfully—

"Leo sent them to you, Gabriel, and I am to say 'good night' to you for him."

"He is a kind little fellow, and I like him," the boy replied, with a languid smile.

"That's right; but you must not be punished again for him, dear lad;" adding, as she looked lovingly into his eyes, and raised his face with her soft hand, "Have you no courage to speak up for yourself when an injustice is done to you?"

The tone of her voice was very earnest and sweet; and over the ugly features of Nurse Löhn there crept a faint tinge of

colour. She started, and her eyes filled with tears as she looked gratefully at the young girl bending over the boy; but it was only for a moment, the next her face resumed its usual sternness, and in a sharp voice she said—

"That would be of no use, madam, to Gabriel; and if he is unjustly treated, up at the castle, he ought still to be grateful for all he gets. He has to be a priest—a monk—and he'll have to live in a monastery; and there he must be obedient, and offer no resistance, even if his soul is ready to burst from his body from anger and indignation. He can't love the young master, little Leo, enough; for its only because he entreats his grandfather to let Gabriel stay here, that he is allowed to be by his mother at all, and was not long ago sent away."

The boy's eyes filled with tears.

"What; you *have* to be monk? Are you to be forced to it, Gabriel?" asked Liane, impetuously.

"Speak the truth, my son—who forces you?" said a full, manly voice from behind.

Liane started, and turning round, recognized the priest who had performed the ceremony that afternoon in the chapel; and, with an inward shudder, it darted across her brain that the shadow she had seen by the colonnade was no other than his figure; that he had watched her go out, and must have followed her, step by step, to the threshold of the cottage.

It made her feel nervous and turn pale, as she looked at his tall, strong, black-clothed figure standing in the moonlight at the open doorway.

He stepped into the room, and bowing low, said, with a smile—

"Don't distress yourself, dear lady; we are very harmless people in Schönwerth, and are not in the habit of employing force, as depicted in the fairy tale of the boy Mortara—are we, my lad?" he asked, laying his well-formed white hand on the boy's shoulder.

But for the long black robe, and the round shaven spot in the centre of his curly hair, no one would have imagined this man to be a priest. There was nothing about his manner or appearance that gave one the idea of his sacred calling. He had neither the subdued, reserved manner of a man who studies much and lives within himself, nor the softened, conciliating words and tones of one accustomed to scenes of sorrow and sadness.

His voice was loud and commanding, and his manner and gestures those of a finished man of the world.

As he entered and spoke to Gabriel, the invalid again buried her face in the pillows; but her bosom heaved painfully, and she trembled like a bird caught in the hand of a child.

"What's the matter with her to-day, nurse?" he asked. "She seems very agitated now, and I could hear her moans and cries as far as the sacristy."

Frau Löhn courtesied, and answered respectfully, but with repressed anger and impatience—

"Her Highness the Duchess rode by again to-day, and the noise was too much for her."

A sarcastic smile darted round his mouth for a second as he replied, shrugging his shoulders—

"Then she will have to bear it. The Duchess won't be likely to renounce the pleasure of riding in this Vale of Cashmere. Who would have the daring to demand such a sacrifice of her?" he added, going nearer the bed, which movement seemed to make the invalid tremble more visibly.

"With all your strictness, you give way too much to your patient, nurse," he said, over his shoulder, to Frau Löhn. "Why does she still wear these heavy ornaments on her thin arms, and this chain on her bosom?"

"It would be her death if I took them away, sir," answered the nurse, half hissing the words through her compressed mouth, while her eyes gleamed, deep-sunk as they were in her head.

"Don't believe any such thing, though she is weak and ailing enough to blow

away. But such a weight as this gold on her is worse for her than you think. Come, let us try to take it away."

As he uttered these words, the poor invalid opened her eyes and looked terrified; and, clasping her hands to the chain at her neck, she gave a low wail, which was heart-rending to hear.

Frau Löhn hastened to her side, and laying one hard bony hand over her soft white one, said, firmly, but with a strange wildness in her manner and expression—

"Sir, that I can't allow—indeed I can't! It goes against *me!* And if you excite her, who has, afterwards, a sleepless night? Not you, but me, sir! I am only a poor woman, but I can't allow it. I might do as the others in the castle, who never put foot near us, and I could get rest that way. I won't say either that what I do is from

love or from sympathy. I am a hard woman, they say, and I won't make myself better than I am. It doesn't matter to me what the others do," she went on quietly, but as if grumbling to herself; "and if I come here and do what I can to give her rest, I do it for my master, whose bread I eat."

"Why, what's come to you, nurse?" answered the priest, smiling, and shaking his head. "Who doubts the faithfulness or the cold-heartedness of Mrs. Löhn? Your patient can keep her playthings. I would be the last one to make your work heavier for you."

In the mean time, Liane had noiselessly left the cottage. She needed to feel the warm, soft air of night upon her, to see the moon shining above her, and to hear the crunching of her feet on the sand to make

sure that she was not dreaming, and that the scene she had just left was not a phantom of her own over-excited imagination. The beautiful fragile figure of the invalid enveloped in soft muslin, the jewelled arms, and the mournful eyes, with that hard-featured, rough-speaking woman for an attendant—all seemed to her more like a picture than a reality.

She stood still for a moment, leaning against the verandah, to cool her hot and throbbing temples, then slowly descended the steps.

"The Vale of Cashmere, the Paradise that our first parents didn't appreciate, and so debarred from us all," said the priest, who had followed her, and now stood close at her side. "Most of those who seek it grow intoxicated and dazzled with its beauty, and ruin themselves; the

ascetic puts it far away from him, as it were, out of his life, till one day a veil falls from his eyes, and he sees what a fool he has been not to have accepted a certain portion of the old curse, instead of working out ideas of his own."

His voice was lowered, as if the warm, sultry air of the July night had weakened it.

Liane stood still, and raised her eyes to his rather coarse-featured face. She was about to answer, but the expression she read in his dark eyes made the blood rush to her cheeks, and she determined not to discuss such a theme with this passionate, eloquent man in the lonely position in which she so unfortunately found herself.

Coldly and haughtily she replied—

"With the moaning of that poor invalid

in my ears, I cannot possibly think of Paradise. Who is she?"

The priest turned pale. Somewhat disconcerted at this unexpected question, he gave a swift, searching glance at the bride, who had slightly moved away, ere he replied, with ironical gravity—

"Won't it wound your proud feelings to know that a lost one is harboured here in Schönwerth? There is nothing more unyielding than a woman proud of her virtue, is there? But woe be to those who have erred through the passion of their devoted hearts! I know well the cold, blighting look of a virtuous woman on an erring sister!"

What words for a priest to utter!

Suddenly turning round and pointing to the little house with its thatched roof that they had just left, he continued—

"Who would think that that poor, suffering, lamed piece of humanity in there had once danced in the public streets of Benares? You ask who she is? She was a Hindoo maiden—a Bajadere—that a Mainau brought over the seas with him. This so-called Vale of Cashmere, here around us was arranged for her. Hundreds of pounds were spent to win a smile from her, or to try and make her forget for a moment the heaven of her far away home. Everything was given to her to make her——"

"And now she eats the bread of charity, and has that hard, rough woman to wait on her, poor thing!" murmured Liane, deeply moved. "And the boy, who is so badly treated——"

"My dear madam, for your own sake, let me entreat you not to speak of the

Hofmarschall's manner of acting in such very plain language," he interrupted. "It was his own brother who scandalized the world with this unfortunate love story. The man is long years ago dead; but to this day no one dare mention the subject in the hearing of the Hofmarschall, without his flying into a rage. He is, perhaps you know, a very severe Romanist."

"He may be as severe in his belief as he likes, but that gives him no right to punish an innocent boy unjustly—as—as I was witness to to-day," said Liane, indignantly.

They entered at this moment the dark copse, so Liane could not see the effect of her rash words on the face of her companion; but she heard him clear his throat, and after a pause he said, in short, curt sentences—

"I was right when I said just now that the woman we have left is a lost one. She was faithless, like all Hindoos. The boy has no claim on the family Mainau—no more than the poorest beggar who knocks at the door of the castle for alms."

Liane said no more, but hastened her steps to reach the end of the wood.

It was hot and very sultry under the interlaced branches of the trees, and she shrank, she could hardly tell why, from the companionship of this coarse, uncongenial man.

Presently one of the tresses of her long hair caught in a branch, as she fancied; but putting her hand behind to free it, she encountered the hot, trembling fingers of the priest!

She felt inclined to scream aloud; but she remembered there was no one near to

come to her aid. She shuddered from head to foot, as if a snake had touched her, and recoiled from his side as far as the path would permit.

She looked up indignantly at his face; but the features were calm, even stern, and he did not attempt to speak till they had reached the palings and closed the gate behind them. Then, as if he had made up his mind to struggle against some inward emotion, he said—

"This Schönwerth is a hard path for tender women's feet to tread, no matter whether they come from far away Indian soil or from a German noble house. Madam, just now there is evil abroad in the world, and the cry is, 'Down with the Ultramontanes—down with the Jesuits.' You will perhaps be told that I am amongst the worst—that I am a fanatical Romanist—

perhaps, even, that I desire and endeavour to obtain power over the nobility, for the honour of my order. Think as you will about that; but remember, that if ever you are in trouble—and it will come, you may be sure—if ever you need a strong hand to lean on, then send for me, and I will come."

And with a low bow and a light elastic step, he left her, and turned to the north side of the castle.

She hastened along the colonnade, entered the ante-chamber, with trembling hands closed the swing-door, and anxiously peered into every hole and corner of the outer room, to assure herself that she was alone, before locking the door to her own private apartments.

Never in her life did she remember feeling so nervous and upset as she did at this

hour. Never before had the dark future seemed so dreary, and her courage to meet it so weak and failing as during the half-hour following those sinister words of the priest.

Never had she felt so thoroughly helpless and lonely—not even the day, three or four years ago, when the auctioneer's hammer resounded through her father's halls, and her mother, wringing her hands, went from room to room, uttering loud cries at the injustice of seizing their last means of support. Even then, dark as the hour was, the unselfish Ulrike had been able to devise a plan by which bread could be secured, and honourable work bring them the wherewithal to live on in the empty rooms.

Work! Yes, why not work now? It was at least as honourable, and far, far

preferable, if sorrow *was* before her, than the "strong hand" of the Catholic priest.

No! Rather die in the struggle, than send for such support!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE next morning Liane discovered a well-lighted, bright little room leading out of her bedroom. It was evidently intended as a cabinet to hang her dresses in; but she immediately appropriated it for her painting, and the work she had set herself to do.

She unpacked her books, plants, pressing machines, and all the paraphernalia for study she had brought with her from

Rudisdorf, and arranged it all in order. From the large window there was a splendid view of the garden and mountains beyond, and, with a satisfied air, she locked the door, and putting the key in her pocket, told the maid, who just then entered, that she must seek another place to hang the dresses in.

The girl excused her late appearance by saying—

"I was obliged, ma'am, to go to mass this morning. We are all obliged to go when the court priest is here. If one is so ill one can hardly move, still one must go. He is so very strict when he is here, ma'am, you can't think—worse even than the Hofmarschall himself. He often comes and stays for days together; he has his own apartments."

"You seem out of breath," said Liane,

smiling, "and the incense I can smell in your dress."

"Yes, ma'am, because I hurried away to you directly it was over; for I knew you would wonder where I was."

Then, with a deep breath of relief, she added, as she looked out of the window—

"God be praised! there he goes back to town, where I am told he has just as much his own way with the Duchess, as he has here with master."

And Liane was glad that there seemed no chance of meeting this strange man again for some time to come.

Presently a servant knocked at the door, and announced that breakfast was waiting in the dining-room.

This apartment joined those belonging to the old Hofmarschall, but its windows overlooked the large courtyard. It was

furnished in oak, and the walls were covered with the antlers of large stags, with here and there a boar's head, elaborately mounted. The furniture was antique, and carved in rich designs ; but the room was too large for comfort, and the small table, covered with a white cloth, near which, in a corner, the easy chair of the Hofmarschall was placed, seemed lost in the space around it.

The gout in the old gentleman's foot must have been better this morning, for he was standing at the window, leaning on a stick as Liane entered, with a flood of sunshine streaming over him.

He was a tall, thin man, with a handsome face, like all the Mainaus, but his features were almost too fine and delicate, and the line between his brows, and the curl of the lip and chin, which once, no

doubt, gave a piquancy to his refined face, now settled and fixed by age, made the expression about his mouth appear spiteful and malicious.

Through a half-opened door on the right the loud voice of little Leo could be distinctly heard, but it seemed to make no impression on the old man at the window, who did not even appear to notice Liane's entrance.

A little distance away stood the housekeeper with a book and some papers in her hand, stretching over the shoulder of the Hofmarschall to look into the courtyard below. Not a movement in the woman's face showed that she thought of the conversation of the night before in the cottage as her mistress passed her, and politely wished the Hofmarschall "Good morning." He turned quickly, and gallantly replied

to her greeting, but a moment after he had again resumed his earnest gaze out of the window, and said excitedly—

"There, just look! Those confounded fellows have been in the new plantation and cut off some of the young trees! Vagabonds! they know well enough that since I am laid by with the gout, the hunting-whip hangs on its nail. Surely this time Raoul will pitch into them; it is his affair; the new plantations are his work."

Liane, too, looked out of window.

In the courtyard stood Baron Mainau, evidently just returned from a morning ride, for he was dusty, his riding-whip was in his hand, and spurs were on his boots. In front of him stood the "confounded fellows," two village children, a boy and a girl. They had just been brought into the courtyard by a man who said he had

caught them in the act of pulling up the young trees. Heads were out of every window looking on, and one of the stable boys could not take his eyes from the whip which the young Baron was lightly cracking through the air. The girl had hid her face in her apron, and was crying bitterly, and the boy hung his head, and every trace of colour had left his fat face.

Baron Mainau listened to the charge; when it was ended he switched his riding-whip louder than before once or twice above the heads of the little delinquents, and with another movement pointed to the open gate of the courtyard. Quick as lightning the little girl let her apron drop from her face and flew through the gateway, the boy following close at her heels, and both had vanished round the corner in a second.

"Well, he is a fool!" murmured the old Hofmarschall, angrily, leaving the window and hobbling back to his easy chair, evidently in a very bad temper. Frau Löhn put a stool to his feet, replenished the fire in the stove, which was always lighted for the sick man, and then asked if there were any more orders.

"None," he replied, grumblingly, "except those you have already received."

"But what am I to do about the wine? I told you, sir, just now, that the Madeira is finished."

"The Madeira all gone at the India House! Really, Löhn, you must think that I am made of money. You might as well ask for wine and beef-tea baths. They would do as much good."

"It doesn't matter to me, sir—how can it?" she answered, unmoved. "It would

make no difference to me whether I pour wine or water into the spoon with which I feed her. The new doctor simply said 'She must have Madeira,' and——"

"The simpleton may get it himself, then. What business has he there at all?"

"He came by the young Baron's desire," replied the woman, quite unmoved by the angry, impatient tone of her master. "He saw her, and after examining her, he asked me twice if the paralysis had resulted from a fall, just as if I could know."

Liane was standing at the table pouring out the coffee with her back to the old man, when she was startled almost out of her senses by hearing a crashing noise, and turning round, she saw the Hofmarschall had smashed his stick against the stove in a passion. Pointing to the door, he cried with flaming eyes—

"Away with you, Löhn; I am weary of you and your stories about that woman."

The housekeeper slowly walked across the room, but just as she reached the door he screamed out--

"Löhn, you are the most insufferable woman I ever had to deal with; but you have one virtue worth all the vagabonds of servants in the castle, and that is, that in general you know how to keep your counsel." Then with a growl he added, "You can give her the Madeira for aught I care, but only a tea-spoonful at a time. Do you hear, only a tea-spoonful?—*More* would not be good for her. And remember that the visits of that doctor I forbid, once and for all. He only worries her with his examinations, and he can't do her any good."

As he spoke a loud cry was heard from

the adjoining room, followed by a string of angry words from Leo's lips, and sundry stampings of his little feet.

"Halloa! what's the matter there?" called out the Hofmarschall; "what's that noise about? Where is that confounded Berger? She is never where she ought to be."

"Here I am, sir," answered the governess, appearing at the threshold of the room with a meek smile on her lips. "I was there all the time. Leo was very good at first, very good and obedient till Gabriel dropped a little drawing out of his prayer-book. That Gabriel, sir, is too stupid and awkward; instead of letting the child have the paper, what did he do but snatch it out of his hand."

At these words little Leo interrupted her, pushed her violently aside, and rushed

into the room, holding in each hand a piece of paper.

"How dare she tear it! Wasn't it unkind of her, grandpa?" he cried excitedly. "I wanted to have the picture—that's true—and Gabriel wouldn't give it me at all, and then she took the beautiful Lion and tore it in two. Look, grandpa!"

"I congratulate you on your charming veracity, Fräulein," sarcastically observed the Hofmarschall, with a bend of his head to the governess, who had stepped farther into the room. Taking the paper from the child's hand, and glancing at it, he called out sternly—

"Gabriel!"

The boy, in reply to this summons, stood in the open doorway paler than usual, and with his eyes cast down.

"So you have been daubing again?"

asked the old man curtly, half shutting his small eyes, and concentrating their angry glare on the trembling boy.

Gabriel did not answer.

"There you stand like a fool, as if you couldn't count three! What do you mean by not answering? Over there behind the palings, you can make noise enough, I know. Spoiling good paper with your unasked-for scribblings, and singing songs as boldly as the lark-——"

Liane shuddered as she heard these hard words, and thought of how the boy sung to his mother at night to try and soothe her to sleep.

The old man felt the paper with his fingers, and continued in a louder tone—

"And how did you get such good paper for scribbling on at all?"

The housekeeper had not yet left the room. As the old man asked this question, she stepped forward with a quiet, determined face, the colour on her cheeks just a trifle heightened, and said resolutely—

"He had the paper from me, sir."

"What's the meaning of that, Löhn? How is it, that against my expressed wish and will——"

"It was at Christmas, sir, and I thought it wouldn't so much matter. One remembers at that time that one has a few pence, and the lad had set his whole heart on having that paper. I gave the coachman's children a table full of things, and no one made a fuss about it. It doesn't matter to me the whole year round if Gabriel paints, or writes, or what he does; but I thought this time to myself, surely there

can be no harm in his painting a picture of the Christ mother."

The Hofmarschall gave her a distrustful look, as he replied with emphasis—

"I hardly know if you speak from native stupidity, or that you are really bad."

The woman returned his gaze without in the least appearing disconcerted, saying—

"Ah, dear Lord! never in my live-long day was I called bad, so it must be stupidity, sir."

"Then let me inform you that henceforth you indulge in no more such Christmas vagaries. Keep your pence in your pocket against the day when you can't work or serve—and I mean what I say," he added, in a determined tone; "the boy shall *not* draw, nor do any such nonsense. Do you call *that* the Mother of Christ?"

he almost screamed in his anger, holding up the paper that she might see the beautifully executed drawing of a lion springing on his prey. "I tell you that he does as he likes down there, and you are obstinate enough to encourage him in his disobedience. Answer me," he said, suddenly addressing Gabriel, "what are you going to be?"

"I am to enter a monastery," whispered the boy half aloud.

"And why?"

"That I may pray for my mother," replied the lad, bursting into tears.

"Right—you must pray for your mother—for that you were born, for that God sent you into the world. And if you were to be on your knees night and day praying God for His mercy, it would not be too much. The priest has told you the same dozens of times, and yet there you

are attending to things of the world that don't concern you, and leaving your prayers when you ought not. I am ashamed of you. You are a worthless fellow. Get out of my sight."

The boy's figure vanished from the door in a moment.

"I must beg you, Löhn, to gather together the rest of the paper you gave him at Christmas, and bring it to me."

"Certainly, sir," replied the housekeeper quietly, though her hard hand trembled slightly as she passed it over her apron; then, with a courtesy, she left the room.

"Isn't grandpa cross to-day?" whispered Leo to his governess.

But she was too shocked to answer, and laid her hand over his mouth to stop his speaking.

In an instant he turned crimson, and hitting and kicking at her, he cried—

"How dare you touch my face with your nasty cold hand. I can't bear it, and I won't have it."

For a moment Liane looked at the old man, expecting him to correct this outburst of temper in his grandchild; but he appeared hardly to notice it, and did not even turn his head as the boy renewed his blows on the governess's hand.

"You are a very naughty child, Leo, and ought to be punished," Liane said at last, in a firm decided manner.

"Oh, it's not as bad as it seems," said the governess affectedly, as she fastened Leo's table-napkin round his throat. "In general we are very obedient; are we not, Leo, darling?"

"You won't do much good with such

maxims, Miss Berger," said Liane, reprovingly. "Such a mode of acting is not good for——"

"Thank you; I receive my instructions from higher authority," broke in the young lady flippantly, and glancing at the sick man in the chimney-corner. "Besides, perhaps you know that 'No man can serve two masters,' and——"

"I beg you will not interrupt me, Fräulein," said Liane, with so much dignity that the governess seemed ashamed and drooped her head.

"Perhaps you will allow *me* to interrupt you one moment, my fair lady," cried the Hofmarschall from his corner, turning round in his chair and twisting his fingers one over the other, while an impertinent smile curled his lip. "Yesterday you were a lovely, charming-looking bride, and I can

assure you that you pleased me much better then than . . . at present, with that serious, motherly air that you assume this morning. Really such gravity does not become a young, girlish face; and besides, I am curious to know from whom you inherit this desire to interfere in the education of children; not from your lady mother, that I know."

He spoke laughingly, jokingly playing with his fingers, and with his head thrown back on the chair, showing his white-haired, refined, classical head in full relief against the dark wood of the fauteuil.

"Ah!" he went on, "perhaps you have read Rousseau's 'Emile'—read it, too, at school, with or without permission—who knows? Those ideas, my dear madam, were once all the fashion, and pervaded society till they were the cause of many

losing their heads. Times are altered now; those who come after us must be made of iron. That is, dragons' teeth must be sown, and not the so-called 'seeds of goodness' with which every schoolmaster crams his pupils now-a-days, and makes them puny and weak. So, my dear, don't spoil your soft, *childish* features with any attempt at discipline, leave all that to me who understands it. Will you give me a cup of chocolate with your fair hands?"

Liane poured out the chocolate, placed the cup on a little silver tray, and handed it to the Hofmarschall. She did not answer him by word or look, quite decided not to allow the governess, whose face beamed with triumph, or the mocking, sarcastic old man, to see that she was in the least degree disturbed by his bitter words. As she gave him the cup he looked at her, and she

met his gaze as unconcernedly as if he had not spoken ; but she looked earnestly, for the first time, into the depths of the little dark orbs, and read there the maliciousness and narrowness of the man's nature.

She knew from that moment that this man was her implacable enemy, and that as long as he lived there would be war to the knife between them ; and she was far too sensible not to see, also, and feel that, with him, mere submission and kindness would have no effect, and that if she wished to hold her rightful place in the castle she must assert her dignity, and when necessary, maintain it.

Taking her hand in his, he looked at it and said :—

" What a beautiful hand you have ! a genuine aristocratic hand !" Then lightly

touching the tip of her left forefinger, he added, "But how rough this is. Why, you must have been sewing—not merely embroidering, but *sewing*—perhaps mending your things from the wash! H-m, but this roughness must be done away with before we—present you at court. That sign is a good one on a lady's-maid's finger . . . but not on that of the Baroness Mainau. . . . My goodness, how things change! What would the red-headed Job von Trachenberg, the richest and most renowned crusader, have said to such a torn, disfigured finger!"

Liane looked down at the invalid with a pitying smile, as she answered :—

"In his time, you forget ladies were not ashamed of a well-pricked finger; besides, as it is our poverty that has caused the roughness you object to, I think it would

be as well to blame Fate, which is stronger than our own will, and which has been laying her iron hand on our family for the last hundred years. The Mainaus were not always so afraid of hard work as you appear to be, Baron," she added, quietly. "I have many a time studied the family archives, and I know that in the history of one of my ancestors, a Mainau is spoken of as having been his faithful servant, and he himself wrote of him as a "fine, faithful, and hard-working man."

And she went back to the breakfast-table and poured out the coffee without saying another word. The Hofmarschall hastily drank his chocolate, but did not answer; only Liane could hear the impatient movements of his cup and saucer, and when presently he asked roughly for some more toast, she herself handed it to

him as gently and pleasantly as if no war of words had passed between them. He took a couple of pieces from the plate, but would not raise his eyes once to meet hers.

CHAPTER IX.

"MAMMA! new Mamma!" said little Leo, springing towards her, and throwing his arms lovingly round her neck, "I will try and not kick Fräulein Berger again, and I will be good if only you will let me sit by you. May I?"

"Yes, darling, you shall; but first you must go and tell Fräulein Berger you are sorry you were so rude to her. Aye, come, I will go with you."

The child ran to his governess, and obeyed his new mamma's injunction without a moment's hesitation. Then he bounded joyously back to Liane's side, and kissing her, whispered,

"I'll *always* be good now you are come."

Not a whit heeding the angry frowns which were cast upon her from the chimney corner, Liane moved the boy's high chair to the side of hers, and was busy giving him his bread and milk, when the door opened, and in walked her husband.

For a moment he stood still, looking at the group before him. It was just what he wished, and the new mistress he had brought to his home the day before, had already commenced her duties. There she sat, dressed in a cool muslin robe, pale and sad-looking, with his handsome, blooming

boy, by her side, and her hair—her red hair—well—— Yesterday her grand, imposing appearance, had made him anxious. The proud haughty bearing, the elegant, richly-attired figure, the shimmering mass of hair, the sarcastic words ready on her lips, had all conspired to make him feel that he had indeed espoused the daughter of the proud race of Trachenberg, and not the simple retiring maiden with the red hair, that he had once or twice seen at Schönwerth, whom he would be able to "twist round his little finger at will."

Yesterday she made him feel that his much-loved liberty might be in jeopardy, and that she would be able to assert her rights as eloquently and decidedly as her noble mother, the Countess von Trachenberg; but now, as she sat there at the head of the table, in that simple toilette,

her face pale and listless, his fears vanished. She had accepted her duties, the boy was by her side, the Hofmarschall was taken care of, her hair seemed redder than ever, and even the ugly governess did not look so plain in contrast to the extreme pallor and listlessness of the young wife.

He was greatly relieved, and in a pleasant, ringing voice, he wished them all "Good morning," as he walked across the huge room, with a flood of sunlight shining on him, and went straight up to the table where his wife sat.

The poor invalid heaved a deep sigh, as he gazed at the handsome, healthy figure of his nephew, and then at his own drawn limbs. He drew his brows together, and his bad humour seemed to gather strength as he broke forth in words:

"Well, Raoul, how many of your famous

Drunustribora trees are left?" he said, angrily.

Baron Mainau took his wife's hand, and lightly touched it with his lips, but a shadow passed over his broad, handsome forehead, as he answered gaily,

"The little wretches only wanted to build a little house, and to do it they took the branches from my costly new trees. Fortunately they were caught in time; the harm is, on the whole, not so very bad."

"Not so very bad! They had no business to touch a twig!" interrupted the old man, vehemently. "It's getting worse and worse. As long as I could walk, there was no one dared touch a leaf. This fresh impertinence must be punished—an example made of it. *I* would have laid my riding whip——"

"I had no inclination to lay mine on the shoulders of a crying morsel of a girl, and the boy was far too pale," answered the young man, slowly and indifferently, as he walked to one of the windows, and stood there so quietly that his phlegmatic unconcern seemed more to irritate the fiery rage of the Hofmarschall.

He darted a furious look at his nephew, who was tapping the window panes with his fingers.

"I have no patience with such maudlin sympathy; it's a thing that shoemakers and tailors applaud, and of course it's well to be popular with them, but it makes you ridiculous in the eyes of your equals," he said, savagely.

The young man's face flushed crimson, but he continued tapping the window

panes with the same provoking tum-tum as before.

"That scene just now in the courtyard made me think, with horror, that what people are saying about you, my dear Raoul, must be true," continued the old man.

"And what are they saying about me?" asked the younger Baron, turning round.

"Now don't be in a rage, my boy, it does not affect your honour," hastened to add the old man, as he caught sight of the face of his nephew, "only, that you barely escape censure for absurdity when you let a notorious poacher escape, from some far-fetched ideas of humanity. That fellow Strolch, the Hessian, who for years has been prowling around Schönwerth, was just nicely in the hands of the gensdarmes, when you helped him——"

The young man's face lost its angry expression, and a smile of derision lurked at the corners of his mouth, as he replied, interrupting his uncle—

"And is it really true that even such a little sin has reached your ears? All due respect, however, to the talent of the one who could spin such a long thread out of such little material, though there is just a grain, perhaps, of real truth in it. This man—this Hessian—was, I will allow, a very troublesome individual. He shot my very finest stag, right under my own nose. If he had done it in a passion, I should have shut my eyes to it; but he did it from distress—fi donc! Formerly such things were punished on the spot. The lords of Schönwerth had a right, if they liked to use it, of shooting such a fellow off-hand, and having gloves made out of his

skin. Bah! What strange feelings they must have had, to endure the skin of their neighbours stretched over their hands!"

This was too much for the old man in the corner. He struck his stick angrily on the ground, as he stared at his nephew in questioning surprise.

"Why, what the devil do you——"

"Most of these good old customs we have had wrenched from us," continued the young man, taking no notice of his uncle's anger; "and what we have had given us instead, I won't have anything to do with. The good-for-nothing idler who steals from the till of the shoe-maker and tailor, would be punished just in the same way—not a bit more severely than my poor unfortunate poacher—and such justice won't do for me! My poacher was taken up and sent to prison, and the very

next evening after he was let free again; having nothing to eat or to do, he returned to his old practice on my lands. This time I thought I would free myself of him; so I sent the fellow to America. There he'll get an honest livelihood I hope, and won't trouble me any more,"

"What Don Quixotism!" murmured the old man, grimly.

But Raoul did not answer; he went over to where his little son sat on his high chair, and caressing his curly head, he said—

"After breakfast, little one, we must go out of doors, and show mamma the pheasants, and all the pretty things round the castle—that is, if she would like to see them," he added, looking at Liane as he spoke.

She nodded her head in reply.

Striking a light at the stove, he lit his cigar and took up his hat to go.

"Can I have a few words with you?" asked Liane.

She had risen, and was standing in front of him, her lovely figure drawn to its full height, her pale face slightly flushed; but with eyes calm, and cold, and undrooping, as she looked him straight in the face.

"Certainly," he answered, no little surprised at her sudden request, and offering her his arm.

"Take care what you say to her, Raoul!" cried the Hofmarschall, holding up a warning finger, and smiling grimly. "Your wife has brought a museum full of curiosities with her from Rudisdorf; and she is well read in the family archives. So beware! Fancy! I have been told this morning that a Mainau once served as ser-

vant to a member of the illustrious Trachenberg's family."

Raoul's face flushed a dark red, and he bit his lip, but said nothing. He, however, let the arm on which his wife had placed the tips of her fingers, slowly sink down, and walking alone, with a quick step, to the door, he opened it wide, and motioned to Liane to pass.

Shutting it behind him, he stepped forward and strode along the corridor till he came to a baize door, which he opened, and waited for her to come up.

Inside, the prevailing colour of the room was red; but against the wall immediately opposite the door by which she had entered, Liane saw what appeared to her to be like a white cloud. Going nearer, she discovered that it was a portrait of a fragile young creature draped in white,

with a white veil half concealing her poor thin bosom and shadowy arms, her fair hair an untidy mass of curls, and with a face as pale and colourless as her dress, making her look, from her faded, heavy gold frame, like a captured white butterfly imprisoned in a net, vainly endeavouring to recover its freedom.

And Liane, as she gazed at the pale young thing felt that it must be the first wife with the "fluttering soul," and that she was now standing in the private room of her husband. Half frightened, she shrank away from the vicinity of the picture, and went over to the window.

"I won't detain you very long," she said, as he pushed a fauteuil towards her.

She would not sit down, but stood leaning her hand on an inlaid writing-table, which was in the corner of the window, on

which lay a large cabinet photograph, in a handsome gilt frame.

As her eyes fell on it, Raoul said, with a smile, as if he were introducing her—

"The Duchess!"

And he put the portrait of the very beautiful woman back in her place. Then drawing the curtain farther down, that the sun might not torment his wife's eyes, he said—

"May I be allowed to hear what you have to say, Juliane? Is the record my uncle referred to a true fact? What a bad humour the old man was in. Your remark seemed to have vexed him, and——"

"It was said in self-defence," replied Liane calmly, but firmly.

"What? he has again annoyed you? I made him promise last night——"

"What does it matter?" she inter-

rupted, with a commanding gesture of her hand. "I regard the man as sick and suffering, and I shall try never to forget it; and any intentional unkindness on his part I shall leave unnoticed, as far as possible, till he ceases to have any desire to annoy me. But self-defence in a war of words I shall make use of now and again if he obliges me."

Mainau gave one of his quick searching looks into Liane's face, ere he replied slowly:

"If you carry out these good intentions, I shall have the peace in the house that I long for. I can assure you, Juliane, that there is nothing worries a man more when he is travelling than to know that his house and home affairs are not in the order they ought to be."

"It's just that I wanted to talk with you about. You——"

He laughed aloud.

"Well! really, Juliane, it's too bad!" he interrupted. "All who heard you speak would laugh too; it sounds so absurd to hear you speaking to me as if I were a stranger. You must say 'thou' some time, so please change the 'you' into the 'thou' at once, if only that the servants may not hear you address me in any such ridiculously respectful manner. I don't like the honour, I won't have it—and—I daresay you will think it worse; but I have sinned too often to deserve such respect from you," and half defiantly, half apologetically, he glanced on the table, on which lay the portrait of the Duchess.

Liane's look followed his. She noticed a number of daintily-framed photographs, with here and there the figure of some

dancer in a favourite pose, and one or two lovely faces with very little drapery to hide the beauty of their forms.

In the middle of the table, on a small handsomely-carved stand, lay a faded satin slipper under a glass case. Liane had often heard from her schoolfellows that gentlemen prized such reminiscences of their wild days as she now saw before her in her husband's room; but she had never been brought personally in contact with them till this moment, and she blushed scarlet as she answered—

"I will do as you desire, and call you Raoul; but I know you so little yet, that the familiar 'Du' does not come naturally to my tongue; and—and—I would rather not know about——" she hesitated; then, with a proud movement of her head, she added, dropping her eyes so as not to look

at him—"about that time you refer to—I don't care to see those——"

"Trophies of my wild oats days," he interrupted quickly, rapping his fingers so hard on a crystal bell on the table that he cracked it. "I, too, have had enough of them; but there they lie—why, I could hardly tell you, for I don't value them any longer. In my student days I was proud of winning from the owner of that slipper such a proof of power; but now, there it lies, and every time I write a letter at this table, if I notice it at all, it is only to wonder at and regret the folly and absurdity of the hour in which it was deemed worthy of a place in my rooms. But I won't speak to you of these follies of the past," he added earnestly, shaking off his usual cool *nonchalant* manner, and bending towards her; "but I will beg you to try

and be impartial in your conduct to—all; I can assure you that it will give you a firmer position in the house than you think for. And as regards ourselves, we will be good friends, Juliane, like a couple of pleasant comrades living together without any sentimental nonsense on one side or the other. And you will see—that although I am called inconstant in love—I can be faithful and true as death in friendship. Do you agree?"

"For Leo's sake I will," she replied firmly, her womanly tact telling her that a quick prompt acquiescence to this strange proposal would be the wisest course for her to pursue under the present difficult circumstances; but she sighed involuntarily, and turned slightly pale.

Raoul noted the change of colour in his young wife's cheeks, and his voice lost its

sarcastic tone, as he asked—"Did you expect anything else in marriage? Does this friendly arrangement fall short of your——?"

"No, no," she hastily interrupted; "I quite agree to your—our being good comrades. I asked for this interview because I wanted to tell you that your child is in very bad hands, and that it will be necessary for you to take steps to——"

He did not let her finish.

"I leave all that to you," he cried impatiently. "Send his nurse or governess away; do as you like with her—only pray don't bother me about it! For Heaven's sake don't do as my first wife did! Always in tears, and treating me to most distressing scenes if I would not interfere when her lady's-maid did anything to displease her. No, no, Juliane, such scenes

I cannot and will not have. The more quiet and pleasant life is here in Schönwerth, the more grateful I shall feel towards my new comrade and friend. *Apropos* of this person whom you think has such a bad influence over Leo, I fancy my uncle has heard of some one else much better fitted for the post."

Liane drew some papers from her pocket as she said with heightened colour :—

"It would please me better if no one came. Look at these, Raoul; they are the certificates I received at school."

He laughed aloud and said :—

"And what have they to do with Leo ?"

"They are proofs of the knowledge I possess in grammar and languages, and all I learnt," she answered, gravely; "and I would not ask you to let me teach the boy if I could not show you that I know enough

myself for the purpose; but you will make me very happy here, Raoul, if you will let me perform the duty I came here for, and—and leave your child entirely in my hands.

And there was entreaty in her voice and manner, as, laying her hand on his arm, she looked into his eyes and waited for his reply.

"You wish for this duty; you will sacrifice yourself and devote your time to the child? Such sentiments are strange, indeed, to hear from such a young thing as you, Juliane," and round his mouth there crept an incredulous smile of sarcastic doubt, as he went on. "The lion-cub has not yet tasted blood; who knows but what all these pretty heads once had ideas of sacrificing their youth and energy to some self-imposed duty, till society and the

world carried them into a fashionable vortex, and then it was 'good-bye' to all irksome duty," and he waved his hand towards the daintily-framed portraits. "You were brought up at school, and had barely returned home, when all worldly riches and splendour were snatched from your grasp by your father's ruin and death. You don't know what you ask, Juliane; if you were ten years older, and had more experience of the world, I should think you, perhaps, would carry out your romantic proposal. You have no idea of the fascination the world has even—pardon me—for one who has drained its pleasures to the dregs as your mother, the Countess Trachenberg, has done."

The girl blushed to her eyebrows at this mention of her mother's well-known weakness.

"How am I to answer you, if you won't believe that a girl's heart and soul are strong enough to take warning by such an unfortunate example?" she said, bitterly, adding in her low, earnest voice, "You say we are to be like two comrades; very well. Then I can speak plainly. I have made my plans, and I shall adhere to them as firmly as you have made yours, and no doubt mean to carry them out. First of all, let me beg you not again to put gold into my writing-desk; it makes me nervous to have so much about me; and what am I to do with it?"

"Am I to believe you, Juliane?" said Mainau, laughing; "really believe you don't want money? and only yesterday you told me that you had a right to wear ermine and lace as your ancestors did. You will soon be tired of the school-room—you

can't wear ermine there; and you will enjoy draping your beautiful figure in costly robes, and sweeping them across the stately halls of the Court, and doing as other ladies do; and then very soon you will come to me and ask for your pin-money to be increased. She," and he pointed to the picture of his first wife, "thoroughly understood the art of spending money; and you—you will soon learn it."

"No; never!" she cried, decidedly. "Never! I am proud—very proud—of my forefathers; they were noblemen and gentlemen from generation to generation, and there is nothing I love more than to read their lives and histories. But their merits belonged only to themselves, and I have no right to assume them as heirlooms to cover our own shortcomings. I would

never wish to appear in the glory and state my ancestors indulged in, now we are reduced to our present level. Only when I meet with the new arrogant wealthy nobles, I love to cling to the old shield of our house, and hear it ring as clear and pure as it did hundreds of years ago."

Mainau looked at his wife in astonishment as she stood before him, all the pride of her youth and noble descent beaming in her flashing eyes and haughty bearing.

"And why do you say this now?" he asked coldly.

"May I beg for a definite understanding?" she asked, as she turned away her eyes and took no notice of his question. "May I be a true mother to your son Leo, and teach him without any one's aid; and will you inform the Hofmarschall that

he is not to interfere with me?" she demanded, her voice soft and yielding, as she walked across the room.

"It will be very difficult to arrange," he answered, passing his hand thoughtfully over his handsome brow; "but that will not prevent my giving you full power over the boy as you wish, and we will see which career your nature will let you follow out —the self-sacrificing life you propose in the school-room, or the worldly woman, the daughter of the Countess Trachenberg, *née* Princess Latowiska."

"Thank you, Raoul," she replied, with childlike simplicity, ignoring the irony of his last remark.

He stretched forth his hand to take hers and kiss it, but turning hastily, she walked to the door, and opening it, she said merrily—

"Such politeness is not necessary, you know, between good comrades; it's best to understand each other at once," and nodding her head, she disappeared.

CHAPTER X.

FRAU LÖHN had a hard time just now. Her patient was restless and excited, and required constant and unweary attention. For years the Vale of Cashmere and the Indian House had remained undisturbed and quiet from all intrusion from the outside gay world; rarely had a strange foot-fall been heard on the pathways, or a noise, resounding in the woods, reached the ear of the

sick inmate of the retired dwelling, but lately every day, and sometimes twice in the day, troops of gay cavaliers and laughing ladies rode noisily in front of the house quite unconscious that the clattering of the horses' hoofs and the sound of their voices caused constant pain to one within, and gave anxiety and trouble to the other. The brightest and merriest of the party was the Duchess—who had lately recovered her spirits in a manner which had greatly surprised those who had guessed at her secret affection for Mainau. From one to the other it had been whispered that after such a "mad, senseless step," he would naturally lose the royal regard and favour with which he had so lately been distinguished, and the affection of the high-born lady would be changed into bitter enmity, but nothing of the kind came to pass. Never

had the proud lady so passionately and humbly loved the man whose bride she had once promised to be, as since the day he had mercilessly stabbed her to the heart, and morally crushed her spirit beneath his will in the presence of her whole court at the fête of the Lindens.

She suffered terribly for a few weeks, then came the hour when, as she rode forth in the forest she met her rival on her wedding-day, as we have seen; and after that momentary glance at the veiled figure in the carriage, she told herself she need not feel jealous of the "red-headed girl," who had no beauty and no attraction to win and keep the heart of such a fastidious man as Mainau.

It was soon known, too, in the court circle that the marriage was, in the fullest sense of the term, a "mariage de convenance," and that the old Hofmarschall dis-

liked it so much, that he had made every effort in his power to prevent it; nay, more, that he hoped yet to be able to dissolve the bond, and separate his nephew from the daughter of the house of Trachenberg.

Immediately after the marriage Mainau resumed his old garçon habits: occupied his elegant suite of apartments in the town, often for days together not returning to Schönwerth, or in any way interesting himself in the welfare of his young wife, and began talking again of his journey to the East. Besides, whereas his first wife with her exquisite toilettes and graceful manner had always been a welcome attraction at the Court, the second he had not even presented.

And thus it was that the Duchess had recovered her spirits, buoying herself up

with the conviction that in spite of the daring and hasty marriage she had nothing to fear; the passionate man had had his revenge, and henceforth would be content to let his friendship for her resume its old familiar footing; and happy in this belief, she rode in the Schönwerth forest day after day, and was merry and bright with her ladies, and was always in a good humour.

At the castle the governess had been dismissed. There had been a warm discussion between uncle and nephew, in which loud words of altercation had been heard by the servants proceeding from the sick man's apartments. His stick had struck the floor in evident angry vehemence, and the young Baron had left the old man's presence with a white face and flashing eyes; but half an hour after, Leo's bed was removed to a tiny room by the

side of Liane's, and from that moment it was an understood fact that henceforth the young mistress would have entire charge of the child's education and training, and would make his rightful position respected by all in the house.

The servants knew that their old master the Hofmarschall could not endure the presence of the new wife, and that "the young Baron had no affection for her; but not one amongst them would have dared to gainsay her authority or have hesitated to obey her slightest commands. At first they resented the quiet, dignified manner in which "the second wife" looked into all the domestic arrangements of the castle, and personally saw that her orders were executed, but after a while this passive mood wore off, and they became reconciled to, and even pleased with, this singularity, espe-

cially as the time soon arrived when the hitherto domineering and reserved housekeeper voluntarily opened her linen press and drawers for the inspection of the gentle but keen-eyed young mistress.

Since the conversation on the morning following her wedding-day, Liane had not again sought for a private interview with her husband, and she had also avoided giving him any opportunity of accusing her of pride. She rarely opened her lips when he was conversing with the Hofmarschall at the tea-table, and she sat so still, and seemed so intent upon the embroidery which seldom left her hands, that Mainau was convinced she had no thoughts beyond Leo's lessons and her housewifely duties.

And now that he had successfully transplanted this "quiet, passive nature" to the

head of his establishment, where peace and comfort appeared to reign under her rule, and made him feel that for the next six months at least he could be free from care and anxiety respecting his child's welfare, he began to prepare for his long-talked-of journey to Palestine and the East.

"It's the Mainau gipsy blood seething in me," he laughingly told the Hofmarschall one evening at tea in answer to the old man's remark about his wandering habits, which answer made his uncle very irate, and some hot words followed, in which the Hofmarschall sternly forbade his nephew to give way to his desire to travel, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of the honour of the old name.

During the discussion Liane sat by the window, as usual, taking no part in the conversation; but as she drew stitch after

stitch through her work, she thought of all she had heard of the three handsome and accomplished brothers, who, five-and-thirty years ago, were the ornaments of society, and more sought after than any other young men of their age.

The old, grey-headed man over there, with an angry flush lighting up his wan features, had some reason to curse the wandering propensities of his family, and to protest against them as earnestly as he could.

He was the middle brother, and for him it would have been impossible to breathe any other air than the Court atmosphere. He had ever desired Court favour, and aimed at the highest position, as the Countess Trachenberg was wont to observe, when she wished it to be understood that *she* had refused the offer of his hand.

"A suitable rank," was what he wished for, and a suitable rank he obtained; and through it the then reigning Duchess "proposed" to him a high-born wife, whom he accepted, and boasted to the end of his days that his feet had never trodden the paths of commonplaceness.

His eldest brother, on the contrary, loved a free, unfettered life. When quite young he had visited the extreme north of Europe and America, had fished and hunted with the Indians, and, after years of roaming, had returned to his native soil, where, by his extravagance and thoughtlessness, not only his brothers, but most of his friends, were obliged to turn their backs on him.

Fortunately a young and beautiful heiress fell in love with him, whom he married and adored. But at the end of a year she died, leaving behind her a son, named

Raoul, and a will bequeathing her fortune to the week-old baby. Her husband buried her, and then started for the Brazils, where soon after he died.

The boy grew up a rich, handsome, talented man, with the world and all its pleasures at his feet; and as Liane gazed at him, sitting near his grey-headed uncle, and puffing blue clouds of smoke leisurely in the air, she asked herself why he could not be content to remain where he was, without travelling abroad for no special purpose.

"Beautiful Schönwerth!" he cried out just at that moment, waving his hand towards the landscape before him with a mocking pathos in his voice. "Beautiful Schönwerth! much envied possession! It's to thee we owe this feverish desire for travel! Uncle Hofmarschall was in the town looking out of his office window when

uncle Gisbert von Mainau sat here in the chimney corner!"

The priest was right when he said that the mention of his youngest brother's name always put the old man in a rage.

Hardly were the words out of Raoul's mouth, when the Hofmarschall turned pale with anger; but checking the passion raging within, he hastily gathered his things together, took up his red silk pocket-handkerchief, put the bottles in his pocket, and said, icily—

"Pardon me, but I think I will retire; my nerves are not strong enough to bear the evening air, or be entertaining. Who can make himself stronger or more robust than he is? It's all very well to say 'beautiful old age,' but to feel it is another thing! I used once to admire French customs and manners; but now it strikes me

as almost ridiculous when I see Germans imitating and treading in the footsteps of —Well, well! My dear Raoul, your cha racter is very like your Uncle Gisbert's. Who could or would deny the likeness? And if it pleases you, I congratulate you; but I do most earnestly hope that you will be led into the right road, which he, poor fellow! groped his way into at last, through much suffering, and which brought him peace."

"Ah! how melancholy! Poor uncle! he was sick and ill, and—became pious!" provokingly replied Raoul, calmly twisting the end of his cigar between his finger and thumb, while the Hofmarschall rang his silver bell with a loud clang.

A man-servant appeared, to whom the invalid said sharply—

"Push my chair to my bedroom."

But his nephew sprang up, with a gesture ordered the servant to stand away, and rolled the old man in his chair to the door ; then stooping over him, he said, politely but coldly—

"I always wish to show every mark of respect to Leo's *grandfather.*"

The old man stiffly inclined his head, but did not reply ; and the servant rolled his chair across the corridor, while Raoul shut the door and returned to his seat by the tea-table in the dining-room.

The young wife would willingly have gathered her work together and left the room, rather than be alone with him ; for after the conversation which had just taken place, she had no desire to speak with him on the ordinary topics of her uneventful life. But she could find no excuse for going away, as it was not time for Leo to

go to bed, who was racing up and down the steps with Gabriel outside the glass doors. So she drew her chair closer to the window to catch the fading light, and went on with her embroidery.

"What do you think of the eccentric family to which I have brought you, Juliane?" suddenly asked Mainau, after a pause, during which he had lighted himself a fresh cigar. "My uncle is ready to tear every hair out of his head at the bare idea of a drop of 'fool's blood' running through his veins; and for him he is right, with his love of forms and ceremonies. And you, Juliane? I believe, with your quiet, natural intuition, you agree with him, if I judge you rightly?"

He waited for an answer, but none came. She did not even raise her eyes to his face, not seeming to deem it worth while to contradict him, and assure him that she

thought the contrary. She drew back her head, and held up her work to the light, to examine the effect of the shading to the flower she had just completed. Her tender, ripe lips were slightly pressed together, but not the faintest tinge of colour deepened the clear pure white of her forehead.

Her husband gazed at her sweet face, which, with its drooping eyes and delicate profile, had something of the lifeless look of a statue about it, and involuntarily wondered within himself if it were possible for anything, except family pride, to bring an expression of interest and animation into her countenance. But a moment's reflection convinced him that it was well if it were so, and that he would not alter her indifference if he could.

"That is a very beautiful design," he said, carelessly, bending near her and

touching the embroidery in her hand. "I can quite understand that a reserved, quiet woman could so thoroughly interest herself in this kind of work as not to be influenced by the world around her. I dare say now you have scarcely noticed the difference between me and my uncle?"

His voice was low and persuasive, as if he wished to hear her confirm with her own lips the opinion he had expressed of her indifference.

"I have noticed enough to be astonished that you yourself are constantly evading the order of your own programme," she answered, gently. "You say you wish for a quiet, peaceful, even family life, and yet only just now you did all in your power to irritate the Hofmarschall."

She never called the old man uncle.

"You are too hard on me, dear Juliane,"

he said, laughing and rising from his seat. "The programme need not to be adhered to so very strictly as long as I remain here, and have the reins in my own hands to guide as I will. Why, I should die of ennui if I carried it out to the letter.

"All I want is peace while I am away," he continued, beginning to walk up and down the room. "Good heavens! what a mass of complaining letters would come in from all sides! My first wife Valerie was an adept in that kind of thing. In the darkest corner of my writing-table there is a whole bundle of such messengers of—love. I bound them all together most tenderly with a bit of rose-coloured ribbon, but I have never touched them since, for fear the spirit of discord and strong will and childish temper, which imbued them somehow or other, should creep forth again. Then,

too, she had her confessor, the priest, our chaplain here, to direct and counsel every emotion of her heart; so she always had the best of it."

For a moment a malicious smile lit up his face, but vanished as quickly as it came, as after a while he resumed—

"Then, too, I am rather proud of the way I treat my worthy uncle. I feel as much of a hero as a child who refrains from touching a cake within his reach. Now, have you ever seen me in a passion with him? Ask any of our neighbours about me, and your hair would stand on end at the stories they would tell you of my ungovernable temper. But here I conquer myself, perhaps for the sake of indulging now and then in the delight of pure self-admiration."

The young wife suddenly raised her eyes,

and met his looking earnestly at her. But there was no warmth, no passion, no lighting up of the expression as each met the other's glance, which tells so forcibly of sympathy between man and woman. Liane dropped hers, and thought to herself that through woman's weakness and caresses, there was nothing a man cared for so much as the display of his own power and will; and he shrugged his shoulders, took up his hat, and contemptuously came to the conclusion that the sad grey eyes cared for nothing beyond counting stitches, and only listened to his talking as an accompaniment to the red silk she was embroidering into the muslin in her hands.

"I'm going," he said, after watching the boys at play on the verandah for a moment or two. "Take care, Juliane; it's getting dark; and our brave servants swear by

their life and soul that Uncle Gisbert's spirit haunts that bow window where you are sitting, You know he made them carry him in here when the death agony was on him. But why do I tell it you at all? Such sinless souls as yours need not trouble about such things."

"Other spirits have power over us only according to the way we fear or love them," she replied, simply, not noticing the irony of his tone. "I don't fear your uncle Gisbert's shade one bit; but I should like to know why he wished specially to die here."

"That I can tell you. He wanted to have a last look at the vale of Cashmere," said Raoul, gravely drawing near to the window, and standing close to his wife as he pointed over the garden. "Down there, under the obelisk, he wished to be buried."

"Where?"

"Can't you see the monument?—a little to the left—there." And putting his hands on her head, he playfully turned her face towards the side. "But what wonderfully thick hair you have, Juliane," he said, as his fingers pressed the rich coils on her head: "it is really——"

But Liane quickly drew away her head from beneath his hands, and blushed scarlet as, looking at him with eyes wide open with astonishment, she said, interrupting him—

"You know we are to be good comrades —only."

For a second he stared at her questioningly; then frowning, and with a heightened colour on his cheeks, he remarked—

"I beg your pardon. I—I have shocked you as well as myself. I had no idea that in touching your hair, I should raise such a

shower of indignation," he said, with an unsteady voice, as he moved away from her vicinity.

He did not see that she trembled as she sat down and tried to go on with her work. She bent over it to hide her emotion, and, outwardly, was the same reserved, quiet girl as before. But Raoul did not again repeat to himself that she was capable of no feeling. He watched her graceful figure, and noticed, to his own amazement, how beautifully full and symmetrical was the rounded bosom, that rose and fell somewhat more rapidly than usual. His eyes wandered to the soft contour of her throat, and he smiled as he saw the pearl-white, smooth skin overspread by a tinge of pink, which grew deeper and deeper as he looked, till it was a deep rosy red. He did not again seize his hat, which he had some five

minutes ago flung on the table; but he was not content with himself. He felt vexed with his wife for reminding him of their compact just because he touched her hair for a second; and discontented with himself, in that he had been reminded of his own wish and desire, and rebuked for his careless thoughtlessness by an unloved wife.

"I really wish Uncle Gisbert could come back in the flesh, and look over this," he said, calmly, as he walked to the window-sill. "For thirteen long years he has been lying under the red marble, while the Indian plants and trees he loved so well have flourished in the northern atmosphere, far beyond his own hopes. That's one of our constant points of dispute, too, between my uncle and me. The whole lot of plants must be put under glass and kept warm every winter, and the exotic animals cared

for—it costs a deal of money, as you may suppose—and every year my uncle insists that, as much as possible, these plants shall be uprooted and done away with, whereas I, on the contrary, insist that not a leaf shall be disturbed."

"And the exotic life that the German nobleman transplanted to his northern home?" she asked, in a low, melodious voice.

He started and came over to her.

"You mean the poor thing in the India house?" he said. Look at that fellow there; look at him well." He pointed to Gabriel, whose elegant figure was bent double to improvise a horse for Leo to ride on, and bearing patiently the cuts the child was unconsciously inflicting on him with his whip. "That's the type of the race who are brought over the sea as costly treasures

—cowardly, faithless, and cringing like a dog as soon as they are under subordination. I have an extreme aversion to the boy. I would forgive him if he caused a few blue marks to appear on my son's back, rather than see such abject, dog-like submission in a creature endowed with a soul. Leo, get off Gabriel's back directly!" he shouted, in an angry voice, opening the window and frowning darkly as he passed out.

Gabriel had just reached the top step, heated and out of breath, with the effort of carrying the child's weight up the stone flight, the beautiful oval of his face appearing like a marble statue, so pale and still were the features.

"Go home immediately," ordered Baron Mainau. "Do you hear, sir?" and he turned his back on him.

The boy grew white to the lips, the smile died off his face, and a frightened, ghastly expression of terror stole over the lad's countenance.

It touched Liane's heart to watch the careful, gentle way in which he let the harsh man's child glide from his shoulders, and then caressingly lay his hand on the boy's curly head in a silent farewell before turning away, as he had been so roughly ordered.

Poor lad! his young soul had been taken possession of by the relentless church, with the sanction of the orthodox nobles, and the imperious man standing there was crushing it blindly and hourly beneath the iron foot of his indomitable pride.

"Good-night, dear child!" Liane called out, as the boy went down the steps silently and dejectedly.

She gathered her working materials together, and prepared to leave the room, knowing full well that she had no influence to alter the boy's painful position. She said not a word, but her whole attitude and bearing showed how bitterly she felt the injustice of the roughness just shown to the lad by the lord of the Castle.

He looked at her silently as she arranged her basket, then lighting afresh his cigar, he said coldly, pointing to one of the banana trees in the Indian garden:

"Do you see that costly Musa there? Well, it will stretch thankfully upwards to the cold heavens, even while it is being dragged down into the region of the—dung-house. For such I have no mercy."

Liane had her back to him as he spoke, but she did not move even a muscle.

"Will you be good enough to look at

me for a moment?" he said, after a moment's pause, somewhat sternly.

It was for the first time that he addressed her in this tone, and with no little astonishment she obeyed him.

"I hope *my wife*, in her virtuous scorn and innocence, is not thinking of shielding this—bastard."

She started and trembled, as she always did at home, when her mother's sharp voice was raised in anger, and turning her face to her husband, she gazed at him with large frightened eyes.

The stern expression on Raoul's countenance softened immediately as he met the innocent girlish look of surprise his words and tone had called forth, and it was somewhat falteringly that he exclaimed,

"How pale you are, Juliane, and your eyes look just like little Red Riding Hood's

must have done when she saw the wicked wolf in her grandmother's cottage. . . . . Now I suppose it's all up with our good comradeship, aye? If so, I'm sorry," he added, shrugging his shoulders, as if regretful for a circumstance over which he had no control. "But I will explain the affair to you," he said presently, pacing the room with a quick, hasty stride. "When Uncle Gisbert came back to his native land, after years of wandering, I was a lad about fourteen. I already worshipped the man, though I had never seen him. His fortune was reported to be marvellous, and stories were told of his life and adventures that rivalled the tales of the 'Thousand and One Nights.' Then, too, as he had purchased Schönwerth, when he was in Benares, and improved it according to his taste, all the good people in the town were

desirous and eager to see him. Never shall I forget the handsome man, with his simple manners and grand, noble face, with its habitual melancholy expression. The Vale of Cashmere was his idol and hobby, and behind that paling down there lived and breathed a being whom he had had carried from his travelling carriage to a sedan chair, and from it to the Indian house, and those who were privileged to lift in their arms the 'pale Lotus-flower of the Ganges,' swore that she was no woman, but a lovely witch, composed of air and perfume and beauty, blown together by the wind."

"She makes the same impression on one now," thought Liane to herself, "with her foreign face; that half-child, half-woman, seems only bound to earth by the chain on her neck, and the ring on her hand."

"Besides my uncle, the Hofmarschall, and the priest, who was then only a simple curé, few visited at the castle, the proud reserve of the owner frightening all away," Raoul went on. "Even I had only once the intense delight of being allowed a three days' visit, and whilst there I was overcome with a curiosity equal to Bluebeard's wife." He smiled as he knocked the ashes from his cigar, and then continued: "Of course it was not a case of blood or life; but my uncle simply refused to have me again. Why? The beautiful foreigner hidden behind the palings haunted my hot young head. Turn your head away if you like, Juliane. But at that time woman's beauty was the only religion I had. I worshipped it; I have swam through dashing waves to catch a castaway kerchief, that had covered a lovely bosom, and

had drunk often enough bad champagne out of a ballet girl's silken shoe, so why should I not clamber over the palings of the Vale, to have a peep at the woman Uncle Gisbert loved as his life? It is true that the gate was not locked, neither was the delicate Lotus-flower kept a prisoner, and I am sure that the only reason why the Vale of Cashmere was forbidden me, was that the beauty did not care to be molested by the beardless nephew of her lord and master.

"Well, one day, with my heart beating wildly, I crept through the bushes, and saw—my uncle right before me. He said not a word, but for a moment his eyes glistened with a mocking, compassionate look, that so exasperated me, that I forgot all my dignity and pride, and fairly took to my heels and ran. That same day, with-

out any order from me, the carriage stood before the Castle door, with my portmanteau packed, and my uncle, without a word of reference to my foolish curiosity, bade me a cordial farewell, and sent me back to the Institute. There was a damper for one!"

He stepped over to the window, and gazed out over the Indian garden. It was beginning to get dusk, and most of the trees and plants were hidden in shade; but the golden pinnacle of the temple was still bright with the dying rays of the sun.

"I did not see my uncle again," he went on after a pause, "till after his death, when his last wish was being fulfilled, which was to have his body steeped in some decomposing preparation. I had been sent for as soon as he died, and when I entered his room there he lay on a white satin cloth; instead of the rose perfume

of the vale of Cashmere that he loved so well; a disagreeable odour of incense fumed over him, and around his bed murmured words of prayer were being uttered, and priestly mouths were praising him for having, at the last hour, repented the error of his ways, and turned to the right path; but why repeat all their formula," he interrupted himself impatiently; "the poor man was worn out with suffering, his nerves were shattered, his brain was wandering, and he died. And that was the sad end of a life full of exquisite enjoyment and one long dream of pleasure."

Liane still stood by her work-table, hardly conscious that she was twisting and untwisting a ball of wool in her trembling fingers. Close to her was the wide bow window in which Uncle Gisbert had died, with his last look on his beloved

Indian territory, his last conscious thought directed to the scene of his joys, in spite of the incense and priestly mockery around him. A long, grey, ghostly light fell through the window on the polished floor of the room, casting a shadow like a huge cross on the oak table in the middle, and weirdly glimmering on the tall moving form of Baron Mainau as he slowly paced up and down the apartment. Liane shuddered, and remained silent, breathlessly waiting for her husband to go on.

Presently he resumed—

"I knew that a child had been born in the Indian House; I had even seen the little creature with its melancholy face, in Frau Löhn's arms, and the sight always strangely moved me. As there was no will, I naturally concluded that this child was the heir. I said so

openly, and then I was shown a paper. For months before Uncle Gisbert died, he suffered from an affection of the throat, which prevented his speaking, and obliged him to express all he had to say by writing. There are numbers of papers of his written in this way—there—" and he pointed to a mediæval writing-table with a high back—" in this so-called curiosity case belonging to the Hofmarschall they are all still preserved. But the paper I refer to expressed in strong terms that the girl occupying the Indian House, the Lotus-flower, the beauty whom I had never seen, had proved faithless; and very distinctly, in a few plain words, ordered the boy to be brought up in the service of the church. I read this document, and agreed that there was nothing else to be done but obey its behests; but it made my blood boil

with indignation—as it does to this day when I think of it—that such a noble fine fellow as my uncle was should have had to suffer from woman's perfidy. And thus my uncle, the Hofmarschall, and I, became co-inheritors—we took possession of the estate. And now I was master of the beautiful tropical garden, and I could walk through the palings without any fear of encountering the lofty figure of my uncle, and being mortified to death by his compassionate mocking laugh. And down in the Indian House, with its reed roof, lay the exquisite Lotus-flower, stricken to death as if by an avenging stroke of lightning——"

"And you might see her now," came almost involuntarily from Liane's lips.

He shuddered as if in pain, as he replied quickly—

"Do you think so? Not I. I was healed of my fever for ever. Such a faithless woman I would not touch with my foot. Besides," he added, more to himself than to her, "I can't endure looking at sick people; every feeling in me revolts at the sight of suffering. The creature is not right in her head, is paralysed in all her limbs, and at times screams so, that it makes one tremble to hear her. She has been dying for the last thirteen years. I have never seen her, and, as much as possible, I avoid even the road which leads to the Indian cottage."

While he was speaking, Liane had a longing to go the side of her husband and tell him of the warm sympathy she felt for him in such a peculiar position as his respecting the boy and his parentage; but he dragon-headed monster pride held her

back, and the fear that he might misconstrue her words kept her silent.

She waited a few moments; then, as he too was silent, she closed her work-basket, and called to Leo, who was amusing himself outside on the steps by throwing stones.

"Say good-night to papa, Leo!" she said gently to the boy, as he noisily ran across the room and threw himself into her arms.

Raoul took him up and kissed him, and as he put the child down he bent towards his wife and said—

"You won't again go and see the woman in the Indian house, Juliane?"

"No."

"And I hope I shan't hear any more of that soft compassionate 'Good-night, my dear child.' You understand that I am obliged to——"

"I must have a little time to think over it before I decide," she said, interrupting him; and nodding her head, she took Leo by the hand and left the room.

"Like a schoolmaster!" he murmured irritably between his teeth, as the door closed on Liane's figure. "Bah! it's just what she is fit for," he thought angrily, as he called for his horse and rode away to the town, where he spent the rest of the evening and all the night.

At his club that same evening, in speaking to his friend Rüdiger about his home, he said—

"I won a prize in my wife — she neither sings, paints, nor plays the piano; so thank God I shall never be wearied with dilettante performances! Sometimes she looks handsomer than I imagined she could; but she fails in *esprit*, and hasn't a

grain of coquetry in her nature, so I have nothing to fear on that head. I can leave her without a doubt but that all will go well in my absence. Her letters will never keep me awake one single night. I can tell beforehand what they will be like, a mixture of school-girl earnestness and housewifely accounts. My boy has taken to her wonderfully; he learns well with her, and even my uncle seems overawed by her quietness, her cold disposition, and the renowned Trachenberg pride, which last she thoroughly understands how to assert whenever her dignity is attacked. I shall be off in a fortnight."

END OF VOL. I.

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